

# ZÜRICH SWITZERLAND

**Preface:** Showing a dynamism not often associated with Switzerland, the city of Zürich is attracting a new breed of start-ups with its sturdy business infrastructure and an impressive quality of life.

**Population:** 1.2 million  
**Key trades:** financial and service sectors  
**Time to register a company:** between 1 and 3 weeks  
**Annual hours of sunshine:** 1,500  
**International flights:** 166

**Quote:** *‘If you have a good idea it’s easy to find funding and get your business off the ground’*

Zürich, the lakeside city famous for banking and confectionery, has experienced something of a metamorphosis. It has always been a popular hub due to the ease of doing business, low tax rates and security but change is in the air. A vibrant start-up culture is putting paid to the conception that all things Swiss are a bit dull.

While the world struggled after the 2008 financial crisis, Switzerland was busy attracting bright minds and innovative entrepreneurs. ETH, one of the world’s leading universities for technology and natural sciences, played a major role in this.

“University research projects often develop into interesting businesses and Walt Disney set up its research lab close to the campus to profit from a creative workforce,” says Michel Bachmann, co-founder of Impact Hub Zürich, a company supporting entrepreneurs.

The city’s government takes a keen interest in promoting an innovative environment and supports young businesses. “If

you have a good idea it’s easy to find funding and get your business off the ground,” says Benno Seiler, deputy director of urban planning in Zürich.

The city’s can-do spirit coupled with great services and connectivity also appeals to global ventures. Google and IBM are just a couple of the behemoth multinationals that have pitched their tents here. “Zürich has one of the best infrastructures for business: the banks, the post, the trains, the trams and the proximity to the airport make this the ideal place to set up your headquarters,” says Chandra Kurt, a Zürich-based wine consultant.

Zürich consistently ranks as one of the world’s most liveable places, not least because of its proximity to nature. Besides the choice of museums, galleries, theatres and open-air dining options, the city’s charm is most apparent in its off-the-beaten-track venues. Everything is accessible on foot or by bike.

The canton of Zürich generates 20 per cent of the national GDP and its growth poses challenges – mostly due to space. “Zürich has changed greatly,” says Daniel Freitag, co-founder of Freitag bags. “There is hardly any affordable space available for those who need more than just a desk. Still, as long as entrepreneurs have a good team and are well connected, Zürich is a great place to start a business.”

In the years ahead, Zürich must find creative solutions to sustain the good life. If the city can maintain its mix of understated chic, bustling business and effortless efficiency, this lakeside hub will continue to feel like the place to be. — (M)



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01 Wohnbedarf furniture store  
02 Christian Hunziker, co-owner of menswear store Pelikamo



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03 Andrea Wiegelmann of Swiss publishing firm Niggli  
04 The city’s efficient tram network  
05 Zürich is known for its *Badi*: open-air bathing areas usually with a bar attached to them, found along Lake Zürich and the Limmat River