

HOTEL INTEL

MAKEOVER MARKS 90TH FOR FAIRMONT ROYAL YORK HOTEL

Revamped Toronto landmark showcases its chic new restaurant and lobby bar



ROCHELLE LASH

It's regal, but oh so relevant. Fairmont Royal York is marking its illustrious 90th anniversary with a massive makeover that ushers in a fashionable, 21st-century age of hospitality.

Seven years of renovations have transformed all rooms and suites, including ravishing executive suites with luminescent silvery decor, and the totally reimagined Fairmont Gold, a luxurious boutique hotel within the hotel.

And captivating new dining-and-drinking venues have opened, including the gourmet-chic Reign restaurant and the cosmopolitan lobby bar, Clockwork.

It's difficult to fathom just how prominent the Fairmont Royal York is. When it opened in 1929, the "city within a city" had a radio station, a concert hall and hospital rooms. This landmark establishment still is red hot. According to the Toronto Film Office, it was the most filmed location in town as recently as 2016.

Today, the largest Fairmont in the world has a sky-lit indoor pool and majestic ballrooms where debutantes have danced and royals have held court. By the end of 2019, it will have reconfigured to 1,329 rooms and suites, many enlarged and all modernized. And its arcade of nearly a dozen shops includes a beauty salon, a barber and a boutique.

The Royal York's six kitchens constitute one of the largest culinary facilities in North America, with a staff of 120 preparing 4,000 to 6,000 meals on many days.

The lobby scenario would bedazzle even the most seasoned traveller with its magnificent hand-painted ceiling and mosaic floors, and the sensational passing parade of senators, sheiks and a world of travellers.

The hotel has played host to Queen Elizabeth, as well as the leaders of Britain, France, China, the U.S. and Germany and countless celebrities including Julia Roberts, Hugh Jackman and Lady Gaga.

"Fairmont Royal York is timeless," said general manager Edwin Frizzell at the gala 90th anniversary party in June. "This transformation reflects our heritage and also captures the vibrancy of Toronto."



Fairmont Royal York's reimagined Fairmont Gold suites were designed by Champalimaud Design to be residential and contemporary.



Fairmont Royal York's spectacular lobby lounge, Clockwork, above, opened weeks ago, and already is the place to be for drinks and apps. Fairmont Royal York's luxurious Gold Lounge, below, is the core of a boutique hotel within a hotel. PHOTOS: FAIRMONT ROYAL YORK



FOOD & DRINK

Executive chef JW Foster is an alumnus of Fairmont in Shanghai, Banff and San Francisco. His cuisine is masterful and regional, featuring meat and produce from Ontario's bountiful farms and seafood from Canadian waters. He loves local ingredients so much that he cultivates rooftop gardens and beehives.

Reign Restaurant + Bar + Bakery is the new flagship. Foster's signature dish is steak tartare, and other favourites are oysters, shrimp and crab; the veggie-friendly steak de choux fleur; as well as foie gras, lamb chops and roast duck. Sharing platters include lobster thermidor, Angus porterhouse and Ontario trout.

Besides Reign restaurant, there are many don't-miss delights: a juicy burger in the handsome Reign Bar; afternoon

tea in the refined Library Bar; lobster rolls and a flute of Veuve Clicquot at Clockwork; Royal York Apiary Ale at Piper's Pub; and Japanese grilled steak and shrimp at Canada's only Benihana.

FAIRMONT GOLD

The totally redefined Gold experience starts with private check-in on the 18th floor and follows through with exceptional Clef d'Or concierge service, in person, by text or by phone.

Champalimaud Design, a touchstone for exquisite interiors, created Fairmont Gold's decor.

The 106 rooms and suites are serene and elegant, subtly shimmering in pearl and alabaster with accents of black lacquer, white leather and brass.

Gold guests enjoy fine toiletries, premium mini-bars and signature turndown service. On the wellness front are a pillow menu (coming soon) and SkinJay, a unique spa experience that uses the shower to diffuse aromatherapy fragrances.

Fairmont Gold is worth the splurge, especially for the delectable food in the gorgeous lounge.

Breakfast features eggs Florentine, waffles with cream and berries, bagels with roasted salmon and treats such as Green Glow organic juices. Cocktail-hour hors d'oeuvres might be sushi, sautéed shrimp and lamb kebabs. It is always a gourmet feast, served on fine china embossed with the noble Royal York emblem. In gold, of course.

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IF YOU GO

Fairmont Royal York: 866-540-4489, 416-368-2511, fairmont.com; 100 Front St. W.; Le Club Accor rewards apply. **Price:** Best rate guaranteed. Rooms approximately \$359-\$539 (suites and Fairmont Gold cost more), includes indoor lap pool/whirlpool/kiddies' pool, sauna/steam, fitness room, in-room coffee. CAA discount. Fairmont Gold starts at \$600, with lounge (breakfast, evening hors d'oeuvres, all-day snacks, honour bar), Nespresso, Wi-Fi, local calls, Reebok gym gear, private concierge/check-in. **Toronto tourism:** 416-203-2600, seetorontonow.com.

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