



Fun reasons
why Winter at
Des Balances
in Lucerne is
a pure heart-
throb.

BY JON MESSER

Swiss winters are truly alluring. The most enlivening of getaways to recharge both soul and spirit, Lucerne is a panorama of sheer beauty, crisply fresh air, art and deep history. Come see why I adore being here.

At the foot of legendary Mt. Pilatus, Lucerne is a 'place of light' nestled in the heart of Switzerland surrounded by magnificent Alps and lakes like no other. You need to gondola up Pilatus, then take the aerial cable 'Dragon Ride' to arrive atop 7,000 feet and visualize unending vistas, views of Lake Lucerne and Alps beyond. Truly breathtaking in any month, year round.

Lucerne offers many hotels but allow me to suggest the absolutely marvelous Hotel Des Balances and tell you why I always return. This twelfth century beauty is family owned and uniquely central at the foot of the River Reuss at Old Town.

The Balances, akin to a Venetian Palace, is unmistakable as her façade is incredibly painted in Holbein-esque murals on the wine market side. Without a doubt one of the most photographed historic properties in the city, your pause to visualize can last 5 to 10 minutes alone, longer with camera!

Des Balance offers 56 rooms with a generous selection of river/ lake or Old Town views at her best. From intimate comfortable to junior + romantic, spacious suites, here

you find a value based easy selection to suit your needs and desires.

I place great emphasis on service here and I assure you warm hospitality is their goal. In a world of hotel options there are very few properties that equal what the venerable CEO & GM Peter Busser + his smiling team provide. Much of my travel is business. Here they assure any request so you are never out of touch.

Simply drop your bags and head to the bar for a house welcome drink. Perfectly situated in the Balances Restaurant, the most convivial bar staff will no doubt more than welcome you. They are my go-to reference point for any question of all things Lucerne. Whether you've planned ahead and studied any of the scores of sites, museums, galleries, touring adventures or shopping, Balances staff will refine and widen your horizon beyond expectation.

If you're like me, food always matters. Far too many hotels say their restaurant will satisfy, etc. Really? Truly? Here, its not a maybe, its an absolute fact. The Balances' Restaurant is world-class and quite affordable. Notice you're surrounded by the many locals that dine here regularly.

In advance, I assure you the best breakfasts a hungry traveler could ever wish. Their lunches are terrific and dinners are superb. Come hungry and I promise you'll depart happy. Kitchen command is

at the hands of two renowned and marvelously creative award winning chefs Andy Fluri & Niko Eichner. Every month they offer an entirely new and terrific menu. Whether for dinner or lunch you'll immediately know why Gault-Millau awarded them a venerable 14 point score. Order a la carte or select from any of their 5 & 7 course fabulous offerings. It may sound strange that this 'lifestyles editor' takes most of his meals here when in town. Why? Because it'd take weeks to try all of Andy & Niko's revolving creations and every month there is a new menu.

Lucerne is all about exploration. Begin easily with the links at the end of this piece and bring your most comfortable shoes. The lake, countryside and Old Town are a photographer's dream. Begin by walking the "Kapellbrücke." Spanning the River Reuss, this wooden Chapel Bridge named for nearby St. Peter's Chapel was first erected a little way back in 1333. The Kapellbrücke provides 170 meters of Lucerne's flawless panorama, sitting on one of the world's most beautiful lakes, Lake Lucerne.

Lucerne offers over a dozen world-class museums including my favorite, the Rosengart. Their collection includes: Picasso, Klee, Matisse, Braque, Miro, Cezanne, Matisse, Leger, Bonnard, Monet, Kandinsky, Modigliani, Renoir, Chagall, Utrillo, Signac, Vuillard, and more. It is truly a unique treasure where I can spend two full



days touring slowly. Best hint here: ‘allow ample time for a leisurely tour.’

Lucerne’s museums always welcome all eyes of any age. So if you’re bringing the kids, absolutely be sure to visit The Museum of Transport. Here, you find superb examples of every conceivable machine and conveyance for road, rail, water, air & space inside a quite fun place.

As the holidays approach, be sure to explore wonderfully festive Christmas Markets for pure Swiss craft and flavor. Light Festival Lucerne “LILU” runs from 10 to 20 January.

Winter here is ideal for skiing, skating, outdoor fun and shopping for all ages. Year round, Lucerne’s events are always memorable from concerts to music at the KKL + exhibits. I look at it as art for the eyes, ears and soul.

International flights to/from Switzerland are easy because of the exceptionally well organized airports. Zurich is a mere hour train ride away. Swiss Rail is splendid fun and the very best way to go. Reliably one of the world’s best, it’s my favorite way to soak in the magnificence of nature, countryside, alps, lakes and why Switzerland is so truly picturesque. If you do as I do, plan ahead and arrange a First-Class Rail Pass for

your stay. Whether vacationing or on business, Swiss Rail cannot be equaled for ease and efficiency. Literally, it’s the most fun way to navigate the entire country. Be sure to go to www.myswitzerland.com It’s Switzerland at your fingertips for info, events, and the easiest way to begin planning.

If you appreciate suggestions, book the Hotel des Balances and you’ll find as I do it’s a perfect home away from home. From superb service to excellent value, it’s a warm, cozy gem. As always, I welcome your thoughts and impressions. So, whether it’s your first Swiss trip or a return, be sure to make time to explore Lucerne, one of the very most hospitable friendly places you’ll ever visit.

When you plan, be sure to visit:

www.balances.ch

www.myswitzerland.com

www.sbb.ch

www.luzern.com

www.museen-luzern.com

www.swiss.com

