

The Newest Star of Trump Hotels



Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C. (above) and its Presidential Suite (left)

An Interview with Mickael C. Damelinourt,
Managing Director, Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C.

EDITORS' NOTE Mickael Damelinourt has held his current post since June 2015. Prior to this, he was a General Manager of Trump International Hotel & Tower Toronto and also Executive Assistant Manager of Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago.



Mickael C. Damelinourt

PROPERTY BRIEF Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C. (trumphoteldc.com) is a \$200-million redevelopment of the Old Post Office. The property's transformation is scheduled to debut in September 2016, when it will become the newest addition to the rapidly growing portfolio of Trump Hotels. Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C. will feature 263 richly furnished guestrooms and suites, among the largest luxury rooms in the city, with lofty ceilings, soaring windows, beautifully restored historic millwork, and glittering crystal sconces and chandeliers. The three extraordinary Presidential Suites will each feature their own style and amenities, one of which will be the largest in the city and among the largest in the country. The property will offer a total of 38,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including the opulent 13,200 square-foot Presidential Ballroom, the largest among D.C.'s luxury hotels. Beautiful, timeless, and luxurious, the ballroom will capture the Trump brand's elegance, with classical motifs with European influences, and be suited for a variety of meetings, conferences, weddings, and social events. Trump Hotels will reinstate the 11th Street entrance, which will serve as the hotel's canopied grand entrance. The property's cortile will include a BLT Prime signature restaurant. Guests of Trump International Hotel, Washington, D.C. will also experience a 10,000 square-foot spa and state-of-the-art fitness facility by Ivanka Trump.

What can guests expect from this property and how do you see it positioned within Washington, D.C.?

This project is one of a kind, not only in Washington, D.C., but throughout North America. This is the first time the iconic Old Post Office is being extensively renovated, and we are creating a memorable and historically enriching experience for our guests.

By working with such a unique property, we have garnered excitement from the entire D.C. community. Since the 1920s, there has been a lot of talk surrounding the property, of whether or not it needed to be refurbished or demolished. It wasn't until the 1970s when the landmark building was saved.

Following this, people really bought into the value of the Old Post Office building and it is exciting for us to finally be able to reinvent such an iconic building, and renew the Washington,

D.C. neighborhood. I compare this prestigious location to the Champs-Élysées in Paris. This is where the President passes almost daily. We are honored to be anchoring the historic Pennsylvania Avenue/City Center revitalization with an ultra-luxury hotel for both business and leisure guests.

I came to this country 15 years ago and became a U.S. citizen in 2010, and it's incredible to now be settled in Washington, D.C. and fully immersed in what will be one of the best hotels in the world. With the involvement of the Trump Family, this property will garner the utmost interest worldwide.

How important is Trump Hotels to this property and its opening, and are there certain traits that make you know you're in a Trump property?

Trump properties exemplify impeccable service. This is my third Trump hotel opening and although each property determines its own design, they all encompass a one-of-a-kind level of service, different from what can be found at a traditional five-star brand.

Over time, the luxury hotel industry has transformed itself from a formal image to adapting to real-world guest needs. Trump Hotels has been highly successful in exceeding the expectations of the five-star customer. Over the past nine years, the award recognition received by Trump Hotels shows this consumer relations investment is paying off.

What is true luxury service today? Has it become more about customization?

Luxury service today is defined by the personal connection one has with their guests. Whether it's the general manager, the doorman, the concierge, or wait staff making that connection, every single visitor must leave with a "wowed" impression by the level of service received.

In my view, guest loyalty does not come from a point system, or from hotel convenience. It comes from the personal connection you make with each and every guest.

How critical is the suite product and how does that drive revenue?

We're targeting a specific niche market with our immaculate suites.

All 35 suites are unique with 14- to 16-foot ceilings, and are among the largest in the country. We have guests traveling from all around the world, and have developed a suite product that will cater to politicians, businesspeople, and discerning guests who are accustomed to the finest amenities in the world.

How much of a focus is food & beverage and what does it take to be successful in a city like Washington, D.C.?

Fine dining has been redefined over the past 10 years. There is a new level of expectation in terms of menu options and service within a five-star hotel. It's about finding the middle ground. We have management agreements with BLT Prime in Miami and Hawaii, and have been impressed with how they have been able to adapt their concept to the local market. I am convinced that BLT Prime will be a tremendous success for us.

How all-encompassing are your meetings facilities?

Recognizing the need for a luxury ballroom spacious enough to host sizeable international meetings and opulent enough for prominent city galas, we designed a complementary addition to the main building. With a private entrance, the 13,200-square-foot Presidential Ballroom will be the largest luxury ballroom in Washington, D.C. and has already been enthusiastically received by wedding and event planners, major associations, and corporations. In addition, we will have 13 meeting rooms providing a total of 38,000 square feet of meeting and event space. I am convinced such a facility will allow us to attract business, which would have not considered Washington, D.C. in the past.

As you're building and opening a new property, is it more about finding talent with the right experience or about the personality fit?

It is definitely about the personality. Passion, drive, and enthusiasm are the most important traits that we look for. Anyone can achieve amazing goals if they puts their hearts and souls into what they are doing. I am very fortunate to be surrounded by colleagues who share the same values I do. ●