

The Golden Rule

An Interview with Nancy Chacon, General Manager, Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta

EDITORS' NOTE Nancy Chacon has spent her entire career with Four Seasons, most recently as Hotel Manager of Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore before assuming her current role. Prior to Baltimore, she served as Director of Rooms at Four Seasons Hotel Buenos Aires and at Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita. Chacon earned a BA degree in business economics and French studies from Mills College.



Nancy Chacon

While each Four Seasons property is unique and reflective of the region in which it's located, we all deliver a quality of service that has never been duplicated. It's a unique competitive advantage, in Atlanta and beyond, because The Golden Rule is the foundation that elevates our brand to the iconic stature it has earned.

As General Manager of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta, it is my most sincere delight and responsibility to continue the promise of our brand's inspiring and unwavering mission by

leading by example. Just as Mr. Sharp learned in the early days of the brand's history, I know that the only way we can successfully delight guests with unparalleled service is if our staff believes in our culture of respect, fairness, honesty and trust. Actions speak louder than words, which is why my actions and decisions go back to The Golden Rule and I believe that is why Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta continues to

be one of the most successful properties in the company's portfolio, as well as one of the busiest in Atlanta.

How did Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta adapt its business to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and how proud are you to see the resilience of your team during this unprecedented time?

Four Seasons has a long history of anticipating the evolving needs of guests, and in the process, continually raising the standard of luxury hospitality at every touchpoint. While we were navigating uncharted waters of the pandemic, our initial concern was the health and well-being of our staff; for without our staff, we'd be an empty shell of a building. In May 2020, Four Seasons entered into a consulting agreement with Johns Hopkins Medicine International, the global division of healthcare and research leader Johns Hopkins Medicine. Leveraging healthcare expertise and access to leading technologies and tools, Four Seasons launched its enhanced global health and safety program, Lead With Care. Our approach to health and safety in response to COVID-19 has always been about doing what we do best – continuing to demonstrate personalized and genuine care while strengthening our already stringent and industry leading health and safety procedures, enhancing tools and training and embracing technological innovation. While the Four Seasons experience may look different in this new environment, it will always feel the same; ultimately, it will still be our people delivering the same attention to detail, intuitive service and personalized care for which the brand is known and trusted for the world over.

As for our team, I could not be prouder of their resilience. The hospitality industry was hit especially hard during the beginning of the pandemic and many individuals made the choice to begin new careers in new industries. Although we briefly closed the hotel, the majority of our team members – from housekeepers to restaurant servers, bellmen to front desk agents – chose to wait for our doors to re-open and fill our hotel with a newfound commitment to deliver an exceptional guest experience. It showed me how much they love what they do. There are intangible elements of hospitality, an innate sixth sense of sorts – and these team members have “it.” “It” is what makes this team special.

PROPERTY BRIEF Located in

Midtown Atlanta, guests of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta (fourseasons.com/atlanta) are within walking distance of Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Bellline, Center for Puppetry Arts, Fox Theater, High Museum of Art, Piedmont Park and Ponce City Market; and only a short drive to attractions including Georgia Aquarium, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, World of Coca-Cola, State Farm Arena, National Center for Civil and Human Rights, Centennial Olympic Park, Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame, Zoo Atlanta and Six Flags Over Georgia. Guests can choose from 226 luxurious guest rooms and 18 suites and can relax at the property's tranquil spa or indoor pool before a meal of locally-sourced fare at Park 75 restaurant. The more than 14,000 square feet of meeting space includes ballrooms ranging from 474 to 5,105 square feet and 50th-floor meeting rooms overlooking the Atlanta skyline.

What have been the keys to Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta's industry leadership and how is the property positioned in the market?

Four Seasons has been a global leader in the luxury hospitality industry for 60 years. I believe that achievement reaffirms the values of respect, care and excellence upon which the company was founded. When Four Seasons Founder, Isadore Sharp, built and opened his first hotel in Toronto, it was successful because he prioritized guest needs. He followed his instincts to create a guest experience of relaxed elegance without pretention, service without class attitude and a caring staff to answer every need. This, paired with innovative amenities and thoughtful touchpoints throughout every property, is what continues to drive the exceptional quality our guests have long cherished.



The exterior of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta

Will you provide an overview of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta and how you define the Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta difference?

Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta emulates modern elegance, steeped in southern charm forever demonstrated by embracing a more diverse definition of what it is to be a “luxury hotel.” Located in the heart of Midtown and an icon in the Atlanta skyline, the Hotel is a Five-Diamond AAA and Forbes Travel Guide celebrated property consisting of 244 guestrooms and suites, two award-winning restaurants, a 10-treatment room spa and indoor heated pool, as well as more than 14,000 square feet of meeting and event space. The 53-story neoclassical-style building was built in 1992 and originally opened as the GLG Grand building in January 1993, before transitioning to the Occidental Grand Hotel, and soon after flagged as Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta in March 1997. Our lobby makes for a grand entrance with its dual-sided wrought-iron staircase with large circular glass-details, Spanish Rojo Alicante marble and a 500-light chandelier. The style of our guestrooms were refreshed in 2018 and have a juxtaposing aesthetic from the lobby, reflecting a sleek color scheme of blues and greys with subtle accents of orange and garnet. In March 2022, we are thrilled to be celebrating 25 years in Atlanta.

What I cherish most about Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta is its people. Atlanta is an inspiring metropolis in the Southeastern United States, and Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta reflects the colorful spirit of our trendsetting community. Our staff is comprised of compassionate hospitality professionals who come from a diverse array of cultures and backgrounds. Always leading with The Golden Rule, we deliver anticipatory service with genuine hospitality rooted in kindness – from warm welcomes that illuminate our glistening lobby to carefully tailored moments that honor the uniqueness of each guest.

Will you highlight Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta’s suite offering and the strength of its suite product?

Of our 244 guestrooms, 18 of those are suites with a range of layouts that include private terraces to standalone deep-soaking bathtubs, to in-room kitchens and living rooms with wet bars. The benefit for our guest is that there are 13 unique room configurations to provide someone with the exact configuration desired.

My personal favorite is our Presidential Suite. Located on the top floor of the hotel, this 2,200 square-foot room includes a master bedroom with an extensive walk-in closet and striking marble master bath. The full kitchen is great for a private chef experience which can seamlessly entertain up to 10 guests at the suite’s dining table. Between the comforting touchpoints and architectural aesthetic of the room, it’s a majestic space.

How do you define a true luxury hotel experience and how critical is providing personalized service and customizing the guest experience in defining luxury today?

I define a true luxury hotel experience as one that is personalized and anticipatory. Service is at the heart of hospitality, and the best service happens when we are able to connect with the people and the world around us. As we learn



The lobby of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta

the likes and dislikes of our guests, we provide them with anticipatory service. For example, if we know a guest loves his or her coffee with non-dairy creamer, we will ensure the in-room coffee creamers are all non-dairy prior to them checking-in. It’s the ability to treat our guests like family and provide them with an experience that enhances the reason for their stay.

How has the role of the general manager evolved and what are the keys to being successful in the role?

While this is my first time in the role of General Manager, one thing has always remained the same – follow The Golden Rule. If I can go to sleep at night knowing the decisions I made were best for the people I am responsible for leading and welcoming, I know I did the right thing. Being a General Manager is about maintaining humanity; it’s about inspiring others and leading by example; it’s about building open relationships with team members at all levels who trust enough to share their candid thoughts and ideas.

In my experience, successful General Managers lead by example and remain approachable to their staff. One of my favorite meetings I look forward to is called “Direct Line,” where I meet with a group of frontline team members. Everyone shares their observations, learnings and thoughts from how the operation can continue to improve to ideas on how we can best curate new experiences for our guests. When I’m there, I listen to their thoughts, but what I hear is their brilliance and passion. It is a delight to know this team is made up of people who care and will forever carry the legacy of Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta.

Additionally, self-care is critical. I never lose sight that my first and most important job is to be a mother to my son. We take time to travel, and there is something unique about seeing the world through his eyes. I also

surround myself with a network of family, friends and mentors who essentially serve as my counsel of thoughtful and honest individuals I can trust. It’s this layer of human connection that keeps my bucket full of joy, optimism and positivity, helping me to be the best version of myself.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?

There are limitless opportunities for women to lead in the hospitality industry. We all bring something special to the conversation – men, women, non-binary. Diversity is what expands our mind and understanding of cultures near and far. We all must be brave enough to listen, learn and self-reflect upon our conscious and unconscious biases and be willing to change certain systems to be more inclusive to people from all walks of life. Diversity is the key to our success.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in a career in the hotel business?

Service starts with the heart; you really have to be present and aware consistently to make the greatest impact on others, and yourself. My advice for young people interested in a career in the hotel business is to gain as much experience as a frontline team member – from being a restaurant host or server to a front desk agent, and learn how to connect with people. If the human interaction makes you happy, continue on your path by challenging yourself with new responsibilities that take you out of your comfort zone. The hotel business is not always glamorous, but we make a significant impact on our guests – and nothing is more rewarding to me than knowing we have made a positive impact on someone’s stay, or on an employee, or a provider, because of something we did to make it meaningful. ●