



One hotel, one story

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La Résidence Hué: a journey for the senses to colonial days

La Résidence Hôtel & Spa's art-deco façade is only one of the features that have made this building a monument in Hué, Vietnam. American magazine Condé Nast Traveller ranked it as the 20th best hotel in Asia in 2011, and epitomises luxury and sophistication at their apex. This MGallery Collection boutique-hotel is steeped in its dual French and Vietnamese heritage and an open door to explore colonial days. Here is more about this discovery experience away from it all.

Fragrant memories

A singular fragrance welcomes guests in the lobby and in each room. It intertwines cinnamon, patchouli and ylang-ylang, is called Woody Ylang and was composed especially by Laurent Séverac, a well-known 'nose'. It is sprayed several times a day and literally fills the hotel. "This perfume transports you back in time," rejoices the hotel's General Manager, Anthony J. Gill. "Almost a century back in time, to be precise!" he adds. It was built in the 1930s as the French Governor's headquarters back in the days when An Nam was a protectorate (1883-1945). The white art-deco façade that stands proud before Le Résidence Hôtel & Spa tells that story. It became a luxury hotel in the 2000s, and Accor completely revamped it in 2005. Its two wings nestle the garden and its 122 rooms and suites each have a private terrace or balcony overlooking Perfume River, one of this hotel's features. Its name comes from the pleasant fragrances that the fruit trees and flowers skirting it release in the spring.



Glory days

"This hotel is part of Vietnam's history," says Anthony J. Gill. La Résidence spans 2 hectares of land overlooking the Flag Tower and the Imperial Citadel, two UNESCO World Heritage sites and Hué's two must-see attractions. Its history is epic: Bao Dai, Vietnam's last king, abdicated there in 1945. The palace then became the communist government's official residence, and became a hotel in 1975. You are never far away from the colonial atmosphere in Hué. "It was a sophisticated society that organised countless parties and valued entertainment," the Hotel General Manager continues. The 1930s spirit has been caringly kept intact at La Résidence, and the distinctive scent is not the only feature that beckons you to travel back in time. It radiates colonial style: the dark wood, high ceilings, Venetian blinds, central rotunda, horizontal lines across the main building and 1920s jazz motifs are only a few examples of the sparkling days and ubiquitous art-deco class that steep this place. Large black-and-white photos capturing scenes from the streets of Hué in the 1930s decorate the corridors. And the hotel provides guided tours in two homes to explore daily life during the colonial period.

Intertwining styles

French influence in Vietnam shines through the architecture as much as the cuisine (traditional baguettes are served with every meal). Le Parfum, the hotel's restaurant, is steeped in both gastronomic cultures: it serves fine French treats and delicious Vietnamese specialties including fish with ginger and lemongrass, shrimp broth and duck breast with cinnamon - all sprinkled with herbs growing in the hotel's aromatic-plant garden. The chef, not unlike the hotel, is cosmopolitan and multicultural. He fled Vietnam when he was 5 years old, grew up in New Caledonian and moved back to Vietnam in 2008. La Thua An's culinary expertise is on the border between France and his homeland. And his proficient Vietnamese language skills and accent often surprise his fellow countrymen, who do not always understand words that he learned from his grandparents.

Luxury excellence

"Travellers visit Vietnam for something different. They expect a cultural discovery experience." MGallery Ambassador Kristin Scott Thomas was right when she visited this hotel two years back. The actress loved it and enthusiastically recommended it for the Collection. "Her endorsement has attracted guests from around the world," Anthony J. Gill confirms. And adds, "We provide a 360° lifestyle here: the

atmosphere is quiet and soothing." Most guests are retired, love history, and come looking for a comfortable change of scenery in a mild, cool faraway clime. Hué was Vietnam's capital long before Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) and its many historical treasures - such as the emperors' graves, which can only be reached by boat - attract large numbers of tourists.

Enticing, legendary and splendour with an up-to-the-minute touch

Le Gouverneur, this hotel's bar, has an outstanding reputation and staggering terrace. The upholstered wooden easy armchairs, cocktails, spirits, wines and cigars, and breathtaking view of the garden, river and 30-metre-long saltwater swimming pool - condense this hotel's sheer class. Some guests are happy to come only for the splendid by artist Renaud Roland, depicting a scene from daily life in Vietnam. La Résidence is also well known for its spa and pampering. The green-tea, coffee and sugar scrubs, and massages by that country's finest hands, are the best money can buy - and unforgettable, guaranteed.

