



A STEP UP IN CLASS

Live like French royalty at the sumptuous Shangri-La Paris



As American hotel chains continue to roll out in expansive waves through Asia and China in search of revenue that's stalling at home, one of China's leading luxury hotel operators is exporting its brand of Asian hospitality to Europe. Ambitiously too. The opening of Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts new property in Paris is a landmark as significant as the Eiffel tower the majority of its suites gaze at. Within the next two years, Shangri-La plan to open hotels in Vienna, London and Moscow. And just so they can make the biggest statement possible in markets already full-to-bursting with upscale accommodation choices, Shangri-La will own the properties it opens, rather than just manage them, the latter being the norm in the business.

If the Shangri-La Hotel Paris is anything to go by, the group's European expansion has got off to an impressive start. Location helps and this one's got classical – and aristocratic – coordinates. While 10 avenue D'Iéna in Paris's 16th arrondissement may not be hip-ville's haunt – more residential than radical - it was a mini-epicentre for the city's bon ton more than a century ago, as the home of French imperial Prince Roland Bonaparte [grand nephew of the former French emperor Napoleon]. Prince Roland stopped on the avenue in

May 1891, admired the Seine river and Gustave Eiffel's recently erected tower [not yet two years old], and fancied the site so much he bought 3,000 square metres of it. The prince commissioned architect Ernest Janty, renowned for his reconstruction work at the Louvre and Tuileries palaces for Napoleon III, and the rest is ... history.

A matter not lost on Shangri-La Hotels, which spent four years restoring its capacious 20,000 square-metre expanse under the guidance of architect Richard Martinet and interior design expert Pierre-Yves Rochon. The latter reworked textures, wallpaper, carpets, lighting and even bath fixtures from Prince Roland's era into 21st-century designs; they even discovered some metal structure by Gustave Eiffel during the removal of a conference room, which Rochon and team created a mezzanine around. The rediscovered history of the building – an eclectic blend of 17th and 19th-century styles - and its cultural significance as the home of one of France's most notable aristocratic families is at the core of this flagship hotel.

Though Prince Roland didn't get to enjoy his palace for more than 20 years, the building's glamour lived beyond his tenure; during the 1920's and 30's the palace welcomed illustrious tenants such as Elsie de Wolfe, or Lady Mendl, the New York actress, interior designer and wife of British diplomat Sir Charles Mendl. There was Jean-Gabriel Domergue, an artist renowned for his portraits of Parisian women, and

occasional clothes designer for couturier Paul Poiret. Last but by no means least, there was the Senn-Foulds family, whose passion for French art resulted in the city's most remarkable collection of modern French paintings from Courbet to Matisse, recently bestowed upon Le Havre museum. The French Centre of Foreign Trade eventually took control of the palace which played host to diplomatic and commercial meetings for the rest of the 20th century.

Fast forward to now. The Shangri-La Paris has 81 rooms and 27 suites. Forty





PALAIS D'ÉNA TIMELINE

1858: Birth of Roland Bonaparte in Auteuil, France, grandson of Lucien Bonaparte (brother of Napoleon I).

1880: Prince Roland marries Marie-Félix Blanc, heiress to her father's Casinos in Monte Carlo, and the Société des Bains de Mer Resort, Hotels and Casinos.

1882: Birth of Princess Marie Bonaparte on 2 July.

1889: Gustave Eiffel constructs his iconic tower for the Paris World Fair.

1891: Roland Bonaparte acquires



“60% of the suites feature a clear view of the Eiffel Tower”



the lot at 10 avenue d'Éna.

1892: Architect Ernest Janty begins construction on the palace.

1896: Prince Roland moves into his new home at 10 avenue d'Éna.

1924: Prince Roland spends his final days within his private quarters at avenue d'Éna.

1925: Princess Marie of Greece sells her family home to the Suez Canal Bank Company

1944: The French Centre of Foreign Trade acquires the building, and Prince Roland's library is dispersed.

2006-2010: Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts acquires the prince's former luxury pad and transforms it into the Shangri-La Hotel, Paris.



percent of the rooms and 60% of the suites feature a clear view of the Eiffel Tower, [from the bathtubs and beds] and nearly half have private balconies. The real touristic jaw-dropper is the Suite Panoramique, a 2, 420 square-foot space with terrace so big and so close to the tower you could throw a facecloth at it. The view's iconographic too; the Montmartre's Sacre Coeur, the Grand Palais, Notre Dame, the Pantheon, the Invalides (Napoleon's Tomb), and the Quai Branly. The Suite Imperiale on the second floor is the hotel's largest and located in the former private apartments of Prince Roland; for the aficionado, it feels like staying in the private wing of a castle.

Not to feel left out, the Shangri-La brings its own palace to the table too; Shang Palace will be the first gourmet Cantonese restaurant in Paris, opening in Spring. Indeed a new order is emerging; The Shangri-La is Paris when Shang Palace sizzles. - GEORGINA SCOTT