

VAL THORENS

50 YEARS OF HISTORY...

les 3 vallées

INFINITE
MOUNTAIN
EXPERIENCES

WINTER 22/23

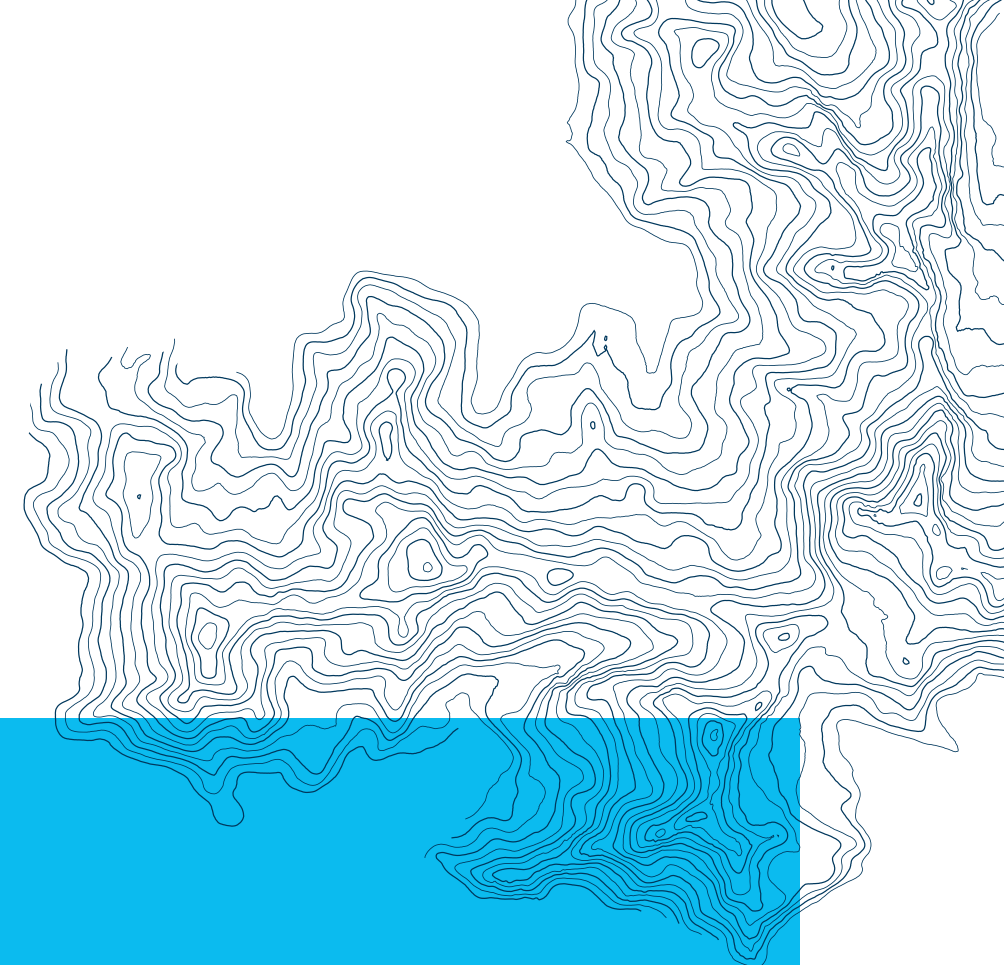
50

LIVE
UNITED



Val Thorens

LES 3 VALLÉES



The goal of this document is to make you relive 50 years of innovation and human and technological challenges.

Dive into the history of Val Thorens and discover the pioneer mindset that distinguishes it.

We invite you to travel back in time, go up to 2,300m and explore history.

WELCOME IN VAL THORENS!





Jean Béranger and Pierre Josserand, two main pioneers of the ski resort

1968
PROJECT INCEPTION

1972-1973
THE FIRST REAL SEASON

1982
OPENING OF THE
CIME CARON CABLE CAR

1988
3 VALLÉES CONNECTION
(ORELLE-VAL THORENS)

1990
CONSTRUCTION OF THE
PÉCLET FUNITEL

2013
FIRST “BEST SKI RESORT
IN THE WORLD” AWARD
(followed by 6 more)

2021
PEDESTRIAN ASCENT BETWEEN
ORELLE AND VAL THORENS

DECEMBER 2022
“LE BOARD”,
NEW SPORTS CENTRE



1971
CREATION OF THE RESORT

1972
FIRST 3 VALLÉES CONNECTION
(MÉRIBEL-VAL THORENS) WITH
CHAIRLIFT LES 3 VALLEES

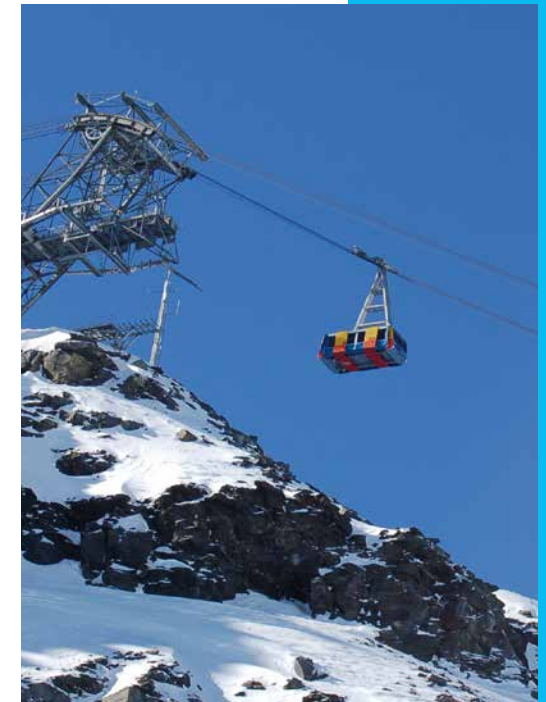
1987
CREATION OF MARIELLE
GOITSCHEL’S SNOW ACADEMY

23/07/1990
FIRST BABY BORN IN VAL THORENS
(AMANDINE LANGOJET)

DECEMBER 2012
FIRST STAGE OF THE
SKICROSS WORLD CUP
IN VAL THORENS

2014
GOLD MEDAL FOR
JEAN-FREDERIC CHAPUIS AT THE
SOCHI WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

2022
50 YEARS OF
VAL THORENS





**"NOBODY WANTED
THIS RESORT"**

Nobody wanted this resort.

Nobody wanted to finance its construction, live in it, or work in it.

It was too high, too far, too cold, too windy and too risky. A hostile, treeless environment where green was more of a wistful memory than an actual colour. And yet, 50 years on, it is one of the most famous ski resorts in the world.

In the end, the first buildings sprang up like a boomtown during the gold rush. But how long would it last? "You need to bear in mind how bitter the dispute was within the département, and that the conflict would continue for many years. A Savoyard councillor, who was also a minister, was undoubtedly very angry when he stated on national radio in 1981 that the order should be given to fighter planes to demolish Val Thorens!", remembers Pierre Jossier, president of the SETAM ski lift company in his book that recounts the resort's origins. And even worse, the resort was scientifically condemned! Philippe Lebreton, a biology professor from Lyon (quoted by Jean Carlier in his book 'Vanoise, victoire pour demain'), warned of the permanent life-threatening dangers for inhabitants due to anoxia and high-altitude diseases, as well as the risk of cyanosis for young children, resulting from a lack of oxygen created by the melting of organic waste in the spring (these alarming predictions proved to be untrue: Val Thorens is home to a nursery school full of healthy children!) The banks quickly pulled out of the project...

**"IF YOU THINK IN A
MATTER-OF-FACT WAY, YOU
WON'T UNDERSTAND THIS
PLACE... THERE'S SOMETHING
IMPALPABLE ABOUT IT... A
KIND OF MAGIC"**

KÉVIN BERTHON



Now, press fast forward on your cassette player (the one with auto reverse) from December 1972, Val Thorens' official opening date, to today... Val Thorens is the highest ski resort in Europe, boasting a ski experience unlike any other from the end of November until the start of May. With ultra-modern (and innovative) ski lift facilities, it proudly displays seven Best Ski Resort in the World awards on its mantelpiece, and totals 1.9 million skier days every season.

What is truly fascinating isn't the detail of everything that happened, the chronology of facts and events, the amazing story told in the books, or the evidence given with hindsight that each move led logically onto the next. On the contrary, to understand Val Thorens, you need to take a step back from the timeline and take a step closer to its spirit. In a nutshell, the state of mind of those who built it and have made it what it is today. When you spend time up there, you can almost feel its soul, its unique DNA, its secret code.... "If you think in a matter-of-fact way, you won't understand this place... there's something impalpable about it... a kind of magic", as Kevin Berthon, the resort's young ESF (French Ski School) director tries to explain.

You have to want to dive in and forget what you already know. To listen to the voices, not just because of the stories they tell but for their tone, their emotions, and the feelings they evoke. Only then can you put the pieces of the puzzle together, watching the connections and the key elements appear. Birthdays and anniversaries are not as much about celebrating a date, or the accomplishments achieved, but more about remembering that you are part of a family. Remembering allows you to move onwards and upwards, holding on tightly to the rope of memories. A fiftieth anniversary deserves special attention, taking time to really admire and understand.

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Built so quickly, and at such heights in the fast-paced context of the 30-year post-war boom, the spirit of its pioneers would have a profound impact on the ski resort (some would call it a new town, an outpost, a utopia even), its life force, creativity, and the determination required to ensure it would run smoothly and stand the test of time. And everything is intensified at altitudes of 2,000 metres, both human energy levels and the power of nature. “When it was stormy outside, we couldn’t do anything with the children. We used to look at the kids’ play area in the Maison de Val Thorens that houses the Tourist Office”, remembers ski instructor, Luc Dupont. “I like these hostile natural environments, it’s like the Roaring Forties when you pass Cape Horn”, says the man who has singlehandedly sailed around the globe twice, “back then, they didn’t use to clear the snow, they went through with the snow cutter-blower, digging out trenches”. The cold snow, which is amazing for skiers, falls in abundance here. “Beyond the quantity, the quality of the snow is magical”, explains Benjamin Blanc, director of the Belleville Valley Piste Maintenance Service, “thanks to the altitude and its northern exposure”, adds Gilles Jay, whose team grooms 80 to 90% of the ski area every day... until May 8th. There’s snow, and plenty of it!



"I LIKE THESE HOSTILE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS, IT'S LIKE THE ROARING FORTIES WHEN YOU PASS CAPE HORN"

LUC DUPONT

"I WAS PRACTICALLY BORN IN THE SNOW, AND THE FIRST TIME I SAW GRASS I DIDN'T WANT TO GET OUT OF THE CAR AS I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS!"

ANTOINE DIET



When you browse through the old photos, it looks like everyone always had a shovel in their hand. Everything needed to be cleared of snow – the stairs, the path to the apartment building, the area in front of the shop window, the car, the snow that had fallen from the rooftops etc. The delighted local children were overjoyed in this snowy setting. “We spent our winters with our ski coaches and our mates”, explains Antoine Diet (former professional freerider turned shopkeeper) excitedly, “we skied all day, and after that we jumped off balconies into the snow... we ran up the fire exits in the apartment buildings, and jumped out onto the snow; there was so much of it! We went to school on our toboggans, or on the back of a snowmobile, then jumped off the school roof at breaktime... We lived in a snow-white landscape for six months of the year. I was practically born in the snow, and the first time I saw grass I didn’t want to get out of the car as I didn’t know what it was!”

"THE MARMOTS [...] WOULD EVEN POP INTO OUR OFFICE FROM TIME TO TIME"

PIERRE JOSSERAND

The 6-tipped snowflake is a marvel of nature, and exquisite ephemeral creation of the sky. It is the raw material on which ski resorts and the winter sports industry were built. In the '60s, France was looking for champions, resorts that could compete against each other in the "international ski battle" (as explained in Val Thorens' first colour brochure, which came out in 1969, before the building work even began). It was a done deal, the various stakeholders had all agreed (Pierre Schnebelen, the visionary developer, and Joseph Fontanet, politician, and mayor of Saint-Martin-De-Belleville). Pierre Josserand, a newly qualified engineer from the National Conservatory of Arts and Industry, was given the task of making the dream a reality. He began working, firstly from his office in Paris, then later from a portacabin: "There was a small team of us on site and we still have fond memories of those moments spent together, at the end of a road up at an altitude of 2,300 metres, with the odd visitor here and there - especially the marmots who would even pop into our office from time to time", he remembers.

"JUST A FEW BENDS IS ALL IT TAKES TO REACH THE MOON"

The very first restaurant, the very first hotel, the very first apartment building, the very first ski lift.... And with each new addition, came the need for more snow to be cleared. Written accounts and photographs all highlight the snow, lots of it, everywhere. Living on

Antarctica means you are dependent on links with civilisation which, in Val Thorens, aren't possible by boat or by plane, only by road. And what a road it is! Hairpin bends, avalanche risks...there are only nine short kilometres between Val Thorens and Les Menuires; nine kilometres but two completely different worlds: "after a few hairpin bends, you enter a different world", acknowledges Laurie Chatelet, SETAM's operations manager. Just a few bends is all it takes to reach the moon (a word often used by locals to describe Val Thorens, and "being on the moon requires extra-terrestrials", points out Luc Dupont, ESF ski instructor), a white desert, with perfectly positioned slopes for a ski resort.

Visionary entrepreneur, Pierre Schnebelen came up with the idea of constructing buildings and ski lifts here. He imagined its "configuration with a central focus point (rond-point des pistes) which the sectors of the ski area lead out from: 3 Vallées sector (Péclet and Plein sud), Grand Fond (Moraine and Grand Fond) and the Caron-Boismint sector", describes Benjamin Blanc. With "the high mountains within easy reach", adds Kevin Berthon, not forgetting the connection to Les 3 Vallées ski area: "I've skied in tons of resorts, but that area is in a league of its own: the runs and the freeride area stretch into infinity. It's like a massive ski buffet and you always find something you want to eat!", says Antoine Diet, excitedly.

"IT'S LIKE A MASSIVE SKI BUFFET AND YOU ALWAYS FIND SOMETHING YOU WANT TO EAT!"

ANTOINE DIET



une journée à val thorens

A Val Thorens, dès décembre 1970, vous passerez de vraies vacances dans la détente et l'insouciance.

- à 10 heures vous skierez, à midi vous déjeunerez à l'une des 10 terrasses d'altitude au-dessus de 3000 mètres.
- à 15 heures vous jouerez au Curling.
- à 17 heures vous serez dans l'une des 10 piscines.
- à 18 heures vous visiterez les nombreuses boutiques de Val Thorens.
- à 19 heures vous visiterez les nombreuses boutiques de Val Thorens.
- à 21 heures vous irez au cinéma ou au concert.
- à 23 heures vous serez dans la dernière boîte de nuit en vogue à Val Thorens.

a Val Thorens:

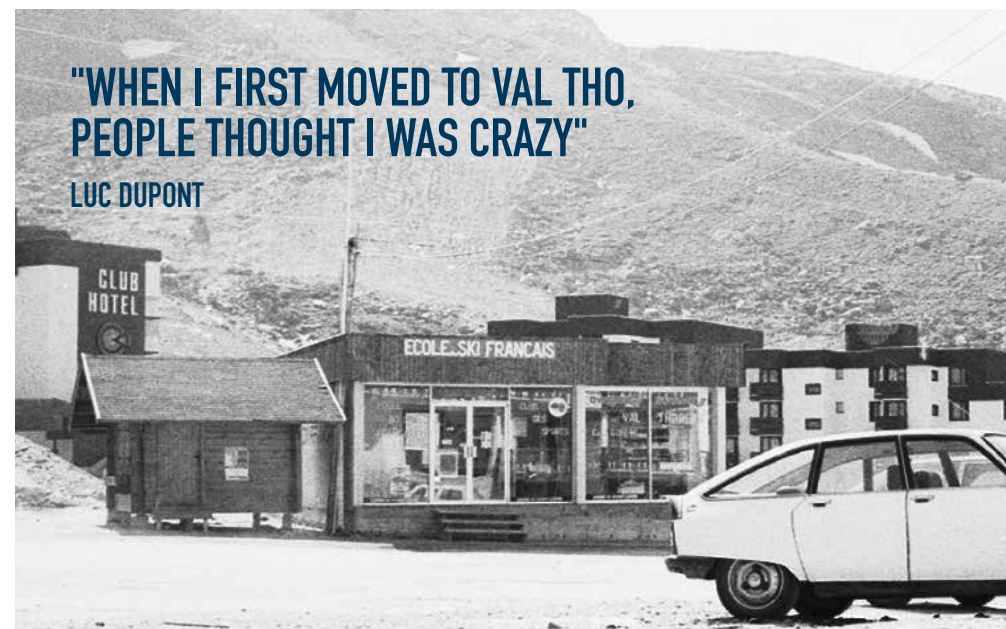
- vous serez débarrassés des voitures
- vous partirez skis aux pieds et rentrerez à skis chez vous
- vous skierez 365 jours par an
- vous pratiquerez ski, cheval, golf, tennis, escalade, patinoire, curling, promenades
- vous découvrirez dans le Parc National de la Vanoise - une faune et une flore exceptionnelles
- vous viendrez de Paris en vols directs
- vous trouverez : garderies d'enfants, service de location de linge, livraisons à domicile, agence de voyages, des dizaines de boutiques
- vous bénéficierez d'un réseau téléphonique par réseau hertzien
- de 10 restaurants d'altitude
- d'un parking souterrain de 2.000 places
- si vous le désirez, votre appartement sera loué en permanence.

le skirail

d'un débit de 7 200 personnes à l'heure reliera à la vitesse prodigieuse de 10 mètres par seconde le centre de la station au glacier de Thorens.

With so much snow all around, Val Thorens never once hesitated about its future – the vision of what it would become was undisputed, although to see it through took strength at times.... “When I first moved to Val Tho, people thought I was crazy”, recalls Luc Dupont. “Les Menuires was the resort that the valley locals lived and worked in; you had to be totally crazy to go to Val Thorens!”. The Belleville Valley residents were a little reluctant to embark on the unpredictable adventure offered to them by Val Thorens, “which left room for those with a sense of adventure... people who didn’t yet realise the difficulties that lay ahead”, remembers Pierre Josserand. Let’s just say that for the pioneers in the ‘70s, with their one-way ticket to Val Thorens, idleness was never an option.

So, a small town was built here, in this high-altitude far west. The watchword wasn’t «go west», but «go high». Was it the conquest of the west? Well, it was west of the Vanoise National Park! After the first banks pulled out, a new one offered its support (La Hénin), and Pompidou gave the green light for the resort construction work to begin, with Val Thorens putting itself on the ski resort map. The location was favourable, the men enthusiastic and creative, the objections and obstacles removed... But still, nothing was easy. “In 1971, a Monsieur Héry came to visit us in Paris. He was an accountant who had only seen the mountains in films, he didn’t know how to ski, had no experience in tourism, but wanted to open a hotel in Val Thorens. The resort project had got him excited. He went on to build and run Le Val Chavière hotel, throwing himself into it without knowing a thing about it: that was the type of Valthorinois local at the start”, points out Pierre Josserand. On site, shops and businesses started to open: Marc was at the Crêperie des Saints-Pères, Gérard at the Chalet de la Moutière, Chantal at the newsagents, Camille at the ESF French Ski School, Jean Béranger at the Tourist Office, and the Goitschel sisters in the sports shops... Unique personalities for a unique resort.



"WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO VAL THO, PEOPLE THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY"

LUC DUPONT



"WE WERE LEFT TO OUR OWN DEVICES, WITH NO REAL DANGER – GROWING UP TOGETHER LIKE BROTHERS AND SISTERS [...]. WHEN SCHOOL FINISHED FOR THE DAY, WE'D TAKE THE MARMOTTONS DRAG LIFT, PRESSING ON THE GREEN BUTTON TO START IT, AND WE'D HAVE FUN FOR AN HOUR OR SO!"

CÉDRIC GORINI



Val Thorens flourished independent of its big sister, Les Menuires, even if the first ten years were hard work. “My parents came here because they didn’t have any ties and they were looking for adventure, they were young and wanted to move away from the city. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain”, remembers Cédric Gorini, hotelier and owner of the five-star hotel Pashmina. “I remember when I was little... we didn’t go on holiday because we couldn’t afford to put petrol in the car. For ten years, no finance groups wanted to invest here!”. Whilst the parents went from being adventurers to shopkeepers and entrepreneurs, the children grew up on this all-new terrain. “We were left to our own devices, with no real danger - growing up together like brothers and sisters: Yannick, Maud, Aurélie, Julie, Virginie... When school finished for the day, we’d take the Marmottons drag lift, pressing on the green button to start it, and we’d have fun for an hour or so! Meanwhile, our parents were struggling, working their socks off, sick to their stomachs that this adventure would prove to have no future”.

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But the future turned out to be bright! And the spirit that was there from its very beginnings would endure; a winning combination of grape variety and a land that infused the place with character and its own individual style. Today, that flavour is summed up in the term United that is seen next to the resort's name. "This feeling of being united is far stronger than anywhere else and quite literally means that if someone is in need, we are there to help. We are all there to help each other", comments Gilles Jay. "We are still subject to bad weather (snow, ice), but we have to open on time... we need this energy, and if necessary, everyone will help! Hierarchy doesn't count for anything when a pylon needs de-icing", confirms Laurie Châtelet. More than just a slogan, United is the expression of an original identity that evolved into a modern strategic choice to combine that energy, to correct the mistake of fragmented governance practiced by many French resorts, and which prevents action from being taken due to differing interests. It's not by chance that Val Thorens was the first resort to combine databases to get to know its customers better, and improve the quality of service provided. "United, is the heritage of the pioneers that went before us, and their children", adds Cédric Gorini, "We've all experienced what it's like to be an outsider, to come from somewhere else, with no long family history, and we've all stuck together with the same aim - to create a united front to be passed on to those that come after us".

On a day-to-day basis, United creates a special vibe; in music it's called a beat. "I left to make a life elsewhere, but I came back because I missed Val Thorens so much", reveals Antoine Moga, a young ski instructor, and a pure product of Val Thorens. "There's something very specific, so unique... it's a village, a family, but the whole world at the same time... it's a totally different world... it's like a bubble, that exudes an amazing sense of freedom..."

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"THE CIME CARON LIFT WASN'T PART OF THE ORIGINAL PLAN, AS CREATING RUNS TO COME BACK DOWN FROM THAT SUMMIT SEEMED NO EASY FEAT"

PIERRE JOSSERAND



You can see the Cime Caron cable car arrival station from miles away. It's a metal sculpture that bears the tension of the cables that enable the lift to reach altitudes of 3,200 metres, amidst stunning views, carrying 150 passengers weightlessly with each journey through the air. Opened in 1982, this cable car really put Val Thorens on the map in terms of international ski resorts. "The Cime Caron lift wasn't part of the original plan, as creating runs to come back down from that summit seemed no easy feat", recalls Pierre Josserand. He remembers how, whilst he was out skiing with Bernard Pomagalski (world-renowned ski lift manufacturer), it all began: "on the flat section, at the bottom of the valley, we were pushing off from on our poles when Bernard said to me: "this would be a great place for a back and forth cable car". At that time, I was looking for something exceptional to set Val Thorens apart. I suggested this cable car, but there were no funds available at the time, so it was refused. I didn't give up though, and managed to get a financial proposal, with French and international manufacturers from whom I had managed to get competitive rates, ready to build it. In the end, SETAM's board of directors gave their consent. There was a before and an after Cime Caron for the resort. The change was radical."

Today, the cable car plays an additional role: it is the link in a transport chain that allows passengers to travel between Orelle (in the Maurienne valley) and Val Thorens, whilst keeping their feet dry. The aim is to enable holidaymakers to get to Val Thorens in 30 to 40 minutes from Orelle (which is really close to the motorway and Modane railway station), without using the road. It is an operating model of the future for resorts who are keen to reduce transport pollution (which, let's not forget, represents three quarters of CO2 emissions). "Val Thorens aims to remain at the top, developing the technical excellence of its equipment, autonomy and the highest level of customer service... We are passionate about what we do, otherwise it wouldn't work", insists Laurie Châtelet. Ambition requires constant nurturing!

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**"THE VISION TAKES THE VIEW THAT
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.
IT'S A ROCK-SOLID IDEA AND
VAL THORENS HAS PROVED THAT."**

PIERRE JOSSERAND

We can browse through the resort's history again at leisure (pressing on the rewind button this time), following the same key elements, and the same structural characteristics. The resort was born from a vision of the future that it pursued with relentless energy. The vision takes the view that anything is possible. It's a rock-solid idea and Val Thorens has proved that. The creation of a new resort is a game of improbable possibilities – like winning ten times over at roulette -, “So many ifs (...) that if left unanswered would have undoubtedly led to the Val Thorens project being cancelled”, sums up Pierre Josserand at the end of his book. The idea of what the future holds only dates back fifty years. “Val Thorens still has a lot of ground to cover”, says Kevin Berthon excitedly, “We're still at the drawing board, moving forward day by day. Fundamentally, we are people of action”, and “in this resort”, adds Benjamin Blanc, “anything's possible”.

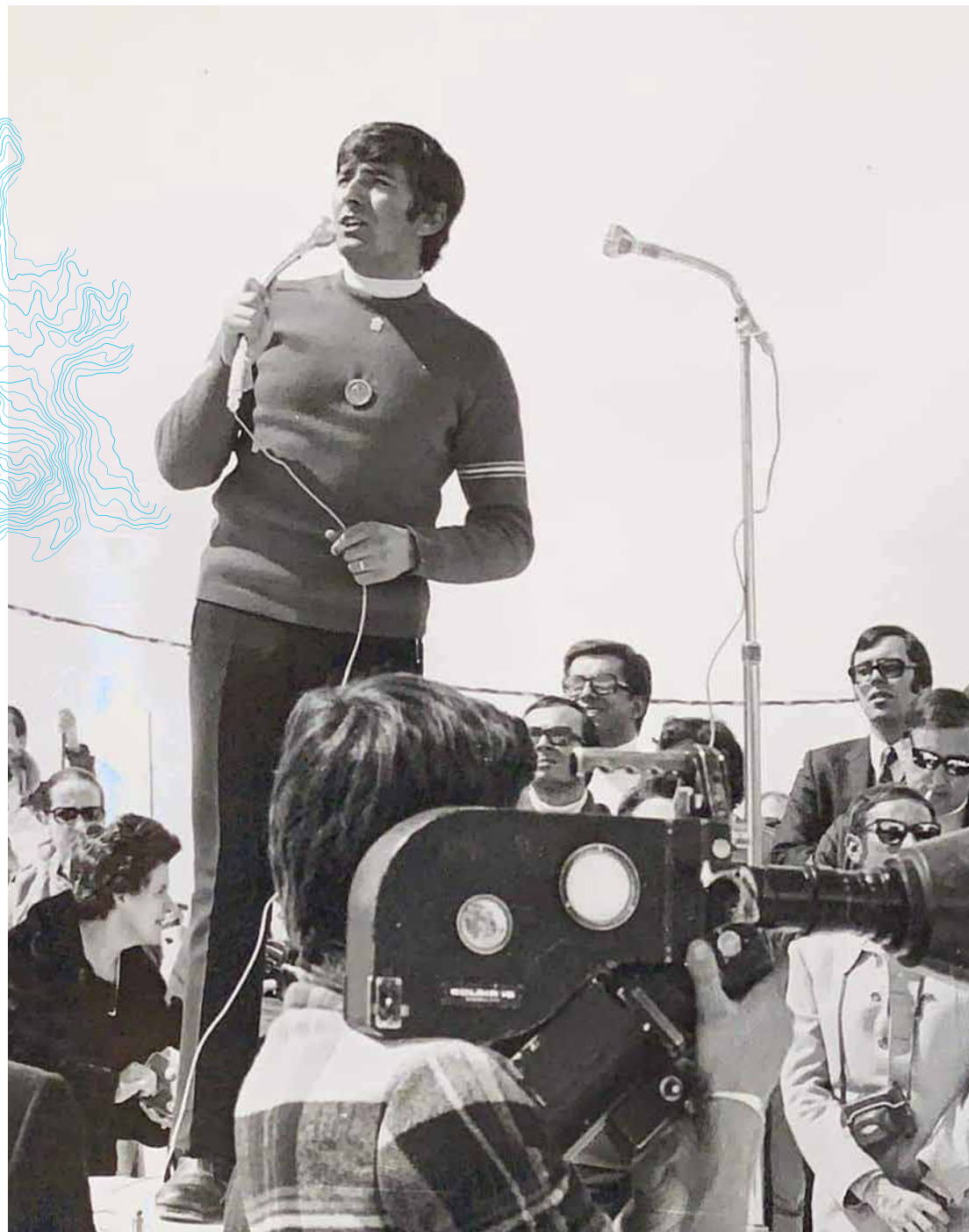
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Val Thorens is a blank page when it comes to stories of entrepreneurs, skiers, dreamers, inventors, engineers, explorers.... A blank page that, as it fills with tales of adventure, makes way for the next one. There's no point rounding these recollections off with the words the end. Let's leave a blank space, where everyone is free to make their mark in the snow.

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PROFILES



JEAN BÉRANGER

Born on June 20th, 1937 in Allevard, Jean Béranger, remains to this day one of Alpine skiing's leading ski coaches and a prominent figure in French skiing. Head coach of France's women's ski team at the time of the Goitschel sisters' double win at the Innsbruck Winter Olympic Games in 1964, he would experience true recognition, for what is to this day, the biggest success ever for the French women's ski team! The success story continued when he accompanied Marielle Goitschel to the top of the international podiums at the Portillo World Championships in 1966, and the Grenoble Winter Olympic Games in 1968.

The connection with the Goitschels strengthened further still when he married Christine Goitschel in 1966. In 1972, they embarked on the "Val Thorens adventure", with Marielle joining them in 1975. Jean Béranger left the French team, and with his wife, they launched the Val Thorens École du Ski Français (French Ski School), the local Club des Sports, and the resort's Tourist Office, which he presided over until 2010... Not bad at all! Jean Béranger started promoting the resort as soon as it opened, putting in place a structure akin to the major French resorts, along with other like-minded Val Thorens' pioneers. He was one of the key figures in developing French ski instruction, and his involvement was very important. Vice-president of the influential Syndicat National des Moniteurs du Ski Français (French ski instructors' union) from 1973 to 1989, he was also president of the French Ski Federation. He passed away on August 17th, 2012, at the age of 75. As active as ever, he died from a heart attack as he cycled up to Le Collet d'Allevard with a group of friends.

His daughter, Virginie, is director of the Évolution 2 ski school, and his other daughter, Stéphanie, was one of the founders of Goitschel Sport... in Val Thorens of course!

**1975 – JEAN BÉRANGER
SPEECHES IN VAL THORENS**

PIERRE JOSSE RAND

Extract from the book "L'Épopée des stations de ski" Guillaume Desmurs

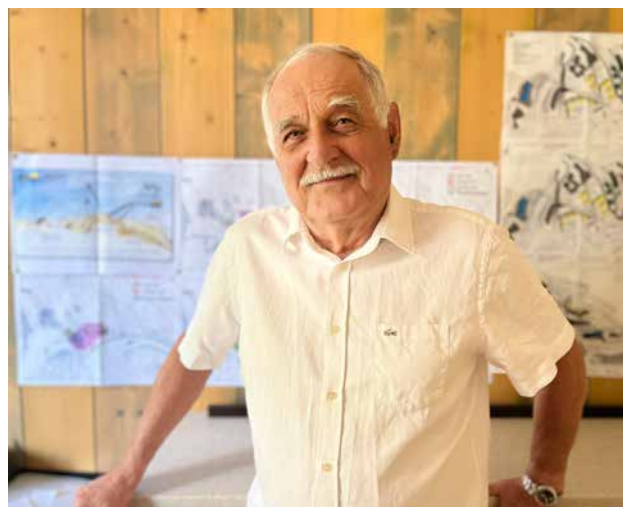
One of the founders of Val Thorens, at the age of 80, Pierre Josserand has lost none of his pioneering spirit. He enthuses over future projects, and "the innovation of cables, that offer a much cleaner, ethical form of transport". SETAM's president qualified as an engineer from the Arts et Métiers Paris Tech university, as did Pierre Schnebelen, one of the acclaimed property developers from France's Plan Neige era, and who was also behind the origins of Val Thorens.

From 1968, Pierre Josserand was tasked with overseeing the project of "this unprecedented resort" at the top of the Belleville Valley, at altitudes of more than 2,200 metres.

Come what may, despite wariness and political power struggles, he managed to open the resort in December 1971, with a few of the pioneers' families setting up home in what seemed like the ends of the earth, to provide skiing "365 days a year".

In charge of SETAM (ski lift company), he had positioned this new resort amongst the most prestigious resorts in the world, by designing and building innovative ski lifts with his team, such as the Cime Caron cable car in 1982, which propelled Val Thorens to a new dimension. With his team of engineers, he invented and patented new ski lift mechanisms and concepts, such as the FUNITEL, the first double embarkation chairlift, bi-cable lifts to provide cabins with greater wind resistance, the first driverless ski lift... Val Thorens is the resort with the most patents for cable transport!

SETAM's latest innovation is a connection between Orelle (in the Maurienne Valley) and Val Thorens, via a chain of gondola lifts, keeping passenger's feet dry at all times! It links the train station, Orelle, and Val Thorens, so that skiers can hit the slopes without needing to use their cars!



AURÉLIE REY

magically combines art and gastronomy! She embodies the "first generation of children from Val Thorens". Now, aged 48, she looks back at her past like a beautiful victory considering the tough childhood she had.

In Val Thorens, the early years were hard, but the culture of "working as a family" still exists to this day. Husbands and wives stick together, everyone helps run the shops and restaurants... Women play an important role managing businesses, and history is made as a team.

Aurélie remembers "nothing was written down, technical equipment was limited (no snow clearing, no deliveries...), everything needed to be created from scratch, and you had to fight to earn your daily bread".

She watched her father, Camille, who was originally from Saint-Martin-de-Belleville, roll up his sleeves and help develop Val Thorens doing what he did best: skiing!

Having trained as a ski instructor with Club Med, he joined Jean Béranger to create Val Thorens ESF French Ski School. He then went on to open the first of the valley's high-mountain guides offices (he knew the mountains like the back of his hand, having kept cattle there), with a burning desire to share his passion and help others discover his beloved Val Thorens!

A few years later, and as Val Thorens settled into its position of French ski resort, he took over the "Aiguilles de Pécelet" restaurant, perched at an altitude of 3,000 metres, with his wife, Nicole, Aurélie's mother. It was whilst helping her parents that Aurélie developed an interest in cooking and the restaurant industry.

In 1980, just 7 years after the inauguration of the resort, the school opened in Val Thorens. This is where Aurélie made her friends; also "children from Val Thorens", she still spends time with them today and they are like family to her.

Having looked after her parents' business for 10 years, she travelled the world taking part in international ski competitions and studying. Aurélie now runs the trendy and stylish Alpen Art restaurant in the resort centre, which serves delicious cuisine to a backdrop of artwork. She can't imagine leaving Val Thorens, "We're a real family here, all the children of my generation grew up together, both at school and on the ski slopes".

She is keen to develop art and culture in the resort, creating a genuine Val Thorens identity through her many different ALPEN ART exhibitions: «the aim is to showcase the energy that Val Thorens exudes". If you ask her what her long-term plans are, she'll answer in a flash, explaining that she wants to continue developing this restaurant into a real hub of life, not only for tourists, but also to carry on the pioneering spirit, making life easier for those who live here all-year-round, improving access to services, such as restaurants, and making them available 365 days a year." For her, enhancing life for those who live here is vital, as is continuing the cosmopolitan feel to Val Thorens.





THIBAUT COMBRE

Born into the second generation of Val Thorens inhabitants, Thibault Combre was one of the first children to be born in the resort. His father moved there in 1973 to work at Chalet de la Moutière, running “La Taverne” bar for a few years. He met his partner in Val Thorens and went on to create “Chalet du Plein Sud” (now the Folie Douce) in 1982. Thibault was born in 1990, and until the age of 19 he lived with his parents and his older brother at the Chalet du Plein Sud.

He would get to school and back via snowmobile...a true mountain life, filled with adventure!

He began skiing when he was two, joining the ski club as soon as he was old enough, and going on to take ski studies (combining skiing and school) from the age of 11 in Bourg-Saint-Maurice and Moûtiers. From there, he embarked on 3 years of international alpine skiing competitions: 3 European Ski Cross Cups and 3 World Cups.

At the age of just 23, he stopped competing to become coach for Val Thorens’ ski club and the French ski cross federation. He has been director of Val Thorens’ Club des Sports for 4 years now.

His aim is “to ensure training for the resort’s younger inhabitants, allowing them the opportunity to discover mountain professions. I love sharing my passion with the younger generations, instilling them with a sense of competition and a healthy lifestyle.”

Playing an active role in developing sports events, he is keen to innovate and promote new sports disciplines, and is particularly proud to be hosting the ski mountaineering European Championships for the first time this year.

But that’s not all: Val Thorens is a breeding ground for champions and Thibault wants to be able to showcase them, helping to launch their careers. He grew up with most of them, following their progress, and for him, this is the next logical step! As he prepares to become a father at the end of October, he takes great pride in introducing “the third generation of children to Val Thorens”, and has his heart set on “raising his own children here”.



MARIELLE GOITSCHEL

More than just sisters, Marielle and Christine became inextricably linked after they lit up the world of French skiing with their silver and gold positions at the Innsbruck Winter Olympics in 1964. And with such unparalleled ease! Marielle would go on to win more world titles, and France followed her adventures with great enthusiasm! The girls from Val d’Isère played a big part in developing mountain tourism and in making skiing for leisure fashionable.

They both embarked on the “Val Thorens adventure” - Christine in 1972, and Marielle in 1975. A few years later, in 1987, Marielle opened the doors to the very first “Snow Academy”, with the aim of teaching youngsters about the joys of snowsports in a whole new way! In Val Thorens, she created a new teaching concept for children, which was both fun, high-performance, and instructive. This inspired most of the large French and European ski schools, who went on to create the “piou-piou” clubs and other ‘learn-to-ski’ offerings designed specifically for children.

Today, the building that was home to the first Snow Academy has been converted to a contemporary and sporty-looking 4-star hotel called Le Marielle! Aged 78, Marielle is still a regular visitor to Val Thorens, and in her own words says, “I’ve skied on runs all over the world, but there’s nowhere quite like Val Tho!”

50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

S SALOMON VAL THORENS 50TH ANNIVERSARY LIMITED EDITION SKIS

In partnership with Salomon, the Tourist Office has launched limited edition skis to celebrate the resort's 50th anniversary. 200 pairs will be available to buy from the Tourist Office, and from many of the resort's ski shops. They will also be showcased by SETAM employees, who will be using them throughout the season.

To bring the project to fruition, Salomon's technical and creative teams, headed up by Quentin Boutry and Cyril Vial, as well as Axelle Gacon from Val Thorens, worked closely to come up with a special anniversary "All Mountain" ski, in line with the French outdoor sports brand's technical and graphic requirements.

Axelle explains: "I got in touch with Quentin Boutry, Salomon's Alpine Ski Product Manager, and graphic designer, Cyril Vial, and the three of us worked out the technical requirements, understanding exactly what we were capable of creating together. They sent me the ski files so that I could incorporate the design directly onto them. I based myself on the Val Thorens 50th anniversary logo graphic that I had already created with the Marketing team - it encompasses an image that stands out, creates an impact, and remains understated. These are the three key elements!"

After much research and many test versions, THE 50th anniversary ski was finalised just a few weeks ago.

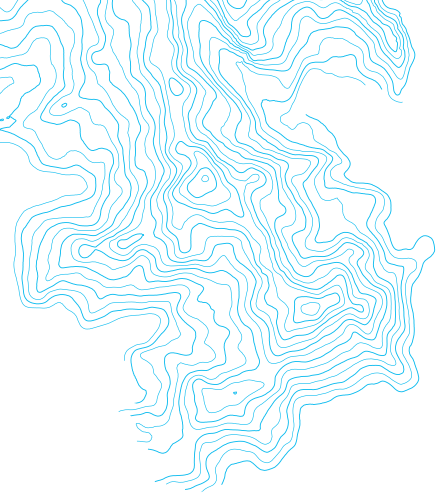
Both teams agreed: no two skis should be the same in this collector's edition! The left and right skis have a different top sheet; you can see the whole image when you put both skis on, side by side.

The skis highlight the fluorescent blue of the Val Thorens 50th anniversary logo, which contrasts with the snow, and the iconic lines created by the Aiguilles de Péclet.

Axelle sums up with: "The skis are currently being produced, and I can't wait to see them. I take great pride in the fact that I designed them, as this was a childhood dream for me. Thank you Salomon!"

Salomon Stance 84
Comes in 3 lengths: 161 / 169 / 177 cm
PRICE: €600 skis / €240 bindings





ALPINA WATCH



To celebrate its partnership with Val Thorens, and (its ongoing partnership with) the resort’s Club des Sports, Alpina (who provided the timing system and ski competition prizes) has chosen to co-create a limited edition “Startimer pilot automatic” watch to mark the resort’s 50th anniversary: a finely crafted timepiece with a close connection to the world of skiing that Alpina knows like the back of its (watch) hand!

It has been imagined and designed as a collector’s item in honour of Val Thorens’ 50th anniversary.

“We chose the luxury Swiss watchmaker Alpina’s Startimer model for its quality, and its clean, timeless design. The limited-edition Val Thorens 1972-2022 model showcases exclusive features” explains Carole Dessalle, a well-known designer in the French Alps who was behind the watch’s concept.

The watch face bears both a stylised design of the resort’s contours, and its altitude: “2300-3200m”. Not forgetting its famous red triangle, arrow-topped second hand, a microscopic 23 as a nod to the altitude of 2,300 metres in the event’s signature blue colour, as well as a contemporary wrist strap with contrasting blue stitching, and a hint of blue on the winder.

The case back is engraved with the resort’s contours, and the official anniversary logo, as well as the model’s limited-edition serial number.

The watch comes in a premium wood and metal box with a metal Alpina certificate.

100 watches

MODEL: STARTIMER PILOT AUTOMATIC, BLACK MAT DIAL WITH WHITE LUMINOUS INDEXES

PRICE: €1,275



SETAM BOOK

Following on from its first volume, published in 2009 and recounting 40 years of cable transport innovation on Val Thorens’ ski area, SETAM published a 144 pages sequel in 2022. It tells the history and secrets of a decade of cutting-edge machines, creating the future of skiing in the highest ski resort in Europe. Precise, technical, beautifully illustrated, and highly informative, it details the technological choices and engineering achievements made to ensure visitors from around the world could enjoy its slopes.





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... THE REST TO BE WRITTEN.

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