



OFFICIAL

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Media Release

NSW Tourism shines at Australian Tourism Awards

New South Wales delivered an outstanding performance at the 2024 Australian Tourism Awards in Adelaide on Friday, 21 March, securing an impressive **four gold, three silver, and two bronze** awards. This marks the best result for NSW in years, underscoring its growing excellence in tourism.

Building on past success, NSW's results have climbed year on year – rising from one gold award three years ago to two the following year, and three last year. This continued **upward trajectory** is a testament to the outstanding quality, innovation, and dedication of our state's tourism operators, who are setting new benchmarks for excellence.

Adding to this success, the **North Coast** emerged as a standout region, with multiple winners showcasing the vital role **regional tourism awards** play in driving business excellence. These awards not only recognise achievement but also inspire operators to push boundaries, refine their offerings, and enhance the visitor experience across the state.

A Celebration of Excellence

Natalie Godward, CEO of the NSW Tourism Association, expressed immense pride in the state's success.

“These results are nothing short of phenomenal and prove that NSW is shining on the national stage. Our winners, particularly those from regional areas, demonstrate the power of dedication, innovation, and continuous improvement. The tourism awards process helps operators refine their offerings, and these wins are a well-earned reward for their commitment to excellence.”



Natalie emphasised the broader impact of the awards process in fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

*“When a region collectively engages in these awards and supports businesses through the rigorous submission process, it drives operators to set higher benchmarks and elevate the visitor experience across New South Wales. Regardless of the outcome, the process encourages businesses to step back and assess their operations strategically, shifting focus from working **in** the business to working **on** it. The mentoring and support involved not only strengthen individual businesses but also raise the region’s overall standard of excellence.*

This investment—both at the regional level and within businesses themselves—ensures they are more prepared and competitive. NSW Tourism Association intends to work with Destination Networks to expand Regional Tourism Awards across other areas of New South Wales in the coming years, further strengthening business capability and reinforcing a culture of excellence within regional communities.”

NSW’s Tourism Strength Recognised

NSW Tourism Association Chair, The Hon. Stuart Ayres, echoed the excitement.

“The strength of NSW tourism is the quality of its people and the experiences they provide to visitors across our state. This incredible result reinforces NSW as a powerhouse in Australian tourism. The upward trend in our award wins shows the strength of our operators and the growing recognition of their world-class offerings.

NSW Tourism Association congratulates all winners and acknowledges their hard work and passion in shaping the state’s tourism industry. With these results, NSW continues to set the standard for tourism across the country, ensuring a bright future for the visitor economy.



Quotes from NSW winners:

"Oh, it's just so exciting! We've had a wonderful year with the launch of our accessible balloon, and we've flown more people than we've ever flown before. We just have such a great thing, and this means a lot to everyone. Thank you so much."

Michelle Wills, Balloon Aloft
GOLD - Adventure Tourism
GOLD - Excellence in Accessible Tourism

"To be awarded GOLD for the second year running at the national level is incredibly exciting for our team and is a true celebration of the collective work of the region's tourism operators and our great partnership with the Tweed Shire Council. For our Tweed marketing campaign to be recognised as the best in Australia once again, especially amongst so many stellar destinations and products, is affirmation of The Tweed's place as one of the country's leading tourism regions."

Sally Scott, General Manager, The Tweed Tourism Company
GOLD - Tourism Marketing & Campaigns

"We're so honoured and absolutely humbled to win tonight. This award really belongs to our guests and our incredible team. The support we've been given by NSW Tourism Association and the Tourism Awards had really helped us build our business from a small family business into what it is today. We're absolutely stoked and humbled. Words can't describe what it means to us to win - fourth time lucky! Amazing."

Natascha and Cameron D'Arcy, Sierra Escape
GOLD - Unique Accommodation

"Winning Gold at the Australian Tourism Awards is an incredible honour and a huge moment for the Northern Rivers Rail Trail. This award is shared with the many people who have championed the Rail Trail over the years – supporters, volunteers, community groups, businesses, licensed operators, tourism partners and local councils – who have worked tirelessly to see this vision become a reality."

Dean Cooper, Regional Lead, Northern Rivers Rail Trail
SILVER - Tourist Attractions



“Entering these awards, is a huge part of moving our business forward, with such an involved process that looks at every area of your business and asks you to really think and evaluate why you're doing what you're doing, which really helps in your own business planning process. It's given me a really good approach towards looking at the whole business, not just doing what you're comfortable doing, but maybe looking at some areas of the business, you're not comfortable with and really scrutinising them and getting them where you want them to be. It's been an incredibly valuable experience.”

**Louise Warren, Mt Hay Retreat
SILVER - 5 Star Luxury Accommodation**

“When a small island like Lord Howe Island can compete on a national stage for a food award, it's unheard of! Considering we're such a small place with only 435 people, it just proves that it doesn't matter how little you are, or how small your business is, you can win at these events, and you can achieve these goals.”

**Danielle Nicolson, Love Lord Howe
SILVER - Excellence in Food Tourism**

“Wow! This is wonderful recognition for our team's hard work and dedication. Port Macquarie Museum is a place where history, culture and storytelling come together. We enjoy sharing the rich history of Port Macquarie and the beautiful Mid North Coast region of NSW with the world. Thanks to our staff, visitors and partners who have all played a part in our amazing Bronze award! It was an honour and pleasure to put Port Macquarie on show at the Australian Tourism Awards.”

**Debbie Sommers, Port Macquarie Museum
BRONZE - Cultural Tourism**

“It's the third year a row we've won an award here at the Australian Tourism Awards. To be number three restaurant in the country, is not lost on us - it's such a testament to the hard work that my team puts in to deliver such a significant experience. It's our ninth birthday on Tuesday, and what we've been able to do for the visitor economy and the Tweed, has been really significant and I'm just so proud of the fact that we continue to come to awards like this this evening and continue to get recognised. So, it's an amazing achievement and I'm so proud.”

**Peter Burr, Potager
BRONZE - Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services**



GOLD

Adventure Tourism	Balloon Aloft Australia
Tourism Marketing & Campaigns	The Tweed Tourism Company
Unique Accommodation	Sierra Escape
Excellence in Accessible Tourism	Balloon Aloft Australia

SILVER

Tourist Attractions	Northern Rivers Rail Trail
5 Star Luxury Accommodation	Mt Hay Retreat
Excellence in Food Tourism	Love Lord Howe

BRONZE

Cultural Tourism	Port Macquarie Museum
Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services	Potager

[Access photos from the night here.](#)

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