



82



74

Departments

13 Notebook

World business in a nutshell.

19 Observer

Spotting and analysing business trends.

26 Column: Paul Krugman

Greed is bad.

Essentials

63 The Sweet Smell of Success

In five short decades, Ajmal has become synonymous across the Middle East for creating high quality perfumes. Now the company is firmly focused on going global.

66 Garage Sale

Hamilton Motors has become a market leader in sales and brokerage of thoroughbred post-WWII historic competition cars.

70 Curved Creations

Colourful walls and ceilings, gilded domes, odd-shaped windows and grassy roofs are the magical creations of Austrian architect, Friedensreich Hundertwasser.

74 Bitter Sweet

Chocolate making in Brussels has been elevated to a high art form, resulting in some of the most expensive confectionery in the world.

78 Cut Above the Ordinary

The Aurora Collection of 296 coloured diamonds, which went on loan to London's Natural History Museum in November 2007, is the world's most famous assemblage of fancy gems.

82 The Sun Shines on Winter Resorts

With glaciers melting and snow packs shrinking, ski resorts in the European Alps are trying to stay ahead of global warming by transforming their resorts with colossal spas, sleek architecture and other off-piste attractions.

86 unReal Estate

Prestige rural properties for sale.

88 Other Business

Portfolio takes a light-hearted look at the latest business news.



The Sun Shines on Winter Resorts

With glaciers melting and snow packs shrinking, ski resorts in the European Alps are trying to stay ahead of global warming by transforming their resorts with colossal spas, sleek architecture and other off-slope attractions, reports **Gisela Williams**.

THE SUN WAS GLARING DOWN ON the Swiss Alps. Bronzed 30-somethings in designer sunglasses and tight T-shirts were draped over extra-large lounge chairs that lined the deck. Euro-pop music played from multiple speakers as fetching young waiters served expensive bottles of Champagne and cheese plates. It might have been August at a Nikki Beach Club – except for the splotches of snow, mountain vistas and overworked snow machines.

It was my second day at the glamorous Arosa ski resort in eastern Switzerland and I had yet to hit the slopes. Instead, I was jostling with Chanel-toting Europeans for sun chairs at Arosa's mountaintop restaurant and floating in the glittering

swimming pools of the Tschuggen Grand Hotel's futuristic new spa.

Could this be the future of Alpine skiing? With glaciers melting and snow packs shrinking, ski resorts in the Alps are trying to stay ahead of global warming, not only by installing more snowmaking guns, but also by transforming their resorts with colossal spas, sleek architecture and other off-slope attractions.

Big-name architects like Zaha Hadid are designing high-altitude ski features. Shopping centres are going up on mountain peaks. And venerable hotels like the Tschuggen Grand are becoming all-weather resorts, in its case by adding a \$30

million, 4,000-square-metre spa designed by the Swiss architect, Mario Botta.

While ski resorts throughout Europe are vulnerable to rising temperatures, Switzerland has been leading the way with several pioneering architectural non-ski attractions. In Davos, home of the World Economic Forum, everyone is talking about the spaceship-like InterContinental Resort designed by the eco-friendly architect Matteo Thun – an elliptical-shaped complex with 186 luxury hotel rooms, residential apartments, shops, conference rooms and, of course, a vast spa. The complex, which Thun calls “a new planet”, is expected to open in 2010 and will be partly built from local materials.



Two designs in Austria by Zaha Hadid — the Ski Jump at Bergisel mountain (top) and the Nordpark Cable Railway in nearby Innsbruck (bottom).

“A lot of people are telling us: ‘You guys are doing fine because you’re far above the critical height line where ski areas will have a problem,’” said Armin Egger, former director of Davos Tourism. “But we know if about 40 per cent of skiing areas in the European Alps will be gone in 50 to 100 years, then we will have a problem as well.”

That point was hammered home at a UN conference about climate change and tourism held in Davos in late 2007.

“If temperatures continue to rise, artificial snowmaking will become less and less efficient,” said Shardul Agrawala, a conference speaker who recently edited a study *Climate Change in the European Alps for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development*, a Paris-based group of 30 industrial nations. “Alpine resorts, especially at low

altitudes, are developing other revenue opportunities that don’t require snow.”

For the Swiss ski village of Zermatt, that means more spas and conference tourism, even though the village is high enough to be safe from current warming conditions. The resort is constructing a 122-metre-high glass-and-steel pyramid on top of Little Matterhorn, the highest point in the Alps reachable by cable car. The pyramid is to be filled with restaurants, a conference centre, swimming pools and an observation deck at an air-thinning 4,000 metres above sea level.

“Some people think it’s great and others think it’s a scandal,” said Heinz Julen, the architect who designed the pyramid, which he calls the Dream Peak. “Even if we don’t have as many glaciers in 50 years, this area will still have a wonderful landscape.”

Some Zermatt hotels say they are already

feeling the effects of global warming. Roman Codina, the managing director of Omnia, a modern mountain lodge in the centre of town, said he has seen a spike in summer visitors, mostly urban dwellers seeking to cool off from the hot European cities. To attract a younger, less sporty crowd, the year-old hotel features a large spa, complete with a swimming pool that overlooks the quaint town.

AUSTRIA IS not far behind Switzerland when it comes to investing in attention-grabbing architecture. Hadid, who built a metallic snake of a ski jump at Bergisel mountain, had just completed a shiny, sculptural funicular for the Nordpark Cable Railway in nearby Innsbruck that whisks visitors from the city centre up 2,300 metres to Hungerburg all year round.

Over-the-top spas are also sprouting in

the Austrian Alps. At Aqua Dome, a 140-room modern spa hotel near the glacier ski resort of Sölden in western Austria, it's hard to miss the three enormous concrete bowls that resemble outdoor birdbaths. Each contains a different soaking experience: one is a supersize whirlpool tub, the second has a battery of massage jets, and the third is filled with saltwater and has piped-in underwater music. Inside, a dome-topped spa has two more pools and a waterfall.

GERMAN SKI resorts, on the other hand, are at the lowest altitude and therefore most at risk from rising temperatures, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. But some guests don't seem to be too concerned about the disappearing snow.

At Das Kranzbach, a new spa resort near the popular ski resort of Zugspitze in southern Germany, skiers can skip the slopes and lounge in a sleek spa with modern wood lines and a grass roof. Designed by the British designer, Ilse Crawford, the resort was the former country castle of the English aristocrat, Mary Portman, who built a series of English-inspired grey stone buildings with steep roofs.

Traditional chalet styling now competes with purple velvet chairs and silvery



Outdoor spa bowls at Aqua Dome, in the Ötztal Alps of Austria.

wallpaper. On a weekend in summer 2007, just two months after its opening, Das Kranzbach was humming with fashionable couples lazing around a maze of indoor and outdoor pools. As the sun began to set, the crowd moved to the spacious dining room, where they savoured a five-course menu that included duck samosas and venison served with chestnuts.

Three months later, despite a blanket of snow that covered the surrounding 360-degree landscape of mountains, the guests at Das Kranzbach were not planning to hit the slopes anytime soon. They preferred to admire the white-capped peaks from the spa's indoor pools. ■



Das Kranzbach's spa

If You Go

■ The futuristic spa at the Tschuggen Grand in Arosa, Switzerland (Sonnenbergstrasse; Tel +41 81 378 9999; tschuggen.ch), designed by Mario Botta, opened in winter 2006/2007. Rooms range from €391 for a double deluxe room to €1,656 for the Tschuggen Suite.

■ The Omnia (Auf dem Fels, Zermatt; Tel +41 27 966 7171; the-omnia.com) in

Switzerland is Zermatt's first contemporary design hotel and spa. To get there, guests ride an elevator that whisks them up a mountainside to a lobby outfitted with Mies van der Rohe furniture. Rooms start at €270, including breakfast.

■ The Aqua Dome in Langenfeld, Austria (Oberlangenfeld 140, Langenfeld; Tel +43 52 53 6400; aqua-dome.at) is surrounded

by designer pools. Rates start at €135 per person per night.

■ Das Kranzbach (Kranzbach; Tel +49 88 2392 8000; daskranzbach.de) is a new spa resort about 10 miles outside Garmisch, Germany's top ski area. Rooms start at €149.