

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
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International travellers put holidays on hold but NSW remains Australia's number one destination

International visitors cut back on travel to Australia last year but NSW maintained the lion's share of total international visits and saw major growth in work and study visits according to the latest International Visitor Survey from Tourism Research Australia.

Minister for Tourism Jodi McKay said that the decline in international tourism would come as no surprise to the State's tourism industry which was bracing for a tough year ahead.

"2009 will be a critical year in terms of the way the Government and tourism operators respond to the global spending slowdown," Ms McKay said.

"Australia is still considered a long-haul destination and unfortunately that means we are one of the first holiday options crossed off the list when times are tough.

"It is so important that in light of these trends we do everything we can to support the tourism industry in NSW."

Ms McKay said despite the decline in international visitors NSW tourism continued to set the benchmark nationally.

"NSW attracted more than half the total number of visitors to Australia and more than a third of the total number of visitor nights compared to other states," Ms McKay said.

"As a Government we are committed to doing everything we can to make sure NSW stays number one.

"We recognise the importance of tourism to the economy of NSW. Tourism supports around 157,800 direct jobs each year - approximately 4.8% of all jobs in NSW."

The International Visitor Survey for the year to December 2008 shows total international visitor numbers to Australia fell by 0.6 per cent last year, the first fall since 2003.

However the survey shows that international visitor nights increased over the same period by 6.1 per cent, driven by growth in the education and employment tourism sectors.

Ms McKay said the survey results reinforce the importance of the State Government's new Tourism Strategy, built in partnership with the tourism industry and underpinned by an additional \$40 million over the next three years.

"We know we have to continue to strengthen links with industry and explore innovative ways to maintain and develop new and existing travel markets," Ms McKay said.

“For example the number of visitors choosing Sydney and NSW destinations for work and study has grown in the last year.

“This is highly encouraging, given these visitors stay longer and spend more in total than the average international holiday visitor.

“We will be seeking to develop the potential of this market under the Tourism Strategy, which includes the establishment of a new Ministerial Taskforce on Education Tourism,” Ms McKay said.

Growth in the education and employment tourist market boosted the number of international youth visitors to NSW. NSW now attracts 60 per cent of all youth (20-29 year old) visitors to Australia and 37 per cent of youth nights.

Overall, international visitors spent \$15.6 billion in Australia last year, with NSW taking the highest share at \$5.6 billion. On average, international visitors spent \$2,039 per visitor in NSW - around two thirds of the average total spend per visitor in Australia (\$3,013).

For a more detailed snapshot of the results please see www.tourism.nsw.gov.au under facts and figures, or click here:

http://corporate.tourism.nsw.gov.au/International_Markets_p574.aspx

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