

The 2017 International Toilet Tourism Award Winners Announced



Six public toilets loved by tourists have officially wiped the floor with the competition. Winners include a cliffhanger dunny where you can sit and watch crocodiles basking while you do your business

Great loos in tourism destinations become talking points, encourage repeat visits and can be a positive indicator of how the host community respects tourists. When visitors stop to spend a penny, they usually spend more than that and end up boosting the local visitor economy and creating jobs.

Those are the findings based on research by Carolyn Childs and Bronwyn White, co-founders of MyTravelResearch.com. The duo organized the inaugural 2017 International Toilet Tourism Awards to show the clear link between toilets and tourism success. The winners of the awards can now be announced.

Thirty entries were received by deadline day 15 June. Prizes will be going to six winners in Australia, United States and New Zealand. There were 30 entries - including a place where you can 'do the business' overlooking a creek with crocodiles and an art studio where guests pull up chairs to admire the toilet doors.

The winning tourism toilets across all six categories announced today are:

Best Economic Contributor - The Loos at the Southern Highlands Welcome Centre (the former Mittagong Visitor Information Centre), Main St, Mittagong, NSW, Australia. Refurbished in late 2015, the makeover at the Southern Highlands Visitor Centre loos included flowers, posters, audio reel, and quirky fact stickers and free Wi-Fi. Since then, visitation to the centre increased from 60,000 to 72,000 2015/16. Local product sales in the SHWC have risen 19%. Regional visitor expenditure has increased from \$250m to \$261m. Visitor expenditure contribution to the region has helped sustain 2500 jobs (up 9%). And the loos and the centre have achieved a customer satisfaction rating of 93%.

Judge's comment: "Despite a very small decorating budget for the toilets, the SHWC has been wonderfully innovative with their colourful, fun and informative loos concept. And this shows in the direct and indirect economic returns when visitors stop to spend a penny and then see what's available locally."

Best Location - Cliffhanger Loo with a View, overlooking the sea, Cobourg Peninsula, Garig Gunak Barlu National Park, Northern Territories, Australia.

The loo is on a cliff overlooking the pristine beach and waters of the Cobourg Marine Park. In the privacy of the toilet the occupant can marvel at the lagoon water ten metres below where crocodiles bask on the sand and reef sharks hunt for prey. The WC is waterless, odourless and converts fresh waste into organic humus. A guest said: "It's like watching a National Geographic documentary while sitting on the loo."

Judge's comment: "Cheeky, audacious, simple and environmentally sound, the cliffhanger loo has capitalized on its location perfectly and has become an attraction in itself."

Best Design (Joint Winner): Hahei Holiday Resort, Coromandel, New Zealand. The new toilet and shower block here is part of a glamping backpacker lodge designed to personify eco beachfront coast chic using as much reused and carbon friendly products as possible. Easy access ramps with sensor lighting and native plants in an atrium lead to oversize showers and loos. The conveniences have light opaque roofing for natural light, open trusses and external gable ventilation, with plenty of recycled native timber featured, including LED lights in old beer bottles and ceramic sinks from a hospital.

Judge's comment: "The beautiful approach to the toilet and shower block and the light and airy design using local products has made the loos at Hahei Holiday Resort an exemplary lesson in design."

Best Design (Joint Winner): The Kathleen Buzzacott Art Studio, Alice Springs, Central Australia, Australia. Built in 2016, the loos were added for the convenience of tourists visiting Kathleen's studio. Her husband, who painted the loos, is a traditional owner of the land. The beautiful toilets complement the stunning landscape and highlight the connection to native heritage and culture through the story-telling toilet doors, which feature indigenous central desert dot paintings.

Judge's comment: "Unpretentious, simple and elegant. The design of these toilets perfectly complements the existing artist studio. A harmonious balance of architectural design and artistic creativity has produced this visually spectacular work of art. The building is an extension of the artist's creative space. People pull up chairs to sit and admire the toilet doors, which tell their own Aboriginal stories."

Quirkiest Toilet Experience - Dummies with a Difference, the Toowoomba Portable Toilets, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. The 'people with the orange toilets' design and manufacture public toilets for events. Most notable is their prestige range - Dummies with a Difference - which includes the Rustic Cottage, the London Telephone Box, Brighton Beach House, and the VIP unit. Each one includes hand sanitation, hand wash and sunscreen stations.

Judge's comment: "The Dummies with a Difference range transform toilets from something you hide at outdoor events into wonderful quirky attractions that add real value because they are so pretty, functional, hygienic and mobile."

Toowoomba Portable Toilets are also the overall winners in the awards. MyTravelResearch.com will donate \$2000 to UN Toilet Day on their behalf.

Best Accessible Toilet - Arthurs Seat Public Toilet, Arthurs Seat Park, Victoria, Australia, run by Parks Victoria. Opened in January 2017, the toilet amenities building has been thoughtfully designed to meet the toileting needs of a diverse range of visitors to Arthurs Seat State Park such as tourists with disabilities, mobility limitations, visitors with young children, older people and tourists from culturally diverse backgrounds (e.g. there's an Asian squat toilet).

Judge's comment: "Beautifully designed; thoroughly functional, modern and inclusive; a highly impressive addition to the destination experience. I have never seen anything quite like this accessible toilet. It's a gold star, best practice example."

Special mention - Wisconsin Department of Tourism, USA. Wisconsin offers tourists a trio of toileting triumphs. Each 4th of July weekend at the Perkinstown Outhouse Challenge competitors race 4x4ft specially decorated outhouses round an obstacle course. It's a race with a toilet, not to a toilet. The female bathrooms at the SafeHouse Bar & Restaurant in Milwaukee feature a portrait of a very exposed (and young) Burt Reynolds with a strategically placed red heart. If any of the ladies try

to take a peek behind the heart a siren goes off alerting the whole restaurant as to who's been inquisitive. Then there's the 'great wall of China', a two-story wall made of 177 toilets stacked floor to ceiling in the Kohler Design Center, which attracts 150,000 tourists, builders and architects to its 'Disney world of plumbing' each year.

Judge's comment: "Wisconsin is a destination that celebrates the power of the WC as a tourism attraction. We love the Perkinstown Outhouse Challenge with its Prettiest Potty award and TP Toss and Plunger Relay, all of which raises funds for a local recreation club."

Meet the Judges

Judging for the 2017 inaugural Toilet Tourism Awards was conducted by Carolyn Childs and Bronwyn White of MyTravelResearch.com. Together they have conducted focus groups and quantitative research on the impact of public toilets in tourism destinations.

They were helped by fellow judge Dick Teaken, an avid world traveller who has experienced toilets on six continents and is currently writing a book about toilets of the world.

Prizes: The overall winner (Toowoomba Portable Toilets) will receive a AU\$2000 donation contributed to World Toilet Day in their name and a copy of every MyTravelResearch.com research publication in 2017 (worth AU\$8000), and access to tourism research events. Other category winners will receive the same, minus the donation to World Toilet Day.

Media contact for organisers and winners

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Winners

Arthurs Seat, Victoria (Best Accessible Toilet): John Kenwright, Access & Inclusion coordinator, Parks Victoria. Tel: (+61) 3 8627 2422. Email: john.kenwright@parks.vic.gov.au.

Southern Highlands Visitor Centre (Best Economic Contributor): Mr Steve Rosa. Tel: 02 4871 2888. Email: steve.rosa@nsw.gov.au

Cliffhanger at Cobourg Peninsula (Best Location): Mr Aaron Gange. Tel: (+61) 439 176. Email: info@venturenorth.com.au.

Toowoomba Portable Toilets/Dunnies with a Difference (Quirkiest Toilet & overall winner) Neville & Dianne Owers. Tel: (+61) 4879 22051: Email: info@toowoombaportabletoilets.com.au. Website.

Hahei Holiday Resort (Best Design Toilet - Joint Winner). Mr Grant Kilby. Tel: (+64) 7 866 3889. Email: grantkilby@me.com

Wisconsin Department of Tourism (Honourable Mention). Ms Lisa Marshall. Tel: (+1) 608 267 3773. Email: lmarshall@TravelWisconsin.com.

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MyTravelResearch.com is a market research and marketing firm specializing in the travel, tourism and aviation industries. Its specialty is providing insights that are actionable.

Founded by principals with lifetime careers in travel, tourism and aviation, MyTravelResearch.com exists to build the visitor economy and successful tourism businesses. It does this by putting the voice of the customer and best practice business thinking into an easy to implement, hands-on approach via an innovative membership model. MyTravelResearch.com can help:

* National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) meet the expectations of their industry by acting as an extension of their research and marketing resources

* Businesses make more informed decisions. (It is like having your own research and/or marketing team)

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