



All About Discovery

An Interview with Chris Rynkar, General Manager, Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel

EDITORS' NOTE Chris Rynkar has more than 15 years of hospitality experience working in New York City, Detroit, Boston and San Diego. He has held various managerial and operational positions at Marriott, Hyatt, and Real Hospitality. He was awarded "General Manager of the Year" by Real Hospitality Group and was named "Manager of the Year" during his career at Hyatt. He also served as Director of Revenue Management at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge Hotel in Boston. Rynkar is a graduate of Villanova University.



Chris Rynkar

PROPERTY BRIEF Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel (renaissancechelsea.com) is a boutique destination occupying a prime address in NYC's Chelsea neighborhood. Within close proximity to iconic attractions like Madison Square Garden and the Empire State Building, the property provides guests with intimate access to New York City. As one of the tallest buildings in Manhattan's enchanting Flower District located on the former site of Chelsea's Antiques Garage, the hotel draws inspiration from the site's history and surrounding neighborhood. The new hotel is infused with a sense of clever theatricality, where spaces surprise and delight guests with unexpected moments, each thoughtfully designed to tell a story. Guest rooms and suites have been designed to underscore Renaissance Hotels' unexpected design aesthetic, with high-low elements such as wood paneled printed wall coverings and concrete sinks, complemented by whimsical touches like gnome desk lamps and rabbit coast hooks. The property's rooftop bar and lounge, Somewhere Nowhere, offers 360-degree views and one of the city's highest open-air rooftop pools, in a lush, garden-like setting, while its 24-hour fitness center provides ample options for health-conscious guests. With a spacious ballroom and light-filled meeting spaces, the hotel is an inspired choice for special events or creative meetings in the heart of Chelsea.

Will you highlight the opening of the Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel and how the property will be positioned in the market?

We are very excited to open the hotel, especially in this dynamic neighborhood. The Renaissance brand and Chelsea neighborhood

meld well together. Renaissance is all about ensuring that guests experience the DNA of the neighborhood through the brand's theatrical design spirit and engaging guest experiences – ultimately leaving with a new sense of the destination. Chelsea is brimming with an artistic and eccentric personality, which inspired us to create a sensory-focused hotel experience infusing creative, unexpected design details that stimulate curiosity and exploration among our guests.

We encourage this sense of discovery not only within the hotel, but also throughout the Chelsea neighborhood. Our on-site Renaissance "Navigators" are on hand to help travelers uncover hidden indigenous gems that they won't find in the guidebooks.



In terms of design, the hotel is located on the former site of Chelsea's beloved Antiques Garage. As an homage to the historic site, eclectic vintage accents are peppered throughout every space for guests to discover. Art consultant Indiewalls led a massive two-story installation of antique knobs, locks and keys that takes center stage as the backdrop to the lobby staircase. Trellage-Ferrill Studio fabricated custom pieces like a collection of upside-down bird cages, as well as a large pendant at the elevator lobby inspired by a bird's nest to pique the curiosity of travelers. Inside the elevator cabs, leather tiles made from vintage belts coat the walls, adding intrigue of the hotel's overall design. Stonehill Taylor did an incredible job with the design, really encapsulating the Chelsea neighborhood.

On the rooftop, guests are surrounded by fresh vegetation and ivy-clad walls. At 430 feet, the hotel is one of the tallest buildings in Chelsea with 39 floors. On the rooftop,



Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel's Somewhere Nowhere rooftop bar and lounge (left); Cotto restaurant (above); guestroom (below)

guests will have access to a private oasis featuring one of the city's highest rooftop pools as well as breathtaking, 360-degree views of Downtown, Uptown, the Hudson River and Hudson Yards.

How critical is having a strong suite offering for the property?

It is very important to have a robust suite offering. We expect many of our loyal Marriott Bonvoy members to visit the hotel and we like to reward these guests with perks, such as suite upgrades, whenever possible. A strong suite offering also means guests have choices when selecting room type. I personally recommend suites located on our 36th floor. They boast the most unbelievable views of the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings. Other suites have lovely outdoor balconies that offer the perfect vantage point of the bustling city.

What has been the focus on food and beverage which is an area that can be challenging for hotels in a city like New York?

While the food and beverage industry can be a challenging environment, the key is to capture the interest of guests staying at the hotel. We've created an inviting setting at Cotto, our Italian restaurant in the lobby. With airy, indoor dining and a trellis-covered courtyard, Cotto will feature community tables and menu items that are both reasonably priced and easy to share. This is the first Manhattan hotel restaurant opening for our award-winning executive chef, Fabrizio Facchini, who hails from Northern Italy. He is ecstatic to bring his talents to Chelsea and offer a modern take on traditional Italian dishes.

Will you highlight the focus on building the team at the property?

We already have a great product and the right neighborhood – now we're prioritizing building our team and investing in our staff. It all starts with hiring the right team members who truly care, have a passion for the business and want to grow. While a background in hospitality is a plus, we're also looking for eager candidates that know how to connect with people from across the world and understand the ins and outs of Chelsea.

In my experience working with a wide range of properties, the differentiator has always been the staff and how well they can take care of and connect with guests. Our mission is to ensure that guests feel like they are at home and have memorable experiences. ●