

Condé Nast Traveler

SPECIAL REPORT
THE WAR FOR
THE SOUL
OF ALASKA

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2012

HOT LIST

121
BEST
NEW
HOTELS
IN THE
WORLD

(INCLUDING 49 UNDER \$300!)

PLUS...

**20 SIZZLING
RESTAURANTS**
**35 SYBARITIC
SPAS**



AND...

HIPPEST LONDON

(Edgy Pubs, Clubs, Art, Food)

ULTIMATE NEW ZEALAND

(Dream Lodges, Meals, Adventures)

TANTALIZING TANGIER

(Cool Shops, Souks, Scenes)

A TRUE DESERT BLOOM: The brand-new Saguaro hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona.

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YOUR DAILY TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE

A 32-page special section.

16th Annual

Hot List

2012

The Year's 121 Top New Hotels

Including 49 under \$300 a night*

WE ALL KNOW what makes a good hotel good: impeccable service, excellent food, beautiful grounds (and let's not forget a bed so plush that you dread going home). But for all of us here at *Condé Nast Traveler*, a good hotel is more than just a blissful temporary roost: It's also a bellwether, an important peek at what you, our readers, are *really* looking for in your travels, not to mention in the very destinations you're traveling to.

This year's Hot List, our sixteenth, includes 121 properties in 49 countries, with three countries making their debut: Kuwait (with the

Hotel Missoni), Montenegro (Aman Sveti Stefan), and Serbia (Square Nine). Best represented on the list? The United States leads the pack with 12 entrants, followed by the United Kingdom, China, and Italy (all with 7 apiece). But as revealing as these numbers are, they don't tell the whole story. The *real* stuff we love sharing with you is our 41 reviewers' enthusiasm for these properties, which, although they range wildly in size, price, and style—from the four-tent Sanctuary Zebra Plains camp in Zambia (the smallest hotel on the list) to the \$3,878-a-night all-inclusive Abu Camp in Botswana (the most expensive)—all have one thing in common: We never wanted to leave. We hope you won't either.

PLUS

Hot Spas

35 blissful new places to relax and recharge

P. 129

Hot Tables

5 cities. 21 superstar chefs. 20 dishes you need to try

P. 139

PG. 75

MAY 2012

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Hot Hotels

ON DECK Overlooking Hotel Chocolat's 140 acres on St. Lucia. PAGE 83. Her swimsuit by Eres (see "Where to Buy It," page 200). ▶

Hot List

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A LIST. AS YOU'RE READING THROUGH THESE PAGES, LOOK FOR OUR TAKES ON:

THE HOTTIES

18 little hotel details we loved this year, beginning on page 83.

THE PREDICTORS

5 members of the Hot List class of 2012 predict what's coming next in hotel design, interiors, food, and spas, beginning on page 96.

THE HOT LIST ALL-STARS

8 of our reviewers name their favorite hotel of all time (it wasn't easy), beginning on page 113.

ALSO:

Want even more Hot List? Go behind the scenes on page 24 for:

Confessions of a Hot List Reviewer

All-true tales from the road.

The Terrific 10

The hotel innovations that changed our lives (and this list) forever.

The Terrible 10

The hotel inventions we'd rather forget.

- 78 **ARGENTINA**
Hotel Pulitzer, Buenos Aires
Mio Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires
- 78 **AUSTRIA**
25hours Hotel, Vienna
- 78 **BOTSWANA**
Abu Camp, Abu Concession, Okavango Delta
- 78 **BRAZIL**
Fasano Boa Vista, Porto Feliz
- 83 **CAMBODIA**
The Plantation, Phnom Penh
- 83 **CANADA**
Ritz-Carlton, Toronto
Rosewood Hotel Georgia, Vancouver
- 83 **CARIBBEAN**
Hotel Chocolat, St. Lucia
Petit St. Vincent, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- 83 **CHILE**
Singular Patagonia, Puerto Barrios
Puma Lodge, Reserva Nacional Rio de Los Cipreses
Lastarria Boutique Hotel, Santiago
Noi Vitacura, Santiago
Tierra Patagonia Hotel & Spa, Torres del Paine
- 84 **CHINA**
Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Naked Stables Private Reserve, Paitou Town
St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay Resort, Sanya
Andaz Shanghai, Shanghai
Jumeirah Himalayas Hotel, Shanghai
Kerry Hotel Pudong, Shanghai
Songsam Tacheng Hotel, Tacheng
- 88 **COLOMBIA**
Karmairi, Cartagena
The Charlee, Medellin
- 88 **CROATIA**
Hotel Lone, Istria
- 90 **CZECH REPUBLIC**
Miura, Moravian Sakas
- 90 **ECUADOR**
Casa Gangotena, Quito
- 90 **EGYPT**
Sofitel Legend Old Cataract, Aswan
- 90 **ENGLAND**
The Pig, Hampshire
Corinthia Hotel, London
Ecclesford Square Hotel, London
45 Park Lane, London
St. Ermin's Hotel, London
St. Pancras Renaissance, London
Zetter Townhouse, London
- 95 **FRANCE**
Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc, Antibes
Les Avisés, Avize
Château Les Carrasses, Capestang
La Belle Juliette, Paris
La Maison Champs-Élysées, Paris
Mandarin Oriental Paris, Paris
Saint James Paris, Paris
Altapura, Vall Thorens
- 98 **GREECE**
New Hotel, Athens
Old Markets, Syros
- 98 **INDIA**
Ailla Hotel and Residence, Whitefield, Bangalore
Grand Hyatt Goa, Goa
Oberoi, Gurgaon, Gurgaon
Leela Palace, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi
- 100 **INDONESIA**
W Retreat & Spa, Seminyak, Bali
- 100 **IRELAND**
Ballyfin, County Laois
- 100 **ISRAEL**
Bereshet Hotel, Negev Desert
- 102 **ITALY**
Villa della Pergola, Alzoso
Num Assisi Relais & Spa, Assisi
St. Regis Florence, Florence
Armani Hotel Milano, Milan
Castello di Velona, Montalcino
First Hotel, Rome
Villa Mosca, Alghero, Sardinia
- 106 **KENYA**
Kicheche Valley Camp, Nabsho Conservancy
Hogmead, Nairobi
- 106 **KUWAIT**
Hotel Missoni Kuwait, Salmiya
- 106 **LUXEMBOURG**
Le Place d'Armes, Luxembourg City
- 106 **MALDIVES**
Anantara Kihavah Villas, Baa Atoll
Jumeirah Dhevanafushi, Gaafu Alifu Atoll
Six Senses Laamu, Laamu Atoll
- 108 **MAURITIUS**
Long Beach, Belle Mare
- 110 **MONTENEGRO**
Aman Sveti Stefan, Sveti Stefan
- 110 **MOROCCO**
Four Seasons Resort, Marrakech
Riad Joya, Marrakech
- 110 **THE NETHERLANDS**
Hotel de l'Europe, * Amsterdam
- 110 **NEW ZEALAND**
Bishop's Suites, Nelson
Hilton Queenstown, Kawarau Village, Queenstown
- 110 **PANAMA**
Manrey, Panama City
- 113 **PERU**
The Westin, Lima
Hacienda Concepción, Puerto Maldonado
- 113 **PORTUGAL**
L'And Vineyards Resort, Montemor-o-Novo, Alentejo
Imani Country House, Quinta de Montemor, Alentejo
Hotel Beira Vista, Portimão
InterContinental Porto—Palacio das Cardosas, Porto
- 114 **RUSSIA**
InterContinental Moscow Tverskaya, Moscow
- 116 **SERBIA**
Square Nine, Belgrade
- 116 **SEYCHELLES**
Raffles Praslin, Seychelles
- 116 **SLOVENIA**
Antiq Palace, Ljubljana
Hotel Cubo, IJulija
- 116 **SOUTH AFRICA**
Alphen Boutique Hotel, Cape Town
Queen Victoria Hotel, Cape Town
- 116 **SPAIN**
Mirror Barcelona, Barcelona
- Ohla Hotel, Barcelona
Balcón de Córdoba, Córdoba
Sant Pere del Bosc Hotel, Lloret de Mar
Hotel Can Cera, Palma de Mallorca
Le Domaine, Sardón de Duero
- 117 **SWITZERLAND**
Hotel Schweizerhof, Bern
Nira Alpina, Saasj
Backstage Hotel Vernissage, Zermatt
- 117 **TANZANIA**
Lamai Serengeti, Serengeti Nat'l Park
Residence Zanzibar, Kionkazi, Zanzibar
Emerson Spice, Stone Town, Zanzibar
- 118 **THAILAND**
Hansar, Bangkok
St. Regis, Bangkok
Casa de la Flora, Khao Lak
- 118 **TURKEY**
Amanruya, Bodrum
House Hotel Bosphorus, Istanbul
- 118 **UGANDA**
Kyambura Gorge Lodge, Queen Elizabeth Nat'l Park
- 118 **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**
Jumeirah at Etihad Towers, Abu Dhabi
Park Hyatt, Abu Dhabi
Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, Dubai
- 122 **UNITED STATES**
The Saguardo, Scottsdale, Arizona
Hotel Lautner, Desert Hot Springs, California
Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles, California
Mr. C Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, California
Aulani, Oahu, Hawaii
Public, Chicago, Illinois
Hotel Modern, New Orleans, Louisiana
The Saint, New Orleans, Louisiana
Four Seasons Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland
Ruschmeyer's, Montauk, New York
Hôtel Americain, New York, New York
The Prairie by Rachel Ashwell, Round Top, Texas
- 125 **ZAMBIA**
Sanctuary Zebra Plains, South Luangwa Nat'l Park

Hot Hotels

trance the old tannery and herding pens to the reception area, a glass cube suspended above century-old pulleys, pumps, and pipes. Ample guest rooms are decorated with Edwardian-style good taste (mahogany writing desks, brass side lamps), and a glass wall overlooks the wind-whipped shore of Last Hope Sound. **The experience:** At first, guests do little but gawp at the surroundings; once settled, they saddle up on neighboring estancias, bike the blustery coast, or chug up the sound in the hotel's 16-passenger motor launch. The sumptuous breakfast ranges from linseed and quinoa to the finest fetas and cured Patagonian lamb. **If only...** coordination with the Santiago reservations office were smoother; confirm spa treatments and excursions directly with the hotel. **The room to book:** Those close to the elevator save a lengthy to-and-fro (\$6-61-722-030; thisingular.com; doubles from \$520). 🌟🌟🌟🌟

UNDER \$300 **Puma Lodge,** near Reserva Nacional Rio Los Cipreses **AA The specs:** A luxe mountain lodge with 24 suites, situated where three valleys meet in the Chilean Cordillera, less than three hours from Santiago and near the Argentine border. **The look:** A sleek wood-stone structure, from Chile's NOI chain, with pine walls and hardwood floors, volcanic stone, found wood, and handwoven blankets and rugs decorate the minimalist space; floor-to-ceiling windows face a

THE HOTTIES



6 **18 Most efficient Intercom**
The whistle that hangs in each room of Peru's Hacienda Concepción in Puerto Maldonado, to summon the Peruvian staff in the event creepy-crawlies find their way in.

7 **18 Most intimate spa**
The teensy one-bed Potting Shed near the walled kitchen garden at The Pig in Hampshire, where soothing massages employ Bamford oils scented with organic leaves grown in English soil.

8 **18 Best farm-to-table experience**
The ultra-fresh truffles at Hotel Chocolat in St. Lucia, made from pods harvested on the estate with a little help from the consumer—that is, you.

spectacular tri-valley vista. Nooks and terraces of all sizes provide the setting for a bar, lounge, library, open fireplace, and game room. **The experience:** In winter, when snow blankets the cordillera, the lodge becomes one of Chile's premier heli-skiing operations, with most visitors opting to indulge in the untouched glacial peaks that seem to swallow the lodge. In summer, there's mountain biking, fly-fishing, rock climbing, and hiking through cypress forests to look for the endangered burrowing parrot. A full-service spa and wood-fired hot tubs under the stars provide relief for aching muscles. **If only...** transfers and excursions were better organized. **The room to book:** All are identical and have the same view, but those on the second floor let in a bit more light (\$6-72-741-486; www.pumalodge.cl; doubles from \$195). 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

UNDER \$300 **Lastarria Boutique Hotel,** Santiago **AA The specs:** A renovated 1927 mansion with 14 rooms in Santiago's vibrant Lastarria neighborhood. **The look:** Understated elegance running through a historic four-story stone structure with marble floors and a winding marble staircase. Contemporary art, modern furniture in the lobby, and an elevator were sufficient to update the space. **The experience:** With no other hotels around (though some are under construction), you feel like a local when exploring the Sunday flea market or dropping into one of the thriving cafes, bistros, and galleries that have popped up around Parque Forestal in recent years. Each room is unique in size and shape, all with dark wood floors, antique wooden furniture, and ceramic shower tiles. Every inch of the rather tight space is utilized (a cyber center squeezes into the lobby), and stairs lead from the second-floor café and terrace to the inviting pool area, where high walls (one with a vertical garden) keep neighbors from peeking. The staff give genuine smiles when proferring scented water or directions to the metro. **If only...** there were more space for the pool chairs—moving into the sun often means moving into the bushes. **The room to book:** A top-floor junior suite with rooftop terrace (\$6-2-840-3700; lastarriahotel.com; doubles from \$230). 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

Noi Vitacura, Santiago **A** \$6-2-941-8000; noivitacura.cl; doubles from \$400. 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

Tierra Patagonia Hotel & Spa, Torres del Paine **AAA The specs:** A 40-room lodge one hour from Puerto Natales, set amid a big-sky landscape with uninterrupted views of the Torres del Paine massif. **The look:** Flanked with earth and clad in lenga beechwood, the low-slung hotel winds for 650 feet along the base of a bluff, its aerodynamic shape barely interrupting the gales that whip in from Patagonia's Southern Ice Field. In the principal salon, a wall of glass

draws the eye across Lake Sarmiento to the serrated peaks beyond. Ample guest rooms are smartly outfitted in a soothing natural palette of wood, wool, and leather; all command views of pampa and peak. **The experience:** Each morning, guests boot up for all-day hikes through cerro and dell or tramp off with the able, affable guides to search for condors and caracaras by deserted lakeshores, returning long before dusk to soothe weary muscles at the excellent spa. **If only...** the Puerto Natales airport were served by more than budget operator Sky Airline; the larger Punta Arenas airport is a four-hour drive away. **The room to book:** One of the three suites, which sprawl luxuriously over two floors (\$6-2-370-5301; tierrapatagonia.com; doubles from \$490). 🌟🌟🌟🌟

CHINA

Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, Hong Kong **AA The specs:** A 312-room hotel in a glass-and-chrome tower above a luxury mall in Kowloon, a half-hour from the airport. **The look:** Gordon Gekko goes to Asia. The building looms over the landscape like the lair of one of Batman's villains and wouldn't look out of place in Dubai. Inside, everything that stood still has been plated with marble or travertine (including the elevator handrails). The 1980s power-decorating effect isn't necessarily tacky, just very corporate, with lots of black glass, taupe silks, dark woods, and chrome. **The experience:** Deutsche Bank and Morgan Stanley maintain offices in the lower levels, and the ground-floor entrance is bustling with sleek-suited businessmen of all nationalities and young Japanese and Chinese women. A swift elevator delivers you to the smaller 103rd-floor lobby, where you'll find the hotel's Italian restaurant and chocolate bar (hopping at teatime). Rooms are spacious, very quiet, and well-stocked; most have harbor views. Staff are super-efficient, and everything—spa, restaurants, pool—is open until at least 10 p.m. The threadlike streets of old Hong Kong feel aeons away, but that doesn't seem to bother the mostly Chinese patrons, whose luggage carts at checkout are piled with bright orange Hermès shopping bags. **If only...** the rooms said Hong Kong in some way (the packets of oolong tea don't do it). **The room to book:** A Deluxe Harbour Room for the knockout view (852-2263-7263; ritzcarlton.com; doubles from \$618). 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

Naked Stables Private Reserve, Paitou Town **AA The specs:** Seventy eco-friendly villas and bungalows in a secluded valley two and a half hours by train from Shanghai. Bamboo forests, tea plantations, and tiny farming villages surround the 60-acre resort. **The look:** Out of Africa by way of Shanghai, with thatched roofs, cowhide rugs, and verdant hilltop views. A Chinese-led design team



POP OF COLOR
The restaurant fire, at the W Retreat & Spa in Seminyak, Bali, page 100.

rooms, with views of Calle Uruguay (507-203-0000; manreypanama.com; doubles from \$246). ● ● ●

PERU

UNDER \$300 **▲▲ The Westin, Lima**
▲▲ The specs: A 301-room glass tower on the edge of San Isidro, Lima's financial district. **The look:** The first Westin in South America is also the tallest building in Peru, and from the high-design glass exterior to the smart escalators, state-of-the-art is not a subtle notion here. Tony Chi's glitzy interiors incorporate mahogany and leather amid all the shiny metal. Rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows, leather desk chairs, and oversized bathrooms with marble double sinks. Peruvian textiles help preserve a sense of place. **The experience:** Lima's traffic is a mess, but the higher your room, the less it matters. Downstairs, there's a bit of everything: a shop featuring clothes by Peruvian fashion designer Ani Alvarez-Calderón, the city's largest convention center, and a 30,000-square-foot spa plus access to a 24-hour gym and business center. Upper-crust Peruvians mill about in the bars and lounges, and at Maras, chef Rafael Piqueras puts his El Bulli training to good use, wowing diners with tableside liquid-nitrogen tricks. **If only...** the San Isidro area weren't caught in a perpetual traffic jam. **The room to book:** The twenty-first-floor Renewal Suites with separate living and dining areas (51-1-201-5000; starwoodhotels.com/westin; doubles from \$199). ● ● ● ● ●

UNDER \$300 **▲▲ Hacienda Concepción, Puerto Maldonado**
▲▲ The specs: A rebuilt 15-unit hacienda on 2,000 private acres in Tambopata, one of the Peruvian Amazon's top natural reserves.

The look: More eco-lodge than rural farm—hand-carved wood everything, a double layer of tightly wrapped mesh screen, and Brazil-nut shells lining the walking trails. **The experience:** This jungle habitat has no Wi-Fi, nor phones, nor satellite TV, but you don't have to sleep in a hammock and go without showers. Three-course meals, a happy hour with a free pisco sour, and hot water until 10 P.M. allow you to refresh after trekking through the rain forest to Lago San doval, home to a family of giant river otters. More intimate than Inkaterra's Reserva Amazonica, 20 minutes downriver, Hacienda Concepción does use some of its facilities—like the canopy walkway. Two or three times a day you'll set off by boat or in rubber boots in search of caimans, squirrel monkeys, and frogs that resemble leaves. Red and blue macaws and prehistoric hoatzins flock here, thanks to the cacao and mango trees left over from plantation days. (Avid bird-watcher Mick Jagger made a stop here just after the grand opening.) **If only...** there were more to do between meals and excursions. **The room to book:** Bungalows 10, 11, or 12, which overlook a small lake (800-442-5042; byinkaterra.com; doubles from \$186). ●

PORTUGAL

UNDER \$300 **▲▲ And Vineyards Resort, Montemor-o-Novo, Alentejo**
▲▲ The specs: A 22-suite wine resort in the gentle hills of Alentejo, less than an hour east of Lisbon. All suites have terraces with fireplaces; some have bedroom ceilings that open to the stars. **The look:** Minimalist Mediterranean—white-washed villas, leafy patios, interiors of natural slate and eucalyptus wood. **The experience:** Alentejo is

Hot Hotels

THE HOT LIST ALL-STARS

EVERY YEAR, OUR FLEET OF REVIEWERS CHECK INTO HUNDREDS OF HOTELS AROUND THE WORLD. BUT SOMETIMES, THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO CHECK OUT. WE ASKED EIGHT OF THE LIST'S MOST FAITHFUL AND PERIPATETIC REVIEWERS TO TELL US ABOUT THE HOT LIST HOTEL THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES



1/8 Vamizi Island Lodge, Mozambique

To me, true relaxation means completely unplugging from the outside world while still having all the best possible comforts, and the Vamizi in Mozambique (which I visited in 2007) is the epitome of a Robinson Crusoe-like island. My villa overlooked what might as well have been a private beach, with no development—and you're literally steps away from some of the best diving in the world. Even though Vamizi has the kind of luxuries most of us only dream of, it's simply done, with huge canopy beds and gorgeous African wood shutters that let in the ocean breeze. Surrounded by so much beauty and serenity, I was heartened by how far the country had come since the brutal days of its civil war.

—O., HOT LIST REVIEWER SINCE 1998

Portugal's breadbasket, long known for winemaking and, more recently, a proliferation of chic rural inns, but this is the province's first luxury resort to offer a full-service oenology retreat. Complimentary wine-tastings in the cellar, crushed cabernet scrubs at the Caudalie Vinotherapie Spa, and tours of the on-site winery are some of the ways to while away your time on this 160-acre estate. In-suite perks include iPads, rain showers in the oversize bathrooms, and Egyptian cotton-draped beds. The excellent restaurant has a fusion menu based on Portuguese mainstays, such as pork stewed in wine with black-sausage croquettes. **If only...** the remote-controlled retractable ceilings weren't so finicky and loud. **The room to book:** Sky-view suite 10 is the most secluded and has the best vista of the lake and the medieval hilltop castle of Montemor-o-Novo (351-266-242-400; l-andvineyards.com; suites from \$256). ● ● ● ● ●

UNDER \$300 **Imani Country House, Quinta de Montemuro, Alentejo**
▲ 351-266-782-021; imani.pt; doubles from \$174. ● ● ●

UNDER \$300 **Hotel Bela Vista, Portimão**
▲▲ The specs: A fin-de-siècle seaside villa with two modern annexes in one of the Algarve's most popular resort towns. Decks have stunning views of the breakers, and giant palms shade the pool. **The look:** A Miami-meets-the-Mediterranean decor inspired by South Beach, North Africa, and, above all, the Moorish-inflected traditions of the Algarve. The 38 rooms and suites have a postmodern Portuguese beach-shack look: limed oak parquet floors, Murano-style amber glass chandeliers, white laminate furniture, and a color scheme of



JEWEL OF THE NILE
 Alfresco river views at the Sofitel Legend Old Cataract, in Aswan, Egypt.
 PAGE 90

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAWN BALDWIN