

# UTAH: ACHIEVING A HIGHER STATE OF SPORT

Diverse landscape, dynamic seasons and world-class venues give Utah: The State of Sport a competitive edge and illuminate Utah as a year-round sports destination. The natural beauty, the expertise of the hosting hundreds of events, and the spirit of volunteerism in the “Beehive state” highlight Utah as a proven and premier host.

“The Utah Sports Commission and its TEAM Utah partners have built a robust sport and Olympic legacy and have aggressively recruited sporting events to Utah, building a diverse portfolio that is over 600 events strong,” said Jeff Robbins, president and CEO of the Utah Sports Commission. “This includes world-class competitions such as Red Bull Rampage, Larry H. Miller Tour of Utah, Huntsman World Senior Games, Xterra USA Championships, World Cups in freestyle, freeskiing, snowboarding, speedskating and sliding sports, and the Web.com Tour Utah Championship, just to name a few.”

Sports-event organizers benefit greatly working with the Utah Sports Commission and TEAM Utah partners. The Utah Sports Commission operates with partners on bid development, volunteer coordination, sponsorship, event logistics planning, event promotion and other related services. No matter the event, Utah: The State of Sport is a destination where events rights holders, competitors, families and fans come to enjoy their sport. In addition, Utah offers a vibrant world-class capital city, a friendly, clean and safe environment, ample recreational opportunities and stunning natural beauty. Mother Nature does play favorites.

## SALT LAKE COUNTY/TOOELE

Salt Lake County in North Central Utah is home to the state’s capital and most populous city, Salt Lake City, as well as a diverse selection of sporting opportunities for event organizers. Salt Lake County

hosted many of the 17 winter events hosted statewide last season, which ran the spectrum from hockey to speedskating to figure skating, along with the newly created Apolo Ohno Invitational, a short-track speedskating event. The summer portfolio for Salt Lake County remained strong, with the Triple Crown National Volleyball Championship, USTA and Champions Challenge tennis, Lucas Off Road Racing and Pro Motocross, and the USA BMX Great Salt Lake Nationals, among several other events.

The region continues to maximize its vast infrastructure of facilities including EnergySolutions Arena, Miller Motorsport Park, the Utah Olympic Oval, the Maverik Center and Smith’s Ballpark.

Rio Tinto Stadium, home to the MLS Real Salt Lake, hosted the CONCACAF Olympic qualifier in October, and held a sold-out crowd for the Mexican national soccer team during their friendly against Trinidad and Tobago in September.

The Salt Lake County softball facilities will host two major championships, the ASA Western Nationals and Native American World Series.

In addition, the first part of a three-event package with USA Fencing began in January 2015, will continue in March 2016 and culminate with the National Championships in 2017. The Salt Palace Convention Center will play host to nearly 10,000 fencers over the course of these events, and in 2016 it will see the return of the Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions and the Triple Crown National Volleyball Championship.

The versatility of Salt Lake County will also be on display during the 2016 National Veteran’s Wheelchair Games. As many as 600 athletes will compete in 20 events at what is the world’s largest wheelchair games. The Easton Salt Lake Archery Center is just one of many facilities that will take part in this multisport event; an event that will illuminate this region’s Olympic infrastructure, accessibility and accommodation.

## OGDEN/WEBER COUNTY

Weber County, including its largest city, Ogden, is a wonderful location for events. “Ogden is a very accessible and very affordable location,” said Rich Koski, director of sales for Visit Ogden. “We’re 40 miles north of Salt Lake International Airport, right up against the Wasatch Mountains. We’re a combination

mountain-metro area, and we tend to attract natural-venue events.”

The region has a dedicated volunteer base. “That’s a big reason people keep coming back to hold events here,” Koski said. “Over the last decade and a half, we’ve gained great experience hosting major events, and we have a very strong volunteer community, which traces its roots to the 2002 Winter Olympics.” After the 2002 Games, Ogden and Weber County consolidated area volunteers into a nonprofit organization known as Get Out And Live, or GOAL. With a database of more than 1,200 volunteers, GOAL assists with local and visiting events, and it also owns several events, including the annual Zions Bank Ogden Marathon, a Boston Marathon qualifier.

Ogden has a minor league baseball team, the Pioneer League’s Raptors, who play at the 8,268-seat Lindquist Field, and an NCAA Division I school, Weber State University, home to The Ice Sheet and its NHL- and Olympic-sized rinks. In September, WSU hosted the 2015 USA Weightlifting National University Championships.

The region boasts 200 miles of single-track trails. Venues for water sports include two rivers (Weber and Ogden) and a large reservoir (Pineview) outside of downtown. Three premier ski resorts—Snowbasin, Powder Mountain and Nordic Valley (formerly Wolf Mountain)—provide outdoor recreation for all and are great locations for competitions. For the second consecutive year, Powder Mountain will be

hosting USA Cycling’s Fat Bike National Championships and the U.S. Snowshoe Championships (both in February). USA Cycling’s Masters Road National Championships also returned for the second consecutive year this September.

Snowbasin, a 2002 Olympics venue, hosted the Xterra USA Championship off-road triathlon for the eighth consecutive year in September. The event was held the day before the Xterra Trail Run Nationals. The two events attracted an estimated 1,500 of the nation’s best amateur and professional triathletes and trail runners.

There are 2,000 hotel rooms in Weber County, including 375 in downtown Ogden. “Our historic downtown is very compact with a two-block area of historic 25th Street that is great for visitors in attendance with shops, attractions and restaurants,” Koski said. “Ogden is a great place to visit, friendly and very scenic up against the Wasatch Mountain Range.”

## PARK CITY/SUMMIT COUNTY

Perhaps best known as an upscale tourist spot—think Sundance Film Festival—and as the site of Utah Olympic Park, Park City in Summit County offers a wide variety of sporting opportunities to competitors and fans alike. “We host a range of large- and small-scale special events throughout the calendar year, especially winter and summer,” said Bob Kollar, vice-president of special events for the Park City Chamber of Commerce. “The top



1 Salt Lake City and the surrounding region played host to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, leaving many venues behind as a legacy of having hosted the event.

Douglas Pulsipher

2 The Salt Palace Convention Center in downtown Salt Lake City is home to many sports-related trade shows and events.

Visit Salt Lake

3 The 15,334-seat Smith’s Ballpark in Salt Lake City is home to the Triple-A Salt Lake Bees, an affiliate of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.

Steve Greenwood



quality of our fields and facilities has attracted an array of teams to come and train here, including an English Premier League team and the U.S. men's and women's national teams, as well as NHL teams. Even weekend warriors who want to come here and compete in running, mountain biking and cycling events enjoy our trail runs."

Park City, although occupying just 8 square miles, is the largest city in Summit County. This locale in the Wasatch Back region of the Rocky Mountains is nestled in the state's northeast, bordering the southeast corner of Wyoming. With 39 of the highest mountain peaks in Utah, Summit County definitely lives up to its name.

This area is also home of the United States Ski and Snowboard Association's headquarters and its off-mountain training center, called the Center of Excellence. According to Kollar, a number of top athletes—past, present and potential future Olympians—have chosen to live and train in Park City.

Another great facility for training and competition is Utah Olympic Park, a venue acclaimed for Nordic jumping, bobsled and luge and as host of FIS Continental Cup events. "Utah Olympic Park is a great partner in keeping our Olympic legacy alive and well," Kollar said. Upcoming events there include a busy December that includes the FIS Nordic Combined International/Continental Cup and the Luge World Cup. In January, sliding competitors from more than 20 countries will take part in the Bobsled and Skeleton World Cup.

"Summit County offers a pair of top-notch resorts in Deer Valley and Park City Mountain," Kollar said. "Park City Mountain was acquired by Vail Resorts and they merged the former Canyons resort and Park City Mountain. We've connected the two resorts with a gondola this summer so it is now the largest ski resort in America." The resorts were recently awarded the right to host the 2019 FIS World Championships, a freestyle skiing, freeskiing and snowboarding competition.

This past January, Deer Valley Resort hosted the FIS Freestyle Ski World Cup, marking the 16th consecutive year of international competitions at the resort.

Park City and Summit County also can brag about venues that host a number of baseball, lacrosse, soccer and softball tournaments for kids ages 8–18 throughout the summer. "We're not just winter sports; we're an easy place to do business for event organizers," Kollar said. "We have all the facilities that you might want."

Cycling has made an impact on the region. According to Kollar, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 have come out each August over the past few years to see the final stage of the annual Tour of Utah. Locals as well as visitors are in attendance as riders roll down Park City's historic Main Street for the seventh and final stage of the race, an event televised on Fox Sports. "Park City has hosted the championship stage for the last four years and we anticipate that we will continue to host

that stage in 2016," Kollar said. "It gets bigger and better here every year and the community has really taken to it."

### PROVO/UTAH VALLEY

Utah Valley owns the moniker of "Happy Valley," a friendly region set in a valley formed by the Wasatch Range. "Especially for youth sports, the Utah Valley is one of the most family-friendly areas in the country with great facilities and accommodations for all budgets," said Lee Adamson, sales manager for the Utah Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau. "With our mountains and nature, it's a great place to meet and to gather. Utah Valley is a very affordable destination."

Mountains surround the Valley on three sides, making a beautiful setting for a variety of outdoor activities. In June, the Utah Valley Marathon, a USA Track & Field-certified race and a Boston Marathon qualifier, marked its eighth year with a run on a course that snakes through Utah and Wasatch counties.

Each January, Utah County hosts The Rumble, a high school wrestling tournament that featured more than six dozen teams in 2015. The event takes place at the 8,500-seat UCCU Center in Orem on the campus of Utah Valley University, the largest publicly funded university in the state. Provo's Brigham Young University has 21 NCAA varsity squads and many notable athletic facilities including Peaks Ice Arena, which was built for the 2002 Olympics.

The arena at Spanish Fork Fairgrounds in Provo is great for rodeos and other events. In May it hosted PRCA Champions Challenge Rodeo for the second time, and in July the 73rd Annual Fiesta Days Rodeo was held there.

Hikers and bikers can enjoy a selection of challenging trails. Utah County is home to a 17-mile portion of the Murdock Canal Trail. Orem's Alpine Loop is a 45.3-mile out-and-back ride through breathtaking scenery in the Uinta National Forest.

Utah Lake, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the West, is home to fishing and other events. This waterway was the site of the 2012 FLW College Fishing Series Western Conference Championship. The lake also is home to a popular bike endurance race. The 2015 Hotter Than Heck (HTH) Utah Valley Century took place July 30 and August 1, including a 100-mile course around Utah Lake. "Hotter Than Heck is growing bigger and bigger each year," Adamson said. "First-timers and seasoned veterans enjoy the HTH ride, which is more than three decades old, but its name changed last year and cash prizes were added."

This past summer, Lehi was the location for the state's lone PGA Tour stop—Web.com Tour's Utah Championship, presented by Zions Bank and hosted by the Utah Sports Commission at the Golf Club at Thanksgiving Point. Another spectacular outdoor venue is Robert Redford's Sundance Mountain Resort in Provo with mountain biking, skiing, hiking and a four-mile zip line.

Utah Valley also has a minor league baseball team. The Pioneer League's Orem Owlz, a Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim rookie affiliate, play at the 5,000-seat Brent Brown Ballpark.

"For visitors, Utah Valley has a great selection of lodging, from the 350-room Provo Marriott to a lot of really great select service properties like Courtyard, Spring Hill and Hampton," Adamson said. "We also offer great restaurant choices, especially in the Provo Center Street Historic Hub, which has 53 non-chain offerings in a three-block core of the city. It's a very unique and very charming little area with shops and other attractions."

### ST. GEORGE/ WASHINGTON COUNTY

Unrivaled scenery, first-rate outdoor venues and superb community support help make Utah's second-largest city, St. George, a popular sports destination. "Athletes love the challenge and stunning scenery of sporting events in southern Utah," said Kevin Lewis, director of sports marketing for the St. George Tourism Office. "They come for events and they return for family vacations so they can experience everything else there is to do. We also have a strong volunteer base that really gets it and really supports having an event in town."

St. George is in Washington County in the southwestern part of the state. The region sits at the confluence of the Mojave Desert, Colorado Plateau and Great Basin, a unique atmosphere for

**1**  
The Larry H. Miller Tour of Utah is a cycling stage race that travels across the state. Park City has traditionally served as the host of the final stage.

Jonathan Devich

**2**  
Deer Valley Resort is one of several resorts in Park City that has hosted international ski and snowboard events.

Deer Valley Resort

**3**  
LaVell Edwards Stadium in Provo is home to the BYU Cougars football team. Utah Valley has a wide range of venues available to sports-event organizers.

Utah Valley CVB

**4**  
Ogden has hosted the Xterra USA Championship for eight consecutive years, a premier off-road triathlon event.

Visit Ogden

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outdoor ventures, including year-round climbing, hiking, mountain biking and trail running—with more than 65 miles of urban trails—plus road races and endurance events, golf and other competitions. Top regional venues include the 38-acre Canyons Softball Complex, Sand Hollow Aquatic Center, Tonaquint Tennis Center and 11 golf courses within a 20-mile radius.

"We've become a mountain bike mecca, as we offer world-class mountain biking with incredible scenery and more than 350 miles of single-track and double-track trails," Lewis said. Some of the area's top mountain bike endurance events include 25 Hours in Frog Hollow, which will stage its seventh annual competition November 7–8 in the Washington County city of Hurricane. "This event's slogan is 'The Longest 1-Day Race' in the world as it happens on the time change so competitors get an extra hour for a 25-hour race," Lewis said.

Other events include Six Hours in Frog Hollow, held each April since 2010; and the True Grit Epic, with 100-mile and 50-mile races in nearby Santa Clara coming up in March 2016.

The annual St. George Marathon, now in its 39th year, is held the first Saturday of October with a maximum of 7,400 runners. "This race has been a longtime sellout," Lewis said. "It's a great tradition for the area. It fuses a lot of energy into the town. Also, it's a Boston Marathon qualifier."

St. George hosts several events that attract national and international

competitors. The Ironman 70.3 North American Pro Championship St. George has drawn a sold-out field of more than 2,500 athletes with a 1.2-mile swim at Sand Hollow State Park, a 56-mile bike ride through Snow Canyon State Park and a 13.1-mile run that ends in downtown St. George.

Every year since 1987, the Huntsman World Senior Games have been a staple of the St. George sports scene. The event brings together more than 11,000 athletes who are at least 50 years old from dozens of countries to compete in 27 sports. The Utah Sports Commission estimates that this October 5–13 event will realize an economic impact of \$19.7 million. "A week after the marathon each year, the Huntsman Games provide quite a social atmosphere," Lewis said. "People come year after year to hook up with their buddies and hang out. The average stay is seven nights for this event that lasts two weeks."

In September, St. George won a pair of bids to host future events. The USA Pickleball Association chose St. George to host its West Regional Championship Pickleball Tournament in April 2016 at Little Valley Pickleball Complex. Also in September, St. George learned of its winning bid to host the 2017 NHPA World Horseshoe Tournament at the Dixie Convention Center. This event brings about 1,200 pitchers to town for a week.

In nearby Virgin, the 10th edition of the Red Bull Rampage, the world's

**1** For the last several years, St. George has played host to the Ironman 70.3 North American Pro Championship, which draws about 2,500 athletes to the region.

St. George Tourism

**2** Softball is big in St. George, with many options available for organizers, including the 38-acre Canyons Softball Complex.

Dave Becker

premier freeride mountain bike event, took place October 15–17.

When in St. George, visitors can spend down time at countless attractions, including the Tuacahn Amphitheatre, Zion National Park (40 miles away) and the new St. George Children's Museum.

#### UTAH: THE STATE OF SPORT

Whatever the sport, Utah annually proves an ideal spot for events. And with a strong volunteer base and willing hosts that have experience knowing how to make events shine, event organizers can find everything they need in the State of Sport. For more information, call the Utah Sports Commission at (801) 328-2372 or visit [UtahSportsCommission.com](http://UtahSportsCommission.com). ■



# UTAH



If it's on a court, on a field, on a mountain, on a track, on a road, on the ice, on a jump, on a deadline, and on a budget, it should be on our calendar.



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