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THE WEB'S LEADING TRAVEL HOST & JETSETTER EXTRAORDINAIRE

A Swiss Miss for a Week: The Princess of the Gstaad Palace

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No one has given me a crown (yet) but after my stay at the [Gstaad Palace](#), I felt like I was royalty.



My long journey brought me to idyllic Gstaad but after seeing the *Palace* on the hill, I was instantly re-energized. Speedily, I bumped my roller bags along the village's designer studded main street and out of breath, I pulled them up the hill to the Palace entrance. And as I walked through those gilded gates, off came ordinary life and hello life of an alpine princess.

Inside, the hotel's supreme quality is found in the details: the fresco-ed reception ceiling, the matchbooks inlaid in the Lobby Bar, the extra bathroom amenities and fresh flowers on arrival. The Palace is deceptively large—there are 4 restaurants, a gorgeous oasis Spa, pool, spacious fireplace lobby and my room made me wonder if others could possibly be as large (the answer to that is yes; I saw them. Even larger suites too). Despite the ample space, the Gstaad Palace still feels intimate. The dark wooden accents give it a lodge quality that's quite cozy. Each person there- from housekeeper to receptionist to waiter takes friendly to a new level and made me feel like family.



"Bonjour Miss Ferro," "Buona Sera Miss Ferro"—around every corner I was sincerely greeted—how *did everyone know my name?* As a New Yorker, I was so taken aback by the overt friendliness and it was...surprisingly nice. At the Gstaad Palace, I felt like I was at home (a really lovely, perfectly polished 5 star sprawling mansion home of course).

I almost wept at how comfortable my bed was as I sunk into a much needed nap. The only wake up I could get that wouldn't drive me to rage was seeing the sun set over the snowy mountains, just beyond my balcony. Though the fresh fruits in my room were a thoughtful touch, I could tell I was starved. I decided to start my Swiss feasting right—with dinner at La Fromagerie.





Just walking down to this former bunker, the cozy, wood paneled [La Fromagerie](#) smelled of decadently rich, bubbling alpine cheese. Salivating, I took my place at the table and the overly hospitable Massimo wine and dined me with assorted salads, air cured meats, seafood salads, marinated vegetables—whoa I had to save room!

The “ferrari of fondues” finally appeared—but I could smell the shaved black truffle & champagne pot of Swiss heaven as it was being made. If only I could have put it in my pocket and taken it back to share as there was so much I had to leave!

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Utterly stuffed and ready to die of happiness, Massimo refused to let me throw in the napkin, and out he came with not one, not two, but THREE desserts. It was a particular type of torture to look at perfect pannacotta, fresh made donuts with cream and chocolate and a pineapple carpaccio drizzled with passionfruit and not being able to eat them. The agony! To top off my wondrous first day in Switzerland, I had a heavenly bed just a few floors above.

Day 2 at the Palace started, as you might have guessed, with amazing food. An indulgent breakfast buffet, prepped me for my

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rigorous morning at the Gstaad Palace’s spa. If you need convincing of the royalty status, then this will do it. The spa was a separate, private space with a stream, circular fireplace lounge, indoor/outdoor hot tub, relaxation rooms and snowy views.

I was there to take part in the signature Hammam experience, modeled after a Turkish bath. I had experienced a turkish bath in Istanbul, and though I liked the experience, it was a bit exposing, a bit rough, and a bit offputting (I’m wholeheartedly glad I did it...once). But [Gstaad Palace’s Hammam experience](#) involved many steps perfectly orchestrated steps to complete relaxation.



The two hour experience involves a specific flow through a maze of interconnected rooms. I did the abridged version and filmed on the way (stay tuned for video!) but it was still a full sensory affair. A footbath, a sensory room, the soap scrub, steam shower, private plunge pool and down time in the relaxation lounge were all on the list, and to top it off, a hot stone massage. Seriously? I don’t need to elaborate but it was of course bliss. I had a hard time adjusting to the sun glittering off the snow outside as I stepped over the footbridge from the Asian motif spa, back into reality.

After all these pampering, I was ready for some serious athleticism. I decided to venture out and take advantage of Gstaad’s notorious mountains. My local guide Anita and I took the gondola up one peak, Eggli, and we grabbed our sleds. We were going “sledding!”

What is sledging you might ask? Does it involve a hammer? Is it something that lumberjacks do? It's actually good old-fashioned sledding on what looked like a crude Flexible Flyer. Sledging is not on one hill, like American sledding, but it's actually down a trail. You lean to turn and if you don't get enough speed for the inevitable flats, well, you get up and pull it. It's a beautiful, peaceful way to experience the quiet, snowy forest whizzing by.

Yes I was initially a little afraid because the first hill was steep! And Anita told me to "slow down or brake, dig in your heels." So I did that and didn't account for the furious flurry of snow that blew into my space, leaving me blinded, cold and disoriented until I slowed to a stop. Yikes, that was an initiation. I got the hang of it though and was slightly embarrassed when we encountered small children on the same trail later on. *It's not fair, the Swiss are probably born on sledges...* I used my GoPro Camera so great video should be on it's way.



At the bottom, we were picked up by a horsedrawn sled, naturally, that took Anita and I for a lovely ride along the horse trail, past the cross-country skiers, and into town. We got an up close view of the prestigious *Le Rosey* International preparatory school and we even were able to take a ride down Gstaad village's main street. Cars weren't allowed but horses? Encouraged. The lovely shops all set in chalet-styled buildings were simply perfect.



I ended my day experience with one of my favorite activities when in new countries: going to the grocery store. I needed a few basics which I had forgotten to pack, so Anita kindly drove me to the yes, chalet-styled grocery store. Inside I loved glancing at the types of fresh produce available, the Swiss brands of cereals, and don't get me started on the dairy section (French & Swiss dairy sections make me weak). With a stop a local cheese shop for some truffle fondue packs and Swiss jams & honeys that I fell in love with at breakfast, and back up to my Palace home, we went.

With some more filming of spectacular deluxe suites, I went down to film the Lobby Bar, filling up with the apres ski crowd. Michael, the hotel's marketing director, met me for a cocktail in the famous bar and we chatted about the hotel's history by the fireplace. Our dinner at Gildo's Ristorante was something I had been looking forward too since before my arrival.

Gildo is an icon at the Gstaad Palace. The hotel has played home to many famous guests throughout the years, from Hollywood to politicians to actual royalty. And many have become close friends with Gildo. A reserved Italian man with a stoic stature, his signature yellow framed glasses, Gildo had an aura around him. I felt like he knew many secrets but would share none, yet he would treat anyone from me (not royalty) to a Princess Kate Middleton (actual royalty) exactly the same. We ate in his restaurant, an inviting loft space that hosts chefs from Il Pelicano, Tuscany's famed restaurant, just for the winter months. Michael and I sampled the house specialities, which included Gildo's pasta, handmade to order at your table, and we capped off the meal with crepes Suzette, flambéed theatrically. I loved it

when I was a kid, and I still was delighted when the flame from the cognac almost hit the ceiling.

The one & only, Gildo in his restaurant

Sadly I didn't dance like Elizabeth Taylor and Roger Moore at the legendary **Green Go Nightclub** that night, but I had to pack for my early morning departure the next day. Though I was extremely excited to take a panoramic train through the Swiss alps, all ten hours to St Moritz, I couldn't help thinking, ***Do I really have to leave!!!***

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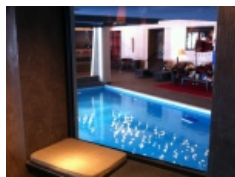
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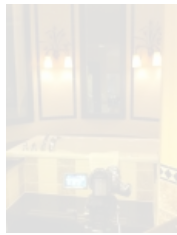
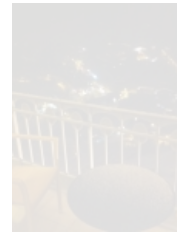
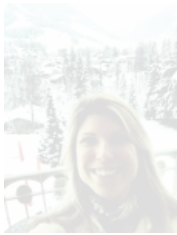
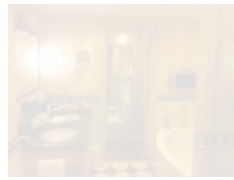
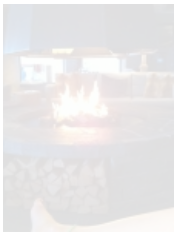


Room with a View



Princess Carriage





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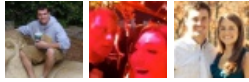
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