



The Great Llao Llao Resort

Thanks to the arrival of the railroad and the enactment of the National Parks Act, due to which the National Parks Directorate and National Park Nahuel Huapi were to be created, 1934 marks a turning point in the history of San Carlos de Bariloche.

The Nahuel Huapi area was no longer an isolated land. It was time to show the world all of its tourist potential and natural wonders.

For this and, through the ambitious project of the National Parks Directorate, a work plan intended to develop the industry of tourism in the region was begun. This project included the construction of a large international hotel.

Only two months after the enactment of the National Park Law, a group composed of the first President of the National Parks Administration, Exequiel Bustillo, together with Antonio Lynch, Ernesto Serigós, the Marquis of Salamanca and Carlos Ortiz Basualdo, set off for the area in order to find the perfect site to build the future hotel.

This group also included architect Alejandro Bustillo, Exequiel's brother, Francisco Salvatierra, and Alberto del Solar Dorrego, a golf expert who studied the possibility of building a golf course there.

On reaching the hill between Nahuel Huapi and Moreno lakes, they immediately realized they had found the most suitable place.

A contest was carried out for the selection of the most apt architect for this project: first prize was awarded to Alejandro Bustillo, Exequiel's brother.

The work was awarded to the General Construction Company by tender. The 9-hole golf course was designed by Alberto del Solar Dorrego and built by Mr. Luther H. Koontz. The gardens were built and subsequently maintained by Carmelo Di Tomasso, former manager of Exequiel Bustillo's Cumelén property.

The Plaza Hotel, a traditional Buenos Aires hotel, was in charge of the original management. The National Parks Association had the hotel ready to go whereas the Plaza Hotel contributed with the organization and work.

With its Canadian style, larch roof tiles, stone base and in perfect harmony with the landscape, the hotel finally opened its doors on January 9th 1938.

The building had 132 rooms and luxury apartments on the upper floors. It also boasted a tea room, a game room, a shopping area, a restaurant for 500 people, bar and solarium. A post office, telegraph, a National Bank branch and a pharmacy were also included.

Shortly after, on October 26th 1939, violent fires burnt that building down. As the hotel was temporarily closed at that time, there were no casualties. The fire, which broke out around midnight on the ground floor, was fought with fire extinguishers and hoses.

The material used in construction, namely wood and sawdust, used as insulation in the walls, and the prevailing wind, burnt what had been the greatest Argentine hotel in just four hours, turning it into a pile of rubble and ashes.

The reasons for the disaster are, to this day, a mystery. According to local police assumptions, the fire may have been caused by an oversight of the operators performing extension works or even a short-circuit, the latter being a poorly founded theory considering the quality and time of installation.

Rumours had it that a diaper belonging to one of the caretakers' baby, had been hung out to dry in a fireplace, thus helping the fire spread.

Builders had even had the foresight to install an electrical and plumbing alarm system which would be automatically switched on in case of disaster. Why this system did not work also remains unknown.

The members of the Directorate of National Parks' strong will power would be shown once again after the disaster: The Grand Hotel Llao Llao was reinaugurated on December 15th 1940, replacing some of its exterior wood for cement and the roofing shingles for Norman roofs.

Soon, the Llao Llao Hotel acquired international fame and became an icon of hospitality.

Since its opening, the hotel attracted members of the aristocracy and the official and diplomatic world, as well as a number of illustrious guests.

However, due to the lack of investment and inadequate maintenance, the hotel which had been Bariloche's pride and joy was forced to close its doors in late winter of 1978.

Fifteen years later, the Hotel opened its doors for the third time in July 1993 as Llao Llao Hotel & Resort.

The current setting is a resort with an 18-hole golf course, marina, beach, solarium, a large 15-hectare park integrated into the golf course, an indoor and an outdoor heated swimming pool, Health Club with sauna, Business Center and game rooms for adults and children.

The hotel has 139 standard rooms, 12 suites - many of which include with their own fireplaces - 1 cabin and 11 studio suites overlooking Moreno Lake, Nahuel Huapi Lake and Mount López. The Presidential Suite, overlooking Nahuel Huapi Lake is 162 m² and boasts a jacuzzi, shower massage, marble tiles, a large terrace of 108m² and a fireplace.

Many rooms were expanded on the first and last level of the building, which was completely transformed to allow for the distribution of the 162 units.

Original materials were used in the interior design and decoration, such as cypress, pine and hemlock boards in planks and the local greenish stone.

The magnificence of the great halls designed by Bustillo was stressed, decorating the hotel interiors in a sumptuous mountain, refined country style, with works of art and high craft inspired in hunting, mountain and countryside motifs.

One of the basic concepts was decorating the interior with patterned carpets and woven fabrics, carefully matching textures and colors.

The refurbished rooms and studios were decorated with a refined Campagnard style. The furniture was built in Argentina with solid cherry wood and Chilean pine veneer displaying grain and knot, in light tones matching the pine and hemlock originally used for the hotel doors.

Darker wood tones were chosen for the suites, furnished with poster canopy beds and color schemes suiting all tastes. Besides the basic colors used in the decoration of the hotel, blue, lavender, bright red, water green and soft mint were chosen.

The great Lobby Bar, with its two huge fireplaces and right next to the Winter Garden, was decorated as a hunting lodge, with antler chandeliers and leather upholstery, and an impressive bar with a green Italian Alps marble top of classic lines.

The Winter Garden boasts stone floor and walls with rattan furniture and iron tables with marble and granite tops. The chandeliers, especially designed for the Hotel, as well as the ironwork, have a beech leaves motif.

Llao Llao has five restaurants. Guests can enjoy a wide variety of dishes, including from from top level traditional patagonian dishes, to international ones. Among these proposals, iconic "Llao Llao Tea" is served in the Winter Garden, overlooking the spectacular view of the Resort gardens and the breathtaking Nahuel Huapi Lake.

The Llao Llao Grand Salon, where breakfast is served each morning, boasts four 10 m x 10 m carpets, large double-height curtains and twelve spectacular chandeliers with 20 lightbulbs each.

The Bustillo Salon retained its original chandeliers. In order to maintain the excellent acoustic of this room, the wooden floor, ceiling and walls were preserved, in a yellow cypress shade.

Many of the bathrooms were decorated with stencil borders matching the curtains. The old toilet cabinets were turned into shelves with mirrors to provide a sense of space and larger surfaces. German ceramic lighting fixtures were kept in some rooms; specially-designed classic silver-plated ones were used in the rest.

Halls and corridors were furnished with Argentine countryside-style furniture.

The Spa was equipped with recycled, Oregon-pine wood furniture imported from Chile. The swimming pool was decorated with Argentine incense wood furniture.

The original furniture designed by Ignacio Pirovano was restored, as well as objects such as wrought iron deers, scales and antlers.

The exterior redesign included the creation of a sports area on Moreno Lake, a large solarium on the lake, a marina, and fishing and sailing facilities.

In 1994 renovation work was carried out in the golf course, under the direction of Architect Emilio Serra, who developed 9 holes over 3,160 yards.

The construction of the second set of 9 holes began in early 1997.

The work involved large earth movement: new slopes were created, greens were elevated and lakes were added in the center of the course.

In November 1995, the hotel was voted "Favorite Resort in Latin America" and received the Golden Award, given by Official Travel Guide after a survey carried out among different agencies around the world.

The Hotel has been chosen by the best travel agencies and events planners worldwide to hold different conventions.

Since 1999 the Hotel is a member of "The Leading Hotels of the World", organization that represents the best hotels in the world, currently 400. Membership implies the highest standards of quality and infrastructure which distinguish these hotels from the rest.

In the same year, the Hotel was declared Historical Monument by the city hall of San Carlos de Bariloche.

In 2005, Llao Llao was chosen as one of the top 100 hotels worldwide by the 2005 edition of the World's Best Awards Travel + Leisure magazine.

In November 2007, following a project designed by architects Malbrán, Abruzzini and Orol, a new wing was opened: the "Moreno Wing", strategically located and with a stunning view of Moreno Lake and Mount Tronador.

It features 23 studios, 17 Suites, two Master Suites and one Royal Suite, with 43 new deluxe rooms altogether.

Despite its renovated style, the profuse use of cypress wood, beech and Patagonian porphyry both inside and outside recall the splendor of the first Hotel.

Due to the abrupt terrain height difference and by means of a glass hall which becomes a bridge with panoramic elevators, the base of the traditional main building is linked to the center of the new wing, at roof levels. The new building, adapted to the topography, includes 6 adjacent modules of 3 and 4 levels, linked by halls with large windows overlooking Tronador, Capilla and López Hills.