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Capella

TAIPEI

For the Taiwanese capital’s first luxury hotel in over a decade, André Fu crafts a modern mansion replete with elegance and artistry.

Words: Nicole Trivilas
Photography: © Timothy Kaye, Courtesy of Capella Hotels & Resorts

Taipei might not sit top of mind when thinking of Asian capitals, but perhaps it should. Behind the high-tech gloss and prickly geopolitical status lies a layered city with a one-of-a-kind culture of fantastic food and creative cache. Emblematic of this energy is one of the most compelling hotel debuts in Asia this year: Capella Taipei.

Located in the city’s central, affluent Songshan district, the opening signals that Taipei is ready for its moment in the global spotlight, and for all the right reasons. “It’s the hotel the city has been waiting for,” says General Manager Dennis Laubenstein, who previously held the reins at Capella Hanoi. “It’s been 10 years since the last luxury hotel opening.”

The venture also forms part of Capella Hotel Group’s strategic expansion across Asia, with properties in Macau, Kyoto and Osaka all expected to open this year – each envisioned by a celebrated designer to bridge heritage with contemporary luxury. “Each Capella property is inspired by the soul of its destination,” says Cristiano Rinaldi, President of Capella Hotel Group. “Our expansion strategy reflects three key principles: selecting destinations with rich cultural narratives, partnering with world-renowned architects who understand our vision of cultural authenticity, and



All-day lounge Plume is anchored by a mural by French artist Elsa Rameau depicting the Taiwanese blue magpie

maintaining an intimate scale across most properties to ensure highly personalised service.”

In Taipei, that world-renowned vision comes courtesy of André Fu – a name that speaks volumes in quiet, urbane luxury. The interior architect’s scheme draws inspiration from the hotel’s immediate surroundings. “It is a re-telling of my personal journey discovering Taipei,” shares Fu. “Flaneuring around local neighbourhoods and wandering along the lush tree-lined boulevard where the hotel fondly resides, I was absorbed by the poetic environment – an antithesis to the urbanity one might typically perceive of Taipei. My vision translates a quietly-curated private mansion, incorporating contemporary touches and cultural nuances. Its lushness and sense of visual poetry rooted my personal take on the project.”

Billed as a ‘modern mansion’, the hotel occupies a 17-storey newbuild designed with Japan-based Mori Building Group. The public spaces – including a cave-like spa that would look at home in Santorini – and all five dining venues reside on the lower levels, while the guestrooms perch eyrie-like on floors 14 through 17. Like its siblings, Capella Taipei speaks in a design

language that is on-trend yet rooted in its location, guided by Fu’s desire “to carve the space into a series of intimate pockets – each articulated with design accents yet linked by a thread of shared aesthetics”.

Behind colossal bronze doors, the foyer makes a grand first impression with a panelled tapestry by Taiwanese artist Lee Chen-Lin, depicting the mountain-ringed cityscape. To the left, an arched corridor leads to the lobby, while to the right sits pretty Parisian-style pastry shop Atelier Plume, outfitted in hues of milky jades and deep emeralds with marble mosaics.

Yet the most visually impressive venue among the F&B line-up is all-day lounge Plume, with a large mural by French artist Elsa Rameau, marked with the motif of Taiwan’s blue magpie. The endemic species also appears on the venue’s bar menu, illustrated by local artist Ariel Chi. Plume has already become the place to be in the city; however, an additional three bars, located in a cube-like space just a few steps away from the main building, are slated for a late-summer arrival.

The other restaurants also impress: Ember 28





celebrates the ancient art of fire-cooking beneath the gentle glow of Preciosa chandeliers, while a Tokyo-worthy omakase with ryokan-like stylings and superlative service is clearly shooting for the Michelin stars. Then there's Rong Ju, the signature Chinese restaurant decorated with hanging lanterns, a Chinese juniper bonsai and 8m-high terracotta-tiled ceiling, which "commands attention," according to Fu.

These spots are very much open to the community, but on floor 14 the ambiance becomes more intimate. Here, a suave guest-only pool garden frames a skyline of low-laying buildings, misty hills and the cloud-skimming Taipei 101 skyscraper. Dressed in scalloped-edged parasols and potted greenery with chill beats, it's a true escape. Inside is the Living Room, where guests are encouraged to help themselves to freshly-baked matcha cookies and snuggle into the plump sofas in front of the bio-ethanol fireplace.

Guestrooms are a high-style delight, many

with features rarely seen in luxury hotels in Taipei, such as balconies and private pool suites, of which there are six. From champagne-coloured stone and silk panels to patterned textiles, materials are curated to invite calmness and connection. In-room amenities include Devialet speakers, full-sized Bamford toiletries and complimentary mini-bars filled with sparkling teas and nori-dusted cashews.

Aside from these visual achievements, Capella Taipei's greatest success might be how well it captures the spirit of the city by taking guests beyond its walls: "In many ways, we need to sell the destination as well as the hotel," explains Laubenstein, adding that a team of 'Capella Culturists' lead tours around the surrounding streets. Guests can shop for vintage postcards at local stores, or try oolong tea and pineapple cakes at a local café. Laubenstein describes it as a close-knit community, one that has already accepted the hotel as a welcome resident. The joy is that for an hour or two, guests can feel that way too.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT
 Developer: GPPC Development
 Operator: Capella Hotels and Resorts
 Architecture: Mori Building Group
 Interior Design: André Fu Studio
www.capellahotels.com