

## Sports Tourism

People have traveled to watch or participate in sports for centuries, but academics did not begin to study sports-based travel until the 1990s. In recent years, research in this area has expanded greatly, investigating everything from event marketing to economic impacts to the sociocultural implications of various types of sports tourism.



Heather J. Gibson defines sports tourism as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical change.” This exhibit focuses on both event sports tourism (e.g., attending the modern Olympic games) and nostalgia sports tourism (e.g., visiting sports museums and halls of fame).

No matter how you define it, sports tourism is big business. The annual U.S. market for sports-based travel is \$44.5 billion, according to *Sports Business Journal*. Communities that plan carefully can reap significant benefits from hosting sporting events, including luring new visitors and businesses to an area and enhancing a destination’s attractiveness.

## Focus on: Olympic Tourism



The first modern Olympics were held in 1896, in Athens, Greece. Fourteen nations sent a total of 241 athletes, as compared to the most recent games in Beijing, China in 2008, which hosted approximately 11,000 athletes from over 200 countries. Similarly, the economic, cultural, and political impact of hosting the Olympics has grown substantially over the years.

As researchers Li and Blake put it, “The Olympic Games are not only grand sporting arenas promoting the Olympic spirit but also great stages on which cities promote themselves to enhance their image for long-term economic gain. Mega-events also bring other effects, such as social, political, and cultural impacts.”



Modern Olympic host cities can count on staggering attendance figures. For example, the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia, attracted more than 1.5 million visitors, and the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City attracted more than 1.2 million visitors. Both events also garnered international media coverage and millions of television viewers.

### Legacy

Just as important is the long-term legacy of hosting the Games. Many people today visit former Olympic sites. For example, the venues from the 2002 Salt Lake City (Utah) Games are used year-round, as both athlete training facilities and public recreational areas. Visitors can take a bobsled run, skate on “The Fastest Ice On Earth,” or visit the 2002 Games exhibit. Lake Placid (host of the 1980 and 1932 Winter Games), a small town in upstate New York, also draws many visitors each year and houses an official training center for the U.S. Olympic Committee for both summer and winter sports.



### 2010 Winter Olympics

The 2010 Winter Olympics, to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, begin on February 12, 2010. Approximately 5,000 athletes from 80-plus countries are expected to attend, with around 3 billion people watching on television worldwide. The economic and cultural impact for Vancouver and the surrounding communities will likely be felt for years to come.



## Focus on: Baseball Tourism

While the Olympics are mega-events that attract international audiences, baseball tourism — traveling to watch games or visit baseball museums and attractions — can have an enormous impact on small or medium American communities.



Cooperstown, a small village (population 2,000) in upstate New York, attracts more than 300,000 visitors annually to visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Baseball-themed shops, restaurants, and attractions have sprung up throughout the town and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, more than 65,000 visitors travel to a cornfield in Iowa to see the place where the movie *Field of Dreams* was filmed, greatly increasing tourism in nearby Dyersville (pop. 4,000).



Major League baseball teams are based in large metropolitan areas, but each year they travel to small- and medium-sized towns in Arizona and Florida for

Spring Training, transforming host communities into hot destinations for baseball fans and media. The Florida Sports Foundation estimates that Spring Training contributes more than \$490 million a year to the Florida economy.

Nor is the impact of baseball tourism limited to the “big boys.” Each year, the Little League World Series (for 11-12 year old players), held in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, attracts more than 300,000 visitors, international media exposure, and primetime television coverage.

Speaking of baseball... The main campus UCF Library will be hosting a special traveling exhibit: **Pride & Passion: The African American Baseball Experience**, March 8-April 16, 2010. In addition to the exhibit itself, the Library will be hosting various speakers, programs, and festivities on this theme. Check <http://library.ucf.edu> for updates!

## Further Reading Suggestions

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**2010 Vancouver Olympic Game website**  
<http://www.vancouver2010.com/>

***Economics of Staging the Olympics: A Comparison of the Games, 1972-2008.*** By Holger Preuss, Rosen Gen Coll GV721.5.P717 2004

***Halls of Fame: An International Directory.*** By David Blevins, Rosen Gen Coll AM1 .B58 2004

***Measuring the Economic Impact of Visitors to Sports Tournaments and Special Events.*** By John L. Crompton, Rosen Gen Coll G155.U6 C76 1999

**Official Website of the Olympic Movement**  
<http://www.olympic.org>

***Olympic Tourism.*** By Mike Weed, Rosen Gen Coll GV721.5.W44 2008

***Sport and Adventure Tourism.*** By Simon Hudson (Ed.), Rosen Gen Coll G155.A1 S627 2003

***Sport Tourism: Concepts and Theories.*** By Heather Gibson (Ed.), Rosen Gen Coll G155.A1 S6284 2006

***Sport Tourism Development.*** By Thomas Hinch, Rosen Gen Coll G155.A1 H56 2004

***Sport Tourism: Interrelationships, Impacts and Issues.*** By Brent W. Ritchie (Ed.), Rosen Gen Coll G155.A1 S6285 2004

***Sports Museums and Halls of Fame Worldwide.*** By Victor J. Danilov, Rosen Gen Coll GV571 .D26 2005

***Sports Tourism: Participants, Policy, and Providers.*** By Mike Weed, Rosen Gen Coll G155.A1 S66 2009

***Ultimate Minor League Baseball Road Trip: A Fan's Guide to AAA, AA, A, and Independent League Stadiums.*** By Josh Pahigian, Rosen Gen Coll GV879.5.P345 2007

And numerous articles in magazines, journals, and newspapers, accessible through Library databases.

## About the Library

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The Universal Orlando Foundation Library serves the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. The collection contains materials related to all facets of the hospitality and tourism industries.

The UOF Library is located at 9907 Universal Blvd., in the heart of central Florida's tourism area. For more information, visit the Library's homepage at <http://library.ucf.edu/rosen> or call 407-903-8100.

## Exhibit Design

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### Special thanks to:

- **Linda Famula**, Museum Marketing & Public Relations Manager, World Figure Skating Museum and Hall of Fame, Colorado Springs, CO
- **Jim Gates**, Librarian, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY
- **Phil Pritchard**, Vice President & Curator, Hockey Hall of Fame, Toronto, ON, Canada

### Universal Orlando Foundation Library at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management



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Universal Orlando  
Foundation Library   
At Rosen College

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## If You Build It, They Will Come: The Scope and Impact of Sports Tourism

On Display  
January—May  
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At the Universal Orlando  
Foundation Library  
at the Rosen College of  
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