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Rose Parade and two bowl games will entice a blitz of visitors

Managers of tourist attractions in the L.A. region hope the out-of-town fans will stay and spend.




USC fans at the 2009 Rose Bowl game. The upcoming football games -- Oregon vs. Ohio State and Texas vs. Alabama -- is expected to draw more fans from out of town. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times / January 1, 2009)

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By Hugo Martín
December 14, 2009

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Within hours after the Oregon and Ohio State football teams march off the field following the Rose Bowl game in Pasadena, crews will tear out and replace the turf to prepare for the BCS national championship matchup between Texas and Alabama six days later.

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But no one in Pasadena is complaining about the cost of the turf.

This January marks the first time under a new rotating collegiate bowl system that Pasadena will host two major bowl games in a week.

The Rose Parade on New Year's Day and the two bowl games could draw nearly 1.2 million people to the city of roses -- and tens of millions in tourism dollars.

The Tournament of Roses alone could generate about \$370 million in direct and indirect spending throughout the region, according to past economic studies. The Bowl Championship Series matchup on Jan. 7 could bring in an additional \$34 million in spending.

"I think a lot of people will come," said Paul Little, president of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce and Civic Assn.

Although football fans and parade devotees will pool around Pasadena for the events, visitors will probably fan out across the region, going to beaches, theme parks, entertainment complexes and shopping malls.

"It really doesn't get any better for Los Angeles than this," said Mark Liberman, president of LA Inc., the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We have four great teams from areas that really have a tremendous fan following for both home and away games."

Already, managers of several top tourist attractions are planning events to get visiting fans to stay and spend.

In Pasadena, the city and the convention center are hosting a tailgate party on Jan. 5 at the Paseo Colorado mall with performances by a live band.

Santa Monica will host rallies for Rose Bowl rivals -- Oregon Ducks fans on Dec. 30 and the Ohio State Buckeye faithful Dec. 31 -- at a parking lot north of the Santa Monica Pier. The city's visitors' bureau expects more than 40,000 fans, players, coaches and cheerleaders to attend.

"We are encouraging the fans to come early and stay late," said Kim Baker, marketing director for the Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We are trying to get as much business out of this as possible."

Across town, Universal Studios Hollywood has invited the Ohio State marching band to play in the theme park on Dec. 30 and is hosting the Texas marching band on Jan. 6, a day before the Texas Longhorns meet Alabama's Crimson Tide for the BCS game.

"This year will be particularly good for us," said Eliot Sekuler, a spokesman for Universal Studios Hollywood.

Since 1959, Disneyland has invited the two Rose Bowl teams to visit before the game. This time, the park plans to invite the BCS teams to hold news conferences in downtown Disneyland, a shopping and dining district adjacent to the park.

How many fans will visit Southern California for the two games and the New Year's Day parade is uncertain.

The Rose Bowl stadium seats more than 90,000 fans, and both bowl games are expected to be sold out. In addition, Pasadena officials estimate that about 1 million people will attend the Rose Parade and view the floats during the following week.

- L.A. Times - Sports 12/14/2009, 11:06 a.m.

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Though it might be difficult to find a room in Pasadena, hospitality experts say there are enough hotel rooms throughout the region to serve all of the visitors.

In Southern California -- including Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties -- the number of hotel rooms is about 220,000. Pasadena has about 2,500.

Mark Davis, general manager of the Hilton Pasadena, said football fans began making reservations at his 296-room hotel about a year ago. The hotel has been completely booked for the nights before and after the Rose Bowl and BCS games for at least six months.

About two-thirds of the guests who stay at the Hilton Pasadena for the bowl games will probably stay a few extra days to visit tourist attractions in the area, he said.

"There is so much to do in Southern California, so many venues to participate in, that they want to make the most of the visit," Davis said.

Even businesses that rent houses and condominiums in Pasadena are struggling to keep up with the demand.

"We are right now scrambling to accommodate a lot of traffic coming in," said Todd Brenneman, president of SportsEventsRentals.com, a website that advertises rental lodging for major sporting events.

The extra bowl game comes at a time when Southern California's top industry -- tourism -- continues to struggle amid the worst recession in a generation. The hotel occupancy rates in Los Angeles dropped to about 65% in October, down from about 74% last year.

The extra visitors also will land in Southern California during one of the year's slowest months for tourism.

"It comes at a time when there wouldn't otherwise be a demand," said Bruce Baltin, a hotel analyst and vice president for PKF Consulting. "The first weeks of January are usually dead."

In 2005, the UCLA Anderson School of Management estimated \$189 million in direct spending and \$181 million in indirect spending from the Rose Bowl game and the Rose Parade.

Last year, the USC Sports Business Institute projected the football game alone generates \$22 million in direct spending in Pasadena and nearly \$12 million in indirect spending. The BCS game is likely to generate nearly as much, experts say.

The USC study noted that out-of-town fans generally stay longer and spend more than locals who can forgo hotel lodging and spend less on food and travel.

Sekuler and others pointed out that all of the four bowl teams have strong followings of fans who are likely to spend several days enjoying Southern California's typically mild weather. In the past, fans from cold-weather states, such as Michigan, Wisconsin and Nebraska, spent more and stayed longer.

"When Nebraska was in the Rose Bowl" in 2002, Sekuler said, "there was a sea of red in our park" as fans packed the Rose Bowl wearing their burnt-orange team jackets and accessories.

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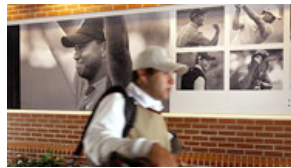
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