

Gary Crallé

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Lovely Luzern & Hotel Wilden Mann



by Gary Crallé
Luzern (Lucerne), Switzerland
July 13, 2012

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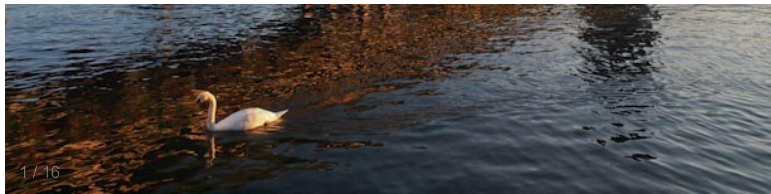
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Fabled Luzern (as it is spelled in German, Lucerne in French) is often considered the prettiest city in Switzerland. Beautifully sited at the mouth of the River Reuss where it enters Lake Lucerne / Vierwaldstättersee, the city is surrounded by mountain peaks. The most noteworthy are Pilatus and Rigi-Kulm, both accessible by rack railway.

Reservations awaited my wife Lis and me at the Romantik Hotel Wilden Mann, literally around a medieval corner from the Kappelbrücke (Chapel Bridge) which famously burned in 1993. Tragically, eighty 17th C. original renaissance paintings done on wood with tempura and oil-based paints by Heinrich Wägmann were destroyed.

Protected by little more than the bridge roof and a thin coat of varnish over the centuries, they were repaired many times awaiting proper renovation techniques undeveloped until the 20th century.

Many original artworks are again displayed with paintings of St. Maurice, St. Leodegar, Lucerne History and Swiss History, including 77 saved or works restored from the fire now decorating the bridge. The footbridge itself was rebuilt in just under a year. Only in Switzerland!

Asun to stars walkabout in the crisp evening air takes us past the Calatrava-designed train station entrance hall, the futuristic Culture and Congress Center with its flat roof mimicking the lake surface, refined gift shops, glittery coffee bars beginning to fill as retail stores shutter for the day, plus crowds of visitors and locals alike weighted with purchases, gradually emptying the narrow streets.

The casual dining room at our hotel now becomes a cozy bubble of international conversation. Seated at a table next to my wife and I is a group of French speaking military personnel. The 4-course dinner is an elaborate and tasty affair which for me is equal parts dining and photographing.

City guide Hanna Felder greets us for a walking tour next morning while wearing fingerless gloves in order to thumb through literature in her satchel. A special thanks to Hanna for sharing her expertise about the Kappelbrücke for this story.

The Jesuit Church near our hotel – one of the country's finest – with its impressive baroque interior and rococo detailing is our starting point. Stepping outside we learn that the swans gliding by the Kappelbrücke are descendants of 4 birds given to the city by King Ludwig II of Bavaria in the mid 1800s.

More hidden history: the 14th C Wasserturm (Water Tower) at the end of Kappelbrücke isn't named for storing water, but because it is *sitting* in the water. Nearby Spreuerbrücke or Mill Bridge dates from 1408 and is the oldest covered bridge in Europe; it features a series of 17th century paintings by Meglinger titled the *Dance of Death*. In 1400 Luzern was the only city in Europe to boast 4 bridges, modest as they may now appear.

Walking through the old town, we climb the steps to a walkway along the city ramparts. Two towers promise a view which turns out to be largely obstructed, but sections of the walk do afford a good sighting of the town and lake extending toward the mountains. William Tell, the Rütli Oath and the founding of the Swiss Confederacy are the stuff of truth and legend surrounding this region.

The Lake Lucerne Navigation Company proudly operates the world's largest fleet of paddle steamers on an inland lake, making several stops on their daily runs. It's all part of an extensive national bus, rail and boat system accessible with a Eurailpass or Swiss Card.

Using coupons sold at the tourist office we lunch at Restaurant Galerie in the luxury Hotel Schweizerhof. Not exactly MacDonalds yet quite affordable.

Although compact, Luzern simply cannot be seen in a day. It's best to allow two or three days minimum to appreciate the neighbouring villages by car, train or boat plus scale the peaks on foot or by rack railway.

All that touring builds an appetite for which the Swiss have cannily prepared culinary offerings in comfortable surroundings as part of the good life. Over dinner one evening we meet the Wilden Mann chef, Simon Oehen, as he makes the rounds chatting with guests. His modesty belies his skill.

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Yesterday's forecast was calling for severe t filling in fast from the south west so I found

July 19 at 8:32am

We sleep well that night, although I confess to leaning out the window at 3am for a street photo as raindrops dampened my head. Morning comes too soon as we walk through the market surrounding the Rathaus (town hall) and buy souvenirs in the flea market by the Spreuerbrücke before departing this lovely town.

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Gary Crallé

Gary Crallé is a seriously sociable travel photographer who appreciates wherever he is. With almost 70 countries under his travel belt it's surprising he hasn't put on weight. He likes to concentrate on what is good for the body and soul (history & culture, gastronomy, health & leisure) and the spirit within us (geography, self-discovery/adventure). Image-based stories are his passion.

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Website: <http://www.facebook.com/getolympus>

More stories by Gary Crallé

Germany's Coburg - A Royal Legacy



There are several intriguing aspects to Coburg that promise an interesting visit. For close to a half century, from 1945 to 1990, the town of 42,000 found itself on the road to nowhere, almost encircled by the borders of former East Germany. But when the Iron Curtain collapsed, everything...

Rothenburg ob der Tauber - Favoured Medieval Town



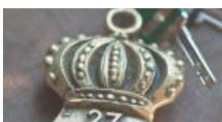
Rothenburg ob der Tauber is the town that time forgot. From medieval prosperity to provincial backwater due to shifting trade routes, Rothenburg sat dormant for many decades until rediscovered and preserved in the early 19th century. For visitors, it's the most favoured medieval town in...

Heidelberg - From Poets to Student Princes



Hollywood's version of The Student Prince put Heidelberg on the map for Americans, although Mark Twain arrived before that. It's a delightful place and one of Germany's most popular destinations. For tourists Heidelberg is a quaint and poetic town on the pretty Neckar...

Romantik Hotel zur Krone, Franconia, Bavaria



The hotel is hidden in plain view in the center of Laudenbach, a village on the banks of the River Main, deep within the Odenwald mountains and Spessart hills of Germany. Surprisingly, it's less than an hour's drive from bustling Frankfurt. As our introduction to the Romantik...

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Artistic Ascona & Castello Seeschloss



It took a few moments to realize that the crenelated medieval tower behind the palm trees was our lodging: the Romantik Hotel Castello Seeschloss. Its Italian-German name loosely translates as 'castle at the end of the lake' – and that's where we found it. If Ascona is a...

Bath Waters



British tourist authorities are promoting the GREAT in Britain this year, with the queen's 60th Diamond Jubilee and Summer Olympics as magnificent cornerstones. Those events focus on London, but there are wondrous historic draws outside the capital too. The Roman town of Bath is one...

Titanic Connections



Historic connections with the ill-fated luxury liner Titanic are spread across Canada. The largest moving object ever built took 1,517 people to their deaths after an iceberg pierced its hull off the coast of Newfoundland at 11:40pm April 14, 1912. It was the ship's maiden voyage....

Richmond BC: A Profusion of Foods



How many visitors fly into and out of Vancouver International Airport – a gifted design boasting a distinctive West Coast touch – without knowing exactly where they are? Surprise! – they're in suburban Richmond. For those in the know, leaving town without sampling the local cuisine would...

Quebec City: culture inside and out



Quebec City: culture inside and out Our intrepid little group set out daily from Château Bonne Entente in suburban St Foye to explore the environs of Québec City. These comfortable touristic forays were a marked contrast to the lives of 17th C. coureur de bois...



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