

# The Reverie Saigon

Vietnam's most dazzling and lavish property showcases opulent Italian design, a sumptuous spa and the finest Italian and Chinese dining.

BY PAMELA MCCOURT FRANCESCONE

**The Reverie Saigon** is Vietnam's tallest hotel, soaring to the top of the 39-story Times Square building, smack in the heart of downtown Ho Chi Minh City's business district, and within walking distance of many of the city's iconic monuments.

It is also its most extravagant, with eye-popping levels of grandeur and nonpareil service, as is fitting for Vietnam's only member of The Leading Hotels of the World. Call its flamboyance overwhelming and larger

than life if you will, but its head-turning glamour is the ultimate in design by top-drawer Italian furniture makers. And, as the saying goes, Italians do it better.

The head turning starts in the ground floor lobby — which has entrances on the upmarket Dong Khoi Street and the pedestrian Nguyen Hue Boulevard — with the sparkling egg-shaped crystal hanging lights and a ceiling design of colored glass flowers which is, in fact, a map of Vietnam.

The pageantry ramps up dramatically in the seventh-floor lobby with its 16-foot-long gilded sofa covered in purple leather ostrich-skin (Michael Jackson had the same in red velvet); 10-foot high, 24-karat gold and emerald green malachite clock that keeps precise atomic time; and two-story flower mosaics that dwarf the rest of the bold décor.

Resident Manager Christina Von Wrede ([christina.vonwrede@reveriesaiгон.com](mailto:christina.vonwrede@reveriesaiгон.com); 001-008-428-3823-6688) told us

the staff are well-versed in each piece. And they are, because when we stopped to admire anything, they came over to tell us the name of the designer, and that we could find one just like it in the showrooms downstairs. We thought, "Wow! Now's the time to snap up a sofa just like Michael Jackson's."

Our Panorama Deluxe Room was as spacious as many junior suites. These corner rooms have great views over the river and the city, and are flooded with light

**THE DESIGNER SUITES BY GIORGETTI (here) have 1,356 square feet of space. One of the highlights of their living room is a specially commissioned golden peacock mosaic.**

**THE SAIGON SUITE (opposite), styled by Poltrona Frau and Cassina, is a blend of modern design and traditional Italian craftsmanship.**



so the automatic blackout blinds were a blessing in the morning. With vintage-mirror panels on the walls and standing and ceiling chandeliers they are heavy on glamour. All 286 rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows and are among the largest accommodations in the city. The bathrooms have separate rain showers and bathtubs — many in front of windows with stunning views — and the amenities are Chopard in the rooms and Hermès or Acqua di Parma in the suites.

There are 12 categories of room — all with stylish Italian furnishings — from romantic to contemporary and from classical to sophisticated, and they all have complimentary mini-bars, Nespresso machines and Bluetooth. We really liked the 18 Junior Suites, which have a bedroom and a living area and are blue-themed with delicate blue and silver mosaics of birds perched on branches covering the walls. For honeymooners, the Romance Suite is a symphony in red, and the bathroom is really quirky with its red mosaic bathtub and huge plush plum-colored wingback armchair.

The Executive, Panorama and Designer Suites are by some of Italy's most eclectic design houses, each one a palette of vibrant colors, featuring iconic pieces from big-name designers. There is butler service in the Designer Suites, the Reverie Suite and the Saigon Suite; but butlers can be arranged for any of the rooms or suites for an additional fee. The person to reach out to is Reverie Lounge Manager Serena Zhou ([serena.zhou@thereveriesaiгон.com](mailto:serena.zhou@thereveriesaiгон.com); 011-008-428-3823-6688 Ext. 1389) who manages the butler service and can also help with VIP requirements.

The Reverie Suite (3,369 square feet) on two floors has regal colors, brocade wallpaper and sumptuous drapes and furnishings, while the eclectic duplex

Saigon Suite, styled by Poltrona Frau and Cassina, has 2,981 square feet of space and a two-story living room with marble-clad walls. Le Corbusier's iconic lounge chair is the talking point in the master bedroom, as are Frank Lloyd Wright's dining table and chairs in the living room.

For families, the choice is between the 13 sets of adjoining rooms, which become two-bedroom apartments thanks to outer doors in the hallway, the wide range of suites or one of the 89 one- and two-bed apartments in the Reverie Residences, which have fully stocked kitchens and laundry facilities. Suite guests have access to the facilities in the striking white and gold Club Lounge on the top two floors.

Christina Von Wrede told us that for holiday periods, such as New Year's, the hotel sells out early and that to guarantee a specific room type, bookings should be at least a couple of months ahead. Guest experiences, Christina added, should also be reserved well ahead of arrival. These include sunset cruises on the Saigon River, and the "Haute Ho Chi Minh," stay of three nights with three spa treatments and three hours of shopping. Tip: Dong Khoi Street has luxury stores and boutiques selling local crafts, lacquerware, silks and smart housewares.

For art and history lovers, the "Pearls of Saigon" tour is an eight-hour custom-curated immersion of museums, galleries and artists' studios with an art expert. It also includes a visit to the compound, which, during the Vietnam War, was the home of the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge.

The Spa has marble floors and walls on the lower level while dark woods and leather feature in the upstairs 10 treatment rooms, four of which are for couples. Spa Manager Ms Hoang Thuy Vi ([vi.hoang@thereveriesaiгон.com](mailto:vi.hoang@thereveriesaiгон.com)).



com; 011-008-428-3823-6688, Ext 1374) recommended the Five Elements multi-sensorial Tibetan treatment, which includes hand-cupping, hot stones and acupuncture and uses Ila organic essential oils. Vi showed us the ladies' Himalayan pink salt sauna and steam room, and said that men have a sauna, steam room and ice fountain. She also pointed us to the sixth-floor deck with the 80-foot-long free-form swimming pool, two Jacuzzis and a gym.

Saigon's international Tan Son Nhat airport takes private jets; and for airport transfers, the Reverie's gleaming fleet includes a Rolls Royce Phantom Dragon, a Bentley, a Maybach and various classes of Mercedes and BMW. The person to contact is Chief Concierge Truc Dang ([truc.dang@thereveriesaiгон.com](mailto:truc.dang@thereveriesaiгон.com); 011-008-428-3824-6688, Ext. 1389). Truc can also arrange tours of the city, which, by the way, is called both Ho Chi Minh City and Saigon, with Saigon also being the name of the Number 1 District in which The Reverie is located.

With four restaurants we were hard put not to miss out on anything. The Long @ Times Square is very long indeed, running the length of the hotel between Nguyen Hue Boulevard and Dong Khoi Street, and does

great pizzas and mouth-watering homemade ice creams with live music in the evenings.

Executive Chef Giovanni Parrella ([giovanni.parrella@thereveriesaiгон.com](mailto:giovanni.parrella@thereveriesaiгон.com); 011-008-401-223-898-022), who hails from Naples, puts the accent on simplicity and quality in his Italian restaurant R&J where Chef de Cuisine Enrico Martino treated us to ravishing lobster, crab and prawn parcels with a crustacean reduction. He followed with a melt-in-the-mouth guinea fowl roll with apples and cinnamon, and we finished with a light-as-air tiramisu that was intriguingly assembled at the table. Another night we dined on Peking Duck in the theatrical and stately Royal Pavilion Chinese restaurant, and it did not surprise us to learn that both their duck and dim sum are Saigon's best.

Both R&J and The Royal Pavilion are off-limits for children under 12, but it is possible to order from their menus and dine in the all-day-dining French-influenced Café Cardinal that also serves sumptuous breakfasts. For out-of-house dining, Christina told us that Vietnam House, which belongs to the same group as the hotel, under Vietnamese-Australian celebrity chef Luke Nguyen is "the" place to go for great Vietnamese food. ■