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MEDIA RELEASE

Regional Towns and Tour Guides Shine at 2026 Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards

The winners of the 2026 Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards, presented by the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC), have been announced today at a ceremony in Parliament House, Canberra.

Stanthorpe, Queensland has been named Australia's Top Tourism Town for 2026, taking out the coveted Gold win. Airlie Beach, Queensland won Gold in the Small Tourism Town category, while Portsea, Victoria earned Gold in the Tiny Tourism Town category. Laura Stone from Sydney by Kayak, New South Wales was named Australia's Top Tour Guide for 2026.

"Stanthorpe has earned its place as Australia's Top Tourism Town for 2026, bringing together outstanding visitor experiences with a strong sense of local character and a community that understands what it takes to create an exceptional visitor experience," ATIC CEO Erin McLeod said.

"Our regional towns are central to the way visitors experience Australia. They encourage people to travel beyond our major cities, discover new destinations and experience the landscapes, people, produce and stories that make different parts of our country unique."

"We congratulate Stanthorpe and all this year's winners and finalists on this outstanding achievement. Their success is also a celebration of the local businesses, tourism operators and communities that work together to make these destinations such special places to visit."

Federal Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon Don Farrell, congratulated the towns and tour guides recognised at this year's awards.

"Today is about celebrating the passion, commitment, and resilience across our tourism industry, and recognising the people, places, businesses and communities who turn destinations into memorable experiences," Minister Farrell said.

"We are fortunate in Australia to have extraordinary stories and experiences in every corner of the country, especially in regional communities where nature, culture, heritage, local knowledge and people that create lasting memories for visitors.

"The towns nominated today showcase the breadth and diversity of our tourism offering and reward the visitors who choose to venture further and discover the regions that help make Australia so unique."

Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards celebrate the regional towns and tour guides that help shape Australian tourism by delivering outstanding, authentic visitor experiences.

National finalists are determined from the Gold winners of the state and territory Top Tourism Town Awards, bringing together leading destinations and tour guides from across Australia to compete on the national stage. The four award categories include Top Tourism Town (population over 5,000), Small Tourism Town (population between 1,500 and 5,000), Tiny Tourism Town (population under 1,500) and Top Tour Guide.

The 2026 Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards are proudly supported by Qantas, Tourism Australia, Localis and Tour Guides Australia.

Tourism Australia Managing Director, Robin Mack, congratulated this year's winners and finalists, recognising the role of regional tourism in the overall visitor experience.

"Regional tourism is a vital pillar of the visitor economy. It creates local businesses, delivers local jobs and supports thriving communities. Tourism Australia's marketing works to showcase the amazing breadth of experiences we have to offer in regional Australia, encouraging visitors to look beyond our gateway cities."

"Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards is a great celebration of regional Australia and the tour guides who deliver exceptional experiences, sharing their knowledge and passion in ways that can offer visitors a new perspective on a place and create lasting memories."

Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards form part of the Quality Tourism Framework, a national suite of accreditation programs, awards and business development tools supporting tourism businesses and destinations across Australia to strengthen the quality, accessibility and sustainability of their visitor experiences.

For more information about the awards and the 2026 winners and finalists, visit toptourismtowns.com.au.

To discover more about the Quality Tourism Framework, visit qualitytourismaustralia.com.

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See full list of winners below.

2026 Australia's Top Tourism Town Awards – Winners

Top Tourism Town

AWARD	TOWN	STATE/TERRITORY
Gold	Stanthorpe	Queensland
Silver	Kiama	New South Wales
Bronze	Echuca	Victoria

Small Tourism Town

AWARD	TOWN	STATE/TERRITORY
Gold	Airlie Beach	Queensland
Silver	Gulgong	New South Wales
Bronze	Portarlington	Victoria

Tiny Tourism Town

AWARD	TOWN	STATE/TERRITORY
Gold	Portsea	Victoria
Silver	Toogoolawah	Queensland
Bronze	Port Arthur	Tasmania

Top Tour Guide

AWARD	GUIDE	STATE/TERRITORY
Gold	Laura Stone – Sydney By Kayak	New South Wales
Silver	Jools De Loryn – Go West Tours	Victoria
Bronze	Angie Ouyang – National Museum of Australia	Canberra Region