



A Constant State of Evolution

An Interview with Rudolf J. Tauscher,
Area Vice President, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group
and General Manager, Mandarin Oriental, New York

EDITORS' NOTE Rudy Tauscher has a Masters degree in business administration from Jobannesburg's Newport University, and has studied at Cornell University Hotel School, New York University, and University of North Texas. He has held his current post since April 2002, 19 months before Mandarin Oriental, New York's opening in December 2003. Prior to that, he was General Manager of Trump International Hotel & Tower in New York, a position he assumed after serving as Resident Manager of The Peninsula New York. Tauscher has also held managerial positions at the Palace of the Lost City (Sun City, South Africa), Dallas' Mansion on Turtle Creek and Hotel Crescent Court, and Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans.



Rudolf J. Tauscher

PROPERTY BRIEF Located on Manhattan's Columbus Circle in the Time Warner Center, Mandarin Oriental, New York features views of Central Park and the Hudson River and is minutes from some of New York's finest restaurants, performance centers, and shops. Opened in 2003, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's North American flagship (www.mandarinoriental.com/newyork) comprises 248 elegantly appointed guest rooms and suites; 64 luxury condominiums; ample meeting and banquet space, including a 6,000-square-foot ballroom; three food and beverage venues, including signature restaurant, Asiate; and the 14,500-square-foot Mandarin Oriental Spa.

How much of an impact did the economic crisis have on Mandarin Oriental, New York and what is your outlook for 2011?

As with just about any industry, we felt the impact of the global economic crisis and, as a result, took precautions, implemented very tactical initiatives to tap into new sources of business, and prepared for the worst while hoping for the best. I don't have a crystal ball to predict what will be in 2011, but I believe we will continue to see the economy have its ups and downs next year. It's critical to remain focused and to stay on course in order to navigate through these unpredictable post-recession waters.

Would you highlight some of the projects taking place at the property?

Our goal at Mandarin Oriental, New York is to continually delight our guests and an important part of that is to keep the hotel in a constant state of evolution. There are always ways to improve, fine-tune, and update a luxury hotel product and one must not sit still. Within the next couple of years, we will continue to make upgrades to maintain our cutting-edge technology.

Our spa product is slated to undergo a major renovation next year – we hope to significantly expand our spa facility so that we can diversify the kinds of treatments and services we offer our guests. The hotel just celebrated its seventh anniversary, and although we have an ongoing maintenance program that keeps the quality of our product at the highest standard, we have plans to completely refresh the overall decor of the hotel with a major renovation in the next year or two.

How are you able to provide such consistent high-level service for the guest and how do you measure your service standards?

Our dedicated team of colleagues is constantly being trained and retrained in the art of hospitality; this must be an ongoing process to ensure that consistency is maintained. The most important way we measure our service standards is through the feedback we receive directly from our guests. Whether it comes from comment cards, outsourced surveys, social media, or travel Web sites and blogs, we constantly monitor and assess guest feedback to fine tune the operation and guarantee that the quality of service is consistently being refined and improved.

How has Asiate restaurant evolved over the years and how important is it to bring the local community into the restaurant?

The local community is critical to Asiate's success. Over the years, we've been successful in cultivating a loyal Asiate following from the local community by consistently providing five-star service, an exceptionally beautiful space, and a top quality product that is competitive with other fine restaurants in New York. Asiate's location in the Time Warner Center with other highly acclaimed restaurants, our positioning as a "Celebration Destination," and our recognition by *Zagat* as one of New York City's top 50 restaurants and number one for "Best Decor" for several years, have all contributed to successfully establishing Asiate as a



premier dining establishment in Manhattan among both visitors and locals.

How important is a high-level spa offering for a luxury hotel today and would you provide an overview of your spa facilities?

The luxury spa is now an expected component for any luxury hotel. Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has benefitted from their foresight into cultivating a luxury spa brand ahead of the competition. It is now our challenge to make sure we stay ahead of the curve by continuing to offer the most innovative treatments and products in the industry with the best trained, most talented therapists. Our Spa at Mandarin Oriental, New York is small comparatively speaking – just seven treatment rooms in 14,500 square feet. But we use this intimate size to our advantage by offering unsurpassed, customized service and privacy, which is greatly valued by our VIP and celebrity guests. Our plan for the future is to expand The Spa so that we can offer a broader range of services to our guests, but our philosophy will remain the same with an emphasis on customized service and wellness. Many spas today are surrendering to the ease and cost efficiencies of "quick fix" express treatments, but we are maintaining our own unique direction by continuing to offer the gift of quality time.

In your regional role, you also oversee the Mandarin Oriental, Boston property. How has it been received in the market and would you provide an overview of the property?

After only two years in operation, Mandarin Oriental, Boston has already achieved AAA Five Diamond status and is well positioned in the local, national, and international markets. There is more to be done, but the property is on its way to continued and increasing success.

How do you balance the financial pressures in leading a property as a general manager today with the hospitality side of the job?

I see myself as a "corporate entrepreneur" and I manage the business as if it were my own. Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has been really good to me and I am very thankful. For the past nine years with the company, I have made it my mission to deliver and, whenever possible, to go above and beyond expectation – and our company respects this hotel as a result. ●

Amethyst Crystal Steam Room (left); Presidential Suite Bathroom (center); Asiate Restaurant (right)