



This picture: Daniel Humm with Lake Zürich in the background. Below: St Peter church at Christmas time

THE SMOOTH GUIDE | THE LONG LUXURIOUS WEEKEND

Daniel Humm's Zürich

The chef behind Manhattan's world-beating Eleven Madison Park talks his hometown's finest - from church spires to scrumptious bratwurst - with **Christina Ohly Evans**. Portrait by **Rita Palanikumar**

“When people think of Zürich, it's often banks or high-end watches that come to mind, but really it's a historic, intimate city with an incredible quality of life. What makes it so special – besides the surrounding nature and the fact that it's so central in Europe – is the Swiss. They're just good citizens, always polite and respectful of the rules. Most people here speak four languages – or two at a minimum – and travel extensively, which gives them a worldly perspective that I don't always find elsewhere.

What's also wonderful about Zürich is that it hasn't changed: the medieval houses and the Fraumünster church in the old town, with its green steeple, have been left totally alone. These buildings were beautiful when built, and

strict architectural codes mean they will remain that way forever. There have been enhancements over time, of course, and the infrastructure is just incredible: trains, trams and buses all run on time, and are all clean and safe – in fact, I don't think there's a better public transport system anywhere on earth. To illustrate the point, I took a recent trip on a Swiss train and it ran 12 minutes behind schedule; the conductor explained over the intercom that this delay was due to a problem on the French side, not theirs. The Swiss are *never* late.

We are a small country surrounded by Germany, Austria, France and Italy, so there are many influences in terms of culture and food, but at the end of the day we are farmers and that's reflected in our classic cuisine. You don't come to Zürich so much for global cuisine, but for sausages and rösti – which

have a real sense of place. I don't want to eat sushi here.

Visitors have a lot of choices when it comes to great hotels. The family-run Baur au Lac is one of my favourites; it's a really traditional place, not flashy at all, with beautiful views of Lake Zürich and the Alps. It's good if you need to access the financial district, or for shopping on the nearby Bahnhofstrasse. Its fine-dining restaurant, Pavillon, is in a sort of indoor garden; I always make a point of eating here because the chef is so talented. While the menu changes frequently, his food is always elevated but with a classic foundation.

Another great place to stay is the Widder Hotel in the old town. It's made up of a series of medieval townhouses that have been cobbled together, and it strikes the balance between old and new perfectly. There are only 49 rooms here and each one is different from the others: some have views of the surrounding cobblestone streets and others have unexpected touches, such as an iconic Eames chair. Taken all together, it's quite charming. The Storchen Zürich, right on the River Limmat, falls into this quaint category too. It has existed since the 14th century, and while the hotel was recently updated, its signature storks can still be



found on the walls and the views of the church spires are fantastic.

Of course, food is central to any Zürich experience, so I like to start the day at John Baker. Yes, that is literally the name of the best bakery in Zürich: it's co-owned by Jens Jung, an artisan who comes from a long line of bakers – he spent some time at the wonderful Tartine in San Francisco, where he learnt from the best, before coming back here to make breads according to Swiss traditions. Another win for breakfast is the café Confiserie Sprüngli. I particularly like the cakes, the colourful Luxemburgerli macaroons and the chocolate truffle-filled brioche. One of those with a morning cappuccino, is perfection.

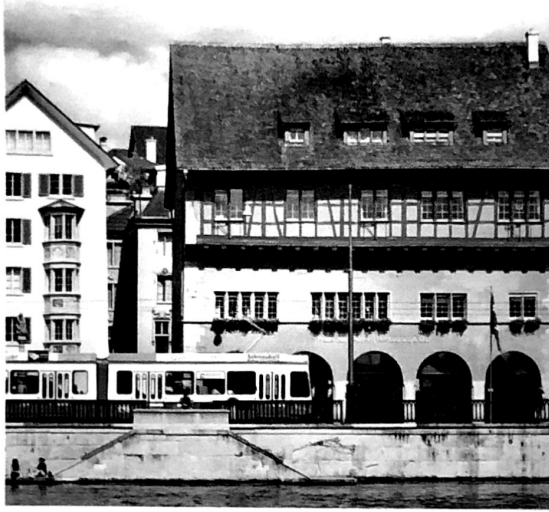
Konditorei culture is very important in Zürich life. Café Schober is a very cute, authentic spot that serves an excellent Gugelhupf, a traditional cake made with almonds and raisins, while Teuscher is the place to go for every imaginable type of chocolate – and a good coffee.

When it comes to restaurants, it's best to approach things by type of cuisine. Kronenhalle is an institution and in addition to great (and authentically Swiss) food, you're surrounded by masterpieces by the likes of Picasso and Rauschenberg – even the lights are by Alberto Giacometti. The bar here is an ideal place for a cocktail and beef tartare, before moving on to a dinner of sliced veal with rösti. The service is very old-school; I think it's an absolute must.

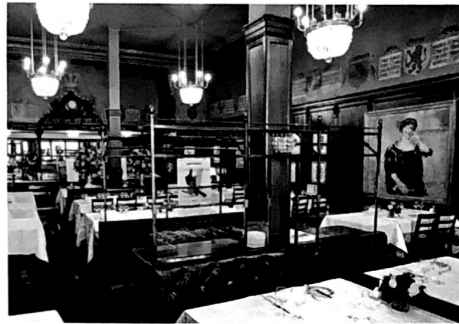
For a truly Alpine feel, I like Obere Flühgasse in the old town. It's really tiny, all done in warm woods – and the mixed salad with bacon, consommé and rösti feels very local. In winter, I always order vermicelles – a dessert made of chestnut purée that's very specific to Switzerland. For excellent steak frites, I recommend Wystube Isebhähni, a 25-seat bistro in the old town with a big focus on wines as well. The best food in town, however, is at the bratwurst restaurant Sternen Grill – every local knows this place. It's great for a veal sausage with a beer, not to mention top people-watching – you'll see people from all walks of life here.

Beyond the excellent food, this is a city of great churches and museums. The Grossmünster, with its windows by Sigmar Polke, is one of its monumental highlights. St Peter church – which can boast having Europe's largest tower clock face – is another one to see, as is Fraumünster, which has those beautiful stained-glass windows created expressly for the church by Marc Chagall in the 1970s.

Whenever I come back from New York, I stock up on things that can only



Clockwise from left: the Limmat river flows through the old town. Kronenhalle is a Zürich institution decorated with works by Picasso and Rauschenberg. The 49-room Widder Hotel is made up of a series of medieval townhouses



The bar at Kronenhalle is ideal for a cocktail and beef tartare

be found here and think it's a good way to shop. Among the first stops should be Schwarzenbach, purveyor of all kinds of teas, spices, vanilla, dried exotic fruits, nuts and jams. They're very knowledgeable and I go there to learn. Buchbinderei, a tiny paper store in the old town, is exceptional for stationery and handmade cards. Another one that's a definite must is the Odeon Apotheke, a gorgeous pharmacy and a

good place to buy all kinds of Swiss skincare by super-local brands.

For really motivated shoppers, the 40km drive to Vitra stockist Betz, in Schaffhausen, is totally worthwhile for the Jean Prouvé designs alone. There's also the Markthalle under the old viaduct in Zürich-West – it's kind of like London's Borough Market meets Manhattan's High Line – and there are all kinds of shops and food vendors

tucked into the old arches. It's fun to see how a formerly industrial part of Zürich has evolved into something very cool.

In terms of cultural institutions, it's hard to beat either the Kunsthau Zürich – with its permanent collection that includes works by Cy Twombly and Mark Rothko – or the Pavillon Le Corbusier. This is the last building the architect designed before he died, and it's a mixture of glass, steel and colourful panels that contrast beautifully with the nature all around. For contemporary art, it's Hauser & Wirth, set in a great, lofty warehouse space in a relatively unknown part of town, but always showcasing the greats of today.

Outdoor life is another big focus here. People hike, bike and swim in the Limmat river in summer. One of the best places to engage with nature like a local is Flussbad Oberer Letten, near Zürich-West. This is basically a public swimming pool with decking and places to eat, drink or just relax. To get a mix of art and nature, visit the Zürichhorn – a massive public park where you can walk along the shore of the lake and where you'll find the humorous *Heureka* sculpture by Jean Tinguely. During the winter months you can travel just one hour from the city and you'll be skiing.

Because Zürich is so international there are obviously lots of outside influences coming in, but my hope is that the city and its people will focus on the unique things it has to offer. The level of taste here, the overall aesthetic, is so on point, never overdone; you can see it in the work of such brilliant Swiss architects as Peter Zumthor and Herzog & de Meuron. And the cuisine! The cheeses, the yoghurt, the meats; they are really some of the finest in the world. The city should continue to celebrate them, instead of importing sushi.



THE HIT LIST

HOTELS

Prices are for a double room with breakfast, where applicable.

Baur au Lac, Talstrasse 1, 8001 (+41-4220 5020; bauraulac.ch), from SF970 (about £745). **Storchen Zürich**, Weinplatz 2, 8001 (+41-4227 2727; storchen.ch), from about £350. **Widder Hotel**, Rennweg 7, 8001 (+41-4224 2526; widderhotel.com), from about £360.

RESTAURANTS AND CAFES

Prices are for a three-course meal with half a bottle of wine, where applicable.

Café Schober, Napfgrasse 4, 8001 (+41-4251 5150; peclard-zurich.ch). **Confiserie Sprüngli**, Bahnhofstrasse 21, 8001 (+41-4224 4646; spruengli.ch), pastries from

about £1.50 and beverages from about £4. **Confiserie Teuscher**, Storchengasse 9, 8001 (+41-4211 5153; teuscher.com). **John Baker**, Stadelhoferstrasse 28, 8001 (+41-4281 9292; johnbaker.ch). **Kronenhalle**, Rämistrasse 4, 8001 (+41-4262 9900; kronenhalle.ch), about £90 and cocktails about £15. **Obere Flühgasse**, Flühgasse 69, 8001 (+41-4381 1110), about £75. **Pavillon**, see Baur au Lac (+41-4220 5022; aupavillon.ch), about £150. **Sternen Grill**, Theaterstrasse 22, 8001 (+41-3268 2080; sternengrill.ch), bratwurst about £6. **Wystube Isebhähni**, Froschaugasse 26, 8001 (+41-3243 7787; isebaehni.com), about £95.

SHOPS

Buchbinderei, Wohllebasse 9, 8001 (+41-4221 0476;

buchbinderin.ch). **Markthalle**, Limmatstrasse 231, 8005 (im-viadukt.ch/de/markthalle). **Odeon Apotheke**, Limmatquai 2, 8001 (+41-4252 5959; achillea.ch). **Schwarzenbach**, Münsterstrasse 19, 8001 (+41-4261 1315; schwarzenbach.ch). **Vitra at Betz**, Moserstrasse 27, 8201 Schaffhausen (+41-2633 4010; betz-designmoebel.ch).

SITES, ART AND ACTIVITIES

Flussbad Oberer Letten, Lettensteg 10, 8037 (+41-4413 5880). **Fraumünster**, Münsterhof 2, 8001 (+41-4211 2063; fraumuenster.ch). **Grossmünster**, Grossmünsterplatz, 8001 (+41-4252 5949; grossmuenster.ch). **Hauser & Wirth**, Limmatstrasse 270, 8005 (+41-4446 8050; hauserwirth.com). **Kunsthau Zürich**, Heimplatz 1, 8001 (+41-4253 8484; kunsthau.ch).

Pavillon Le Corbusier,

Höschgasse 8, 8008 (stadt-zuerich.ch/lecorbusier). **St Peter church**, St Peterhofstätt, 8001 (st-peter-zh.ch). **Zürichhorn**, Bellerivestrasse 170, 8008 (+41-4412 1111)

WHEN TO GO

Days are long and temperatures are mild rather than hot in June and July. The city's proximity to the Swiss Alpine ski slopes makes it especially popular from December to February.

HOW TO GET THERE

British Airways (0344-493 0125; ba.com) flies up to six times daily from Heathrow to Zürich, from £78 return. **Swiss** (0345-601 0956; swiss.com) flies seven times daily from Heathrow, from £79 return.