

Lifetime Innovation



The grand stairway of the Lotte New York Palace (above); a Tower One-Bedroom Suite living and dining area (left); a Tower Executive Suite bedroom (below)

An Interview with Becky Hubbard,
General Manager, Lotte New York Palace

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to her current post, Becky Hubbard was Executive Assistant Manager at Trump SoHo Hotel; Assistant Rooms Executive at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; Front House Director for The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; Director of Reception for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.; and Assistant Director of Reception for Sheraton. She received her B.S. degree in hospitality from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.



Becky Hubbard

PROPERTY BRIEF Lotte New York Palace (lottenypalace.com), a legendary New York City luxury hotel, underwent a thorough transformation from a historic Madison Avenue gem to Midtown's premier modern hotel. The hotel features 909 spacious rooms and suites, including 176 exclusive Towers accommodations, which provide the perfect setting for relaxation and inspired stays in New York City. Unique dining venues such as Pomme Palais offer everything from imaginative breakfast dishes to signature pastries and sandwiches. Lotte New York Palace's collection of versatile meeting and event spaces is ideal for weddings, corporate events, and special occasions. The hotel's famed Villard Mansion, built in 1882, is recognized as a New York City landmark and gracefully blends with a contemporary 55-story tower. The Madison Avenue courtyard provides a dramatic entryway to the hotel's grand lobby. Villard restaurant offers a New American menu comprised of "farm house" breakfast and brunch fare.

What are your views on the state of the hotel business in New York City and the opportunities for growth in the market?

The New York City hotel market is on the upswing. We are seeing higher tourism levels than ever before, with increased hotel room inventory each year. 2017 was a record breaking year for NYC with 61.8 million visitors and 3.1 percent growth in hotel rooms. The city has demonstrated many years of record-breaking visitation and is on track to do the same in 2018. Even though the room supply has increased, it has been met with strong demand. As the largest luxury hotel in New York City, Lotte New York Palace has a unique opportunity to be a leader within the hotel community and create standout experiences that visitors flock to.

What are the keys to being a great hotel today and how do you define the Lotte New York Palace difference?

In the luxury travel space, it's a given that we have to provide amazing service. We need to be thoughtful, memorable and impeccable in our service delivery and execution. Our overarching goal is to create transformative experiences that people want to be a part of. We strive to deliver far beyond what our customers have paid for including experiences that are available only at The Palace. We

genuinely care about the well-being of our guests, and it's that passion that I try to instill into my entire team.

Will you discuss the culture of continuous improvement at Lotte New York Palace and the investments made at the property to maintain its leadership position?

Lotte is a leader in every type of business that they engage in. It is a company that is based upon continuous innovation and irreversible momentum. We are constantly seeking ways to improve our guest experience. In the upcoming year we plan to launch a new spa that is unlike anything else available in NYC. With our new spa partner, we are creating an urban oasis and expanding our offerings to 8 treatment rooms, a state of the art fitness center and a yoga stu-



dio. We are also renovating four of our specialty suites this year. In addition, we are redesigning uniforms for our entire staff. We are constantly seeking opportunities to upgrade service and cater to the needs of our travelers with changes to technology and exceeding all guest expectations.

How important is the strength of the suite offering for Lotte New York Palace and having such a wide range of suites in The Towers?

Lotte New York Palace has a large offering of suites to cater to the needs of our clientele. We have 87 suites including 40 Corner Suites that would be considered a Presidential Suite in virtually any other hotel throughout the city. In addition, we have four triplex suites (5,000 square feet each), a Royal Suite and a number of other offerings. In a luxury hotel such as The Palace, our clients expect us to have a variety of suites to meet their needs. Guests stay with us to take family vacations, celebrate special occasions and to conduct business. We are also lucky enough to host many leaders of business and diplomats. With such a large inventory, we feel that we have something for everyone.

Lotte New York Palace has a strong offering with its lounges and bars. Will you highlight these venues and the value they bring to the property?

We have a number of lounges and bars throughout the hotel. Each one is unique and has its own personality. Our Lobby Lounge is ideal for sipping wine and casual conversation. Troubles Trust (tucked beneath our Grand Staircase) serves curated hand-crafted cocktails. Tavern on 51st Street is the most upscale tavern that you'll find in the city with microbrews and classic cocktails. We also have Rarities where we serve fine spirits, wines and champagnes (by reservation and invitation only). Our famous Courtyard on Madison Avenue is open during the spring and summer months.

Is personalized service the key in providing a true luxury hotel experience today?

Personalizing service is no longer fully defined by tangible things. At Lotte New York Palace, we feel that catering to an individual's personal preferences is very important. Guests want to feel that they have received value for what they have paid. We seek ways to create authentic experiences for our travelers. We want them to come away from their visit feeling refreshed and with a renewed sense of well-being.

What advice do you offer young people interested in a career in hospitality?

I would advise people embarking on a hospitality career to work hard and prepare yourself to be lucky. Your career in hospitality can expand into many different areas of the industry. In hospitality, you can do anything from operations to sales to acquisitions, all while advancing in one company. Most importantly, always remember that the guest comes first. ●