

## NEWS RELEASE

### NATIONAL ACCOMMODATION AWARDS - FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

A total of 146 finalists in the 2009 AA Travel Guides American Express Accommodation Awards programme have been announced.

This programme is the only established mechanism that consumers can use to express their views about the quality of tourist accommodation in South Africa and is now in its sixteenth year.

The 27 award categories include different types of guesthouses and hotels, game lodges, self-catering resorts and lodges.

Convenor Vanessa Sand says consumer feedback on more than 1 300 AA Quality Assured or star graded establishments was received this year. "We received some 47 000 questionnaires commenting on guest experiences related to service, cleanliness, value-for-money and the quality of food. This is hugely valuable information, all of which is sent back to establishments so that they can see where they are successful and where there may be room for improvement.

"There is currently a major focus on the quality of our accommodation establishments, with a view to the Soccer World Cup tournament in 2010, and we believe the awards programme is an important component in the overall standard of the industry."

According to Sand achievers in the programme receive wide marketing exposure through publicity received and in the annual South Africa's Best publication, which is distributed at local and international travel exhibitions.

"Consumer feedback is the key," she says. "If consumers feel you are at the top of your class, news travels fast and it translates into new business."

High scoring establishments in the programme were examined carefully and visited by qualified and experienced assessors to verify that high scores were justified.

A list of the finalists is available on [www.accommodationawards.co.za](http://www.accommodationawards.co.za). The winners will be announced at a gala awards ceremony at the Tourism Indaba in Durban on 10 May 2009.

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The awards programme is supported by American Express Card, Sealy, BnB Sure and the Industrial Development Corporation.

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