MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW tourism excellence recognised as 2026 Awards winners revealed

From the outback to the coast, the state's leading tourism operators celebrated for commitment to exceptional visitor experiences and industry standards

Tourism businesses from across New South Wales have claimed the state's top awards at the **2026 NSW Tourism Awards**, reflecting the dedication, professionalism and hard work behind their success.

Hosted by **NSW Tourism Association**, *Gold*, *Silver* and *Bronze* honours were presented across 30 categories, with 73 winners named at the state's annual tourism celebration at **ICC Sydney** on **Monday 9 November**.

The results reflect the diversity of NSW's visitor economy, spanning attractions, accommodation, events, tours, food and beverage experiences and other services that contribute to the state's appeal as a destination.

The NSW Tourism Awards form part of Australia's longest-running tourism awards program, which has recognised excellence nationally for more than four decades.

NSW Tourism Association CEO Natalie Godward said winning was a significant achievement, reflecting the commitment and dedication of businesses across the state.

"There is so much more to running a successful tourism business than what people see when they visit. Behind every great experience are people who work incredibly hard, who care about what they do and who are constantly looking for ways to make their business better," Miss Godward said.

"These businesses have earned their place among the state's leading tourism businesses through a rigorous assessment process. That is a significant achievement and one they should be immensely proud of.

"It's been a challenging year for our industry however the passion and commitment across our operators hasn't wavered. Seeing what the industry can achieve and the contribution they make to their communities, is incredible and something worth celebrating."

Accessible tourism was a standout in 2026, with seven finalists in the Excellence in Accessible Tourism category, the highest number in recent years. Ecotourism also attracted a strong field, reflecting growing interest in responsible travel and experiences that minimise environmental impact.

This year, the NSW Tourism Association expanded its entrant support program, with a quarter of entrants taking up the new personalised mentoring service and over 50 per cent participating in entrant support webinars and regional programs.

"The whole program is more than just an award. The process provides businesses the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day to work on their business, reflect on how far they have come and plan where they are going next," Miss Godward said.

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Each award entrant met nationally recognised industry standards, with submissions assessed by a panel of 50 judges alongside a consumer review score component. The judging process was also subject to extensive internal verification and an independent external audit review by BYRONS, providing further assurance of the integrity of the results.

Regional NSW was strongly represented, with 19 of the 30 Gold awards going to regional operators, including 10 on the North Coast.

Minister for Jobs and Tourism Steve Kamper congratulated the winners and finalists, saying they reflected the quality and ambition driving the state's visitor economy.

"The NSW Tourism Awards set a high bar, and every winner should be very proud of what they have achieved.

"From the city to the coast and the bush, these operators are telling the stories of their local communities, bringing visitors through the doors, supporting local jobs and putting money back into towns right across NSW.

"The Minns Labor Government is backing a strong and growing visitor economy, and businesses like these will be critical as we work towards our $91 billion tourism target by 2035," said Mr Kamper.

The **Outstanding Contribution by an Individual** award was presented to Steve Hinks, Director at Taronga Western Plains Zoo, acknowledging exceptional contribution to the NSW tourism industry.

Two businesses, Sierra Escape and Mt Hay Retreat, were inducted into the **NSW Tourism Awards Hall of Fame**, after securing *Gold* in their respective categories for three consecutive years, from 2024 to 2026. They join the three businesses inducted in 2025.

In addition to the category winners, three **Tourism Stars** were selected by the judging panel for outstanding potential and commitment, with Kestrel Nest EcoHut, Nundle Woollen Mill and Tarragon Lodge Holiday Park receiving the special recognition.

For eligible *Gold* winners, the Awards provide a pathway to represent New South Wales at the **Australian Tourism Awards**, where they will compete against leading tourism businesses from other states and territories for national honours.

The Australian Tourism Awards winners will be announced at the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre, Victoria on **19 February 2027**.

The **2026 NSW Tourism Awards** are proudly supported by the NSW Government's tourism and major events agency, **Destination NSW**.

The 2026 NSW Tourism Awards category winners are:

Placing	Winner	Region
Major Tourist Attractions 2026		
Gold	Northern Rivers Rail Trail	North Coast
Silver	Art Gallery of New South Wales	Sydney
Bronze	The Big Banana Fun Park	North Coast
Highly Commended	Sydney Zoo	Sydney
Tourist Attractions 2026		

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Gold	Crystal Castle & Shambhala Gardens	North Coast
Silver	Old Dubbo Gaol	Country and Outback
Bronze	Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary	North Coast
Major Festivals & Events 2026		
Gold	Broken Hill Mundi Mundi Bash	Country and Outback
Silver	Deni Ute Muster 2025	Riverina / Murray
Festivals & Events 2026		
Gold	Groovin the Moo Lismore	North Coast
Silver	The Hoey Moey, Park Beach Hotel Motel, Tidal Sounds Music Festival	North Coast
Bronze	Newcastle Pride Festival 2025	Sydney Surrounds North
Highly Commended	Luna Park Sydney Harbour Party 2025/26	Sydney
Ecotourism 2026		
Gold	Vision Walks - Eco Tours	North Coast
Silver	Tweed Eco Cruises	North Coast
Bronze	Sydney By Kayak	Sydney
Tourism Star	Kestrel Nest EcoHut	Riverina / Murray
Cultural Tourism 2026		
Gold	Old Dubbo Gaol - Dubbo Regional Council	Country and Outback
Silver	Yarrila Arts Museum	North Coast
Bronze	Port Macquarie Museum	North Coast
Tourism Star	Nundle Woollen Mill	Country and Outback
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Experience 2026		
Gold	Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council	Southern NSW
Tourism Retail, Hire and Services 2026		
Gold	Better By Bike	North Coast
Silver	Coffs Coast Accommodation	North Coast
Bronze	Ask Roz Blue Mountains	Sydney
Highly Commended	My Dream Adventures	North Coast
Visitor Information Services 2026		
Gold	Mudgee Region Tourism	Central NSW
Silver	Central Coast Visitor Centre	Sydney Surrounds North
Bronze	Young Visitor Information Centre	Southern NSW
Business Event Venues 2026		
Gold	Willinga Park	Sydney Surrounds South
Silver	City of Newcastle – Newcastle City Hall	Sydney Surrounds North
Major Tour & Transport Operators 2026		
Gold	Brighton Coach & Tours	Sydney
Tour & Transport Operators 2026		
Gold	Vision Walks - Eco Tours	North Coast
Silver	Tweed Eco Cruises	North Coast
Bronze	Mudgee Ale Trail	Central NSW
Adventure Tourism 2026		
Gold	Sydney Kayak Experience	Sydney
Silver	Stand Up Paddle Boarding Shellharbour	Sydney Surrounds South
Bronze	Oz Jet Boating	Sydney
Tourism Marketing & Campaigns 2026		
Gold	City of Newcastle – Seek Off Beat	Sydney Surrounds North
Silver	Destination Central Coast	Sydney Surrounds North
Bronze	Why Bother - Visit Wollongong	Sydney Surrounds South
Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services 2026		
Gold	1920 at Catalina Club	Southern NSW
Silver	Harwood Hotel	North Coast
Bronze	Hoey Moey, Park Beach Hotel Motel	North Coast
Tourism Wineries 2026		
Gold	Printhie Wines	Central NSW
Silver	Mograni Creek Estate	North Coast

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Bronze	Cupitt's Estate	Sydney Surrounds South
Tourism Distilleries & Breweries 2026		
Gold	Jervis Bay Brewing Co	Sydney Surrounds South
Silver	Husk Farm Distillery	North Coast
Bronze	Earp Distilling Co	Sydney Surrounds North
Caravan & Holiday Parks 2026		
Gold	Tathra Beach Eco Camp	Southern NSW
Silver	Swansea Lakeside Holiday Park	Sydney Surrounds North
Bronze	Blue Lagoon Beach Resort	Sydney Surrounds North
Tourism Star	Tarragon Lodge Holiday Park	Riverina / Murray
Hosted Accommodation 2026		
Gold	The Belfry Guesthouse	North Coast
Unique Accommodation 2026		
Gold	Sierra Escape	Central NSW
Silver	The Silos Accommodation	Riverina / Murray
Bronze	Starscape Australia	Central NSW
Self Contained Accommodation 2026		
Gold	Mt Kanimbla Retreats	Sydney
Silver	The Ridge Gloucester	North Coast
4 or 4.5 Star Accommodation 2026		
Gold	Ibis Styles The Entrance	Sydney Surrounds North
5 Star Accommodation 2026		
Gold	Mt Hay Retreat	Sydney Surrounds South
Silver	Kalinya Estate	Sydney
New Tourism Business 2026		
Gold	Newy Food Adventures	Sydney Surrounds North
Silver	Burradoo Park Farm	Sydney Surrounds South
Bronze	Trentham Waters Mildura	Riverina / Murray
Excellence in Food Tourism 2026		
Gold	Broken Bay Pearl Farm	Sydney Surrounds North
Silver	Our Italian Table	Sydney Surrounds North
Excellence in Accessible Tourism 2026		
Gold	Crystal Castle & Shambhala Gardens	North Coast
Silver	Northern Rivers Rail Trail	North Coast
Bronze	Swansea Lakeside Holiday Park	Sydney Surrounds North
Local Government Award for Tourism		
Gold	City of Newcastle – Visit Newcastle	Sydney Surrounds North
Silver	Central Coast Council	Sydney Surrounds North
Take 3 For The Sea Award For Visitor Litter Prevention		
Gold	Vision Walks - Eco Tours	North Coast
Silver	Australia By Nature	Sydney
Bronze	Sydney Kayak Experience	Sydney
Service to Tourism Industry		
Gold	Clarence Valley Council	North Coast
Silver	Sparrowly Group	Sydney

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Notes to Editor:

Interviews are available with Natalie Godward, CEO of NSW Tourism Association.

If you would like to interview a finalist or winner, please contact Oakley Grioli at oakley@zadroagency.com.au

Images:

Images from the night are available for download here.

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About NSW Tourism Awards:

The NSW Tourism Awards represent the pinnacle of recognition for New South Wales' tourism industry. With categories spanning attractions, tours, festivals, food, wine and accommodation, the awards champion excellence across the diverse visitor economy, showcasing the brilliance of businesses both small and large.

Through the NSW Tourism Awards, we continue to build pride, strengthen communities, and celebrate the passion that makes NSW a truly exceptional destination.

The NSW Tourism Awards serve as the only pathway for NSW visitor economy businesses to compete at the Australian Tourism Awards. As such, all entries are required to be assessed in line with the Quality Tourism Framework Sustainable Tourism accreditation standards.

https://nswtourismassociation.com.au/nsw-tourism-awards

About NSW Tourism Association:

NSW Tourism Association is the peak body representing the visitor economy in New South Wales.

Comprising member businesses across the state, NSW Tourism Association is dedicated to advancing the interests of the tourism industry in government policy, supporting the industry, promoting excellence and driving economic growth through tourism.

https://nswtourismassociation.com.au/

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