

REVIEW: MI SHANG PRADA BAR IN SHANGHAI

A DAY IN HO CHI MINH CITY

BUSINESS TRAVELLER

ASIA-PACIFIC

September/October
2026

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**BAR
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The Bar at Mi
Shang Prada

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HOTEL

The Imperial Hotel, Kyoto

A 90-year-old geisha theatre
transformed into a luxury hotel

READ THE REVIEW





Obayashi Corporation – the same construction company that built Yasaka Kaikan nearly 90 years ago – led the restoration, preserving around 16,000 original roof tiles while seamlessly integrating a contemporary extension.

Interiors by architect Tomoyuki Sakakida balance traditional Kyoto craftsmanship with understated modern design. After a day navigating Kyoto's increasingly crowded streets, returning to the hotel felt genuinely restorative.

The room

Accommodation is split between the newly built North Wing – inspired by Kyoto's traditional *machiya* townhouses and featuring tatami flooring – and rooms within the restored 1936 structure, some with private balconies overlooking the Kaburenjo theatre grounds.

Gion's strict 12m height limit means elevated views are rare, making the upper floors of the original 31m theatre particularly special.

My suite was generously proportioned by Japanese urban standards, with a separate living area, a comfortable workspace and a spacious bathroom

stocked with Penhaligon's toiletries.

The bed was exceptionally comfortable, while the ubiquitous Japanese high-tech toilet came complete with a motion-activated lid and integrated wash functions.

Food & beverage

The hotel offers four dining venues, including a guest-only rooftop bar overlooking Gion. It proved an excellent spot for an early evening drink, particularly the Mount Hiei signature cocktail made with fresh matcha and Mizuo yuzu.

Executive chef and Osakan-born Koji Imajo oversees the culinary programme.

Breakfast was a highlight, with a beautifully presented multi-course Japanese set featuring Saikyo miso-marinated black

halibut, simmered hijiki seaweed and sweet tofu dumplings.

The leisurely pace may not suit guests rushing to an early meeting, but those with time to spare will appreciate the attention to detail.

Amenities

The indoor swimming pool is finished in dark Kitagi stone, giving the space the atmosphere of a natural cave. The hotel also features a fitness centre and a spa with two treatment rooms.

The concierge deserves particular mention. Besides arranging restaurant reservations and transport, the team can organise cultural experiences including private visits to Gion *ochaya* (teahouses) and traditional Goshoninyo doll-painting workshops. Although my preferred experience was fully booked, they quickly suggested several thoughtful alternatives.

Meetings

There are no dedicated meeting rooms, reflecting the hotel's leisure-focused positioning. However, the rooftop bar and several communal spaces are well suited to informal conversations or small client meetings.

VERDICT

The focus on *omotenashi* – the Japanese art of hospitality – was clear to see, as was the emphasis on a more mindful, personalised approach to guests in what is Japan's premier tourist town.

BEST FOR

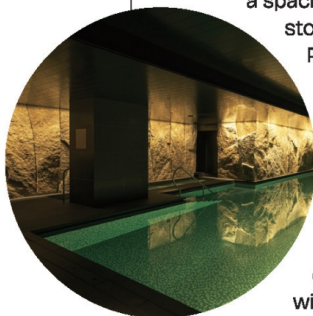
Travellers with an interest in history and culture, guests seeking understated luxury in a heritage setting and business visitors who value personalised service.

PRICE

Rates start from
JP¥164,500 per night

CONTACT

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imperialhotel.co.jp/en/kyoto



PREVIOUS PAGE:
Grand Premier Room

FROM TOP:
Imperial Hotel occupies the restored Yasaka Kaikan building; the cave-like swimming pool area

→ **OPENED IN MARCH**, the Imperial Hotel, Kyoto occupies the beautifully restored Yasaka Kaikan, a 90-year-old geisha theatre. Its revival gives the property a connection to the city's cultural heritage that few new openings can match.

Set within the historic Gion district, it is an ideal starting point for exploring Kyoto on foot. Temples, shrines and traditional wooden *machiya* (townhouses) are all within easy walking distance.

From your bedroom window, you may even spot *geiko* (the Kyoto term for geisha) and *maiko* (their apprentices) walking to or from an engagement, or rickshaw pullers weaving through the district's narrow streets.

The hotel

The Yasaka Kaikan building once hosted performances, concerts and community events associated with the neighbouring Gion Kobu Kaburenjo theatre. Following an extensive restoration, it reopened this spring as the Imperial Hotel, Kyoto.

With just 55 rooms, the property has the intimacy of a boutique hotel despite carrying the Imperial name.

Service was quietly attentive throughout my stay. Staff greeted me by name and thoughtful touches, including afternoon matcha ice cream and house-baked cookies, reinforced the hotel's highly personalised approach to hospitality.

The building itself is a nationally registered Tangible Cultural Property.