

THE GLOBAL SPORTS TOURISM TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND



The global sports tourism market is set to experience remarkable growth, with its value projected to rise from \$607 billion in 2020 to an impressive \$1.8 trillion by 2030. This represents a solid annual growth rate of 16.1% from 2021 to 2030.

Sports tourism has gained significant traction in recent years as more individuals travel—locally and internationally—to participate in or witness sporting events. A comprehensive report titled "Sports Tourism Market Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity, and Forecast 2025-2032," published by Allied Market Research, highlights this expanding industry.

While travel has always been a popular activity, the last decade has seen an increase in attendance at sporting events, enhancing the appeal of global sports tourism. What was considered a niche market has now transformed into a global phenomenon, driven by growing interest in active leisure activities and the excitement of experiencing world-class sporting events.

There are three distinct categories of global sports tourism: event tourism, celebrity and nostalgia sports tourism, and active sports tourism. Each category offers a unique aspect of the sports tourism experience, from watching events to participating in sports while traveling. Sports tourism provides exciting opportunities for adventurers of all kinds, whether it's the electrifying atmosphere of a FIFA tournament or the challenge of running a marathon in a vibrant foreign city.

The growth of the sports tourism market can be attributed to several factors. A significant driver is the increase in global sporting events—ranging from soccer tournaments to Formula 1 races—which has led to a greater demand for comprehensive travel packages, including event tickets, accommodations, and transportation arrangements. In addition, many enthusiasts view these events as opportunities to explore new destinations, enhancing their experiences beyond just the competition.

Government and company investment in sports infrastructure—such as stadiums, arenas, and hotel accommodations—has played a notable role in meeting the growing demand for sports-related activities. These investments are essential for expanding the capacity to accommodate larger audiences, directly fostering market growth. Many cities worldwide are reconfiguring themselves to become prime locations for major sporting events, generating positive economic impact that benefits local communities.

The global sports tourism market is segmented into categories based on product type, geographic region, and activity levels. Key contenders include football (soccer), cricket, motorsports, tennis, and other sports. The football segment, in particular, stands out as the leading contributor to the sports tourism landscape, largely due to the universal passion for the game. Events such as the UEFA Champions League, the FIFA World Cup, and local leagues attract millions of visitors annually, driving demand for services ranging from accommodations to guided tours and ticket sales.

Domestic sports tourism is currently the most significant contributor to the market, particularly in Europe and North America. Locals often travel within their countries to attend major sporting events

in these areas. Meanwhile, international sports tourism is experiencing growth, with fans increasingly traveling abroad for iconic events such as the Olympic Games.

It's also essential to distinguish between active and passive tourism. Active tourism involves traveling to participate in skiing, golf, or cycling activities. In contrast, passive tourism refers to attending events as spectators, like going to a Grand Slam tennis match or a soccer game. Passive tourism accounts for a larger market share due to the widespread appeal of live sports events worldwide.

As the global sports tourism market evolves, several notable trends have emerged, with the increasing importance of fan zones standing out. As sporting event enthusiasm grows, organizers create designated spaces where fans can gather, watch, and enjoy these events together. These fan zones are quickly becoming key components of the sports tourism experience, allowing travelers to engage with events even if they do not have tickets to the actual matches.

Despite its robust growth, the sports tourism sector faces several challenges. The uncertainty stemming from incidents like the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant obstacles. The health crisis resulted in numerous cancellations, travel bans, and restrictive measures that severely impacted the industry. While recovery is underway, a complete return to pre-pandemic levels will take time. Additionally, high operating costs and a lack of financial support for specific sports organizations can hinder growth potential in various areas.

Europe dominates the sports tourism market, generating about USD 119 billion in 2020. Top European capitals like London, Paris, and Madrid have established a strong reputation for hosting large-scale events, drawing millions of sports enthusiasts annually.

North America follows closely, bolstered by the popularity of American football, basketball, and baseball, as well as major international events like the Super Bowl and the NBA Finals.

In addition, the Asia-Pacific region is rapidly emerging as a significant player in sports tourism. Countries like China, Japan, and India increasingly secure international sporting events. As their economies thrive, they are better positioned to invest in sports infrastructure and attract international visitors.

In summary, **the global sports tourism market is set for significant growth, driven by an increasing interest in major sports and international events.** More travelers are eager to watch their favorite athletes or engage in active sports, which positions this sector for substantial expansion by 2030. As governments and organizations invest in infrastructure and technology to support this growth, sports tourism will be an important driver of global travel and economic development.

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