

Cheese to meet you



GRAND . . . opera house in Zurich and, inset left, the city by night

GO: ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

ANN travelled with Swiss Air from Cork which operates flights on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, May-October.

Swiss Air also operates from Dublin from €65. See www.swiss.com

The Swiss Travel system provides a dedicated range of travel passes and tickets exclusively for visitors from abroad. The SWISS TRANSFER TICKET covers a round-trip between the airport/Swiss border and destination. Prices are approx €130 in second class and €210 in first class.

The SWISS TRAVEL PASS offers unlimited travel on consecutive days throughout the rail, bus and boat Swiss Travel System network. This pass also covers scenic routes and local trams and buses in around 90 towns and cities. The Travel Pass also includes the Swiss Museum Pass, allowing you free entrance to 500 museums and exhibitions. Prices from approx €220 in second class.

■ FOR the ultimate Swiss rail specialist visit www.swisstravelsystem.co.uk.

■ FOR more information on Switzerland visit www.MySwitzerland.com or call freephone 00800 100 200 30 or e-mail info.uk@myswitzerland.com

STAY: Rooms at the Marktgasse hotel start from around €220. See www.marktgassehotel.ch

DO: Market tours cost approx. €65 and take place every Friday from 4 to 7pm. See www.zuerich.com/en/visit/tours-excursions/zurich-food-tour

■ FOR more information on The Cheeseman see <http://thecheeseman.ch>.

■ FOR reservations at the Baltho bar and restaurant see balthokuechebar.ch

■ FOR reservations at Saltz restaurant see www.thedoldergrand.com.



INDULGE IN A SWISS CULINARY ODYSSEY



MOUNTAIN MAN . . . model of a tired climber stops hotel guests in their tracks

IRELAND may lay claim to James Joyce as his place of birth – but Zurich is where he chose to be his final resting place.

The city even has its own James Joyce Corner but that's not the reason I was there on a weekend break.

The fact that Zurich is recognised as one of the world's most important financial centres was not the reason either.

No, I was there to experience yet another exciting aspect to this wonderful city which is fast gaining a reputation as a foodie centre of renown.

From very unusual cocktails served outdoors at a rooftop restaurant to a food tour which provides an insight into the gastronomic culture of the city, Zurich managed to provide many interesting foodie surprises.

The city has an annual food festival in September, and brings together restaurant tastings, colourful varieties of foods and vegetables, al fresco stalls, conventions, cookery demonstrations and a six-stop walking tour that can be taken all year round.

And if you don't want to walk then invest in a Zurich Card which allows you to travel all

By ANN MOONEY

around Switzerland's biggest city on the trams and ferries. This can be purchased at the airport and also includes transport from there to the city's main railway station.

But to get back to the tour of food and drink outlets around the Viadukt retail centre and the very fashionable Zurich-West quarter, you learn about beer brewing, food delights and the variety of traditional dishes available in restaurants and hotels.

In the food market, the bakers, cheese makers, wine merchants, chocolates, fishmongers and butchers, florists and vegetable stalls offer the best of fare.

It's here that I found Michael Jones, 'The Cheeseman' who in Switzerland, the home of cheese, sells British and even some Irish cheeses very successfully. He proudly told me: 'I have the largest range of British cheeses in the world outside of London – an average 50-60 varieties (although in December, that's sometimes over 70). The cheese I sell is not supermarket cheese but artisan handmade cheese. I also sell British and Irish beer at the corner of the cheese shop.'

Michael also founded The International – Zurich's first craft beer bar – which has a constantly changing menu and 10-30 new beers every week. Also in the market you will find a branch of St Jakob, the bakery with a social conscience. It employs disabled staff to turn out fresh pastries and bread, pralines, truffles, biscuits and syrups. We paid a visit to Steinfels, where they brew five different beers and you get a chance to taste them and pick your favourite. They told me they plan to produce an Irish stout there next so that should be interesting. Further up the road, we popped into a former shipbuilding factory which now houses an excellent restaurant, The Sciffbau Bar, a the-

atre and a jazz club. Running for 17 years, it has a classic menu, with mussels a firm favourite.

This area of the city was once industrial and derelict but has been transformed into a really hip place for visitors and locals alike, with plenty of shops, museums and art galleries.

I stayed in the Marktgasse Hotel right in the heart of the old town with cobbled streets and wonderful shops, bars and restaurants all within easy reach. This hotel is gorgeous, one of Zurich's oldest inns, with a long history of hospitality. The location in the heart of Medieval Niederdorf makes it the perfect place to explore on foot.

Once a backpacker hostel, it has now been rejuvenated into a bright and modern hotel with 39 very stylish rooms. The Baltho bar and restaurant is a favourite not only with residents but with locals and visitors. On Saturdays and Sundays, there is a special table for the youngest guests, where children can paint and do craftwork under supervision before joining their parents for lunch.

The menu includes Swiss specialities, such as veal patties and capuns (sausage wrapped in Swiss chard) with Vals mountain cheese, as well as Italian and French fare enlivened by tangy Asian and Latin sauces. Dinner for two with wine is around €90. Just down by the river, there's a weekly flower and vegetable market where tourism originated in Zurich – at the spot where Goethe and Mozart enjoyed the city as the gateway to the Alps. The Rathausbrücke was also the site of a market long ago which is why the locals call it the Gemüsebrücke (Vegetable Bridge). Now back to those wonderful cocktails served on the Rooftop Restaurant on the top floor of the Grieder luxury department store. The menu is exceptional but not cheap. However just standing at the top of the tradition-steeped fashion store, enjoying cold drinks, creative cuisine and a

ROLL ON . . . Mick's bed



ROOFTOP RULES . . . the cocktail bar over store



PRETTY . . . the evening light at the Grossmuenster



ARTISANAL . . . chef does his thing with chocolate



COLOURFUL . . . varieties in department store stalls

TRAVEL DEALS

Airbus to Asia trip

ASIA is set to become a whole lot more accessible! Put June 2 in your diary, and get ready for the first non-stop route from Dublin to Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific. The service will operate four times weekly on Cathay's Airbus A350-900 fleet with HD TV and in-flight WiFi.

At the time of writing, return fares are available from €619. See www.cathaypacific.com

Monster cruises in

IF you're in the capital today, take a trip down to Dublin Port to see the largest ship ever to call to these shores.

MSC Meraviglia is the world's fifth largest cruise liner, stretching 315m, with a 5,700 capacity.

It's calling as part of a 12-day journey around Britain and Ireland, departing for Cork at 5pm. For more info, see www.msccruises.ie

London bargains

STILL haven't tried Flybe's new route from Dublin to London Southend airport?

Here's the perfect excuse to try out the route, operated by Stobart Air, as fares are currently on offer from just €14.99 one-way.

Book up to May 17 for travel between May 10-September 27 to nab the bargain on flights operating on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. See www.flybe.com

Canaries anyone?

DESPERATE for a last-minute break in the sun? Grab a holiday in the Canaries – when temperatures have risen but prices haven't yet.

Head for Lanzarote on May 19 where self-catering at the 3* Lomo Blanco Apts costs from €469. Or Fuerteventura where a half-board stay at the Cotillo Beach Hotel is €575. See www.sunway.ie for more specials.

Active in the East

WHEN you're keen to check out an exotic destination but limited on time, leave it to the experts.

Get a flavour of the Middle East with a tour of Oman and the UAE with TD Active Holidays. Small eight-night tours immerse you in local culture, from restaurants and markets to a stay in a Bedouin camp, then Dubai and Abu Dhabi. From October 29, €1,899. See www.tdactiveholidays.ie