

HOTEL PROFILE | BEIJING

Gold-medal service

With London Games under way, manager of a Beijing five-star hotel fondly remembers receiving Olympic VIPs. Wang Yu reports.

The lighting of the Olympic torch in London brought sweet memories for Gino Tan, general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing, who recalled his unforgettable experience of serving the International Olympic Committee's executive members upon their visits during the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Tan is thankful for having the opportunity. For those in the hospitality business, a good attitude and a personal touch hold the key to providing successful and great service for VIPs, he says.

"It involves a self-fulfilling and gratifying attitude and feeling to have provided not just great service (to those respectable guests) but also an experience for our guests and residents. I do it for those special moments and occasions in our hotel and to know we have played a small part in making that happen. That feeling is the reason I have chosen this job," says Tan.

This attitude was reflected in his service to the IOC, whose executive committee members resided in the hotel in Beijing, where Tan was the resident manager during the 2008 Olympics.

It was his previous experience with the Protocol Office of the IOC during the 117th IOC Session in Singapore and the 119th Session in Guatemala that won Tan the confidence of the IOC.

During the 2008 Olympics, Tan encouraged his staff to work not only for themselves but also for the pride of Beijing and the nation because the hotel had 12 dignitaries and members

of royalty for a three-week stay.

"It was a very challenging period because these VIPs had made our hotel home not for the usual two- or three-day stay but for more than a fortnight," says Tan. "We are humbled to be given this opportunity to contribute to the success of the Games in an indirect way."

Working in hospitality has many pleasures, Tan says. There are always interesting stories to share — within the boundaries of confidentiality.

As a veteran hotelier, Tan has received a slew of dignified guests. Foremost among Tan's most-memorable moments remain visits from the IOC, Queen Elizabeth II and official leaders, such as former British prime minister Gordon Brown and former US president Bill Clinton.

Tan once received Queen Elizabeth, who has just celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, and the Duke of Edinburgh in 2006, when he was the resident manager in a luxury hotel in Singapore.

"It was an honor and privilege to have served Her Majesty and her delegation during her three-day state visit then. It remains today the most unforgettable three days for all of us," he says.

"We had to ensure Her Majesty had a very pleasant and enjoyable stay and yet, in a very subtle way, ensure the tightest security without being too visible," Tan explains.

There were many other factors to be considered in the preparation. For example, Tan revealed that the timing for raising Her Majesty's Flag at the roof of the hotel had to be very precise and coordinated

in tandem with Her Majesty's motorcade arriving at the hotel.

Moreover, all hotel associates were given special etiquette training in the weeks prior to her arrival, such as the protocol governing bowing, handshakes and curtsying. Attention to details like room temperature and noise level could not be overlooked. Advance preparations for months, veiled in secrecy, were essential due to the high profile of the visit.

Adding to the excitement of the visit was the conferring of knighthood to the British high commissioner to Singapore in the hotel on the last day of the queen's visit.

"We were delighted and honored to have received a letter of compliments from Buckingham Palace a few weeks after the visit, which truly made our day," Tan adds.

Having served 20 years in hospitality, Tan points out that, in the hotel industry, a manager needs to always be patient and passionate about his job. "If you work because you have to, the service level will be mediocre, but if you work because you want to, that is another story. This is where the passion for the job comes in," he says.

In his current position as general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing, Tan has continued this passion and has been enhancing both the service and image of his hotel to all patrons and guests alike, not only the VIPs. "I guess it has always been in my DNA," Tan concludes.

Contact the writer at wangyu@chinadaily.com.cn.

Bi Nan contributes to the story.



Gino Tan, general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing.



An evening view of Grand Millennium Beijing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tangla Hotel gets 'Oscar' for service

By LI JIN

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The Tangla Hotel Tianjin recently became the first hotel on the Chinese mainland to be given the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences' International Six Star Diamond Award, the highest award of excellence in the global hospitality industry, according to Hainan Airlines Group, the company that manages the hotel.

"Drawing on the development of excellent international hotel brands combined with the profound cultural connota-

tions of China, HNA Hospitality Group has devoted itself to the development, standardization and improvement of its operations and management concepts and systems," says Steven Song, chairman and president of HNA Hospitality Group. "Awareness of the Tangla brand as a homegrown Chinese national luxury hotel brand has been continuously promoted, and its social influence has also improved."

The award signifies that China's hospitality industry is developing its own world-

renowned brands capable of competing with foreign heavyweights like Hilton and Starwood, Song says.

"The Tangla Hotels and Resorts brand, in terms of facilities, operational management systems and service quality, has reached the international standard," Song says.

Founded in 1997, HNA Hospitality Group's mission is to create a world-class hotel brand for the Chinese nation. In 2008, HNA Hospitality Group decided to create its own high-end international hotel brand —

Tangla Hotels and Resorts — and launched the first Tangla hotel on West Chang'an Avenue in Beijing in 2009.

Song says the brand has expanded overseas and will soon open new outlets in New York, Brussels and other international metropolises, which will further enhance the visibility of the brand.

Joseph D. Cinque, president of AAHS, says he is glad to see Tangla Hotel Tianjin awarded the high honor after a long and complicated evaluation procedure. "Tangla Hotel Tian-

jin joined a group of only five members globally," says Cinque. "There are only two others in Asia, including the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Tokyo and The Peninsula in Hong Kong."

The International Six Star Diamond Award was created by the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences in New York in 1949. It is the highest honor bestowed by the academy in the international service industry and is one of the most internationally recognized. It is often likened to the service industry's "Oscar".

hotellistings

BEIJING

Ham it up

Jinglun Hotel holds a Spanish bamaham ham festival until Aug 7, with special discounts. The café on the first floor offers a buffet featuring Western-style dishes comprising Spanish ham including salad, and ham with beef fillet or grilled fish. The hotel's Chinese restaurant serves dishes with ham, such as ham and asparagus roll.
010-6500-2266 Ext 8111.

New Chinese menu

Fu Gong Restaurant at Qianmen Jianguo Hotel reopened after renovation, with a revamped menu featuring new dishes in different cooking styles. Main courses include charcoal roasted duck breast with mashed potato, braised sea cucumber with golden millet, sauteed sea bream with tieguanyin tea. The restaurant has a healthy concept, and presents its dishes beautifully. While at the hotel, visit its theater, where artists from Beijing Peking Opera Theatre stages performances every evening.
010-6301-6688 Ext 8826.

Mooncakes as gifts



Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing presents a special choice of exquisite mooncakes to mark the Mid-Autumn Festival. Packed in specially designed boxes, they make good gifts for friends and families. Gift boxes with four mooncakes cost 198-268 yuan a box, and 338 yuan with six mooncakes.
010-8522-1999 Ext 3621.

Golden dragon mooncakes

To celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, JW Marriott Hotel Beijing presents an array of delicious mooncakes. "Golden dragon moon" gift box, with four cakes, costs 208 yuan each, six mooncakes gift box costs 358 yuan, and eight mooncakes gift box costs 558 yuan.
010-5908-8101.

Unwind in beer garden

Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun offers an option to unwind with its beer garden, which will open until September. The outdoor venue features premium German Franziskaner beer, Belgian Stella Artois beer, and other German specialties, besides barbecue. 6 pm - midnight.
010-5993-8271.

SHANGHAI

Summer menu

Dining room of Park Hyatt Shanghai has created a new summer menu, designed by Chef Lukas, which includes classic gazpacho with parmesan ice cream. The restaurant's Pastry Chef Louie has also specially prepared an exotic dessert menu for this summer.
021-6888-1234 Ext 4559.

Signature mooncakes

As the Mid-Autumn Festival draws near, the Langham Hotel Shanghai presents a mooncake gift box to celebrate the special occasion. Mini yellow egg custard and double egg yolk with white lotus are special recommendations, which have been voted as among the most delicious mooncakes in a Hong Kong magazine.
021-2330-2430.



Healthy mooncake

To share the joy of the traditional Mid-Autumn Festival with family and friends, Waldorf Astoria Shanghai on the Bund introduces their elegant mooncake gift box. It contains different flavors such as egg yolk with white lotus; and red bean with black jujube, walnut and red lotus, which are suitable for people who prefer a healthier option.
021-6322-9988 Ext 4318.

Yunnan Mushroom Festival

The period from July till August each year is the season when mushrooms taste best, giving birth to the Yunnan Mushroom Festival. To enjoy the best mushrooms, Golden Phoenix of Hotel Equatorial Shanghai presents a unique menu with matsutake, porcini, and termite mushrooms.
021-6193-5920.

who'swho



John Rice (left), area manager and general manager of China World Hotel, welcomes Wayne Swan, Australian deputy prime minister and treasurer.



Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Amollo Odinga (middle) poses with Matthias Ahmed Al-Amiry (right), general manager of Raffles Beijing Hotel, and Christian Westfeld (left), the hotel's resident manager.



Michael Zhou (middle), general manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Chongqing North, welcomes film director Danny Pang (right) and actor Sean Law (left).



Stefan Schmid (left), general manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Beijing, welcomes movie star Allen Ting.



British Airways Maxine Peng (left) and The Langham's Jorgen Christensen (right) congratulate Jeff (second left) and Maggie Hu (second right) for winning the Langham Anniversary Tiffin Competition.



David Amador (right), the director of rooms at Grand Hyatt Shanghai, warmly greets famous football player Gerard Pique (left) who plays for Barcelona.



Monica Chan (right), Miss Hong Kong and TVB actress, receives a warm welcome from Wilson Lum (left), the general manager of Sheraton Ningbo Hotel.



Vice-chairman and CEO of HNA Group, Wang Jian (right), at the opening ceremony of Tangla Hotel Tianjin, along with Zhu Shanzhong, deputy director of China National Tourism Administration (second right), Li Renzhi, director of China National Tourism Administration (second left) and Ren Xuefeng, vice-mayor of Tianjin (left).