



# Swiss role

**Forget your preconceptions about Zürich: far from being a staid money pit, the city has a vibrant bar scene where style and substance meet. By James Lawrence**

**P**oor old Zürich. The city is routinely lambasted as one of Europe's most boring; a last-resort option that could never hope to compete with vibrant metropolises such as Barcelona, Paris or Amsterdam. And if it's not boring, then it's "excruciatingly expensive", the naysayers cry.

Yet those who criticise Zürich have plenty of reasons to re-examine their position, and should reserve judgment until they have had the opportunity to experience a night out in the city's industrial quarter, which is anything but prosaic.

Indeed, over recent years, this formerly rundown part of the city has become a magnet for nightclub owners, who have wasted no time in turning former warehouses and factories into massive dance venues that attract the world's best DJs, and could even give Berlin a run for its money.

This is the real beauty of Switzerland's most prosperous city; it can be as sedate or as edgy as you desire, depending on where you go, what you're after and who you're with.

Indeed, for a relatively small city there are options galore: industrial nightclubs, laid-back

pubs, chic cocktail bars, live music venues, and more. Locals and tourists can be found partying at weekends around the Niederdorf district in the old town, as well as in the streets of Langstrasse and Zürich West. Meanwhile the bars in Paradeplatz in the old town are notably sedate – perfect for imbibing cocktails if the parents are in tow.

But for my money (and, admittedly, you'll need plenty of it here), Zürich West is the hottest ticket in town. The district has witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of bar openings in recent years, attracting both Swiss and international talent to compete for supremacy in Zürich's bar scene. This is also where the city's banking set is found

most evenings, which usually begin with an after work 'apéro' and can develop into a long night of partying. However, if an Aperol Spritz doesn't tickle your fancy, there are a multitude of other options, especially at the famous Widder Garage in Zürich West. A venerable institution, the Widder boasts more than 500 types of wines and sprits, including Switzerland's largest whisky collection. A guarantee, surely, of a memorable evening. sb

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## Top five Zürich Bars

### RAYGRODSKI

**Sihlfeldstrasse 49, Wiedikon**

Raygrodski is part of a growing firmament of style-conscious cocktail bars popping up all over Zürich, where minimalist interiors, Chesterfield sofas and hip bartenders are the order of the day. Still, the substance matches the style, and a long list of classic and signature drinks ticks all the boxes, while service is unfailingly friendly and relaxed.

### ODEON

**Limmatquai 2, Hochschulen**

It may not be Zürich's trendiest bar, but it is one of the oldest. Odeon opened in 1911 and counts Lenin, W. Somerset Maugham and Einstein among its alumni. The first bar to serve 'Cüpli' (Champagne by the glass) in Zürich, today Odeon stands as a vital meeting point for all sorts: suits, tourists, ladies who lunch, the city's gay community and, of course, bar flies. Try the Manhattan.

### KRONENHALLE

**Rämistrasse 4, Hochschulen**

Another must-visit destination in Zürich, Kronenhalle is renowned for one very good reason – expert bartender Peter Roth. With more than 37 years in the business, Roth is still one of the world's best, with an ability to put a new spin on any concoction you may desire, both classic and contemporary. Throw into the mix insanely comfortable leather chairs, beautiful artwork and pampering service and you have the recipe for a great evening.

### BALTHO KÜCHE & BAR

**Marktgasse 17, 8001**

The best of Zürich's new addresses, Baltho is already a massive hit with post-work professionals, who increasingly arrive in their droves in search of outstanding cocktails and slick, bespoke service. Chef de bar Luis Estrada manages a talented team of bartenders. Professionalism is the name of the game at Baltho – the hosts are extremely well trained and set the standard for service in Zürich.



### WIDDER GARAGE

**The Widder Hotel, Rennweg 7**

The legendary Widder Bar (undergoing a massive refurbishment) has temporarily morphed in the Widder Garage, but is no less impressive for the change of venue. As bars go, this one's pretty damn special: expect a library of 1,000-plus spirit bottles, a beautiful lounge area, live music and friendly and talented staff. The venue's head bartender is a regular recipient of cocktail-making awards.



## SB MEETS... Luis Estrada – chef de bar at Baltho Küche & Bar, Zürich

**LUIS ESTRADA** is a force to be reckoned with. A stalwart of the hospitality trade, Estrada cut his teeth in Toronto, where his time working among the city's best bartenders cemented his fondness for all things mixology related. This predilection became a passionate vocation after a stint at the Marriott Renaissance Tower Zürich, where Estrada took on his first management role. Appointed chef de bar at Baltho last year, Estrada is recognised as one of Zürich's finest bartending talents.



### Baltho is one of Zürich's newest bars – what's the ethos behind it?

The concept is simple: warm, professional service with the best possible drinks list and a tailored, bespoke approach where guests are given one-to-one guidance while ordering their drinks. We are completely independent, so we have no ties or restrictions from any major spirit company in creating our cocktail menus, so we offer the drinks we think will be attractive for our guests and friends. We spend a great deal of time finding the best base spirits for our recipes, which means we let the main spirit shine in the drink. We also make many of our own bitters, syrups and infusions.

### What is your recommended concoction to a first-time visitor?

We always try to find out what our guests enjoy to match them with their perfect drink. Recommendations include our Baltho Sour: a twist on the classic with Kentucky Bourbon, agave syrup, lemon juice, egg white, sea buckthorn purée and absinthe air. Or the Kokotiki: a fun drink with London dry gin infused with red beetroot, mixed with coconut water, coconut syrup, Drambuie and balanced out with fresh lemon juice.

### What's your tippie of choice?

[Laughs] Actually I really love red wine. But in terms of cocktails, it always depends where I am and who I'm with, but a well-made Margarita is always a pleasure to drink.

### What do you think of the bar scene in Zürich generally?

I have seen a huge leap in the past 10 years. It is no longer impossible to find a qualified bartender who knows the classics, knows all about spirits, and possesses a good technique.

### What will be the next big drinks trend in Zürich?

Themed cocktail bars are still missing in Zürich. I would like to see some crazy concepts with perfectly-made drinks menus. Consistency and hospitality will be the key too.

### Finally, where do you like to party in Zürich?

Tales Bar, Old Crow Bar and Widder Garage are some of my favourites.