

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

It List 2016: the Best New Hotels on the Planet



Courtesy of Baccarat

Baccarat Hotels & Residences in New York City

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Even in New York City, true five-star hotel debuts are still fairly rare. The Baccarat, however, clearly means business. What sets it apart is the ambitiousness of its opulence: think crystal chandeliers, crystal vases, and walls of crystal, plus antique pieces on loan from the French government. This is Luxury—yes, with a capital L—designed for a crowd of global nomads who move between London and Shanghai and Dubai and give the bar an atmosphere that's a far cry from the minimalism of MoMA across the street. For all the glitz, however, the guest rooms are both serene and restrained, done in a brisk, tailored style that features a neutral palette, extravagant marble baths, and thoughtful use of technology. And there are only 114 of them, small for a hotel of this type, which translates into an experience with a surprising degree of intimacy. baccarathotels.com; doubles from \$899.

What makes a hotel rank among one of the most exciting openings in the world? This year, it came down to three factors: a killer location, impeccable design, and the ability to bring something totally new to the table. Take for example Pumphouse Point, a daring boutique property set in an old hydroelectric plant in the middle of Tasmania's Lake St. Clair National Park: it's bringing luxury to a destination that has never known it. Then there's the debut property from Baccarat Hotels & Residences in T+L's hometown of New York City. It has crystal everywhere—even the tumblers on your bathroom sink are made by the iconic brand—making it the most over-the-top debut to hit a city filled with over-the-top debuts. Compare it to the Soho House Istanbul, which bring cutting edge design to the old American embassy building in Beyoğlu. Even in a city that continues to reinvent itself, the property feels ahead the trend with its three constantly-packed restaurants, speakeasy style bar, and a buzzy rooftop pool.

All of the properties on our list opened in 2015, but there are a few notable exceptions: among them, there's the legendary Lanesborough in London and Ashford Castle in Ireland. Both were completely redone in the past year, and are gleaming with new rooms and amenities (the butler service at the Lanesborough earned some serious raves). And of course, there's Esperanza, an Auberge Resort in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, where competition to make the cut was perhaps the most intense (nearly every property made enhancements after last year's devastating hurricane).

It goes without saying that narrowing down the choices was no small feat. Our team of editors and contributors looked at a whopping 300-plus openings before deciding on a shortlist worth checking into. From there, we dispatched our reviewers and saw which

candidates stood up to the test: ordering room service, vetting the spas, checking out the signature dishes at restaurants, and in some cases, jumping on beds. (It's a tough job, but someone's got to do it.)

What you'll find here is a definitive list of hotels worth putting on your bucket list—and if it's anything like It Lists past, these are the properties that will become instant classics. Consider them opportunities to explore your favorite cities in fresh ways or new excuses to head to the last place you ever imagined. We promise: you won't regret it.