

DAYDREAMING ON THE MEKONG

The Reverie Saigon more than lives up to its name with a contemplative and dream-like proposition to travellers seeking something far from the usual.

The Reverie occupies the topmost floors of the landmark Times Square Building in Ho Chi Minh City's prestigious District 1. Facing page: the butterfly ceiling.



By SHABIR MAHMOOD

In the hurly burly of Ho Chi Minh City, The Reverie Saigon manages to cocoon its guests with an incredible amount of comfort and tranquillity. The experience begins at the airport where I am whisked

away in a BMW 7-Series, with refreshments and a Wi-Fi-enabled iPad to help me attend to pressing emails. Located in the throbbing heart of the prestigious District 1, The Reverie – being the tallest hotel in the city – offers spectacular views of the

urbanscape; a melange of colonial French architecture amid the tapestry of local built-up influences. The same structure also hosts 89 full-service luxury apartments.

Inside, the 286-room hotel offers another

feast for the aesthetes. Even as you make your way to the seventh floor to check in, you would already have passed through the lavish gold-leafed entrance, Swarovski crystal-encased lobby and art deco-inspired

gold elevators. Stepping out on the palatial seventh floor, you are struck by the overwhelming mosaic columns and walls, the Louis XVI-style sofas at one end and a giant antique clock at the other.

Up on the 33rd floor where I stayed, the floor-to-ceiling windows open up to the breathtaking panorama of the city and the Saigon river. Inside, guests are offered a fully stocked complimentary minibar, a 46-inch LED TV as well as a 15-inch TV in

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the bathroom, equipped with both a tub and walk-in rainforest shower.

At breakfast, I find myself with Christina von Wrede, the hotel's resident manager. She points out the hotel's showpiece residing in the foyer, a US\$313,000 (S\$454,000) Bechstein grand piano with a veneer of 'Russian mosaic'; precious malachite stone accented with gilded bronze. This opulent piano serves as a microcosm of the tremendous energies invested into the property – a seven-year undertaking that has wrought this dramatic, soaring edifice. The amount of marble that adorns the hotel leads to a joke by von Wrede who says: "There is no more marble left in Italy since it is all in The Reverie now."

At the lobby, a butterfly ceiling depicts the map of Vietnam – an intricate piece of art composed entirely of *Lepidoptera*. Walking through the interior spaces, a connoisseur would recognise some of Italy's foremost furniture brands in the form of B&B

Italia, Giorgetti, Poltrona Frau, Colombostile and Sicis; a combination of classical European and whimsical pieces that create amazing canvases.

Facilities run the gamut, from a Visionnaire-outfitted 542sqm lounge on the hotel's top two floors, to an outdoor pool with underwater sound system and two jacuzzis. A total of 1,200sqm of relaxation is presented at the spa. Its range of therapies is inclined towards Asian treatments, but utilise some far-out ingredients such as Atlantic seaweed and Himalayan pink salt.

Such is the breadth of the hotel's diversions that one need not venture far to be amazed. Four culinary options comprise The

Royal Pavilion for Cantonese, R&J for Italian and Cafe Cardinal for French, as well as The Long Bar, a relaxed dining venue with a vibrant bar scene.

The Reverie Saigon's per-night rates start from US\$350 for the rooms and from US\$850 for the suites.

www.thereveriesaiagon.com



Cafe Cardinal's impressive atrium dining space features an elegant landscape of gorgeous leather furnishings by Visionnaire.

Facing page from above: the Panorama Deluxe Room; the spa has 10 private treatment rooms.

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