

## Rating Criteria: Lodging

### The Star Rating Process

The Forbes Travel Guide process of rating each establishment includes:

- **Facility inspection:** Every property is visited by a trained facility inspector, who uses a checklist to evaluate cleanliness, physical condition and location. This inspection is unannounced and results in a Forbes One, Two or Three Star rating. Spas are the only exception -- the minimum standard for a Forbes spa rating is three stars.
- **Service evaluation:** Based on the facility inspection, properties that might qualify for a Forbes Four Star or Five Star Award certification will receive a visit from a second, this time, incognito inspector. This inspector makes an anonymous visit and performs an incognito evaluation based on more than 550 service standards. During service evaluations, inspectors behave as regular guests and never reveal that they represent the Forbes Travel Guide. This inspection largely focuses on the guest experience and the consistency in service, not just the physical facilities and amenities.

Only facilities that meet the Forbes Travel Guides rigorous standards are rated and listed in both the travel guides and on the website. Deteriorating, poorly managed establishments are deleted. A Forbes Travel Guide listing and review constitutes a positive quality recommendation; every listing is an accolade, recognition of achievement.

### Star Definitions

**★★★★★Five Star Hotels:** These exceptional properties provide a memorable experience through virtually flawless service and the finest of amenities. Staff are intuitive, engaging and passionate, and eagerly deliver service above and beyond the guests' expectations. The hotel was designed with the guest's comfort in mind, with particular attention paid to craftsmanship and quality of product. A Five Star property is a destination unto itself.

**★★★★Four Star Hotels:** These properties provide a distinctive setting, and the guest will find many interesting and inviting elements to enjoy throughout the property. Attention to detail is prominent throughout the property, from design concept to quality of products provided. Staff are accommodating and take pride in catering to the guest's specific needs throughout their stay.

**★★★Three Star Hotels:** These well-appointed establishments have enhanced amenities that provide travelers with a strong sense of location, whether for style or function. They may have a distinguishing style and ambience in both the public spaces and guest rooms; or they may be more focused on functionality, providing guests with easy access to local events, meetings or tourism highlights.

**★★Two Star Hotels:** The Two Star hotel is considered a clean, comfortable and reliable establishment that has expanded amenities, such as a full-service restaurant.

★**One Star Hotels:** The One Star lodging is a limited-service hotel or inn that is considered a clean, comfortable and reliable establishment.

## Forbes Star Rating Criteria & Expectations - Lodging

*The following are suggested criteria of what a guest can expect at each star level. They are not individually mandated and are a representative sampling of the hundreds of points covered during our inspection process. Additionally, at each star level the lodging establishment is required to meet or exceed the requirements of the previous star rating. For example, a Three Star hotel meets the criteria expectations of a Three Star hotel, a Two Star hotel and One Star hotel, and so forth.*

★**One Star Hotels:** Clean, comfortable and reliable establishments providing travelers with limited services and basic amenities. These properties focus on providing a value experience while meeting traveler's expectations. Most hotels do not have a full-service restaurant or dining room. Many Hampton Inns and Fairfield Inns consistently earn a Forbes One Star rating.

*Characteristics of a One Star Hotel, Motel or Inn include:*

### Services Detail

- Staff is well-groomed with professional, neat and well-maintained attire.
- All staff encountered are pleasant and professional in their demeanor.
- Coffee, hot tea and breakfast pastry are available on-site (could be in-room).

### Facilities Detail

- Self parking area is free of debris, good condition; surfaces, curbs, paths.
- All outdoor walkways and approaches are well-maintained and cleaned.
- Outdoor awnings, signs, marquees, flags, and plantings are clean and in good condition.
- Public spaces are free of obvious hazards.
- Lobby floors, walls and ceiling are free of debris, marks and damage.
- Elevator landings, cars and doors/tracks are clean and in good condition.
- Guest room corridor floors, walls and ceilings are free of debris, marks, and damage.
- Vending and/or ice machines are located within one floor of guest room.
- Vending and/or ice areas and equipment are clean, well-lit, and well-maintained.
- All furniture, fixtures and equipment are clean, neat and well-maintained.
- Ashtrays throughout public areas are well-maintained and free of excessive debris.
- Temperature in all interior public areas are maintained in general comfort range.
- If public phonebook present, it is neat and in good condition.
- Public washrooms very hygienic and neat, with well-stocked paper and soap.
- Public washroom fixtures, walls and floors are in very good condition.
- Guest rooms are equipped with direct dial phones.

## **Guest Room Detail**

- Hardware and hangings (door locks, racks, artwork, etc.) are secure and in good condition.
- Carpet/floor is free of debris, stains, wear, loose threads, open seams, etc.
- Walls and ceilings are free of marks, stains and damage.
- Drapes are free of stains, damage; pull easily and hang properly.
- Furniture is free of dust, marks and damage.
- All printed material including collateral, phonebooks and stationery are neat, crisp and current.
- Drawers and shelves are clean, free of dust and debris.
- All light bulbs operate; all light fixtures and lamps are in good condition, clean.
- Mirrors and windows are free of smudges and damage throughout.
- If safe is provided, it is clean, functional and convenient.
- Guest rooms are equipped with data ports (guest can connect laptop to the Internet).
- Room equipped with accurate, functional clock and radio/stereo.
- Color television works and is equipped with remote control.
- Televisions will feature basic cable or satellite channels.
- Telephones are available in each guest room.
- Ice bucket and glasses (may be molded plastic) are clean, hygienic.
- If minibar is present, it is hygienic, free of spills and damage, all products are sealed, price list present.
- If coffeemaker is present, it is hygienic, contains ample, sealed supplies and cups.
- All bedding and linens are free of debris, hairs, damage and stains.
- Room heating and air conditioning is easily controlled by guest and is quiet.
- Air is fresh and clean, no stuffiness or odors.
- Sink, tub, shower, toilet, bidet are very clean, free of hairs, stains and discoloration.
- Bathroom tile and grouting is clean, not discolored, cracked or mildewed.
- Faucets and drains operate smoothly and easily.
- Hygienic soap and shampoo is provided.
- Minimum bath linen is present: one bathmat; two each of facecloth, hand towel and bath towel.
- Towels are free of spots, stains, tears and obvious frays.
- If robes are provided, they are free of spots, stains and loose threads.

## **Specialized Facility Detail**

- Pool/beach furniture is clean, hygienic and well-maintained.
- Pool deck or beach/sand is clean and free of excessive debris.
- Pool deck and tiling are in good condition, free of excessive damage or wear.
- Pool water is clean, free of debris and free of notable odors.
- Pool fittings and equipment (ladders, dive boards) are secure and in good condition.
- Tennis court surfaces are in good condition, free of damage and well-marked.
- Tennis courts and surrounding areas are clean and free of debris.
- Fixtures, nets, lights, and fences are well-maintained and good condition.

★★**Two Star Hotels:** Comfortable establishment that is clean and reliable with expanded amenities and services that include a full-service restaurant on site. The hotel décor, furnishings, amenities, property grounds and guest room design will be moderately enhanced in quality. Doubletree Hotels, Courtyard by Marriott and Four Points by Sheraton are well-established names in the Forbes Two Star category.

*A Two Star Hotel, Resort or Inn meets all the criteria expectations and all of the qualities for a One Star Hotel, Resort or Inn plus the following characteristics:*

### **Services Detail**

- Front desk staff are articulate, smile and make eye contact.
- Staff is attired in well-fitting, consistent uniforms.
- Baggage assistance is available on request.
- The front desk is staffed twenty-four hours.
- Restaurant on-site serves three meals daily.
- If Inn, twenty-four hour guest service available on-call

### **Facilities Detail**

- Lobby provides a comfortable seating area.
- Signs and notices are professional, matching décor, not "handwritten".
- Vending and/or ice machines are located on each guest floor.
- Service doors are clean, free of marks and damage, and closed.
- Public phones are convenient, clean and well-maintained.
- A variety of different sized and appointed rooms are available in hotel.
- If available, meeting rooms are well-signed so that it is easy to find and arrive at a specific room.
- If available, meeting room doors are in good condition, free of nicks and damage.
- If available, meeting room interiors are in generally good condition, including walls, floors and ceiling.

### **Guest Room Detail**

- Guest room door and frame are free of marks, scratches and scuffs.
- There is comfortable seating for two people (other than bed).
- Guest service directory, pad and pen/pencil present and conveniently placed.
- Enclosed closets (means closets must have doors).
- There are a minimum six non-captive hangers.
- There are three spacious drawers or enclosed shelves (inside closet).
- A Luggage rack or bench provided; and adequate space to leave suitcase.
- Extra clean and hygienic blanket and pillow are provided in room.
- Lighting throughout the room is adequate.
- The room can be fully darkened.
- A full-length mirror is present in room.
- A hairdryer present in room, clean and functional.
- Hygienic soap, shampoo and two other bath amenities are provided.
- Guest rooms are equipped with easily accessible data ports or Ethernet/ wireless internet access.

### **Specialized Facility Detail**

- Guest can pick up e-mail and access the Internet from a Business Center workstation.
- Business Center working areas are clean, tidy and professional.
- There are comfortable office-style chairs at the Business Center guest workstations.
- All fitness, treatment and relaxation areas are hygienic, neatly organized and

maintained.

- Fitness equipment is clean, in very good condition, and conveniently laid out.
- Fitness/workout area is well-ventilated, with comfortable temperature.
- Sound system or television is provided in fitness/workout areas.
- Towels are provided in locker and fitness areas.
- Grooming area is equipped with hairdryers; soap and shampoo conveniently placed
- All amenities are neatly and professionally presented, and are very hygienic.
- Locker room, showers, sauna and hot tub are extremely clean, and hygienic in appearance.
- Floors throughout the casino are well-maintained and free of excessive debris.
- Air circulation in casino is adequate, not stuffy or smoky.
- Slot banks are free of excessive debris, soiled glassware, and soiled ashtrays.
- Slot chairs are in good condition, clean and free of rips and stains.
- Cashier and change booths are tidy, well-organized, and well-signed.
- Table game tops are well maintained, free of damage and wear.

★★★**Three Star Hotels:** Well-appointed establishment with consistent service and enhanced amenities providing travelers with an elevated level of comfort and convenience. Hotels will provide such services as, room service, fitness center and optional turndown service. Hotels will have a distinguishing style and ambience with both the public space and guest rooms. Many Hyatt, Hilton, Marriott, Westin and Fairmont hotels are established names with consistent service in the Forbes Three Star category.

*A Three Star Hotel, Resort or Inn meets all the criteria expectations and all of the qualities for a Two Star Hotel, Resort or Inn plus the following characteristics:*

### **Services Detail**

- Confirmation number provided during reservation service.
- Reservationist can give clear and vivid description of hotel facility and style.
- Turndown service is available upon request.
- Valet parking is available.
- Baggage assistance is automatic.
- Same day laundry and dry cleaning available five days/week.
- Complimentary newspapers are delivered to room automatically.
- Complete room service is available.
- Workstation is available where guest can access Internet.
- Basic fitness equipment is provided, including treadmills and cycles.
- If Inn, restaurant on-site which serves full breakfast is available and one additional meal service.
- If Resort, complimentary newspapers (or newsfaxes) are delivered to room automatically.

### **Facilities Detail**

- High quality, varied, and major brand sundry selections are available in an on-site store.
- If public phonebook present, it is displayed in attractive cover.
- Pay-per-view movies are available.
- Suite accommodations (separate bedroom and living areas) are available.

## **Guest Room Detail**

- Each guest room has two phones (one could be in the bathroom).
- Comfortable desk and chair are available for working, complete with telephone, data port, and light.
- Guest rooms are equipped with Ethernet/ wireless internet access.
- Insulated ice bucket, vinyl or better, as well as glass glassware; clean and hygienic are present in room.
- Minibar is present (defined as selection several beverages and snacks).
- If Inn, refreshments present in room or readily available
- If coffeemaker is present, ceramic mugs and napkins are available.
- Pillows are plush and full, no foam.
- Framed artwork or interesting architectural features exist in room.
- Excellent lighting is provided in bathroom for makeup and shaving.
- Hygienic soap, shampoo and four other bath amenities are provided.
- Amenities are presented attractively, thoughtfully (not simply lined up on counter).
- Towels are of absorbent quality, with soft nap and no discoloration.
- If Inn, Pay-per-view movies available or VCR/DVD is available.
- If Resort, guest room provides ample seating for more than two persons.

## **Specialized Facility Detail**

- If Business Center is present, a semi-private working area with workstation and telephone is available for guests.
- If tennis is available on site, water is available courtside.
- If pool or beach service is present, ample towels are available poolside or at the beach.
- Pro shop/clubhouse interiors are clean and well-maintained; displays and counters neat and tidy.
- Pro shop/clubhouse and surrounding areas are clean with well-maintained appearance.
- Golf carts are clean, well-organized and maintained.
- Rental equipment is clean and good condition, including bags.

## **Forbes Four and Five Star Criteria and Expectations**

At the Forbes Four and Five Star level, both a facility inspection and service evaluation will be performed. For each property, more than 750 criteria including cleanliness, physical facilities and employee attitude and courtesy, are measured and evaluated to produce a mathematically derived score. At the Forbes Four and Five Star level, 25% of the overall score is based on the facility inspection and 75% is based on the service evaluation.

"Service" can seem pretty subjective, but the staff at Forbes Travel Guide use strict standards and a good stopwatch to make their findings as accurate and objective as possible. For hotel ratings, inspectors spend three days and two nights at the hotel, interacting with staff, ordering room service, working out in the fitness center, making requests with the concierge, dining in the restaurants and taking advantage of other services that a standard guest would encounter.

Inspectors respond "yes" or "no" to standards that are classified in a way that assess efficiency, graciousness and warmth, technical skill level as well as food quality,

housekeeping and concierge services, to name a few. For every "no" answer, a hotel loses one point, and there's very little grey area. For example, upon arrival, luggage is delivered to the guest's room in 10 minutes or guests are always asked permission before being placed on or into a recording. It either happens or it doesn't, there's no middle ground. Inspectors also write pages of commentary during the evaluations.

### **The Forbes Four and Five Star Hotel Incognito Service Evaluation**

The hotel service evaluation is based on a three-day, two-night stay. The following categories are evaluated during the stay by the Forbes incognito inspector:

- Reservations
- Arrival
- Departure
- Communications (PBX Operator)
- Room Service (Dinner)
- Breakfast Service (in Restaurant)
- Bar/Lounge Service
- Housekeeping Daily Service
- Housekeeping Request and Turndown Service
- Laundry Service
- Business Center (if applicable)
- Guest Services/Concierge (by phone and in-person)
- Guest Room Conditions
- Public Area Conditions
- Fitness Room (if applicable)
- Pool/Beach Service (if applicable)
- Casino (if applicable)

Within each category, questions are "tagged" for certain qualities/classifications.

#### **Classifications:**

- Courtesy/Manners
- Graciousness/thoughtfulness *and* sense of personalized service
- Efficiency
- Guest comfort & convenience
- Luxury
- Technical execution skill and knowledge
- Staff appearance
- Food quality
- Cleanliness & condition

#### **Sample Service Questions from Hotel Incognito Evaluation**

Note: All questions are answered with a YES or NO and then allow for comments/remarks from the inspector. Also, each question has the applicable *classification* tag in parentheses following the statement.

#### **Reservations**

Reservations agent can readily describe variety of rates and types; effectively enabling choice. (Technical execution, skill & knowledge)

Staff exhibits the ability to anticipate needs; not always requiring prompting by guest. (Graciousness/thoughtfulness and sense of personalized service)

### ***Arrival***

Arriving guests are greeted and assisted curbside within sixty seconds of arriving by car or taxi. Exactly how long did it take? (Efficiency) *Note: inspectors carry recorders that can not only measure this particular exercise but the entire arrival process.*

Orientation to the hotel is discreet and helpful, consisting of not more than four relevant and important facts, but not delaying guests' arrival to room. (Guest comfort and convenience)

### ***Guest Services/Concierge***

Staff maintains alert posture; no hands in pockets, folded arms; Staff avoids excessive personal chatting amongst themselves; Staff does not smoke, drink or eat in guest view. (Staff appearance)

When asked about restaurant recommendations, staff mentions at least three appropriate options; describing cuisine, atmosphere and anticipates transportation and dress code. (Technical execution skill and knowledge)

### ***Guest Room Conditions***

Would you describe the bed to be plush and inviting? Linens of exceptional quality and comfort? Use of oversized or numerous pillows? Bedcovers elegant and stylish? (Sense of luxury)

Would you describe this room as being extremely well maintained? (nothing broken, worn, damaged, slow plumbing etc.) (Cleanliness and condition)

### ***Room Service***

Staff is extremely well spoken, polite and clear, avoiding slang and phrase- fragments. (Courtesy/manners).

Hot foods are hot when served (not warm); frozen items are firm at the time of consumption (desserts adequately protected or offered as second course delivery). (Food quality)

## **Forbes Four Star Criteria**

★★★★**Four Star Hotels:** Outstanding establishment in a distinctive setting that provides travelers with exceptional service and a luxury experience. Service and amenities are refined and sophisticated and may include automatic turndown service, valet parking and 24-hour room service. Ritz-Carlton, Mandarin Oriental and Four Seasons are prominent names in the Forbes Four Star category, known for personalized service and hospitality, in addition to luxurious accommodations. Other notable Forbes Four Stars include the Post Ranch Inn, Canoe Bay and the Windsor Court Hotel.

*A Four Star Hotel, Resort or Inn meets all the criteria expectations and all of the qualities for a Three Star Hotel, Resort or Inn plus the following characteristics:*

### **Services Detail**

- Written confirmation is automatic or offered, either by mail, fax or e-mail.

- Written confirmation is personalized, professional and accurate; it reflects the style and image of the property.
- Guest's name is used effectively, but discreetly, as a signal of recognition.
- The time from arriving at the reception area until registration is complete does not exceed five minutes (includes queuing).
- Bed is plush and inviting with oversized or numerous pillows.
- Bedcovers are elegant and stylish and with linens of exceptional quality and comfort.
- All written information is provided on good quality paper or pads, custom-printed or logoed.
- Bathroom presentation and placement of amenities and linens is thoughtful, careful, and elegant.
- Fresh ice is provided during evening service or at another time during the day.
- Turndown service is automatically provided.
- During turndown service, guest clothing is neatly handled and guest toiletries are neatly arranged and displayed on a cloth or shelf.
- Room service is delivered within 30 minutes.
- Room service order is delivered within five minutes of quoted time.
- One hour pressing is available.
- If resort, two hour pressing available
- Same day laundry and dry cleaning is available seven days/week.
- Staff arrives in guest room to pick up clothing within ten minutes of placing request.
- Wake-up call is personalized with guest's name and time of day.
- Wake-up call is delivered within two minutes of requested time.
- Wine by the glass service will include an offer of a tasting sample.
- Special service desk identified as concierge/guest service is situated apart from reception/front desk.
- The final bill is offered to guest for review prior to printing final receipt.
- If Inn, choice of at least two complimentary newspapers are offered on-site.
- If Inn, restaurant on site serving a full breakfast plus two additional meal services.
- If casino services are present, when playing slots for more than 20 minutes, drink service is offered.
- If casino services are present, when playing a table game for more than 15 minutes, drink service is offered.

### **Facilities Detail**

- Lobby areas feature elegant live plants and/or fresh floral displays.
- A dedicated and secure luggage storage area is available.
- Public phones are equipped with seats, privacy panels and pad/pens.
- Public washrooms are furnished with upgraded materials and appointments/luxurious design.
- Televisions feature premium cable or satellite television.
- Guest room telephones have two lines.

### **Guest Room Detail**

- Selection of at least 10 hangers including a variety of bars, clips and padded.
- Closet is very well lit and generously spacious.
- In-room safe is present.
- If Inn, in-room safe is present or readily accessible on-site.

- Minibar is present, is non auto-charge, and premium products are attractively displayed.
- Bed is triple sheeted or features washable duvets.
- Live plants are present in guest rooms.
- Shaving/makeup, lighted magnifying mirror is present.
- Double sinks or separate vanity counter are present in the bathroom.
- Ample cosmetic and toiletry storage space exists for two persons.
- Hygienic soap, shampoo and five other bath amenities are provided.
- Bathroom amenities will be exceptionally luxurious in quality and variety.
- One robe per guest is provided; plus additional towels in the bathroom.
- Luxurious bath linens, oversized towels and a bath rug are all present in the bathroom, no plastic shower curtains.

### **Specialized Facility Detail**

- Fitness equipment is available with personal headphones/televisions
- Current newspapers and national-title magazines are provided in fitness and locker areas.

## **Forbes Five Star Criteria**

★★★★★**Five Star Hotels:** Exceptionally distinctive luxury environment offering consistently superlative, personalized service and the ultimate in amenities, make these hotels and inns the best in the U.S. and Canada. Attention to detail and the anticipation of every need are evident throughout this exclusive group of hotels. These hotels are remarkable in every aspect from the plush and elegant guest room design to the unforgettable culinary experiences. The Forbes Five Star category includes such properties as the Peninsula Beverly Hills, the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago, the Ritz-Carlton San Francisco and the Mandarin Oriental New York.

*A Five Star Hotel, Resort or Inn meets all the criteria expectations and all of the qualities for a Four Star Hotel, Resort or Inn plus the following characteristics:*

### **Services Detail**

- Staff is extremely well spoken, polite and clear, avoids slang and phrase-fragments.
- Staff is extremely well informed about requirements within their department.
- Overall service is flawless from initial reservation call to departure service.
- Guests are offered an escort to their rooms unless they specifically decline.
- Choice of at least two complimentary newspapers is offered and distributed.
- Welcome gift or amenity provided by management during the visit.
- Twenty-four hour room service is available, including hot food.
- Wine by the glass is presented in bottle and poured in room, for room service.
- During turndown service, something noteworthy and thoughtful is included in the presentation.
- At least two types of premium quality snacks are automatically offered and distinctly presented during bar and lounge service.

- All mixed drinks are presented with modified or full club service.
- Any work undertaken by the staff is handled with complete professionalism, and returned to guests neatly, in folders or envelopes.
- If Inn, restaurant on site serving a full breakfast and dinner plus one additional meal service.
- If pool service is available, guests are proactively greeted and escorted to their chairs, and set-up assistance is provided or offered.
- If pool service is available, during a 90 minute period and in warm conditions, some sort of complimentary refreshment is offered (for example, mineral water, fresh fruit, water spritz).

### **Facilities Detail**

- Public washrooms feature well-maintained cloth towels, fresh plants or flowers.

### **Guest Room Detail**

- Guest bathroom is equipped with a telephone.
- CD player/stereo is present and functional.
- Ice bucket and glasses are high quality (glass, metal, stone etc.), with tongs which are clean and hygienic.
- Fresh flowers are present in guest rooms.
- Separate showers are present in bathroom.