

Review: The Clan Hotel, Singapore: New hotel delivers a taste of old-time Singapore

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January 21, 2022



Anthony Dennis

Our rating

4.5 out of 5

THE CLAN HOTEL, SINGAPORE

THE PLACE

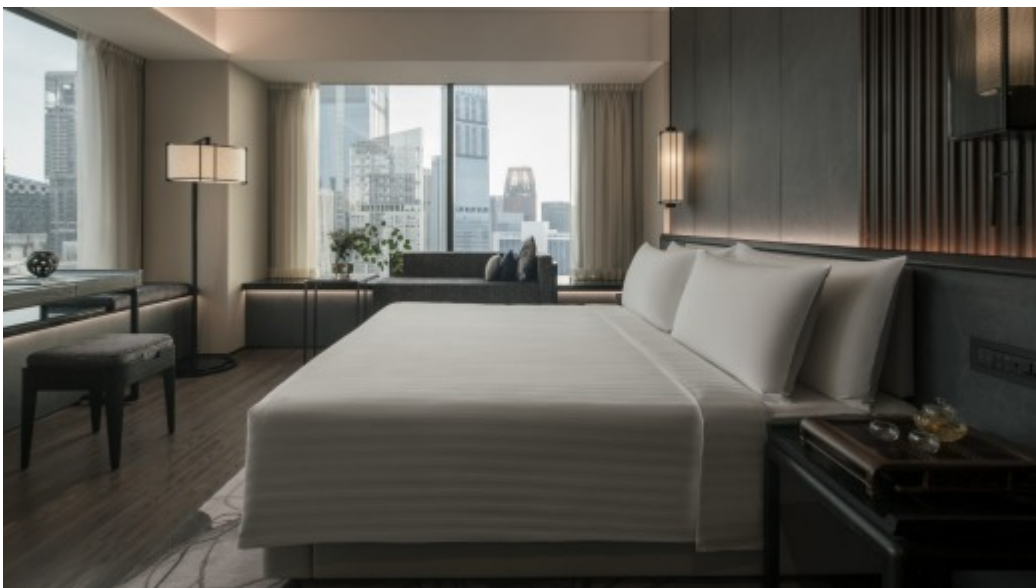
The destruction of Singapore's built heritage, most significantly the demolition of its distinctive shophouses, only really ceased when the city state's burghers finally realised they were ruining not only their own rich history, but also their tourism future. It was not a moment too soon. Modern-day developers are now happy to tap into the island's past, as exemplified by this new 324-room, 30-storey hotel. The Clan, an otherwise contemporary, boutique-style hotel, which opened last year to mainly staycationers and which is targeted at "experience-driven travellers", seeks inspiration from Singapore's historic clan associations, once centred on nearby Amoy Street. These proud, tight-knit groups, which originated from China, were created based on factors such as kinship, dialect, village, location and occupation.

THE LOCATION

A traditional Chinese gong is sounded by a hotel staffer to signify your arrival at the small, almost secretive, ground floor entrance of The Clan, set on Cross Street. This is one of Singapore's oldest thoroughfares and was established soon after British statesman Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore in 1819, and formed part of the plan for Chinatown. Home to Chinese booksellers and stationers from the 1950s to the 1970s, today the historic shophouses of the adjacent atmospheric Telok Ayer district are occupied by fashionable restaurants and bars which jump to life with locals and expats during the typically steamy Singapore nights.

THE SPACE

From the ground floor, take the lift to the high-ceilinged, dark timber-clad reception where you'll be greeted by The Clan's in-house tea-master. He welcomes you with a ritual Chinese tea ceremony consisting of a soothing signature oolong brew and a moreish Chinese bean pastry snack. Sink into one of the lobby's leather sofas as you sip and absorb the surroundings. Although The Clan, part of the giant Far East Hospitality group, is housed in a slender and shiny bronze contemporary tower, much effort has been made to recreate an imagined Old Singapore. Fortunately, it's executed in an elegant, rather than a kitsch, manner. Reminders of The Clan's heritage theme are ubiquitous but not gratuitous. Take the eccentric display of antique umbrellas with ornate handles displayed in a glass case, and "did you know?" facts about Singapore's past on screens in elevators. On the 30th floor, where you'll find the well-equipped gym and a relaxation lounge, is the compact, infinity-like Sky Pool. It overlooks old and mostly new Singapore and is particularly spectacular at night (due to the pandemic, guests are required to book a swimming slot).



The Chinese heritage theme and its pleasing attention to detail extends seamlessly to the rooms' calming, timbered chocolate and cream decor and chic furnishings.

THE ROOM

The Chinese heritage theme and its pleasing attention to detail extends seamlessly to my gorgeous 31-square-metre premier room with its calming, timbered chocolate and cream decor and chic furnishings. There's yet more to tea to be savoured. It is served from a traditional ceramic pot and cups atop a wooden tray and is accompanied by a Chinese biscuit. In the mini-bar, you'll find The Clan's own in-house craft beer, replete with chrysanthemum notes, while on one wall is a framed antique Chinese calligrapher's brush.

THE FOOD

With Singapore an undisputed south-east Asian culinary capital, there's no end of dining choices for every budget outside the hotel door and indeed, straight across the road in Telok Ayer. But The Clan's in-house restaurant, QIN, which overlooks Cross Street and the charming shophouses that surround it, is worth a dinner booking in order to sample its local classics with a contemporary spin. Back on ground level, the rear of The Clan is connected to a covered street where you'll find some good and inexpensive eating outlets, while beyond here are the pleasantly pedestrianised streets of the trendier parts of Chinatown, packed with restaurants, cafes and bars. For a taste of Singapore's celebrated hawker markets, the once somewhat touristy Maxwell Food Centre, is an eight-minute stroll away.

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STEPPING OUT

As a result of its often oppressive tropical climate, Singapore is not the most ideal walking city. But The Clan's position affords the opportunity to at least explore the surrounding area by foot, with some of the nearby neighbourhoods mentioned above. Of course, should you wish to venture further, call or hail one of the city state's reliable and inexpensive taxis or take the brilliant MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) underground train system.

THE VERDICT

The Clan, a classy addition to the already impressive, if at times pricey, Singapore hotel scene, is a fine, and skillfully-curated attempt to imbue a hotel with not merely a sense of place but also a modicum of nostalgic style and intelligence.

ESSENTIALS

Rooms from \$S315 per night. The Clan Hotel, [Far East Square](#), 10 Cross Street, Singapore. Ph: [+65 6228 6388](tel:+6562286388). See theclanhotel.com.sg; fareasthospitality.com; singaporeair.com

HIGHLIGHT

The excellent location provides an ideal launching point to explore some of the pedestrian-friendly parts of the city state.

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LOWLIGHT

Singapore's travel bubble with Australia was paused since this reviewer's visit but was due to partially resume in the past week.

Anthony Dennis stayed as a guest of Far East Hospitality and Singapore Airlines.



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