

# The Power of the Suite

An Interview with James W. McBride,  
Regional Vice President, Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, and  
Managing Director, The Carlyle, A Rosewood Hotel

**EDITORS' NOTE** A native of South Africa, James McBride received a diploma in hotel management before moving to the United States to further his studies at Cornell University. He then worked for The Ritz-Carlton Company in hotels around the world. After graduating from Harvard Business School's program for management development, he oversaw the opening of the group's properties in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining The Carlyle, A Rosewood Hotel, in December 2003, McBride was General Manager of Grosvenor House in London.



James W. McBride

**PROPERTY BRIEF** Named after essayist Thomas Carlyle, the legendary 35-story The Carlyle hotel has been a fixture on Manhattan's Upper East Side since its completion in 1930. Its 192 individually appointed rooms and suites – some with grand pianos, private terraces, and Central Park views – have been called home by leaders in world affairs, business, society, and entertainment. Brilliantly positioned on fashionable Madison Avenue, The Carlyle is also home to the celebrated Café Carlyle and Bemelmans Bar. It is managed by Dallas-based Rosewood Hotels & Resorts.

## How important are hotel suites to The Carlyle's business, and can you provide a brief overview of your hotel suites?

The Carlyle has always been a hotel with a very high suite count. We have close to 70 suites in the hotel. We are a cooperative, so we control 192 rooms and suites, which gives us control of the board. We still have about 56 private apartments, and we continue to evaluate whether or not we want to buy those apartments. We recently bought several and converted them into suites. Many of them are located in the Tower, which houses floors 22 and above, so guests have exceptional views of Central Park. In a recent acquisition, we purchased what is now the Empire Suite, which is a duplex on the 28th and 29th floors. It used to be a fashion magnate's residence, designed by Thierry Despont, and it's absolutely beautiful. It's approximately 3,000 square feet with unbelievable views, and it's beautifully appointed and very residential in feel. We purchased an apartment on the 30th floor as



well, which has become another two-bedroom Tower Suite. We have purchased several other locations throughout the building, giving us 10 suites for which we can charge north of \$5,000. This has been very successful for us, helping us dominate the entertainment business, because a lot of celebrity clientele stay here.

**Are the suites individualized, each with a different look and feel, or are they somewhat similar?**

All of our suites are different. We try to use different interior design for a lot of the suites. In the Empire Suite, we brought a lot of the previous owner's furniture, and we tweaked it to make it more guest-friendly since it's not a private residence. The current design was done by Thierry Despont. Many of our suites were done by Alexander Champalimaud, always in a different way, with a different color palette, and offering a different feel.

**Are suites the key growth area for the property?**

It's hard to believe because they're the most expensive, but the suites in the Tower always sell first. Our suites are extraordinarily popular, maintain very high occupancies, and yield tremendous profits. They're always the first to go.



**Can you give a brief overview of The Carlyle's new spa facility?**

It's going to be branded Sense, A Rosewood Spa, which is our Rosewood brand. We have several Sense spas within the Rosewood collection, including the Rosewood Little Dix Bay, Rosewood Mayakoba, and CordeValle, and others will be opening soon. Our core partner in New York will be Sisley Paris, and ours will be the only spa carrying that product in North America. Sisley Paris offers a tremendous product. The space itself actually resides between the third floor and a town house located next to The Carlyle on 76th Street, and was designed by Mark Zeff of Zeff Designs. It is very chic. We have five treatment rooms, and hair stylist and salon owner Yves Durif, who has a tremendous following, is relocating his salon on 65th Street to operate an Yves Durif salon at Sense spa. In addition, our brand new workout facility, which we call the fitness studio, will offer all the latest equipment from Techno Gym. Evolving our design in a tasteful way is very important to us, and Sense spa is an evolution of The Carlyle. ●

*Suite 3001 (top left); the Empire Suite (bottom left); the Royal Suite (top right); the spa reception area (above)*