



# REGITSE ROSENVINGE

A Hotel- & Hospitality Blog

- [Work with me](#)
  - [Reviews](#)
  - [Eco Hotels](#)
  - [Design](#)
  - [Guides & Destinations](#)
  - [Green Travel](#)
  - [Resources](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
  - [HOTELS](#)
  - [TRAVEL](#)
  - [HOSPITALITY & LIFESTYLE](#)
  - [NEWSLETTER](#)
  - [AGENCY](#)

[Home](#) [Hotels](#) [Reviews](#) [The Life & Story of a Grand Hotel: Hôtel Bella Tola in Valais, Switzerland.](#)

[HOTELS](#) [REVIEWS](#)

## The Life & Story of a Grand Hotel: Hôtel Bella Tola in Valais, Switzerland.

by [Regitse Rosenvinge](#) updated on [August 7, 2021](#)



*There's truly no place like Switzerland. I knew that when I embarked on a trip to the French-speaking part of the country, more specifically Valais, earlier this summer. However, after a few years away, I had forgotten what this level of pristine beauty and natural splendour can do for the soul. My place of residence this time was the iconic Hôtel Bella Tola located in the historical mountain town of St. Luc in Val d'Aniviers – about two hour's drive from Geneva. Nestling in a scenery that literally takes your breath away, this hotel felt like a true home from the very first moment. And even better; it's full of stories that I'll do my best to convey in this article.*

*Hôtel Bella Tola is a tale of family bonds, heartfelt hospitality and taking pride in building something that lasts for generations. Sit back, relax and enjoy this virtual visit to one of the finest mountain hotels in the Swiss Alps.*

---



# HÔTEL BELLA TOLA

St. Luc | Val d'Anniviers | Valais | Switzerland

## 162 years of genuine hospitality

This story begins in the year of 1859. Pierre Pont and his wife, Elizabeth Zufferey, decide to open Hôtel Bella Tola in her childhood home. Back then, a place for the high society – a mountain refuge only reachable by foot or horse carriage from Sierre. At the end of the 19th century, the hotel had a capacity of 40 beds and a dining room able to seat 100 people. Since then, extensive renovations have taken place, but always with respect for the past, which means the main structure of the house is the same. Take for example the *Salon Vallet*, which has retained its wooden panelling and painted ceiling – or the 19th century dining room with its marvellous pink stucco ceiling. Today, guests enjoy their breakfast, coffee and tea in these rooms – just like they have for 162 years.

In 1995, the current owners, Anne-Françoise et Claude Buchs-Favre, took over the operation of Hôtel Bella Tola. Before them, four generations of the Pont family have had their daily walk on the historical premises. Not only is it rare to find a hotel that has been guarded by only two different families for more than a century; their level of dedication and genuine care for the property has simply made Hôtel Bella Tola a beacon of quality and alpine well-being.

***Hotel Bella Tola is built on the foundation of a Roman villa. Several ancient artefacts from the Roman Era has been found by archeologists in the area.***

Several new initiatives and projects have seen the light of day since Mr. and Ms. Buchs-Favre took over the property in 1996. In 2008, the hotel's very own lifestyle boutique *Maison d'Angelique* opened its doors, simply because residents were so often inquiring about the interiors of the hotel. Here, you can get your hands on the delicate items adorning e.g. the the lobby and hotel bathrooms (cushions, wallpaper, scents etc.), which makes Hôtel Bella Tola not only a place to stay, but a *lifestyle*.

The latest renovations took place in 2020, where the hotel closed down to focus on adding new life to the existing rooms and suites. I stayed in a Junior Suite, freshly painted with impeccable views of the snow-covered alpine peaks. The price for this kind of room starts at €285,-.



*How Hotel Bella Tola looked in its early days*

## Alpine gastronomy with local references

An international cuisine with clear references to Swiss gastronomy, primarily based on local ingredients and prepared with attention to detail; that sums up Hôtel Bella Tola's main restaurant, Chez Ida, pretty well. Last-mentioned is named after the mother of Ms. Buchs-Favre, and it's a place paying tribute to good taste and social gatherings. The dark wooden floors, splashes of colourful suede and colour-washed walls is the symbol of that. During my stay, I enjoyed the lamb with bulgur and grilled apricots, but I've heard that the Filet de Perche with tartar sauce and homemade fries is a must-try. (not to mention the linguine with morels!). The restaurant is awarded with 13 points in the Gault Millau 2021 guide.

Le Tzambron is the name of the hotel's second restaurant. Here, guests are met by a more traditional decor and an informal and laidback atmosphere, which the long, wooden tables and colourful lamps are proof of. Ideal for families and couples looking for a relaxed evening with genuine mountain-inspired recipes at its core, Le Tzambron offers its guests to mingle and enjoy traditional raclette evenings with various cheeses from the valley. I was fortunate enough to have a taste of this concept during my visit here, and I was blissfully reminded that raclette is truly one of my favourite eats!



*The cosy lobby area of the hotel invites for pre dinner drinks, board games and book readings.*

The sister hotel of Hôtel Bella Tola, *Chalet Favre*, is located in the village of St. Luc and just a stone's throw away. Oozing of Swiss traditionality, these premises are well-suited for families

and hikers who appreciate more rustic surroundings. Lunch and dinner can equally be enjoyed here.

Last, but not least – breakfast. One of the corner stone’s of a hotel experience and, in my mind, a reflection of the property itself. I was pleased to begin my days here in the historical lounge, which truly didn’t change much since the 19th century. And breakfast was exactly as you would expect from a historical mountain retreat; a rustic selection of bread and croissant made by local artisans, jams, cold cuts, cheese, cereals, eggs and bacon (local as well, of course!) and coffee/tea served in authentic china. Not two plates or cups were exactly identical. Each piece discreetly told a story of past hotel guests, some of them perhaps a hundred years old or more. I couldn’t help but wonder if someone would sit there with that exact thought in another 100 years from now. History has a way of repeating itself – a thought I find rather comforting.

On my last day at the hotel, Ms. Buchs showed me the interior of the old kitchen in which breakfast is produced every morning and has been for the past 160 years or so. To my great joy, I found that the heating rack (the metal rack used to heat the china before servings in the late 19th and early 20th century), hadn’t been replaced. And I thought to myself; *“Why change something if it isn’t broken?”*.



# Afternoons in an alpine spa heaven.

How would you feel spending an afternoon in a spa over-looking the snow-covered mountain tops? Quite good, right? That was my immediate thought when first hearing about *L'Eau des Cimes* – the 200 m2 high altitude spa of Hôtel Bella Tola. Rarely have I seen a spa with such strong connections to nature. From the choice of materials to the scents and products used in the wellness treatments; this location is an ode to Mother Nature and an appreciation of the unspoilt nature that (still!) constitutes the Swiss Alps. A cornucopia of natural beauty and plants that have been used for soothing purposes for thousands of years. During my visit, I was made aware of this, and I've been thankful for this knowledge ever since. If we take care of our nature, it will certainly take care of us, too.



HOTEL BELLA TOLA



Apart from a heated pool, sauna and relaxation area, *L'Eau des Cimes* is home to various signature treatments carried out by professional spa therapists living in close vicinity of the hotel. What was once the hotel's wine and cheese cellar, has been transformed into a wellness refuge made from pebble rugs, stone walls, animal skin cushions and leafy greens. Traditional but always chic.

The two signature treatments, *Rituel d'Anniviers* and *Rituel de Bacchus*, each last 110 minutes and centers around alpine herbs, flowers and wine therapy. For my own two treatments, I had the pleasure of collecting mud from a nearby mountain glacier. It gave me a feeling of being closer to nature and being more connected – and if that's not the point of well-being in modern

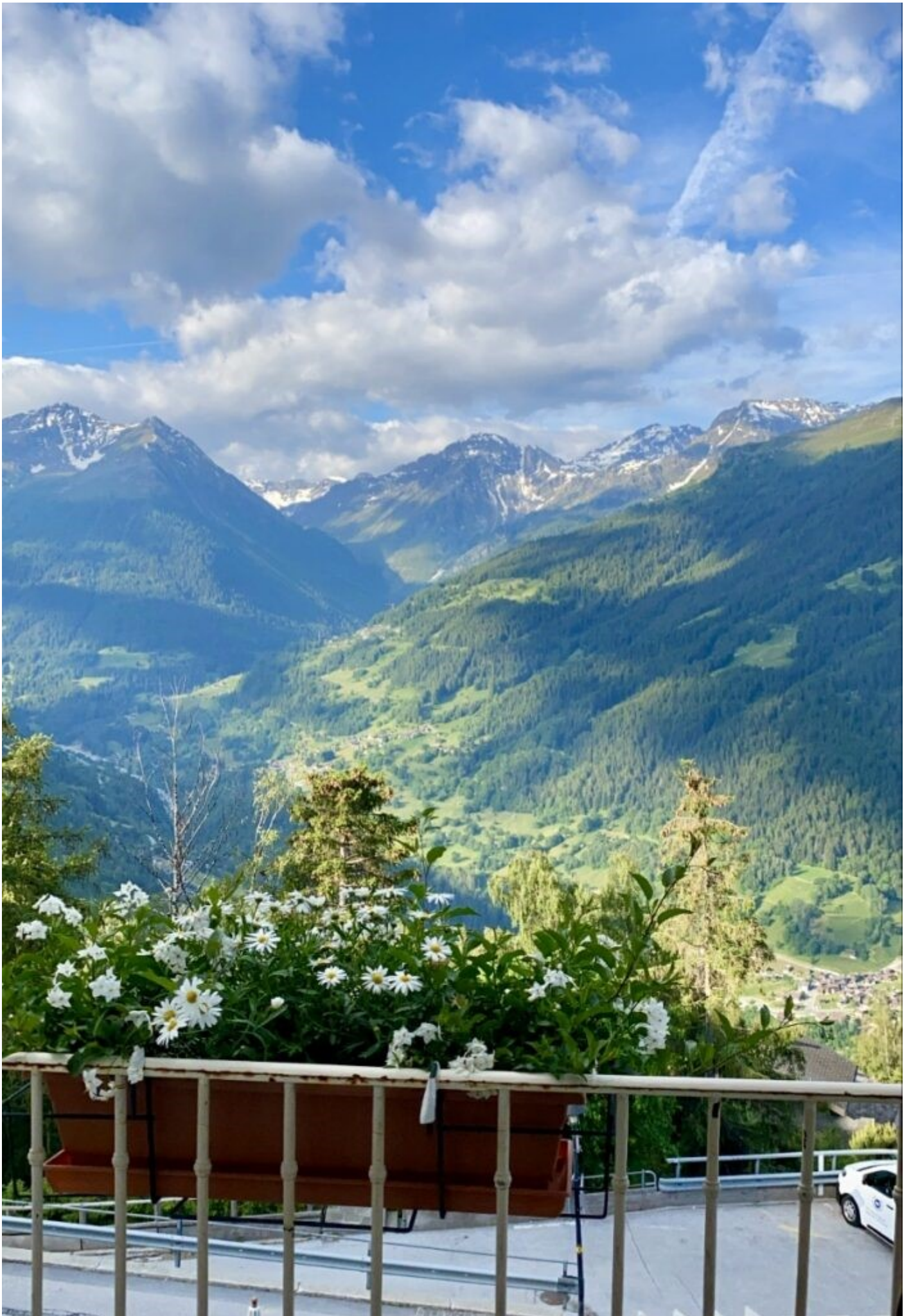


times, I don't know what is. Of course, other products were used as well, for example the Swiss skincare brand Alpeor, which is based on local plant extracts and alpine water. Pure bliss!

If you'd like to truly immerse yourself in nature while here – which I'll strongly recommend – look out for the packages of Hôtel Bella Tola. These include anything from a day exploring the mountains to high altitude beauty treatments and guided botanical tours. Last-mentioned deserves a chapter of its own, but for now; have this Swiss luxury hideaway in though next time you're longing for an experience abroad that involves nature, genuinely good service and exquisite food with a soul soothing backdrop.



*Golden hues in the Junior Suite.*



*Mountain view from the Junior Suite.*

Hôtel Bella Tola is a place unlike anywhere else. A visit here will transform into a life long memory that your mind keeps wandering back to – until you book your next stay. I can't wait to be back for more.

For more information, packages etc., go to [www.bellatola.ch](http://www.bellatola.ch).

*Hôtel Bella Tola is a member of, and one of the founders of, Swiss Historic Hotels.*

---



**Interview with Anne-Françoise  
Buchs-Favre**

*In 1996, Anne-Françoise and Claude Buchs-Favre took over Hôtel Bella Tola. Today, 25 years later, they're still involved in the daily operations, and so is one of their three daughters. In this interview, you'll get an insight into a family where hospitality has been the driving force for decades – and how to preserve the stories and legacy of a historical hotel.*

---

**Q: Please share how and when you first got to know Hôtel Bella Tola?**

*A: My grand mother is from the village of St. Luc, and when I was a young girl, 20 years old, I came to the Bella Tola to work at the reception for the summer season. I spent two months here before attending the Hotel school in Lausanne. It was my first experience in the hotel industry.*

*Even if I was a young girl, I already felt such an admiration for this hotel. I fell in love with the house and thought to myself; «how lucky was Olivier, the son of Mr Henry Pont, to receive such a nice hotel from his father!»*

*I left at the end of the season 1984, and had no idea I would come back 12 years later.*

*I got married and we had our three girls. In 1996, the Bella Tola was on sale; I was 32 years old and together with Claude, I grabbed the opportunity of buying it! So, I came back to my “premier amour”. Since 1996, we put our souls and hearts into maintaining this historical property. A new spirit of Bella Tola was born.*

**Q: How do you preserve the legacy of a hotel like Bella Tola? How do you keep the stories alive?**

*A: We are very lucky that we could get access to the original guest books of the hotel! We have all of them from 1859! When Olivier Pont sold the hotel, he sold the guests books to a regular guest, and after 15 years, this guest gave them back to us.*

*When we took over in 1996, many regular guests used to tell us stories about the hotel, we spent many years collecting facts and anecdotes, and now we tell these stories ourselves to our guests.*

*For example, the historic tours of the house with me every Monday, are definitely keeping the stories alive. I tell stories and bring the guests to the back-office and under the roof, and I show them the guests books. I never run out of anecdotes, and as my family is from the village, I can always add some fun details.*

*It is important to me that my daughters know about the hotel's stories, too. In every bedroom, we have put a booklet containing the history of the hotel. Social media are of course part of our strategy as well. People truly love the storytelling aspect!*



*Anne-Francoise & Claude Buchs-Favre took over Hôtel Bella Tola in 1996.*

**Q: Do you have a favourite memory from your time at the hotel?**

*A: One of my favourite memories is when I used to spend time with one of our very old regulars – Lady Brunner from Oxford. She had her honeymoon at the hotel during the war. As she came to the end of her life, she wanted to die here at Bella Tola in the room 407. As we changed the decoration and the curtains of that room since then, she asked me to send the original curtains to her home in England. My best memories were to listen to stories of our very old regular guests. Sadly, now all these people are gone, but we do our best to keep their stories and the memories alive.*

**Q: You have three daughters who have all been brought up in the world of hospitality. Did you try to prepare them for a career in the industry from an early age, and are they involved in the hotel operations today?**

*A: Yes, we have 3 daughters; Magdalena, Eva and Angélique. All three grew up in the hotel, and they all love contact with people. They also feel very lucky to have been growing up in a historical hotel like Bella Tola.*

*Magdalena, 29, attends the hotel school in Lausanne, and she is also running a trendy restaurant called Manud in Zermatt.*

*Eva, 27, is studying Media & Communication here in Switzerland. For a few years, she has been working for the Swiss Space Center in Lausanne and Zürich. She recently told us that her dream is to run a camping-glamping place in a lovely spot in Switzerland. She is a fan of the «van life» and meeting people in general.*

*Angélique, 25, attends the hotel school in Lausanne as well. She worked for the Free Ride World Tour before and she decided to join the family hotel 6 months ago. She loves managing restaurants, organizing events and doing her best to make people happy and to make them feel special. We now run the hotel with her, and we share all tasks between us: Claude, my husband, is in charge of administration and rooms division. I am in charge of the spa, press contacts, decoration projects and housekeeping, and Angélique manages the restaurant as well as events and social media. Mélanie Glassey-Roth is the name of our resident Manager and head of reception.*

*Our daughters were free to choose the career paths they wanted. We only emphasized the importance of having a passion, just like my husband and I did for all those years running the hotel. I think they have done well.*



*The family of 5 a few years ago.*

**Q: In your words, what is hospitality about? Do you think it will change in the future?**

*A: I think hospitality has changed in the past year (in the wake of the Pandemic). Many hotelier's have understood that it is not enough to simply offer beds and food. Our clients want to have a change of scenery from their normal life.*

*We want to keep Bella Tola as authentic as possible, simply because its history is so unique. Nobody can pretend to build an historic hotel – either it is or it is not. The small village, the unspoilt nature, and fresh mountain air free from pollution complete this special feeling of staying with us.*

*My best strategy is to surprise clients when they do not expect it – this is a part of the experience.*



*Any unexpected surprise is good. The job of a hotelier is to find out where he can be better than his neighbour. This is an attitude coming from the heart rather than a skill learned in a hotel school.*

*I think that only creative hoteliers will survive in the industry moving forward. The time of «common hospitality» is long gone.*

*On the other side, we will see more digitalization, e.g. self check-in and out, no contact with the staff etc. As long as the message is clear for the guests, I think it gains a place in the market.*

