

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

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**SPECIAL ANNUAL
TRAVEL SURVEY**

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THE WORLD'S *best resorts*

From tropical getaways to ski chalets, CIGAR AFICIONADO surveys travel experts to find the most stunning vacation spots on earth *by Larry Olmsted*

luxury resorts,
BY THEIR VERY NATURE,
serve only one master: fun.

You can get your kicks from holing up in a luxurious villa and relaxing on a powdery white sand beach or skiing until your legs give out. Resorts feature something for everyone.

Our list of the world's best resorts offers up a dazzling array of amenities: from private yachts to camping butlers, celebrity yoga instructors to celebrity chefs, whirlpool baths to Roman baths, along with virtually every sporting activity one could think of. Some resorts are mountain hideaways, some desert oases, some deserted islands, but all offer lavish and luxurious lodgings, gourmet cuisine, first-rate spas and staff that go beyond all reasonable expectations.

So, how did we come up with this stellar collection of resorts? As we did in our previous travel survey (December 2005), we went to the people in the know: the world's top travel journalists, travel agents,

hoteliers (who could not vote for their own properties), avid first-class business and leisure travelers and assorted industry pundits and experts. CIGAR AFICIONADO puts little stock in the vague and statistically unreliable reader polls that many magazines conduct to save effort and money, with their tiny samples of people whose expertise is completely unknown and not quantifiable. Votes in such polls can come from readers who have never visited a place, or worse, are friends of the hotel owner. Instead, we let people whose full-time job is picking the best hotels and resorts do the job for you.

Many things have remained the same since our inaugural Best Hotel survey, but others have changed. According to our experts, Italy again has the best resorts in Europe, and Four Seasons was again the most often-named hotel brand. And smaller was generally better, with tiny resorts coming out on top in several categories. At the same time, we have seen a race to build grander resorts and spas. While new hotels traditionally have experienced growing pains, this generation seems to be ready for prime time: a number of properties that have opened in the past five years leapt right onto our list and many more right into contention. The boom in new hotels includes some top-notch skiing destinations so, with winter almost upon us, we've increased our coverage of luxury ski properties.

Montage in Laguna Beach, California, is known for its beautiful setting as well as its luxurious spa.



best resorts overall

With votes cast for resorts around the world, the United States managed to reign supreme in this category. Both the world's best large and small resort were located on American soil.

large resort

MONTAGE, LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Named Best Beach Resort in our 2005 hotel poll, Montage has continued to improve. And it bested all comers by a wide margin. Anne Scully, one of the world's top travel agents, has a great track record for picking ultimate honeymoon destinations for NBC's "Today" show's annual contest. Montage was one of her picks because, in addition to the "incredible setting on Laguna Beach, it has the best accommodations, best spa and best restaurant." Her industry peer, Bill Fischer, who has booked trips for everyone from Tom Cruise to Oprah to Barbara Walters, also picked Montage, as did hoteliers Stephen Brandman, chief operating officer and partner in the chic 60 Thompson hotel chain, and Jonathan Tisch, chairman and chief executive officer of

Loews Hotels. Self-proclaimed beach junkie Drew Limsky, travel editor of *Elegant Bride* magazine, says, "It has the most scenic coastal view in America, and if that weren't enough, it's peerless in terms of design and dining—plus it has one of the most luxurious hotel spas in the world." www.montagelagunabeach.com

best beach/ocean resorts

With so many beautiful oceanside resorts to choose from, the panelists managed to narrow them down to one choice by region.

united states

MONTAGE, LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA

It's no surprise that our overall winner for best resort, which placed so high in part because of its stellar sandy setting, took first place among beach resorts as well. Lowry, a spa expert, praised the "dramatic setting" of the "grand property" and was swayed by "some of the best massages I've ever had." www.montagelagunabeach.com