

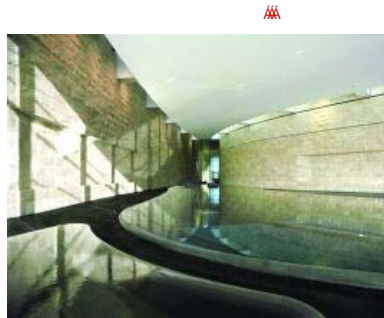
Modern spas shines in historic Zurich

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Indulge in luxurious surroundings after a day exploring Swiss city

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Zurich, Switzerland's largest city, is best-known as an international financial centre with executive-level prices. However, it also has a lot to see, great shopping, creative dining and attractive price-conscious specials for tourists.



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The indoor infinity pool at the Dolder Grand Hotel in Zurich, Switzerland.

With a setting in the majestic Alps and next to shimmering Lake Zurich, Zurich revels in the outdoors. Depending on the season, locals and visitors rent Bixi-style bikes to cycle in the "city of small distances," hike in the Sihlwald nature preserve, swim in the many public pools and picnic on the beaches of the Limmat River.

Wellness is a part of life, too. Modern spas with progressive facilities and treatments are hidden behind Zurich's historic cityscape of medieval architecture like the 12th-century Grossmunster Cathedral.

Using the Zurich Break program, you can get three-nights-for-two at 24 different hotels. Getting around is a pleasure. With the Zurich Card (about \$20 a day), you can criss-cross Zurich effortlessly, from cocktails to couture shopping, and from meetings to massages.

This pass offers unlimited public transportation on one of the world's best interconnected system of buses, trams, boats, trains and urban cable cars, plus perks at museums, shops and bistros. It's a zippy 10 minutes from Zurich airport to the posh, downtown Bahnhofstrasse.

With the Zurich Picasso package, you can book tickets to the current blockbuster Picasso exhibition (and skip the lineups), plus get reduced rates at 13 hotels. Pablo Picasso: 70 original works from the most famous international collections, continues at Kunsthau Zurich museum until Jan. 30.

With the Zurich Relax program, visitors who stay two nights at certain hotels also get a treatment at the hip Spa Schminkbar, a half-block from the Bahnhof (train station). This is the perfect place to unwind when you arrive in Zurich.

At Schminkbar, you, Colin Firth and Sting all are greeted royally with an ambrosial tea of ginger, lemon grass and orange.

You are showered with rose petals while you choose from a menu of foot massages - the eucalyptus and the lavender are favourites.

Then, a black-clad massage therapist brings a plate of fresh fruit and it's time for your full-body rubdown, hair styling and manicure. You're good to go, and your jet lag is gone.

If sheer indulgence in luxurious surroundings is your style, a trip to the Dolder Grand Hotel is a must. The Dolder is an urban resort and a historic landmark that recently reopened after a four-year, \$500-million overhaul, with much of the work in the stunning new spa and the Michelinstarred dining room.

The Dolder sits royally atop a mountain overlooking extensive grounds, the city and Lake Zurich. Take the Dolder Bahn, a delightful cable car that rides straight up a wooded mountain from downtown Zurich.

Even travellers who are accustomed to five-star living are in for a steep upgrade at this plush hotel. The views are dramatic, the accommodations brand-new and luxe and the in-room technology is state of the art.

The Dolder also brings spa life and wellness to new heights. Its team of doctors focus on cardio fitness, anti-aging and weight loss. Its cluster of shimmering indoor and outdoor pools and hydro-baths includes a Japanese footbath and a snow paradise for a refreshing roll outdoors.

You can opt for a caviar facial in total privacy in a spa suite with its own fireplace and steam bath - and even a butler to see to your needs. Treatments include the Ecochic Body Wrap with algae, a Bamboo Shiatsu Massage in which rhythmic tapping relaxes the muscles and mind, and the new Hydra-Heaven body treatment by Kerstin Florian.

* Schminkbar: www.schminkbar.com. A day spa with two locations near Zurich Bahnhof; with a gourmet health bar and beauty and body treatments from \$50 to \$150.

* The Dolder Grand Hotel: www.thedoldergrand.com/en. Facilities include outdoor and indoor swimming pools, skating rink, golf club, tennis courts and spa with cafe, hydro therapy and steam baths, snow area, fitness and water classes, and meditation area. Its 173 rooms and suites range in price from about \$870 for two people in a luxurious room to more than \$3,000 per night for lavish suites with

sweeping city, mountain and forest views, private dining, living and meeting rooms and various styles of traditional or modern interior design. Rates include spa access.
Prices change according to date and availability.

