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latest spa news

03 Jul 2015

Mi Xun Spa opens in restored monastery at The Temple House hotel

BY JAK PHILLIPS

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The restored monastery makes a unique setting for the hotel and spa

The Mi Xun Spa opens this month in a restored monastery at Swire Hotels' The Temple House – an urban hotel in Chengdu, China. The spa includes 11 treatment areas, a gentleman's barbershop, and a teahouse, as well as a retail spa shop.

Operated in-house by Swire Hotels, the 2,000sq ft (186sq m) spa uses products from Natura Bisse, Mesoestic, Themas and Refinery, and Coates also works to match treatments to the wellness benefits of different teas in the tearoom.

"It's so unique to be able to offer modern-day treatments in such an old, characteristic and beautiful building," spa director Kelly Coates told *Spa Opportunities*.

This is the third in Swire's House Collective portfolio, following The Opposite House in Beijing and The Upper House in Hong Kong. The hotel is located in the heart of Chengdu within the Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu, a project jointly developed by Sino-Ocean Land and Swire Properties. It is designed by UK-based Make Architects, which also collaborated with Swire Hotels on its Montpellier Chapter Hotel in Cheltenham, England, in 2010.

The hotel includes 100 bedrooms and 42 adjoined serviced apartments, and forms part of the government's conservation project to preserve the heritage buildings surrounding the 1,000-year-old Daci Temple.

The three-dimensional woven façade combines modern design with the traditional Chengdu architectural elements of timber, brick and step stones, the company said. Bamboo trees frame the hotel's entrance, which is set in a restored hundred-year-old Chinese courtyard building.

Swire said The Temple House is an "understated luxury experience," designed to evoke the modest houses provided for scholars who came from all over the world to study at the temple. Creating a welcoming, "local" quality was key to the design concept.

"The design was not a linear process," said Katy Ghahremani, Make partner and lead architect on the project. "It was an iterative dialogue with Swire Hotels, which made the process more interesting. We could look at the design holistically, and this created a really dynamic relationship between the design of the hotel's external and internal spaces."

The hotel has a typical Siheyuan, or 'courtyard house' design, with a sequence of courtyard gardens bordered by two L-plan medium-rise buildings that house the hotel rooms and apartments. A Qing Dynasty heritage building is the anchor and entrance point for the hotel.

Throughout the design process, Make and Swire Hotels undertook rigorous testing of visual and experiential possibilities relating to surface textures, internal light and shadow effects, and interior views, the company said. This means that rooms with city-facing views are solid and brick-built, for instance, while courtyard-facing facades are sheer curtain-walls of subtly fritted glass, designed to maximise the reflection of light into the courtyard.

The city-facing brick façades of the hotel were inspired by the local production of brocade, and feature woven-in brass elements, combining modern design with the traditional Chengdu architectural elements of timber, brick and step stones. The courtyard section includes stepped elements designed to be reminiscent of the terraced paddy fields of Sichuan's hillsides when seen from beneath, an effect also echoed in the design of the grand staircase.

"We want people to come to Chengdu and have a unique hotel experience, one they couldn't have in Hong Kong or Beijing," said Brian Williams, managing director of Swire Hotels. "The hotel is unique to Chengdu, and unique in Chengdu."

Swire Hotels is also set to open a new hotel, East, in Miami in Q4 2015.

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