

Hospitality

An Urban Resort



An Interview with Daniel Entenberg,
General Manager, Gramercy Park Hotel

Gramercy Park Hotel lobby (left); loft guest room (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Daniel Entenberg was named to his current post in 2013. Gramercy Park Hotel is the third Manhattan address that Entenberg has worked with since he launched his career at W New York Hotel in 2001. He arrived from W New York Times Square, where he spent the past two years as Director of Operations. Entenberg also served as Acting General Manager for his last four months at the hotel.



Daniel Entenberg

Previously, Entenberg was based in Las Vegas, having risen from Director of Rooms to Executive Director of Hotel Operations over three years at Palms Casino Resort. Prior to Las Vegas, Entenberg spent a half-dozen years in Los Angeles with assignments at W Los Angeles Hotel; Viceroy Santa Monica Hotel; and Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills. Entenberg earned a Bachelor of Sciences in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management from Pennsylvania State University.

PROPERTY BRIEF Reimagined by architect John Pawson and Oscar-nominated director and artist Julian Schnabel, Gramercy Park Hotel (www.gramercyparkhotel.com) is a modern take on a traditional grand city address, with custom-designed, handcrafted furnishings and a rotating collection of artwork by 20th century masters throughout all public spaces and 185 rooms, including six Signature Suites. Maialino, part of Danny Meyer's famed Union Square Hospitality Group, is a relaxed and distinctive setting for Roman delicacies fashioned from fresh seasonal ingredients. Gramercy Terrace rests on the hotel rooftop 18 floors above Lexington Avenue, with a retractable glass roof and jaw-dropping city views; and Rose Bar and Jade Bar are among the city's most original and exciting spaces for a cocktail. Gramercy Park Hotel is well-suited for meetings and events with the rooftop terrace and an elegant Penthouse Suite. Guests will enjoy a fitness center, in-room spa treatments, and a key to Gramercy Park throughout their stay.

How do you differentiate Gramercy Park Hotel within New York City?

We see Gramercy as an urban resort, a destination. With our location, guests come here because they want to be here. We aim to offer our guests a special and quality experience throughout their stay via our partnership with

restaurateur Danny Meyer, our nightlife destination in Rose Bar and Jade Bar – which has held its own over the past seven years – and the overall Gramercy experience. It's a lot of quality under one roof.

Gramercy is a historic property – former President Kennedy used to live here; Babe Ruth used to stay here; Mick Jagger used to stay here, too.

In 2006, when we reopened the property, we changed a lot of the aesthetics, but there is much history that has held its own over time and has

maintained Gramercy as a premier experience destination.

Is your client profile broad or niche?

Our profile is pretty broad. I consider it a luxury product with average rates north of \$500.

We cater to a lot of business people; CEOs, CFOs, and corporate and senior vice presidents. We cater also to the fashion industry not only for stays here but, with our outstanding culinary attributes and top event destination in Gramercy Terrace, we are the premier launching pad for brands and organizations to showcase what they do and how they do it, amidst the beauty of Gramercy.

In addition to who we are, there is the artistic component to the hotel. Julian Schnabel designed the property making Gramercy one of the only hotels to be designed by a true artist. There are many hidden and subtle details on property that guests discover each time they stay here. Add to that the \$45-million-plus art collection displayed at the hotel and it becomes a dynamic property. We also cater to celebrity clientele.

What's great about us is we're not in the middle of the hustle and bustle of New York City. We're away from the commotion but a stone's throw from transportation to the rest of the city. Being set on the only private park in New York City also adds to the insider experience.

Is there a heavy focus on suites at the hotel?

There is. Our rooms are of substantial size. As an older building, we have some interesting layouts; 80 percent of the rooms are outward facing toward the park and Lexington Avenue.

We have about seven different suite types including our Penthouse Suite. Each room has a Bohemian-esque design and unique flair,

courtesy of Julian Schnabel. We have some custom colors designed exclusively for Gramercy with Julian's inspiration.

Our suite sizes range from 475 square feet to 1,700 square feet, and we also have standard rooms.

How challenging is the food and beverage component in this market?

We have a great partnership with Union Square Hospitality and Danny Meyer, and it was a smart idea to bring in a third-party operator that is the best at what they do.

Of the majority of the top 15 restaurants in New York City, many of them have been run by, or are being run by, Danny Meyer. So having Maialino serving three meals a day at our hotel is an honor.

Not only does he handle the restaurant, he also handles all the culinary for the hotel; this includes all of our events on Gramercy Terrace, and our room service.

Also, rather than following the competition, we like to be innovators in what we do, so we decided to focus strictly on events for our Terrace space and do away with the breakfast and lunch. This gives our hotel Chef de Cuisine the chance to focus on room service and do it right.

Being in a city like New York where the culinary experience is one of the best in the world, how do I sell a guest on sitting in his room to have a meal? This was the impetus for our redefining room service. We took the opportunity to create an in-room dining experience unlike anything else. We showcased the chef's bio and culinary background inside the in-room dining menu. So it's a restaurant experience with the comfort of your own room and it has been phenomenally successful.

Does the GM role require one to be more of a generalist today than in the past?

It depends on the individual. What has helped me to be successful is maintaining a fine balance between substance and style.

Style is the engagement piece, which comes from spending time on the floor. The substance piece is also important. At day's end, it's a business and we're here to be financially successful, and deliver a positive bottom line to our owner.

As the GM, you need to trust your peers, and I have a great team. I can guide them but they make the decisions, so the GM has to trust his team. ●