

THA Creates a Transformative Senegal Experience

Crystal Winner: THA Group, Brussels, Belgium

Client: AXA Insurance

Program: AXA Senegal 2008



Each year, AXA Insurance holds a travel incentive trip. The trip is a chance for AXA to bring together 1200 of its independent brokers and dealers and share key messages about the future direction of the business. As independent brokers are targeted by many competing insurance companies, AXA wanted a different, appealing location that would engage its Belgium brokers and ensure that it hit its broker and loyalty targets. AXA turned to THA Group Belgium to find such a destination and to plan an exclusive experience.

After much strategizing, THA chose Senegal as the location for the trip. Holding the event in Senegal allowed THA to create a trip unlike anything the brokers had seen before. However, organizing the event in a third-world country also presented many logistical challenges. THA needed to combine an authentic Senegalese experience with the luxury that an incentive trip necessitates.

From the outset, THA provided superlative organization and logistics to manage the challenges of the destination. It minimized cultural differences by briefing both locals and participants so that both parties knew what to expect. Local people were included in the planning process from early on, and Senegal staff members and chefs were extensively trained. For example, after a first tasting, the chef received special training; THA then organized a second tasting to ensure that its high standards were being met. THA also made accommodations for language differences. It organized the attendees into two groups: one French-speaking and one Dutch-speaking, providing appropriate staff for each.

Throughout the entire event, THA blended Senegal culture and traditions with a luxury environment. AXA attendees used local transportation, enjoyed local dishes and traveled

to many Senegal landmarks. The group visited the spectacular Lac Rose. At the lake, some of the attendees went quad driving, while others participated in Djembe drum playing, sand painting and traditional Senegalese board games. Guests went to Goree Island; their private tour of the slavery museum included an emotional gospel performance by 20 singers. Another upscale event with Senegalese character was the gala dinner. The event was staged in middle of the Bandia Reserve, in the shade of a baobab tree. Percussionists emerging from the bush welcomed the guests to dinner, and they enjoyed a performance by a local acrobatic troupe. That entertainment was followed by an exclusive Senegalese fashion show, which showcased the designs of the renowned designer Oumou Sy.

THA also prepared a community outreach component. It created the Incentives4Humanity project as part of the overall experience, with the goal of interacting with and helping the local community. AXA sponsored the purchase of school equipment for Senegalese villages, and the participants visited these villages to connect with the local people. The group was driven out to the remote villages, where they were welcomed by the chief, took a tour of both the community and the school and watched performances by the villagers. Individual AXA brokers were also encouraged to bring appropriate materials, such as writing instruments, paper and clothes, to donate on their own.

THA designed a travel program that allowed AXA to fully experience Senegalese culture and develop a genuine connection with the local people. The trip was an incentive, but it was also a wonderful immersion into a culture unlike the participants' own. The destination was decidedly original and engaging, exactly as requested. THA also helped AXA achieve its other objective: loyalty and broker targets increased both in volume and sales of services. Through a magnificent choice of destination and logistical excellence, THA created an experience that the client declared the best program ever. ●

