

Zug's big "living room" is the place to be

Text
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Images
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← Feeling good
in the Freiruum
market hall: oper-
ations manager
Marco Husi.

Freiruum – free space and open room for freedom of choice. An 11,500 sqm hall for enjoying food from around the world, for parties, for cooking courses, for great coffee, for jumping and climbing – even for working (if we must).

You wouldn't necessarily expect to find something like the Freiruum in a smaller city like Zug. But Zug is a place full of surprises. While Zug may be small, a look at its economic history reveals it has always been a cosmopolitan city. In fact, it is thanks to this economic history that there is an 11,500 sqm market hall right in the centre of town today, where kids and adults come for fun and recreation.

The Freiruum – the name is a play on the German words for free/freedom and space/room – was formerly a large industrial building, which was converted into a space where, today, people come to eat, drink, chat and celebrate – as well as work and even jump and climb. It is one of two industrial halls originally erected on a property owned by the global enterprise Landis & Gyr. Up until quite recently, heavy equipment was still being manufactured here for worldwide distribution. The machines are gone now, moved to a different location, and a fresh breeze of urban flair has been blowing through the old hall since 2019.

People gather there to have a good time with friends and work colleagues, to discover all the different kinds of food to be had, or simply because they want to have their meeting in a "cool" location. The Freiruum has plenty to offer kids as well, with a parkour zone and a trampoline park with more than 400 sqm of jumping surfaces where children aged six and over can bounce to their heart's content, plus the Spiiruum area – a special playground for

younger children. Adults can also get some physical exercise at one of Switzerland's largest bouldering halls. Basically, the Freiruum is the "place to be", as operations manager Marco Husi proudly puts it. "The Freiruum is a bit like a busy neighbourhood street," says Husi, but with a roof over it, and no street noise.

Great food from around the world

The heart of the Freiruum is the spacious food court, with seating for 500 spaced throughout, around a bar located in the middle that doubles as an information point for visitor enquiries. In all, there are 16 food vendors for guests to choose from, and you can really take a culinary trip around the world, should you so desire, with options including Lebanese, Greek, Tibetan, Italian, American, Mexican, French, Hawaiian, Thai, Japanese and Swiss cuisine. The café/bar areas can serve whatever beverage your heart desires, from exquisite coffee to fine wine. Workshops on cooking, beer and wine are offered for those who enjoy experiential learning.

The industrial hall structure means the amount of natural light in such a large building is maximised. Natural light was important for the machinery manufacturing operations back in the day, and now it is ideal for the hall's many plants, which transform the former factory space into a green oasis and emphasise its air of urban casualness. Some of them are, admittedly, artificial, but at least seven large trees inside are real, tended by the landscaping service.





← The old factory hall has been transformed into a relaxing green oasis.



↑ You can always find a spot to sit in the Freiruum.

There is also a spacious outdoor area, opened in 2021, for those who prefer spending time in the open air.

The Freiruum is so spacious, it is usually not necessary to make reservations. That's part of the "freedom" inherent in the hall's name, as you can almost always find a spot to sit, often a quieter one too, such as for working. Larger groups visiting Zug's oversized living room should consider making a reservation, however. It can get a bit full sometimes on Friday and Saturday evenings, as Marco Husi notes. Cashless payment is required and free WiFi is provided. Every day is different here, with a stream of various events taking place in the Freiruum, which morphs into a Christmas market during the Advent season.

The art-historical perspective of architectural preservation is an interesting aspect of the Freiruum hall. Retired monument conservator Heinz Horat expressed a very positive opinion on the Freiruum in a trade journal article, saying: "This is exactly what I have in mind when I think of a successful conversion project for a former industrial building. Rather than trying to 'spruce up' the space, they have inventively managed to retain the building's industrial character while creating a lively space with a fresh, revitalised feel." That says it all, really.

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11 **Bouldering and jumping**

The Freiruum is a great place to go for both kids and adults who like physical activity. The 2,000 sqm sports hall has every need covered. Kids aged six and over can bounce away in the trampoline park and run around in the parkour zone. Directly adjacent is one of Switzerland's largest bouldering halls, where adults can learn how to climb and hone their skills.



11 **Spiilruum playroom for younger children**

The sports area of the Freiruum has a special section for younger children, too, called the "Spiilruum" – a play area of almost 250 sqm with a comfortable and inviting lounge area for parents to relax in.



Freiruum
zug-tourismus.ch/en/freiruum

The eerie beauty of the moors

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If you love the special nature of moorland hiking, you must come to the canton of Zug, which features four extraordinary hiking trails through nature reserves of national importance. Aside from the high Alpine regions, the moors are Switzerland's only remaining primeval landscapes.

The Biber river meanders gracefully across the Ägeriried moor. ↓

