**Arinsal**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Snowboarders

Families

Après ski

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

7

**Intermediate Runs**

31

**Advanced Runs**

4

**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 is one of the most attractive villages in Andorra and is awash with traditional architecture. The resort is part of a ski region known as Vallnord, a partnership that also ties in the ski area of Ordino-Arcalis and another resort base linked by gondola to Pal's ski area, La Massana.

Following the merger of these areas, Vallnord is now one of just two ski areas in Andorra, the other being the Grandvalira ski area that encompasses six village bases; the best known of which are Pas de la Casa and Soldeu.

Along with name changes, the ski area has seen many physical enhancements in recent years as Andorran skiing has moved ever more upmarket. Modern lifts have been installed – with more than half of the old drag lifts replaced by fast chairlifts and gondolas – and the professionalism with which the ski areas are managed has reached higher standards. This may have quietened Arinsal's ‘cheap and cheerful' image of the 1970s and ‘80s slightly, but it remains a fun place to stay and its lift passes cost less than Grandvalira's.

**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 and intermediates will like runs such as 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 – although in Andorra nothing is too far!

A case in point is the sports centre (tel: 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: 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 because it has 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 age 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; although longer helicopter flights and transfers to Ordino-Arcalís areas are also available.

**Apres Ski**

Famed for its affordable and often lively après-ski, Arinsal has two dozen bars, most of which double as eateries. There's a more limited selection of bars in the neighbouring resort bases of Pal and La Massana, even though the latter is larger than Arinsal village.

The Derby (Carretera General 17; tel: 835 706; [www.thederbyirishbar.com](http://www.thederbyirishbar.com)) has an Irish atmosphere, while Quo Vadis further along the street (Carretera General 8; tel: 837 600; [quovadis-arinsal.com](http://quovadis-arinsal.com)) is 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, and disco-pub Solana, a good option for later on in the night.

**Eating Out**

Arinsal has a good selection of restaurants for its size, with offerings ranging from 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. Establishments along this street include El Planells, which is an option for local dishes, Bella Italia for quality Italian dishes, Surf for Argentinean steak and MexicObelix for spicy Central American offerings.

**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 and has undergone 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 Princesa Parc**

One of the new breed of high-calibre accommodation options in Andorra, 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**

XXX

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

736 350.

**Website**

http://www.hotelprincesaparc.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**

XXX

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

837 237.

**Website**

http://www.aparthotel-poblado.com

**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**

XXX

**Country**

Andorra

**Telephone**

836 336.

**Website**

http://www.hotelhusaxaletbesoli.com