# The Upper House: Hong Kong's Epitome Of Lofty Understatement

* John Oseid

In this age of the hotel mega-lobby as trendy theme park and party central, how refreshing to enter a property that doesn’t really have one. How satisfying it is to glide up a cocooned escalator to a landing with sublime works of art, while a custom-designed ginger verbena scent envelops your senses.

In a few months, [The Upper House](https://www.upperhouse.com/en/default) in the Admiralty section of Hong Kong Island will enter its decennial anniversary year as one in a quartet of properties under the banner of [The House Collective](https://www.swirehotels.com/en/Our-Hotels/The-House-Collective.aspx) within the [Swire Hotels](http://swirehotels.com/) group.

The Upper House's understatedness begins with its discreet logo out front in which a graceful letter U sits above an inverted half-U and which together form an H with a curvy mid-section.

The fact that The Upper House takes up the 38th to 49th floors of a high-rise above the popular [Pacific Place](http://www.pacificplace.com.hk/) shopping complex does not account for its name as one might think. As that first escalator jaunt hints, the name reflects an upward journey taken in the artistic sense as guests discover slowly over their stay.

Originally, this [Preferred Hotels & Resorts](https://preferredhotels.com/destinations/hong-kong/the-upper-house?) member hotel was planned as private residences which means that today guests benefit from 730 square feet of space that make the rooms feel like private apartments. The 117 rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows, while soft tones are described as green tea, mauve purple and mineral blue.

With bathrooms that rival the size of a studio apartment, there's plenty of room for a huge limestone spa tub that overlooks the cityscape. Around the room, information nuggets are printed on cool paper weight-sized clear resin blocks; by the tub, guests will notice a helpful reminder to close the curtains. English-made [Bamford](https://www.bamford.com/) bath products are featured, while for a tub soak Moroccan rose otto essential oil is provided.

The Upper House's understated aesthetic is even more of a stunning achievement for Hong Kong-born, Cambridge-trained architect and designer [Andre Fu](http://afso.net/profile/andre-fu/) when you consider that it was his first big commission. Fu has gone on to build an entire lifestyle brand from which his new [Fargesia](https://www.andrefuliving.com/products/fargesia) eau de toilette is found in rooms. Among many fine art books placed on living room coffee tables, one is devoted to the work of Fu.

Which takes us again to Fu's upward journey concept. The hotel prints a handsome and handy mini-poster guide called the Poetic Upward Journey which displays the titles and artists behind the property's major art works. You can literally follow the works upward, from the Stone Curtain entrance facade for which renowned British artistic designer [Thomas Heatherwick](http://www.heatherwick.com/) used Bedonia sandstone to the sixth-level landing where [Cynthia Sah](http://www.cynthiasah.it/en/)’s sensuously smooth white marble Grain stops guests in their tracks to admire it.

Works of all media and dimensions show up in all places, from the Egyptian artist [Armen Agop](http://www.armenagop.com/)’s small black granite sculpture Silence and Choi Tae Hoon's elegant wall-mounted Forest-Mandala made of welded-steel to [Hirotoshi Sawada](http://www.s-s-d.com/)'s enormous stainless steel Rise sculpture that seems to flow like water down the ten-story Atrium.

The rooms themselves are graced by sculptor Marvin Minto Fang’s sandstone pieces from his series called Cocoon. Each room's unique piece is meant to conjure the shapes of nuts and seeds.

With a golden hue to its space on Level 49, Café Gray Deluxe and its long open kitchen are the brainchild of chef Gray Kunz who made his name in NYC at Lespinasse. The venue is committed to sustainability with its “ocean-friendly menu” that eschews vulnerable species. The house cured gravlax as a starter and the main of roasted organic chicken, porcini and chanterelle in a garlic-lemon thyme jus are big hits.

Despite not having an enormous lobby, The Upper House does indeed support gatherings. An outdoor space, The Lawn schedules cinema events, cocktail hours and yoga classes. With a living room fireplace ambience, The Sky Lounge hosts monthly Up Close seminars with leaders in fields from fashion, arts, literature and more; in the past, guests have heard from Victoria Beckham, Christian Louboutin and the Taschen publishing house's eponymous managing director Marlene Taschen.

Further copious cultural offerings lie within minutes of The Upper House. With a contemporary art museum, [Herzog & de Meuron](https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/index.html) contributed to the brand new [Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts](https://www.taikwun.hk/en/) which is made up of the original colonial-era Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison. Its huge public courtyard was formerly the prison exercise yard, around which today the complex also hosts restaurants and cafes.

For off-site drinks and dinner, many guests of The Upper House pop over to the Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant [Duddell’s](https://www.duddells.co/landing/) which is an art gallery in its own right. Its lounge and leafy patio are the place to be seen.

For a nightcap with Victoria Harbour views, you can head back to The Upper House's 49th floor and sit and sip at the Café Gray Bar's nearly-fifty-foot-long bar or on one of its plush banquettes. Either way, you'll have completed your upward journey by then.

Travel notes: Savvy travelers from North America know that the way to go to Hong Kong is with the flag carrier [Cathay Pacific Airways](https://www.cathaypacific.com/cx/en_US.html). Aficionados of the world's great Business Class lounges are excited about the airline's recent remaking of its four lounges that are spread across [Hong Kong International Airport](https://www.hongkongairport.com/) (HKG).

For travelers about to head back to North America, Cathay Pacific's intimate new [Deck](https://www.cathaypacific.com/cx/en_US/travel-information/flying-with-us/all-lounges/hong-kong-international-airport-lounges/the-deck.html) in Terminal 1 is the ideal spot for a brief refreshing before boarding. The Deck has one of the lounge system's signature noodle bars in its bright Terrace space. With muted wood tones and pod chairs, [Ilse Crawford](http://www.studioilse.com/)'s design work in the lounge interior shows strong Mid-Century modern elements. The plush loungers in the dedicated relaxation room would fit nicely in your living room, you'll think. The eight shower rooms with the [Aesop](https://www.aesop.com/us/c/skin) skincare brand are more spacious than those in many hotels.

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