

Hospitality



A Panoramic View of Los Angeles

An Interview with Jean-Jacques Reibel,
General Manager, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown



InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown (left); La Boucherie restaurant (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Jean-Jacques Reibel, who had served as Managing Director of InterContinental Hong Kong for 12 years, assumed his current post in April 2016. The 34-year IHG veteran and native Frenchman spent 20 years managing the company's top properties in the USA (including The Willard in Washington, D.C., and InterContinental Miami) before joining InterContinental Hong Kong.



Jean-Jacques Reibel

PROPERTY BRIEF Officially opened in June of 2017, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown (ihg.com) is located in the Wilshire Grand building, standing 73 stories tall in the core of Downtown's historic, entertainment, financial, arts and sports districts. Ideally placed at the heart of the revitalized, energy-charged urban center of the United States' second-largest city, the hotel provides first-class hospitality that seamlessly intertwines with the fabric of the burgeoning Downtown area. With its iconic sail and a 1,100-foot silhouette inspired by Yosemite's Half Dome, InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown gives new shape to the L.A. skyline. High-speed double-decker elevators provide a 40-second ride to an innovative Sky Lobby on the 70th floor. The Sky Lobby greets guests with large, panoramic views along with art and design inspired by L.A.'s unique culture, delivering a distinctly elevated experience and transporting them into a different world at every turn. The top of the tower, imagined as a "city in the sky," offers 360-degree views as the tallest building west of Chicago, where global travelers and locals alike can mingle amongst some of the city's most coveted lounges and restaurants.

How will InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown be positioned within the market?

The design of the property is absolutely astonishing and has forever changed the skyline of L.A. We are catering not only to international clientele, corporate clients and meetings, but we also want to be the destination of choice for food and beverage, so we have an incredible array of restaurants and bars within the hotel.

The rooms are about 380 to 500 square feet each, so they're very spacious and all feature views of the city. Suites, including our Presidential, range from 650 to 2,500 square feet. The design of the hotel is such that all of the

rooms are built facing the exterior. The service areas and elevators are in the middle of the floors, so every room has a panoramic view of L.A.

The lobby is also located on the 70th floor – it's two stories high with glass windows overlooking the city. It's spectacular. When one comes in from the street, they enter and take the very speedy double-cabin elevator to the 70th floor within 40 seconds with no stops.

Our Lobby Lounge offers 150 different vodkas at the bar. On the 71st floor, we have the French-inspired steakhouse, La Boucherie. The contemporary design blends American and old French history; it's very intriguing. We serve meats from all over the world and offer 1,200 labels of hand-selected wines.

On the 73rd floor, we offer Spire 73 with an open sky bar/restaurant/lounge. It has music, great cocktails and rotating DJs.

On the 69th floor, we offer Sora for sushi and omakase as well as Dekkadance, which is a premier restaurant open for breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week. We have a pizza oven in the restaurant delivering fresh pizza with different flavors while guests enjoy the beautiful views.

Our Club InterContinental serves our guests on the 70th floor, which is adjacent to the front desk. It offers breakfast, afternoon tea and evening cocktails.

Will you discuss the event capabilities at the property?

Being centrally located in the financial district, we attract local corporate executives and groups both large and small, as well as entertainment industry clientele. Additionally, with our convenient location near the Convention Center and L.A. Live, we have the ability to cater to larger events as we offer a variety of event space. We have a huge indoor/outdoor ballroom on the fifth floor that is wide open without any pillars blocking anyone's view and can accommodate 1,800 people for dinner. This grand ballroom is amazing in that it has windows on one side of the building with a terrace garden where people can breakout for coffee or cocktails and enjoy the fresh air and views of the city.

On the seventh floor, we have our junior ballroom, which can host up to 400. It is adjacent to our outdoor swimming pool, which is a versatile spacious area with cabanas and a bar as well. We also have 33 different meeting suites.

We offer 95,000 feet of banquet or conference space, so we have wonderful options for events such as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, charity galas and political fundraisers.

How important is the suite component for the hotel?

We are fortunate to have 109 suites – including four hospitality suites and a luxurious 2,500-square-foot Presidential Suite. With a hotel of our size, we always need suites because when we have high-profile groups, corporate clients and VIP guests, they want something special.

What kind of investment have you put into composing the team at the property?

We want to be perceived as a contemporary and modern hotel with incredible service and a product that delivers beyond our guest's expectations. To accomplish this, it's critical that we hire the best people with natural hospitality skills. Being in the hospitality industry is all about serving people.

In order to consistently deliver the highest service that hotel guests continue to return for, it's important to have a team of motivated and dedicated employees and be close to them so I can support them. This requires management to stay close to employees and really listen to their feedback. Our employees already have a solid knowledge of the industry and, if we successfully communicate with them, they will also fully understand what guests' expectations are.

We brought a task force into the property from sister properties across the states to explain the InterContinental way and emphasize the importance of service. When we open a hotel, we start everything from scratch.

We have to introduce our culture of excellence.

What makes InterContinental so special for you?

InterContinental is an international company, so I have worked in Europe and America for several years, as well as Asia. I welcome the opportunity to travel the world and be an international hotelier. This gives me the opportunity to understand the world better as I travel and work in different environments.

InterContinental offers incredible opportunities to any individual, and they are supportive of where one would like to be. I now believe I am a global citizen and am honored to have served in a number of fantastic hotels. ●