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CHRISTMAS CHEER

It's nice to see some places reducing rates over the summer holidays rather than lumping you with a premium. The 4.5 star Freshwater Point Resort at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast is offering two deals over the Christmas holiday season. Between December 25 and January 17 you can save up to 25 per cent off with rates from \$195 per night for seven nights or from \$210 per night for five nights in a one-bedroom apartment. For accommodation up until December 24 and from January 18 to March 31, 2010, a savings of up to 45 per cent can be made. Details: www.discoverqueensland.com.au or 1300 788 553.

FAMILY FUN

The new Hilton Melbourne South Wharf is offering an excellent package for families, with 20 per cent off bookings when reservations are made 21 days in advance. The hotel goes to great lengths to make sure guests of all ages enjoy their stay. Family-friendly features include: all children under 10 stay for free; if you require a second room for the children, it is 50 per cent off; and children's breakfast free in-house. This Christmas the hotel lobby will also be home to a spectacular Christmas tree, decorated

exclusively by Malka, creator of luxury natural skin care products. Details and bookings: www.newmelbourne.com.au or 1300-Hilton.

FESTIVAL OF MARATHONS

Australian marathon legend Steve Monaghetti has launched the world's first Solar Eclipse Marathon, to be held in Port Douglas, Queensland, in 2012.

The festival will include a 42km marathon and a half marathon and the race is timed to start as the first rays of the sun emerge from behind the moon.

The event is expect to attract 2000 competitors and 3000 visitors to the region. "An endurance run provides a great personal challenge but to share the adventure with like-minded people on a significant day in a special place will be astronomical! I love to run and I love the beauty of the Australian rainforests so this event is a winning combination for me," Monaghetti says.

Doug Ryan, executive officer of Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree, says the race will have a significant impact on tourism in the region, in what is normally a quiet period. The marathons will cater to professionals and amateurs and accommodation and tour and holiday packages will be available to suit

every budget and requirement. Details: www.tpdd.com.au

BEST OF THE CROP

The best airlines, destinations and hotels have been revealed at the 16th World Travel Awards, as voted by 180,000 travel professionals from around the world. The winners were: world's leading airline, Etihad Airways (national airline of the United Arab Emirates); world's leading airport, Dubai International Airport; world's leading all-inclusive company, Sandals Resorts International; world's leading beach, Bondi Beach; world's leading budget airline, Easyjet; world's leading car hire, Europcar; world's leading business travel agency, American Express; world's leading credit card for travellers, Visa; world's leading cruise destination, Jamaica; world's leading cruise line, Princess Cruises; world's leading destination, London; world's leading green destination, Tobago Main Ridge Rain Forest; world's leading honeymoon destination, St Lucia; and world's leading hotel, Burj Al Arab, Dubai. Details: www.worldtravelawards.com