

Zurich, A Future-Proof Sustainability Plan

Capitalizing on its expertise as a banking city, as well as its central location and easy accessibility, Zurich is emerging as one of the most sustainable convention destinations on the globe.

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Zurich is considered the gateway to the Alps—in less than three hours, you can be skiing or exploring picturesque Swiss mountain scenery in towns like St. Moritz or Lucerne. Nature is certainly one draw to the compact metropolis, but so are its significant sectors like finance. Home to 500 financial institutions that are top-ranking in the banking world (including UBS, Credit Suisse, and Swiss Re), Zurich ranks most important financial centre in Europe after London.

Zurich may lead the list on the “Global Financial Centres Index” for mainland Europe, but it’s also developing into a European hub for life sciences, cleantech and ICT, drawing everyone from Google to Microsoft, IBM, and Disney Research Lab to set up headquarters in the city and pull talent from renowned institutions like the University of Zurich and ETH. Patrick Warnking, Country Director Google Switzerland, even said: *“We intend to expand further in Zurich.”*

In addition, the Greater Zurich Area and “Crypto Valley” (Blockchain, Bitcoin, and Initial Coin Offering are hot topics at the moment) are transforming the city into a serious FinTech hub. Prof. Dr Stefan Launer, Senior VP Science and

Technology, Sonova Group, provides further proof of the city’s growing sectors and knowledge capital, saying: *“Zurich is our strongest innovation centre by far.”*

Zurich Fast Facts

- Zurich Airport was ranked No. 1 in Europe (2019)
- Direct flights to more than 60 countries and 170 destinations
- 15 minutes from Zurich Airport’s baggage claim to the city centre by train
- Unique venues accommodating 10 to more than 1,500 delegates
- 592 start-ups in 2018 and 133 new patents per year
- 32 Nobel Prize winners

360-DEGREE SUSTAINABILITY

Experience sustainability. This is the motto Zurich both champions and actively encourages. As one of the most sustainable convention destinations in the world, ranking eighth in the Global Destination

Sustainability Index (GDS) in 2021 and second in the Smart City Ranking 2021, Zurich is proving its expertise in the realm of sustainability, particularly in the meetings sector. The city is laying the framework for sustainable events through climate-neutral activities, sustainability-certified hotels, and a streamlined and effective transportation network.

During the recent The Green Mile event, 40 planners from Germany, Austria and Switzerland experienced the city’s sustainability practices first-hand, starting with the train ride to Zurich (an option half of the attendees took), which saved 32% in carbon emissions. One of the challenges was encouraging train travel from Germany and Austria, but Ricarda Jacomet, event organizer and project manager at Zürich Tourism, Convention Bureau, says the cost and amount of planning time paid off in the end.

GOING THE GREEN MILE

Even for those who flew to the event, they still saw sustainable measures in place at Zurich Airport, one of the greenest in the world, with a sustainability commitment that includes flushing toilets with rainwater, solar cells, geothermal energy for heating



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and cooling, and R&D for noise- and air-cleansing activities—all part of the plan to reduce climate emissions to net-zero by 2050.

During one of the keynote speeches, the speaker even highlighted how you can be sustainable by flying: for example, by taking direct flights instead of stopovers (most fuel is consumed during take-off and landing) or by booking a flight on a newer plane that produces less carbon emissions.

The event took place at the opened congress centre Kongresshaus Zürich, on the lake, which is in the centre of the city, making it easy to walk to the venue. The congress centre also focuses on vegetarian and vegan menus, and has enacted green measures like cooling and heating regulated by lake water and

compensation of unavoidable CO₂ emissions. By something as simple as serving a vegetarian dish twice during the stay, costs were reduced by 33% and carbon emissions by 12%.

At the Umwelt Arena, the world’s first plus-energy (or zero-energy) house, keynote speakers like Sarah Sommerauer (2bdifferent) and Florian Haselmayer (AMEX Meetings & Events) shared tips for sustainable even planning, and activities focused on local attractions, like urban swimming on the river Limmat. *“The participants of such events don’t just want to be fed information – they would like to contribute something themselves to make the event more sustainable, or even to leave a positive legacy for the host destination,”* Jacomet explains. *“Examples could be collecting garbage, rebuilding something or making it new and attractive, baking*

bread for the homeless and distributing it, or promoting biodiversity by building a gypsum drywall somewhere.”

As the meetings infrastructure intertwines with the fabric of the city and its overall goal to reach smart status, events like The Green Mile show how important a role associations and attendees have in impacting Zurich’s sustainably-focused future—starting with the present.

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