**Vail**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

Après ski

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

42

**Intermediate Runs**

48

**Advanced Runs**

103

**Total Runs**

193

**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 ski resort is the biggest of its kind in the USA, and it's also often voted one of the best resorts in popularity polls.

Despite having pandered to its early target audience, Vail, which turned 50 in 2012, has broadened its appeal in recent years and has since become a destination for everyone while continuing to serve the well-heeled extremely well. Its attractive traffic-free village, which meanders along the slopes, features smart 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. Recently, the resort has put a lot of investment into its innovative Epic Pass ticket encompassing the resort company’s other ski areas: Beaver Creek, Breckenridge and Keystone in Colorado, and Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood in California. It also enables skiing for five days in St Anton (Austria), Verbier (Switzerland) and the Trois Vallées (France).

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: (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: (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: (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 (184 E Gore Creek Drive; tel: (970) 476 3750), which sells carved wooden items, and the garden-themed gift shop A Secret Garden (100 E Meadow Drive; tel: (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: (800) 785 4743; [www.camelotballoons.com](http://www.camelotballoons.com)) for sensational views across the Rockies. The one-hour flight can last longer depending on conditions and includes transport from the hotel and a champagne toast.

**Apres Ski**

Vail's après-ski scene is lively. Most of the action can be found along Bridge Street. Venues here include the Red Lion (304 Bridge Street; tel: (970) 476 7676; [www.theredlion.com](http://www.theredlion.com)) and the Tap Room (333 Bridge Street; tel: (970) 479 0500; [taproomvail.com](http://taproomvail.com)).

A number of venues are also popular at the fast-improving Lionshead annex, including Garfinkles (536 E Lionshead Circle; tel: (970) 476 3789; [garfsvail.com](http://garfsvail.com)). Here, a young crowd relaxes on the decked area before the evening DJs take over.

**Eating Out**

The choice of restaurants in Vail is endless. Among the eateries serving gourmet food are the elegant Elway’s in Lodge at Vail (tel: (970) 754 7818; [lodgeatvail.rockresorts.com](http://lodgeatvail.rockresorts.com)) and the modern French food purveyor La Tour (122 East Meadow Drive; tel: (970) 476 4403; [www.latour-vail.com](http://www.latour-vail.com)).

For more affordable fare, Bully Ranch (20 Vail Road; tel: (970) 479 5429; [bullyranchrestaurant.com](http://bullyranchrestaurant.com)) is a good option for steak and burgers; while there’s a good selection of pizza places too.

**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.

**The Arrabelle at Vail Square**

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

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

675 Lionshead Place

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Colorado

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

United States of America

**Telephone**

(970) 429 5045.

**Website**

http://www.arrabelle.rockresorts.com

**Evergreen Lodge**

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

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

250 South Frontage Road

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Colorado

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

United States of America

**Telephone**

(970) 476 7810.

**Website**

XXX

**Lionshead Inn**

One of the better value hotels in Vail, Lionshead Inn offers 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**

XXX

**Country**

United States of America

**Telephone**

(970) 476 2050.

**Website**

http://www.lionsheadinn.com