

traveltips

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Themed special 30 May

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Themed special: FIFA Women's World Cup

Get ready for another magical summer. In 2006, fans from all over the world descended on Germany for the men's World Cup, celebrating a festival of football together with their hosts in the stadiums and at the fan parks. This year, Germany will once again be transformed into a captivating and cosmopolitan stage for the beautiful game. The FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™ takes place from 26 June to 17 July and promises enthralling matches, lots of goals and an electrifying atmosphere. In 32 games played in nine stadiums, the best women's national teams from around the globe will be competing to lift the world cup trophy.

www.fifa.com/womensworldcup/index.html

The FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™ kicks off with the opening game in Berlin. The city, a great destination in itself, is near to the holiday regions in Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. For the tournament final, the organisers chose the unofficial capital of women's football in Germany – Frankfurt, a banking centre where the famous skyscraper skyline contrasts with the tranquil banks of the river Main. The other host cities also reflect the diversity of Germany. Augsburg, for example, is located in the Bavarian part of Swabia – a popular region for holidaymakers – while Bochum can be found at the heart of the Ruhr, which was the European Capital of Culture in 2010.

www.germany.travel

Football has long since ceased to be the sole domain of men. So it's no surprise that the organisation of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™ lies in female hands. Steffi Jones, president of the Organising Committee, became a world and European champion during her playing days for the German national side. For her, the development of women's football in Germany is also a personal success story. The women's game first became popular in Europe in the second half of the 20th century. In 1970 Italy hosted the first women's World Cup, albeit unofficially, and the sport finally made its breakthrough in 1991 with the launch of the *Frauen-Bundesliga*. Women of all ages in Germany fought hard for the right to play football and have been richly rewarded for their efforts: the German women's national team have twice been crowned world champions.

www.dfb.de

Host cities: Berlin, Frankfurt and Mönchengladbach

Berlin and the big city buzz

Young, hip and full of life: Germany's capital city Berlin is one of the most popular travel destinations in Europe. It's also where the opening game of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™ will be held on 26 June. Berlin's Olympic stadium, the venue for the match, is located in the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf district alongside a multitude of museums and cultural attractions. Also in this area is the famous Kurfürstendamm shopping street, which this year celebrates its 125th anniversary. The prestigious thoroughfare stretches almost as far as Berlin Zoo, from which a well-trodden route leads to Berlin-Mitte, Brandenburg Gate and the government quarter. From the great squares in the city centre, it's not far to the alternative Kreuzberg district with its narrow streets. Fans of music and the arts will find rich pickings here. A good time to visit is during the Bergmannstrassenfest from 24 to 26 June, when the streets of Kreuzberg become one giant stage for jazz and theatre. At the *Kindertheater*, Berlin-based performers show just how family-friendly Germany's capital can be. There are also around 2,000 playgrounds, some more unusual than others, spread right across the city. Cycling tours are perfect for discovering the many sights and attractions – from Alexanderplatz square to Berlin Museum Island – in as leisurely a way as possible. Engaging the services of a tour guide to add a personal insight helps visitors to get the most of the routes, some of which extend for 50 kilometres. Lakes, parks and gardens in the region surrounding Berlin make a cycling trip in the country equally worthwhile. Just a few miles outside the city is an area of outstanding natural beauty. On Lake Wannsee, visitors can follow up their bike ride with a boat trip; in and around the Havel river they can swim, cycle, walk, play golf and, of course, go touring on the water, all within easy reach of the western fringes of the city. To the south of Berlin and less than an hour's drive from the city centre, holidaymakers will find tropical temperatures and landscapes to match at Tropical Island water park. Hurtling down water slides is all part of the fun, while a spa offers rest and relaxation.

Information

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Frankfurt: the capital of women's football

Glass-fronted skyscrapers reach toward the heavens along the banks of the river Main – the streets below are a blur of activity. Frankfurt is Germany's main banking centre but also the unofficial capital of women's football. The city is hosting four matches during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™, including the final. To open the tournament, fans will be treated to an experience to remember. On 25 June, when darkness falls, Frankfurt's skyscrapers and the river Main will provide the setting for a phenomenal pyrotechnic show. Music and video installations will help to build excitement for the World Cup action to come. During the tournament proper, there will be an electrifying atmosphere at the Frankfurt Football Gardens on the southern banks of the Main. But Frankfurt also has its quiet side. At Palmengarten botanical gardens, for example, visitors can enjoy peace and quiet before or after the games. A leisurely stroll around the grounds reveals tropical and subtropical plants in the greenhouses, a subarctic landscape and even two deserts. Those who want to enjoy long walks amidst unspoilt nature won't have to travel far either. The Rheingau-Taunus district, the most beautiful part of the Rhine-Main region, begins just a few miles outside Frankfurt. This is a place where medieval castles perch high above the Rhine surrounded by vineyards stretching into the distance. Nearby Opel Zoo in the Taunus hills is set in a woodland area between Königstein and Kronberg. In its extensive grounds, families can see around 1,400 animals from all continents and climate zones.

Information

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Mönchengladbach: Football and holiday fun

Mönchengladbach in North Rhine-Westphalia is steeped in football heritage. The entire city is already in the grip of football fever and there will be lots of entertainment and events to complement the matches. Fans will be gathering to watch the games at the fan park on Kapuzinerplatz square, which will feature a huge LED screen and two live bands a day. 'Girls are better than boys' provides the theme for all the footballing fun on 18 June in the municipal gardens. The *spocht frei* (sport free) festival, which runs until 17 July, features film, theatre and comedy from all angles, putting the spotlight on football and Mönchengladbach.

In the city centre, the Bunter Garten is a haven of tranquility and also has a playground for the little ones. It's a great place to relax and unwind after the exciting World Cup matches. Art lovers will find much to appreciate at the Abteiberg Museum. The building itself is a work of art for which the prestigious German Architectural Prize was awarded. Inside, the collection spans the 20th and 21st centuries. Modern art also takes centre stage in the sculpture garden outside the museum. Religious art can be seen in Mönchengladbach Minster, which dates back 1,000 years. Other highlights include the multi-genre theatre, the concert seasons, the events and music festivals, and the projects showcasing the city's young and creative side.

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Host cities: Augsburg, Wolfsburg and Sinsheim

Augsburg: history, heritage and natural beautyships

Historical Augsburg has long been popular with tourists, but this year football fans are also in for a treat. The city's stadium will be hosting three group phase matches and one quarter final. Augsburg is home to people of many nationalities, who will be celebrating together during the Festival of Cultures from 7 to 10 July. There will also be several one-off events to coincide with the World Cup. On Rathausplatz square, for example, the *Kulturstadion* concert stage has been designed to look like a sports stadium. Culture also finds a stage in Augsburg's many museums, such as the State Textile and Industry Museum which explores four centuries of textile-making history. Augsburg puppet theatre also has its place in the town's history: generations of children have been enthralled by the antics of Jim Button and Robber Hotzenplotz. Although the latter is purely fictional and part of the famous puppet theatre lore, Bavaria has experienced its fair share of real-life thieves and rogues down the centuries. Visitors can learn all about their escapades on the 'robber trails' found throughout Germany. One of these leads to the Kissinger Museum on the Gut Mergentheim estate, just a few miles outside Augsburg. This is a great place to find out about the bandits and brigands of German history. Augsburg's focus on nature is reflected by its many restaurants and cafés specialising in organic food and drink. These are featured on the 'organic trail' through the city centre. To get even closer to nature, families can set off on a farm holiday in Naturpark Augsburg Westliche Wälder or in the Swabian Stauden hills.

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Sinsheim: football, fun and the great outdoors

Sinsheim is a hub of football and technology and the main town in the Kraichgau region, which offers a wealth of historical attractions. During the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™ it is hosting three group matches and the third place play-off. There are also lots of events planned during the tournament. The programme focuses on women and football, and includes performances by the crack team of high-rope acrobats led by world champion Jessica Traber. 'SportArt - Pioneers of German Women's Football' is the title of a multimedia exhibition documenting the history of the women's game. It runs from 7 to 31 July. At the fan park, supporters and their families can watch the footballing action together. On children's day (5 July) the little ones can meet their heroes from the television and enjoy a thrilling magic show. There is also lots to discover on Sinsheim's doorstep. The surrounding Kraichgau region with its hills and peaks is great for outdoor activities. Everyone from beginners to seasoned off-roaders can explore the landscape in a jeep or all-terrain vehicle, pushing themselves and their rides to the very limit. But there are, of course, more leisurely ways to discover the Kraichgau. Keen cyclists can roll along past orchards and meadows right into the heart of the countryside. On the Museums Cycle Route, they are taken on a trip down memory lane on short sections with hardly any inclines. It's an easy way for families to track down medieval villages, natural monuments and mighty castles. Six museums along the route chronicle the history of the region. Back in Sinsheim proper, the Museum of Technology explores the past, present and future of human ingenuity. Real airplanes and even a space shuttle are among the exhibits on display.

Information

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Wolfsburg: engineering meets science

A young town with a strong engineering tradition, Wolfsburg is one of Germany's most important hubs for science and technology. Four women's World Cup games will be taking place here – three in the group stage and one quarter final. At the centrally located fan park, people can enjoy live music and watch the action on a giant screen. Although a relatively new town, Wolfsburg has become a dynamic urban centre in southern Lower Saxony. Life in the town is dominated by Volkswagen, from whom the Autostadt complex is a museum and brand experience rolled into one. The phaeno in Wolfsburg is one of Germany's biggest science centres. More than 350 stations for experimentation help visitors to find out for themselves how tornados form, how geysers erupt and what anti-gravity is. There is even a 'time machine' showing people how they'll look in 20 years time. Wolfsburg Planetarium turns attention to the skies and can accommodate 144 visitors beneath its dome, which has a diameter of 15 metres. Its shows and lectures reveal all sorts of useful and fascinating information.

At Wolfsburg Castle, the 'Host City' exhibition will be putting the focus on football and the World Cup until the middle of August. Between games, it's well worth taking a trip to the Allerpark. Here, locals and visitors can do water sports, play football or ice hockey, go blading, bowling and climbing, enjoy a spot of sunbathing or breakfast, meet for coffee or party in the evening. On 18 June the park will host a summer festival to celebrate the arrival of the women's World Cup in Wolfsburg.

Information

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Host cities: Bochum, Dresden and Leverkusen

Bochum: mining heritage and water sports

The Ruhr is one of the most distinctive landscapes in Germany – a place where mining traditions unite with culture and the arts. In the heart of this region in North Rhine-Westphalia lies Bochum with its World Cup stadium. This is the venue for four group matches of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™. After watching the games it's well worth visiting the city and its attractions. The Mining Museum, for example, illustrates how the extraction of raw materials has shaped the character of an entire region. An insight is given into working conditions underground, while the visitor mine – at a depth of 20 metres – shows how coal was once extracted. The pithead frame offers fabulous views across Bochum and the rest of the Ruhr. From here, it's just a short hop to the Zeiss Planetarium, which switches attention from the subterranean to space. The projector displays the night sky as it looks from Earth, while space flights and other exciting adventures are projected onto the dome during the planetarium shows. Holiday activities galore are on offer at Freizeit-zentrum Kemnade, where visitors can learn how to sail or windsurf on a reservoir lake. There's also lots to see and do on dry land: Heveney water park offers electric and wood-fired saunas, an eco-sauna, a steamroom and saltwater inhalation facilities. An indoor beach volleyball centre and a golf course can also be found by the lake. Another attraction is Kemnade House, a moated castle containing museums and a late-Gothic chapel. Watching Starlight Express with the whole family is the ideal way to end a perfect day in Bochum. Since 1988 Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit musical has been performed in the purpose-built Starlighthalle next to the World Cup stadium. People of all ages are captivated by the story of how these anthropomorphic engines do battle in love and in a thrilling race.

Information

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www.starlight-express-musical.de

Leverkusen: a young town with a sporting tradition

Football is a way of life in Leverkusen in North Rhine-Westphalia. Bayer Leverkusen play in the highest tier of the Bundesliga and have made the town famous throughout Germany. Three group games and one quarter final will be played in the World Cup stadium. The fan park offers events and activities especially for families. During the tournament, a football pitch, target wall and a huge, football-themed bouncy castle will help kids to burn off excess energy. Two-hour sightseeing tours will take place on all four match days. The Japanese Garden is one of Leverkusen's many green areas that can offer respite from the emotions of the game. Carl Duisberg, a leading figure at I.G. Farbenindustrie AG – the conglomerate which at the time encompassed the Bayer company – had the park laid out in 1913. On his return from a world tour, he had it converted to the Japanese style. In 2006 the garden was voted one of the ten prettiest in Germany. Nearby Morsbroich House accommodates a museum for modern art. The collection puts the focus on contemporary artists, in particular those who specialise in analytical painting and kinetic art. A sculpture park and quarterly exhibitions complete the picture in what was once a medieval castle. Also close to the centre of Leverkusen are the Bürgerbusch woods – the green lungs of the town.

Information

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www.sportpark-lev.de

Dresden: a verdant gem on the Elbe river

Water, a historical centre and sporting traditions are three of the defining features of Dresden. A venue for three group matches and one quarter final, the city is well known even outside Germany. Things will be hotting up this summer for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011™. The Elbe river and the many nearby lakes are perfect for cooling off, as well as for water skiing, canoeing and even parties on rubber dinghies and rafts. Boat trips are a great way to discover Dresden – the 'Florence of the Elbe' – and its surrounding region. The skyline and the Church of Our Lady look particularly impressive on a night-time sightseeing tour. Dresden also happens to be one of the greenest cities in Germany. Right in the centre is Grosse Garten park, a popular destination for joggers and for people out on a stroll. The Elbe Cycle Route runs through the riverbank meadows and carries on all the way to the beautiful Saxon Switzerland region, which can be reached within a day. Cyclists can admire the dramatic rocky landscape on paths that hug the water. Dresden is both the regional capital and the economic centre of Saxony. One of the biggest companies based in the city is Volkswagen. Its 'transparent factory' is quite literally a window into the world of car manufacturing. Behind large glass panels, premium-class VW models are put together before visitors' very eyes. Art also plays a prominent role in Dresden. The Ostrale is a major European art festival and represents the entire spectrum of contemporary art. This year's event, which runs from 1 July to 4 September, features works by more than 200 artists.

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Football museums in Germany

Pioneers of women's football in Frankfurt

In the 1970s two football teams were established in the Niederrad district of Frankfurt that would go on to change the face of the women's game – Union Niederrad and Oberst Schiel. An exhibition devoted to them and to women's football in general can be seen at the Niederrad local history museum. Twenty three large display panels document the history and triumphs of these pioneering sportswomen. It wasn't easy for the first women footballers, but they carried on playing despite receiving criticism and abuse. In 1955 the German Football Association banned women's football in order to keep the sport as a man's domain only. It took until 1970 for the governing body to recognise that women were equally entitled to play football as men. Teams from Niederrad were founder members of the first official women's league. In the first season Oberst Schiel emerged as the champions of the Hessen region. The Niederrad exhibition features photos of these trailblazing women and the shirts they wore, helping to bring the past to life.

Information

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Titles and triumphs in Berlin's football museum

Germany's women have been crowned football world champions five times, the last victory coming in 2007. The German Football Museum in Berlin puts the spotlight on the team's triumphs, titles and trophies. The exhibition also illustrates the significance of football in culture, how it has shaped contemporary history and society, and what it means for the wider sporting world. A timeline documents the successes of Germany's national side, and all the hard-won titles are featured in the gallery and the hall of fame. The museum also documents what people in West and East Germany thought about football 'over the border' in the days before reunification. There is also a timeline chronicling the ups and downs of football in Berlin. Because 'the beautiful game' is an experience for all the senses, the German Football Museum has adopted a themed, multimedia approach. Its combination of open display cabinets, films and audio recordings reflects the multi-faceted nature of the sport. Historical items are also part of the mix, of course, and are sure to stir fond memories among football fans.

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The Eintracht Frankfurt story

Eintracht Frankfurt is one of Germany's oldest football teams. Founded at the end of the 19th century, the club can look back an eventful history. The Eintracht Museum beneath the main stand of the Commerzbank Arena tells the story of how the players with eagles on their shirts made Frankfurt famous around the world as a city of sport. Film footage of famous matches, radio broadcasts and first-hand accounts offer visitors a multimedia experience chronicling the history of the club. Prize exhibits include the certificate of the team's foundation from 1899, the ball used in the famous European Cup Final of 1960, and the many trophies won down the years. The exhibition also touches on other types of sport played by the club and the history of the Hessen region and Frankfurt. The stadium, the home of Eintracht Frankfurt since 1925, is also part of the attraction. No visit to the museum is complete without a tour of the Commerzbank Arena.

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Sterling football heritage in Dresden

Dresden is famous mainly for its historical centre, but it is also a mecca for football fans. The city's teams have attained cult status, and none more so than Dynamo Dresden. The Dynamo Dresden Museum recounts the history of the present-day club and its predecessors – including those that existed before 1945. Anyone interested in the history of modern football is well catered for in Dresden, not least because the Saxony city was once home to the Dresden English Football Club. This was the first sports club established outside Britain in which football was played in accordance with the rules of today. More than 2,000 exhibits are on display in the museum, whose football cinema screens legendary games from Dynamo Dresden's history, including the UEFA Cup match of 1976 in Liverpool.

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Bayern Munich Museum

A new football wonderland is in the making at the Allianz Arena in Munich. Germany's most successful team, Bayern Munich, is to open a museum honouring the club's history, triumphs and iconic players. The exhibition is scheduled to open during the 2011/2012 season and will feature cups and trophies, major footballing personalities, film footage and the history of the club from its foundation in 1900 to the present day. There will also be an extensive special section dedicated to the fans and fan clubs.

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