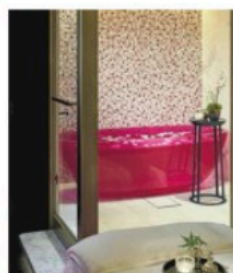


HOTEL REVIEW FAUCHON L'HOTEL KYOTO



Clockwise from main: The tea saloon at Fauchon L'Hotel; the hotel's spa; a Classic guest room; the Fauchon restaurant with panoramic views of Kyoto.



French deli flair for Japan digs

This hotel is a seamless tapestry of Asian and European influences, writes *Emily McAuliffe*.

THE BACKSTORY

Why would you stay at a French hotel in Japan? In Kyoto it makes sense. You see, Kyoto and Paris are sister cities, so when the French delicatessen brand Fauchon (revered for its tea and macarons) decided to open its second luxury hotel in the world (after Paris) in September 2021, Kyoto was the natural choice. Fauchon took over an old hotel and turned the 150 rooms into 59 suites, essentially doubling the room sizes.

THE SETTING

The refurb (as opposed to demolition) of a somewhat tired 30-year-old hotel was strategic - city planning rules now cap building heights, but the hotel was constructed at a time when building to 10 floors was fair game. The result? Epic river, city and mountain views. From the dining area, you can see the regal Kiyomizu-dera temple standing tall on the hillside (which looks deceptively far away, but is just a 20-minute walk).

The hotel is a six-minute taxi ride from Kyoto station and a 10-minute walk to the stylish Kawaramachi neighbourhood, accessed via cute lantern-lit laneways. The cherry blossom-lined river is practically on your doorstep and there are striking views of Kyoto's famous orange and red leaves during autumn.

THE STYLE

The colour palette is pink, gold, black and white, but it feels glamorous, not kitsch, and I can imagine the Fauchon having trendy retro status in 30 years' time. Though a French hotel, the styling is undeniably Japanese, with *sakura* (cherry blossom) motifs laced through the staircase railing, bamboo patterns in the corridors and *ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangements) throughout.

THE ROOMS

Careful detailing carries through to the rooms, where walls are adorned in

SNAPSHOT

Where: Fauchon L'Hotel Kyoto, 406 Nanbacho, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto

How much: Rooms start at JPY57,980 (\$666)

Explore more: hotelfauchonkyoto.com

delicate *uvashi* (Japanese paper), and bed headboards and armchairs are wrapped in Nishijin-ori, the thick fabric used to make kimonos. In true Japanese style, the bidet toilet is a highlight - it lifts its seat, warms, deodorises and flushes by itself. Beds are comfortable, and the fluffy towels and robes, neatly folded pyjamas and Dyson hairdryer add to the luxury.

THE FOOD

The 10th-floor restaurant has the best views in the hotel and offers a four- or six-course French-style set menu, made with local ingredients and Japanese precision. Our Wagyu beef was top-class, and the turbot fillet in a silky broth was delicate and well balanced. Breakfast is a multi-course experience, with French cheese,

buttery croissants, eggs, salad and fruit. On Friday and Saturday nights, complimentary tea-infused cocktails are offered in the bar near reception. Each room comes with a gourmet bar behind a (pink) double-door pantry. Far from a tokenistic packet of biscuits or plate of macarons, there's a generous selection of crackers, shortbread, chocolates and Fauchon tea.

THE ACTION

The hotel has a spa, tea saloon (where you can book a tea ceremony) and small gym. You'll probably want to spend most of your time exploring the quaint streets, Nishiki food market and a selection of the 2000-odd Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines across the city. Don't miss the 5000-plus orange torii gates of Fushimi Inari-Taisha shrine, which is a 20-minute train ride away.

UNFORGETTABLE

The endless supply of sweet treats, including soft and chewy macarons, define the hotel experience, but, when you get home, you'll probably miss the toilet the most.

|| Emily McAuliffe was a guest of Fauchon L'Hotel Kyoto

