

WALKING IN A POLO WONDERLAND

The sport of polo assumed various identities before reaching its current form popularized by the British in the early nineteenth century. But just when the game seemed to have reached a state of predictability came a major plot twist. **BY PAUL RUBIO**



THE SNOW POLO WORLD CUP ST. MORITZ 2014



ST. MORITZ IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS WINTER RESORTS IN THE WORLD.



SWISS-IMAGE.CH/CHRISTIAN PERRIER

ST. MORITZ, SWITZERLAND

Think Switzerland and, almost immediately, images of breathtaking snow-capped mountains, pristine lakes, pastoral landscapes and atmospheric train rides come to mind. From the towering Swiss Alps in the

south to the more than 1,500 azure lakes drenching 6 percent of the land, Switzerland is a stunningly beautiful place that never fails to impress. In the country's breathtaking Engadine valley, adjacent to the southeastern reaches of the Swiss Alps, chic St. Moritz is not only the birthplace of snow polo but also the world's original winter resort town (circa 1864). Thirty years strong in 2015, The Snow Polo World Cup St. Moritz reigns as the world's most coveted winter polo tournament, unfolding on the icy expanses of Lake St. Moritz each January.

SLEEP

With a wealth of historic grande dame hotels, St. Moritz spoils visitors when it comes to posh pads. For formality and elegance, the delightfully ostentatious, century-old Badrutt's Palace Hotel (badruttspalace.com) and the more subdued yet stately Kulm Hotel St. Moritz (kulm.com) are both fit for royalty (and have fittingly hosted kings, queens, princes and princesses over the years). A bit less stuffy and always hot on the polo scene, the circa-1896 Kempinski Grand Hotel des Bains blends classic and modern elements across its stylish guestrooms and suites (kempinski.com/en/st-moritz).

EAT

Splurge on the award-winning haute cuisine of Talvo by Dalsass (talvo.ch/en), where you'll embark on a discovery of French-inspired, Engadine gastronomy in a farmhouse dating back to 1658. Even if you're not staying there, pop into the Kempinski Grand Hotel des Bains for dinner at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Cà d'Oro, one of the hotel's four exalted restaurants. Executive Chef Matthias Schmidberger embraces the apex of Mediterranean cuisine in his intimate, 35-seat dining room.

DO

Winter sports are serious business across St. Moritz's Alpine landscape. Explore hundreds of miles of ski slopes, navigate more than 100 miles of cross-country ski trails or hike across frozen lakes, taking in the stunning scenery. Beyond the traditional winter fare, try your hand at snow-kiting, a the sport of curling or paragliding over Lake Moritz.

SWISS-IMAGE.CH/DANIEL MARTINEK



BADRUTT'S PALACE HOTEL



BADRUTT'S PALACE HOTEL



KULM HOTEL



KEMPINSKI GRAND HOTEL DES BAINS

KEMPINSKI GRAND HOTEL DES BAINS



GIANNI GIOVANNOLI / KULM-FOTOGRAFIE.CH



BENNO THOMA

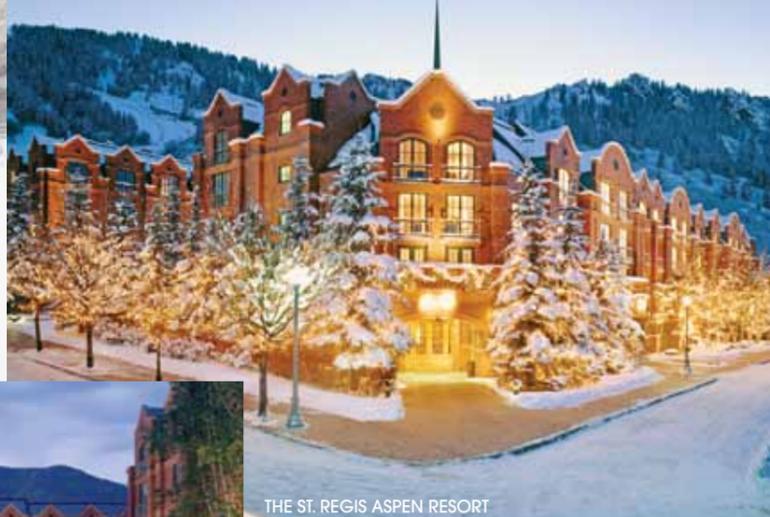


RESTAURANT CÀ D'ORO



SWISS-IMAGE.CH/CHRISTOF SONDEREGGER





THE LITTLE NELL

THE ST. REGIS ASPEN RESORT

THE ST. REGIS ASPEN RESORT

JEREMY SWANSON

DAVID O. MARLOW

JEREMY SWANSON

HAL WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPHY, INC.

PIÑONS

SKI IN/OUT AT THE LITTLE NELL



DAVID O. MARLOW

ASPEN, COLORADO, USA

As the epicenter of America's ski scene, celeb-studded Aspen in Colorado's Rocky Mountains is a daily celebration of winter trends, people watching, socializing and outdoor enthusiasm. Each December around the official start of winter, U.S. snow polo is contested exclusively in this much-buzzed-about, four-mountain ski resort of the uber-hip and wealthy. Hosted by the esteemed Aspen Valley Polo Club, spectators gather for the two-day World Snow Polo Championship at Wagner Park in the heart of downtown Aspen (worldsnowpolo.com).

SLEEP

Sybarites gravitate toward Aspen's only five-star, five-diamond property, The Little Nell (thelittlenell.com), which offers deluxe lodging in either the primary inn or the resort-managed private residences and boasts prime ski-in/ski-out access, directly connected to the Silver Queen Gondola. Polo devotees also frequent The St. Regis Aspen Resort (stregisaspen.com), given the brand's strong ties to the polo world and, of course, exemplary standard of accommodations and service. The resort recently completed a \$40 million renovation to parlay the already-grand resort into an extraordinary Gilded Age mountain manor through the vision of acclaimed designer Lauren Rottet of Rottet Studio.

EAT

As trendsetting as Aspen may be, its top restaurants, Cache Cache (cachecache.com) and Piñons (pinons.net), are still the area's tried and true staples. While they both date back to the late 1980s, don't expect *Dynasty*-era decor here. These foodie institutions have gone under renovation multiple times since opening to maintain status at the top of Aspen's trendy food chain. Fine-dining favorite Cache Cache serves up the best in sophisticated, classic French fare and features a 1,000-plus-label wine list, most of which is showcased in the 4,000-bottle cellar. The intimate and understated Piñons doles out hefty portions of panoramic Aspen Mountain through ubiquitous picture windows and molds the concept of modern American fare. Its delectable menu includes crispy oysters topped with crème fraîche and Sterling caviar and sesame-crust sea bass over bok choy.

DO

Aspen in winter revolves around all activities snow-related, from skiing to sledding to snowshoeing and snowboarding to snowmobiling and more skiing. Neophytes and experts can achieve snow-speckled nirvana at one of Aspen's four mountain ski areas—Aspen Mountain, Snowmass, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk—each with its own level of ease or difficulty (coloradoski.com). Following long days on the slopes, opt for some relaxation time in a sumptuous spa or steaming Jacuzzi at one of Aspen's top resorts. Buy the latest and greatest in ski threads in downtown Aspen and visit the quaint souvenir shops of Snowmass Village. For some indoor invigoration, explore the new high-design facility of the Aspen Art Museum (aspenartmuseum.org), rife with edgy, international contemporary art.



HOT AIR BALLOON OVER SNOWMASS MOUNTAIN



HIKING UP ASPEN HIGHLANDS

RED MOUNTAIN PRODUCTIONS



METROPOLITAN POLO CLUB HOTEL

METROPOLITAN POLO CLUB HOTEL



PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP

POLO WORLD CUP 2014 TIANJIN



TIANJIN, CHINA

The ultra-rapid growth of China's upper class has prompted the demand for new diversions to entertain China's elite. Case in point: snow polo. The Fortune Heights Snow Polo World Cup is held in the major seaport city of Tianjin, outside of Beijing, each year at the 222-acre, members-only Tianjin Goldin Metropolitan Polo Club (metropolitanpoloclub.com). The trade gateway to Beijing, Tianjin has blossomed as a major economic powerhouse, providing an international home to more than half of America's Fortune 500 companies. Although Tianjin hasn't quite achieved tourist-destination status yet, the city links to the heart of Beijing by a 30-minute high-speed train ride on the Intercity Railway.

SLEEP

To be close to the action at the Tianjin Goldin Metropolitan Polo Club, stay on site at the opulent, 167-room Metropolitan Polo Club Hotel (metropolitanpoloclub.com/hotel), designed in neo-classical style. Or crash at Tianjin's most prestigious address, The St. Regis Tianjin (stregis.com), perched over the bustling Hai River in the heart of the city. Polo commuters desiring the constant pulse of China's capital should check into the skyscraping Park Hyatt Beijing (beijing.park.hyatt.com), where the lobby is located on the sixty-third floor.

METROPOLITAN POLO CLUB HOTEL © PREFERRED HOTEL GROUP



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METROPOLITAN POLO CLUB HOTEL PRESIDENTIAL SUITE



THE ST. REGIS TIANJIN



THE ST. REGIS TIANJIN



THE ST. REGIS TIANJIN



TEA SOUP IN TIANJIN

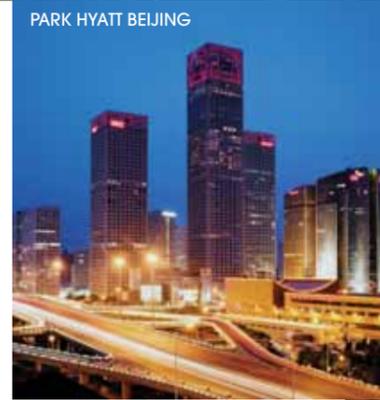
EAT

With so many international companies and expats, you'll find every kind of restaurant in Tianjin, from Texas barbecue to Thai. Regardless of your cravings, head to Tianjin Cuisine Street (aka "Food Street") to discover multiple incarnations of true Tianjin cuisine, both new and old. The "street" is in fact a bi-level, 50-restaurant food mall with thousands of dishes served by grab-and-go, street-style vendors as well as sit-down restaurants. Try new taste sensations like *guobacai* (a savory pancake) and *erduoyan zhagao* (fried rice dough filled with bean paste). See where the rage of stuffed steamed buns began at the original Goubuli Dumpling Restaurant (or one of its many branches across the city).

DO

Peruse the 200,000-piece collection at the massive Tianjin Museum (tjbwg.com), with exhibits on Chinese fine art and historic artifacts. Stroll Tianjin's famous Ancient Culture Street, lined with picturesque buildings constructed in traditional Qing-style, occupied by quaint shops and cafés. Be sure to stop into one of the many Chinese teahouses for more of an insider's experience. Rise to the top of the Tianjin Radio and Television Tower—which, at 1,362 feet, is one of the tallest buildings in the world—for surreal panoramas. And, of course, don't miss the Great Wall of China, the closest access point to Tianjin at the view-heavy Huangya Pass. 🏯

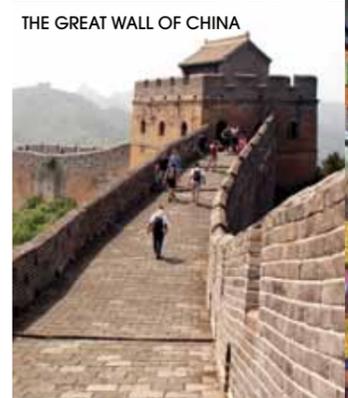
ST. REGIS IMAGES © STARWOOD / RALF TOOTEN



PARK HYATT BEIJING



PARK HYATT BEIJING



THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA



RESTAURANTS ON FOOD STREET