



FORBES TRAVEL GUIDE ANNOUNCES 2021 STAR AWARDS

Tokyo Earns More New Five-Star Hotels Than Any Other City

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Employees of the Year Awards Recognize Those Who Make a Difference Every Day

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New Hospitality Star Category Honors Those Doing Exceptional Work During COVID

ATLANTA, FEBRUARY 16, 2021 — Forbes Travel Guide (“FTG”), the only global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas, today unveiled its 2021 Star Awards, including a number of special accolades for individual workers and brands in the hospitality industry. All honorees are showcased on [ForbesTravelGuide.com](https://www.forbestravelguide.com).

The 63rd annual list features 283 Five-Star, 576 Four-Star and 438 Recommended hotels; 73 Five-Star, 136 Four-Star and 77 Recommended restaurants; and 90 Five-Star and 200 Four-Star spas worldwide. These winners were inspected before the pandemic and when regional restrictions allowed the safe welcoming of guests. Here are some highlights from the 2021 honorees:

- Tokyo added four hotels to its Five-Star roster: The Capitol Hotel Tokyu; The Prince Gallery Tokyo Kioicho, A Luxury Collection Hotel; The Ritz-Carlton, Tokyo; and Takanawa Hanakohro. The city now boasts nine Five-Star hotels.
- Five cities gained their first Five-Star hotel: Hilton Head (Montage Palmetto Bluff), Houston (The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston), Montreal (Four Seasons Hotel Montreal), Philadelphia (Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia at Comcast Center) and Seattle (Four Seasons Hotel Seattle).
- Los Cabos welcomed a trio of new Five-Star winners: Esperanza, Auberge Resorts Collection; Chileno Bay Resort & Residences, Auberge Resorts Collection; as well as Auberge Spa Chileno Bay.
- Bali picked up two first-time Five-Star hotels: The Mulia – Nusa Dua, Bali and The St. Regis Bali.

- Scotland claimed its first Five-Star win with The Balmoral, a Rocco Forte Hotel.
- Globally, the cities with the largest number of Five-Star hotels include: London (19), Macau (13), Paris (13), New York (10) and Tokyo (9).
- In the United States, the states with the greatest number of Five-Star hotels include: California (20), New York (11), Florida (8), Nevada (6), Massachusetts (5) and Hawaii (5).
- U.S. cities with the most Five-Star hotels include: New York (10), Beverly Hills (6), Las Vegas (6) and Miami (6).

The second annual Employee of the Year awards, sponsored by Frette, celebrate the exemplary staff members who stand out in their service of guests and co-workers:

Hotel Employee of the Year: Hisashi Sugimoto, master bartender, The Tokyo Station Hotel

The 80-year-old joined the Tokyo hotel in 1958 and invented many of the original cocktails that fill the menu at Bar Oak. Yet, his colleagues report that it's his passion to make guests happy that keeps patrons returning after six decades.

Finalists: Manon Danois, housekeeping floor supervisor, Shangri-La Hotel Paris; John Goncalves, concierge, Hotel 41 in London; Ashley Lowry, recreation manager, Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Palm Coast, Florida; Ricardo Silva Pereira, front office guest service agent, Le Grand Bellevue in Gstaad, Switzerland.

Spa Employee of the Year: Najla Ceman, therapist, The Spa at Four Seasons Hotel New York Downtown

When the spa closed for nine months, the 20-year beauty veteran proactively became certified in numerous health-and-safety-related courses to ensure that she was prepared to meet the new demands upon reopening. But finding positivity in difficult times is a way of life for Ceman. When she left war-torn Bosnia 27 years ago, she had just started her first year of college. She recently has resumed her classes.

Finalists: Heriberto Peña, wellness ambassador, The Spa at Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica; Phonthip Uppapong, senior spa trainer, The Oriental Spa, Bangkok; Denise Ward, attendant, The Lodge at Turning Stone Resort Casino's Skana Spa in Verona, New York; and Hee Wei Feng, therapist, The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur.

Restaurant Employee of the Year: Bruce Wong, supervisor, Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel's Cucina

Wong is known among the staff for going the extra mile when it comes to taking care of guests. But he pays the same attention to colleagues, regularly hosting workshops to enhance the team's confidence. He also dedicated time to obtain a level 3 certification in Wine & Spirit Education Trust, among other initiatives.

Finalists: Jorge Blas Vasquez, kitchen supervisor, Bristol Panama; Nathan Gillespie, commis waiter, Ashford Castle's The Drawing Room in County Mayo, Ireland; Akeel Shah, restaurant director, SingleThread Farms Restaurant in Healdsburg, California; Jeremy Stulak, server, Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass' Kai Restaurant in Chandler, Arizona.

Hotel Instagram of the Year: Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi

Forbes Travel Guide's editorial department determined five nominees from its highest-performing luxury hotel posts on FTG's own Instagram account for 2020. Then FTG asked its readers and followers to select their favorite feed in an online survey. Thousands voted in the contest. The Maldives resort won for curating a feed that radiates personality, engages with followers and has an overall stunning aesthetic.

Finalists: Airelles Gordes, La Bastide in the French Riviera; Condado Vanderbilt Hotel in Puerto Rico; Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort; and Grand Hotel Tremezzo in Lake Como.

To honor those who particularly shined during the pandemic, Forbes Travel Guide, the world-renowned expert in genuine Five-Star service, introduced the new Hospitality Stars of the Year awards, sponsored by Frette, in 2021:

Wellness Star of the Year: Hotel Esencia, Riviera Maya, Mexico

This distinction recognizes a property that spearheaded an inspired wellness initiative, like a noteworthy food program, a fitness and health offering, or a focus on design and amenities that enhance wellbeing. Hotel Esencia introduced a unique new room category, Rooftop Wellness suites, that come with a Mirror virtual fitness trainer, a Peloton bicycle, a Technogym weight set, yoga mats and an aromatherapy steam shower. The innovative accommodations also embrace the jungle setting with rooftop terraces, outdoor showers, solariums and private pools.

Finalists: Carillon Miami Wellness Resort; One&Only Palmilla, Los Cabos Resort; The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain; Sunstone Spa at Agua Caliente Resort Casino Spa Rancho Mirage, California.

Philanthropic Star of the Year: The Berkeley, London

This award salutes a property that helped others who faced adversity in 2020, whether through an international campaign or a community-based effort. When COVID-19 forced The Berkeley to close, the hotel created The Berkeley 999 Drive Thru, serving 500 meals daily during the first lockdown to emergency services. An additional 250 meals a day were given to the elderly and more vulnerable in the community, in partnership with Westminster Council. In total, more than 50,000 meals were provided. Staff members, many of whom were furloughed, volunteered to serve food and were a beacon of positivity.

Finalists: Drake Bay Getaway Resort in Costa Rica; Ocean House Management Collection in Rhode Island; SingleThread Farms in Healdsburg, California; and The Venetian Resort Las Vegas.

People First Star of the Year: Raffles Seychelles

This accolade is given to a hotel with an exceptional commitment to people and culture, including efforts related to improving staff health and happiness and overall support of the team's mental wellbeing. When Raffles Seychelles was forced to close for several months, it saved team members' jobs by reducing all salaries but continuing to provide housing and meals. Only 10 employees of 300 were not retained. When conditions improved, the hotel was able to pay a bonus to all employees.

Finalists: Acqualina Resort and Residences on the Beach in Miami, Four Seasons Hotel at The Surf Club in Miami, Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach and Royal Mansour Marrakech.

Service Visionary Star of the Year: Ocean House Management Collection

This category spotlights a property or brand that implemented a notable reimaged process that improved the hotel experience for staff and guests. With the OH Well program, the Ocean House team rethought its services early in the pandemic, with input from Harvard University experts. Some initiatives included a mobile cart that did room-to-room delivery of cocktails and complimentary appetizers to re-create the bar experience, personalized picnics, culinary garden and winter igloo outdoor dining setups, and private culinary and wine classes and dinners.

Finalists: Kimpton La Peer Hotel in L.A.; One&Only Palmilla, Los Cabos Resort; The Phoenician, A Luxury Collection Resort in Scottsdale; and The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston.

Health Security Star of the Year: Hilton Luxury Brands, Conrad and Waldorf Astoria, Americas

In honor of the new [Sharecare VERIFIED™ with Forbes Travel Guide](#) health security platform, FTG recognizes a brand or property that took smart, proactive steps to enhance guest and employee

health safety. In response to the pandemic, Waldorf Astoria and Conrad in the Americas swiftly developed luxury service manuals with detailed videos and illustrations to thoroughly describe the modified guest experience with safety in mind. The brand also created a robust cleanliness and disinfection program. Its VERIFIED™ hotels include Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach, Conrad New York Downtown, Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills, Waldorf Astoria Chicago, Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas, Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal and Waldorf Astoria Orlando.

Finalists: Acqualina Resort and Residences on the Beach; Hotel Nikko San Francisco; The Murray, Hong Kong; Wynn Resorts Las Vegas.

Properties in Forbes Travel Guide's worldwide collection were asked to submit nominations for these industry awards. FTG received hundreds of entries and narrowed each category to five finalists. An executive committee then chose the winners.

"In this unprecedented time for the travel industry, every persisting staff member at a hotel, restaurant and spa is a winner," said Filip Boyen, CEO of Forbes Travel Guide. "But we also wanted to honor those hospitality workers who went above and beyond during the pandemic to aid their guests and colleagues. Our Employees of the Year and Hospitality Stars exemplify the best of our industry."

To view the 2021 Star Award winners, visit [ForbesTravelGuide.com](https://www.forbes.com/travelguide).

For a detailed explanation of how Forbes Travel Guide compiles its Star Ratings, click [here](#).

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