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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

JANUARY 2010

GOLD LIST

SPECIAL
36
PAGE
SECTION

681 WORLD'S BEST PLACES TO STAY

TOP HOTELS,
RESORTS,
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CRUISE SPECIAL: 10 RULES FOR PERFECT PORTS OF CALL

UNITED STATES	94
EUROPE	113
THE AMERICAS	124
ASIA, AUSTRALIA & PACIFIC NATIONS	130
AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST	142
CRUISE LINES	146



THE **WORLD'S**
BEST
 PLACES TO
STAY

**GOLD
 LIST**

681
HOTELS, RESORTS,
 AND
CRUISE LINES

When deciding where to sojourn on your next vacation, there's one source worth banking on—our **SIXTEENTH ANNUAL GOLD LIST**. More than 25,000 *Condé Nast Traveler* readers, the world's most dependable source of travel intel, selected the best hotels, resorts, and cruise lines in our annual Readers' Choice Awards (see November 2009). But since figures don't express the whole story, we interviewed you on what makes these places the *crème de la crème*. Our findings? An index of extraordinary treasures that are the gold standard in international travel

THE ART OF
 GRACIOUS LIVING

Inn at Little Washington
 Washington, Virginia 88.8

Named for the late food writer Craig Claiborne, the Claiborne House guest cottage has a living room with a fire-place, a dining room, and a veranda. This, the master suite, features a wall-papered barrel ceiling and a solarium.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
 Julien Capmeil

gargoyles is "close to the center of the action." Local woods and subtle accents of the golds, greens, and purples of Mardi Gras dominate. "The gardenia-scented candles burning in public areas smell amazing." Mélange celebrates local cuisine and has live jazz three nights a week. "Service stands out." \$\$\$\$; 527 rooms; spa; 504-524-1331.

Windsor Court Hotel, New Orleans

☎86.9 ☎88.9 ☎86.5 ☎89.2 ☎92.1 **88.8**

This rose-granite property is "away from the noise of the nearby French Quarter." Rooms, replicating stately English manors, have high ceilings, a predominance of the color yellow, "great beds, good soundproofing, and a fine view of the Mississippi." The remodeled Grill Room offers four culinary categories on the menu, including "Unadulterated" and "Indulge." \$\$\$\$; 323 rooms; pool; 504-523-6000.

MAINE

White Barn Inn & Spa, Kennebunkport

☎88.2 ☎93.1 ☎93.2 ☎85.6 ☎86.6 **89.3**

The nineteenth-century refurbished farmhouse, now a sophisticated country inn, "embodies 'typical New England style.'" A subdued palette of blues, greens, and grays is brightened by fresh fruit and flowers. At the restaurant, where "lobster is a signature dish," each candlelit table has a unique animal sculpture made from silver. Spa treatments include green tea facials. \$\$\$\$; 26 rooms; pool, spa; 207-967-2321.

MASSACHUSETTS

Eliot Hotel, Boston

☎88.0 ☎84.3 ☎86.0 ☎93.5

☎87.7 **87.9**

This neo-Georgian structure in Back Bay, originally built for retired Harvard professors, has rooms with a white-on-brown color scheme, toile fabrics, and French mirrors. "Ours faced Commonwealth Avenue Mall, which is pretty at night." Uni Sashimi bar, a velvet-and-leather spot for Asian fare, has an extensive sake menu. \$\$\$\$; 95 rooms; 800-443-5468.

Four Seasons, Boston

☎90.8 ☎91.2 ☎87.0 ☎93.1

☎88.9 **90.2**

Facing Boston Common, the brick property "maintains a feeling of openness." Enter the lobby to "gleaming black-granite floors" and a grand staircase with views of "the Public Garden's swan boats or Beacon Hill." Country-style rooms have historic Back Bay photos. Bristol Lounge, "set up like a formal living room," offers Meyer lemon-crust lamb chops. \$\$\$\$; 273 rooms; pool, spa; 617-338-4400.

Mandarin Oriental, Boston

☎96.9 ☎96.9 ☎93.8 ☎90.6 ☎93.8 **94.4**

The Asian-influenced limestone-and-marble newcomer next to the Prudential Center is "very well thought out." Teal- and taupe-shaded rooms "are spacious, with fabulous bathrooms." Bamboo floors and Jerusalem limestone walls at Asana set the tone for "amazing Nova Scotia halibut and Maine lobster" and caramelized miso cod. "Staff are exceptional—the smiles are never forced." \$\$\$\$; 148 rooms; spa; 617-535-8880.

Wequassett Resort and Golf Club, Cape Cod

☎82.9 ☎89.3 ☎90.5 ☎98.8 ☎91.7 ☎86.4 **90.1**

Anticipate "total relaxation" amid the stretches of fairways and woodlands at this multi-building retreat. "Generous-sized, luxurious rooms," in blues, greens, and beiges, have patios. The Outer Bar and Grille turns out lobster rolls, fried clams, and piña colodas. A 2009 expansion added upscale Signature Collection rooms, a kids' center, and an adult lap pool. \$\$\$\$; 120 rooms; beach, golf, pool, tennis, water sports; 508-432-5400.

Blantyre, Lenox

☎93.0 ☎96.6 ☎91.2 ☎91.4 ☎96.3 **93.7**

This Tudor castle on 117 acres in the Berkshires offers winter barbecues in the snow. Guest rooms are "large

and luxurious," with period antiques, fireplaces, "spa-like bathrooms" with pedestal sinks, and extensive book collections. "Staff are well mannered, multilingual, and attentive without hovering." The main dining room offers a country-house dinner menu with French influences, along with live piano music. \$\$\$\$; 23 rooms; pool, spa, tennis; 413-637-3556.

Charlotte Inn, Martha's Vineyard

☎85.7 ☎90.5 ☎90.6 ☎96.9 ☎90.6 ☎66.7 **88.1**

At this Italianate former whaling merchant's home, arriving guests are asked to sign an old-fashioned ledger. The 25 individually decorated rooms have English antiques, dark-wood furniture, and canopy beds. El Tesoro serves Italian specialties, including veal scaloppine, on the terrace, and afternoon tea and lemonade on the balcony. "Nicely maintained gardens are full of blooming flowers." \$\$\$\$; 25 rooms; 508-627-4751.

The Wauwinet, Nantucket

☎84.3 ☎92.8 ☎92.8 ☎91.6 ☎93.8 **91.0**

With views of Nantucket Bay and the Atlantic, this weathered-shingle Nantucket mansion "full of dormers and gables" is "a fabulous place to read, relax, and recharge." Rooms are "simple, not sumptuous," but have Pratesi linens, pine furniture, and chintz. "Staff are very accommodating," and breakfasts are

serve New Western cuisine; relax before dinner in the velvet chairs of Carabiner Lounge while sipping the hotel's signature Summit Huckleberry Cosmopolitan. \$\$\$\$; 220 rooms; golf, pool, skiing, spa, tennis; 406-995-8000.

NEVADA

Bellagio, Las Vegas

☎92.2 ☎83.8 ☎91.1 ☎95.2 ☎93.1 **91.1**

This Tuscan-inspired Strip mainstay is set behind an eight-and-a-half-acre man-made lake. "The decor is rich and elegant without being froufrou." Bedside panels control lighting and curtains. Among the dozen-plus restaurants is Olives, with Mediterranean dishes and "a dark ambience that makes it cozy." Take a dip in one of the five pools. \$\$\$\$; 3,933 rooms; pool, spa; 702-693-7111.

Encore, Las Vegas

☎90.8 ☎88.5 ☎86.0 ☎83.7 ☎90.7 **88.0**

The interior of this high-rise built in the same curved shape as its sibling property, Wynn, is awash in red—"it stands out from other casinos." Suites, starting at 700 square feet, have floor-to-ceiling windows, "great space, and views of the Strip." At Switch, a French-inspired boîte, the walls and lighting change throughout the night. \$\$; 2,034 rooms; golf, pool, spa; 877-321-9966.



SKY'S THE LIMIT

The magnificent vista from the Presidential Suite at the 52-story Four Seasons, New York, takes in most of upper Manhattan, including Central Park's treetops and reservoir.

memorable: "I can still taste the apricot and currant scones—two years later!"

\$\$\$; 32 rooms; beach, spa; 508-228-0145.

MINNESOTA

Saint Paul Hotel, St. Paul

☎86.4 ☎87.4 ☎84.7 ☎88.5 ☎85.3 **86.5**

Celebrating its centennial in 2010, this brick and stone Renaissance Revival building with wrought iron balconies is "comfortable and not overly ostentatious." "Staff are superbly friendly and act as if they honestly care about your happiness." St. Paul Grill serves standard fare like crab cakes and New York strip steak that's "good and reasonably priced." \$\$; 254 rooms; 651-292-9292.

MISSISSIPPI

The Alluvium, Greenwood

☎95.9 ☎89.8 ☎83.7 ☎73.5 ☎89.8 **86.5**

At this row house-style hotel, the decor reflects the colors of the Mississippi Delta and the bright-white lobby "looks like snow." The "quite grand rooms" employ deep purples, greens, and gold and are "so comfortable." Giardina's, where curtained booths dating to Prohibition allow for private dining, serves Italian and Southern cuisine. "Friendly staff provide old Mississippi hospitality." \$\$; 50 rooms; spa; 662-453-2114.

MONTANA

Summit Hotel, Big Sky

☎90.9 ☎87.9 ☎75.8 ☎93.9 ☎90.9 ☎87.9 **87.9**

Bear, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats visit this retreat in Yellowstone National Park. "The wilderness reinforces the authentic experience." Rooms have rich wall colors and Western artwork. Peaks Restaurant

Four Seasons, Las Vegas

☎93.0 ☎95.1 ☎91.9 ☎85.4 ☎92.0 **91.5**

This hotel set within Mandalay Bay is "an uncrowded getaway." Interiors have "the feel of a spa," with "fantastic floral arrangements throughout"; among the room choices are Sunrise Sunset suites, with 180-degree views of Vegas and the mountains. "Staff make you feel so important." Charlie Palmer Steak serves—what else?—steak house fare. The 12,000-square-foot spa offers custom perfume blending. \$\$\$\$; 424 rooms; pool, spa; 877-632-3000.

The Palazzo, Las Vegas

☎95.1 ☎84.7 ☎87.4 ☎90.1 ☎92.4 ☎92.3 **90.3**

The Italian-inspired resort on the site of the former Sands has "a good location on the Strip." Its design channels modern European with pillowtop beds and Egyptian cotton sheets. Several restaurants are outposts of celebrity chefs like Emeril Lagasse and Mario Batali. At Azure, a daytime pool club, champagne and ice towels are the norm. \$\$\$\$; 3,066 suites; pool, spa; 866-263-3001.

Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, Las Vegas

☎92.6 ☎82.1 ☎87.1 ☎92.2 ☎90.6 **88.9**

Set around a re-creation of St. Mark's Square, with gondolas plying a canal, "this hotel captures the grandeur of Venice." For dining, "we found no need to leave," with 19 restaurants to choose from. Rooms have sunken living rooms with sleeper sofas and are "a lovely contrast to the Strip's bacchanalia." Canyon Ranch SpaClub's "rock wall is great." \$\$\$\$; 4,027 rooms; pool, spa; 877-883-6423.

Wynn, Las Vegas

☎96.0 ☎86.9 ☎90.4 ☎86.8 ☎92.6 ☎89.3 **90.4**

Behind the reflective black exterior are rooms where