

# Photo tour: 18 hotels earn Five Star status for 2013

## [Hotel Check-In](#)

Barbara De Lollis, USA TODAY 1:23p.m. EST February 26, 2013



(Photo: InterContinental Hotels, AJL Photography)

The crop of newly crowned *ForbesTravel Guide* Five Star hotels for 2013 includes a pink-stucco retreat in a tony Los Angeles neighborhood and one of Macau's gleaming, glass-wrapped skyscrapers.

**PHOTO GALLERY:** [See the 18 newly minted Five Star hotels](#)

Besides a prime location, guests at Five Star-status hotels can expect top-notch service. Odds are high that employees will know your name before you introduce yourself.

At Rhode Island's 49-room Ocean House, which opened three years ago with the goal of earning Five Star status, guests are called 10 days before their arrival "so we can get as much information from them as possible so when they come here, they can disconnect without having to worry about anything," says the Ocean House's resort manager, Edward Villafane.

If it's raining and you're about to leave one of these hotels, you'll likely be offered a hotel umbrella. If you need to get to a nearby restaurant or shopping destination, at many of these properties, you'll be offered a ride in the chauffeur-driven house car, which might be a new Mercedes Benz, BMW or Rolls Royce.



An orange tree outside the main entrance of the celeb magnet Hotel Bel-Air. (Photo: By Barbara DeLollis, USA TODAY)

It also is not unusual for a staffer to discover a guest's special anniversary or occasion that they hadn't revealed at booking time, says Denise Flanders, general manager of the Hotel Bel-Air. When this happens, it's common for the staffer to spread the word and, ultimately, for the guests to receive a complimentary amenity such as a bucket of iced champagne delivered to their door.

#### **FIVE DIAMOND HOTELS: [AAA reveals 'best of the best' for 2013](#)**

Many Five Star properties offer the latest technology, such as in-room iPads that you can use to order room service or a couples massage.

And whether set on the ocean or in a city, these properties also pride themselves in giving high paying guests "experiences" — the biggest buzzword among luxury properties these days.

The Ocean House, for example, has a "food forager" on staff who can take foodie guests to local farms. Once there, they can learn about cheesemaking or select ingredients for their lunch or dinner. Last week, Villafane says the staffer took guests to century-old Schartner Farms, where they were able to pick local produce.

Some highlights from this year's list:

- **Few chains on the list:** Most of the newly added hotels are independent, but Ritz-Carlton and Mandarin Oriental each have two new Five Star awards,
- **USA vs. overseas:** 10 of the hotels are located in the USA, while the rest are in Asia, underscoring the soaring demand for luxury in that region — and luxury hoteliers' scramble to fill the need. The destinations that can claim the biggest wins this year are California, Florida and Macau, with three new Five Stars apiece,
- **Longevity:** For some hotels, the award came after a major renovation while others earned it following years of striving to meet Forbes standards

Forbes' new Five Star hotels:

## USA

Arizona — The Canyon Suites at The Phoenician

California — Hotel Bel-Air

California — Montage Laguna Beach

California — Resort at Pelican Hill

Florida — Acqualina Resort and Spa on the Beach

Florida — Mandarin Oriental Miami

Florida — The Ritz-Carlton Naples

Illinois — Trump Chicago

Nevada — Aria Sky Suites

Rhode Island — Ocean House

## Overseas

China — China World Summit Wing Beijing

Hong Kong — InterContinental Hong Kong

Hong Kong — The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong

Macau — Crown Towers

Macau — Encore Macau

Macau — Mandarin Oriental Macau

Singapore — Capella Singapore

Singapore — The Fullerton Bay Hotel

For the hotels, Forbes Travel Guide's top honor will mean a boost in business from celebrities, corporate leaders and other well-heeled travelers.

If you are one of the high rollers who can call these places home, odds are you're spending at least \$500 a night to get into the cheapest room. If money's truly no object, however, you can easily spend thousands of dollars.

The presidential suite at the celebrity magnet Hotel Bel-Air hotel, for instance, runs \$15,000 per night.

Part of the London-based Dorchester Collection, the Bel-Air sits on land dotted with 100-year-old sycamore trees, palm trees, flowers and a pond where swans swim during the warmer months. Wolfgang Puck runs its high-end restaurant, which features outdoor seating decorated with real lemon trees. The hotel occupies pink-stucco buildings nestled within L.A.'s millionaire-studded Bel-Air neighborhood.

For this hotel, the award represents a victory since it had lost its Five Star status after its closure for a two-year, top-to-bottom renovation. It reopened in 2011, with a mix of veteran staff and new employees.

"It's a coveted honor of recognition by *Forbes*," Flanders, the general manager, says. "It confirms what our employees have been working towards since our reopening - our pursuit of creating exceptional, unique experiences."