

LUXURY

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At the city's oldest hotels, wedding organizers have come to expect the unexpected. On Lower Fifth Avenue just steps from Grand Army Plaza, **The Pierre** has been in operation since 1930, originally housing 700 rooms, and now offering 189 redesigned, residential-style guest rooms, including 49 suites. For sure, the Pierre boasts some of the most sumptuous gathering spaces in town—in particular the rotunda, an elliptical chamber decked out in faux-Renaissance murals, created by artist Edward Melcarth in 1967 and featuring famous figures like Jacqueline Kennedy in classical drag. The room acts as both a public dining space and a private receiving space for wedding guests who can then proceed into what was once the hotel's restaurant, with sensational views across the street to Central Park, and then through a corridor to the main ballroom for dinner. The hotel's prime location—plus abundant social media exposure—means its prospective brides are informed well before they walk through the door. "They know the terraces, the views; the bride sees shots of the park, and tells me, 'I want that room,'" says Francois-Olivier Luigi, The Pierre's General Manager since 2015. He and his colleagues do their best to live up to their clients' high expectations, and with bridal packages that include fantastic overnight stays in beautifully appointed upper-floor suites (including one created by renowned Italian designer Piero Lissoni) they can usually make even the most indulgent dreams come true—like flying in a cook from the groom's hometown to offer childhood comfort food during cocktail hour. There's also the fixing of nightmares such as engaging the entire pastry kitchen to craft the wedding cake on the fly after a snafu with the local bakery. Luigi and his colleague, Director of Catering and Events Bill Spinner, once looked on in horror as a bride, standing on one of the balconies on a windy day, had her veil swept off and carried away over the ledge. They had to run out and buy another, and never recovered the original. "Maybe it fell on another couple, and they got married," says Spinner, hopefully.

