

Venture outside Switzerland's largest city to find quieter shores with top-tier restaurants, placid swimming holes, and historic towns, all without renting a car.

Where to Stay



Rooms at B2 Boutique Hotel + Spa feature oak parquet floors and matte-black lamps designed by Tom Dixon.

(Photo: Courtesy of B2 Boutique Hotel + Spa)

Wake up to the sun glinting off the water at [Romantik Seehotel Sonne](#) (from \$209), just five miles south of Zurich, where you can dine on classic Swiss dishes in the shade of chestnut trees at the outdoor restaurant. Though the building dates back to 1641—Thomas Mann and Carl Jung stayed here in the past—its 40 rooms are superbly maintained and maximize the waterfront views with large windows.

Stroll out the front door of [Hotel Schwanen](#) (from \$215) and you're right on the waterside boardwalk of Rapperswil, a historic town on the lake's eastern shore. The renovated rooms face the lake, and a select few have a balcony as well. The hotel's older section is well preserved, with rooms named after their original use, like the Taubshchalg (pigeonry), a compact room that's ideal for single travelers.

Go industrial at the [B2 Boutique Hotel + Spa](#) (from \$350, breakfast included), which opened last year inside Zurich's former Hürlimann Brewery. The brewery's skeleton has been smartly incorporated into the hotel design, from the 36-foot-high ceilings of the Library Lounge (which serves Hürlimann beer) to the handsomely designed rooms and suites, built in the old mash house and cold storage. The on-site Thermal Bath & Spa (from \$33 for entry) is one of the city's best, featuring a rooftop pool and a view of Üetliberg Mountain.

Where to Eat



Fischer's Fritz is among several outstanding waterfront restaurants on Lake Zurich.
(Photo: Courtesy of Fischer's Fritz)

Feast on fresh fish at [Fischer's Fritz](#) (reservations recommended), which shares the sloping lakeshore with Zurich's only campground. The catch is hauled in daily by a local fisherman and served to a crowd of prosecco-drinking campers and city dwellers who loosen their ties and kick off their high heels. Start with the seasonal-vegetable basket (\$30), accompanied by a tangy anchovy mayonnaise, followed by grilled pike and perch (starting at \$31).

Watch the chef grill your steak in the open kitchen of the [Steakhouse at Marina Lachen](#), the newest restaurant to open (two summers ago) at this breezy lakefront complex on the lake's southern tip. In addition to serving choice cuts of roast beef (\$49) and steak (\$79), this sleek restaurant won the 2012 Best of Swiss Gastro Award, the country's only dining award that's voted on by the public.

Book in advance for dinner at stylish but often packed [Seerose](#), which serves fresh seafood (from \$48) including yellowfin tuna steak and Ora King salmon alongside top-shelf cocktails. For a more tranquil evening with equally stellar views, head three miles south to the elegant, lesser-known [Tracht](#), where you can sit on the lakeside deck and dine on tuna carpaccio with wasabi panna cotta (\$23) and tiger prawns spiced with Thai curry (\$41).

What to Do



The medieval town of Rapperswil at night.
(Photo: Courtesy of Switzerland Tourism)

Survey the lake's rippling waters from the front deck of a [Zürichsee ferry](#). To see as much of the area as possible, take the 30-mile trip from Zurich to the medieval town of Rapperswil (two hours one way, from \$12) on the lake's eastern shore. The ferry makes short stops along the way, offering a glimpse of life on the lake, from its charming ports with wooden piers to stately waterfront mansions.

Plan on spending at least a half-day in [Rapperswil](#) (to maximize your time, you can also take a train here), which has been better preserved than other historic towns surrounding the lake. Stroll the cobblestone streets and boardwalk lined with outdoor restaurants, climb the hill to the thirteenth-century Rapperswil Castle for great views, and then walk across the Holzbrücke Rapperswil-Hurden, the longest wooden bridge in Switzerland.

Work up a sweat on the 71-mile waterfront [Zurich Trail](#) (Zürichsee-Rundweg), which is divided into ten stages. One of the easiest to access is the first stage, which travels from the Zurich Manegg train station (a ten-minute ride from the Zurich Main Station) and south along the Sihl River for the two-and-a-half-mile trek to the town of Adiswil. Here you can catch the [Luftseilbahn aerial tram](#) (\$8 round-trip) to the Felsenegg lookout for unbeatable sunset vistas.

Insider's Tip



The evening scene at Barfussbar in Zurich.
(Photo: Courtesy of Barfussbar)

One local summer tradition is taking a dip in open-air swimming holes, like the neoclassical Frauenbadi, which is women-only by day but turns into the co-ed [Barfussbar](#) (Barefoot Bar) by night. City spots like this can get crowded, though, so head to one of the small municipal swimming holes around the lake, like Rapperswil's **Stadbadi**. The quietest times are in the morning and during the last two hours that it's open (7 to 9 p.m.), when you can float in solitude under the starry sky.

Oddball Day



Im Viadukt, in West Zurich, houses boutiques, galleries, and a food hall.
(Photo: Courtesy of Im Viadukt)

Trade the shore for the city with an urban adventure in Zurich West, a once-industrial neighborhood that's already a couple of years into its revival but shows no signs of slowing down. Kick off the morning with caffè crema (\$4.25) at [Ambrosi Coffee Bar](#), under the stonemason arches of [Im Viadukt](#), an 1894 railway viaduct that's been converted into boutiques, galleries, cafés, and the city's first covered gourmet market hall. Fuel up for the day at the [Restaurant Markthalle](#), which serves a Swiss breakfast spread (\$11) that includes birchermüesli (the traditional name for muesli, which was first developed by Swiss physician Maximilian Bircher-Benner). Next, tap into the progressive arts scene at the Löwenbräu Brewery complex, the renovated home of the contemporary art museum [Kunsthalle Zürich](#) (\$13 admission), which reopened here last summer and features rule-breaking exhibitions of local and international artists, including an upcoming show of work by American artist Wade Guyton (opens August 31). Afterward, stop by the flagship [Freitag](#) store, housed in a tower of freight containers, which has become the emblem of the neighborhood and ushered in a wide variety of design stores. (Among these is the one-of-a-kind [Senior Design Factory](#), where senior citizens share their knowledge of crafts like knitting and crocheting with young designers.) For dinner, ascend to two-year-old [Clouds](#) at the top of Prime Tower, which was built on the grounds of a former cogwheel factory and is now the tallest building in Switzerland. Dine at the bistro bar instead of the restaurant—it's cheaper, but the views are just as good—and order a glass of white from Swiss winery Weingut Burkhart (\$12) with Catalan-inspired tapas like blood sausage with red onions (\$8). For the full Zürich West experience, spend the night at the [25-Hours Hotel](#) (from \$190), which opened last fall and aims to reflect the neighborhood by going “beyond banks, chocolate, and watches.” Top off the evening with a Swiss Feldschlösschen Dunkle Perle beer (\$6) at Neni, the hotel's lively bar.

Links

[Wanderland](#) offers an excellent overview of hiking in Switzerland, with a section devoted to Lake Zurich that features route maps and local listings.

The [Zurich tourist office](#) features up-to-date reviews of restaurants, hotels, and attractions; festival and event listings; and transport information with suggested itineraries.

[New in Zürich](#) is a local blog by and for expats that covers restaurant and events, as well as practical information.

Keep up on local news with [The Local](#), the Swiss edition of Europe's largest English-language newspaper.

<http://nymag.com/travel/index.html>