

Hospitality

Temporary Residence in Manhattan

An Interview with Hilary J. James,
General Manager, Bristol Plaza

EDITORS' NOTE Educated in England, Hilary James began her career in the film industry and held positions with Columbia Pictures, 20th Century Fox, and Warner Bros. She also founded her own theater production company and won an OBIE Award for Michael Burrell's Hess. As a marketing executive and Director of Sales for Bristol Plaza's developer, Howard Milstein, she was instrumental in the development and management of the luxury residential hotel. She assumed her current role in April 1989.



Hilary J. James

PROPERTY BRIEF Bristol Plaza (www.bristolplaza.com), a luxury residential hotel, was developed to meet the needs of people planning long-term stays in Manhattan. Its 152 suites feature fully equipped kitchens for home dining, and the property boasts a health club, swimming pool, and sun deck.

Are you happy with Bristol Plaza's growth in 2008, and what is your outlook for growth in 2009?

Bookings remained very strong throughout 2008, with many of our repeat clients returning throughout the course of the year. Clearly, the global financial tsunami is going to have an impact on the travel and leisure industry this year. Very few companies will be unaffected by the crisis, and it is reasonable to assume it will take at least two years for the global economies to stabilize and rebuild lost confidence in the marketplace. However, Bristol Plaza has seen only one or two cancellations, and we are optimistic that occupancy in 2009 will continue to meet our expectations.

How do you define the target market for the property, and what is the profile of your guest?

Bristol Plaza caters to guests requiring accommodations far beyond the average short-term business trip to the city, including those being transferred from abroad or from out of state who need to find permanent housing for themselves and their families. They find our flexibility in tailoring the length of their stay to suit their circumstances a very welcome adjunct to the services we provide.

Our guest profiles are many and varied. A large percentage of our visitors is from

multinational corporations, the banking industry, and the world of politics and diplomacy. Many guests are in the arts, and some visit the city once or twice a year simply to attend the theater and opera and enjoy the concert season.

What kinds of developments are taking place at the property?

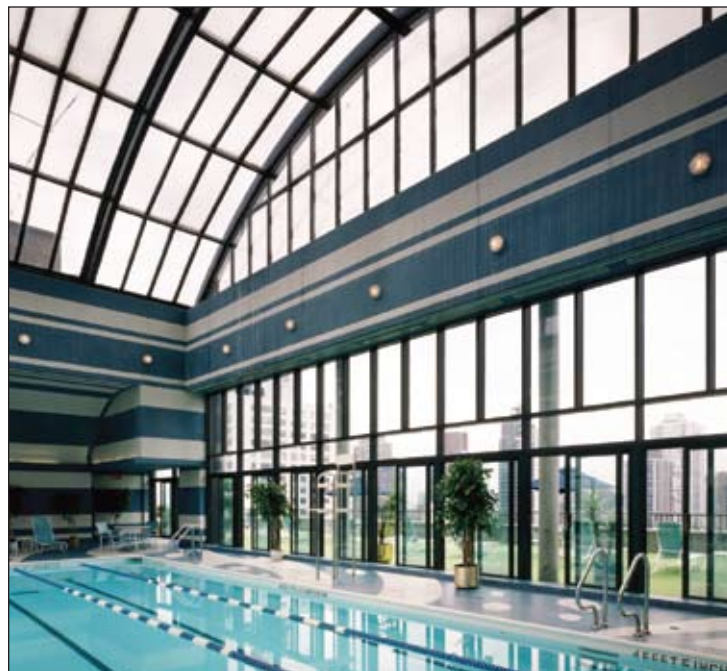
We are constantly upgrading our suites with new furnishings and fabrics. The latest renovation, which began last year, is due for completion next month. Flat-screen televisions have been installed in all the living rooms and bedrooms, and the new high-speed modems will be complemented by Wi-Fi Internet access. Gardens surrounding the building have been redesigned, and the repainting of the building's facade is now complete.

In such a competitive market, how challenging is it to differentiate from your competitors, and how do you define what makes Bristol Plaza unique?

While the hotel industry is indeed highly competitive, Bristol Plaza is fortunate to enjoy a rather unique position in the marketplace. Our minimum monthly stay, ideal location, and advantageous rates make us extremely desirable. Guests enjoy the comfort of the relaxed and peaceful atmosphere of the hotel and appreciate the fully equipped kitchens that obviate the need to dine out every evening.

How important are the health club and rooftop pool for the property?

Our health club is considered one of the most attractive private facilities in the city. Our rooftop swimming pool and open sun deck are a prerequisite for many of our guests, and our fully equipped gym boasts the very latest state-of-the-art equipment. The sun-filled lounge and small library offer a comfortable and peaceful oasis away from the bustle of the city and provide a pleasant alternative when inclement weather keeps one indoors.



How important is it for you to make time to interact with guests?

Spending time with our guests is one of the most important and enjoyable aspects of my position as General Manager. My office has always been a focal point for residents who know they are welcome to come in at any time to discuss issues or resolve problems. Old friends and new arrivals alike find their way into my office, where they are assured of a warm and sincere welcome.

As you look to 2009, what are you focused on to make sure that you keep your leadership position in the industry?

As the new year begins, we shall maintain and endeavor to further our worldwide reputation as the optimum destination for temporary residence in Manhattan. We are pleased to enjoy continually evolving recognition and recommendation from those who have stayed with us, and we shall ensure that they and future guests will always concur that the praise is justified. ●

The pool room at Bristol Plaza (top); the Bristol Plaza sun deck (below)