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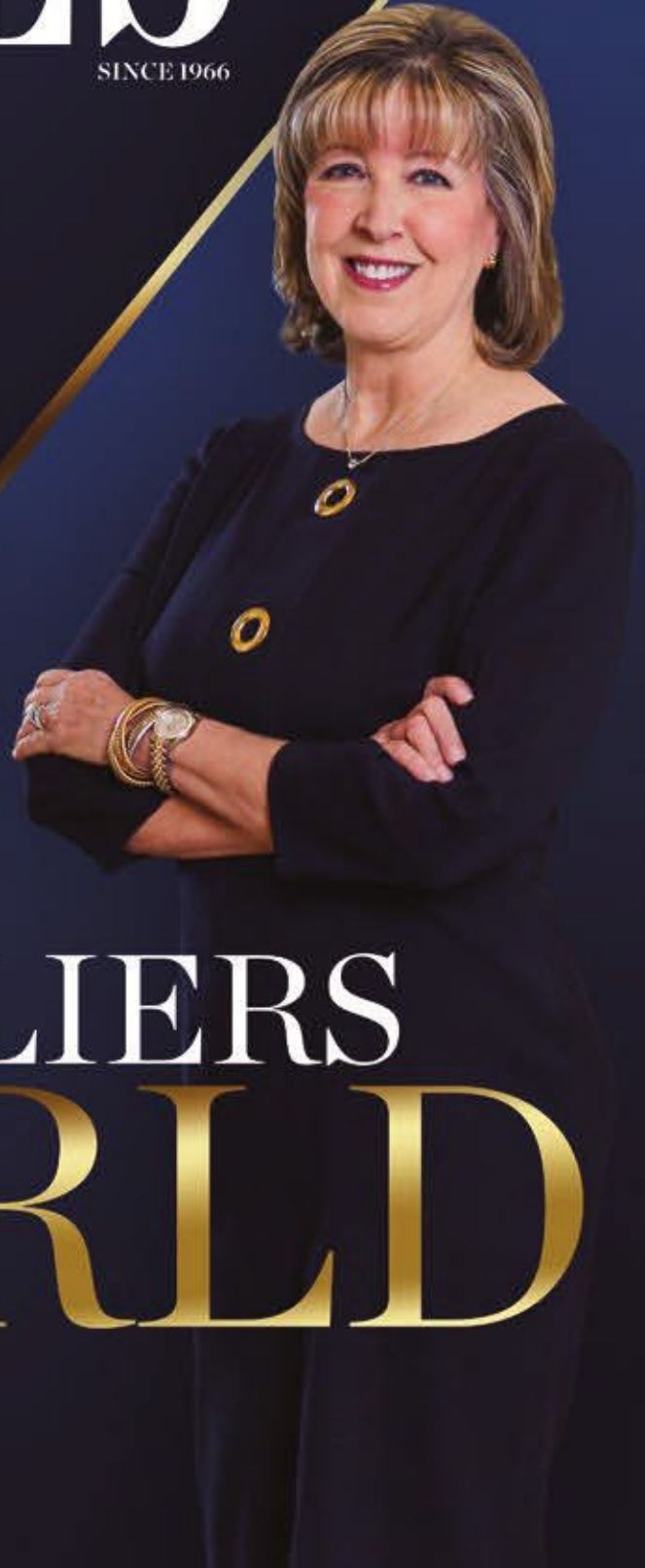
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TRENDING

French brand emerges FOR HIGHEST ALTITUDES

GROWING LES ETINCELLES HAS DRY POWDER TO EXPAND SNOW-SURE RESORT COLLECTIONS, PREDOMINANTLY IN THE FRENCH ALPS.

By **JEFF WEINSTEIN**, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Les Etincelles is the new and growing brand name for Guerlain Chicherit's and Nicolas Chatillon's high-altitude, snow-sure resort and residence portfolio that recently raised a fighting fund to purchase more properties in the French Alps. The company has already invested €380 million in properties and has another €200 million to invest.

With a collection of more than 35 hotels, chalets and residences, many ski in-ski out less than 200 meters from the slopes, Les Etincelles launched in September 2021, but its roots extend back to 2013 when one of the founders, Chicherit (who hails from Tignes and was four times the World Champion Freerider in the late '90s and '00s) built Chalet Quezac in Tignes Les Brévières. More chalets followed leading to the creation of Carte Blanche, a chalet management company. Expected turnover for the winter 2022-2023 season is estimated at €60 million.

Chatillon, today's CEO, joined forces with Guerlain in early 2018,

helping to expand Carte Blanche, before the birth of Les Etincelles, an umbrella company overseeing the management of all the hotels, chalets and residences owned by Whitegold Hospitality, which is the investment and construction arm of the business.

Les Etincelles already incorporates 10 hotels, 15 chalets, 12 restaurants and seven residences in three resorts: Tignes, Le Plagne and Val d'Isère. Some of the hotels, such as the new festive brand VoulezVous (think karaoke, aperitivo, and live concerts), which launched in Tignes le Lac in December 2021, and Tetras Lodge, which opened in Tignes Les Brévières in February 2022, are new builds. Others, including Le Levanna in Tignes le Lac, have already been extensively renovated and the rest are marked for refurbishment in the near future.

Etincelles has acquired the Club Hotel, a hotel residence in Tignes and the McKinley hotel in La Rosière. It is also building a hotel in La Plagne (94 rooms and suites); in



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– NICOLAS CHATILLON

Tignes Les Brévières (44 rooms, 13 flats and seven chalets); and another 5-star property in Tignes le Lac.

The imminent integration of Lodge & Spa Collection’s three luxury properties (located in Val Thorens, Arc 2000 and Alpe d’Huez) into the group will further expand Les Etincelles’ footprint in the French Alps. “We are developing the Etincelles collection associated with Roundshield with the Lodge & Spa Collection assets through a historic fundraising in July 2022,” says Chatillon. “The group is continuing its expansion and is becoming a key player in the high-end and luxury hotel industry at high altitudes.”

In addition to Roundshield, Etincelles has private investors in Switzerland and England and has a further objective to develop a new luxury brand in 2023.

By the end of 2026, the group aims to operate 30 hotels, as well as 100 chalets (half of which they will own, half of which will be managed on behalf of other owners) and 20 residences. Les Etincelles currently has 25 projects of 100,000 m² in development that will be completed within the next five years.

“In the 5-star segment, the market is resilient, and the economic climate should have little impact on this market segment,” Chatillon says. “There are still investment opportunities to be addressed, which are both acquisitions of existing hotels and developing new hotels.”

Chatillon says the biggest challenge facing Etincelles is to grow the identity of its sub-brand (for example, the VoulezVous brand

in the festive segment), as well as to build loyalty with its customer base and move upmarket in an eco-friendly way.

Les Etincelles aims to have a property to suit every kind of luxury guest, whether traveling as a couple, with friends or family, in search of tranquility or a lively atmosphere, and whether seeking a more traditional hotel, a contemporary build or one of the unique chalets, with each having their own imaginative interiors that provide high comfort, as well as a full concierge service.

“We have a vision to build sustainably, to renovate where we can, rather than to new-build and to make our buildings fit into the environment, at high altitude and in snow-sure destinations,” Chatillon adds. “In the future, with spa and well-being a priority we may look to lake-side properties and mountain destinations with a great range of summer activities, but right now the snow-sure resorts are priority.”



Reception and bar at Hôtel VoulezVous