

The ultimate challenge in paragliding and hang gliding flight has to be the mountains where perhaps the best thermalling and cross country flying is found and there is no place like the Chamonix Valley and its surrounding area for superb year round flying. The sheer altitudes, the stunning views and the tranquillity of what must be Europe's most extensive alpine area you should find a pleasure to visit. We hope this guide will give you an insight into its magic. The guide has been put together using the experience of not only ourselves but also from many of our companions whom live and fly within this area. To them we are very grateful.

The following information we hope you will find useful and accurate, and if for any reason you can find fault or change, then please let us know so we can adjust the text. Apart from flying many other sporting recreations that are found here. There's skiing in winter, climbing nearly all the year, mountain biking and walking, horse riding, rafting, excellent indoor sports facilities, a great atmosphere and of course the views! Chamonix is the holiday playground for all ages.

We hope you enjoy your visit...

From our centre you can obtain daily information about the local flying, the sites, weather forecasts and cross country possibilities, absolutely free of charge. Just call us at after 09.00 for details. +33 610634558. We also organise courses, offer fly guiding services, glider rental and accommodation: please click on the appropriate buttons above for details.

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INTRODUCTION

This site guide not only provides information on access to launch and landing sites, but also describes the flying within these areas and offers information on safety, including telephone numbers or radio frequencies. Some sites listed in the guide are accessible by cable car, though some cable cars may close for maintenance in the spring, and may well be closed completely during October and November: it is worth checking with us before venturing into these areas.

Nearly all flying sites in France are open to the public though may be controlled by the local school, club or commune, in conjunction with the FFVL (French Federation Vol Libre) and at the present time (2014) there are no site charges. However, you may find the local school and their tandem pilots have priority at the launch areas. Some sites, for various reasons may well be closed during parts of the year. Please respect these closure periods.

All the official (FFVL) sites have notice boards placed at launch and landing giving information of school or club address and phone numbers, rescue services phone number or radio frequencies. The notice boards details in French and often English describe launch directions and landing approaches, flying restrictions, wind and thermal turbulence problems if any, areas that may be dangerous to fly near, and so on. Launch and landing areas are generally well stocked with wind socks or flags.

Flying in the high Alps is a fantastic experience and treated with respect is probably some of the safest flying a pilot can have, especially when venturing from windy countries. This is an area not

only for advanced pilots it suits all standards and many new pilots are taught to fly in these regions each year!

A note of warning..

Wherever you visit it will be your decision to fly: please remember that the flying conditions in the mountains may be quite different from your home sites. It is most important that you have good advice, accurate wind and weather forecasts before flying.

We have been flying this area for many years and have first hand detailed experiences with the region. Regardless of what you hear or read from the so called experts who rarely fly these areas. Stay away from the vertical rock faces, no closer than 75 metres and do not fly in windy conditions especially when there could be strong lee-side rotor unless you are looking for sportive flying!! If you think you need to be in close to find the best thermals then don't do it, go and look for thermals elsewhere!!!

A high proportion of the folk running courses or flying chalets here are not qualified to work in the area and many have had clients having very serious accidents!!! If you are not too sure about conditions then please call us for advice. +33(0)610634558 If you are seeking interesting and safe flying why not try our fly guiding service. It's excellent value for money!!

DAILY WEATHER FORECASTS can be seen at the tourist office, flying school, local flying club, newspaper, television at 20.40 hrs on most channels - or by telephone - call 0892680274 then 1 for the Chamonix area. For other regions use the same first eight numbers: the last two numbers represent the department you are in. The last two numbers on local car registration plates represent the department. The forecast can be found in English on the internet at, www.chamonix.com

ALL FORECASTS ARE IN FRENCH! The forecast you will get give the general synopsis, the height of 0c and -10c, general temperatures, cloud base and cloud cover, wind speeds and directions at 2000m (mid mountain) and 4000 m (high mountain) altitude, valley wind conditions, etc. Then the outlook for the following few days. The mountain forecasts are generally very good, it is well worth taking note of them. Of course you could always call us for the forecast: try after 09.00 hrs!!!

There are 2m radio band weather stations in the general area - radio frequency 143.9875, the FFVL frequency. The Chamonix Valley station is at 'Les Grands-Montets' situated at 3200 metres, asl and transmits information about every 10 minutes. A second one at Passy-Varan (1640m) just outside Chamonix valley to the south west is on the same frequency. The information given is temperature, wind direction and minimum-maximum gust value. It is constantly updated.

LAUNCH SITES

All launch sites accessible by cable car require a lift ticket that is purchased at the cable car station before going up. In summer you can buy one ride up or sometimes there is a 'Parapente day pass' available at a reduced cost. During winter months, a half day, a one day pass or weekly ski pass. The half or one day pass will allow you as many rides as you wish. However, not all areas offer the half

day pass but the ones that do will have a morning pass that finishes at 13.00 hrs and an afternoon pass that starts at 12.30 noon. The half or one day pass will only cover the rides in the area from where it was bought.

Chamonix Valley, in winter, you may also buy a Chamonix Valley lift pass from the local tourist office or at the various lift stations. This pass covers all the resort cable cars and chair lifts within the valley, or as listed on the pass, apart from the top cable car at the 'Les Grand Montets', where a separate charge is made. The valley pass also includes multiple rides on the 'Aiguille du Midi' lift.

Some sites listed are accessible by road and may have a navette (bus) shuttle service available between the launch and landing areas, although they may only run at weekends or busy periods. Other times you may have to hitch a ride up to launch. If you have a vehicle with extra space available then offer other pilots a ride up, you may find a return lift easy to get later. Access details are given on each individual site page.

LANDING SITES.

All official flying areas will have well marked sites that are generally stocked with wind socks or flags. Please respect the local site rules. Often there are recommended 'final approach' paths set out on the information board - try and respect these! In some areas local pilots will use the 'down wind/base approach and not the 'S or 180 turn system at the end of the landing site, as these tend to congest the airspace, making landing tricky.

Please visit the landing areas before going up to fly, as many of our sites have limited landing sections and particular places where you should park your glider. Our sites are delicate and some have been lost when pilots disregard the local rules.

Out-landing, in France, is generally not a problem. One can land just about anywhere and thumbing a lift back to base can be easy. Be polite if you land in someone's back garden and you may well find yourself sipping some local wine!

INFORMATION

The Chamonix Valley bus service connects all resorts from Les Houches to Le Tour. Some parts of this service are free to 'Mont-Blanc' pass holders.

The daily weather reports in French only, are updated twice a day and posted at:

1. Any of the tourist offices within the Valley.
2. The meteo office by the church in the middle of Chamonix
3. Pharmacy du 'Mont-Blanc' by the clock in the middle of Chamonix.
4. The weather reports are also available by telephone on 0892680274 +1 for Chamonix.

Useful telephone numbers and radio frequencies:

Chamonix Hospital. Tel. 04 50 53 84 00

Sallanches Hospital Tel. 04 50 47 30 30

RESCUE SERVICE - 'POMPIERS' - Tel.. 18 at any land phone and 112 on Mobiles

The general rescue service everywhere is undertaken by the 'Pompier' . The 'Pompier' can handle all sorts of problems and have a paramedic team with them!! Call the number and describe the problem and position. If the situation is serious and you feel you need helicopter rescue then tell them. though don't use this service unnecessarily!

CHAMONIX - PlanPraz - Le Brevent. Map - Carte IGN 3630 O.T. Top 25



Wind Direction - Any direction if light

Height of launch 1990 metres asl

Launch conditions -

Launch conditions - Paragliders, easy.

Hang-gliders, ramp

Landing - 1060 metres asl in Chamonix town

Car Park - At the Brevent lift station

PlanPraz - Le Brevent is above the north side of Chamonix town and provides excellent flying in light wind

conditions. This pure thermal site works well when the sun is in the valley. On good days it's possible to climb 2000 metres, ato, although 1000 metres is more usual. The cross country potential from here is excellent, although care is needed in middle summer when the mid day thermal conditions become strong!! The launch areas can become busy, so only layout your canopy when you are ready to fly.

WARNING. In summer, the thermals start working early in the day and can continue until late evening. In hot unstable conditions the valley winds becomes strong and turbulent during the early afternoon, often making the area un-flyable after about 13.00. It is inadvisable to fly this site when the meteo winds are strong, especially from the north. The site is a popular flying spot, so if no one is flying there may be good reasons for it.

ACCESS

Paragliders

Take the “Telecabine de PlanPraz” just above Chamonix up to PlanPraz then walk up the ski path for about 200 metres. The launch areas are easily spotted by the wind socks or the presence of other pilots. There are two sites facing south west and another on the north east side a little further up the path. The north east launch is ideal for morning flights before 11.00 especially when the wind is east

Hang Gliders

At the “Telecabine de PlanPraz” buy a lift ticket at the kiosk and then go around to the back of the cable car station with your glider and arrange to have it taken to the top: the standard lift ticket cost includes the ride up for your glider. There is a flat-bed car in the system so you will have to wait for it to come around. The operators are very good at sending up hang gliders! All you have to do is help load your glider then take the cabin just before your glider, at the top and pull off you glider. This sometimes can take a little time so allow at least 45 minutes. On the ride up and near the top, you will see the launch ramp on the left, directly before the car docks in the building. The ramp and rigging area is just a 15metre walk from the outer left hand door in the lift station.

LANDING SITES

SAVOY LANDING FIELD. The Savoy landing site directly below ‘Le Brevent’ lift station and within the middle of town is huge. Landing here is only permitted in summer. During the winter this site is used as a beginners ski area. Watch out for the ski tow cables on this site as they remain permanently in place and are hard to see from the air. It is inadvisable to land here in strong valley breezes as the air becomes turbulent. Land at the Bois du Bouchet!



The official Chamonix paragliding landing site the BOIS DU BOUCHET is just up valley of Chamonix swimming pool, outdoor ice rink and small lake. It's next to the main road and easily spotted from the air. In summer by 13.00 the valley winds can become strong. After then landing in Chamonix can become sportive. Most

of the local pilots including the tandem pilots have all but finished flying here. Also, landing here is only permitted in spring and summer. During the winter this site is used as a beginners ski area.

The official hang gliding landing site is another 200m further up valley to the Bois du Bouchet landing site. It's the long narrow strip and easy to see from the air. Hang gliding approach has to be precise as there is little room to turn off height in this long narrow field. The field is surrounded by trees and there is always a steep wind gradient during the last 40 metres of altitude!!!! Please look for the long narrow strip to the left of the block of trees that are to the left of the paragliding landing site in this picture....

NOTE - The Chamonix landing sites cannot be seen from the launch sites. Make sure that you have a good look at these landing sites before going up the mountain or from the cable car, on the way up. Once in the air all these sites are easy to spot.

Winter landing Paragliders and Hang Gliders: only use the hang gliding landing site.

Summer Landing site - Paragliders. Use the Savoy and Bois du Bouchet landing sites.

Summer landing site - Hang gliders Only land at the Hang Gliding landing or fly out of the valley and land at the Batistock landing field. See Plaine Joux.

Within Chamonix Valley there are a couple of other possibilities where you may land.

1. There is a long emergency airstrip for sail-planes near the end of the Valley Blanche Glacier, on the south-side of the valley. You will see a helicopter landing site close by.

Between Chamonix and Les Houches at the south-west end of the valley there is a large gravel works. There you will see a large flat car park between the gravel works and the mountain. It is possible to land here

BEWARE - there are no safe landing areas in the north-east end of the valley.

HAZARDS

1. Be aware of the Brevent Cable Car cables in front and above the south west launch site. These cables are a long way up so should not prove to be a problem.

2. Stay out of the gullies to the east of PlanPraz lift station. In S-SW valley winds it can be very turbulent in them.

3. Keep an eye on the valley wind as it can become strong during the afternoon, making landing difficult. If the wind is strong do not allow yourself to drift downwind of the landing site.

4. The Foehn and strong upper northerly winds can make the flying in the valley very unsafe.

5. In moderate north winds stay well away from the mountain ridge tops, as good rotor is present.

6. The mountain ranges on the south side of the valley from the centre of the 'Valley Blanche' glacier to 'Les Houches', including 'Plan de Aiguille' and 'Aiguille du Midi', are closed for flying throughout July and August because of the helicopters working the area.

The Flying

During mid-winter months Chamonix has excellent and gentle flying, ideal for the new alpine pilot wanting to experience massive top to bottoms, gaining air experience and learning more about alpine launching and landing approach techniques in high altitudes conditions.

From early February onwards the sun reaches the valley and good thermals rise giving excellent conditions. The potential cross country flying is then very good: 'cats-cradles', triangles, out and returns or straight distance flights are possible.

To leave the valley in the Passy/Varan direction to the west you will need to be at least 2700 metres asl. and have very light winds. Any significant wind from the west will slow your progress. The ground speed reading from a GPS will assist.

To venture off in the direction of Verbier to the east you will need a day with very little or a very light westerly wind, and easy height gains to 3000 metres or more. There are often very strong valley breezes down low in the Martigny Valley in Switzerland so care is needed!

Spring and summer offer a variation of conditions that can become quite strong by early to mid-afternoon. Excellent flying can be found during the early part of the day and late in the afternoon and evening but then from Plan I Aiguille on the other side of the valley.

In spring and summer and when the conditions become too strong in Chamonix Valley, it is worth driving down to Plaine Joux, opposite the viaduct, just outside the valley to the south west.

The autumn weather in Chamonix provides much smoother flying conditions, however, many of the cable cars may be closed for maintenance, making access to some sites impossible. Please check with us for opening/closure times.

Les Grands Montets

Map - Carte IGN 3630 O.T. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light W. NW. NE Height of launch 3290 metres asl

Launch conditions - Paragliders, easy. Hang gliders, ramp

Landing - 1060 metres asl in Chamonix town. Car park - At Les Grand Montets lift station.

'Les Grands Montets' is situated on the south side of the valley just before 'Argentiere' at 'Le Plagnolet', and provides excellent flying for most of the year, although the cable car is closed in the Spring and Autumn.

Due to its sheer size 'Les Grands Montets' is a pure thermal site and not flyable when windy. The best time to fly is late afternoon after a long sunny day when the warm Chamonix air has been pushed up into this area by the valley wind, creating an ocean of buoyant lift: pilots in this area have climbed to over 5000 metres asl. Of course it can be flown at any time, though in the morning a tail wind at launch, especially in winter, is nearly always present.

The potential cross country flying from here is excellent, although the best lift is generally found from mid afternoon and continues until sunset. This is an excellent site for pilots looking for serious flying.

ACCESS

It can take a little while to get up to the launch area so be sure of the conditions before starting out. Information on weather and wind conditions can be taken from the ticket office. Pilots with 2 metre band radios can listen in on the 'Les Grands Montets' weather station on 143,9875, which is transmitted about every ten minutes giving minimum/maximum wind speeds, wind directions and temperature.

Buy a ticket that will take you to the top of 'Les Grands Montets'. Even if you have already purchased a 'Chamonix Valley' weekly lift pass you may still require a ticket for the top cable car. This cable car is owned by an independent lift company and is not included on the valley pass.

The upper launch areas are on the glacier and in winter you will need some good protective and warm clothing, as it will be cold. There is snow and ice up here all year and rigid soled climbing or walking boots are an advantage. Crampons for your boots are often useful! If it is your first time up here then go with an experienced pilot or guide as the glacier has many crevasses sometimes covered with very thin snow bridges and can be extremely dangerous, especially in summer.

Hang gliders have two opportunities each day to take their gliders up to the top. The designated times are around 08.30 and 16.30, give or take a bit. It is worthwhile perhaps going to the office just to check that the times haven't changed. Paragliders

Take the 200 or so steps down from the top station onto the glacier. You may launch just about anywhere, although make sure the areas ahead are free of cliffs, crevasses and rocks. As the launch sites here are unofficial do not expect to find wind socks. The air is thin up here making breathing difficult, so take your time.

1. The classic 'Pas de Chevre' launch site, facing south-west, looks straight down into Chamonix. It is possible to fly directly to the town passing over the end of the 'Vallee Blanche' glacier. Carefully walk onto the glacier staying to the right of the main slope. This slope is shallow so only attempt to launch if there is a light face breeze. The views are fantastic so don't forget your camera!

2. North-west site: at the bottom of the steps and slightly to the right you may launch in a north-westerly direction, you will see the ski slopes and ski lifts below. This is an impressive flight, soaring

over some of the finest ski areas in Europe.

3. Argentiere Glacier. To the north-east you may fly over this glacier, landing where you can down in Argentiere village. To get to the launch area, turn left at the bottom of the steps and follow the skiers around the narrow path. You may need crampons for your boots as this path can be tricky. Launch anywhere below the path and away from the skiers, although, stay within the roped off areas as the glacier is full of crevasses and can be very dangerous to walkers.

After launch go left and follow the glacier until you see Argentiere village below in the valley. Landing on the glacier could be hazardous and is best avoided.

Moderate to strong winds here cause turbulence within the valley, so do not fly.

Hang gliders

There is a small rigging area and launch ramp just outside the top lift station part way down the steps. You may need help with your glider, as access is not easy. If necessary, ask the local staff. We haven't flown hang gliders off here for some years as access is often difficult and once the glider is up there the only way down is to fly. However, the flight is absolutely amazing and well worth the effort if the conditions are right!

LANDING SITES

Basically there are no landing sites in Argentiere. Use the Chamonix landing fields as shown above in the PlanPraz - Brevent section.

HAZARDS

1. In any strong-ish wind this area becomes turbulent, and should be avoided.
2. Watch out for the cable car cables!

THE FLYING

'Les Grands Montets is a great site when the weather conditions are good. Due to the altitude 3290m asl, early in the day katabatic wind could be present. A forecast of near zero winds, good temperatures with plenty of sun, makes a good day from late morning onwards. Flying in good thermals on the west or north-westerly side over the 'Vallee Blanche Glacier' will produce big height gain.

The nearby 'Les Drus' and the surrounding peaks are perfect thermal generators, from the top of these 'The World is your Oyster'. The views are stunning, so don't forget your camera! For the cross country pilot this area is fantastic and in the spring, onwards, it is possible to fly to Verbier, in Switzerland.

For the lesser mortal, a circuit of the Chamonix valley is a must, good triangles and out and returns from here are possible. Because of the sheer altitude it is possible to fly straight to Chamonix and beyond, checking your glide angle, sink rate and speed, using time and altimeter readings. Even the straight top to bottom into Chamonix town is spectacular!

PLAN L'AIGUILLE (Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3630 O.T. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light SW and W Height of launch 2310 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Paragliders, good, but rocky under foot.

Landing - 1060 metres, asl in Chamonix town.

Car Park - At the l'Aiguille du Midi Lift station.

The Telepherique de l'Aiguille du Midi is in two sections: the first section stopping at the Plan l'Aiguille 1250 metres above the south side of Chamonix. The bottom station is found in Chamonix Sud near the main road. The main launching area faces south-west and the afternoon valley wind gives a thermo-dynamic effect, similar to those experienced in Britain. The sun really only shines on this side of the valley in the afternoon, and the flying in winter can be cold.

LAUNCH SITE ACCESS

Unless you have a Chamonix valley lift pass, buy a ticket for the Plan l'Aiguille at the cable car ticket office. At the Plan de l'Aiguille station leave by the left door and walk around the building and under the cable car cables. The launch site to the west is marked by a wind sock.

In winter, after a fresh snow fall, you may have to make your own launch path as access here is not possible for the snow bashing machines. In soft snow this launch is difficult, unless a good face breeze is blowing. This area is quite rocky and care must be taken not to catch your lines.

LANDING SITES

Use the normal Chamonix landing sites as there is nothing on this side of the valley.

HAZARDS



Watch out for the cable car and power cables, they are close to the westerly launch site.

THE FLYING

In good afternoon conditions the flying here is great! It's possible to climb and circuit the valley.
WARNING: This side of the valley is closed during July and August as the helicopter rescue service are busy and need clear airspace.

AIGUILLE DU MIDI (Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3630 O.T. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light South-South East and North Height of launch - 3800 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Paragliders, south side good. North side Serious

Landing - 1060 metres, asl in Chamonix town

Car Park - At the l'Aiguille du Midi lift station.

THIS IS IT! Possibly Europe's biggest flight: a 2740 metre top to bottom (9042ft).

The south side flight is an eighteen kilometre flight over the spectacular Vallee Blanche Glacier. The views are stunning!

The north side flight takes you directly over Chamonix Town. The launch is dramatic and the views gob-smacking! The Aiguille du Midi at 3842 metres, asl, is Europe's highest cable car station.

As you can imagine the views from up there are quite amazing: we are so fortunate in being able to fly from this height. It is only possible to fly from here when we have near still flying conditions.

The wind needs to be light either from the south or the north. It is important to check the weather forecasts before going up. Telepherique de l'Aiguille du Midi also gives skiers access to the Mer de Glace Europe's longest off-piste ski glacier and the same area holds some of the World's best mountain climbing.

A little over 150 years ago this beautiful glacier reached the floor of Chamonix Valley. Now, sadly, due to climatic changes it stops 1 km or so short. Nevertheless, when the condition are good flying over the glacier is an experience not to miss

LAUNCH SITE

ACCESS

Access down to the launch area is via a tricky ice arête and generally from late January the arête is manicured into a stepped walkway with metal and rope banister protection. Crampons for your boots are necessary for a safe descent. The protection is put in place for the winter skiers and climbers making fairly easy access down to the Vallee Blanche Glacier, one of Europe's most spectacular ski off-piste runs.

When the weather conditions are good queues of skiers and climbers for the cable car start as early as 07.30 hrs: sometimes it can be a long wait. However, it is rarely flyable until late morning, and by 10.00 hrs the queues have subsided. Without a Chamonix valley lift pass, you'll have to buy a one way ticket for the top. This will cost about 38 Euros. Once at the top give yourself a little time to acclimatise to the thin air, maybe go to the restaurant for some coffee. Certainly go to the upper balcony for the views. Do not forget your camera!!

Once at the top, cross the footbridge and follow the skiers/climbers through the ice tunnel and descend down the ice arête:

the descent can take up to an hour! Warm clothing is needed up here especially in winter and good walking or climbing boots are necessary: the temperatures in winter may be as low as -25c. It's milder up here in summer, though rarely much above freezing!



WARNINGS

1. In Summer there is no protection in place and this is a serious descent down a difficult and very exposed ridge. A mountain guide is necessary for in-experienced mountain folk. Only be sure the weather conditions are good for flying before descending the ridge as the return walk/climb back up could take 2 hours. A good tip is: if it's windy at the lift station, then it's probably too windy to fly.
2. The south facing launch area is about 150m past the end of the ice ridge. The slope is sometimes shallow, depending upon the snow or ice cover so try and find a set up area with a reasonable launch angle. In north winds the launch is to the left. Continue on up the ridge until you find a flatter open area. Here extremely good launch skills are required with a wind strong enough to allow a comfortable launch. Crampons are necessary as you will be launching off ice and there's no second chance if you go over the edge!!!!
3. Both these launch areas are for experienced pilots very good launch skills...

LANDING SITES

Use the normal Chamonix landing sites as there is nothing on this side of the valley.

HAZARDS

1. Below the north face to the left, watch out for the cable car and power cables!
2. On the south face to the right of launch, there is the Telepherique de la Vallee Blanche, the 'Helbronner lift' passing over the glacier to Italy. Watch out for the cables. The south face is otherwise clear of obstructions.
3. If the wind and weather conditions change whilst flying in the valley, then keep to the centre and away from the steep mountain faces. The moving air close in may be turbulent!

THE FLYING

Flying from the l'Aiguille du Midi is an experience that should not be missed. You will be in the heart of Europe's most spectacular mountain range.

The flight time for a top to bottom in calm conditions is around 40 minutes. At the end of the glacier and during the warmer months, it is possible to thermal up next to the Les Drus or over the Aiguille de Bouchard, then into the huge bowls within Les Grand Montets ski area, the end of the valley and Le Tour is then within reach.

The gentle sloping south face offers a much kinder launch especially with a light face wind. It is possible to soar the snow bowl to the left of launch. Once away from the bowl follow the glacier to the left. If there is a westerly valley breeze in Chamonix, then stay away from the left hand ridge as you fly down towards the Montanvers Railway Station, near the end of the glacier, the wind this side can be a little rotary.

It's possible to soar the north face whilst looking straight down into Chamonix some 2700 metres below. When the conditions are good it's also possible to climb another 400-500 metres and fly to the north-east, over the Aiguille de Chamonix.

WARNING

When flying the south side do not get low forcing a glacier landing. In summer the open crevasses within the glacier are not a place for anyone foot!!! The Vallee Blanche Glacier and the south face of the Chamonix Valley between the glacier exit and Les Houches is closed during July and August as the helicopter rescue and supply services are busy and need clear airspace.

LES HOUCHES (Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3531 ET Top 25

Wind Direction - Light easterly or westerly Height of launch - 1930 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Paragliders, good.

Landing - 1020 metres, asl Car park - by Le Prarion lift station Les Houches is situated at the south-west end of Chamonix Valley.

This site is the valley's only dynamic site. The flying here is only possible in light winds from a north-easterly or easterly direction. For an unknown reason it is also possible to fly here when a light Foehn is forecast from the south and south-east, even though the launch site faces east. It is also possible to fly from the top in westerly winds, overlooking the Passy/St Gervais valley.

ACCESS

Access is by cable car. The Telecabine Les Houches/Prarion is 2 kilometres from Les Houches centre. Drive out of town to the west pass the Telepherique de Bellevue on your left then go straight on under the bridge and continue for another kilometre.

The new Prarion Telecabine is on your left. Tickets are available at the lift station. Sometimes Chamonix valley lift pass covers this ride, but check at the office. At the top leave the building, go right around the back and walk up the ridge to the north, towards and onto Le Prarion ridge.

This 15 minute journey will take you over rocks, around bushes and trees. You will eventually come across a small site amongst the trees that's often marked with a wind sock or streamers. The launch areas to the east are either amongst the trees or on top of the ridge, and in winter the soft snow can make this launch tricky. The easterly site is only flown in dynamic conditions and a face wind will assist launching. Once in the air you may fly the whole ridge. Close by there is also a clearing for a westerly launch. The thermals on the St Gervais side can be good, although watch out for the valley wind from this side it can be strong in the afternoon.

LANDING SITES

On the Les Houches side the landing is on a huge empty L shaped field at Colonie de Vacances a little further to the north-west. For the westerly landing, use the Chedde paragliding landing field down near the Viaduct, or the 'Batistock' hang gliding landing site close to the railway bridge. There are many huge fields all around the valley. Please see Plaine Joux for the details.

HAZARDS

1. Keep a look out for the various power cables in and around this area. There are some massive power cables above St Gervais which are difficult to see. These cables follow the tree line around the Tete Noir and pass across the west side of the Prarion ridge, however, they are quite a way down from the top.

2. In easterly winds, a valley breeze from the lower lands, blowing from the north-west, through the Gorges de l'Arve, can create a strange wind shear layer above the Les Houches landing field.

THE FLYING

On the east side, the soaring can be fun, although one never tends to climb more than 300 metres, ato. The Tete Noire to the north-west provides the best thermals, and from there it's an easy flight over to Plaine Joux or to the village of Servoz, to the north. From the west side, if the thermals are good, the possible cross country flying to the south is almost unlimited. Flying into the Passy valley or south towards Les Contamines is straightforward. The late afternoon sun produce large and smooth thermals within this area giving good summer flying, right up until sunset.

MERLET (Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3531 ET. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light south-west Height of launch - 1500 metres, asl.

Launch conditions - Paragliders, good Landing - 1000 metres, asl

Car Park - Within 250 metres of launch Merlet is the only site in the Chamonix Valley that is accessible by road.

This is primarily a soaring site, although the thermal flying here can be good from late February.

ACCESS

To find Merlet, cross the river l'Arve at La Griaz close to Les Houches, sign posted the 'Gare' (the railway station). Keep to the right and climb the hill past Le Coupeau and continue until reaching Merlet. Park at the car park and go by foot until you find the windsock and streamers at the launch area. The launch area is quite small and stony, you'll need to pick your spot.

There is generally only space for one glider at the launch site. This site is good for thermal soaring if the wind conditions are light and then best during the late afternoon.

LANDING SITES

There are various landing areas below Merlet around the gravel works, next to the river. Normally there will be a wind sock in place showing the best area to land in. The landing area cannot be seen from launch. Alternatively fly across the road and river and land at the Les Houches site.

HAZARDS

The launch site is very rough and stony. 2. Do not fly if the valley breeze is strong, it can become turbulent in places.

THE FLYING

From early spring the afternoon thermal soaring here is good and it is possible to reach the Aiguillette des Houches nearly 800 metres above launch. From there the cross country flying is superb, either to the north-west or north-east.

PASSY-PLAINE JOUX (Paragliders and Hang Gliders)

Map - Carte IGN 3530 ET Top 25

Wind Direction - Light and in almost any direction Height of launch - 1360 metres, asl



Launch conditions Easy for both Paragliders and Hang gliders

Landing - 620 metres, asl.
Car Park - Close to launch site. Plaine Joux is situated 1380m asl opposite the viaduct that leads into Chamonix Valley.

This site provides excellent thermal and cross country flying from late February to October. Behind the launch area at Plaine Joux looms a spectacular south facing

mountain range 'Le Chaine de Fiz'. In fact there is another 1000 vertical metres or so of beautiful rock face. This perfect thermal generator draws up air from the vast valley below, giving excellent flying for all standards of pilot.

ACCESS

This is a drive-to launch site. At first, the drive up to Plaine Joux will appear complicated. It takes about 20 minutes from the landing site at Chedde/La Frasse. Drive to La Motte then basically turn right whenever you can, passing through le Perrey, Maffray, through Plateau d'Assy and connecting with the D43 to Plaine Joux. The launch site near the shops and restaurants at the top, is well marked: there is a fence surrounding it and there are wind socks and flags present.

If you have your own car then first go to the landing site and collect as many pilots as you can. This should ensure a returned passage later. The launch and landing sites are well organised and controlled by the local club, schools and commune.

They welcome visiting pilots and offer good advice on the flying. Individual pilots do not need permission to fly here, but groups need to make contact before a visit, especially in the mid summer months. Please respect the local rules that are posted on the notice boards at launch and landing sites. Visiting groups can call us here at the Lodge.

PARAGLIDERS

Prepare your glider outside the fenced off launch site, make all your preparations, harness yourself up, scoop up your glider and be ready for flight before coming forward to launch.

HANG GLIDERS

This is the hang gliders pilots paradise. You can drive right up to the rigging area, just 10 metres from the launch site. Rig your glider outside the launch area on the grass, then only come forward when you are ready to fly.

LANDING SITES

The official paragliding landing site is at Chedde/La Frasse, near to the big smelly factory under the viaduct. The landing site can be seen from the launch site.



1. Paraglider pilots may land in the fields surrounding this site, although in the spring and summer there may be cattle in them, and often there will be light electric fences present. The pack up area is next to the road by the cars. Please do not pack up in the middle of

the field!

Hang gliders may also land here but the field is small for hang glider landings and the terrain runs slightly downhill.



2. Hang glider pilots have a huge landing site near the end of the viaduct in the middle of the valley. The field is next to a paint store called 'Batistock' and close to a railway bridge. It normally has a wind socks positioned there. Please visit this site before launching as there is only one area to land in. The de-rigging area is by the road on the right close to the notice board. Paraglider pilots may also land here. Please visit both or either of these landing areas before flying then read and understand

the limitations and restrictions after landing as regards to the pack up areas.

THE FLYING

The open flat valley is surrounded by mountains and is a near perfect thermal generator. Any snow that falls never stays very long, and depending upon temperatures, excellent thermic conditions are produced for most of the year. The thermals rule in this valley, and unless strong winds blow, the cross country possibilities are endless.

In the morning keep a good distance above the trees as the unfriendly sinking air surrounding the small and irregular thermals may leave you hanging in the forest, especially on unstable days. On sunny days and by early afternoon, the thermals will become regular and the conditions will continue to improve throughout the rest of the day, until the sun leaves the valley.



From springtime onwards and in the evening the whole valley can be filled with warm buoyant air that has been created by the hot daytime sun. This amazing phenomenon produces some very smooth flying with good height gains, and may continue to do so until the sun leaves the valley, and only then does it switch off. You only need to study a local map to see potential this valley has.

Cross country flying in most directions is possible from here, all in friendly flying conditions.

HAZARD

1. Apart from a few cables around this valley most of which are easily visible, it is basically a hazard free area.



2. On unstable days be aware of strong valley breezes when landing from lunchtime to mid afternoon.

3. There is a 4.4km reach from launch to the Batistock landing field without too many land-out areas in between!!

PASSY-VARAN (Paragliders and Hang Gliders)

Map - Carte IGN 3530 ET Top 25.

Wind Direction - Light South to south-west

Height of launch - 1640 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Easy for both Paragliders and Hang Gliders

Landing - 620 metres, asl

This area is known to the locals as Varan. The launch site is in fact at le Pertuis on the hill to the south and below the Aiguille de Varan, 4kms west of Plaine Joux. This launch site is on a massive and gentle sloping hill in an area that is surrounded by fantastic views. This really is the best launch site in and around Chamonix Valley and the surrounding mountains and cliffs offer excellent thermodynamic flying. However, all this does not come without penalties, Varan was not blessed with an easy access.

ACCESS

Getting up to the take off site is a matter of either owning a good four wheel drive vehicle, catching a lift with someone, walking uphill for an hour or using our services.

Take the D43 up from Passy, turning off at the little road signposted to Bay. Continue through Bay up past le Coudray to the car park at Pyl, and with a four wheel drive vehicle carry on up the narrow

track past the brightly painted rocks (Indian graphics) to the top. It takes about 20 minutes. Turn off left when you see the wind socks. Park anywhere here, although do not block the possible launch and top landing sites. If you are walking, then park at Pyl and continue on foot along the same track, it takes about one hour. On sunny days sometimes hitching a lift is possible as this place is popular with French tourists.

This lovely grassy gentle slope tells its own story: enjoy it! Most days launching from this site is good until about lunch time, after then the wind at launch can turn to the west making launching very difficult.



LANDING SITES

1. This is one of the few sites where top landing is easy due to the vast open areas.
2. Landing is possible at the lake Plan d'eau down in the valley and the small road, the D199. The site at the east end of the lake has a wind sock marking it. It can be windy here in

the afternoons!

3. The two Plaine Joux landing sites, Chedde/La Frasse and Batistock are within easy reach.

THE FLYING

Thermals start rising here a couple of hours before Plaine Joux and on good days it's possible to climb the 900m needed to reach over Aiguille de Varan.

From there the valley is open to you. In light winds the thermo-dynamic lift on the cliffs works extremely well and the regular thermals passing through will make the flying fun, one can spend hours flying here.

Top landing when necessary. It's possible to cross the valley towards Pte Percee, directly to the west, though paragliders will need to be above 3000m, asl, to do it successfully. If you complete this crossing then you are on the way to an extremely good cross country flight towards Annecy. Flying east to Chamonix, north to Cluses or crossing the valley southwards are just three of the many options you have. In the spring and summer all these areas are active, any large rock or mountain facing the sun will work well.

HAZARDS

There are few hazards in this area. However, you should think carefully before flying into some of the upper gullies, sometimes the wind and strong thermals mix badly, making these areas turbulent. The afternoon breeze can be very strong at this end of the valley, especially to the north and over the town of Sallanches. The valley is narrow and deep there so care should be taken. Do not land around here if it looks at all suspect. In summer on unstable days the afternoon valley breezes can be strong though not dangerous!

MIEUSSY

Map - Carte IGN 3431. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light South and Southwest Height at launch - 1640 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Easy for both Paragliders and Hang gliders Landing - 640 metres, asl.

Car Park - Near the top.

Mieussy, it is claimed was where paragliding first happened and used to be a very popular site. However, it is no more, but it's still a good place to fly. Mieussy is situated on the D907 between Annemasse and Taninges. Only the landing sites are found in Mieussy, the launch site is actually at Sommand up in the mountains, well above Mieussy.

The flying here is excellent, thermo-dynamic conditions prevail upon a massive ridge you fly over to, after launching. This ridge is about 1000m above the landing site and the gentle sloping launch area makes the flying here a pleasure. However, you have either a 15 minute walk to the launch site, after leaving the car or there is a 4x4 track to the top accessible only when the snow has gone.

ACCESS

The launch site is at Sommand ski area about 12 kilometres from Mieussy. Take the D308 from the centre of Mieussy, signposted Messy and Sommand. The road climbs up into the mountains taking you through a couple of avalanche tunnels.

When you get to the top take the first major right turning and follow this road to the end. There is a small restaurant cafe/bar where you park. As you look up you should be able to see the windsock at the launch area. The windsock is mounted on a high tower and is also visible from the landing site below. From here, walk up passing under a couple of ski tows. In winter you will be crossing some hard packed piste ski areas, make sure you have good footwear, it can be slippery.

Also, watch out for the skiers. The official launch area is at the top by the windsock. A local Dutch school operates from a site just below there, please do not fly from their site. You will find the launching is better from the top. There is a track making the launch site accessible to four wheel

drive vehicles or ones with a good ground clearance, although the ground can be muddy in spring when the snow melts. To find this track, after you have taken the major right turning towards the parking area you will find a mountain track road on the left after about 500m. You can prepare your gliders on site, close at the launch area.

LANDING SITE

The official landing site is next to a football field on the main road, the D907, just east of Mieussy village. This landing site is not visible from the launch area, but it is easily seen once in the air. The site is well marked with a border of white painted tyres and has a large windsock and flags. There are a couple of huts there belonging to the local school. One is a snack bar and the other a shop and office. The site notice board stands at one corner and is packed with information.

Approach this landing site using the base leg system, trying not to fly over the small river next to the site, as the surrounding hills can produce turbulence. Also, do not fly over the house at the eastern end of the site. The owner becomes upset if this happens!! Directly to the south-east of Mieussy village is another large landing site. This is the private site so only land there if you really need to!

THE FLYING

Once in the air the best thermo-dynamic lift is found on the ridge nearly 750m ahead of the launch. This ridge is covered in a mixture of bumps and gullies and the strength of the lift will vary. Around the westerly corner it is possible to fly the ridge back into the bowl above the road. Watch out for the cables that cross this corner, they are very hard to see!! The mountain range behind the ski area is accessible but you need good thermals and plenty of height, before attempting the crossing. To actually have a proper cross country flight from Mieussy is not that easy due to the surrounding landscape. However, it is possible to fly the ridge next to the D907 in an easterly direction, towards Taninges. At Taninges one can continue east or then go north. Most pilots tend to stay around Mieussy as the flying there is relatively hassle free.

HAZARDS

1. In south-west winds the westerly gully near the cables can become very rotary and should be avoided at all costs. A few pilots have gone down in here!!!
2. Please do not fly over the house at the main landing field.

SAMOENS

Map - Carte IGN 3530. ET Top 25

Wind Direction - Light North-north-west.

Height of launch -1630 metres, asl Launch conditions - Good for both Paragliders and Hang gliders
Landing - 690 metres, asl

Car Park - At the lift station and at the top.

When northerly winds take control of our area only a few sites will be flyable and Samoens is our life saver. Also it has a cable car to ease the strain in inter. Samoens a small alpine town, is situated between some beautiful rolling mountains, and is on the D907, east of Taninges. The town is predominantly a winter ski resort, although the cable cars do open for summer business in July, August and early September. The flying from the Plateau des Saix to the south of town is over some interesting terrain. There is also some other flying to the north of the valley, the access to these sites by road is easy, and the views, tremendous.



ACCESS

In winter take the D907 into the centre of town, go right on to the D4 and then connect with the D254 sign-posted Le Fayet and the Telecabine des Saix. There is a large car park at the lift station. This lift system is not on the Mont Blanc pass, so you will need to buy a ticket. In summer just follow the road up after crossing the river: it's a good drive. There is plenty of parking at the top. At the top there are two

launch sites, the more popular is on the right when leaving the lift station.

There is plenty of space here, for launching. The launching and flying is easy, and on good days it attracts many pilots. A number of schools also work from here.

LANDING SITE

This site of le Berouze is next to the swimming pool (piscine) and tennis courts that are clearly visible from the air.

THE FLYING

During the mid winter months very few thermals are produced at the Plateau des Saix site which is north facing. In the spring the sun shines into the valley and by afternoon good thermals form, and crossing the valley is then possible.. However, in north winds, these areas over the valley become turbulent and care is needed when flying low or close in. In fine weather the valley has good flying, making Samoens well worth a visit.

HAZARDS

1. As most places, there is a reasonable selection of lift and power cables around the mountain side, which are not always easy to see.
2. Some of the gullies produce unpleasant turbulence when the valley winds blow from the west.

MEGEVE...Rochebrune (Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3531 OT. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light north or nothing Height at launch - 1754 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Paragliders, good Landing - 1150 metres, asl.

Car Park - Close to lift station.

Megeve, an attractive town, is surrounded by beautiful rolling mountains and is a popular holiday spot with the French, both in winter and summer. There are a number of launch sites around the area, which are best visited with an experienced local pilot, to ensure the best flying. The Rochebrune launch site in Megeve is served by a cable car which is open from mid December until a week after Easter, and throughout July, August and early September. In the remaining months, it is closed.

ACCESS

Directions to Telepherique de Rochebrune are well posted from the middle of Megeve town, making it easy to find. The lift is not covered on the Chamonix valley pass. You may purchase a ticket at the lift office.

The official launch site is found on the right when leaving the upper lift station, and is well marked with windsock, flags, etc. On arrival you will see that the launch site is small, so only prepare your glider when you are ready to fly. The wind really needs to be straight on this site, to make launching easy. On good flying days the local school and club members contribute towards a crowded launch area.

LANDING SITES

There are plenty of open areas near the bottom cable car station to land upon. You will see various windsocks and streamers around the area. A large flag is fitted on top of the lower cable car pylon which is visible from a great distance. You may land anywhere here

HAZARDS

1. This valley is covered in cable car, power and ski lift cables, a wary eye is needed at all times.
2. The changing daytime conditions especially in spring and summer create some interesting and sometimes turbulent flying within this valley, although not dangerous.

THE FLYING

This very interesting valley has great potential for the ambitious pilot. The many ridges and gullies produce constantly changing thermic conditions, consequently, completing any locally set task or cross country flight from here, although difficult, is very rewarding.

LE GRAND BORNAND (Paragliders)

Map - Carte IGN 3430 ET. Top 25.

Wind Direction - Light, all directions Height of launch - 1453 metres, asl.

Launch conditions - Good for Paragliders Landing - 900 metres, asl

Car Park - At lift station.

Le Grand Bornand is a flyers paradise situated in the heart of some fascinating terrain. It was built for flying. All around Le Grand Bornand tower perfect thermal generators, and the valleys are not so wide that they cannot be easily crossed. Situated between Chamonix and Annecy, the winding mountain roads make the drive to here lengthy, however, when the flying conditions are good, it's well worth the effort.

The mountains here are scattered with launch sites, mostly only accessible by road or on foot. Le Grand Bornand and the surrounding towns are popular ski areas in winter, hence the many ski lifts, most of which are open in the summer for walkers, climbers and flyers.

ACCESS

From Cluses, take the D4 through Scionzier, passing le Reposoir on the climb up to Le Grand Bornand. On arriving, drive into the town centre and look for the signs to Telecabine le Rosay. This cable car is generally closed between 12.30 and 14.00 hrs for lunch. You will need to purchase a ticket as this lift.. From outside the top lift station you may launch in nearly any direction, although if any wind is present then it should be from the south or south-west. Only fly if the wind is light, otherwise the surrounding mountains cause serious turbulence. This is predominantly a thermal area and generally the wind may come from any direction, changing frequently as thermals rush up the mountain from all sides. The launch areas are quite big and the steeper ones can be very slippery in winter.

LANDING SITES

This vast area has many different valleys, so landing out is relatively easy, assuming there are no strong valley winds. There are a few sites with windsocks around the town. The official site can be seen from the launch area, and is near the ice rink (patinoire) at Villeneuve, opposite the church. Land between the road and the trees. The trees may cause a little turbulence if a valley wind is blowing.

HAZARDS

Apart from the usual power and lift cables this valley is free of serious hazards. However, summertime afternoon thermic breezes can be very strong in the lower valley, making landing hazardous and active flying is required for a safe landing.

THE FLYING

From the launch site look around, the valley will tell its own story about cross country flying. From here and nearby some of the French, European and World records have been initiated. This area caters for mainly experienced pilots, the surrounding ridges and peaks offer a variety of interesting flying which will satisfy the appetite of most. ;Le Grand Bornand has an excellent school/club and is very popular, which can make it busy here in good weather. However, the launch sites are large and congestion is rarely a problem.

ANNECY.... MontMin. (Paragliders and Hang Gliders)

Map - Carte IGN 3431 OT. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light, and anything apart from NNE, NE, and East.

Height of launch - 1300 metres, asl.

Launch conditions - easy for both Paragliders and Hang Gliders Landing - 450 metres, asl.

Car Park - Close to launch site.

The views from MontMin are quite stunning. The spectacular mountain range surrounding the tranquillity of lac Annecy is only better when viewed from 1000 metres or so higher, a privilege only flyers get. In the heart of the northern Rhone-Alps the old town of Annecy stands within a truly alpine setting. It would be a crime to pass through this area and not visit the town. The lake is small compared with some around, only 13 kilometres long and on average, a little less than 2 wide, and its north/south projection gives good flying in the prevailing winds. The landscape surrounding the lake offers interesting cross country flying with many possibilities, including lake crossings.

When the weather conditions are right the MontMin can be busy, several schools and clubs and MANY tandem pilots frequent this area, congesting the launch site: July and August are the worst months. Sometimes there are restrictions here, limiting the amount of visiting pilots. If you visit with a large group don't be surprised if you get turned away!

ACCESS

From the summer of 2007 there is an electronic barrier at the bottom of the road up to launch restricting the once easy access. A pass card that is obtainable from the Doussard Mairie is required to open the gate. To get this card you need to present yourself with your car registration papers between 09.00 and 12.00 - 14.00 and 18.00 hrs Monday to Saturday with a 50 Euro deposit for the

card plus 15 Euros for Paraglider pilots or it's currently free for Hang Gliding pilots. The card is restricted and can be taken on a daily or week long basis, but no longer. You will receive back the 50 Euro deposit when you return the card to the Mairie.

In the summer months there is a very good navette minibus service for paraglider and hang glider pilots that goes from the Doussard landing to launch. It runs on a regular basis and costs just a few Euros.



By road, take the D42 either from Vesone on the southern end of the lake or by turning right off the main road the D909a, just north of Talloires. At Col de la Forclaz turn up left and pass the restaurant parking and farm buildings. You will find the Pass Card barrier here. Go through the barrier and drive up the 500m long track. At the top of this track there is ample parking, though there is still another short walk/carry up from

the car park.

The site has been nicely laid out to accommodate both P/G and H/G pilots for both rigging and launching. However, hang gliders also have a couple of ramps found on the road up to the top. You may prefer to stop, rig and launch at these ramps. In summer the thermal winds here can become a little gusty making launch a little interesting. The Concrete ramp at the top faces directly into the lake and thermal breezes making launch much easier.

LANDING SITES

Before driving up go to the landing at Doussard, at the south end of the lake. This is normally marked by the volume gliders landing there. There is an information board which clearly shows the landing

approach path for both paragliders and hang gliders.

There is a buffet hut here in the summer. Please do not land out anywhere than at the landing. We know the lake area is huge but the flying in this area is collecting problems and the local people are starting to complain about the unruly attitude of visiting pilots.

THE FLYING

Almost no matter what the overhead weather conditions are, unless strong, the lake controls the local weather which changes throughout the day. The lake is a huge cold mass surrounded by thermal generating mountains, and by afternoon, the wind direction below the mountain tops and over the lake blows from the north-north-west, after perhaps a southerly morning wind.



On warm to hot days, the MontMin site may become too windy for launching paragliders from around 13.00 to 15.00. If conditions at midday are good then launch and stay around the area until the thermals are well formed, cross country flying is then possible. To cross the lake, paragliders need at least 800 metres, ato, to ensure reaching the opposite ridge. Hang gliders will be able to cross a little above take-off height.

The big challenge here is to circum-navigate the lake, or depending upon overhead wind directions and strengths, attempt some large triangles within the area. After a warm and sunny day, the evening flying from MontMin is smooth and remains that way until dark. In Northerly or North east winds the flying is rubbish as the air blows over the mountains behind launch creating very poor thermic conditions.



HAZARDS

Apart from the usual cables, there are no real hazards apart from the congestion in the air and the lack of air law!

ANNECY.... Plaine Fait.(Paragliders only)

Map - Carte IGN 3431 OT. Top 25

Wind Direction - Light South West to North West Height of launch - 960 metres, asl

Launch conditions Easy for Paragliders Landing - 640 metres, asl

Car Park - At launch site

Plaine Fait is situated about half way down the east side of the lake, and is an excellent site and can be used in most all conditions, and would appear more favoured than the MontMin. It may be small in stature, but it does offer excellent launch and landing sites both with easy access, and the bonus of having an excellent restaurant cafe/bar at the landing area.

The site is often used for competition purposes and has very interesting flying all around. The launch site has a plastic carpet giving a clean and smooth surface to launch from with plenty of preparation area all around. At the landing site is the shop 'Rip'Air' that carries an excellent stock of goodies, plus

has a good repair service/sail loft above the premises.



ACCESS

Take the D42 as if you were going up to the Col de la Forclaz and turn left just before Ermitage St Germain, the road is marked with a Parapente 4 kms sign. Follow this road until you reach the launch site. The site overlooks the lake and speaks for

itself! The site is easy to launch from, though it's better to be in the middle and close to edge if there's a breeze.

LANDING SITE

When on the D42 and at the junction near to Perroix, you will see the landing site on the left, it is clearly marked with a windsock. The only landing allowed is in the long narrow strip marked by the little red and white arrow boards. The landing is in the white sector and the packing up in the red

sector. Do not cross the fields when leaving, please walk around the ends, using the paths.



THE FLYING

The daytime thermals are encouraged off the lower lands below by the sea breeze effect that forms during the late morning from over the lake. Almost regardless of forecasted conditions, when sunny, the lake has control here, nearly always giving excellent flying, right up until nightfall.

The cross country potential from here is excellent, and it is relatively easy to climb up and fly away from this site, doing everything that would be possible from MontMin. Generally the flying from here is less intimidating for the pilot new to this area.

HAZARDS

1. Apart from the bushes and low trees just below the launch area, this site is free of hazards.
2. Do not fly over the houses downwind of landing. There are restricted areas here shown on the notice board at the landing site.



SEMNOZ (Paragliders and Hang Gliders)

Map - Carte IGN 3431 OT. Top 25

Wind Direction - West and Northwest Height of launch - 1650 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Easy for both Paragliders and Hang Gliders.

Landing - 550 metres, asl or top landing Car Park - Near launch site.

Ten kilometres west of Lac d'Annecy is Montagne du Semnoz. This impressive mountain ridge

houses three launch sites that cater for easterly and westerly winds. These sites situated at Cret de Chatillon are accessible by road, the D110, from St Jorioz, to the west of Lac d'Annecy.

The flying is good in the strong thermals that come up from the vast valleys below, and the opportunities are endless, many good cross country flights have started here.

ACCESS

Take the road from Annecy town, marked to the Semnoz. Just keep going and you'll reach the launch area. Take the path at the hairpin bend walking south along the ridge past Chets de Leschaux, the launch site to the west is well marked. Due to the vastness here, top landing is possible on this site.

LANDING SITES

To the west there is an official landing site on the D31, just north of Gruffy, though this site is not easy to see from the launch area. There is plenty of room for top landing at the launch areas, otherwise there are no other official sites within the area.

HAZARDS

1. There are various ski tow cables at the paraglider site.
2. There are many ski and power cables around the hang glider launch area at Cret de Chatillon
3. Keep an eye out for the sail-planes that frequent this area, they move very quickly!

THE FLYING

This vast bald mountain top offers some excellent flying for the aspiring cross country pilot. With its north-south projection, Semnoz is best to fly in summer, in light west to north-west winds. The surrounding mountains give interesting flying for the pilot who wants to leave the ridge and flying to Annecy via the Col de la Forclaz from here is quite a challenge.

VERBIER (Switzerland) (Paragliders and Hang Gliders)

Map - Any Swiss map with reasonable scale

Wind Direction - Light, any direction Height at launch - 2195 metres, asl

Launch conditions - Easy for both Paragliders and Hang Gliders Landing - 845 metres, asl

Car Park - bottom lift station or at the top if driving up.

This fantastic area has been the venue for many major championships including the paragliding World Championships in 1993.

The valley is vast and is surrounded by peaks and bumps of all shapes and sizes and on sunny days throw off nicely formed thermals. The excellent daytime conditions offer good flying for all standards and the well positioned launch and landing facilities make Verbier a great place for any pilot.

ACCESS

Take the road No.36 from Sembrancher signposted to Mauvoisin until you reach the junction for Verbier. At this point you should be able to see the 'Telecabine Chable', that links you into the Verbier ski area, it passes over the road and is quite easy to see.

In winter - Paragliders Park there and buy a Parapente day ticket, it costs 15 Euros or about 28SF. A single ride up is about 12SF. Take the little cable car up to Les Ruinettes, the second building not the first. The car you entered at the bottom will pass through the first building opening its doors as it goes. This is to allow extra passengers on if there's room. Stay in the car until the next building and alight there.

The launch site is to the right when leaving the building and is well marked by the wind socks and flags, also by other pilots on busy days. In Summer drive through Verbier town and follow the signs to the Golf Course, yes it's up the mountain. Pass the golf course up and



keep driving up to Les Ruinettes Lift station. This road is only passable from May to October, otherwise the top part is snow covered. There is plenty of rigging area and this site is easy to launch from.

LANDING SITES

One paragliding landing site is about 10 minutes walk towards a little village called Villette in a south-easterly direction and past the lift station. This landing site can be tricky to find when on foot though from the air it's clearly marked by the quaint little church next to it.

There is an ideal landing site for hang gliders and paragliders up the valley from Chabre close to Bruson, in a south-easterly direction. This site on the other side of the valley is visible from the air. However, it is better you visit this site before flying, as it runs slightly uphill and may create a difficult landing if you tackle it the wrong way. One can also top land paragliders near the launch site or in fact anywhere up in the area. You cannot see any of the landing sites from launch.



HAZARDS

As with all ski resorts there are many ski lift and power cables around. Above the landing site near Villette and close to the trees there are some massive power cables, though being close in, generally are not a problem.

THE FLYING

The flying here is spectacular and a must for every pilot at some stage. The surrounding landscape within the valley has many bumps and gullies offering varied and interesting flying in most conditions. However, the afternoon valley wind can become strong and a wary eye needs to be kept on it. Like Chamonix, the Verbier Valley is well worth investigating and just to circum-navigate the huge bowl behind Verbier town or to cross and fly the valley circuit are both challenges worth looking at.