

David Citadel Hotel: A Focal Point for Historical Encounters

With a phalanx of international TV networks recording her every move, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice whisked Palestinian President Abu Mazen into an elegantly decorated conference room at the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem to conduct another round of Middle East diplomacy in 2008.



At that moment, a smile of satisfaction creased the faces of both Moshe Sand, the hotel's venerable General Manager and Medina Pearl, the peripatetic Public Relations Director who not only have tended to the personal whims and needs of Ms. Rice, but also to a long and growing list of foreign dignitaries, celebrities, business moguls and Israeli politicians who are rapidly making the architecturally stunning David Citadel Hotel, their "home away from home."

When Israeli real estate and hotel magnate, Alfred Akirov built the 384 room David Citadel Hotel with the help of internationally renowned architect Moshe Safdie in the mid-1990's, Mr. Akirov was determined to offer a new standard of service to guests who wished to luxuriate in the beauty of Jerusalem.



Located just outside the walls of the Old City, the glass and stone edifice has become the focal point between ancient & modern Jerusalem. These elements have also made it a magnet for headliners such as President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton, Republican Presidential Candidate Rudy Giuliani, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, high-ranking government officials from Asian, Eastern and European nations, billionaire business moguls including Oracle Chairman Larry Ellison, celebrities like actress Valerie Harper ("Rhoda") and of course leading Israeli politicians such as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik.

"We are hosting world leaders at least once a month. They tend to come in waves depending on which way the political winds are blowing in the region. It's also not unusual for us to host politicians, especially from the USA, who are looking to spend a few days relaxing and conducting many off-the-record meetings with Israeli officials, as well as friends and family in our Executive Business Lounge," Mr. Sand revealed.



Mr. Sand, who has helmed some of Israel's finest hotels, insists that the David Citadel's staff tends to every detail, whether it's for a visiting foreign dignitary or a tourist from the USA, Europe etc. The "personal touch" is paramount. "When a high-ranking politician, businessman or celebrity visits a particular country they always seek out the best hotel. The David Citadel is recognized on an international level for offering a top facility and premium services. We take great pride in offering a real personal touch," he maintained.

When the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv alerts the hotel about an impending visit from Secretary of State Rice (she's stayed at the David Citadel at least 10 times during the past two years), Ms. Pearl springs into action. "Prior to her arrival (Ms. Rice), I have a meeting with U.S. Embassy staff to find out what's on her schedule, as far as which meetings will be conducted in the hotel, what foods she might like to eat and what other amenities she might enjoy in her suite," Ms. Pearl revealed. "The hotel could be very busy but Ms. Rice or any other dignitary would never have to interact with the hotel's guests because we protect their privacy in many different ways. All of these issues play a major role in why these people keep coming back to stay with us. We are trained to preserve their privacy and dignity."

Secretary of State Rice has been known to hold 'hush-hush' meetings with Abu Mazen and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the large flower-laden terrace in her hotel suite, which boasts a spectacular view of the Old City. After headline-making decisions are made either in the Prime Minister's office or in one of the hotel's boardrooms, Ms. Rice likes to return to her suite late in the evening to relax and enjoy a good meal.

While Ms. Pearl is acutely aware of the fact that historical decisions are being made in the meeting rooms and suites of the David Citadel Hotel, she particularly enjoys the off-beat and very 'human' encounters she has with important dignitaries that take place before and after sensitive diplomatic

meetings.

She is particularly fond of one encounter she had with the Chinese Ambassador to Israel.

"I escorted him to our outdoor terrace by the pool that overlooks the ancient walls of the Old City. As he stared out at the beautiful scenery, I remarked, 'You have your wall and we have ours!'"

Mr. Sand's office is adorned with photos and endearing 'thank you' notes from his growing number of professional encounters with world leaders, international business moguls and celebrities. He added, "One of our regular guests is a prominent American businessman and philanthropist who took the time to tell me one afternoon, 'Moshe, you should be very proud of your hotel staff. I regularly stay at some of the best hotels around the world in Manhattan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Europe. And, I want to tell you that the David Citadel ranks with the best.' This is what we are striving for every day of the year."

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