

# THE GOLD LIST 2020

THE EDITORS' ALL-TIME FAVORITE HOTELS

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PHOTOGRAPH: NIKOLAS KOENIG

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THE TRIBECA PENTHOUSE AT THE GREENWICH HOTEL, NEW YORK

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## ANANTARA AL JABAL AL AKHDAR RESORT NIZWA, OMAN

Set in the sunburnt Al-Hajar mountains, on the rim of the Arabian Peninsula's most outrageously beautiful canyon, is the region's most ambitious wilderness hotel.

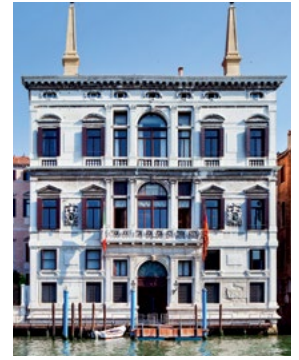
This is Oman's wild frontier, but this space has souped it up to the max, with chasm-facing pool villas, majlis-style courtyards, a lantern-lit outdoor hookah space, and superslick service fit for a sultan (a little jealous, perhaps, Omani premier Qaboos bin Said is building a palace on the canyon lip opposite). This being the splashy Gulf of Oman, there has to be a superlative or two: The hotel has the highest swimming pools, tennis court, and stargazing platform in the Middle East. But its real essence is pure escapism, whether dangling from a mountain while rappelling or relaxing in the impeccable spa with its energizing hammam rituals and fragrant frankincense oils. It's a bold, almost transcendental experiment in off-the-map tourism, and at the vanguard of a growing number of Middle Eastern hotels opening in unexpected and wonderfully extreme locations. *Doubles from \$400. [anantara.com](http://anantara.com)*





## THE GRITTI PALACE VENICE, ITALY

In a city with such a concentration of luxe hotels, none does it quite like this Grand Canal classic. Though the 15th-century palazzo—now a member of the Luxury Collection—has been open to guests since 1895, a 15-month, \$200 million revamp in 2013 ensured that it's no creaky museum piece. (Most modern extras are cleverly concealed.) But it's the sheer grace of the place that makes it so appealing. Of course, it's all inimitably exquisite, with rich Rubelli fabrics and priceless art; but this silky cocoon also manages to be utterly affable. Nothing is too much trouble, from the staff who serve cocktails from the martini trolley to chef Daniele Turco, who creates wonders with castraure—those special Venetian baby artichokes. A restorative facial in the spa? A spin in the Riva Aquariva boat? Full immersion in local food at the culinary school? Only if you can take your eyes off that watery spectacle outside: This is still one of the most beautiful hotels in one of the most beautiful, and most fragile, spots in the world. *Doubles from \$460. marriott.com*



### Venice: More Classics

The crush of over-tourism has risked muting the magic of La Serenissima, but the city's hotels, many of them palaces and villas during the republic's glory days, remain a bastion of Venetian romance. At the graceful **Aman Venice** (above), in the quieter San Polo district, there is slightly more reserve. With its Murano chandeliers and stellar rabbit cappelletti served in a side garden, the hotel mixes the elegantly spare aesthetic of this revered Asian brand with the cultured taste of the Italian count and princess who own the property. ♦ The intimacy of Aman is countered by the spaciousness of **Belmond Hotel Cipriani**, where every room has garden or water views. Those who prefer to sleep somewhere that's at least four centuries old can head to its annex, set inside a 15th-century palace on Giudecca Island. ♦ For an extraordinary spot that has remained under the Cipriani family umbrella, hop on the *traghetto*, or ferry, to **Locanda Cipriani**, a charming little inn on an island in the lagoon that feels like an escape within the city. ♦ And for the contemporary without compromising on the classic, book one of the rooms at the whimsical **Palazzo Venart**. Reached through a hard-to-find courtyard off the Grand Canal, it's filled with modern statues that underscore Venice's remarkable history and fabulous art scene.

## ONE&ONLY PALMILLA MEXICO

In the 1950s, Don Abelardo Rodríguez, son of Mexico's former president, had his choice of real estate in Baja Sur. He decided on the very tip of the peninsula, between the calm Sea of Cortez and the crashing Pacific, as the site for the area's first hotel of note, the 15-room Palmilla. The hotel became the hideaway of politicians and actors looking for a little sun and a lot of privacy. Sixty-some years on, the luxury hotel set has moved in, and much at the Palmilla has changed—but not enough to keep nearly half of its guests from coming back each year. The hotel, which was taken over by One&Only in 2004, still has the best location—on its own little point between Los Cabos' two busy hotel zones, making it more secluded than most. The hacienda-style rooms with wrought-iron chandeliers and updated mission-style furniture continue to embody the pueblo Cabo once was. But it still comes down to the service here, just like it always has—the small, thoughtful touches, such as the roaming masseuse who offers foot massages while you lie facedown on a pool chair. *Doubles from \$990. oneandonlyresorts.com*



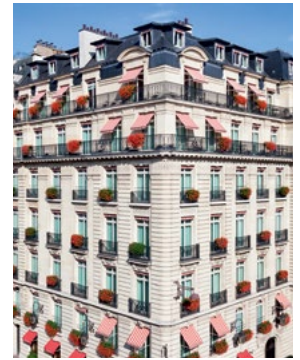
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### RITZ PARIS FRANCE

This is one of a small number of hotels so high and mighty they create their own weather system. Which made the ragging it got when it reopened in 2016, after a four-year revamp, all the more baffling. Some scoffed that it was a facsimile of its former self, smelling of fresh paint but virtually unchanged. But what exactly would have been gained if the Ritz had been remade in the image of a Nantucket shrimp shack or Buddhist monastery? It had stuck to its guns, and its critics were tilting at windmills. The Ritz remains, *merci au bon Dieu*, the Ritz, demonstrating that sometimes the most spectacular renovations are the least spectacular, though the hotel is as opulent today as at any time in its 122-year history. Yet even among the silks and tassels, a kind of democracy prevails. The smallest rooms are, by Parisian standards, generous, and differ from the mega-suites only in the scale, not the degree, of their sumptuousness. And it does not matter how rich, famous, or beautiful you are—the peerless Bar Hemingway still isn't taking reservations. *Doubles from about \$1,110. ritzparis.com*

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### Paris: More Classics

Like the Ritz, **Hôtel de Crillon, A Rosewood Hotel** is a case study in how to stay relevant in the 21st century. But while the Ritz carried on in the same splendid fashion as always, the Crillon blasted off in search of something new. The result is a fascinating postmodern triumph. ♦ La Réserve owner Michel Reybier had great success with his Geneva and Ramatuelle outposts. Yet there was general astonishment when, in 2015, **La Réserve Paris** sashayed into town, teaching the city's grandes dames new tricks. ♦ Utterly immaculate yet playful, **Le Bristol** (above) is much like the pampered Birman cat Fa-Raon, who roams its halls. There are sensational new rooms, and the lobby restaurant remains fashion-power-breakfast central. ♦ **The Hoxton** updates the Haussmann vibe for hipsters. Could such a thing fly here in Paris? *Ouais, ouais, tranquille.* ♦ Ageless **Le Meurice** has always been tolerant of experimentation and eccentricity. No wonder it was Salvador Dalí's favorite. Most of its suites, including the penthouse, Belle Étoile, have been redone in silk and velvet. ♦ After some topsy-turvy years, Left Bank Art Nouveau institution **Hôtel Lutetia** reopened in 2018, and now looks better than it did when James Joyce wrote bits of *Ulysses* here, thanks to architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte and collaborators such as Francis Ford Coppola.

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### BELMOND HOTEL SPLENDIDO PORTOFINO, ITALY

The first guest to sign the visitors book was the Duke of Windsor, who stayed here with his American wife, Wallis Simpson, in 1952. The following pages of the weighty volume reveal a who's who of Hollywood royalty (Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, Elizabeth Taylor), and the stream of A-listers has never stopped. The hotel hasn't really changed much, although superyachts have replaced the fishing boats. A former monastery acquired by Orient Express Hotels in 1986, the Splendido overlooks the harbor, giving all but a handful of the sunny bedrooms grandstand views. There's a retro-glam feel, with button-back banquettes, honey-hued parquet, and custom-made '70s terrace furniture. After spending the day lying by the saltwater pool, guests gather on the veranda to sip Campari spritzes while an old-timer plays numbers on a baby grand, then tuck into lemon-scented linguine with clams. This is the only place you should stay on the coast; no wonder it has such a loyal following. *Doubles from about \$1,356. belmond.com*



### Italy: More Classics

A tribute to the vision and folly of its creator, **Il San Pietro di Positano** burrows into a cliff, with an elevator plunging down to the beach via a shaft hacked out of rock. It's the ultimate Amalfi Coast cocoon, made all the more attractive by delicious but not overly fancy seasonal food. ♦ Tuscany's **Borgo Santo Pietro** has expanded from 9 to 20 rooms since its 2008 opening, all done in impeccable style. The hotel has a Michelin-starred restaurant and its own natural skin-care line. ♦ Lake Como has seen its share of designer openings in recent years, but few match the glamour of century-old **Grand Hotel Tremezzo**, which has the lakefront T Spa and a restaurant dedicated to late super-chef Gualtiero Marchesi. ♦ Celebrities (Madonna, the Beckhams) keep delightful Puglian resort **Borgo Egnazia** (above) in the news. The heart of this hotel, however, lies not in the private villas where they hide away, but in the pretty piazzas of Il Borgo and La Corte, where the community vibe is ramped up by six restaurants and three bars. ♦ The **Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Resort**, set on 15 acres with views to St. Peter's, is both a lavish escape and a perfect city-break address. The lack of neighborhood action is more than made up for by a world-class art collection and La Pergola Rome, one of the best restaurants in the capital.

### ZERO GEORGE CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

History is so much a part of the Charleston experience that you don't want to leave it behind when returning to your hotel. At the three early-19th-century in-town "singles" and two carriage houses that form the Zero George, each of which comes with a pleasantly quiet, shaded courtyard nook to beat the steamy streets, you don't have to. When plantation shutters are closed and the happy hour cheese board in the small bar is running low, sleep comes easily in one of the 16 rooms, which offer an unfussy palette of cream, gray, and sage, and not a lick of kitsch. Garden suites are sweet with heart pine floors and period millwork, though like the Dewberry down the street, the kitchen is the heart and soul of this place, as should be the case in the South. Chef Vinson Petrillo isn't about pretense or elaborate sauces; royal red shrimp are served with generous amounts of heritage pork fat. This is classic Charleston, down to the deeply satisfying underfoot crunch of oyster shells in those nooks. *Doubles from \$359. zerogeorge.com*



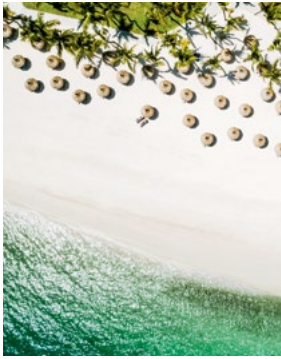
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## BISATE LODGE VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK, RWANDA

This pint-size country has become one of Africa's most buzzed-about—and exclusive—destinations, and nowhere more so than the gorilla-rich Virunga Mountains. Top-notch operators Singita and One&Only have opened here, and very lovely they are, but Wilderness Safaris' Bisate Lodge was the original.

Ranged like giant birds' nests around the natural amphitheater of an eroded volcanic cone, its six thatched pods are inspired by the former royal palace in the southern city of Nyanza. Inside, the swooping ceilings and woven-grass walls curve around to huge windows with knockout views of the peaks where Dian Fossey studied gorillas. And in 2020, Wilderness is rumored to be upping the ante again, opening satellite camp Little Bisate close by. *From \$1,575 per person, full board, including lodge activities. wilderness-safaris.com*

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### Africa: More Classics

After bush comes beach, and **North Island**, in the Seychelles, is a beach-breaker of hearts, a revamped shipwreck-fantasy island with 11 villas set along a sensational lick of white sand splendor. When it opened it set a new standard for what utterly bespoke, private-island barefoot hotels could be, and it continues to thrill. ♦ At **AndBeyond Benguerra Island**, off the coast of Mozambique, a wonderful renovation of the once-rustic lodge by one of Africa's best safari outfits might have elevated this hideaway, but it still retains its low-key soul. With around 140 species of birds—from kingfishers to flamingos—and some of the best snorkeling and diving in the world, it is hard to beat as a natural retreat. ♦ Over on Mauritius, **One&Only Le Saint Géran** (above) is one of the most beloved Indian Ocean hotels, with a fiercely loyal following since it opened in 1975. Tamper with an old favorite at your peril, but there was a collective sigh of relief when the hotel revealed a more than \$55 million renovation a couple of years ago: lighter, brighter, the very model of a sharp, slick, sophisticated beach retreat, and still in the island's best spot.

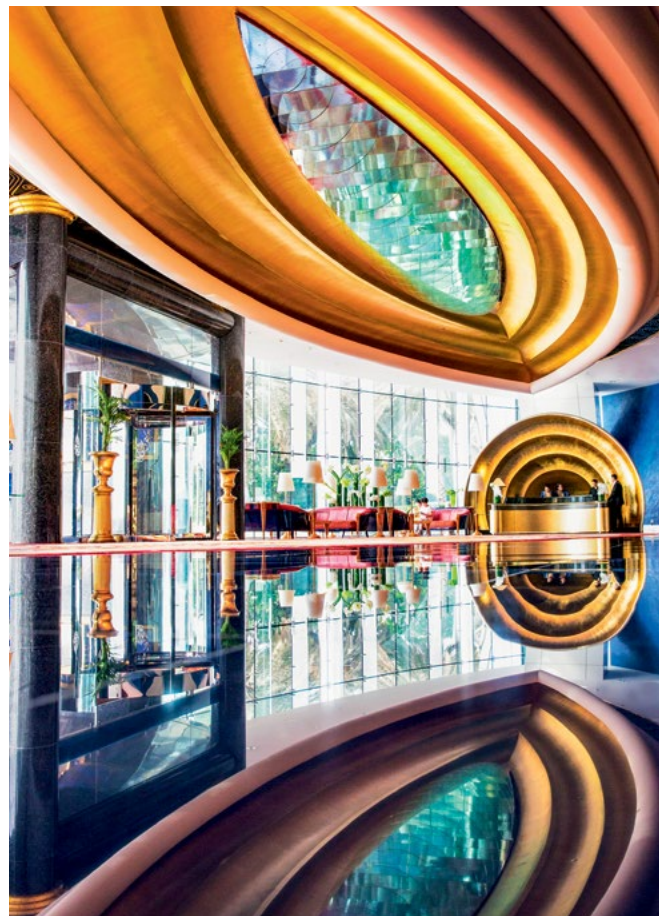


## FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANAI HAWAII

There's Hawaii, and there's Lanai. Driving through Lanai City—still more plantation outpost than the island's only town—on the way from the airport to the hotel, there are none of the usual signifiers: no ABC Stores or shave ice stands (there aren't even traffic lights). In addition to palms, there are willowy Cook pines planted a century ago by pineapple king James Dole. In 2012, billionaire Larry Ellison purchased 98 percent of Lanai, including this hotel, which he closed in 2015 for a major overhaul. Rooms were freshened up with teak and zebrawood; key cards morphed into waterproof wristbands, handy for late-night dips in the new pool. Nobu and Malibu Farm were clever additions—sashimi and salads are brilliant after sun and sea. But what really makes this hotel stand out is that there's no feeling of being on- or off-property. Every part of Lanai, from sunbathe-naked-empty Polihua Beach to the interior's Garden of the Gods, with otherworldly red-rock formations, feels all yours. *Doubles from \$1,150. [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)*

## BURJ AL ARAB JUMEIRAH UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

It was a smart move, even in those far-off pre-Instagram days, to design this hotel with such a distinctive silhouette. Since rising off Jumeirah Beach in 1999, the Burj has been the symbol for Dubai as much as the Eiffel Tower is for Paris. And despite fierce competition—the regal One&Only, superchic Bulgari—this homegrown star is still regarded with a mixture of affection and awe. Arriving here and looking upward can make a head spin: The atrium rises 590 feet, a dancing waterfall flanked by aquariums. And the hotel has found fresh ways to innovate, with Michael Ellis, formerly of the Michelin Guide, heading up the restaurants, and Robuchon disciples bringing French finesse to 27th-floor Al Muntaha. While the pool terrace is a lesson in pared-back luxe, the rest of the show is a Baz Luhrmann-style production, with crystal ceilings, silk wallpaper, and gold-plated iPads. In a land of record-breaking one-upmanship, this place still feels audacious. *Doubles from \$400. [jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)*



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### HOTEL NORD-PINUS TANGER MOROCCO

When French hotelier Anne Igou dressed up a former 18th-century palace in Tangier with Syrian chandeliers and lacquered cabinets, she created one of the few hotels that could draw attention from the scene in Marrakech. What it does is subtly become a place you fall for so hard that you obsessively revisit it in your mind until you finally return. Part of the magic is Igou's unwavering taste, which led her to match vintage wardrobes with stained-glass windows. One of the five rooms has views across the sea to Tarifa, in Spain, and deep into the Rif Mountains—a reminder that bohemian Tangier is itself a mash-up of influences, straddling oceans, continents, and languages. But inside, sweet orange juice and figs on exquisite little glass plates let you know exactly where you are. Spain, visible just 20 miles in the distance, seems pretty far away, after all. *Doubles from \$210. nordpinustanger.com*



### Marrakech: More Classics

In Marrakech, the hotel is as much a destination as the city itself. Choose one for a rooftop supper, another for its marble hammam or sunbathing by the pool. Pick the best for sleeping. At the **Royal Mansour Marrakech** (above), located inside the medina, the draw is privacy—its beautifully tiled *riads* have their own pools dotting lush gardens that are made for afternoon strolls. ♦ The bougainvillea-filled grounds at grand **La Mamounia**, also inside the medina, are equally lovely, though Jacques Garcia's sultry, layered interiors are the real star, particularly the mosaic walls with terraces that look out onto jasmine and roses. ♦ A bit more reined in is Jasper Conran's supremely stylish **L'Hôtel Marrakech**, where the rooms have striped vintage chairs and pieces from the Yves Saint Laurent collection. ♦ The white-on-white lobby at retro retreat **Es Saadi** feels opulent rather than minimal; it's both a little kitschy and throwback glamorous. ♦ For a serious reset, there's the **Beldi Country Club**, where the roomy spa has handcrafted chandeliers and bronze sconces, plus views over the long reflective pool. This property nails the idea of the retreat-as-destination, with prime access to Marrakech's urban treasures.

### HOTEL DE RUSSIE ROME

From the moment the top-hatted doorman ushers you into the classic-modern space by former Valentino interiors whiz Tommaso Ziffer and Rocco Forte Hotels director of design Olga Polizzi, the sense of being in the foremost place to stay in town is as sharp as the Campari sodas served at the bar. The 120-room hotel just off Piazza del Popolo mixes Art Deco-tinged nods to Rome's classical past with jazzy homages to Picasso and ballet legend Nijinsky, who stayed here in its previous incarnation. They're commemorated in signature suites, as is Giuseppe Valadier, the architect behind the palazzo's terraced garden. This is being restored for the hotel's 20th anniversary—one of several refreshes that include a health-oriented lightening of the mod-Med menu. The kitchen is overseen by chef Fulvio Pierangelini, who also curates the food at the Stravinskij Bar, which heaves with beautiful Romans come aperitivo time. *Doubles from \$440. roccofortehotels.com*





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## MANDARIN ORIENTAL HYDE PARK LONDON

After a fire in June 2018, this local stalwart reopened last April. Gone are the heavy curtains and throws. Instead, everything is lighter, fresher—even the marbled lobby. Rooms have been painted a pale gray, and gold lampshades added. The carpets have been replaced with wooden floors, and there are little libraries curated by beloved bookseller Heywood Hill. Still, the best rooms are the Hyde Park-facing ones, where the sound of the Household Cavalry clip-clopping past is better than any morning alarm. Artist Leah Wood has revamped the Butterfly Terrace with floral art; in the ballroom—where Queen Elizabeth learned to dance—every inch of gold leaf has been restored; and both Bar Boulud and the molecular Dinner by Heston Blumenthal are packed every night. Gracious and unstuffy, it's still the best-situated hotel in London. *Doubles from \$820. mandarinoriental.com*



### London: More Classics

Also on Hyde Park, **The Lanesborough** is an unashamed concoction of gilding, trompe l'oeil, and marble that has all the interior oomph of a palace hotel—and, with a butler for each room, service to match.

◆ With smart dining from star-spangled chefs including Jean-George Vongerichten, an ethereal Aman Spa, and quite possibly the best hotel bar in town, **The Connaught** is a distillation of everything that makes Mayfair tick.

◆ The **Rosewood London** (above) brought a neglected Edwardian pile back to life—the Mirror Room is fabulous—but it's also helped put Holborn back on the map for Londoners. ◆ **The Langham** has kept up with the times admirably, adding

a stylish pub and cooking classes while maintaining a reassuringly old-school swish of palm-court elegance. ◆ Not far away, **The Beaumont** puts a playful spin on Prohibition-era New York. The impeccably realized bubble of Art Deco escapism is best approached through its An American Bar, while sculptor Antony Gormley's three-story Room is totally unique. ◆ And snug within its own Soho enclave, **Ham Yard**, from artful town house maestros Kit and Tim Kemp, still feels as fresh as when it opened in 2014, with its procession of fabrics, textures, and fizzy commotion that rebooted the whole concept of the boutique hotel.

## THE SINGULAR PATAGONIA CHILE

While other luxury lodges in Patagonia are purpose-built, the Singular has a less glamorous history. Constructed in 1915 as an agricultural building, it was reborn in 2011 after a daring renovation as a 57-room hotel. Rather than try to erase its past, the place embraces it. Austere, dramatic design choices reference its heritage in a way that feels modern. Hulking machinery has been left intact in the huge public spaces. A block of guest rooms built of brick, steel, and timber is connected to the original structure; its coarse textures contrast beautifully with sleek, wall-size windows that frame a showstopping view of the wind-ruffled waters of Ultima Esperanza Sound from every fluffy white bed. Lamb, as well as other local specialties such as king crab and guanaco, appears throughout the menu in the two-story dining room. The result is a feeling of being indulged but not coddled, primed for adventure in the wilderness on excursions ranging from hiking in Torres del Paine National Park to fly-fishing and horseback riding. Go for the epic landscape and unique historical atmosphere—and the excellent pisco sours. *Doubles from \$365. thesingular.com*



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## SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND CAMBODIA

A sense of calm radiates from Song Saa, a pair of private islands off Cambodia's once-overlooked southern coast. It starts with sunrise Buddhist blessings from tangerine-robed local monks and lasts until candlelit suppers soundtracked by the splashes of leaping fish. Australian owners Rory and Melita Hunter are accidental hoteliers—he was a Saatchi executive, she an interior designer—who had an epiphany while sailing a rented fishing boat along the mangroves and white sand beaches of the Koh Rong archipelago in 2005. The couple bought tiny Koh Ouen and Koh Bong, and spent six years crafting overwater villas with upcycled furniture and salvaged wood from abandoned boats. They also set up a foundation to protect and support the surrounding rain forests, sea life, and communities, such as Prek Svay, a village on stilts on neighboring Koh Rong. Six Senses and Alila Villas have since arrived on nearby islands, but Song Saa is the original: a living, breathing passion project that has that intangible essence of soul. *Doubles from \$1,100. [songsaa.com](http://songsaa.com)*



### *Southeast Asia: More Classics*

**Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan**, on the banks of the Ayung River just outside arty Ubud, is still queen of the jungle two decades in.

Waterfront villas with lotus-filled pools and a lobby terrace that overlooks dense, tumbling palms create a sense of lush timelessness. But a new cooking school and refreshed wellness program are now speaking to the mindful crowd that flocks to this corner of Indonesia. ♦ At

**Nihi Sumba** (above), an hour's flight from Bali on the lesser-known island of Sumba, solitude is prized more than pomp: Twenty-seven villas are spread across 550 acres of forest. Adventure is also key: The hotel opens onto Occy's Left, one of the world's top private waves. With ties to the local community and a rustic surfer ethos, Nihi is five-star and cool. ♦ There was relief in 2018 when Malaysia's

**The Datai Langkawi**, with its nature-luxe architecture by the late Kerry Hill and jungle-meets-sand setting, emerged from an almost \$65 million overhaul as wild as ever. There are new rain forest villas, but still the best thing to do is to spot dusky leaf monkeys on the walk to the Andaman Sea. ♦ The Thai island of Phuket has grown up from backpackers' hangout to serious hotel destination. Relative newcomer

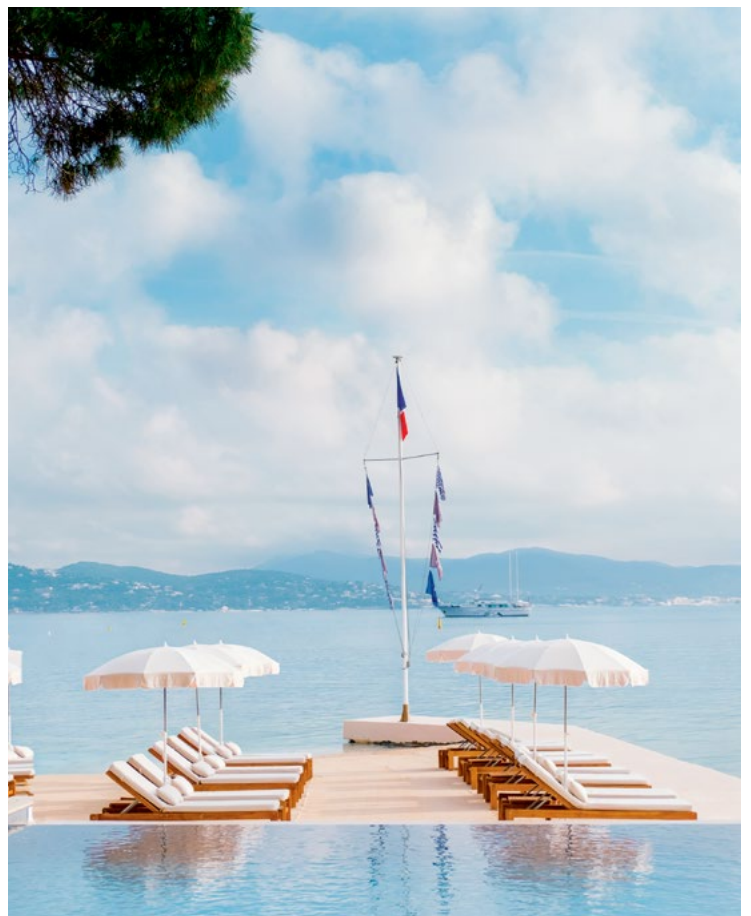
**Rosewood Phuket** is leading the pack, with breezy bungalows, a dreamy spa, and a prime beach spot.

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## CHEVAL BLANC ST-TROPEZ FRANCE

La Résidence de la Pinède, a classic peaches-and-cream Riviera hotel on the beach outside St. Tropez's center, was reborn in 2019 as the latest of LVMH's superb Cheval Blanc properties. It's both golden oldie and bright young thing. All that made La Pinède great has been preserved—that covetable strip of private beach, the three-Michelin-starred extravaganza of La Vague d'Or restaurant, the cinematic cluster of tables in the main courtyard. Inside, however, it has been transformed. There's a blue, white, and ivory palette by architect-designer Jean-Michel Wilmotte, angular lines, glossily glazed ceramics on the walls, and stairs inside the front door that lead to a Guerlain-scented parallel universe. St. Tropez is blessed with marvelous hotels these days, in contrasting styles.

In town there's White 1921 and Byblos; nearby, wellness-focused La Réserve Ramatuelle and elegant Villa Marie. Cheval Blanc occupies the sweet spot in between. *Doubles from about \$670.* [chevalblanc.com](http://chevalblanc.com)



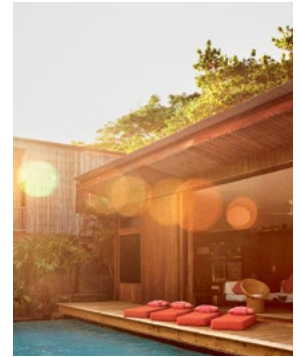
## THE PENINSULA BEIJING CHINA

There's a delicious frisson in stepping into one of the Peninsula Beijing's Rolls-Royce Phantoms, secure in the knowledge that you're bound for Goldfish Lane and its preeminent address. At the front of the hotel, you're greeted by the sight of a pai-lou arch, with its distinctive hip-and-gable roof, and a covey of bellboys, pillar-box hats set at a jaunty angle, ready to usher you into that phenomenal lobby.

Thirty-one years on from when it opened as the Chinese capital's only hotel with any plausible claim to luxury, the Pen has not so much upped its game as put it on fast-forward. Whether fellow guests are high-society Beijingers or international players, they will relish the neatly juxtaposed hairy crab and minced pork dumplings in the Cantonese restaurant; the hotel's heavy-hitting collection of artworks, including an abstract painting by Gao Shangxiao; the blue oasis that is the indoor pool; and the electric nail dryers that are standard in the suites' bulging armory of home comforts. Many of Beijing's foremost attractions—in particular the Forbidden City—lie nearby, but the temptation to stay put in the Pen is hard to resist. *Doubles from \$260.* [peninsula.com](http://peninsula.com)

## DORADO BEACH, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE PUERTO RICO

Shoulders begin dropping half an hour into dinner at Positivo Sand Bar. By the time the table is covered with tangy ceviche and cold albariño, sleeves are rolled up and sandals slipped off. Unlike with other properties on the resort-heavy north shore, the emphasis is on the setting. The hotel has undergone many transformations (including after Hurricane Maria in 2017), but since Laurance Rockefeller built a sanctuary here it has been all about sea, sand, and green spaces. Rooms are bookended by beach-facing terraces and outdoor showers, and museum-quality art is scattered on tree branches. But it's the Spa Botánico, a tropical wonderland that's much more than the usual cluster of treatment rooms, that really sticks to Rockefeller's approach. After visiting, you'll remember the 95-year-old ficus at the entrance most clearly. That or the tree house in the canopy where you had the greatest massage of your life. *Doubles from \$1,500. ritzcarlton.com*



### Caribbean: More Classics

On an island of bells-and-whistles hotels, **Playa Grande Beach Club**, on the Dominican Republic's wild north shore, is a refreshingly simple standout, with nine bungalows that are all lacy woodwork and wraparound porches. More friend's holiday hideout than hotel, it has bikes for exploring and a last-century feel, with lazy ceiling fans and wicker chairs. ♦ Of the Coppola clan's two exceptional ecolodges in Belize, the mangrove-encircled **Turtle Inn** (above), in the fishing village of Placencia, is where their cinematic vision really kicks in: thatched cottages with hand-carved Balinese doors; rustic-Italian dishes flavored with items from the organic garden; and a private castaway island, Coral Caye, with hammocks for post-snorkel naps. ♦ It's the cachet that keeps **GoldenEye** in Jamaica a perpetual favorite—before it was a hotel, it was the home of Bond author Ian Fleming—as well as the wooden cottages opening onto a peaceful lagoon. ♦ The vibe is more intimate at the understated **Kamalame Cay** in the Bahamas, where David and Michael King-Hew throw elaborate wine-soaked lunches. ♦ The sand at wellness-pioneer **COMO Parrot Cay** might be the whitest in the Caribbean, but the massages at its Shambhala Retreat are so effective that visitors may spend more time in the treatment rooms than on the beach.

## PULITZER AMSTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS

Back in the 1960s, Amsterdam businessman Peter Pulitzer had the bright idea of converting a few of the city's grand Golden Age canal houses into a hotel. He was one of the first to do so. Today, the Pulitzer ambles, climbs, and stretches through 25 historic buildings, between two canals. The essence of Amsterdam's past is here, but a contemporary makeover by Jacu Strauss, one of the architects behind the transformation of the Sea Containers hotel in London, blows away any cobwebs. Alongside the original stucco ceilings, antique Delft tiles, and baronial fireplaces, you'll find prime new Dutch design (charred furniture by Maarten Baas, Piet Hein Eek's patchwork Persian rugs) and countless works from the hotel's extensive modern art collection. Rooms are in the palette of the Old Masters: deep blues, rich yellows, and pinky plums (the bathrooms, in contrast, are glinting white). Restaurant Jansz snakes through a series of rooms, simply decorated with plain wood floors and bentwood chairs, and serves robust fare big on flavor. Much like Amsterdam, the Pulitzer fuses prime elements of the past with irreverent contemporary design, while remaining originally, utterly itself. *Doubles from \$330. pulitzeramsterdam.com*



## THE GOLD LIST 2020



### AMANZOE PORTO HELI, GREECE

With views over the glitzy fray of Porto Heli Bay, this hotel is a series of set pieces: a composition of black amphorae in a soaring portico, a skylit spa framed by graceful colonnades, a yoga *shala* seemingly balancing on a Peloponnesian panorama. Marble-clad villas look like miniature Parthenons, only with planted roofs and plunge pools. The recurring nods to the Acropolis veer toward pastiche, yet it all hangs together because the landscape refuses to be upstaged by the monumental architecture. Other guests are barely noticeable (even the terribly famous ones). The main pool is miraculously empty, the library is all yours, and there's always a front-row daybed at the beach club. At dusk everyone gravitates toward the circular terrace, which floats on a reflective pool, to stare as the sunset streaks the horizon fuchsia and tangerine. The beauty of Amanzoe lies in its isolation—in the stillness of the landscape and the complete absence of distraction. *Doubles from \$975. aman.com*



#### Greece: *More Classics*

Like Porto Heli, Costa Navarino occupies an unsung corner of the Peloponnese. **The Romanos, A Luxury Collection Resort**, its polished-marble flagship, is deeply rooted in the local culture. Immersive experiences include philosophy walks in centuries-old olive groves and grape harvesting in the organic vineyard. ♦ Crete's

**Blue Palace, A Luxury Collection Resort and Spa** (*above*) has an equally strong sense of place. Set on a luminous pebble beach, this sophisticated property has more authenticity than all the hotels along the Elounda coastline combined. There's a wooden fishing boat to putter across to Spinalonga island and a lamb spit roast at dusk.

♦ Several stylish hotels have helped offset the party-island reputation of Zakynthos, including **Porto Zante Villas & Spa**, which has nine villas overlooking a private bay. Everything is just so, from the supersmart room service to the perfectly aligned beach toys at the sparkling water's edge. ♦ Thankfully, nothing much has changed at Athens landmark **Grande Bretagne, A Luxury Collection Hotel** in the last century. This gilded icon is impervious to passing fads.

### EMIRATES ONE&ONLY WOLGAN VALLEY NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Darwin stopped off at this pine-shrouded valley, three hours west of Sydney, on his journey through Australia in the early 1800s. The steep cliffs, lush forests and waterfalls, and countless Aussie critters are thoroughly captivating. Kangaroos dart into view, unconcerned by the human activity on this eco-retreat's 7,000 acres, which were fortunately spared from the bushfires that ravaged the area late last year. The homestead where Darwin stayed is now a museum. At the rest of the custom-built property, furniture is made from upcycled eucalyptus, while the showers in the 40 villas run on rainwater. The house gin, 1832 Wolgan, is second only to all that surrounding nature. It's best drunk veranda-side in a G&T, where the classic juniper notes are boosted with a herb-y dose of local tea tree. From here, plot out the next day's hike around the reserve. And keep an eye out for a grove of trees that even Darwin didn't notice. These Wollemi pines were thought to be extinct, until a bushwalker chanced upon them in the 1990s. The hotel has since nurtured new plantings—this place was eco-conscious from inception. *Doubles from \$1,295. oneandonlyresorts.com*



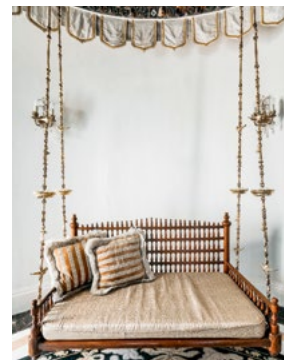
# THE GOLD LIST 2020

## THE LEELA PALACE UDAIPUR, INDIA

Domed *havelis* with delicately latticed *jharoka* balconies seem better suited to fairy tales than austere stone castles with imposing turrets. Udaipur, Rajasthan's City of Lakes, has all the ingredients for a romantic myth, and on the banks of Lake Pichola, the Leela Palace has made generous use of them to re-create the erstwhile era of maharajas.

After floating across from town by boat, consult with the palace astrologer about your forthcoming plans, swim laps in a pool flanked by stone peacocks, or while away the hours in museum-like hallways that are a tribute to Rajasthan's Mewar rulers. Each of the 80 rooms has views over the vast landscape, and there are brilliant Ayurvedic treatments in the spa. But the defining moment is spending twilight on one of the many terraces, when a dusky glow falls over the city from across the water, which proves that the greatest theatrics are all-natural.

Doubles from \$610. [theleela.com](http://theleela.com)



## India: More Classics

No destination does high-low like India, from its regal palace hotels to its whimsical, windswept beach retreats. Jaipur's rose-tinted

**Suján Rajmahal Palace**, an Art Deco-inflected abode that was once home to the city's maharaja, is done up in a riot of color—with 46 gorgeous bespoke wallpapers, from fuchsia to mint green. ♦ In the kinetic megalopolis of Mumbai, the striking Indo-Saracenic silhouette of the **Taj Mahal Palace hotel** (above) is no less of a landmark than the neighboring Gateway of India. ♦ While it might not have quite the same royal pedigree, **The Oberoi, New Delhi**, the capital's most beloved hotel, is fit for modern-day mughals and moguls alike. An extensive two-year refurb by Adam D. Tihany has left it thoroughly refreshed, but one thing is resolutely the same: Oberoi's signature fit-for-a-queen service. ♦ A dramatic pace change from much of India, the Andaman Islands are a world away, closer to Thailand or Burma. By far the loveliest place to stay here is **Jalakara**, a wild—and wildly beautiful—rain forest retreat. This is a place to disconnect and reset, properly off-the-grid and Wi-Fi-free.

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Condé Nast Traveler

## THE LANGHAM CHICAGO

A highlight of any Chicago riverboat architecture tour is Mies van der Rohe's last skyscraper, 330 North Wabash, still commonly referred to as the IBM Building. It's a paragon of the late International Style: a 52-story rectangle of anodized aluminum and bronze glass that is the perfect distillation of corporate might and urban promise. To check into the Langham Chicago, which since 2013 has occupied the building's first 13 floors, is to step into the story the building tells about the American city. You feel like you could be a character in a spy thriller as you pass through the note-perfect midcentury lobby and take the elevator to the elegant second-floor reception area. (The hotel makes an appearance in the 2018 film *Widows*.) Everywhere you go, there are encounters to be had with the City of the Century: You'll ponder the curious curlicues of Marina City, the iconic "corn cob" apartment towers next door, over a bowl of cacio e pepe in Travelle, the handsomely brassy New American restaurant, and admire the bold way North Wabash slices diagonally through the urban jungle from the cream-and-taupe comfort of your vast guest room. For the traveler, it's Chicago's finest address. Doubles from \$340. [langhamhotels.com](http://langhamhotels.com)

# THE GOLD LIST 2020



## THE GREENWICH HOTEL NEW YORK

In an era of the ever-more-exclusive members' club luring the black-card-carrying wolf pack, Robert De Niro's hotel makes privacy feel refreshingly effortless. Built more than a decade ago in a cobblestone quarter of Lower Manhattan, it creates the sensation of stepping into the actor's own salon. The lobby is hung with abstract paintings by De Niro's late father, and beyond it more inner sanctums await: A book-filled drawing room merges into a pocket garden, where topiaries cast an Italianate charm. Each of the 88 rooms is idiosyncratically arranged with antique silk rugs, the odd vintage table, and marble bathtubs, while the TriBeCa Penthouse is earthy and minimalist. But the enduring revelation is the Shibui Spa, where the lantern-lit pool glimmers under the beams of a 250-year-old Japanese farmhouse. A festive din still kicks up at Locanda Verde, which serves rustic plates of duck orecchiette, and New York fixtures such as Yoko Ono and Jay-Z go pretty much incognito, but things settle down early. The wolf pack can go elsewhere. *Doubles from about \$755. [thegreenwichhotel.com](http://thegreenwichhotel.com)*

Condé Nast Traveler

## *New York City: More Classics*

The truly great hotels in this city are the ones that wend their way into everyday life.

Walk through the velvet-and-gilt lobby of the Jacques Garcia–designed **NoMad Hotel** into its moody bar, where the after-work creative set gets progressively louder over dirty martinis and guests have a last drink before bedding down in apartment-like rooms. ♦ No one knew what to expect when a 252-year-old French luxury brand opened its first property, **Baccarat Hotel**, on West 53rd five years ago—except that there had better be at least one over-the-top chandelier. The hotel did not disappoint, but what was surprising was how wonderful its opulence felt, after all that industrial, bare-bulb and rough-hewn everything. Like a return to Champagne after years of lager. ♦ **The Whitby**, NYC's second import by British brand Firmdale Hotels, is designer Kit Kemp at her playful best. A welcome addition to staid Midtown, it's that rare find that is both family-friendly and sophisticated.

♦ **The Lowell**, on the Upper East Side, reopened in 2017 after a three-year renovation. Its 74 rooms got a refresh, but the important touches stayed the same: wood-burning fireplaces, grisaille wallpaper in the lobby, tasseled key fobs. Nowhere in the city feels quite as refined.

# THE GOLD LIST SHIPS

THE EDITORS' FAVORITE VOYAGES TO THE MOST EXCITING PLACES

## OCEANIA MARINA COPENHAGEN TO STOCKHOLM

A sail that begins and ends in Scandinavia is certain to attract foodies, and *Oceania Marina* so spectacularly nails the dining that its 1,250 guests won't mind missing Noma. The beyond-juicy porterhouse at the Polo Grill is a particular standout. Across the Gulf of Finland (*shown*)

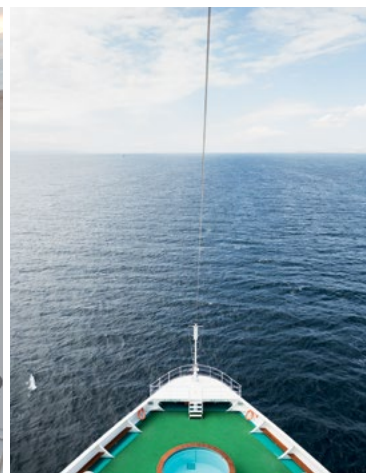
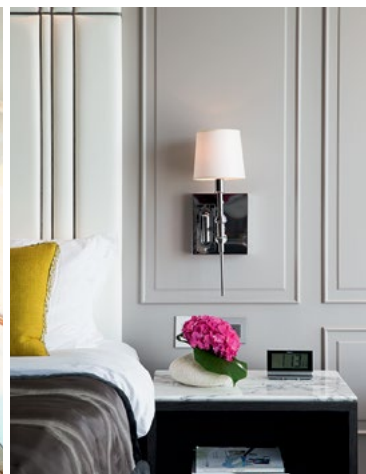
burn it off in St. Petersburg with a behind-the-scenes tour of the huge Hermitage Museum, or a stroll of Tallinn Old Town's picturesque cobblestone streets. The recent introduction of local guides shows how much Oceania is investing in excursions (new intimate, sweet options include picking berries followed by tea inside a Latvian farmhouse).

Back on board, even the inner-facing cabins have cachet, with their cozy throws and upholstered headboards. But the room to book is one of the Owner's Suites, which Ralph Lauren kitted out in Georgian-style wood panels and navy, echoing the deep-blue Baltic outside the double windows. *Baltic Legacies* cruise, from \$2,999. [oceaniacruises.com](http://oceaniacruises.com)



## CRYSTAL SERENITY PAPEETE TO AUCKLAND

This classic ocean liner is 17, which could be considered old enough to retire, and it has sailed to nearly every continent. Yet there was no way it could be sent off to the proverbial ship graveyard. So in 2018, Crystal injected millions on a restoration, and that November it hit the seas again, sailing from Lisbon with a glamorous new look (*shown*) that goes big on bronze, velvets, and light woods. Thirty-six penthouses and two penthouse suites replaced many of the staterooms, which cut down occupancy by 9 percent; crucially, the number of staff remains the same. A newly implemented open-plan dining space means everyone can now eat when—and with whomever—they choose, including at the lively, laid-back churrascaria, where servers flamboyantly carve grilled beef picanha tableside. And yes, the legendary miso black cod is still as buttery soft as ever. If you're too tired for dinner conversation after long, sunny days swimming in the shockingly cold waters of New Zealand's Bay of Islands, hop online instead: Cabins now have whip-fast Wi-Fi, which means you can post images to Instagram in no time at all. *South Pacific Tropical Kingdoms*, from \$4,549. [crystalcruises.com](http://crystalcruises.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALISTAIR TAYLOR-YOUNG; JOHN LAURIE; LUIS GARCIA



## THE GOLD LIST 2020



### REGENT SEVEN SEAS VOYAGER ISTANBUL TO ATHENS

The first reaction guests may have when spotting this 12-deck sleek liner is that it seems awfully large for its capacity—low for the industry at 700 passengers. But once they depart they appreciate it. Lines are shorter, there's always availability at the Serene Spa & Wellness, and navigating the ship is that much easier without the crowds.

Those who make the sailing are a good-looking group of well-traveled boomers who are likely to become fast friends sitting around the lounge bar, going through bottles of Cabernet (the all-inclusive ship means never worrying about whose drink round comes next). Off-shore programming is thoughtful and goes deeper than most, with guided walks through spots like Mykonos (*shown*) and UNESCO-protected Ephesus, plus tours of the 14th-century murals at a Crete monastery. A Harvard lecturer, Adam Tanner, keeps the conversation going with tons of information once back on board. *Crossing Continents, from \$9,099. rssc.com*

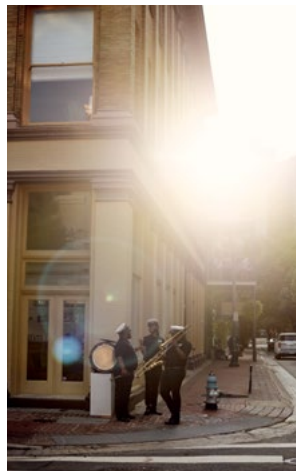
### Cruises: More Classics

In addition to the classics—the ships and itineraries that stand the test of time—it's important to remember the fine niche experts on the high seas. These lines have a specific focus that gets travelers farther and deeper into a place or experience: Norway-based **Hurtigruten** has been around for over a century, and has recently led the charge on sustainability. Its approach to itineraries, such as a 16-day expedition voyage from Alaska and British Columbia aboard the *Roald Amundsen*, is influenced by the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. ♦ Polished **Ponant**, a French line known for roll-up-your-Patagonia-sleeves expedition cruising with high-end touches (staterooms have Hermès products), caps passenger capacity to make sure everyone gets as much out of their time as possible, like snaking through the wild Moluccas islands in the Malay archipelago on board its ship *Le Laperouse*.

♦ Small-ship expert **Windstar** keeps its experiences intimate, whether in the Mediterranean, South Pacific, or Mexico; find only a couple hundred passengers on the *Star Breeze*, which sails through secret coves for its Fishing for the Sea of Cortez itinerary. ♦ And **Uniworld** has brought new energy to river cruising with design-forward ships and innovative programming. Its Sanctuary Yangzi Explorer is especially worthwhile, because it can help you see so much of China, from the terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an to the Great Wall and pandas, in just 11 days, which is much quicker than going by land.

### NORWEGIAN GETAWAY ROUND-TRIP NEW ORLEANS

Norwegian is known for its personal touch. As anyone who has sailed on the *Norwegian Getaway*, its newly refurbished mega-liner, can attest, this is true even when you share the ship with 3,962 others. It doesn't hurt that the refreshed 800-piece art collection, up in the breezy Atrium, includes original works by sculptor Arik Levy. But the heart of this ship, a hot ticket for sunny Caribbean itineraries, has to be the numerous activities. Kids can swish across the top deck on a zip line that goes joyfully fast or lose their minds (and voices) screaming from the free-fall slides at Aqua Park, while their parents do cocktails at the Bar at the Atrium, which has the best people-watching of the ship's 20 places to grab a drink. The shore excursions, from a guided tour of historic New Orleans (*shown*) to bamboo rafting on the Martha Brae River in Jamaica, keep pace with anything on board. *Western Caribbean, from \$599. ncl.com*



# THE GOLD LIST 2020

## VIKING RA ROUND-TRIP CAIRO

As the Nile becomes a playground for the biggest names in river cruising, Viking's *Ra* is the standout for its design and access. Its 26 blond-wood cabins, most with balconies from which you can catch sights like the temple complex of Dendera, were the hardest beds to secure when the ship launched in 2018. Here, Scandinavian reference points are gracefully offset with Arabic touches, like the sundeck canopies resembling dhow sail shades. Viking also scores big by showing guests more than typical bucket-list sights; in Nubia, a local Egyptologist leads tours through Philae Temple, and in Aswan (shown) traditional felucca sailboats get you closer to the activity on the riverbanks. Back on board, toast the North African sunset from one of the two hot tubs, under those dhow-style sails. *Pharaohs & Pyramids*, from \$4,899. [vikingrivercruises.com](http://vikingrivercruises.com)



## SEABOURN OVATION LISBON TO ATHENS

Chalk it up to design, but guests consistently find *Ovation* to be one of the most social ships in cruise. It may have to do with the fact that the Montaudon bubbly is endless and complimentary. Drink it up on Deck 10's Skybar for truly awesome views, though the nooks found throughout the ship are fun places to sit with a bottle or two, especially when the group then moves to a table at Thomas Keller's Colonnade. Conversation over the tableside-tossed Caesar will focus on sights like the blow-your-mind Roman ruins in Spain's under-the-radar Cartagena from earlier that day, after leaving from Lisbon (shown). Seabourn star designer Adam Tihany outdid himself on *Ovation*, partnering with London-based ArtLink on the 1,600-piece collection found throughout, to turn the ship into the world's grandest floating museum. That striking vase in the lobby? It's by celebrated Korean ceramicist Yoo Eui Jeong. *Autumn Isles*, from \$6,499. [seabourn.com](http://seabourn.com)

## SILVERSEA SILVER SPIRIT MUMBAI TO ATHENS

Industry insiders know Silversea as the standard of style. So the line raised the bar for itself when it totally redid *Silver Spirit* in 2018, adding a 49-foot pool deck with sofas soft enough to sink into. In other words, it is exactly the type of ship to easily spend, say, 26 days on—which happens to be the length of this itinerary. From Mumbai, the vessel moves north, drifting past lesser-known parts of Arabia. Stop-offs are designed to leave guests more intimately connected to the places, from the beachside city of Salala in Oman, with its banana plantations and ring of mountains, to the towering Sheik Zayed mosque and other cultural attractions of Abu Dhabi (shown). *Mumbai to Athens*, from \$12,900. [silversea.com](http://silversea.com)

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