

Hospitality Interiors

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WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Swissôtel Kursaal Bern

Bern, Switzerland

The launch of Swissôtel Kursaal Bern marks a new era for one of the city's most historic properties, and a triumphant entry into hotel design for Nina Mair.



This June, the doors open to Nina Mair's first hotel project. Commissioned by Accor Group, Nina's interior design vision for the Swissôtel Kursaal Bern is a celebration of heritage, natural materials, progressive functionality and warm hospitality.

The Kursaal is one of the most famous houses in Bern, Switzerland. Positioned on a hill with breathtaking views across the river and UNESCO old town, the site has been an important cultural meeting place for locals and travellers since 1860. This year, this historic building will be reborn as the Accor Group's flagship example of Swiss hospitality excellence.

Award-winning Austrian interior and product designer, Nina Mair, was selected to transform the hotel's lobby and 171 rooms. Swissôtel vice president, Lilian Roten, explains: "Our alpine heritage has its roots in craftsmanship, sustainable design and a conscious, active way of life. This is exactly what Nina Mair's design brings to the new Swissôtel Kursaal Bern. It's through these approaches that we offer our guests a sense of wellbeing, energy and joy of life."



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Nina sought to balance Kursaal Bern's legacy as a community meeting place with the needs of modern business and leisure travellers, through a sophisticated yet homely atmosphere. Guests might come for work on a Friday and stay the weekend with family. The design is characterised by timelessness, a connection to nature, intuitive design features and soothing materials. Nina says: "My goal was to create a coherent ambience in which guests feel at home. Above all, local and renewable materials are used, combined with technical refinements to enhance each guest's stay."

The curvaceous form of the lobby – an important meeting and living space – has been configured into zones of light, custom-made furniture which are easily rearranged for social encounters or privacy. Clusters of greenery act as friendly room dividers, and acoustics are carefully managed via wall panels and niches. Nina creates a strong connection to the outdoors by enhancing natural light through large, glazed walls which open the lobby to the gardens, fishpond and city views. In the evening,

Nina's lobby ceiling design comes alive through sunken light pockets which impart a glamorous glow.

The lobby counter, however, is the major centrepiece. Taking inspiration from the woodwork motifs of the original building, Nina developed a bespoke stone counter imprinted with a contemporary 'fretwork' relief pattern across the surface. To balance the tactility, Nina finishes the countertop in leather that is beautifully soft to touch. More of an art piece than a fixture, the concept marries history with modernity, and craftsmanship with technology – leaving visitors with a lasting impression.

Her design uses space intelligently, for a sense of openness while being pleasantly cocooned. Rooms feature customised, built-in furniture – long stone sideboards double as storage or desks, and oak boudoir dressers, headboards with twin side tables, and bench seating deliver comfort and function in compact spaces. The joinery is by Felix Graf, which manufactures striking bespoke furniture and fittings in its workshop in Bavaria, Germany.





Multi-use zones provide cosy living or working corners, and custom-tiled bathrooms open or close via sliding smoked-glass doors, with curtains for additional privacy.

Technological comforts have been implemented with discretion, for a personalised sense of wellbeing. A dimmable bedside lighting system and customised baths with rainfall showers facilitate the perfect night's sleep. Rooms are also fitted with air purifiers, noise reduction and warm, adjustable lighting. Inside the Vitality Suites – an innovative wellness concept unique to Kursaal Bern – guests can enjoy custom-made fitness walls, yoga areas and personalised training routines.

Nina's restrained material palette references the site's history while creating a calm atmosphere. In her trademark style, the designer chose to simplify rather than overtly add to the space. Inspiration for the two chosen materials – local oak and tiles – came from the building's heritage, and is applied in sweeping motions through communal and private spaces in a clear and unified expression. Inside room entries and bathrooms, entire surfaces are laid with handmade Italian ceramic tiles.

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The washing basins and shower trays were specially designed by the architects, and realised by Swiss manufacturer Laufen, which, through its BESPOKE programme, produced the unique design elements – in colours custom-created by Nina Mair to match the existing surfaces and ceramic tiles. Two customised colour schemes are recognisable among the 170 rooms in the new Swissôtel, depending on the room typology. The minimalistic fixtures supplied by German company Grohe complement the high-quality sanitary objects from Laufen, creating a sense of wellness that deserves the description “designed and made in Europe”.

A soothing spectrum of pale timber, mint green, soft pink and cool greys characterise the contemporary interiors, which Nina devised in two schemes – larger Premier rooms are cast in cool green, while smaller Classic rooms use warm, cosy tones. Natural leather and wool details throughout all rooms satisfy the senses.

The opening of Swissôtel Kursaal Bern in June 2021 marks the beginning of a new era for this celebrated site – presented through Nina Mair's sophisticated and empathetic design language.

www.swissotel.com/hotels/bern/
www.ninamair.at



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