

So this is Val d'Isère!

Val d'Isère grew up on the floor of the valley of the Isère river. Like other valleys in the Alps, this is a glacial valley (photograph C) that was carved out (eroded) by ice during the last **Ice Age**, which ended about 25,000 years ago. The river now follows the path cut by the glaciers. Glacial erosion created this landscape, but now tourism is reshaping the

area. At first people came to the area to walk, climb and see the scenery. Then, in the 1950s and 1960s, winter sports (skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing) were developed, and places like Val d'Isère and neighbouring Tignes became all-year-round resorts. Now, tourists come every year, summer and winter (mid-November to mid-April).

Sharp 'knife-edge' mountain ridges called **arêtes**. These were carved out by glacial erosion and frost weathering, which makes them very jagged. (P)

Avalanche barriers made of concrete or steel positioned where avalanches are most likely to happen. These stop the free slide of snow and ice, and protect routes and settlements. (H)

Road along valley floor into village. (H) Often closed due to heavy snow or avalanches. (P)

Tourism brings in a lot of money to the local economy. Tourists spend their money on ski equipment, lift passes, accommodation, food and souvenirs. (H)



Val d'Isère

High, rugged mountain peaks up to 3,500 m high, e.g. Grande Motte. These are among the highest mountains in Europe. (P)

Rocky valley sides, often cliffs. In some places waterfalls cascade to the valley floor below. (P)

Steep-sided, flat-floor valley. These huge U-shaped valleys were deepened and smoothed by glaciers during the last Ice Age. (P)

Village on valley floor. Most Alpine villages face south (that is, they are on the north side of the valley) so that they receive most sunshine. (H)

STEP 3

Look carefully at photograph C. Note that some labels refer to physical features (P), others to human features (H).

Camille and Cassandra's grandparents live in Paris, and have never been to the Alps. Write a letter to them from either Camille or Cassandra, describing Val d'Isère in great detail. Include a sketch to show what it is like.

(P) = physical features

(H) = human features

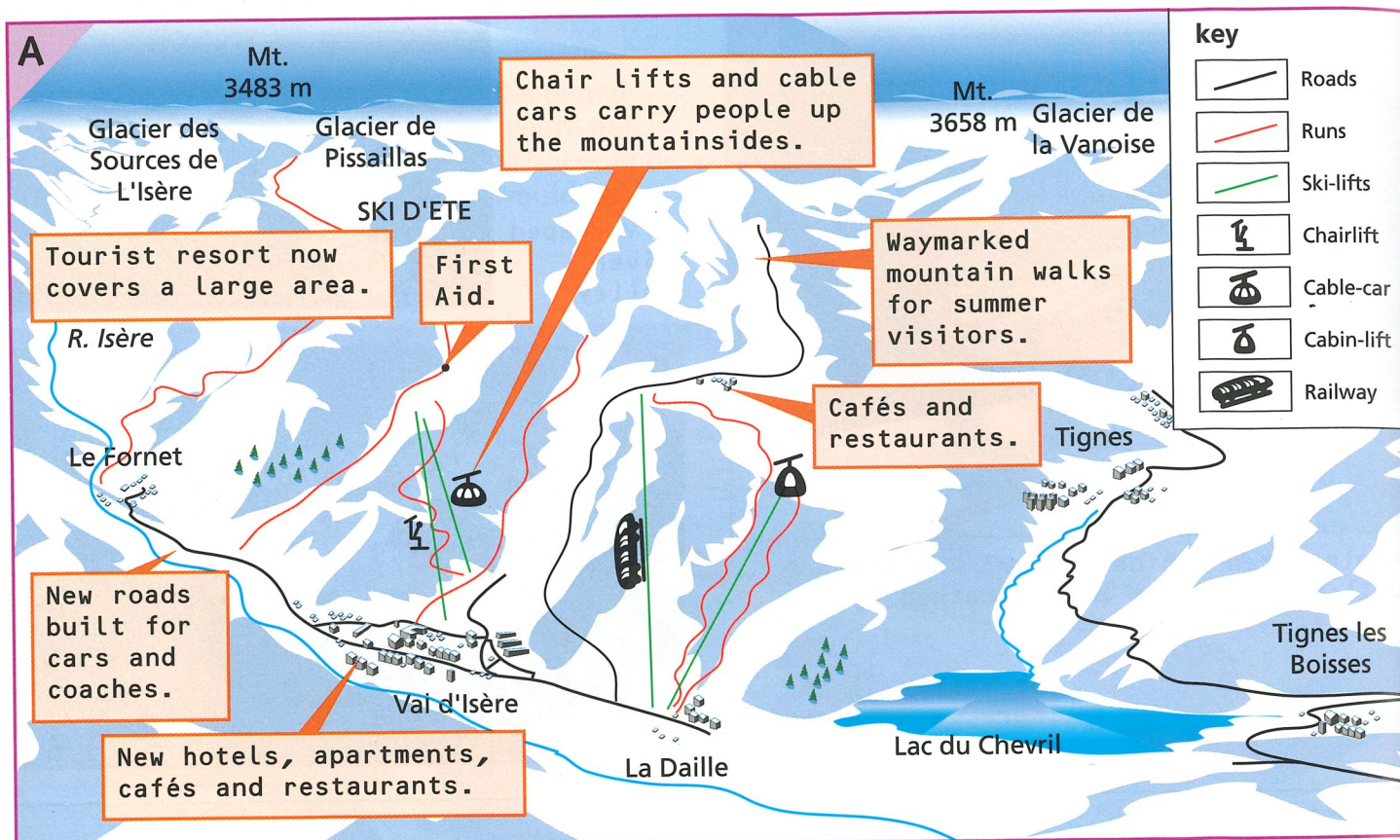


• writing a letter • interpreting annotations •

'Le plus bel espace de ski du monde'

Before winter sports really became popular in the 1970s, many Alpine valleys were remote farming communities. Places like Val d'Isère and Tignes were quiet villages – but by the end of the 20th century they had become 'the best skiing resorts in the world'.

Great change has come to these valleys, to cater for the tourists who flock to the region (diagram A). This change has been very rapid, taking place over just 20 or 30 years. By contrast, nature's changes (glaciation) were huge, but took thousands of years.



Changes made by humans in the Isère valley

STEP 5

- 1 Make a sketch map of diagram A – leave out all the features related to tourism so that you can see more clearly the valley as it used to be..
- 2 a Make a list of all the features that have been added to the valley to meet the needs of tourism.
b Describe the changes that have taken place in the valley.
- 3 Cassandra Bichet is doing some fieldwork as part of her school geography course. She talked to people in Val d'Isère about the changes in their lives (see B on page 97).

Copy and complete the table she has drawn up in her exercise book at school.

Advantages of change	Disadvantages of change
more jobs	

Extension

Suggest other advantages and disadvantages tourism brings to an area.

