

# Historic Hotels!

## XXX: Singapore's *Raffles Hotel*

Our first foreign entry! On 1 December, 1887, the Raffles Hotel opened to the public as a 10-room Hotel. Over the next few years a pair of wings flanking the bungalow are added. In 1888, Both Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling were guests. Later, the Palm Court wing was opened. In 1899, the Raffles Hotel's familiar Main Building was completed and opened with great fanfare on 18 November. This marked the beginning of the Hotels' heyday. The elegant neo-Renaissance architecture and grand spaces reflected comfort and style. The Hotel also boasted Singapore's first electric lights and fans and a French chef. Raffles Hotel rapidly became a magnet for travellers and Singapore residents. In 1902, the last tiger to be killed in Singapore was pursued at Raffles Hotel and was finally shot while cowering under the Bar & Billiard Room, then an elevated building!

In 1910, The Raffles Hotel Post Office opened, serving Hotel guests and the surrounding area up to the late 1920s. Bartender Ngiam Tong Boon created the Million Dollar Cocktail and Singapore Sling before 1910. The exact year is unknown. In 1920, the verandah was replaced by an airy ballroom which quickly earned the reputation of the "finest ballroom in the East". Somerset Maugham made the first of his visits to Raffles Hotel in 1921; he returned again in 1926 and in 1959. Legend has it that he worked all mornings under a frangipani tree in the Palm Court, turning the bits of gossip and scandal overheard at dinner parties into his famous stories. The Hotel continued to play host to the rich and famous, including Charlie Chaplin, Maurice Chevalier, Frank Buck and Jean Harlow. Noel Coward, the British playwright, novelist and actor, arrived at Raffles Hotel in the company of Lord Amherst shortly thereafter.

The Great Depression and World War II, The Raffles Hotel had its ups and downs, but it always endured. The 1950s saw Ava Gardner and Elizabeth Taylor among the famous who visited the Hotel.

In 1986, the Raffles Hotel celebrated its centenary a year early to coincide with the Year of the Tiger. A live tiger was photographed on the first day of the year - on top of the Hotel's billiard table. The following year, the Singapore government designated Raffles Hotel a National Monument. In 1991, the hotel completed a complete restoration. Raffles Hotel today stands as a jewel in the crown of Singapore's hospitality industry.

