



Destination Management

2006 FIFA World Cup™

In June 2006, Germany's streets filled with millions of colourfully dressed football fans. Spectators from all over the world came to cheer their national teams and enjoy the friendly atmosphere surrounding the 2006 FIFA World Cup™. They all needed a place to stay, fun things to do, and most importantly, a hassle-free and efficient way to get to the stadiums. Because of the sheer number of people, it was an awesome but exhilarating challenge. The biggest groups were from Brazil with more than 6,000 guests and Mexico with nearly 4,500 – enough to fill a whole city!



THERE IS A FINE LINE
BETWEEN BEING GOOD
AND BEING GREAT. WE
NEVER LOSE SIGHT
OF THAT.

The Project

When Germany was awarded the right to host the 2006 FIFA World Cup™, the DFB (German Football Association) decided to set up its own Destination Management Agency to deal with the exceptional number of guests. Every single day for 31 days between June 9th and July 9th, the agency would have to handle between 10,000 and 20,000 people! Central management allowed a swift exchange of information and maximum efficiency. Because of the magnitude of the event, there was absolutely no room for mistakes. All transfers between the airports, stadiums and hotels had to run perfectly on time. Even one small delay could have a disastrous “domino effect” on the painstakingly designed schedule. Perfectionism was key to success and the almost proverbial German precision really came in handy this time. Together with the DFB, HRG Germany formed a joint venture named 2006 FIFA World Cup™ Travel and Event Services, which arranged the following:

- Transportation within Germany
- Sightseeing and excursions
- Event production and entertainment
- Festive dinners to sample local specialties

In addition to thousands of football supporters, we looked after numerous VIP guests including sponsors, heads of state, politicians, and the players’ wives and girlfriends. Naturally, because of their status, these guests required special treatment. They enjoyed a personalized service tailored to their specific needs and varying cultural backgrounds. It was crucial that everyone, without exception, had an absolutely unforgettable time in Germany.

Challenges

Minor everyday crises ranged from guests requiring medical care, being trapped aboard an out-of-service train or... simply getting into trouble. There were also several cases when HRG had to go the extra mile to assist visitors. On one occasion, twenty guests, including several VIPs, got stuck at border control with invalid visas. HRG negotiated with German authorities for hours to arrange special entry permissions. Another time, a national airline went into bankruptcy two days before 5,000 supporters were expected to arrive in Germany. Flights and routes were changing rapidly making scheduling a logistical nightmare. Despite many last-minute changes all supporters arrived in time to watch their national team play.

The Outcome

Everyone admired the superb organization and the friendly atmosphere surrounding the World Cup. Specially chartered high-speed ICE trains, filled to the brim with colourful crowds, shuttled between German cities. Masses of enthusiastic fans moved swiftly between airports, hotels, train stations and coaches thanks to a clever colour-coding system. When not cheering their national teams, the guests enjoyed a rich entertainment programme including restaurant visits, sightseeing with tour guides who spoke their native language, wine tasting excursions, and evening entertainment. There was a party for 1,600 Brazilian fans aboard a ship on the Rhine River in Cologne and a “Mexican Village” set up in downtown Düsseldorf with ethnic food, music and dancing. Even the weather cooperated! The summer of 2006 was exceptionally beautiful in Germany with warm weather and lots of sunshine.