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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

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ZAGAT SURVEY  
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# GOLD LIST

THE WORLD'S BEST  
PLACES TO STAY

TOP HOTELS, RESORTS, CRUISE LINES  
United States, Asia, Australia, the Americas, Africa, the Pacific, Europe

U.S.A. \$4.50  
Europe/Canada \$5.50



a "Mediterranean villa, with its low red roof" and "relatively isolated cottages." Buffet-style breakfasts "fill you to the groaning point." Some protest that staff "don't fuss over you as much as they should."

SSSS; 30 rooms; tennis, pool, spa, water sports, beach; 39-0564-858-111; [pellucanohotel.com](http://pellucanohotel.com)

#### Hotel Splendido & Splendido Mare, Portofino

Everything just gets, thanks to the staff" in this hotel on "a hill that goes right into the sea" (the Mare is in the heart of the village). "Wisteria hangs from balconies" off "bright guest rooms." La Terrazza serves Ligurian specialties but deftly handles requests: "I asked for pasta with truffles, and they came through beautifully." "It's the most romantic place I've ever been."

SSSS; 82 rooms; pool, spa; 39-0185-267-8511; [splendidorient-express.com](http://splendidorient-express.com)

#### Il San Pietro di Positano, Positano

87.7 88.5 91.3 92.4 89.6

This "flower-bedecked" hotel is "an engineering marvel—you have to take an elevator down a cliff just to get there." It's "heaven to return to after trudging all over the countryside sightseeing." "Excellent" staff "give everyone the royal treatment." Though some rooms are "relatively small," all are "tastefully decorated." The restaurant's "local dishes" are "as inspirational as the views."

SSS; 61 rooms; tennis, pool, water sports; 39-089-875453; [www.ilsanpietro.it](http://www.ilsanpietro.it)

#### Le Sirenuse, Positano

91.7 91.7 91.8 93.9 91.7

Steinbock stayed at this redbrick establishment set "on the slope of a mountain over the spectacular Amalfi Coast." "Reserve one of the stylish rooms on the high floors, which have terraces and better views of the sea." Evenings, "dine alfresco" on "fabulous traditional pastas," so you can see the lights of the coastal villages. "Several winding flights of stairs" connect guests to local shopping. "Staff do whatever you ask of them."

SSSS; 62 rooms; pool, spa, water sports, beach; 39-089-875066; [www.sirenuse.it](http://www.sirenuse.it)

#### Palazzo Sasso, Ravello

90.0 93.3 90.6 96.8 93.5

The "spellbinding views" from this "beautifully renovated" twelfth-century villa "above the Amalfi Coast" are "truly unforgettable." Rooms are "sunny and very luxurious" but "not overdesigned," and some come with "wonderful whirlpool tubs"—"perfect for relaxing in after a day spent visiting Sorrento or Positano." Meals are "as fine as any you'll find in the area—which is a pretty high standard." "Attentive staff" are "never obtrusive." "The entire place feels like Eden."

SS; 44 rooms; pool; 39-089-818-181; [palazzosasso.com](http://palazzosasso.com)

#### Hotel Hassler Villa Medici, Rome

76.2 83.3 82.9 97.6 85.7 85.2

Rooms are "upscale and old-fashioned" at this "fabulous hotel" on the "Roman equivalent of Madison Avenue"; you "hear bells chiming from the nearby sixteenth-century church." At the "rooftop garden restaurant, overlooking the Spanish Steps," "single waiters served me a tiramisu birthday cake"—"they sounded like the three tenors." The "genuinely warm" owner is "deaf but reads lips in three languages." A new gym overlooks the city.

SSSS; 100 rooms; 39-06-699-340; [www.hnc.com/hassler](http://www.hnc.com/hassler)

#### Westin Excelsior, Rome

88.0 90.0 77.1 92.0 90.0 87.5

Close to the gardens of the Villa Borghese and "good restaurants and shopping," this Via Veneto classic has "everything you need." Rooms are "comfortable and elegant," with "chandeliers, custom wall coverings,

and wonderful sheets." The "concierge's excellent recommendations for restaurants" ("only half a block away for half the price") provide an alternative to the regional dishes at Doney. The service is "outstanding" despite the "slow elevators."

SSSS; 316 rooms; 39-06-470811; [westin.com/italy/excelsiorrome](http://westin.com/italy/excelsiorrome); b.

#### San Domenico Palace Hotel, Taormina, Sicily

65.0 71.4 85.0 95.2 85.7 80.6

This former monastery has "magnificent views of everything: Mount Etna, the ancient Greek theater, and the sea." Set amid "beautiful gardens," the hotel "has retained its monastic past gloriously"—"the cloister, idols of saints, and architecture haven't been touched." Rooms, "once meant for monks, are a bit small"; staff are "courteous and efficient." Les Bougainvillées "overlooks the bay" and serves "esquisite Sicilian dishes."

SSS; 108 rooms; pool; 39-0942-61-34-17; [shilongship.it](http://shilongship.it); b.



**Pooling Resources** France's Hôtel de la Cité has the only heated swimming pool in Carcassonne, which claims the distinction of being the largest walled city in Europe.

#### Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Sorrento

78.6 82.8 78.6 92.6 82.1 82.9

Expect "sublime views of Naples and Mount Vesuvius," from this nineteenth-century landmark on the Bay of Naples frequented by the "rich and famous." "A beautiful swimming pool, gardens, and terraces" counter the "plain-lane guest rooms" with "modern amenities" and "tiled floors." Service is "better than at most other hotels," and the food "reflects the setting"—"lots of seafood."

SS; 105 rooms; pool; 39-081-807-1044; [excitv.it](http://excitv.it)

#### Doge Hotel and Il Palazzo al Canalier, Venice

88.7 84.1 71.4 98.4 81.0 84.8

This eighteenth-century palazzo has "one of the best locations in Venice," "right on the Grand Canal." The "small but magnificent rooms" in the older wing—decorated with "antiques and patterned wall-coverings"—"reflect much of the building's history," and those on "the top floors have inspirational canal vistas." "Professional" staff "get the job done." "So-so dining is pricey—you're paying for the view."

SSSS; 196 rooms; spa; 39-041-520-7022; [www.baservenezia.com](http://www.baservenezia.com); b.

#### Hotel Cipriani and Palazzo Vendramin, Venice

79.5 95.0 87.5 92.3 90.2 88.9

Visitors to the "cream of the crop" Vendramin, a fifteenth-century palace linked to the Hotel Cipriani on Giudecca Island, "take the five-minute private boat ride back and forth from St. Mark's Square." Among the highlights are the "immaculate grounds" and "a saltwater pool that's more than 30 yards long." "Fantastic staff pick you up at the train station or airport." Rooms are "ample in size"; request one "overlooking the lagoon."

SSSS; 103 rooms; tennis, pool, spa; 39-041-520-7744; [www.hotelcipriani.it](http://www.hotelcipriani.it); b.

#### Hotel Danieli, Venice

86.4 81.5 83.1 92.5 90.1 86.0

"Facing the lagoon" and "near St. Mark's Square," this hotel "couldn't be better located." A converted fourteenth-century palace, it "looks completely authentic"—"it takes your breath away when you walk in." The "helpful concierge" "arranges water taxis" and "sets you up at the finest restaurants." The food is "very good," with "eggs done to perfection." Rooms have "incredible views"—"we like the older ones best."

SSSS; 233 rooms; 39-041-522-6480; [starwood.com/italy](http://starwood.com/italy)

#### Hotel Gritti Palace, Venice

85.3 95.6 87.3 91.3 91.2

This "old palace with updated interiors" is "about as good as it gets" in Venice. "The attention that the excellent staff pay to each guest is incredible." They let us use one of the rooms to change after we had already checked out. Rooms "overlooking the water" are "bright and pleasant." There's "fantastic food" on the waterside terrace, where the Grand Canal view is out of this world. "We were serenaded by Woody Allen."

SSSS; 93 rooms; 39-041-296-1222; [starwood.com/italy](http://starwood.com/italy)

#### Westin Europa and Regina, Venice

86.1 78.4 65.7 97.3 71.4

80.0

"Steps from St. Mark's Square," this collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century houses has "spotless, beautifully decorated rooms" with "marble bathrooms" and balconies that grant "magnificent views of the Grand Canal." Staff are "welcoming" but "not bow-you-over terrific." "Head elsewhere for better meals." The hotel is "great during Carnival," since it's "so close to all the action."

SSSS; 185 rooms; 39-041-296-1222; [starwood.com/italy](http://starwood.com/italy)

#### MONACO

##### Hôtel de Paris, Monte Carlo

82.9 86.5 97.5 100 92.5 92.1

"Extravagantly over-the-top," with gold leaf everywhere, this hotel "embodies the Monaco high life." "A picture-perfect location next to the casino" makes it "the place to watch the Grand Prix." Rooms, though "on the small side," provide "awesome views." "Sharply dressed staff" are "quick to please." The haute cuisine at Alain Ducasse's Louis XV "left my husband and me speechless"; "I'd fly all the way there just for the food—it really was that special."

SSSS; 200 rooms; pool, spa; 377-92-16-30-00; [montecarloresort.com](http://montecarloresort.com)

##### Le Métropole Palace, Monte Carlo

94.7 71.4 77.3 95.2 76.2 82.7

Near the Place du Casino and "within walking distance of the city's best offerings," the Belle Époque hotel "haunts upscale luxury" with its "esquisite