



NEW BÜRGENSTOCK RESORT

WEIGHT LOSS

LAKE LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND

EUROPE'S MOST ANTICIPATED OPENING OF THE YEAR

Renowned in Switzerland since the late 19th century and spectacularly revived this year after a £440 million revamp, Bürgenstock is so dramatically located, looking down on Lake Lucerne, that approaching it will be a thrill whenever you arrive. But on a winter's day at dusk, it is utterly enthralling. After the half-hour lake crossing, step off the boat straight into one of the little wooden carriages of the funicular railway, built in 1888. As the train slowly climbs, mist swirls and the snow-laden fir trees become ever denser. At the top, the vintage-poster-lined station opens directly onto the road along which the four hotels of the resort are set: the glass-and-steel Bürgenstock, partially cantilevered over the edge; the old-world Palace; the cosy 12-room Taverne 1879, and – largest of them all – the 160-room, state-of-the-art Waldhotel medi-spa. Staying at any of them gets you access to the knockout new Alpine Spa. Ranged across three floors, with floor-to-ceiling windows emphasising its mountain-eyrie magnificence, this 10,000-square-metre world of wood and slate redefines wellness design. Whereas most spas look inwards, focussing on the treatment areas, here it is all about looking out, appreciating the incredible setting. Cosy spots do exist and rustic armchairs encircle log fires. But the architecture is dedicated to letting you draw in those spirit-lifting views whether you're sweating in a sauna or steam room (some are women-only), stretched out by the indoor lake-water pool, or swimming out into the best heated outdoor infinity pool in the Alps following a hot-stone massage or La Prairie facial. Experiencing all this is exhilarating. ('As it should be! After all, this is my 15th spa,' says

managing director Bruno Schopfer, the wellness pioneer who opened the celebrated Oriental Spa in Bangkok in 1992). Yet it is arguably the Waldhotel health and medical centre that is the real game-changer. You can come here just to rest, detox or shift pounds, to pad the corridors in your robe and slippers, going from the top-floor library to a deep-tissue massage to a -40°C ice room (excellent for reducing all kinds of inflammation, eliminating joint pain and aiding weight loss). But the Waldhotel is also somewhere to turn for serious medical care or rehabilitation treatment. Director and internal-medicine specialist Dr Michael Brabetz has a staff of four doctors working full time, including two devoted to dermatology and orthopaedics. On one floor all 23 rooms are equipped with hospital-grade beds and a nurse is on call 24 hours. Thanks to an insurance-based national health system that pays for alternative as well as mainstream treatment, along with affluent residents who demand the best, Switzerland has an almost unparalleled reputation for medical excellence. And this is now the best place to access that.

INSIDER TIP The Bürgenstock hotel's three restaurants – the farm-to-table Oak Grill, Lebanese and Persian Sharq, and pan-Asian Spices – aren't going to help you slim down. The safest bet for losing weight is the Waldhotel, which offsets the super-healthy menu in its restaurant with a bar where you can also have a glass of wine.

BOOK IT Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.co.uk/condenast) offers a four-night Wellness Experience from £1,199 per person, including flights, transfers, breakfast, spa access and about £75 spa credit.

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