

# SPORT TOURISM IN CATALONIA - THE MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR SEGMENT



From the massive mobilization of fans to the great sporting competitions to the incessant movement of people in relation with amateur or federated children's sports competitions and an endless number of popular sports activities that are held every weekend in a family atmosphere, as well as the skiing, water sports or golf seasons, among other practices. Sport tourism has been developing on the fly, with no greater connection or planning than that of the big events themselves.

Experts estimate the direct impact of sport tourism in Catalonia alone in a context without mobility restrictions **at 270 million euros per year, plus 133 million euros of indirect impact and another 150 million euros of induced impact.** These figures, however, do not consider much of the turnover generated by amateur and school sport.

The data from the Survey of tourism expenditure prepared in 2018 by the National Institute of Statistics indicate that sports tourism before the pandemic had reached a great maturity and had a very relevant role in Catalonia. According to the above, about half a million Catalans moved for sporting reasons promoting consumption and overnight stays outside their place of residence and about 300,000 people from outside Catalonia also visited the region in relation with sport events.

Along with Catalonia, other autonomous communities such as Galicia, the Basque Country, the Balearic Islands, Madrid, Aragon, Valencia, Andalusia and the Canary Islands have also committed to this type of tourism by proposing or promoting specific activities and promoting an appropriate structure, from the celebration of major sporting events, from the ambitious Formula 1 and MotoGP GPs or large ocean regattas with mixed results to large marathons with popular participation, tennis tournaments, motorcycling, golf, rallies, triathlons, large mountain races or attractive cycling or cycle touring routes. There are two objectives: attracting investment and creating a brand to attract countless sports fans as well as amateurs or/and professional athletes.

The Ministry of Culture and Sport also certified in 2019, before the pandemic changed the fate of the sector, that Spain was in an unbeatable situation to exploit this niche market since the majority of foreign tourists moved for sporting reasons had Spain as their favorite destination.

**This model also provides diversification and deseasonalization, two great mantras for a sector which is too dependent on different campaigns.** But it also opens the door to a trend that is gaining momentum by leaps and bounds, sustainable tourism. The private sector has not wasted any time, and several hotel chains and tour operators have specialized in this sector, with specific campaigns and Bike Friendly establishments as pioneers.

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