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FACT FILE

HOW MANY ROOMS? There are 117 rooms – 52 Studio 70s, 42 Studio 80s, 21 Upper suites and two Penthouses.

ROOM HIGHLIGHTS The iPod Touches that replace the normal hotel services brochure, and the free wifi.

PRICE Internet rates for a midweek stay in April started from HK\$3,630 (£298) for a Studio 70 room.

CONTACT The Upper House, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway; tel +852 2918 1838; upperhouse.com

HOTEL CHECK

HONG KONG

The Upper House

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Open since October, this five-star boutique hotel was the second Swire Hotels property to open, following the Opposite House in Beijing. First impressions are of a Zen-like retreat, a world away from the high-end commercialism of Pacific Place. A Bedonia stone doorway by English designer Thomas Heatherwick gives the impression of a curtain being opened to welcome visitors to a private residence, and a four-metre-high textured nickel front door is set into floor-to-ceiling glass walls that rise from pools of water.

Once inside, you walk through a circular bamboo enclosure known as the Lantern, to a long escalator that takes you to the sixth floor. Here, there is a lounge with doors opening out on to an open space with a lawn and chairs, and lifts to whisk you up for your in-room check-in.

Many works of art are displayed throughout the hotel, including a Marvin Feng wood-grain sandstone sculpture in every room. The hotel is on floors 38 to 49 and wraps itself around a 40-metre atrium, with Hiroshiawata Sawada's stainless steel sculpture *Rise* as a feature. Although the hotel is contemporary Oriental in design, as the "House" element of the name suggests, much effort has been made to give it a friendly, second-home feel, and it largely succeeds.

WHERE IS IT? Pacific Place, Admiralty, joining the Shangri-La, Conrad and JW Marriott properties (for reviews of the

latter two, see business traveller.com/tried-and-tested). It is directly above the mall (and on top of the JW Marriott building), and has excellent connections via the MTR station to the Airport Express station and the airport.

ROOM FACILITIES The 117 rooms have harbour or island views, and as a result of formerly being apartments, are all large. The basic room, a Studio 70, is 68 sqm, claimed to be the largest entry-level room in Hong Kong – although it should really be called a Studio 68. There are 52 of these.

Other categories are Studio 80, which is 79 sqm (there are 42 of these), 21 Upper suites at 114 sqm, and two 182 sqm Penthouses. All come in one of two colour schemes – "bamboo", with solid ash flooring, bamboo timber and lilac upholstery, or "celadon", featuring green-tea upholstery, limed oak flooring and cream oak timber. They come with luxury 400 thread-count Egyptian cotton and down bedding, a free in-room bar, a dual temperature wine fridge, an espresso machine and a selection of teas.

The technology in the rooms is comprehensive, with an iPod Touch replacing the normal hotel services book. It also allows you to access room service, local area information, weather, news and feedback forms at the touch of a screen. There is an LCD TV with 2.1 surround-sound and simple connectivity for PC, camcorder and MP3, and free wired and wireless internet access throughout the hotel – including, amazingly, in the Lexus RX450h hybrid chauffeur car.

The bathrooms are magnificent, all over 30 sqm with panoramic windows, although you have to draw the curtains if you are not to provide a spectacle to those in neighbouring buildings. Lined with Italian Perlato Svevo natural limestone floors and

beige Turkish Terre d'Oriente limestone walls, they are simple and uncluttered.

There are walk-in rainshowers, a dressing area and deep soaking baths. Chemical-free toiletries from UK company Ren are the final touch.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS Café Gray Deluxe is on the 49th floor overlooking Victoria Harbour and is styled as a 21st-century "grand café", serving European classics from a 14-metre-long open kitchen and equally long bar. The main dining room has seating for 100 and there are semi-private dining areas with views of the kitchen. A private room for 12 is available and there is a bar and lounge seating 88. Linked to Café Gray Bar by a bridge that crosses the atrium (pictured above right), the Sky lounge serves cocktails throughout the day.

BUSINESS AND MEETING FACILITIES The hotel doesn't have a business centre and there are no meeting rooms, although guests can use one in the Pacific Place mall beneath the hotel.

LEISURE FACILITIES There is a fair-sized gym on the 48th floor. There is no spa, although guests can use the one in the Pacific Place mall. The hotel doesn't have a pool, but negotiations are ongoing to use the one in the JW Marriott.

Tom Otley



VERDICT

The Upper House has positioned itself at the top of the Hong Kong market in every sense – in elevation, pricing and quality. It succeeds in all of this and is a superb hotel with excellent service.