

TRAVEL TIPS

What is hotel status match?

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Bankrate.com (TNS)

The hotel industry is competitive, which is part of the reason hotel brands launch loyalty programs to lure in and reward frequent travelers. But there’s another tool hotel brands use to steal business travelers and jet-setters from other brands, and it’s known as a status match.

If you frequently stay with one hotel brand, and you have elite status to show for it, you’re probably busy enjoying hotel benefits like room upgrades, early check-in, late checkout and lounge access. But what happens if you want to change your preferred hotel brand?

Hotel status match programs can help you enjoy elite benefits with other hotel loyalty programs for a limited time, or even in perpetuity if you switch programs.

WHAT IS A STATUS MATCH?

Status match is a tool that hotel loyalty programs use to snag frequent travelers from competing hotel chains. Essentially, these programs let elite members from another brand qualify for top-tier perks that they would normally have to earn through paid hotel stays or having a co-branded hotel credit card.

Whereas some status matches are offered automatically to those who sign up, others are offered in the form of a status “challenge.” When the latter applies, customers typically need to complete a specific number of paid stays or reach a specific spending threshold with the new hotel brand in order to qualify.

WHICH HOTELS OFFER STATUS MATCHES?

Here’s a rundown of which hotel brands are offering status matches right now.

Hilton Honors

Hilton Honors members who have not applied for a status match in the past and are a Silver tier or lower can apply for this benefit. Essentially, frequent travelers need to submit proof of elite status with another hotel brand upfront, at which point they’ll be upgraded to Hilton Gold status for 90 days. At that point, guests can do one of the following:

- Stay at least eight nights with Hilton within the 90-day trial period to keep Gold status through March 31, 2027.
- Stay an additional six nights (14 total nights) within the 90-day trial period to upgrade to Diamond status through March 31, 2027.
- Also, be aware that several Hilton credit cards provide automatic elite status just for signing up. Some options to consider include:
- Hilton Honors American Express Card (comes with automatic Silver status)



Dreamstime / TNS

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- Hilton Honors American Express Surpass® Card (comes with automatic Gold status)
- Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card(comes with automatic Diamond status)
- The Platinum Card® from American Express (comes with automatic Hilton Gold status)
- The Business Platinum Card® from American Express (comes with automatic Hilton Gold status)

Marriott Bonvoy

At the moment, the Marriott Bonvoy program does not have an official status match offer you can apply for. However, the brand has an unpublished status challenge that you can call and request. The details include:

- Stay eight nights within three months of enrollment to get Marriott Bonvoy Gold status.
- Stay 16 nights within three months of enrollment to get Marriott Bonvoy Platinum status.

If you meet the requirements, you keep the status for the remainder of the current year, plus all of the following membership year. Unlike a status match, you don’t need existing status to apply. Note that only paid stays count, and you can’t request a challenge if you already have elite status with Marriott.

To enroll, call Marriott and request a status challenge. Because this is an “unofficial” offering, be sure to take note of any requirements you get from the representative.

There are also co-branded Marriott credit cards that offer automatic elite status. Consider the following cards if you want to get automatic elite status and earn rewards for your spending:

- Marriott Bonvoy Boundless® Credit Card(comes with automatic

- Silver Elite status)
- Marriott Bonvoy Bold® Credit Card(comes with automatic Silver Elite status)
- Marriott Bonvoy Bevy™ American Express® Card (comes with automatic Gold Elite status)
- Marriott Bonvoy Brilliant® American Express® Card (comes with automatic Platinum Elite status)
- Marriott Bonvoy Business® American Express® Card (comes with automatic Gold Elite status)
- The Platinum Card from American Express (comes with automatic Marriott Gold Elite status)
- The Business Platinum Card from American Express (comes with automatic Marriott Gold Elite status)

World of Hyatt

The World of Hyatt program doesn’t offer a status match program at the moment, and it has not had a public offer for status matches in the past. However, you can get automatic World of Hyatt elite status by signing up for the right World of Hyatt credit card:

- The World of Hyatt Credit Card(comes with automatic Discoverist status for as long as the account stays open)
- The World of Hyatt Business Credit Card(comes with automatic Discoverist status for the cardholder and up to five employees)

IHG One Rewards

IHG One Rewards is another hotel brand that is not offering a public status match challenge at the moment. It’s been quite a while since one was available. However, you can still get automatic elite hotel status with an eligible credit card:

- IHG One Rewards Premier Credit Card(comes with automatic Platinum Elite status)

- IHG One Rewards Traveler Credit Card(comes with automatic Silver Elite status)
- IHG One Rewards Premier Business Credit Card(comes with automatic Platinum Elite status)
- Keep in mind: If you have the New United Club® Card, you can enroll for IHG One Rewards Platinum Elite status.

Wyndham Rewards

Wyndham Rewards offers the chance to match your status as of the time of publication. To qualify, you’ll send in proof of your existing hotel elite status with the chance to maintain a corresponding status level if you complete a minimum number of paid stays with the hotel brand within 90 days.

The new status you receive depends on the status you have. For example, Gold Elite status or higher with Marriott Bonvoy translates to Diamond status with Wyndham Rewards.

You can also get automatic Wyndham Rewards elite status with the following rewards credit cards:

- Wyndham Rewards Earner® Card(comes with automatic Gold status)
- Wyndham Rewards Earner® Plus Card(comes with automatic Platinum status)
- Wyndham Rewards Earner® Business Card(comes with automatic Diamond status)

This is one of the easiest status matches to get, so if you have any Wyndham stays coming up, you might want to enroll.

Choice Privileges

Choice Privileges currently offers a status match. You can apply for a status match by submitting proof of elite status with another hotel brand.

You’ll email your full name, Choice Privileges member number and proof of status (such as a screenshot that shows your elite hotel status) to Status_Match@choicehotels.com.

Within 30 days, you’ll automatically become an elite member with Choice Privileges. You’ll then be eligible for elite perks like bonus points on paid stays and a welcome gift at eligible properties in the U.S. and Canada.

Details are scant about how the match works, but there are three potential status tiers: Gold, Platinum and Diamond. You’ll likely be matched as closely as possible from your existing elite status.

You can also cut to the chase and get instant elite status with the right credit card:

- Choice Privileges Mastercard® (comes with automatic Gold Elite status)
- Choice Privileges Select Mastercard® (comes with automatic Platinum Elite status)

Best Western Rewards

Best Western offers a program called Status Match...No Catch®, which lets you request a status match without much work required on your part.

This program requires you to email StatusMatch@bestwestern.com with your name, contact information, Best Western loyalty number and proof of status in another hotel program.

Best Western says that new elite members will receive status through Dec. 31, 2026.

SHOULD YOU DO A HOTEL STATUS MATCH?

Using a status match program is a no-brainer if you already have elite status with a particular hotel brand, but you want to try out a new program. After all, most status match programs give you a higher tier of status just for proving your current status, and you may get to enjoy elite status perks for a year or longer.

That said, you can get automatic elite status through a number of top hotel credit cards, which might be even easier. Hotel credit cards even let you earn generous sign-up bonuses and hotel points on all your spending, and many offer a free award night each year (often after your cardmember anniversary). Plus, some of the best travel rewards cards offer hotel status for cardholders.

Mind the timing: It’s best to apply for a status match or challenge shortly before you stay with the new hotel chain. That gives you more time to complete any requirements and enjoy your newly minted status.

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TRAVEL TIPS

Smart travel hacks for the well-heeled, from hotel designer Kelly Wearstler

By **MARK ELLWOOD**
Bloomberg News (TNS)

Top interior designer Kelly Wearstler has been synonymous with a distinctively West Coast glamour — ’70s cool shot through with a liberal dose of Old Hollywood — ever since she established her namesake firm 30 years ago. A member of Architectural Digest’s Hall of Fame, the South Carolina native has overseen the design of hotels (Viceroy Santa Monica, Avalon Beverly Hills) and restaurants (at Bergdorf Goodman in New York), as well as partnering with Serax, the Rug Company, Hummer and other brands. She was the first outside designer tapped to create a new palette for the legendary British paint company Farrow & Ball.

Wearstler’s latest effort is the Substack-based newsletter Wearstlerworld, in which she plans to share behind-the-scenes looks at her life as well as tips and tricks for travel and decorating.

Wearstler logs around 150,000 air miles annually, pinballing back and forth between the West Coast (she lives in Beverly Hills) and Europe, and vacationing with her husband, developer Brad Korzen, and their three sons, Oliver, Elliott and Crosby, who are 20, 21 and 2½ years old. Her carrier of choice is Air France (but only if she absolutely has to go commercial). “Flying private is top of my list, of course, when it works out, but I really love Air France,” she says. “I just flew La Première to Paris. I was able to get upgraded from Business. You get taken right to the airplane. And in the first-class lounge in Paris, I recently had a six-hour layover, and I got a facial and a massage.”

Here are her best travel hacks (be-

sides fly private, of course).

Checking luggage?
Book two cars

For the last 10 years, I have had two drivers pick me up when I land at LAX. I get off the plane and greet one driver and give him my luggage ticket. I leave, and he then waits to pick up my luggage at the carousel and drives it home. I get right out of there, and he shows up 45 minutes later. Wherever you go regularly and know a driver, you can do that — like in Austin, where I know my driver too.

Don’t mess with Uber et al. when you’re on a trip

A hired driver is essential to getting around town with no time wasted. I always plan out my day so I’m super-efficient: a gallery, a studio visit with an artist, stopping in at a bookstore, going to museums and maybe a vintage clothing store for fashion. I have bags; I don’t want to lug that stuff around. I can just pop it in the car. And there’s no time f---ing around on your phone calling the Uber. I don’t book one through my hotel, because there’s usually a surcharge on it. There are limo services in every city, so you can just look online and call them.

Avid surfers should book a trip to this far-flung island

One of my favorite off-the-beaten-path destinations is Nihon Sumba Island in Indonesia. I’ve been going with my family since 2016 — we’ve been about six times. We fly to Bali to decompress, spend one or two nights, then fly to Sumba. It’s quite extraordinary, and the surfing waves

are some of the best — all left breaks, which for me as a goofy-footed surfer is ideal. They tow you out, so you don’t have to paddle out every time you want to catch a wave. It’s effortless.

One pillow is for amateurs.
Real pros travel with a full set

I love to sleep really well when I travel. Six or seven years ago, I started bringing my three Frette pillows everywhere I go: two for my head, one to hug. I could easily get four or five in my carryon. I take out about 50 percent of the filling, because I want them really soft—I don’t want my face smushed at night. Some pillows at hotels are so hard, they’re like a sausage. These pillows can make any bed feel like my own. I consider myself a seasoned traveler, but I also hold on to my routines, especially on vacation.

Pack your beauty gadgets

We travel with our red lights, because I do red light therapy on my face every day at home. Consistency, consistency — I’m all about consistency. The company, Joov, makes a travel size too, so I bring that with me, and I do that for 10 minutes before I go to sleep. It’s great in general, and great for your body, and it really relaxes you. I sleep so well. And six months ago, I started using this red light helmet for your hair from CurrentBody — red light for your hair follicles is like exercise.

This is the most stylish hotel she didn’t design herself

I just had lunch with a friend at the Hotel Costes in Paris, and it’s spectacular. The two sides are so different, and it creates this beautiful



Ilya S. Savenok / Breitting / Getty Images / TNS

Kelly Wearstler attends the Breitting x Charize Theron Navitimer “For The Journey” Launch on Sept. 6, 2023, in New York.

tension. There’s the Jacques Garcia side, the old side, which is really beautiful. Then the restaurant sits in the middle. And then Christian Liaigre did the other side.

Chartering a boat is the best family vacation.

A yacht charter is the best quality family time. You eat all your meals together, and you’re really, truly in the moment. We play chess, backgammon, we dive off the boat. You wake up together. At a hotel you’re in your separate rooms, but here you’re together the entire time. We’ve done Greece and Turkey that way, and we went scuba diving near Komodo Island.

The best destination for design junkies isn’t Copenhagen or Tokyo

I have a gallery, and some of my artists are in Amsterdam, and it’s such a great city in terms of design. The Frozen Fountain has all these emerging Dutch artists, and right outside of Amsterdam is Morentz

Gallery, in an old shoe factory. They are huge dealers in really great vintage furnishings. I’ve been buying from them for years. For restaurants, I love Cornerstore, because I get to absorb Amsterdam’s local music scene. Try the tasting menu.

Bring a second phone

Over the last year, I’ve traveled with a backup iPhone. I lost my phone — I left it in a car. And then I had my phone taken. It happened twice, and it’s a hassle, so now I pack a backup one as part of my travel kit. It’s just a matter of getting it turned on. The secondary phone is already set up with my Apple ID and all of my iCloud data, so if anything happens to my main phone, I am able to log in to my service provider online and change the number over to the secondary phone. All you need is the EIN number, which is found in Settings>About on the iPhone, to transfer service over. It usually only takes 5 to 10 minutes to activate, which is so much faster than having to go to the Apple store to get a new one.