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ZURICH



GENEVA

*The spirit of Zurich and Geneva*

Bauschänzli
Ile Rousseau

Freitag Flagship Store
and Prime Tower
Organisation Météorologique
Mondiale



Zurich's Sächsilüüte is a day-long festival in April where winter, called the Böögg, is burned in effigy. It has its roots in medieval times, as does Geneva's December Escalade, when the city celebrates a 1602 victory over the Savoyards, with marching bands in medieval garb.

It took me nearly 30 years to realize that city residents won't admit it themselves, but Zurich and Geneva are more alike than different, and not just thanks to the multitude of banks. They come close in some national voting, going against the language divide. Geneva talks about its "esprit de Genève" and has even given that name to a red wine. Zurich hasn't bottled and labelled its spirit, but it clearly has one.

Grain of truth in every cliché

They do, of course, differ. Zurich can seem northern, cold, efficient, sensible, money-oriented and rigid. Geneva, the ditzy southern belle with a French accent, has more obvious

foreign residents (skin colour is a factor) and visitors working in international humanitarian offices, while Zurich's foreigners have Italian, German or Slavic accents. They work in hotels or commerce. A large chunk of Geneva's foreign population is tax-exempt, which translates into too many illegally parked cars with diplomatic plates.

Efficiency is a relative concept, but it's not the first word that comes to mind in Geneva unless you've just come from Italy. Being 15 minutes late is okay; I have never wanted to try that in Zurich, where appointments start at seven o'clock, when Geneva is still rubbing its eyes. Zurich's ability to get things done plays a central role in Switzerland repeatedly ranking tops for innovation. Geneva prefers to host the organizations that do the ranking, WIPO and the World Economic Forum.

Restaurants have served good but stolid food in Zurich for centuries, like cream and veal

schnitzel. These are meals designed to give you the strength to face business deals, tough landladies, no-nonsense teachers and the tram police. Zurich diners eat at 19:00, the aperitif hour in Geneva, and they tend to be home by 22:00, well ahead of people in Geneva. I have no memory of drinking wine in Zurich the first few times I was there – discussions about whether to have wine are always a bit uncomfortable.

Geneva is awash in outdoor cafés (wine on every table, no discussion) until November, with lake perch and light French-style cuisine. Geneva's sense of law and order has always had a relaxed thread woven through it and the Jet d'Eau adds an effervescent note to life. Not surprisingly, therefore, Geneva has just been named Europe's best short stay destination – but tourists need reminders to hang onto their wallets, with the city a magnet for pickpockets.

Swiss urban party genes

Vive la différence! But look more closely and you'll see that in the 21st century both cities love a good party, from medieval festivals to the Lake Parade in Geneva and the Street Parade in Zurich. Geneva's is a contemporary fancy dress celebration, where just about anything goes, part of the Fêtes de Genève in July. Zurich's mammoth Street Parade two weeks later pulls in more than a million partygoers for one wild summer night of music and dancing.

A love of going out

Zurich's strength is its alternative culture's ability to shift abandoned zones into entertainment areas that quickly move up the social ladder to pull in crowds. Kreis, or district, 5's area next to the railroad tracks is hard to beat: oil drums for bar stands, solar panels for electricity, live radio. It's a colourful contrast to nearby Prime Tower, the symbol of Zurich-West's rebirth. Geneva's new landmark buildings, notably the lotus-shaped Maison de la

Paix and WIPO's glass offices, are part of the United Nations sprawl; both cities are using architecture to underscore their new profiles as young, energetic, sophisticated and urban. Late afternoon shoppers in Zurich browse in trendy little boutiques under the arches along the Viaduktstrasse, off Hardbrücke before they head for wine bars and a clutch of new restaurants around Langstrasse's east side. The newly gentrified area borders streets that are still seedy enough, with a few hookers, alcoholics and drug users, to remind you that this was until recently a well-known red light district.

Ten years from now we'll probably be comparing Zurich-West to Geneva's PAV (Praille-Acacias-Vernets), a project in the planning to transform 230 hectares of industrial zone into alternative restaurants, housing, shops, a pedestrian and cycling park. Right now, dinner in a renovated garage on Gasometerstrasse feels very much like dining in Geneva's Carouge – although the arty quarter was a charming

artisans' village on the city outskirts when Zurich-West's factories belched smoke. Langstrasse connected the factories in district 5, via a tunnel under the railroad tracks, to worker's quarters in district 4, where Zurich's political Left found a foothold.

Defying the forebears

It has taken Zurich and Geneva 500 years to fall in love with a nightlife sprinkled with clubs, gay bars, and in Zurich's case, a new casino in 2012. Both cities were home in the 16th century to some of the most powerful figures in a Protestant world not noted for celebrating fun. The process of dislodging the conservative legacies of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich and Jean Calvin in Geneva has speeded up in the past decade. Zwingli's stern figure towers over passersby at the Wasserkirche on the Limmat, while Calvin is part of a quartet of reformers who dominate the Reformation Wall in the Bastions park. Expect the pedestrians to be sporting tiny skirts and tattoos.

SPOTTED IN ZURICH

Niederdorf/City

Wirtschaft Neumarkt, Niederdorf, Focus on local foods and Swiss wines, www.wirtschaft-neumarkt.ch

George's restaurant, Sihlstrasse, atop the casino with great view, www.george-grill.ch

Kreis «Cheib»

Loft Five, Europaallee, new restaurant and bar from Carlton wine bar owner, www.loftfive.ch

Caduff's Wine Loft, Kanzleistrasse, classes, meals, wine tastings, www.wineloft.ch

Zurich-West/Langstrasse

Frau Gerold's Garten, Geroldstrasse, the place to be in summer, www.fraugerold.ch

Restaurant Clouds, Maagplatz, top view over Zurich and fine dining, www.clouds.ch

Freitag Flagship Store, Geroldstrasse, tower made of metal containers, www.freitag.ch

Walter's Vintage Möbel, Viaduktstrasse - many boutiques under the arches, www.walterwalter.ch

Steinfels, Heinrichstrasse, micro-brewery and restaurant, www.steinfels-zuerich.ch

D-Vino, Limmatplatz, busy wine and tapas bar, features Swiss wines by the glass, www.d-vino.ch

Times Restaurant, Gasometerstrasse, a fancy restaurant and bar, www.times-zurich.com

Seefeld

Masi, Seefeldstrasse, lively wine bar near the Opera house, owned by Bindella, www.bindella.ch

Razzia, Seefeldstrasse, fine wines and good Schnapps in an old cinema, www.razzia-zuerich.ch



Zwingli Statue
Reformation Wall

Sprüngli, Paradeplatz
Auer Chocolate, Rue de Rive

Flower Clock, Bürkliplatz
Flower Clock, Jardin Anglais

Lettenkanal, Drahtschmidlisteg
Rhone, Quai du Seujet

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Statues are no longer the only oversized art. Zurich is hosting a controversial giant rusty crane on the Limmatquai during 2014. Part of the spirit of Geneva is moral earnestness, so its art matches that. The broken chair sculpture by Swiss artist Daniel Berset, all 5.5 tons of it, is a gesture of opposition to land mines and cluster bombs.

Lakes and rivers, a physical resemblance

I found myself in front of Zurich's Opera this summer, at the bustling new Sechseläutenplatz near Bellevue. The sun was streaming across the plaza, morning coffee cups were clattering and buskers were warming up. Straight across the lake was a jet d'eau I'd never noticed. It's smaller than Geneva's, apparently out of deference. It takes 30 minutes to walk from Bellevue to the fountain in Enge, past lake cruisers and private boats, through a magnificent park lined with 200-year-old trees. The walk is a smaller double of Geneva's quayside path to its

140-metre tall fountain, Europe's highest. Geneva's fine old park is across the lake from the fountain, at the foot of the World Trade Organization. Nearby grand parks were created by the cities' fathers, the private gardens they built for their splendid mansions. Geneva's discreet Parc La Grange, whose first resident was a rich Roman 2000 years ago, overlooks the lake, as does the romantic and larger Rietpark in Zurich. Guest Richard Wagner wrote "Tristan and Isolde" in a Wesendonck family villa here, with Mathilde Wesendonck as his muse. He fled when their affair came out in the open.

The power of the Rhone when it arrives in Geneva, and its locks and dams, make swimming dangerous along most of the riverfront in Geneva. Zurich's gentler river, named the Limmat once it leaves the lake, caters to swimmers, near the main station. In Geneva, you have to head to the Bains des Pâquis for the same kind of protected dip, with waterfront cafés.

SPOTTED IN GENEVA

Old Town/Eaux-vives

Café Papon, Rue Henri-Fazy, cool traditional restaurant, www.cafe-papon.com

Mi food mi raisin, Chemin neuf, terrific little wines and great nibbles, www.mifoodmiraisin.com

Chez Lucien, rue de la Scie, for Swiss, French and Italian wines, tapas, www.chezlucien.com

Le Décanteur, la rue des Eaux vives, accent on Italian wines, www.ledecanteur.ch

Carouge

Dix Vins, rue Jacques-Dalphin, bistro lunch on the sidewalk, classic French dishes

Qu'importe, rue Ancienne, rustic style wine bar, cold and hot bruschetta, www.quimporte.ch

Pâquis

Bains des Pâquis, quai du Mont-Blanc, since 1872, raclette dinner, www.buvettedesbains.ch

East-West Hotel, rue des Pâquis, chic little lunch, tapas, intimate dinner, www.eastwesthotel.ch

A hot time

Pâquis is known as a *quartier chaud* in Geneva for its prostitution, drugs and noisy nightlife. It's a relatively small area and while the crime rate is higher here, so is policing, just as with Zurich's hot spots. This is a popular area for restaurants, from cheap to smart. And just as with Zurich's Langstrasse, divided by the railroad tracks, Pâquis is separated by train lines from Les Grottes, very much working class, with a high percentage of foreigners.

Geneva's international crowd loves its nightlife, especially the newly arrived commodity traders – 40 percent of the world's commodities are traded here. Cross the river from Les Grottes to the financial district and you find bars, coffee shops and restaurants catering to the new young professionals who party until the wee hours.

Zurich, too, has shifted some financial centre expertise from classic banking. It is home to



SIX, the Swiss stock exchange, the world's first exchange with a fully automated trading, clearing and settlement system in 1995.

It's a major international futures and derivatives trading centre. After work you'll find traders in the area stretching from Europa Allee's shops and trendy bars, that you reach by following track 3 at the Zürich Hauptbahnhof, to the area around Stauffacher.

Eateries with character

Back in Bellevue to change trams it strikes me that the new Sechseläutenplatz is a blend of Geneva's Place Molard with its bustling sidewalk cafés, and the markets and open play spaces of Plainpalais. All three have a steady stream of people because they are public transport hubs with several tram and bus lines. Bellevue, like Molard, is near the lake. It divides two shopping and nightlife areas. Seefeldstrasse is funky and light-hearted at the Opera house end. Face the other way and you

The Kempinski's Floor Two bar, quai du Mont-Blanc, best view of the jet d'eau, www.kempinski.com/geneva



UBS and Credit Suisse, Paradeplatz
Bank Paribas, Saint-François

Hin & Weg Dépôt, Kalkbreite
Fleamarket, Plainpalais

have the Limmat quarter, the right bank side of Zurich's Old Town with its medieval alleyways, micro-brewery bars and coffee roasting houses.

Molard, too, looks one way towards glitzy watch and jewelry shops on the Rue du Rhône and the other way towards more affordable clothing shops and the Eaux Vives eateries and bars. It's an area that is on the upswing, with a new Franco-Swiss regional train station being built just steps away. A few metres from Place Molard you climb narrow cobblestoned paths to Geneva's Old Town.

Wine bars

Wine bars are growing in popularity in both cities, wherever the young international crowd goes. They're a new twist on an old theme. Zurich's Old Town has boasted a famous wine bar since 1801, the tiny Oepfelhammer, while Geneva's Café Papon opened in 1820. Since 1968 the Uni Mail campus has drawn people to Plainpalais nooks.

The Swiss are some of the best-traveled people in the world, with 10 percent of the population living abroad and foreign travel popular with those at home. Switzerland was in the news early in 2014 for voting a cap on immigration – but it has the highest percentage of foreigners – 23 percent – in Europe, after tiny Luxembourg.

Zurich and Geneva have large foreign populations, 30 percent and 39 percent respectively, so it's not surprising that new bars and clubs have an international flair. You can order a vegetarian meal in a 16th century restaurant and eat ethno-fusion cuisine in a former factory – your tablemates are as likely to be local Swiss as foreign, and loving it. The real charm of the twin cities is that since the turn of the century they've taken on board their new roles as international centres. The clichés haven't disappeared – they're part of what gives cities character – but today they're dished out with a sense of humour. Santé! Prost! Cheers!

Train station

Petite Reine, Place de Montbrillant, for locals and hipsters, www.cafelapetitereine.ch

Lavinia, rue de Coutance, chain wine retailer and simple great lunches, www.lavinia.com/ch

Plainpalais

L'éléphant dans la canette, avenue du Mail, hip beer bar, www.elephantdanslacanette.com

Le Kraken, rue de l'Ecole-de-Médécine, for aperitifs, www.lekrakenbar.ch

Ethno, rue des Deux-Ponts, nice terrace, www.ethnobar.ch
Café Gavroche, boulevard James-Fazy, cheap and student-friendly, www.restaurants-geneve.ch/gavroche