

# YAK & YETI

## THE HERITAGE HOTEL



Kathmandu has always been a favored destination for those seeking historical architecture. Named as one of the World Cultural Heritage Sites by UNESCO, the entire Kathmandu Valley is a living museum filled with palaces, temples, holy sites and other cultural treasures.

As a major crossroad between India and Tibet, architectural styles of diverse origins flourish here, from the Mughal-inspired Krishna Temples to the Tibetan and Bhutanese style gompas or monasteries. But it is the traditional style of building using brick and wood, which naturally dominates and gives definition to the Valley's landscape. Called the Newari style (after the Newars, the people of the Kathmandu Valley), this type of architecture developed during the reign of the Malla kings during the 12th – 18th c, the so-called Golden Age in Nepal's art history.

Architectural influence from the West came in the 1850s during the time of the Ranas. The Ranas adopted the Neo-Classical style from Europe in the design of their palatial homes and stately government buildings. Interestingly, while the Ranas brought in new ideas from the West, they also closed Nepal's



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doors to the outside world. During their controversial rule, very few foreign visitors were given permission to enter Nepal.

Today, the Ranas' former palaces have been converted into more accessible spaces. One particular building located in central Kathmandu have now been turned into an upscale hotel by the Saraf family.

Saraf Industries Limited was established in 1974 and is the principal holding company of Radhe Shyam Saraf and the Saraf family's hotel portfolio. At present the Saraf family owns seven hotels in India and Nepal.

Back in Nepal R.S. Saraf met someone after his own heart, a similar zest for entrepreneurship: Boris Lissanovitch. A strong friendship grew between R.S Saraf and Boris. The labour of this friendship turned into a restaurant called the Yak & Yeti. He later turned this establishment into a full fledged hotel with the funding of World Bank. Historic in its own right,

probably the only time on record that the financial body has funded the single individual.

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Maharajah Bir Shumsher was then the Prime Minister of Nepal and the Lal Durbar was his third palace. While little survives of his other two homes, the Seto Durbar and the Phora Durbar, the Lal Durbar has been well-documented and preserved. Victorian inspired, the Lal Durbar remains regal and now comprises the palace wing of the Hotel.

The Maharaja's former private quarters now function as the Hotel's ballrooms and convention halls and all

retain the original Rana decor. The crystal chandeliers, the marble tiles, the floral carvings and murals, the cut glass and gilt mirrors – all speak of opulence and luxury. Meanwhile, old photographs spread throughout the walls, narrate the rich story of the Maharajah and his rule over Nepal.

Also housed in the Lal Durbar wing is one of Nepal's famed restaurants, the the Chimney. The Chimney, was founded by the famous Russian gastronome Boris Lissanevitch. Its red brick walls, open fireplace and its signature copper chimney provide a warm and cozy setting for fine dining. It serves continental food as well as

Russian staples.

The Naachghar occupies one of the most historic rooms in the palace – the former theater cum dining hall. Today it serves as a classical banquet venue with facilities for stage performance.

The hotel's 270 rooms and suites are located in 2 other wings, which were later additions to the main building. The Durbar and Newari wing both depart from the Neo-Classical style and reflect a more hybrid form of traditional and modern architecture. The Newari wing, built in the 1970s, is in keeping with the traditional Newari style with its brick walls and woodcarvings. The

Durbar wing, which was built more recently, has more subdued rooms with discreet touches of Asian elegance.

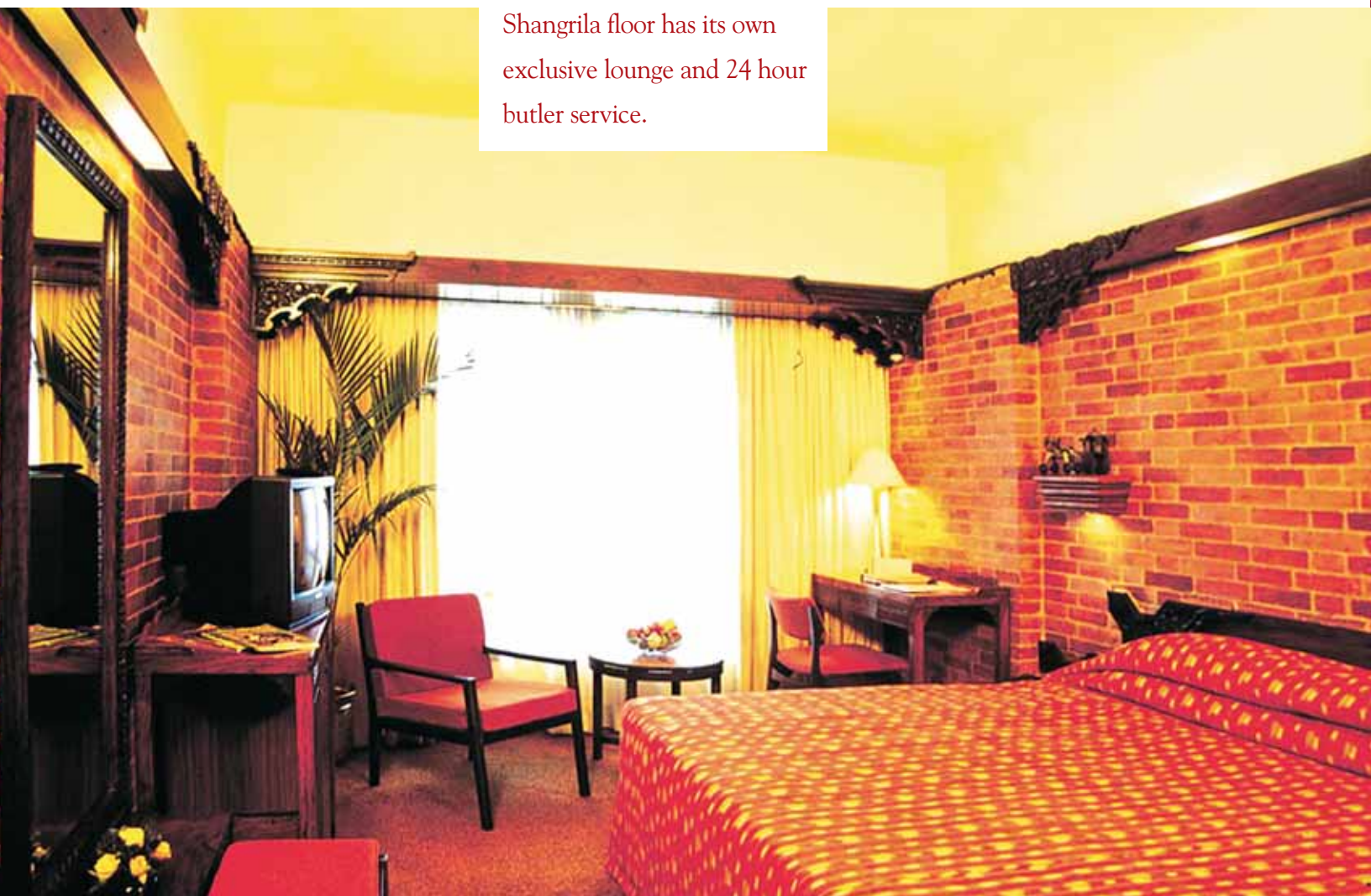
An entire floor of the hotel is designed especially for business travelers. The Club Shangrila floor has its own exclusive lounge and 24 hour butler service. There are also Junior, Business and Executive Suites with adjoining sitting rooms. The most

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expensive and luxurious rooms in the hotel, the Tibetan and Newari Suites, are located on the top floor and are richly furnished with Tibetan and Nepali antiques, carpets and silks. Both suites also have their own private terraces with views of the hotel's lush grounds and the grand Himalayas.

The Chimney Restaurant with brick walls, open fireplace and its signature copper chimney provide a warm and cozy setting for fine dining. It serves continental food as well as Russian staples.

As expected of hotels of this status, the Hotel Yak and Yeti offers facilities such as a Business Center, outdoor





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Kingdoms and dynasties come and go and rulers change over time but some things remain constant in Nepal. More than a century ago, the Lal Durbar housed an aristocratic family and today, as the Hotel Yak and Yeti, it continues to indulge its guests with all the pampering suited for royalty.

swimming pools and tennis courts, a health club and spa, a night club and bar and a casino. It also has an in-house travel desk, which can make all the arrangements for sightseeing, tours and other adventures in Nepal.

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Dear Dad,

Writing to you sprawled out on the luscious green gardens of a 100 year old palace. And no, I'm not in a museum. In fact, this is my home during my stay in Kathmandu! I have to admit that this hotel is as enchanting and wonderful as the city itself. It's modern and comfortable yet filled with the charming elegance of an ancient era. And the best part is that I'm just minutes away from the city's shopping hub !

I only wish you were here to enjoy this with me. I feel like a Queen out here dad. Why shouldn't I? After all, I'm staying at the Yak & Yeti !!!

Love,

M

P.S. I'm told that Richard Gere once occupied a suite here. Isn't that cool ?? 😊



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