

# Hospitality

## A Progressive Luxury Experience

An Interview with Gerald Glennon,  
Managing Director, The Modern Honolulu



Ocean Front Suite (left); The Modern Honolulu reception area (upper right);  
Morimoto Waikiki restaurant (lower right)

**EDITORS' NOTE** In 2012, *The Modern Honolulu* announced the addition of Gerald Glennon as Managing Director. Glennon's extensive hospitality experience includes tenure with luxury global brands such as Sofitel, and most recently for more than 11 years at Hawaii's iconic Halekulani. Halekulani Living, a luxury lifestyle series, was introduced and developed by Glennon.



Gerald Glennon

**PROPERTY BRIEF** Located on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, *The Modern Honolulu* ([www.TheModernHonolulu.com](http://www.TheModernHonolulu.com)) is a cosmopolitan lifestyle hotel that blends service, a sleek and stylish design, and an alluring atmosphere to create memorable experiences for guests. The property, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean and a marina, debuted in October 2010 and is unlike any other in Waikiki, or Hawaii for that matter. The 353-room hotel is noted for its list of amenities that include a boutique spa; restaurant by Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto; local hotspot Addiction Nightclub and a lobby bar; and two unique pools, one with lushly landscaped gardens and the other with its own lagoon and spectacular views of the Pacific.

**What excited you about assuming your current role? What has made this property so special?**

I've made my home in Hawaii for almost 12 years now, but when this opportunity came along, it was timely because I wanted something to sink my teeth into and guide in its early life.

What excited me most about joining The Modern Honolulu is the style and design of the product combined with amazing potential. Our team is so passionate about creating an innovative and extraordinary experience for our guests.

We offer a new approach to luxury. We call it progressive luxury: we are redefining the standards and how we measure success. For us, it's about delivering an exceptional experience that guests remember. They want to share their stories of The Modern Honolulu with their friends and come back and stay with us again.

The challenge of taking this one-of-a-kind property from its current place in the market to what I know will be the most sought after Hawaiian experience in the islands is what drew me here. I feel that there is great potential and the opportunity for terrific success for our owners, the team, and the brand.

**Is your target market the discerning top-tier traveler or is it more broad?**

We appeal to a large cross-section of guests including young, old, and everyone between. It's more about the desire to do something different and experience something new. Our guests will not accept a commercialized representation of Hawaii. We make sure they get a genuine "uncommon" Hawaiian experience.

We have the essence of Aloha, but it's overlaid with high design, music, and cuisine. Our general ambiance is genuine.

We are more on a par with the most chic lifestyle hotels found in New York, L.A., Las Vegas, or other cosmopolitan destinations. We appeal to a sophisticated traveler looking for a unique experience.

**What range of accommodations does The Modern offer?**

The hotel is one-of-a-kind in Hawaii with its consistent, clean, and chic style. We offer rooms from city view to full ocean view; we are in a marina-front setting, which brings another unique element to the hotel.

The hotel has great texture and pops of color. Everything is sleek and modern from Travertine sink tops to white subway tiles in the bathrooms; all-white Frette linens; and everything is accented by a brightly colored hand-painted ukulele and a few pareos (wrap-around skirts) to give it a bit of style.

Oceanfront suites top off our inventory with a penthouse accommodation that is 3,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor stylish space; it has 1,500 interior square feet and probably the largest hotel lanai in any penthouse in Waikiki – at 1,400 square feet, it offers sweeping views from Waikiki to the Waianae Mountain Range.

Our lobby is intimate and we have a lobby lounge called The Study. The second level of the property offers an area called Passage Ways, which is like a large covered lanai where guests can dine and have cocktails. Plus, we have two

pools and two pool bars – one is for adults only. Both pools overlook the marina and the ocean, providing a one-of-a-kind ambiance.

**How would you describe your food and beverage offerings?**

We house a major restaurant by Iron Chef Morimoto – it's a popular breakfast, lunch, and dinner venue with a large outdoor lanai as well as a beautiful indoor space designed by Thomas Schoos.

Morimoto-san comes to the hotel at least every two to three months and is responsible for menu development and training the culinary staff. He brings fish in from the Tsukiji Market in Tokyo and he uses a lot of locally grown aquaculture and agricultural products.

Scott Toner leads the hotel's food offerings. He was with Ritz-Carlton for many years before joining The Modern Honolulu.

His philosophy about food requires utilizing sustainable and natural products. He butchers his own meat and makes his own sausages and mozzarella. All of the baked goods and pastries within the hotel are done on premise.

He does that not only for in-room dining and the other food opportunities on property, but we also have a ballroom that seats up to 1,000 and we are one of the few hotels where everything is dished up, plated, and hand-carried to tables right out of the kitchen – nothing is frozen or kept under a heating lamp.

**Do you need to offer a true spa experience at a property like The Modern Honolulu?**

Guests who travel to a luxury destination expect to be pampered, but there is a difference between a 50,000-square-foot spa facility with water features and relaxation areas and an intimate boutique spa where you are pampered in personalized service.

We have an intimate spa with four custom-designed treatment rooms; a manicure/pedicure area; and a retail component featuring products by Eminence. Our staff is well trained in different kinds of elemental herbology, everything from Amala massage to Intracutaneous treatments.

**As managing director, is it tough to avoid becoming too enmeshed in the day-to-day activities on site?**

I am here on behalf of ownership to achieve their desired goals, both short term and long term. This includes hiring the best and committing to training and empowering our team to create memorable experiences for our guests. ●