

ZURICH

About town

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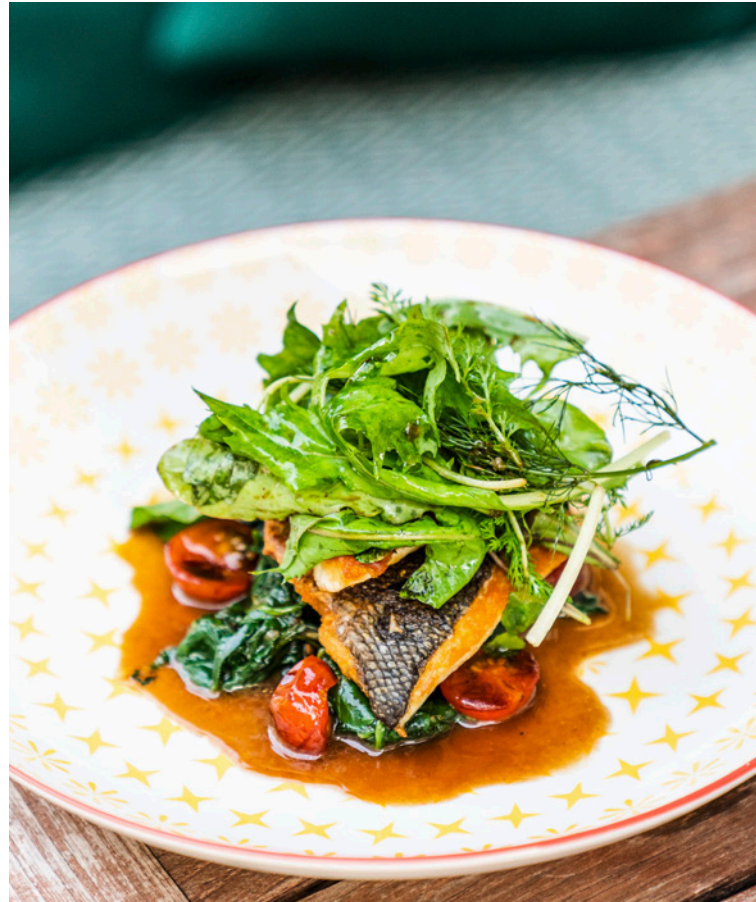
The Uetliberg mountain in Zurich may not technically be part of the Alps and yet this is where our Grand Tour Deluxe of Alpine Passes begins. From there, it's on through the Swiss Alps. From Zurich to Andermatt to Zermatt and finally to Crans-Montana. Forget chalets – four of the 39 Swiss Deluxe Hotels provide the accommodation on this grand tour of the mountains. Four hotels in four days. Starting at the legendary Baur au Lac, the ideal base for discerning guests hoping to explore Switzerland's postcard-city. Johannes Baur spotted the potential in this stunning location 175 years ago even though the area around the lake basin was just wasteland in the mid-19th century.

This five-star hotel is perfectly positioned for guests planning to spend a few days in Zurich. A spot of shopping along Bahnhofstrasse and a stroll around the lake sounds like a plan! On Tuesdays and Fridays, the vegetable and flower market around the pavilion at Bürkliplatz is well worth a look and it's only a 30-second walk from the hotel. If you prefer hunting for antiques, the flea market comes to town on Saturdays.

You don't have to travel far for your caffeine fix or tasty treats. *Bar 45* on Bahnhofstrasse serves the best coffee in town if that helps narrow it down for you. Or why not enjoy a drink in the pretty courtyard at *Milchbar* with the trickling sound of the fountain

in the background? Head down to the other end of Bahnhofstrasse for a simple lunch made with local produce at *Lotti*. What about dinner reservations? Laurent Eperon at Pavillon (18 GaultMillau points and two Michelin stars) really knows how to spoil his guests from Tuesday to Saturday evening, while traditional brasserie dishes are on the menu at the fabulous *Baur's*.

There are a couple of other options just a stone's throw away from the hotel. Stefan Heilemann, GaultMillau 2021 Chef of the Year, is at the helm at the Hotel Widder on Rennweg, another Swiss Deluxe Hotel. And meat is what the *AuGust Brasserie* does best. All kinds of charcuterie, veal in a white wine and mushroom sauce, meatloaf with potato salad and sausages from the local butcher are just some of the tantalizing Zurich specialities served up in this laid-back setting.



Now it's time to hop on the train to our next stop, Andermatt. On the Treno Gottardo along the Gotthard panorama route and into the mountain village in the canton of Uri. You can get to Ticino quicker on other lines, but on this route you can still see "s'Chileli vo Wasse", the church in Wassen in Uri three times thanks to the loop tunnel. After a two-hour journey, it's time to check in at The Chedi.

ANDERMATT

Dim sum & Greek gods



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Immediately upon entering The Chedi, guests could be forgiven for dropping their jaws in utter amazement. Luckily, face masks will disguise their facial expressions in good manner. The number one address in Andermatt and arguably one of Switzerland's swankiest Alpine sleepers, The Chedi is a firm favourite of stylish domestic and international crowds during both the winter and summer months. Located in a mammoth chalet of epic proportions,

it engulfs visitors in its Asian-inspired ambiance, bringing them into a world not often seen in other hotels of this calibre. The ultra-contemporary grandeur is masterfully paired with sober understatement.

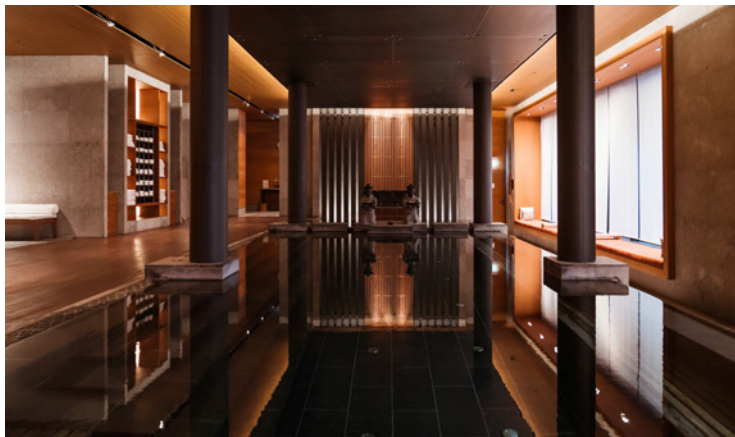
Andermatt is a mountain village with a tumultuous past. It was always an important stop on the transit route between the north and south of Switzerland. Not to mention that Goethe was a fan of the region. Whilst the wartime periods brought the army here, 007 Sean Connery upped the sophistication stakes when filming the Bond film *Goldfinger* in the area. When the military withdrew, a lot of jobs disappeared and it took billionaire businessman Samih Sawiris to bring people back. The Chedi was the first-ever hotel in the Andermatt Swiss Alps. As Sawiris' projects picked up pace, the village has been given a new lease of life. Buildings were renovated and new boutiques and wine bars started popping up.

If you love outdoor pursuits, Andermatt is the village for you. The rough, barren terrain is wild and natural. Looking down from the mountains, the view of the Ticino, Uri, Grison and Valais Alps is nothing short of breathtaking. Andermatt is right in the middle, linking the cantons via the Furka, Oberalp and Gotthard Passes. The Alpine passes on the Grand Tour of Switzerland are ideal for drivers looking for an adrenaline kick but should probably be avoided by any passengers with a nervous disposition.

Change is afoot up in the mountains too. Last year saw The Chedi open up a branch of The Japanese Restaurant 2344 metres above sea level up on Mount Gütsch. In the summer months, Dietmar Sawyere cooks up a storm here every Friday, Saturday and Sunday lunchtime. Obviously one restaurant is never going to be enough. And so Markus Neff (previously awarded 18 GaultMillau points at the Fletschhorn Country Hotel in Saas-Fee) serves up gourmet cuisine at the Bergrestaurant Gütsch. Back at The Chedi itself, you can take your pick between The Japanese and The Restaurant. Fancy Asian food to share? The Restaurant menu is packed with delicacies like the Thai *yam nuea*

beef salad, *dim sum* with all kinds of fillings, salmon *tikka* and prawn *pad thai*.

After a relaxing spa session, your next stop has to be the hotel bar. Bar Manager Marie Gerber and her team have created a menu of seriously cool signature drinks. The theme at the moment is Greek gods and goddesses... Why not order a



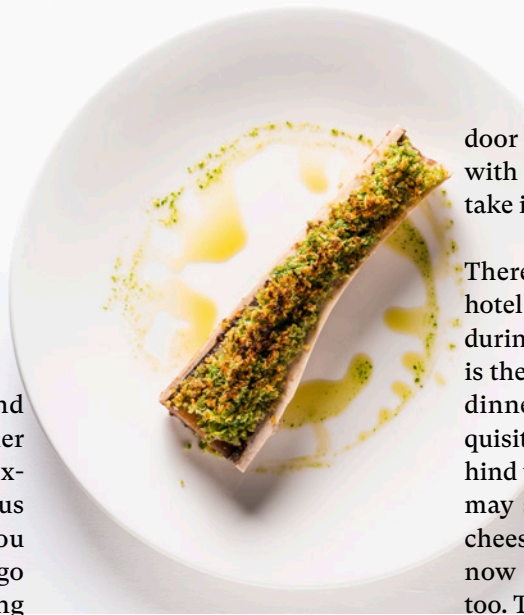
Poseidon? This cocktail of gin, yuzu sake and a black tea and soya reduction is served in a pouch. Or maybe a *Hestia*? Although, with chicken broth foam as one of the ingredients, this concoction is not for the faint-hearted. All of the syrups are made in-house and old coffee grounds are used to create a cold brew syrup.

Where are we heading to next on this Grand Tour Deluxe? Let's hop onto the Glacier Express for a leisurely ride over to Zermatt. Be sure to take in the spectacular panoramic views along the way!



Onwards with the Grand Tour Deluxe! The Glacier Express, the slowest express train in the world, takes us from Andermatt to Zermatt. You wouldn't want this train ride to go any faster. Just imagine not being able to savour the stunning view! After the Furka Pass, the landscape starts to get prettier. If you're desperate to see the Matterhorn, you'll have to be patient and wait until you've arrived in the village. Just keep your fingers crossed for a clear day. Do try to remember, though, that Zermatt does have plenty more to offer than just its famous mountain. Did you know that there is no other place in the mountains with so many GaultMillau points? The restaurateurs in the Valais region are also known for their never-ending innovation and experimentation. Vrony Cotting-Julen's *@Paradise* and Dani Lauber's new *Cervo* are two fine examples. To be honest, though, the trusty traditional options are as good as ever.

If you're looking to stay in Zermatt, you'll find yourself spoilt for choice. Even if you're splashing out on a luxury hotel. After all, there are three Swiss Deluxe Hotels in the village. The Mont Cervin Palace and the Zermatterhof are in the centre, whilst the Riffelalp stands 2222 metres above sea level. You can either brave the journey to that one on foot or hop on the Gornergrat mountain rack railway and the hotel's own train. A swim in the out-



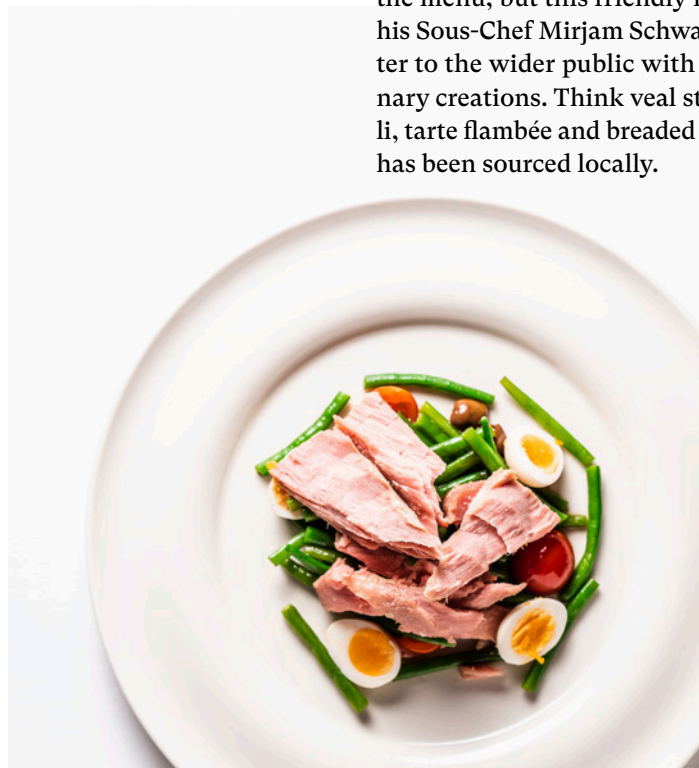
door pool here is a special experience, with a clear view of the Matterhorn to take in and enjoy.

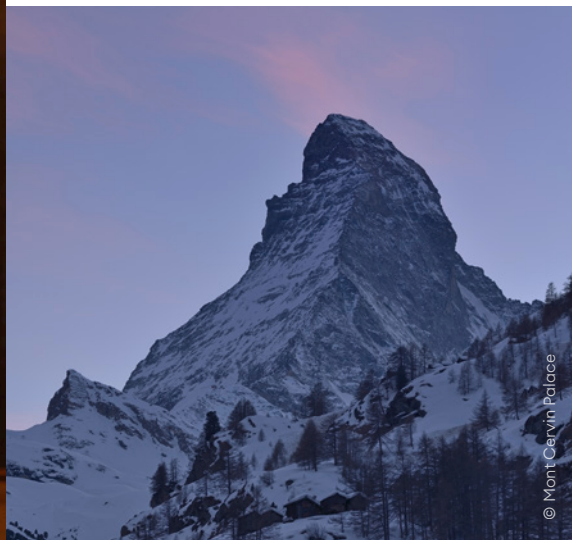
There are two restaurants open at the hotel during the summer and one extra during the winter. The *Al Bosco* terrace is the lunchtime spot of choice, whilst dinner at the *Alexandre* is simply exquisite. Luigi Lafranco is the talent behind the gastronomic offering here. He may serve up cured meat and cream cheese from his own cows, but he has now started to delight vegan diners too. The Italian takes it all in his stride. "There are so many incredible vegetables to choose from. And we have the demand for them," he explains. If you are a carnivore yourself, the Lostallo salmon and Sardinian fregola pasta with prawns and aubergine mousse come highly recommended.

ZERMATT

Spoilt for choice

Bern-born Heinz Rufibach is a culinary legend in the village. His *Prato Borni* restaurant has been awarded 16 GaultMillau points, whilst *Brasserie Lusi* has recently been added to the guide with 13 points. If the weather is on your side, you can enjoy a meal out on the gorgeous terrace. Snails, tête de veau and tripe may stand proudly on the menu, but this friendly foodie and his Sous-Chef Mirjam Schwarz also cater to the wider public with their culinary creations. Think veal steak ravioli, tarte flambée and breaded perch that has been sourced locally.





Delicious food is on the menu at the village's third Swiss Deluxe Hotel too. Chef René 'Cookie' Kockelkoren grills meat over an open flame at the *Grill Le Cervin*. From December, Sicilians Andrea Migliaccio and Salvatore Elefante will be cooking up a storm at *Ristorante Capri* and spending the winter in Zermatt. *Myoko*, a Japanese sushi and teppanyaki restaurant with 13 Gault-Millau points, is just opposite. And there's even a cool Peruvian restaurant at the Hotel Schweizerhof, a partner establishment. Head to *La Muña* for gambero rosso prawns with caviar, sea bream ceviche with black truffles, yellow tail carpaccio and baby spinach.

The next stop on the Grand Tour Deluxe? Let's board the train to Crans-Montana, where the Guarda Golf Swiss Deluxe Hotel is waiting for us.

CRANS-MONTANA

James Bond & Mont Blanc

Our final destination is Crans-Montana. The train from Zermatt takes us down into the Rhône Valley and on to Sierre, crossing the so-called Röstigraben cultural border on the way. And then back up we go. 1477 metres above sea level to be precise. The Funi cable car between Siders and Crans-Montana will take you up almost 1,000 metres. On the Grand Tour Deluxe, there's a choice of two places to stay: Do you fancy checking into the Guarda Golf Hotel & Residences or the LeCrans Hôtel & Spa? If you're a keen golfer, it's a no-brainer since the golf course is right on your doorstep at the Guarda Golf. More of a foodie? The LeCrans will be right up your alley, with its *Le Mont Blanc* restaurant having been awarded 17 Gault-Millau points.

Nati Felli is the owner, manager and all-round good fella behind the Guarda Golf. She goes the extra mile to keep every one of her guests happy. Two years ago, she extended the luxury hotel by adding seven premium suites in an adjacent building. Each of the suites has a living space with a fireplace, up to three bedrooms with en suites, a terrace and (of course) a kitchen. The question is just how much cooking are you really going to get round to? A large indoor pool, sauna and steam room await in the spa area. If you're a golfer, though, you may be more tempted to head to the gym to work on your swing. This Swiss Deluxe

Hotel even has its own cinema, which was a real bonus during lockdown. What's the movie link here? James Bond himself, Roger Moore, was a regular guest at the Guarda Golf.

Diners at *Restaurant Five* are treated to a menu of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean delights, including hummus, falafel, tsatsiki and stuffed vine leaves. Nati Felli is a Brazilian native and so *pão de queijo* obviously couldn't be missing from the menu. Just be warned that these little cheesy dough balls are rather moreish. This could be a problem if you've got a later reservation at *Le Mont Blanc* restaurant at the LeCrans. Yannick Crepaux has been the chef here since last year. Not to be confused with his predecessor Pierre Crepaud. These two share more than just sim-



© Guarda Golf Hotel & Residences



ilar names – their careers are closely intertwined. Originally Crepaud's Sous-Chef, Crepau managed to hold onto the 17 GaultMillau points after his mentor's departure.

Produce from the Valais region is still very much on the menu despite the change at the helm. Raron perch fillets make for one lovely local dish, served up with seasonal tomatoes and elderflowers from the neighbouring village of Chermignon. The main course of Arctic char from Lake Geneva is as fresh as it gets and the Valais apricots go beautifully with the beer-infused pork. Antoine

Idenn is the genius behind the exceptional dessert of a sweet and sour peach variation hidden beneath a half-sphere meringue with a garnish of candyfloss to finish it off.

As one of the smaller Swiss Deluxe Hotels, the *LeCrans* has just eight suites and seven standard rooms. The wood-heavy decor creates a cosy, snug atmosphere. The hiking trails right on the doorstep are perfect for the summer months, but this is a ski-in, ski-out hotel during the winter. Relaxation is high on the agenda too thanks to the sauna, hammam steam bath and two pools. ♦