



Zurich (ZRH/LSZH)

SPOTTING GUIDE



Last complete update: June 2014. All focal lengths provided for crop sensors. Multiply for full frame cameras.

Introduction

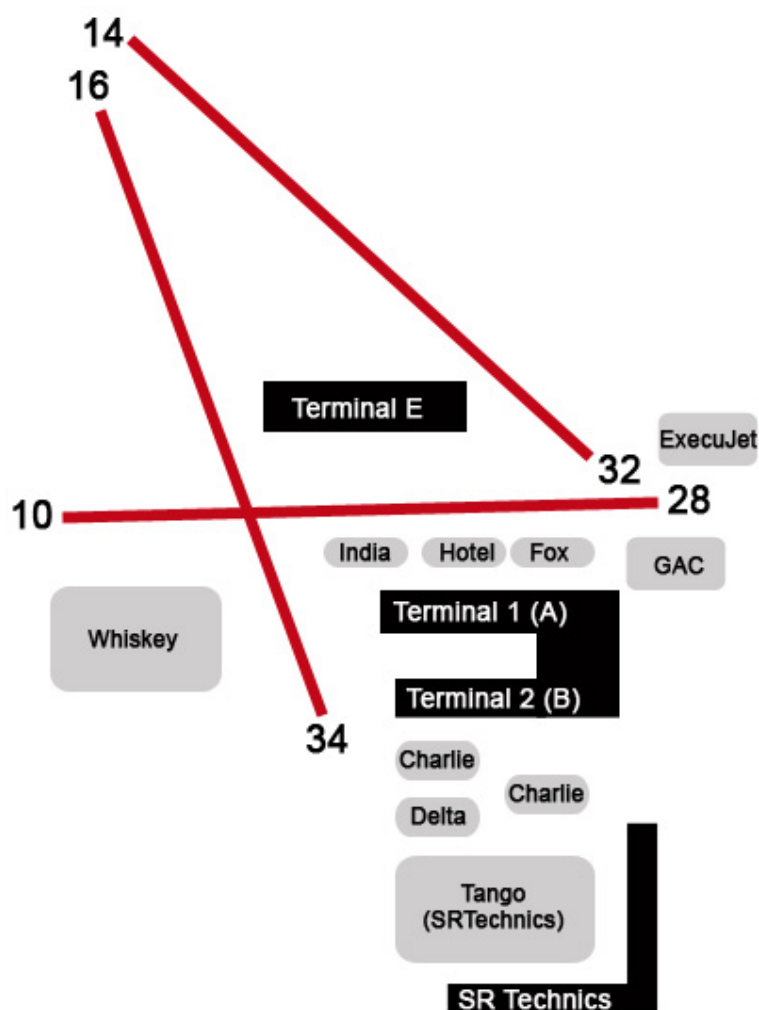
Zurich airport is the only commercial airport of the city of Zurich, Switzerland's centre of finance and economy. Located 13km northeast of the city, it is Switzerland's biggest and most used airport; and the home of (among others) our national flag carrier, Swiss. There are about 100 airlines offering around 160 connections to every continent in the world except Oceania. In 2003, the new Terminal E, also called "Midfield", was opened and equipped with an outdoor observation deck. In November 2011, Terminal 2 opened where the famous Terminal B was standing before - bringing back the same great views from its brand new observation deck.

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Operations



Runways

Rwy	Length	ILS	Usage	In use
10	2500m	-	Departing runway with strong winds from the east. No landings	rare
14	3300m	ILS	Main landing runway during daytime, no takeoffs	always
16	3700m	ILS	Main departing runway for heavies during daytime, rarely a landing	frequently
28	2500m	ILS	Main departing runway during daytime, landings in the evening	always
32	3300m	-	Departing runway in the morning, no landings	medium
34	2700m	ILS	Landing runway in the morning, takeoff runway in the evening	medium

Terminals and Aprons

Terminal/Apron	Use
Terminal 1 (Gates numbered A)	Swiss/Star Alliance Schengen (Europe) only
Terminal 2 (Gates numbered B)	Swiss, Edelweiss + Air Berlin Schengen/non-Schengen transfers (Mostly European, but Longhaul flights possible)
Terminal E (Gates numbered E)	Non Schengen (UK/Rest of World): Most Swiss Longhails, all foreign Longhails, most non Star Alliance European carriers. A380 parks at northwestern tip.
Aprons I/H/F	Swiss Avros, Darwin, other commuters, some bizjets on F
Aprons C/D	Some European scheduled flights (Iberia for example), low-revenue/charter flights (Swiss, Air Berlin, external companies)
Apron Whiskey	Longterm biz-jet parking, cargo, VVIPs, Helicopters
Apron Tango	Maintenance/SR Technics parking, some biz-jets maybe
Apron GAC	General Aviation, small bizjets
Apron ExecuJet	Bizjets of ExecuJet, CAT Aviation

Standard Runway Usage Concept

In order to spread the noise evenly, an elaborate runway usage scheme has been worked out. This is always adhered to, except in very bad weather conditions, when low visibility or strong winds dictate other usage schemes. It might seem confusing at first - but once you're familiar with it, it's not that hard anymore!

Weekdays (Mo-Fr)	Weekends (Sa/Su)*	Runway Usage
06.00-07.00	06.00-09.00	Landing Rwy 34 Departure Rwy 28 & 32
07.02-21.00	09.02-20.00	Landing Rwy 14 Departure Rwy 28 & 16 (heavies)
21.00-23.59	20.00-23.59	Landing Rwy 28 Departure Rwy 32 & 34

* Public holidays in Southern Germany are treated as weekends. Those are: Jan 1 | Jan 6 | Good Friday | Easter Monday | May 1 | Ascension Day | Whit Monday | Corpus Christi | Oct 3 | Nov 1 | Dec 25 | Dec 26

Weather-dictated Runway Usage Concepts

Weather Situation	Runways used
Strong winds from the west or north	Landing Runway: 28 Departure Runway: 32
Strong winds from the east	Landing Runway: 14 Departure Runway: 10

Traffic

All traffic data as per summer timetable **2014**.

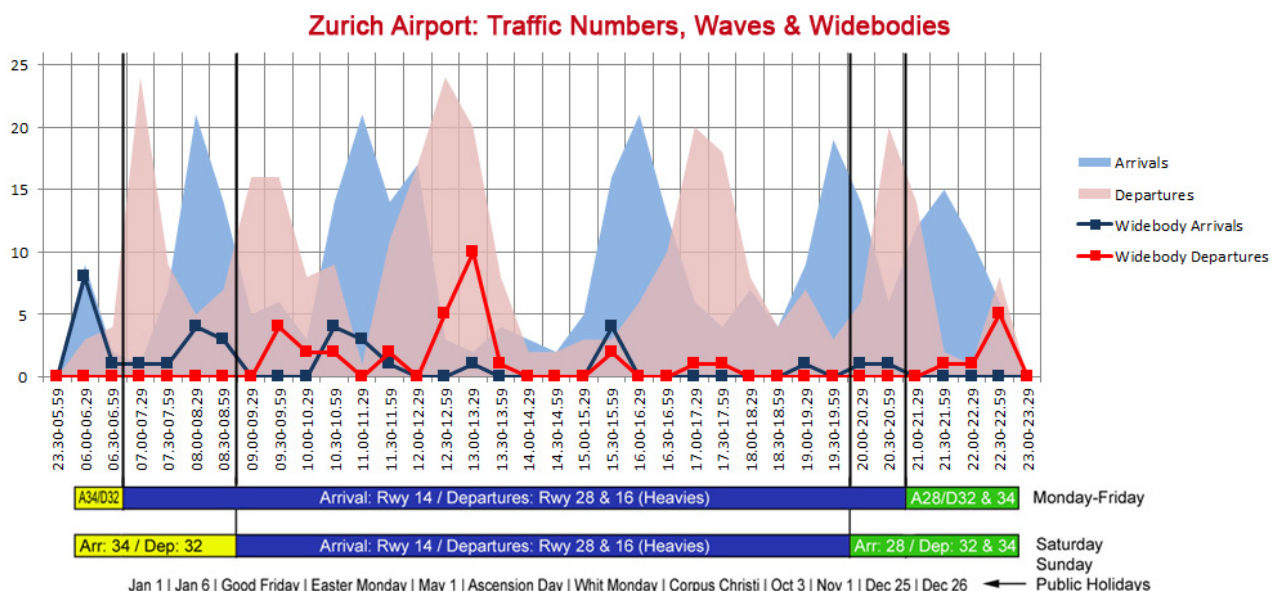
Overview

- Swiss airlines: Flag carrier Swiss (RJ100, A319/320/321, A333, A343), Edelweiss Air (A320/A332/A333), Helvetic (F100/A319), Darwin/Etihad Regional (SB20)
- European Traffic: Most European airlines have numerous services to Zurich, including rarer ones like Ukraine International (B737)
- Longhaul: Heaps of Swiss Heavies, Middle Eastern, Asian and US intercontinental flights.
- Cargo: There is only one scheduled cargo flight by Turkish Cargo using A310F (sometimes provided by ULS Cargo, sometimes using an A330F of Turkish). See [Turkish Cargo's official schedule](#).

To be up to date in terms of traffic the best thing is to have a look at the official online timetable. Hover over a flight number to see the aircraft type and registration planned!

- [Arrivals](#) | [Arrivals next day](#)
- [Departures](#) | [Departures next day](#)



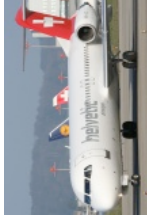


There are certain waves of traffic and there are times when the airport is almost dead. This graphic should help planning your stay!



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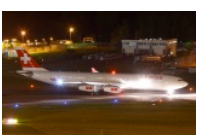
Swiss airlines and their role in Zurich

The following Swiss airlines are based in Zurich or can often be seen here. Watch out for them - you don't want to miss the smaller ones!

Airline:		Swiss Air Ambulance		Etihad Regional (operated by Darwin)		Helvetic Airways		Belair (Air Berlin subsidiary)		Edelweiss Air		Swiss Air Lines
Code, Callsign:		SAZ, "Swiss Air Ambulance"	F7/DWT, "Darwin"	2L/OAW, "Helvetic"	4T/BHP, "Belair"	WK/EDW, "Edelweiss"	LX/SWR, "Swiss"					
Fleet:		CL60 x 3	ATR72 x 6 SB20 x 8	A319 x 1 F100 x 6	A320 x 6 A319 x 2	A333 x 1 A332 x 1 A320 x 5	A340 x 15 A333 x 15 A321 x 8 A320 x 23 A319 x 5 RJ100 x 20					
Operations:		Based in ZRH, north of Rwy 28. Medevac flights around the globe.	Mostly based in Geneva, but some Saabs operate from Zurich	Operating some F100 for Swiss, some F100 plus the A319 for own routes.	Mainly operating under Air Berlin flight numbers, but some own flights.	Holiday routes, some flights for Swiss	Regional, International and Intercontinental.					
Watch out for:		These flights don't appear in the airport timetable, but can be seen on radar websites like Flightradar24.	Many Saabs still wear Darwin special c/s but might be repainted soon: HBIYD (Lugano c/s) HBIYI (basic OLT c/s) HBIZG (comercard c/s) HBIZH (Etihad c/s) HBIZJ (DOS Group c/s) HBIZP (Etihad c/s) HBIZW (Darwin c/s) HBIZX (Darwin c/s) HBIZZ (BSI Bank c/s) All ATRs wear the Etihad c/s already.		All aircraft are painted in standard Air Berlin colors, but with a Swiss registration.	HBJHM, operated for Swiss (in full Swiss c/s) on one of their New York JFK flights.	A320 HBULT (Sharklets) RJ100 HBIYS (Zurich Shopping) RJ100 HBIYU (Star Alliance) RJ100 HBIYV (Star Alliance)					

SWISS Widebodies

Of course, widebodies are always a special attraction. The SWISS widebodies (A333 and A343) typically arrive and depart in waves. Those are:

	Arrival Wave	Departure Wave		
Early Morning	06:10 LX289 JNB A343 daily 06:10 LX181 BKK A343 daily 06:10 LX179 SIN A343 daily 06:10 LX139 HKG A343 daily 06:15 LX087 YUL A333 daily 06:15 LX155 BOM A333 daily 06:20 LX245 DXB A333 daily 06:20 LX147 DEL A333 daily 06:25 LX293 NBO A333 daily 06:25 LX2609 ORD A333 1_3_5_7 08:00 LX017 JFK A333 daily			Arrivals land on Rwy 34 between 0600 and 0700 (0600-0900 on weekends), and on Rwy 14 afterwards. For Rwy 34, head to spot 3. For Rwy 14, use spots 9, M5 or M6. Picture taken at spot 3.
Morning		09:25 LX292 NBO A333 daily 09:45 LX154 BOM A333 daily 09:45 LX254 TLV A333 daily 09:45 LX236 CAI A343 1_3_567 09:50 LX016 JFK A333 daily 09:55 LX2608 ORD A330 _2_4_6_7		These flights usually take off on Rwy 16. Thus, they can be seen from spots 1, 2 and 3 (pictured). CAI and TLV flights take off from Rwy 28, use spots 4 or 6. CAI and TLV are operated by narrowbodies on some days.
Midday	10:50 LX015 JFK A333 daily 11:00 LX065 MIA A333 daily 10:55 LX053 BOS A333 daily 11:00 LX009 ORD A333 daily 11:05 LX093 GRU A343 daily 11:20 LX197 PEK A333 daily 11:35 LX019 EWR A333 daily			These flights land on Rwy 14. Use spots 9, M5 or M6. Picture taken at M6.
Midday		12:45 LX244 DXB A333 daily 12:45 LX146 DEL A333 daily 12:50 LX086 YUL A333 daily 12:55 LX008 ORD A333 daily 13:00 LX014 JFK A333 daily 13:00 LX160 NRT A343 daily 13:05 LX038 SFO A343 daily 13:05 LX188 PVG A343 daily 13:10 LX040 LAX A343 daily 13:20 LX064 MIA A333 daily 13:20 LX196 PEK A333 daily		These flights all take off from Rwy 16. Use spot 6 for rotations or spot 7 for line-ups. Picture taken at spot 6.
Afternoon	15:40 LX039 SFO A343 daily 15:45 LX041 LAX A343 daily 15:50 LX161 NRT A343 daily 15:50 LX189 PVG A343 daily			These flights land on Rwy 14. Use spot 8 (pictured).
Evening		17:20 LX018 EWR A333 daily 17:30 LX052 BOS A333 daily		These flights depart on Rwy 16. Use spot 7 for line-ups (pictured) or spot 6 for rotations.
Evening	19:10 LX255 TLV A333 daily 19:15 LX237 CAI A343 1_3_567			These flights land on Rwy 14. Use spot 8. Sunset shots possible from spot 9 (pictured). CAI/TLV flights sometimes operated by narrowbodies.
Late Night		22:40 LX092 GRU A343 daily 22:45 LX288 JNB A343 daily 22:45 LX180 BKK A343 daily 22:45 LX178 SIN A343 daily 22:45 LX138 HKG A343 daily		These flights take off on Rwy 34. Night shots from spot 3 are the only way of capturing them.

Foreign Widebodies

Airline	Flight	From/To	ZRH Arr	ZRH Dep	Aircraft	Frequency	
Air Canada	ACA878/9	YYZ	7.50	10.00	A333/B787	daily	
American Airlines	AA64/5	JFK	7.55	10.00	B763	daily	
Delta Airlines	DL66/7	ATL	8.35	11.30	B763	daily	Ends Oct 2014
Delta Airlines	DL206/7	JFK	9.45	10.20	B763	daily	Acft swapped with ATL flight
Emirates	EK87/8	DXB	13.20	15.35	A388	daily	
Emirates	EK85/6	DXB	20.45	22.15	B77W	daily	
Etihad Airways	EY073/4	AUH	6.50	11.55	A333	daily	
Korean Air	KE933/4	ICN	20.00	21.35	B772/W	-2-4-6-	arrival via VIE
Oman Air	WY151/2	MCT	7.20	11.55	A332	--3---7	
Oman Air	WY153/4	MCT	19.00	22.15	A332	1---5--	
Qatar Airways	QR093/4	DOH	6.45	11.10	B787	1-3-5--	
Qatar Airways	QR095/6	DOH	13.35	16.00	B787	-2-4-67	
Singapore Airlines	SQ345/6	SIN	8.00	11.45	A388	daily	
Thai Airways	TG970/1	BKK	7.25	13.30	A346	daily	
United Airlines	UA134/5	EWB	8.40	10.10	B764	daily	
United Airlines	UA52/3	IAD	8.05	11.55	B763	daily	
US Airways	US710/1	PHL	8.40	10.40	B762	daily	

SR Technics Visitors

SR Technics is a popular provider of maintenance for A330, A340 and MD-11 aircraft, which is why Zurich receives a steady stream of maintenance visitors, with roughly one aircraft every two weeks. They don't appear in any timetables, so you still need a lot of luck catching them. Keep your eyes open, and watch the radar websites/apps for these recurring visitors.



Air Caraïbes
A330 (usually
inbound from
ORY)



Air Tahiti Nui
A340 (usually
inbound from
CDG)



World Airways
MD-11 visit quite
often



Currently (May
04, 2013) on site
at Zurich



Air Greenland
A330, visiting
once every
couple years
inbound from
CPH



There's always a
chance for a very
rare catch. I don't
expect this one
to return anytime
soon though! :)

ATC & Flight Tracking

ATC Frequencies

Using airband receivers in Switzerland is **allowed**. In fact they're hugely popular, and troubles with police are unheard of. Here are the most useful frequencies.

Station	Frequency	Remarks
ATIS Arrivals	125.725	Phone: +41 43 816 22 94
ATIS Departures	129.000	Phone: +41 43 816 22 95
Arrival West	118.000	
Arrival North/East	135.225	<i>changed to 135.225 1/1/2015</i>
Final	125.325	Between ARR and TWR during high traffic
Tower	118.100	All runways
Tower (secondary)	120.225	Rarely used, sometimes for arrivals (Rwy 14)
Apron North	121.850	North of Rwy 28
Apron South	121.750	South of Rwy 28
Clearance Delivery	121.925	All terminals
Departure	125.950	All departures

Flight Tracking

- [ZHAW Radar](#): Built by local students. Some ground coverage, too.
- [RadarVirtuel](#): Including amazing ground coverage all down to airport cars!
- [Flightradar24](#): Relatively good coverage, decent ground coverage, too.

Public Transport

Getting to Zurich Airport

Zurich airport is very well connected by public transport and there's no need to rent a car!

- Train: Frequent direct trains to Zurich Main Station (Zurich HB, travel time: 9-12mins) and other major cities. [Timetable](#)
- Tram: A tramway runs through the northern parts of the city to Zurich HB, travel time: 35min. [Timetable](#)
- Bus: The airport's the main bus hub for the surrounding area with services to Glattbrugg, Rümlang, Oberglatt, Kloten, Bülach, etc. [Timetable](#)

Getting to the Spotting Points

All spots can be reached from the airport via public transport and a maximum of 20 minutes of walking. Spot numbers refer to the guide below.

- Spots 1-5: At or near the terminal. See "getting to the Airport" above.
- Spot 6: From Rümlang Bahnhof, you need to walk for about 15mins (1,3km). See the Google Map below for the walk. Getting to Rümlang is easy:
 - From the airport: Take Bus Nr.510 (heading for Stadel b. N., Neuwis-Huus) to Rümlang train station ("Rümlang Bahnhof"). The service runs hourly at :05 past the hour on all days. Travel time 11mins. Busses from Rümlang station back to the airport depart at :42, busses to the north (spots 7-9) at :15. [Bus timetable](#): Click on a station to see when Bus 510 departs there.
 - From Zurich City (Zurich HB): Take the train to Rümlang (twice per hour, travel time 11 mins). [Timetables](#).
- Spots 7-9: From Oberglatt Zentrum, walk for about 20mins to spot 7, 8 or 9. See Google Map below for the walks. Getting to Oberglatt Zentrum bus stop is easy:
 - From the airport: Bus Nr.510 (heading for Stadel) to the town center of Oberglatt ("Oberglatt Zentrum"). The service runs hourly at :05 past the hour on all days. Travel time 17mins. Busses back to the airport and to spot 6 leave at :36. [Bus timetable](#): Click on a station to see when Bus 510 departs there.
 - From Zurich City (Zurich HB): Take the train to Oberglatt (twice per hour, travel time 17mins), then take the bus to Oberglatt Zentrum or walk 15min. [Timetables](#).

Spotting Points


Check out an [interactive Google Map](#) of all spots, public transport points, hotels and walking paths!





Spot 1: Observation Deck Terminal 2 (formerly Terminal B)


[See spot on Google Maps](#)

Since late 2011, the famous observation deck on top of Terminal 2 has reopened and is better than ever. The great views of heavies taking off Rwy 16 have remained the same, as have the apron views. There are heaps of new spotter gimmicks though: Interactive binoculars that show data for each aircraft you point at for example, or a walkable finger dock to allow a different angle of parked planes. The entrance fee is 5 CHF, annual passes can be had for 60 CHF. The observation deck also serves as a starting point for all other bus tours, be it the shuttles to Spot 2 (Observation Deck Terminal E), the apron tours, or the special WEF spotters' tours. It once again includes a restaurant, too. Check out the official website about the observation deck [here](#).


 From anywhere in the terminal complex, head for the check-in area of Terminal 2 and walk toward the side of the terminal that's farthest away from the airport roads. There are lots of signs leading the way to the observation deck, too.

 Restaurant available - toilets, too.

 30-50mm for aircraft taxiing past, 20-50mm for aircraft parked at the gates, 100-200mm for side-ons of Rwy 16 departures, up to 300mm-400mm for action shots

 Planes departing on Rwy 16 (mostly widebodies), planes taxiing to parking areas in the south, planes parked at Terminals 1 and 2

 First half of the day for Rwy 16 movements; whole day for gate action.

 Opening times: 8AM to 9PM in summer, 9AM to 6PM in winter. Entrance fee: Adults 5 CHF, kids 10-16: 2 CHF



View of taxiing
aircraft (25mm)

Takeoff Rwy 16
(330mm)

Close-up on
takeoff
(380mm :-))

Side-ons on
takeoff (54mm)


Gate views
(18mm)

Spot 2: Observation deck Terminal E ("Midfield")

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

This second observation deck is located on top of Terminal E, which stands north of Rwy 28. This deck is much smaller in size, as it just occupies the western end of the terminal. Still, it puts you right in the middle of the action with good views on both departure runways. However, the action on Rwy28 takes place south of you, i.e. backlit.

With the old Terminal 2 observation deck reopened, it appears that this deck will only be open in the summer half (from April onwards).


 Follow the way to Spot 1; busses for this observation deck depart from spot 1.

 Vending machines for snacks and drinks (warm and cold); toilets

 100-150mm for side-ons on Rwy 16, 200mm for Rwy 28

 Planes departing Rwy 16 and 28, taxiing to Rwy 16, view on western gates of Terminal E

 First half of the day for Rwy 16 shots

 Rwy 28 backlit all day. Observation deck closed in winter season 2011/12.



Taxiing to Rwy16
on Echo
(100mm)

Takeoff Rwy16
(120mm)

Takeoff Rwy28
(200mm)

Takeoff Rwy34
(260mm)

Terminal action
(150mm)

Spot 3: Car Park 3 - Rwy 34 spot


[See spot on Google Maps](#)




The 10 storey Car Park 3 is located on the western end of the airport buildings, abeam the threshold of Rwy 34. This spot is perfect to photograph early morning arrivals to Rwy 34 in summer with superb light! It also allows very scenic views of departures out of Rwy 16 later on, provided you have a long enough lens. Last but not least, you can see aircraft using the southern parking areas as well as all traffic taxiing to/from the maintenance base. The one drawback is that the walls of the car park are made up by vertically placed lamellae, about


30cm apart (see picture on the left). This can be annoying when taking pictures of moving objects, but you'll get used to it.


Parking tariffs can be found [here](#), a map of all parking garages [here](#).

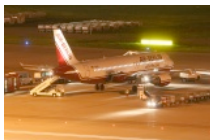
 You'll find elevators to the Car Park in the rearmost corner of the food court, near the train station. Follow the signs!

 Lots of shops and restaurants as well as toilets just an elevator ride away in the terminal

 150-200mm for side-ons of arrivals onto Rwy 34

 Aircraft arriving onto Rwy 34 (early morning), taking off from Rwy 16, aircraft using parking stands south of Terminal 2 or going to maintenance

 Early morning (Rwy 34 in use), first half of the day in terms of light



Arrival Rwy 34
(235mm)

Final approach to
Rwy 34
(160mm)

Climbouts of
Rwy 16 with
scenic views
(340mm)

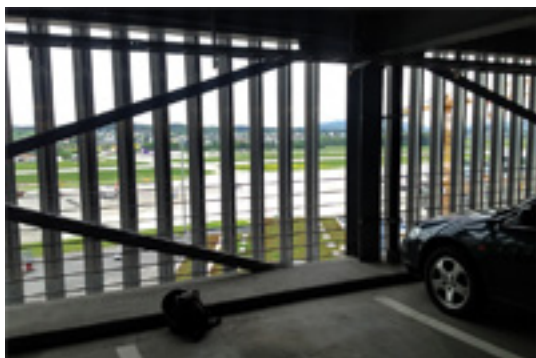
Typical slow
climbout from
Rwy 16
(180mm)

Aircraft on
their way to/
from the
southern
parking stands
and
maintenance
area (63mm)

View of
southern
stands
(120mm)

Spot 4: Car Park 6 - Rwy 28 spot

[See spot on Google Maps](#)



The 11 storey Car Park 6 is located on the eastern end of the terminal complex - a 5 minute walk east of the exit of Terminal 1, heading towards the cargo area. This is the best point to photograph aircraft using Rwy 28 - you're looking right down on the treshhold and also see the two taxiways leading there. This spot can also be used on the occasions where Rwy 28 is used for landings.

The one drawback is that the walls of the car park are made up by vertically placed lamellaes, about 30cm apart (see picture on the left). This can be

annoying when taking pictures of moving objects, but you'll get used to it.

Parking tariffs can be found [here](#), a map of all parking garages [here](#).



(on foot:) Exit terminal 1 to the east (possible on both, arrival or departure level) and proceed straight ahead. Enter the first large parking garage you see. Signposted.



Shops, Restaurants and toilets in the terminal complex



200mm for medium sized aircraft on Rwy 28, 100mm for heavies



Aircraft arriving and departing from Rwy 28. Limited views of planes vacating Rwy 14



Whole day



Lining up Rwy 28 in the evening (250mm)

Aircraft taxiing to Rwy 28 (130mm)

Final Rwy 28 (250mm)

Flaring, Rwy 28 (120mm)

Long final Rwy 28 (400mm)

Spot 5: Final Rwy 28

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

Another quite famous point is located just behind the threshold of Rwy 28. If Rwy 28 is in use for landings (strong westerly winds, and regularly in the evening) you can see planes approaching very low over your head. This is most impressive with widebodies.

Photos of aircraft lining up and taking off are not possible as the view is too obstructed.

Because the planes are approaching very low, you might have to go away from the runway axis to get a better angle. This is no problem as you can easily move to the left and right.



(on foot:) After exiting terminal 1 to the east, continue walking eastwards, passing the Operation Center first, then the Cargo area, and finally the small General Aviation terminal. After that one, follow the small road that goes left and right again and is basically running right along the fence. After another 5 minutes you will have reached the spot. 15-20 min walk in total.



Closest facilities are at the terminal, a 15-20min walk away



20-50mm in the runway axis, a little more from the sides. 400mm for nice zoom shots (see Singapore below)



Aircraft landing on Rwy 28. Possibilities for line-up shots are very, very limited



All day, yet best in the evening light



-



Very close to the action!

Spot overview (28mm)

Lovely evening views (400mm)

Planes are very close here!

Widebodies are most impressive


Shots onto the runway need a lot of luck

Spot 6: Heligrill (Rwys 16 and 28)


[See spot on Google Maps](#)


Probably the most characteristic Zurich spot, this one lets you get extremely close to the action. It is located on the western side of the airport, in the southwest corner of the Rwy16/28 intersection and therefore allows good views on both runways. This spot is most impressive during the longhaul outbound wave (usually between 12.30 and 2PM), but good all day.


The airport authority cut some 10 holes in the fence (big enough for all lenses), but they are quickly occupied on beautiful weekends! You can take your ladder with you if you wish. Just south of the spot is the parking area "Whiskey", accommodating longstay biz-jets as well as large cargo or VIP aircraft. Some of them can be photographed quite well, too.


 See transport section above: Bus 510 from the airport to Rümlang Bahnhof (Rümlang train station), 15 min walk from there: Cross below the tracks towards the east. Continue walking eastwards, cross that red bridge, and continue eastwards on the paved road that leads towards and along the forest for another 10 minutes. It will take you all the way to the fence.

 A small snack bar/grill is open year round. Basic toilet facilities.

 40-80mm for side-ons on Rwy 16, 300-400mm for Rwy 28, up to 400mm for those action shots of takeoffs Rwy 16

 Aircraft taking off Rwy 16 and 28, taxiing to Rwy 10 (rare). Limited views on Terminals 1 and 2. Aircraft parked on Whiskey stands.

 Noon outbound wave and second half of the day for Rwy 16, all day for Rwy 28 movements

 Very popular spot; photo holes may be occupied particularly on sunny weekends.



Takeoff Rwy16! Great view, huh?! (110mm)	Close-up on TO Rwy16 (350mm)	Rotate! (400mm)	Takeoff Rwy28 (220mm)	Taxiing to Rwy10 (210mm)	Biz-jet on Whiskey stand (160mm)
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Spot 7: Firefighters' Hill (Line-up Rwy 16)

[See spot on Google Maps](#)



This interesting point is located at the beginning of Rwy 16. On a small hill above the training area of the firefighters (note the derelict DC-8 used as a fire trainer), you have a wonderful view on aircraft lining up on Rwy 16. Aircraft landing on Rwy 16 can also be photographed from here, although this doesn't occur very often. Planes landing on the main landing Rwy 14 can be seen, too - both distance and heat haze make it difficult to get neat shots though.

The views are good and totally unobstructed. 90° shots are possible here while aircraft line up. But remember that most medium sized planes will depart from Rwy 28, so this spot is only good during the intercontinental outbound waves, usually between 12.30 and 2PM.

As this spot is part of a natural reserve, please take special care not to litter and whenever possible to stay to the marked paths when walking up and down.

If you prefer more action, you should head to Spot 6.



See transport section above: Bus 510 from the airport to Oberglatt Zentrum. Thence follow the directions on the map above until you get to a hill right next to the fence. Please take care **not** to enter the hill from its northwestern side (red dots). Instead enter it from the northeastern or southern side (both near the fence), where there are footpaths (green dots).



No facilities. Closest are at Spot 8, a 20 min walk away



100-200mm for side-ons on Rwy 16, 400mm for landings on Rwy 14



Aircraft lining up on Rwy 16, aircraft landing on Rwy 16 (rare) and 14 (far away, heat haze)



Second half of the day, best at the noon outbound wave



Natural reserve - don't litter, stick to paths. Prone to heat haze on hot days. No facilities.



Spot overview
(18mm)



Spotting's
easy here!
(73mm)



Lining up
Rwy16
(340mm)



Lined up
(100mm)



Landing
Rwy16




Landing
Rwy14
(400mm)


Spot 8: Final Rwy 14/16

[See spot on Google Maps](#)


This is one of the most popular spots. It's a parking lot on the main road from Oberglatt to Bülach, located right under the approach paths of Rwy14 and 16. The parking lot is surrounded by extensive farmland and a wide network of gravel roads. Therefore you can position yourself anywhere you want to get the perfect angle for your approach shots. You're very likely to bump into other aviation enthusiasts here - since all arrivals must pass this spot, it's the one place where you won't miss a single movement.

 See transport section above: Bus 510 from the airport to Oberglatt Zentrum. Thence follow the directions on the map - walk along the main road that leads eastwards, heading to the next town of Bülach.

 Snack bar and grill open year round, toilets. Ice cream sold in summer too!

 Depending on the angle, from 200mm unwards

 Aircraft landing on Rwy 14 and 16 (rare)

 All day, but mainly used as an afternoon spot



Standard approach shot (115mm)



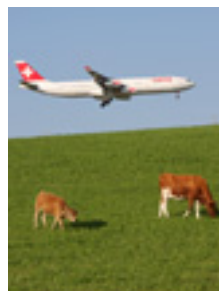
Standing away from the runway axis allows you to include the scenery (160mm)



Looking down on Rwy14 (400mm)



Just north of the parking lot (200mm)



Welcome to Switzerland! (90mm)

Spot 9: Final Rwy 14

[See parking lot on Google Maps](#) | [see 'real' spot on Google Maps](#)

Within walking distance from Spot 8 there is another beautiful place, mostly suitable for photography in the first half of the day. When walking from Spot 8, the first spot you'll see is a car park located on the eastern side of Rwy 14, just before its beginning. This is the 'easy' spot which is also accessible by car. If you head down to the fence now and walk along it towards the south for about ten minutes, you'll finally reach a small hill. This allows for much better photos that include some scenery, too.

The best time to visit is in the first half of the day, preferably during workdays (Mo-Fr) when Rwy14 is in use from 7AM. You'll get a bunch of heavies in beautiful light conditions here. But the spot is also excellent for sunset shots!



From spot 8, continue along the main road heading east. Just after crossing the runway axis, turn right. After a few hundred meters you'll get to a parking lot. Either remain there to take pictures, or head down to the fence, and follow the fence south for about 10 minutes, until a small mound comes in sight right behind the fence. Total walking time from spot 8: 15 to 20 mins.



Closest facilities are at spot 8



From 100mm onwards for side-on shots



Aircraft landing on Rwy 14; sunset shots



First half of the day, best for the two inbound waves; late evening for sunsets



The parking lot offers standard approach views plus those here (200mm)

The spot on the hill is a bit more scenic (70mm)

Good positioning can also yield artistic shots here! (115mm)

Touchdown Rwy14! (400mm)

Sunset Landing Rwy14!

People enjoying an eve on the mound (130mm)

Minor Spots

The following spotting points are what I consider *minor spots*. While the main spots above are perfectly fine to get pictures of all traffic, you may want to add that special angle or two if you're on a longer visit. However, those spots are often harder to get to and may need a ladder. If you're just spending a day or two in Zurich, use the nine main spots above. If you've got a car (or bicycle!) and fancy exploring a little bit, give those spots below a go:

M1: Head-on shots of departures Rwy 16

[See spot on Google Maps](#) | [see spot on Google Street View](#)

This spot is created at a point where the main road (Flughofstrasse) climbs up a bit to pass over a secondary road (Rohrstrasse). Thankfully, this overpass is located right in the runway axis south of Rwy 16, allowing you to take head-on shots of those slow-climbing heavies. Light is good all day; though at least 400mm is needed. Do not park on the main road - instead head to the parking area near Spot M2 and walk up the slopes from there.



Looking along Rwy 16 Take-off on a winter's day (400mm)

The mighty A380 (400mm)

Decent climbout pics can be had, too (400mm)

M2: SRTechnics

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

The parking lot at the end of Rwy 16 is located next to the SRTechnics apron. You may be able to get a shot if a maintenance visitor is parked the right way. Airbus planes of many a company are overhauled in Zurich, as are some MD-11, for example of World Cargo. A ladder is highly recommended - with a little luck, shooting through the fence is possible, too.



Parked at SRT (120mm)

Parked at SRT (85mm)

Parked at SRT (95mm)

M3: Head-on shots of departures Rwy 28

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

There's a point in the extension of the runway axis of Rwy 28, where a small unnamed service road crosses over the main road (Flughofstrasse). From that bridge, you have nice views down on Rwy 28 and can get decent take-off shots. This spot makes most sense for the few heavies that use Rwy 28 (Emirates and Qatar on dry, not too warm days; maybe some empty cargo planes). Once again, 400mm are required. A ladder is not needed here. You can even take shots onto Rwy 16, but it's rather far away and heat haze will be a special problem there.



DC-10 taking off
(400mm)

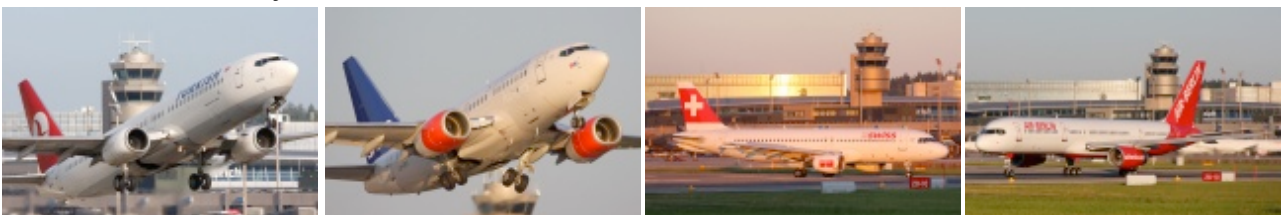
Emirates Triple Seven Airbus A320 (400mm)
(365mm)

Departure Rwy 16
(400mm)

M4: Late summer eve Spot

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

This spot has lots of limitations, yet the shots taken are quite rewarding. Located in the northwestern corner of the intersection of Rwy 16/28, its main purpose is to take pictures of movements on Rwy 28. It can also be used to take pictures on Rwy 16/34, should anything be happening there (rare). However, since you're facing south, the only time this spot makes any sense is in the last hour of daylight during the three summer months - when the sun gets around to the northern side. In addition, it requires a long and strenuous walk of about 25 min to the closest car park. Last but not least, you'll need a ladder here. As this, too, is a nature reserve, please take extra care not to step on any important plants and not to leave any rubbish behind.



Early evening TO
Rwy 28 (300mm)

Late evening TO Rwy
28 (400mm)

Turning off Rwy 28
(220mm)

Departure Rwy 34
(135mm)

M5: Touchdown Rwy 14

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

There's a bike and hiking path running along the whole length of Rwy 14. So provided you have a ladder with you, you can position yourself anywhere you like. As an alternative if you don't have a ladder and still want to shoot some touchdown shots: Along that path, a little south of the touchdown point, is a single park bench. Standing on that one enables you to peek over the fence and get your shots. Three people should fit on there I'd guess - first come, first serve! Heat haze is a problem here on warmer days. At least 200mm focal length is advisable.



Touchdown (400mm)	After touchdown action (400mm)	Side-on shot of a late landing (220mm)	Close-ups are neat, too! (320mm)
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M6: Final Rwy 14, long distance shots

[See spot on Google Maps](#)

The main road running east of Rwy 14 is slightly elevated - just enough to let you catch glimpses of the approaching airplanes at some positions. If you've got a good zoom lens, a clear and preferably cold day and some widebodies due to land, you can get nice photos including some lovely Swiss scenery here. Check the Google Maps link above to see the exact location of my usual spot - following a small forest road breaking off from the main road uphill lets you gain some final meters of additional elevation. Obviously, this spot is best used during the first half of the day, preferably in the early morning when it's colder.



Scenic approach shots (400mm)	Beautiful shots during flare (320mm)	Touchdowns are just barely possible, too (235mm)	Careful positioning even lets you capture the fortified town of Regensburg on the shot (400mm)
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M7: Climbouts Rwy 16, long distance shots

[Spot M7A on Google Maps](#) | [Spot M7A on Street View](#) | [Spot M7B on Google Maps](#) | [Spot M7B on Street View](#)

The conditions here are similar to spot M6 above, only that this road here is even a bit further away for the action. You will need at least 400mm even for the largest widebodies out there. If this is the case and the conditions are clear and cold, two spots from the main road (Glattalstrasse) running along the hills west of the airport allow for some scenic climbout pictures. The first spot (M7A) is located at the western end of the hamlet of Letten and provides views of the initial climbout stage, featuring airport buildings and residential houses in the background. The second spot (M7B), located 800m south, has better views of the later climbout stages and a more natural picture setting.



Climbout in front of
Terminals 1 and 2
(M7A, 400mm)






Some seconds later :)
(M7A, 400mm)

Beautiful on winter
days, too! (M7A,
400mm)

Beautiful composition
from spot M7B
(400mm)

Itinerary for a complete day at Zurich Airport

It is based on a summer's day with standard runway usage on weekends. Check ATIS!

	Time	What to see and do
	6AM-9AM	The day begins at 6AM in Car Park 3 (spot 3). Before taking the elevators up there you can buy your breakfast in the airport food court. You will see all the early morning inbound flights onto Rwy 34 in beautiful light, with a fair share of widebodies.
	9AM-12AM	Runways are switched at 9AM (7AM on weekdays!), with Rwy14 becoming the landing runway and Rwy 28 and 16 used for departure. Now you can head to one of the observation decks (spots 1 or 2) to prepare for the first widebody take-off wave off Rwy 16 around 10AM. The Singapore A380 (departing around 11AM in winter and 12AM in summer) looks stunning from here. Its take-off usually marks the time to head on. If you prefer, you can also stay on Car Park 3 - with a long lens, take-offs from Rwy16 can also be captured from up here (and it's free! :-))
	12AM-2PM	Be sure you're at the Heligrill spot (spot 6) at 12:45 the latest, when the extremely busy noon outbound wave kicks in. Dozens of European flights depart from Rwy 28, while all the widebodies use Rwy 16. This wave lasts until about 2PM - afterwards, the airport is virtually dead. Grab a bite to eat, either at the spot's grill or in the nearby McDonalds.
	3PM-8PM	In the early evening, there is the next arrival wave, which you don't want to miss. Catch Bus 510 on to Oberglatt and place yourself at Spot 8 for landings Rwy 14. Between 3PM and 4PM there are 4 Swiss A340s arriving (LAX, SFO, NRT, PVG). Another two will land after 7PM (CAI/TLV). You can stay at this spot until sunset if you like.
	8PM-bed-time	Runways are switched again at 8PM (9PM on weekdays!). Take Bus Nr. 510 back to the airport. If you are still alive and not fed up with spotting yet, you can then go to Car Parks 3 or 6 and try some night shots. Around 10PM, six Swiss A340 will line-up and depart from Rwy 34 - they can be seen from car park 3.

Well done, you've just spent 15 hours at Zurich airport (and just as much time reading this guide I guess ;-)) !

Accommodation

Hotel Park Inn Zurich Airport/Rümlang ****

This is my preferred hotel to recommend if you're on a true spotting holiday. It is located just west of the airport fence - a 10 minute walk from the fantastic Spot Nr. 6 (Heligrill). In addition, a bus stop for Bus 510 taking you to the other spots and the terminal is just a stone's throw from the hotel (the stop is named Rümlang Rümelbach, northbound busses depart at :13, south/airport bound busses at :45 - click on the Rümmlbach stop [here](#) to check the timetable). There's a McDonald's right next to the hotel, and the Rümlang train station with frequent commuter trains to downtown Zurich is just a 15 min walk away. The hotel features a free airport bus, too.

Spotters who have stayed at the Park Inn have written favourable reviews. Cleanliness and proximity to the spotting locations and bus stops was considered very helpful. If you want to write a review, contact me!

Check out the hotel's [website](#), and its [reviews on Tripadvisor](#).

Hotel Holiday Inn Express/Rümlang ***

This hotel opened up in 2009 only a few steps from the Park Inn. While I haven't heard any personal impressions from planespotters, Tripadvisor reviews are favourable and it has all the same advantages of the Park Inn location-wise. Definitely worth checking out, too!

Check out the hotel's [website](#), and its reviews on [Tripadvisor](#).



Various hotels in Kloten

There are several hotels in the city of Kloten, which borders the airport at its eastern side. Location-wise they're less ideal for spotting (even more so if you don't have a car). Yet, they're in the hearth of a city and closer to the commuter train station - if that's more important to you. Kloten Hotels include:

- Welcome Inn, ***, [Website](#), [Tripadvisor reviews](#)
- FlyAway, ***+, [Website](#), [Tripadvisor reviews](#)
- Allegra, ***, [Website](#), [Tripadvisor reviews](#)

Hilton Hotel

If you want to splurge a little, the Hilton - also a popular crew hotel - may be your choice. While it's not that close to the various spotting points, and there's not much in terms of restaurants and bars nearby, you can see arrivals onto Rwy 34 and slow-climbing departures out of Rwy 16 from here.

[Hotel Website](#) | [Tripadvisor reviews](#)