



Zurich, the Water City

Water is omnipresent in Zurich. Lake Zurich, around which the city is built, and the River Limmat, which winds its way past Old Town buildings and through up-and-coming urban quarters, lend it a refreshing Mediterranean ambiance. Top-quality, pleasant-tasting drinking water flows from the city's water taps, as well as from its 1,200 public fountains. Whether with watersports, wellness facilities or Europe's mightiest waterfall, the Rhine Falls, Zurich entices with a variety of watery experiences, ranging from laid back to action packed.

→ zuerich.com/water

A Refreshing Mediterranean Ambiance and Plenty of Options to Chill Out

Bathing is Cult

In summer, Zurich is transformed into one gigantic urban aquatic park, with some 30 lakeside and riverside bathing facilities and almost 20 other open-air swimming baths. No other city in Europe has such a high concentration of bathing facilities per capita as Zurich. Here, water lovers can take a dip in Lake Zurich against a magnificent Alpine backdrop or swim along the River Limmat directly through the heart of the Old Town. Zurich's bathing history dates back to 2,000 years ago, when the ancient Romans built the first bathhouse on the site of the present-day Weinplatz, the remains of which can still be seen today. At the beginning of the 19th century, hygiene became increasingly important and the City of Zurich started building public bathhouses, which was cheaper than equipping all the private houses with running water. At that time, 60 percent of Zurich's residences had no bathroom. By 1900, 20 such bathhouses had been built – naturally with the sexes strictly segregated and with a maximum bathing time of one hour per person. During the subsequent bathing boom, a visit to the public baths became an integral part of everyday life, time limitations were abolished and more space was created for sunbathing. It is therefore hardly surprising that bathing has long since achieved cult status among Zurich's inhabitants. The locals love their outdoor bathing facilities – but visitors, too, are guaranteed to find something to suit among the variety on offer. The Frauenbadi, for example, offers female guests the opportunity to sunbathe with a view of the magnificent Grossmünster Church. Zurich's oldest "box bath" – an enclosed rectangular wooden construction with areas for sunbathing – was built in 1837 as a small "bathing house for women" and is still reserved exclusively for female guests to this day. The Flussbad Schanzengraben, on the other hand, gives male guests access to a tranquil riverside oasis. After dusk, these venues open their doors to both sexes, allowing them to bring the day to a relaxing close next to the sparkling water. Those who prefer to float down the river carried by the current should take the plunge into the 1,300ft long swimming canal in the river at the Flussbad Oberer Letten or the 340ft long enclosed canal with retention grid at the Flussbad Unterer Letten.

→ [zuerich.com/outdoorpools](https://www.zuerich.com/outdoorpools)

Inviting Lake Landscape

The Seebad Enge on Lake Zurich offers both mixed-sex and women-only bathing, coupled with a fabulous panoramic view of the lakeside villages and the snow-capped Alps on the horizon. The bathing experience is complemented by additional activities, including a sauna, yoga lessons and stand-up paddling courses. At the Utoquai lakeside bathing area on the opposite bank, children and amateur acrobats leap and dive into the water from the 6ft and 10ft high diving boards. The Strandbad Mythenquai – the oldest of Zurich's lakeside bathing facilities and the first to admit both sexes – was built in 1922 and features an 820ft long sandy beach and a large grass area. Here, the more energetic among the guests play table tennis or engage in other sports on the expanse of grass, while bookworms help themselves to something of interest from the book box. The Strandbad Tiefenbrunnen, too, offers plenty of entertainment options: the huge waterslide, paddling pool, diving platform, playground and trampoline make it an absolute paradise for children. In the middle of the 20th century, Swiss writer

and architect Max Frisch built a municipal open-air swimming pool at Letzigraben on the site where a Roman villa once stood and later where the executioner carried out his trade. The hill on which the Freibad Letzigraben is built has brought forth pottery artefacts dating from the Bronze Age, remains of Roman buildings and traces of the city's gallows. Today, a wave pool in the renovated swimming facility is just one of its many attractions. In the Zurich region, not only Lake Zurich attracts water lovers from near and far. Smaller stretches of water, such as Lake Greifen, Lake Pfäffikon and Lake Sihl, stand out as a result of their beautifully clear water and picturesque scenery. Also highly popular is the Badi Egelsee in Bubikon. This bathing facility, situated on a moorland lake in a protected nature conservation area, offers an idyllic location and natural surroundings in which cool down.

Badi Bars

After dusk, a number of riverside and lakeside bathing facilities are transformed into bars on the water's edge. In these Badi Bars, as the locals call them, guests can take in concerts, readings or movie screenings with a cocktail in their hand and a gentle lake breeze in their hair. Or they relax on the company of friends, and gaze out over the glittering water and watch the sun as it sets behind the far-off Alpine peaks. In the evening, the Frauenbadi ladies' bathing area becomes the Barfussbar (barefoot bar), which allows both sexes but no shoes. The subtle, colored lights give this wooden box bath in the heart of the Old Town a romantic ambiance, which perfectly suits Zurich's sultry summer nights. On Cultural Wednesdays, there are concerts, improvisation theater and literary readings. When night falls, the Flussbad Schanzengraben changes into the Rimini Bar, a popular summertime meeting place where guests chill out on oriental cushions and enjoy cool drinks and culinary specialties from the grill. The yellow railings, green plants and brightly colored lights are reflected in the water, creating a cheerful, laid-back atmosphere. Every Monday evening there is a market, selling second-hand articles and original Zurich labels to a vibrant mix of clientele. At the Seebad Enge, guests can dip their feet into the refreshing water while they listen to concerts, poetry slams, readings, or simply the splashing noise of the fountain. This bathing facility also has a sauna, providing a welcome alternative in inclement weather. Every summer since 1994, the riverside Flussbad Unterer Letten hosts two weeks of open-air movie screenings. The focus is not placed on blockbusters, but rather on selected movies and independent productions. In the evenings, the Flussbad Oberer Letten, in the guise of the Panama Bar, serves delicious cuisine, including fish dishes and freshly made paella. The view of the opposite riverbank, with its numerous bicycles, graffiti-laden concrete walls and people in hip attire reveals much about the area, which is not far from the lively, creative quarter of Kreis 4.

→ zuerich.com/open-air-bars

Wellness

On rainy or wintry days, the refreshing water experience shifts to Zurich's numerous indoor swimming baths and wellness spas. The Hürlimann Thermal Bath & Spa, housed in the brick buildings of what used to be a brewery, gives guests the opportunity to leave the hustle and bustle of city life far behind them. In 1976, during construction work, the Hürlimann brewery – which had been based within these mighty walls since 1867 – discovered a mineral spring, which it subsequently used to produce Aquí mineral water. These days, the Aquí spring water flows directly into the baths of a magnificent spa. The

spa comprises giant wooden vats modelled after the barrels in the former brewery, as well as an Irish-Roman Circuit. The various thermal pools and steam rooms, together with the almost monastery-like charm exuded by the barrel-vault ceilings, promote a feeling of well-being and recuperation. Particularly recommended is the outdoor thermal bath on the roof, which comes complete with stunning views of Zurich's skyline. Whether in a Japanese-inspired sunaburo you glide through the water, feel the soothing warmth of the pebbles through your fleecy bathrobe, or stimulate your circulation in steaming snow, the facilities at the Dolder Grand's European & Japanese-style spa are second to none. However, small but select facilities, such as the Fitnesspark Hamam Münsterergasse in the Niederdorf quarter or the Setareh in Rapperswil, also have much to offer. A veritable place of pilgrimage for wellness seekers is Baden, home to the most mineral-rich thermal spring water in Switzerland. Throughout its 2,000 year-old history, the town to the west of Zurich has constantly lived up to its name, which literally means "bathing" in German. Countless wellness oases use the natural warmth and energy of the thermal water bubbling out of 18 springs for their Irish-Roman baths, Kneipp pools, whirlpools or relaxing hammams. The Limmathof Baden Hotel und Private Spa even offers private spa suites, complete with thermal bath, hydro massage lounger, rain shower, steam bath and sauna.

→ zuerich.com/wellness

Zurich's Drinking Water: Flowing From Around 1,200 Fountains

Pleasant-tasting drinking water flows from approximately 1,200 fountains scattered all over Zurich. Most of them offer the same mix as tap water: a cocktail of 70% lake water, 15% ground water and 15% spring water. Approximately 400 fountains are fed with spring water, such as the fountain in Napfplatz, for example. These spring-water fountains are particularly eco-friendly, as the water does not have to be treated or pumped. They also guarantee a constant water supply via an independent network, including in times of emergency. Around 80 of these emergency water fountains, which were designed by interior designer Alf Aebersold in 1973, can be found distributed throughout the city. In terms of hygiene, the quality of Zurich's fountain water is every bit as good as most mineral water that can be bought in the stores, sometimes with only a slightly lower mineral content. From an ecological point of view, tap water is trendy; after all, it consumes 1,000 times less energy than purchased mineral water on its way to the consumer. The history of Zurich's fountains spans some 500 years. While in bygone days, water-dispensing structures were places of social gathering, these days the intricately decorated fountains gracing the city's squares and narrow winding streets are considered to be works of art. At one time, Zurich was known as "Limmat Athens" due to the numerous fountains decorated with motifs from Greek mythology. This prolificacy resulted from the fact that the leader of the Reformation in Zurich, Huldrych Zwingli, despised the Catholic tradition of elaborately adorning stonework and ordered countless Christian deities, images and ornamental fountains to be removed and destroyed.

→ zuerich.com/fountains

Boat Trips: From the Nostalgic Steamboat to the Rental Solar Boat

Anyone who prefers to enjoy a leisurely trip on the water can explore the verdant nature along the lakeshores or riverbanks by boat. With a light breeze in your face and beautiful views of the lush vegetation along the lakeshores, a cruise on Lake Zurich is particularly delightful in spring and summer. The

Lake Zurich Navigation Company (ZSG) operates various round trips daily between Zurich and Rapperswil, lasting between one and seven hours. Both the modern motor-powered vessels and the nostalgic old-timer steamships depart from the main jetty at Bürkliplatz. The “Stadt Rapperswil” was one of the last paddle steamers to be built by Escher Wyss in the Zurich-West quarter. Its sister ship, the “Stadt Zurich”, dating from 1909, was also constructed in the shipbuilding hall in Zurich-West. Furthermore, special theme cruises on the so-called Dreamboats guarantee plenty of variation. Lunch, Brunch, BBQ and Fondue Cruises combine a trip on the lake with tasty cuisine, while the Party Cruises offer an opportunity to listen and dance to various styles of music ranging from pop to evergreens to salsa. Besides the scheduled boat services, the pedal boats and motorboats are particularly popular. For private trips, the Lago rental company hires out solar-powered boats – a first in Zurich. Motorboats, yachts, aqua scooters, electric boats and other small vessels can also be rented here. In addition, there are rowing and pedal boats for hire at Pier 7 at the Quaibrücke, as well as at Bürkliplatz and Enge.

Refreshing Excursions

In 1983, the foundations of the Roman baths of ancient Turicum were discovered during construction work carried out underneath the present-day buildings at Weinplatz. The mosaics and remnants of wall paintings point to a rather sophisticated establishment. Today, the remains can be viewed through a metal grating at Thermengasse, close to St Peter's Church, with wall display cases and explanatory texts providing information about the Roman bathing tradition in Zurich. Meanwhile, Alpamare in Pfäffikon, in the neighboring canton of Schwyz, celebrates bathing enjoyment in its most modern form. Europe's largest covered waterpark features 11 giant slides, a wave pool, outdoor and thermal pools, and a wellness zone. Not far from Pfäffikon, the longest wooden bridge in Switzerland leads from Rapperswil to Hurden – and invites visitors to enjoy a romantic 20-minute stroll across Lake Zurich. From the bridge, the two tiny, picturesque islands of Lützelau and Ufenau can be seen; both are reachable by boat and guarantee an enjoyable leisurely day or evening spent surrounded by the undulating waves of Lake Zurich. Close-up nature experiences can also be had by Lake Zug, at the Neeracher Ried – one of the last lowland moors in Switzerland – and at Seleger Moor near Rifferswil. The mighty power of water is very much in evidence at the Rhine Falls, Europe's largest waterfall. Intrepid explorers can take the boat right up to the thundering mass of water and experience the water at close quarters as it cascades down the rocks at a rate of some 160,000 gallons per second.

Eating by the Water's Edge

Those who want to experience the natural freshness of Lake Zurich at close quarters is well advised to reserve a table at the Landgasthof Halbinsel Au, where, between lush greenery and rippling water, they can tuck into fresh fish straight from the lake. The restaurant, Fischer's Fritz, on the edge of the campsite of the same name also sets great store by fresh, locally caught fish. Thanks to their location directly on Lake Zurich, the restaurants Quai 61, Fischstube, Lake Side and Sonnengalerie all offer romantic vistas of the glittering lake, the verdant lakeshores and the snow-capped mountains on the horizon. The Marina Lachen, a mile-long dining and leisure mall at the southernmost point of Lake Zurich, also serves up delicious menus complete with lake views. The Rôtisserie at the Hotel Storchen

snuggles up against the River Limmat and treats guests to a stunning view of the Grossmünster Church and the stone buildings of the Old Town. The Ziegel au lac restaurant, which belongs to the Rote Fabrik alternative cultural center, is characterized by its factory charm, simple decor, superb lakeside location and relaxed ambiance.

→ zuerich.com/lakeview-restaurants

Events

Blaueierschwimmen

Strandbad Niederuster // April 22, 2019

→ blaueierschwimmen.ch

Städtzürcher Seeüberquerung

Strandbad Mythenquai // July 3, 2019

→ seeueberquerung.ch

Freiluftkino Filmfluss

Flussbad Unterer Letten // July 19, 2019

→ filmfluss.ch

Allianz Cinema

Zürichhorn // July 18 – August 18, 2019

→ allianzcinema.ch

Ironman Zurich Switzerland

Landiwiese am Zürichsee // July 21, 2019

→ ironman.ch

Zürcher Limmatschwimmen

Frauenbad Stadthausquai // August 17, 2019

→ limmatschwimmen.ch

Samichlaus-Schwimmen

Limmatquai // December 8, 2019

→ samichlausschwimmen.ch

Contact

International Media Team
Zürich Tourism
Gessnerallee 3
CH-8001 Zürich
Tel +41 44 215 40 96
→ media@zuerich.com
→ zuerich.com/media

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