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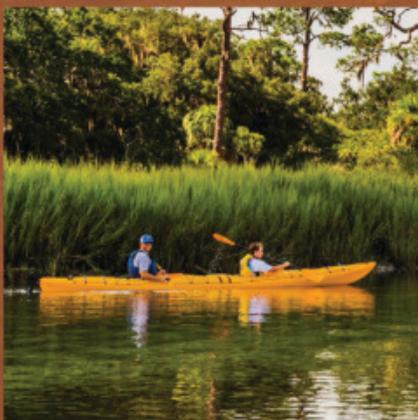
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F O N T A I N E B L E A U  
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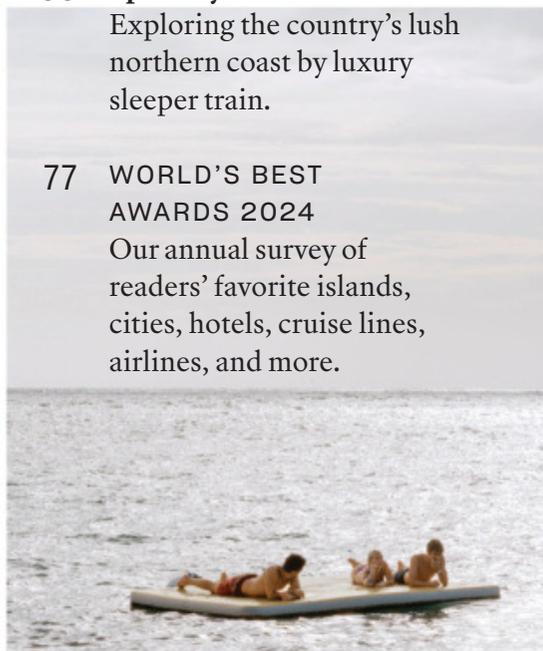
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The Gulf of Naples as seen from Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, the No. 1 resort in Italy (page 110). Photograph by Serena Eller Vainicher.

A sense of place  
when you're far from home  
– we know the feeling.



# Contributors

## ABRAHAM VERGHESE

*Still Waters* (page 148)

The writer and physician wrote about Kerala, a state in the south of India, which is the setting of his latest novel, *The Covenant of Water* (an Oprah Book Club selection), and the birthplace of his parents. An unexpected outcome of the trip? “The fact that my pants kept getting tighter as we ate our way through Kerala!” he says.



▲ *The Bellamy Mansion Museum, in Wilmington, North Carolina.*



## LESLIE RYANN MCKELLAR

*Time and Tide* (page 158)

McKellar has spent much of her life in the South, so she felt a sense of affinity while photographing our feature on Wilmington, North Carolina. “The area is gorgeous and has plenty to boast about, but I most enjoyed being around the humble, friendly, and laid-back people,” she says.



▲ *The infinity pool at the Leela Kovalam, a Raviz Hotel, in Kerala, India.*

## JOHN JEREMIAH SULLIVAN

*Time and Tide*

The author of the essay collection *Pulphead* and a contributing writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, Sullivan wrote about his hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina, for this issue. “The city has grown and changed so much in the last five years, and I could only capture a slice,” he says.



## BRITTANY CONERLY

*Hot, Hot Houston* (page 172)

The Dallas-based photographer shot our feature on Houston’s culinary scene. A high point? “It was a pleasure chatting with chef Chris Williams in the garden of his restaurant, Lucille’s,” Conerly says. “I loved hearing about the food he grows, and how he supports the local community.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRISTOPHER P. MICHEL/COURTESY OF ABRAHAM VERGHESE; LESLIE RYANN MCKELLAR; DAWN PICK BENSON/COURTESY OF LESLIE RYANN MCKELLAR; KATHY TRAN/COURTESY OF BRITTANY CONERLY; WYATT MASON/COURTESY OF JOHN JEREMIAH SULLIVAN; TOM PARKER

# AH-HA MOMENTS HAPPEN HERE.

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# Letter from the Editor



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
Jacqui at the Great Temple of Abu Simbel, in southern Egypt, with its massive statues of Ramses II; the pool on the Sphinx; Jacqui's husband, Rob, and son, Bobby, on a dune-surfing excursion in Aswan.

**S**EARCH FOR the term “cold plunge” on Instagram, and you’ll discover a treasure trove of posts, geotagged from Finland to California. Keen to boost circulation, reduce inflammation, and improve mental clarity, people are going all in on this wellness experience, which entails a quick dip in frigid water.

I did my own “PG” version this spring—in the Nile River, of all places. My family and I were sailing on Uniworld’s **Sphinx** (12-day cruise plus land tour from \$6,499 per person, all-inclusive), a 42-suite ship that departs from Luxor, Egypt, and winds its way toward Aswan. Of course, you go to Egypt for the temples: Kom Ombo, Karnak, Dendera, to name but a few. These sites are thousands of years old and magnificently preserved, with remnants of paint still clinging to the stone.

But when offered the chance to swim in the Nile, we jumped: here was an excursion that leaned less historical, more playful. So after the *Sphinx* docked in Aswan,

my husband, son, and I took a separate boat past giant rocks and tall bamboo grass to a small beach backed by sand dunes. With the temperature near 100 degrees, I expected the river to feel like a warm bath. But after putting one toe in, I shuddered from the cold. I don’t know if it was YOLO or FOMO, but something drove me to jump in anyway. I first let out a yell, then a deep belly laugh, my body shaking from the thrill of it all.

The experience reminded me that travel, at its best, makes us think deeply about ourselves and our place in the universe. It can also provide simple moments of surprise and delight, as it did that day in Egypt. Our annual World’s Best Awards are a global who’s who of destinations, hotels, cruise lines, safari outfitters, and more, as vetted and voted on by you, our loyal readers. Use it as a resource for finding your own moments of surprise and delight, which will, I hope, give your brain and body the boost they deserve.

@jacquigiff  
@jacquigiff

## FROM MY TRAVELS

Right now, I’m gravitating to larger city hotels that have resort-like amenities for decompression. In Cairo, we stayed at the **Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at Nile Plaza** (doubles from \$420), which has just-renovated rooms and three outdoor pools surrounded by chic cabanas. The alfresco seating area at the new Upper Deck Lounge also proved to be ideal for cocktails.

Stuck in Houston thanks to severe weather, we gave the five-month-old **Thompson Houston** (doubles from \$349) a go. Set in a 36-story tower near Buffalo Bayou Park, it has generous marble bathrooms, an expansive spa, and a swim deck with soaring skyscraper views. Consider it a fun, fresh base from which to explore one of America’s most diverse food cities (find a full guide on page 172).



Scan here for early-offer pricing: \$500 off through July 31.

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Charleston was once again voted the top city in the U.S. in our World’s Best Awards. For an immersive look at this beloved destination, come to the **Food & Wine Classic in Charleston**, held **September 27–29**.

This inaugural event, presented by Explore Charleston, will bring together *Food & Wine*, *Southern Living*, and *Travel + Leisure* for a weekend of cooking demonstrations, along with extensive wine tastings and a traditional Southern tailgate. I will also be curating a shopping tour of some of my favorite boutiques. To me, the beauty of Charleston is in the friendliness of the locals, who always greet visitors with a hug and a “How are you?” We can’t wait to welcome you to the party.

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# DISCOVERIES



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**

*A view of the Nice coastline from Hôtel du Couvent; the pétanque court at the bar and club La Boulisterie; a guest room at Hôtel du Couvent; chef Dominique Le Stanc outside his restaurant La Merenda; the exterior of Hôtel du Couvent; T-shirts at La Boulisterie.*





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ADRIANNA GLAVIANO; COURTESY OF CLÉMENT ROUGIER/LA BOULISTERIE; LAURENCE FAYE; ADRIANNA GLAVIANO; COURTESY OF CLÉMENT ROUGIER/LA BOULISTERIE

## MOMENT IN THE SUN

Why Nice once again feels like the coolest place to be in the French Riviera.

By Chrissie McClatchie

WHEN WELL-HEELED tourists first came to the Côte d'Azur in the mid 19th century, they were drawn to Nice for its wide waterfront promenade and warm winter days. But over the years that allure faded and the hotel landscape became tired compared with nearby Cannes and Monaco. Now, with new high-end properties; stylish, made-in-Nice clothing labels; and restaurants that put a fine-dining twist on traditional dishes, the city has some of that luster back.

The hotel scene got a boost last year with the opening of the **Anantara Plaza Nice Hotel** (*doubles from \$680*), the brand's first address in France. More have arrived. Among the most anticipated was the **Hôtel du Couvent** (*doubles from \$965*), which debuted in June. The serene, 88-room retreat, which is set inside a 17th-century convent in Old Town, has Roman baths. Also new, in the port district, is **Mama Shelter** (*doubles from \$271*), which appeals to younger travelers with bright, maximalist décor and a popular rooftop pool and bar.

Across town in the sophisticated Carré d'Or neighborhood, the 132-room **Maison Albar-Le Victoria** (*rates not available at press time*) is coming in late September and will have sweeping views of the beach and the Baie des Anges, as well as a ground-floor shopping gallery. Older hotels are getting a refresh, too. **Le Negresco** (*doubles from \$810*)—a legendary 1913 property that has hosted Princess Grace, the Beatles, and other luminaries—opened its first spa and wellness space this year. Between treatments, guests can admire works by Dalí, Picasso, and Rubens in the hotel's 6,000-piece collection.

Niçoise cooking is also being reconsidered by a new generation of chefs. At **Le Chantecler** (*tasting menus from \$205*), a Michelin-starred restaurant at Le Negresco, chef Virginie Bassetot has reinvented street-food classics. One spectacular addition is a dainty amuse-bouche of gold-leaf-topped *socca* (a chickpea pancake) and a soufflé-style *pan bagnat* (a *salade niçoise* sandwich). Other established



dishes, like *barbajuan* (vegetable fritters) and *panisses* (chickpea fries), get a twist at **Chez Davia** (*prix fixe* from \$47), a cozy bistro that has been run by the same family since 1953. The 20-seat **La Merenda** (*entrées* \$19–\$27) still serves some of the city’s best traditional snacks, like stuffed sardines and tomato tarts.

Another coveted reservation is **Onice** (*tasting menus* from \$97). The chefs, Florencia Montes and Lorenzo Ragnir, met at Mauro Colagreco’s famed Mirazur, up the coast in Menton. Colagreco himself has also been experimenting: his artisanal bakery, **Mitron**, now sells fresh breads made from heirloom grains, such as *pétanielle noire*

*de Nice*, at a stand in the city’s fragrant Cours Saleya market.

Increasingly, Nice’s sea-meets-mountain setting is drawing a sporting crowd. The city cemented its athletic status this summer by hosting the final day of the Tour de France (the first time the bike race has ended outside of Paris) and several Olympic soccer matches.

**Café du Cycliste** makes cycling gear and streetwear that gives Lycra a dapper twist. Another brand to know is **La Boulisterie**, which carries an entire range of clothing bearing the slogan “Pastis Pétanque,” referring to the anise-flavored aperitif and the cherished bocce-like game, both beloved in the south of France.

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
A view of the port; inside La Boulisterie; tables at La Merenda.

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## Serving Looks

A collaboration between two storied French brands is a game changer for summer sportswear.

**Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc** (*doubles* from \$1,845) might just be the world’s most glamorous place to play tennis. Steps from the glittering bays of Cap d’Antibes, perfectly framed by Aleppo pines and olive trees, are five red-clay courts, each just about as well-groomed as the average hotel guest. For those of us who can’t make it to the Côte d’Azur for a quick round of doubles, the property has teamed up with **Lacoste** on a collection of chic tennis attire. With a pleasing retro aesthetic (the line makes liberal use of Lacoste’s iconic piqué cotton), the look is pure F. Scott Fitzgerald—whose novel *Tender Is the Night* is set at the hotel.—**FLORA STUBBS**



The tennis courts at Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc, in France.  
**INSET** Pieces from the new Lacoste line.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved dress with a red vertical stripe and fringe, red leggings, and silver high-heeled sandals, is sitting on a luggage cart in a dimly lit hallway. The hallway has dark walls, a polished floor, and recessed lighting. The brand name 'One&Only' is overlaid in white script.

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# ALL IN THE DETAILS

At Botswana's latest high-end safari camp, design takes center stage.

By Gisela Williams

"LOOK OVER THERE at that impala," said Gosegonna Gontshamang, my guide at **Atzaró Okavango Camp**, a new safari camp set on a 425-square-mile private concession in the Moremi Game Reserve, in Botswana's Okavango Delta. I was sitting in an open-sided Toyota Land Cruiser with several other guests; we had just started our afternoon game drive. "See how it's frozen there?" he continued. "We're going to find out why."

As we inched our way toward the impala, Gontshamang suddenly turned left and spotted a group of five cheetahs lying under a leadwood tree.

Gontshamang is one of many excellent guides who work for **African Bush Camps**, which operates 18 properties in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. ABC was founded in 2006 by Beks Ndlovu, a native of Zimbabwe who started his career as a guide and is today one of the few Black African CEOs of a safari company.

For Atzaró Okavango, Ndlovu collaborated with Philip Gonda, co-owner of the Ibiza, Spain-based hospitality brand Atzaró. The two met in Cape Town through mutual friends and "discovered we shared similar values," Ndlovu said. "Philip told me he was compelled to be, in his own words, 'part of the ABC magic.'"

A bit of Ibiza's bohemian spirit is present at Atzaró Okavango, but the design is decidedly non-Eurocentric. The lobby bar and main lodge have an impressive collection of African crafts, including masks from Gabon, beaded wooden figures from Cameroon, and textiles from Ethiopia—all chosen by Ndlovu. "We are celebrating the richness

and grandeur of Africa, its history and people," he said, waving his hand around the room. "We didn't want the design to have an old-fashioned colonial look or feel."

Guest rooms are just as considered: each of the eight stand-alone tented suites, generously sized at 2,000 square feet, have four-poster beds, parquet floors, plunge pools, and copper bathtubs. There is also a pair of two-bedroom villas that are ideal for families.

One evening, I walked with Ndlovu to a remarkable, massive structure made almost entirely of thatch. It looked as if Zaha Hadid had designed a bird's nest. The soaring, open-air space is called the Boma, the Swahili word for a protective enclosure, and is used for dining and relaxing. "This is the heart of the camp," Ndlovu said, "and where our staff or guests gather." It is a space both organic and modern that, he added, pays tribute to the continent's future.

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*Atzaró Okavango Camp, a new safari lodge in Botswana.*

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## GLOW UP

In Istanbul, an Ottoman masterpiece is restored to its former glory.

By Erin Riley

MOST OF THE 10,000 iridescent Iznik tiles that covered the **Zeyrek Çinili Hamam**—a 500-year-old public bathhouse in Istanbul—had been lost to time, stolen, or sold to private collectors and museums. But the remaining fragments, which have a newfound sparkle, are the centerpiece of a famed hammam that reopened this summer after a \$15 million, 13-year restoration.

Zeyrek Çinili was commissioned in 1546 by Hayreddin Barbarossa, a pirate who rose to the rank of grand admiral of the Ottoman Empire. After helping the empire secure dominance throughout North Africa and the Mediterranean, Barbarossa tapped Mimar Sinan—one of the great architects and engineers during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent—to construct the hammam, which Barbarossa saw as his legacy project.

The centuries since were not kind to the building, which was damaged by earthquakes and neglect. Past restorations saw tile work and decorative embellishments plastered over. The Marmara Group—the Turkish hospitality company that bought the hammam in 2010—had its work cut out for it. To honor the building’s many lives, Marmara artfully exposed some of its layers, including monochromatic patterns on a dome in the men’s section from the 1700s and a faded pastel wall painting of a garden scene from the 19th century in the women’s section.



*The men’s hot room at Istanbul’s Zeyrek Çinili Hamam.*

What was supposed to be a simple restoration turned into a staggering archaeological excavation after workers unearthed dozens of artifacts and a network of Byzantine cisterns. The finds, which include etched-copper bathing bowls from the 1800s, are on display in a new museum designed by Atelier Brückner, the firm behind the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. One gallery shows fragments of the original 16th-century Iznik tiles, along with digital reconstructions of the 37 tile patterns used.

In a first for the city, the hammam’s separate areas for men and women won’t be fixed. “As with many traditional hammams, the men’s bath has a more elaborate design and is slightly elevated in height,” says Koza Yazgan, the project’s creative director. “Zeyrek Çinili rotates its men’s and women’s sections so everyone can enjoy the architecture of each bath.” This will give all visitors the chance to see *Sitting Bather*, a contemporary sculpture by noted Turkish painter and ceramist Elif Uras, located in the women’s hot room.



### MAKER'S MARK

Frank Gehry’s work is unmistakable: his undulating forms define many of the world’s leading museums, towers, and concert halls. Now you can carry a piece of his signature style with you. The architect’s decade-long partnership with **Louis Vuitton** continues with 11 handbags—like this one, made of hand-painted lambskin—that premiered at Art Basel Miami Beach and are now available in select Vuitton boutiques. *Louis Vuitton x Frank Gehry Capucines Mini Puzzle*, \$13,700. —ELIZABETH CANTRELL



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## CROWN JEWEL

Dubai can feel dizzying—but in the relaxed enclave of Jumeirah, you'll find a quieter escape.

By Chaitali Patel

ONE OF DUBAI'S oldest neighborhoods, Jumeirah—which means *beautiful* in Arabic—is strung along the coast, where the desert merges into the sea. Glimpses of its ancient history are still visible at the **Jumeirah Archaeological Site**, which displays ruins from the Abbasid era (from the ninth to the 11th century). The artifacts indicate that traders traveling between Iraq and Oman often stopped there with their caravans to rest and refill supplies.

Today, Jumeirah is one of the city's most glamorous districts, a patchwork of mansions, boutiques, high-end hotels, destination dining, and serene stretches of beach. Here's how to experience the best of the neighborhood.

### 1. SPARKLING STAY

With unbeatable views, 13 restaurants and bars, and a next-level spa, the **Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach** (*doubles from \$285*) gives you every reason to stay put—but the property can also arrange outings, like a boat ride along Dubai Creek.

### 2. SHOPPING FIX

Run by two French expats, **Comptoir 102** has an eclectic collection of jewelry, homewares, and beauty products, plus an adjacent café.



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### 3. CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

The magnificent **Jumeirah Mosque** is open to non-Muslims. Tours include a classic Emirati snack of *luqaimat* (doughnuts coated in date syrup).



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### 4. DINNER WITH A VIEW

At **Azeema Seafood**, diners can bring their own catch and have it cleaned and grilled to perfection. Next door is **Dibba Bay Oysters**, the Middle East's only oyster farm.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS RESORT DUBAI AT JUMEIRAH BEACH; COURTESY OF COMPTOIR 102 (2); BJORN GOETTLICHER/VISUM/REDFUX; COURTESY OF DIBBA BAY

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# BACK TO THE FUTURE

Decades in the making, Hong Kong's arts quarter is finally ready for its close-up.

By Denny Lee

FOR MANY YEARS, Hong Kong was dismissed as a cultural desert. Sure, the food was fantastic and the shopping was incredible, but those seeking art were often left wanting.

The idea for an arts enclave emerged around 1997, around the same time that the former British crown colony was handed back to China. Under a master plan by the architects Foster + Partners, a 100-acre "cultural hub" would be built on reclaimed land fronting Victoria Harbour. It took nearly 30 years, but the **West Kowloon Cultural District** has finally taken shape. Today, there are world-class museums, an opera house, theaters, and open parkland for space-starved Hong Kongers.

"There is much more to come," says Rocco Yim, the architect behind the Hong Kong Palace Museum, which opened in 2022. "The area is only one-third to one-half complete." Here, a guide to what's new.



## FREESPACE

As the name suggests, this performing-arts center is designed to be flexible and imaginative. The bunker-like complex houses a black box theater and studios for experimental performances and dance, as well as the Lau Bak Livehouse, a coffeehouse and bar with live music on weekends.



## HONG KONG PALACE MUSEUM

Resembling a Chinese gold ingot, this museum showcases artifacts from China's imperial palaces, including Ming dynasty ceramics, scroll paintings, and double-headed dragons from the National Palace Museum in Beijing's Forbidden City.



## ART PARK

Hugging the waterfront promenade, this expansive lawn is an oasis for joggers, picnickers, museum-goers, and dog walkers (does everyone in this city own a Shiba Inu?). There are more than a dozen places to eat and drink throughout—around sunset, grab a seat at one of the harborside cafés below the Palace Museum. The facilities are spotless, too.



**M+**

With works by Ai Weiwei and other blue-chip Chinese artists, M+ is intended to rival institutions like MoMA and the Tate Modern in its ambition. The futuristic building, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, has one façade that lights up like a *Blade Runner* billboard. Just as impressive is the design collection, which includes a 1980s sushi bar from Tokyo that was rebuilt piece by piece.



**XIQU CENTRE**

This performance hall, which hosts Cantonese opera, has an exterior with aluminum shingles that resemble fish scales. A large opening fills the atrium with breezes and natural light. Even if *xiqu* (Chinese opera) isn't your cup of tea, the public atrium is an inviting place to rest before exploring the shops along Canton Road.

**+ WHERE TO STAY**

A quick hop from the cultural district, the 413-room **Rosewood Hong Kong** (*doubles from \$671*), which occupies part of a 65-story tower, anchors the new Kowloon waterfront. The brand's flagship property, it has 12 places to eat and drink, including two Michelin-starred restaurants, and is connected to the sprawling **K11 Musea** mall.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY; COURTESY OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY (2); COURTESY OF THE PALACE MUSEUM; COURTESY OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY (2); HONG KONG; COURTESY OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY (2); HONG KONG; COURTESY OF WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY

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*The new exterior of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.*

**Good Bones**

With a refreshed design and groundbreaking exhibits, Cleveland's preeminent science museum has a new story to tell.

**By Jen Salerno Yong**

ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL scientific breakthroughs in the last year was not about the future so much as the past. In February 2023, hominin tools that are between 2.6 million and 3 million years old were discovered in Kenya. The findings push back the time line of prehistoric industry by about 400,000 years, changing our understanding of human ancestry.

Casts of these objects will be on display at the **Cleveland Museum of Natural History**, which reopens in December after a \$150 million expansion. Upgrades include a redesigned façade, a new 25,000-square-foot wing called "Evolving Life," and a visitors' hall with free exhibitions—including one of the museum's most significant holdings, a cast of "Lucy," which, at the time of its 1974 discovery in Ethiopia, was the oldest and most complete human ancestor ever found, at 3.2 million years old.

As part of CMNH's Scientists Unleashed program—in which 25 staff members spend five hours each week answering questions and walking the museum floor—visitors can also engage directly with experts, including Dr. Emma Finestone, curator of human origins, who was part of the research team that uncovered the tools in Kenya last year.

Though it's a few millennia younger, the city's newest place to stay also has historic cred and is an ideal home base. **Hotel Cleveland, Autograph Collection** (*doubles from \$344*), built in 1918, reopened this June after extensive renovations with a massive green crystal chandelier above the bar, a nod to the hotel's Gilded Age origins.



Castries, St. Lucia

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# EXPERIENCES



**LEFT TO RIGHT**  
*A view from Palazzo Nicolaci, in Noto, Sicily; a courtyard sculpture at Q92 Noto Hotel; tangerine gelato from Noto's Caffè Costanzo.*





## City of Gold

*While some parts of Sicily feel overexposed, there's still treasure to be found in Noto.*

By Jeffrey Gettleman



**T**O BE THE MAYOR of Noto is not such a terrible life. To my mind, this little city in southeastern Sicily is one of the most enchanting in all of Europe. Along its main drag, Corso Vittorio Emanuele, stands one gorgeous building after another, built in the grand, 17th-century Baroque style. The whole place looks like a movie set (a steamy episode of *The White Lotus* was filmed there). Strolling around, gazing up at the carved limestone façades and wrought-iron balconies made me think: Wait, this is exactly what all those fancy buildings I've seen my entire life—the Versace mansion in Miami, the Odesa opera house—are trying to imitate.

On my recent visit, I asked the mayor, Corrado Figura, to explain Noto's beauty. "It all goes back to the earthquake of 1693," he said from his office in what has to be one of the most splendid city halls, set in a former palazzo. "After that, Noto's people decided to build a new city. They wanted the help of the most important architects of the time. It was all done in a uniform style, the Baroque style."

"The result," he said, leaning proudly back in a leather chair so old it creaked, "is that we're *sui generis*"—one of a kind. "And we haven't lost our identity," he added. "If you pay attention to your past, you can actually feel it."

Tourism has been booming in Sicily, even before the *The White Lotus* prompted a major upswing in visits to the island—specifically to the town of Taormina, where the second season was set. Compared with its cousins Taormina and Siracusa, Noto is more intoxicating and more beautiful, but at the same time more real. It has not yet been overrun by the cruise ships, tour buses, and designer stores that can make a destination feel like an airport departures area.

To help us get the most out of our trip, my wife and I turned to Matteo Della Grazia, who runs a small travel company, **Fuoritinerario—Discover Your Italy**. He suggested we stay at **Q92 Noto Hotel** (*doubles from \$311*), which is right in the center of town. The manager, Gaia Quartucci, told me how her parents, who run hotels in Taormina, had bought a 17th-century nobleman's house and undertaken a careful renovation, turning it into a delightful nine-room hotel. The Q92 (the Q comes from the family's name, and 92 is the street address) served as a base for a late-spring vacation, and with the help of a rented Fiat 500, my wife, our two sons, and I explored the whole southeastern corner of Sicily—beaches, nature reserves, cathedrals, pizzerias, and all.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE** Calamosche Beach; the steps of Noto Cathedral; pizza at La Vecchia Fontana; a granita seller at the Vendicari Nature Reserve.



Our boys, ages 12 and 14, are gelato addicts, so mission number one was to rigorously taste-test the two Noto gelato shops reputed to be among Italy's best: **Caffè Sicilia** and **Dolceria Costanzo**. We ordered the same flavors at both, chocolate and ricotta (basically an extra-sweet vanilla). The verdict wasn't even close. Costanzo was by far creamier and richer. And it came with a free cookie. As my wife, Courtenay, said, "What's not to like?" We found a place to sit on the wide steps of the cathedral, Noto's stunning centerpiece and the perfect people-watching perch, and after we finished our cones, we ventured inside.



The cathedral was completed more than 200 years ago, but the dome collapsed in the 1990s after being damaged in an earthquake. The entire thing was then rebuilt with local limestone, which takes on, late in the day, the warm hue of sunset. The interior was vast and cool, with a smooth, white-tiled floor, which a nun was quietly sweeping. Visitors drifted in and out. This is basically what you do in Noto. You eat. You stroll. You marvel that there are places that still really look like this.

Some of the best spots to take in Noto's splendor are the residences of the city's former nobility. We toured Palazzo Castelluccio, which sank into disrepair after the last marquis died in 1981—until a French movie director scooped it up and brought it back to life. As we trudged through the palazzo's polished dining room, music room, and ballroom, it felt like we were walking through a game of Clue. Sicilian nobles lived large. There was even a balcony overlooking the courtyard where the marquis would toss down candy to children of the common folk. (Palazzo Castelluccio has since closed to the public, but there are plenty of other palaces to tour, including the city hall, **Palazzo Ducezio**, and **Palazzo Nicolaci**, with its façade of carved mermaids and hippogriffs.)

Noto is not quite on the coast, but it isn't far from several great swimming spots. Calamosche Beach and the Vendicari Nature Reserve were stunning. Calamosche is a 20-minute hike from the parking lot, and a word to the wise: be sure to stick to the designated spots or you'll end up with a ticket flapping away on your windshield, like we did. But the beach—a perfect cove with calm, clear water—was more than worth it. The nature reserve, which consists of a string of marshes and beaches, is a bird-watching hot spot. We saw flamingos, sandpipers, storks, and graceful herons gliding over the rich swamp grass.

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We worked up an appetite hiking and swimming, so we were happy to make a little discovery: *granita con brioscia*, a.k.a. the granita sandwich. The Sicilians don't mess around with granita, which is what we think of when we say Italian ice—it's a semi-frozen dessert with a texture somewhere between a sorbet and a slushy. At a stand on the coast we learned that a popular way to eat granita is to take a big scoop (preferably the tart-lime flavor) and smooch it between two slices of soft, buttery brioche. It's even better than it sounds.

That was just one of the trip's many gastronomic highlights. On the fancy side, our favorite restaurant was **Nachè** (*entrées \$21–\$27*), a minute's walk from our hotel, where we munched on red-tuna tacos, house-made tagliatelle with rabbit from a local farm, and truffles from the slopes of Mount Etna.

I was also a big fan of **La Vecchia Fontana**, a pizzeria and bar near the town's entrance gate. Don't be thrown off by the fact that it looks like a million other sidewalk cafés: the pizza was perfectly seasoned, thin and crisp, but somehow gooey at the same time.

We capped off our last evening at **Gelati Bianca**, which had become our favorite. You know how some ice cream servers make you feel bad if you ask for too many tastes? Not at this joint. Ours offered samples of flavors we hadn't even requested. "Try this," he said. "Cookies." It left the perfect aftertaste of biscotti. "And give this to mama." Mama happily tried the spoonful—tiramisu—then took a full cone of it, and we all retreated to the cathedral steps to enjoy our last hours in Noto.



That night there was something irresistible about the combination of the air, the light, the setting. A busker strummed soft-rock classics on his guitar. A few dozen people sat on the church's steps eating ice cream and listening. A group of teens, who looked like locals, stood chatting with their buddies, checking their phones, seemingly oblivious to the magical backdrop that framed their every move.

It reminded me of something Quartucci, the manager of our hotel, told me about the experience of opening Q92 back in 2021: that Noto seemed endearingly innocent of its own charms. "The local people," she said, "didn't know they had gold in their hands." 🌐



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** A guest room at Q92; evening drinks alfresco; pasta at La Vecchia Fontana; Baroque details on a building in Noto.



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*Up close with a mountain gorilla from the Sabinjo family in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park.*

## Where the Wild Things Are

Uncovering Rwanda's natural treasures—and the gift of multigenerational travel.

By **Jacqueline Gifford**

**T**HE BATTLE-WORN hippo trotted into the acacia trees, surprisingly light on its feet. Not exactly one of the dancers from *Fantasia*, but even with layers of scar tissue covering its side, the creature embodied grace and resilience in the bush.

Less than 24 hours into our stay at Rwanda's Akagera National Park—a swath of savanna, swamps, and lakes some 100 miles east of the capital, Kigali—my family and I had already become accustomed to the hippos. Scores of them dotted the surface of Lake Rwanyakazinga, home to **Wilderness Magashi Camp** (*doubles from \$1,322 per person, all-inclusive*), an eight-suite, solar-powered tented enclave on the shore. At night, though I was snug with hot-water bottles in our king-size bed, their *harrumphs* kept me awake—an insomniac's dream.

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But seeing this solitary hippo on the move, on land, gave us all a sense of the animals' true size and speed. "When hippos fight, they use their teeth like spears," explained our soft-spoken Rwandan guide, Herman Nkusi, who, on a later game drive, found two incisors lying in a small grove. My son, Bobby, lifted one up and down like a barbell, the tooth nearly as long as his arm.

After the 1994 genocide—in which an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were murdered over a 100-day period—Akagera's size was greatly reduced, as land was reallocated. Poaching was left unchecked, meaning much of its native wildlife was also lost. In 2010, the Rwanda Development Board and African Parks, a conservation nonprofit, joined forces to rehabilitate the reserve, which now covers 433 square miles. In 2015, lions were reintroduced, followed by rhinos in 2017. It is now possible to see the Big Five in Akagera, putting it in select company with such destinations as Kruger National Park in South Africa and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania. One evening at sundown, we happened upon a female rhino and her six-month-old calf, their precious horns bobbing up and down as they grazed for dinner. No other vehicles were around us.

The evolution of Akagera, like tourism in Rwanda overall, has been slow, deliberate, and remarkable, given the circumstances. Wilderness Magashi opened in May 2019; Magashi Peninsula, a four-suite companion property, is in development. Though we saw no other

children during our stay, the camp felt very accommodating to families, with a small dipping pool and a nurturing staff. Nkusi, whose wife was expecting their first child, offered up his copilot seat and walkie-talkie to Bobby each afternoon—the quickest way to an eight-year-old boy's heart.

Multigenerational travel, which has exploded post-COVID in tried-and-true safari destinations like Kenya and South Africa, is still nascent in Rwanda, in part because the minimum age for gorilla trekking in Volcanoes National Park is 15. But we discovered that going a little deeper, beyond the destination's most famous activity, leads to some remarkable experiences—for all ages.

"WE'VE RAISED THREE biological and three adopted children here, and found so many family-friendly activities beyond the gorillas," said Alissa Ruxin, who, along with her husband, Josh, owns the **Retreat by Heaven** (*doubles from \$550*), a 20-room luxury hotel in Kigali's central Kiyovu district. It is a divine, welcoming place to recharge after a long flight: Bobby gravitated to the shaded pool and the chessboard with gorilla pieces in the open-air reception area—an invitation to play, if ever there was one.

Ruxin suggested biking in the new **Nyandungu Urban Wetland Eco-Tourism Park** or ziplining at the **Fazenda Sengha** recreation center on Mount Kigali as day excursions. But our adventures took a more sartorial turn. Bobby, who loves dressing up, had a beaded bracelet custom-sized at **Moshions**, a gender-neutral Kigali boutique run by the energetic, supremely stylish Moses Turahirwa, who ran upstairs to their workshop to get the fit just so. Moshions is one of several emerging brands—others include **K'tsobe**, a brass jewelry brand by Sarah Legrand, and **Asantii**, a contemporary women's line founded by Maryse Mbonyumutwa—with stores and ateliers open to visitors, making fashion here accessible and welcoming.

Through her larger enterprise, Pink Mango, Mbonyumutwa employs around 1,000 people (80 percent of them are women) to produce clothing for not only Asantii but also other global brands. One morning, she led us around two of her airplane-hangar-esque factories in Kigali's Special Economic Zone, an industrial area ►



*An elephant and a hippo cooling off in Lake Rwanyakazinga, outside Wilderness Magashi Camp.*



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► 30 minutes from the city center. “We’ve got a training section for embroidery here, and then we also work with cooperatives of women in rural areas,” she said as a nearby employee finished work on a white Asantii blouse.

At one factory, we toured a day care and kindergarten run by Pink Ubuntu—Pink Mango’s social-impact arm—which opened in 2021 to support the children of female employees. Bobby told Mbonyumutwa about the similarities to his former school back home (the cots for nap time, ABCs written on the wall). As we left, I noticed block letters running above the cubbyholes. They spelled out AMAZING THINGS HAPPEN WHEN YOU TRY.

“ARE WE SURE this is a good idea?”

My husband, Rob, was wondering why Bobby was leading the charge at the **Canopy Walkway**: a gently swaying suspension bridge 230 feet up in the treetops of Nyungwe National Park. Kids as young as six are permitted to cross the 525-foot-long structure, one of the park’s marquee attractions, along with some 310 bird species, hiking trails, waterfalls, and chimpanzee treks.



**CLOCKWISE FROM  
TOP LEFT**

*A Pink Mango employee finishing an Asantii fabric; the author’s son at the Ellen DeGeneres Campus of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund; the Nyungwe Canopy Walk; designer Moses Turahirwa in their Kigali studio.*



In September 2023, Nyungwe, which spans 252,000 acres of forest in Rwanda’s southwestern corner, was named a UNESCO World Heritage site—the country’s first.

After descending 45 minutes down the Igishigishigi trail—the path all travelers must follow, accompanied, to the walkway and back—Bobby was determined to be the first one to cross the bridge. And truth be told, I didn’t want to go first. “Baby steps!” I shouted to him as we all made the crossing, sending up a prayer that an afternoon shower wouldn’t appear, as sometimes happens in November, which is rainy season.

Rivulets of sweat poured off my palms. “We did it!” I exclaimed as I grabbed Rob and Bobby’s hands on the other side. Unlike mine, their hands were as cool as cucumbers.

Coming off that adrenaline rush, we collapsed in our plush, earth-toned suite at the 22-room **One&Only Nyungwe House** (doubles from \$1,750 per person, all-inclusive), a cluster of wooden villas and a main house with soaring ceilings and a grand fireplace in the middle of a heart-stoppingly beautiful tea plantation. Our time there was short, but sweet: Rob and I rose at 4:30 a.m. to go on a five-hour chimp-trekking excursion (grueling, definitely not for the kids) while Bobby took a cooking and painting class in the lobby, with the fields outside for inspiration. Later on, we all gathered with women from

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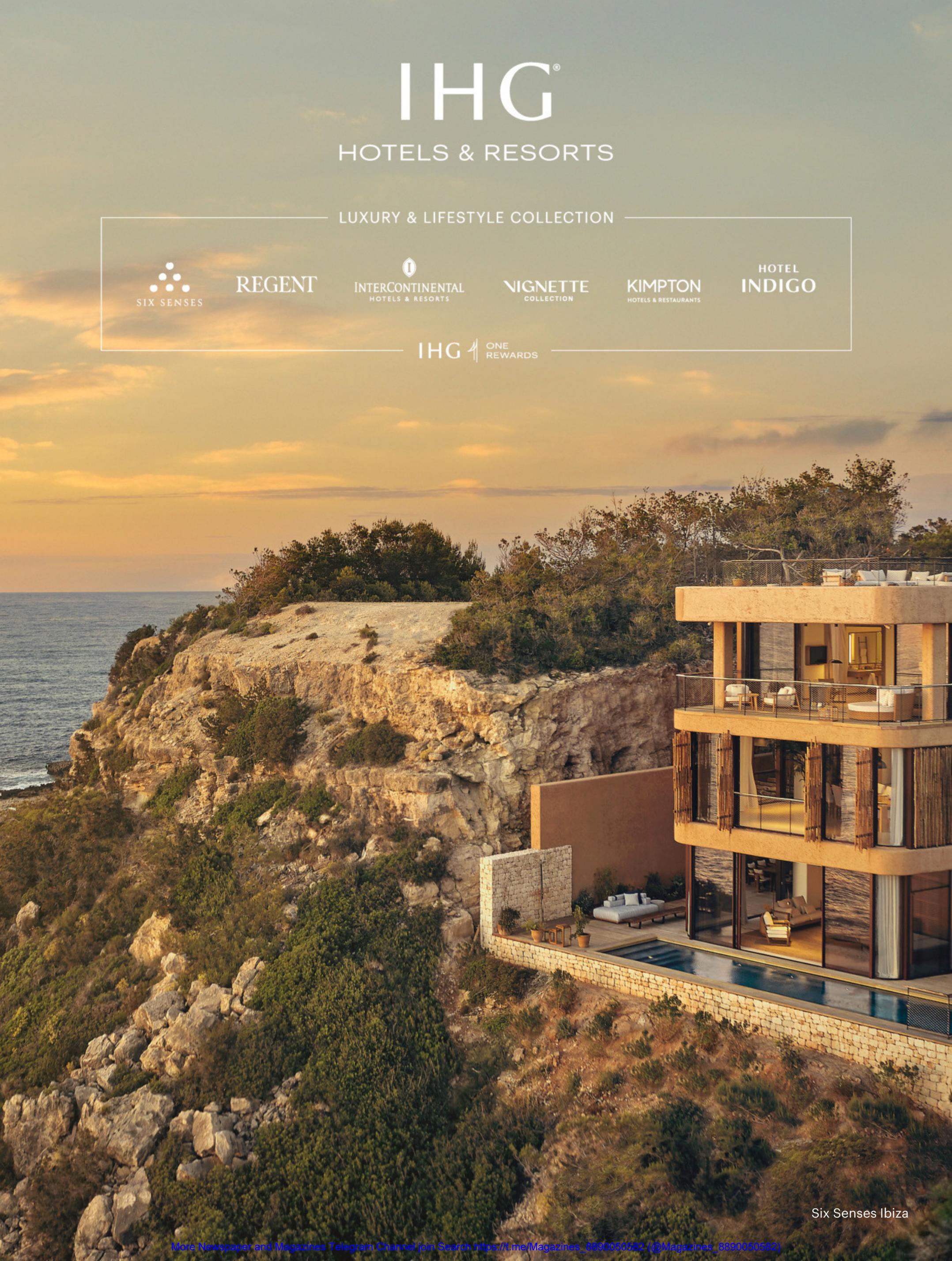


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Six Senses Ibiza



the Nyungwe Cultural Village cooperative, who harvest tea for a living. They taught us how to sort the thick, healthy green leaves into giant baskets strapped onto our backs. When nature is at your fingertips, a kids' club is superfluous.

“YOU HAVE TO MIMIC the sound that you are hearing,” explained Kadiara King’ai, manager of guest services at the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund. We were touring the fund’s state-of-the-art Ellen DeGeneres Campus, inaugurated in 2022 on the outskirts of Volcanoes National Park, a 62-square-mile patch of rain forest in Rwanda’s northwest. Designed using local volcanic stone, the contemporary campus is part research and education center, part interactive museum—and a brilliant place for children to engage with conservation.

Bobby was at the “gorilla chat” display, where you can learn how the animals communicate. After listening to recordings of them laughing, crying, singing, and beating their chests, we each took our turn, breaking down our inhibitions by trying to copy them. We wandered into a re-creation of Dian Fossey’s cabin, which displays some of the legendary primatologist’s personal effects, as well as a model of a mountain gorilla skeleton next to a human one. King’ai even took us to a separate lab, where research is still being done on the thousand or so mountain gorillas left in their wild, to show us brown paper bags filled with their frozen poop, which reveal many tidbits of biological information—including whether or not the animals are stressed.

After hours of learning about them at the campus, telling Bobby that he wouldn’t be able to see the gorillas up close was not an easy conversation. The displays profiling Digit, one of Dian Fossey’s favorites, had made quite an impression. But I gently explained that there would be plenty of other things for him to do at each of our hotels—archery and a drumming lesson at **One&Only Gorilla’s Nest** (*doubles from \$3,650 per person, all-inclusive*), which also happens to have a spectacular infinity pool—as well as games, coloring, and endless croissants at **Singita**



**FROM TOP**  
A suite at Singita Kwitonda overlooking farmland on the edge of Volcanoes National Park; a tree house at One&Only Gorilla’s Nest.



**Kwitonda Lodge** (*doubles from \$3,295 per person, all-inclusive*), both of which are within 15 minutes or so of the park. It was time for Dad and me to be alone, for a bit.

Gorilla trekking can be an all-day affair; visitors are each assigned a family group on the morning of the trek, and go where they go. I wasn’t prepared for some of the hiking hazards: the mud, the fire ants, the stinging nettles. But once we reached the Hirwa group—a family of 17 with a rare set of rambunctious male twins—my adrenaline kicked in. Because of park rules, we only had an hour in their presence. It was go time.

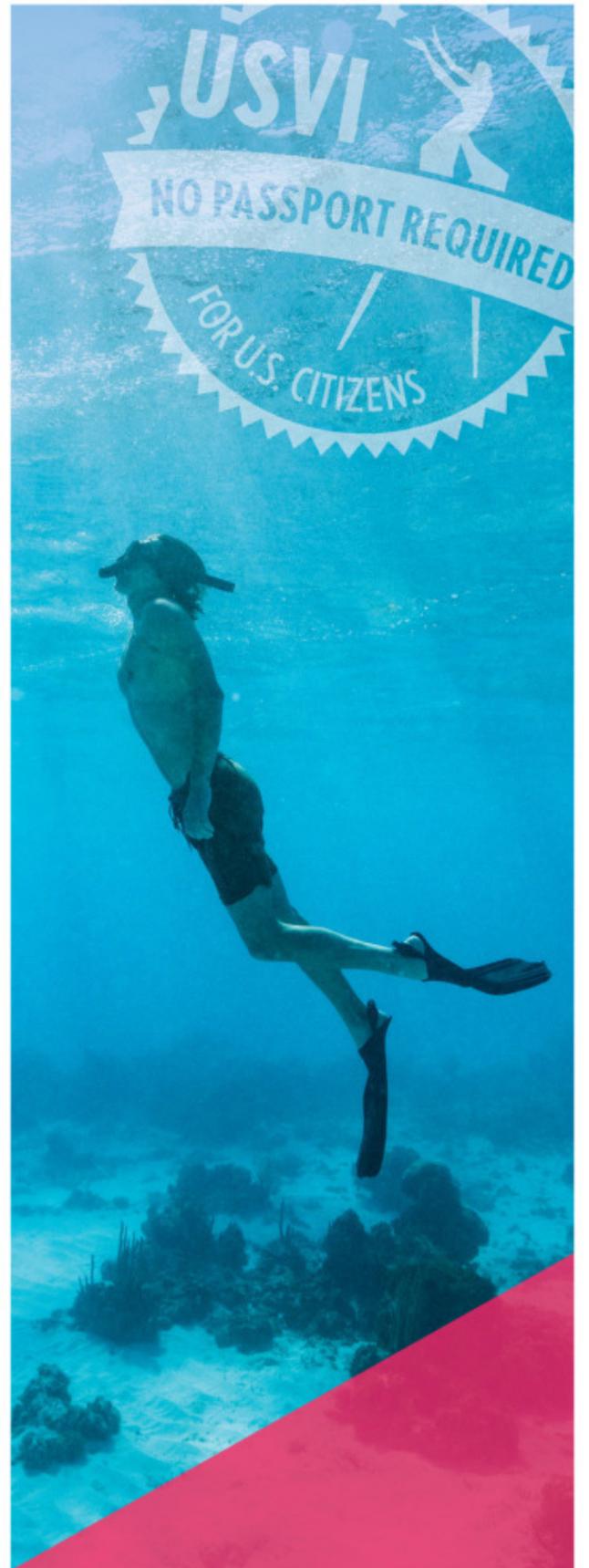
One of the twins reached into the ground, then pulled out a handful of ants and licked his fingers clean. Two juveniles spun in circles around a bamboo tree as the silverback came over to supervise. I noticed one smaller, slower gorilla taking cover from the rain in the underbrush, its rheumy eyes displaying a world-weariness that the younger, more nimble animals didn’t seem to have. Turns out, she was Kibyeyi: at 49, one of the oldest female gorillas in the park. I made sure to tell Bobby all about her when I got back. 🌍

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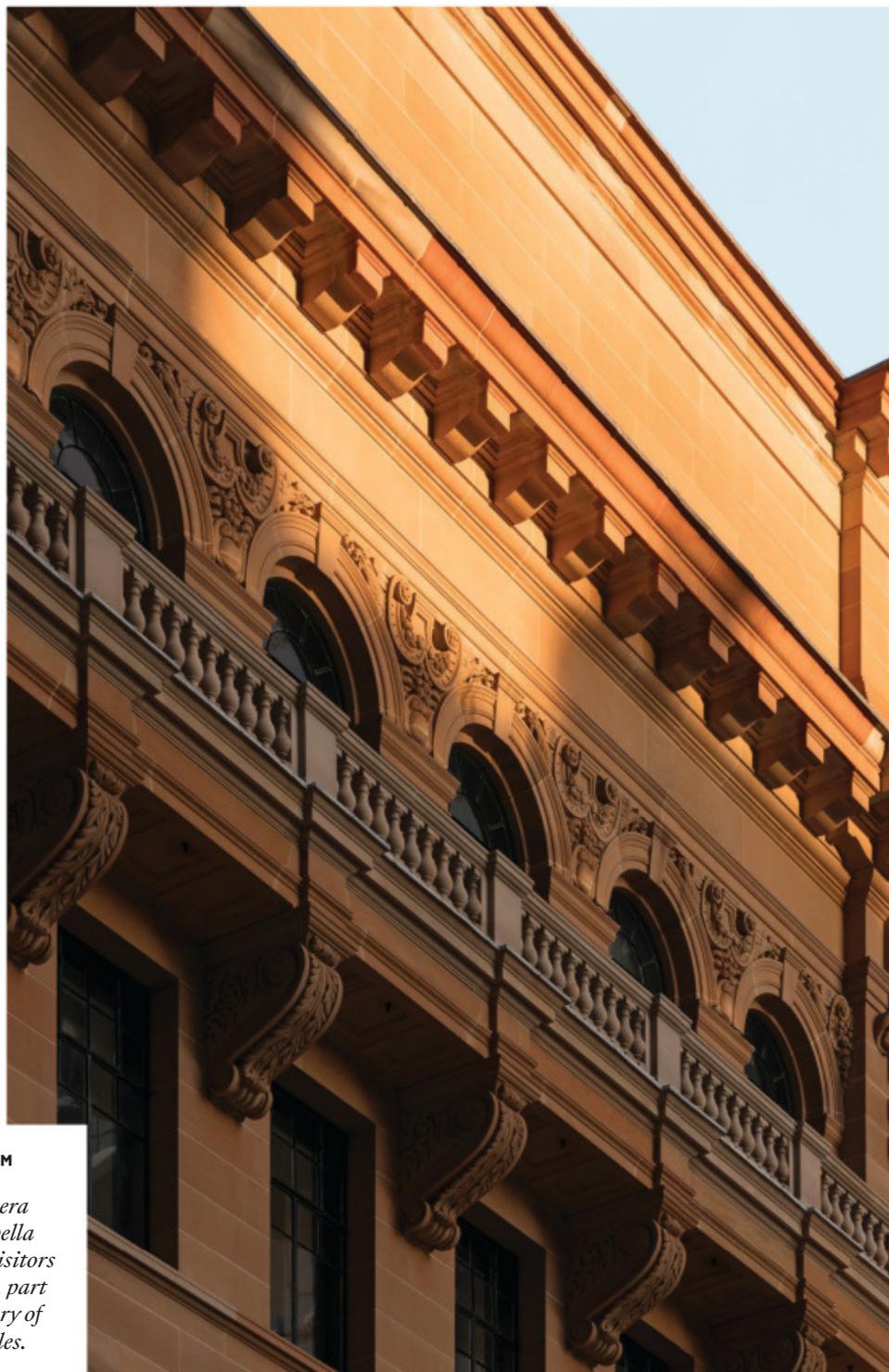
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# Happy Hour

*Sydney's once-sleepy office district now buzzes with nightlife, chic hotels, and a lively waterfront.* By Jeffries Blackerby



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**  
*The Sydney Opera House; the Capella Sydney hotel; visitors at Naala Badu, part of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.*



**S**ATURDAY NIGHT AT the Sydney Opera House is always a festive occasion, and it was particularly glittery the evening my husband and I took his father to a concert there last fall. The violinist Joshua Bell was performing Mendelssohn with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, and concertgoers turned up in their finest, looking sharp against the hall's bright-pink seats.

During the intermission, we stood out on the western plaza and took in the view of the Central Business District, or CBD, as locals call it—the heart of downtown Sydney, which includes popular waterfront areas like Barangaroo, Circular Quay, and the Rocks. The area's fortunes have shifted many times over the decades. When the Rocks was redeveloped in the 1960s and 70s, hundreds were displaced from public housing. My husband (who is from Sydney) recalled that in the 90s and 2000s, no one really went there other than to work. Then the pandemic emptied the place out.

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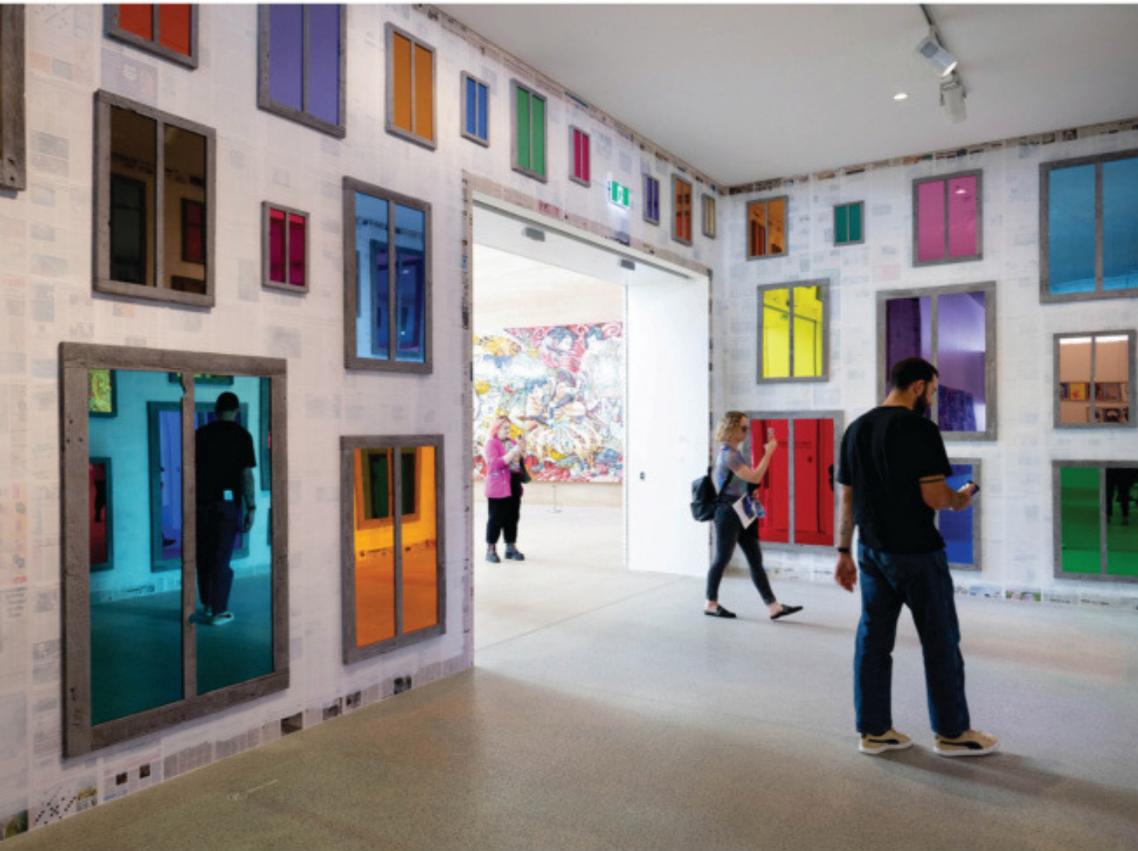


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**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT** An installation by Ugo Rondinone at the Art Gallery of New South Wales; oysters and anchovies at Le Foote; the W Sydney, on Darling Harbour.



Now the CBD is changing again. With new tram lines, a revitalized harbor, an expanded museum, and the opening of high-end hotels and restaurants, the district has become one of the city's most vibrant areas—and a model for mixed-use development where economic renewal is balanced with cultural inclusivity.

One of the best examples is the year-old **Capella Sydney** (*doubles from \$450*), the brand's first property in Australia and the first luxury hotel to open downtown in about two decades. Occupying a meticulously restored government building from the early 1900s, the Capella has an ornate sandstone façade and a wrought-iron staircase, 192 sumptuous guest rooms, and a marble-lined pool.

The hotel has contributed to the CBD's revival by breathing new life into historic structures, said David Tsang, CEO of Pontiac Land, Capella's parent company. "These were imposing buildings that most people had never been inside of," he told me. "Hospitality makes them more porous and vibrant."

That vibrancy was on full display during our stay. There was an international opulence to the design, with high-tech features and contemporary art from around the world. In the morning, the hotel's restaurant is a hot spot for power breakfasts; evenings, it's filled with couples dressed for date night. Yet the old bones of the building, as well as numerous works by Australian and Aboriginal artists, imbue the hotel with a sense of place. A nice touch is the daily tea service, where guests can hear the stories of local Aboriginal figures.

Celebrating cultural heritage and diversity is an integral part of the CBD's reinvigoration. I've been visiting Sydney regularly for decades, but have never seen such a widespread public reckoning with the city's Indigenous past. Nearly everywhere these days there is an acknowledgment that the CBD sits on land of the coastal Gadigal people. Aboriginal culture is showcased at galleries, in public parks, on television, and on menus.

Before the concert, we had dinner at **Midden** (*entrées \$22–\$30*), the flagship restaurant at the opera house created by Mark Olive, who is one of Australia's most celebrated Aboriginal chefs. The menu, which showcases native ingredients, introduced me to flavors I'd never tasted, like bush tomato, which was both blended into a gazpacho and braised with a wallaby shank.

Midden was a hard table to book, as are other restaurants in the area. That the CBD is now a place to see and be seen is a marked change from several years ago, when it was largely a ghost town on Saturday nights. Buzz-seeking diners who would otherwise go out in the suburbs of Bronte or Surry Hills are thronging to downtown spots like **Ragazzi** (*entrées \$17–\$33*), a tiny trattoria known for its handmade pasta and Australian wine made from Italian varietals; **Bar Totti's** (*entrées \$19–\$45*), always packed with revelers grazing antipasti; **Clam Bar** (*entrées \$25–\$166*), with its throwback menu of oysters Rockefeller and three kinds of caviar;



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FROM LEFT The casbah-chic interiors at Jimmy's Falafel; the after-work crowd outside the restaurant.



## *The Central Business District is now a place to see and be seen.*

and **Le Foote** (entrées \$18–\$119), a new brasserie that feels like it's been there for a century and serves wood-fired dishes like roasted barramundi and charred cabbage.

I asked Justin Hemmes, who owns Bar Totti's and more than 30 other establishments in the neighborhood, what was fueling the revival. He pointed to the new L2 and L3 lines of Sydney's light-rail network, which link the CBD to the rest of the city, and to the rise in outdoor dining during the pandemic. "They've created a bustling and lively atmosphere with foot-traffic numbers unlike anything I've seen in 20 years," he said.

This was certainly true on a weekend night at **Jimmy's Falafel** (small plates \$5–\$23), a spot on George Street with a cool 70s casbah feel and a live DJ. Tables were turning fast, with diners of all ages digging in to superb Middle Eastern small plates. I was struck by how relaxed and happy everyone seemed. Sydney is a gorgeous city, with 100 beaches and a come-as-you-are attitude—famously on display in neighborhoods like Bondi Beach. It was refreshing to see an area previously dominated by office culture begin to develop an Aussie flavor all its own: laid-back, but also polished and sophisticated.

And walkable. Unlike much of Sydney, which is spread out and requires a car, the CBD is knitted together with new plazas and green spaces. You can spend a very pleasant afternoon exploring the waterfront on foot, starting at Darling Harbour, which is anchored by the new, wave-shaped **W Sydney** (doubles from \$305), and heading north to Barangaroo, perhaps stopping

for a veal Milanese at **a'Mare** (entrées \$24–\$109), inside the Crown Sydney hotel.

Continuing east takes you past Circular Quay and the opera house, until you reach the Botanic Gardens and the **Art Gallery of New South Wales**, the city's leading art museum. In 2022 the Art Gallery opened a modern, multilevel glass structure designed by the Tokyo-based firm SANAA, along with an art park by the landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson. The museum announced in April that the addition would be named **Naala Badu**, which means "seeing waters" in the language of the Dharug people, who are native to what is now Sydney.

It's the most significant addition to the artistic life of Sydney in many years, nearly doubling the museum's exhibition space. Central to the mission is the foregrounding of works by Aboriginal and women artists. The original gallery, which occupies a 19th-century sandstone building, confined its Aboriginal pieces to the lowest level, and the bulk of its collection was mostly composed of works by white men. Now, most of the new commissions are by women artists, and its evolving Aboriginal collection is woven through multiple exhibits.

On my visit, I saw works by the contemporary Aboriginal artist Tony Albert next to an Ed Ruscha canvas—a bracing redefinition of the modern-art canon. I was introduced to many artists whose work I didn't know and made me see the ones I did in a different light. It was a revelation. "When I grew up, we thought we were a young country—Captain Cook discovered us," Dr. Michael Brand, the museum's director, told me. "In fact, we have this other history." 🌐

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# Recipe for Success

*At a chef's homestay near Phnom Penh, travelers learn about Cambodia's traditional dishes—and help save them from extinction. By Shamilee Vellu*

**M**OST PEOPLE struggle to describe Cambodian cooking. Chef Rotanak Ros starts by saying what it is not. “Cambodian cuisine is not survival food,” the 39-year-old Ros told me. Popularly known as “Chef Nak,” the celebrity chef is an energetic advocate of Cambodian, or Khmer, cuisine. She collaborates with the staff at Brasserie Louis at **Rosewood Phnom Penh** (*doubles from \$300*), in the Cambodian capital, and partners with the hotel to offer epicurean experiences (private cooking classes, market tours, and food-focused homestays) in her hometown of Prek Loung, a 40-minute drive away.

Ros has also published two cookbooks that delve into some of Cambodia's most iconic dishes. As part of her research, she spent 19 years crisscrossing her country, coaxing villagers to share recipes for half-forgotten dishes. She fears that unless work like hers continues, Khmer food traditions will be lost over the coming generations.

Cambodian cuisine typically incorporates rice, fish, soups, plenty of spices, and fresh produce. But Ros is quick to point out that these vary greatly depending on where you are. “Khmer food is regional, seasonal, and very personalized,” she said.

Ros's mission to reinvigorate Khmer dining stems from her country's poisoned past. In the late 1970s, an estimated 2 million Cambodians—nearly a quarter of the country's population—died through mass violence, starvation, and disease under the radical communist regime of the Khmer Rouge. As the government eliminated private property and food became scarce, rice gruel became a staple and people began eating insects, bats, and even poisonous fruits.



“Big, complex dishes were reduced down to whatever ingredients you could find to survive,” said Ros, whose sunny demeanor and signature round glasses conceal a grit that developed from an impoverished childhood. She was born five years after the Khmer Rouge regime ended in 1979. “We lost the ground to hold on to, the roots of who we were. After that, if you asked people what Cambodian food was, they could name only five dishes at most.”

The weight of that history felt worlds away when I arrived at Ros's homestay after crossing the Mekong River's other currents outside Phnom Penh. The grounds were lush, with a large pool framed by palm trees that beckoned in the afternoon heat. Ros and her husband, Sarin Chhuon, bought the property in late 2018 as a country getaway; over the years, it has grown from a simple farm patch into an Edenic compound. Guests stay in two 100-year-old wooden houses relocated from the cities of Siem Reap and Battambang that local craftspeople painstakingly disassembled, cleaned, and reconstructed to Ros and Chhuon's specifications.

Today, the three tastefully appointed bedrooms and open-air lounge areas are filled with accents like hand-painted diptychs of *apsaras*, or celestial dancers, and Ros's impressive antique collection. The most precious piece is a wooden bowl from Chhuon's childhood that his family brought with them when they moved from the Kendal province to Siem Reap in search of a better life.

I stayed at their home for two nights, enjoying luxuries like air-conditioning and a private outdoor bathtub and shower, as well as thoughtful touches like the tiny saucer of fragrant jasmine flowers that accompanied my drinking water. While there is no spa, massages were available on demand.



**FROM TOP**  
 Chef Rotanak Ros at her homestay outside Phnom Penh; meang chrouk, a salad from her cookbook, Saoy.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF CHEF NAK; LAMO/COURTESY OF CHEF NAK

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Dinner at Ros's homestay.



## WHERE TO EAT: KHMER CUISINE IN PHNOM PENH

### BRASSERIE LOUIS

Offering the city's loftiest views from the 35th floor of Rosewood Phnom Penh, Brasserie Louis rotates a menu of 10 signature Khmer dishes. *Entrées* \$14–\$21.

### KRAVANH

Established in 2009, this bungalow-style fine-dining venue is a go-to for traditional Khmer orders, backed by a culinary team that prioritizes using ingredients from small-batch suppliers. *Entrées* \$10–\$15.

### MALIS

Celebrated chef Luu Meng serves elevated street food in three set menus or à la carte. Try the royal *mak mee*, a plate of crispy fried noodles topped with slices of marinated pork. *Entrées* \$17–\$66.

### SOMBOK

Chef Kimsan Pol leads an all-women team at this upscale restaurant on the banks of the Tonlé Sap River. A highlight is the *sombok samlor korko*, which some Cambodians regard as a national dish. *Entrées* \$10–\$20. —Samantha Falewée

Ros's homestay programs, which are arranged for private groups only, range from a five-course meal to the cooking class and multi-night stay I attended. On the first night, dinner was a relaxed but artful procession of Khmer dishes, which I learned have been influenced by Indian, Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese, and French cooking (the country was a French protectorate from 1863 to 1953). It can also vary by region and class. For example, fish *amok*, a well-known coconut-based curry, might involve fillets, a mixture steamed in coconut shells or banana leaves, or a soup that includes the whole fish.

Khmer cuisine also typically includes an exuberant use of raw leafy greens, diverse spices, and a wide variety of piquant (but rarely spicy) dressings. My *tea kanh* salad consisted of a banana-leaf cone exploding with frizzled shallots, raw bean sprouts, duck breast, snake beans, and peanuts, all dressed with lime juice and fish sauce and showered in chrysanthemum and water-hyacinth petals—and great fun to eat.

"It's very important that we have sweet, sour, and salty flavors in our salads," said Ros, who plays the role of both host and historian during her meals. "We never use oil, and there should be lots of crunch."

There was also *cary trie*, a platter of ingredients designed to be mixed together: a small crock of curry ringed by rice noodles, snakehead fish steamed in banana leaves with fresh lemongrass and coconut cream, and little piles of julienned cucumber, bean sprouts, and banana flowers. I ate *samlor muktaa*, the main dish, in a deeply appreciative silence, relishing every spoonful of the delicate pork-and-chicken consommé containing juicy prawn parcels, scallions, and tiny house-made tapioca pearls. (There is a recipe for the soup in Ros's cookbook *Saoy*.)

The next morning, Ros and I prepped for a cooking class with a trip to Prek Loung's small market, a 10-minute walk away, where we found

feathery tamarind leaves and miniature gourds, glistening snails and writhing, just-gutted river eels. We picked up a small bag of fingertip-size freshwater shrimp, then strolled back through the village, stopping only to sample a heart-shaped, unexpectedly briny "fish mint" leaf from a vine. "Growing up, meals were a bit of protein and whatever was growing on the fence," Ros told me.

Back at her place, we stirred the shrimp into a thin rice-flour batter before gently sliding it into bubbling oil, which yielded filigreed shrimp fritters that were the best I'd ever had. Ros showed me how to cook beef tenderloin with crispy shallots in cups of *chaphlou* leaves, which tasted similar to mint, and how to make a common version of fish *amok*, pounding aromatics such as lemongrass, garlic, shallots, and galangal (a rootstalk related to ginger), adding shrimp paste, coconut cream, and fish sauce, then mixing in chunks of snakehead fish. Finally, we fashioned banana-leaf disks into little boxes using toothpicks, dolloped the mixture inside, and placed them in a steamer.

While I blissfully lost track of the hours in Ros's tranquil, teak-lined hideaway, a real sense of urgency drives her work. "Maybe a hundred years from now, this place could be a real museum, with a garden filled with edible plants," Ros told me. "There would be hundreds of recipes that generations of people would have otherwise forgotten." 🌐

**Rosewood Phnom Penh** *epicurean experience with Chef Nak from \$950 for two people, including an overnight stay, tours of the chef's home and gardens and the local market, a cooking class, and limousine transfers.*

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*National Geographic Orion noses close to a waterfall, Nordfjord, Norway.*

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# Spain by Train

It's now possible to see the country's lush northern coast from a luxury sleeper train. **Jessica Vincent** hops on board.

**S**TATE-OWNED RAILWAYS aren't usually associated with upscale travel. So when I heard that Spain's national rail system had a luxury sleeper-train route called the *Costa Verde Express*, my curiosity was piqued, and I signed up. The six-day trip travels along the country's "green coast" in the north, stopping in medieval towns, UNESCO-protected parks, and seaside villages. Last October, I boarded the train for its weekly journey between the industrial city of Bilbao and Santiago de Compostela: the final stop of one of Catholicism's most sacred pilgrimages, known as the Camino de Santiago. While there would be overlaps with one of the pilgrimage routes, my itinerary would feature champagne dinners, a private cabin, local guides at every stop, and even an onboard gala.

## Day 1: Bilbao to Santander

I arrived at the Bilbao-Concordia train station at 10 a.m., just early enough to drop off my bags and grab a pastry and apricot juice before joining a tour of the old town and

the **Guggenheim Museum**. When we returned, a porter escorted me to my cabin. It was smaller than I expected—barely big enough for a double bed and built-in desk—but stylish nonetheless, with wood-paneled walls, silky gold curtains, and a bijou bathroom with a glass shower and marble sink.

The train rolled out at 2:15 p.m. as glasses of Catalan cava were served in the Pullman dining car, which had more wood paneling, green velvet armchairs, and brass table lights. Over the next three hours, waiters in tartan vests and white gloves served a four-course lunch of French toast with foie gras and blueberry (better than it sounds), Basque fish stew, duck confit, and cheesecake. As vineyards and apple orchards blurred past the windows, I chatted with several of my fellow passengers, a group of about 50 smartly dressed travelers that included a flamenco dancer from Andalusia and a psychologist from Puerto Rico. "It's so romantic, isn't it?" said a flight attendant from Chicago who sat near me during lunch.

We arrived at the port city of Santander at 5:30 p.m., with enough daylight hours left for a guided coach tour of the coast. The bay was turning a cotton-candy pink as the tour ended, so I opted for a swim at El Sardinero, a wide beach fringed by Belle Époque buildings. The water was

*The Costa Verde Express near the medieval town of Viveiro, Spain.*

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Hiking in Picos de Europa National Park, in the Asturias region.



ice-cold, but the sunset was unforgettable. After drying off between two boulders, I joined my fellow passengers in town at **Querida Margarita** (*prix fixe* \$28), where I enjoyed a butter-smooth Ibérico-pork shoulder.

For the evening's entertainment, there was a magic show on the train, but I wanted to see more of Santander, so I explored the 13th-century cathedral and lively Plaza de Cañadío on my own. Besides, the train was stationery every night, so there was no rush. When I returned to my cabin, there was a square of dark chocolate on my pillow. I went to sleep to the rustling sounds of birds nesting in the station's tiled roof.

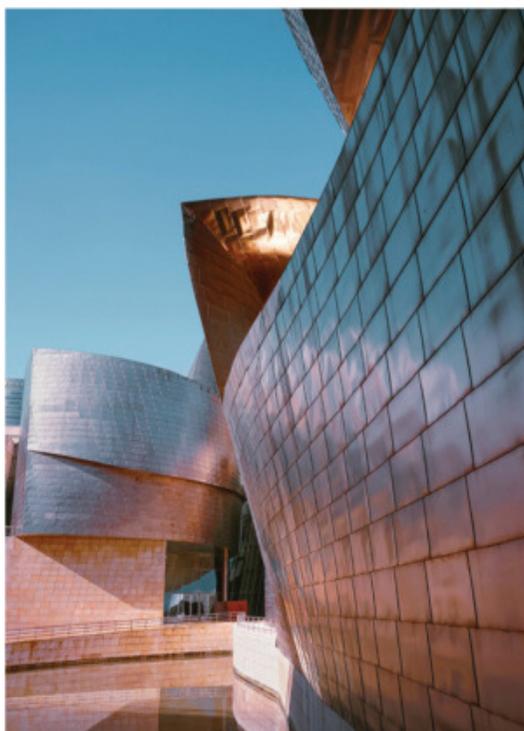
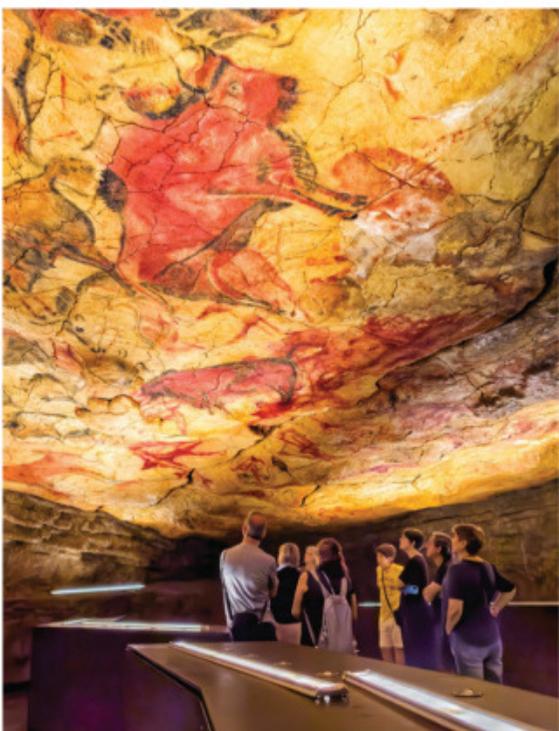
### Day 2: Santander to Llanes

The wake-up bell rang at 8 o'clock, and the train jolted into action. I lay in bed, watching curly-horned cows graze on chartreuse pastures and children playing

on swings as we glided through the rolling hills of the Cantabria region. A breakfast of smoked salmon and made-to-order eggs was served in the dining car as the train trundled toward Cabezón de la Sal, a salt-mining town. We arrived at 9:30, and a bus took us to the **Altamira Museum**, where we marveled at the replicas of Paleolithic cave paintings discovered nearby in 1879.

After a lunch of *cocido*, a bean stew with black pudding and chorizo, at **Santillana Gil Blas** (*entrées* \$17–\$39), a traditional Cantabrian restaurant near the museum, we explored Santillana del Mar, a beautiful medieval village. "It's like a living museum," said our guide, Daniel Escudero. The shops on the main street sold Cantabrian anchovies, wild-boar sausages, and *orujo*, a local brandy. I met two pilgrims from Canada who were buying butter cake, the town's signature treat. They had walked 186 miles of the Camino de Santiago—and had 300 more to go.

Like the pilgrims, we continued west to Llanes, the medieval port town built along rocky turquoise coves where we would spend our second night. Dinner—monkfish salad, beef loin, and *tocinillo de cielo*, a flanlike dessert—was served on board, followed by a gin-spritz master class with Nacho Capín, the train's mixologist. ▶



FROM LEFT Replicas of cave paintings at the Altamira Museum; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; visitors exploring the town of Santillana del Mar.

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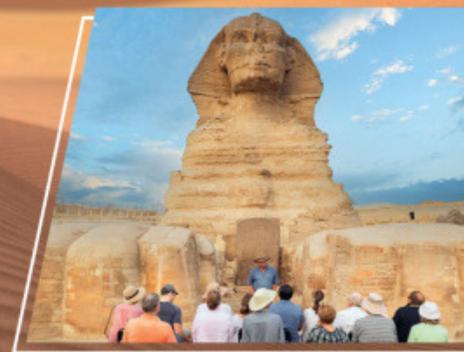
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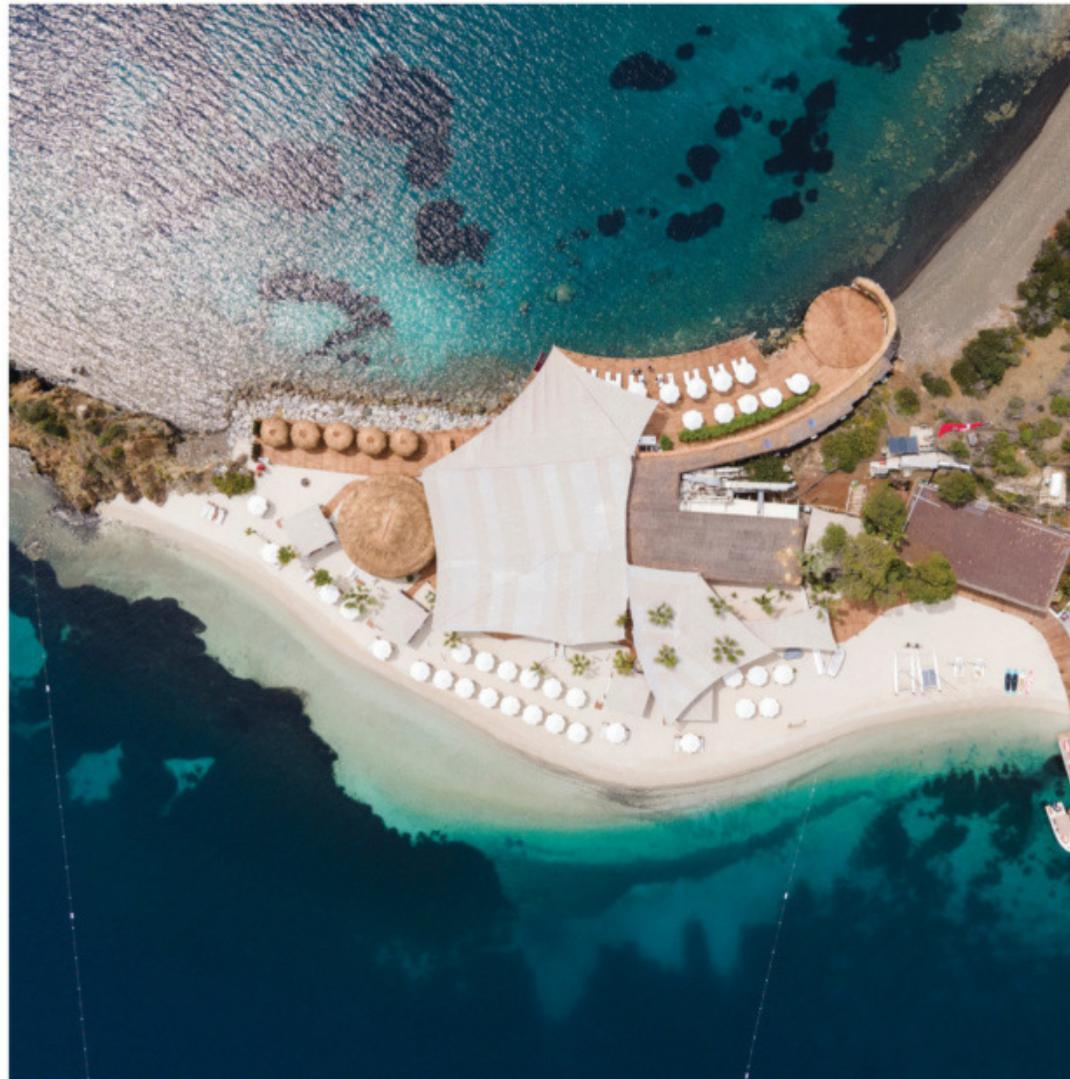
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(Spain, continued from page 68)

### Day 3: Llanes to Oviedo

I woke up to the squawk of a cockerel and the smell of cow dung—the train was parked in the station in Asturias, Spain’s “natural paradise.” After breakfast, we boarded a coach to Picos de Europa National Park, a landscape of limestone peaks, deep river gorges, and wildflower meadows. Our driver navigated hairpin turns to reach the glacial Lakes of Covadonga, which sit more than 3,280 feet above sea level. These UNESCO-protected mountains are home to rare wildlife, including Iberian wolves and shrewlike desmans. We didn’t see either of those creatures, but we did spot a herd of horned Asturian cows, which roam the area freely, and a lone peregrine falcon circling over our heads.

We returned to the train for lunch and continued to Oviedo, the region’s stately capital. We arrived at 5:30 for a guided tour of the old quarter and the Gothic Cathedral of San Salvador of Oviedo, said to house the cloth that covered Christ’s face after his death. Dinner that evening was in the leafy courtyard of **La Gran Taberna** (entrées \$16–\$30) and included a delicate crab bisque and caramelized cheesecake. Before retiring to my cabin for the night, I had a nightcap at **La Pumarada**, a traditional pub where waiters in vests pour cider from bottles held above their heads.

### Days 4 and 5: Oviedo to Viveiro

The three-hour ride between the fishing villages of Candás and Luarca was the most scenic of the route. The train passed turquoise bays lapping at limestone cliffs, rivers coursing through emerald hills, and wheat fields dotted with 16th-century *hórreos*—hut-size granaries made of chestnut wood.

On our last full day, we arrived at Viveiro, a port town famed for its fine beaches and Holy Week celebrations. We were touring the historic center when it started to pour. The rest of the group went back to the train, but I found an umbrella and continued exploring the city on my own, taking in the 16th-century glass verandas and well-preserved medieval walls, which seemed all the more beautiful in the rain.

The final dinner—black-truffle ravioli and seared sea bass—was served aboard the train. Afterward, at 11:30 p.m., the train manager invited everyone into the bar car, which had been decorated with green and gold balloons. Champagne flowed as we raised a glass to the crew. The flamenco dancer, wearing a sparkly red dress, led the way on the dance floor,

**There were champagne dinners, a private cabin, local guides, and an onboard gala.**



▲ The main square and cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

tapping her heels and getting other passengers to join in. It was 3 a.m. when I finally got to bed.

### Day 6: Viveiro to Santiago de Compostela

The train departed Viveiro at 7 a.m. for the city of Ferrol, where we said goodbye to the crew and boarded a bus for the hour-long drive to Santiago de Compostela. We met our guide, Manuel Mallo, at Plaza del Obradoiro, the city’s main square and the place pilgrims traditionally gather after completing the Camino.

Despite the incessant rain, the atmosphere was electric. (“If you don’t have a rainy day in Santiago, then you don’t understand Santiago,” the guide said.) Galician bagpipers played by the entrance to the plaza. Hundreds of pilgrims hugged, cried, and drank red wine from scallop shells on the granite steps of the soaring Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, a Romanesque complex that dates back to 1075 and is said to contain the remains of Saint James, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus. While I did not travel to Santiago on foot, I felt lucky to have met some pilgrims along the way—and fortunate for being able to see the green coast of Spain from the comfort of a plush train. 🌍

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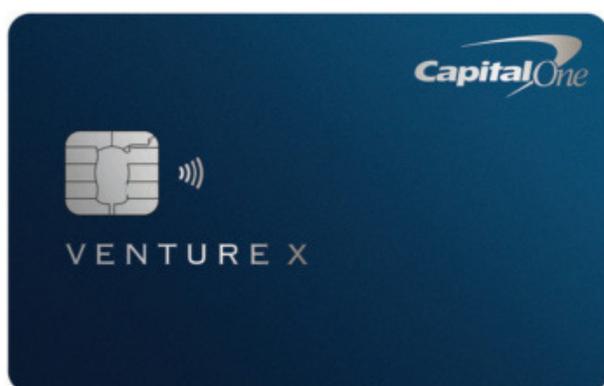


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EDITED BY JESS FELDMAN

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## 100 BEST HOTELS

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- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur</b><br/>India <b>99.79</b></li> <li>2. <b>La Casa de la Playa</b><br/>Playa del Carmen, Mexico <b>99.76</b></li> <li>3. <b>The Ritz-Carlton, Doha</b><br/>Qatar <b>99.64</b></li> <li>4. <b>Park Hyatt Siem Reap</b><br/>Cambodia <b>99.40</b></li> <li>5. <b>Selman Marrakech</b><br/><b>99.39</b></li> <li>6. <b>[T] Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno</b><br/>Torroja del Priorat, Spain <b>99.33</b></li> <li>6. <b>[T] Regent Hong Kong</b><br/><b>99.33</b></li> <li>8. <b>Pendry Newport Beach</b><br/>California <b>99.29</b></li> <li>9. <b>[T] Alma Resort</b><br/>Cam Ranh, Vietnam <b>99.20</b></li> <li>9. <b>[T] Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi</b><br/><b>99.20</b></li> <li>11. <b>Mission Pacific Beach Resort</b><br/>Oceanside, California <b>99.17</b></li> <li>12. <b>[T] Argos in Cappadocia</b><br/>Turkey <b>99.09</b></li> <li>12. <b>[T] Capella Ubud, Bali</b><br/><b>99.09</b></li> <li>14. <b>Raffles The Palm Dubai</b><br/><b>99.08</b></li> <li>15. <b>Six Senses Fort Barwara</b><br/>Rajasthan, India <b>99.06</b></li> <li>16. <b>The Winnetu Oceanside Resort</b><br/>Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts <b>99.00</b></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. <b>Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas</b><br/><b>98.95</b></li> <li>18. <b>La Mamounia Marrakech</b><br/><b>98.94</b></li> <li>19. <b>Tierra Atacama</b><br/>San Pedro de Atacama, Chile <b>98.93</b></li> <li>20. <b>The Mulia</b><br/>Bali <b>98.92</b></li> <li>21. <b>Monwana Game Lodge</b><br/>Thornybush Nature Reserve, South Africa <b>98.90</b></li> <li>22. <b>Joali Maldives</b><br/><b>98.88</b></li> <li>23. <b>Nihi Sumba</b><br/>Sumba, Indonesia <b>98.85</b></li> <li>24. <b>[T] Hotel Hartness</b><br/>Greenville, South Carolina <b>98.80</b></li> <li>24. <b>[T] Taj Exotica Resort &amp; Spa, Goa</b><br/>India <b>98.80</b></li> <li>26. <b>The Peninsula Istanbul</b><br/><b>98.77</b></li> <li>27. <b>[T] The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra</b> ★<br/>India <b>98.74</b></li> <li>27. <b>[T] The St. Regis Bali Resort</b><br/><b>98.74</b></li> <li>29. <b>Asilia Namiri Plains</b><br/>Greater Serengeti National Park, Tanzania <b>98.73</b></li> <li>30. <b>[T] Candleberry Inn</b><br/>Brewster, Massachusetts <b>98.67</b></li> <li>30. <b>[T] Finch Hattons</b><br/>Tsavo West National Park, Kenya <b>98.67</b></li> <li>30. <b>[T] The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur</b><br/>India <b>98.67</b></li> </ol> |
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*A garden at the Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur, in India.*



COURTESY OF OBEROI HOTELS & RESORTS



# Nº1

HOTEL IN THE WORLD

## The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur

THIS PINK-WALLED, PALACE-INSPIRED RETREAT WOWED READERS WITH ITS LUXURIOUS SUITES, GRACIOUS STAFF, AND SERENE GARDENS WHERE PEACOCKS ROAM FREELY.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 30. [T] <b>Rosewood Phnom Penh</b><br>Cambodia <b>98.67</b>  | 51. <b>Gili Lankanfushi</b><br>Maldives <b>98.35</b>   |
| 30. [T] <b>Royal Champagne Hotel &amp; Spa</b><br>Champillon, France <b>98.67</b>                        | 52. <b>The Norumbega</b><br>Camden, Maine <b>98.32</b>   |
| 30. [T] <b>Tokoriki Island Resort</b><br>Fiji <b>98.67</b>   | 53. <b>Taj Lands End, Mumbai</b><br><b>98.29</b>   |
| 36. <b>The Leela Palace Bengaluru</b><br>Bangalore, India <b>98.59</b>                                   | 54. <b>Mfuwe Lodge, The Bushcamp Company</b><br>South Luangwa National Park, Zambia <b>98.26</b>   |
| 37. <b>Villa Mara</b><br>Carmel-by-the-Sea, California <b>98.55</b>                                      | 55. [T] <b>The Egerton House Hotel</b><br>London <b>98.25</b>                                      |
| 38. [T] <b>The Oberoi Vanyavilas Wildlife Resort, Ranthambhore</b><br>India <b>98.53</b>                 | 55. [T] <b>Royal Mansour Marrakech</b><br><b>98.25</b>   |
| 38. [T] <b>Secret Bay</b><br>Dominica <b>98.53</b>   | 57. [T] <b>Hotel Jerome, Auberge Resorts Collection</b><br>Aspen, Colorado <b>98.24</b>            |
| 40. [T] <b>Flemings Mayfair</b><br>London <b>98.50</b>   | 57. [T] <b>Nayara Tented Camp</b><br>Greater Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica <b>98.24</b> |
| 40. [T] <b>Hotel Casa Real</b><br>Santiago, Chile <b>98.50</b>   | 59. <b>The Laguna, a Luxury Collection Resort &amp; Spa, Nusa Dua, Bali</b><br><b>98.22</b>        |
| 40. [T] <b>Hyatt Regency Koh Samui</b><br>Thailand <b>98.50</b>  | 60. [T] <b>Cedar Lakes Estate</b><br>Port Jervis, New York <b>98.20</b>                            |
| 40. [T] <b>Regent Beijing</b><br><b>98.50</b>  | 60. [T] <b>Ellerman House</b><br>Cape Town <b>98.20</b>  |
| 44. <b>Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok</b> ★<br><b>98.48</b>  | 62. [T] <b>The Leela Palace New Delhi</b><br><b>98.18</b>  |
| 45. <b>Kalesma Mykonos</b><br>Greece <b>98.47</b>  | 62. [T] <b>Palacio del Inka, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Cusco</b><br>Peru <b>98.18</b>             |
| 46. <b>Hotel Indigo Bali Seminyak Beach</b><br><b>98.44</b>  | 64. <b>Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River</b><br><b>98.15</b>                         |
| 47. <b>Raffles London at The OWO</b><br><b>98.40</b>   | 65. <b>The Leela Palace Udaipur</b><br>India <b>98.13</b>  |
| 48. <b>Capella Bangkok</b><br><b>98.39</b>   | 66. <b>Deer Path Inn</b><br>Lake Forest, Illinois <b>98.11</b>                                     |
| 49. <b>Mount Gahinga Lodge, Volcanoes Safaris</b><br>Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Uganda <b>98.37</b> |  |
| 50. <b>Hotel Walloon</b><br>Walloon Lake, Michigan <b>98.36</b>  |  |

WORLD'S BEST AWARDS: HOTELS

<p><b>BEST HOTELS IN THE WORLD</b> <i>continued</i></p> <p>67. <b>Tensing Pen</b> Negril, Jamaica <b>98.07</b></p> <p>68. <b>Nayara Springs</b> Greater Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica <b>98.06</b></p> <p>69. <b>[T] Kyambura Gorge Lodge, Volcanoes Safaris</b> Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda <b>98.00</b></p> <p>69. <b>[T] Signiel Seoul</b> <b>98.00</b></p> <p>71. <b>Las Ventanas al Paraíso, a Rosewood Resort</b> San José del Cabo, Mexico <b>97.94</b></p> <p>72. <b>Four Seasons Hotel Seoul</b> <b>97.91</b></p> <p>73. <b>[T] Lion Sands Game Reserve</b> Sabi Sands Game Reserve, South Africa <b>97.89</b></p> <p>73. <b>[T] Marbella Club Hotel, Golf Resort &amp; Spa</b> Marbella, Spain <b>97.89</b></p> <p>75. <b>[T] Alila Hinu Bay</b> Salalah, Oman <b>97.88</b></p>	<p>75. <b>[T] Matetsi Victoria Falls</b> Matetsi Private Game Reserve, Zimbabwe <b>97.88</b></p> <p>75. <b>[T] The Willcox</b> Aiken, South Carolina <b>97.88</b></p> <p>78. <b>[T] Singita Grumeti</b> Greater Serengeti National Park, Tanzania <b>97.87</b></p> <p>78. <b>[T] Triple Creek Ranch</b> ★ Darby, Montana <b>97.87</b></p> <p>80. <b>Thornybush Game Lodge</b> Thornybush Private Nature Reserve, South Africa <b>97.83</b></p> <p>81. <b>The Standard, Hua Hin</b> Thailand <b>97.82</b></p> <p>82. <b>[T] Domaine des Etangs, Auberge Resorts Collection</b> Massignac, France <b>97.80</b></p> <p>82. <b>[T] J.K. Place Roma</b> Rome <b>97.80</b></p> <p>84. <b>Baoase Luxury Resort</b> Curaçao <b>97.79</b></p> <p>85. <b>Quisisana Resort</b> Lovell, Maine <b>97.77</b></p> <p>86. <b>[T] The Inn Above Tide</b> Sausalito, California <b>97.75</b></p> <p>86. <b>[T] Jade Mountain</b> ★ St. Lucia <b>97.75</b></p>	<p>88. <b>[T] Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria</b> Sorrento, Italy <b>97.71</b></p> <p>88. <b>[T] Mandarin Oriental, Doha</b> Qatar <b>97.71</b></p> <p>90. <b>[T] Lancaster Hotel</b> Houston <b>97.64</b></p> <p>90. <b>[T] New World Phu Quoc Resort</b> Vietnam <b>97.64</b></p> <p>92. <b>[T] The Imperial New Delhi</b> <b>97.60</b></p> <p>92. <b>[T] Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur</b> India <b>97.60</b></p> <p>94. <b>Cavas Wine Lodge</b> Mendoza, Argentina <b>97.49</b></p> <p>95. <b>[T] Angama Mara</b> Maasai Mara, Kenya <b>97.47</b></p> <p>95. <b>[T] Monasterio, a Belmond Hotel, Cusco</b> Peru <b>97.47</b></p> <p>97. <b>Alila Villas Uluwatu</b> Bali <b>97.44</b></p> <p>98. <b>Sofitel Legend Casco Viejo</b> Panama City <b>97.42</b></p> <p>99. <b>Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues Geneva</b> <b>97.41</b></p> <p>100. <b>Hotel Café Royal</b> London <b>97.40</b></p>	<p>25 BEST HOTEL BRANDS</p> <p>1. <b>Capella Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>98.52</b> This distinguished collection won again because of the ever-present sense of place and elegant design of its properties, including the first outside Asia, Capella Sydney.</p> <p>2. <b>Taj</b> <b>98.11</b></p> <p>3. <b>The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts</b> <b>98.00</b></p> <p>4. <b>The Red Carnation Hotel Collection</b> <b>97.00</b></p> <p>5. <b>Raffles Hotels and Resorts</b> <b>96.67</b></p> <p>6. <b>Oberoi Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> ★ <b>96.64</b></p> <p>7. <b>One&amp;Only Resorts</b> <b>95.47</b></p> <p>8. <b>Mandarin Oriental</b> <b>95.15</b></p> <p>9. <b>The Peninsula Hotels</b> <b>95.10</b></p> <p>10. <b>Regent</b> <b>95.06</b></p> <p>11. <b>Nayara Resorts</b> <b>94.93</b></p>	<p>12. <b>Montage Hotels and Resorts</b> <b>94.88</b></p> <p>13. <b>Aparium Hotel Group</b> <b>94.82</b></p> <p>14. <b>Auberge Resorts Collection</b> ★ <b>94.79</b></p> <p>15. <b>Rosewood Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>94.71</b></p> <p>16. <b>Six Senses</b> <b>94.51</b></p> <p>17. <b>Belmond</b> <b>94.21</b></p> <p>18. <b>Alila</b> <b>94.10</b></p> <p>19. <b>Anantara Hotels, Resorts &amp; Spas</b> <b>94.05</b></p> <p>20. <b>Dorchester Collection</b> <b>93.93</b></p> <p>21. <b>Oetker Collection</b> <b>93.90</b></p> <p>22. <b>Viceroy Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>93.85</b></p> <p>23. <b>Noble House Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>93.83</b></p> <p>24. <b>The Langham Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>93.68</b></p> <p>25. <b>LXR Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> <b>93.33</b></p>
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**One&Only Resorts**  
*A guest room at One&Only One Za'abeel, a Dubai property of the No. 7 hotel brand.*

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HOTELS & RESORTS

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Featuring luxury accommodations, elite amenities, personalized service, and locations in iconic destinations, these winning hotels and resorts offer guests the ultimate stay experience.

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*Santorini, Greece*

Aurora Anguilla Resort & Golf Club  
*Rendezvous Bay, Anguilla*

Baccarat Hotel New York  
*New York, New York, USA*

Boston Harbor Hotel  
*Boston, Massachusetts, USA*

Brenton Hotel  
*Newport, Rhode Island, USA*

The Broadmoor  
*Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA*

The Brush Creek Luxury  
Ranch Collection  
*Saratoga, Wyoming, USA*

Condado Vanderbilt Hotel  
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The Dupont Circle Hotel  
*Washington, D.C., USA*

Edgewood Tahoe Resort  
*Stateline, Nevada, USA*

The Eliot Hotel  
*Boston, Massachusetts, USA*

Garza Blanca Resort & Spa Los Cabos  
– A Tafer Resort  
*Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, Mexico*

Grand Hotel Tremezzo  
*Tremezzina, Italy*

Grand Velas Riviera Maya  
*Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico*

Green Valley Ranch Resort Spa Casino  
*Henderson, Nevada, USA*

Half Moon  
*Montego Bay, Jamaica*

Hotel Bennett, Charleston  
*Charleston, South Carolina, USA*

Hotel Xcaret Arte  
*Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico*

Hotel Xcaret Mexico  
*Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico*

The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa  
*Houston, Texas, USA*

Inn at Perry Cabin  
*St. Michaels, Maryland, USA*

Inn by the Sea  
*Cape Elizabeth, Maine, USA*

The Lancaster Hotel  
*Houston, Texas, USA*

The Leela Palace Bengaluru  
*Bengaluru, India*

The Leela Palace New Delhi  
*New Delhi, India*

The Leela Palace Udaipur  
*Udaipur, India*

Montage Big Sky  
*Big Sky, Montana, USA*

Montage Deer Valley  
*Park City, Utah, USA*

Montage Healdsburg  
*Healdsburg, California, USA*

Montage Kapalua Bay  
*Lahaina, Hawaii, USA*

Montage Los Cabos  
*Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur,  
Mexico*

Montage Palmetto Bluff  
*Bluffton, South Carolina, USA*

Nemacolin  
*Farmington, Pennsylvania, USA*

The Palms Hotel & Spa  
*Miami Beach, Florida, USA*

Pendry Chicago  
*Chicago, Illinois, USA*

Pendry Manhattan West  
*New York, New York, USA*

Pendry Park City  
*Park City, Utah, USA*

Pendry San Diego  
*San Diego, California, USA*

Pendry West Hollywood  
*West Hollywood, California, USA*

The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston  
*Houston, Texas, USA*

The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island  
Golf Resort  
*Kiawah Island, South Carolina, USA*

Shutters on the Beach  
*Santa Monica, California, USA*

Surf & Sand Resort  
*Laguna Beach, California, USA*

Villa Copenhagen  
*Copenhagen, Denmark*

Virgin Hotels New York  
*New York, New York, USA*

The Wall Street Hotel  
*New York, New York, USA*

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HOTELS & RESORTS

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RESIDENCES

# U.S. HOTELS

Many longtime favorites known for their history and attentive service are on the list again, as are some first-time winners in New England and the South. Plus, as readers crave more personalized experiences, we're highlighting inns across the country.



Outdoor dining at SET Steak & Sushi, at Pendry Newport Beach, in California.

## Nº1

CITY HOTEL IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S.

### Pendry Newport Beach

AFTER OPENING WITH A CELEBRITY-FILLED PARTY LAST FALL, THIS 20-STORY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HOTEL HAS BOOSTED THE AREA'S SOCIAL SCENE WITH A MEMBERS' CLUB, BUZZY RESTAURANTS, AND SWANKY LOUNGES.

#### 15 BEST CITY HOTELS CONTINENTAL U.S.

1. Pendry Newport Beach  
California **99.29**
2. Lancaster Hotel  
Houston **97.64**
3. Raffles Boston  
**97.09**
4. Four Seasons Hotel One Dalton Street, Boston  
**96.77**
5. Bellyard, West Midtown Atlanta, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel  
**96.56**
6. Maison de la Luz  
New Orleans **96.53**
7. Wentworth Mansion  
Charleston **96.46**
8. Virgin Hotels New York  
**96.36**
9. Hotel Saint Cecilia  
Austin **96.25**
10. Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills  
**96.22**
11. The Bristol Hotel  
Bristol, Virginia **96.16**
12. The Lowell  
New York City **96.13**
13. [T] The Jefferson, Washington DC ★  
**96.00**
13. [T] The Whitney Hotel Boston  
**96.00**
15. Viceroy Washington DC  
**95.86**

#### 15 BEST RESORTS CONTINENTAL U.S.

1. Mission Pacific Beach Resort  
Oceanside, California **99.17**  
Steps from the surf, this property has beachfront balconies and a Michelin-starred restaurant that specializes in the cuisine of Baja, Mexico. (It's also home to the 1887 bungalow featured in *Top Gun*.)
2. The Winnetu Oceanside Resort  
Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts **99.00**
3. Hotel Hartness  
Greenville, South Carolina **98.80**

4. Hotel Jerome, Auberge Resorts Collection  
Aspen, Colorado **98.24**
5. Cedar Lakes Estate  
Port Jervis, New York **98.20**
6. Deer Path Inn  
Lake Forest, Illinois **98.11**
7. Triple Creek Ranch ★  
Darby, Montana **97.87**
8. Quisisana Resort  
Lovell, Maine **97.77**
9. Madeline Hotel & Residences, Auberge Resorts Collection  
Telluride, Colorado **96.67**
10. Sonnenalp Hotel  
Vail, Colorado **96.47**
11. Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa  
Rancho Santa Fe, California **96.44**
12. Little Palm Island Resort & Spa  
Little Torch Key, Florida **96.29**
13. The Ranch at Rock Creek  
Phillipsburg, Montana **96.22**
14. The Seabird Ocean Resort & Spa  
Oceanside, California **96.15**
15. The Lodge at Blue Sky, Auberge Resorts Collection  
Park City, Utah **96.13**

#### 15 BEST INNS CONTINENTAL U.S.

1. Candleberry Inn  
Brewster, Massachusetts **98.67**  
Priding itself on "simple elegance" with just nine rooms, this early 1800s manse offers the quintessential Cape Cod experience to all, any time of year.
2. Villa Mara  
Carmel-by-the-Sea, California **98.55**
3. Hotel Walloon  
Walloon Lake, Michigan **98.36**
4. The Norumbega  
Camden, Maine **98.32**
5. The Willcox  
Aiken, South Carolina **97.88**
6. The Inn Above Tide  
Sausalito, California **97.75**

COURTESY OF PENDRY NEWPORT BEACH

7. **Inns of Aurora**  
Aurora, New York **97.39**
8. **Nicewonder Farm & Vineyards**  
Bristol, Virginia **95.75**
9. **Farmhouse Inn**  
Forestville, California **95.00**
10. **The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens**  
St. Augustine, Florida **94.96**
11. **H2Hotel**  
Healdsburg, California **94.25**
12. **Holiday House**  
Palm Springs, California **94.11**
13. **The Wauwinet**  
Nantucket, Massachusetts **94.00**
14. **Weekapaug Inn**  
Westerly, Rhode Island **93.83**
15. **Stephanie Inn**  
Cannon Beach, Oregon **93.78**

**10 BEST RESORTS  
MID-ATLANTIC**

1. **Omni Bedford Springs Resort**  
Bedford, Pennsylvania **92.73**  
  
Readers keep going back to this sprawling retreat in the Allegheny Mountains—which has hosted 13 presidents in its 200-year history—for the much-lauded golf course, extensive spa, and spacious suites.
2. **Inn at Perry Cabin**  
St. Michaels, Maryland **90.86**
3. **Wave Resort**  
Long Branch, New Jersey **90.20**
4. **The Reeds at Shelter Haven**  
Stone Harbor, New Jersey **89.76**
5. **Asbury Ocean Club Hotel**  
Asbury Park, New Jersey **87.30**
6. **Nemacolin**  
Farmington, Pennsylvania **86.74**
7. **Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa & Marina**  
Cambridge, Maryland **86.29**
8. **Bungalow Hotel**  
Long Branch, New Jersey **85.07**

**Blackberry Mountain**

*A bird's-eye view of the No. 2 resort in the South.*



9. **Congress Hall**  
Cape May, New Jersey **84.94**
10. **The Asbury**  
Asbury Park, New Jersey **84.88**

**10 BEST RESORTS  
MIDWEST**

1. **Deer Path Inn**  
Lake Forest, Illinois **98.11**  
  
About 30 miles north of Chicago, this Tudor-style manor has claimed the top spot for the past six years. The warm staff maintains comforting British traditions, like afternoon tea.
2. **Larsmont Cottages on Lake Superior**  
Two Harbors, Minnesota **93.75**
3. **Madden's on Gull Lake**  
Brainerd, Minnesota **92.47**
4. **Hotel Iroquois**  
Mackinac Island, Michigan **90.40**
5. **Grand Hotel**  
Mackinac Island, Michigan **89.90**
6. **The Hotel Landing**  
Wayzata, Minnesota **89.89**

7. **Big Cedar Lodge**  
Ridgedale, Missouri **89.02**
8. **The American Club Resort Hotel**  
Kohler, Wisconsin **88.48**
9. **Saint John's Resort**  
Plymouth, Michigan **87.60**
10. **Mission Point**  
Mackinac Island, Michigan **85.76**

**10 BEST RESORTS  
NEW ENGLAND**

1. **The Winnetu Oceanside Resort**  
Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts **99.00**  
  
Spread across 11 beachfront acres, this property is perfect for families because of its extensive lineup of activities, including weekly clambakes and nightly s'mores.
2. **Quisisana Resort**  
Lovell, Maine **97.77**
3. **Hidden Pond**  
Kennebunkport, Maine **95.19**
4. **The Nantucket Hotel & Resort**  
Massachusetts **94.95**
5. **The Brenton Hotel**  
Newport, Rhode Island **94.40**

6. **Inn by the Sea**  
Cape Elizabeth, Maine **93.44**
7. **The Vanderbilt, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Newport, Rhode Island **93.17**
8. **The Wentworth**  
Jackson, New Hampshire **93.07**
9. **White Elephant**  
Nantucket, Massachusetts **91.56**
10. **Faraway Nantucket**  
Massachusetts **91.31**

**15 BEST RESORTS  
SOUTH**

1. **Blackberry Farm**  
Walland, Tennessee **95.57**  
  
With elevated cuisine—much of it sourced from the on-site garden—and a prime location in the Great Smoky Mountains, this Relais & Châteaux resort continues to be one of the region's most beloved stays.
2. **Blackberry Mountain**  
Walland, Tennessee **95.32**
3. **The Lodge at Sea Island**  
St. Simons Island, Georgia **94.57**

4. **The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island**  
Georgia **93.26**
5. **The Cloister at Sea Island ★**  
Georgia **93.00**
6. **The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Lake Oconee**  
Greensboro, Georgia **92.48**
7. **Old Edwards Inn & Spa**  
Highlands, North Carolina **92.00**
8. **The Williamsburg Inn**  
Williamsburg, Virginia **91.50**
9. **The Tides Inn**  
Irvington, Virginia **91.47**
10. **Keswick Hall**  
Charlottesville, Virginia **90.63**
11. **The Inn on Biltmore Estate**  
Asheville, North Carolina **88.63**
12. **Barnsley Resort**  
Adairsville, Georgia **88.61**
13. **High Hampton**  
Cashiers, North Carolina **88.00**
14. **Pinehurst Resort**  
Pinehurst, North Carolina **87.60**
15. **The Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa, Autograph Collection**  
Point Clear, Alabama **87.36**

COURTESY OF BLACKBERRY MOUNTAIN

15 BEST RESORTS

**WEST**

1. **Salish Lodge & Spa**  
Snoqualmie, Washington **94.12**  
About 30 miles east of Seattle, this 86-key resort owned by the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe has a chic Pacific Northwest look and a dramatic setting above a gorge and waterfall.
2. **Edgewood Tahoe Resort**  
Stateline, Nevada **93.26**
3. **Brasada Ranch**  
Bend, Oregon **92.30**
4. **Bishop's Lodge, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Santa Fe **92.00**
5. **The Allison Inn & Spa**  
Newberg, Oregon **89.87**
6. **Cedarbrook Lodge**  
Seattle **89.18**
7. **Green Valley Ranch, Resort Spa & Casino**  
Henderson, Nevada **89.07**
8. **Shore Lodge**  
McCall, Idaho **88.96**
9. **[T] Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa & Casino**  
Incline Village, Nevada **88.87**
9. **[T] Salishan Coastal Lodge**  
Gleneden Beach, Oregon **88.87**
11. **The Coeur d'Alene Golf & Spa Resort**  
Idaho **87.68**
12. **Sunriver Resort**  
Sunriver, Oregon **87.64**
13. **Taos Inn**  
New Mexico **86.00**
14. **Alyeska Resort**  
Girdwood, Alaska **85.26**
15. **Denali Backcountry Lodge**  
Healy, Alaska **85.07**

5 BEST RESORTS

**ARIZONA**

1. **Castle Hot Springs**  
Morristown, Arizona **95.71**  
Readers loved the restorative mineral pools at this Sonoran Desert retreat, where the bungalows have

outdoor fireplaces and views of the cacti punctuating the surrounding hilltops.

2. **Sanctuary Camelback Mountain, a Gurney's Resort & Spa**  
Scottsdale **93.64**
3. **The Hermosa Inn**  
Paradise Valley **92.47**
4. **L'Auberge de Sedona**  
**92.45**
5. **Enchantment Resort**  
Sedona **92.00**

15 BEST RESORTS

**CALIFORNIA**

1. **Mission Pacific Beach Resort**  
Oceanside **99.17**  
*See the Best Resorts in the Continental U.S., page 84.*
2. **Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa**  
Rancho Santa Fe **96.44**
3. **The Seabird Ocean Resort & Spa**  
Oceanside **96.15**
4. **Montage Healdsburg**  
**95.00**
5. **Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort & Club**  
Dana Point **94.95**
6. **The Inn at Mattei's Tavern, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Los Olivos **94.53**
7. **Stanly Ranch, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Napa **94.21**
8. **Surf & Sand Resort**  
Laguna Beach **94.18**
9. **Auberge du Soleil, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Rutherford **94.07**
10. **Terranea Resort**  
Rancho Palos Verdes **93.98**
11. **Calamigos Guest Ranch & Beach Club**  
Malibu **93.78**
12. **Bardessono Hotel**  
Yountville **93.67**
13. **Park Hyatt Aviara Resort, Golf Club & Spa**  
Carlsbad **93.60**
14. **The Ranch at Laguna Beach**  
**93.56**
15. **Harvest Inn**  
St. Helena **93.50**

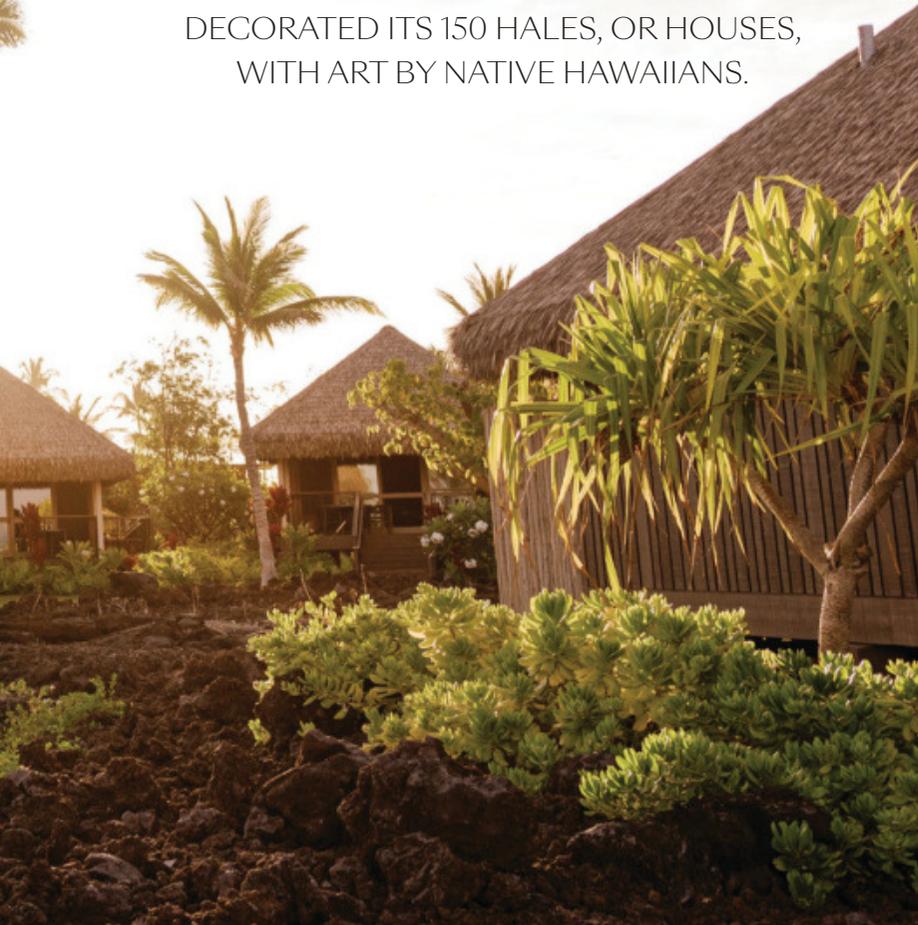


# Nº1

RESORT IN HAWAII

## Kona Village, a Rosewood Resort

ROSEWOOD HAS REVIVED THIS HISTORIC PROPERTY ON KAHUWAI BAY AND DECORATED ITS 150 HALES, OR HOUSES, WITH ART BY NATIVE HAWAIIANS.



**FROM LEFT**  
*Kona Village's Shipwreck Bar; a look into the spa; a guest in the kid-friendly pool.*  
**ABOVE** *The resort's guest hales.*

MICHELLE MISHINA KUNZ

### 10 BEST RESORTS COLORADO

1. **Hotel Jerome, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Aspen **98.24**  
More than a century after it opened, this 99-room landmark, where Hunter S. Thompson once held court, still has the best après-ski scene in Aspen.
2. **Madeline Hotel & Residences, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Telluride **96.67**
3. **Sonnenalp Hotel**  
Vail **96.47**
4. **Viceroy Snowmass**  
Snowmass Village **94.86**
5. **The Little Nell**  
Aspen **94.80**
6. **Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort & Spa**  
**94.11**
7. **Grand Hyatt Vail**  
**92.50**
8. **The Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch**  
Avon **92.00**
9. **The Broadmoor**  
Colorado Springs **90.33**
10. **Limelight Hotel Aspen**  
**90.11**

### 15 BEST RESORTS FLORIDA

1. **Little Palm Island Resort & Spa**  
Little Torch Key **96.29**  
The only private-island resort in the U.S., this 5½-acre oasis just north of Key West is reachable solely by boat or seaplane.
2. **The Colony Hotel**  
Palm Beach **94.96**
3. **The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale**  
**94.93**
4. **The Ritz-Carlton, Orlando, Grande Lakes**  
**93.94**
5. **Kimpton Vero Beach Hotel & Spa**  
**93.60**
6. **The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island**  
**93.01**

7. **Ocean Key Resort & Spa**  
Key West **92.80**
8. **The Alford Inn**  
Winter Park **92.50**
9. **The Breakers Palm Beach**  
**91.61**
10. **Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort**  
**91.56**
11. **Sandpearl Resort**  
Clearwater Beach **91.11**
12. **The Ritz-Carlton, Naples**  
**91.08**
13. **The Ben West Palm, Autograph Collection**  
**91.06**
14. **[T] Hotel Effie**  
Miramar Beach **91.00**
14. **[T] JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes**  
**91.00**

### 20 BEST RESORTS HAWAII

1. **Kona Village, a Rosewood Resort**  
Island of Hawaii **97.29**
2. **Hotel Wailea**  
Maui **96.91**
3. **The Kahala Hotel & Resort**  
Oahu **96.67**
4. **Kaimana Beach Hotel**  
Oahu **95.64**
5. **Montage Kapalua Bay**  
Maui **94.53**
6. **Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Island of Hawaii **93.59**
7. **Ko'a Kea Resort on Po'ipu Beach** ★  
Kauai **93.47**
8. **Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea** ★  
**93.08**
9. **Four Seasons Resort Lanai** ★  
**93.05**
10. **The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Waikiki Beach**  
Oahu **92.42**
11. **Fairmont Kea Lani, Maui**  
**92.23**
12. **Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii** ★  
Island of Hawaii **91.86**

13. **1 Hotel Hanalei Bay**  
Kauai **91.82**
14. **Hanalei Colony Resort**  
Kauai **91.43**
15. **The Westin Hapuna Beach Resort**  
Island of Hawaii **91.11**
16. **Turtle Bay Resort**  
Oahu **90.77**
17. **Four Seasons Resort Hualalai** ★  
Island of Hawaii **90.71**
18. **Halekulani** ★  
Oahu **90.46**
19. **Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina**  
**90.25**
20. **Wailea Beach Resort – Marriott, Maui**  
**89.81**

### 5 BEST RESORTS MONTANA

1. **Triple Creek Ranch** ★  
Darby **97.87**  
Surrounded by pines in the Bitterroot Mountains, the 25 private cabins at this Relais & Châteaux retreat offer rustic, all-inclusive luxury, with fireplaces and private hot tubs.

2. **The Ranch at Rock Creek**  
Phillipsburg **96.22**
3. **Sage Lodge**  
Pray **93.83**
4. **The Resort at Paws Up**  
Greenough **92.38**
5. **Montage Big Sky**  
**90.78**

### 5 BEST RESORTS NEW YORK STATE

1. **Cedar Lakes Estate**  
Port Jervis **98.20**  
With lawn-game nights, movies under the stars, and a lake, this property has an adult summer camp vibe. Plus, its mix of bungalows, cabins, and villas makes it particularly suited to weddings and other group events.
2. **Wildflower Farms, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Gardiner **94.78** ▶

**NEW YORK STATE RESORTS** *continued*

- 3. **Mohonk Mountain House**  
New Paltz **91.22**
- 4. **The Sagamore Resort**  
Bolton Landing **89.05**
- 5. **Mirror Lake Inn Resort & Spa**  
Lake Placid **87.50**

5 BEST RESORTS  
**PUERTO RICO**

- 1. **Fairmont El San Juan Hotel**  
**92.87**  
The historic beachfront institution has it all, from pools and tennis to 13 restaurants and bars. Villa-inspired "Banyan Bungalows" are the latest luxe touch.
- 2. **The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort, Puerto Rico**  
Río Grande **91.38**
- 3. **Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve**  
Dorado **91.33**
- 4. **Wyndham Grand Río Mar Rainforest Beach & Golf Resort**  
Río Grande **91.08**
- 5. **Condado Vanderbilt Hotel**  
San Juan **90.95**

10 BEST RESORTS  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

- 1. **Hotel Hartness**  
Greenville **98.80**  
One year after opening, this 69-room, family-owned hotel is top of its class—and yet another reason to check out one of the state's most vibrant cities.
- 2. **Montage Palmetto Bluff**  
Bluffton **94.55**
- 3. **The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort**  
**93.88**
- 4. **Grand Bohemian Lodge Greenville, Autograph Collection**  
**92.38**
- 5. **The Beach Club at Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina**  
Mount Pleasant **92.00**

- 6. **The Westin Hilton Head Island Resort & Spa**  
**87.65**
- 7. **Wild Dunes Resort**  
Isle of Palms **86.33**
- 8. **Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront Resort**  
**85.79**
- 9. **Beach House Hilton Head Island**  
**84.80**
- 10. **Disney's Hilton Head Island Resort**  
**81.27**

5 BEST RESORTS  
**TEXAS**

- 1. **Omni PGA Frisco Resort**  
Frisco **94.12**  
Just steps from the PGA of America HQ, this new resort has two 18-hole golf courses, plus a 10-hole short course, four swimming pools, and tons of dining and entertainment options.

- 2. **The Woodlands Resort, Curio Collection by Hilton**  
The Woodlands **93.92**
- 3. **The Ritz-Carlton Dallas, Las Colinas**  
Irving **92.75**
- 4. **The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa**  
Houston **92.51**
- 5. **Commodore Perry Estate, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Austin **91.71**

5 BEST RESORTS  
**UTAH**

- 1. **The Lodge at Blue Sky, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Park City **96.13**  
World-class mountain biking and fly-fishing are big draws at this 3,500-acre sanctuary in the Wasatch Mountains, just 20 miles from Park City.

- 2. **Amangiri**  
Canyon Point **95.10**
- 3. **Ulum Moab**  
**93.65**
- 4. **The St. Regis Deer Valley**  
Park City **93.22**
- 5. **Goldener Hirsch, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Park City **92.00**

5 BEST RESORTS  
**WYOMING**

- 1. **The Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch**  
Saratoga **94.37**  
This all-inclusive resort on a working ranch in southwestern Wyoming won last year, too. It gives guests exemplary service, comfortable accommodations, and farm-to-table fare.
- 2. **The Cloudveil, Autograph Collection**  
Jackson **93.40**

- 3. **Four Seasons Resort & Residences Jackson Hole**  
Teton Village **91.31**
- 4. **Rustic Inn Creekside Resort & Spa**  
Jackson **89.94**
- 5. **Amangani**  
Jackson **89.41**

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**ATLANTA**

- 1. **Bellyard, West Midtown Atlanta, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel**  
**96.56**  
With its many iron fixtures and concrete floors, this property reflects West Midtown's stockyard past, while also offering modern amenities such as in-room Pelotons.
- 2. **The St. Regis Atlanta**  
**94.47**
- 3. **InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta**  
**89.30**
- 4. **The Whitley, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Atlanta Buckhead**  
**88.59**
- 5. **Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta**  
**87.18**

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**AUSTIN**

- 1. **Hotel Saint Cecilia**  
**96.25**  
Named for the patron saint of music and poetry, this iconic Bunkhouse Hotels hideaway has just 20 suites, studios, and bungalows set amid lush gardens along the Colorado River.
- 2. **Hotel San José**  
**94.67**
- 3. **Archer Hotel Austin**  
**91.64**
- 4. **JW Marriott Austin**  
**90.13**
- 5. **Austin Proper Hotel & Residences**  
**89.68**



Wildflower Farms, Auberge Resorts Collection  
*Amenities in the Ridge Suite at the No. 2 resort in New York State.*

COURTESY OF AUBERGE RESORTS COLLECTION



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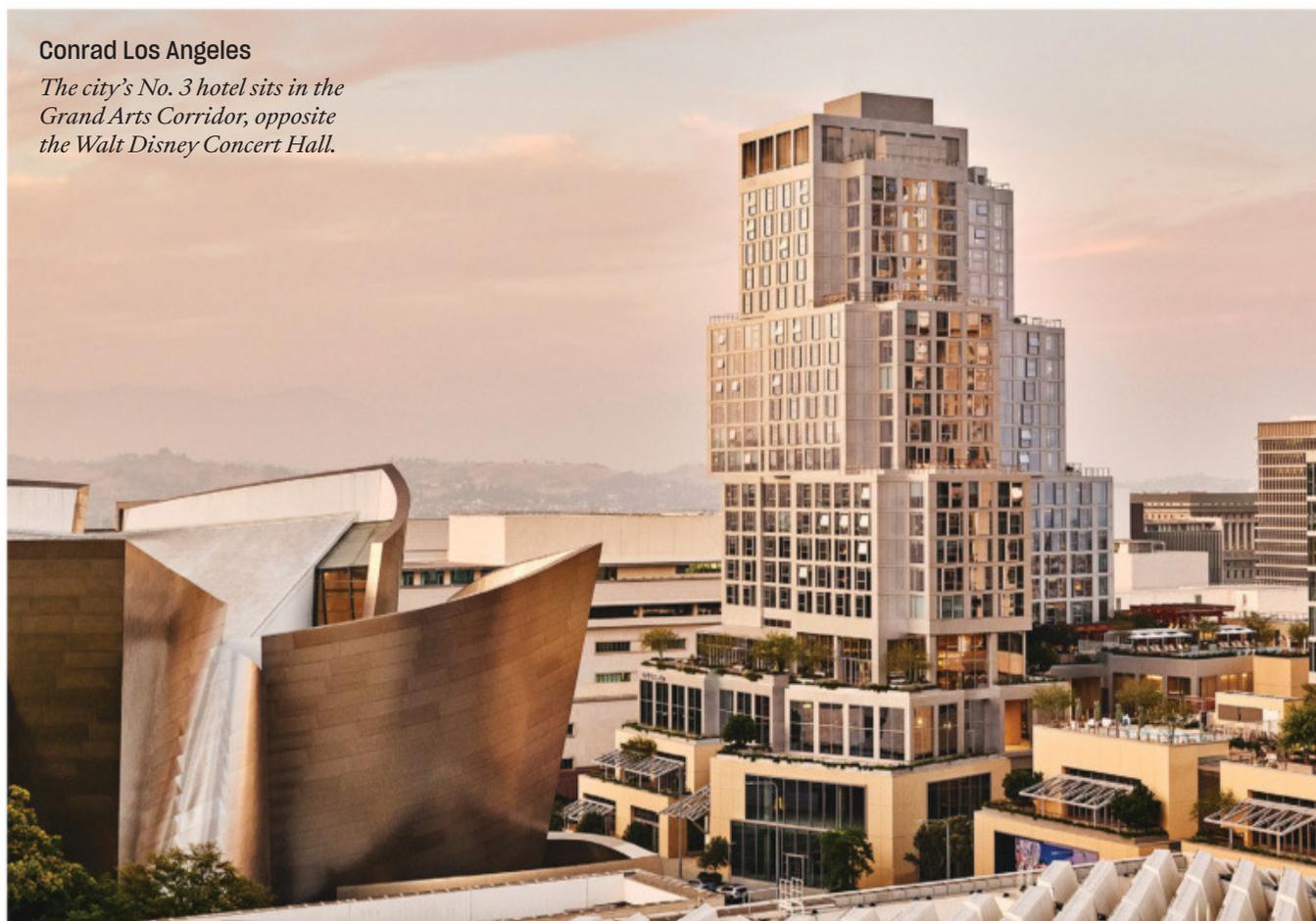


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**Conrad Los Angeles**

*The city's No. 3 hotel sits in the Grand Arts Corridor, opposite the Walt Disney Concert Hall.*



It's all about the game at this 182-room tower next to Coors Field. It has family- and pet-friendly suites and a rooftop plunge pool and deck overlooking the diamond.

2. The Oxford Hotel  
93.75
3. The Maven  
92.67
4. Hotel Clio, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Denver Cherry Creek  
91.29
5. Clayton Hotel & Members Club  
90.48

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**HOUSTON**

1. Lancaster Hotel  
97.64
- With a nearly 100-year legacy, this intimate Theater District hotel stands out for its classic elegance and more than 200 pieces of contemporary art.

2. Hotel ZaZa Houston Museum District  
93.57
3. The Moran Citycentre  
89.87
4. The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston  
89.37
5. Four Seasons Hotel Houston  
86.84

10 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**LAS VEGAS**

1. Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas  
94.36
- Fresh off a major renovation that brought in a lighter aesthetic—as well as the brand's signature lobby clock—this 392-room stunner with a relaxed pool scene offers a welcome reprieve from some of the Strip's excesses.
2. Wynn Las Vegas  
91.07
  3. NoMad Las Vegas  
89.65
  4. Encore Las Vegas  
89.56
  5. The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas  
88.49

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**BOSTON**

1. Raffles Boston  
97.09
- The first Raffles in the U.S., this new Back Bay property pampers guests with butler service, a Guerlain spa, and luxe Garnier Thiebaud linens.
2. Four Seasons Hotel One Dalton Street, Boston  
96.77
  3. The Whitney Hotel Boston  
96.00
  4. The Eliot Hotel  
95.41
  5. Hotel Commonwealth  
92.63

15 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**CHARLESTON**

1. Wentworth Mansion  
96.46
- Claiming the top spot for a second year, this Gilded Age getaway is filled with original Tiffany glass panels and parquet floors. Its restaurant, Circa 1886, is set in the old carriage house.

2. John Rutledge House Inn  
95.81
3. Zero George  
95.76
4. The Spectator Hotel  
93.57
5. Hotel Bennett  
93.54
6. The Dewberry  
93.06
7. The Vendue, Charleston's Art Hotel  
92.67
8. The Loutrel  
92.63
9. Grand Bohemian Hotel Charleston, Autograph Collection  
92.16
10. The Charleston Place  
92.04
11. HarbourView Inn  
91.49
12. French Quarter Inn ★  
90.77
13. Planters Inn  
89.90
14. Emeline  
89.84
15. The Mills House Hotel  
89.03

10 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**CHICAGO**

1. The Langham, Chicago ★  
95.85
- This longtime favorite inside a landmark skyscraper in the middle of the Magnificent Mile has a robust art collection, plus exquisite suites with floor-to-ceiling views of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan.
2. The Peninsula Chicago ★  
95.72
  3. Viceroy Chicago  
95.57
  4. Four Seasons Hotel Chicago  
94.67
  5. Park Hyatt Chicago  
92.82
  6. The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago  
92.60
  7. Hotel Zachary, Chicago, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel  
92.19
  8. Pendry Chicago  
92.00
  9. 21c Museum Hotel Chicago  
89.69

10. Waldorf Astoria Chicago  
88.84

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**DALLAS-FORT WORTH**

1. Hotel Drover, Autograph Collection Fort Worth  
93.69
- Located in the Stockyards National Historic District, this must-be-Texas hotel celebrates the neighborhood's past with Western-inspired furnishings, including hand-tooled leather and stone fireplaces.
2. Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek  
Dallas  
93.29
  3. Hotel Crescent Court  
Dallas  
92.50
  4. The Joule  
Dallas  
91.76
  5. The Adolphus, Autograph Collection  
Dallas  
91.20

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**DENVER**

1. The Rally Hotel  
95.25



# Best Hotel in the World

The Oberoi Rajvilās, Jaipur voted the 'Best Hotel in the World' at Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards, 2024.  
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**LAS VEGAS  
HOTELS** *continued*

6. Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas 88.37
7. The Venetian Resort Las Vegas 87.88
8. The Signature at MGM Grand 86.38
9. Bellagio Resort & Casino 84.73
10. Aria, Las Vegas 84.58

15 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**GREATER LOS ANGELES**

1. Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills 96.22  
With a Jean-Georges restaurant, Bijan boutique, and La Prairie Spa, this 12-story hot spot has all the name-brand glamour you'd expect from a Wilshire Boulevard address.
2. Oceana Santa Monica 94.32
3. Conrad Los Angeles 94.10
4. Hotel Bel-Air Los Angeles 93.68
5. Kimpton La Peer Hotel West Hollywood 93.60
6. Viceroy Santa Monica 92.96
7. Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills 92.56
8. Shutters on the Beach Santa Monica 92.17
9. The Beverly Hills Hotel 91.60
10. Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows Santa Monica 91.09
11. Santa Monica Proper Hotel 89.65
12. Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel 89.25
13. The West Hollywood Edition 89.01
14. The Beverly Hilton 88.00

15. Pendry West Hollywood 87.20

15 BEST RESORTS  
**GREATER MIAMI**

1. The Setai Miami Beach 95.59  
An oceanfront, Art Deco-style haven, the Setai is a favorite with celebrities—and

T+L readers—thanks to its hushed sense of discretion and a can-do staff.

2. Faena Hotel Miami Beach 94.34
3. Four Seasons Hotel at the Surf Club, Surfside, Florida 93.33
4. [T] Nobu Hotel Miami Beach 93.04

4. [T] The Palms Hotel & Spa Miami Beach 93.04
6. W South Beach Miami Beach 92.84
7. Hilton Aventura Miami Aventura 92.77
8. Acqualina Resort & Residences Sunny Isles Beach 91.05
9. The Ritz-Carlton, South Beach Miami Beach 90.43

10. The Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne, Miami 89.52
11. Loews Miami Beach Hotel 88.57
12. The Standard, Miami Beach 88.47
13. Eden Roc Miami Beach 87.30
14. 1 Hotel South Beach Miami Beach 87.20
15. SLS South Beach Miami Beach 86.75

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**NASHVILLE**

1. Thompson Nashville 94.92  
Not far from the Honky-Tonk Highway, the Thompson channels the city's electric scene with whiskey tastings, vinyl-listening events, and a rooftop bar that's one of the most popular in Nashville.
2. The Joseph, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Nashville 92.00
3. Conrad Nashville 90.13
4. Loews Nashville Hotel at Vanderbilt Plaza 89.68
5. Four Seasons Hotel Nashville 89.20

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**NEW ORLEANS**

1. Maison de la Luz 96.53
2. Hotel Peter & Paul 94.59
3. The Windsor Court 93.91
4. Hotel Saint Vincent 91.88
5. Four Seasons Hotel New Orleans 90.90

15 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**NEW YORK CITY**

1. Virgin Hotels New York 96.36  
The party never stops at this 39-story tower with an outdoor pool ▶



*The 1920s-inspired concierge desk at Maison de la Luz.*

**Nº1**

HOTEL IN NEW ORLEANS

**Maison de la Luz**

A LUXE PROPERTY WITH GRAND ALLURE, THE MAISON HAS 67 ROOMS, AS WELL AS VIBRANT LOUNGES FILLED WITH WHIMSICAL TOUCHES. ONE HAS A SECRET OPENING TO THE BAR THROUGH WHICH YOU CAN ORDER A DRINK.

STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON/COURTESY OF MAISON DE LA LUZ

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# Experience the Langham Way

FROM CHICAGO TO JAKARTA, DISCOVER THE CAPTIVATING TOUCHES OF THE LANGHAM HOTELS & RESORTS.

THE READERS of *Travel + Leisure* have weighed in on the top hotel brands in the 2024 World's Best Awards—and it is no wonder that The Langham Hotels & Resorts is among them. Since the 1865 flagship opening of The Langham, London, Europe's first grand hotel, Langham has kept one eye on its storied past and the other on a dazzling future. Celebrities have stayed alongside passionate travelers, and all enjoy Langham's caring, personalized service and its focus on the exceptional in everything from sustainability and digital experiences to wellness and food and drink. These are hotels and resorts with a British heart, an Asian soul, and a global mindset—an approach known as the Langham Way.

## STAY IN A WORK OF ART IN CHICAGO

Voted the #1 hotel in Chicago by *Travel + Leisure* readers in the 2024 World's Best Awards, **The Langham, Chicago** is a luxe sanctuary and a marvel of design from top to bottom. Legendary architect Mies van der Rohe guided the creation of the sleek AMA Plaza (formerly the IBM Building), where the hotel occupies the skyscraper's first 13 floors. Within a bold exterior of black anodized aluminum, The Langham has retained many of the building's original design elements, including Travertine



stone and bronze detailing—while the ground-floor lobby was designed as a tribute to Mies by his architect grandson Dirk Lohan. A warm, welcoming space, the lobby showcases a bust by Spanish sculptor Jaume Plensa, echoing a series of his works at Millennium Park, the city's outdoor sculpture showcase. Also greeting guests in the lobby is a cascade of multicolored glass pendants, which sparkles over the reception desk. These are just a few examples of the more than 140 artworks that adorn the hotel—and fill your stay with beauty.

#### DINE BRILLIANTLY FROM THE UK TO ASIA

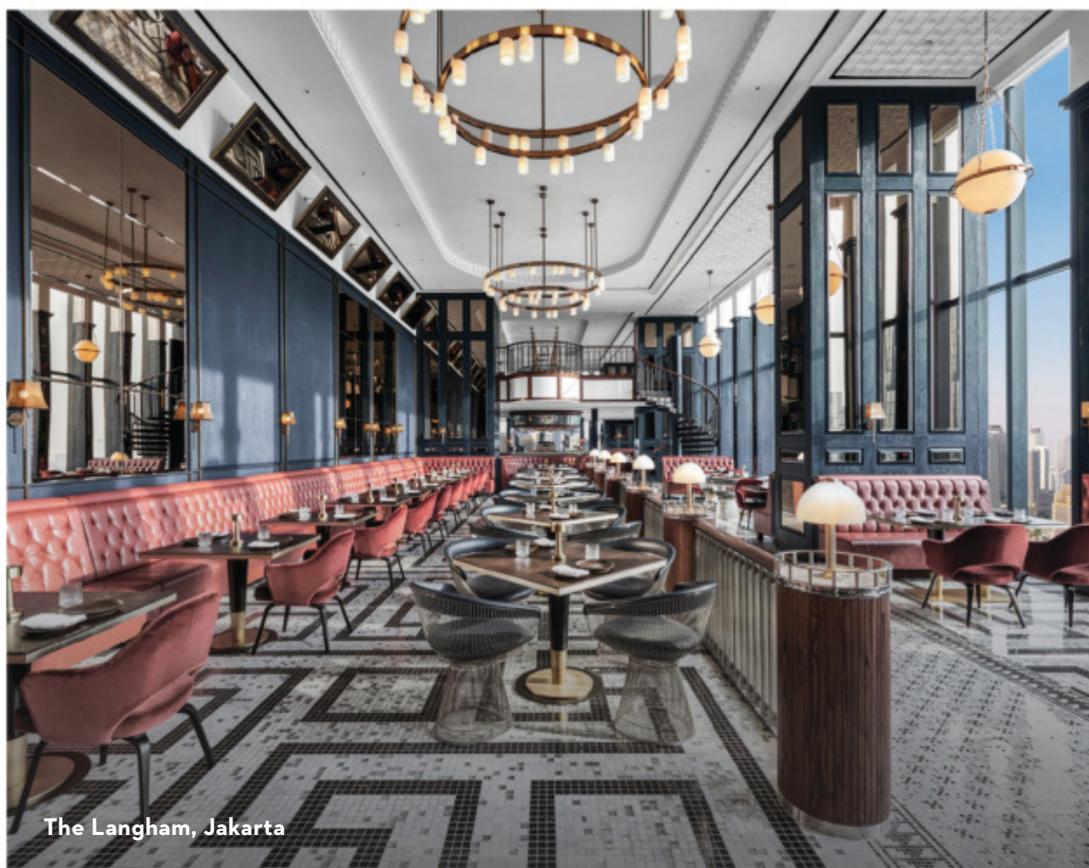
A sojourn at **The Langham, London** is a delicious experience. Explore new dining concepts such as Mimosa, serving French Riviera cuisine, and Chez Roux, offering a rare chance to taste Chef Michel Roux's cooking in London. The latter menu showcases British classics alongside traditional French cooking methods (think Welsh rarebit, or grilled lobster with garlic butter, fries, and béarnaise). At the iconic Artesian Bar—recent winner of one PIN from The Pinnacle Guides—sip an expertly crafted cocktail from the new Alter Ego menu, featuring imaginative flavors such as lychee, daikon, melon, and marshmallow. You can even attend cookery school at Sauce by The Langham, and don't miss Afternoon Tea in the Palm Court, where this British tradition was born; stay tuned for an exciting new concept coming soon.

Your odyssey for the palate continues at **The Langham, Gold Coast**, where guests overlook shimmering aquamarine waters while dining on Australia's luscious natural bounty. East meets West in



the culinary concepts at this hotel, which has opened its own location of T'ang Court, the three-Michelin-star Cantonese restaurant at The Langham, Hong Kong. You'll also find T'ang Court at other Langham hotels such as in Shanghai, whose executive chef visited Gold Coast earlier this year to participate in a spectacular four-hands dinner.

Set in a glittering skyscraper in Indonesia, **The Langham, Jakarta** brings dining traditions to Southeast Asia from around the world. Choose from star-chef British cuisine at Tom's by Tom Aikens, modern French food and pastries at Alice, and "Iron Chef" Japanese and Western-influenced creations at Morimoto Jakarta, among others. Late in 2023, the hotel opened Artesian Bar Jakarta, a rooftop outpost of the beloved London destination bar; perched on the 65th floor, it boasts innovative cocktails and astonishing views.



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<p><b>NEW YORK CITY HOTELS</b> <i>continued</i></p> <p>deck—Sir Richard Branson’s vision of a go-go Manhattan hotel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Lowell 96.13</li> <li>The Roxy Hotel 94.43</li> <li>The Carlyle, a Rosewood Hotel 94.40</li> <li>Pendry Manhattan West 94.12</li> <li>Loews Regency New York 93.91</li> <li>The Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad 93.78</li> <li>Archer Hotel New York 93.71</li> <li>The Wall Street Hotel 93.12</li> <li>The St. Regis New York 92.32</li> <li>Baccarat Hotel New York 91.82</li> <li>The Plaza Hotel 91.36</li> <li>Four Seasons Hotel New York Downtown 91.16</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arlo Midtown 90.43</li> <li>The Beekman, a Thompson Hotel 90.09</li> </ol> <p>3 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>SAN DIEGO</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pendry San Diego 89.14</li> </ol> <p>Pendry has dialed up the coastal cool at this spot near Petco Park with an in-house beer hall, rooftop pool, and rental guitars and skateboards.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>InterContinental San Diego 87.05</li> <li>Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina 86.17</li> </ol> <p>5 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>SANTA FE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Inn of The Five Graces 93.74</li> </ol> <p>A longtime voter favorite, the inn has a New Mexico-meets-Morocco aesthetic, with suites bedecked in</p>	<p>handmade textiles and carved-wood doors and headboards. The spa is world-class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rosewood Inn of the Anasazi 91.50</li> <li>Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado 89.60</li> <li>Inn &amp; Spa at Loretto 89.25</li> <li>La Posada de Santa Fe, a Tribute Portfolio Resort &amp; Spa 88.39</li> </ol> <p>5 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>SAN FRANCISCO</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hotel Zephyr 94.88</li> </ol> <p>A first-time winner, this family-friendly property in the heart of Fisherman’s Wharf is all about fun, with a massive outdoor play area and an indoor game room.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco at Embarcadero 93.80</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beacon Grand, a Union Square Hotel 92.96</li> <li>The St. Regis San Francisco 90.35</li> <li>Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco 89.00</li> </ol> <p>5 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>SAVANNAH</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perry Lane Hotel, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Savannah 91.14</li> </ol> <p>The belle of Georgia’s oldest city, this hotel in the heart of the historic district has an impeccably trained staff and contemporary rooms and suites.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Alida, Savannah, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel 90.09</li> <li>JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside District 88.35</li> <li>The Bohemian Hotel Savannah Riverfront, Autograph Collection 86.69</li> <li>The Kimpton Brice 83.60</li> </ol>	<p>5 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>SEATTLE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thompson Seattle 93.27</li> </ol> <p>Steps from Pike Place Market with views of Puget Sound, the sleek Thompson lends some contemporary cool to this tech hub.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Edgewater Hotel 92.21</li> <li>Hotel Andra Seattle - MGallery Collection 91.25</li> <li>Four Seasons Hotel Seattle 89.48</li> <li>Inn at the Market 87.59</li> </ol> <p>10 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>WASHINGTON, D.C.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Jefferson, Washington DC ★ 96.00</li> </ol> <p>Long considered one of the capital’s best, this 1923 Beaux-Arts landmark has 99 guest rooms. The décor was inspired by the eponymous president’s travels in Paris and his Virginia home, Monticello.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Viceroy Washington DC 95.86</li> <li>The Hay-Adams ★ 94.71</li> <li>The Dupont Circle 93.20</li> <li>Hotel Zena Washington DC 92.55</li> <li>Riggs Washington DC 91.11</li> <li>Sofitel Washington DC Lafayette Square 89.77</li> <li>Conrad Washington DC 89.67</li> <li>Willard InterContinental Washington, D.C. 89.26</li> <li>The Ritz-Carlton Georgetown, Washington, D.C. 88.84</li> </ol>
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*A couples treatment room in the spa at the No. 1 hotel in Wyoming.*

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# CANADA HOTELS

With favorites peppered all across this vast country, readers sought out luxury, trusted brands, and bespoke service this year.

<p><b>5 BEST RESORTS CANADA</b></p> <p>1. <b>Manoir Hovey</b> North Hatley, Quebec <b>97.00</b></p> <p>This Relais &amp; Châteaux retreat in the countryside east of Montreal has just 39 rooms, some with</p>	<p>views of Lake Massawippi and all with a soothing look.</p> <p>2. <b>Fairmont Chateau Whistler</b> ★ British Columbia <b>92.95</b></p> <p>3. <b>Four Seasons Resort &amp; Residences Whistler</b> British Columbia <b>92.00</b></p>	<p>4. <b>Fairmont Banff Springs</b> Alberta <b>91.85</b></p> <p>5. <b>Cabot Cape Breton</b> Inverness, Nova Scotia <b>91.50</b></p>	<p><b>10 BEST CITY HOTELS CANADA</b></p> <p>1. <b>The St. Regis Toronto</b> <b>95.20</b></p> <p>Discreet butler service and an enviable downtown location make this pet-friendly option a reader favorite.</p> <p>2. <b>Fairmont Empress</b> Victoria, British Columbia <b>94.61</b></p> <p>3. <b>Rosewood Hotel Georgia</b> Vancouver <b>94.25</b></p> <p>4. <b>The Ritz-Carlton, Toronto</b> <b>93.47</b></p>	<p>5. <b>The Ritz-Carlton, Montreal</b> <b>93.14</b></p> <p>6. <b>Four Seasons Hotel Toronto</b> <b>92.44</b></p> <p>7. <b>Auberge Saint-Antoine</b> ★ Quebec City <b>92.00</b></p> <p>8. <b>Four Seasons Hotel Montréal</b> <b>91.25</b></p> <p>9. <b>Fairmont Pacific Rim</b> Vancouver <b>90.28</b></p> <p>10. <b>Fairmont Le Château Frontenac</b> Quebec City <b>89.78</b></p>
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## Nº1

RESORT IN THE CARIBBEAN

### Secret Bay

THIS ECO-FORWARD RESORT IN DOMINICA IMPRESSES WITH ITS EPIC VIEWS AND TREE-HOUSE-INSPIRED VILLAS, EACH OF WHICH HAS A PRIVATE PLUNGE POOL.

*Rounding a corner to Ripaton Beach, near a Secret Bay villa.*

# CARIBBEAN, BERMUDA & THE BAHAMAS HOTELS

In addition to sun, sea, and sand, T+L readers picked these resorts on the strength of their lush, eco-friendly environments and engagement with the local community.

<p><b>25 BEST RESORTS CARIBBEAN</b></p> <p>1. <b>Secret Bay</b> Dominica <b>98.53</b></p> <p>2. <b>Tensing Pen</b> Negril, Jamaica <b>98.07</b></p> <p>3. <b>Baoase Luxury Resort</b> Curaçao <b>97.79</b></p> <p>4. <b>Jade Mountain</b> ★ St. Lucia <b>97.75</b></p>	<p>5. <b>Calabash Hotel</b> Grenada <b>97.11</b></p> <p>6. <b>Jamaica Inn</b> ★ Ocho Rios, Jamaica <b>95.38</b></p> <p>7. <b>The Loren at Pink Beach</b> Bermuda <b>95.19</b></p> <p>8. <b>Lovango Resort &amp; Beach Club</b> St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands <b>95.15</b> ▶</p>
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**CARIBBEAN RESORTS**  
*continued*

9. **Jumby Bay Island, Oetker Collection**  
Antigua **94.96**
10. **Rockhouse**  
Negril, Jamaica **94.90**
11. **Seven Stars Resort & Spa**  
Providenciales, Turks and Caicos **94.79**
12. **Curtain Bluff**  
Antigua **94.15**
13. **Cap Maison**  
St. Lucia **93.83**
14. **Anse Chastanet Resort**  
St. Lucia **93.64**
15. **Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort**  
St. Lucia **93.56**
16. **Ambergris Cay**  
Turks and Caicos **93.18**
17. **The Ocean Club, a Four Seasons Resort, Bahamas**  
Paradise Island **93.14**
18. **[T] Half Moon**  
Montego Bay, Jamaica **93.04**
18. **[T] Malliouhana**  
Anguilla **93.04**
20. **Frangipani Beach Resort**  
Anguilla **93.00**
21. **Rosewood Little Dix Bay**  
Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands **92.86**
22. **Sugar Beach, a Viceroy Resort**  
St. Lucia **92.69**
23. **Aurora Anguilla Resort & Golf Club**  
**92.65**
24. **The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman**  
Cayman Islands **92.53**
25. **Couples Sans Souci**  
Ocho Rios, Jamaica **92.50**

# Nº1

CITY HOTEL IN MEXICO

## Rosewood San Miguel de Allende

LOCATED IN THIS YEAR'S NO. 1 CITY IN THE WORLD, THIS MAJESTIC PROPERTY IS RECOGNIZED FOR ITS CONTEMPORARY ART AND HAS EXPANSIVE ROOMS AND SUITES, SOME WITH PRIVATE TERRACES.



*A sun-filled room at the Rosewood San Miguel de Allende.*

9. **Chileno Bay Resort & Residences, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Cabo San Lucas **96.27**
10. **[T] Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita**  
**96.00**
10. **[T] Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal**  
Cabo San Lucas **96.00**
12. **The Cape, a Thompson Hotel**  
Cabo San Lucas **95.87**
13. **Esperanza, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Cabo San Lucas **95.49**
14. **Garza Blanca Resort & Spa Los Cabos**  
Cabo San Lucas **95.45**
15. **Étéreo, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Punta Maroma **95.15**
16. **W Punta de Mita**  
Punta Mita **94.75**
17. **Montage Los Cabos**  
Cabo San Lucas **94.22**
18. **One&Only Palmilla**  
San José del Cabo **93.58**
19. **Vidanta Riviera Maya**  
Playa Paraíso **93.57**
20. **Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas**  
La Ribera **93.50**
21. **Nobu Hotel Los Cabos**  
Cabo San Lucas **93.41**
22. **One&Only Mandarin**  
Riviera Nayarit **93.27**
23. **Marquis Los Cabos**  
San José del Cabo **93.18**
24. **Grand Velas Riviera Maya**  
Playa del Carmen **92.95**
25. **Fairmont Mayakoba**  
Playa del Carmen **92.91**

# MEXICO HOTELS

Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende continue to reign supreme for those who prefer urban attractions and amenities. For readers who went to resorts, the Riviera Maya was a particular favorite this year.

25 BEST RESORTS  
**MEXICO**

1. **La Casa de la Playa**  
Playa del Carmen **99.76**  
An enclave within Xcaret, on the Riviera Maya, this resort is known for its intimate atmosphere and spa.
2. **Las Ventanas al Paraíso, a Rosewood Resort**  
San José del Cabo **97.94**
3. **Hotel Xcaret México**  
Playa del Carmen **97.33**

4. **Viceroy Riviera Maya**  
Playa del Carmen **97.04**
5. **Susurros del Corazón, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Punta de Mita **96.63**
6. **Rosewood Mayakoba ★**  
Playa del Carmen **96.44**
7. **Hotel Xcaret Arte**  
Playa del Carmen **96.41**
8. **Viceroy Los Cabos**  
San José del Cabo **96.33**

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**MEXICO**

1. **Rosewood San Miguel de Allende**  
**95.78**
2. **Casa de Sierra Nevada, a Belmond Hotel, San Miguel de Allende**  
**94.20**
3. **The Ritz-Carlton, Mexico City**  
**94.18**
4. **Colima 71**  
Mexico City **94.14**
5. **Four Seasons Hotel Mexico City**  
**93.45**

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# CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA HOTELS

Rainforests, wildlife, and intimate beaches are popular draws in this region, where Costa Rica and Peru claimed many of the top-ranked stays.

<p>10 BEST CITY HOTELS <b>CENTRAL &amp; SOUTH AMERICA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Palacio del Inka, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Cusco</b> Peru <b>98.18</b> Occupying a 500-year-old mansion in the heart of Cuzco, this gilded</li> </ol>	<p>hotel is filled with colonial-era art and antiques. Readers also praised the Peruvian cuisine.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Monasterio, a Belmond Hotel, Cusco</b> Peru <b>97.47</b></li> <li><b>Sofitel Legend Casco Viejo</b> Panama City <b>97.42</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Singular Santiago</b> Chile <b>96.44</b></li> <li><b>Rosewood São Paulo</b> <b>96.27</b></li> <li><b>Inkaterra La Casona</b> Cuzco, Peru <b>95.85</b></li> <li><b>Four Seasons Hotel Bogotá</b> Colombia <b>95.33</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hotel B</b> Lima, Peru <b>95.29</b></li> <li><b>Casa San Agustín</b> Cartagena, Colombia <b>94.83</b></li> <li><b>W Bogotá</b> Colombia <b>94.62</b></li> </ol>
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*Private suites are surrounded by rainforest at Nayara Tented Camp.*

**Nº1**

RESORT IN CENTRAL AMERICA

## Nayara Tented Camp

VOTERS RAVED ABOUT THIS CLIFFTOP CAMP'S TENTED SUITES, EACH OF WHICH HAS A PRIVATE POOL AND IMPRESSIVE VIEWS OF ARENAL VOLCANO.

### 10 BEST RESORTS

#### CENTRAL AMERICA

- Nayara Tented Camp**  
Greater Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica **98.24**
- Nayara Springs**  
Greater Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica **98.06**
- Hotel Belmar**  
Monteverde, Costa Rica **96.32**
- Nayara Gardens** ★  
Greater Arenal Volcano National Park, Costa Rica **96.14**
- Blancaneaux Lodge**  
Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve, Belize **96.00**
- Hacienda AltaGracia, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica **94.96**
- Hamanasi Adventure & Dive Resort**  
Hopkins Village, Belize **94.73**
- Amor Arenal**  
La Fortuna, Costa Rica **94.65**
- Río Celeste Hideaway Hotel**  
Tenorio Volcano National Park, Costa Rica **94.16**
- Kimpton Grand Roatán Resort & Spa**  
Honduras **94.00**

### 5 BEST RESORTS SOUTH AMERICA

- Tierra Atacama**  
San Pedro de Atacama, Chile **98.93**  
This retreat on the Chilean Altiplano feels otherworldly thanks to the high-desert setting and its proximity to natural hot springs. Guests appreciated its commitment to sustainability.
- Hotel Casa Real**  
Santiago, Chile **98.50**
- Cavas Wine Lodge**  
Mendoza, Argentina **97.49**
- Tierra Patagonia Hotel & Spa**  
Torres del Paine National Park, Chile **97.14**
- Hotel Paracas, a Luxury Collection Resort, Paracas**  
Peru **96.87**

COURTESY OF NAYARA TENTED CAMP



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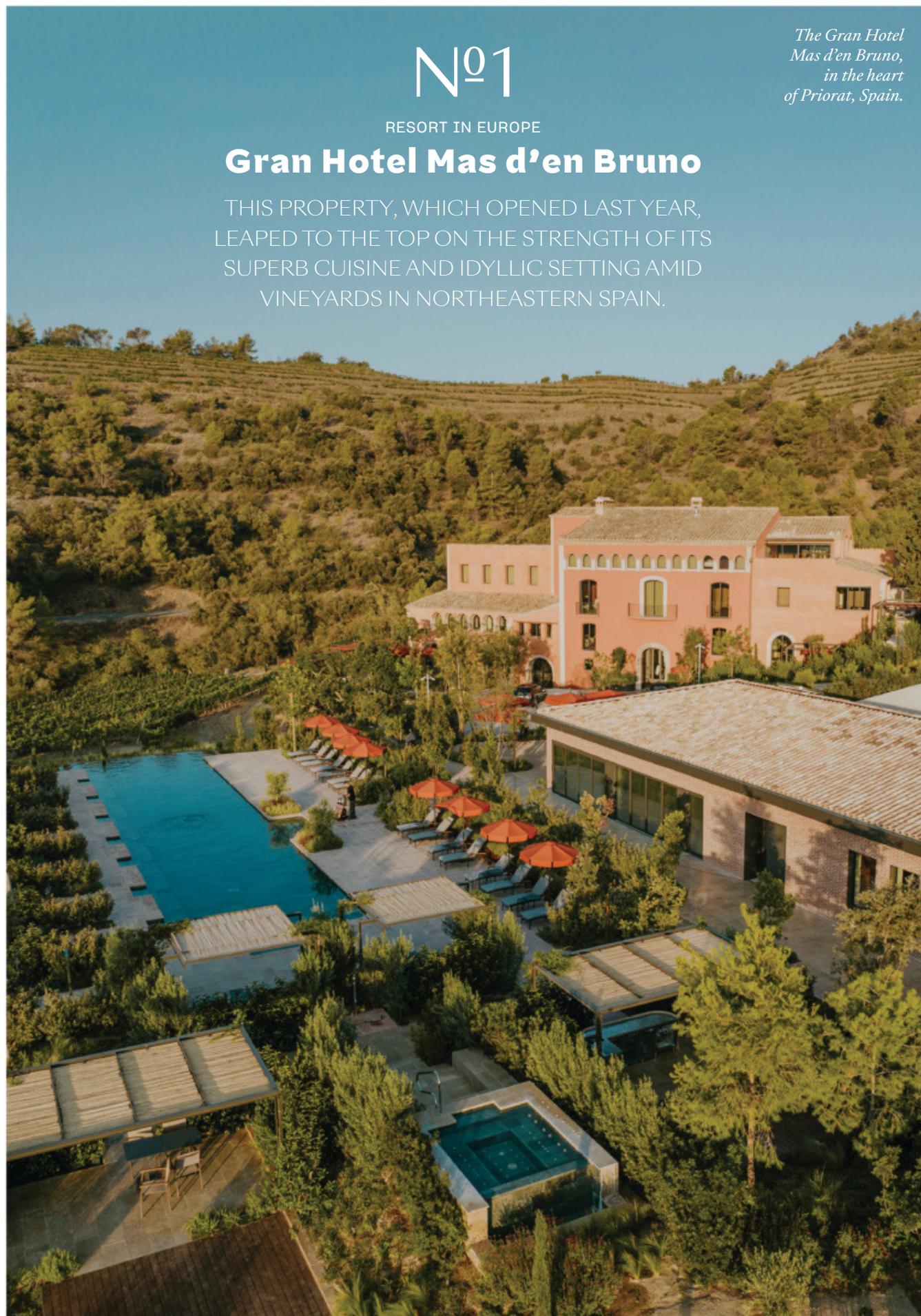
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# EUROPE HOTELS

T+L readers preferred ultra-luxe properties this year—with brands like Four Seasons, the Ritz-Carlton, and Rosewood standing out. And in the city category, London hotels received six of 10 nods.



# Nº1

RESORT IN EUROPE

## Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno

THIS PROPERTY, WHICH OPENED LAST YEAR, LEAPED TO THE TOP ON THE STRENGTH OF ITS SUPERB CUISINE AND IDYLIC SETTING AMID VINEYARDS IN NORTHEASTERN SPAIN.

*The Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno, in the heart of Priorat, Spain.*

### 10 BEST CITY HOTELS

#### EUROPE

1. **The Peninsula Istanbul**  
98.77  
Set in refurbished historic buildings along the Bosphorus, this 2023 debut instantly won over voters with its luxurious feel—and spectacular 82-foot indoor pool.
2. **Flemings Mayfair London** 98.50
3. **Raffles London at The OWO**  
98.40
4. **The Egerton House Hotel London** 98.25
5. **J.K. Place Roma Rome** 97.80
6. **Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues Geneva**  
97.41
7. **Hotel Café Royal London** 97.40
8. **Hotel 41 London** 97.35
9. **Shangri-La The Shard, London**  
97.18
10. **[T] Hotel Copernicus Kraków, Poland** 97.07
10. **[T] The Milestone Hotel & Residences London** 97.07

### 10 BEST RESORTS

#### EUROPE

1. **Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno**  
Torroja del Priorat, Spain 99.33
2. **Argos in Cappadocia Turkey** 99.09
3. **Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa Champillon, France** 98.67
4. **Kalesma Mykonos Greece** 98.47
5. **Marbella Club Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa Marbella, Spain** 97.89
6. **Domaine des Etangs, Auberge Resorts Collection Massignac, France** 97.80
7. **Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria Sorrento, Italy** 97.71
8. **Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni Lake Como, Italy** 97.13

COURTESY OF GRAN HOTEL MAS D'EN BRUNO

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## EXCEPTIONAL HONG KONG

Among the world's most fascinating cities, Hong Kong offers a beautiful balance between old and new, city and nature.

WITH AN IDEAL MIX of culture, dining, art, and shopping, Hong Kong is one of the most captivating cities in Asia. "It's truly a city like no other, full of paradoxes where modernity seamlessly blends with rich traditions," says Erina Pindar, a T+L 2024 A-List Travel Advisor, who rediscovered the city's allure in a recent return visit. Each neighborhood adds another vibrant layer to Hong Kong's many facets and hidden gems.

Whether it's viewing the city from The Peak, a hilltop vantage point overlooking the entire panorama, or soaring high on a mesmerizing helicopter tour, you're always getting a fresh perspective. "Seeing the city from above is always a quick way to understand the depth and breadth of Hong Kong," explains Pindar. "The stunning natural landscape is as vast and wide as the city is vertical—it's a perfect balance."

One must-do is to see the city through the eyes of its artists. "At the top of my list was delving into the up-and-coming arts scene," says Pindar, who chose The Peninsula Hong Kong as her base. "The hotel's concierges delivered, from arranging a tour at the Hong Kong Palace Museum to an educational trend overview at Christie's Hong Kong," and even a behind-the-scenes tour of M+ led by the museum director.



*“There is this beautiful dichotomy of old-world glamour and modern sensibilities. The heritage of the city’s oldest hotel is palpable the moment you step through the door.”*

**ERINA PINDAR, TRAVEL + LEISURE TRAVEL ADVISORY BOARD**

Since opening in 2022, both the Palace Museum and M+ have quickly left their mark on the cultural landscape. The Palace Museum has more than 900 loans from the Beijing Palace Museum, the largest collection of Chinese antiquities outside the capital. On the contemporary art side, the M+ has gained comparison to the world’s best modern art museums in New York and London, exhibiting some of the most well-known figures today.

Hong Kong has also taken its place among the world’s greatest food cities, from traditional dim sum to international haute cuisine. Perched on the 28th floor of The Peninsula Hong Kong, Felix is a pure epicurean delight with its spectacular views, eclectic Philippe Starck design, and menu by accomplished culinarian Aurélie Altemaire. “Her mastery of global flavors is evident,” says Pindar, noting creative dishes like briny caviar and sweet scallops.

Beyond the glamorous designer shops and sleek rooftop bars, Hong Kong has lovely pockets of green, centuries-old temples, and quiet beaches nearby. “It’s surrounded by lush mountains, country parks, and over 250 islands, offering ample opportunities for hiking, cycling, and water sports,” says Pindar. As for indoor leisure, she wouldn’t miss an elegant afternoon tea alongside Victoria Harbour at “The Pen,” her luxe home-away-from-home.

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**THE PENINSULA**

# Nº1

RESORT IN GREECE

## Kalesma Mykonos

THE CYCLADIC ISLAND PROPERTY, WHICH OPENED IN 2021, ROSE TO THE TOP OF THE LIST THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF ITS SECLUDED LOCATION, DISTINCTIVE FOOD, AND REGIONALLY INSPIRED ARCHITECTURE.

### EUROPE RESORTS *continued*

- 9. **Andronis Boutique Hotel**  
Santorini, Greece **97.07**
- 10. **Airelles Courchevel**  
France **96.94**

### 5 BEST RESORTS **FRANCE**

- 1. **Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa**  
Champillon **98.67**  
Amid the hills of the eponymous wine

region, this retreat has rooms fitted with CHAMPAGNE PLEASE buttons to summon the bubbly. The 16,000-square-foot spa got raves, too.

- 2. **Domaine des Etangs, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Massignac **97.80**
- 3. **Airelles Courchevel**  
**96.94**
- 4. **Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, a Four Seasons Hotel**  
St.-Jean-Cap-Ferrat **96.89**

- 5. **Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc, Oetker Collection**  
Cap d'Antibes **96.00**

### 10 BEST RESORTS **GREECE**

- 1. **Kalesma Mykonos**  
**98.47**
- 2. **Andronis Boutique Hotel**  
Santorini **97.07**
- 3. **Santa Marina, a Luxury Collection Resort, Mykonos**  
**96.47**



*The pool at Kalesma Mykonos.*  
**RIGHT, FROM TOP** Lunch at Pere Ubu, the on-site restaurant; the terrace of a suite.



MARCO ARGUELLO

# EPIC ADVENTURES

## BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES



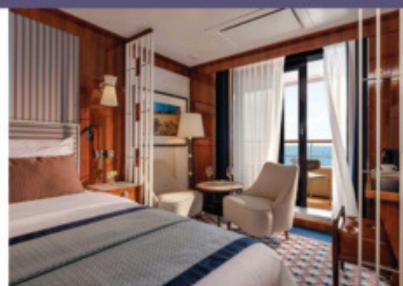
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The sunlit writing room at the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria.

# Nº1

RESORT IN ITALY

## Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria

ON A CLIFF OVERLOOKING SORRENTO BAY, THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN RUN BY THE SAME FAMILY SINCE 1834. AMONG ITS MANY PAST GUESTS IS ITALIAN ACTRESS SOPHIA LOREN.

- 9. **Il San Pietro di Positano**  
95.37
- 10. **Borgo Egnazia**  
Savellettri di Fasano  
95.17

### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS SCANDINAVIA

- 1. **Hotel Sanders**  
Copenhagen 93.11  
This small property has muscled out more than one grande dame with its cozy-yet-artfully designed rooms and suites, as well as an obliging staff and an array of inviting public spaces.
- 2. **Grand Hôtel Stockholm**  
91.48
- 3. **Hotel d'Angleterre**  
Copenhagen 90.92
- 4. **Villa Copenhagen**  
87.26
- 5. **Grand Hotel Oslo**  
86.89

### 5 BEST RESORTS SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

- 1. **Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno**  
Torroja del Priorat, Spain 99.33  
*See the Best Resorts in Europe, page 104.*
- 2. **Marbella Club Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa**  
Marbella, Spain 97.89
- 3. **Cap Rocat**  
Mallorca, Spain 96.71

- 4. **Six Senses Douro Valley**  
Lamego, Portugal 96.14
- 5. **Vila Vita Parc**  
Porches, Portugal 95.79

### 5 BEST RESORTS U.K. AND IRELAND

- 1. **Ballyfin**  
County Laois, Ireland 96.22  
This Irish escape is nothing short of spectacular, with attentive staff, antique furnishings, and cuisine that gets attention because of ingredients grown on site.
- 2. **Ashford Castle ★**  
County Mayo, Ireland 95.69
- 3. **Adare Manor**  
County Limerick, Ireland 95.45
- 4. **The Lodge at Ashford Castle**  
County Mayo, Ireland 95.20
- 5. **Gleneagles**  
Auchterarder, Scotland 93.56

### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS AMSTERDAM

- 1. **Conservatorium**  
96.72  
The location of this stunning hotel—near the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, and the music academy from ▶

### GREECE RESORTS continued

- 4. **Mandarin Oriental, Costa Navarino**  
Pylos 96.40
- 5. **Andronis Arcadia**  
Santorini 95.32
- 6. **Sani Asterias**  
Halkidiki 95.20
- 7. **Katikies Santorini**  
94.00
- 8. **Andronis Luxury Suites**  
Santorini 93.71
- 9. **Grace Hotel, Auberge Resorts Collection**  
Santorini 92.50
- 10. **Amanzoe**  
Porto Heli 92.34

### 3 BEST RESORTS ICELAND

- 1. **The Retreat at Blue Lagoon**  
Grindavík 92.00
- 2. **Fosshotel Glacier Lagoon**  
Öræfi 90.25
- 3. **Silica Hotel**  
Grindavík 90.17

### 10 BEST RESORTS ITALY

- 1. **Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria**  
Sorrento 97.71

- 2. **Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni**  
Lake Como 97.13
- 3. **Mandarin Oriental, Lago di Como**  
Lake Como 96.67
- 4. **Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco**  
Montalcino 96.25
- 5. **Borgo Santandrea**  
Conca dei Marini 95.83
- 6. **Grand Hotel Tremezzo**  
Lake Como 95.63
- 7. **Caruso, a Belmond Hotel, Amalfi Coast**  
Ravello 95.56
- 8. **Grand Hotel Timeo, a Belmond Hotel, Taormina**  
95.47



No 1

RESORT IN ICELAND

**The Retreat at Blue Lagoon Iceland**

NORDIC STYLE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS AT THIS LUXE HOTEL NEXT TO ONE OF ICELAND'S PREMIER NATURAL ATTRACTIONS.

*The Retreat at Blue Lagoon Iceland has private pools fed by water from the hot springs.*

**AMSTERDAM HOTELS** *continued*

- which it borrows its name—can't be beat. A highlight for readers? The free classical music concerts in the atrium every weekend.
- 2. De L'Europe Amsterdam 94.40
- 3. Pulitzer Amsterdam 91.92
- 4. Anantara Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky Amsterdam 89.52
- 5. Amsterdam Marriott Hotel 84.39

3 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**ATHENS**

- 1. Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel Athens 94.78  
The first Four Seasons in Greece, this resort on the Athens Riviera has multiple pools, access to beaches, and views of the Aegean and the pine-covered hills.
- 2. A77 Suites 94.43
- 3. King George, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Athens 93.87

5 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**BARCELONA**

- 1. Majestic Hotel & Spa Barcelona 92.80

Holding court over the Passeig de Gràcia, a famed boulevard in Barcelona, this grand hotel has welcomed guests for more than a century. It has elegant rooms and a 1,000-piece art collection.

- 2. Mandarin Oriental, Barcelona 90.78
- 3. W Barcelona 88.89
- 4. Cotton House Hotel, Autograph Collection 88.80
- 5. Almanac Barcelona 88.26

3 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**BERLIN**

- 1. The Ritz-Carlton, Berlin 93.20

The spirit of 1920s Berlin and Marlene Dietrich, who pops up in artwork around the hotel, presides over this Art Deco-inspired property located just steps from the Tiergarten.

- 2. Grand Hyatt Berlin 86.35
- 3. 25Hours Hotel Bikini Berlin 84.05

3 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**DUBLIN**

- 1. The Merrion 95.20  
Spread across four restored Georgian town houses in the city center, the 142-key Merrion counts among its amenities a Michelin two-starred restaurant

and a private art collection.

- 2. The Westbury 92.39
- 3. The Shelbourne, Autograph Collection 90.86

3 BEST CITY HOTELS  
**FLORENCE**

- 1. Four Seasons Hotel Firenze 96.67  
A short walk from the Duomo, this property has distinctive room options, including some with frescoed ceilings, some with skylights, and some with fireplaces—all surrounded by immaculate gardens.
- 2. The St. Regis Florence 94.35
- 3. The Place Firenze 92.27

COURTESY OF BLUE LAGOON ICELAND

<p><b>3 BEST CITY HOTELS ISTANBUL</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Peninsula Istanbul</b> 98.77 <i>See the Best City Hotels in Europe, page 104.</i></li> <li><b>Shangri-La Bosphorus</b> 93.50</li> <li><b>Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at the Bosphorus</b> 92.27</li> </ol>	<p><b>10 BEST CITY HOTELS LONDON</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Flemings Mayfair</b> 98.50 Perfectly British, and not far from Buckingham Palace, this is one of London's oldest hotels, though its many rooms and suites—not to mention its Michelin-starred restaurant—are thoroughly au courant.</li> <li><b>Raffles London at The OWO</b> 98.40</li> <li><b>The Egerton House Hotel</b> 98.25</li> <li><b>Hotel Café Royal</b> 97.40</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hotel 41</b> 97.35</li> <li><b>Shangri-La The Shard, London</b> 97.18</li> <li><b>The Milestone Hotel &amp; Residences</b> 97.07</li> <li><b>Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London</b> 97.00</li> <li><b>Corinthia London</b> 96.63</li> <li><b>[T] The Lanesborough, Oetker Collection</b> 96.00</li> <li><b>[T] The Rubens at the Palace</b> 96.00</li> </ol>	<p><b>3 BEST CITY HOTELS MADRID</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Rosewood Villa Magna</b> 96.71 Steps from Madrid's "Golden Triangle" of art museums, this luxe property on the site of a former villa has held the top spot for the past three years.</li> <li><b>Mandarin Oriental Ritz, Madrid</b> 96.28</li> <li><b>Four Seasons Hotel Madrid</b> 95.27</li> </ol> <p><b>10 BEST CITY HOTELS PARIS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mandarin Oriental, Paris</b> 96.00 A tranquil garden, rotating art exhibitions, and a spa with bespoke treatments define this oasis on the legendary shopping street Rue St.-Honoré.</li> <li><b>Hôtel Lutetia</b> 95.86</li> <li><b>Ritz Paris</b> 95.61</li> <li><b>Relais Christine</b> 95.50</li> <li><b>Hôtel de Crillon, a Rosewood Hotel</b> 95.41</li> <li><b>Le Bristol Paris, Oetker Collection</b> 94.86</li> <li><b>Bulgari Hotel Paris</b> 94.17</li> <li><b>Hotel Grand Powers</b> 94.13</li> <li><b>Four Seasons Hotel George V, Paris</b> 93.96</li> <li><b>Grand Hotel du Palais Royal</b> 93.29</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hotel de la Ville, a Rocco Forte Hotel</b> 96.95</li> <li><b>Bulgari Hotel Roma</b> 95.60</li> <li><b>Hotel Eden</b> 94.50</li> <li><b>Rome Cavalieri, a Waldorf Astoria Hotel</b> 93.78</li> </ol> <p><b>5 BEST CITY HOTELS VENICE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hotel Cipriani, a Belmond Hotel, Venice</b> 95.09 This romantic, 96-key hideaway is a study in old-school Italian glamour, with antique furnishings, a heated saltwater swimming pool, and an elegant sailing yacht for excursions.</li> <li><b>JW Marriott Venice Resort &amp; Spa</b> 94.91</li> <li><b>The St. Regis Venice</b> 94.29</li> <li><b>Aman Venice</b> 92.31</li> <li><b>Hotel Excelsior Venice Lido Resort</b> 92.22</li> </ol> <p><b>5 BEST CITY HOTELS VIENNA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hotel Bristol, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Vienna</b> 94.89 History buffs rejoice: the Bristol revels in period furnishings, cocooning guests in rooms with chandeliers, ornate fabrics, and marble baths. Don't be surprised if you hear melodies from the opera house next door through an open window.</li> <li><b>Rosewood Vienna</b> 93.64</li> <li><b>The Ritz-Carlton, Vienna</b> 92.97</li> <li><b>Hotel Sacher Wien</b> 92.20</li> <li><b>Hotel Imperial, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Vienna</b> 92.00</li> </ol>
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**Hôtel de Crillon, a Rosewood Hotel**  
*The Jardin d'Hiver at the No. 5 city hotel in Paris.*

LAUREN LUXENBERG/COURTESY OF HÔTEL DE CRILLON, A ROSEWOOD HOTEL



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# AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST HOTELS

Spanning 11 countries, these properties offer experiences as diverse as the region. The one thing they have in common? The settings, whether in a city center, a private game reserve, or steps from the sea, are second to none.



*Elephant-spotting from a lounge area at Monwana Game Lodge.*

## Nº1

SAFARI LODGE

### Monwana Game Lodge

IN GREATER KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, MONWANA HAS FANTASTIC WILDLIFE VIEWING RIGHT FROM THE LODGE, WHICH HAS JUST SIX SUITES AND ONE PRIVATE VILLA, ALL EQUIPPED WITH HEATED PLUNGE POOLS.

#### 5 BEST RESORTS NORTH AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

- Raffles The Palm Dubai**  
Dubai **99.08**  
Readers loved this beachfront resort on Dubai's famed Palm Jumeirah thanks to its over-the-top spa from French brand Cinq Mondes and the opulent rooms, suites, and villas.
- Alila Hinu Bay**  
Salalah, Oman **97.88**
- Mandarin Oriental Jumeira, Dubai**  
Dubai **96.44**
- Mandarin Oriental, Marrakech**  
Marrakech **96.22**
- Four Seasons Resort Sharm El Sheikh**  
Egypt **94.91**

#### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS AFRICA

- Ellerman House**  
Cape Town **98.20**  
This intimate property, which has just 13 rooms and two private villas, is renowned for its art collection—as well as its world-class cuisine and wine cellar.
- Mount Nelson, a Belmond Hotel, Cape Town**  
Cape Town **95.15**
- Cape Grace ★**  
Cape Town **94.95**
- Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa**  
Johannesburg, South Africa **94.59**
- Giraffe Manor**  
Nairobi, Kenya **94.48**

#### 3 BEST RESORTS AFRICA

- Matetsi Victoria Falls**  
Matetsi Private Game Reserve, Zimbabwe **97.88**

On the banks of the Zambezi River, not far from Victoria Falls, this family-owned lodge is situated on a 136,000-acre private game reserve in Zimbabwe.

- Babylonstoren**  
Simondium, South Africa **96.57**
- Elewana Arusha Coffee Lodge**  
Arusha, Tanzania **92.42**

#### 10 BEST SAFARI LODGES AFRICA

- Monwana Game Lodge**  
Thornybush Nature Reserve, South Africa **98.90**
- Asilia Namiri Plains**  
Greater Serengeti National Park, Tanzania **98.73**
- Finch Hattons**  
Tsavo West National Park, Kenya **98.67**
- Mount Gahinga Lodge, Volcanoes Safaris**  
Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Uganda **98.37**
- Mfuwe Lodge, The Bushcamp Company**  
South Luangwa National Park, Zambia **98.26**
- Kyambura Gorge Lodge, Volcanoes Safaris**  
Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda **98.00**
- Lion Sands Game Reserve**  
Sabi Sands Game Reserve, South Africa **97.89**
- Singita Grumeti**  
Greater Serengeti National Park, Tanzania **97.87**
- Thornybush Game Lodge**  
Thornybush Nature Reserve, South Africa **97.83**
- Angama Mara**  
Maasai Mara, Kenya **97.47**

#### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS NORTH AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

- The Ritz-Carlton, Doha**  
Qatar **99.64**  
With its breathtaking views of the Gulf and the Doha skyline, this

27-story hotel has several impressive restaurants, a small slice of beach, and a spa that draws on both Arab and Asian wellness traditions.

- Selman Marrakech**  
Marrakech **99.39**

- La Mamounia Marrakech**  
Marrakech **98.94**
- Royal Mansour Marrakech**  
Marrakech **98.25**
- Mandarin Oriental, Doha**  
Qatar **97.71**



**GRAND HOTEL EXCELSIOR VITTORIA**  
*Sorrento, Italy*



**THE SETAI, MIAMI BEACH**  
*Florida, USA*



**ROYAL CHAMPAGNE HOTEL & SPA**  
*Champillon, France*



**CAPELLA UBUD**  
*Ubud, Indonesia*

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# ASIA HOTELS

From the beaches of the Maldives to the towers of Bangkok, in this region T+L readers singled out impeccable amenities at properties with brand star power.

## 15 BEST CITY HOTELS ASIA

1. **Park Hyatt Siem Reap**  
Cambodia **99.40**  
A luxurious urban resort that's a short *tuk-tuk* ride from the wonders of Angkor Wat, the 117-key Park Hyatt also has one of the city's finest restaurants.
2. **Regent Hong Kong**  
99.33
3. **Rosewood Phnom Penh**  
Cambodia **98.67**
4. **The Leela Palace Bengaluru**  
Bangalore, India **98.59**
5. **Regent Beijing**  
98.50
6. **Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok** ★  
98.48
7. **Capella Bangkok**  
98.39
8. **Taj Lands End, Mumbai**  
98.29
9. **The Leela Palace New Delhi**  
98.18
10. **Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River**  
98.15
11. **Signiel Seoul**  
98.00
12. **Four Seasons Hotel Seoul**  
97.91
13. **The Imperial New Delhi**  
97.60
14. **Taj Mahal, New Delhi**  
97.33
15. **JW Marriott Dongdaemun Square Seoul**  
97.06

## 15 BEST RESORTS ASIA

1. **The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur**  
India **99.79**  
*See the 100 Best Hotels in the World, page 78.*
2. **[T] Alma Resort**  
Cam Ranh, Vietnam **99.20**
2. **[T] Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi**  
99.20
4. **Capella Ubud, Bali**  
99.09
5. **Six Senses Fort Barwara**  
Rajasthan, India **99.06**
6. **Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas**  
98.95
7. **The Mulia**  
Bali **98.92**
8. **Joali Maldives**  
98.88
9. **Nihi Sumba**  
Sumba, Indonesia **98.85**
10. **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Goa**  
India **98.80**
11. **[T] The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra** ★  
India **98.74**
11. **[T] The St. Regis Bali Resort**  
98.74
13. **The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur**  
India **98.67**
14. **The Oberoi Vanyavilas Wildlife Resort, Ranthambhore**  
India **98.53**
15. **Hyatt Regency Koh Samui**  
Thailand **98.50**

## 5 BEST CITY HOTELS TOKYO

1. **Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo**  
95.70  
Housed in the upper floors of a skyscraper, this 179-room retreat has a gorgeous spa, a dozen restaurants and bars, and stunning views, including, on a clear day, of Mount Fuji.
2. **Conrad Tokyo**  
95.07
3. **Grand Hyatt Tokyo**  
93.44
4. **Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Otemachi**  
93.33
5. **Aman Tokyo**  
92.98

## 3 BEST CITY HOTELS HONG KONG

1. **Regent Hong Kong**  
99.33
2. **Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong**  
96.27
3. **Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong**  
91.76

## 5 BEST RESORTS INDONESIA

1. **Capella Ubud, Bali**  
99.09  
Voted the world's No. 1 hotel in 2020, this Bill Bensley-designed tented camp has spacious suites with hammered-copper tubs, vivid textiles, and plunge pools.
2. **The Mulia**  
Bali **98.92**
3. **Nihi Sumba**  
Sumba **98.85**
4. **The St. Regis Bali Resort**  
98.74
5. **Hotel Indigo Bali Seminyak Beach**  
98.44

## 5 BEST RESORTS SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. **Alma Resort**  
Cam Ranh, Vietnam **99.20**  
A sprawling, family-friendly beach resort on



2. **Hyatt Regency Koh Samui**  
Thailand **98.50**

3. **The Standard, Hua Hin**  
Thailand **97.82**
4. **New World Phu Quoc Resort**  
Vietnam **97.64**
5. **Hyatt Regency Danang Resort & Spa**  
Vietnam **97.27**

CALVIN SIT



**No.1**

HOTEL IN HONG KONG

## Regent Hong Kong

THIS MODERN LANDMARK ON VICTORIA HARBOUR REOPENED LAST FALL AFTER A MAJOR RENOVATION LED BY THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECT, CHI WING LO.

*The lobby lounge at the Regent Hong Kong.*

nabbed the top spot following a major renovation of its River Wing.

2. **Capella Bangkok**  
98.39
3. **Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River**  
98.15
4. **The Standard, Bangkok Mahanakhon**  
96.70
5. **Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort**  
95.09

### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS INDIA

1. **The Leela Palace Bengaluru**  
Bangalore **98.59**  
This stately 357-room hotel, with its pink sandstone façade and domed copper roof, sits amid nine acres of manicured grounds that include palm trees and waterfalls.
2. **Taj Lands End, Mumbai**  
98.29
3. **The Leela Palace New Delhi**  
98.18
4. **The Imperial New Delhi**  
97.60
5. **Taj Mahal, New Delhi**  
97.33

### 5 BEST RESORTS INDIA

1. **The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur**  
99.79  
*See the 100 Best Hotels in the World, page 78.*
2. **Six Senses Fort Barwara**  
Rajasthan **99.06**
3. **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Goa**  
98.80
4. **The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra** ★  
98.74
5. **The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur**  
98.67

### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS SINGAPORE

1. **Capella Singapore**  
95.09  
No. 1 for the second year in a row, this serene Sentosa Island resort designed by Norman Foster has 112 plush rooms, suites, and villas set on 30 acres of tropical gardens.

2. **Andaz Singapore**  
94.00
3. **Raffles Singapore**  
93.57
4. **Mandarin Oriental, Singapore**  
92.00
5. **The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore**  
91.37

### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS BANGKOK

1. **Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok** ★  
98.48  
A longtime reader favorite, this famed 148-year-old hotel—where W. Somerset Maugham and Grace Kelly once stayed—

# AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, & THE SOUTH PACIFIC **HOTELS**

When traveling to the faraway destinations of Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and French Polynesia, T+L readers prized ultimate privacy in lush jungles and superb service in repurposed landmarks.

*A view from the infinity pool at the Tokoriki Island Resort, in Fiji.*



## Nº1

RESORT IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

### **Tokoriki Island Resort**

AN ICONIC ADULTS-ONLY RESORT IN FIJI, IT'S KNOWN AS A HONEYMOON HIDEAWAY, WITH COUPLES-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES, SCUBA DIVING, AND UNLIMITED MASSAGES.

#### 5 BEST CITY HOTELS

#### **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**

1. **Four Seasons Hotel Sydney**  
93.44  
The Four Seasons, with its 531 rooms and suites, has pride of place in the heart of the Central Business District, with views of both the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge.

#### 2. **Park Hyatt Auckland**

New Zealand **91.76**

#### 3. **Capella Sydney**

91.74

#### 4. **Cordis, Auckland**

New Zealand **88.24**

#### 5. **Ace Hotel Sydney**

86.35

#### 5 BEST RESORTS

#### **SOUTH PACIFIC**

1. **Tokoriki Island Resort**  
Fiji **98.67**
2. **Nanuku Resort Fiji**  
96.75
3. **Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora** ★  
92.36
4. **Conrad Bora Bora Nui**  
89.20
5. **Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa**  
French Polynesia **82.67**

COURTESY OF TOKORIKI ISLAND RESORT

# DESTINATION SPAS

As wellness travel becomes more popular and inclusive, readers chose these getaway spas, in the U.S. and abroad, for some true serenity.

15 BEST SPAS

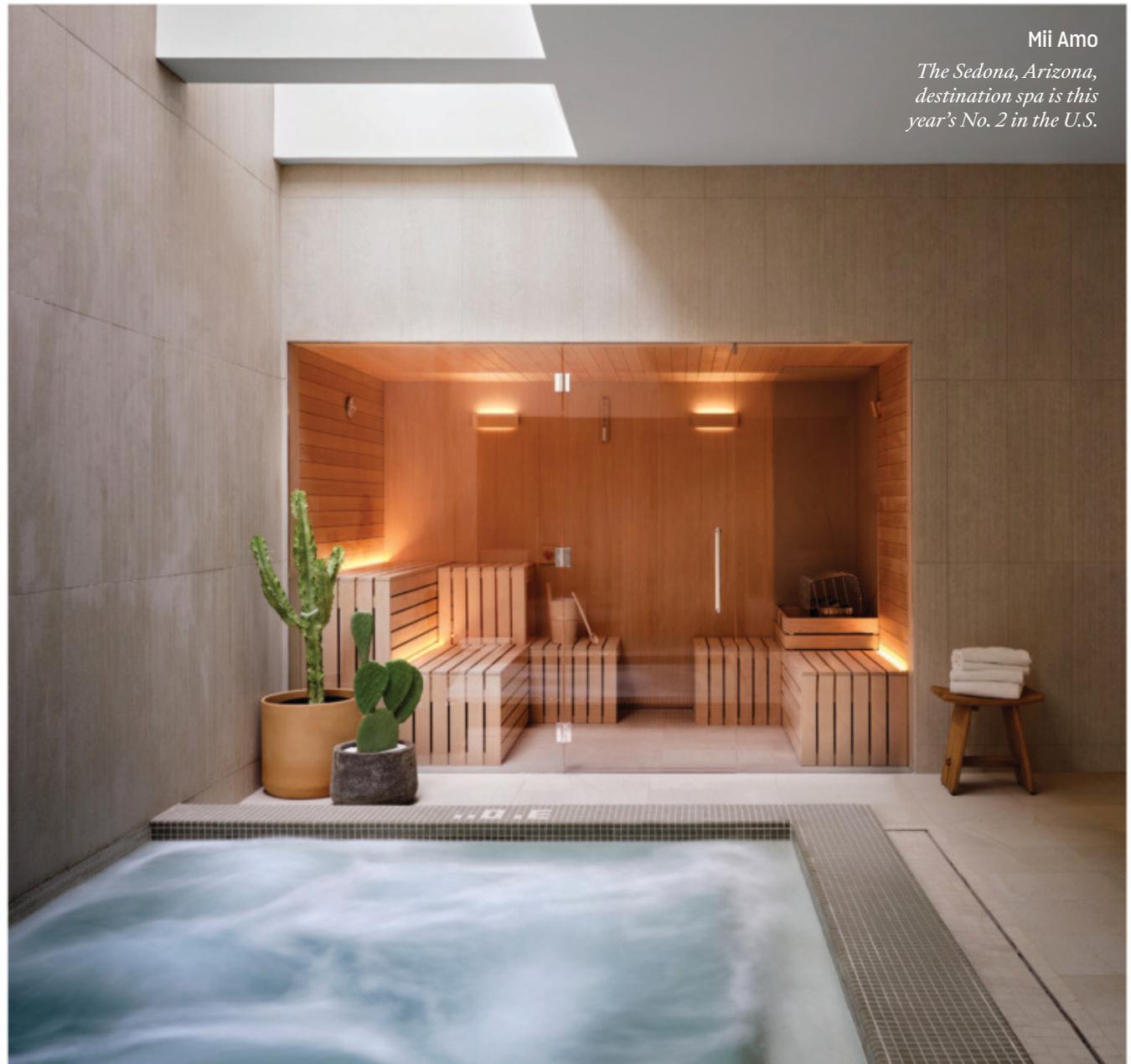
**UNITED STATES**

- Sundara Inn & Spa**  
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin **94.19**  
This intimate resort has been climbing the list for years, thanks to an over-the-top spa with cutting-edge treatment options, including energy therapy. The setting, amid acres of pines, is another point of pride.
- Mii Amo ★**  
Sedona, Arizona **93.73**
- Civana Wellness Resort & Spa**  
Carefree, Arizona **93.71**
- Lake Austin Spa Resort ★**  
Austin **93.54**
- Golden Door**  
San Marcos, California **93.52**
- The Lodge at Woodloch ★**  
Hawley, Pennsylvania **92.92**
- Cal-a-Vie Health Spa**  
Vista, California **92.71**
- Canyon Ranch Lenox**  
Massachusetts **92.60**
- Sensei Lanai, a Four Seasons Resort**  
Hawaii **91.81**
- The Ranch Malibu**  
California **91.70**
- Miraval Austin**  
**91.64**
- Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs**  
Ojo Caliente, New Mexico **91.32**
- Miraval Arizona**  
Tucson **91.11**
- Ten Thousand Waves**  
Santa Fe **90.51**
- Carillon Miami Wellness Resort**  
**90.17**

3 BEST SPAS

**INTERNATIONAL**

- Rancho La Puerta ★**  
Tecate, Mexico **95.89**  
A perennial favorite among WBA voters, this retreat offers weeklong wellness programs



Mii Amo

*The Sedona, Arizona, destination spa is this year's No. 2 in the U.S.*

# VILLA-RENTAL COMPANIES

and an ever-evolving slate of classes, lectures, and activities on its 4,000-acre campus.

- Tabacón Thermal Resort & Spa**  
La Fortuna, Costa Rica **92.38**
- BodyHoliday**  
St. Lucia **92.30**

Dine poolside on a five-course meal, or take in the sun on the terrace of a home overlooking Greek islands, with the help of these providers.

5 BEST **LUXURY VILLA-RENTAL COMPANIES**

- Tuscany Now & More**  
**96.22**  
This Italy-focused operator has a robust portfolio of restored farmhouses and historic estates, plus beachside

finds and contemporary villas, all with 24/7 concierge service.

- East West Hospitality**  
**94.29**
- Five Star Greece**  
**94.22**
- Thirdhome**  
**93.67**
- Villas of Distinction**  
**93.59**

COURTESY OF MII AMO

# CITIES

Culinary and history-steeped hubs caught readers' attention this year, with favorites like Charleston, Quebec City, and Cuzco receiving high praise. On the global list, though, destinations in Asia received the most nods.

<p>25 BEST CITIES <b>OVERALL</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>San Miguel de Allende</b> Mexico <b>91.88</b></li> <li>2. <b>Udaipur</b> India <b>91.75</b></li> <li>3. <b>Kyoto</b> ★ <b>91.49</b></li> <li>4. <b>Hoi An</b> Vietnam <b>90.67</b></li> <li>5. <b>Chiang Mai</b> Thailand <b>90.64</b></li> <li>6. <b>Florence</b> ★ <b>90.55</b></li> <li>7. <b>Bangkok</b> <b>90.27</b></li> <li>8. <b>Tokyo</b> <b>90.04</b></li> <li>9. <b>Ubud</b> Bali <b>90.00</b></li> <li>10. <b>Funchal</b> Portugal <b>89.82</b></li> <li>11. <b>Oaxaca</b> Mexico <b>89.71</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. <b>San Sebastián</b> Spain <b>89.66</b></li> <li>13. <b>Marbella</b> Spain <b>89.57</b></li> <li>14. <b>Mexico City</b> <b>89.28</b></li> <li>15. <b>Marrakesh</b> <b>89.17</b></li> <li>16. <b>Istanbul</b> <b>89.15</b></li> <li>17. <b>Cape Town</b> <b>88.87</b></li> <li>18. <b>Porto</b> Portugal <b>88.85</b></li> <li>19. <b>Kolkata</b> India <b>88.60</b></li> <li>20. <b>Rome</b> ★ <b>88.44</b></li> <li>21. <b>Jaipur</b> India <b>88.23</b></li> <li>22. <b>Charleston</b> ★ <b>87.99</b></li> <li>23. <b>Barcelona</b> <b>87.94</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. <b>Seoul</b> <b>87.85</b></li> <li>25. <b>Cuzco</b> Peru <b>87.47</b></li> </ol> <hr/> <p>10 BEST CITIES <b>UNITED STATES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Charleston</b> ★ <b>87.99</b> Southern hospitality meets a burgeoning shopping scene in this South Carolina charmer, which has been named the best in the U.S. for an incredible 12 years running.</li> <li>2. <b>Santa Fe</b> ★ <b>87.43</b></li> <li>3. <b>Savannah</b> ★ <b>85.27</b></li> <li>4. <b>Honolulu</b> <b>85.17</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <b>New Orleans</b> ★ <b>84.53</b></li> <li>6. <b>San Antonio</b> Texas <b>83.20</b></li> <li>7. <b>Fort Worth</b> Texas <b>83.19</b></li> <li>8. <b>New York City</b> ★ <b>83.16</b></li> <li>9. <b>Chicago</b> ★ <b>82.44</b></li> <li>10. <b>Aspen</b> Colorado <b>82.41</b></li> </ol> <hr/> <p>10 BEST CITIES <b>CENTRAL &amp; SOUTH AMERICA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Cuzco</b> ★ Peru <b>87.47</b> Once a hub of the Incan Empire, this historic city—set at 11,150 feet in the soaring Andes—has been winning the hearts of readers for more than 20 years.</li> </ol>
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Antigua Guatemala</b> <b>85.93</b></li> <li>3. <b>Quito</b> Ecuador <b>84.26</b></li> <li>4. <b>Lima</b> Peru <b>84.13</b></li> <li>5. <b>Buenos Aires</b> ★ <b>84.09</b></li> <li>6. <b>Rio de Janeiro</b> <b>82.81</b></li> <li>7. <b>Cartagena</b> Colombia <b>82.69</b></li> <li>8. <b>Bogotá</b> Colombia <b>82.14</b></li> <li>9. <b>Mendoza</b> Argentina <b>82.00</b></li> <li>10. <b>Panama City</b> <b>79.05</b></li> </ol>	<hr/> <p>5 BEST CITIES <b>MEXICO</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>San Miguel de Allende</b> <b>91.88</b> <i>See No. 1 City in the World, opposite.</i></li> <li>2. <b>Oaxaca</b> <b>89.71</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mexico City</b> ★ <b>89.28</b></li> <li>4. <b>Mérida</b> <b>86.67</b></li> <li>5. <b>Guadalajara</b> <b>84.82</b></li> </ol> <hr/> <p>5 BEST CITIES <b>CANADA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Quebec City</b> ★ <b>86.71</b> Though it offers more than 400 years of history and picturesque cobblestones, this city—voted onto the list by readers for more than two decades—has plenty of contemporary charms, too, including dynamic dining options and easy access to nature.</li> <li>2. <b>Victoria</b> British Columbia <b>83.31</b></li> <li>3. <b>Montreal</b> <b>83.01</b></li> <li>4. <b>Vancouver</b> <b>81.87</b></li> <li>5. <b>Halifax</b> Nova Scotia <b>80.21</b></li> </ol>
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The burnt-orange roofs of Florence.

## No. 1

### CITY IN EUROPE **Florence**

THE EVER-POPULAR CITY RETAINS A TIMELESS ALLURE WITH ITS RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE, LEGENDARY MUSEUMS, AND EXCELLENT HOTELS. THIS FALL, IT WILL COMMENCE A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR RESTORATION OF THE PONTE VECCHIO.

EVGENIYA VLASOVA. OPPOSITE: TAYLOR SIMPSON/KINTZING/REDUX



Nº1

CITY IN THE WORLD

## San Miguel de Allende

VISITORS TO THIS DELIGHTFUL SPOT ARE ATTRACTED BY ITS VIBRANT ART SCENE, WELCOMING RESTAURANTS, AND TERRIFIC SHOPPING, WHETHER AT HIGH-END BOUTIQUES OR THE MERCADO DE ARTESANÍAS.

*One of San Miguel de Allende's signature brightly colored buildings.*

<p><b>10 BEST CITIES EUROPE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Florence</b> ★ 90.55</li> <li>2. <b>Funchal</b> Portugal 89.82</li> <li>3. <b>San Sebastián</b> ★ Spain 89.66</li> <li>4. <b>Marbella</b> Spain 89.57</li> <li>5. <b>Istanbul</b> ★ 89.15</li> <li>6. <b>Porto</b> Portugal 88.85</li> <li>7. <b>Rome</b> ★ 88.44</li> <li>8. <b>Barcelona</b> 87.94</li> <li>9. <b>Madrid</b> 87.46</li> <li>10. <b>Lisbon</b> 87.27</li> </ol>	<p><b>10 BEST CITIES AFRICA &amp; THE MIDDLE EAST</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Marrakesh</b> 89.17</li> </ol> <p>A repeat winner and one of Morocco's most beloved cities, Marrakesh impressed with opulent hotels, niche souks, intriguing historical sites, and flavorful cuisine.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Cape Town</b> ★ 88.87</li> <li>3. <b>Jerusalem</b> ★ 87.25</li> <li>4. <b>Dubai</b> 86.14</li> <li>5. <b>Kigali</b> Rwanda 85.93</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <b>Fez</b> Morocco 84.37</li> <li>7. <b>Essaouira</b> Morocco 83.97</li> <li>8. <b>Tel Aviv</b> 82.46</li> <li>9. <b>Luxor</b> Egypt 82.04</li> <li>10. <b>Cairo</b> 81.40</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>10 BEST CITIES ASIA</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Udaipur</b> India 91.75</li> </ol> <p>Tiny by Indian standards, this lakefront city draws visitors to its historic sites, palatial hotels, and relaxing boat rides on Lake Pichola.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Kyoto</b> ★ 91.49</li> <li>3. <b>Hoi An</b> Vietnam 90.67</li> <li>4. <b>Chiang Mai</b> Thailand 90.64</li> <li>5. <b>Bangkok</b> ★ 90.27</li> <li>6. <b>Tokyo</b> ★ 90.04</li> <li>7. <b>Ubud</b> Bali 90.00</li> <li>8. <b>Kolkata</b> India 88.60</li> <li>9. <b>Jaipur</b> India 88.23</li> <li>10. <b>Seoul</b> 87.85</li> </ol>	<p><b>5 BEST CITIES AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, &amp; THE SOUTH PACIFIC</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Sydney</b> ★ 87.30</li> <li>2. <b>Melbourne</b> ★ 86.62</li> <li>3. <b>Queenstown</b> New Zealand 85.29</li> <li>4. <b>Auckland</b> New Zealand 84.48</li> <li>5. <b>Hobart</b> Australia 84.24</li> </ol>
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*Sydney Opera House, seen from under the famed Sydney Harbour Bridge.*

# N<sup>o</sup>1

## Sydney

CITY IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, & THE SOUTH PACIFIC

BOLSTERED BY SEVERAL HOTEL OPENINGS—AND THE GLOW OF THE FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP FINAL IN 2023—THE ICONIC HARBORSIDE CITY WON PRAISE FOR ITS WORLD-CLASS DINING AND STUNNING OUTDOOR SPACES.

IRJALINA PAAYONPERA

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# ISLANDS

Readers noted the pristine beaches and top-of-the-line amenities in these oases spread across the globe, with Greek islands leading the pack. What else is trending? In-villa plunge pools, private surfing lessons, and access to wildlife.

## No. 1

ISLAND IN THE WORLD

### Maldives

CLIMBING TO THE TOP SPOT FROM A NO. 2 RANKING IN 2022 AND 2023, THE MALDIVES OFFER MORE THAN JUST LUXURIOUS OVERWATER BUNGALOWS. READERS ALSO PRAISED THE CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATERS, WHITE-SAND BEACHES, AND REMARKABLE CORAL REEFS.

*Sailing the clear blue waters of the Indian Ocean, along the coast of the Maldives.*

#### 25 BEST ISLANDS

##### OVERALL

1. **Maldives**  
95.63
2. **Phu Quoc**  
Vietnam 94.41
3. **Bali** ★  
93.26
4. **Mílos**  
Greece 93.08
5. **Dominica**  
92.47
6. **Crete**  
Greece 92.38
7. **Hvar and the Dalmatian Islands**  
Croatia 91.53
8. **Galápagos Islands**  
Ecuador 91.26
9. **Koh Samui**  
Thailand 91.03
10. **Great Barrier Reef Islands**  
Australia 90.99
11. **Ischia**  
Italy 90.95
12. **Cuba**  
90.61
13. **Palawan**  
Philippines 90.59
14. **Fiji Islands**  
90.56
15. **Golden Isles**  
(Jekyll Island, Little St. Simons Island, Sea Island, St. Simons Island)  
Georgia 90.29
16. **Phuket**  
Thailand 90.20
17. **Sicily**  
Italy 90.14
18. **Anguilla**  
90.02
19. **Moorea**  
French Polynesia 89.70
20. **Corfu and the Ionian Islands**  
Greece 89.42
21. **Sardinia**  
Italy 89.39
22. **Madeira**  
Portugal 89.12
23. **Skye and the Hebrides**  
Scotland 89.05
24. **Páros**  
Greece 88.97
25. **Zanzibar**  
Tanzania 88.95

IBRAHIM MUNAZ/500PX/GETTY IMAGES

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**St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands**

*The East End of St. John, which takes the No. 5 spot for islands in the Caribbean.*



**10 BEST ISLANDS  
CONTINENTAL  
U.S.**

- Golden Isles**  
(*Jekyll Island, Little St. Simons Island, Sea Island, St. Simons Island*)  
Georgia **90.29**

This quartet of Georgia islands—along with the mainland town of Brunswick—has a mix of natural landscapes and historical attractions that are particularly appealing to families.

- Amelia Island**  
Florida **86.93**
- Mackinac Island**  
Michigan **86.73**
- Martha's Vineyard**  
Massachusetts **84.17**
- Florida Keys**  
**83.48**
- Cumberland Island**  
Georgia **83.20**
- San Juan Islands**  
Washington **83.10**

- Nantucket**  
Massachusetts **83.06**

- Kiawah Island ★**  
South Carolina **82.61**

- Sanibel Island**  
Florida **82.32**

**5 BEST ISLANDS  
HAWAII**

- Island of Hawaii ★**  
**88.04**

Home to this year's No. 1 resort in Hawaii, the "big island" won accolades from adventure-seeking voters who appreciated the hiking, snorkeling, and surfing.

- Maui ★**  
**87.81**
- Kauai ★**  
**87.28**
- Oahu**  
**86.36**
- Lanai**  
**85.68**

**5 BEST ISLANDS  
MEXICO &  
CENTRAL &  
SOUTH AMERICA**

- Galápagos Islands ★**  
Ecuador **91.26**

This tropical archipelago has topped the list for more than two decades. Readers continue to find joy in seeing wildlife found only here, both on land and in the water.

- Caye Caulker**  
Belize **87.71**
- Ambergris Caye ★**  
Belize **84.56**
- Isla Mujeres**  
Mexico **82.03**
- Roatán**  
Honduras **80.31**

**3 BEST ISLANDS  
CANADA**

- Vancouver Island ★**  
**86.46**

The immensity of nature here is a hit with readers,

who visit for the whale spotting, rainforest hikes, storm watching, and low-key accommodations.

- Cape Breton Island**  
**85.12**
- Prince Edward Island**  
**80.38**

**25 BEST ISLANDS  
CARIBBEAN**

- Dominica**  
**92.47**
- Voters loved the remarkable landscape of this volcanic island. One summed it up: "it's like no other place on the planet."

- Cuba**  
**90.61**
- Anguilla ★**  
**90.02**
- St. Lucia**  
**88.70**

- St. John ★**  
U.S. Virgin Islands **87.68**

- Aruba**  
**87.13**

- Turks & Caicos**  
**86.92**

- Harbour Island**  
Bahamas **86.73**

- Vieques**  
Puerto Rico **86.57**

- St. Bart's**  
**86.44**

- Exumas**  
Bahamas **86.30**

- St. Vincent and the Grenadines**  
**85.80**

- Eleuthera**  
Bahamas **84.77**

- Nevis**  
**84.48**

- Grenada**  
**84.46**

- Bonaire**  
**84.36**

- Cayman Islands**  
**84.19**

- Virgin Gorda ★**  
British Virgin Islands **84.16**

**CARIBBEAN ISLANDS**  
*continued*

- 19. **Bermuda**  
84.05
- 20. **Culebra**  
Puerto Rico 83.35
- 21. **Jost Van Dyke**  
British Virgin Islands 83.07
- 22. **Jamaica**  
82.74
- 23. **St. Maarten/St. Martin**  
81.81
- 24. **St. Kitts**  
81.51
- 25. **St. Croix**  
U.S. Virgin Islands 81.44

15 BEST ISLANDS  
**EUROPE**

- 1. **Mílos**  
Greece 93.08  
Hot springs, sea caves, and an array of fabulous beaches helped place this lesser-known Cycladic island at the top of the list.
- 2. **Crete ★**  
Greece 92.38
- 3. **Hvar and the Dalmatian Islands**  
Croatia 91.53
- 4. **Ischia**  
Italy 90.95
- 5. **Sicily**  
Italy 90.14
- 6. **Corfu and the Ionian Islands**  
Greece 89.42
- 7. **Sardinia**  
Italy 89.39
- 8. **Madeira**  
Portugal 89.12
- 9. **Skye and the Hebrides**  
Scotland 89.05
- 10. **Páros**  
Greece 88.97
- 11. **Ibiza**  
Spain 88.94
- 12. **Azores**  
Portugal 87.17
- 13. **Mallorca**  
Spain 87.04
- 14. **Malta**  
85.73
- 15. **Santorini ★**  
Greece 85.67

5 BEST ISLANDS  
**ASIA**

- 1. **Maldives**  
95.63  
*See Best Islands Overall, page 124.*



Ibiza, Spain  
*Beach life at Cala Gracioneta, on the No. 11 island in Europe.*

- 2. **Phu Quoc**  
Vietnam 94.41
- 3. **Bali ★**  
93.27
- 4. **Koh Samui**  
Thailand 91.03
- 5. **Palawan**  
Philippines 90.59

5 BEST ISLANDS  
**AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

- 1. **Great Barrier Reef Islands**  
Australia 90.99

Voted No. 1 in the world last year, these 900 islands are part of the world's largest coral reef system—plus they have many luxe hotels, including Reefsuites, which has underwater rooms.

- 2. **Fiji Islands**  
90.56
- 3. **Moorea ★**  
French Polynesia 89.70
- 4. **Bora-Bora**  
French Polynesia 88.00
- 5. **Tahiti**  
French Polynesia 83.00

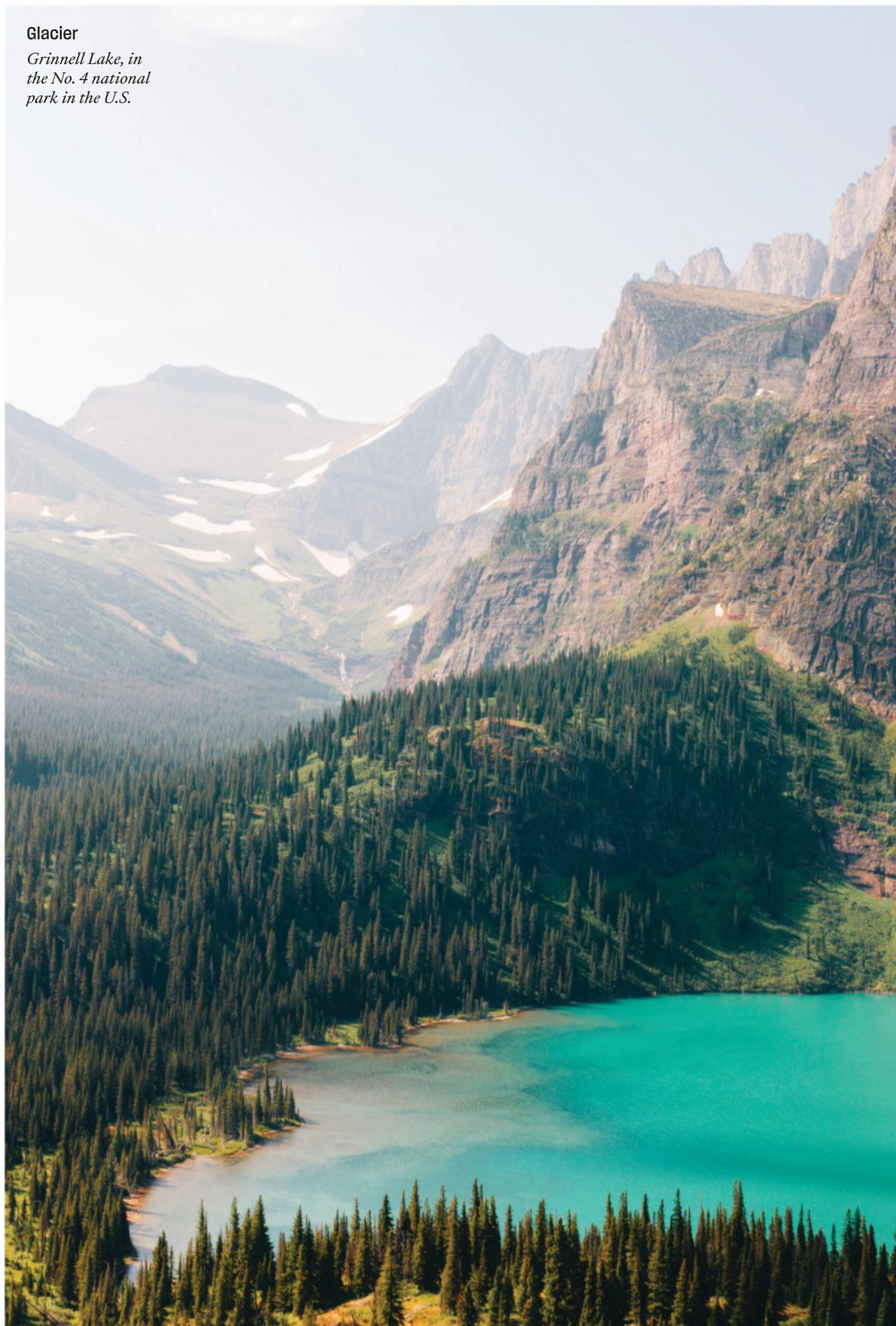
GUNNAR KNECHTEL

# U.S. NATIONAL PARKS

America's vast natural spaces continue to call to T+L readers by offering the ultimate antidote to the stresses of modern life. This year, two tropical newcomers made the list: Virgin Islands and Hawai'i Volcanoes.

## Glacier

*Grinnell Lake, in the No. 4 national park in the U.S.*



## 20 BEST

### U.S. NATIONAL PARKS

1. **Yellowstone**  
Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana **90.79**  
The original U.S. national park, it has active geysers and other unforgettable scenery as well as more than 60 species of mammals, including buffalo, elk, grizzly bears, and moose.
2. **Grand Teton**  
Wyoming **88.94**
3. **Yosemite**  
California **88.34**
4. **Glacier**  
Montana **87.20**
5. **Kenai Fjords**  
Alaska **86.73**
6. **Rocky Mountain**  
Colorado **86.21**
7. **Zion**  
Utah **85.62**
8. **Great Smoky Mountains**  
North Carolina and Tennessee **85.41**
9. **Katmai**  
Alaska **85.10**
10. **Denali**  
Alaska **85.00**
11. **Mount Rainier**  
Washington **84.62**
12. **Virgin Islands**  
St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands **84.33**
13. **Grand Canyon**  
Arizona **84.30**
14. **Olympic**  
Washington **83.99**
15. **Redwood**  
California **83.30**
16. **Sequoia**  
California **83.18**
17. **[T] Glacier Bay**  
Alaska **82.10**
17. **[T] North Cascades**  
Washington **82.10**
19. **Hawai'i Volcanoes**  
Hawaii **81.95**
20. **Acadia**  
Maine **81.87**

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# Beach, City & Beyond

Whether you're dreaming of seaside suites or city digs, **Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts**, **LXR Hotels & Resorts**, and **Conrad Hotels & Resorts** beckon from every corner of the globe. From swimming in rooftop pools to enjoying chef-prepared in-suite dinners, these Hilton luxury brands have it all this summer—and all year round.

## AMERICAN GEMS

In Hawaii, be immersed in paradise at **Ka La'i Waikiki Beach, LXR Hotels & Resorts**, a beautifully designed property and the newest addition to the LXR brand. Each residential-style suite comes with a fully equipped kitchen for the utmost comfort and convenience. Have a private chef prepare a delightful multicourse meal right in your suite's kitchen, or sink into the bathroom's soothing soaking tub. To fully appreciate Honolulu's lifestyle, take in panoramic views from Diamond Head State Monument, less than three miles from the hotel, or shop for one-of-a-kind finds at Luxury Row on Kalākaua Avenue, a half-mile away.

For an authentic taste of art and culture in Tennessee, **Conrad Nashville**—selected among *Travel + Leisure* readers' 5 Favorite Hotels in Nashville in 2023—is ideally situated minutes from Music Row, Vanderbilt University, and some of the city's hottest music venues. Relax in stylish rooms outfitted with contemporary décor, fine Frette linens, and Byredo bath products from Sweden. Head to the rooftop pool terrace for a swim and enjoy a gorgeous vantage point overlooking the city. Around the hotel, check out fine art and photography by regional artists.

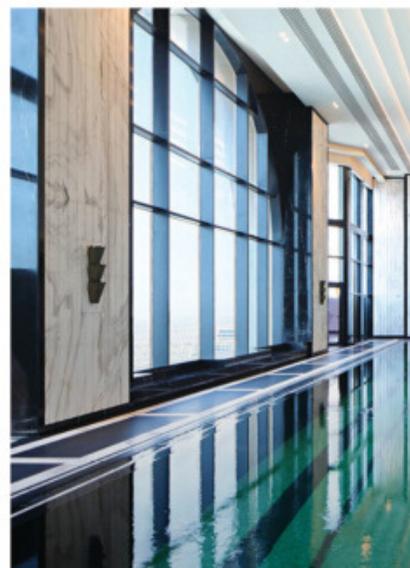
## BEACHSIDE BLISS

With addresses throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, Waldorf Astoria draws inspiration from each unique location. Looking out to Qatar's glittery skyline, **Waldorf Astoria Doha West Bay**



is a 44-story tower with Art Deco-accented rooms, suites, and residential-style apartments. The light-filled accommodations feel like private sanctuaries with floor-to-ceiling windows, spacious interiors, and upscale furniture. Relax in the hotel's hammam,

sauna, and stream room, or work out in the fitness center with city views and an 85-foot indoor pool. Outdoors, bask in sunshine on the shores of the Arabian Gulf at Doha Sands Beach in West Bay.



Explore Waldorf Astoria  
Hotels & Resorts



Discover  
LXR Hotels & Resorts



Learn more about  
Conrad Hotels & Resorts



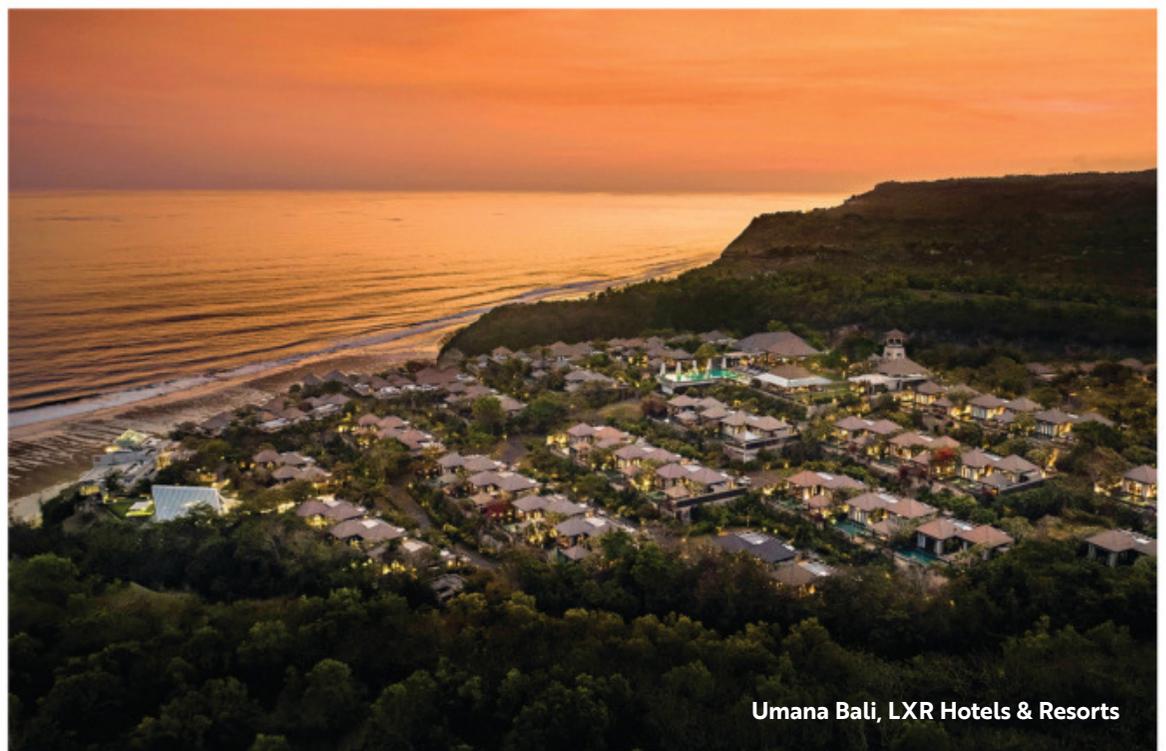
On a private island in Seychelles, **Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island** is an all-around escape for the senses. Settle into one of just 50 seaside villas for your own secluded oasis with a private pool, spacious patio, and bohemian design accents that put guests into beach mode. Dig into six restaurants and bars from an award-winning chef, and elevated resort amenities such as eco-awareness education, fly-fishing, snorkeling, and an outdoor cinema. Get closer to the sea with majestic whale-watching tours and exhilarating catch-and-cook fishing excursions.



Waldorf Astoria Seychelles Platte Island

## AUTHENTIC ASIA

In Indonesia, the **Umana Bali, LXR Hotels & Resorts** clifftop resort is part of the hand-selected LXR portfolio. Along with direct access to Melasti Beach, every villa has gorgeous indoor and outdoor living spaces, including a private infinity pool, a whirlpool with ocean or garden views, and rain showers inside and out. Connect with local traditions as you learn the meaning and training behind vibrant Balinese dance—or experience an *otonan* birthday ceremony, which clears away negative energy for a fresh start to one's personal new year.



Umana Bali, LXR Hotels & Resorts



Waldorf Astoria Doha West Bay



Conrad Osaka

Located on the largest of Japan's four main islands, **Conrad Osaka** looks out over the thriving city from the highest floors of the Nakanoshima Festival West Tower. Each room has nearly 540 square feet of space to let guests unwind, while stylish public spaces include a glowing indoor pool lined with lounge chairs, and the 40 Sky Bar and Lounge for expertly made cocktails. Near the hotel, the bustling Umeda district is within walking distance for shopping and entertainment, and richly historic Osaka Castle is just two miles away.



Warmly Welcomed

# CRUISE LINES

As fleets and itineraries adapt to rising demand, one thing remains the same: the No. 1 winners from last year have continued to reign supreme in 2024.

5 BEST

**MEGA-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINES**

1. **Virgin Voyages**  
89.71  
This fleet of three adults-only ships sails the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, offering diverse entertainment, a variety of onboard restaurants, enriching shore excursions, and—yes—plenty of partying.
2. **Celebrity Cruises** ★  
85.85
3. **Princess Cruises** ★  
82.58
4. **Norwegian Cruise Line** ★  
80.90
5. **Royal Caribbean International** ★  
80.81

5 BEST

**LARGE-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINES**

1. **Cunard** ★  
89.06  
No. 1 for its second consecutive year, Cunard recently welcomed *Queen Anne* to its august fleet, proof that tradition and modernity can blissfully coexist.
2. **Disney Cruise Line** ★  
85.79
3. **Holland America Line** ★  
84.02
4. **Celebrity Cruises** ★  
82.28
5. **Princess Cruises** ★  
80.24



Viking Polaris approaching Toronto via Lake Ontario.

**No. 1**

SMALL-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINE

## Viking

VIKING'S EXPEDITION VESSELS, EACH OF WHICH HAS 189 CABINS, SAIL TO ANTARCTICA, GREENLAND, AND OTHER OUT-THERE DESTINATIONS. ONBOARD OCEANOGRAPHERS, ORNITHOLOGISTS, AND RESEARCHERS LEAD EXCURSIONS BY LAND AND SEA.

10 BEST

**MIDSIZE-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINES**

1. **Viking**  
94.09  
The brand's nine ocean ships—each with 465 cabins—blend chic Scandinavian design with a relaxed atmosphere on itineraries that crisscross the globe. A 10th ocean ship, *Viking Vela*, is slated to sail in December.
2. **Explora Journeys**  
92.81
3. **Crystal**  
90.16
4. **Regent Seven Seas Cruises** ★  
89.68
5. **Seabourn** ★  
88.90

6. **Silversea** ★  
87.96
7. **Oceania Cruises** ★  
87.31
8. **Holland America Line** ★  
86.27
9. **Azamara**  
86.13
10. **Celestyal Cruises**  
82.63

5 BEST

**SMALL-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINES**

1. **Viking**  
96.69
2. **HX (formerly Hurtigruten Expeditions)**  
96.08

3. **Windstar Cruises** ★  
92.99
4. **Paul Gauguin Cruises** ★  
91.26
5. **Silversea** ★  
88.49

10 BEST

**INTIMATE-SHIP OCEAN CRUISE LINES**

1. **Quasar Expeditions**  
97.81  
This longtime winner specializes in trips to the Galápagos Islands that “challenge the mind, body, and spirit,” as past guest and T+L editor in chief Jacqui Gifford put it. A third ship is scheduled to join the fleet in 2025.

2. **Overseas Adventure Travel**  
97.55
3. **Aqua Expeditions**  
94.81
4. **Lindblad Expeditions**  
94.40
5. **Seabourn** ★  
94.35
6. **Celebrity Cruises** ★  
93.94
7. **The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**  
92.86
8. **Variety Cruises**  
92.35
9. **Ponant**  
91.73
10. **Silversea** ★  
91.33

10 BEST

**RIVER CRUISE LINES**

1. **Aqua Expeditions**  
98.85  
None of the three river ships in this brand's fleet has more than 20 cabins, meaning guests can sail the Peruvian Amazon (with occasional chef-led excursions) or navigate the Mekong through Cambodia and Vietnam in an intimate, low-key setting.
2. **Avalon Waterways**  
95.91
3. **The Oberoi Cruisers**  
95.75
4. **Tauck** ★  
95.71
5. **Grand Circle Cruise Line**  
95.61
6. **Uniworld Boutique River Cruises** ★  
94.83
7. **Viking** ★  
94.73
8. **Riverside Luxury Cruises**  
94.62
9. **Scenic**  
91.00
10. **AmaWaterways**  
90.09

COURTESY OF VIKING

# TRANSPORTATION

Whether by plane, train, or automobile, this year, readers traveled in style. First-time winner JSX, a semiprivate-jet company with a complimentary in-flight cocktail hour, took the top spot among domestic airlines.

## 5 BEST DOMESTIC AIRLINES

- 1. JSX**  
95.48  
This semiprivate airline, with routes from Denver to Houston and Boca Raton, Florida, to Westchester, New York, won for its ever-growing route network, pet-friendly cabins, and

stress-free security screening.

- 2. Hawaiian Airlines** ★  
78.71
- 3. Breeze Airways**  
77.58
- 4. Alaska Airlines** ★  
77.32
- 5. Delta Air Lines**  
76.67

## 5 BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

- 1. Singapore Airlines** ★  
90.89  
Back on top after slipping to No. 4 in 2023, Singapore Airlines impressed with its luxurious premium cabins, excellent food, and nonstop service from six U.S. airports to Southeast Asia.

- 2. La Compagnie**  
90.88
- 3. Emirates** ★  
90.02
- 4. All Nippon Airways (ANA)**  
89.84
- 5. Qatar Airways** ★  
89.26

- 2. Singapore Changi Airport** ★  
94.32
- 3. Hamad International Airport**  
Doha, Qatar 88.65
- 4. Dubai International Airport**  
88.02
- 5. Incheon International Airport**  
South Korea 85.97
- 6. Abu Dhabi International Airport**  
85.94
- 7. Haneda (Tokyo International) Airport**  
85.84
- 8. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport**  
Mumbai 84.87
- 9. Hong Kong International Airport**  
84.81
- 10. Osaka International Airport**  
Japan 83.53

## 10 BEST DOMESTIC AIRPORTS

- 1. Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport**  
82.32  
Last year, nearly 35 million passengers passed through MSP, a hub for Delta and other SkyTeam airlines—yet it was also the most punctual large airport in the world, with an on-time performance of over 84 percent.

- 2. Rhode Island T. F. Green International Airport**  
82.31
- 3. Palm Beach International Airport**  
Florida 81.51
- 4. Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport**  
79.86
- 5. Indianapolis International Airport**  
79.68
- 6. Kansas City International Airport**  
79.63
- 7. Manchester–Boston Regional Airport**  
New Hampshire 79.44
- 8. Tampa International Airport** ★  
Florida 79.40
- 9. John Wayne Airport**  
Orange County, California 77.24
- 10. Portland International Airport** ★  
Oregon 77.18

## 5 BEST CAR-RENTAL COMPANIES

- 1. National Car Rental** ★  
84.73  
This business-travel-focused brand now has more than 1,500 locations, as well as a refreshed, user-friendly mobile app.
- 2. Sixt**  
79.28
- 3. Enterprise Rent-A-Car** ★  
78.58
- 4. Alamo** ★  
77.26
- 5. Hertz** ★  
74.65

## 5 BEST TRAINS

- 1. Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, a Belmond Train**  
92.75
- 2. British Pullman, a Belmond Train**  
91.11
- 3. Rocky Mountaineer**  
87.37
- 4. Napa Valley Wine Train**  
86.50
- 5. Royal Canadian Pacific**  
85.67

## 10 BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS

- 1. Istanbul Airport**  
95.79  
In 2024, an estimated 85 million passengers are expected to visit this cutting-edge facility. It's also the global hub for Turkish Airlines, which now flies nonstop to 14 U.S. cities.



The dining car on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

## No. 1

TRAIN

### Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, a Belmond Train

THOUGH THE LEGENDARY VSOE NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION, IN THE PAST YEAR THE TRAIN ADDED SEVERAL NEW SUITES, PLUS ROUTES TO CROWD-PLEASING LOCATIONS SUCH AS THE FRENCH ALPS AND PORTOFINO, ITALY.

CHRIS WALLACE

# SAFARI & TOUR OPERATORS

Want to track chimpanzees in Uganda? Ride horseback in Iceland with a small group of adventurous women? Or go it solo, hiking the highest peaks on a journey curated by an expert? These companies can make it happen.



## Nº1 TOUR OPERATOR Timbuktu

THIS CAPE TOWN-BASED COMPANY IS ON A MISSION TO MAKE REMOTE DESTINATIONS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO TRAVELERS, WHETHER THAT ENTAILS A TREK TO THE SUMMIT OF KILIMANJARO OR AN ITINERARY THROUGH THE PEAKS AND VALLEYS OF BHUTAN.

*Sundowners in Greater Kruger National Park, in South Africa.*

### 10 BEST SAFARI OUTFITTERS

1. Alluring Africa  
100.00  
This operator received a perfect score—a World's Best first—for its ability to pull off one-of-a-kind journeys in places like the Okavango Delta and Serengeti National Park.
2. Dazzle Africa  
98.82

3. Asilia Africa  
98.66
4. Micato Safaris ★  
98.56
5. Piper & Heath Travel  
98.31
6. Extraordinary Journeys  
97.91
7. Rothschild Safaris  
97.60
8. Thomson Safaris  
97.38
9. Go2Africa  
96.22

### 10. Deeper Africa 94.91

### 15 BEST TOUR OPERATORS

1. Timbuktu  
99.30
2. Quasar Expeditions  
98.76
3. DuVine  
98.68

4. Butterfield & Robinson  
98.60
5. AdventureWomen  
97.83
6. TCS World Travel  
97.78
7. Black Tomato  
97.38
8. Jacada Travel  
97.24
9. Kensington Tours  
97.02

10. Natural Habitat Adventures  
96.33
11. Classic Journeys ★  
96.21
12. Boundless Journeys  
96.00
13. Tauck  
95.84
14. Off the Beaten Path  
95.78
15. Backroads  
95.39

# All this. *And so much more.*



## **Eau Palm Beach is all about the extras.**

That's why a stay at our Forbes Five-Star resort and spa always includes our Eau Daily Benefits – at no extra charge.

## **Stay two nights and get your 3rd night free.**

*\*Valid for travel May 1 - October 31, 2024. Blackout dates apply. Based on availability.*

In addition to acres of private beach, Jonathan Adler-designed guestrooms, many distinct dining options, an award-winning spa, and complimentary kids' club\* starting May 1st, you will enjoy:

- No Resort Fee
- Complimentary dog amenities (pet fee waived)
- Private beach access with complimentary use of beach chairs and umbrellas
- Complimentary bicycle rentals and use of non-motorized water sports equipment
- Unlimited access to our 24-hour fitness center and complimentary fitness classes (based on availability)
- Complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the resort
- Kids 5 and under eat free (excludes in-room dining and Angle)

## **Settle in nightly. Take advantage of all these benefits daily.**

*\*Complimentary kids club May 1 - September 30, 2024*



**EAU PALM BEACH**  
*Resort & Spa*

*Stay. The water's perfect.*



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# THE METHODOLOGY

A look at how this year's World's Best Awards survey was conducted, and how the results were compiled.

A SURVEY DEVELOPED by the editors of *Travel + Leisure*, in association with research firm Proof Insights, was made available at [tlworldsbest.com](https://tlworldsbest.com) from October 23, 2023, through February 26, 2024. Readers were invited to participate through *Travel + Leisure* magazine, T+L tablet editions, newsletters, social media, and [travelandleisure.com](https://travelandleisure.com). Proof Insights maintained the survey, ensuring its security, and also collected and tabulated responses. To protect the integrity of the data, after the survey closed, *Travel + Leisure* and Proof Insights screened the responses to identify fraudulent votes, which were eliminated from the final tallies.

Respondents were asked to rate airlines, airports, car-rental companies, cities, cruise ships, destination spas, hotels, hotel brands, islands, luxury villa rental companies, tour operators, trains, safari outfitters, and U.S. national parks on a number of characteristics (see right). For each characteristic, respondents could choose a rating of excellent, above average, average, below average, or poor. The final scores are averages of these responses. Scores shown have been rounded to the nearest hundredth of a point; in the event of a true tie, winners share the same ranking. In most categories, respondents could also rate optional characteristics; these ratings are not included in the overall scores.

Hotels were categorized as City, Resort, or Inn based on their locations, amenities, and number of rooms. For resorts, the U.S. was divided into 18 states and regions: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Greater Miami Beach, Hawaii, Montana,

New York, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, the Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania), the West (Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington), the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin), New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont), and the South (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia). Inns were categorized as having 40 rooms or less, and also have an intimate, historic feel, plus

fewer amenities than a property listed as a Resort.

For the cruise category, respondents were asked to rate individual ships; the results were combined to generate scores for

cruise lines in each of the six categories. They are: mega-ship ocean cruise lines (capacity of 1,500 cabins or more), large-ship ocean cruise lines (800 to 1,499 cabins), midsize-ship ocean cruise lines (300 to 799 cabins), small-ship ocean cruise lines (150 to 299 cabins), intimate-ship ocean cruise lines (150 or fewer cabins) and river cruise lines. Some cruise lines may appear in multiple categories depending on the makeup of their fleet.

A minimum number of responses was necessary for a candidate to be eligible for inclusion in the World's Best Awards. Some companies were eligible to be rated in multiple categories; they were scored independently for each category.



## CATEGORIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

### AIRLINES

Cabin comfort, in-flight service, customer service, value.

### AIRPORTS

Access, check-in/security, restaurants/bars, shopping, design.

### CAR-RENTAL COMPANIES

Vehicle selection, vehicle availability, car-rental locations, service, value.

### CITIES

Sights/landmarks, culture, food, friendliness, shopping, value.

### CRUISE SHIPS

Cabins/facilities, food, service, itineraries/destinations, excursions/activities, value.

### DESTINATION SPAS

Accommodations/facilities, treatments, service, food, value.

### HOTELS

Rooms/facilities, location, service, food, value.

### HOTEL BRANDS

Locations, rooms/facilities, food, service, value.

### ISLANDS

Natural attractions/beaches, activities/sights, restaurants/food, people/friendliness, value.

### LUXURY VILLA RENTAL COMPANIES

Service, locations, amenities, range of properties, value.

### TOUR OPERATORS &

### SAFARI OUTFITTERS

Staff/guides, itineraries/destinations, activities, accommodations, food, value.

### TRAINS

Accommodations, food, service, itineraries, destinations, value.

### U.S. NATIONAL PARKS

Natural attractions, activities, lodging, wildlife, accessibility.



## WANT MORE WORLD'S BEST AWARDS?

HEAD TO [TRAVELANDLEISURE.COM/WORLDS-BEST](https://travelandleisure.com/worlds-best) FOR EXPANDED LISTS—AND FIND EVEN MORE CONTENT ON INSTAGRAM (@TRAVELANDLEISURE) AND TIKTOK (@TRAVELANDLEISUREMAG).

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# WINNER'S CIRCLE



## The World's Best Hotels, Resorts & Cruises

When planning your next trip, look to *Travel + Leisure* reader favorites for unforgettable vacation experiences. Discover the outstanding hotels, resorts, islands, and cruise lines that have been voted among the best on the planet by the readers of *T+L* in this year's World's Best Awards.



## A SIMPLY STUNNING BEACHFRONT SANCTUARY

Luxuriate at The Alma Resort Cam Ranh, a Vietnamese resort offering serene accommodations, family-friendly activities, extraordinary dining, and the warmest of hospitality.

Situated on a golden stretch of beach in Cam Ranh, a beautiful peninsula on Vietnam's south-central coast, the Alma Resort is a transporting haven. Voted #1 among the 20 Best Southeast Asia Resorts, #2 among the 20 Best Asia Resorts, and voted among the 100 Best Hotels in the 2024 *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, the spacious getaway is home to world-class facilities, oversized suites and pavilions, and sublime cuisine—a winning combination promising an unforgettable oceanfront escape.

### PLAY FROM DAWN TO DUSK

Commanding 74 acres of beachfront, Alma Resort features endless opportunities for sun-splashed adventures. In addition to the 12 swimming pools that cascade invitingly down to the beach, the resort also offers basketball, tennis, volleyball, soccer, a fitness center, an 18-hole mini-golf course, and a waterpark with a lazy river, wave pool, slides, and a kids' pool. When you're ready to wind down, Le Spa awaits with private wellness villas and all-natural treatments that draw on the ancient health and beauty traditions of Asia. More entertainment beckons at the kids and youth centers; and there's even an on-site cinema.

### TAKE A CULINARY JOURNEY

Fourteen distinct dining venues let you embrace an enticing world of flavors during your stay. Barefoot beachside dining featuring only the freshest seafood awaits at Atlantis; meticulously prepared nigiri platters are on offer at Asiana; and fresh handmade pizza and pasta fills the menu at La Casa—to name just a few of the incredible offerings.

### STAY IN STYLE WITH SWEEPING VIEWS

With a palette of whites, earthy colors, and blues complementing the modern decor and abstract artwork, Alma Resort's oversized suites and pavilions—all with balconies or terraces—harmonize with Cam Ranh's aquamarine waters and scenic headlands. Floor-to-ceiling windows usher in an abundance of natural light and spectacular vistas of Vietnam's most breathtaking expanse of coastline.

- To learn more, visit [alma-resort.com](https://alma-resort.com).





## A REJUVENATING ISLAND GETAWAY

Escape to BodyHoliday Saint Lucia, a one-of-a-kind wellness resort rich with award-winning spa experiences, engaging activities, and farm-fresh dining options.

Located on a pristine crescent beach surrounded by lush tropical gardens, BodyHoliday Saint Lucia offers a unique, comprehensive approach to wellbeing. Voted #3 among the Best International Destination Spas by *Travel + Leisure* readers in the 2024 World's Best Awards, the resort's all-inclusive experience includes a daily spa treatment along with virtually endless options for classes, adventure programs, and sports. Settle into one of the property's well-appointed rooms, suites, or private villas, and enjoy a personalized wellness journey in paradise.

### CREATE YOUR IDEAL VACATION

At BodyHoliday, you're encouraged to tailor your program to your own desires, whether you're interested in high intensity workouts or relaxing Ayurvedic massages. The focal point is the beautiful BodyHoliday Wellness Centre, home to an indulgent array of time-honored body treatments and state-of-the-art therapies, as well as a fitness center, dance studio, and thalassotherapy pool. There's also a PADI-certified dive school, a sailing school, water sports, tennis, golf, archery, and more—all geared towards optimizing guests' wellness.

### LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS

Throughout the year, BodyHoliday presents themed programs presented by professional practitioners, dancers, sailors, and athletes. From international yoga instructors to Olympic champions, these skilled hosts provide priceless knowledge and insights you can take with you when you continue your wellbeing practices back at home.

### FEAST ON FARM-TO-TABLE DISHES

From vegetarian fare to indulgent fine dining, culinary choices abound at BodyHoliday with five unique resort restaurants. Don't miss I-TAL, a transporting, Rastafarian-inspired eatery located on the hillside overlooking the resort. This unique, farm-to-table dining experience includes a guided garden tour, panoramic views, and a stunning menu of plant-based dishes.

● To learn more, visit [thebodyholiday.com](https://thebodyholiday.com).

**bodyholiday**  
Saint Lucia



## A TRANSFORMATIVE WELLNESS RETREAT

Take a rewarding journey to wellbeing with Miraval Resorts & Spas, a groundbreaking collection of wellness resorts situated in breathtaking locales.

Miraval Resorts & Spas inspires guests to create a life in balance through immersive experiences in settings ranging from Arizona's Sonoran Desert and Texas Hill Country to the serene Berkshires in Massachusetts—as well as the idyllic Red Sea. Miraval Austin and Miraval Arizona were each voted among the 15 Best Domestic Destination Spas by *Travel + Leisure* readers in the 2024 World's Best Awards. Whichever luxurious property you choose, expect a wide range of mindfulness activities, destination-inspired experiences, and award-winning spa treatments.

### EXPLORE A WORLD OF ACTIVITIES

Miraval Resorts' signature approach to wellness is immersive and experiential. Built around the belief that life is an adventure of discovery and growth, each Miraval retreat offers a rich array of unique experiences led by specialists. Meditation classes, creative sessions, culinary programs, outdoor adventures, equine experiences, and more let you reconnect with yourself and with nature, encouraging you to make wellness a way of life back at home. The resorts also offer a thoughtfully curated schedule of seasonal festivities and exclusive workshops.

### EMBARK ON A CELESTIAL ESCAPE

Soak up this season's energy-filled moonlight during the Celestial Summer celebration. Dream under the Texas sky, reflect on Sonoran Desert constellations, or gaze at the Berkshires' blanket of stars. Celestial Yoga, the Moondance spa service, the Celestial Campfire, Moonlight Hikes, and more will put you in harmony with the cosmos.

### FIND SERENITY AT THE SPA

The Life in Balance Spa features an extensive menu of restorative treatments and services. While the spas at every Miraval resort share the same philosophy, each reflects its particular environment and natural bounty. Rejuvenate with a signature facial or scrub, or experience the healing power of acupuncture, Reiki, Thai massage, and more in these tranquil spaces that nurture mind, body, and spirit.

● To learn more, visit [miravalresorts.com](https://miravalresorts.com).

**MIRAVAL**  
RESORTS & SPAS



## A DREAMY CALIFORNIA BEACH ESCAPE

Discover Mission Pacific Beach Resort, a haven of modern comfort with culinary delights, fresh-air fun, indulgent spa services, and a distinctly SoCal feel.

Situated in Oceanside, CA, just 40 minutes north of downtown San Diego, Mission Pacific Beach Resort exudes Southern California coastal charm. Voted #1 among the 15 Best California Resorts and #1 among the 15 Best Continental U.S. Resorts in the 2024 *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, this welcoming 161-room beachfront getaway is brimming with style—and unique experiences reflecting the spirit of its locale.

### DINE AND DRINK WITH COASTAL VIEWS

Mission Pacific Beach Resort is a dining destination in its own right with the Michelin-starred restaurant Valle, featuring seasonal Mexican cuisine paired with Baja wines. Savor surf-inspired cocktails and Mediterranean bites poolside at The Rooftop Bar, linger over brunch on High/Low's airy terrace, and don't miss the decadent hand pies at Top Gun House. Guests can also enjoy the eateries just steps away at Mission Pacific's sister resort, The Seabird Ocean Resort & Spa.

### REVEL IN BEACHFRONT LIFE

Take in sweeping Pacific vistas from the balcony of your room, complete with sleek custom furnishings, original art, and a

spa-inspired bath. Reserve a cabana at the pool or stop by the resort's vintage beach Rambler for everything you'll need for a day at the beach, from sunscreen and beach umbrellas to surfboard rentals. Hit the waves, take a breezy bike ride, or browse the curated finds at Mission Pacific's luxury retail destination, The OZONE.

### REJUVENATE BOTH BODY AND SPIRIT

Pamper yourself at Sunny's Spa & Beauty Lounge, located at sister resort The Seabird. The award-winning sanctuary offers full-service beauty treatments, relaxation rituals, a dry-warming sauna, and a cooling mist shower, along with soothing ocean views. Back at Mission Pacific, ease into sunset at The Rooftop Bar, where the music will immerse you in Southern California's undeniably upbeat vibe.

● To learn more, visit [MissionPacificHotel.com](https://MissionPacificHotel.com).

MISSION PACIFIC  
BEACH RESORT



## UNIQUELY LUXURIOUS ECO-RESORTS

Nayara Resorts offers enriching escapes in breathtaking natural settings at its award-winning properties in Costa Rica and beyond.

Voted among the top 25 Best Hotel Brands in the 2024 *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, Nayara Resorts' roots are in the lush landscapes of Costa Rica, though the brand's luxurious and sustainable footprint now extends to Panama and Chile. For the past decade, Nayara Resorts have consistently been recognized among the top 10 Central American Resorts in the World's Best Awards, with Nayara Tented Camp ranking #1 for the past four years, Nayara Springs ranking #2 this year, and Nayara Gardens, a Hall of Fame member, making the top 10 for the last 10 years. Each destination offers immersive experiences reflecting the natural beauty and cultural richness of their surroundings.

### EXPERIENCE UNPARALLELED GLAMPING

Nayara Tented Camp's lavish tents are set amidst the vibrant rainforest and boast uninterrupted views of the surrounding landscape and the Arenal Volcano. Extensive reforestation efforts have created a thriving ecosystem where guests can expect exceptional wildlife encounters and enjoy absolute immersion in nature. Every moment at Nayara Tented Camp, a Leading Hotels of the World member, has been designed to be unforgettable.

### FIND LUXURIOUS SECLUSION

Nayara Springs, an adult-only romantic retreat, offers unparalleled luxury and seclusion. Each spacious villa features private pools fed by volcanic mineral hot springs, outdoor showers, gardens, and a private host to complement the ever-attentive staff. Two gourmet bistros offer world-class cuisine, deeply rooted in local flavors. The resort is a member of the exclusive Relais & Chateaux group.

### DISCOVER A HAVEN OF SERENITY

Nayara Gardens, a member of Leading Hotels of the World, is celebrated for its lush tropical gardens and tranquil atmosphere. The inviting, newly renovated casitas and villas are immersed in the ecosystem provided by Nayara's planting initiative. Explore a rich array of flora and fauna, from orchids and cacao trees to sloths and toucans, and indulge in world-class open-air treatments at the spa.

- To learn more, visit [nayararesorts.com](https://nayararesorts.com).





Credit: Erwin Lim

## AN UNFORGETTABLE NATURAL WONDER

Famed for exquisite beaches, magical lagoons, and limestone bluffs that rise dramatically from the sea, the island-province of Palawan will make you fall in love with the Philippines.

A multi-award-winning island beach destination, Palawan is a favorite among *Travel + Leisure* readers. In this year's World's Best Awards, it was voted among the 5 Best Islands in Asia and among the 25 Best Islands in the World. A tropical archipelago, Palawan boasts stunning coral reefs, beautiful beaches, underground rivers, and unique flora and fauna—it's a biodiverse haven offering the perfect backdrop for one-of-a-kind adventures.

### DISCOVER EXHILARATING DIVE SITES

From Coron and El Nido to the capital city Puerto Princesa, top-notch diving destinations are plentiful in Palawan. Off the coast of the town of Coron, Busuanga's Coron Reefs teem with aquatic wildlife. Snorkel or scuba dive here for a chance to see a Philippine Dugong (or sea cow), a gentle and shy relative of the manatee. The reefs also offer glimpses of a dozen World War II shipwrecks.

### BASK ON PRISTINE WHITE SAND BEACHES

Secluded, sugar-fine, white sand beaches abound in Palawan. With stunning stretches of palm trees and turquoise waters, Port Barton and Long Beach—the most extensive beach in the Philippines—both

beckon from the town of San Vicente. In southern Palawan, Balabac is well worth discovering, with crystal-clear waters, breathtaking beaches, and pristine islands.

### EXPLORE RIVERS, LAKES, AND LAGOONS

Paddle-boat your way through the Puerto Princesa Underground River on the main island's west coast—it's the world's second-longest subterranean river and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the evening, enjoy a cruise on the Iwahig River to see the glittering fireflies and bioluminescent plankton. In Coron, splash in crystal-clear waters among underwater rock formations in Lake Kayangan and explore the dazzling blue lagoon.

- Let the **Travel Philippines app** help you plan your trip to the Philippines, available through App Store and Google Play.





## AN EXTRAORDINARY OCEANFRONT OASIS

Immerse yourself in luxury at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, a reimagined Gulf Coast icon offering exclusive Club Level experiences, exciting dining options, and pampering poolside comfort.

A consistent award-winner, The Ritz-Carlton, Naples was voted among the 15 Best Florida Resort Hotels in this year's *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards. The legendary beachfront property recently underwent a spectacular transformation with the opening of the new Vanderbilt Tower, a reimagined resort lobby, and new culinary and poolside experiences. Settle into a fully redesigned, expansive guest room or suite—all with indulgent beds and breathtaking views—before relishing the resort's signature experiences on the Paradise Coast.

### ENJOY AN ELEGANTLY ELEVATED STAY

Offering 75 beautifully appointed rooms and suites, the new Vanderbilt Tower overlooks the Gulf of Mexico and was designed exclusively for Club Level guests. The personalized experience includes dedicated concierge service including check-in hosted in the lounge, as well as the stunning, indoor-outdoor Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge. Boasting floor-to-ceiling windows, the Lounge features an exclusive full-service bar, private office space, a media room, children's play area, and a dining room with five daily culinary presentations. It's the ideal place to enjoy curated daily engagements, such as bespoke demos by local artisans, or to simply relax and toast the sunset.

### SAVOR THE EXPANDED DINING SCENE

Don't miss house-made pastas, pizzas, and classics like veal parmigiana at the resort's newest culinary destination, Nolita. Enjoy Eastern Mediterranean shareable plates at Sofra. Sample confections and coffee drinks at Moka. And savor light bites paired with a Master Sommelier-curated wine list in the showstopping Lobby Bar.

### BASK IN PURE POOLSIDE BLISS

In the new oceanfront pool area, you can splash at four separate sparkling pools, including a pool for families and another for adults. Settle in for the day at one of the luxe cabanas equipped with plush seating, a ceiling fan, and television, or opt for an air-conditioned bungalow boasting an entertainment system, service bar for refreshments, and private restroom.

● To learn more, visit [ritzcarlton.com/naples](https://ritzcarlton.com/naples)



THE RITZ-CARLTON

NAPLES



## A DECIDEDLY LUXE EUROPEAN CRUISE

Embark on an exclusive, pampering journey with Riverside Luxury Cruises, voted among the 10 Best River Cruise Lines by *Travel + Leisure* readers in the 2024 World's Best Awards.

Europe's newest river cruise line, Riverside Luxury Cruises offers all-suite, all-inclusive vacations on the Rhine, Rhône, Danube, Moselle, and Main rivers. Aboard the *Riverside Mozart*, *Riverside Ravel*, and newly inaugurated *Riverside Debussy*, expect spacious accommodations—all with king-sized beds and elegant bathrooms—and a superb staff-to-guest ratio. Thanks to Riverside's intuitive service, you're set to enjoy a seamless, highly personalized, and immersive European adventure.

### CRUISE IN TOTAL COMFORT

Riverside Luxury Cruises delivers the most inclusions in its category, including gourmet cuisine made with high-quality, fresh ingredients à la minute, premium wines and spirits, unlimited shore excursions, complimentary StarLink broadband Wi-Fi, and butler service in every suite. These dedicated butlers go out of their way to make you feel cared for during your journey, handling packing and unpacking, serving personalized meals in your suite, providing recommendations, and more. Whether you'd like an appointment at the spa or any kind of reservation, simply let your personal butler know—then sit back, relax, and enjoy the journey.

### SAVOR TRULY EXCEPTIONAL CUISINE

Onboard, you'll be treated to gourmet culinary creations prepared to order as well as around-the-clock food options. In dining venues like the Waterside restaurant and the upper deck's Vista Grill, take in views of dreamy landscapes and magical cities as you enjoy specialties from the surrounding regions.

### UNCOVER EUROPE'S HISTORY, CULTURES, AND LANDMARKS

Choose from a vast array of distinct itineraries with durations ranging from 3 to 23 nights. Follow your passions or awaken new ones with the cruise line's diverse array of included shore excursions. From art and architecture to history and cuisine, Riverside Luxury Cruises will immerse you in discoveries beyond the bucket-list sights for a uniquely authentic European experience.

- To learn more, contact your preferred travel advisor or visit [Riverside-Cruises.com/en](https://www.Riverside-Cruises.com/en)



RIVERSIDE  
LUXURY CRUISES



## HOTEL WAILEA

Recognized as one of the top 5 Hawai'i Resorts four years in a row in the *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, Hotel Wailea offers personalized couples' experiences and laid-back luxury in a lush tropical setting. The only Relais & Châteaux resort in Hawai'i and the sole adults-only luxury hotel on Maui, this locally-owned boutique property is perched above the sea, with 72 individually designed suites featuring sweeping views of the ocean and three Hawaiian Islands. During your stay, dine at the award-winning Restaurant at Hotel Wailea, which showcases thoughtfully sourced local ingredients and one of the most extensive wine programs in Hawai'i.

● To learn more, visit [hotelwailea.com](https://www.hotelwailea.com).

Hotel Wailea®  
MAUI



## RANCHO VALENCIA RESORT & SPA

Experience exceptional luxury with a warm Southern California vibe at Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa, voted the #2 Best Resort in California in the 2024 *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards. Total escape begins when you enter the gates of Rancho Valencia, nestled on 45 lush, rolling acres in San Diego County. Relax in your spacious casita complete with private patio, fireplace, and whirlpool. Pamper yourself in the award-winning spa, an oasis of fitness, wellness, and pure relaxation. Finally, indulge in The Pony Room's Coastal Ranch cuisine, crafted using seasonal produce sourced directly from California's family farms, fishermen, and ranchers.

● To learn more, visit [ranchovalencia.com](https://www.ranchovalencia.com).



RANCHO VALENCIA  
resort & spa



# THE WORLD'S BEST AWARDS 2024

*Travel + Leisure* readers are continually exploring the globe and uncovering the best of the best, then sharing their finds in *T+L's* annual survey on the world's best hotels, destinations, cruise lines, airlines, railway journeys, villa rental companies, and much more. Scan the QR code above to find the full list of winners in the 2024 World's Best Awards, then start dreaming up your next journey—the greatest travel experiences are a mere click away.



## KAIMANA BEACH HOTEL

Feel the sand under your feet at this Honolulu icon, the only boutique hotel in Waikīkī located directly on the beach. Voted among the 20 Best Hawai'i Resorts in the 2024 *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards, this welcoming property features Hawaiian cultural classes, surfing lessons, wellness offerings, and acclaimed beachside dining.

- To learn more, visit [kaimana.com](https://www.kaimana.com).



WINNER'S CIRCLE





# S t i l l

*The lakes, canals, and coxes of Kerala, in southwestern India, played a crucial role in the ancient spice trade. On a return visit to his ancestral home, **Abraham Verghese** finds a place redolent with memory, tradition, and a zest for life.*

Photographs by Tom Parker

# W a t e r s



*Rowing on Lake Vembanad, in Kerala, India.*

## Whenever I think of Kerala,

the faces of my grandmothers appear before me. These two women, centers of goodness and strength in our family, frame how I see the land of my parents' birth. I close my eyes and I'm once again seated in my maternal grandmother's kitchen, the pampered grandchild back for the holidays, watching clay pots simmer over wood fires and inhaling the aroma of roasted cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, red chilis, and pepper. It is a soothing and quintessentially Kerala daydream, because spices are at the heart of this one state that feels so different from India's other states, almost like another country.

The "Spice Coast," as it has been known since the days of ancient Greece, is a ribbon of territory on the southwestern edge

of India. Just 360 miles long and 75 miles at its widest, the state sits sandwiched between the Western Ghats—a mountain range that runs parallel to the coast—and the Arabian Sea. A wonderful alchemy of geography, temperature, rainfall, wind, and soil composition allows pepper, cloves, cardamom, and other spices to grow wild on the mountains' lower slopes. Roman soldiers brought that pepper home from the Spice Coast; later, Arab and Indian sailors made small fortunes selling the seasoning in Venice and Genoa. By the 13th and 14th centuries, the craze for spices—not only pepper but also ginger, cloves, and cinnamon—was sweeping Europe.

Astonishing medical claims fueled the frenzy, including the assertion that ginger smeared on flagging body parts could restore virility. For all that, no one in Europe seemed to consider dry-roasting and powdering the spice, then frying it with mustard seeds, shallots, and perhaps cumin, turmeric, and coriander, to make a masala, the first step in so many Indian dishes.

What made these spices so valuable was not so much their flavor as the difficulty in procuring them. The urgent desire to find their source (which the Arabs naturally kept secret) eventually brought the Portuguese, French, Dutch, and British to India. England enslaved and plundered the country for two centuries, first through the East India Company and then through crown rule. So many of the magnificent edifices of government and education in Britain were built on this loot. (Even the word *loot* is stolen from the Indian vernacular.)

MY OLDER BROTHER and I were born in Ethiopia, where my parents were hired to work as teachers. Our holiday visits to their ancestral homes in Kerala felt like a return to a land that existed before time. At dusk, in the years before electricity arrived, the gentle glow of oil lamps enhanced the night. The unforgettable meals were all sourced from our family's properties and nearby streams, prepared and consumed that day. During my medical-school years in Madras (now Chennai) I visited regularly, but after my grandparents' passing and the sale of their homes, there was little reason to return. Still, over the course of the past 10 years, while I was researching and writing a novel set in Kerala, I went back multiple times. Soon after *The Covenant of Water* was released in May 2023, I set off on one more visit, this time to fulfill a vow.

My partner, Cari, and I landed at Kerala's southern end, in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram (formerly Trivandrum), and planned to travel north through the length of the state. It was Cari's third trip to India, but her first to Kerala. She grew up in Hawaii, a place whose lush green foliage, coconut palms, and beaches I find so reminiscent of Kerala.

Despite major growth and development, Thiruvananthapuram retains a sleepy, small-town feel. For centuries, maharajahs from one lineage ruled from here over "Travancore"—present-day central and southern Kerala. They worshipped at the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple, an awe-inspiring and beautiful shrine, making lavish offerings to the temple's

*Floral offerings for sale  
outside the Sree  
Padmanabhaswamy Temple,  
in Thiruvananthapuram.*





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** *The exterior of an antiques shop in Kochi; a bather at Padmatheertham Pond, in Thiruvananthapuram; women gather at the Pazhavangadi Maha Ganapathy Temple, in Thiruvananthapuram; the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple.*





LEFT A villa at Kumarakom Lake Resort.

deity, especially when invaders from the north threatened. In 2011, a court-ordered inventory of the temple vaults revealed hillocks of gold jewelry, precious stones, gold coins, and stone-encrusted idols weighed down with diamonds and gold chains. The value of the temple's treasures is estimated to be in the trillions of dollars.

We chose to stay two nights outside the city in Kovalam, a popular beach town, at the splendid Leela Kovalam, a Raviz Hotel. This sprawling property is perched on a cliff, with panoramic views of the ocean and a private beach below. Upon our arrival, the Leela's chef took us to the hotel's organic garden to pick produce for our *thali* lunch. A *thali* is a complete meal: rice with many small dishes, including dessert, served on a single dish or banana leaf. Ours came in a round stainless-steel tray embracing an inner circle of stainless-steel cups. These held bitter melon in a coconut curry; red spinach and green chiles in a fiery red curry; okra fried with onions—which we had picked that morning—along with yogurt, lobster curry, fish curry, and pickle.

The second night, the chef set a table for us near the beach. The water lapped close by as he plied us with delicacies including *karimeen*, or pearl spot fish, a great Kerala favorite, which he prepared by marinating it in a paste of onions, chiles,

and spices, then steaming it wrapped in a banana leaf.

We drove north from Kovalam to my father's hometown of Mannar, and the nearby Parumala church, a famous pilgrimage destination for the Christian community in Kerala—my community. Dad was an altar boy at Parumala; his father, who is buried there along with my grandmother, was a deacon. Legend has it that Christianity came to India in A.D. 52 with the arrival in Kerala of Saint Thomas, “Doubting Thomas” of the 12 apostles. He converted a few Brahmin families. Today that community, the Saint Thomas Christians, has grown to 6 million, though they make up just 18 percent of Kerala's population. Parumala holds the tomb of the first saint of our church, Mar Gregorios (1848–1902).

Christians from Kerala put great store in prayers to Mar Gregorios, and visiting the saint's tomb was the main reason for this trip. At one point during the 10 years I spent writing *The Covenant of Water*, I broke my contract with my original publisher—I felt they didn't get the story. It was a scary time, with the fate of my manuscript uncertain, and an advance to repay. I took a vow then that I'd come to this tomb if the novel ever got published. It did. Indeed, it succeeded beyond anything I could have hoped for—a miracle, as far as I was concerned. And so now, as I stood at the saint's tomb, shoulder to shoulder with Cari and so many others, all of whom had their own reasons for being there, I was overwhelmed with gratitude, and the tears welled up. I felt one with the faith of my forefathers; the spirit of my late mother, so instrumental to the genesis of my novel, was present. My prayers had been answered. My vow was fulfilled.

WE DROVE ON to Kottayam, a town in central Kerala that is the epicenter of the state's Christian community. Kottayam has many churches, some so close together that the sermon in one could serve both congregations. It is also the home of my college friend Jacob Mathew, or “Chacko,” who is part of the fourth generation of the family that has published Kerala's *Manorama* newspaper since 1890. The *Manorama*, a daily staple of my grandparents' lives, now has 17 million readers. Chacko's late mother published 27 cookbooks; it's a rare Kerala house that doesn't have at least one of them. Chacko's wife, Ammu, continues the great culinary tradition. At her table we feasted on my favorites: *appam* (a pancake made from rice flour) and fish curry; *erechi olarthiyathu* (a beef dish); and some dishes that were new to me, such as a dessert of tapioca and coconut milk crowned with tender toasted coconut.

Chacko had generously arranged—indeed insisted—on having his car and driver meet us when we arrived in Kerala and stay with us on every leg of our journey. It was a huge help. Saying our goodbyes to Chacko and Ammu, we got on the road again. From Kottayam, we headed to the backwaters, hundreds of miles of natural and

**LEFT TO RIGHT**  
*A boat in the beach town of Kovalam; St. Peter and St. Paul's Indian Orthodox Church, in the village of Parumala.*

**BELOW, FROM LEFT**  
*A toddy tapper collects the sap of a palm tree in Kovalam; a thali at Leela Kovalam.*



man-made canals, which in the pre-automobile era were Kerala's highways, transporting goods and people across the state. Our destination was Kumarakom, a village on the shore of the vast Lake Vembanad—India's longest and South India's largest lake. Homestays, small hotels, and vast resorts hug the shore; bird-watchers come to visit the Kumarakom sanctuary nearby.

We stayed at Kumarakom Lake Resort—or “KLR”—a Paul P. John property. John, a Christian from Kerala, is best known for his single-malt premium Indian whiskey, which shocked connoisseurs by winning medals internationally and capturing a sizable world market share. I think Paul John whiskey is better than any single malt (but I won't tell my Edinburgh friends).

KLR is a “heritage” resort, at the heart of which are two large, repurposed family homes that have been transported to the property; one houses KLR's signature restaurant, the other its superb ayurvedic spa. The buildings showcase the classic features of traditional Kerala architecture: peaked roofs with exquisitely carved and decorated wooden gables; inner and outer courtyards and broad verandas; windows, doors, and wall vents designed to maximize airflow. The guest villas are miniature versions of the two larger homes. Ours had teak walls polished to a beautiful finish, heavy wooden doors with ornate locks, and cement floors painted with red oxide. Each of these villas also has a private swimming pool. The interiors felt so familiar that on my first night I dreamed about my grandparents—their house was built by a skilled carpenter, or *Ashari*, following ancient Vedic principles in terms of the house's position on the plot, its orientation to the sun, and the prescribed ratios for the support beams and roof timbers.

Chacko and his family keep a motorboat on Vembanad Lake, and he had made arrangements for us to get a backwater tour. The next morning, just before the sun rose, we met the boatman on the KLR jetty. Vembanad was as smooth as glass, and would have seemed endless had we kept going north. But we soon steered away from its center, toward a shore that unfolded to reveal the entrance to a broad channel. There were raised mud embankments on either side of this passage, beyond which flooded fields stretched away in the distance. These are the rice paddies of Kuttanad, where, for more than two centuries, rice has been cultivated *below* sea level, making use of ponds, reclaimed swamp, and lagoons and using an elaborate system of irrigation and drainage.

We were lucky to spot a toddy tapper climbing down from a tall palm tree, his tools hanging from his belt. Toddy is the sap from the palm's flowering top. Each day the tapper “taps” on the fruiting body to soften it, makes a few incisions, then inverts a clay pot to collect the sap. The next day he empties the receptacle, and repeats. We purchased his fresh toddy, which ferments at once, its taste for now sweet and tangy. By lunchtime it would have the potency of an IPA. Toddy shops abound all over Kerala, housed in nondescript shacks. They famously serve a fiery cuisine—which requires you to drink more to douse the flames.





*The lobby of the  
Leela Kovalam.  
LEFT The grounds  
of the resort.*



**FROM LEFT**  
*Chinese fishing nets near Kochi's Cherai Beach; a gardener on the grounds of the Leela Kovalam.*



**BELOW, FROM LEFT**  
*Nuns near the harbor in Kovalam; a guest room at Kumarakom Lake Resort.*



We passed several houseboats during our excursion. These converted rice barges are air-conditioned floating suites, complete with pilot and chef. We would have loved to have spent a week on a houseboat, exploring the far reaches of the backwater, and a second week relaxing at KLR. But we didn't have enough time, and Cochin (or Kochi, its new name) beckoned.

Kochi—"The Queen of the Arabian Sea," as it is called—is a congregation of islands where backwaters and ocean meet that, once a modern harbor was built in 1920, anchored the spice trade. Most visitors will choose, as we did, to spend their time exploring Mattancherry and Fort Cochin, neighborhoods where the city's rich history is most evident.

Negotiating the gridded streets of Fort Kochi, we arrived at Brunton Boatyard. As the name implies, this classic colonial building, with its tall arches and pillars, was once a prosperous boatyard owned by an Englishman. It has been beautifully transformed into a hotel, its hallways and walls decorated with colonial artifacts. On the broad veranda you can close your eyes and imagine the privileged life of a British expatriate as you stretch out on a teak-framed recliner, sip a gin and tonic, and let yourself be cooled by the shore breeze.

Brunton Boatyard is steps from the seawalk; from there we watched the ferries shuttling between the surrounding islands. Stalls selling fresh fish offered an education on the species that abound in the Arabian Sea: sardine, mackerel, pomfret, mullet, seer fish, prawns, and mussels. In the early mornings you might see fishermen bringing in a fresh catch, including crabs, lobster, and tuna. Our stroll brought us to the iconic "Chinese" fishing nets, cantilevered over the water by wooden beams like giant cranes; no tourist leaves Kochi without photographing these structures.

The St. Francis Church was also on our walking route. Built in 1503, it was the first European church in India. We stood alongside other tourists and stared numbly at the vault where Vasco da Gama is *not* buried. (He was, briefly, entombed here, but then his body was taken back to Portugal.) This Catholic church became Protestant in the Dutch era, and Anglican when the British came.

OUR LAST STOP was Mattancherry, once home to the large spice markets where traders came to bid and barter. Now this quaint part of Kochi is famous for its antiques shops, many of them selling wonderful artifacts recovered from old ancestral homes, such as doors, arches, decorative panels, and locks. Mattancherry once had a large Jewish community, but most left after the creation of Israel. The neighborhood of Jew Town remains—its label is not derogatory, but a designation given over time as more Jewish people arrived in the area. The synagogue is the main attraction. On a visit I made in 2000, a congregation of fewer than five people remained. Now the congregation is nonexistent; its members have all either died or emigrated to Israel.

Once the sun set, we were back in Fort Kochi, which now took on a different character, the returning

sea breeze having brought about a revival. The foreign backpackers who had been tucked away in hotels in the side streets emerged, looking pleased, as though they might stay forever. Families came out to stroll, teens to meet friends. Kochi is host to the popular Kochi-Muziris Biennale, which began in 2012. It has had an effect on the city that lasts all year: art galleries buzz with visitors, and coffee shops and elegant restaurants light up the street. The ocean was dark and invisible, illuminated only by the lights of ferries crisscrossing between islands like fireflies.

Our time in Kerala had run out. There was so much more to see: the wildlife sanctuaries in the jungle preserves of the Western Ghats; the cities of Kozhikode (formerly Calicut) and Kananur (formerly Cannanore) farther north; visits to the estate regions of Wayanad, or Munnar, where tea and rubber are grown on mist-shrouded slopes; perhaps a stay in one of the many individual estates—properties that encompass thousands of acres—where the original planter's home has transformed itself into luxury lodge or hotel, far from the crowds of Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram. We planned to come back again, next time for a longer, more leisurely stay. Cari, an anthropologist, had loved learning about the history and culture of Kerala, and meeting my friends and extended family, seeing my roots.

When Vasco da Gama landed in Kerala in 1498, he claimed he was there to bring Christian salvation to the heathens. Little did he know that Christianity had been extant there since A.D. 52. And here I was, a descendant of those first Indian Christians, returning to fulfill my vow. It felt good. 🌐

## WHERE TO STAY

### BRUNTON BOATYARD

The 26 rooms at this Kochi hotel, once a British shipyard, draw on colonial style and overlook the point where Lake Vembanad meets the Arabian Sea. *Doubles from \$143.*

### KUMARAKOM LAKE RESORT

This luxurious heritage resort on the shores of Lake Vembanad has a number of villas modeled after *manas*, the traditional homes of the region—as well as larger pavilions and even houseboats. *Doubles from \$228.*

### THE LEELA KOVALAM, A RAVIZ HOTEL

From its clifftop location, this 188-room resort has superb views of the Arabian Sea. Ask for one of the four suites in the former Halcyon Castle, a 1932 royal building that has been restored. *Doubles from \$168.*



# WIND AND TIDE

# WIND AND TIDE



Wilmington, North Carolina, is evolving into a 21st-century destination, even as it comes to terms with its



*Surfers at sunrise  
on Wrightsville  
Beach, just east  
of Wilmington,  
North Carolina.*

**RIGHT** *A lounge area  
at Dreamers by DW,  
a boutique hotel.*



complicated past. **John Jeremiah Sullivan** reflects on the place he calls home. Photographs by **Leslie Ryann McKellar**



HERE IS A CERTAIN VAGUENESS about our national awareness of Wilmington, North Carolina. It is a significant American city, a 300-year-old colonial port that played a determining role in American history at more than one juncture, yet a striking number of people have never heard of it. I have been here for 20 years and am used to being met with a kind of blankness when I tell someone from another town where I live.

Some remember Wilmington from their youth as a pretty beach town with an interesting “old” section down by the river. It was once referred to as “the Port City of Progress and Pleasure”—but many people who live here pay little attention to the port and the constant activity around it.

Still, even if the city’s identity is fuzzy, there is an undeniable charm that may owe its existence to precisely that quality. Wilmington does not brand itself as aggressively as many other Southern coastal cities. It has chill, as the kids say these days. If you want to get to know it, you have to explore it some. The exploration is worth it.

AS A HISTORY OBSESSIVE and pale person who generally hides from the sun, my favorite part of Wilmington is not our famous beaches but Downtown, by the river, a small grid of streets lined with late-19th-century commercial buildings, and the blocks that flank it, where the oldest houses are. Only a few pre-Revolutionary structures survived the fires that have sporadically destroyed sections of the city. A couple of grand 18th-century homes overlook the wharves, and one very old brick building, the Mitchell-Anderson House at Orange and Front Streets, supposedly dates back to the 1730s, right around the time Wilmington came into existence. If you walk by there, take a look at the ballast-stone foundation, one of only a few that have lasted. These football-size stones were carried over from England in the holds of ships to weigh them down properly. When a ship arrived in port, its stones were removed so goods could be put into the hulls. The stones were then used to build foundations.

Many visitors will probably always gravitate toward remnants of the antebellum South, and we certainly have



**FROM LEFT**  
*The porch at Dreamers; oysters and beer at Seabird restaurant; a guest room with a view of the Atlantic at the Blockade Runner Beach Resort; the bar at Seabird.*



those to offer. Downtown, horse-drawn-carriage tours move sleepily along brick streets; ghost tours are also fun (we seem to specialize in ghost stories, many involving pirates, which is funny, because we didn't really have many pirates here). I recommend a tour of the Burgwin-Wright House & Gardens, built about 1770. During the Revolutionary War, when the city was occupied by the British, Lord Cornwallis briefly used it as his headquarters. You can also take a nighttime walk through the Latimer House, built during the 1850s, and see what those grand old places looked like when they were lit by gas lamps.

Finally and most famously, there is the white-columned Bellamy Mansion, at the corner of Fifth and Market, with its intact brick "slave quarters" in the back. Most of the fine craftwork to be seen inside the mansion was executed by enslaved and free Black artisans. Only in 2002 was it discovered that one of them, William B. Gould, who escaped during the Civil War and joined the Union navy (and kept a diary that was later published), had signed his initials behind a piece of decorative plasterwork.

The discovery is, in a sense, a metaphor: in Wilmington, Black history is always peeking out from behind an Old South

## WHERE TO STAY

### **Blockade Runner Beach Resort**

While there have been hotels on this spot on Wrightsville Beach since the 1860s, the 150-room Brutalist building that houses the Blockade Runner has been a local icon since its debut in 1964. The property has access to both the Atlantic Ocean (for surfing) and the more sedate Wrightsville Sound (for fishing and kayaking). New owners have initiated a welcome renovation. *Doubles from \$299.*

### **Dreamers by DW**

This handsome Queen Anne-style house in a residential part of Downtown has been converted into five bright and airy guest rooms and suites, available on an Airbnb-style rental model. The contemporary interiors are decorated with blond wood and pops of pastel color. *Doubles from \$225.*

### **The Hive**

Fifteen individually designed suites, all with fully equipped kitchenettes, in a converted industrial building only two blocks from the riverfront. *Doubles from \$149.*

### **The Inn at Bald Head Island**

This 10-suite bed and breakfast, just across the harbor from the island's ferry landing, is rich with Southern coastal charm. Sit out on the long terrace and enjoy the ocean breezes. *Doubles from \$450.*



**FROM LEFT** *The Bellamy Mansion, a 19th-century house turned museum; a mezcal-peach-basil sour at Manna restaurant; summertime fun at Wrightsville Beach.*

façade. In recent years, more people have become aware of the city's complicated and often bloody racial past, and if they know anything about the place, they might be aware that a white-supremacist mob committed a massacre here in 1898. (A book on that subject, David Zucchino's *Wilmington's Lie*, won a Pulitzer Prize a few years ago.) To live here today is to be constantly aware of how the city is coming to grips with that story.

For anyone interested in Wilmington's African-American history—and not just the violence, but the cultural depth and achievement—there now exists an easy way to interact with it as a tourist: the WilmingtonNColor tour. This was created by my friend Cedric Harrison, a local entrepreneur whose nonprofit Support the Port has been active on the social-justice scene for a decade. A few years ago, he bought a bus (actually a decommissioned Atlanta transit tram) with a plan to use it for guided tours. I remember the day he got it: I went over to help rip out the old seats and install a video screen.

*Sit at the counter and get your sweet tea on, then feast on fried catfish, which is the best I've ever tasted, full stop.*

Today the bus is thoroughly fancied up, and along the sides run the faces of some of the city's Black heroes, including the newspaper editor Alex Manly, whose pioneering *Daily Record* was burned on that dark day in 1898; the artist Minnie Evans; and the basketball player Michael Jordan, who went to high school in the city and was back this past spring for the opening of a medical clinic that carries his name.

Cedric's trained guides will take you to see sites that are important to Wilmington's Black history but might be difficult to identify otherwise, such as the empty lot next to St. Luke's AME Zion Church, which was the final location of the *Daily Record* offices, or Williston Middle School, formerly Williston Senior High School, one of the great Black public schools in the South. It produced, among other notables, the Heath brothers, who were pioneers of modern jazz (bassist Percy and saxophonist Jimmy both attended Williston), and Althea Gibson, the first Black Wimbledon tennis champion. "I've had people take the tour, and it made them want to go do their own research," Cedric said, adding that the most common reaction he gets on the bus is "Why isn't any of this taught in schools?"

Wilmington's Cameron Art Museum was built on the site of the so-called Battle of Forks Road, where the city's Confederate defenders faced off against the United States Colored Troops and lost. A permanent outdoor sculpture, Stephen Cameron's *Boundless*, stands within a park on the property. Nine soldiers, representing the Black recruits who fought in the battle, march in rows of three behind a drummer and a flag-bearer.





*The pool area at  
Blockade Runner.*

## WHERE TO EAT

### **Britt's Donut Shop**

This Carolina Beach institution has been making doughnuts since 1939. And they make only one type—original glazed.

### **Caprice Bistro**

Timeless French dishes—such as duck confit and *steak frites*—prepared simply and elegantly. *Entrées \$21–\$32.*

### **Jackson's Big Oak Barbecue**

All the classics, including barbecued pork, fried chicken, and banana pudding. *Entrées \$10–\$12.*

### **Manna**

Thoughtful revamps of American standards, as well as an excellent craft-cocktail menu. *Entrées \$32–\$75.*

### **Nippy's Soul Food**

At this family-owned restaurant, customers can “pay it forward”: buy a meal in advance for someone who might not be able to afford one. *Entrées \$12–\$17.*

### **PinPoint Restaurant**

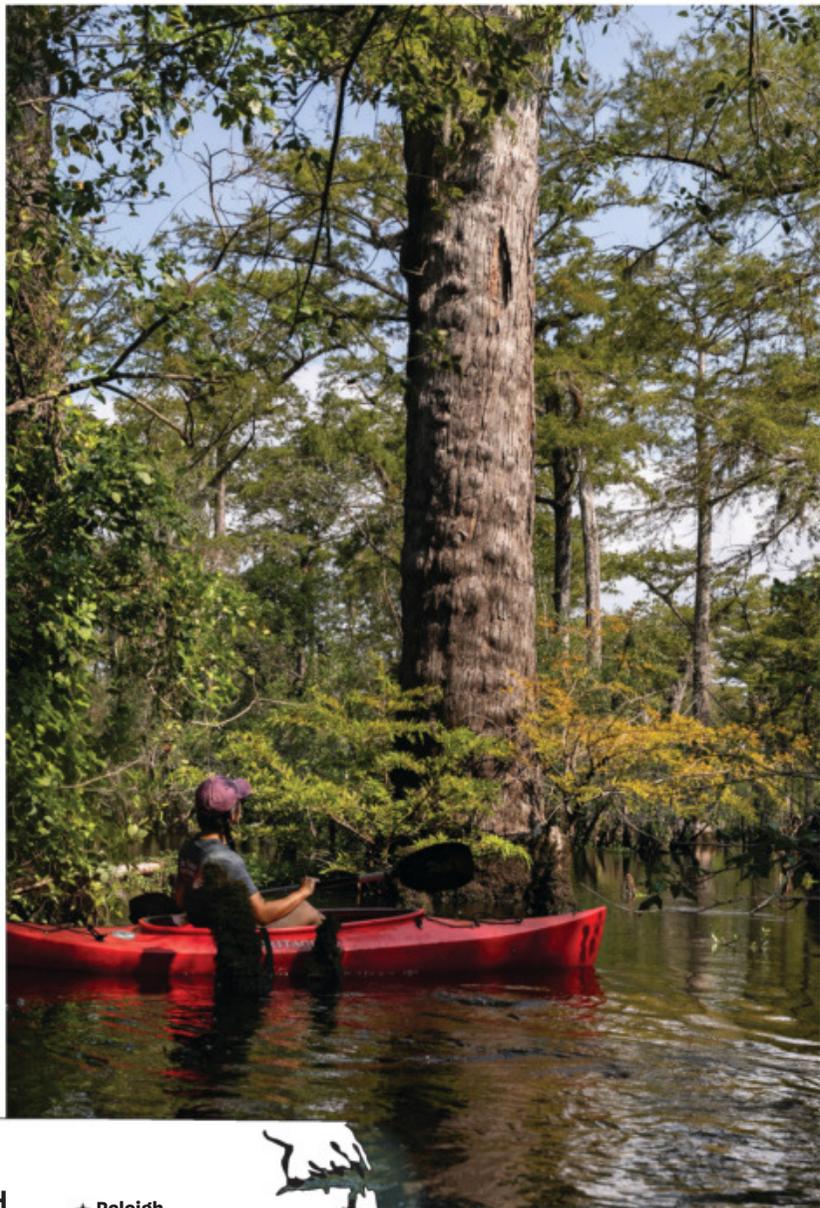
Chef Cameron Garvey presents a rotating menu of elevated American classics, such as a fried chicken with General Tso sauce. *Entrées \$29–\$46.*

### **Seabird**

Spectacular, inventively prepared seafood is the star of chef Dean Neff's menu—try the swordfish schnitzel or the crispy smoked catfish. *Entrées \$29–\$46.*

### **Truck's Chicken 'n Fish**

A great soul-food place, with a legendary mac and cheese. *Entrées \$7–\$17.*



## WHAT TO DO

### **Bellamy Mansion Museum**

The self-guided tour of this ornate mid-19th-century home of a physician's family includes the quarters of his enslaved workers.

### **Burgwin-Wright House & Gardens**

The city's only colonial-era building open to the public is surrounded by extensive grounds that reflect 18th-century garden style, with terraces, an orchard, and a kitchen garden.

### **Cameron Art Museum**

This eclectic institution has a collection that ranges from Mary Cassatt to Robert Rauschenberg—as well as a study center for the work of visionary artist Minnie Evans.

### **Latimer House Museum**

Once the home of a prosperous Wilmington family, this 1852 residence is a window into the city's Victorian past.

### **Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden**

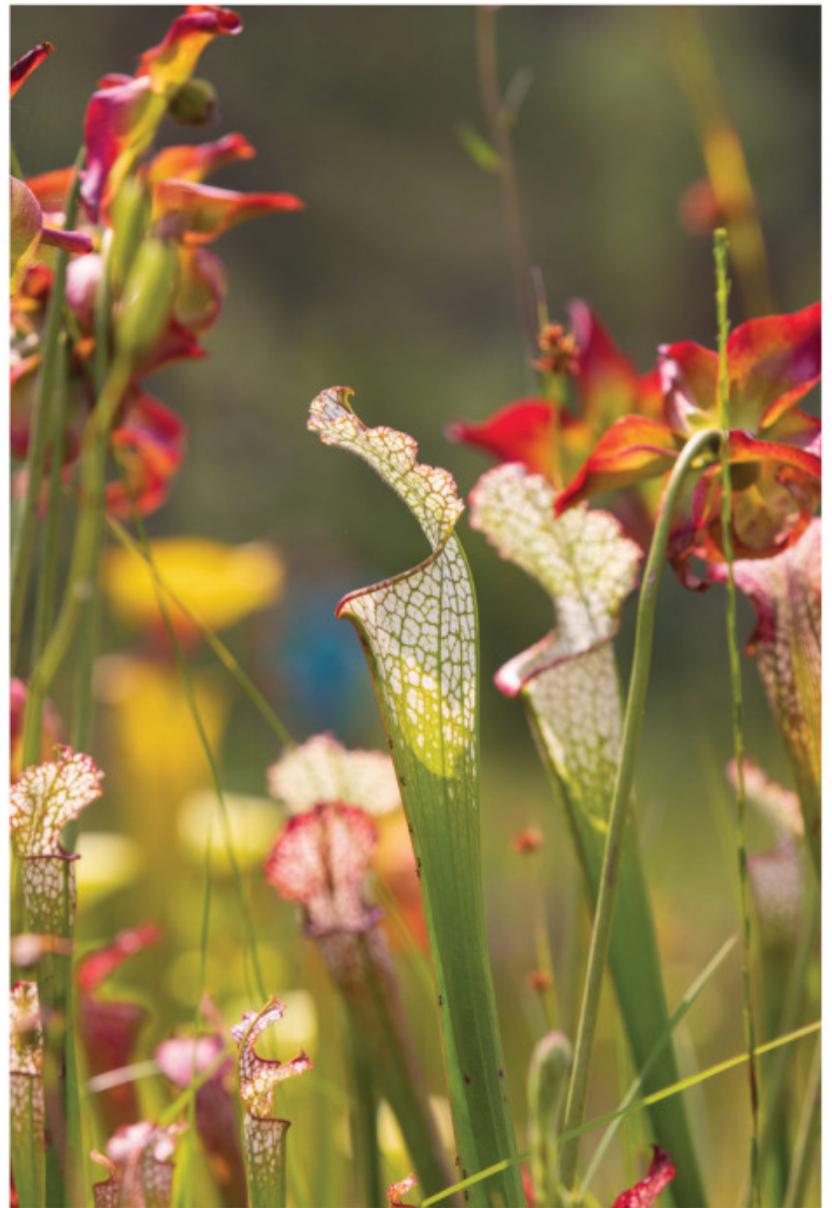
Named after a local horticulturalist, this compact plot showcases Venus flytraps, sundews, and pitcher plants.

### **WilmingtonColor**

Cedric Harrison's 70-minute bus tour of the city focuses on the history of its African-American population, from the 1898 massacre by white supremacists to the achievements of artists and athletes.

MOST PEOPLE WHO VISIT Wilmington come not for history, of course, but for the natural beauty. Our beaches are superb, especially given that all of them are public. The Cape Fear peninsula juts out a bit into the Atlantic, so the water there is at its clearest and cleanest. The sand is pale and fine. There are waves, though not the kind of waves that grind your face into the coral—surfing tournaments take place here, believe it or not. Wrightsville Beach is the main one: four miles long, with plenty of smooth sand for spreading out your towels, and almost never horribly crowded, even in peak season. But be sure to check out at least one other stretch of strand, maybe Carolina Beach, which on some nights feels like a time capsule from the 1950s, with rows of small beach shacks and even an amusement park that runs through Labor Day. If you make it to Carolina Beach, find Britt's Donut Shop, an institution, along the boardwalk, and get a coffee and a bag of fresh glazed doughnuts. They sell nothing else. Later take a walk on the wooden dock, which seems to extend fantastically far out over the ocean.

ILLUSTRATION BY BASHIEL LUBARSKY



**FROM LEFT** *Front Street, part of Wilmington's historic district; kayaking the Black River; a burrata salad with local vegetables at Manna; Cedric Harrison of WilmingtonNColor at the 1898 Monument & Memorial Park; pitcher plants at the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden.*

The countryside around Wilmington can also yield surprises. It's not the traditional postcard kind of nature, with hikes and waterfalls. This country is flat. The soil is sandy and poor, easily exhausted. But the landscape has its own weird treasures.

I took a kayak trip with Deb Maurer of the Nature Conservancy to see one of the oldest trees in North Carolina: a bald cypress in a swamp on the Black River. We had to paddle carefully, because all around us were cypress knees, the strange aboveground, or in this case above-water, roots that bald cypress trees put out, a familiar Wilmington sight. My friend the artist and naturalist George Sanford McGee, who came with us, spotted a gorgeous brown water snake napping on one knee. Little yellow prothonotary warblers flitted through the canopy. Deb said they don't know exactly how old the tree is, but cores that have been taken suggest an age of at least 2,700 years. When we paddled up to it, it was totally enormous and unlike any tree I've seen. The outside bark looked like seal skin, slick and taut around the trunk.

Perhaps Wilmington's greatest boast is its Venus flytraps. This part of the coast is the only place on earth where those famous carnivorous plants grow wild. When friends pass through, the first place I typically take them is one of the Venus flytrap preserves. Nobody's mind is ever not blown. There has been a lot of interesting science done on flytraps. They can

count, it turns out, and possess a kind of memory or sense of time. When a flytrap feels a tickle on one of its sensitive trigger hairs, known as trichomes, it waits to see how quickly the next couple of tickles happen—and snaps closed only if they occur within a certain time span. In this way, it can tell the difference between an insect and a raindrop, so it doesn't go snapping its lobes at every wind, wasting its energy for zero nutrition. My favorite place to commune with the flytraps (and a couple of other species of pitcher plant) is at the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden at Piney Ridge Nature Preserve, where a little stone path winds through the moist habitat. There is hardly ever anyone else there.

WILMINGTON DOES NOT show up on many people's culinary maps of the most exciting places to eat in America, but that may be about to change. When I moved here

(Continued on page 180)

road trip through southeastern Austria reveals that, in a land where

In other parts of the world, natural wine production can be raw, wild, and a little messy. But a



order and understatement reign, even the low-intervention bottles are elegant and refined.

# Natural Selection

*A guest room at  
Vienna's Hotel Sacher.  
OPPOSITE The Rosalia  
chapel in Burgenland,  
in southeastern Austria.*





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP**  
**LEFT** Barbara Eselböck,  
co-owner of Taubenkobel,  
with staffers from the  
restaurant; a tasting at  
Gut Oggau vineyard;  
a dish of peas, potatoes,  
wild sage, and caviar at  
Taubenkobel; Archaic  
Blanca, Ploder Rosenberg  
winery's signature bottle.



**“AUSTRIA’S TUSCANY”** was my destination: the wine region of Sudsteiermark, or Southern Styria, in the foothills along the Slovenian border. But in this small country known for alpine sports, high culture, and Weiner schnitzel, all roads lead to Vienna. So the day before I set out on a spring driving tour of wine country, I found myself in the imperial city, opening the windows at Hotel Sacher to take in the delicious weather. My elegant suite was a composition of eau de Nil wall fabric, ecru silk curtains, and molded paneling in eggshell hues, and it gave me an idea to try out over dinner.

At a relaxed farm-to-table bistro nearby (Restaurant Schubert, sadly now closed), the twentysomething proprietor seated me on the terrace and suggested I let him handle the ordering. I agreed, and asked him to also choose two Austrian wines. My idea, I explained, was to compare one “classic” from a landmark Austrian winery, something in the faultless Hotel Sacher manner, with an equivalent “natural” wine. The proprietor’s eyes lit up. He knew what to do. (There is no exact definition, but typically wines sold as natural, or low-intervention, come from organic or biodynamic grapes fermented with wild yeast and treated with minimal sulfur.)

Out came a progression of beautiful seasonal dishes. White asparagus with grilled romaine and diced rhubarb in a pool of pea emulsion. A frilly salad of sheer carrot ribbons. Delicately poached salmon trout. Jerusalem-artichoke sorbet with preserved quince for dessert. It was a culinary sketch of springtime in Austria: the taste of nature, and a perfect counterpoint to the refinement of the Hotel Sacher.

As for the wines, there was a misunderstanding. The proprietor brought me two glasses—for each course. Eight fine wines in total, every one of them elegant and precise. And from each pairing, without a doubt, I preferred the natural wine. Why? They had charm, individuality, dash. They were fun, but not in the disheveled way of many natural wines I’d tried in the past.

I texted the results of my experiment to Marko Kovac, cofounder of Karakterre, the natural-wine fair in Eisenstadt that was to be the final stop on my itinerary.

“What have you people done to my palate?” I teased.

“There’s no going back,” he replied.

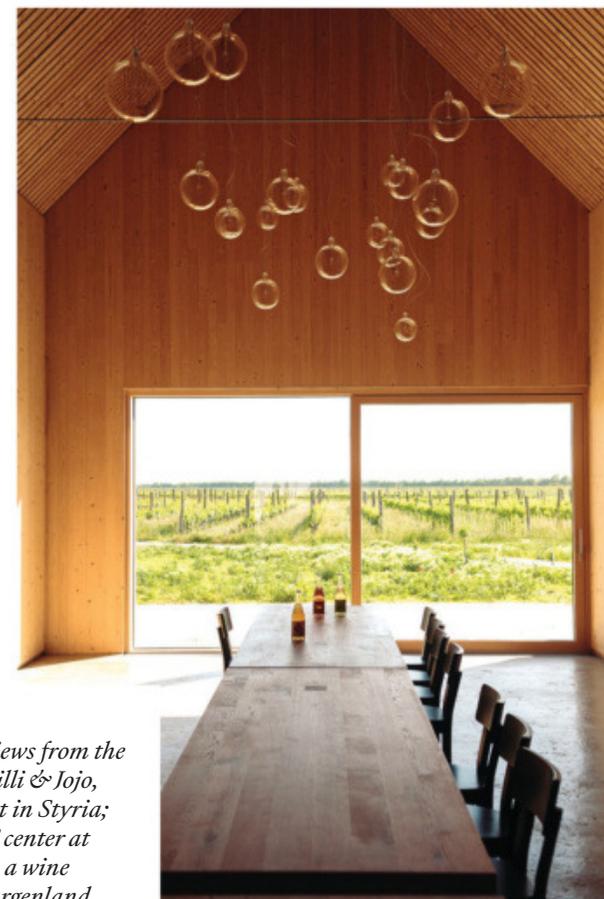
**To each his own**, of course, and some drinkers will always prefer the classical style. But what I discovered on the natural-wine route through Southern Styria and adjacent Burgenland—regions known, respectively, for fresh-as-springwater whites and reds nimbler than a Strauss waltz—is that Austria is not a funky place, wine-wise. The low-intervention bottles I sampled were faultless and refined, with none of the barnyard aromas, kombucha fizz, and sour-grape tang tolerated by vintners in other, less exacting corners of the world. By the end of the trip, it occurred to me that Austria may well be the world’s most approachable gateway to natural wine.

From time to time, I put down my glass to soak in the history of these culturally rich borderlands, which were once not at the edge but in the middle of a European superpower. “Austria used to go all the way south to Trieste,” one sommelier reminded me. Austro-Hungary’s Hapsburg dynasty had counted Styria among its possessions since 1278; on the eve of World War I, it ruled as a constitutional monarchy over such far-flung cities as Trieste, Budapest, Prague, Kraków, and Sarajevo.

Resources, ideas, and influences from across the realm entered the country’s cultural DNA. I kept catching glimpses of elsewhere in the food, the palaces, the polychrome churches, the stone village houses, the timber farms—each a trace of that cosmopolitan empire.

Even more vivid than the region’s history was the sparkling presence of nature. Southern Austria was in full flower during my trip: lilac and elder in the forested Styrian hills, honey locust and wild rose on the plains of Burgenland, a perfumed landscape that rushed in through my open car window. Everywhere I was met with the bloom of health. At little taverns, garden pickings filled the menus, and at night the family-run inns smelled of air-dried linen. Folks carried themselves with a sense of contentment and good humor, as if they weren’t too busy to open a bottle of wine at lunch or saunter off for an afternoon hike.

**Halfway to Graz**, the storybook capital of Styria, green hills gently gathered themselves up from the smooth plains like the skirt of a couture ball gown. Graz was once an imperial city, like Vienna, but it has a distinctly southern exposure. I had the strange



**FROM LEFT**  
*Vineyard views from the terrace of Lilli & Jojo, a restaurant in Styria; the visitors’ center at Meinklang, a wine estate in Burgenland.*



Joachim Gradwohl  
and Lilli Kollar of  
Lilli & Jojo.

sensation, as I walked into the UNESCO-designated historic center through plazas planted with olive trees, that I could feel a Mediterranean breeze. It was as the Hapsburgs wished. In the 16th century they brought in Italian architects to update their drab medieval city. Domenico dell'Allio delivered them a colonnaded palace that is now home to the provincial parliament. On the nearby central square a hulking town hall, the Hauptplatz, bristles with architectural doodads like an old Baroque pile but is practically new, put up in 1893 by city-proud residents who paid for it with a tax on wine.

I ducked in to Gasthaus Stainzerbauer, a traditional tavern, for lunch. The daily special was white asparagus, warm potatoes, and mâche, a small salad green, drizzled with pumpkin-seed oil, a local delicacy so intensely green it left grassy stains on my napkin. This was classic Styrian cooking, and it would be the baseline against which I measured that night's dinner at Broadmoar, a countryside restaurant and inn run by innovative chef Johann Schmuck.

Although it sits barely beyond the Graz suburbs, Broadmoar seemed to exist on the far side of enchantment, in a setting of horse pastures, shadowy woods, and blooming hedgerows. I went for a walk during golden hour and time seemed suspended: dandelions in their uncountable number had flowered, but the puffballs had not yet puffed away. At dinner, Schmuck's menu explored the precise micro season of the farm across 11 courses, each accompanied by low-intervention wines from small regional producers. Nearly every plate was sprinkled with the wild edibles I'd seen underfoot on my walk: oxalis, chickweed, yarrow, field garlic, rumex, bishop's weed, cress, and nettles that stung less than ours in the United States. Compared with lunch, this was Styria at its most natural.

**A cock crowed.** Across the valley another answered. It was 4:21 a.m., and the skylight above my bed was open. Soon the light rose and, with it, the most flamboyant birdsong I'd heard since a morning on the Serengeti many years ago. Among the

chorus, a cuckoo called. I had never heard one before, but it couldn't have been anything else: it sounded exactly like a cuckoo clock.

Somehow my head felt fine despite the previous night's many glasses of research. Natural-wine proponents claim their low-sulfur tippie causes less of a hangover, or maybe it was just a good night's sleep in the super-oxygenated air. But in any case, I was fully charged to drive about 45 minutes south, nearly to the border with Slovenia, to meet a world-renowned guru of natural-wine making, Sepp Muster, and his wife/collaborator, Maria.

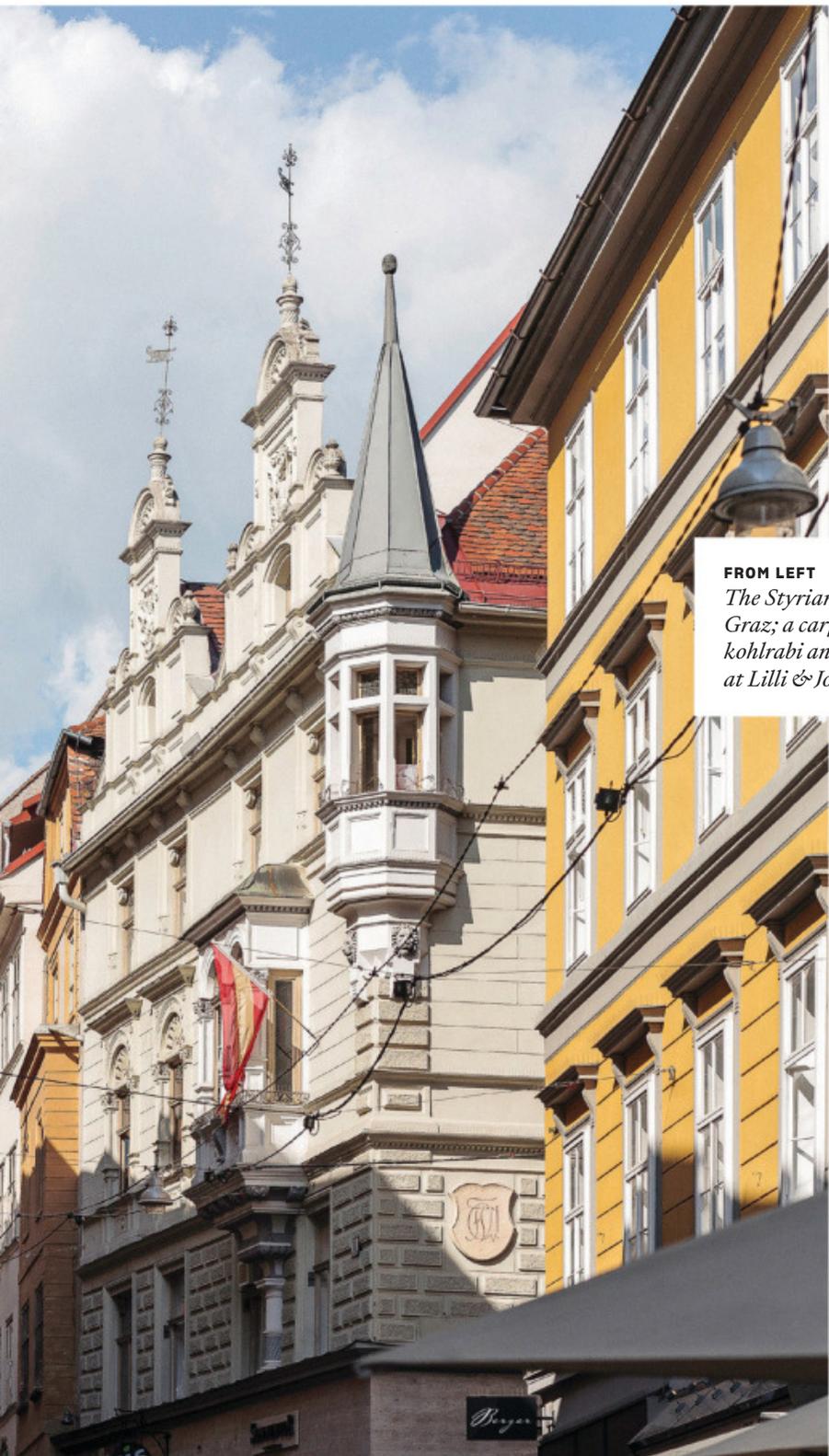
There was no mistaking the Muster vineyards. Conventional management practices suppress everything that isn't vine by mowing, tilling, and spraying herbicide with an intensity that ranges from anal-retentive to paranoid. The Musters do the opposite. They invite in unruly nature and encourage its residency among their vines. I could distinguish a dozen kinds of rival wildflowers and broad-leaf plants in the thick grass. Pollinators buzzed past. Swarms of smaller insects, backlit by the morning sun, were snatched from the air by avian patrols.

Sepp greeted me on the steps of the couple's gently worn 18th-century farmhouse and toured me through the vineyards, established on land his father acquired in 1978. "We trust every plant is growing on the right spot," Muster said of the green exuberance, "because that's the way nature works. If the soil is alive, everything works." Robust and jolly in his middle years, Sepp sounded by turns like a humble farmer, a wise ecologist, a climate scientist, a government agronomist, and a Druidic high priest. Another secret: he doesn't make the wine. "I'm observing," he said in succinct summary of the entire low-intervention ethos. In this worldview, the wine is made "in the vineyard": the vines themselves create a self-portrait of the year to capture in a wine bottle. We joined Maria at a table in the half-wild garden, and Sepp uncorked several bottles. "We can feel this complexity in the wine," he said, swirling a glass. "It's not a physical sensation; it's just very fine, elegant flavors."

The surprise was that Styria has historically not been known for its fine wine, though grapevines were first recorded in the area in the 17th century, Sepp said, but at the turn of the 20th century more grapes were being grown commercially on the Slovenian side of the border. The reason had to do with politics, to an extent, but mostly with climate. Styria was too chilly. A warming trend reached a historic milestone with the perfect 1992 growing season. Sepp compared the current climate conditions with those of Burgundy in the 70s and 80s—wine-making Valhalla.

That night I stayed nearby at Weingut Tauss, a winery and inn outside the village of Schlossberg run by Alice and Roland Tauss. Breakfast the next morning was served outdoors on tablecloths the same milky blue as the bright, humid sky. Alice Tauss put out whole-wheat bread, superb house-made jam, and a scramble of orange-yolked eggs drizzled with the ubiquitous pumpkin-seed oil. She moved among the tables in a nutmeg linen skirt, a picture





**FROM LEFT**  
The Styrian capital, Graz; a carpaccio of kohlrabi and fennel at Lilli & Jojo.



## SEE AUSTRIA'S NATURAL SIDE

### VIENNA

#### Hotel Sacher Wien

The grande dame of Vienna hotels, subtly refreshed in 2018, remains a paragon of classical elegance. Breakfast is served in the superb ballroom. *Doubles from \$703.*

#### Meinklang Hofladen

The in-town “farm shop” from Austria’s largest natural winery multitasks as a coffee house, all-day café, bakery, wine bar, and wine shop, supplied by the Michlits family’s Burgenland estate. *Entrées \$6–\$14.*

### STYRIA

#### Broadmoar

This restaurant-guesthouse offers hyperlocal gastronomy and simple lodging on a picturesque horse farm outside Graz. *Doubles from \$88; tasting menu \$124.*

#### Weingut Taus

Bare-bones but endearing, this biodynamic winery and inn is surrounded by gardens, wildflowers, and vine-covered hillsides. *Doubles from \$65 per person.*

#### Gasthaus Restaurant Thaller

Contemporary fine dining on the church square of Veit am Vogau, with a deep wine list of

bottles from local legends Maria and Sepp Muster. *Tasting menu \$128.*

#### Gasthaus Stainzerbauer

A cozy tavern in the historic center of Graz that highlights traditional Styrian ingredients. *Entrées \$21–\$45.*

#### Lilli & Jojo

Calling itself a *Wirtshaus*, or wine tavern, this stop along the wine route charms with elevated country cooking and a friendly welcome. *Prix fixe \$60.*

#### Ploder Rosenberg

Run by two generations who are passionate about biodynamic wine-making but are delightfully relaxed among their vines. Tastings and guided visits are available.

#### Weingut Tement

This large, family-owned biodynamic winery straddles the Austria-Slovenia border and offers tastings—and vistas—on the terrace.

### BURGENLAND

#### Gut Purbach

Fine dining in the village of Purbach with a hearty nose-to-tail menu for adventurous eaters and modern guest rooms in an ancient stone house. *Doubles from \$152; entrées \$30–\$42.*

#### Neusiedler

A casual natural-wine bar featuring bottles from Meinklang, Judith Beck, and Lichtenberger Gonzales, plus grass-fed burgers and snacks. *Entrées \$13–\$15.*

#### Taubenkobel

The region’s leading resort offers luxury accommodations, plus a seasonal tasting menu in the main dining room (\$160) and simpler bistro fare at Greisslerei (*entrées \$15–\$47*). In both, wines from Gut Oggau feature prominently. *Doubles from \$370.* —K.W.

of health and good conscience. Roland had the acute, assessing look of a hyper-educated bird and sported a New Wave haircut. In the tasting room, they described their intent, as winemakers, to bottle a sense of harmony and “lifeness,” their term for the spirit of biodiversity that animates the meadow-like vineyards.

“In German, vineyard is *Weingarten*, a wine garden,” Alice told me. “We do a lot of work for our place to be a garden. For us, it is also a harvest to see the wildflowers and hear the birds.”

Under the influence of their graceful wines, I felt myself falling in love with the day, the place, the couple’s animist spirituality, the whole bucolic vision. Longtime customers had the opposite reaction when the winery first went natural a decade ago. They fled, “one hundred percent,” Roland said. “In this region, people don’t drink our wine,” he continued, an edge in his voice. The Taussees also faced scorn from

(Continued on page 181)





Brisket and banh mi, crawfish and fried chicken, tacos and tamales—eating well in Houston is a journey across continents. Take your time, and save room.

By Kayla Stewart  
Photographs by  
Brittany Conerly



# HOT HOT HOUSTON





**GLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**

*A spread of oxtail and grits, chili biscuits, and yardbird at Lucille's, in Houston's Museum District; the line outside the Breakfast Klub; a chocolate éclair from Three Brothers Bakery; chicken and waffles at the Breakfast Klub; green curry at Street to Kitchen, a Thai restaurant in the Second Ward; Chris Williams, the chef-owner of Lucille's, harvesting mustard flowers in his garden; a Morning Call cocktail with tequila, lime, agave, tonic, and hibiscus-infused mezcal at Julep, a bar in Downtown.*

N



## At some point

in their formative years, many young people decide to leave their hometowns in search of somewhere they imagine to be more interesting and exciting. That was true for me growing up in Houston, where I also went to college. I loved my own hometown, to be sure, but I was eager to experience other parts of the world. I thought that somewhere, someplace, had to be better than Houston—a city that was, in my young mind, too slow, too familiar, too set in its ways.

But pretty quickly, all of this changed. As I began a career as a food and travel writer in my late 20s, I realized that my identity, my personhood, who I was—heck, the things I really liked about myself—were almost entirely rooted in my upbringing as a Black American woman in the Bayou City.

When I returned recently to co-author a cookbook about African-American foodways in Texas, I realized the reason I had always been so inspired by international flavors is because I'd grown up with them. Asian, Mexican, and African immigrants are just a few of the groups that have made Houston one of the most diverse large cities in America; my aptitude as a food writer is rooted in decades of eating at extraordinary pho shops, trying every samosa I could get my hands on, and ensuring that I always cleaned the last bites of barbecue from my plate.

Last summer, I returned home to explore Houston's food scene—which has started to get national attention—from a traveler's perspective. Eating well there is about more than visiting the taco joint everyone goes to on Tuesdays, or trying

to get in to that cool new spot that mixes cuisines. It's about finding a balance, neighborhood by neighborhood, between traditional and contemporary, and holding what's different in deep regard.

### *But first, tacos*

Mexicans are the city's largest immigrant population, so it felt only right to kick things off at **Original Ninfa's on Navigation** (*entrées \$17–\$39*), the restaurant that put Tex-Mex cuisine on the Houston map. The fajitas that Mama Ninfa Lorenzo first made in her family's tortilla factory in 1973 are still the mainstays of the menu. Since her passing, the restaurant has continued to serve its sizzling strips of beef, cheesy enchiladas, and plenty of salt-rimmed margaritas.

Another icon is **Laredo Taqueria #4** (*entrées \$4–\$12*). In a city where breakfast tacos reign supreme, this low-key spot rises above the rest—*Texas Monthly's* taco editor José R. Ralat included its refried-bean and barbacoa option on his list of “50 tacos to eat before you die.” After trying the spicy chicken and nopales (cactus) varieties, I had to agree.

For dinner, I went to **Xochi** (*entrées \$24–\$55*), where James Beard Award-winning chef Hugo Ortega displays his Oaxacan heritage in dishes like fried grasshoppers with flying ants and *tlayudas*—crisp, gently fried tortillas topped with chicken, steak, or mushrooms. Ortega and his wife also operate **Hugo's** (*entrées \$22–\$55*), which features traditional dishes from across Mexico, in the Montrose neighborhood.

In search of a nightcap, I wandered over to **Julep**, a sleek cocktail bar in Downtown owned by Alba Huerta. In 2022, it was awarded Texas's first James Beard Award for an Outstanding Bar Program—and as I took a sip of a perfectly floral Aviation, and looked around at the eclectic crowd, the reason for the win became crystal clear.

### *Spice, heat, and texture*

In the 1970s, many refugees fleeing the Vietnam War settled along the Gulf Coast, particularly in Louisiana and Texas. In the 80s and 90s, many of these immigrants—as well as people from countries including China, India, Korea, and Malaysia—moved to Houston's Bellaire neighborhood and established “Asiatown,” where many of the cuisines intersect.

Houstonians grow up knowing what makes for a good banh mi, and where to get one, but I went to Bellaire specifically to indulge in Viet-Cajun cuisine. First I stopped in at **Crawfish & Noodles** (*entrées \$12–\$42*), which is credited with kick-starting the region's fusion trend, and dove into metal bowl of crawfish smothered in a fragrant spiced garlic and butter sauce, served with the requisite

sides of boiled potatoes and corn on the cob.

Another favorite is **Crawfish & Beignets** (*entrées \$17–\$70*), which excels at those two things: crawfish, bathed in a sweet, citrusy Thai sauce and sautéed with white and green onions and oranges, and beignets, dusted with powdered sugar and served with generous helpings of honey and condensed milk.



**BELOW** Cakes to go at *Three Brothers Bakery*.

**OPPOSITE** Tossing crawfish in garlic butter at *Crawfish & Beignets*.



RIGHT Breakfast tacos at Laredo Taqueria #4.

But the neighborhood's offerings extend well beyond crawfish. At **Blood Bros. BBQ** (entrées \$9–\$23), brothers Robin and Terry Wong and their childhood friend Quy Hoang serve up Asian-inspired smoked meats. After a turkey banh mi and a generous helping of gochujang-glazed pork ribs, I went for dessert at **Three Brothers Bakery**, a family-owned Jewish chain known for its hamantaschen (triangular cookies that are typically stuffed with jam), fresh breads, and year-round gingerbread men.

At **Street to Kitchen** (entrées \$14–\$100), the dishes will take you on a bold journey through the flavors and spices of Thailand. Chef Benchawan Jabthong Painter and her husband, Graham Painter, who is also the beverage director, opened their original restaurant next to a gas station in Houston's Second Ward in 2020; three years later, they brought home the James Beard Award for Best Chef in Texas. They've since moved to a new location closer to Downtown. I dipped in one lunchtime and ordered spicy fried pork belly topped with crunchy bits of fried shallots, porky *larb*, and a fragrant stir-fried beef with basil.

Another day, I met a friend for dinner at **Theodore Rex** (entrées \$20–\$75), in the Warehouse District. Chef Justin Yu's New American menu has elements of French and Asian cuisine, so we sampled both, with an order of beef-stuffed dumplings topped with flecks of Parmigiano-Reggiano and a roasted chicken leg with sorrel.

### In the Heights

Once a quiet part of town marked by Folk Victorian and Queen Anne-style homes, the Heights is now drawing diners. One of the places that initiated this change is **Jūn** (entrées \$22–\$55), pronounced like the month, where *Top Chef* alum Evelyn Garcia, who is from Houston, and chef Henry Lu, who grew up in the Bronx, have crafted a distinctive menu that blends Asian and Latin American influences. "All our food at Jūn has the flavors and combinations that we grew up eating, but it might be presented differently," Garcia told me.

One showstopper was an appetizer of carrots glazed with layers of *salsa matcha* and Salvadoran cheese, served with a pickled quail egg. I also loved my entrée: pan-seared scallops doused in what they call Viet-Cajun butter and plated with pickled fingerling potatoes.

I found a similar culinary perspective at **Tatemó** (tasting menu \$125), where chef Emmanuel Chavez presents region-specific Mexican dishes with a modern touch. "We want to encourage the next generation of immigrants in our city," Chavez said. "We want them to know that it is possible to achieve things on your own." Empanadas stuffed with gooey Oaxaca cheese and *enmoladas* made from a plantain tortilla and dressed in a rich *mole negro* have become calling cards for the chef. "Very few places in America can do a tasting menu and execute it very well, at an old juice bar, with very little capital," Chavez said, referring to the location where he opened Tatemó. "We value the landscape Houston provides for the kind of work we do."

If there's one food you simply cannot skip when visiting Houston, it's barbecue. Options are plentiful in the Heights, and my pick is **Truth Barbeque** (entrées \$23–\$31), which makes a cheesy Tater Tot casserole. Next I got my fix of the Texas trinity



(brisket, ribs, and sausage) at the Black- and family-owned **Gatlin's BBQ** (entrées \$10–\$36). I also stopped by the family's newest venture, **Gatlin's Fin & Feathers** (entrées \$17–\$26), an ode to Houston's Gulf Coast that serves fried shrimp, gumbo, crab nachos, and blackened catfish, plus fried chicken.

### The Soul of Houston

One of my absolute must-visits is a restaurant I've loved since high school: the **Breakfast Klub** (entrées \$12–\$32). Known for block-wrapping lines at brunch time, it's essential to Houston's large and deeply influential African-American community. Owner Marcus Davis



celebrates the city's music culture and jazz history by hosting visiting bands, who create a rich atmosphere that pairs well with the most popular dishes: "wings & waffles" and my personal favorite, "katfish & grits."

"We are Houston," Davis told me. "If you come to Houston and you haven't been to the Breakfast Klub, then you haven't been to Houston."

For an inexpensive lunch option that occasionally includes a celebrity sighting, stop by **Trill Burgers** (*entrées \$11–\$17*), co-owned by Bun B, a Houston transplant and former member of the Southern rap duo UGK (short for UnderGround Kingz). Their smashed, spiced patty, served on a potato bun, sells by the hundreds each day, and even won *Good Morning America's* competition for the country's best burger. (The vegan option is also a hit.)

Nearby, I spent an afternoon enjoying chili biscuits and oxtail tamales at **Lucille's** (*entrées \$24–\$46*), in the Museum District. It's named for Lucille B. Smith, who, in the 1940s, created Lucille's All Purpose Hot Roll Mix, the first packaged roll mix to be marketed in the United States. She is often credited as being the first African-American businesswoman in Texas.

Today, her great-grandson, chef Christopher Williams, a 2022 James Beard Award Finalist for Outstanding Restaurateur, carries on her legacy, serving Southern classics like smothered steak and fish fry with a refined touch.

"Houston isn't a place where creativity and diversity are just welcomed; they're embedded in the structure of the city," he told me. "It allows for a dining culture that should be a learning experience for the traveler, and certainly a delicious one."

### Color & Community

I started my next morning in Montrose, a neighborhood that has long been known as a safe space for LGBTQ Houstonians and a hub of queer history. It's also a place where businesses like **Brasil** (*entrées \$7–\$13*), a café that has been a staple for more than 30 years, have become part of the fabric of the community. I ordered tamales—Brasil offers pork, chicken, and braised greens and beans—and enjoyed a quiet breakfast before grabbing coffee at the beloved two-story coffee shop **Agora**.



**FROM TOP**  
*Chef Benchawan Jabthong Painter at her restaurant Street to Kitchen; green curry, papaya salad, and pad thai at Street to Kitchen; Bobby Jucker, co-owner of Three Brothers Bakery.*

## WHERE TO STAY

### C. Baldwin, Curio Collection by Hilton

Named for Charlotte Baldwin Allen, the so-called mother of Houston, this Downtown hotel celebrates Texan women with colorful illustrations, coffee-table books, and eclectic signage. *Doubles from \$202.*

### La Colombe d'Or

This 32-suite Montrose property is close to Houston's Museum District and displays works by Georges Braque and Picasso, drawn from owner Steve Zimmerman's private collection. *Doubles from \$509.*

### The Post Oak at Uptown Houston

Owned by Texas entertainment mogul Tilman Fertitta, this 38-story tower has Vegas-level amenities, with nine bars and restaurants, a helicopter pad, and a Rolls-Royce dealership. *Doubles from \$557.—K.S.*

If I'm in Montrose for dinner, I'll stop in to **Mala Sichuan** (*entrées \$15–\$25*) for outstanding baby-back ribs, which are smothered in sweet-and-sour plum sauce with Chinese spices, and dry-pot prawns with Szechuan peppercorns. Another of my favorites is **March** (*tasting menus from \$185*), chef Felipe Riccio's 28-seat Mediterranean restaurant. On my most recent visit, the tasting menu had been inspired by Riccio's travels in the Catalan provinces of Spain and included *paella valenciana*, a truffle-laden bowl of *escudella de hortalissa*, and braised short ribs with a chestnut purée.

Another standout dinner option nearby is **Bludorn** (*entrées \$37–\$70*), where Aaron Bludorn, an alum of Netflix's *Final Table* and Café Boulud in New York City, presents a fresh take on Gulf Coast cooking. I started with flash-fried octopus in a rich *romesco* sauce, but it was the lobster-and-chicken pot pie that stole the show: at the table, the server delicately cut it open and mixed in a dollop of citrusy crème fraîche.



**FROM TOP**  
Order up at Original Ninfa's on Navigation, a Tex-Mex restaurant; Ninfa's signature enchiladas suizas; outside Ninfa's.  
**OPPOSITE**  
Ninfa's queso flameado.



### Beyond the Loop

Houston's sprawl is no secret, and at this point in the trip, you'll likely have spent a lot of time on its numerous multilane freeways. While restaurants in the city center are excellent, it's imperative to explore outside of what locals call "The Loop" (that is, everything within Interstate 610, which encircles the city).

At **Amrina** (*entrées \$26–\$70*), a restaurant in the Woodlands, Jassi Bindra takes visitors on a thrilling ride through India, his home country, with intriguing dishes like a watermelon and *burrata* salad with Kashmiri-chile *sofrito* and ostrich kebabs tempered with an avocado-and-cilantro chutney and masala-laced onions.

"I marry traditional Indian recipes with the world's ingredients," Bindra told me as I ate a char-grilled oyster dotted with lemon and dill. "My goal is to show the flavors and the richness of Indian cuisine, the force of Indian cuisine, and the power of Indian cuisine."

On my last evening, it felt only right to go back to the beginning: Southwest Houston, where I grew up. When my parents arrived in the 1970s, the suburb was known for its affordable homes and public schools, and it has since become home to many immigrant communities.

My final meal was a trip back home in more ways than one. Ghanaian, Nigerian, and Senegalese cuisines—the foundation of African-American foodways—are prepared with care and efficiency at **Afrikiko** (*entrées \$20–\$25*). My meal of jollof rice with goat pepper soup was terrific, but it was impossible to leave without a bowl of their groundnut soup, a stew of ground peanuts and tender bites of poultry.

As I lifted my spoon, inhaling the scent of dried herbs, cloves, and paprika, I was reminded that the world's glorious culinary gifts have a forever home in the Bayou City. 🌐





(Wilmington, continued from page 165)

in 2004, there were very few places to take visiting friends who were into food. The exception has always been barbecue. This part of eastern North Carolina has its own sub-regional style. The sauce is not thick, red, and spicy, like you find farther west. Here it is tangy and vinegar-based. The hush puppies are not round but shaped like chubby fingers. Most unusual of all, when you order a barbecue sandwich, it is typically served with a scoop of coleslaw directly on top of the meat. That may sound disgusting, but somehow, it bangs. Just make sure to eat quickly, because the bun gets soggy very fast.

My favorite barbecue joint in town, a place that could have bottled and sold its own authenticity in a pinch, was Parchie's, which was just down the street from my house. It closed a few years ago, one of many pandemic casualties. These days your best bet, and the old standby, is Jackson's Big Oak Barbecue (there is actually a giant oak tree in the back—we are a people of subtle naming).

We also have two fantastic soul-food places that have managed to stay open. There's Nippy's Soul Food, on 17th Street, where, as the sign says, they're TAKING YOU BACK TO MAMA'S KITCHEN, provided your mama knew how to make sumptuous chitterlings, neck bones, and oxtails. And there is Truck's Chicken 'n Fish, downtown on Red Cross, where

you can sit at the counter and get your sweet tea on, then feast on fried catfish, which is the best I've ever tasted, full stop.

If you had told me when I moved to Wilmington that there would someday be too many good and interesting higher-end dining establishments to name, I'd have asked you to sit and tell me about your apparent drinking problem. Not so, anymore. I have encountered people in the past four or five years who claim that the food scene is one of the reasons they moved here. Caprice Bistro is the anchor and the mainstay, a French restaurant owned and run by a real Frenchman and his Belgian wife, Thierry and Patricia Moity. They serve classic dishes like lamb cassoulet and beef bourguignon. I've eaten at Caprice maybe a hundred times and have never had a bad meal. The cocktails and wine list are similar to the food: solid, unpretentious, tasty. If you're leaning swankier, think about Manna, still one of the best restaurants in Wilmington after going on 15 years of existence. The proprietor, Billy Mellon, is cut from the old cloth. A former military man, he circulates through the room in a suit with slicked-back hair. One block south is Manna's competitor, PinPoint Restaurant. The fried chicken is memorable, in a region where it's hard to stand out for your fried chicken.

The most exciting new spot, which opened in 2021, is Seabird. Head chef Dean Neff was a finalist for the James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef this year. On the short list of the best and most interesting seafood I've eaten in my life are three Seabird meals. The fish is so fresh you taste the seawater.

Once I went oyster harvesting with one of Dean's providers, a sustainable shellfisher named Ana Shellem. We rode on a little skiff to a wild oyster bed on Masonboro Island and ate oysters right there on the little spit of muddy sand. They were wonderful right out of the

shell, and Neff mainly lets their natural savor shine through, though the little mignonettes and preparations he serves them with are superb. It's his stews that I love most, though: rich broths full of different sea life—including plants, seaweeds, and algae. Shellem brings him dead man's fingers, a type of seaweed that he uses in salads. It's all sinfully good, and for dessert there's sometimes a house-made mint chocolate chip ice cream that, according to my younger daughter, has redefined ice cream.

ONE OF THE TRUE hidden treasures along this stretch of North Carolina coast is Bald Head Island, which is not in Wilmington proper but about 40 miles south. Catch the ferry at Southport, a little seaside town that is itself worth an afternoon of antiques shopping and ice cream. Bald Head is partly a nature preserve—turtles nest there—and its most untouched sections give you a chance to see what this part of the Southern coast looked like when only Native Americans lived here. Gnarly oaks groan in the ocean breezes. A tall, powerful lighthouse, Old Baldy, celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2017. You can climb to the top and survey the whole island. There are plenty of houses and condos, but no cars. Everyone gets around on golf carts and bikes, a rule that does much to preserve the atmosphere of seclusion. A great place to stay is the Inn at Bald Head Island, owned by a groovy New Jersey couple, Dann and Gail Jackson. A few passable restaurants and a grocery store mean you can stay as long as you like. If you're spending a week in Wilmington, the island makes for a perfect vacation-within-a-vacation.

Wilmington! What a weird, beautiful little city. I recommend you get here before we figure out what we are. The population is about 120,000 these days—still small enough for residents to feel each time the influx pulses: when the students come back to college at University of North Carolina Wilmington, or the tourists arrive for the summer. I came here once for six months, to get some writing done. That was 20 years ago. You might not stay that long. In fact, it would be better if you didn't. We have a housing crisis: new people are having a hard time finding a place to live. To visit, though? Heaven. 🌐

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(Austria, continued from page 171)

conventionally minded neighbors who considered their nonconformist methods eccentric and possibly lunatic.

I drove away with a greater appreciation for the nerve shown by Styria's natural winemakers in breaking away from the establishment, with its rule books and official tasting panels that decide if a bottling can carry the label of "*Qualitätsw Wein*." Several years back, a wine submitted by the Musters failed to meet all 10 quality standards—a fact Maria shared with a twinkle of pride.

IF YOU CAN NAME any red from Austria, it's probably Blaufränkisch, the wine for which Burgenland—Austria's easternmost and least populous state—is best known. (Bonus points for naming Zweigelt, the region's other widely planted red.) Traditionally, local growers went 50-50 on white versus red, explained Martin Lichtenberger, who makes wine in Breitenbrunn with his Spanish wife, Adriana González. The balance shifted in the 1980s, thanks to European Union subsidies, but the couple seeks out old plots that escaped uprooting. "Each has its own history, which you respect," Lichtenberger said. "You don't have to raise the vines anymore. But you take them by the hand and lead them your way."

"We are a bit romantic," said González of their passion for gnarled vines set in imperfect rows. But when it comes to cellar work, they favor "serious"

wines, meaning the opposite of funky. (At Karakterre, Judith Beck, the talented maker of whistle-clean wines, similarly said, unsmilingly, "I am a serious person, and I take what I do very seriously.")

What Burgenland has over Styria is scale—it's possible to go big on this flat acreage. The one Austrian natural-wine producer whose bottles I can find dependably in wine stores around the U.S. is Meinklang, which is headquartered at the southeastern end of Lake Neusiedl in Pamhagen, a bottle toss from Hungary.

The farmers behind the brand, the Michlits family, have lived in the region for seven generations and now keep 200 of their roughly 6,000 acres in wine grapes. The diverse operation includes grain for beer and cattle for beef, and it all runs on principles established by the philosopher Rudolf Steiner. Born in Austro-Hungary in 1861, Steiner created biodynamics, a way of farming that combines organic methods (cattle manure for fertilizer) with esoteric rituals intended to draw down cosmic energies, or something like that. Biodynamics is a mash-up of premodern farming traditions, neo-pagan animism, liturgical precision, and recordkeeping worthy of the papal bureaucracy. Call it spiritual agronomy for short—or call it whack-a-doodle nonsense—but either way, biodynamics is a force in the wine world.

Most of the places I visited along Austria's natural-wine route were certified biodynamic; Meinklang's spectacular winery-slash-tasting room does them all one better. The building is designed according to anthroposophist principles—more Steiner woo-woo—and uses eco-friendly building materials such as an all-wood roof structure and rammed-earth floors and walls. Farmer Werner Michlits and collaborating winemaker Niklas Peltzer led me through a leisurely tasting and explained their goal: to produce approachable

"bridge wines" that are meant to be affordable, honest, and easy to enjoy.

Like the Meinklang visitors' center, Burgenland as a whole is well kitted out for visitors. I enjoyed a hipster hangout, Neusiedler, where the tattooed generation gathers for grass-fed burgers and natty Blaufränkisch, as well as Michelin-starred stops for the sorts of high-end tourists who return to Vienna with their trunks full of wine.

The region's star establishment is Taubenkobel, a Relais & Châteaux resort that opened 41 years ago as a simple B&B. These days, the founders' daughter, co-owner Barbara Eselböck, and her husband, chef Alain Weissgerber, send out 12 courses for lunch. (The best was a one-bite lovage tart; second best was a scoop of rhubarb ice cream cupped by radicchio leaves like pink-speckled clamshells.)

The gaggle of wines accompanying the meal included several from Gut Oggau, a winery launched in 2007 by the Taubenkobel founders' other daughter, Stephanie, and her husband, Eduard Tscheppe, who was formerly a conventional winemaker in Styria. Lunch proved beyond a doubt how Austrian natural wines can pair with even the most refined cuisine. Not to say they were entirely conventional—some were still a little unbuttoned by the strictest standards of propriety. An archconservative on an Austrian wine board's tasting panel might well have found fault.

But a T-shirt I saw at Karakterre earlier in the day captured the growing confidence and mischievous spirit of the crowd gathered there, who care less every year what conventional arbiters think—because they are too busy selling wine. It was the equivalent of a one-finger salute aimed at critic Robert Parker, who once ruled supreme as the wine industry's global arbiter thanks to his 100-point rating system and preference for opulent, conventionally "perfect" wines. It read: PARKER GAVE ME 50. 🌐

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हन्दी मैगज़ीन

समय पत्रिका साधनापथग हलकषमी उदयइंडिया नरिगधाम मॉडर्न खेतीइंडिया टुडेदेवपुत्र  
कुरकिट टुडेग हशोभा अर्नखीहनिदुस्तानमुक्ता सरति चंपक परतयोगिता दरपण सक्सेस मरि  
सामान्य ज्ञान दरपण फारम एवं फुड मनोहर कहानियां सत्यकथा सरस सललि स्वतंत्र वार्ता लाजवाब आउटलुकसचची शकिषावनति  
मायापुरी रूपायन उजाळा ऋषि पुरसाद जोश रोजगार समाचार जोश करंट अफेयर्स जोश सामान्य ज्ञान जोश बैकग और एसएससी  
इंडिया बुक ऑफरकिरइसपरक् तमिल  
राजस्थान रोजगार संदेश राजस्थान सूजससखी जागरण अहा! जदिगी बाल भास्कर योजना कुरकषैन्  
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