

# Stamps of the Island Games

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Stamp collectors who have an interest in sports may likely focus on collecting stamps related to major events such as the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and Pan American Games. However, there are also numerous other multi-sport games that are worth paying attention to, including the Island Games.



*Figure 1: The logo of IIGA<sup>1</sup>*

The Island Games are sports events for islands around the world, organized by the International Island Games Association (IIGA). The first games were held on the Isle of Man in July 1985 and were known as the Inter-Island Games. Seven hundred athletes from 15 islands participated in the games. Initially, the games were intended only as a one-off sporting celebration, but due to their success, they later became biennial. The second edition was held in Guernsey in 1987, followed by events in the Faroe Islands and Åland Islands. The most recent Island Games were held in Gibraltar in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> IIGA official Website. <https://www.iiga.org/>

The members of the IIGA include Greenland, the largest island in the world, as well as many small islands, they are located in Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. Currently, there are 24 members in the IIGA: Åland Islands, Alderney, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Faroe Islands, Frøya, Gibraltar, Gotland, Greenland, Guernsey, Gozo, Hitra, Isle of Man, Isle of Wight, Jersey, Menorca, Orkney Islands, Saaremaa, Saint Helena, Sark, Shetland Islands, Western Isles, and Ynys Môn. Gibraltar is not actually an island, but a peninsula that borders Spain to the north. It is the only member of the IIGA that is not an actual island. For convenience, the members will be collectively referred to as 'islands' in the rest of this text. Former members of the IIGA include the countries Iceland and Malta, the province of Prince Edward Island, and Rhodes.

<b>Sovereign States</b>	<b>Islands</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	Faroe Islands, Greenland
<b>Estonia</b>	Saaremaa
<b>Finland</b>	Åland Islands
<b>Malta</b>	Gozo
<b>Norway</b>	Frøya, Hitra
<b>Spain</b>	Menorca
<b>Sweden</b>	Gotland
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Alderney, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Isle of Wight, Jersey, Orkney, Sark, Shetland Islands, St Helena, Western Isles, Ynys Môn

*Table 1: The Islands and the Sovereign States*

None of these 24 islands are sovereign states. Although Malta and Iceland were members of the IIGA, they left for various reasons. However, in 2022, Gozo, a small island in the Republic of Malta, became the latest member to join the IIGA. Among the 24 current IIGA members, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands have competed independently in the Olympic Games, while Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, Jersey, and St. Helena have all sent teams to the Commonwealth Games. The IIGA Constitution of 2017 states that new applications are limited to island territories with populations under 125,000, with at

least two sports governing bodies represented in the IIGA program where the island can compete "adequately." Membership is limited to 25 islands.<sup>2</sup>

Postal Administrations	Islands
<b>Åland Post</b>	Åland Islands
<b>Bermuda Post Office</b>	Bermuda
<b>Cayman Islands Post Services</b>	Cayman Islands
<b>Falkland Islands Philatelic Bureau</b>	Falkland Islands
<b>Posta</b>	Faroe Islands
<b>Royal Gibraltar Post Office</b>	Gibraltar
<b>Post Greenland</b>	Greenland
<b>Guernsey Post</b>	Guernsey, Alderney, Sark
<b>Malta Post</b>	Gozo
<b>Isle of Man Post</b>	Isle of Man
<b>Jersey</b>	Jersey Post
<b>St Helena's Post Office</b>	St Helena
<b>Eesti Post</b>	Saaremaa
<b>Posten</b>	Froya, Hitra
<b>Correos y Telégrafos</b>	Menorca
<b>Posten Sweden Post</b>	Gotland
<b>Royal Mail</b>	Isle of Wight, Orkney, Shetland Islands, Western Isles, Ynys Môn

Table 2: *The Islands and the Postal Administrations*<sup>3</sup>  
*Italics: unlikely to issue Island Games stamps*

Sovereignty over these islands belongs to eight countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Table 1). There are 17 postal administrations (Table 2) on these 24 islands, some of which have their own postal administration, while others do not. For example, the British Crown Dependency Isle of Man and the British Overseas Territory Bermuda have their own postal administrations, but the islands of England, Wales, and Scotland do not. Therefore, collectors can expect to find Island Games stamps from these 17 postal administrations. However, it is unlikely that countries like Spain, Sweden, and the UK will issue Island Games stamps as the games are not major events for these countries. Therefore, it is more likely that the stamps for the Island Games will come from the following 12 territories: Åland Islands, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Faroe Islands, Gibraltar, Greenland, Guernsey, Malta, Isle of Man, Jersey, and St Helena, however so

<sup>2</sup> IIGA. "Constitution of International Island Games Association"

<sup>3</sup> UPU member countries

far only five of them have been confirmed to have issued Island Games stamps. All these 5 territories only issue stamps when they host the games.



Figure 2: 1989 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: June 5, 1989

The Faroe Islands issued the first set of Island Games stamps for the 3rd edition of the games in 1989.<sup>4</sup> Four stamps (Figure 2) feature four sports: rowing, football, swimming, and handball. The first-day cover includes the Faroese word 'Oyggjaleikir,' which means 'Island Games' in English. However, rowing and handball are not official competition events in the 1989 Island Games. During the games, the Faroese organized a traditional Viking boat rowing competition to promote their culture. As for the handball stamp, it may simply feature a popular sport on the islands.

In 1991, the Åland Islands hosted the Island Games for the first time and issued four stamps (Figure 3) featuring volleyball, shooting, football, and athletics. These four sports were official competitions in the games. The miniature sheet included the Swedish phrase 'Ö-spelen,' which means 'The Island Games' in English. Despite being an autonomous region of Finland, the official language of Åland is Swedish.

<sup>4</sup> Faroe Islands Stamps. "Island Games"





Figure 3: 1991 Island Games stamps. Issue date: April 5, 1991

In 1995, Gibraltar hosted its first Island Games as the only member located on a peninsula, and they issued three stamps (Figure 4) featuring sailing, athletics, and swimming.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 4: 1995 Island Games stamps. Issue date: May 8, 1995

In 1997, Jersey hosted the Island Games for the first time and issued six stamps (Figure 5) featuring six sports out of the 13 official competitions. They are Cycling, Archery, Windsurfing, Gymnastics, Volleyball and Athletics.

<sup>5</sup> Gibraltar Stamps. "Gibraltar Island Games"



Figure 5: 1997 Island Games stamps. Issue date: June 28, 1997

In 2003, Guernsey hosted the Island Games for the second time but first issued stamps for the games at the beginning of the year. Six stamps (Figure 6) featuring six sports out of 15 competitions. They are Athletics, Mountain biking, Gymnastics, Windsurfing, Golf and Triathlon.



Figure 6: 2003 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: January 30, 2003

In 2009, the Åland Islands hosted the Island Games for the second time and issued a single stamp (Figure 7) featuring a real person, Hanna Wiss. Hanna is the best sprinter on the Åland Islands and is also a long jump and triple jump athlete. In that year's Island Games, she won three gold medals in the 100m, long jump, and triple jump events.



Figure 7: 2009 Island Games stamp. Issue date: June 27, 2009

In 2015, Jersey hosted the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Island Games and issued 14 stamps (Figure 8) for all 14 official competitions. They are archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, football, cycling, football, golf, sailing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, tennis, triathlon and volleyball.



Figure 8: 2015 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: June 27, 2015



In 2019, Gibraltar did something similar and issued 14 stamps (Figure 9) featuring athletics, badminton, basketball, beach volleyball, bowling, cycling, judo, sailing, shooting, squash, swimming, table tennis, tennis, and triathlon.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 9: 2019 Island Games. First Day Cover. Issue date: April 25, 2019

Featuring all official sports on stamps may become a trend in the future. For instance, Guernsey, which will host the 19th edition of the Island Games in July 2023<sup>7</sup>,

<sup>6</sup> Gibraltar Stamps. "Gibraltar Island Games XVIII"

<sup>7</sup> Guernsey 2023 Island Games Official Website.



has issued a set of seven stamps (Figure 10) and a miniature sheet (Figure 11) on May 24, 2023<sup>8</sup>. It's worth noting that there are still 14 official competitions in this edition of the Island Games. Each stamp features two sports, and the additional miniature sheet features the mascot<sup>9</sup>.



*Figure 10: 2023 Island Games Stamp. Issue date: May 24, 2023*



*Figure 11: 2023 Island miniature sheet. Issue date: May 24, 2023*

<sup>8</sup> Guernsey Stamps. "Stamp Programme 2023"

<sup>9</sup> Guernsey Stamps. "Guernsey 2023 Island Games"

The Island Games can be compared to a mini-Olympics. While the Olympics showcase the world's best athletes, who are often viewed as superheroes in their countries, the Island Games are on a much smaller scale, with a lower level of competition. However, this does not diminish the significance of the event. Due to the small populations of these islands, athletes and islanders may be acquainted with each other. For instance, Sark has a population of less than 500, which is the smallest among the members. An islander of Sark may know every person on the island, and Sark has won three gold medals in the Island Games. This is quite remarkable, and the islanders should be proud of their athletes. Issuing stamps featuring sports on small islands is an excellent way to promote the event and highlight their own local heroes, such as Hanna Wiss. For stamp collectors interested in sports and small postal administrations, the Island Games offer a fantastic theme to collect, with a manageable number of stamps available.

Year	Games	Host Island	Participating Islands	Athletes	Sports	Stamps
1985	I	Isle of Man	15	700	7	
1987	II	Guernsey	18	1,049	9	
1989	III	Faroe Islands	15	800	11	✓
1991	IV	Åland	17	1,500	13	✓
1993	V	Isle of Wight	19	1,448	14	
1995	VI	Gibraltar	18	1,214	13	✓
1997	VII	Jersey	20	~2,000	13	✓
1999	VIII	Gotland	22	1,858	14	
2001	IX	Isle of Man	22	2,020	15	
2003	X	Guernsey	23	2,129	15	✓
2005	XI	Shetland	24	1,658	14	
2007	XII	Rhodes	25	2,343	14	
2009	XIII	Åland	24	2,286	14	✓
2011	XIV	Isle of Wight	24	2,311	14	
2013	XV	Bermuda	22	1,296	14	
2015	XVI	Jersey	24	2,430	14	✓
2017	XVII	Gotland	23	2,333	14	
2019	XVIII	Gibraltar	22	1,700	14	✓
2021	Postponed due to COVID-19 Pandemic					
2023	XIX	Guernsey	24	~3,000	14	✓
2025	XX	Orkney			13	
2027	XXI	Ynys Môn				
2029	XXII	Isle of Man				

Table 3: The summary of the games and stamps

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