



Hardly has the sun set than the respectable City on the Limmat shows itself from a completely different side: here, in Switzerland's melting pot, where different cultures, young energy, and visions converge, the night is celebrated and in the darkness the world is reinvented. Within a compact area, Zurich offers visitors a world-class choice of clubs, bars, and music venues – which have been free of licensing hours since 1997.

→ [zuerich.com/nightlife](https://zuerich.com/nightlife)

## Pioneers of the Night

The diversity and innovation in the nightlife of this manageably sized city in the heart of Europe was created overnight – but by far not just in a single one. Not only was the birth of Dadaism at the beginning of the 20th century a largely nocturnal affair, but the punk wave at the end of the 1970s also had a decisive impact on Zurich’s nightlife. Two world-renowned precursors of techno music – **Dieter Meier** and **Boris Blank** from the band, **YELLO** – hail from here. The synth-pop sound collages that they created from the early 1980s with their electronic equipment and Meier’s distinctive voice went down in music history and have influenced electronic music ever since.

A young **Stephan Eicher** was also active here. He trained as a musician, dedicated the song, “Les Filles Du Limmatquai”, to the ladies of the City on the Limmat, and in 1980, as a member of the band, Grauzone, made a significant contribution to New German Wave with songs such as “Eisbär”, before he shifted more towards chanson-style songs and conquered the French-speaking market.

Another key person in the development of Zurich’s nightlife is **Oli Stumm**, who already back in the mid-1980s robbed partygoers of their sleep. Before becoming a successful restaurateur in New York with his restaurants, Café Select, Rintintin, and Diviera Drive, he first shook up the Zurich house scene and then produced many internationally renowned bands for his electro label, “A Touch Of Class”. The 1990s brought with them the era of **Arnold Meyer**; thanks to his gigantic “Energy” parties following the Street Parade (the biggest techno parade in the world), as well as other raves and festivals, he has rightfully earned himself the nickname, “King of Techno”.

**Sami Khouri** belongs to the current generation of Zurich residents who see the night as an opportunity to thwart the Zwinglian spirit in the City of the Night. Under the label, “Mr. Samigo”, the nonconformist restaurateur – he runs among other things the Palestine Grill on Langstrasse and recently took over the Les Halles restaurant – and his team have for years orchestrated the craziest of events and the most spectacular temporary locales. In his establishment, **Samigo Amusement**, near Enge harbor, the public at large have been able to enjoy this entertaining mixture of show and cuisine since January 2019.

Zurich also owes much of its cosmopolitan nocturnal activities to the pioneers of the LGBT+ movement. The Old Town, in particular, developed early on into a center for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people in Switzerland. In 1943, the reading circle of the first international magazine for homosexual men, “Der Kreis”, met here, and since it opened in 1956, the Barfüsser restaurant has been a well-known meeting place for the LGBT+ scene. In the meantime, many other locales have followed suit and lend Zurich’s nightlife a particularly colorful note.

## From the Sin Mile to the Entertainment Mile

The City on the Limmat is home to more than 600 nightclubs and bars. The main hubs center on the Kreis 4 and 5 districts, which, following urbanistic efforts to upgrade the area, have developed from a red-light and drug district to a popular entertainment quarter. Here, Zurich's young creative scene ensures that the city has one of the most attractive and varied club scenes in the world. In the area around **Langstrasse** and as far as the industrial district, an exciting, multinational neighborhood has arisen, with clubs, bars, restaurants, alternative galleries, dimly-lit underground bars, and hidden-away or distinctive concert venues. Everything that culturally discerning night owls could wish for can be found within a radius of a few square miles. With the Club **Zukunft**, for example, internationally known musicians such as **Alex Dallas**, **Kalabrese**, **Lexx/Kawabata**, and **Jimi Jules** have created a home base that still enjoys an enthusiastic following after more than 14 years. The underground club, **Gonzo**, with its sweaty parties and potent shots, also has fans far beyond the Swiss borders – due not only to its strategically important compact space, but also to the carefree and exuberant mood, created by charismatic characters such as co-owner, **Maurizio “Milieu Mauri” Pecoraro**.

## The Mothers of all Clubs

The youngest offshoots of this flourishing club culture stem from the solid foundations of legendary Zurich dance halls. One such institution is the **Kaufleuten**: in the 1920s, members of the Dada movement gathered for one of their last soirées in the very same place where today a colorful mix of guests celebrates a hedonistic lifestyle, international artists give intimate concerts, and lively podium discussions are held. Another dinosaur in the business is the **Mascotte** – at over 100 years, one of the oldest clubs in Switzerland. The former living room of German singer Udo Jürgens, who lived directly over the club at Bellevue, has in the past welcomed legendary artists such as Josephine Baker and Miles Davis. Nowadays, a varied program caters to all possible tastes and nocturnal wishes. The **Plaza** at the very beginning of Langstrasse has a long history, too. Opened in 1924 as one of the city's first motion-picture theaters, it has changed from screening principally westerns and detective movies to hosting live music and parties. Here, the motion has shifted from the big screen to the dance floor.

## Concerts, Drinks, and Temporary Venues

Zurich's central location in the very heart of Europe also means that the city is blessed with a first-class concert program. Venues such as the **Hallenstadion**, the **Volkshaus**, **Komplex 457**, **X-tra** on Limmatplatz, the above-mentioned Kaufleuten, the **Samsung Hall** on the periphery of the city, or the **Moods jazz club** also present world-class guest stars week after week.

In addition, Zurich has plenty to offer for evenings when people want to enjoy a few relaxing drinks with friends rather than an exciting program of activities: the city may not have invented the concept of the apéro – an informal get-together with drinks and snacks –, but it has definitely elevated it to an art form. Particularly in summer at one of the numerous open-air bars, but during the rest of the year too,

an evening drink or two often signals the beginning of a long night of partying. The watering holes range from establishments with international appeal such as the **Kronenhalle Bar** or the **Widder Bar**, to pubs, wine bars, or locales from where live music is broadcast simultaneously like the Sender bar run by the radio station **GDS.FM**, to pubs for the alternative scene and with a high sociability factor, such as the **Olé Olé Bar**, the **Bar 63**, or the **Mars Bar**.

Those who want to move away from the more commercial establishments are also sure to find something to their liking in Zurich. One tradition that has been upheld since the 1980s is the legendary temporary bars that arise out of thin air and are created for officially approved but “legally creative” temporary uses. Also officially illegal yet often tolerated are the regular forest parties on the densely wooded hillsides, as well as spontaneous parties on rooftops or under bridges – especially in summer, Zurich celebrates as and where it happens to be.

## Open-Air Parties

### Street Parade

Founded by a student in 1992 as a “demonstration for love, peace, freedom, generosity, and tolerance”, the Street Parade is now the largest techno parade in the world. Every year, on the second Saturday in August, around one million ravers accompany the Love Mobiles along the lake basin.

→ [zuerich.com/streetparade](http://zuerich.com/streetparade)

### Lethargy

Originally, this festival was an ironic response to the party following the Street Parade – while the masses celebrated at the “Energy”, at the Rote Fabrik, a small group of anti-commercialists held a “Lethargy” party. The increasingly lavish event quickly became a popular family rave among Zurich residents.

→ [zuerich.com/rote-fabrik](http://zuerich.com/rote-fabrik)

### Zürich Openair

Over the course of four days, the Zürich Openair delights music lovers with big names from the spheres of rock, electro, indie, and pop. Located close to the airport, it is also an ideal open-air event for guests from abroad, and its proximity to the city means that the festival experience can easily be combined with an extensive shopping spree through Zurich’s city center.

→ [zuerich.com/zuerich-openair](http://zuerich.com/zuerich-openair)

### Züri Fäscht

Switzerland’s largest public festival is held every three years (next time in 2019) and over the three days attracts up to two million visitors to the City on the Limmat. Various open-air concerts, fairs, food stands, and other events take place around the lower lake basin. The absolute highlight of the event is the half-hour fireworks display on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

## Caliente

Europe's largest Latin festival stretches along Langstrasse from Helvetiaplatz as far as the Kasernenareal and offers South American specialties and the latest Latin beats – including music performed by guest stars from the scene.

→ [zuerich.com/caliente](https://zuerich.com/caliente)

## Zurich Pride

Formerly known as Christopher Street Day, today the biggest LGBTIQ event in Switzerland. At the heart of the event is the large demonstration on the Saturday. The two-day event also includes speeches and numerous live acts.

→ [zuerich.com/pride](https://zuerich.com/pride)

## Relevant Links

It is true that Zurich sometimes seems somewhat sleepy. But those who take a second look, beyond the clean streets and the idyllic Old Town, will quickly discover that Zurich's residents often only properly wake up and come to life after night has fallen.

- [Zurich's Concert Venues](#)
- [Zurich's Hottest Clubs](#)
- [The Locales Along Langstrasse](#)
- [LGBT+ Bars and Cafés](#)
- [Zurich's Most Iconic Bars](#)
- [Summer Festivals](#)

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