

HISTORY OF

THE HOTEL

## THE METROPOLE HOTEL

### THE PALACE OF PLACE DE BROUCKERE

First to provide electricity in 1895

First to provide telephone in 1895

First to provide fax in 1985

First on the Net in 1995

Since the turn of the century, de Brouckère Square has symbolized the lively heart of Brussels. The square's second to none architecture owes its harmony to its richly decorated buildings and to the three wide boulevards that lead to it. The square was built about 100 years ago. In 1893, the Augustins Temple was built. This temple was a seventeenth century church whose baroque façade, which has been reassembled on the site of Trinity church, and can still be admired by the inhabitants of Brussels. The square was dedicated to Charles de Brouckère, hero of the 1830 revolution and mayor of Brussels. In the Heart of the square stood the obelisk fountain in honour of Anspach, the burgomaster who renovated downtown Brussels. Around the fountain emerged sumptuous façades such as the Continental Hotel and the magnificent houses surrounding the North passageway.

It is near the latter that the Métropole Café was set up in 1890 by the Wielemans brothers, brewers from the commune of Forest, with the aim of promoting their beers. Due to their tremendous success, they bought the neighbouring building, the former "Caisse d'Epargne" headquarters and turned it into the Métropole Hotel. It is in this way that a palace was born, embodying a new concept for the end of the nineteenth century. A palace is in other words a luxurious hotel equipped with the most up-to-date facilities : lifts, electricity, central heating, not to mention the richness of the decor and high quality service. At the entrance of the hotel can be found a triumphant allegory of the bourgeois era : a sculpted group with an imposing statue celebrating progress illuminating the world. Inside, all architectural styles are depicted in an air of luxury and richness of materials: panelling, polished teak, marble of Numibia, gilded bronze and forged iron, all competed to give the impression of comfort in the 1900 era.

The French architect Alban Chambon, already responsible for the decoration of The Métropole Café, was appointed by the owners to carry out the interior design of the hotel. The French Renaissance main entrance, leads to the Empire style reception hall, where columns and pillars line the room. The attentive observer will linger in front of the beautiful stained-glass windows, which would be used widely later on by the art-nouveau style. To the right, lies a large staircase and the lift with its elegant and timeless mahogany case. Chambon did not hesitate to call upon the best artists and craftsmen of his era who assisted him in his work. It is in this respect that the bronze Nymph on the fountain of the Roman-style restaurant that has now been converted into a café was signed by Julien Dillens. An Indian lounge and an Italian Renaissance reception hall complete this refined collection of styles.

The Métropole Hotel hosts numerous events international and national social events. In 1911, the first Solvay Physics Board was held which brought together personalities such as Einstein, Marie Curie, Poincaré. Stars, Crowned Heads of State and politicians all resided at the Métropole, balls and banquets were frequent and popular. After the First World War, which saw the hotel requisitioned, the owners undertook extension works by buying a neighbouring building in 1925, in order to create new rooms. The extension works of the Métropole cinema completed in 1932 were also important. The building of the 3000-seater theatre required the demolition of several buildings on the rue Neuve. The project included the creation of shops, a brewery, a disco "La Frégate", banquet halls and two floors of supplementary rooms with a patio above the cinema. The construction of this was carried out by Adrien Blomme who designed an authentic architectural masterpiece combining technical process with a refined aesthetic. The façade of yellow Travertin opened out on the rue Neuve with large glazed bays. The restrained interior decoration, with mirrors, polished metals and precious wood is enhanced by carefully purpose-built lightings. As you can imagine, the inauguration in the presence of Queen Astrid and Raimu was a great social event.

The Second World War saw the Métropole Hotel requisitioned by Germans during the occupation, then for a year by the allies, but in the aftermath of war the hotel enjoyed another golden era. Stars visiting Brussels, among them Sacha Guitry, all stayed at the hotel. Toots Thielemans made his debut in the jazz orchestra that played in the café. Since the completion of the works in 1976, the hotel made a new start, which will take it well beyond its centenary which was celebrated in 1995.

In 1985, "Le Bar 19ème" and the restaurant "L'Alban Chambon" were opened, which in 1989, thanks to his chef Dominique Michou was awarded 2 red chef's hats and 16/20 in the GaultMillau culinary guide. He is a member of the French culinary academy, Eurotoques. In 1991, he was introduced into the very select "Association des Maîtres Cuisiniers de Belgique" and in 1992, into "Association des Maîtres Cuisiniers de France" - Associations of Master cooks of Belgium and France.

The restaurant was completely renovated during the summer of 2002 giving it a Baroque Italian décor.

November 2011 saw the opening of the new bar "31", after the discovery of original frescoes on the ceiling of the bar and several years of repairs. Located in the majestic of the Hotel Metropole, the Bar "31" is more than just a bar. This is "The place to be" downtown. Recently re-decorated in an unique "End XIX-contemporary" style, you will enjoy comfortable moments of relaxation in a new and prestigious decor. The colorful frescoes, the new furniture designed by Miss Sandrine Saint Hilaire of SA Décor Cartisane, the Belle Epoque style lamps will satisfy customers looking for comfort, luxury and privacy.

A new name, a new décor, a new map of drinks, cocktails, whiskeys and champagnes, new musical styles, everything have been designed to accommodate businessmen, tourists and regulars visiting the place Brouckère.

Café Metropole, located on the vibrant Place de Brouckère, re-open his door in February 2014. It offers high-end brasserie cuisine in line with Brussels' tradition. The Café's new menu revives the history of this building, which was founded by the Wielemans-Ceuppens brewer's family in 1890.

This luxurious brasserie welcomes its guests in an Art Nouveau environment in which the original decor has been kept; both the building's interior and exterior have been classified. Guests can choose to sit either inside, in the intimate yet lavish interior of the Café, or outside on the heated terrace, which is open all year round, to be closer to the city's hustle and bustle. Café Metropole has 80 seats inside and 150 outside, split into two separate terraces in summer.



Banqueting room



Wintergarden



Dining room



## Hotel Metropole 110 years at the heart of Europe (from the original 1894 brochure)

Inaugurated alongside the vast café - another marvel of richness and good taste - also founded by the Wielemans-Ceupens family, the Hotel Metropole, resembling similar establishments in London, has risen rapidly, to become one of the first houses in Brussels. Nothing has been overlooked to create the ultimate luxurious impression. From the beauty of the used materials, the natural marble to the electrical lighting and the steam heating on all floors, everything has been meticulously planned to make the traveller oblivious to the fact that he stays in a hotel and to create the special atmosphere of home quietude.

The Hotel Métropole is located on the Place de Brouckère, between the Boulevard Anspach and the Boulevard du Nord, two thriving centres of amusement and business. This major city thoroughfare goes to the Nord station in one direction and to the South station in the other. In the same vicinity you will find Post offices, Telegraph and Telephone offices, Theatres and Concert cafés, art galleries and more... Many electrified tramways pass the hotel and private cars can be parked in front of the Hotel.

Of the many facilities of the Hotel, we have only provided a glimpse. Thanks to the owner's visionary ideas, who bears a famous name in the Belgian brewer's world, they are all of princely taste. Let us first enter the entrance-hall, in French renaissance style. On your left and right, blind mirrors provide you with a view on the lounge, the restaurant and the reception. The high walls are covered with Numidian marble, and the coffered ceiling will remind you of some historical Loire castle. Admire the wrought- and cast-iron arches, professionally designed and finely crafted. The Hall, illuminated by a large lantern and enhanced with stained-glass windows, is ventilated by hidden airconducts.

The Hall, characterised by simple architectural design, supported by large bays and enlarged with mirrors, will leave you with an impression of grandness.

Opposite the Hall, you will admire the large staircase. The lift was commissioned from the renowned French company of Edoux, which rose to fame when it equipped the Eiffel Tower with elevators. The latest safety measures have been used, like the ones in the Banque de France or in the Fort de Vincennes or in many Parisian Hotels. The walls in the hall and in the staircase have also been covered with Numidian marble.

A lovely marble fountain, with a bronze nymph on top, by Julien Dillen, is not to be forgotten.

The great Banqueting room is decorated in Italian renaissance style. On both ends you will see large Chemtoe marble fireplaces, over twenty feet high, with gilded ornaments.

The large Hall - This vast room, marvellous winter garden with ornamental plants, has been decorated in Italian renaissance style. A lush impression is conveyed by the design of the layout and the charm of the shades. Six high marble columns, enriched with pompeian bronze and gold inlays, sustain the arched ceiling. In the coffers of this ceiling, you will be attracted by the boldness of the colours, by the decoration, by the original, harmonious and charming design.

What have we forgotten in this brief but mind dazzling description?

That the presentation and courtesy of the staff is unflawed; that all employees speak different languages; that both the kitchen and wine cellar of the Hotel Métropole stand unrivalled; that all meals are real lucious feasts completed with concerts each evening at six p.m., during the whole holiday season.

This all could be useless publicity, however, as the reputation of this hotel has already been established through many thousands of visitors, who pledged to return after their stay.