



**Hon. George Souris M.P**  
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing  
Minister for the Arts

---

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

---

Friday 23 December, 2011

### **SYDNEY CONFIRMED AS A TOP INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION**

Minister for Tourism and Major Events, George Souris, today said that NSW was Australia's top tourist destination, confirmed by the number of international tourism awards that Sydney won throughout 2011.

Mr Souris said the slew of international awards demonstrates that the Harbour City and its surrounds is widely recognised as the 'must see' destination for Australian and international travellers.

"With its spectacular harbour and iconic landmarks, beautiful beaches and breathtaking national parks, Sydney has a unique blend of natural beauty, together with world class events, cultural activities, luxury shopping and dining experiences - Sydney continues to exceed visitors' expectations."

Mr Souris said the latest visitor statistics also confirm Sydney and NSW as Australia's number one destination for international and domestic visitor numbers.

"Sydney's status is good news for regional tourism in NSW with the Harbour City being the gateway to country areas of the State," Mr Souris said.

Over the past year, there were 24 million domestic visitors to NSW who spent almost \$13 billion and stayed 81 million nights – the last two measures growing faster than the national average growth rates."

NSW received 34.5 per cent of all domestic overnight visitors and 30.9 per cent of all nights in Australia over the year ending September 2011.

"NSW is performing above the national average with international visitors staying longer and spending more in NSW," Mr Souris said.

"Expenditure by international visitors totalled \$6.5 billion in year ending 2011, up nearly six per cent, well above the national average of less than four per cent.

"That represents a \$6.5 billion injection into the NSW economy...more than a third of total international visitor expenditure in Australia.

"This is an encouraging result despite tough global economic circumstances. It's positive news for NSW Government's goal of doubling overnight tourism expenditure by 2020.

"While Sydney is still the prime drawcard for the domestic market, it's also encouraging to see visitation to some NSW regions rising significantly.

“Again and again throughout 2011, Sydney has been recognised at home and abroad as a leading global destination and the gateway to Australia and through Destination NSW, we have many initiatives planned for 2012 to build upon Sydney’s international reputation as Australia’s leading tourism and events city and strengthen visitor numbers to Sydney and regional NSW.”

Sydney’s popularity as a premier destination for travellers was confirmed last weekend, as the Sydney Facebook page surpassed the 100,000 fans, putting it in the top one per cent of Facebook pages in the world.

Earlier this month in Brazil, Sydney was named as the ‘International Destination of the Year’ as part of national travel awards.

In November, Australian travellers also recognised Sydney as their favourite destination.

Online accommodation website Wotif.com nominated Sydney as Australia’s favourite destination, earlier in the year. Other NSW destinations to also feature in Wotif’s Top 20 destinations include Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Byron Bay.

In October, Sydney was voted the world’s number one city in the Condé Nast Traveler Reader’s Choice Awards after eight million votes were cast. Sydney scored highest with a rating of 85.1 out of 100 - beating European cities such as Florence and Paris, and New York.

The International Festival and Events Association named Sydney as the world’s best festival and major events city for the second year running.

TripAdvisor’s Travelers’ Choice Destination 2011 awards placed Sydney as the ‘Top destination in the South Pacific’ and ranked Sydney as number two in the World’s 25 Best Destinations. More than one million travellers voted in the awards on the world’s biggest travel website.

Sydney was also recognised as one of the World’s Best Summer Cities by global travel guide, Lonely Planet’s 700,000 Facebook and Twitter fans.

During 2011, Sydney was acknowledged as a top tourist destination by a number of global travel and tourism awards and publications. Other accolades for the Harbour City include:

- Cruise passengers voted Sydney as the ‘Cruise Destination of the Year’ at the Cruise International Awards.
- The US Travel + Leisure magazine’s 2011 World’s Best Awards placed Sydney at number eight in the Top Ten Cities category.
- Popular global travel website, travel.yahoo.com rated Bondi Icebergs Baths as number one in their ‘Best 10 Public Pools in the World’ article.
- TripAdvisor’s Travelers’ Choice Destination 2011 awards also ranked Sydney as number one for nightlife in the South Pacific. Sydney beaches (Bondi, Coogee and Manly) ranked in the top ten of the 25 Best Beaches in the South Pacific (coming in at number nine), but was pipped by Byron Bay which took second place.
- Luxury publication Condé Nast also recognised Sydney as having a number of world-class hotels, with leading Sydney hotels forming 11 of the top 15 hotels in the Oceania region. The Observatory Hotel was voted number one in Oceania scoring 91.1 out of 100, with other top-end Sydney hotels dominating the top five.

- The Australian Traveller Readers' Choice Awards rated a number of Sydney hotels and restaurants highly with Quay winning, closely followed by Tetsuya in the 'Best Restaurant in Australia' award, and The Ivy topping the 'Best Bar or Pub in Australia' category.
- Readers of the Australian Traveller also voted BridgeClimb Sydney as the 'Best Guided Tour in Australia.'