**Arinsal**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Snowboarders

Families

Après ski

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

5

**Intermediate Runs**

32

**Advanced Runs**

5

**Total Runs**

42

**Lifts**

31

**Chairs**

12

**Drags**

16

**Gondola Cable Cars**

3

**Parks**

2

**Pipes**

1

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

2.5m (8.3ft).

**Overview**

Arinsal has long been one of the most popular ski destinations in Andorra. Originally known back in the 1980s as a rather down-market duty free party town, its image has been gradually evolving over the past few decades.

Some major changes that have contributed to this include the introduction of the ski resort collective, Vallnord, with the ski area of Pal (which Arinsal is physically linked to by lifts and pistes) and the principality’s snowiest destination, Ordino-Arcalis. Additionally, dramatic improvements have been made on Arinsal’s own slopes, with fast new comfortable lifts being installed, and the introduction of extensive snow making equipment. The result is that Arinsal can now compete as a resort for serious skiers – not just serious drinkers.

Of course that doesn’t mean the famous après-ski nightlife has diminished. Down in the village, beautified with natural local stone and solid wood, two dozen bars keep the party thumping into the early hours, a lively ambiance that’s enjoyed by friendly locals and visiting skiers alike.

**Location**

Arinsal is part of the Vallnord ski resort, which takes up much of the northern half of the small principality of Andorra. Andorra is sandwiched between Spain to the west and France to the east, in the Pyrenees mountains, and is about 160km (100 miles) north of the Mediterranean Sea.

**Website**

http://www.vallnord.com

**Piste Map**

http://vallnord.com/map/en

**Hit The Slopes**

Arinsal has a reputation for offering family-friendly skiing on wide, sunny slopes. This was once a bit off-putting for more advanced skiers, but the opening of a new gondola linking the local ski slopes to those of neighbouring Pal has greatly increased the choice of terrain. Access to the slopes from Arinsal centre has also improved with the opening of another gondola from the village centre straight up to the snowsure centre of the ski area.

Beginners normally start off in the Prat de la Coma sector, also suitable for intermediates with runs like La Solana, one of the longest in the principality at 6km (nearly 4 miles). But intermediates will most enjoy the slopes of Pal, particularly its contrasting tree-lined runs.

Experts, meanwhile, have a more limited choice; but the La Devesa black directly above Cota is reputed to be the steepest in Andorra; and there is a second black, La Comellada, on the Pal side. Four International Ski Federation-approved slalom slopes can also be found around Arinsal.

In recent seasons, Arinsal has made a major effort in developing freestyle facilities, creating ‘freestyle start' areas in both Arinsal and Pal where first-timers can try freeriding. There are also extensive terrain parks and pipes, rated as some of the best in southern Europe.

Holders of the local Vallnord lift ticket are entitled to ski at Ordino-Arcalis, which has a reputation for steeper runs and off-piste terrain – a 15-minute helicopter transfer service is available to this area. The Ski Andorra ticket also covers the principality's other resort, Grandvalira, with skiing at Soldeu and Pas de la Casa about half an hour away.

The ski season in Arinsal runs from the end of November until late April.

**Arinsal**

**Resort**

1780

**Base**

1550

**Top**

2560

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Although primarily a straightforward ski and nightlife resort, Arinsal does offer other activities. Be wary and check that these are actually in Arinsal however, as facilities in neighbouring Vallnord villages such as Pal and Ordino can be listed as Arinsal attractions when in reality they are some distance away.

A case in point is the sports centre (tel: +376 878 110) in Ordino, approximately 5km (3 miles) away, or the Palau de Gel ice rink in Canillo, around 25km (16 miles) from the resort. The famous and extensive Caldea spa (tel: +376 800 999; [www.caldea.com](http://www.caldea.com)) in Andorra la Vella offers linked indoor and outdoor pools, fountains, waterfalls, saunas, Jacuzzis, Turkish baths, hydrotherapy and massage.

The resort itself has an Olympic-sized swimming pool, squash courts, sauna and gym; while outdoor possibilities include dog sledding, snowmobiling and paragliding.

**Family Fun**

Arinsal is a good choice for families due to its good natural ski terrain that's enhanced by specially created fun areas for children, excellent nurseries and a ski school. The ski school also runs a nursery service for children aged one to four, with the school itself accepting children from the age of four for lessons.

Off the slopes, Arinsal is affordable for family lodging and dining, and there are plenty of activities to keep the kids entertained. Children will love a ride on the snow snake, a long snake-like mass of linked sledges that is pulled down the slope. Other family activities include bowling and tobogganing, and there are even special child-sized snowmobiles. Older children, meanwhile, can take part in ‘laser combat’ at Pal.

**Retail Therapy**

Andorra is famous for its duty-free shopping, and Arinsal is no exception, with a small shopping area offering alcohol, cigarettes, perfume and electronic goods at very affordable prices. For a wider choice, it's a 15-minute trip to the capital Andorra la Vella.

It's worth signing up for the free Vallnord Club, a discount scheme that gives savings (typically of 5% to 10%) in most shops, restaurants and some other attractions in Vallnord – and in some cases further afield. There are even savings to be had at some shops over the border in Spain.

**Splashing Out**

Take to the air on a helicopter sightseeing trip, with booking available through the tourist office. Flights generally last 10 minutes, but longer helicopter flights and transfers to Ordino-Arcalís areas are also available.

**Apres Ski**

For affordable, vibrant nightlife in a ski resort it’s hard to beat Andorra, and Arinsal is among the best resorts for lively après-ski scenes, with around two dozen bars lining the main street.

The Derby (tel: +376 835 706; [www.thederbyirishbar.com](http://www.thederbyirishbar.com)), an Irish bar, has a lively atmosphere most evenings, while Quo Vadis further along the street (tel: +376 837 600; www.[quovadis-arinsal.com](http://quovadis-arinsal.com)) is an example of a traditional English pub.

Other options along the main Carretera General drag include La Jungla, which has a laid-back ambience with chill-out music, disco-pub Solana, a good option for later on in the night and The Bull (tel: +376 835 554) which houses a particularly nice cocktail bar upstairs.

**Eating Out**

Arinsal has a good selection of restaurants for its size, with offerings ranging from Basque, Catalan and French regional cuisine to international styles you might not expect to find in an Andorran ski area.

Most of the restaurants in Arinsal are located along the main Carretera General thoroughfare. The Bull (tel: +376 835 554) is only 15 metres (50ft) from the gondola base station and offers tapas and snacks immediately after the lifts close, then a full a la carte Mediterranean menu in the evening.

While those wishing to sample something a little more traditional should head to Sagarotegui Herri (tel: +376 838 566) which serves excellent Basque specialities.

Other good options include El Bosc (tel: +376 835 519) for pizza and burgers, El Moli (tel: +376 835 281) for curries, and Surf (tel: +376 838 069) for Argentinean steak.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airports: Toulouse-Blagnac Airport (TLS); Lleida-Alguaire Airport (ILD); Barcelona Airport (BCN).

Distance to resort: 170km (105 miles); 200km (124 miles); 200km (124 miles).

Driving time: 2 hours 30 minutes; 2 hours 50 minutes; 3 hours.

Nearest railway station: Ax Les Thermes, France.

Distance to resort: 50km (31 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour.

**Getting Around**

A shuttle bus circulates around the Arinsal Valley and the wider Vallnord area. With the addition of the gondola from the village centre to the slopes, many properties are now within walking distance of the ski lifts.

**Hotels**

The long, narrow village of stone-clad buildings has some rustic appeal despite undergoing rapid development in recent years. There is a wide choice of hotels in Arinsal as well as many reasonably priced self-catering apartments, plus a hostel for those on a budget.

**Hotel Husa Xalet Besolí**

A modern 3-star hotel close to the lifts, Hotel Husa Xalet Besolí has spacious rooms with balconies and a games room with a billiard table and video games.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Carretera d'Escladella 13

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Arinsal

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

AD 400

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

+376 836 336.

**Website**

http://www.hotelhusaxaletbesoli.com

**Aparthotel Poblado**

This friendly apartment complex is only 20m (66ft) from the gondola in central Arinsal. Apartments are available for two to four people.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Carretera General 8

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

La Massana

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

AD 400

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

+376 837 237.

**Website**

http://www.aparthotel-poblado.com

**Hotel Princesa Parc**

One of a new breed of high-calibre accommodation options in Andorra that began to appear over the past decade or so, this 4-star hotel is close to the gondola (150m/490ft) and resort centre (100m/330ft). Despite its relatively central location, Hotel Princesa Parc’s wellness facilities, pool and relaxed communal area make it the perfect spot for a quiet break.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Carretera General

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

La Massana

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

AD 400

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

+376 736 350.

**Website**

http://www.hotelprincesaparc.com