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Story **Call me Swiss miss**

By CINDY ADAMS
Last Updated: 12:42 AM, October 11, 2011
Posted: 10:22 PM, October 10, 2011

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The vulgar, low-class film is insanely funny. Maybe funnier because this was Zürich, and it was cold out and it was raining. Years ago, I saw the first "Harry Potter" job in Puerto Rico. In Spanish. Not easy since I couldn't even understand it in English.

A two-hour drive took me to Interlaken and the Jungfrau, the big-time alp peak. Lunch at a roadside chalet was red cabbage, spaetzle, grapes and chestnuts. Chef's salad is not a big number in downtown Interlaken.

Now I'm in the International Olympic Committee headquarters, Lausanne. It's one of Switzerland's smallest cities but has one of its biggest hotels. The Beau-Rivage Palace, boasting France's only female chef with three Michelin stars, was built for the rich and famous in 1861. Ten acres with two tennis courts on Lake Geneva. France's border is 30 minutes away. The hotel TV speaks seven languages.

Mozart plinked around here. Lord Byron wrote here. Coco Chanel's dog is buried here. It's so elegant that you don't dress to go out, you dress to stay in!

Lausanne has a picturesque cobblestone shopping district to which I eagerly raced. In the city two days, I ran there two days. Sunday, every store was closed. Monday, not one store was open. Some rule or law or holiday or Irving Rolex's birthday, who the hell knows?

Two places had doors open. One sold shoes. One sold sweaters. I careened in. One was vacuuming, one was bookkeeping. Both threw me out. A 100 percent Swiss diss. I was a really big hit in Lausanne.

By ferry across Lake Geneva is France. The city of Evian. Its water was discovered in 1789 by some duke who had an ailment plus thirst and drank what eternally erupts from within. Today the product is everywhere and owned by Dannon. I was told I must see Evian. So I hopped the boat, about \$100 first-class round-trip, 35 minutes each way.

The conservatory, wherein is the history and background and assorted fountains, was closed. Closed? The one day I schlepped from the United States? Yes. It opens tomorrow? No. When will it open? The month of May.

This Evian water was closed for the winter. You can get a case at every supermarket and restaurant from Montauk to Lausanne. You just can't get Evian in Evian. It's closed until May.

One lone outside spigot flows freely and is open to all. Villagers with empty bottles hold them under the spigot. New Yorkers pay a few bucks for a bottle. Evianistas drag it home in old jugs free. Unfortunately, I didn't have a canteen in my luggage so for me the whole place was padlocked.

The stores are closed. The water's closed. What's open is my mouth. I'm going home tonight. I'll turn on the tap and inhale a long draft of H2O, municipal style.

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I'm Switzerland-ing. Switzerland's clean, neat, got Swiss cheese, Swiss clocks, Swiss chocolates, Swiss banks, Swiss Army knives and no demonstrations. It's also got TV. In Zürich's Baur au Lac Hotel, my three sets repeatedly blared news about the US -- unhappiness, unrest, unemployment and "America's method of handling its debt problem is to borrow more."

This place is mega-efficient. Comparatively, a military campaign looks messy. Swiss International Air Lines left on time, arrived early, my seat went flat so I could sleep and its washroom had hand lotion.

Arrival transportation was no yellow cab with a driver's middle finger signaling a right turn. The Baur au Lac's Rolls-Royce glides you to the hotel. Fresh orchids in your living room. I am not one to knock my city that I love, but I'm not sure the Sheraton does that.

In 1860, Czar Alexander II's mom, the Dowager Empress of Russia, and her staff of 62 had two whole floors here. Brahms, Mahler, Alfred Nobel, Franz Liszt, Hans Christian Andersen and Richard Wagner stayed here. Of course, not lately. Lately it was Bill Clinton, Roman Polanski, Renée Zellweger and me.

Me, they don't mention, Renée Zellweger, they do.

Dinner was at Kronenhalle on Ramstrasse. Gigi Kracht, wife of the hotel owner Andrea Kracht, who's also chairman of Leading Hotels of the World, took me. Above tasties like venison with mushrooms or salmon over sauerkraut hang hundreds of millions of dollars. Original Bonnards, Picassos, Chagalls, Klees, Braques, Miros, Tintoretto.

Early on, this restaurant fed starving artists with remains of dishes left over from rich customers. The artists paid back. Today, the place boasts no security. No cameras, no guards, just old waiters.

The walls were so breathtaking I could hardly finish the veal sausage -- but since I wasn't paying, I managed.

Switzerland is big with Swiss watches. I wear none, so locals immediately labeled me low-class. Magazines in town advertise \$500,000 wristwatches. I mean, we're not talking Timex here.

Famous for neutrality, not all Swiss are neutral. Bahnhofstrasse, the main drag, boasts Chanel, Armani, Chloe, Cartier, Tiffany, Escada, Prada, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Benneton, Bally, Tod's. In front of Hermes -- smack in front -- stood a huge half-block-long sign in white. With black block letters. It read "Free Palestine." The sign was seen on Saturday. Yom Kippur. The Jewish high holy day.

Zürich is not cheap. This is not Canal Street. A movie, "Horrible Bosses" with Kevin Spacey, Jennifer Aniston, Colin Farrell, Donald Sutherland, Jamie Foxx, cost \$20 per person. Mid-movie, halfway through a crucial scene, projection stopped, lights lit and it was intermission. This was the theater owner's forced march for popcorn, Cokes and the concession to vacuum up a few extra francs.

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