



## LE ROYAL MÉRIDIEN SHANGHAI

# When a Hotel is a True Haven for Business & Leisure

Regardless of how hotels are held together, what matters most is the ‘total guest experience’. It is the God of all hospitality and few General Managers know this better than the inimitable DANIEL AYLNER, General Manager of the Le Royal Méridien Shanghai and Area Managing Director, East China, Starwood Hotels & Resorts.

**B**lessed by location, Le Royal Méridien Shanghai sits on 789 Nanjing Road, a location most hotels would kill for. Surrounded by shops, malls, restaurants, banks and almost anything any guest could wish for, the hotel itself is the warm slice of heavenly heaven, Aylmer and his team have crafted it into.

No fuss but crystal clear personalized service one gets at a swift check-in. The doors open to a junior suite that would stand up to the harshest housekeeping test. Crisp sheets, understated colours, well-appointed amenities and all the hotel’s 761 guest rooms — including 132 suites — feature floor-to-ceiling windows that frame dazzling views of the Bund and the city’s skyline.

Now, for a first taste of the hotel’s famed hospitality, one-on-one.

### Spotless Service

On the 44th floor of the hotel, basking in the morning sun is the spacious Le Royal Club Lounge. It becomes your ‘personal space’. Get a freshly brewed coffee, fire up the laptop and from thereon, it’s just you and your work — if you can keep from the spectacular view of the city and resist the tantalizing temptations served at the breakfast buffet.

Courteous staff call you by name. It makes a difference. The quality and range of food and beverage leaves little to be desired. Service is spotless.

Now, why is this amazing? Isn’t all this expected from a five star hotel?

For someone who has inspected more than 2000 hotels in a career span of 20+



**Daniel Aylmer: “At the end of the day, we would not exist were it not for the customer. Here at the Le Royal Méridien Shanghai we work hard to create a customer experience that is good enough to make our guests want to return.”**

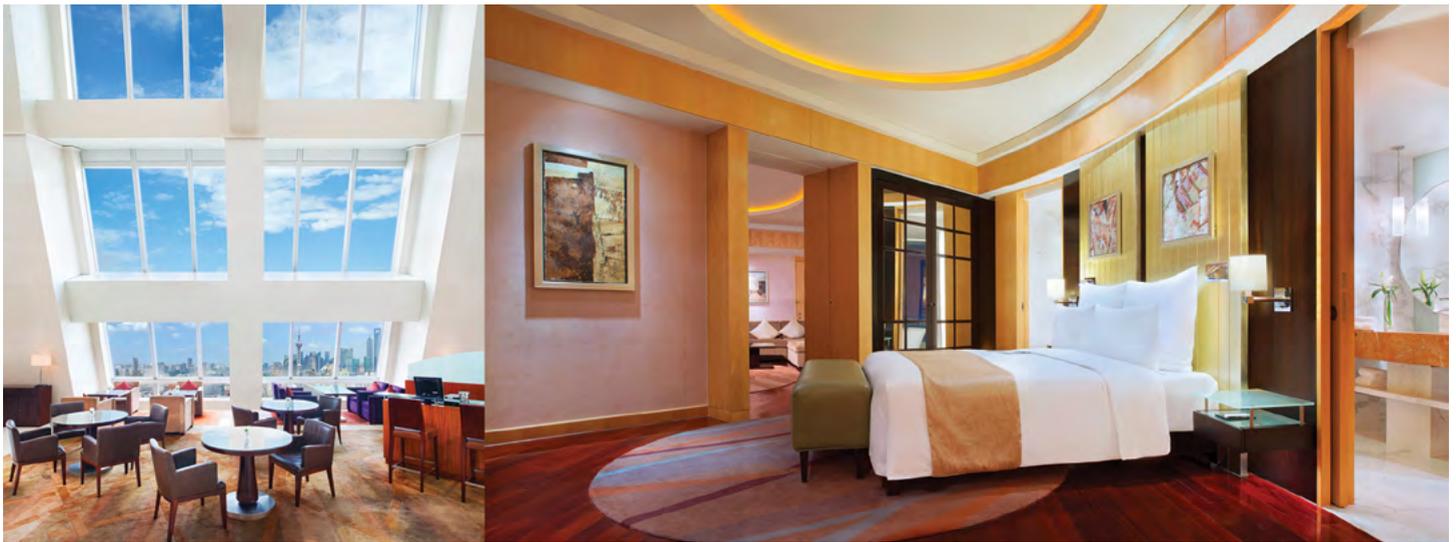
years, I’d say, this is pretty amazing, particularly in this day and age and even more so in a competitive city like China’s jewel — Shanghai.

Challenged by a talent crunch, rising costs of soft and hard-ware, rapidly mounting competition, narrowing travel-trade margins, rising costs of insurance, staff-poaching issues, demanding owners, lack of quality staff-training options and of course, the biggest of all challenges...the increasingly demanding guest, one wonders what must make the irrepressible General Manager, Daniel Aylmer, tick. No stranger to challenge, one recalls his deft handling of The Westin Beijing Chaoyang where staff till

date recall with fondness his patience, attention to detail and his leadership skills.

### “No Silver Bullet”

“Our spirit makes us rise to the challenge, I guess,” says Aylmer, agreeing that the industry, particularly in Shanghai is growing fiercely competitive. “You’ve got to innovate, inspire and empower. It’s not easy, but there isn’t a silver bullet. The Internet serves the industry well as both, a watchdog and a window. Helpful sites like TripAdvisor put service providers in the court of public opinion and the industry needs mirrors like these to provide us with constant feedback. At



the end of the day, we would not exist were it not for the customer. Here at the Le Royal Méridien Shanghai we work hard to create a customer experience that is good enough to make our guests want to return.”

“We serve a mix of the luxury leisure and Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition (M.I.C.E) market that’s grown increasingly demanding and more sophisticated in its needs. The trick is to provide that seamless quality from start to end, regardless of how complicated the requests get. Here we believe the true art of hospitality beats to provide guests with what they need, not just with what you have to offer. This calls for extreme flexibility, which you can only achieve if there is a strong team spirit. We pool our resources together and serve with one heart. That’s the way forward for any hotel serious about earning repeat business.”

### The “WOW” Factor

Spoilt for choice, Aylmer’s guests must have what no other hotel provides. Among his hotel’s many strengths is the

popular French restaurant Allure.

Drawing upon classic French and Mediterranean dishes, the signature restaurant reinvents the traditional with a focus on simpler, healthier ingredients and a modern presentation style that strikes a sophisticated yet approachable note.

The restaurant is located in the striking lobby of the hotel and is marked by the same refined simplicity as its menu.

Diners enjoy views of the open kitchen as well as of the hotel gardens through the massive lobby windows.

“We have an amazing team at Allure, currently offering an art-inspired menu that’s got to be enjoyed to be believed. Guests favour fine-dining for those special occasions but we have a range of equally good casual dining options too. For rest and recreation, the hotel offers a well appointed indoor heated swimming pool and a gym that’s open to guests 24/7. We have a spa that’s attracted a growing fan club of its own. The crowning glory though has to be the spirit of the hardworking, committed people I am lucky to be serving with.”

### All It Takes!

“I believe a hotel must have a great service attitude, offer the freshest food, anticipate guests’ needs and work in sync to create that uniquely satisfying guest experience,” says Aylmer. “We get more than our fair share of M.I.C.E travel thanks to our location, amenities and flexible leanings. Customers are looking for that one-stop-shop and we’ve got to push back the boundaries, innovate and surprise. That’s the key. You have to outdo your competitors and every single aspect of your service has to be aimed at creating repeat business, converting your customer into your advertiser and this easier said than done. But, at the end of the day, the customer is not that merciless too. All you need to do is put your heart into it and try hard. We do it. We look forward to welcoming our friends from Hong Kong back home to the Le Royal Méridien Shanghai,” concludes Aylmer. ■

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