



VIRTUOSO®  
SPECIALISTS IN THE ART OF TRAVEL

## VIRTUOSO® HOTELS & RESORTS MARKS 25 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE BY HONORING THE GLOBE'S 11 MOST EXCEPTIONAL HOTELS

### *Best of the Best Award Winners Named at Virtuoso Travel Week*

**LAS VEGAS (August 17, 2017)** – International luxury travel network [Virtuoso](#)® announced the winners of the eagerly awaited 2017 *Best of the Best* awards last night at the 29th annual Virtuoso Travel Week. The 11<sup>th</sup> annual ceremony celebrated this year's top 11 hotels and hoteliers before 1,600 of luxury travel's crème de la crème attending the Hotels & Resorts Dinner. Of particular note, Palazzo Seneca in Italy received the sought-after "Hotel of the Year" honor.

Virtuoso received input from its 800-plus travel agency partners and more than 16,000 professional travel advisors to name the winners in each category, from best dining experience to best wellness program. Editors of *VIRTUOSO LIFE*, the network's multi-award-winning magazine, offered their expert insight and hotel savvy to select the nominees on which the advisors voted. This year's *Best of the Best* award recipients will be highlighted in the publication's September/October, distributed to 200,000 upscale world travelers.

"With this being the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Virtuoso Hotels & Resorts, we wanted to ensure that this year's winners were emblematic of the commitment to delivering the world's best hotel experiences that has served as the hallmark of this program all these years," said Albert Herrera, senior vice president of Global Product Partnerships for Virtuoso. "This year's *Best of the Best* winners are truly renowned properties. They constantly redefine modern luxury by proactively reimagining the guest experience and inspiring others within our own industry to think bigger. In that sense, they mirror Virtuoso's own philosophy regarding innovation and we proudly recognize these great partners."

With a broad-ranging portfolio of more than 1,200 hotels, resorts, villas and private island retreats in over 100 countries, Virtuoso Hotels & Resorts is revered as the industry's most prestigious hotel program. Founded in 1992 with just 20 hotels, Virtuoso Hotels & Resorts is marking its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, celebrating the remarkable growth, quality and diversity that have become trademarks of the program over the past quarter-century.

The 2017 Virtuoso *Best of the Best* categories and winners are:

#### ***Hotel of the Year: Palazzo Seneca, Norcia, Italy***

Giving Back: "The Bianconi family doesn't just own a lovely hotel. They are beautiful people indeed, who care for others less fortunate, love the land where they were born, and take good care of this land." - *Julia Kostina, Renshaw Travel, a Virtuoso Agency*

#### ***Best Achievement in Design: Six Senses Douro Valley, Lamego, Portugal***

Unwind with Wine: "What sets this resort apart is that it retains the charm and beauty of a large country manor set among rolling hills and vineyards. There's a prevailing sense of quiet, calm and relaxation as soon as you enter." - *Linda Zelisko, Travel Experts, a Virtuoso Agency*

#### ***Best Dining Experience: La Terrazza – Hotel Eden Rome, Rome, Italy***

Buon Appetito: “Have you ever eaten pasta surrounded by vaped dry ice? It is simply the most innovative dish I have ever seen.” - *Jonathan Phillips, Camelback Odyssey Travel, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Best Bar: Bar Hemingway – Ritz Paris, Paris, France**

Time Travel: “Walking into Bar Hemingway is like stepping back in time. Head bartender Colin Field is a book of stories. You can sit back, listen and just imagine.” - *Liora Manilof, Forest Travel Agency, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Best Family Program: The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, Naples, Florida, U.S.**

Educational Experiences: “They have great options for families to visit local museums, bird sanctuaries, and a special program with a local artisan who leads their glass blowing classes. They really go out of their way to make the experiences as engaging as possible for the kids.” - *Nick Cutrone, Vista Travel Consultants, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Best Wellness Program: Canyon Ranch, Tucson, Arizona, U.S.**

Healthy Inspiration: “The combination of four areas - physical, emotional, spiritual, and medical - is very unique in the wellness community. Most spas will cover a couple of the areas. Canyon Ranch can do it all. It has a wider range of options for the consumer than any other spa and the quality is outstanding!” - *Peggy Purtell, Travel Experts, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Best Virtuoso Experience: Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Playa del Carmen, Mexico**

A Singular Stay: “From the moment you arrive in the Sanctuary Lounge and make a wish by throwing a little stone in the cenote, you know you are in a special place. Everything in the hotel is an experience so that makes it unique.” - *Areli Guzman, Viajes Terranova, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Best Virtuoso Newcomer: Four Seasons Hotel New York Downtown, New York, New York, U.S.**

Dramatic Entry: “The large wrought iron front doors give a luxurious first impression. But the standout feature is the beautiful spiral staircase and long hanging cascading sculpture on the ground level.” - *Sylvia Betesh Lebovitch, Ovation Vacations, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Sustainable Tourism Leadership: Cavallo Point – the Lodge at Golden Gate, Sausalito, California, U.S.**

Nature by the Bay: “Sustainable tourism can sometimes lead to unexpected opportunities. It’s a tale of tourism helping transform swords into plowshares.” - *Costas Christ, Global Strategist, Sustainability, Virtuoso, of the former military base now transformed into an urban eco-resort*

**Best Virtuoso Hotel Ambassador: Kees Hogetoorn – Grand Hotel Amsterdam, an Accor Hotel**

Host with a Heart: “I knew nothing about his hotel prior to meeting Kees and he truly allowed the property to come to life. His passion and enthusiasm is unmatched.” - *Jessica Renshaw, Renshaw Travel, a Virtuoso Agency*

**Hotelier of the Year: Susanne Hatje – Mandarin Oriental, New York, New York, New York, U.S.**

Goes the Extra Mile: “There is a peace of mind when I send clients her way because I know they will be taken care of by her amazing team that lead by her example. She makes every client stay memorable. She has an incredible vibrant and energetic personality, always engaging with guests.” - *Miriam Omphroy, Forest Travel Agency, a Virtuoso Agency*

For more information, visit [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com).

**About Virtuoso**

Virtuoso® is the leading international travel agency network specializing in luxury and experiential travel. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 800 travel agency partners with more than 16,000 elite travel advisors in over 45 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing upon its preferred relationships with 1,700 of the world's best hotels and resorts, cruise lines, airlines, tour companies and premier destinations, the network provides its upscale clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. More than (U.S.) \$21.2 billion in annual travel sales makes Virtuoso a powerhouse in the luxury travel industry. For more information, visit [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com).

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