

Elevated STOREYS

FEATURED IN ICONIC FILMS,
ATTRACTING THE CULTURAL ELITE
AND HOLLYWOOD GLITTERATI,
WITH CAPTIVATING HISTORIES
WHICH HAVE LEFT LASTING MARKS
ON THE SOCIETY SURROUNDING
THEM, GRANDE DAME HOTELS ARE
INSTITUTIONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.
IAN THE BUTT EXPLORES EIGHT
OF THE BEST, DELVING INTO THEIR
FASCINATING PASTS, AND THE FRESH
ADDITIONS WHICH ENSURE THEY
REMAIN AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME...

The Peninsula, Hong Kong

BACKSTORY: Woven into the fabric of Hong Kong's history, the formal surrender of the country to invading Japanese forces at the conclusion of 1941's Battle of Hong Kong took place on The Peninsula's fifth floor, in room 336. Taking its name from its location at the tip of the Kowloon peninsula, this elegant hotel housed in a Chino-Belle Époque building opened in 1928; immediately the darling of high society. After the war it was a star magnet, attracting the likes of Lauren Bacall and Marlon Brando. Featured on the silver screen almost as much as its lodgers, a scene from James Bond, *The Man with the Golden Gun* sees Bond (Roger Moore) and Mary Goodnight (Britt Ekland) tail Andrea Anders to the hotel in the Pen's famed Rolls Royce fleet. Offering old-world charm, today, nine hundred staff help serve finger sandwiches in the lobby – where gargoyle statues peer down from the top of gilded columns – or proffer plates of jellied lobster at Gaddi's, where Ava Gardner once twirled beneath its Christofle candelabras.

LOCAL LEGEND: Ask barman Johnny Chung Kam Hung to mix you up a Screwdriver cocktail; the recipe was taught to him by Clark Gable.

WHAT'S NEW? A Shaolin Wushu training experience which gives a hands-on introduction to one of China's oldest martial arts.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The Upper House. A calming space designed by award-winning architect Andre Fu, its 117 rooms are the largest in Hong Kong starting at 68 square metres. Modern European restaurant Café Grey Deluxe and a stylish Sky Lounge on the 49th floor both afford wonderful skyline views.



Peninsula Hong Kong



Fairmont Banff Springs

Fairmont Banff Springs, Canada

BACKSTORY: ‘If we can’t export the scenery, we’ll import the tourists,’ said William Cornelius Van Horne, Canadian Pacific Railway’s general manager, and pioneer of the Banff Springs Hotel. Opened in 1888, it played an instrumental role in bringing tourism to Western Canada, accommodating rail enthusiasts wishing to explore the untouched wilderness which would become Canada’s first National Park. Initially a wooden French chateau, the ‘Castle in the Rockies’ sat a mile high, looking over the Bow River Valley. Later it was reconstructed in stone, with a seventeenth-century Scottish castle look. Royalty, including the late Queen Mother and George VI visited. Marilyn Monroe twisted an ankle during a stay, and bellmen drew straws to determine who would assist her. In the 1960s jet-age travellers arrived to ski at the world-class slopes nearby. While hi-tech heli-skiing is *de rigueur* today, heritage runs deep; the 764-room property has original stained-glass windows and a spiral staircase with a 450-million-year-old fossil in its steps.

LOCAL LEGEND: In 1939 ‘King of Swing’ and amateur pilot Benny Goodman declared he would only visit arriving by aircraft. Staff cleared a field at the base of the Cascade Mountain, creating Banff airport.

WHAT’S NEW? Bow Valley Grill, known for its weekend brunches, will soon reveal a brasserie concept and on-tap prosecco.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Moose Hotel & Suites, the first lodge to open in Banff in a decade. Natural materials and the talent of local craftspeople has resulted in 178 cabin-luxe rooms. Make for the rooftop for stunning views, stargazing and dips in two bubbling hot pools.



Fairmont Banff Springs

Galle Face Hotel, Colombo

BACKSTORY: Another of the first grand railway hotels, Galle Face sets the standard for stays in Sri Lanka. Moments from the rolling Indian Ocean this elongated, gleaming white, terracotta-roofed Victorian building was originally a Dutch villa. It opened as a hotel in 1864, when well-to-do Ceylonites would zip up and down kilometre-long Galle Face Green in horse-drawn carriages while Colombo’s *creme de la creme* watched from wicker chairs, sipping on Pimm’s Cups. As notorious for its glamorous guest lists at its Coconut Grove Club (now the Palm Club), as its guests were for missing departing ships after attending them, Galle Face hosted a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ spanning revolutionaries (Che Guevara) to cosmonauts (Yuri Gagarin). Vivien Leigh conducted an affair with co-star Peter Finch, when filming *Elephant Walk*. Husband Laurence Olivier sent her home in disgrace. Sundowners on the hotel’s terrace, during the nightly ritual when the National Flag is hoisted accompanied by a piper, and swimming in its large saltwater pool are quintessential Colombo experiences.

LOCAL LEGEND: The British used to use Galle Face Green for artillery practice. Once, a 30-pound cannonball careered into the hotel. Luckily it didn’t explode. An annual ‘cannonball run’, sees competitors sprint its course in commemoration.

WHAT’S NEW? The Verandah restaurant, specialising in delectable Sri Lankan curries and string hoppers, now offers an exciting selection of world cuisine, from Thai to Arabic meze.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The Residence by Uga Escapes, a lovingly smartened up Victorian townhouse between leafy Park Street and Gangarama Lake. With just eleven suites, it’s small but beautiful, has a tropical garden, and a restaurant that uses ingredients from the Residence’s east-coast farm.



Galle Face Hotel, Colombo



Galle Face Hotel, Colombo



Done Day in The Man Who Know Too Much

La Mamounia, Marrakech

BACKSTORY: Art Deco architecture melded with *Arabian Nights* aesthetics best describes this Moroccan palace. Designed by Prost and Marchiso in 1922, La Mamounia bears the name of its 200-year-old, extraordinary, 20-acre, once-royal gardens – which brim with lemon, guava and olive trees, its manicured lawns lit by thousands of candles come night time. Exotic and exciting, it became the go-to for stately dinners. Winston Churchill whiled away hours on his balcony, painting watercolours of the gardens, while Alfred Hitchcock immortalised the hotel on screen in his 1956 thriller, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Kaftan-clad rock stars and fashionistas seeking a refined foil to their exploits along Marrakech’s hippie trail arrived in the 1960s – Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Balmain among them. A place for modern-day dreamers, its 209 rooms and three riads have stunning Koutoubia Mosque, Atlas Mountains or rolling garden views. All have intricate wooden latticework and mosaic floors. Even the 2,500-square-metre spa here is an artwork, with lofty halls and eye-catching Zellige tiles.

LOCAL LEGEND: When General Charles de Gaulle visited, a made-to-measure bed had to be built to accommodate the statesman’s height – he stood just shy of 2m.

WHAT’S NEW? It’s the first African hotel to partner with French pastry maestro Pierre Hermé, meaning superior sweet treats.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Riad Joya. A seven-suite hotel centred around a pretty indoor courtyard, in the Medina. Astonishing decor is a mish-mash of Morocco’s cultural influences – think travertine Doric columns, Romanesque bronze doors and traditional pottery. A stay feels as if you’ve been given the keys to the private house of your most discerning friend.

REX Features

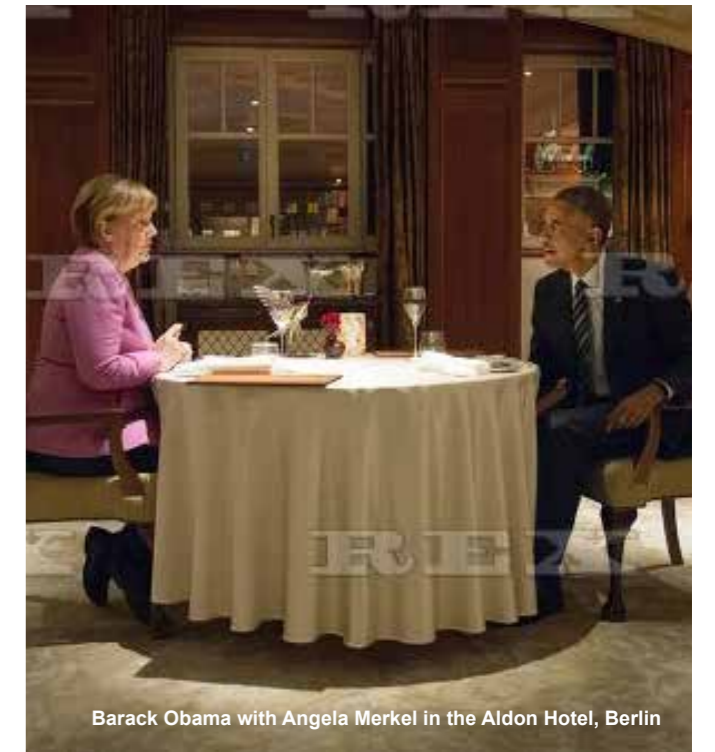
Hotel Adlon Kempinski, Berlin

BACKSTORY: Lorenz Adlon spent an astronomical 20 million gold marks building his original Hotel Adlon in 1907. His vision? To create the planet’s most opulent hotel. First through the doors was Emperor Wilhelm II, who quickly became its most loyal patron, declaring the marble ‘more shiny and nicely polished’ than in his own palaces. Aristocrats and international dignitaries dropped anchor, many embassies setting up offices in the illustrious *Kaisersaal* (Emperor’s Hall). Businessmen came unaccompanied, fearing wives might pressure them to redecorate homes in a similarly exorbitant style. Despite operating throughout WWII, shortly afterwards the property burnt to the ground, only rebuilt in 1997, on the same site to the tune of €265 million. Mahogany and cherry furnishings fill its suites, along with, of course, plenty of marble. When Barack Obama visited Berlin, he and Angela Merkel dined at its two-Michelin starred Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer restaurant.

LOCAL LEGEND: Standards are exacting. In-house flower atelier Mario Weidner has used 1.5 million of the finest roses (since 2001) creating the hotel’s sensational floral arrangements. One of the butler team irons morning papers so VIPs don’t dirty their fingers.

WHAT’S NEW? The lobby, a vision in rich gold and turquoise tones. The focal point is an elaborate elephant fountain, a gift from the Maharaja of Patiala in the thirties.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Das Stue. Whimsical touches at this cool, 78-room boutique hotel, housed in the former Danish Embassy (Das Stue means ‘living room’ in Danish), include an oversized sculpture of a crocodile by Quentin Garel, and black-and-white Henri Cartier-Bresson photography.



Barack Obama with Angela Merkel in the Aldon Hotel, Berlin

| ELEVATED STORIES |

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