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West coast skipper cruises to victory

From cleaner to skipper, Amanda Sansom has taken some massive strides during her 13 years with Gordon River Cruises.

And now the Strahan local has taken out the Tourism Minister's Young Achiever award at today's Tasmanian Tourism Conference.

The young achiever award is given to an exceptional emerging business leader, entrepreneur, or tourism professional, aged under 35-years, from across the Tasmanian tourism industry.

Amanda, 33, started with Gordon River Cruises 13 years ago as a cleaner, later moving on to a tour guiding position. She was then appointed crew leader, before securing her coxswains ticket five years ago.

Last November, Amanda then gained her Master V qualification, meaning she can now skipper Gordon River Cruises' state-of-the-art *Spirit of the Wild* while under supervision. She is now training to attain her Master IV qualification, which will enable her to take solo command of the vessel in the next year.

Amanda said receiving the young achiever award was a huge honour as skippering had been a long-time dream of hers.

"I come from a boating family. All my family are cray fishermen, so I grew up on boats," Amanda said. "Over the past few years, I have really enjoyed watch-keeping while our skippers are taking a break and it's probably over that time that I really decided I want to do this."

In her time with Gordon River Cruises, Amanda has made a lot of memories, but one sticks out the most.

"It's the reflections. The reflections when you first enter the river are an awesome sight. They're always different. It's never the same scene twice."

RACT Destinations Chief Operating Officer Andrew Paynter said Amanda's award is recognition of the efforts, dedication and passion of an outstanding young person in the tourism industry.

"We're really proud to have progressed one of our own through the ranks at Gordon River Cruises, to the point that she's now driving our state-of-the-art vessel," Mr Paynter said.

"This progression is impressive and has taken a lot of hard work. Hopefully Amanda's achievements can serve as inspiration for other young Tasmanians to seek career pathways in our industry."