


Mar 30, 2021, 11:50am EDT | 824 views

Betting On Boston, Raffles Hotel Unveils Design Plans



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Travel

How would you like to meet for a drink in the Sky Terrace Lounge? In these pandemic times it sounds like a distant dream — and not necessarily one that you'd expect in Boston. But hopefully by late 2022, when luxury brand Raffles Hotels & Resorts' new Boston property opens, we'll all be able to celebrate with Champagne in the property's three-story lobby, complete with a grand staircase traversing the 17th, 18th and 19th floors.

Tucked at the mid-point of the 35-story tower, the Sky Lobby is the centerpiece of the first North American mixed-use development for the brand, whose very name evokes a luxurious sense of place — of Singapore Slings and uniformed butlers.

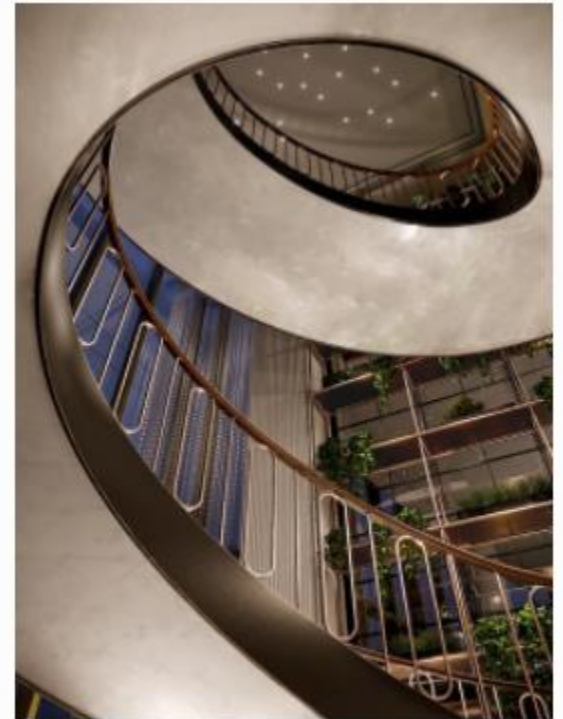


Street level of the new Raffles Boston will be a tiny sliver of the public space. THE ARCHITECTURAL TEAM

Gary Saunders of Saunders Hotel Group says the Raffles brand is exactly what the team, which includes his organization, Noannet Group and Cain International, was looking for to create a new hotel that is respectful of Boston's history and culture. "As we progressed in our planning, it became increasingly obvious that Raffles was the perfect solution, and the perfect way to brand and identify this gorgeous building," Saunders said during a recent Zoom conference. "They're really at the intersection of local and global, and we're predominantly a Boston team, so that philosophy was both attractive and compelling to us."

Indeed, each of the 16 Raffles properties, starting with the flagship Singapore hotel built in 1887, is deeply invested in a crafting a sense of place, while delivering consistently luxurious hospitality.

The Boston property will feature 147 guest rooms, a pool and spa for guests and residents only and a number of dining and drinking spots, starting on the first floor, with a pair of restaurants intended to drive a lively street-level scene with all-day dining and a patisserie. Guest rooms will occupy the sixth through 14th floors, then the lobby section, which divides the hotel from the residences, will offer four more public gathering spaces, including the Sky Lobby Fine Dining Restaurant, an intimate space featuring moody, softly-lit walls and dazzling metal finishes overlooking the Back Bay, Charles River, and Cambridge. Other outlets will include aforementioned Sky Terrace Lounge, which pairs cocktails with expansive views of the South End, a soon-to-be unveiled Signature Sky Bar for drinks and small bites, and a clandestine Speakeasy accessed through a secret passageway with a cocktail experience harkening back to an earlier era.



A grand staircase in the middle of the 35-story building will be a social hub. **STONEHILL TAYLOR**

It's a hard time to be a hotelier, especially in Boston. Before the pandemic started, the city's lodging scene was moving at a breathtaking pace. The city had just welcomed its second Four Seasons hotel — a striking modern tower in the Back Bay and the exponential increases in international service into Logan Airport promised a seemingly endless supply of visitors to fill a wide range of luxury properties. Fast-forward a year or so, and hotels are limping along at less than 30 percent occupancy, with some experts predicting that there won't be a full recovery until 2025.

Like many working on large projects, the team took advantage of what I might call a pandemic pause to increase the airflow to public spaces and address other elements of concern for a post-pandemic hospitality business. And they're optimistic that when the property opens in 18 months, people will be ready, despite the gloomy predictions to the contrary.



Meet me in the Writer's Lounge -- a staple of all Raffles properties. STONEHILL TAYLOR

“Nobody can stay away from community-based activities,” says Jordan Warshaw, president of the Noannet Group. “I think you're going to see people in restaurants, you're going to see people in bars, you're going to see people at concerts like you've never seen before. Think about the roaring 20s after the Spanish Flu of 1918. People want to make up for lost time.”