

FAB FOUR

HISTORICAL ZURICH HANGOUTS

Art and revolution collide in the Swiss city

JOHN BORTHWICK



CAFE ODEON BAR

Stroll Zurich's riverside Limmatquai and you come to Cafe Odeon, a classic, Vienna-style art nouveau coffee house and the early 20th-century hangout for artistic and political exiles. Among its poets, painters, thinkers and musicians were James Joyce, Albert Einstein (an accomplished violinist), Somerset Maugham, Arturo Toscanini and Dada's proto-punk kick-starters. A more ominous cohort included Benito Mussolini and two Russian Marxist heavies, Trotsky and Lenin.

VLADIMIR WAS HERE

During 1916 and 1917 the cobbled lane called Spiegelgasse was home to the exiled Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, aka Lenin, and his wife, Nadeshda. They occupied an apartment at No. 14 while he wrote the leaden-titled *Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Look for the wall plaque noting (in German), "The father of the Russian Revolution lived here". Nadeshda complained that Spiegelgasse stank of a nearby sausage factory and she could open the windows only at night. This perhaps explains the couple's distinctly bourgeois preference for driving to grassy Zurichberg hill and lying there eating chocolate. In early April 1917, they had already paid a month's rent in advance when Lenin was called home to head up the Bolshevik

The Odeon, which opened in 1911, occupies only one-third its original area but its marble, brass and stained glass are still burnished with history. Over champagne, with Russian eggs or Swiss caviar, mustard and capers, imagine the fervid conversations and ideas that spread beyond these mirrored walls to shape art and conflict. As for Orson Welles's jibe that Switzerland "had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock", Zurich knows better.

■ odeon.ch



Revolution. Their shrewd landlady, rather than refunding the money, promised they could come back later and stay free for a month, but Vlad had larger fish to stick. They soon entrained for St Petersburg and Lenin's grim place in history.

■ zuerich.com



THE CHAGALL WINDOWS

Fast-forward to 1970 and the arrival in Zurich of another Russian emigre, of very different sensibility and ambition. Eighty-three-year-old Jewish Belarusian-French painter Marc Chagall was commissioned to

create five stained-glass windows illustrating biblical tales for one of the main churches, the Fraumunster. Each of his tall, vivid panels has a different dominant colour and when backlit by the sun they become a visual Hallelujah, psalms sung in light. Boisterous tourists find themselves stopped in their tracks before the panes, silenced and gobsmacked. "When I create something from my heart, almost everything goes well," said Chagall. His windows are one of Zurich's most popular sights. The 13th-century Fraumunster, on Stadthausquai opposite the perfect post-gothic chocolate box streets of Old Town, is also home to the impressive 9m stained-glass Heavenly Paradise by Augusto Giacometti and a 6959-pipe organ, the largest in Zurich.

■ fraumunster.ch

CABARET VOLTAIRE

While Lenin wrote a book on Marx, Dada lit a different spark. In 1915, a group of young bohemians at the Odeon fulminated against what the new century had brought: war on a horrific scale, atrophied leadership, moribund art. Sculptor Hans Arp, dancer Sophie Taeuber and writer Tristan Tzara declared a full, kick-out-the-jams rejection of everything, "a protest against the madness of the times". Decamping from the chandeliers and champagne of the Odeon to nearby Spiegelgasse 1 and its Cabaret Voltaire salon, they called their revolution Dada. If Marxist, they were of the Groucho school. A century later, Cabaret Voltaire is reincarnated at the same address in what is now Old Town. Known



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also as the Dadahaus, it's an unabashed exercise in nostalgia but also a cool venue, with a bar and performance theatre in shell-shock decor. There's a bust of Voltaire, of course, but what would the subversives make of a BoHo club and its exit through the gift shop?

■ cabaretvoltaire.ch