

**TRAVEL CONFIDENTIAL**  
THE NAKED TRUTH—FROM GUIDES, WAITERS, MAIDS, FLIGHT ATTENDANTS, AND MORE

# Condé Nast Traveler

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2013

## HOT LIST 154 BEST NEW HOTELS IN THE WORLD

INCLUDING 62 UNDER \$300

PLUS

35 BLISSFUL SPAS

**AUSTRALIA'S  
SEXIEST CITY**  
(NO, IT'S NOT SYDNEY)

**BRAZIL'S  
SWEETEST BEACH**  
(A REAL BEAUTY IN BAHIA)

**NEW YORK'S  
NEW RIVIERA**  
(THRILLS ON THE WATERFRONT)

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# FEATURES

Condé Nast  
**Traveler**

## WORLDWIDE

## Hot LIST

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### 64 HOT HOTELS

It started with more than 1,000—the number of new hotels that opened worldwide in the last year and made it onto our radar. We whittled that down to 200-plus, in 57 countries, to which we sent 36 reporters (anonymously, of course). Their mission? To identify the very best. Their verdict? 154 places you'll want to go to right away, including 62 under \$300. Presenting our 17th annual Hot List.

### 119 HOT SPAS

From Miami to Marrakech, 35 relaxing new retreats.



## FOR YOUR TABLET

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## AUSTRALIA

### 138 The Melbourne Ultimatum

In the nineteenth century, "marvelous Melbourne" was Australia's most fabulous city...until Sydney captured the world's attention. Now a new generation of artists, chefs, nightclub owners, musicians, mixologists, and bohemian bon vivants are turning Melbourne marvelous again, as **TONY PERROTTET** discovers when he goes Down Under.

## BRAZIL

### 150 Warm Breeze Over Brazil

The fashionistas have spoken—and they love Trancoso! And what's not to love? This little Bahian fishing village has gorgeous beaches, charming hotels, sweet little eateries, and plenty of *barracas*. **MARK CONNOLLY** and **ALI PEW** style the look for the ultimate South American getaway.

## UNITED STATES

### 160 New York's New Riviera

New York City, that dense archipelago webbed by rivers, estuaries, inlets, bays, and channels (a total of 500 miles of coast), has resurrected its last reserve of open space—its waterways. **JUSTIN DAVIDSON** dips in and finds that Gotham is indeed wild again.

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**PARADISE FOUND**  
The infinity pool at Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. See Hot List, page 63.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM FRANCO



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INCLUDING 62 UNDER \$300 A NIGHT

**SOME PEOPLE ARE OBSESSED** with movies or sports or Beyoncé. But here at *Condé Nast Traveler*, we're obsessed with hotels (and, all right, Beyoncé as well). Such an obsession means that for us, May is the happiest month. Why? Because it's when we get to present to you our favorite new hotels that have opened in the past year in our annual Hot List. Compiling the list takes ten months, a full-time staff, and dozens of stringers who visit hundreds of properties in scores of countries, evaluating every hotel—from the massive to the small and sweet—for style, location, service, comfort, value, and chic. And we make all visits unannounced and anonymously: In other words, we experience the property the way you experience the property. This year, we hotel geeks were driven to near-delirium, because after considering more than 1,000 properties, we selected 154, making the 2013 Hot List our largest ever in 17 years—if you need proof of a financial rebound, here it is. There are 57 countries represented over the next 29 pages, including 19 in Europe (with a whopping 8 hotels in London alone), 16 in Asia (the Thai islands—and Bangkok—are booming), and 6 in South America (where there's been strong growth in Peru, Chile, and Colombia). The hotels themselves range from the very tiny (the one-suite Howie's HomeStay, in Chiang Mai, Thailand) to the very large (the 745-room Mulia Resort, in Nusa Dua, Bali), and from the highly affordable (Tántalo Hotel, in Panama City, at just \$99 a night) to the break-the-bank (Singita Mara River Tented Camp, in Tanzania, where a room will run you a cool \$1,900 a night). Along with the best hotels of the year, we also have the scoop on the trends and details that are defining the way we travel now—and, in our "Predictors" special, the way we will travel in the very near future. So welcome to the next 154 places you're going to want to visit. Just don't blame us if you end up as obsessed as we are.

PLUS

## HOT SPAS

35 blissful new places to relax and recharge

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PG: **63**

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEFF ROGERS

# Hot HOTELS

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### THE PREDICTORS

A designer, architect, restaurateur, spa maven, and hotshot Hollywood director (turned hotelier) on what's next for luxury lodging. Starting on page 80.

### THE INNOVATION REPORT

Four hotels, from New York to Stockholm, that are making their own rules. Starting on page 100.



DOWNLOAD OUR DIGITAL EDITION FOR A STUNNING PHOTO PORTFOLIO OF THIS YEAR'S 23 HOTTEST PROPERTIES—THEN VISIT [CONDENASTTRAVELER.COM/HOTLIST](http://CONDENASTTRAVELER.COM/HOTLIST) FOR PHOTOS OF EVERY HOTEL, STANDOUTS FOR FOOD AND HISTORY, AND A WHOLE LOT MORE. SEE PAGE 14 FOR DETAILS.

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HER DRESS BY BRUNELLO CUCINELLI. \$1,460 (BRUNELLO CUCINELLI N.Y.C.). SHOES BY CANFORA. \$180 (CANFORA.COM)





# Hot HOTELS

The ample and lovely bathrooms were stocked with a few more amenities like body lotion. **The room to book:** The penthouse, for a private patio and views of the rolling countryside (351-281-961-913; doubles from \$200). ● ● ●

## UNDER \$300 Cooking & Nature Emotional Hotel,

**Alvados**  
351-244-447-000; doubles from \$176. ● ● ●

## UNDER \$300 Pousada de Cascais, Cascais

351-210401712; doubles from \$145. ● ● ● ● ● ●

## UNDER \$300 Lisboa Carmo Hotel, Lisbon

35-1-213-264-710; doubles from \$137. ● ● ●

## UNDER \$300 Carmo's Boutique Hotel, Ponte de Lima

**The specs:** A new 15-room glass-and-concrete hotel in northern Portugal's Lima Valley, just outside the ancient town of Ponte de Lima. Among the amenities: an outdoor pool with views of the Minho Mountains, a spa, a restaurant, and bicycles and a horse-drawn carriage for touring the scenic riverside and the beautifully preserved medieval town. **The look:** Stark and modern on the outside, cozy and chic on the inside, with a jumble of furnishings evoking a family home in lived-in disarray. **The experience:** Situated off a country road and shaded by cedars, this intimate, casual property feels like the upscale abode of friends who are away, their books and heirlooms lying around, their quietly attentive staff left to take care of you. Meals are served whenever you please—in the dining room, the garden, or the vineyard by the pool. Opportunities for exploring abound: Within a 90-minute radius are the cultural center of Guimarães, the ancient town of Braga, the northern capital of Porto, and across the border, the World Heritage Site of Santiago de Compostela. **If only:** The prestige rooms with private patios didn't overlook the parking lot. **The room to book:** The three suites have sweeping countryside and mountain vistas (351-258-938-743; doubles from \$240). ● ● ● ●

## PUERTO RICO

## Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Dorado

**The specs:** A hundred new rooms and 14 suites in modern villas along an unspoiled beach about 20 miles west of San Juan. Occupying the site of Laurance Rockefeller's famous Dorado Beach Hotel, now a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, the property includes an exceptional spa, an 11-mile nature trail, golf courses, tennis courts, and Mi Casa by José Andrés, which marries haute to local

cuisine. **The look:** Built of coral stone that reveals the founding fossils within, the 11 two-story villas house understated, warm, and attractive rooms, all with terrace and ocean views, a deep soaking tub, and an outdoor shower. **The experience:** Easy resort-style living with a focus on service and the tropical surroundings. Attention is paid to detail throughout, from the framing of the impressive opening view of the ocean at reception and the appealing, playful art throughout to the retro large-faced bedside alarm clock, the ripe tamarind on a fruit plate, and the prompt arrival of the room's *embajador* to help with a stiff socket. **If only:** *Luxe et volupté* weren't so expensive. **The room to book:** Go for broke and stay at Su Casa, a lavishly restored four-bedroom Spanish colonial-style 1920s hacienda on the beach, with its own private garden, infinity pool, and concierge (787-626-1100; doubles from \$959). ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

## QATAR

## St. Regis, Doha

**The specs:** A mega hotel with 338 rooms on a promontory between Doha's business quarter and the new Kantara Arts complex. Rooms overlook dhows as well as trophy high-rises on the skyline. **The look:** John Jacob Astor's Manhattan meets modern Arabia by the sea. A 1911 Rolls-Royce belonging to a member of Qatar's ruling family decorates the soaring lobby; rooms in somber tones have canopied beds and picture windows. **The experience:** Conveniently located for both business and leisure, the St. Regis Doha displays Qatar's wealth, ambition, and cultural tolerance (alcohol is served) with a design that is all about scale. The pool is Olympic-size, the spa vast, the 22 treatment rooms segregated by gender. In a town where fine dining centers on hotels, the St. Regis offers ten choices, including two Gordon Ramsay eateries, branches of the famed Lebanese seafood restaurant Sultan Ibrahim and London's Hakkasan, and the only Middle Eastern home of Jazz at Lincoln Center—musicians are personally selected by Wynton Marsalis. Rooms have large workstations with multiple lines, cordless phones, and wall-mounted travel plugs, as well as huge baths with rain showers and deep tubs, some offering sea views. **If only:** All days of the week were equal. Hotel nightlife shuts down on Sunday, when the jazz club and Opal by Gordon Ramsay are closed. **The room to book:** Empire suites wrapping around the front corners of the southern tower have sweeping panoramas. Among the least expensive Superior rooms, those in the north tower ending in 17 have unadvertised but decent sea views (877-787-3447; doubles from \$385). ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

## SCOTLAND

## The Atholl, Edinburgh

**The specs:** A centrally situated eighteenth-century town house that has been converted into four



**ROCKIN' OASIS**  
The lush grounds of Palais Namaskar, just outside Marrakech.

roomy suites, each with its own kitchen and Gaggenau wine fridge and the services of a private butler and an Albert Roux-trained chef.

**The look:** Spacious corporate boardroom luxe with oversized furniture, artwork by the square yard, and coffee tables freighted with gargantuan art books. **The experience:** Your friendly manager receives you in the lobby, an ornate glass-ceilinged affair with a banister staircase and chinoiserie frescoes. Whether you've booked a one-, two-, or three-bedroom suite, you find a spacious set of rooms including a state-of-the-art kitchen and a sitting/dining room furnished with weighty sofas, armchairs, and ottomans. Fireplaces are comparatively small (and antique). Bedrooms are sized on a more intimate scale and furnished in muted shades. Bathrooms have walk-in rain showers and freestanding porcelain tubs with oversized bottles of Penhaligon's bath products. Breakfast cooked to order is included in the room rate, and there are several table d'hôte options for chef-cooked dinners. All menus are for carnivores, including such delicacies as crispy chicken oysters, roasted langoustines, and poached quail eggs, but the chef can improvise for a vegetarian on short notice. **If only:** The abundance of personal service made for a more private experience: The frequently banging front door and clattering in the kitchen felt intrusive, and although the walls are thick, sounds can be heard floor to floor. **The room to book:** The Ambercromby is a three-bedroom duplex that includes a sitting room with a baby-grand piano

and a courtyard garden with a fireplace and a hot tub for six (44-844-736-0047; doubles from \$1,500). ●

## Glencoe House, Glencoe

**The specs:** Seven suites with private drawing rooms and dining areas in a four-story granite-and-sandstone manse with views of Loch Leven, Loch Linnhe, and the Pap of Glencoe. Built in the late 1890s for Lord Strathcona, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and a founding partner of Canada's first transcontinental railway, the house is surrounded by ten acres of private gardens and walkable woodlands. **The look:** Scottish neobaronial High Victorian updated for absolute comfort. The plasterwork ceilings with intertwined thistles, roses, and oak leaves have been compared to a love letter from Scottish-born Strathcona to his Canadian wife, Isabella. **The experience:** You find a hospitable welcome with tea and fresh scones served at your private table before a gorgeous lake-and-mountain view while a crackling fire warms your sitting room. Later, as the sun sets dramatically, you can serve yourself drinks from the well-stocked honor bar as a prelude to a cornucopia of local shellfish caught that day and served cold with aioli and other fixings. At night you're kept cozy by a bedroom fireplace and shutters pulled tight, as well as central heating that warms towel racks in the large bathroom with walk-in rain shower, double sinks, and stand-alone tub. Breakfast is a magnificent affair with porridge, eggs, and even kippers made to order. **If only:** Full evening meals were provided for small parties. At pres-

HER TOP BY APECE APART; \$241 (CASTOR & POLLUX, NYC); BOTTOMS BY CHARLIE BY MATTHEW ZINK, \$116 (CHARLENEZ.COM); SHOES BY CANFORA, \$180 (CANFORA.COM)

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN HUBA

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## Hot SPAS

den filled with tropical trees and flowers, two tiled outdoor whirlpools, and a royal-looking recovery bed in a pavilion. Beyond are six thatched treatment rooms, each with a view of the sea. **The look:** Lime-green throw pillows at reception; lime-green washcloths and amenities in the plain and simple changing room with small lockers—where there's sadly little privacy for undressing. **Who goes:** Mostly pallid northerners; Asians during the monsoon. **The treatment:** The Niyama signature massage, prefaced by a footbath, deploys pure coconut oil for the deeply relaxing Thai- and shiatsu combo treatment. **P.S.:** The spa is open 24 hours; late-night appointments carry a surcharge (960-676-2828; massages from \$130). 🏠

### The Spa by Clarins, The Residence, Gaafu Alifu Atoll

**What:** From the people who have brought you French face cream for almost six decades comes a tropical outpost with six overwater thatched treatment rooms. **The look:** The exquisite arrangements of flowers, petals, and leaves are memorable—as is the nearby island you can see from the treatment suite. **Who goes:** Europeans (often French, Italians, and Brits) and honeymooning Asians. **The treatment:** Follow up a Heaven massage (heated basalt stones) or a Balinese Peace massage (elbows as well as hands) with a decadent mani-pedi. **P.S.:** Those lucky enough to get a foot massage during the welcoming footbath will long for a repeat (960-6820088; massages from \$120). 🏠

### MAURITIUS

#### Le Spa de Constance, Le Prince Maurice, Poste de Flacq

**What:** Post-beach bliss is succumbing to Sisley's phyto-aromatic face and body treatments at this super-serene spa in the tropical gardens of an exclusive east coast resort. Swim in a thermal pool, or shape up with resident guru Isabelle Lamant, who combines Vinyasa yoga, dance, and gymnastics. **The look:** Thatch, wood, and bamboo warm up minimalist spaces scented with candles and heady tropical flowers. **Who goes:** Pseudo-celebs, non-golfers, and honeymooners. **The treatment:** A memorable 60-minute head-to-toe massage using powerful, fluid strokes combining Ayurvedic, Thai, shiatsu, and Indian head massage by therapist Isram, who has practiced for 15 years. **P.S.:** The sporty seek hardworking pedicures and posture checkups designed by famed podiatrist Brice Nicham (230-402-36-36; massages from \$45).

### MOROCCO

#### Le Spa, Selman, Marrakech

**What:** A standalone spa from Henri Chenot, whose medical spa in the Italian Alps draws detox-seeking high rollers. Here, however, the focus is less on curing and more on coddling. **The look:** A stunning- and seductive take on the typical riad—a small heated pool in the middle of a glittery, mosaic-paved courtyard, surrounded by stone archways. **Who goes:** Young lovelies from Marrakech, older French couples. **The treatment:** The 55-minute Cupping massage, a mild detox treatment adapted from the Chinese

walls and pastoral gardens—but since this is Israel, they're peppered with the occasional palm tree. **Who goes:** Native Israelis and those doing outdoorsy stuff in the country's breathtaking north. **The treatment:** The 60-minute Relaxing Aromachologie session begins with an effervescent mineral footbath perfumed by eucalyptus and pine extracts. The full-body Swedish massage employs lavender, tea tree, and geranium oils; Chinese acupressure and Balinese techniques unwind every knot from forehead to heel. **P.S.:** After, sip tea from a rocking chair overlooking the Sea of Galilee (972-4-671-0737; massages from \$97).

### ITALY

#### The Spa at Monastero Santa Rosa Hotel & Spa, Amalfi Coast

**What:** Within a former seventeenth-century monastery, this small but excellent spa includes a lavender-scented steam room, sauna, tepidarium (a tiled room that's warm but not roasting), and mini indoor pool. **The look:** With high, arched ceilings and wrought iron fixtures, the effect is 50 Shades of Grey meets ancient cantina. **Who goes:** American honeymooners (watch out for PDAs) and well-heeled pensioners. **The treatment:** Opt for one of the garden pavilions, and choose an 80-minute massage, wherein you're doused with fragrant Santa Maria Novella products from Florence. **P.S.:** Children under 12 aren't allowed in, since the pool area plunges down to the sea (39-089-832-1199; massages from \$78). 🏠

#### Yhi Wellness Spa, Gran Meliá Rome Villa Agrippina, Rome

**What:** A standout spa a short walk from Vatican City and the Piazza Navona. **The look:** Asian serenity meets ancient Rome, with minimalist white interiors and a courtyard pool that could be the bathing spot for a B.C.-era Roman general's ghost. **Who goes:** Hotel guests breaking from sightseeing, and Romans who've heard about the excellent treatments. **The treatment:** It's the rare Italian spa that offers reflexology, but a good foot rub is what you'll need after tramping around the Eternal City: In the 50-minute Deep Swedish massage, feet and calves are pummeled and stroked. **P.S.:** The ambitious can book a pre-treatment

personal training session (39-06-925-901; massages from \$100). 🏠

#### Essere Spa, Castello di Casole, Tuscany

**What:** A quintessentially Tuscan spa at the center of a 4,200-acre estate—think long cypress-lined roads, medieval ruins, and rolling hills. (Full wet areas and full treatment rooms are opening this summer.) **The look:** Cozy, pared-down Tuscan—exposed brick, vaulted ceilings, tile floors, antique wood cabinets, and oversized plush furniture. **Who goes:** Type A American couples taking time out from wine-tastings; young Germans. **The treatment:** Tuscan ingredients—olive oil, lavender, antioxidant-rich grape seed oil—are slathered all over you during the Rilassante, or Relaxing, massage, which is 80 minutes of strokes from toes to scalp that will put you to sleep. **P.S.:** Try the estate's vintage at Bar Visconti, in an adjacent tenth-century castle (39-0577-961-501; massages from \$170). 🏠

### MALAYSIA

#### Majestic Spa, Hotel Majestic, Kuala Lumpur

**What:** A sensitively designed spa, part of the revamped hotel—a city fixture since the 1930s. **The look:** Inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Scottish Willow tearooms, it has wood floors and chocolate-brown or bright-purple treatment rooms trimmed with white, as well as a mosaic steam room. **Who goes:** Genteel ladies; expat couples. **The treatment:** They all start with a rosemary scalp massage and a lavender foot wash in a floral porcelain tub that looks plucked from the British countryside. From there, choose the Queen Victoria's Lavender, a 180-minute exfoliation-massage event, or the Malaya massage, which engages pressure points and loosens muscles. **P.S.:** The hotel's orchid conservancy is good for post-treatment relaxing (603-2785-8070; massages from \$113). 🏠

### MALDIVES

#### Lime Spa, Niyama, Dhaalu Atoll

**What:** A place that's regal and resplendent: Reflecting pools border a circular reception area under a thatched dome, and a tiled walkway leads to a walled gar-

▲ A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT Spa Botánico, at Ritz-Carlton's Dorado Beach in Puerto Rico.



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#### Miraval Life In Balance Spa with Clarins, Tucson, Arizona

From craniosacral therapy to holographic memory realization, this is a free-spirited—and fabulous—immersive escape.

#### Six Senses Spa, Oberbort, Switzerland

Auras are balanced and crystals used to heal in a "color therapy room" with one light for each of the body's seven chakras.

#### Akasha Holistic Wellbeing Centre, Amsterdam

Be bathed in a Watsu pool, and try Reiki or a massage focused on your third eye.

🏠 Denotes a spa that is connected to a Hot List hotel.

