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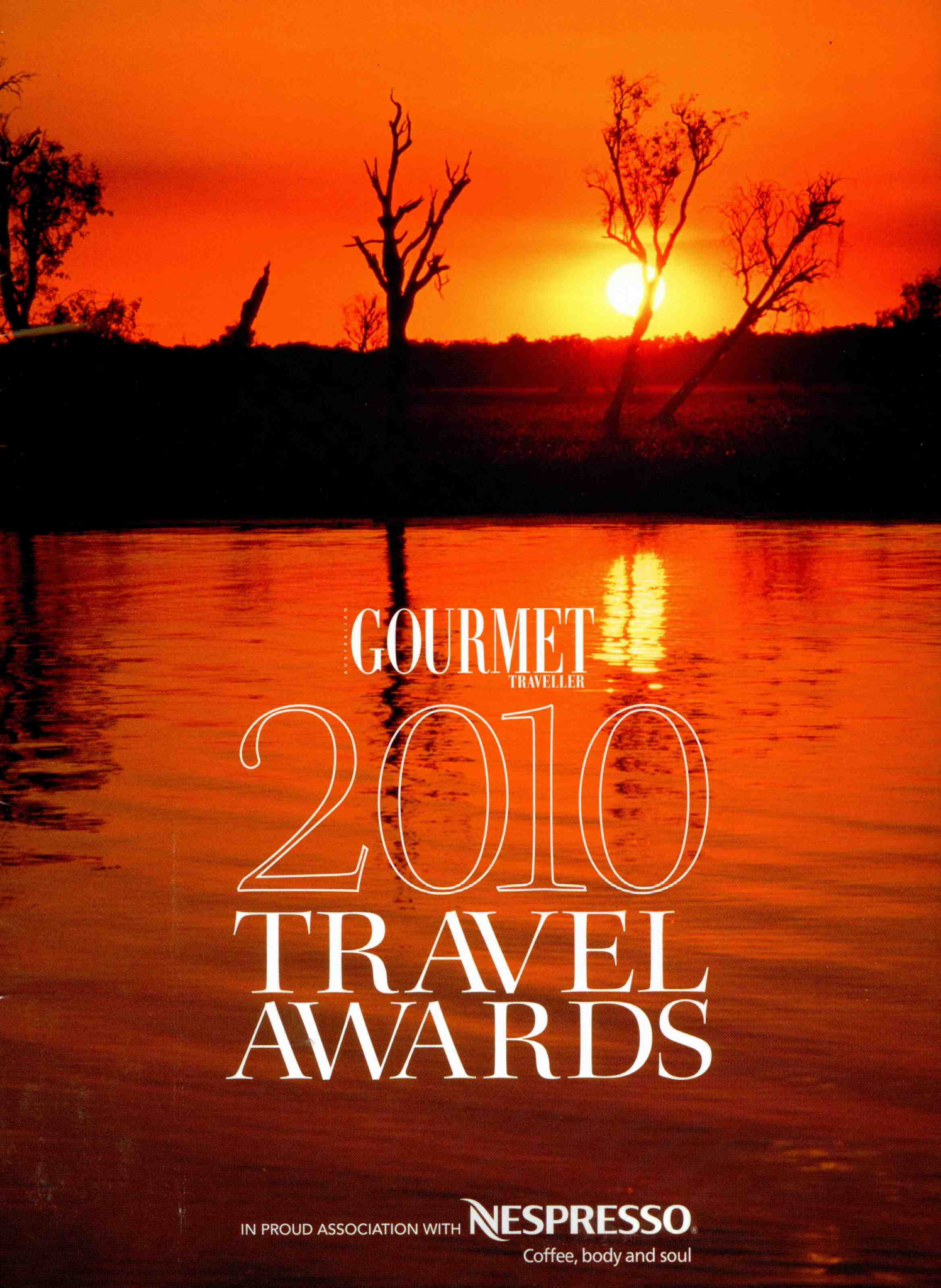
AUSTRALIAN
GOURMET
TRAVELLER
2010
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AWARDS
IN PROUD ASSOCIATION WITH NESPRESSO
Coffee, body and soul

Southern star Kangaroo Island's Southern Ocean Lodge is an architectural masterstroke that fully embraces its setting.

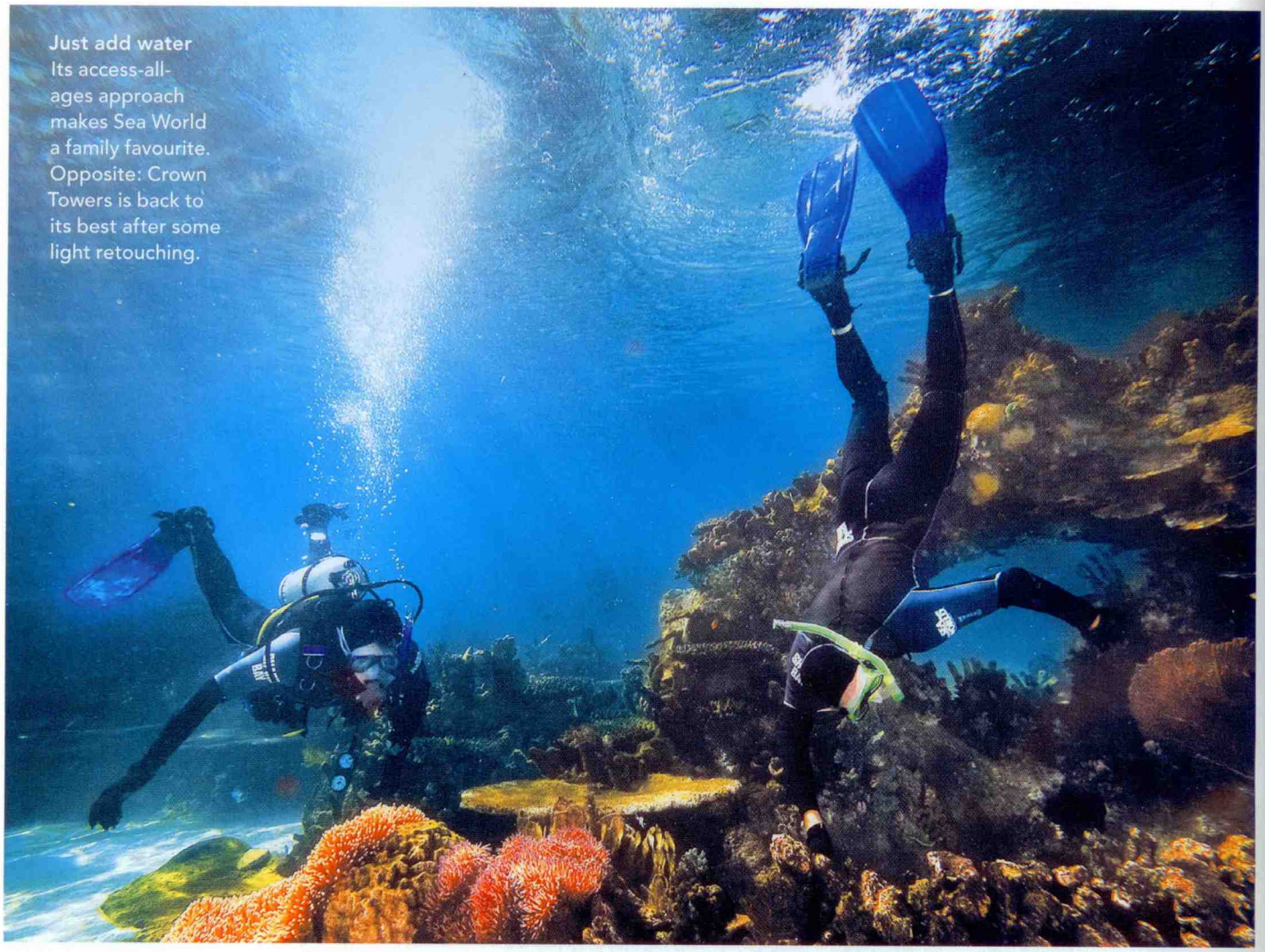
The wave-shaped clifftop lodge takes its name from the surging sea that dominates its view.

country; its founder is the indomitable Alla Wolf-Tasker. She and husband Allan developed this sanctuary from a neglected mine site and, since 1984, have been wowing diners with their commitment to pure regional produce prepared with tremendous flair. Assisted by head chef David Green, Wolf-Tasker creates memorable plates that reflect the bounty of the surrounding countryside, such as free-range pork served three ways – an agnolotto of braised pork, poached crisp belly and melting loin slices infused with fennel and apple. Combine the food with a phenomenal wine list of Australian and international headliners, lakefront accommodation and a sybaritic spa, and you have one of regional Australia's star attractions. *lakehouse.com.au*

BEST RESORT/LODGE

Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, SA
Runner-up: Qualia, Hamilton Island, Qld

Let's face it – with a lodge the calibre of Southern Ocean on our doorstep, it's likely to be some time before another superlative property arrives to challenge its supremacy. James and Hayley Baillie's clifftop lodge is a masterstroke of modern architecture and superior creature comforts that has swiftly elevated Kangaroo Island to the wish-lists of the international jet set (and affluent Australians). The wave-shaped lodge takes its name from the surging sea that dominates views from each of the 21 cantilevered suites as well as the communal Great Room. The lodge is a light-filled beacon of unbridled comfort amid the surrounding wilderness. Guest activities revolve around the great outdoors – encounters with wallabies, echidnas, koalas and the island's colony of sea lions – and the great indoors – king-sized beds with goose-down pillows, an open cellar, excellent South Australian>



Just add water Its access-all-ages approach makes Sea World a family favourite. Opposite: Crown Towers is back to its best after some light retouching.

produce and cosy fires. The combination of the two, and the exceptional level of enjoyment each provides, is what sets Southern Ocean Lodge apart from the pack. *southernoceanlodge.com.au*

NESPRESSO BEST LARGE LUXURY HOTEL

Crown Towers, Melbourne, Vic
Runner-up: Park Hyatt, Sydney, NSW

Feeling her age after 13 years as the sovereign of Southbank, Crown Towers booked in for a little work last year and has emerged looking more fabulous than ever. An extensive makeover by architects Bates Smart has refreshed and modernised the hotel's 482 rooms with a rich palette of black and grey, silver and chrome that befits Melbourne's premier riverfront address. High thread-count linens, fibre wallpapers and leather-bound king-sized beds amp up the style quotient; and original artworks by David Band and Belinda Fox lend distinct character to each suite. Bathrooms have been gutted and rebuilt as white-and-chrome pleasure dens complete with glittering chandeliers. The hotel's 82 suites and 32 decadent villas cater to the exacting standards of high rollers and high society, and there are private dining rooms, cocktail bars and panoramic views across the city and bay. The Crown complex buzzes with more than 40 restaurants and bars, and marvellous Melbourne is right there on your doorstep. Life is good. *crowntowers.com.au*

GETAWAY BEST FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Sea World Resort & Water Park, Broadwater, Qld
Runner-up: Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, NSW

It's home to more than 30 bottlenose dolphins, the nation's only polar bears, a colony of little penguins and a kaleidoscope of fish across 17 aquariums, but that's only part of Sea World's enduring attraction for Australian families. Over 22 years this Gold Coast institution has welcomed more than 5 million visitors with its unique mix of close-up creature encounters and marine-themed rides. Highlights include a glass-bottomed boat trip across the largest man-made shark lagoon for intimate (but generally safe) encounters with dusky, bull and bronze whaler sharks, and the 70km per hour thrills and spills of the Jet Rescue ride. Accommodation at the adjacent resort gives guests exclusive park access and memorable Kodak moments, such as breakfast with a side order of seals. The resort's Research and Rescue Foundation regularly saves stranded whales, dolphins and turtles, underlining Sea World's commitment to animal welfare. Not your average Gold Coast theme park. *seaworld.myfun.com.au*

BEST SPA/HEALTH RETREAT

Qualia, Hamilton Island, Qld
Runner-up: Gaia Retreat & Spa, Byron Bay, NSW

Its Latin name translates as "a collection of deep sensory experiences" and Qualia spa delivers this in spades. This breezy Whitsundays health retreat takes centre stage at the high-end Hamilton Island resort, its six spa pavilions equipped with indulgent essentials such as Roman baths and alfresco Vichy showers that make the most of dreamy>