

Hotel outlook for the FIFA World Cup 2026, from Amex GBT Consulting

As we approach one of the world's largest global sports events, we want to provide some context on how this event is shaping hotel rates and share practical guidance for travel program owners.

Following the considerable rate increases and occupancy spikes during the 2022 World Cup, North American hoteliers anticipated similar demand patterns for 2026. Factoring in historical mega-event performance, macro trends, and the consumer outlook, we forecasted, back in September 2025, hotel rates in US host cities to grow nearly twice as much as non-host cities (3% vs 1.7%)[1]. Toward the end of 2025, predictions emerged for foreign visitors ranging from one million to six million, with the tournament comparable to roughly ten Super Bowls compressed into six weeks[2].

Changing sentiment and demand not fully realized

In January 2026, Tourism Economics[3] reported that North America inbound travel continued to decline due to negative international sentiment, coupled with rising airfares and cost-of-living pressures.

Following the draw, host cities experienced drastically different rate increases. According to data firm Lighthouse, Guadalajara saw prices increase 385%, while Atlanta saw rates grow just 1.7%[4]. Since then, reports show thousands of hotel bookings in host cities, including 2,000 in Philadelphia, being cancelled. Occupancy on the books currently falls short at 20-40% of expected levels, according to CoStar[5].

How did average weighted rates increase in host cities during the 2026 sourcing season?

Host city	Year-over-Year (YOY) contracted rate change
Global average	**+1.3%**
Atlanta	1.0%
Boston	1.4%
Dallas	1.2%
Guadalajara	4.1%
Houston	1.4%
Kansas City	0.9%
Los Angeles	0.3%
Mexico City	3.9%
Miami	2.9%
Monterrey	2.2%
New York	3.0%
Philadelphia	1.2%
San Francisco	1.0%
Seattle	3.0%
Toronto	4.8%
Vancouver	4.4%

Source: American Express Global Business Travel internal reporting data, May 2026.

Key considerations

There's no doubt the FIFA World Cup will be a major sporting and cultural event this summer. However, current demand is tracking lower than initially expected. Now is the time to reconnect with your suppliers about room inventory, rates, and blackout dates.

Some other things to consider as we count down to the June 11 kick-off:

- Despite current reports showing lower hotel booking uptake, history tells us something important: 70% of previous World Cup accommodations were booked within 30 days of matches[6]. The outlook will remain fluid for some time.
- Fringe dates may not see the occupancy levels expected in late 2025. However, match days themselves, particularly for teams with large fan bases, will likely see considerable demand.
- As with any sporting or cultural event, demand uptake is dynamic and requires close monitoring. Your most important priority is ensuring you've effectively communicated any travel policy changes to your travelers and that they stay informed.

References:

1 American Express Global Business Travel, September 2025. Hotel Monitor 2026.

2 Tourist Economics, November 2025. North American Cities on the Front Foot for 2026 FIFA World Cup™.

3 Tourist Economics, January 2026. US Inbound Travel's Continued Decline Amid Sentiment Challenges.

4 Hospitality Net, January 2026. FIFA World Cup 2026 hotel prices: Data analysis of the post-draw surge and game day spikes.

5 CoStar, April 2026. Delayed hotel bookings, tough draws define World Cup lead-up in Mexico and Canada.

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