

Blog Report

The Gold Service Scholarship 2024 educational trip to Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong and Bangkok

I would first like to start by once again thanking all of our generous sponsors and trustees for making this one in a lifetime opportunity possible.



Our experience is as follows....

Simona Fedorova and I were fortunate enough to visit 2 world renowned properties as Scholar and Commended Finalist.

The first being M.O Bangkok where unreasonable hospitality thrives. Upon arrival we were both presented with a welcome drink of iced tea as well as being presented with a flower bracelet. Our bags were taken and a refreshing towel to comfort us from the humidity of Thailand was offered. An overwhelming sense of care was apparent from the moment we arrived.

Our rooms were spacious and immaculate, modern yet still fitted with a sense of culture and tradition which was apparent through touches such as the background music and art work. This property sits on the banks of the capital cities Chao Phraya river known and loved as Bangkok's 'La Grande Dame' and was this year awarded the world's best hotel by the daily telegraph in the U.K as well as receiving the highest possible score and being awarded 3 Michelin keys and placed well in the world's 50 best hotels list for 2024. Their attention to detail and willingness to go above and beyond is surely the reason there are so many fans of M.O.

Further hospitality was extended on our first morning with suit pressing and valet services on offer as well as inclusive breakfast to fuel us for our first day and hotel induction.



Day one we explored the different outlets and had the opportunity to meet many of the management through sitting in and observing F&B as well as Executive team meetings which was a most valuable experience to watch and listen to how some of the leading minds of our industry think. We also received a lesson on culture, greetings and the way of life through stories of history and respect. The ethos of the people of Thailand is special. Family driven and respectful, these two things resonated with me as I believe are strong factors to my over 5 year career with Rocco Forte Hotels sharing these qualities.

The following days consisted of a series of work placements and tours in different F&B outlets such as world famous Le Normande now operating under chef Alex Dilling, the

Bamboo Bar one of Asia's most well respected bars and their all day dining offering in the Verandah.

The Bamboo bar was like a time machine to the luxurious days of the past with live music and signature cocktails showcasing their personality. Here at Browns we are offering jazz 3 nights a week in our drawing room, it was great to compare our offering to theirs. They work sharp and fast similar to my times in the Brasserie back in the Balmoral in Edinburgh, it was a feeling of home I enjoyed.

It was amazing to experience hospitality through a different culture for the first time professionally in Thailand's first luxury Hotel. Not only do you take in the information and build new ideas to take home you leave feeling inspired. Whether it was assisting in a wine training course with some new recruits stepping into the world of restaurants for the first time or conversing with like minded people from different backgrounds each moment was beneficial in growing and developing professionally, the exposure was life changing and many new friendships were made.

Following this trip, we jetted off to Hong Kong to open arms from previous Gold Service Scholarship Finalist Christoph who is one of the directors of F&B at Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong who kindly escorted us to our rooms. It was amazing to see team gold thriving worldwide.

It was really interesting to see the similarities as well as the individuality of both properties, with Bangkok targeting longer stay guests looking for a relaxing and luxurious care free holiday to the business district of Hongkong and how they have adapted to their guests needs while still remaining true to M.O's brand.



M.O Hong Kong consists of a cafe, and all day dining restaurant, an English style gentleman's club turned pub, a buffet restaurant, a cocktail bar as well as two restaurants with one Michelin star each. From a guest point of view you would never need to leave the hotel in order to find your next meal, the vast offering caters to all levels of clientele. The Chinnery stood out to me with their strong retention in repeat guests and recorded preferences allowing them to offer a warm and welcoming experience for those who now feel like part of the family. The strong respect towards Cantonese cuisine in their Michelin starred Man Wah was educational to say the least as all communication between the staff was in their local dialect. To see and taste a slice of their culture was fantastic.

I was thoroughly impressed by the In room Dining team here in Hong Kong. Their ability to organise and multitask all of their duties was like a well-oiled machine. With amenities being refreshed all day long while juggling calls for meals in the room was impressive. It would be a privilege to work beside this team once more. Who knows it's a small world that day might come!

During our free time we thought it best to see some of the town and thought of nowhere better than the Baker and the Bottle man, one of Simon Rogan's bakery's/ wine bars. Rogan's empire is world famous and attracts great talent from across the globe with Laudy

Gibba-Smith, another GSS Winning Finalist from 2018 running the show front of house. There natural wine selection was superb. I couldn't leave without a snack before heading to Happy Valley race course and decided on some truffle croquets and a crispy duck baguette to see me through.

To summarise this trip was one of many passionate hospitality professionals bucket list journeys. It is still a pinch me experience that I will forever be thankful for. I feel privileged and honoured to represent Rocco Forte Hotels and The Gold Service Scholarship worldwide. Working, learning and diving into another culture's operation was magical.