

SPECIAL REPORT: WHERE YOU CAN STAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

# Condé Nast Traveler

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OUR COVER  
LOCATION  
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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2007

## 2007 HOT LIST

WORLD'S TOP NEW

**138** hotels\*  
\*including 24 under \$200

**75** Spas **95** Restaurants **25** Nightclubs



Europe

Monaco's Magic

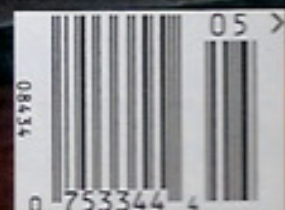
Egypt

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Condé Nast Traveler presents  
THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL

# HOT LIST




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## THE YEAR'S **138** TOP NEW HOTELS\*

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*With apologies to George Orwell, some hotels are more equal than others. Their superiority amid legions of also-rans comes not by dint of brand or price or even celebrity influence but from the plain fact that they deliver a superb night's stay, a judgment that comes only from firsthand experience. Luckily for you, we've done the work. Of the thousands of hotels that opened in the past year, we winnowed our list to the most promising and anonymously bedded down at each—filling the tubs, tasting the food, testing the staff. Though those that fell short far outnumbered those that made the cut, this year's list is nevertheless our largest ever, with 138 hotels winning us over on their look, location, service, and value. Spanning 46 countries and 6 continents, they range in size from a four-suite Mexican gem behind eighteenth-century walls to an 816-room (and counting) desert resort with a view of the Vegas Strip, and in price from \$80 for a smart B&B in Buenos Aires to \$10,000 for an exclusive-use yacht and private island in the Maldives (unlimited massages included). So what does it take for a hotel to be beyond compare? Read on.*

\*Including  FOR UNDER \$200 A NIGHT

best views, the most space, and a stately feel (353-49-4377700; farnhamestate.com; doubles, \$265-\$462). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

### Lodge at Doonbeg Golf Club, Doonbeg, County Clare

🔥 What appears to be an aristocrat's stately nineteenth-century seaside manor was in fact built in 2006 by the developers of South Carolina's Kiawah Island and designed entirely by Americans. But what is very real about Doonbeg (and all that really matters) is its stunning setting on a remote whitecapped bay in west County Clare, the perfection of its every detail, and staff who are easily among the most welcoming in Ireland. Accommodations are in one- to four-bedroom suites with high ceilings, gas fireplaces, kitchens, and sumptuous beds. The centerpiece of the resort is the Greg Norman-designed course mowed through the rolling marram grass dunes, but there are many diversions for nongolfers, too, including dolphin watching, hiking the nearby cliffs, treatments in the superb spa, and the simple pleasure of sipping tea or a Guinness and staring out at the windswept sea. **When to go:** Year-round. Mild winters allow golf throughout most of the year. **Which room to book:** Any oceanview suite (353-65-9055624; doonbeggolfclub.com; suites, \$545-\$1,062). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

### Bellinter House, County Meath

🔥 Designed in 1750 by Richard Castle, the architect who created Dublin's Parliament Building, Bellinter House was for centuries a sprawling estate and more recently a convent. Now this meticulously restored Palladian-style gem, on 12 green acres a 45-minute drive north of Dublin, has opened as a country house hotel with a hip twist. Cowhide covers the original pitch pine flooring, and tasteful embellishments, such as the modern artworks and the white paper bull's-head wall sconce, give a contemporary feel to this house of vast proportions. The 37 rooms couldn't be more comfortable, and there's ample diversion with two pools (one indoors), a screening room, a terrific restaurant, and walks along the River Boyne. The combined effect is a welcome as warm as the peat fires that burn in the public rooms. **When to go:** Both climate and ambience are pleasant year-round, though winter months have a decidedly more mellow vibe. **Which room to book:** No. 1 in the East Wing is spacious and has a dramatic vaulted ceiling (353-

46-9030900; bellinterhouse.com; doubles, \$292-\$506). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

#### ITALY

### JW Marriott Capri Tiberio Palace Resort & Spa, Capri

🔥 Just a five-minute stroll from Capri's piazzetta, this radiant 61-room Regency-style villa has been a smart spot since the early 1900s, but its latest incarnation may be its best yet. The hotel's confident sense of luxury is evident everywhere, from the luminous white piano bar and the indoor-outdoor pool to the sumptuous spa, which includes a full Roman bath. This combination of airiness and elegance extends to the bedrooms, where the palette of the palest pastels and the creamy marble baths trimmed in gold mosaic evoke Capri's easy languor. Upstairs, the elegant White Restaurant makes the most of the hotel's sea views with terraces that overlook the entire island. Its Mediterranean specialties include *pezzogna all'acqua pazza*, a local fish poached in herbs and tomatoes. Best of all are the staff, who manage everything with grace and style. **When to go:** In Mid-March, spring weather is not unusual, and the crowds have yet to arrive. **Which room to book:** No. 207, a junior suite, has the largest terrace (39-081-978-7853; tiberiopallace.com; doubles, \$459-\$1,914). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

### Castello del Nero Boutique Hotel & Spa, Chianti

🔥 With its 700 acres of centuries-old cypress trees and impressive gardens, Castello del Nero feels much like the fiefdom of a Tuscan lord—and in fact, the original structure has belonged to various noble families since the twelfth century. Frescoes and vaulted ceilings give the design grandeur and formality, as do the terracotta floors, claw-foot tubs, and sumptuous four-poster beds done in the baldachin style with fabric headboards. The 50 huge guest rooms designed by Alain Mertens (Madonna and Sting are among his clients) are airy and light, with beautiful fabrics and subtle colors. Florence is a 25-minute drive away, and the property offers free twice-a-day shuttle service. The only caveat is that the hotel imposes feudal tax-like charges for any extras—breakfast costs about \$40 a person, a glass of prosciutto is \$20, and Internet service is another \$26 per day. **When to go:** In mid-October, the tourists leave and the cuisine grows rich with truffles. **Which room to book:** No. 114 offers a quintessential Tuscan view

(39-055-806-470; castello-del-nero.com; doubles, \$661-\$1,316). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

### Villa Bordonni, Chianti

🔥 This sixteenth-century ten-bedroom property outside the town of Greve provides a comfortable and affordable base to explore one of Tuscany's best-known wine regions. Its owners, a Scottish couple with two successful restaurants in nearby Florence (Beccofino and Baldovino), have clearly done their homework: Everything from the trompe l'oeil wallpaper to the antique bar displays a keen attention to Italian authenticity. The rooms are saved from stuffiness by a creative mix of modern and antique (flat-screen TVs are mounted onto massive gilded mirror frames). A fire roars in the lovely open bar area on winter nights, and in the summer, the pool and outdoor gym afford spectacular views of the vineyards. Amid a plethora of Tuscan villa hotels that invariably feel too formal, the laid-back Villa Bordonni gets it right. **When to go:** In mid-October, the tourists leave and the cuisine grows rich with truffles. **Which room to book:** The Montefioralle has a cast-iron bath at the foot of the bed (39-055-884-0004; villabordonni.com; doubles, \$223-\$380). 🍷 🏖️ 🏊 🍴 🕒

### Riva Lofts, Florence

🔥 Designed by Florentine architect Claudio Nardi, this striking nine-room property, in a refurbished nineteenth-century factory on the southern bank of the Arno just removed from the city center, is a fresh counterpart to the city's more prevalent traditional design. The combination of spare, loftlike rooms with in-suite kitchens and a common room with an honor bar and a fireplace creates the feel of stylish Florentine apartments. Nardi's design mixes natural woods and various stone surfaces with an eclectic assortment of furniture that includes white leather sofas, cowhide rugs, and oversize lamps and mirrors. Alice Nardi, the resourceful owner (and the architect's daughter), can recommend everything from little-known restaurants to a barbershop, and the hotel has bicycles to help get you around town. **When to go:** Early April and May for perfect weather. **Which room to book:** Suite 4 has an incredible view of the Arno, the Parco delle Cascine, and Brunelleschi's cupola from its living room. The bedroom has a concealed peephole in the wall, so you can see the same scenery (39-055-7130272; rivahotel.it; doubles, \$249-\$721). 🍷 🏖️

#### KEY TO SYMBOLS

🍷 = Bar/lounge 🏖️ = Beach 🏊 = Gym 🍴 = Pool 🕒 = Spa 🔥 = Hot Spa 2007 🕒 = 24-hour room service 🔥 = Hot 🔥 = Hotter 🔥 = Hottest