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JANUARY 2004

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GOLD LIST

WORLD'S BEST PLACES TO STAY

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Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis, Clayton

91.5 87.8 85.1 77.1 83.3 84.9

In the core business district, this hotel "feels friendly but is still professional." Rooms show "no wear and tear" (all furnishings were reupholstered in 2003) and have views of the Arch or the green spaces of Clayton. The Grill offers "standard Midwestern food with new spins and flavors." Sample some of the cigars, Cognacs, Scotches, and other whiskeys in the Cigar Club. 301 rooms; pool; 314-863-6300; ritzcarlton.com; ̄.

NEVADA

Bellagio, Las Vegas

91.5 85.9 89.5 95.7 93.6 91.2

We find an artificial lake out front and "understated elegance" in the "oversized suites" that are "so comfortable they feel like your own bedroom." The property is within walking distance of "everything you want," although on-site are a shopping promenade, pools, a theater, a casino, and ten restaurants, including Picasso, which serves upscale French-Mediterranean cuisine. 3,103 rooms; pool, spa; 702-693-7111; bellagio.com; ̄.

Four Seasons Hotel, Las Vegas

91.9 92.9 85.7 74.4 84.9 85.9

This hotel, located at the southern end of the Strip, on the upper section of the Mandalay Bay Resort, is "a mile from the hustle and bustle." "Elegantly decorated rooms" have "stunning urban views." "Superlative staff deliver chilled towels" poolside, as well as cucumber slices for your eyes. A new chef helms The Garden restaurant; at the spa, the menu includes traditional Indonesian treatments. 354 rooms; pool, spa; 702-632-5000; fourseasons.com/lasvegas; ̄.

W Venetian, Las Vegas

91.6 79.2 82.3 88.4 90.0 86.7

This hotel's "eye-popping shopping gallery" replicates the Piazza San Marco. Large accommodations—all 100—are decorated in red hues and have "wonderful views." Of the many great restaurants, "some of the fun names don't quite live up to the hype." "Staff are easy to please." "Don't miss the fantastic spa." A 12-story tower has added 1,013 suites to the hotel. 5,409 suites; pool, spa; 702-414-1000; ritanc.com; ̄.

NEW MEXICO

W of the Anasazi, Santa Fe

82 85.5 82.2 95.3 91.8 88.6

Located in the heart of the historic district, this hotel adds to the community. "Attractive rooms" have poster beds, gas-lit fireplaces, and vigas ceilings. Site guides will escort guests to the ancient Anasazi ruins, as well as to Indian pueblos. The 92-seat restaurant features "yummy Native American, northern Mexican, and Southwestern cuisine." 75 rooms; 505-988-3000; woftheanasazi.com; ̄.

NEW YORK

Bryant Park Hotel, New York

84 86.4 80.0 95.7 82.6 83.5

"Sophisticated" Midtown high-rise is "packed with fashion types" and houses a 70-seat screening room. The modern rooms are "small"; designers-wearing staff "try to please," even if just pointing the way to Times Square. It serves upscale American fare (the cheese plate); DJs spin beneath vaulted ceilings in the Cellar Bar. 250 rooms; 212-869-0100; bryantparkhotel.com; ̄.

Four Seasons Hotel, New York

86 86.4 87.7 95.1 90.1 90.5

The city's tallest hotel is in "the best location," off Madison Avenue. Guest rooms have leather furnishings and "bathtubs that fill up in a minute." The new spa suites showcase 23-foot pyramid windows. Contemporary American cuisine at Fifty Seven is "really superb," and staff are equally excellent. "My husband forgot his cuff links, and they brought some up in every color imaginable." 368 rooms; spa; 212-758-5700; fourseasons.com/newyork; ̄.

Plaza Athénée, New York

87.9 85.2 92.4 83.3 87.4



Fluid Fantasy The 1,000-plus choreographed fountains at the Bellagio, in Las Vegas, shoot up to 240 feet in the air above an 8.5-acre man-made lake. In just five years, the water ballet has become an institution on the Strip.

With its "cozy, dark Bar Seine," elegant French restaurant Arabella, and staff who "gladly ship everything home," this 23-year-old hotel on "a peaceful block" of East 64th Street, near museums, shopping, and Central Park, maintains its "sophisticated, upper-class atmosphere." European-style rooms have rich fabrics, Frette linens, and CD players. 333; 150 rooms; 212-734-9100; plaza-athenee.com; ̄.

New York Palace, New York

84.4 85.7 75.0 88.9 77.4 82.4

This Midtown classic, originally a railroad tycoon's mansion, is near St. Patrick's Cathedral and Fifth Avenue shopping and is "a good value for the area." Rooms come with fax machines and are characterized by "refined comfort." Guests are attended to by "efficient staff." Le Cinq 2000 and Istana serve French-American and New American fare, respectively. 333; 896 rooms; spa; 212-688-7000; newyorkpalace.com; ̄.

The Pierre, New York

89.2 97.4 91.4 94.7 97.3 94.1

At this 74-year-old landmark across from Central Park, "very spacious rooms" have Chippendale furnishings. "The beautiful Rotunda," where tea is served, has trompe l'oeil murals. Make use of "the concierge, who got us tickets to any show, even when it was sold out." The bar at the Café Pierre mixes "one of the best Bloody Marys you've ever had." 333; 201 rooms; spa; 212-638-8000; fourseasons.com/pierre; ̄.

Ritz-Carlton Central Park, New York

93.5 93.8 93.3 100 93.1 94.8

A perfect-scoring location on Central Park South ensures "dazzling views" from this 33-story tower. "Museum-quality paintings" hang throughout the former St. Moritz, transformed after a four-year makeover, and rooms have feather beds with "enough pillows to get lost in." In addition to staff, who "whisked me through check-in," technology butlers are on call. Atelier serves "French with an American twist." 333; 277 rooms; spa; 212-308-9100; ritzcarlton.com; ̄.

St. Regis, New York

92.5 93.9 90.6 93.9 87.7 91.0

This 100-year-old Beaux Arts monument in "an ideal Midtown location" offers 24-hour butler service on each floor. Rooms are designed in Louis XV style, with silk wall coverings, crystal chandeliers, and antiques.

The new Carita Spa debuted in March. The Astor Court serves afternoon tea (L'Espinoza closed in 2003). 333; 315 rooms; spa; 212-753-4300; stregis.com; ̄.

60 Thompson, New York

73.3 74.2 86.2 82.8 93.3 81.9

Located in fashionable SoHo, this boutique hotel has "some of the best see-and-be-seen bars in Manhattan." "Rooms are minimalist," with asymmetrical fireplaces and clean lines; some say they're "a little dark and stark." Thom serves modern American cuisine, and expect good service from "young, superhip, supercool" staff. 333; 100 rooms; 212-431-0400; thompsonhotels.com; ̄.

The Point, Saranac Lake

82.6 86.4 81.8 90.9 86.4 85.6

Originally a retreat for the Rockefellers, these "magnificent slate-roof cabins" in the Adirondacks have custom-made beds, stone fireplaces, and wrought iron hardware. Vintage rotary phones connect guests to 24-hour butler service. The lakeside location is "a little bit of heaven on earth." Formal modern European dinners are served in the restaurant. Children must be 18 or older. 333; 11 rooms; water sports; 318-891-5678; thepointresort.com; ̄.

NORTH CAROLINA

Inn on Biltmore Estate, Asheville

87.5 86.1 76.3 85.2 78.8 82.0

This three-year-old property "overlooking vineyards and farmland" is set on 8,000 acres. Verandas have rocking chairs, and "rooms are spotless." The Dining Room serves estate-raised beef, lamb, and veal and pours "only its own wines, which are excellent." "Staff remembered us from one day to the next." 33; 213 rooms; pool; 800-858-4130; biltmore.com; ̄.

Greystone Inn, Lake Toxaway

85.4 90.0 80.0 95.0 82.1 86.5

This former mansion's "absolutely breathtaking location" in the Blue Ridge Mountains is relaxing: "The minute you arrive, you feel a load has been lifted." Rooms, some with fireplaces and wet bars, have "rustic furnishings." At the three-course country breakfast, "staff always serve you with a smile." 333; 33 rooms; golf, tennis, pool, spa, water sports; 828-966-4700; www.greystoneinn.com; ̄.

Ferrington House Country Inn, Pittsboro

93.2 91.1 91.3 55.6 84.4 83.1

Eight miles south of Chapel Hill, this former dairy

farm is surrounded by 640 acres of cultivated land. "Staying here takes you back to a simpler time." The restaurant's menu includes *torchon de file gray* with lavender oil and offers a 550-bottle wine list. "Superb staff are unobtrusive." Some rooms overlook "the magnificent English gardens."
 \$\$\$; 32 rooms; golf, tennis, pool; 919-542-2121; kaurington.com; [E]

OHIO

Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland

●89.4 ●89.6 ●79.1 ●85.3 ●80.0 ●84.7

At this hotel, located "right smack downtown" and attached to Tower City and Jacob's Field by covered walkways, guests can "get anywhere in about three minutes." Rooms, some with views of Lake Erie or the Cuyahoga River, are decorated traditionally and come with CD players. The Century Restaurant, popular with locals, uses "acquired bento lunch boxes" at its sushi bar.
 \$\$\$; 208 rooms; pool; 216-622-1300; ritzcarlton.com; [E]

OREGON

Tu Tu'Tun Lodge, Gold Beach

●84.2 ●93.0 ●89.1 ●89.5 ●93.0 ●89.8

This "upscale rustic lodge" on the Rogue River offers white-water rafting and fly-fishing—or you can simply feed the deer in the apple orchard. The lobby has wood-beamed ceilings and a ten-foot fireplace, and "comfortable rooms" have floor-to-ceiling windows as well as patios (some with hot tubs). "Staff are down-to-earth," and meals highlight "fresh local ingredients."
 \$\$\$; 16 rooms; pool, water sports; 541-247-6664; tututun.com; [E]

Heathman Hotel, Portland

●75.4 ●92.7 ●69.6 ●93.1 ●77.6 ●81.7

This 1927 Italian Renaissance-style hotel, with its "inviting lobby," is next to the Performing Arts Center. The restaurant's French-Northwest menu offers "a good selection" but faces competition from the area's many eateries. Staff lead guests "straight through check-in" to "small but tastefully decorated accommodations"—light sleepers should request a room away from the bustle of the street.
 \$; 150 rooms; 503-241-4100; heathmanhotel.com; [E]

PENNSYLVANIA

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort & Spa, Farmington

●90.0 ●84.0 ●80.0 ●64.0 ●82.0 ●86.0 ●81.0

An equestrian center is one of the options at this resort 70 miles south of Pittsburgh. "It's well set up for families," with ten restaurants serving everything from french fries to French Continental. Rooms are divided between the European-style Chateau LaFayette and the recently renovated Tudor-style Lodge, which has views of "woods and gardens."
 \$\$\$; 287 rooms; golf, tennis, pool, spa; 724-329-8535; nemacolin.com; [E]

★ Four Seasons Hotel, Philadelphia

●88.2 ●94.7 ●85.5 ●84.6 ●89.5 ●86.5

"With all the columns and granite, you feel like you're in a museum." At this hotel on Logan Square, rooms contain armoires, desks, and wing chairs reminiscent of the Federal period. The 24-hour concierges are "always there to plan activities and suggest great places to eat." The Fountain Restaurant and Swann Lounge specialize in Sunday brunch, offering caviar omelets and prosciutto-wrapped quail.
 \$\$\$; 364 rooms; pool, spa; 215-963-1500; fourseasons.com/philadelphia; [E]

Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia

●85.7 ●85.7 ●80.0 ●95.2 ●85.4 ●86.5

Its location on Rittenhouse Square allows for "nice strolls" to Chinatown and The Gallery shopping mall. The steel-and-glass exterior of this high-rise belies the interior's "residential feel." Rooms are like "mini-suites" and are done in blue and gold. The new Lacroix, with a 500-bottle wine list, serves modern French cuisine. "Staff just know."
 \$\$\$; 98 rooms; pool, spa; 215-546-9000; www.rittenhousehotel.com; [E]

Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia

●86.4 ●84.8 ●84.6 ●89.4 ●84.8 ●86.0

A former bank building designed by McKim, Mead &

White, this four-year-old hotel makes the most of the "impressive, overwhelming architecture." Rooms are "relatively small, with lovely decor." Some guests praise the weekend Chocolate Buffet "a great value"; others praise The Vault, a cigar lounge. The downtown location is close to City Hall and arts destinations.
 \$\$\$; 330 rooms; spa; 215-323-8000; ritzcarlton.com; [E]

SOUTH CAROLINA

★ Charleston Place, Charleston

●88.8 ●88.0 ●83.6 ●97.4 ●88.7 ●89.3

Located in the "quaint historic district," this residence-style hotel is in "a prime location from which to explore the city." Rooms were recently redecorated in yellow tones and are equipped with high-speed Internet access. The rooftop pool is "perfect for sunbathing." Seafood is a specialty at the Charleston Grill.
 \$\$\$\$; 442 rooms; tennis, pool, spa; 843-722-4900; charlestonplacehotel.com; [E]

✓ HarbourView Inn, Charleston

●83.3 ●80.6 ●73.3 ●88.9 ●80.0 ●81.5

"The best of historic Charleston is a short distance from this hotel," which incorporates a warehouse built in 1800. High-ceilinged rooms are furnished West Indies-style, with four-poster beds and wicker chests; several have exposed-brick walls. Wine and cheese are available in the afternoon, milk and cookies in the evening.
 \$\$; 52 rooms; 843-853-8439; harbourviewcharleston.com; [E]

John Rutledge House Inn, Charleston

●95.7 ●81.8 ●55.0 ●95.5 ●81.8 ●82.6

This "charming restored antebellum home" in the historic district retains its "delicate ironwork," carved marble fireplaces, and hardwood floors. Rates include "a light breakfast," but there is no restaurant; "cordial staff" advise on dining spots in the area. Rooms on the first floor have 14-foot ceilings; all are furnished with antiques and canopied beds.
 \$\$\$; 19 rooms; 843-723-7999; charminginn.com; [E]

Planters Inn, Charleston

●86.1 ●86.1 ●80.7 ●93.6 ●86.8 ●88.6

"I'd love to stay again, and for longer," at this downtown hotel. Constructed as a dry goods warehouse in 1844, the building feels like a Southern mansion, with "surprisingly large, light rooms" that have four-poster beds. "Staff are smart and friendly," and the Peninsula Grill serves "rich, creative New American cuisine."
 \$\$\$; 62 rooms; 843-722-2345; plantersinn.com; [E]

TENNESSEE

Blackberry Farm, Walland

●87.1 ●93.5 ●93.5 ●93.5 ●90.3 ●91.6

This 1,100-acre retreat in the Smoky Mountains, a 20-minute drive from Knoxville's airport, draws guests looking for "a restful setting and gourmet treasures." The Southern dishes are "ultrafresh—we could tell their sauces are made from scratch." Rooms, some of which are in cottages, have four-poster leather beds. Staff exude "a universal calmness," as does "everything about the place." Children must be ten or older, except during holidays and in July.
 \$\$\$\$; 44 rooms; tennis, pool, spa; 800-273-6004; blackberryfarm.com; [E]

TEXAS

✓ Driskill Hotel, Austin

●81.8 ●84.4 ●75.6 ●91.1 ●84.8 ●83.6

The interior of this downtown hotel, once the residence of a cattle baron, is Victorian-Texas: Leather couches and a steer's head are juxtaposed with a black-and-white marble entryway and a stained glass dome. "Staff greet you like they're welcoming you to their home." Rooms include custom-made wrought iron beds. "The Driskill Grill has a cheffy atmosphere" and a Southern menu.
 \$\$\$; 188 rooms; 512-474-5911; driskillhotel.com; [E]

Four Seasons Hotel, Austin

●90.9 ●92.7 ●85.7 ●89.1 ●94.6 ●90.6

This hacienda-style hotel, set amid rolling hills and live oaks close to the hip Warehouse District, has "a nice atmosphere for relaxing after work." Rooms offer guests a chance to see the 1.5 million bats that fly seasonally from the Congress Avenue Bridge. Pinnies are popular at The Café, which serves Hill Country cuisine. Multilingual staff, who "just excel," provide com-

United States

plimentary cookies, milk, and popcorn to children.

\$\$\$; 291 rooms; pool, spa; 512-478-4500;

fourseasons.com/austin; [E]

★ Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas

●91.9 ●89.8 ●91.3 ●74.2 ●85.9 ●86.6

This former estate from the 1920s is in the upscale Highland Park neighborhood and is therefore "so convenient for business," but it provides a Mercedes sedan for complimentary short-distance drives. For rooms were recently renovated and have French doors opening onto private balconies. The restaurant serves signature tortilla soup.
 \$\$\$; 143 rooms; pool; 214-559-2100; mansiononturtlecreek.com; [E]

Four Seasons Hotel, Houston

●86.2 ●89.7 ●79.3 ●72.4 ●78.6 ●81.3

"A great location for businesspeople who want to catch a game," this tower in the business district is two blocks from the new Houston Rockets arena. Late night, staff escort guests to rooms, all of which have bay windows and L'Occitane bath amenities. An outdoor pool is set among banana and palm tree. Quattro serves up "pretty decent Italian-American cuisine."
 \$\$\$; 404 rooms; pool, spa; 713-650-1300; fourseasons.com/houston; [E]

St. Regis, Houston

●95.0 ●90.0 ●76.2 ●75.0 ●94.7 ●86.0

Located in the upscale River Oaks neighborhood, this 22-year-old granite building is surrounded by "beautiful landscaped grounds." Expect quiet rooms with "great floor-to-ceiling windows." The lobby displays "flowers that make your heart skip." Restaurants include the formal Remington Astor Court and the lively Remington Bar. "Thoughtful staff gave us water bottles for the trip home."
 \$\$\$; pool, spa; 713-840-7600; stregis.com; [E]

UTAH

★ Stein Eriksen Lodge, Deer Valley

●88.2 ●90.0 ●84.9 ●94.4 ●91.4 ●86.6 ●82.3

Rooms are "so comfortable, you just feel like staying put" at this ski-in/ski-out property. "Pleasant wait attendants" will store your equipment. At Giltretired in the Troll Hallen Lounge, New American cuisine is served amid traditional Norwegian decor. The lodge provides frequent shuttle service to Park City's Main Street.
 \$\$\$\$; 170 rooms; pool, spa, skiing; 435-649-3700; steinlodge.com; [E]

✓ Grand America Hotel, Salt Lake City

●90.3 ●90.3 ●86.7 ●87.1 ●93.3 ●89.5

"Classic architectural touches" throughout public spaces and rooms—Murano glass chandeliers, marble walls, English wool carpets—"exude a sense of elegance." Afternoon tea is served at the Lobby Lounge. The Garden Café offers both casual and fine dining. "Service is like butter." The central downtown location is "easy to get to."
 \$\$\$; 773 rooms; pool, spa; 800-621-4505; www.grandamerica.com; [E]

Sundance Resort, Sundance

●73.1 ●82.1 ●76.7 ●86.2 ●89.7 ●81.5 ●81.7

"Beautifully situated" on 6,000 acres on the slopes of Mount Timpanogos, this mountain village has "true elegance." Rooms, built from local stone and oak woods, "feel like someone's home." Activities—staff guide guests through "plenty of options." Diners choose among the Tree Room Restaurant, the Foundry Grill, and the Owl Bar.
 \$\$\$; 106 rooms; spa, skiing; 801-225-4107; sundanceresort.com; [E]

VERMONT

✓ Jackson House Inn, Woodstock

●85.0 ●75.0 ●86.4 ●86.4 ●81.0 ●82.9

This nineteenth-century inn, with a gabled roof and white picket fence is "so welcoming you feel like you're weekend-ing with good friends." Rooms have many styles of decor, including French Provincial and Victorian. "Cosmopolitan meets countryside" at the restaurant: Helmed by a new chef, it offers prix-fixe menus and wine pairings in front of an open hearth.
 \$\$\$; 15 rooms; 802-457-2065; jacksonhouseinn.com; [E]