

New openings

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Manhattan's hospitality scene is tempting back guests. We profile three new hotels at which to kip.

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Spanish flair

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July/August 2022

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A monthly round-up of all you need



INVENTORY: Travel

Taking to the waters Baden

The Swiss city of Baden is named after its baths but only recently has it embraced its curative waters and revived the riverfront. We dive in to find out how.

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Some like it hot; some like it cold. The postcard-pretty city of Baden in Switzerland offers both: a cool, rapid-flowing river runs through it while warm geothermal waters bubble up from beneath. "The hot water will come no matter what," says Andriu Deflorin, co-founder of Bagno Popolare, Baden's independent bathing advocacy association. "We have to use it." He is bobbing in a stone thermal bath on the banks of the Limmat below a streetscape of townhouses and grape

vines. Technically, he's in Ennetbaden, a village of 3,600 on the eastern bank of the river. It's a suburb of the city of Baden, home to 19,400. As an organisation, Bagno Popolare is partly responsible for the return of public bathing in a city named for it. While Baden's bathing history dates back to Roman times its fortunes have ebbed and flowed. Its heyday was in the early 20th century, when people would flock here to sample the area's supposedly curative waters. Eventually, though, Baden's baths drifted into obscurity and the last one closed in 2012 after decades of neglect.

Now, though, the city has returned to the water. Three new thermal baths, two public and one private, opened in 2021, all of them a 10-minute walk from Baden's main train station.

The two public baths, Heisse Brunnen Baden and Heisse Brunnen Ennetbaden, face one another across the Limmat. For reasons that few people remember (something to do with tax law) the village of Ennetbaden separated from Baden 200 years ago and a friendly competition persists. Baden's bath is bigger and no stranger to a popped cork or late-night dip. Meanwhile, the Ennetbaden side is arguably prettier and set under old chestnut trees, as well as being sheltered from the river promenade. Loyalists tend to favour one or the other. "Our bath is better," says one bather, when pressed. Luckily the city is big enough for a little friendly rivalry.

Sitting above the two public baths is the Fortyseven private bath. Designed by Mario Botta, the complex is a draw for tourists and architecture enthusiasts alike. The stone structure crowns the revived Bäderquartier (bathing quarter) with pools that glow by night and steam by day. It is a 160 metre-long, CHF190m (€185m) investment by a local foundation snappily titled Stiftung Gesundheitsförderung Bad Zurzach + Baden. The name Fortyseven comes from the temperature of the mineral-rich water, which is accessible for a fee of CHF39 (€38). The two smaller public baths are free to access.



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1. Fortyseven thermal bath
2. Surf slalom on the Limmat

This spread

1. 'Bäderquartier' (bathing quarter) area in Baden and Ennetbaden, with new thermal baths

Baden's waterways have not always been a site of leisure. The Limmat river once powered Baden's industrial ambitions, giving rise to companies such as engineering firm Brown, Boveri & Cie (now ABB). In turn the electricity industry boomed and firms such as GE and Axpo made Baden their Swiss base. Today the city's focus has shifted from heavy industry to quality of life. In 2020, Baden won the Swiss Wakker prize for urban reinvention, in recognition of its well-designed public space. Reconnecting the city to the water is next phase of development.

"Finally, we can fully enjoy this heritage again, as the spa area has been returned to the public," says Baden's mayor, Markus Schneider. "*Einzigartig*," is a term he uses often. It means

"unique", "unrivalled" and "singularly excellent" all in one neat word. And he's right. While many Swiss cities have cleaned up their waterways to create spaces where you can cool off in the summer, Baden's warm waters are a year-round draw.

The development of the new baths brings people together in a shared space but it took time for it the idea to take root. After years of hosting pop-up baths, Bagno Popolare ignited public imagination and inspired permanent ones. "A big difference is that up there," says Deflorin, nodding to the private bath complex, "people can be private but here they have to get along – and there are all kinds of people from all over the world." Despite some friction, there's enough demand for both public and private bathing facilities here.

Both Heisse Brunnen baths were approved and financed by the public. Befitting Swiss direct democracy, Ennetbaden residents held a public vote on theirs in the village square. They approved the public bath nearly



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1. Kayaker on the Limmat
2. Heisse Brunnen Ennetbaden
3. Geothermal water
4. Baden's mayor, Markus Schneider
5. Swimmers at the slalom



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Residents held a vote in the village square. They approved the public bath nearly unanimously, waving voting cards in the air



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unanimously, waving voting cards in the air. Baden followed in a slightly more formal fashion when council members gave the nod, 82 votes to eight.

If the baths draw a diverse public, so does the river. Here you'll spot a slalom course dotted with kayakers and surfers. The course was designed by forestry engineer Tom Hänggeli, who kayaks on it most days. "A lot of people think it's natural but it's not. It's completely man-made," he says. He has tended the area for more than 30 years and has seen watersports boom.

You don't have to get wet to enjoy Baden's waters, however. The Oederlin Areal, a former ironworks, houses artist studios, small design firms and craft brewers. At its edge is what's known simply as "the island", an almost hidden idyll atop a dam in the Limmat. Here you'll find a tasteful mishmash of Vitra, Hay and Embru outdoor furniture, gifted by a resident furniture dealer. On summer nights Oederlin tenants, kayakers, bathers and lucky invitees barbecue in the shade as the river rushes by. — ☺

Baden and Ennetbaden address book:

To bathe:

Fortyseven Baden

Located a 10-minute walk from Baden SBB station, which is 15 minutes by train from Zürich. fortyseven.ch

The Heisse Brunnen Baden

Lies directly below Fortyseven on the Limmatpromenade. The Heisse Brunnen Ennetbaden is directly across the river. bagnopopolare.ch

To eat:

Il Brunello Baden

Perfect for a morning coffee or a sundown spritz, seated on cheery coloured chairs. ilbrunello.ch

Brasserie Schwanen Ennetbaden

A stunning Jugendstil dining room from 1897 turns out solid Swiss classics. brasserie-schwanen.ch

Pepe Nero Ennetbaden

A well-turned-out Italian features excellent pasta and grilled meats served under vast red parasols. pepenero.ch

To stay:

Limmathof Baden and Ennetbaden

The original grand hotel building from 1834 is across the Limmat from its more recent extension. limmathof.ch