



Victorian Charm Lives at The Prestige



Lording over Church Street and bringing the pages of Victorian heritage to life, The Prestige Hotel has attracted a loyal patronage, both local and foreign. From the white-washed façade to sprawling arches, wainscoting walls and pastel-hued rattan furniture, this hotel has been consistently lending its good looks to photographs and social media feeds. The design of the property takes inspiration from the movie *The Prestige*, starring Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale.

Keeping the narrative in mind, you are bound to notice the clever details throughout the property. The golden symbols in the lift decode Penang attractions, while the mirror-resembling hallways leave an air of mystique, and the levitating-like beds

in rooms are equally stylish. Guests also enjoy various botanical designs scattered across the hotel, giving a refreshing contrast to the property's neutral colour scheme.

Part of The Prestige Hotel's claim to fame is its location. Lace up your walking shoes and begin the stroll to nearby landmarks, attractions, and streets that harken back to Penang's maritime trading era.

LOFT SUITE LUXURY

The confluence of modern-day comfort and classic inspirations extend to the accommodation, as well. There are 162 rooms with the Loft Suite claiming the highest regard in the hotel. This suite, though unpretentious, invites you to cast off stress and weariness and embrace luxe and comfort at your own

pace. The grey-panelled walls and carpeted floors are soft and subdued, complementing the champagne-bronze frameworks that add a timeless elegance.

Settle in at the generous lounge with a Nespresso coffee or TWG tea in hand, walk up to the mezzanine level and leap onto the king-size bed, or get in a shower cubicle that resembles Houdini's escape box. The gleaming framework that grasps onto the glass bathroom is out of the ordinary, and once under the rain shower – with premium amenities and natural essential oils – you won't want to escape.

A clock that seamlessly blends onto the wall, a separate toilet behind a secret door; another door reveals a



botanical-themed bar with a glass jar stocked with unusual local candies. Every thought process behind each gesture creates sheer magic brought out by shrewd design.

IMPRESSIVE SPACES

Cutter's Lounge is an exclusive space for the Loft Suite guests. Thoughtfully designed with modern furnishings, it's a great spot to sit with a laptop or while away an hour flipping through a magazine. Coffee and tea are available, but the real deal is to stick around until evening because a variety of canapés and wines wait to be relished come cocktail hour.

You'll be hard-pressed to find a better spot to watch the sun rise or set across the ocean than the rooftop infinity pool. Either from the edge of the

saltwater swimming pool or on the sun deck, the scenic views of the Straits of Malacca will form a memorable part of your stay.

The beautiful rooftop is not just home to the pool, but also a charming event space. The multipurpose hall, named Angier and Borden, fits up to 80 guests and the pavilion and terrace is an ideal choice for bespoke special events. Though some may balk at the idea of burning calories during a vacation, the hotel's gym, equipped with fitness essentials, may change your mind.

DINING DELIGHTS

When hunger comes calling, The Glasshouse is the place to be. Whether enjoying indoor or *al fresco* seating, the tropical Victorian Eden charm will help

you unravel from the plagues of urban hustle. Staying true to the name, glass abounds here, with lattice-designed white frames giving a spacious and sophisticated outlook, while cushioned rattan furniture with printed pillows completes a delightful, airy café setting.

The kitchen, under the stewardship of Chef Sean Liew, serves both local and Western fare with their own flavour twists. F&B Manager Mr Jeevaa Murugan underlines the essence of locally sourced ingredients that accentuate each plate. To name a few, creamy *tom yum* fettucine topped with grilled *ayam percik*, Nyonya *nasi ulam*, and nutmeg soda.

If these gentlemen could name two platters that keep the crowd coming



back, it is a close tie between their Afternoon Affair and Mixed Platter. The former befits the theme of the establishment: a three-tiered tower of sweet and savoury goodness. You have the classics like macarons, smoked salmon, and scones, but also creative-runners such as lollipop-like cake pops, mini sandwiches with spicy prawn paste, and semi-sweet tiramisu crunch. Paired with the prestigious TWG Tea, it is a nudge towards perfection.

Come in with a Herculean appetite for the Mixed Platter. From batter-fried fish fillets to calamari and prawns,



mussels, grilled corn, and more, this dish will ensure you leave completely satiated. Mr Jeevaa adds that the smoked paprika mayonnaise, one of the three condiments, is a standout. It has a symphony of spicy, sweet, and sour notes that uplifts the taste of each element on the wooden block. Though that surely sounds like feast on its own, be sure to leave some space for dessert because not everyone can do bread pudding justice like they do here. When the hotel opened in 2019, the kitchen started with a semi-buffet and the bread, butter, and banana pudding was a highlight on the menu. Guests loved it so much that it has been a mainstay ever since.

Putting a finger on any one thing that gives guests a memorable experience is difficult. But at The Prestige, from the warm gestures of the staff to the timeless design, and the delicious food to the idyllic rooftop pool, staying here is sure to be part of a memorable visit to Penang. As a destination hotel, whether staying with your other half, friends, or family, The Prestige is surely one for the bucket list! ■



Making The Prestige the Perennial Favourite: An Interview with General Manager Melvin Ooi

Harnessing the potency of Victorian-era architecture and modern-minimalism interior, The Prestige hotel on Church Street promises a memorable stay with a 5-star, timeless elegance that underscores the heritage-centred appeal of Georgetown. We recently caught up with General Manager Melvin Ooi, who offered a window into his roles and responsibilities.

The Expat: How long have you been attached to The Prestige?

Melvin Ooi: I am one of the pre-opening team members, so it's been almost four years.

How many years in the hotel business? Any standout experiences?

For 25 years and counting, and my latest assignment was being appointed to run The Prestige hotel in George Town, Penang. Prior to joining The Prestige, I was given the opportunity to work with various prestigious companies and luxury properties, including Archipelago International in Indonesia's leading international hotel group, Hard Rock Hotel, The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur, The Datai Langkawi, and others. I am also a committee member of the Malaysia Association of Hotels, under the Penang Chapter, to support the state's hotel industry.

What is your vision for The Prestige?

Guest satisfaction is incredibly important to any business, and hospitality is no exception. The hotel line is a complex business and has countless customer touchpoints. We know that technology and digital solutions have been booming for the past few years, but my philosophy is to go back to the basics of service and



satisfaction with a perceptive approach to the needs of every individual.

What are the typical duties as a GM?

The job description of a hotel GM is to manage all kinds of tasks. No matter what it is related to, you need to be aware of a lot of things, always be on top of the game, and make quick decisions. Having this ability will help resolve issues as soon as possible. Contributing to a reasonable return on investment for the owners, who spend a great amount to establish the hotel, is also one of the key roles of a General Manager.

The Prestige's interior and ambiance reflect colonial times. What's your favourite part?

The main distinctive feature of The Prestige hotel is the narrative – I love how the design of the hotel tells a wonderful story through its spatial experience, and its art and design, from beginning to end. The hotel is a modern interpretation of Victorian-era interior design layered with the local

flora. In addition, we added elements of visual surprise through notions of illusion, as design devices to animate spaces, taking cues from the movie *The Prestige*, which featured the illusory art of magic, also set in the Victorian era.

What are the upcoming plans for The Prestige?

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world and its effects will be long-lasting. During this uncertain time, the business will be adjusted instead of expanding. We have identified some of the trends that will shape the coming 'new normal'.

How would you describe your leadership/management style?

Hopefully, I am seen as an approachable person. When talking about approachability, we don't mean the need to be liked and accepted by people, but having them feel comfortable during conversations so that all channels of communication are open.

What is the biggest project you have worked on at The Prestige?

An ongoing one: Building the homegrown hospitality label to the international-standard level.

Hotel management is a fast-paced environment. Any tricks or tips you follow to be on par with it?

An important thing is to keep up with market trends. Our media habits are changing, whilst digital ads are taking over our lives, especially during this pandemic. Thus, designers might have to come up with unique ideas in making the ads catchier. Collaborating with the right media channels and people is really key to helping the branding, as well. ■