

PLACES TO STAY

# A Myanmar Grand-dame Hotel Restored to Former Glory

06 DEC 2016



*A recent refurbishment has restored the elegant formality of The Strand in Yangon*

At 6pm every evening, the butlers at The Strand in Yangon change out of their longyi, Myanmar's traditional clothing, and into Western white tie. It is a new, cross-cultural dress code for an old, cross-cultural institution that has ruled the city's harbour front since the Sarkies brothers - the Armenian brothers who built such colonial-era edifices as Penang's Eastern & Oriental (in 1885) and Singapore's Raffles (in 1887) - opened it in 1901.

History dealt its usual reversals. It was 'the finest hostelry East of Suez', according to author John Murray in his 1911 Handbook for Travellers in India, Burma and Ceylon; it stabled Japanese horses in the Second World War; it was restored in 1989. But in recent years, this particular grande dame, with her colonnaded portico and lanterns, had become, perhaps, a little casual in her habits. Now, since a 2016 refurbishment, a proper sense of formality reigns once more.

It would have been easy, in a city crammed with golden pagodas, to have taken the bling-and-kitsch path. Instead, a restrained grandeur gleams under the chandeliers. The green and red wallpaper in The Strand Café is a delicate rendition of antique prints telling a tale of former Burmese days; the resin lamps in Sarkies Bar resemble drops of warm amber; the 31 suites, with original teak floors and light fabrics, have a serious elegance.

Local flavour is crucial. Silver lime bowls and trays were made by a local craftsman and the lacquerware is from the city's 13th Street. The hotel has kept its teak furniture. The image of the chinthe, the lion-guardian seen in the Buddhist Bagan temples, and throughout Myanmar, is everywhere. There is also a new floral dress code: pink roses in the café; red roses in The Strand Restaurant; and, always, white roses in the lobby to greet another generation of visitors.

*Suites from £268 a night; [hotelthestrang.com](http://hotelthestrang.com)*



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## BAGAN

Young monks in Bagan, with the city's temples behind.

4CORNERS



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## HOTEL BAR





### THE STRAND EXTERIOR

The hotel's exterior.

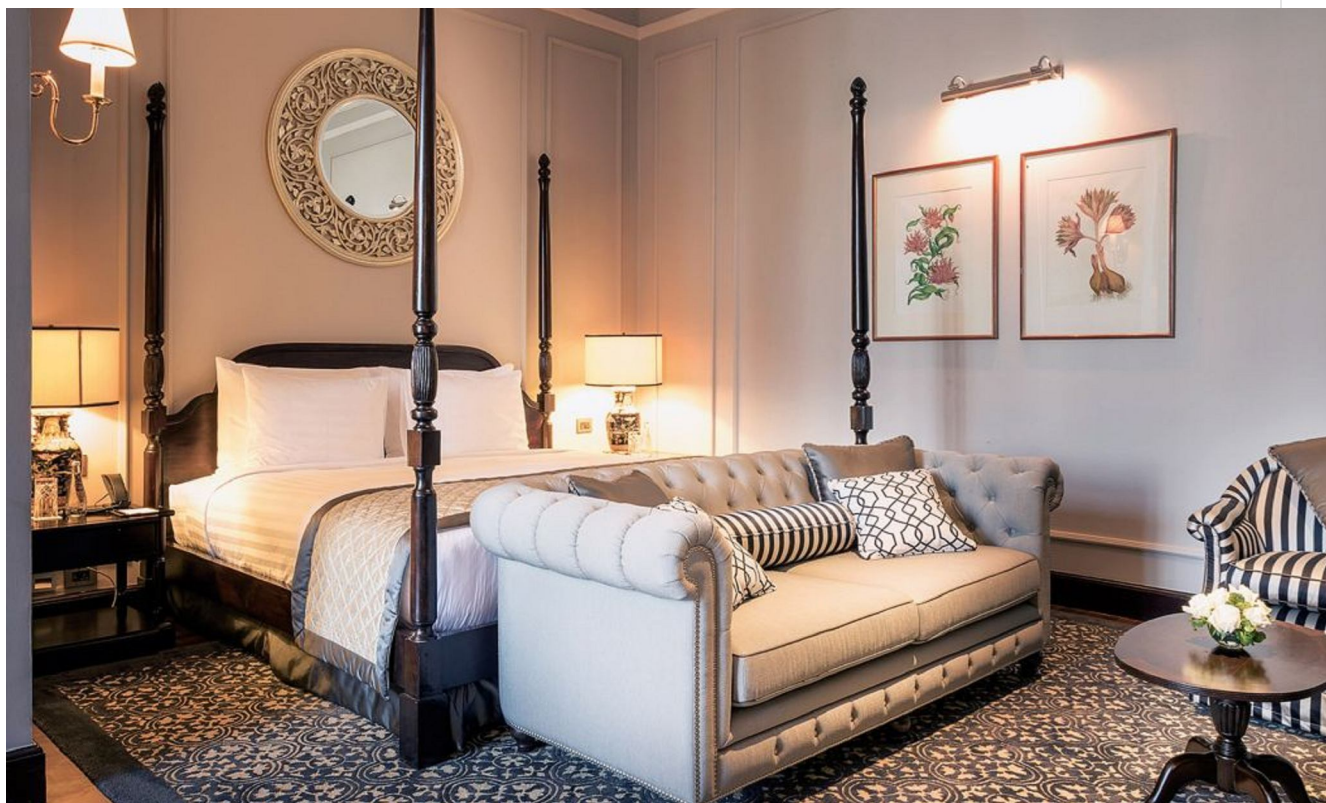




HOTEL CAFÉ

The Strand Café.





HOTEL SUITE

A bedroom suite.

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YANGON

The Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon.

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