

Shakespeare's England members unite for Disabled Access Day

Shakespeare's England, the Destination Management Organisation for Warwickshire, has much to offer visitors to celebrate 'Disabled Access Day' which takes place from 10 - 12 March. Many of the region's attractions are united together in offering first class accessibility, special offers and plenty of opportunities for people to try something new, not just in March but throughout the year.

The **Royal Shakespeare Company** will offer its first British Sign Language tour of its brand new exhibition '*The Play's The Thing*'. The one-hour tour, available at 11am on Friday 10 March, will showcase the RSC's new exhibition which launched in October. Visitors can discover the secrets and stories behind the making of the RSC's world famous productions as well as enjoying rarely-seen props, exquisite costumes and original set designs.

Anyone using a wheelchair or mobility scooter can join **Stratford Town Walk** on 10 (11am), 11 (2pm) & 12 (11am & 2pm) March free of charge. The Town Walk is accessible and a great way to discover Stratford and its fascinating relationship with William Shakespeare. The tour passes the Shakespeare Town Houses, Theatres, River Avon, 15th century timber-framed buildings, Guild Chapel, Shakespeare's School and Holy Trinity Church. Hear fascinating stories of fire, flood, plague, old-fashioned sayings, medieval cures and history, wrapped up in a little Shakespeare. Duration is 2 hours approximately. Meet by the Swan Fountain on Waterside, near the main theatre and opposite Sheep Street.

Housed in a large greenhouse, landscaped with waterfalls, ponds and tropical plants, visitors can see hundreds of exotic butterflies fly from all over the world at **Stratford Butterfly Farm**. All areas of the display are fully accessible, with flat level pathways. To celebrate 'Disabled Access Day' disabled visitors will be entitled to discounted tickets, please see their website for admission details. Carers throughout the year are entitled to free entry. Onsite disabled toilets will be opening soon.

The **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** (SBT) has just been awarded a £24,000 grant to improve the visitor experience of its world-renowned collections and the five Shakespeare family homes for those with access needs. The grant, jointly funded through a partnership between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Wolfson Foundation, will enable the SBT to develop new audio resources to help blind and partially sighted visitors explore more of the content at its historic Shakespeare houses, and in its digital collections.

Transporting a group to a venue can be an expensive part of any organisation's trip, so the **British Motor Museum** have launched a Travel Support Fund aimed at helping groups in the community with the cost of coach/minibus transport. This has been made possible through the award of a grant by Arts Council England as part of the Council's 2015-2018 Museum Resilience Fund. The Museum is keen that groups of all ages and abilities have the opportunity to visit. Anyone visiting using the Travel Support Fund will also have the benefit of a Museum Officer to work with them which is included in the entry price.

Warwickshire Open Studios takes place from 17 June - 2 July and will see its artists open the doors of over 250 workshops, homes and other venues across Coventry and Warwickshire. Visitors will be welcomed free of charge to enjoy high quality art, pottery, paintings, glass, wood and more. This year the website and brochure will be more specific about the accessibility and ambience of each venue with clearer instructions as to who to contact in advance of a visit. The website will also enable visitors to filter venues helping them choose the ones to visit.

Shakespeare's Schoolroom & Guildhall provides all visitors with the opportunity to discover where Shakespeare was inspired to become the world's greatest playwright. During the £1.8 million restoration of Shakespeare's Schoolroom & Guildhall full access to the building, and in particular the Schoolroom, was made possible with the installation of a wheelchair accessible lift. There is level access throughout the building at ground and first floor level, with the exception of the first floor landing to the Victorian staircase. There is an induction loop in the ground floor reception area, the ground floor counting house and in Shakespeare's Schoolroom. Access to the first floor for ambulant disabled persons can be achieved via the Victorian staircase or the lift with assistance from staff or volunteers.

The **MAD (Mechanical Art & Design) Museum** houses interactive weird and wonderful motorised contraptions belonging to artists from all around the world. The whole museum is fully accessible; there is a lift in the entrance, disabled toilets and extra reading material if required. There are no restrictions with regards to interacting with the exhibits and all assistance dogs are welcome. Come and release your inner inventor at the UK's only mechanical art museum.

For more information on Shakespeare's England please visit
www.shakespeares-england.co.uk or call 01789 260 677

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Notes to editors

Shakespeare's England is the official destination management organisation for Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts. It is a public-private sector partnership representing the leading tourism businesses and organisations in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Royal Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and surrounding market towns and villages. For more information visit please visit <http://shakespeares-england.co.uk/about-us>

More information on Shakespeare's England can be found at www.shakespeares-england.co.uk www.facebook.com/ShakespearesEngland and Twitter [@ShakespearesEng](https://twitter.com/ShakespearesEng)

Please note all offers are subject to availability and T&C's.

For more information, interviews and photo opportunities please contact:

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