



Barrier Reef, Uluru on wonders top list

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The Great Barrier Reef and Uluru have made the final round in a global contest to select the new Seven Wonders of Nature.

The Australian natural landmarks were selected from a shortlist of 77 top spots around the world to be among the 28 finalists in the New7Wonders of Nature competition.

Only 21 finalists were expected to be announced, but the number was higher because of high levels of participation.

There were originally 441 nominees from 222 countries when the campaign began, with the entrants whittled down by public voting.

The contest now proceeds to the final round of voting, with an announcement due in mid-2011.

Uluru in the Northern Territory is the world's largest monolith, while the reef is the world's biggest coral reef comprising more than 3,000 individual reef systems and beaches.

The Aussie icons will be up against natural beauties including Halong Bay in Vietnam, Angel Falls in Venezuela, the Grand Canyon and Jeita Grotto in Lebanon, for a place in the coveted final seven.

Tourism Australia's executive chairman Rick Allert said Australians should be proud.

"A place among the ultimate New7Wonders of Nature would be a stunning achievement for our nations iconic natural wonders," Mr Allert said in a statement on Tuesday.

"And we thank everyone who has played a part in ensuring Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef have made it through to this third and final stage, still in the running for the ultimate accolade."

Tourism Australia has set up a web link to the voting site at www.australia.com.

More than one billion votes are expected to be cast in the contest.