

Work on new 4-star hotel moves ahead

The structural construction was completed last week on a new luxury spa hotel in Budapest's Jewish Quarter. The project to build a hotel on the site of the former Hungária Fürdő baths and Continental Hotel was announced last October and the project's cornerstone was laid in April this year.

The Continental Hotel Zara is due to open in summer 2010 and the project is expected to cost around EUR 50 million. The once-grand facade of the old Hungária baths stood abandoned for years on Dohány utca and as it is a protected building

it was incorporated into the new project. The first baths were built on the site in 1827, only to be washed away in the great flood of 1838. The building – of which the remains still stand – dates back to 1910.

Grand plans

The new "Superior" Zara hotel will have 272 rooms and suites and a large, rooftop wellness and fitness centre, as well as a conference room that will accommodate up to 400 and a green park in the courtyard, the developer says.

The Hungaria Spa was one of Budapest's three major spas and the new hotel plans to revive this tradition.

Both the architectural plans and the interior design of the building was created by award-winning artists, whom worked on the hotel chain's first Budapest facility as well.

Last week's ceremony was attended by numerous members of the new staff as well as László Duli, the last director of the Continental Hotel, which shut its doors back in 1970.



The final stage of construction on The Continental Hotel Zara can now begin, with structural completion last week.

Trading through tough times

Vienna Trader Fair organiser drums up business across the region

JAN MAINKA

"We are dealing with an integrated economic area, a kind of Danube axis," explains Matthias Limbeck, CEO of Austrian trade fair organiser Reed CEE GmbH. It is not surprising, therefore, that he is visiting the countries of the region in person in preparation for the coming trade fair year.

Reed CEE GmbH is a subsidiary of the world's largest trade fair organiser, the British company Reed Exhibitions. In Austria it is active at both the trade fair locations Vienna and Salzburg. Based on a long-term contract with the city of Vienna Reed Exhibitions is in charge of marketing the 55,000 square metre Vienna trade fair centre. "That size is perfectly suited to our concept. With larger areas permanent capacity utilisation is a big problem. In addition, larger trade fair areas simply come up against the tolerance level of visitors," says press chief Paul Hammerl.

For five years the trade fair centre in Vienna has also offered a 7,000 square metre convention centre. The juxtaposition of the two is no coincidence. "We are currently strongly experiencing how the boundaries between trade fairs and conventions are becoming increasingly blurred. For example providers of relevant products and services present themselves on the periphery of trade conferences. Exhibitors and trade fair visitors also expect relevant conferences and talks alongside trade fairs," says Limbeck.

At the same time the role of the trade fair organisers is changing. "We are something like relationship brokers, rather than simply providing exhibition space. It is important to bring together providers and customers in as targeted a way as possible," explains Limbeck. The timelines of this approach is also new. "While bringing together supply and demand is mainly limited to the few trade fair days among traditional trade fair organisers, we support our clients the whole year round in establishing contacts, for example through data-pooling."

Crisis only hit a few trade fairs hard

The crisis has also had an effect on Reed Exhibitions. This year the trade fairs for financial services and real estate were hit the hardest, with roughly a third of exhibitors staying away. The boat fair scheduled for November even had to be called off, since the market had shrunk by as much as 80% this year.

Most of the trade fairs, however, remained stable, mainly because their markets are dominated by the middle class which is less affected by the global downturn and secondly because they target private consumption, which so far in Austria has barely been hit by the crisis. All the trade fairs for construction and home



improvement have been very successful. According to Hammerl the explanation for this phenomenon is that consumers take greater care of their homes in times of crisis, and that home owners are now paying more attention to the cost efficiency of their home.

2010 opens with Vienna Car Show

Next year will open with the Vienna Car Show which takes place every two years, and is already looking like it will be very successful. "Even now we have signed contracts with around 85% of the Austrian importers. All the large European suppliers are on board," says Limbeck. Although the fair is regarded by the car industry as a public exhibition rather than a trade fair, Limbeck is pleased that the show will be used by some car companies for world premieres of their products. So far it is certain that Audi will unveil its new A8 at the show.

A further highlight is Real Vienna, the international trade fair for commercial and industrial real estate which takes place in May. The focus of the trade fair this year will be the countries of the CEE/SEE regions (Central and Eastern Europe/Southeast Europe). "In these regions there are positive developments on the horizon. The banks are again sending out positive signals about financing real estate projects and the effect of that will soon show on the markets," says Limbeck.

Limbeck is confident that Real Vienna is on the right track with its concentrated focus on the property markets in the CEE/SEE regions: "The property regions in these countries continue to hold enormous potential. Nowhere else is there a possibility like that offered by Real Vienna to meet with more than 7,000 decision-makers and specialists in the property markets in Central and Southeast Europe for doing business and networking within four days."

This year's Real Vienna attracted 242 exhibitors from 24 countries. The trade fair was attended by 7,082 visitors over three days, including visitors from Hungary. In addition to the Vienna expo, the trade fairs for art, gastronomy and aquatherm are popular among visitors from Hungary.

The trade fair managers are keen to interest this target group even more strongly in a visit to the Vienna trade fair centre. "At our trade fairs in Salzburg around 25% of the visitors now come from Germany. We would like to achieve a similar ratio of guests from Vienna and the countries which are practically on the doorstep: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary," says Limbeck.

All this, however, is not a one-way street. For example, in Hungary Reed Exhibitions collaborates very effectively with Hungexpo, such as by referring customers. Reed Exhibitions does not currently have plans, however, to set up its own subsidiary in Hungary. Limbeck is keeping a close eye on the development of a second trade fair centre just outside Budapest's gates as part of the Tópark mega project, although he does not believe that the market is big enough for two trade fair centres.



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