



Foyer area outside meeting rooms (above); Sofitel Montréal Golden Mile exterior (right)

French Style and Influence



An Interview with Marc Pichot,
General Manager, Sofitel Montréal Golden Mile

EDITORS' NOTE Marc Pichot assumed his current post in August of 2015. Prior to this, he was Hotel Manager for Sofitel New York; General Manager for Novotel Edinburgh Centre and Mercure Edinburgh The Point; Hotel Manager for Novotel Edinburgh Centre; Room Division Manager for Novotel Nottingham; Operation Manager for Holiday Inn Thoiry Geneva Airport; Food and Beverage Manager for Lux Island Resort; Assistant Food and Beverage Manager for Sofitel Minneapolis; and Food & Beverage Manager for Mercure Courchevel. He received his BTS in Hospitality Management from Lycee Hotelier Chamalieres.



Marc Pichot

PROPERTY BRIEF Sofitel Montréal Golden Mile (sofitel.com) is conveniently located in the heart of the city and is ideal for business travelers and art lovers – at the foot of lush Mount Royal Park, next to the renowned McGill University and Montréal Museum of Fine Arts. The property masterfully blends minimalist design and warm sophistication embellished with Victorian accents from the estate of North American railroad pioneer William Cornelius Van Horne. Guests can choose from one of 241 elegant and stylish hotel rooms or 17 suites all featuring Sofitel's luxurious feathertop and duvet sleep system – SoBed.

Would you talk about the strength this property has and what makes it a leader?

Being a French company in Montreal is an advantage. As one of the first French hotels in Montreal, we did bring some French influence and style to the city.

Our strength is how we interact with guests from the moment they book to the moment they leave the property. Our guest involvement is a very strong asset we have, and we are lucky enough to have a great team of professionals who are dedicated to hospitality and want to please our guests to make sure the only thing they think about when they leave is when they will come back. Because we are in a challenging market, it's critical today that the people working with us make a difference in the guest experience.

Also, the building is a historic site – the former site of the Van Horne mansion. The Van Horne family was responsible for building the trans-continental railroad in 1881 and the Van Horne mansion has always been iconic to Montréal. The location is a valued advantage for us.

How well understood is the Sofitel brand?

Our customers offer true testimony and acknowledge that we are different because we anticipate the need of the customer, and we always

look at the little things that will make a big difference to the guest's stay. Our customers value that. They know the kind of bedding they're going to get – it's very comfortable and we have won several awards for it. They know the quality of the service. Our restaurants are well taken care of and we have very good chefs. Our longstanding customers especially understand us and why they seek our brand when they travel around the world. Sofitel is the only French luxury hotel brand with a presence on five continents with 120 addresses in almost 40 countries.

Are you happy with where the hotel is today and are there changes on the horizon?

The hotel is well positioned and we are looking at what we can do to make it even more appealing through renovation and innovation. We are in a time of digital transformation so we are in a strong position there not only with the hotel itself but with the restaurant as well. Le Renoir is well known as a standalone restaurant that hosts many events year-round which are tied to our brand pillars and to local happenings, such as the upcoming Montréal en Lumière festival in February.

How challenging is it to be successful in food and beverage?

While Montréal can be a challenging market, we are quite well positioned as we have long-standing customers that frequent our restaurant Le Renoir. We put a lot of effort into supporting the community and through word-of-mouth Le Renoir has received great reviews over the years. Because we manage the restaurant, there is a lot of freedom to be innovative with our culinary offerings and we incorporate seasonal and many local products in our menus.

What do you look for in the people you bring in?

We look for a service-oriented person that has the right personality to interact with customers and a positive attitude. We offer internal training to our employees to ensure that they develop or reinforce their great skill set, but at the core they must have a passion for hospitality.

Has the market been strong and do you anticipate growth opportunities?

Our goal is to drive more business. We are at the point where there is a lot of transformation in the city, with hotels renovating their rooms and restaurants and changes in local infrastructure making it easier for tourists coming into the city centre. We are in the right position and the future should be bright, especially as we anticipate the big celebration of Montreal's 375th anniversary. The city is preparing for this milestone with many new projects and events planned.

Montréal has a lot to offer and is one of the few cities in Canada where business is growing.

How important is it not to lose the guest interaction when there is such a financial focus in the hospitality industry today?

Great service is at the heart of the Sofitel brand so I spend a lot of my time talking to my guests, getting to know them and how we can service them better. If we can deliver great service, there is a good chance that the customer will come back and even refer us within their circle, and the financial results will be there at the end.

Do your meeting facilities cover a wide span?

Our meeting rooms cover all sizes. We are very involved in the local market, which helps a lot with this business. It's more challenging today but we do offer added value. Technology is key so we are lucky we have the latest gadgets to facilitate meetings. Our flexibility is also key. We can't ignore this business.

Did you know early on that hospitality was the business you wanted to be in?

I have always been passionate about hospitality. I started out in the industry wanting to be a chef but eventually switched to the front of the house and then spent some time in house-keeping. I like to meet different people from different cultures and I've been lucky to travel the world. I've learned so much from many people along my journey. ●