

A RESTORE & REVIVE MINI GUIDE

Annecy, France

A two-day lakeside escape - and how to combine it with Chamonix



THE FEELING

The clearest water I have ever experienced, with a breathtaking lake, Alpine views and a beautiful old town. It felt like the Maldives of France.

THE PRACTICALS

A two-day guide from Chamonix, with coach tips, bike hire, beaches, top sights, places to stay and budget notes.

Prices, routes and opening times can change. Check the linked operator or venue before booking.

Getting there from Chamonix

We combined Annecy with our Chamonix trip by taking a coach between the two. FlixBus and BlaBlaCar Bus appear on this route on selected dates; journey times and departure choices vary, so check your exact date and book the return before you travel. A direct journey is roughly 95 km and around 1 hour 35 minutes, depending on the service.

Check routes and tickets: [FlixBus Chamonix to Annecy](#) | [BlaBlaCar Bus](#)

A day trip is possible if you catch an early coach and plan a compact visit. I would recommend one night and a second full day if you can: it gives you time for the old town, the lake and a bike ride without rushing. Annecy's central sights are close together and easy to explore on foot.

Suggested two-day plan

DAY 1 | Chamonix to Annecy, old town and lakeside evening

- Take a morning coach from Chamonix and walk or take a short local transfer from the Annecy bus station to your accommodation. Drop your bags if your room is not ready.
- Explore Vieille Ville: wander the canals and arcaded lanes, then see the Palais de l'Île, Annecy's iconic island building. If you have the energy, visit the Château d'Annecy for its history and elevated views.
- Stop for a relaxed lunch. From my experience, cafes and casual lunch spots can be around €10-€25 per person, depending on what you choose. Bakeries, takeaway sandwiches and cafe menus can help keep costs down.
- Spend the afternoon around Jardins de l'Europe, Pont des Amours and the broad lakeside lawn of Le Pâquier. The lake and canal views are especially lovely as the light softens in the evening.
- Choose a restaurant in the old town or near the water for dinner. There is plenty of variety, from casual cafes to sit-down restaurants.

DAY 2 | Hire a bike, find your favourite lake view and swim

- Hire a bike in town or by the lake. Standard and electric bikes are available from local rental providers; browse the tourist office's current list before you go.
- Cycle a section of the lakeside voie verte towards Sevrier, stopping at viewpoints, cafes and beaches. The full loop around the lake is about 40 km, so you do not have to ride the whole route. An e-bike or a short out-and-back ride is a gentler option.
- This was especially beneficial for me because of my mobility challenges. Annecy is walkable, but having a bike gave me a more comfortable way to explore further and see the places at my own pace.
- Take a swim or relax at a lakeside beach. Marquisats is close to the old town; Albigny and the Imperial beach are north of the centre. If time allows, take a lake cruise for a different view of the mountains and shoreline.
- Return your bike, collect your bags and take your pre-booked coach back to Chamonix. Leave enough time to reach the bus station.

Bike information and rental providers: [Lake Annecy Tourist Office - bike hire](#) | [Getting around by bike](#)

Annecy in my photos

A few of the moments and places that made this trip so memorable.



The clear water and mountain backdrop that made Annecy feel like the Maldives of France.



The lake takes on a different magic in the evening.



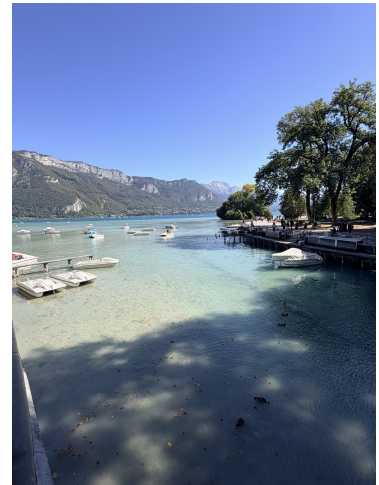
Out on the lake, surrounded by Alpine scenery.



Traditional boats resting at the water's edge.



A quiet moment beside the clear lake.



One more lakeside view to remember.

Top things to see and do

1. Vieille Ville (Old Town)

Start with the canals, pastel buildings, narrow lanes, covered passages and riverside cafes. It is lovely to explore without a strict route.

2. Palais de l'Île

Annecy's most recognisable landmark sits on a small island in the Thiou canal. Admire it from the bridges and riverside, or check the museum's current opening times if you want to go inside.

3. Château d'Annecy

The former castle above the old town houses a museum and offers a different perspective over the rooftops. The uphill approach is steep in places; consider your energy and mobility before visiting.

4. Pont des Amours

A picturesque footbridge beside the lake, between Jardins de l'Europe and the Pâquier. It is a classic photo stop, especially in the softer evening light.

5. Jardins de l'Europe

A peaceful lakeside garden with mature trees and lovely lake and mountain views. Sit for a while or stroll through on your way to the bridge.

6. Le Pâquier

A wide open green beside the lake, perfect for a slow wander, a picnic or simply looking across the water to the mountains.

7. The Thiou canals and Vassé Canal

Follow the water through the old town and towards the lake. Swan Island sits just off the lakeside near the Vassé Canal.

8. Lake Annecy's beaches

Marquisats, Albigny and Imperial beach are convenient options near Annecy; further around the lake, Saint-Jorioz and Talloires offer more lakeside scenery. Opening, lifeguards and facilities are seasonal.

9. A boat cruise

A one-hour or longer cruise is an easy way to take in the lake, villages and mountain scenery from the water. Check the current timetable and book ahead in busy periods.

10. Basilique de la Visitation

Set above the town, this landmark offers a quieter visit and broad views. It is uphill from the centre, so factor in the climb or use local transport/taxi if needed.

Water activities include swimming, paddleboarding, pedal boats, kayaking and sailing. At the Marquisats beach, the tourist office lists accessibility features including accessible changing facilities and amphibious wheelchairs during the staffed summer period; check the latest dates and services before visiting.

Official visitor links: [Old Town](#) | [Beaches](#) | [Cruises](#)

Annecy in my photos

A few of the moments and places that made this trip so memorable.



A shaded lakeside stroll beneath the trees.



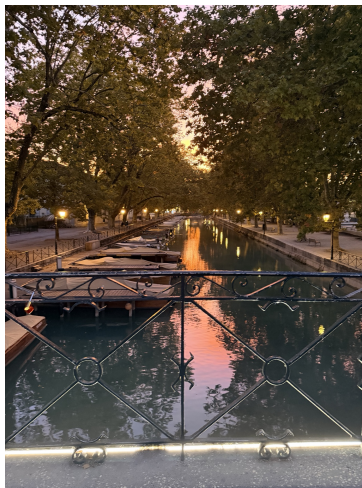
Wandering through the old town streets.



The flower-lined canal in the heart of Annecy.



A peaceful walk beside the canal.



The canal at dusk.



A tempting stop for a sweet treat.

10 places to stay

These are a mix of hostels, central hotels, aparthotels and lakeside stays rather than a strict ranking. For a short visit, staying near the station, old town or lakefront makes it easy to explore without relying on taxis. Rates change by season and date, so use the links to compare your actual dates.

1. Annecy Hostel

A hostel close to the centre and lake; a useful option to compare if you are watching your budget.

2. Auberge de Jeunesse HI Annecy

Youth-hostel style stay with lake views; check its location and how you will get to the old town before booking.

3. Hôtel du Nord

A simple central hotel close to the station, old town, shops and lake.

4. Hôtel des Alpes

A small central hotel near the station and old town, handy if you arrive by coach or train.

5. ibis Annecy Centre Vieille Ville

A practical chain-hotel option in the centre, close to the old town and canal area.

6. Aparthotel Adagio Annecy Centre

Furnished apartments close to the station and within walking distance of the old town and lake; useful if you want more space or kitchen facilities.

7. Splendid Hôtel Lac d'Annecy

A central four-star hotel close to the old town and lake, with a wellness area.

8. Hôtel Le Pélican

A four-star lakefront stay beside the old town, with lake and mountain views.

9. Rivage Hôtel & Spa

A lakeside hotel and spa north of the historic centre; good if you want a more resort-like stay.

10. Les Trésoms Lake & Spa Resort

A hillside hotel with lake views and a spa; allow for the distance and slope between the hotel and the old town.

If accessibility, hills or distance are important, check the accommodation's exact position and contact the property directly about step-free access, lifts and transport. The Lake Annecy Tourist Office has an accommodation directory with filters.

[Browse the official Lake Annecy accommodation directory](#)

Useful planning notes

Getting around

- The central old town, lakefront, Jardins de l'Europe and Pont des Amours are close enough to explore on foot.
- Bike hire is an easy way to see more of the shoreline. The cycle network extends around the lake, but the complete circuit is a substantial ride; choose a shorter section or an e-bike if that suits you better.
- For farther beaches and villages, check local buses, lake boats or bike routes. Do not assume every beach or activity is right beside the centre.

Swimming and lake days

The lake is known for exceptionally clear water, and there are beaches and swimming areas around its shores. In summer, beaches can have lifeguards, changing facilities and refreshments, but provision and dates differ. There are also public swimming pools in Annecy if you prefer a pool; check current opening hours before setting out. Bring swimwear, a towel and water shoes if you prefer not to walk over pebbles.

Food and budget

Annecy has plenty of cafes, bakeries and restaurants. As a rough guide from my own trip, lunch could be around €10-€25 depending on where you eat and what you order. A bakery lunch, cafe special or picnic by the lake can be a lower-cost option; lakefront restaurants and dinner can cost more.

What to book ahead

- Book your Chamonix-Annecy coach and return journey first, checking the arrival and departure stops and allowing a buffer before departure.
- Reserve accommodation early for summer weekends and major events.
- Book a bike in advance during busy periods, especially if you need an e-bike or a particular size.
- Check seasonal beach lifeguard dates, boat schedules, museum opening hours and weather before you go.

My recommendation

Annecy can be squeezed into a day trip from Chamonix, but an overnight stay gives you time to see the old town in the evening and enjoy a slower second day by the lake. For me, the clear water, mountain backdrop and freedom to explore by bike made it one of the most breathtaking places I have visited in France.

Annecy in my photos

A few of the moments and places that made this trip so memorable.



A shaded place to pause by the lake.



A swim in the clear water.



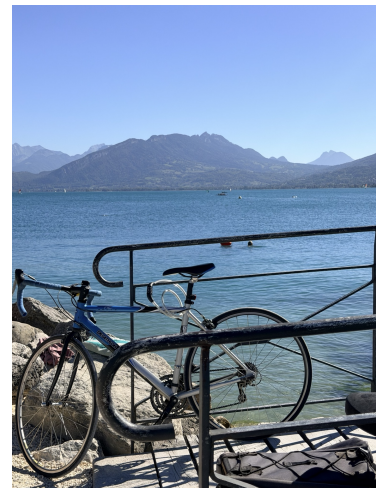
Lunch with a lakeside view.



The lake's green-blue shallows and mountain shore.



A rocky shoreline and wide-open lake view.



Exploring the lakeside by bike.

Live visitor links

- [FlixBus route from Chamonix to Annecy](#)
- [Lake Annecy bike hire listings](#)
- [Lake Annecy Tourist Office: cycling](#)
- [Lake Annecy Tourist Office: beaches](#)
- [Lake Annecy Tourist Office: swimming pools](#)
- [Lake Annecy Tourist Office: accommodation](#)
- [Annecy Tourist Office: old town highlights](#)
- [Annecy Tourist Office: lake cruises](#)
- [Marquisats beach accessibility and seasonal services](#)

Travel details and prices were checked in September 2026. Confirm live schedules, admission, accommodation rates and seasonal services directly with providers before travelling.

For my next visit

Two landmarks I would love to explore on a future visit. These AI-generated illustrations are visual previews, not documentary photographs.



Château d'Annecy
A hilltop castle overlooking the old town.



Basilica of the Visitation
A twin-towered landmark above the city.