

# AUSTRALIANS SAY NO TO STAYCATION



Australia has been recording unique tourism statistics in recent years. As sharp declines of tourist arrivals from recession hit US and Europe were met in the past two years, Australia lost two of its biggest tourism markets. Nevertheless, the tourism industry in Australia acknowledges that it had dodged a frightening bullet this year, as it has attracted more overseas travelers from Asia than ever before, outstripping those huge falls from the United States and Europe.

However, that is not Australia's current tourism problem. Australian travel operators have no idea what they will do about the worrying fact that **a rise in abroad travel by Australian citizens is probably the worst advertisement the country can get.** While the country's domestic tourism has experienced a sharp fall in the past few years, foreign travels by Australian citizens has actually doubled in numbers. Government statistics show that about one third of the country's population is taking annual trips abroad.

Leaders of the tourism industry have taken charge in convincing citizens that the "right thing must be done", emphasizing the importance of domestic tourism in fighting the economic crisis.

It has been mathematically estimated that the country's tourism field is worth an annual value of about 94 billion dollars, with domestic travel accounting for around 60 billion of the money. But travelers are constantly complaining about the ridiculously high prices and bad service.

In order for this sharp decline in domestic tourism to be a one-time occurrence with no long term effects, the Australian government is continuously planning strategies that would bring back Australia to the forefront of Australians. This would mean investing hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising and public relations, a tough task for any country to face in such an economy.

Nevertheless, **the Australian government has already increased the budget of the tourism department**, indicating its intentions in doing exactly what the tourism market in Australia, including its hotels, travel associations and travel media, expect it to do.

Tony Charters, a private industry consultant, further strengthens the idea, saying that they have to increase their marketing campaigns in order to bring in more foreign visitors and to make sure more Australians want to spend their holiday seasons at home. Mr. Charters also mentioned that Australia can't in any way compete with the Asian market on price, making the tourism industry have to focus its campaigns on quality and unique offerings.

At the end of the day, Australia will always be a major tourism destination for people all over the globe. The question remains, will Australians think alike?

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