

PRESS KIT



VAL D'ARAN

The essence of the Pyrenees



Table of contents

2015 VAL D'ARAN NEWS	4
Baqueira Beret 50 th Anniversary	4
Marxa Beret	4
2015 Ski Club of International Journalists Championship	4
Val d'Aran among 15 Finalists in the National Geographic World Legacy Awards	4
New Hiking Route: The Aneto Tour	5
New Tourism Website	5
New Val d'Aran App	5
Val d'Aran's Val de Neu Becomes Europe's First Five-Star Grand Luxury Mountain Resort	5
A New Online Platform for the Sale of Services and Activities in the Val d'Aran: www.aranexperience.com	5
Camping Verneda Offers New Circular Routes from its Campsite	5
REASONS TO VISIT VAL D'ARAN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR	6
THE MOUNTAIN AND EVER-PRESENT WATER OFFERING LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES	6
Winter sports and the Baqueira Beret ski resort.	6
Trekking destinations throughout the year.	7
MTB destinations and Road Bike Touring.	8
Other sporting activities to complement active holidays and the outdoors.	9
New sports facilities: Mountain Bike, Climbing, Paddle Two new Mountain Bike Circuits.	10
Val d'Aran's wildlife and Aran Park	11
Fishing, one of the oldest activities practiced in the Val d'Aran.	11
Val d'Aran: First "Biosphere" certified Mountain destination.	11
THE AMAZING AND BEAUTIFUL HERITAGE	12
GASTRONOMY, THE WARM ATMOSPHERE	13
SHOPPING	13
The Val d'Aran Card	13
HYDROTHERAPY, RELAXATION AND WELLNESS IN AN EXCEPTIONAL SETTING	14
FAMILY ACTIVITIES	14
RICH AND VARIED ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS	14
A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR CORPORATE TRAVEL AND SEMINARS	15
A CERTIFIED "SPORT TOURISM DESTINATION"	15
PLAN YOUR STAY IN VAL D'ARAN	16
Aranese Travel Agencies	16
How to reach Val d'Aran	16
Internet sites and brochures	16
ANNEXES	17
Annex 1 - Identity card of the Val d'Aran	17
Annex 2 - Map of Val d'Aran	17

2015 VAL D'ARAN NEWS

Baqueira Beret 50th Anniversary

This season, the Val d'Arán's ski resort celebrates its 50th anniversary by offering its clients an additional 21 slopes, bringing the resort's downhill total from 120 kilometers to 146 kilometers. An additional seven kilometers of cross-country skiing opportunities make for a grand total of 153 skiable kilometers for the 2014-15 winter season, spread out over a wide area of 2.166 hectares all equipped with the highest quality services. The resort will offer a total of 35 active lifts for the season, with an overall transportation capacity of 60,683 people per hour.

Baqueira Beret will celebrate its 50th anniversary with the organization of a wide variety of festivals and sporting events spanning the length of the season.

www.baqueira.es

Marxa Beret

The 36th edition of the Marxa Beret will take place in the Val d'Arán from January 30th to February 1st.

This year, major changes are expected for Spain's most important cross-country skiing competition regarding both the organization and the format of the event. The 2014 edition saw the participation of 1,300 cross-country skiers representing a number of different European countries including Finland, Norway, Estonia, Russia, Germany, Italy, and France among them.

Participants in the Marxa Beret can opt for one of three different courses of 10, 21, or 42 kilometers in length, each of which begins in Plan de Beret.

www.marxaberet.com

2015 Ski Club of International Journalists Championship

From March 7th to 14th of 2015, Baqueira Beret ski resort will host the skiing world championship for journalists.

This will be the 62nd world championship for journalists specializing in winter tourism. A total of 250 journalists will participate in the event, the primary purpose of which is of course to ski! At the same time, however, journalists will have the opportunity to get to know the valley, its attractions, and the different offerings it holds for visitors.

The championship, which is celebrated annually, welcomes ski journalists representing 35 different nationalities.

www.baqueirascij2015.com

Val d'Arán among 15 Finalists in the National Geographic World Legacy Awards

The Val d'Arán is a finalist for the National Geographic World Legacy Awards, which will be given this March during the ITB Berlin.

Only 15 finalists have been chosen from a list of 150 initial candidates, demonstrating the value of the Val d'Arán's candidacy.

The World Legacy Awards are an initiative of National Geographic in collaboration with the ITB Berlin. These awards honor the businesses, organizations, and destinations working to positively transform the tourism industry via best practices in sustainable tourism. This past November in Singapore, the Val d'Arán was chosen during the ITB Asia as one of three finalists in the Destination Leadership category, alongside the Aruba Tourism Authority (Aruba) and Delaware North Yosemite (United States). This category recognizes leading destinations demonstrating the application of best practices in the protection of natural and cultural heritage and visitor education according to the principles of sustainability.



New Hiking Route: The Aneto Tour

The Aneto Tour is a new hiking route consisting of a full circular route around the Aneto massif.

The route goes through five valleys and six mountain passes and consists of both Spanish (Catalonian) and French territory, covering 115 total kilometers in six distinct stages with a total altitude difference of 11,332 meters. The hike is facilitated by the *Andando sin Equipage* ("walking without luggage") brand, with lodging in hotels and cottages and luggage transport services at each stage.

www.tourdelaneto.com – www.camins.es

New Tourism Website

The Val d'Arán will debut a new tourism website this year, featuring a more visually-striking design and fully compatible with mobile devices. Users will find a more accessible and intuitive site created with the most modern design technologies.

www.visitvaldaran.com

New Val d'Arán App

We are currently designing a new multilingual app to function with different operating systems (iOS, Android). The content of the app will include a guide featuring tourism establishments in addition to locations and routes of interest to tourists. The app will also offer a variety of maps for visitors to choose from depending on the level of specialization required by the user.

Val d'Arán's Val de Neu Becomes Europe's First Five-Star Grand Luxury Mountain Resort

Located in Baqueira, more specifically in the new Val de Ruda zone, this recognition was given due to the resort's wide catalog of personalized services, all directed towards the comfort and well-being of its guests.

The full array of facilities, the professionalism of its staff, its 120 luxurious rooms, its exclusive spa featuring treatments by Sisley, its kids club and baby-sitter services, and its wide array of gastronomic offerings from a kitchen dedicated to the use of certified quality ingredients, the Val de Neu Hotel guarantees all the luxury and quality of a truly top-tier mountain resort.

www.hotelbaqueiravaldeneu.com

A New Online Platform for the Sale of Services and Activities in the Val d'Arán: www.aranexperience.com

The Val d'Arán now has an online portal for reserving tourist activities that functions from desktops as well as from smartphones. This platform gathers information regarding all tourist offerings in the region and allows guests to make reservations online with immediate confirmation year-round. Additionally, the platform also offers a services directory with useful information regarding bars and restaurants, lodging, local businesses, ski classes, equipment rentals, and other businesses offering services to tourists.

Camping Verneda Offers New Circular Routes from its Campsite

Camping Verneda, a member of the Camping Bike & Run (CB&R) collective, now offers a series of routes to enjoy on bicycle or on foot, each of which begins and ends at its own campsite.

The routes, clearly-marked and identified by CB&R, primarily pass by the Camino Real and offer opportunities for excursions to the villages neighboring the campsite.

An alluring option for families, young people, and seniors alike, these routes will permit guests to park their cars and enjoy excursions on foot or on mountain bike from their own campsite.

www.campingverneda.com



REASONS TO VISIT VAL D'ARAN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The mountain and ever-present water offering limitless possibilities

The Aigüestortes and Sant-Maurici Lake National Park is surrounded by summits higher than 3,000 meters and holds more than 200 lakes making the Val d'Aran a natural paradise. Some of the lakes such as Mar Lake and the Tort de Riu Lake are the largest of the Spanish Pyrenees. When the snow melts water is everywhere. Adjacent to the lakes, thousands of waterfalls are formed and Garonne and Noguera Pallaresa Rivers' flow increases. The valley's vast forests are made of fir trees, pine trees, beech trees, walnut trees, birch trees and of course oaks. In the spring, wild cherry trees bloom in the valleys.

Because of its exceptional ecosystem, the Val d'Aran offers a broad range of possibilities for all the outdoors enthusiasts, lovers of wide-open spaces, sports and well-being.

From a quiet and relaxing stroll to an extreme challenge, the Val d'Aran has adapted its tourist options to meet every expectation. A wide range of activities allows you to live memorable moments, any time of the year and in all four seasons. The amateur or experienced athletes will also find exceptional facilities and products for their sport here in Aran.

Winter sports and Baqueira Beret ski resort

Baqueira Beret, which is regarded by many as the best ski resort in the Pyrenees, has become a **national and international reference point**. The ski slopes are spread over **1,922 hectares of skiable area with a difference in elevation of 1,010 m and 153 km of slopes**. The majority of the slopes are located on the north side of the Pyrenees thus enjoying an adequate quantity and quality of snow. Each winter season, the station welcomes enthusiasts of all categories: alpine skiing, snowboarding and Nordic skiing.

The varied accommodation options, the many upscale hotels and restaurants, health and wellness spas, the "après-ski" activities and the large number of shops, come together to make Baqueira Beret a unique destination for winter sports.

Information: www.marxaberet.com

Statistics:

153 Km of slopes
99 slopes: 6 green, 41 blue, 37 red, 15 black
7 Km of routes
7 Km cross country skiing circuits
Snow park and Slalom stadium
Incalculable off-trail area
33 ski lifts: 1 gondola (9 seats), 20 chairlifts (9 detachable 3x6, 6x4 and 11 fixed-grip 7X3, 4x2), 5 ski lifts (3 ski lifts, 1 double ski lift, 1 telecord) and 7 moving walkways (magic carpets).
Transport capacity: 60.683 persons/hour
Maximum altitude: 2,510 m
Minimum altitude: 1,500 m
Difference in elevation: 1,010 m
611 snow cannons
Machines for preparing the slopes: 14
Capacity of the station: 17,647 skiers

Additional services

5 Rental and ski repair shops
Parking areas = in total 5,060 spaces (of which 35 are reserved for buses)
15 Cafeterias and restaurants on the slopes
4 Winter sports kindergartens
2 Medical assistance points on the slopes
1 Private medical center in Baqueira sector 1,500.
Over 550 ski instructors
Residential area at the foot of the ski slopes including hotels, apartments, restaurants and shopping centers.

Information: www.baqueira.es



Besides the ski resort, Val d'Aran offers the visitor a wide range of possibilities to enjoy the snow and the high mountains during the winter.

The cross-country ski lovers will have to choose among the valley's **36 ski routes** (see snow activities in Val d'Aran map). **Snowshoe excursions, snowmobile rides, dog sledding (mushing) at Pla de Beret, horseback excursions and rides, excursions to Montgarri** with the option to have lunch or dinner at the shelter, **heli-skiing and heli-boarding** and scenic helicopter flights and **igloo construction** are some of the extra activities that can be enjoyed by the snow enthusiasts.

The practice of these activities should always be done at the hand of **the network of professionals operating as guides. Moreover, the Government offers state of the art** snow and avalanche forecasting.

Without a doubt, the vast prairies of the Plan de Beret represent the ideal starting point for many walks and excursions to be enjoyed as a couple, as a group or as a family. It is also a fantastic place for beginner skiers and children who are starting to discover the joy of snow.

Avalanche forecasting service of the Val d'Aran Government: The Internet site of the avalanche forecasting service of Val d'Aran offers constant updated information on the risk of avalanche in the valley. **Information: www.lauegi.conselharan.org**

Trekking destinations throughout the year

Very often, the best way to discover an area is by walking. The Val d'Aran is located between the two long distance Trans-Pyrenees hiking routes, **GR11** which crosses the Catalan region and southern Aran and **GR10** which passes through France. Other Short Hiking Trails (PRs) and a multitude of routes complement this network of mountain trails. There are **more than 300 km of routes of varying degrees of difficulty**, suitable for all ages and all levels to be enjoyed with family or friends.

While walking the trails, the hiker discovers a unique region, virgin spaces of a captivating beauty and great natural value. For all the outdoors lovers, the possibilities are limitless.

In Aigüestortes and Sant-Maurici Lake National Park, easy routes allow everyone to admire breathtaking views during the strolls. For the those seeking a challenge, marked trails and shelters allow hiking of all difficulty levels, up to the conquest of mountain peaks higher than 3,000 m, such as Besiberri North (3,015 m) in the National Park or Tuc de Molieres (3,010m) at the border with Aragon from where the famous Aneto Peak can be seen in the distance.

Perfectly designed, developed and signposted¹, all these trekking routes grant access to the most beautiful scenery of the Val d'Aran. You only need good walking shoes and the desire to discover what each season brings on each route.

Among the many trekking routes proposed, a few stand out, such as **Pla de Beret route to the Sanctuary of Montgarri** (an abandoned village 7 km from start), the route to the **7 lakes of Colomers**, the circuit in **the heart of Toran** or the one to **Artiga de Lin** (see hiking map). From Pla de Beret, the Blanhiblar ski lift offers the possibility to discover the Val d'Aran from above. Open between July and September.

Thematic tours are also offered and **organized by professionals** operating in the valley ensuring that the hikers enjoy the route.

1. For each route are shown: distance, incline/drop/elevation, duration, location of remarkable sites, waterfalls, panoramic views, picnic areas, museum, Romanesque art route, shelters.



Information: <http://www.senderismovaldaran.com>

Information and booking:

Camin Reiau

www.caminreiau.cat

Hiking along ancient trails, which formerly served as means of communication between the different villages of the Val d'Aran and were previously used by the Romans. Total distance: 150 Km. Cumulative elevation gain: 12,000 m

Carros de Foc

www.carrosdefoc.com

Circular hike around the Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici Lake National Park which should be done in several stages due to the large area covered along the route. Accommodation in mountain shelters located in the National Park. Total distance: 55 km. Cumulative elevation gain: 9,200 m

Cuatro cumbres, Cuatro lenguas

www.camins.net

Circuit which allows access to the 4 most representative summits of the region offering fantastic views on the surrounding areas. Each of the 4 areas has its own language, its own culture and its own history. Total distance: 50 Km. Cumulative elevation gain: 4,472 m

Pass'Aran

www.passaran.com

A cross-border high mountain crossing (Couserans - Val d'Aran). The route follows GR-10 and GR-211 and can be done in 5 stages. Accommodation in shelters and hostels. Total distance: 64 km. Elevation +: 5,155 m. Elevation -: 5,050 m

Setau Sageth

www.setausageth.com

A journey through Val d'Aran's history, passing through its villages, rivers and mountains using GR-211. Can be done in 5 stages. Accommodation in hotels, shelters and hostels. Total distance: 103 km. Cumulative elevation gain: 9,480 m

Encantats

www.andandosinequipaje.com

Hiking route which proposes the crossing of the National Park through Val d'Aran, Pallars Sobira and Alta Ribagorça along historic routes that pass through the most beautiful areas of the Park. Circular route in 5 stages which starts and ends in Vielha. Total distance: 92 km. Cumulative elevation gain: 9,070 m

Via Calda

www.andandosinequipaje.com

Perfect combination of hiking and discovery of the hot springs offering lodging in hotels with service packages included. Route in 4 or 5 stages. Total distance: 60 km.

MTB destinations and Road Bike Touring

"Privilege" is without doubt the word that best describes the sensation that one feels while biking on the trails, along the streams and in the steep landscapes of the Val d'Aran.

By its itinerant character, biking allows you to enter the heart of Val d'Aran with a perspective that is quite different from that offered by hiking. The plains, the steeps, winding paths or a simple obstacle turns the journey into a story waiting to be told/ something to talk about.

Val d'Aran has **more than 400 km approved routes**. From easy rides fit for relaxation to steep trails requiring technique and effort, the routes are varied and appropriate for all levels of mountain biking. A great way for people of all ages and levels to enjoy the great outdoors. You only need to have the right equipment and the right company.

The **MTB Center of Val d'Aran** located in Vielha invites you to follow the **27 MTB routes** with all levels of difficulty, along the 400 km of trails (see bicycle touring map and MTB). Clearly signposted, there are **circular routes** with same departure and arrival points. During the summer months,



Downhill Mountain Biking on the Blanhiblar slope (Naut Aran), located in Pla de Beret and accessed using Blanhiblar ski lift is an invitation to a thrilling experience. There is also offered public transport or transfers for accessing each route or for returning.

The MTB Center is a must for all MTB enthusiasts and cycle tourists. In addition to the information and advice concerning the routes, the MTB Center offers bike rental and bike repair if needed.

For Road Bike Touring there are 7 signposted mountain passes to be ridden.

The following biking programs offered by Aranese companies are also available upon reservation.

Information and booking:

Pedals de foc – MTB www.pedalsdefoc.com

MTB route through Aigüestortes National Park, suited for all levels, in 6 stages and accompanied by a guide. For experts, there is the challenge to complete the ride in just 3 days. Distance: 220 km. Positive cumulative elevation gain: 5,800 m

Pedals d'Occitania – MTB www.pedalsdoccitania.com

MTB route across Occitania, Val d'Aran and Comminges regions. It is a perfect union between Val d'Aran and France taking advantage of the regional hospitality and cuisine, trails and paths. Distance: 227 km. Positive cumulative elevation gain: 6,000 m

Era Roda – MTB www.eraroda.com

The ERARODA - 100% Aran route is based on the use of a GPS navigator and a road map

Aran Bike Park circuit in the woods of Varicauba is intended for MTB professionals. This spectacular circuit is composed of modules, wooden footbridges and jumps. The access is free, but it is recommended to be accompanied by professional guides for safety reasons.

Information: www.bikingvaldaran.com

Other sporting activities to complement active holidays and the outdoors

The rivers and waterfalls are also an ideal environment for other exciting water sports such as **canyoning, hydro speeding, rafting, and kayaking**.

In addition to the aquatic activities, **archery, rock climbing (Via Ferrata in Les and Unha), Naturaran Adventure Park in Les, horse riding, Nordic walking, wild animal park, Aran Park, in the Portillon Pass or the bird observatory** are other ways to get the most out of a visit to the Val d'Aran.

Val d'Aran has a number of professional and specialized guide companies from which to choose.

Information: www.visitvaldaran.com



"Naturaran" Adventure Park in Les

The new "Naturaran" Adventure Park, located in a spectacular natural setting within Cauarca Camping in Les, offers thrilling experiences and fun times to share as a couple, with family or friends or as a group. Here, pleasure and sport are the main objectives. The park is divided into different circuits, varying according to the difficulty level:

- "Discovery" circuit: for beginners and for children over 12 years. It is 105 meters long, has 11 challenges located at a height between 2 and 6 meters and is composed of platforms.
- "Sensation" circuit: blue circuit, 120 meters long with 12 challenges. It is equipped with platforms located at heights between 4 and 8 meters.
- "Emotion/Thrill" circuit: red circuit, 120 meters long with 10 challenges.

Naturaran offers more than 200 challenges with different configurations, with heights ranging from 50 centimeters to 11 meters. The park has two giant zip lines of 120 and 240 meters long, the second one being classified as the longest zip line in the Pyrenees. Naturaran also offers fun activities for younger children with a circuit consisting of 7 vertical elements and 11 bridges at a height of 4 meters.

Naturaran, the Cauarca Camping in Les. Open throughout the year. Offers nocturnal circuits. Entrance fees apply. **Information: www.naturaran.com**

New sports facilities: Mountain Bike, Climbing, Paddle Two new Mountain Bike Circuits.

New sports facilities: Mountain Bike, Climbing, Paddle Two new Mountain Bike Circuits : The great successes of activities related to the world of Mountain Bike have converted the Val d'Aran into a strategic location for the practice of this sport which is associated with adrenaline and nature.

· **A new MTB competition circuit located in the Pla de Beret**, The course is open and free to the all types of public and riders. The route is 5 km and is located at 1.855 m. It reaches 1880 at its maximum height and 1830m at its lowest. The elevation change is thus that of 170m. The circuit is part of a 25 km itinerary which already exists between 1650m and 1900m. There are several variants which ascend along forest trails reaching 2500m. Thus, converting this route into a unique circuit within the Pyrenees and Spain. The course is ideal for holding sporting events and high altitude training.

· **In the Varicauba forest we find a new Mountain Bike Downhill circuit which begins at the Bassa d'Oles**, There are two suggested routes which pass through the municipalities of Vielha, Gausac and Aubert: 1/ Blue Route (Intermediate level) – 3,6 km in length – 500 meters of elevation change. 2/ Green Route (Beginner level) : 3,2 km in length – 400 meters in elevation change. These circuits form a part of the 400 kms of signed and marked itineraries for riders of all levels.

Info : www.visitvaldaran.com

Two new facilities for those who love climbing, these are in addition to the fixed climbing "Via Ferrata" of Les:

· **The new fixed climbing "Via Ferrata" of Naut Aran**,

The second route of the Val d'Aran (the first was built in Les in 2011) is located in the Poi d'Unha (2.221 m) and consists of 3 principal routes with a total length of 775 meters and an elevation change of 500m. The 3 routes are differentiated by their level of difficulty: the first route which is 150 m is designed for beginners, the second is more difficult as it is 250 m and includes spectacular and aerial climbing, and the third and most difficult route is 375 m and has a "Big Wall" feel. The culminating point of the Ferrata is at 1950m. **+Info : www.nautaran.com**

· **There are also other indoor climbing centers in the Valley. Moreover, courses adapted to all levels are available for those who wish to improve or learn.**

· **A Paddle Club « Mountain Paddle Indoor »** Recently inaugurated with two paddle courts, dressing rooms, specialized shop and a space for children **+Info : [Facebook Mountain Paddle Indoor](https://www.facebook.com/MountainPaddleIndoor)**.



Val d'Aran's wildlife

Although the territory of Val d'Aran covers only 633 sq. m, its large variety of ecosystems makes it one of the richest regions of the Pyrenees in fauna and flora.

The differences in altitude in this small area, as well as the influence of the Atlantic climate contribute to a rich biodiversity. The most characteristic are the brown bear, Pyrenean capercaillie, deer, chamois, marmots.... these species are visible starting in spring. Many concealed observation points, "hides", have been created in strategic locations from which the wildlife can be observed.

Val d'Aran Wildlife encourages the visitors to observe and take pictures of this exceptional environment. It is a must see for outdoors enthusiasts due to the diversified flora and fauna species.

Starting this summer, thematic hiking circuits propose the observation of the diverse species accompanied by local guides who are familiar with the area.

Photography enthusiasts can enjoy circuits accompanied by local photography guides specialized in observation of ecosystems.

Information: www.visitvaldaran.com

"Aran Park" in Bossòst

Set in a pristine landscape, surrounded by the mountains, "Aran Park" is located in Col du Portillon (10 min away from Luchon) and proposes, since its opening last April 13, various possibilities for discovering the natural habitats of the Pyrenees, and the Aranese fauna and flora through discovery trails, observation points and exhibitions.

Given that the animals live in semi-freedom they can be seen in their own ecosystem: bears, lynxes, otters, two packs of white and gray wolves, marmots, as well as large deer and all mountain ungulates.

The park has a surface area of 16 hectares and includes a museum, a shop, a classroom, a restaurant and a picnic area.

Aran Park, in Col du Portillon in Bossòst. Open: from April 13 to November 4, 2013, daily, including Sundays and public holidays. Entrance fee. **Information:** www.aran-park.com

Fishing, one of the oldest activities practiced in the Val d'Aran

For the lovers of this sport, Val d'Aran is a paradise that attracts enthusiasts from all over Europe. When the snow melts, the high mountain lakes, the artificial reservoirs, the streams and the Garona and Noguera Rivers of Val d'Aran are vibrant and become a strong attraction for all fishermen. Many types of fishing can be practiced.

Fishing in the Val d'Aran is fully controlled and regulated to avoid excessive fishing and ensure the survival and sustainability of the river's wildlife.

Val d'Aran: First Biosphere certified Mountain destination

The Val d'Aran is the first mountain tourism region to be accredited as a sustainable tourist destination. With this certification a new system has been developed and integrated into the planning and management of the Val d'Aran's tourism program. This includes an emphasis on the environment as well as the local cultural patrimony which has been well conserved over the centuries. With the incorporation of this program, the Val d'Aran, known for attracting tourists through nature, intends to offer its visitors a sustainable territory recognized outside of its borders as an exemplary tourist destination.



THE AMAZING AND BEAUTIFUL HERITAGE

The Val d'Aran has been able to retain its entire linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage, thus preserving its own individuality.

Its **artistic and cultural heritage** is distinguished by magnificent representations of all periods. All artistic disciplines are represented here: architecture, painting and stone and wood sculpture. Some works stand out due to their exceptional state of preservation.

The mountains of the Val d'Aran have witnessed the passing of prehistoric, Roman and Christian cultures which transformed the valley into a living art and history museum. The **Romanesque Route** allows the visitor to walk back in time and experience the history of Aran firsthand. **Information: Val d'Aran Museum in Vielha.**

Many Romanesque and Gothic churches are part of this rich heritage: Salardú, Arties, Vielha, and Bossòst to name a few. The **beautiful Romanesque sculptures** such as the Christ of Salardú and the Christ of Mijaran in Vielha, or **the baptismal fonts** of Arties, Vilac or Vilamos are also well worth visiting.

The Gothic altarpieces and frescoes of some churches representing amazing Biblical scenes, in Roman, Gothic and Renaissance styles constitute a unique and well preserved artistic heritage.

Nature and spirituality

Besides the architectural heritage, in the Val d'Aran there are other elements which are important to discover the history, symbolism and traditions of Aran. Many of these represent much more than what can be seen at a first glance. Such is the case with the Marian Sanctuaries of Montgarri and Mijaran. Montgarri is located in a beautiful mountain setting close to the Noguera Pallaresa River. Every July 2nd, people from the neighboring Aranese, French and Pallars villages come together to pay homage to the image of the Virgin. According to the legend, the image was found by a bull and this small and simple shrine was built in her honor. Because the shrine soon became famous, there were 2 consecutive attempts to steal the image, but each time, the image returned to the sanctuary. The sanctuary is visited by thousands of people year round.

The Saint Andrew Church of Salardú, built in Romanesque style (12th century), houses the Holy Cross (Santa Cruz) which is also highly venerated. Every May 3rd, crosses from neighboring villages are brought in a procession which ends with a solemn mass. There are a number of miracles attributed to this image and thus, numerous legends.

Among other places of worship in the village of Bossòst 7 chapels were built which, according to the tradition, protected the inhabitants from the plague. The inhabitants continue to venerate these shrines. The 7 chapels are located nearby and can be easily reached on foot.

Throughout Aran, **various museums** invite the visitor on a discovery of the lifestyle of the previous centuries. For example, the **Val d'Aran Museum** in Vielha, the **Ecomuseum** located in the **Joaniquet House** in Vilamos, the **Snow Museum** in Unha, the **Museum of the Pyrenees "Pyrenmuseu"** in Salardú which is home to the Refugi Rosta, the oldest hotel of the Val d'Aran and the **Eth Corrau Museum** in Bagergue. Guided tours are offered. **Information: Val d'Aran Museum in Vielha.**

In the past few years, Aranese industrial sites such as the Wool factory in Vielha, **the Salardú Mill** and the **Victoria Mines** have been rehabilitated and opened to the public.

The **villages of the Val d'Aran** share the same architectural character. Built to withstand the winter and the snow, they are made of stone, slate and wood and integrate perfectly in the valley's landscape. The oldest houses date back to the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and are authentic jewels of the Aranese architecture, such as Ço de Portolà (currently Parador d'Arties) or Ço de Perejoan, in Escunhau, dating back to 1393. Both have been declared Assets of Cultural Interest. Other houses built in renaissance, baroque or neoclassical styles are waiting to be discovered.



Moreover, the beautiful Aranese legends persist and are manifested in the most popular **Aranese traditions and dances**. The annual cycle of seasons is at the origin of a large number of these **traditional holidays**. The end of winter has always been a long awaited and celebrated event throughout the Pyrenees. It is deeply rooted also in the Gascony culture in general. In spring and summer, each village celebrates its annual feast. A few pilgrimages persist, such as that of Montgarri on July 2nd. The lights of Haro in Les and in Arties celebrated on the night of St. John on June 23rd are the most popular. There are also the livestock fairs which are organized in autumn in Vielha, Les and Salardú.

Finally, **one of the most important characteristics of the Val d'Aran culture is its language: Aranese**. It is a living language spoken by the people of the valley. It belongs to the Occitan linguistic group. Aranese is a variant of the Gascony language of Comminges.

THE GASTRONOMY, THE WARM ATMOSPHERE

Another pillar of the Val d'Aran heritage is the richness of its gastronomy. Traditional or modern, **over 170 restaurants of the Val d'Aran** are open invitations to enjoy its cuisine in a friendly and relaxing atmosphere. Diversified and of high quality, the gastronomic fare of the Val d'Aran includes dishes prepared from indigenous products of the valley. **The traditional, par excellence, Aranese dish is the Aranese soup known as the "la olla aranesa"**, but there are also wild chamois, boar and hare stews, terrines and trout to enjoy. The modern and renowned cuisine of the Aranese chefs, favors the use of products such as the duck prepared in a thousand ways, the Caviar of Les (known as the black gold of the Pyrenees) is often used for sophisticated and luxurious dishes. In addition, Aran's proximity to France has greatly influenced the Aranese gastronomy. This is apparent today in the dishes based on crepes, liver or duck confit prepared in Aranese style.

Would you like a drink and a few mountain flavored tapas? The majority of the bars of the Valley offer a wide variety of tapas. This miniature cuisine makes your stay in the Val d'Aran even more pleasant.

Aranese products and the "Val d'Aran Products" brand (Geographical indication and guarantee of origin) : The Caviar "Nacarii", the Aranese beer, "Immòrtela", the Aranese soup, "Olla Aranesa", deli meats with chorizo, the longaniza (dry sausage), the "pâtés", the andito and the bolh, (typically Aranese products), cheese, yoghurt, honey, the tronquets and coquilhons (pastries) are all specialties of the region which can be bought in most shops in the Valley. **Information: www.productesvaldaran.com**

Some local manufacturers welcome visitors, such as the Caviar factory Nacarii of Les or Tarrau Cheese Factory of Bagergue. Information: www.visitvaldaran.com

SHOPPING

Whether you are looking for regional products, ski or bike rental and repair shops, equipment and clothing for practicing mountain sports, children's clothing, or even home decoration articles, you will be delighted with the variety of the commercial and retail options of the Val d'Aran. In Bossòst, Les, Vielha, Baqueira and other villages, you will find what you are looking for.

Throughout the year, the Aranese shops are open each week day. During the winter season and in the month of August the shops are also open Sundays and public holidays. Activities are organized during the summer to boost the local trade.

For more information: www.visitvaldaran.com

The Val d'Aran Card

The new "Val d'Aran Card", launched by the Chamber of Commerce (Agencia deth Comèrç) of the Val d'Aran is a fidelity card which permits its users to accrue virtual Euros in the participating establishments of the Val d'Aran. The owner of the card automatically participates in different promotions organized by the companies within the program. Without a doubt, the Val d'Aran Card will make your experience and shopping in the Val d'Aran more exciting!

+Info : www.visitvaldaran.com / www.targetavaldaran.com



HYDROTHERAPY, RELAXATION AND WELLNESS IN AN EXCEPTIONAL SETTING

Thanks to its exceptional mountain setting, the Val d'Aran is known for its high standard of living. The natural environment is conducive to well-being. Its top quality facilities including the **2 spa resorts and the many Hotel & Spa accommodations** complement the health and wellness options of the valley.

History and health meet in the Aranese thermal baths, some of them being used since the Roman era. The sulfuric waters captured at a depth of more than 300 m gush forth generously at a temperature of more than 30°C, bringing with them mineral-medicinal properties, beneficial for various therapeutic treatments: rheumatism, osteoarthritis, arthritis, skin diseases, circulatory problems and respiratory track problems.

The **Thermal Baths of Baronia of Les** will celebrate their 10th anniversary in 2013. The company is known for **use of cosmetic products with caviar**. The "**Caviar Cosmetic Baronia of Les**" brand is made with extracts of caviar "Nacarii". **Information: www.termasbaroniadeles.com**

The **thermal baths of Banhs de Tredòs** are located on the banks of Aiguamòg River, on the outskirts of Aigüestortes and Sant-Maurici Lake National Park. At 1,740 m in altitude; this Spa resort is the highest in Europe. It is a hotel resort. **Information: www.banhsdetredos.com**

16 hotels in the area provide Spas and care facilities for their guests. Many of these come with spectacular views of **the mountains and the valley**.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The Val d'Aran offers a complete array of services for family vacations:

1. "**Aran Park**" in Portillon pass. A wild animal park with indigenous Pyrenean animals in semi-freedom
2. "**NaturAran**", the largest and the most modern Adventure Park of the Pyrenees located in Les
3. **Beret Park**: chairlift in ski resort open during the summer
4. **Pony and horseback rides, white water rafting, canoeing, observation of fauna and flora and bird watching**
5. **MTB routes and hiking trails** accessible by all levels, rental facilities offering bike rentals for adults and children as well as baby seats
6. Sports facilities: Sports Complex of Bossòst, Ice Palace "**Palai de Gèu**" in Vielha including an ice skating rink with 2 heated swimming pools, solarium, gym, sauna, climbing wall, paddle court. www.palaidegeu.com
7. Various museums and visits to manufacturing sites (**Nacarii Caviar Factory, Tarrau Cheese Factory**)
8. Accommodation services offering multi-use rooms and special activities for children. Restaurants with menus for children
9. Cinema in Vielha www.circusa.com ; Municipal Library in Vielha
10. A child care facility in Baqueira during the winter

Information: www.visitvaldaran.com

RICH AND VARIED ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Hotels, farmhouses, boarding houses, hostels, guest houses, campsites, mountain shelters, apartments, houses and cottages constitute a vast range of accommodation options designed to meet the needs of all types of visitors.

64 hotels (1 *****GL, 3 ***** , 14 **** , 16 *** , 21 ** and 9 *) and 6 Apart hotels, 30 boarding houses (20 ** , 10 *), 2 hostels, 9 shelters (including 5 in high mountain), 8 campsites (7 ** , 1 *), 4 farmhouses and 8 guest houses provide **13,400 BEDS** for the tourists. There is also the option to rent an apartment or a chalet.



About 3,500 hotel beds are offered at the foot of the slopes of Baqueira Beret Resort.

There are two National Parador hotels in the Val d'Aran, which are part of National Parador network (first class hotels scattered throughout Spain and located in iconic buildings or in exceptional locations, selected for their historical, cultural or artistic interest).

22,000 BEDS IN RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES, in secondary residences, divided among the different villages of the Val d'Aran or at the foot of the slopes. Many of them are available for rent for the weekend, on weekly basis or longer stays.

A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR CORPORATE TRAVEL AND SEMINARS

The exceptional environment, hotel establishments adapted to all needs, and the wide range of sporting, cultural and leisure activities contribute to making the Val d'Aran the ideal destination for all enterprises organizing meetings, conventions, incentive and team building trips.

A large number of hotels in the valley (one 5* GL hotel, three 5 * hotels, and eight 4* hotels) offer meeting rooms suited for different events and are equipped with the most advanced technologies. In addition to these meeting rooms, there are a number of other local halls available.

The natural environment and the wellness and the gastronomic options of the Val d'Aran provide additional ingredients to transform a business trip into an unforgettable pleasure. Sport activities such as rafting, heli-skiing or golf complement the experience and make Aran unforgettable. Participants will leave the Val d'Aran with the desire to return with their family or friends!

Information: www.visitvaldaran.com

A CERTIFIED "SPORT TOURISM DESTINATION"

In 2004, the Val d'Aran received the certification of **Sport Tourism Destination** for activities such as **high mountain hiking, Alpine running and Football**.

The strategic location and the variety of landscapes as well as all the sports facilities spread throughout the valley make the Val d'Aran an ideal destination for sports and nature enthusiasts. The Val d'Aran is located between the two long distance Trans-Pyrenees hiking routes, **GR11** which crosses the Catalan region and southern Aran, and the **GR10** which passes through France. Other Short Hiking Trails (PRs) and a multitude of routes complement this network of mountain trails.

Among the sports facilities, visitors will find the **Sports Area** and the **Municipal Football Field** in **Bossòst**, the **Multi-purpose Hall of Salardú**, the **Pitch & Putt Golf Course** and the **Sport Technicians School** of Val d'Aran in **Salardú**, the **Football Field** and the **Thermal Baths of the Baronia** in Les, and the **Multipurpose Hall**, the **Football Field** and the **Palai de Geu** (Ice Palace), with a semi Olympic swimming pool and an ice skating rink in **Vielha**.

The Catalan Tourism Agency has certified these municipalities of Catalonia, granting them the mark of distinction as a "Sport Tourism Destination" due to their high quality infrastructure and services dedicated to the practice of sports. This mark of distinction targets the competitive athletes, the tourists who focus their holiday on practicing sports, the tourists who practice sports in their free time or the visitors who travel to Aran to see major sporting events.



PLAN YOUR STAY IN THE VAL D'ARAN

Aranese Travel Agencies

ALPS ARANESI www.alpsaran.org
CAMINS www.camins.net
COPOS EVENTS www.coposevents.com
KABI TRAVELS BY EDURNE PASABAN www.kabi-travels.com
NAUT VIAJES www.nautviajes.com
NATURA TRAVELS www.pedalesdelmundo.com
VIAJES BAQUEIRA BERET www.baqueira.es

How to reach Val d'Aran

BY ROAD

The access to the Val d'Aran is primarily by road, using 4 different routes:

- From France, going south from Toulouse past Saint-Gaudens and then through Saint-Beat, adjacent to the Garonne River and passing through Pont de Rey (550 m)
- From France in Bagnères-de-Luchon through Col de Portillon (1366 m);
- From Spain, passing through Col de la Bonaigua (Bonaigua Pass)
- From Spain going through Tunnel of Vielha.

From France:

- Toulouse - Vielha: 162 Km (Highway A-64 in the direction of Tarbes; N-125 to Saint-Beat / N-230)
- Bordeaux – Vielha : 361 Km (Highways A-62 then A-65 to Pau/ A-64 / N-125/ N-230)
- Bayonne – Vielha : 258 Km (Highway A-64 in the direction of Toulouse/ N-125 / N-230)
- Montpellier - Vielha: 398 Km (Highways A-9 to Narbonne/A-61 to Toulouse/A-64/N-125/ N-230).
- Paris – Vielha : 837 Km (Highways A10/A-71/A-20/A-62/A-64/N-125/ N-230)

From Spain:

- Barcelona – Vielha: 318 Km (Highway A-2/N-230)
- Girona – Vielha: 400 Km (Highways AP-7 to Barcelona/A-2/N-230)
- Lleida – Vielha: 164 Km (N-230)
- Madrid – Vielha: 618 km (E-90/A-2/N-230)
- San-Sébastien – Vielha: 307 km (Highways AP-8/A-63/A-64/N-125/ N-230)
- Bilbao – Vielha: 405 km (Highways A-8/A-63/A-64/N-125/ N-230)

BY TRAIN

The nearest railway station is in Montréjau in France. You will then need to rent a car or book a taxi to reach the Val d'Aran.

BY PLANE

The nearest airports are: Barcelona: 310 Km. Zaragoza: 260 Km. San Sebastián: 308 Km. Toulouse (Francia): 165 Km. Pau (Francia): 157 Km. Pirineus, Lleida-Alguaire (145 Km.)

Internet sites and brochures

INTERNET SITES

- About the Val d'Aran in the general: www.visitvaldaran.com
- For hiking specific information in the Val d'Aran: www.senderismovaldaran.com
- For MTB and Road Bike touring in the Val d'Aran: www.bikingvaldaran.com
- For health and wellness information: www.bienestarvaldaran.com

BROCHURES AND GUIDES

"Foment Torisme Val d'Aran" annually publishes about twenty brochures and guides, which can be downloaded at www.visitvaldaran.com.

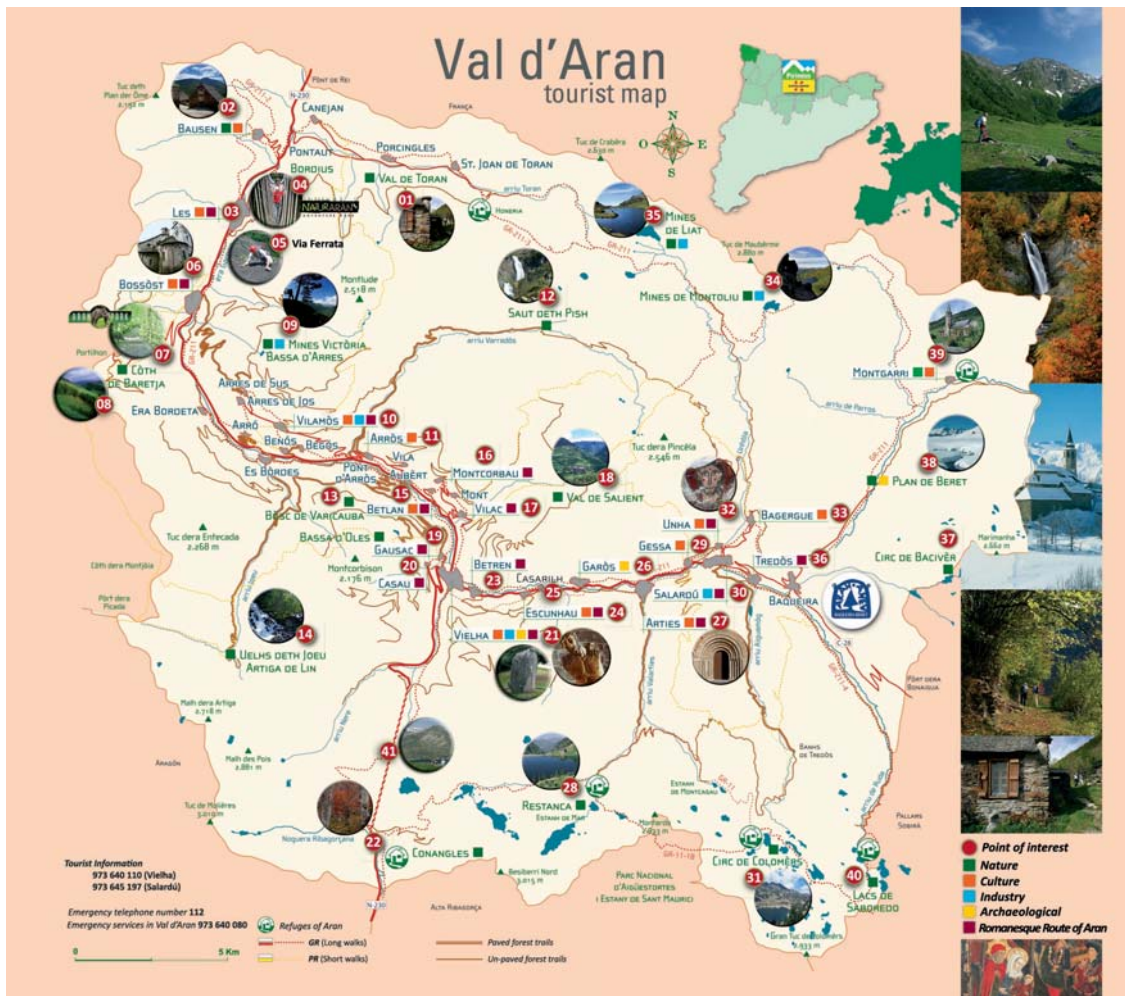


ANNEX

Annex 1 - Identity card of Val d'Aran

33 Villages
10,295 inhabitants
Vielha (900 m of altitude), the Capital
633.6 Km², area
30% of its territory is located at over 2,000 m altitude
3 official languages: Aranese, Catalan and Spanish
3,014 m: highest altitude - Besiberri Norte Peak
33,000 tourist beds
390 tourist providers and 326 shops
4 nearby airports: Barcelona (317 km). Pau (161 km). Toulouse (167 km). Pirineus-Lleida- Alguaire (145 km)

Annex 2 - Map of Val d'Aran



All the companies listed in this press kit are members of Foment Torisme Val d'Aran.






VAL D'ARAN
Era essència des Pirenèus

 **Conselh Generau
d'Aran**

foment
TORISME VAL D'ARAN

Passeg dera Libertat, 16 / 25530 Vielha
Phone : +34 973 640 688 / info@visitvaldaran.com
www.visitvaldaran.com