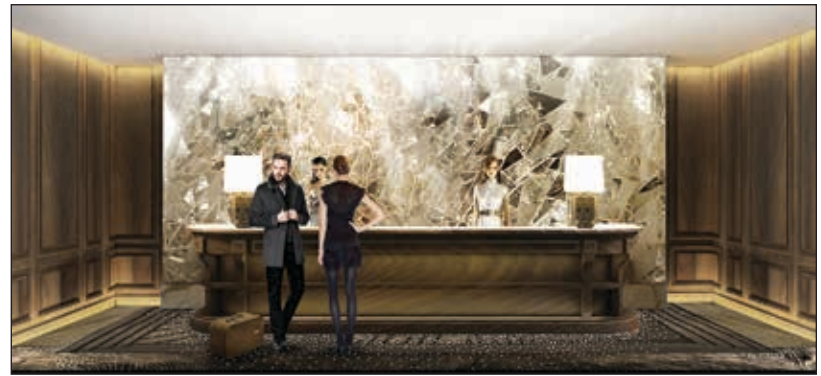


# Hospitality

## Perfecting the Art of Service

An Interview with Andrew Turner,  
General Manager, Baccarat Hotel & Residences-New York



Baccarat Hotel & Residences - New York model room (left) and reception (above)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Andrew Turner was named to his current post in June 2013. Prior to joining the Baccarat Hotel team, Turner was General Manager of Anantara Villas in Phuket, Thailand, where his leadership was recognized with the company chairman's Award of Excellence for outstanding contribution to service and financial results. Turner began his career at The InterContinental Sydney in his native Australia and he proceeded to work his way up The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company ladder, holding management positions in Sydney, Australia; Atlanta, Georgia; Washington, D.C.; Shanghai, China; Doha, Qatar; and Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.



Andrew Turner

**PROPERTY BRIEF** Baccarat Hotel & Residences-New York, ([baccarathotels.com](http://baccarathotels.com)) which opens in February 2015, is situated just off Fifth Avenue on 53rd Street, directly across the street from the Museum of Modern Art.

### How do you define what Baccarat stands for and how will this property be the flagship?

The crystal brand, which was established by King Louis XV, celebrated 250 years in 2014 and since its inception, has been anchored in perfection and artisanship. We are closely tied to the history of our brand and aim to bring that true craftsmanship and sense of art de vivre into the service space. Baccarat is a multi-sensory brand in that you can see, feel, and experience it. That said, there will be no shortage of crystal integrated into the hotel – from the custom furniture, tableware, chandeliers, and amenities, the magic of the brand will shine through.

What makes us unique is that we're 114 rooms and that gives us the ability to provide something very intimate and profoundly personalized, where some of the bigger hotels may struggle to do that. We still have all of the facilities of a large, luxury international hotel. We have a 55-foot swimming pool, an exceptional spa, a fantastic gym, a freestanding restaurant at street level with a bar, and a lounge upstairs with another bar. So guests will find an intimate hotel with all the infrastructure of a large one.

Our core ethos and service philosophy will be "Not the best that you can do, but the best that can be done." If you're in the factory in Baccarat and watch them produce the crystal like they

have for more than two centuries, it's one of those moments where the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. It has to be absolutely perfect for them to release it. What we're trying to do is say, perfection is a moving target but we want to be known for perfecting the art of service.

### Will a luxury travel experience be about personalized service going forward?

First, luxury has to be comfortable and to establish that, we have to understand that, in many cases, people want certain things just the way they like them. Many travelers at the high end of the market know exactly what they want and how they like it, often because they have traveled extensively and own a second home or holiday apartment somewhere in the world. In the luxury space, we differentiate ourselves in the way we make you feel and those moments throughout your stay define your overall experience.

In any hotel or resort, whether you stay one night or three weeks, if someone asks you about your stay at the hotel, it's likely going to come down to a kind gesture or involve interactions that you've had with employees who made you feel comfortable and at home. This level of personalized service is certainly here to stay. At Baccarat Hotel, the hosts and concierges, chefs, bartenders, and bellmen will be the best of the best, trained to anticipate every guest's need. In fact, we are developing a Master of Service training and apprenticeship program inspired by the craftsmen whose precision in crystal making has earned them the prestigious Meilleurs Ouvriers de France (MOF) title (an award for special abilities across a variety of categories).

### How do the 114 keys break down?

Twenty six of the 114 keys are suites and span anywhere from 620 square feet for the Classic Suite to around 820 square feet for the Prestige Suite. We also have two signature suites: the Harcourt Suite named after Baccarat's iconic stemware, and the Baccarat Suite, which is around 1,800 square feet.

The suite mix is important. In the New York market, there is a certain client that likes space when he travels. Our service is the same across the entire hotel but there are some amenities that slightly differ if you take one of our suites.

### Would you touch on the food and beverage component and how you plan to be successful in that area?

We are fortunate to have legendary restaurateur Charles Masson as Director of Restaurants for both the hotel and our retail-level restaurant and the talented Michelin-starred Chef Shea Gallante leading our culinary offerings. Accessed through a private, street-level entrance, our restaurant, Chevalier, is destined to become midtown's next iconic establishment. Designed by Stephen Sills, the space has a different spirit but maintains a French sensibility. It's a modern brasserie deluxe, so the food will be elevated yet comfortably familiar – a place you'll want to visit often, not just once or twice a year for special occasions.

In the hotel, Gallante has created special menus for the magnificent Grand Salon and adjacent 60-foot bar that is modeled after the stables of Versailles. Cocktails will be served in mismatched Baccarat crystal stemware, making every night feel like a celebration.

### How does the residence component impact the role of the GM?

The residents are a very important part of our business, as they have trusted us to make Baccarat their home, so it's critical to make them feel welcome whenever they come through the doors. We have invested greatly in our residence staff. We have a residence director and a core team that will take care of all of our residents to make sure they feel comfortable. They also should feel that their interaction with our staff – whether at the bar, spa, or restaurant – is genuine and seamless. The impact that has for the overall tower and residence experiences is crucial to our success.

### For a new property, how do you offer the technology but make sure you don't lose that human touch?

We offer state-of-the art technology in-room and have provided the capabilities that guests desire to communicate through an app, but they can also pick up the menu and hit zero on their phones to order their lunch or dinner.

To me, the technology helps. We need to offer it, because it is expected, but we also need to make sure that we don't overcomplicate luxury. It has to flow naturally and it has to work for the customer. We also can't ignore the personalization – the impact of a handwritten note, or of saying "Good morning, nice to see you," of meeting the guests personally and shaking their hands. ●