



MR MAYFAIR AT THE MARRIOTT

The Appeal of Elegance

Precise and targeted service is a key point for the modern traveller and the London Marriott Hotel Park Lane has polished its game still further by collaborating with tailor Henry Herbert and shoe restoration wizard the Jaunty Flaneur to offer the Mr Mayfair service

Article by Rupert Watkins Photography by Andy Barnham

A personalised service is a given at any top notch hotel in London today. The idea of 'service' however is increasingly taking the form of a filter, refining and elevating not only the services and options available to the guest but also the information available to them. Time, data and a surplus of choice has begun to create a situation in which a curated offering will be seized by the high tempo traveller.

Given Mayfair's remarkable heritage as a font of British luxury, it is hardly surprising that Christoffer Jonsson of the London Marriott Hotel Park Lane, Tom Beecroft aka the Jaunty Flaneur and Charlie Baker-Collingwood of Henry Herbert tailors all unhesitatingly use the phrase, "quintessentially English" when describing this area's importance in the ideal of gentlemanly elegance. In Christoffer's eyes, "this focus and synergy with Mayfair is about tapping into the British touches about the hotel." Having been a long term collaborator with Tom through their "Details of a Gentleman" events in the hotel's Lanes Bar, the logical next step was to deepen links with local business partners. As Tom comments, "Mayfair is the home of the traditional and high quality service such as bespoke tailoring and shoe shine."

The Mr Mayfair offering, "is a very useful filter in being able to narrow down to the brands and partners that share the same values" according to Tom. Christoffer confirms that the hotel's concierge service has numerous requests for tailors and so it is very useful to be able to definitively offer one option, "something you're happy to stand against." The aim of Mr Mayfair is clearly as educational as it is facilitative, "every conversation starts with 'How can we help?'" points out Charlie, "we're there to steward them through the options, choices and pitfalls." All three feel British brands carry a unique weight. London's great menswear brands and the regard they are held in means clients want to buy into that collective sartorial and gentlemanly knowledge.



Tom Beecroft aka the Jaunty Flaneur

Certainly, few hotels offer truly traditional services. Tom feels that many hotels no longer offer a genuine shoe shine, "to get a five star rating it does have to be offered through the porters as a default. However, we have found that guests want a dedicated professional service. The porters have the necessary basic kit but not the breadth of creams and oils we can bring." Given its popularity, especially with American guests, Tom wonders if some hotels have taken their eye off the marketing ball, "US guests frequently are asking, where can you get a good shoeshine?" This is something he hears from all the Jaunty Flaneur locations where guests are searching for a particular service feeling a lack of confidence in what they will receive where they are staying. Tom reckons, after the London Marriott Hotel, only two other London hotels offer a genuinely professional service.

Christoffer points out that so much of true service, "is about building the rapport, if you have any specific questions about, say, where to buy shoes or tailoring in general, a hotel must be able to call on absolute professionals to answer those." As Charlie points out, it's not about lecturing guests and potential clients, "these people are very successful in their own right, they are used to giving advice and making decisions and so, when they do want guidance, they expect precision answers about what will help them feel at their most comfortable and help them succeed in their own environments."

The line between pure business and leisure guest has also become increasingly blurred. "We see most of our guests doing both" explains Christoffer, "a lot of people either prolong their stay, most do now come with a partner or family whilst jumping into two or three critical meetings." The straightforward polish becomes important before they leave for Curzon Street Private Equity offices but, after that, the relaxed chat, the sharing of a mutual passion, knowledge and interest in the finer things in life becomes more pertinent.

Garment care continues to be an area both Charlie and Tom find they are quizzed on. "A customer has made a significant investment in their clothing and appearance" says Charlie, "the last thing they want is for their garment to have a short life span." Many of Henry Herbert's suggestions can also be found on his YouTube channel. Although, quite rightly, Charlie stresses that high quality, natural doths and suitings are robust and travel friendly, there is still the occasional need to alert frequent travellers about the problems of linen. Tom comments that many customers still don't quite realise the importance of shoe trees. Quite fairly, he points out, wooden shoe trees are not the lightest item for travellers. But, whilst not as good, plastic travel shoe trees should be substituted and the wooden ones put back in the shoe immediately upon returning home.



Charlie Baker-Collingwood of Henry Herbert

The Mr Mayfair offering has only just been rolled out, and, although Charlie expects to see a range of orders, his hunch is that the core request will remain a suit, "everyone needs a good suit. Many customers ask me what a suit should do, which is simple: to make you feel good and confident in yourself." The Jaunty Flaneur's core offering will continue to be the shoe polish. The London Marriott Hotel Park Lane is already Tom's main base and he expects most work to continue to be their high quality shining, with guests dropping off their shoes with the Jaunty Flaneur team and the gleaming result placed back in their room upon return. Tom does offer a full repair and renovation service, working with a trusted colleague for both men's and women's repairs. Whilst on a slight tangent, interestingly Tom points out that the Jaunty Flaneur team do see a considerable interest from women for the polishing services, although it is mainly in winter when they are wearing boots or court shoes.

With so much bewildering choice, Mr Mayfair fuses the best of British service, "going that extra mile" as Charlie puts it. "Service must be, and is, at the very core of the guest experience" Christoffer stresses. With a steadily more demanding clientele, the need to offer an enveloping experience to guests becomes ever more critical. The club-like feel of the London Marriott Hotel Park Lane was, as Christoffer mentions, a very deliberate move to merge with the traditions and atmosphere of both their Park Lane and Mayfair addresses, "it's a very natural British air – one that overseas guests will expect to see when they arrive." Mr Mayfair represents the increasing personalisation of unique experiences that all top end institutions need to offer in an increasingly cut throat London environment. From bringing together brands sharing the same unique selling point, to collating information and experiences for mutually beneficial use, this may well be the next frontier in true service. And Mr Mayfair is showing us how to do it with a little swagger. **R**

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