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Travel tips

I've stayed in 1000 hotels around the world. Here are the 10 best

Mark C. O'Flaherty
FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Venice's Gritti Palace ... one of the most opulent hotels in existence.

This article is part of Traveller's Holiday Guide to Luxury Bucket List. See all stories.

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From big luxury names to small boutique properties you might never have heard of, our expert chooses his ultimate hotel experiences

I've been writing about hotels for nearly 30 years now and the rest of my work generally involves a stay somewhere other than home too. This got me thinking, just how many hotels have I stayed in?

A quick look at my tax returns and Google Calendar, plus the collection of hotel ephemera I've kept (when I'm staying somewhere with my husband, he draws a unique artwork on the branded notepad beside the bed), suggests an average of 30 a year.

In a former life as a DJ and music photographer in the 1990s, the average was higher. I'd say I've stayed at approximately 1000 to date. Some of those are airport hotels, others lavish resorts. Recently, I spent a day working out the 10 that gave me the most memorable experience. This was a fiendishly difficult task, but brought back a lot of great memories.

My final list ranges from major luxury chains that are really worth the splurge, and smaller boutique hotels you might never have heard of. Consider it Bucket List inspiration – so yes, some of them are very pricey.

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Can Ferrereta, Mallorca, Spain

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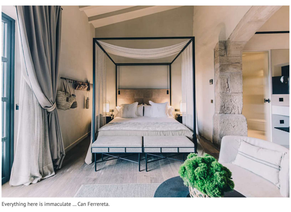


Everything here is immaculate ... Can Ferrereta.

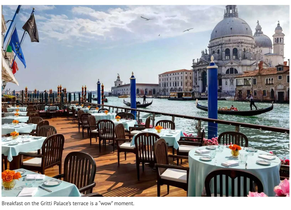
I made a point of staying here as soon as it opened because the couple behind it runs the Sant Francesc Hotel Singular in Palma, which would make my top 20. It's located in the super-cute town of Santanyi and my favourite European beaches are close by.

Everything here is immaculate and feels impressively sophisticated, like walking through an interior design story. It's mostly monochrome, with warm honey hues, wood and textured plaster all arranged by an expert modernist eye. This chic villa-style property is set around a pool and rows of olive and cypress trees.

Natural daylight floods every room and hallway. The courtyard restaurant is romantic, and the food delectable. Crucially, for me, it's adults only, so the vibes are immaculate.

Doubles from $510 a night, B&B. See hotelcanferrereta.com/en

Gritti Palace, Venice, Italy



Breakfast on the Gritti Palace's terrace is a "wow" moment.

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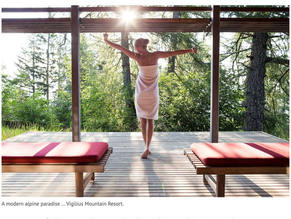
I have to admit I'm not that keen on the food in the restaurant here (nor indeed in many places in Venice), but walking out onto the terrace on the Grand Canal for breakfast at the Gritti is a knockout moment – the architecture and the gondolas look like an AI fantasy of the city.

Everything else is flawless. I can't imagine how much was spent transforming the former palace of Doge Andrea Gritti into one of the most opulent, velvet and chandelier-filled hotels in existence.

It all feels absurdly grand, but also intimate and romantic. If you stayed here solo, you'd still feel delighted, like you were having an affair with yourself.

Doubles from $1750 a night, room only. See marriott.com

Vigilius Mountain Resort, South Tyrol, Italy



A modern alpine paradise ... Vigilius Mountain Resort.

Far flashier resorts have opened in the Tyrol since architect Matteo Thun designed Vigilius more than 20 years ago, but I don't think it's been bettered. The svelte wooden lines that stretch along the whole building cut through a lush green mountain scape in crystal-fresh air.

The rooms are all off a long hallway, with dramatic shadows that change throughout the day. Spa treatments are superb and I can't think of a happier place to be than sitting by the indoor pool feeling cosy, looking through the giant wall of glass at the trees and greenery outside. This is a modern Alpine paradise.

Doubles from $695 a night, B&B. See vigilius.it

El Fenn, Marrakech, Morocco

El Fenn has the feel of an elite members' club. CECILE TRIAL

While I think the Royal Mansour has more wow-factor architecturally, El Fenn will always be the scene in the Red City. I love getting lost around the courtyards and torchlit corridors of what was once a collection of riads. The colourful polished plaster, foliage, chequered tile floors and stained glass make it one of the most atmospheric places to stay.

The Sunday evening DJ sets on the rooftop bar and restaurant make you feel like you're in the right place at the right time. Also – the boutique on the ground floor is the best shop in the city.

Doubles from $1050 a night, B&B. See el-fenn.com

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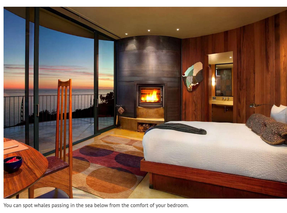
THE AMERICAS

Post Ranch Inn, California, United States



You can spot whales passing in the sea below from the comfort of your bedroom.

You can spot whales passing in the sea below from the comfort of your bedroom.

The Big Sur drive is one of the world's greatest road trips, and this is my favourite place to stay while doing it. The curves of the rooms and their balconies hug the cliff-side, you can see whales passing in the sea below and all manner of other local wildlife – I was kept under siege in my room by a wild turkey one afternoon.

Everything feels six-star, from the spa tubs to the Sierra Mar restaurant, where every table comes with a wonderful view. America, overall, is near the bottom of my list for food, but when a kitchen gets it right, and has access to the kind of produce this place does (the farms of Napa County are to the north), it's another story.

Doubles from $2735 a night, B&B. See postranchinn.com

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Twin Farms, Vermont, United States

Twin Farms was decorated by interior designer Jed Johnson in 1993.

I was torn between this and the Point in the Adirondacks as my ideal all-inclusive, adults-only rural getaway from New York City. I've had some of the best times in my life at both.

Twin Farms has the edge because you don't dine communally (which I'm not always in the mood for), and it's also an incidental design museum of sorts – a brightly furnished high-society fantasy of antiques, fine art (including work by Cy Twombly and Jasper Johns), bold patterns, antler chandeliers and open fires, created by interior designer Jed Johnson in 1993.

Johnson was Andy Warhol's lover, director of the cult film Andy Warhol's Bad in 1977, and the most fashionable Manhattan interior designer of his generation. The service and sense of 24/7 free-flowing champagne decadence here today is extraordinary.

Doubles from $4660 a night, all-inclusive. See twinfarms.com

Awasi Patagonia, Chile

Awasi Patagonia makes you feel like you're the only guest.

You feel like you're at the end of the Earth here – and you very nearly are. Each villa is the size of an impressive house and everything is wood, apart from the fleece throws and handcrafted lamps. This is essentially an all-inclusive safari lodge, with a small team of people who clearly love everything about the national park they are in.

I adored drinking wine from local grapes (Chilean Pais) and seeing animals in the wild – and on the menu – I'd never even heard of before (the guanaco is a relative of the llama). The scenery is endlessly impressive, as is the service. You feel like the only guest – or the only one that matters – and anything you want is no problem.

Doubles from $12,220 for three nights, all-inclusive. See awasi.com

ASIA

Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui, Thailand

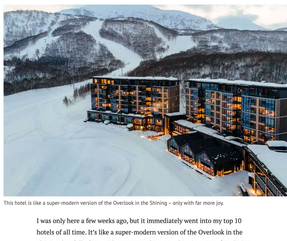
Series 3 of the White Lotus was filmed here.

Long before they filmed the least interesting series of the White Lotus here, I thought this was the most impressive place I had ever stayed, even if just for that moment you arrive – when you look down at the resort and beach from the top of the hill and a member of staff rings a gong. It's magnificent.

Each room is a villa and showcases designer Bill Bensley at his most indulgent. The look is, of course, overtly Thai and tropical, but never tacky. It is not only the most beautiful resort on Koh Samui, but on the best beach. I've only stayed once and my sole regret is bothering to leave the resort one afternoon for lunch elsewhere. If I won the lottery, I'd go for a fortnight every year.

Doubles from $2860 a night, room only. See fourseasons.com/kohsamui

Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono, Hokkaido, Japan



This hotel is like a super-modern version of the Overlook in the Shining – only with far more joy.

I was only here a few weeks ago, but it immediately went into my top 10 hotels of all time. It's like a super-modern version of the Overlook in the Shining, but full of joy, with gorgeous white-on-white interiors, fine dining (the raw red sweet prawns on the breakfast buffet! The dim sum! The flaming teppanyaki!) and the feeling that you're absolutely on holiday.

Go and ski if you must, but I was happiest sitting staring at Mount Yotei while drinking locally produced fizz by the fire. I'm a fan of the Park Hyatt brand and its Tokyo hotel, recently reopened fresh from a mega refurbishment, is perennially popular largely thanks to its bar, which featured in Lost in Translation – but this three-tower resort is next-level luxury. You could spend a week here without leaving and love every second.

Doubles from $340 (ski season rates from $1560) a night, B&B. See hyatt.com

Ritz-Carlton Kyoto, Japan

The service at the Ritz-Carlton in Kyoto is second to none.

It was hard to boil down my top 10 and just have two from Japan – the standards are so high there. I've stayed at gorgeous historic ryokans and mega Tokyo towers, but this Ritz-Carlton does everything so perfectly, blending into the local architecture, and making you feel like it's been here for a century.

It takes all the tropes of tatami, bonsai and shoji screens, and mixes them with 21st-century amenities and lighting. The views from the waterside rooms are really something, while the sushi and tempura restaurants are among the best in the country.

Service is beyond anything I've ever encountered anywhere – when Rimowa couldn't fix the handle on my suitcase in under a week, someone in-house did it in two hours, and left it in my room with a handwritten card and some biscuits.

Doubles from $1530 a night, room only. See ritzcarlton.com/en

The Telegraph, London

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