

SPECIAL REPORT

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What Men Should Know—At Every Age

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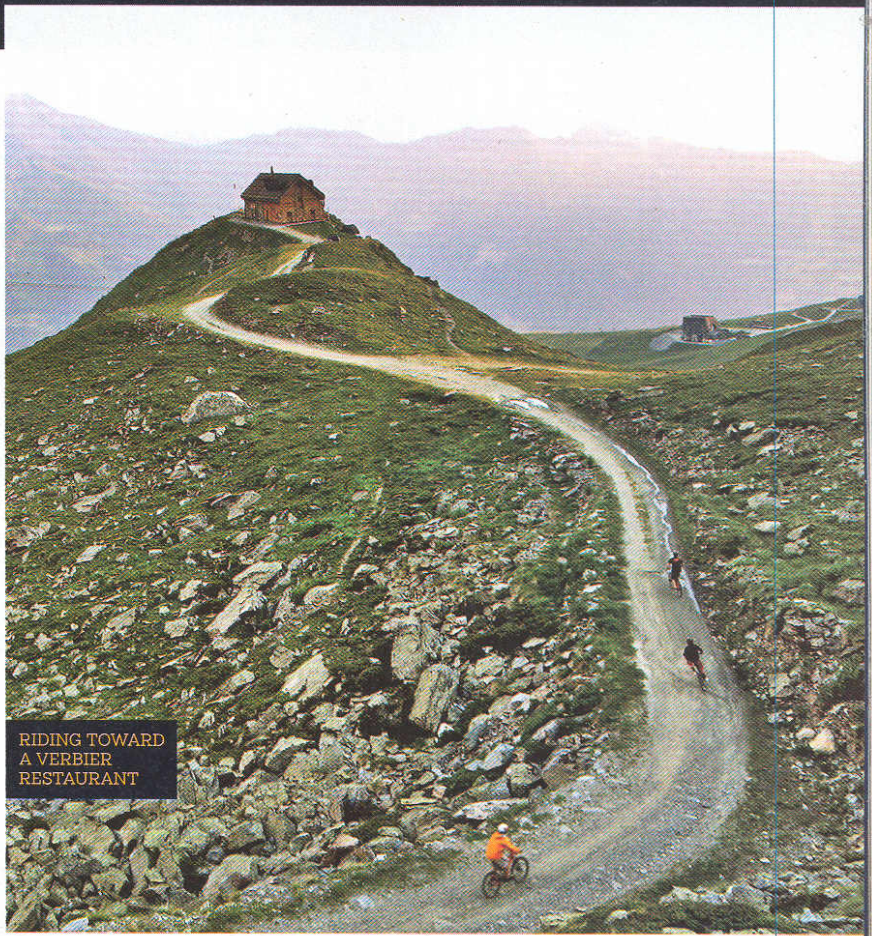
INSIDE: LIGHTWEIGHT HIKING AND BIKING ROUTES // GREAT DINING // LUXURY LODGING

Spot On
Bombing the Alps



ALL DOWNHILL:
GUIDE JOE
SCHWARTZ NEAR
MONTE ROSA

It took hundreds of years and the heavy-heeled stomping of thousands of trekkers. Now some 30,000 miles of trails high in the Swiss Alps are finally packed down, buffed out, and ready for their true calling: downhill mountain biking. This August, the first North American outfitter to guide armor-clad cyclists to the area, Vancouver, British Columbia-based Big Mountain Bike Adventures, will lead its second annual nine-day Alpenrock Downhill trip in Switzerland's southwestern peaks. "The majority of the trails we ride, no other mountain bikers will ever see," says guide Joe Schwartz, 25, a Nelson, B.C.-based pro. "Where are they? I'm not telling. They're our little secrets." But for less than the price of a Rolex, Schwartz and fellow guide and pro rider Wade Simmons, 33, are willing to spill the beans. First stop is Verbier, where, in a single day, the duo will take riders over 15,000 vertical feet of chairlift-, gondola-, and train-accessed routes, introducing clients to mountain goats, medieval stone churches, and 360-degree views of the Rhone Valley. Then it's back to base camp, the ski resort's three-star Hôtel La Vallée, and finally Brig, where riders will skirt the UNESCO-protected Aletsch Glacier. "You need to bring your own full-face helmet, a full-suspension downhill bike, and protective wear," says Schwartz. "But don't worry—the trails are so smooth, the difficulty level is actually pretty low." August 17–25 and August 26–September 3; \$2,782, including lodging and meals; ridebig.com —MEGAN MICHELSON



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