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Shop Talk

PLUSH PALACE

With the grand opening of Raffles, Bostonians and tourists alike now have a cool new place to kick back in the Back Bay. *By Tonya Mezrich*

Photograph by Mona Miri





PICTURE THIS: Magnificent wood doors are adorned with an elegant brass doorknob at the center, embodying the essence of the Back Bay. But hold on—do we push or pull this grand handle? As I reach to solve the mystery, the door swings open, and the ever-charismatic Jordan Warshaw appears, welcoming me into the nerve center of the first North American outpost of the Singapore-based hotel brand Raffles.

Inside, the gleaming floors beckon with a sophisticated herringbone pattern, while the statement coffee table to my left is casually strewn with a hard hat and neon yellow vest. The \$400-million-plus hotel/residential complex is still under construction, after all, scheduled to open this summer.

It's akin to a star being born a decade after its conception—at least, that's what visionaries Warshaw of the Noannet Group and Gary Saunders of the Saunders Hotel Group would say. The two worked together with Cain International to develop the mal-used parcel of land in the Hancock Tower's shadow. After interest from half

Clockwise from left, Raffles' shiny 394-foot tower makes a mark on the Boston skyline; the guest rooms take inspiration from classic Back Bay homes; a rendering of the soon-to-open restaurant in the hotel's "Sky Lobby."

a dozen hotel groups, the pair decided to partner with Raffles, a brand they believed would take Boston's hospitality scene to new heights—394 feet, to be exact. Still, the scale of what they've accomplished sometimes seems hard to believe. "At the time we purchased this little eight-story building, we had no idea it would evolve into a 35-story signature building for the city," muses Warshaw.

As we stroll through the elegant foyer, I get my first taste of the space. Framed photos of iconic local destinations such as the Boston Public Library, La Voile, and Saltie Girl grace the walls—there's even, coincidentally, a snapshot of the L.A. Burdick hot chocolate I treated myself to on the way over. "Every Raffles provides a uniquely intimate and personalized level

of service," Saunders explains. "As well as a sense of place that is true to its location." In Boston, that translates to details reminiscent of those you'd find "in a classic Back Bay home," he notes, with rich elements chosen by the design teams, Rockwell Group and Stonehill Taylor. Once open, the building will boast 146 residences, 147 hotel rooms, and one very grand ballroom.

Condo dwellers and visitors alike will relish the many dining and lounge venues—including a restaurant on the multi-level "Sky Lobby" more than a dozen floors up, run by Michelin-starred chef George Mendes—and an 18th-floor speakeasy for late-night snacks. And don't forget the 20-meter indoor pool and spa that will be open to residents and hotel guests—I surely won't.