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How Taj Under Puneet Chhatwal is Setting a Global Standard Where Heritage Meets Innovation

Hozpitality Group presents the **Global Executive Leadership Series**, an exclusive platform for CEOs, Presidents, and owners of major organizations. This series spotlights visionaries who are reshaping global hospitality, setting new benchmarks in service, innovation, and sustainable growth, and offering insights that define leadership at the highest level. The series reflects Hozpitality Group's ongoing commitment to celebrating excellence, fostering innovation, and connecting the global hospitality community through meaningful content. In this edition, we are deeply honoured to feature Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO of The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL).

“Human connections drive everything.”



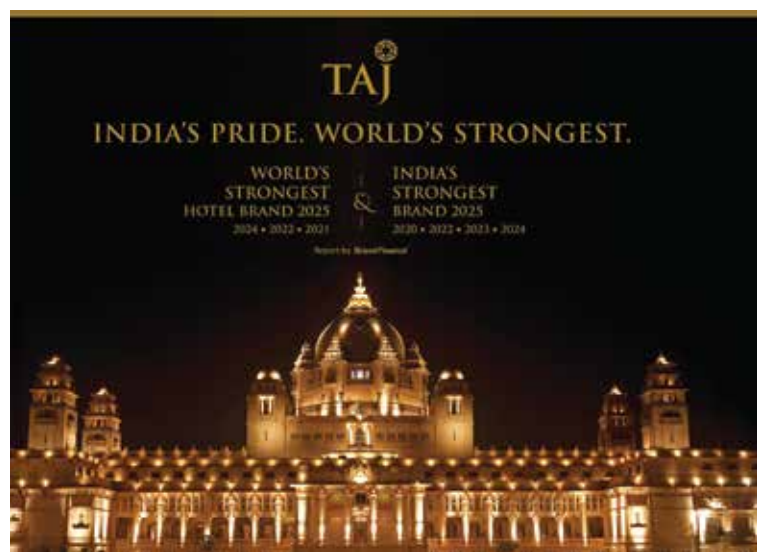
Puneet Chhatwal

Managing Director & CEO
The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)

As the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) strides toward its 700-hotel milestone by 2030, it stands as a beacon of Indian hospitality on the world stage, a global powerhouse with a portfolio of 567 hotels across 14 countries and four continents, including 317 in the pipeline. From the iconic grandeur of Taj, recently named the World's Strongest Hotel Brand and India's Strongest Brand in 2025, to the contemporary elegance of Vivanta, the lean-luxe innovation of Ginger, and the serene escapes of Tree of Life, IHCL has crafted a multi-brand ecosystem that touches every facet of modern travel. Guiding this journey is Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO, whose vision is global yet grounded in deeply human values.

A Vision Rooted in Balanced Growth

Under Chhatwal, IHCL has pursued a strategy that marries ambition with prudence. By combining capital-light and capital-heavy models, the group has scaled efficiently while maintaining financial resilience. Recent strategic acquisitions and partnerships, including ANK Hotels, Pride Hospitality, Brij Hospitality, and the Claridges Collection, have strengthened IHCL's presence across mid-scale, boutique, luxury, and experiential leisure segments, reinforcing its reputation as one of the world's most diversified and dynamic hospitality groups.



This approach reflects not just a desire to grow, but a commitment to building lasting value for the company, its guests, and the communities it touches. Every expansion project carries the dual mandate of excellence in service and responsibility toward people and heritage.

Taj: More Than a Brand, a Legacy

At the heart of IHCL lies Taj, a brand synonymous with Indian hospitality for over a century. With 130+ properties spanning 14 countries, Taj combines timeless elegance with contemporary luxury, offering Grand Palaces, iconic city hotels, safaris, spa resorts, and service residences.

In 2025, Brand Finance once again recognized IHCL's iconic brand, Taj, as the World's Strongest Hotel Brand for the fourth time and India's Strongest Brand across all sectors for the fifth consecutive year. These accolades underscore Taj's century-old legacy of pioneering destinations, setting global benchmarks, and proudly showcasing Indian hospitality on the world stage.

*“Stay open, stay curious,
and above all, stay joyful.”*

Its expansion strategy carefully balances global ambition with cultural authenticity. Internationally, Taj is targeting gateway cities that host vibrant Indian diasporas and business communities. Projects in Makkah, Riyadh, Bahrain, Ras Al Khaimah, and Frankfurt exemplify this approach. Each property becomes not just a hotel, but a custodian of heritage, celebrating local culture while delivering world-class experiences.

Tajness: The Soul of Service

The essence of IHCL's success lies in Tajness, a philosophy that blends trust, awareness, and joy into every interaction. It is more than a service framework; it is a cultural compass that guides employees in creating memorable moments for guests. Across 40,000 associates, Tajness fosters authenticity, empathy, responsiveness, and pride, ensuring that whether a guest visits a historic palace in Jaipur or a resort in the Maldives, the experience is unmistakably Taj.

It is this intangible quality that sets IHCL apart globally, a consistency of warmth and care that transcends borders and leaves an emotional imprint on guests.

Sustainable Luxury and Purpose-Driven Initiatives

For IHCL, luxury and responsibility are inseparable. Through its ESG+ framework, Paathya, the company, is embedding sustainability into the guest experience and operational DNA. From India's first zero single-use plastic hotel at Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans, to green-certified urban retreats like Taj The Trees in Mumbai, sustainability is both a practice and a promise.

IHCL also champions cultural preservation through UNESCO partnerships, Khazana's promotion of traditional arts and crafts, and livelihood programs for handloom weavers in Varanasi. Here, luxury is not just opulent, it is meaningful, mindful, and socially conscious, appealing to travellers who seek deeper connections and purpose-driven experiences.

Redefining Modern Luxury

The modern luxury traveller wants more than indulgence; they seek authenticity, personalization, and responsibility. IHCL has responded with initiatives like the J Wellness Circle, combining Ayurveda, Yoga, and immersive wellness programs, and Carecations, curated itineraries allowing guests to support local communities while travelling.

Digital innovation, wellness, and sustainable practices converge to redefine luxury for a new generation of travelers, showing that opulence and purpose can coexist seamlessly.

Leadership with a Global Yet Human Vision

Puneet Chhatwal's leadership style is shaped by decades of experience across Europe, the US, and Asia. He blends American marketing acumen, European management rigor, and Asian emotional intelligence to guide IHCL's growth with both precision and heart.

For those aspiring to build a career in hospitality, he believes that a positive mindset is the greatest asset. Joy, he says, is a powerful force, fuelling passion, creativity, and resilience. True excellence emerges from wholehearted engagement: with people, with ideas, and with life itself. The advice is simple yet profound: stay open, stay curious, and above all, stay joyful.

He also reminds us that nothing truly meaningful is ever built alone. Lasting impact comes only when individuals unite, leveraging one another's strengths in pursuit of a shared purpose.

