



Sanjay and Surinder Arora

# Masters *of* Hospitality

*The inspirational story behind  
The Buckinghamshire's transformation  
under new ownership.*



Two rivers run through the course and water comes into play on seven holes.



Quintessentially English in atmosphere, the heart of the club is the elegant 17th century clubhouse, Denham Court Mansion.



LONDON, ENGLAND: United Kingdom's largest privately owned hospitality corporation is the Arora Group. The brand has made a name for itself through the design, construction, and operation of luxury hotels. Several of its properties may be familiar to you, including the Sofitel London Heathrow and Fairmont Windsor Park.

"Our family-owned and operated company is a story of grit and determination," recalled Sanjay Arora, COO of Arora Group. "My grandparents emigrated from India to England in search of a better life and to financially support the family. My dad, Surinder Arora, stayed back with his auntie until he moved to England at age 13. He met his mom and dad at Heathrow Airport as a teenager. His success hasn't come easily. With a strong work ethic and dedication to growing the business, he engaged with projects no matter the day of the week or time of the day. ►



“Every son’s role model is his father, and I was no different,” continued Sanjay. “Although on more than one occasion there was an empty seat next to my mom during school functions, the sacrifices made were for the good of our family.”

### *THE GOLDEN ARCHES*

When Sanjay turned seven years old, he joined his dad for weekend visits to construction worksites. “I think it was my dad’s way to ‘nudge’ me into the business. Since building a hotel from the ground up requires a 24-month timeframe, on one particular project, the two of us would visit the McDonald’s across the street on our way home for an ice cream cone,” remembered Sanjay. “It was so simplistic but brought so much happiness. To this day, if we are traveling internationally, we will make a point to stop at McDonald’s to rekindle one of our fondest memories as father and son.”

After graduating from university, Sanjay faced a dilemma. Should he enter the family hospitality business or go out on his own? “My bravado made me shun my dad [to his great chagrin] and take a job at KPMG [the huge accounting and consulting firm],” stated Sanjay. “My dad was deeply disappointed and didn’t speak to me for a

couple of days. After a short stint in the corporate world, my interest turned to furthering my upper education. I asked my parents if they would pay for tuition for me to obtain my MBA. They agreed.”

### *THE DEAL MAKER*

After receiving his MBA, Sanjay joined the family business. “My wife, Raj, was instrumental in making the decision and strongly encouraged me to give it a go,” said Sanjay. “Looking back, I think my days at KPMG made me more disciplined, street-wise, and allowed me to bring more to the table today.”

During his first official day in the office, Sanjay arrived at work with no office to call his own. “I felt lost and knew all eyes were on me. I needed to prove my merits and create a distinctive management style to complement my father’s. My first opportunity to prove my aptitude arrived at an inopportune time—just as the world was entering a hard lockdown because of COVID. As you can imagine, as the seriousness of the pandemic came into focus, every hotelier in the world was frightened,” softly stated Sanjay. “During a meeting with my parents, they felt the most prudent choice of action was to delay new projects until uncertainty diminished.

“I pressed my dad that I had found a real estate opportunity outside of our wheelhouse as hoteliers, but the numbers worked. My dad capitulated, and I knew if I screwed this up, well, let’s say, there probably would have been silence around the dinner table!”

Sanjay turned a £6 million investment into a £20 million profit within six months. Dad’s reaction: “I’m so glad I listened to you.”

“That one sentence means more to me than you can imagine,” smiled Sanjay.



### *FEET THAT BARELY TOUCH THE PEDALS*

A regular Arora family activity included bike rides around The Buckinghamshire, an upscale private golf club about five minutes from their main residence.

“I distinctly remember the sound of water permeating the air. I had an affinity toward golf even before my feet could reach the pedals on a golf cart,” said Sanjay. “My father was part owner of the distinguished Wentworth Club, so our family had a heritage in the golf business. We heard The Buckinghamshire was for sale; we were giddy with anticipation. With so much excitement, we knew we had to ‘cool our jets’ during negotiations. After all, negotiating a real estate transaction is similar to playing chess. When we got the call that the current owners had agreed with the sale price, I felt like we had just won the lotto, and it was an instant adrenaline rush.”

### *BUILDING TRUST*

Home to the Ladies European Tour and nestled on the green banks of the River Colne, The Buckinghamshire features a John Jacobs design (a former Ryder Club captain) and an exquisitely renovated 17th-century house with overnight accommodations. “The clubhouse is designated a Grade 2 Listing in the United Kingdom that is ‘of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve it.’ I admit I’m passionate about history; I consider the clubhouse irreplaceable,” confided Sanjay. “The craftsmanship of rounded edges and brickwork are from a bygone era.”

The club had a stable membership and sterling reputation. “Our first order of business was to gain the trust of existing members that we were here for the long haul,” continued Sanjay. “We sought to improve all aspects of the club without messing with what’s working. Although our legacy is hospitality, it was a daunting task to transform The Buckinghamshire into an experience that members from around the world would gravitate toward.

“One of the first changes we implemented was eliminating corporate group outings. Although this was an immediate £500,000 hit to the bottom line, it created an aura of exclusivity.

“I can now say with confidence that our international membership has merit and is so special Americans will talk about it,” praised Sanjay. “The club is a mere 15 minutes from London Heathrow and about 35 minutes from central London. With so many options into London from the United States, you are likely one nonstop flight away, and once you land, our team takes over to make your stay at The Buckinghamshire flawless.” ■

*For more information on international memberships, please visit [BuckinghamshireGC.com](http://BuckinghamshireGC.com).*

