



World's 50 Best New Hotels

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The Forbes Traveler 400 experts pick the top spots

Have you ever eaten at a new restaurant where the waiter couldn't answer a simple question about the menu? Or where the hostess cracked under the stress of seating a party of six? There's a reason this doesn't happen at established restaurants. These little slips can cause a restaurant to fail, no matter how great the food may be.

Likewise, every new hotel faces unforeseen hurdles during launch. Fearful of the inevitable glitches, many luxury travelers avoid new hotels until they've had time to mature and iron out the kinks. That's why we excluded debut properties when we asked the Forbes Traveler 400 board of experts for their opinions on the world's best hotels.

But we still wanted their thoughts on the world's up-and-coming hotspots, so we asked them to name a favorite new hotel (if they had one). What follows is a list of the World's 50 Best Hotels, as determined by our team of globetrotting business leaders, celebrities, travel writers and luxury travel professionals.

That our experts make up a well-traveled bunch is evidenced by the geographical diversity of the list. The usual suspects are here, of course—France is home to four of the world's best new hotels; Shanghai, three; Indonesia and England, two each. But it's refreshing to see Tunisia, Jordan and even tiny Bahrain show up on the world's luxury radar.

Both household-name and emergent hotel groups make appearances. The Four Seasons chain—which took more than 40 spots on the Forbes Traveler 400—shows up twice. There's the **Four Seasons Hotel Firenze**, which accomplished the near-impossible: to make a splash in famously staid Florence, Italy. The Four Seasons group is sometimes criticized for offering a homogenized luxury experience, but here they've taken the former Palazzo della Gherardesca and made a modern hotel of it – while restoring the palace to its Renaissance glory. And the **Four Seasons Resort Provence at Terre Blanche** offers a quintessentially Provence experience of rolling hills, charming villages—and year-round golf.

Two St. Regis properties are on our board members' minds. The **St. Regis Singapore** joins the ranks of the hotel group's beloved city hotels, while the **St. Regis Bali** is the group's first resort in Asia. Early reports suggest that they've successfully transplanted their famously high level of service from an urban surrounding to a beachside environment.

While Southeast Asia is enjoying a boom of luxury hotel openings (five of the 50 are there), some atypical destinations emerged as winners, too. Europe's oldest hotel group opened the **Kempinski Hotel Ishtar Dead Sea**, a sprawling luxury resort inspired by the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. A thousand miles west, the **Hasdrubal Prestige Hotel** in Djerba, Tunisia is "definitely the best new hotel in North Africa," in the words of one Forbes Traveler 400 expert. Of particular note is the owner's collection of Tunisian paintings, distributed across the property.

Art factors into another new hotel's appeal. At the **Hotel Tugu Lombok** in Indonesia, owner Anhar Setjadibrata used his personal collection of Indonesian antiques to decorate the property, even the guest rooms. It's a strategy that's worked for him before, notably at the Tugu Bali, which was among the Forbes Traveler 400 this year.

Like the Tugu Lombok, several other hotels are the second or third efforts by an individual entrepreneur or a small family-owned group. In Brazil, the Fasanos are fourth-generation restaurateurs already famous for their top-notch eateries. In 2003, they opened their first hotel to wide acclaim in Sao Paulo; in 2007, their sophomore effort, also named **Fasano Hotel**, debuted to similar praise in Rio de Janeiro. In Chile, the Purcell family opened **Tierra Atacama Hotel and Spa**, a modern boutique hotel nearly 8,000 feet up in the dry Chilean Andes. It's a departure for the Purcells, whose Portillo Resort offers the best skiing in Chile. This sky-high boutique hotel offers just 32 rooms, all with private balconies and a view of nearby Licancabur volcano (one of eight on the horizon).

A world away, another family project is redefining the concept of luxury rooted in the local culture. In Namibia, **Woldewans Boulders** was built by Stephan Brückner, whose father, Albi Brückner, created the NamibRand Nature Reserve in 1992. Namibia may be trendy among celebrities and travel channel hosts, but it's been the Brückners' home—and passion—for several decades. Most of their luxury tented camps are based in and around Wolwedans farm—one of eight properties joined to create the reserve—but Boulders, the most exclusive of the collection, is 30 miles south. The family's reputation for responsible tourism and sustainable practices is nonpareil.

Several more hotels on this list are the result of singular visions. The **myhotel in Brighton** is the latest opening from London hotelier Andy Thrasyvoulou, whose lifestyle hotels are among the U.K.'s must-see luxe accommodations. For this sea-side property, he enlisted American designer Karim Rashid to create a vibe they describe as "Freddie Mercury meets the Maharishi." In Jackson, Wyoming, skiing legend Rob DesLauriers opened the **Hotel Terra Jackson Hole**, an environmentally low-impact luxe lodging and the first of 12 planned "enviro-lodges."

Last but not least, there's the king of singular visions. The 92-story **Trump International Hotel and Tower** in Chicago isn't even finished, yet it's already winning praise. It's also slated to become one of Chicago's most desirable addresses—condos will fill more than half of the skyscraper. At 600 square feet, the standard rooms are spacious and feature floor-to-ceiling windows. In keeping with the residential vibe, the suites come with kitchens outfitted with top-end appliances. The Trump name was never synonymous with subtlety, and even the Spa at Trump is over-the-top: 23,000 square feet and 53 treatment rooms.

Large or small, independent or part of a larger hotel group, these 50 new hotels are already living up to the greatest expectations of the world's most demanding luxury travelers. Whether you're heading to Bali or Bahrain, the Riviera Maya or Mozambique, there's a fresh-faced staff waiting to welcome you.



Monarch Hotel ZaZa, Houston, Texas

© Hotel ZaZa

It's a fine line between over-the-top opulent and tacky. Where to put Houston's ZaZa, the sophomore follow-up to the Dallas hotel original of the same name? There's no denying the service is top-quality and that no expense was spared to outfit this Museum District destination. But is there really enough demand for the "For Your Eyes Only" James Bond-inspired suite? And who books the snug 352-square-foot, Old West throwback "Outlaw Suite"? To the property's credit, the gimmicks are impeccably well-executed, making this (at the very least) the five-star inheritor to old-school Las Vegas Strip gauche-hotels. But maybe it's best to stick with the "regular" rooms, which are on-par with anything else in the city.

Tel.: 713-526-1991
300 rooms & suites

*For more information: **Hotel ZaZa Houston***