

**WHAT'S NEW FOR GROUPS AT EXCURSIONS 2010
ALEXANDRA PALACE, NORTH LONDON,
SATURDAY 16 JANUARY**

Over 250 attractions, destinations, accommodation providers, tour operators and theatre agencies from around the UK will be showcasing what's new for groups and coach parties at the Excursions 2010 group travel show to be held at Alexandra Palace, North London on Saturday, 16 January (10.30am - 4pm).

Excursions continues to be the top event for coach party organisers seeking ideas for days out and short breaks. Many exhibitors will be taking a stand for the first time in 2010 and several will be offering overseas holidays including tours, cruises and hotels for larger parties. There will also be some exhibitors from mainland Europe.

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

Coach Operators Invited to Bring Clients

Coach and tour operators are invited to treat their key clients for a great day out at Excursions 2010 to encourage further group bookings. Familiarisation trips to attractions enroute and accommodation can also probably be arranged, provided the show organisers have sufficient notice.

Feedback has shown that coach operators who expose their clients to the wide selection of attractions and destinations exhibiting at the show receive a surprising amount of new business as a result. Keith Payne from Anderson Travel, who has brought several coach parties to Excursions, said: "I have been doing the exhibition for many years and find it extremely beneficial. I have received excellent feedback from my clients and it's generated a lot of business for the upcoming year."

On arrival at Excursions everyone in a coach party will receive a VIP welcome with complimentary tea from London Cuppa. To register interest in bringing a party to Excursions call the group travel team at Tourism South East on 023 8062 5409 or email edavis@tourismse.com. Details can also be found on www.excursions.org.uk.

Free Coach Travel

Visitors from outside London attending Excursions 2010 are kindly being offered free coach travel by members of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK's Coach Marque quality scheme. There will be seven coaches with departures from twenty-two major towns plus six central London main line railway stations.

Following five very successful years working in partnership with Coach Marque members, the Excursions organisers have been able to use their past experience in running this service to ensure the towns and pick up points are of optimum value and convenience to group travel organisers visiting the show. As a result routes now include pick-ups at train stations to integrate road and rail travel. Coaches will plan to arrive at Excursions around 11.30am with departures for the homeward journey at 3.30pm.

Although the coach travel is free, it is essential to pre-book a seat. Full details of pick-up points and the timetable can be found on the show website, www.excursions.org.uk, where it's also possible to book a place by email. Alternatively a seat can be booked by calling 0845 226 7542. Each vehicle will also carry a Blue Badge Guide to provide interesting facts on the journey.

For visitors making their own way to Excursions by train, there will be a free shuttle service provided by Anderson Travel running from Alexandra Palace main line and Wood Green Underground stations to the exhibition venue. Members of the exhibition team will be at both stations to direct visitors to the coaches; they will be easily recognisable with their 'Excursions' signs.

What's New for 2010

A large number of exhibitors at Excursions are introducing something new.

The Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site in south east London has some exciting developments planned for completion during spring 2010 with the opening of the new *Discover Greenwich* contemporary cultural centre at the Old Royal Naval College and the reconstruction of the former brewery in the Royal Hospital. *Discover Greenwich* will use state of the art interpretation including artefacts, artwork, film and stories of lives past and present to explore the significance of the Old Royal Naval College and Maritime Greenwich to London and British culture. A revamped Tourist Information Centre is an integral part of *Discover Greenwich* (www.greenwichwhs.org.uk).

Set within the Royal Landscape on the edge of Windsor Great Park, Savill Garden will be opening a contemporary new rose garden from June. And from January 2010, groups can combine a garden visit with a 2.5 hour boat trip on the Thames with French Brothers taking in the historic sites of Windsor Castle and Runnymede (www.theroyallandscape.co.uk, www.frenchbrothers.co.uk, www.windsor.gov.uk).

Thorpeness & Aldeburgh Hotels, Suffolk have now completed refurbishment of the half-timbered Swan Hotel at Lavenham and are about to start at extensive upgrade of the Brudenell in Aldeburgh, which will then re-open at four-star level during the spring (www.aldeburgh-breaks.co.uk).

The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu is opening a new exhibition from Easter 2010. *ProMotion* will showcase a variety of vehicles that illustrate the imaginative and fun techniques companies have used to promote their products over the years such as a giant pea on wheels (www.beaulieu.co.uk).

Simply Groups are offering three superb new cruises in association with Croisi Europe, the award winning European river cruise specialists. These include Croatia and Montenegro; Paris to Honfleur and Avignon, and the Camargue (www.simplygroups.co.uk). Stuart Line Cruises has joined with Powderham Castle in South Devon enabling groups to enjoy a castle tour and cruise on the River Exe for just £10 per person (www.stuartlinecruises.co.uk).

Airedale Tours, who have been exhibiting at Excursions for several years, specialise in tailor-made group holidays on the continent and in the UK enabling group organisers to provide a unique itinerary of destinations and excursions for their party. They will have several new brochures available at the show including Worldwide Holidays by Air 2010, which includes tours to Europe and long haul destinations, and a mini-brochure with short breaks to historic market and county towns in the UK, plus Christmas themed breaks for 2010 (www.airedaletours.co.uk).

Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum has been undergoing significant changes which include the digitalisation of its collections. The latest programme soon to be made available to the public is the *What's in Store* concept, which will allow visitors a glimpse into the museum's hidden treasures using touchscreen technology. In addition 2010 will see the launch of tennis wear designer Ted Tinling's exhibit celebrating the fashion designer's accomplishments. The Championships Showcase also now includes the kit used by Roger Federer during his historic victory over Andy Roddick in the Wimbledon 2009 finals and outfits donated by the Williams sisters allowing visitors to view Serena's Nike Mirabella Naxair shoes and Venus's '11' brand dress along with other pieces and accessories worn during their 2009 battle (www.wimbledon.org/museum).

The award winning art gallery in the heart of Warwickshire's countryside, Compton Verney, is introducing a new VIP 'super group' exhibition tour, which gives parties of 15 and over an exclusive one-hour tour with an expert guide. Ideal for groups wishing to get the most out of a short visit, or as a starting point for those with more time, it's an addition to the two existing 'super group' tours already on offer (www.comptonverney.org.uk).

First Time Exhibitors

Amongst the many first time exhibitors at Excursions 2010 is Poppy Travel; the official travel division of the Royal British Legion, they arrange journeys of remembrance to war cemeteries, memorials and battlefields. New destinations for 2010 include Canada, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Malta, Ireland and Vietnam (www.poppytravel.org.uk).

Success Tours is offering group packages with accommodation to the new Bavarian Beer Festival in Kent over the August Bank holiday weekend where visitors will be able to sample the finest beers, ciders and real ales from the UK and Europe along with bier-keller style entertainment. The tour operators also have two new trips to Dubrovnik and the Balkan States including excursions into Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina (www.successtours.com).

Also exhibiting for the first time is London's Royal Opera House, which is home to three world class performing companies, namely the Royal Ballet, the Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Coach tours are welcome for both performances and backstage tours, which give an exciting overview of the stunning building including the

historic front-of-house and the elegant Paul Hamlyn Hall as well as the huge backstage area. Visitors hear about the colourful history of the theatre, learn about the state of the art technology installed during its major redevelopment between 1997 and 1999 and take a look at aspects of current opera and ballet productions (www.roh.org.uk).

Britain's very popular beach resort, Blackpool, has unveiled its new, free coach passenger facilities in the heart of the town. The new coach drop-off and pick-up bays are just one of the many developments forming part of the town's wider regeneration programme (www.visitblackpool.com).

Other new exhibitors include the City of London, where the capital first began and much of its history is concentrated into just one square mile (www.visitthecity.co.uk); the Houses of Parliament (www.ticketmaster.co.uk/housesofparliament); the recently refurbished Stoke by Nayland Hotel, Golf & Spa resort on the Suffolk / Essex border (www.stokebynaylandclub.com) and Highclere Castle, near Newbury, Berkshire, which will be promoting its *Wonderful Things* Egyptology exhibition (www.highclerecastle.co.uk).

Returning to Excursions after several years' absence is the Science Museum. This time it has joined forces with several other venues from London's South Kensington area including the Royal Albert Hall; Victoria & Albert Museum and Natural History Museum. The latter will be introducing two new exhibitions, *Butterfly Explorers* and *The Deep* that explores the 'final frontier' – the deep sea (www.sciencemuseum.org.uk; www.royalalberthall.com; www.vam.ac.uk and www.nhm.ac.uk).

2010 Anniversaries

Several Excursions exhibitors will be celebrating a special anniversary in 2010.

Finchcocks Musical Museum at Goudhurst, Kent will be celebrating two anniversaries; the 300th birthday of English composer Thomas Arne (12 March 1710 – 5 March 1778) who is best known for his composition of the patriotic *Rule Britannia*, and the 200th birthday of the great composer Chopin (1 March 1810 – 17 October 1849) (www.finchcocks.co.uk).

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. Opening in London from February is a new exhibition, the *Ministry of Food*, which will examine the impact of the introduction of rationing on the production, distribution and consumption of food in Britain throughout the war, while during May there will be a series of events to highlight the day Churchill became Prime Minister. The September air show at the Imperial War Museum's Duxford site will be themed and named after the Battle of Britain to mark its use as an active airfield during the campaign (www.iwm.org.uk).

Two members of the Shropshire Star Attractions group will be celebrating anniversaries in 2010; 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. Both will have more details on their stand at Excursions 2010. It's also the first full season for the new, £12million developments at Blists Hill Victorian Town, one of the ten Ironbridge Gorge Museums, while Weston Park, the stately home on the Shropshire / Staffordshire border, will be promoting its Granary Shop and Gallery as a refreshment stop for coffee, cakes and sandwiches (www.shropshireforgroups.co.uk).

Next year is 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. The county will also be marking 200 years of Ancient Wiltshire and the life of Sir Richard Colt Hoare. An archaeologist, antiquarian and artist, he had a long history of being involved with Wiltshire's archaeological finds including being one of the first people to record excavations at Stonehenge in 1798 and 1810 (www.visitwiltshire.co.uk).

Historic Attractions

Kew Palace, which opens from Good Friday, 2 April, will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of George III's accession to the throne while from the spring, Kensington Place will be transformed into a new *Enchanted Palace* with a series of stunning installations of contemporary fashion inspired by royal dress and tradition (www.hrp.org.uk).

A new cultural venue and centre for world-class maritime collections is opening at the heart of the Historic Dockyard Chatham mid 2010. *No 1 Smithery* will be an exciting fusion of museum, heritage and culture where objects, artworks and a historic building come together to provide an inspiring and thought provoking mix located within one of the UK's leading maritime heritage sites (www.thedockyard.co.uk).

Canterbury is offering behind-the-scenes tours of the city's Cathedral. Groups can visit the stained glass studio, stone conservation shop, archives and library to see treasures and documents dating back to the 7th century and learn about the problems the cathedral's conservators experience (www.canterbury.co.uk).

International Exhibitors

European attractions taking a stand at Excursions include La Coupole in Pas-de-Calais, the gigantic underground blockhaus designed by the Nazis in 1943-44 to prepare the launch the V2 rockets (www.lacoupole-france.com), and the nearby Historial, Museum of the Great War (www.historial.org). Also exhibiting from mainland Europe is the Hotel Baeren, Germany (www.baeren-oh.de).

To Exhibit or Pre-Register as a Visitor

Organisations interested in exhibiting at Excursions 2010 should contact the following for details and a booking form:

- Tourism South East region – call Emma Davis on 023 8062 5409 or email edavis@tourismse.com
- Visit London area – call Louisa Myers on 020 7234 5821 or email lmyers@visitlondon.com
- East of England – call Stephen Rampley 01284 727 478 or email srampley@eet.org.uk.

- Organisations from all other areas – call Adrian Gates at Group Travel Organiser magazine on 0845 166 8125 or email adrian@grouptravelorganiser.com.

Visitors wishing to pre-register for free entry should call 023 8062 5409. Details can also be found on www.excursions.org.uk.

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For press enquiries and images please contact:

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November 2009

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