

# STAYING GREEN

Mix your business and pleasure with a large helping of green credentials in the new GTower Hotel.

Text Kenneth Tan Photos Dev Lee

There's always a heave of relief when one has successfully navigated the tricky outer layer of Kuala Lumpur in an effort to get into the city's heart. And, just like the eye of the storm, the calm centre which now opens its doors to the business traveller comes in the form of the environmentally-conscious GTower, a mixed development of offices, restaurants, bars and 180 all-club rooms hotel.

Walk into the lobby to discover the lush greenery that springs forth from a gigantic wall of shoots and vines, centred on a magnificent million-dollar bronze chilli sculpture. There's that sweet tranquillity that the double- and, in some areas, triple-glazed windows confers onto the space and it's like you've stumbled into an oasis of quiet, far and away from traffic snarls and urban humidity.

The concept of an all-club-rooms hotel, the first in Asia, sprung from a motivation to provide the business traveller of today a five-star property which is both smart and green. Here, at the GTower Hotel, guests can request for up to 1MB per second

dedicated broadband speed and still luxuriate in a cocoon of comfort in the spacious rooms, in the knowledge that green safeguards are in place to help him minimise his carbon footprint.

GTower Executive Director Colin Ng says the GTower building that houses the hotel is the first green-certified building which made the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) standard, no small feat considering the







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**TOP** The luxurious confines of The Club.  
**BELOW** A futuristic-like Bridge Bar to help guests unwind.

gross built-up of the entire place totals to 1.4 million sq ft. The air-conditioning uses 28 per cent less energy compared to properties of similar sizes, partly driven by reduced heat from the glazed windows and reusing waste heat. In addition, harvested rainwater is used to irrigate extensive green planting efforts around the building.

There's also organic composting which will eventually go toward a herb and spice garden for the building's Italian restaurant Tanzini and the mandatory standard applied to cleaning agents within the building ensures only biodegradable and environmentally-friendly products are used. "With all this in place, the energy savings and lower carbon footprint of

the building would be the equivalent of saving 18,000 trees per year," Ng says.

For the business traveller, the biggest draw at the GTower Hotel would be the 12,000 sq ft members-only exclusive 'The Club'. Unlike the dinky business centres in other hotels, which seem more like afterthoughts, The Club takes pride of place, with contemporary furnishing and wide spaces to enable business to take place easily. Hotel guests are given complimentary access and, in this space, up high on the 28th floor and overlooking the city centre, they can catch up on the needful with plenty of amenities at their disposal to help them brainstorm and power through the agenda of the day. Internet





stations, wireless access, sound-proofed boardrooms and private lounge rooms are in place to make it easy for the hotel guest to get things done without the burden of commute and, in the Les Clefs D'Or concierge, an additional level of support is provided, on top of the standard secretarial bundle.

The Club also provides plenty of tantalising gourmet selections to whet the appetite after a day of poring over facts and figures. Breakfast offers healthful choices, including fresh juices and freshly-baked pastries, while lunch at The Club covers the gamut of fusion and Thai delights. To wind down your day, head for the Bridge Bar, a modish-looking space integrated with elements of sustainability, such as timber decking made from rice-husks and opulent reupholstered furniture that perfect for lounging in. The bar's range of wines, cocktails and beers is a generous affair and you can really take your time, from this vantage point, to take in the larger picture and absorb the vermillion embrace of the sunset from the comfort of your couch.

According to Ng, the idea for the hotel's design was to create something timeless, simply so it wouldn't look dated in time and require an extensive renewal. In the hotel rooms, one can certainly see how this concept has

been fleshed out. From the unassuming warmth of walnut and beige, to a delicate fresh orchid peering out a test tube vase, the ambience makes for total relaxation, with the addition of either a Hans Wegner *Shell* chair or the Eames lounge (depending on room) echoing that classical interior spirit. This design drive also helped the hotel sweep the Best Hospitality and Best Interior Builders' titles at the Malaysia Interior Design Awards (MIDA) last year.

Guests also have the facility of a business phone on a wide desk and plenty of storage and surfaces for luxurious working space, while the Nespresso machine in the premier rooms is also a neat touch. Setting the mood for the rooms is the exquisite photography of Catalonia-based artist Maria Espeus, commissioned by the hotel to capture scenes from the Borneo rainforest. In the room, a large picture of the misty highlands of Sabah will strip the urban realities away and, staring into the lustrous giant photo of cloud-shrouded mountains, you are made to almost forget that the jungle you're in is entirely urban.

Other than the quiet hum of the air-conditioning, there's not much in the room to provoke the weary business traveller from his solid eight, although, for those who do enjoy a little late

night entertainment, the movies-on-demand deserves a mention. There's also a separate screen in the bathroom, which syncs up to the main, ensuring you don't miss cliffhangers or the news. Additionally, with the whole building being given a fibre-optic spine, you can request for a wireless keyboard to surf the Internet on the much grander real estate of the television as compared to a laptop.

If you're the type who enjoys breaking into a good sweat, there's the 32,000 sq ft Elements Gym, which comes with state-of-art exercise equipment minus the usual rabble of a chain gym. In here, you can get your cardio done with an eye on the news or documentaries, or engage a trainer to work on trouble spots. A gorgeous pool with massage features also gives you the option of water therapy while taking in the looming vista of the imposing Petronas Twin Towers.

Granted, the fact that the GTower Hotel is conveniently located in a commercial building makes it easy for you to get that post-workout snack and a host of F & B tenants inside GTower will provide that plethora of choice. You can also eat in with an all-day dining menu providing gastronomic fulfilment and the gracious attentions of the staff certainly add to the seamlessness of the overall service.

An added benefit of staying at the hotel is the Tanzini restaurant, up on the 28th, which is a perfect space to entertain newfound business acquaintances or old friends. Dine in casual elegance and experience the freshness of ingredients which is the restaurant's stated ethos. Here, the fish swim in tanks, crisp vegetables are sourced daily and bread is freshly baked on the hour. From the hearty pastas done *al dente* to juicy lamb chops, a meal here will ensure the flow of good vibes and is a great way to burnish memories of your stay. **LE**