**Lech**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Non-skiers

Après ski

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

42

**Intermediate Runs**

80

**Advanced Runs**

18

**Total Runs**

140

**Lifts**

94

**Chairs**

11

**Drags**

32

**Gondola Cable Cars**

51

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

8m (26ft).

**Overview**

One of the best-known names in skiing, Lech has a long history as a snow holiday destination and a reputation for being one of the world's most exclusive resorts.

Part of the large Arlberg ski area, it shares the region with equally famous St Anton. Both legitimately claim to be vitally important in the history of downhill skiing, which was invented in the area a little over a century ago by Hannes Schneider, before being exported across the continent and to North America and Japan.

Today, Lech is one of the world's leading resorts, with both exceptionally good skiing and excellent resort infrastructure. It has an unrivalled 60 plus 4-star hotels as well as six 5-star options. These luxury hotels greatly outnumber the lower-rated hotels in the resort, underlying Lech's upmarket nature.

If that's still not exclusive enough, the smaller neighbouring village of Zürs could be the answer; several of Europe's royal families return to holiday there year after year.

**Location**

Lech is located in the Arlberg region of the Alps in northwest Austria's Vorarlberg province, close to the Swiss border.

**Website**

http://www.lechzuers.com

**Piste Map**

http://ski.intermaps.com/skiarlberg/en\_west.html

**Hit The Slopes**

The ski season typically begins in late November and lasts through to the first days of May, thanks to the area's high altitude.

The giant Arlberg ski area is one of the world's best-known ski areas and is divided into two main parts – the St Anton side and the Lech side – which are not connected by ski lifts. Advanced skiers can, however, ski from St Anton to Lech off-piste with a guide.

Ahead of the 2013/14 season, a third ‘sector’ of the Arlberg – representing around a fifth of the expanded total terrain – was added with the creation of the Arlberg Jet gondola lift link to the neighbouring ski areas of Schröcken and Warth, an expansion that had been planned for many decades.

Another attraction for good skiers is the number of marked ski routes. These are ungroomed trails offering skiing the way it used to be before piste bashers were invented, and these make up about a third of the 340km (211 miles) of terrain in the whole area. There's more than 32km (20 miles) of black runs too, including the 4.7km-long (3-mile) Langer Zug run number 37 – arguably the resort's toughest. Additionally, heli-skiing is another thrilling activity available locally.

Beginners and intermediates should be spoilt for choice, as 90% of the terrain in Lech itself is graded blue (easy) or red (intermediate) – with a relatively even division of the two. Beginners can also benefit from great nursery slopes and the century-old ski school's long-established reputation for excellence.

Intermediates have trails up to 5.7km (3.5 miles) in length to explore, and they have the added advantage of being able to follow the sunshine around the resort as there are slopes facing in each direction on the compass.

Unlike on the St Anton side, Lech limits the number of lift tickets sold at busy times to prevent overcrowding on the slopes. At the very start and end of the season ‘Snow Crystal' weeks allow lift passes to be sold at half the regular rate.

**Lech**

**Resort**

1450

**Base**

1300

**Top**

2811

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Given Lech's size and typically wealthy clientele, it should be no surprise that there's plenty to do here besides skiing and boarding. As well as the resort's permanent attractions – many of them based in its individual hotels – it’s also famous for its one-off events. These include the highest boat show in Europe, organised by the resort's yacht club, which exists despite the lack of a nearby marina.

Popular off-slope activities include sleigh rides, curling on the ice rink, helicopter flights and paragliding. There's also a great floodlit toboggan run down from Oberlech. Culture vultures, meanwhile, will enjoy the resort’s three art galleries and library.

**Family Fun**

Lech has a busy main road running through it, but the car-free oasis of Oberlech, which is reached by cable car, is a particularly good choice for families – the hotels here are linked underground by a tunnel system, giving a very sophisticated feel to the whole mini-village, as well as maintaining a peaceful atmosphere above ground. Most of Lech's comfortable hotels also have good facilities for families, usually including a swimming pool.

There are Kinderclub (tel: (0664) 123 9993; [www.kinderclub-lech.at](http://www.kinderclub-lech.at)) bases in Oberlech and Lech that accept children from two to five years; at which point the ski schools can take over with special ski classes.

**Retail Therapy**

There is an excellent selection of around 40 shops in Lech, with wonderful emporiums and boutiques among the most enticing. Head to the Sporthouse Strolz (tel: (05583) 23610), with its elegant staircase and incredible range of sporting goods and gadgets from the world's top brands. The jewellery equivalent is Huber (tel: (05583) 3737), where shoppers can browse the full range of Cartier, Rolex, Hermès and Gucci products.

**Splashing Out**

The Arlberg is the only place in Austria to enjoy heli-skiing and heli-boarding; and it's hard to think of a better place in the Alps to try it. Helicopters take skiers and boarders to the slopes of the Mehlsack or the Schneetäli, with descents taking approximately an hour and ending at the romantic Seitental Zug near Lech. Bookings can be made through the ski schools.

**Apres Ski**

Lech has a reputation as a party town. Once the ski lifts close, the resort's main street comes alive with revellers from ground-level hotel bars spilling out onto the pavements – during the colder months, many of the hotels create ice bars, giving a particularly magical atmosphere.

There's a wide choice of spots for après-ski in Lech, but Tannbergerhof (tel: (05583) 2202; [www.tannbergerhof.com](http://www.tannbergerhof.com)) is eternally popular with its early evening tea dance and late-night club (one of six in the village) open until 0300.

**Eating Out**

With around 80 restaurants in Lech, visitors are unlikely to go hungry. There's dining for all tastes and budgets but, as with the black runs on the mountain, Lech offers a wider range of gourmet standard establishments than most.

One restaurant worthy of a mention is Hus Nr 8 (Omesbergasse 8; tel: (05583) 33220; [www.hus8.at](http://www.hus8.at)), which is located in a 300-year-old building and serves Austrian delicacies and fondues. Johannesstübli restaurant (tel: (05583) 22050; [www.goldenerberg.at](http://www.goldenerberg.at)) at Oberlech is equally atmospheric and has notched-up two Gault Millau ‘chef's hats’ for its superb cuisine.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Innsbruck Airport (INN); Zurich Airport (ZRH).

Distance to resort: 110km (68 miles); 220km (137 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour 30 minutes; 2 hours 30 minutes.

**Getting Around**

A free ski bus for lift pass holders links the key parts of the Arlberg ski area, including skiing above St Anton. After 1930 in Lech, a fleet of multiple occupancy taxi vehicles known as 'James' are available right through to 0400. These are combined bus/taxi services that take customers where they want to go, but also pick up other visitors and work out the best route (and rate) for all.

**Hotels**

The wide selection of 4- and 5-star hotels in Lech reflects its well-heeled visitors, but there are also many moderate hotels, guest houses and chalets. Oberlech is home to many ski-in/ski-out options.

**Pension Sabine**

One of the more affordable guest houses in Lech, Pension Sabine is located above the main resort in Oberlech, right on the slopes next to the ski school. This traditional chalet building is furnished with antique furniture and incorporates a sauna.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Oberlech am Arlberg

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Austria

**Telephone**

0664 522 12 44

**Website**

http://www.hotelsabine.com

**Hotel Goldener Berg**

An excellent 4-star hotel in Oberlech, Hotel Goldener Berg has great facilities, including the acclaimed Johannesstübli restaurant.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Oberlech am Arlberg

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Austria

**Telephone**

(05583) 22050.

**Website**

http://www.goldenerberg.at

**Kristiania Lech**

One of the finest hotels in Lech, Kristiania Lech provides an excellent butler service for those seeking some the ultimate in luxury, from acquiring guests’ favourite novels to running aromatic baths. The hotel also boasts a fine selection of restaurants and bars.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Omesberg 331

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Lech am Arlberg

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Austria

**Telephone**

(05583) 25610.

**Website**

http://www.kristiania.at