

The New York Times

Home & Garden

- HOME
- JOB MARKET
- REAL ESTATE
- AUTOMOBILES
- NEWS
 - International
 - National
 - Politics
 - Business
 - Technology
 - Science
 - Health
 - Sports
 - New York Region
 - Education
 - Weather
 - Obituaries
 - NYT Front Page
 - Corrections

- OPINION
 - Editorials/Op-Ed
 - Readers' Opinions

- FEATURES
 - Arts
 - Books
 - Movies
 - Travel
 - Dining & Wine
 - Home & Garden
 - Columns
 - Fashion & Style
 - New York Today
 - Crossword/Games
 - Cartoons
 - Magazine
 - Week in Review
 - Photos
 - College
 - Learning Network

- SERVICES
 - Archive
 - Classifieds
 - Personals
 - Theater Tickets
 - Premium Products
 - NYT Store
 - NYT Mobile
 - E-Cards & More
 - About NYTDigital
 - Jobs at NYTDigital
 - Online Media Kit
 - Our Advertisers

- MEMBER CENTER
 - Your Profile
 - E-Mail
 - Preferences
 - News Tracker
 - Premium Account
 - Site Help
 - Privacy Policy
- NEWSPAPER
 - Home Delivery
 - Customer Service
 - Electronic Edition
 - Media Kit
 - Text Version

SEARCH [Go to Advanced Search/Archive](#)

Past 30 Days

HARRISdirect Planning And \$100 credit

Invest with Harris

All Across Switzerland, Fresh Design

By FRED BERNSTEIN

FOR years, friends had been telling me that Switzerland was the place to see great architecture, especially the work of Peter Zumthor, whose small buildings in the area of Chur, 70 miles southeast of Zurich, are, they said, too subtle to be understood from photos.

So last month I flew to Zurich, rented a car (\$400 a week from Hertz) and headed to Vals, a small town at the end of a mountain road lined at this time of year with waterfalls. There I found Mr. Zumthor's most famous building, a spa called Therme Vals (www.therme-vals.ch), which is a series of hot and cold pools in boldly geometric rooms seemingly carved from thick layers of local slate. The spa can be experienced only in a bathing suit; a day pass is \$18 and includes a book of black-and-white photos (ask at the desk).

Advertisement

Independence
And \$100 credit

Invest with Harrisdirect

HARRISdirect

Armed with a list of Mr. Zumthor's buildings, available by e-mail from his office (arch@zumthor.ch), I drove next to the nearby town of Sumvitg, with a cylindrical wooden chapel that is always open and well worth the drive up a winding road.

If Switzerland was already an architectural wonderland, Swiss Expo.02 makes it even more so. (The fair will close on Oct. 20, and some of the world's most innovative buildings will be torn down.) To reach the

Expo, which is on three lakes in northeastern Switzerland, I drove through the Alps. Switzerland's well-marked highways and a map I picked up at Switzerland Tourism, 608 Fifth Avenue (49th Street) in Manhattan, made the trip easy. The only problem I encountered was parking: the Expo was designed to be served mainly by boat and train.

The first building I saw, by the Viennese architecture firm Coop Himmelblau, was like an apparition: three giant towers and a metal roof cantilevered hundreds of yards over a pastoral lake. "It wasn't easy convincing them to spend millions of dollars to build a roof for fish," said one Expo official, Pidu Russek.

The Swiss spent \$900 million to build the Expo — almost \$128 for every man, woman and child in the country. It is spread across four towns: Biel (known as Bienne in French), Murten (Morat), Neuchâtel and Yverdon-les-Bains. The organizers invented a word, arteplage (art beach) to describe the settings. The arteplage in Biel, an industrial town that is home to Swatch, features pavilions designed to make the Swiss ask difficult questions about their country's future. Everywhere, the Swiss make wood seem like a cutting-edge material. In Neuchâtel, a 90-foot wooden sphere called the Palais de l'Équilibre, by Groupe H architects, contains an exhibition on climate change. Murten, a well-preserved medieval town, is the setting for a dozen provocative buildings by Jean Nouvel, including one gallery that looks like a pile of logs. (If you go, I suggest dinner lakeside at Le Vieux Manoir; the equivalent of about \$120 for two and worth every Swiss franc.)

The most exclusive hotel room in Switzerland this summer is a single, \$200-a-night pod on a dock at the edge of the much publicized Blur building in Yverdon-les-Bains (60 days advance booking required at www.everland.ch). There is also the Golden Arch Hotel outside Estavayer-le-Lac, owned by McDonald's, which is under \$100 and convenient to the sites (www.goldenarchhotel.com). In contrast, the Golden Tulip Hotel in Biel (www.goldentulip.com) costs twice as much and is drab and lacks air-conditioning.

A three-day pass to the fair is \$75 (www.expo02.ch), but three days isn't enough. If you are pressed for time, the Blur, the Palais de l'Équilibre and the Nouvel buildings are the must-sees.

- E-Mail This Article
- Printer-Friendly Format
- Most E-Mailed Articles
- Reprints

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY STARBUCKS.COM



Expect the World every morning with home delivery of The New York Times newspaper. [Click Here for 50% off.](#)

[Home](#) | [Back to Home & Garden](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Help](#) | [Back to Top](#)

The New-York Times June 13, 2002