



Best Bits

WORLDWIDE

A Lush Life Manual
by Susan L. Schwartz



A WELLNESS WEEKEND IN VAL THORENS



There's nothing like cold crisp air to make you feel alive. Even if you don't ski often or well, you still feel healthy on a ski weekend break, even after eating tons of tartiflette and cheese fondue. It's clomping through snow and all the other wintery activities that invigorate you and make you feel revitalized. The resort of Val Thorens has gone one step further in making sure you are keeping well. This season they have launched their My Serenity program, highlighting all the other things you can do in Val Thorens to look after yourself, your wellness and your wellbeing.



The resort of Val Thorens in the French Alps is the highest ski resort in the whole of Europe at 2300 m. Purpose built in the 1970's to take advantage of the best ski conditions, Val Thorens was seen as the hippy cousin to its posh relatives Meribel and Courchevel. Its modern, hurried architecture felt a bit stuck in the past, but in the last few years, it has developed into a luxury skiers' paradise.



GETTING TO VAL THORENS

Getting to Val Thorens can be easy if the road is clear. Driving with First Exclusive Transfer, you can always feel secure in making the journey of two and half hours from Geneva airport. The owner has been living in Val Thorens for sixteen years, so his team is used to driving on ice and snow. Needless to say, the cars are all 4 x 4s!



STARTING OFF THE WELLNESS WEEKEND IN STYLE

The Hotel Pashmina is the epicenter of My Serenity program. At check-in, you are handed hot apple cider served in a heated silver mug by the friendly, Alpine-clad staff – an inviting welcome drink after a snowy journey. Eugenie, the wellness coach, is on hand to greet every guest and outline all the activities that you can take advantage during your stay.



We were led upstairs past the dedicated L'Occitane spa, the bar, and the restaurants to our wonderful junior suite, overlooking the mountain, the slopes and all the snow. One of my favorite scents, L'Occitane's Lemon Verbena, was wafting through the room, and I almost didn't want to leave. Even a gorgeous box of fresh clementines was left in the room for us to enjoy!



After unpacking, you can head down to arrange ski rental, which is conveniently found on the ground floor of the hotel, so there is no need to go outside.



PRE AND POST SKIING WELLNESS

Everyone in the hotel can take advantage of pre-ski yoga in the morning. The first one at 7:00am is really the one to schedule, as it's hard not to fall in love with Val Thorens while watching the sun rising over the mountains. There is also a class at 8:15am for those not so enthusiastic. After the ski day was over, she gives another super-relaxing, evening stretch class in a candle-lit, cocoon-like room, making you ready for the sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi in the spa.



WELLNESS BREAKFAST

Eugenie is present at restaurant for breakfast to make sure you don't miss the "corner bien-être" including homemade jams, all different dairy options, seeds, nuts, and honey. What a relief to see the same unsweetened soya I use in my tea back home – a rare find in any hotel. I also was thrilled to discover [bircher muesli](#), one of my favs, and here I could dash it with spirulina, bee pollen, and loads of other rich antioxidants.

WELLNESS COCKTAILS

I'm of the thinking that once you add alcohol and sugar to a drink you can no longer use the term 'wellness' to describe it, still, you can't get more local than the Pashmina's Head Bartender's creation, Le Petit Marsellais, a combination of Tanqueray 10, lemon juice and verbena syrup. [Younes Bahir, my quest on A Lush Life Manual](#), took the verbena from the garden of the grandmother of the owner of the Hotel Pashmina as inspiration. It tastes like pure summer and has to be good for you, right?

TREATING YOURSELF



For food connoisseurs and those who want something other than the usual mountain offerings, Les Explorateurs in the Hotel Pashmina earned a Michelin star, thanks to the geniuses of Chef Josselin Jeanblanc and Chef Consultant Romuald Fassasnet. We dined on snails with mushrooms with grilled polenta crumble; blue lobster roasted with yellow, carrot purée, Yuzu sauce and “vin jaune” from the Jura region; and ended the meal with the scrumptious duo of apples with vanilla all the way from tiny Reunion Island! A feast for the eyes as well as the tummy!