



August 2011

Visitor Wayfinding in Sydney

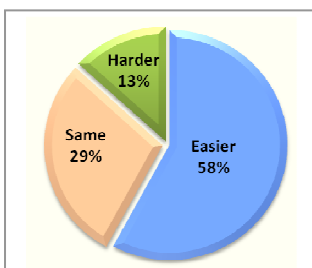
This summary is based on research conducted by The Urban Tourism Program at the University of Technology Sydney in 2011.

This snapshot identifies:

- How tourists currently make their way around Sydney - routes taken and wayfinding tools;
- Tourists' use of public transport ; and
- Significant landmarks that assist with wayfinding around Sydney.

Method:

- Tourists were recruited at the Sydney Visitor Information Centre (SVIC) at The Rocks and interviewed face-to-face.
- 41 interviews were conducted with 60 tourists between 19th April and 6th May 2011.
- A re-analysis of GPS tracking data of tourists in Sydney collected for a [previous research project in 2009](#).



How would you rate the ease of finding your way around Sydney, compared to other cities you have visited?

Compared to the [visitor profile for Sydney](#), the interviewees were skewed towards English speaking international visitors, females, younger age groups, and were more likely to be users of Visitor Information Centres.

Tools Used for Wayfinding and Orientation

Free, hard copy maps were the primary source of information about the location of attractions, transport and for general directional guidance.

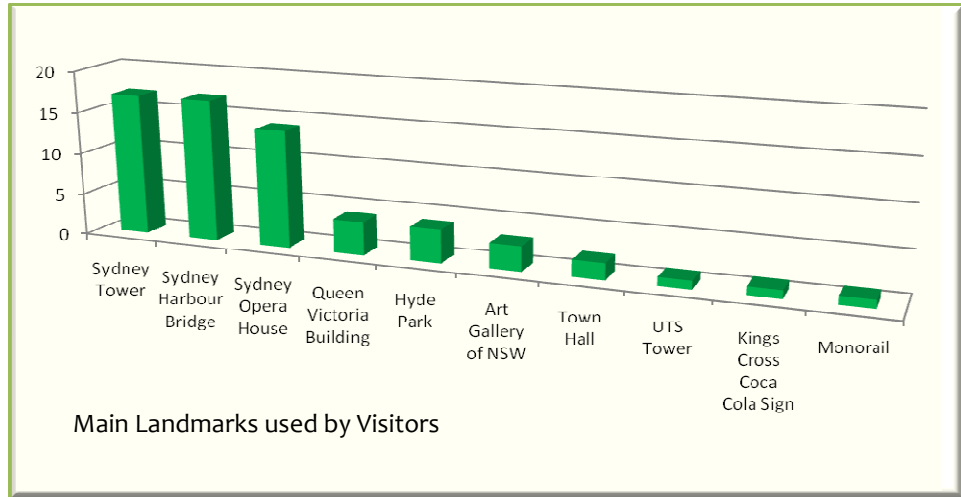
Visitors often ask for directions from ordinary people, or are offered help by friendly passers-by.

Only 20% of participants used a GPS or App for wayfinding. Of those, more than half encountered problems because of high international roaming charges and because guidance becomes unreliable amongst tall buildings. Drivers found that GPS directions are not always correct.

Most visitors reported that signage in Sydney was satisfactory, however some indicated that street signs were not as helpful as maps and often did not point in a clear direction. A few reported specific problems, such as getting into The Rocks while walking off the Harbour Bridge and/or finding the entrance to the SVIC at The Rocks.

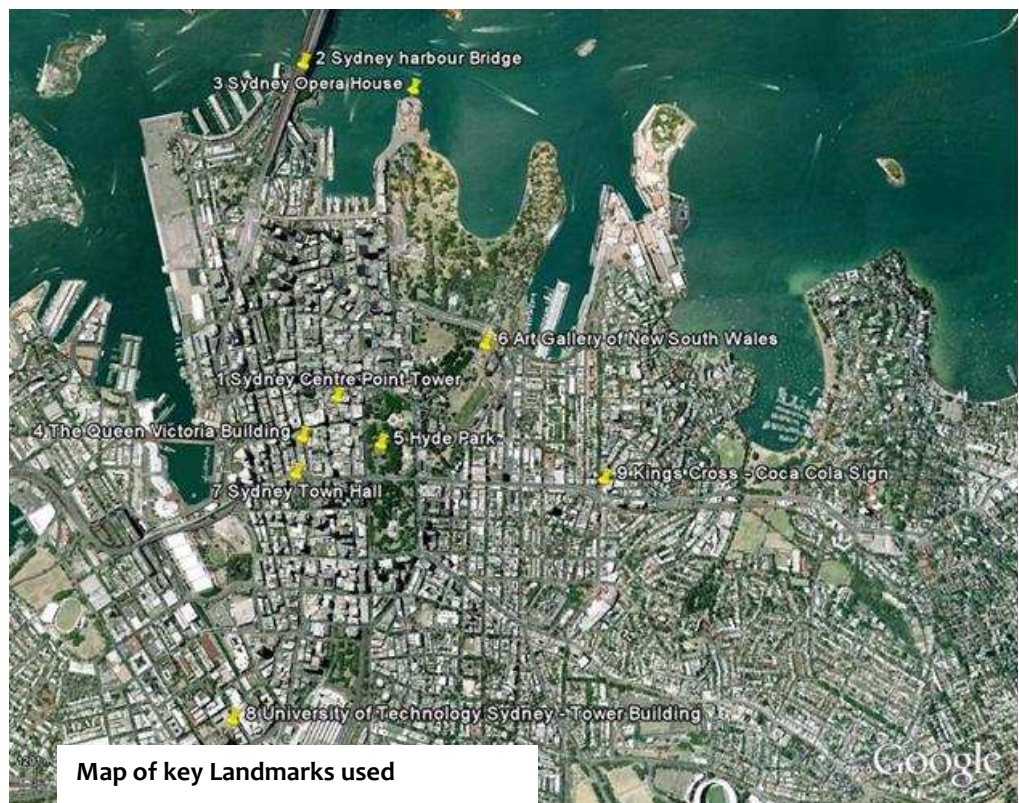
Landmarks

Most participants used landmarks for orientation. The Opera House, Sydney Tower and the Harbour Bridge were the most common, followed by the Queen Victoria Building, Hyde Park and The Art Gallery.



Landmarks play an important role in wayfinding, as they are easy to recognise and can be kept in memory without difficulty. As a person gets to know an area, routes between landmarks are remembered until, a familiarity with the environment leads to a “cognitive map” being formed.

Landmarks were used as reference points to reassure visitors that they were walking in the right direction; high-rise buildings like the UTS tower or Sydney Tower were used to demark a particular area of town that visitors needed to get to.



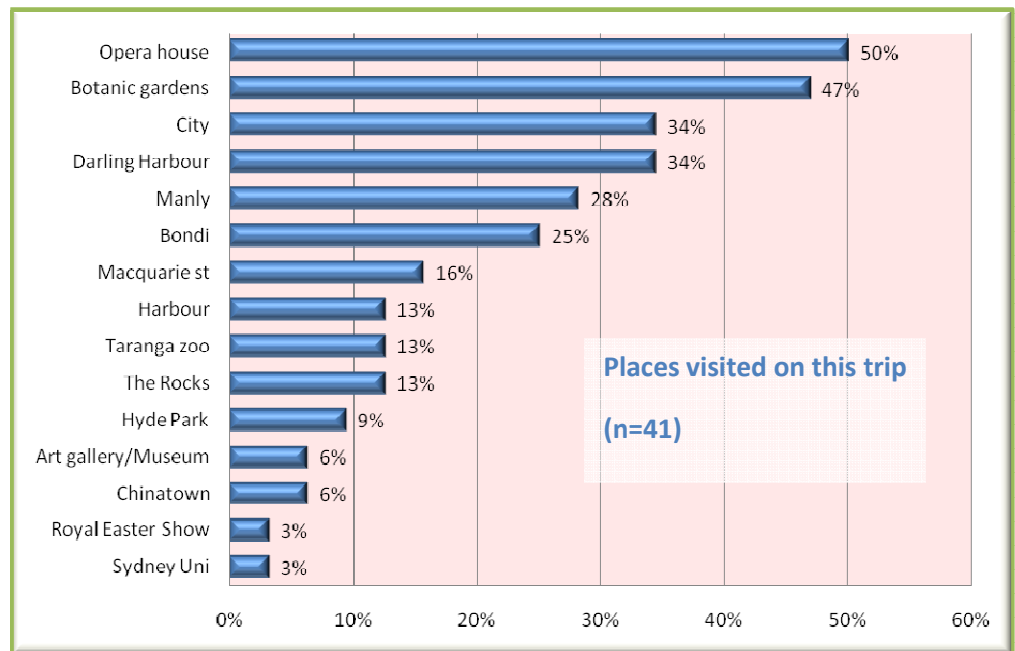
Walking and Wandering

How visitors move through the city depends on where they are staying and with whom (relative/friend/hotel) and how long they are here, as well as individual travel habits. Most like to be prepared and have an idea of where they are going, interspersed with bouts of wandering.

- Circular Quay seems to be the gateway or launching point to the rest of the city. Many visitors' days would start there or they would head there if starting from another point.
- George Street is the main route used to access the key tourist areas of Sydney city.
- Visitors stick to main roads, even when wandering. Visitors would love to explore little alleys and shopping centres off the main streets, but don't know where to find them.

When asked where they expected to find VICs many indicated that they expected to find VICs either near major attractions or close to transport hubs. Some incorrectly assumed there was a VIC at Circular Quay.

Participants were asked where else they had been in Sydney on this trip, apart from The Rocks. Half of them had been to the Opera House, just under half had visited the Botanic Gardens, a third had been to the City and Darling Harbour, and a quarter had been to Manly and Bondi.



When asked how they found out about these places just over half said that it had been recommended to them, while others found these places by wandering around, using their guidebook or brochures and internet research. Maps were generally used to locate these places and a small number had followed signs.

Transport

Walking was the most preferred method of getting around; it gives the visitor more control over where they are going, and it is cheaper. An [earlier study](#) using GPS tracking devices found that tourists walk up to 40km a day!

There was general disquiet about using buses because of uncertainty about routes and where to alight, and the belief that they simply take too long. Trains were seen as more efficient.

Public transport in Sydney was regarded as expensive, which discouraged use. There was much confusion about what tickets or passes to buy, and which forms of transport they were valid for. Tourists would prefer to use one ticket for everything. They also had difficulty in understanding transport zones.

Accessing Greater Sydney

Most of the visitors found Sydney a relatively easy city to navigate. However, this applies primarily to the city core, and visitors were reluctant to go beyond the core, or even wander off the main routes.

The main places they wanted to find “off the map” (outside the core) were Bondi, Manly and the Zoo. Maps need to be extended to give information about places other than the core.

For more information please visit www.tourism.nsw.gov.au

Full report from UTS <http://business.uts.edu.au/lst/>

or contact: Deborah.edwards-1@uts.edu.au

[Sydney TourismSnapshot](#)

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