



## Hotel Tugu Malang Surreally Monumental



By **Wendy Lim**  
**Images** from a Hotel Tugu Malang

Gaya Travel team have been hearing so much about Hotel Tugu Malang for quite some time. It was only in early February 2015 that our team finally managed to visit this highly reputable establishment, which left us all inspired, enlightened and respectful towards Pevanakan richness and Indonesian sophistication.



To reach the hotel, the team required to fly to Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, located in East Java. We were then whisked away by Hotel Tugu Malang's own transport to Malang, which is two hours and a half drive away from Surabaya airport. Based on our research, we learned that during the colonial times, Malang was claimed to be one of the most beautiful cities in South East Asia. Nowadays, the city still attracts travellers due to its relatively cooler temperature than Surabaya since it is situated 462 metres above sea level. Malang's role in relation to Surabaya is similar to how Bandung functions in relation to Jakarta.

### Nostalgic and charming

The low key exterior of Hotel Tugu Malang belies the wonders that await within. Upon arrival, we realised that the property personifies the unique blend of Dutch colonial heritage with Chinese Peranakan influence. We were informed that the land where the hotel sits on used to be a Chinese neighbourhood, located right at the heart of Malang Old Town, facing the monument for Indonesia's struggle of independence.

Hotel Tugu Malang is a sensuous and intimate bolthole, filled with bewildering priceless antique and artworks belonging to the hotel's owner and founder of Tugu Hotel's himself, Bapak Anhar Setjadjidarta, an accomplished lawyer and passionate antique collector. Gaya Travel team loves the hotel for being so rich in character and excitement without being intimidating, laughy or pretentious. Comprising only 49 rooms, the entire property is purposely created to be cosy and intimate. Due to the hotel's popularity, it is often fully booked during school and public holidays.

Guests who just checked in are recommended to follow the complimentary tour of the hotel to learn more about its background and fascinate over the impressive antique collection, and eventually savour satiating refreshments.

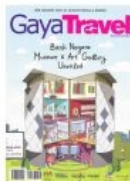


Non-guests are also welcome to join the tour by having to pay only Rp75,000 per person.

As we began exploring the property, we found that the hotel is replete with Peranakan and Indonesian elements, immersing guests with local aesthetic elegance and palpable sense of history through its furnishings and collection of antiques, each item telling its own story. It also pays homage to the elements of Indonesian civilisations that can be found in Indonesia such as the colonial Apesra dancers and Nirwana.

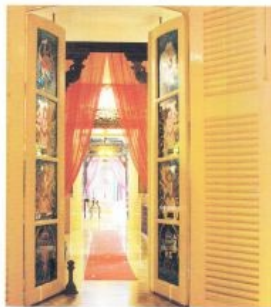
Hotel Tugu Malang attempts to invite guests back to the yesteryears – often referred to as a *sempow alweke* (times of old) – when culture was strong, purity was prized and products were mostly natural, manually manufactured and homemade. Such nostalgia can be felt at the hotel's impressive spaces such as the romantic dining hall called The Silk Road, the Sugar Baron Room that commemorates the legacy of Oer Tjong Ham, who was one of the richest men in Asia, and the Sunda Chinese-inspired Bahai Room where diners are surrounded by artefacts once belonged to old Chinese families that lived in Java. Guests will also be able to

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feel the *sempow alweke* vibe flowing freely at the hotel's all day dining outlet named Michel Restaurant and the quaint Roti Tugu Bakery, also known as Ulat Bakery.

Besides being nostalgic, Hotel Tugu Malang also transports guests to dreamlike settings, making it ideal for an inspiring surreal getaways, especially when guests check into any of Hotel Tugu Malang's evocative suites. The most dreamy of them all is the Apesra Suite, which features priceless antiques, a large antique canopy that is kitted with Tugu Hotel's signature handmade large copper bathtub under it, private spa area, a romantic dining area, and a 3.5-metre wide bed. If guests find the suite overly opulent and prefer those that are more demure, they can choose the other smaller yet no less remarkable ones like the Rades Sallah Suite with its strong Javanese identity or the Zarewad Suite that features antiques from the island of Madura. All of these suites, including the guest rooms, come with toiletries that are packaged using recycled and recyclable items, signifying the hotel's commitment to sustainability.





The dramatic characteristic does not just stop at the suites – it is also carried over to the long passageway called Endless Love Avenue, painted in splendidous violet with gigantic mosaic reproduction of Gustav Klimt 'The Kiss' at the end. The passageway then leads to the Sahara, a romantic and expansive space reminiscent of the tale of 1,001 Nights complete with 8th Century Moroccan chandeliers, palm trees and tented roof inlaid with mosaic works inspired from Gondal's designs. The passageway and the Sahara are popular for matrimonial ceremonies.

As guests step further into the Sahara, they are bound to encounter another space that is full of enchantment, likened to stepping into the sanctum of a mystifying ancient Buddhist stone temple that houses several statues from Cambodia. The space, which is simply called Chandri or Lotus Temple, is turned into a special venue for fine dining with cultural dance performance held every Wednesday evening.



#### Gastronomic haven

Ever since Gaya Travel Magazine team members were introduced to Tugu properties when covering Hotel Tugu Lombok over two years ago, we discovered that Tugu's establishments always emphasise on delicious and authentic Indonesian gastronomy alongside gratifying Western dishes. Truth be told, guests will almost never be disappointed when dining at any of Tugu hotels or restaurants, especially at Hotel Tugu Malang, the group's flagship property.

The hotel's 24-hour restaurant, Melati Restaurant – which offers menu that bursts with over 200 choices of food and beverages – is not only strong in terms of atmosphere but also in its gastronomic offerings. Gaya Travel team was truly impressed because we found that the hotel excels in Indonesian dishes like the restaurant's iconic Nasi Bak Madura (rice platter served with Malang's vegetable stew, coconut fritter, marinated beef, fried tripe, fried chicken and Madura spicy green sambal) and the must-try *Bakso*



*Malang* (dish comprising meatball or meat paste served with noodle, tofu, steamed and fried dumplings), alongside Western fare such as pasta and grilled meats. Close to the restaurant is a swanky bar called Bin Linn, which alludes to the sophisticated European salon culture.

Guests should not miss savouring the hotel's wistful complimentary tea time experience at the Javanese lounge situated above the lobby, where local snacks and delicacies are served from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. by the hotel's employee over a quaint traditional stall similar to the ones used by the peddlers of yore. There are also small adorable wooden seats facing the stall for guests to sit on so that they could easily reach out to the spread. The tea time is a valuable opportunity for guests to get acquainted with popular Indonesian snacks and cakes like *lase lumpur rolé* angng and

*Asw cava* *off*, including refreshing local teas, coffee and herbal beverages, without having to venture out of the hotel.

Gaya Travel team loves the gracefully aging look of Roti Tugu Bakery, also known as Urd Bakery, an adorably nostalgic bakery reminiscent of the times when the Dutch was still ruling Indonesia, located at a corner within Hotel Tugu Malang next to Melati Restaurant facing Jalan Kahuripan. The bakery serves freshly homemade baked bread and pastries daily, arguably the largest bread and cake selection in town. This is also the place where coffee lovers can buy Tugu's own brand of Premium Robusta coffee that becomes full bodied when brewed called Kawo Sari Coffee, sourced from a coffee plantation also belonging to Tugu Hotels, located one hour and a half drive away from Hotel Tugu Malang.



#### Exploring Malang

Guests need not confine themselves only at Hotel Tugu Malang when staying there, though that would not be a bad idea at all; Gaya Travel Magazine recommends that guests take the chance to explore Malang through a guided bicycle tour, offered by none other than the hotel itself. This two-hour-and-a-half to three-hour tour takes guests to the traditional bird market that opens since 7:00 a.m., the lush flower market that is connected to a labyrinthine local neighbourhood, Malang's oldest yet clean and well organised market since the times of the Dutch called Oro Oro Dowo, which is also the place where guests of Hotel Tugu Malang buy the ingredients for their cooking class; and Jalan Iden, the boulevard that is lined with jam-dropping mansions belonging to the Who's Who in Indonesia, including pre-independent Dutch colonial edifices. Along the way, guests also get the chance to take a short break at Und Corner, a sister establishment to the Und Bakery. The ideal time to start the tour would be around 8:30 a.m. daily, before the weather gets hotter.

#### Monumental experience

The word "tugu" means monument; based on Gaya Travel team's observation, it is obvious that Hotel Tugu Malang, together with the other establishments under the Tugu Hotels group, decidedly pull out all stops in turning each one of them into a monument – and destination – in their own right. Travellers are definitely in for a monumental treat whenever they stay at any of Tugu's properties, particularly Hotel Tugu Malang, the group's first hotel that undoubtedly lives up to the group's name.



Hotel Tugu Malang, INDONESIA  
IMAGE | Sharm