



Santa Monica Boosted Beach Volleyball from Sunny Sand to Olympic Glory

In 2028, City to Host Gold-Medal Battle Where it All Began a Century Ago

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – Popularized on the sands of Santa Monica more than 100 years ago, volleyball outgrew its Southern California roots to become a worldwide pastime and indelible icon of fun in the sun. Named an Olympic sport in 1996, beach volleyball has attracted fans and players around the world for its thrilling combination of power, grace and athleticism.

From Sand, a Sport Transformed

In 1920, Santa Monica tamed its shore with jetties, creating a sandy beach that quickly became a worldwide icon for sun seekers. Once permanent nets were installed, the still-new sport of volleyball became an instant hit among public beachgoers and private clubs.

Santa Monica held its first inter-club competitions in 1924, and in the summer of 1930, Paul “Pablo” Johnson created the sport’s two-person team — vs. indoor volleyball’s traditional six — when a couple of Santa Monica Athletic Club players didn’t show up for a scheduled game.

From its roots in Santa Monica, the sport slowly grew in popularity at beaches across America, spreading to Europe’s shores as well. Added as a competitive Olympic sport in 1996, beach volleyball soon made celebrities of gold medalists Kerri Walsh Jennings, Misty May-Treanor and Karch Kiraly, the only player to win Olympic medals in both indoor and beach volleyball.

In fact, Misty May-Treanor is a Santa Monica native and has often lauded the beach destination for its role in her career.

“All my life, I’ve dreamed in gold,” she’s said of her childhood by the ocean. “When I was a tyke, scampering through the sand, a jump serve away from my parents’ pizza stand at Muscle Beach in Santa Monica, California.”

City to Host 2028 Olympic Matches

Returning to Los Angeles for the third time, the Olympic Games are set to begin July 14, 2028, running through July 30. L.A. previously hosted in 1984 and 1932.

The LA28 Games will feature 800 events in more than 40 sports, with an estimated 15,000 athletes expected to compete in the Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games, which will follow in August 2028. The LA28 Games will feature five new supports including cricket, flag football, lacrosse, squash and baseball-softball, all approved by the International Olympic Committee.

Fittingly, Santa Monica is set to host the Summer Games' beach volleyball matches near the iconic Santa Monica Pier, with Pacific Palisades' nearby Riviera Country Club hosting golf. Schedules, athletes and ticket information will be announced at later dates. Learn more at www.la28.org or sign up for the Santa Monica Travel & Tourism newsletter at www.santamonica.com.

Preliminary beach volleyball plans include a temporary, 12,000-seat stadium plus practice courts and support facilities north of the Santa Monica Pier. Extensive security, accessibility and construction plans also are included and will continue to evolve as the Games approach.

LA28 is working closely with the City of Santa Monica, regional leadership and public transit agencies to move athletes, stakeholders and fans efficiently to training and competitions while keeping Southern California residents moving through the region. In preparation, the country's largest mass transit construction program currently is expanding subway, light rail, rapid bus transit and express lane projects to better connect every corner of L.A. ahead of 2028.

With 11 professional teams and college powerhouses, Southern California is a sports region unrivaled, known for its legendary players, team-winning dynasties, generations of fans and unparalleled venues. The Olympic Games' return promises to add another glorious chapter to the area's already historic sports story right here in the sand.

Surf, Sand & Accommodations for All

Whether your dreams of Olympic gold live on the sand, stadium or screen, a friendly pick-up game is always an option in our beach city. Santa Monica offers visitors an abundant lineup of daily recreational options, [wellness activities](#) and outdoor fun, from [surfing alongside the world-famous Santa Monica Pier](#) to [bike rides](#) along miles of neatly maintained routes. With green spaces, fitness classes, farmers markets, luxury spas and miles of dog-friendly jogging, skating and cycling paths, the city prioritizes wellness like no other.

More than 40 hotels at every price point and numerous accessible transportation options make Santa Monica an ideal destination for Olympic competition-hopping, with 2028 matches set to take place at sites across the entire metro Los Angeles region, including the San Fernando Valley, Long Beach, San Dimas, Anaheim and Lake Perris. Learn more about [staying in Santa Monica](#).

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ABOUT SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM

Santa Monica Travel & Tourism is a nonprofit organization chartered to strengthen the local economy by promoting our community as a vibrant, accessible and inclusive travel destination. For more information, visit santamonica.com, email info@santamonica.com, or follow us on Instagram ([@SeeSantaMonica](https://www.instagram.com/SeeSantaMonica)), Facebook ([@VisitSantaMonica](https://www.facebook.com/VisitSantaMonica)) and X/Twitter ([@GoSantaMonica](https://twitter.com/GoSantaMonica)).