

St Moritz vs Klosters

If certain slopes project an aura of exclusivity, then St Moritz and Klosters in Switzerland together capture the essence of a luxury ski resort. Both have been the vacation mainstay for figures such as Prince Charles, Princess Caroline of Monaco, Donald Trump and Tom Cruise, to name a few.

However, how do they compare? We put them through their paces to find out which resort reigns as King of the Mountains.

THE APRÈS SKI BARS

St Moritz and Klosters conjure images of royalty and screen idols spraying snow as they slide their way into the après ski bar to sip champagne, but which one takes top spot?

Priya Ramkissoon reports.

Left: Klosters has plenty of slopes to choose from
 Bottom: St Moritz boasts wild, secluded slopes

KLOSTERS IS THE CLOSEST A TOP-END SKI RESORT COMES TO AN ALPINE VILLAGE.



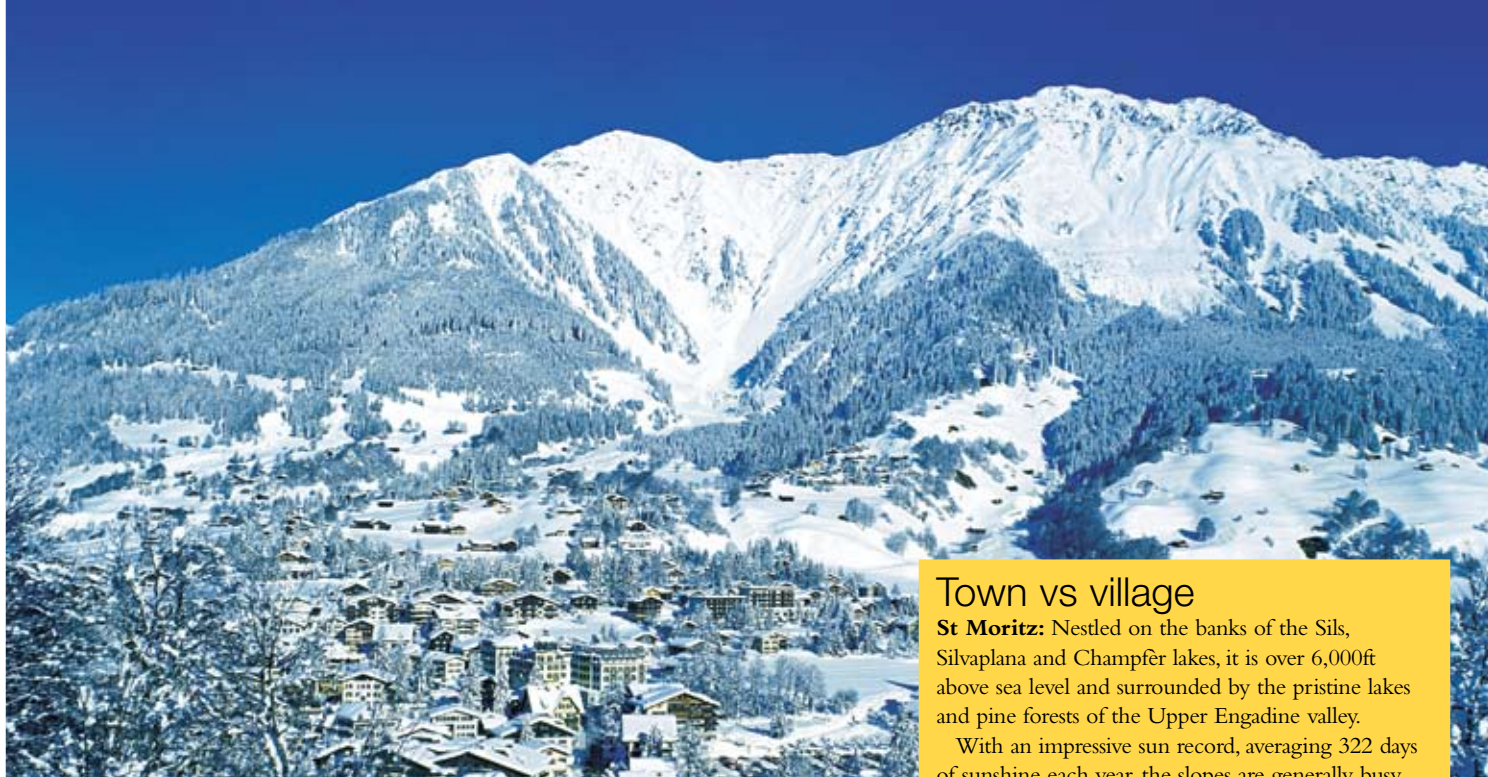
Hitting the slopes

St Moritz: Eric Kendall, editor of ultimate_ski.com, believes: 'St Moritz has flattering, enjoyable slopes. The two main outlying areas – Corvatsch and Diavolezza – have excellent and frequently deserted slopes with a wild taste of the high mountains and expert-only terrain that surround these areas.' It has held the Winter Olympic Games twice, with a heritage that stretches back to 1864.

Klosters: It has a pretty small selection of slopes called the Madrisa, which has a good selection of blue and red slopes for the intermediates. Beginners and experts might be better taking advantage of the link with Davos' famous Parsenn ski slopes, and the two share a lift pass covering each other's pistes and mountain transport. This gives it over 300km of slopes and plenty of challenging runs, but they are 10km away.

Round 1: St Moritz, thanks to its Olympic-standard slopes.

All images in this article courtesy of St Moritz and Klosters



Sleeping arrangements

St Moritz: With its Romansh heritage, proximity to Italy and mostly German-speaking population, St Moritz has a cosmopolitan culture of many different styles and influences. This can be seen in the array of accommodation on offer. With 5,700 hotel rooms and 7,500 holiday homes, there is plenty of choice.

The most famous skiing hotels in the world are arguably Badrutt's Palace and the historic Hotel Kulm, both of which are in St Moritz. They can feel a bit stuffy, especially Hotel Kulm, which enforces a dinner jacket policy after 8pm.

Klosters: A gentle, placid calm sits on this quiet little town, made up of a few streets surrounded by forests. Of the 1,900 hotel beds, the main hotels are the Walserhof – where the Royals stay – and the Hotel Vereina, which was completely rebuilt in 2000. Most visitors stay in an appealing huddle of dark wood chalets, which are tucked almost out of sight in the woods and offer a lot of privacy.

Round 2: A tie – glamour and privacy cannot be compared.



Above and below left: Klosters feels like an unspoilt village
Below right: Badrutt's Palace in St Moritz is one of the best skiing resorts in the world

Town vs village

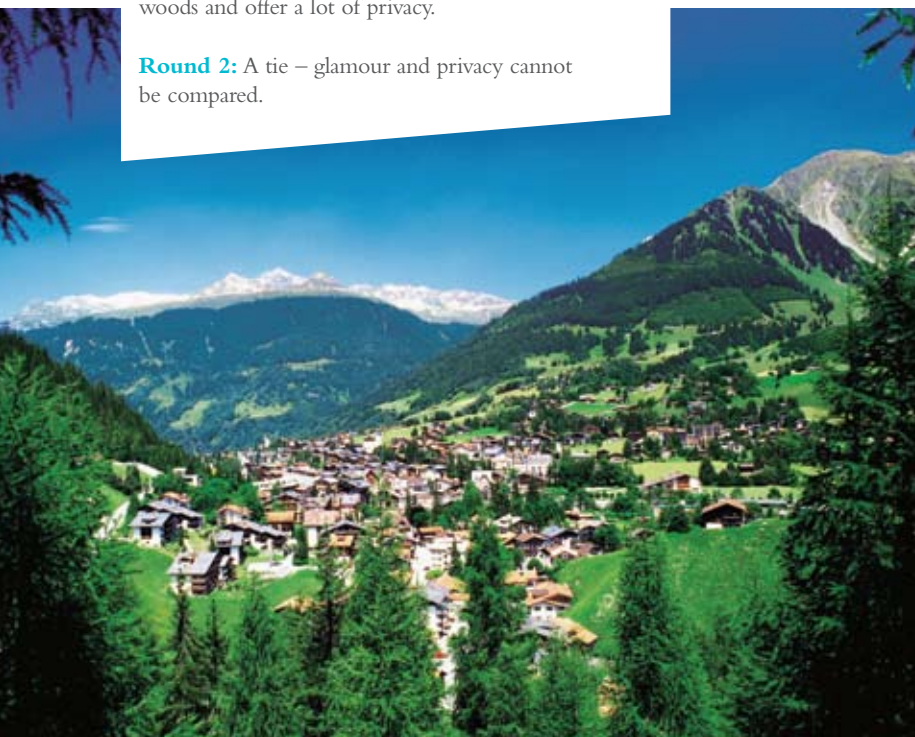
St Moritz: Nestled on the banks of the Sils, Silvaplana and Champfer lakes, it is over 6,000ft above sea level and surrounded by the pristine lakes and pine forests of the Upper Engadine valley.

With an impressive sun record, averaging 322 days of sunshine each year, the slopes are generally busy and the terraces full. St Moritz is a fairly big place, more like a mountain town than a village.

Klosters: This is the closest a top-end ski resort comes to an Alpine village. Its buildings are mostly wooden, the streets are wide and uncluttered, and it sits amid the restful peaks that inspired Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain.

'It is this tranquillity that gives Klosters its distinct appeal,' believes Nicky Stephenson, director of Flexiski. 'It is more of an understated glamour, if you like. It is a picture postcard holiday with its scenic views and settings.'

Round 3: Klosters, for retaining its rural feel.



KLOSTERS IS THE PLACE FOR 'JUST THE VERY RICH, RATHER THAN THE RICH AND FAMOUS, WHO TEND TO PREFER RITZY ST MORITZ'.

– NICKY STEPHENSON, FLEXISKI



Après ski

St Moritz: This place is in a league of its own for high-class après ski. The restaurants are all Michelin-starred or practically as good and the bars are on the cutting edge of cool, offering anything from smart contemporary minimalism to country and western. The best parties can be hard to get into, but if you manage, you will not be disappointed.

Klosters: The restaurants are more intimate, slightly more reserved in style, but the food is of a high standard. The Walserhof recently received two Michelin stars while the Wynegg offers beer and hearty meals with royal patronage. For a livelier evening try the pricey Chesa Grischuna, which, despite looking like a tumbledown chalet from the outside, is one of the chicest places in town.

Round 4: St Moritz, for its beautiful people doing beautiful things in beautiful places.



ST MORITZ IS IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN FOR HIGH-CLASS APRÈS SKI.



Top: The après ski in St Moritz is in a league of its own

Above: Klosters is quieter but attracts a more regal following

In the right company

St Moritz: For the rich, famous, glamorous and powerful St Moritz is the place to be seen. However, it is also the place for 320,000 others, and such big crowds water down the feeling of exclusivity.

Klosters: Described by Flexiski's Nicky Stephenson as the place for 'just the very rich, rather than the rich and famous, who, with the obvious exception of HRH, tend to prefer ritzy St Moritz', the clientele at Klosters enjoy privacy and peace and quiet. So, if it is important whom you are sitting next to in the restaurant, this is not the place for you. But then, how can you argue against the choice of royalty?

Round 5: Klosters sneaks it for its princely companions.

The coronation

So, with the judging over, it seems that we have a tie. Klosters wins hands down for its quiet atmosphere, beautiful scenery and tasteful private chalets while St Moritz is prized for its larger hotels, bigger ski slopes and all-round facilities that surpass anything else on offer.

So, with great difficulty we must give it to St Moritz; it just has too much to offer. It is bigger and would wrest the crown from Klosters anyway. However, I don't think Klosters would be too unhappy to remain the quieter, more reserved Prince of the Mountains. ■