

# HOTEL "GRANDE BRETAGNE"

ATHENS

## 150 years of (Postal) History

150 years of history is no small feat for a hotel which, due to its location and high-quality services, is part of the historical backdrop of the Greek capital, Athens. We are referring to the "Hotel Grande Bretagne" which we will then present through its philatelic history.

### The "GRANDE BRETAGNE" Hotel

The "Grande Bretagne" Hotel is a renowned 5-star luxury hotel located in the heart of Athens, Greece. It has been an emblem of timeless elegance in Greece for more than 150 years

The Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens has a history that is closely connected to the history of the city and modern Greece. The original structure was built in 1842 as the house for Antonis Dimitriou, a wealthy Greek businessman from the island of Lemnos, just twelve years after Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire. In 1874, it was bought by Efstathios Lampsas, who restored it with a loan of 800, 000 drachmas loan and named it "Grande Bretagne".

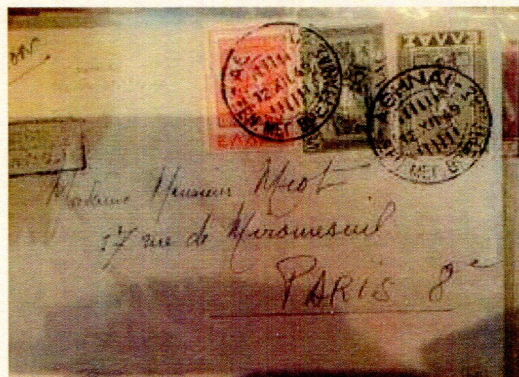
Among first renowned clients were members of the first Olympics (1896) as well as visitors and friends of the Greek Royal family. During the early stages of the Greek Civil War (1944-45), the hotel housed Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou, the Council of Ministers and the British military assistance force under General Ronald Scobie. Winston Churchill during his 24- hour visit in Athens (1945) stayed there.

The hotel's history also includes darker periods, such as when it was turned into the headquarters of the Third Reich during the Nazi occupation of Greece in 1941, with Hitler and Rommel residing there on the eve of the Soviet invasion. Additionally, the hotel housed dozens of refugees during the civil war between the communists and the Greek Army after World War II and a countless number of personalities from all over the world.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century ended, the hotel close down (2001) and the last and most recent renovation began to modernize the hotel and make it more luxurious, before opening it for the 2004 Athens Olympics.



German soldier at the entrance of GRANDE BRETAGNE HOTEL, during the German occupation of Greece (1941-1944)



During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the "Hotel Grande Bretagne" was given the permission by the Greek post Offices to use its own "post handstamp" which was a double round black stamp with the words "GRANDE BRETAGNE HOTEL & ATHENS" (picture on the left).

The Grande Bretagne Hotel has been a landmark of cultural heritage and elegance, adapting to changing times while preserving its historical essence.

The photos, letter covers and card- postal presented here in chronological order highlight the significant changes made to the hotel building during its renovations and extensions during the 150 years of its existence.

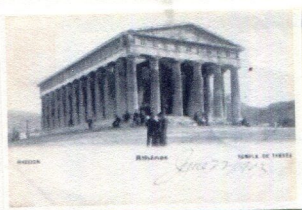
Bibliography: "THE HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE IN ATHENS", AGGELOS F. VLAHOS, KERKYRA pub., ATHENS 2003, 265 p.

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Unused, colored postcard/ *Epistolikon Deltarion* (No. 31) of the end of 19th century "Grande Bretagne" Hotel after its first major renovation (1870) which transfer the main entry from Panepistimiou street, to King George A' str. (still today). Only horse-drawn carriages appear, while the hotel is protected by an iron railing on the sidewalk. In the terrace a large sign in Greek "ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΟΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ" (Hotel Grande Bretagne). On the facade, it bears the printed title "Georgiou A' Street, Athens".



Postcard/ *Epistolikon Deltarion*. It bears a 10 lepta (1901-10), rose, of Flying Hermes. Cancellation stamp, ATHENS, 9 JUN 1903. Bears also an oval blue handstamp of the GRANDE BRETAGNE HOTEL, le 9 JUN 1903, ATHENS. Declaring the sender as a hotel client. Arrival cds OAKLAND, California, US. The front side shows the "Temple of Thesee", ΘΗΣΕΙΟΝ, Athenes.



Color Letterhead, depicting, as inscribed in red ink, the "GRAND HOTEL ANGLETERRE", Athens, Greece. It has been shipped from Patras to France. It bears a stamp 5 Lepta, 1906, Green, Second Commemorative Issue for the Olympic Games in Athens. WM: ET & Crown. The sender writes on the obverse "*Je t'embrasse, Ne m'oubliez pas*" and signs while noting on the image that the building center-right is the Royal Palace. The card has been issued by the company RICHTER & Co, Napoli. The recipient's address is written on the reverse (Bourg La Reine, Seine) but doesn't correspond to recipient ad has been re-directed to Rucoff. There is a cds cancel from the PO Finstère, France.



(70%)

Colour, Letter Card, depicting, as written in red ink at the bottom left, "Hotel Grande Bretagne – Athens" and noting that the card has been issued by the company RICHTER & Co, Napoli. It has been shipped from Athens to Windsor, England. It bears a stamp 10 Lepta, 1901-1910, rose, Flying Hermes Issue for the Olympic Games in Athens. WM: ET & Crown. It bears a cancellation stamp, ATHENS, 24 AYΓ 1908.

The card shows the hotel in its original state with a metal railing around the building, with two flags, Greek and British, on the corners of the roof of the building, horse-drawn carriages on the street, but also a car and a bicycle, as well as many pedestrians. In its own way, it gives a view of the Athens of the time.



Postcard, Athens edition by "SOFIANOPOULOS & VIKOPOULOS". A colour photo of the Parthenon appears on the front. The accompanying text is dated 20.12, but the postmark (ATHENAI) bears the date 24.12.1920. The card is addressed to Mr. & Mrs. Konstantinidis in Cairo, Egypt. It bears two lithographic stamps of 10 Im., rose and 20 Im., grey/black. (Mi GR 214,215) 1916. The text, written in French, has Christmas and New Year's wishes and ends with the information that if they wish to reply, they should send the correspondence to the "Hotel Grande Bretagne - Athens". \* (pict. A)



(70%)

\* Pict. A

relations et sa  
 votre d... Ferend...  
 Hotel Grande Bretagne  
 Athènes



Grande Bretagne Hotel postal envelope bearing 6 stamps addressed to Fraulein MARIA LUTHI in the canton of Bern, Switzerland. Consigned by ERNEST FLUCKIGER, Hotel Grande Bretagne, Athènes. It should be noted that the recipient's name and address are typed, while the sender's is a red stamp. It also bears the hotel coat of arms embossed in deep blue on the reverse and the words HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE LAMPSA, ATHENES. Inside, the envelope is lined with purple paper. The stamps are:

1x 2 DRH, 1924 Lord Byron, Lithographic, Violet & Black, None WM,

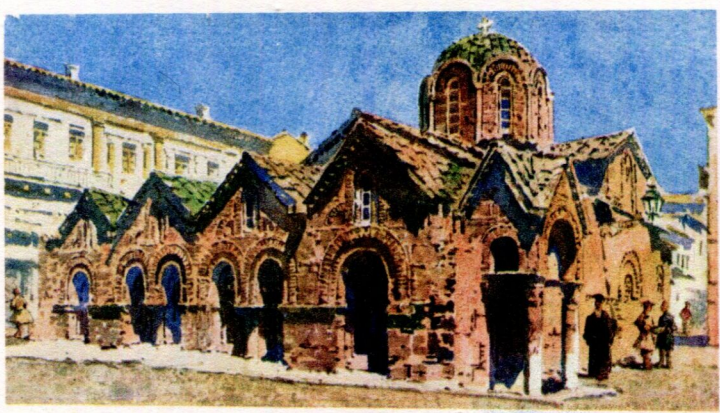
2x 25 L., 1917, Iris messenger, Light blue, Lithographic, WM: SPPL

2x 1 L., 1911, Hermes, Green, Lithographic, None WM

It bears one handstamp from Athens (unclear) and one cds upon arrival in HUTTWIL (11 III 25)



Postcard issued by the 'GRANDE BRETAGNE' Hotel for its customers, showing the church of *Kapnikarea* in colour with the explanation that it is a Byzantine church. It is also written that it is published by THE LAMPSA HOTELS – HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, HOTEL PETIT PALAIS. On the reverse, except for the text, the postcard is sent from Athens to Vienna. It is again stated in green font to be a 'Grande Bretagne' hotel postcard, and comes with 3 stamps: 2x 1 drachma, with Parthenon theme, issue 1927, (Mi GR 311 I) blue/brown-orange 1x 1 40 lepta, with the theme of the White Tower of Thessaloniki, (Mi GR 308) greenish And two large round cancellation seals ATHINA - , 25. ...



(102)

THE LAMPSA HOTELS: | HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE  
 | HOTEL PETIT PALAIS  
 TEMPLE STYLE BYZANTIN  
 CAPNICARÉA - ATHÈNES

Two 1930s black and white –unused– postcards showing the “Hotel de la Grande Bretagne” from different angles. The first, from the level of the Unknown Soldier Monument, from where the original building can be seen, as well as the addition along Panepistimiou Street. The second shows the facade of the hotel on Syntagma Square. The main building still remains two-storied, without the addition of the next two floors, while several trees still appear on the sidewalk of Syntagma Square. The first is a Greek edition with registered "Copyright Perla 9-3-33" and photo number 223.

Both state that they are show the “Hotel de la Grande Bretagne”.



Envelope of 'HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE', 'LE PETIT PALAIS', ATHENES, as seen on reverse. This is an envelope that was used by the hotel in the second half of the 1930s. The envelope is gray in color and inside it has a deep green paper lining. The letter is sent «ΑΕΡΟΠΟΡΙΚΩΣ-PAR AVION» to Paris and bears 9 stamps, canceled by the Post Office of the Syntagma Square, on 11 JUN 38. It is:

- 2x 50 L., grey-green, 1933, Government Air Mail, none WM, Hermes 463
  - 1x 6 DRH., bleu, 1938, Balkan Entent, Bucarest, none WM, Hermes 518
  - 2x 50 L., violet, 1937, Charity stamps (1927 or 1933), surcharged (green), Hermes 177(412)
  - 1x 80 L., braun & ultra violet, 1937, Historical, WM: Crown, Hermes 507,
  - 1x 20 L, black & green-blue, 1937 Historical, WM: Crown, Hermes 504,
  - 1x 5 DRH., red, 1937 Historical, WM: Crown, Hermes 509,
  - 1x 2 DRH., blue, 1947 Historical, WM: Crown, Hermes 508,
- On the reverse it has arrival cds, PARIS, RUE SINGER, 15 JUN 1938



(76)

Unposted, 1930s common airmail envelope, printed with the 'Grande Bretagne' hotel symbol on the upper right obverse (GB Athens) and an aircraft lower left (denoting its airmail use). It bears two stamps:

1x1, 1933, Junkers aircraft flying over Greece, (Mi GR 362) green, 40 Lepta

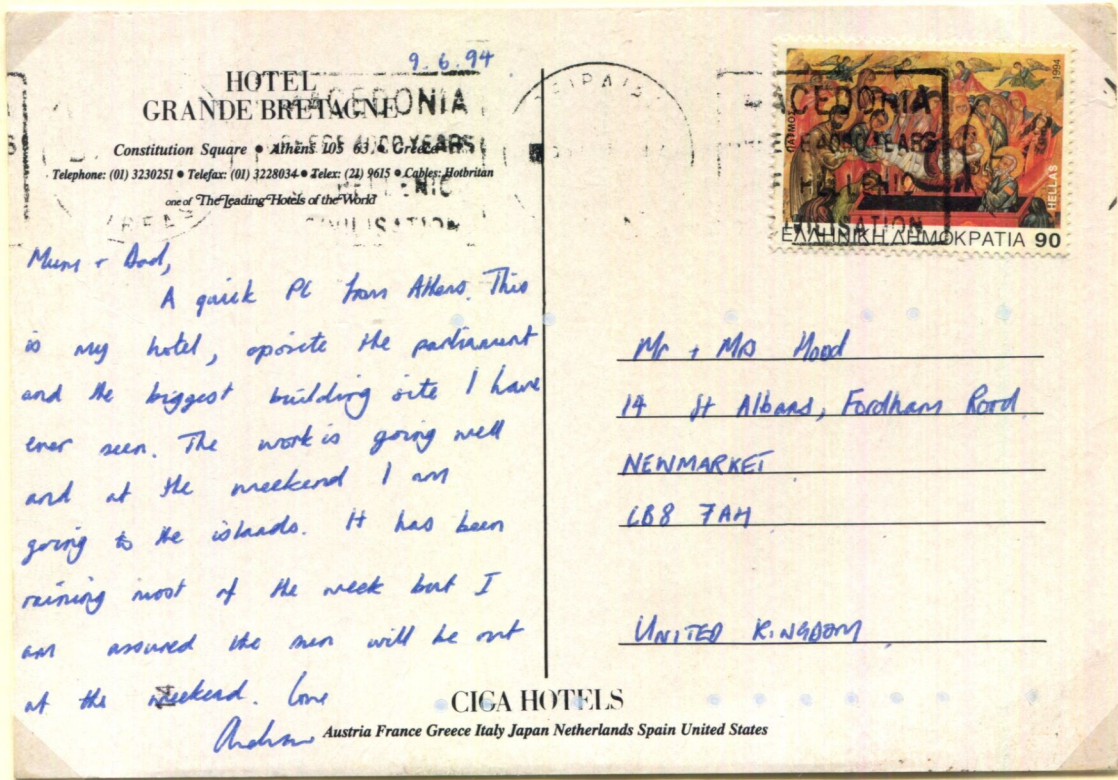
1x1, 1938, Prince Paul & Princess Frederika (Mi GR 409), brown-orange, 3 Drachma

Cancel, red double round stamp, ATHENS, 1.1.39, and hallmark at bottom.

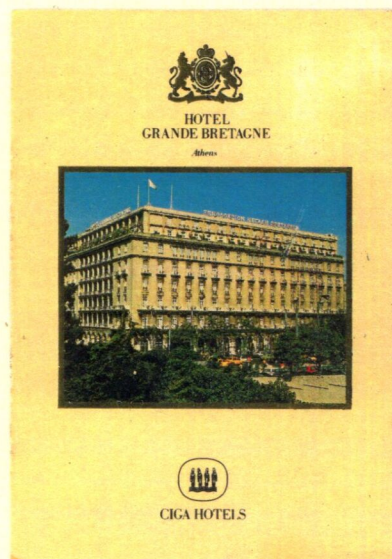


(70%)

Postcard of the HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, issued by the GIGA HOTELS Company, which owned the hotel in the '90s. The obverse features the hotel, its coat of arms and the GIGA HOTELS trademark and the reverse features text from the customer-consignor to a British couple in the United Kingdom, dated 9.6.94 and mailed from the Piraeus Post Office. It bears a stamp worth 90 drachmas, colorful, with the theme of "The Burial of Jesus", 1994 edition, (HERMES 2006).



(50%)



July 24, 1974. K. Karamanlis returns to Athens from Paris signaling the end of the dictatorship era and settles in HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE. Journalists from international media have also settled there. One of them, the British Archer (as can be seen from his notes he probably covered a television medium) uses a stamped paper of the Grande Bretagne Hotel to keep his personal notes. He records all the movements and meetings of K. Karamanlis as well as the reactions of the thousands of Greeks who "celebrate" the fall of the junta. (item below).

ATHENS ARCHER

HOTEL GRANDE · BRETAGNE  
ATHENES · 133

TELEGRAMME · HOTBRITAN  
TELEPHONE : 3 230.251  
(40) LINES  
TELEX : HBRT : GR 215-348  
P. O. BOX. NO 298

The Streets of Athens exploded with delight soon after seven o'clock last night when the military government announced on the radio that it could not carry on. Car drivers had been listening eagerly for such an announcement all day and simultaneously sounded their horns in a cacophony which to the people of Athens <sup>must have</sup> sounded like a symphony. The chorus of voices <sup>was</sup> shouting Democracy Democracy.

Then at about half past two this morning the man they had been waiting for arrived, his car showered with flowers. This was Constantine Karamanlis, three times a former prime minister who resigned last in 1963 and has lived in exile in Paris. The Military Regime had asked him to try to form a Government of National Unity.

DOCUMENT  
(HISTORICAL)



Stamp of the Greek, 1999 series, K. Karamanlis, 170 drachmas, multicolored (Mi GR 2005) showing the return and welcoming of Karamanlis in 1974.

Rectangular white envelope bearing the hotel's coat of arms and HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, ATHENS, printed in gold in the upper left corner. On the reverse is printed HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL, ATHENS, 106 64 SYNTAGMA SQUARE ATHENS, GREECE. The sender is not mentioned but the recipient is someone in Germany. It bears a manual, round, blue stamp, ELTA, Syntagma Square, 19 03 24 and an ELTA adhesive tape, option A, worth 6 euros and an electronic tag for online tracking of the letter. The German post offices, although they did not place arrival cds, have put a green sticker that says SENDUNG SCANNEN and a scanner design. This indicates that the letter has been checked for security reasons.

HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL, ATHENS  
 SYNTAGMA SQUARE, 106 64 ATHENS, GREECE  
 THE LUXURY COLLECTION HOTELS & RESORTS





Original, HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE, Luggage label. "Nude Man Greek Statue". 1920-1940



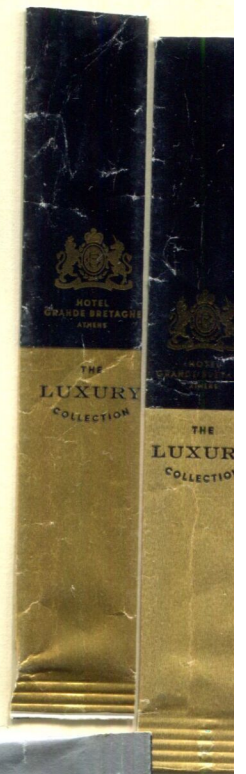
Original Luggage (sticker) from the HOTEL GRANDE BRETAGNE. 1940-1960

A photographic memory of a moment of cheerfulness in front of the entrance of the hotel Grand Bretagne, with the taxi drivers who served the hotel, a "tsolias" and the doorman of the hotel of the time (1930's) giving a "military" salute...

- The photo came from the archive of the late photojournalist **Stathis Giannakopoulos**



Some items of daily use by hotel services and customers. Set of envelope-tubes with sugar: in gold (brown sugar), in silver (white sugar). Napkin, sous-verre, playing cards from a hotel edition deck, a plastic room key card with a MERCEDES car manufacturer advertisement on the back, etc...



Title of 100 shares of the HELLENIC HOTELS LAMPSA S.A., OF 1984, listed  
on the Athens Stock Exchange.

**ΑΝΩΝΥΜΟΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΙΑ  
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΩΝ ΛΑΜΨΑ**

Έγκριθεῖσα διά Β. Διατάγματος τῆς 28 Νοεμβρ. 1919

**ΕΔΡΑ ΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ**

**ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑΒΕΒΛΗΜΕΝΟΝ ΔΡ. 465.660.900**

Διηρημένον εἰς 3.104.406 ἀνωνύμους μετοχάς  
ἑν Δραχ. 150 ἑκάστη

**ΤΙΤΛΟΣ ΕΚΑΤΟΝ ΜΕΤΟΧΩΝ**

ΑΝΗΚΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΚΟΜΙΣΤΗΝ

ΑΥΞ. ΑΡ. ΤΙΤΛΟΥ  
No. DU TITRE

040177

*Εν Αθήναις τῇ 1<sup>ῃ</sup> Νοεμβρίου 1984*

ΔΥΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΙ



DEUX ADMINISTRATEURS

*Athenes, le 1 Novembre 1984*

ΑΡ. ΜΕΤΟΧΩΝ  
No. DES ACTIONS

3061451 - 3061550

Approuvée par décret Royal du 28 Novembre 1919

**SIÈGE SOCIAL ATHÈNES**

**CAPITAL ENTIÈREMENT VERSÉ DR. 465.660.900**

Διηρημένον 3.104.406 ἀκτῖνες ἀὸν πορτεὺρ