

## The Peninsula Way

An Interview with Samir Ibrahim, Managing Director, The Peninsula New York

**EDITORS' NOTE** Samir Ibrahim has been with The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited (HSH) since September 2009 when he first joined The Peninsula New York as Front Office Supervisor. His caring approach to colleagues and strong engagement with guests were well-recognized with promotions to Director of Front Office in April 2014 and Director of Rooms in June 2016. During his tenure as Director of Rooms, he provided interim support at The Peninsula Chicago for four months in 2018 and The Peninsula Paris for 12 months later that year, before returning to The Peninsula New York in July 2019. In May 2021, he became Hotel Manager and was promoted to Managing Director in February 2024. Ibrahim earned a BBA degree in marketing from Pace University and an MA degree from Columbia University.



Samir Ibrahim

We are very excited about the updates and changes we have made at the hotel. It started with all the guestrooms where we brought an updated version of our Peninsula offering to provide a modern twist celebrating the New York landscape. Our rooftop bar, which is a place for all New Yorkers to congregate before the sun goes down and while the stars are in the sky, was completely refurbished with retractable awnings on both terraces. We also livened up our lobby which is the first and last place our guests experience at the hotel. We have received very kind and generous feedback from our guests about the renovation and we are excited about the future.

**What are the keys to be effective with your restaurant/food and beverage offerings?**

I think it is important to be flexible and to adapt to the current times. Times have changed and you need to provide the guest with multiple offerings and variety in order to be successful.

**The Peninsula brand has a long history of providing a leading spa and wellness product. Will you discuss this focus?**

This is a big part of The Peninsula Hotels DNA. We offer services to appeal to all guests from around the world, and to have a spa on the 21st and 22nd floor of the hotel with skyline views makes it an oasis. We offer a pool with panoramic views of Central Park. In addition, we just renovated our gym and fitness room with all new equipment. We have received great feedback from our guests on this offering.

**PROPERTY BRIEF** The Peninsula New York ([peninsula.com/en/new-york](http://peninsula.com/en/new-york)) elevates Fifth Avenue as it unveils the completion of a comprehensive interior design renovation, debuting a refresh of 219 guest rooms and suites, alongside public spaces and select dining venues. Led by the award-winning New York City-based Bill Rooney Studio, the property-wide renovation, which the renovation completed in September 2024, includes the hotel's lobby, reception, Palm Court, and the reimagined rooftop lounge, Pen Top. A landmark building on renowned Fifth Avenue since 1904, The Peninsula New York drew inspiration for its renovation from the elegance of Manhattan's Roaring 1920s era blended with a refined simplicity that is both fresh and elegant, complete with bespoke amenities and personalized services.

**What have been the keys to The Peninsula New York's industry leadership?**

The expectations of The Peninsula New York will never change – to provide impressionable service and lasting memories. This is our goal for anyone who walks through the doors. This is called The Peninsula Way. It is about personalized service that leads to memories that people take with them for a lifetime.

**Will you highlight the recent renovation at The Peninsula New York?**



Lobby staircase at The Peninsula New York



*Grand Suite living area*

**How important has it been for The Peninsula New York to build its workforce and to have so many members of its team be a part of the hotel for decades?**

In this business, people make the difference. It is the software first, the hardware second. The pride that the employees bring each and every day to this property is what motivates me in my position and what has gotten me to 15 years. We have doormen who have been here for 25 years, bellman who have been here for 30 years, waiters who have been here for 30 years – it is an incredible blend for success. The reason they have been here for so many years is because of the way they feel and because of the way they make others feel. I believe that this is a crucial factor to the success of any business.

**How do you define the meaning of a true luxury hotel experience?**

The word luxury is used often, and I believe it is about the manipulation of the five senses. How can you bring luxury to each sense? This translates into memorable, personable, impressionable, enjoyable – to me, that is the definition of luxury. The key is to be able to do it consistently.

**How do you balance the impact of technology on the business with the need to maintain the human touch?**

This is a people business, and the reason our guests come back again and again is because of the relationships they make with our employees and the interactions between the guest and the staff. Without the human touch, it is really not hospitality. Technology needs to be a part of enhancing the guest experience, but this cannot take away from the human touch and personal relationships.

**Did you know early on that you wanted to pursue a career in the hospitality industry?**

I did not aspire to be a hotelier, but I fell in love with the business because of the company culture I was fortunate to step into. I am proud to be a part of Peninsula. I always knew that my career would be in the landscape of people, communication, and positivity. I thought that I would work in the field of sports as an athlete growing up, and I realized that there are so many parallels between sports management and hospitality management. I am inspired every day to come to the hotel and try to get the very best out of a team and group of people in a similar way to how a coach tries to take a team to a championship. I love being a hotelier; I love being in this industry; and I love coming to a place where I have an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives.

**How valuable has it been to have owners who are so engaged and invested in the hotel?**

It is everything. It is the fuel that feeds one's passion for wanting to be a part of the hotel. You can feel the support of ownership in the building, and this is a big factor in our ability to be successful.

**What are your views on the state of the New York City travel and tourism market?**

I am a New Yorker. I was born in New York City and received an excellent education here. This is the most resilient city in the world. No matter what the City faces, it comes back stronger. It is exciting to see the streets filled with people and the travel and tourism business remaining so strong.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the hotel business?**

I tell them to be patient and to trust the process. I started at Peninsula as an overnight manager which at the time was a lower-level opportunity than I wanted based on my academic degrees, but I made a conscious decision to give it a chance and I have been given the opportunity to learn and grow. You need to build a foundation of understanding of what it takes to get to the top. ●