

Slope off!

Nellie Huang brings you a round-up of the best skiing areas just a hop and a jump from Madrid

Winter may be creeping in, but with it comes the opportunity for frosty fun. Beyond the skyscrapers the mountains around Madrid are slowly filling up with snow, meaning you don't have to look far to put your ski skills to the test. Forget snuggling indoors under your blanket, get out and enjoy the sunshine on the slopes! Here *InMadrid* presents its guide to the best skiing spots within easy reach of the city.

Navacerrada

www.puertonavacerrada.com

The Navacerrada Mountains may not be the Alps of Spain, but they offer lots of space for sliding down the slopes and perfecting your skills. Although a lack of snow means the ski station is closed for most of the season, it still makes a pretty place to mingle in the frost and slurp a cup of something warm. Don't worry about accommodation as there's a wide range of budget ski lodges to choose from. The area's gentle terrain makes it the perfect spot for first timers, while intermediate skiers will embrace the well-maintained slalom station and ski jump. With prices for a day pass starting at €25, Navacerrada is the cheapest ski location in the region. Rent a full set of skis for €20 per day or a snowboard set for €30 per day from Verdesoto, located within the ski station (call 91 852 14 48 to book in advance). Remember to check the weather and snow level on the resort website before setting off.

Getting there By train: hourly from Chamartín or Atocha, change train at Cercedilla. First train leaves 8am, and last train returns 7pm. Journey time: 2 hrs.

Valdesqui

www.valdesqui.es

Just 80 kilometres from Madrid is the well-known Valdesqui station. Things get quite crowded here during weekends in high season as people flock up from the city. With a modest 1,300-foot slope, the terrain is primarily suited to beginners and intermediates. Weekend entrance is a pricy €36, while a half-day pass is €21, though group packages are considerably cheaper. Valdesqui provides economical ski lessons and onsite equipment rental (€20 per day for a full set of skis or €30 per day for a snowboard set). There's no accommodation available at the ski station, but you can easily find inexpensive hotels in the nearby village of Rascafría. Hotel Marcos (Avda de Paular, 34km 604, Rascafría, 91 869 01 53, www.hotelmarcos.com) offers country-style rooms at standard prices.

Getting there By train: hourly from Chamartín or Atocha, change train at Cercedilla for Cotos. First train leaves 8am daily; last train returns 5.43pm Mon-Thur, 7.43pm Fri and 6.43pm Sat, Sun. By bus: 684 from Moncloa.

La Pinilla

<http://lapinilla.es>

Offering tempting discount packages during *puentes*, this



Puerta de Navacerrada

Photo: Nellie Huang

InMadrid FIXTURE FIX

■ Compiled by Keith Miles

Football

La Liga

2 Dec Xerez v Barcelona
6 Dec Real Madrid v Almería
6 Dec Deportivo v Barcelona
6 Dec Xerez v Atlético Madrid
6 Dec Villarreal v Getafe
13 Dec Valencia v Real Madrid
13 Dec Barcelona v Espanyol
13 Dec Atlético Madrid v Villarreal
13 Dec Getafe v Tenerife
20 Dec Real Madrid v Zaragoza
20 Dec Tenerife v Atlético Madrid
20 Dec Sevilla v Getafe

Champions League

8 Dec 8.45pm—Atlético Madrid v Porto
8 Dec 8.45pm—Besiktas v CSKA Moscow
8 Dec 8.45pm—Chelsea v Apoel Nicosia
8 Dec 8.45pm—FC Zurich v AC Milan
8 Dec 8.45pm—Juventus v Bayern Munich
8 Dec 8.45pm—Maccabi Haifa v Bordeaux
8 Dec 8.45pm—Marseille v Real Madrid
8 Dec 8.45pm—Wolfsburg v Man Utd
9 Dec 8.45pm—Dynamo Kiev v Barcelona
9 Dec 8.45pm—Inter Milan v Rubin Kazan
9 Dec 8.45pm—Liverpool v Fiorentina
9 Dec 8.45pm—Lyon v Debrecen
9 Dec 8.45pm—Olympiakos v Arsenal
9 Dec 8.45pm—Sevilla v Rangers
9 Dec 8.45pm—Standard Liège v AZ Alkmaar
9 Dec 8.45pm—Stuttgart v Unirea Urziceni

Premier League

5 Dec 6.30pm—Man City v Chelsea
12 Dec 6.30pm—Man Utd v Aston Villa
13 Dec 5pm—Liverpool v Arsenal
16 Dec 9pm—Tottenham v Man City
27 Dec 2.30pm—Arsenal v Aston Villa
29 Dec 8.45pm—Aston Villa v Liverpool

World Cup

4 Dec 6pm—World Cup finals draw

Tennis

4-6 Dec Davis Cup Final, Spain v Czech Republic, Barcelona

Athletics

31 Dec 6pm—San Silvestre Vallecana, 10km run. www.sansilvestrevallecana.com

Cricket

1 Nov-18 Jan 2010 England tour of South Africa



Valdesqui

ski station sure knows how to draw in the crowd. With a young and vibrant vibe, La Pinilla caters more to youngsters than families. Off season, you can try out dirt-biking in its biking park, where riding up and down sky-high slopes is just part of the adventure. Accommodation-wise, take your pick from tons of *albergues* and budget hotels within the ski centre. Complete ski equipment rental on site costs from €23 to €29 per day. This station is the largest of the lot, with a 2,600-foot vertical slope suitable for skiers of all levels. The best part of all is that 75 per cent of its terrain is covered by snow-making machines, guaranteeing enough snow to last through the season!

Getting there By bus: Continental Auto buses leave Plaza de Castilla on Fri at 9am, 5pm and 7.30pm, return Sun only at 10am, 5.30pm and 9.45pm. Journey time: 50mins.

La Covatilla

www.sierradebejar-lacovatilla.com

Hidden in the Sierra de Béjar, this new ski station is slightly further out, lying 202 kilometres from Madrid in Salamanca province. A newcomer to the skiing scene, its facilities and equipment are all in mint condition and, as it's still largely undiscovered, you won't be stuck in line. The station's rather small, but there are already plans to expand it. Advanced skiers will be keen to show off their skills on its challenging S-course slope. On weekends, the price of a day pass is a rather steep €35, with half-day tickets at €25. The small hotel-restaurant in the ski station gets booked up quickly, especially during peak season, so be sure to

reserve in advance. The next nearest accommodation is in the village of Béjar, 17 kilometres away. Ski classes at the station can be booked online at www.escuelabejaranadeesqui.com.

Getting there By bus: Catch the CEVESA (www.cevesa.es) bus from Príncipe Pío to Béjar at 8.30am, 4.10pm and 8.30pm (weekends only). The returning bus leaves at 7.45am, 10am and 3.45pm from Mon-Sat; 4.45pm and 7.45pm Sun.

Madrid Snow Zone

www.madridsnowzone.com

Don't be fooled by the slightly juvenile atmosphere, this indoor ski slope can be a pretty fun experience for both children and adults. It guarantees you snow and ice-cold temperatures 365 days a year—a perfect alternative to traipsing up the nearby mountains in search of snow. Located within the Xanadú shopping centre in Leganés, the snow park offers a 250-metre ski slope for skiers of all levels. Granted, the trails might not be wildly extensive, but who said skiing needs to be an all-day activity? In the height of summer, you could easily spend an hour sliding around in the snow, then head back out into the sun or the cool of the shopping centre. Entrance costs €19 per hour or €33 a day, or €36 an hour or €50 a day with equipment hire.

Getting there By bus: 496, 498, 524 or 528 from Príncipe Pío.

Note: All prices quoted are high season prices; please check the ski stations' websites for other prices. For detailed train schedule, see www.renfe.es.

