

SUMMER 2009: GREATEST DEALS EVER

Condé Nast Traveler

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A \$25,000
DREAM
TRIP
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TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2009

EUROPE
ON SALE
CRUISING
CLASSIC CITIES

HOT LIST WORLD'S TOP NEW 140 hotels*

50 Restaurants

50 Spas

35 Nightclubs

*including 43 under \$250

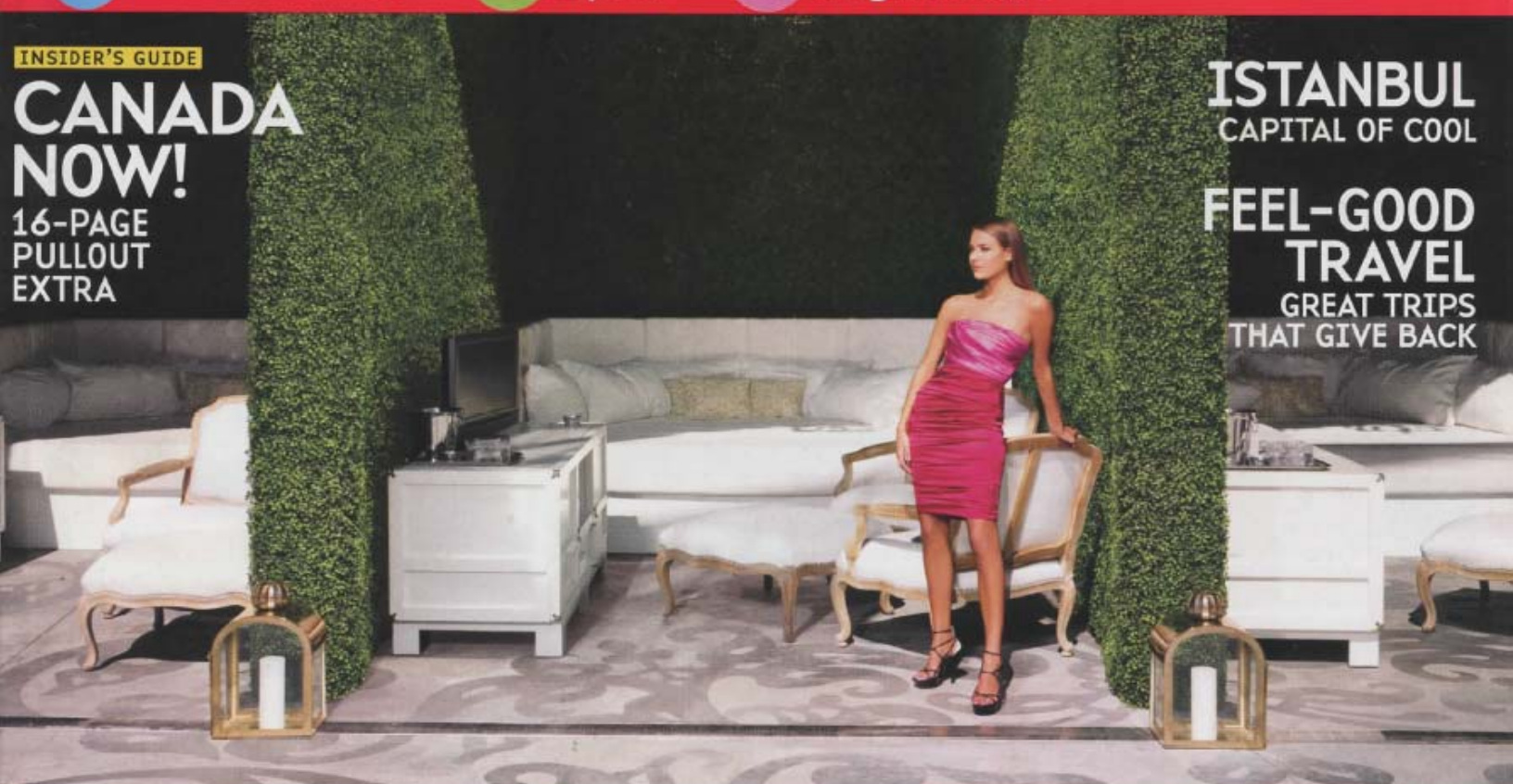
INSIDER'S GUIDE

CANADA NOW!

16-PAGE
PULLOUT
EXTRA

ISTANBUL CAPITAL OF COOL

FEEL-GOOD TRAVEL GREAT TRIPS THAT GIVE BACK



Condé Nast Traveler presents
THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL

HOT

LIST

2009

THE YEAR'S 140 TOP NEW HOTELS*

*including 43
UNDER
\$250 A NIGHT

Consider it a silver lining: Hot hotels continue to open in record numbers despite the recent economic overcast, and many are more affordable than ever. Of the thousands that made their debut in the last year, we checked into the most promising—incognito—measuring up the service, trying out the beds, and sampling the food. The 140 properties that passed our scrutiny make up the largest Hot List yet, proving that the standards for excellence haven't slipped; in fact, they've only risen. Spanning 53 countries (including new-to-the-list destinations Israel, Mongolia, Peru, Slovenia, and Zimbabwe), they range in size from a three-pavilion hideaway an hour north of Sydney to a 2,034-room high-rise on the Vegas Strip, and in room rates from \$89 at an invitingly accoutred Palm Springs hot spot with a pool straight out of a David Hockney print to \$2,050 for a sprawling safari tent in northern Botswana. Such bright choices make the forecast easier to weather.

cultural events, and an exquisite spa. The resort also abounds in private nooks: A magnificent formal garden dotted with thatched pavilions occupies an expanse of nearly two acres between the main building and the golf course. The beachside Kayuputi restaurant is easily one of the island's best, offering extravagances like wagyu beef and Prunier caviar, and desserts both delicious to the palate and witty to the eye. **When to go:** June through September for sunny skies and cool breezes. **Which room to book:** Strand Suite 723 occupies a slightly larger site than the other beachside villas (62-361-847-8111; stregis.com; suites, \$450-\$650). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Hotel Tugu, Lombok

UNDER \$250 🍷 62-370-620-111; tughotels.com; doubles, \$175-\$450. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

IRELAND

Cliff House Hotel, County Waterford

🍷 353-24-87-800; thecliffhousehotel.com; doubles, \$288-\$339. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

ISRAEL

Hotel Montefiore, Tel Aviv

🍷 The best of Tel Aviv's stylish new hotels is a meticulously renovated 1920s mansion, with an arabesque dome and bijou Juliet balconies in 8 of the 12 guest rooms. The accommodations have original 1930s furniture by German Bauhaus designer Thonet, libraries packed with art and travel tomes, and chocolate- and champagne-stocked mini-bars. The small but capable staff multitask, handling everything from picnic lunches to reservations for Tel Aviv's most popular tables, including at the Montefiore's own French-Asian restaurant. An adjacent bar has become the new HQ for media, art, and finance swells. Although off the typical tourist path—a.k.a. the beach—the hotel's location close to top shopping, restaurants, and architectural icons makes it a chic alternative to the tired chain hotels. **When to go:** In November, after the crowds of the fall Jewish holidays, Tel Aviv is at its welcoming best. **Which room to book:** No. 26, a street-facing guest room on the second floor, has towering ceilings and a balcony (972-3-5646100; hotelmontefiore.co.il; doubles, \$350-\$400). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

ITALY

Villa Marina Hotel & Spa, Capri

🍷 Though minimalist chic and earth colors pervade at the restructured 1915 Villa Marina, each of the spacious 21 rooms is designed differently and named after a famous personality from the artistic enclave that put Capri on the map. Bathrooms are especially fabulous: Entertainer Gracie Fields's tub, big enough for four, features a rush of water spilling from a large rock, and physician Axel Munthe's enormous green marble bathroom has a tub with a sea view. A panoramic roof terrace means gorgeous sunsets, and the candlelit Ziqu' restaurant offers a spectacle of glittering yachts in the Marina Grande. The hotel's small spa is the perfect place to unwind after treks down the Via Krupp or up to Emperor Tiberius's ancient villa. The staff are warm, but, when mak-

ing plans, watch out for a Neapolitan approximation of details. **When to go:** Easter opens the season, which winds down at the end of October. **Which room to book:** Three suites have large terraces and private pools (39-081-837-6630; villamarinacapri.com; doubles, \$762-\$1,016). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Hotel Palazzo Gattini, Matera

UNDER \$250 🍷 39-0835-33458; palazzogattini.it; doubles, \$231-\$269. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Romeo Hotel, Naples

🍷 39-081-0175; romeohotel.it; doubles, \$445-\$605. 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Donna Camilla Savelli Hotel, Rome

🍷 This restored seventeenth-century convent in Trastevere was designed by one of the great Baroque architects, Francesco Borromini, and has all the play of convex and concave shapes for which the architect is celebrated: soaring archways decorated in bas-relief in the bar area and a refectory complete with a lofty coffered ceiling, dark boiserie, and a pulpit where matins were read. The 78 rooms are soberly done (although the beds are sumptuous), with many of the convent's antiques and Baroque architectural flourishes. The garden cloister, with its magnolia tree, camellias, jasmine, rooftop terrace, and smaller Cloister of the Angel, provides outdoor space where guests can enjoy the monastic tranquility. What saves the property from too much gravitas is the hospitality of the exceptional staff. **When to go:** Anytime but mid-August, when locals traditionally vacation and many shops and restaurants close. **Which room to book:** Room 202 has a balcony with a view, and the Imperial Suite has a huge terrace and a rose window in the bathroom (39-06-588861; hotellsavelli.com; doubles, \$314-\$440). 🍷

Borgo Santo Pietro, Tuscany

🍷 The Sieneese monks who stopped at the Borgo Santo Pietro more than 800 years ago wouldn't recognize the place today. Danish owners Claus and Jeanette Thottrup have rebuilt the old stone exteriors and added chandeliers and beautiful trompe l'oeils to the extensive public areas and six guest rooms (another three garden suites are planned for this summer). The effect is elegant, with useful modern touches: Oil paintings open to reveal flat-screen TVs, an extensive DVD library is on hand, and claw-foot tubs look plucked from an Italian castle. Rose-lined pathways lead to secluded benches, a lovely orto (vegetable garden) that provides the restaurant with its greens, and just-planted fruit orchards. Danish chef Thomas Brieghel is only 28, but his tasting menus at the standout restaurant are already generating talk of a Michelin star. **When to go:** Time your visit with Siena's Palio horse race, run on July 2 and August 16 this year; the hotel plans special outings for the event. **Which room to book:** The Via del Pellegrino, with its fresco of the pilgrims' path, will remind you of the spot's past (39-0577-751-222; borgosantopietro.com; doubles, \$424-\$594). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Castiglion del Bosco—Il Borgo, Tuscany

🍷 In the heart of Brunello wine country, the nearly 4,500-acre Castiglion del Bosco is one of Tuscany's most impressive debuts in years. While the resort's spa, golf course, and equestrian center won't be completed until 2010, there is already plenty to attract in this medieval borgo, or hamlet, which includes the noble family's original villa and 16 large suites (with 10 more in the works). The accommodations have huge living rooms and massive showers and are done in a refined country style with leather chairs and heavy draperies. A former priest's house now holds the two restaurants: one the unpretentious Osteria; the other the Ristorante Del Drago, a more formal affair. It's also the site of cooking classes and wine-tastings (the property produces its own vintage). With many cozy spaces and a fleet of discreet staff to cater to your whims, you'll feel like the master of your own estate. **When to go:** In October for spectacular foliage. **Which room to book:** Del Pomario is the largest of the Deluxe Suites (39-0577-807-078; castigliondelbosco.com; suites, \$663-\$995). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

MALAYSIA

Gayana Eco Resort, Kota Kinabalu

🍷 "Summer camp for everyone" best describes this island retreat inside the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park. Enthusiastic staff lead guests on kayak tours through the mangroves, swim with them along the reef, and show off the Napoleon wrasses and giant groupers that are saved by sea gypsies for this eco-resort's rescue and breeding program. New Zealander chef Michael Maguire turns out dishes that are anything but camp fare. A three-room spa with Jacuzzis and sea views offers exceptional treatments. And the 44 overwater accommodations—kitted out with Frette linens, organic Harnn bath amenities, powerful rain showers, and, in the mini-bar, handmade lace cookies infused with palm sugar—feel more Maldives than Malaysia. **When to go:** February through June for clear skies. **Which room to book:** Bayu Villas add extended decks to the South China Sea view (60-88-442-233; gayana-eco-resort.com; doubles, \$249-\$459). 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

Temple Tree at Bon Ton Resort, Langkawi

🍷 Langkawi's popular Bon Ton resort has added a magical collection of nine antique houses from Malaysia's ethnically diverse regions, arranging them in a tree-lined neighborhood a five-minute drive from the beach. Guests in the Chinese House can take tea and coconut cake on the wraparound veranda, the resort's best spot for viewing sunsets into the Andaman Sea, just beyond the long infinity pool and the bird-filled wetlands. The Colonial House, built by Arab gold traders, has four stylishly furnished bedrooms, with plump chairs and couches festooned with ethnic throw pillows. Bathrooms in all the houses feature deep wood-