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Why Switzerland Never Fails to Charm: The Real Paradise on Earth

BY SHRADDHA D'SOUZA (MAILTO:EDITOR@MASALA.COM) Thursday, 13 June 2019

Shraddha Dsouza went on a trip to Switzerland and came back completely charmed by its beauty and awe-inspiring experiences



Switzerland

Sweet dreams are made of these..." The thought of Switzerland makes me sing and dream. So when the opportunity to visit Switzerland came to me, I couldn't resist. The itinerary looked interesting with lots of opportunities to take in the beautiful scenic views of Switzerland.

Our first stop was the gorgeous town of Zermatt. From Dubai we took the Swiss Air to Zurich and from Zurich a train to Zermatt. One of the main features of this country is their punctuality. The Swiss are very particular about time and this reflects in all their interactions, including the timings of the train which would arrive and depart at the stipulated time.





On arrival at Zermatt, we checked into Hotel Alex, a rustic but comfortable hotel, located just a few minutes away from the station. Zermatt has three main mountains, Rothorn, Gornergrat and Matterhorn Glacier Paradise. Rothorn is perfect for skiers who are beginners. We boarded the funicular or cable car to a point called Sunnegga, from where we took the gondola to Rothorn. No sooner did we reach Rothorn, than it started to snow. I caught some snow flakes on my sleeve, which were so beautiful and shaped exactly how I would draw them.

It was now time to head back down and explore the village of Zermatt. Even though the place was buzzing with many tourists or skiers (they could have been from nearby towns) there was some sort of peace and tranquility. One of the unique features of Zermatt is that it has always been car free. After walking around a bit, we discovered a point which overlooked the town with the grand Matterhorn as a backdrop. It was a perfect photo opportunity and after going shutter-happy, we decided to call it a day and returned to the hotel.



Our second day began with an early breakfast and soon we were on our way to tackle the highest peak at Zermatt, the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise by cable car. The highlight of the modern cable car are its four "Crystal ride" cabins, which are coated with Swarovski crystals. During the nine-minute journey, the four special cabins offer a spectacular view: after three minutes, the cloudy glass bottom clears in a matter of seconds to provide a magnificent view of the glacier landscape. We were warned that upon reaching the viewing platform, there is a possibility of slight dizziness due to the sudden change in the atmosphere. One can also view the Swiss-Italian border from the Matterhorn. Below the deck is a restaurant with panoramic windows for those who want to relish a warm cup of their favorite beverage while taking in the sights.

We walked to the Glacier palace, below the deck, which had some Ice sculptures. After taking in the stunning views from the Matterhorn, it was time to take the gondolas down to Furi and lunch at the Gitz-Gadi for even more scenic views of the mountains. As we still had most of the day left and we hadn't had enough of the mountains we decided to head to Gornergrat which is 3,089 m. by the cogwheel train. One can take the cogwheel directly from Zermatt station to Gornergrat too. It is a completely different view of the Matterhorn from Gornergrat viewing deck. On our way back from Gornergrat we got off at the Findelbach station and took the trail down to Zermatt. It was a quite an easy hike down and very picturesque with winding roads and quaint houses. We continued exploring the village and then settled in for traditional Swiss dinner at Schaferstube, which was simply delicious.

Next day we left for our next destination, Lugano, by the Glacier Express. The International Au Lac which was our hotel for the day was centrally located and offered serene views of the lake. Lugano as opposed to Zermatt gives a city vibe and everyone is always stylishly dressed.



On our day in Lugano, we took the boat from Lugano-Paradiso to Capolago-Riva San Vitale. From there we took the cogwheel train to Monte Generoso, which is one of the first cogwheel railways in the Swiss Alps. On reaching atop we had lunch at the Fiore Di Pietra, a floral-shaped building created by the famous architect Mario Botta. After all the sightseeing in the past few days, we were all looking forward to shopping at the Foxtown Factory stores. This store is a factory outlet where 160 stores offer the most prestigious brands at prices discounted from 30% to 70% during whole year. A shopper's paradise indeed.

But what I was really looking forward to that whole trip was the next place we were about to visit, the Swissminiatur. The Swissminiatur is an open air museum where one can admire more than 120 models at scale of 1:25, which represent the most important buildings, monuments and transportation means in Switzerland. All the trains and cable cars are motorized and it feels like a massive playground. The highlight is the joyride in the toy train, which takes one back to childhood. Packing for our trip back was difficult as there is so much more to explore in Switzerland and I promised myself that I am definitely coming back.

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