

# SPORT TOURISM - EVENT ORGANIZATION TO BE MUCH MORE COMPLICATED



The world of sport events, just as tourism, hasn't been able to escape the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. After many months at a standstill, we start to see new proposals for what could be the reactivation of this industry. Preserving sports and maintaining the health of athletes and fans are the main priorities.

Agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and sports associations have agreed to design a proposal that aims to resume sporting events, while ensuring the health of athletes, support staff and attendees, so **let's review some of the most relevant proposals for sports tourism while considering the ethical implications and minimum requirements for these events** to be as close to pre-pandemic times as possible.

## **An Ethical and Social Matter**

In addition to the logistics of a sporting event, there are a number of ethical issues and social considerations that must be taken into account long before a proposal is made. Therefore, in addition to the pandemic's conditions, we must assume that as long as a vaccine is not developed and its effectiveness is verified, the fatal risks of infection by COVID-19 remain quite high.

With the above considerations in mind, it is possible that many athletes and attendees with pre-existing risk factors make them more likely to contract the infection. Likewise, even when the event takes place in a town with the low transmission, it is possible that attendance from other towns or countries will introduce new cases and spark a wave of infections in the host community. In short, this is not an easy task because in order to restart sport tourism, one must guarantee the safety of people, and that can only be achieved by thinking about the well-being of everyone involved.

## **Planning Sport Events**

Although each sport must be analyzed individually in terms of risk factors and the ways to mitigate them, there are some general considerations that must be taken into account and that are helpful to familiarize with the context.

### **Type of Event: Low or High Risk?**

Sporting events can be classified as high or low risk based on the probability that attendees have of contracting coronavirus during the execution. Low-risk sports are those where physical distancing between athletes is possible, and in which social distancing can be established between participants, support staff, and audience. On other hand, high-risk sports are those in which contact between competitors is essential.

### **Size of Event**

The size of the event refers to the relationship between the venue and the number of attendees that will be admitted inside. Therefore, social distancing among all participants and spectators of the event must be guaranteed. An appropriately sized sporting event is one in which the athlete/spectator ratio is low, and the group of spectators is easy to control and manage during the

event.

### **Indoor or Outdoor Locations?**

As expected, outdoor sporting events tend to have better ventilation and therefore the risk of transmission is lower. The important thing is to be able to guarantee social distancing in the venue, something that can be achieved more easily in open spaces, especially those in which seats should not be assigned.

### **Venue Facilities**

Before choosing the location where the sporting event will take place, it is necessary to know that the facilities comply with the WHO sanitary and infrastructure measures or the national recommendations for the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Demographics of Athletes**

It is important to know the age and associated risk factors of those attending the event. In most cases, athletes are usually younger and healthier than spectators, but that does not rule out that competitors, support staff, coaches and assistants do not have underlying health conditions that turn them into risk groups.

### **Risk Communication**

It is important that information and health advice is available before and during the event, which also includes constant monitoring of compliance with established sanitary measures, and identification of possible infection cases.

### **Recommendations to Event Organizers**

The following recommendations must be considered before and during the organization of a sporting event. The first, which are considered above, include the following tips for organizers:

Provide alcohol-based gel, hand washing and other hygiene facilities at multiple locations where the event takes place.

Maintain good hygiene across all venues that will be used by athletes and spectators.

Medical staff must perform daily temperature checks on competitors and other people attending the event. Any temperature above 38° C should be notified to the event's medical office and follow the mandatory isolation measures until the case is cleared.

Determine logistics for the isolation of suspected cases. This includes how cases will be diagnosed, notified, quarantined if confirmed. Likewise, establishing procedures for tracing possible infections in case that a participant is diagnosed with COVID-19 during the event.

Ensure availability of disposable gloves to team staff and volunteers handling potentially contaminated laundry, towels, etc.

Provide each participant with a clean water bottle and personal items that are not reused.

Medical masks should be ready for personnel, support teams and sick individuals.

Provide each team with a thermometer along with personal kits that include hygiene items such as alcohol-based gel, disinfectant wipes and masks.

Other recommendations for participants include:

Anyone participating in the event (athletes, assistants, volunteers, spectators, etc.) should regularly check their health status (symptoms, temperature or attending a medical consultation).

Any attendee feeling ill must notify this, not go to the venue, and receive proper advice and information.

During the event, all participants must follow the hygiene and prevention protocols established by the organizing staff. The vast majority of these correspond to health measures implemented since the beginning of the pandemic: social distancing, washing hands often, not sharing personal items, etc.

### **Setting That Adapts to the New Normal**

It is quite clear that planning a sporting event in 2020, or at least in the coming years, won't be an easy task, and that's why most of them have been canceled for the remainder of the year.

**Furthermore, the logistics of planning sporting events in post-pandemic times make the process challenging.**

In the near future, in order to enjoy sports as we know them, a collaboration between event organizers, public entities and participants, athletes and attendees, as well as professionals involved, will be necessary. In fact, one of the main tools to stop the pandemic is making use of social awareness among participants.

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