

At The Crossroads Of History And Hollywood

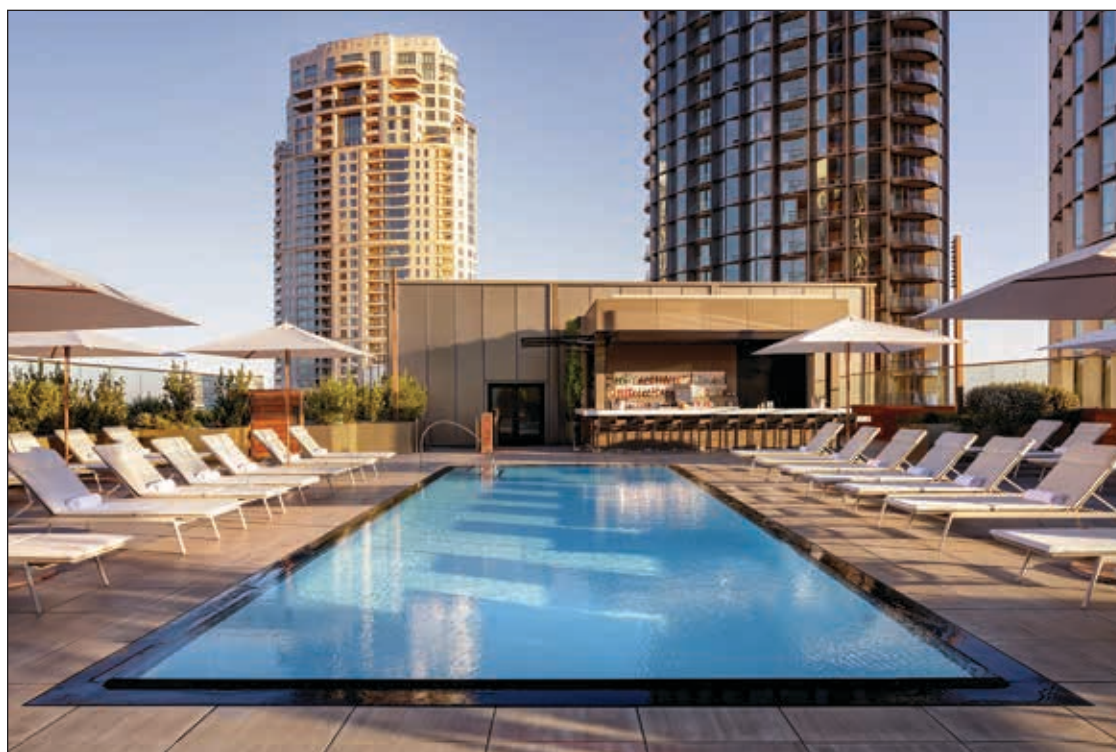
An Interview with Hiren Prabhakar, General Manager, Fairmont Century Plaza

EDITORS' NOTE Hiren Prabhakar is general manager of the iconic Fairmont Century Plaza. A highly respected leader with more than 30 years of luxury hospitality experience across five continents, Prabhakar leads the continued evolution of the 400-room hotel, a landmark destination in Los Angeles known for its blend of historic significance and modern luxury. Prabhakar's distinguished career spans globally renowned brands and prestigious destinations. He began with early roles at Oberoi Hotels & Resorts in Mumbai and as part of the launch team for the iconic Burj Al Arab in Dubai, followed by serving as director of food and beverage at the Polish Business Roundtable Club in Warsaw. Building on this foundation, he successfully led general manager roles for the openings of Ibb Andersia Hotel in Poland and Barvikha Hotel & Spa in Moscow. He then served as resort manager during the launch of Mövenpick Beach Resort in Saudi Arabia, which earned the Best Specialized Resort award at the Saudi Excellence in Tourism



Hiren Prabhakar

Awards in 2011. Prabhakar's leadership journey continued with roles at InterContinental Lusaka, The St. Regis Moscow, and Toronto Marriott Markham. His tenure at The St. Regis Moscow was marked by the hotel earning the prestigious title of Hotel of the Year – Marriott Luxury Brands Europe in 2016. In Toronto, he was named general manager of the year in 2019 and helped the hotel's signature restaurant, LOUIX LOUIS, secure the Best Restaurant & Bar for Marriott Luxury Brands U.S. and Canada portfolio, while the hotel and spa received back-to-back Forbes five-star awards in 2023, 2024 and 2025. Throughout his career, Prabhakar has been at the helm of multiple high-profile hotel openings, demonstrating a consistent ability to deliver operational excellence and industry recognition across some of the world's most celebrated luxury properties. Beyond operations, Prabhakar is known for fostering award-winning food and beverage programs, elevating guest satisfaction, and building dynamic, service-driven teams.



Exterior of Fairmont Century Plaza (top); rooftop pool (above)



Will you highlight your career journey?

My career in hospitality began with a deep curiosity about people and a desire to create meaningful experiences, and it has taken me to some of the most extraordinary corners of the world. I started with Oberoi Hotels & Resorts in Mumbai, where I developed a strong foundation in luxury service and operational discipline. From there, I had the remarkable privilege of being part of the opening team for the Burj Al Arab in Dubai which shaped my understanding of what truly iconic hospitality looks and feels like. Over the following decades, I have led properties across five continents, from Warsaw to Moscow, Lusaka to Riyadh, and Toronto to Los Angeles. Each chapter brought new challenges and new opportunities. At the St. Regis Moscow, the hotel earned the prestigious title of Hotel of the Year for Marriott Luxury Brands Europe in 2016. In Toronto, I was honored to be named General Manager of the Year in 2019, and our team achieved back-to-back Forbes five-star awards for the hotel and spa in 2023, 2024, and 2025, all milestones I am incredibly proud of.

What unifies all of these experiences is a commitment to building exceptional teams, delivering genuine hospitality, and elevating every property I have had the honor of leading. More than 30 years in, that passion has only deepened, and I bring all of it to my role here at Fairmont Century Plaza.

Will you provide an overview of Fairmont Century Plaza?

A true icon of Los Angeles, Fairmont Century Plaza brings together glamour, culture, and wellness in one of the city's most storied settings. Since opening in 1966 on the site of a former 20th Century Studios backlot, the hotel has welcomed Grammy-winning artists, U.S. presidents, and generations of tastemakers. From the Beatles winning big at the 10th annual Grammy Awards to the first Presidential State Dinner ever held outside the White House, hosted by President Nixon to honor the Apollo 11 expedition, Fairmont Century Plaza has long stood at the crossroads of history and Hollywood.

After a thoughtful \$2.5 billion transformation completed in 2021, the hotel continues to honor its legacy while embracing a modern, sophisticated spirit. Today, it offers 400 spacious guest rooms with private terraces, nearly 24,000 square feet of private event space for gatherings of all sizes, a world-class 14,000-square-foot spa, and a rooftop pool with sweeping views of the city, all of which are just steps away from Beverly Hills and West Los Angeles.

What do you feel are the keys to the strength and leadership of the property?

At its core, the strength of Fairmont Century Plaza lies in the authenticity of its identity. This is not a hotel that was manufactured for a market; it grew organically from the culture, history, and energy of Los Angeles. That sense of genuine place is something guests feel from the moment they arrive, and it is something we work hard to preserve and amplify.

The renovation was a critical inflection point. A \$2.5-billion investment of that scale signals an enormous belief in this property's future, and the result is a physical expression of excellence in design, in amenities, and in the experiences we offer. But bricks and mortar are only part of the equation. The real differentiator is our people. I have always believed that a hotel is only as strong as the team behind it, and the team here is extraordinary. They are passionate, service-driven, and deeply committed to the guest experience.

Finally, our position within the Fairmont brand gives us tremendous resources and a global community of guests who trust what the Fairmont name represents.

How does Fairmont Century Plaza blend its historic significance with modern luxury?

It is a balance we think about every single day, and it is one of the things that makes this property so compelling to lead. The history of Century Plaza is a living part of who we are. We honor it not by preserving the past unchanged, but by letting it inform and elevate the present.

Architecturally, the renovation was thoughtful and deliberate. The iconic crescent silhouette of the original building, designed by Minoru Yamasaki, was maintained and celebrated, even as the interiors were completely reimagined with contemporary luxury in mind. The result is a space that feels both timeless and of this moment.

In our programming, our dining experiences, and our approach to service, we draw on the legacy of a property that has hosted world leaders, cultural icons, and historic events, and we ask ourselves: what does that level of significance look and feel like for guests today? The answer evolves, but the aspiration remains constant. Modern luxury, to me, does not erase history. It is enriched by it.

What does luxury mean to you in today's hospitality landscape?

Luxury has fundamentally shifted in my career, and I think that evolution is exciting. When I began in this industry, luxury was largely defined by the tangible – the thread count of the linens, the height of the ceilings, the grandeur of the lobby. Those things still matter, and we deliver them in abundance at Fairmont Century Plaza, but they are no longer sufficient on their own.



Century Plaza 2 Double living area

Today, true luxury is about time, authenticity, and connection. Guests are sophisticated and well-traveled. They can access beautiful rooms and fine dining in many places. What they cannot easily find is a hotel that genuinely sees them, that anticipates their needs, understands what matters to them, and delivers experiences that feel personal rather than programmatic.

Luxury is also increasingly about meaning. Guests want to know that the places they choose operate with integrity – caring for their people, their communities, and the environment. That aligns with Fairmont's long-standing commitment to responsible tourism, and it is something I take seriously in how we operate this property.

At the end of the day, luxury is the feeling that you are exactly where you are meant to be, that every detail has been considered, and that your time here has been genuinely worthwhile. That is what we aspire to every day.

What has made the hospitality industry so special for you?

The people – the guests we have the privilege of welcoming, and the colleagues I have been fortunate to work alongside across every continent and every property. Hospitality is one of the few industries where you are in the business of human connection, full stop. Every shift, every interaction, every stay is an opportunity to make someone's day, celebrate a milestone with them, or simply offer a place of warmth and care in the middle of a busy world. That never gets old.

I have also been shaped by the diversity of this industry. My career has taken me from Mumbai to Dubai, Warsaw to Moscow, Saudi Arabia to Toronto, and now to Los Angeles. Every destination brought a new culture to understand, new guests to serve, and new colleagues to learn from. That breadth of human

experience is a gift that very few careers can offer, and I am grateful for every chapter of it.

There is also something deeply meaningful about building teams and watching people grow. Some of the greatest joys of my career have come from seeing a talented colleague discover their potential and flourish into a leader in their own right. That is legacy – and hospitality gives you the platform to create it every day.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the industry?

First and most importantly: say yes to the experiences that challenge you, even when they are uncomfortable. My career took me to cities I might never have imagined calling home. Each of those chapters pushed me, shaped me, and gave me a depth of perspective I could not have found any other way. The hospitality industry is genuinely global, and your willingness to embrace that is one of the greatest advantages you can give yourself.

Second, master the fundamentals before you chase the title. The leaders I most admire in this industry are those who understand the work at every level. Early in my career, I was on the floor, in the kitchen, behind the front desk. That ground-level knowledge is invaluable when you are eventually making decisions that affect hundreds of people and thousands of guests.

Third, invest in relationships. Hospitality is a small world and a long career. The colleagues, mentors, and guests you meet along the way matter. Treat every one of them with respect and genuine curiosity.

And finally, never lose sight of the reason we are all here: to make people feel cared for. On the best days and the hardest days, that purpose is the anchor. If you hold onto it, this industry will reward you in ways that go well beyond a career. ●