

Sports Tourism: Tough Legacy or Golden Jackpot?

Sports tourism – one of the industry’s fastest-growing sectors – can be an absolute minefield, Fiona Jeffery, chairman of World Travel Market – the premier global event for the travel industry – claimed.



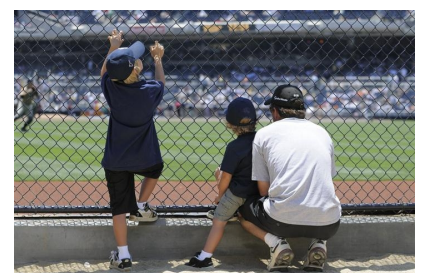
Although the industry is starting to discuss sports tourism more than ever before, she said that the difficult and sometimes controversial questions about sports tourism are simply not being addressed.

“Undoubtedly sports tourism is a tough legacy for everyone,” she said. “But the myth is that those who successfully bid for a major sporting event automatically win the golden jackpot. It can be an absolute minefield.”

“The rewards are indeed extremely high, but so are the risks. This has been clearly illustrated by the problems surrounding the Commonwealth Games in India.”

Jeffery said that World Travel Market, among the first to raise the profile of sports tourism within the global industry, is setting out to dispel many of the commonly held views about the sector at an important keynote debate on the opening day, Monday, November 8 at ExCeL, London. A high-level panel of experienced sports tourism experts will examine the dangers that can often cause more harm than good.

Speakers include: Marthinus van Schalkwyk, South Africa Minister of Tourism; Taleb Rifai, Secretary General UNWTO; Marc Bennett, Head of Sports Division, TUI; Chris Foy, Head of 2012 Games Unit, Visit Britain; Tom Jenkins, Executive Director, European Tour Operators Association (ETOA); and Richard Shipway, Lecturer in sports tourism at Bournemouth University.



The session will be moderated by former British middle-distance runner and the man who turned around

the finances of UK Athletics, David Moorecroft.

“Lessons have been learned from major international sporting events such as the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, a financial disaster when the city faced debts for many years afterwards,” said Jeffery. “The costs of staging an international sporting event can be prohibitive; venues are often not properly utilized afterwards and sometimes fall into disrepair.”

“Unless a destination/region has a long-term business plan, integrating the sporting event into its strategic vision over 20 or even 30 years, as well as ensuring that the opportunities pre and post a sporting event are fulfilled and measured exhaustively, they are unlikely to reap the considerable benefits.”

“There is also little understanding that not only is this an opportunity for host cities, but also for other towns and cities throughout that country to dovetail other tourism events, competitions, sports, festivals, and promotions to maximize the surge of incoming visitors.”

Jeffery said that there are other issues, too, which are equally troubling. “Ticket pricing, the expensive acquisition of corporate hospitality that can exclude the public and overseas visitors, merchandising and, of course, security are just some of the issues, which need greater discussion and transparency.”



The free debate is aimed at agents/operators/hotels/venues involved in sports tourism, those who are thinking of trying to get involved in this lucrative sector, potential host cities, national tourist boards, and towns/cities in countries that have already won bids to stage major international events.

Sports Tourism: "It's a Tough Game – but Some Win" is at World Travel Market on Monday, November 8, 1500–1630 hours, Platinum Suite 4, ExCeL London.

The conference supports World Travel Market's first-ever Sports Pavilion, which has some of the world's most iconic stadia exhibiting including Wembley, Lord's (Cricket), Wimbledon (Tennis), and Twickenham (Rugby). English Premier League teams exhibiting including Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, and Chelsea.

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