



THE CAMBRIAN SWITZERLAND

by Matthew Parsons

Deep in the heart of the Bernese Oberland, I'd just spotted a row of pink, floral wellies in the lobby and wondered if the Paul Smith family had just checked in. Welcome to another Design Hotels member.

The British designer has created staff uniforms, and the attention to detail doesn't stop here. After a swift check-in, I'm drawn to the minimal open fire, logs immaculately arranged against the grey slate. There are glimpses of UV light shimmering through from Scott's bar to one side, while the other leads to the lounge, with modern grey and beige sofas, overlooking the valley. Rooms are equally modern, also in grey and beige, but with splashes of dark wood.

The hi-tech spa was unexpected in the rustic village of Adelboden. Like the bar, the indoor pool is bathed in UV light, but struggles against the light streaming in off the snow nearby, where beds face floor to ceiling windows overlooking the valley.

Next to this lounging area is a heated outdoor pool, with jets, and a surreal experience during my weekend here was floating as the snow fell into the water.

The main highlight was learning to snowboard. I'd arrived at the end of season, but fortunately there was enough snow. You can reach the slopes in half an hour, via a cable car a few minutes' walk from the hotel.

Despite skiing being the main draw (the US team stays here during World Cup events) the hotel also promotes summer activities, as it's ideally placed for walkers: "water trails" follow the region's waterfalls, or tougher treks wind through the Wildstrubel massif. There's even para-gliding for the more energetic.

There's a good restaurant, with Swiss style cuisine, and an emphasis on meat, but recommend Des Alpes for something different, with its Swiss/Thai fusion cuisine.

It's difficult to leave the peacefulness of Adelboden, although efficient trains do ease the pain. But I'll be back – in a few years developers from Egypt and Kuwait will open more hotels in Adelboden, so I'm hurrying before the bulldozers move in.

HOW TO SELL IT

- The views, especially from the heated outdoor pool
- The spa is useful to help ski novices rejuvenate, or provide pampering for non-skiers
- Terrain is ideal for experts, with a good range of nursery slopes

How to book it

Neilson offers three nights B&B from £620pp, staying in a Deluxe Double room and including flights, first-class rail transfers between airport and resort. Tel: 0845 070 3466, neilson.co.uk/lakes. Or book direct (Design Hotels pays agents 10% commission).

**Dorfstrasse 7, CH-3715,
Adelboden, Switzerland.
Tel: 0041 33 673 8383
thecambrianadelboden.com**

VERDURA GOLF & SPA RESORT SICILY

by April Hutchinson

Set between the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento and the fishing town of Sciacca, Rocco Forte's latest hotel is one of his most ambitious to date. A labour of love on 570 acres, Verdura is the group's first resort and where better to experiment than among orange and olive trees, undulating hills and with the glistening Med as a backdrop.

But while it may boast a 1.8km coastline, very little of that is beach. No, this striking coastline is reserved for a links course – one of two 18-holers designed by Kyle Phillips, as well as a nine-hole. There's also an impressive pro shop, Torre bar, Sicilian trattoria and gelateria, all part of La Piazzetta, in effect the clubhouse area.

There's a huge spa, but while impressive on paper - 25m indoor pool, hammam, 11 treatment rooms, gym with Technogym equipment and healthy cafe - my experience was underwhelming and my matronly therapist told me my Grapevine body treatment lotion smelt like someone who had drunk too much red wine the night before. The outdoor thalassotherapy pools are great however and the resort's main pool is huge and stylishly designed with a cafe and loungers on the lawns down to the sea, where there's another restaurant (the resort has four in total).

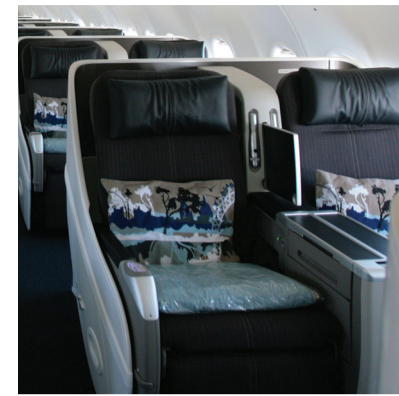
This resort of 203 rooms and suites needs a lot of people and a lot of sunshine to bring it to life, and while the

atmosphere was warm during my stay, Verdura's design left me a little cold. But this seems to be the point, as designer Olga Polizzi says that she "found Sicily hard, raw and rugged and this was reflected in the square, strong forms we used".

Tel: 00 39 0925 99 81 80, verduraresort.com

HOW TO BOOK IT

Seasons in Style offers a three-night break from £1,040pp, including breakfast, flights and private transfers. Tel: 01244 202 000, seasonsinstyle.com



BRITISH AIRWAYS BUSINESS

London City to JFK (T7), New York

The facts: 11 flights a week (two a day Mon-Fri and a Sunday service), from £2,000. Tel: 0844 493 0787, ba.com

Style & substance: Check-in was swift and polite with fast-track line through security. I was airport door to gate in 20mins. The lounge was small but the beauty of LCY is you are not in it for long.

★ **Top notch** ☒ **Could try harder**

Feeling: I felt special on this flight, one of BA's two A318s carrying 32 passengers 2x2 in all-business seats in a spotless, spacious and stylish cabin. Disembarking in Shannon to clear US Immigration (while the aircraft refuels) means you are free of the cattle-like interrogation facing international arrivals into the US. On the return, passengers can use JFK's Terraces lounge and spa.

★ **VIP** ☒ **One of the masses**

And so to bed: The flatbed allowed enough space to rest, with decent-sized pillow and warm cotton blanket. I slept five hours on the night return but a mini-mattress would have been more plush.

★ **Comfortable cocoon** ☒ **Cabin fever**

On the menu: A potato salad with smoked trout was served as the appetiser to Shannon, but disappointingly, my choice of main course was not available, so I opted for the dry sea trout (again) with shrimp, samphire, green beans and potatoes. A "Jaffa cake" tart to follow was divine, but the afternoon tea was a let down.

★ **A fine feast** ☒ **Eat before boarding**

High-tech v low-tech: The OnAir system is a godsend for CrackBerry addicts, as mobile phones can be used (usual roaming charges apply). The selection of viewing on the portable touch-screen Media Player is sufficient but not as comprehensive as other BA flights.

★ **Switched on** ☒ **Switched off**

Who's it for: City folk shuttling back and forth between financial centres.

If it were a famous person... Evan Davis. Like the Radio 4 Today presenter, the service makes a smoothly convincing and strong economic argument.

by April Hutchinson