

Best hotel rewards programmes

Your guide to maximising loyalty points



Hotel loyalty programmes can unlock free nights, room upgrades and elite perks. We break down the best hotel rewards programmes to help you choose wisely.

Not all hotel loyalty programmes are the same. Some are points goldmines, others excel at upgrades. Here's what you need to know to pick your perfect match:

-  Marriott Bonvoy offers the largest choice of hotels, though redeeming points can be challenging.
-  Hilton Honors lets you rack up points like frequent flyer miles and keeps redemptions refreshingly flexible.
-  World of Hyatt delivers premium perks, though its portfolio is smaller in Europe.
-  IHG One Rewards shines with affordable redemptions and frequent promotions.
-  Accor Live Limitless deserves serious consideration for Europe-focused travellers, with unmatched French coverage and a strong presence across the continent.
-  Consider how often you travel and which destinations you visit before making your choice.

Why hotel loyalty programmes are important for travellers

Think of hotel loyalty programmes as the frequent flyer programmes of the accommodation world. The key to hotel rewards is knowing the insider strategies. The best hotel loyalty programmes offer free nights, room upgrades, late check-out and elite perks that can transform a standard trip into a premium experience—which is particularly valuable when staying in more expensive cities like London, Paris, Amsterdam and others.

Did you know? Marriott Rewards, which Marriott launched in 1983, is the oldest continually operating modern hotel loyalty programme.

Here's the travel truth: loyalty pays. A well-chosen hotel programme can save you hundreds of pounds annually while giving you perks that make every stay feel special.

The heavy hitters: Comparing major hotel rewards programmes

Marriott Bonvoy

Best for: Frequent travellers who value variety and global reach.

Marriott Bonvoy, with close to 9,000 properties worldwide, is the jumbo jet of hotel loyalty. Marriott has excellent coverage across Western Europe, particularly in the UK (150+ properties), Spain, Italy, France and Germany. You'll find a good selection of Marriott hotels in major cities and popular resort destinations like the Costa del Sol, Algarve and Greek islands. You'll earn points on every stay, with bonuses for elite status tiers.

Pros and cons:

- 👍 Massive global footprint across 30+ brands
- 👍 Transfer points to 38 airline partners, including British Airways Executive Club, Virgin Atlantic Flying Club and major European carriers
- 👍 Hotels often grant elite members complimentary upgrades, sometimes including suites
- 👎 Award nights can be expensive (35,000–100,000+ points). Ultra-luxury resorts in places like the French Riviera or Santorini have nights costing hundreds of thousands of points
- 👎 Point values vary by property—London and Paris properties often require more points than equivalent hotels elsewhere in Europe
- 👎 Complex award charts can be confusing

Hilton Honors

Best for: Point collectors and frequent business travellers.

Hilton Honors is generous with points and their "fifth night free" benefit stretches your points further for Silver, Gold and Diamond members—perfect for week-long European city breaks or extended business trips. Hilton has over 400 properties across Europe, with particularly strong coverage in the UK, Germany, Netherlands and major business hubs. They also offer a good selection of both city hotels and resort properties.

Pros and cons:

- 👍 Strong point-earning potential, especially when combining base points + elite bonuses
- 👍 No blackout dates on standard reward stays
- 👍 Elite benefits include room upgrades where available, lounge access, free breakfast, bonus points and rollover nights
- 👍 Points don't expire with account activity
- 👍 Hampton by Hilton offers excellent value across European cities
- 👎 Point values vary by brand, property and date—central London or Paris properties often require significantly more points
- 👎 Limited luxury/ultra-luxury options in Europe compared to competitors
- 👎 Some resort properties in Spain, Portugal and Greece charge extra fees even on award stays

World of Hyatt

Best for: Luxury seekers and those who value premium experiences.

World of Hyatt may be smaller, with 1,400 hotels and properties, but it offers high-value points and standout perks. European coverage is concentrated in major cities—like London, Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich and Vienna—with limited presence in smaller destinations or Eastern Europe.

Why we love it: Hyatt's Category 1 hotels require just 5,000 points per night, offering exceptional value for UK and European travellers when you can find them.

Pros and cons:

- 👍 Excellent point values compared to many larger chains—often 1.5–2p per point
- 👍 Reasonable award pricing (5,000–30,000 points/night)
- 👍 Strong elite benefits and service, including upgrades and lounge access
- 👍 Suite upgrade awards for elite members
- 👎 Smaller European portfolio means limited choices outside major cities
- 👎 Virtually no presence in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia or smaller UK cities
- 👎 Fewer promotions
- 👎 Casual travellers often find it challenging to maintain elite status

IHG One Rewards

Best for: Budget-conscious UK and European travellers and those who enjoy maximising points through promotions and credit card perks.

IHG has thousands of properties globally and over 650 properties across Europe, with particularly strong coverage in the UK (250+ properties), Germany, France, and more and more in Eastern Europe. Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express offer reliable mid-range options across the continent. Its *One Rewards* programme includes some of the lowest-cost nights in the industry. Limited-time promotions like *PointBreaks* reduce the number of required nights to just 5,000 points.

Hidden gem: IHG's Accelerate promotions can multiply your point earnings quickly—particularly valuable for European road trips or multi-city breaks.

Pros and cons:

- 👍 Best UK coverage of any major chain—Holiday Inn Express in nearly every British city
- 👍 Low point redemption options via PointBreaks and other sales
- 👍 Fourth night free on award stays of 4+ consecutive nights for eligible credit card holders
- 👍 You earn points through stays and purchases with IHG credit cards
- 👍 Frequent promotions that boost point earnings
- 👎 Inconsistent property quality across brands. Holiday Inn Express is reliable, but some older Holiday Inns vary in quality
- 👎 Limited ultra-luxury options compared to competitors (though InterContinental properties are excellent)
- 👎 Elite benefits are less comprehensive
- 👎 Complex brand portfolio can be confusing

Major programmes Quick Comparison Table

Programme	Points per £1	Elite Tiers	Typical Award Cost	Global Properties
Marriott Bonvoy	~10 points (some brands less)	5	30k-100k+	~9,000
Hilton Honors	~10 points	3 elite + base member	10k-80k	~7,000
World of Hyatt	~5 points	4	5k-30k	~1,400
IHG One Rewards	~10 points	4	10k-70k	~6,000
Accor Live Limitless	~2 points	4	2k-40k	~5,400

Other notable programmes include:

- Radisson Rewards: Excellent for Scandinavia, Germany and Eastern Europe. Often overlooked but offers good value in cities like Copenhagen, Stockholm, Prague and Warsaw, where other chains have limited presence.
- NH Hotel Group: Strong in Spain, Italy and Germany. Good option if your travels focus on the Iberian Peninsula or Central Europe.
- Wyndham Rewards: Limited European presence, but offers simple reward tiers when properties are available.
- Best Western Rewards: Decent European coverage with consistent mid-range properties. Good for road trips across Europe.

How to choose the best hotel loyalty programme for you

Picking the right programme is about matching your travel patterns with programme strengths.

Consider your travel frequency

- **Occasional travellers (1–5 nights/year):** Focus on low redemption thresholds like IHG or Accor.
- **Regular travellers (10–25 nights/year):** Marriott, Hilton or Accor offer variety and earning potential across Europe.
- **Road warriors (25+ nights/year):** Hyatt or Marriott deliver the most valuable elite benefits, though consider IHG if you travel extensively across different European destinations.

Match your destinations

UK-focused travel

- IHG has the best coverage, with Holiday Inn Express in virtually every city.
- Premier Inn (not a loyalty programme) dominates the budget sector but doesn't earn points.
- Hilton and Marriott have good presence in major cities.

Mediterranean holidays

- Marriott, IHG and Accor have strong resort presence in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy.
- Accor's Ibis and Novotel brands offer excellent value along coastal areas.

European business travel

- Hilton and Marriott dominate business hubs like Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Brussels and Milan.
- Accor's Novotel and Mercure are reliable business hotel options across Europe.

Eastern Europe

- Accor and Radisson have the best coverage in Prague, Budapest, Warsaw and Krakow.
- IHG is expanding rapidly in this region.
- Marriott and Hilton have limited but growing presence.

France

- Accor is unmatched—you'll find properties in cities where no other international chains operate.
- Consider Accor as your primary programme if you visit France regularly.

Skyscanner's hotel search can show which loyalty programme hotels operate in your favourite cities.





Factor in credit card benefits

Many hotel credit cards offer automatic elite status, free nights and bonus points. Many travel credit cards also earn bonus points on flights and other travel purchases. Sometimes a credit card annual fee pays for itself in perks alone.

UK-specific considerations

- American Express offers IHG, Hilton and Marriott co-branded cards in the UK (annual fees typically £75–£300).
- Annual fees can pay for themselves if you stay 5+ nights per year and use the card for everyday spending.
- Some UK travel credit cards earn transferable points that convert to hotel points.
- Consider whether elite status benefits justify the annual fee for your travel frequency.

Maximising your hotel loyalty programme benefits

Elite status can be worth a lot in perks, even if you never use lounge access. Late checkout, room upgrades and bonus points add up fast—particularly valuable in expensive European cities.

Elite status shortcuts

- **Status matches:** Already have airline elite status with British Airways, Virgin Atlantic or other carriers? Some hotel programmes will match it.
- **Status challenges:** Fast-track elite benefits by completing a stay challenge (typically 3–5 stays within 90 days).
- **Credit cards:** Many hotel cards offer automatic elite status as a cardholder benefit. This is particularly valuable in the UK, where earning status through stays alone can be difficult for leisure travellers.

Point earning strategies

- **Book direct:** Hotels often reward direct bookings with bonus points. This is key for European properties where third-party booking sites are popular.
- **Promotions:** Stack offers for double or triple points. European properties frequently offer regional promotions during shoulder seasons.
- **Dining programmes and shopping portals:** Earn extra points through hotel dining and online shopping portals (availability varies by country—strongest in UK, France and Germany).
- **Credit card spending:** UK co-branded cards typically earn 5–10 points per £1 spent at programme hotels.

Smart redemption tactics

- **Off-peak stays:** Award availability is better during shoulder seasons. Plan around the [cheapest times to travel](#) for maximum savings on both flights and hotel awards. Avoid August across Mediterranean countries, Christmas market season in Germany/Austria, summer in major capitals. Target November to March for beach destinations, May to June and September to October for cities.
- **Fifth night free:** "Often better value than straight point redemptions, especially in expensive cities like London, Paris, Zurich or Copenhagen.
- **Point + cash options:** These often offer better value than straight point redemptions.
- **Compare programme values:** A "cheap" 40,000-point Marriott redemption might cost the same as a 60,000-point Hilton stay. Always check cash prices to calculate true value.

Elite Benefits Comparison

Benefit	Marriott Gold	Hilton Gold	Hyatt Discoverist	IHG Platinum	Accor Silver
Room upgrades	Yes, if available (usually not suites)	Yes, if available (sometimes	Preferred room only not suites	Yes, if available (usually not suites)	Subject to availability

	Standard rooms	Executive rooms	Single rooms	Standard rooms	Standard rooms
Late checkout	2 pm	2 pm	2 pm	2 pm	2 pm
Bonus points	25%	80%	10%	60%	10%
Free breakfast	No (Platinum/Titanium+ at some brands)	Sometimes replaced with daily F&B credit	No	No	No (Silver), Yes (Gold)

FAQs: Hotel loyalty programmes decoded

Do hotel loyalty programmes cost money?	▼
How to collect points for hotels?	▼
Is hotel elite status worth it?	▼
Are hotel rewards cards worth it?	▼
What is the largest hotel loyalty programme?	▼
What is the most generous hotel loyalty programme?	▼
How to get a free room at a hotel?	▼
Which loyalty programme is best for hotels?	▼

Is a loyalty programme worth it?

For travellers who stay at hotels more than a few times per year, yes. Even basic membership earns points toward free nights and the perks scale up significantly with elite status. Late checkout, room upgrades and bonus points add real value.

A well-chosen loyalty programme can save you £300–£1,000 annually. A free night in Paris, Barcelona or London (worth £150–£400) after just three to five paid stays makes loyalty programmes worthwhile even for occasional travellers.

What hotel booking site gives the best rewards?

You maximise loyalty programme benefits—points, elite recognition and potential upgrades—by booking directly with hotels. [Skyscanner](#) helps you compare rates and find flights while still making the most of loyalty perks.

The takeaway on hotel rewards programmes

The best hotel loyalty programme is the one that matches your travel habits, not the one with the flashiest marketing. Focus on where you actually stay, how often you travel and the benefits that matter most.

Whether chasing elite status or the occasional free night, loyalty programmes can add real value. The key is picking one, sticking with it and reaping the rewards.

If you're ready to start collecting points and perks, compare [hotel rates](#) and [find flights](#) across the UK and Europe with Skyscanner. We'll help you maximise your travel savings.

International Sites

-  Travel Features
-  Matka-artikkelit
-  Travel Features
-  Reisinieuws
-  Todo sobre el mundo de los viajes
-  Travel Features

-  Travel Features
-  Articles sur les voyages
-  Notizie sui viaggi
-  Fremhevede reiser
-  Researthiklar
-  Travel Features

-  旅行资讯
-  Reise-News
-  旅行情報
-  Artykuły o podróżach
-  Reise-News

-  Rejsenyt
-  Travel Features
-  Características de viaje
-  Новости для путешественников
-  Öne Çıkan Seyahat Haberleri