



One hotel, one story

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Sofitel Montevideo: Latin America welcomes a splendid flagship establishment into its fold

In Uruguay's capital, the Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa has been restored to all its former glory after being totally refurbished. This magnificent turn of the 20th century French-style palace hotel is a legend. In its heyday it was a preferred haunt for the famous and fashionable, but then fell into oblivion. It reopened in March 2013 with its former splendor revived, its renowned restaurant "1921", an exclusive So Spa, a casino and all the lavish comfort of a grand luxury hotel.

"We offer all our customers a unique gift that we call the soap ritual," explains Mario Leite, the hotel's General Manager. Guests choose their own room fragrance and soaps made especially for the hotel from natural local ingredients and presented in an elegant wooden box. Their selection is then wrapped in tissue paper by the butler. "These natural soaps made from oats, honey, cornflowers or other ingredients are elegant gifts and much appreciated by our guests."

Overlooking the river

The Hotel Casino Carrasco was built on the banks of the Rio de la Plata, or Silver River in Spanish, with a view of a fine sandy beach. This French-style palace nestled amongst palm trees and green lawns has been restored to all its former glory. It was designed by businessman Alfredo Arocena, and first opened in 1921, rapidly becoming the preferred holiday destination of the country's elite. However, it closed in 1997 and fell into disrepair until 2009. After being completely refurbished, the Hotel Casino Carrasco was reborn as the Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa, an iconic building in the smartest part of Uruguay's capital.

Daring refurbishment

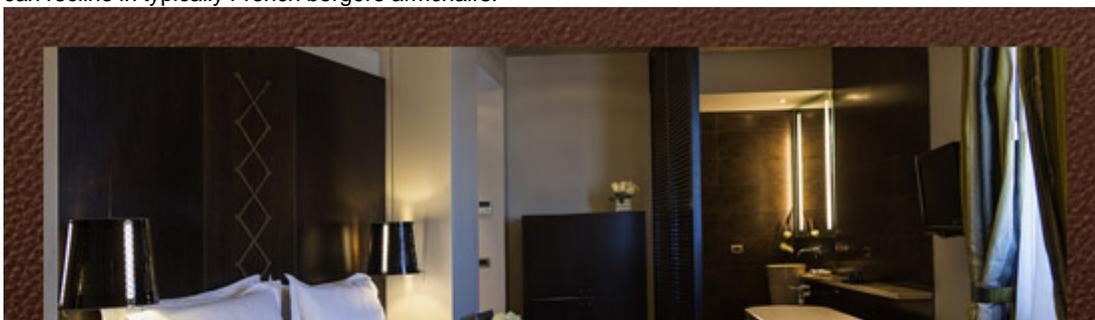
"It was a massive restoration that took 400 days" explains the General Manager. "Six hundred people worked on restoring this 24,000 sq. meter building which features its original furnishings, including several chandeliers, tables, chairs and armchairs." The architects worked hard using testimonials and old pictures to painstakingly restore it to its original aspect. This involved assessing the ravages of time, especially on the piano nobile, or principal floor, on the half-moon shaped facade where the most beautiful reception rooms are located. "Every square centimeter of the rooms was carefully scraped and scrubbed to recover the original decor of plaster stucco and gold leaf." The results are there for all to see: the building has well and truly been restored to all its former glory.

The rebirth of a legend

In the impressive lobby, huge stained glass panes reflect their light onto the new marble floor and crystal chandeliers sparkle on the completely restored original furnishings. The atmosphere is radiant and striking. *"This hotel is irretrievably linked to France,"* continues the General Manager. Hotel Carrasco, which was designed by French and Swiss architects Gaston Mallet and Jacques Dunant, is definitely remarkably like a Deauville luxury hotel with its white stone facade and very French charm. *"The entire team is very proud to work here, because for the people of Montevideo, it's an icon of Uruguay's past. In fact, it has been a heritage-listed building since 1975."* In its heyday, famous people like writer and poet Federico García Lorca, scientist Albert Einstein and heads of state such as former French president François Mitterrand stayed here. Today, the curious still come to admire it as they stroll by along the river banks.

The art of living à la française

The Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa features 93 rooms and 23 suites in six categories with breathtaking views of either the river or Stella Marris Church. *"Each room features a different atmosphere, and cleverly offers a blend between the pleasure of feeling at home and the thrill of being elsewhere."* The color schemes are soft and warm with walnut furnishings and ochre and green fabrics. The bond with France is again reflected in the suites' names which refer to French artists, writers or opera composers. In the Thays Lounge Bar, guests can recline in typically French bergère armchairs.





Surrounded by works of art

The establishment also boasts impressive and omnipresent art works. The magnificent fresco by Uruguayan artist Ignacio Iturria mesmerizes guests in Le Salon du Chef, a private area that is part of the Thays Lounge Bar. *"It is several meters long and, represents personalities who have marked Uruguay's history as well as key moments from our past."* Painters, actors and politicians feature in this impressive, multicolored work. The Tea Gallery located in the old conservatory and designed for tea aficionados, also houses two magnificent stone sculptures created exclusively for the hotel in 1921. This cultural wealth reflects Montevideo's abundant artistic activity.

The hallmark of local culture

Though France's influence can be seen in the stones and atmosphere, it recedes before the vibrant colors and materials that typify Uruguayan local culture: tango red, leather, gold and silver, and the Ceibo flower, the national emblem. For guests seeking the ultimate in relaxation, So Spa offers massages, a pool and a sauna, accompanied by fresh fruit juice and traditional music. *"Our yerba mate, tannat wine, and amethyst powder beauty lotions provide the most wonderful sense of well-being."* In the restaurant, named "1921" after the year the palace hotel opened, Chef William Porte combines French cuisine and Uruguayan recipes, with a focus on veal, beef, lamb and duck. Meals are taken overlooking the river under a crystal chandelier and in a setting resplendent with Louis XV furnishings.

Anchored in a contemporary world

The hotel features all the modern facilities found in a luxury establishment. Its casino, which is located beneath the main building, boasts 400 slot machines as well as poker, blackjack, baccarat, and roulette tables in a belle époque-style setting. In a tribute to its glorious past, the sculptures brought from Europe one hundred years ago when the hotel was built have been reinstated and given pride of place in the garden.

The Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa is now ready to revive the refinement of its past with private parties, diplomatic receptions, gala events and other festivities.

Find out more about Sofitel

Book a room in the hotel Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa

