

# Discover Heritage in the Best Asian Hotels

Asia has some of the world's most breathtaking hospitality hotspots in the world. With locations steeped in colonial after effects and architectural designs that were truly a marvel in its time and still continue to be so, these heritage hotels are certainly worth a visit at least once in a lifetime. Here is a historic overview of some of the best heritage hotels in Asia.



## **Raffles Singapore (Singapore)**

Established in 1887 by Armenian brothers Martin and Tigran Sarkies, the 5 star Raffles Hotel in Singapore is radiant with colonial grandeur. Steeped in a century of old world tradition, the hotel was named after Stamford Raffles, who has been given the credit of laying the foundation for the developmental masterpiece that Singapore is today.

The Raffles owes its elegant design to architect Regent Alfred John Bidwell. Following the completion of the main building in 1899, the Raffles expanded with construction of additional wings, the great verandah, the classic ballroom, bar, and the billiards room. Further additions were made then on to bring the Raffles to its current resplendent state. The Raffles has been witness to good times and bad, surviving the great depression and a period of receivership.

The hotel was closed for a lavish renovation that cost around \$160 million. The project was implemented by Ssangyong Engineering and Construction. It was restored to its early glory days with all rooms being converted to suites with teakwood floors, handmade carpets, and high ceilings.

Today, the Raffles is considered to be one of the finest hotels in the world with royalty visiting from Europe, Japan, the Middle East with a mile long list of celebrities and distinguished guests of state.

## **Eastern & Oriental Hotel (George Town, Malaysia)**

The Eastern & Oriental Hotel or more popularly known as the E&O is again a dream child of the Sarkies brothers built in 1885. It is one of the rare structures in the world that accomplishes the perfect marriage of historic grandeur and contemporary style. The Heritage Wing of the five star luxury hotel is comprised of the elegant domed lobby. Additional wings were constructed in the mid-1970s and consequently in 2001.

The suites present the perfect amalgamation of European comfort and contemporary Malaysian designs. Dotted with hardwood artifacts and luxurious linens, this is truly what luxurious splendor is all about. One of the hotel's most poignant features is the jaw dropping view of the Malacca Straits along what could be ranked among the longest private sea facing promenades in the area. The equally beautiful view of the sea from any point in the hotel makes it an inspiring place for romantics and artists looking to complete their work.

Like the Raffles, the E&O was also closed down for renovation in 1996. The Heritage Wing was subjected to restoration work while the remaining sections were completely torn down or refurbished in a major way to reflect the hotel's older architectural design.



### **Hotel Continental Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)**

The four star Continental Saigon was established in 1880 and it is renowned for its unique architectural traits. Some of the features that set it apart include its tile roof, thick brick walls, huge bedrooms, and wide open public spaces. The hotel is also comprised of ceilings that are 4 meters high that has been designed to cut down on the discomfort caused by the tropical heat. The design also helps to take full advantage of the free flowing winds and natural light sources. The hotel has a rectangular design and is placed in the center of a huge garden. The distinct feature that sets the Continental Saigon from contemporary luxury hotels is its distinct ambience that provides an eloquent peace and quiet right in the middle of a city that is constantly bustling with energy.

### **The Taj Mahal Palace (Mumbai, India)**

Situated in the historically dynamic city of Mumbai, the five star Taj Mahal Palace is one of the most iconic structures in India and it has a great deal of history right from the time when leading Indian industrialist Jamshetji Nusserwanji Tata acquired it for commission at the start of the twentieth century to the terrorist attack it was subjected to in 2008.

It is said that Tata designed and developed the hotel just out of love and respect for the city. In the first fifty years after the hotel was built, the Taj's booming 240-foot dome was the indicator for ships coming in to Bombay Harbor. The dome is even today set as one of the official triangulation points for Navy ships to identify their position in the harbor.



### **Fairmont Peace Hotel (Shanghai, China)**

The Fairmont Peace Hotel was formerly known as the Cathay Hotel. Sir Victor Sassoon, a real estate tycoon is the dream merchant behind this historic structure. It is China's first high rise structure with ten floors. Among the hotel's characteristic feature are the prominent copper roof and granite exterior.

The five star hotel certainly set some amazing standards of luxury in its time. With trendy deco designs and the most contemporary amenities, the Fairmont Peace was a challenge to some of Europe's finest hotels. The Peace Hotel is even today considered to be one of the centers of Asian glamour giving shelter and hospitality to some of the biggest names in the entertainment and business world, apart from the mysterious and faceless rich personalities. The luxury hotel received a major overhaul in 2010 with modern extensions.

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