



Reef sleepover voted the best

SPENDING a night on a pontoon surrounded by the Great Barrier Reef has been voted Queensland's most unique experience.

Fantasea Cruises' Reef-sleep won the Unique Accommodation award at this year's Queensland Tourism Awards, which were held on the Gold Coast on Friday night.

Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor said the Whitsundays tour operator, which offers a select few guests the chance to stay overnight on Fantasea Cruises' Reefworld pontoon, was a finalist in the category last year.

"Reefsleep is a unique product where guests can travel out to the Great Barrier Reef, spend their day snorkelling and diving and then stay overnight after the daytrippers have gone home," Mr Lawlor said.

"There can be nothing

more amazing than having the Great Barrier Reef all to yourself, dining under the stars with your own personal steward, and seeing the marine environment by night. This is a fantastic experience that creates life-long memories."

Mr Lawlor said Fantasea Cruises' Reefworld was also named a finalist in the Tourist Attractions category.

The region's other finalists included: Audi Hamilton Island Raceweek 2008 Silver Jubilee (Major Festivals and Events); Oceanic Whitsunday Boat and Leisure (Festivals and Events); Airlie Retreat Food and

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— *Queensland Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor*

Wine Festival (Festivals and Events); Cruise Whitsundays (Major Tour and/or Transport Operators); Capers at the Beach Bar/Grill (Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services); BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort (Tourist and Caravan Parks); Long Island Resort (Standard Accommodation); Peppers Palm Bay (Deluxe Accommodation); qualia (Luxury Accommodation); and Fantasea Adventure Cruising's Reefworld (Tourist Attraction).

Member for Whitsunday Jan Jarratt said it was fantastic to see the region's events excelling at the awards.

"Regional events bring visitors to a destination,

inject money into the local economy and create jobs for the locals," Ms Jarratt said.

Queensland Tourism Industry Council chief executive Daniel Gschwind said the awards' 13-member judging panel was impressed by entrants' professionalism and business acumen.

"In these tough economic times, it becomes more imperative than ever for tourism businesses to employ sound planning and rigorous self-assessment," Mr Gschwind said.

"The awards remain one of the best tools to guide operators through this process."

Reefsleep will progress to the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, which will be held in Hobart on February 26.



Fantasea Adventure Cruising general manager Michelle Ryms accepts the Unique Accommodation award for Reefsleep at the Queensland Tourism Awards. PHOTO COURTESY



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Reef thrill

WHITSUNDAYS:

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Queensland Tourism Awards 2009 winners

- Major Tourist Attractions — Australia Zoo
- Tourist Attractions — Daintree Discovery Centre
- Major Festivals and Events — 2008 Gold Coast Airport Marathon
- Festivals and Events — Julia Creek Dirt & Dust Festival
- Steve Irwin Ecotourism Award — Capricorn Caves
- Heritage and Cultural Tourism — Paronella Park
- Indigenous Tourism — Riverlife Mirrabooka
- Specialised Tourism Services — Rubyvale Gem Gallery
- Visitor Information and Services — Brisbane Visitor Information and Booking Centre
- Meetings and Business Tourism — Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre

- Major Tour or Transport Operators — Passions of Paradise
- Tour or Transport Operators — The Discovery Group
- Adventure Tourism — Passions of Paradise
- The Richard Power Award for Tourism Marketing — RACQ 150 Must Do's in Queensland
- Tourism Education and Training — Griffith University Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management
- Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services — Peppers Spicers Peak Lodge
- Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Boutique Breweries — O'Reilly's Canungra Valley Vineyards
- Tourist and Caravan Parks — Brisbane Holiday Village
- Backpacker Accommodation — BUNK Backpackers
- Hosted Accommodation — Hidden Valley Cabins

- Unique Accommodation — Fantasea Adventure Cruising
- Standard Accommodation — Noorla Heritage Resort
- Deluxe Accommodation — Azure Studio Retreat
- Luxury Accommodation — Emporium Hotel
- New Tourism Development — Brisbane City YHA
- Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism — Skyrail Rainforest Cableway
- Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group — Reef HQ Volunteers
- Young Achievers Award — Amanda Jennings, Capricorn Caves
- The Marie Watson-Blake Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual — Ron Chapman (CEO, Caravanning Queensland)



RECOGNITION . . . Reef HQ volunteers Dana Turner, Jill Blaikie, Tom Walter, Mohamed Henni, George Lilley and Marie McKee

Qld: Queensland Tourism Awards winners

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