

Life

TRAVEL

Check it out: Kameha Grand Zurich, Switzerland

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THE AUSTRALIAN
MAY 23, 2015 12:00AM



Kameha Grand, Zurich.

Zurich's newest hotel lies on a busy road just six minutes from the airport, but that's the only dull thing to say about the extremely diverting Kameha Grand.

The property features chocolate-box interiors courtesy of Dutch design maestro Marcel Wanders (think giant cowbell lobby lights), themed suites and Maserati airport transfers. It sits at the heart of a rapidly developing business precinct, yet guests are only moments from forest, lake and meadows and 15 minutes on a tram from downtown. There are even alpine views from the rooftop spa terrace.

Wanders has had a lot of fun with the hotel's 245 guestrooms and suites, taking every Swiss cliché you can think of — chocolate, those cowbells, and even the arcane art of scherenschnitte (paper cut out) — and giving them a contemporary twist.

The dark, leather-upholstered sliding door separating king bed from bathtub resembles a block of chocolate, the mini bar and coffee machine are hidden in a bank vault, the desk lamp is a cowbell while the back of the gold-flecked sofa is so like a Toblerone you might be tempted to have a nibble.

Sounds naff but it's not. The moody rooms, dubbed neo baroque by the hotel's marketing pundits, are stylish, incredibly quiet and high tech with push-button blinds, massive wall-mounted television (readily viewable from the bath in the deluxe category rooms) and free and fast Wi-Fi. Bathrooms are large and well designed with loads of shelf space, good lighting and full-sized Molton Brown toiletries (but let's lose the mirrored walls in the loo please).

Upstairs you'll find a state of the art gym, outdoor terrace and an all-white day spa featuring four treatment rooms and a slick relaxation lounge dominated by a wall of fire. Downstairs, smokers are well served with a club-style cigar lounge and an exotic shisha parlour. Meeting facilities include a dramatic plenary hall that might have been dressed by Lady Gaga.

DON'T MISS:

A drink in PureGold, where the walls are lined with shiny lucre and you can charge your phone via induction on the bar top. There's a DJ Thursdays and Fridays and pretty cupcakes and other goodies from the in-house pastry chef every afternoon.

DINING IN:

In the groovy L'Unico with its open kitchen and tiled tables you'll find house-made pasta and Italian-style tapas from chef Iginio Bruni. The tiny Yu Nijyo is fine dining and bookings are recommended.

DINING OUT:

Drop by Hiltl in the city, the world's oldest vegetarian restaurant. Try the no-meat tartare.

ASK THE CONCIERGE:

Both hotel restaurants (and most of Switzerland) are closed Sunday nights so if you're staying in, you'll need to grab a bar snack or order room service. And if it's the surf 'n' turf burger you're after (wagyu, lobster and truffle mayo) you might need to break into that mini bank vault to find the CHF79 (\$107) required.

CHECKING IN:

Opening rates from CHF199 (\$270) to August 15. More: www.kamehagrandzuerich.com.

ALSO TRY:

The Mira Hong Kong; Andaz Amsterdam, Prinsengracht; Mondrian South Beach Miami.

ACCOMODATION BUZZ

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- Le Meridien has opened a 350-room hotel in Ho Chi Minh City on the banks of the Saigon River featuring large guestrooms with separate sitting areas, and bathrooms fitted with deep tubs and rainforest showers; the contemporary lobby or “hub” embraces key elements from the Paris-born brand including a soundtrack from Nouvelle Vague and great coffee.
- South Africa’s Oldenburg Vineyards in Stellenbosch has transformed a 200-year-old Cape Dutch homestead into a private villa custom-made for families or groups of friends; set in established gardens with mountain views, The Homestead features six ensuite bedrooms, pool and the optional services of a butler, chef and driver.
- Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces is offering guests at its new 296-room hotel in Dubai an opening rate of AED800 (\$271) plus taxes; the opulent downtown bolthole affords great views of the Burj Khalifa and its dancing fountains and all the usual Taj accoutrements of 24/7 butlers, fine dining and a Jiva Spa.
- This month, Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort, opened at the height of the heady 80s, gets started on a \$40 million overhaul of all 294 guestrooms, including the creation of new suites and swim-out rooms; scheduled for completion early next year the renovation extends to the resort’s public areas, pools, gardens and golf club.









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