



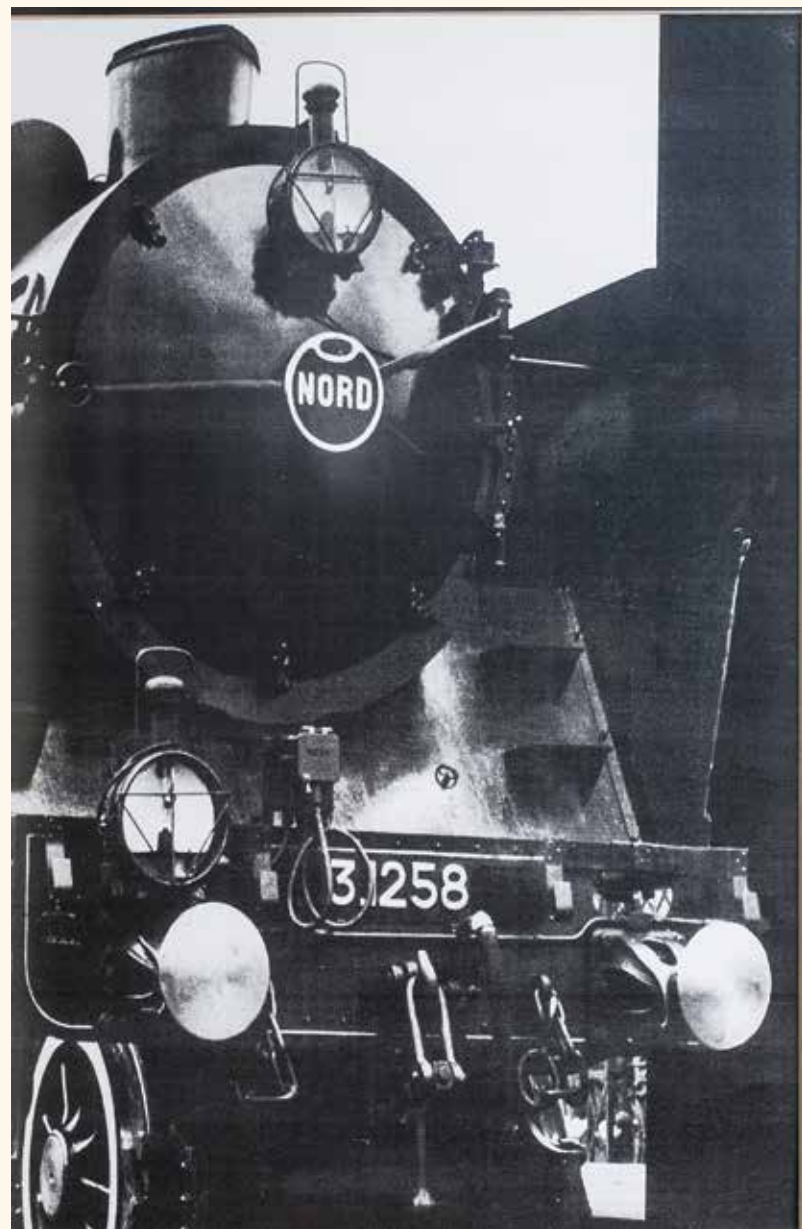
THE ESPLANADE'S FASCINATING HISTORY



The Esplanade Hotel is by far the best known and most sumptuous hotel in Zagreb and the region, and in April 2025 it marks its 100th year since it first opened its doors. Its timeless elegance, sophistication and charm, which back in 1925 attracted passengers of the famous Orient Express, today is considered an elite venue and cultural historic icon of Zagreb. Known as the temple of comfort and cuisine, in its 100th year it positively keeps up with contemporary trends, while equally fostering the harmony of tradition and the past.









B U I L T F O R T H E P A S S E N G E R S O F T H E O R I E N T E X P R E S S

In the early 20th century two of the most well-known hotels of the time became far too small for the increasing number of passengers who arrived in Zagreb stepping off the famous Orient Express. In order to meet the changing needs of the city, the construction development of a new luxurious hotel imposed itself as a priority. The hotel was to be built on a vast open field, close to the railway station - once, the only link with Europe and the rest of the world - which was one of the stops of the prestigious Orient Express en-route between Paris-Venice-Istanbul.

In 1917 an international tender was announced which attracted numerous excellent architects of the time including the famous Austrian, Adolf Loos - although he did not win the tender. The success came to a German, Otto Rehnig, whose original plans were reworked by Dionis Sunko, who today is considered the architect of this masterpiece of architecture of the “Belle Époque”. The construction of the largest hotel in Zagreb took place over a mere 26 months. The opening ceremony, on 22 April 1925, drew over 200 distinguished guests, including Mayor Heinzel of Zagreb. Journalists wrote words predicting a bright future on an international level, and among the first guests of the hotel was a Mr. Glück (German for happiness), which was an indication that this prediction was to become true. And so it was!











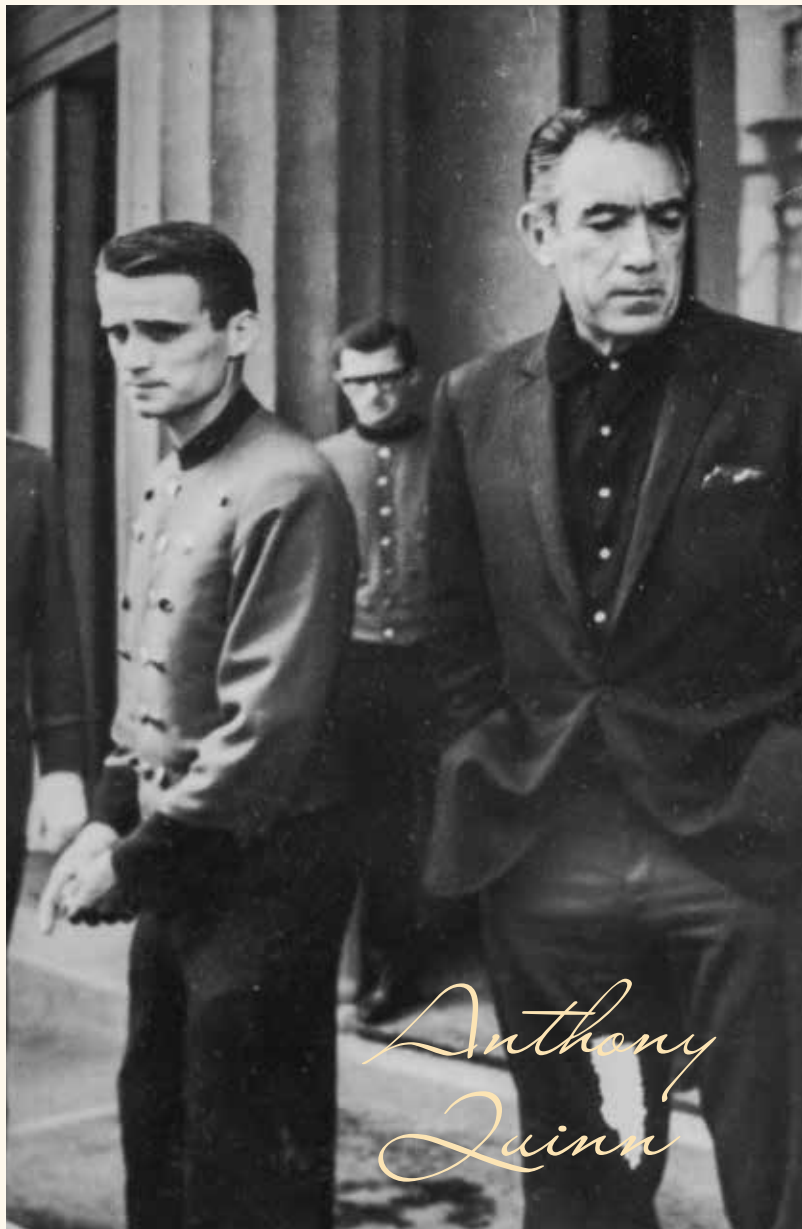
L U X U R I O U S , S O P H I S T I C A T E D A N D
D I G N I F I E D

Indeed, the first guests had no cause for complaint as the hotel was luxurious, sophisticated, and extremely comfortable, equipped with the latest advances of modern science. There were two hundred rooms available with running hot and cold water, one hundred bathrooms, a phone in every room, numerous apartments, salons, and restaurants with excellent cuisine and a magnificent ballroom decorated with iconic columns and sculptures. The impact that the Esplanade had back then upon the social life of the city is best evidenced by recent common opinion that “once you step inside, the experience is worth mentioning to your grandchildren”. It is not surprising that many generations have spoken in awe of the elegant and magical areas of the hotel.









*Anthony
Quinn*



*Orson
Welles*



T H E G O L D E N Y E A R S O F T H E E S P L A N A D E

During the early years, the Esplanade's most frequent visitors were journalists who were constantly searching for interesting people and attention-grabbing events. The extravagant Esplanade balls were the most attractive of all, and were for many years the largest and most talked-about social events in town. The Esplanade hotel also acquired literary notoriety by becoming an ideal setting for love affairs in contemporary writers' novels, since it was said, "it attracted dissatisfied wives and their lovers." Also, the very first striptease in the country took place at a farewell party given by an Italian count when certain ladies took off their shoes and clothes, remaining in their underwear.

This "most fashionably appointed hotel of Central Europe" attracted many famous personalities. One of the first famous guests was the silent-movie star Asta Nielsen, and stage and screen actress Gitta Alpár, whose fans besieged the Esplanade hotel for hours on end. Similar crowds awaited the arrival of the black Venus, the Queen of Parisian cabarets, Josephine Baker. The impressive list of famous guests includes the European king of shoes, Bata, the greatest screen lover of the 1920s, Vladimir Gajdarov, Lady Ashby who was Chairwoman of the International Alliance for Women's Rights, Charles Lindbergh, the man who first flew over the Atlantic Ocean, and French writer, Jules Romains. Even royalty chose to spend time at the hotel including the King of Spain, Alfonso XIII, the extremely rich Prince of Nepal and the former King of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, who are all featured on the Esplanade guest list.



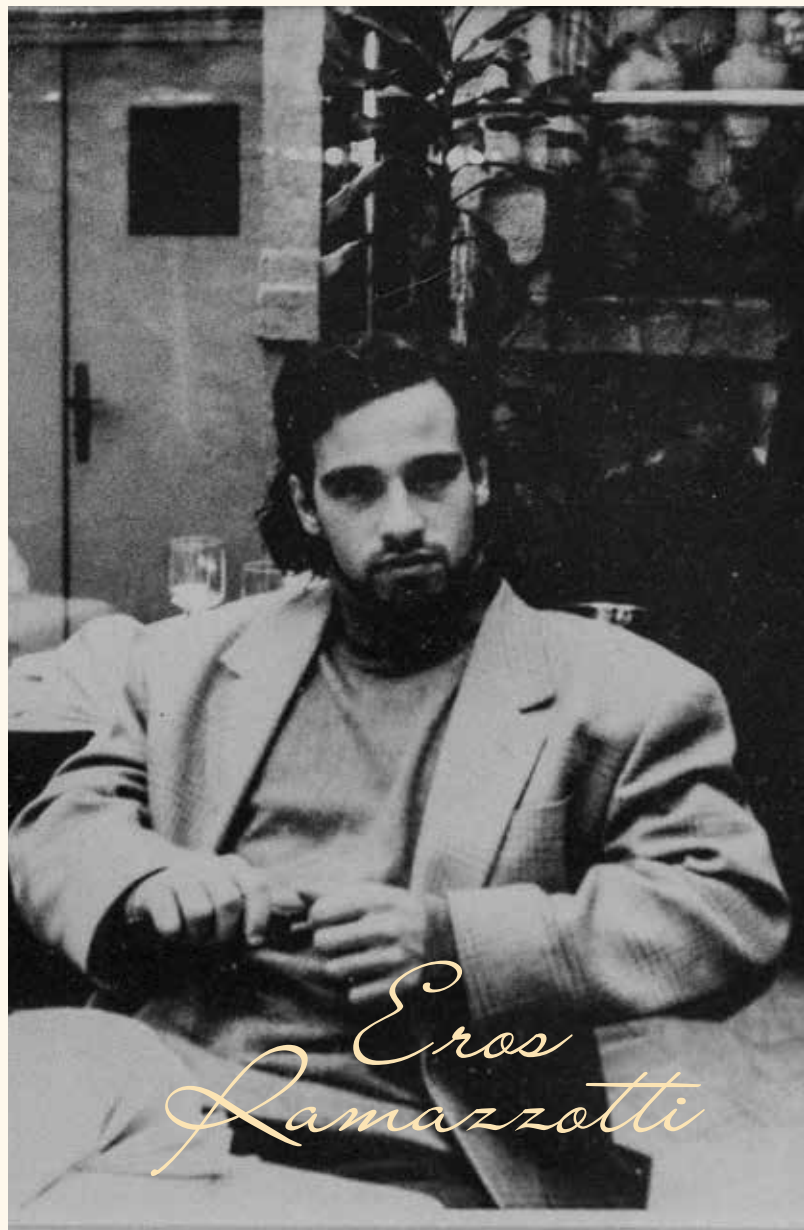




T H E W A R Y E A R S

In 1941, during the first days of foreign occupation, sadly the hotel was completely empty; the last guests disappeared without a trace and German officers arrived. The Esplanade became the Gestapo's and the Wehrmacht's headquarters in Zagreb. Nevertheless, this was equally a place of some remarkably happy moments, such as the guest performance of the famous opera singer, Beniamino Gigli. After the Second World War, the hotel was transformed into a public kitchen, but at the start of the 1950s the hotel underwent its first reconstruction. In time for the re-opening in 1957, the famous Italian tenor, Mario del Monaco and his wife were among the first guests to pay homage to the re-energized hotel. Within just a few years, the Esplanade Hotel proudly joined the Inter-Continental Hotel Corporation.



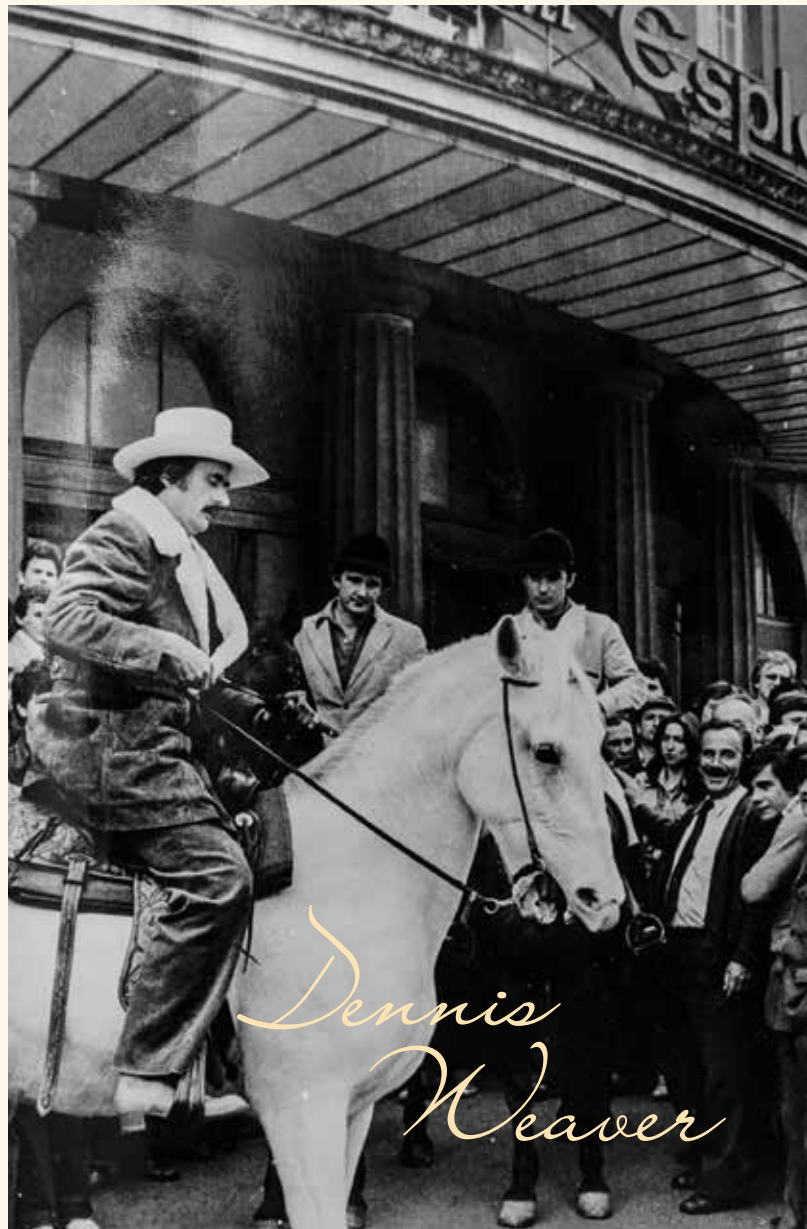


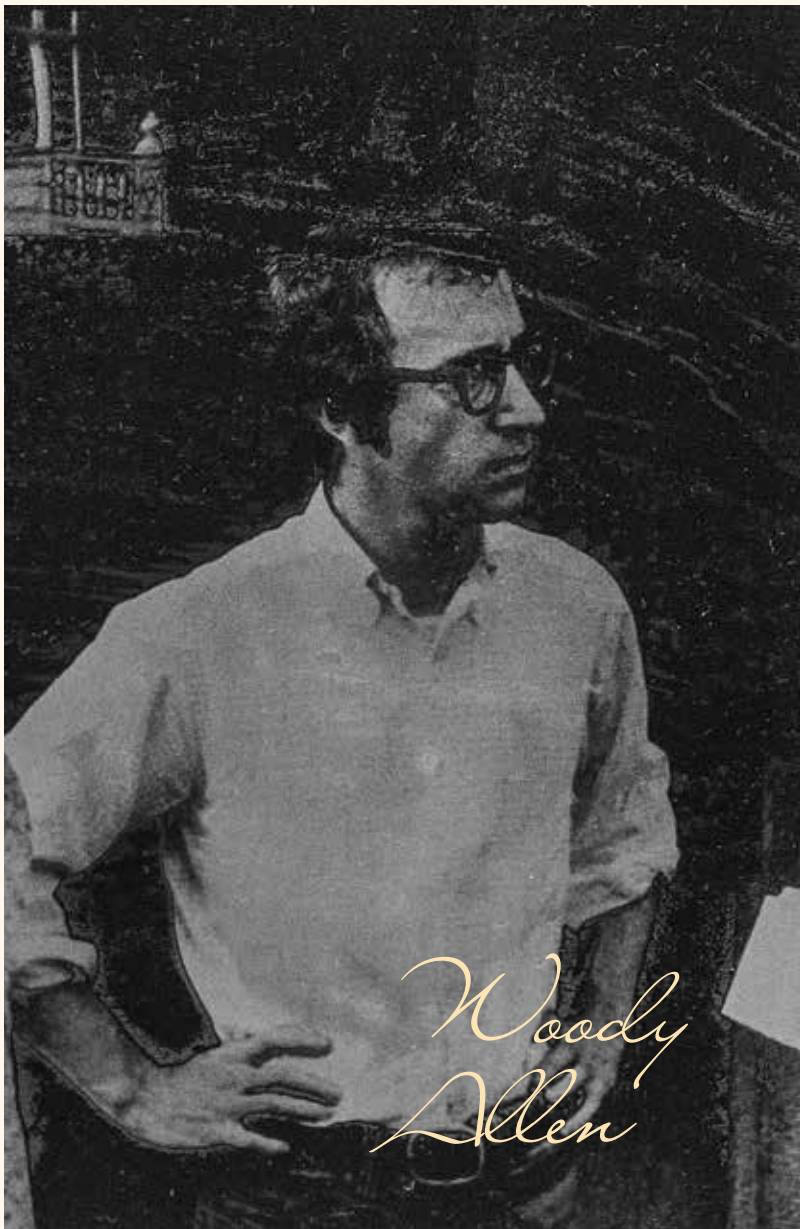


T R A C E S O F T H E S T A R S A T
T H E E S P L A N A D E

Entering the high society of the best hotels in the world marked the beginning of the Esplanade's golden years. The Esplanade Hotel became the centre of social and cultural life of Zagreb, in which numerous events, symposiums, fashion shows, culinary competitions and gastronomic events were held. During the past forty years, a number of famous guests have chosen to stay at the Esplanade: Giuseppe De Santis, Anita Ekberg, Silvana Pampanini, Yul Brynner, Jack Palance, Rossana Podestà, Belinda Lee, Gérard Philipe, Moira Orfei, Orson Welles, Liv Ullmann, Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Arthur Rubinstein, Domenico Modugno, Charles Aznavour, Maria Callas, Maya Plisetskaya, Arthur Miller, Francis Ford Coppola, Anthony Quinn, Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Aram Khachaturian, Henryk Szeryng, Pelé, Curd Jürgens, Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Stewart Granger, Erroll Garner, Ike & Tina Turner, Joan Baez, Cliff Richard, Gian Maria Volonté, Barbara Mikulski, Pablo Casals, David Oistrakh, Clay Regazzoni, Nelson Piquet, Bobby Charlton, Ingemar Stenmark, Irina Rodnina, Fats Domino, Sir Rudolf Peierls, Morgan Fairchild, Bob Guccione, Woody Allen, Catherine Deneuve, Gary Oldman, Armand Assante, Michael York, George Soros, Éva Marton, Juan Antonio Samaranch, Sadako Ogata, Lucia Aliberti, Garry Kasparov, Susan Sontag, Eros Ramazzotti, Alain Finkielkraut, Jane Seymour, Omar Sharif, Paulo Coelho, B.B. King, Pierce Brosnan, Zubin Mehta and several others.

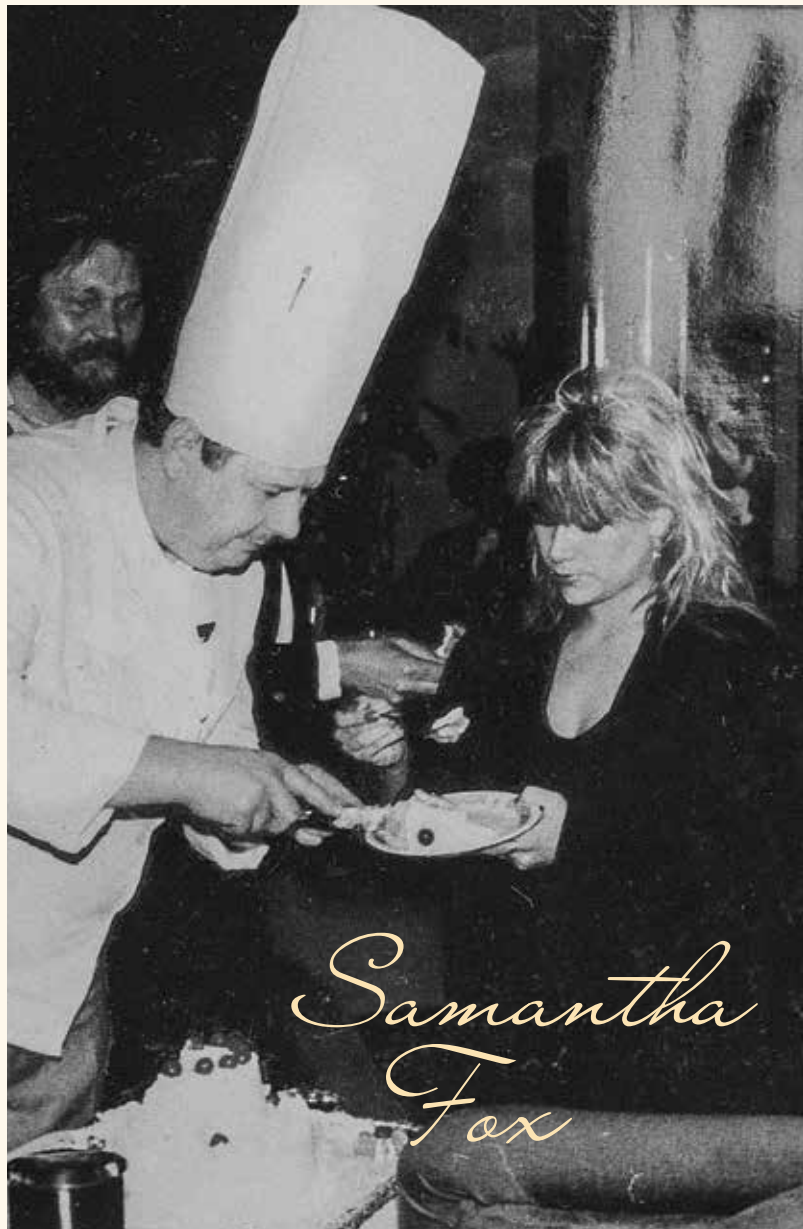








*Miss
Esplanade*



*Samantha
Fox*



Various diplomats and world statesmen have also stepped through the doors of the Esplanade: Queen Elizabeth II, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Richard Nixon, Prince Sihanouk, Amintore Fanfani, Aldo Moro, Milton Obote, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Edmund Kohl, James William Fulbright, Henry Kissinger, Andrei Gromyko, dr. Rudolf Kirchschräger, Matteotti Mário Soares, Maurice Couve de Murville, Aldo Moro, Martín Torrijos, Alain Juppé, Francesco Cossiga, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. These are some of the distinguished guests who signed the Esplanade guestbook and of course, certain celebrities, statesmen, and politicians chose to pass through the hotel incognito.







T H E E S P L A N A D E ' S C O M P L E T E R E N O V A T I O N R E T U R N I N G T O I T S O R I G I N A L G L O R Y

After the heavy war period during the nineties, when Zagreb was mainly visited by foreign journalists and peace missions, in 2002, the Esplanade entered a new phase as the hotel closed its doors followed by a complete renovation. Zagreb experts responsible for shaping the hotel and an architecture design company based in London, called MKV Design, led by award-winning interior designer Maria Vafiadis, had a mission to renovate the hotel and return it to its original glory. Finding original designs and photographs greatly assisted the redesigning of the hotel which finally found the right balance between the Neoclassical and Art Deco style of the existing building and the introduction of modern elements appropriate to a luxury hotel at the beginning of the 21st century.

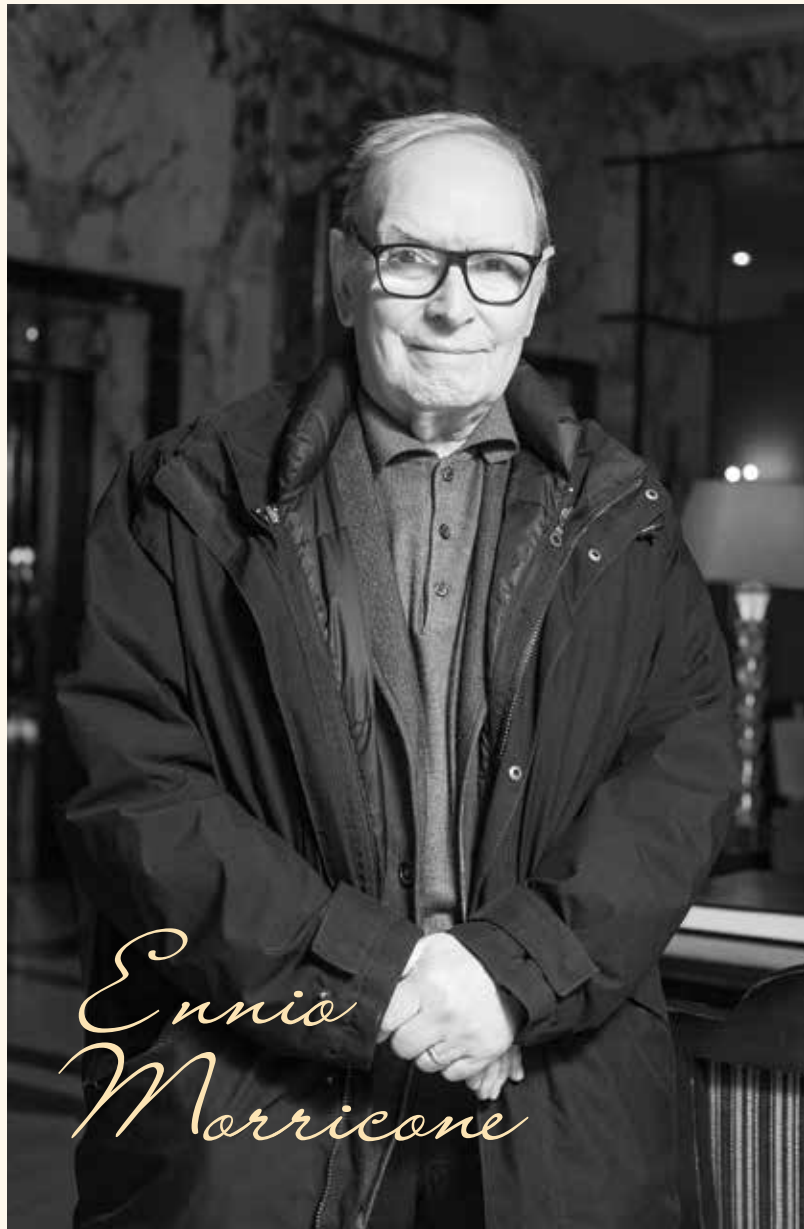
Following two years of extensive restoration and demanding work, the Esplanade Hotel was handed over to the management of a luxury international hotel group and celebrated its official opening on 11 November 2004 under the name of the Regent Esplanade Zagreb. Within the familiar splendour and new image, the hotel continues to follow its well-known tradition of discreet and elegant service at a high level, which guests always appreciate. New trends within the hotel industry, the perfect blend of timeless elegance and tradition of a hotel with modern, dynamic, contemporary design and functionality has launched the Esplanade to the top of the list of most luxurious hotels in the region and equally, across the globe. Once again, the Esplanade has regained the title as the centre of the social life of the city, as the hotel has become a favourite meeting place for business people, celebrities, journalists and all those who admire exceptional service and luxurious surroundings.



*Orlando
Bloom*



*Ennio
Morricone*





T H E C E N T R E O F Z A G R E B ' S S O C I A L S C E N E

The first guests at the re-opened hotel, once again enjoyed the luxury and elegance the Esplanade still radiates. The restored hotel with its luxurious and stylish ambience, yet familiar charm, continued to attract many people from public life and the world of showbiz, such as actors, singers, politicians and royalty. Over the last decade the hotel has proudly hosted numerous members of world acclaimed bands such as Depeche Mode, Simple Minds, Franz Ferdinand, U2, R.E.M, Backstreet Boys, Pet Shop Boys, Guns N' Roses, The Offspring and Snow Patrol. World-famous singers have equally enjoyed their stay at the Esplanade including Robbie Williams, Bob Geldof, Joe Cocker, Natalie Cole, Bryan Ferry, Sting, Morrissey, Lenny Kravitz, Patti Smith, José Carreras, Paco de Lucía, Chris Rea, Sade and Shakira, not to mention stars of film and TV including

Courtney Thorne-Smith, Orlando Bloom, Armand Assante, Hugh Laurie and a host of others.

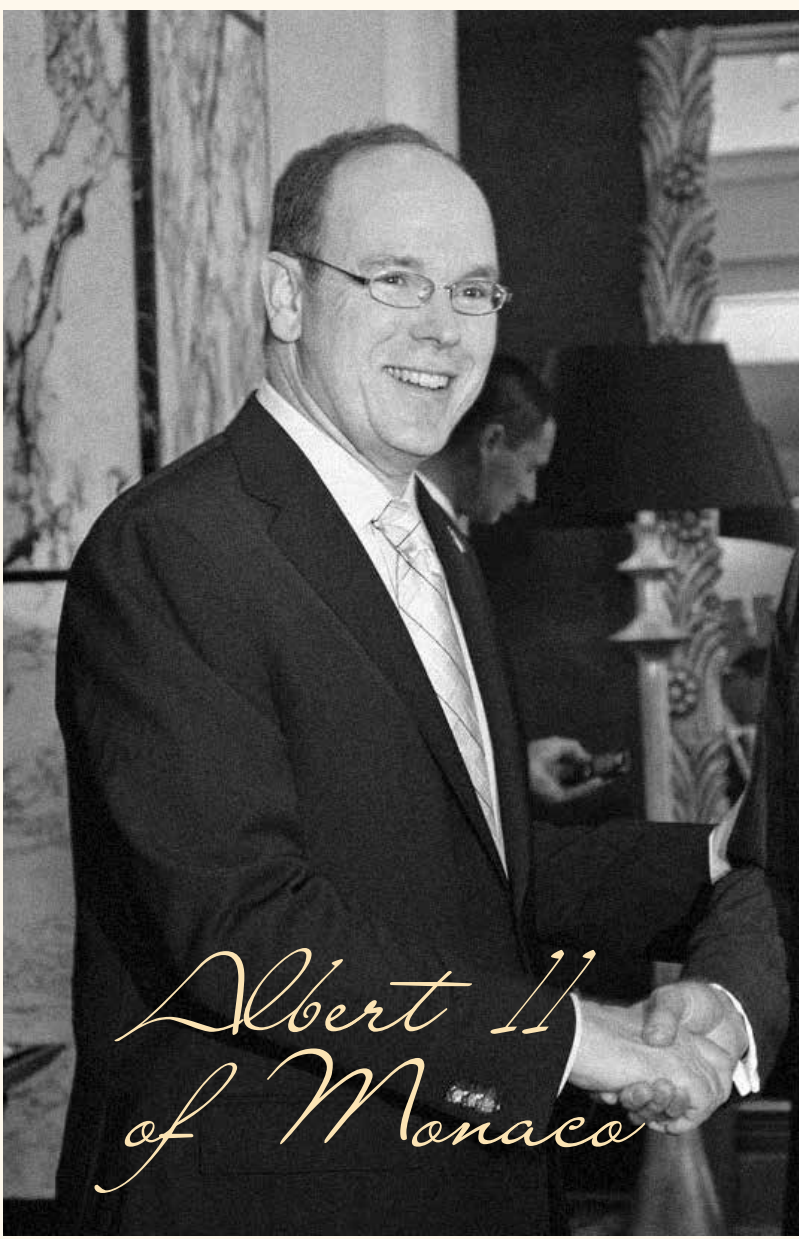
The hotel has often been home to many athletes and sports personalities who have stayed in Zagreb: from David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo, Jennifer Capriati, Mary Pierce, Pep Guardiola to endless famous basketball, handball and football teams. Politicians, diplomats and royalty are frequent hotel guests. Guests who have expressed their delight include Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, German President Horst Köhler, President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak, the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, First Lady of the United States and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Prince Albert II of Monaco, Princess Anne, Emir of Qatar, Al-Waleed bin Talal, Japanese Prince and Princess Akishino, Swedish King Carl Gustaf XVI and Queen Silvia, the Danish Queen Margareta II and Prince Henrik and many others. The hotel has also hosted model and daughter of the famous musician, Jade Jagger, famous Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho, renowned photographer Peter Lindbergh, violinist Julian Rachlin, British artists Gilbert & George, designer Karim Rashid, DJ David Guetta, music producer Dave Clark, musician Maksim Mrvica and Academy award-winner

Maestro Ennio Morricone with many others on the list.





*Gilbert &
George*



*Albert II
of Monaco*



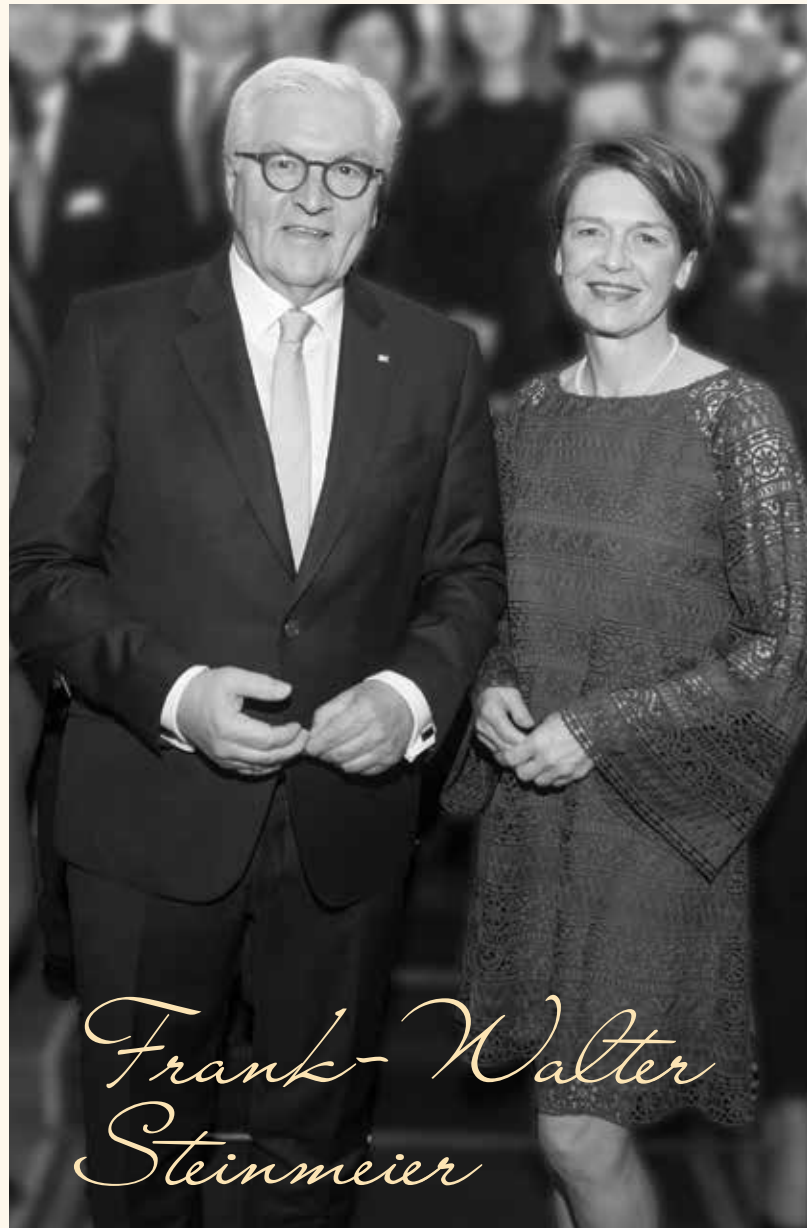
A C E N T U R Y O F T R A D I T I O N ,
A D E C A D E O F E V O L U T I O N

For the past century, the Esplanade Zagreb Hotel has been more than a charming place to stay — it stands as a revered landmark, deeply woven into Zagreb's identity and cherished by locals and visitors alike. Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025, the hotel remains a symbol of timeless charm, sophistication and the warmth of Croatian welcome since 1925.

Independent since 2012, Esplanade continues to set the standard for world-class hospitality, seamlessly blending rich traditions with bold innovations, sustainable practices and a strong commitment to the community. Following Croatia's entry into the EU in 2013, Esplanade has gone from strength to strength, navigating a decade of triumphs and challenges. During the EU accession celebrations, the hotel hosted world leaders and handled complex security with its signature grace, marking the start of a transformative decade.



*Ursula Gertrud
von der Leyen*



*Frank-Walter
Steinmeier*



Amid the challenges of the pandemic and a major earthquake in 2020, Esplanade stood as a symbol of stability and resilience. It reopened its famed restaurants with enhanced safety measures, offering a refuge for the city's residents. While tourism faced a difficult time, the hotel rose to the challenge with the dedication of its staff and a spirit of ingenuity, reaffirming its status as an enduring icon at the heart of the city.

The past decade has brought numerous accolades, including Croatia's Hotel of the Year 2018 and Best European Historic Hotel award in 2019, while in 2022 Condé Nast Traveller ranked the Esplanade among the 10 best hotels in Central Europe. The same year, Ivica Max Krizmanić was recognised as the Best General Manager of SEE by World Luxury Hotel Awards, while in 2025 at the gala ceremony in Warsaw EHMA (European Hotel Managers Association) crowned him with the prestigious General Manager of the Year award. Executive Chef Ana Grgić Tomić was crowned Gault&Millau Chef of the Year 2022 in Croatia. Zinfandel's was awarded the Best European Hotel Restaurant of the Year in 2023 and Ana's sustainably sourced cuisine earned Croatia's first Green Michelin Star, while her role as an ambassador for WWF's Fish Forward project and the development of a food waste programme highlight the hotel's commitment to ecological practices. In addition, the hotel's PR & Marketing Director Sanda Sokol was awarded PR of the Year title in the European Hotel Awards in 2024 in Copenhagen.



*Karim
Lashid*



The National

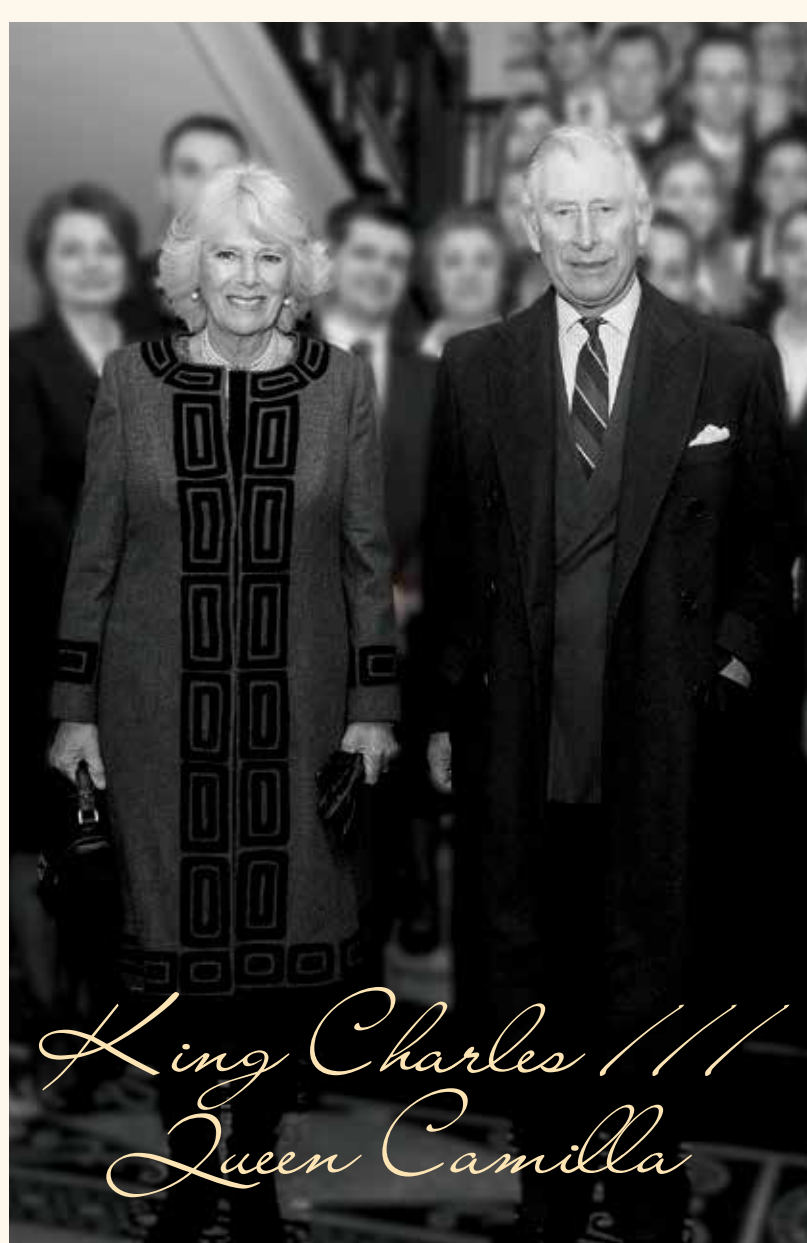




Within Esplanade's storied walls, countless memorable visits from global luminaries have unfolded, including Hollywood actors Rami Malek, Kevin Spacey and Kate Beckinsale; singers Enrique Iglesias, Bryan Adams, Nick Cave and Michael Bublé; former prime minister of the UK Boris Johnson, former president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and former chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, to name just a few. King Charles III, charmed by Chef Grgić's risotto, requested the recipe, while President Macron praised the cuisine and service of the hotel, which managed to serve the distinguished guests an impeccable four-course lunch in a short strict protocol time, in the magnificent Emerald Ballroom. Danish royalty have also praised the cuisine, adding their family's Malbec wine to the hotel's renowned wine list, making it the only place in Croatia to offer this royal vintage.

The staff's dedication plays a key role in creating Esplanade's unique atmosphere, often going above and beyond with personal gestures. When a royal guest needed a tie at short notice, the General Manager Mr. Krizmanić lent his own, avoiding a diplomatic mishap, and for a Saudi prince's entourage, the team arranged 40 bicycles for an evening tour of Zagreb, as well as a memorable banquet spectacle at Medvedgrad — attentive touches that capture the spirit of the hotel's commitment to each guest.







A cherished part of the city's fabric, the Esplanade welcomes not only dignitaries and international travellers but also the people of Zagreb, who gather here for celebrations, special meals, cocktails, weddings, family events and memorable staycations. Besides Zinfandel's, Le Bistro and Esplanade 1925 Bar, Esplanade's renowned Oleander Terrace remains Zagreb's favourite social hub, hosting high-profile public and private events that bring the community together, from dazzling charity galas to beloved Advent festivities known as Fooling Around. Refined yet approachable, the hotel remains seamlessly integrated into Zagreb's heart.

As it celebrates its centenary, Esplanade Zagreb Hotel remains a symbol of Zagreb's heart and spirit, an inspiring blend of tradition, luxury and forward-thinking vision. With each award, memory and milestone, it strengthens its place as the pride of Zagreb — a hotel woven into the fabric of the city for an entire century.





HOTEL ESPLANADE



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