

Hilton Honors vs. Marriott Bonvoy: Loyalty Program Showdown

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Look in almost any city and you'll probably find hotels affiliated with Hilton and Marriott. They're two of the biggest chains in the U.S. and are well-established around the world, from the United Arab Emirates to Zambia and many places in between.

So if you're looking to join a hotel loyalty program, which one of these two should you choose? Whether you want a budget-friendly place to sleep or a full-service luxury stay, both chains' rewards programs have benefits to offer.

We'll look at Hilton's and Marriott's availability, fees and elite status programs to determine which one comes out ahead.

Availability

Winner for number of brands and properties: Marriott

Marriott wins this category, with nine more brands than Hilton and over 1,000 more properties. It also operates in 14 more countries than Hilton, making it more likely you'll find a Marriott brand.

Hilton

Hilton has 22 brands that operate about 7,400 properties in 124 countries and territories. These hotels offer travelers a variety of price points, from luxury stays at the Waldorf Astoria to budget-friendly Spark hotels.

Hilton brands



- Canopy by Hilton.
- Conrad Hotels and Resorts.
- Curio Collection by Hilton.
- DoubleTree by Hilton.
- Embassy Suites by Hilton.
- Hampton by Hilton.

- Hilton Hotels and Resorts.
- Hilton Club.
- Hilton Garden Inn.
- Hilton Grand Vacations Club.
- Hilton Vacations Club.
- Home2 Suites by Hilton.
- Homewood Suites by Hilton.
- LivSmart Studios by Hilton.
- LXR Hotels and Resorts.
- Motto by Hilton.
- Signia by Hilton.
- Spark by Hilton.
- Tapestry by Hilton.
- Tempo by Hilton.
- Tru by Hilton.
- Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts.

Marriott

Marriott has over 30 brands and nearly 8,700 properties located in 139 countries and territories.

Similar to Hilton, the brand's portfolio offers options across most budgets, from stays at top-notch brands like St. Regis and Ritz-Carlton to lower-key experiences at Moxy or City Express.

Marriott brands



- AC Hotels by Marriott.
- Aloft Hotels.

- Autograph Collection.
- Bulgari Hotels & Resorts.
- Courtyard by Marriott.
- Delta Hotels by Marriott.
- Design Hotels.
- Edition.
- Element by Westin.
- Fairfield by Marriott.
- Four Points by Sheraton.
- Gaylord Hotels.
- Homes & Villas by Marriott International.
- JW Marriott.
- Le Meridien.
- Marriott.
- Marriott Executive Apartments.
- Marriott Vacation Club.
- Moxy Hotels.
- Protea Hotels by Marriott.
- Renaissance Hotels.
- Residence Inn by Marriott.
- Sheraton.
- SpringHill Suites by Marriott.
- St. Regis.
- The Luxury Collection.

- The Ritz-Carlton.
- TownePlace Suites by Marriott.
- Tribute Portfolio.
- W Hotels.
- Westin Hotels & Resorts.

» Learn more: Questions to ask before joining a hotel loyalty program

Fees

Winner for lowest fees: Marriott

Hotels often charge extra fees for things like bringing a pet, on-site parking and using resort amenities. To compare fees across hotel brands, NerdWallet analyzed the cost of resort and parking fees as a percentage of the overall room rate.

NerdWallet rated Marriott's fees at 2.7 out of 5, while Hilton came in at 1. Out of the seven hotels reviewed, Marriott placed toward the middle of the pack, while Hilton received last place.

Hilton

Hilton's resort fees cost about 3.9% of the room rate, while parking fees add on an extra 12.8%, the highest of all hotels in NerdWallet's analysis.

Nerdy Tip

One upside for Hilton Honors members is that resort fees are waived for reward stays.

For those traveling with a pet, Hilton's pet fees add up to an average of 26.79% of the room rate. This fee is the second-highest of all hotels studied, lower only than Marriott's pet fees.

Marriott

Marriott charges resort fees for many of its properties, which average out to 2.53% of the room rate. Note that these fees are required for all guests, even those who are redeeming points for stays. Parking fees, which may cover valet or self-park options, typically average out to 11.5% of the room rate.

While resort and parking fees tend to be lower with Marriott, it may not be the best option if you're bringing a pet. Its pet fees average out to 30.59% of the room rate, the highest NerdWallet found in its research.

Elite status and rewards programs

Overall winner: Marriott Bonvoy

When NerdWallet ranked seven hotel loyalty programs based on their rewards rates, credit card offerings and elite status offerings, Marriott and Hilton ended up with nearly identical scores: Marriott Bonvoy earned 2.5 stars out of 5 and Hilton Honors garnered 2.4 stars out of 5.

Marriott loyalists appreciate the program's higher rewards rates while those who frequent Hiltons enjoy better perks for elite members. We'll look at both of these features, as well as credit card offerings, in more detail below.

COMPARING REWARDS RATES

Both programs reward loyalty by issuing points based on the price of the room as well as other factors, including if a customer has earned an elite-level status in the program. Then, these points can be redeemed for free stays and other perks, including earning elite status.

Nerdy Tip

To earn points toward the Marriott or Hilton loyalty programs, book directly with the hotel, not through tour operators or third-party booking sites like Hotels.com, Priceline or Expedia.

To compare the rewards rate between the two brands, NerdWallet calculated the percent value you receive per every dollar spent. Marriott's program wins with an 8% earning rate compared with Hilton's 5%, the lowest of all hotels surveyed.

Hilton Honors

Hilton Honors members earn 10x points at all Hilton properties except Home2 Suites by Hilton and Tru by Hilton, which earn 5x points. You can earn points on up to four rooms per stay if they are all on one bill.

You can also earn Hilton Honors points by:

- Registering for points promotions.
- Spending on Hilton co-branded credit cards.

- Using Lyft when you link your Hilton Honors and Lyft accounts.
- Participating in the Hilton Honors Dining program.

Hilton Honors allows you to transfer points to another member or pool them with up to 10 other members so you can combine your earning power.

To redeem points, Hilton uses a dynamic pricing model, so the number of points required for a stay will depend on the current cash price of the room. This can make it difficult to plan out how many points you'll need for a specific trip. NerdWallet values Hilton Honors points at 0.5 cent each, which isn't great, but if you can get a stay with a better redemption rate, you know you're getting decent value.

Marriott Bonvoy

Members earn 10x points at most Marriott brands except for the following, which earn 5x points: Residence Inn, TownPlace Suites, Element, Protea Hotels, City Express, FourPoints Express and Marriott's Apartments and Homes and Villas.

You can also earn Marriott Bonvoy points by:

- Registering for points promotions.
- Spending on Marriott co-branded credit cards.
- Using Uber when you link your Marriott Bonvoy and Uber accounts.
- Joining the Eat Around Town program.
- Booking Marriott tours and activities.

Marriott Bonvoy allows members to transfer points to another member but doesn't have a points pooling option like Hilton.

Marriott Bonvoy also uses a dynamic pricing model, so again, it's difficult to know in advance how much an award night might cost. NerdWallet values Bonvoy points at 0.8 cent each, slightly better than Hilton.

Nerdy Tip

Once you redeem points for an award stay, keep an eye on the price as the trip gets closer. If the rate drops, you can often rebook at the lower rate and save a few points.

HOTEL CREDIT CARDS

Hotel credit cards can be a great way to boost points and reach elite status faster, and many cards include benefits that can improve your stay, from late checkouts to welcome amenities, lounge access and complimentary elite status.

Both hotels' credit card offerings are solid, with nearly every card providing complimentary elite status at some level. That said, most of Marriott's cards also give cardholders a free award night each year, and some have the opportunity to earn additional nights through spending.

Nerdy Tip

If you're having trouble choosing, one card can get you automatic Gold elite status with both Marriott Bonvoy and Hilton Honors: The Platinum Card® from American Express. Enrollment required.

This card, along with its counterpart The Business Platinum Card® from American Express, also offers other useful travel benefits, such as a \$200 airline fee credit, elite status with three car rental agencies and access to airport lounges around the world. Enrollment required. Terms apply.

Hilton Honors credit cards

There are four Hilton Honors credit cards, all issued by American Express. Three cards are for personal use, while one is a business card. All four cards can help you earn more points toward free stays as well as provide automatic elite status.

Cards that earn Hilton points 

Hilton Honors American Express Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)

on American Express' website

Rates & Fees

Hilton Honors American Express Surpass® Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)
on American Express' website

Rates & Fees



Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

[Read Review](#)

The Hilton Honors American Express Business Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)

on American Express' website

Rates & Fees

Annual fee

\$0.

\$150.

\$550.

\$95.

Earning rates

-
- 7 points per \$1 on eligible purchases with a hotel or resort within the Hilton portfolio.
 - 5 points per \$1 at U.S. restaurants, U.S. supermarkets and U.S. gas stations.
 - 3 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.

Terms apply.

- 12 points per \$1 on eligible purchases with a hotel or resort within the Hilton portfolio.
- 6 points per \$1 at U.S. restaurants, U.S. supermarkets and U.S. gas stations.
- 4 points per \$1 on U.S. online retail purchases.
- 3 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.

Terms apply.

- 14 points per \$1 on eligible purchases with a hotel or resort within the Hilton portfolio.
- 7 points per \$1 on flights booked directly with airlines or AmexTravel.com and car rentals booked directly with select car rental companies.
- 7 points per \$1 at U.S. restaurants.
- 3 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.

Terms apply.

- 12 points per \$1 on eligible purchases with a hotel or resort within the Hilton portfolio.
- 6 points per \$1 at U.S. restaurants, U.S. gas stations, on flights booked directly with airlines or AmexTravel.com, car rentals booked directly with select car rental companies, on wireless telephone services directly from U.S. service providers and U.S. shipping purchases.
- 3 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.

Terms apply.

Welcome offer

Earn 100,000 Hilton Honors Bonus Points after you spend \$2,000 in purchases on the Card in the first 6 months of Card Membership. Offer ends 4/17/24. Terms Apply.

Earn 155,000 Hilton Honors Bonus Points after you spend \$3,000 in purchases on the Hilton Honors American Express Surpass® Card in your first 6 months of Card Membership. Terms Apply.

Earn 150,000 Hilton Honors Bonus Points after you spend \$6,000 in purchases on the Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card in the first 6 months of Card Membership. Terms Apply.

Earn 130,000 Hilton Honors Bonus Points after you spend \$3,000 in purchases on the Hilton Honors Business Card within the first three months of Card Membership. Terms Apply.

Marriott Bonvoy credit cards

Marriott Bonvoy offers a total of six credit cards — including personal cards and a business card issued by Chase or American Express. All but one card provides automatic elite status, and most cards give you at least one free night each year with the opportunity to earn even more through spending.

Cards that earn Marriott points 

Marriott Bonvoy Bold® Credit Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)

on Chase's website

Marriott Bonvoy Boundless® Credit Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)

on Chase's website

Marriott Bonvoy Bountiful™ Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Learn more

Rates & Fees

Marriott Bonvoy Brilliant® American Express® Card

★★★★★

NerdWallet Rating

Apply now [↗](#)

on American Express' website

Rates & Fees

Annual fee

\$0.

\$95.

\$250.

\$650.

Rewards

- 3 points per \$1 at participating Marriott Bonvoy hotels.
- 2 points per \$1 on other travel purchases (such as airfare, taxis and trains).
- 1 point per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.
- 6 points per \$1 at participating Marriott Bonvoy hotels.
- 3 points per \$1 on up to \$6,000 a year in combined purchases on grocery stores, gas stations and dining.
- 2 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.
- 6 points per \$1 at participating Marriott Bonvoy hotels.
- 4 points per \$1 on up to \$15,000 a year in combined purchases at grocery stores and on dining.
- 2 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.
- 6 points per \$1 at participating Marriott Bonvoy hotels.
- 3 points per \$1 at restaurants worldwide and on flights booked directly with airlines.
- 2 points per \$1 on all other eligible purchases.

Terms apply.

New cardholder offer

Earn 30,000 Bonus Points after spending \$1,000 on purchases in your first 3 months from account opening with the Marriott Bonvoy Bold® Credit Card.

Limited time offer! Earn 5 Free Night Awards (each night valued up to 50,000 points) after spending \$5,000 on purchases in your first 3 months from account opening with the Marriott Bonvoy Boundless® Credit Card.

Earn 85,000 Bonus Points after you spend \$4,000 in purchases in your first 3 months from your account opening.

Earn 185,000 Marriott Bonvoy bonus points after you use your new Card to make \$6,000 in purchases within the first 6 months of Card Membership. Terms Apply.

[Learn more](#)

There is one additional consumer card and one business card in the Marriott credit card portfolio.

- Marriott Bonvoy Bevy™ American Express® Card has a \$250 annual fee. It comes with complimentary Gold elite status and earns 6x points at Marriott hotels. It also includes 1,000 bonus points per stay, a free night worth 50,000 points (after spending \$15,000) and 15 Elite Night Credits.
- The Marriott Bonvoy Business® American Express® Card has a \$125 annual fee. It grants automatic Gold elite status and 6x points at Marriott hotels. The card also provides a free night award up to 35,000 points with the option to earn a second night, a 7% room rate discount and 15 Elite Night Credits.

ELITE STATUS

Points can add up quickly for basic members of Hilton Honors and Marriott Bonvoy, but customers with elite status can really rack up the points. Status also comes with privileges like free Wi-Fi, food and beverage credits and suite upgrades.

NerdWallet's analysis of hotel elite status programs shows Hilton's dominance, especially at the higher Hilton Honors™ Gold Status and Hilton Honors™ Diamond Status levels. While Marriott Bonvoy earned 3 out of 5 stars for its program, Hilton earned 4.8 out of 5, beating other competitors except World of Hyatt.

At the lowest levels (Silver and Hilton Honors™ Silver Status), the benefits are similar. However, there are big differences just one level up at Gold. NerdWallet values the benefits of Marriott's Gold status at \$136, while Hilton's Gold benefits give status holders \$904 worth of value.

Similar benefits don't kick in for Marriott Bonvoy members until the higher Platinum or Titanium levels.

Hilton Honors

Hilton Honors elite status has three tiers: Silver, Gold and Diamond. Status is earned based on the number of nights, number of stays or total base points accumulated.

Here is what it takes to reach each tier:

- Silver: 10 nights, 4 stays or 25,000 base points.
- Gold: 40 nights, 20 stays or 75,000 base points.
- Diamond: 60 nights, 30 stays or 120,000 base points.

All Hilton Honors members, even those without status, receive free Wi-Fi, waived resort fees on award stays, room discounts and 10x base points on stays.

Once you've reached Silver elite status, here are the benefits you can expect to receive:

- Fifth night free on award stays.
- 20% points earning bonus on stays.
- 15% spa discount.
- Free bottled water.

Hilton Honors Gold status provides the following additional benefits:

- 80% points earning bonus on stays.
- Daily food and beverage credit or continental breakfast.
- Room upgrades and late checkout, if available.

Hilton's Diamond Status includes more perks:

- 100% points earning bonus.
- Executive lounge access.
- Premium Wi-Fi.
- Room upgrades up to the suite level, if available.
- Elite status gifting.
- 48-hour room guarantee for last-minute reservations.

» Learn more: Your guide to hotel bonus point promotions

Marriott Bonvoy

Marriott Bonvoy elite status has five levels: Silver, Gold, Platinum, Titanium and Ambassador Elite. Status is awarded based on the number of nights stayed at Marriott properties.

Here's how many nights you need to reach each tier:

- Silver: 10 nights.
- Gold: 25 nights.
- Platinum: 50 nights.
- Titanium: 75 nights.
- Ambassador Elite: 100 nights plus \$23,000 qualifying spending per year.

All Bonvoy members receive free Wi-Fi and member room rates, as well as the fifth night free on any award stay.

Silver elite status grants Bonvoy members the following benefits:

- 10% more points.
- Priority late checkout.

When you reach Gold elite status, you'll also have access to:

- 25% points bonus.
- Room upgrades when available.
- 2 p.m. late checkout when available.
- Welcome gift of points.

Platinum elite status provides these benefits:

- 50% more points.
- 4 p.m. late checkout.
- Welcome gift of points, breakfast or an amenity.
- Room upgrades up to the suite level when available.

- Lounge access.
- Annual choice benefit.

Those with Titanium elite status receive:

- 75% bonus points.
- 4 p.m. late checkout.
- Welcome gift of points, breakfast or an amenity.
- Room upgrades, up to the suite level when available.
- Lounge access.
- Annual choice benefit.
- 48-hour room guarantee.
- Premier Silver status with United Airlines.

For those who reach Ambassador Elite status, these perks are included:

- 75% bonus points.
- 4 p.m. late checkout.
- Welcome gift of points, breakfast or an amenity.
- Room upgrades, up to the suite level when available.
- Lounge access.
- 48-hour room guarantee.
- Choose your check-in and checkout time.
- Premier Silver status with United Airlines.

Hilton Honors vs. Marriott Bonvoy recapped

When it comes to Hilton Honors versus Marriott Bonvoy, the latter has many compelling reasons to book a stay: Marriott has more locations, lower fees and a better rewards rate for its points. It also has a wide array of credit cards that offer elite status at various levels as well as free award nights.

However, if it is optimal elite status that you're after, Hilton wins, providing its loyalists with more perks sooner than Marriott and its Bonvoy program.

So which one is better? It depends on what's important to you. If you want to simply earn and redeem points for free nights, Marriott Bonvoy has a higher rewards rate, so you'd probably get more value for your points there.

However, if earning elite status and its associated perks is what you're looking for, Hilton Honors is your best bet.

All information about Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card has been collected independently by NerdWallet. Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card is no longer available through NerdWallet.

All information about Marriott Bonvoy Bountiful™ Card has been collected independently by NerdWallet. Marriott Bonvoy Bountiful™ Card is no longer available through NerdWallet.

How to maximize your rewards

You want a travel credit card that prioritizes what's important to you. Here are our picks for the best travel credit cards of 2024, including those best for:

- Flexibility, point transfers and a large bonus: Chase Sapphire Preferred® Card
- No annual fee: Bank of America® Travel Rewards credit card
- Flat-rate travel rewards: Capital One Venture Rewards Credit Card
- Bonus travel rewards and high-end perks: Chase Sapphire Reserve®
- Luxury perks: The Platinum Card® from American Express
- Business travelers: Ink Business Preferred® Credit Card

About the authors

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