

SURFING AT THE OLYMPICS



Surfing, which has been introduced into the Olympics will continue in the Paris 2024 Games as well. Interestingly, the competition will be held in the ocean, 10,000 miles away from the main venue. Thus, Sri Lanka too has the opportunity to provide our world-class surfing destination, Arugambay for the Olympics in the future especially with India being a serious contender for the 2032 Olympic Games.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe.

With the decision made to hold the surfing competition in the ocean as opposed to artificially generated waves, “the condition of the waves, the direction and strength of the wind, and the ebb and flow of the tide will all be factors” for the surfers. As no two waves are alike athletes will compete with each other while balancing environmental conditions. Surfers will be using short- boards at the Tokyo Olympics and there will be 20 men and 20 women competing.

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The venue selected for the surfing competition for the Tokyo Olympics is Tsurigasaki Surfing Beach, which is located in Ichinomiya town on Chiba Prefecture's Pacific coastline. This is situated about 40 miles east of Tokyo, the host city. Shuttle services will be provided to travel to the venue. As it is almost the farthest eastern point of Japan it is the ideal location to capture the swells from the north, east and south. Consistency of the waves is one of the reasons that the venue has been selected. The area of the beach known as Shidashita has hosted the WQS 6000 competitions previously as well. Furthermore, the venue for the various sporting events also provide the opportunity to show- case the local traditions and culture, which is an important aspect of the Olympic movement.

The 2024 Olympics, which is to be held in Paris, will also include surfing in the program. Thus reflecting that the sport will become a permanent feature in the Olympic Games. As the ISA President Fernando Aguerre ex-plaind, "Surfing is a sport for the new era of the Olympic Games...and it combines high-performance action with a connection to the environment, sustainability and self-improvement." France similar to Japan has a vibrant and rich surfing tradition and culture and has hosted many ISA competitions previously.

While France has many surfing venues in the country, the host venue that was selected for the surfing competition is 10,000 miles away from Paris, in Teahupo'o, Tahiti! It is home to the most dangerous and iconic waves. Tahiti is part of French Polynesia and was able to beat out four other possible locations for the 2024 surfing competition: Biarritz, Lacanau, Les Landes, and La Torche, which are all in France. The decision was made in order to ensure good waves throughout the competition. The waves in Teahupo'o Tahiti will be drastically different from of Shidashita Beach in Tokyo. Thus, it would seem like a totally different sport as the natural conditions are vastly different.

With India being a serious contender as the host of the 2032 Olympics Games, Sri Lanka has a great opportunity to bid to become the venue for the surfing competition.

The Olympics decision to select venues for surfing that are farther away from the main venue, and in the case of the Paris Olympics almost moving the competition to the other side of the world, augurs well for Sri Lanka. Because we too can bid to become a host venue for surfing in future Olympic Games. Arugambay has world-class waves and draws in surfing professionals/champions from around the world on an annual basis. Sri Lanka has hosted ISA

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competitions and world championships as well. The rich surfing culture and tradition, as well as the unique Sri Lankan hospitality would provide the ideal venue for surfing.

With India being a serious contender as the host of the 2032 Olympics Games, Sri Lanka has a great opportunity to bid to become the venue for the surfing competition. Furthermore, Sri Lanka can in fact bid to become a venue for surfing for any Olympic Games as distance is not a criterion but the conditions of the waves are the decision making factor for the Olympics Committee. Sri Lanka has a great opportunity to make use of as we are blessed with natural resources and perfect waves in Arugambay, with the supporting laid-back culture that would definitely enhance the experiences of the competitors.



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