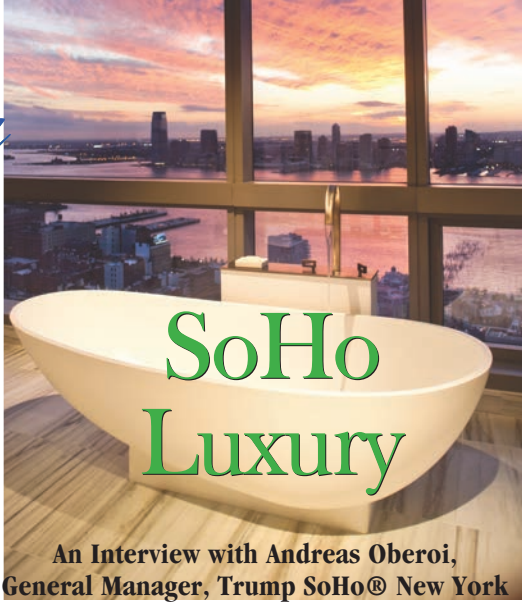


Hospitality



An Interview with Andreas Oberoi,
General Manager, Trump SoHo® New York



EDITORS' NOTE Veteran hotelier Andreas Oberoi was appointed to his current post in late 2011. Oberoi spent the past 10 years managing iconic, luxury hotels for St. Regis and The Luxury Collection. In addition to the St. Regis Bangkok, which he opened, these include the Hotel Romazzino in Italy's Costa Smeralda and the opening of the St. Regis Mardavall Mallorca Resort in Spain. For 12 years prior, Oberoi held senior-level roles with Kempinski Hotels in Beijing and Munich. His career also includes management positions with The Waldorf Towers in New York and The El San Juan Hotel & Casino in Puerto Rico in the early 1990s. He launched his career in 1985 at Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich, where he rose from an apprenticeship to Front Office Manager on a task force team to open the Mansion Kempinski Bangkok in 1991. Oberoi holds an executive Master of Business Administration from Reims Management School in France.



Andreas Oberoi

PROPERTY BRIEF The first luxury hotel in downtown Manhattan, Trump SoHo® New York (www.trumpsobohotel.com) brought together the master works of Handel Architects for the 46-story shimmering glass tower, as well as Rockwell Group for the creation of the interior spaces. The 391 spacious guest rooms and suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows offering unparalleled views of the city's spectacular skyline and the Hudson River. Trump SoHo currently offers hotel condominiums for purchase. Owners and hotel guests will enjoy world-class dining at Koi SoHo (coming later this summer) the Kastel cocktail lounge, the seasonal poolside Bar d'Eau, and the utmost in personal service with the signature Trump Attaché service. The Spa at Trump® with its two levels of pampering services provides New York its only authentic luxury Turkish hammams. The property is a member of the Trump Hotel Collection portfolio.

What sets Trump SoHo apart in the market?

First, the Trump Hotel Collection brand always stands for quality on a high level; second, it's the location of the hotel. SoHo is a unique area with small and medium enterprises such as galleries, architectural firms, and agencies and we found the right spot to open a luxury hotel.

How do you balance occupancy and rate in this market?

We do not need to run 100 percent each night; we would rather run 90 percent but have a higher rate and the ability to deliver a memorable guest experience, which is important in today's market because it brings the guests back.

Is it difficult to create an understanding in the market that with that higher rate, you are offering more value?

Everything has become so transparent. If you research Trump SoHo and look at the pictures we have, and examine our offerings, we define it clearly. So the customer gets what he sees and what he pays for.

Also, our room size is substantially bigger than the room size in a midtown hotel of the same category. And beginning on the 20th floor, where the deluxe category starts, we have unobstructed views of the Hudson River, Financial District, Brooklyn, the East River, and midtown. There are not many hotels in the city with that offering.

What kind of suite product do you offer?

The one-bedroom suites are on average 780 square feet, which is a nice size. The rooms and suites all have floor-to-ceiling windows with great views.

We have 132 suites and 10 penthouses, which sit on the top of the building; they are in high demand. We are about to launch some of the penthouses themed around our SoHo location. We are planning to launch others themed with partner brands.

You recently announced a new food and beverage venture. How challenging is it to offer that in this city?

We have formed a joint venture with Koi Restaurant Group – Japanese Fusion Cuisine that is very successful in Los Angeles and that is popular with the crowd we see in the hotel. Why did we outsource this? Today, there are restaurant companies that run successful concepts and the typical hotel restaurant is not what the customer wants to see now and into the future. A lot of hotels hold on too long in trying to make a restaurant successful; we are bringing a successful restaurant concept on site to enhance the guest experience.

How much of a focus have you put on the spa product and is that a must in a luxury property today?

It's a must. We have built our spa from scratch and I can't name another spa that comes close to it, especially with the combination of the pool and the terrace. The reason the spa is successful is because of the demographics we have in the hotel. Trump SoHo is business driven from Monday through Thursday, but on weekends, we are a leisure hotel and attract many international leisure guests, and we also have many guests from the tri-state area.

Do you focus on leveraging the Trump brand or showing the individuality of the property?

Trump stands for luxury and quality, and that will bring guests from different nationalities and demographics into both New York City hotels, especially as the brand is expanding. We also continue to focus on the individuality of Trump SoHo. Our downtown location is an attraction in itself for many travelers.

How does your Trump Attaché service work with your guests?

The Trump Attaché team is devoted to providing services from personal to business assistance and everything in between. People choose Trump SoHo for special reasons and the Attaché team is there to engage with the guests to see what can be arranged to make their stay memorable, from flowers to in-room amenities to setting up proposals and other surprises. But the Attaché team is not only what you see in front of the guests; there's also a component working behind the scenes to organize whatever is needed, without intrusion or pretension.

How do you measure the level of success you're achieving with the property?

The hotel is two years old and 2011 was the first full year of operation. If all of our current guests keep coming back, we will have a wonderful 2012 and beyond. Measuring guest satisfaction is very important for us. There are three key metrics we go by in asking guests: How did you like the hotel? Will you come back? Will you recommend us? In all three, we score very high, which leaves me with a challenge in driving the team to continually improve to reach the next level. ●

Trump SoHo exterior with pool deck (left); bathroom at sunset (center); Duplex Terrace Penthouse living and dining areas (right)