

Toblach Grand Hotel

Description

On 20 November 1871 the Southern Railway began operating through the Pusteria (Pustertal) Valley, running from Lienz to Franzensfeste. After the line had been operating for a year, the commercial expectations of the Imperial–Royal Southern Railway were still not being met. So the company turned its attention to the market of the future: tourism. Toblach, known today also by the Italian name Dobbiaco, was conveniently located and offered magnificent scenery. So it was that the idea came into being of building a hotel here that would become an innovative point of reference. On 25 August 1877, construction on the Southern Railway’s hotel, which would later become known as the Grand Hotel, commenced. The design for the project came from Wilhelm Ritter von Flattich, the head of the railroad company's own building department. Construction costs had to be strictly limited due to an economic recession going on at the time, so the architect used his previous train station projects as a model. The hotel opened its doors for the 1878 summer season. With a capacity of eighty beds, it was not yet a “Grand Hotel” but rather a functional building with a few representative elements. The new leaseholders, Ignaz and Elise Überbacher, were an extraordinary stroke of luck for the Southern Railway, since Elise in particular had a remarkable way with guests and knew exactly how to handle the staff. Ten years after the opening, on Dec 22, 1887 and 5 January 1888, the Überbachers acquired each equal shares of the Toblach hotel. Celebrities, too, visited Toblach in those years. This was of great significance, naturally, and conferred a special aura of nobility to the hotel: Frederick, the German heir to the throne, came to Toblach in the autumn of 1887. Other nobles followed, including King Albert of Saxony, Archduchess Stephanie, Crown Princess of Austria, and King Milan of Serbia. It was soon clear that Hotel Toblach, as it was called, had changed to the Grand Hotel. After her husband Ignaz died the summer of 1888, Elise managed the hotel alone. The Southern Railway’s hotel was the starting point of the tourist boom in Toblach. Through generous investments, Elise provided for the continual expansion of the hotel so that the total number of beds eventually reached a capacity of 350 people. Because the Grand Hotel was only minimally damaged during World War I, it was converted into a military hospital. By the end of the war, in November 1918, the Grand Hotel was in dire condition: the infrastructure was in need of renovation and the furniture was worn out. Of course it was also sorely lacking in guests, who began returning – albeit slowly – only in 1924. Elise died in 1926, at the age of 68. Her son Max stepped into her place, but filed for bankruptcy in 1932. The Grand Hotel was put up for auction in 1934. The Venezia Tridentina land credit institution took over the hotel temporarily. The actual day-to-day management, meanwhile, continued under the leadership of Elise's daughter and her husband. Fortunately a period of economic growth followed, and now it was the Italians’ turn to discover Toblach – now called Dobbiaco in Italian: an Alpine Mecca for summer tourism. In the following years, the Grand Hotel changed owners frequently: the first was the umbrella organization for the Fascist party organizations; the next was the cartographic and geographic service of the Italian army. Later, the house became the property of the state, which relinquished it to the Pöpstliches Hilfswerk, a papal charity that used the house as a summer residence for needy children. In 1991, after many proposals, a space-utilization program of the South Tyrolean province government was adopted, which has continued to this day. Composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) visited Toblach in the summer of 1908. He had just gone through a difficult phase of life, and was suffering from heart disease. Mahler passed three summers in peace and quiet at Trenkerhof, and composed “Song of the Earth” and his Ninth Symphony here; he also began his Tenth Symphony here. Mahler died in June 1911. The spacious music hall in the new Dobbiaco (Toblach) Grand Hotel Cultural Centre, which has excellent acoustics, is dedicated to him.

Address

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Permission

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Categories: Castles, palaces, stately homes, residences, fortresses, Museums

Setting: rural

Topic: romantic, idyllic, buildings of historical/artistic interest

Architectural style: alpine architecture

Facade: natural stone facade, wooden facade

Water: ✓

Electricity: ✓

Elevator: ✗

Parking: ✓

Access for passenger cars, commercial vehicles





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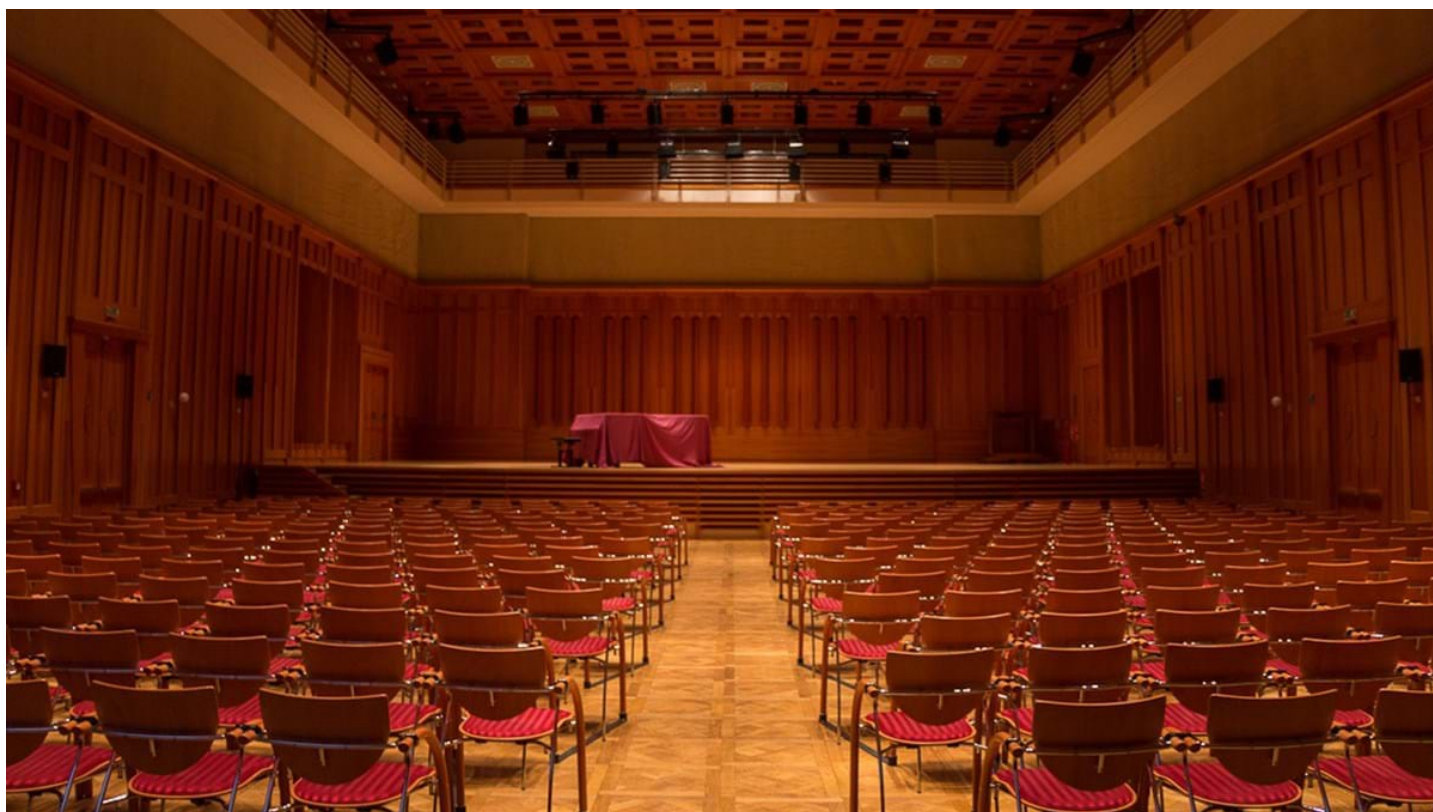
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