

Hospitality

Anticipating Guests' Needs



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

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. Aqimero restaurant and lounge unfurls within this historic space, serving a Latin-inspired menu alongside a sushi and ceviche bar. Those traveling for business are treated to 26,000 square feet of updated 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.

With regard to the recent multimillion-dollar renovation that took place at The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia, how important was it to keep some of the history and heritage of the property?

The property was built as a bank and the history was one of the main factors in deciding what it would look like and what the design themes would be.

We brought in the “colors of money” to our design – the bronzes and greens are found throughout rooms and lobby – to pay homage to the history of the building.

Will you touch on some of the changes that took place with the accommodations and more specifically the strength of the suite product?

We had a very high demand for suites, and because we had the space, were able to add two more to our total room count. The great

thing about this hotel is that virtually no two rooms are alike and this is especially true within our suite product.

Our penthouse level, which is the entirety of the 31st floor, looks like a residence – there are two bedrooms with two full baths, a full kitchen, a den, living room, and a dining room. It has a personal lift elevator, so it's the ultimate in privacy.

Our presidential suite is another amazing option that we made some structural changes to in order to make it more accommodating and satisfying

to our guests.

We also have luxury suites, which can be one- or two-bedroom with a live-in area and they are our most popular.

We also added a category of Junior Suites, which consist of unusually large standard rooms that because of the extra space are ideal for families.

How challenging is the food and beverage part of the business?

The key ingredient is to remain relevant. Restaurants in Philadelphia are unique and the culinary experience here is getting better and better. When we decided to partner with Richard Sandoval to introduce Aqimero, we chose to create an engaging lounge and bar experience, as well as a refined dinner experience to meet the needs of our guests and local clientele.

In a city center like Philadelphia, is the spa offering a key component in the luxury space?

The spa is a key component and is something I'd like to continue to grow. Looking at the number of weddings that happen in Philadelphia, pedicures, manicures, and hair appointments are important to offer. Our spa does really well in those areas.

The spa is used a lot for small groups and corporate VIPs. Coming from a background in resorts, spas have always been integral to the travel and guest experience. In the city, there is opportunity for the spa to play a larger role, especially when it comes to going after incentive-type programs. People need to be able to have a place to unwind.

Is the banquets and meetings area another strong point for the property?

We have 36 to 38 weddings annually and a host of holiday parties for corporate groups within the city. Groups look for variety of

The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia exterior (above); and executive suite living area (left)

spaces in the hotel – a great lounge experience, restaurant experience, and spa experience, as well as a level of excellent service and creative chefs. One of the highlights of an event at The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia's grand ballroom is the oculus; if you stand in the middle of the dance floor and look up, you can see straight up through the property to the sky. We say that our newlyweds have their first dance truly under the moon and stars. No other property in Philadelphia can say that. All of this makes for the hotel to be a well-rounded, attractive destination for groups.

In the luxury space, is there an expectation for greater personalization and customized service today?

The luxury guest wants to come into a hotel and not have to think. Anticipation is a huge part of what our customer requires from us. That goes back to our company culture, with The Ritz-Carlton credo and three steps of service. We focus on anticipating our guests' needs, and on making sure we deliver on those needs before they recognize them because in today's world, where people are multi-tasking all the time, business never closes. To be able to walk into a true luxury experience and not have to worry about every detail, is priceless.

Do you feel the perception and awareness of Philadelphia today is well understood?

This city offers so much and has an incredible history, but we can do a better job of getting that message out and capitalizing on the spotlight that's been on the city in recent years. We've been fortunate that Philadelphia has been on the national stage as of late: In 2015, the Pope included Philadelphia on his U.S. tour. In 2016, the Democratic National Convention was here. In 2017, the city plays host to the NFL Draft. Not to mention the many festivals and events that bring people, especially from the northeast, to our great city. There's a broad experience to be had, whether guests are here for business or leisure travel. We have many corporate guests who come for the week and extend into the weekend with their family because there is so much to do for all ages. ●