

The World's First Zero-Star Hotel

Located in a converted nuclear bunker in Switzerland, this hotel offers no amenities, no frills, and no comfort.

In the last decade or so, the luxury hotel industry has really taken off. Larger-than-life hospitality impresarios have been routinely tripping over each other to build the hottest hotel, the most lavish accommodations in the most opulent milieu. But the economic climate now stresses affordability over impractical extravagance, and the fashion world has taken note. Recession-friendly is the new Eco Chic, and hoteliers have taken notice.



The brainchild of Swiss artists Frank and Patrik Riklin, Null Stern Hotel (opened at the beginning of June) takes the concept of frugality and multiplies it by a million, or, more suitably, it takes the concept of luxury and multiplies it by zero. For a hotel to gain the dubious distinction of zero stars, it had better be pretty damn unaccommodating. And it is. Located in a converted nuclear bunker in Teufen, Canton Appenzell Outer Rhodes, Switzerland, the hotel offers no amenities, no frills, and no comfort. Sounds great, right?

Null Stern boasts three large rooms, two bedrooms, each of which accommodates up to seven guests, and a bathroom with a series of toilets all in a row and gang showers. There's no heat, but there are plenty of bottles that can be filled with hot water, and complimentary slippers for walking across the icy floor. There are also no windows, but there are a row of monitors in the reception area. These are hardly the features you'll find at a W Hotel or Four Seasons.

So why on Earth would anyone want to stay there? Well one reason would have to be for sport. The hyperbolic austerity of the hotel is more conceptual than it is earnest. The minimal approach suggests a commentary on the state of the world. If we can survive in such conditions, we don't need fancy amenities like decorations, entertainment, or comfort. But also, the hotel is just pretty damn cheap. For £6 (about US\$10), you're given a room, a bed, and... well that's pretty much it, but it's still pretty damn cheap.



Queen of the cold war
Photo: Asteier für Sonderaufgaben



Hot-water bottles
Photo: Asteier für Sonderaufgaben

Ultimately, people seem to be treating the hotel as an experience, a social experiment more than actual accommodation. But it's also a social experience. Living is all communal and it's impossible to ignore your fellow guests. Customers enter a draw to see who gets a hot morning shower (there's only enough hot water for one), while bed assignments are decided with the spin of an old bike wheel. Bedtime is decided by taking the average amount of sleep everyone wants and subtracting it from a mandatory 7 a.m. wake-up call. Who needs privacy, anyway?

It may sound crazy, but the Riklin Brothers are already planning on expanding the Zero Star Hotel concept to other bunkers around the world. Already, it has attracted interest from recognized Hospitality Advisor Daniel Charbonnier, who has previously worked for Larry Flynt and Four Seasons.

Start selling your possessions now, because zero is the new seven.

Photos: Null Stern Hotel

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