

The Best Hotels and Resorts in the World: The 2019 Gold List

The editors' favorite hotels and resorts of all time.

This year's Gold List of our editors' favorite hotels, resorts, and cruise ships in the world is the first transatlantic list for *Traveler*, created by teams in New York and London. It spans six continents and 36 countries. They're gold as in exceptional. Gold as in classic. Gold as in brilliant. Gold as in you'd do it all tomorrow. ([Click here to view as a list.](#))

Le Sirenuse, Positano, Italy



John Steinbeck certainly chose a beautiful spot to hole up while writing his famous piece on Positano for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1953. Positano was just a quiet fishing village then, and he described the Sirenuse as 'an old family house converted into a first-class hotel, spotless and cool.' While still spotless and cool, the summer villa is a lot more upscale these days, immaculately run with huge charm and a maniacal eye for detail by Antonio Sersale and his wife Carla. The handsome ox-blood red building is crammed with precious antiques (starting with a rare 18th-century palanquin in the reception hall), many of them collected by Antonio's late father Franco, and the white bedrooms have tiled floors from Vietri, and balconies with grandstand views. But it's the small details—the cloth-bound copies of Steinbeck's article and the pretty beach baskets in the bedrooms, the crisp Frette linens and Eau d'Italie bath goodies—that kick things to another level. Positano is a bit of a madhouse nowadays, but you can avoid it altogether, dreaming away the hours on the pool terrace, booking a massage at the Gae Aulenti-designed Aveda spa or hopping on the hotel's boat for a spin. In the evening, guests gather in the Champagne & Oyster bar before moving on to La Sponda restaurant to tuck into *tonnarelli* pasta with lobster and saddle of lamb with artichokes to the sound of guitar and mandolin duo Franco and Andrea.

Four Seasons Hotel at The Surf Club, Surfside



Over the years, guests here have included Elizabeth Taylor, Wallis Simpson, and the Shah of Iran. Winston Churchill used to rent two cabanas, one to paint in and one “for naps.” (And drinks, as during Prohibition spirits were served illegally here.) Set in Surfside at the less-developed northern end of Miami Beach, this hacienda-style hotel has been brilliantly extended by Richard Meier, whose 12-story glass towers seem to float above the terra cotta tiles of the original 1930s Mediterranean-style pantile roofs. The cabanas now house part of the charming spa, where even the brushed-brass key pads on the lockers are a thing of beauty, as well as a handful of Cabana Studio bedrooms, each a pale-but-interesting essay in contrasting textures: canvas, rattan, and travertine. Of course, the restaurants are as much of an attraction: The Surf Club by superchef Thomas Keller opened its doors in summer 2018, and Le Sirenuse Miami comes from the owners of its namesake hotel in Positano. Densely planted with exotic palms, the latter evokes a cultivated jungle, a setting that is almost as memorable as Antonio Mermolia’s deft cooking, where the attention to detail extends to dyeing the ice over which they serve oysters the bluish-green of an iceberg. Try the Kumamotos, flown in daily from Washington state and dressed in a zingy citronelle emulsion. “Spectacular” was the word the *Miami Herald* ran in a headline for the Surf Club in November 1959. And so it is, nearly 60 years on.