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# Forbes Travel Guide's 2023 Star Award Winners

By Forbes Travel Guide Editor Jennifer Kester (/author/jenkester)

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The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands earned Five Stars. *Credit: The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands*

Travel's continued resurgence in 2022 meant more people are embarking on adventures all over the globe. To help travelers make every trip count, Forbes Travel Guide revealed its 2023 Star Awards winners, a list of the world's finest hotels, restaurants, spas and—new this year—ocean cruises.

To compile the 65th annual Star Awards, Forbes Travel Guide's incognito inspectors check into hotels and cruise ships, dine in the restaurants and experience spa services while posing as ordinary guests. The inspectors test up to 900 rigorous standards, from modern-day luxuries—such as whether a room is set up to enhance sleep quality or whether the food-and-beverage choices support a guest's well-being—to more traditional elements, such as the décor and the attention the staff pays to a guest. Seventy percent of a property's rating relies on its service—with a more exacting look at the guest experience as a new service metric for 2023—while the remaining 30 percent accounts for the quality and condition of its facilities.

This year's list features 48 new Five-Star hotels, 64 new Four-Star properties and 45 new Recommended hotels. Several new countries—including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Tunisia and Cyprus—make their first appearance in the Star Awards while nine international destinations welcomed their first Five-Star hotels this year, including Athens (Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel Athens (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/athens-greece/four-seasons-astir-palace-hotel-athens>)), Capri (J.K. Place Capri (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/capri-italy/jk-place-capri>)), Kuwait (Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/kuwait-kuwait/four-seasons-hotel-kuwait-at-burj-alshaya>)), Lake Como (Mandarin Oriental, Lago di Como (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/lake-como-italy/mandarin-oriental-lago-di-como>)) and Shenzhen (Mandarin Oriental, Shenzhen (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/shenzhen-china/mandarin-oriental-shenzhen>)).

See the full list of Star-Rated properties here (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/award-winners>), and learn about the most notable new achievements in hospitality below.



Five Celebrity cruises were rated in the inaugural listing with more vessels coming later this year.

*Credit: Celebrity Cruises*



## INAUGURAL OCEAN CRUISE RATINGS

For the first time in its 65-year history, Forbes Travel Guide dove into ocean cruises, launching its inaugural ratings with five ships. Celebrity Apex (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/ocean-cruises/celebrity-apex>), Celebrity Flora (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/ocean-cruises/celebrity-flora>) and Celebrity Millennium (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/ocean-cruises/celebritymillennium>) earned Four-Star awards, while Celebrity Edge (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/ocean-cruises/celebrity-edge>) and Celebrity Summit (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/ocean-cruises/celebrity-summit>) received Recommended honors.

Known for fine dining—Celebrity Cruises named Five-Star chef Daniel Boulud as its global culinary ambassador in 2022—and cutting-edge design (including the Magic Carpet, the cruise industry's first cantilevered venue), Celebrity offers relaxed a luxury resort experience at sea with ships that make their way to as many as eight destinations in one sailing.

A second wave of cruise line ratings will be announced later this year and evaluations are already underway on several ships worthy of star ratings for 2024.

## NEW INTERNATIONAL FIVE-STAR DESTINATIONS

Sicily captured international attention in 2022 as the breathtaking backdrop of the second season of HBO's *The White Lotus*, and it landed on FTG's list as a new international destination. The series was filmed at the newly minted Four-Star San Domenico Palace, Taormina (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sicily-italy/san-domenico-palace-taormina-a-four-seasons-hotel>), showcasing scene-stealing locations like a cliff-top alfresco breakfast setting overlooking the Ionian Sea. The island also added Four-Star accolades for Grand Hotel Timeo (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sicily-italy/grand-hotel-timeo-a-belmond-hotel-taormina>), Verdura Resort (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sicily-italy/verdura-resort-a-rocco-forte-hotel>), Villa Igiea (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sicily-italy/villa-igiea-a-rocco-forte-hotel>) and Villa Sant'Andrea (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sicily-italy/villa-santandrea-a-belmond-hotel-taormina-mare>).

The Scandinavian region made its first showing on the list with the Four-Star Hotel d'Angleterre Copenhagen (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/copenhagen-denmark/hotel-dangleterre-copenhagen>) and Recommended winners Amerikalinjen (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/oslo-norway/amerikalinjen>) (Oslo), Ett Hem (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/stockholm-sweden/ett-hem>) (Stockholm) and Grand Hôtel Stockholm (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/stockholm-sweden/grand-hotel-stockholm>).



San Domenico Palace was the setting for season 2 of “White Lotus.” *Credit: San Domenico Palace, Taormina, a Four Seasons Hotel*

After being closed to tourists for the past three years, Macau dethroned London this year as the city with the most Five-Star hotels in the world. London, which reigned as the Five-Star hotel capital for four years, had 21 top-rated properties, while Macau had 22 award winners. The onetime gambling capital of the world, Macau added five newcomers to its elite ranks, including the opulent Grand Lisboa Palace Macau (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/macau-china/grand-lisboa-palace-macau>), which debuted in 2021 and houses fellow Five-Star winner The Karl Lagerfeld (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/macau-china/the-karl-lagerfeld>), the world’s only hotel fully designed by the late fashion icon. Integrated resort The Londoner Macao also had two new honorees: the all-suite, British-style Londoner Hotel (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/macau-china/the-londoner-hotel>) and the exclusive Londoner Court (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/macau-china/londoner-court>), which offers 24-hour butler service and an in-room wellness program. Galaxy Hotel (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/macau-china/galaxy-hotel>) also made the list with Asia’s only Macallan bar and a massive 807,000-square-foot resort deck that includes the world’s largest rooftop wave pool.

The Maldives expanded its scope as a star-studded destination with four new top-ranked hotels this year. The serene Joali Being (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/maldives-maldives/joali-being>) focuses on all-encompassing wellness, while Soneva Jani

(<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/maldives-maldives/soneva-jani>) stands out with villas featuring retractable roofs and waterslides that launch guests into a lagoon. The Fari Islands, an archipelago in the North Male Atoll, also scored a double win with the hip Patina Maldives, Fari Islands (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/maldives-maldives/patina-maldives-fari-islands>), whose art collection includes James Turrell's *Amarta*, a pavilion with an open ceiling to the skyscape, and the sleek The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/maldives-maldives/the-ritz-carlton-maldives-fari-islands>), whose round overwater villas circle a stunning spa.

Other noteworthy new Five-Star properties include the legendary Raffles Hotel Singapore (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/singapore-singapore/raffles-hotel-singapore>)—established in 1887, the hotel, which invented the famed Singapore Sling cocktail, recently emerged from a massive two-year renovation; Adare Manor (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/ireland-republic-of-ireland/adare-manor>), a grand Neo-Gothic castle surrounded by 840 verdant acres in Ireland's County Limerick; Capella Bangkok (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/bangkok-thailand/capella-bangkok>), which has riverside villas with outdoor hot tubs and a new Five-Star spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/bangkok-thailand/auriga-wellness-at-capella-bangkok>); Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/paris-france/royal-champagne-hotel-spa>), a modernist getaway among the vine-laden hills of Champagne, France; and Waldorf Astoria Dubai International Financial Centre (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/dubai-united-arab-emirates/waldorf-astoria-dubai-international-financial-centre>), a sophisticated stay tucked inside the Burj Daman skyscraper.





Four Seasons Resort and Residences in Napa received Five Stars. *Credit: Four Seasons Resort and Residences Napa Valley*

## ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE AMERICAS

Stateside, California racked up two Five-Star wine country wins, including Four Seasons Resort and Residences Napa Valley (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/napa-california/four-seasons-resort-and-residences-napa-valley>) and Montage Healdsburg (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/sonoma-california/montage-healdsburg>) in Sonoma, both of which opened in 2021. On the East Coast, the historic Chatham Bars Inn (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/cape-cod-massachusetts/chatham-bars-inn>) in Cape Cod comes with sweeping ocean views and meals spotlighting fresh produce from its farm, and The Rittenhouse (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/philadelphia-pennsylvania/the-rittenhouse>) in Philadelphia offers a contemporary gem with the lauded Lacroix (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/philadelphia-pennsylvania/lacroix-at-the-rittenhouse>) restaurant. While in Florida, The Boca Raton Beach Club (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/palm-beach-florida/the-boca-raton-beach-club>) received double Five-Star honors for its luxurious beachfront hotel and 44-treatment-room Spa Palmera (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/palm-beach-florida/spa-palmera>), which was designed to resemble Spain's Alhambra Palace. In the Midwest, the 92-story riverfront Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/chicago-illinois/trump-international-hotel-tower-chicago>) earned its first Five-Star status.



In Canada, the stylish The St. Regis Toronto (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/toronto-canada/the-st-regis-toronto>), which boasts the country's largest collection of luxury suites and a new top-rated spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/toronto-canada/the-spa-at-the-st-regis-toronto>), earned Five Stars this year. And in Mexico, Los Cabos scored big wins for Grand Velas Los Cabos (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/los-cabos-mexico/grand-velas-los-cabos>), an all-inclusive, all-suite hotel in a sail-shaped building where every accommodation overlooks the water, and Zadún, (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/los-cabos-mexico/zadun-a-ritz-carlton-reserve>) a retreat where every room comes with its own outdoor plunge pool.

The Caribbean also added three new Five-Star properties: Four Seasons Resort and Residences Anguilla (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/anguilla-caribbean/four-seasons-resort-and-residences-anguilla>), where guests can enjoy one of three picturesque pools (including the adults-only, infinity-edge Sunset Pool); Kimpton Seafire Resort + Spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/cayman-islands-cayman-islands/kimpton-seafire-resort-spa>), a colorful escape on Grand Cayman's famous Seven Mile Beach; and Rosewood Little Dix Bay (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/british-virgin-islands-caribbean/rosewood-little-dix-bay>), a secluded slice of sandy paradise in the British Virgin Islands.



Jean-Georges Philadelphia, set atop the Comcast Center, was named a Five-Star restaurant. *Credit: Jean-Georges Philadelphia*

## WINNING RESTAURANTS

This year's Star Award winners demonstrate that experiential dining isn't just a trend du jour—it's a gourmet mainstay. The Restaurant at Justin (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/monterey-carmel-big-sur-california/the-restaurant-at-justin>) in Paso Robles, California, became the first Five-Star restaurant in a vineyard with its win. Meanwhile, The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/hong-kong-china/the-landmark-mandarin-oriental-hong-kong>)'s Four-Star SOMM (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/hong-kong-china/somm>) delivers memorable sommelier-led meals and more than 100 wines and sakes by the glass. And in Las Vegas, Bellagio's Five-Star restaurant Picasso (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/las-vegas-nevada/picasso>) immerses diners in the cubist master's vibrant art and chef Julian Serrano's culinary masterpieces.

Additional Five-Star culinary highlights include Gabriel Kreuther (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/new-york-city-new-york/gabriel-kreuther>), the first new independent restaurant in New York City to receive the top rating in 10 years; 8 1/2 Otto e Mezzo Bombana Macau (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/macau-china/8-12-otto-e-mezzo-bombana-macau>), chef Umberto Bombana's Italian fine dining tucked inside Galaxy Macau; Jean-Georges Philadelphia (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/philadelphia-pennsylvania/jean-georges-philadelphia>), chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's French restaurant atop Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia in the Comcast Center; and The Ocean Room (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/restaurants/charleston-south-carolina/the-ocean-room>), a sophisticated steakhouse in The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island Golf Resort (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/charleston-south-carolina/the-sanctuary-at-kiawah-island-golf-resort>) with a seasonal menu of local meats.





One&Only Le Saint Géran's Wellness Spa is among the new Five-Star spas this year. *Credit: One&Only Le Saint Géran's Wellness Spa*

## SUMPTUOUS SPAS

Six destinations picked up first Five-Star spa accolades: Barbados (The Spa at Sandy Lane (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/barbados-barbados/the-spa-at-sandy-lane>)), Ireland (The Spa at Ashford Castle (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/ireland-republic-of-ireland/the-spa-at-ashford-castle>)), Kuwait (Spa and Wellness Centre at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait Burj Alshaya (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/kuwait-kuwait/spa-and-wellness-centre-at-four-seasons-hotel-kuwait-burj-alshaya>)), Madrid (The Spa at Four Seasons Hotel Madrid (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/madrid-spain/the-spa-at-four-seasons-hotel-madrid>)), Mauritius (One&Only Le Saint Géran's Wellness Spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/mauritius-indian-ocean/oneonly-le-saint-gerans-wellness->

spa)) and Vancouver (Willow Stream Spa at Fairmont Pacific Rim (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/vancouver-canada/willow-stream-spa-at-fairmont-pacific-rim>)).

Other new Five-Star standouts include Crown Spa Sydney (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/sydney-australia/crown-spa-sydney>), with La Prairie treatments and an Aqua Retreat; Iridium Spa at The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort, Puerto Rico (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/puerto-rico-puerto-rico/iridium-spa-at-the-st-regis-bahia-beach-resort-puerto-rico>), a tropical oasis that incorporates ingredients such as rum and coconut in its spa services; The Retreat Spa at Okada Manila (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/manila-philippines/the-retreat-spa-at-okada-manila>), which features a foot spa, reflexology center and barbershop; Serrano Spa (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/los-angeles-california/serrano-spa>) in Highland, California's Yaamava' Resort & Casino (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels/los-angeles-california/yaamava-resort-casino>) looks to the earth's elements (fire, water, earth and wood) to power its treatments; and two L.A. retreats: Fairmont Spa Century Plaza (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/los-angeles-california/fairmont-spa-century-plaza>) (offering a Himalayan salt room) and The Spa at West Hollywood EDITION (<https://www.forbestravelguide.com/spas/los-angeles-california/the-spa-at-west-hollywood-edition>) (which includes touchless treatments like infrared therapy). Whether you want to indulge in a spa vacation or make the best of traveling for work, these Star Award winners represent the pinnacle of pampering.



THE RITZ-CARLTON MALDIVES FARI ISLANDS ([HTTPS://STORIES.FORBESTRAVELGUIDE.COM/TAG/THE-RITZ-CARLTON-MALDIVES-FARI-ISLANDS](https://stories.forbestravelguide.com/tag/the-ritz-carlton-maldives-fari-islands))



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