

[Home](#) / Two Mideast hotels score special awards as world's best hotels honored with Michelin Keys in Paris

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Atlantis The Royal in Dubai won the Architecture and Design Award. (Supplied)

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October 08, 2025
22:13

PARIS: Known for awarding coveted stars to restaurants around the world, the Michelin Guide also operates the Michelin Key Selection recognizing hotels, the latest awardees of which were named at a gala event in Paris on Wednesday with two hotels from the MENA region scoring special awards.

The organizers handed out four prizes for excellence in specific areas, including an Architecture and Design Award, Wellness Award, Local Gateway Award — for hotels that offer guests immersive connections to their surroundings — and the year's Best New Opening Award.

Nominations for the four awards were unveiled over the past few months, with hotels from the Middle East making the cut.

La Fiermontina Ocean, Morocco was nominated for the Local Gateway Award for its “authentic access to rural Moroccan life; Atlantis The Royal in Dubai was nominated for the Architecture and Design Award for its “stacked geometry redefining Dubai’s skyline; and Shebara Resort in Saudi Arabia was nominated in the same category for its “futuristic chrome pearls camouflaged by the Red Sea.”

On Wednesday night, La Fiermontina Ocean in Morocco scored the Local Gateway Award and Atlantis The Royal in Dubai nabbed the Architecture and Design Award.

The year's Best New Opening Award went to The Burman Hotel, Estonia, and the Wellness Award went to Bürgenstock Resort Switzerland.

Introduced over the past year in 15 countries across North America, Europe and Asia, the awards ceremony for the first-ever global list took place at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs in the French capital.

The candidates were assessed by Michelin Guide inspectors based on five criteria: excellence in interior design and architecture; quality and consistency in service, comfort and maintenance; consistency between the level of experience and the price paid; uniqueness, personality and authenticity; and whether the hotel was a gateway to a destination.

Like Michelin stars, the keys are awarded in line with a three-tier system.

One key signifies “a very special stay,” according to the guide. This is awarded to properties that “may break the mold, offer something different, or simply be one of the best of its type. Service always goes the extra mile and provides significantly more than similarly priced establishments.”

Two keys are awarded to properties that provide “an exceptional stay ... where a memorable experience is always guaranteed.” These hotels also boast “character, personality and charm that’s operated with obvious pride and considerable care ... eye-catching design or architecture and a real sense of the locale make this an exceptional place to stay.”

Three keys indicate an extraordinary stay, according to the guide.

“It’s all about astonishment and indulgence here — this is the ultimate in comfort and service, style and elegance. It is one of the world’s most remarkable and extraordinary hotels and a destination for that trip of a lifetime. All the elements of truly great hospitality are here to ensure any stay will live long in the memory and hearts of travelers.”