Ramada Colombo’s Refreshing Refurb

Posted on
The white and light lobby

This contemporary hotel pays homage to its past with a stylishly different ‘70s look.

Words Joanna Eckersley

Refurbishing a hotel built in the 1970s is not an easy job by any stretch of the imagination. Architects from the decade are known for breaking boundaries and doing things their own way, but they are also known for making spaces dark and dowdy. Ramada Colombo’s refurb, completed at the start of this year, has paid tribute to the very best of its ‘70s heritage, while wiping away the cobwebs and letting the light shine in. The effect is minimal yet plush, and simple yet stylish.

We’ll start with the lobby – the oh-so white and light lobby. Ramada literally raised the roof here, moving the beams of the room up and covering the façade in glass to create an expansive atrium bathed in sunshine.

This modern setting houses a very modern bakery – appropriately named BAKED. The crisp bakery-cum-patisserie sells a selection of healthy sandwiches and tasty treats, pointedly packaged so they are easy to eat on the go. Customers can serve themselves a range of contemporary drinks and dishes – from aloe and king coconut juice to paninis and macaroons. The food is laid out in spacious glass-topped fridges. Ramada Colombo is right in the centre of the city – just by the seascapes of Galle Face Green – and the concept cafe already has a steady stream of clientele lining up for their daily fix.

In keeping with their dedication to space, Ramada’s deluxe rooms are the biggest in the city. But, in contrast to the stark white of the main hall, the rooms are carpeted in a warm brown stripe. The bathrooms are done up to the nines in cream marble and ceramic, giving a soft ambience, and have three fixtures including rain showers. Suites come with Le Corbusier seats in tan and ergonomic office chairs, and the walls are hung with abstract art and lithograph prints in similarly muted shades. To top this all off guests can enjoy IPTV on a 42 inch LED TV, and benefit from free WiFi throughout the hotel.

Little design details entertain the eye throughout the hotel. In the breakfast room it’s the teardrop lights sourced from a German designer, in the lobby it’s the Foscarini Tress floor lamps – both picked out by a lighting consultant from Spain. White chairs are upholstered in a subtle cross-hatching which shimmers in the light, while the poolside gardens were landscaped by a six time Chelsea Garden Award winner.

This outside area is a popular spot for Colombo’s residents, who come after work to sample the tapas and enjoy the ocean breeze. The food is served up in temptingly creative ways—from skewers to towers—while the drinks match the tropical setting. The Gourmet Burgers, served at the Gardenia Coffee Shop, are a hit with many of the guests.

The hotel certainly caters well to casual diners and spur of the moment visits, but it also has a loyal following. It is said that Alhambra restaurant houses the longest running Friday night buffet in Sri Lanka. Chef Ziyad Khan, who runs the show, cooks a range of Moghul specialities with the freshest possible ingredients. And if you are looking for something more local, the hotel’s lamprais – a traditional Sri Lankan rice and curry served wrapped in banana leaves – have a delicious twist and are not to be missed.

After dark one of the nicest places to relax is the Oasis Lounge, which boasts of a range of cocktails, digital jukeboxes, pool, and widescreen TVs. Subtle lighting from candles and LEDs gives the place a chilled-out vibe.

If you need to burn off the calories from the night before, you can visit the gym, spa or swimming pool. The sauna and steam rooms are perennially popular, giving guests the chance to really let go and pamper themselves.

For those who have a more formal celebration in mind there are also extensive banqueting facilities. The white staircase in the lobby divides into two sides at the first floor in a classically grand style, before leading up to the main banqueting rooms. The space is the biggest in the city – catering up to 1,500 people – but can also be partitioned for smaller events. They are decorated in keeping with Ramada’s signature grandeur, with thick glass chandelier-style lamps and autumnal furnishings. The overhead lighting is the pièce de résistance of these rooms – lights that can be programmed in different portions of the ceiling in up to 16.7 million colours.

These lights are an example of the smart, luxury solutions and superior technology that are characteristic of the new and improved Ramada Colombo. This family-owned property, under the Ramada franchise, has moved Colombo’s hotel business to new frontiers with its conceptually striking modern design.

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