

Wealthy visitors' mega World Cup splash out

ZANDILE MBABELA

ARMoured vehicles, private jets and R50 000-a-day mansions are just some of the enticements on offer to the world's wealthiest travellers coming to South Africa for the World Cup.

Though some accommodation providers are battling to secure bookings after Match, the Fifa-appointed hospitality service provider, left them in the lurch last week, top-end concierge companies are "substantially" booked for the duration of the tournament.

Quintessentially, whose clients include a "balanced mixture of local and international tourists", has organised armoured vehicles to transport its clients on tours of townships and between their hotels and stadiums.

When not in these specially converted 4x4s — hired for R3 600 or

Private jets, armoured cars on offer

more a day — they will be travelling by chartered planes, at a cost of about R1.8-million for a return trip for 18 passengers between Nelspruit and Johannesburg.

Marketing manager Ingrid Pearce said that if a client wanted a bodyguard, and some have asked for one, "that's an extra R4 250 for 12 hours".

"We can't reveal the exact visitor numbers, but it's going to be big and most of them are staying for the duration of the World Cup," said Pearce.

There was no room for cancellations because the company's policy was "100% non-refundable deposits".

The *Sunday Times* reported in November that the international high-rollers attending the tournament will include the Russian

billionaire and Chelsea football club owner Roman Abramovich, Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and multi-billionaire Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Abramovich, who reportedly rented a high-security Johannesburg home and an apartment in Cape Town, booked a berth at Cape Town's harbour for his 170m, R3.3-billion yacht, *Eclipse*.

The Desk concierge company's managing director, Carole Day, said the company had booked more than 100 overseas visitors.

The shortest stay was two weeks, but most guests will stay for the full five weeks of the event.

"Most of our clients will be based in Cape Town and will commute [to soccer matches and local tours] from there," she said.

Guests will be staying in luxury villas that cost between R30 000 and R50 000 a day. The seven-bedroom villas have a large entertainment area, cleaning staff, 24-hour security personnel, chefs and butlers.

Visitors can bring their own chefs and nannies, but these can also be provided on request.

"We took the decision not to rent properties at ridiculously high prices because we didn't want to exploit out visitors," said Day.

She said their high-earning visitors did not make any "absurd requests".

"We will do anything for our clients, as long as it is legal," she joked.

Each villa has a luxury 4x4 vehicle and private planes are on offer from R200 000 a return trip.

"One guest asked for a Bentley, for which he will pay R15 000 a day," she said.

HIS MASTER'S SHADOW



CANINE COMPANION: A dog being walked near the market place at the Biscuit Mill, in Woodstock, Cape Town, on Saturday morning Picture: ALON SKUY

Rooms at the inn in Durbs going for a snip

ZANDILE MBABELA

DURBAN hoteliers have embarked on a big marketing campaign to win back their regular upcountry holiday-makers after 60% of the province's rooms provisionally booked for the World Cup were released back onto the market last week by Fifa.

Fifa's hospitality arm, Match, booked a "good stock of rooms" in KwaZulu-Natal for the World Cup four years ago, but that fell through on Wednesday.

And now the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry says it is aiming to lure Gauteng tourists

back to the sea during the winter holidays.

The chamber's tourism manager, Jane Pillay, said it was assisting holiday accommodation providers to secure bookings at much lower rates.

"There was an expectation created and, at the last minute, Match pulled out, so we have to do everything possible to rope in our usual crowd as people are under the impression that Durban is fully booked for that time," she said.

"We want to let people know that Durban is open for business."

She said hoteliers previously felt little need to publicise their winter specials but, with only 10 days to go until the World Cup kick-off, the pressure is on to attract holiday-makers.

'Many hotels have started advertising'

"It's short notice, but we'll pull it off. I'm confident," said Pillay.

She said that most Durban hotels were fully booked for match days, but that some would have days on which bargains could be found.

Many hotels are advertising rooms for the five-week period.

The Elangeni hotel has rooms available for the whole of June and July, except for three days on which it is fully booked.

However, when *The Times* tried to find out what The Elangeni was charging for a week in June, staff would not answer, saying there was a "specific team dealing with the World Cup pricing".

Sun International spokesman Sue Klerck said: "We have packages available for the winter school holidays."

Reynard Pretorius, of Durban's Bluewaters Hotel, said the hotel was "slowly but surely filling up" for the World Cup.

Briefs

More optimism on Cup prospects

MORE than two-thirds of South Africans believe Bafana Bafana is ready for the World Cup, and the number of people who believe that the country is ready to host the spectacle has risen to 87% from 85% in February.

Research group African Response's 2010 barometer, released on Friday, also shows that, if Bafana Bafana failed to make the quarterfinals, 22% of South Africans would support Cameroon and 42% would support overseas teams.

About 71% of citizens feel confident about policing and security arrangements for the tournament — up from 69% in February.

Durban residents were the most optimistic, with 96% believing that the country was ready to host the tournament.

Optimism about Eskom's ability to supply power during the tournament rose to 59% since February, an increase of 5%. Almost two-thirds (62%) believe that the roads will be ready and 73% have confidence in the new public transport systems. — *Judy Lelliott*

SAA undermining Cup objectives

DEMOCRATIC Alliance tourism spokesman Greg Krumbok said yesterday that SAA air fares were "two to three times higher" than those of any other airline during the tournament, especially for "key games".

Public Enterprises Minister Barbara Hogan responded to a parliamentary question by saying there was "no marked difference between fares offered during and outside the World Cup period".

However, Krumbok said SAA's economy ticket prices rose by 71.6% during the tournament — 60.1% higher than the average charged by 1Time, Mango, Kulula and British Airways — the day before the quarterfinal in Johannesburg and on the day of the final.

"On July 5, the day before the Cape Town semifinal, the price is R3 598 for a full economy seat, which is 386% up from the current price of R740. Again, SAA's fare on this day is between 45% and 314% more expensive than that of other domestic carriers," he said.

"SAA is undermining one of our key World Cup objectives, which is to brand our country not only as a safe destination, but also a value-for-money one." — *Staff reporter*

Own-goals save England blushes

ENGLAND missed a penalty but came from behind to beat Japan 2-1 in a World Cup warm-up game yesterday — thanks to two own-goals.

After Marcus Tanaka gave Japan a seventh-minute lead, England's Frank Lampard had a penalty saved by Eiji Kawashima. But Tanaka headed a cross by Joe Cole into his net in the 72nd minute and Yuji Nakazawa deflected a cross by Ashley Cole past his goalkeeper in the 83rd.

The game was played in Austria so that the teams could get used to playing at high altitude. — *Sapa*