

The Nazi past
and troubling
legacy of
thalidomide,
50 years on

Waterlilies,
roses, irises:
the shaping of
Monet's garden
at Giverny

Rose Prince's
fresh new look for
January food

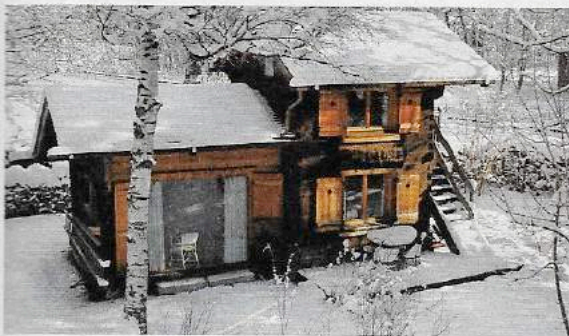
EXIT PURSUED BY A BEAR

Leonardo DiCaprio on family values,
going naked in the snow and being mauled by
a grizzly for his latest film

Four of the best

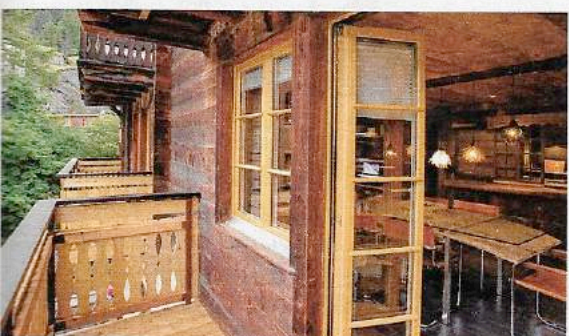
Alpine chalets, by Francesca Syz

Place Blanche 2 *Verbier, Switzerland* News that a W hotel had arrived in the Swiss Alps last year filled some with horror, others with excitement. If you're in the latter camp, but would still rather stay in a chalet than a hotel on your ski holiday, consider Place Blanche 2, a stylish penthouse overlooking both W and the newly developed village square. A glorious, double-height main room, with a south-facing terrace overlooking the valley and mountains, includes a large, comfortable living space with a long, loungy sofa and an open fireplace leading on to a kitchen and dining area. There are two double bedrooms, both of which can be twins, and the first has a mezzanine level with two additional single beds, ideal for two children. Stargazers will love the bathroom of the second bedroom, which has a glass ceiling, so you can look up at the solar system from your bath. Step out and you have the Médran piste and bubble lift on your doorstep, the main point of entry to Verbier's best slopes. **The details** Place Blanche 2 sleeps four adults and two children and costs from £10,400 per week, including all meals and house champagnes and wines, excluding daily lunch and dinner on one night (01608-674011; skiverbierexclusive.com).



Mazot Les Tines *Chamonix, France* This lovely miniature chalet, forged from a *mazot* – a traditional windowless wooden 'lock up' found near a chalet – sits across a large garden from its owners, Colleen and Jean-Marie Olianti, in the pretty hamlet of Les Tines, just outside Chamonix. The ground-floor kitchen-living-dining room couldn't be cosier, and with one double bedroom upstairs, with a view perfectly framing the legendary Aiguille du Dru, it's ideal for a couple. It also, however, has an additional mezzanine bedroom space accessed via a wooden ladder (kids love this), so it works equally well for a family of four. A railway line runs right past the village every half an hour, whisking you in about five minutes to the cable car at La Flégère, which in turn whisks you up the south-facing mountain, where you can ski across to Brevant before getting the bubble lift back down. You are also a mere 10-minute drive from Chamonix. A trained ski and hiking guide, Jean-Marie is full of tips and suggestions for making the most of your stay, and may even take you on a walk himself. **The details** Mazot Les Tines costs from £820 (01483-579242; collineige.com).

Eden Rock Chalet *St Anton, Austria* Located at one end of the pretty ski resort of St Anton in Austria's reliably snowy Arlberg region, the new Eden Rock Chalet offers a flexible set-up. 'Tyrolean village' on the outside, contemporary Alpine chic on the inside, the chalet is divided into three fully catered two-floor apartments, sleeping eight, six and six. While each can be rented individually, and is equipped with a spacious drawing-dining room with an open fire, balcony with amazing views and a kitchen, the chalet also has a fully staffed communal dining room and a lounge with a bar (the food served throughout is exceptional). This makes it ideal for a group renting all three as it means they will have somewhere spacious to dine and hang out together. There is also a spa with a sauna, steam room and swimming pool. It's five minutes' walk from the Nasserein gondola lift (or one minute in the chalet minivan), so you have St Anton's 220 miles of pistes at your fingertips. **The details** Whether you take one apartment or all of them, Eden Rock costs from £999 per person including all meals but lunch, based on full occupancy of the apartment you are in (020-7962 9933; supertravel.co.uk/ski).



Chalet Heidi *Zermatt, Switzerland* In an unbeatably atmospheric location between the church and the school right in the centre of Zermatt, locally owned Chalet Heidi could not be a lovelier place to retreat to after a hard day's skiing. Inhabiting the entire first floor of a traditional Swiss chalet, its weathered, wood-panelled walls and ceiling make it feel exceptionally cosy and inviting. But don't be fooled, it has modern touches in all the right places – from the well-equipped kitchen to the great beds in its three bedrooms, all en suite, dressed in crisp white linens. The apartment is also wrapped in a south-facing balcony – a suntrap and a great spot for pre-dinner G&Ts. While this chalet doesn't come with catering, there is a fantastic bakery just around the corner offering delicious breads, pastries, meats and cheeses, and you are in strolling distance of excellent restaurants such as Heimberg and the relaxed, Michelin-starred After Seven. A six-minute walk away is the Klein Matterhorn lift. **The details** Chalet Heidi sleeps six and costs from £3,600 per week on a self-catering basis (07772-853996; thewhitechaletcollection.com). Next week winter walks