



Moments of Magic

An Interview with Jonathan H. Crook, General Manager, The Peninsula New York



The Peninsula Suite living area (above); Clement restaurant mirror room (below); The Spa reception area (left)

EDITORS' NOTE In April of 2011, Jonathan Crook was appointed to his current post. He most recently served as General Manager for The Peninsula Manila. Prior to that, Crook served as Hotel Manager of The Peninsula Tokyo and Resident Manager of The Peninsula Beijing. He began his Peninsula career in North America within the food and beverage departments at Peninsula hotels in New York and Chicago. He attended the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, U.K., where he received a Higher National Diploma in Hotel and Institutional Management. He furthered his studies via the Executive Development Program with the Kellogg School of Management at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Harvard Business School. Before joining The Peninsula Hotels, Crook worked at Dorchester London and other leading international resorts and hotels.



Jonathan H. Crook

As you are aware, New York is an extremely competitive market and we do consider ourselves to be one of the top hotels in the city. We continue to see the same five or six hotels within our competitive set. During slow periods, we also see a bit of competition from the smaller boutique luxury hotels in Midtown, which are priced very competitively.

Why is it so important to maintain the food and beverage product and is it difficult to be profitable in that part of the business?



As a luxury hotel, our food and beverage product is considered an integral amenity to provide our guests with a five-star experience. While it may be true that it can be difficult to run a profitable food and beverage operation, we will always continue to invest in the product to ensure that our guests have an incredible experience. Last year, our main restaurant, Clement, opened after a year-long renovation to the main dining room and bar. The new look is very elegant, yet cool and modern. We also hired a Chef de Cuisine for the restaurant, further cementing our commitment to ensuring an incredible culinary experience. In

October, we renovated Gotham Lounge, an extremely popular spot for both guests and locals. The new space includes stunning artwork from a private collector and enhanced afternoon tea selections. In 2015, we plan to renovate our rooftop bar, Salon de Ning, which would complete the upgrading of our restaurants and bars.

The spa experience is a key part of the Peninsula heritage. How important is that product in a city like New York?

The Peninsula Spa is a true five-star experience and one of the most popular amenities our hotel offers. The spa opened in 2009 after a year-long renovation, and has consistently won many awards over the years, including Best Hotel Spa in the U.S. by *Condé Nast Traveler* readers. I think our spa has an incredible winning combination of a luxurious environment, highly skilled therapists, and two superior products lines. We are lucky to work with two partners, ESPA and Biologique Recherche, to provide treatments that are both luxurious and results-oriented.

Are you happy with the suite offering and will there be any changes there?

We are very happy with our suite offering at The Peninsula. Our two top suites, The Grand Suite and The Peninsula Suite, were recently renovated over the past few years and they continue to be extremely popular. In 2015, we are considering adding a third themed suite to meet the demand. We still see the need for larger suites with multiple bedrooms from both the domestic and international traveler, especially from the Middle East and South America as those markets continue to mature.

How do you define what a true luxury hotel experience is today?

Peninsula has always been very adept at offering a unique experience, and we have wonderful buildings in key locations in each city combined with a superior physical product that we constantly reinvest in.

What makes the ultimate difference is the staff and the personalized service that is focused on recognizing the guest. Our team truly wishes to know our guests and create a unique experience that touches them personally.

Our Peninsula Academy offers programs that are unique to each city and destination and we have a focused team that ensures that we begin before arrival to meet expectations and create little touches – we want guests to experience that moment of magic where they walk out of the hotel and think it was a great experience. This is what it takes to ensure a loyal guest. ●

PROPERTY BRIEF The Peninsula New York (newyork.peninsula.com) occupies an elegantly restored, 23-story, Beaux-Arts landmark building on Fifth Avenue in the heart of Manhattan's prestigious shopping, cultural, and business neighborhoods. Featuring 239 rooms and suites equipped with state-of-the-art technology, a glass-enclosed spa and health club, rooftop bar, and the popular Fives restaurant, the property is the recipient of the AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Five Star ratings. The hotel was recently awarded number-one hotel in New York City by the readers of *Condé Nast Traveler*. The Peninsula New York is managed and owned by The Peninsula Hotels (peninsula.com), a division of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited.

Are you concerned to see how much supply is coming into the New York market and that the city will get to a point where the market can't handle it?

New York is one of the top five cities in the world along with Paris, London, Tokyo, and Sydney, so it will always be a driver. As the growth of tourism continues, New York will always be one of those destinations that people will come to first. With the opening of new hotels within the luxury segment, it is only helping to meet – not exceed – demand and I still feel the market can handle additional supply.

How broad is the competitive set you consider for this property?