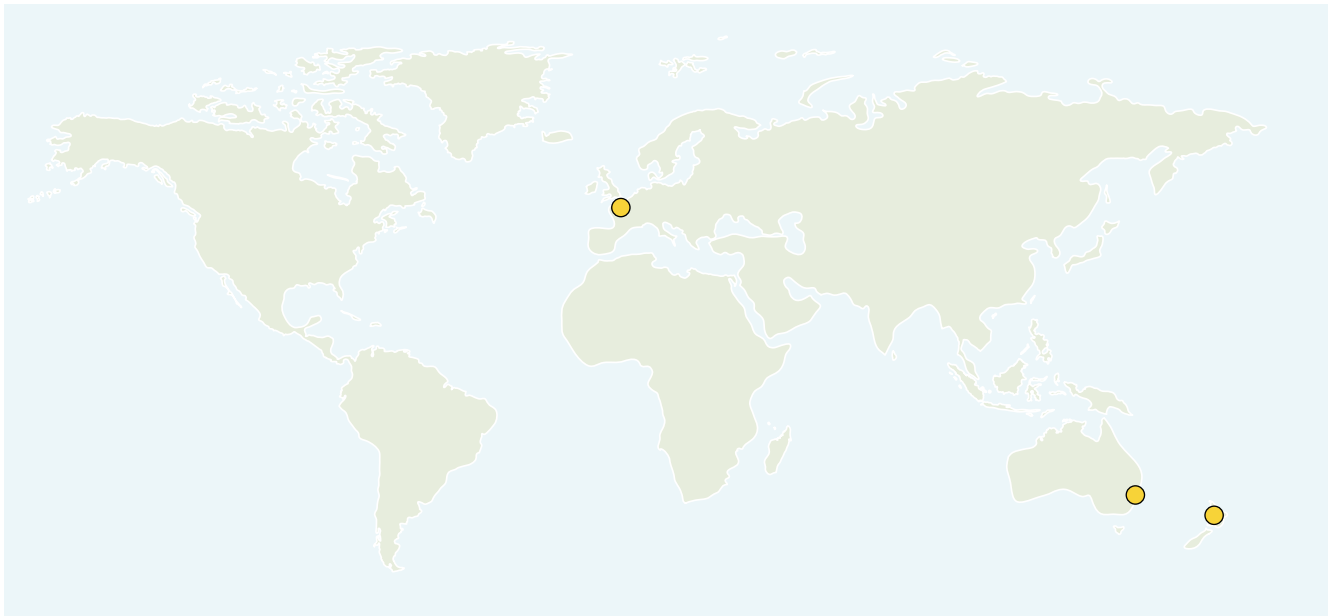


# MY FAVOURITE OLYMPIC DESTINATION



Offered a one-way ticket to any Olympic City, what's your destination of choice?

## Sydney, Australia



**Richard Steer,**  
**Senior Partner,**  
**Gleeds**

Ever since I first visited Sydney in 2004, I fell in love with its charm, its beauty and its diversity. The City of Sydney covers approximately 26.15 square kilometres and within that area you have the spectacular world famous Opera House nestling into the rich backdrop of the Sydney Harbour and its famous bridge.

The ultimate stage set for the ultimate event - the 2000 Olympics. It is little wonder that the city was universally acclaimed for its organisation, attitude and professionalism. It is one of my favourite cities in the world, and it is not hard to see why.

Sydney has fantastic weather – it averages almost seven hours of sunshine every day throughout the year. It is the perfect city to really enjoy living outdoors.



The city is very cosmopolitan, with a huge ethnic mix – half of its residents were born overseas and almost 30% of the resident population speaks a language other than English. This leads to a profusion of different culinary opportunities, with restaurants offering eating experiences from Asia to Europe.

Tourism is a major income source for Sydney, which houses seven of Australia's top ten attractions. Over half of all international visitors come to the city each year and two-thirds of them are international business visitors. I have always found the people friendly and accommodating. The ultimate test is whether I will return, having already visited twice. Because it is such a vibrant city, the answer to that question is a resounding yes. Next year.



## New Zealand



**Liz Yelling,  
British Athlete**



As an athlete, I have been lucky enough to travel to many parts of the world. The irony is that when you are competing, you tend to see more hotel rooms, running tracks and closed off roads than anything else, and it can be difficult to get a true feel for a place through this type of experience. So after competing in the marathon at the 2004 Athens Olympics, my husband and I decided we would do a round the world trip and really have a look at places, and run and train where and when we could. The beauty about running is that you get to see so much more in less time!

On our trip, the country that made the biggest impression on me was New Zealand. It is an amazing, unspoilt, wonder. I loved the varied terrain and stunning views round every corner, glaciers, mountains, volcanoes, and miles of sandy beaches. The main cities are manageable and clean, and are never more than a short drive to the open road. More specifically, if I had to pick an area of New Zealand it would be Able Tasmin, which is situated in the north of South Island. It boasts miles of white sandy beaches and a National Park with very limited access to cars – great if you want to escape and canoe, hike, run, camp and so on. This area of South Island also has the best climate in New Zealand.

In some senses, it would be wonderful if at some point in the future the Olympic and Paralympic Games came to New Zealand, to show the world what a beautiful place it is, and to give all the athletes a chance to experience it themselves. For the time being, though, I'm quite happy to go back purely as a tourist, without having to compete for space with the world's media and thousands of Olympic visitors – and without having to confine myself to hotel rooms and training tracks!

## Paris, 1900?



**ZEUS,  
the Loud-Thunderer,  
Father of Gods & Men,  
Lord of the Sky**



My first thought – after Locum sacrificed a white bull in the office car park, with all the maidens on the staff dancing around in fetching white gowns – was 'Anywhere but Olympus.'

Three hundred successive Olympics in one's home town is no joke, I can tell you. The original idea was to strengthen the Olympos™ brand and visitor economy by creating a really solid anchor for an events programme that would pull punters from the whole civilised world. It started well, but after a thousand years we'd passed through regeneration and stagnation to hit desperation, and frankly when the Christians banned the Games I couldn't be arsed to pick up the old thunderbolt.

Did you know they tried to revive the Games in the flush of enthusiasm after Greece was reunited? They chose Athens as the permanent site, which caused no end of ructions up here. Those are My Games and I wasn't going to play second fiddle to my so-dear daughter Athena. And she couldn't decide whether to be flattered they'd chosen her city, or flustered by memories of what we'd had to put up with when the games were at Olympus. Not that it mattered:

Greece may have been united, but the Greeks were as quarrelsome as they were at Troy. What a fiasco!

The next time the idea got off the ground it was young Coubertin. Better a Frog than a Greek, as Aristophanes said, so I gave him a fair wind. But be sure I briefed rosy-fingered Eos and trim-ankled Nike to trickle the message into his grey cells: a different city each time if you please. (Nike's no fool. When the SALT talks started in 1969 she decided it was time to concentrate on the athletic kind of victory. Within two years she was Nike™.)

So that's how it started. Athens, Paris, St Louis.... But which is My favourite? Maybe Paris 1900, when they first let girls compete. Why didn't we think of that in the old days? Ankle-length dresses don't impede divine eyesight, I can tell you! Rome 1960 was almost like old times – but 46 years ago is ancient history for most mortals. I'll always remember Sydney 2000 (and not just because it was the first time a god manifested as a volleyball). But mostly I'm looking forward to Beijing 2008 and London 2012. My favourite Olympic destination is always the next one!