



GRÜEZI VON ZÜRICH!

HOW about Zürich as a gay holiday destination? Europe's financial capital hosted the Zürich CSD Gay Pride on the 28th June, and Alex Finean-Liáng was there to find out what Switzerland's biggest city had to offer.

Christopher Street Day commemorates Stonewall in 1969, when New York gays on Christopher Street fought back against police oppression; it is what many consider the birth of gay rights and gay political resistance. The event had a political flavour, kicking off at 1pm in Gänzer Platz with an hour of speeches by prominent Swiss gay rights activists and politicians. The crowd of about 5,000 cheered enthusiastically with each speech.

The theme of the 2003 CSD was 'Hand in Hand durch Stadt und Land' (Hand in Hand through City and Countryside) – reflecting that gay rights are not just for the gays and lesbians in big cities, but, also, for those who live in rural Switzerland. Each Kanton (state) in Switzerland has a high degree of autonomy, hence it is no surprise that it is the Kantons of Zürich and Geneva which have Switzerland's most progressive gay laws including full partnership rights.

Swiss summers can be ferocious. At the height of summer, with mid-afternoon temperatures touching 35°C, the march took almost two hours to complete and it did get extremely tiring towards the end. Nonetheless, the atmosphere was electrifying and I could not think of a better walking tour to see the best of Zürich. Huge crowds lined the route, taking us through the city's downtown main shopping district. On the march were gay and lesbian organisations from all over Switzerland and all the Swiss newspapers and TV stations were there providing headline coverage.

On sale on the march were the CSD badges for only 10 Swiss Francs (£4.55), which got you into the party, held in Zeughausareal Marktplatz. This arrangement helped attract more to the march, as Dieter who has also been to a number of London gay Prides explained; "The CSD march is just as, if not more, important as the party. In London last year, there were all these English people who

missed the march and went directly to Hackney and got pissed there – what kind of political statement was that?" The party had a small stage, open-air disco, food vendors, stalls representing various Swiss gay and lesbian groups and a big exhibition detailing the history of gay and lesbian rights in Switzerland. Zürich CSD is a major event on the Swiss calendar and the event this year attracted top sponsors like Swiss International Airlines, Renault, Miller and Nivea. How about British Airways sponsor the next London Gay Pride?

The Zürich gay scene has much to offer. My favourite has got to be The Dynasty Club (Zähringerstr. 11, www.dynastyclub.ch), a bar and club that has a range of cabaret acts, including 'erotic shows', and a DJ. The Cranberry Bar (Metzgergasse 3, www.cranberry.ch) is sleek, but with the summer heat, all the beautiful Swiss boys spilled into the street. Barfüesser (Spitalgasse 14, www.barfuesser.ch) promises the best Sushi in Zürich, but be warned that (like most things in Zürich) it costs about 2-3 times more than in London and the bar was so hot it felt more like a sauna. Labor Bar in Technopark (Schiffbaustrasse 3, www.laborbar.ch) is one of the classier bars and has a gay tea dance on Sundays and is about a fifteen minute tram ride west. Technopark features one of the most popular clubs, Labyrinth (Pfungweidstrasse 70, www.laby.ch), that sent a massive float to the parade full of leather men pumping some really hard techno. Add to that, a number of saunas, sex shops, gay 'beaches' by Zürich Lake, and some very good shopping (albeit expensive), and Zürich gay boys know how to have a good time.

Zürich is a beautiful city with loads to offer the gay tourist. The only drawback seems to be the prices. Zürich or not, paying 6 Swiss Francs (£2.70) for a diet coke is daylight robbery anywhere else but here. Everything is expensive, but hey, this is, after all, Switzerland! Zurich is a rather small place, interesting enough to keep you fascinated on a week-end break, but probably not for much longer.

Official Zürich CSD website: www.csdzh.ch

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