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A Night at Hotel Vagabond

DECEMBER 20, 2015 BY BINO

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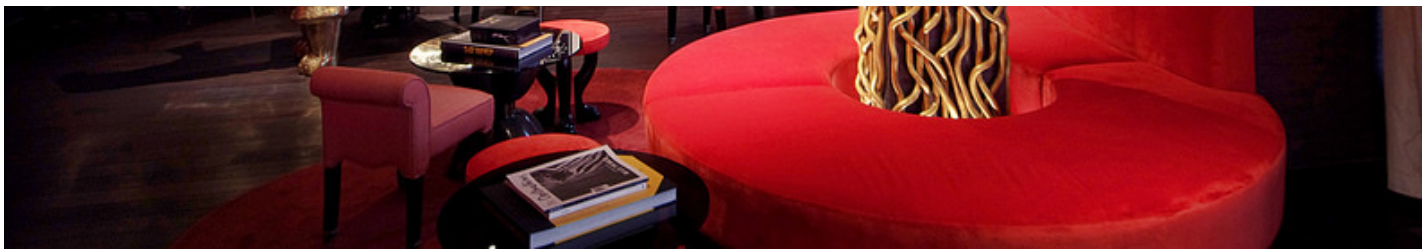


Despite being an unassuming small boutique hotel from the outside, Hotel Vagabond is the type of property that you cannot help but pay attention to. While Singapore has no shortage of lodging options in this category, this property located at Syed Alwi Road is just... different. Perhaps it's due to the gold elephant gracing the hotel lobby. Or the bar flanked by a brass monkey and banyan tree. Whatever it is, the images here create the impression of being in a far more glamorous time. Like a cross between Great Gatsby and a museum. When I first heard about this property, I told myself that I just had to check it out one day.



Finally, that day came and just last week, I stayed at **Hotel Vagabond** for a staycation. The first of three planned projects under Garcha hotels, the property itself is located in between Kampong Glam and Farrer Park. Notable attractions such as Arab Street or the 24 hour shopping mall, Mustafa, are within 10 minutes walk from the hotel.





Entering the all-red lobby for the first time, I was immediately reminded of a film noir genre movie. This color scheme was interspersed with golden objects here and there, notwithstanding the reception desk which took the form of a gold rhino.



During my stay, I was billeted in a superior room. I initially expected my room to be tiny, as was my experience in other boutique hotels, but was pleasantly surprised by the reasonable size of their most basic room. At 20 square meters, it's slightly bigger than its boutique peers in Singapore.



While the lobby carried a film noir theme, the room was more fitting to the vagabond name. Photographs from exotic locales (think: Cuba and Africa) graced the wall on top of the bed. A retro-ish telephone was situated at the bedside table, complimenting the overall classic look.

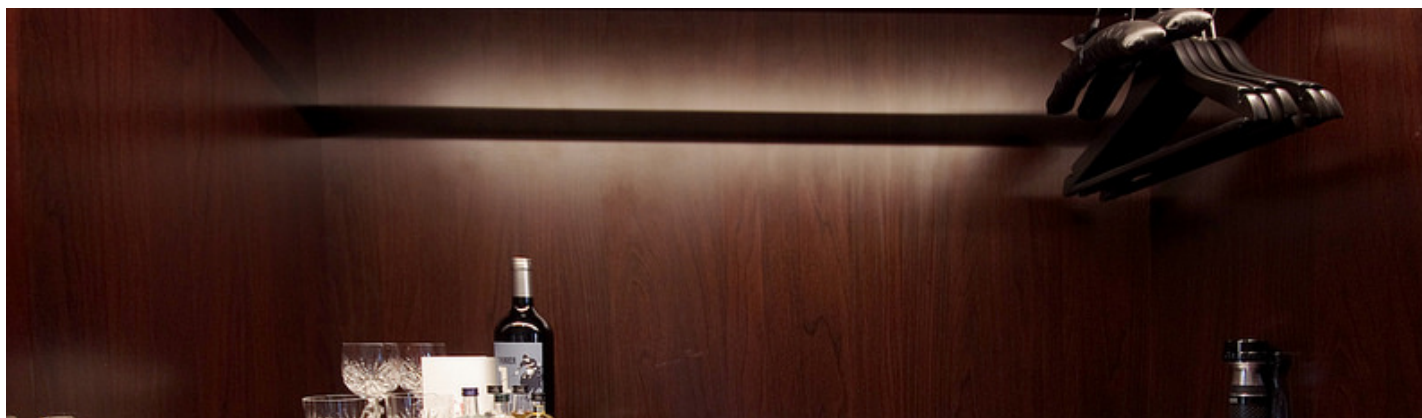


At the other end of the room was the desk. I particularly liked the rhino bookend which immediately conjured images of the golden one at the lobby. The property's thoughtful enough to actually leave behind small guides of the three neighborhoods surrounding the hotel – Kampong Glam, Little India and Rochor. I have to mention that these guides were specially commissioned for the use of Hotel Vagabond so the property definitely gets plus points in terms of originality.





The most notable item on the desk is undoubtedly the Roberts Bluetooth Radio. The first of its kind that I have seen in a hotel, it served as a preferable alternative to the iPod docks gracing hotels elsewhere. For someone like myself who does not own an iPod and carries a non-Apple mobile phone, the bluetooth device was a seamless way for me to stream my favorite tracks.





Despite being in the boutique category, I was pleasantly surprised to find a well-stocked minibar in my room which included small bottles of various types of liquor as well as a relatively extensive lineup of snacks. There was a coffee maker with complimentary coffee capsules and teabags from TWG. Bathrobes were also provided as were extra fluffy slippers. The bathrobe was made of fine cotton, soft and comfortable to the touch. I later discovered via the price list that I could also buy it if I wanted – at \$200 each.



Mineral water bottles were conspicuously absent in the room and I was almost worried that I'd have to get my fill of H2O from the tap until I heard a knock on my door. As if they could hear my thoughts, the housekeeping staff delivered to my room a large container of mint-infused water as part of their turn-down service. That essentially solved my hydration requirements for the stay.



A sliding door separated the room from the bathroom which in turn was made up of three parts. At the center was the sink, with the shower area at the left and the toilet to the right. As was my experience with the bathrobes, I was particularly impressed with the quality of towels used here. I've been quite dismayed by the towels I've encountered of late in some hotels I've stayed in which seem to be getting thinner each time so the thick and quick absorbing ones at Hotel Vagabond

were certainly something to be happy about.



Toiletries provided were from Etro. As is the clean and green strategy in most properties these days, other amenities such as shavers and dental kits were available free-of-charge and upon request from the lobby. I asked for mine and these were delivered to my room in no time.





pork jowl – one of my favorite small plate items at 5th quarter





While the property has an in-house restaurant in the form of **5th Quarter**, this is not fully owned by the hotel so breakfast was not included in my stay. Nevertheless, I checked the menu and prices seemed reasonable, at around SGD 10 to 15 for ala carte items. I did however have lunch and dinner at 5th Quarter after learning that it's opened by the same group as my favorite restaurant in Singapore, Ember. The main concept at 5th Quarter is to feature secondary cuts so expect to find some pretty exotic meat portions in their menu. The lunch offerings were reasonably priced, at SGD 10 per plate for small plates and I ended up spending around SGD 20++ for my lunch there.





There is also a bar which is fully owned by the hotel. It's notable for having a statue of a brass monkey as well as an atmospheric art installation of a banyan tree.



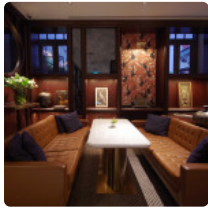
Verdict

In the 30-odd hotels I've had the pleasure of staying in Singapore, I have not encountered any like Hotel Vagabond before. For something special, I highly recommend this property for its well-appointed rooms, amenities that go a step beyond what is expected and a more intimate setting. My stay here is easily the best boutique hotel experience I have had in Singapore and I certainly would not mind going back.

Hotel Vagabond

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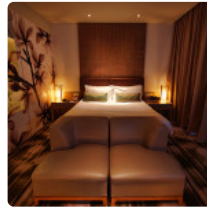
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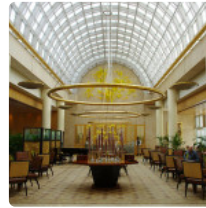
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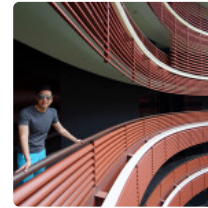
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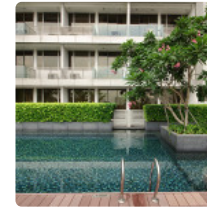
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