

31. Townhouse Designhotel



Making the
usual
unusual...

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Maxine Hofman © Cedric Vanaken

Making the usual unusual. That is the philosophy of the Townhouse Hotel, an innovative four star hotel in the centre of Maastricht. The welcoming ‘Maastricht living room’ has the design and the cosiness of days gone by and the best of the present. “After a phase of sleek design we now attach more attention to the past; old fashioned cosiness combined with innovative hotel solutions, humour and fun elements,” explains Maxine Hofman, Marketing & Sales Manager of La Bergère Group, the hotel group Townhouse Hotel is part of. “You stay in our hotel, at home in Maastricht. You are welcomed with a cup of homemade soup and you can ask for anything and if you want fetch anything yourself.” Townhouse not only is an innovative hotel, it also is a concept that is suitable for sustainable applications.

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Sustainable business operation is the focus from the concept phase onwards. Maxine: “In 2009 it is impossible to stay behind and operate a business where sustainability is not included, that was not an option for us. An old family hotel was established in this location and we have approached it in such a way that some sustainable elements could be immediately implemented during the renovation. Think for example of a grey water system in which waste water is re-used and of advanced air-conditioning. When decorating the hotel lobby we also have paid attention to every detail; the interior consists of new, vintage and recycled items and we only use second hand Maastricht crockery. We therefore looked for partners, preferably from Maastricht, who also work sustainably such as Mosa, Sphinx, Artifort and Flos.”

Townhouse opened its doors at the end of 2009 after being granted the award for ‘Best New Hotel Concept 2009’. Barely a year later, in September 2010, the hotel already obtained a ‘Green Key Gold’ certificate. The international hallmark for companies in the tourism and leisure sector which are seriously and transparently working on environmental care in the company and also do more for the environment than required by law and regulations. Townhouse was the first hotel in Maastricht that obtained the Green Key label of that level. The organisation awards the ‘Gold’ label to Townhouse, because it meets 26 mandatory and at least 18 optional measures for environmentally-aware enterprising. The mandatory measures mostly relate to saving electricity, gas and water; sorting and limiting waste and reducing the use of paper. A few of the optional measures applied by the design hotel, are the purchase of ecological products, waste sorting, the use of energy saving lighting (LED) and incentives for the personnel and guests to use bicycles. Green is the future and the Green Key label is a good way for companies to communicate their environmentally-aware image to guests, authorities and business relations. Maxine: “People increasingly look for sustainable hotels both at business and private level.”

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The Green Key is first and foremost a means to measure and promote the environmental performance in a company, but according to Maxine it also has a positive impact on the personal behaviour of all employees. “Internally it involves a culture conversion. We have to do it together, because ultimately that is the start of it all. Anyone who comes up with ideas knows they have to be sustainable. And it works, because there is a multitude of sustainable ideas! We encourage our employees to travel by public

transport. We have company bicycles and as from this month guests can use electric bicycles. And look at the breakfast we serve for example, we have banned all small packaging there. Our jam is presented in original preserve pots, the bread is biological and we consciously choose fair-trade products and suppliers from the region. From fresh apple juice produced by the farmer just outside Maastricht to coffee of the Maastricht coffee roaster 'Blanche Dael'. We no longer provide small packages with care products in the rooms, but quality products in large dispensers. And instead of always leaving new folders in the hotel rooms there is a notice board in each room with practical and tourist information. All small things that together make a big difference."

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"People are increasingly thinking about sustainability. Not only at home and at work, but also on holiday. The Green Key label enables them to choose green hotels. It is increasingly easier for companies to implement sustainability and there is more and more available at that level," says Maxine. "Logical thinking is essential, because not everything that carries the sustainable label is actually sustainable. It still remains a matter of personal consideration. As from this year, we have decided to halve the number of hard copy mailings and leaflets. On the other hand, the employees with many customer contacts have been equipped with an iPad to present Townhouse in a professional way."

There is also room in the Townhouse philosophy for the application of other types of socially responsible enterprising. Maxine: "We also consider the human factor and look for various possibilities to fit it in our business operation."



Maastricht porcelain for Townhouse Designhotel Maastricht

© Hugo Thomassen



Sleeping Townhouse Designhotel Maastricht

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Living Townhouse
Designhotel Maastricht
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Within our own HR plan, called ‘Heroes’, we have introduced the concept ‘Green Heroes’ in which our employees and their sustainable ideas are placed in the spotlight. The 65 employees of the four hotels of the La Bergère Hotel Group are mainly young people. We want to make those young people aware of sustainability.”

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Under the name “Barbed wire gala” the whole staff and management go out to clear up litter to experience for themselves how big the problem is. Maxine: “We also have done a project recently with mentally disabled youngsters who have co-operated in different areas of our organisation.”

“With all these provisions we have since established a good foundation from where to continue implementing new developments and activities. But anything needs to fit into the Townhouse philosophy. But as the concept of Townhouse provides other numerous sustainable opportunities, we are far from finished yet,” says Maxine.

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Sanne Tummers for REcentre
Interviewee /
Maxine Hofman, Marketing & Sales Manager
La Bergère Group (the hotel group Townhouse is part of)

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The Netherlands

www.La-Bergèregroup.com

Sector • Hotel

Year of foundation • 2009

Number of employees • 65

Turnover • N/A