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TRAVEL pavilion 2018

When it comes to vacation planning, choosing the right accommodation is as important as selecting the perfect destination. You want to have fun all day, and when you're ready to retire to your home away from home, if the service and the vibe are less than ideal, it puts a damper on your vacay. No worries—we've come up with a list of our favorites. You may be tempted to snuggle in and stay put, but don't. Get what you came for!

BY: Kym Allison Backer, Linda Day, LaConia J. Dean, E. Monique Johnson, Sheryl Nance-Nash, Nina Hemphill Reader, Leslie E. Royal

GRAND HYATT BAHA MAR
NASSAU, BAHAMAS

You might think you're in Dubai with all the gold and glitz. Terms like "palatial" and "over the top" come to mind. The Grand Hyatt aims to set a new standard of luxury in the Caribbean. You're likely to be inspired to indulge your urges, from shopping at the finest boutiques and shops to gambling like a high roller at the largest casino in the Caribbean that has direct beach views from the casino through massive windows. High rollers are treated like royalty. Everybody else does okay too, with the first and only luxury ESPA and more than 20 food and beverage outlets. Hang out at Churchill, the cigar and rum bar. Or relax with a craft cocktail in Bar Noir, a circular bar with perfect views of the action in the casino. You'll feel like you're in a museum, with thousands of paintings, sculptures and experimental installations of Bahamian art (bahamar.grand.hyatt.com/en/hotel/our-hotel.html).

SHADES OF BARBADOS
ST. JAMES, BARBADOS

Check in to the Venetian on Grace Bay and you won't want to check out. Nestled in a quiet little neighborhood, just a brief stroll from the cerulean waters of the sea, is the family-owned paradise known as Shades of Barbados. Guests can stay in one of 12 beautifully appointed apartments, featuring full kitchens and decks or patios overlooking the oasis-like in-ground pool. It's by the pool that you will also find an outdoor lounge, complete with a BYOB wet bar and a sitting area where guests can mingle, curl up with a book or just enjoy the lush gardens. And don't be surprised if you warrant a visit from local wildlife like the occasionally mischievous green monkeys. The property also offers guests a DIY laundry and workout room. Get out and see the island with a visit to nearby Lime Grove, an upscale hub of luxury shops and entertainment, or map out an excursion into Bridgetown to discover the history of Bajan culture (shadesofbarbados.com).

THE BALLANTYNE HOTEL
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

It's luxury, excellence and beauty unparalleled. The splendor of the Ballantyne allows guests to bask in the wonder of it all. This Forbes Four-Star, AAA Four-Diamond luxury locale, with 199 well-appointed guest rooms, 9 elegant suites, 35-room lodge and 4-room cottage, offers a wonderful retreat. Select an executive suite overlooking the 18th hole and enjoy nightly turndown service complete with plush robes and slippers awaiting your relaxation. Dine at the ultra-chic Gallery restaurant featuring tantalizing, earth-to-table, contemporary American cuisine or delight in 24-hour in-room dining. Stroll along miles of walking trails or tee off on one of the finest golf courses in the region. First-time golfers can make reservations at

MOTIF SEATTLE, A DESTINATION HOTEL
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Sandals Resorts are famous for many things, but its Butler Suites service raises the bar—high. Get ready for VIP treatment that you dare only dream of. When you arrive, your butler will greet you with a smile, lemongrass-scented hand towels to freshen up after your flight, and then tempt you will a cold cocktail and light bites. No worries about your luggage, of course. Forget about standing in line to check in. Your butler will handle that privately in your suite and work his or her magic to orchestrate any personal accommodation preferences. You'll get a private resort orientation. Don't be surprised when you get the offer to unpack your bags and to press your first night's clothes. When you're given a cell phone to call when you so desire, you'll know for sure you are in the very best of hands. Better still, this kind of service that you'll never forget is just beginning (www.sandals.com/main/barbados/bd-home/).