**Barèges**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

17

**Intermediate Runs**

45

**Advanced Runs**

7

**Total Runs**

69

**Lifts**

30

**Chairs**

14

**Drags**

14

**Gondola Cable Cars**

2

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

5m (17ft).

**Overview**

Barèges is a spa town that lies below the Grand Tourmalet – Pic du Midi ski area, the largest ski area in the French Pyrenees. Ski lifts were first installed here in the 1920s, but the town’s popularity as a tourist destination predates this development by several thousand years.

The mountain resort initially rose to prominence as a wellness hub during Roman times, and this reputation continued to flourish throughout history, thanks mainly to its famous thermal springs – Napoleon III opened an army hospital here so that French troops could enjoy the healing waters. The sulphuric water is still reputed to be good for healing ailments such as arthritis and rheumatism, and the resort continues to attract spa tourists year round.

The rise of snow sports in the area was a much slower process, but when the lifts went up, some of the very first in Europe, participation began to grow. More recently a lift and piste connection to the neighbouring resort of La Mongie, has created the Grand Tourmalet ski region, adding more variety to the slopes available and aiding Barèges reputation as a serious ski destination.

**Location**

Barèges is located in the Hautes-Pyrénées region of southwest France, at the foot of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre Mountain, close to the Spanish border.

**Website**

http://grand-tourmalet.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.grand-tourmalet.com/fr/il4-glisse\_p25-plan-des-pistes.aspx.

**Hit The Slopes**

The slopes at Barèges are linked to those of neighbour La Mongie, a modern purpose built resort with slopeside accommodation. These twin resorts form the Grand Tourmalet ski area, the largest in the French Pyrenees with 100km (62 miles) of pistes spread over 1,700 hectares (4,200 acres).

The slopes vary like the resorts, with those on the Barèges side generally pretty, tree-lined descents, and those on the higher La Mongie sector snowy, open and treeless. This means the region has something for all ability levels and tastes, including long descents, freestyle and freeride areas and the famous off-piste descent from the Pic du Midi.

This is a good resort for beginners, with well-designed nursery slopes at La Laquette accessed by gondola from the resort. From here, novices can explore seven beginner slopes that are served by a drag lift, chairlift and three easy-to-ride conveyor style lifts. And, once confident, there are plenty of harder green and blue runs on which to progress.

Intermediates will find that most of the terrain suits them, with the Lienz Valley accessed by the chairlift of the same name a particularly appealing sector with its pretty runs that carve through woodland.

There are seven groomed black runs – the most challenging being the 2.9km-long (1.8 miles) Coume d’Ayre – but for most advanced skiers, the crowning jewel of their visit will be to ski Pic du Midi. After a disclaimer is signed, skiers on this off-piste route can tackle the challenging 1,700 vertical metres (1 vertical mile) down to the bottom, where a shuttle bus links to La Mongie.

For freestyle skiers and boarders, the Star Park offers five different courses with three levels of difficulty, so there’s a line for everyone from beginner to pro.

Experienced skiers in search of challenging off-piste terrain can enjoy a large area dedicated to freeriding. Both cable cars leading to the Pic du Midi are reserved for this purpose, with guiding, tuition and safety-equipment checks provided by an experienced local guide.

**Barèges**

**Resort**

1250

**Base**

1400

**Top**

2500

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

The main activity around the resort, when you’re not on the slopes, is indulging in a bit of spa culture. The CIELéO spa in Barèges, spread over three levels, includes treatments where participants can soak in either chocolate or mud baths, while admiring the magnificent panorama over the valley. There’s also a relaxation area beneath its stunning glass dome that offers a thermal water pool and a steam bath.

Keeping on the healing water theme, trips to nearby Lourdes with its world famous healing waters and grotto – where local peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous saw her sacred vision more than 150 years ago – is less than an hour away.

Back on the snow, there’s 14km (9 miles) of marked routes available for snowshoeing. Alternatively, if you’re in a less exuberant mood, you can try your hand at dog-sledding, snowmobiling or riding along in a piste basher, to watch the work they do each evening.

**Family Fun**

Parents requiring childcare or ski school tuition for their little ones are blessed with the option of either non-skiing care (for children aged three to six) or ski nurseries (for children aged three to eight) run by two of the larger ski schools. These offer lessons in line with the French national testing system.

Family friendly activities include the chance to enjoy a 3km (1.8 mile) toboggan ride from the Col du Tourmalet in the evening, taking the chairlift up. Torchlight descents of Col du Tourmalet for all the family are also available.

**Retail Therapy**

There’s a small range of shops in Barèges suitable for most holiday needs, from the essentials to gifts and souvenirs. In the former category, there are several local boulangeries, a butcher, a mini supermarket, newsagents and a chemist. In the latter, L’Ourson (tel: +33 5 6292 1999) is a good choice for unique items to take home. For ski and snowboarding gear and accessories, head to the well-stocked Ali Loisirs (tel: +33 5 6292 6818).

**Splashing Out**

To make the off-piste Pic du Midi skiing experience even more special, it’s possible to spend the evening before your descent stargazing in the observatory and sleeping in a double or single private room. Come morning, have breakfast at sunrise and make the first tracks down the mountain accompanied by stunning views. Reservations should be made well in advance as places are limited to 27 a night (tel: +33 5 6256 7000; [www.picdumidi.com](http://www.picdumidi.com/))

**Apres Ski**

Although not a destination for wild après ski, Bareges does have several fun and friendly bars where you can have as lively a night as you wish to make it. These establishments are dotted along the main Rue Ramond, which leads through the village. Among these, Pub l’Oncet (tel: +33 5 6292 6780) is a resort institution adored by locals and visitors alike.

Over at La Mongie the QG Bigourdan Tapas Bar (tel: +33 5 6745 3586) is a popular choice for both drinks and early evening snacks.

For something a little different come nightfall, there’s a weekly ski school-led torchlit descent back down from the slopes along wooded trails to the village.

**Eating Out**

There are around a dozen places to eat in Barèges, most serving traditional French and Pyrenean cuisine. This focus on local cuisine is typified by the cosy Rozell (tel: +33 5 6292 6761), which is famous for its crêpes and uses local ingredients in its seasonal menu.

For a romantic night out or a special occasion, snuggle in front of the fireplace at La Coquelles (tel: +33 5 6292 6815). Built in an old barn at the base of the slopes, it’s a good choice for authentic, local cuisine to gourmet standard – a regional version of raclette with three meats and three cheeses is especially popular here.

Away from French fare, B’Armary (tel: +33 5 6291 1845) on the main street is a bright and popular pizzeria open until 0200 during high season.

Over on the La Mongie side, The Schuss (tel: +33 5 6291 9010) is the main venue serving cheesy mountain specialities such as raclette and fondues.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Tarbes Lourdes Airport (LDE)

Distance to resort: 50km (31 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour.

Nearest railway station: Lourdes

Distance to resort: 40km (25 miles)

Driving time: 45 minutes.

**Getting Around**

The Tournaboup, a free shuttle bus service, circulates every 30 minutes during the day (more frequently at peak times) from 0830 to 1730 with stops at multiple areas. The 3km (2-mile) drive to the base of the ski slopes takes approximately six minutes.

**Hotels**

While many French ski resorts are known for having mainly apartment-style accommodation, Barèges was a holiday destination before it became a mecca for snow sports fans; so it already had a good selection of budget and mid-range family-run hotels. It has, however, benefited from the building boom of the past decade or so and there are therefore a few apartments on offer; although few options could be classed as ‘luxury’.

**L’Auberge des Pyrénées**

Housing a popular restaurant, this family-run 2-star inn is nestled in a quiet location at the base of the Grand Tourmalet slopes. With nine double and family sized bedrooms (some of which have a balcony), there is a cosy and friendly atmosphere.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Coste des Bulanettes

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Campan

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6291 8246.

**Website**

http://www.aubergedespyrenees.com

**Maison d’Hoursentut**

This art deco inspired family-run hotel can be found in the small neighbouring village of Gripp, 10 minutes drive from the slopes. With just 13 bedrooms, this intimate accommodation features a bar, restaurant and Wi-Fi internet access. Make sure to try owner Francis’ homemade bread and croissants.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Gripp

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Campan

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6291 8942.

**Website**

http://www.maison-hoursentut.com

**Résidence du Pic du Midi**

Built with local wood and stone, this 3-star apartment complex sits at the bottom of the Pic Du Midi, near the ski slopes. The on-site indoor swimming pool, spa area and steam room are the perfect places to relax after a day on the slopes; and covered parking is an added bonus for guests travelling by car.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

3 Boulevard du Taoulet

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

La Mongie

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6295 6300.

**Website**

http://www.pv-holidays.com

**Le Central**

This recently renovated 3-star hotel has been welcoming guests for more than a century and is run with a sustainable ethos. Now adorned with plenty of contemporary style, facilities here include a Jacuzzi and a restaurant that uses fresh local produce.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

11 Rue Ramond

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Barèges

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6292 6805.

**Website**

http://www.central-tourmalet.com

**Résidence Richelieu**

A centrally located apartment building, Résidence Richelieu is conveniently just 300m (980ft) from the ski lifts. These apartments are simple in terms of décor, but are spacious and some can house up to ten people.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

19 Rue Ramond

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Barèges

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6292 1997.

**Website**

http://www.richelieu-bareges.com

**Le Coromandel**

Located 1,000m (3,280ft) up on a vast, sunny plateau, this large private apartment sleeps up to eight people. Parties are greeted with a welcome pack on arrival and internet connection is available.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Plateau de La Laurence

**Neighborhood**

La Séoube

**Locality**

Campan

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 5 6292 3756.

**Website**

www.gitelecoromandel.com