

Hospitality

A Hint of the Unexpected

An Interview with **Stuart P. Johnson**,
General Manager, Rocco Forte's Brown's Hotel



The exterior of Rocco Forte's Brown's Hotel (above); The Dover Suite living area (below)

EDITORS' NOTE *Stuart Johnson was appointed General Manager of Brown's Hotel in London in January 2005. Earlier, he served as Publishing Director at Condé Nast Jobansens. Before this, he was Director and General Manager of Cliveden from 1994 through 1999, and previously held the position of Resident Manager between 1986 and 1990. Between those two posts, at the age of 32, Johnson was the youngest ever Hotel Manager at The Savoy in London, a position he held for four years. He originally made his mark with The Savoy Hotel Group as Personnel and Purchasing Manager at The Connaught and as Assistant Banqueting Manager of Claridge's, having started his career as a management trainee. In 2012, Stuart Johnson was named Hotelier of the Year by Caterer and Hotelkeeper. In 2013, he was named Hotelier of the Year at The European Hospitality Awards.*



Stuart P. Johnson

PROPERTY BRIEF *Rocco Forte's Brown's Hotel London, in the heart of Mayfair, is situated within walking distance of key shopping areas such as Bond Street and Regent Street, in addition to major theaters, art galleries, and all key central London landmarks. The hotel has hosted many distinguished guests since it opened as London's first hotel in 1837. Each room and suite is individually decorated, and many feature contemporary artworks. The Donovan Bar and HIX Mayfair celebrate British art and cuisine and The English Tea Room offers the award-winning afternoon tea, while an indulgent spa and state-of-the-art gymnasium offer guests a discreet sanctuary. Brown's Hotel (roccoforte-hotels.com) is also home to six unique private dining rooms for intimate meetings or extravagant celebrations. The property is comprised of 11 Georgian town houses offering 117 bedrooms, including 29 luxurious suites.*

What has made Brown's such a consistent leader in London as well as a leading global property?

From its opening in 2005 as a Rocco Forte Hotel, the mission of the owner of Brown's and the Brown's team has been to provide a consistent level of exceptional service, offering guests seamless arrival, departure, and pre-emptive attention to detail in each aspect of

their stay. Brown's is quintessentially English with a hint of the unexpected, and we are always looking for ways to improve all aspects of our guest's stay and dining experience.

How important is the strength of the suite offering for Brown's and would you provide an overview of your suite product?

A suite at Brown's is a guest's private apartment in Mayfair. All suites are individually designed by Olga Polizzi, our Director of Design, and offer an opulent and relaxing ambience, with carefully selected objets d'art and touches to make them feel like home. Suite guests at Brown's are very important and, to this end, there are a number of added-value benefits included within the suite program.

Are you happy with the state of the property today and what plans are there for continued investment at Brown's?

Brown's has undergone an entire soft furnishings update program over the past 12 months in suites and bedrooms, public areas, and the restaurant and bar. The interior design has been re-energized, but still reflects the Englishness of the property and the location in which it sits.

Brown's is known for its service standards. Would you discuss your focus on service and the investment in training your employees so as to maintain the service culture at Brown's?

Attention to detail and service to our guests is paramount. All team members receive a comprehensive induction and we have an extensive on job and off job training culture. We invest heavily in training our managers, heads of department, and team members in the art of unrivalled customer service.

What are your views on the state of the travel business in London and your outlook for growth for the property?

The London market is benefiting from a very buoyant year. London continues to be one of the most visited capital cities in the world for both leisure and business travelers. As well as being a leading financial center, London boasts the finest architecture, art, culture, cutting-edge fashion, tradition, and pomp and circumstance.

You have led Brown's for a number of years. What has made your experience so special?

Having seen Brown's through its refurbishment and reopening in December 2005, for all reasons previously mentioned, Brown's is a special place to work. Like one's children, we learn so much from our team members. I am fortunate to work for Rocco Forte Hotels, a company that believes in investing in its properties and people, and no day is ever the same. Our guests are very important and many, due to their frequent visits, have become personal friends.

What are your key priorities for Brown's in order to ensure that you maintain your leadership position in London?

I think you will understand from my comments that we are already looking forward to the future while knowing that what we have done well today, we can do better tomorrow. This maintains Brown's as an iconic leader in the global world of hospitality, an establishment in which to work to gain a unique experience and also a place to stay. ●

