

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

CONDÉ NAST

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# Traveler

## THE Gold List

100 HOTELS  
THAT CHANGE THE  
WAY WE  
SEE THE WORLD

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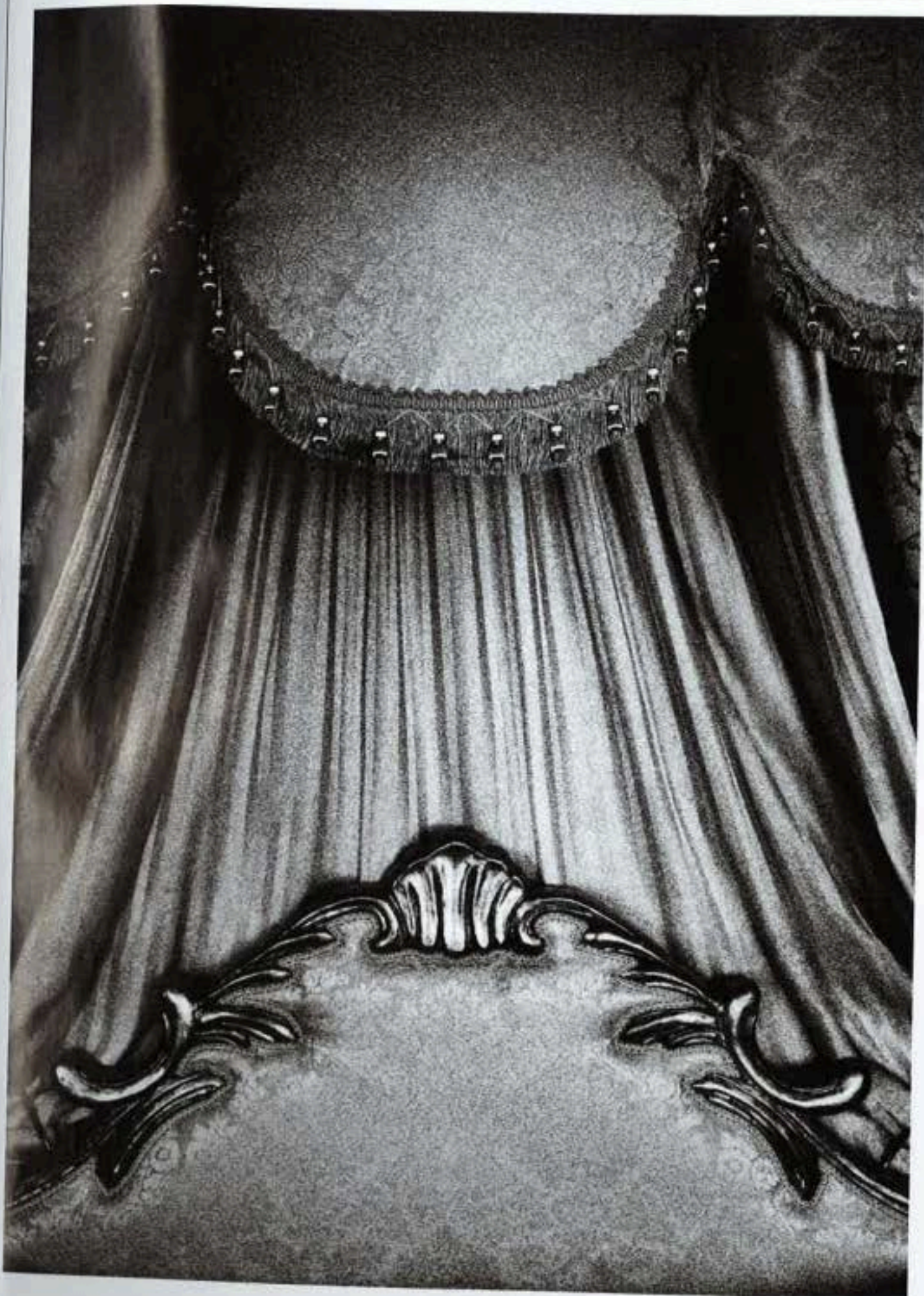
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The

# GOLD LIST

2015



Sometimes the difference between a good trip and an amazing one comes down to one thing: the hotel. And nothing stirs up as much heated debate in the *Condé Nast Traveler* offices as the hotels we're passionate about. So this year, we're doing something different with our annual Gold List by opening up our black books (which span six continents and 37 countries) to share the little (and not so little) details that excite us, move us, and keep us going back for more. The hotels listed here are already established winners of the luxury game, so what we're calling out are those micro-ingredients that say everything about a hotel's ethos—the way it feels to sit on your terrace-on-stilts at Strawberry Hill, in Jamaica, and be able to pluck your morning mango directly from a branch, or the oh-so-subtle but sumptuous hand embroidery of your initials on the pillowcases at the Belmond Villa San Michele in Florence. Consider this our collective response to the perennial question we get as travel editors: "What are your favorite hotels in the world?"



## Naturally Caribbean

Fresh organic meals are a rarity in the Caribbean, which is why **Hermitage Bay** on Antigua is such a find: The menu changes daily, depending on what the kitchen garden yields. And entrées rely entirely on what the local fishermen caught earlier that day. —Y. E.

## Sweet Rides

➔ **Rancho Valencia**, just north of La Jolla, California, has a fleet of Porsches that guests can take out free of charge. It's first come, first served, and you can spend an entire day driving along the coast or into San Diego to explore. Over on the East Coast, Rhode Island's **Watch Hill Inn** has a stable of Mercedes vehicles for touring. —J. W.

## Pipe Dreams

On my first morning in Chiang Mai's **Dhara Dhevi**, I woke up to soft pipe music. Being a curious cat, I began looking for the source of the sweet sound, only to find a man on a water buffalo playing a Thai flute below my colonial suite's balcony. —L. Y.

## Far East, Paris

Follow the Parisians' lead to La Bauhinia at the **Shangri-La** for the city's best dim sum (with a French twist). The dishes are delicate and delicious. —J. Y.



## Teatime

High tea at the nineteenth-century **Belmond Mount Nelson** in Cape Town is a must. It's a civilized oasis in the center of the city. —M. H.

**Amantaka**, in Luang Prabang, Laos, serves a big spread in the library: homemade cakes, cookies, and, best of all, iced bael-fruit tea, which is honey-ish with a distinct tropical flavor. —H. Y.

**Amanfayun**, in Hangzhou, China, is in a small tea village, so naturally the in-room tea is divine. It comes in loose leaves, which you can take home in envelopes and savor for weeks. —H. Y.



ic House rooms at the **Ventana Inn & Spa**. The Japanese-inspired decor, fireplaces, and hot tubs are just the right nod to luxe at this unapologetically hippie-chic property. —P. G.

There's probably a compound German word for the feeling you get standing by the window in your room at the **Hotel Santa Caterina** on the Amalfi Coast, overlooking terraced lemon groves and the Mediterranean

(the hotel clings to a cliff above the sea). The English word is bliss. —P. G.

The balcony rooms in the back of Istanbul's **Georges Hotel Galata** are high on a hill, with vast views from Asia across the Bosphorus to Topkapi Palace and all the way to the Golden Horn. —S. O.

Rooms at the **Hotel Vitale** in San Francisco have dramatic views

of the Bay Bridge's nighttime light installation. It's like seeing a modern art show from your room. —J. W.

The snowcapped fir trees and purple-pink Dolomites beyond the floor-to-ceiling windows of the rooms at the **Vigilius Mountain Resort**, outside Lana in Italy's South Tyrol, are out of a fairy tale. —O. C.

Set on Mount Tauro and abutting an ancient

Greek theater, the **Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo**, in Taormina, Sicily (our cover subject this month), probably has the most dramatic prospect on the island, looking out over Mount Etna and the Bay of Taormina. —Y. E.

At the **Mauna Kea Beach Hotel's** restaurant, you sit high above the water and, at dinner, watch mantas swooping in to feed under the spotlights. —M. S.

## Views from the Top

The rooms facing the iconic Gateway Arch at the **Four Seasons St. Louis** are epic. —M. H.

The best way to take in views in Big Sur, where redwoods meet the ocean, is from the newly renovated Pacif-

