



The Value of Location

An Interview with Paul Nash,
General Manager, The St. Regis New York



The Presidential Suite bedroom (left); the Imperial Suite living area (above)

EDITORS' NOTE In March 2009, Paul Nash assumed his current post. Prior to this, he was the General Manager of The St. Regis Houston. He is a native of London and has more than 30 years of luxury hotel experience working at various properties within Starwood Hotels & Resorts. He has worked at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco; The St. Regis Shanghai; the Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia; and the Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit in Bangkok, Thailand. Nash received his credentials in Hotel, Catering and Business Management in 1984 from the Ryde College of Catering Studies and Hotel Administration in Sydney, Australia and a Certificate of Business Administration from the University of Washington.



Paul Nash

PROPERTY BRIEF The St. Regis New York (www.stregis.com/NewYork) offers 238 luxurious guest rooms and suites. Contemporary luxury meets classic sophistication at this iconic hotel, just steps from an exceptional Fifth Avenue shopping experience. Guest rooms and suites are newly renovated and marry original design elements, such as crystal Waterford chandeliers and elegant crown moldings, with beautiful, large-format photographic artwork, vibrant-hued fabrics, and stunning beveled mirrors. Rooms feature marble-tiled entryways, rich color schemes, custom furnishings, and state-of-the-art technologies. It is the flagship property of both St. Regis Hotels and Resorts, and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.

Why was this a good time for the renovation, and how are you maintaining the history and heritage of the property?

It had been about seven years since our last renovation, so it was about time in a typical luxury cycle. The most distinct change this time was in the design and blending of our historical elements with contemporary pieces. This supports our strategy of lowering our demographic from an age perspective while at the same time broadening our demographic from a global geographic perspective. The heritage and iconic presence of this building is legendary, so finding a balance was strategic.

How has the feel evolved, and is it consistent throughout?

The legacy is our five-meter, 15-foot-high ceilings; our Waterford chandeliers; and our amazing crown moldings, which we will never touch.

At the furniture level, everything is new: we have also added the technologies to accommodate the changing needs of our global guests.

We have a much cleaner and fresher look, with bold vibrant colors throughout. A lot of luxury products these days are beige and caramel. We have gone with beautiful deep blues and aubergines into a bold red and

grey combination for our specialty suites.

For the designer suites, Dior and Tiffany have their own unique bathrooms, and the Bentley bathroom is a stunning gray granite.

We spent the most money on our larger master suites to position them where they belong as the largest and most luxurious suites in New York City.

How challenging is it to succeed within the food and beverage space?

We made a conscious decision to make the space more relevant to today's travelers while at the same time building on our legacy.

We have the King Cole Bar, iconic for the Bloody Mary or a great martini, which will remain as it was. We are taking the ethos of that space and bringing it outside to the old Astor Court space.

We've announced a partnership with John DeLucie, so we're going with a shared-plate concept – contemporary American cuisine with a Mediterranean influence; it offers a much simpler service style with new uniforms for the staff. We are targeting a local following in addition to our loyal hotel guests.

The new space will be far more convivial and relaxed, with more relevant music offering different zones to enjoy the much more relevant sensibilities of what will become a great mid-town destination. The old space was dramatic though with many hard surfaces, so we're softening that with carpets, music, and lighting while adding new aspects like a communal table and a fireplace, so everyone can enjoy the new King Cole Bar and Salon at its best.

With all the product coming online in 2014, some would say it's questionable whether demand can meet the supply. Do you agree?

No. Mayor Bloomberg and NYC.com has been successful in driving the number of total

visitors, and we're going to go past 55 million in 2015. So there was a need for more hotels.

Many of the new hotels are categorized as luxury but there will be a vast range of products. The St. Regis New York has been around for 109 years as a luxury hotel, and there is a reason for that – we will continue doing what we do.

Also, strategically, I'm somewhat old school – I still believe in the value of location, and at Fifth and 55th, we're hard to beat.

How important is it to link the St. Regis properties in some way?

The branded piece is making our lives easier because we were small for a long time, so when the brand was created in 1999, it was built around the New York property. St. Regis has now opened 15 hotels within the past five years, putting us at 31 hotels globally. The repositioning story from St. Regis New York ties into the global power of the brand.

Rather than doing a big event in New York, we have strategically taken the repositioning story of this property out to our 10 key markets, bringing the hotel to them.

While the brand is broadening the St. Regis footprint, there are certain aesthetics that you will see in every St. Regis hotel: the butler service; a mural; chandeliers; and iconic staircases.

Do you take the time to reflect on the success?

Not really. I had a conversation last week about looking towards when we renovate again.

The ongoing challenge to successfully running a luxury hotel is the consistency.

When you're a leader in the market, how do you guard against becoming complacent?

We have been fortunate to receive accolades since 1991 when the St. Regis reopened after a major renovation.

We have a seasoned staff that understands the importance of discretion. When a guest comes in, it's like an oasis – they are not bothered by staff or paparazzi.

Guests roam around freely within the building and our staff understands the value of that. Maintaining our service levels to this discerning clientele gives them and their families security.

We remind our team regularly about the value of the reputation we have built. Others want to knock you off when you're on top but it's up to our management team to continue leading from the front. ●