

SWITZERLAND AT A GLANCE

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To chocolate lovers everywhere, Sprüngli is one of Zurich's finest institutions, a repository of all things delicious. Now in its 164th year, the company's cafes and shops continue to tempt and delight those fortunate enough to pay them a visit.

SWEET PLEASURES



● Sooner or later, any visitor to Zurich with a taste for the finer things in life is bound to find themselves at the city's world-famous Confiserie Sprüngli. Located at the heart of the banking quarter on Paradeplatz, the nineteenth-century building with its grey facade blends perfectly into its rather dour surroundings. Yet it still manages to be welcoming. At any rate, it's almost always bustling with activity. There's something comfortingly familiar about those engraved silver trays, sugar basins and cream jugs; that slightly old-fashioned china discreetly emblazoned with the Sprüngli arms – a golden sun and moon on a red and black ground; those copper cake moulds displayed symmetrically on the walls; that special "Limmat" presentation box of chocolates with its blue and white packaging, unchanged for decades. I first savoured the unforgettable taste of Sprüngli 15 years ago, courtesy of a friend returning to London (where I then lived) from a business trip to Switzerland. It's quintessential Zurich – solid, respectable, slightly puritanical – and yet wonderfully indul-

TRUE, BEJEWELLED WIDOWS SIPPING HOT CHOCOLATE AND FORTY-SOMETHING CORPORATE WIVES CLUTCHING THEIR KELLY BAGS ARE IN ABUNDANCE, BUT BUSINESS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES FROM CENTRAL ZURICH REGULARLY LUNCH HERE.

gent. The decor is slightly dated and the waitresses are dressed in traditional black and white, but that's exactly what makes it so appealing. After all, they've been around for 164 years. I don't mean the waitresses...

Sprüngli was founded in 1836 by David Sprüngli and his son Rudolf when they opened their first shop, Confiserie Sprüngli & Sohn, on Zurich's Marktgasse. The father and son team moved to today's premises on Paradeplatz in 1859 in the hope that Zurich's main railway station would soon be built there. Despite the fact that the station was eventually built elsewhere, the Sprünglis suddenly found themselves in an eminently desirable part of town, right in the middle of Zurich's burgeoning financial district. Quick to recognise the opportunities their new situation presented, they soon opened a refreshment parlour, where tea and hot chocolate

were served – and respectable ladies could afford to be seen without being escorted by a gentleman. Times may have changed, but Sprüngli remains. Somehow, Zurich wouldn't be the same without it. Quite simply, Sprüngli is an institution.

At a time when a plethora of cool cafés, sleek bars and pulsating clubs are sprouting up all over Zurich, the staid premises of one of the city's most venerable cafés, which opened its doors on the first floor of the building in 1909, are almost refreshingly conservative. But not that conservative. True, bejewelled widows sipping hot chocolate and forty-something corporate wives clutching their Kelly bags are in abundance, but business people of all ages from central Zurich regularly lunch here, and the shop on Paradeplatz is a magnet for a truly international clientele. Despite not belonging to any of these categories, I must say I have always felt quite at home there.

SPRÜNGLI'S LEGENDARY CHOCOLATES are enticingly displayed in the company's shops in an astonishing variety of flavours, consistencies, shapes and sizes. The current range numbers some 2,000 products, including the world-famous *Truffles du jour* – the name says it all. The best-selling item from this bewildering selection of treats are *Luxemburgerli*, butter-filled macarons available in seven standard varieties, rising to as many as 14 depending on the time of year. Between 300 and 500 kg of these feather-light temptations leave the factory in Dietikon near Zurich every day, the equivalent of approximately 120 tonnes a year.

For me – and I think for most people – the sheer indulgence of a trip to Sprüngli is what really counts. It would be unthinkable for me to visit friends or family abroad without taking them an exquisitely wrapped box of champagne truffles or chocolate-filled *gaufrettes* bought at Paradeplatz. The very act of buying them is luxurious. But of course, there's a great deal more to it than the packaging. "What makes us unique," explains Beatrice Wüscher, who heads the Sprüngli restaurants, "is the absolute freshness of our products, the vast majority of which are still made by hand. And of course, we're still very



much a Zurich company, and intend to remain so. All our twelve shops are within a radius of 15 kilometres. I think people really appreciate that. It's not a mass product."

The business-minded are sure to be impressed by the phenomenal success of Sprüngli's corporate sales and its shops in and around Zurich (a thirteenth is to be opened in Winterthur in December, a fourteenth at Enge Station in March 2001). Another rapidly expanding business area is catering for special customer requests, which are dealt with

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by a separate production site specially dedicated to accommodating these wishes. The possibilities are virtually endless. For example, this branch of the business has already produced thousands of boxes of praline chocolates for a major bank's successful corporate customer business, and the world's largest chocolate Easter bunny, shown at the Boston Swissôtel, was needless to say made by Sprüngli. The home delivery branch of the business is also posting double-figure growth, and each year some 50,000 parcels are despatched directly from the company's high-tech production facility in Dietikon near Zurich, half of them at Christmas time.

MOST PEOPLE WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH ZURICH, however, will surely associate the name Sprüngli with the company's café bars in Paradeplatz, which opened in 1973, and Löwenplatz, near the main station. These are particularly popular for anyone taking a morning coffee break, wanting to wash down a salmon canapé with a glass of champagne, or – my personal favourite – to spoil themselves with a Schoggi Mélange hot chocolate served with a wickedly thick topping of whipped cream. Not one to do things by halves, I usually indulge in a fluffy, buttery brioche for good measure. Not to mention the "Bakery Breakfast", a buffet available on Sundays at Paradeplatz which includes a wonderful selection of freshly baked





bread, jams, cheese, Birchermüesli and freshly squeezed fruit juices. Not to be missed.

THE LÖWENPLATZ CAFÉ BAR, in fact, is something of an insider tip: people come from far and wide for the wonderfully frothy cappuccino served by Monika Schüpbach, manageress since the café bar opened in 1984. "We've all been here for a long time," she says, "and I think we all appreciate the very special atmosphere. We have many regular customers; a lot of them are from the surrounding shops and offices, but we also have people from abroad. One German couple comes once or twice a year to Zurich. They even call to reserve their Birchermüesli before they arrive. It's nice to feel that people come specially to see us! What I really enjoy is that we are a good team that really works well together. That gives each of us a great deal of freedom."

Deputy manageress Angelina Trümper, who has been at Löwenplatz for 14 years, agrees: "The whole atmosphere is wonderful – it's smart without being hyper-modern. How should I put it? It's a traditional company, old and yet not old-fashioned. I think the fact that there are so few staff changes – very unusual in the restaurant business – says it all. Basically we're all proud to be here." Julia Gucec, with 10 years of service to her credit and still the newcomer, is a case in point. As the fresh sandwiches are delivered to the kitchen at 2.40 p.m. sharp, she laughs: "Just at the right moment. What did we tell you? Everything is fresh!" Not bad for 164 years.

Sprüngli: Tradition seit 1836

FRÜHER oder später findet jeder Besucher Zürichs den Weg in die Confiserie Sprüngli. Weltbekannt sind die Praliné-Kreationen des traditionsreichen Familienbetriebs und in Zürich ist es auch möglich, in den beiden Cafés im Stadtzentrum die süssen Köstlichkeiten mit Musse bei einer Tasse Kaffee oder einer Schoggi Mélange zu geniessen. In Zeiten, wo überall hippe Clubs und Restaurants wie Pilze aus dem Boden schiessen, scheint die Zeit bei Sprüngli etwas stehen geblieben zu sein. Doch die stillvolle Retro-Atmosphäre und die exquisite Auswahl an süssen Leckerbissen machen den Charme von Sprüngli aus. Vergessen Sie Ihre Diät.

Sprüngli: on a tous envie de chocolat!

QUICONQUE visite Zurich finit, un jour ou l'autre, par franchir la porte de la très réputée confiserie Sprüngli. Connue dans le monde entier pour ses créations de pralinés, l'entreprise familiale riche en tradition a aussi ses deux cafés au centre-ville. Là, on peut savourer à loisir de délicieuses pâtisseries en buvant un Schoggi Mélange ou une tasse de café. A l'époque où les restaurants tendance et autres bars branchés se multiplient à l'envi, il semblerait que chez Sprüngli, le temps se soit quelque peu arrêté. Mais c'est justement l'atmosphère rétro et raffinée des lieux ainsi que le choix d'exquis petits fours qui font tout le charme de la confiserie. Alors oubliez votre régime et accordez-vous un peu de douceur.

THE ATMOSPHERE IS WONDERFUL – IT'S SMART WITHOUT BEING HYPER-MODERN.
IT'S A TRADITIONAL COMPANY, OLD AND YET NOT OLD-FASHIONED.



A CHOCOLATE COATED HISTORY

- 1836 David Sprüngli acquires a confectioner's shop on Zurich's Marktgasse from his hitherto employer's widow.
- 1845 Rudolf Sprüngli, David Sprüngli's son, begins chocolate production.
- 1859 Rudolf Sprüngli rents the premises on Paradeplatz and opens the main shop, buying the building in 1861.
- 1909 The Paradeplatz premises are renovated and Zurich's first "Tea Room" opened on the first floor.
- 1957 "Luxemburgerli", exquisite macaroons filled with a fine buttercream in a variety of flavours, are introduced. Today they are an absolute best-seller.
- 1961 A new, modern production facility opens in Dietikon near Zurich.
- 1970 Three new shops are opened – Spreitenbach, ShopVille, Stachelhofen.
- 1973 Café bar opens at Paradeplatz.
- 1980 Two new shops open – Zurich main station and at Zurich Airport.
- 1984 A new shop with a café bar opens on Löwenplatz.
- 1989 New shop opens on Bahnhofstrasse.
- 1996 160th anniversary of the company and renovation of the Tea Room on Paradeplatz.



LEONARDO DA VINCI IN ZURICH

A special offer for readers of the *Swissair Gazette* with the Hotel Bristol. Valid until January 7, 2001. Leonardo da Vinci, the inventor of the automobile, the parachute and the submarine can now be seen for the first time at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich, with 250 models, sculptures, drawings and paintings. Includes two nights at the Hotel Bristol***, exhibition entry, stroll through the old town of Zurich. Cost: CHF160 per person (double-room/weekend basis). Zurich Tourism, tel. +41 1 215 40 40, fax +41 1 215 40 44, information@zurichtourism.ch, www.zurichtourism.ch

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