

Luring tourists to area with off-season events

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The Reno Championship Air Races were created in 1964 in part to boost tourism during slow September days. Now, 46 years later, the annual event at Reno-Stead Airport draws close to 200,000 people to northern Nevada, helping make September one of the busiest tourism months in the region.

Though attendance at the 2010 Reno Championship Air Races dipped slightly from 2009 figures, advance ticket sales and pre-orders are encouraging for a slight uptick at this year's event scheduled for Sept. 14-18. Full-week attendance at last year's event was 197,000 fans, down slightly from just over 200,000 in 2009.

Mike Houghton, president and chief executive officer of the Reno Air Racing Association for the past 14 years, says about 40 percent of visitors to the event hail from the West Coast, with the balance spread out from larger cities around country.

Although popular with locals, about 70 percent of attendees come from outside of the area – including 4 to 5 percent international visitors. “It is a huge event for this community,” Houghton says. “It contributes in excess of \$70 million in economic impact in a week's time.”

Read the whole story