

Finding Shangri-La in Paris

By PETER FRIEND

Seven years ago, Paris welcomed a new luxury five-star hotel to its tree-lined avenues; the first European property for Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts (shangri-la.com/Paris/shangrila/#).

Joining some illustrious and well-established names on the hotel scene of France's capital, the property would merge the French *art de vivre* with Shangri-La's legendary Asian 'hospitality from the heart' in a seamless blend across cultures and continents. Shangri-La's investment in, and commitment to, Paris saw the company purchase the palatial residence of Prince Roland Bonaparte, the grandnephew of Napoleon himself. The new owner registered the property as a *monument historique* and thereafter commenced a four-year renovation; a period equal to that of its original construction. During the painstaking restoration, exceptional attention to detail ensued, overseen by architects and artisans of their craft from marble to marquetry. >>



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Originally built in 1896 in the elegant 16th *arrondissement* (between the statue of George Washington and the Eiffel Tower – a district with a high concentration of galleries and museums), respected botanist Prince Roland used his palace to entertain the elite of Parisian society. Today, modern travellers and locals alike are afforded the opportunity to relax, lounge, dine and sleep in the original rooms of the palace, making the property a truly unique and intimate place to stay in the city.

In addition to closely maintaining and preserving the historical importance of the property, Shangri-La's investment saw the creation of three distinctly different restaurants (two of which have been awarded Michelin stars) and the Botaniste bar (named after Prince Roland's passion). A stunning, 16-square-metre swimming pool bathed in natural light was installed where the stables once stood. It forms the centrepiece of Chi, The Spa – another signature facility of Shangri-La properties.

Many of the 101 rooms, which include 36 suites, have commanding views across the Seine to the Eiffel Tower. Each guest room and suite is designed and decorated in traditional French style and colours, with subtle Asian touches – your stay feels more akin to residing in a luxury private Parisian home than a hotel, yet with all the full-service benefits the latter provides.

For exploring Paris, there is so much to see and do on the doorstep, from the Trocadero to the Champs Elysées, the world-class boutiques on nearby Avenue Montaigne, to a boat trip on the Seine and, of course, the iconic Eiffel Tower, which is less than a 10-minute walk away. The nearest metro station, around the corner from the hotel, takes you to Boulevard Haussmann and beyond. Even the Louvre, Nôtre Dame Cathedral and Opéra Garnier are just a brisk walk or an inexpensive taxi ride away.

As one expects of a five-star property, the guest amenities and facilities throughout are superb; however, in addition to the uniqueness of the fabric of the building in which you are staying, two elements are a real standout. Firstly, the cornerstone of Shangri-La's philosophy towards service excellence: the staff themselves who embody the ethos of 'hospitality from the heart'. This shines through, from arrival to departure, with their genuine care in the wellbeing, comfort and enjoyment of each guest. Secondly, the attention to detail displayed at every level, from the hotel's book of *10 Parisian Walks* to the research undertaken to produce botanical cocktails in the bar. This is above and beyond five-star; however, it comes naturally to Shangri-La.

We have been fortunate in our travels to have stayed at eight Shangri-La properties in Europe, Asia and Australia. Inspired by the legendary land featured in James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*, the name Shangri-La encapsulates serenity and hospitality. As I sip a G&T in Le Bar Botaniste during our stay in Paris, I could easily imagine that if the author had joined me for a drink he may well have felt the fictitious land of his novel had become a reality. ♣

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