

HEIRLOOM COOL

Benedikta

MONTAFON, VORARLBERG, AUSTRIA

The perfect amalgamation of old and new, Benedikta breathes fresh life into Vorarlberg heritage traditions in this smoothly crafted private-hire house originally built in 1836, located in the sleepy village of Vandans clasped by the wildflower-strewn valley of Montafon, west Austria.

Ever had the fantasy of living in the hills, surrounded by meadows, fresh air and incredible mountain views? Well, this is surely the house to bring that fantasy into real life. Begone fusty Alpine traditions and chinz-arama, enter in instead spacious Benedikta, a chilled den of tranquillity, considered design and thoughtful comforts, wrapped in local and salvaged woods, original detailing, natural stone and sheepskin.

Owner Dr. Elisabeth Brändle was best placed to bring in a new transition for the house. Her grandmother Benedikta's house, Elisabeth spent her childhood here, so she knew the power of its surrounds. But being a self-confessed interiors addict, Elisabeth also had a vision of how to contemporise the house and create a mountain idyll for the modern traveller. Thinking not only as a guest, she also utilised her memories as a child to create a deep sense of homeliness, viewed through her honed eye for style.

Looking around at the tranquil and well-thought-out spaces at Benedikta, you would imagine that Dr. Elisabeth Brändle was an interior design guru, with many a project under her belt. Not so. Elisabeth is, in fact, a GP with her own practice and this is her first renovation. Coming to the end of her career in medicine, Elisabeth wanted a change in her life's work and decided to take on the rekindling of her grandmother's house.







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Having lived in the house as a child, before she left to study medicine in Innsbruck, Elisabeth had strong memories and association with this part of the world: wholesome outdoor living, a cosy home and stunning landscapes all around. But it was her attachment and love of interior design and her eye for style that really helped join the dots in creating the mountain idyll that is Benedikta. Elisabeth was the crucial link between the past and the present and using her skill for placement, colour and design, Benedikta was created, the perfect tribute to her grandmother.

In collaboration with architects Hackl and Klammer, based in the nearby municipality of Röthis, renovations began. The exterior was kept true to the original Alpine vernacular, with shingled roof and sage-green shutters, surrounded by outside terraces and herb gardens. Inside, the cosy

wood-paneled Stube with original Montafon tables and vintage photographs brings the house's heritage to life. Elsewhere, a new wow-factor living area opens up over the entire cross-section of the house with plenty of built-in window seats and rugs; and an open staircase in black steel leads to the three bedrooms, revived with natural materials of stone and wood. A new addition was the sauna-with-a-view on the ground floor.

A house of sheer comfort and style, Elisabeth has channelled heart and soul into this sublime project, from trinkets sourced from Italy, gleaming copper pans in the kitchen, a curated wine cellar, her grandmother's hand-painted antiques to the delicately scented soaps, perfectly merging the reminiscences of nostalgia with heritage customs and modern-day style.





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An ideal home-from-home, Benedikta sleeps up to eight, so could work nicely for a family or group of friends wishing to lock right into the pleasures of life in the mountains. Furnished to a very high standard, the rooms are beautifully pared-back, with none of the fussiness sometimes associated with Alpine interior design. Instead, the three double bedrooms have a minimalist aesthetic that focuses on the comfort and liveability of materials, with the use of scented fir wood, cosy wool blankets and dimmable designer lighting creating that perfect pool of light. Beds come with ergonomic Rummel mattresses, which also have climate control for a deep sleep. Bathrooms have drenching rain showers decked in natural stone and rimmed with blackened steel. Small kids coming to the mountains will love the cosy mezzanine bed above Mum and Dad.

Welcome to the mountains and welcome to a foodie paradise with a comestible mileage of hyper-local; simply the nearby farms, fields and hills. An artisan hamper will greet you on arrival with Montafon's finest delicacies, including a speciality sour cheese, muesli, honey, fresh bread, ham and yoghurt – this is some of life's most wholesome and delicious foods.

The kitchen is well set up for firing up a feast with two stoves, and a delivery service can be arranged to make life that bit easier when you arrive. If you'd like to try some local dishes, there's a wonderful cook who can come by to whip up warming goulash, schnitzel or käsknöpfle. One of Benedikta's real treats is the in-house curated wine cellar, which you can leisurely choose from. Including wines from Italy, France and Austria, Elisabeth has ensured there will be something delicious to tempt you.

Eating out in the area can be as gourmand or local as you like. Within walking distance are some rustic taverns for plates of cold meats and local wine or, further afield, are more gastronomic experiences such as the Montafoner Hof to take your tastebuds on a culinary adventure of all things Austrian.

Having your own sauna is a truly special thing, especially as this wooden sauna overlooks the herbal garden and to the mountains. Whether you like an early morning detox or a simmer later at night, your private sauna awaits. Austria is synonymous with wellness – just walk out in the doorstep nature and feel its benefits. If you're interested in learning further, day trips can be arranged to understand more about the rejuvenating power of mountains herbs or how to forage for hidden foods in the forests and meadows. For in-house treatments, massage and reflexology can come to your door.

