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Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit (Thailand)



Six Amazing Hotel Lobbies

The lowly hotel lobby! All too often, they're the means to an end, a passageway to hurry through. Lovely? Yes...but where's my room?



Mantra Samui (Thailand)

Today, hotels are re-thinking the lobby as much more than a setting for a front desk transaction or an easy rendezvous point. It is a property's signature space, the stage setter. When done right, it establishes a tone and a clear sense of arrival. Below are six hotels with lobbies that are hard to leave:

1 - Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit (Thailand)

Forgive yourself if you experience a sense of destination discombobulation upon entering this lobby. With a number of elements that evoke the City of Light rather than the City of Angels, it might make you question for a moment what time zone you're in. In addition

to a Parisian-style cafe called Le Macaron, there's a très chic bar that serves up inventive French cocktails. But the pièce de résistance is the discreet art gallery, which boasts plush booth seating along the sides, a sleek neon chandelier that changes colors -- a piece of art in itself -- and enough space to house any type of exhibition.



La Residence Hotel & Spa Hue (Vietnam)



The Palace Hotel Tokyo (Japan)

2 - Mantra Samui (Thailand)

A new lobby anchors the extensive changes that have taken place at this tropical retreat in Koh Samui. The completely overhauled arrival experience ushers guests through a grand pine timber frame building, reminiscent of traditional Thai house with a lofty, tiered ceiling. Just beyond check-in is a verdant, five-metre high vertical garden that references the island's natural beauty. Indigenous trees and plants also hedge the road to the hotel, and a water feature adds a new dimension of appeal to the lush surrounds.

3 - La Residence Hotel & Spa Hue (Vietnam)

What to do with a rotunda? The answer, when designers renovated the 1930-built art deco marvel at 5 Leo Loi Street in Hue, was a lobby. Anchored by a bar, a bank of floor-to-ceiling windows drink in lush hotel gardens, the Perfume River and the walled city of Imperial

Hue. Overhead, an original mural, called the Arc of Life, curves with the wall, depicting scenes of daily life in Vietnam. The French artist, Roland Renaud, drew inspiration for his creation from the walls of the Musée des Colonies in Paris and the main post office in Lyon. If the beauty of the arc alone is not worth the price of admission, indulge a little history: It was through these doors at Tet in 1968 that Viet Cong cadres infiltrated the hotel and made off with the highest ranking South Vietnamese official abducted during the war.

4 - The Palace Hotel Tokyo (Japan)

Bridging the adrenaline-fuelled business hub of Marunouchi with the serenity of Japan's nearby Imperial Palace gardens, Palace Hotel Tokyo's lobby melds the two worlds in one grand setting. Complementing its natural surroundings, the lofty public space features hand-tufted green carpets and a perfectly placed

tamukeyama momiji (Japanese maple), viewed through floor-to-ceiling windows at one of the lobby's many seating areas. The artwork of some of Japan's finest contemporary artists adorns the walls, with several pieces of the hotel's 1,000-strong collection prominently displayed. Today, business and pleasure travelers alike mingle within the space, but it's not hard to imagine decades past when newly appointed ambassadors to Japan descended through the lobby, at the original Palace Hotel, to a horse-drawn carriage waiting to escort them to their introduction to Japan's Emperor.

5 - The Reverie Saigon (Vietnam)

More reminiscent of an Italian palace than a Vietnamese reception, The Reverie Saigon's 7th floor lobby is one of the most visually arresting entrance experiences you'll have in Vietnam. Vibrant hand-laid mosaic tile artwork, by Sicis of Italy, tower above check-in desks in a lofty



The Reverie Saigon (Vietnam)

rotunda area. The lobby's prize jewel, a custom-made three-meter tall Baldi Firenze clock, demands attention with a Russian mosaic veneer of precious malachite stone, accented by 24K gold and green crystal. Its prominent position is an 'ode' to the building's Times Square name. Kent Lui, the hotel's lead architect has hailed the whimsical lobby as, "the most iconic space in the entire building." A bold statement in a hotel filled

with unapologetic splendor and spaces designed to dare and excite travellers.

6 - Sanctum Inle Resort (Myanmar)

In a region long closed off to the wider world, the Brigitte Dumont de Chassart-designed Sanctum Inle Resort opens the doors on an experience celebrating removal and contemplation starting right at its breezy, semi open-air lobby.

Architectural flourishes that invoke monastic traditions, such as Spanish-style arches, add flair to the overall minimalist yet striking lobby overlooking surrounding greenery, villas and suites. Hardwood floors, furniture and accents add warmth to this off-the-beaten path setting on the banks of Myanmar's storied Inle Lake, as do large glazed terracotta pots sourced from the nearby Kyauk Daing pottery village. ■



Sanctum Inle Resort (Myanmar)