

## **a&o Venice becomes first hostel in Europe to achieve the maximum GreenSign sustainability standard**

- For the first time, a hostel in Europe has achieved the maximum GreenSign Level 5 sustainability standard
- a&o Venice is one of only 19 properties in Europe to achieve the top rating, with over 800 properties assessed in total
- a&o Vienna Central Station and a&o Vienna Stadthalle also achieve Level 4 standard
- a&o is the only hostel chain in Europe to report individual CO2 values



**Four at Level 5: (from left to right) Arben Maliqi, Project Manager ESG + HR at a&o, Francesco Siciliano, GM a&o Venice Mestre alongside assistant Alessia Doretto as well as Frank Hörl, GreenSign Sustainability Auditor. Credit a&o Hostels.**

**Berlin** – a&o Venice has made history as the first hostel in Europe to achieve a GreenSign level 5 standard, becoming one of only 19 properties across the continent to achieve the top sustainability accreditation. A total of approximately 800 hotels and alternative accommodation properties are currently certified by the GreenSign Institute in Europe, which examines current sustainability performances.

Speaking on the achievement, Francesco Siciliano, General Manager of a&o Hostels, said: "This is a tremendous recognition of our long-standing commitment to sustainable travel."

Arben Maliqi, Project Manager ESG and HR at a&o Hostels, adds: "This certification sets the pace from now on - a&o Venice Mestre is our role model for all a&o locations."

GreenSign certifies that the a&o Venice Mestre has an "exemplary sustainability concept" with over 90 percent sustainability performance in core areas such as energy efficiency, water management, environmental management, procurement, quality management and sustainable development. Suzann Heinemann, founder and CEO of the GreenSign Institute, explains: "The extraordinarily good



*results of a&o Venice for the GreenSign certification are an important sign for the industry and a milestone on the way to climate neutrality for Europe's largest hostel chain."*

Founded in 2015, the GreenSign Institute certifies properties in a unique five-stage certification system and not only examines the current status, but also "*shows ways to continuously improve and further develop sustainability performance*". From approximately 800 properties certified, only three percent of them have achieved the highest level known as quality level 5.

GreenSign's sustainability certifications are amongst the most prestigious in Europe. In addition to a&o Venice, the teams at the two Vienna locations, a&o Wien Stadthalle and a&o Wien Hauptbahnhof, are also delighted that their hotels have been upgraded to GreenSign Level 4.

These recognitions mark the latest sustainability landmarks for a&o Hostels, Europe's largest privately owned hostel chain, who have bold ambitions and frameworks to become the first net-zero hostel chain in Europe by 2025. The company currently operate 38 properties in 25 cities and nine European countries, with the 39<sup>th</sup> set to open in Florence in 2024.

### **"Growing sustainability spirit in the industry"**

Sustainability, says Suzann Heinemann, is independent of the size or type of property: "*We are pleased to see a growing sustainable spirit in the hotel industry and an increasing willingness for sustainability certifications. This positive development makes a significant contribution to climate protection and gives us hope.*"

### **Hardly any plastic, but food and art from the region**

The GreenSign audit is comprehensive and covers the following: management and communication, environment (energy, water, waste), biodiversity and cultural heritage, purchasing, regionality and transportation, quality control and sustainable development, social and economic responsibility.

Measures at a&o Venice include

- Avoiding plastic in the bar: 80 percent plastic-free bottles and glasses;
- Use of food from local/regional producers;
- Supporting local artisans and artists who exhibit and sell their work at the a&o, for example;

Recently, composters on the roof of a&o Venice have been recycling organic waste from breakfast and dinner. The plants in the hostel benefit from the nutrient-rich fertilizer produced in this way.

Arben Maliqi said "*Our goal is to be the first European hostel chain to be CO2-neutral in 2025. For us, net zero means reducing our own ecological footprint to a minimum and offsetting the rest.*"

a&o is already the only hostel chain in Europe to show the individual CO2 value per booking on all reservations and guest invoices.

**-ENDS-**

### **About a&o Hostels**

a&o was founded in 2000 by Oliver Winter and currently operates 38 hostels in 25 cities and nine European countries. The a&o guest mix is diverse: backpackers, solo travellers, families, school groups and clubs are all part of the a&o target group. The number of business travellers and senior



citizens is also increasing. The a&o Edinburgh City was the first location in the UK to open in July 2021. Three new locations were added in 2020: there were premieres in Poland, a&o Warsaw, and Hungary, a&o Budapest; the second hotel opened in Copenhagen. With around 28,500 beds and around 5.55 million overnight stays in 2022, a&o recorded a turnover of 172 million euros (2021: 70 million; 2020: 64 million euros). a&o's goal is to be Europe's "zero-emission hostel chain" in 2025. The American investor TPG Real Estate has owned a&o since 2017. The company is still managed by the founder.

For further information about A&O Hostels, visit:

<https://www.aohostels.com/en/>

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