New Airport Raises Andorra Ski Holiday Prospects

Sixteenth smallest country in the world, Andorra has been transformed in the past forty years from a poor European country with no real economy to a vibrant independent State, sought after by the wealthy for her tax haven status, and skiers for her ski runs that match the best in Europe for facilities and ski holidays infrastructure. The one drawback that Andorra has had is the distance from a major airport, two and a half hours drive to Barcelona in Spain or Toulouse in France, with some ski holidays starting with a night in one of the Barcelona hotels before setting off for Andorra. But that is set to change with agreement for an aiport to be built just fifteen minutes drive from the Spanish / Andorra border. As well as the extra ski tourists the new airport will impact Andorra as a tax haven. Andorra and the more famous Monaco are Europe's leading tax havens, with residents enjoying the benefit of no income tax. Property prices in Andorra are less than a third of the price of Monaco's. Commenting on the new airport, Andorra estate agents who specialise in Andorra real estate for sale thinks that the prices of Andorra properties will rise. 'At the moment Monaco has the advantage of being ten minutes away from an international airport by helicopter, while Andorra is over two hours. With that advantage gone we anticipate more people considering a tax haven will consider Andorra, with a resulting appreciation in property prices.' Property in Andorra has risen an average of ten per cent a year in recent years, with three streams of buyers - the local market, buyers for ski holiday homes who are often on a Thomson Ski holiday and like Andorra enough to buy a holiday home, plus those looking for a tax haven. The airport is to be located in Seu d'Urgell, and the first flights are anticipated to be in 2010 or 2011, with a runway of 4,500 feet - not long enough for some medium range aircraft, and it is likely that most commercial airlines using the airport will be 60 to 80 seaters, plus private jets much favoured by the wealthy who might now consider Andorra as a viable tax haven.

Cheap Holidays As well as being welcomed by the property business in Andorra, a new airport has been greeted enthusiastically by the skiing industry. The country has upgraded facilities in recent years, and often competes as a top ski destination in Europe, with well known ski companies like Crystal Ski operating holidays for the British market. In recent years the number of tourists for the Andorra ski holiday season has topped ten million visitors, and the ski industry is an important part of the country's economy, with the government investing in new infrastructure to help tempt visitors back for skiing for repeat visits. But last year was the worst season for decades as the snow, which normally falls from end October, didn't arrive until mid March, and the first drop in the number of ski holiday in Andorra units being sold by British and other European travel agents dropped from the previous ski season for some years. The new airport cutting travelling time from the UK, one of the Andorra ski holiday's main markets, could boost the occupancy levels of hotels in Andorra significantly. 'When people are considering a ski holiday in Andorra', comment one travel guide, 'At the moment to reach Pas de la Casa, one of Andorra's top ski villages, it's two and a half hours from Barcelona to the capital la Vella, and then another twenty minutes on top of that - nearly a three hour trip after a flight. Cutting down resort arrival time from three to one hour will be enough to influence some people's decision on where to visit.' Recent investment by the government has reached several million Euros designed to keep the country in line with other European winter destinations, and intended to make Andorra a natural choice for the ski and snowboard fraternity, the addition of an airport close to her border could help ensure that. All that is needed now is a good level of snow from late autumn.

About the Author

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