

## 90 YEARS OF LUXURY HOSPITALITY

The Peninsula Hong Kong officially opened to the public on 11 December 1928, becoming the latest hotel venture of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, which at the time owned the Hong Kong Hotel, the Repulse Bay Hotel and the Peak Hotel in Hong Kong, as well as The Palace Hotel, the Majestic Hotel and The Astor House in Shanghai.



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*The Peninsula Hong Kong's story is one of vision and evolution. If walls could talk, they would tell of glittering, exuberant parties; society weddings; elegant tea dances in the roaring twenties; great love stories and magnificent memories. The hotel has witnessed the excitement and glamour of the earliest days of intercontinental air travel, the dark days of military occupation, the swinging sixties, China's rise as an economic superpower and the digital technology transformation. Every aspect of life in all its varieties has taken place within its walls.*

Sir Wilfrid Thomas Southorn CMG, Governor of Hong Kong, remarked at the opening ceremony in 1928: *"The success of this hotel is not a thing of today or tomorrow. The inspiration which gave rise to this building is the inspiration of the future; it stands as an outward and visible testimony of the faith which is in us all; that Hong Kong is in the future and not in the past."*

Sir Wilfrid's words have continued to resonate throughout the last nine decades. The Peninsula Hong Kong has endured as a remarkable example of vision and evolution in the hospitality industry, and to this day, remains an irrepressible icon of the city.

It was an audacious plan to build "the finest hotel east of Suez". Despite initial fears that Kowloon was not a suitable location for a luxury hotel, it was evident that the vision of the Company's directors was sound, as the grand hotel soon became the centre of vibrant social life in Hong Kong.

The opening of The Peninsula Hong Kong saw a steady stream of elegantly dressed men and women travelling across the Fragrant Harbour by Star Ferry, junk or sampan, and then onwards to the hotel by rickshaw or on foot. Pageboys clad in neat black uniforms and distinctive pillbox hats opened the great doors with a flourish, welcoming Hong Kong to the greatest party of the decade.



The first guests were awestruck by the hotel's 7,500 square-foot *cinquecento* Lobby and marvelled at the soaring marble pillars, the elaborate chandeliers, and the perfect staircase which inspired grand entrances from perfectly-coiffed ladies. There was an incredible variety of dining possibilities afforded by the Moorish Bar, the domed Main Banqueting Hall, the Children's Dining Room, the Tea Lounge, the Roof Garden and the Rose Room.

Following its spectacular opening, The Peninsula's reputation rapidly spread beyond Hong Kong. Hollywood arrived in the form of Charlie Chaplin and Paulette Goddard, Ella Fitzgerald, Peter O'Toole, Kirk Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Rex Harrison, William Holden, and Elizabeth Taylor. The Peninsula was firmly entrenched as the film set and celebrity haven, and as jet travel became more affordable, American visitors sought out the hotel made famous by its movie-star guests.

Hong Kong's elite were also attracted to The Peninsula's never-ending medley of events. The hotel put on breathtaking Christmas and New Year programmes of dinner dances and buffet lunches, St. Patrick's nights, Chinese New Year carnivals, balls and galas. Tea dances, held daily in the Rose Room, were "constantly filled to overflowing, being the scene of Hong Kong's daily fashion parade."

Dancing and tea of course were the perfect partners, and The Peninsula Afternoon Tea has become a celebrated and much-loved signature feature in The Lobby of every Peninsula hotel around the world. In the 1920s, the inaugural mid-afternoon feast at The Peninsula Hong Kong set customers back all of HK\$4 (US50 cents).



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In 1936, the first Clipper seaplane to land in Hong Kong was piloted by Pan American's President, Mr. Juan Trippe. In a foreshadowing of the role the hotel was to play in aviation developments, Trippe, his passengers and crew, who were travelling around the world scouting possible new routes, stayed the night at The Peninsula, beginning a long association with the hotel that lasted throughout the golden age of aviation and beyond.

The 1940s saw the devastation of World War II and military occupation of the hotel until 1945.

Good times returned again in the 1950s and an outdoor terrace was enclosed to form a restaurant. Originally called "The Playpen", it was later renamed as *The Verandah*.



The opening of The Peninsula Tower extension in December 1994 enabled it to “greet the new century with pride and confidence,” said Chairman The Hon. Sir Michael Kadoorie at the launch party. Mr Peter Borer, who joined the Group in 1981 and is now the Group Chief Operating Officer, oversaw the construction of the new Tower in 1994.

The crowning glory on top of the tower was the creation of *Felix* restaurant named after former General Manager Felix Bieger. Helipads were installed on the rooftop and the China Clipper aviation lounge was established to welcome guests prior to a helicopter ride.

Today, The Peninsula Hong Kong stands as an enduring testament to the 1920s golden age, when HSH set impressive new standards of hospitality, and as a glimpse into an increasingly globalised and exciting future. It remains the heartbeat of The Peninsula Hotels brand, exuding classical grandeur and timeless elegance.

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### A YEAR OF CELEBRATION

We hosted a calendar of special events to celebrate 90 years of The Peninsula Hong Kong.

#### 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nostalgia Package

The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nostalgia Package included three nights of accommodation in The Peninsula Suite and three days of non-stop immersive experiences, including a yacht trip and helicopter package.

#### Afternoon Tea Dance Revival

From April to October, The Peninsula Hong Kong recalled the late 1920s and 1930s when the hotel was the stage for frequent elegant tea dances. Guests and visitors were invited to take to the dance floor to waltz, cha-cha and tango whilst enjoying the famed signature Peninsula Afternoon Tea and reliving days gone by.

#### The Archive Room

Few people have known of the existence of The Archive Room at The Peninsula Hong Kong, which houses a fine collection of historical objects and memorabilia collected over the 90 years of the hotel's existence. The collection includes original menus from the restaurants that have come and gone, or indeed, remained within the hotel's walls, photographs of iconic Hollywood celebrities who have resided at The Peninsula, and items of china and silverware that have graced tables throughout the hotel over the years. This unique space was officially opened to guests of the hotel following its launch by Archive Ambassador and respected historian, Mr. Peter Hibbard, MBE.

#### Master Botero's Work In Residence

The Peninsula Hong Kong had the honour of presenting nine paintings and five sculptures by Colombian artist Fernando Botero for guests to appreciate and enjoy at their leisure.

#### Giving Back To The Community

In keeping with the community spirit of The Peninsula Hotels, in June The Peninsula Hong Kong hosted a special afternoon tea gathering at Felix for a group of ladies and gentlemen aged 90 and above. Attendees will be able to enjoy the signature traditional Peninsula Afternoon Tea alongside live performances and activities.



