

MOMA1890 owner Maximilian Seidel on the topics of solar/preservation/energy::

How do you defy the energy crisis at MOMA1890?

Maximilian Seidel: We have been dealing with the energy efficiency of our listed building for years and have a special responsibility: after all, we hoteliers are not in a position to control the individual behaviour of our guests. Every guest takes a shower for as long as he wants and if he leaves his window open, we have no control over that either. Of course, there is smart building technology for all these cases. But building technology also requires energy and often represents a costly intervention in the building. Finding a balanced solution that saves energy on the one hand, is feasible on the other, and is also financially viable, is a challenge, especially nowadays.

Do you currently manage to maintain your standards?

We manage. However, we as a boutique hotel do not have any energy-intensive wellness areas, swimming pools or large kitchens. We constantly review our own processes and optimise our energy consumption.

You also deliberately do without mini-bars in the rooms?

We have been doing this since 2010, when we took over the hotel operations ourselves. If you calculate what 50 refrigerators running continuously consume in electricity per year, you quickly arrive at orders of magnitude that correspond to the annual consumption of a small family. Therefore, we have decided to offer our guests a so-called Maxibar, which is available freshly filled in our lounge.

Is it realistic for a hotel in a listed old building to save electricity?

The most important measure we have been working on since 2019 - long before the energy crisis - is the construction of our solar system on the roof. We can use it to generate a good part of the electricity we need ourselves. So on hot days, our guests cool their rooms with self-generated electricity and take showers with emission-free heated water. Nevertheless, the cost of energy is a factor that cannot be ignored; price increases for the rooms and suites are unavoidable.

What percentage of your electricity needs can you generate yourself?

About 25 per cent. However, as a hotel we have the favourable circumstance that we have a comparatively high electricity demand during the day in order to consume the energy we produce ourselves. In the morning, the coffee machines, dishwashers and vacuum cleaners are running. Our computers and lighting are in operation all day. Therefore, the conditions are different from those in most private households.

Where do you put the electricity you don't use yourself?

We wanted to avoid operating expensive batteries. After all, they contain valuable resources and only pay for themselves after 10 years. However, it is questionable whether they will still have sufficient charging capacity after this time. That's why we decided to use the remaining electricity to preheat our hot water, which is always needed in a hotel. Even though this is not the most efficient use of electricity, we came to the conclusion with our experts that it is the most sensible solution for us.

A solar system on the roof of a listed house - actually sounds like a contradiction?

It was indeed very difficult to get approval from the listed building authorities. After several attempts and a small odyssey through Munich's offices, we were able to convince the heritage conservationists of our concept - albeit with a delay of almost two years. This was painful for us

insofar as it meant that we were caught out by the supply bottlenecks in the wake of the Corona crisis. When the permit was finally granted, there was no more material. With great commitment and persistence, we managed to go fully operational at the beginning of March 2023.