

Sports tourism can be defined as a type of tourism that refers to trips that are undertaken specifically to attend a sporting event. Common examples include the Olympic Games, the FIFA and Rugby World Cups and Formula 1 Grand Prix races. An estimated average of 12m sports tourists make international trips every year.



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Sports tourists can be profiled fairly easily, in accordance with the sports that they follow. The bulk of the market tends to be 18-34 years, in the C1 and C2 (middle) socio-economic groups, with the exception of rugby, cricket and Formula 1 sports tourists who tend to be slightly older with a higher disposable income.

Sports tourism is a multi-billion dollar business. It is one of the fastest growing service industries.

SPORTS TOURISM & LONDON 2012

Predicted Benefits

The UK's tourist industry could be given a £3 billion boost by the London 2012 Olympic Games, according to a report by hotel chain Travelodge.

The UK could outperform global tourism growth by 50 per cent in the four years before and after the 2012 Olympic Games, according to the report, with a potential extra 6.6 million visitors to the country between 2007 and 2016, generating the extra revenue.

Predicted Costs

However, the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) believes that London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games might actually harm tourism. In a 2009 report that analysed six Olympic Summer Games, the ETOA stated that Beijing experienced a 30% downturn in international tourists over the Summer, when compared to Spring 2008 figures. Applying such a scenario to London would see a potential 2.5m drop in tourists visiting London, which would be accompanied by a £1.5bn fall in revenue.

The ETOA went on to theorise that the conceptualisation that the Olympics provides great economic benefits in terms of tourism is a belief that is 'wholly illusory'.

ETOA executive director Tom Jenkins said: “...we have yet to have a Games where tourism has not been disrupted, and disrupted in a way that causes real harm.” Whilst the ETOA found no long-term growth benefits for Games host cities, they did nevertheless discover a peak in international tourist arrivals in those host cities during the Games.

THE OLYMPIC PARK, STRATFORD

The flagship venue for London 2012, Stratford’s Olympic Park, is the jewel in the crown of Britain’s Olympic offering. Stratford is the venue for impressive new sports venues (currently under construction), most notably the Olympic Stadium and the Aquatic Centre, in addition to the Olympic Village where athletes will stay.

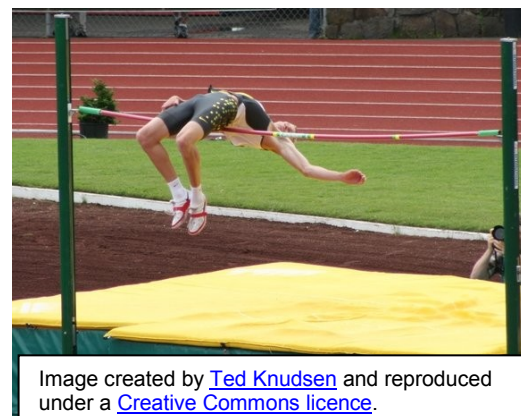
It is without doubt that the huge number of Olympic sports tourists will lead to a much needed injection of cash into what is currently a relatively bleak landscape in dire need of regeneration.

Hotels, shops, transport companies and other services will all see a great rise in custom in the run up to, during and immediately after the Games. A great example of this is the Westfield Shopping Centre located between the Olympic Park and Stratford train station. An estimated two-thirds of sports tourists at the Games are expected to pass through it!

Clearly this creates voluminous opportunities for boosting the sales of goods and services in the Stratford area whilst the Games are taking place.

START THE DISCUSSION

- ❖ Why do you think the ETOA and the Travelodge Group offer such different forecasts in terms of tourism and economic impacts?
- ❖ What other examples of successful sports tourism can you think of?
- ❖ How might your area be affected by the Games?



FIND OUT MORE

Journal of Sports & Tourism

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/14775085.html>

CREDITS

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