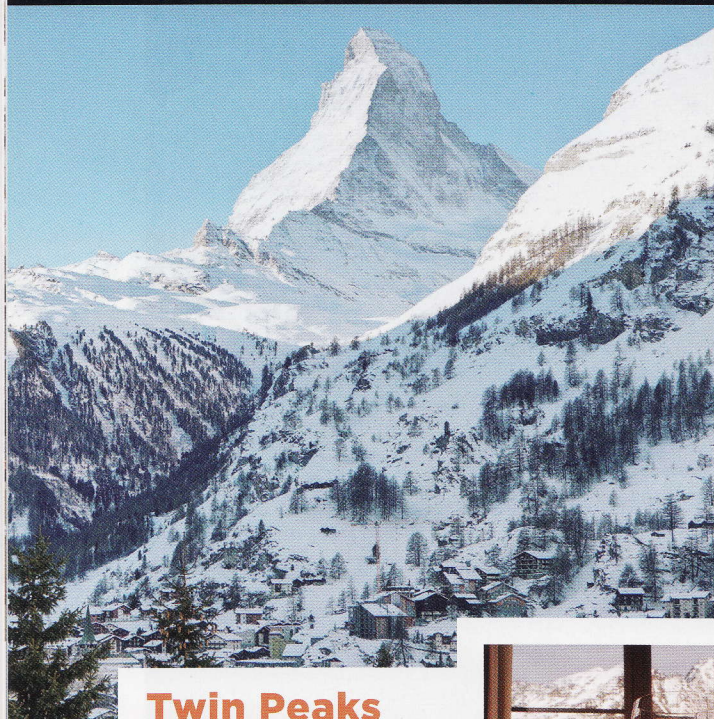


BITES

GOURMET SKIING Gabriella le Breton tastes the best of the Alps



Twin Peaks

Zermatt and Saas Fee: two heartbreakingly beautiful Swiss towns just nine miles apart (as a brave crow flies) across glacial valleys. Thanks to their lofty positions, both places vie for the attention of climbers and skiers, the latter enjoying virtually year-round glacier skiing. Thanks in part to the Matterhorn, which dominates Zermatt's skyline, it has been argued that Saas Fee is 'a poor man's Zermatt'. However, encircled by 13 peaks over 4,000m, Saas Fee has comparably dramatic scenery. Furthermore, in recent years Saas Fee has been escalating its unofficial battle with Zermatt for the title of culinary king of the skiing world. Between them, Zermatt and Saas



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN IMAGE The view from Chalet les Anges. Cervo. Vernissage. Fletschhorn



Fee boast a stellar line-up of restaurants. While few would argue that

Zermatt takes the crown for dining, the relatively petite Saas Fee offers strong competition in the town itself. Among the 42 restaurants that dot its streets, visitors will find Swiss fondue houses, cheery trattorias, a cow-hide decorated steak house and contemporary, world-class restaurants. Whether you go for Zermatt or Saas Fee, you'll be spoiled for foodie choice. For tips on how to spend a day in each, see right.

STAR QUALITY

While Zermatt and Saas Fee wage gentle culinary war with each other, the accolade of 'ski resort with the greatest concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants' goes to the little-known Alta Badia, tucked away in Italy's South Tyrol. It has racked up 16 Michelin stars, thanks to its combination of Austrian, Italian and local Ladin cuisine. The 'Dolomiti' (three of Alta Badia's key



chefs) are now working with fellow Alpine chefs to create signature dishes for ten mountain refuges. Serious gastronomes should visit Alta Badia from January 16-22, 2011, when the region will host the sixth annual Chef's Cup, a week-long food and wine festival. Visit www.altabadia.org for further information. Rosa Alpina, Alta Badia's best hotel, has doubles from £296. Call 00-39-0471 849 500; www.rosalpina.it

ZERMATT

- 8am** Breakfast in bed at Chalet les Anges, watching the sun hit the Matterhorn (00-35-31 288 6634; www.elysiancollection.com)
- 11am** Hike to the Gandeggihütte for breathtaking views and fresh pastries (00-41-79 607 8868)
- 1pm** Leisurely lunch at Franz & Heidi's Findlerhof restaurant in the hamlet of Findeln (00-41-27 967 2588; www.findlerhof.ch)
- 3pm** Blackberry cake and coffee in the cosy Tuftern hut (00-41-27 967 5495)
- 4pm** Après-ski sustenance at Cervo, the chic new slope-side restaurant (00-41-27 968 1212; www.cervo.ch)
- 6pm** Cocktails and canapés in Vernissage, the trendy bar, gallery and cinema (00-41-27 967 6636; www.vernissage-zermatt.ch)
- 7pm** Melt-in-the-mouth lamb with local wines at Le Mazot (00-41-27 966 0606; www.lemazotzermatt.ch)
- 11pm** Cigars and digestifs at the Havanna bar, Mont Cervin (00-41-27 668 888; www.seilerhotels.ch)

SAAS FEE

- 8am** Buffet breakfast at the five-star Ferienart Hotel (00-41-27 958 1900; www.ferienart.ch)
- 11am** A short hike to Britannia Hütte for unctuous hot chocolate (00-41-27 957 2288; www.britannia.ch)
- 1pm** Hearty rösti at the tiny mountain hut Vernissage Berghaus Plattjen (00-41-27 957 1205; www.ferienart.ch)
- 3pm** Apple strudel by the open fire at Gletschergrotte (00-41-279 572 160; www.gletschergrotte.ch)
- 4pm** Après-ski glühwein at mountain hut Zur Mühle (www.moulin-saas-fee.ch)
- 5pm** Join an informal tutored tasting of Valais wines (00-41-279 581 858; www.saas-fee.ch)
- 7pm** Feast on Markus Neff's superb cuisine at the Fletschhorn (00-41-279 572 131; www.fletschhorn.ch)
- 11pm** Dance off the calories in the Popcorn Bar (00-41-27 958 7706; www.popcorn.ch)