

Golden night for Queensland at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards

Claiming several major prizes at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, Queensland tourism operators have proven that the nation's Sunshine State is home to many iconic destinations and exceptional visitor experiences.

Presented at the Sunshine Coast Convention Centre, more than 700 tourism operators and guests gathered on Friday 18 March to recognise the achievements and resilience of Australia's finest visitor experiences.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council Chief Executive and Chair of the Australian Tourism Awards Daniel Gschwind said that the Awards offered a platform to showcase the world-class experiences and destinations that Australia has to offer.

"The Awards are testament to the commitment and determination of our nation's top tourism businesses, who, despite the difficulties of the past two years, consistently provide visitors with exceptional experiences.

"While all the winners and finalists should be congratulated for their achievements through these challenging times, we're particularly proud of Queensland's success at this year's Awards", said Gschwind.

Competing with the nation's best tourism products, Bundaberg Rum Distillery Visitor Experience were the big winners at the Awards night, walking away with top honours for a third time in Tourism Wineries, Distilleries & Breweries.

Having achieved a golden hat trick, the Distillery Experience were inducted into the Australian Tourism Awards Hall of Fame.

Overall, Queensland tourism celebrated a remarkable night by accepting 15 accolades at this year's national Awards with 6 Gold, 5 Silver, and 4 Bronze being awarded to exceptional Sunshine State operators.

A total of 75 awards were presented across 25 categories, including Red Cat Adventures who took home Gold for Adventure Tourism, as did Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat in the Hosted Accommodation category, and Empire Apartment Hotel for 4-4.5 Star Accommodation.

Other Queensland winners include Beef Australia Limited for Major Festivals & Events, and Spirits of the Red Sand, who took out the prestigious Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Tourism Award.

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Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchliffe said the Awards' strong Queensland representation demonstrated commitment to recovery.

"In the last two years, resilient Queensland tourism operators have found opportunities to build back better", Mr Hinchliffe said.

"They've strived for excellence in delivering outstanding, visitor-focused experiences and new, world-class tourism infrastructure.

"The tremendous determination of tourism operators is reflected in the Awards' 21 Queensland finalists.

"The Palaszczuk Government is investing more than \$1.1 billion in support for tourism operators.

"We've helped operators update and create new visitor attractions to put Queensland in the best possible position to lead the rebuild of domestic and international tourism.

"And right now, Queensland is seeing the green shoots of recovery".

Sunshine Coast Council Mayor Mark Jamieson said it was an exciting night for tourism operators, highlighting how important the national tourism industry was for the economy.

"Hosting the Awards gave us the means to showcase our very own distinct Sunshine Coast tourism experiences to industry peers from across the nation, and notably, our welcoming spirit," Mayor Jamieson said.

"Montville's Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat taking gold for Hosted Accommodation is wonderful acknowledgement of a tourism operator's ambition to provide outstanding service and encourage visitation to our beautiful Sunshine Coast".

The Qantas Australian Tourism Awards celebrates innovation and exceptional standards in tourism; and is made possible through the generosity of sponsors, in particular Qantas, Tourism Australia, the Queensland Government, Novotel Sunshine Coast, Sunshine Coast Council, Visit Sunshine Coast and the Sunshine Coast Airport.

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QLD Gold Winners

QLD	13. Adventure Tourism	Red Cat Adventures (<i>Whitsundays</i>)
QLD	16. Tourism Wineries, Distilleries & Breweries	Bundaberg Rum Distillery Visitor Experience (Hall of Fame) (<i>Bundaberg</i>)
QLD	18. Hosted Accommodation	Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat (<i>Sunshine Coast</i>)
QLD	22. 4-4.5 Star Accommodation	Empire Apartment Hotel (<i>Capricorn</i>)
QLD	03. Major Festivals & Events	Beef Australia Limited (<i>Capricorn</i>)
QLD	07. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Tourism	Spirits of the Red Sand (<i>Brisbane</i>)

QLD Silver Winners

QLD	01. Major Tourist Attractions	Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary (<i>Gold Coast</i>)
QLD	10. Business Event Venues	Empire Apartment Hotel (<i>Capricorn</i>)
QLD	11. Major Tour & Transport Operators	Red Cat Adventures (<i>Whitsundays</i>)
QLD	17. Caravan & Holiday Parks	Julia Creek Caravan Park (<i>Outback</i>)
QLD	20. Self Contained Accommodation	Pinnacles Resort (<i>Whitsundays</i>)

QLD Bronze Winners

QLD	23. 5 Star Accommodation	InterContinental Hayman Island Resort (<i>Whitsundays</i>)
QLD	04. Festivals & Events	Isaac Regional Council - Economy and Prosperity Department (<i>Mackay</i>)
QLD	08. Tourism Retail & Hire Services	Pelican Boat Hire (<i>Sunshine Coast</i>)
QLD	09. Visitor Information Services	Longreach Visitor Information Centre (<i>Outback</i>)

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**QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**

Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is the peak industry body for tourism in Queensland representing more than 3,000 members. QTIC is a private sector, membership-based organisation which, since 2001, has worked to influence and shape the state's tourism business environment that directly contributes \$27.2 billion to the Queensland's economy and employs more than 237,000 Queenslanders.

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