

MONOCLE

ALPINO

Delivering fresh insights from the world's wintry corners, high altitudes and frosty frontiers.

Winter 2025/2026.
A Monocle
Special Edition.



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DEFENCE / CHAMONIX

War and piste

A snowball's throw from Chamonix is the École Militaire de Haute Montagne, the French armed forces' elite cold-weather training facility. Here, recruits learn to ski, march and fight on the postcard-pretty slopes. As the Arctic region becomes more geopolitically fraught, the expertise of the academy's officers is increasingly sought out, as its commander-in-chief, Colonel Gaëtan Dubois, tells Monocle. Read on to find out how the centre is helping to train France's Nato allies to conquer the frost, as well as just how many rosy-cheeked cadets are put through their paces here every year.

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F&B / BOLZANO

Height of good taste

Not all great restaurants last but the view over Bolzano framed by the jutting Dolomites persuaded the partners behind Pramol Alto to turn their pop-up into a permanent fixture. "We started here and loved it so much – and so did the diners," says chef and co-founder Jakob Zeller. He and his Singaporean partner, Ethel Hoon, had been searching for a farm-restoration project further down the slope but something about the site captured their imagination. They have been joined by Julia Heifer and

Core Kurtenbach – a chef and sommelier, respectively – who moved from Berlin to South Tyrol for the project.

The team recently rifled on the region's meat-and-chestnut-dominated fare, adding a Chinese-style pork rib glazed with birch syrup to the menu, alongside deer and pork sausages served with fermented berries and pickled pine. The highlight of Monocle's visit was a Mont Blanc cake with fresh pears and sorrel ice cream.

Though some of the dishes take inspiration from far-flung places, most of the ingredients used here are supplied by local farms that help to root the restaurant firmly in the community. The next course? There are already plans to use the on-site farm to grow produce and perhaps even to house a low-key wine and food kiosk too. The locals are certainly hungry for more.

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THEATRE / ITALY

Acting on instinct

Alpine theatre group Office for a Human Theatre is creating immersive, site-responsive performances that change with the terrain and seasons. We venture into the mountains for a front-row seat.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: *Andrea Mazzoni*

In the Trentino-South Tyrol region of the Italian Alps, the silence is often only broken by the Office for a Human Theatre (OHT). Founded by artist and curator Filippo Andreatta, OHT is an unusual model of contemporary theatre – an organisation that morphs as it stages performances deep in nature.

For OHT, the Dolomites aren't merely a backdrop but a collaborator. Their conditions shape the tone and tempo of the group's community initiatives. Throughout the year, OHT hosts creative retreats, educational excursions and open-air readings in the mountains. In 2025 this included the sixth edition of the Nomadic School.

The project involves about 25 practitioners from various disciplines venturing into the Alps to immerse themselves in

the surroundings. Over 15 days, participants take cues from the land as they work on performances that unfold along mountain paths and around communal fires.

OHT programmes are designed and delivered with a responsive approach that mirrors the Dolomites' blend of rugged beauty and refined simplicity, which means managing the unpredictable weather. But who doesn't like singing in the rain?

This winter, its programme includes readings of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The text suits the season and the dramatic setting perfectly. As everyone takes their place around the fire, Andreatta begins to recite: "I consented to listen, and seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale..."

oht.art

