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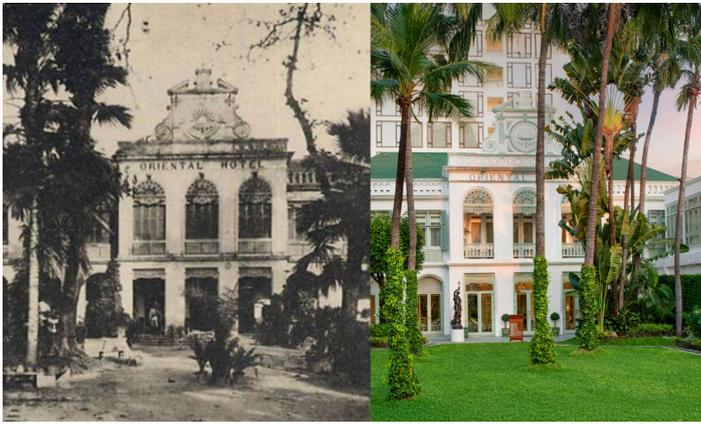
These Iconic Hotels in Asia-Pacific Have Been Around for Over 100 Years

The sturdiest—and most stylish—of centenarians, these hotels were built to last.

BY [UTE JUNKER](#) |

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There was no unveiling a candle-laden cake when **Huka Lodge** (hukalodge.com; doubles from NZ\$2,728) turned 100 last year. Like many other grande dames, New Zealand's most celebrated lodge approached its big day strategically. The doors were shuttered last year as the property underwent a NZ\$25 million refurbishment. When the first guests returned in May this year, they found that the property looked... not that different—which was exactly what they had hoped for.

“It's the one thing all the guests said before we closed: ‘Don't change it too much!’” says **Huka Lodge's** general manager Kerry Molloy. In fact, there have been some significant additions—including extensive new indoor-outdoor areas and a new river lounge—but preserving the lodge's character was a key aim.

‘Don't change a thing but keep it contemporary’ could be the motto for the Asia-Pacific region's most historic hotels, many of which have been welcoming guests for a century or more. Regular multi-million-dollar renovations, like the one just announced for **Mandarin Oriental Bangkok** (mandarinoriental.com; doubles from Bt22,328) ahead of its 150th anniversary next

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year, are considered essential maintenance, but care is taken not to mess with the heritage ambience.

Take Sri Lanka's **Amangalla** (aman.com; doubles from US\$982), located inside a 340-year-old building within the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Galle Fort. Back in the 1600s it was the residence of the Dutch-colonial administration, later it became British barracks; it was turned into a hotel in the 1860s, then operated as the New Oriental Hotel for a century before being reborn as an Aman resort in 2004.



Amangalla

Its guests enjoy a wealth of antique details, including four-poster beds, planters' chairs, pettagama chests, freestanding bathtubs and period chandeliers, many dating back to the days of the New Oriental Hotel. They might even take a seat at the mahogany writing desk in their room, to compose a message on one of the postcards provided, before heading down for a traditional afternoon tea served with antique silverware.

In finding a way to walk the line between heritage character and modern conveniences,

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Amangalla has plenty of company. In George Town, Penang, the **Eastern & Oriental Hotel** (easternandoriental.com; doubles from RM860) was established by the Sarkies brothers in 1885 through the amalgamation of two existing hotels.

After the **E&O**, the Sarkies went on to open a spate of grand hotels that are still thriving: **Raffles Singapore** in 1887, Burma's **The Strand Rangoon** (now Yangon) in 1901, and Indonesia's **Majapahit Surabaya** in 1910.

Other way-back-when openings include **The Oriental** (known since 2008 as the **Mandarin Oriental**), which was Bangkok's first luxury hotel, in 1876. Hanoi's **Grand Hôtel Métropole Palace**—now the **Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi**—launched in 1901, followed by Hua Hin's **The Railway Hotel**—now **Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin**—in 1923. **The Peninsula Hong Kong** debuted in 1928, and then came Phnom Penh's **Hotel Le Royal**—now **Raffles Hotel Le Royal**—in 1929, the same year the **Goodwood Park Hotel** opened in Singapore.



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A respect for tradition weaves through each of these properties, from the green Rolls-Royces and afternoon teas of **The Peninsula** to **Raffles Singapore**'s be-turbaned doormen and the peanut shell–strewn floor of its Long Bar, birthplace of the Singapore Sling. Staff are inculcated in the history of each hotel.

“Many of our team members have been with us for years and take real pride in sharing the stories of **Amangalla**,” says Harry Fernandes, Aman’s regional director of India and Sri Lanka. “They know the history inside and out, and love connecting with guests who are curious to learn more.”

Japan’s historic ryokans are equally skilled at blending the modern with the traditional.

Koshu Nishiyama Hot Spring Keiunkan, founded in 705 A.D., is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s most historical inn but all across Japan you will find traditional ryokan run by generations of the same family.

At **Nishimuraya Honkan** (nishimuraya.ne.jp; from ¥53,230 per person twin share) in the charming hot springs town Kinosaki Onsen, the seventh generation of owners is now running this 165-year-old inn where traditional rooms feature tatami mats and sliding fusuma doors.



Raffles Singapore

“Providing a relaxing and calm environment, fine cuisine that fully reflects the local area, and making enjoyment of the town itself as easy and seamless as possible is probably what keeps **Nishimuraya** and other ryokan of Kinosaki Onsen able to continue for so long,” says Colin Fukai, the brand’s global marketing chief.

In Kyoto, **Hiiragiya** (hiiragiya.co.jp; starting rate from ¥82,000 per person twin share) was established in 1818 and is now run by the sixth generation of Nishimura family. Each room has its own unique details, from lacquered bathrooms to folding screens featuring Zen-style ink paintings.

The current okami (a ryokan’s proprietress), Ms. Akemi Nishimura, says that a ryokan is often “passed down” by loyal guests to their children and grandchildren. That loyalty corresponds with the way the family has handed down its philosophy of *raisha nyoki* through the generations, she says.

“We strive to be attentive to our guests’ feelings and concerns before they are told,

and while resting from the day’s fatigue,” she says. “This spirit of hospitality is timeless, though it is important to adapt and change with this spirit, to meet the needs of the times and people today.”

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Ute Junker

WRITTEN BY



Ute Junker

Ute Junker has been reporting on luxury travel and lifestyle for more than 20 years. She spends much

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