

Tables overlooking the slopes at El Paradiso



THE 20 BEST RESTAURANTS IN THE ALPS

EUROPE A good lunch on the slopes is an essential ingredient of the day for most skiers, among them our gourmet mountain guide, Peter Hardy

ST MORITZ, SWITZERLAND El Paradiso

Essentially a mountain hut in the Corviglia ski area, El Paradiso has a gourmet restaurant (with fur-lined seating on its terrace and candelabra on the bar) offering two sittings each day, at 11.30am and 2pm. Iranian caviar and white Alba as well as black Périgord truffles are in abundance, and specialities include Maine lobster spaghetti with tarragon, fondue, coq au vin and *Kaiserschmarrn* (diced sweet pancake) with caramelised

Tuna sashimi and, right, meringue at La Marmite, in St Moritz



► apple. According to Serena Sutcliffe, the head of Sotheby's international wine department, El Paradiso has 'the greatest mountain wine list in the world'.

LUNCH FOR TWO Minimum charge SFr140 (about £80). *Prices throughout exclude wine*

ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS Possible, via the Suvretta/Chasellas chair-lift and with a 10-minute walk

RESERVATIONS 00 41 81 833 4002; www.el-paradiso.ch

ST MORITZ, SWITZERLAND La Marmite

In the Corviglia ski area above St Moritz is the highest and most enterprising 'food court' in the world: its six restaurants offer everything from instant fodder for impoverished snowboarders to fine dining for banking-bonus beneficiaries, the latter in La Marmite. The blockhouse exterior of La Marmite is deceptive, for chef Reto Mathis has created one of the best, and most expensive, mountain restaurants. A warm lobster salad with truffles might be followed by rack of red deer in a herb crust, or pan-fried duck liver in a truffle sauce.

LUNCH FOR TWO From about £80

ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS Easy, by train from Chantarella

RESERVATIONS 00 41 81 833 6355; www.mathisfood.ch

ST ANTON, AUSTRIA Verwall Stube

Lift companies are good at grooming pistes, usually bad at running restaurants. Which makes the Verwall Stube exceptional: set at the top of the Galzig gondola, it's

a place where on a bad-weather afternoon you'll be content to linger until its owners run the last lift down to the valley. Fresh fish and seafood, delivered daily via Zürich airport, is the speciality; the bouillabaisse would put many a restaurant in Marseille to shame. The cellar is dominated by fine Austrian wines and is not overpriced.

LUNCH FOR TWO From about €70

ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS Easy, by gondola from the valley

RESERVATIONS 00 43 5446 235 2501

ST CHRISTOPH, AUSTRIA Hospiz Alm

Waiters in brown-suede knickerbockers and waitresses in puff-sleeved dirndl dresses scurry around the definitive mountain

restaurant of the Arlberg ski area. You can eat on the terrace or in the charming, wood-clad dining room. Downstairs (or, for those in ski boots, down a corkscrew slide) is a cellar with an extraordinary collection of Nebuchadnezzars of vintage Bordeaux. A characteristic meal here would be grilled sardines on a bed of piri-piri spaghetti, followed by veal Wiener schnitzel; but simple mountain stalwarts such as boiled sausages with bread and mustard are also available.

LUNCH FOR TWO From about €60
ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS Easy, by road from St Anton

RESERVATIONS 00 43 5446 3625; www.hospizalm.at

CERVINIA, ITALY Chalet Etoile

Situated just beneath the Rocce Nere chair-lift, Chalet Etoile is the mountain restaurant of choice on the Italian side of the Matterhorn. Ulla di Frassy and her husband Cesare ride up here on their snowmobiles before dawn each morning to start work. They change the menu daily, but fresh and innovative pasta dishes and slow-roasted leg of pork are regulars. Spicy fish soup is my particular favourite. The wine list is thoughtful and reasonably priced. A free grappa accompanies the bill.

LUNCH FOR TWO From about €60

ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS A difficult walk up the piste

RESERVATIONS 00 39 0166 940220

VAL D'ISERE, FRANCE Nuvo Self at La Folie Douce

This is the finest self-service restaurant in the Alps. The interior has lots of limed wood, discreet lighting and granite tables. The food is beautifully presented; the smiling staff wear impeccably clean whites. Dishes usually include grilled chicken and lamb casserole. Spaghetti bolognese is served in a tall glass jar to keep it warm when eaten outside. Wines and cheeses can be sampled in the cellar. Those who can't cope without a tablecloth and a waiter can go to La Fruitière, next door. The food is the same there, the price different.

LUNCH FOR TWO From about €40

ACCESS FOR NON-SKIERS Easy, direct by the La Daille gondola

RESERVATIONS 00 33 4 79 06 01 47; www.lafoliedouce.com

MEGEVE, FRANCE L'Alpette

L'Alpette is Megève's most famous mountain restaurant, a favourite in its

