

A vibrant tropical landscape featuring a tall palm tree on the left, several overwater bungalows with thatched roofs in the middle ground, and a dramatic mountain range in the background under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The water is a clear, bright turquoise.

The World's Best Hotels 2011

By Jeremy Murphy with Mona Buehler

The Four Seasons, Bora Bora

Profiteroles at Le Meurice. Dim Sum at The Peninsula Hong Kong. High tea at The Dorchester.

Such are the accoutrements of the jet-set lifestyle, and the offerings of the world's finest hotels. Every year Simply the Best picks our favorites, a subjective exercise, for sure, but one we've perfected over the years to include everything from location to history, romance and luxury. In all, it boils down to the experience, and the memories that last long after you've said your adieus. Here are our selections for 2011's "World's Best Hotels."

MOST PICTURE-ESQUE

THE FOUR SEASONS, BORA BORA

Motu Tehotu - BP 547
98730 Bora Bora
French Polynesia
Tel: (689) 603 130

fourseasons.com/borabora

Overlooking turquoise waters and views of Mount Otemanu, tucked away on a private "motu," is The Four Seasons, Bora Bora, one of the most mind-blowing destinations we've ever encountered. The resort, which opened in 2008, delivers more than just a room with a view—here, you'll stay in one of 100 overwater bungalows, or for the ultimate experience, upgrade to one of the seven beachfront villas, each with a private pool. It doesn't stop there. For water babies big and small, no poolside experience can compare to the gorgeous natural blue "swimming pool" or lagoon that surrounds this Tahitian gem. Couple that with a stunning infinity pool, teenagers-only private isle and a specialty kids splash pad with turtle tracking, snorkeling and hermit crab hunts and you've got one perfect island resort.



The Armani Hotel, Dubai

MOST OUT OF THIS WORLD

THE ARMANI HOTEL, DUBAI

Dubai - United Arab Emirates | Tel: 00 971 4 888 3888 | dubai.armanihotels.com

Giorgio Armani's first hotel smacks of slick sophistication and elevation. Set inside the world's tallest skyscraper, with 160 impeccable guest rooms, a 12,000 square foot spa, a trendsetting nightclub, seven first class restaurants (including exceptional and eclectic Japanese), cozy lounges and a gorgeous observation deck that overlooks Burj Khalifa, the hotel also features a personal "lifestyle manager" who won't look down at you for not wearing Armani, and who'll be at your beck and call for whatever concierge-butler services that you require. The Armani/Privé club attracts the city's most stylish partygoers and projects the latest catwalk shows on big screens. If you're seeking the perfect "going out" look Armani himself would approve, top designer shops and international boutiques are right next door at renowned Dubai Mall and Souk Al Bahar malls.

MOST COSMOPOLITAN

THE HOTEL PLAZA ATHÉNÉE PARIS

8, Avenue Montaigne | 75008 Paris, France | plaza-athenee-paris.com

With its charming signature scarlet awning, cascading red geraniums, views of the Eiffel Tower and Seine River and location off trendy Avenue Montaigne, The City of Light's most fashionable hotel caters to celebrities and a more discerning clientele seeking exceptional Parisian romance. From its gorgeous Louis XVI and Art Deco-styled guest rooms to haute chic cocktails at

happening Le Bar du Plaza Athénée and delectable dishes at the three-star Michelin-rated Alain Ducasse, the Hotel Plaza Athénée continues to set the bar in service and style. The hotel is set to close in late 2012 for a grandiose expansion (it's taking over the Harry Winston space next door) but you still have time to experience this grand palace au naturelle.

MOST COZY

THE INN AT LITTLE WASHINGTON

Middle and Main Streets
Washington, VA 22747

Tel: 540-675-3800

theinnatlittlewashington.com

Tucked deep away in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah Valley exists this exquisite hideaway that has enchanted everyone from Barbra Streisand to Paul Newman, Al and Tipper Gore and Alan Greenspan. Quaint, whimsical and steeped in luxury, The Inn at Little Washington has completely transformed itself from its rustic gas station and repair shop roots into something fitting for fairytale. Lush tapestry, hand-gilded linen ceilings, stained glass windows and 350-year-old floors from a chateau in the south of France will delight your eyes. Add in a beautiful blooming garden and extravagant dining, and you'll senses will be swept away.

MOST SUMPTUOUS

THE RITZ PARIS

15 Place Vendôme | 75001 Paris, France,
Tel: 33 (01) 43 16 30 30 | ritzparis.com

Located off Paris' Place Vendôme square, The Ritz Hotel Paris has been catering to the crème de la crème of international society since Cesar Ritz first opened the property in 1898 and continues to evoke old world glamour with modern day chic. Attracting everyone from Coco Chanel (who lived there during WWII) to Winston Churchill and Johnny Depp, the legendary Parisian gem has hosted them all. And of course, when visitors arrive incognito as Edward II used to, they can be assured absolute discretion. The designer glitterati flock here (and Hotel Le Meurice) during Paris Fashion Week, and you might happen celebrity sighting tipping on back any given evening at Bar Hemingway, whose namesake was fond of dry martinis and lived at the hotel his Parisian adventures.

MOST ROMANTIC

HOTEL DU CAP, CANNES

10 Boulevard John F Kennedy | 06160 Antibes, France

Tel: +33 4 93 61 39 01 | hotel-du-cap-eden-roc.com

Extravagant. Expensive. Endearing. Hotel Du Cap-Eden-Roc has long catered to the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and has been the hotel of choice for celebrities from Rudolf Valentino and Marlene Dietrich to more recently, Leonardo Di Caprio and Blake Lively, who shacked up together at the hotel during this year's annual Cannes International Film Festival. First opened as Villa Soleil in 1879 and now part of Oetker Hotel Collection, this regal retreat took over neighboring properties, doubling its expanse to 22 acres. Newly reopened after undergoing a 45 million renovation, the 67 room hotel (including 5 new deluxe rooms and 2 new suites) is more beautiful than ever. But leave the credit cards at home: this hotel sticks to its classic roots and takes cash only or bank transfer. Despite the inconvenience, Condé Nast Traveler put the charming destination on its Gold List this year, and we agree. It's definitely worth traveling with a bank-roll burning a whole in your Prada bag.

Hotel Du Cap, Cannes



Le Meurice



MOST ELEGANT

LE MEURICE

228 rue de Rivoli | 75001 Paris, France,
+33 1 44 58 10 10 | lemeurice.com

Cool. Chic. Elegant. Ranked by Condé Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure as one of the world's best hotels, for nearly 200 years Le Meurice remains one of the most beautiful addresses in Paris and the hotel of choice for the fashion world. Carrie Bradshaw may have canoodled with Mr. Big just down the street at sister property Hotel Plaza Athénée but it's likely that during Paris Fashion Week, she may strut her Manolos over to this classic gem to soak in the haute designer scene. Tucked between the Louvre and the Place de la Concorde, and just a stone's throw from Parisian boutiques and the runway bustle at Jardin de Tuileries, Hotel Le Meurice features 160 soundproof guest rooms and 45 suites, including the expansive top-floor Belle Etoile Royal Suite with panoramic views of the city. It's where Jay-Z and Beyoncé spent a week while visiting Paris, and there's no better way to see it.

Hotel Cipriani



MOST GLAMOROUS

HOTEL CIPRIANI

Giudecca 10 | 30133 Venice, Italy

Tel: 39 041 520 7744 | hotelcipriani.com

Brangelina has been spotted here, Neil Patrick Harris can't wait to return. Located at the top of Venice's Giudecca Island, this five-star boutique hotel provides privacy and luxury the Hollywood elite expect, but even those without a starlet stamp will feel like a rock star. Combine 95 tranquil bungalow-style rooms, 600 square foot salt water pool, a lively restaurant and bar scene, and a location just minutes from St. Mark's Square and you've got the makings of your own Venetian paradise.

MOST TIMELESS

THE DORCHESTER, LONDON

Park Lane | London W1K 1QA | England.thedorchester.com

For more than 70 years, London's most envied address has played host to the noble and noteworthy—from Saudi oil sheiks to media barons, Hollywood starlets and members of The Royal Family, including everyone's favorite playboy Prince Phillip who hosted his bachelor's party on the eve of his wedding to Queen Elizabeth II in the opulent Park Suite. All of the roomy 250 luxury rooms and suites feature décors of both English country charm and art deco chic, and are teeming with luxurious amenities from on-call butler service to a culinary master class with executive chef Henry Brosi.

MOST REFINED

COWORTH PARK

London Road, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7SE, Tel: +44 (0)1344 876 600, coworthpark.com

Just 40 minutes from Central London is where quintessential English country meets unrivaled comfort. Set in 240 acres of picturesque Berkshire parkland in Great Windsor Park, near Ascot, Coworth Park boasts deluxe accommodations ranging from a well-appointed Georgian mansion complete with British crafted furniture, smoked oak floors and elegant textiles to 40 adorable converted stables and cottages, appropriately named after Derby winners. Prime perks? Marble bathrooms with heated tiles and tea time twice daily in The Drawing Room.

MOST FUN

THE BREAKERS, PALM BEACH

One South County Road | Palm Beach, Florida 33480 | Tel: 888-273-2537 | thebreakers.com

This all-star resort set amidst Italian Renaissance architecture, Boboli fountains, sandy beaches and Cape Cod-style cabanas has been the playground for the privileged since its early days hosting Vanderbilts and Rockefeller. Since then it's developed a luxury niche as a vacation destination for families, business conferences and personalities seeking pampering—such as Sting, Tony Bennett, Bill Clinton and Katie Couric—who can't help but be lured by its 140 acres of breathtaking oceanfront property, eight on-site restaurants and sumptuous Conde Nast-approved spa.

The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach



MOST DECADENT

THE RITZ-CARLTON, PALM BEACH

100 South Ocean Blvd. | Manalapan, FL 33462

www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/PalmBeach

After a near \$130 million renovation, the seaside palace that is The Ritz-Carlton Palm Beach re-opened five years ago to universal applause, transforming what was a tired, clubby Upper East Coast retreat into an ocean oasis. Gone are the fireplaces and wood paneling that would have you believe you were in some robber baron's private study; in its place is a light, bright, and soothing décor that evokes a genuine Palm Beach vibe, with sweeping views of the ocean, warm color palettes, and a "barefoot elegance" that is meticulously captured with art, furnishings and accessories from around the world. Intimate, articulate and awesome, The Ritz-Carlton is a world-class get away in your own backyard.



The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain

MOST REMOTE

THE RITZ-CARLTON, DOVE MOUNTAIN

15000 North Secret Springs Drive | Marana, Arizona

Tel: 520-572-3000 | ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/DoveMountain

A 17,000 square foot spa, Jack Nicklaus-design golf course, award-winning spa and infinity pool complete with waterslide are just a few things that will knock your flip-flops off at The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain. Authentic and eco-sensitive, the resort's incorporates everything natural into its setting, from flagstone and quartzite floors to raw steel fixtures, copper accents, and historical artifacts, such as godes and quartz crystal. Superb trails snake throughout the property, so don't forget your hiking boots!

MOST SOOTHING

THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL NEW YORK

57 East 57th Street | New York, New York 10022

Tel: 212-758-5700 | fourseasons.com/newyorkfs

Hard to believe a New York City hotel can put one at ease so fast, but that's the beauty of The Four Seasons New York. One of the city's tallest hotels may cast a big shadow over its Midtown competition, but you'll be floating on a cloud the minute you step inside. Designed by legendary architect I.M. Pei, each of the 368-rooms boast floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase the Manhattan skyline, but expertly soundproofed so you can take in the Central Park views ignorant of any city noise. The hotel's interior immediately puts one at ease, with soothing lighting and neutral décor. And then there's the "peak" de résistance—the \$52 million Ty Warner Penthouse Suite atop that goes for \$32,000 a night and comes with private elevator and gold-laced pillows.

MOST PAMPERING

THE GEORGE V (A FOUR SEASONS HOTEL)

31, avenue George V | 75008 Paris, France

Tel: +33 (0) 1 49 52 70 00 | fourseasons.com/paris

Steps away from the Champs Élysées, the Arc De Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower, this pristine palace certainly takes the crown for best Four Seasons property worldwide. Besides prime location, incredible décor (17th-century Flanders and Aubusson tapestries, marble floors, crystal chandeliers and 19th-century art), private terraces, award-winning spa treatments (we adore the signature vodka massage!), and exceptional dining, what stands most is its flawless service, not to mention the stunning flower arrangements (1.2 million Euros annually) from rock star florist Jeff Leatham, whose creations have inspired oohs and ahhs from the likes of even Cher.



The Four Seasons, Budapest

MOST BREATH-TAKING

THE FOUR SEASONS, BUDAPEST

Roosevelt Tér 5-6 | 1051 Budapest, Hungary

Tel: 36 (1) 268-6000 | fourseasons.com/budapest

A picture is worth a thousand words, but seeing this palatial perfection in person will leave you breathless. Painstakingly restored after being early destroyed in World War II, this Art Nouveau landmark exudes much of the country history and beauty, so much that if you don't make it to a single museum, you won't miss out. Stained-glass windows, clear glass chandeliers and cupolas, delicate wrought-iron vents, gold mosaic tiles, three grandiose staircases weave elegance and grace throughout 179 room hotel that perfectly situated at the foot of the Chain Bridge. Here you'll take in picturesque views of Buda Hills, the Royal Castle, the Fisherman's Bastion, the Danube River and the city. Add in beautiful Biedermeier-style décor, vaulted ceilings, Spanish marble bathrooms, deep soaking tubs and exceptional amenities, and you'll never want to leave.

MOST HISTORIC

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL FLORENCE

Borgo Pinti 99 | 50121 Firenze, Italy

Tel: 39 (055) 2626 | fourseasons.com/florence

Spread over two 15th century palazzos, this impressive Italian property may have taken seven years to renovate, but a good masterpiece is worth the wait. Painstaking restoration and adherence to strict historic preservation laws means the hotels 116 guest rooms intermingle with priceless Renaissance murals, statues and paintings. Add in Florence's largest private garden and a spa touting chemical-free products from the world's oldest pharmacy, Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, and you've found a true work of art.



MOST ADVANCED

THE PENINSULA HONG KONG

Salisbury Road | Tsimshatsui | Hong Kong, China

Tel: 852 2920 2888

peninsula.com/hong_kong/en/default.aspx

Built nearly 80 years ago, the legendary "Grande Dame of the Far East" offers a blend of the best of Eastern and Western hospitality in an atmosphere of unmatched classical grandeur and timeless elegance. A fleet of Rolls-Royce Extended Wheelbase Phantoms are on call to whisk you throughout the city, while the hotel's helicopter service will land you right on its rooftop helipad. Top of the line recreational facilities include a full harbor-view Roman-style swimming pool, sun terrace and award-winning Oriental and Ayurvedic specialty spa. And there's our favorite techno wizardry—the magical drawer that automatically sends your shoes off for shining with a just touch of button.



Four Seasons Hotel Florence

MOST SURPRISING

THE RITTENHOUSE

210 West Rittenhouse Square | Philadelphia, PA 19103 | Tel: 215-546-9000 | www.rittenhousehotel.com/

Philadelphia may be the city of brotherly love, but it's not one known for its fawning hospitality. Enter The Rittenhouse, a 98-room hotel with the service and standards of any Parisian palace. The hotel, housed in a giant skyscraper overlooking Philadelphia's picturesque Rittenhouse Square, offers guest classic European elegance

with big city glamour. Boasting the city's largest, most technically advanced guestrooms, the Rittenhouse has also become known for its award winning French restaurant Lacroix, an in-house chocolatier, and a guest roster that includes Oprah, Tom Hanks and Bruce Willis.

The Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne



MOST RELAXING

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KEY BISCAIYNE

455 Grand Bay Dr. | Key Biscayne, Florida

305-365-4500

ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/KeyBiscayne/Default.htm

When we say "relaxing" we don't mean simply sunbathing, umbrella drink in hand, on a pristine beach ... unless that's what you want to do. Basking on the calm golden sands of Key Biscayne, a world away from South Beach bustle, certainly is on the bucket list of any seasoned traveler, and there's no better place for it than the Ritz Carlton. Here, guests can enjoy one of 60 treatments in the 20,000 square foot ocean view spa, custom cocktails from country's only "Tequilier," tennis on one of the 11-courts designed by Cliff Drysdale, and/or swimming and delicious burgers at the poolside Dune Oceanfront Burger Lounge. This deluxe paradise boasts 402 guestrooms including 37 suites, 64 Club Level rooms and suites and one Presidential Suite. All guests enjoy private balconies with ocean, bay or garden views and sumptuous marble baths. {stb}