

'Clear mountain air and morning dips in the lake': Why Lake Zurich's newest hotel is the place to be right now

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I had a pretty good idea of what to expect from this hotel before I even arrived; for, in similar fashion to a Swiss cuckoo clock, a small man popped out in front of me as I approached the luggage carousel in Zurich airport, armed with my name. A minute later he had whisked my case off the belt and propelled me to a glossy black Mercedes waiting right outside.

Thinking back to this pre-Covid arrival seems another world away now, free of face masks and social distancing, but Switzerland is emerging out the other side, bar a few clusters, making this a tempting proposition in which to immerse yourself in that particularly civilised way of life that the Swiss excel in. And that is before we get on to the breezy lake views.

As I walked through the entrance of this little Belle Époque jewel, the newest member of the seriously loved La Réserve Hotel group, which has long charmed Paris and Geneva with its informal luxury, it was the rough (in contrast to my smooth arrival) that caught my eye: exposed red brick on the walls with occasional breaks for smooth wood or dramatic black-and-white tiger marble. While the Paris and Geneva outposts are visibly the opulent hand of Jacques Garcia, here it is Philippe Starck who weaves the story.

The Eden au Lac Hotel, bordering Lake Zurich, has been a city landmark since its arrival in 1909. Its renowned service and position on the edge of the lake, mountains visible in the distance, combined to appeal to the discerning traveller who wanted to escape city grime for healthy walks in clear mountain air and morning dips in the lake.

So, much the same as what appeals to the discerning traveller of 2020; and the lake this summer, with private access from the hotel, is balmy.

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When Michel Reybier, the French-born owner, decided to reinvent the hotel as a member of his La Réserve group, it was this location which designer Starck drew on for inspiration. Reimagining the hotel as a yacht club, he numbered the 40 rooms and suites on illuminated photographs of a yacht sail and trimmed the windows with jaunty blue and white awnings.

Interiors of the rooms brim with buttery yellow, soft leather details. A desk with all the necessary plugs and sockets in the right place sits behind the bed, looking over it out to the many activities of the lake. Floors are wooden, walls mostly the original red brick. Bathrooms, always a strength of La Réserve hotels, are trademark seductive, with huge stand-alone tubs, again with lakeside views and sizeable double basins in roughly hewn marble.

Downstairs, past the stained glass on every floor by Ara Starck – a creative nod to the Chagall stained-glass windows in nearby Zurich's Fraumünster Church – the hotel is completely open from one end to the other. Off the long corridor, embedded with glass-fronted wine cellars, there is a closed fumoir. Otherwise, a wonderful sense of space pervades.

The original lobby and entrance have been kept (but a new reception and arrival area has been made to allow cars to pull in) and stands between the bar and the Eden Kitchen Restaurant, a live DJ there to entertain the already popular bar, which offers a rare treat of wine by the glass from Reybier's stable of Château Cos d'Estournel.

Turn left and you are in The Eden Kitchen with its open kitchen and tables of beaten silver. This is the domain of chef Marco Ortolani. His recommendation was the spaghetti with gambero rosso and oscietra caviar – a must-try – although I looked longingly at the grilled lobster with French fries.

Next time, I thought; for the following evening I was at La Muña, the Japanese-Peruvian restaurant tucked high up, under the dome of the building. Philippe Starck envisaged this as the harbour master's office, its sloping wooden walls crammed with watercolours and oil paintings of Lake Zurich.

The Japanese-Peruvian restaurant is tucked high up, under the dome of the building

Rugs from Peru and Asia top the wooden floor and suspended from inside the dome are a few wooden canoes. Ceviches of sea bass, tuna and salmon, a creamy, spicy salmon tartare with sesame, jalapeño and fried rice, marinated aubergine with soy sauce and black cod marinated in miso proved the talent of chef Tomoko Gunji Hangartner.

The next morning, seagulls were wheeling over a misty Lake Zurich beyond my balcony. On a shelf in my room were a couple of Panama hats for when the weather became more clement – and my thoughts turned to staying there for a while until that happened. Then I could unwind the awning that stretched over my balcony and imagine I was back in 1909 as I settled down with a book and the lake view for the afternoon.

But now, post-Covid, the promise of a dinner of sea bass ceviche at La Muña, high up under the dome, is exactly where I would want to be.

Read the full review: [La Réserve Eden au Lac Zurich](#)

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