

*Traveling*  
*The Jennis Jour*



# Traveling The Tennis Tour

**The Men's Professional Tour**

**Your Ultimate Guide to Traveling  
The World's Tennis  
Tournaments**

**Ben Ammar**

*Traveling the Tennis Tour: The Men's Professional Tour*

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## **Dedication**

To God, who is the biggest part of all my life and my journey. To my mother, who left me a legacy of strength, will, and the determination to make things happen, and who is always ready to help and support me. To all those who made this guide possible, and most of all to those who share my dream of visiting the world greatest tennis tournaments.

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## **Preface**

My dream started twenty years ago as a hobby and has since become a passion. It all began the day I watched my first tennis match on television. By the time that match ended, I knew I'd discovered the most exciting sport of all. At the time I lived in Nice, France, and the nearest tournament was in Monte Carlo. The Monte Carlo Open featured some great matches and I did my best to attend every session, but that wasn't enough.

My deepest desire was to travel around the world. by then I'd visited a few place as a tourist, but I wanted a more focused kind of travel. That's when I formed the idea of combining my passion for travel with my love for tennis. I would travel to tennis tournaments and view the local attractions while attending as many matches as possible. Before I knew it, I was planning a trip to the French Open. Although I didn't make specific arrangements in advance, I managed to attend a session of the tournament where Ivan Lendl battled Miloslav Mecir in a breathtaking semi-final match. It was the only session I could attend because the French Open is one of the tournaments where reservations must be made long in advance. That experience prompted me to be more organized and plan my trips ahead of time.

Again, before I knew it I was involved in another field trip. The next possibility was the U.S. Open in New York City – my first visit to the United States. The beauty of my plan was that it allowed me to explore New York City and the surrounding area as well as attend the tournament. This was a dream come true, combining my passion for travel with my love for the game. It was too late in the tennis calendar year to plan another trip. But I made it my goal to organize many trips for the following year.

After spending some time evaluating my vacation schedule, my budget, and the tournament schedules, I created an itinerary that included France, England, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Six countries, six tournaments, three different playing surfaces, and many miles to cover. This itinerary allowed enough time to see and visit the beautiful cities and explore what they had to offer, as well as watching the world's best tennis players in action.

Prior to that first trip, I'd only see the game played on red clay and hard surfaces. While they are both very fine surfaces, it wasn't until I saw the game on other surfaces that I realized how dependent the game of tennis is on its surroundings. Each tennis court varies in pattern and location, and some playing surfaces are more challenging than others. I also realized that players consider the surface and the nature of each tournament before scheduling their tours.

I had by then grown to appreciate the game and the players, and I wanted to see my favorite stars at work on the field. I also realized that in addition to the surface, the players, and the location of the tournament, tennis was greatly affected by the ambiance of the surroundings and the zeal and enthusiasm of the fans. There's nothing like watching a game of tennis while surrounded by thousands of fans cheering for their favorite players.

The smells, sounds and sights of each tennis arena give every tournament an individual identity. There's something special about each and every tournament in the world. Cultural differences, how popular tennis is in a given country, and whether a native of that country is having a good run in the draw all contribute to the individual experience of each tournament.

There's something special about meeting people from other places and cultures who share your passion and love for the game. I keep many dear memories and still maintain friendship with people I've met at tennis tournaments around the world.

Seeing a live tennis match is a unique experience. Though the game is played individually, it's enjoyed collectively. Where else can you be awed by an ace serve or a great passing shot and turn to the person beside you to exchange a look of great appreciation?

Unlike many other sports, tennis doesn't necessarily have its own stadium. Apart from the grand Slam Tournaments, which have their own stadium complexes, most tennis tournaments are held in expansive, lush hotels or multi-use arenas. This book isn't a guide to tournaments stadiums, but rather a guide to tournaments locations.

Visiting the world's greatest tournaments is a fun and exciting thing to do. Tennis oriented trips have allowed me to visit wonderful places such as:

- Paris and the banks of the Seine River
- San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge
- Sydney and the Opera House
- Rome and the Coliseum
- Hong Kong and its bustling harbor
- Barcelona and La Rambla
- Vienna and the Prater
- The cosmopolitan city of London
- The beautiful beaches of Acapulco
- And the mysticism of Oriental cities

... And many more places I will describe in this guide. This book will provide tennis lovers with a guide to the world's most exciting tennis destinations, allow me to share my own experiences, and highlight some of the most attractive places to visit. You'll learn the best places to stay, where to eat, and where you can catch a tennis game between matches.

There are an infinite number of things to see and to do. Along with information about the places I've most enjoyed, you'll find priceless tips on getting the best deals, whether you travel by plane, train, or bus.

I am confident that after reading this book you'll begin planning your own trip of a lifetime.

## **Introduction**

It is generally believed that the game called lawn tennis was introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a British officer named Major Walter Clopton Wingfield. Modeled after popular English games such as badminton, squash, and the French “Tenez”, tennis spread quickly through England, the British colonies, and ultimately the United States.

While the game was young and its rules and regulation not definitely established, tennis attracted a greater number of adepts. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, men and women were organizing amateur competitions. The first world championship took place in 1877 at the All England Lawn tennis & Croquet Club in Wimbledon. In 1881, after standardizing the rules and equipment of the game, the United States Lawn Tennis Association, organized the first tournament in Newport, Rhode Island. The championship has been held each year since.

Wimbledon and the U.S. Championship were the only major international tournaments until early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The French Open joined the tour in the 1920s, but tennis wasn't considered a professional sport until 1926 when Charles C. Pyle organized a traveling tour in which the players received monetary compensation. Over the next forty years, tennis tournaments gained popularity and became a popular game among the crowds. Tennis increasingly attracted skilled athletes who played for the love of the game and the substantial compensation.

Annual tennis tournaments operated by the professional tours are now held around the world over 11 months of the year. The main governing bodies of tennis, the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and the Women Tennis association (WTA) organize a combined number of 130 tournaments per year. Each tournament varies in prize money, race point, and draw size.

The tournaments are divided into categories. Some are more prestigious than others and thus attract a greater number of quality players. The four major tournaments include the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open – know as Grand Slam Tournaments. These tournaments offer greater prize money, race points, and prestige for the winners, making them the most sought after tournaments for players and fans.

The International Series tournaments have almost as much prestige as the four major tournaments and offer almost equal opportunities to compete for ranking points. Men's and women's tournaments are held separately within the International Series, but there are six international competitions where both sexes compete together in a Grand Slam format. In addition to professional competitions, other major championships include the Davis Cup and the federation Cup, both annual international competitions held between national teams.

Today, millions of amateurs play tennis worldwide, all attracted by the spirit of competition, the fullness of the game, and its recreational spirit. Love of the game and the thrill of competition are also major factors in attracting fans to the stadiums.

Each year, tennis fans from all over the world converge on the tournament stadiums. Although millions of people are satisfied watching the game on television. I prefer to experience the excitement in person and become part of tennis history as it's made.

When I'm not at the matches cheering for my favorite tennis star, I am off enjoying local museums, historical sites, and nightlife. I fill my days and nights with the memories of a lifetime.

Half the fun of any given trip is the planning and anticipation. Each December when the ATP yearly schedule is released, I am thrilled by the perspective of the many tournaments and exciting places I'll be visiting. The official schedule is available each December from: **ATP Tennis International, 201 ATP Blvd, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, 32082. U.S.A. Tel: 904-285-8000.** Alternatively, check on the Internet at [www.ATPtennis.com](http://www.ATPtennis.com). for more schedule information.

My first step in planning a trip is to decide on a time frame: how many days do I want to spend and which places shall I visit? If I plan to start my trip in Australia, I plan accordingly so the plane ticket will allow me to stop over in Asia for several tournaments, which means great savings on airfare. Since the tennis season starts in Australia and extends to Europe through the following weeks, I plan an itinerary that begins in Sydney where I attend the Australian tournaments, and then stop for more tennis in Tokyo and Dubai before I tackle the European tour

If I decide instead to visit the American tour for the start of the season, I travel to the U.S. at first, then to Australia, and back to the U.S. This system is a great fare saver because I purchase a plane ticket from Europe to Australia with stopover in the U.S. without extra charges. The best airline companies offering such deals are *American Airlines, Air France, and British Airways*. You'll find details on getting the best airfare deals further ahead in this book.

I usually plan to spend around eight days in each destination. A trip of this length allows me to attend the tournaments and spend time visiting the local attractions. You may want to plan a trip around a holiday, but you'll find that flights, car rentals, and hotel rooms will cost more and may be more difficult



to obtain. Make sure you secure all your reservations well in advance.

Tournaments are usually scheduled during the warmer seasons in each country. The tour generally starts in the Southern Hemisphere, extends to Europe and finishes the year in North America.

I try to see between eight and ten tournaments each period, depending upon the ATP schedule. Although the tennis matches are always exciting, seeing what each city has to offer is equally fun besides, there's only so much tennis one can take!

The more cities and tournaments you try to see, the trickier the scheduling becomes. Two or more tournaments are often planned for the same week, sometimes in the same country. You may have to catch only one tournament and visit those you missed the next year.

Once you decide how many days you can devote to your trip, it's time to choose where to go. One way I plan my trip is to follow a particular player. If you have a favorite tennis player, all you have to do is look at the player's tour schedule and pick a time to go along. It's your choice regarding which tournament and players you want to see. What cities and countries are the most appealing to you, and where you'll begin the journey. Australia hosts a number of major tournaments in a relatively short time period and the country offers great adventure and leisure opportunities. North America provides the greatest concentration of tournaments in interesting locations. Europe's relatively small distances from one place to the other are an asset. No matter where you go, each city offers wonderful things to see and do besides tennis.

You might also base your trip on which part of the world you'd like to see or haven't seen yet. I selected to visit Europe the first year of my journey. The following year I chose North America, and the next I visited tournaments in Asia.

Each time I try to select four or five tournaments fairly close together so I can see as many events as possible, with minimum time spent traveling from one place to the other. The North American and European tours offer a number of events with short distance to cover between cities, which help travelers save time and money.

Scheduling your trip depends entirely on how much time you have. When I began visiting tournaments I could only travel for one month at the time. Later, I could stay away longer, which meant seeing more tournaments and visiting more exotic places. Needless to say, the greatest joy for any tennis lover is to take a sabbatical year and follow the tournaments week by week wherever they're held.

Once you've decided on when and where to go, the next step is to organize your trip. Many airlines and airfare resellers are competing for your business and are willing to slash their prices just so you'll buy your trip with them. With the help of a travel agent, it's relatively easy to buy airline tickets that let you move from one point to another while stopping over in a number of cities on the way. On my last trip to Australia I bought a ticket from Paris to Sidney through *Pakistan International Airlines*. The airline makes a number of stopovers on each flight. On my way back from Australia I had the opportunity to stop in Tokyo, attend the Toray Pan Pacific Tournament, and afterwards I stopped in Dubai to watch the Dubai Duty Free Tournament. All this was possible with one regular plane ticket.

If you live in Europe and want to visit the North American tour, companies like *American Airlines* and *United Airlines* offer an excellent unlimited travel deal on all destinations in North America. The airlines will sell you a 30 days travel pass that's valid any time and anywhere for practically the price of a single ticket.

In Europe, where distances are much smaller, I recommend you travel by rail. You'll find affordable fares, flexible departure schedule, and access to almost any location on the continent. Rail Europe provides the Eurail Pass, giving you unlimited rail transport throughout Europe. This bargain combines value with flexibility. Learn more about Rail Europe on the Internet at: [www.raileurope.com/us](http://www.raileurope.com/us) .

A reputable travel agent knows the ins and outs of travel conditions in foreign countries, gives good advice, and will help you find the best deals. Convention and visitors bureau of the cities and countries you're visiting are always a good source for information and will gladly send information to help plan your trip. Those organizations will provide you with a wealth of documentation. Map. And discounts for hotels and attractions. Don't overlook the Internet, where you can find travel information for almost any city in the world.

Once you've determined which tournaments you want to attend, make sure you allow adequate time for travel between destinations. Order your plane tickets, hotel reservations, and tournament tickets in advance. Ordering tickets for each tennis tournament in advance will ensure you get a good seat and enjoy the sessions. I generally order well in advance only those ticket that sell out months ahead, such as the French Open, Wimbledon, the Australian Open, the Monte Carlo Open and the Italian Open. Each of these tournaments is likely to sell out in advance. Weekend sessions for most of the tournaments are especially difficult to access if you don't make reservations. On the other hand, you may be able to save money by purchasing your tickets at the entrance gate. The danger, with this solution is that tickets may sell out for that same day.

I am very pleased to present this guidebook and invite you to join one or more of the extraordinary trips on the tour. Over the past 20 years I've

continually sought out the most special places to stay, eat, and visit during my travels. Now I will share these places with you.

## About This Book

Have you dreamed of traveling the world – perhaps taking a sabbatical year to enjoy your favorite sport? Whether you can afford a full year, six months, three, months, or even two weeks, it's possible to enjoy tennis matches all over the world. Follow your favorite players on their victorious journeys, or plan your own itinerary and go wherever the tournaments are played. Travel as the professional's do, stay where they stay, and eat where they eat.

Whether you're an experienced traveler or planning your first trip, it's important to access the facts you need quickly and easily. *Traveling The Tennis Tour* offers the inside information to help you travel as you wish, whether you want to live large or maintain a shoestring budget. Within these pages you'll find the dates and locations of tournaments, how to get there, how to get around, where to stay, and the best restaurants and entertainments in the area.

How? Where? When? The choice is yours. Tennis tournaments are available throughout the year and around the world, and the calendar is tailored to suit almost any schedule. This means you may chose to start your trip anywhere and anytime you like.

The book is organized in three parts. Part one introduces the tennis tours, Part Two discusses specific tournaments in cities throughout the world, and Part Three offers important details to help you travel safely and inexpensively.

The vital information in Part Two is organized by continent, country and city. The order in which the

cities are listed does not reflect tournament dates, but does reflect tournament popularity and interest. Because two or more tournaments are sometimes held during the same week in different countries, it's important to plan ahead so you're never too far from the next destination.

While writing this book, I made several assumptions about what will interest the traveling tennis fan. First to attend and enjoy tennis tournaments, second to visit exotic locations and enjoy what these cities have to offer. For that reason, I've selected the places of most interest based on tournament schedules.

## **Important:**

Although all prices, opening times, and other details in this book are based on information supplied or gathered at press time, changes occur in the travel business and in the scheduling of ATP and WTA tournaments. Therefore, we can't accept responsibility for facts that become outdated or for unintended errors or omissions. Always confirm information when it matters. We encourage you to verify any critical information with the relevant authorities before you travel. This includes information on visa requirements, health and safety, customs, and transportation.

Accommodation and restaurants options are endless, with everything from five-star luxury hotels to backpacker hostels and eating facilities. Depending on your budget and taste, you can enjoy a wide variety of hospitality. In this guide you will find many options. The ratings conform to international standards, although prices may not always reflect the category. Five- star hotels in some countries may cost as much as a three-star hotel in others, and the same goes for restaurants. An opulent dinner in some countries may cost as much as a quick lunch in others. Below is a guideline for prices and categories used in this book.

<b>Hotels</b>		<b>Restaurants</b>	
<b>*****</b>	<b>\$300 +</b>	<b>*****</b>	<b>\$50 +</b>
<b>****</b>	<b>\$200 - \$300</b>	<b>****</b>	<b>\$40 - \$50</b>
<b>***</b>	<b>\$100 - \$200</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>\$20 - \$40</b>
<b>**</b>	<b>Under \$100</b>	<b>**</b>	<b>Under \$20</b>

## Getting Around The World

The major concern is to visit as many tournaments as possible in the minimum of amount of time. This requires careful planning. First, check the tour schedule and determine which tournaments you wish to attend.

The best and most efficient way to travel around the world is obviously by plane. If airfare is a big concern, look for deals on the Internet by searching airline and travel dealer web sites. Also check the fares to different area airports. For example, travelers flying to the Australian Open may find it cheaper to arrive in Sydney rather than Melbourne. If you'll be traveling in Europe, consider the excellent train system. Traveling by rail in Europe is often less expensive and time consuming than driving or flying, and the railroad offers discounts to students, seniors, and groups.

### **A: Airline Travel:**

The lowest airfares from one point to another are called non-refundable. These require 21 – day advance purchase and often a stopover of 7 to 30 days. On those tickets, unless you're will to pay more for your fare, no changes or refunds are permitted. An advance purchase ticket, which is another inexpensive way to buy airfare, requires only 14 – day advance purchase and a stopover of 7 days to 2 months. Again,



a penalty is often imposed for changes in flight dates within 14 days of initial departure.

With a regular excursion fare, no advance purchase is necessary. There are no restrictions about early reservation or minimum time spent abroad. The return half of the ticket is valid for a year after departure.

Many airlines offer up to a 15% discount from regular fares for passengers age 62 and over and a traveling companion, regardless of that companion's age. Some airlines also offer interesting deals to anyone between the ages of 12 and 24. For instance a round-trip Youth Fare requires only that tickets be reserved and purchased 3 days or less before departure. Also, if you have six or eight people flying you may be eligible for substantial special group fares.

### **To find good airfares:**

Use the following tips to find great deals on airfare.

**Timing:** The early booking system can help you save money on air travel. Book your flight early to take advantage of lower fares and refundable seats. At the same time, be flexible and change your booking if a fantastic deal comes along. Keep checking for better deals, because the so-called non-refundable tickets are not really non-refundable. If a cheaper opportunity comes along, it's well worth it to pay the penalty and get a new ticket.

**Mondays and Fridays:** Are the least advantageous days to find good travel deals, because many business people chose those days for their own traveling. Instead, book your flights on non-productive days for the airlines, such as Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and most of all, Saturday which often provides big discount for an overnight stay.

**Package Deals:** Airlines and travel agents can offer packages (air, hotel, car rental), for a much lower price than you'd obtain by organizing things on your