HVS

MARKET REPORT

“Volleyball Day in Nebraska” Sets World Attendance Record and Boosts Hotel Demand

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The “Sea of Red” is a common sight in Downtown Lincoln as the fall months begin, with area crowds tailgating, packing the bars, and running around Downtown in Husker gear. But typically, this type of crowd is associated with the Nebraska Husker football team. On Wednesday August 30, 2023, known as “*Volleyball Day in Nebraska,*” the Husker women were the stars of the show. The event was not only a showcase of the Husker women, but also a celebration of all women’s volleyball in the state, as it was a double header; Nebraska-Kearney and Wayne State played an exhibition match prior to the Huskers taking on Omaha. The program further included honoring high school coaches from across the state, recognizing college volleyball alumni, and introducing the new Omaha professional team, the Supernovas. Fans of the sport from across the state and the Midwest were in attendance for the historic event.

Immediately before the third game in the match, it was announced that, with 92,003 people present, the event had just claimed the world record attendance for any women’s sporting event. The previous record was 91,648, held by the 2022 Barcelona vs. Wolfsburg UEFA Champions League match in Barcelona, Spain.





Hotels in the market were largely sold out for the night. A check of the major hotel chains on Wednesday afternoon showed no available vacancies within the city limits. Among the Marriott Bonvoy hotels, the nearest available hotel room was in the neighboring town of Crete, while Hilton Honors members would have needed to trek 40 miles up I-80 to La Vista to find an available room. A manager at The Kindler Hotel in Downtown Lincoln reported that as of Wednesday morning, the property had only one room available for booking, owing to a late cancellation. Similarly, the General Manager at the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Lincoln reported that this property was sold out both Tuesday and Wednesday due to the event.

Of the available rooms in the Lincoln area, hotel rates were significantly higher than a typical August Wednesday night could command, at $200–$250 above average. While this was a one-time event, it felt appropriate that this new women's sports record took place in what NPR dubbed the #BillionGirlSummer, when powerful women were taking lead in the entertainment world.

Large events such as "Volleyball Day in Nebraska," as well as general increases in commercial and leisure demand, are contributing to the ongoing hotel occupancy recovery in the market.

According to Nebraska Lodging Tax records, Lancaster County, which includes Lincoln, reached a new revenue peak for June 2023, which is the latest month reported. Furthermore, total lodging taxes remitted in the year-to-date 2023 period are up more than 21% from the same period of 2019. The total increase in hotel rooms has been minimal, with a net increase of 130 rooms (2.5%) during that period, according to STR. While average rates have been the primary driving force in this revenue growth, hotel occupancy is nearing pre-pandemic levels for much of the market. Weekend demand is still surpassing weekday business, according to our market interviews. Looking to the end of 2023 and 2024, occupancy is expected to continue to rebound, while ADR growth is expected to moderate somewhat.

The market is well positioned for continued growth moving forward as the market capitalizes on its stable government and education sectors, while also building momentum with local sports and special events.

Our team constantly monitors markets throughout the Midwest, and our many consulting engagements across the state keep us abreast of the latest trends and shifts. For more information on the Nebraska markets, contact Sara Olson with HVS Omaha.

Follow us on LinkedIn for the latest market and industry insights.

Sources

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