

A Storied Icon In The Heart Of The Nation's Capital

An Interview with Alaina Sweeney, General Manager, The St. Regis Washington, D.C.

EDITORS' NOTE In her role as General Manager, Alaina Sweeney oversees all aspects of hotel operations, driving guest satisfaction and ensuring smooth functioning throughout the storied property. Sweeney previously served as Interim General Manager since May 2024, where she worked closely with distinguished guests and staff to cultivate meaningful relationships and uphold the hotel's premier status in the nation's capital. Among her accomplishments, she played an integral role in The St. Regis Washington, D.C.'s recent renovation and redesign of its guestrooms and suites in 2024, a project aimed to improve guest experience and bring the century-old structure into its latest era. In her previous role as Director of Operations, she ensured smooth functioning of the property where flawless guest experience is paramount, maintaining the standard of excellence guests have come to recognize from the The St. Regis Washington, D.C. Sweeney's career spans multiple roles at properties across the St. Regis Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International portfolio. Before joining the team at The St. Regis Washington, D.C., Sweeney held leadership positions at The St. Regis Aspen Resort and The St. Regis New York, with additional leadership roles at Marriott International's property, W New York, and more.



Alaina Sweeney

experiences, and I had the opportunity to follow one of my mentors to another hotel which opened a lot of doors for me. For the first time I got to travel for work, as I supported hotels in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and realized that I really enjoyed seeing new places.

Since the first time I visited when I was 10 years old, I always wanted to live in New York City. The timing was never right until 2016 when my mentor from Los Angeles helped me land a position at the flagship W New

York. Then, naturally, she brought me over to The St. Regis New York to temporarily help them with some new system rollouts. It was there I truly fell in love with the St. Regis brand and eventually transferred to the iconic hotel shortly after. I had never seen so many people with the same passion for hospitality that I had. I was blown away and so proud to work at the flagship St. Regis.

When COVID hit, I couldn't stay still and wait for hospitality to come back in the city, so I made the decision to move back to my home state of Colorado with my favorite brand. After two years of breaking almost every record for the property, I felt it was time for a change and to go back to the east coast where I assumed the role as Director of Operations at The St. Regis Washington, D.C. During my first few months at the hotel, we relaunched the restaurant concept and started room renovations. It was my dream situation: new and exciting changes in a historic hotel. As the hotel went through leadership transitions, I was asked to assume the role of Interim General Manager. Long ago I learned that you never say no to an opportunity, and I took over leading the hotel. In the last year that I was Interim General Manager, I learned more about the business and was able to go back to my roots where I get to collaborate with everyone, I fell in love with hospitality all over again. About eight months ago, I officially became the General Manager.

PROPERTY BRIEF Located steps from The White House, The St. Regis Washington, D.C. has been witness to incredible moments throughout recent history. Starting in October 2025, the property will count down to its 100th anniversary at Washington's best address, as the hotel celebrates 100 years on the corner of 16th and K in October 2026.

Will you discuss your career journey?

Growing up, my aunt, who I was very close with, worked in the hotel industry, and I essentially grew up in a hotel. It was only fitting that my career path took me to the hospitality industry. I started my career working in the front office and fell in love with the job. One day is never the same as the last, especially working in front office – you get to collaborate with every department in the hotel from engineering to sales. I wanted to get different department



Entrance of The St. Regis Washington, D.C.



Alhambra Mediterranean-inspired restaurant



The St. Regis Suite living and dining area

Will you provide an overview of The St. Regis Washington, D.C., and how the property is positioned in the market?

The St. Regis Washington, D.C. is a storied icon in the heart of the nation's capital. Just two blocks from The White House, the hotel blends historic grandeur with the quiet confidence of modern luxury. Originally opened in 1926, it has long served as a discreet haven for dignitaries, global leaders, and refined travelers seeking timeless elegance and intuitive service. With 182 guest rooms and over 11,000 square feet of meeting space, the property offers an intimate yet commanding presence – positioned at the crossroads of diplomacy, business, and culture.

Since stepping into the role of General Manager, my focus has been on honoring the hotel's extraordinary legacy while guiding it into its next chapter. We are preparing to celebrate the hotel's 100-year anniversary in 2026, and with that milestone in mind, I've worked to ensure every facet of the guest and associate experience reflects both the history and future of the brand. That has included revitalizing leadership culture, refining service rituals, and strengthening our market position through both elevated programming and strategic renovation efforts.

Today, The St. Regis Washington, D.C. stands as a leader in the luxury market – not just for its physical beauty or legacy, but for the warmth, precision, and pride of the team who brings it to life each day.

How valuable is it to have such a strong suite product, and do you see this as a differentiator for The St. Regis Washington, D.C.?

Our suite product has been essential in differentiating us in the D.C. luxury landscape. Where space and discretion are paramount, our suites offer an elevated level of comfort, privacy, and refinement that appeal to our discerning guests – from global leaders and diplomats to leisure travelers seeking an exceptional experience. Each suite is thoughtfully designed to reflect the brand's timeless elegance, featuring bespoke furnishings, generous layouts, and the hallmark St. Regis

Butler Service. This level of personalization and space sets the property apart, particularly in a market known for formal business travel and high-profile clientele. The strength of the suite offering not only enhances the guest experience, but also reinforces the property's positioning as a premier luxury destination in the nation's capital.

How has The St. Regis Washington, D.C. approached its restaurant/food and beverage offering, and what are the keys to being effective in this part of the business?

The St. Regis Washington, D.C. has taken a curated and intentional approach to its food and beverage offerings, ensuring that each outlet reflects both the legacy of the brand and the expectations of today's luxury guest. At the heart of the experience is Alhambra, the hotel's Mediterranean-inspired restaurant, which blends seasonal ingredients with refined technique in a setting that evokes warmth, elegance, and European charm. The St. Regis Bar offers a sophisticated yet inviting atmosphere, featuring signature rituals like the daily Champagne sabering and the locally inspired Capitol Mary cocktail.

Effectiveness in this part of the business comes down to three key pillars: distinct identity, consistent execution, and a sense of occasion. Guests today aren't just dining – they're seeking meaningful, memorable moments. By anchoring the dining experience in storytelling, service ritual, and a deep understanding of our guests' preferences, we've been able to create offerings that feel both timeless and relevant. In a city defined by power, culture, and diplomacy, our food and beverage programming is designed to be not just an amenity, but a destination – welcoming locals, travelers, and dignitaries alike with thoughtful hospitality and impeccable taste.

Will you discuss The St. Regis Washington, D.C.'s focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?

Personalized service is at the core of our hotel's experience. We believe that true luxury is personalization – one size fits one. Every guest has different expectations,

preferences, and purpose – our role is to create a unique experience that feels tailor-made for them at every touchpoint during their stay. Whether through our attentive Butler Service, curated amenities, or remembering the guest's coffee preference in the restaurant, we strive to go beyond service and deliver an emotional connection.

We instill this in our team from their first day with us. When new team members join the hotel, their orientation is customized to include their favorite snacks and beverages, setting the tone for a culture that values the individual and encourages personalization from day one. It's not just about making people feel welcome; it's about making them feel special and that sense of belonging.

How do you define the role of the general manager?

In my opinion, the role of the general manager is both to be the steward of the brand and the architect of the culture, requiring strategic vision, discipline, and most importantly, emotional intelligence. My role is to create an environment where guests, associates, and key stakeholders can thrive, where excellence is expected but humanity is never lost. In the luxury environment, details define the experience. As general manager, you must lead with precision and empathy, ensuring that the property performs, but also inspires.

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

Relationships and empathy will take you further than any title or resume. In an industry built on people, those you serve and those you work alongside are your best assets. Nearly every opportunity in my career happened because of a relationship I built and nurtured over time. But it's not just about who you know, it's about genuinely caring. Empathy allows you to understand what others need, anticipate challenges, and lead with compassion. Whether you are serving a guest, leading a team, or learning from a mentor, connecting on a human level will set you apart. Always stay curious, present, and kind. ●