

# Sport Tourism

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## What is Sport Tourism?

With around fourteen million Australians participating in sport annually as players, volunteers or workers, and over 90% of adults interested in sport<sup>1</sup>, it is no surprise that sporting events are a successful and growing aspect of the tourism industry. Government and communities increasingly recognise the impact of sporting events on local economies and view them not just as opportunities for competitors, but to attract visitors. Sports matches, mass participation events, and carnivals attract participants and spectators from outside a region, and as tourists they spend on local accommodation, hospitality and retail.

## Geelong - Victoria

Geelong in Victoria has a national and international reputation for the festivals and sporting events it hosts, attracting around 5.8 million visitors each year, and contributing to the visitor economy, which is estimated to support 7,551 jobs annually with a regional output of \$1.1 billion.<sup>2</sup> Sporting events include the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race (contributing \$11 million to the region's economy), the Festival of Sails (\$10.6 million) and the biennial Australian International Air Show (\$28.9 million).<sup>3</sup> Events are supported through Geelong Major Events, a funding source provided through the City of Greater Geelong to sponsor events that have a big impact on driving the local economy.

## Skills needed to build sport tourism

While many of the skills needed to support sporting events, like sponsorship, ticketing, marketing, transport and risk management, sit squarely in the events industry, skills embedded within other sectors like traffic management, audio visual contractors, construction, hospitality, equipment hire, food and beverage, and accommodation services are intrinsically linked.

A coordinated events strategy assesses and harnesses regional resources to achieve the best outcome for individual events while optimising the economic return for a region. This requires creative thinking, strategic planning, business management and problem-solving skills.

Leadership, communication and networking skills are needed to maximise marketing and promotion opportunities, seek out and gain sponsorship, and deliver the event. The role of State and local governments is particularly important in leveraging the value of a single event to benefit the region's broader tourism industry. They have capacity to provide direct or in-kind support by giving organisers a regional perspective, promoting events and destinations, welcoming and managing visitors, streamlining compliance processes, improving tourism infrastructure accessibility, collecting visitor data, and providing tourism expertise.

## Application in WA

In Western Australia the RAC Arena and Optus Stadium have given WA greater capacity to host high profile national and international sporting events, as well as world-class entertainment acts, which have been realised through partnerships with Tourism WA and other events stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> Over 2018-19, these venues and eleven others owned and operated by VenuesWest welcomed more than six million patrons and hosted 156 sporting and entertainment events, its most successful year ever.<sup>5</sup>

The Mid-West Sports Federation, in regional WA, has recognised the value of strategically coordinating sporting events. The economic impact of 84 sporting events held in the region in 2018 was \$9.4 million. Approximately 21,500 visitors travelled to the region to participate in or watch one of these events, spending on accommodation, travel and transport, marketing and promotion, printing and stationery, equipment hire and venue hire.<sup>6</sup>

Approaches like this and the addition of Optus Stadium appear to be creating jobs. Direct employment in Western Australia for sport and recreation services in the tourism industry grew between 2016-17 and 2017-18, from 2000 to 3,100 workers or 4.2% of total tourism employment in WA. Over the same period, WA Direct Tourism Gross Value Added in sport and recreation grew from \$65 to \$85 million, an increase of 30%.<sup>7</sup>

## References

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3. Major events contribute \$99.3 million to Geelong Economy, October 14, 2019, Australian Leisure Management,
4. VenuesWest Annual Report 2018/19, Venues West - Government of Western Australia, p. 30
5. VenuesWest delivers gold medal winning performance, 7 October 2019, <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/10/VenuesWest-delivers-gold-medal-winning-performance.aspx>
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