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Rhapsody in Blue

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TOKYO TREASURE

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PALACE HOTEL TOKYO BLENDS CLASSIC JAPANESE ELEGANCE WITH FIVE-STAR LUXURY – AND THE CITY'S BEST VIEWS.



For nearly a half century, the Palace Hotel was a Tokyo landmark, set on a coveted lot overlooking the Imperial Palace gardens, home to some of the city's most expansive green spaces. Last spring, following an ambitious three-year renovation that involved a complete teardown and \$1.2 billion reconstruction, Palace Hotel Tokyo re-opened for business, quickly setting a new benchmark for luxury in the Japanese capital. Drawing inspiration from the verdant gardens nearby, the hotel embraces natural motifs and traditional Japanese aesthetics, and blends them with all things modern. No other Tokyo hotel enjoys such impressive green views.

"It was never meant to be just another addition to Tokyo's skyline or simply the latest entry into the city's luxury scene," said Masaru Watanabe, the hotel's executive director and general manager. "We wanted to build a hotel where real substance and presence could be felt in the spaces created and the services offered. It's about the authenticity in one's experience when one stays at Palace Hotel Tokyo, because it represents the best of Japan."

Situated across from the ancient Ote-mon Gate of the Imperial Palace, the hotel offers 290 spacious guest rooms and suites, along with acclaimed Japanese, Chinese and French restaurants (several with Michelin-star affiliations) and a shopping arcade full of luxury boutiques.

Given its proximity to the many corporate headquarters in the vibrant Marunouchi area, the hotel remains popular among business travellers. But it's also within walking distance of Tokyo station and Marunouchi Naka Dori, one of the city's most upscale shopping and dining areas. In fact,



the neighbourhood is a shopper's paradise. Ginza, the fabled shopping district, is just 20 minutes away on foot, while the lower-level Hotel Arcade is home to boutiques, such as muta PALAZZO watches, Christian Tortu flower designs, Masters Craft high-end Japanese ceramics, Nichibo Pearl jewellery and Imabari Yokkin bathroom towels, famous for their plush quality and featured in guest rooms at Palace Hotel Tokyo.

From the Hotel Arcade, guests can also access Otemachi station, a crossroads for five different subway lines (Marunouchi, Tozai, Chiyoda, Hanzomon and Toei-Mita). It's even possible to walk underground all the way to Tokyo station.

Hotel guests enjoy a comfortable mix of traditional Japanese hospitality with modern luxury touches. In the Palace Lounge, waitresses don kimonos for a classic Japanese-style

afternoon tea and, at sundown, the space transforms into a more convivial setting, the ideal place for an evening cocktail, with a jazz pianist performing nightly on a white Steinway & Sons grand piano. When it's cold outside, a fire roars in the room's enormous fireplace. Outside on the terrace overlooking the old Edo castle moat, a pair of white swans glide through the water in front of 400-year-old stone walls.

If you want a more intimate space for cocktails, head to the subdued Royal Bar, also on the ground floor, where dark wood and leather chairs combine with dim lights and a haze of cigarette and cigar smoke to create a luxuriant retro atmosphere. The Royal Bar's mahogany counter was originally part of the old hotel, dating back more than a half century, and the special-recipe martini remains from the bar's former long-time

chief bartender Kiyoshi Imai, better known as "Mr Martini."

Or try the more modern Lounge Bar Privé, on the sixth floor, which offers nice views of the city from inside the main bar area or from a spacious outdoor terrace.

Palace Hotel Tokyo has also made a name for itself as a fine dining destination, seeking out, what the hotel describes as "a constellation of Michelin stars." The hotel's signature Japanese restaurant Wadakura is separated into three dining areas. The six-seat Tatsumi serves tempura, using fresh seafood from the world-renowned Tsukiji Fish Market. At GO, diners can enjoy teppanyaki featuring top-quality Japanese beef. Sushi Kanesaka is managed by Shinji Kanesaka, who also owns the two-star Michelin restaurant Sushi Kanesaka in Tokyo. The primary dining room has been developed in a traditional Japanese aesthetic, with a mixture of wood and stone in straight lines and right edges, and is filled with the pleasant sound of water trickling into a rock pool.

"Most hotels endeavour to have at least one widely talked about signature restaurant," Watanabe said. "What we've established is a constellation of restaurants, each a new beacon for diners intent on experiencing some of the most sophisticated cuisine of their class in Japan."

Other restaurants in the hotel include Amber Palace, a traditional Chinese restaurant operated by the Chugoku Hanten Group, which also runs Tokyo's two-star Michelin restaurant Fureika. Dark wood panelling and pumpkin-coloured carpeting, along with decorative traditional Chinese instruments and porcelain pieces lend the space an old-world Chinese atmosphere. The

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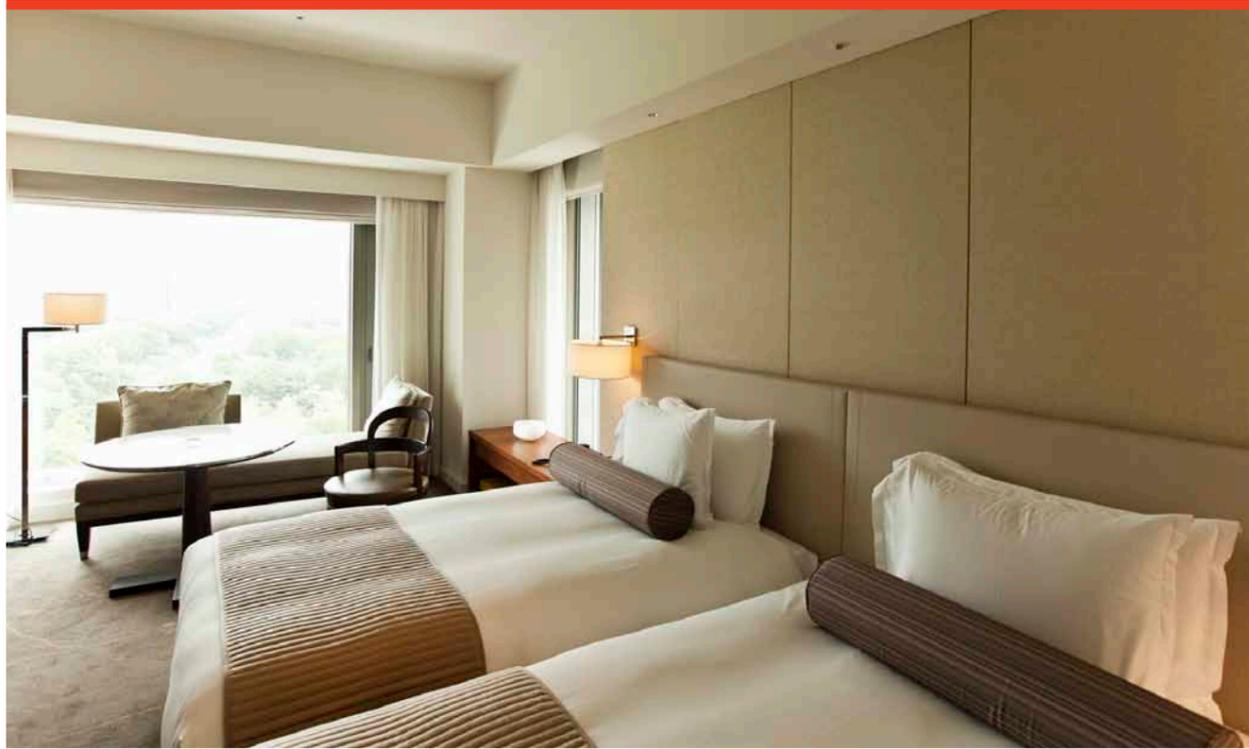


hotel's French restaurant Crown also enjoys Michelin ties. Patrick Henrion, who collaborated with the chefs at Crown, also holds two-star status for La Pyramide in Vienne, France. Crown, like all of the restaurants in the hotel, enjoys marvellous views over the Imperial Palace grounds, but what's interesting here is that Crown was originally part of the old hotel, then on the 10th floor. Now on the 6th floor, it enjoys roughly the same views as before, simply because the ceilings in the new hotel are much taller. The 6th floor today is as tall as the 10th floor was previously.

Half a dozen design firms helped create Palace Hotel Tokyo, but it was GA Design International, led by Terry McGinnity, that was responsible for designing the award-winning guest room interiors and ground-floor public spaces. More than half of the guest rooms enjoy



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large terraces or balconies, perfect for enjoying the views of the Imperial Palace gardens, and the interior design seizes on natural colour patterns and motifs. Most guest rooms feature separate soaking tubs and showers, as well as state-of-the-art technology that's blessedly simple to operate. Highlights include 16-inch LCD TVs built into the bathroom mirrors and one-click window blinds.

"The aim was to not only make the hotel's interiors attractive, but also to give them substance and meaning – an enduring character that would evolve over time and become very personal to those who pass through it," said McGinnity, whose London-based firm also designed the upscale Conrad Tokyo and Corinthia Hotel London.

"More than anything," added Watanabe, the GM, "we wanted the look and feel of this hotel to celebrate

hallmarks of Japanese aesthetics."

In the hotel's evian SPA, the only one in Japan, visitors can experience blissful treatments like the Vitalising Signature, which uses seitai massage to help realign your body's natural balance. The five treatment rooms softly glow in aqua-blue lighting, creating a relaxing atmosphere reminiscent of a quiet aquarium.

"For domestic and international travellers alike, whether they're with us for business or leisure, we hope they will walk away saying, 'To have stayed at Palace Hotel Tokyo is to have experienced the very essence of Japanese hospitality,'" said Takashi Kobayashi, the hotel's president. 📍

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