

Local tourist attractions angling to reap Olympic benefits

Proximity to pavilions and event venues promises to create revenue opportunities for surrounding businesses

JOEL MCKAY

With the Olympic Games mere weeks away, some local tourist attractions are gearing up to cash in on their biggest strength: location.

The Edgewater Casino near False Creek is spitting distance from major venues such as BC Place, GM Place and a host of Olympic pavilions.

For Vanessa Kelley, Edgewater's director of marketing,

that means hordes of potential customers.

"Obviously, it's a great opportunity, being that we're in the heart of it all," Kelley said.

The casino is open 24-7, and she hopes it'll be a gathering place for people before other venues open for the day and after they close for the night.

The Games also coincide with Chinese New Year, and the casino plans to capitalize

on both events.

Kelley said the casino will host 120 local food and shopping vendors and have ongoing live shows that include bands, Asian martial arts performances and Chinese lion dances in what will be called the Celebration Village.

She expects the village to draw as many as 30,000 people into the casino per day, and that means slot machines are unlikely to remain idle.

"We always celebrated Chinese New Year anyway, so this gives us a chance to have this village as a gathering place for visitors as well as the local community."

It might not be in the heart of downtown Vancouver, but the Capilano Suspension Bridge plans to benefit from throngs of people destined for the nearby Grouse Mountain Resort.

"We hope it hits us more from a media standpoint because we think a lot of media will be heading up that way to take pictures of the city," said Capilano's communications



Gambling on Games: Edgewater Casino's director of marketing Vanessa Kelley said the casino plans to step up its print and radio marketing presence closer to the 2010 Winter Games

manager Stacy Chala.

NBC recently announced that it would broadcast the *Today Show* from Grouse Mountain every morning during the Games, and Chala hopes that means more business for the suspension bridge in the long run.

"Hopefully, things like that will help businesses in Vancouver and North Vancouver get exposure for the future."

The suspension bridge also

plans to offer free admission for all Olympic athletes in an effort to garner business from them and their families.

Another attraction working the free admission angle is the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The gallery partnered with Victoria to offer free admission from February 12 to 17 to get more people in the door and shed some light on one of B.C.'s most renowned cultural venues.

"It's such an opportu-

"We hope it hits us more from a media standpoint"

- Stacy Chala, communications manager, Capilano Suspension Bridge

ity to introduce visitors from around the world to the important history of art and art-making in British Columbia," said Dana Sullivant, the gallery's director of marketing and communications.

She said the gallery has been planning for the Games

since 2006 and has secured some landmark exhibitions to enhance its international reputation.

On the first floor, the gallery will display Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical drawings on loan from the Queen's Royal Collection.

The gallery's second and third floors will feature work entirely from B.C. artists such as Emily Carr, Robert Davidson, Stan Douglas and Bill Reid, among others.

Sullivant said the gallery offered free admission only once in 2006, which resulted in a "big day" of 8,000 visitors.

She said the gallery expects to see similar numbers during the Games, and its location in the heart of the downtown core could go a long way toward making that happen.

"That's what we're anticipating," she said. "And certainly our proximity to all of the programming taking place on Robson Square ... we're definitely in the heart of things." ■

jmckay@biv.com

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