



NOVEMBER 4, 2022
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What does travel entail in a post-pandemic world? Author **PICO IYER** tells all

Photo: Malek Hue; Imaging: Raja Choudhury



TRAVEL

Women in FIFA World cup matches

Ode to Football

COME NOVEMBER 20, FOOTBALL FRENZY IS ALL SET TO TAKE OVER AS QATAR HOSTS THE 2022 EDITION OF THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP, WHICH MEANS YOU NEED TO HEAD TO THE FIFA MUSEUM IN ZURICH

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



Have you ever wanted to see how it would be like to be a commentator or a referee at a football game? Have you longed for a selfie at a football match? Well, if you answered either of these questions in the affirmative, head to the Fifa Museum in Zurich where you can live your fantasy, albeit virtually. Incidentally, football or soccer is the most popular sport in the world with a whopping 3.5 billion fans. The fast-paced game comes with unending thrills gives an adrenaline rush like no other in under two hours. And if you want an education about all things football, where better than the headquarters of Fifa in Zurich at the Fifa Museum?

Interactive space

Located in Seestrasse, the Fifa Museum makes an impression even from the outside with an imposing facade that stands tall with its black-toned and glass exterior. The spacious interiors have a sleek industrial like decor with pops of quirk that capture my attention immediately. Spread over 32,500 square feet across three floors, the museum tells the story of football and how Fifa or the Fédération Internationale de Football Association has worked to popularise the sport. The best part is that all the museum involves guests at every place courtesy its VR screens. You can also opt for a guided tour (with prior notice) that adds a nice personal touch. There are numerous activities for children as well, with an open space lab where kids can draw, read about football, and relax. There is a kids trail that helps the little ones discover the museum in their own way as well as fun interactive quizzes for the soccer fans.

Exhibits galore

The museum has an extensive collection of memorabilia, photographs, exhibits that run into thousands and is continually evolving as the sport continues to grow. The ground level has a large circular display of the national team shirts of Fifa 211 member associations, aptly called 'The Rainbow'. Do

not miss the Fifa timeline that starts from 1863 to 2022 displayed alongside a 13-metre-long wall with interesting images, information, and memorabilia. You then continue to 'The Foundations', a space dedicated to an interesting display of the history of the sport. This is where you can see Fifa referee badges from 1954, 1986 and 2004. Interestingly, the Fifa referees are continually assessed and only the best are appointed for the World Cup matches. When you are here do not miss the whistle used by Abraham Klein (ISR) in the World Cup of 1970 and 1978, when matches were first controlled by a single official instead of a pair of and a referee's pocket watch with a 45-minute dial dating back to 1950. The tall glass showcases have neat handwritten notes of match reports too. A screen with a world map allows you to tap on any country and see details of its football journey including names of officials, international matches played, drawn won and lost. You can also see the cap awarded to Billy Meredith from Wales in 1895 as well as the Fifa handwritten logbook of international matches, Switzerland 1932-42 on display. I also learnt that the first international match was played between Scotland and England in 1872. Sporting history buffs will love the panels that have several snippets of information written in four languages for all exhibits. For instance, from 1908, only associations affiliated to Fifa were allowed to enter Olympic football tournaments. Fifa recognises the winners of the five Olympic football tournaments before 1930 as amateur world champions.

Pulsating World Cup

The Fifa World Cup Gallery is the largest section here that is really where you can see everything about the Fifa World Cup as well as the Fifa Women's World Cup. For instance, did you know that the original World Cup trophy was created by the French sculptor Abel Lafleur in 1930? Its base was replaced by a larger one after the 1954 finals and the trophy was given to Brazil in 1970 after the Third World Cup but was stolen in 1983. The dimly lit space comes



alive on the walls that have bright coloured panels dedicated to world cup winners arranged in a chronological order. Each showcase has information panels as well as objects associated with the game in that year. Look for Pele's tracksuit from the 1958 finals or

Uruguay's shirt from the first finals – each one has something different. Incidentally, Fifa organises tournaments for men and women at senior and youth level as well as football, beach soccer and interactive competitions. The Fifa World Cup winner's trophy is also on



display at the museum. There are also interesting displays of the mascots for each of these World Cup games. The 'Wall of Champions' lists the head coach and team as well as the winner's country name along with some signatures of the players.

Future perfect

The museum has a display of medals, mascots and a must see is a collection of moments from a final converted to a short film aptly called *Finale* that is screened in the cinema here. As you take the lift to the next level, do not miss the galaxy of handmade footballs from around the world made by football lovers from fabric, plastic bags, and even banana leaves that look quite arty. From postage stamps to antique accessories and lucky charms to children's games, there is more than you can imagine. The library has a unique collection of 7,500 documents some of which date back to 110 years and apart from printed works you can also find an electronic database here. Keeping in tune with the times, Fifa launched the Fifa Interactive World Cup in 2004 adding e-

A) The exterior facade of the Fifa Museum; B) 3D views of a game; C) Fifa Men's World Cup Trophy; D) 'The Rainbow' that displays the team jerseys; E) World Cup Gallery showcasing Brasil 2014

football to its official tournaments. As you wind up, try your skills with the ball at the 'Pinball' arena. And the best souvenir you can take away? Well use the virtual mirror and follow the instructions to step into the game and celebrate a world with the stars. Check your email inbox later for your photo. So, as you get ready for Fifa 2022, you know everything about the spirit of the world's most loved sport.

For more details you can log on to www.fifamuseum.com. **W**
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