

In the spirit of all things badass, House of Coco like to push its limits. Not only by being totally pampered and served luxurious plates of fine food and wine, but also by getting dangerous. With this in mind, we sent our adventurous writer Penny Lee Brown and her boyfriend over to Zermatt, Switzerland to prove that there's more to that part of the world than free chocolates and cowbells...

Arriving at Zermatt is similar to the arrival at most Swiss ski resorts - idyllic. There's the winding mountain roads, lush green

trees reaching up to touch the sky, sunshine glistening off the patches of snow... yet this time the journey to our destination felt quite different. On the train journey, you are just waiting to catch a glimpse of that infamous sight - the Matterhorn - one of the most famous mountains in history.

Let's set the scene. Your morning alarm goes off and you feel energised, despite the fact your head is fuzzy after last night's après-ski. You look around your beautiful wooden chalet bedroom and breathe in the smell of the hot breakfast and coffee already being

prepared for you. As you open your curtains you know exactly what you will see... as clear, bright and shining as your morning view itself, the famous Matterhorn mountain greets you. It's a sight we haven't been able to get rid of; it has burnt itself into our memories like a treasured old photograph.

Rather than a travel guide to Zermatt, we tell you all the things we wanted to about that

HEART OF THE MATTERHORN

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experienced and why they were the ideal choices for a five-night, four-day break.

It's a great amount of time to travel because you make the effort to squeeze more in, including three full days on piste, and there are no excuses for downtime.

Zermatt itself is traditionally low emissions and car-free, so they don't have clunky buses or taxis coughing out nasty fumes. It's easy to get around on the small buses via the green or red routes (your ski pass includes free bus travel) and even electric taxis don't cost a fortune.

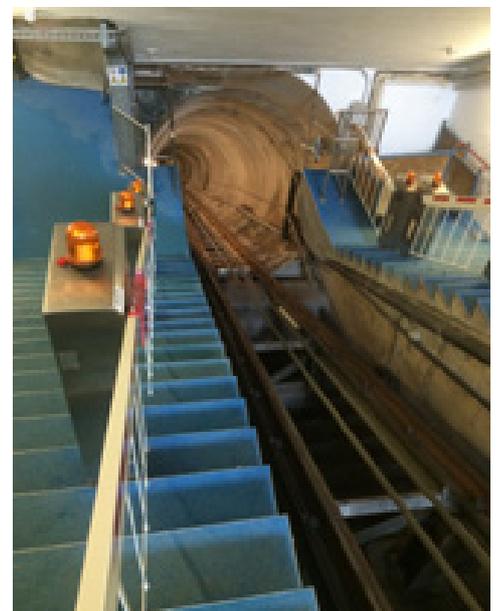
We stayed at one of Matterhorn Chalet's amazing properties - Chalet Ulysse - which is just a couple of minutes' walk from the main gondola and five minutes from the centre. All of Matterhorn Chalets are luxurious to the max. We couldn't keep away from the dining table thanks to our incredible chef, Romain, while our host, Erika, knew Zermatt inside out and helped us with everything we needed. As a couple they were infallible, and the cutest pair we could have had looking after us. When we weren't eating and

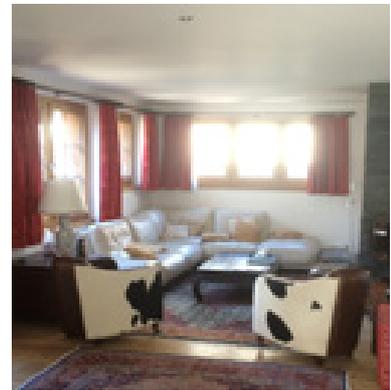
drinking at the chalet, or enjoying a sauna and massage downstairs, there was certainly a lot more to do than just hitting the pistes.

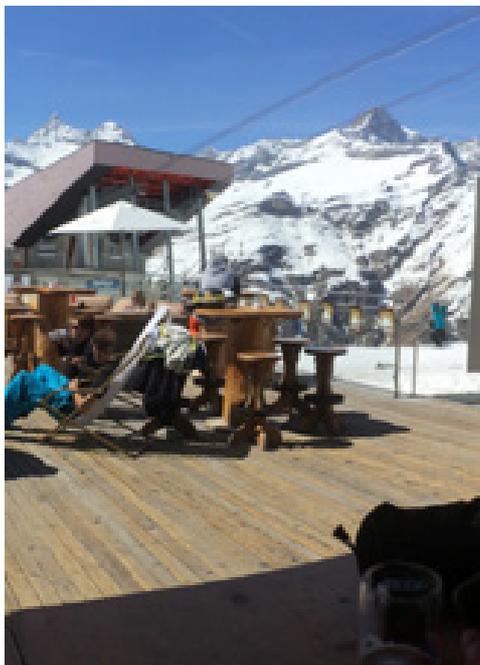
The town itself was packed full of bars for all types of people. The more luxurious Zermatt locations show off with velvet and leather furniture and walls, decorative chandeliers and incredible comfort. Their concept of 'normal' is a nice wooden pub-style bar, no frills on the decor and a pool table in the corner. Cable Car was our default location!

Here at House of Coco we love our luxury, but we also love getting our hands dirty over a beer, so we found live music bars and even a underground dirty dance club. The best way is to just get involved and explore all of your options for an amazing few nights on the town.

Not forgetting why we were there, each of our three intense days was packed with stunning sights and sketchy snowboarding. Matterhorn Chalets can organise a guide to show you around the mountains and help acclimatize to the conditions. Ours was brilliant. He was a very proficient skier and,







as we are only a few trips into snowboarding, the poor guy had to wait at the bottom of many a mountain for us to catch up. Shout out to Ed for his patience and general badass knowledge about everything!

Back to the exploration and the mountains here are more than just breathtaking. You have three main areas to explore and each has its own unique way of getting you there.

To reach the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise you take the main gondola from near our chalet and keep catching them up as you ascend. The views are ridiculous and the ride back down is spectacular.

Gornergrat is reachable via the cogwheel train from Zermatt's main train station (your lift pass is your ticket!). It's a beautiful half hour ride around the mountain, starting at an altitude of 1605 metres and ending at 3090 metres on the Gornergrat ridge. Cameras at the ready!

Finally there is the ride up to Rothorn, whose main transport link begins deep inside the belly of a mountain on a train and rises up to almost a 90 degree angle!

The sheer amount of runs around Zermatt is enough to keep you entertained for weeks but you can also do and see them in part. Get to the top of a mountain and enjoy some lunch overlooking the Matterhorn itself or get involved in your own bar crawl as you safely board or ski back to the town.

There's practically nothing that Zermatt cannot offer. The underground museum has recreated the old town and shows fascinating documentaries in their cinema, where you can learn all about the years of perilous climbing and battles between the Swiss and Italians over who could conquer the mountain first. (Swiss is the answer. The Swiss generally do things better!)

As for your leisure time, there are so many bars that adventure is always possible, the food and drink on the mountains is unforgettable and your warm welcome back every day to your hotel or chalet is refreshing and delightful.

Take us back! Bring us back to Zermatt and light up our lives, for

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To get to Zermatt you can either fly to Geneva or Zurich (flight prices from the UK are reasonable, particularly so to Geneva) and take the train down to Zermatt. The Swiss views are generally so good that you won't even notice the journey!



GETTING THERE

For more information on Matterhorn Chalets visit matterhornchalets.com

Transfers: Take the train for about 140 CHF (*approx. £95*) You can get this on the Zermatt or Swiss tourist board website. Book early.

Lift pass per adult: 380 CHF for 6 days. (*approx. £250*)

Snowboard/Skis, boots and helmet hire from Skiset: From about 160 CHF. (*approx. £110*)