

Press kit

Palace distinction:

Recognition of the jewels of French hospitality

PALACES
DE FRANCE

Official unveiling of the 2026 collection – 2 June 2026

Contents

1 – Why a “Palace” distinction?

Recognising the excellence of French hospitality	3
A driver for the competitiveness and appeal of the French hospitality industry	4
A French exception	5
The experience: the new benchmark for luxury	6

2 – Establishments holding the “Palace distinction” 8

3 – What steps are involved in obtaining the “Palace” distinction?

Eligibility requirements for the Palace distinction	10
The Palace Commission’s assessment criteria	11

Appendices

Atout France, The France Tourism Development Agency	12
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1- Why a “Palace” distinction?

Recognising the excellence of French hospitality

Outstanding locations, historical significance, unique architectural heritage and quality, exceptional gastronomy, bespoke service and a keen sense of hospitality... a select few of 5-star hotel establishments embody a rare level of excellence that goes far beyond even the highest standards.

These singular establishments, deeply rooted in French history and imagination, have long contributed to the prestige of France as a destination. Yet, prior to 2010¹, no official recognition existed to distinguish their truly exceptional character.

The distinction of Palace was created to identify and honour hotels offering an extraordinary hospitality experience, especially for establishments that embody excellence in service and the French art of living in all its forms.

As a genuine mark of differentiation, it helps to showcase and promote these exceptional establishments, particularly on the international stage, in the face of an increasingly competitive global luxury hospitality market.

The distinction is awarded through a demanding and rigorous process overseen by Atout France and the Palace Commission, making it unique in the world. It is based on highly selective criteria that safeguard both its credibility and the excellence of the establishments awarded the title, and is awarded for a period of three years.

The Palace distinction is thus a uniquely French concept that contributes to France’s cultural, tourist and economic influence by championing standards of excellence, elegance and creativity.



¹ The Palace distinction was established by the Order of 8 November 2010, as amended by the Order of 24 January 2024

A driver for the competitiveness and appeal of the French hospitality industry

In 2025, France confirmed its position as the world's leading tourist destination, welcoming **102 million international visitors**. Buoyed by the country's enduring appeal and the strength of its "art de vivre" brand, France also reinforced its standing in the luxury hospitality sector.

According to the *Les Tendances de l'Hôtellerie 2026* (Hospitality Trends 2026) in *Extenso Tourisme, Culture & Hôtellerie (TCH)*, published in February 2026, the growth in overall turnover for the French hotel industry in 2025 was largely driven by the performance of the luxury sector. The study noted an average annual RevPAR of 6.5% between 2019 and 2025 for upscale and luxury hotels, compared with 3.2% for mid-range properties and 1.8% for budget hotels.

Another key factor is length of stay. Guests at Palace-designated hotels stay, on average, more than twice as long as guests across the wider French hotel market, generating a considerable multiplier effect across the entire tourism economy.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

3.9 DAYS FOR LUXURY HOTELS

1.8 DAY FOR THE HOTEL SECTOR AS A WHOLE

Sources: RYDGE Hospitality, INSEE
(for 2024)

Latest figures from the Palace Observatory (RYDGE Hospitality)

2024 saw an increase in the overall occupancy rate of French Palaces, with the national average reaching 56%, an increase of 3.2 percentage points. While Paris benefitted from the momentum of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games (+2.6%), it was not the biggest winner. The strongest growth was actually witnessed by Palace hotels in the regions (excluding the Riviera and Courchevel, where occupancy rates remained stable) which recorded an increase of +4.2% in 2024.

In 2026, the premium and luxury segments are expected to remain central to the market thanks to their strong appeal and the substantial investments made by hotels to continually enhance the guest experience.

For establishments holding the Palace distinction, **continuous improvement** is essential to maintaining both competitiveness and reputation. Unlike hotel star ratings, which are awarded for five years, the Palace Distinction must be earned every three years – a reminder that excellence is not a given, but an ongoing commitment. Each year, a significant share of revenue is reinvested to improve facilities, redesign spaces and introduce ever more innovative, refined and sustainable services.

However, the true strength of the Palaces rests above all on the talented staff who bring them to life. Combining expertise, passion, attention to detail and an emotional intelligence, **their teams are the beating heart of the establishments.**

The challenge is to respond to the growing importance of **personalised services**, while remaining **at the forefront of technology and trends** to create ever more immersive luxury hospitality experiences. Guests are also increasingly attentive to the **environmental and social commitments of hotels**, whether in reducing waste and energy consumption, prioritising eco-responsible products and local sourcing, or supporting circular economy initiatives.

This is all the more important given that Palace hotels cater to a **predominantly international clientele** that is both highly discerning and highly sought after, and whose loyalty is paramount. Guests from North America are particularly well represented, followed by Europeans, and in particular British travellers, and to a lesser extent travellers from the Middle East. In mountain destinations, Russian-speaking guests and Brazilian travellers also remain significant markets.

83% INTERNATIONAL CLIENTELE 30% FROM THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Sources: RYDGE Hospitality
(for 2024)

For the hotels concerned, the **Palace distinction represents a major asset**, strengthening brand image and **legitimising their positioning at the highest end of the market**, particularly in relation to other luxury establishments.

It also ensures immediate recognition among high-net-worth clients, as well as **among luxury travel agencies and concierge services, travel designers**, specialist media and premium lifestyle publications. Finally, the distinction helps reinforce employer branding: it enables establishments to **attract new talent**, foster team loyalty through a strong sense of belonging, and to support ongoing training and skills development.

A French exception

The Palace distinction is neither a simple additional level of prestige nor a marketing label. It represents an **official category, regulated by the state**, with its own specific criteria, deeply rooted in the French culture of refinement and excellence, where luxury is recognised as a living heritage, a source of international appeal, and a powerful economic lever.

Very few countries around the world have institutionalised a rating category above five stars. In Europe, most stop at the classification “Superior”, which is not an independent category, but rather recognises a higher standard of service within the same star category. This designation is not only awarded to 5-star hotels, but may also be applied to 1, 2, 3 or 4-star establishments. This is the case in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, where classifications are based on a points system harmonised by the European organisation Hotelstars Union or the Swiss organisation HotellerieSuisse. In Spain and Portugal, networks of state-run hotels have been established with the aim of promoting heritage (the Paradores and Pousadas, often housed in historic buildings), but their level of luxury varies. Other systems rely on private labels, highlighting distinctions awarded by brands and organisations such as Forbes or Michelin. Whilst these labels assess performance according to their own criteria within a global competitive framework, the Palace distinction forms part of a **dedicated national tourism policy focused on excellence**. As for hotels that describe themselves as 6 or 7-star establishments (particularly in the Gulf states), they do not belong to any official classification system. These are marketing claims without regulatory basis, reflecting an internal positioning strategy.



The experience: the new benchmark for luxury

More broadly, Palaces both anticipate and embody the new codes of luxury: a luxury defined by attention to detail, ultra-personalisation, authenticity and meaning, where sustainable wellbeing, artisanal excellence, creativity, discreet service and the subtle integration of innovation now take precedence over the mere display of prestige. They offer an **experiential, intimate and cultural form of hospitality that resonates with the expectations of an international clientele seeking emotion, singularity and authenticity.**

- They have established themselves as key **cultural players**, organising inspiring events within their establishments, whether intimate or large-scale, including literary awards, cinema screenings, temporary exhibitions or permanent art displays, concerts or DJ sets, etc.
These are **places where knowledge is passed on**, where expertise becomes an experience in itself, particularly through wine-tasting and gastronomic workshops.
This sharing of knowledge sometimes extends beyond the hotel itself and into its kitchen gardens, and even to leading Champagne houses and Provençal estates.
- As experiential expectations become the new benchmark of luxury, Palaces are showing increasing creativity in offering **privileged and exclusive escapes**. A hotel space may be transformed into a secret private dining venue; boat trips or hot-air balloon excursions are organised; long-term bespoke wellness programmes combining clinical approaches and cutting-edge technology are designed to enhance the guest experience.
Concierge services, the cornerstone of the Palace promise, open up an almost limitless field of possibilities: invitations to fashion shows, tickets for sold-out concerts and events, VIP visits to institutions and heritage sites, access to rare luxury goods without the need to wait in line...

- In a context where guests increasingly organise their **travels around their passions** and related events (what the industry now refers to as “passion pursuit”), Palaces are uniquely positioned to respond the most exclusive and sought-after desires. In addition to concierge services, each establishment anticipates demand and orchestrates **tailor-made stays built around the major events of the year**, such as Roland Garros, Fashion Week, prestigious auctions, opera premieres, etc.
- This wealth of experiences also **attracts a new clientele who may not necessarily stay at the Palace itself**, creating “**Palace moments**” beyond traditional overnight stays. Just as afternoon tea has become an indispensable part of life, Palaces are developing new rituals in response to the growing desire for “**lux-scaping**” observed across society – luxurious getaways that are proving particularly popular with younger generations. A need that stems from the growing popularity of occasional consumption of luxury goods, including hospitality, as recently analysed by sociologist Vincent Chabault (*Sociologie du Luxe*, Presses universitaires de France, 2026).

Gastronomy at the heart of the Palace experience

In the world of fine dining, too, distinguished establishments are offering an ever-increasing range of experiential and exclusive formats, including cinema dinners with food-and-film pairings, confidential and private “chef’s tables” or haute couture picnics in exceptional locations. Far from being simply another service, gastronomy acts as a cultural marker and one of the foremost drivers of desirability. Given the Palace distinction celebrates French excellence, dining thus plays a central role within it.

In France, wine and gastronomy rank among the leading motivations for travel, with nearly one-third of international visitors citing them as the primary reason for their stay. French Palaces play a leading role in this collective imagination. They offer some of the most sought-after culinary experiences (cooking classes with renowned chefs, Michelin-starred restaurants and tastings of fine wines). Between them, they are home to seven Michelin three-star restaurants (out of the 30 currently found in France).

Gastronomy is also a way of telling the unique story of each establishment by reinterpreting traditional recipes, offering iconic cocktails and showcasing regional produce or specific French expertise. This heritage dimension is an integral part of the Palace distinction. In this respect, pastry-making holds a special place. Through signature afternoon teas, sculptural creations, dedicated boutiques and artistic collaborations, the establishments showcase a form of artisanal mastery deeply rooted in the French art of living.

2 – Establishments holding the “Palace distinction”

France now has 33 establishments officially designated as “Palaces”

In 2025, Atout France convened the members of the Palace Commission on several occasions to review the applications from establishments seeking renewal of their Palace designation, valid for three years. Earlier this year, the Commission also examined applications from new hotels that had never previously obtained the distinction.

Following the various review sessions, and upon recommendation of the Commission, Serge Papin, Minister for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, Commerce, Craft Industries, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, officially awarded the Palace distinction.

As a result, 27 establishments have had their Palace distinction renewed, whilst six new establishments have joined the very exclusive circle of France’s Palace hotels for the first time.

PARIS

1. [Bulgari Hotel Paris](#) **NEW**
2. [Cheval Blanc Paris](#) **NEW**
3. [Fouquet’s Paris](#) **NEW**
4. [Four Seasons Hotel George V](#)
5. [Hôtel de Crillon, A Rosewood Hotel](#)
6. [Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Dorchester Collection Paris](#)
7. [La Réserve Paris - Hotel and Spa](#)
8. [Le Bristol Paris](#)
9. [Le Meurice, Dorchester Collection Paris](#)
10. [Mandarin Oriental Lutetia Paris](#)
11. [Royal Monceau – Raffles Paris](#)
12. [Shangri-La Paris](#)
13. [The Peninsula Paris](#)

THE ALPS

1. [Airelles Courchevel, Les Airelles](#) – Courchevel
2. [Cheval Blanc Courchevel](#) – Courchevel
3. [Fouquet’s Courchevel](#) – Courchevel
4. [Four Seasons Resort Megève](#) – Megève **NEW**
5. [Hôtel Royal](#) – Évian-Les-Bains
6. [L’Apogée Courchevel](#) – Courchevel
7. [Le K2 Palace](#) – Courchevel

FRENCH RIVIERA – SOUTH-EAST

1. [Airelles Gordes, La Bastide](#) – Gordes
2. [Airelles Saint-Tropez, Château de la Messardière](#) – Saint-Tropez
3. [Château Saint-Martin & Spa](#) – Vence
4. [Cheval Blanc St-Tropez](#) – Saint-Tropez
5. [Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat, A Four Seasons Hotel](#) – Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat
6. [Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc](#) – Antibes
7. [Hôtel Martinez Cannes](#) – Cannes **NEW**
8. [La Réserve Ramatuelle Hotel, Spa & Villas](#) – Ramatuelle
9. [Villa La Coste](#) – Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate

SOUTH-WEST

1. [Les Prés d’Eugénie](#) – Eugénie-Les-Bains
2. [Les Sources de Caudalie](#) – Martillac

EAST

[Royal Champagne Hôtel & Spa](#) – Champillon **NEW**

CARIBBEAN

[Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France](#) – Saint Barthélemy

33 French Palaces showcasing the full diversity of the regions

The Palaces collection does more than simply embody French hospitality excellence: it also reflects the richness and diversity of the regions that make it up. From Paris to the coast, from the mountains to the wine-growing regions, each establishment reflects a unique local identity and a way of life that is deeply rooted in its environment.



3 – What steps are involved in obtaining the “Palace” distinction?

The awarding of the Palace distinction is based on a two-stage process:

- 1 Submission of the application to Atout France
- Review of eligibility criteria by Atout France
- 2 Visit to the candidate establishments by two members of the Palace Commission
- Hearing of each establishment before the full Commission
- The Minister for Tourism presents the distinction

Eligibility requirements for the Palace distinction

Atout France reviews the applications and ensures that the establishments fully meet the eligibility criteria for the award, in particular:

- **To have been trading for at least 24 months** in the case of a new business, or 12 months in the case of a complete refurbishment of an existing business that resulted in a break in trading of one year or more;
- Have a **5-star rating**;
- Rooms must have a **minimum floor area of 26 m²**;
- Meet all the **enhanced criteria set out in the 5-star hotel classification table** ([see criteria](#)).

These conditions, particularly those arising from the stricter requirements of the 5-star rating, are particularly demanding. They ensure that only establishments offering an outstanding level of comfort and service are presented to the members of the Palace Commission, ones characterised, for example, by:

- A concierge service,
- Multilingual staff,
- A valet service,
- The presence of a number of suites,
- A breakfast offering a minimum range of products,
- A continuous dining service,
- A spa,
- A fitness centre,
- A swimming pool, etc.

The Palace Commission's assessment criteria

Once applications have been deemed eligible by Atout France, **each establishment is visited by two members of the Palace Commission.**

Appointed by the Minister for Tourism², the Commission responsible for awarding the Palace distinction comprises experts from a wide range of backgrounds, including luxury travel, architecture and design, gastronomy and the media. Its members carry out their duties on a voluntary basis.

Members of the Commission notably examine the following assessment criteria:

- Economic indicators demonstrating excellence in service
- The location of the establishment, which must be exceptional
- The exceptional architecture of the building, whether historic or contemporary
- The size of the establishment and the presence of a significant number of suites
- The aesthetics, the spaciousness of the premises, and the outstanding quality of the facilities and amenities
- The history, heritage and personality of the establishment
- The personalisation, responsiveness, precision and continuity of service
- Excellence in dining and bar services
- The unique character of the establishment
- The commitment of teams to the pursuit of excellence
- An exemplary and responsible approach
- Extensive use of digital services and new technologies

Following the inspection visits, applicant establishments are invited to attend **a hearing before the full Commission.**

The Commission then deliberates during one or several meetings before ultimately deciding whether or not to award the Palace distinction. Atout France acts as secretary to the Commission and ensures compliance with all applicable procedures.

Finally, the Commission submits its recommendations regarding the awarding of the Palace distinction to the Minister for Tourism.



In addition to playing a key role in the process of awarding the Palace distinction, Atout France supports the international promotion of the establishments under the Palaces de France banner.

Various promotional initiatives are organised jointly by the Agency and the distinguished establishments in order to raise awareness among both the general public and specialist luxury travel operators, such as exclusive events during the ILTM Cannes trade fair, communication campaigns and partnerships with agency networks such as Internova and Virtuoso, broadcasting of the Palace de France video in Air France lounges, and so on.

²Appointment of the members of the Commission by order of 3 December 2024.

Atout France, The France Tourism Development Agency

Atout France contributes to strengthening the appeal and competitiveness of France as a destination and is working to make the country a global benchmark for sustainable tourism by 2030.

Thanks to its unique partnership-based model bringing together nearly 1,200 public and private tourism stakeholders, and to the commitment of its teams based in France and across 25 countries worldwide, Atout France mobilises an entire collective around an ambitious roadmap for the sector aimed at accelerating the transformation of French tourism towards more qualitative, sustainable, innovative and inclusive models, in order to offer remarkable stays in France to visitors from around the world.

The Agency thus offers its various areas of expertise to serve both French tourism professionals and travellers alike:

Observation: Monitoring, research and forecasting tools enabling French tourism stakeholders to anticipate trends and adapt their offerings and development strategies.

Innovation: Support for the deployment of innovative solutions designed to strengthen the competitiveness of French tourism offerings while enhancing the customer experience.

Professional development: Training courses, conferences and tools enabling professionals to strengthen their knowledge and skills.

Engineering: Expert support, in collaboration with the Agency's partners, to bring sustainable tourism development projects or transformation and refurbishment projects to fruition.

Quality: The classification of tourist accommodation, the registration of travel operators and quality labels as mechanisms designed to maximise traveller satisfaction.

Promotion: Development of marketing strategies with the Agency's partners, targeted communication and influence campaigns, expert guidance and market knowledge to strengthen the visibility and commercialisation of French tourism offerings, both in France and internationally.

For more information: atout-france.fr



