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Melbourne 'world's top city'

February 6, 2004

Melbourne has retained its position as the best city in the world to call home.

Often derided as Bleak City by Sydneysiders, Melbourne topped a survey of 130 cities, narrowly beating out the other four Australian capitals surveyed - because its weather rated the best.

Sydney lost ground because its crime rate was rated on a par with New York and London.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) survey ranked Melbourne, Vancouver and Vienna as the best cities for expatriates to live, with Perth fourth and Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney equal sixth.

Geneva was ranked fifth, while Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby kept the title it took in the last survey in October 2002 as the worst.

"Melbourne pretty much top scored in everything," said survey co-editor Jon Copestake.

"But the difference between all the Australian cities is minimal. One thing Sydney had different to the other cities was a higher crime rate, and its climate. Its level of humidity was worse than Melbourne's."

Victorian Tourism Minister John Pandazopoulos said the award was based on a survey of a city's infrastructure, access, education levels, crime rate, focus on the environment, culture and events, its diversity and how connected it was with the rest of the world.

Mr Pandazopoulos said even Melbourne's weather rated better than Sydney's.

"It's a brilliant pat on the back for Melbourne, particularly for two years in a row," he said.

"We already promote ourselves as the world's most liveable city, we can continue doing that."

Mr Pandazopoulos said the award backed Victoria's record as the only Australian state in which international visitor rates grew for the past two years.

He said Melbourne was also a very affordable city, where people got value for money for great products, including top fashion and restaurants.

He said the government would continue to work hard to meet the balance of stimulating a vibrant economy and social standards to ensure Melbourne remained one of the world's best cities.

The London-based EIU assessed the level of hardship for expatriates in the 130 cities, using 12 factors including housing, education, recreational activities, health, climate and terrorism.

Cities were rated one to five in the 12 categories, with one meaning there was no hardship and five indicating extreme hardship.

Melbourne received the perfect one in each category, including its unpredictable weather, to give it an overall score of one.

1= Melbourne

1= Vancouver

1= Vienna

4 Perth

5 Geneva

6= Adelaide

6= Brisbane

6= Copenhagen

6= Montreal

6= Oslo

6= Sydney

6= Zurich

13= Helsinki

13= Stockholm

13= Toronto

Others:

19= Auckland

19= Honolulu

28= Paris

45= London

51= Dublin

51= New York

57= Washington

64= Athens

75= Beijing

130 Port Moresby

The other Australian cities were all given a two for climate, while Adelaide also received two for housing, Brisbane and Perth scored two for transport and Sydney for its crime. Port Moresby received five for crime and an overall score of 80.

While Perth was given an overall mark of 1.1, Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney scored 1.2.

The heightened terrorist threat only had a minimal impact on western cities, even those in the United States, largely because of newly developed security measures.

The highest ranked US city was Honolulu in 19th on eight points, while New York was 51st with 16 and Washington was the lowest of 16 American cities in the survey at 57th, mainly due to a higher risk of terrorism giving it an overall score of 19.

London was equal 45th, along with Los Angeles, Madrid and San Francisco.

Kuwait fell the most places, dropping from 87 to 97 because of the war in neighbouring Iraq, while Harare suffered the greatest actual drop in living standards as a result of ongoing unrest and slid eight places to 118.

The Iraqi capital Baghdad was not included in the survey.

- AAP

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/02/06/1075854028808.html>