

Hospitality

Peninsula Moments



The Peninsula Suite living room (above) and bedroom (below)

An Interview with Jonathan H. Crook,
General Manager, The Peninsula New York

EDITORS' NOTE In April of 2011, Jonathan Crook was appointed to his current post. He most recently served as General Manager for The Peninsula Manila. Prior to that, Crook served as Hotel Manager of The Peninsula Tokyo and Resident Manager of The Peninsula Beijing. He began his Peninsula career in North America within the food and beverage departments at Peninsula hotels in New York and Chicago.



He attended the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, U.K., where he received a Higher National Diploma in Hotel and Institutional Management. He furthered his studies via the Executive Development Program with the Kellogg School of Management at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Harvard Business School. Before joining The Peninsula Hotels, Crook worked at Dorchester London and other leading international resorts and hotels.

PROPERTY BRIEF The Peninsula New York occupies an elegantly restored, 23-story, Beaux-Arts landmark building on Fifth Avenue in the heart of Manhattan's prestigious shopping, cultural, and business neighborhoods. Featuring 239 rooms and suites equipped with state-of-the-art technology, a glass-enclosed spa and health club, rooftop bar, and the popular Fives restaurant, the property is the recipient of the AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Five Star ratings. The hotel was recently awarded #1 Hotel in New York City by the readers of Conde Nast Traveler. The Peninsula New York is managed and owned by The Peninsula Hotels (www.peninsula.com), a division of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited (HSH).

How is the luxury segment faring today?

Over the two years I have been here, there has been some return in occupancy and rate, however not to the levels we'd like to see. We are cultivating emerging markets such as China, Russia, Middle East, and South America as their travel patterns are quickly increasing year over year.

How difficult is it to maintain quality service during tough times?

The key is to provide the same level of service and same attention throughout good and bad times so that the guest experience is never affected.

There is constant financial pressure on the business, but we are fortunate to be owned by a parent company that takes a long view when it comes to the financial success of the hotel. In fact, over the past four years, we have continued to invest millions in renovating the hotel, including most recently

the renovation of our premier accommodation, The Peninsula Suite, which took seven months.

What is your vision for the upcoming restaurant renovation?



We will be renovating Fives restaurant, the hotel's only fine dining outlet, starting in January 2013. With the renovation will come a new food concept that focuses on modern American cuisine using locally sourced ingredients. The bar area will also serve a light bites menu with an Asian flair as a nod to our hotel company's heritage. We do think that this new concept will prove popular for hotel guests and the local community.

What changes have been made to The Peninsula Suite?

The Peninsula Suite is two bedrooms and just over 3,200 square feet. We have worked with local designer Bill Rooney to give it a contemporary New York feel throughout – it feels

luxurious yet comfortably elegant and has received a great reception from our guests.

Altogether, we have 52 suites in the hotel; we have our two premiere suites, which includes the Grand Suite, and we have our Deluxe Suite offering.

How has the spa product been received and how critical is it in a luxury property?

The luxury traveler today expects a spa experience and a fabulous gym, which is why we redeveloped our spa four years ago.

In 2012, it was rated the number one hotel spa in the U.S. by *Conde Nast Traveler* readers.

We recently introduced a new series of facial offerings with Biologique Recherche, which is a luxury French skin care company known for its luxurious products and results-oriented facials. Thus far, it has been extremely successful.

Also, our private membership support of the fitness facilities and spa has increased by 30 percent over the past year.

How have you maintained the service standards within the property?

Training is key and we have a loyal staff that has a passion for the brand and property. It's about good governance and being supportive of our team.

We try to drive consistency on a daily basis and we have always gotten strong recognition for our service level and culture.

We were recently rated number one hotel in New York City by *Conde Nast Traveler*, a recognition that we have never before had.

What is your vision for the Peninsula Moments campaign?

Peninsula Moments focuses on some of the key images of the brand, and it truly demonstrates how much the staff cares about the guest even before they deliver the service as well as after they deliver it. That focus is all on guest interaction and conveying the passion of our employees to serve.

Is it difficult today to define a true luxury experience?

If you're somebody who travels consistently at the five star level, you appreciate what true luxury is. A hotel experience is about how you're looked after by the employees, as well as the feel, the lighting, the touch, and how all of your senses are played with. ●