

# U.S. Commemorates Vancouver Olympics

One of the first stamps that will be issued by the USPS this year will commemorate the XXI Olympic Winter Games, which will be held February 12-28, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

This will be the second Olympic Winter Games, after the 1988 Games in Calgary, to be held in Canada, but the country's historic ties to the event go back much further. Canada helped usher in the first Olympic Winter Games—at the Alpine resort of Chamonix, France, in 1924—by joining with Central Europe to persuade the International Olympic Committee to add an “International Winter Sports Week” to the Games planned for that year.

For the Games in Vancouver, the Olympic torch relay is expected to be the longest to take place in a single country. Thousands of Canadians are participating in carrying the torch from Victoria, British Columbia, through every province and territory of the country. After reaching St. John's, Newfoundland, in the east, the torch will then make its journey back to British Columbia.

With this stamp featuring an illustration of a snowboarder, the U.S. Postal Service continues its tradition of honoring the spirit of athleticism and international unity inspired by the Olympic Games. More than 80 countries will participate and some 5,000 athletes and officials will

be involved in the XXI Olympic Winter Games. At least a million people are expected to travel to Vancouver, a beautiful city surrounded by water on three sides with a view of mountains in the distance. The main venue for skiing will be the resort village of Whistler, north of Vancouver.

The number of sports designated for the Olympic Winter Games has grown over the years. In addition to those included since 1924—figure skating, ice hockey, cross-country skiing, bobsled, Nordic combined, ski jumping, and speed skating—athletes today compete in Alpine skiing, biathlon, luge, and curling, as well as in the newer events of snowboarding, freestyle skiing, and short track speed skating.

After making their Olympic debut in Torino, Italy, in 2006, snowboard cross and the team pursuit for long track speed skating will be officially added to the 2010 program, which will also include the debut of ski cross,

a race down a technically challenging course resembling a motocross track.

Olympic stamp themes have been popular with collectors since the first modern Olympiad in 1896, when Greece issued 12 Olympic-themed commemorative stamps. Beginning in 1932, when the Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles, California, numerous U.S. stamps have honored the Games.

