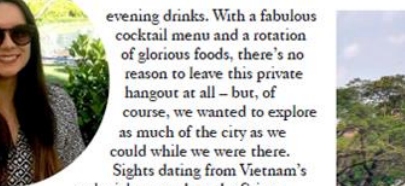


SAND & the CITY

Y&YW's Rachel Avery embraces urban culture and beach serenity in Vietnam



A Panorama Suite at The Reverie Saigon



evening drinks. With a fabulous cocktail menu and a rotation of glorious foods, there's no reason to leave this private hangout at all – but, of course, we wanted to explore as much of the city as we could while we were there. Sights dating from Vietnam's colonial era, such as the Saigon

Central Post Office and the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica, are very close to the hotel. Be sure to head out in the morning before the sun gets too strong and explore the streets on foot. While out and about, you can also pop in to Ben Thanh Market, one of the liveliest parts of the city, to pick up a few gorgeous keepsakes (don't forget to haggle).

While at The Reverie Saigon, we enjoyed The Royal Pavilion, the hotel's Chinese restaurant that's a destination in itself – the superb dim sum dishes are highly recommended. A few doors down, another of Ho Chi Minh City's must-visit eateries is the Vietnam House Restaurant, serving a fabulously modern take on Vietnamese food overseen by well-known chef Luke Nguyen.

The vibrant country of Vietnam has been popular with backpackers for the past few decades, but thanks to its ever-growing luxe hotel scene, it's now a hub for honeymooners too. We flew direct with Vietnam Airlines to get straight in on the action. A short car transfer took us to The Reverie Saigon, the most talked-about hotel in the capital, Ho Chi Minh City.

SEEING THE SIGHTS

The hotel is located right in the centre of the city (sometimes known by its former name of Saigon) and situated within a 39-floor building that stands overlooking the busy streets below. As soon as we pulled up to the huge marble lobby (with a fleet of luxury cars, including a Bentley and Rolls-Royce outside), we knew we'd arrived somewhere pretty special. The epitome of opulence is the best way to describe the entire hotel – everything in the building sparkles (literally), from the polished marble floors to the decadent chandeliers.

In our Panorama Suite, the grandeur continued with a vast sitting

room, gigantic bed, walk-in wardrobe and exquisitely decorated bathroom. We were also very impressed with the extensive pillow menu and complimentary minibar that was restocked daily. And it's not called the Panorama Suite for nothing – the views from the floor-to-ceiling windows were absolutely breathtaking, even from the

"Everything in the hotel sparkles, from the polished floors to the chandeliers"

bathroom. I made sure I took time to enjoy the surroundings, and soaked in the bath while admiring the mesmerising skyline.

The indulgence continued as I headed to the hotel's spa for an even bigger dose of pampering. My 'Five Elements by Ila' treatment involved massage, hot stones and acupressure, and was the perfect remedy for those long-haul aches. There's also an outdoor pool on the sixth floor if you'd prefer to relax there while catching some rays.

If you book a suite at The Reverie Saigon, you get access to the top-floor lounge. The exclusive area is where we headed for breakfast, afternoon tea and



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