



**Lightly I do not speak of happiness,
 Yet I almost think
 I am happy here.**
 Thomas Mann

HOTEL SUVRETTA HOUSE

The Engadine - where people greet each other with 'Allegra', a Ladin expression roughly meaning, in today's terms, 'be happy'. A Romansh legend about this patch of land is still told by the inhabitants: "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, or Engiadina in Ladin."

True or not, the outcome is breathtaking: picture a vista of heavenly beauty, a valley carved out by the River Inn, glacier-covered mountains, steep passes, dreamy Alpine lakes and flower-drenched meadows. In the **Upper Engadine - often called the 'roof of Europe'** - there is a place that exerts an almost magical attraction, to us and to thousands like us. Its name is neither Sils, Celerina, Silvaplana nor Sils-Maria. It is a very special domicile, with magnificent hotel palaces and luxurious boutiques, situated by a lake and divided into two parts, the 'Dorf' (village) and the 'Bad' (baths). Central to its attraction: holidays with a touch of exclusivity. Little wonder, since its name has become synonymous with style, elegance, wealth and celebrity. Yet the name also stands for culture, nature, tradition. The place we are talking about is that legendary metropolis built in the mountains - **St. Moritz**.

The history of its development to what it is today, from an unexceptional and impoverished farming village to a renowned and international holiday resort and spa, may justly be described as turbulent, to say the least. But how did this place get its name, a name that is held in high esteem all over the world? To find that out we must look far back in history, to the epoch of the mighty Imperium Romanum.

Mute evidence of such ancient times: the church high above the village with its distinct landmark, the leaning tower. This humble place of worship was dedicated to a particular saint, who according to the legend lived sometime in the third century AD. His name was **Mauritius**. As a high Roman officer he commanded a legion, and in turn took his orders from the emperor Diokletian and his co-regent Maximianus. The latter crossed the Alps to do battle with the revolting Galls, and made camp in

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Octodurum, now called Martigny and situated in the canton of Valais. However, 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, however, the Christians refused to follow the heretical orders of Maximianus. Mauritius and his men were therefore pitilessly slaughtered by the imperial troops.

Thus was a cult created, 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 thus incurred, Mauritius the Martyr was revered, even worshipped. The name of this saint was carried to the most remote and obscure corners of the empire, to the mountainous Engadine, for example. And wherever his protection was invoked, a church was built in his name, in St. Moritz, too. The old church of Mauritius with its leaning tower must have been built between 1000 and 1100. Its tower was of course not designed to be as it is today; the slope on which the building was erected began to slowly slide downwards, and the tower gradually started to lean to the valley.

The history of the Engadine is closely intertwined with the history of the **canton Grisons**. Still today, this region is proudly called 'alt fry Rätia'. The former province of Rhaetia was inhabited by Etruscans, Celts and Romans; they all left traces in this wild and mountainous countryside. A druid's stone in today's Kulm-Park, once a holy place of the Celtic priests, bears witness to this ancient people, and the columns on the Julier hospice are said to have been erected by the Roman emperor Julius Caesar.

Anyone hearing the name **St. Moritz** today will more likely than not immediately envisage a winter sports metropolis illuminated by the blaze of glamour. Yet its healing sources are far older than any Summer or Winter tourism. As far back as 3000 years ago the curative powers of the waters of St. Moritz were held in high esteem. But it was not until 1573 that the therapeutic effect of the highly carbonated water was recorded in writing, by the eminent physician **Paracelsus**. Later, other doctors from Italy and Switzerland greatly praised the curative action of the source. As a result, St. Moritz became a renowned spa, and experienced its initial 'golden epoch' towards the close of the 17th century. Rich and distinguished people with aristocratic blood travelled to St. Moritz, including Duke Victor Amadeus of Savoy and Franz Fornese of Parma.

The 'boom' period for St. Moritz did not actually begin until 1864. The first tourist office was set up, and a new spa opened. The village gradually developed into an attractive destination with a special charm. In 1899 Swiss writer J.C. Heer described

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St. Moritz as follows: "... 1856 metres above sea level. Seemingly supportive of but the most frugal shepherd's existence, the earth bears millions! Seven or eight months of the year the countryside remains in the grip of the harsh elements of winter, and the summer season produces little more than beautiful grass, and fir, larch and stone pine cones; yet inhabitants and visitors luxuriate in all the material goods the wide world has to offer...!"

The **village of St. Moritz** gradually grew into a town. The traditional fear of the mountains was also overcome, no mean feat considering the legions of monsters, demons and evil spirits that were, according to legend, supposed to populate these inhospitable tracts. The respect for such divine creations had long prevented man from conquering the mountains. In the 19th century, however, this way of thinking quickly became a thing of the past. Mountaineering came into its own! The main peaks of the Bernina region were climbed between 1850 and 1877. With growing enthusiasm the people realised that the mountain environment provided scope for spiritual freedom. The love of nature was discovered, the love of the walls of rock and ice, of the tranquility and solitude to be found up there, the love of daring to challenge the mountain. Walter Bonatti, one of the world's foremost climbers, once said: "It should not be forgotten that the big mountains derive their worth from the esteem in which they are held by man - otherwise they would remain nothing more than a large pile of rocks."

The Engadine farming village thus became a town. 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 conveyed people from St. Moritz-Dorf to St. Moritz-Bad. Hotels appeared at an astonishing rate, attracting moneyed visitors from all over the world. In 1903 the journey to St. Moritz became almost child's play: gone were the days of an arduous and long haul over the narrow pass track. The Rhätische Bahn (Rhaetian railway) opened its service to St. Moritz, 1856 metres above sea level, to where the mountains are at their most breathtaking. Initially the rail service covered the Thusis - Celerina route, but was extended a year later to provide comfortable travel from Chur to St. Moritz.

Today still, the train winds its way through rugged and unchanged terrain, with deep gorges and steep abysses, through wildly magnificent flora, with breathtaking views down into the valley below, where emerald-green water rushes in torrents past massive boulders. Through tunnels and over viaducts, with vertical drops that are definitely not for the faint of heart, the train carries its passengers up into a mountain wonderland.

Hikers and skiing enthusiasts are especially attracted to St. Moritz, particularly in winter, the resort's clear-cut high season. Already in 1859 - in Sils, to be exact - 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

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continued unbroken to this day. Alpine skiing has retained its lead over the decades, and remains the key attraction of St. Moritz as a winter sports resort, a fact that anyone who knows St. Moritz will certainly be glad to confirm. However the new craze of snowboarding amongst the younger more athletic types is becoming a very popular alternative.

In wintertime, St. Moritz resembles a rare white-petalled flower. Either you love it, or you don't. There is nothing in between, no middle ground, no alternative. Very few people are able to resist its unique character; it is a place that casts a spell on visitors, Winter and Summer. Empathy is soon created, one feels drawn to and comfortable with the personality of St. Moritz. Once you have been there you will always look forward to your next visit. Of course, these are by no means the only reasons why St. Moritz inspires such loyalty amongst its visitors. Let us not forget the astonishingly blue lakes, and the luminescent mountain peaks with their bizarre contours outlined against the dusk sky.

On the other hand, the sheer voguishness of the place also serves as a magnet. Like a number of other resorts of international distinction, it is a place to see and be seen. As previously mentioned, St. Moritz has a long tradition of being home to the famous. Alfred Hitchcock spent his honeymoon here, and returned every winter thereafter.

This celebrated creator of many a big-screen thriller hatched many of his plots in the atmosphere of St. Moritz, and once remarked as follows: "I asked myself: what is to be found in Switzerland? Milk chocolate, the Alps, folk dancing and lakes. One must attempt to build such local colour into the drama. The lakes must be there so that people can be drowned in them. The Alps so that people can be pushed over an edge into an abyss." He was, of course, referring to his films.

The Aga Khan learned to ski in St. Moritz by gliding over the surface of the lake with skis on his feet and Mr Denoth, his skiing instructor, by his side. The same can be said of the late King Hussein of Jordan. Even Lenin tried his luck on the ice and on the slopes.

The Maharajah of Haiderabad arrived with 500 trunks and 300 pieces of hand luggage, 40 tuxedos and a whole suitcase full of ties. Richard Strauss, Charlie Chaplin, Enrico Caruso, Hans Albers, Rose Kennedy, King Gustav Adolf of Sweden and Gloria Swanson were most welcome guests. King Faruk was greeted with flags and garlands, with a flower-covered carpet provided for the royal feet to walk on. Twenty years later, however, he was afforded virtually no attention at all...

To see and be seen was the motto, especially in the golden 20's, when night became day. Spectacular parties and magnificent events were the order of the times. People who had long arrived, and people whose sole purpose in life was to arrive, came to St. Moritz to experience life at its fullest and most extravagant. Taking the waters

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was definitely 'out', time was much too precious to be wasted in this way, and sporting activities had yet to be properly developed.

This is why the name 'St. Moritz' instantly conjures up **images of high life and glamour** - yet it is the afterglow of times long past. Today, the jet-set still congregates in St. Moritz, but with a great deal less spectacle.

Partying until the sun came up and doing the cocktail round was quite simply 'in' at that time. Life in the **Grand Hotels** was life lived at its most excessive. Those who wished to spend their precious holidays away from the public eye, far from the high-profile parties and the celebrity photographers, selected an exclusive address in St. Moritz. An address that provides true peace and quiet, impeccable discretion, in harmony with nature, and with the 'bellavista', the tremendous view over the unrivalled mountain panorama and the lakes of the Upper Engadine. Far away from the bustle of the town centre, a place where today one can remain incognito and enjoy one's holiday undisturbed in complete privacy.

A garden of Eden situated above St. Moritz, with a name that can never be forgotten once one has stepped inside. An establishment that stands for everything expected a holiday will be: **Suvretta House**.

An establishment with a history, and one that made history, too. A legendary history, beginning in 1912. Hotel pioneer **Anton Sebastian Bon** transformed his vision into reality, and had his dream built on the Plateau Chasellas. Two kilometres away from St. Moritz, far removed from the touristic commotion of the town.

The hospitable house in the mountains soon developed into one of the leading establishments of the world.

Although Anton Bon was approaching 60 when Suvretta House was opened, he was by no means ready for retirement. On the contrary. Dynamic and full of ideas, he created a fantastic world, an achievement rarely matched anywhere else in the world. Trained in the hotel business, and a veteran of many a renowned European establishment, his goal was independence, to be exact his own first-class hotel. Initially he and his wife Marie took out a lease on the hotels Bodenhaus and Post in Splügen. They then purchased the Rigi First hotel, and subsequently the Villa Pfyffer in Vitznau, which was to become the Park Hotel. But the landmark of his career as a hotel owner was to be the creation of Suvretta House. **Architect Karl Koller** drew up the plans and the foundation was laid on April 22nd, 1911. Work proceeded at an unprecedented pace, with 400 workmen working from dawn to dusk. By December of the same year the hotel was ready for the interior outfitting work to commence. A truly magnificent moment!

The following months of **1912** were dedicated to interior decoration and soon the hotel was ready to welcome the first guests. Anton Bon's dream, the Suvretta

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House, had come true. Embracing the style of the belle époque, the château-like building was truly impressive. Comfort was afforded absolute priority; neither work nor expense was spared. The luxurious interior boasted 110 bathrooms. The abundance of the hotel exceeded even the expectations of the owner. The cream on top of it all: the stunning location. Anton Bon had created an hotel with a unique ambience, which to this day may justly be termed the truly remarkable feature of Suvretta House.

This was an hotelier who treasured his creation, his hotel, who made it come to life, gave it the character that can still be experienced today.

From 1915 onwards, after the death of Anton Bon, it was his **wife Marie** who made her mark on the future of the establishment. She was called '**the soul of the Suvretta**', probably because of her exceedingly strong personality that demanded, and obtained, all due respect. Yet those first years without her husband must have been difficult. The Great War was in progress, foreign guests were few and far between.

Better times were anticipated, but they were not to materialise until after World War II, during which the hotel had to be completely shut down for several years. But in spite of all the problems encountered, the legacy of Anton Bon was in good hands. In particular his son Hans was responsible for continuing the life-long work of his father. His brother Anton worked in the hotel for a year after their father's death, then left for England to continue his hotel career at the Dorchester in London.

Hans Bon directed Suvretta House until 1950. Guests knew him as a charming host, the manager who liked to play traditional tunes on the Swiss accordion in the hotel bar. A small piece of the history of Suvretta House, that is remembered and recounted to this day.

The era of Hans Bon began in the golden 20's, the period of imaginative balls and sumptuous parties. In January 1919 Vaslav Nijinski, the famous dancer, gave his last major performance - in the ballroom of Suvretta House. Madam Peron, Crown Prince Akihito of Japan and King Faruk of Egypt were staying at the hotel. The Shah of Persia, too, was a regular and enthusiastic guest.

After the economically austere war years, an absolutely new beginning followed in summer 1946, with extremely limited financial resources, to be sure, but with a cast-iron determination to steer the hotel back to success. The mountain of debts had to be cleared, at the same time conversion and renovation work was overdue.

After the death of Hans Bon responsibility was assumed first by **Rudolf Candrian-Bon**, for a period of four years. He was followed by his brother **Albert Candrian**, who managed Suvretta House for the next 14 years.

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In 1968 the baton was passed on to directors **Rudolf F. and Dorli Müller**. In the glorious 50's the hotel had the unique attraction of the 'Carousel Bar', where American guests in particular liked to meet for aperitifs and nightcaps.

Today diners congregate for pre-dinner drinks in the very stylish Anton's Bar, where until 1989, the bar was presided over by the legendary Mario for 77 seasons who was an expert at mixing cocktails for guests. Although he actually wanted to become an actor, Mario Scandella started work at Suvretta House, in 1946. His life was nevertheless adequately colourful, especially if one considers the long list of celebrities who sat at his bar: for example the Shah of Persia, King Umberto of Italy and Gregory Peck. And if he was asked whether guests have changed over the decades, his answer was: "Maybe. As a rule, they are quieter, perhaps because sport has become so much more a part of life here. More steady-going, one could almost say. The times when festivities would continue till 4 a.m., whereupon the guests would move on to the hotel bakery, are gone."

Mario Scandella provides the next cue: sports. So what is the first thought when the words 'sports' and 'St. Moritz' are spoken? Skiing, of course. And with ample justification, too, because St. Moritz and Suvretta House were pioneers in this field. In 1935, for example, the **first-ever ski lift 'Suvretta-Randolins'** was opened. Hollywood star Douglas Fairbanks cut the tape on December 22nd, and proceeded to become the first skiing celebrity to be hauled up the mountain from Chasellas to Randolins. The project was established by the Skilift Suvretta company, guided by Hans Bon and architect Karl Koller as mentors. It could really have been one of Anton Bon's ideas! Hans Bon, his successor, left no stone unturned to ensure economic survival. In 1937 a second lift was built, twice the length and the continuation of the first one, from Randolins to Plateau Nair, to an altitude of 2760 metres. In spite of the war, slalom races were held, including in 1940 the Vlasow Cup, which was initiated by Mrs Alex Vlasow.

Albert Candrian was as committed to winter sports as his predecessor, especially as the high season for St. Moritz has always been the Winter. He therefore, continued with the development of skiing facilities directly on the hotel's doorstep. To provide scope for downhill pistes, Suvretta House purchased additional land in 1963. The dream of many guests - to have direct access to the Corviglia skiing region from the hotel - was fulfilled. This is where, under the mountain Piz Nair, skiing slopes of ideal configuration and great beauty are to be found.

The sunny south-westerly slopes are accessed by nine T-bar and chair lifts, the longest of which are two kilometres. They provide up to 600 metres elevation and certainly deserve the designation as one of the largest coherent skiing paradises the world has to offer. No other St. Moritz hotel is in a position to provide the little 'luxury' of being able to ski right down to the hotel entrance! All guests have to do is glide to the hotel and step out of their bindings - no equipment storage problems, either at the hotel.

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Skiing has long been a sport of great significance for Suvretta House. It is interesting to know that Switzerland's first ski school was opened in St. Moritz in 1925. The **Suvretta Snow Sports School** is located in the hotel, and employs more than 140 ski instructors during the winter season. Guests wishing to learn this sport, snowboarding or to improve their skills, are living above the "school", so to speak...

Guests at Suvretta House usually bring their own skis, hiking kit and equipment once only, as these items can be carefully stored for subsequent visits. This service is held in very high esteem by the numerous guests who spend their holidays at Suvretta House many being the fourth generation. Regulars have their 'own' tables in the magnificent Grand Restaurant dating back to the era of Anton Bon. And their favourite armchair for reading and relaxing in the elegantly redecorated lobby.

During the **Millennium year 2000** extensive rebuilding and redesigning work took place in the public areas at Suvretta House with expenditure in the region of CHF 23 millions. All the works under the close supervision of Helen and Vic Jacob were finished on time and ready for Christmas and the start of 2001. The changes were very well received by all the regular and new guests, whilst at the same time retaining the legendary style created by Anton Bon. The generously dimensioned lobby has been completely redesigned: its vast spaces set the scene for what guests have come to expect at Suvretta House and it makes an immediate impact for new visitors. Walls have been removed and a new staircase installed to reveal "**Suvretta ConBrio Celebrations**", a very exciting complex of three beautiful ball-rooms all equipped with state of the art facilities. The rooms, Atrio, Capriccio and the Festivo ball-room with its stage, are very versatile and can be used for conferences, family occasions and private parties up to 300 guests.

The large foyer and salon rendezvous have been redecorated and furnished in subtle colours to complement the ever changing colours outside the large panoramic windows. The enormous wood panelled Grand Restaurant with its massive oak columns and the painstakingly decorated coffer-work ceiling lends itself to formal dining when gentlemen still wear the traditional black tie evening dress on Sundays and a dark suit on other nights. Christmas and New Year's Eve are naturally very special days at Suvretta House and a magnificent gala event always sees out the old year and welcomes in the new. Some of the mouth watering dishes from the menu prepared by our kitchen brigade of over 40 chefs, could include:

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Les perles d'Osciète Malossol et le filet royal de Bornholm fumé
 Les blinis de sarrasin et le toast de brioche

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L'élixir de canard fumé aux quenelles de séré aux herbes
 Les pailles au Parmesan

* * *

La fricassée de langoustines et coquilles St-Jacques
 sur fond d'artichaut de Bretagne

* * *

Le filet de bœuf rôti aux petits légumes
 La sauce périgourdine
 Les perles Parmentier aux amandes
 Les haricots fins aux salsifis

* * *

La terrine au chocolat à la fine Champagne
 et le confit de poire Williams
 Les frivolités de notre pâtissier

In contrast the Suvretta Stube offers a more relaxed atmosphere where diners can dress in a more casual style and where traditional Swiss dishes such as raclette and fondue are available. The two smaller dining rooms, Salon Vert and the Salon Venise on the ground floor adjacent to the Grand Restaurant offer yet further choice for Suvretta's discerning clientele.

The **Suvretta Sports and Pleasure Club** offers a vast range of fitness and sports facilities for everyone. The 25 metre indoor pool has been completely redesigned in summer 2000 as part of the renovation programme and its exciting new shape complimented by a large waterfall and jacuzzi make it a very popular amenity. The new outside whirlpool heated to 36°C and surrounded by the mountains of the Upper Engadine is the first in St. Moritz. And after an invigorating day, as the sun sets, what better way to refresh body and mind than to luxuriate in this way in the open air. Saunas, beauty treatments, massage, solarium, hydrojet waterbeds and gymnasium are other facilities available to hotel guests.

Included in this jewel of Suvretta House is a south-facing terrace, which provides an unrestricted view over the magnificent mountain scenery, plus a sunbathing meadow and tennis courts in summer that are converted into an ice rink for the winter season.

Suvretta is also proud of its **three mountain restaurants**. **Chasellas** a short walk away and open for lunch and dinner in winter and summer, **Trutz** open for lunch in summer and winter and **Chamanna** open only for lunch for skiers in winter time.

One aspect of Suvretta House that is never in danger of being overlooked is its unique location. Winter and summer, the fascination is always there. Fascinating in scope are also the opportunities for walking and hiking tours offered by the hotel. Up and away, equipped with suitable shoes and a rucksack, is the motto. For example by aerial cableway from Surlej to the 'Corvatsch', which translates as 'large raven', to enjoy the feeling of being exactly 3303 metres high and the overwhelming

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panorama of the surrounding alpine peaks. Many roads lead away from the Murtél middle station: over to the Fuorcla Surlej, the fork over the lake, from there in an hour or so southeast down into the Roseg valley. Pontresina is a one and a half hour's hike away, or can be reached by horse-drawn carriage, which is certainly the most picturesque way to get there.

From the Fuorcla Surlej station there is also a trail leading to St. Moritz-Bad via lake Hahnen. This route follows the western slopes of the Piz Surlej, and provides a magnificent view of the lakes of the Upper Engadine.

The Segantini hut on the Schafberg - the place where famous Engadine **painter Giovanni Segantini** lived and worked - is the destination of a classic walk. Segantini created his works, which far transcended what is generally deemed 'reality', at an altitude of 2731 metres. He painted not only the Engadine, but also the dreams which this region graced him with. His main work - the Alpine Tryptichon 'la naschita', 'la natüra' - 'la mort' (from birth through life to death) can be admired in a museum in St. Moritz founded especially to house his art. In addition, and to name but a few possible activities, the area provides scope for wind surfing, horseback riding, golf, canoeing and gliding.

The wonders of the Engadine are many, and sometimes seem to be waiting around every corner. For example soldanellas, which flood the meadows with violet once the snow has melted, or the glacier crowfoot, a plant that covers the ground up to 4000 metres high with a whiteish-red carpet of blooms. Looking up to the steep mountain slopes, the dark needles of the 'Dschember' (arolla) pine provide a delightful contrast to the light green of the 'Laret', the larch forest.

All these wonders of nature, and the tradition of Suvretta House, provide a truly extraordinary combination. All the more so now because the hotel has all the amenities of the 21st Century whilst retaining the traditions on which it was founded. First and foremost, it is (and will always be) a holiday oasis, a retreat where rest and relaxation are guaranteed. It is said that rare flowers often grow in close proximity - like Suvretta House and St. Moritz.

From May 1st, 1989 to April 30rd, 2014 Suvretta House was under the management of **Helen and Vic Jacob**, who run the hotel in accordance with the philosophy of the Bon family. On May 1st, 2014 **Esther and Peter Egli** took over the management. This is only the seventh management generation in the 100 years of this hotel's history. Ester and Peter Egli greet their guests personally when they arrive and depart and are 'on call' around the clock. Such above-average dedication also has a positive effect on the staff, and contributes significantly to the long-term loyalty of the employees.



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Many of the 300 members of the Suvretta team proudly wear a certain number of stars on their uniforms, symbols that express their loyalty to the hotel. One star stands for 10 completed seasons. All the people who work there have a common goal: to ensure that guests have a more than pleasant stay, a second home in the Engadine even. They see that guests always have everything they need, and will swiftly meet every request. Their motto: nothing is impossible. Although up to 400 guests reside at the hotel in peak periods, there is never a feeling of being part of a crowd. On the contrary: this is Suvretta House at its most stimulating!

So how could this establishment maintain itself on such a high level of all-embracing harmony over so many decades? The answer is quite simple, really: by striving for continuity, by being determined to uphold the time-honoured and traditional values, by consistently seeking to improve the 'software' of Suvretta House.

An entry in the diary of Segantini provides a meaningful description of the relationship between the artist and his works: "Life's pleasure grows from the freedom to love. In every good work there is love."

This applies not only to his pictures. It applies also to Suvretta House. Because if you love Suvretta House, you will always be attracted to it, always see it as "your home away from home" - above the small woods, which is what "Suvretta" means in Ladin.

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