





St. Regis

ABU DHABI

Blending Emirati design with Art Deco aesthetics, St. Regis Abu Dhabi resides in Nation Towers, the capital's new landmark skyscraper.

Words: Molly Dolan | Photography: Courtesy of St. Regis

How do you combine the emblematic design of a century-old brand with Arabian culture, factoring in an ultra-modern skyscraper and the world's highest skybridge? St. Regis Abu Dhabi has the answers.

Located at the southern end of the Corniche, the newbuild Nation Towers houses the latest addition to the St. Regis portfolio. A distinctive landmark on the Abu Dhabi skyline, the mixed-use complex is designed by WZMH Architects and made up of two skyscrapers linked by a skybridge.

It is the second St. Regis in the UAE capital, the first of which, St. Regis Saadiyat Island, opened in February 2012. Both have been designed by global practice Hirsch Bedner Associates. "The overall

design was centred on Art Deco detailing with a contemporary mood," explains Josh Mason, Associate at HBA Dubai, of the new addition. "Inspiration came from the St. Regis brand's luxury and grandeur, and from Emirati culture. The design team did extensive research into the region as well as the Art Deco style."

As Abu Dhabi did not experience the Art Deco era of the Twenties and Thirties in the way that destinations such as New York and Shanghai did, HBA fashioned an imaginary historical starting point: what would classical Art Deco have looked like if it had been expressed in Abu Dhabi? This pushed the designers to look to the colours of surrounding sands, traditional foods, spices and the flourishing markets of the time for inspiration, re-envisioning it for



Above: The Abu Dhabi Suite sits 200 metres above ground, spanning the Nation Towers' skybridge **Opposite Page (Top):** The St. Regis Bar is divided into three spaces; a Library, a Bar and a Cigar Bar **Bottom:** The Abu Dhabi Suite features a Grand Drawing Room, complete with intricate glass dome and Deco detailing

the 21st century. "With the St. Regis Abu Dhabi, we aimed to create a sophisticated and modern environment that marries Arabic influences with the needs of global travellers," comments Mason. "Using local references, we were able to combine the elegant lines of Arabic design with stately and modernist Art Deco forms to create a unique stand-out hotel on par with the greatest hotels worldwide."

A clear amalgamation of the styles is seen in the entrance lobby, where homage is paid to the region's natural resource-based economy. "It's a unique area," states Mason, "with its dual-winding staircase around a custom designed tapestry of a historical scene of Abu Dhabi's dhow ships and pearl diving." St. Regis Hotels around the world are particularly known for two design elements, the staircase and chandeliers, and St. Regis Abu Dhabi lives up to this reputation, featuring low-hanging Arabian lantern-inspired chandeliers in the grand lobby. "The best hotel design should capture the sense of place, integrating the local culture into the design for an extraordinary experience," continues Mason.

Paying homage to the St. Regis ritual of afternoon tea, the tea lounge is nestled in the grand reception hall, complete with deep pile carpets and signature crystal and bronze lantern chandeliers. Progression up the curved staircase leads to a number of the hotel's culinary venues, including Villa Toscana, the Tuscan-inspired restaurant featuring vaulted ceilings and exposed beams, as well as a sizeable stone fireplace. A focal point of the gastronomy outlets is Rhodes 44, which incorporates the atmosphere of open-air souks and takes its name from Gary Rhodes, who heads the eatery. Highlights of the restaurant include the individual food stations and outdoor space, reminiscent of a traditional Abu Dhabi wooden-hulled boat.

Advancing 33 floors up, the 282 sumptuous guestrooms begin, accompanied by 55 suites that all offer panoramic views of the Arabian Gulf. "The overall palette is a neutral desert base colouration, with bold brushes of colour and intricate local patterns," describes Mason. "The attention to detail is what makes this project special, there is detail at every level."

The Deco theme is as evident in the guestrooms as ever, with rich, dark walnut furniture featuring sleek curves and ornate detailing. Meanwhile, the bathtub offers a sense of luxury: freestanding and positioned at floor-to-ceiling windows. The waterfront views dominate the room and are rivalled only by the white stone mosaic or marble cladding on the floor, walls and ceiling.

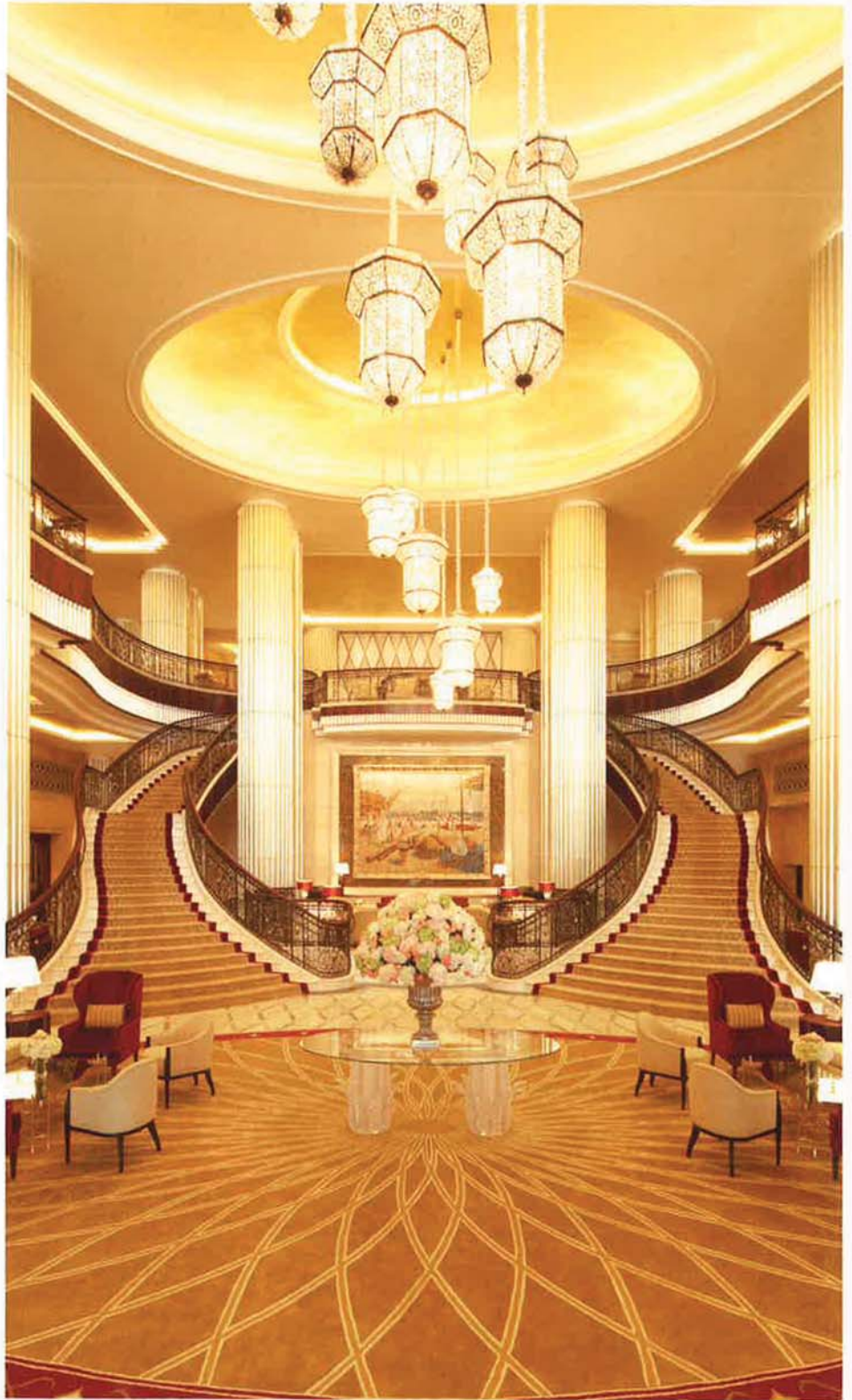
Linking the two buildings of Nation Towers is a skybridge, positioned 200 metres above ground and home to the Abu Dhabi Suite. Spanning two floors and 1,120m², the suite offers panoramic views of both the Corniche and the city skyline. Inspired by the spirit of the 'Roaring Twenties', the design features bold lines and bespoke embellishment, with the consistent colour palette of warm tones such as gold and amber.

Reinforcing a desire to highlight local culture at every opportunity, Arabian motifs in stone and onyx define the floor pattern, complemented by silk and velvet fabrics in hues of ruby, turquoise and amber. "The location absolutely affects the design and feel. The artwork, accessories and patterns tell their own story of Abu Dhabi's history," notes Mason.

Further elevating the level of luxury, custom furniture is accented with Macassar ebony, ivory, gold leaf and crystal. The Abu Dhabi Suite also features its own spa with double treatment room, movie



Right: Low hanging Arabian lantern-inspired chandeliers feature in the hotel's lobby



theatre, kitchen and gym. Private elevator access adds to the exclusivity of the room, heightening indulgence and creating the feeling of a private sanctuary, complete with staff quarters.

All guestrooms and suites overlook the Nation Riviera Beach Club, complete with its own stretch of beach and a cabana-surrounded swimming pool, with Jacuzzi area and immersed pool bar, offering tranquil views over the beachfront. This sense of relaxation is extended back inside Nation Towers, with the hotel's Remède Spa. A sprawling 3,200m², the spa includes 11 treatment rooms inspired by the sand dunes of the Arabian desert, together with St. Regis' opulence and sophistication. The soothing light of the spa complements the rich, dark woods and embossed leather featured throughout.

"We enjoy working on luxury brands as both the budget and design dream come together," concludes Sandra Cortner, Principal at HBA Atlanta.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 283 guestrooms | 8 restaurants | 4 bars | Spa: 3,200m² | Event Space: 2,195m² | www.stregisabudhabi.com
Operator: Starwood Hotels and Resorts | **Tower Architecture:** WZMH Architects | **Interior Design:** Hirsch Bedner Associates
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