

TAMPA

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025 / tampamagazines.com

\$4.99

YOUR BEST YEAR YET

FROM WORKOUTS TO
WELLNESS—START THE
YEAR OFF RIGHT

+

TOP LAWYERS 2025

HOTTEST BARS + DRINKS

GASPARILLA



MY TRIP

COURMAYEUR,
ITALY

Traveler/Story by Terry Ward

Make your base: The beautiful mountain village of Courmayeur or neighboring La Thuile.

Travel dates: December

Flight: Edelweiss Air from Tampa to Zurich, Lufthansa for Zurich to Milan

Hotels: Grand Hotel Courmayeur Mont Blanc and Montana Lodge & Spa

WHAT I LOVED

When most people think of Mont Blanc (Western Europe's highest peak), the ski town of Chamonix in France, at its base, usually springs to mind. However, a snowy vacation on the Italian side of the border, in the tiny mountain town of Courmayeur, offers equally inspiring views and ski pistes—not to mention better pizza and pasta at more appetizing price points. I loved spending two nights at the Grand Hotel Courmayeur Mont Blanc and another two in the smaller neighboring mountain village of La Thuile at Montana Lodge & Spa. Let the hotels' ski concierge arrange a private helicopter transfer between the two for some glacier flightseeing en route. You'll find everything that makes a ski trip in Europe so wonderful at these two resorts.

Both hotels have exceptional on-site gourmet restaurants and wellness facilities, complete with Finnish saunas, steam rooms and indoor heated pools. In La Thuile, cross-border skiing from Italy into France awaits at Espace San Bernardo, a massive ski resort that connects to France's La Rosière. Families might prefer the more compact terrain

at Courmayeur Mont Blanc, accessible via gondolas departing from the town center.

On-mountain dining in Europe is always a highlight of skiing on the Continent for me. I particularly loved the mountain views and charcuterie platters at Lo Ratrak above La Thuile and Chateau Braniant, located right on the ski pistes above Courmayeur. You ride a gondola to reach both; at the latter, you can even be deposited via snowmobile to feast on hearty traditional Alpine fare like polenta with fontina.

Savor the Aosta Valley's unique terroir with a wine and cheese tasting at Les Crêtes, a stunning winery in the Aosta Valley that has been owned by the same family for six generations.

For the best panoramic views without skis, ride the Skyway Monte Bianco from Courmayeur to Punta Helbronner, the highest point in Italy at 11,371 feet, and enjoy breathtaking views of Monte Bianco (Mont Blanc). Warm up with the local hot toddy, Bombardino—made with zabaglione liqueur, brandy and whipped cream—at the Skyway's cozy mountaintop café.

NEXT TIME...

The Mont Blanc Tunnel, which connects Italy and France under the Alps, closes to traffic for several weeks each year for renovations and was shuttered during my visit. Next time, I'll make sure it's open so I can make the short drive across the border into France's Haute-Savoie region, a skiing and hiking hotspot. During the summer months, hikers arrive here to trek inn-to-inn along the famed 132-mile-long Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt, widely considered one of the most spectacular walks in the world. ☐

Photography: Courtesy of Courmayeur Mont Blanc