

Travel

Festival state takes gold

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ONCE again, we are delighted at the number of votes received from savvy readers for our annual Travel & Tourism Awards. This year, South Australia takes line honours with gongs in four categories, a great result for the Festival State, which won no categories last year.

Other winners are spread across all states and territories, with the exception of the Northern Territory. The breakdown is: South Australia 4; NSW 3, Queensland 3; Victoria 2, Western Australia 1, ACT 1 and Tasmania 1. No state locator has been given to winners of the national categories of best adventure tour operator (Wilderness Australia) and best tour operator (also last year's winner, Abercrombie & Kent).

Best Luxury Accommodation (100 rooms and over): Park Hyatt, Sydney, NSW. Few hotels in the world can better this location: absolute waterfront in Sydney's historic Rocks precinct. 2008 winner: The Observatory Hotel, Sydney.

Best Luxury Accommodation (under 100 rooms): The Louise, Barossa Valley, SA. An elegant retreat with idyllic views across the Barossa, The Louise has a standout restaurant and wine list and sophisticated guestrooms. 2008 winner: The Richardson, Perth, WA.

Best Resort Accommodation (100 rooms and over): Hayman, Whitsundays, Qld. Hayman remains the evergreen standard bearer for Australia's resort industry, its beachfront locale unbeatable. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: Cable Beach Club Resort, Broome, WA.

Best Resort Accommodation (under 100 rooms): The Byron at Byron Resort & Spa, Byron Bay, NSW. Five minutes from Byron Bay, this acclaimed resort offers contemporary digs in a rainforest setting. 2008 winner and new Winners' Circle member: The Byron at Byron Resort & Spa, Byron Bay, NSW.

Best Lodge Accommodation: Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, SA. Regarded as one of the finest in the world, this lodge has minutely finessed interiors eclipsed only by its stunning views. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: The Lodge at Tarraleah, Tas.

Best Value Accommodation: Majestic Roof Garden Hotel, Adelaide, SA. In the city's vibrant East End, this small service-oriented hotel ticks all the boxes for corporate and leisure travellers. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: Vibe Savoy Hotel, Melbourne, Vic.

Best Hosted Accommodation: Crystal Creek Meadows Luxury Cottages & Spa Retreat, Kangaroo Valley, NSW. Visitors are accommodated in four delightful self-contained cottages that offer absolute privacy, each with its own fragrant garden. 2008 winner and new Winners' Circle member: Crystal Creek Meadows Luxury Cottages & Spa Retreat.

Best Family-focused Tourism: Kingfisher Bay Resort, Fraser Island, Qld. This



Southern Ocean Lodge on South Australia's Kangaroo Island, winner of the best lodge accommodation category in our annual T&I Awards.

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environmentally savvy resort operates an exciting Junior Eco Rangers program that includes ropes and canoeing courses, bushwalks and stargazing. 2008 winner and new Winners' Circle member: Kingfisher Bay Resort.

Best Eco-Wilderness Experience: Maria Island Walk, Tas. This four-day walk combines bush camps with fabulous Tasmanian food and wine. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: Bay of Fires Walk, Tas.

Best Adventure Tour Operator: Wilderness Australia. A well-established specialist in tailor-made safaris that includes the company's stable of Wild Bush Luxury retreats. 2008 winner: Peregrine Adventures.

Best Indigenous Tourism Experience: Kooljaman at Cape Leveque, WA. This Aboriginal-owned wilderness camp on the tip of the Dampier Peninsula provides accommodation options of basic beach shelters, cabins and comfortable safari tents. 2008 winner: Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, Cairns, Qld.

Best Heritage Tourism: Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT. This majestic national monument has regular changing exhibitions and houses one of the world's best collections of military artefacts and wartime documents. 2008 winner: Port Arthur, Tas.

Best Food Experience: Spirit House Restaurant & Cooking School, Yandina, Qld. This acclaimed cooking school offers daily classes focusing on contemporary Thai and other Asian cuisines. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: Stillwater Restaurant and The Mill Providore, Launceston, Tas.

Best Winery Restaurant: Montalto Vineyard and Olive Grove, Red Hill, Vic. This dining experience offers outstanding food, much of it sourced from the estate's organic gardens and orchards. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: The Restaurant at Voyager Estate, Margaret River, WA.

Best Destination Spa: Hepburn Bathhouse & Spa, Daylesford, Vic. A world-class facility combining soaking in the Bathhouse (complete with relaxation pools, spa couches, steam room and spa) with all the pleasures of a contemporary day spa. 2008 winner: Salus Spa, Lake House, Vic.

Best Innovative Tourism Experience: Santos Tour Down Under, SA. This event lures stars such as Lance Armstrong and Cadel Evans, draws crowds in excess of 750,000 and involves communities across the state. 2008 winner and Winners' Circle member: Sydney Seaplanes Fly & Dine Experiences, NSW.

Best Tour Operator: Abercrombie & Kent. A&K offers super-stylish travel experiences across seven continents. 2008 winner and new Winners' Circle member: Abercrombie & Kent.

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