



**SXSW: Around the world with global artists**



**Business and fun at SXSW Interactive**



**A different view of state's landmarks**



**Selection Sunday: Will Horns get bid?**

**Today**  
Mostly cloudy.  
70/50

**Monday:** Isolated showers. 72/54  
**Tuesday:** 60% chance of rain. 68/58  
**Wednesday:** Rain showers. 70/58

**BUSINESS, F1**  
**SXSW influence still growing in gaming world**

\$2.50

# Austin American-Statesman

Sunday, March 15, 2015

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STATESMAN INVESTIGATES OPEN GOVERNMENT

## State wrongly hid settlements

Records show Texas has been improperly concealing public information on settlements worth millions.

By **Eric Dexheimer** and **Andrea Ball**  
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[aball@statesman.com](mailto:aball@statesman.com)

The state of Texas has been improperly concealing public information about thousands of legal settlements and court

judgments worth millions of dollars, an American-Statesman review of government legal records shows.

But in response to a series of open records requests filed by the newspaper, most state agencies agreed to re-examine their policies to make

such information more easily available to the public. Some conceded the payments have been mislabeled as secret. While the Department of Criminal Justice contended state law prohibited it from revealing some of the information, records show it appears to have obscured more than that statute would allow.

Several of the agencies also split hairs. While agree-

ing the payments were clearly public records under the law, they added they weren't going to advertise the information — effectively creating different categories of public records. "What that means is that if you ask for it, you can have it," said Sylvia Hardman-Dingle, general counsel for the Department of Assistive and

Settle continued on A6

### IN THE NEWS

**Kurds say ISIS uses poison gas**  
Islamic State group in Iraq reportedly used chlorine gas against peshmerga fighters. **A3**

**NATION & WORLD**  
**U.S. plans to slow Afghanistan pullout**  
The White House abandons plans to cut U.S. forces in Afghanistan to 5,500 by year's end. **A3**

**POLITIFACT**  
**False:** PolitiFact checks a statement by George P. Bush about the percentage of Texas students "trapped in schools that are underperforming." **B1**

**METRO & STATE**  
**Manor schools move toward drug testing**  
The plan would randomly test for drug use students who want to participate in extracurricular activities. **B1**

**BUSINESS**  
**Telecommuting an answer for traffic?**  
Working from home might help with Austin's increasingly congested roadways. **F1**

Austin 360	D1
Business	F1
Deaths	B4
Insight & Books	E1
Sports	C1

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**CONTINUING COVERAGE**  
STATE CONTRACTING SCANDAL

## Lobbyist for 21CT: I was told I must lie

Former lobbyist Frinzi gives new details in contract scandal.

By **J. David McSwane**  
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The former lobbyist for Austin tech company 21CT — whose canceled Medicaid anti-fraud contract is shrouded by scandal and criminal investigations — testified last month that he was referred to work for the company by Jack Stick, the disgraced former Texas official who steered millions of dollars in no-bid deals to the company.

During sworn testimony last month, lobbyist James Frinzi provided new details about accusations he made last year that Stick was working as a state official to grow 21CT and seemed poised to become a company executive.

"My first conversation with Jack was exactly about developing a road map to take the company public to make generational wealth for himself," Frinzi said, according to a 167-page deposition transcript obtained by the American-Statesman.

Frinzi also testified that he was instructed by a company executive to lie to the media about how Stick, his former business partner, was the

21CT continued on A13

**THE STORY SO FAR**  
Following an American-Statesman investigation into a lucrative, no-bid state contract through the Department of Information Resources with Austin tech company 21CT, four state health officials resigned, a pending \$90 million deal with the company was canceled, and state and federal criminal probes were launched.

### STATESMAN AT SXSW EVENT PERMITS

## Austin curbs temporary events during SXSW



Vendors take supplies into the SouthBites Trailer Park food and drink zone Friday at 604 Driskill St. "This SXSW appears to be as normal and as large as ever," said Dan Machold, owner of Showlist Austin, which is tracking SXSW unofficial parties. Not everyone agrees. PHOTOS BY RALPH BARRERA / AMERICAN-STATSMAN

## City officials had planned to reduce number of pop-up events by 25% but ended up scaling back by about 7%

By **Lilly Rockwell**  
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When the city spent nearly six months last year examining its policies around South by Southwest, one recommendation came through loud and clear: Find a way to curtail the size and number of alcohol-fueled pop-up events.

These "side parties," designed to promote a brand or company, are often outdoor events, sometimes held on parking lots in the downtown area, often with free booze and music. Some are official South by Southwest events, but most are not.

In January, the city announced it would give closer scrutiny to events during this year's SXSW week and would reduce the number of pop-up events by 25 percent. It even stopped accepting permit applications Feb. 10, say-



The Burro Cheese Kitchen displays its temporary permit for food service in the SouthBites Trailer Park area.

ing the city had reached its target amount. But with the festivities now in full swing, the city's numbers show a reduction of less than 7 percent, from 133 temporary events last year to 124 that have tentative approval this year.

City spokeswoman Alicia Dean said that, in the end, officials focused more on the "size and scope" of the

events, versus hitting a target number. For instance, when considering an application, the city looked at "what else is going on next door or around the block?" Dean said.

The city had studied the proliferation of side parties as part of a bigger examination of SXSW safety after the trag-

Permits continued on A10

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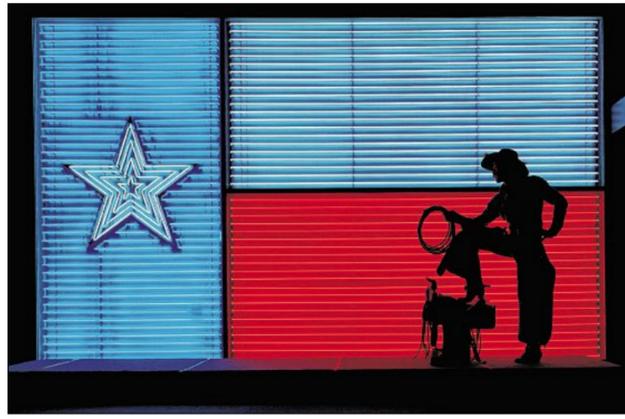
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# TRAVEL



J. Griffis Smith photographed Barbadillo, a 10-foot-tall armadillo, at a steakhouse in Buffalo Gap. J. GRIFFIS SMITH / TEXAS HIGHWAYS



Smith photographed this neon flag at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio in 1985. J. GRIFFIS SMITH / TEXAS HIGHWAYS

# TEXAS FROM ALL SIDES

J. Griffis “Griff” Smith sought out unusual angles, lighting when photographing state landmarks.

By Michael Barnes  
mbarnes@statesman.com

Why don't your Texas vacation snaps look like this? Because you are not J. Griffis “Griff” Smith. You did not spend three decades, before retiring in August 2014, making the state look its best for Texas Highways magazine. And you almost certainly didn't travel with his uncanny array of photographic equipment.

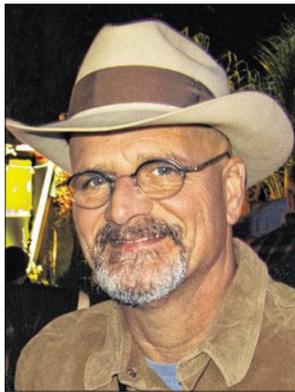
Almost every image in “On the Road with Texas Highways,” Smith's new picture book from Texas A&M University Press, glows with sublime light, mostly natural, but some enhanced during the shoots by devices like hand-held spotlights that illuminate fresh angles on his subjects.

“I always look for abstract, textural scenes or some unusual point of view,” Smith told writer and sometime photographer E. Dan Klepper, who contributed the book's introductory essay. “In fact, I often find myself on my back to come up with different angles.”

Through March 31, one can also see a fair share of Smith's travel pictures at the Capitol Visitors Center on East 11th Street. During a recent visit to the upstairs gallery, Smith, bursting with energy – he's described by fellow photographers as a “galactic force” – explained how he got a variety of shots. The book also contains some of these lively anecdotes.

“Barbadillo,” taken in 2009, for instance, is a goofy, 10-foot-tall armadillo sculpture that awaits visitors to the Perini Ranch Steakhouse in Buffalo Gap.

“Nanci Liles of the Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau convinced me to take this shot for a story about



For 30 years, J. Griffis Smith photographed the Lone Star State for Texas Highways magazine.

the Abilene area,” he says. “It had been a long day, and I was exhausted, but I am so glad she insisted, because this is one of my favorite photos.”

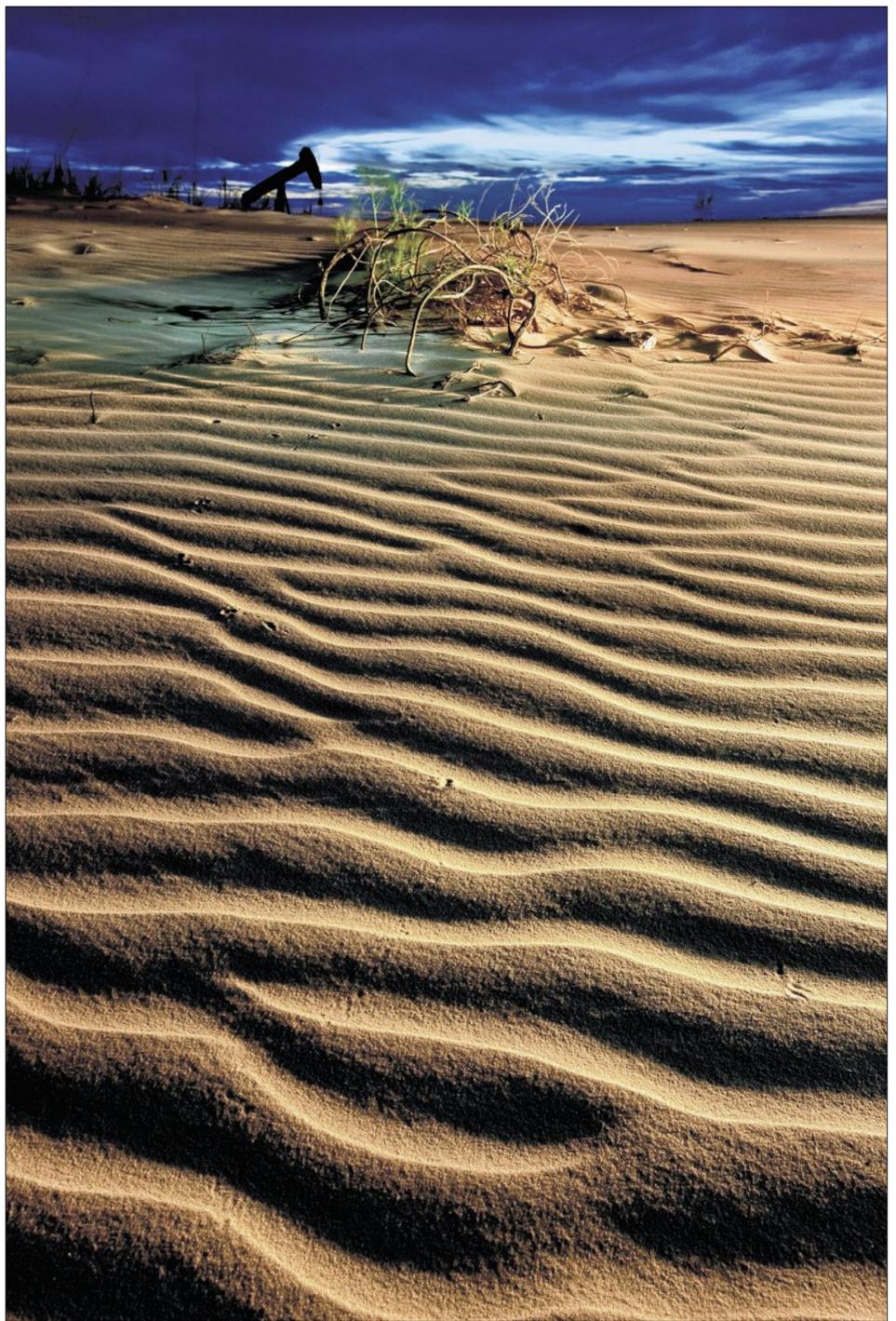
Some of Smith's subjects are already exceedingly well-known. Typically for those tough assignments he went the extra mile to make the familiar seem somewhat unfamiliar.

For example, he treats the Stevie Ray Vaughan memorial on Lady Bird Lake at Auditorium Shores as a haunting “light painting,” a technique that employs multiple light sources.

At other times, some of his subjects could stump even the most widely traveled Texan. One is a bas-relief sculptural treatment of desert flora applied to a heavy door at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon.

“It is propped open during operational hours, so unless you look behind it, you'll miss this cool carved feature,” Smith says. “One of the things I love about my job is having

Photographs continued on D12



This photograph of Monahans Sandhills State Park is one of Smith's favorites. J. GRIFFIS SMITH / TEXAS HIGHWAYS

## BUCKET LIST TRIPS

### Placing bets on St. Moritz

Soak in luxury in this upscale Swiss hamlet.

By Becca Hensley  
Special to the American-Statesman

It started with a bet. And I am not talking about the personal wager I have with myself. That one which questions my ability to eat the entire truffle pizza presented to me at Corviglia's midmountain La Marmite, a gastronomic see-and-be-seen restaurant in St. Moritz, right on the ski slope. In the case of the pizza, I wonder: Can I gobble all that up and still manage to ski for the rest of the afternoon? Maybe. Especially if I take a sip or two of wine. And, why not? Everyone else is doing it – nibbling and tipping in this snow globe of a glittery social universe.

Rather, the bet I speak about has nothing to do with pizza at all. In fact, it dates



St. Moritz, Switzerland, is a snow globe of a glittery social universe. SWISS TOURISM

back 150 years to when St. Moritz was a rustic mountain hamlet. It's the challenge that gave birth to winter sports mania – and the wager that transformed this once-sleepy village into the world's swankiest wintertime playground. The story goes something like this: Savvy hotelier Johannes Badrutt runs a small, summertime pension in St. Moritz for alpine hikers and trav-

elers seeking a cure for their pulmonary ailments. He decides to lure them back to Switzerland in the winter, telling them that the mountains would be snow-frosted and sun-dappled. He teases them with descriptions of madcap winter recreation. They falter. After all, this is a time when there are not yet trains in the

St. Moritz continued on D12

## BOOKS

### Three weeks, no baggage and one fun book later

Freelance writer documents minimalist travel experiment.

By Xander Peters  
xpeters@statesman.com

Clara Bensen, a freelance writer based in Austin, is steadfast to her routine. She wakes up and stares at the ceiling for a while. She showers. She meditates. And then she moseys over to one of the East Austin coffeehouses down the street to see how many words she can hammer out that day. If Bensen has writer's block, she pulls weeds in her front yard.

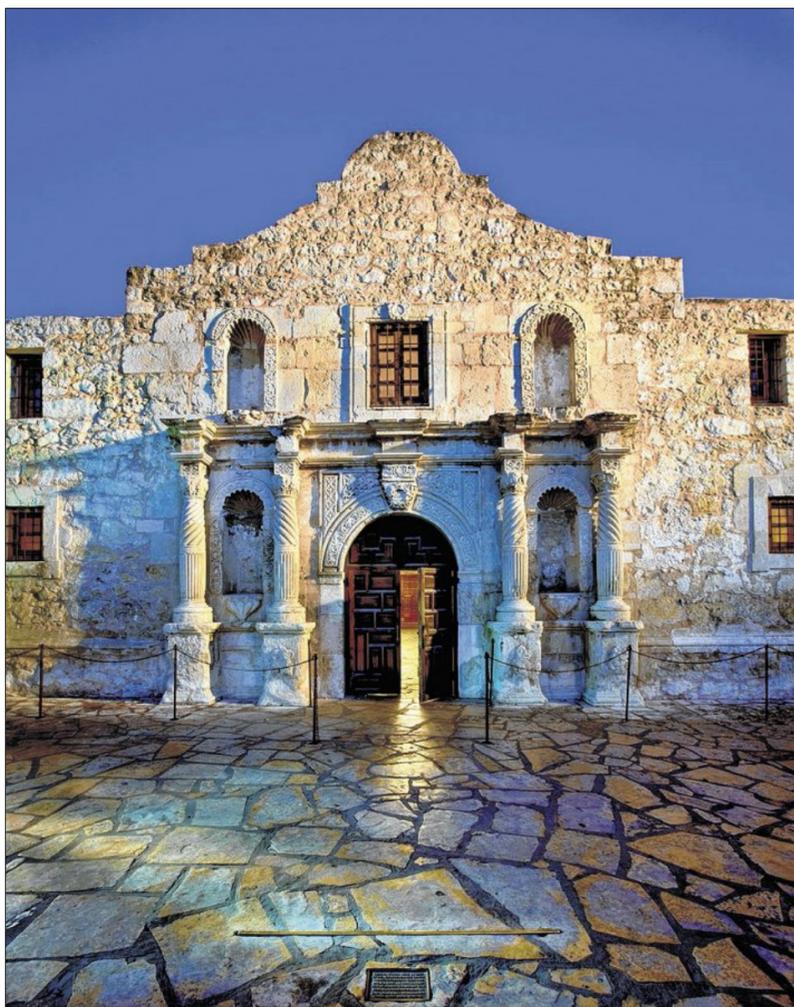
These familiarities are all in part with the upcoming deadline for Bensen's first book, “No Baggage,” due out on shelves in November. The travel memoir documents her and her boyfriend's 21-day ultra-minimalist vacation across



Clara Bensen and Jeff Wilson took a 21-day minimal-stuff trip across Europe. CONTRIBUTED

eight European countries with only the clothes on their backs – a trip that stretched from Istanbul to London, Budapest at midnight to Athens at sunrise, all while roaming across miles of inspiration

Bensen continued on D11



J. Griffis Smith's photo of the Alamo is one of the most popular images to appear in Texas Highways magazine. J. GRIFFIS SMITH PHOTOS / TEXAS HIGHWAYS

## Photographs

continued from D10

access to these places and experiencing little surprises like this.”

Smith finds ways to make already eccentric subjects such as the Art Car Museum, Beer Can House and Orange Show in Houston all the more bizarre.

“The Orange Show is an incredible place to photograph,” he says. “I used strobe lights to make this umbrella and clown prominent against the cloudy sky.”

One of Smith's all-time favorite shots, which captures the rippling dunes of Monahans Sandhills State Park with a lone oil pump in the background, played in his head long before he actually shot it. He used a very low point of view.

“I had dreamed about light painting the sand dunes for 20 years,” he says. “When I finally did it, the shot came out even better than I had imagined. And the sand felt good between my bare toes.”

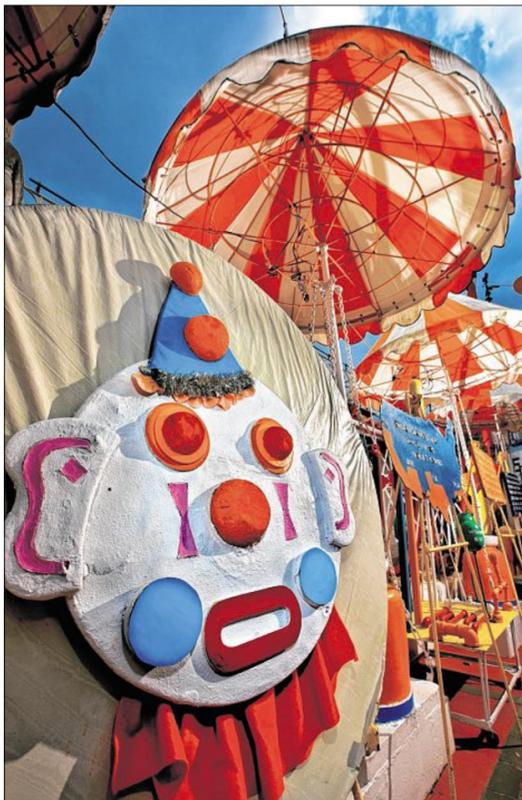
Texas Highways, once published strictly for readers interested in building and maintaining roadways, shifted in the 1970s to become a sort of regional version of National Geographic, according to Klepper. It now attracts a readership in the hundreds of thousands.

“The print media was the media of the time,” Klepper writes. “And a slow walk through the pages of Texas Highways inspired a generation of Texans, some of whom had never traveled beyond their own backyards, to explore a vision of Texas they had never seen before.”

Klepper identifies an evocative Smith vision of the Alamo as epitomizing the magazine's style.

“The sky above gave off an ambient glow, the stone columns were lit just so, and one of the massive wooden doors stood ajar, casting a warm light across the plaza,” Klepper writes about what became one of the most popular images in the history of the magazine.

When Smith first shot the Alamo, 20 years earlier, he was told to halt by a gun-toting securi-



Smith used strobe lights to make a clown and umbrella pop out against the blue sky at Houston's Orange Show.



Lady Bird Lake and the Austin skyline provide the background for Smith's photo of a statue of Stevie Ray Vaughan.

ty guard. In 2009, conditions were more to his suiting.

“I was left in the Alamo alone to photograph for about an hour,” he says. “It was one of those awe-inspiring moments when I could almost feel all the lives that were lost there.”

Contact Michael Barnes at 512-445-3970 or mbarnes@statesman.com. Twitter: @outandabout



Skiing is one of many draws to St. Moritz, Switzerland. SWISS TOURISM

## St. Moritz

continued from D10

area, so travel means wagons – and, in the winter, sleighs pulled by horses. Badrutt persists. “You’ll love it,” he says. “Come back and stay for Christmas. If you don’t like it, I will pay your bill myself.”

As Badrutt hoped, his ruse worked. A handful of guests did return for the holidays – and they stayed until Easter. As it turns out, those wacky winter sports amused them, and the twinkling sunlight on the mounds of snow bedazzled them. They sent word home and others joined them. The next year a whole coterie of British revelers came for the season to partake of the wintery landscape. These bon vivants brought everything they would need: trunks of clothes, furniture, fur coats – and, of course, Champagne. Soon, they could ski, ice skate, snowshoe, sled and toboggan with the best of them. Some even did it with glasses aloft. Their parties were notorious and attracted other beau mondes. The years passed and the denizens became more bejeweled. Greta Garbo, Audrey Hepburn and Alfred Hitchcock were regulars. Mischief, mayhem and networking were de rigueur.

Today, St. Moritz's mood is less opulently outrageous than classically canny. But, it's still a fairy tale, and at La Marmite, I'm surrounded by skiers, clad in Prada or Bogner, and nonskiers, donning a mélange of fur, who have taken the funicular up the mountain for chef Reto Mathis' lobster bisque and truffle pizza. After a three-hour, multicourse lunch, I manage to whiz down the re-

### IF YOU GO

**Links:** en.carlton-stmoritz.ch, mathisfood.ch, stmoritz.ch, tschuggenhotelgroup.ch

**Package:** Try the Bet, a package that includes a ride in a bob taxi on the Olympic bob run, curling and a Cresta Run beginners' course for men. Cost is around \$3,500 per person and includes four nights' accommodations in a suite or junior suite, buffet breakfast, massages and \$100 to be used toward food or drink in the various restaurants.

sort's stunning wide-opens, rather amazed how crowd-free the resort feels. The pizza has propulsion powers, and I shock myself at how long I manage to continue skiing after that meal. Maybe what's driving me is what awaits. I'm staying at the 100-year-old Carlton, one of St. Moritz's historic hotels. Said to have been built for the last heir of the Romanov dynasty, the Carlton keeps its palatial bones as an homage to the past. But clever interiors by Swiss designer Carlo Rampazzi turn things deliciously contemporary. Full of poetry, metaphor and fearless color, Rampazzi's artistic ministrations play up the Russian royalty theme with subtle, abstract references: a crown here, a scarf there, princely fabrics and the double-headed eagle emblem of the empire. All in all, the hotel has the elaborate perfection and jaw-drop-

ping cry for attention of a Faberge egg. The hotel's meant to seduce – and it does. I just want to stay forever.

With more than 215 miles of pistes, loaded with doable intermediate runs, St. Moritz is divided into several sections, connected by 58 lifts. The Carlton St. Moritz, like many of the village's grand lodges, has its own ski shop and will deliver you stylishly, care of a white-gloved driver, to the foot of whatever mountain you choose. So frozen an annual horse race can be run atop it, the hamlet's eponymous lake awaits ice skaters and curlers. And the Cresta Run, if you dare, will plummet you down the mountain at 87 miles per hour, a nose-bleeding experience said by some to be “fun.”

But, I'd rather eat a grand lunch, ski gently, then return to the Carlton, where a heated indoor/outdoor pool beckons. I could shop a little. There's Gucci, Chopard, Bulgari – the usual subjects, and not a bargain to be found. No, I prefer to gad about the hotel, make mischief my own way and then end up at the hotel's three-Michelin-starred Da Vittorio with friends. After dinner, maybe I'll pull out a deck of cards and we'll gamble a little, like Badrutt and those first British tourists did. After all, you never know what might happen on the back of a bet.

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