

Title:

Olympics to Damage UK Tourism

Word Count:

648

Summary:

Despite the governments claims that the 2012 Olympics will bring a huge boost to UK tourism there is strong evidence to the contrary and the government is coming under increased pressure to create a coordinated strategy to mitigate the potentially damaging impact on tourism of the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Keywords:

2012 Olympics London Hotels Accommodation Guest Houses Bed and Breakfast

Article Body:

<p>The European Tour Operators Association is calling for careful planning and marketing around the Olympics to avoid a tourism downturn in London and the UK around the time of the Olympics. The ETOA has released a report countering previous claims that countries see tourism benefit from hosting the Olympics.</p>

<p>The European Tour Operators Association report, published a year after London won the Olympic bid, demonstrates that countries who host the Olympic Games suffer a drop in tourism growth in the years surrounding the event. Further to this the report claims that there is no long-term boost to tourism, as has been widely asserted.</p>

<p>In the case of Australia, a trend of over 10% growth in visitor arrivals turned into a decline two years before the Sydney Olympics. The stagnation persisted for more than two years after. By comparison, New Zealand experienced steadily improving tourism growth throughout the past decade. In the five years prior to the Olympics, Australia's and New Zealand's tourism was growing at the same rate but Australia's growth lost ground significantly straight after the Olympics.</p>

<p>A similar 'Olympic Effect' is also apparent for four out of the last five Olympics - in Sydney 2000, Atlanta 1996, Barcelona 1992 and Seoul 1988.</p>

<p>ETOA's research also disproves claims that the beneficial impact of the

Olympics needs to be measured over a longer period of time. Taking Barcelona as an example, longer-term tourism growth since the Games has been outstripped by other comparable European cities, such as Prague and Dublin.</p>

<p>Official statistics for the years after the Athens Olympics are not yet available. But the pattern appears to be the same. The ETOA says that in 2002, two years before the Olympics, arrivals in Greece were 8.2% up on the previous year but in 2003, numbers fell by 1.5%. This decline continued until the first part of 2004. One month before the start of the Games, visitor arrivals were 12% down.</p>

<p> The EOTA Has suggested the following measures be taken:</p>

<p>\*A commitment not to burden the tourism industry with any additional tax</p>

<p>\*A national marketing campaign with an appropriate budget to smooth out the inevitable Olympic dip</p>

<p>\*Specific communication to make the point that London is able to absorb the Games without difficulty and that it will be open for tourist business as usual throughout 2012</p>

<p>\*Initiatives and marketing communication in the years running up to the Games to counteract fears that London will be full, over-priced or 'otherwise engaged', possibly detailing how much is open and the bargains available</p>

<p>\*Arrangements to give 'Olympic visitors' a full tourism experience whilst they are in the UK for the Games</p>

<p>ETOA suggested that many of the prior reports have been based on aggregated opinion looking forward to the future rather than on objective fact, looking back on past experience and have been funded by organizations wishing to promote the Games.</p>

<p>The International Olympic Committee's claims about media exposure have been

"hyperbolic" too, ETOA suggested. IOC president Jacques Rogge said on CBS in October 2004 that the total cumulative world television audience - with viewers counted each time they watched - was around 40 billion for the Athens Olympics.</p>

<p>Such numbers do not stand up to scrutiny, according to ETOA. There are roughly 6.5 billion people on the planet. Of these, 1.6 billion have no access to electricity and a further 400 million are less than five years old. To achieve a cumulative audience of 40 billion involves nearly three billion people (or 60% of the available world) watching every single day of the games. Detailed viewing data from the IOC itself for Sydney suggest that the total number watching "peak time" was 280 million. Even if this number is multiplied up by the number of days the games is open, the audience size would only be a tenth of that claimed by enthusiasts.</p>