



## LIFESTYLE

Travel & Adventure

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### Harbouring history

The imposing Fullerton Hotel in Singapore offers far more than just a place to lay your head.

By JACQUELINE PEREIRA

*This place possesses an excellent harbour and everything that can be desired for a British port? and I may consider myself fortunate in the selection; it will soon rise into importance – Thomas Stamford Raffles, 1819*

Sir Stamford Raffles uttered these prophetic words as he stepped ashore at the mouth of the Singapore River in early 1819.

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Today, just a stone's throw from that very spot, near an impressive statue of Raffles, stands the imposing Fullerton Hotel. Surrounded by a swirl of modern skyscrapers, this colonial-era building stands proud and unperturbed, like a stately imperial dowager.

The hotel is a landmark of Singapore's illustrious history.

The Fullerton sits on the site of the long-demolished Fort Fullerton, which was named after Singapore's first Governor, Robert Fullerton (1826-29). Built in 1829 by the British East India Company, the fort was torn down 44 years later as the port city grew and the area became a thriving commercial centre.

Later, the original Fullerton Building was constructed here in tandem with the centenary celebrations of 1919. It took nine years to complete. Fullerton Building was the largest structure at the time, and it housed various government bodies through the years, even serving as the Japanese military HQ during the war.

On Jan 21, 2001, the building began life anew as the Fullerton Hotel.

Walking into the Fullerton, under the lofty portico, through the main entrance with its trophy designs and royal coat of arms, is a quietly exhilarating experience. During the day, sunshine streams in through the skylight ceiling sheathed in rice paper. The warm embrace of the sun-speckled lobby immediately makes visitors feel at home.

Though luxury is a rule here, the hotel does not alienate curious onlookers and tourists. They are welcome to mill around and admire the grey Aberdeen granite building with its neo-classical features. With its fine fluted Doric colonnades, coffered ceilings and cornices, the Fullerton is a perfect marriage of historical legacy and modern management of space. It was in 1998 that the building was renovated and slowly restored to its present glorious state, while remaining true to its original spirit.

Today, this 400-room deluxe hotel captures the romance of the past while offering respite from the furore of the financial district where it is situated. Located along the banks of the Singapore River, near the now-famous Boat Quay, the hotel is just minutes away from the Asian Civilisation Museum, Victoria Concert Hall and the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

All is still and serene in this grand hotel.

The views from the rooms are to be savoured, whether facing the sunlit atrium, city skyline, river promenade or Marina Bay. Out of every window, Singapore sparkles – perhaps as envisaged by Raffles?

The in-house restaurants and bars offer enough distractions, especially the penthouse haute-Italian San Marco at the Lighthouse. However, it is at the Town that the swanky congregate over power lunches and the *tai tai* teas.

The Fullerton Singapore is much more than just a hotel. It is a piece of history that you purchase when you book into its impeccable rooms.

One is tempted to rephrase Raffles: "*This place possesses an excellent harbour for the weary and everything that can be desired for a perfect stay?*"

### **The Fullerton Hotel Singapore**

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