

Three Los Angeles area hotels, just a short half-hour (not during drive time) from each other were honored with the American Automobile Association's Five Diamonds, its highest honors for excellence. In addition to the Beverly Hills are the Montage in Laguna Beach and the Four Seasons Westlake Village.

Others in the U.S. earning the honors for the first time are the Ritz-Carlton in Palm Beach, Florida, the Four Seasons in St. Louis, Missouri, and the InterContinental Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia.

Why it took the AAA so long to recognize the posh Beverly Hills Hotel, which opened in 1912, is a mystery. The hotel has consistently kept up its extremely high quality, including lavishly decorous rooms, tropical landscaping and luxury bungalows surrounding its pool.



Early movie stars Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Will Rogers, Rudolph Valentino and Charlie Chaplin often dined and partied at the famed Polo Lounge. Today, the same atmosphere continues, and tourists come to the lounge hoping to gawk at frequent diners there, which on any day could include Warren Beatty, George Clooney, Carmen Diaz, Tom Cruise, Angelina Jolie, Kirk and Michael Douglas, Paris Hilton and Drew Barrymore.

Movie moguls first began gathering at the hotel in the 1920s to discuss upcoming productions, and contemporary TV and movie producers and directors still follow the same tradition. Wannabe movie starlets were brought by their agents to pose in skimpy bathing suits around the pool, hoping they'd be seen by the Hollywood brass.

Private interviews and talent tests were conducted in the seclusion of the hotel's bungalows. Future stars who claimed they were discovered at the Beverly Hills Hotel include Jean Harlow, Raquel Welch, Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield.

The Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows are located at 9641 Sunset Boulevard, Beverly Hills, California 90210, telephone 1-310-276-2251, and online at www.thebeverlyhillshotel.com