HISTORIC GRAND HOTELS
A MACHINE FOR LIVING IN

PART FOUR
NORTH AFRICA, ARABIA AND THE ORIENT

BRIAN ROBERTS
LEAVING FOR THE ORIENT
Grand Hotel Bellevue, Tozeur, Tunisia; a centre of desert tourism.

The featured hotels date from 1800-1830, no air conditioning, some early ones without bathrooms or toilets (in fact no taps, water for washing being brought by servants who may have also discretely removed "night soil"). Respite from the extreme hot or humid conditions depended on the hotel itself: orientation, shading and mass (thermal response) of construction, location and size of windows, provision for natural cross-ventilation, high ceilings, rooms opening onto balconies and verandahs, window shutters or shades and external awnings. Following Indian custom, many rooms were furnished with punkahs. These consisted of sheets of material or canvas, hung from the ceiling and pulled to and fro, to create a breeze by means of a cord, operated by a punkah wallah (servant) posted outside the room. Other attempts at cooling involved blocks of ice, screens of plaited grass (tatties) doused with water and hung outside the verandah. As the Victorian era came to a close, a number of hotels were equipped with electric lighting and electric ceiling-propeller-fans (then also known as punkahs).
ALONG THE ROUTE TO THE ORIENT

North African Hotel Locations.

"Ah, it is not without love that I sail across the Mediterranean in this spring of 1914. I have always been filled with such a mad desire for this Asian land. In my idle hours, I turned towards it. It appeared to me in a haze of heat, buzzing with dreams and inchoate forces which could both give me back life and submerge me. Today... I shall leave the area where countries are clear and enter the mysterious circle. I shall offer myself a brilliant vision, I shall awaken new melodies within myself and attune myself to moving events that I sense without knowing them. I need to listen to a music more profound and more mysterious and to be reunited with the dreams that I have built on the far shore of the sea, at the door of Asia's desert... My wish today is to be permitted to go to the Near East, as if to the threshold of my true destiny, and to hold out my glass to the cupbearers of eternity." Maurice Barrès. 50 December, 1915. Hotel Mamounia, Marrakech.
ALONG THE ROUTE TO THE ORIENT

Hotels in Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region and beyond.
Hotel Albert I, Algiers, built 1914; Hotel Metropole and Hotel Continental, Oran.
The Grand Oriental Hotel in Colombo and Queen's Hotel, Kandy.
1930: The New Sassoon House, Shanghai. Later the Cathay Pacific Hotel.
The "Bund" 1930 (a Chinese Manhattan) and Main Dining Room Astor House complete with pole-mounted electric propeller fans.
The Bund in the 1970s with the Peace Hotel (formerly Cathay Pacific) and its pyramidal roof.
BEIJING CHINA

GRAND HOTEL DES WAGONS LITS PEKIN

Built 1903, later Hotel de Pekin.
CAIRO EGYPT

Opened 1841. Leading hotel in Cairo.
One of the most celebrated hotels in the world. Destroyed by fire in 1952.
Heliopolis Palace Hotel opened 1909.
Restaurant at the Aswan's Cataract Hotel in the 1920s.
Built 1920. The name Hong Kong Hotel on the pediment was never used.
Opened 1928. Amazingly, central heating (by Haden) with radiators in all bedrooms, bathrooms, corridors and public rooms.
KOWLOON HONG KONG

The first hotel in the region to have electric lighting (4000 lamps) and 185 ceiling fans.
UDAIPUR LAKE INDIA

Built 1746. Transformed into hotel 1960s.
BOMBAY INDIA

Taj Mahal Hotel built 1904.
Shi Niwas Hotel. Wing added to the "City Palace" c.1860.
UDIAPUR INDIA

Shi Niwas Hotel. Reception Room (right half) 1984, with ceiling fan (top left corner).
Hotel des Indes, once famous in the Far East. Former Governor's Residence built 1871. Converted to hotel in 1897.
Hotel des Indes, photos from early 1900s. Rebuilt 1930s.
(top) Frank Lloyd Wright and Hotel Staff 1920s. (below) Early postcard.
Fujiya Hotel opened 1878.
BEIRUT LEBANON

Hotel Bassoul built 1860s. Cast-iron heating stove in the Main Lounge (photo about 1980).
La Mamounia Hotel built 1925. Photo: Winston Churchill in 1943 after Casablanca Conference
SINGAPORE

Opened 1887, 10 rooms. Named after Sir Stamford Raffles, founder of colonial-era Singapore.
Extended 1890-97. Famous for its Long Bar and invention of Singapore Sling cocktail.
Baron Hotel Aleppo, opened 1911.
Bill of Lawrence of Arabia when he stayed at hotel in 1914.
A family of hotel keepers, the Mazloumans, founded Baron’s Hotel. They came to Aleppo in the 1880s and set up the city’s first hotel, an unpretentious, convenient place. Two Mazloumans of the next generation, Onn and Armen, decided in 1909 to build a new hotel - the Baron’s Hotel. As its name indicates, it was intended to be luxurious. “Baron”, however, is simply the Armenian word for “Mr.”, and the staff of the hotel always used it when they addressed the owners. Foreign guests were delighted to find themselves in such distinguished company.

At the time of its inauguration in 1912, the hotel was situated in the middle of a wood outside the town. Its guests could enjoy the peace of the countryside, and duck shooting from the windows of the Baron’s bedrooms as one of their favourite pastimes. Aleppo has grown so much since those days that the Baron is now in the middle of the city. It was rationalised in 1966 and Koko, the last of the Mazloumans, who no longer owns it but still manages it, is doing his best to save the building from demolition.

Above: first writing paper provided for the Baron’s guests and a baggage label of the 1930s. On the left page: bill of Lawrence of Arabia when he stayed at the Baron in 1914. A bottle of Cordon Rouge had been included in his bill by mistake. As he only drank water, the item was deleted.
1876, then 1887: 40 rooms. Famous for Authors Wing: Conrad, Maugham, Coward, etc.
The Continental Hotel, opened 1880. Ceiling fans on the veranda, date unknown.
CARDS TWO: AFRICA AND ISRAEL
CARDS THREE-: MEDITERRANEAN, INDIA

Hôtel Villa des Chevaliers, Mount Lebanon
Hôtel Adenmand, Beirut.

Grand Hôtel de Palmyre, Palmyra.
Grand Hôtel de Mme Huch, Smyrna.

Grand Hôtel, Smyrna.
Hôtels Calypso and Giacomo, Istanbul.

Apollo Hôtel, Bombay.
Hotel Continental, Calcutta.
CARDS FOUR: ORIENTAL HOTELS

Bentel Hotel, Colombo.

Phya Thai Palace, Bangkok.

Adelphi Hotel, Singapore.

Australian mining, Java.

Hôtel Marquis James, Errol.

“GRAND HOTEL DE PEKIN” Peking.

Hôtel Marquis Jansen, Brazil.

Grand Hôtel de Peking, Peking.

Shanghai Mansion, Shanghai.

Grand Hôtel des Wagons Lits, Peking.
1053 ft, 56 floors (claims to be a 7-Star Hotel), fully air conditioned. Stands on artificial island, connected by bridge to mainland. Complete with roof helipad.
1972 ft, 120 floors, 140 ft wide clock face, fully air conditioned. Has 59 elevators, five of which are double-deck.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Inauguration of the Suez Canal (Mural now in the Cairo Marriot Hotel).

1997  The Peninsula: Portrait of a Grand Old Lady, Sally de Souza (Ed), Round House Publications (Asia), Ltd, Hong Kong.

Other information from the Heritage Group Archive and website.