

# The Reverie Saigon offers a dreamy escape into la dolce vita



ROCHELLE LASH  
*Hotel Intel*

I have seen a few opulent hotels, but I have never seen anything quite like The Reverie Saigon. In a world of modern minimalism, it is unabashedly grandiose, and in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’s largest metropolis, it is unexpectedly Italian.

The Reverie, a nod to Vietnam’s growing internationalism and commercial success, is an ornate palace of lavish hospitality operating on several floors of the 39-storey Times Square tower. This is District 1, the city’s core of first-class business, shopping, dining and colonial architectural treasures.

At The Reverie Saigon, guests enjoy la dolce vita. Executives alight from Bentleys, socialites bliss out at the spa and epicureans flock to Da Vittorio, a culinary brand that has eight Michelin stars in Europe and Shanghai.

“The Reverie Saigon illustrates that Vietnam is an important world crossroads,” says François Lievens, the hotel’s executive assistant manager. “We attract elite travellers and we want to pamper them with unapologetic splendour. And we are totally different from corporate hotels.”

**Extravagance:** The Reverie Saigon’s defining aspect is its extravagant and fanciful decor. Travel + Leisure magazine called it “bling-tastic,” which suggests it is overdone, but I saw it as a triumph of audacious design and supreme craftsmanship.

It’s a bold pastiche of Italian rococo — marble, gold, crystals, mosaics, more marble and more gold — paired with vivid splashes of colour. Every piece of furniture is elaborately crafted and every accessory is tasselled, gilt-edged or mirrored. Here, there is



The Reverie Saigon’s rooms offer views of the Saigon River or the Ho Chi Minh City skyline. THE REVERIE SAIGON

no such thing as too much.

If you’re up for a celebratory splurge, the hotel can organize a city tour in a limited-edition Rolls-Royce Phantom Dragon with Champagne, or perhaps book a suite attended by a private butler, or a romantic Saigon River cruise at sunset on The Reverie Yacht.

The Spa at The Reverie Saigon offers endless ways to luxuriate, including a swimming pool with whirlpools and a children’s pool, saunas and steam rooms, plus services like a Vietnamese massage or a lava foot massage.

**Posh digs:** Even the simplest of the 286 accommodations is an indulgent experience, and not as expensive as it looks. With rates starting at about \$380, you’ll be seduced by rich decor and sensational views of the Saigon River or the city skyline.

Every room has fine embossed sheets by Frette of Italy, a choice of six pillow types, fresh orchids and a complimentary mini-bar

with soft drinks and beer. Some rooms have velvet fainting couches, champagne silk wall coverings and damask drapes — electronically controlled. The bathrooms are sumptuous sanctuaries, too, with Acqua di Parma lotions, a TV facing the soaking tub, and a loo with heated seats and an electronic bidet. And the two-storey suites are truly regal.

**Food and drink:** The Reverie Saigon has five remarkable dining areas, all with gracious service and different national cuisines.

Da Vittorio Saigon brings its Michelin-starred sophistication with fine wines and tasting menus. Specialties like mushroom cappuccino with black truffle, Japanese sea urchins, braised beef cheeks, homemade pasta, lamb tartare, Wagyu beef with foie gras and caviar — Baeri, Kristal or Beluga — exquisitely presented with all the trimmings.

For another mood, the chic Café Cardinal is a showpiece with shimmering white marble

columns and a glassed-in kitchen. The Asian-Western buffets are laden with international choices, and the à la carte menu features treats like melon salad, shrimp toast, lobster ravioli and Wagyu beef carpaccio. At night, Café Cardinal goes more formal with French-inspired foie gras, lobster, scallops and lamb. Saturdays feature lavish seafood dinners, afternoon tea is served daily and Café Cardinal is poolside, so casual outdoor lunches are a sunny option.

The Long @ Times Square is an upbeat streetside trattoria serving simply everything, and offers elevated mixology that would rival that of Vegas. The menu covers a world map with pizza, spring rolls, papaya salad, oysters and main courses like black cod, barbecue ribs and tiger prawns.

The Royal Pavilion, a Chinese dining room, is decked out in ruby-red velvet and golden dragons. Here, top chefs deliver superlative Cantonese delicacies,

**IF YOU GO**

**The Reverie Saigon:** 84 28 3823 6688, thereveriesaigon.com; 22-36 Nguyen Hue Blvd., Ben Nghe Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. Vietnam’s only member of Leading Hotels of the World.

**Price:** Rooms start at about \$380, suites at \$580, including outdoor pools, sauna, steam, whirlpools, mini-bar, twice-daily housekeeping, Nespresso coffee, Dammann Frères tea.

**Vietnam tourism:** See vietnam.travel  
Canadians require a visa.

like dim sum and Peking duck.

If you need a stylish break, the Reverie Boutique serves barista coffee, fancy teas, tropical juices, homemade pastries, sandwiches and salads. A lacquered Bal-di-Beckstein Grand Piano box of sweets would be a fine take-home gift. That’s extravagance to go.



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- Donna, G.



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