

## **The perfect balance of old and new Hotel Riffelberg is once again the Riffelhaus**

**The oldest hotel in the mountains of Zermatt has been completely renovated in time for the start of the 2014/2015 winter season and is also returning to its historical name. Hotel Riffelberg will once again become the Riffelhaus. The most famous mountaineers in the world stayed here. Its new director, Raymond Kronig, also has a deep personal connection to the mountains – his ancestors were alpine guides – as well as an impressive record in the hotel industry.**

The next year will be an exciting one for the historic hotel on the Riffelberg mountain. The grand opening of the open-air theatre in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn will bring a great deal of excitement to the area. The burghers of Zermatt, who own the hotel on the Riffelberg mountain, have had the hotel completely renovated in anticipation of the upcoming anniversary year. All of the rooms and public areas in the hotel have gotten a stylish modern update.

### **Hotel Riffelberg will once again become the Riffelhaus**

The historic hotel on the Riffelberg mountain was built in 1853, making it the oldest hotel in the mountains of Zermatt. It belongs to the golden age of mountaineering. Both mountaineering history and hotel history were made here. The climbers on the first ascent of the Dufour Peak also took off from the Riffelberg in 1855 on their way to the highest mountain in Switzerland (4,635 metres).

But traditional doesn't have to mean old-fashioned. "A hotel's infrastructure has to meet the requirements of its guests and be considered modern according to the standards of the day. Today, it is possible to do this without erasing a building's history. We have proven this in our renovation work on the hotel on the Riffelberg mountain. We very consciously worked to tie the hotel's past in with the present. This is also why we decided to return the hotel to its original name, the Riffelhaus," explains Andreas Biner, the President of the Zermatt burghers.

### **The new Riffelhaus director**

Raymond Kronig, the new director of the Riffelhaus, is already hard at work well before the official opening on 19 December 2014 to prepare for the upcoming winter season. He was born in Zermatt in 1966. In his mid-twenties he left the village at the foot of the Matterhorn in order to gain experience in the hotel industry in other tourist destinations in Switzerland. He has since worked in Crans-Montana, Zurich, Lucerne, Graubünden and around Lake Constance. Kronig has won numerous awards for his work in Eastern Switzerland. During his tenure at the Hotel Swiss Die Krone in Kreuzlingen, the hotel received the prize for "Best Hotel in the SME Category in Switzerland" from GastroSuisse. In 2014, the Hotel Die Krone in Gottlieben was awarded the Thurgauer Tourismuspreis, and Gault-Millau has named the charming hotel, which is located on the Seerhein river, one of the "100 most beautiful gourmet hotels in Switzerland" for a number of years.

We can deduce from this that Raymond Kronig has big plans for Restaurant Riffelhaus. The menu will also feature a well-balanced mix of traditional and modern elements. "We want to offer simple and straightforward cuisine. The menu will be centred around local Swiss specialities," explains Kronig. "We will serve

bratwurst with rösti, *Geschnetzeltes*, a typical Swiss meat dish cooked in a cream sauce, as well as our air-dried beef specialities, which our chef de cuisine prepares in the hotel's own meat air-drying facility and which are a particular highlight.”

Furthermore, Raymond Kronig has the Matterhorn in his blood – his great-grandmother was part of the Taugwalder family, whose members Peter Taugwalder and his son accompanied the first ascent of the Matterhorn as guides. This means that Kronig's ancestors passed through the same Riffelhaus 150 years ago where he now works today.

### **Key facts about the Riffelhaus renovations**

The first phase of the construction process began in spring 2014, but the actual renovation took place in August. The construction work has not altered the building's structure; it has not been made larger. The Riffelhaus still has 25 rooms. The hotel will now be marketed as a four-star establishment.

In the Riffelhaus, at 2,600 metres above sea level, guests can enjoy the splendour of the mountains in the Zermatt region at eye level. The renovation also pays respect to the hotel's unique location. Using natural materials combines modern design with traditional alpine charm. The freshly renovated rooms are outfitted with Swiss pine wood, which lends them clean lines and an uncomplicated, down-to-earth feeling. The rooms will now have balconies, which will allow guests to enjoy their own private “viewing platforms”. Furthermore, guests will also have access to a cosy spa area with an outdoor whirlpool. The exterior renovation is scheduled for summer 2015.

Raymond Kronig is excited about these changes: “The old ski room is being reverted to its original form and will be turned into a bar. Starting in the 2014/2015 winter season, guests can meet here for a mountain climber cocktail. The public areas and the restaurant feature modern design that still retains its rustic, traditional feel and reflects the peace and harmony of the hotel's surroundings with simple, clean architectural solutions.”

Guests can also experience the new Riffelhaus by visiting with friends and family during the day, for example to sit on the sun terrace and enjoy a Riffelhaus plate with three appetizers paired with three different wines from the Valais region.

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