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SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

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You might think the Olympic Games are all about being number one. But that's only a small fraction of the story. As soon as London was announced as host of the Games of the XXX Olympiad on 6 July 2005, the clock began counting down to the greatest show on Earth - and an astonishing panoply of facts and figures immediately came into play. Here are just a few headline numbers to crunch on, as years of preparation finally come to a head.

On 27 July 2012, London will become the first-ever city to organise the Olympic Games three times. The Opening Ceremony, staged by artistic director Danny Boyle and with music by Underworld, will be watched by many millions around the world. Then, some 10,500 athletes from more than 200 different nations will line up to contest a total of 302 gold medal events. The margin between victory and defeat will be measured in both milliseconds and millimetres, and the digits 2012 will be etched in their memories for ever.



One of the joys of the modern Olympic Games is the dazzling diversity of events - from the popular to the little known. The official programme for London 2012 is made up of 26 very different sports with a total of 39 disciplines. Alphabetically speaking, these run from Archery to Wrestling, embracing everything from Canoeing and Cycling to Table Tennis and Taekwondo along the way.



By far the largest single category is Athletics, which comprises 47 gold medal opportunities, and will feature 2000 elite athletes running, walking, jumping and throwing for glory. On the Olympic Stadium track, distances covered range variously from 100 metres to 10,000 metres; shots, discuses, javelins and hammers will hurtle through the air; jumps will be long, high or triple.



Out on the gold-paved streets of London, meanwhile, the longest Athletics event of them all is the elbow-pumping men's 50km Race Walk, closely followed by the highly anticipated women's and men's Marathons, which come to their strength-sapping climaxes in the Mall on 5 and 12 August respectively.



Before the numerous athletes arrive, the stage needs to be set. And it's taken years of meticulous planning and hardcore construction work to get there. Olympic competitors will be showing their mettle in 34 varied venues across the UK, from Triathlon in Hyde Park, to Football in the City of Coventry Stadium, to Sailing off the coast of Weymouth.



The main focus, however, will be the impressive new Olympic Park, spread out over 500 acres of once-derelict land in East London. This is home to eight permanent and temporary venues, including the Zaha Hadid-designed Aquatics Centre, with its spectacular undulating wave roof, and the ultra-eco Velodrome. The jewel in the crown is the main 80,000-capacity Olympic Stadium. Surrounded by waterways on three sides. it's the most sustainable ever built. fashioned from recycled low-carbon concrete and just 10,000 tonnes of steel, far less than its predecessors.



Of course, sport won't be the only thing London has to offer in 2012. Home to around 7.8 million people, and reckoned to be over 2000 years old, it's a fascinating city with a curiosity around every corner. Four UNESCO heritage sites are right on the doorstep: the Tower of London; Westminster Abbey, the Palace of Westminster and St Margaret's Church; Maritime Greenwich: and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. There are over 240 museums and galleries, 100 or more West End and fringe theatres, and countless music venues to choose from. Take in spectacular city views from the 135-metre-high London Eve, or visit the 16,802 creatures at London Zoo,



performances inspired by London 2012, a Cultural Olympiad has been in full swing since 2008. During that time, over 16 million people across the UK have taken part in events or come along to watch. The programme comes to a crescendo with the ambitious London 2012 Festival, featuring over 1000 nationwide events ranging from pop to film, fashion to theatre, circus to carnival, opera to digital innovation.

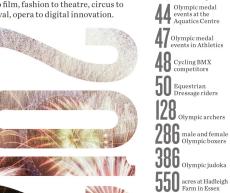




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Olympic Stadium

3 types of Fencing weapon

U Olympic rings

players in a Volleyball team

events in women's

Heptathlon

Taekwondo medal events

Newcastle

Football matches

events in men's Decathlon

days' competition in Olympic Sailing

medal events in all Cycling disciplines

24 Beach Volleyball teams

40 minutes in a Basketball game

700 rooms in the Olympic Stadium

days of Olympic finals

at St James's Park

Wrestling disciplines

Archery medal events





