

EDITED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Since opening in 1906 to the Schmid family's management, four generations have accompanied the evolution of Lugano hospitality through investments, preservation of memory and new sustainability needs.

The Hotel International

au Lac In 2026, the EHL

Hospitality Business

School will reach its

120th anniversary, a

milestone that also

offers an opportunity to

retrace some of the

milestones in Lugano's

tourism development.

Inaugurated on March

31, 1906, at Via Nassa

68, the facility has passed through four generations of the Schmid family, alternating

modernization and preservation of its historic features. The anniversary was celebrated on

October 13 with representatives of the EHL Hospitality Business School Alumni Association,

which itself is celebrating a century since the establishment of its own graduate network.



The hotel was founded by Anton Disler, a hotelier originally from Lucerne, in a city that was

consolidating its tourist vocation, thanks in part to rail connections across the Alps. The aim

was to offer comfortable and elegant service, attentive to guests' needs. This approach,

while adapting to changing travel habits, has remained a benchmark in the hotel's

management.

Four generations at the helm of the hotel

After Anton Disler and his wife Alice Disler-Helfenstein, the management passed to their

daughter Alice and her husband Otto Schmid. In 1957, Giulio Schmid took over, followed by

the generation represented by Alessandra and Roberto Schmid, who currently run the business. Sergio and Aurelia, the fifth generation, are looking to the future and will eventually decide whether to continue the family tradition.

Continuity has not prevented significant changes. Between 1958 and 1980, private bathrooms were gradually installed in the rooms; the 1990s saw the addition of an underground garage and a garden pool, while between 1999 and 2009, air conditioning was introduced throughout the building. From 2012 to 2024, the rooms on four floors were completely renovated in three phases.

According to data provided by the hotel, approximately eight million francs have been invested in improvements and modernizations of rooms and facilities over the past twelve years. The work also included the façade, restored in 2020 to its original colors, and the distinctive dome.



Energy efficiency and memory conservation

The modernization also affected energy consumption. The renovation of the heating plant resulted in a 47,5% reduction in CO₂ emissions compared to the previous levels indicated by the

facility. In 2026, a heat recovery system was also put into operation, recovering heat from the air conditioning systems and reusing it to produce domestic hot water.

Alongside its technical investments, the hotel has developed a project dedicated to its history. Roberto Schmid has compiled over ten years of research from the family archives in a roughly one-hundred-page volume, published in 2026. Documents, photographs, plans, and testimonials reconstruct the history of the hotel and its relationship with the city. A copy

of the book is available in every room; a museum is also located on the first floor, flanked by historical panels along the staircase and a digital tour.

In 2007, the hotel received a special ICOMOS recognition for the preservation and enhancement of its historical archive and for the continuity of its family management. In 2023, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* included it among the best historic Swiss hotels in its *NZZ-Hotel Rating*. The following year, Alessandra and Roberto Schmid received the Swiss Welcome Trophy from *Gastronomie & Tourisme* magazine, an award for the quality of their hospitality and sustainable management.

The link with hotel training

The 120th anniversary coincides with the centenary of the EHL Alumni Association, founded in 1926 and linked to the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, founded in 1893. The network today brings together approximately 35.000 graduates in 150 countries, divided into 70 territorial groups.

For the Schmid family, the relationship with the school spans several generations. Giulio Schmid attended from 1954 to 1956, before working in London and St. Moritz and returning to Lugano in 1957. Alessandra graduated in 1991, while Roberto completed his Bachelor of Science in International Hospitality Management in 2000.

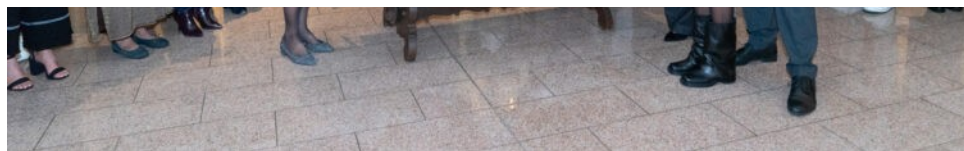
The joint celebration thus provided an opportunity to bring together a professional community united by a shared background. Letizia Gianora, president of the association's Ticino group, which has approximately 500 members, highlighted the activities organized annually: visits to accommodations, tastings, conferences, and workshops designed to foster exchange of expertise and the creation of professional relationships.

A history intertwined with that of Lugano

From the Belle Époque to the development of lakeside tourism,



passing through Via
Nassa and Piazza Luini,
to the birth of the LAC,
the history of the
International au Lac



has unfolded alongside urban transformations. The hotel's location has made it a privileged observatory of the city's changes, while the structure itself has adapted to its guests' evolving expectations.

The name may also be linked to the connections between Switzerland and Italy in the early 20th century. The opening of the Simplon Tunnel, initially scheduled for 1905 and then postponed to 1906, was tied to the Milan International Exposition. Meanwhile, the Gotthard connection continued to transport travelers to Ticino. According to the reconstruction proposed by the hotel, the expression "International au Lac" may refer to that event and its location on the lake.

Today, the facility boasts 78 rooms, 140 beds, 30 staff, 36 parking spaces in the underground garage, and four charging stations for electric vehicles. These numbers describe the current operation, but they take on meaning when viewed in light of a journey that began in 1906.

"The history of a hotel is measured not only by the years that have passed, but by the ability of each generation to preserve what they have received, renew it, and pass it on to those who come after," said Roberto Schmid, co-owner and director. This perspective sums up the challenge of a family business called upon to reconcile historical heritage, day-to-day management, and industry changes.

