

## ★ BEST HOTELS FOR FOOD

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### THE AMERICAS & CARIBBEAN

#### ★ Auberge du Soleil California 98.53

This Mediterranean-inspired hotel set on 33 acres of hillside in Napa Valley is one of the most famous in California. Decorated in shades of terracotta and orange with shuttered French windows and terraces, it has 52 large, comfortable rooms, some in the main building and the others in cottages in the grounds. The 7,000sq ft spa offers signature treatments using grapeseed extracts and herb-infused oils created by the therapists; the yoga pavilion, set beneath oak trees and overlooking the resort's vineyard, is the perfect setting for early morning classes.

**X-factor** Created more than two decades ago by Claude Rouas, the recently renovated restaurant now specialises – under current executive chef Robert Curry – in 'Wine Country cuisine'. The menu features roasted lamb served with fava beans, gnocchi and goat's-cheese-stuffed squash blossom and other equally complex dishes; the view from the terrace, over surrounding vineyards and olive groves, is a further pleasure. 180 Rutherford Hill Road, Rutherford, California, USA (00 1 707 963 1211; [www.aubergedusoleil.com](http://www.aubergedusoleil.com)). Doubles from \$616

#### ★ Mandarin Oriental New York USA 98.47

Close to Central Park, on the upper floors of the Time Warner Center, this Upper West Side hotel has rapidly established itself as one of the best in Manhattan. The 248 bedrooms, including 46 suites, all have floor-to-ceiling windows and the latest home-entertainment technology. The spa, on the 35th floor, is fantastic: it has a chic East-meets-West design, a 75ft lap pool, and seven treatment rooms including a VIP suite with two treatment beds and a fireplace. There's also a 6,000sq ft fitness centre, and a chic cocktail bar.

**X-factor** Under the direction of executive chef Toni Robertson, the Asiate restaurant serves outstanding French-Japanese fusion cuisine. The views from the 35th-floor dining room are equally spectacular. 80 Columbus Circle at 60th Street, New York, USA (00 1 212 805 8800; [www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com)). Doubles from £568

### UK

#### ★ The Waterside Inn Berkshire 98.72

The presence of the Waterside Inn, and now Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck restaurant, have made Bray, in Berkshire, something of a culinary hotspot. The three-Michelin-starred Waterside Inn, established by Michel Roux and run by his son Alain, has 11 rooms spread between the restaurant building and nearby cottages. Designed by Roux's wife Robyn, the rooms are elegantly and individually decorated, some with four-poster beds and some with outdoor terraces. In-room treatments are available, and a popular cookery school runs throughout the year.

**X-factor** The excellent French cuisine is created with great ingredients and impeccable technique, and served by knowledgeable, affable staff in a lovely riverside setting. The Waterside Inn has had three Michelin stars every year since 1985, making it the most decorated restaurant in the UK.

Ferry Road, Bray, Berkshire (01628 620 691; [www.waterside-inn.co.uk](http://www.waterside-inn.co.uk)). Doubles from £190

#### ★ Gidleigh Park Devon 98.51

This mock-Tudor house, surrounded by woodland on the edge of Dartmoor, is in a lovely setting on the banks of the North Teign River. In the house and a converted chapel are 22 individually decorated bedrooms, and there are another two in the Pavilion, a self-contained thatched cottage nearby. The rooms are beautifully furnished with antiques, art and rich fabrics and have views over river, moorland or forest. In-room treatments are available, and three rooms are equipped with spa facilities. Diversions include croquet, tennis, fishing, putting and shooting.

**X-factor** Renowned executive chef Michael Caines has won two Michelin stars for his excellent modern-European restaurant. There are weekly and seasonal tasting menus as well as the à la carte selection. The extensive wine list complements the cuisine well. Chagford, Devon (01647 432367; [www.gidleigh.com](http://www.gidleigh.com)). Doubles from £480

#### ★ Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons Oxfordshire 98.50

Owner-chef Raymond Blanc's hotel, set in a 15th-century manor house, is famed for its restaurant, which has two Michelin stars. The 32 bedrooms are individually designed, mostly in a classic country-meets-modern style (those in the garden

wing having a more contemporary feel, and private terraces). The extensive grounds are both beautiful and functional, a two-acre kitchen garden providing more than 70 herbs and 90 types of vegetable. A popular cookery school offers lessons for adults, teenagers and children; and in-room health and beauty treatments are available.

**X-factor** The restaurant's modern French cuisine comes in a traditional form on the five-course 'Les Classiques' menu, and is tuned to more adventurous tastes on the 10-course 'Menu Découverte', which offers such dishes as pan-fried sea bass served with smoked, mashed potatoes and star anise. There's a full vegetarian menu, too. Church Road, Great Milton, Oxfordshire (01844 278881; [www.manoir.com](http://www.manoir.com)). Doubles from £473

### EUROPE

#### ★ Le Bras France 98.76

An exquisite, three-Michelin-starred restaurant with 15 rooms, Le Bras was conceived by owner/chef Michel Bras and designed by architects Philippe Villeroux and Eric Raffy. Its minimalist design – using granite, glass, steel and slate – was inspired by rural France, Chile's Atacama Desert and contemporary Japan. The property is on a hilltop in the Massif Central, with views stretching for miles; a stream running through the restaurant brings the outdoors in. The sleek rooms have large windows and are hung with custom-made pieces by local artists.

**X-factor** Bras's sophisticated dishes are heavily influenced by his surroundings. Wild herbs and flowers are used in the daily changing menu, which features dishes served on slabs of volcanic stone. Route de l'Aubrac, Laguiole, France (00 33 5 65 51 18 20; [www.michel-bras.com](http://www.michel-bras.com)). Doubles from €250

#### ★ Le Meurice Paris 98.73

This 174-year-old *grande dame* is handily located in the 1st *arrondissement*, opposite the Tuileries gardens and close to the Louvre. It has 120 rooms and 40 suites decorated in a Louis XVI style, but each of the seven floors has a different look. The top-floor, Belle Etoile Suite has a 360-degree view of Paris from its large terrace. In a recent refurbishment of the hotel's public areas by Philippe Starck, the lobby, both restaurants and Bar 228 were restyled. Restaurant le Dali now features a huge ceiling canvas painted by Starck's daughter, Ara.

**X-factor** Yannick Alléno's inventive cooking at the Restaurant le Meurice has won it three Michelin stars. His gastronomic delicacies are served in a stunning dining room inspired by the Salon de la Paix at Versailles. 228 rue de Rivoli, Paris, France (00 33 1 44 58 10 10; [www.lemeurice.com](http://www.lemeurice.com)). Doubles from €770

#### ★ Can Fabes Spain 98.45

Considered by many to be the best restaurant in Spain, Can Fabes is located in a hill village 40 minutes' drive from Barcelona. Chef Santi Santamaria, who was born on the premises (the building was once his family home), established the restaurant with his wife Angels in 1981. Over the past 28 years, they have added a second dining space, the less formal Espai Coch, and five guest bedrooms. While the latter are sleek, contemporary and stylish, the main restaurant retains the authenticity of the original farmhouse.

**X-factor** Santi Santamaria became the first Catalan chef with a three-Michelin-star restaurant in 1994, achieving it with rustic but innovative local cuisine. The prawn ravioli is a classic that has stayed in his repertoire for more than 20 years, and the 'festival of chocolates' is one of his best-loved desserts. Sant Joan 6, Sant Celoni, Spain (00 34 938 672851; [www.canfabes.com](http://www.canfabes.com)). Doubles from €240

#### ★ Palazzo Sasso Italy 98.45

This refurbished 12th-century *palazzo* is in a wonderful cliff-top position above the Amalfi coast, with incredible views. Its 32 rooms and 11 suites are lavishly furnished with handmade Vietri tiles, rugs, antiques and iPod docking stations; some have balconies or terraces. The top-floor Infinito Suite has a large living area, a bathroom with Jacuzzi, and a large outdoor terrace. A 20-metre swimming pool is set in beautifully landscaped gardens; there's a rooftop sundeck with plunge pools and a spa with hydro-pool and gym.

**X-factor** Chef Pino Lavarra's southern Italian cuisine has made Rossellinis the best restaurant on the Amalfi Coast, and won it two Michelin stars. The less formal Terrazza Belvedere is available for casual dining. Via San Giovanni del Toro 28, Ravello, Italy (00 39 089 818181; [www.palazzosasso.com](http://www.palazzosasso.com)). Doubles from €218