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DOSSIER

Bridging past and future

Fund professionals
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Claude Kremer on their
new industry roles

LIFESTYLE

Home from home in a small hotel

PRIVATE BANKING

The steps change but the dance goes on

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The number of business men and business women travelling regularly to Luxembourg has stimulated the development of a niche market: the small business hotel. Aiming to create a “home from home” ambience, these hotels go to great lengths to customise their service to individual clients.

The Hotel Albert 1^{er} is an independent 4 star hotel within walking distance of the centre of Luxembourg city. With just 40 rooms and suites, the hotel prides itself on offering a personalised service. Guests frequently eat in and spend time in the library, a cosy salon with a real fire that draws customers from both inside and outside the hotel.

Guests fall into two distinct groups, weekday business clients and private visitors who use the hotel at the weekend to visit the city. “We get a lot of repeat guests”, notes Marine Boulanger at the Albert 1^{er}. “Quite a few come every week for a couple of days.” Clients who visit regularly often have their particular room. “They can leave things here: we put them into their room before their arrival”.

Indeed, a large part of the charm of such hotels is that the rooms are shaped and decorated differently, so that a client can find the ideal atmosphere. In the case

of the Albert 1^{er}, rooms are either in the English style – using natural textures and traditional English furnishings – or in the Modern style. “Each room is unique” says Boulanger.

Individuality is the key theme of the hotel Le Place d’Armes, an independent 5 star hotel situated in the heart of the city with just 28 rooms and suites. Composed of 7 houses of different periods, which were painstakingly restored over a period of 4 years, this hotel is a rabbit warren of hidden interior courtyards, rooftop terraces and winding staircases.

“The objective was to respect the architectural character of each building” explains the architect from local interior decoration company, Création d’Ambiances, who worked on the project from the beginning. “There are three periods: Art Nouveau, Baroque and Intemporel, and each room is completely individual”. She recalls that the team made regular visits to Paris, Verona and Brussels to find the right fittings and fabrics, or just to seek inspiration. The result is delightfully eclectic: a cubic bathroom in one suite, an empire canapé in another, a harlequin baroque commode, a variety of four poster beds, and objets d’art everywhere. This level of individuality delights the clients of the hotel and is particularly appealing to women.

Like the Albert 1^{er}, le Place d’Armes has both a weekday business clientele and a weekend tourist trade. There is a large overlap between the two. “Business trade is driven by the local banks, legal firms and the European Court of Justice”, says Franck Leloup, Director General of the hotel “but the hotel is also popular with leisure visitors from Luxembourg and the Grande Région. A high percentage of business is generated by local clients who use the hotel both for business and for private events, such as birthdays, weddings and communions”.

One of the 28 unique bedrooms at the hotel Le Place d’Armes (© to the hotel)





The library-style salon at the Hotel Albert 1^{er} (© to the hotel)

Both the Albert 1^{er} and Le Place d'Armes have excellent restaurants. "Guests often eat in" says Boulanger at the Albert 1^{er}. "There is also a room service with a dedicated menu". Le Place d'Armes has a superb Art Deco dining room (la Cristallerie) and a street level Brasserie (Plèss). At both hotels, the restaurant serves as an advertisement for the hotel.

The reputation of these hotels spreads by word of mouth, but modernity oblige: it is also necessary to be listed on international hotel search engines and to

have a direct on-line booking form. "We have partnerships with a number of companies", adds Boulanger.

So what are the ingredients for a successful small business hotel? Position is important, if the hotel is to survive at the weekend. Interesting, individualised rooms and cosy public spaces are also important. Above all, a highly personalised level of service is indispensable to create that "home from home" feeling that brings guests back again and again. (ER)