



THE SWISS ALPS WELLNESS RETREAT LIKE NO OTHER, RESORT BAD RAGAZ

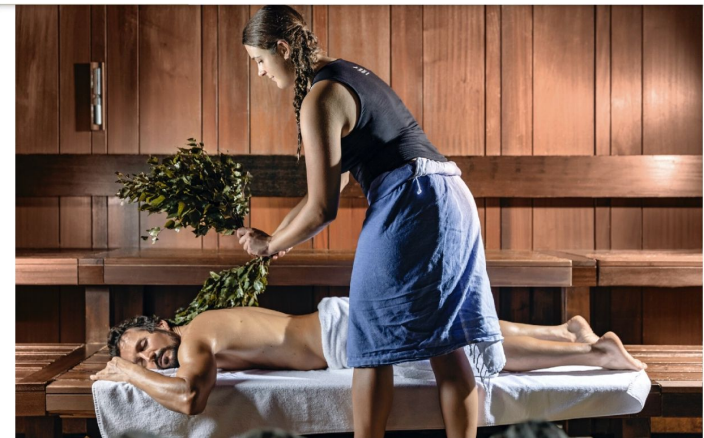
HOME / STAY / THE SWISS ALPS WELLNESS RETREAT LIKE NO OTHER, RESORT BAD RAGAZ



By Elyse Glickman



Some travelers head to Switzerland for skiing, mountaineering and outdoor adventure, while others come for idyllic scenery, hearty cuisine, history and culture. Given that Switzerland's spas intersect all of these realms, an itinerary without a spa visit, or stay at a luxury hotel known for its spa facilities, would be unthinkable. The potent mix of naturally sourced spring water pools, skilled wellness practitioners, top tier beauty products and garden-fresh snacks is not just irresistible but thoroughly enriching.



For all of these reasons and more, towns like Interlachen, Gstaad, St. Moritz and Lucerne are synonymous with glamorous Alpine wellness retreats, fully appointed with sumptuous five-star properties and nearby skiing. However, because they are so internationally renowned, it's always good to have an alternative that's just a touch off the radar, and yet beloved by locals and a handful of travelers in the know. Bad Ragaz, an hour from Zurich's airport by train, fits the bill and is astonishingly easy to find once you know where it is. The train station is right across the street from a complex of four- and five- star hotels, a public thermal bath, state-of-the-art med spa, casino, theater and restaurants tastefully arrayed over a number of acres.



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While Bad Ragaz may not be as familiar to American spa enthusiasts, it's been a best-kept secret among savvy Zurich-ites wanting to avoid the international crowds in Gstaad and Lucerne. In fact, it's been an actual wellspring of healing since 1242, thanks to the Benedictine monks who discovered the soothing properties of the mineral-rich hot spring waters. The delightfully landscaped complex adjoins the storybook setting of the village of Bad Ragaz and is a short bike ride or hike from the childhood home of the young girl who inspired Johanna Spyri's classic children's novel "Heidi."

Entering the resort through main road is a little like seeing a treasure chest open to reveal gems of whimsical landscaping and modern sculptures. This road leads to the free-standing but connected hotels: The Grand Hotel Quellenhof, The Grand Hotel Hof Ragaz, Palais Ragaz (a Relais & Chateau property dating to 1840), cozy four-star Hotel Schloss Waterstein, and residential-styled Spa Suites for those getting treatments at Clinic Bad Ragaz, which on January 1, 2020, merged with the Clinics of Valens. The collaboration expands an already impressive roster of cosmetic, dermatological and medical services offered at Clinic Bad Ragaz since 2014. Guests can now book treatments in the specialties of sports medicine, dermatology, nutrition and metabolic optimizing, fertility, dentistry, sleep diagnostics, internal-oncological treatments and musculoskeletal rehabilitation.



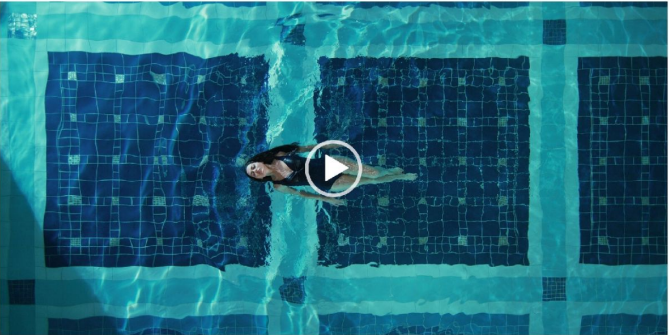
Arguably, the jewel in the Bad Ragaz hotel crown is Grand Hotel Quellenhof, reopened in July 2019 after a \$45.5 million remodel. The results make it sparkle like fine Champagne, down to bubble-like art glass light fixtures outlining the lobby's central spiral staircase. Like the motif designed into the carpets, the eye swirls out to catch luminous glimpses of its restaurants, lounges, retail and paths leading to its in-house boutique spa and Tamina Therme—the public baths that make up the cornerstone of the Bad Ragaz resort.



The revitalized hotel houses 98 opulently decorated rooms and suites inspired by the elements (fire, water, air, and Earth) along with sumptuous bathrooms rendered in natural stone. The same 36.5^o thermal waters that fill up the various spas and pools at Tamina Therme also finds their way into the public and private amenities within the property. The 6,050 square meters Thermal Spa in the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz - which features a separate entry for celebrities, religious guests and others requiring more privacy - offers spa enthusiasts an exclusive of massages, facials, and other services designed around the body-temperature thermal water. Naturally, the spa boutique sells top tier skin care and cosmetic brands from around the world, as well as up-and-coming new boutique brands and products.



While adult Quellenhof guests can luxuriate in the Baroque “Helena Bath,” kids up to age 16 traveling with them can make the spa lifestyle their own inside the 550 square-meter family spa, devised by interior designer Claudio Carbone (with a shout-out to Heidi, of course) and opened in 2018. Parents or grandparents feeling generous can also sign their 7 to 12-year-olds up for age-appropriate beauty and restorative treatments such as “Bling Bling Fingers” and “Happy Feet” manis and pedis, and a “Funny Choco” back massage involving actual Swiss chocolate.



The 7,300 square-meter Tamina Therme public baths (taminatherme.ch/en) is offered free of charge to all resort guests, and is accessible by numerous outdoor garden paths, indoor walkways and elevators. The soaring, cathedral-esque 20 meter-high structure was conceptualized by Zurich-based [Smolenicky & Partner Architektur](#) in 2009, based on their winning proposal for a design competition on the area’s revival. The form of the building volume emerges from the enclosing of exterior spaces, while the interiors are supported by 115 columns. The monumental structure is stepped back and opens out to expose open air baths and a sunbathing lawn, offset by the wooded slopes of the mountain ridge. The view extends past other buildings on the grounds even as intentionally planted thickets of trees ensure privacy.

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Although Tamina Therme’s sauna features and sports pool are reserved for adults, kids are welcome into the indoor and outdoor pool areas when accompanied by adults. Given that this facility is frequented by members of the community, as well as weekenders from Zurich and other nearby towns, it provides a fascinating window into how the Swiss integrate wellness into their everyday lifestyle. Resort General Manager Marco R. Zanolari adds that this paradise was recently expanded with rustic-chic Ragaz Sauna Village, a resort-within-a-resort offering an innovative mineral infusion ritual involving salt containing magnesium, calcium and lithium.



Like any high-end resort, Bad Ragaz offers numerous western and international dining options on the property, and the nearby village has several local pubs and traditional regional-Swiss restaurants. However, the Grand Hotel Quellenhof’s Memories by Sven stands as the resort’s marquee dining experience. Sven Wassmer, who earned his Michelin Stars by age 33, shapes it as a true “dinner-and-a-show” experience where he and his young synchronized team sculpt every conversation-starting course of a degustation menu under his “leaf to tip” philosophy in an expansive open concept kitchen.



When a course arrives at the table, Wassmer explains how a particular dish was inspired by his childhood memories (hence, the restaurant’s name), reflecting the future of Swiss cuisine, or how the ages-old soils and springs from nearby farms beget such rich tasting vegetables and herbs. Sommelier (and wife) Amanda Wassmer-Bulglin follows by adeptly pairing each course with a Swiss wine or artisanal cocktail. Verve by Sven, the casual poolside dining venue, is a little more straightforward and relaxed. However, imaginative dishes and enchanting low-alcohol cocktails reflect Wassmer’s uncanny ability to create spa cuisine that also happens to be exciting, flavorful and memorable.



Back on dry land, a Bad Ragaz vacation can be rounded out with on-site cultural events, golf, mini-golf, casino, complementary bike rentals and a chalet-inspired Children’s Villa. The home of the real life “Heidi” can be reached via a hike (as Heidi herself did), bicycle, or car.

To learn more visit: [The Grand Hotel Quellenhof](#) and [Clinic Bad Ragaz](#).

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Los Angeles-based Elyse Glickman covers a variety of subjects under the “travel” banner, including food + beverage, wellness and family travel. She has visited 60 countries on assignment for Global Traveler, Travel Age West, Intermezzo, Taste & Travel, Good Food (U.K.), La Repubblica (Italy), Harper’s Bazaar, Lucire (New Zealand/Australia, as U.S. West Editor), C-Suite Quarterly and In The Mix.