



Media text / advance information Hotel Anniversary 2018

The oldest hotel in Lötschental has reason to celebrate: 150 years Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn, Blatten

Blatten / Lucerne, 7 June 2017. **In the middle of the 19th Century, Swiss alpine and tourist history was written in Lötschental, at the heart of the Bernese and Pennine Alps. In 1859, the Englishman Leslie Stephen (the father of the writer Virginia Woolf) made the first successful ascent of the Bietschhorn, 3,934 m above sea level, the highest mountain of Lötschental. In 1868 the first hotel was opened in the valley which in 2018 celebrates its 150th anniversary and at the same time inaugurating a fascinating History Trail and presenting a book.**

Esther Bellwald and Laurent Hubert are the young hosts in this hotel, soon to reach its 150th year. They are proud of this hotel steeped in tradition in which Esther Bellwald grew up, and together with their sons Noé and Luc they bring a breath of fresh air to the hamlet Ried, situated close to the village of Blatten. Laurent Hubert's gourmet cuisine, his cuisine fraîcheur, is perfectly suited to this unique world between the traditional and the modern, as also appreciated by Gault Millau (14 points), Guide Bleu (6 out of 10 points) and Guide Michelin (Bib Gourmand).

1. Looking back – Alpinist Leslie Stephen and the Siegen brothers

The history of the Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn began with the mountaineers' discovery of the Alps. The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain caused a new feeling for nature amongst the English. And thus began the summit attempts of English Alpinists. In 1859 one of them, Sir Leslie Stephen (1832 - 1904, British historian and man of letters) was the first to reach the summit of the Bietschhorn. This first ascent subsequently gave rise to the development of tourism in Lötschental. More and more mountaineers and gentlemen of the high society came to Lötschental with their wives in order to recuperate from the city and daily life. In the beginning the visitors were accommodated in the vicarage in Kippel but demand soon became too great. Joseph Ignaz Lehner from Gampel had the idea to set up a "hostelry". He looked for suitable partners for the venture and came across the brothers Joseph and Johann Siegen in Ried. They were enthusiastic right from the start as with Leslie Stephen, they also belonged to the first to reach the summit of the Bietschhorn.

The hotel was to be quite modern and eye-catching and so, instead of the traditional Canton Wallis building style, it was built in quarry stone and rendered in white. The hotel was named after the neighbouring

Nesthorn (the name for the Bietschhorn at that time in Lötschental), in honour of the mountain. Already in 1869 the most famous of all travel guides, the "Baedeker", reported the opening of the only hotel in the valley. It was described as «small and simple» but at the same time also as «excellent and comfortable». Joseph Ignaz Lehner from Gampel who built the hotel, was praised as «an attentive host». He made every effort to ensure the wellbeing (also culinary) of his visitors who included many well-known alpinists, male and female, cultural historians and politicians.

Around 1890 the hotelier family Schröter from Raron took over the now well established hotel. They raised the hotel with a half-timbered construction, still seen today. A laundry and a sunny veranda were added. Local celebrities such as bishops, professors and federal councillors stayed at the hotel. In 1923 the legendary Theophil Schröter took over the hotel: He was a tireless builder and promoter of tourism; he built the chalet with restaurant and the cozy "Lötscherstübli" and in 1938 built the spacious central part with kitchen and dining room. Steeped in legend is the old cellar hewn from rock where Wallis specialities and wine barrels have stories to tell ... Theophil Schröter and his wife Sabina Mooser ran the hotel in the style of famous Swiss hospitality and even during the Second World War, they were assured of loyal, international customers. In 1959 their son Hans took over the management of the hotel which he ran until 1979.

In 1979 Erwin and Helene Bellwald-Grob took over the Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn which, up until then, had been open only in the summer months. In the winter 1985/86 the guest rooms were fitted out with every comfort and due to increasing ski tourism, the hotel was from now on open all year round. With creative marketing concepts, an excellent cuisine and enormous dedication on the part of the hotel owners the hotel enjoyed a new lease of life. In mid- 2011, daughter Esther (with professional experience in a great variety of national and international restaurant, service and administration fields) took over the management with her husband Laurent Hubert (vast experience as chef in famous houses at home and abroad, chef de cuisine in Switzerland) of the hotel which had been run so successfully by her parents. This now completes the brief review of past history.

2. With courage and confidence: The young hotelier couple carries out extensive renovations

The 2-star Hotel Nest-und Bietschhorn is steeped in history and on completion of renovation works, is striving for its 3rd star: In time for summer in the mountains 2017, ten double rooms on three floors have been renovated completely. Five rooms are available for guests on low-budget vacation; three of them are double rooms with floor shower and with attractive sloping roofs. Materials used in the renovation work are in part old woods from the previous building "Egguhuis" from the 17th century. Comfort and appearance in the bedrooms and bathrooms are distinctively upgraded. And the alpine building style charm of this hotel is treated with respect so that the visitor has the full experience: In the whole house, visitors can simply breathe in the history of the hotel, in the corridors and in the lobby, in the day room with a small but fine library. For children there is a play corner, lovingly fitted out with toys and with board games for the whole family. Free WiFi in the hotel and numerous daily newspapers keep the guests up to date. A Finnish Sauna and the trendy Bietschhorn Lounge on the sun patio complete the attractive offer.

And new investment is already on the cards: In autumn 2017 the realm of chef de cuisine Laurent Hubert is also to be completely renovated. Further information and offers: www.nest-bietschhorn.ch.

Together we are strong: Together with partner hotels Edelweiss and Breithorn in Blatten, the Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn is a founder member of the Hotel and Tourism Cooperation: [Die Lötschentaler](#). Innovative cooperation initiatives also include the Summer Camping Site on the Fafleralp.

3. Anniversary Year 2018

At present all the preparations for anniversary activities “150 Years Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn, 1868 – 2018” are underway. We wish to reach out to the media and tourism partners at the earliest in order to enable integration in editorial planning for 2018: This anniversary celebration can be used at many levels, here a selection of themes in which we are pleased to provide our support:

- The Past and the Present of the 150-year old Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn
- Hotel financing (investment possibilities from federal or Canton governments, mountaineering, involvement of commerce)
- Travel and mountain climbing reports from Lötschental
- Reviews of first ascents and the subsequent effects on Swiss tourism
- Influence of the English on (tourist) discovery of the Alps
- Bietschhorn: First Summit Ascent by Leslie Stephen and his daughter Virginia Woolf
- UNESCO World Heritage Jungfrau-Aletsch and the significance for Lötschental.

Notes to the editorial staff: We are open to Bonus Hotel Packages (subscription offers).

The main anniversary activities are:

In January 2018

- **Kitchen Party.** Inauguration of the new kitchen: alternative cuisine fraîcheur party.

In Summer 2018

- **Official Anniversary celebration.** The date (in June or July) will be notified to the media in good time.
- **Preview Book** «Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn, 150 Years at the Service of the Guest» (working title). The book tells the story of the hotel in the form of historic, tragic, humorous, entertaining short stories supported by photos and other documents of the time. The central element of the book is a presentation which guides through the years and the themes and serves as an introduction to the short stories. The stories were written by recognized authors from the Oberwallis region and from the countries of origin of the visitors e.g. England.

- **History Trail Hotel Nest- und Bietschhorn.** The trail covers five or six themes surrounding the history of the hotel: Golden Age, First Ascent Bietschhorn, Leslie Stephen, the Hotel, the English Cemetery, the Schröter Era, the Bietschhorn Chalet.
- **Presentation of the Jubilee Wine «GastFREUNDSchaften»** (working title), red assemblage by Olivier Mounir Salgesch and Dominique Passaquay Choex.

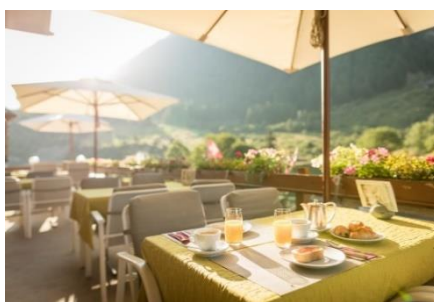
All year round

- Attractive jubilee offers for hotel guests

Photos



Timbered: Hotel, Chalet: Restaurant



Breakfast on the Sunshine Patio



Cuisine fraîcheur from Laurent Hubert



New rooms with alpine charm



Your hosts © Ringier, K. Reichenbach



Restaurant, gourmet – half board

Further press photos for free use: [Flickr photo download](#)

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