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First Look: Matild Palace, Budapest

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Matild Palace, [a Luxury Collection Hotel](#) has opened in Budapest with restaurants and bars to follow this Autumn.

Transformed by Maria Vafiadis of [MKV Design](#), in collaboration with local architects, Péter Cajka and Puhl Antal, Matild Palace is the culmination of a five-year project to convert a neglected UNESCO World Heritage Site into one of Europe's grandest hotels.



[MKV](#) has woven together a narrative rich in sense of place, which embraces the architectural, crafts, social and cultural inheritance of Budapest while creating a hotel that is relevant, beautiful and comfortable for 21st Century travellers.

Typifying buildings of its era, a passageway with full-height ornamental gates and a high vaulted ceiling is carved through the building, offering access to the café on one side and reception, lounge and dining areas on

the other. Over-scaled pendants made of individual porcelain pieces showcase the next chapter of the local Zsolnay tile tradition and crafted items of furniture and elegant plantings hint at what is to come.

The interiors blend hints of Baroque, Romanesque and Art Nouveau, with metalwork, embroidery and tile-making and in the tones of aquamarine which grace the city's old rooftops. Just as the Duchess commissioned Budapest's first lift for the original Matild Palace, her latter-day statement piece is a modern, custom-designed reception desk in beaten brass. The lobby lounge is a double-height space featuring a floor-to-ceiling collection of images of Budapest printed onto metal, in the centre of which an oil on canvas portrait of Princess Klotilde resides.



The Belvarosi Café has been reinvented as Matild Café and Cabaret, a contemporary destination with all the glamour of its predecessor. A long-buried stage in the central atrium was excavated and renovated and will once again play host to musicians and cabaret; the mezzanine gallery which flows around this will be ideal for people-watching. The timber-clad walls, architectural features on the ceiling and café chandeliers have

all been retained and restored to their former beauty while table lamps have been introduced to provide a sense of intimacy.

Opposite, the ground floor has been re-planned to accommodate Spago Budapest by Wolfgang Puck, a contemporary dining experience. Both the restaurant and the café spill onto new outdoor dining terraces, marking the first ‘gastro street’ in Budapest.

From the days of the Roman Empire, Budapest’s reputation for thermal bathing was second to none, and numerous bathhouses remain in the city today. Naturally, Matild Palace was destined to have its own spa inspired by the bathing culture and re-interpreted into a sanctuary where the graceful forms of the swans which inhabit the River Danube infuse the design. Doors resemble their soft white plumes of feathers and an ornate metalwork screen depicts their dance; the ethereal relaxation room hints of traditional bathhouses.



MKV completely re-configured the first floor upwards to create 111 guestrooms and 19 suites. The rooms are grand and elegant with four-metre high ceilings and large windows offering views across the city. The

envelope of the rooms is timeless and pared back with simple painted walls and elegant panelling, allowing the story to unfold in specially designed features and luxurious fabrics. Belle Époque flourishes complement the architecture of the building, embroidery and fine metalwork reflecting Hungary’s traditional crafts heritage, and a thoughtful colour palette of teal, green, gold and copper reflecting the hues of the iconic Budapest roofscape. Materials include faux shagreen, large verre églomisé mirrors, marble-topped tables, crystal lamps and Hungarian-style fishbone parquet flooring complemented by soft rugs. With an emphasis on detail and craftsmanship, full-height headboards are upholstered in embossed leather onto which an elaborate art-deco pattern has been stitched in a design inspired by The Adventures of Sinbad, a Hungarian classic published in 1911 and authored by one of the writers who used to frequent the palace.

The bathrooms also take guests to a new level of luxury with their bespoke bathtubs and rain showers. Designed as a private spa, the wet areas are clad in turquoise glass mosaic interleaved with gold – a nod to Budapest’s famous Gellért Baths. Richly veined Calacatta Oro marble to the walls, floors and vanities and bronze fittings complete the jewel-like character of their interiors.



The Maria Klotilde Royal Suite has been imagined as the princess’s private apartment, designed to reflect her personality and social standing. Modern and traditional furniture spans the opulent chamber along with chandeliers, handmade glass pieces, antiques sourced in Budapest and a parquet floor. Everything is custom designed and the original artwork is crafted by acclaimed Hungarian artists.

The three-storey Crown Tower Suite is also noteworthy; created within one of Matild Palace’s turrets, it is the first suite in Hungary to come with a 48-metre-high viewing level offering a 360- degree panorama of the city.



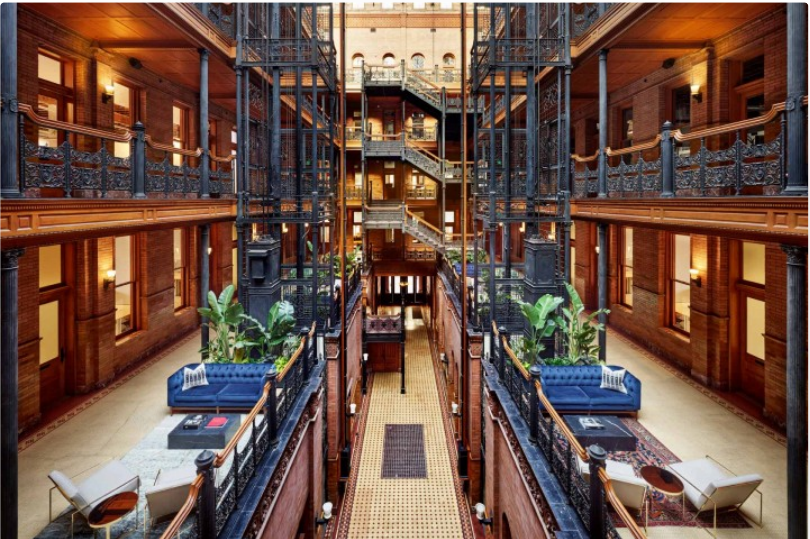
The Duchess rooftop bar has the ambience of a private club with a glowing onyx bar displaying its liquor “library”. Tables are held aloft by brass peacocks accompanied by giraffe sculptures. A large terrace where guests can sit within the Baroque skyline completes the magic.

“Reimagining Matild Palace as one of the finest hotels in central Europe was an extraordinary experience,” says Maria Vafiadis, founder & Managing Director of MKV Design. “We were fortunate in a client who was

passionate about the project, a hotel brand that was a strong partner for our aspirations, the property’s location in a city which loves its palaces, and historical context. While clearly a new hotel, Matild Palace feels as if she’s been there forever.”

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