



Luxepitality meets: Harpeet Bedi The Art of Living: hôtel vagabond

H O T E L B I N E S S Q U A R T S W S

Harpeet Bedi, a former corporate lawyer turned hotelier, tells **Luxepitality** the story of her brainchild hôtel vagabond and its unique position on Singapore's hospitality landscape.

The Lion City is a rather crowded space, that due to its healthy economy still experiences the growth in hospitality luxury segment. Even in such a competitive market, hôtel vagabond remains in a class of its own. Set on a fringe of Little India, this former shop house with original red shutters oozes Parisian luxury and art deco chic. Designed by Jacques Garcia, the interior architect and designer of outstanding and memorable five-star hotels like the La Mamounia in Marrakech and Hotel Costes in Paris. This former migrant worker's dormitory and a brothel has recently been acquired by the Starwood group and became the third hotel in Asia to join Starwood's Tribute Portfolio.





How do you feel about joining Starwood group?

Vagabond is still being managed internally, but as a Tribute Portfolio hotel, we will continue our ethos of creating unique experiences for our guests with our Artist-in-Residence programme, as well as our upcoming Live Music programme. It wasn't always a goal of ours to join a big chain, but we're very excited about this distinctive brand that we built, and when the opportunity came to bring out vision to a wider audience, we took it.

What are the requirements that a modern traveller has for a high-end boutique hotel these days?

I think most modern travellers want to remain connected, which is why we offer high speed Wi-Fi throughout the hotel

Is hotel's eclectic design one of your USPs? Where did you get an idea for something so unusual?

Our hotel was designed by the world-renowned Jacques Garcia, whose accolades include being named by Architectural Digest as one of the world's 100 best and most influential interior designers and architects. After seeing the space and walking around the neighbourhood, Jacques was inspired to create something opulent yet inviting, which was perfect for our vision of a space akin to a Parisian Salon.



Is art one of the important parts of hotel's DNA? Where does it come from?

Some of the art you see in the hotel is from our own private collection, but we also collaborated with

artists like Peter Millard to curate the back wall of our Salon, and artisans who handcrafted functional yet aesthetic pieces like our rhinoceros-shaped reception desk.

What type of customer did you imagine when designing your hotel and who did you get?

We opened hôtel vagabond to cater to everyone who loves the arts – the people who enjoy fun and theatricality. We set out to be a space where both international travellers and local residents could find something unique, whether they're staying the night with us or just dropping by for a drink or one of our many events

What's the story behind the hotel's name?

We wanted it to be a place where even the most intrepid of world travellers, the vagabonds, would feel comfortable stopping and staying for a while. We reflect the best from all around the world – good enough, I think to quench some of that wanderlust.

How did you come across this building, how did the renovation process go?

We were very taken by the Art Deco style of this row of six shop houses, built in 1950, before Singapore's independence. When we found it, it was rundown but we could see the potential. The renovation process involved working closely with local authorities, to find out what we could and could not do to this heritage building.

Is it just business for you or is it labour of love, too?

This is a labour of love. When I am in Singapore, I'm at the hotel pretty much every single day. I make it a point to speak with everyone who comes down for the daily Lady Boss High Tea to find out how I can make the hotel more welcoming, more comfortable for people.

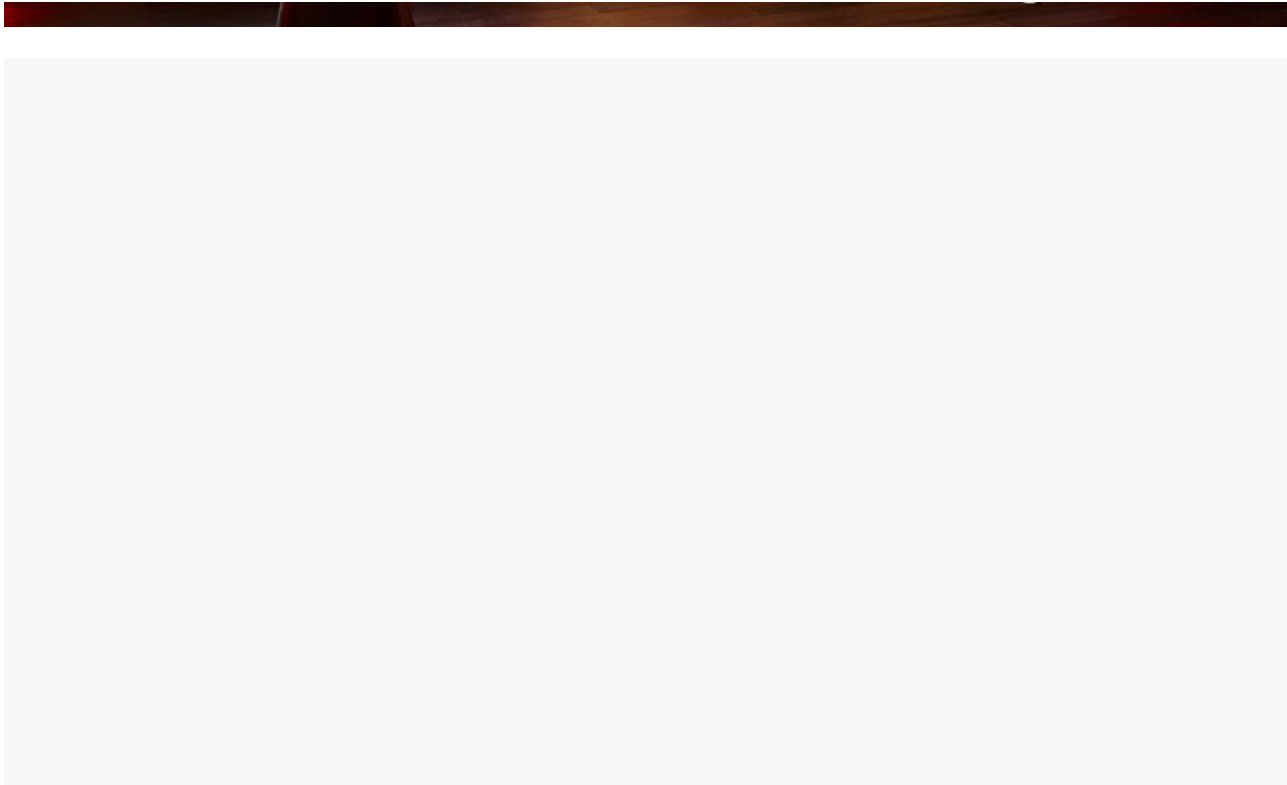
How did you come to this industry?

My husband is in hotels and when our GM left us right before the hotel began its soft launch in September 2015, I stepped up to manage it. I have a background in law, and it was a steep learning curve.

Is it a type of hotel you'd stay in?

Exactly! I like places that move away from the cookie-cutter mould, while still offering the kind of service and amenities that befit a luxury property.





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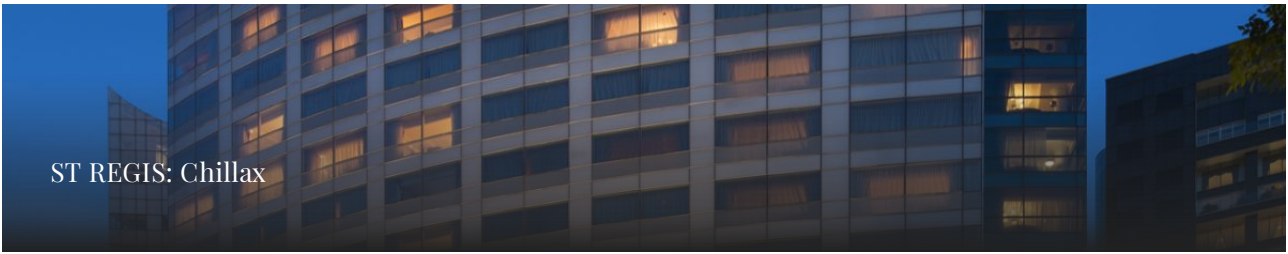
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