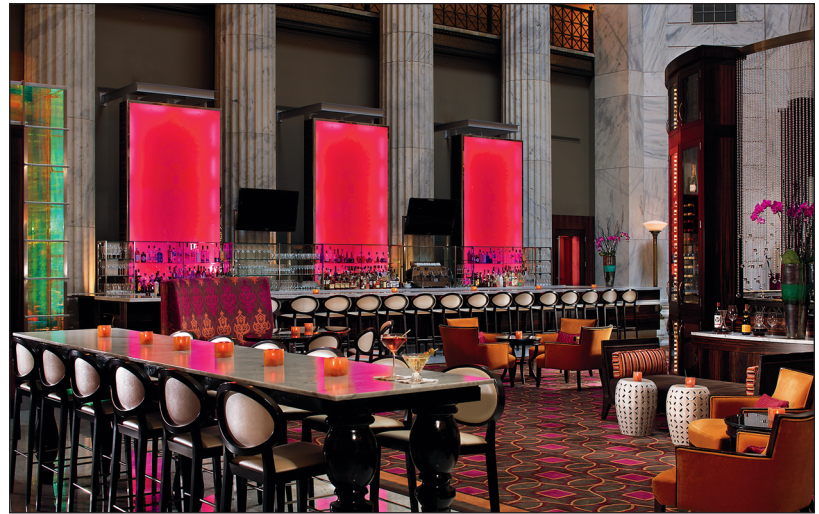


Hospitality



In the Heart of Philly

An Interview with Darryll P. Adams,
General Manager, The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia



The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia exterior (left) and The 10 Arts Lounge (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Darryll Adams assumed his current post in April of 2014 after a long and loyal career within the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton families. Adams began his career in 1988 as a security supervisor at the JW Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C. He assisted with the opening of no fewer than six different Ritz-Carlton properties before serving most recently as the Hotel Manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island in Florida.



Darryll P. Adams

PROPERTY BRIEF Enviably situated within the City of Brotherly Love, The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia (ritzcarlton.com/Philadelphia) extends to its guests the best of everything from location to luxury. The downtown hotel is just steps away from top retail, dining, and cultural attractions, and its on-property offerings are just as appealing. The experience begins within the magnificent domed lobby, where an oculus stretches upward to 142 feet. The 10 Arts Lounge unfurls within this historic space, serving a sophisticated menu of drinks and light fare to complement the creative, regionally-inspired American cuisine of 10 Arts Bistro. Those traveling for business are treated to 26,000 square feet of state-of-the-art function space, which includes two stunning ballrooms. The full-service Richel D'Ambra Spa & Salon offers an ideal opportunity for guests to take a moment for themselves. The luxury hotel's 300 guest rooms and 36 suites (including the city's only penthouse suite) provide a soothing retreat with flat-screen televisions, wireless Internet access, bath butler services, and complimentary overnight shoe shines.

What makes this Ritz-Carlton property so special within the Philadelphia market?

The secret to the success is the ladies and gentlemen who live and breathe the Ritz-Carlton culture. They strive to be great every day, and their true passion is to take care of people and to try to make them happy. This has allowed us to not only grow our occupancy but also to grow our business in general.

Do you consider your location one of the hotel's greatest assets? Do you anticipate further changes to the property?

Yes. We're in the heart of Center City, right next to City Hall. There are tons of restaurants and theatres, and unique dining opportunities and bars. It's a really happening area. Being in this hotel puts a guest right in the middle of all of that and gives us so many different options.

We're planning a renovation to begin later this year, which will continue into the first quarter of next year. We will be renovating all of our guest rooms and meeting spaces, as well as our lobby.

How is Philadelphia positioned in the travel market today?

Visit Philadelphia and the Convention Center Bureau are doing an excellent job of getting our message out to the rest of the country and to the world. The city is booming and had a strong first quarter. The rest of the year looks great as well.

Also, as the convention center business really picks up in future years, we anticipate that Philly will become the place to be.

How critical is your suite product offering in terms of driving revenue?

We have approximately 36 suites in the hotel and they are significant, as far as driving our ADR. The suites are really in demand as a result of a number of groups and conventions that come into the city. Many CEOs want to be able to entertain their clients or board members but in an intimate setting, not always a meeting room, and our suites cater to that need.

On the weekends, we get a lot of families so those suites come in handy for them. Instead of buying two rooms, they can buy a suite and easily accommodate four or five people. The suites play a major role in our business outlook and how we're able to obtain that business.

What is the key to success in your food and beverage offering?

We have the 10 Arts restaurant and our Lobby Lounge, which is probably one of the biggest draws in our city. The oculus is just gorgeous. There are people who come into the hotel to view how beautiful the lobby is, and they end up having a drink, or even dinner. Based on that, we draw in a good number of people just passing through, as well as our guests.

One of the main things often mentioned in reviews of our hotel is how great the lobby is. It allows us to compete with the ever-changing dynamics of the restaurants around us.

Is it more difficult today to judge bookings far in advance and has it changed how you think about occupancy?

Yes. The booking windows have grown considerably shorter. In Philadelphia, people determine on Thursday what they're going to do that weekend, and that's when they think about coming here. It creates challenges in forecasting what our room count is going to be.

How critical is it for your people to focus on the human touch when technology is utilized so prominently today?

For us, that interaction and engagement is at the forefront of what we do. We have technology available to our guests to make their check-in or check-out quicker, but they're not using it as much as one might expect because they like the interaction with someone standing in front of them. As a result, we focus in on the engagement and service factors.

What advice do you give young people who want to become hotel general managers?

I didn't know that I wanted to become a GM. When I first got into the industry, it hadn't even crossed my mind. My goal was to become Director of Security. Once I achieved that goal, I was constantly pulled into operations for different reasons or my boss would ask me to do something, and I started to fall in love with it. The knowledge I was picking up helped me tremendously in continuing to grow. I also had many people who invested in me because they saw my leadership ability and my passion to really take care of people.

For young people coming out of school, the hotel business can be a fun industry to enter. It's all about people so if they don't like people, it's not for them. If they want to advance in this industry, they have to be patient and choose the right opportunities for growth.

My advice to young people is to keep their eyes open, pay attention, and take advantage of the opportunities. It's also important to find a mentor who can help guide them to the correct career choices. ●