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The circular economy is gaining momentum, with French ski resorts leading the way in reuse. Serre Chevalier, Les Carroz, Val Cenis, and Le Grand-Bornand are showing the way

Against a backdrop of changing climate issues and resource conservation, French ski resorts are establishing themselves as pioneers of the circular economy model in the mountains, with both economic and environmental objectives in mind. Ski resort teams are successfully implementing concrete actions to reduce their environmental footprint while improving the management of equipment and resources. While France appears to be a leader in reuse, there are also concrete examples in Switzerland, the United States, and Canada. The Mountain Planet trade show takes stock of this circular economy trend, which is now also developing in mountain areas. It is a way of highlighting pioneering initiatives, concrete solutions, and new models adopted by major players in the sector to promote reuse, resource reduction, and sustainable management of equipment and infrastructure.

In Serre Chevalier (FRANCE), after major advances in energy transition to produce 34% of their needs from renewable energies, the ski area teams have been implementing a structured circular economy policy for the past two years. Organized around three pillars—reducing resource consumption, reusing equipment, and recycling materials—this strategy favors the choice of suppliers and materials that are repairable and sustainable, the systematic recovery of used parts, and the methodical inventory of materials for reuse or redistribution. Initiatives are already in place: ski lift stations dismantled and reused by local stakeholders (farmers, craftsmen, etc.), recovered wood redistributed to residents and craftsmen in the valley, 100 outfits repaired, 8,000 m² of tarpaulins transformed, inventory and recovery of all materials and spare parts. Serre Chevalier is going even further in its approach by creating a resource center and a digital platform for spare parts in order to extend the circular economy to the entire professional mountain ecosystem. The resort is also innovating in the area of retrofitting, with infrastructure and snow groomers being recommissioned or modernized and alternative fuels being used to reduce CO₂ emissions.

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Val Cenis (FRANCE), is also consolidating its status as a pioneer and is part of this circular approach with the new Roches Blanches chairlift, 90% of whose components are reused: (seats, stations, pylons) come from other resorts, with only 10% of the parts (cables, bolts, station covers) being new. Only 35 tons out of 400 are new. This technical innovation therefore reduces the use of raw materials and greenhouse gas emissions tenfold, while maintaining the highest level of safety. The assembly and installation are also innovative in that they reduce the number of pylons from 21 to 12, limiting the impact on the natural environment and the landscape. Finally, the dismantling of the old 35-year-old lift was carried out methodically to allow for the reuse or recycling of almost all of its components.

In Le Grand-Bornand (FRANCE), the replacement of the Taverne chairlift is a perfect example of the circular economy in action. During its dismantling, all components—seats, towers, cables, stations, and electrical equipment—were carefully sorted to maximize the reuse, resale, or recycling of materials. The Taverne chairlift was then replaced by a new 4-seater lift, itself made from reused and recycled components. This new chairlift was assembled mainly from second-hand components, such as seats, towers, and stations, recovered from other French ski areas. Only components essential to safety and performance, such as the cable and certain mechanical parts, were installed new. This operation drastically reduces the consumption of new resources: more than 80% of the total weight of the lift comes from reuse and recycling, thus reducing the environmental impact of manufacturing and commissioning by a factor of ten.

Les Carroz ski area in Haute-Savoie (FRANCE), in the heart of the Grand Massif ski area, is taking a new step in its ecological transition by reconditioning the Gron chairlift rather than installing a new one. After 26 years and more than 15 million trips, the old chairlift has been replaced by a more modern, quieter, and more efficient 6-seater detachable chairlift, capable of transporting 2,600 people per hour in just four minutes. Acquired in the Pyrenees, the chairlift was dismantled, transported, and then completely refurbished mechanically and electronically. Nearly 85% of the original parts were reused, reducing raw material consumption by 80 to 90% and cutting CO₂ emissions by a factor of ten. This operation reduces the carbon footprint of the project by a factor of ten compared to a new installation. The lift is scheduled to be operational by Christmas 2025. This approach offers an estimated budget saving of 30%, while ensuring comfort and improved flow in the resort.

In Switzerland, the Greenstyle program of the Swiss ski resort LAAX (Flims-Laax-Falera region) is one of the most advanced systems in terms of circular economy and sustainability in the mountains. Launched in 2010 by the Weisse Arena Group, it brings together more than 200 active projects based on the principle of “reduce, reuse, recycle.” LAAX applies a strict policy of sorting and reusing materials at all levels: infrastructure, catering, accommodation, and events. In the ski area, materials from old buildings (steel, concrete, technical plastics) are reused or recycled in new mountain infrastructure projects. Worn signage tarpaulins and safety nets are replaced with recyclable or returnable materials, some of which are transformed into covers and bags by local upcycling workshops. Since 2022, all ski schools and children's areas have included a “Ride Green” module: explanations of the circular economy, mountain protection, and eco-friendly practices to adopt while skiing.

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At Castle Mountain Resort (Alberta, Canada), the Stagecoach Express (scheduled to open in winter 2025/26) is a refurbished detachable chairlift. Mechanically and electrically refurbished, it replaces an old lift and increases the accessible ski area by 25%. All of its components (seats, cables, motors) have been upcycled, with comprehensive testing and certification to ensure safety. At Nitehawk (Alberta, Canada), this community resort has installed a used T-bar lift recovered from a large Canadian ski area. A dozen old lifts from Whistler (United States) have been sold to other resorts in North America, notably to community resorts in Colorado and Vermont.

Thanks to these exemplary initiatives, the ski areas of Serre Chevalier, Val Cenis, Les Carroz, Le Grand-Bornand, Laax, Castle Mountain Resort, and others are blazing a new trail toward sustainable, inclusive, vibrant, and innovative mountain resorts, inspiring other ski areas to take similar steps by demonstrating that reusing cable transport equipment can be safe, environmentally friendly, and economically advantageous.

Key figures & concrete actions in France

Serre Chevalier

- 34% of the resort's energy needs covered by renewable energies.
- 700 m² of old wood reused locally.
- 100 work outfits repaired, representing 25% of the total.
- 8,000 m² of tarpaulins and geotextiles reused.
- Creation of a resource center.
- Digital platform pooling second-hand parts from the resort and other stations.
- Retrofitting of infrastructure and snow groomers, use of HVO fuel, and experimentation with electric snow groomers.

Val Cenis

- 90% of the components of the Roches Blanches chairlift are reused.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reduced tenfold.
- Only 10% of components are new, i.e., 35 tons out of 400.
- Dismantling of the old chairlift maximizing reuse and recycling.
- Reduction in the number of pylons from 21 to 12 to limit environmental impact.

Les Carroz

- Nearly 85% of the original parts were reused, eliminating 80 to 90% of raw material consumption.
- This reduced CO₂ emissions tenfold.
- An estimated budget saving of 30%.

Le Grand-Bornand

- More than 95% of the materials from the old chairlift were recycled or reused locally.
- The new 4-seater chairlift is made up of more than 80% used parts.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reduced tenfold compared to a new installation.

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About Mountain Planet: MOUNTAIN PLANET is the global trade show for mountain development and industry, held at ALPEXPO, the event park in Grenoble, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes. An international gathering for mountain development and a showcase for the latest innovations and market trends, this major event for mountain professionals brings together the entire global mountain ecosystem (manufacturers, elected officials, local authorities, accommodation providers, ski area operators, etc.) every two years. It allows professionals in the sector to unveil innovations and the latest trends/technologies for sustainable mountain development in summer and winter. Each year, MOUNTAIN PLANET welcomes more than 900 international exhibitors and brands. Its exhibition area covers 60,000 m². More than 20,000 professional visitors from over 68 countries attend. The 2026 edition of the MOUNTAIN PLANET trade show will take place from April 21 to 23, 2026, at Grenoble-ALPEXPO (France). For more information, visit: [mountain-planet.com](https://www.mountain-planet.com)