



THE HISTORY OF THE BELLEVUE PALACE IN BERN

THE OLD BELLEVUE

In 1848, Switzerland's federal parliament chose Bern as the capital of the nation. It was a decision which bestowed great honour on the city – but which also brought with it considerable obligations. These included the provision of suitable amenities and infrastructure worthy of the seat of government and parliament, as well as improved facilities for the influx of official guests and other visiting VIPs. As a result the city experienced a building boom which saw the construction of new government buildings, roads, a railway station, housing – and hotels.

At that time official guests were accommodated at the "Falken", a hotel renowned for its high standards of service and excellent cuisine. The business-minded manager of the "Falken" – Friedrich Osswald, a German – was quick to realise the potential business a new hotel would attract to the city. So he and his wife, Philippine, purchased land right next to the government and parliament buildings. In 1865 the Hotel BELLEVUE opened for business, offering its guests a choice of 110 beds, almost all with fine views of the distant Bernese Alps. The hotel also hosted the most exclusive events on the city's social calendar, and very soon the fame of the BELLEVUE spread far beyond the borders of Bern. Visiting royalty, English lords and ladies, Italian aristocracy, Russian princes and American millionaires – they all stayed at the BELLEVUE.

THE NEW BELLEVUE PALACE

When Friedrich Osswald died in 1882, he was succeeded as director by Walter Haerlin (later to become proprietor of the "Vier Jahreszeiten" luxury hotel in Hamburg). He in turn was succeeded by Osswald's two sons, Alphons and Philipp. In 1910 they decided against modernizing and enlarging the BELLEVUE, and opted instead to construct an entirely new hotel. Together with other partners they founded the Hotel BELLEVUE Company and acquired the land on which the current property stands.



BELLEVUE PALACE
Bern

Building work began in March 1912, and November 1913 saw the festive opening of the new 200-room BELLEVUE PALACE. The cost of construction was 3.2 million Swiss francs, just below the figure budgeted. Behind the classic-style sandstone façade were structures of re-enforced concrete – a revolutionary construction concept nearly a century ago. And the hotel interior featured the finest fittings, furnishings and fabrics. The BELLEVUE PALACE offered its distinguished guests the most modern infrastructure, including a ventilation system, built-in baths, telephones and electricity in each room. Another revolutionary feature was wardrobe lighting which turned on automatically whenever the wardrobe door was opened – a sensation at that time.

During the First World War (1914-1918), the BELLEVUE PALACE lost many of its most eminent clientele, mainly from Europe. But business came from an unusual source when the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss army, General Ulrich Wille, set up his headquarters in the hotel. The 1920s saw a revival in business, and even during the Second World War (1939-1945) the hotel – along with many others in neutral Switzerland – remained open for business. During the winter season, well-to-do Bernese families stayed for weeks at a time at the BELLEVUE PALACE and spent their evenings in the warm, welcoming rooms of the hotel. The "La Terrasse" restaurant also remained open, with guests from the Axis nations often meeting in one half of the restaurant – and those from the Allied powers sitting in the other. The bar achieved legendary fame as a popular wartime meeting point for politicians, diplomats and journalists.

Structurally, the BELLEVUE PALACE survived the Second World War in good shape. But global economic depression and a dramatic decline in bookings resulted in a post-war period of prolonged financial crisis. In 1976 the Swiss National Bank acquired a majority stake in the BELLEVUE PALACE to save it from a foreign takeover, and in 1994 offered the property as a gift to the Swiss government. In 2002 the hotel closed for an entire year to undergo extensive modernization and renovation, re-opening on 1 January 2003. The BELLEVUE PALACE currently attracts some 40,000 hotel guests annually, as well as 800,000 non-resident guests to its restaurants and event rooms.



BELLEVUE PALACE

Bern

THE VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU COLLECTION

The BELLEVUE PALACE is the only 5-star luxury hotel in the Swiss capital, and since 1973 has been a member of "The Leading Hotels of the World." Since January 2007 it has also been a member of the exclusive VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU COLLECTION, which manages the hotel. Other luxury hotels in the group are the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa in Interlaken, the PALACE LUZERN in Lucerne and the EDEN AU LAC in Zurich, all of them owned by the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU COLLECTION company.

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