

Hospitality

Human Experience and Human Scale

An Interview with Dina De Luca Chartouni



Two-bedroom suite living area

EDITORS' NOTE Dina De Luca Chartouni wears many hats. As her maiden name, Dina De Luca, she is known as a producer of film and TV. As Dina Chartouni, her married name, she is known as a co-owner of The Lowell Hotel in New York City. In addition to being a wife and mother of three, Chartouni is known as the name behind the DDC28 brand of bath and beauty products, which recently launched in Saks Fifth Avenue and is available at lowellhotel.com. Born and raised in New York City, Chartouni continues to make it her home base, while also dividing her time between London and Los Angeles for work.



Dina De Luca Chartouni

PROPERTY BRIEF The Lowell (lowellhotel.com) provides its guests with unique personalized service and attention to detail, maintaining 75 suites that can be configured in multiple ways. Guests will appreciate complimentary beverages upon arrival, Voss water at turndown, and a selection of DDC28 amenities exclusively created for The Lowell. Most suites have wood-burning fireplaces, some have terraces, and almost all have fully-equipped kitchens. The Lowell, long the New York hotel of choice for "in the know" world travelers, has become even more sought after with a new restaurant, Majorelle, and bar, Jacques, library lounge, and garden, in addition to an updated lobby and Pembroke Room.

The Lowell has achieved consistently strong results and is a leader in the market. What makes the property so special and how do you define The Lowell advantage?

There are many aspects that help to make The Lowell unique. Chief among them is the staff – the team of people that make up what I call "The Lowell family." We are a uniquely sized hotel and everybody's input is valued. The Lowell Family is led by our talented General Manager, Heiko Kuenstle, and the staff's dedication and passion for their work is unparalleled. I believe that our guests sense this spirit as they come into contact with the staff. Many of our guests have been staying with us for over 30 years and many of our staff have been working at the hotel for this same amount of time. The Lowell is also unique because it is one of the only remaining hotels in the city of New

York that was built as a hotel in 1927 and still remains a hotel today – it has never fallen into corporate hands. Today, it is more relevant in the New York luxury market than ever in its history. The Lowell received two very distinguished honors this year: *Travel & Leisure's* #1 New York City hotel and *Conde Nast Traveler's* #1 New York City hotel in their reader awards.

What are the keys to providing a true luxury hotel experience today?

I have been traveling a lot recently and have stayed in many different types of luxury properties around the world. What I have come to conclude about a true luxury hotel experience is two-fold: The human experience and the human scale. The human experience starts from the moment you enter a lobby. Are you handed an electronic key, or are you escorted to your room by a member of the staff? Are you ordering your breakfast through the app on the TV screen or are you speaking to someone in room service? The human experience is all about feeling there is a connection to the hotel as soon as you step through the front door. Since The Lowell is a uniquely sized property, we have a good ratio of staff to guests and a sense of personalization and service can be met.

The other key to providing a truly luxury hotel experience is that guests experience "human scale." What I mean by this term is that a guest should be able to enter a luxury hotel, reach one's room and walk about the property and not feel like they've run a half marathon. Human scale is the ability to access things in a relatively effortless fashion and with relative ease. Being able to go to your room without having to ride two elevators, or the ability to open a window, and/or step onto a terrace and feel the temperature outside, are all a part of the human experience.

How do you define the target market for The Lowell?

We define the target market for The Lowell as those who want a quintessentially New York experience, complemented by personalization of service and unique and exclusive spaces.

The Lowell has a strong suite product. How critical is this offering for your clientele and will you provide an overview of the suites?

Often, in the world of luxury travel, suites represent heightened glamour, as well as more space. For The Lowell, suites are a way of experiencing a true New York lifestyle. We have many different categories for our suites – some are larger than others. All accommodations have kitchens or mini kitchens and many have wood burning fireplaces and terraces. The Lowell has the unique flexibility to join suites and rooms to create large-scaled, truly exclusive units that feel like a big Manhattan apartment.

The restaurant/food and beverage business is challenging for hotels in major cities like New York. What are the keys to being successful in food and beverage for a hotel like The Lowell and will you highlight your new restaurant, Majorelle, and bar, Jacques?

I believe that the key to having a successful food and beverage department in a hotel is consistency and menu choices. Under the direction of Chef Michael Fred, The Lowell has been able to achieve this consistency of quality, while evolving with the changing tastes of the times. The in-room dining menus have tried to balance the need for comfort food along with the latest trends in the food world. Majorelle's and Jacques' successes are largely due to Charles Masson's dedication and hard work. Charles' lifelong passion for excellence in food and service have few equals in this city. In addition, his floral arrangements are works of art that help to transport the guest out of reality.

You are involved in many businesses in addition to hospitality, including film and beauty. How do you balance your time and efforts and do you see these areas as interrelated?

I started out in film and TV production and moved into the world of design as The Lowell needed attention. They are both visual mediums and therefore very interrelated. I feel that hotels, like films, tell a story and if the story is relatable and resonates with you, you will want to come back to it time and time again. The bath and lifestyle products that I created for the hotel are just further enhancements in the telling of the story. I wanted the scent of the DDC28 bath amenities to trigger a sense of release and surrender to tranquility while using them at The Lowell. Hopefully, this sense of peace in a bustling city like New York will be the perfect antidote when you come home to The Lowell. ●