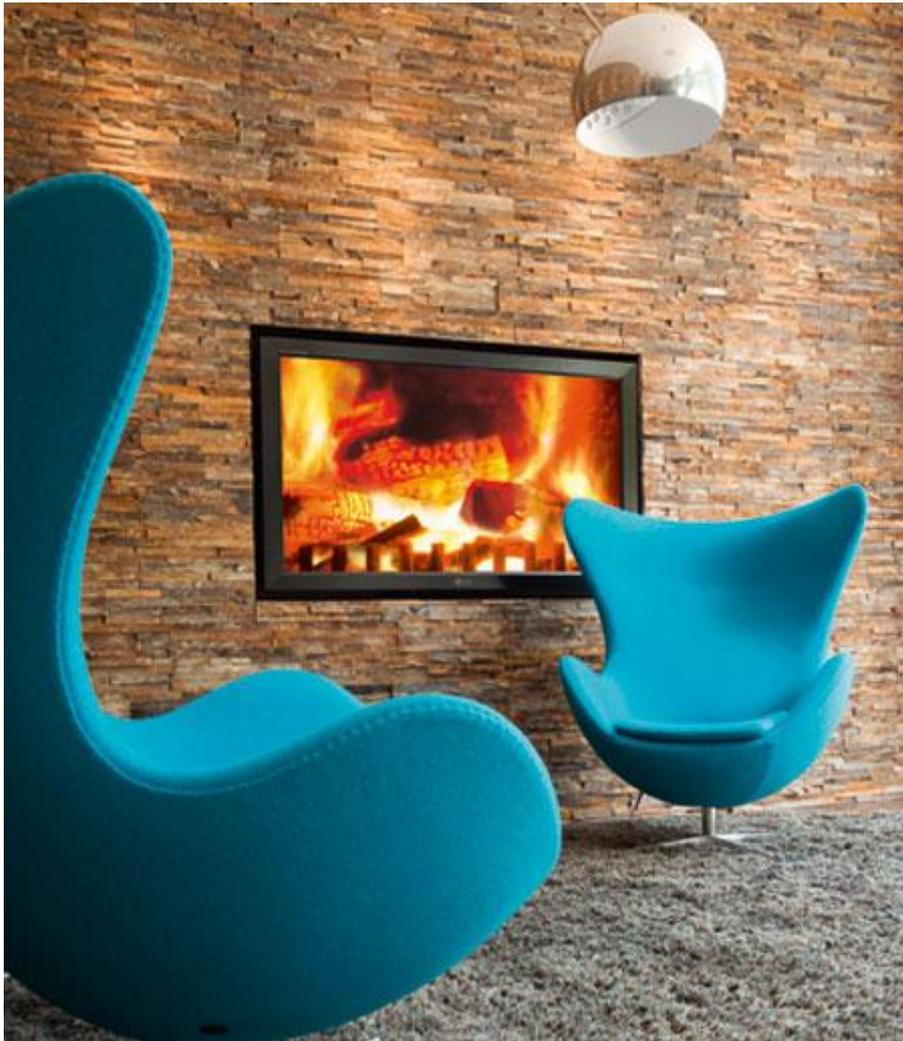


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Amanda Morison on hotels with looks and service that belie their budget price tags



Motel One Wien-Westbahnhof, Vienna

MUNICH

Cocoon Hotel

It's hard not to smile when you stay at Cocoon. Rooms are decorated with orange or fuchsia headboards, thick felt curtains and egg or hanging Perspex ball chairs. A desk-meets-divan — work and play at the same time? — is cunningly wedged into the window, and every room has an iPod dock and free WiFi. There's no restaurant but the reception area doubles as a bar and breakfast is better than you'd expect for an extra €9. The 'fun' atmosphere extends to the bathroom facilities. The shower head is the size of a dinner plate but if you're sharing, be warned — only a glass wall separates you from the rest of the room. hotel-cocoon.de

LONDON

Z Hotel Soho

You haven't mistakenly wandered into a wardrobe. Staying this centrally at an affordable price means certain compromises are necessary, and one of them is space, hence a row of coat hooks does the job of a cupboard. The first Z Hotel (a second opens this month in London's Victoria) was created from 12 townhouses close to Cambridge Circus. Instead of a restaurant there's a café where you can pick up sourdough sandwiches and continental breakfast. Beds are worth a lie-in for, especially the wool duvets, though you will hear noise from the surrounding Soho streets since this area of London rarely sleeps. iPod docks, free WiFi and Thierry Mugler toiletries are other touches that lift this above a basic offering. thezhotels.com

VIENNA

Motel One Wien-Westbahnhof

This German-based group operates 31 hotels in its home nation and Austria, and opens in Edinburgh later this year. If the Vienna offering is anything to go by it's rather smarter than the name suggests. Large enough rooms are decorated in a turquoise and chocolate colour scheme, with aircon and free WiFi. The location next to Vienna's Westbahnhof station means access to the city centre or airport within ten minutes. A favourite area is the well-lit lounge, where you can work without being hassled, eat breakfast and order good value drinks and coffee. motel-one.com

BRUSSELS

Sofitel Brussels Europe

Sofitel is a surprising chain, offering everything from hugely luxurious palace hotels to little niche gems well located in city centres. Sofitel Brussels Europe (not to be mistaken for Le Louise, the group's more expensive Brussels outpost) is a great example of the latter. Its rooms are all large — you pay more for a separate shower and bath — and the location on Place Jourdan means easy access to the European Commission. If you're here for business you'll probably miss the famous Sunday morning food market; a shame, because the chips at Friterie Antoine are reputed to be the best in Brussels. The recently updated bar is a violet-lit haven and the gym is small but well equipped. But be careful in the morning, because breakfast is one thing that is expensive here. sofitel.com

Link: <http://www.babusinesslife.com/Travel/Hotels/Four-of-the-best-affordable-but-stylish-European-hotels.html>