

**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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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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# Hot HOTELS

block neighbor (and 2010 Hot List entrant) the Ace, albeit on a more elegant scale. Here, the crowd is a little older, more European, and more sophisticated than scruffy. Standard rooms are cozy and homely and feel like a well-appointed bedroom in a New York City town house, with crisp white sheets, tiny writing desks, Oriental carpets, large showers (no tubs), and refreshingly low-tech electronics that you control with a switch instead of a keyboard. There are no treats or extras—no turndown gifts or takeaways—but these shortcomings are compensated for by the location (equidistant between Midtown and SoHo, and steps from two subway lines), the price, and the on-site bar and restaurant, currently two of the most soigné boîtes in town. For a city hotel, it's also remarkably quiet: You won't hear your neighbors—but the constant creaking of the elevator cables may disturb light sleepers. While not exactly warm, staff are unpretentious and efficient. **If only:** Turndown arrived when expected. Why ask guests for a preferred time at check-in if their answer is going to be ignored? **The room to book:** Those ending in 0 through 9 face the street; the rest look into air shafts. Lower floors are noisier (212-796-1500; doubles from \$395). ● ● ● ● ●

**UNDER \$300** **21c Museum Hotel,** Cincinnati, Ohio  
**Hot The specs:** A 1924 landmark turned art hotel in downtown Cincinnati, next to the Contemporary Arts Center and across the street from the Aronoff Center for the Arts. **The look:** The old Metropole Hotel survives in the restored terrazzo floor, curving staircase, arched windows, and ornate plasterwork of 21c, its every corner, from the 156 guest rooms to the nine-story solarium, a showcase for contemporary art. Much of it is

playful and witty, such as the trademark four-foot yellow pen-guins that pop up in elevators and hallways. **The experience:** Just like its Louisville sister, Cincinnati's 21c hosts rotating exhibits and installations that draw locals as well as out-of-towners, and its restaurant, led by Louisville import Michael Paley, specializes in local ingredients like bison burgers cooked in a wood-burning fireplace. Once the theater crowd descends in the late evening, the mood goes from reflective to rollicking. Enjoy the surge by grabbing a drink at the street-level lounge or the rooftop bar for a panoramic city view. **If only:** The restaurant had better acoustics—shouting over an intimate dinner tends to ruin the mood. **The room to book:** Nos. 909 and 1009 have the best views of Cincinnati, but No. 919 gives you heated bathroom floors (513-578-6600; doubles from \$209). ● ● ● ● ●

**UNDER \$300** **The Attwater, Newport,** Rhode Island  
**Hot The specs:** 800-392-3717; doubles from \$159. ●

**UNDER \$300** **Weekapaug Inn,** Westerly, Rhode Island  
**Hot The specs:** A recently renovated legendary seaside inn on the National Register of Historic Places, with 27 guest rooms and four suites, a three-hour drive from New York and less than two from Boston. The inn's gray-slate roof, marsh-green painted shingle walls, and dull-red shutters blend with the surrounding protected seascape of grasses, saltwater ponds, pines, two-mile undeveloped barrier beach, and ocean breakers beyond. **The look:** Traditional WASP New England luxured up with \$20 million of modern comforts and as much aesthetic updating as the guardians of the National Register allow. Guest rooms are alluringly

spare, light, and airy with pastel painted walls, original simple wicker and wood furniture, pretty crewelwork and ticking upholstery, and braided rugs. The updating of the originally dark-painted reception rooms is comparatively cautious, conserving a tad more historic gloom (brown tiles, pastel chair coverings, drab turn-of-the-century chandeliers) than some might prefer. **The experience:** A flock of old-line dowagers who habitually flit down to Florida in the winter still home dependably back to the Weekapaug Inn with its intergenerational broods in the summer. (Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited in her day.) Nowadays, new-money yummy mummies with Ralph Lauren-attired banker hubbies and offspring attended by nannies join the throng. Excellent guided nature walks, golf, tennis, and fishing and boating expeditions in historic vessels can also be arranged. Meals served at the inn can suffer from slow or overanxious service and occasionally from dishes that skimp on size and taste. **If only:** The annoyingly loud and schmaltzy piped elevator music were silenced—or ramped up in intelligence and turned way down. **The room to book:** For memorable views over the pond to the dunes and the sea, get one with an even number on the third floor—Nos. 32, 34, or 36 (888-813-7862; doubles from \$280). ● ● ● ● ●

**UNDER \$300** **Heywood Hotel,** Austin, Texas  
**Hot The specs:** 512-271-5522; doubles from \$229. ●

**VIETNAM**  
**UNDER \$300** **InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort,** Danang

**Hot The specs:** A beach resort with 197 rooms on a spit of land just east of Danang. **The look:** Asian post-modern with a touch of colonial chic. Pagoda-style buildings and butterfly gardens spill down the hillside to a crescent of sand and sea. **The experience:** International hotel companies are only just discovering the Son Tra Peninsula, but Mercure and the other firms currently building here will have a hard time surpassing this resort, which draws Saigon fashionistas, Australian honeymooners, and Bostonians with babies in tow. Rooms, all of which face the water, are frankly gorgeous, and the amenity-filled baths have tubs the size of a European car. An adorable tram, shaped like a Vietnamese fishing boat, whisks guests up the hill to reception and the main restaurant, Citron, where the service is more enthusiastic than polished but the food—both Asian and Western—is beautifully prepared. **If only:** The layout weren't so tight; there's less privacy than you'd expect at a resort of this caliber. **The room to book:** Corner rooms have wraparound balconies, affording views in two directions (84-511-393-8888; doubles from \$230). ● ● ● ● ●

## An Lam Saigon River Private Residence,

Ho Chi Minh City  
**Hot The specs:** Fifteen rooms divided among seven villas on the Saigon River, 15 minutes by boat from District One. All rooms have private terraces; all but four have plunge pools. **The look:** Relaxed tropical Asian. Starting at 538 square feet, rooms (and baths) are huge, with a subdued, classical Vietnamese look—pine floors, carved hardwood armoires and daybeds, gathered silk chandeliers. Palms and frangipani trees hung with lanterns shade the footpaths. **The experience:** There's no shortage of spaces to chill out at this secluded hotel, from the couples-friendly interconnected sunbeds at the fountain-filled pool to the excellent riverfront alfresco restaurant, where you can sample Vietnamese home cooking while islands of water hyacinths float by. In keeping with the casual, intimate vibe, there's no reception; each room is appointed an attentive (but not overbearing) butler who can assist with everything from making dinner reservations and confirming flights to arranging babysitting. **If only:** Boat service didn't end at 9:30 P.M. The hotel is a 45-minute taxi ride from downtown Ho Chi Minh City, and many drivers get lost—bring along the hotel's phone number. **The room to book:** Watch the tide come in from the Song villa's expansive waterfront terrace (84-650-378-5555; doubles from \$360). ● ● ● ● ●

## Banyan Tree, Lăng Cô

**Hot The specs:** Forty-nine pool villas on the central coast of Vietnam, a 90-minute drive from the historic towns of Hue and Hoi An. The hotel is the first in a luxury recreational complex, its centerpiece an 18-hole golf course designed by Sir Nick Faldo. **The look:** Banyan Tree's first property in Vietnam pays homage to the opulence of the former imperial capital of Hue, 40 miles away, with clay-tiled roofs, lacquer and silk embellishments, and latticed screens and doors. Bamboo floors and wraparound floor-to-ceiling windows bring the outdoors in, and the king-size beds have unobstructed views of the private pool and lush garden. **The experience:** Start by booking a massage to channel the worry-free vibe of the place—you'll need it after the drive from Danang Airport, 35 painfully slow miles away (given the strictly enforced 30-mph speed limit). Wood-fired pizzas topped with local seafood are served at the beachfront café; the elegant Thai restaurant affords hillside sea views. **If only:** The airport transfer weren't so tedious. **The room to book:** Beach villas 116 through 120 are closest to the restaurants; lagoon villas 168 through 175 are near the spa (84-54-369-5888; doubles from \$735). ● ● ● ● ●



**STEP INTO STYLE**  
 London's The Amersand, an Edwardian town house turned high-style hotel.