

# The Continuous Legacy of Grand Oriental Hotel



The entrance of the Sri Lankan Restaurant with a vibrant and welcoming ambience

Menaka Aravinda

**Gleaming in white, the Grand Oriental Hotel (GOH) is a monument that connects the colonial past of Sri Lanka to its present.**

**Words** Gayathri Kothalawala



The stately façade of Grand Oriental Hotel (GOH)

Menaka Aravinda

Grand Oriental Hotel (GOH) - the first hotel in Sri Lanka opened its doors in 1870. A former barrack for British military officers, the converted hotel in York Street once catered to guests who disembarked on Sri Lankan shores.

Today, as a guest enters the three-star hotel, an aroma of freshly baked goodies unfolds them from the Tiffin Hut. Stepping through the elegant wooden doors, the

guest reaches the glimmering lobby, decorated with traditional motifs and artwork. Further emphasising the solemn history of the hotel, a vintage telephone is placed next to the reception desk. The walls are adorned with old newspaper clippings and advertisements about GOH dating back to the colonial era. An intricately patterned 'pettagama' placed on the landing of the staircase attracts the eye as the guest begins to access the upper floors. The elevator, happens to be the oldest installed elevator in Sri Lanka, and continues to be in operation.

Over the decades since its opening, the hotel has catered to numerous guests with elegant and comfortable rooms. It boasts of 80 rooms: 64 standard rooms, 14 deluxe and two suites, the Anton and Rizal suites named in honour of two distinguished guests - Russian author Anton Chekov and Filipino author Dr Jose Rizal.

GOH maintains a private museum located on the fourth floor; that contains items chronicling the progress of the hotel since its inauguration including craft items, delicate porcelain ware, photographs and newspaper articles.

The hotel also offers gastronomical marvels to diners. The Harbour Room Restaurant offers iconic vistas of the Port of Colombo. Sumptuous international cuisine, served through a buffet or a la carte can be enjoyed while a floor-to-ceiling wall allow diners to enjoy a one-of-a-kind view. The restaurant features theme nights, live bands, executive lunches and family buffets.



Dine on authentic Sri Lankan dishes in a colourful setting at the Sri Lankan Restaurant  
Menaka Aravinda

The Sri Lankan Restaurant on the ground floor pays homage to the culture and traditions of the island with its interior décor. It serves authentic Sri Lankan dishes that recalls to mind the traditional Sri Lankan village life. The Harbour Bar within the Harbour Room Restaurant and Tap Bar offer cocktails and fine spirits.

Generations of Sri Lankans have also enjoyed their wedding ceremonies at GOH. To cater for weddings, seminars as well as celebrations, the hotel offers five banquet halls: Lotus Ballroom, Rainbow Hall, Thakshila, Satin and Kashyapa Conference Halls.

A statue immortalising a colonial gentleman in a rickshaw faces GOH at the entrance, as a reminder of its bygone history. Rich in history and tradition, the Grand Oriental Hotel remains as a stalwart to Sri Lankan hospitality through the generations.

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