



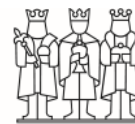
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# LES TROIS ROIS

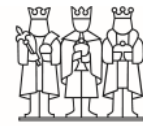
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## a treasure hunt fit for a little *king* and *queen*

WORDS AND PHOTOS OLIVER SCHMUKI





A treasure hunt is so much more than just a clever way of attracting families to traditional hotels like the *Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois* in Basel. This is exactly the kind of adventure that can boost a child's confidence and help them come out of their shell. What parent wouldn't be happy with that?



A few weeks after our stay at the Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois in Basel, my little girl told me that there would be no beating the first visit to this hotel if we were to return. We had been chatting about our time at this prestigious place steeped in tradition that has made a name for itself in Switzerland and beyond. My curiosity got the better of me and I asked why. «The first time round we didn't know where the treasure was hidden.» said my five-year-old, adding. «It would be cool to go back again, But not quite as cool as before.»

Great. As if there wasn't already enough pressure on planning the perfect holiday! I was just starting to panic about how I could book another trip that would live up to last October in Basel, let alone top it, when her brother chipped in. Staring up at me with wide eyes, he told me (again) all about how the treasure had been hidden more or less

where they had started – in a drawer at the concierge desk.

But the dilemma I had found myself facing was far from over. A few weeks later, my son asked when we would be going back to Les Trois Rois, catching me off guard at the dinner table. «I really want another lobster bisque.» he announced. It was more of an order than a request. I considered asking him how his request tied in with the barley soup I had just served up – a dish that had required me to spend what felt like an eternity chopping up carrots and celery so fine that even Andreas Caminada (whose recipe I was using) would have been impressed. But I just couldn't fight the memories of that evening at the Brasserie Les Trois Rois. The impeccable service, the fish, the oysters, the view of the Rhine, the countless masterpieces by illustrious artists all around us. And my children, who were so exhausted after



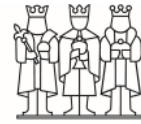
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the treasure hunt but so happy that I didn't worry for a second that they might bother anyone. But there was a simple explanation – they felt so welcome and at home. And so did all the other kings and queens, big or small, that we came across during our stay.

That evening, I really appreciated the huge benefits of a children's treasure hunt upon arrival at a hotel. Sure, it gives the parents time to get sorted and checked in calmly before settling into the room, studying the restaurant menu and entering the Wi-Fi password in peace. But really it's all about the kids. The treasure hunt (or «Tour des Petits Rois» as it's rather fittingly called here) helps them feel at ease. Not to mention that they have the chance to meet some of the hotel staff and burn off some of the energy that is sure to have built up on the journey. When we were reunited, it was time to tuck into the legendary afternoon tea in the lobby with the children's grandmother, who had made the short journey from Kleinbasel to join us. Boy did the kids have a lot to tell us! They spoke about chests, keys, crowns, the double glass chandelier in the foyer and Playmobil pirates. And when I heard that my children even got to have a look into the hotel's wine cellar on their tour, I found that I was actually a little bit jealous of their VIP adventure.

Now it goes without saying that every royal needs a fitting kingdom to rule over. On top of the prestigious hotel itself, where even the youngest of guests are treated like royalty and where the supply of sweet treats seems never-ending, Basel is a cultural hotspot with plenty to offer the whole family. And so the next day we made our way over to the other side of the Rhine, escorted by the «Fährimaa» on the «Vogel Gryff» ferry. After a stroll along the river, we boarded the «Wild Maa» and headed from Kleinbasel towards St.-Alban-Tal. At the paper mill there, we put our

creative skills to the test and transformed pulp (water and textile fibres) into sheets of paper you could write on – complete with a watermark of the Basel coat of arms.

Back at the establishment where a certain Napoleon Bonaparte had lunch back in 1797, we retreated to our room and ordered some room service. No hotel stay is complete without room service! There's no

**‘We felt like passengers on a fancy ship waving goodbye to the real world.’**

arguing about that. In our River King Room filled with classical style and luxurious antiques, we felt like passengers on a fancy ship waving goodbye to the real world and being transported to a place where dreams really do come true. Where people celebrate without a care in the world. Where people can hug one another without a face mask in sight. After a fair few farewells, with our bags and treasure chests in tow, we exited through the revolving doors. It was time to leave this historical hotel behind us. We all turned round for one last reluctant goodbye before we had to make our way back to the real world.

From now on, as a new year begins, we will chat about the Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois around the dinner table. It makes sense to earmark 6 January since it's known as Three Kings Day in some parts of the world. Who knows if we'll end up going back to the hotel? If we do, I hope for my daughter's sake that the treasure will be hidden somewhere else in the hotel. That way, the next stay will be just as cool as the first one. Or maybe even cooler. ♦





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