

Sleeping by the fragrant harbour



BUDGET hotel or total luxury, Hong Kong has more than its fair share of hotels of every description. All the big name brands are there, including the Mandarin Oriental, Grand Hyatt, Four Seasons, JW Marriott, Peninsula, Intercontinental and Shangri-La all dominating the skylines.

More are on the way such as the Harbour Grand Hong Kong, Harbour Plaza Hotels & Resorts' new five star hotel, due to open in spring 2009.

The Shangri-La Group has two hotels here – one in Kowloon and the other two kilometres away on Hong Kong Island. The Kowloon hotel at Tsim Sha Tsui was one of the very first of the chain to open its doors in 1981 and has been extensively modernised on three occasions, the last time was three years ago at a cost of \$25 million.

Patsy Chan, The hotel's director of communications, is justifiably proud of the long list of awards it has received over the years. "It reads like a Who's Who of just about every accolade there is going," she said. "Condé Nast Traveler, Travel & Leisure, Business Traveller, Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, Euromoney, Executive Travel... the list just goes on and on."

And it's not hard to see why. The rooms, the restaurants, the views, the service is excellent (even down to changing the carpets in the lifts every 24 hours so you know what day it is!) which probably explains why over half the staff have been working there for over 10 years, and why its appeal to both business people and wedding organisers.

The hotel offers 'Cooking with the Stars,' a series of cooking classes under the tutelage of the hotel's chefs specialising in various cuisines, including Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Malaysian, Thai, Italian and pastry. "The classes include ingredients, recipes, a framed certificate and a lunch, with a welcome by the chef, followed by a menu briefing, explanation of techniques, menu preparation and presentation and food service," says Chan.

Whilst Kowloon hotels cater predominantly for businessmen who visit the many trade shows and exhibitions, the Island, in contrast, is the home of bankers, and its up-market hotels therefore welcome a very different type of guest. Here you will find the Island Shangri-La, which opened in 1991, a more traditional luxury hotel featuring opulent interiors combined with

a classic European style, with over 770 crystal chandeliers; over 900 paintings and a cellar that boasts well over 12,000 bottles of wine, including its most expensive – Chateau Petrus 1947 (which would set you back a mere \$50,300 a bottle).

Situated on top of Pacific Place – a modern commercial, shopping and entertainment complex in the Central financial district – one in every 100 of the Island Shangri-La's visitors comes from the Middle East and few can resist its impressive line-up of in-house restaurants, including its signature Restaurant Petrus, selected as one of the five best hotel restaurants in the world.

On Hong Kong's Southside is the chic and unique hip hotel Le Meridien Cyberport, a 170 roomed hotel of stylish design, cutting edge technology and upscale amenities. The hotel offers easy access to the adjacent Cyberport Convention and Exhibition Centre, indoor and outdoor meeting and banquet event venues, a Cardio Vascular Suite, an outdoor Jacuzzi and swimming pool, and five restaurants and bars. Le Meridien Cyberport was recently named 'Best Hi-Tech Hotel 2008' by Travel Weekly Asia. ■

By Brian Salter