

THE GOLD LIST

OUR EDITORS' ALL-TIME FAVOURITE HOTELS 2025



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARMEL BRANTLEY

THE COLONY HOTEL, PALM BEACH, USA

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SECOND COMING

A RETURN TO THE AMALFI COAST'S HOTEL
SANTA CATERINA REIGNITES A PASSION

A road trip along the Amalfi Coast in June seemed like a good plan for our first long holiday together. A week of high and low: we jumped from threadbare hostels to dream hotels, from street pizzas to chichi restaurants. But it was at Santa Caterina where it all came together.

Because Santa Caterina is, above all, a family-run hotel, shaped in a different era and with the wits to adapt to the present without any false steps. Adept in the art of making everyone happy, a talent not everyone possesses. We threw ourselves in the sea and rode the most beautiful lift in the world down to the saltwater pool teetering on the cliff edge. We swapped numbers with guests who had been coming here every year for decades and, at breakfast, feasted on fresh mozzarella, lemon juice and all the sfogliatelle we could eat, because there really is no argument here: sfogliatelle is Italy's greatest invention after Anna Magnani. We dined in front of a moon so full, so huge, that it looked like someone had hung it there for us. Maybe they had. We fell in love with the tiled floors, with the breeze swaying the curtains, with the staff serving us delicious fresh pasta and fish as if we were guests in their home. In short, we fell in love. The next day, in Salerno, we didn't speak to each other. We were afraid to open our mouths in case people discovered that we were Spanish. It was the Euro 2012 final and Spain beat Italy 4-0.

Twelve years later I return to Santa Caterina and the first thing I do is lie down in the same place I did the first time and send you a photo. You couldn't come, but you are here. At the reception desk they ask me about you. I smile at them; there's nothing to worry about – as Julio Iglesias sang, "La vida sigue igual" ("Life goes on"). So does Santa Caterina, but with a few changes. Alongside the original Liberty-style building, two smaller villas have been restored, hidden among the cliff-top lemon groves and turning the hotel into a sort of albergo diffuso – adding more rooms and allowing more privacy for those who want it. I won't name names, but quite a few Hollywood stars have taken over these houses in their entirety. But the pool is still as salty and inviting, the curtains dance the same waltz in the breeze, the tiled floors still shine. The restaurant, Glicine, now has a Michelin star, but I decide that we'll try it together next time. And ask them to pop the full moon from that first visit in front of us again.

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