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ISSUE 132 APRIL 2015
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WHY JON OLSSON IS JUMPING AGAIN / MAKE A SKI MOVIE LIKE THE PROS / ON TOUR WITH THE ARMADA CREW / EXPLORE ICELAND'S TROLL PENINSULA / ZERMATT: A LOCAL'S GUIDE



PHOTO: JEREMY BERNARD

Er... WOWZA!

THE WHOLE PACKAGE

Most photographed mountain in the world: tick. Charming, traffic-free village centre: tick. Easy-access backcountry: tick. Year-round skiing: Tick. Sign us up!



MEET THE GUIDE

Not only is Sam Allen in his third year of ski instructing in Zermatt, but he's also the current British and English Indoor Ski Cross champion. Go Sam!

WORDS **MARY CREIGHTON**

Freeriders, tourers and piste-cruisers unite! Here's a resort that will charm you all equally, and not just because of that majestic, skyline-dominating mountain. In the meadows, couloirs and bowls beneath the Matterhorn, there's skiing for everyone: wide and rolling pistes, steep and testing powder runs and some of the best lift-accessed touring in Europe.

The town itself is as all alpine villages should be: quiet, winding lanes lined with ageing chalets and wooden cowsheds break up the glitzy hotels, and, best of all, there's not a car in sight. Only taxis and buses are permitted on Zermatt's hallowed streets, and the quiet gives you more time to reflect on

that oft-photographed Matterhorn vista. Huzzah!

Back to the mountain. It's big: 300km big if you include linked Cervinia (worth popping over to for a cheap lunch, now more so than ever, thank you quantitative easing!). It's high: the slopes reach 3899m, meaning natural snow is a sure thing from early December until late April. Plus, the glacier - complete with halfpipe and funpark - mean you can ski 365 days a year. And it's varied: head to the Gornergrat for quad-building reds, Schwarzsee for tough, tree-lined itineraries or the Stockhorn for moguls and touring.

Oh yes, it can be pricey - especially if you get pulled in by the swanky restaurants. But if you do as local boy Sam Allen does and stock up on CHF8 sandwiches, your bank balance might just survive the trip... ▶

BEST RUN FOR A WARM UP

Riffelberg is the place to go – there are wide, open blues that anyone can ski, surrounded by nice, easy, natural airs on the sides of the piste.

FOR FRESHIES DAYS AFTER A STORM

The Green zone, but I didn't tell you that! If ski patrol catch you there they will pull your pass, so play it safe and head to Gornergrat north face or just under the Eja/Findeln lift.

FOR FREERIDE FORAYS

It's got to be Hochtälli, Stockhorn; it's a big freeride area open to everyone. If you don't believe its credentials, it's home to the Swatch Skiers Cup competition, where European and North American teams battle it out for freeride glory every year.

THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING HERE IS...

The freeriding, the snow-sure altitude, the secret powder stashes, and the summer glacier park. Plus you really don't need a TV here. You can just perch on the balcony and watch the clouds and sky dance around the Matterhorn instead.

THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT ZERMATT IS...

That the Matterhorn is made of chocolate! But seriously? Everyone thinks it's too expensive. If you choose the right week you can actually find some very good deals!

WHAT IS ZERMATT'S BEST-KEPT SECRET?

*Wherever my mates and I built our last kicker!

FOR MOUNTAIN BITES

I love the omelettes at the Gandeggütte up on the glacier. It's very well hidden, so ask a local for directions. Of course, the famed restaurants like Chez Vrony, Zum See and Findlerhof are worth splashing out on at least once.

FOR CHEAP EATS IN TOWN

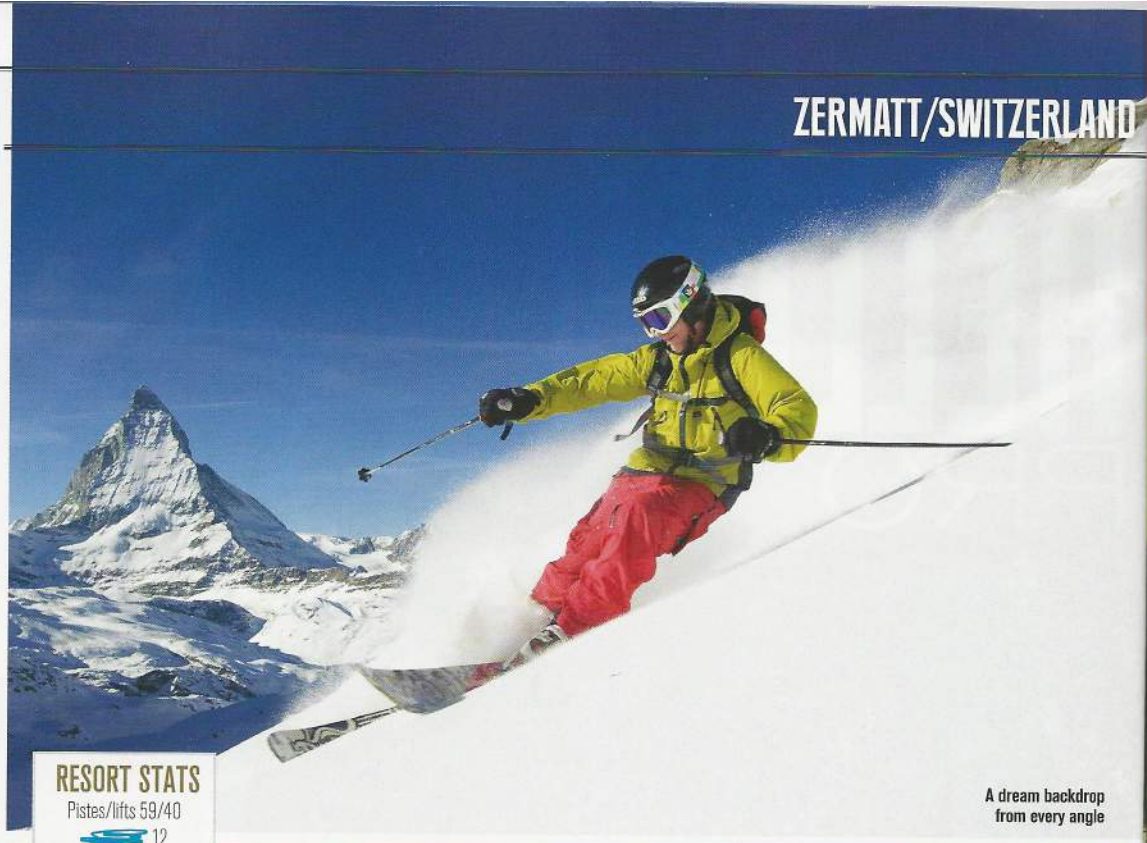
Wilde Hilde! They make the best chicken sandwiches, not just in Zermatt, but in the whole world. And it's just CHF8.5 for a large! Bargain!

FOR A SPLASH-OUT MEAL

The Bubble, home of the best burgers and spare ribs around. And it's part-owned by original British pro freeskiers Glenn Parsons and Mark 'Pocket' Harris. Legends!

FOR AN APRÈS-SKI TIPPLE

Papperla Pub, in the town centre, gets going at 4.30 and doesn't die down until 2am. Henuu Stall, on the mountain, is good too, but you'll have to ski or tumble down so don't get carried away! **FL**



A dream backdrop from every angle

RESORT STATS

Pistes/lifts 59/40

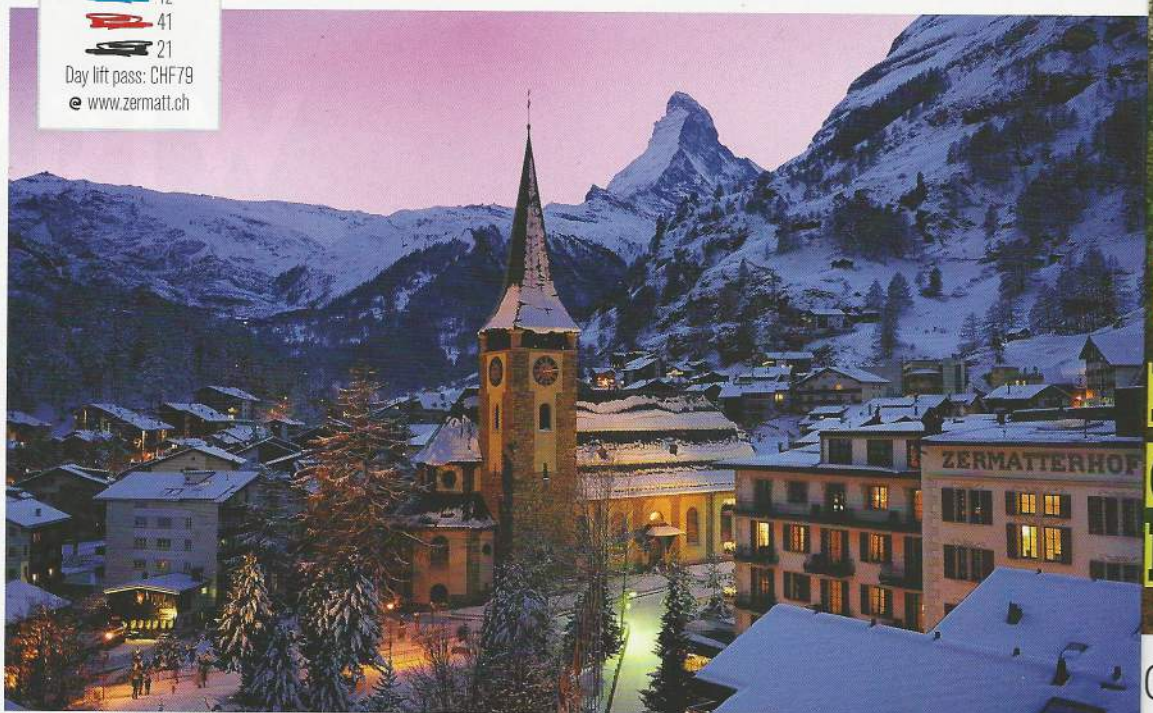
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Day lift pass: CHF79

e www.zermatt.ch



The quaint hamlet of Findeln