

SPECIAL REPORT: LIFE-CHANGING TRIPS THAT HELP THE WORLD

Condé Nast Traveler

WIN!
A \$25,000
DREAM
TRIP
Page 36

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2008

INTRODUCING

QUICK TRIPS

3 PERFECT DAYS
IN AUSTIN,
PALM SPRINGS,
MINNEAPOLIS,
AND MORE

2008 HOT LIST WORLD'S TOP NEW 136 hotels*

105 Restaurants

76 Spas

28 Nightclubs

*including 36 under \$250

ULTIMATE
HAWAII
STEP-BY-STEP
ITINERARY

BRAZIL'S
SECRET BEACHES

SYDNEY NOW!
WHERE TO STAY,
EAT, SHOP, PLAY

Condé Nast Traveler presents

THE TWELFTH ANNUAL

HOT LIST

2008

THE YEAR'S 136
TOP NEW HOTELS*

*including 36
UNDER
\$250 A NIGHT

Hotels are like cars: Newer models can dazzle with flashy looks and marketing hype, but only after you test-drive them does their true performance come to light. After scrutinizing the thousands of hotels that opened in the last year, we checked in to the most promising—incognito, of course—appraising the location, service, design, and value. We came across our fair share of lemons. But the 136 properties that won us over are the most global group yet. Spanning a record 53 countries (including new-to-the-list destinations Easter Island, Romania, and Rwanda), they range in size from a three-suite safari camp in South Africa's Londolozi Private Game Reserve to a 3,000-room tower on Macau's Cotai Strip, and in price from \$70 for a winsome inn near Angkor Wat to \$3,900 for a three-tent pool villa in the Maldives, complete with massage table and personal butler. What makes a hotel a keeper? Read on.

ARGENTINA

Legado Mítico, Buenos Aires
Moreno Hotel, Buenos Aires
Casa Los Sauces, El Calafate
Puerto Valle Hotel, Esteros del Iberá

AUSTRALIA

Emporium Hotel, Brisbane
Qualia, Hamilton Island, Queensland

AUSTRIA

Schloss Velden, A Capella Hotel, Velden
Ring Hotel, Vienna

BELGIUM

Hotel Matelote, Antwerp
The Dominican, Brussels

BHUTAN

Taj Tashi, Thimpu

BOTSWANA

Selinda Camp, Selinda Reserve

BRAZIL

Hotel Fasano, Rio de Janeiro

CAMBODIA

Hotel Be Angkor, Siem Reap
Viroth's Hotel, Siem Reap

CARIBBEAN AND ATLANTIC

Hermitage Bay, Antigua
Cove Atlantis, Bahamas
Agua Resort & Spa, Dominican Republic
Aquamare, Virgin Gorda

CHILE

Explora en Rapa Nui—Posada de Mike Rapu, Easter Island
Tierra Atacama Hotel & Spa, San Pedro de Atacama

CHINA

Hotel Côté Cour St., Beijing
The Regent, Beijing
Hotel of Modern Art—HOMA Libre, Guilin
Venetian Macao, Macau
Kayumanis Nanjing Private Villa, Nanjing

Hyatt on the Bund, Shanghai

JIA Shanghai, Shanghai

Lapis Casa, Shanghai

URBN, Shanghai

COSTA RICA

El Silencio Lodge and Spa, Bajos del Toro
Arenas del Mar Beach and Nature Resort, Manuel Antonio National Park

CROATIA

Adriana Hvar Marina Hotel & Spa, Hvar

CZECH REPUBLIC

Icon Hotel, Prague

EGYPT

Four Seasons Alexandria at San Stefano, Alexandria
Oberoi Zahra, The Nile

ESTONIA

Hotel Telegraf, Tallinn

FINLAND

Hotel GLO, Helsinki

FRANCE

Domaine de Verchant, Castelmau-le-Lez
La Maison du Paradou, Le Paradou
Hôtel Particulier Montmartre, Paris
Le Bellechasse, Paris
L'Auberge Basque, St-Pée-sur-Nivelle

GERMANY

Das Kranzbach, Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Charles Hotel, Munich

GREECE

Grecotel Amirandes, Crete
Mykonos Grace, Mykonos
Andronis Luxury Suites, Santorini
Mystique, Santorini

HUNGARY

Lanchid 19 Hotel, Budapest

INDIA

Le Colonial, Fort Cochin
Ista, Hyderabad
Visalam, Sivaganga
360° Leti, Uttaranchal

JAPAN

Peninsula Tokyo, Tokyo

KENYA

Sanctuary at Ol Lentille, Laikipia

MALAYSIA

Majestic Malacca, Malacca

MALDIVES

Banyan Tree Maldives Madivaru, Ethere Madivaru Island
Beach House at Manafaru Maldives, Manafaru Island

MEXICO

Aqua Cancun, Cancun
Cabo Azul Resort & Spa, Los Cabos
Hotel Hacienda Mérida, Mérida

QATAR

La Cigale Hotel, Doha

ROMANIA

Carol Parc Hotel, Bucharest

RUSSIA

Ritz-Carlton, Moscow

RWANDA

Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, Parc National des Volcans

SINGAPORE

St. Regis

SOUTH AFRICA

La Residence, Franschhoek
Melton Manor, Kwandwe Private Game Reserve
Granite Private Suites, Londolosi Private Game Reserve

SPAIN

Hotel Ferrero, Bocoirent
Hospes Palacio del Bailío, Córdoba
Hotel Iturregi, Getaria
L'Avenida Hotel, Mallorca
Hotel Claude, Marbella
Corral del Rey, Seville
Valdepalacios, Tomico

SRI LANKA

CASA Colombo, Colombo

SWITZERLAND

Le Richemond, Geneva

THAILAND

Seven, Bangkok
Alila Cha-Am, Cha-Am
At Niman Conceptual Home, Chiang Mai
Villa Water Orchid, Chiang Mai
Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi, Koh Yao Noi
SALA Phuket Resort and Spa, Phuket

TURKEY

Serinn House, Cappadocia

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Palace the Old Town, Dubai
Raffles Dubai, Dubai

UNITED KINGDOM

Luton Hoo Hotel, Golf & Spa, Bedfordshire
Hotel du Vin, Cambridge
Haymarket Hotel, London
Hotel TerraVina, Southampton

UNITED STATES

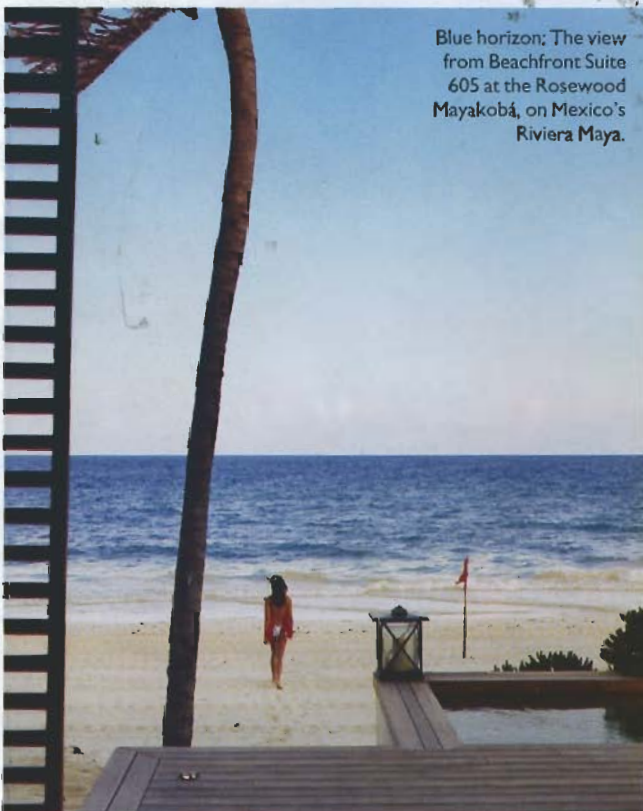
Grand Del Mar, Del Mar, Calif.
Solage Calistoga, Napa Valley, Calif.
Colony Palms Hotel, Palm Springs, Calif.
Ivy Hotel, San Diego, Calif.
Hotel Oceana, Santa Monica, Calif.
St. Regis, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Angler's Boutique Resort, Miami, Fla.
Tides South Beach, Miami Beach, Fla.
Hotel Sax, Chicago, Ill.
Trump International Hotel & Tower, Chicago, Ill.
Liberty Hotel, Boston, Mass.
The Palazzo, Las Vegas, Nev.
Bowery Hotel, New York, N.Y.
Duane Street Hotel, New York, N.Y.
The Plaza, New York, N.Y.
Renaissance Providence Hotel, Providence, R.I.
Ritz-Carlton, Dallas, Tex.
Sky Lodge, Park City, Utah
Hotel Terra, Jackson Hole, Wyo.

VIETNAM

InterContinental Hanoi Westlake, Hanoi

THE WORLD

Queen Victoria



Blue horizon: The view from Beachfront Suite 605 at the Rosewood Mayakobá, on Mexico's Riviera Maya.

INDONESIA

Bambu Indah, Bali
The Calyx, Bali
Ritz-Carlton Jakarta, Pacific Place, Jakarta

IRELAND

Solis Lough Eske Castle, Co. Donegal
Lisfoughrey Lodge, Co. Mayo
Ritz-Carlton Powerscourt, Co. Wicklow

ITALY

Residenza 100 Torri, Ascoli Piceno
J.K. Place, Capri
Villa Laetitia, Rome
Falconara Charming House & Resort, Sicily
Castello Banfi—Il Borgo, Tuscany
Ca' Sagredo, Venice
Palazzo Barbarigo, Venice

La Purificadora, Puebla

Mandarin Oriental, Riviera Maya
Rosewood Mayakobá, Riviera Maya

MOROCCO

Angsana Riads Collection Morocco, Marrakech
Riad Noir d'Ivoire, Marrakech

THE NETHERLANDS

Grand Hotel Amrâth, Amsterdam

NEW ZEALAND

Farm at Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay

OMAN

Six Senses Hideaway Zighy Bay, Zighy Bay

PORTUGAL

Quinta da Romaneira, Douro Valley

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- ☉ = Bar/lounge
- ☀ = Beach
- ☁ = Free Wi-Fi
- ♣ = Gym
- ♨ = Pool
- ♨ = Spa
- ♨ = Hot Spa 2008
- 🕒 = 24-hour room service
- 🔥 = Hot
- 🔥🔥 = Hotter
- 🔥🔥🔥 = Hottest

Ramos. Its sunlit living area features a Bose iPod docking station and stylish loungers, while double-glaze laminated glass provides soundproofing. Plenty of closet space and an expansive sunken rain shower enhance this room's good value. All accommodations come with modern essentials like Wi-Fi and a 32-inch flat-screen television; those in search of Siem Reap's low-tech offerings can tour the food market with a Khmer-speaking French chef. **When to go:** December to March has the least rain (but the most tourists). **Which room to book:** For lovers of sculpture, the Bamboo Room; painting, the Saf-ron Room; and photography, the Sepia Room (855-63-965-321; hotelbeangkor.com; doubles, \$95–\$150). 🍷 🏊 📺 📶 🛀

Viroth's Hotel, Siem Reap

🔥 Sitting squarely in the sweet spot between cheap guesthouse and big-box hotel—and unbeatably priced—Viroth's has a simple, clean design that is accented by gray Khmer tile floors, rosewood railings, and the occasional indig-enous objet or scarlet wall. The ground-floor saltwater pool (in full view of the reception desk) may be best for exhibitionists, but the bamboo-walled massage area and rooftop thatch-covered breakfast/lounge nook are more private sanctuaries. Each of the seven artfully lit rooms also has its own balcony or terrace that looks out over the street, pool, or small private courtyard. The hotel is located just across the river from the bustling Old Market; the helpful staff can arrange a *tuk-tuk* there or to Angkor Wat, three miles away. For dinner, walk the two blocks to Viroth's Restaurant, which the hotel's French owner opened four years ago on a moat-enclosed patio, and which serves Khmer and Western dishes. **When to go:** From December to March you'll encounter the least rain (but the most tourists). **Which room to book:** Ask for No. 7, the second-floor corner room overlooking the pool (855-63-761-720; viroth-hotel.com; doubles, \$70–\$90). 🍷 🏊 📺 📶 🛀

CARIBBEAN AND ATLANTIC

Hermitage Bay, Antigua

🔥 Down a long dirt road, this secluded resort perches between a steep slope and

a small bay. Its 25 suites—each a spacious contemporary cottage of dark wood and white linens—are tucked into lush foliage rich with birdlife and come with an outdoor shower and daybeds, as well as a flat-screen TV, an iPod docking station, and Wi-Fi; ceiling fans twirl above mosquito-netted beds. All this is the ideal setting in which to decompress fully while lounging by your plunge pool with a glass of wine from the restaurant's well-chosen cellar. The friendly staff ferry guests up and down the hillside in golf carts. A few antique Chinese tea chests, an exhibit of original black-and-white photographs of Bob Marley, and low-slung furnishings combine to give the reception area a laid-back chic. With its commitment to sophistication and natural beauty, Hermitage Bay aims to join the properties at the top of the market in Antigua—and is priced accordingly. What you're paying for here is peacefulness, supremely relaxing accommodations, better than decent food, a wonderful swimming beach, and an understated yet pampering spa. **When to go:** Rates drop the first week of April, but hurricane season has yet to kick in. **Which room to book:** Beachside suites let you step out your door into the placid sea, but for drop-dead romance, book a hillside suite, the higher the better (268-562-5500; hermitagebay.com; suites, \$700–\$1,650, including meals). 🍷 🏊 📺 📶 🛀

Agua Resort & Spa, Dominican Republic

🔥 This romantic all-suite beachfront retreat north of the sprawling all-inclusives of Punta Cana is a diamond literally in the rough—the last two miles of the approach road are so bone rattling that it may be worth ponying up \$200 for the ten-minute helicopter transfer from the airport in Punta Cana. **But behind the resort's unmarked security gate, Agua is breathtaking.** The open-air lobby has a soaring peaked thatch roof, and the 53 rooms, divided between two-story thatched buildings and freestanding villas, are arranged around two snaking pools and are no more than a one-minute walk from the beach. With classic clean lines, they are dramatic by virtue of their size (the smallest is 700 square feet) and simple comforts—wicker ceilings, dark hardwood floors and furniture, white-on-white beds, immense bathrooms with black slate showers and deep soaking tubs. Alas, the food at Areito, prepared by the kitchen staff formerly at

Casa Colonial (“Hot List,” May 2005), could and should be better: Crêpes come stuffed with rubbery cheese; vegetables taste as though they were fresh out of a packet. **When to go:** December through March remains relatively dry, and nights are cool enough to be refreshing. **Which room to book:** Nos. 47–52 are second-floor oceanfront suites that have decks over the Atlantic but offer the privacy that height affords (809-468-0000; aguaresort.com; doubles, \$350–\$980). 🍷 🏊 📺 📶 🛀

Aquamare, Virgin Gorda

🔥 Aquamare melds the best aspects of a villa rental and a posh hotel. A house for celebration is the idea behind this trio of glass-enclosed, shingle-roofed five-bedroom villas fronting a half mile of beach on Mahoe Bay. And though Hollywood A-listers cherishing their privacy and space (8,000 square feet per villa) have been the first to avail themselves of the enclave's concierge (who will arrange spa treatments or an excursion aboard the property's 62-foot yacht), those who will feel most at home are families or other small groups gathering for a special occasion. In addition to identical master suites in each villa (along with one double and one junior), there is an open kitchen off a high-ceilinged great room that allows everyone to help stir the soup or observe the art of the personal chef, as well as a private infinity-edge pool. Furnishings are stylishly oversized, and as much thought has been given to the texture of the decor as to the (subdued) color, something you notice while standing on the pebbled floor of your master bath's private outdoor shower, wondering—despite the double latticework—how private it really is. **Which room to book:** The third-floor master suite in Villa No. 1, which is closest to the sea, has the best views of the sunset and the islands of Sir Francis Drake Channel (787-461-2638; villaaquamare.com; five-bedroom villas, \$12,500–\$18,500 per week). 🍷 🏊 📺 📶 🛀

CHILE

Explora en Rapa Nui— Posada de Mike Rapu, Easter Island

🔥 Co-owned by Explora and the prominent islander whose name it bears, Explora en Rapa Nui is unquestionably the swiftest place on this volcanic island marooned some 2,300 miles west of Chile, and as with Explora's other properties, the build-

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