

Ritz-Carlton earns five diamonds

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The Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne and Ritz-Carlton Sarasota were awarded five-diamond status for 2006 by the American Automobile Association. It's a designation so rare that less than one quarter of 1 percent of the 57,000 properties rated by AAA received the award.

The Sarasota and Key Biscayne hotels will show up with five diamonds next to their names in AAA's tour books next year. Just seven other Florida hotels share the ranking. Six of the Florida hotels on the list are Ritz-Carltons.

"We've received other awards, but by far the AAA is the most sought-after," said Ritz general manager Jim McManemon. It is the first time the Sarasota hotel has received five diamonds.

AAA named 150 five diamond hotels for 2006. Only six of them were new additions, with the remainder being re-awarded after multiple years with the designation.

Thirty-one Ritz-run hotels -- 20 percent of the total -- made the five-diamond list for 2006.