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CRANS- MONTANA

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living the high life

*Winter in Switzerland naturally slows the pace.
Snow softens the landscape, the light shifts with quiet
precision, and every place seems to breathe in its own way.*

Our new editions invite you to experience the season anew
and explore the atmosphere that defines each destination.

helvet.swiss

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Editorial

The feeling is the same whether you travel via funicular or the stacked, winding road: behind you, your usual daily life disappears as you shift into an enchanting break. All lit up for the winter holidays, Crans-Montana serenely looks out over the rest of the world from its high plateau. From these profound heights, worries and stress fade away in the fresh mountain air. Instead, you can find yourself entranced by the charming Chemin des Lanternes – a magical experience for families, in the forest that surrounds the quiet golf course, guided only by the lights and the gentle crunch of your footsteps in the snow.

If you look closely, this snow-dusted forest is actually everywhere, sprinkled around so many of the cozy establishments here that complete a proper winter getaway. Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours. Six Senses. LeCrans. Crans Ambassador. Guarda. All of the biggest local stars offer quiet luxury amongst these majestic pines.

The Cry d'Er, Arnouva and Violettes Express gondola lifts all fly over the same green expanse, accompanied by the soft clicking of the cable as they advance, before reaching the white knolls of the Bernese Alps, bathed in the light of the southern sun. The entirety of the ski area is spectacular, playful and festive over this collection of Valais' sharp Alpine peaks – and there's no better place to see them than here. Travel a notch further and you reach the area's far north: La Plaine Morte, its glacier, and its immaculate white expanse. On skis, the resort is eight breathtaking kilometres from here, tracing the route of the world's first ski race (the Kandahar in 1911). It's the perfect benchmark for measuring the breadth of this ski area and its history – even the Ski School is celebrating its centenary.

Down below, as the sun begins to set, the soft warmth of the spas calls before its time for dinner. Some lovingly refer to Crans-Montana as "a mountain city", complete with a host of delightful dining options, all of which explore the delicate art of exalting local ingredients accompanied by a friendly smile. Perhaps that's why L'Ours (18/20), to mention just one, reigns supreme in the Valais gastronomy scene?

Christian Bugnon
Publisher & Editor-in-chief



ELEVATE YOUR WINTER



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SKI AREA

**CRANS MONTANA:
THE BEST SKI
RESORT IN SWISS
ROMANDIE**

In February 2025, Crans Montana was once again awarded (for the second consecutive year) the title of "Best Ski Resort in Swiss Romandie" by the Blick Winter Awards – and also placed third on a national level in the "Leisure for Pleasure" category. Organised by the Blick media group, the award winners are determined by online votes from their readers across two geographical regions and in five different categories.

winterawards.ch

SKI AREA

**L'ARNOUVA, A FAMILY
RENDEZVOUS**

Three minutes; that's all it takes from the centre of the ski resort to reach l'Arnouva's sunny escape, surrounded by large pine trees. A sort of general headquarters for families, this sector is home to the Snow Garden, where children can frolic under the watchful eyes of their parents from a table on the terrace of the Restaurant Arnouva. On Saturday nights, the spotlight shines on the Verdets piste, which is lit up for a ski session by night until 21:30 – accessible with a regular day pass for no extra fees.

mycma.ch

HOSPITALITY

THE KEYS TO COMFORT

In 2024, the Michelin Guide launched a new distinction for the best hotels on the planet: the Michelin Keys. One, two or three Keys indicate a "special", an "exceptional" or an "extraordinary" stay. For the occasion, four Crans Montana establishments (out of 90 in Switzerland) were honoured to be recognized: the Aïda Hotel & Spa (1 Key), the Guarda Golf Hotel & Residences (2 Keys), the Hostellerie Du Pas de l'Ours (2 Keys) and the LeCrans Hotel & Spa (2 Keys). It's a welcome reflection of the region's excellent hospitality.

guide.michelin.com

SHOPPING

INSTANT CHOCOLATE

Based in Crans Montana for over 30 years, David Pasquiet has spent half of that time managing a former nougat shop turned chocolate shop. His signature product is choconougat, of course! Winner of the 2013 Swiss Chocolate Masters, David is passionate about what he does, favouring ethical and organic Grand Cru chocolate, with a special place in his heart for Peruvian cacao beans. Even though he had to move his laboratory into the valley for lack of space, the windows of the boutique in Crans Montana are still just as drool-worthy: chocolate slabs, ganache, spread, rochers, Princess Almonds... it's hard not to crack!

davidchocolatier.ch

GASTRONOMY

**GAULT&MILLAU,
2026 WINNERS**

Every year in October, this celebrated fine-dining guide reveals the best restaurants in Switzerland. On the high plateau, eleven establishments found themselves on the list for a cumulative 156 points! In addition to the Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours, which maintained its title as the best restaurant in Valais (18/20 points), two new locales entered the scene: La Maison Crans Montana (14 points), managed by the team from Arakel in Geneva, and Le Partage (also 14) inside the Aïda Hotel & Spa, supervised by Franck Reynaud (of l'Ours) and brought to life by Italian Chef Gioele Marzola.

gaultmillau.ch

WINTER SPORTS

**THE WORLD'S
SKI ELITE IN
CRANS MONTANA**

The high plateau will welcome not one, not two, not even three full days of large-scale ski competitions this winter season... but five! It all kicks off on Tuesday 13th January and Wednesday 14th January with two FIS Alpine Ski Europa Cup men's slaloms, followed two weeks later by three FIS Ski World Cup events from 30th January to 1st February. The women's super-G race will be on the Friday and Saturday on the Mont Lachaux slope, while the men's downhill will take place that Sunday on the famous Nationale slope.

skiworldcup-cransmontana.ch





ACTIVITY

**SPOTLIGHT
ON WINTER**

From 5th December 2025 to 8th March 2026, the poetic Chemin des Lanterns (Lantern Path) will once again light the way from 17:00-22:00. It's the perfect fantasy stroll between the frosted pines, guided by the halos and illuminated artworks that dot the path. It's not strenuous: the flat walk that's barely 2 km gives you just enough time to dream with the family, as night gently falls on the ski resort. Spectacles and concerts will also delight, along with the Christmas Village – which runs from 19th to 28th December at Place Victoria – which features artistic performances (from 19:00) and Santa Claus as a bonus.

crans-montana.ch

SKI AREA

**FAR-NORTH-INSPIRED
GLACIAL EXPLORATIONS**

When the gondola opens in a rush of glacial air, your heart will be racing. Anchored to the glacier's ridge at 3,000 m, the domain's highest lift stop delicately balances two stunning panoramas: The Valais Alps, united in all their glory, on one side and the expansive stretch of the Plaine Morte Glacier on the other. It's the perfect setting for a fondue, a loop of cross-country skiing (6 km) or a snowshoeing trek on the snowy seracs. Even better? How about a dogsledding outing across the great white expanse as a passenger or a musher for the day.

mycma.ch

swissmushingcompany.ch



WINTER 2025-2026

WATCHMAKING

WATCHES AND WONDERS

For one week each year, Geneva becomes the beating heart of global watchmaking. Taking place 14th to 20th April 2026, the next edition of Watches and Wonders will welcome some 66 watchmakers, a dozen of whom are participating for the first time – including the legendary Audemars Piguet. As in previous years, the first four days of the trade show are reserved for industry professionals, while the last three days are open to the public. Two spaces are reserved for independent creators, including the Lab, which facilitates connections between industry innovators and startups. Like last year, there will also be related activities throughout the city.

watchesandwonders.com



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Here you dine while lounging on a sheepskin, celebrate après-ski while sipping several drinks at the never-ending bar, fill your ears with music during concerts and dance to your heart's content during DJ sets. Inaugurated on Friday the 13th in December 1991 by Nicole Bonvin, Bar Amadeus has been at the epicentre of mountain nightlife ever since, attracting crowds of all ages throughout the season. Move downstairs to catch the live music.

baramadeus.ch

HOSPITALITY
**CRANS MONTANA,
AN ART DE VIVRE**

The address could not be more poetic: Route des Fleurs des Champs (Wildflower Road). Located just by the ski lifts, the Art de Vivre boutique hotel has been run here for three generations by the Bonvin family. The recently renovated hotel rooms boast two key, appealing features: modern spaciousness and private balconies. Hotel guests are also invited to sip delightful cocktails in the lounge, near the large modern fireplace, and let their stress evaporate in the outdoor jacuzzi or wellness area, which features a pool, hammams, a sauna, treatment rooms and a gym with large windows that overlook the surrounding snow-covered Alpine summits. The establishment also boasts a holistic Therapeutic Centre.

art-vivre.ch



WINTER SPORTS
**WHO WILL COME
OUT ON TOP?**

Blowing out 30 candles in 2026, the Défi des Faverges is a ski-mountaineering race which takes place above Crans Montana every two years just before the Patrouille des Glaciers. This year it will be on 14th March, featuring three races of different difficulties: the Easy Défi (which is not really that easy, with 1,300 m of altitude change in two stages), the Petit Défi (which covers 18 km and 2,000 m of ascending elevation) and the iconic Grand Défi, which is definitely reserved for veterans (26 km, 3,000 m D+, and incredible panoramic views included). Sign-ups, for teams of two or three skiers, open in December.

defidesfaverges.ch

CULTURE
**THE LEGENDARY NEW
YEAR'S CONCERT**

An institution for classical music lovers, the Crans Montana New Year's Gala Concert will take place 1st January at 17:00, at the Le Regent Sport Center, featuring the legendary Israeli cellist Micha Maïsky – a student of Rostropovitch – along with her children Lily (on piano) and Sacha (on violin), violinist Yossif Ivanov and the Cameristi della Scala orchestra, directed by Conductor Rotem Nir. On the programme: Bruch, Beethoven, Ravel and Borodine. The following day, the just-as-spectacular Family's Show takes the reins with a unique performance of Peter and the Wolf.

cmclassics.ch

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NEON**



Crans-Montana

Top-notch skiing

Text Daniel Bauchervez
Photos Patrick Güller



In Crans-Montana, skiing is like breathing. Deep, full breaths, charged by the Southern sun and the EEG visual of the Valais Alps' wild peaks and drops on the horizon. Awaiting your skis are 140 km of white avenues and extremely vertical freeriding.

The sun rises behind the Valais Alps, illuminating the crest of Petit Mont Bonvin (2,412 m).





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At the summit of the ski domain, the black diamond Kandahar run follows the crests, with views of the Plaine Morte Glacier on the left.

At nearly 1,500 m in altitude, the well named "high plateau" welcomes almost three metres of snow on average each year. From the gondola heading towards *Cry d'Er* (2,256 m), the white quickly spreads in sumptuous knolls, cut here and there by deep vales that are a skier's delight. Therein lies the beating heart of the resort, complete with its red-carpet piste: *the Nationale*, graced by many World Cup races both past and present (notably women's), also known as "the most beautiful men's Super-G run" according to Swiss downhill skier and Olympic medallist Bernhard Russi. This highly technical and demanding track features about 4 km of often perfect snow and will play host to the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships 2027.

At the foot of the lifts lies the *Snowpark*, which accommodates both beginners and top dogs with rails, jumps, boxes, one of the biggest Alpine halfpipes, and artificial snow (if needed). And if you're looking to photograph freestylers in action, nothing beats the *Cry d'Er Club d'Altitude*'s XXL terrace, where you can soak in the sun and the panoramic views.

To refuel, don't miss *Chetzeron*, just 10 minutes away on skis, which boasts a view of the Matterhorn in all its glory from the other side of the Rhône Valley. This extraordinary luxury hotel was built inside the former cable car station, from which another epic piste awaits: the black diamond *Chetzeron*, which is never groomed and which some descend in bathing suits! There are also some family-friendly options near the centrally located *Arnouva*, which

features a large snow garden, beginner ski classes, and electric snow scooters.

On the upslope side, the white hillsides of *Bella Lui* (2,543 m) and *Plaine Morte* (2,927 m) beckon. You can get to Plaine Morte by taking the Funitel from Violettes. The glacial air in the cable car indicates what's in store: very, very high-altitude mountains and one of the biggest glacial plains in the Alps, spanning 7 km² and guarded over by the summits of Wildstrubel. You'll feel like you're in the Far North with cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, and dog sledding without a tree on the horizon and a wind-frozen nose. Up there you'll also find the black diamond Kandahar, which follows the ridge then goes directly to Mont Bonvin (2,995 m). Some skiers opt for La Toula, which is never groomed and has a savage reputation for its steep slopes and bump fields that cross from the shadows into sunlight.

And let's not forget about *Aminona*, which has few crowds and a lot of charm. Swerving to the East, in the shadow of Petit Mont Bonvin, this sector has only a handful of pistes above the delightful Alpine hamlet of *Colombire* (where you will cross paths with those who ascend on snowshoes). If you're looking for snow-covered *mayen* rooftops, Michelin Man-esque pine trees, ski touring, or forest runs, you'll feel right at home here. And if you feel so inclined to trade your skis for blades, the sledge run to the station is simply breathtaking.

The Crans Montana Ski School

The lifeblood of the high plateau

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Photos École de Ski Suisse (ESS)

One doesn't turn 100 every day. For the Swiss Ski School (ESS) of Crans Montana, this anniversary marks a chance to scroll through the trailblazing history of the region, which has shaped a winter season that's as festive as it is athletic.

It all began in 1911, with the world's first alpine ski race, the Kandahar, founded by the son of an English lord... or was it at the dawn of the century just a few years before that, thanks to Doctor Stefani, who, in between two tuberculosis healing sessions, was already donning skis? Although the true heritage of mountain skiing may have been lost in the passing of time, one thing is certain: the first ski lesson was in 1911, given by an Austrian shoemaker living in Crans Montana to the very English Captain Hoppenmeyer.

After WWI, Herr Bauer began teaching ski lessons again, primarily for the local park and forest hotels (one of his students was even a British Prime Minister). The enthusiasm of the Roaring Twenties helped draw in a steady stream of candidates, and by 1926 the shoe repair shop had become a ski school – even though they didn't get their license until 1933! It was an incubator for talented skiers and teachers,

including filmmaker Charles Dubost (from Crans), Henri Clivaz (from Blucé), and Messrs. Balmer, Savioz, Felli, Maurice, and Hencboz. These men helped cement the role of skiing in the high plateau region for good.

THE SEAL OF APPROVAL

Together, the Ski School and Ski Club worked together to develop skiing for locals and tourists alike, who only continued to increase in number once paid vacation days became the norm. Some names rose to the top, like the young Alfred-Germain (aka "Boubé") Rombaldi, a native of Montana and a Ski School professor, who participated in the Saint-Moritz Olympic Games in 1948, became the Swiss Combined Champion in 1951, and was the coach of the Swiss Women's Olympic Ski Team from 1956-1960. There was also Georges ("Collo") Felli, who shone at the Trophée du Mont-Lachat for many years, in addition to being a ski jumper



For the past century, the teachers at the Crans and Montana ski schools have helped shape the development of local skiing.

1. From left to right: Monique Vuignier-Grichting, Bernard Doep, Rudi Rotzer and Peter Kuonen, 1978 © Monique Vuignier-Grichting Archives

2. From left to right: Collo Felli, Henri Clivaz and Bouby Rombaldi © Crans-Montana Library Archives

3. Henri Bauer in front of his class, ca. 1930 © Charles Dubost, Crans-Montana Library Archives

4. From left to right: Heinrich Gentinetta, Otto Gentinetta, Martin Barras and Alex Gentinetta, 1937 © Alex Sports Archives



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Unfolding at the base of the Bernese Alps, the Crans Montana ski domain offers one of the most beautiful panoramic views of the Pennine Alpine summits.

and ice hockey player. It was a time of opulent snowfall and bobsleighing as promised by Rinaldo Jacomelli, who convinced Bourvil to become the honorary president of the local bobsleighing club. The people came: Lino Ventura, Michèle Morgan, Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren, Jean-Paul Belmondo, and even Jackie Kennedy, future Onassis.

THE SCHOOL'S EVOLUTION

The years 1990-2000 saw the arrival of snow guns, snowboarding, and carving. The professors who were not already on the forefront of emerging trends adapted. Then in 2016, the Ski Schools of Crans and Montana joined forces, forming one of the largest ski schools in the country, with 400 paid staff members serving over 2,000 clients a day.

Classes for children were then developed, the office of mountain guides was folded in, and a bike school was invited to take part in the summer programming, with camps as a bonus. Now the Crans Montana Ski School (ESS CM) is heavily involved in bike championships and the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup. "It all favours the emergence of new mountain activities, contributes to sustainable, 4-season mountain tourism, and helps compensate for short winter seasons by offering new perspectives for this beautiful destination", explains Nicolas Masserey, the current director of the Crans Montana Ski School.

Now more than ever, youth classes are a priority. As a result, the majority of the Ski School's monitors are also active in the area's local clubs and in competitive circles, further enhancing their teaching abilities. "The Grand Prix Crans-Montana Junior races, organised by ESS CM, unite over 300 young skiers from clubs in the region and beautifully reflect our local collaborations", added Nicolas Masserey. Several national ski personalities, like Marc Rochat and Luca Aerni, even grew up skiing on the local slopes, with Aerni being taught by his father, who is a teacher at ESS CM.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

The centenary of the school promises to be both festive and athletic, kicking off at the start of the season with a film, a magazine, and a party at the Le Régent Congress Center. Then, from March 20-22, three days of educational competitions take place, revolving around the Grand Prix Crans-Montana Junior. On the schedule are events between various ski teachers from Valais and a commemorative slalom in full costume (and equipment!) from back in the day, symbolically signposted with 100 course markers. The summer months will welcome a junior mountain biking race modelled after the winter Grand Prix.

esscrans-montana.ch

The luxury of Le Pas de l'Ours

Mountain charm

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Photos Pas de l'Ours

Aged wood draped in pristine snow: classically timeless! Before even setting foot inside, the Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours beckons like a beacon of refuge.



Tucked into the heights of Crans-Montana, on the edge of the forest, the Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours exudes Alpine elegance. Part of the Relais & Châteaux collection, it embodies mountain charm, warm intimacy and Michelin-starred gastronomy.



Le Pas de l'Ours is the story of a family – a family that began from modest means and, with perseverance and intuition, patiently transformed this large chalet into a warm mountain retreat. Just one look at the property, made of raw stone and aged wood, with a discreetly carved railing, embraces you in the authenticity of a true mountain retreat.

Simultaneously rustic and refined, a warm and comforting fireplace crackles just inside – the beating heart of the chalet – instantly making you feel right at home. Nothing feels exaggerated here: the establishment has just 15 rooms and they all beautifully encapsulate the romance of life in the high mountains. Most of the rooms are suites, many of which feature a private fireplace, and all of which encourage you to enjoy the southern-facing sun on the balcony or terrace, surrounded by views of the Valais Alps' snow-covered peaks. Allow your troubles to slip away as you lounge in the comfort of a luxurious, leather English club chair... or in the bubbles of the room's hot tub.

AWAKEN YOUR SENSES

In the evenings, the L'Alpage spa awaits, encircled by pine trees, with its large wellness area and indoor/outdoor pool. Dip below the large windows and re-emerge outside to a kiss of fresh mountain air on your face. Straight ahead: a horizon of proud mountains that slowly fade into the sunset. After a soak, eliminate stress and fatigue in the sauna and hammam.



Between the stunning dishes and gorgeous views, it's hard to know where to look when dining at L'Ours. Either way, pleasure is certain.

On the upper level, the large bay windows of the gastronomic L'Ours offer the same stunning views of the snowy Alpine landscape beneath a sky of twinkling stars. The establishment's headliner restaurant welcomes you in a harmonious ambience of warm wood, stone and fire... but dining here is anything but ordinary. The kitchen is run by celebrity Chef Franck Reynaud, Gault&Millau's Chef of the Year 2018 and a 2023 Swiss Culinary Merit award winner. Boasting 18 points with Gault&Millau (since 2018) and one Michelin Star, the restaurant proudly reigns over the Valais gastronomic scene.

Originally from Montpellier, Chef Reynaud, who has lived in Valais for over three decades, embraces the local seasons and flavours – merged with a hint of southern-inspired cooking. His guiding principle? Obtaining ingredients directly from producers and building around them until just a few small bites transform into a full terroir experience.

The Bistrot des Ours, the establishment's second restaurant, offers convivial cuisine, with a 2025 Christmas Eve menu that reads like a poem: *Lake biscuit with absinthe and crayfish nectar. Poached and roasted capon with "vin jaune", truffle clafoutis. Alpine cheese from the Lens region, cocoa vinegar and juniper-steamed bread.* Is your mouth watering? It's best to reserve quickly – things tend to evolve quickly with Franck Reynaud!

pasdelours.ch



David Bagnoud, the mayor of Lens

A local's path to politics

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Photo Luciano Miglionico

Bagnoud. A family name that's well known in Crans-Montana's high plateau, having long played an integral part in the region's local affairs. We interview the current mayor of Lens, David Bagnoud, a man of many talents who wears many hats.

Does growing up in the heart of the mountains, between hikes, ski runs and horseback riding shape a man's demeanour? One might think so, if you take David Bagnoud as an example. The young man from Lens has been fiercely independent since childhood. He chose a career path that includes both optics and commerce, having opened his first boutique in Crans-Montana while still in school – at just 19 years old!

"I'm an entrepreneur at heart", he explains enthusiastically. And when that drive combined with his desire to do well – by himself and for all – he quickly found himself drawn toward local politics. It wasn't for the verbal sparring or the power plays. Rather, he wanted to use his professional experience to participate in "the quest for solutions that benefit the development and future of the entire region".

First a city councillor, in 2009 he became mayor of the municipality of Lens – the largest of the high plateau's six municipalities. Thinking he would serve a single term, he threw himself into his projects without a thought to his re-election, focusing on obtaining results and defending common interests. And perhaps that's the true secret to political success, because he met with success and was re-elected in 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024, for what is now his 5th term.

David Bagnoud, what accomplishments are you most proud of? I'm very proud to have anticipated and contributed to the creation of several hotel zones in the 2010s, and to have played a part in the development of Lens and its hamlets. Especially regarding the project for an international school.

What role does the Lens municipality play within the high plateau? The Lens municipality plays a very important role because it represents a large section of the Crans territory. Our tourism – specifically golf, skiing and the creation of hotels – results in a major regional contribution and helps reinforce the entire area's attractiveness. Lens is home to the Severiano Ballesteros golf course, and we also have the Le Régent international school and our wine-growing sector, which provide sustainable, year-round employment.

What are some of the most important projects of your 5th term? The question of housing is becoming increasingly problematic in our area, so the municipality has planned to invest in the creation of housing meant for our region's local residents and workers. Mobility is also a major challenge and the municipality is currently working on a new 250-car parking lot project in the centre of Crans. There is also a new hotel project in the upper region that's nearly completed.

How important is sustainable development and the energy transition for the municipality, the high plateau region and, more broadly, Valais? These are major questions that impact all municipalities, whether they are touristic in nature or not. We have hired a dedicated energy delegate who's responsible for reviewing all of our projects in terms of solar power, long-distance heating and more.

Tell us about the Association des Communes de Crans-Montana (ACCM). I think the creation of the ACCM has allowed us to simplify some of the many procedures linked to tourism. That said, it has also increased our role and its associated workload; sometimes it feels like we have an entire second municipality to manage! While the fusion of Montana, Mollens, Randogne and Chermignon into Crans-Montana in 2017 didn't fundamentally alter the relationship with Lens and Icogne, being three municipalities instead of six has certainly simplified certain processes.

What is the Association des Communes Touristiques Valaisannes de Montagne (ACTVM), of which you are president? The creation of this association, which unites nine ski resorts, happened naturally. We were previously an informal association that often held friendly gatherings to discuss topics related to tourism, like equalisation. I wanted to make it more official so we could better address our shared difficulties (tourism, mobility, housing), communally implement proposed solutions and reflect together about future tourism challenges still to come.

New age nomadism

Catch your breath, at 1,600 m in altitude

Text Samia Tawil
Photos Six Senses Crans-Montana

The days of nomad mountain living with extreme skiing in between two conference calls seem over. To shake the stress, the new trend leans towards finding inner balance: yoga, mediation... getting in touch with one's inner self.

Some establishments have been leading the trend for several years already. The CERVO Mountain Resort, in Zermatt, pioneered a holistic high mountain offering with their ice bath experiences, which link breathwork and a Russian banya ritual where sauna participants are whisked with birch branches to improve blood circulation. Zermatt coach Sven Chanton, who has overseen several wellness treatments offered at the CERVO's Ātman Mountain Spa from 2023 to 2025, explains the theory behind it in more detail: "There are several benefits to ice baths that go far beyond the physical benefits. It's really about learning how to relax in discomfort, which has the power to transform how we see our circumstances."

As a former top-tier skier, Sven discovered breathwork during a recovery trip to Bali after he had injured his meniscus. The experience allowed him to free himself of several unexpected traumas, and he adopted certain practices moving forward to alleviate psychosomatic blocks.

Today, while he is primarily sought out by athletes, he offers private retreats and has noticed an increasing number of digital nomad clients. "The freedom their lifestyle gives them is actually a double-edged sword, because it comes

with a heavy mental load. Through these sessions, we work on creating the space they're missing, which is as much spiritual as it is physical". The Alpine silence offers its own remedy, a communal refuge for these digital travellers that are used to normally coping with stress alone.

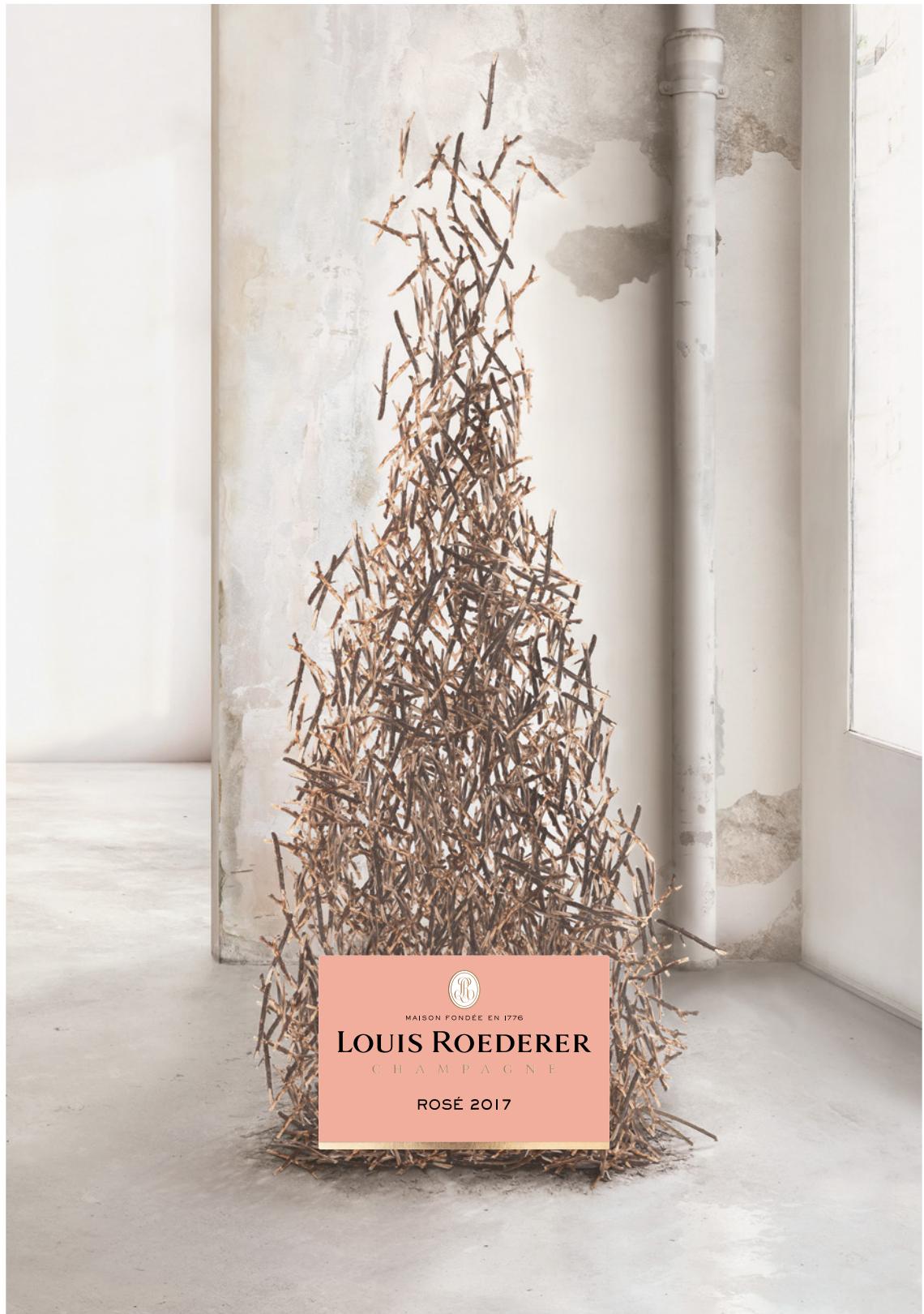
HIGH CLASS ZEN FESTIVALS

These observations led to the creation of holistic wellness festivals in the mountains, in the same vein as the Schloss' Flow Weeks in Zermatt, organised each season – with the next one taking place 1-6 March 2026. The key words? Nature and mental reset. From guided walks through nature harvesting medicinal and anti-stress plants, to open air mountain drawing sessions, ecstatic dance and even good old-fashioned yoga... if your chakras aren't aligned after all that, the warm exchanges over lunch – surrounded by the absolutely breathtaking panoramic views – will surely do the trick. And that's one of the other key reasons participants sign up to attend.

In Crans Montana, the Six Senses luxury hotel proposes some of the most creative healing sessions year-round: from a fall yoga session that marks the International Day of Peace to a sound healing workshop featuring Nepalese



Yoga, meditation, breathwork; it's the dawn of a new age for rituals that combat stress.



LOUIS ROEDERER
TUTOYER LA NATURE

In and out, hot and cold; experience your own personal therapy at the Six Senses Hotel pool beneath a ceiling inspired by wooden wind chimes.



gongs, timed perfectly for sunrise in the spring... here, any reason to connect with one's inner self is a good one. The hotel also hosts the Alma Frequency festival in June, which is centred around wellbeing, longevity and mindfulness. This large-scale wellness retreat primarily attracts large swaths of digital nomads, who attend in hopes of a cleanse from their habitual routine of productivity and exhaustion, and a chance to meet with renowned personal development specialists. The Six Senses also offers premium wellness events throughout the winter season, making it a natural gathering place for digital nomads who want both luxury and health, with dedicated remote workspaces.

In Verbier, too, conscious co-living is all the rage. Take for example Snomad Fest in Liddes, which hosts its second edition from 7-17 December, combining ski passes, conferences and debates around the challenges of nomad living. Its goal? To connect nomads to one another and evolve into an annual international gathering.

There's also Inspire Verbier, which organises weekends and micro-retreats in collaboration with several high-class hotels. The unbeatable Chalet d'Adrien (Relais & Châteaux) organises ski and yoga retreats for three to five nights,

which include spa treatments and gourmet vegetarian meals by Michelin-starred Chef Sebastiano Lombardi – dishes that invite you to lean back and let your soul be nourished.

CREATING A SERENE FUTURE

It's worth noting that in Switzerland, "workactions" have become the norm. According to a Flex Work study, more and more employees request to work remotely for certain periods; more than 15% even consider remote work as a non-negotiable part of their employment contracts. But is the freedom touted by freelancers all that it's cracked up to be?

"Having no set work hours also means being available all the time, and that's the spiral we're trying to combat through these experiences. It offers people a chance to completely unplug and recharge", explains Sven. There's no doubt that burnout also affect digital nomads. And although the door to freedom is half ajar for these world travellers, who had the courage to adopt a lifestyle many others never would, they also have to work twice as hard to find some semblance of peace and wellbeing. And the mountains offer a perfect contemplative setting, a welcome pause where it's easy to focus on simply "being".

A parade of beautiful cars

Alpine picnics and concours d'élegances

Text Daniel Bauchervez

Photos Götz Göppert

In just a few years, the Eclectica car show in Crans-Montana has established itself as the region's unmissable Alpine festival of fine automobiles. And, on the horizon, a new gathering emerges for 2026: the Alps International Motor Show.

Ferrari *rosso corsa*, Corvette torch red, Lamborghini yellow, Maserati Noble Blue, Jaguar forest green... the gleaming bodywork at Eclectica sparkled beneath the high plateau's summer sun. Brainchild of the *Automobile Club de Crans-Montana (ACCM)*, the concours d'élegance has taken place every summer in the Valais ski resort for four years. At the helm: ex-racing driver Nelson Philippe, the youngest driver in history to have raced at the CART and Champ Car Championships – at just 17 years old – and the youngest winner in Champ Car World Series history (in 2006 at Surfers Paradise, Australia).



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With an iconic concours d'élegance, an Alpine road trip, car-themed picnics and a new gathering for manufacturers in 2026, the Automobile Club de Crans-Montana has ambitious plans.

be shared and enjoyed. For 2026, the concept is evolving: "while still in discussion with the authorities, we hope it will be an official drive on a closed road, a proper tribute to Switzerland's great sporting heritage", added Nelson.

NEW TRAJECTORIES

With several ACCM members being originally from Geneva, the club is currently in discussions with the Automobile Club de Genève "to explore being associated clubs, an extension of our already-established partnership with the Automobile Club de Lugano", added the club president. "These kinds of partnerships reinforce the connection between our plains and our mountains, helping make French-speaking Switzerland a true intersection of automobile culture".

RALLY SPIRIT AND AESTHETIC REUNIONS

"Each year, the Club organises several major events", explains Nelson. Taking place over three days on the last weekend of July, Eclectica is without a doubt the Club's leading light, having attracted around 10,000 participants for its last edition. The concours d'élegance, which unites some 100 vehicles on Rue de Prado, just steps from the golf course, includes exhibitions, artistic performances and "gourmet moments". The very chic Collector's Picnic, for example, which takes place before the event, boasted a partnership with Audemars Piguet for last summer's edition. The goal? "To bring car lovers together in nature, in a friendly and refined environment to celebrate time, engineering and the art of Swiss living".

An essential part of the overall event, the Crans Turismo scenic drive "revives the spirit of cruising the high plateau's most legendary routes". The idea? To gleefully rev car motors for a retro-inspired epicurean tour, set amongst an incredible Alpine background. There's no timing scores here, only beautiful stops for gourmet food that's meant to



automobileclubcm.com

Portfolio

Tanguy Henrigean
For the love of freestyle skiing

Text Daniel Bauchervez
Photos Tanguy Henrigean





Seen from the high plateau, the Bishorn (4,151 m) and the Weisshorn (4,506 m) are the last summits in the Valais Alps to catch the light of the setting sun.



At 3,000 m of elevation, on the edges of the Plaine Mort Glacier, a white ocean spreads as far as the eye can see.

#helvet







Filmmaker and freestyle skier Anthony Vuignier takes on the deep powder and many immaculate slopes of Crans Montana's vast freeride domain.



Originally from Belgium, Tanguy Henrijean found himself called to Switzerland by the slopes. First in Valais, he now lives in Crans-Montana and juggles his time between tricks, days in front a screen, and nature footage, with his camera in hand.



It was not fate. Or maybe it was. The snow in Ardennes would never fully satisfy a freestyle skier... so when he was still very young, Tanguy Henrijean left his homeland of Belgium for Switzerland. He quickly found himself in Anzère, working as the snowpark manager and tallying up the winters, before moving to the foot of the Matterhorn in Zermatt. Was it that mountain's pure lines that lit the spark? Tanguy found himself diving headfirst back into his education and passion for the visual arts. He then joined the marketing team for Crans Montana's ski lifts, working as both a graphic designer and a community manager. But reporting on the resort's events gave him a chance to reveal his true talent as a photographer.

It all goes back to his adolescence, when he found himself enjoying taking photos of his friends' freestyle tricks. "Like lots of kids born in the 90s, I grew up doing extreme sports and we always had a camera of some kind to document our

sessions", he explained. "Later I took photography classes and that was when I started to go deeper and take photography more seriously. Over the years, I've been able to work on many different projects, but I try to always ensure it remains a passion and not just a job".

His preferred tools of the trade? A Canon 5D Mark IV, an extensive battery of lenses ranging from 8 mm to 400 mm, a trusty iPhone and a cult-classic Lomo – or rather, a recreation of the honourable, Soviet-era analogue camera, which had a popular resurgence in the 1990s thanks to its experimental dimensions, highly saturated images, blurry effects, vignettes, and sometimes even deformed results. An entire alternative photography movement sprung up around the Lomo, revolving around the dogma of always having your camera on hand, maintaining a primal focus on the moment, and shooting instinctively. Tanguy believes in the importance of photography coming from the heart

above all, keeping it spontaneous in search of emotions and sensations, without any overarching concept. "I don't really have any favourite subjects. I try to immortalise the things that I love and capture moments that I want to remember, whether that's a landscape or a feeling", says Tanguy. He recounts a memorable moment: "I took a photo of the Matterhorn on a whim as I arrived at the spot where I was going to camp for the night, just when the sun disappeared behind it. The contrast was incredible. I think I also really love that photo because it was the first time that I ever went camping alone".

When it comes to Crans Montana, Tanguy Henrijean speaks highly of the strong mountain lights and shadows, accentuated by drone angles and the "timelessness" of black and white images. A pure and free mountainside.

th-studio.me | @thnrjn

Stefan Engström

Serial skier and serial entrepreneur

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Photos The Mountain Studio

Back to a more discreet lifestyle, Stefan Engström rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s as one of Sweden's top – and first – freestyle skiers. A genius co-founder of Peak Performance and several other sportswear brands, he is now devoting himself to his latest venture: The Mountain Studio, based in Zermatt.

There's a fairy-tale feel to this story. Once upon a time, on the outskirts of Stockholm, a boy hopped on his skis and hurtled down the neighbouring hills. Stefan Engström wasn't even ten yet. Commonplace? Maybe today, but not at the time. Stenmark hadn't come along yet, and very few people skied back then in Sweden.

Way west, close to the Norwegian border, Sälen was just a few streets dotted with purple lupins in summer and snow-drifts in winter. It is in this discreet resort, made famous by the Vasaloppet cross-country ski race, that Stefan really made his first marks. Then, at age 15, a summer camp took him north of the Arctic Circle to meet his future. For him, skiing was to be moguls, freestyle, and parties in between every landing.

The energy of the seventies propelled him into the national team and towards several World Cup podiums – and even

two victories. His ego was satisfied. But what next? Stefan's unbridled enthusiasm led him to SOS, the sportswear brand that sponsored the Swedish freestyle team. At just 23, it wasn't about playing CEO, sitting in a fat chair and smoking cigars, but doing everything at once – "a crash course in learning."

THE PEAK PERFORMANCE ADVENTURE

In 1986, then age 26, Stefan Engström decided to go his own way. In Åre, with his mates Peter Blom and curler Christer Mårtensson, he started his own business: first a clothing and ski equipment shop, then quickly their own line of sportswear. Quality, functionality, Scandinavian design – the three pillars of Peak Performance were planted. The brand was the first in the country to use Gore-Tex. Sales doubled every year, forcing the trio to come up with every kind of solution – from finding a factory in Portugal to avoiding cash-flow problems. A decade later, the brand was sold. Two decades later, Stefan Engström set sail, having made his fortune. But the man couldn't stay





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Now 65 years old, Stefan Engström remains insatiable. His latest venture: The Mountain Studio, a brand that's 100% Zermatt.

put for long... The following year, he was propelled to the head of J.Lindeberg, a Swedish sports and fashion clothing line that was struggling to keep up with success.

Restructuring, reorganisation, and the addition of a new ski collection brought J.Lindeberg back on track, tripling its sales. Always eager to explore new business ideas and trends, Stefan still had one foot in the door when he hurtled down yet another new path, launching another company – this one based on a direct online sales model: Stellar Equipment. The catalogue featured all the technical equipment for skiing, hiking, and climbing, designed from innovative, high-quality materials.

THE MOUNTAIN STUDIO: THE MADE IN ZERMATT BRAND

Although never one to take it easy – whether in life or on the slopes – at the dawn of the new millennium, Stefan finally eased back a little. He spent time in Verbier, then in Zermatt, 'for its very long skiing season'... The entrepreneur decided to settle down here, built a house at the edge of the slopes, hit the runs almost every morning as soon as the lifts opened, and embraced the alpine resort lifestyle Zermatt is famed for.

Resting, Stefan? Not for long. Skiing down the Klein Matterhorn or dining around Zermatt's best restaurants, bonds were naturally formed. Between two schuss runs, Marcel Hirscher, the 2018 double Olympic champion (in giant

slalom and combined), came aboard the Swede's circle of friends. A perfectionist, hailed as the best alpine skier in history, with a total of 67 World Cup race wins, Hirscher was considering his next big move after his recent retirement. Should he go for his own brand of skis (he has: now Van Deer)? Or embark on Stefan's latest idea? So he did. Both. The two had much to share: a love of skiing, the mountains, and good equipment. So why not launch a new brand? No sooner said than done. A company was set up as equal partners, investors followed, and a versatile collection was designed and personally tested in Zermatt and Engelberg. Hence, The Mountain Studio was born. 'A small range of purpose-built, carefully curated garments for advanced skiing, outdoor activities, and mountain living – including hiking, biking, training, and everyday wear. High-quality, stylish products, designed in Switzerland and produced with environmental considerations in mind,' explains Stefan Engström. The spirit? 'Buy less, use more.'

'Our main customers are primarily avid sports enthusiasts, but they also care about their appearance,' explains the Swede. 'Our icon products? Our Gore-Tex Z-2 jacket and our reversible double-duty down jackets – one side for the resort, the other for the city. We have also developed Alp-3, our own stretch fabric for ski jackets.' On the team: nothing but snow sports professionals, including a few local big names.

the-mountain-studio.com

A sense of terroir

Histoire d'Enfer: flagship and rare wines

Text Alexandre Caldara

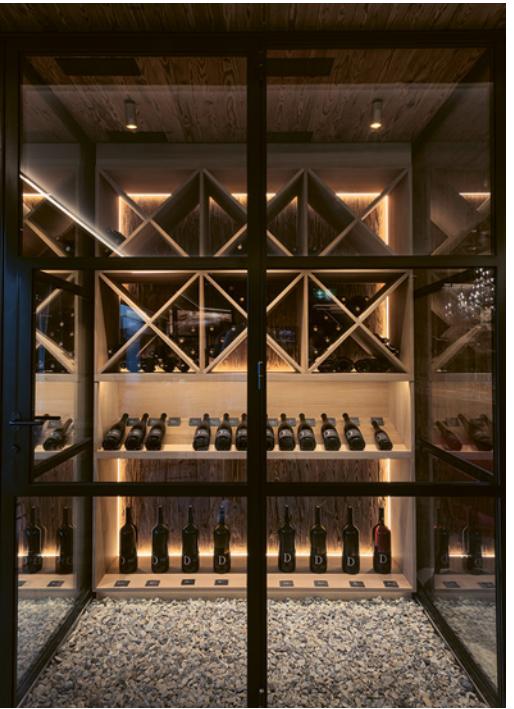
Photos Histoire d'Enfer SA

The Histoire d'Enfer Estate's single-vineyard wines seduce the most discerning wine lovers, and can be sampled at a luxurious wine cellar in Loc, in the commune of Crans Montana.

The striking silver D on the black label echoes across over 400 well-renowned Swiss tables. D for delta (an allusion to the terroir), D for Dionysos, but above all, D for Doctor. Patrick Regamey, a co-founder of Histoire d'Enfer and General Practitioner in Crans Montana, is never too far away. His motto? "Exceptional wine cannot be made without exceptional grapes". This philosophy comes to life in Histoire d'Enfer through hand-picked grapes grown on small plots that yield no more than 400 grams per metre, organic practices (non-certified) and limited production factors.

ROOTS IN CALCIUM-RICH AND ROCKY SOIL

The estate was founded in 2008 by four friends who are passionate about fine wines and is one of 19 members of the High Plateau Wine Growers Association, who represent a small but highly diverse viticultural region. Spread over nearly 10 acres, it was originally named Histoire d'en Faire, but after a complicated start that involved several different œnologists and vinification processes, a new name was born: Histoire d'Enfer!



The wine cellar's thirty barrels are displayed like museum artifacts beneath soft light.



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The new tasting room welcomes chefs, with an outdoor space that overlooks the vineyards.

Today, they specialise in single-vineyard wines spread across 29.5 acres of calcium-rich, rocky soil in Corin, Miège, Sierre and Varen-Salquenen – distinct from Fully's granitic soils that favour Petite Arvine. Here it's Pinot Noir and Cornalin, along with Rèze and Humagne Blanc (some of Switzerland's oldest varieties) that thrive.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Surrounded by opulent vines and one timid olive tree, the wood and stone tasting room, which was built in 2022 in Loc (in the Commune of Crans Montana), immediately exudes a high-end feel. This soothing space is home to regular Histoire d'Enfer dinners in collaboration with renowned chefs, like a game proposition during hunting season with double starred Chef Gilles Varone.

"We've managed to build a beautiful word-of-mouth brand and establish ourselves on a national level in Switzerland with our vision of world-class great terroirs, similar to Burgundy or Piedmont – it's something collectors really enjoy", says Julien-François Nebel, the head of communication and marketing. Trained in the high-end watchmaking industry, he appreciates the precision that goes into the estate's wines, two of which scored more than 95 points in Robert Parker's 2025 guide and five stars from Falstaff. Julien-François

also speaks highly of the collaborations between Histoire d'Enfer and Crans Montana: "The Six Senses luxury resort, which exclusively works with ultra-local producers, offers a large selection of our wines. Some bottles can also be found at the Japanese restaurant Kaizen".

A PASSION FOR PINOT NOIR

Two reds stand out: the elegant Pinot Noir, representing 25% of the estate's production, and the native and robust Cornalin, which has excellent aging potential. The 2020 vintage – which is currently on the market – spent six months in stainless steel vats, was barrelled for 12 months in 600 litre batches, then bottle-aged to obtain its distinctly soft tannins. Patrick Regamey offers us a tasting of the 2024 vintages, "a complicated year for reds", pulled directly from the barrel by Vineyard Manager Alexandre Roduit. The Pinot has a fresh mouthfeel and ends on a note of bitter orange. The Calcaire is immediately mineral with a hint of saffron, while the Calcaire absolu, which is aged in new wood barrels, is more earthy with balsamic on the nose. A snowy day would be the perfect for enjoying the lemon aromas of the Enfer Blanc – Assemblage, a Pinot Gris and Riesling blend. And the Cornalin? After taking a sip, Patrick exclaims, "This is magical wine".

historedenfer.ch

A Swiss education

The mountain as a classroom

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Photos Le Régent – Jacobo Lasheras | Les Roches



Today, private schools in Switzerland bring students from all over the world together under one roof – sometimes as many as 50 or 60 nationalities.

Does increasing the altitude improve education? To learn better, should one study *and* ski? Since the late 19th century, elite private schools – inspired by British boarding schools – have proliferated in the Swiss mountains. Why are they such a success?

It likely all began with the creation of a boy's boarding school by writer and educator Rodolphe Töpffer in the 1820s. He designed Rousseau-inspired course curriculums that integrated experiences in the area's Alpine nature for his students, many of whom were foreigners. But it wasn't until almost a half century later, in 1880, that the Institut Le Rosey was founded in Rolle (Vaud), becoming a model of its kind. This elite Swiss boarding school, located within a prestigious, medieval castle, is highly selective, offers bilingual education, emphasizes sport as an incentive for learning and provides a sense of community. It's a well-defined model that will soon reach as far as the shores of Lake Geneva.

In 1915, spurred by the First World War, Le Rosey set course for Gstaad for the winter. A trial run that quickly became the norm, then a tradition, contributing to the resort's booming growth, where several wealthy families settled. Why? Primarily because of the mountains' powerful educational potential: sports like skiing, ice skating and mountaineering help forge character, instil discipline and encourage endurance, empowerment, maturity, resilience and team spirit... to name just a few of the benefits. And, of course, there's the added bonus of the students' parents being able to network.

BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF

At the time, the Collège Alpin International Beau Soleil, which had been in Gstaad since 1910, had already moved to Villars-sur-Ollon's sunny plateau at 1,300 m in altitude. After the Second World War, three more schools were founded within three years, all of which are still active today – La Garenne International School in 1947, Préfleur International Alpine School in 1948, and Aiglon College in Chesières, in 1949.

All of them are still primarily based on the British boarding school model, emphasising their high standing, quest for excellence, small class sizes and high level of personal-

isation – for studies that often begin in early childhood. The schools are also often influenced by the Montessori method or Austrian Rudolf Steiner's holistic education approach, which relies heavily on the integration of the arts and manual labour. While run at first by their essentially English and French founders, these elite Swiss boarding schools began little by little to attract candidates from all four corners of the globe, reinforcing socialization, language practice and a potentially powerful future network for their students.

Over time, the goals evolved: as the world globalised, it became more about preparing for international exams and increasing both mobility and adaptability on a global level. In contrast to the demagogic influences of the past few years, the schools have strongly emphasised humanist values and the central role of multilateralism. Education is bilingual or entirely in English, with options to obtain a French Baccalauréat, British A-Level, Swiss Maturité or an IB (International Baccalaureate) upon completion of studies.

A (VERY) DYNAMIC EDUCATION

The security and quality of life that Switzerland in general (and Valais' ski resorts in particular) offers have been attracting increasing numbers of wealthy foreign residents. This new boom led to the 2011 founding of the Verbier International School, whose mantra is to "educate beyond the curriculum" and shape world citizens who are sharp, integrated, independent and creative. How exactly? Using a holistic approach that offers multiple sources of learning and experience, like debates, theatre, fine arts and even cooking classes, plus cultural visits, hikes and other sport activities that span dozens of other domains. Take for example the sport-study *Ski Race Academy* program or the *Freeride Academy* program, which include glacier outings in Zermatt and Saas Fee. It was a success, which inspired the creation of the Copperfield International School, also in Verbier – until



At Les Roches Crans-Montana, students are empowered to learn, collaborate and flourish in an inspiring Alpine setting.

the two schools unified in summer 2025, under the aegis of Duke's Education, and inaugurated the new Trois Cimes campus premises (with an adjoining sports centre).

On the other side of the valley, in the heart of Crans Montana, the Le Régent International School (the youngest of the Swiss international boarding schools, founded in 2015) adopted a similar philosophy, expressed through their unique educational model: learning with the head, heart, and hand (h³). All classes are in English with obligatory French classes. It offers "experiential learning" with orientation courses in a plethora of options from music to yoga, debating, eloquence, robotics, mountain biking or hockey. The goal is to enhance development to help children reach their full potential, build practical skills and strong character that will last a lifetime and shape responsible citizens, entrepreneurs and leaders who are conscious of their social (and even environmental) role, ultimately having a positive impact on the future of the world. A core mission and enormous ambition to prepare students to excel in all their pursuits.

LES ROCHES, A HIGH-ALTITUDE HOSPITALITY SCHOOL

Les Roches, one of the world's leading hotel management schools, has been established in Crans-Montana since 1954. Inspired by the concept behind other boarding schools, Les Roches developed with a greater focus on international hospitality, and what could be better? The perfectly positioned campus, which overlooks the Valais Alps, is surrounded by a cohort of high luxury establishments that embody Swiss excellence.

Here, learning doesn't happen in a sterile environment, instead everything that is taught becomes part of daily life, within the exceptionally privileged setting of the ski resort. "It's an open-air classroom," enthuses the school's director, Giovanni Odaglia. Star hotels, a dynamic culinary scene, ski slopes, golf courses and international sporting events are all key elements of the education offered at Les Roches, offering an avenue into every possible career path. More than an education, Les Roches asserts itself as a lifestyle, perfectly captured in its motto: *Les Roches is not just a school; it is a Way of Life.*

A POWERFUL INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Offering programs in applied hospitality sciences, luxury tourism, the experience economy and entrepreneurship, the school aims to train world leaders in high-end tourism – entirely in English to ensure strong international grounding. A highlight is the highly immersive *Bachelor of Science in Global Hospitality*, which immediately opens

the door to rich internship opportunities around the world and a truly dynamic career. At the graduate level, the *MBA* and *Executive MBA programs in Global Hospitality Management* are both highly successful, as is the *Master of Science in Sports Management and Events*, which takes full advantage of Switzerland's central role in major international sporting institutions.

A Les Roches degree comes with a rare guarantee: that of being sought after. It should thus be no surprise that the institution ranks second in the world in the QS University Rankings by Subject 2025 – a major indicator of its reputation and the high employability of its graduates.

A member of the Swiss Learning network, which brings together the crème de la crème of Swiss private education, Les Roches has in fact expanded far beyond Valais. With campuses in Marbella (Spain), Abu Dhabi and (soon) Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, there's no doubt that the school puts the "global" in global hospitality education, with a student body that numbers nearly 2,600 students and represents around a hundred nationalities.

LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICE, ABOVE ALL

Several key words define the education one receives at Les Roches, including service, leadership, innovation and problem-solving. But if one had to choose a priority, what would the essential mindset underlying all of Les Roches' teaching be? "It would be a combination of academic excellence and human-centred experiential learning," says Giovanni Odaglia.

At the Crans-Montana campus, training rooms, restaurants and bars are combined with state-of-the-art facilities that are all housed within the contemporary Spark-designed building – which also includes virtual reality rooms and a digital media studio. Here, the best modern technologies are used to develop and refine experience-based skills through collaborative work in small groups. Visitors can even dine at Substance, the school's training restaurant, which showcases modern Alpine cuisine made with hyper-local, sustainably-grown ingredients.

From the moment the academic year begins, group projects and decision-making exercises set the pace, while each student's interests and creativity are nurtured through a wide variety of student clubs. Cooking, wine knowledge, sustainability, the arts, charitable investments, sports... talents of all kinds are encouraged to flourish here. The ultimate goal? To build deep mastery that enables young people to find their true place in the world.

Giants of the Swiss Alps

Dams: heritage and the future of energy

Text Aurélie Michelin

Photos Oiken | Valais-Wallis Promotion – Giovanni Castell

Switzerland: the land of chocolate, watches, banks... and dams. Few people know it, but this country has the highest density of dams in the world, which includes run-of-river structures and, above all, storage dams. For decades, this infrastructure has shaped both the Swiss landscape and the country's energy identity.

The history behind the country's hydraulic power really began to accelerate in the mid-20th century, when Switzerland, in a visionary and bold move, began to pursue unprecedented modernization. After the end of the Second World War, rising consumption and electrification meant that new means of production were required. Taking advantage of its unique topography and rich glacial reserves, Switzerland commissioned around a hundred large dams within just 20 years, mainly in the canton of Valais – which is home to Europe's largest concentration of glaciers.

THE “BLUE GOLD” RUSH

The long-isolated Alpine valleys suddenly found avenues for new prosperity. The work sites attracted vast numbers of labourers: thousands of Swiss and foreign workers came to contribute to building these monumental projects. For the Émosson Dam, which was commissioned in 1975, nine out of ten workers were Italian. In parallel, infrastructure was expanding nationwide: roads, housing, cable cars, bridges – all of which contributed to the growth of Alpine tourism.

But there was a dark side to this growth. Entire villages were submerged, ecosystems were disrupted and many workers lost their lives. The worst accident occurred at the Mattmark Dam construction site in 1965, when a glacier tongue collapsed onto workers' barracks, claiming the lives of 88 people.

SWISS-MADE INNOVATION

Today, there are 222 large dams in Switzerland, which have evolved to become symbols of engineering excellence, innovation and national pride. These dams, along with the smaller infrastructure involved in the complete hydropower process, provide Switzerland with virtually emission-free electricity. Until the early 1970s, hydropower supplied nearly 90% of Switzerland's electricity. Although activating nuclear power plants brought that percentage down to around 60% today, hydropower remains the backbone of the country's energy system, and Switzerland ranks sixth in Europe in terms of installed hydropower capacity.

From design and engineering to operation and maintenance, Switzerland masters the entire chain of expertise in this domain and exports its technical innovations globally to places like Norway, China and South America.

Because hydropower requires significant investment, its funding is based on a public or semi-public model, with the primary contracting authorities and developers being cantonal or municipal administrations, along with electric utility companies (which are often publicly owned). The success of this model revolves around key hydropower concessions: companies are given the right – by a canton or municipality – to use a watercourse for electricity production



A staggering 156 m high, the Tseuzier arch dam took four years to build (1953 to 1957) and is located in the upper Lienne Valley, near Crans-Montana.



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On the other side of Valais, tucked into the Val d'Anniviers and in line with the Grand Cornier (3,962 m), the Moiry dam is slightly less high at 148 m.

for limited periods, generally 80 years. In exchange, the operator pays fees and transfers ownership of the dam to the public once the concession period comes to an end.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Switzerland committed to gradually phasing out nuclear power and increasing renewable production in its 2050 Energy Strategy, which was approved by voters in 2017. In order to meet rising energy demands while also compensating for the closure of nuclear plants, a historic round-table discussion with cantons, operators, and environmental organizations began in 2020. It selected 16 hydropower projects – deemed “energetically promising and ecologically acceptable” – to benefit from new facilities, raised dam walls, expanded reservoirs, and extended pump-storage systems for improved energy storage and grid balancing.

But the future of Swiss hydropower now faces new challenges. Suitable location sites have become scarce, approval procedures are lengthy, and profitability is uncertain in an electricity market where prices remain relatively low. Another serious concern is that the first concessions are approaching their end, which means the future governance of these concrete giants will need to be redefined. What company would invest hundreds of millions of Swiss Francs in a dam that has uncertain ownership rights and residual value?

Climate change has also become another increasingly important factor. Large dams are primarily fed by glacial meltwater and require hydrologic balance in order to regulate water flow, prevent floods and secure water reserves

during (increasingly frequent) droughts. Scientists now predict that half of Switzerland's glaciers will disappear by 2100, risking the future utility of the dams... while, paradoxically, making them even more essential. The Gornerli reservoir project in Valais, a flagship of the round-table discussion, illustrates the challenge of reconciling energy production, water management and protection of nature.

REINVENTING THE BALANCE

Even though voters overwhelmingly approved a 2024 law aimed at boosting domestic renewable electricity production, administrative delays, local opposition, and environmental or landscape concerns still hinder many projects. However, in late September 2025, Parliament adopted a “law to accelerate procedures”, designed to simplify planning and authorization for renewable energy projects of national interest. Whether these measures will be enough to convert political intent into tangible progress remains to be seen.

So, what does the future have in store? If the electricity agreement between Switzerland and the European Union enters into force, it could open new prospects – like integration into the European electricity market or greater value for pumped-storage power – but it could also lead to a potential loss of flexibility in managing and leveraging Switzerland's hydropower resources. Only time will tell whether the country can harmoniously combine energy independence, respect for nature and the legacy of its “water cathedrals” – these monuments of the past that continue to power the future.

**Audemars Piguet**

Royal Oak Extra-Thin
Selfwinding Flying Tourbillon Chronograph RD#5

A reflection of Audemars Piguet's 150 years of history, this unusual timepiece, which is powered by the new Calibre 8100, unites a flyback chronograph and a flying tourbillon for the first time ever. Another innovation: new generation push-pieces that were inspired by supple smartphone haptics! The 39 mm titanium case surrounds a seductive blue "Petite Tapisserie" dial for this highly limited-edition watch (only 150 available).

audemarspiguet.com

**Tudor**

Black Bay 68

1968. That was the year that Tudor's signature aesthetic took hold with its emblematic "Snowflake" hands. Now, they are found on this timepiece, part of the Black Bay collection, which regroups the brand's visual codes within a 43 mm stainless steel case with polished and satin finishes and a unidirectional matte black aluminium bezel. Its manufacture calibre offers a 70-hour power reserve and is a METAS-certified "Master Chronometer".

tudorwatch.com

**Chopard**

Alpine Eagle 41

One of the things we immediately love, in this dial that has textures inspired by an eagle's iris, is its magnificent pine colour, which is obtained through a PVD treatment that makes the Roman numerals and rhodium-plated, luminescent indexes pop. It's both minimalist and exceptional at the same time, housed within a stainless-steel 41 mm case and powered by a manufacture COSC-certified calibre that boasts a 60-hour power reserve.

chopard.com

**Omega**

Speedmaster Grey Side of the Moon

This astral gem pays homage to spatial exploration with its 44.25 mm polished-brushed and plasma-treated ceramic case, grey dial and new movement decoration that's precisely laser-engraved to recreate the Moon's surface topography. The ensemble boasts three sub-dials (30 min, 12 h and small seconds) and a tachymeter scale. The backside of the watch features a tribute to Astronaut Jim Lovell, with the engraved quote: "The Moon is Essentially Grey".

omegawatches.com



Hublot
*Big Bang King Gold Ceramic
20th Anniversary*

This watch marries 18K 5N gold with the robustness of black ceramic, a key Hublot material. With its polished and satin-finished 44 mm case, ceramic bezel with 6 H-shaped screws, triple sub-dials and date at 04:30, this watch embodies the brand's visual codes in a look that's as bold as it is chic. The self-winding chronograph movement has a 42-hour power reserve, and it's topped with a black structured rubber strap.



Swatch
Golden Tac

A glimmer of gold on intense black marks the Swatch Golden Tac, which features a thin 34-mm round case and bracelet made of bio-sourced plastics. The dial, which is the same deep black, features golden hands, indexes and Arabic numerals which indicate hours, minutes and seconds. It's discreet, chic, waterproof and efficient, powered by a Swiss Quartz movement. And at this price, it won't last long on the shelves!



H. Moser & Cie
*Streamliner Perpetual Moon
Concept Meteorite*

Born when the cosmos collided with earth, this timepiece contains a true piece of intergalactic history: a fragment of the Gibeon meteorite, one of the largest ever to fall on Earth, in Namibia in the 19th century. Integrated into the dial, the meteorite's unique structure creates a beautiful Widmanstätten pattern, with the addition of a signature smoke effect that Moser is known for and an adjustable moon phase indicator.



Rolex
Perpetual 1908

1908: the year Rolex was created by Hans Wilsdorf. More than a century later, this new watch perpetuates the core aesthetics of Rolex's origins in a 39 mm case in grey 18K gold – or 950 platinum – with a polished finish. Uniting delicacy and performance, the self-winding movement integrates a small-seconds sub-dial at 6 o'clock, a stop-seconds function and a "Superlative Chronometer" certification. The strap? Stunning alligator leather.



1. **Louis Vuitton** Corduroy and shearling mix trucker louisvuitton.com

2. **Dom Pérignon** Vintage 2004 Pléniitude 2 domperignon.com

3. **The Mountain Studio X Hestra** W-1 TMS & HESTRA Leather gloves the-mountain-studio.com

4. **Prada** Suede duffle bag prada.com

5. **Scott** Flow Pro Mips helmet scott-sports.com

6. **Hublot** Big Bang 20th Anniversary All Black hublot.com



1

2



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4



5



6



7



1. **Bogner** Runa wool coat in Camel bogner.com

2. **Maison Ogier** Ribbed knit hat in cashmere ogier1948.com

3. **Chopard** Ice Cube ring, ethical rose gold and diamonds chopard.com

4. **Audemars Piguet** Royal Oak Selfwinding Perpetual Calendar audemarspiguet.com

5. **Peak Performance** Elevate insulated hood jacket peakperformance.com

6. **Dior** DiorAlps Après-Ski Ankle Boot dior.com

7. **Loro Piana** Extra Bag L27 ch.loropiana.com

VIÑAS

GENÈVE

#trends



1



2



3



4



5

1. Hermès Samarcande chess set hermes.com
2. Ferm Living Burl table lamp fermliving.com
3. Moncler Snowseeker Rectangular Sunglasses moncler.com
4. Flexform Ozzy swivel armchair flexform.it
5. Ralph Lauren Home Brennan Leather Umbrella Stand ralphlauren.ch



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