

**COMPARING THREE OF
SOME OF THE TOP HOTELS OF EUROPE**

Having stayed for 3 weeks in 3 of the purported best hotels in Europe – Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Hamburg, Germany; Mandarin Oriental, Praha, The Czech Republic; and, Hotel Sacher, Salzburg, Austria – it was relatively easy to pick the winner.

In descending order, this is **TARGET**'s pick of the best and the worst:

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Hamburg, Germany

This hotel won the golden ring on **TARGET**'s merry-go-round of 3 hotels in Europe due to a number of reasons, those reasons included:

- a) The service at the hotel was the best of the 3 hotels that were surveyed;
- b) The hotel had the best, fastest, and most-reasonably priced laundry service, compared with the other 2 hotels; and,
- c) All in all, it was reasonable value for money.

There were some negative points about this hotel, also, which included:

- a) The hotel had the worst gymnasium of the 3 hotels; and,
- b) The hand-held, shower mixer, the heavy head of which is affixed to a flexible hose, covered in a metal sheath, could not set firmly in its holster in the shower stall and kept falling onto the floor, sometimes on one's foot (ouch!). When room service was told of this problem, no action was taken. Also, the water temperature was not constant so that constant adjustments had to be made during one's shower. Further, the water-evacuation system of the shower was quite inadequate.

One could criticise any hotel, of course, but the above-mentioned, 2 demerits with regard to this hotel need to be addressed by Management in this medium's opinion.

One very positive aspect of this wonderful hotel, which **TARGET** () is unlikely, ever, to forget, was the quality of its patronage.

The majority of the guests, staying at this hotel, and those, who came just to eat at the hotel's food outlets, were, mainly, upper crust Germans to be sure, their manners and consideration for other guests, being only too evident.

The ambiance of the hotel is such that it is conducive to one, thinking that he or she had just returned home – in spite of the fact that it is, after all, a hotel – and not a cheap one at that.

The entire décor is charming and although this is an old, historic building, the interior has been upgraded with all of the modern conveniences that one expects of a 5-star hotel, those conveniences, being introduced without detracting from the history of the structure.

As for the food, it is excellent, and the in-house bakery is second to none.

TARGET stayed at the Maria Callas Suite, Room 109, which is a very generous-sized suite of 3 separate rooms, overlooking the lake.

In this medium's opinion, all in all, this hotel offers good value for money.

Hotel Sacher, Salzburg, Austria

Hotel Sacher, Salzburg, Austria, is living off its long and famous history with its creation of the best way to produce a chocolate cake, now known, internationally, as Sacher Torte.

The hotel is very expensive, considering that which is offered to guests.

The food can be very good, but it is nothing to write home to mom; and, as for the Sacher Torte, it is terribly sweet, in this medium's opinion – almost inedible, in fact.

The most discouraging facets of Hotel Sacher, Salzburg, included:

- a) It had the worst bed of the 3 hotels surveyed, being uncomfortably hard;
- b) Suite 408-409, the suite in which **TARGET** stayed, was clean, but it was badly planned, with no vanity room or table for ladies, and with no real place to write a letter home;
- c) The hotel resembled a train station with new guests, coming in, almost on a daily basis, while the older guests were on their way out. It was rare to see the same guest more than twice at breakfast. As such, one was forced to endure an admixture of different nationalities, from Japanese, to Russians, to citizens from the Middle East, to citizens of Great Britain, to Italians, to Greeks. This would have been interesting, under normal circumstances, but the manners of many of the guests were, often, atrocious; and,
- d) The hotel imposes a 50-percent surcharge on all massages at the gymnasium on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. This makes the cost of a massage at Hotel Sacher, Salzburg, the most-expensive of the 3 hotels as well as being the worst value for money.

The cost of the laundry service is very expensive and it was the worst service of the surveyed hotels.

The housekeeping service, however, was excellent as was the service, extended by the concierge.

The view from **TARGET**'s suite was wonderful since one could view the entire collage of the old city and, in the evenings, lights illumined the bridge, linking the old city to the modern city.

TARGET cannot recommend this hotel because, inter alia, at a cost of €1,100 per night, it was about 30 percent higher than the much-better accommodation at Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten and it just is not worth an additional €250 per night in order to brag that one had put one's head on a pillow of Hotel Sacher, Salzburg.

Mandarin Oriental, Prague, The Czech Republic

The only saving grace of Mandarin Oriental, Prague (Praha in Czech) is its elegant spa where one is able to enjoy among the best of massages, delivered by well-trained (or so it seemed) masseuses.

Of the 3 European hotels, Mandarin Oriental, Prague, also, had the best gymnasium although, by Asian standards, it, still, was not a patch on, say, the gymnasium at Island Shangri-La, Hongkong.

Accommodation at this hotel was not good, at all, however, with the suites, being relatively small and

awkward and uncomfortable.

There is too little drawer space for clothes and the tiny wardrobes make one feel that Management does not welcome long-staying guests.

Other negatives about this hotel include:

- (a) There is no place in the rooms for ladies to put on make-up and/or style their hair;
- (b) The food at the lone restaurant of the hotel is not good, at all, with only about 15 items on the menu, and with no authentic Czech food on offer;
- (c) The cost of the laundry service is far too expensive and it was the costliest of the 3 European hotels that were surveyed;
- (d) There is no view from any window in any of the rooms since the old monastery, from which the hotel was built, is in the middle of the old city and all that one may see from one's window is another person's window;
- (e) The services, offered by the concierge, ranges from mediocre to very poor; and,
- (f) The ambiance of the entire hotel is not really conducive to being restful.

A very positive aspect of Mandarin Oriental, Prague, however, is the cleanliness of the entire hotel, with the housekeeping service, being spot on.

In conclusion, regardless of the cost of a suite at this hotel – **TARGET** paid €865 plus tax of 9 percent per night (€942; about \$HK12,257) – it is, just, not worth this kind of money.

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