

Hospitality



Bringing Back the Carillon



A Carillon beachfront room (left) and the Sunrise Pool (above)

An Interview with Lester L. Scott,
Managing Director, Carillon Miami Beach

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming his current post in 2015, Lester Scott spent over 18 years as a senior-level executive working within the luxury hotel industry, including at The Ritz-Carlton and Capella Hotel Group. Most recently, he served as General Manager and Director of Hotel Operations in China for the Capella Hotel Group.



Lester L. Scott

PROPERTY BRIEF An icon has been revived at Carillon Miami Beach (carillonhotel.com). With a coveted oceanfront address in North Miami Beach, an intuitive approach to guest service, and an A-list team of culinary, spa, fitness, wellness, and hospitality experts, individually curated experiences are abundant at this sophisticated property. Culinary delights are created by Executive Chef Fritz Zwahlen at all dining venues, including the signature restaurant, THYME. South Florida's most expansive spa and fitness facility led by medical and wellness visionaries allows guests to indulge in a dynamic selection of services only found at Carillon. Access to the European Thermal Spa experience, a two-story indoor rock wall, more than 40 fitness classes daily, and a state-of-the-art, ocean view fitness space round out the unrivaled facility. Sitting just on the northern fringes of the bustling South Beach strip, Carillon takes advantage of its steps-from-the-sand location by providing guests with exceptional beach service. Four sparkling pools, live entertainment, and events from its Ocean Terrace provide a true haven for sun seekers. Carillon Miami Beach is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and Leading Spas. Carillon Miami Beach is a portfolio company of Z Capital Partners, L.L.C.

Would you talk about the heritage of Carillon Miami Beach?

The property made its debut as the beautiful Carillon Hotel in 1958. It was iconic back in its day, with regular guests including the Rat Pack who would hang out and have improv performances at the Tambourine Bar and Lounge.

In the mid-70s, it transitioned into more of a modern hotel until it was acquired by Lehman Brothers to create the Canyon Ranch, which was a health and wellness destination. Z Capital Partners acquired the property in January 2015, after Canyon Ranch struggled to find themselves in the Miami area.

Taking the property back to its original name and the grandeur that went with it, we have infused a new spirit into Carillon Miami Beach that celebrates the resort's past in a retro style fit for today's luxury traveler. This spring, we will begin a renovation to bring back some of Carillon's iconic 1958 features, including the Tambourine Bar and Lounge where our signature cocktail will be something Frank Sinatra himself would sip on.

How valuable is having an all-suite product?

We're very fortunate to have the largest room product of any hotel in the area, offering 150 one- and two-bedroom suites, which range between 720 and 1,200 square feet. Our spacious suites feature a sleek, modern design and are outfitted with amenities that allow guests to have the comforts of home in a lavish oceanfront setting. Complementing our spacious accommodations is the Carillon's 750-square-foot private beach – one of the largest in Miami.

In addition to our all-suite style accommodations, what really makes the Carillon unique is our health and wellness component. We have medical doctors on staff, as well as exercise physiologists and nutritionists, who lead lecture series on health, wellness, nutrition, healthy living, and longevity. We have personal trainers on staff, the largest spa on the East Coast with 24 treatments rooms, and 70,000 square feet of fitness and spa space.

What makes for a successful food and beverage component and does the restaurant need to tie them into the health and wellness theme?

An essential component of the Carillon Miami Beach's rebrand project was the opening of THYME. Tying into the project's vision to revive the Carillon name, the inspiration of THYME links directly to the Carillon's symbolic meaning of "turning the hands of time."

Led by world-renowned Executive Chef Fritz Zwahlen, guests can enjoy fine dining with a menu that features a progressive take on American cuisine with fresh seasonal ingredients with a slight Asian influence.

In addition, we strive to create experiences that enable guests to look better, feel better, and live better through wellness offerings, menus, and programs focused on mindfulness, nutrition, and overall lifestyle improvements.

How critical has it been to attract the staff and to implement the right training?

With an overall goal to create the best lifestyle hotel in the Miami area, we train our staff with a focus on delivering personalized service.

Since launching our new employee training six months ago, we have watched our employee retention rate grow tremendously, and our TripAdvisor scores rise to number two out of 206 hotels.

When this opportunity presented itself, did you know it was a good fit and what excited you about taking it on?

When the opportunity to join the Carillon Miami Beach team presented itself, I was busy overseeing the Capella operations in China. I never envisioned the day I would leave Capella; however after meeting with Z Capital and gaining insight about the Carillon, I knew this was a fantastic project that I had to be a part of.

With the Carillon, we are creating a brand, not just one hotel. Through this new role, I am able to use my expertise and passion to make an impact on the hospitality industry. With a focus on personalized service, we created the Carillon brand's pillars: hotel, health and wellness, culinary, and residential. Using these pillars as the fundamental components, we have plans to recreate the Carillon's signature experience worldwide. We recently bought a second hotel in Switzerland located in a thriving ski area with strong historical ties to the region – the perfect sister hotel to Carillon Miami Beach.

Has your role become more about finance and how do you avoid losing the hospitality piece?

In the past, we never saw the true hotel owner on a regular basis. The evolution now is that the owner is more present; they may live at the hotel or in the same city, allowing them to have a stronger involvement with the day-to-day operations.

Like any business, the owner wants the strongest return on their investment. To achieve this, most hoteliers lead their teams with a business-minded management style focusing on sales, investors, and other outside factors. I prefer to lead the Carillon differently, focusing on the guest first. We want to make sure that every visitor we touch intends to return to the Carillon or will recommend us to their friends and family. By establishing a personal connection with our guests, this allows us to maximize the customer spending willingly on the products and services we offer. I personally stand in the lobby and talk with guests, and I encourage my employees to engage with the customer throughout every touch point. ●