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BEYOND LUXURY AWARDS 2026.

EXTENDED CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

BEST LUXURY HOTELS OF THE YEAR IN SPAIN '26 —Classic, Lifestyle, Resort, Urban, Boutique.

This year, we've evolved our flagship category to reflect the rich diversity of Spain's luxury hospitality landscape. Rather than crowning a single winner, we recognize excellence across five distinct segments—because true luxury isn't one-size-fits-all.

Each segment demands its own expertise, vision, and soul.

1 Classic Hotel

Honors timeless excellence rooted in heritage and elegance.

Classic hotels are the grand dames of hospitality—properties where history whispers through every corridor and tradition is not merely preserved but elevated. These are establishments that have earned their place in the cultural fabric of their destinations, often occupying historic buildings of architectural significance or operating with decades (sometimes centuries) of hospitality legacy.

What defines a classic hotel isn't age alone, but rather a commitment to timeless standards of service, refined elegance, and an almost ceremonial approach to hospitality. Think polished marble, crystal chandeliers, white-gloved service, and a reverence for protocol that never feels stuffy but rather reassuringly gracious.

These properties understand that luxury, at its most enduring, is about consistency, discretion, and a kind of institutional memory that anticipates your needs before you articulate them. They are the keepers of tradition in an age of disruption—and they do it with unwavering confidence and grace.

This category is for hotels that: Embody heritage and timeless elegance | Operate in historically significant buildings or with long-standing legacy | Deliver impeccable traditional service | Create an atmosphere of refined formality balanced with warmth | Represent the gold standard of classic luxury hospitality

2 Lifestyle Hotel

Recognizes modern, design-forward hotels appealing to trend-conscious guests.

Lifestyle hotels are the cultural provocateurs of hospitality—properties that don't just accommodate guests, they curate tribes. These are design-led destinations where aesthetic identity is as important as thread count, where the lobby doubles as a social hub, and where the hotel itself becomes a statement about who you are and how you want to be seen.

This category celebrates hotels that embrace contemporary culture, art, music, fashion, and social rituals. They're Instagram-ready without being superficial, design-obsessed without sacrificing comfort, and socially vibrant without compromising on service. Think bold interiors, collaborations with emerging artists, signature events that locals want to attend, and a palpable energy that makes every corner feel alive.

Lifestyle hotels attract a specific kind of traveler: culturally curious, design-savvy, socially connected, and allergic to boring. These properties understand that luxury today is less about formality and more about authenticity, creativity, and the creation of shareable moments that feel genuine rather than staged.

This category is for hotels that: Lead with design and contemporary aesthetics | Create social spaces that attract both guests and locals | Embrace cultural programming (art, music, events) | Cultivate a distinct personality and brand identity | Appeal to travelers who value style, creativity, and cultural currency

3 Resort

For resorts offering transformative, multigenerational and immersive experiences.

Resort hotels are self-contained universes—destinations where guests don't just stay, they immerse themselves in a lifestyle, a landscape, and a rhythm entirely different from their everyday lives. These are properties extensive enough to offer multiple experiences under one roof (or across one estate), yet cohesive enough to feel like a singular, carefully orchestrated world.

What distinguishes a true luxury resort is its ability to cater to diverse needs simultaneously: the couple seeking romantic seclusion, the family creating memories across generations, the wellness devotee on a transformative retreat, the golfer perfecting their swing. A great resort doesn't fragment these experiences but weaves them into a harmonious whole where everyone finds their version of paradise.

These properties typically occupy significant land, offer multiple dining concepts, extensive recreational facilities (spas, sports, water activities), and create a sense of temporal suspension—where days blend together in the best possible way and the outside world feels delightfully distant. The resort becomes the destination itself, not merely a place to sleep near one.

This category is for hotels that: Occupy expansive properties with multiple facilities and experiences | Offer diverse programming for different guest profiles (couples, families, wellness seekers) | Create immersive, transformative experiences beyond accommodation | Function as destinations in themselves | Deliver a complete lifestyle proposition within their boundaries

4 Urban Hotel

Celebrates city-based hotels that epitomize urban luxury and cultural vibrancy.

Urban hotels are the beating heart of city hospitality—properties that don't just exist within a metropolis but actively channel its energy, culture, and sophistication. These are hotels where the city itself becomes part of the experience, where location is leverage, and where the property serves as both sanctuary from urban intensity and gateway to its best offerings.

The finest urban hotels master a delicate balance: providing a refuge of calm and luxury while remaining utterly connected to the pulse of their city. They're where international travelers come to understand a destination's cultural codes, where business leaders conduct their most important meetings, and where locals celebrate their most significant moments.

What sets exceptional urban hotels apart is their ability to be simultaneously cosmopolitan and locally rooted. They offer world-class amenities and service standards while reflecting the unique character of their city through design, gastronomy, art, and the intangible atmosphere that makes a place feel authentic rather than generic. They're as comfortable hosting a CEO as they are welcoming a design enthusiast or a cultural traveler.

This category is for hotels that: Occupy prime locations in major cities | Seamlessly integrate urban sophistication with local character | Serve as cultural and social anchors within their destinations | Offer services and amenities tailored to urban rhythms (business, culture, dining) | Balance cosmopolitan standards with authentic local identity

5 Boutique Hotel

Showcases small-scale hotels with distinct personality and exceptional design.

Boutique hotels are the antithesis of formulaic hospitality—intimate properties where scale enables a level of personalization, creativity, and attention to detail that larger establishments simply cannot match. Typically under 50 rooms (and often significantly smaller), these hotels trade breadth of facilities for depth of experience and character.

What defines boutique luxury isn't size alone but rather the freedom that intimacy provides: freedom to take design risks, to curate highly specific experiences, to know guests by name and preference, to operate without the constraints of brand standards or corporate playbooks. These are hotels with a singular vision—often owner-operated or independently minded—where every design decision, every service gesture, and every amenity reflects a coherent point of view.

The best boutique hotels feel less like hotels and more like private homes with impeccable taste and professional service. They attract travelers who value individuality over predictability, who appreciate that their room might be different from the one next door, and who understand that true luxury is often found in the unexpected detail, the personal touch, the story behind the design choice.

This category is for hotels that: Offer 50 rooms or fewer | Demonstrate exceptional design and distinctive personality | Provide highly personalized, intimate service | Operate with creative independence and singular vision | Create experiences impossible to replicate at scale

EXPERIENCE & ATMOSPHERE CATEGORIES

6 Best Hotel with a Soul

Awarded to the property that inspires guests through authenticity, individuality, and a true sense of place.

Some hotels you remember for their amenities. Others, you remember because they moved you. This category honors properties that transcend functional hospitality to create something more profound: a genuine emotional connection, a sense of belonging, an experience that lingers in memory not for what you did but for how you felt.

A hotel with soul possesses an intangible quality—call it authenticity, character, or spirit—that can't be manufactured through design alone or purchased through luxury amenities. It emerges from a combination of elements: thoughtful stewardship of heritage or place, a team whose passion is palpable, design choices that tell rather than shout, experiences rooted in local culture rather than imported luxury tropes.

These are properties where you feel the presence of human intention and care in every detail. Where the building itself seems to have stories to tell. Where the staff don't just work but genuinely inhabit the space with pride. Where authenticity isn't a marketing term but a lived reality. Guests leave these hotels not just satisfied but somehow changed—inspired by the place, moved by the people, connected to something larger than a transaction.

This category is for hotels that: Create profound emotional connections with guests | Demonstrate authentic sense of place and cultural rootedness | Operate with visible passion, intention, and care | Tell compelling stories through their existence and operation | Inspire guests in ways that transcend conventional luxury markers

7 Best Insider Experience

Honoring properties that open exclusive doors to rare, behind-the-scenes, or hidden moments.

In an age where information is democratized and access seems universal, true rarity lies not in what everyone can see but in what remains hidden—until the right guide opens the door. This category celebrates hotels that leverage their deep local connections, insider knowledge, and creative vision to offer experiences that feel genuinely privileged and impossible to replicate independently.

These aren't standard concierge services or packaged tours rebranded as "exclusive." They're experiences that require genuine relationships, rare access, cultural fluency, and often years of trust-building within a community. Think private studio visits with reclusive artists. After-hours access to cultural institutions. Introductions to master craftspeople in their workshops. Culinary experiences in family kitchens that don't open to the public. Natural moments in protected environments. Participation in local traditions typically closed to outsiders.

What distinguishes genuine insider experiences is that they feel like privileges rather than purchases—moments when guests sense they're being welcomed somewhere special, introduced to someone remarkable, or shown something few others will ever see. The hotel becomes not just accommodation but a key that unlocks hidden dimensions of a destination.

This category is for hotels that: Provide access to experiences unavailable through conventional channels | Leverage deep local relationships and insider networks | Create moments that feel privileged rather than purchased | Offer behind-the-scenes access or exclusive cultural encounters | Serve as genuine cultural bridges between guests and destinations

8 Best Hotel for Celebrations & Milestones

Honors properties excelling at crafting bespoke experiences for life's most meaningful moments, from intimate proposals to multigenerational gatherings.

Life's most significant moments deserve settings and service equal to their emotional weight. This category recognizes hotels that have mastered the art of celebration—properties where proposals become legends, anniversaries are honored with genuine thoughtfulness, milestone birthdays feel appropriately momentous, and multigenerational family gatherings unfold with seamless grace.

Excellence in this category requires a sophisticated combination of skills: the emotional intelligence to understand what makes each celebration meaningful, the creativity to design bespoke experiences that feel personal rather than templated, the logistical mastery to execute flawlessly, and the discretion to balance presence and invisibility as each moment requires.

These hotels don't just accommodate celebrations—they elevate them. They understand that a proposal isn't just about a room with rose petals, but about reading the couple's story and creating a moment that authentically reflects their relationship. That a milestone birthday might call for adventure or contemplation depending on the person. That multigenerational gatherings need spaces and programming that allow different ages to connect and also enjoy their own rhythms.

This category is for hotels that: Demonstrate exceptional creativity and personalization in celebration experiences | Successfully orchestrate complex multigenerational or group celebrations | Show emotional intelligence and authentic care in milestone moments | Create bespoke experiences rather than relying on standard celebration packages | Balance flawless execution with genuine warmth and humanity

9 Best Sunset Experience

Recognizes hotels offering the most evocative sunset moments—spaces where light, design, and atmosphere converge into shareable magic.

Sunsets are universal, but the experience of watching one can be transcendent or forgettable depending on where you are and how the space is orchestrated. This category honors hotels that have elevated sunset viewing from passive observation to curated experience—properties where geography, architecture, design, atmosphere, and service converge to create moments worth traveling for.

The best sunset experiences combine natural advantage (exceptional vantage points, unobstructed horizons, dramatic landscapes) with intentional design and programming. They understand that a memorable sunset isn't just about the view but about how you're positioned to enjoy it: the comfort of seating, the soundtrack (or thoughtful silence), the quality of the cocktail in your hand, the company you're keeping, the way staff anticipate needs without interrupting the moment.

These are spaces that become destinations in themselves—rooftops, beach clubs, cliff-top terraces, infinity pools—where guests and sometimes locals gather with a sense of ritual and anticipation. Where the hotel's identity becomes intertwined with those golden-hour moments. Where sunset isn't just a time of day but an experience the property has mastered and made its own.

This category is for hotels that: Offer exceptional vantage points for sunset viewing | Design spaces specifically to maximize golden-hour experiences | Create atmospheres (through music, service, design) that enhance the moment | Demonstrate thoughtful curation of the complete sunset experience | Have made sunset moments central to their identity and guest experience

DESTINATION & STYLE CATEGORIES

10 Best New Luxury Hotel in Spain

Honors recent openings (late 2024 / early 2026) offering fresh innovation.

First impressions matter, and in hospitality, debut years reveal a property's true character. This category celebrates hotels that have recently opened their doors to the Spanish market, bringing fresh perspectives, innovative concepts, or elevated standards to their destinations.

New hotels face unique challenges: building a team culture from scratch, establishing operational rhythms, creating reputation without history, and proving that their vision translates from concept to lived experience. The properties that excel do more than simply launch—they arrive with confidence, purpose, and a clear understanding of the gap they're filling in the market.

What we look for in exceptional new openings: a coherent vision executed with polish from day one, innovation that enhances rather than distracts from core hospitality, teams that perform with the cohesion of veteran operations despite their newness, and evidence that the property is already making an impact on its destination's luxury landscape. These are hotels that don't ask for patience as they "work out the kinks"—they emerge fully formed and compelling.

This category is for hotels that: Opened between late 2024 and early 2026 | Demonstrate strong vision and execution from launch | Bring innovation or elevated standards to their market | Show operational maturity despite recent opening | Make immediate impact on Spain's luxury hospitality landscape

11 Best Luxury Hotel of the Year in Portugal

Celebrates Portugal's most outstanding luxury hotel, honoring overall excellence across hospitality, design, guest experience, and innovation.

Portugal has emerged as one of Europe's most compelling luxury destinations, with a hospitality scene that balances historic grandeur with contemporary sophistication, urban energy with coastal tranquility, and authentic cultural identity with international appeal. This category honors the Portuguese property that most brilliantly exemplifies luxury hospitality excellence across all dimensions.

We're evaluating holistic excellence: the quality of accommodations and facilities, the distinction of design and architecture, the warmth and professionalism of service, the thoughtfulness of food and beverage programs, the integration with Portuguese culture and place, and the overall guest experience from booking through departure. This isn't about a single standout element but rather comprehensive excellence across every touchpoint.

The winning property will demonstrate what makes Portuguese hospitality special—perhaps that particular combination of formality and warmth, of historical awareness and contemporary relevance, of local pride and cosmopolitan sophistication. It will be a hotel that could only exist in Portugal, yet appeals to international luxury travelers. A property that honors its country's hospitality traditions while pushing them forward.

This category is for Portuguese hotels that: Demonstrate comprehensive excellence across all hospitality dimensions | Embody the best of Portuguese luxury hospitality culture | Balance local authenticity with international standards | Excel in service, design, facilities, and guest experience | Represent Portugal at the highest level of luxury hospitality

12 Best Luxury Hotel of the Year in Andorra

Honors Andorra's pinnacle of luxury hospitality, celebrating excellence in mountain elegance and alpine experiences.

Andorra's luxury hospitality scene occupies a unique niche—combining the alpine sophistication of neighboring France and Switzerland with Catalan cultural influences and its own distinctive character as a mountain principality. This category recognizes the Andorran property that best delivers luxury hospitality excellence in this specific alpine context.

We're looking for hotels that excel across the particular demands of mountain luxury: world-class winter sports services and facilities, spa and wellness offerings appropriate to alpine environments, gastronomy that honors mountain traditions while achieving contemporary standards, and the ability to create compelling experiences across seasons (or to so thoroughly master winter that year-round operation is unnecessary).

The winning property will demonstrate comprehensive excellence while showing clear Andorran identity—whether through architecture that responds to mountain landscapes, service that reflects local hospitality culture, culinary programs celebrating regional products, or experiences that connect guests to Andorra's unique position between cultures and countries. It will represent the principality at the highest level of luxury hospitality.

This category is for Andorran hotels that: Demonstrate comprehensive luxury hospitality excellence | Excel in alpine and mountain hospitality services | Reflect Andorra's unique cultural and geographic identity | Offer exceptional winter sports experiences and facilities | Represent Andorra at the pinnacle of mountain luxury

13 Best Luxury Hotel for Art Lovers

Recognizes hotels that are cultural platforms and art showcases.

These hotels understand that art is not decoration but dialogue—a way to transform spaces, provoke thought, create identity, and connect guests to both place and culture. This category celebrates properties where art curation is taken as seriously as any other aspect of the guest experience, where the collection tells stories, where the hotel itself functions as a cultural platform.

Excellence in this category goes beyond merely hanging expensive works on walls. It requires vision, expertise, commitment, and a genuine belief that art enriches hospitality. The best art hotels work with curators, support living artists, rotate exhibitions, provide context and education, commission site-specific works, and create programming that brings art to life rather than treating it as static backdrop.

These properties attract a specific kind of traveler: culturally curious, aesthetically literate, intellectually engaged. They're guests who appreciate that art collection reflects values and vision, who want to be challenged and inspired by their surroundings, who understand that staying in a hotel with museum-quality art is a privilege and an education. The hotel becomes a reason to visit, not just a place to stay while visiting museums.

This category is for hotels that: Demonstrate serious art curation and collection | Function as cultural platforms beyond accommodation | Support contemporary artists and cultural programming | Provide context, education, and engagement around art | Attract and serve culturally sophisticated travelers

14 Best Barefoot Luxury Hotel

Honors properties that fuse simplicity, comfort, and serene connection to nature.

Barefoot luxury represents a philosophy: that true sophistication sometimes means stripping away rather than adding, that connection to nature can be more restorative than elaborate amenities, that informal elegance often delivers more profound luxury than formal opulence. This category celebrates hotels that have mastered relaxed refinement—properties where you kick off your shoes, breathe deeply, and reconnect with simpler pleasures.

These hotels typically occupy extraordinary natural settings—beaches, islands, countryside, mountains—and their design and ethos reflect those environments. Natural materials, indoor-outdoor living, minimal but impeccable amenities, service that's warm and intuitive rather than formal, and a palpable sense of calm that permeates the property. The luxury is in the quality of materials, the sophistication of simplicity, the freedom from convention.

What distinguishes barefoot luxury from casual or beach resort categories is intentionality and execution. These properties have made conscious choices to prioritize certain values—authenticity, sustainability,

wellness, connection to place—over conventional luxury markers. Yet nothing feels compromised; rather, everything feels elevated through thoughtfulness and a deep understanding of what creates genuine relaxation and joy.

This category is for hotels that: Embrace relaxed elegance and informal luxury | Demonstrate strong connection to natural settings | Prioritize authenticity and simplicity over opulence | Create environments that encourage genuine relaxation and connection | Execute "less is more" philosophy with sophistication and intention

15 Best Island Getaway

Honors hotels offering inspiring island-style escapes and coastal joie de vivre.

Islands possess a particular magic—a sense of remove from ordinary life, a slower rhythm, a permission to exist differently. This category celebrates hotels that capture and amplify that island essence, whether they're on Mediterranean isles, Atlantic archipelagos, or Balearic paradises. These are properties that understand island living isn't just about location but about a state of mind and way of being.

The best island hotels don't fight their geography—they embrace it. They design with the climate, landscape, and local culture in mind. They understand that island guests are seeking something specific: escape, simplicity, natural beauty, perhaps a touch of adventure, and above all, a sense of having truly left the everyday world behind. These hotels facilitate that psychological journey while delivering luxury standards that never compromise.

What sets exceptional island properties apart is their ability to balance remote tranquility with impeccable service, rustic authenticity with refined comfort, and intimate scale with complete experiences. They master the logistics that make island locations challenging while making everything feel effortless for guests. They become synonymous with their islands—places people dream about during gray city winters.

This category is for hotels that: Capture and express authentic island character and lifestyle | Balance remote location with excellent service and amenities | Create a sense of escape and temporal suspension | Reflect their island's unique landscape, culture, and rhythm | Make island life feel like the ultimate luxury

16 Best Little Gem

Celebrates independent or boutique gems (≤ 40 rooms) with ultra-personalized luxury.

In the world of luxury hospitality, sometimes the most extraordinary experiences come in the smallest packages. This category is dedicated to intimate properties of 30 rooms or fewer—hotels where limited size enables unlimited personalization, where every guest is known, where service can be genuinely bespoke rather than aspirationally customized.

These little gems operate with advantages that larger properties cannot match: the ability to remember every guest's preferences, to adapt service and offerings on the fly, to maintain design and experiential consistency across every room and space, to make decisions quickly without corporate approval layers, and to create the feeling of being welcomed into a private home rather than checking into a hotel.

What elevates a property from merely small to genuine gem status is the quality of vision and execution. These hotels punch above their weight, delivering experiences that rival (and often surpass) much larger luxury properties. They're often independently owned or operated, allowing for creative freedom and personal expression. They attract travelers who value intimate scale, distinctive character, and the kind of personalized attention that only small properties can genuinely deliver.

This category is for hotels that: Offer 30 rooms or fewer | Demonstrate exceptional personalization and guest recognition | Maintain consistent quality and vision across all spaces | Operate with independence and creative freedom | Create intimate, highly curated experiences impossible at larger scale

17 Best Rooftop

Celebrates hotels with spectacular elevated spaces that blend breathtaking views, sophisticated design, and memorable outdoor hospitality moments.

A great rooftop is more than real estate—it's theater, social hub, Instagram moment, and sensory experience rolled into one elevated platform. This category honors hotels that have transformed their top floors or terraces into destinations that draw both guests and discerning locals, spaces where design, service, atmosphere, and yes, views, combine to create something greater than the sum of their parts.

The best hotel rooftops understand they're competing not just with other hotels but with the city's entire social and cultural scene. They succeed by creating environments that feel complete: exceptional food and beverage programs, thoughtful design that enhances rather than competes with views, service that's attentive without being intrusive, music and atmosphere that set the right tone, and a sense of occasion that makes visiting feel special rather than routine.

These spaces have become essential to their hotels' identities—sometimes even eclipsing the rooms themselves in terms of reputation and draw. They extend the hotel's reach into the local community, create buzz and desire, provide content that travels, and offer guests experiences worth centering a visit around. A rooftop done right isn't an amenity; it's a reason to book.

This category is for hotels that: Have created rooftop spaces that function as destinations | Combine exceptional views with sophisticated design and atmosphere | Offer compelling food, beverage, and service programs | Attract both hotel guests and discerning locals | Make rooftop experiences central to hotel identity

18 Best Beach Club

Celebrates beach clubs that have become coastal destinations, blending waterfront luxury, culinary excellence, and vibrant social atmosphere.

The beach club has evolved from simple seaside amenity to lifestyle destination—spaces where sun, sea, and sophistication converge into experiences that draw both hotel guests and discerning locals. This category honors properties that have mastered elevated beach hospitality, creating clubs that become synonymous with their destinations' coastal culture.

Exceptional beach clubs orchestrate multiple elements seamlessly: prime beachfront locations with thoughtful layouts (daybeds, cabanas, pools) that maximize views while creating intimate zones; gastronomy that delivers restaurant-quality cuisine in relaxed seaside settings; beverage programs from perfectly executed classics to creative signatures; and service that's professional yet relaxed. The best also understand atmosphere—curating soundtracks, creating events, and balancing energetic social scenes with tranquil sanctuaries within the same space.

What distinguishes truly great beach clubs is their ability to deliver luxury without pretension, sophistication without stuffiness. They make beachgoing feel elevated and effortless simultaneously, creating experiences worth the premium positioning and memories worth returning for season after season.

This category is for hotels that: Have created beach clubs that function as coastal destinations | Demonstrate excellence in beachfront hospitality and service | Offer exceptional gastronomy and beverage programs in beach settings | Create compelling atmospheres and social scenes | Balance luxury standards with authentic beach club culture | Attract both hotel guests and local/regional beach enthusiasts

19 Best Architecture & Interior Design

Honors the most inspiring architectural and interior projects.

Architecture and design aren't merely the container for hospitality—they're fundamental to how guests experience luxury, comfort, beauty, and place. This category recognizes hotels where architecture and interior design have been executed at the highest level, creating spaces that are visually stunning, functionally brilliant, and emotionally resonant.

Exceptional hotel design requires a sophisticated balancing act: creating beauty without sacrificing comfort, expressing strong vision without overwhelming guests, respecting context (historical, cultural, geographic) while offering contemporary luxury, and making bold statements that remain timeless rather than trendy. The best projects feel both of their moment and enduring, both specific to their location and universally appealing.

We're looking for projects that demonstrate design excellence across multiple dimensions: architectural innovation or sensitive restoration, interior spaces that tell coherent stories, thoughtful material selection, lighting that enhances rather than overwhelms, and crucially, designs that work—spaces that don't just photograph beautifully but actually enhance the hospitality experience. These are hotels where design elevates every moment of the guest journey.

This category is for hotels that: Demonstrate exceptional architectural design or restoration | Execute interior design at the highest creative and technical level | Balance aesthetic vision with functional hospitality needs | Show thoughtful integration with context and place | Create spaces that are both photogenic and genuinely livable

20 Best Heritage Hotel

Celebrates properties where history, architecture, and storytelling converge to create living legacies of cultural significance.

Heritage hotels occupy a unique position in luxury hospitality—they're not just accommodation but living monuments, cultural guardians, and storytellers. This category honors properties housed in buildings of genuine historical significance, where the weight and wonder of the past are preserved, respected, and made accessible to contemporary travelers without being frozen in aspic.

The finest heritage hotels perform a delicate alchemy: respecting their buildings' historical integrity while introducing modern comfort and contemporary luxury; preserving architectural and cultural significance while ensuring the property functions as a hotel, not a museum; and allowing guests to experience history without subjecting them to historical hardships (inadequate plumbing, uncomfortable beds, poor climate control).

These properties require specialized expertise: understanding of historical conservation, sensitivity to cultural significance, knowledge of period-appropriate restoration techniques, and the vision to integrate necessary modern systems invisibly. But technical excellence alone isn't enough. The best heritage hotels also master the art of storytelling—helping guests understand and appreciate the layers of history they're inhabiting, making the past feel present and relevant.

This category is for hotels that: Occupy buildings of genuine historical and cultural significance | Demonstrate excellence in historical preservation and restoration | Successfully integrate contemporary luxury with historical integrity | Tell compelling stories about their heritage | Function as both luxury hotels and cultural guardians

21 Best Luxury Ski Hotel (Spain & Andorra)

Celebrates hotels delivering the ultimate alpine experience, from slope-side elegance to après-ski sophistication.

Mountain hospitality demands a particular set of skills and sensibilities. This category recognizes hotels in Spain and Andorra that have mastered alpine luxury—properties where the mountain experience is enhanced by exceptional hospitality, where the thrill of the slopes is matched by the pleasure of returning to refined comfort, where winter sports culture meets sophisticated service.

Great ski hotels understand their guests' rhythms and needs: early breakfasts before first lifts, equipment storage and boot-warming stations, ski concierge services, heartwarming cuisine after cold days on the mountain, spa treatments targeted at ski-weary muscles, cozy design that embraces rather than fights alpine aesthetics, and après-ski scenes that feel both vibrant and authentic.

But excellence in this category isn't just about servicing skiers. The best mountain hotels create complete winter experiences: properties that appeal to non-skiers in the group, that offer winter activities beyond the slopes, that function as year-round destinations or excel so thoroughly at winter that guests wouldn't dream of visiting any other season. They balance rustic mountain charm with refined luxury, creating spaces that feel appropriately alpine without resorting to cliché.

This category is for hotels that: Excel in alpine hospitality and ski-focused service | Understand and cater to winter sports culture | Offer slope-side convenience or excellent ski access | Create compelling après-ski and non-skiing experiences | Balance mountain authenticity with refined luxury.

SPACES & FACILITIES CATEGORIES

22 Best Signature Suite

For suites that epitomize a hotel's ultimate vision of luxury, design excellence, and unforgettable guest experience.

A hotel's signature suite is its masterpiece—the room where budget is least constrained, where design vision is most fully realized, where size allows for features impossible in standard rooms, and where every element comes together to create the property's ultimate accommodation offering. This category celebrates those crown jewels.

Exceptional signature suites go far beyond merely being large or expensive. They tell a story about the hotel's identity and values. They may showcase the work of renowned designers or architects. They might offer historical significance or occupy the most privileged location in the building. They feature amenities and services found nowhere else in the property. Most importantly, they create experiences that justify their positioning at the apex of the hotel's accommodation hierarchy.

What we're evaluating: design excellence and cohesive vision, thoughtful use of space and light, exceptional quality of materials and craftsmanship, unique features or amenities that distinguish the suite, integration of technology without compromising aesthetics, and crucially, whether the suite delivers an experience genuinely elevated beyond the hotel's other rooms. The best signature suites become destinations in themselves—spaces people dream about occupying.

This category is for suites that: Represent the hotel's ultimate vision of luxury accommodation | Demonstrate exceptional design and spatial planning | Offer unique amenities or features unavailable elsewhere in the property | Justify premium positioning through genuinely elevated experiences | Create memorable experiences that extend beyond size or opulence

23 Best Hotel Pool

Celebrates exceptional pools that embody each property's unique spirit, from serene coastal retreats to vibrant urban sanctuaries.

A pool can be purely functional or it can be iconic—a space so thoughtfully designed and integrated into the property that it becomes one of the hotel's defining features. This category recognizes pools that have transcended utility to become experiences: spaces that guests seek out, that define the property's visual identity, that create the kinds of moments people share and remember.

Great hotel pools succeed across multiple dimensions. Aesthetically, they must be stunning—whether through dramatic settings, innovative design, perfect proportions, or thoughtful integration with their surroundings. Functionally, they must work beautifully: appropriate depths, comfortable temperatures, intuitive layouts, and excellent maintenance. Experientially, they must create the right atmosphere: service that anticipates needs, food and beverage offerings that enhance poolside time, and a sense of place that aligns with the hotel's overall character.

The best pools also understand their role within their context. An urban rooftop pool creates different magic than an infinity pool overlooking the ocean or a natural pool nestled in mountain landscape. Each must express its environment while offering something beyond what nature or location alone provides. These pools become synonymous with their hotels—the image you remember, the space you can't wait to return to.

This category is for pools that: Demonstrate exceptional design and visual impact | Create memorable guest experiences beyond swimming | Integrate thoughtfully with their environment and hotel identity | Offer excellent service, amenities, and atmosphere | Become defining features of their properties.

WELLNESS CATEGORY

24 Best Wellness Hotel

Celebrates hotels that deliver exceptional wellness experiences, from innovative spa concepts to transformative holistic retreats where wellbeing is woven into every touchpoint.

Wellness has evolved from spa amenity to holistic philosophy, and the hotels leading this evolution understand that true wellbeing touches every aspect of the guest experience. This category honors properties that have embraced wellness as a core value, where the commitment to guest health and renewal is evident not just in the spa but throughout the property and programming.

Elite wellness hotels approach the subject comprehensively. Physical wellness through exceptional spa facilities, fitness programming, movement classes, and perhaps medical or therapeutic services. Nutritional wellness through menus designed by nutritionists, organic and locally sourced ingredients, and options for various dietary needs and preferences. Mental and emotional wellness through meditation, mindfulness programming, digital detox options, and spaces designed to promote calm. Environmental wellness through biophilic design, connection to nature, and sustainable operations.

What distinguishes the very best is integration and authenticity. Wellness isn't a marketing add-on but a genuine organizing principle. The architecture promotes wellbeing. The staff are trained in wellness philosophy. The guest journey is designed to support restoration and renewal. These hotels attract guests seeking transformation rather than just relaxation—people who leave feeling genuinely renewed, perhaps carrying habits and insights that extend beyond their stay.

This category is for hotels that: Demonstrate holistic commitment to wellness beyond spa facilities | Offer comprehensive wellness programming (physical, nutritional, mental) | Integrate wellness principles throughout the property and operations | Attract and serve wellness-focused travelers | Create transformative rather than merely relaxing experiences

GASTRONOMY CATEGORIES

25 Best Gourmet Experiences

Celebrates immersive, personalized culinary moments at every meal.

This category recognizes hotels where food isn't just sustenance or amenity but rather a defining element of the guest experience—properties that have built their reputation partly on the exceptional quality and creativity of their culinary offerings across multiple touchpoints. These are hotels where breakfast is an event, where lunch venues are destinations, where dinner might be the evening's highlight, where in-room dining maintains restaurant standards.

Excellence in this category requires multiple elements working in harmony: sourcing the finest ingredients (often locally, sometimes exclusively); employing talented culinary teams whose vision aligns with the hotel's overall philosophy; maintaining consistency across multiple outlets and meal periods; creating dining environments that enhance the food; and delivering service that's knowledgeable, professional, and warm.

The best gourmet hotels understand that different guests have different culinary needs and desires. They offer diversity without losing focus—perhaps a fine dining restaurant, a more casual all-day venue, a specialty concept, and room service that doesn't feel like an afterthought. They might offer cooking classes, market tours, wine tastings, or chef's table experiences. Food becomes a lens through which guests understand the destination, the season, and the hotel's values.

This category is for hotels that: Excel across multiple dining venues and meal periods | Demonstrate exceptional culinary quality and creativity | Source ingredients thoughtfully and prepare them skillfully | Create compelling dining atmospheres and service | Make gastronomy central to the hotel's identity and guest experience

26 Best Gastronomic Restaurant in a Hotel

For hotel restaurants that deliver remarkable culinary artistry.

The relationship between hotels and fine dining has evolved dramatically. Once, hotel restaurants were merely convenient. Today, the best hotel restaurants are destinations in their own right—spaces where culinary ambition matches or exceeds standalone restaurants, where Michelin stars feel earned rather than surprising, where locals book tables without considering the hotel context at all.

This category celebrates hotel restaurants that have achieved true gastronomic distinction: where the chef's vision is uncompromised, where the cuisine would be celebrated in any context, where the wine program matches the food's ambition, where service achieves the difficult balance of being professional, knowledgeable, and warm. These restaurants benefit from hotel resources (purchasing power, infrastructure, sometimes captive audience) while transcending hotel restaurant limitations.

What we evaluate: the quality and creativity of the cuisine, technical skill in preparation and presentation, thoughtfulness of sourcing and seasonality, excellence of the wine or beverage program, sophistication of

service, design and atmosphere of the dining space, and crucially, whether the restaurant functions as a true destination attracting diners beyond hotel guests. The best hotel restaurants make choosing where to dine one of the compelling reasons to stay at their hotel.

This category is for restaurants that: Demonstrate exceptional culinary quality and creativity | Achieve destination status beyond hotel-guest convenience | Offer sophisticated wine/beverage programs | Deliver outstanding service and atmosphere | Function as independent dining destinations that happen to be in hotels

27 Best Hotel Brunch

Celebrates hotels that have elevated brunch into a destination experience, blending culinary creativity, ambiance, and social magnetism.

Brunch has transcended meal category to become a cultural phenomenon—a social ritual, a weekend celebration, an Instagram moment, and increasingly, a reason to choose one hotel over another. This category honors properties that have recognized brunch's potential and elevated it to destination status, creating experiences that locals book weeks in advance and travelers specifically plan around.

Exceptional hotel brunches combine multiple elements: culinary creativity that goes beyond standard buffet offerings, perhaps including live cooking stations, seasonal specialties, or chef's signature dishes; beverage programs that understand brunch drinking culture (creative cocktails, quality Champagne, interesting non-alcoholic options); and atmospheres that feel festive without being chaotic, social without being noisy, and special without being pretentious.

The best brunches also understand timing and flow—they're generous enough to justify the investment but paced so guests don't feel rushed or overwhelmed. They offer variety for different tastes and dietary needs. They create environments where groups want to linger, where conversation flows, where the meal becomes an event worth building the day around. These brunches become traditions for locals and must-do experiences for visitors.

This category is for hotels that: Have created brunch experiences that function as destinations | Demonstrate culinary creativity and quality beyond standard offerings | Understand and deliver brunch atmosphere and social culture | Attract strong local patronage alongside hotel guests | Make brunch a defining element of their food and beverage identity

28 Best Hotel Breakfast

Honors hotels where breakfast becomes an exceptional daily ritual, showcasing local terroir, artisanal craftsmanship, and unparalleled attention to detail.

Breakfast is the meal every hotel guest experiences, making it perhaps the most democratic test of a property's commitment to excellence. This category celebrates hotels that approach breakfast with the same rigor, creativity, and attention to detail they bring to dinner service—properties where the morning meal becomes a highlight rather than a necessity, where guests set alarms not from obligation but from anticipation.

World-class hotel breakfasts demonstrate excellence across multiple dimensions. Breadth and quality of offerings: not just variety for variety's sake but thoughtful curation of local and seasonal products, artisanal items made in-house, and perhaps signature dishes that guests remember. Technical execution: eggs cooked properly, coffee brewed expertly, pastries arriving warm, fruit cut perfectly. Service that's attentive but not intrusive during a meal when some guests want conversation and others want quiet contemplation.

The finest breakfasts also reflect their place: local specialties, regional products, seasonal variations that connect guests to the destination. They offer choice without overwhelming, quality without pretension, and crucially, time—the luxury of lingering over breakfast without feeling rushed. These are breakfasts worth waking up for, experiences that set the tone for exceptional days.

This category is for hotels that: Treat breakfast with exceptional attention and excellence | Showcase local terroir and artisanal quality | Offer both breadth and depth in morning offerings | Execute every element with technical precision | Make breakfast a defining element of the guest experience

29 Best Cocktail Bar in a Hotel

Recognizes hotels whose bars are creative social hubs with standout mixology.

The best hotel bars have always been more than places to order drinks—they're social institutions, cultural scenes, and in some cases, drivers of entire cocktail movements. This category honors hotel bars that have become destinations: spaces where serious cocktail lovers make pilgrimages, where hotel guests find their nightly gathering spot, where locals come for the city's best drinks and most sophisticated atmosphere.

Excellence in hotel bar culture requires multiple elements: a thoughtful cocktail program that shows both technical skill and creative vision; bartenders who are genuine craftspeople, not just drink makers; a selection of spirits that reflects both classics and discoveries; and a physical space and atmosphere that invites lingering, conversation, and return visits. The best bars have a personality—sometimes refined and quiet, sometimes energetic and social, always distinctive.

These bars often become as iconic as their hotels, sometimes even more so. They understand that cocktail culture is having a moment and that discerning drinkers are as sophisticated about their spirits as wine lovers are about their bottles. They take the craft seriously.