

THE OLYMPIC GAMES DO NOT ALWAYS BRING BENEFITS TO THE HOST CITY



New study revealed that Olympic cities tend to experience considerable declines in tourist numbers once the Games are over.

It is typical for the newly elected host city for the Olympic Games to wildly celebrate their victory and to presume that the games will bring increased revenue and great success to the image of the city. A new study by the **European Tour Operators Association** suggests that only the latter of these presumptions is actually true. The Association researched visitor arrival statistics for the past Olympics in Beijing ('08), Athens ('04), Sydney (2000), Atlanta ('96), Barcelona ('92) and Seoul ('88) and stated that the tourism benefits of hosting the Olympic Games is "wholly illusory".

Indeed, one cannot deny that the Games brought great fame and glory e.g. to Barcelona as the world was treated to a magnificent spectacle in the Catalan capital. However, Barcelona along with Seoul, Sydney and Athens according to the results suffered a stunt in the growth of their revenues from tourism after the Games were over.

Visits to Beijing actually dropped by 30% in comparison with the previous year. If London follows the same pattern in 2012, then the English capital will see 2.5 million fewer visitors. The global financial crisis cannot be blamed for the Beijing statistics as the Chinese city still fared worse than its counterparts.

The problem is that the Olympic Games tend to bring tourists to the chosen cities that have totally different spending habits to those who are deterred by the huge event. In other words, big shoppers are hardly going to go to Sydney in the midst of hordes of international tourists with tighter budgets and less modest behaviour. It is comparable to the happy hour in the pub. It attracts masses of modest spenders yet puts the diners and the expensive-whisky drinkers off.

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