



THE FONTENAY: LUXURY RETHOUGHT INTERVIEW WITH THE MANAGING DIRECTOR THIES SPONHOLZ

Hamburg, August 2022. Changing times require new approaches. Managing Director Thies Sponholz, who has been steering the fortunes of The Fontenay Hotel on Hamburg's Outer Alster since the construction phase, reflects on the changed starting position after the past two and a half years. He states a change in values for the luxury hotel industry, which was accelerated by the pandemic.

Mr. Sponholz, what is the starting position of The Fontenay after the past years, which were very challenging for the tourism industry, among others?

- The Fontenay has enjoyed greater demand than ever since the summer of 2021. We welcome a lot of families to the hotel, guests use us as a stopover destination on their way to the coasts and many have spent their summer holidays here at the Außenalster in the countryside. Really unusual for a city hotel in a major German city. The demand for our suites, which range from 65 to 200 square metres, is also remarkable. Furthermore, we are experiencing very short-term booking behaviour, both in terms of room bookings and event planning. A high degree of flexibility remains in demand here. After four and a half years on the market, we enjoy many enthusiastic regular guests who keep giving us honest feedback and motivate us to develop further.

What features of The Fontenay have proven to be location advantages in and after Corona times?

- The positioning of The Fontenay as a city resort in liveable Hamburg has proven to be a great strength in Corona times. "The green city in the forest" - that is the name of the Hanseatic city of Hamburg in a Japanese translation. 27 percent of Hamburg's national territory is natural area. This includes the Fontenay area directly on the south-western shore of the Außenalster. It is a place of nature and tranquillity - in the heart of the city. All 130 rooms and suites look out and almost all have their own balcony. There is over 14,000m² of window space, light, fresh air and space in abundance. The boundaries between indoors and outdoors are blurred. A special unique selling point is of course our indoor/outdoor pool on the sixth floor with a view of the Outer Alster, but also the large terraces of all restaurants and the Fontenay Bar. That is why I am convinced that the hotel is a symbol for a new form of modern luxury. The Fontenay is pure "Lakeside Luxury" and stands for the perfect balance of nature and urbanity. The hotel is thus a prime example of the global mega-trend Urban Nature.



What do you think are the new priorities for luxury hotels?

- In my opinion, trust is more important than ever when travelling. It is essential that guests feel safe, secure and comfortable in the hotel. Of course, this requires even more sophisticated hygiene concepts, but also well-versed staff who are always approachable and competent to answer questions, respond to wishes or even anticipate guests' needs. Once this bond is established, regular guests can be won over who are highly committed to the hotel and recommend it to others. For me, personal recommendation is still the most efficient form of marketing.

Do guests have different expectations when it comes to luxury?

- Yes, from my point of view, guests definitely have different ideas of what luxury means to them. If the basic requirements such as hygiene, quality of service, good beds, excellent food, harmonious drinks and service mentality are met, small details can make the difference for each individual. For one guest it is the possibility of an extended breakfast, the next appreciates the proximity to the airport, yet another loves the running track directly in front of the door. Depending on preferences, cultural imprint and travel occasion, these can be very different things.

Do you notice a change in values in the luxury sector?

- The definition of luxury is as individual as the people themselves. And guests also want to be perceived and recognised in this individuality.

In my opinion, however, a general development is the shift away from obvious and ostentatious luxury towards new, more sustainable values: quality of life, space, tranquillity, privacy, nature combined with urban amenities and self-realisation are just some of the new varieties of luxury.

I observe a change in values regarding the concept of luxury among our guests, but also among our friends and acquaintances. It is less and less about the hunt for quick status or exclusively personal fulfilment. Rather, the question of deeper meaning is in the foreground. People want special experiences and emotions to share with their loved ones. Time well spent is the most valuable commodity here.

But a mindful and sustainable use of available resources is also playing an increasingly prominent role in purchasing decisions. Guests want to take responsibility for themselves, for others, but also for the environment and question very carefully what added value the product or service offers.



THE FONTENAY
HAMBURG



Listening to the guest properly, concentrating fully on him and being a host with a natural cordiality - these are important core values for managing director Thies Sponholz. Born in Husum, he started his career with an apprenticeship as a restaurant specialist at Landhaus Carstens in Timmendorfer Strand. This was followed by positions at the Hotel Suvretta House in St. Moritz and the Hotel Negresco in Nice, and later at Sheraton in the USA. With America, Thies Sponholz fulfilled a dream. He worked in Palo Alto in California's Silicon Valley and attended Cornell University. Back in Germany, he held the position of resident manager at the Europäischer Hof in Baden-Baden, won the Egon Steigenberger Award and went to the USA again, this time to Hilton. After returning home, Thies Sponholz took his first job as director at the Badischer Hof in Baden-Baden. In 2006, he joined the Rocco Forte Hotel de Rome as General Manager, where he worked for seven years.

Since 1 January 2015, he has been Executive Director at The Fontenay.

The Fontenay is a reflection of modern Hamburg - a homage to the Hanseatic city. Located directly on the Outer Alster, this "Modern Classic" unites urban nature and cosmopolitan lifestyle in a special way. The fascinating, sculptural architecture houses 130 luxurious rooms and suites, many with a view of the Alster. The heart of the hotel is a glazed inner courtyard planted with trees and the imposing 27m-high enclosed atrium. Casual bar culture can be found with a dream view of the Alster in the Fontenay Bar. For meetings and events, four function rooms with 48 sqm - 220 sqm and daylight are available. Above the rooftops of Hamburg, you can experience an exclusive wellness world with indoor/outdoor pool on 1,000m². The hotel is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World.

Photos are available here: <http://www.thefontenay.de/media/download-galerie/>.

Press contact:

Claudia Bellmann

Director of PR

Tel: +49 40 605 6605 837

Claudia.bellmann@thefontenay.com

www.thefontenay.com



A MEMBER OF
THE LEADING HOTELS
OF THE WORLD