



Roving volunteer ambassadors Joe and Judy Mellis standing by to help visitors at Circular Quay

All the answers

A well-travelled couple pay back kindness, volunteering to help Sydney tourists

» Jacqui Taffel

HUSBAND and wife Joe and Judy Mellis worked together for many years in the wine industry. Now, more than 10 years after retiring, they're

volunteering together.

A year ago they joined the City of Sydney's team of tourism ambassadors greeting cruise ship passengers as they arrive in Sydney, providing them with maps, information and local insider tips.

In October last year, the program extended to other visitor hubs including Pitt Street and the QVB.

Joe and Judy, who live in Millers Point, have worked on the ships and roamed the city streets, doing one or two three-hour sessions a week.

Between them, they have fielded countless questions and advised visitors how to tick off the things they want to do in Sydney.

Apart from the obvious tourist landmarks, Joe says, many people are keen to do a good walk around the CBD after being on-board ship.

He also gets questions about the Bondi to Bronte or Spit to Manly walks, and how to use an Opal card. One Englishman only wanted to do one thing – walk to the

Sydney Cricket Ground.

Others ask where the nearest McDonalds is, or where they can get their nails done. "That's a minority," said Joe.

This is the first time the couple have taken on volunteer work, motivated by their own experiences.

"We do a lot of overseas travel, and any number of times people have gone out of their way to help us. It's paying that back," said Joe.

Helping arrivals from the cruise ships is usually "full on", he said. "You can be surrounded by seven to eight people looking for information."

Walking through the CBD, or Circular Quay in their distinctive red uniforms, there's more time to chat to people and share stories.

"People are very appreciative," said Joe. "One American wanted to give me a tip."

He politely declined.

To volunteer as an ambassador, see cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au