

Becoming an Olympic Host City

Destinations that meet the challenge can reap a substantial payoff. BY HOLLY RIDDLE

For many destinations, hosting the Olympics is a point of pride. No matter how long ago the event took place, remnants of the Games remain, and locals recall the brief weeks in which the entire world turned its attention to their city or town. However, events of this magnitude don't come together with ease.

It all starts with the International Olympic Committee, which chooses each host. Being chosen doesn't guarantee a positive experience, though.

According to Jacqueline Barrett, director, Future Olympic Games Hosts, IOC, a successful host destination must balance what she called "brilliant basics — such as top-quality sports venues, ample accommodation and reliable transport — to allow the best athletes in the world to perform at their peak, and to create a festival for the local population and the rest of the world ... blending sport, culture, the Olympic values and entertainment."

If the host pulls off all the above, it can expect myriad benefits.

"Olympic hosts can use the platform of the Games to achieve meaningful and long-term improvements to the quality of life of local people," said Barrett.

In London, host for the 2012 Summer Olympics, for example, all permanent sporting venues are still open and used, and repurposing of venues and related developments created tens of thousands of jobs.

According to Tracy Halliwell, director, Tourism, Conventions and Major Events, London & Partners, "We wanted to make sure that what we built for the Olympics would stick around [and] benefit Londoners long after the Games were over. Now, over a decade later, we're still seeing the payoff."

As the world turns toward Paris and the 2024 Summer Olympic Games, new venues have been constructed and an extensive new metro network is under development. The Paris tourist office, Paris je t'aime, is also working to make travelers' experiences in the city more convenient and enjoyable, both during the Games and after.

A new app will help travelers "optimize" their experiences, as will a new network of informational kiosks, said the office's managing

director, Corinne Menegaux. "After the Games, visitors will be able to enjoy a renewed city, greener, with improved infrastructures, better hospitality and new experiences," she added.

That said, if you're one of the many travelers who adores every facet of the City of Light, don't worry — the changes aren't *too* massive.



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As Barrett commented, "Paris 2024 understood right from the beginning that it did not have to adapt its city and country to fit the Olympic Games. Instead, the Games have adapted to the French context, to create a unique concept for the people of Paris and France, as well as a unique French experience for international visitors."