

FEATURE

THE REBIRTH OF VIEUX PARIS

It was a chilly night in October when I first stepped foot into the recently refurbished lobby of Le Bristol Paris. As I moved further from the doorway, I was able to shake the water off my boots from walking the rain soaked sidewalk of the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honore, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I had just been transported to the roaring '20s.

It was the night of Le Bristol's 90th birthday celebration, and the hotel had spared no expense to recreate a speakeasy-style soiree for its most loyal guests and a few members of the media. Live jazz music played in the lobby and a very animated maître des cérémonies worked the room, while women dressed in beaded slip dresses with kitten heels and cigarette holders sipped rare vintage Dom Pérignon Champagne, giggling alongside their dapper dates dressed in dark suits with canes and white-silk scarves. Although the atmosphere was just as lively and vibrant as it likely was when the hotel first opened in 1925, there was a noticeable air of renewal and modernity bustling around that night, as this iconic hotel was also celebrating the end of a six-year restoration that reinvigorated the hotel's luxurious standards.

And Le Bristol isn't the only one celebrating. Hotels across Paris have fallen under a spell of reawakening La Belle Époque. In fact, not since Paris was "modernized" back in the mid-1800s at the hand of Baron George Eugene Haussmann has the city seen such drastic renovations. After a noticeable wave of Asian-run five star hotels opening in recent years (the Mandarin Oriental, Raffles, Shangri-La, and The Peninsula among them), the hotel scene is now dominated by re-launched homegrown icons. In addition to Le Bristol Paris, Ritz Paris, Hotel Regina, Hôtel Plaza Athénée and more are back at it again with stunning new renovations and restorations to welcome the new generation of gilded guests. →

THE REVIVAL OF SOME OF PARIS' MOST LEGENDARY HOTELS IS RE-ENERGIZING THE CITY'S LUXURY HOTEL LANDSCAPE. KRISTY ALPERT GETS A PEEK BEHIND THE GILDED DOORS.



"It is something very positive for Paris and its image to have all these renovated properties featuring the highest standards," says Didier Le Calvez, CEO of Le Bristol Paris and COO of Oetker Collection. "Paris must not reinvent itself. Paris is known for its grand luxury properties and palaces, and I think that the city needs to embrace its heritage and what it represents to the world. It is a city that was lucky enough to escape from WWI and WWII destructions. It offers an exceptional architectural patrimony with medieval parts and Haussmanian areas. Paris is the City of Light, and it needs embrace its international exposure and give magic to the people visiting, because that is what they are expecting. Of course we need to renovate the properties, but most of all, we need to embrace our history."

From hotels that shut their doors for years to revamps that cost upwards of \$250 million dollars, here are a few of the top renovations, reconstructions, and restorations from Paris' most emblematic hotels.

RITZ PARIS. Not since the doors first opened for the Ritz Paris in 1898 has this Place Vendôme icon seen such excitement. After closing in 2012 for what would soon become billed as the biggest restoration in its history—and after a few unforeseen delays (including a top-floor fire)—the grand dame hotel finally



debuted its \$200 million renovation in June 2016. Noted designer / architect Thierry Despont's stunning new interiors include refreshed leisure areas, redone rooms, and 15 renovated historic prestige suites, while other perks range from a privacy tunnel for celebrity guests and the world's first-ever Chanel Spa, to three restaurants, three bars, and gardens and terraces with retractable roofs and heated floors. Michelin-starred chef Nicolas Sale now oversees the hotel's fine dining restaurant, L'Espadon, where esteemed sommelier Estelle Touzet continues the hotel's long-established reputation for serving the finest wines and most prestigious spirits. ritzparis.com



LE BRISTOL PARIS. It took six years for Le Bristol Paris to complete its renovation program—which it did while keeping its doors open to guests, making it one of the most discrete luxury hotels re-dos in recent history. The hotel debuted a fully refurbished lobby, restored guest rooms and suites, and nineteen new seventh floor accommodations just in time for its 90th birthday this year. The renovations also included incorporating new features into the hotel, from design elements like white Calacatta Michelangelo marble imported from Italy in the lobby, to new facilities like a Michelin-starred brasserie (the 114 Faubourg), revived Le Bar du Bristol, and the Spa Le Bristol by La Prairie. lebristolparis.com

HOTEL REGINA. No stranger to refurbishments, the Hotel Regina first opened its doors to guests in 1900, after being transformed from a former king's stable into a grand hotel. The Regina boasts a uniquely Belle Époque setting, surrounded by the Musee du Louvre, the Tuileries garden, and the Musee de L'Orangerie. The journey to completing this 17-million Euro renovation project wasn't an easy one, as it involved replacing the pipes, overhauling the electricity, and carefully working around historic features like the original green ceramic and original revolving door. The hotel debuted the finished project in 2015, having successfully maintained the French charm and authenticity of the hotel while updating the property to suit modern guests' expectations. leshotelsbaverez.com





FEATURE

HÔTEL PLAZA ATHÉNÉE. More accurately described as a gentle face-lift rather than a full-blown renovation, the Hôtel Plaza Athénée completed its \$268 million-dollar project in 2014. This marquee Dorchester Collection property has been the epitome of high fashion since it opened in 1913, long-favored by designers like Christian Dior. Today, the hotel continues that legacy of leading couture from floor to ceiling—quite literally, as the hotel's basement is now home to the Dior Institute and the new ceiling of Le Bar was designed by Patrick Jouin to pay homage to the tweed of Chanel jackets. Along with a Bruno Moinard redesigned lobby, the hotel acquired three buildings that added 14 more guest rooms and three event spaces to the already spacious property. dorchestercollection.com



THE HÔTEL DE CRILLON. Originally commissioned in 1758 by King Louis XV, the Hotel de Crillon closed its doors in 2013 to launch a meticulous restoration process set to restore the hotel's 18-century luster while bringing its standards of staying into the modern age. The hotel is scheduled to open in 2017 as a new member of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, and will feature artistic interiors designed by Aline d'Amman and his team of three Paris-based decorators. The hotel will also feature expanded guest rooms, suites designed by Karl Lagerfeld, a subterranean pool, a spa, and a wine cellar with a tasting room. crillon.com



THE HILTON PARIS OPERA. This historic property was the first deluxe hotel in Paris, opening on May 7, 1889, to accommodate guests of the 1900 World's Fair. Famed architect Jean Juste Lisch was responsible for the design of both the hotel and the neighboring Gare Saint-Lazare train station, and, even after a \$50 million renovation and rebranding project, Lisch's exquisite handiwork can still be seen in the beautifully-restored spaces of the hotel. The highly-revered design firm Richmond International led the project with a discerning eye to update the interior spaces, transforming Le Grand Salon into the centerpiece for the hotel's 268 guestrooms and suites, multiple restaurants, and expansive meeting and event spaces. hiltonparisoperahotel.com

