



SUVRETTA HOUSE ST. MORITZ PRESS INFORMATION

HISTORY OF ST MORITZ & THE ENGANDINE

ST MORITZ

St. Moritz is a metropolis in the mountains of Switzerland's stunning Upper Engadine. Known for its scenery, magnificent hotels, luxurious boutiques and famous lake, St. Moritz is divided into two parts, the 'Dorf' (village) and the 'Bad' (baths). Elite 'jet-set' travellers are drawn to the glamour of the destination and over the years Moritz has become synonymous with style, elegance and celebrity, yet also stands for culture, tradition and nature.

Today, St. Moritz is well known for being a winter sport mecca for the well heeled, yet its healing sources are far older than its summer or winter tourism. As far back as 3,000 years ago the curative powers of the waters of St. Moritz were held in high esteem. But it wasn't until 1573 that the eminent physician Paracelsus recorded the therapeutic effect of the highly carbonated water in writing. Other doctors from Italy and Switzerland then followed suit and praised the curative powers of the water. As a result, St. Moritz became a renowned spa destination and had an initial 'golden epoch' of tourism towards the close of the 17th Century, attracting rich and distinguished aristocrats such as Duke Victor Amadeus of Savoy and Franz Fornese of Parma.

The 'boom' period for St. Moritz really began in 1864 when the first tourist office was set up, and a new spa opened. The village gradually developed into an attractive town. According to ancient legend, legions of monsters, demons and evil spirits were alleged to populate the inhospitable tracts of the mountains surrounding St. Moritz. The respect for these divine creations had historically prevented man from conquering the mountains, however, during the 19th century this fear of the mountains subsided and mountaineering came into its own. The main peaks of the Bernina region were climbed between 1850 and 1877 and with enthusiasm for climbing growing, people realised that the mountain environment provided scope for spiritual freedom. St. Moritz continued to cast a spell on visitors, drawing travellers in both the summer and winter months with its astonishingly beautiful blue lakes and luminescent mountain peaks.

Growth and development proceeded at a swift pace. In 1878 the first light bulbs provided illumination in one of the best hotels of the resort. In 1894 Switzerland's first electric tramway transported people from St. Moritz-Dorf to St. Moritz-Bad. Hotels appeared at an astonishing rate, attracting moneyed and literary visitors from all over the world including Swiss writer J.C. Heer in 1899. In 1903 the Rhätische Bahn (Rhaetian railway) opened its service to St. Moritz

and gone were the days of an arduous and long haul journey over the narrow pass track. Today, the train still winds its way through the rugged and unchanged terrain. Hikers and skiing enthusiasts were especially attracted to St. Moritz. In Sils, in 1859, the first skiers slithered down the slopes with wooden slats on their feet. In the 1890's the sport captured the hearts of numerous new followers, a development that has continued until to this day. Skiing has retained its popularity over the decades, and remains the key attraction of St. Moritz as a winter sports resort, with Snowboarding also becoming popular.

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE ENGADINE

A Romansh story about the beautiful Engadine area is still told to this day by the locals: "When the archangel had sealed the gate to paradise behind Adam and Eve, God stood in the now-deserted Garden of Eden and was filled with pity for the people who had chosen the path of sin. He therefore called for his angels, and told them that from then onwards paradise was to remain closed to all human beings. However, he wished to create for them a place on earth that would remind them of their lost homeland, a place that should be close to heaven and filled with all things beautiful, yet not perfect. Obeying this divine order, the angels duly created a paradise on earth: the Engadine."

The Engadine is famed for its natural beauty, with a valley carved out by the River Inn made up of glacier-covered mountains, steep passes, Alpine lakes and flower-drenched meadows. The history of its development from an impoverished farming village, to a renowned and international holiday destination can be traced back to the church. High above the village of St. Moritz, with a distinctive leaning tower, is a humble church, dedicated to a saint who lived during the third century AD. According to legends Saint Mauritius was a high ranking Roman officer who commanded a legion, and took his orders from the emperor Diocletian and his co-regent Maximianus. The latter crossed the Alps to battle with the Galls, and set-up camp in Octodurum, now called Martigny, situated in the canton of Valais. According to the beliefs held by the Roman regents, a sacrifice to the gods was required before battle was accepted. Mauritius and his legionaries diverted to Agaunum - today's St. Maurice - to evade this religious sacrifice. The order to return to the main body of the Roman army was ignored by Mauritius, where upon Maximianus had every tenth man of his legion executed. Despite such punishment, the Christians refused to follow the heretical orders of Maximianus. Mauritius, and his men were pitilessly slaughtered by the imperial troops, thus creating a cult with Mauritius as its figurehead. People increasingly sought his patronage, and over the subsequent centuries a movement of astonishing potency developed. Even under Roman rule, and regardless of the risks this incurred, Mauritius the Martyr was revered and worshipped. His name was carried to the most remote and obscure corners of the empire, including the mountainous Engadine region. Wherever his protection was invoked, a church was built in his name, with one in St. Moritz too. The old church of Mauritius with its leaning tower was built between 1000 and 1100. The region was inhabited by Etruscans, Celts and Romans who all left traces of their existence. A druid's stone in the region's Kulm-Park, once a holy place of the Celtic priests, bears witness to this ancient people whilst the columns on the Julier hospice are said to have been erected by the Roman emperor Julius Caesar.

For further information, please contact Perowne International on
+44 (0)20 7078 0295 / suvrettahouse@perowneinternational.com