

GETTING BACK TO NATURE: OUR 2026 NATURAL VENUES GUIDE

August 2026

SportsEvents

Great stuff for sports event planners

\$3.50 Per Copy

Hit the dirt: Exploring
the growth of gravel riding

Five destinations for
outdoor adventure

YEEHAW!

EXPERT TIPS FOR PLANNING A REMARKABLE RODEO

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State spotlights: Kentucky, Louisiana,
New York, Oregon, Utah

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EDITOR'S PLAY•BY•PLAY

Risk assessment

On a cold, rainy spring day about 20 years ago, I was barreling down a muddy mountain bike trail when I spotted a downed tree across the path. I was soaked, shivering, and carrying a fair bit of speed, and with my brake pads slick from the rain, I knew I wasn't going to stop in time. So, I yanked up on the handlebars to hop the front tire over the log. Unfortunately, I misjudged the drop on the other side. My front tire plunged into a hole, sending me flying over the handlebars. My head slammed into a stump, and my bike landed on top of me.

I got up, shook off what mud I could and rode the remaining 30 minutes back to my campsite. It wasn't until I arrived that I noticed the deep gash below my knee and finally stopped to assess the damage. I thanked my lucky stars for my helmet. Judging from the sizable dent in one corner—presumably from hitting that stump—I either wouldn't be here today or would be sipping my food through a straw. Instead, I escaped with a half-dozen stitches and a valuable reminder that helmets really do save lives.

There's no doubt mountain biking can be risky, which, of course, is part of the appeal. These days, though, I'm more inclined to enjoy the scenery without quite as much adrenaline. That's one reason regular contributor Paige Townley's feature on gravel biking caught my attention. It offers many of the same rewards as mountain biking, but with a little less chance of cracking your skull on a tree stump. Judging by its explosive growth, plenty of other riders feel the same way. Read all about the trend—and how organizers can capitalize on it—in "Off the beaten path" on page 19.

Safety is only one theme running through this issue. Writer Keith Loria explores the planning behind successful rodeo events in "Saddle up" on page 23, where organizers explain how the right preparation, equipment, and procedures help keep participants safe, even in one of sports' most demanding environments.

You'll also find our annual guide to natural venues, a look at some of the country's top destinations for outdoor adventure, and planning information for hosting events in Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, Oregon and Utah.

As always, we hope you'll find ideas you can put to use in your own events, and we'd love to hear what topics you'd like us to tackle in future issues. Reach out at bsxton@kenilworth.com. Until then, enjoy the rest of the summer—and watch out for logs in your path. ■



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LiNEUP

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On The Cover:

A rider and her horse in full stride at a Bluegrass Youth Rodeo Association event.

Courtesy Bluegrass Youth Rodeo Association

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Outdoor thrills By Helen Jacob

These five destinations offer some of the country's most exciting places to play outside

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Natural venues resource guide

Essential info on the best places in the county to organize outdoor events

Special Feature

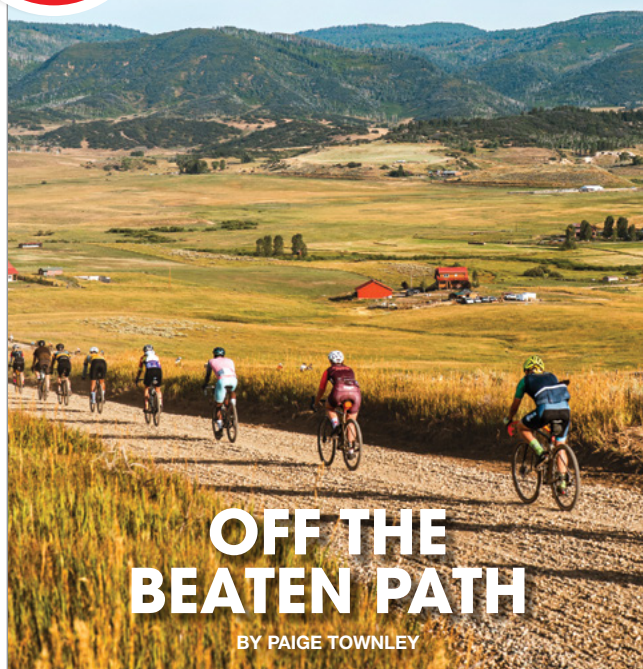
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What to expect at S.P.O.R.T.S 2026 in Virginia Beach

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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

BY PAIGE TOWNLEY

Gravel riding is more than a fad. It's a growing movement, and a new opportunity for planners

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SADDLE UP

BY KEITH LORIA

Expert advice on how to balance tradition, safety, and logistics to host a successful rodeo

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Outdoor thrills

These five destinations offer some of the country's most exciting places to play outside

BY HELEN JACOB

It doesn't matter if you prefer mountains, deserts, forests, or the coast, these outdoor destinations offer exciting ways to explore nature. Whether you're looking to rappel through sandstone, carve fresh powder, or glide behind a team of huskies, these five destinations showcase unforgettable ways to experience the country's most spectacular landscapes while embracing the thrill of the outdoors.



Courtesy Utah Office of Tourism/Playlight

1 Canyoneering in southwest Utah
Canyoneering in Utah turns geology into an up-close adventure. In Zion National Park, guided routes like The Subway and Orderville Canyon lead hikers through Navajo Sandstone sculpted by flash floods in the North Fork of the Virgin River, mixing swimming, scrambling, and rappelling in a continuous flow of movement. In Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, canyons such as Spooky Gulch and Peek-a-Boo Gulch narrow into winding corridors shaped by centuries of runoff across the Colorado Plateau. With permits and careful attention to weather, these routes offer some of the most striking canyon formations in the Southwest.

Best time to go: Spring and fall for milder temperatures and fewer crowds

More info: nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/canyoneering.htm



Courtesy Crystal Mountain Resort

2 Snowboarding on Crystal Mountain, Wash.
Snowboarding at Crystal Mountain Resort in Washington's Cascade Range, southeast of Seattle, pairs deep powder with one of the most photogenic backdrops in North America: Mount Rainier looming in near-constant view. The state's largest ski and snowboard resort spans more than 85 runs across 2,600 acres, with terrain parks for those chasing airtime and wide bowls for those chasing survival. A gondola climbs 2,400 vertical feet to the summit, and off the slopes, riders can explore snowshoe trails and mountainside dining that break up long days on the hill. Together, the terrain, elevation, and consistent Cascades snowfall make it a great winter destination for snowboarders of all levels.

Best time to go: From November to May, during ski season

More info: visitrainier.com/crystal-mountain/

Courtesy Arkansas Tourism



3 Biking in Monument Trails, Arkansas

Arkansas' Monument Trails are built inside state parks like Hobbs State Park–Conservation Area, Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Mount Nebo State Park, and Devil's Den State Park. These trails are purpose-built by professional designers to showcase some of the state's most dramatic terrain. Bikers can expect fast-flowing singletrack, rock gardens, waterfall crossings, and bluff-top views that feel suspiciously overproduced by nature itself. One minute you're carving through pine forest, the next you're rolling past limestone cliffs or lake vistas that make you briefly consider quitting your job to become a "trail person."

Best time to go: Late spring (April–May) and fall (September–November) for milder temperatures

More info: arkansas.com/state-parks/explore/monument-trails

Courtesy Larry Ricker/LHR Images



4 Dog sledding in Ely, Minnesota

In Ely, Minnesota, your workout comes with 10 furry engines and a soundtrack of happy barks. Perched on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Ely is known as the "Sled Dog Capitol of the U.S.," where teams of enthusiastic huskies pull riders across snow-covered forests and frozen lakes. Along the way, you might even spot a fox or white-tailed deer. Equal parts adrenaline, history, and winter magic, dog sledding in Ely proves the best horsepower sometimes has four paws.

Best time to go: December to February

More info: ely.org/things-to-do/winter/dogsledding/

Courtesy Outer Banks Visitors Bureau | outerbanks.org



5 Windsurfing in the Outer Banks, N.C.

Steady winds and the shallow waters of the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds have made the Outer Banks a longtime favorite for windsurfers of all skill levels. The destination offers reliable conditions for lessons, training, and competition, along with outfitters that provide rentals and instruction. Easy access to launch sites and a strong watersports culture make the Outer Banks a natural fit for sports groups and outdoor enthusiasts.

Best time to go: From April to May and September to November for steady winds

More info: outerbanks.org/things-to-do/land-activities/water-sports/kiteboarding-and-windsurfing ■

Natural Venues Resource Guide

DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTISPORT
ALABAMA										
Experience Montgomery (334) 261-1100 www.experiencemontgomeryAL.org	Road Speedway	Angling Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking White water rafting	Cross-country	Jet ski Water skiing			Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Triathlon
	Montgomery is becoming one of the South's hottest sports tickets. National sporting event planners are taking notice of Montgomery as a fun, energetic destination for a wide variety of sporting events. See Ad on Page 25									
Foley Sports Tourism (251) 923-2119 www.foleysportstourism.com			Canoeing Kayaking	Cross-country Trail		Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering
ARIZONA										
Tempe Tourism Office (480) 305-1365 www.tempetourism.com	Road		Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Rowing	Road		Hiking			Tennis Beach	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Visit Tucson Sports (520) 770-2166 www.visittucson.org/sports	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway			Cross-country Trail	Water polo	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Swimming Triathlon
ARKANSAS										
Explore Springdale (479) 872-2222 explorespringdale.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Freshwater		Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Pony club Riding Swimming
CALIFORNIA										
Riverside Sports Commission / Riverside Convention & Visitors Bureau (951) 335-7040 riversidecvb.com/sports/	BMX Mountain biking		Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Rowing	Cross-country	Water polo			Archery Shooting		Disc golf Cross-country Swimming
Visit Fresno County (559) 981-5500 www.visitfresnocounty.org	BMX			Cross-country	Water polo	Hiking			Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
COLORADO										
Visit Colorado Springs (719) 685-7642 www.visitcos.com	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
	Colorado Springs, Olympic City USA, a culture of accomplishment and national pride complements awe-inspiring beauty and unparalleled natural training grounds. Colorado Springs is home to the USOPC Headquarters, 25 NGBs, over 50 national sports organizations, the US Olympic and Paralympic Training Center and the US Olympic and Paralympic Museum. Bring your next event to Olympic City USA! See Ad on Page 51									
DELAWARE										
Greater Wilmington Convention & Visitors Bureau (302) 652-4088 www.visitwilmingtonde.com	Mountain biking Road	Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking			Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Riding Swimming Triathlon
FLORIDA										
Columbia County Sports Commission (386) 719-1453 columbiacountysportscommission.com/	Road	Freshwater	Canoeing Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking				Disc golf Swimming

► Natural Venues Resource Guide

DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
Pensacola Sports (850) 434-2800 www.pensacolasports.org	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Visit Central Florida Sports (863) 551-4750 www.visitcentralfloridasports.com/		Angling Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing	Cross-country	Wakeboarding Water skiing			Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Visit Sarasota County (941) 685-2047 sports.visitsarasota.com	BMX Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing				Tennis Beach	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
 Sarasota County is a top destination for amateur and recreational sports due to our year-round, sunny skies and wide array of community amenities. Our sporting facilities include acclaimed multisport rowing venue Nathan Benderson Park, and the #1 beach in the U.S. on Siesta Key. Our destination fosters and supports an active sports community in addition to robust arts, culture, and dining scenes. See Ad on Page 52										
GEORGIA										
Akins Ford Arena (706) 208-0900 akinsfordarena.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Peachtree City Convention and Visitors Bureau (678) 216-0282 visitpeachtreecity.com	BMX Mountain biking Road		Dragon	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Triathlon
IDAHO										
Visit Boise (208) 472-5204 visitboise.com	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
ILLINOIS										
Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (630) 256-3194 enjoyaurora.com/sports	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Rowing White water rafting	Cross-country Trail		Hiking	Skiing Cross-country	Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Orienteering
Experience Champaign-Urbana (217) 351-4133 experiencecu.org/planners/sports-and-events				Cross-country Road Trail				Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Springfield, Illinois Convention & Visitors Bureau (217) 789-2360 www.visitspringfieldillinois.com	BMX	Angling	Canoeing Kayaking Racing Sailing	Cross-country		Climbing		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
Visit Chicago Southland (708) 895-8200 visitchigosouthland.com	BMX Road		Dragon Kayaking Rowing		Water polo			Archery	Tennis	Swimming

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DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
Visit Lake County (847) 662-2700 www.visitlakecounty.org	BMX Road	Angling Fly Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Triathlon
INDIANA										
Hamilton County Sports Authority (317) 848-3181 www.hamiltoncountysports.com	Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Pony club Swimming Triathlon
Visit South Bend Mishawaka (574) 400-4004 www.visitsouthbend.com	Mountain biking	Angling Freshwater	Canoeing Kayaking Racing Rowing White water rafting	Cross-country Trail		Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Snowmobiling	Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming
IOWA										
Cedar Rapids Tourism (319) 731-4556 tourismcedarrapids.com	BMX Road Speedway	Angling	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing	Cross-country	Water racing	Climbing		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Swimming
SPORTS QC (309) 736-6831 www.visitquadcities.com	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Team	Canoeing Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country	Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
KANSAS										
Sports KS (785) 296-2009 www.travelks.com/sportsks/	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
 SportsKS is a statewide alliance of Kansas Sports Destination Marketing Organizations working together to promote sports tourism. By uniting public and private partners, SportsKS highlights Kansas as a premier destination for tournaments, training, and athletic events, boosting local economies and creating winning experiences. See Ad on Page 17										
Visit Kansas City Kansas (913) 433-3690 www.visitkansascityks.com	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Riding Pentathlon Triathlon
Visit Wichita (316) 265-2800 www.visitwichita.com	BMX Road	Angling Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water skiing	Climbing		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Swimming
KENTUCKY										
Bowling Green Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (270) 782-0800 www.visitbgky.com	Speedway		Canoeing Kayaking Racing	Cross-country Trail				Archery	Tennis	Disc golf

► Natural Venues Resource Guide

DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
Hopkins County Tourist & Convention Commission (270) 821-4171 www.visitmadisonvilleky.com  With a brand-new 90,000 sq. ft. indoor sports facility and a community that embraces athletic events, Madisonville, KY offers a high-quality experience for athletes & fans alike. When the games are over, visitors can explore local attractions or dive into diverse outdoor recreation with 750 acres of parks. Score big off the court with over 60 restaurants & 400 quality hotel rooms within 10 miles. See Ad on Page 35	Mountain biking							Archery	Tennis	Disc golf
Owensboro Convention Center (270) 687-8800 www.owensborocenter.com  Planning Your Next Competitive Sports Event? The Owensboro Convention Center is ready to host your tournament or competition! With a movable sports floor and versatile equipment, our venue has become a premier hub for sporting events of all kinds. Configure the space for up to 4 basketball courts, 9 volleyball courts, or 4 futsal courts — all under one roof. See Ad on Page 37								Archery		
LOUISIANA										
Louisiana's Cajun Bayou (985) 537-8800 www.lacajunbayou.com  In Louisiana's Cajun Bayou, just 35 miles south of New Orleans, discover the unapologetic Cajun culture of Lafourche Parish. The bayou stretches over 75 miles, flowing through our communities and defining our traditions, there's plenty to see and do "up the Bayou" and "down the Bayou." See Ad on Page 29	Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water skiing	Hiking		Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Riding Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Jefferson Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. (504) 731-7083 www.visitjeffersonparish.com/sports  Selecting your next sports venue should be no contest. Fast becoming one of the premier destinations for mid-size tournaments & events, Jefferson offers diverse venues, over 8,500 hotel rooms, convenient airport, I-10 access & great dining along the Louisiana Oyster Trail. See Ad on Page 31	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Fly Saltwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water skiing	Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering
Louisiana Office of Tourism (225) 342-9283 www.TeamLouisianaSports.com  Bring your event to Louisiana! Whether you're looking for fields, courses, courts, stadiums, or arenas, on land or on water, our communities are equipped, accessible, and ready to welcome your athletes and families. Off the field, the good times continue to roll with the cuisine, music, and entertainment found only in Louisiana to "Feed Your Soul". See Ad on Page 29	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Visit Baton Rouge (225) 382-3584 www.visitbatonrouge.com	Road	Angling Freshwater Team		Cross-country Road	Jet ski Water skiing	Climbing		Archery	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Swimming
Visit Lake Charles (337) 436-9588 www.visitlakecharles.org  Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana is the "Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana," with state-of-the-art facilities & superb group services to make planning your event a breeze. We offer baseball, softball, soccer & football fields, gyms, beach volleyball, Olympic-sized swimming pools, arenas, award-winning golf courses, tennis courts & more. Contact our sales director today! See Ad on Page 30	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Saltwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Racing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery		Swimming
Visit The Northshore (985) 892-0520 www.visitthenorthshore.com/sports	Road	Angling Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Sailing	Cross-country Trail					Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Triathlon

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MAINE										
Greater Bangor Convention & Visitors Bureau (207) 947-5205 www.visitbangormaine.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Saltwater	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Water polo	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Alpine Cross-country Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming
MARYLAND										
Ocean City, Md Tourism (410) 723-8624 www.ococean.com	BMX Road	Angling Freshwater Saltwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Surfing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Triathlon
Visit Howard County (410) 313-1900 www.visithowardcounty.com	Road			Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking			Tennis	Disc golf Triathlon
MASSACHUSETTS										
See Plymouth (508) 747-0100 www.seeplymouth.com		Angling Fly Freshwater Saltwater	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Surfing	Hiking				
MICHIGAN										
Lansing Sports Commission (517) 377-1428 www.lansingsports.org	BMX Road	Angling Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Traverse City Tourism (231) 995-3910 www.traversecity.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Alpine Cross-country Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Pony club Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
MINNESOTA										
Twin Cities Gateway CVB (612) 269-0441 www.tcgateway.com	BMX Road	Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking	Skiing Cross-country	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
MISSISSIPPI										
VisitHATTIESBURG (601) 296-7475 www.visitburg.org	Mountain biking Road Speedway	Freshwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water skiing	Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Swimming
MISSOURI										
Visit Cape (573) 335-1631 www.visitcape.com	Mountain biking Road	Angling	Canoeing Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon

Natural Venues Resource Guide

DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
Visit Maryland Heights (314) 374-5209 www.visitmarylandheights.org	Mountain biking Road		Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Swimming Triathlon
MONTANA										
Destination Missoula (406) 532-3250 destinationmissoula.org/sports	Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice	Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowboarding		Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Triathlon
Visit Billings (406) 606-1372 www.visitbillings.com/sports	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
NEBRASKA										
Visit Lincoln (402) 434-5335 www.lincoln.org/compete	BMX Road	Angling Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Pony club Riding Swimming Triathlon
NEW JERSEY										
Atlantic City Sports Commission (609) 318-0803 www.atlanticcitysports.org/	BMX Road	Angling Fly Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Wildwoods Convention Center (609) 846-2664 www.wildwoodsc.com	BMX Road	Angling Fly Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
NEW YORK										
Lake George Regional CVB (518) 668-5755 www.meetlakegeorge.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
Visit Binghamton (607) 296-2103 www.visitbinghamton.org	BMX Mountain biking Road	Fly Ice	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Water polo	Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon

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DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
Visit Rochester/ Rochester NY Sports Commission (585) 279-8300 www.visitrochester.com/sports-commission/	Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Kayaking Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Water polo	Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
NORTH CAROLINA										
Alamance County Visitors Bureau (336) 570-1444 www.visitalamance.com	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater	Canoeing Ice Kayaking Racing Rowing	Road Trail		Hiking		Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf
NORTH DAKOTA										
Visit Greater Grand Forks (701) 746-0444 www.visitgrandforks.com	BMX Road	Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water skiing	Climbing	Skiing Cross-country Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting		Disc golf Swimming
OHIO										
Destination Dayton (937) 226-8284 www.destinationdayton.org	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Wakeboarding Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Triathlon
Shores & Islands Ohio (419) 624-6910 sports.SHORESandISLANDS.com	BMX Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Cross-country Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
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Sports Alliance of Greater Akron - Akron/Summit CVB (330) 374-7560 www.playakron.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
Travel Butler County, Ohio (513) 860-4194 travelbutlercounty.com/sports	BMX Mountain biking Road	Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Rowing	Cross-country Trail	Wakeboarding Water polo			Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
OKLAHOMA										
Tulsa Sports Commission (918) 560-0291 tulsasports.org	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon

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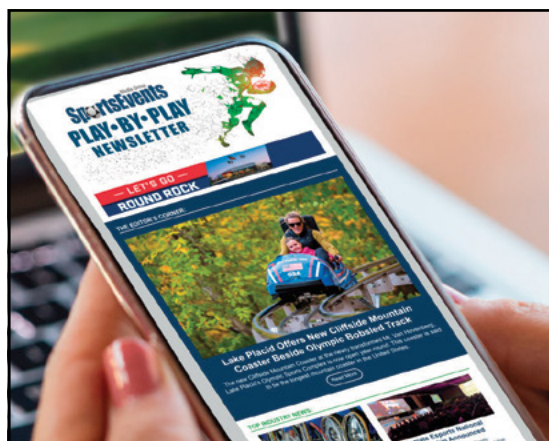
DESTINATION	BICYCLING	FISHING	BOATING	RUNNING	WATER SPORTS	CLIMBING / HIKING	SNOW / ICE SPORTS	TARGET SPORTS	NET SPORTS	OTHER / MULTI
OREGON										
Explore Tualatin Valley (503) 644-5555 tualatinvalley.org/sports-events-planners/	Mountain biking Road	Freshwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
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Travel Medford (541) 608-8517 www.travelmedford.org	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
Visit Corvallis (541) 757-1544 www.visitcorvallis.com/sports	Mountain biking Road			Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming
PENNSYLVANIA										
Discover Lehigh Valley (610) 882-9200 www.discoverlehighvalley.com/	Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Ice		Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Orienteering Pentathlon
Pennsylvania's Americana Region Visitors Bureau (610) 375-4085 www.visitpaamericana.com	Mountain biking Road	Fly Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Swimming
RHODE ISLAND										
Rhode Island Sports Commission (401) 456-0243 www.gosportsri.com	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Saltwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon
SOUTH CAROLINA										
Experience Columbia SC Sports (803) 545-0009 www.columbiascsports.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing White water rafting	Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission (803) 772-1228 www.icrc.net		Angling Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail				Archery		Disc golf Orienteering
SOUTH DAKOTA										
Visit Watertown (605) 753-0285 visitwatertownsd.com	Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski			Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Swimming Triathlon

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TEXAS										
San Marcos Convention & Visitor Bureau (512) 393-5930 www.visitsanmarcos.com	Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater	Canoeing Kayaking Racing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Visit El Paso (915) 534-0600 visitelpaso.com/sports-planners/	BMX Mountain biking Road					Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming
UTAH										
Discover Davis (801) 451-3237 www.discoverdavis.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Fly Freshwater	Kayaking Racing	Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking	Skiing Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
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Visit Ogden (801) 778-6254 www.visitogden.com	Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice Saltwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing White water rafting	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking	Dogsled Skiing Alpine Cross-country Freestyle Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Swimming Triathlon
VIRGINIA										
SALEM, Virginia's Championship City (540) 375-9713 www.visitsalemva.com/	Mountain biking Road	Freshwater	Kayaking	Cross-country Road Trail		Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Riding Orienteering
Sports Richmond, VA (804) 783-7422 sportsrichmondva.com	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Fly Freshwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail	Water polo			Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Spotsylvania County Office of Tourism (540) 507-7755 www.visitspotsy.com	Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Flyboarding Jet ski Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Pony club Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
Tour Stafford, Virginia (540) 658-4580 tourstaffordva.com/sports		Angling Fly Freshwater Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing		Water polo	Hiking		Archery Shooting		Disc golf Swimming
Virginia Beach Sports Tourism (757) 385-6651 www.vbsports.com		Saltwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road	Jet ski Parasailing Surfing Wakeboarding Water polo Water racing Water skiing				Tennis	Triathlon

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WASHINGTON										
Seattle Southside Sports (206) 743-5345 www.seattlesouthside.com/sports-planners/	BMX Mountain biking Road	Saltwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Racing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Water polo	Hiking	Skiing Alpine Cross-country Snowmobiling Snowboarding	Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
Snohomish County Sports Commission (425) 535-5188 www.snocosports.org	BMX Mountain biking Road	Angling Freshwater Saltwater	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing Hiking		Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Orienteering Swimming Triathlon
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WEST VIRGINIA										
Huntington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (304) 525-7333 www.visithuntingtonwv.org	Mountain biking Road	Angling Team	Canoeing Dragon Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Water skiing	Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis	Disc golf Swimming Triathlon
WISCONSIN										
Sports Milwaukee (414) 287-6232 sportsmilwaukee.org	BMX Road Speedway	Angling Freshwater Ice	Canoeing Dragon Ice Kayaking Powerboating Racing Rowing Sailing	Cross-country Road Trail	Jet ski Parasailing Wakeboarding Water polo Water skiing	Climbing	Skiing Cross-country	Archery	Tennis	Disc golf Riding Swimming Triathlon
WYOMING										
Campbell County Convention & Visitors Bureau (307) 686-0040 www.visitgillettwright.com	BMX Mountain biking Road Speedway	Angling Fly Freshwater Ice		Cross-country Road Trail		Climbing Hiking		Archery Shooting	Tennis Beach	Disc golf Cross-country Pony club Riding Orienteering Pentathlon Swimming Triathlon



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Advance look

This way to the beach for S.P.O.R.T.S. 2026

SportsEvents Media Group is once again hosting our S.P.O.R.T.S.—The Relationship Conference, and if you're still on the fence about attending, these three reasons might help you make up your mind.

1. The Location

We move to a different host city every year, and this September 21–24 we're excited to be in Virginia Beach. Conveniently located on the East Coast where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean, it's a destination with a long history of hosting meetings and events, and the team at the city's CVB is ready to welcome our attendees.

Of course, you'll be there to build relationships (more on that in a moment), but Virginia Beach is also a great place to spend a few days. The city was named one of *The New York Times*' top places to visit in 2026 and is home to the world's longest pleasure beach, according to Guinness World Records. Getting there is easy, too. Drivers have access via I-64, U.S. 460, and U.S. 58 from the west, and via I-85, I-95, and U.S. 17 from the north and south. Flying? Our host hotels are just 30 minutes from Norfolk International Airport.

2. The Networking

The hosted buyer concept isn't new, but we do it a little differently. We believe less is more, which is why we maintain a strict 3:1 supplier-to-planner ratio. Our appointments are also a little longer, giving you more time to make your pitch, build meaningful relationships and, ultimately, create opportunities that can lead to business.

The networking doesn't stop when the appointments end. Evening receptions, after-hours gatherings and other social events offer plenty of opportunities to continue the conversation. Returning this year is our popular Singo event, sponsored by Discover Odessa. If you've never played, think musical bingo, adult beverages, and a whole lot of fun.

3. The Hospitality

We're known for going the extra mile to make the conference both memorable and worthwhile, and that extends to the food and beverage experience. This year's networking brunch includes a mimosa wall and Bloody Mary bar sponsored by Sports Virginia, along with entertainment sponsored by Visit Williamsburg. Visit Richmond is sponsoring a crêpe station, Visit Fairfax a donut-and-bagel wall, and Visit Loudoun a build-your-own parfait station.

Yes, S.P.O.R.T.S. is about doing business. But it's also about building relationships, enjoying great hospitality, and having a little fun along the way. We hope to see you in Virginia Beach. ■



Learn more and register to attend at:
www.therelationshipconference.com

All photos courtesy of Trey Burnette/Shoreline Productions

Gravel riding has emerged as one of cycling's fastest-growing disciplines

Off the beaten path

Gravel riding is more than a fad. It's a growing movement, and a new opportunity for planners

BY PAIGE TOWNLEY

The best roads aren't always paved—sometimes they're covered in crushed stone, winding through rolling farmland, and stretches of countryside few cars ever travel. That's exactly what has drawn thousands of cyclists off the pavement and onto gravel, where the ride is less about dodging traffic and more about discovering where the next turn leads.

This type of cycling, known as gravel riding or gravel biking, has emerged as one of cycling's fastest-growing disciplines, allowing riders to venture onto quiet gravel roads, paths, and remote backroads. The cycling and fitness app Strava reported a 55 percent increase in gravel participation in 2023,

a surge fueled in part by riders seeking a safer experience. "It's a way safer form of cycling opposed to road where you have the factor of cars or mountain biking where you have the danger aspect going downhill at high speeds, weaving in and out of trees and around rocks," says Sofia Gibson, assistant lead promoter and outreach coordinator for Gravel Worlds, a gravel cycling event series based in Lincoln, Nebraska. "Gravel riding is a chance to get out by yourself and be able to be in a safer environment."

Natural evolution

As gravel riding has evolved from grassroots gatherings into a mainstream cycling discipline, events have become

more than just races—they've become celebrations of the sport's culture. Few embody that spirit better than Gravel Worlds in Lincoln, Nebraska. What began in 2008 as the Good Life Gravel Adventure—a small gathering of friends riding the area's rural roads—has grown into one of the sport's marquee events, drawing roughly 2,500 to 3,000 participants each August. "It started out as just a group of friends riding the roads we had here or meeting at different places around the country," explains Jason Strohbehn, chief experience officer and lead promoter. "Every year it would grow, with more and more friends that came, and it eventually became a global recognized cycling event."

Courtesy Dan Hughes



Gravel Worlds is an annual event for all ability levels, featuring a 10-mile fun ride, a 35-mile course, a 150-mile race, and a challenging 300-mile route that spans three or sometimes four states.

The inaugural Gravel Worlds was held in 2010 with roughly 100 riders who rode approximately 150 miles on an unmarked course. Since then, Gravel Worlds has grown into one of the sport's premier gatherings. The annual event offers something for nearly every ability level, from a 10-mile fun ride and a 35-mile course to its signature 150-mile race and an epic 300-mile journey that crosses three states—and occasionally four. The weekend also includes running events, a gravel triathlon, and duathlon national championship that serves as a qualifier for the world championships, an expo and live entertainment. But what truly sets the event apart is its emphasis on community over competition. “We like to say it’s community first. We care about the smiles over the speed,” Gibson says. That philosophy comes to life at the finish line, where organizers throw one of cycling’s biggest celebrations not just for the winners, but for the final rider to cross after spending more than 14 hours on the course. Complete with a live DJ, mechanical bull, photo booth, and dozens of bottles of champagne, the party reflects the welcoming atmosphere that has become synonymous with gravel riding. “Unlike many events where you finish, get your medal, and go home, at our events you get your medal and hang out and meet new friends,” Strohhenn says. “That’s what makes these events different. You can hang out with people you normally never would be able to.”

That sense of community has remained a constant even as the sport has exploded in popularity. While gravel riding has long attracted recreational cyclists looking for adventure, the competitive side has exploded in recent years as professional fields have grown and more marquee events have emerged across the country. “The pro side has really grown in the last five years,” Sofia says. “It’s unrecognizable compared to what it was in 2021.” At the same time, she says, the sport has retained the welcoming atmosphere that drew riders to it in the first place. “Everybody gets that gravel bug,” Gibson says. “You sign up for one event, and then you want to try the roads in different states and keep coming back for more.”

Courtesy SBT GRVL



Gravel riding events have become more than just races—they’ve become celebrations of the sport’s culture.

Destination gravel

While Nebraska helped establish gravel riding's grassroots culture, Colorado has become home to one of the sport's premier destination events. Set against the backdrop of Steamboat Springs, SBT GRVL has grown into one of the country's most sought-after gravel rides, attracting riders from across the United States and around the world.

For co-founder and owner Amy Charity, a former professional road cyclist, the idea was a natural fit. After retiring from road racing, she discovered gravel riding and quickly realized her hometown offered everything needed to host a world-class event. "Steamboat is an incredibly unique location to host a gravel cycling event," she says. "We have more than 600 miles of gravel roads, and we're surrounded by a ranching community. At the same time, because we're a popular ski destination, we have the hotels, transportation, restaurants and shopping to support visitors."

That combination of scenic riding and established tourism infrastructure proved to be a winning formula. When registration opened for the inaugural SBT GRVL in 2018 ahead of the first event in 2019, the event's 2,000 rider spots sold out in just six days. Today, demand exceeds capacity, with organizers using a lottery system to fill the event's 2,750 available entries.

Like Gravel Worlds, SBT GRVL is designed to welcome riders of all experience levels. Participants can choose from four routes ranging from 25 to 108 miles, allowing everyone from first-time gravel riders to elite competitors to find the challenge that fits them best. "Gravel cycling really disrupted the whole cycling culture in a very positive way," Charity says. "It's much more inviting. You just show up with a bike. We have seven-year-olds and 82-year-olds riding our event. There really is something for everyone."

The event has evolved into far more than a single day of racing. Throughout the weekend, Steamboat Springs hosts an outdoor expo featuring approximately 80 vendors, yoga sessions, rider panels, live

entertainment, and community activities, while Friday night's costumed uphill climb and concert help set a festive tone before race day. "We want everyone to remember it's supposed to be fun," Charity says. "We want people to connect before race day."

Building a successful event

As gravel riding continues to expand, more destinations are discovering they

don't need towering mountains or world-famous cycling routes to host a successful event. In many cases, all it takes is a network of gravel roads, community support, and an experience that welcomes riders of every ability.

For organizers, that starts long before the first cyclist rolls to the starting line. Because many gravel events wind through remote farmland and ranching communities, building

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SBT GRVL has become so popular that demand now exceeds capacity, and organizers are using a lottery system to fill the event's 2,750 available entries.

relationships with local residents is essential. "Community engagement is really important," says Charity. "Our race goes through working ranches, so we've had a lot of collaboration to ensure the ranching community is aware and comfortable with all the bikes coming through an area that's normally very quiet. As you get out into rural communities, make sure you have strong engagement and communication so everyone knows what to expect."

Those partnerships can also help smaller communities see the opportunity gravel events present. Unlike traditional road races, which often require extensive road closures and traffic management, gravel events typically utilize low-traffic roads outside city limits, making them easier to stage while still delivering a meaningful economic impact. "If you look at some of the most successful gravel races, they're in relatively small communities," says Strohbehn. "The largest gravel race

in the world is in Emporia, Kansas. Gravel cycling has made these small towns places people want to travel to because it's much easier to put on an event. We only use about 200 yards of city streets. It's still a lot of work, but it's very doable."

Broad appeal

Designing an event that appeals to a broad audience is equally important. One of gravel cycling's greatest strengths is its accessibility, and successful events embrace that by offering multiple route options that allow riders to participate at their own comfort level. "There's a huge range of abilities and interests in how far people want to ride," Charity says. "Having different distances has been great for us because you can bring a family and have everyone doing something that works for them."

Convenience also plays a significant role in the overall participant

experience. Rather than requiring riders to shuttle between start and finish locations, Charity recommends creating a central event hub where participants can walk or ride to everything they need. "Our riders love that we're a hub," she says. "The ride starts and finishes in downtown Steamboat, and you can get to the start and finish without getting in a car. That simplicity makes the experience so much better."

Ultimately, organizers agree that the biggest draw isn't necessarily the miles riders cover, but the welcoming atmosphere they encounter along the way. Whether participants arrive on a high-end race bike or their first gravel bike, the goal is to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable joining the ride. When riders leave already planning their next gravel adventure, organizers know they've created more than a race—they've built a community. ■

Timed events, including barrel racing and roping, focus on speed, accuracy, and coordination between rider and horse.

Saddle up

Expert advice on how to balance tradition, safety, and logistics to host a successful rodeo

BY KEITH LORIA

From bucking broncos to barrel racing, rodeo may look like a freewheeling spectacle from the stands, but behind every successful amateur event is a carefully coordinated operation that blends old-school know-how with modern planning tools. From recruiting contestants and preparing livestock to managing schedules and ensuring safety, organizing a rodeo requires months of preparation and a strong team working in sync.

“To make a successful rodeo, it starts long before the day of,” says Jessi Proctor, vice president of the Eastern Professional Rodeo Association, which hosts events across states such as Virginia and North Carolina. “You have to advertise—not only to spectators,

but you have to advertise to your contestants so that they enter.”

Since rodeo competitors choose where they compete, outreach is critical. That means promoting events through social media, signage, community connections and most importantly, word of mouth. Organizers also prioritize building a reliable schedule. “We try to have our schedule planned out months in advance,” Proctor says.

For newer groups, that preparation can take even longer. For instance, David Otten, president of the Bluegrass Youth Rodeo Association in Richmond, Kentucky, notes his organization spent a long time planning before launching its first season in 2025. “We worked for a year on this before we ever had our first rodeo,” he says.

Understanding the core horse events

Horse events are typically divided into roughstock and timed competitions. Roughstock events such as saddle bronc and bareback riding involve staying mounted on a bucking horse for eight seconds. Timed events, including barrel racing and roping, focus on speed, accuracy, and coordination between rider and horse.

Each type requires different planning considerations. Roughstock events depend on stock contractors, who supply the horses and ensure enough animals are available for competitors.

“If you have 10 saddle bronc riders entered, then you need to bring 10 head of horses,” Proctor says.

Timed events rely on competitors bringing their own horses, shifting the

Courtesy of Eventeny



Saddle bronc riding is an exciting rodeo event in which a cowboy aims to ride a bucking horse for eight seconds while using a specialized, hornless saddle and a single rein.

organizer's focus to arena conditions and fairness across runs.

Assembling the right team

No rodeo runs without having a trusted set of people behind the scenes. Organizers must coordinate announcers, judges, arena directors, and a large number of volunteers.

"The biggest thing is having a schedule and sticking to it," says Chance Gregory, past president of the Heartland Youth Rodeo Association in Kingman, Kansas. "Then, having volunteers and making sure you have enough people for each of the events."

Volunteers, he notes, often handle essential roles, from setting barrels and

poles to running gates and assisting with livestock. However, finding enough help can be a challenge. "That's been one of the hardest things, making sure we have enough volunteers," Gregory says. Otten highlights that success is built by strategically placing the right people in key roles. "You've got to get the right group of people with the same passion," he says.

Managing arena flow

Once the rodeo begins, keeping events running smoothly is a constant challenge. Organizers must coordinate transitions between events while maintaining audience engagement. "There's always something moving in the background," Proctor says.

While one event is underway, crews are preparing the next, loading livestock, resetting equipment, or grooming the arena surface. Entertainers, often called rodeo clowns or funny men, help fill downtime and keep spectators engaged. "You have about two hours before you start losing people's attention," Proctor says.

From a broader operational perspective, congestion is one of the biggest challenges modern rodeos face. "Bottlenecks are a common pain point at rodeos," says Nausheen Punjani, co-founder and COO of Eventeny, a U.S.-based event management platform used by festivals, fairs and approximately 60 rodeos nationwide. "That might be a high-profile event where the ratio of attendees to staff gets out of hand. The fix is to anticipate high-traffic areas and overstaff them on purpose."

Prioritizing safety

Safety is a top priority in amateur rodeo, particularly when working with youth competitors and valuable horses. "These animals are worth so much money, and we spend so much on them," Proctor says. "They get the best feed, the best vet care, everything."

In youth rodeos, safety often starts with attire. Gregory notes competitors must wear proper Western gear, including boots and long sleeves, to reduce risk.

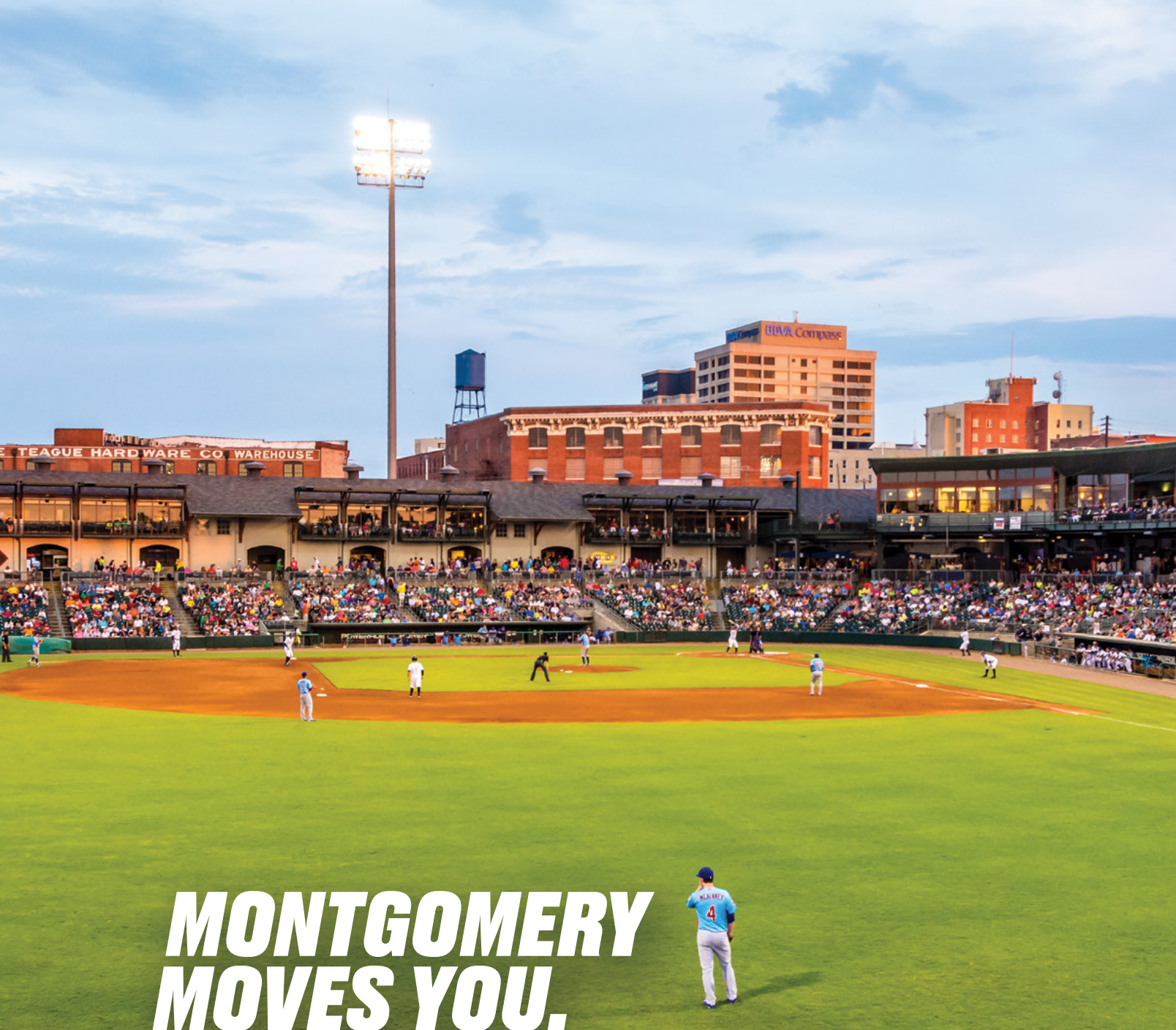
Officials also monitor conditions in real time, stepping in when a situation becomes unsafe.

On the operational side, Otten says basic precautions make a difference. "Don't let spectators in with the horses," he says. "Keep everything separated." Arena footing is another critical factor, especially for timed events like barrel racing, where consistency is key to preventing injuries.

Handling money

Rodeo may be rooted in tradition, but it is also a business that requires careful financial planning.

"It's easy to put on a rodeo, but it's hard to budget it," Gregory says. Expenses include arena rental, insurance, livestock, equipment, and



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Courtesy Bluegrass Youth Rodeo Association



Safety is a top priority in amateur rodeo, particularly when working with youth competitors.

Courtesy of Eventeny



Barrel racing is a classic rodeo event in which a horse and rider race against the clock to complete a precise cloverleaf pattern around three barrels.

awards, often requiring organizers to plan months ahead without guaranteed revenue. Sponsorship is crucial for the viability of events, which is why organizers focus heavily on it. “Getting those sponsors, that’s a big thing,” Proctor says. “That money goes toward our award money for contestants.” For newer organizations, securing funding can be a major hurdle. Otten notes his group initially struggled to gain support and find a venue but saw rapid growth once participation increased.

Talking tech

While many aspects of rodeo continue to have a strong link to the past, technology is beginning to play a larger role in operations.

Eventeny is an all-in-one event management platform that helps organizers handle ticketing, applications, scheduling, and communication in a centralized system. The platform is used by events across the country, including dozens of rodeos, to streamline operations that were once handled manually.

“Almost every event has ticketing software, but there’s more they can do,” Punjani says. “A single rodeo might have 15 different applications open for competitors, vendors, and performers, so having a clear system for managing those is critical.”

Eventeny also helps manage complex schedules across multiple events happening at the same time. “Schedule

tracks let organizers differentiate between activities happening concurrently,” Punjani says. “That’s especially useful when you have timed horse events and roughstock events running at the same time.” For spectators, technology enhances the experience as well.

“Having the event live in the palm of your hand matters,” Punjani says. “Access to schedules, maps, and updates helps attendees plan their day.”

Avoiding common mistakes

Even well-intentioned organizers can run into problems if they overlook key details. One common mistake is failing to prioritize contestants. Poor arena conditions or disorganization can discourage participation, particularly when high-value horses are involved.

Another mistake is inadequate promotion. “If you don’t advertise, people don’t know you’re coming,” Proctor says. Technology can also become a stumbling block if systems are not integrated.

“If everything lives in different places, it becomes inefficient,” Punjani says. “That kind of setup limits growth because organizers spend too much time managing the details instead of improving the event.”

Maintaining focus

For many organizers, especially those working with youth, rodeo is about more than competition.

“It teaches them how to lose,” Gregory says. “And how to carry themselves with integrity.” Otten believes that the focus of rodeo should remain on participants and their development. “Keep it about the kids,” he says. “If you do it for the right reasons, it will work.”

In the end, organizing an amateur rodeo is a balancing act. It requires honoring the traditions of the sport while adapting to modern expectations around safety, efficiency, and spectator experience. From assembling the right team to leveraging technology and maintaining high standards for animal care, successful events are built on preparation and passion. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON: LOUISIANA

Louisiana is a sports destination where competition is amplified by culture, hospitality, and a deep-rooted passion for gathering around the game. From the marquee energy of New Orleans to the collegiate pride and tradition surrounding Baton Rouge, the state consistently delivers environments built for high-impact events, creating a setting that supports tournaments, championships, and gatherings from start to finish. "Louisiana has everything event organizers need to deliver a successful championship, from first-class venues and experienced partners to a welcoming hospitality industry," says Louisiana's Lieutenant Governor, Billy Nungesser. "Beyond the competition, athletes and fans enjoy an unforgettable destination filled with incredible food, music, culture, and outdoor adventures that turn a sporting event into a vacation." ■

In 2025, Baton Rouge hosted the Masters of Strength Fest. ►



Courtesy Visit Baton Rouge



MUST SEE:

Mardi Gras Museum

The Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu in Lake Charles offers an immersive look at one of Southwest Louisiana's most celebrated traditions. Reimagined following Hurricane Laura and expanded into a modern 6,000-square-foot facility, the museum showcases the artistry, craftsmanship, and cultural significance of Mardi Gras through elaborate costumes, interactive exhibits, and the world's largest display of Mardi Gras attire. The attraction highlights the rich heritage of one of the nation's largest Mardi Gras celebrations outside New Orleans. ■

Visit Lake Charles

LOUISIANA

ALEXANDRIA/PINEVILLE

Conveniently located in the heart of Louisiana, Alexandria and neighboring Pineville offer fields, fairways, diamonds, lakes, and an array of other venues for sporting events. With easy access from across the state, affordable lodging, family-friendly attractions, and a welcoming community, Alexandria/Pineville gives event planners a central, convenient, and memorable Louisiana sports experience.

Hotel rooms: 2,000

Hotel tax rate: 16.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Johnny Downs Sports Complex has eight 200-foot baseball/softball fields, five large fields, and five small fields
- Links on the Bayou is an 18-hole golf course
- Ward 9 Sportsplex has six turf baseball/softball fields and eight soccer fields
- Ward 10 Recreation Complex has nine baseball/softball fields and four tennis courts

Convention center: Laborde Earles Coliseum offers 55,000 square feet of space and can accommodate sports such as basketball, volleyball, archery, wrestling, and boxing.

Contact: Alexandria/Pineville Area CVB, explorealexandriapineville.com

ASCENSION PARISH

Ascension Parish is conveniently located between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

Hotel rooms: 1,893

Major facilities:

- Lamar Dixon Expo Center is a multipurpose facility that sits on 247 acres and has two indoor buildings that can host wrestling, cheerleading, and more
- Cajun Industries Soccer Complex has 20 grass fields suitable for soccer, lacrosse, football, and other field sports

Contact: Ascension Parish Tourism Commission, visitlasweetspot.com.

BATON ROUGE

Baton Rouge is Louisiana's Capital City, conveniently situated just an hour from New Orleans and well connected to major hubs like Houston, Dallas, Washington D.C., and Atlanta through the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport. Known as the Sports Capital of Louisiana, Baton Rouge is home to championship-



The Pontchartrain Convention & Civic Center in Kenner has hosted The American Championships cheer and dance event.

winning programs at both Louisiana State University and Southern University, bringing a built-in culture of passionate sports fandom to every event it hosts.

Hotel rooms: 8,500

Hotel tax rate: 15.45 percent

Major facilities:

- LSU's Tiger Stadium is a 102,321-seat venue
- Stacks Pickleball has 12 indoor courts
- Raising Cane's River Center's main exhibition hall spans 70,000 square feet and can be combined with other areas, like the arena, to create over 100,000 square feet of contiguous space
- LSU's Alex Box Stadium is a 10,326-seat ballpark
- Traction Sports Performance Complex has 12 outdoor fields

Contact: Visit Baton Rouge, visitbatonrouge.com.

CAJUN COAST

Conveniently located along U.S. Highway 90 between New Orleans and Lafayette, the Cajun Coast provides easy access for regional and national events. Athletes and spectators enjoy fresh Gulf seafood, award-winning festivals, swamp tours, fishing, paddling trails, and a welcoming small-town atmosphere.

Hotel rooms: 1,100

Hotel tax rate: 15.7 percent

Major facilities:

- Atchafalaya Golf Course is an 18-hole course
- Kemper Williams Park includes six lighted baseball/softball fields
- Bayou Bend Health & Fitness Center has eight pickleball courts

• Morgan City Auditorium offers a number of spaces and can host sports like dance competitions and wrestling matches.

Contact: Cajun Coast CVB, cajuncoast.com.

HOUMA

Just 55 miles southwest of New Orleans, Houma offers a welcoming destination where events feel personal, community-driven, and deeply rooted in Cajun culture. From large-scale youth tournaments and fishing rodeos to cheer and dance competitions, Houma provides a unique blend of hospitality, authentic experiences, and quality sports facilities.

Hotel rooms: 1,500

Hotel tax rate: 10.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Bayou Country Sports Park features a softball complex, baseball complex, and multipurpose fields
- Barry Bonvillian Civic Center is a multipurpose space that hosts volleyball and basketball events
- Vandebilt Catholic High School Stadium has seating for 3,790 and accommodates track and soccer
- Gray Pickleball Complex offers dedicated pickleball courts
- Terrebonne Parish Tennis Complex features 10 courts and dedicated pickleball courts

Contact: Houma CVB, explorehouma.com.

JEFFERSON PARISH

Jefferson Parish offers a diversity of sporting venues, both indoors and out.

Hotel rooms: 8,000

Hotel tax rate: 12.75 percent on the Eastbank, 11.75 percent on the Westbank

Major facilities:

- Pontchartrain Center can host a variety of sports events, including wrestling, volleyball, cheer, basketball, karate, and taekwondo
- Alario Center is a multipurpose facility and sports center with a 2,000-seat arena

Contact: Jefferson CVB, visitjeffersonparish.com.

KENNER

Kenner is conveniently located 15 minutes from New Orleans and five miles from the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. In addition to a major convention center, the city features multiple volleyball and basketball courts.

Hotel rooms: 2,420

Hotel tax rate: 9.5 percent

Major facilities:

- The Pontchartrain Convention & Civic Center offers 73,243 square feet of space, including a 34,560-plus-square-foot arena
- Coconut Beach Volleyball has 22 sand courts
- Muss Bertolino Park has a stadium, running track, and baseball field
- Galatas and Greenlawn each offer one baseball field

Contact: Visit Kenner, visitkenner.us.

LAFAYETTE

Lafayette combines top-tier sports facilities with a one-of-a-kind cultural experience, making it an ideal destination for sporting events of all sizes. With more than 5,000 hotel rooms, easy access from major Gulf South markets, and top-notch venues such as the Broussard Sports Complex and Youngsville Sports Complex, Lafayette offers the infrastructure event organizers need.

Hotel rooms: 5,337

Hotel tax rate: ranges from 13 percent to 16 percent

Major facilities:

- Youngsville Sports Complex consists of six soccer fields, four softball fields, five baseball fields, 10 tennis courts, and a number of indoor and outdoor pickleball courts
- Broussard Sports Complex has 11 baseball/softball fields, six soccer/lacrosse fields, and eight USA-certified tennis courts

Convention center: Cajundome houses a 26,400-square-foot arena floor and has seating for up to 13,500.

Contact: Lafayette CVB, lafayettetravel.com.



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► LOUISIANA

LAKE CHARLES

Situated along I-10, two hours from Houston, Texas and three hours from New Orleans, Lake Charles boasts easy access. Its mild climate with warm winters allows for outdoor and indoor sporting events year-round.

Hotel rooms: 7,300

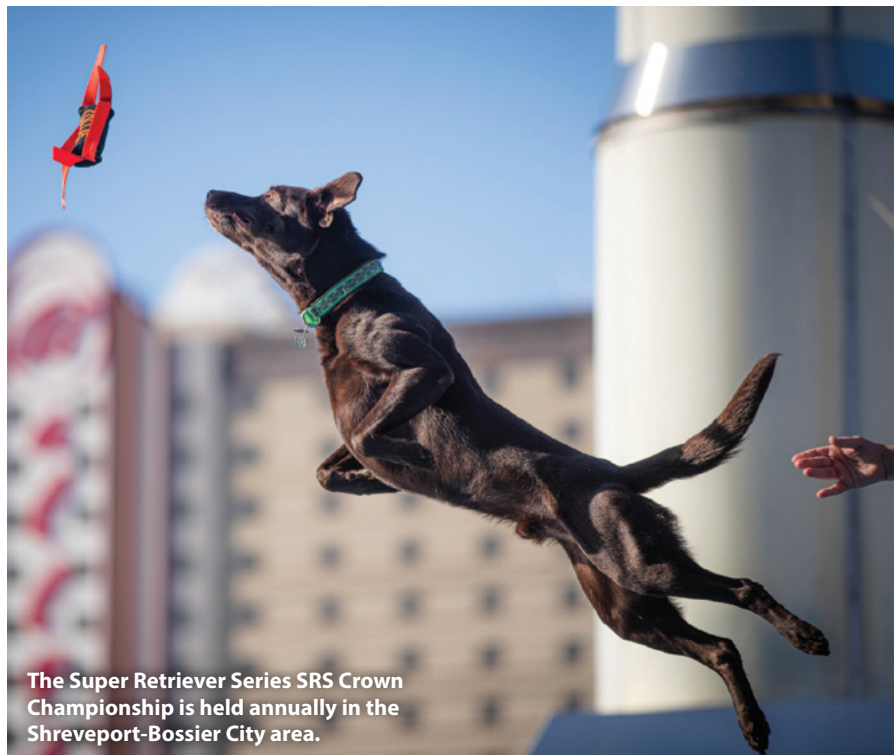
Hotel tax rate: 15.2 percent

Major facilities:

- McMurry Park has three baseball fields
- North Frasch Softball Complex has eight softball fields: two grass fields and six turf fields
- Lake Charles Multi Sports Complex includes five baseball fields, 12 soccer fields, and two basketball courts
- OD Johnson Softball/Baseball Complex includes four baseball/softball fields
- Pattison Park includes 10 baseball/softball fields
- SPAR Aquatic Center features an Olympic-sized pool

Convention center: Lake Charles Event Center has a capacity of 7,450 and can accommodate a wide variety of sports.

Contact: Lake Charles CVB, visitlakecharles.org.



The Super Retriever Series SRS Crown Championship is held annually in the Shreveport-Bossier City area.

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MONROE-WEST MONROE

With more than 2,500 hotel rooms, 100 locally owned restaurants, and facilities for almost any sport, Monroe-West Monroe is a sought-after sports destination.

Hotel rooms: 2,500

Major facilities:

- Sterlington Sports Complex features 10 baseball/softball fields of various sizes
- West Monroe Sports and Events is a new 112,000-square-foot facility with eight basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts, 16 pickleball courts, and 77,000 square feet of flat floor space.
- Ouachita Sportsplex has eight baseball/softball fields
- Ike Hamilton Expo Center houses a dirt arena for equestrian events and bike races, and has seating for 2,900

Convention center: With seating for 7,600, Monroe Civic Center hosts sports such as boxing, MMA, and cheerleading.

Contact: Monroe-West Monroe CVB, Monroe-WestMonroe.org.

NATCHITOCHES

Louisiana's oldest city, Natchitoches offers a rich history and culture alongside outstanding recreational activities. Its 33-mile oxbow lake is ideal for rowing, boating, kayaking, and various other watersport events.

Hotel rooms: 750

Major facilities:

- Ben Johnson Foundation Basketball Courts has two full-court basketball courts and six half-court basketball courts
- Northwestern State University has a baseball field, softball field, soccer complex, eight-court tennis complex, football stadium, multipurpose coliseum, and track
- Parc Natchitoches has eight baseball/softball fields, five soccer fields, and six tennis courts
- Highland Park includes two baseball/softball fields
- Parc Natchitoches has five baseball/softball fields and four soccer fields

Convention center: The Natchitoches Events Center is a 40,000-square-foot facility that offers a

diverse range of spaces to accommodate events of all sizes and styles.

Contact: Natchitoches CVB, natchitoches.com.

NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans offers a combination of world-class sports infrastructure, walkability, culture, and hospitality that few destinations can match. Event organizers benefit from major venues located within a compact downtown footprint, allowing attendees to easily access hotels, restaurants, attractions, and event venues without extensive transportation needs.

Hotel rooms: 26,000

Hotel tax rate: 15 percent plus 2.5 percent tourism support assessment and \$1 to \$3 per room, per night depending on hotel size

Major facilities:

- Caesars Superdome is an indoor multipurpose venue and has a seating capacity of 66,000
- Smoothie King Center is a multipurpose venue with a seating capacity of 16,800
- City Park has more than 1,300 acres and is home to cross country, running, golf, and rowing



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The Eunice Rec Complex in St. Landry Parish houses 10 baseball/softball fields.

- Shrine on Airline is a professional-grade baseball facility
- Convention center:** Ernest N. Morial Convention Center boasts more than 1.1 million square feet of contiguous exhibit space and hosts sports like volleyball, cheer and dance, martial arts, wrestling, and more.
- Contact:** New Orleans & Company, neworleans.com.

THE NORTHSHORE

The Northshore is located at the convergence of three major interstates (I-10, I-12, and I-59) and is less than an hour away from downtown New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

- Hotel rooms:** 3,000
- Hotel tax rate:** average of 13.5 percent plus \$2 per room, per night in certain Wards
- Major facilities:**
 - Pelican Park in Mandeville has three gyms, seven courts, 32 athletic fields for baseball, softball, flag football, soccer, and lacrosse, an 18-hole disc golf course, and eight lighted pickleball courts
 - Castine Center at Pelican Park is a 56,000-square-foot multipurpose facility that can host volleyball, basketball, pickleball, wrestling, baton twirling, cheer, and more
 - Coquille Sports Complex has 12 diamond fields for baseball and softball, five rectangular fields for soccer, lacrosse and flag football, four gymnasiums, eight tennis courts, a special event field, and an outdoor area that hosts games including bocce ball, shuffleboard, and horseshoes.
- Convention Center:** The Harbor Center in Slidell is a 54,000-square-foot space that can be divided into

various floor plans as needed. In 2024, it underwent a \$3.55 million expansion, which added 9,000 square feet of meeting space.

Contact: Visit The Northshore, visitthenorthshore.com.

RUSTON

Ruston and Lincoln Parish combine small-town charm with big-league hospitality, offering first-class athletic facilities, a central location in North Louisiana, and a community that rallies behind every event. Home to Louisiana Tech University and Grambling State University, the area boasts top-tier venues for everything from football and basketball to track and field, baseball, and beyond.

- Hotel rooms:** 750
- Major facilities:**
 - The 185-acre Ruston Sports Complex offers facilities for baseball, softball, tennis, football, soccer, basketball, pickleball, cheerleading, volleyball, and more
 - Lincoln Parish Park boasts a highly-rated, 10-mile mountain bike trail
 - Joe Aillet Stadium is a 28,562-seat stadium
- Contact:** Experience Ruston, experienceruston.com.

SHREVEPORT

Located in the easily accessible region of northwest Louisiana, Shreveport-Bossier offers a one-of-a-kind blend of spicy Cajun spirit and warm southern hospitality. Here, guests will experience 24-hour resort-style casinos, riverfront entertainment, family-friendly festivals, and mouthwatering food.

Hotel rooms: 10,500

Hotel tax rate: ranges from 15.6 percent to 16 percent

Major facilities:

- Brookshire Grocery Arena is a 14,000-seat multipurpose arena
- Independence Stadium has a synthetic turf field with seating for 50,000 fans
- Tinsley Athletic Complex is a multiuse complex with 10 baseball fields, four soccer fields, and four youth/adult football fields

Convention center: Shreveport Convention Center has 350,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including 95,000 square feet of column-free space. visitshrevestbossier.org

Contact: Visit Shreveport-Bossier, www.visitshrevestbossier.org

ST. LANDRY PARISH

Many players travel with their families, and St. Landry Parish offers numerous family-friendly activities, such as paddling along a National Water Trail.

- Hotel rooms:** 849
- Hotel tax rate:** ranges from 14 percent to 18.2 percent, depending on city
- Major facility:**
 - Eunice Rec Complex houses 10 baseball/softball fields
- Contact:** St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission, cajuntravel.com.

TANGIPAHOA PARISH

Tangipahoa is located at the intersection of two interstates and is home to multiple cities, including Kentwood and Hammond. The cities offer numerous fields, gyms, arenas, and multipurpose buildings, many of which are within a 20-mile radius.

- Hotel rooms:** 1,200
- Hotel tax rate:** 14 percent
- Major facilities:**
 - Chappapeela Park has 12 softball and baseball fields, 21 soccer fields, two regulation football fields, and a gym with two basketball/volleyball courts
 - Hammond America Sportsplex includes three artificial turf baseball/softball fields
 - North Oak Park features four softball fields
 - Pennington Student Activity Center is an 85,000-square-foot facility with four multipurpose courts and an indoor track
- Convention center:** Southeastern Louisiana University Center is a 15,000-square-foot arena with 7,561 seats. The facility hosts numerous events every year, including basketball and cheerleading.
- Contact:** Tangipahoa Parish CVB, tangitourism.com. ■

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SPOTLIGHT ON: KENTUCKY

Kentucky blends storied sports tradition with a steadily growing event landscape. From the global spotlight of the Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby to its deep athletic roots that include legends like Muhammad Ali, the Bluegrass State carries a championship pedigree that resonates well beyond its borders. Anchored by strong facilities and a landscape that ranges from rolling horse country to urban venues, Kentucky offers event organizers both versatility and character. "Kentucky has a lot to offer, from our southern hospitality to our rich traditions," says tourism commissioner Mike Mangeot. "Our central location means easy access from anywhere in the country, and our ability to host massive-scale events like the Kentucky Derby has put us on the map for more national events." ■

Bowling Green Ballpark is a 4,500-seat minor league stadium. ▶



Courtesy Visit BGKT



MUST SEE:

National Corvette Museum

A visit to Bowling Green isn't complete without a visit to the National Corvette Museum, a destination that celebrates one of America's most iconic sports cars. Through interactive exhibits, historic vehicles, and hands-on attractions, the museum offers an immersive look at Corvette's legacy and ongoing evolution. As the only place in the world where Corvettes are manufactured, Bowling Green gives visitors a unique opportunity to connect with the brand beyond the showroom, with select tours available at the nearby GM Corvette Assembly Plant. Motorsport enthusiasts can take the experience even further at NCM Motorsports Park, where visitors can get behind the wheel of a Corvette or test their skills on the go-kart track. ■

KENTUCKY

ASHLAND

Ashland is located on the southern banks of the Ohio River in the tri-state area of Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia.

Hotel rooms: 1,100

Major facility:

The Ashland Tennis Center has four indoor and 11 outdoor courts

Contact: Visit Ashland, KY, visitaky.com.

BOWLING GREEN

Bowling Green's combination of strong sports facilities, a positive event-hosting track record, a supportive community, and unique entertainment options makes it an attractive and distinct choice for sporting events.

Hotel rooms: 3,500

Hotel tax rate: 13.42 percent

Major facilities:

- Bowling Green Ballpark is a 4,500-seat minor league stadium
- Michael Buchanon Park is an eight-field baseball/softball complex with a 62,000-square-foot gym and 40,000 square foot space that houses four

basketball/volleyball courts and eight pickleball courts, and attached to the gym is an 82,000-square-foot multipurpose tennis facility

- E.A. Diddle Arena is a 7,500-seat multipurpose venue.

Convention center: Sloan Convention Center is conveniently located near three hotels with a combined 444 rooms. Versatile ballroom space of over 19,500 square feet of space for multiple sports such as dance, indoor archery, cheerleading events, and more.

Contact: Bowling Green Area CVB, visitbgky.com.

ELIZABETHTOWN

Located in central Kentucky and close to major parkways, Elizabethtown is easy to get to. The city offers a thriving downtown with new restaurants, shopping, and live music nearly every night.

Hotel rooms: 2,400

Major Facilities:

- Elizabethtown Sports Park is a 158-acre outdoor complex with 25 total fields, including 12 diamonds with newly-installed infield AstroTurf, 12 rectangular fields of various sizes, and a Miracle Field

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TEAM
KENTUCKY.



The Big Lex 4 Miler is an annual run and walk held at the historic Keeneland Race Course in Lexington.

- Bluegrass Sportsplex is a 103,000 square foot indoor venue with a multi-use turf field, three full size basketball courts that convert to five volleyball courts, six batting cages and meeting/party spaces.
- The soon-to-be named Amphitheater in Elizabethtown will open in spring of 2027. The venue will seat up to 10,000 guests and host events such as concerts, festivals, opening ceremonies for sports tournaments and more

Contact: Elizabethtown Tourism, touretown.com

FRANKFORT

Frankfort, Kentucky's capital city, is just a short drive from Lexington and Louisville. The city offers plenty of indoor and outdoor facilities and lots to do before or after the event.

Hotel rooms: 864

Major facilities:

- Capitol View Park has two lighted fields and three unlighted fields for soccer, four lighted softball fields, and nine miles of trails for mountain biking
- Lakeview Park has seven soccer fields, four youth softball fields, and a disc golf course

Contact: Frankfort Tourist Commission, visitfrankfort.com.

HOPKINS COUNTY

Conveniently located directly on I-69 in the heart of western Kentucky, Madisonville and Hopkins County are excellent destinations for your next sporting event, thanks to their sports and recreation facilities.

Hotel rooms: 508

Total hotel tax rate: 11 percent

Major facilities:

- Kentucky Sports Factory is a 90,000-square-foot indoor facility with six basketball courts, 22 pickleball courts, 12 volleyball courts, and one indoor turf field
- West Kentucky Archery Complex is a 18,000-square-foot indoor facility with 50-plus shooting lanes and up to 90 meter outdoor shooting range

Convention center: Ballard Convention Center offers a meeting/training room, two large event/exhibit halls, and outdoor arena and fairgrounds.

Contact: Hopkins County Tourist & Convention Commission, visitmadisonvilleky.com.

HOPKINSVILLE

Hopkinsville offers diverse and accessible facilities for most sports of most sizes. From a robust skate park and a rolling disc golf course to a 55,000-square-foot indoor recreational facility and a five-plex softball complex, Hopkinsville is the place to play.

Hotel rooms: 1,400

Major facilities:

- Basil Griffin Park is a 111-acre park with an 18-hole disc golf course, 10 baseball/softball fields, three youth football fields, and three outdoor basketball courts
- Bee Creek Soccer Complex boasts 19 soccer fields ranging in size
- Bennie Purcell Tennis Courts features eight lighted hard courts

Contact: Visit Hopkinsville, visithopkinsville.com.

KENTUCKY LAKE

Kentucky Lake offers a rare blend of scenic beauty, world-class outdoor recreation, and versatile sports facilities—all within a short drive of major population centers in the Midwest and Southeast. As home to Major League Fishing headquarters and the site of numerous national bass fishing tournaments, the area is a top destination for competitive angling.

Hotel rooms: 1,000

Hotel tax rate: 10 percent

Major facility:

- Mike Miller Park in Benton includes two lighted baseball/softball fields and two youth soccer fields
- Calvert City Ballpark Complex includes four baseball/softball fields
- Kenlake Tennis Center has dozens of courts

Contact: Kentucky Lake CVB, kentuckylake.org.

LEXINGTON

Lexington is known as the "Horse Capital of the World" and is surrounded by world-famous horse farms and Bourbon distilleries. The city's central location to two-thirds of the U.S. population makes it an attractive host city for sports events and tournaments.

Hotel rooms: 9,300

Hotel tax rate: 15.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Rupp Arena is a multipurpose venue with seating up to 23,500
- Alltech Arena is a multipurpose venue with seating for 5,500
- Lexington Sporting Club Soccer Stadium has a grass field and seating for 7,500

Convention center: Central Bank Center is home to 200,000 square feet of flexible space, next to more than 800 hotel rooms, and situated in downtown Lexington.

Contact: VisitLEX, visitlex.com.

LONDON

London is located in Laurel County, conveniently located on I-75. The area offers a rich history of sports and athletics and a rural setting that provides ample opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to explore.

Hotel rooms: 1,233

Major facility:

- London-Laurel Optimist Club offers a 15,000-square-foot gym, nine soccer fields, two basketball courts, and two volleyball courts
- The Laurel County Fairgrounds sit on 74 acres and are suitable for a variety of events, including archery, 10K races, and mountain biking, among others.

Contact: London-Laurel County Tourist Commission, visitlondonky.com.

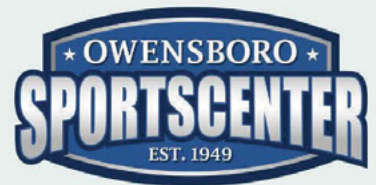


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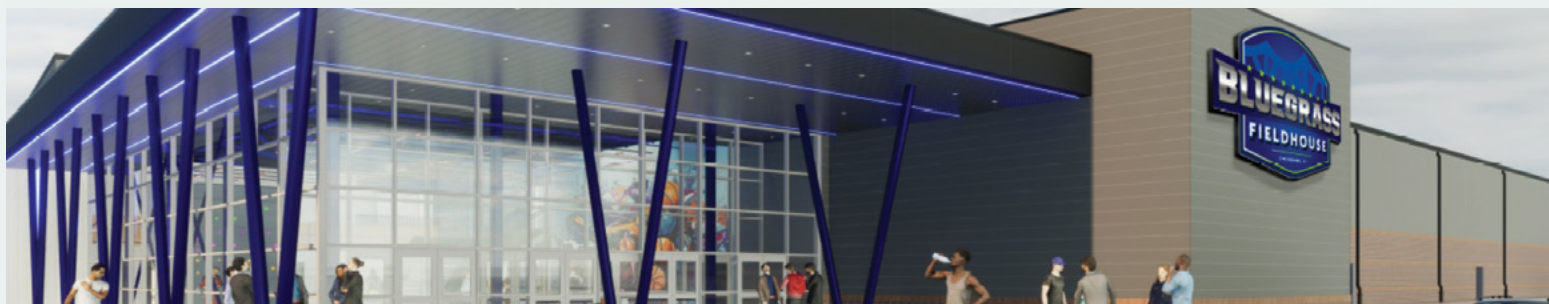


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The Urban Bourbon half marathon takes place yearly in Louisville.



Louisville is a regular host of the USA Cycling Cyclocross National Championships.

LOUISVILLE

Louisville is synonymous with legendary sports icons and traditions, from Muhammad Ali and Churchill Downs—home of the Kentucky Derby—to the iconic Louisville Slugger. With a rich sports heritage and countless championship moments, Louisville has also emerged as one of the nation's most dynamic destinations.

Hotel rooms: 23,442

Hotel tax rate: 17.7 percent

Major facilities:

- The Kentucky Exposition Center is undergoing an expansion and renovation and features 1.2 million square feet of event space
- KFC Yum! Center is a multipurpose venue with seating for more than 22,000
- The Norton Healthcare Sports & Learning Center is a track and field facility with Kentucky's only banked indoor track

Convention center: The Kentucky International Convention Center provides more than 200,000 contiguous square feet of space.

Contact: Louisville Sports Commission, louisvillesports.org.

OWENSBORO

Owensboro offers a diverse mix of venues, most of which are less than 10 years old.

Hotel rooms: 1,500

Hotel tax rate: nine percent

Major facilities:

- Fisher Park has four turf baseball/softball fields
- Bluegrass Fieldhouse is set to open this year and will be an 88,000-square-foot all-hardwood facility with seven high school regulation basketball courts, which can be converted into 14 volleyball courts, or 28 pickleball courts.

- Panther Creek Park includes four baseball/softball fields
- Thompson Berry includes 11 soccer fields
- Edge Ice Arena has one hockey rink

Convention center: The Owensboro Convention Center can hold eight volleyball courts and four basketball courts and hosts other sports such as volleyball, cheerleading, dance, pickleball, and archery.

Contact: Owensboro-Daviess County CVB, visitowensboro.com.

PADUCAH

Paducah is situated in western Kentucky, halfway between Nashville and St. Louis. Paducah's natural and built venues are adaptable for a variety of sporting events and its arts, culture, dining, and shopping scene amplify the experience after hours.

Hotel rooms: 2,000

Hotel tax rate: 14 percent

Major facilities:

- Paducah Sports Park by CFSB is a sports and recreation complex featuring 20 synthetic turf baseball/softball diamonds and multiple rectangular fields for soccer, lacrosse, and disc golf
- Paducah Ohio River Boat Launch is used for fishing tournaments
- Twin Oaks Lake is a 50-acre two-lake tournament water skiing venue
- Historic Brooks Stadium is a 1,800-seat ballpark

Convention center: The Paducah-McCracken County Convention & Expo Center offers 100,000 square feet of flexible space under one roof. The facility has hosted sports such as basketball, volleyball, and cheer and dance.

Contact: Paducah CVB, paducah.travel.

SOMERSET

Somerset, in Pulaski County, offers a rare blend of competitive sporting venues, scenic beauty, and small-town hospitality. Being the Capital of Lake Cumberland, the area is ideal for fishing tournaments on the lake, baseball/softball tournaments at Cal Ripken, or mountain biking events at Pulaski County Park.

Hotel rooms: 695

Hotel tax rate: ranges from 10 to 14 percent depending on location

Major facilities:

- Ward Correll Sports Complex has five fields
- The Center for Rural Development has 35,000 square feet of space and hosts wrestling and roller derby

Contact: Somerset-Pulaski County CVB, lctourism.com. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON: OREGON

Oregon combines premier sports facilities with some of the most scenic natural landscapes in the country, creating a destination that appeals to event organizers, athletes, and spectators alike. From championship-caliber venues in vibrant urban centers to competition sites surrounded by mountains, forests, and waterways, the state offers a versatile backdrop for events across a wide range of sports. ■

Riders lining up at the
BMX Track in Bend. ►



Courtesy Visit Bend

OREGON



MUST SEE:

Salt Creek Falls

Just outside Eugene, Salt Creek Falls offers one of Oregon's most impressive natural escapes. As the state's second-highest single-drop waterfall, it cascades 286 feet and plunges into a forested canyon surrounded by old-growth evergreens and a network of accessible viewing areas and short trails. The setting delivers a quick immersion into the Pacific Northwest's signature landscape, where mist, moss, and mountain air define the experience. ■

Melanie Griffin/ Courtesy EugeneCascadesCoast.org

BEND

Bend is nestled in the mountainous high desert of central Oregon. The city is best known for its abundance of scenic beauty.

Hotel rooms: 3,028

Hotel tax rate: 11.9 percent

Major facilities:

- Pine Nursery Park houses 16 pickleball courts, five sand volleyball courts, two turf soccer fields, six grass fields, and a disc golf course
- Juniper Swim & Fitness Center houses an Olympic-sized 50-meter pool, indoor 25-meter pool, and seasonal outdoor activity pool
- The Pavilion includes 1,200 square feet of indoor space, 4,500 square feet of outdoor space, and 20,000 square feet of outdoor covered space. It's suitable for skating, roller skating, hockey, and curling.

Contact: Visit Bend, visitbend.com.

CORVALLIS

Corvallis is the heart of the Willamette Valley and is a community that celebrates the unconventional, supports all things local, and is passionate about preserving the beauty of its natural resources.

Hotel rooms: 951

Hotel tax rate: 13.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Benton County Fairgrounds houses a 27,500-square-foot indoor exhibit hall
- Crystal Lake Sports Fields has 10 Little League baseball fields and flexible field space that can accommodate up to 10 soccer fields
- Oregon State University offers venues for football, basketball, gymnastics, wrestling, volleyball, baseball, track and field, soccer, and tennis.

Contact: Visit Corvallis, visitcorvallis.com.

EUGENE, CASCADES & COAST

The Eugene, Cascades & Coast region is a unique sporting and adventure destination. With the ocean, sand, mountains, lakes, rivers, forests and exceptional sporting venues, there's a wealth of natural and traditional options for hosting a wide range of sports.

Hotel rooms: 5,896

Major facilities:

- Matthew Knight Arena is a 420,000-square-foot venue ideal for basketball
- Home of the Eugene Emeralds minor league



US Rowing's 2023 Northwest Masters took place in Eugene.



The Capital Futbol Club in Salem hosts tournaments, camps and leagues.

- baseball team, PK Park is a 4,000-seat ballpark
- Pape Field hosts soccer and lacrosse
- Moshofsky Center is a 117,000-square-foot indoor facility with a turf football field and a four-lane 120-meter track
- Bob Keefer Center for Sports and Recreation is a 97,000-square-foot multisport complex with six indoor courts for basketball, volleyball, tennis, pickleball, and roller skating
- Civic Park has four indoor hardwood courts, two outdoor courts, and a lighted 100,000-square-foot turf field
- Willamalane Park Swim Center houses an eight-lane pool

Convention center: Lane Events Center offers several different sports facilities.

Contact: Eugene, Cascades & Coast, eugene Cascades Coast.org.

KLAMATH FALLS

Klamath Falls has over 300 days of sunshine a year, moderate temperatures, and four distinct seasons, and it's quickly becoming known as one of the premier playgrounds of the West.

Hotel rooms: 2,000

Hotel tax rate: 9.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Kiger Stadium is one of the last all-wood baseball stadiums left in the U.S.
- Steen Sports Park features an indoor 60,000-square-foot multipurpose fieldhouse, 10,000-square-foot indoor baseball/softball

facility, indoor and outdoor soccer fields, baseball/softball diamonds, pickleball courts, skate park, and cross-country jogging path

- Bill Collier Ice Arena features a sheet of ice

Contact: Discover Klamath, discoverklamath.com.

MEDFORD

Medford features an abundance of world-class natural and traditional venues and more than 200 days of sunshine a year. It is centrally located on the West Coast and easy to access along the I-5 corridor and through the Medford International Airport.

Hotel rooms: 2,636

Hotel tax rate: 12.5 percent

Major facilities:

- Lithia & Driveway Fields encompasses 132 acres and offers 15 sports fields, which include three full-size baseball fields, seven mixed-use baseball/softball fields, and five fields for soccer and football
- Rogue Credit Union Community Complex offers 140,000 square feet of indoor space, including eight basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts, and 32 pickleball courts
- The Expo has seven buildings on its property featuring more than 180,000 square feet of versatile space
- Spiegelberg Stadium has a capacity of 9,250, making it the largest high school stadium in the state of Oregon
- The Rrrink is an indoor ice skating and hockey arena

Contact: Travel Medford, travelmedford.org.

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Tigard is home to the Northwest Fencing Center.



The Hillsboro Hops Ballpark has 4,700 fixed seats with a capacity around 7,000 for Hops games.

PORTLAND

Portland has a welcome-to-all attitude that invites every type of sporting event, and locals always show up to support.

Hotel rooms: 10,000

Hotel tax rate: 16 percent

Major facilities:

- Portland Expo Center offers 356,000 square feet of space with 20 basketball courts and 24 volleyball courts
- Moda Center is a 20,000-seat indoor multipurpose venue
- Veterans Memorial Coliseum has a seating capacity of 11,600

Convention center: Oregon Convention Center offers more than 478,000 square feet of flexible event space.

Contact: Travel Portland, travelportland.com.

SALEM

Salem combines tournament-quality facilities, affordable value and authentic Oregon experiences in a centrally located destination where athletes can compete during the day and explore wine country, downtown Salem and the Willamette Valley after the games are over. As the heart of the Willamette Valley and the "Most Oregon Part of Oregon," Salem offers convenient access to everything that makes the state special.

Hotel rooms: 2,000

Hotel tax rate: 12.8 percent

Major facilities:

- Wallace Marine Softball Complex includes five natural grass fields
- The Oregon Expo has a pavilion that seats 5,000 and two expo halls with 75,000-plus square feet of space
- Pioneer Sports Park showcases nine adult-sized soccer fields

- Home Courts Powered by NPJ has six basketball courts

Convention center: The Salem Convention Center can accommodate a number of sporting events such as cornhole, cheer and dance, weightlifting, and bodybuilding.

Contact: Travel Salem, travelsalem.com.

TUALATIN VALLEY

The Tualatin Valley is in the western part of the Portland metro area and offers a unique combo of natural beauty and urban amenities.

Hotel rooms: 6,225

Hotel tax rate: ranges from 13.5 percent to 14.5 percent depending on the city

Major facilities:

- Howard M. Terpenning Recreation Complex in Beaverton houses a 50-meter pool, 15 tennis courts, five multipurpose fields for soccer/football/lacrosse, five softball fields, two baseball fields, one roller hockey rink, two skate parks, four outdoor and six indoor basketball courts, and a 10-acre natural area
- Gordon Faber Recreation Complex has a 7,000-seat multipurpose stadium and also features six natural grass softball fields
- Opened in April 2026, the new Hillsboro Hops Ballpark has 4,700 fixed seats and capacity for roughly 7,000 fans
- Fairgrounds Sports Complex offers 150,000 square feet of all-weather turf, five ball fields, and two soccer fields

Convention center: Wingspan Events & Conference Center at the Westside Commons hosts indoor and outdoor events, including basketball, cheer, dance, martial arts, pickleball, volleyball, and wrestling.

Contact: Explore Tualatin Valley, tualatinvalley.org. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON: UTAH

Utah has established itself as one of the nation's premier sports destinations, offering a unique combination of world-class venues, exceptional outdoor assets, and a proven track record of hosting major events. From winter competitions to endurance races, cycling events, and field sports, Utah provides year-round opportunities for competition across a wide range of disciplines. Add in strong infrastructure, easy accessibility, and an active outdoor culture, and the state further enhances the experience. ■

The 2027 U.S. Figure Skating Championships are taking place at the Maverik Center in West Valley City from January 5–10. ►



Courtesy Visit Salt Lake



MUST SEE:

The Museum of Ancient Life

The Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point brings prehistoric history to life. Home to one of the world's largest dinosaur collections, the museum features more than 60 complete mounted skeletons alongside immersive exhibits tracing millions of years of natural history. The experience offers visitors an up-close look at creatures that once roamed the region and beyond. ■

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UTAH

CEDAR CITY

Cedar City is surrounded by national parks and natural beauty, making it easy for visiting athletes and fans to explore the area between games. It's a three-hour drive from Las Vegas and a three-hour drive from Salt Lake City.

Hotel rooms: 1,349

Hotel tax rate: 17.95 percent

Major facilities:

- Field at the Hills has four softball fields
- Bicentennial Softball Complex includes three fields
- Little League Baseball Complex features six fields
- Bicentennial Soccer Complex offers numerous soccer fields
- Cross Hollow Event Center is a 30-acre facility with two arenas
- KJ's Ice Barn in nearby Enoch has an indoor rink
- Bicentennial Pickleball Courts have eight lighted outdoor courts

Contact: Visit Cedar City, visitcedarcity.com.

OGDEN

Through strong partnerships and a community-wide commitment to sports tourism, Ogden has successfully hosted everything from youth championships to international events. Add in mountain views, outdoor recreation, and a welcoming community, and it's easy to see why so many events choose Ogden.

Hotel rooms: 1,293

Hotel tax rate: 12.57 percent

Major facilities:

- Weber County Ice Sheet features two sheets of ice
- Golden Spike Event Center is a multiuse event complex
- Best known for hosting the annual Ogden Pioneer Days PRCA rodeo, Spencer Fox Eccles Pioneer Stadium is a 12,000-seat open-air venue
- Snowbasin Resort & Powder Mountain are two of Utah's premier mountain destinations that provide year-round opportunities for sporting events and outdoor recreation

Courtesy Visit Salt Lake



Salt Lake City regularly plays host to major hockey tournaments.

Convention center: The Ogden Eccles Conference Center offers more than 70,000 square feet of flexible space in the heart of downtown.

Contact: Visit Ogden, visitogden.com.

SALT LAKE CITY

Salt Lake pairs world-class professional infrastructure with an active, enthusiastic amateur and youth sports scene. The unmatched energy and community ambition make it the ultimate, highly accessible destination for athletes of all levels.

Hotel rooms: 20,000

Hotel tax rate: 14.35 percent

Major facilities:

- Salt Lake City Regional Athletic Complex offers 16 pristine, multiuse fields ideal for soccer, lacrosse, and rugby
- Mountain America Expo Center features 243,000 square feet of contiguous space with 30-foot clear-span ceilings, and hosts a variety of sports events, including basketball and volleyball.

Convention center: Salt Palace Convention Center offers more than 555,000 square feet of contiguous space.

Contact: Visit Salt Lake, visitsaltlake.com.

UTAH VALLEY

Tucked between the Wasatch Mountains and Utah Lake, Utah Valley is centrally located in Utah and the Intermountain West making the destination an easy drive or short flight for attendees coming from across the region.



Provo's Epic Sports Park hosts local and regional tournaments and leagues.



Cycling in the Utah Valley is top-notch.

Courtesy Gran Fondo Utah/Caelan Diemann

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UTAH'S **AMUSEMENT** CAPITAL



The Canyons Softball Complex in St. George is a 38-acre softball facility.

Hotel rooms: 4,500

Hotel tax rate: 13.52 percent

Major facilities:

- Epic Sports Park in Provo boasts 15 full-size soccer and multipurpose fields
- Provo's Peaks Ice Arena has one Olympic-sized sheet of ice and one NHL-sized sheet of ice, along with a full-size turf field
- UCCU Center in Orem is an indoor arena that seats 8,000
- Orem's Lakeside Sports Complex has five baseball/softball diamonds and eight full-size soccer fields

Convention center: The Utah Valley Convention Center offers more than 80,000 square feet of flexible space in the heart of Provo.

Contact: Explore Utah Valley, utahvalley.com.

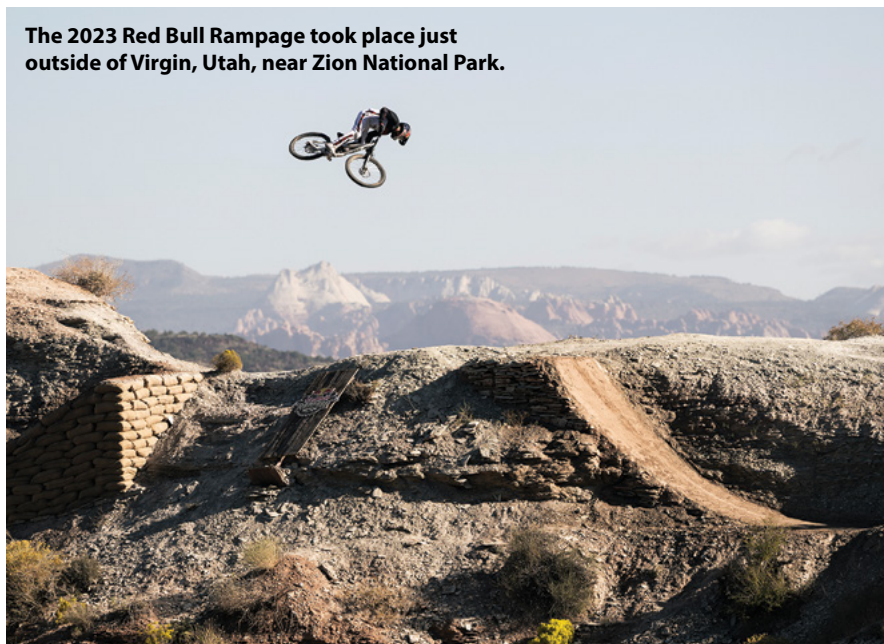
ZION

Greater Zion has a combination of assets that event planners don't often find in one place. The natural terrain is a genuine competitive advantage. Sand Hollow State Park, Snow Canyon State Park, Sand Mountain, the lava fields, and the open desert corridors out of Hurricane Valley are functional venues with real capacity and built-in event infrastructure that can handle everything from a 12,000-person obstacle race to a PGA Tour stop.

Hotel rooms: 6,700

Hotel tax rate: varies based on municipality

The 2023 Red Bull Rampage took place just outside of Virgin, Utah, near Zion National Park.



Major facilities:

- Greater Zion Stadium is a 10,500-capacity stadium for football and soccer
- Human Performance Center houses a 50-meter Olympic-sized pool
- The Fields at Little Valley has six soccer fields and 33 pickleball courts
- The Canyons Softball Complex is a 38-acre complex with seven diamonds

- Southern Utah Shooting Sports Park is a 889-acre complex with six outdoor ranges
- Shivwits Legacy Fields include five full-size natural grass soccer fields

Convention center: Dixie Convention Center is a 100,000-square-foot facility that can be used for a number of sports, including volleyball and basketball.

Contact: Greater Zion CTO, greaterzion.com. ■

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SPOTLIGHT ON: NEW YORK

New York offers a sports landscape as diverse as the state itself, pairing iconic venues and major metropolitan markets with scenic destinations that are equally equipped to host memorable competitions. From championship events staged in world-renowned facilities to amateur tournaments set amid mountains, lakes, and waterfront communities, the Empire State provides exceptional versatility for organizers, furthering securing it as a destination where competition thrives. ■

The Greater Binghamton Sports Complex has facilities for numerous sports, including soccer. ►



Courtesy Greater Binghamton Sports Complex

NEW YORK



MUST SEE:

Ausable Chasm

Situated on New York's Adirondack Coast, Ausable Chasm is a can't-miss natural landmark. Carved through sandstone over thousands of years, the "Grand Canyon of the Adirondacks" offers a picturesque landscape of cliffs, waterfalls, and trails that invite exploration at every turn. Visitors can take in the chasm from above on scenic hikes or get closer to the action through rafting and tubing experiences that move directly through its dramatic rock corridor. ■

Courtesy Ausable Chasm

ADIRONDACK COAST

Stretching along the western shores of Lake Champlain and framed by the Adirondack Mountains, New York's Adirondack Coast offers a unique combination of tournament-quality facilities, world-class outdoor recreation, stunning scenery, and easy accessibility. Located just one hour south of Montreal and within driving distance of major Northeast markets, the destination provides event organizers with access to both U.S. and Canadian participants and spectators.

Hotel rooms: 1,100

Hotel tax rate: 14 percent

Major facilities:

- SUNY Plattsburgh Field House has an indoor track and field facility, basketball court, and outdoor turf field for lacrosse and soccer
- Ronald B. Stafford Ice Arena is located inside the Field House and is a 1,924-seat arena
- SUNY Plattsburgh Memorial Hall offers a gym
- Chip Cummings Baseball Field is a 500-seat ballpark

Contact: North County Chamber of Commerce, goadirondack.com.

ALBANY

Located at the crossroads of the Northeast, Albany is easily accessible by plane, train, or automobile and is a

short jaunt from major metropolitan areas such as Boston, New York City and Montreal. It has numerous options when it comes to sporting venues including Universities, arenas, and sports complexes.

Hotel rooms: 7,000

Hotel tax rate: 14.5 percent

Major facilities:

- The University of Albany has fields that surround its 8,000-seat stadium
- Afrim's Sports Center Colonie has five indoor soccer/football fields and a sports park with four outdoor turf fields and dome featuring one indoor turf field
- The MVP Arena features an enclosed arena

Convention center: The Albany Capital Center has hosted everything from AAU basketball tournaments to powerlifting tournaments.

Contact: Discover Albany, albany.org.

BINGHAMTON

Binghamton is a unique destination due to its accessible and convenient location, incredible dining selection of over 250 locally owned restaurants, and unique attractions.

Hotel rooms: 2,200

Hotel tax rate: 13 percent or 18 percent, depending on location

Major facilities:

- Greenlight Networks Grand Slam Park is a four-field softball complex
- Greater Binghamton Sports Complex offers facilities for baseball, cheerleading, cornhole, dance, football, field hockey, flag football, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, softball, and softball
- Visions Veterans Memorial Arena hosts basketball, cheerleading, dance, gymnastics, ice skating, hockey, weightlifting, and wrestling

Contact: Visit Binghamton, visitbinghamton.org.

BUFFALO

Buffalo has a huge array of athletic facilities, from ice rinks to aquatic centers. Buffalo is home to over a dozen colleges and universities with athletic facilities, including a Division 1 complex at the University at Buffalo. In the first half of 2026, Buffalo has hosted the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, the USA Artistic Swimming national competition, the American Jump Rope Federation Championships, and the NHL Draft.

Hotel rooms: 1,500 downtown; 10,000 countywide

Hotel tax rate: 16.75 percent

Major facilities:

- Northtown Center at Amherst houses three NHL-sized rinks and one Olympic-sized rink
- Buffalo RiverWorks offers 60,000 square feet of indoor space and two covered outdoor ice rinks
- LECOM Harborcenter boasts 600,000 total square feet of space and 205 hotel rooms, along with two NHL-sized rinks
- The R.O.C.K. offers six indoor courts and four outdoor courts
- Sahlen's Sports Park has 200,000 square feet of indoor space and two outdoor turf fields
- West Seneca Soccer Complex has 17 fields

Convention center: Buffalo Convention Center offers more than 110,000 square feet of flexible space in downtown Buffalo.

Contact: Visit Buffalo, visitbuffalo.com/sports-commission.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

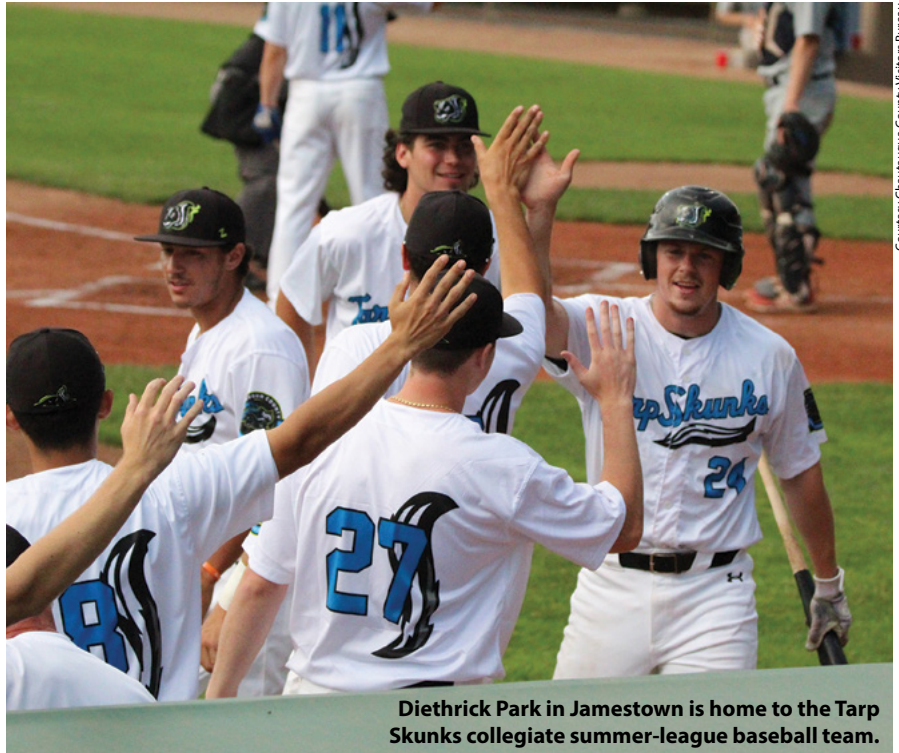
Chautauqua County can host a variety of sporting events and competitions as an all-season destination featuring both indoor and outdoor facilities, championship-caliber golf courses, ski resorts, and a twin-pad ice arena. The area also hosts many fishing tournaments.

Hotel rooms: 1,534

Hotel tax rate: 13 percent

Major facilities:

- Northwest Arena in Jamestown has two full-size NHL ice pads, which are also multi-surface floors for other court events



Courtesy Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau

Diethrick Park in Jamestown is home to the Tarp Skunks collegiate summer-league baseball team.

- SUNY Fredonia offers a natatorium with an eight-lane, 25-yard pool with separate diving well
- University Stadium seats 1,500 and is home to the soccer and lacrosse teams, features both artificial turf and natural grass fields and is lighted for evening events
- Blue Devil Field is home of the Fredonia State softball team and includes two grandstands and a field-level press box
- Home of the Fredonia Blue Devils women's and men's basketball teams, Dods Hall Gym has new lights, modern scoreboards, four sets of bleachers and also serves as a good location for events like gymnastics and cheer competitions
- Peek'n Peak Resort has 27 ski slopes ranging in difficulty and an 18-hole golf course, and during the summer, it adds three soccer fields, which can be used for tournaments and training camps

Contact: Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau, tourchautauqua.com.

CORTLAND COUNTY

Cortland County offers several multipurpose turf fields in close proximity. Events held here include the Empire State Senior Games, NYS Games, NYS Junior Games, and NYSPHSAA Girls Soccer and Lacrosse Championships.

Hotel rooms: 600

Major facilities:

- Gutches Lumber Sports Complex offers turf baseball fields

- JM McDonald Sports Complex features an indoor NHL-sized rink and indoor soccer fields
- Ted Testa Park has two Little League fields, one soccer field, and one multipurpose field
- SUNY Cortland offers a 6,500-seat stadium field and numerous other outdoor fields, as well as an indoor gym, 50-meter pool, and 40,000-square-foot field house with track and field area

Contact: Cortland Regional Sports Council, cortlandsports.org.

LAKE GEORGE

The Lake George Area is ideal for sporting events, offering a unique mix of natural beauty, top-tier facilities, and a welcoming community.

Hotel rooms: 7,000

Hotel tax rate: 11 percent

Major facilities:

- Harding Mazzotti Arena in Glen Falls is a 4,800-seat venue with a professional-sized hockey rink
- East Field is a 7,000-seat baseball/football stadium
- Glens Falls Recreation Center houses an ice rink
- Afrim's Sports Dome in Latham is a 108,000-square-foot multipurpose facility with nine acres of sports fields
- Golden Goal Sports Park has eight full-size fields

Contact: Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, lakegeorgechamber.com.



Players scramble for the puck at a game in Chautauqua County.

LAKE PLACID

Lake Placid is a community where a rich sporting legacy, modern amenities, local culture, and natural beauty balance in perfect harmony. World-class events and iconic venues offer visitors and residents the ability to experience various winter sports and embrace the community's Olympic spirit while rubbing elbows with some of the world's best athletes.

Hotel rooms: 1,800

Major facilities:

- Mt Van Hoevenberg offers 55 km of cross-country ski trails and a new biathlon stadium that features one of the world's largest snowmaking system dedicated to a Nordic venue
- Olympic Jumping Complex is the only ski jumping facility approved for both summer and winter training and competitions in North America
- Olympic Center houses historic ice rinks

- Whiteface Mountain stands 4,867 feet high and is the state's fifth tallest mountain
- James C. Sheffield Speed Skating Oval is rated among the top ice rinks in the country

Contact: Lake Placid Visitors Bureau, lakeplacid.com.

LONG ISLAND

Long Island is located approximately 90 minutes outside of New York City. It's a year-round destination surrounded by beaches and water, rich with watersports, hiking trails, skating rinks, and live entertainment arenas and a frequent host of sporting events, especially marathons, golf tournaments, triathlons and swimming, surfing, and diving competitions.

Hotel rooms: 18,500

Major facilities:

- Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum is a multipurpose venue that seats 13,000

- Set to reopen in September after a multimillion-dollar renovation, Belmont Race Track—home of the Belmont Stakes—has a crowd capacity of 90,000
- Nassau County Aquatic Center is an 80,000-square-foot natatorium

Contact: Discover Long Island, discoverlongisland.com.

ROCHESTER

With a rich sports history spanning professional and amateur competition, Rochester—the third largest city in New York State—is an appealing destination for sports events of all sizes. Located on the southern shore of Lake Ontario, it's easy to reach, and with most facilities, hotels, dining, and entertainment just minutes apart, even easier to navigate.

Hotel rooms: 7,000

Hotel tax rate: 14 percent

Major facilities:

- Tim Horton's Iceplex is a 186,000-square-foot facility with four NHL-sized rinks
- Golisano Training Center offers a six-lane indoor track, artificial turf field, and four tennis/volleyball courts
- Lakefront Park has 14 natural grass multipurpose fields and one turf soccer/baseball field
- Total Sports Experience is a 127,500-square-foot indoor facility with 40 acres of outdoor field space for a variety of sports
- Webster Aquatic Center houses an Olympic-sized pool
- Blue Cross Arena is a 14,000-seat indoor venue

Convention center: The Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center features more than 100,000 square feet of space and is connected to the Hyatt Regency Rochester via enclosed skyway.

Contact: Visit Rochester, visitrochester.com.

SARATOGA

Saratoga is home to high quality sporting facilities and a walkable downtown, along with offering easy accessibility from major markets.

Hotel rooms: 5,000

Hotel tax rate: ranges from 10 percent to 15 percent

Major facilities:

- Gavin Park in Wilton is a 350-plus-acre park with multiple baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, and tennis courts
- Saratoga Springs Ice Rink houses two NHL-sized rinks
- Impact Athletic Center offers 60,000 square feet of indoor athletic space

Convention center: Saratoga Springs City Center includes 32,000 square feet of space and has hosted sports like cheerleading, dance, martial arts, and wrestling.

Contact: Discover Saratoga, discoversaratoga.com. ■

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