

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Plaza suite owner facilitates discreteness via independent bookings

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The Plaza Hotel is managed by Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. Image credit: The Plaza

By JEN KING

A Pulitzer Suite in the Fairmont-managed Plaza Hotel in New York is foregoing the traditional reservation program to let guests book directly with the suite's owner.

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The Plaza Hotel is currently a mixed-use property with 181 apartments facing north toward Central Park and east and 282 hotel guest rooms, including 102 suites along its south facade. The Fifth Avenue and Central Park South address is one of the most illustrious properties in New York.

"The benefit of opening up this suite for bookings is that the guest may book directly through the owner rather than having to go through the hotel," said **Liz Kobak**, the personal representative of the unit's owner. "This means that they can secure a booking well in advance and have access to a specific unit - the one and only Fifth Avenue Pulitzer Suite with sweeping views of Fifth Avenue, 24-hour butler service and an ambiance adorned with classically modern furniture.

"You know exactly what you're getting, when you're getting it," she said. "You know you're getting the best. It's not like you're coming into the hotel and you don't know what you're going to get necessarily; you could be on a waiting list for your suite of choice.

"The owner's suite is also listed much lower than on the hotel's site. There's certainty, something that you can count on in what the owner is offering; the strength of knowing exactly what you're going to get. The client is getting the best of everything, and they know it."

A home in The Plaza

In 2008, **Fairmont** launched a program that would allow owners of hotel suites to rent their units to everyday guests through the hospitality brand's Web site. Under the program guidelines, the owner can live in his or her unit at The Plaza for up to 120 days and rent the remaining dates through the hotel.

But, **the owner of suite N 1421**, one of only five Pulitzer Suites, opted out of The Plaza rental program for reasons that remain undisclosed.

Located on the 14th floor of The Plaza, facing Fifth Avenue and the Pulitzer Fountain, guests can now work directly with the suite's owner to book a reservation.



Sitting room in the Pulitzer Suite, N 1421 at The Plaza. Image provided by the suite's private owner

For \$2,000 per night, up to four guests can book the one bedroom and one-and-a-half bath suite.

Renovated in 2015, N 1421 includes modern furnishings and a spacious sitting room with decorative fireplace. The master bath features 24-karat gold plated faucets and marble mosaic tiles in a leaf motif inspired by Central Park.

"I feel that I've created a win for our guests and win for myself," said the owner of the N 1421 Pulitzer Suite, who wishes to remain anonymous, in a statement.

"My friends ask why I left the hotel booking program and aside from my independence, I truly wanted to provide greater access and allow my guests to enjoy a venue that has hosted royal families and bold face names in a discreet manner at a more affordable price. Everyone loves value."



Master bedroom in the Pulitzer Suite, N 1421 at The Plaza. Image provided by the suite's private owner

Although separate from The Plaza's booking system, guests of suite N 1421 will still enjoy the same level of service and amenities the hotel is known for.

The Plaza amenities include the Caudalie Vinotherapie Spa, the Warren-Tricomi Salon, the La Palestra fitness center and hotel's restaurants including Palm Court. The hotel also offers a 24-hour concierge and doorman, nanny service, limousine service, turn-down service and a private butler.

Mi casa es su casa

Home-sharing platforms such as Airbnb and HomeAway have grown in popularity in recent years, as consumers look for authentic experiences such as living as a local while abroad.

For example, digital home rental platform Airbnb is causing greater disruption in the luxury travel and hospitality space with an addition of a high-end tier.

Tentatively named Airbnb Lux, the new tier will be a hub for users looking for luxury home rentals such as mansions and penthouses. The high-end classification will be one of many new tiers from Airbnb that will help users search more easily for what type of accommodation they would like to book ([see story](#)).

On June 21, during Forrester's CXNY 2017 New York, a discussion with an editor from Fortune magazine revealed how the growth of Airbnb has disrupted the luxury hotel business by solving a problem from an outsider's perspective.

During the interview with the assistant managing editor at Fortune and an executive at Tumblr, the two discussed how Airbnb was able to not just build a new business, but construct a new way of life by looking at customer behavior. The home sharing network was able to disrupt the hotel industry by changing the way consumers behave, and in turn shifting the way hospitality brands need to behave ([see story](#)).

"Fellow unit owners have expressed interest in how this experiment will take flight," Suite N 1421's owners' personal representative Ms. Kobak said.

"We are banking on generating interest at this time as we are doing something that no one has ever done before, venturing outside of a hotel rental program," she said.

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