**Vail**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

Après ski

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

42

**Intermediate Runs**

50

**Advanced Runs**

103

**Total Runs**

195

**Lifts**

31

**Chairs**

20

**Drags**

9

**Gondola Cable Cars**

2

**Parks**

3

**Pipes**

2

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

8.99m (30ft).

**Overview**

Built in the 1960s as a faux Austrian village for an upmarket clientele, Vail has grown to become the third largest ski mountain resort in North America.

Despite having pandered to its early target audience, Vail, which turned 50 in 2012, has broadened its appeal in recent times and now caters to almost all categories of skiers, from well-heeled powder hounds to young budget first-timers. Its attractive traffic-free village, which meanders along the slopes, is decorated with numerous hotels, shops and restaurants.

There's a good choice of skiing here, from the conventional pistes on the front face and the open Back Bowls to the pleasure of skiing through widely spaced trees at Blue Sky Basin.

Vail does have some of the most expensive lift tickets in the world but bargains can be had by buying in advance online or through a tour operator.

The resort has also tried to improve its eco credentials, having installed some solar panels on mountainside restaurants and introduced hybrid low-pollution buses.

**Location**

Vail ski resort is located on Interstate 70, two hours west of Denver in Colorado's Rocky Mountains.

**Website**

http://www.vail.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.vail.com/mountain/explore-mountain/mountain-trail-map.aspx

**Hit The Slopes**

Vail is renowned for its exciting terrain for good skiers, particularly the Blue Sky Basin. This rugged, wooded area that's 10km (6.5 miles) by skis from the village, offers the adventurous feel of out-of-bounds slopes within the safety of the resort.

The narrow, tree root-peppered Hairbag Alley and the Minturn Mile – a long off-piste section that allows skiers to thunder down a creek to the town of Minturn and its lively saloon – are also great options for the advanced skier to explore.

But experienced skiers don’t have the terrain wholly to themselves. There is endless skiing for all levels in Vail, with the vast Back Bowls enabling intermediates to get to grips with powder skiing, while the pistes at the front that snake through the trees are a paradise for mid-level enthusiasts.

Vail ski resort also has excellent beginner slopes, but these can often become overwhelmed during peak times. Novice skiers can progress on to the good variety of green runs, including the winding Flap Jack route from the top of the Highline Express lift.

Snowboarders have three terrain parks, the largest of which Golden Peak, is below the Riva Bahn chairlift and is home to two halfpipes and a range of jibs, boxes and rails.

Beaver Creek is included on the same lift pass, but there’s the chance to purchase the Epic Pass ticket offering multiple resort access. This costs little more than a six-day pass at an individual resort, but has features such as interaction with social networking websites allowing users to track and broadcast their ski day stats, location and much more.

With the exception of Back Bowls, the resort is relatively snowsure, which contributes to the season operating from mid-November until late April.

**Vail**

**Resort**

2476

**Base**

2476

**Top**

3527

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Much of the non-ski activity in Vail ski resort takes place at Adventure Ridge (tel: +1 970 754 8245), a mountaintop centre where visitors can snowshoe, snowmobile, skate, go tubing or ride a ski-bike.

Ease any post-ski bruising by relaxing in one of the resorts many spas. Among the most luxurious is the large Arabelle’s RockResorts Spa, which can provide a range of treatments and manicures.

Those who want to compare Vail’s offering to other ski resorts in the region can visit other ski towns of Beaver Creek and Breckenridge on a day trip.

**Family Fun**

Vail is a good place for families, with childcare and tailored lessons available to young children and a range of activities for older kids.

The Golden Peak Children's Centre (tel: +1 970 479 3285) is the focus of activities for children aged three to six, with its ski school and nursery.

The ski school (tel: +1 800 475 4543) offers group lessons for children, with classes split between three- to six-year-olds, seven- to 12-year-olds and teenagers.

Adventure Ridge (tel: +1 970 754 8245) is a great attraction for kids with its tubing areas, snow park and a specially built children's snowmobile track.

**Retail Therapy**

There are plenty of shops in Vail; mostly upmarket boutiques, galleries, ski and souvenir stores. These include Alaskan Shop (tel: +1 970 476 3750), which sells carved wooden items, and the garden-themed gift shop A Secret Garden (tel: +1 970 476 2241).

Self-catering visitors can choose from a wide selection of grocery shops, including a supermarket and a range of general food retailers in West Vail – accessed by the free bus service.

Nearby Avon has a wide-ranging selection; although Silverthorne (50 minutes away) has more options with its factory outlet shopping centres.

**Splashing Out**

Take to the air on a dawn balloon ride over Vail Valley with Camelot Balloons (tel: +1 800 785 4743; [www.camelotballoons.com](http://www.camelotballoons.com)) for sensational views across the Rockies. The cost of the one-hour flight includes transport from the hotel and a champagne toast.

**Apres Ski**

Vail's après-ski scene gets pretty lively, with numerous bars decorating the central streets.

Most of the action can be found along Bridge Street where popular venues include the Red Lion (tel: +1 970 476 7676; [www.theredlion.com](http://www.theredlion.com)) and the Tap Room (tel: +1 970 479 0500; www.[taproomvail.com](http://taproomvail.com)).

A number of lively bar-restaurants are also popular at the Lionshead annex, including Garfinkles (tel: +1 970 476 3789; www.[garfsvail.com](http://garfsvail.com)). Here, a young crowd relaxes on the decked area before the evening DJs take over.

**Eating Out**

There are now more than 100 cafes and restaurants to choose from in Vail, catering to all tastes and budgets.

There are a larger number of upscale eateries than your average ski resort norm. Among the most popular are Sweet Basil (tel: +1 970 476 0125), which is known for its exquisite cuisine and stylish glass wine cellar.

Given the number of gourmet options , it’s interesting that The Little Diner (tel: +1 970 476 4279), a traditional no-frills diner with affordable prices, is one of the most popular in the entire Vail valley. Expect to queue for up to an hour, even for breakfast – it’s worth the wait.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airports: Eagle County Regional Airport (EGE); Denver International Airport (DEN).

Distance to resort: 20km (12 miles); 190km (119 miles).

Driving time: 15 minutes; 2 hours 30 minutes.

**Getting Around**

The resort and its outlying settlements are served by a large bus network. Taxi and shuttle services connect with Denver International Airport. There are also buses to Beaver Creek, Keystone, Breckenridge and Arapahoe Basin.

**Hotels**

This enormous resort has a wide variety of accommodation in a mixture of styles, from modern blocks to the mock-Tirolean architecture of Vail Village. There are catered chalets and apartments perfect for groups and a good number of intimate hotels in Vail that are ideal for couples.

**Lionshead Inn**

One of the better value hotels in Vail, Lionshead Inn offers guests free Wi-Fi internet access, a fitness centre and on-site parking.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

West Lionshead Circle

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Colorado

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

CO 81657

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 476 2050.

**Website**

http://www.lionsheadinn.com

**Evergreen Lodge**

This roomy, pleasant place between Vail Village and Lionshead has an outdoor pool and a sports bar.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 476 7810.

**Website**

XXX

**The Arrabelle at Vail Square**

This slopeside retreat offers luxury accommodation, gourmet dining and an opulent spa. Its opening marked the beginning of the stylish redevelopment of the Lionshead area of the resort.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 429 5045.

**Website**

http://www.arrabelle.rockresorts.com

**Sonnenalp**

One of Vail’s original properties, the Sonnenalp has grown to include 112 luxury suites and 14 hotel rooms, all of which enjoy a view of either Gore Creek or Vail Village. All accommodation comes with a gas-log fireplace, large bathrooms with heated floors and complimentary internet.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 476 5656.

**Website**

http://www.sonnenalp.com

**The Sebastian**

One of the more popular cheaper options in the resort, The Sebastian houses a modest spa, lively bar and outdoor swimming pool with mountain views and hot tubs. Rooms come equipped with all the latest mod cons including an MP3 docking station.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 477 8000.

**Website**

http://www.thesebastianvail.com

**Tivoli Lodge**

The centrally located Tivoli Lodge is just one block from the new gondola. Rooms come with large soaking bathtubs and many have fireplaces. The hotel serves breakfast and also houses popular pub the Brown Hound Lounge.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

XXX

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

XXX

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

XXX

**Telephone**

+1 970 476 5615.

**Website**

http://www.tivolilodge.com/