

# WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION NEWS

ISSUE 62

**LEISURE IN MOTION:  
WL DAY, WL CONGRESS, WL AWARDS,  
GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND MORE**



March 2025



# Editorial

Are you a  
WLO Premium  
member?  
Submit your  
news here!

Dear members, dear colleagues,

We begin this issue of our newsletter with the announcement that registration for the 18th World Leisure Congress, to be held August 25-28, 2025 in Breda, The Netherlands, is now open! Make sure to register early to take advantage of our discounted rate!

The World Leisure Organization's Awards Program, which recognizes scholars and students making an impact in the world of leisure studies, is also now accepting applications. Learn more about the various scholarships and awards, along with eligibility requirements, on page 4.

World Leisure Day 2025 is just around the corner, on April 16th, 2025. On page 5 we provide details on how you can get involved. You'll also find some very exciting news from the World Leisure Journal on page 16- make sure to check it out!

We've had a very busy couple of months, so you'll also find recaps of our participation in the preparatory meeting of UNESCO 2005 Convention Civil Society Forum, the JSLRS International Congress 2025, and the TALS Conference below.

The rest of the issue is packed with fascinating news and insight from the wider industry, links to WLJ articles with free access this month, and more information about applying to make your institution a recognised World Leisure Center of Excellence.

You'll find a wonderful quote from new institutional member Greater Medellín Convention & Visitors Bureau, and we close with a fascinating interview with Dr. Wadih Ishac about Qatar's evolving role as a global sports tourism hub.

Please enjoy this exciting issue!

Yours truly

Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere  
WLO Chief Operating Officer





# WLO News



**18<sup>TH</sup> WORLD LEISURE CONGRESS**  
25-28 August 2025  
Breda, the Netherlands

LEISURE FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

## World Leisure Congress 2025: Registration is now open!

**The 18th World Leisure Congress** will be held in Breda, The Netherlands from August 25-28, 2025 with the theme 'Leisure for a Better Society'.

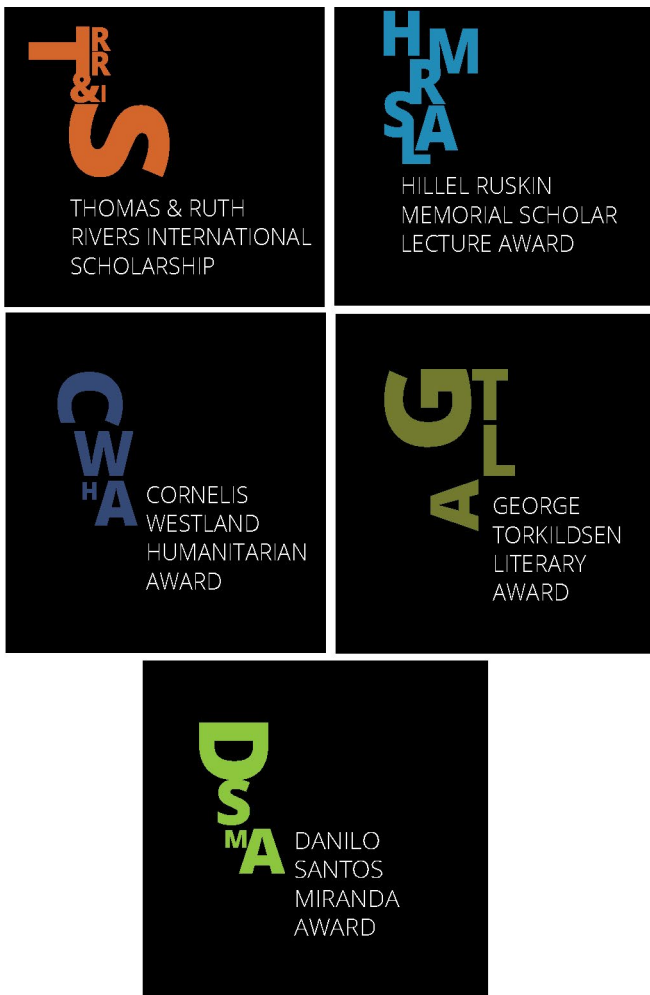
Hosted by [Breda University of Applied Sciences \(BUAs\)](#), WLC 2025 will bring together a diverse and vibrant community of **emerging scholars, young investigators, early-career professionals, seasoned researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders** to explore how leisure contributes to healthier, more inclusive and connected communities.

[Register here](#) before May 20, 2025 to take advantage of our discounted early registration

rate. WLO Premium Members are eligible for an additional discount off the regular registration fee.

[READ MORE...](#)





or university programs to attend and present a scholarly paper at the biennial international World Leisure Congress.

[Learn more and apply here!](#)

**Hillel Ruskin Memorial Scholar Lecture Award:**

The Hillel Ruskin Memorial Scholar Lecture Award seeks to perpetuate and recognize the contributions of the namesake of this award by sponsoring a scholarly lecture focused on advancing concepts related to leisure, leisure education and leisure policy development.

[Learn more and apply here!](#)

**Cornelis Westland Humanitarian Award:**

The Cornelis Westland Humanitarian Award seeks to recognize an individual or organization that has made significant and sustained contributions to the worldwide leisure movement, advancing human concerns.

[Learn more and apply here!](#)

**George Torkildsen Literary Award:**

This award is presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the recreation, parks and leisure service literature by advancing innovative ideas, thoughts, and/or philosophical perspectives.

[Learn more and apply here!](#)

**Danilo Santos Miranda - Culture Entrepreneurship Award:**

Further information coming soon! Stay tuned!

**The deadline for applications for all awards is May 23, 2025.**

## World Leisure Awards 2025

The World Leisure Organization’s Awards Program recognizes individuals who demonstrate strong dedication within the field of leisure.

It honors both scholars whose contributions in advancing best practices and theoretical knowledge have been significant, and students who have demonstrated excellence in areas of leisure, tourism, culture, parks, and recreation. We are thrilled to announce that the following awards and scholarships are now open for applications:

**Thomas & Ruth Rivers International Scholarship:**

This award provides opportunities for senior or graduate students who are studying recreation, leisure studies, leisure services, leisure resources, or tourism studies in college



## World Leisure Day 2025: Be part of the celebration!

The 5th annual WL Day is coming up on **April 16th, 2025**. This year's theme is **Leisure for a Better Society**.

World Leisure Day is a global call to explore the transformative role of leisure in building a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious society. It unites communities worldwide to examine how leisure can address critical societal challenges and inspire positive change.

Here are the ways you can get involved:

### 1. Label your event

To label any event you are planning with the World Leisure Day (WL Day) initiative, ensure it aligns with WL Day's goals of promoting leisure as a vital aspect of social, cultural, and personal well-being. Your event should focus on the importance of leisure in our lives, incorporate themes of innovation, inclusivity, and community engagement in leisure activities, and highlight how leisure contributes to quality of life.

### 2. Organize your own activity or event specifically for WL Day

Anyone can organize a WL Day event or activity in any corner of the globe, and any type of event can qualify—from individuals and families playing games to large groups engaged in sport competitions or educational seminars for the community. Simply register your event on the WL Day website and tag us on social media!

### 3. Post your takeaways, photos, or videos of the event

Showcase how you're embracing digital innovations in your leisure activities. Share your innovative leisure activities, thoughts on digital leisure's role, or any leisure-related content using the hashtags #WLDAY2025, #WLDAY, and #WorldLeisureDay.

[Learn more and submit your event here!](#)





# WORLD LEISURE JOURNAL

**Special Issue: Unstructured entanglements of human  
leisure and nonhuman animal life**  
Guest Editors: Paul Tully, Neil Carr and Katherine Dashper



The official journal of the World Leisure Organization



## WL Journal: New cover and 'going green'

The World Leisure Journal has two exciting updates to share!

### We are pleased to unveil our brand-new cover, which was chosen by our community!

This year, we invited our global audience—researchers, practitioners, and leisure enthusiasts—to be part of the cover selection process. Through an open vote, we allowed our readers to play a key role in shaping the visual identity of the journal.

We are delighted with the result: a cover that truly represents the diversity, dynamism, and spirit of leisure studies worldwide. The engagement of our community on initiatives such as this continues to make World Leisure Journal a valuable space for shared knowledge and innovation.

[Browse our journal and explore the latest research here.](#)

### We are going green!

In line with our continued commitment to sustainability and responsible environmental practices, the World Leisure Organization (WLO) is proud to announce that, beginning this month, the *World Leisure Journal* will transition fully to a digital-only format. This means we will no longer publish or distribute printed copies of the journal, making it available exclusively through online, digital access. Printed copies will only be distributed to WL Institutional Premium members upon request.

This strategic decision is part of WLO's broader efforts to reduce our ecological footprint and align with global sustainability goals. It also reflects our endorsement of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, which emphasizes the need for urgent climate action and calls on organizations to take measurable steps toward reducing emissions and promoting sustainable practices.





## **Participation in the UNESCO 2005 Convention Civil Society Forum preparatory meeting**

WLO Participates in preparations for the UNESCO 2005 Convention Civil Society Forum.

On 19 March 2025, the World Leisure Organization took part in the fifth coordination meeting for the upcoming UNESCO 2005 Convention Civil Society Forum set to take place later this year. The meeting, held online, gathered key stakeholders to advance preparations—particularly around finalizing the programme.

Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere, WLO Chief Operating Officer, represented the organization and contributed to the discussions, reinforcing WLO's ongoing commitment to active civil society engagement and global collaboration. Stay tuned for more updates as the Forum approaches.



# Network



We also had many meaningful exchanges with global organizations and fostered new opportunities for collaboration and innovation. WLO was honored to be part of this important conversation alongside experts from Europe, the USA, and Africa, reinforcing our shared commitment to advancing leisure and recreation worldwide.

## Recap of JSLRS International Congress 2025

The [JSLRS International Congress of Leisure and Recreation Studies 2025](#), held February 22-23, provided an inspiring platform for global leaders to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and explore the future of leisure and recreation. The theme of this year's Congress was **The Mission of Leisure and Recreation in a Global Society**.

At this year's event, WLO President [Joanne Schroeder](#) delivered a powerful keynote on the future of leisure on a global scale, and WLO Chief Operating Officer [Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere](#) provided valuable insights into WLO's mission, efforts, and strategic vision.





## TALS Conference

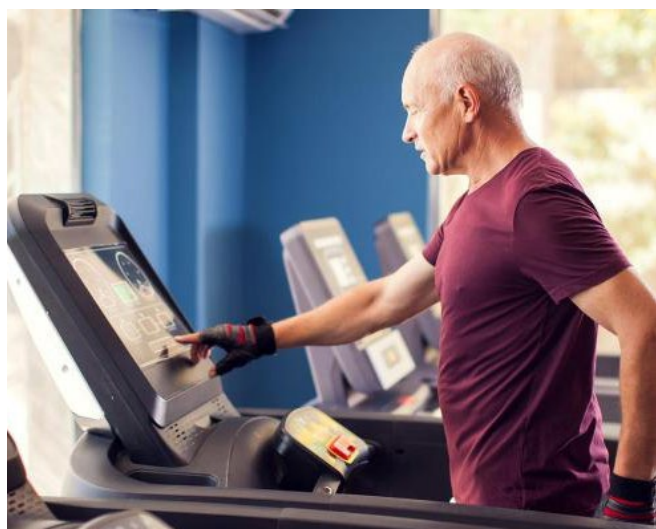
### **WLO Board Members participate in the 2025 Conference of The Academy of Leisure Sciences (TALS)**

Dr. John Dattilo and Dr. Hazel Maxwell, members of the World Leisure Organization (WLO) Board of Directors, actively participated in the **2025 Conference** of The Academy of Leisure Sciences (TALS), held in Bloomington, Indiana, from February 20–23, 2025.

The conference brought together leading academics, researchers, and professionals to engage in meaningful discussions around the theme *“Fostering Leisure Across the Lifespan: Advancing Research, Teaching, and Practice.”* Dr. Dattilo and Dr. Maxwell’s presence underscored WLO’s ongoing commitment to advancing leisure science and supporting global collaboration in research and education.

For more details on the event, visit: [TALS 2025 Conference](#)

# Research



It is offered to patients with lung, colorectal (bowel) and oesophageal and gastric cancers. The programme has had approximately 2,000 referrals for two consecutive years.

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## Prehab4Cancer continues to make a massive impact on the health of cancer patients

by Kath Hudson

Greater Manchester's [Prehab4Cancer](#) programme is continuing to report outstanding results, with a recent evaluation showing the benefits to both patients and the health service.

The first prehabilitation and recovery programme for cancer patients to be delivered through an integrative care system (ICS) in the UK, Prehab4Cancer was created by [GM Active](#) and the [GM Cancer Alliance](#) to deliver exercise, nutrition and wellbeing interventions before, during and after cancer treatment.





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## New HFA research identifies growth opportunities for fitness in Latin America

by Kath Hudson

**Young and affluent consumers are leading health club usage in Latin America, according to research from the [Health and Fitness Association \(HFA\)](#), and there are further opportunities to engage lapsed and never-members.**

Seventy eight per cent of Latin Americans in major metropolitan areas in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Chile exercise several times a month, including 61 per cent who exercise multiple times weekly, according to *The 2024 Latin America Consumer Survey*.

The report says this is a dynamic market and in order to succeed, fitness businesses must develop a deep understanding of local consumer behaviours and preferences, offer holistic programmes and consider investing in equipment and spaces for outdoor activities.

[READ MORE...](#)

# Policy



## Inequalities are a ticking timebomb says Sport England as investment for 53 deprived areas is announced

by Kath Hudson

**Sport England has announced investment into 53 areas highlighted in the top 10 per cent of the UK in terms of inactivity, social need, deprivation and health inequality.**

This investment follows on from the [£250 million invested in 2023](#). Sport England's place-based approach involves working in partnership with local organisations and leaders who understand the specific needs of their communities and the local assets available to support people to get active.

With lifespan varying by up to 9 years depending on geographical location, Chris Boardman, chair of Sport England, says the rising levels of inactivity must be tackled. "Health inequalities have become embedded in our communities, with rising inactivity among children a particular worry," he says. "Inactive kids are more likely to be inactive adults and more at risk of developing chronic illness that costs the NHS and our economy; it's a ticking time bomb for the long-term health and wealth of the country. We must address it urgently."

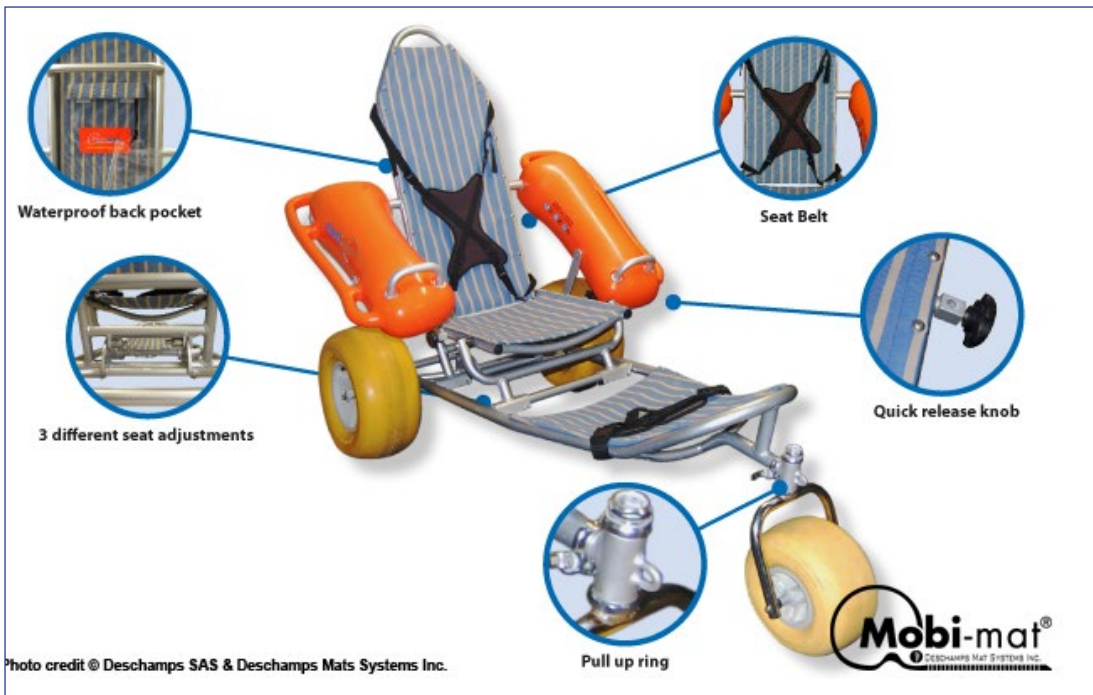
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## Greater Geelong, Australia delivers on ocean beach accessibility with **MobiChair**

A new initiative provides floating beach wheelchairs, enhancing ocean access for people with mobility challenges.

[READ MORE...](#)

# Industry



## Growing number of men participate in reformer pilates at Belgravia Leisure facilities

Belgravia Leisure reports growing male participation and an average age of 43, highlighting its appeal as a low-impact, effective workout.

[READ MORE...](#)



## Tread Lightly encourages tackling sport waste this global recycling day

Shaun Bajada of the Australian Sporting Goods Association encourages households to recycle old sports balls and shoes, helping reduce landfill waste and support sustainability.

[READ MORE...](#)



# Member Quote

## New institutional member: Greater Medellin Convention & Visitors Bureau



*"Medellín joined the World Leisure Organization (WLO) because it is a key global network that strengthens the positioning of cities as optimal destinations for leisure, entertainment, and events. As a city, we aim to establish Medellín as a premier location for healthy and enriching entertainment experiences, not only in Latin America but, in the medium-term, at a global level."*

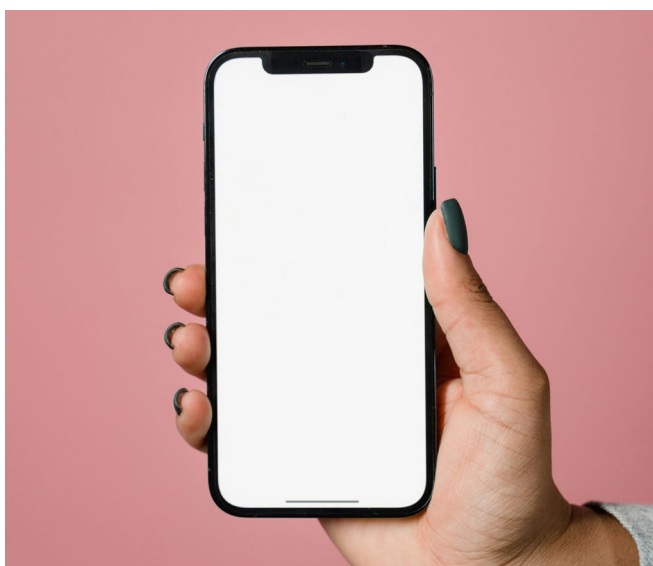
*"WLO provides invaluable connections, insights, and expertise that help us align with international best practices, innovate in entertainment and leisure tourism, and integrate sustainable and inclusive event strategies. Additionally, being part of this organization allows us to expand our network within the global industry, attract world-class events, and showcase Medellín's unique value proposition as a transformative and innovative destination."*

*"Through this membership, we seek to enhance our visibility, foster meaningful collaborations, and contribute to the global dialogue on leisure and event development, ensuring that Medellín continues to grow as a leading hub for entertainment and leisure-driven tourism."*

**Juliana Cardona Quiros,**  
Executive Director of the Greater  
Medellin Convention & Visitors Bureau



# Publications



## **World Leisure Journal articles with free access in April**

Global South Leisure Perspectives of April  
Innovating for retention: strategies for enhancing customer retention in theme parks  
Rasheed, A. K. F., & Balakrishnan, J.

World day for safety and health at work - April 28

Does leisure time improve your job and life satisfaction?

The mediating effect of work-life conflict and the moderating effects of organizational support.

Kao, F. H.

International dance day - April 29

Enhancing the experience? Exploring the impact of augmented reality on staged performances.

Jordão, A. C., Mitas, O., Boode, W., van Gisbergen M., Richards, G., & Bastiaansen, M.

# Opportunities



WORLD LEISURE  
CENTERS OF  
EXCELLENCE  
OPEN REQUEST  
FOR PROPOSALS

## Become a World Leisure Center of Excellence

From now and until July 2025, express your interest in establishing your institution as a World Leisure Center of Excellence (WLCE).

We are pleased to be able to expand our current network, and we invite interested colleges or universities to apply to become a recognized WLCE.

Currently, this network includes [Breda University of Applied Sciences](#) (the Netherlands), [Vancouver Island University](#) (Canada), [University of Sao Paulo](#) (Brazil), [University of Otago](#) (New Zealand), [Zhejiang University](#) (China), and [Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières](#) (Canada).

WLO is especially interested in the establishment of additional WLCEs in geographic areas without representation of such programs. However, all proposals will receive consideration by the WLO Board of Directors.

Notices of Intent to respond to this request for proposals are due before **July 5, 2024**.

[READ MORE...](#)

WL  
CONGRESS  
2030  
SUBMIT YOUR  
PROPOSAL



## World Leisure Congress 2030 – Open Call

WLO now invites expressions of interest from communities, cities, or institutions interested in hosting future editions of the World Leisure Congress. We encourage proposals developed in collaboration with professional associations, government agencies, and academic institutions to ensure a strong local foundation for the event's success.

If your community is passionate about leisure and eager to be part of a global conversation, this is your opportunity to get involved and make a lasting impact.

Learn more about the World Leisure Congress Open call [here](#).



# Encounter



## Dr. Wadih Ishac of Qatar University speaks to us about Qatar's evolving role as a global sports tourism hub



During [Qatar Travel Mart 2024](#), we had the opportunity to speak with [Dr. Wadih Ishac](#) about Qatar's evolving role as a global sports tourism hub.

As the country builds on the success of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and expands its portfolio of world-class events, the discussion focused on balancing cultural heritage, sustainability, and community engagement while ensuring long-term growth within the sector.

Dr. Ishac is Assistant Professor and Head of the Sports Management Department, College of Sports Science at Qatar University. He is a recognized expert in the field of sports management, with a deep understanding of the strategic and operational frameworks that drive successful sports tourism initiatives. His insights shed light on how effective sports management can enhance cultural tourism and contribute to a destination's global reputation.

*With the rapid development of sports tourism in Qatar, how do you think this industry can sustainably balance cultural preservation with the demands of modern, international events?*

Qatar can achieve a sustainable balance by integrating its rich cultural heritage into the design and programming of sports events. For instance, the successful staging of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar demonstrated how international sports events can be linked with cultural preservation.

Qatar capitalized on the global spotlight by integrating local heritage into the event experience. This was evident in various activities, such as those held along the Doha Corniche and at the Souq Waqif marketplace, where fans from around the world gathered to immerse themselves in Qatari culture and traditions.

*In what ways does sports tourism impact local communities in Qatar, and what measures do you think should be in place to ensure community benefits and engagement?*

Sports tourism, particularly through hosting international / mega sporting events, has delivered notable positive impacts on local communities in Qatar. Between 2018 and 2022, these events have boosted community pride and excitement, especially among the youth, while also driving significant infrastructure improvements.

For instance, enhanced transportation networks, upgraded public facilities, and newly established stadiums have all contributed to a stronger sense of community and social sustainability. These developments not only align with the goals of the [Qatar National Vision 2030](#) but also encourage broader societal benefits such as increased youth participation in sports and cultural activities.

*What are the main challenges you see for Qatar in maintaining momentum in sports tourism, especially as the global competition among destinations increases?*

Despite many successes, maintaining momentum in sports tourism poses significant challenges for Qatar as global competition intensifies. With more destinations competing for international recognition, Qatar must adopt innovative strategies to remain competitive.

One key approach is diversification, through expanding the sports tourism portfolio beyond singular mega-events to include seasonal, smaller, niche, and community-focused events. Additionally, exploring opportunities for co-hosting events with regional partners, as noted by [Ishac et al. \(2022\)](#), can create a broader impact within the region by sharing resources, expertise, and marketing efforts.

This strategy not only mitigates the risks of over-reliance on a single event type but also enhances Qatar's ability to consistently attract and engage international audiences in a highly competitive market.

*How can Qatar leverage sports tourism to foster skills development and career opportunities for local talent, ensuring long-term benefits beyond major events? Are there particular initiatives or strategies you believe would be effective in achieving this?*

Sports tourism extends far beyond hosting major events—it can be a powerful engine for long-term skills development and career opportunities for local and regional talent. Qatar can leverage this by creating an educational and practical training pathways that prepare its workforce for a dynamic sports industry. For example, Qatar University's [College of Sport Science](#) plays a pivotal role by offering specialized programs such as a BSc in Sport Management and a BSc in Sport Coaching.

In addition to formal education, Qatar has built on its rich sports heritage by establishing the [3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum](#), which not only preserves sports history but also actively promotes physical activity and educational events, being consistent with Qatar's broader strategy to create engaging cultural and sports initiatives.

Moreover, as we enter a new era defined by artificial intelligence and technological innovation, Qatar is uniquely positioned to harness these advancements. By integrating AI-driven analytics, virtual reality training modules, and digital fan engagement platforms into its sports programs, Qatar can drive innovation and operational efficiency, aligning with the long-term objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030.



WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION (WLO)

World Leisure Organization is a non-profit organization registered in the State of New York in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 1990.

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