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Traveltalk

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WIN!

The luxury holiday of a lifetime

WRECKS & REEFS
in Vanuatu

GOING WILD
in Bolivia

ANDORRA

EUROPE'S BEST KEPT SECRET

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Floral meadows in Andorra

Right: The entrance hall at the Hotel Plaza

LIFTING THE LID





Andorra welcomes more than 11 million tourists a year and now more Australians are being encouraged to sample its myriad attractions. Here, *Traveltalk* looks at 'Europe's best kept secret'.

TAKING THE PISTE

Grandvalira is southern Europe's largest ski resort and will be celebrating its 10th anniversary this season. It is made up of six different access points, contains 118 slopes of all different levels, 210 km skiable area with 64 ski-lifts capable of transporting more than 100,000 visitors per hour.

It also has three snowparks (one of which opens at night) for freestyle and six skiing and snowboarding schools with 400 instructors. And on top of that, Grandvalira has more than 1,000 state-of-the-art snow cannons placed strategically throughout the territory to ensure that at least 65 per cent of the skiable areas are covered in snow.

In addition to skiing, adventure activities such as canyoning, Segway on snow, tubing or laser combat are also available, along with old favourites such as mushing, snow mobiles, heliski or snow shoes.

Off piste, Grandvalira offers a wide range of different places to eat throughout the territory catering for all budgets: from cafeterias, self service restaurants and sandwich and hamburger joints to first class à la carte restaurants.

This season sees a whole host of new venues, particularly the opening of the Cala Bassa Beach Club Pas de la Casa, offering an indoor and outdoor service with a terrace containing tables, hammocks and sofas and a DJ playing music to create a unique environment in

Andorra.

Grandvalira-Grau Roig (Cubil) will also welcome AndBurger Zero, offering a wide range of hamburgers and exquisite 100 per cent Andorran meat while Pasta Box del Gall de Bosc in the Soldeu sector will serve high-quality pasta in a self-service environment.

For top-notch après-ski, head to L'Abarset (Grandvalira-El Tarter), the ideal location for a drink and the parties that will be organised every weekend throughout the skiing season. L'Abarset also has a new terrace this season where skiers can enjoy the best nights once skiing is over for the day.

Two major events will be taking place at the resort in March and April. The Total Fight Masters of Freestyle (Snowboard and Freeski) competitions will be held from March 27-29 and April 3-5 respectively. The best riders in both disciplines will do battle at the Grandvalira-El Tarter snow park, promising two weekends full of spectacular jumps.

The Grandvalira Igloo Hotel is unique in southern Europe and is located at the Coma Ill Edici Xirixuca de Grandvalira - Grau Roig. It is made entirely of snow and enjoys views over the slopes of Grau Roig. It has a bar, restaurant, five rooms and everything you'll need to enjoy a special night in the snow.

grandvalira.com

Spotlight: Andorra



SHOP TILL YOU DROP

The main shopping destination in Andorra is the department store *Pyrenees Andorra*, which has more than 15,000-square-metres of floor space, offering top-of-the-line perfumes, luxury fashion, electronic devices and gourmet food.

Here you'll find designer labels for women such as Michael Kors, Ralph Lauren, Hoss Intropia and Custo alongside exclusive brands like Marc by Marc Jacobs, Diane von Furstenberg, Joseph, Isabel Marant and JBrand. The building also contains the only Nespresso boutique in Andorra, an exclusive Apple store and a National Geographic store.

The retail group has two other stores in the Principality, including *Pas de la casa*, which opened in 2001 and has an annual turnover of 21 million Euros. *Andorra 2000*

is the other store which focuses on food but also has sections for textiles, sports, electronics, fragrances and PEM. pyrenees.ad

IN THE LAP OF LUXURY

Hotels Plaza Andorra is the most prestigious hotel chain in the Principality, internationally recognised for quality, elegance and service excellence.

The chain has four, five-star hotels (*Hotel Plaza*, *Holiday Inn*, *Ski Plaza* and *Carlton Plaza*) and a four-star hotel (*Hotel Mu*). The combination offers five hotels with five different concepts for accommodation in Andorra in five different ways.

Flagship property of the brand is the *Hotel Plaza*, located in the business and commercial centre of *Andorra la Vella* and combining gastronomy, wellness and elegance. It offers

Clockwise from top: snowmobiles at Grandvalira; Pyrenees Andorra; mushing at Grandvalira; Denim & Supply at Ralph Lauren; heading to the slopes at Alta

Spotlight: Andorra

a total of 90 rooms, of which 47 are suites, all with views of the mountains of Andorra.

One of the main attractions of this hotel is, undoubtedly, the haute cuisine restaurant, where you can sample the finest cuisine in Andorra, with the help of renowned chef Patrick Mariot. The Spa Plaza has exclusive beauty, wellness and relaxation treatments, and features a heated water circuit and a fitness space.

The Hotel Holiday Inn offers 133 spacious and comfortable rooms and is aimed at families and business people. It is a contemporary and modern hotel situated just a few hundred metres from the Congress Centre in Andorra, but also very close to the commercial centre and within walking distance of Caldea.

Purchased in 2011, the Hotel Mu is small but cozy, offering a casual style that is fresh and fun. It has an ideal position in the Ordino Valley, the greenest of Andorra, and is close to the ski slopes of Vallnord. The hotel features 42 standard rooms and eight junior suites while Spa Mu delivers treatments inspired by the mountains and contains a jacuzzi, Turkish bath, Finnish sauna and aromatherapy showers. Outside, there's a Storvatt Nordic bath, the only one in Andorra.

plazandorra.com

For more information, visit australia.andorra.com

Top right: A room at the Hotel Plaza

Right: Scenic Andorra

Bottom: Families can learn to ski together at Grandvalira





www.australia.andorra.com



*Andorra,
Europe's Best Kept Secret*



Welcome to Andorra,

the country of the Pyrenees. An independent state with an area of 468 km² and more than a thousand years of history in the southeast of Europe, between Spain and France.

Known internationally for its **ski resorts**, **shops with very low taxes** and its **modern hotel and service infrastructures**, each year the country receives nearly 8 million visitors.

Andorra is also a paradise for nature lovers: 90% of the country is forest.