

# Where travellers slept in centuries past: 13 of the oldest hotels in Asia

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**COVER** From mountain ryokan to colonial-era landmarks, these are the oldest hotels in Asia still open to travellers today (Photo: Peninsula Hong Kong)

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## From Japan's ryokan to Southeast Asia's grand hotels, explore the oldest hotels in Asia still open for guests

Asia's hospitality traditions go back centuries, long before the modern hotel industry took shape. Many of the region's oldest hotels began as inns or [ryokan](#) serving merchants, monks and travellers on established trade routes. Some have grown into luxury properties, others have remained modest family-run lodgings. Together, they show how accommodation in Asia evolved through empires, colonisation and industrial change. Here is a selection of the oldest hotels across the region, from Japan's thousand-year-old hot-spring inns to Southeast Asia's early colonial establishments.

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### 1. Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan (Yamanashi, Japan)

Founded in 705 AD by Fujiwara no Mahito in Yamanashi Prefecture, this ryokan holds the Guinness World Record for the "oldest hotel" in the world. It has been in operation for over 1,300 years and, until 2017, was run by 52 generations of the same family. One of its defining features is its location at a natural hot spring and accommodation in the ryokan tradition. As the oldest among the listed oldest hotels, it presents a remarkably continuous thread of hospitality.

### 2. Sennen no Yu Koman (Kinosaki, Hyōgo Prefecture, Japan)



**ABOVE** A family-run ryokan in Kinosaki Onsen that has welcomed guests for over 1,300 years (Photo: Kinosaki Onsen)

Founded in 717 AD, the Kinosaki Onsen Inn popularly known as Koman is cited as the second-oldest hotel in Japan. Operated by the same family across many generations, it offers a classic ryokan experience in one of Japan's older hot spring towns. It holds a place among the oldest hotels in Asia by virtue of its founding date and continuous operation.

### 3. Hōshi Ryokan (Awazu Onsen, Ishikawa, Japan)

Established in 718 AD in Awazu Onsen, Hōshi Ryokan was long recognised as one of the oldest hotels and remains a run-by-family business now in its 46th generation. The building has been refurbished over the centuries but retains its role as lodging for travellers, illustrating how accommodation as a business survived across eras.

## 4. Shirasagiyu Tawaraya (Yamanaka Onsen, Ishikawa, Japan)

Founded in 1190 in the Yamanaka Onsen valley, this traditional ryokan has been in operation for more than 800 years and claims family succession across many generations. It therefore qualifies as one of the oldest hotels in Asia. Guests today stay in accommodation that has been refreshed but retains traditional hot-spring baths and a setting in the Kakusenkei gorge.

## 5. Chigira Jinsentei (Ikaho Onsen, Gunma, Japan)

Established in 1502, this ryokan in Gunma Prefecture is among Japan's long-running lodging houses. Located in the Ikaho hot-spring town and noted for retaining some of the historic ambience, it offers one of the lesser-known but still credible examples of sustained hospitality.

## 6. The LaLiT Great Eastern Hotel (Kolkata, India)

Built in 1840 in Kolkata (originally as “Auckland Hotel”), this property is one of India's oldest operational hotels, highlighting the colonial-era lodging tradition. Now known as The Lalit Great Eastern, it has hosted many famous personalities over the years, including Mark Twain and Queen Elizabeth II. The hotel underwent a major renovation and reopened in 2013, blending its historic charm with modern amenities.

## 7. Taj West End (Bengaluru, India)

Opened in 1887, this heritage hotel in Bengaluru may not be among the millennium-old properties of Japan, but it is one of India's older commercial lodging establishments. The colonial-era architecture and expansive garden setting, reminiscent of a bygone era, mark its historic role in hospitality during the British period.

## 8. The Peninsula Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

Opened in December 1928, The Peninsula remains a prominent early-20th-century property that demonstrates the emergence of modern luxury lodging in Asia. Known for its iconic Rolls-Royce fleet, afternoon tea, and stunning views of [Victoria Harbour](#), it has maintained its reputation as a leading luxury hotel. Its longevity and commitment to excellence solidify its place among the oldest hotels in Asia.

## 9. Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok (Thailand)

Opened in 1876 as the Oriental Hotel, this property on the Chao Phraya River is widely recognised as Thailand's first luxury hotel. While its structure has changed, its continuous role as a hotel places it among the region's oldest hotels, reflecting the early spread of international hospitality in Southeast Asia.

## 10. Eastern & Oriental Hotel (Penang, Malaysia)

Established in 1885 by the Sarkies Brothers, this property is considered one of the founding grand hotels of Southeast Asia and is frequently listed among its oldest hotels. The Heritage Wing retains many original features alongside modern amenities, showing a long and documented history of service in the Straits Settlements.

## 11. Hotel Majapahit Surabaya (Indonesia)

Founded in 1910 and opened in 1911 as Hotel Oranje, this building has witnessed key historical events in Indonesia and still functions as a hotel today. Its continuous operation earns it a place among the oldest hotels in Asia, particularly in the Indonesian archipelago.

## 12. The Manila Hotel (Manila, Philippines)

Opened in 1912 along Manila Bay, [The Manila Hotel](#) was designed by American architect William Parsons and has hosted numerous historical figures, including General Douglas MacArthur, who once resided in its penthouse suite. It stands as the oldest hotel in the Philippines still in operation, representing the country's transition from colonial rule to independence while remaining a landmark in the capital's hospitality scene.

## 13. Raffles Hotel Singapore (Singapore)

Opened in 1887 by Armenian hoteliers the Sarkies Brothers, [Raffles Hotel](#) remains one of Singapore's most recognisable landmarks. It is widely considered the oldest hotel in Singapore still in operation. The property has hosted literary figures, politicians and celebrities while evolving from a modest bungalow to a symbol of colonial-era elegance and later independence. Its preserved façade and tropical courtyard maintain the atmosphere of its founding period.