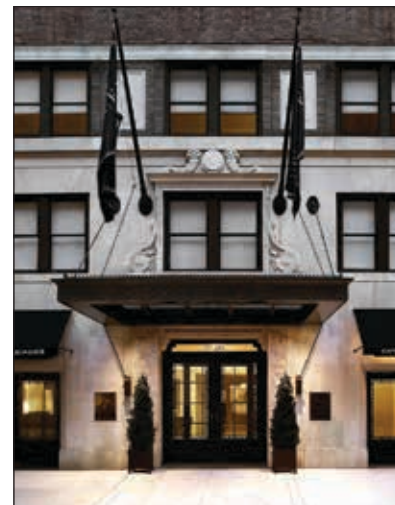


Upper East Side Luxury

An Interview with
Troy Pade, General Manager, The Surrey



A Surrey suite (left) and The Surrey entrance

EDITORS' NOTE Troy Pade assumed his current post in July 2014. Pade joined The Surrey from Viceroy Hotel Group where he most recently served as General Manager for CASSA Hotel in New York City after holding senior leadership positions at Viceroy Santa Monica and Hotel Milano in San Francisco. Previously, he served as pre-opening/opening General Manager of Hotel Shangri-La, Santa Monica. Pade began his career after graduating from Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, when he landed a job as a poolside waiter at the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua in Maui, Hawaii. It was then that he fell in love with the hotel business. He quickly worked his way into various sales management positions, beginning at Four Seasons at Beverly Hills, and later, with the Carlyle in New York and the Mondrian in West Hollywood.



Troy Pade

PROPERTY BRIEF The Surrey (thesurrey.com) is New York City's only Relais & Châteaux hotel, owned and operated by Denihan Hospitality Group. An intimate address on the Upper East Side, it began as a townhouse to the stars of the 1920s and is now a hot 2014 pied-à-terre. Its location gives cultured guests direct access to top fashion houses, restaurants, world-class art institutions, and iconic landmarks, while the hotel's discreet service allows for calm personal space. The Surrey offers world-class dining by Café Boulud, the atmospheric Bar Pleiades, Cornelia Spa, and a Private Roof Garden. Lauren Rottet created its 189 exquisite salons and suites.

When the opportunity presented itself at The Surrey, what excited you about it?

I was very fortunate to return to the five-star world. I started as a waiter at The Ritz-Carlton in Kapalua 20 years ago and from there went on to the Beverly Wilshire, Four Seasons, and the Carlyle in New York, so I had a strong luxury background.

I had progressed to a point where the hotels were serving an older demographic than my own. I was in my late 20s and most of my guests were in their 70s and 80s. So I went to Morgans Hotel Group and found something more contemporary.

I continued on the boutique and lifestyle hotel route, most recently with Viceroy Hotel Group. However, the older I got and the more experience I acquired and I felt I was missing out on a luxury experience. The boutique lifestyle tries to imitate the luxury world, but it misses it in certain key areas and service is usually one of those areas.

When The Surrey opportunity arose, it interested me because the hotel speaks to a bit of modernity that I appreciate and have grown accustomed to. You don't wander into it and think that it's your grandmother's sitting room. There is a more contemporary feel to it, but it still screams Upper East Side luxury. That's what spoke to me more than anything.

Are you competing primarily on the Upper East Side or is it broader?

Our customers tell us where they choose to stay. The majority are looking to be on the Upper East Side.

Occasionally, it's not necessarily location but type of hotel that comes up, so we will see some of the contemporary downtown hotels among their preferences as well.

Is it well understood that a property such as this could be modern but also offer first-rate traditional service?

Twenty years ago, you could not have told that story. The demographic of the traveler and our guest is quickly approaching the point where luxury hotels in a five-star neighborhood will look more like The Surrey and less like more traditional hotels.

In another 10 years, the white glove butler-type service will become less desirable as guests become more focused on an experience. Did you care about my stay and help me find the right gift to buy my wife? These things are harder to teach by the book than how you carry a water glass. I prefer people to feel truly at home at our hotel.

Are you happy with where the property is today?

There are always changes to be made. The Surrey's redevelopment and renovation several years ago cost \$60 million. The hotel is holding up very well because a very high quality of products were used.

There are always tweaks and enhancements to be made in a hotel. We are customizing the suites to give them an even more residential feel. We find that many of our guests who stay in the suites are moving from their brownstone or co-op and into The Surrey during a renovation of a residence. These guests want to feel like they've just moved into a home.

This has incited us to do some more suite enhancements, mostly with the accents. The property overall is in exceptional condition.

In a city with such a competitive food scene, what makes for a successful hotel restaurant?

The labor expense required to keep a restaurant in a hotel profitable can be the nail in the coffin. There is definitely a marriage between what you're offering in the rooms above the lobby and what is in or adjacent to the lobby.

For us, Café Boulud was actually there long before the reopening of The Surrey as a luxury hotel. Given the direction of the hotel, we were destined to be a perfect marriage.

Prior to the renovation and reopening of The Surrey, Café Boulud was separated from the hotel. The caliber of the guests and quality of the product was not necessarily aligned with that of the restaurant, so it was more of a tenant in a space relationship. Today, The Surrey, Café Boulud, and Bar Pleiades are very much integrated and we work together very harmoniously, including sharing customer feedback regarding the overall experience.

How have you chosen to invest in your spa product?

We partnered with Cornelia, made famous by their beautiful spa on Fifth Avenue. This completed our positioning as a luxury destination. Cornelia Spa at The Surrey does extremely well. It's actually more heavily used by local customers than it is by our guests, which says a lot about The Surrey's relationship to the Upper East Side neighborhood. Cornelia also has a wonderful experts-in-residence program. For instance, we have a resident hair stylist that comes in from L.A. several times a year who is a feng shui hair specialist. Offerings like this attract a very local following. ●