

YVONNE VERSTANDIG

Luxury travel designer

MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON A DAILY BASIS FOR AUSTRALIA'S DISCERNING TRAVELLERS, AND THIS YEAR, A PANEL MEMBER OF OUR GOLD LIST LUXURY TRAVEL INSIDER EXPERTS, YVONNE SPEAKS TO Katrina Holden.

We spoke with Yvonne Verstandig, Director of Melbourne's Executive Edge Travel + Events about what luxury travellers are seeking from their holidays. Yvonne is an expert in experiential travel – immersive experiences for travellers that enable authentic connection to a local region through its people and culture. Here, we discuss together the mindset of a luxury traveller.

They seek out experiences: "It's not just about the lavish hotel stays – clients want experiences. That's where my focus is, on experiential travel." This growing trend sees travellers desiring more from their trip. "So even for people staying in a city," explains Yvonne, "they still want to have unique experiences and a bespoke itinerary created for them."

They combine luxury travel with cultural immersion: "It's totally possible to combine a

culturally immersive experience with luxury," says Yvonne. Destinations such as Bhutan in the Himalayas featuring Aman and COMO hotels provide five-star luxury retreats by night then by day you can hike to temples and monasteries with a private guide meeting local farmers en route.

"When I stayed at Rohet Garh in rural Jodhpur, Rajasthan India, we walked the streets where local children played and one family even invited us to a

wedding that day. Then after visiting a Bishnoi tribe with no electricity, we returned to the opulence and comfort of our heritage palace.

They are open to ideas and going beyond the text-book: For the luxury traveller, there's a distinction between racing and touring through a place, ticking off everything from a must do list – and really taking one's time.

"A text-book experience for many is going to see Angkor Wat in Cambodia at sunrise – but

you're there with everyone else. I'll suggest to my clients why don't we do it slightly differently – visit at sunset and instead spend the morning visiting one of the many orphanages or giving offerings to the local monks and receive blessings in return. Travelling is more, in my mind, about really *feeling* a destination and immersing yourself in a local community, getting involved and going beyond. You can go to Nizwa in Oman and see the old citadel. Sure, you might tick it off your bucket list, but if you visit on a Friday you can experience the Nizwa goat market and feel like you're stepping back into biblical times."

They take advantage of the benefits of booking with a specialist agent: Any style of travel, regardless of budget, involves plans sometimes going wrong – cancelled or delayed flights, political or weather storms, to name a few. "For the luxury traveller there's general expectations of wanting their hand held and having accessibility to us all the time. I've had calls at 3am because somebody's flight was cancelled. My personal clients have my mobile number. That's the service – to be available 24/7. Between the three partners at Executive Edge and our Corporate Manager, we personally attend to our phones after hours. Some companies outsource that service but we do it ourselves.

No request is too small or too large: Customer preferences can vary widely among luxury travellers. Yvonne says that while typically her clients want to be met at the air bridge and shuffled



"People are wanting to go deeper and see more of a country. A lot more people are steering away from the one-place destination holiday."

through immigration quickly, beyond that there are different requests.

One of my luxury clients isn't an intrepid traveller wanting to veer off and prefers I book every spa and restaurant during the trip. I also have clients who only want to stay at a luxury brand five-star hotel with a huge gym and all the equipment. Then there are clients who still want to travel first class but stay in a hidden boutique gem."

Others desire the family holiday of a lifetime and would only trust their travel advisor to design the perfect itinerary using a multitude of on-the-

ground resources

Yvonne recalls a recent challenging (but rewarding) trip she organised for a client to Africa. It was a multi-generational three-week journey including 22 people –grandparents, their four adult children and the grandchildren ranging from 1-21 years old.

"After a year of planning, it was the trip of a lifetime with unforgettable memories for all three generations."

They may research but they don't rely on the internet alone: The internet can be an important source of inspiration and practical advice for travel planning. Though

when it comes to actually booking the trip, many people at the luxury travel end prefer to book with a reliable and trustworthy luxury specialist agent.

"People ask me if I find the internet to be a problem, but it's not. The internet can be a great resource for general information but when it comes to creating bespoke itineraries, there is no comparison to a luxury travel designer's service. Our team have travelled to every corner of the globe, so between us we can provide personalised advice. Then we go a step further – we curate experiential travel itineraries using local specialists via our connections on the ground. We know our clients' travel needs best and they rely on that knowledge and our insider perspective. Our clients also benefit from of all our exclusive hotel memberships and the Virtuoso network which brings added amenities and upgrades, which you cannot receive via the internet.

They seek out deeper layers: Experiential travel at the luxury end may not always be about going somewhere entirely new to tourism or an exotic destination – it can also be about looking at favourite locations through different layers.

"People are wanting to go deeper and see more of a country. One of my favourite cycling companies, Butterfield & Robinson's motto is "slow down to see the world" which exemplifies what I'm talking about. Instead of simply seeing the sights of the Netherlands, you can cycle through tulip fields on two wheels and meet locals along the way."



This page: Yvonne cycles by rice paddies in Bali; Opposite page: Yvonne at the end of a 100km ride through the Netherlands.

THE GOLD LIST 2016

Here are the winners and finalists of our annual Gold List Awards for 2016 where you, our readers, vote for the best luxury travel operators and destinations. Now in its 12th year, the awards recognise the ultimate in luxury travel in Australia and around the world.

This year, we have included a select group of specialist luxury travel agents who send their clients daily to discover the world's most exciting and luxurious properties and travel experiences. Here, they share their nominated preferences across several categories. Our editorial team has also chosen a wider selection of editor's picks based on our expert knowledge and travels to new luxury properties and operators around the world – as well as the timeless classics that continue to excel in luxury hospitality.

Thank you to the thousands of readers and Virtuoso clients who took the time to vote online at our new website, luxurytravelmag.com.au

Congratulations to all of this year's winners.

Introducing our specialist luxury travel agent Gold List panel



STEPHEN WHITE
DIRECTOR –
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
THE EXCLUSIVE TRAVEL
GROUP,
TAURANGA NZ



FAY COHEN
OWNER
TRAVEL PHASE,
SYDNEY



MELINDA GREGOR
MANAGING DIRECTOR
GREGOR & LEWIS,
SYDNEY



YVONNE VERSTANDIG
DIRECTOR
EXECUTIVE EDGE
TRAVEL + EVENTS,
MELBOURNE



This icon signifies that the award winner has made the Gold List every year for the past

five years or more. They are our Hall of Fame members and deserve special recognition.

Saffire
FREY CINET


VIRTUOSO.
SPECIALISTS IN THE ART OF TRAVEL

Best Australian Hotel

1. PARK HYATT SYDNEY

Congratulations to Park Hyatt Sydney, back on top this year as your favourite Australian Hotel. The hotel previously won in this category in 2012, as well as in our first ever Gold List in 2005.

2. Crown Towers, Melbourne
3. Four Seasons Hotel Sydney
4. Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney
5. Hotel Hotel (Canberra)
6. The Langham, Sydney
7. The Langham, Melbourne
8. Sheraton on the Park, Sydney
9. Park Hyatt Melbourne
10. InterContinental Sydney
11. Mansion Hotel & Spa at Werribee Park (VIC)
12. QT Sydney
13. Sofitel Melbourne on Collins
14. Palazzo Versace, Gold Coast
15. The Westin Sydney
16. Pier One Sydney Harbour
17. Ovolo 1888 Darling Harbour
18. Grand Hyatt Melbourne
19. The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Park Hyatt Sydney
"Consistently fabulous."
 Stephen White, The Exclusive Travel Group

EDITOR'S PICKS:

Park Hyatt Sydney has an unsurpassed harbour-front location. We also like Hotel Hotel in Canberra for its innovative approach to hospitality; and COMO The Treasury Perth for its thoughtful redevelopment of mid-19th Century heritage buildings and bringing a new level of luxury to Perth.



PARK HYATT SYDNEY

Best Overseas Hotel

1. THE PENINSULA HONG KONG (Hall of Fame winner)

Perennial favourite The Peninsula Hong Kong continues its reign as the leading overseas luxury hotel in a pool of luxurious finalists including the quirky Ham Yard Hotel in London and ultra-luxurious Villa d'Este in Lake Como.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Ham Yard Hotel (London) 3. Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise (Alberta, Canada) 4. Raffles Singapore 5. Le Bristol Paris 6. Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore 7. Fairmont Banff Springs (Alberta, Canada) 8. Four Seasons George V (Paris) 9. Halekulani (Hawaii) 10. Villa d'Este (Lake Como) 11. The Fullerton Hotel, Singapore 12. Hotel Adlon Kempinski (Berlin) 13. Bellagio Las Vegas 14. Beverly Wilshire, Beverly Hills (A Four Seasons Hotel) 15. Claridge's (London) 16. Crosby Street Hotel (New York) 17. Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong 18. The Langham, London 19. Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok 20. Shangri-La Hotel, Paris | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi 22. The Ritz London 23. The Dorchester (London) 24. The Beverly Hills Hotel 25. The Langham, Auckland 26. Burj Al Arab Jumeirah (Dubai) 27. The Plaza (New York) 28. The Savoy (London) |
|---|---|

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Claridges London
"Delivers every time."
 Stephen White, The Exclusive Travel Group

EDITOR'S PICKS:

We like Aman's first city hotel, the recently opened Aman Tokyo; the beautifully-designed and appointed Mandarin Oriental Marrakech, overlooking the Atlas Mountains; the new, flamboyantly renovated former palace, the Rajmahal Palace Hotel in Jaipur, India; the cutting-edge and classic crystal-accented Baccarat Hotel & Residences, New York; the lavish new The Reverie Saigon in the heart of Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh; and The Ritz London for its refined and elegant luxury.

Best Australian Resort

1. QUALIA (Hamilton Island, QLD)

We congratulate all of our luxurious Australian resort finalists, especially qualia, the winner of this category for the fourth year running.

2. One&Only Hayman Island (QLD)
3. Cable Beach Club Resort & Spa (WA)
4. The Byron at Byron (NSW)
5. Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort, Gold Coast (QLD)
6. Peppers Beach Club (Port Douglas, QLD)
7. Pullman Bunker Bay Resort & Spa (WA)
8. Peppers Beach Club & Spa (Palm Cove, QLD)
9. QT Port Douglas (QLD)
10. Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort (QLD)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

qualia
"A fabulous option with direct scheduled flights into Hamilton island and a private scenic buggy transfer for a special check-in with champagne at hand. Go for the Windward Pavilion with private plunge pool and views over the Whitsundays."
 Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

EDITOR'S PICK:

One&Only Hayman Island for taking Australian beachside chic and glamour to new levels.



THE BRANDO

Best Overseas Resort

1. THE BRANDO (Tahiti)

Tahiti's luxurious and eco-friendly The Brando wins this category for the second time just two years since it opened – an impressive feat for an impressive resort.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Laucala Island (Fiji) 3. Vomo Resort Fiji 4. Likuliku Lagoon Resort Fiji 5. The Nam Hai, Hoi An (Vietnam) 6. W Retreat & Spa Bali – Seminyak 7. Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora 8. Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea 9. Ayana Resort and Spa (Bali) 10. Imperial Springs (China) 11. Necker Island (British Virgin Islands) 12. The Datai Langkawi (Malaysia) 13. The Remote Resort, Fiji Islands 14. Bulgari Resort Bali 15. One&Only Reethi Rah (Maldives) 16. InterContinental Bali Resort 17. Alila Villas Uluwatu (Bali) 18. Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui (Thailand) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort 20. The Havannah (Vanuatu) 21. The Resort at Pedregal (Mexico) |
|--|---|

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Laucala Island
"Simply the best resort I have ever been to in the world!"
 Melinda Gregor, Gregor & Lewis Bespoke Travel

EDITOR'S PICKS:

Fregate Island Private, Seychelles, with its stunning clifftop location and private white sandy beaches; Alila Jabal Akhda, providing a luxury base 2,000 metres above sea level for explorers to Oman; and the new Cape Weligama overlooking the Indian Ocean in Sri Lanka, the second hotel to open from the Dilmah family.

Best Australian Boutique Property: Villa or Lodge

1. SAFFIRE FREYCINET (TAS)

Third time's a charm for Saffire Freycinet, the stunning luxury lodge having also won in this category in 2014 and 2015.

2. Bells at Killcare (Central Coast, NSW)
3. Southern Ocean Lodge (Kangaroo Valley, SA)
4. Halcyon House (Cabarita Beach, NSW)
5. Silky Oaks Lodge (Daintree, QLD)
6. Cape Lodge (Margaret River, WA)
7. Capella Lodge (Lord Howe Island, NSW)
8. Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley (NSW)
9. El Questro (WA)
10. Lake House (Daylesford, VIC)
11. Pretty Beach House (Central Coast, NSW)
12. Spicers Peak Lodge (Scenic Rim, QLD)
13. Cradle Mountain Lodge (TAS)
14. Spicers Vineyard Estate (Hunter Valley, NSW)
15. The Louise (Barossa Valley, SA)
16. Islington Hotel (Hobart, TAS)
17. Pumphouse Point (Lake St Clair, TAS)
18. MONA The Pavilions (Hobart, TAS)
19. Berkeley River Lodge (Kimberley Coast, WA)
20. Lizard Island Resort (QLD)
21. Longitude 131 (Uluru, NT)
22. Spicers Tamarind Retreat (Sunshine Coast, QLD)
23. Lindenwarrah at Milawa (VIC)
24. Lindenderry at Red Hill (VIC)
25. Bedarra Island Resort (QLD)
26. Jonah's Whale Beach (NSW)
27. Spicers Clovelly Estate (Sunshine Coast, QLD)
28. Calabash Bay Lodge (NSW)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICKS:

Saffire Freycinet
"Perfect."
 Stephen White, The Exclusive Travel Group

Lizard Island
"Barefoot luxury."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley for its special location in the UNESCO World Heritage Blue Mountains region, offering a relaxed yet refined rural Australian experience.

THE GOLD LIST 2016

Best Overseas Boutique Property: Villa or Lodge

1. **ANDBEYOND BATELEUR CAMP** (Kenya)

The luxurious tented andBeyond Bateleur Camp, set on the edge of the Maasai Mara in Kenya, wins your vote. This year the list of boutique finalists also includes several standout properties in New Zealand and South Africa.

2. Huka Lodge (Taupo, New Zealand)
3. Singita Ebony Lodge (South Africa)
4. JK Place Capri (Italy)
5. Song Saa Private Island (Cambodia)
6. Azur Lodge (Queenstown, New Zealand)
7. Blanket Bay Luxury Lodge (Otago, New Zealand)
8. Eastwell Manor (Kent, England)
9. L Hotel Seminyak
10. The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs (Matauri Bay, New Zealand)
11. Ulusaba Private Game Reserve (South Africa)
12. Viceroy Bali
13. Villa Samadhi (Kuala Lumpur)
14. Windu Asri Bali
15. Kata Rocks (Phuket, Thailand)
16. Eagles Nest (Bay of Islands, New Zealand)
17. Otahuna Lodge (Tai Tapu, New Zealand)
18. Post Ranch Inn Big Sur (USA)
19. Kapama Karula (South Africa)
20. Matakauri Lodge (Queenstown, New Zealand)
21. Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve (South Africa)
22. The Place, Ko Tao (Thailand)
23. Villa Crespi (Italy)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Masseria Trapana
"Puglia's hottest new property."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICKS:

The elegant Relais & Chateaux heritage Ceylon Tea Trails in Sri Lanka with its quaint cottages amidst tea fields; Hotel Villa Honegg with its outdoor heated pool and spectacular views over Lake Lucerne; Ashford Castle Ireland dating back to the 13th Century and recently reopened under the Red Carnation Hotel Collection – once home to the Guinness family.



ANDBEYOND BATELEUR CAMP



Best New Zealand Property

(WITHIN DRIVING DISTANCE OF THE CITY)

1. **MATAKAURI LODGE**

Matakauri Lodge retains its top spot again this year, the leader of a pack that includes some of the best luxury lodgings on offer in New Zealand.

2. Huka Lodge
3. Blanket Bay Luxury Lodge
4. The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs
5. Millbrook Resort (Arrowtown)
6. Treetops Lodge & Estate (Rotorua)
7. Azur Lodge
8. The Farm at Cape Kidnappers (Hawke's Bay)
9. Hilton Queenstown Resort & Spa
10. Wharekauhau Lodge (Palliser Bay)
11. Sofitel Queenstown Hotel and Spa

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Huka Lodge
"The most popular lodge for the past 30 years. They must be doing something right."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Otahuna Lodge in New Zealand's Canterbury region, with its classic Victorian architecture and an impressive 17 chimneys!

Best Australian Property

(WITHIN DRIVING DISTANCE OF THE CITY)

1. **LAKE HOUSE**

Luxury travellers need drive no further than picturesque Lake House in Daylesford. We congratulate the foodie favourite for its back-to-back wins in this category.

2. Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
3. Bells at Killcare
4. Mansion Hotel & Spa at Werribee Park
5. Saffire Freycinet
6. Pretty Beach House
7. Lillianfels Resort & Spa (Blue Mountains, NSW)
8. Cape Lodge
9. Pullman Bunker Bay Resort & Spa
10. Spicers Peak Lodge
11. Bannisters by the Sea (Mollymook, NSW)
12. Château Élan at The Vintage (Hunter Valley, NSW)
13. Lindenderry at Red Hill
14. The Louise

15. Hydro Majestic (Blue Mountains, NSW)
16. The Byron at Byron

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
"New general manager who is out to please."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICKS:

Saffire Freycinet, the stingray-shaped architectural wonder on Tasmania's Freycinet Peninsula overlooking Hazards mountain range: guests can shuck oysters in the bay. The whimsical newcomer to the New South Wales north coast, Halcyon House, has its visitors setting Instagram abuzz, thanks to its fresh take on the blue and white nautical theme and casual Australian luxury.

THE GOLD LIST 2016



GWINGANNA LIFESTYLE RETREAT



Best Australian Health & Wellness Property

1. **GWINGANNA LIFESTYLE RETREAT** (Gold Coast, QLD)

The Gold Coast's Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat is back on top this year as your first choice for a luxury health and wellness getaway. They have recently renovated to add meditation suites to the property.

2. Golden Door Health Retreat & Spa Elysia (Hunter Valley, NSW)
3. Gaia Retreat & Spa (Byron Bay hinterland, NSW)
4. Billabong Retreat (Sydney, NSW)

Best Overseas Health & Wellness Property

1. **KAMALAYA KOH SAMUI**

Thai resorts have taken out the top two spots this year with luxurious health retreat and reader favourite Kamalaya moving up from second to claim the win, followed by Chiva-Som, another long-time reader favourite.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. Chiva-Som (Thailand) | 9. Miraval Resort & Spa (Arizona) |
| 3. Aro Ha (New Zealand) | 10. Ananda (India) |
| 4. The Ranch at Live Oak (Malibu) | 11. Bagus Jati (Bali) |
| 5. Como Shambhala Estate (Bali) | 12. Carmel Forest Spa Resort (Israel) |
| 6. Canyon Ranch (Arizona) | 13. Champneys Tring (Hertfordshire, UK) |
| 7. Sukhavati Ayurvedic Retreat & Spa (Bali) | 14. Enchantment Resort (Arizona) |
| 8. Fivements Puri Ahimsa (Bali) | 15. Hoshinoya Karuizawa (Japan) |

EDITOR'S PICKS:

COMO Shambhala Estate Bali in Ubud is beautifully positioned to allow guests to connect with nature through outdoor activities and a range of specialists on hand to promote healthy lifestyle changes; our readers love the wellness programs at Kamalaya.

Best Australian Family Property

1. **ONE&ONLY HAYMAN ISLAND**

Loved by adults and kids alike, One&Only Hayman Island makes it two in a row as your favourite family property.

2. Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort, Gold Coast
3. Yacht Club Villas, Hamilton Island (QLD)
4. Peppers Broadbeach (QLD)
5. Alamanda Palm Cove (QLD)
6. Cable Beach Club Resort & Spa
7. Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
8. InterContinental Sanctuary Cove Resort (QLD)
9. Hotel Pullman Port Douglas Sea Temple Resort and Spa (QLD)
10. Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort
11. Daydream Island Resort & Spa (QLD)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

One&Only Hayman
"Caters for everyone."
Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICKS:

The waterfront Yacht Club Villas Hamilton Island on Dent Passage are a great option for kids and boatie families, within walking distance to the Hamilton Island Yacht Club. Paperbark Camp Jervis Bay gives families a glamping adventure just 2.5 hours from Sydney.

Best Overseas Family Property

1. **VOMO RESORT** (Fiji)

Fiji's Vomo Resort has made the jump from sixth place to first this year, and with Fijian resorts occupying the top four spots, reinforces the country's reputation as a family-friendly paradise.

2. Jean Michel Cousteau Resort (Fiji)
3. Turtle Island (Fiji)
4. Castaway Island (Fiji)
5. Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa (USA)
6. Four Seasons Tented Camp* (Thailand)
7. &Beyond Phinda Homestead (South Africa)
8. Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort
9. Atlantis, The Palm (Dubai)
10. Shangri-La's Fijian Resort & Spa
11. Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa (Hawaii)
12. InterContinental Bali Resort
13. Saint Andrea Seaside Resort (Greece)
14. Ulusaba Private Game Reserve

**(Over 12s only)*

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Iniala Phuket
"Even has a children's hotel."
Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICKS:

Special mention to the Maldives properties becoming more family-friendly, with Soneva Fushi Maldives opening The Den, touted to be one of the world's most elaborate children's facilities. Per Aquum Niyama Maldives with safaris and MasterChef classes; and Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa with its family surf lessons.

Best Australian Romantic Property

1. **QUALIA**

Readers looking for a romantic luxury getaway are spoilt for choice with this list of finalists, but it's qualia that takes out the top spot, the resort winning its second award in this year's Gold List.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Saffire Freycinet | 11. Jonah's Whale Beach |
| 3. The Mansion Hotel & Spa at Werribee Park | 12. Silky Oaks Lodge |
| 4. Lake House | 13. One&Only Hayman Island |
| 5. Bells at Killcare | 14. Lindenderry at Red Hill |
| 6. Bedarra Island Resort | 15. Palazzo Versace, Gold Coast |
| 7. Capella Lodge | 16. Lindenwarrah at Milawa |
| 8. Lizard Island | 17. Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge |
| 9. Southern Ocean Lodge | 18. Lilianfels Resort & Spa |
| 10. Pretty Beach House | 19. Spicers Tamarind Retreat |
| | 20. The Byron at Byron |

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Brae (VIC)
"The best restaurant in Australia now has accommodation."
Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Spicers Vineyard Estate offers cosy and stylish surrounds in the heart of Hunter Valley wine country and an award-winning on-site restaurant.



FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA

THE GOLD LIST 2016

Best Overseas Romantic Property

1. **FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA**

Luminous turquoise waters dotted with over-water bungalows make for rich and romantic getaways at winning resort, the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora.

2. Laucala Island, Fiji
3. Likuliku Lagoon Resort Fiji
4. The Remote Resort, Fiji Islands
5. andBeyond Mnemba Island (Tanzania)
6. Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise (Alberta, Canada)
7. andBeyond Ngorongoro Crater Lodge (Tanzania)
8. Royal Davui Island Resort (Fiji)
9. Villa d'Este (Lake Como, Italy)
10. InterContinental Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa (Tahiti)
11. Le Sirenuse (Positano, Italy)
12. Belmond Hotel Cipriani (Venice, Italy)
13. Anantara Layan Phuket Resort
14. Baros Maldives
15. Blanket Bay Luxury Lodge
16. Cocoa Island by COMO (Maldives)
17. Huka Lodge
18. Mont Rochelle (South Africa)
19. The Nam Hai, Hoi An (Vietnam)
20. Necker Island (British Virgin Islands)
21. Pangkor Laut Resort (Malaysia)
22. Japamala Resort (Tioman Island, Malaysia)
23. The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort
24. The Peninsula New York
25. The Havannah
26. Twinpalm (Phuket)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Kasbah Tamadot
"At Sir Richard Branson's Kasbah Tamadot perched high in the Atlas Mountains outside Marrakech, red chandeliers softly ignite the Berber tent – one of the most sexy and romantic settings imaginable."
Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

EDITOR'S PICKS:

Romance is so high on the agenda at Las Ventanas Al Paraiso, a Rosewood Hotel in Baja, Mexico, that it has created its own Romance Department to cater to its guests' every whim. The adults-only getaway Likuliku Lagoon Resort Fiji was the first resort in the country to create overwater bures.

Best Overseas Ski Property or Lodge

1. THE LITTLE NELL (Aspen, USA)

Long-time reader favourite The Little Nell in Aspen also makes it four in a row with another win this year.

2. Fairmont Chateau Whistler (Canada)
3. Four Seasons Resort and Residences Whistler (Canada)
4. The St. Regis Aspen Resort (USA)
5. The Lodge Verbier (Switzerland)
6. Matakauri Lodge
7. Fairmont Banff Springs (Canada)
8. Four Seasons Resort and Residences Vail (USA)
9. The St. Regis Deer Valley (USA)
10. The Westin Resort & Spa, Whistler (Canada)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

K2 Courcheval, France
"Perfect location – 1,850 at Courcheval always has snow and Goji spa is a must."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICKS:

The intimate and recently-opened Haus Hannes Schneider in Stuben Austria, former home of ski legend Hannes Schneider. The Lodge Verbier in the Swiss Alps – mountain hideaway of Sir Richard Branson with its nine luxury bedrooms and suites.



THREDBO ALPINE VILLAGE

Best Australian Ski Property or Lodge

1. QT FALLS CREEK (VIC)

Congratulations to QT Falls Creek for its third consecutive win in this category.

2. Thredbo Alpine Hotel (NSW)
3. Hotel Pension Grimus (VIC)
4. Ski In Ski Out Chalets Thredbo (NSW)
5. The Denman Thredbo (NSW)
6. Grand Mercure Chalet Mount Buller (VIC)
7. Zirky's, Mount Hotham (VIC)

THE GOLD LIST 2016



EDITOR'S PICK:
 Kosciuszko Chalet Hotel at Charlotte Pass for the old-world charm and style of the 1930s hotel, right on the slopes.

Best Australian Ski Resort

(VILLAGE OR TOWNSHIP IN A SKI AREA)

1. THREDBO ALPINE VILLAGE (NSW) (Hall of Fame winner)



Thredbo continues to prevail as your favourite Australian ski resort, winning for the eighth consecutive year.

2. Falls Creek Alpine Resort (VIC)
3. Perisher (NSW)
4. Mount Buller (VIC)
5. Mount Hotham Alpine Ski Resort (VIC)
6. Charlotte Pass Ski Resort (NSW)
7. Dinner Plain Alpine Village (VIC)
8. Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort (VIC)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Thredbo
"Thredbo boasts the longest and most challenging runs in the country. Don't miss the butterscotch schnapps après!"
 Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

Best Overseas Ski Resort

(VILLAGE OR TOWNSHIP IN A SKI AREA)

1. ASPEN SNOWMASS (USA)

Aspen Snowmass is back in the peak position as your favourite overseas ski resort, overtaking leading Canadian favourite Whistler/Blackcomb.

2. Whistler/Blackcomb (Canada)
3. Niseko (Japan)
4. Vail (USA)
5. Zermatt (Switzerland)
6. Beaver Creek (USA)
7. Verbier (Switzerland)
8. Val Thorens (France)
9. Big White (Canada)
10. Chamonix Mont-Blanc (France)
11. Hakuba (Japan)
12. Lech (Austria)
13. Méribel (France)
14. Val d'Isère (France)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Aspen
"Still number one with Aussies, great choice of restaurants"
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

We love Aspen Snowmass for both its sophistication and seriously good-quality snow fields catering to all ages.

Best First Class Airline

1. EMIRATES

Winner Emirates is expected to reveal new A380 first class suites in the coming months, and we can't wait to check out the next level of luxury on offer from the airline when they do.

2. Etihad Airways
3. Singapore Airlines
4. Qantas
5. Cathay Pacific
6. Qatar Airways
7. British Airways
8. Thai Airways

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICKS:

Singapore Airlines
"The best suites in the world."
 Stephen White, The Exclusive Travel Group

"Flat double bed hard to beat."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Etihad Airways deserve recognition for its innovation onboard the A380 with its luxury First Apartments.

Best Business Class Airline

1. QANTAS

Our national carrier continues to perform strongly in the Gold List, awarded for its Business Class for a second consecutive year (having won six out of the last seven), and Qatar Airways and Finnair join the ranks this year.

2. Emirates
3. Singapore Airlines
4. Etihad Airways
5. Cathay Pacific
6. Virgin Australia
7. Air New Zealand
8. Qatar Airways
9. Thai Airways
10. British Airways
11. Finnair

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Qantas
"Our most popular."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Qatar Airways, now flying daily out of Sydney, has Skytrax award-winning business class seats.



PARIS IN SPRING



Best Overseas City

1. PARIS, FRANCE

Ahh, Paris... we're not surprised the French capital has been voted as the best overseas city for another year - c'est magnifique!

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. New York, USA | 11. Vancouver, Canada |
| 3. London, England | 12. Prague, Czech Republic |
| 4. Rome, Italy | 13. Singapore |
| 5. Venice, Italy | 14. Berlin, Germany |
| 6. Barcelona, Spain | 15. San Francisco, USA |
| 7. Florence, Italy | 16. Vienna, Austria |
| 8. Tokyo, Japan | 17. Cape Town, South Africa |
| 9. Istanbul, Turkey | 18. Budapest, Hungary |
| 10. Amsterdam, Netherlands | 19. Auckland, New Zealand |
| | 20. Copenhagen, Denmark |

Best Country

1. ITALY

Italy has so much to offer a luxury traveller – amazing hotels and villas, gorgeous scenery and enticing food and wine experiences – and you've chosen it as your favourite country for another year.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 2. France | 15. Greece |
| 3. Spain | 16. Ireland |
| 4. USA | 17. Croatia |
| 5. New Zealand | 18. Vietnam |
| 6. Canada | 19. India |
| 7. Japan | 20. Austria |
| 8. Israel | 21. South Africa |
| 9. Switzerland | 22. Norway |
| 10. Germany | 23. Scotland |
| 11. Fiji | 24. Turkey |
| 12. Thailand | 25. Botswana |
| 13. Singapore | 26. Peru |
| 14. England | |



LA DOLCE VITA IN ITALY

THE GOLD LIST 2016

Best Australian Golf Resort

1. THE DUNES (Barnbougle, TAS)

The Dunes at Barnbougle in Tasmania has jumped from third place to first this year as your pick for Best Australian Golf Resort.

2. Bonville Golf Resort (NSW)
3. Château Élan at The Vintage (NSW)
4. Noosa Springs Golf and Spa Resort (QLD)
5. Hamilton Island Golf Club (QLD)
6. InterContinental Sanctuary Cove Resort (QLD)
7. Peppers Moonah Links Resort (VIC)
8. Cypress Lakes Golf & Country Club (NSW)
9. The Vines Resort & Country Club (WA)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

The Dunes, Barnbougle
"Barnbougle stands out because not only does it offer two highly world-ranked golf courses, but it also offers accommodation options with cottages and villas at the Dunes course, and the lodge at the Lost Farm. Easy fly-in/fly-out access provides an opportunity to tour Tasmania after a round of golf."

Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

Best Overseas Golf Resort

1. THE FARM AT CAPE KIDNAPPERS

(Hall of Fame winner)



We welcome The Farm at Cape Kidnappers to the Gold List Hall of Fame with their fifth consecutive win this year, congratulations!

2. Pebble Beach Resorts (USA)
3. Argentario Golf Resort & Spa (Tuscany, Italy)
4. The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs
5. Millbrook Resort
6. InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa
7. Mission Hills Resort Shenzhen (China)
8. Adare Manor Hotel & Golf Resort (Ireland)
9. The Gleneagles Hotel (Scotland)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Cape Kidnappers
"Views to die for."
 Stephen White, The Exclusive Travel Group

EDITOR'S PICK:

The recently opened The Lodge at Kinloch in Taupo, New Zealand was created by the awarded-owners of Treetops Lodge & Estate, and is the only Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course in New Zealand.

Best Luxury Cruise Company

1. NORTH STAR CRUISES AUSTRALIA

North Star Cruises is back on top this year as your favourite luxury cruise company, moving up from second place.

2. Scenic Tours
3. Silversea
4. Seabourn
5. Crystal Cruises
6. Cunard
7. Oceania Cruises
8. Regent Seven Seas Cruises

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICKS:

SeaDream
"No company comes close."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

Crystal Cruises
"They have the most professional and friendly staff, and great specialty restaurants."
 Melinda Gregor, Gregor & Lewis

EDITOR'S PICK:

Silversea for its innovation in luxury on the seas and all-inclusive cruising holidays.

THE GOLD LIST 2016

Best Luxury Cruise Ship (SMALL)

1. TRUE NORTH, NORTH STAR CRUISES AUSTRALIA

You've chosen luxury expedition ship True North as your favourite in our small cruise ship category - congratulations to North Star Cruises for their second award this year!

2. SeaDream II, SeaDream Yacht Club
3. National Geographic Orion, National Geographic-Lindblad
4. Le Ponant, Ponant
5. Seabourn Quest
6. Seabourn Odyssey
7. Silver Spirit, Silversea
8. S.S. Antoinette, Uniworld
9. Scenic Gem
10. Scenic Jade
11. Seabourn Sojourn
12. Silver Shadow, Silversea
13. Silver Whisper, Silversea

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICKS:

SeaDream I and II
"Understated elegance without formality."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

Silver Whisper
"A small intimate ship with high levels of service and attention to detail. Silversea also has a great team here in Australia to deal with."
 Melinda Gregor, Gregor & Lewis

EDITOR'S PICKS:

The 12-suite Aqua Amazon and 16-suite Aria Amazon were both upgraded in 2015 for even more luxurious river cruising through South America.

Best Luxury Cruise Ship (LARGE)

1. QUEEN MARY 2, CUNARD (Hall of Fame winner)

Congratulations to hall-of-famer Queen Mary 2, continuing an 11-year winning streak and remaining your favourite large luxury cruise ship.



2. Regent Seven Seas Mariner
3. Crystal Serenity
4. Queen Elizabeth, Cunard
5. Riviera, Oceania Cruises
6. Marina, Oceania Cruises

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICKS:

Crystal Serenity
"Simply the best and friendliest service at Sea."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

Crystal Serenity
"Fantastic, professional staff that always have a smile on their face and have been with Crystal for many years and really seem to enjoy being on board. This really makes a difference to the service levels. Great choice of optional restaurants too!"
 Melinda Gregor, Gregor & Lewis



PLATINUM CLUB, ON BOARD THE GHAN

Best Luxury Rail Company

1. GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL, AUSTRALIA

(Hall of Fame winner)



Great Southern Rail, operators of Australia's iconic luxury trains The Ghan and the Indian Pacific, can celebrate another win in our rail category, this year as hall-of-famers.

2. Rocky Mountaineer, Canada
3. Belmond Trains, Europe
4. Palace on Wheels, India
5. Rovos Rail, South Africa
6. The Blue Train, South Africa
7. Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, Europe
8. Cruise Train Seven Stars, Japan

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Renfe (Al Andalus)
"Clients loved it, on my bucket list for 2017."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Belmond Trains for the classic Venice Simplon-Orient Express and the Eastern & Oriental Express – and coming soon in August, the Belmond Grand Hibernian bringing luxury to the rails in Ireland.

Best Luxury Eco Tourism Property

1. THE BRANDO

Congratulations for a second win this year for The Brando. The carbon-neutral resort's eco-credentials include renewable energy sources like solar power, a coconut oil power station and a pioneering deep seawater air-conditioning system.

2. Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat
3. El Questro
4. Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef (WA)
5. andBeyond Sandibe Okavango Safari Lodge (Botswana)
6. Southern Ocean Lodge
7. Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
8. Daintree EcoLodge & Spa (QLD)
9. Silky Oaks Lodge
10. Paperbark Camp (South Coast, NSW)
11. Thala Beach Nature Reserve (QLD)
12. Capella Lodge

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Nihiwatu
"My client commented she felt like they had fallen off the earth."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

Song Saa Private Island on the Koh Rong Archipelago in Cambodia – its "luxury that treads lightly" ethos has seen the creation and management of Cambodia's first marine reserve, a sustainable management program and the formation of the Song Saa Foundation.



Best Luxury Tour Operator

1. SCENIC TOURS

Scenic Tours has been voted as your preferred Luxury Tour Operator for the second year in a row – congratulations!

2. Abercrombie & Kent
3. APT
4. Tauck
5. Captain's Choice
6. Butterfield & Robinson
7. Micato Safaris
8. Insight Vacations
9. Walk Into Luxury

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Imperial Tours China
"Go the extra mile, never had a complaint."
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

The global experts in luxury experiential travel established in Africa in 1962, Abercrombie & Kent, with their Luxury Small Group Journeys, intimate Journey by Private Jet tours for 50 passengers and their family-friendly tours.

Best Luxury Travel Agency

1. FBI TRAVEL

Congratulations to FBI Travel, your choice for Best Luxury Travel Agency for a second consecutive year!

2. Travelcall
3. Mary Rossi Travel
4. Executive Edge Travel + Events
5. Gregor & Lewis
6. World Travel Professionals
7. Oasis Travel
8. Escape Travel
9. Concierge Traveller
10. Spencer Travel
11. The Tailor
12. Travel Associates
13. Bicton Travel - Premium
14. Clean Cruising
15. Savenio
16. Goldman Travel Corporation



TRUE NORTH, NORTH STAR CRUISES

Best Australian Food and Wine Experience (REGION)

1. BAROSSA VALLEY, SA

South Australia's Barossa Valley features again as your favourite food and wine region, with Western Australia's Margaret River and New South Wales' Hunter Valley following closely behind while Rutherglen in Victoria joins the list of finalists this year.

2. Margaret River, WA
3. Hunter Valley, NSW
4. Yarra Valley, VIC
5. Mornington Peninsula, VIC
6. Mudgee, NSW
7. McLaren Vale, SA
8. Coonawarra, SA
9. Tamar Valley, TAS
10. Clare Valley, SA
11. Bellarine Peninsula, VIC
12. King Valley, VIC
13. Orange, NSW
14. Rutherglen, VIC
15. Coal River Valley, TAS
16. Adelaide Hills, SA

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Mornington Peninsula
"Proximity to Melbourne's city centre, Mornington Peninsula is unbeatable in breadth of new, quality culinary establishments and boutique wineries complete with views of both vineyards and the Bay in the distance."
 Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

EDITOR'S PICK:

Margaret River in Western Australia – one of Australia's smallest but most premium wine-producing regions has positioned itself at the luxury end of wine tourism, with beautiful cellar doors, fine dining restaurants and, in the past three years, has hosted the Margaret River Gourmet Escape program each November, attracting some of the world's best chefs to the program.



THE GOLD LIST 2016

Best Australian Food and Wine Experience (PROPERTY)

1. LAKE HOUSE

Another win for Lake House Daylesford, celebrating the boutique property's fine dining offerings, helmed by culinary director Alla Wolf-Tasker.

2. The Louise
3. Cape Lodge
4. Chateau Yering (Yarra Valley, VIC)
5. Saffire Freycinet
6. Bells at Killcare
7. Southern Ocean Lodge
8. Royal Mail Hotel (Dunkeld, VIC)
9. Mansion Hotel & Spa at Werribee Park
10. qualia
11. Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
12. Spicers Vineyard Estate
13. Lindenderry at Red Hill
14. MONA The Pavilions
15. Longitude 131
16. Polperro by Even Keel (Red Hill, VIC)
17. Lindenwarrah at Milawa (VIC)
18. Crittenden Estate (Mornington Peninsula, VIC)
19. Spicers Peak Lodge
20. Stones of the Yarra Valley (VIC)
21. Peppers Mineral Springs Hotel (Daylesford, VIC)

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

Southern Ocean Lodge
"At Southern Ocean Lodge, all ingredients are locally sourced from either Kangaroo Island or South Australia with a produce to plate approach by the chef and a daily changing menu. Standout open bar." Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge Travel + Events

EDITOR'S PICK:

The newly re-opened Pretty Beach House (sister property to Bells at Killcare) with renowned Italian chef Stefano Manfredi also in charge of the kitchen.



CUISINE AT LAKE HOUSE



SOHO HOUSE, ISTANBUL

Best New* Property

1. SOHO HOUSE ISTANBUL

Luxury members club and hotel brand Soho House has undertaken extensive restoration work on Istanbul's Palazzo Corpi, revitalising the grand building to become its 13th property, Soho House Istanbul, and it's your choice as Best New Property this year. Other exciting new properties to make the list include a new QT in Bondi, a Six Senses in the Seychelles and a Palazzo Versace in Dubai.

2. QT Bondi
3. Halcyon House
4. Como The Treasury (Perth)
5. andBeyond Benguerra Island (Mozambique)
6. Pretty Beach House
7. Mayfair Hotel (Adelaide)
8. Keemala (Phuket)
9. Six Senses Zil Pasyon (Seychelles)
10. Bannisters Pavilion (Mollymook, NSW)
11. Allia Seminyak (Bali)
12. 1 Central Park (New York)
13. Palazzo Versace Dubai
14. Six Senses Douro Valley (Portugal)
15. The Laslett (Notting Hill, UK)
16. Tintswalo Atlantic (South Africa)
17. Atlantis by Giardino (Zurich, Switzerland)

*Or relaunched/rebranded. Opened in the last 12 months.

EDITOR'S PICK:

Amanera, Dominican Republic – Aman's 29th property overlooks Playa Grande beach with access to the famed Playa Grande golf course; Mandarin Oriental Milan with sleek Italian finishes; Mandapa Ritz-Carlton Reserve with a wellness focus in Bali's cultural hub of Ubud; Six Senses Douro Valley in Portugal in the heart of vineyards; and Shambala Private Game Reserve in South Africa – the five-bedroom luxury retreat the former home of Nelson Mandela.

Best Australian Adventure Experience

1. TRUE NORTH KIMBERLEY CRUISE, NORTH STAR CRUISES

North Star Cruises wins a third award in this year's Gold List as your choice of the True North Kimberley Cruise as the best adventure experience in the country – congratulations!

2. Horizontal Falls Seaplane Adventures (WA)
3. Cradle Mountain Huts Walk (TAS)
4. Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef Wild Bush Luxury
5. The Great Escape Charter Company (WA)
6. Maria Island Walk (TAS)
7. Bay of Fires Walk (TAS)
8. Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris (NT)
9. Hidden Trails by Horseback at El Questro Wilderness Park
10. National Geographic Orion Kimberley Cruise

GOLD LIST PANELIST PICK:

True North Kimberley Cruise
"You don't wear shoes for the entire cruise, Manolo Blahniks can stay at home"
 Fay Cohen, Travel Phase

EDITOR'S PICK:

The Arkaba Walk with Wild Bush Luxury, a four-day, 45-kilometre walk through the Flinders Ranges staying outdoors and also Arkaba Heritage Homestead, finishing with wine tasting and lunch at Clare Valley. True North Kimberley Cruise for an authentic Australian experience and well-guided luxurious way to see the Kimberley.

Hall of Fame



1. The Peninsula Hong Kong for Best Overseas Hotel
2. Thredbo for Best Australian Ski Resort
3. Great Southern Rail for Best Luxury Rail Company
4. Queen Mary II for Best Cruise Ship: Large
5. The Farm at Cape Kidnappers for Best Overseas Golf Resort