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## CHAPTER 5

# The City of Sport: London's Stadiums as Visitor Attractions

Claire Humphreys

### Introduction

Sport tourism has grown in academic prominence in recent years, with recognition that stadiums and other sporting locations can contribute to both the tourism offer and to a city's image. This chapter focuses on the major sporting venues in London and examines their appeal as attractions for tourists. Much research has considered the significant role of sport in urban economies (Gratton and Henry 2001) but Higham (2005, 239) goes further, arguing that 'conceptualizing sport as a tourist attraction' can generate revenue from markets seeking a different type of authentic experience. City tourism now encompasses a broader range of facilities and experiences, and sports tourism in London provides an illustrative example of this type of expansion.

Sports tourism includes active participation in sport as well as spectating at sports matches and competitions (Weed and Bull 2004). It also includes viewing sports heritage and places, including museums and halls of fame (Gibson 1998). Consequently, the range of sporting infrastructure which may be used by tourists is extensive. Gammon and Robinson (1997) assessed the relative

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importance of sport over other travel motivations and suggested a distinction between those for whom the sporting element dominates and those focused on tourism aspects, with sporting activity included only as secondary aspect. In most cases tourists engage with sports facilities primarily developed to serve a local market but some sports facilities have developed – and promoted – touristic elements to enhance their commercial appeal. Accordingly, sports locations can become sites of tourist consumption (Ginesta 2017) and sporting venues that actively seek tourists may manipulate both the design of the venue and its promotion to maximise tourist revenues.

To ensure the commercial viability of such stadiums, maximising operational revenue is important and tourism provides an additional income stream. Income is generated through event ticket sales, but also through sales of tours of the facilities or through museum visits. Redmond (1973, 45) acknowledges that ‘the commercial value of sport as a tourism asset has long been recognised,’ and it is worth in excess of £2 billion to the UK economy, evenly split between sports participants and sports spectators (of events and tours) (DCMS 2012).

Iconic spaces such as sporting venues can also play a wider role in destination promotion and other policy objectives: ‘Sport is increasingly seen as a central strategy for cities to promote their image and global position, undertake regeneration, and tackle problems of social exclusion’ (Herring 2004, 17). For many decades, sports stadiums have been used as catalysts for urban and social development, to capitalise on mass interest in sport (Stevens and Wootton 1997; Williams 1997).

London has long been regarded as a sporting capital, but this reputation has been reinforced in recent years. The London 2012 Olympics encouraged the construction of new sporting venues in East London, while in other non-central areas a wave of redevelopment has embedded tourism offering within existing sports spaces. Therefore, in line with one of the central themes in this book, this chapter also investigates the ways in which sports stadiums have expanded the spatial reach of tourism and (re)distributed visitors outside central London. Such facilities may add to the appeal of the locality, encouraging visitors to engage with neighbourhoods outside of the popular central tourist districts.

### London’s Sport Tourism Venues

Since the 2012 Olympics Visit London has extended their promotion of the sporting attributes of London. The variety of world-class sporting facilities and the expertise to organise sporting events encouraged the city to stage numerous world championships in the years following the Olympics (Greater London Authority 2014). London has consistently topped the Global Sports Cities Index, which assesses more than 700 multi-sport events over a rolling period

(7 years past to 7 years forward) to compare those cities active as hosts of major sporting events (Sportcal 2017).

In recent years London has seen the development of many temporary sporting facilities which can serve local and the domestic and international tourist markets. For example, winter sees the creation of many ice-skating rinks, located both at popular tourist sites such as the Natural History Museum and Tower of London as well as in locations outside of the central area (such as Tobacco Dock in Wapping and Canada Square Park in Canary Wharf). During spring and summer, the closure of city streets provides spaces for sporting opportunities such as the London Marathon and Ride London, events that provide opportunities for professional and amateur athletes to compete on traffic-free streets.

These events, while perhaps restricting regular community use of local infrastructure, add to the sporting appeal and assets of London, alongside the permanent sporting venues. Across London, arenas and stadiums are the home for rugby, football, and cricket teams as well as providing spaces to watch a variety of sports including athletics, cycling, basketball, and field and ice hockey. There are also entertainment facilities which accommodate sporting events. For example, the O2 arena has played host to the ATP Tennis Finals since 2009 and a regular season NBA Basketball game since 2011. Alexandra Palace is the host of the PDC World Darts Championships and the UK Masters Snooker tournament.

Notwithstanding the numerous entertainment spaces that play host to sporting events in the city, Table 5.1 exhibits the key sporting infrastructure available in the city. All these venues have the potential to host sports tourism and enhance the image of London, but this chapter predominantly focuses on the stadiums that currently offer attractions for sports tourists through the inclusion of tours and/or museums (Group 1). The chapter also includes discussion of the London Stadium, one of the sporting venues in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (Group 2). While the venues listed in group 3 are not specifically discussed in this paper Crystal Palace National Sports Centre is worthy of comment here. This facility offers limited touristic appeal, despite being the national centre for athletics. Built in the 1960s, many years of underinvestment caused management and operational issues, compounded further since 2012 by the move of some major athletics meetings to the London Stadium. In 2018, the Mayor of London initiated a review of the Centre to consider design and development options in an attempt to achieve a long-term future for the location (Majendie 2018). Thus, at a time when many London facilities are thriving, this stadium is facing greater competition and an uncertain future.

Many stadiums are the home of a sports team and so the image projection of London as a sports destination is achieved in part by the activities of the sports team and its regular use of the stadium. Table 5.1 emphasises that football (soccer) dominates London's sportscape. This is driven by football's significance as the national sport, which imbues a sense of cultural authenticity. The

<b>Group 1: Stadiums with Tours/Museums</b>
Craven Cottage (home to Fulham Football Club)
Emirates Stadium (home to Arsenal Football Club)
Kia Oval (home to Surrey Cricket Club)
Loftus Road (home to Queens Park Rangers Football Club)
Lords (home to Middlesex County Cricket Club)
Stamford Bridge (home to Chelsea Football Club)
The Den (home to Millwall Football Club)
Twickenham (home to England Rugby Union)
Wembley Stadium (home to the England national football team)
White Hart Lane (home to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club)
Wimbledon Tennis (home to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club)
<b>Group 2: Sports Venues constructed for London 2012</b>
London Stadium (originally the Olympic Stadium and currently home to West Ham United Football Club)
Copper Box Arena
Lee Valley Velo Park
London Aquatics Centre
Eton Manor (Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre)
<b>Group 3: Other Stadiums/Sports Grounds</b>
Allianz Park (home to Saracens, a rugby union club)
Brisbane Road (home to Leyton Orient Football Club)
Crystal Palace National Sports Centre (hosting national athletics meetings)
Queens Club (private sporting club hosting a major tennis event)
Selhurst Park (home to Crystal Palace Football Club)
The Stoop (home to Harlequins, a rugby union club)
The Valley (home to Charlton Athletic Football Club)
Trailfinders Sports Ground (home to London Broncos rugby league club)

**Table 5.1:** London Sports Stadiums and Venues. Source: Devised by the Author.

touristic appeal of football is also influenced by the international draw of the English Premier League (EPL) with research revealing that 2 per cent of visitors to London are likely to watch live football during their stay (Visit Britain 2015). The media rights value of the EPL is more than double its nearest rival, Spain's LaLiga (Sport Business 2016), reflecting its appeal domestically and internationally – it is broadcast to 156 countries with estimated audiences of



**Figure 5.1:** The New Warner Stand at Lord's Cricket Ground (Photo: Andrew Smith).

4.2 billion (Eurosport 2015). Consequently, many domestic and international tourists want to attend a live match or visit the stadium of EPL teams when they come to London.

For Premier League football clubs, the financial return from the operation of stadium tours is often small in relation to the revenue earned from broadcasting rights and football player trading. Furthermore, while other sports receive less from broadcasting rights, financial accounts (SCC 2016; Rugby Football Foundation 2015) suggest that the income from stadium tours and museums is usually only a small percentage of the total revenue earned by these businesses. Revenue from sponsorship, ticketing, hospitality and corporate events substantially overshadow earnings from tourism. However, offering access to the stadium via tours supports the brand and delivers an important fan experience.

After the London 2012 Olympics the venues created in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (henceforth termed the Olympic Park) have been altered, particularly with regards to the London Stadiums and the adaptations required to make it the new home of West Ham United Football Club. The stadium now offers tours, which acknowledge its role as an athletics stadium as well as an EPL ground. As at the Emirates Stadium (the home of Arsenal Football Club in north London), tours are predominately operated as self-guided (using multi-language audio guides). Other London stadiums offering tours use human guides to direct and inform visitors. Several stadiums, including Emirates Stadium, offer a premium tour that employs a well-known ex-player to accompany the tour group to further enhance the visitor experience.

## Research Method

This chapter draws on two sources of data. Firstly, a mystery shopper exercise was completed at eight of the London stadiums. Ethical debates regarding participant observation in the form of mystery shopping largely focus on issues of privacy and informed consent (Oliver and Eales 2008) but are countered by assertions that information is effectively in the public domain, available to anyone who seeks the information or experience (Jorgensen 1989, Ng Kwet Shing and Spence 2002). Consequently mystery shopping is seen as a 'quite mild and on the face of it harmless form of deception' (Hammond and Wellington 2013, 61) and therefore as a research approach has largely become mainstream (Hudson et al. 2001). Although mystery shopping may be perceived as deceptive it is used extensively by commercial organisations to assess service delivery and performance (Wilson 1998). While there has been discussion of the ethical use of mystery shopping for critical appraisal of human or competitor performance (Ng Kwet Shing and Spence 2002), in this case it was undertaken to gain appreciation of the norms of tour design and delivery. This insight informed the critical analysis of the main data set drawn from Trip Advisor reviews. Gaining experience as a participant allowed enhanced interpretation of these reviews written following other people's experiences of stadium tours.

The main data set that underpins this chapter consists of more than 7,000 reviews posted on Trip Advisor, which detail the visitor experiences of stadium tours. Table 5.2 summarises the number of Trip Advisor reviews for each venue analysed.

Trip Advisor relies on user-generated content to provide travel-related reviews which may act as a form of word-of-mouth recommendation to influence the decision-making of others (Gretzel and Yoo 2008). The scale of such resources (more than 535 million reviews have been posted on Trip Advisor) provides insights from a variety of users. Thus, it is possible to achieve 'insight extraction' (Gandomi and Haider 2015, 140) through analysis of such data.

The dataset was collated by downloading the full Trip Advisor review for each venue. In some cases, there are separate Trip Advisor pages for the venue tours and the match-day experiences. However, in other cases there is no separation of reviews; thus the data set included only those reviews which made specific mention to the word 'tour' (noted in Table 5.2). In total 7040 reviews were collected for analysis.

Nvivo was used to analyse the dataset, a qualitative software tool which helped to manage the thematic analysis of each review. Thematic analysis identifies ideas from the data (Guest et al. 2011), allocating codes (or names) which represent these so that other examples can be identified and compared. It also allows contrasting cases to be recognised and evaluated (Flick 2009). This allowed advanced levels of abstraction (Punch 2005) to ensure the development of overarching conceptual ideas from the dataset. Analysis of the data revealed a wide variety of issues linked to the experience of stadium tours. However,



Stadiums with Tours/Museums	Reviews (November 2017)
Craven Cottage (home to Fulham Football Club)	293 (10 mentioning 'tour')
Emirates Stadium (home to Arsenal Football Club)*	1,799 (tour specific site)
Kia Oval (home to Surrey Cricket Club)*	189 (8 mentioning 'tour')
Loftus Road (home to Queens Park Rangers Football Club)	117 (4 mentioning 'tour')
London Stadium (home to West Ham United Football Club)	1,419 (91 mentioning 'tour')
Lords (home to Middlesex County Cricket Club)*	1,275 (657 mentioning 'tour')
Stamford Bridge (home to Chelsea Football Club)*	1,602 (tour specific site)
The Den (home to Millwall Football Club)	96 (80 mentioning 'tour')
Twickenham (home to England Rugby Union)*	1,381 (122 mentioning 'tour')
Wembley Stadium (home to the England national football team)*	4,816 (1,000 mentioning 'tour')
White Hart Lane (home to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club)*	395 (tour specific site)
Wimbledon Tennis (home to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club)*	998 (museum) 1,287 (274 mentioning 'tour')
Total Reviews	15,667 (7,040 = museums/tours)

**Table 5.2:** Trip Advisor Reviews.

\* *Visited as part of Mystery Shopper research.*

the findings presented in this chapter focus only on the visitor experience of London sports stadiums as tourist attractions.

### The Appeal of Sports Facilities as Tourist Attractions

Sports venues act as the home base for a sporting team and they can be venerated for such associations. These modern-day shrines are seen as sacrosanct spaces that appeal to fans but also to wider audiences. Substantive research into the 'Fan' has been developed over the years, focusing particularly on fan identification (Sutton et al. 1997). Shortened from the term fanatic, the fan is seen to hold obsessive, devotional emotions, akin to a religious or spiritual fervour. In a sporting context being a fan suggests a taking of sides, with affiliation to a group with similar beliefs. Fandom suggests perseverance, a long-term relationship and a level of self-identification with the sport (Jones 2000). In recent years academic discussion of the nature of fandom has recognised changes in sporting affiliation, heavily influenced by media coverage (Williams 2007).



Being a fan can stimulate continued engagement even in cases where the cost of participation in a leisure activity is seen to be greater than the benefits experienced. In other words, there is an irrational element of fan consumption that defies established models of consumer behaviour. Fandom occurs at many levels, with supporters of the team or the sport attracted to those stadiums or arenas that act as spaces where the sport is displayed.

There has long been significant research linking sport fans to tourism. Fifteen years ago, Gibson (2003) explored the idea of the 'fan as tourist' with an investigation of the supporters of the University of Florida American football team. She concluded that leveraging tourism benefits from visiting fans is possible. Furthermore, Sutton et al. (1997) drawing on the work of Wann and Branscombe (1993), acknowledges three types of fan (social, focused, vested) each holding differing levels of identification with their teams. Consequently, it isn't just the ardent, vested fans that visit sports spaces. Those with a love of sport generally (with only a relatively passive, social interest in a specific team) may also want to visit. Furthermore, tourists travelling with family and friends are likely to visit these sites together; thus non-fans also engage with such experiences (Table 5.3).

The reviews show that the tour experience is often unexpectedly positive for non-fans. Comments intimate that reviewers are 'NOT a fan BUT ...', suggesting that tours of sports stadiums have a wider appeal. Some literature considers the degree to which someone is a fan of a sport or team (Wann and Branscombe 1970, Hunt et al. 1999), but there is little empirical research considering engagement by non-fans. If fandom comprises a degree of commitment and loyalty to a sport or club (Pedro, Carmo, and Luiz 2008) then, appreciating that, those who do not consider themselves fans but who are still engaging in activities akin to low levels of fandom are exhibiting contradictory behaviours. Gray (2003) recognises this in his discussion of anti-fans (those with an informed distaste) and the non-fan who engages with experiences but with lower levels of involvement. This research suggests that engagement with the tours is often initiated for the benefit of a sports fan but participation reaches further to offer non-fans (those with low engagement with the sport or club) something of interest. Consequently, market size can be expanded to include a wider group of tourists. This helps to explain why sports venues – previously considered to have niche appeal – are now becoming mainstream attractions.

This research also reveals that the association of sporting places as spiritual or sacred spaces is clearly established in the mind of London visitors. Brooker (2017, 157) recognises that fans will 'travel across the world to often mundane places that fandom has made sacred' including the football stadium (Jorgenson 1995). In evaluating Trip Advisor reviews of stadium tours there are numerous contributors that liken their visits to pilgrimages (Joseph 2011, Gammon 2004) with the sports spaces honoured as holy or 'hallowed' (Table 5.4).

<p>'Great Tour' I am not a true fan of Association Football also known in the USA by the original British nickname-soccer, but I greatly enjoyed this tour. Our guide was very entertaining, and I learned a lot about the business models used to fund this multi-billion dollar industry.</p>	<p>'Hate football but loved this tour!' I have no interest in football, or footballers, never mind stadiums, but my children do (even though they are not Arsenal fans) so I came along with low expectations. I was very happy with the tour and think if you are ever going to see round a stadium, this is a good one to see.</p>
<p>'Interesting' My boyfriend got 2 tickets for Christmas, I'm not a huge football fan so wasn't too bothered with this but actually quite enjoyed it.</p>	<p>'Amazing, boyfriend was chuffed!' Booked to do the tour for my boyfriend's birthday, I'm not really into football but I really enjoyed it.</p>
<p>'Not Chelsea fans and still enjoyed this tour and museum!' Museum really good and this kept us all entertained, the tour was good but felt could be better with footage of some past press conferences.</p>	<p>'Very cool stadium tour'‡ I went there with a bunch of friends to take the stadium tour and I think all of us genuinely enjoyed learning about the stadium itself and West Ham Football Club, even people with little interest for football. The videos/audio and the tour guide made it extra special and really enjoyable.</p>
<p>'Interesting tour' Went on a weekday morning for a 90 min tour. The tour takes you all around the grounds - specifically to centre court, media room and other courts. Even though I am not a tennis fan, had an interesting morning at this place.</p>	<p>'Loved the stadium tour' As a QPR fan for most of my life, I was always going to love the Loftus Road Stadium Tour. However, as I had a spare ticket, I dragged my sister along who is not a football fan at all and she really enjoyed it too.</p>

**Table 5.3:** Non-fan Engagement with Stadium Tours.

These sports grounds are also seen as spaces of worship. For example, Lord's cricket ground is referenced as 'A worship place for cricket lovers', 'The Vatican of cricket' and 'The Mecca of cricket'. The terminology reflects the quasi-religious appeal of such attractions. Lord's is not unique in this association; for example, Twickenham is described as 'The temple of Rugby'. Bale (1995) acknowledges that the stadium is a cathedral for the masses while Gebauer (2010) further adds that the architecture of the stadium, with sacrosanct ground at its centre, allows the separation of the profane fan from the saint-like players. Price (2001, 3) suggests that sports fans 'exhibit a kind of devotion that is often described in terms of religious dedication or intensity'. Consequently, stadiums provide the space for adoration of players by sports tourists regardless of the presence of sporting action.

<p>'Dream come true!' A fantastic experience for our 'true Blue' son and the rest of the family. From sitting in Jose's seat to exploring the dressing rooms, nothing was off-limits except the <u>hallowed turf!</u> (Chelsea Tour)</p>	<p>'Take the ground tour!' We were at The Oval for an AGM. After the meeting we were taken on the Ground Tour. We were allowed onto the <u>hallowed turf</u> and taken over to the 'square' to see how the ground looks to the players. (Oval Tour)</p>
<p>'The Home of Rugby' Always a pleasure to enter the <u>hallowed halls</u> and sit in the greatest stadium in rugby. We have been many times and will continue to do so. (Twickenham Tour)</p>	<p>'Visit Wimbledon if you are a tennis fan' Very well worth visit to this <u>hallowed ground</u> of tennis. The tour is good and gives good info on how the tournament works. (Wimbledon Tour)</p>
<p>'Stand on the <u>Hallowed turf!!</u>' Access all areas of interest that you wouldn't usually see and touch the FA cup. (Wembley Tour)</p>	<p>'The Home of Cricket' Astounding place to visit. There's a visit to the pavilion, a walk down the Long Room and a trip to the <u>hallowed turf</u>. (Lords Tour)</p>

**Table 5.4:** Hallowed Space.

For many holy sites that have touristic appeal the balance between times for worship and times for visitation must be managed (Brown et al. 2009) and for sport stadiums these distinctions can be clearly identified as days of worship are determined by match schedules. Visiting the stadium at times of worship (during matches or competitions) may seem to be the preserve of the vested ardent fan but the commercialisation of sport has limited access to such opportunities. The growth of corporate entertainment packages within sports stadiums introduces 'a less passionate fan base famously derided by Manchester United captain Roy Keane' for its lack of knowledge of the sport (Slack and Amis 2004, 270), which excludes other fans. Thus, tours provide access to those otherwise unable to visit such venerated spaces during the times of scheduled 'worship'.

In London the international appeal of the EPL plays an important role in promoting London stadiums. Arsenal and Chelsea prove the most popular teams to watch (Visit Britain 2015) but lesser-visited teams such as Fulham also offer appeal for some tourists (Table 5.5).

Just as Arsenal and Chelsea dominate the live match market so they also dominate the stadium tours/museums market, both receiving in excess of 200,000 visitors annually. This is almost double the number of tour visitors to Wimbledon AELTC and Twickenham combined (86,000 and 30,000 visitors respectively) (Visit England 2016).

Team	Number of International Tourists to Live Matches Annually
Arsenal; Emirates	109,000
Chelsea; Stamford Bridge	89,000
Wembley Stadium	51,000
Tottenham Hotspur; White Hart Lane	40,000
Fulham; Craven Cottage	30,000

**Table 5.5:** International Tourists Attending Football Matches. Source: Visit Britain 2015.



**Figure 5.2:** Poster on the London Underground Advertising Tours of Arsenal Football Club (Photo: Andrew Smith).

### Stadiums as Tourist Infrastructure

Sports stadiums are important parts of the urban infrastructure of London, with the commercial power of the EPL driving waves of investment in the redevelopment of stadiums home to Premier League teams. At the time of writing (2017/18 football season) Tottenham Hotspur are playing their home matches at Wembley Stadium while their ground at White Hart Lane is being rebuilt.



**Figure 5.3:** Wembley Stadium on FA Cup Final Weekend (Photo: Andrew Smith).

The lack of a home ground has not put paid to Tottenham Hotspur stadium tours, with specialist ‘Spurs at Wembley’ tours offered on the days adjacent to their home matches. Furthermore, the importance of serving the visitor market is revealed as the club has already announced that tours will be available at the new stadium when completed. The new stadium has been designed to incorporate a permanent visitor centre, housing a museum and Hall of Fame.

Redevelopment of Stamford Bridge is also planned by Chelsea FC, with expectations that this will increase match-day capacity by about 50 per cent. Unsurprisingly, given demand levels at the existing stadium, the proposals include a space for tours and a museum. The extent to which touristic infrastructure is embedded into redevelopment plans for stadiums is evident, and stadiums incorporating hotels (such as Twickenham), museums and restaurants can encourage tourists to increase their dwell-time in the local area. The development of sports stadiums that function as entertainment zones with touristic appeal has featured prominently in the redevelopment of urban areas (Hinch and Higham 2011). Historically, stadiums served a largely local market but, today, larger stadiums, increased car ownership and wider geographical spread of fans means stadiums are designed to cater for regional, national and even international audiences.

Sports-related development policies are often justified for their trickle-down benefits to communities (Jones 2001, Stevens and Wootton 1997) and stadium

redevelopment has been common in London in recent decades. Completed stadium-led regeneration schemes include Wembley Stadium (rebuilt between 2002 and 2007, see Figure 5.3) and Arsenal FC's move from its old ground in Highbury to the Emirates stadium in 2006 (London Assembly 2015). Both grounds included aspects of regeneration for the surrounding districts. The success of such redevelopment is debated (Davies 2005, Bourke 2015), particularly considering the impacts to local communities as well as to supporters and other visitors. Collins (2008) argues that stadiums are often unsuccessful as development catalysts because they result in unevenly distributed benefits, leading to social and spatial inequalities. There are also concerns that benefits may only be ephemeral, and with redevelopment plans introducing infrastructure that is likely to be in existence for many decades it is challenging to provide a long-term cost-benefit appraisal. Despite these reservations, clubs continue to drive redevelopment plans led by an enthusiasm to gain increased revenue from ticket sales, corporate hospitality, stadium naming rights, sponsorship and non-match-day rental earnings (Zinganel 2010).

Recently constructed stadiums have incorporated tourist facilities within the building from the outset while older stadiums are trying to incorporate tours and museums into existing facilities. Tours vary in complexity and popularity with Arsenal Emirates and the London Stadium offering self-guided tours while others use trained individuals to guide visitors through the building. In some cases, the individuals are volunteers (Twickenham and Kia Oval) while Wimbledon AELTC uses accredited guides in an attempt to ensure a quality experience. In all cases the tours provide backstage access to spaces which are not seen by match-day attendees. This is an important part of the offering, sought after by visitors (Table 5.6). Gaining access to spaces usually reserved for the sports players is valued.

The reviews show that tourists value the opportunity to move beyond the public spaces of sports infrastructure. The opportunity to sit in the manager's chair, see the players' changing rooms or visit the press areas (including those spaces where players are interviewed for TV) provides the tourist with meaningful engagement with the physical environment of such buildings. The power of the backstage to generate feelings of adoration and veneration (Gammon and Fear 2005) is evident in the data for London stadiums. Expanding on the work of Goffman (1959), the importance of the backstage was recognised by MacCannell (1973) and has since been extensively examined in tourism research (Pearce and Moscardo 1986, Cohen 1979, Sharpley 2008) including more recent discussion of access to the backstage when venerating sports sites and people (Hinch and Higham 2005).

Accessing spaces usually only available to the elite few appears important for fans who relish the opportunity to 'cross the symbolic boundaries that distinguish the world for the audience and the worlds of the performer or privileged' (Ramshaw et al. 2013: 19). The creation of an organised stadium tour converts the backstage to a frontstage, as access is no longer restricted to the



<p>'Great tour - whether you're a fan or not!' This new tour in the new West Ham stadium is a great experience - whether you're a fan or not! It's fascinating to see backstage, including the VIP sections, dressing rooms and dugout.</p>	<p>'Good fun!' Of course, Wembley needs no introduction, and getting to go backstage - quite literally - is a great experience. The tour takes you through the changing rooms, pitchside area, press conference room, royal box and more.</p>
<p>'Birthday boy's dream day out' We started with a good look at the stadium which if you have never seen one is a vast and impressive structure plus a tour of the press room in a chance to sit in the manager's chair. Then an insider view of the huge spa like changing rooms and then a lifelike exit through the dug out onto the pitch to the sound of applause. You can't fail to feel the energy and adrenalin which the players must experience. It's a backstage pass into a footballer's life.</p>	<p>'Pretty cool backstage look!' The Arsenal stadium (audio) tour is pretty cool! It gives a very detailed look behind the scenes. It really takes you to places which you normally can't access. Locker rooms, business club, the pitch. Truly awesome experience.</p>
<p>'Stadium Tour Fulham' Treated my husband who is a staunch Fulham fan to a trip around the ground. It was very informative and you went behind the 'scenes' to where the players change and where they wives wait while they are playing.</p>	<p>'Fascinating behind the scenes view' Excellent guide - obviously enthusiastic. Loved seeing the Long Room and the surprisingly sparse dressing rooms. Also enjoyed the amazing view from the state-of-the-art media centre. (Lords Cricket Tour)</p>

**Table 5.6:** Touring the Backstage.

few. MacCannell (1976) highlighted the existence of different types of backstage, including some altered to be accessible to tourists. Regardless of adaptations, tours offer access to spaces within the stadium that are endowed with a special status (Gammon 2011). Furthermore tours provide the fan with a sense of intimacy with the players and/or teams through greater appreciation of the spaces they inhabit (Ramshaw and Gammon 2010).

Motivations to take tours of sports venues and their associated museums are driven in part by a desire for a nostalgic engagement with the hidden aspects of stadiums. Consequently sport tours, halls of fame and sports museums are 'a unique opportunity for devoted pilgrims to enter areas that are otherwise restricted, providing authentic insight and an otherwise unforgettable backstage experience' (Wright 2012: 197). Such experiences are proliferating (Kellet 2007) to a point that they are embedded into stadium design and promotion.



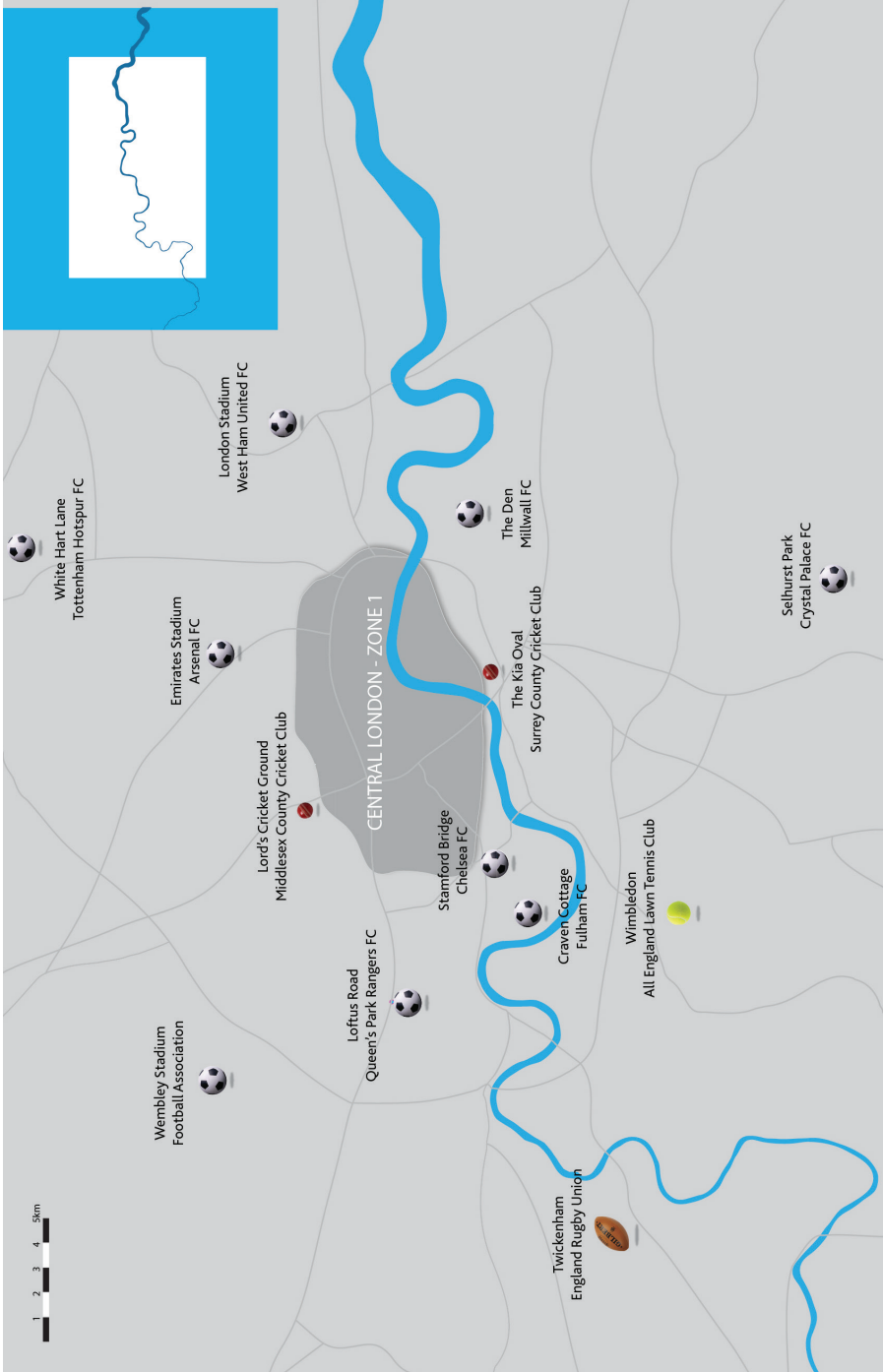


Figure 5.4: Non-Central Locations of London's Key Stadiums (© Mason Edwards).

## Extending the Tourist Area

London experiences seasonal patterns of demand which are more pronounced when examining international travel patterns as compared to domestic overnight travel. The latter shows fewer signs of imbalance across the year (Kyte 2012). Visiting London to watch sporting events can affect the travel season, with football particularly encouraging travel outside of the peak UK summer time (Visit Britain 2015). Sports have their own seasons that can mean events such as finals or championships must take place during peak holiday periods. Thus, although sport tourism has some potential to assist in addressing seasonal imbalances it must still work within the confines of the sporting calendar. The geographical spread of sport stadiums across the city has encouraged tourists to move outside of the heavily visited central core. Discovering new neighbourhoods and engaging with local teams adds to the authentic appeal for these areas of London. Consequently, sports stadiums have the potential to spread tourist demand both temporally and geographically. The majority of London's major tourist attractions (including 9 of the top 10 most visited attractions) (ALVA 2017) are located in an area denoted as zone one (based on the transport system and outlined grey in Figure 5.4) while all the sport stadiums offering tours and/or museums are outside of this area (see Figure 5.4). Many are adjacent in zone two but stations for White Hart Lane (Tottenham Hotspur) and Wimbledon AELTC are in zone three, Wembley Stadium station is in zone four while Twickenham is classified as a zone five station.

The expansion of the tourist zone is encouraged through these non-central attractions, which can be particularly important at busy times of the year. In 2016 London received one-third more visits in July–September (5.2 million) than it did in January–March (3.87 million) (Visit Britain 2017). Thus tourists' intensive use of space, particularly during peak seasonal holiday times, can pressurise the central parts of popular cities and towns (Russo 2002), and encouraging visitors to move outside of the core can provide opportunities to relieve this congestion. In his discussion of the urban explorer tourist searching for the authentic, Maitland (2017, 67) recognises that many tourists are prepared to move into the suburbs to enhance their 'experience of the real city'. Thus demand can be encouraged to travel outside of the central zone if the attraction is evident, with sport stadiums often seen as authentic spaces (Bale 1993).

The use of sport tourism development to increase destination attractiveness has been recognised (Daniels 2007) but this comes with challenges in terms of the uneven spread of (economic and social) benefits and costs. Much literature from the USA on the development of new stadiums to attract franchise teams has often been critical, raising concerns over neighbourhood blight and poor return on investment (Nelson 2001). However, issues that influence stadium development in the North American context do not always exist elsewhere (Thornley 2002) and, for London, many of the existing

<p>'If you haven't been to the stadium for an event it's interesting.'</p> <p>The major focus is now on the West Ham football team but there is still a lot of Olympic &amp; para Olympic detail. It is a self-guided audio tour but there are many helpful staff along the way. As well as a view of the arena you get to see the main hospitality area, the home dressing room, the indoor warm up track, the tunnel and dug-out. At the end you can return to the club shop to get a souvenir certificate of your visit.</p>	<p>'At your own pace'</p> <p>We did the tour on a non-match day and were pleasantly surprised. We had a warm welcome, were given our headsets, tablet and a quick introduction to the tour, then off we went following the signs and playing the appropriate video on our tablets. Really interesting, such as when we walked through the tunnel a guide was on hand to chat about how they remove the seats for athletics. When you have finished you receive a voucher to take back to the club shop to get a personalised certificate of your tour (either in West Ham or Olympics format) and you receive 15 per cent off in the cafe. Well thought out and very pleasant experience.</p>
<p>'Proud to be a Hammer - Enjoyed the Tour'</p> <p>Loved our trip to see our new ground - London Stadium. Will miss Upton Park after going for 40 years, but enjoyed the look around the stadium. Can spend as much time as you wish in each section, pitch, tunnel, changing rooms, etc.</p>	<p>'Great Experience!!'</p> <p>I am not a super football fan but I must say that the tour of the stadium was great and very interesting... plus was my first time in a completely empty Olympic stadium... it literally left me breathless! I would totally recommend it!</p>
<p>'Stadium Tour'</p> <p>This is more of a West Ham tour that of the Olympics – there is limited Olympic stuff to see or hear about. We enjoyed that it is self-guided audio tour so you can take your time and explore at your own pace. You get to go into the changing rooms, warm up track and on to the pitch dug out as well as sitting in the exclusive seats. The views are great and there are assistants on hand to ask questions of.</p>	<p>'Not just a football stadium'</p> <p>I loved the stadium! It brought up memories of the glorious Olympic Games in 2012.</p> <p>The tour was very comprehensive and not just focused on football which I appreciated. It was very interesting to hear how it has changed since it was built. The audioguide in the tour is really good, it has a lot of quality videos and information.</p>

**Table 5.7:** London Stadium Tours.

sports stadiums have been long established in their neighbourhoods. Therefore, notwithstanding the recent waves of redevelopment, these places are rooted in their local areas and thus offer tourists a means of engaging with an authentic local space. One key exception to this is the development of the Olympic Park stadiums, where the construction of new stadiums occurred

alongside the construction of new residential property, shopping and other local amenities and services.

The need for regeneration of the Olympic Park area of East London was evident, with much of the site containing polluted waterways and brownfield spaces. The construction of permanent and temporary stadiums was seen as an opportunity to transform a run-down part of East London and during the construction phase policy rhetoric focused on the legacy of Olympic-led regeneration. In the period since the Games, the Olympic Park has been redesigned to capture the legacy benefits of the infrastructure (Latuf de Oliveira Sanchez and Essex 2017). The success of this development is hard to assess, however, as plans for the infrastructure have changed since the initial inception phase (Azzali 2017). This is particularly evident with the main Olympic Stadium. Originally designed to be reduced in size (to 25,000 seats) and be used as an athletics stadium, it is now a multi-sport arena with capacity for 66,000. Consequently, it is now capable of hosting EPL football matches and is the home ground of West Ham United. This has provided the stadium with a regular schedule of events as well as increased media coverage through televised matches.

Redevelopment of the Olympic Park stimulated service sector growth in the area, providing new spaces for the consumption of leisure. Estimates suggest there have been more than 15 million visits to the venues in the park, with one million spectators heading to the London Stadium for music and sports events, including West Ham United home games (LLDC 2017). Converting the main athletics stadium into a multi-use arena embedded facilities to operate self-guided tours. The design of the tour needed to acknowledge both the Olympic history of the stadium as well as its status as the new home of West Ham United Football Club. Reviews suggest that tours have, for the most part, been successful in achieving an appropriate balance (Table 5.7). The reviews highlight that, in line with other stadiums in London, the tour offers access to spaces not usually accessible to the public during sporting events, while the use of multimedia technology within the tour has also helped maximise the visitor experience.

The sharing of stadiums means separate fan bases may be attracted to the location. Some European football teams in the same league share grounds (for example AC Milan/Inter Milan and AS Roma/SS Lazio) and cross-sport sharing occurs frequently between football and rugby teams. While the London Stadium is not currently shared by two teams, its recent history as an Olympic stadium still provides an important draw to some tourists interested in the Olympics. Furthermore, club relocation for West Ham United also has an impact on the experiences of visitors. Relocation to a new ground is not a recent phenomenon in football (Vamplew et al. 1998, Horak 1995); thus fan allegiance to place can transition when teams move to a new home (Brown 2010). This is controversial (Maguire and Possamai 2005) but there have been successes when support has come from the fan base (Vamplew et al. 1998, Tallentire 2018). Thus, in such cases demand for tours can be stimulated by a desire to see the new home of a team.



**Figure 5.5:** The London Stadium in Athletics Mode (Photo: Andrew Smith).

While the Olympic Park hosts tours of the Aquatics Centre, Velodrome and London Stadium, it is the last of these that attracts the greatest demand. From the reviews it is clear that its Olympic history is still an important part of its appeal. Many Olympic cities mark anniversaries of the Games (Cashman 1999) and London is no exception, with the stadium hosting an athletics meeting every July. Consequently, annual TV coverage displaying the



stadium as more than an EPL ground continues to drive diversity in its appeal to visitors. Sports stadiums as part of urban regeneration programs have often relied on TV coverage (of the variety of events taking place at the stadium) to stimulate awareness and encourage international visitation (John et al. 2013). Media coverage can create place recognition in the mind of visitors. This can, in turn, encourage tourists to move outside of the central tourist districts into other areas of the city.

Television coverage of mega-events such as the London 2012 Olympics and annual events such as the Wimbledon tennis championships can enhance national and international awareness of these sports facilities; consequently 'because of its global reach, telecasting plays an active role in defining, shaping and changing national images around the world' (Zeng et al. 2011, 41). Events as a component of the destination's product can leverage media attention to promote the place image (Brown et al. 2004), hence the construction of iconic buildings and the staging of events being strategically employed to assist in the re-imaging of cities (Smith 2005). Thus sports stadiums are thought to enhance perceptions of the destination and add marketing appeal (Thornley 2002).

## Conclusions

London's rating as the 'world's best sporting city' (London and Partners 2018) has been driven by the success of hosting peripatetic events such as the London 2012 games, the 2015 Rugby World Cup and the 2017 IAAF athletics world championships alongside the long established sporting schedule that includes the Wimbledon tennis tournament and EPL football matches. As well as enhancing destination image, sporting events were found to contribute £1.67 billion to the London economy between 2013 and 2016 (London and Partners 2016). London's growing reputation as a sporting city has been part of the appeal for the NFL to use it as a base for its international series of games, from one a year in 2007 to four a year in 2017. TV coverage of such events further extends awareness to potential visitors, as views inside stadiums and around the historic city promote the touristic offering.

Extending the tourist offering outside of the central London core is valuable in managing demand pressures as well as offering tourists the opportunity to engage with different localities and neighbourhoods. The provision of scheduled tours and associated team or sport-related museums has made sports stadiums in London a robust part of the touristic offering. Accessibility, vitally important when stadiums are used for sporting events, ensures transport links exist for those tourists coming on non-match days. Construction of new stadiums across London has led to the expansion of the tourist region and, with the new stadium at White Hart Lane due for completion for the 2018/19 football season, the number of sport tourism attractions is set to further increase.

Sports stadiums across London have attracted many visitors to watch games, take backstage tours and, in some cases, to use the facilities to participate in sporting activities. The appeal of sport as a primary or secondary motivator brings tourists to the city both during the peak holiday season and during less popular times, bolstered by the appeal of sporting events. Reviews of the visits to sports stadiums are overwhelmingly positive, for fans and non-fans alike. Despite receiving only about one-tenth of the numbers that visit attractions such as Shakespeare's Globe or St Paul's Cathedral, the scale of visitation to London sports stadiums (for tours and live sports events) reveals that such infrastructure is an important component of the London tourist product and helps extend tourism beyond central areas.

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