

**Room Key**

A D.C. mainstay gets a modern makeover in time for Inauguration Day

## Old Guard, New Tricks

Come January 20, all eyes will be on our nation's capital for Barack Obama's inauguration. But the White House isn't the only D.C. landmark undergoing major changes this year: Two blocks away, the venerable St. Regis Washington, D.C.,\* has reopened its doors following a \$52 million, 16-month renovation that dusted off the old-world hotel and revealed gleaming modern-day opulence.

The lobby's hand-carved wood ceiling was restored with a fresh coat of paint and gold leaf, and the heavy velvet drapes replaced by lavender sheers to provide a more welcoming atmosphere. At the hand of noted interior design firm Sills Huniford Associates, the guest rooms' signature chintz has gone the way of the Bush administration, traded for a pastel palette and a residential feel.

"Many of our clients are looking for a home away from home — but also for the space to have smaller, more intimate meetings in between meetings they may be having outside of the hotel," general manager Laura Schofield says. "We like our guests to feel like they're in someone's private home."

The St. Regis reduced its number of guest rooms from 193 to 175 in order to add 11 palatial suites — such as the 2,500-square-foot Presidential Suite, with two fireplaces and a private dining room. You would, though, be hard-pressed not to feel right at home among the Pratesi linens and personal butler service that come standard with every room.

To grow with the times, the hotel added Bose sound systems, Wi-Fi access and a 15-inch LCD TV, recessed behind the bathroom mirror, that projects images onto the screenless surface so they appear to be floating. And now that all butlers are equipped with BlackBerries, having your clothes ironed or your shoes shined is just a mere click away. **D**

### THE FILE The St. Regis Washington, D.C.

**Rates** Start at \$845 per night; the Presidential Suite costs \$10,000.

**Number of Rooms** 175, 11 of which are suites

**Inflationary** When the hotel first opened in 1926, room rates started at \$5 per night (suites went for \$15).

**For Reservations**  
877-787-3477;  
stregis.com/washingtondc



### FOOTNOTE

In 2007, Dublin-based private investment firm Claret Capital acquired a 90 percent interest in the St. Regis for an estimated \$170 million. Other ventures of Claret founder Domhnal Slattery include JetBird, Europe's first on-demand private-jet airline, and Blue Ocean Wireless, which provides mobile connectivity at sea.

WRITER: CRISTINA VELOCCI; PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE BUCK

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