

If you want to see how the other half ski, there's only one resort, says Alex Gorton

# High society

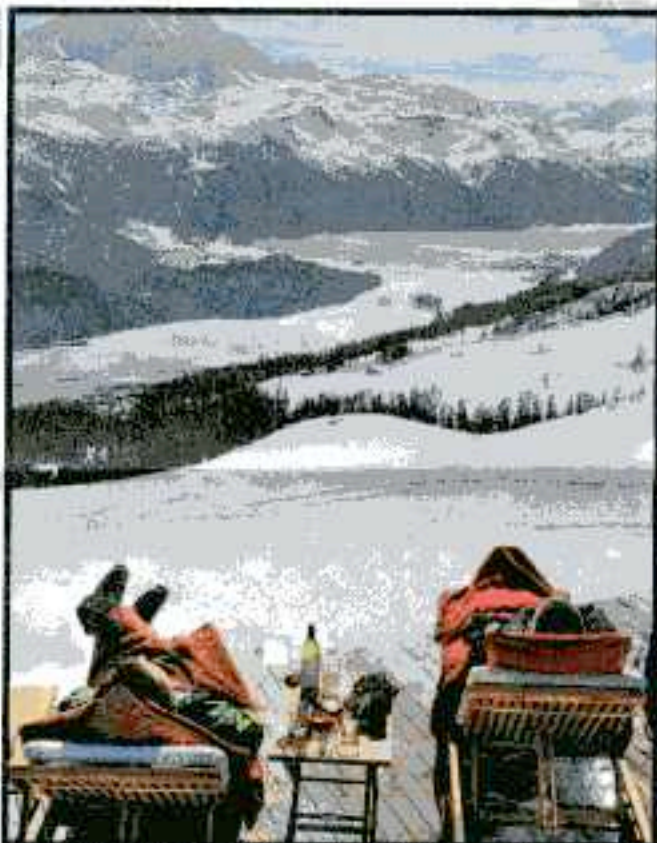
**P**ECA, the anti-fur group with a penchant for splashing paint, would love a field day in St Moritz.

Close by, some far in this tiny Swiss alpine town that people eye on safari, Chamonix, Zermatt, Cortina—all the big names—are busy selling a peculiar race of warm, furry items (hats, coats, boots; you name it, it's got fur) and smoothly instructional snow-sports-wizards and a wrap-around jacket and anyone else that you'd like to see.

But that, of course, is St Moritz, a mix of old-world swains and new millennium glamour, where you'll find Swiss alpine like Cresta Run and one absolutely, resolutely main draw for tourists: It attracts celebrities and old money who own the town, all of which stay at Badrutts Palace, the imposing hotel in prime position on the heart of town. This is a hotel where a few weeks ago a British Queen (Elizabeth II) was welcomed in aid of charity for £299,177. It was bought by a young woman from Moscow, who paid double the usual retail value just to have it listed out in the national columns.

Badrutts is also home to the town's most happening club, Kluge's, the town's famous skating rink, the Ratskeller Bar; a branch of Nobu; and the private Casanova Ski Club, which counts the Aga Khan as a member. It also hosts the best New Year's Eve party, tickets to which last year cost £244 per person, just to enter the hotel after midnight to see the decorations and have a drink was £254 per person, and you, there was a pattern.

Yet Badrutts is a surprisingly unsexy place, despite being full of glamorous events, many of which are spread across two and was Italian couple who had been coming for the past 25 years) and the old celebrity Dietsch-Kind returned to for afternoon



**A class above** THE VIEW FROM ST MORITZ, SET TO ENJOY THE SCENIC, WILL TEST YOUR HEALTH AWAY

tea. If you weren't bothered with making it up the mountain, you could certainly spend your entire holiday living from the hotel site to afternoon tea and then onto Nobu and the King's Club.

But people tend to come to St Moritz to be seen, which means making it up the slopes if only for the mountain restaurants.

To never miss a big big breakfast something like white truffles and caviar before, but in the Champagne tent at the start

of the Cortina ski area, it's clearly the same thing. If people can't see themselves away from the Champagne bar or the similarly swanky Le Merano restaurant, the thing itself is great. There are three areas, covering around 300km of pistes. Generally the snow is reliable and the weather is fantastic.

Back down in town, there's plenty going on for non-skiers: The historic Cresta Run has been an annual event for 110 years and is open to paying

guests (though in the spirit of all things elegant and old school, no women are allowed). Families can join a polo team and go for a run, though if this sounds a little too far-seeing, there's Champagne to be sipped and sports to watch, such as the White Turf horse-racing events, ice polo and show jumping on the town's lake.

But is it a place for the (jaded) holidaymaker? The one without friends to spend on a week's holiday? The answer, surprisingly, is

## ESSENTIALS

### Getting there

Schwarzenberg (04144 202002) [www.pensionhotel.com](http://www.pensionhotel.com) offers four nights' b&b at Badrutts Palace from £1,086 per person, including return flights from London to Zurich. If you're on a tighter budget, try Hotel Palace (041 2001 81 837) £200 [www.hotelpalace.com](http://www.hotelpalace.com). If a good-value, mid-range hotel in the centre of town, it also offers three nights' b&b from £200, including a three-day package for the Upper Engadine valley and one day's hire of a bicycle. (041 2001 0905) [www.hotelpalace.com](http://www.hotelpalace.com). (See from £200) [www.hotelpalace.com](http://www.hotelpalace.com). The train to St Moritz is Zurich and Chur (both around £40 return).

### Eating out

John's Table (041 2001 25 202) [www.johnstables.com](http://www.johnstables.com) is a Michelin-starred and Badrutts is a nice, casual restaurant. Head to Nobu in Badrutts for Moritz's Japanese health clinic. A cheaper alternative is Casanova (041 2001 824 9206), which serves pizza and drinks. La Suite (041 2001 2001) [www.lasuite.com](http://www.lasuite.com) is a nice place to go for pizza.

yes. There are several well-priced hotels (as well as affordable restaurants). And everywhere the millionaire go (with the exception of the 'swimmers' club), you can go too, allowing you, should you wish, to rub shoulders with the great and the glamorous.

It may sound depressing to be sipping a Cote while everyone else is guzzling Champagne, but the mood is so relaxing you won't help but feel involved. The very rich love for riveting people-watching.