

A look at Sestriere

Sestriere township rises up to 2035 metres altitude and links the Chisone and Susa valleys only a few kilometres from France.

Population: 908 on 31/12/05

Area: 2580 hectares

Sestriere consists of four built up areas: Sestriere Colle, Sestriere Borgata, Champlas du Col and Champlas Janvier. Sestriere is historically renowned for its international tourism and is a sure reference point as it has time again been selected to stage important sporting events such as the Alpine Ski World Championships in 1997 and the Olympic Winter Games in 2006 together with the Paralympic Games.

It is at the heart of the extensive Vialattea ski area that offers skiers the possibility to link to five other ski resorts making a total of 400 km of slopes, of which 75 km with snow making using 900 cannons and 92 lifts and night skiing on a flood lit run.

For the joy of mountain lovers, the Monterotta area offers a 10 km cross-country track and in front of the ski lifts you can ice skate in the open air rink.

An 18 hole golf course (one of the more highest in Europe), an open air swimming pool, a natural lake equipped for fishing and the opportunity to explore the rich, uncontaminated alpine nature also makes the area enjoyable during the summer season.

All year round, Sestriere offers the possibility to play mountain-bike, soccer, tennis, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, squash, body building or even to relax in a sauna or hot room and to tan in a solarium.

In Sestriere you can admire an outstanding piece modern architecture, the St. Edward's church. It contains works of art by Rubino and Azzi, not to mention the splendid Via Crucis (the Cross) by Francesco Messina.

Whether it be summer or winter, Sestriere guarantees entertainment, cultural sporting events, hospitality, 3000 hotel beds, a wide variety of shopping and extensive possibilities for eating out.

A brief history of Sestriere

The Sestriere council has a short history since it was established in 1934 (R.D. 18/10 n. 1852) with the name Sestrières, then in 1935 it lost the French accented "è" and the last "s" in accordance with the new government to become Sestriere, including the towns of Champlas du Col, Sauze di Cesana and Borgata hamlet and detaching from the bordering council of Pragelato.

Then in 1947 the Sauze di Cesana council was reformed hence breaking away from the Sestriere orbit. In 1955 (D.P.R. n. 611 del 3/6/55) the bordering area was extended making Sestriere a total of 2580 hectares.

The name "Sestriere" derives from "Petra Sestreria", the sixth stone used as a reference point when measuring the distance in miles from Turin, the closest city. The history of the Susa and Chisone valleys dates back to Western Imperial Roman times when, seemingly, the first inhabitants and first civilian organization existed here. The area was invaded by the Vandali and Saraceni and was later made a part of the Delfinato and a part of France until 1713 when the Escartonese territories of Oulx and Pragelato along with Casteldelfino passed under the

reign of the House of Savoy. Various battles for the succession of Spain and Austria were to follow. A notable battle was the Assietta battle won by the Piedmontese against the French in 1747. Some archaeological findings (although many were lost in World War II during German raids) suggest that Hannibal the Great used the Sestriere pass during his crossing of the Alps. It is certain however that the first "carriageway" through the Alps was built by Napoleon in 1814. Proof of this is the obelisk erected for the centenary in 1914 which was later torn down in 1950 (to make space for other buildings) and then rebuilt in 1987 in Pinerolo street.

Somewhere around 1896 or 1897 (the exact date is unknown), the Swiss engineer Adolfo Kind (working at the time in Turin) and his friends made the first appearances on skis in the valleys near Turin. Those "snow skates" seemed like a lot of fun and madness at the time. However not even forty years later Sestriere and her valleys, which seemed specially made by nature to give fame to the new sport, became a one of its kind in the world of skiing and tourism.

Commander Paolo Vincenzo Possetto was a pioneer in the development of tourism in Sestriere. He was a native to the area, son of a road worker and from the only local family left by 1930. In 1914 he began construction of the "Baraccone", a small 20 room hotel with a restaurant which was completed in 1921 after the first World War. Later, in 1929, the building was expanded to a total of 70 rooms.

In 1924, the Madonna Regina Pacis chapel designed by architect Carol Carbonnet was unveiled. From 1930 the "Sestriere Growth corporation", with key figures Senator Giovanni Agnelli and lawyer son Edoardo, gave the decisive impulse to make Sestriere the resort it is today. The 4 cable cars that took you to Alpette, Sises, Banchetta and Fraiteve were born, the famous towers were built, the luxurious and more popular tower Duchi d'Aosta, the luxurious suites at the Principi di Piemonte and also hotels of various categories were built. Sestriere had become a great winter resort that, given its modernity and class of hotels, brought a high level of international visitors. Then again, since it was nearby to Turin and easily accessible it also attracted the middle and working classes. The middle classes arrived in Balilla and the "afterwork" ski clubs travelled by truck and bus.

Big competitions helped promote the resort, like the "Six Day International" that was held on six different runs. It was later named the "Three Cable cars".

The 1940-1945 World War paralysed tourism for five years and severely damaged the lift system but gradually Sestriere was restored with a more modern tone and business took off at an even faster pace in the following years.

After the War the tradition for important racing events continued: the unforgettable Kandahar event in 1951 when Zeno Colò won the downhill on the slopes of Rio Nero, and later Moltere, Duivillard, Schranz, Killy and the birth of the World Cup. All skiing heroes have at sometime stood on the pedestals of Sestriere.

What is left is modern day history, from the enthralling "double win" by Alberto Tomba in Giant Slalom and Slalom in 1987, to the first World Cup night race won by the same amazing athlete from Bologna in 1994. Many other prestigious races like the World Championships in

February 1997 and the Alpine World Cup Finals in 2005 took us to the top with the XX Olympic Winter Games of Turin 2006 and Paralympic Games.

Significant dates

1814 Opening of the road linking the Susa and Chisone valleys (Napoleon Bonapart) crossing the Sestriere pass.

1864 Construction of the first building, a roadman's house lived in all year round by husband and wife, Lorenzo and Francesca Possetto.

1914 Construction of the first hotel begins, by Vincenzo Possetto. Postponed during the war.

1921 Construction finishes and Hotel Sestrières opens during the summer only. Obelisk is erected for the centenary of the opening of Napoleon's road, jointly with the opening of the hotel (21 August) (the obelisk was rebuilt in 1987).

The Bousson, Cesana Torinese, Champlas du Col, Desertes, Fenils, Mollieres, Sauze di Cesana, Solomiac and Thures council unite with the capital and title being Cesana Torinese (royal decree law 8th November 1928 n.2541).

1924 Hotel Possetto opened for the winter (17 rooms).

1930 Senator Agnelli decides to establish tourist installations in Colle. Engineer Vittorio Bonade-Bottino' studio was in charge of the construction of the lift system.

The LTD company for "Sestrières Tourist Growth" was born.

1930 [march] A test road from Traverses to Sestrières was opened by SAPAV (Perosa high-valley bus line company) constructed by FIAT tractors.

1930-31 [winter] Traverses-Champlas road opened by FIAT tractors and snow graders (Sapav).

1930 The LTD "Sestrieres" company was born.

1931 Construction of the Alpette-Sises cable car and restaurant begins.

The Sestriere Ski School was formed, directed by the skiing Champion Hans Noebl nicknamed Archangel of the Snow, The Scuderia was born at the same time. Ski instructors included Edoardo Agnelli with 20 locals, some of which became champions such as Camillo Passet, Alberto Marcellin and other excellent instructors.

1931-32 [winter] Alpette-Sises cable car and restaurant opens: Official opening date 18th January 1932.

1932 Construction of hotel Principi di Piemonte completed.

Construction of hotel "Torre di Sestrières" starts 21st May and completed and unveiled 5th December.

Golf course created.

1932-33 [winter] Col Basset road opens.

1933 Hotel "Duchi d'Aosta" built.

Mount Banchetta cable car built.

1934 Council buildings constructed.

Sestrières Council formed.

1936 "Sestrieres", the Sestriere golf circuit, hosts Open Italia. Henry Cotton, a famous English golfer, won. It was the first time a golf competition of this importance was held at high altitude.

1937 Construction of the Mount Fraiteve cable car and the arcades connecting XXVIII October Square (location of the Sises and Banchetta cable car) and Fraiteve Square.

1937-38 [winter] The Fraiteve cable car opened.

1948 Doc. Giovanni Nasi elected mayor of Sestriere.

In the early 50's during the summer period the Sestriere Rally was held and later a few editions of the Montecarlo Rally were held. While during the winter period, Sestriere entered the international ski race circuit with the "Three Cable Cars" competition and later "Kandahar".

1950 The first Borgata-Sestriere drag lift completed.

1951 Zeno Colò wins the great Kandahar Trophy for the mens downhill.

1952 39th Tour de France has a leg Bourg-d'Oisanns-Sestriere and was won by Fausto Coppi.

1953 Golf course in enlarged to 18 holes.

1956 Umberto Agnelli becomes Council President of the company and holds this position until the 60's when Doc. Emanuele Nasi takes over.

1961 October- the LTD company becomes "S.p.A."

1967 First Alpine Ski World Cup race held. Men's downhill won by Killy. Women's downhill won by Goitschel.

1969 The arcade going into the Fraiteve cable car was demolished and turned into a road.

1970 The running of the three hotels, Principi, Duchi and Torri was relinquished. These **hotels** had around 1640 hotel beds.

1973 The cableway company SIF S.p.a. was formed managing all the lift systems.

1974 The two towers (Torre and Duchi d'Aosta) are sold to Club Mediteranee.

1982 After the death of Conte Camerana, Tiziana Nasi is elected president of SIF S.p.a.

1983 The race courses in Sestriere become a fixed venue for the Alpine World Cup ski competition for men and women.

The first snow making facility in Italy is installed in Sestriere, capable of making snow for 36 km of slopes.

1984 The Sportina and Littovie companies in Sauze d'Oulx are united with SIF to form Sestrieres S.p.A.

On the 16th of May the Sporting Club Sestriere srl is formed promoting and managing sporting activities.

On the 28th of December the Sibs Spa (the Borgata Sestriere company) was bought.

1985 Snow making facilities are amplified.

1987 Alberto Tomba starts his carrier in winning World Cup races on the Sestriere slopes.

The cable car Colle Basset connecting Sestriere to Sauze d'Oulx is realized.

1988 In collaboration with CONI, Palazzetto dello Sport is built. Beside it is the 8 lane athletic course homologated for international competition and a regulation size, synthetic grass soccer field. The high altitude Training Centre is born consisting of the 3 training venues at over 2000m altitude. There are only 2 other of its kind in the world, found in USA and Russia.

1988 The first International Athlete Track Meet is held, famous world class competitors include Carl Lewis, Colin Jackson, Roger Kingdom.

1989 The Cesana Claviere lift system is bought, already linked to the Sestriere Sauze lifts.

1990 The Sauze Genevris company is bought.

Between 1980 and 1990 Hotel Du Col and Grand Hotel Sestriere are built to increase accommodation. After being closed for a while the Hotel Principi di Piemonte is renovated and reopened.

1991 The Pian della Rocca company is bought.

The lift system over this vast territory is named the Via Lattea (Milkyway) and extends from Sestriere to Sansicario to Sauze d'Oulx and Cesana and Claviere and including

Montgenevre, the neighbouring resort, makes up the largest ski area in Europe with 400 km of ski slopes.

1992 79th Tour de France has leg St Gervais-Sestriere won by Claudio Chiappucci.

Sestriere hosts a number of legs in both the Tour de France and Giro d'Italia between **1990** and 2000.

1994 The new Hotel Cristallo opens.

During the VI Athletic Meeting, Sergej Bubka broke the world record in pole vaulting at the height of 6.14 m.

1997 Alpine Ski World Championships Sestriere '97.

The Olympic Village is opened and run by Valtur.

2004 In March, Sestriere hosts the Alpine Ski World Cup Finals.

2005 Giro d'Italia, leg Savigliano-Sestriere-Colle delle Finestre-Sestriere.

2006 Cable car Pattemouche-Anfiteatro opens linking Pragelato to Sestriere.

Goldola Sestriere-Fraiteve opens directly linking Sestriere to Sansicario.

In February Sestriere is a venue for the XX Olympic Winter Games Torino 2006 and Paralympic Games.

Art

The Queen Of Peace Chapel

The chapel dominating Sestriere was built in 1922-24 by a local body under the patronage of commander Vincenzo Possetto. It was designed by architect Carlo Chardonnnet and dedicated to the Madonna "Regina Pacis" (queen of peace) in memory of those fallen, in the Chisone and Susa valleys, during the 1915-18 World War. It was blessed on the last Sunday of July 1924 by the Susa and Pinerolo bishops.

The mosaic on the external lunette of the central door is of particular note and also the plaque with its medallions in memory of past parishes. The interior, in mountain style, is home to the Madonna Queen of Peace statue, sculptured in Valgardena. Madonna "Regina Pacis" is Sestriere's patron.

The Napoleon Obelisk

The Obelisk – Fountain rises in Kandahar square. It was erected in 1921 for the one hundred year anniversary of the road built by Napoleon. It was then reconstructed in 1987 because it was getting run down. The Omero horse plaque is one to its own.

St Edward's Church

The church was established by Senator Giovanni Agnelli, the founder of FIAT, in memory of his son Edoardo who was tragically killed in an aeroplane accident in 1935. It is in pseudo romantic style and designed by architect Bonadè Bottinoe Chevalley. It was consecrated in 1937. The bronze doors are the work of Arturo Dazzi, the centre door (weighing 2 tons) represents Edoardo Agnelli 7 children. The austere interior has three naves and monolithic stone pillars. The altar is in rose marble. There are two adoring angles, a large Cross and a grieving Virgin Mary all by Edoardo Rubino. The St Edward, King of England, statue is in porphyry red marble from Trento and is by Francesco Messina. Also by Messina is the splendid 14 stations of the Cross in golden bronze. The holy water basin is by A. Dazzi and the main altar is supported by an onyx pillar found in an excavation and dating back to the

first century AD. The church became a parish in 1960, it was detached from Champlas du Col and was the property of the Agnelli family in 1991 and has now been donated to the Sestriere parish.

The Tree Of Life

The "Tree of Life" sculpture is by artist Mario Ceroli and was donated to the town of Sestriere. It was unveiled during the opening ceremony of the Alpine Ski World Championships in 1997. The "Tree of Life" is a 13.5 metre structure made up of roughly 2000 triangle glass leaves, varying in length from 3 metres at the base to 0.5 metres at the top, rotating slightly one on the other.

This imposing, original and beautiful piece unites the colours and lights of the day time created by the sun and uses a special lighting system at night.

Enjoy - winter

- Cross Country
- Alpine Guide:
 - ski mountaineering
 - off-piste skiing
 - snowshoe trekking
 - ice climbing
 - tandem paragliding
- Fitness Center:
 - body building, step, bodypump, tone up, stretching, spinning, squash, sauna, hot room, Jacuzzi, massages, solarium, uva
- Swimming pool
- Sport Center:
 - 5/5 a side football
 - volley-ball
 - indoor tennis
 - basket
 - climbing wall
 - table tennis
- Ice skating

Enjoy - and in summer time...

- Alpine Guide:
 - trekking, climbing, tandem paragliding
- Horse Riding

- Rafting, Canoraft, Hydrospeed, Kayak
- Mountain-bike
- Athletics pist
- Tennis
- Golf
18 hols, par 67, lenght 4598 m.
- Fishing
- Mini golf
- Trial truck

Accommodation

Sestriere has 6,000 beds divided by half in hotel beds, six 4 star hotels, seven 3 star hotels, one 2 star hotel, 9 apartment complexes for weekly renting, 2 tourist villages and one Olympic village. The other half is accommodation in rented apartments making a total of approx. 2,000 rooms.

Disabled – In the past Sestriere has always given a high level of attention to athletes with different needs. The more modern lifts are designed and capable for use by persons who are almost independent.

Olimpic Sestriere

The selection of Turin as host for the XX Olympic Winter Games and Paralympics has been for Sestriere, as race venue, a priceless exhibition. An opportunity to show the entire world the beauty of a captivating mountainous landscape.

The Olympic Winter Games in Turin 2006, apart from the prestige and emotions that come with such a unique sporting event, has brought enormous funding. In Sestriere alone investments have mounted to almost 100 million Euros and have made Colle Sestriere one most important and famous winter resorts in the world.

Not to mention the numerous private projects where many, in the wave of the Olympics, have courageously invested in renovations and extensions of their hotels or businesses. All this has created a resort ahead of its time, something only possible as a result of such a big winter sports event, and tourism will benefit from this in the years to come. There has been much work done and it will characterise the “New Olympic Sestriere” for the next decades.

The new lift systems, the Trebial and Garnel chairlifts, the Pragelato-Sestriere cable car and the important and high tech Fraitve gondola is very strategic for the Vialattea (Milkyway) ski area.

The floodlit illumination on the slalom course has been completely redone for the more professional standards needed for televising and two new lakes have been built to hold water for the intensified snow making facilities essential for those seasons with poor snowfalls.

Finally the new "Olympic Village" and the "Home Hotel" completely equipped and planned for the disabled, amplifying the tourist accommodation.