

magdas HOTEL, Austria

<https://www.magdas-hotel.at>

[Andrea Amman]



magdas HOTEL is a colourful coming together - of globetrotters, visitors, revellers, explorers and discoverers. Run by twenty former refugees and hotel professionals, in cooperation with artists, architects and students, magdas HOTEL is something different: a place for meetings and connections, going far beyond regular hotel experience. A stylish lounge, cafe, library and garden bring together tourists, neighbours, park visitors, the local creative scene, students from the art academy next door. Readings, exhibitions, concerts, film nights, discussions and Social Dinners mean the hotel is always alive with the exchange of ideas.

Business-focused, socially-run magdas HOTEL is part of Caritas Vienna's Social Business group. Their aim is to address social matters through a market approach, wherever possible. The concept of a social business is based on Nobel Prize-winner Muhammed Yunus: all income is reinvested, to create more social change. The hotel does not receive any public funding that is not also available to other companies. magdas HOTEL must be self-financing, without losing sight of its ultimate goal: improving the lives of otherwise marginalised people.



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Migrants with a refugee background face problems in finding work in Austria. Challenges include a lack of German, a reluctance on the part of some employers, and a long wait (of months or sometimes years) before the approval of asylum status, which is a requirement for legal employment. We are convinced that staff who come from around the world bring real advantages to the hotel business – skills, talents, languages and cultural insights – that give magdas HOTEL a significant advantage over its competitors. The experience of the past few months, since the opening of the hotel, proves us right.

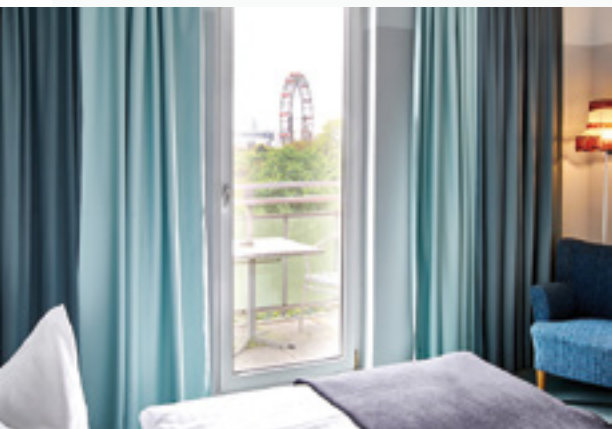


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FACTS & FIGURES

- Opened in February 2015
- 20 former refugees and 10 experienced hotel staff
- 16 nationalities
- More than 20 languages spoken
- 88 rooms in five categories, 60% with balconies and three with wheelchair access
- Suites and penthouse have TV and satellite
- Salon with lounge and bar, terrace and library
- Rooms from € 62
- Free wifi and tablets for rent
- Bike rental
- Seminar rooms
- Potential for hosting large events

The hotel had an occupancy of around 90 % this April and May, June around 85% so we are on a good path. We are in competition with lots of other hotels, not all the guests coming know about the social business, so they just compare the rates and book, but our costs for labour work are much higher as most of the refugees have no hotel experience.



For the future, the very best would be if other hotels and restaurants see that the concept works, that refugees are great for the tourism industry and therefore employ them easier. For support we have a lot of individual trainings for the refugees financed thru the magdas academy (where guests can donate).

The locals around were a bit scared in the beginning what we do here in their neighbourhood but also curious so we invited them to help while renovating, with painting, putting furniture together and we made a nice party to say thank you to involve them in the business.

Recommendations for others who want to open a business like ours are that you employ trained and experienced people as well, as here in magdas we started with one trained staff member to 5 refugees, which didn't work. I would probably start the business with one to one, so everyone has his buddy to learn from.