

Condé Nast Traveler

CHICAGO!
8 HOT NEW PLACES
TO EAT AND DRINK

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

JANUARY 2012

GOLD LIST

WORLD'S BEST

511

HOTELS, RESORTS,
CRUISE LINES

19-PAGE SUPER-GUIDE

PLUS

ITALY

27 SUPERB FEASTS IN ROME

CARIBBEAN

2 TINY ISLANDS OF PERFECTION

THE BIG STORY

AFRICA

INCREDIBLE JOURNEY
TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF MAN
AND A PEOPLE IN PERIL

NATURAL HIGH
12 MOST TRANQUIL SPOTS
ON EARTH

(See them while you can)



CHECK OUT OUR DIGITAL EDITION FOR A SLIDE SHOW OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE 214 PLATINUM CIRCLE HOTELS, RESORTS, AND CRUISE LINES (SEE BELOW), AS WELL AS FULL REVIEWS OF ALL 2012 GOLD LIST PROPERTIES.

2012 GOLD LIST

THE WORLD'S BEST PLACES TO STAY

511
TOP HOTELS, RESORTS
& CRUISE LINES

HERE IS TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE IN its purest form: drawn from impartial personal experiences, sifted according to exacting standards, far-reaching in ambition, and, finally, tantalizing in what it delivers. The hotels, resorts, and cruise lines that made it onto this, our eighteenth annual Gold List, can't rest on their laurels. The contenders are tested afresh every year, in our Readers' Choice Survey, the collective result of some eight million votes cast by as savvy a group of travelers as you'll find on the planet. Many of those who do meet the gold standard hold their place year after year. But there is always somebody nipping at their heels. This year, for example, almost one-third of the list, a whopping 93 properties, is new. This reflects the acuity of our readers' radar—there are newcomers from the Czech Republic and Costa Rica, Saudi Arabia and South Korea, Tanzania and Turkey, and beyond. At this time of year, when thoughts turn to far horizons, here are more than 500 reasons to make your plans, find the dream.

INTRODUCING
THE
PLATINUM
CIRCLE

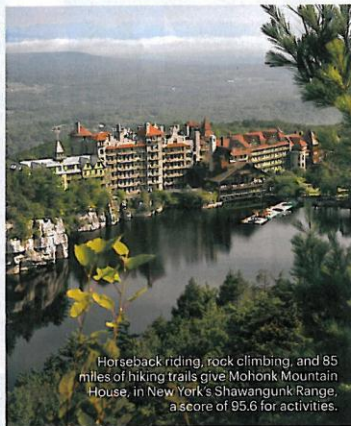


What better way to mark 25 years of *Condé Nast Traveler* than by celebrating the superstars of the Gold List? Whenever you see the icon at left, it means that the hotel, resort, or cruise line has made the list every year for the past five years running. **1** An impressive 214 Gold List properties and cruise lines can now call themselves Platinum Circle members, and the honor is a reminder of what we already know: that consistency, as much as excellence, is its own reward.

United States

Our love affair with the great outdoors endures—just look at the hotels that debut on this year's list

OF THE 34 properties that appear for the first time ever on the U.S. section of the Gold List, more than half promise an experience that's as much about the natural surroundings as the plush beds, intuitive service, and tour-de-force meals. Take, for example, the 18-cottage hotel in the Florida Keys with 1,100 feet of private beach and 700 coconut palms; the three inns in California and Oregon wine country; the Colorado, New York, Utah, and Wyoming properties next to ski slopes; or the coastal Maine retreat where guests are encouraged to play croquet and badminton on the hotel lawn. Newcomer urban hotels are a mix of historic structures and new builds, which is why a 105-year-old former bedding company building in Milwaukee and a 2-year-old lakefront oasis in Chicago made the list.



Horseback riding, rock climbing, and 65 miles of hiking trails give Mohonk Mountain House, in New York's Shawangunk Range, a score of 95.6 for activities.

ARIZONA

Ritz-Carlton Dove Mountain, Marana 91.2

92.9 87.9 83.9 87.7 98.2 96.4
"We never stopped smiling on this vacation." The 850-acre resort has more than 20 miles of hiking and biking trails and is "such a find." Rooms have copper accents and views of the Tortolita Foothills. Core Kitchen & Wine bar serves American cuisine with a Southwestwestern flair.

Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain, Paradise Valley 90.0

92.5 90.1 89.1 90.4 89.8 88.3

The Phoenician (Luxury Collection), Scottsdale 90.4

92.4 90.8 86.3 90.1 91.9 91.0

Enchantment Resort, Sedona 91.2

90.1 91.2 85.3 96.1 94.1 90.2

Mii Amo, Sedona 94.0

93.9 94.0 93.9 96.0 94.0 92.0

"The staff and facilities are phenomenal" at this "outstanding, outlandish spa retreat." The "truly healing environment" incorporates design elements such as adobe brick and indigenous stone. Mii Amo Café's health-conscious "food is like no other spa food. I mean, it's really good."

Miraval Resort & Spa, Tucson 91.3

90.9 92.2 91.6 88.9 91.6 92.8

CALIFORNIA

Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills 91.0

90.7 93.8 87.3 92.5 90.7

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- Rooms
- Service
- ⊕ Food
- ⊕ Location
- ⊕ Design
- ⊕ Activities

SCORES IN RED = OVERALL

New to Gold List

Platinum Circle

Condé Nast Traveler 2011 Best Ski Resorts

Condé Nast Traveler 2011 Best Golf Resorts

For full reviews of every hotel and resort on the 2012 Gold List, visit reader quotes, go to condonasttraveler.com/goldlist or download our digital edition.

Beverly Wilshire, Beverly Hills 89.6

88.8 89.8 88.4 93.0 88.0

The Peninsula, Beverly Hills 94.7

94.9 97.9 93.8 95.3 91.8

Post Ranch Inn, Big Sur 93.9

93.5 92.4 90.4 97.2 96.0

Ventana Inn & Spa, Big Sur 89.7

91.5 88.9 83.1 92.0 90.8

Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel, Dana Point 92.1

93.0 94.0 91.2 95.7 91.7 86.8

St. Regis Monarch Beach, Palmdale 90.2

95.2 89.4 88.9 88.9 90.9 87.7

Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay 90.8

92.4 92.4 87.5 92.4 90.8 89.1

Montage, Laguna Beach 92.1

94.1 93.8 92.9 96.5 93.0 87.2

Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe 92.9

96.4 98.2 85.7 100 92.9 96.3

"The location can't be beat" at this mid-mountain ski-in/ski-out hotel. Valets carry guests' gear to the slopes, where "the skiing is fantastic." Rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows and gas fireplaces. Manzanita, with its French-inspired California cuisine, is "fabulous for dinner."

Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles 89.8

90.7 92.9 88.5 89.6 87.3

Rosewood Sand Hill, Menlo Park 89.2

95.8 91.7 95.8 75.0 87.5

"This lovely property makes you feel serene." The 21-acre site at the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains is in the heart of the venture-capital corridor. "Top-notch rooms" with private balconies have artwork and marble bathrooms. Madera offers "excellently prepared" American cuisine.

Auberge du Soleil, Napa Valley 95.0

94.4 95.3 96.1 93.4 95.7

Bardessono Hotel, Restaurant, and Spa, Napa Valley 92.3

91.7 89.8 87.8 98.0 94.1

Guest rooms at this LEED Platinum-certified modernist stone retreat have salvaged walnut bathrooms and organic-cotton towels. While service "could use some polishing," the "clean, minimalist lines of the architecture are very soothing." Order dishes like Niman Ranch strip loin from the hotel's market-driven menu.

Solage Calistoga, Napa Valley 89.1

89.0 89.8 89.8 87.0 89.0 89.7

Located on 25 acres overlooking the Palisades, this newcomer offers guests "a beautiful and pampered experience that never disappoints." Earth-toned contemporary guest rooms are "absolutely stunning," with vaulted ceilings and stone showers. Solbar has a menu that combines healthy and comfort food.

Resort at Pelican Hill, Newport Coast 96.3

97.7 95.4 93.1 96.6 97.7 97.0

Inn at Spanish Bay, Pebble Beach 92.5

92.2 92.3 91.8 95.7 90.2 93.0

Lodge at Pebble Beach, Pebble Beach 95.0

92.3 95.7 92.5 98.9 96.8 93.5

Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco 89.2

89.2 92.0 88.3 88.9 87.4

St. Regis, San Francisco 89.0

89.2 86.6 85.7 91.9 91.4

CordeValle (Rosewood), San Martin 95.2

100 100 96.4 78.6 100 96.4

Santa Barbara Ranch, Santa Barbara 93.2

96.2 91.5 91.4 92.5 94.3

Kenwood Inn and Spa, Sonoma County 92.7

98.0 98.0 99.0 92.2 90.2 87.5

COLORADO

Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch, Avon 89.6

92.0 88.5 84.1 90.5 90.5 91.6

Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa at Beaver Creek Mountain, Avon 96.1

97.7 94.4 94.0 96.5 97.2 96.8

The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs 91.6

93.4 92.8 89.0 91.1 92.8 90.7

Oxford Hotel, Denver 89.9

86.0 92.2 84.0 97.7 89.1

"A wonderful older hotel with lots of charm." This brick and brownstone property dates to 1891. Individually decorated rooms in French, Victorian, and classic early-twentieth-century American decor are "interesting, not carbon copies."

McCormick's serves seafood.

Viceroy, Snowmass 90.8

93.1 982.8 98.2 89.7 96.4 96.0

This year-Newcomer offers service delivers



The Boulevard Pool is one of three at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Opened in December 2010 on The Strip, the hotel gets a location score of 921.

MARYLAND

Inn at Perry Cabin, St. Michaels 90.2

94.8 93.7 88.9 90.4 88.8

MASSACHUSETTS

Eliot Hotel, Boston 94.6

94.7 93.7 95.3 97.9 91.5

Mandarin Oriental, Boston 95.3

95.8 95.7 94.6 94.7 95.8

Wequasset Resort and Golf Club, Chatham 90.8

85.9 84.0 92.5 98.8 93.8 87.7

Blantyre, Lenox 92.8

92.3 100 84.6 94.9 92.3

The Wauwinet, Nantucket 94.0

86.7 95.0 100 95.0 93.2

NEVADA

Bellagio, Las Vegas 89.5

90.3 81.8 89.6 94.6 90.9

Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, Las Vegas 89.5

94.7 76.3 89.5 92.1 94.7

The Cosmopolitan is "a fresh, fun, sophisticated, yet not-too-Vegas hotel in the heart of it all," next to CityCenter. Each of the residential-style guest rooms has a sprawling terrace. Inside, you'll find plush sectional, lacquered coffee tables, and marble bathrooms. There are 13 restaurants, but "the service is not as good as it should be."

Encore at Wynn, Las Vegas 90.0

95.9 87.0 90.3 84.1 92.5

Four Seasons, Las Vegas 91.0

93.1 96.6 91.6 83.2 90.2

The Palazzo, Las Vegas 89.4

92.9 81.8 88.9 91.7 91.0 90.1

Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, Las Vegas 89.1

92.7 84.2 87.0 91.5 89.9

Wynn, Las Vegas 91.3

96.7 89.1 91.2 87.1 93.9 89.7

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Wentworth by the Sea Hotel & Spa, New Castle 91.9

92.6 93.6 88.6 92.7 91.7

2012 GOLD LIST

GOLD STANDARD

BEST PLACE FOR POOCH PAMPERING

At The Peninsula, Beverly Hills, canine guests are treated to personalized towels, plush doggy beds, walks around the neighborhood by white-uniformed staff, and a special "people-food-for-dogs" menu, with eats like a Bow Wow Beef Burger and Spic's New York Strip. Owners can keep the doggy bag for themselves!

NEW MEXICO

Inn and Spa at Loretto, Santa Fe 91.4

90.7 87.6 85.5 99.2 93.8

This Taos Pueblo replica just a block from the historic plaza "captures the spirit of the landscape." Beautiful guest rooms have adobe walls, beamed ceilings with vigas and latillas, and kiva fireplaces, but are "a little too dark" for some. Luminaria Restaurant uses fruits, vegetables, and spices from local farmers in its cuisine.

NEW YORK

Whiteface Lodge, Lake Placid 92.9

94.4 92.6 92.5 90.7 96.3 90.6

The only all-suite resort in the Adirondacks was built in 2005 using timber and stone from the region. Get checked in by "the tremendously friendly staff." Sepia-tinted suites have cast-iron gas fireplaces, slate floors, and custom alderwood cabinetry. "There are endless outdoor opportunities," while the 5,800-square-foot spa offers "a heaven-sent four-handed massage."

Mohawk Mountain House, New Paltz 91.5

82.9 90.6 88.7 97.5 93.7 95.6

Andaz Wall Street, New York 89.5

96.3 85.2 88.0 81.5 96.3

This "very cool" 42-story property has a sculptural steel-and-stone staircase that links public areas, while "modern and chic guest rooms" are bright, with high ceilings, stained-oak floors, and stenciled metal artwork but "not as much privacy as I like." At Wall & Water, dine on seasonal cuisine with ingredients from the Hudson Valley.

The Carlyle (Rosewood), New York 92.3

93.6 94.9 92.1 92.4 88.6

Four Seasons, New York 91.9

92.0 92.0 89.9 93.9 91.6

Mandarin Oriental, New York 90.7

93.4 86.1 86.4 94.0 93.4

The Peninsula, New York 91.0

92.6 89.4 88.8 94.3 91.9

The Plaza, New York 89.4

89.0 88.9 82.0 98.0 88.9

Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park, New York 92.1

91.7 94.0 91.0 94.0 89.8

St. Regis, New York 90.7

92.2 89.2 88.8 94.8 89.2

Trump International Hotel & Tower, New York 91.1

92.1 89.8 93.3 96.9 83.5

NORTH CAROLINA

Inn on Biltmore Estate, Asheville 92.3

93.4 93.9 89.0 92.8 92.4

Unstead Hotel and Spa, Cary 90.2

97.0 94.0 86.0 81.2 93.1

This "lovely retreat" ten minutes from Raleigh is surrounded by pine trees and borders a three-acre lake. Constructed of rough-cut Texas limestone, aluminum panels, and bronze-colored glass, it has a design that is "quite stunning." Guest rooms come in palettes of greens and greys. "Staff are really top-notch." Herons serves American cuisine with Southern accents.

Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte 95.2

100 996.0 89.6 96.0 94.0

Guests "love the Zen feel" to this eco-friendly hotel with an electric vehicle charging station and a roof with 18,000 plants and two hives that are home to 100,000 bees. "Amenities are outstanding" in the perfect-scoring rooms. Offering service that is "downright amazing, staff best those at any other hotel." Bar Cocoa offers chocolate bites and beverages.

Fearrington House Inn & Restaurant, Pittsboro 94.9

100 95.9 97.3 86.5 94.6

Swag Country Inn, Smoky Mountains National Park 94.5

93.1 96.6 89.7 96.6 96.6

OREGON

Stephanie Inn, Cannon Beach 93.0

92.6 93.4 90.8 98.3 90.0

Tu Tu 'Nun Lodge, Gold Beach 92.0

90.6 88.7 90.0 96.3 94.4

Allison Inn & Spa, Newberg 89.5

92.9 86.2 89.3 82.8 96.6

Surrounded by vineyards, orchards, and farmland, this "jewel of a hotel" rises on a hillside in Oregon's wine country. "Very spacious rooms" have private terraces or balconies — "we loved the in-room fireplaces." Serving up local produce from the chef's farm, Jory also offers Oregon wines, microbrews, and spirits.

The Nines (Luxury Collection), Portland 90.0

91.8 86.4 85.6 94.5 91.4

This hotel in a former flagship department store is in "a perfect downtown location." The artwork and fashion-influenced design are a nod to its retail past. Corridors with crystal chandeliers lead to "Hollywood-glam rooms" with ivory leather headboards and mercury glass lamps. With a 20-foot communal table and "second-to-none staff," the modern steakhouse Urban Farmer highlights local organic produce.

PENNSYLVANIA

Lodge at Woodloch, Hawley 93.1

95.2 94.3 93.0 87.4 93.0 95.3

Ninety minutes from New York, this 2006 property with more than 150 wooded acres and a private lake in northeastern Pennsylvania

nia is "a quiet and serene resort, the perfect weekend getaway." Excursions include kayaking on the Delaware River. Tree restaurant's chef uses ingredients from the resort's herb garden.

Four Seasons, Philadelphia 89.1
 \$90.8 \$90.5 \$89.6 \$87.4 \$87.0

Renaissance Hotel, Pittsburgh 91.4
 \$93.2 \$89.8 \$92.7 \$89.8 \$91.5

Situated "in the middle of the cultural district," this vintage hotel offers views of the Allegheny River and a design that is "beyond stunning." "Beds are a dream" in rooms with 12-foot ceilings and marble vanities. Braddock's American Brasserie serves up classic French comfort food with a local spin. "Extremely professional staff go above and beyond."

RHODE ISLAND

Chanler at Cliff Walk, Newport 92.0
 \$92.3 \$90.8 \$92.3 \$93.9 \$90.8

SOUTH CAROLINA

Inn at Palmetto Bluff, Bluffton 89.3
 \$95.3 \$90.0 \$81.4 \$86.8 \$93.1 \$89.1

Charleston Place, Charleston 91.3
 \$86.3 \$90.5 \$91.9 \$97.3 \$90.7

French Quarter Inn, Charleston 92.6
 \$92.3 \$92.3 \$88.0 \$95.2 \$94.7

John Rutledge House Inn, Charleston 91.6
 \$95.5 \$92.0 \$87.3 \$92.0 \$90.9

Market Pavilion Hotel, Charleston 89.2
 \$83.9 \$91.1 \$87.5 \$92.9 \$90.9

Planters Inn, Charleston 89.7
 \$88.5 \$90.3 \$89.9 \$93.3 \$86.4

Wentworth Mansion, Charleston 91.3
 \$93.2 \$92.6 \$90.5 \$88.0 \$91.9

Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, Kiawah Island 95.9
 \$98.1 \$95.8 \$92.8 \$96.6 \$96.2 \$95.8

TENNESSEE

Blackberry Farm, Wolfand 92.0
 \$92.6 \$91.9 \$93.7 \$91.0 \$91.8

TEXAS

Lake Austin Spa Resort, Austin 92.4
 \$92.1 \$93.6 \$94.3 \$89.4 \$92.1 \$92.9

Rosewood Crescent Hotel, Dallas 94.3
 \$92.9 \$95.5 \$94.5 \$94.6 \$93.8

Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas 93.1
 \$93.7 \$96.6 \$96.6 \$88.1 \$90.9

Hotel Sorella, Houston 93.2
 \$95.6 \$92.7 \$93.8 \$88.8 \$95.1

Hotel Contessa, San Antonio 89.4
 \$91.1 \$87.9 \$82.7 \$93.5 \$91.1

Hotel Valencia Riverwalk, San Antonio 89.6
 \$89.8 \$88.0 \$86.1 \$94.0 \$89.9

This mustard- and paprika apartment building-like property with red-tile roofs is located right on the River Walk. Rooms—with custom-made beds, oversized leather armchairs, and plantation shutters—have views of the city or internal courtyard. Citrus restaurant serves "imaginative contemporary American cuisine."

Mokara Hotel & Spa, San Antonio 92.0
 \$91.2 \$90.0 \$90.9 \$95.6 \$92.1



A private dining room at Eight K, the signature restaurant at Viceroy, in Snowmass, Colorado, is entered through a door set in a glass and birch-tree wall. The resort scores 86.2 for food.

2012 GOLD LIST

GOLD STANDARD

ACTIVITIES MOST LIKELY TO GET YOU OUT OF YOUR ROOM

At Ayana Resort and Spa, on Bali's southern coast, guests can take Balinese cooking classes, or plant trees on the resort's grounds. Makes a body wrap at the spa sound a little ho-hum, don't you think?

Omni La Mansión del Rio, San Antonio 90.1
 \$89.4 \$86.7 \$87.3 \$96.7 \$90.5

UTAH

Stein Eriksen Lodge, Park City 89.7
 \$88.5 \$89.5 \$88.6 \$93.3 \$87.5 \$91.1

Waldorf Astoria, Park City 89.0
 \$92.0 \$92.3 \$86.4 \$80.8 \$96.2 \$85.0

"Beautiful rooms" in natural colors have custom furnishings and views of the Wasatch Mountains. Enjoy a yam-and-pumpkin enzyme peel at the "first-rate" Golden Door Spa. "I would recommend this property to anyone who wants to be pampered while skiing." The restaurant serves seasonal American cuisine.

VERMONT

Twin Farms, Barnard 89.5
 \$95.7 \$91.3 \$77.3 \$87.0 \$89.2

Rabbit Hill Inn, Lower Waterford 91.6
 \$97.8 \$95.7 \$93.5 \$89.1 \$95.7 \$77.8

"It may be the most romantic place in Vermont." The white Greek-Revival-style B&B, which opened in 1834, has "exquisite service, food, and hospitality." "Individually designed rooms are telephone- and TV-free." At the Snooty Fox Pub, order signature cocktails such as the Vermont Maple Martini.

Stowe Mountain Lodge, Stowe 93.0
 \$93.7 \$90.9 \$89.0 \$95.5 \$94.1 \$95.0

Pitcher Inn, Warren 89.1
 \$94.6 \$89.7 \$86.8 \$87.2 \$87.2

VIRGINIA

Keswick Hall, Charlottesville 94.7
 \$93.7 \$95.2 \$96.8 \$93.7 \$96.8 \$91.7

Colonial Houses, Williamsburg 96.8
 \$96.6 \$97.7 \$92.7 \$98.9 \$97.7

WASHINGTON

Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle 89.2
 \$86.2 \$92.2 \$84.4 \$95.3 \$87.5

Hotel 1000, Seattle 92.7
 \$94.0 \$91.9 \$89.0 \$94.0 \$94.7

Inn at the Market, Seattle 90.4
 \$89.1 \$89.0 \$85.2 \$97.3 \$90.3

Hotel Murano, Tacoma 92.3
 \$94.4 \$94.3 \$82.6 \$94.3 \$95.7

WEST VIRGINIA

The Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs 89.5
 \$89.5 \$92.7 \$88.1 \$83.6 \$91.3 \$92.0

WISCONSIN

Iron Horse Hotel, Milwaukee 94.2
 \$97.5 \$97.0 \$94.9 \$84.8 \$97.0

Expect "a fun atmosphere" at this hotel in a former bedding company building that was constructed in 1907. The "very cool design" includes sleek, modern rooms with club chairs that have tattoo-inspired upholstery. Smyth's nightly tasting menu of "superior New Wisconsin cuisine" highlights local and seasonal ingredients. "This is the most masculine hotel you can imagine."

WYOMING

Amangani, Jackson Hole 93.5
 \$97.4 \$94.9 \$86.8 \$92.1 \$92.3 \$97.4

Four Seasons, Jackson Hole 91.0
 \$92.3 \$89.1 \$90.1 \$91.3 \$90.2 \$93.3

Hotel Terra, Teton Village 95.2
 \$97.6 \$95.2 \$92.9 \$97.6 \$95.2 \$92.7

The ski-in/ski-out contemporary Western lodge is "stylish and comfortable." "The eco design is fresh and cool," with vibrant colors, streamlined dark-wood furniture, and gas fireplaces. Have a hearty Italian dinner at Il Villaggio Osteria, with homemade pastas like beef cheek ravioli.