



France Travel Review

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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Skiing in Avoriaz, France is the best skiing you'll ever do. But, you need to be willing to take planes, trains, automobiles, and horses to get there. It's actually a fairy tale, so removed from daily life and routines that you feel transported. The recently developed town sits on a cliff halfway up a mountain, lost in the Alps. You can get there by plane to Geneva, then a winding road or cable car, and once you're there, your only option is to take a horse carriage. I mean, come on. Your taxi cab is a sleigh ride.

The first couple days that you are there, it is hard to get your bearings. There are so many options for everything, and it's frankly overwhelming. In downtown, almost every building is a restaurant or attraction, and you want to visit all of them. But you might not be able to - we learned early on that you need to make reservations by calling ahead or showing up very early or else be waitlisted for hours. La Fontaine Blanche is certainly the best place to go, considering the local cheese that they have made their specialty. Eat the Raclette plain, in fondue, or in your dinner - it is incredible any way.

Navigating the actual city proved more difficult than we thought. The resort is built into the side of a mountain, so there are levels of buildings. They are all tall apartments that look like someone crammed as many stories as they could without the building toppling. Seeing as the town is on a slope, you don't want to get stuck at the bottom and then have to hike up to your house, especially after a long day of skiing.

So, it's important to know which chairlifts take you near to your house, and when they close for the night. If you know Avoriaz's public elevator system, then you're also in good shape. Each level has an elevator that takes you up to the next. If you can't find either of these, you may have to wait a while to hire a horse or a snow-cat to drive you home. But still, horse rides are quite the experience (despite the \$10 it costs), so you may want that. When you're skiing, pay attention. The exposed mountaintops and the culture

of skiing "off-piste" (off-trail) make getting lost alarmingly easy. Check map signs at the bottom and top of chairlifts and don't be afraid to ask for help (not that the French will help you). Once you get a feel for the area, it is easy to navigate the chairlifts, and you can experiment with new trails as well as "off-piste" skiing. If you typically ski in New England, the idea of no trees on the mountain is a new one. You get to choose your path and there are so many options - if you're up for a challenge, create your own way down the mountain. You can also try to cross into Switzerland, which just requires a couple of chairlifts, and somehow the skiing in another country feels different. The little village of Chatel was one of my favorites - there was a grand piano in the middle, and anyone could play. The sounds of a concerto in a mountain valley is so majestic.

Let's say you get a little hungry while skiing... you don't want to go all the way back to town, do you? No. That could take forever. Instead, I suggest stopping at the cr erie about half way down the Fournet/Choucas area, or the waffle hut if you're skiing the Lindarets area. A five euro ham and cheese cr pe or some warm homemade soup really hits the spot when you've been skiing all day. And, you still get the stunning mountain view.

Speaking of which, the view is likely the best part of the whole Avoriaz experience. Even when skiing, you feel so small compared to the sheer height and multitude of mountains in the Alps. At every turn, there is a new towering mountain and the light hits it a new way every day.

Sometimes it's clear for miles, sometimes it is hazy like someone has put a filter over it. And sometimes the whole town is stuck in a cloud, reminding you just how high above sea-level you actually are. No matter how many days you are there, the beauty of Avoriaz will never cease to amaze you.

Although it takes coordination and planning, skiing at Avoriaz is certainly worth it. I would go back in a heartbeat. I sincerely hope that all skiers have a chance to go.

Is America Gay? Because we sure are overcompensating...

Benji Boyd, Freshman

Hello fellow Americans. Remember a couple years ago, I think around 1776-ish, when we promised that America was going to be a land for freedom? We've fought some wars over it, wrote a song about it, and kind of told the entire world that we were better at it than everyone else. Ring any bells? Yeah, well, it turns out we've been doing freedom all wrong up to this point, and that whole "equal rights" thing was just a phase.

During these past few years, we've all witnessed our fair share of injustices and straight up human rights violations here in the land of the free. The latest in the long line appears to be a recent wave of anti-LGBTQ legislation that is taking the country by storm. So if you weren't already convinced that freedom is only for people who embody the founding-father archetype, stick around and let's learn about what our favorite troublemaker states are up to in the legislative branch.

Hey guys, did you know that telling kids about gay and trans people will turn them gay or trans? Just like centuries of teaching people that homosexuality was wrong successfully resulted in there being no gay people, ever. Either Florida has completely lost its mind passing their new "Don't Say Gay" bill, or this is just a big stunt to top all the 'Florida Man' headlines and make us forget all about their weird reputation. If so, it's almost working.

Florida's Parental Rights in Education act, dubbed by dissenters the "Don't Say Gay" bill, prevents educators from instructing children from kindergarten to the third grade on topics related to sexual orientation or gender identity. While the wording on the bill is vague and up to interpretation, the intent behind its making is clear. Queer education and history are being erased from the classroom. If you're not convinced that this is a big deal, but still consider yourself an ally of the LGBTQ community, imagine what being a young queer child would have been like in the not so distant past. No resources, no discussions. Being taught that what you are is something to be hushed up and ashamed of.

With this law, we're making the classroom an unsafe space for queer students, and potentially fostering a culture of taboo around LGBTQ issues. This controversy has even managed to spark chaos within Florida's most powerful force: the Walt Disney Company. Hundreds of Disney employees walked out after CEO Bob Chapek donated to politicians backing the bill,

leading him to apologize and reevaluate. Thanks Disney employees! Short of making *Luca* (2021), this is probably the biggest thing Disney has ever done for the LGBTQ community.

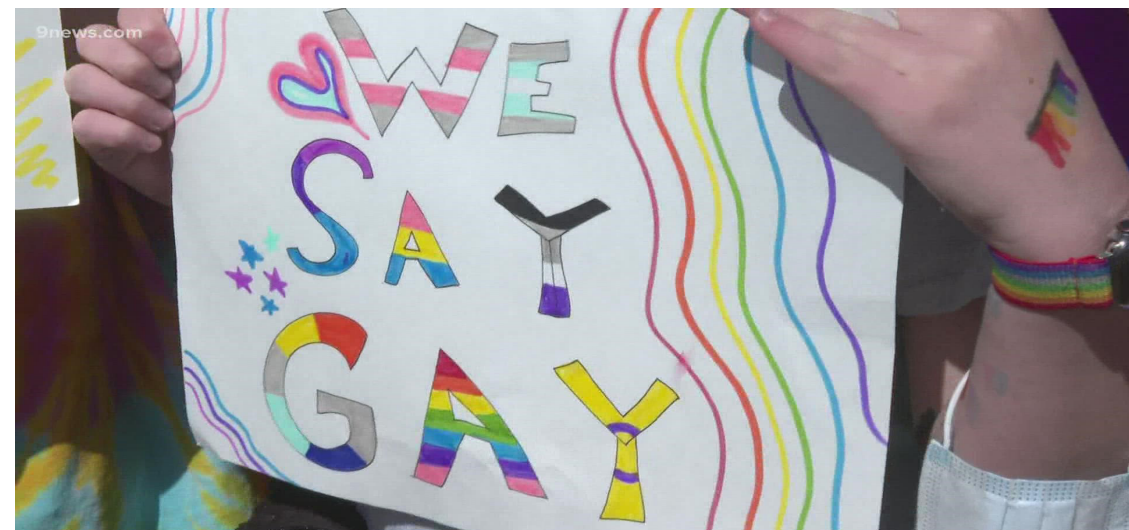
In other news, now that the initial outrage from Texas's abortion fiasco has died down, the Lone Star state is once again starved for attention and ready to do something crazy. With the emergence of a new far-right movement pushing to label helping a transgender child medically transition in any way "child abuse," Texas officially makes itself enemy number one of the girls and the gays. Big mistake buddy. It all started with a man called Jeff Younger, who, after getting into a legal battle with his estranged wife over allowing their seven year old to express their transgender identity, has become the poster child for the new movement. If Younger and his supporters get their way, parents, doctors, and, you guessed it, anyone even aware of a child's plan to transition could be in danger of going away for life.

Texas may think it's seducing us all into thinking it's a big bad rebel standing up to the Gay Agenda™, but honestly, I think I speak for all of us when I say that Texas just needs to take a breath. I mean, how many anatomical rights can one state take in a year?

Florida and Texas aren't the only ones freedom-snatching. Only a few weeks after the martyrdom of *Maus*, Oklahoma has decided to fan the flames by declaring a new law allowing parents to demand that any book featuring LGBTQ related topics be removed from the shelves of their children's schools.

Iowa has prompted its very own committee for human rights to declare it "a dark day" when they passed a bill that prohibits trans girls from playing on girls' sports teams. Finally in Tennessee, the only ten I see is the ten seconds they have to remove their new law that prevents LGBTQ education in the classroom before the community riots.

To conclude, in the name of the holy mother Marsha P. Johnson, America, please stop. This country has its fair share of issues to deal with, and removing the rights of marginalized people actually isn't the solution we were looking for. If you're outraged, scandalized, infuriated, or affronted by anything mentioned in this article, please educate yourself further and see what you can do to stand up for the LGBTQ community.



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