

Indochina's Hotels

As with any area that had travelers for business and pleasure, a variety of hotels appeared on the scene French Indochina. Certainly, most were concentrated in the major cities, but even small towns could claim their local hotel or two.

This exhibit provides a survey over the range of hotels that served Indochina prior to the creation of the independent states of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The glimpse into the hotels is through a paper trail consisting of three basic categories:

- hotel stationery
- hotel baggage labels
- picture postcards

Larger hotels could afford to have personalized stationery printed for use by the hotel as well as guests. Typically, the stationery consisted of letter sheets and envelopes bearing the name of the hotel and its logo. Groups of hotels sharing common ownership took advantage of economy of scale by printing stationery that incorporated the names of several hotels. These stationery items could be used by any one of the hotels.

Baggage labels would have helped in sorting the luggage of an arriving ship to facilitate getting the right bags to each hotel. But beyond their functionality, baggage labels were a form of cheap advertisement for the hotel. Guests who wanted to let their travels be known allowed hotel staff would affix labels to their luggage. Since the traveler's baggage may be seen by a large number of potential customers, hotels sometimes created elaborate labels that far exceeded simply identifying the hotel. Bright colors with detailed scenes beacons travelers to exotic destinations.

Picture postcards were generally of two types: those that were scenic as any notable building might be and those freely distributed by hotel for use by its guests. In the latter case, picture postcards represented another avenue for low-cost advertising by the hotel. Hotels hoped that messages home from tourists written on hotel postcards would stimulate follow-on business.

Indochina's Hotels

A special problem exists for picture postcards. In French, the word "hotel" can mean a place that provides temporary lodging for people who are traveling, exactly the same as the word means in English. However, in French, the word can also apply to any substantial building. For example, "hotel de ville" means "city hall." Because of the popularity of picture postcards, virtually every building in Indochinese cities appeared on them at one time or another. The caption correctly identified the building as a hotel of some sort, but it was not a place that offered temporary lodgings.

This example from the town of Tay-Ninh looks like a place that could conceivably accommodate travelers, but l'Hotel de l'Inspection is a government building that houses the Bureau de l'Inspection, an independent agency similar to the US government's Inspector General.



Cie Française Immobiliere

Extensive properties belonging to the "Cie Française Immobiliere" chain are identified in the corner imprint of the chain's stationery. Based on later letters, the company changed its name to "Société Foncière de Tonkin et de l'Annam."



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 29-12 31

Société Foncière de Tonkin et de l'Annam

On a letter sent to The Library of Congress in 1937, the arched lettering at the top of the imprint identifies the hotel chain as "Société Foncière de Tonkin et de l'Annam."



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 4-3 37
REVERSE
HAI-PHONG TONKIN 4-3 37

Grand Hotel
Hue, Tourane, Quinhon

The Morin Frères chain of hotels included three named Grand Hotel in the cities of Hue, Tourane and Quinhon in Annam.



Morin Freres
Grand Hotel
Hue, Tourane, Qui-Nhon, Bana

Later, the Morin Frères chain added a hotel at Bana to those at Hue, Tourane and Qui-Nhon. The chain's baggage label was considerably larger than those of its competitors.



Angkor les Ruines Hotel
Angkor

The “corner card” impression identifies the Angkor les Ruines Hotel as part of the “Société des Grands-Hotels Indochinois” (“S.G.H.I.”) group.



POSTAL MARKINGS

ANGKOR-LES-RUINES CAMBODGE 19-11 28
slogan handstamp

REVERSE

PNOMPENH CAMBODGE 19-11 28

Hotel des Ruines d'Angkor
Angkor

The stationery for the Hotel des Ruines d'Angkor was less ornate than that of many of the other hotels serving tourists at the Angkor Temple complex.



POSTAL MARKINGS

ANGKOR CAMBODGE 5-4 31
slogan handstamp

REVERSE

PNOMPENH CAMBODGE 6-4 31

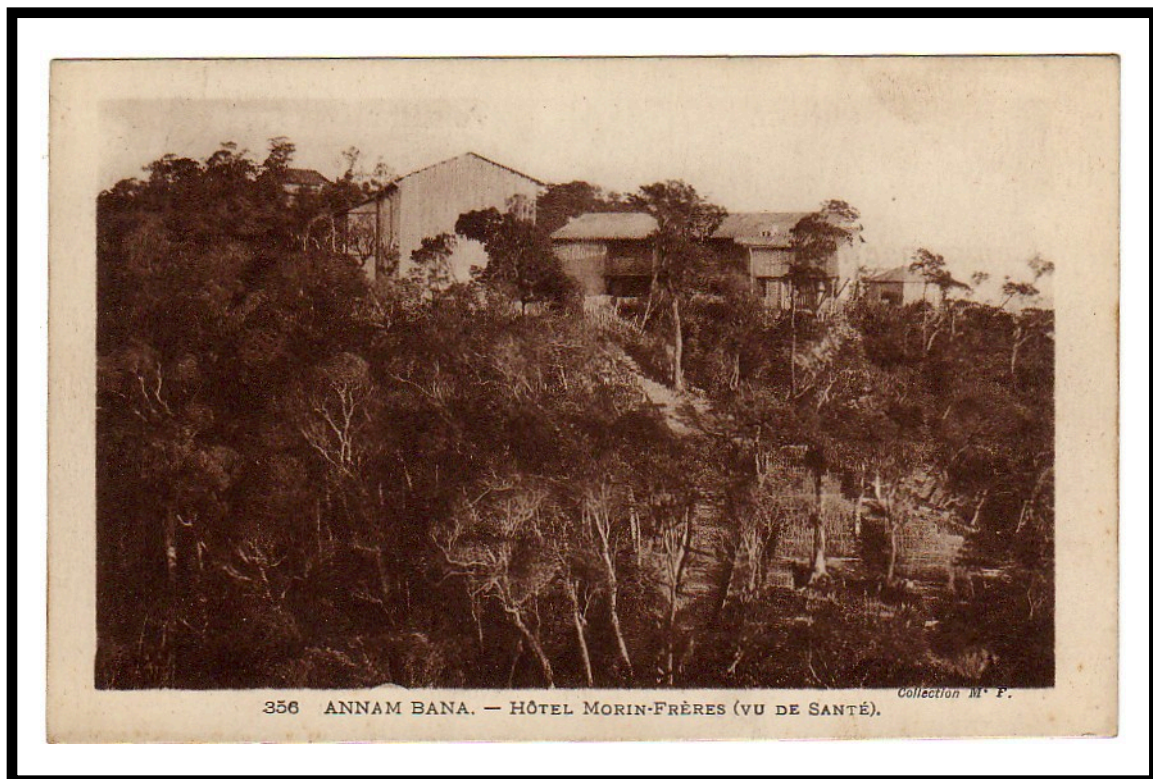
Auberge Royale des Temples Angkor

The baggage label for Auberge Royale des Temples conveniently identifies the establishment's location with respect to the famous ruins. The label provides an eyelet for attaching the label to a luggage handle with string.



Hotel Morin-Frères Bana

The town of Bana was located in a highland retreat area. Hotels there catered to those who wanted to escape the heat and humidity of coastal areas.



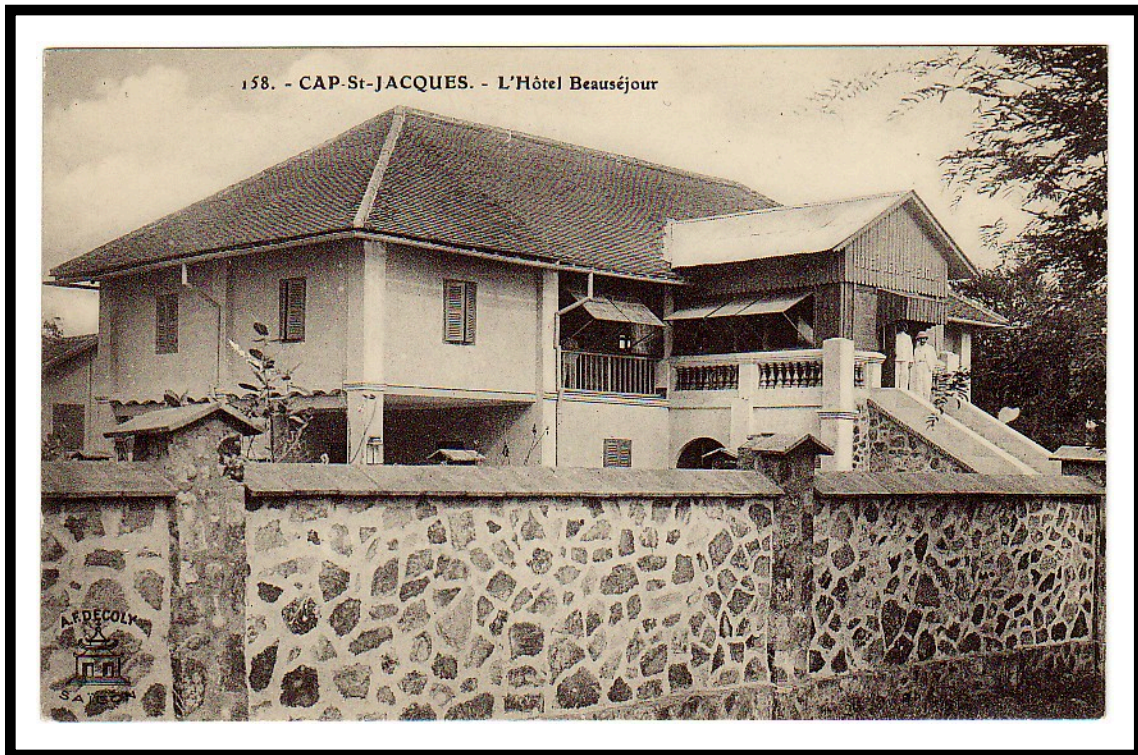
Hotel Central Cantho

Signage for Cantho's Hotel Central employed both French and Vietnamese.



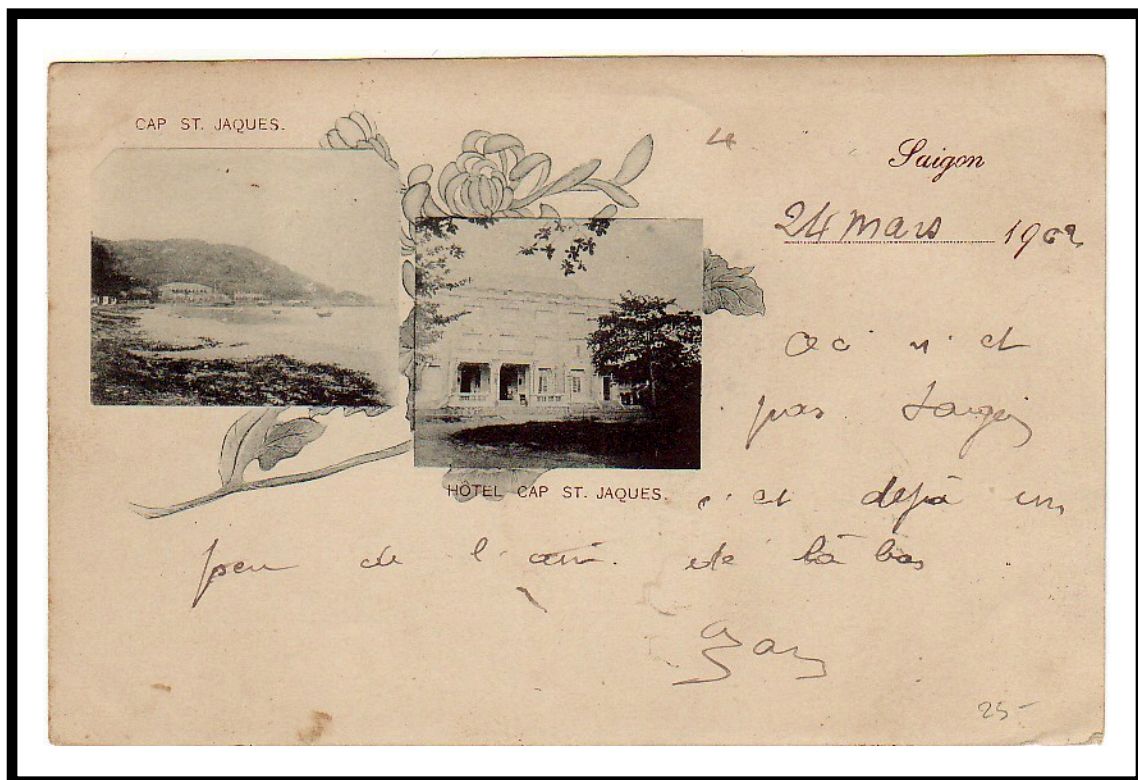
Hotel Beauséjour Cap Saint Jacques

Although smallish by hotel standards, the Hotel Beauséjour had an air of exclusivity owing to the rock wall that surrounded its grounds.



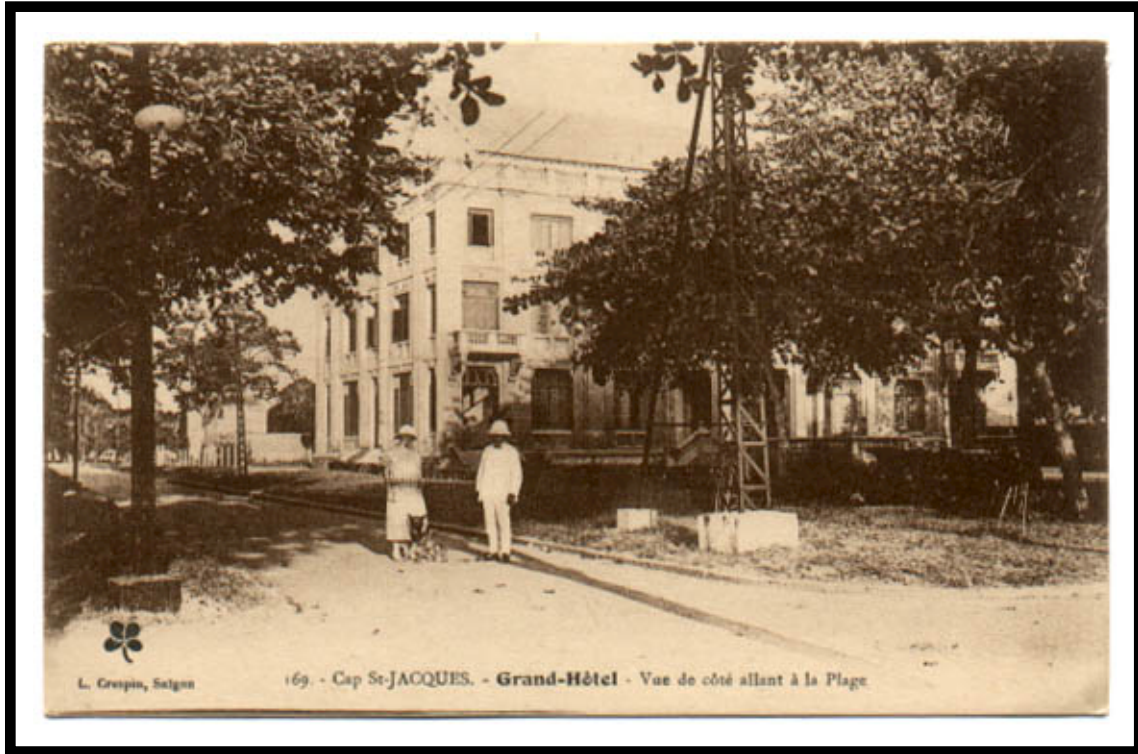
Hotel Cap St. Jacques
Cap Saint Jacques

Appearing to be a souvenir for hotel guests, this card uses the spelling “Cap St. Jaques” (with no letter “c” as compared as to “Jacques”) for both the town’s and the hotel’s names. Further adding to the geographical confusion, it carries the dateline “Saigon” at the upper right.



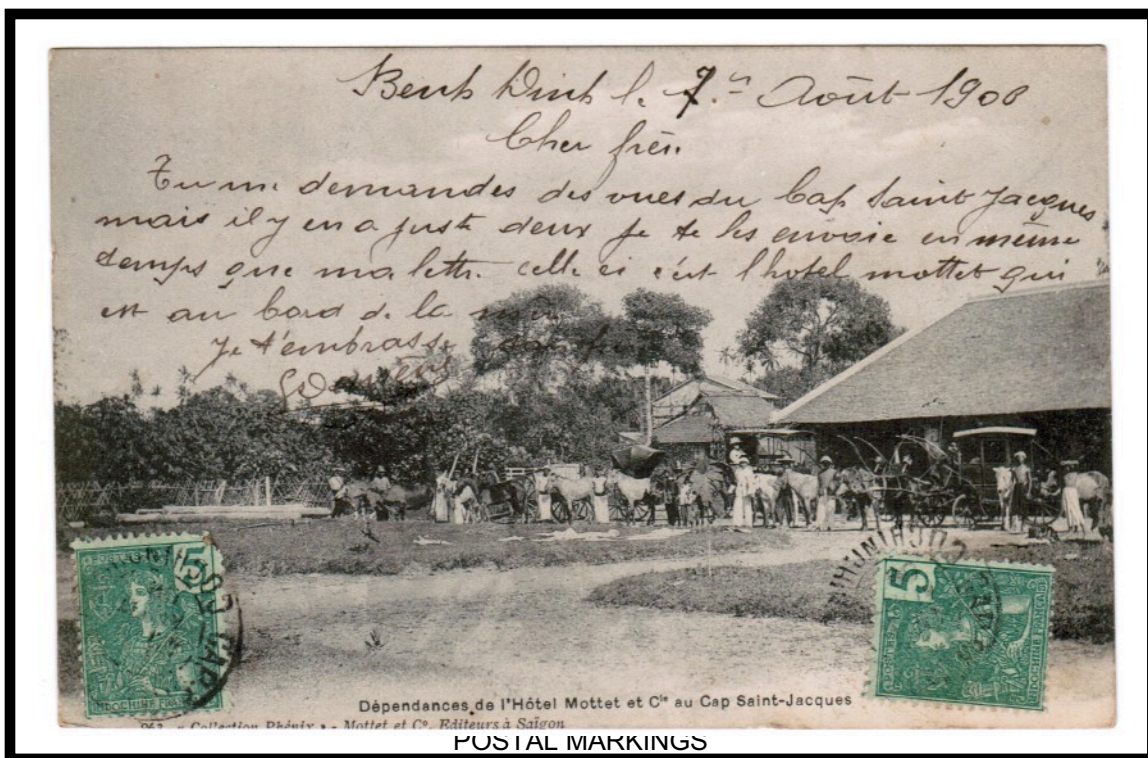
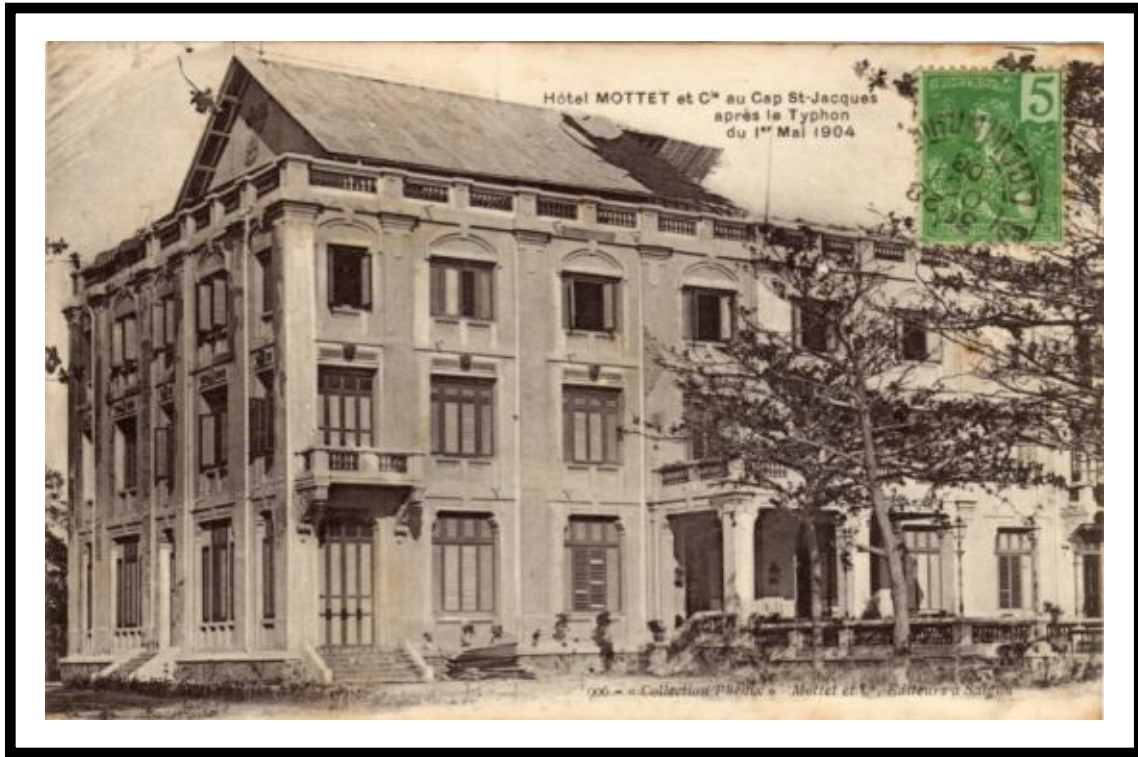
Grand Hotel Cap Saint Jacques

Towers in front of the Grand Hotel at Cap Saint Jacques probably supported wires with the colony's telegraph service.



Hôtel Mottet Cap Saint Jacques

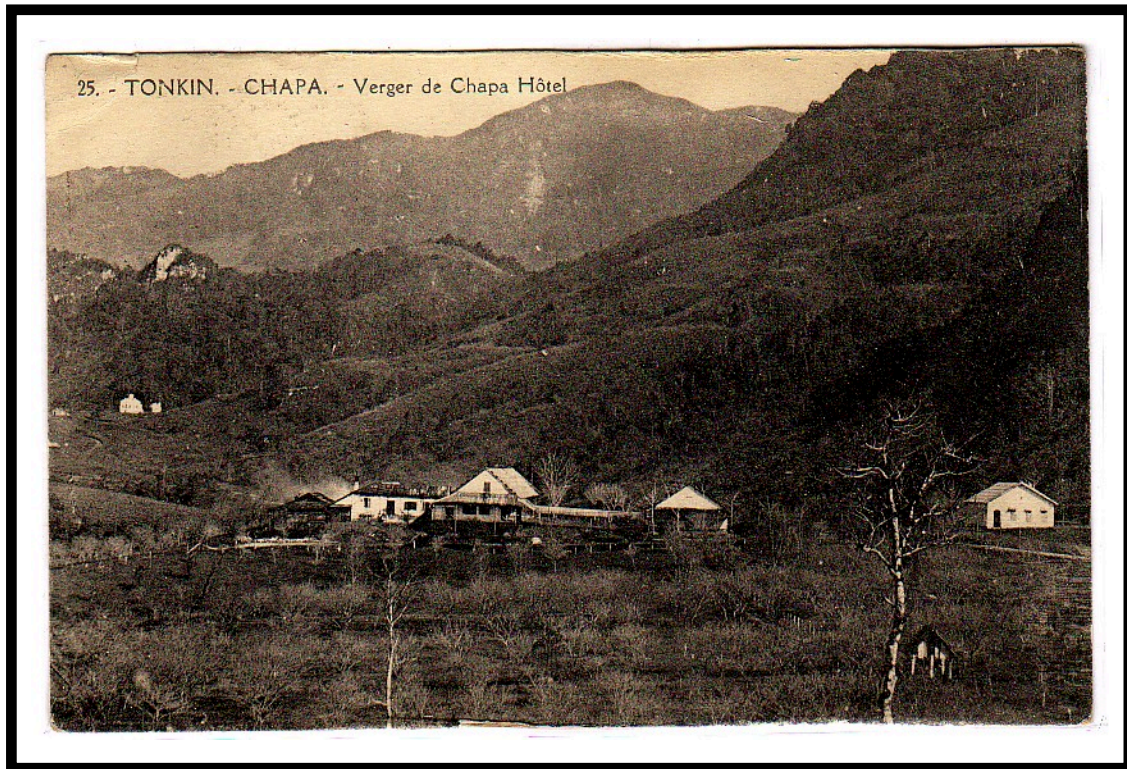
The image in the top postcard shows that the Hôtel Mottet lost part of its roof during the typhoon of 1 May 1904.



CAP ST. JACQUES COCHINCHINE 28 OCT 08

Chapa Hotel
Chapa

A postcard's image shows that the Chapa Hotel's orchard was located in an isolated flat area among the rural hills of Tonkin.



Fan Si Pan Hostel
Chapa

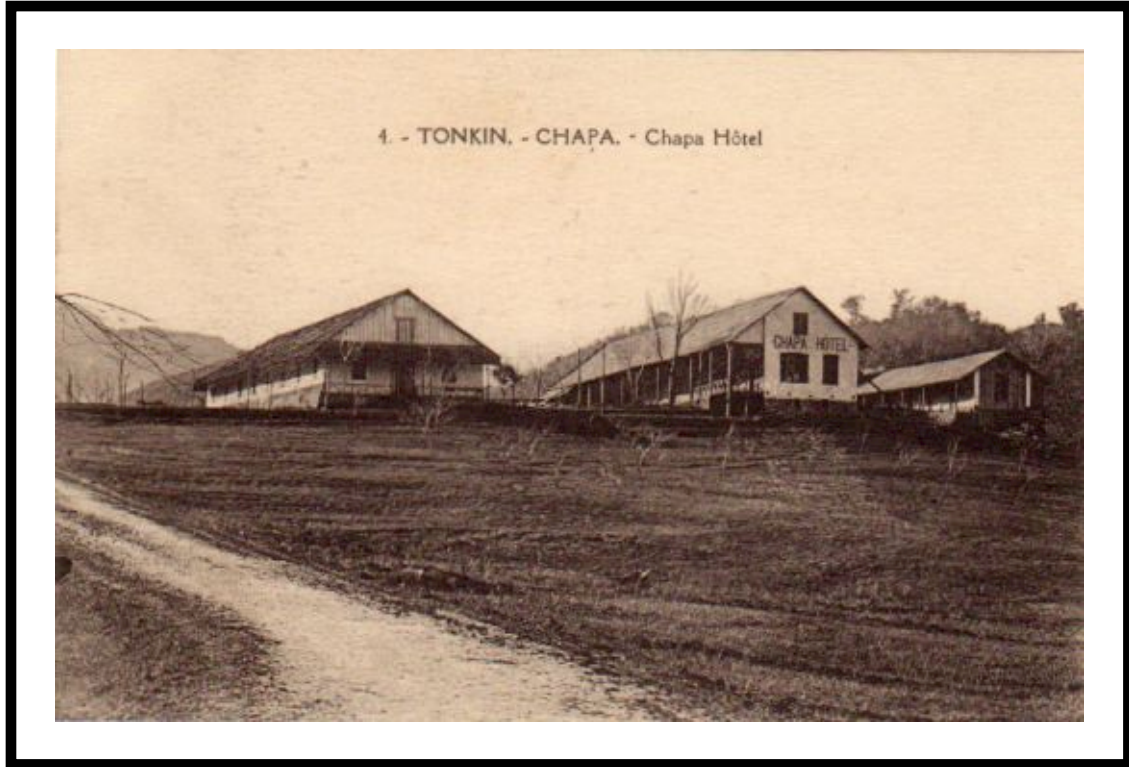
Stationery printed for the Chapa Hotel was modified to serve a hostel in the same town. The hostel's handstamp promotes Chapa as being in the "Alps of Tonkin" with the "Climate of France." Curiously, the letter was posted at Lao-Kay, far from Chapa.



POSTAL MARKINGS
LAO-KAY TONKIN 12-2 40
REVERSE
HANOI R.P ^{BIS} TONKIN 13-2 40
HANOI R. P. TONKIN 14-2 40

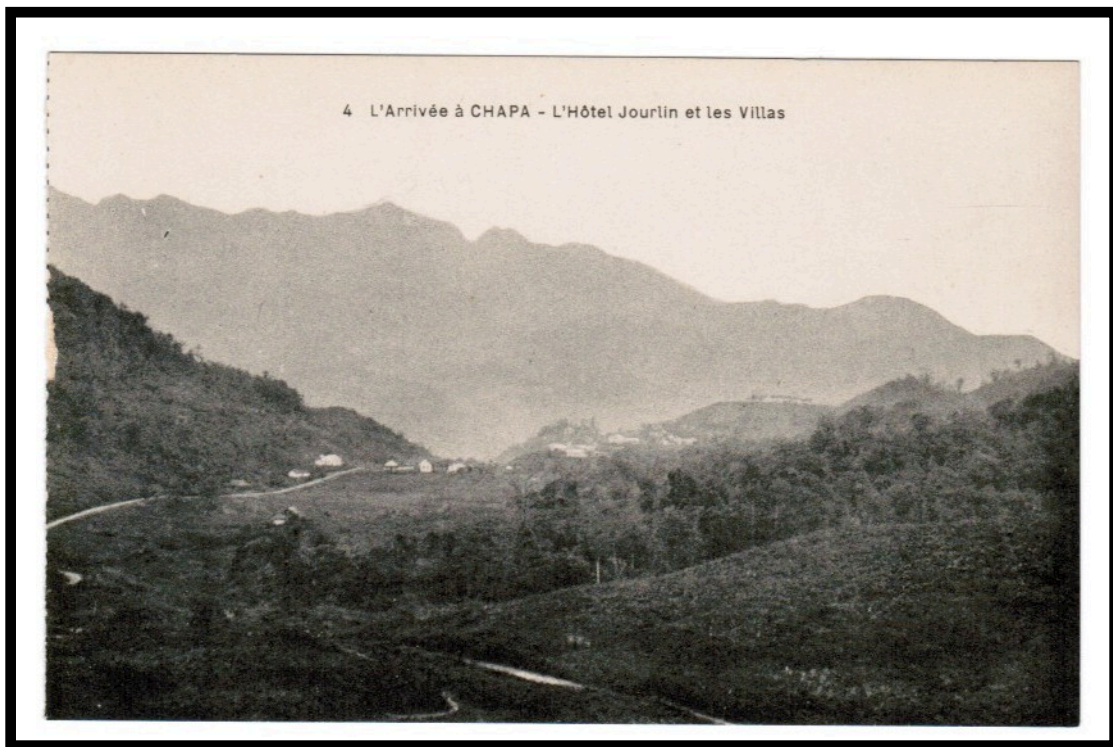
Hotel Joulin Chapa

Comparison of images shows that the Chapa Hotel and Hotel Joulin were one in the same, likely with different names over time.



Hôtel Jourlin Chapa

The view upon arriving at Chapa and the Hôtel Jourlin gives the traveler a sense of its remoteness in the mountainous territory.



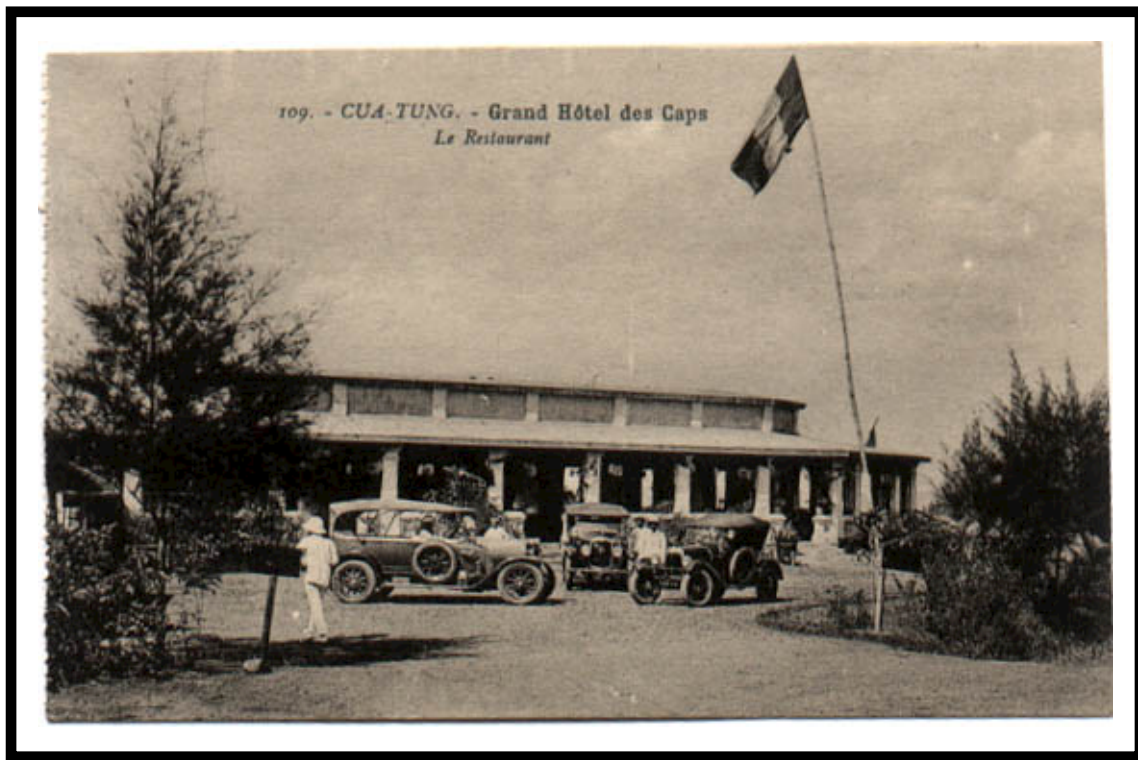
Hotel Dong Khan
Cholon

The Hotel Dong Khan's baggage label was shaped in the form of a parallelogram shape as a way to make it stand out from the usual rectangles and circles.



Grand Hôtel des Caps Cua-Tung

With automobiles situated out front, the Grand Hôtel des Caps appeared more modern than its urban counterparts. A view from the restaurant shows its ocean side setting.



Grand Hôtel des Caps
Cua-Tung

The hotel's restaurant offered an oceanside setting.



Grand Hotel of Dalat
Dalat

The sender selected stationery from the Grand Hotel of Dalat for a registered airmail letter to Paris in 1934.



POSTAL MARKINGS

DALAT ANNAM 5-4 34

registration label

airmail label

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 6-4 34

Grand Hotel Dalat

Evidently, Dalat's Grand Hotel consisted of multiple buildings. This postcard depicts the hotel's restaurant as an isolated structure.



Grand Hotel Dalat

Dalat's Grand Hotel offered individual chalets. Although separated from one another, they were located close to the hotel's amenities.



Hotel du Parc
Dalat

Stationery for Dalat's Hotel du Parc featured a bird's eye view of hotel printed in blue ink at the upper left.



POSTAL MARKINGS

DALAT ANNAM 19-2 40

slogan handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 20 FEV 40

LE FLEIX DORDOGNE 10-4 40

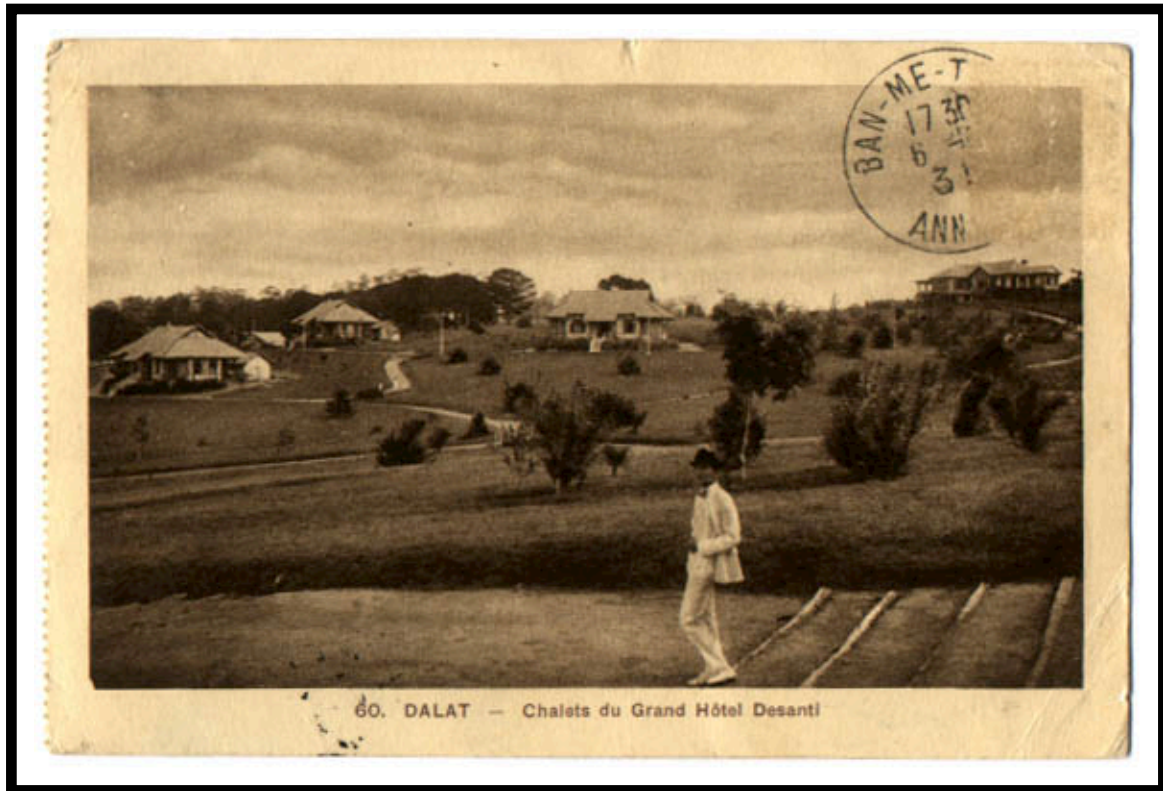
Hotel du Parc Dalat

The Hotel du Parc, one of Dalat's many hotels, was a complex featuring a large, multi-story building.



Grand Hotel Desanti
Dalat

The Grand Hotel Desanti, another of Dalat's hotels, offered individual chalets to its guests.



POSTAL MARKINGS

BAN-ME-THUOT ANNAM 6-6 31

REVERSE

BAN-ME-THUOT ANNAM 6-6 31

NINH-HOA ANNAM 9-6 31

Langbian Palace Dalat

This view of the hotel shows a number of automobiles occupying a garage with no walls, no doubt simply providing protection from the sun.

The caption on the postcard identifies the name of the hotel with a single word “Langbian” rather than two words as was sometimes the way the hotel was referred to.



Langbian Palace
Dalat

The corner imprint of early stationery from the Langbian Palace in 1924 identifies the hotel's location as well as its proprietors.



POSTAL MARKINGS
DALAT ANNAM 2-6 24

Lang-Bian Palace
Dalat

Unlike many examples of the period, this model of Langbian Palace stationery lacks any images. At the extreme upper left is the abbreviation "S.G.H.I.," which stands for "Société des Grands Hotels Indochinois."



POSTAL MARKINGS

DALAT ANNAM 15-9 27
framed R with manuscript registration number

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 17-9 27

Lang-Bian Palace
Dalat

The sedate blue used for printing airmail stationery for the Langbian Palace Hotel was, no doubt, selected to convey a sense of the elegance of the property.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 17-11 39
registration label

Lang-Bian Palace Dalat

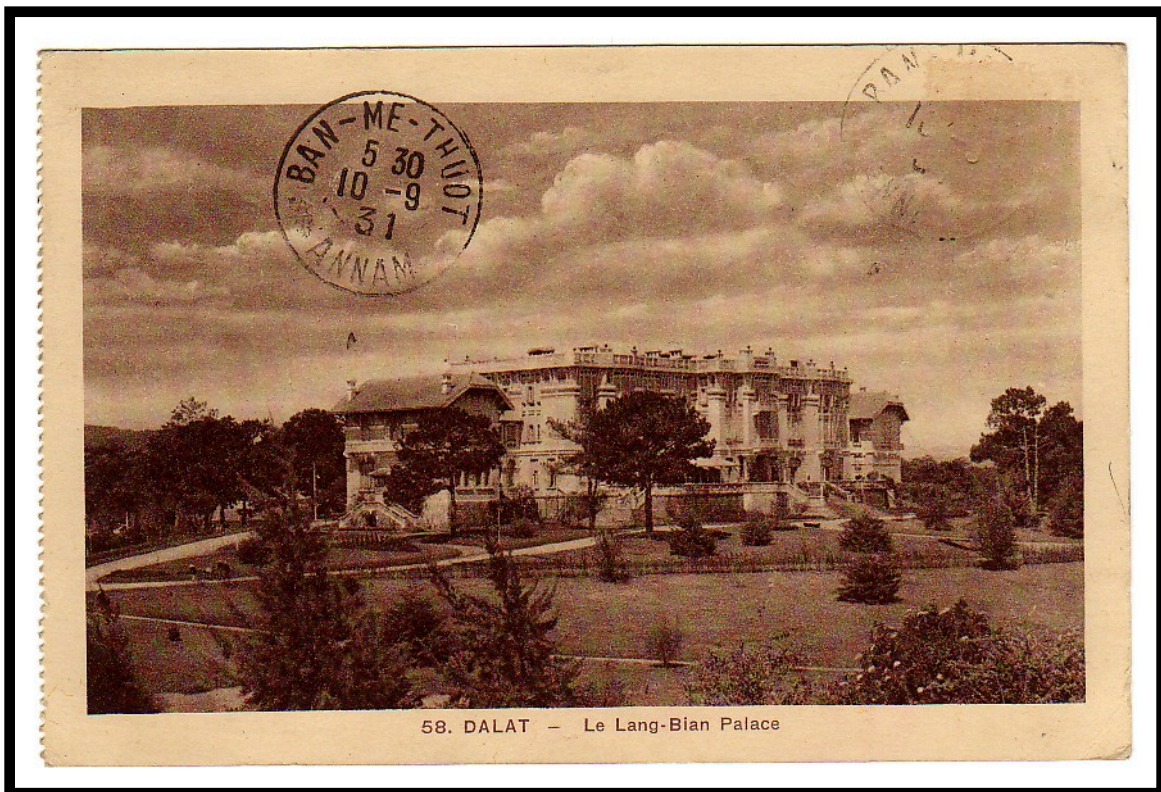
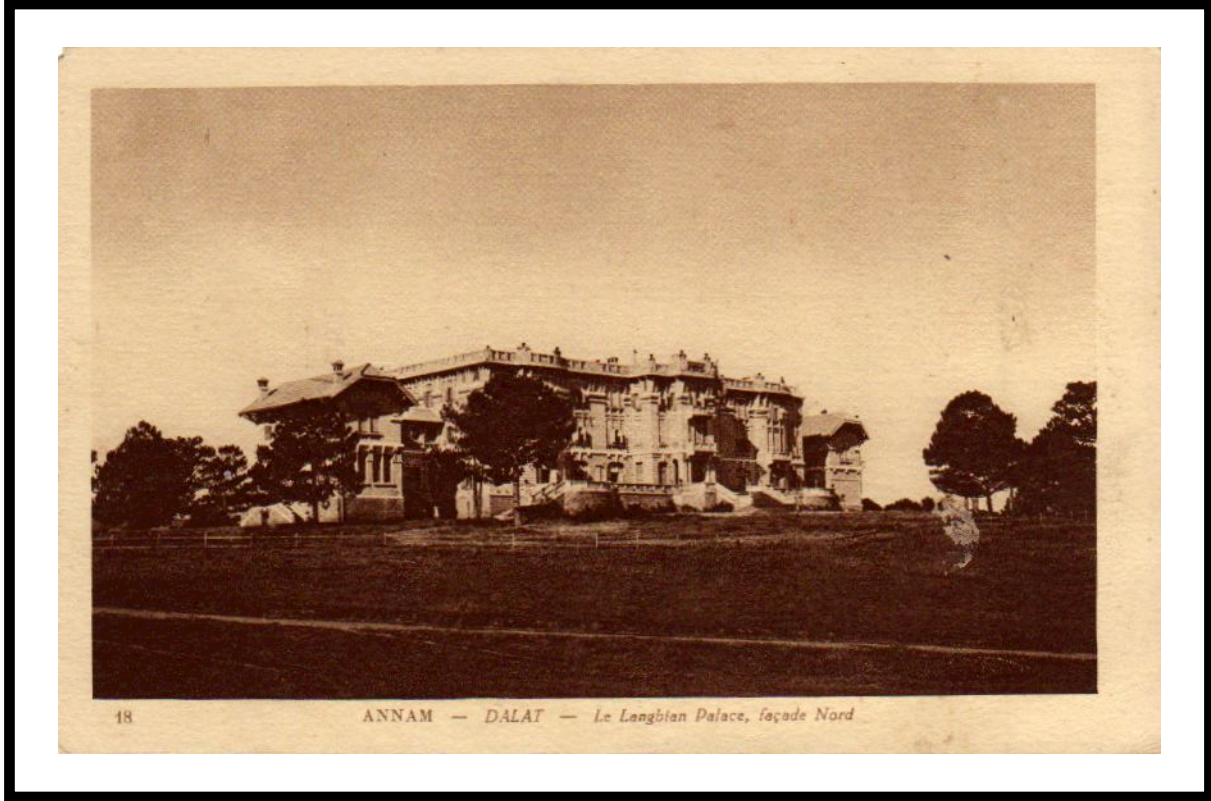
Airmail stationery for the Langbian Palace Hotel was printed in a sedate blue, no doubt selected to convey the elegance of the property.



POSTAL MARKINGS
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 17-11 39
registration label

Langbian Palace
Dalat

The Langbian Palace was a dominant feature of the landscape at Dalat.



Langbian Palace
Dalat

A colorful baggage label conveyed the image of an unspoiled area as part of the hotel's message of escaping from the ordinary.



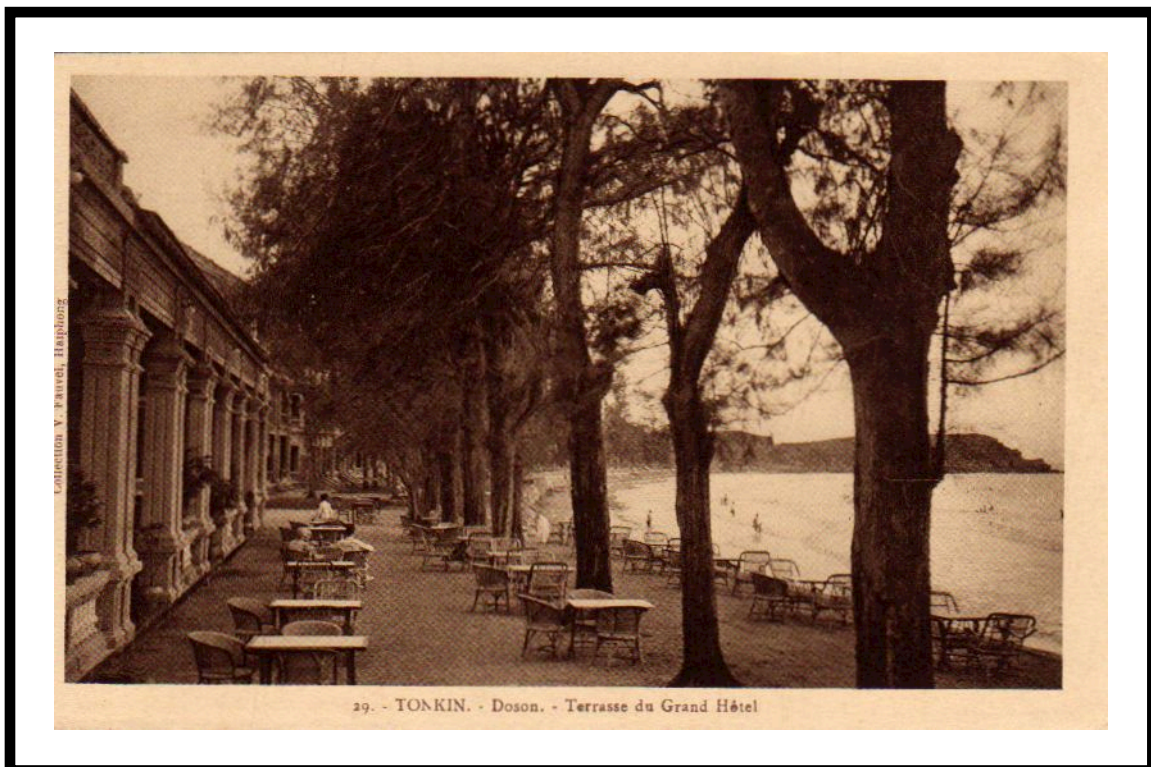
Store and Hotel of Dap Cau Dap-Cau

The sign on the front of the building on the right reads “MAGASINS ET HOTEL DE DAP CAU.”



Grand Hôtel Doson

While hotel postcards typically depicted the view from the street, occasionally a card featured one of the hotel's high points as in this case of the lower image of the Grand Hôtel's terrace alongside the beach at Doson.



Le Pagodon
Doson

From the image on this picture postcard, Le Pagodon appeared to be a beachside resort hotel.



Hotel des Colonies Haiphong

The awning on the front of the Hotel des Colonies advertises for the Café Hotel des Colonies.



Hotel du Commerce
Haiphong

Typical of the era, Haiphong's Hotel du Commerce employed stationery noting the manager's name, but little else about the hotel.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG TONKIN 7 MARS 03
REVERSE
JONZAC CHARANTE INFRE 7 AVRIL 03

Hôtel du Commerce Haiphong

A period postcard locates the Hôtel du Commerce in Haiphong on Rue Paul-Bert. The postcard also notes that the hotel was built in 1886.



Grand Hotel du Commerce
Haiphong

Apparently by 1939, the name of the hotel had evolved from the simple "Hotel du Commerce" to more distinctive "Grand Hotel du Commerce"



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG TONKIN 21-12 39

Hôtel de l'Europe and Hôtel de l'Univers
Haiphong

The corner imprint shows that the Hôtel de l'Europe and Hôtel de l'Univers were affiliated. It is uncertain if there was a separate Hôtel de l'Univers in Haiphong as well as in Saigon.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG TONKIN 10-8 21
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 18-8 21

L'Hôtel de l'Europe Haiphong

True to its name, the L'Hôtel de l'Europe, with its architecture and verandas, would not look out of place in a European capital city.



Hotel Huu Nghi
Haiphong

A later style label publicizes the Hotel Huu Nghi located in Haiphong, Vietnam.



Hotel Yen-Tan
Haiphong

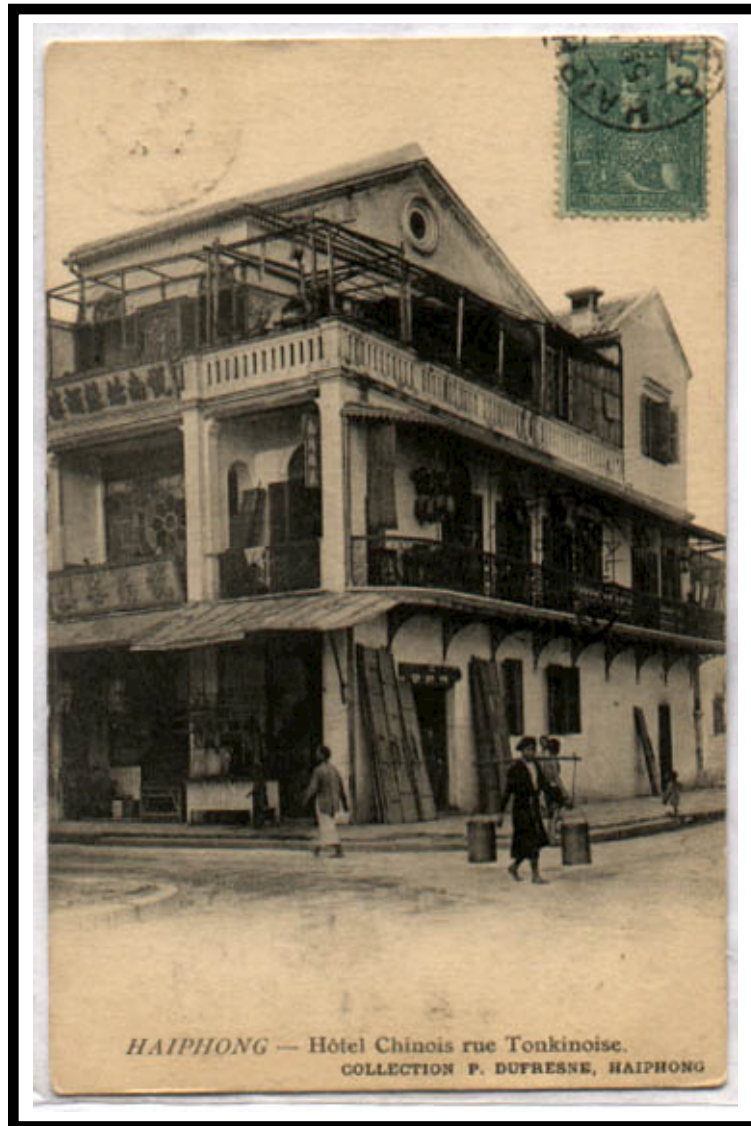
Curiously, as indicated in its stationery, the address for Hotel Yen-tan consisted of six street numbers on Boulevard Amiral Courbet in Haiphong.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAI-PHONG TONKIN 16-9 31

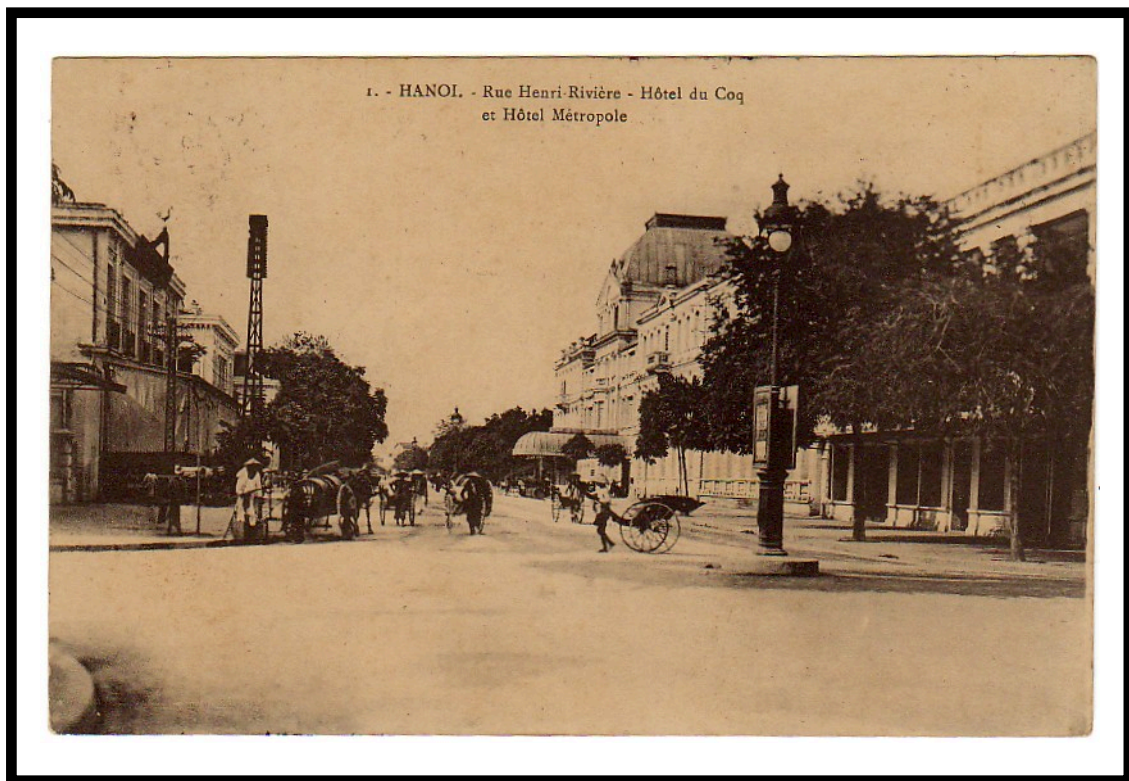
Chinese Hotel Haiphong

The Chinese Hotel in Haiphong appeared to be a step down in elegance from the many hotels depicted on postcards of the period.



Hotel du Coq Hanoi

A period postcard shows that both the Hotel du Coq and the Hotel Metropole were located on Rue Henri Rivière in Hanoi.



POSTAL MARKINGS ON REVERSE
HAIPHONG TONKIN 28-12 14

Hotel du Lac
Hanoi

A colorized picture postcard depicts Hanoi's Hotel du Lac.



Hotel de la Paix
Hanoi

Because the sender overfranked Hotel de la Paix stationery for a registered, airmail letter to Paris in 1931, it was handstamped "Franked by Sender."



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 23-9 31
registration and airmail labels
framed "Franked by Sender" handstamp

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 28-9 31
MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION 12-10 31

Grand Hotel Métropole Hanoi

The large Grand Hotel Métropole was one of the major hotels in Hanoi. It was part of an Indochinese hotel chain called Société Foncière de Tonkin et de l'Annam.



Grand Hotel Métropole Hanoi

Hanoi's Grand Hotel Métropole opened in 1901. It was the first venue in Indochina to show motion pictures in 1916. In the 1960s, anticipating American air raids, a bomb shelter with a capacity of 30-40 people was constructed to protect guests. Today the hotel continues operations under the name Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI TONKIN 12-5 19
REVERSE
HAIPHONG TONKIN 13 MAI 19

Grand Hotel Métropole
Hanoi

André Leralle was a prolific philatelist who mailed covers to himself from around the world. Evidently, at one point in 1926, he stayed in apartment 132 of Hanoi's Grand Hotel Métropole.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI TONKIN 20-12 26

Grand Hotel Métropole
Hanoi

Hotel stationery was imprinted along the left side "Par avion Costes et Bellonte" for the distance record flight that the two pilots were attempting from Hanoi to Paris in November 1929.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 17-11 29

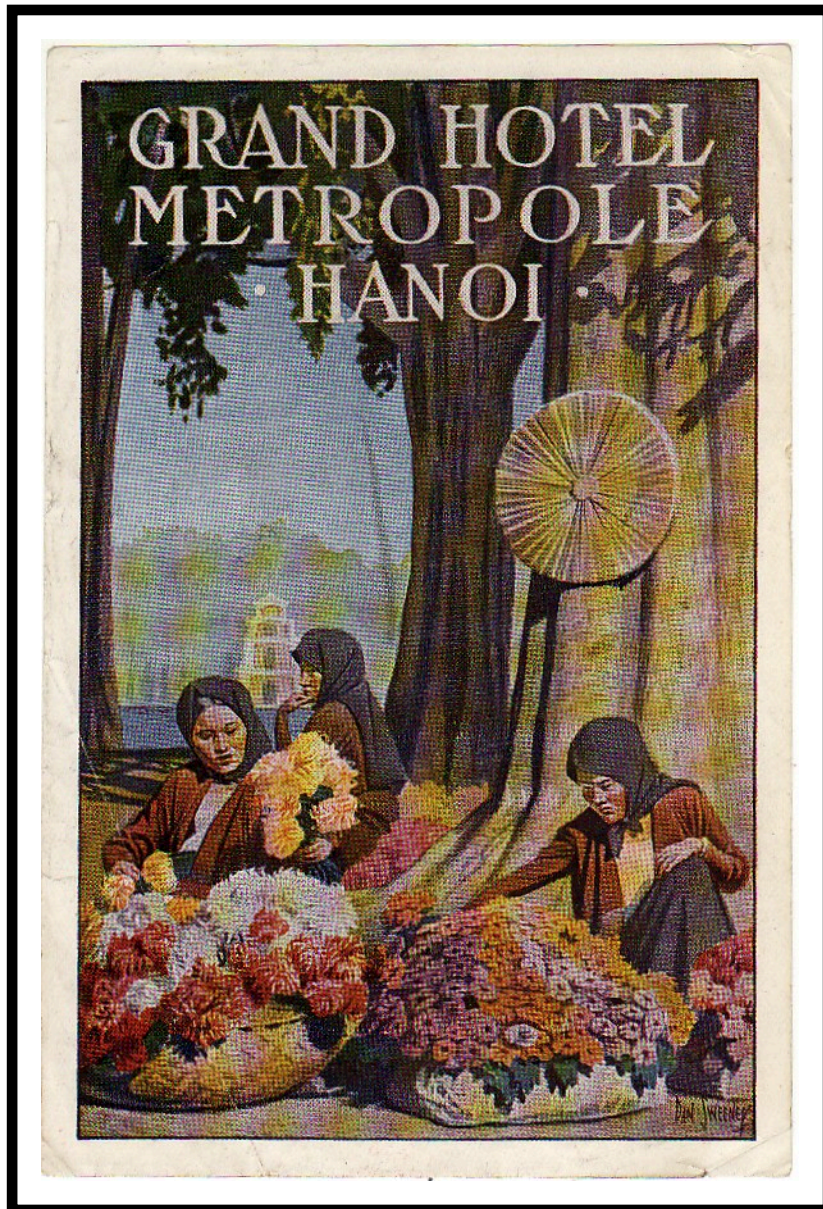
airmail label
flight cachet

REVERSE

PARIS R.P. DISTRIBUTION 21 • XI 1921

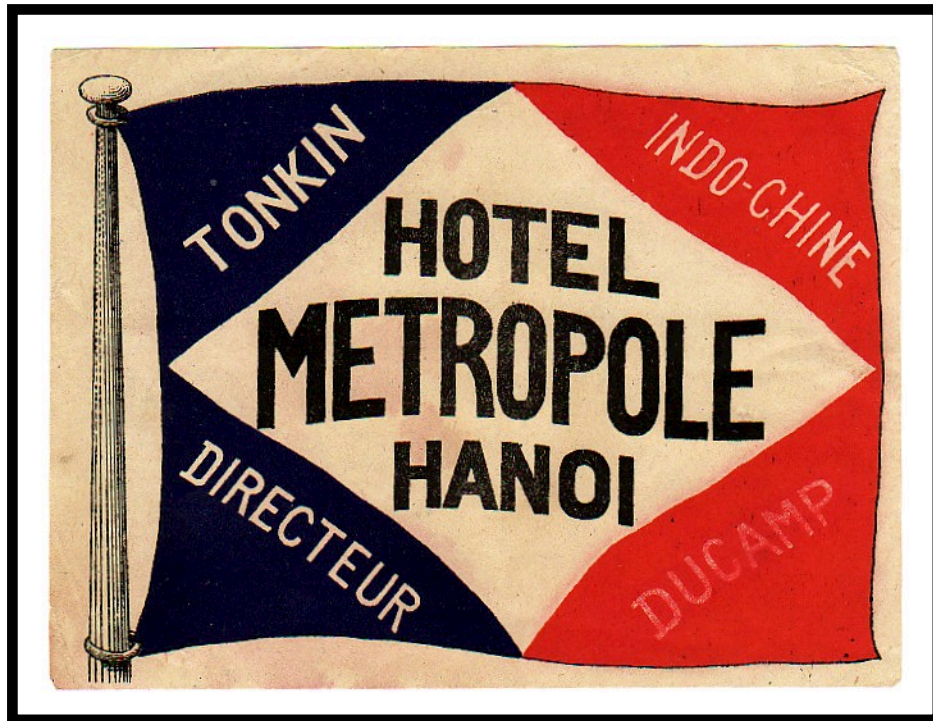
Grand Hotel Metropole Hanoi

Dan Sweeney, whose signature appears at the lower right, designed this label for the Grand Hotel Metropole in Hanoi.



Hotel Metrople
Hanoi

This variation in name indicates that the hotel was simply called “Hotel Metrople” at one point.



Hotel de France
Hanoi

A registered 1931 airmail letter from Hanoi to France used stationery from the Hotel de France.



POSTAL MARKINGS

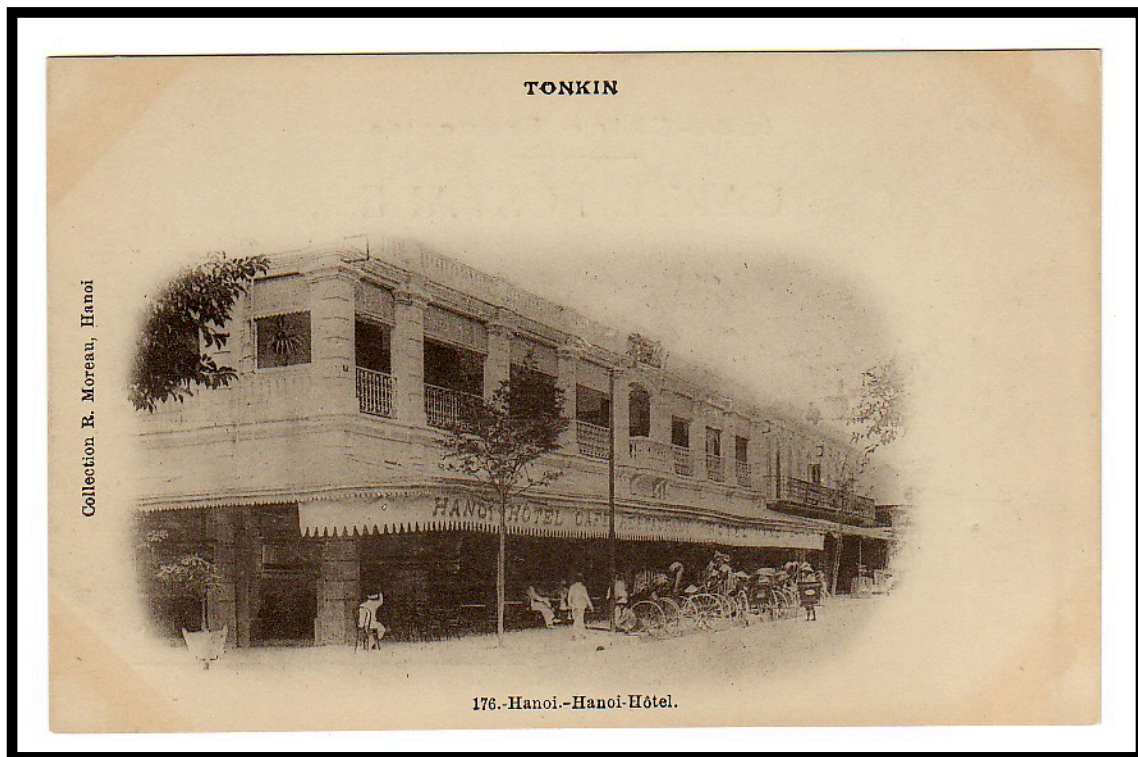
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 6-4 31
registration and airmail labels

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 10-4 31

Hanoi Hôtel Hanoi

Like many urban hotels, the Hanoi Hotel included a sidewalk café, which faced the main street and presumably projected a welcoming environment to prospective patrons.



Hotel Splendide
Hanoi

For a mailing to France in 1932, Hotel Splendide's stationery gave its address at the corner of Boulevard Henri-Rivière and Boulevard Carreau.



POSTAL MARKINGS

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 28-3 32
airmail label and routing instruction handstamp

REVERSE

NEUVY S/ BARANGEON CHER 12-4 32

Hotel Splendide
Hanoi

A wartime mailing to French India using Hotel Splendide stationery was examined by censors prior to leaving Indochina.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HANOI R.P. TONKIN 24-11 40
censor's resealing tape
Military Authority football

Hotel Splendide
Hanoi

A piece of notepaper, imprinted "HOTEL SPLENDIDE HANOI," was filled in with guest services.



Hotel Splendide
Hanoi

The reverse of the Hotel Splendide's baggage label served double duty with a street map showing the location of the hotel.



Terminus Hotel
Hanoi

A handstamp on the reverse of an airmail envelope shows that the sender was a guest or an employee of the Terminus Hotel in Hanoi. Presumably, the hotel was located in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi's train station.

HOTEL TERMINIUS
ET DE LA GARE
HANOI



POSTAL MARKINGS

MARSEILLE-GARE-AVION BCHES DU RHONE 19 • () 1936

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 11- () 236

Hotel de Hongay
Hongay

For a mailing to France, the sender used stationery from the Hotel de Hongay to post a letter from Haiphong in 1910.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HAIPHONG TONKIN 17 JUN 10
REVERSE
AGEN LOT ET GARONNE 21-7 10

Grand Hotel des Mines
Hongay

Mining was a dominant industry in the area around Hongay. The handstamp of Hongay's Grand Hotel des Mines was a low cost way of creating "personalized stationery."



POSTAL MARKINGS

HONGAY TONKIN 21-3 33
Saigon- Marseille route instruction

REVERSE

HANOI R.P. TONKIN 22-3 33
PARIS VIII DISTRIBUTION 10 • IV 1933

Grand Hotel Hue

A photographic postcard depicts the Grand Hotel de Hue (sign visible above the entry).



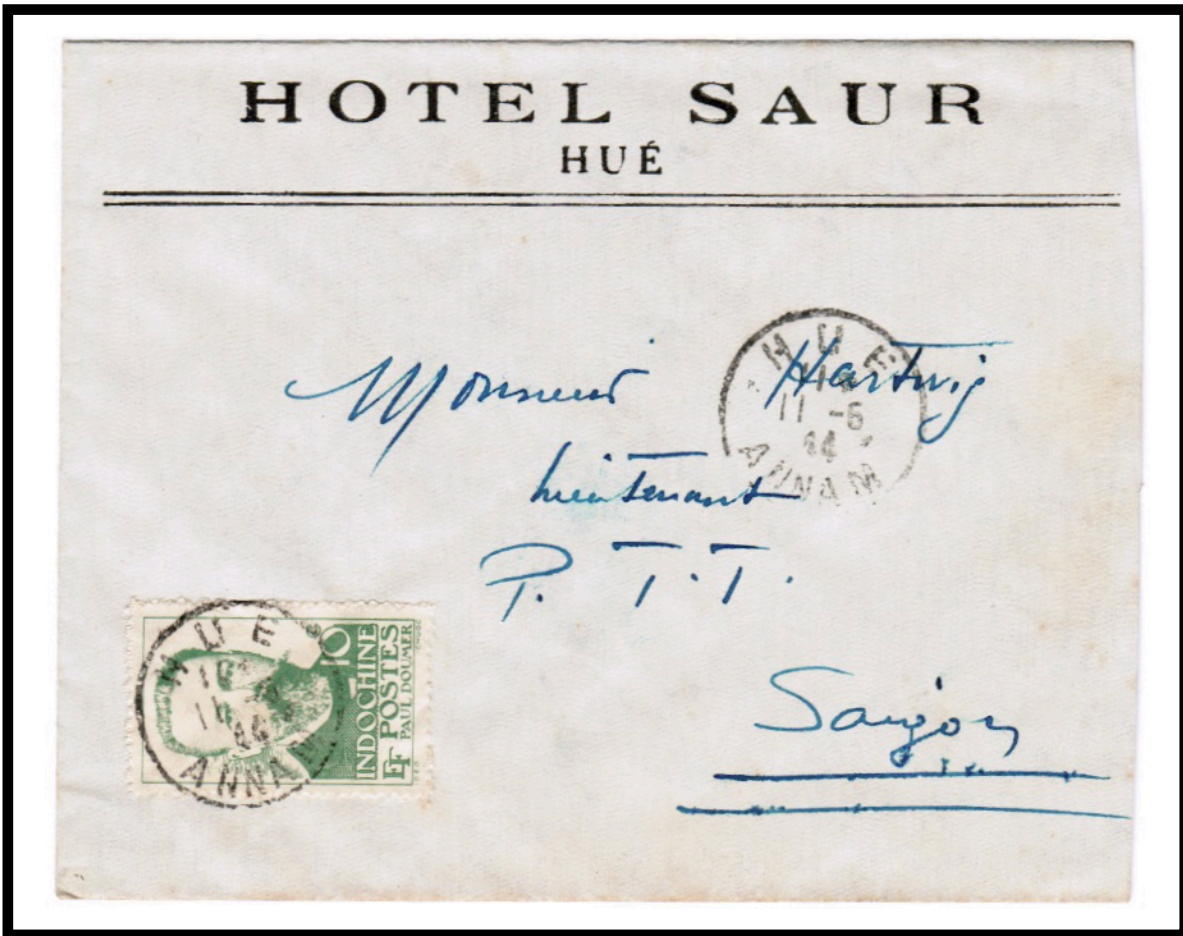
Establishments Morin-Freres Hue

A photographic postcard depicts a Morin-Freres structure. Because the edifice lacks any signage, rather than one of the chain's hotels, the building likely housed the corporate offices of Morin Freres.



Hotel Saur
Hue

Stationery for Hue's Hotel Saur featured its name emblazoned across the top of the envelope. This mailing in 1944 to Lieutenant Hartwig, who was the head of Saigon's censorship authority, exhibits no sign of censorship.



POSTAL MARKINGS
HUE ANNAM 11-5 44

Hotel de Provence and Hotel de la Page
Kampot and Kep

Sister hotels at Kep and Kampot were run by F. H. Joly. Based on the Kampot postmark on this envelope, it had originated at the Hotel de Provence located there.



POSTAL MARKINGS
KAMPOT CAMBODGE 8-5 28
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 10-5 28

Hotel de la Plage
Kep

An airmail letter written with Hotel de la Plage stationery was posted from Kep, Cambodia to Switzerland in 1939. Postage was calculated as follows

foreign letter rate	18 cents
<u>airmail surcharge</u>	<u>30 cents</u>
total	48 cents



POSTAL MARKINGS

KEP CAMBODGE 21-4 39
airmail label

REVERSE

PHNOMPENH CAMBODGE 21-4 39

Grand Hotel à Kompong-Cham
Kompong-Cham

Hotel stationery used rectangular frames to set different portions of the imprint located across the top of the envelope.



POSTAL MARKINGS

KOMPONGCHAM CAMBODGE 17-2 37
registration label

REVERSE

PNOMPENH CAMBODGE 18-2 37
LIMOGES HAUTE VIENNE 1-3 37

Hotel Caralp Nam-Dinh

The postcard image of the Hôtel Caralp at Nam-Dinh shows that it employed minimal outside advertising.



Hotel du Commerce
Nhatrang

A registered mailing to France was made 1906 using an early example of printed hotel stationery from the Hôtel du Commerce in Nhatrang, Annam.



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG ANNAM 16 AOUT 06
framed R with manuscript registration number

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 22 AOUT 06
LIBOURNE GIRONDE 18-9 06

Grand Hotel de la Plage Nhatrang

The Grand Hotel de la Plage was a beachfront hotel at Nhatrang. Postcards depict sides of the hotel facing toward and away from the beach.



Grand Hotel Beau Rivage Nhatrang

The corner imprint on this envelope shows that Nhatrang's Grand Hotel Beau Rivage was situated on the beach. Indeed, "rivage" means bank or shore.



POSTAL MARKINGS

NHATRANG ANNAM 7-12 34
registration and airmail labels

REVERSE

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 8-12 34

Grand Hotel Beau Rivage Nhatrang

A postcard posted in 1934 shares the same image of the beach and buildings that appeared on the hotel's envelopes.



POSTAL MARKINGS

SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 19 JUN 34

REVERSE

NHATRANG ANNAM 18-6 34

Grand Hotel Beau Rivage
Nhatrang

An oval baggage label from the Grand Hotel Beau Rivage shares the same image as the hotel's stationery.



Hotel Beaurivage Nhatrang

The caption on this period postcard identifies the name of the hotel as “Hôtel Beaurivage” with a single word as compared to the way the hotel was sometimes referred to with two words “Beau” and Rivage.”



Hotel Beau Rivage
Grand Hotel de la Plage
Nhatrang

In 1936, a registered letter was posted with the stationery of the sister hotels in Nhatrang. The hotels were identified using simple block text.



POSTAL MARKINGS
NHA-TRANG ANNAM 17-7 36
registration label
REVERSE
REIMS-PRINCIPAL MARNE 27-7 36

Grand Hotel Beau-Rivage
Nhatrang

This example of hotel stationery from World War II exhibits a slight variation in the hotel's name. As opposed to earlier examples the words "BEAU" and "RIVAGE" are connected with a hyphen.

Interestingly, the letter is addressed to another hotel, the Hotel du Parc in Dalat.



POSTAL MARKINGS
NHATRANG ANNAM 14-8 42
REVERSE
SAIGON-CENTRAL COCHINCHINE 14 AOUT 42