



PHOTOS: SWITZERLAND TOURISM

**TRAVEL** Going off track

# That James Bond feeling

Oozing sophistication and movie star glamour, St Moritz in Switzerland will leave you starstruck

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**W**hat do I pack?" That's the foremost question on our mind when travelling to the glitzy resort town of St Moritz on the Southern side of the Swiss Alps. King Carl Gustaf of Sweden is only one of the many prominent guests that can be spotted wandering around the town, as are movie stars and royalty from around the world, so sartorial finesse is essential here. Yet, before we give you the lowdown on the higher-ups, it is important to know what is

catapulted this benign Swiss ski town to global fame. **IT STARTED WITH A BET** In 1864, over a round of whisky, hotelier Johannes Badrutt made a bold wager with some of his English summer guests: he promised them that if they came back in the winter, they would still be able to enjoy the mild Engadine sunshine on his terrace in their shirtsleeves. If not, he would pay their travel costs. The guests were sceptical but decided to take him on. They came back at Christmas and loved it so much that they stuck on in St Moritz till Easter, tanned,

relaxed and happy. And so, 150 years ago, word of St Moritz's pleasant climate and scenic beauty spread across England. However, Europe's well-heeled were already flocking to St Moritz in the summer to visit the iron-rich mineral springs, which were discovered here over 3,000 years ago. Today, this stylish ski paradise never ceases to amaze as it constantly innovates to stay ahead of the pack. As a matter of fact, many firsts can be added to St Moritz's roster: Switzerland's first electric light shone here, Europe's first Palace Hotel was built here, and new sports have been created here that have gone on to achieve worldwide popularity — the most recent being kite-sailing on the nearby Lake Silvaplana.

**SKI LIKE THE STARS** "Bend ze knees!" yells our ski instructor Marcos as we totter on the beginner's slopes for our first lesson of the day. For skiing enthusiasts, there are 350 kilometres of pistes with a state-of-the-art infrastructure to support the same. Other winter sports include dog-sledging, snowshoeing, and the famous Cresta Run. More off-beat winter activities include polo, horse racing and ice cricket. It's a good idea to pick up a Visitor's Card that doubles as a

## GETTING THERE

From Zurich, the journey by car takes about two and a half hours (220 kilometres). By train, there are several intercity connections to St Moritz from Basel and Zurich. The famous panoramic trips on the Glacier Express run from Zermatt to St. Moritz and link the sunny Valais with the Engadine. The train ride from Zurich airport to St Moritz takes about three and three-quarter hours.

**WHERE TO STAY** Nira Alpina, a charming and unpretentious place offers a location second to none because of its instant access to the ski regions. For the ultimate luxe experience, it has to be the Badrutt's Palace Hotel, with 165 rooms and 30 suites, serving celebrities and royalty since 1896.

**BEST TIME TO VISIT** December to March

**RECOMMENDED LENGTH OF VISIT** Three-four days



Top: The Kempinski Grand Hotel Des Bains in St Moritz; Bottom: The Alpine slopes that offer great skiing opportunities

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 44