

# AFAR

## Lesser-Known Hotel Loyalty Programs That Should Be on Your Radar



If you prefer boutique properties and unique destinations, there may be a better loyalty program out there for you.

As the year comes to a close, you might be looking at your loyalty program balances and wondering whether you traveled enough to earn those elite level perks for the coming year. If you have been chasing points all year but to no avail, consider these alternative options in 2020. Sometimes bigger programs with thousands of hotels do not always equal better perks for your personal travel patterns. Smaller programs are often less about points and more about immediate benefits and experiences to keep you loyal. These smaller programs could actually serve you better.

### **World of Hyatt + Small Luxury Hotels of the World**

As a World of Hyatt member, you have a lot to gain because the program (known for celebrated brands like Andaz and Park Hyatt) has been expanding its collaboration with Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH), giving members access to global boutique properties that were previously unaffiliated. These include the well-known [Hotel Excelsior](#) just steps from the old town in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and the nearby uber-chic, 13-room [Villa Orsula](#). Even better, between now and January 31, 2020, guests can [register for a promotion to earn 3,000 bonus points](#) per stay at any of the more than 300 participating SLH hotels if they visit before March 2, 2020. This is a hugely lucrative promotion given that some World of Hyatt hotels can be booked for as few as 5,000 points per night.

## Miraval Authentic Circle

Guests at Miraval Resorts become a lifetime [Authentic Circle](#) member during their fifth Miraval stay at wellness resorts like the [Miraval Arizona Resort & Spa](#) in Tucson. It comes with on-site shopping discounts, a \$100 resort credit, free laundry, welcome gift, and complimentary glass of wine with room service. World of Hyatt members can double-dip by earning points for their stays at Miraval on top of these Authentic Circle amenities.



Courtesy of Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas

Score a free massage at Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas with elite status in the Discovery loyalty program.

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## Discovery collection

This [collection of well-known hotel brands](#) covers over 550 hotels, resorts, and palaces worldwide and includes brands like Anantara Hotels, Resorts and Spas; Kempinski; Omni Hotels & Resorts; Pan Pacific Hotels and Resorts; and Tivoli Hotels and Resorts. It is especially known for delivering immediate perks and nearly 2,800 complimentary [local experiences](#) at many hotels. For example, Black Level members (the program's highest level, which you reach after staying 30 or more qualifying nights in a calendar year) can redeem a free [Anantara Signature massage at Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas](#) in Thailand or an [afternoon tea on a pontoon boat at Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara](#).

## Preferred Hotels & Resorts I Prefer Hotel Rewards

Coming in 2020 are two new elite-level tiers and a new way to redeem points toward free stays and upgrades. The changes to Preferred's I Prefer program have not been fully unveiled yet but are expected to make it easier to secure benefits like room upgrades. Exclusive to members, the new [Last Minute Escapes](#) offering slashes member hotel rates at various properties around the world by 35 percent (or sometimes more) with a new list being released every two weeks. This collection of boutique hotels include chic options like [Only You Hotel Atocha](#) in Madrid and [Post Ranch Inn](#) in Big Sur, California.



## The Leading Hotels of the World Leaders Club

Redesigned last year, [Leaders Club](#) sports some upgraded benefits for its annual \$175 fee. Members automatically receive free breakfast and wireless internet with each stay plus the opportunity to score priority room upgrades upon check-in. Guests can also get five pre-arrival upgrades that they can apply to upcoming stays after they spend at least \$5,000 at Leading Hotels within a calendar year. Among the club's most well-known hotels are Madrid's [Villa Magna](#) and [Hôtel Barrière Le Fouquet's Paris](#).

## HotelTonight HT Perks

[HT Perks](#) comes with hotel discounts and credits that increase with the number of stays that guests book through the [last-minute hotel booking site's](#) program. It was designed like a video game and offers award badges when people reach significant milestones like number of countries traveled to or unique hotels visited.

## **Aqua-Aston Hospitality's A-List program**

Aqua-Aston's [A-List program](#) shifts the focus away from points toward discounts and earlier access to promotions. The program covers more than 30 hotels in Hawaii, the mainland, and Costa Rica and includes traditional hotels as well as condominium rentals. Travelers will recognize the name from hotels like [Aston Waikiki Beach Tower](#) and [Crocodile Bay Resort](#) in Costa Rica. When checking in, members also receive a free "eco-kit" containing a reusable tote, reusable bottle, and reef-safe sunscreen to enjoy during their stay and back at home.

## **Sonesta Travel Pass**

This year, [Sonesta Travel Pass](#) launched a new Sonesta World Mastercard with Bank of America that delivers immediate perks to those approved for the card. Travelers earn bonus points for certain spending, including three points per dollar spent at Sonesta properties and two points per dollar spent on airfare, car rentals, and dining. In addition to earning points that can be redeemed at Sonesta hotels, cardholders receive an immediate bump to elite status offering club lounge access, free breakfast, room upgrades, and food and beverage discounts when they stay with Sonesta just for having the card. These include hotels like Sonesta Maho Beach Resort, Casino & Spa in St. Maarten ([a plane spotter's paradise](#)) and [Sonesta Fort Lauderdale Beach](#).

## **Dream Hotel Group**

Some small hotel groupings eschew formal programs altogether—for example, Dream Hotel Group, which says it tries to deliver recognition in its own way. At [Dream Hollywood](#), the staff typically sends up a welcome amenity to guests on their fifth stay, and those celebrating a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion are treated as VIPs in the dining room or lounge. Business travelers are not forgotten either, with different corporate contracts highlighted on a rotating, monthly basis to receive goodies like free breakfast and welcome drinks. Loyalty programs are designed to reward repeat business, but even the smallest hotels often go out of their way to keep guests happy and coming back.