

THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELER

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Check into these rooms at the top

Thousands of votes were cast for this year's Mr & Mrs Smith Hotel Awards, revealing the best bars, spas, baths and bedrooms around the world

An expertly curated selection of 1,000 of the world's most stylish hotels; 22,000 votes cast by the travel-savvy public; a panel of 50 tastemaker judges; and 12 amazing award-winners... This year's hippest holiday spots, most romantic hotel rooms and best-looking boutique stays were revealed on Thursday at an exclusive party thrown by Mr & Mrs Smith, for its third annual hotel awards. Top-10 shortlists in a dozen categories were created by public vote, with the overall winners selected by a panel including restaurateur Jeremy King, designer Henry Holland and *The Independent's* Head of Travel Sophie Lam.

Best-Dressed Hotel Ett Hem, Stockholm, Sweden

The Scandinavian passion for snuggling finds its best expression in this beautiful Arts and Crafts building. Designer Ilse Crawford and owner Jeanette Mix deftly manage that tricky balance between "hotel" and "home" decor. There's no need for jazzy gewgaws here: the mismatched Modernist chairs, rich muted tones, gleaming cabinets and vintage stoves create the kind of livable, laid-back spaces that Crawford's built a reputation on. Upstairs, the bedrooms are a luxurious hymn to *gemmytighet*, a Swedish spin on cosiness and conviviality (etthem.se).

Sexiest Bedroom in the World The Roccia Suite at Bellevue Syrene, Sorrento, Italy

If you want to hole up for a weekend with your lover, there are worse places you could choose than Italy's ravishing Sorrentine peninsula. Bel-



levue Syrene's Roccia Suite pulls out all the stops with a hat-trick of woody weaponry: it is set in an ancient Roman grotto (where sirens and nymphs are wont to romp); it has heady views of Vesuvius (explosive, naturally) from its private balcony; and there's a heated hydro-massage pool at the foot of the king-size four-poster bed (bellevue.it).

Best Hotel Restaurant Oreade at Monteverdi, Tuscany, Italy

Raw-food pioneer Giancarla Bodoni wowed Floridians for two decades at her Miami restaurant before following her dream to live la dolce vita in Italy. In an old wine cellar in the tiny hilltop hamlet of Castiglioncello del Trinoro, Oreade is where she now



serves an exceptional farm-to-table menu. Romantic dinners are likely sourced from places you can see from the terrace, where views of the surrounding countryside provide a spectacular backdrop. Smoked duck breast with micro-celery and green-apple sorbet; braised wild-boar short ribs; and chocolate fondant with liqueur-poached pears are typical offerings (monteverdituscany.com).

Hottest Hotel Bar The Cocktail Lounge at the Zetter Townhouse, London, UK

It's not the newest bar on the block, but it's definitely the hottest in its 'hood: the Cocktail Lounge at London's Zetter Townhouse brings together supremely inventive ingredients devised by mixologist Tony Conigliaro, finely dressed taxidermy, and theatrical decor that pays homage to an imaginary great aunt (staff call her Wilhelmina). The menu's genuinely cunning liquid concoctions are bolstered by a list of "potted delights" and supper bowls created by chef Bruno Loubet (thezettertownhouse.com).

Best Spa Hotel The Nam Hai, Hoi An, Vietnam

The best hotel spas reflect their setting. At the Nam Hai, treatments span the traditional Asian gamut, incorporating Thai and Vietnamese techniques, Himalayan salts and jade massage; and tailoring them to tackle 21st-century stresses; one specifically targets adrenal fatigue. Using some of the industry's best-respected products (Voya seaweed wraps; organic Ila products; SpaRitual nail polish), the expert therapists are delivered in eight private spa pavilions - designed to "float" over tranquil, koi-filled ponds (ghmhotels.com).

The Eco Award Song Saa Private Island, Koh Rong Islands, Cambodia

While private-island pampering and planet-friendly promises are not the most natural of bedfellows, Song Saa's mantra of "luxury that treats lightly" is no hollow gesture: environmentally-friendly credibility is demonstrated across this beautiful resort on the Koh Rong archipelago, which has its own water- and waste-management facilities, environmental research programme and community investment scheme. Song Saa sits at the heart of the vast marine reserve it created - the region's first - and, at its "sanctuary", guests are invited to teach art to local children supported by Song Saa's charitable foundation (songsaa.com).

Best for Families Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort, Fiji

A luxury resort that's widely respected for its scuba diving and environmentally-friendly attitude, this Fijian fantasy island also holds a family-friendly ace up its sleeve. The Bula Club is a free, fun-



packed mini-resort with a pool and water slides, where children are assigned their own dawn-to-dusk nanny; and there's a never-be-bored list of activities to keep everyone happily occupied. Best of all, cultural and environmental awareness are incorporated into many of the daily "adventures", and there are plenty of flexible, unfussy but nonetheless top-flight accommodation options for families (fijiresort.com).

Best Budget Boutique Hotel Masseria Cervarolo, Puglia, Italy

This 16th-century, family-run farmhouse hotel was upcycling, locally sourcing, running on solar power and infusing its own liqueurs well before the hipster community embraced such notions. There are 80 Puglian wines on the menu; the *trulli* houses are perfect examples of the local vernacular; and you can learn to cook (or make soap, or dance) in the traditional regional style. Owner Patricia's passion and talent for repurposing vintage finds is in evidence throughout - there are towel rails made of driftwood, and headboards fashioned from the farmhouse's doors (masseriacervarolo.it).

Best Hotel Pool Amangiri, Utah, US

We're not just talking a turquoise oblong with a few sunbeds here: the world's Best Hotel Pool is



an environmentally sympathetic, eye-catching patch of perfection. Amangiri's swim spot curves around the base of a sandstone escarpment, its bulk elegantly contrasted with bakelit floating day-beds and a sunken hot tub. The 600-acre sprawl of desert surrounding the resort ensures unspoilt views of soaring Studhorse Mesa, the colourful strations of Utah's Grand Staircase and terracotta-hued desert flats (aman.com).

Above and Beyond Huka Lodge, Lake Taupo, New Zealand

This 1920s former fishing lodge ranks consistently among the world's top retreats, and yet again impressed both public voters and Mr & Mrs Smith's expert judging panel. Staff might give impromptu tours en route to the airport, perhaps; or jump off their bus home to direct guests they've spotted going the wrong way. There's an intimacy that few other places can match. From the wine service to dining under the stars, everything's cleverly handled to make guests feel completely at home (hukalodge.co.nz).

The Best Newcomer The Battery San Francisco, California, US

Tech multi-millionaires Michael and Xochi Birch (creators of Bebo), who met at their university pub, wanted to recreate the feel of a village drinking den in the hip Jackson Square neighbourhood - and thus was born The Battery. Tapping into the style lingua franca of speakasies, urbane country estates and mid-century ad agencies, the exposed brick walls and polished brass fittings are given a decadent spin with rotating art exhibitions, taxidermy and glossy leather tub chairs. Your local may not have as many Silicon Valley bigwigs propping up the bar, but this former sweet factory feels as cosy as it is cool (thebatteryssf.com).

Best Smith Hotel 2015 The Pig On the Beach, Dorset, UK

In a picturesque hamlet, overlooking Studland Bay, The Pig on the Beach in Dorset is a revived and extended 16th-century manor house in a winning location. Every inch of this coastal country-house hotel is decorated with charming knick-knacks; outside, the grounds are dotted with fairy-tale dovecotes and shepherd's huts converted into couples' hideaways. As you'd expect with a Pig, the main focus is food: everything revolves around the remarkable kitchen garden, and the chefs work closely with the head gardener and foragers. More reasons it's so fondly loved by guests and critics alike? Fantastic staff, attention to detail, and a lack of pretension (thepighotel.com).

See the 12 shortlists at smithhotelawards.com. To book any of these hotels, or for more information, visit mrandsmrsmith.com or call 0330 100 3180.