

It List 2016: the Best New Hotels on the Planet

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by Travel + Leisure Staff February 1, 2016

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.



Thomas Hart Shelby

Chicago Athletic Association

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When Windy City native John Pritzker, the Chairman of Commune Hotels and Resorts, decided to turn the 100-year-old Chicago Athletic Association building into a luxury hotel, the whole city seemed to perk up. And with good reason. The long-dormant building—built for the 1893 World's Fair—had been the subject of local lore: a place where politicians brought their mistresses and where many Chicagoans' grandparents have cherished memories. Now the second-floor steak house from the 1920s has been reimaged by the culinary superheroes from Longman & Eagle, the subway tiled speakeasy serves coffee by day and scotch by night, and the former Turkish baths have given way to a Shake Shack. Upstairs, the Roman & Williams-designed rooms are filled with references to the building's history, from wrestling-inspired robes ("One size fits: Featherweights, welterweights, & heavyweights," they proclaim) to the desks, which resemble monkey bars. But they're also thoroughly modern, with Bluetooth-enabled speakers and a mini-bar that can actually be put to use making proper cocktails. chicagoathletichotel.com; doubles from \$229.