

Downhill Skiing

Ski areas cover the Catalan the Pyrenees and southern Massif Central. There are 12 resorts at an altitude of 1200-2600m offering more than 200 downhill runs and 150 ski lifts. The Pyrenees region offers the 'Neiges Catalanes' ski-pass: a single priced ticket which allows you to ski across 10 resorts.

For sports activities such as skiing (and potholing and mountaineering), travel insurance must include mountain rescue services and helicopter costs. You should be aware of the risks involved in the more hazardous sports activities. You should also be aware of weather forecasts and conditions, be well equipped, not undertake the activity alone, study the itinerary and inform someone of their plans. Off-piste skiers should follow the advice given by local authorities and guides; to ignore such advice could put yourselves and other mountain users in danger. Information on snow and avalanche risks is available, in French, on the following website: <http://www.anena.org>

The following are downhill ski resorts in or near the Languedoc: Les Angles, Porté-Puymorens, Puy Valador, Prat-Peyrot, Font Romeu, Odeillo, Bolqueres, Pyrenees 2000, Ax-Bonascres, Mijanès, Ascou-Pailhères, Les Monts-d'Olmes, Goulier Neige, Le Puigmal 2600, and Camre d'aze.

Cross Country Skiing

The mountains of Languedoc-Roussillon have 11 cross country ski areas, with 75 marked ski trails covering over 450 miles, all in the southern French sunshine. In the the Pyrenees, the Capcir Nordic ski area combines the resorts of Matemaie, La Llagonne, Réal, Pyuvalador-Rieutort, Espousouille/Fontrabieuse, Caudiès de Conflent and Formiguères. These villages make up a Nordic ski area, registered with the France cross country skiing association, at an altitude of 1500m, with more than 70 miles of cross country ski tracks. Information: Maison du Capcir, 66210 Matemale Tel: 33 (0)4 68 04 49 86 E-mail: contact@capcir-pyrenees.com Website: <http://www.capcir-pyrenees.com/>

Col du Chioula. Near Ax-les-Thermes. Tel: 05 61 64 20 00. www.vallees-ax.com. e-mail: vallees.ax@wanadoo.fr. Alt. 1240-1650 m. 60 km of marked and swept piste, through the trees, following forest tracks. Superb natural site. Sledging. Mountain bike trails in summer.

Mijanès. Near Axat. Tel: 04 68 20 40 44. 50 km of piste, including 40 km compacted and marked. Tranquil, sunny countryside.

Plateau de Beille. Near Ax-les-Thermes. Tel: 05 34 09 35 35. Alt. 1800 m - 2000 m. 65 km of marked piste. Lots of snow, fine views. 12 km of dogsledge tracks. Walking (snowshoes available). Other activities such as learning trapping and living in an igloo. Mountain biking and horse riding in summer.

Tour Lafont. Near Foix. Tel: 05 61 64 53 33. Alt. 1250-1500 m. 15 km of marked piste. Fine setting.

Etang de Lers. Near Foix. Tel: 05 61 04 91 13. Alt. 1300-1615 m. 35 km of compacted marked and swept piste. Other activities include ski-horse and walking (snowshoes available) and sledging.

Snow Kiting

Snowkiting is an outdoor winter boardsport. It combines the airfoil techniques of kitesurfing with snowboarding. Snowkiting differs from most other alpine sports, in that it is possible for a snowkiter to travel uphill with ease - if the wind is blowing in the right direction. Like kitesurfing, snowkiting can be hazardous, and needs to be practiced with care. Snowkiting is becoming increasingly popular in places often associated with skiing and snowboarding, including the Pyrenees.

Snowboard, alpine skis or Telemark skis can be used for snowkiting. Foil kites were originally the most common type; now kitesurfers use water gear for snowkiting, and it is not uncommon to see tubekites.

One well known school is based in the Ailipse shop which specialises in sales and repairs of flight materials (parapents, kites, etc) and sales of skis, boots and snowboards. The school is registered with EFK (Ecole Français de Kite) and uses the most up-to-date Snowkite equipment. All instructors are fully qualified in their various fields and registered with FFVL (Federation Français Vol Libre).

They use a number of Snowkiting locations in the region (9 in total) at different altitudes and of different orientations maximising the opportunities for ideal wind and snow conditions.

Snowkite packages include transfers from Perpignan airport, bed, breakfast, evening meal with wine and transport to/from snowkite sites each day, snowkite tuition/practice with qualified instructors. Kites, harness, helmets included. Bring or hire your own skis or snowboards. Packages start at 4 night break. Longer stays available. Other activities include parapent, buggy and mountainboarding.

For more information contact Chalet Isard (+33 (0)4 68 04 18 79 English spoken) or visit the website at <http://ailipse.nuxit.net/Ckite/>

Dog Sledging.

Learn about every aspect of sledging and sledge dogs at the European High Altitude Dog Training Centre. There are dog handling courses for adults and children (10 years and upwards) which teach you everything you need to know about

the dogs. Unique in Europe. Information: European High Altitude Dog Training Centre, Les Airelles - BP 27 - 66122 Font-Romeu, Tel: 06 84 84 05 00, E-mail: ceca@itineris.net.fr