Smart meetings
July/August 2026

WHAT LUXURY LEAVES BEHIND

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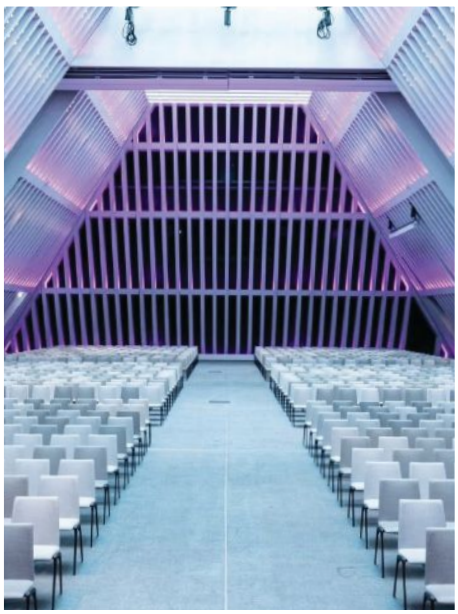
Greater Colorado Springs • Greater DC / Virginia • Central / Northern California • Central Florida

Switzerland

Four destinations, countless possibilities

By Kate Zaliznock



The Circle Convention Center

I arrived in Zurich two days before the 2026 Switzerland Meeting Trophy officially began, which turned out to be less of a scheduling cushion than a revelation. Switzerland is often praised for what it does efficiently: trains arrive, luggage appears and meetings begin when they are supposed to. But Zurich reminded me that efficiency is only part of the appeal.

That idea stayed with me throughout the week. The annual Switzerland Meeting Trophy, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, took planners from around the world across four distinctly different destinations—from Zurich to Crans-Montana, Montreux and Geneva. The competition itself was memorable, but what stuck with me long after the scores were tallied was how naturally Switzerland shifted personalities from one stop to the next. Medieval streets gave way to alpine villages. Lakeside promenades became cosmopolitan boulevards. Every destination felt entirely different, yet each was connected by one of the world's most efficient transportation systems.

For meeting planners, that's more than convenient. It's an invitation to think bigger.

ZURICH SETS THE PACE

Many international visitors treat Zurich as a gateway city, but it's very much worth the stay. The city strikes a rare balance between financial powerhouse and cultural capital, where sleek office towers coexist with centuries-old architecture, lakefront parks and one of Europe's most walkable city centers.

Its meetings infrastructure mirrors that versatility. **Kongresshaus Zürich** anchors the city's convention offerings with more than 57,000 sq. ft. of event space, over 20 meeting rooms and capacity for up to 4,500 attendees, all overlooking Lake Zurich. Just minutes from the airport, **The Circle Convention Center** expands those possibilities with more than 30,000 sq. ft. of event space, a convention hall for up to 1,500 guests and direct access to **Hyatt Regency Zurich Airport The Circle** (my home base in Zurich) and **Hyatt Place Zurich Airport The Circle**.

The city's hotels reflect a similarly broad range of personalities. **Park Hyatt Zurich** brings understated luxury to the financial district, while **Mandarin Oriental Savoy**, **Zurich** combines historic elegance with a prime address on Paradeplatz. Along the Limmat River, **Zurich Marriott Hotel** caters to larger groups, while **Ameron Zürich Bellerive au Lac** offers boutique charm on the lakefront. Overlooking it all, **The Dolder Grand** feels like a city resort, proving attendees don't have to choose between urban convenience and restorative surroundings.

FROM CITY STREETS TO ALPINE PEAKS

One of Switzerland's greatest strengths is how dramatically the landscape changes without requiring a day of travel. Within a few hours, Zurich's polished streets give way to Crans-Montana, where mountain air, chalet architecture and panoramic Alpine scenery create an entirely different atmosphere.

For incentive groups and executive retreats, destinations like this naturally encourage attendees to slow down. **Guarda Golf Hotel & Residences**, where I had the pleasure of staying, embodies that philosophy. The intimate luxury property offers just

Guarda Golf Hotel & Residences

Team North America

25 guest rooms and residences alongside 3,434 sq. ft. of meeting space, providing for exclusive experiences that don't sacrifice functionality.

Even arriving becomes part of the event. A gondola ride to **Cry d'Er Club d'Altitude** isn't simply transportation; it's an experience that builds anticipation before guests ever reach lunch or an afternoon reception. Few destinations blur the line between transfer and attraction quite like Switzerland.

LIFE ALONG THE LAKE

Montreux offers yet another change of pace. Set along Lake Geneva, the city is effortlessly elegant, balancing Belle Époque architecture, palm-lined promenades and a relaxed rhythm that invites attendees to put away their phones for a while.

Fairmont Le Montreux Palace has welcomed travelers for more than a century and remains one of Switzerland's signature meeting hotels. Its 236 guest rooms and 40,000 sq. ft. of event space allow it to host programs of impressive scale, while the lakeside setting ensures coffee breaks come with memorable views.

Just a short walk away, **Mona Montreux** offers a more contemporary complement, with flexible meeting space and a central location that puts groups within easy reach of the city's waterfront, restaurants and cultural attractions.

It's easy to understand why incentive groups gravitate here. Some destinations require elaborate programming to create memorable moments. In Montreux, simply stepping outside often accomplishes the same thing.

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Geneva provides a fitting finale. Home to international organizations, luxury watchmakers and groundbreaking scientific research, it blends diplomacy, innovation and hospitality into a destination unlike anywhere else in Switzerland.

Hotel President Wilson reflects that global outlook with nearly 20,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including a ballroom accommodating up to 700 attendees. Nearby, **Hotel N'vY** offers a more contemporary personality for smaller gatherings.

Beyond the hotels, Geneva's off-site experiences stand out because they are authentic to the city itself. Groups can explore the mysteries of particle physics at **CERN Science Gateway**, discover Swiss watchmaking traditions through hands-on experiences at **Initium**, enjoy Michelin-starred cuisine at **Domaine de Châteauvieux** or gather beside the lake at **Restaurant Hôtel du Parc des Eaux-Vives**.

Rather than feeling like attractions created for visitors, these experiences offer a genuine introduction to what makes Geneva distinctive.

DESIGNED TO CONNECT

Some destinations excel at conventions. Others shine as incentive escapes. Switzerland quietly refuses to choose. Over the course of a single itinerary, planners can move from a sophisticated financial center to an Alpine retreat, continue to a lakeside resort town and conclude in one of the world's most international cities—all without the logistical hurdles that often accompany multi-destination programs.

That's Switzerland's real advantage. Not simply its mountains, its lakes or its luxury hotels, impressive though they all are. It's the way those experiences fit together so naturally that the journey becomes just as memorable as the destinations themselves.

After nearly a week crossing the country, I came away convinced that Switzerland's greatest asset isn't any single property or postcard-worthy view. It's the remarkable ease with which it allows planners to create programs that feel varied, immersive and seamlessly connected from beginning to end.

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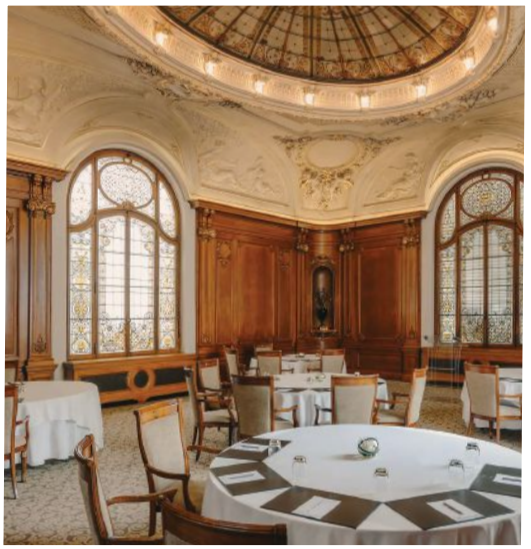

Fairmont Le Montreux Palace

Switzerland Meeting Trophy teams depart from Cry d'Er Club d'Altitude