

hôtel palafitte

NEUCHÂTEL SWITZERLAND



“RETOUR AUX SOURCES”, a unique exhibition by MONSIEUR CHAT
From October 24, 2024 to June 1, 2025

LIFESTYLESM

Preferred
HOTELS & RESORTS

THE ORIGINS: EXPO.02

Approximately every 25 years, Switzerland takes center stage during a major “National Exposition.” In 2002, the sixth National Exposition was mounted in the region of Lakes Neuchâtel, Bienne and Morat.

In Neuchâtel, EXPO.02 explored the themes of openness and the environment, and paid special attention to the theme of “water and Switzerland’s peacekeeping missions abroad.” Only five of the exposition’s 2002 structures have been preserved, including the most symbolic of all: the Hotel Palafitte.

The hotel’s overwater design is testimony to a very distant past and very futuristic present. “Pala fitta,” meaning “stake” in Italian, and “pilotis” in French, are the roots of the word “palafitte,” which describes a set of wooden piles. And so we are taken back millennia to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (3900-850BC), when the region’s first farmers, fishermen and breeders lived in lakeside homes built on wooden piles near Monruz, at the north-eastern exit of Lake Neuchâtel. It was not until the end of the 19th-century - when the rechanneling of the waters of the Jura Mountains lowered the level of the lake - that the remains of ancient dwellings built atop wooden piles were revealed.

Referencing these ancient historic sites, the Hotel Palafitte was constructed atop stilts as a centerpiece of EXPO.02...emphasizing the past in its uniquely evocative design. An utterly original concept in modern Europe, its architecture was the result of a joint venture between the Sandoz Family Foundation and the *Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne* (The Lausanne Hospitality Business School). It was the school’s students who developed the original marketing and hospitality concepts designed to delight the hotel’s international clientele while meeting the very strict standards of a Swiss 5-star hotel.

“RETOUR AUX SOURCES”

With MONSIEUR CHAT as his feline identity, artist Thoma Vuille has become one of the great icons of street art. It’s the story of a Neuchâtel resident who started in hiding and is now celebrated around the world. **Monsieur Chat is exhibiting for the first time in his career in Neuchâtel, at the Hotel Palafitte, one of the few remaining vestiges of EXPO.02.** The exposition’s original pavilions were called “arteplages” (an amalgam of the French words for “art” and “beach’), in a celebration of water, openness to the world. and peace. Thus, in the third decade of the 21st-century, the Hotel Palafitte’s uniqueness pays homage to its site’s prehistoric heritage.

“Retour aux Sources” is an event exhibition.

