

**MIKE BEDINGFIELD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
TOURISM SOUTH EAST OPENS
EXCURSIONS GROUP TRAVEL SHOW
Saturday, 16 January 2010: Alexandra Palace, North London**

Mike Bedingfield, Chief Executive of Tourism South East officially opened the Excursions 2010 group travel show at Alexandra Palace, North London at 10.30am on Saturday, 16 January. After declaring the show 'open' he toured the stands and met visitors.

Previously Marketing Director at Visit Britain, Mr Bedingfield joined TSE on 1st June 2009. Delighted to have opened Excursions he said: "Excursions provides a superb opportunity to showcase some of the best tourism products from South East England and the rest of the UK to group organisers, ensuring they are aware of all the new opportunities available for group travel in 2010. Group travel is so important in our region, with nearly four million visitors travelling as part of an organised coach trip or tour in 2008. We were also very pleased to welcome some tourism attractions and hotels from mainland Europe at Excursions this year."

Over 200 Exhibitors

Excursions 2010 was well attended with around 250 attractions, destinations, accommodation providers and tour operators from around the UK showcasing new ideas for groups and coach parties. Several of the exhibitors were also offering overseas holidays.

The free entry show, which was organised by Tourism South East and Group Travel Organiser magazine, was supported by Visit London and East of England Tourism.

Excursions continues to be the premier one day event for group and coach party organisers seeking facts and figures about what's on offer for days out and short breaks. Visitors also include tourism guides, corporate social clubs, school and higher education teachers, youth organisations, language schools and in fact anyone who is involved in arranging away days and short breaks for groups.

20% First Time Exhibitors

Around twenty per cent of exhibitors took a stand at Excursions for the first time this year, all keen to inform group travel organisers about their latest developments. Among them were Poppy Travel, the official travel division of The Royal British Legion; Success Tours offering group packages to the new Bavarian Beer Festival in Kent and overseas; Visit Blackpool; Banham Zoo, Norfolk and London's Royal Opera House and the Houses of Parliament.

New Events, Anniversaries and Exhibitions

The majority of exhibitors highlighted something new at Excursions such as the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site in South East London, which will be opening the *Discover Greenwich* contemporary cultural centre at the Old Royal Naval College in the spring.

Savill Garden on the edge of Windsor Great Park, invited visitors to see its new rose garden opening in June, while details of the Beaulieu National Motor Museum's latest exhibition, *ProMotion* could be found on their stand. Opening in time for Easter, it will showcase vehicles used by companies to promote their products such as a giant pea on wheels.

Several Excursions exhibitors will be celebrating a special anniversary in 2010. Finchcocks Musical Museum at Goudhurst, Kent will be marking the 300th birthday of English composer Thomas Arne, who is best known for his composition of the patriotic *Rule Britannia*, and the 200th birthday of the great composer Chopin.

The Imperial War Museum will be continuing its year of events to mark the 70th anniversary of the day Britain declared war on Germany and the Second World War began, while two members of the Shropshire Star Attractions group will be celebrating anniversaries; it's the 40th birthday for the Severn Valley Railway and RAF Museum Cosford will be marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in September.

2010 is also set to be a busy time in Wiltshire as the county celebrates numerous anniversaries including 200 years since the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal; 175 years since the Great Western Railway was created by an Act of Parliament and 150 since the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum was founded.

On Stand Competitions

Several exhibitors organised on-stand competitions and draws; among them first time exhibitor Stoke by Nayland Resort, Suffolk offered a spa break for two. Bowens Group Travel ran a raffle for a voucher off a group holiday, Blue Funnel were offering ten free tickets on a cruise of choice and Ascot Racecourse ran a competition to win a day at the races for two in a private box. A competition organised by Tower Bridge offered one lucky winner the chance to raise Tower Bridge; accompanied by a member of their team they will be responsible for stopping traffic and lifting and lowering the bridge.

Food and drink samples were also on offer including Adnams Ales on the Thorpeness & Aldeburgh Hotels stand; tasty home grown apple juice from Hole Park Gardens; local Kent produce courtesy of Maidstone and a pork pie, cheese and ale tasting with Melton Promotions

Various costumed characters made appearances such as Elizabeth I on the Compton Verney stand and a Dickensian look alike from Dickens World while the Imperial War Museum brought along a second World War pilot and Cuba the crocodile could be found with Paignton Zoo.

Free Coach Travel

Independent visitors from outside London attending Excursions were kindly offered free coach travel by members of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK's CoachMarque quality scheme. There were seven coaches with departures from over

twenty major towns plus six central London main line railway stations each carrying a Blue Badge Guide to provide interesting facts on the journey.

For visitors making their own way to Excursions by train, there was a free shuttle service provided by Anderson Travel running from Alexandra Palace main line and Wood Green Underground stations to the exhibition venue.

This year the central demonstration area featured a large screen with presentation material from various exhibitors enabling visitors to have a preview of what's on offer. While watching the video clips, they could enjoy a refreshing cup of tea by courtesy of London Cuppa.

Sample Local Beer from Kent and Wine from Surrey

Media visiting the press office at Excursions 2010 were able to sample the delights of locally brewed beer by courtesy of Shepherd Neame of Faversham, Kent (stand SE08) and English wine from Denbies Wine Estate, Surrey (stand SE69).

For further details visit www.excursions.org.uk. Excursions 2011 will be held at Alexandra Palace on Saturday, 15th January.

- Ends -

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