

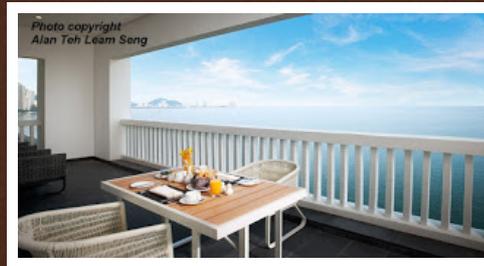
# My Travels

Monday, 22 June 2015

## E&O Hotel Penang - Opening of Victory Annex (My story in Travel Times New Straits Times Bhd)

Victory Once Again!

It is already late Sunday morning by the time Arshak Sarkies finally leaves the Koe Guan office at No. 63 Beach Street. He walks with a noticeable spring in his step and a grin in his face despite the sweltering tropical heat. Arshak has every reason to be jolly today. Finally, after weeks of intense negotiations with Khaw Joo Chai, he has got his hands on the prime piece of sea front real estate he so very desires. It was a hard fought battle of wits with the scion of Khaw Sim Bee, one of the wealthiest land owners in Penang and Southern Thailand.



On this momentous day, November 10, 1918, Arshak has become the proud new owner of the Sea Bank, located adjacent to his beloved Eastern & Oriental Hotel or the E&O as it is fondly referred to by most people. The day is made even more memorable as he has also successfully secured a long lease for his hotel site from Joo Chai, giving his hospitality business

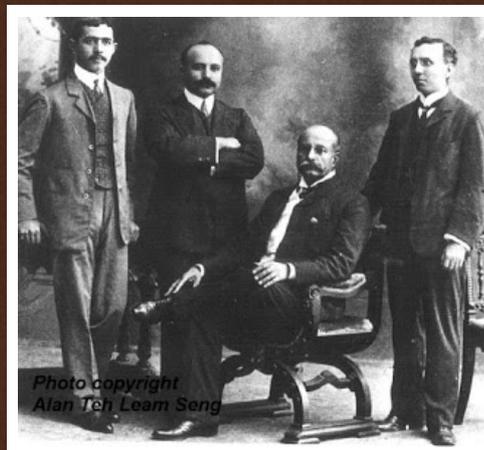
greater security in future.

Arshak then decides to head back to the E&O for his customary Sunday Tiffin lunch. Later that evening, while making his usual rounds at the hotel and greeting guests, Arshak receives breaking news via Morse code of the impending Armistice Day which could be announced as early as the very next day itself. The war is finally coming to an end! This is excellent news for hoteliers like himself as trade is sure to flourish once again and more people will definitely walk through the doors of his hotel.

The string of events that day immediately set Arshak's nimble mind ticking. He takes a walk by the sea front and while looking at the Sea Bank, an expansion plan comes to mind. Arshak swiftly sets in motion plans to construct a handsome palatial extension on this site, located on the western part of the E&O. He even takes the liberty to aptly name it 'Victory Annexe', as a remembrance to the just concluded World War I.

Five year later, in 1923, the E&O becomes the most sought after luxury hotel in the Far East.

Arshak's dream has materialised. The 40-room Victory Annex opens its doors to welcome guests for the very first time. This new wing soon becomes the talk of the town. Externally



### About Me



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I am a history and culture buff who like to travel and experience different cultures and write about them. I also like environmental protection and how my readers can learn to care for Mother Earth

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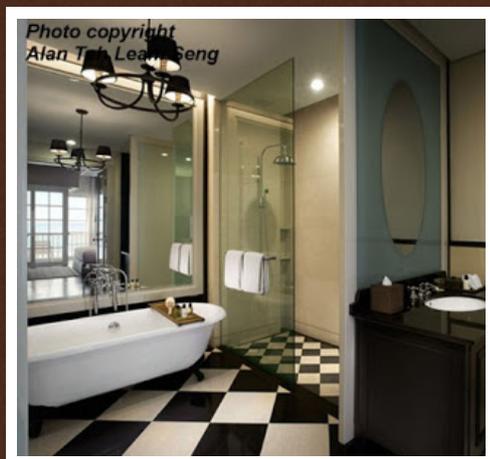
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many marvel at its Islamic-influenced domes and minarets of British India while staying guests are treated to the best in comforts of the time.



Every bedroom at that time has a private balcony which provides a commanding view of the sea. The rooms also have private telephones, electric fans and attached bathrooms equipped with the almost unheard-of luxuries of English long baths and hot and cold running water. The Victory Annexe quickly becomes a status symbol for the rich and famous - a place to be seen among the elite.

Sadly, the Victory Annexe built by Arshak fell into disrepair in the 1970's and an unavoidable decision was made in 1981 by its owners at

that time to demolish it completely.

I have been following events at the E&O regularly as my family used to have lunch here every time we were on holiday in Penang back in the 1970's. So it was with great excitement when I learn about the reopening of the new Victory Annexe in March 2013. How can I pass up this golden opportunity to relive history once again? The opening of the new Victory Annexe is an important chapter in the E&O Hotel's rich and illustrious past. To me, it is like history has come full circle.



So a few weeks later I arrive in Penang with great expectations, hoping that the new Victory Annexe will do justice its former glory. There is ample parking space at the multi storey car park located at the lower floors of the new wing.



Then I decide to take a walk outside first before checking in. At first glance, the external view does indeed project an architectural style true to the old world opulence that would surely make the Sarkies Brothers proud. On top of that, the new owner, E&O Bhd has made several exciting new additions. The new Victory Annexe features 117 Superior and 5 Corner Suites each with its own private balcony.

My walk outside is quickly followed by an 'expedition' to the interior before finally going to my own suite. I am impressed to see that while almost all of rich heritage has been retained but modern travellers like me are assured of the latest state-of-the-art conveniences including high-speed wifi broadband connection, a fully-equipped gym, an infinity pool with an extensive

view of the Andaman sea.

I spend most of the late afternoon and evening at the swimming pool and its connecting Planters Lounge. I like the pool as it is partly covered giving me the option to either swim out in the open when it is not so hot. Swimming to the edge gives me an illusion of 'infinity' - nothing lies between me and the great blue yonder.

The best part of my stay is at the Planters Lounge balcony, sipping my favourite drink and watching the sun slowly sink below the horizon while casting a myriad of hues in the sky above. By the time I am done watching nature's light display, it is already dark and the well

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positioned lights make the hotel look very different. So, I take another walk around to enjoy the place from a different perspective while working up an appetite for dinner.

The lunch and dinner buffet at Sarkies are very popular and reservations must be made to avoid disappointment. The place is



already packed with people by the time I arrive at 8 pm. One thing I learn about buffets is patience. I sit and watch the largely local crowd moving around and mentally noting the contents of their plates. After a while I notice a pattern. Nearly all have a piece of roast duck and some fresh slices of sashimi at the side. Looks like those are the favourites here.

The roast duck proves to be very

good. The skin is crispy while the meat is tender and juicy. The accompanying dark sauce accentuates its taste perfectly. I will never forget my first mouthful. Pure heaven. The tuna and salmon sashimi are delicious but I save my stomach to get second helpings of the succulent duck. I remind myself to bring friends here next time and they must definitely sample the wonderful roast duck for themselves.



Sarkies is located next to the lobby in the Victory Annexe. It opens daily from 6.30 am to 11 pm, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets.

For more information and latest promotions, contact: Eastern & Oriental Hotel, 10 Lebuhr Farquhar

10200 Penang Tel: +(6) 04 222 2000 Fax: +(6) 04 261 6333 Email: luxury@eohotels.com



#### GETTING THERE

Situated in George Town, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, the E&O Hotel is located at the intersection of Farquhar Street and Penang Road. The hotel is 20 kilometres from the Penang International Airport and just within minutes drive from the ferry terminal and Swettenham cruise terminal.

#### MUST DO

Take a walk around the hotel - both the Victory Annexe as well as the Heritage Wing to fully appreciate the old world grandeur which has been immaculately maintained. I especially like

the long corridor in the Victory Annexe which leads from the Planters Lounge to the swimming pool. The walls of this wooden floored walkway are adorned with intricately designed and colourful tiles which were once used in the homes of old Penang.



I also spend some time at the E&O

Gallery to learn more about the hotel's rich and illustrious past. Located next to the Victory Annexe lobby, the Gallery is aimed at developing an 'experiential' narrative of Penang's rich history via the hotel's own experiences which stretches back for more than a hundred years.



Looking at the interesting exhibits is like taking a walk back in time. The item that catches my eye most is the wedding gown worn by Patsy Addington on 9 July 1956 when she married Victor Oon tham. The couple had a tea reception for 150 of their friends at the E&O Grand Ballroom. The most amazing thing about this dress is that Patsy stitched it herself!

In July 2006, the couple returned to

the E&O to celebrate their golden anniversary. A reception at the Farquhar Suite mimicked to the last detail of their original reception back in 1956 down to the sandwiches, curry puffs as well as a replica wedding cake.

I also like the photographs of the old Victory Annexe built by Arshak exactly 90 years ago. In my opinion, the new Victory Annexe looks like the old version externally but after having experienced the modern comforts and state-of-the-art facilities i am sure even Arshak will agree that the new Victory Annexe is much better.



The hotel encourages people to contribute their precious mementos, stories and recollections to the Gallery in an effort to help preserve the heritage and historical record of Penang, a heritage the E&O is very proud to be part of.

#### FIRST IMPRESSION

Very relaxing, lots of greenery and animals coupled with definitely stunning views!

#### ROOMS

Although there are only two room categories to choose from, both

offer unparalleled luxuries true to the E&O tradition. The over-sized corner suites have a separate living area, guest washroom, expansive balcony and dining area with sea view. For a single traveller, I find that the superior suite is more than adequate. I like the black and white chequered marble floored bathroom which is very colonial in style. Soaking in the claw footed long bath I just cannot help imagining myself being transported by in time.

#### OVERALL SERVICE

Friendly and efficient service

#### F&B OUTLETS

Guests staying at the Victory Annexe wing have access to the private Planters Lounge which serves complimentary breakfast, coffee/tea throughout the day and evening cocktails from 5.00pm - 7.00pm.

Also, do not forget to make reservations and enjoy a wonderful spread at Sarkies. Although it serves buffets for lunch and dinner, I prefer the latter as it gives me more time to relax, unwind and enjoy the food.





#### FACILITIES

Early the next morning I head to the Victory Annexe gym for a good workout before breakfast. I like the view of the open sea from my treadmill. During my 45 minute workout I even manage to see a cruise liner slowly moving into port, bringing more visitors to Penang.

For meetings, functions and conferences, check out the Victory Annexe Ballroom with a 400-seating

capacity and five function suites that can accommodate groups of between 40 to 150 people. The hotel provides a dedicated Meeting Concierge for personalised meeting service experience.

The hotel also arranges complimentary transfers for staying guests to its sister establishment, the Lone Pine Hotel in Batu Ferringhi. This allows guests to enjoy the best of both Penang's heritage zone and scenic beaches.

#### PLACES WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE

The E&O is strategically located within George Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008. According to Communications & Public Relations Manager, Eileen Chong, guests can either walk or take a memorable trishaw ride to nearby Fort Cornwallis, Penang State Museum, Carpenter's Guild, Kapitan Keling Mosque, Goddess of Mercy Temple and St George's Church. "There are lots of antique shops at Upper Penang Road where guests can see the things used by people a long time ago. There is also a curio market right in front of the hotel on every last Sunday of the month where guests can pick one or two memorable souvenirs to take home," she adds.



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