

AROUND THE WORLD

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THE CONTINENT HOTEL IN ASOK OFFERS BOUTIQUE ACCOMMODATION WITH A FLAIR FOR FASHION.

It's within steps of one of Bangkok's most congested arteries, but the moment you enter The Continent's driveway, the commotion of Sukhumvit is left behind. A shrine marks the entrance – a beacon of mosaic silver tiles splintering sunlight in every direction. Opposite, a smooth veil of water spills over inky marble, a babbling rebuttal to the din of the traffic that tears down Sukhumvit. Once the lobby doors swing shut, the blare of Asok is worlds away, and the armchairs and air conditioning of Compass Lounge silently un-fray the nerves of new arrivals.

Despite its height of 39 floors – three storeys taller than neighbouring Interchange Tower – The Continent is by no means a big hotel. Its 153 guestrooms begin at level eight and ascend to level 34 – just seven rooms per floor. On the 35th floor is the Italian restaurant Medinii with its vertiginous glass walls and views over surrounding condos. Above that, there's an open-air pool at eye level with distant skyscrapers. And above that are the boot-coloured speak-easy sofas of Axis & Spin – a bar with cool vintage oddities like a life-sized brass cheetah and an old postman's bike. The Axis level opens up to the sky via sliding windows – the designated hang-out for smokers and stargazers.

Sky is an abundant feature of The Continent. Picture windows capture great swatches of it, while lower level rooms frame slivers of it between office towers. Sky, space and earth combine in accordance with the theme of "continents".

Malin Bylund, PR and Events Manager often receives compliments on The Continent's layout and décor. "Guests usually say the room is small, but it's very nice, the way it's designed. And they comment on



the view, because the rooms start from the eighth floor, so everybody has a view. There's a lot of detail in this hotel when you start looking, details that have been really thought through."

The company behind the hotel's interior design is Idealist Limited, who had free creative reign over The Continent's look. Using motifs of earthly terrains and of skies, each floor is differentiated by colour and topography. There's desert (red), forest (green), ocean (blue) and, deviating from the terrestrial, the solar system (purple).

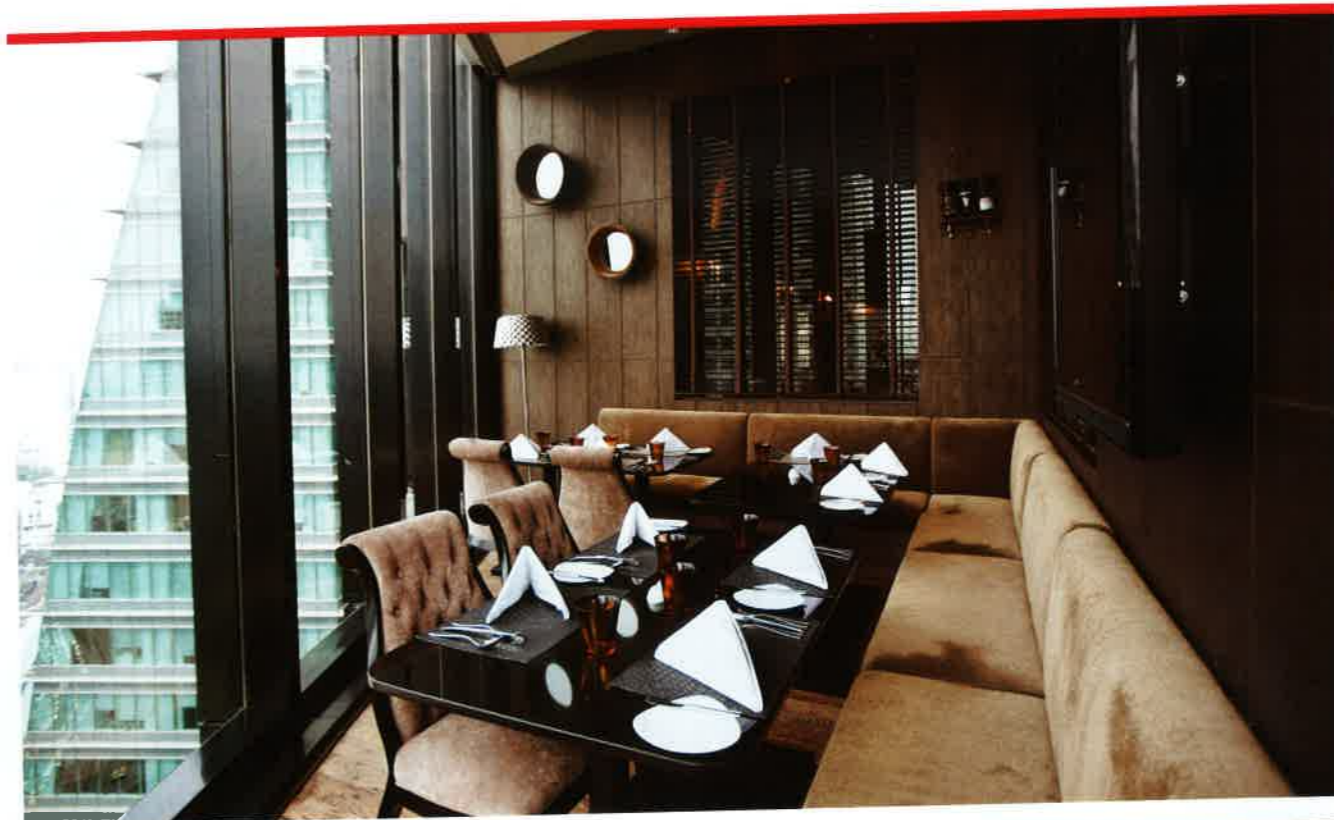
"For the space theme, these lines represent the lines that go around the world," says Malin, pointing at painted arcs on the elevator walls. "These are the longitude and the latitude lines. There are circles and there are planets and stars. They're not hidden, but people don't really notice that they're there straight

away. These details are a deliberate part of the whole theme."

Another bespoke aspect of The Continent are the hand-painted pictures that line the corridors and rooms, all photographic in detail. They adhere to the designated theme for each floor, depicting different parts of the universe, be it the white-washed walls of Santorini, a sunset over dunes, a distant spiral galaxy. There are hundreds of these paintings throughout the place. "They took some time to finish."

Positioned as a fashion hotel, The Continent was designed to be equal measures homey and hip. "Sometimes when you enter a trendy hotel you wonder, 'Can I wear this? Can I wear shorts?'" says Malin. "You feel awkward and we don't want that. We've had a wide range of guests – from backpackers to ambassadors – and we want everyone to feel comfortable and welcome, and

SKY IS AN ABUNDANT FEATURE OF THE CONTINENT. PICTURE WINDOWS CAPTURE GREAT SWATCHES OF IT.



not to say 'No, that's too flashy or too trendy for me.'

Fashion is subtly infused into every part of the hotel. The flatscreen in Compass lounge stays tuned to Fashion TV. The down-tempo soundtrack in the lifts and restaurants was produced just for the hotel – and is copyrighted to The Continent. Events so far have been intimate luxury fashion functions; a recent soiree was for Ralph Lauren. The opening party, which drew a turnout of more than 450 well-heeled Bangkokians, was a test of The Continent's capacity, and the biggest event they're likely to ever have.

"We want to do more fashion, more brands – smaller launches for special new items," says Malin. "Because we're not big, we can't attract a huge crowd, so when we do events, it's more exclusive. It's not 200 people, it's more private – that's what we can offer, that's something that's

missing in Bangkok. Usually a launch is so big people don't feel that it's exclusive at all. Many brands are looking for venues that are smaller so they can get closer to their clients, so that's what we're working towards."

The Continent is also perfectly primed to be of Sukhumvit's most stylish drinking holes. Axis & Spin on the top floors borrow heavily from Prohibition Era décor to create a secret clubhouse feel, with low *chaises longue* beckoning guests to sink in and indulge in a few cocktails. An iron spiral staircase linking the two floors gives a literal meaning to the bar's "spin" moniker, particularly after a few of their special "Post-War" concoctions.

Either area can be reserved for private parties, though monthly specials draw in walk-ins lured by drinks specials, ladies nights and sponsored events.

Just a few paces from the sky walk



STEPPING OUT OF THE ELEVATOR YOU'RE TELEPORTED TO A POCKET-SIZED PORTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.



to Terminal 21 and the peaktime pandemonium of the BTS and MRT interchange, the calm that permeates The Continent is a nice surprise. Looking down on the city from this height, it's hard to imagine the heat and noise at ground level. Seeing the streets like this with a bird's-eye view of pink taxi cabs, tiny pedestrians and a model railroad-sized BTS, is like watching a miniature Bangkok on mute. And if you look straight out to the horizon, you swear you can see all the way to Ayutthaya.

Up on the 37th floor is H2O, The Continent's poolside bar. Limited square footage here has been used to dramatic effect – stepping out of the elevator you're teleported to a pocket-sized portion of the Mediterranean, high above the rooftops of Bangkok. Sun loungers and breezy cabanas sit at one end of an infinity pool, while a little bar huddles to one side, facing prim garden furniture and white wrought iron trellises that give off a distinct "Santorini" feel.

At night, if you look up at The Continent from car level while waiting for the Asok traffic to move, you'll notice diagonal rows of lights lining its slender frame. They look a little like stars against a black sky – a space-patterned cloak, a metaphoric atmosphere that lets in the light while keeping out the chaos. 📍

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