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TEEING OFF IN STYLE

by Shabana Nather

Few world destinations are as made for golfing as Switzerland is. Topography that's a gift from the gods with lush extensive swathes of grassy lawns dotted intermittently with pools of blue, a languid serene pace of life that percolates to every activity you pursue here, and to top it all off, a selection of some of the finest restaurants and hotels that are the icing on the cake for a world weary golf traveler. Plus, there's the new Swiss trend of spa-and-golf resorts that threaten to make the term "golf widow" redundant. With spa pampering rituals in such close supply, spouses of avid golfers these days are only too happy to pack their bags, and head out for a weekend or two of swinging of a tamer kind.

There are more than 80 golf courses spread across Switzerland. Big deal, you think. But the beauty of golfing here is that no matter where you are, there's a putting green near you. In fact, Switzerland has the highest density of golf courses in Europe, and many of these are at varying degrees of altitude – from the near sea level courses at Ascona all the way up to the playgrounds of Moritz, and dozens of others in between. From courses nestled amid verdant velvety plains and fairways that stretch across hilly countryside to greens tucked away at the foothills of a glacier – Switzerland offers a varied choice for die hard aficionados of the privileged sport.

The Graubunden region is home to some fine courses, all set against the magnificent backdrop of the mountains. Putting choices here range from the two 18 hole championship

courses at sunny Engadine set against clear blue sky and breathtaking scenery, to a more sophisticated golfing experience at Davos, where sport and relaxation blend perfectly. Consider a trip to the highest golf course in Europe at Arosa where the high altitude levels add distance to your shot, and St. Moritz, the winter playground of Europe which morphs into a golfer magnet come summer. The Kulm Golf Course here is part of a growing trend of golf resorts that include comprehensive spa facilities.

At the Riviera of Switzerland, Ticino, the all year round pleasant weather and beautiful lakes draw honeymooners and golfers in equal measure. The region has a selection of three excellent 18 hole courses in Lugano, Losone, and Ascona where you'll enjoy the privilege of skiing all morning, and still manage to get back in time to play 18 holes before



Images courtesy Omega European Masters

the sun sets. About a 188 km out of Zurich are the Grand Hotels Bad Ragas, the only hotels in Switzerland with their own golf courses. The Hotel's USP is the spa with its healing thermal waters, whose proven therapeutic powers have been well documented for centuries. With decadent pampering luxury at such close quarters, the only question you need ponder is "Before or After?" Experts suggest a massage before a round of golf hones the game, but we also recommend a little luxuriating after.

Even with the impressive array of putting facilities in the rest of the country, it's Valais that's the destination of choice for international golfers, with Crans Montana taking pride of place as the venue of the prestigious Omega European Masters. Easily the high point of the Swiss sporting calendar, the European Masters defines Omega's commitment to the promotion of the sport, and lures golf fans from around the world. This year the tournament, the Swiss stop in the European PGA tour will kick off on September 3 through 9 at the spectacular Plan Bramois course, in the beautiful Swiss Alps resort of Crans-sur-Sierre. This stunning course overlooks Mont Blanc, Matterhorn and Wesshorn and was redesigned by Severiano Ballesteros in 1997. Since 1923, its luxuriant and expansive fairways have played host to the golfing world's elite, and it is the second largest golfing tournament on the calendar, next only to the British open.

Omega has always had a strong connection with golf, and sponsored the US PGA tour for several years. In 2001, the legendary watchmaker chose to attach its name to the European Masters in a move that solidified its presence on the European sporting scene. In fact Omega's commitment to the European Masters is another link in its international association with the sport. This affinity with golf isn't surprising; the 159 year old watch maker has an illustrious history that's as distinguished as the sport itself.



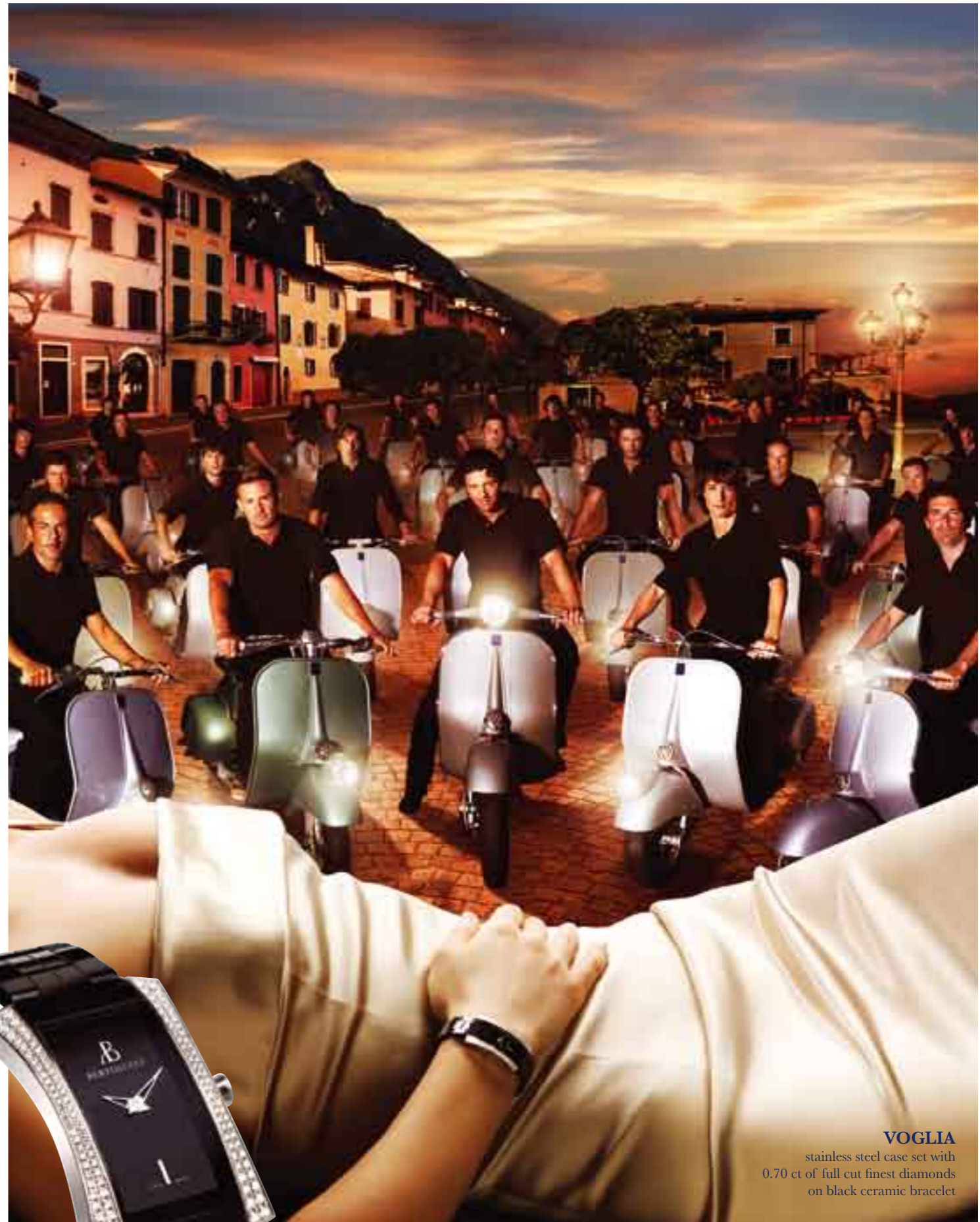
Welcome to the leading Health, Spa & Golf Resort in Switzerland. The Grand Hotel Quellenhof stands for a new interpretation of luxury and elegance. Covering more than 3'000 m2, the "To B." Health Club offers a health and fitness experience and its own thermal water, while "To B. Beauty" is a beauty parlor. The well-known medical health center includes cosmetic medicine and laser treatments. The hotel has its own 18-hole and a 9-hole golf course as well as six different restaurants plus banquet rooms catering for up to 250 people and not to forget its own casino.



The Kulm Hotel St. Moritz in sunny and central location offers a fascinating combination of tradition and elegance, teamed with modern comfort. The ideal place for the whole family, for winter and summer activities. Shopping and entertainment within walking distance. Sunny rooms with breathtaking view over the mountains and the lake of St. Moritz. Spacious and luxury suites. 4 restaurants, bar with piano music, stylish saloons, Panorama Spa & Health Club with whirlpool, sauna, caldarium, salt water grotto, steam bath, Nordic walking instruction; beauty farm. The Kulm sport center offers 9-hole Executive Golf Course with driving range, putting green and golf academy with Pro. 3 tennis courts (summer), natural ice skating rink (winter).



Located on a hillside overlooking the scenic region the famous Palace Hotel Gstaad offers stunning views of the Swiss Alps. It is renowned for its refined elegance, luxury accommodation with individual charm and a personalized service, which exceed even the most discerning traveler's expectations. The culinary variety at the four restaurants ranges from traditional Swiss dishes to international gourmet cuisine and after a splendid dinner you can unwind at one of the two bars or visit the night club. Four tennis courts and one squash court, a health-club with beauty salon, gym and indoor pool, are only part of this complete mountain resort's facilities. Whether you are looking for a romantic weekend get-away or a family vacation, planning your wedding or an amazing incentive event & The Palace Hotel Gstaad is a unique and magic place for a truly memorable stay, in winter and summer time!



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