

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)

CONDENASTTRAVELER.COM
YOUR DAILY TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE

You take the elevator to the beach
at Il San Pietro di Positano, a Gold List
star on Italy's Amalfi Coast.



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

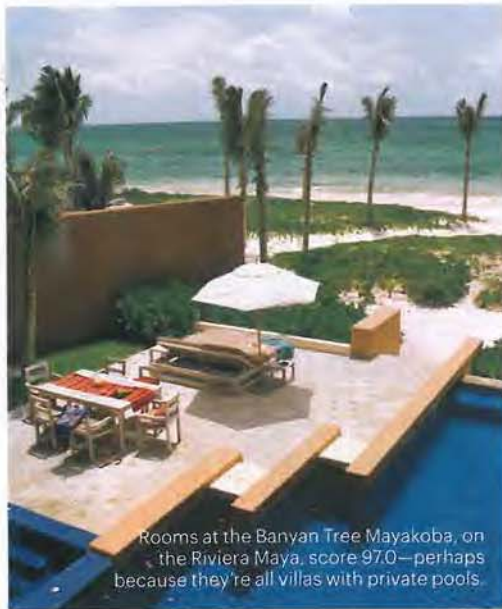


What better way to mark 25 years of *Condé Nast Traveler* than by celebrating the superstars of the Gold List? Whenever you see the icon at left, it means that the hotel, resort, or cruise line has made the list every year for the past five years running. † An impressive 214 Gold List properties and 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.

The Americas

In an area stretching from Canada to Chile, it's our southern neighbor—Mexico—that shines the brightest

WHILE THE diversity of this region is dazzling, our readers give their emphatic endorsement to the hotels and resorts in Mexico. The country has a staggering 33 properties on the list this year—the most ever for Mexico and more than one-third the total in the Americas. Of these properties, 11 are new to the list, all of them coastal resorts. Among Caribbean islands, the current pacesetter is St. Lucia, with five luxe hotels that showcase the island's stunning topography. Elsewhere in the Americas, a hotel near the main plaza in Cuzco, Peru, and two Lilliputian properties—one a 14-room wine lodge in the viticulture center of Argentina, the other a 16-room eco-resort amid 500 acres of dense forest in central Costa Rica—join the list, while a couple of sleek urban hotels also debut in Canada.



Rooms at the Banyan Tree Mayakoba, on the Riviera Maya, score 97.0—perhaps because they're all villas with private pools.

This six-year-old resort is "a dream come true." Gazebos made of Indonesian woods are clustered around the central reflecting pool. Airy pavilions feature terraces with daybeds and sunken dining areas—"they bring a touch of modernity to the islands." Asian and Mediterranean dishes fill the menu at the main restaurant.

Grace Bay Club, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos 89.1
92.9 84.7 83.3 95.3 91.8 86.6

Biras Creek Resort, Virgin Gorda 90.6
93.2 90.9 93.3 95.6 88.9 81.4

CANADA

ALBERTA

*** Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, Lake Louise 91.1**
89.9 91.2 86.9 97.2 92.8 88.3

Post Hotel & Spa, Lake Louise 89.8
85.4 97.6 92.7 87.8 92.7 82.1

BRITISH COLUMBIA

King Pacific Lodge (Rosewood), Princess Royal Island 97.0
97.0 97.0 97.0 100 93.9 97.0

NEW Fairmont Pacific Rim, Vancouver 90.3
92.0 88.0 89.0 90.7 92.0

The glass tower across from Canada Place is the newest and "nicest of the Fairmont properties in Vancouver." "Ultramodern rooms" are done in beige and natural tones; some have private patios with outdoor fireplaces. Oru, a pan-Asian bistro, has a menu with dishes like Malay steamed honey musrels. The "Zen atmosphere" Willow Stream Spa is "to die for."

Sooke Harbour House, Sooke, Vancouver Island 91.4
88.9 97.2 92.1 92.1 86.8

Long Beach Lodge Resort, Tofino, Vancouver Island 92.2
90.2 95.1 92.7 92.7 92.7 90.0

Wickaninnish Inn, Tofino, Vancouver Island 91.8
94.3 93.5 85.5 96.8 94.4 86.3

*** Fairmont Chateau, Whistler 89.9**
87.3 88.7 87.4 92.8 90.5 92.5

*** Four Seasons, Whistler 91.0**
98.0 93.0 88.4 87.7 89.5 94.6

*** Pan Pacific Village Centre, Whistler 91.6**
95.8 87.5 87.5 91.7 91.7 95.7

Emerald Lake Lodge, Yoho National Park 94.9
86.7 96.7 96.7 100 100 88.9

ONTARIO

Langdon Hall Country House Hotel and Spa, Cambridge 95.7
100 100 97.0 81.8 100

Queen's Landing, Niagara-on-the-Lake 90.4
90.9 88.4 88.4 93.2 90.9

NEW Hazelton Hotel, Toronto 90.8
95.8 87.5 79.2 95.8 95.8

In the heart of exclusive Yorkville, this "modern and hip" hotel, where "staff greet you like a longtime guest," has "an inviting brick exterior." "Large, cozy rooms" have L-shaped custom leather headboards and "feel like a home, not a cookie-cutter hotel room." The restaurant, One, serves Mediterranean dishes. "I still crave the lobster!"

ATLANTIC & CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

Curtain Bluff, Antigua 91.8
91.8 93.9 91.8 95.9 89.8 87.8

Jumby Bay (Rosewood), Antigua 91.9
95.0 93.3 91.7 91.5 91.7 87.9

One&Only Ocean Club, Paradise Island, Bahamas 91.3
91.3 90.3 87.0 94.6 93.5 91.2

The Reefs, Bermuda 94.9
91.5 95.8 95.8 97.5 95.5 93.0

Rosewood Tucker's Point, Bermuda 90.4
94.7 81.8 85.7 93.5 94.8 91.9

Peninsula House, Las Terrenas, Dominican Republic 98.8
100 100 96.9 96.9 100

Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman 93.7
96.3 93.5 93.1 94.9 91.7 92.4

The Caves, Negril, Jamaica 94.4
92.0 92.0 96.0 96.0 96.0

Couples Swept Away, Negril, Jamaica 90.4
88.3 83.5 85.5 90.9 90.9 93.4

Sandals Whitehouse European Village & Spa, Westmoreland, Jamaica 89.1
89.9 87.6 91.0 80.9 92.1 93.1

Nisbet Plantation Beach Club, Nevis 96.1
97.0 98.0 97.5 97.0 97.0 90.2

Peter Island Resort & Spa, Peter Island 89.0
84.5 84.8 87.9 93.9 92.9 89.8

Eden Rock, St. Barts 92.9
93.4 91.9 90.3 96.8 91.8

Hotel Saint-Barth Isle de France, St. Barts 92.5
88.9 92.7 95.1 97.6 87.8

Anse Chastanet, St. Lucia 94.4
96.3 94.5 92.7 92.7 96.4 93.5

NEW BodyHoliday, St. Lucia 89.4
80.0 96.7 90.0 90.0 86.7 93.3

This beachfront all-inclusive is "a good value with very good food and excellent service in the restaurants and spa"—although "rooms are pretty poor." The wellness center offers Pilates and Reiki. All four restaurants use local produce, often from the hotel's garden. A \$20 million renovation, completed in 2011, added an infinity pool and expanded the water sports center.

Jade Mountain, St. Lucia 94.7
95.7 94.7 92.6 95.8 95.8 93.5

Jalousie Plantation, St. Lucia 91.4
91.7 94.6 83.8 100 91.9 86.5

Ladera, St. Lucia 90.6
91.2 88.2 94.1 91.2 88.2

Parrot Cay, Turks and Caicos 92.1
86.0 96.5 89.5 94.7 94.7 90.9

NEW Amanyaara, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos 90.4
92.3 96.2 92.3 84.6 92.3 84.6

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- Rooms
- Service
- Food
- Location
- Design
- Activities
- SCORES IN RED = OVERALL
- NEW 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, with reader quotes, go to condenasttraveler.com/goldlist or download our digital edition.