

HIGHLIGHT

Sunset cocktails in the Reverie Lounge are the perfect way to round off the day.

**LOWLIGHT**

Having to go home to my apartment, which at present still contains no chandeliers.

THE
HOTEL

Getaway

The Reverie Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City

By
Ben
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**THE LOCATION**

If you stared at a map of Ho Chi Minh City and stuck your finger on the point that looked like the middle, you'd be jabbing the Reverie. The hotel couldn't be more central, set in the Times Square Building, one of the city's tallest, in the heart of District 1. While the street outside features the usual honking cacophony of urban Vietnamese life, upstairs at the Reverie it's an oasis of calm, thanks to the hotel's positioning above the building's sixth floor. Even the reception lobby, the main restaurant and the pool are set well above honk level.

THE SPACE

There are two ways you can deliver on the idea of "lavish". One is with classic understatement; the sort of luxury that it takes a while to even notice is there. The other is the style of the Reverie. There's nothing understated about blue marble floors, imported from Bolivia, a 1000-kilogram clock worth \$500,000, Murano glass chandeliers imported from Italy, high-end Colombostile furnishings (one piece originally designed for Michael Jackson), and a series of floor-to-ceiling Roman-style mosaics. Strangely enough, however, the Reverie manages to pull off all of this outlandishness. It doesn't look ridiculous, as it very easily could. It's beautiful, in the same way as, say, later-era Liz

Taylor was beautiful: a little over the top perhaps, but put together with real skill. Maybe it's the principles of feng shui that have gone into the design; or just that lots of really expensive things actually complement each other. Whatever the reason, the Reverie is a stunner.

THE ROOM

It's the little things in the Reverie's rooms that seduce you. It's the fact that the flatscreen TV, at the touch of a button, disappears into a cabinet to allow an uninterrupted, wraparound view of the city behind it. It's the fact that there's a fire burning – digitally, at least – on that TV every evening when you return from dinner. It's the blackout blinds that retract at the touch of a button. It's the free minibar that's always stocked. It's the fact that all of your stuff gets tidied up whenever you depart the room for more than a few minutes, and yet it's left in roughly the same spot as you threw it so you can find it.

Of course, it's also the big things that impress in our Panorama Deluxe Room, which in true Reverie style is opulent almost to the point of ridiculousness (almost, but not quite). There's a chandelier, of course. In fact there's one chandelier on the ceiling and another one on the floor, a stalagmite and stalactite of Murano glass. There's also a huge floor-to-ceiling wraparound

window with views over the city and the river, a mesmerising panorama that you find yourself gazing at for hours, traffic far below, boats navigating the river, storm clouds billowing on the horizon. In the marble-tiled bathroom there are freestanding double basins, Frette bath linens and Chopard amenities, while just outside there's Dammann tea and a Nespresso machine.

This is just one of the Reverie's 14 room categories, which range from the more modest though still spacious and beautifully appointed Deluxe Rooms, all the way up to the insanely lavish Reverie Suite, which is the sort of space Louis XIV would have thought was a little OTT.

THE FOOD

The Reverie's main restaurant, Cafe Cardinal, serves Vietnamese and Western-style breakfasts and lunches either as a buffet or a la carte, while dinner is a French-influenced fine-dining affair. Breakfast is the daily highlight: hungry diners have free rein on the buffet, but can also order unlimited dishes from the a la carte menu – don't miss the pho, the Vietnamese noodle soup, and the "Reverie Egg", a poached egg with grilled asparagus, foie gras and shaved truffle. Yeah: it's that sort of breakfast. Elsewhere within the hotel, R&J serves classic Italian cuisine, the Royal Pavilion does

traditional Cantonese fare, while both The Deli and The Long do more casual food.

STEPPING OUT

It's another world out there, you discover, when you emerge from the airconditioned luxury of the Reverie and step straight into Ho Chi Minh City's District 1. Oh yeah: you're in Vietnam. Scooters zip past, cars honk, massage touts entreat you to enter. There's so much to do within easy walking distance from the hotel, whether you want to shop at upmarket Western-style shopping malls, visit Ben Thanh market to pick up souvenirs, or go out to eat authentic Vietnamese cuisine.

The highlight of those choices would have to be the food. If you want fine-dining, stick to the Reverie. If, however, you're prepared to get down and dirty and juxtapose your Reverie opulence with a \$2 dinner eaten on a plastic stool, then you're in luck. For Saigon's best pork roll, join the inevitable queue at Banh Mi Huynh Hoa, about a 10-minute walk from the hotel. A little further afield, Co Lien Bo La Lot does probably the best roll-your-own grilled beef rice-paper rolls you're ever likely to encounter, while at Oc Chi Em you can try Saigon-style sea snails fried in chilli and lemongrass.

THE VERDICT

The Reverie might have a bold, flashy exterior, but it also has an impressively warm heart, with very personal, friendly service and striking attention to detail. The hotel also represents an immensely affordable version of the luxury experience, with great deals that include accommodation, meals and access to the exclusive Reverie Lounge available through the website luxuriescapes.com. This place is a real treat, and well worth the price.

ESSENTIALS

The Reverie Saigon, 22-36 Nguyen Hue Boulevard, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City +84 (28) 3823 6688. See thereveriesaigon.com

Deluxe rooms start from \$US350 a night; Panorama Deluxe rooms start at \$US550. Wi-Fi is free and fast. **T**

Ben Groundwater stayed as a guest of The Reverie Saigon.



TripAdvisor Traveller Rating

