

Hospitality

A Specialized Product

An Interview with Daniel Entenberg,
General Manager, Gramercy Park Hotel



The lobby of the Gramercy Park Hotel

EDITORS' NOTE Daniel Entenberg was named to his current post in 2013. Gramercy Park Hotel is the third Manhattan address that Entenberg has worked with since he launched his career at W New York Hotel in 2001. He arrived from W New York Times Square, where he spent the past two years as Director of Operations. Entenberg also served as Acting General Manager for his last four months at the hotel. Previously, Entenberg was based in Las Vegas, having risen from Director of Rooms



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to Executive Director of Hotel Operations over three years at Palms Casino Resort. Prior to Las Vegas, Entenberg spent a half-dozen years in Los Angeles with assignments at W Los Angeles Hotel; Viceroy Santa Monica Hotel; and Sofitel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills. Entenberg earned a Bachelor of Science in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management from Pennsylvania State University.

PROPERTY BRIEF Reimagined by architect John Pawson and Oscar-nominated director and artist Julian Schnabel, Gramercy Park Hotel (gramercyparkhotel.com) is a modern take on a traditional grand city address, with custom-designed, handcrafted furnishings and a rotating collection of artwork by 20th century masters throughout all public spaces and 185 rooms, including six Signature Suites. Maialino, part of Danny Meyer's famed Union Square Hospitality Group, is a relaxed and distinctive setting for Roman delicacies fashioned from fresh seasonal ingredients. Gramercy Terrace rests on the hotel rooftop 18 floors above Lexington Avenue, with a retractable glass roof and jaw-dropping city views; and Rose Bar and Jade Bar are among the city's most original and exciting spaces for a cocktail. Gramercy Park Hotel is well-suited for meetings and events with the rooftop terrace and an elegant Penthouse Suite. Guests will enjoy a fitness center, in-room spa treatments, and a key to Gramercy Park throughout their stay.

Where do you see the hotel market in New York City today and is this a challenging time?

The market for New York as a whole is down. The truth is in the metrics, which can be seen in the media, by 3 and 6 percent. At Gramercy, we have been fortunate to have a

clear focus on what we do in our business for this hotel as well as in that we have started an integration. Being a part of Design Hotels, we became the eleventh brand of Starwood and now a brand within the entire Starwood/Marriott complex. SPG members can now book the Gramercy and have both point earnings as well as point-redemption opportunities at the hotel.

That has helped to drive more business directly to the hotel so, from an occupancy and year-over-year growth perspective, we have seen

minimal drop off and we have, in fact, seen increases to our occupancy while our competitors are down tremendously.

We have been one of the fortunate survivors in a more challenged market.

From a competitive standpoint, do you look at your property from a location point of view, and how do you define what the competitive set looks like?

We compare ourselves only on a metrics perspective to hotels in the geographic area. From a true competitor perspective, Gramercy has such a unique offering and is such a unique aspect of this niche market, that we don't see ourselves competing with any other property. Our's is such a specialized product with a unique experience we offer and deliver upon day in and day out with respect to our food and beverage offerings, our nightlife experience, and our artfully done property in totality.

Will you talk about what you see as the keys to being successful as a hotel restaurant?

We have aligned ourselves with Danny Meyer, who is one of the most successful restaurateurs in New York. Our restaurant, Maialino, is a completely different experience than what Gramercy as a whole provides. The hotel is lifestyle driven and artfully executed in that perspective, but Maialino is unique in that it's a neighborhood restaurant. Many guests that come to dine there aren't hotel guests. President Obama dined there last year. People truly love to dine there because of the culinary experience that takes place. The chefs make multiple trips to Italy, to Rome in particular, every year to see what is happening and what is new and fresh, and use that as an inspiration to bring back to the restaurant.

As a Roman trattoria, one is truly getting an authentic experience day in and day out, so having them as a partner is an amazing placement for us. While we offer one of the best hotel experiences in the city, and one of the most outstanding nightlife experiences in the city, we also have one of the marquis dining experiences the city has to offer.

Is it hard to get across the understanding that the great service Gramercy offers is as much a part of the experience as the nightlife?

The nightlife aspect of the Rose Bar is an amenity of the property. It complements the aspect of the experience we deliver as well, but service is of paramount importance to us and we deliver that personalized experience that people look for. When they come here, they don't want to just experience the city; they want to live it, and that's what we offer.

How valuable is it to have a property that has such a strong suite product?

It allows us to offer a full range of room products to every guest no matter what they may desire. We have offerings from entry-level rooms at 250 to 300 square feet to our Presidential Suite at 4,000 square feet with prices ranging from \$400 to \$5,000. We're able to cater to a variety of clientele including those who desire suite products that touch on different needs.

How important is it to avoid losing the hospitality side of running a property when there is so much of a focus on the business side of it?

We're fortunate to have an owner focused on and committed to delivering and maintaining integrity in what we are as a property and what we are as a brand.

We've never compromised on service, nor on our product, and there is always a continued focus not only on maintaining but on elevating and improving that experience year over year.

What advice do you give young people early on to help them build a sustainable hospitality career?

I had great schooling and continued to contribute to my school.

It's important from a young age to have an open mind, to be exposed to environments that are out of one's comfort zone because that is the best way to learn and grow, not only as an industry leader but as an operator. ●