



VERY IMPORTANT CARGO

One German company will move anything GCC nationals want to and from Munich, including the kitchen sink, reports Kathryn Semcow

Many of us have experienced the pain of paying excess baggage fees after too much shopping on vacation, but imagine bringing 50, 500, even 800 kilogrammes worth of cargo home from a trip. This happens more often than you would think, according to Viktor Fuchs.

Fuchs is one half of the Gross Fuchs company, which specialises in cargo for GCC VIPs and royal families travelling to Munich. "Munich is a very popular tourist destination for GCC nationals," he explains.

In fact, Gross Fuchs has a database of over 3,000 wealthy customers and manages between 1,000 and 1,500 shipments a year.

And Gross Fuchs is, of course, shipping only the finest of goods. "Armani suits, Rolex watches, anything you can dream of," says Fuchs.

He says his company even ships goods from the GCC to Munich to make their clients' stays just perfect. "Some VIPs, especially the royal families, will install their own kitchen where they are staying," he explains. "They import their own cooks, and they import their own fish and meat on a daily basis. They want this food prepared not in a European kitchen, but in an Arab kitchen."

ON THE SIDE:

In addition to its own forwarding business, Gross Fuchs sets up international logistics networks for mid-sized forwarding agents. Smaller companies need to work together in order to compete with global players such as DHL and Shenker, says Fuchs. "We are only local heroes."

The first network, Air & Ocean Partners (AOP), is full with 196 members in 83 countries, and Gross Fuchs is now concentrating on expanding its latest network C5C (Connecting 5 Continents). It has also developed the Project Partners network for forwarders specialising in charters or airfreight of heavy or oversized cargo.

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Viktor Fuchs

He says some customers even go as far as installing such a kitchen in a hotel. "That doesn't happen that often, of course," he adds. "That's really extraordinary."

Fuchs says his company is the only one in Germany that processes the tourist tax refund with cargo transportation. The VIP can show up to the Gross Fuchs office at the airport with his or her cargo, and GF will process the tax refund documents; or the customer can pay a little extra for Gross Fuchs to come to his hotel.

"Clients can call us on a Monday evening and say, 'I have 10 cartons to be shipped back to Riyadh,' and we will pass by either on the same evening or next morning. We pick up the cartons, pick up all the documents for the tax refund, and then in the evening we come back to the hotel, give the client the cargo airway bills and a nice envelope with the money from their refund in it," says Fuchs.

"We are the only company in Germany combining the tax refund with cargo transportation."

Fuchs says one challenge of the business is explaining to the customer the difference between suitcase transportation and cargo transportation. "When you go on vacation, you're used to the suitcase going with you on the plane. In cargo, however, the airline has no problem changing the booking. 'If it doesn't go on today's flight to Doha, we'll send it tomorrow,' they say. This is sometimes not comprehensible to a tourist."

And he has to urge his staff to be culturally sensitive. "It is impossible to send a female truck driver to pick up the cargo of an Arab family," he says, for example. "You simply cannot do it."

"The picture of our company is a very Arabic one. I think we are one of the few German companies considering the dates of Ramadan for organising the holidays of our staff."

He says he has a particular penchant for the Middle East. "I've read the Quran several times. I have dozens of history books about the Middle East. I appreciate the culture very much." 🌞