

HANDLING PARTICIPANT TRAVEL AND TRANSFERS

Holding a conference or a corporate event means bringing many participants together in one place at one time. The organiser must attend to participants' travel arrangements and oversee all or some of their transfers during the event. Even if the participants take care of their own transport or if a travel agency has been sub-contracted, the organiser's role is crucial.

PARTICIPANT TRAVEL, BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

A) Logistics:

Before deciding on a final location for your conference, check, if possible, air and rail connections: destinations served, frequency, passenger capacity of medium- and large-sized aircraft, standard or double length high speed (TGV) trains and compare this information with the expected number of participants and where they are travelling from. All participants should be able to arrive at the conference or depart from the conference on the same day. If not, additional flights or trains will have to be arranged (with all the risks that arranging such charters involves).

On the first day of the conference, schedule the opening session for late morning so that participants do not have to arrive the evening before and pay an additional night's accommodation. On the final day, end proceedings early enough to allow participants to take cars, flights and trains and thus arrive at home the same evening.

B) Fares:

In the competitive transport market, transport operators are very aware of the additional custom generated by conferences and their participants. If you make a request to the carriers, special fares can perhaps be offered to participants. You must provide the carriers with the name of the event, the location, date and an expected number of participants.

Rail fares:

France's national railway company, the SNCF, offers discount fares for conference participants, for both first and second passenger classes. You must apply for authorisation from:

**SNCF Service Congrès,
Immeuble Lumière, 46 avenue des Terroirs de France,**

75611 Paris Cedex 11

Ph: (++ 33) (0)1 5723 6105

The SNCF will then print discount slips with the name of the conference on them. This service costs 0.45 euros for 50 to 300 discount slips and then 0.15 apiece for any additional slips. The participants present this slip at the station or travel agency when getting their tickets issued. The discounted fare is valid for a 15 day period which must include the date of the conference.

Air fares:

Once your application has been received, an authorisation number will be issued, which must then appear on the conference programme with the initials or logo of the company. By presenting this document at their chosen travel agencies, participants will be eligible for a discounted fare.

Air France:

“Tempo Congrès 1” with a 30% discount for class K reservations or “Tempo Congrès 2” with a 50% discount for class M reservations throughout France. On every Air France flight there is a limited number of class M or class K seats available.

It is important, therefore, that participants make their reservations as early as possible to be eligible for these discounted fares.

For national conferences of more than 1000 people, these discounted fares are applicable and valid for 48 hours before the opening and after the closing of the event. You must contact Air France two months in advance.

Contact: Air France service congrès – tel: (++ 33) (0)1 5693 7456
e-mail : servicecongres@airfrance.fr

For international conferences of more than 200 people, Air France’s international division may offer a partnership after examining the number of participants and routes taken to visit France. The partnership will offer preferential fares and assistance for publicising the conference overseas.

WELCOMING THE PARTICIPANTS

The participant’s first impressions upon arrival at the conference location are important. Consider arranging a conference meet-and-greet service.

A) At the airport

- A welcome stand for the arrival of each flight, staffed by an airport hostess or a conference hostess.

The airport will usually charge for the use of the site. Another service that you can request is to have a welcome announcement in several languages made over the loudspeakers in the arrival hall.

- Shuttle buses to take participants directly to the convention centre or hotels (shuttles can be either free or paid for by participants).

- Taxis reserved for the participants

Negotiate a discount fare beforehand.

- Rental cars at preferential rates.

Contact: Avis (George Larrive – Tel: (+33) (0)1 4906 6806), fax: (0)1 477809898; Europcar (Tel: (0)1 3044 93), Hertz (Tel: 0825 030 040)

In some cases, as a business provider, you have the leverage to negotiate the use of free vehicles during the conference for welcoming your guest speakers, your VIPs...

B) At the station

- A welcome stand with a conference hostess.

- A welcome banner to greet the participants.

- A special announcement made as the trains arrive.

Sometimes a welcome announcement can be made in the trains, before they arrive at the station. Authorisation from station officials for this service must be requested long in advance.

- Shuttle buses to hotels or convention centre.

TRANSFERS FOR PARTICIPANTS DURING THE CONFERENCE

Links between hotels and convention centre

Shuttles: depending on the number of people and the distances between the hotels and the convention centre, shuttles may be required in the mornings and evenings. Ask the coach operator to design a shuttle run in accordance with the start and finish times for conference sessions, the timetable for which can be posted up in each of the hotels.

Financing the shuttle service can be undertaken by sponsors or paid for by the participants (price included in hotel reservation charges).

Public transport “pass”. In some cities, a “pass” can be purchased, allowing the user unlimited use of public transport throughout the event (negating, in some cases, the need for shuttles).

Transfers for gala evenings, cocktail evening at the Town Hall, sightseeing tours: hiring coaches.

Request time estimates that take into account all the usual traffic congestion for given times and days, the time needed for all passengers to board the coach... Negotiate an overall package with the coach operator, including all the services you require: shuttles for airport, station, hotels, sightseeing tour coaches, soirées.... Opt for coaches equipped with RT communication links if possible.

For soirées held in the town centre, arrange a temporary taxi stand (one driver calls his colleagues depending on the need for further taxis). The participants will appreciate having taxis available at the end of the evening.

For any problems relating to travel and transfers, don't hesitate to contact the convention centre team. They know the lie of the land, what the participants expect, the service providers and the best solutions for your budget. Provide the welcome committee hostesses with all the flight and train arrival timetables, as well as useful contact telephone numbers in case reservations need changing.

Remember

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Your participants can enjoy discounted fares.
But you must contact the companies long in advance.

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Welcoming the participants.
Participants can be welcomed upon arrival at the airport or at the station.

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Throughout your event, make all transport easy for the participants.