



power earlier this year when hundreds of thousands of spectators thronged Sydney Harbour to witness their impressive water ballet. Such attention is nothing new to Cunard – since it launched transatlantic crossings aboard the Britannia in 1840, the brand has embodied the romance of the grand ocean voyage. Even today the company holds fast to such classic traditions as formal dinners and balls, and treats passengers to unique experiences such as acting classes with graduates of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and onboard lectures by Oxford dons. And, while countless cruise-liners now ply the seas of the world, Cunard is still setting standards to which other lines aspire – such as the Queen Mary’s two-storey suite (with butler service), the most expensive accommodation afloat.

Cunard, 132 441, www.cunard.com.

Runners-up: SeaDream Yacht Club; Orion Expedition Cruises.

BEST HOSTED ACCOMMODATION

The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa, NSW

When considering an award for Best Hosted Accommodation, a \$45 million resort with 92 designer suites is not the first thing that comes to mind. But The Byron at Byron was first praised by our expert judges for the warm hospitality of its managers, and then was deemed the runaway winner by readers’ votes. The reason for its popularity is, no doubt, the welcome provided by resort managers Lyn and John Parché,

graduates of the globally admired Aman resorts. Their personal approach and commitment to guest satisfaction ensure this is not just another sleekly managed resort. “Always pleasing, friendly and helpful... On hand to greet guests and offer advice on what to do and where to go,” remarked judge Mike Smith, *The Daily Telegraph’s* travel editor, of the Parché style. The resort’s owner, retailer Gerry Harvey, hired them for exactly that reason. “They both have an uncanny knack for providing that little bit extra – the Parché touch,” he says.

The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa, 1300 554 362, www.thebyronatbyron.com.au.

Runners-up: Islington Hotel, Hobart, Tas; Villa Gusto, Bright, Vic.

BEST ECO-TOURISM EXPERIENCE

The Freycinet Experience Walk, Tas

It’s fitting that a region of Australia known for its heightened environmental awareness should be the winner of our Best Eco-Tourism Experience award. Freycinet was gazetted as a national park back in 1916 (making it Tasmania’s oldest), and it’s also home to Coles Bay, Australia’s first plastic-bag-free town. This four-day guided walk explores the many natural highlights of the park – including Schouten Island, Mt Graham, Bluestone Bay and the world-renowned Wineglass Bay – while treading lightly on the earth. Each evening, walkers bed down in the purpose-built, environmentally sensitive Friendly Beaches >

YOU TOLD US

Favourite International Destination Paris was the clear favourite by far in our best foreign destination vote; followed by Rome, Florence and Venice. New York also got top marks from many happy travellers.

Bank on The Byron

The personal touch of resort managers Lyn and John Parché at The Byron at Byron Resort and Spa (above) has earned it the title of Best Hosted Accommodation.