

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Swiss hotel Le Bijou offers contactless accommodations

March 27, 2020



Swiss luxury hotel Le Bijou. Image credit: Le Bijou

By DIANNA DILWORTH

Swiss luxury hotel group **Le Bijou** has built its strategy around offering clients discreet people-free check-ins, which many have come to appreciate as the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic rages on.

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For affluent consumers stuck in Switzerland because their flights home were cancelled or locals looking to isolate away from older relatives, the brand offers luxury apartments in Zurich, Lucerne and Zug. The company has been marketing this option on Instagram and digital media in hopes of being there for consumers who need luxury accommodations but do not want a concierge or a front desk.

"We were looking at the situation closely when everything was being shut down in China and when the virus reached Europe, we wanted to try to find new ways of making revenues to survive as a company," said Alexander Hbner, cofounder of Le Bijou, Zurich.

"We wanted to keep our staff working and to stay open and do something about the crisis and not just look for governmental support," he said.

"We had a little bit of extra time, since it hit the tourism industry a bit earlier than others."

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Covid-19: We are open 24x7 and currently the safest place to host guests. #covid #covid\_19 #covid19

A post shared by Le Bijou (@lebijou\_switzerland) on Mar 19, 2020 at 1:17pm PDT

### Social distancing

Le Bijou offers luxury apartments and penthouses with no front desk. Guests use a door code to let themselves in.

One of the benefits of staying at Le Bijou is 24/7 check-in and guests do not typically encounter any other people when they stay, which is a selling point in this era of social distancing.

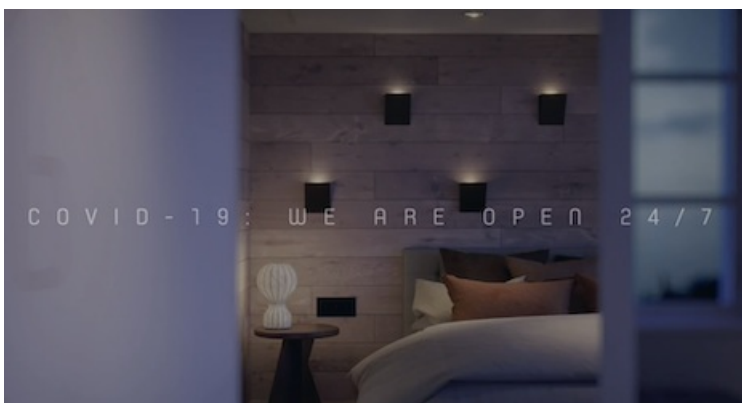
The group's slogan has always been "hotel service without the other hotel guests."

Social media has been a core channel for Le Bijou, so the company decided to experiment with it ahead of the crisis. It created COVID-19-related social media posts and is promoting "quarantine apartments" on its homepage.

"We thought it was a great idea to try it out and we developed the COVID-19 service page, ads and campaigns for social media," Mr. Hbner said.

"We usually hear from business travelers or high-end tourists, but now we are hearing from people looking for a safe place to go," he said.

"I just spoke to a client that was referred to by a concierge team who was checking in and flying in by private jet. Switzerland is pretty well-known for having quite a good healthcare system and good doctors and clinics, and a lot of people are trying to get in, but now it might not be possible."



Swiss luxury hotel Le Bijou is open 24/7 for hotel guests who want to self-isolate. Image credit: Le Bijou

## Self-containment

The apartments normally cost about \$1,000 a night, but Le Bijou has dropped rates due to the current healthcare crisis. Guests can stay for around \$400-\$500 a night.

"We don't want to take advantage of the situation," Mr. Hbner said.

Right now, the hotel is at 50-60 percent capacity. Inquiries for long-term bookings are up, the company claims.

The hotel has foregone daily cleanings to cut down on interactions. Guests can request cleanings and leave while masked staff performs their duties. Guests can also leave garbage outside.

"We get inquiries from people who have tested positive, but we have told them not to come," Mr. Hbner said. "The government doesn't recommend you leave your house if you are positive, then it would travel around.

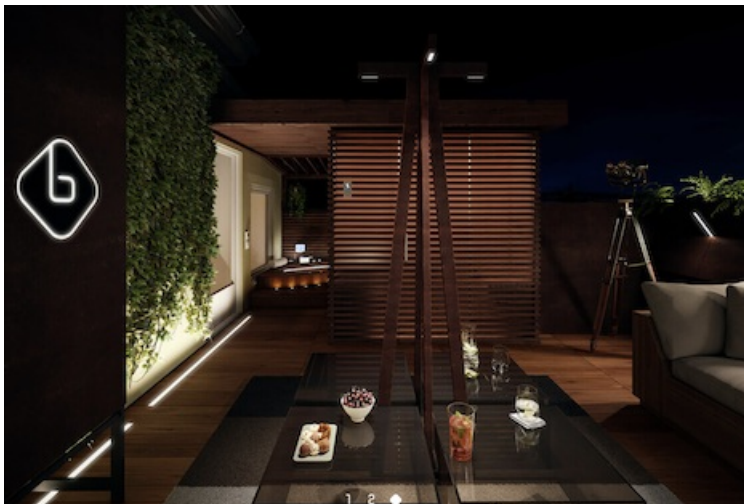
"We are assuming people are self-containing at Le Bijou," he said.

Switzerland itself is also on lockdown and reporting almost 12,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus.

The hotel could also be a good option for affluent consumers who need to see a doctor for another reason and do not want to mess with contagious hospitals and medical clinics.

"We've had inquiries for additional healthcare services and medical support," Mr. Hbner said. "We have the network and we know the people because there is already some medical tourism in Switzerland already, so it is not completely absurd.

"Nurses can do house calls through online booking partnerships already and now it is time to make use of it and offer it to clients," he said.



*Swiss luxury hotel Le Bijou. Image credit: Le Bijou*

In the post-coronavirus scenario, as affluent consumers return to travel, some may be hesitant to interact closely with others. LeBijou offers the solution with a no-contact offering.

"I think we will benefit in the future," Mr. Hbner said.

"People will know they can check in without meeting people," he said. "As a self-check-in, high-end hotel brand, people will feel safe in such a situation."