



BURT WOLF

TRAVELS & TRADITIONS

GREAT HOTELS OF THE WORLD

PART 2



PALACE LUZERN SWITZERLAND

These are the Swiss Alps, and people have been living in, on, and around them for over ten thousand years. The ancient Romans wrote about the tribes who lived in these mountains. The most important were the Helvetians. During the 400s, as Rome fell, German tribes took control of the northern part of Switzerland. The Burgundians from France conquered western Switzerland. But the Helvetians, high up in their central mountain villages, remained free and unaffected by much of Europe's history. This is an extraordinarily beautiful part of the world, and relatively unspoiled.

Luzern is the largest city in central Switzerland, and a great base for touring.



During the Middle Ages, Luzern was a simple fishing village, but when the St. Gotthard Pass, connecting northern Europe and Italy, opened in the 1200s, Luzern became a major staging area. During the early 1800s English poets showed up in Luzern and began describing the beauty of the nearby lakes and mountains. The British upper class, always ready for a holiday abroad, made Luzern a major tourist attraction.

In 1903, Josef Bucher-Durrer purchased a plot of land at the edge of Lake Luzern and spent the next three years overseeing the construction of a luxury hotel which he called The Palace Luzern.

Bucher-Durrer was born in 1834 into a traditional Swiss family of farmers which was not his idea of how to earn a living. He was much more interested in using his imagination rather than his hands and he was completely misunderstood by his family. His mother even described him as a young man "too lazy to work". Well, never-the-less, he managed to amass a considerable fortune, he built and owned ten luxury

hotels all over Europe and six mountain railways. Not bad.

He built his Palace right on the lake's tree lined promenade. The views are magnificent: The lake; The low hills that surround the lake; The peaks of the Alpine mountains in the background.



The hotel has two restaurants. Les Artistes offers light regional and international dishes. And during the warm months, the tables are outside at the edge of the lake.

One of the specialties is roasted or grilled whole fish prepared to order and served at your table.

They also have a few of the traditional dishes of Switzerland like sliced veal Zurich style with crispy rosti potatoes.

During the cold months, the restaurant moves inside.

Les Artistes decorates its walls with the works of international artists.

While I was at the Palace they were displaying the works of David Gerstein.

Gerstein's works are three dimensional sculptures with a two dimensional feel. He starts by drawing the object that interests him, translates the drawing to a computer program and the computer program uses lasers to cut out the shapes which he then paints and assembles into the sculpture. Many of his sculptures are produced in a limited edition of 150 and they are available for sale in the hotel.



The hotel's other restaurant is called Jasper and it has been awarded 16 points by the GaultMillau Guide and a star from Michelin.

The chef is Ulf



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Braunert who trained in some of the top restaurants in Europe. His style is basically Mediterranean with accents from Italy and Spain. It's nice to have the GaultMillau points and the Michelin star but I think the greatest compliment to his work comes from the residents of Luzern who not only appreciate his cooking but consider his prices a bargain, especially at lunch. Not something you usually hear about a one star restaurant.

A signature lunch included: Tomato mousse with aubergine caviar bloody Mary; Lamb marinated with ginger and yogurt spinach; A parfait of Prosecco with limes and strawberries.

There's an outstanding selection on the cheese cart --- after all, we are in Switzerland. And a first class wine cellar.

This is a photograph of the lobby area as it looked when the hotel opened over 100 years ago. It looks and feels much like it did when it opened.



The bar area also has much the same look and feel as it did in 1906.

In 2005 a spa was added that offers guests the opportunity to relax and it has an extraordinary approach to pampering.

The rooms are large, and well decorated and they look out at the lake and the mountains.

The Palace is at the edge of Luzern and everything is within easy walking distance.

Luzern's 650-foot roofed bridge is the oldest in Europe. Called the Chapel Bridge, it was originally built in the 1300s as part of the city's fortification. The triangular roof supports were used by 17th century painters to present the history of Luzern and the patron saints of the city.

Luzern's old town is filled with ancient decorated buildings. The paintings present the history of a guild, or a family, or a special event. This building is the site of the first pharmacy in Luzern. It opened in 1530. The sign over the door reads, "There Is No Herb That Will Cure Lovesickness."



Just across the river is the Baroque Jesuit Church, built in the mid-1600s. The robes of Niklaus von Flue, Switzerland's only saint, rest here. His major act was to propose an agreement that regulated the division of spoils among Switzerland's mercenary troops .

One of the things you can see from your room at the Palace is Mount Pilatus which has the steepest cogwheel railway in the world. And it will take you to the top, which is seven thousand feet above sea level and offers some of the most impressive views of the area. And on a clear day you can see the Palace.

HOTEL ADLON BERLIN GERMANY

On the 24th of October 1907, Emperor Wilhelm of Germany officially opened the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. It was built and owned by Lorenz Adlon, a successful Berlin restaurateur and it quickly became the social center of the city. The



Emperor often preferred the Adlon to his own royal chambers. Wealthy aristocratic families sold their winter palaces because they wanted to spend the social season in the suites of the hotel. It was a favorite residence of Charlie Chaplin, Albert Einstein and President Theodore Roosevelt. It's still *the* place in town for an important event.



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The Adlon also developed a reputation as an unofficial neutral territory where differences between individuals, political groups and even nations were put aside for a few hours. In fact, the Adlon was often referred to as "Little Switzerland" because of its neutral atmosphere.

The most elegant part of modern Berlin is the government and embassy district. There's the Hungarian Embassy, the French Embassy, the British Embassy and the American Embassy which is squeezed in between two big banks. The Parliament building, the Museum of Ancient Cultures, the Cathedral and the twin Churches.

The new Adlon is at the edge of that district next to the Brandenburg Gate and within walking distance of Berlin's major museums and attractions.

During the late 1990s, it was completely rebuilt in the classic style that made it famous. It's run by the Kempinski Hotel Group which is responsible for some of the finest hotels in the world.

If you are a King or a Queen, the head of a nation, a famous rock star, or the President of a giant corporation that's about to declare bankruptcy because of your greed and incompetent management --- personal security can be a big issue, especially when you're traveling.



In response to the problem, the Adlon has built a security wing. Its Presidential suite is not only one of the most luxurious in any hotel but the security is probably the safest in Europe.

It was designed to meet the latest requirements of the German Federal Police for a level one security area. The Presidential suite comes with its own butler. The living room has a magnificent view of the Brandenburg Gate and a nice dish of chocolates. There is a private study with a secure fax machine and high-speed Internet access and a nice dish of chocolates. A large bedroom with a four-poster bed and another nice dish of

chocolates. An elegant bathroom with its own sauna and no chocolates. A private dining room, no chocolates. A kitchen area, again, no chocolates. So if luxury, security and really good chocolates are important to you. This is the place. And at only \$15,000 a night --- it's a deal.

If you're just a regular person and you love good food, then you can dine in public at one of the hotel's excellent restaurants.



The Adlon is one of the few hotels in the world that has three restaurants each with a Michelin star. The name of this restaurant is Mǎ which is the Chinese word for horse. There's a

bar that specializes in a drink that's similar to vodka, a section that specializes in Chinese dishes and one that concentrates on the cuisine of Japan.

The chef Tim Raue takes the traditional recipes of these cultures and gives them a very personal twist. One of his signature dishes is charcoal grilled veal with truffle sauce, leeks and horseradish.

Gabriella is the one star Michelin restaurant with an Italian menu. The chef is Bjorn Alexander Panek and his signature dish is seafood and roasted bread. The third Michelin starred restaurant is the Lorenz Adlon named after the founder of the hotel. The maitre'd is Boris Habel. A small and intimate room, an outstanding selection of wine and liqueurs. And classic French cuisine. The chef is Thomas Neeser. For over 100 years the Adlon restaurant has been famous for their duck recipes and they still make a traditional pressed duck. And they have a great Sunday brunch.

And if you're in need of a snack in the afternoon, there is tea time. It was the English who got serious about introducing tea to Europe. Tea was a pleasant drink and because England controlled and taxed the tea trade from

India and China, it was a great source of revenue for the King.

England also dominated and taxed the Caribbean trade in sugar --- so if they could get you to put sugar in your tea they really had it made.

High tea became the drink of the English upper class and was soon accepted by many aristocrats in Europe. Over the years, I have seen some pretty classy tea times in great hotels.

The hotel has two tea masters who will offer you a considerable amount of advice. Which is very helpful since they have over 24 different teas on their menu ranging from a classic Darjeeling to an extremely rare Gu Zhang which is only harvested once each spring during a tight ten day period.

The traditional tea service comes with scones and little cakes, sandwiches, fruit tartlets, clotted cream, jam and a nice plate of chocolates.

And if you're planning a small private party the perfect room is the winter garden.

Gee, I was almost sure I emailed everybody about the date.

The Adlon also has a shop that sells many of the things that you encounter during your stay. You can buy a mattress like the one you sleep on. And the bed linens. The chocolates. The Adlon cake, the Adlon wine and the Adlon bathrobe.

Of course, anything you buy can be shipped home --- which raises a more complex issue --- why would you want to go home?

LAUSANNE PALACE HOTEL & SPA SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is divided into a series of states called Cantons. The primary canton in the Lake Geneva region is known as the Canton de Vaud. Its southern border runs along the shore of Lake Geneva. Its western and northern frontiers pass through farm land



and small villages in the Jura Mountains that share a border with France. And much of its Eastern edge rises into the Alps.

The largest city in the Canton de Vaud is Lausanne and it has been inhabited for tens of thousands of years. The hill at the top of the city was once capped with a Roman fort. Today it's the base for the largest Gothic cathedral in Switzerland.

Lausanne is also home to one of my favorite hotels --- the Lausanne Palace Hotel and Spa which is run by Jean-Jacques Gauer.

In 1990, Gauer became President of The Leading Hotels of the World, an organization that monitors the quality of some of the finest resorts and hotels. He literally grew up in the hotel business. His family owned and operated hotels in Switzerland, Spain and Greece. Today, he's also the General Manager of the Lausanne Palace.

JEAN-JACQUES GAUER :

When I took over the Lausanne Palace back in 1996, it was like a sleeping princess and it needed a big hug to wake it up.

The first thing we did was to create a typical Parisian brasserie here at the hotel with a very relaxed atmosphere, a lively place where people sit at the bar and enjoy their time.

In a big city like Paris or London or New York you can rely on your guests from outside, from other towns, other countries. In a small town like Lausanne it is very important that you address yourself to the locals, the local community. They have to feel at home here and that's exactly what we did here at this hotel.

The Cote Jardin restaurant is like a giant greenhouse. It has a buffet at breakfast, lunch and dinner with Mediterranean and Italian food.



The Table d'Edgard is a Michelin-starred gourmet restaurant with an unusual private table above the kitchen. There's a huge mirror that lets you see the chefs at work.

My personal favorite was the Palace Sushi Zen which is under the direction of three talented Japanese chefs. Each studied the art of Sushi for at least 10 years before they became licensed masters. They've begun to blend European and Japanese ingredients --- eel topped with a slice of Camembert cheese slightly melted.

One of J.J. Gauer's stars is Kevin Trimoulla, the head concierge. His job is to get you anything you need. Kevin



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has been taking care of demanding guests for over 20 years. He worked all over Europe and has the unique distinction of having created the position of concierge on The Queen Mary 2. He loves a challenge.

As I was getting off the plane in Switzerland, my favorite glasses fell out of my pocket and I was unaware of it until I got through customs and of course there was no going back.

I pleaded with people at customer service, I begged the airlines lost and found, I even offered a bribe of chocolate--nothing. When I got to the Lausanne Palace Hotel I mentioned it to Kevin and two days later miraculously my glasses were back.

The Palace also has an outstanding spa, indoor heated swimming pool, serious exercise equipment, a Jacuzzi that reduces the tension in your muscles, a relaxation terrace, and of course, massage and body care treatments. I like the one where they make believe you're sushi and wrap you in seaweed.

Combine that with a few glasses of sake and my tension is gone ---- along with most of my other cognitive senses.

Down hill from the Lausanne Palace is the Chateau d'Ouchy which is a sister hotel of The Lausanne Palace. It's set in a beautiful park on the edge of the lake.



The ancient building was stripped down to it bare walls. Anything of architectural value was saved. At which point a small 50 room hotel was built into the structure.

At one time the Chateau was surrounded by a moat filled with water to protect it against invaders. The moat is remembered by a little indoor brook.

The Lausanne Palace runs the restaurant La Grappa which specializes in the foods and wines of Tuscany. I have been coming to this restaurant for over 40 years and I am always impressed with their work. Their pasta is homemade everyday. The steaks are grilled Florentine-

style. There is a wood-burning fireplace, and a great, not overpriced, wine list.

When it comes to a relaxed vacation, good food, excellent wine, and beautiful surroundings, the Lake Geneva area is always one of my favorites.

TO LEARN MORE . . .

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