**Barèges**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

42

**Intermediate Runs**

22

**Advanced Runs**

6

**Total Runs**

70

**Lifts**

34

**Chairs**

14

**Drags**

19

**Gondola Cable Cars**

1

**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/uk/il4-wintersport\_p25-the-trail-map.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.

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 here, novices can explore seven beginner slopes 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 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 the crowning jewel for expert skiers will be to ski Pic du Midi which offers an off-piste route down a challenging 1,700 vertical metres (5,580ft) to the bottom, where a shuttle bus links to La Mongie.

For freestyle skiers and boarders, the Star Park offers five different courses with a line for everyone from beginner to pro.

**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**

A friendly and welcoming resort, Barèges is usually a good choice for families skiing with kids.

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: +33 562 921 999) 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: +33 562 926 818).

**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: +33 562 926 780) is a resort institution adored by locals and visitors alike.

Over at La Mongie the QG Bigourdan Tapas Bar (tel: +33 567 453 586) 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: +33 562 926 761), 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: +33 562 926 815). 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: +33 562 911 845) 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: +33 562 919 010) 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 therefore a few apartments are now also on offer.

**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**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Plateau de La Laurence

**Neighborhood**

La Séoube

**Locality**

Campan

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 562 923 756

**Website**

www.gitelecoromandel.com

**Pic du Midi Summit Hotel**

Spend the night at 2,877m (9,440ft), in the luxurious Pic du Midi Summit Hotel. Enjoy a gourmet meal, visit the astronomical observatory and then ski down the powder slopes the following morning with a guide – after a good breakfast of course.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Rue Pierre Lamy de la Chapelle

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Barèges

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

65200

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 562 567 000

**Website**

www.picdumidi.com/nuits-au-sommet/

**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**

+33 562 926 805

**Website**

www.central-tourmalet.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**

+33 562 956 300

**Website**

www.pv-holidays.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**

+33 562 918 942

**Website**

www.maison-hoursentut.com

**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. Double and family sized bedrooms are available, some of which have balconies offering spectacular views of the resort.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Coste des Bulanettes

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Campan

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

+33 562 918 246

**Website**

www.aubergedespyrenees.com