

## **Hotel Belvedere Locarno – more than 400 years of History**

The Hotel Belvedere is directly situated on the path to Madonna del Sasso, the famous pilgrimage church above Locarno. Therefore it goes without saying that the two buildings have an intricate relationship. As recounted in historical documents the mayor and benefactor of the pilgrimage church - Baldassare Luchsinger, initiated the building of the Belvedere. In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the building was commissioned for a Locarno noble family who were tied to the Dukes of Milan.

After being used for 10 years as a girl's finishing school, the building was ultimately renovated for use as a hotel in 1892. For nearly one hundred years the hotel remained in the hands of the Franzoni family, who ran and enlarged the hotel over a period of three generations. The Belvedere like so many grand hotels of its kind flourished during the Belle Epoch during which the tourism trade developed. Wealthy German and English tourists enjoyed the mild climate for a seaside holiday or to get health treatments. The hotel, even at that time, offered the latest amenities. From cold and warm running water in all rooms (some even with a private bathroom) to a balcony with a view of the lake, telephone, elevator, garage, doormen. Even the hotel's car was at the disposal for the establishment's guests.

A turning point for the hotel came in 1980 when the Franzoni family sold the establishment to an insurance company. Major investments were made in the hotel, which included a complete refurbishment, until the hotel landed again in private hands of a local family.

Fortunately the historical elements of the building were not compromised during the refurbishment. Therefore in addition to all the modern luxuries, the character of the building including its historic banquet hall with restored ceiling frescos remains. This fresco depicts Persephone, who according to Greek myth, is kidnapped by Hades the god of the underworld. Further frescoes show monochrome landscapes in lunettes. The salon's atmosphere is grounded in the Renaissance fireplace - Dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the crossbeam is sustained by two Michelangelo-style stone figures. Today the hotel can organize little events up to 30 guests or plan a family get together in this special ambience. Next to the salon the old entrance hall with its vaulted ceilings is to be admired. It is here where also a granite pillar which features a medallion with the effigy of Nero was found - the last remaining example in a series of portraits of Roman emperors which were visible in this place.

A further historical *Highlight dating back to 1815* is to be found on the terrace of the "La Fontana Ristorante & Bar". Originally the over 200-year-old fountain was located in the terraced Italian garden, which in the old days extended as far as to the city center. As of 2003, the octagonal fountain made out of local granite, stands in its entire splendor in a new position. It's here on the terrace that the guest breathes in the history of this fascinating place while having an aperitif on a spring evening or while enjoying a mere break during the day.

Being the official Partner Hotel, the Belvedere has the pleasure of accommodating many actors and celebrities as a result of the yearly Locarno Film Festival. The hotel juxtaposes its historic elements tastefully with modern contemporary style.