

The Evolution of Modern Sports Tourism

What Is Sports Tourism?

Sports Tourism is defined as a specific travel outside of the usual environment for either passive or active involvement in competitive sport where sport is the prime motivational reason for travel and the touristic or leisure element may act to reinforce the overall experience. Another definition worth noting explains sport tourism as a combination of sports activities and travel.



From a sport marketing and sport management perspective, it consists of two broad categories of products: a) sports participation travel (travel for the purpose of participating in a sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activity); and b) sports spectatorial travel (travel for the purpose of spectating sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activities or events).

With its remarkable growth, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) recognizes that sports tourism is now an emerging market. Indeed, over the past twenty years, the interest in sport especially elite sporting events has grown at a phenomenal rate.

Sports tourism events at the international, national and regional levels have a double-barreled effect – the direct effect of the attendance of the competitors and/or spectators and accompanying persons, and the indirect effect of the marketing of the destination which lead to the subsequent tourism flows. This indirect effect can be very large – most of the tourism benefits of big sporting events are expected to be of this nature. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced on November 11, 2004 that the UN General Assembly has proclaimed 2005 to be the “International Year for Sport and Physical Education” and encouraged all Member States to cultivate the International Year to show the value of sports for peace and development.

According to Secretary-General Annan, providing access to physical education may cultivate them in learning the ideas of teamwork and tolerance through experiencing real exhilaration. Objectives of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations have given focus on achieving sports that would help work and build peace.



A Fast Growing Niche

Today, tourism is the world's number one industry while sport is regarded as the number one industry in the leisure sector. Sport is an integral part of all culture, and while often viewed as a separate activity, it is inextricably linked to tourism. Sport can now be viewed as an attraction within the broader tourism industry.

Sports Tourism is emerging as a key component of tourism supply. Major tourism destinations are developing tourism product concepts revolving around pleasure sports. These concepts enable destinations to stand out amongst their competitors and increasing their competitive edge in the international arena, attracting consumers who are keen on getting in touch with nature, and interacting with the community to enjoy more healthy and interactive holidays.

Sports Tourism is a multi-billion dollar business, one of the fastest growing areas of the \$4.5 trillion global travel and tourism industry. It has become a vast international business attracting media coverage, investment, political interest, traveling participants and spectators.

By 2011, travel and tourism is expected to be more than 10 percent of the global domestic product. The economies of cities, regions and even countries around the world are increasingly reliant on the visiting golfer and skier or the traveling football, rugby or cricket supporter. In some countries, sport can account for as much as 25 percent of all tourism receipts.

Thus, Sports Tourism has started to earn its reputation to be a multi-million dollar business. Trends in tourism over the last decade have shown that sports tourism is emerging as a very significant segment of the global tourist market.

The Worldwide Phenomenon

To date, sports and active recreation have become very large and successful industries worldwide. A 1994 European Commission Report of the European Community and Sport estimated that sports industry is responsible for 2.5 percent of world trade.



Over the last 10 years, the global sports industry has seen rapid changes and innovations fuelled by a range of driving factors such as the increase in leisure time and spending, the appetite for spectacle and participation, new distribution methods and the deregulation of the broadcast industry. This resulted in worldwide travel mainly for sports purposes.

An analysis by The Bureau of Tourism Research recently published in *Sports Tourism: an Australian Perspective* states that 6 percent of day trips and 5 per cent of overnight trips taken by Australians in Australia, were taken with sport as the primary motivation. This corresponds to expenditure of \$1847 million by domestic sports tourists, of which \$461 million was spent on day trips and the remaining \$1386 million on overnight trips.

In a separate study in Australia, sports tourism sector accounts for about 55% of the total tourism market. Across both international and domestic tourism, sports tourism in Australia account for annual expenditure of about \$3 billion per annum.

In 1998, 37% of Canada's 73.7 million domestic trips were for sports tourism purposes. In Canada, sport tourists are defined as individuals who traveled and in doing so participated in or attended a sports event during the reference period. Sport tourists account for between 2.5 and 5 million individuals from June to September, July and August being the most popular months for sport tourist activities (15% and 18%).

While sport tourism in South Africa is yet to be established, sports tourism (spectator and participant) makes up four percent (4%) of its domestic tourism market. This appeared following the launching of South Africa Sports Tourism (SAST) by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the Ministry of Sport and Recreation in October 1997, after it specifically identified sports tourism as an avenue for the development and promotion of tourism in its study.

In the case of the United States of America, the Travel Industry Association of America found that in the past five years, 38 percent of US adults attended an organized event, competition or tournament as a spectator or participant, while on a trip of 50 miles or more.

The British Tourist Authority and English Tourism Board claim as many as 20 percent of tourist trips are for the prime purpose of sports participation, while up to 50 percent of holidays include incidental sports participation. This level of activity is broadly consistent with Canadian data, with the 1998 Canadian Travel Survey finding that 37% of domestic trips that year were for sports-related purposes.

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