

ZÜRICH FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

The largest city in Switzerland lies in the heart of Europe and offers a lot more than fabulous views. It sits on the northwestern tip of Lake Zurich and its airport and railway station are the largest and busiest in the country.

Zurich is a bustling city and it is easy to have a great time there. I recently managed a visit of two days and had to make a choice of where to go and what to see. I skipped the boat rides on the lake and the train ride from the main station up the Uetliberg which I have been told offers a fabulous view of the city. I also have to keep the Kunst Haus Museum for another time as that by itself would easily take up a day with its rich collection.

The old town and especially the district of the Niederdorf, affectionately known by the locals as the Dörfli – (little village), is a wonderful collection of car-free alleys that begs to be explored. It has many small boutiques, antiquarian bookshops, craft studios and upmarket fashion stores. A delightful place for a coffee is the Plécard patisserie and boutique, tucked away in a little courtyard, it has the most delicious looking displays and has been in



business since 1842. It is housed in a listed building that stylishly combines the elements that make a trip to Zürich so special: history, architecture and shopping.

<http://www.peclard-zurich.ch/>

In this area you will also find the Grossmünster church with beautiful and surprisingly modern stained glass windows by Sigmar Polke and choir windows made by Augusto Giacometti. The bronze doors are by Otto Münch.

Just over the river is the Fraumünster church. You pay a CHF 5 entry fee which includes a free audio guide. Inside you will find a series of five stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall. He created them in the 1970s when he was at a very advanced age and it has become a world-famous masterpiece. Each window has a dominant color and depicts a Christian story. The audio guide gives an excellent clarification of the stories and their meanings and opened my eyes to its beauty.

Lunch was at Hiltl, the oldest vegetarian restaurant in the western world and in business since 1841. They now have several restaurants and bistros in Zurich and all serve delicious vegetarian fare with an eastern influence. <https://www.hiltl.ch/en/home>

In the afternoon I strolled down the Bahnhof strasse with its super luxurious shops and had a drink and a delicious pastry at the Sprüngli coffee shop where sooner or later you see all the beautiful people pass by. <https://www.zuerich.com/en/visit/coffee-houses-tea-rooms/confiserie-cafe-spruengli-paradeplatz>

For dinner, I can recommend the Bebek Restaurant – a cool place with middle-eastern food in a relaxed atmosphere with interesting lighting and decoration and next to a tram depot which can be seen through a glass wall. <http://bebek.ch/entry/>

The next day, I headed for Zürich West which is the place to go for new, hip design and city labels. I started with breakfast at the 25hours Hotel. This funky, 125-room budget hotel, by local designer Alfredo Häberli, is on the Pfingstweidstrasse and just a tram-ride away from the city. It is filled with colorful vintage furniture and contemporary art. Rooms range from bunk beds to suites and there's free Wi-Fi, sauna and bikes. <https://www.25hours-hotels.com/en/zurich-west/home/home.html>

Further down the street is the Schiffbau building, an enormous hall where once ships were built. From 1996 to 2000, it was renovated by the German architects Ortner&Ortner and has been transformed into a cultural center with 3 theatres, a jazz club, a bar and an upmarket restaurant. Nearby is "Frau Gerold's Garten" – a market garden complex with little shops that sell herbs, vegetables, artifacts and trendy clothing. It is just behind the extra-ordinary flagship store of the "Freitag" bags (Geroldstrasse 17). This store is housed in a "tower" of ship containers and the brothers Markus and Daniel Freitag make their collection of bags and accessories from recycled tarpaulins, truck tires and seatbelts.

In this same area, under the arches of the railway viaduct you'll find a pleasant recreational area with walking- and cycle paths and all kinds of trendy shops – as well as the market hall that sells fresh produce and gourmet specialties from throughout the region. The Market hall also runs a restaurant where I had dinner that evening and I was not disappointed. <https://www.im-viadukt.ch/en/markthalle/restaurant-markthalle/?lang=set>



However the best spot to have a drink before dinner is the Clouds bar on the 35th floor of the Prime Tower (Maagplatz 5). This is Switzerland's tallest building, a sparkling, glass-clad construction soaring 105 meters above Zürich West. The views over the city, lake and mountains are spectacular with in the foreground a lego-land view of the coming and going of trains into and out of the Zurich main station. <http://clouds.ch/en/>

Another hotel to consider is the newly opened renovated Marktgasse Hotel in the heart of the old town surrounded by winding lanes and centuries of history. It is housed in a 15th century building and has 39 rooms.

<http://www.marktgassehotel.ch/en/>

I travelled by train and the public transport system in Zurich is truly impressive. Nothing seems to be far away and the trams and buses are frequent and efficient. And as I bought a Zürich city card, getting around was very easy.

(<http://www.zvv.ch/zvv/en/home.html>).