



Spa specialist

Hildegard Dorn-Petersen FCSI explains how she got involved in an extraordinary spa project in Bavaria, and the unique challenges it presented

Most resort hotels and international brands such as Mandarin Oriental or Ritz Carlton would agree that a hotel spa is not just a nice add-on, but a potential profit centre. Now the discussion has moved on from whether a spa is needed to how to attract new guests to keep the money coming in. The spa project at Bavaria's Hotel Eisvogel is a case in point.

Creating a jewel

The Hotel Eisvogel is located in the scenic landscape of Lower Bavaria, in the small town of Bad Gögging, 60 miles north of Munich. The history of the hotel dates back three generations. Margit Zettl-Feldmann, the owner's daughter, has run the place since 1988. For years her ambition was to transform what was

a traditional business into a spa hotel. Realising the ambition would come at a cost though – when she finally got to put her plans into action, the investment in 24 new rooms and suites, plus 1,600 square metres of spa, was €6.5m.

Throughout the 18-month project, from the first steps in January 2012 to the official opening in July 2013, I was involved in all major steps as consultant, from a first strategy paper to actual implementation. Plans had been developed in 2011 by interior designer Josef Angermeier and his team. The areas for the pool zone and saunas had already been identified, but plenty of room was required in the wet zone and the spa area. "If you don't have enough space, you can't breathe or recuperate," says Zettl-Feldmann.

Various areas for a number of different purposes were also designed, from the library to relaxation rooms with a view over the park and a room for silence, featuring comfortable water beds. Another important task was to determine the number and size of various treatment rooms, most of which needed natural light. The balancing act was to enable each one to be a generous size while still providing a reasonable number of them.

Perfect for a hen party

The detailed plans were optimised to create the best guest experience along with the best workflow. The 1,600 square metre Eisvogel Spa & Bath House is now home to a heated indoor pool, two saunas, a steam bath, a fitness room and a gym,

plus 15 treatment rooms and a doctor's office. A spacious spa reception area is the centrepiece of the venue.

A particular challenge was the idea of a private spa suite. Initially, only one large space was planned with a steam room, massage tables and a relaxation zone. This area would have been occupied by only one couple for hours. So a more flexible solution was found: two Spa Suites were created in two adjacent rooms that can be connected if required and used by up to 10 people – a perfect place for a hen party.

"Since wellness is a holistic concept, the design concept does not end at the door of the Spa"

To be successful a spa needs a coherent approach and, above all, a unique selling point. As the Hotel Eisvogel is located right in the heart of "Hallertau" – a renowned hop-growing area – the central theme was found quickly, especially since the hops are not only used for brewing beer, but also offer excellent health benefits.

Special treatments, baths, massages and soft packs have been created, in which hop oil or dried hops are used. This taps into current trends – "going local" is on the rise, as is "from farm to fork". Since good ideas are often picked up and copied by the competition, "HopfenWell" has been listed as a registered trademark.

Quality is everything

Providing quality is central to everything at the Eisvogel – quality of food, service and facilities. These high standards apply to the spa as well. The team of owners, interior designers and I found a way to bring together innovative products with a regional touch, creating spaces with a warm atmosphere – a touch of shabby chic means the furniture reflects this too – but at the same time integrating specially-built

working units that are easy to use, and some high-functioning massage tables.

Since wellness is a holistic concept, the design concept does not end at the door of the Spa. For example, fresh hops are bright green so this colour continues as a recurring theme in the hotel rooms.

So what have both owners and consultant learned? The main thing is to keep a close eye on interior design, even the small details. This avoids problems such as missing hand showers for cleaning bathtubs in treatment rooms or non-removable, non-washable cushion covers, especially in the Spa.

The collaboration between client and consultant has proved so satisfactory on this occasion that the relationship will continue for some time to come. ■

The boom in the German spa hotel sector

A special highlight of the Eisvogel spa is the gastronomic all-inclusive concept. In addition to the hotel's breakfast buffet, a 'hotel and day spa' guest can help themselves from a delicious buffet any time between 9am and 5pm. This is the perfect way to enjoy a relaxing spa day, because there is no rush at breakfast or pressure due to restaurant opening hours.

People can have a snack, light lunch, cup of coffee or tea or a piece of homemade cake whenever they like. This brings extra value to Day Spa packages, which range in price from €139 to €199. It's certainly proved popular within the region: the first sold-out weekend confirmed the capacity of the spa, which was full of happy people moving around in a relaxed manner.

It has been three years since the German government reduced VAT on hotel accommodation from 19% to 7%. This significant reduction has created improved market conditions and tax equity in comparison to other European countries, and resulted in investments of nearly €2bn in the German hotel market for renovation and expansion. Let us hope the current political negotiations in Germany will not bring a change of mind.



Consultant

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Specifications

Eisvogel Hotel & Spa
Bad Gögging / Bavaria
www.hotel-eisvogel.de
58 rooms

Restaurant seating 300 people
Bar and beer garden (in season)

Spa

13 treatment rooms plus
two private spa suites
Single room: €70 - €140
Double room: €164 - €205
Suite: €240 - €375

Interior design

Planungsbüro Josef Angermeier

Spa suppliers

Thermarium
lonto Comed
Unbescheiden
Kaldewei
Grohe
Alpenmanufaktur
GARPA

Spa brands

Maria Galland
Pharmos Natur Green Luxury
PINO Natural Spa Therapy