



The „Elephant“

A long Journey

The Name “The Elephant”: The Hotel Elephant is legendary. Its success stems from its friendly atmosphere and hospitality and a great history. Countless visitors have gazed in fascination at the hotel’s facade and marvelled at the image of the exotic animal. The elephant’s journey from far-away India through the Alps is one of European history’s wonders. The fresco depicts the meeting between East and West, an allegory for world unity.

The History of a Journey: The arrival of the elephant in Brixen is recorded in history. The animal was presented by King John III of Portugal to his nephew, Archduke Maximilian of Austria, as a gift from one of his Indian colonies. The journey by sea from Lisbon to Genoa was not much fun for the elephant and the long journey by foot towards the Alps even less so. However, to the people it encountered along the way, the elephant was a sensation. In Trento bishops and cardinals applauded it and in Bolzano it was given a triumphal reception. In little Brixen too, the townspeople turned out in numbers to welcome the elephant as it arrived in the town just before Christmas in 1551 with a large entourage.



From Brixen to Vienna: For the inn that would soon bear its name, the elephant's arrival was a stroke of luck. The innkeeper, Andrä Posch, gave the elephant a home for 14 days, until the 2nd of January 1552 when it continued its journey to the north. Passing through Innsbruck and Hall and over the rivers Inn and Danube, the thick-skinned creature reached Vienna in May of 1552. After the long journey, its stay in Vienna was only a short one, as the poor animal died in December 1553 in the menagerie in Kaiserebersdorf, where it perished, having been fed the wrong kind of food, and quite possibly from homesickness.

Journey after Death: The elephant's death did not bring its journey to an end. Its forefoot was removed and the bones were made into an ornate chair that can still be seen today in the monastery at Kremsmünster. Maximilian bequeathed the rest of the body to the Bavarian Duke Albrecht, who added the stuffed animal to his collection where it survived as an exhibit in the Bavarian National Museum for about another 400 years.

The elephant still lives on in the collective memory: in Linz, Wasserburg and Vienna, small monuments bear witness to its journey; and his host in Brixen, the innkeeper Andrä Posch, rechristened his establishment "Am Hellephanten" and had a fresco painted on the wall of the building in bright colours.

Past and Future: The Elephant is the symbol of our establishment and continuity its hallmark. Top quality, friendly service for all of our guests and a sense of tradition: after all, the last time the establishment changed hands was in 1773. The "Elephant's" journey is by no means over.

We would be delighted if you were to accompany him into the future.
 The Heiss-Falk Family