

## It List 2016: the Best New Hotels on the Planet



Courtesy of Casa Malca

### Casa Malca in Tulum, Mexico

[Casa Malca's](#) arrival in Tulum is a little like Morticia Addams gliding into a yoga class: it's a dramatic, elegant, and slightly Gothic newcomer amid a patchouli-scented crowd. Locals swear that the 36-room property—a whitewashed villa complex fronting a secluded 600-foot-long beach—was built by Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar back in the 1980s. Regardless, it's now in the talented hands of New York-based art dealer Lio Malca, who bought it in 2013 and gave it a thorough redesign. The expansive guest rooms have polished concrete floors and floor-to-ceiling velvet drapes in shades of chartreuse and royal blue—draw them open to reveal views of the ocean or a lovely garden. Even more striking are the works of contemporary art that Malca has installed throughout the hotel: paintings by Kenny Scharf, giant fiberglass ants by Rafael Gomez Barros, video art of clowns by Marion Peck. Some pieces, like the vintage dentist chairs perched on the second floor, can be a little unsettling, but the Keith Haring-papered bar is cheery, and the lure of the wide beach and blue-tiled pool are undeniable. [casamalca.com](#); doubles from \$700.

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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.

*Edited by Jacqueline Gifford and Nikki Ekstein.*

*Reporting by Max Anderson, Jesse Ashlock, Tom Austin, Inbal Baum, Christopher Beam, Jeffries Blackerby, Jane H. Broughton, Sara Clemence, Britt Collins, Winsor Dobbin, Nikki Ekstein, Andrew Bradley Ferren, Sarah Firshein, Thessaly La Force, Jacqueline Gifford, Caroline Halleman, Becca Hensley, David A. Keeps, Millie Kerr, Amelia Lester, Sarah Greaves Gabbadon, Nathan Lump, Alexandra Marshall, Emily Mathieson, Lacy Morris, Ashley Niedringhaus, Pat Nourse, Aoife O’Riordain, Corina Quinn, Marzena Romanowska, Cynthia Ann Rosenfeld, Alexander Schechter, Michael Snyder, Flora Stubbs, Gisela Williams-Kramer, Stephen Whitlock, Stephanie Wu*

by Travel + Leisure Staff    February 1, 2016

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