

FROM SIMPLE PENSION TO LUXURY HOTEL

THE VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU GRAND HOTEL – SYMBOL OF SWISS HOSPITALITY FOR MORE THAN 150 YEARS

The VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa in Interlaken can look back on a long and eventful history. It continues to occupy such an imposing location along Interlaken's tree-lined *Höheweg* at the foot of the Jungfrau massif, that even today one could still imagine such eminent guests as Mark Twain and the Emperor of Brazil relaxing in style on the hotel's pillared terrace. Swiss hospitality has been at home here since the hotel welcomed its first guests in 1865. The VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU has long enjoyed international acclaim as one of Switzerland's leading luxury hotels, combining timeless tradition with entrepreneurial innovation. This is one of the truly great hotels of Europe, with its distinctive design, fine furnishings, state-of-the-art infrastructure and passion for perfection.

The small sub-Alpine region between the lovely lakes of Thun and Brienz (the name of Interlaken is derived from the Latin *inter lacus* (= *between lakes*) is known locally as the *Bödeli*. It was mentioned in records as early as 1133 as the seat of an Augustinian monastery, but for centuries remained a settlement populated mainly by peasants. The first Unspunnen Alpine Herdsmen's Festival was held here in 1805, attracting early visitors to the region from both Switzerland and abroad (more than 200 years later this colourful spectacle is still a highlight on the cultural calendar). The inauguration of steamboat services on both lakes in the 1830s also boosted travel and tourism to the region. In 1803 only three establishments possessed a permit to accommodate guests – but by 1830 at least a dozen guesthouses were in business.

VIP VISITORS TO INTERLAKEN

In 1856 an enterprising young hotel pioneer Eduard Ruchti (then only 22) purchased the Pension Victoria, which had previously been a doctor's house. Eight years later he commissioned local architects Friedrich Studer and Horace Edouard Davinet to re-design the

property completely. After only nine months' work, the new Hotel Victoria opened for business in 1865. In 1895 Ruchti transformed his private enterprise into a joint stock company and acquired the adjacent Hotel Jungfrau (which had been built by Davinet in 1864). Two years later the ornately decorated *Festsaal* – now the "Jungfrau Brasserie" – was completed. And 1899 saw the two buildings linked by the distinctive dome-topped central tract fronted by an imposing façade.

The new VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU offered standards of quality and comfort unparalleled at that time, including such innovative features as a telephone system, hydraulic lift and electric light in all rooms. The hotel soon began to attract a prosperous, privileged clientele from far beyond the borders of Switzerland, among them royalty, writers, academics and artists. Exciting new types of transport were also being introduced in the Interlaken region, and several mountain railways were built between 1890 and 1912 – a development which also benefited other hotels throughout the Bernese Oberland. This "Golden Age" of tourism to Switzerland came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918). But thanks to shrewd management and great flexibility, the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU weathered these troubled times and maintained its position as one of Switzerland's leading hotels.

WARTIME HEADQUARTERS

The Second World War (1939-1945) dealt another blow to travel and tourism to Switzerland, but brought unexpected benefits in a situation somewhat unusual for a luxury hotel of such style and standing. The VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU became a wartime headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss army, General Henri Guisan, which meant that he and his entourage frequently resided at the hotel.

By the 1950s the building was greatly in need of renovation. Guest rooms were modernized and bathrooms installed, the "Salle Napoléon" breakfast room was converted into a banqueting room, a swimming pool was added and a linking passerelle was built between the two parts of the hotel. Over recent decades the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU has invested millions of francs in the

most modern amenities, while retaining its old-world elegance and charm. In 1970 the management of the hotel was taken over by Emanuel and Rosmarie Berger, whose innovative style, pioneering achievements and untiring commitment to quality have repeatedly earned international acclaim.

The 1970s saw more modernization, including improvements to the guest rooms, construction of a four-court tennis hall and re-designed gardens. During the 1980s the focus was on restoration of the stately Belle Époque rooms, the reconstruction of three floors and the glass-fronted Restaurant "La Terrasse".

WORLD OF WELLNESS

In 1990 the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU celebrated its 125th anniversary and the launching of another ambitious programme of investment – the most intensive in the history of the hotel. The hotel "boulevard" was transformed by a blend of glass and steel into a light and airy lobby which at the same time linked the Victoria and Jungfrau buildings at ground level. And in 1991 the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU SPA was created – a spectacular and spacious 5500 square metre world of wellness which set exciting new standards in the international spa industry.

In 1994 the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU dome was transformed into the luxury Tower Suite. Further modernization culminated five years later in the opening of the "Coté Jardin" congress centre, with its pioneering technology. The "Racket Club" was transformed into "La Pastateca" restaurant. And the "Jungfrau Brasserie" underwent complete renovation, revealing stucco treasures and impressive ceiling and wall paintings from a century earlier.

In late 2003 the Bel Air extension to the wellness area was completed at a cost of 17 million Swiss francs. This new wing comprised 10 new Junior Suites, as well as an exclusive ESPA with 16 treatment rooms (offering 30 types of treatment), cold and warm zones, and a private Spa Suite for the ultimate in rest and relaxation.

The ESPA was the perfect complement to the existing fine facilities, which range from tennis courts (indoor and outdoor), a 21-metre swimming pool, whirlpools, steam rooms, saunas and solaria to a fully equipped gym with regular spinning, dance aerobics, fit-boxing and aqua-power classes, not to mention Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates. A spa café serves healthy snacks throughout the day and all three restaurants' menus feature *spa food* for those that choose to "dine-around" safe in the knowledge that they are within their regime.

The SENSAI SELECT SPA by Kanebo International opened their first spa internationally on 23rd December 2009. This luxurious addition has brought a new dimension to the well established and award winning spa hotel, making it the perfect wellbeing destination.

The SENSAI SELECT SPA has six therapy rooms including one especially spacious zone where their 3-hour signature treatment is practised including the ritual Japanese cleansing bath. They offer seven luxurious treatments each featuring the exclusive *Koishimaru Silk*, the finest facial and massage techniques blended with traditional Japanese beauty treatments within a tranquil oasis.

The VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa is one of Switzerland's landmark hotels. For over 150 years the hotel has succeeded in setting the trend in innovative hospitality and has an established reputation for excellent service and luxurious living. Its philosophy is to pursue a pioneering path with pride and passion.

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It will be our pleasure to provide you with high-resolution pictures. Please contact us directly under pr@vjc.ch