Discover **what’s new** in the East of England for 2008 - attractions, facilities, special anniversaries and accommodation.

---

**Bedfordshire**

**Bedford Museum and Cecil Higgins Art Gallery** [www.bedfordmuseum.org](http://www.bedfordmuseum.org)
Castle Lane, Bedford
Two historic buildings in the complex - which forms Bedford Museum and the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery are to be refurbished thanks to a £2.5 million award by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This will bring the ‘Bedford Gallery’ and ‘Hexagon’ building back into public use as part of the overall museum facilities. Additional spaces for exhibitions and corporate hospitality will be created, and storage conditions for the collections of the art gallery and museum will be improved. The Cecil Higgins Art Gallery is now closed, and is due to re-open in 2009. *Further information: +44 (0)1234 353323.*

**Bedford River Festival - 12 and 13 July 2008** [www.bedfordevents.co.uk](http://www.bedfordevents.co.uk)
One of the biggest free festivals in the UK, held on the banks of the River Great Ouse. Dragonboat and raft races, carnival parade, live entertainment, sports, music, fireworks, fun fair, trade and charity stands. The 2006 festival saw audiences of over 300,000. 2008 will be the 30th anniversary of the event - with special activities planned. *Further information: +44 (0)1234 227392.*

**Bodyflight** [www.bodyflight.co.uk](http://www.bodyflight.co.uk)
Twinwoods Business Park, Twinwoods Road, Clapham (nr. Bedford)
This indoor skydiving simulator will be opening a range of extra leisure facilities in March 2008, including a sauna, steam room and swimming pool. *Further information: +44 (0)845 200 2960.*

**Hilton Garden Inn (Luton North)** [www.stayhgi.com](http://www.stayhgi.com)
Butterfield, Hitchin Road, Luton
Scheduled to open in April 2008, the Hilton Garden Inn will feature 157 modern bedrooms, each with complimentary internet access, air conditioning and high definition televisions. Alongside this is the Pavilion Pantry (with snacks and drinks 24 hours a day), a fitness centre, 10 well-equipped meeting rooms and a business centre. *Further information: +44 (0)1582 435300.*

**Stockwood Discovery Centre** [www.luton.gov.uk](http://www.luton.gov.uk)
Farley Hill, Luton
A £6 million transformation of the former Stockwood Park Museum will open in July 2008. There will be new interactive displays about the history of the area; gardens to complement the current period ones - including sensory, world and medicinal; a Visitor Centre, shop and café; an outdoor children’s discovery centre; and new buildings to house ‘The Mossman Collection’ - the largest and most significant collection of carriages in the country. *Further information: +44 (0)1582 738714.*

**Whipsnade Zoo** [www.zsl.org/zsl-whipsnade-zoo](http://www.zsl.org/zsl-whipsnade-zoo)
Whipsnade (nr. Dunstable)
The new 4,000 square metre ‘Cheetah Rock’ will open at Easter 2008, costing in excess of £1 million. Complete with a rock lookout and watering holes, visitors will view the Cheetahs from an African-style hut, where floor to ceiling glass will be the only thing separating them from the animals.
Also opened in February 2008 is new indoor housing for the Asian Rhinos, complete with three heated pools. Visitors will have the chance to view the Rhino in their baths, as well as being able to spot them in their paddock from a new watch tower. The tower is modelled on those used in Asia to look out for Rhino in the wild. Buddhist prayer flags and colourful murals will complete this Asian experience. Finally ‘The Café on the Lake’ is undergoing a major £1.1 million redevelopment for Summer 2008 to provide more seating and improved kitchen facilities. Visitors will be able to eat whilst watching the zebra and ostrich feeding on the adjacent paddocks. Further information: +44 (0)1582 872171.

Wild Britain www.bedford-butterflies.co.uk
Renhold Road, Wilden (nr. Bedford)
On February 1 2008, Bedford Butterfly Park changed its name to Wild Britain. This is the start of a major investment programme, with the addition of several new attractions - including ‘Adventures of Urchin’ nature trail, a new puppet show and animal keeper’s talk. These sit alongside the existing tropical butterfly house, mini farm and adventure playground. Further information: +44 (0)1234 772770.

Cambridgeshire

Woburn Abbey www.woburnabbey.co.uk
The gardens at the Abbey were part of a grand design by Humphrey Repton (and other designers) in the early 19th C. Known as the Pleasure Grounds, the design was never completed. A plan is now underway to begin the restoration of key areas of the gardens, and to implement some other parts of Humphrey Repton’s original design. A series of interactive boards will explain the developments to visitors, such as Darwin’s Experimental Garden, the Rockery and Hornbeam Maze. Special guided tours of the garden are available to groups of six persons and above. Further information: +44 (0)1525 290333.

Octavia Hill Birthplace House www.octaviahillsbirthplacehouse.org.uk
1 South Brink Place, Wisbech
The building which was the early home of social reformer and National Trust co-founder Octavia Hill (1838-1912) is being renovated and expanded thanks to a £850,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant, and almost £100,000 from the European Regional Development Fund. Part of the money has been used to buy the freeholds of two buildings next to the museum. When it re-opens in March 2008, the house will include a Victorian Chamber of Horrors, a National Trust room, educational facilities and a community garden. Further information: +44 (0)1945 476358.

Cambridgeshire

Angelsey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill www.nationaltrust.org.uk/angelseyabbey
Lode (nr. Cambridge)
2008 sees the culmination of a major project to improve the visitor facilities at Angelsey. After more than two years of work, the site has a new structure of wood, steel and glass housing a restaurant (able to cater for 160 people), picnic area, function/education room, toilets and shop. Plate glass picture windows in the restaurant now reveal a magnificent vista of the garden. Further information: +44 (0)1223 810080.

The Grand Arcade www.grandarcade.co.uk
Cambridge
This exciting new development brings a 21st C. shopping experience to the historic city of Cambridge. The scheme comprises a new 265,000 square feet John Lewis department store over five floors, 52 further shops, two cafes and a restaurant. The Grand Arcade acts as an important link through to the Lion Yard shopping centre. John Lewis is now open, with the rest of the scheme scheduled for open at the end of March 2008. Further information: +44 (0)1223 353861.

The Old Bridge Hotel www.huntsbridge.com
1 High Street, Huntingdon
The hotel is currently re-landscaping its outside areas to include an ‘alfresco’ eating area. This work will be completed by summer 2008. A wine shop will also be opening at the hotel - this will sell many wines which are made in small quantities, and normally only available in restaurants. Further information: +44 (0)1480 424300.
Thriplow Daffodil Weekend – 12 and 13 April 2008 [www.thriplow.org.uk](http://www.thriplow.org.uk)
Thriplow (nr. Royston)
2008 will see the 40th anniversary of this popular annual event – which regularly attracts around 10,000 visitors. There will be massed displays of daffodils throughout the village, alongside private open gardens, heavy horses, Maypole dancing, steam engines and live music. The event raises thousands of pounds each year for charitable organisations. 

Further information: +44 (0)1763 208563.

Wysing Arts Centre [www.wysingartscentre.org](http://www.wysingartscentre.org)
Fox Road, Bourn (nr. Cambridge)
This visual arts centre has recently completed a £1.7 million building programme, which includes new purpose built artists’ studios, dedicated education facilities and a state-of-the-art New Media Suite for both artists and community use. A new reception building houses an improved café and refurbished gallery space. 

Further information: +44 (0)1954 718881.

Essex

Adventure Island [www.adventureisland.co.uk](http://www.adventureisland.co.uk)
Sunken Gardens, Western Esplanade, Southend-on-Sea
Opening in the summer, ‘Over the Hill’ is a new multi-sensory dark ride experience - combining animatronic models with CGI technology to thrill and scare you. Whilst in spring, the existing Gold Mine ride becomes home to the strange characters of ‘Devils Creek’ – an old family favourite with a new twist. 

Further information: +44 (0)1702 443400.

Audley End House and Gardens [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)
nr. Saffron Walden
This is one of England’s grandest stately homes. New for 2008 (opening in May) is the Service Wing, which is being furnished in Victorian period style. It will reveal what everyday life was life for servants at the great house. Visitors will be able to explore the laundries, scullery, dairy, meat and game larders - all vividly animated by sounds and film projections. 

Further information: +44 (0)1799 522399.

Colchester Zoo [www.colchester-zoo.co.uk](http://www.colchester-zoo.co.uk)
Stanway (nr. Colchester)
2008 will mark the 25th year since the Tropeano family took over the zoo in 1983. This will see a celebration of everything that has been achieved, and the huge investment that has taken place to make it the leading attraction that it is today. The park will also be celebrating 15 years of its conservation organisation ‘Action for the Wild’ - which is now a registered charity, and raises many thousands of pounds for projects all over the world. In summer 2008, a new ‘Orang-utan Enclosure’ will open costing in the region of £1,750,000. The whole area will be an exciting and interactive development - accessible via an underground tunnel from ‘Playa Patagonia’. The enclosure will have room for up to four Orang-utans, alongside Asian reptiles and fish. 

Further information: +44 (0)1206 331292.

The County Hotel [www.countyhotelgroup.co.uk](http://www.countyhotelgroup.co.uk)
Rainsford Hotel, Chelmsford
The hotel is undergoing a major refurbishment programme - exterior building renovations, new furniture, fabrics and a total upgrade of public and meeting areas with new equipment and Wi-fi. Seven new ‘Premium’ bedrooms of four star quality have been created. 

Further information: +44 (0)1245 455700.

Dunmow Flitch Trials – 12 July 2008 [www.dunmowflitchtrials.co.uk](http://www.dunmowflitchtrials.co.uk)
Great Dunmow
This ancient ceremony is held every four years in the town of Great Dunmow in Essex. It involves a mock court trial - where married couples (who may come from anywhere in the world) try to convince a judge, along with a jury of six maidens and six bachelors, that for a year and a day they have not wished themselves unmarried again. If successful they win a flitch - a salted side of pork, and are paraded through the town in the flitch chair. The ceremony reputedly dates back to 1104, when the Lord of the Manor and his wife dressed themselves as humble folk and went to beg the blessing of the local Prior - a year and a day after their marriage. So impressed by their devotion he gave them a flitch of bacon. The Lord then revealed his identity and gave his lands to the priory on the condition that the flitch should be given to any couple who could claim they were similarly devoted. 

Next trials on the 12 July 2008.
**firstsite**  [www.firstsite.uk.net](http://www.firstsite.uk.net)
High Street, Colchester
A new spectacular £16.5 million arts complex designed by Rafael Vinoly Architects. firstsite is for artists to express ideas, exhibit innovative, contemporary work and interact with visitors. People of all ages will be able to meet, learn and be inspired. Features will include a welcoming and exciting foyer exhibition space, world class presentation areas, a fully-equipped auditorium and the University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art. The construction of firstsite will be completed in spring 2008, and will open its doors in autumn 2008. *Further information: +44 (0)1206 577067.*

**Great Leighs Racecourse**  [www.greatleighs.com](http://www.greatleighs.com)
nr. Chelmsford
This racecourse - the UK’s first new one for 80 years is scheduled to open in March 2008. The floodlit all-weather track is expected to host about 80 days racing throughout the year. The grandstand close to the winning post and paddock areas is the most sophisticated of its type in the world. *Further information: +44 (0)1245 362412.*

**Maison Talbooth**  [www.maison-talbooth.co.uk](http://www.maison-talbooth.co.uk)
Stratford Road, Dedham (nr. Colchester)
This fine small country hotel is undergoing a major re-investment - due to open in April 2008. The new complex will include four new suites, a day spa (with three treatment rooms), tennis court, large swimming pool, outdoor hot tub and poolside dining room. *Further information: +44 (0)1206 322367.*

**Museum of Power**  [www.museumofpower.org.uk](http://www.museumofpower.org.uk)
Steam Pumping Station, Hatfield Road, Langford (nr. Maldon)
The museum has acquired two impressive aero engines for display in 2008 - one is a Rolls Royce ‘Griffon’, as fitted to later type Spitfires during World War II; the other is a 1940’s jet engine, the ‘de Havilland Ghost’, which was fitted to early Comet airliners. These two engines represent historically significant periods in aviation history, and will complement the power theme of the museum. Other changes for 2008 include the installation of a number of historic engines in the former boiler house, where it is intended to run them for the public on certain days. *Further information: +44 (0)1621 843183.*

**Natural History Museum**  [www.colchestermuseums.org.uk](http://www.colchestermuseums.org.uk)
All Saints’ Church, High Street, Colchester
The museum has been awarded £55,000 for new displays themed around local geology and climate, concentrating on the last 50 million years. The project is proposed as the next stage in a programme of phased re-display of the museum, which includes creating a Discovery Room, where visitors can enjoy a hands-on experience of the natural history collections. A projection screen, large suspended objects, a time-line and fossil wall will be key features. *Further information: +44 (0)1206 282927.*

**The Rose and Crown Hotel**  [www.bw-roseandcrownhotel.co.uk](http://www.bw-roseandcrownhotel.co.uk)
East Street, Colchester
The hotel is undergoing a refurbishment of 30 bedrooms - whilst in January 2008, the lounge bar was given a new-look along with a different restaurant menu. *Further information: +44 (0)1206 866677.*

**Travelodge: Chelmsford**  [www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk)
A new 81 bedroom Travelodge hotel is planned for the town of Chelmsford. The building will form part of a £8 million mixed development, which also includes residential apartments, a car park and retail/restaurant space. The scheme is scheduled for completion in early 2009.

**Hertfordshire**

**The Forge Museum**  [www.hertsmuseums.org.uk](http://www.hertsmuseums.org.uk)
High Street, Much Hadham
Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the museum is expanding its facilities throughout the main building, along with a new extension housing a café and learning space. The Elizabethan wall paintings and collection of items relating to the history of Much Hadham will be preserved and displayed. The museum is currently closed until late 2008. *Further information: +44 (0)1279 843301.*
Hatfield House  www.hatfield-house.co.uk
2008 will see Hatfield celebrating the 450th anniversary of Elizabeth I’s accession to the throne. The adjacent Old Palace was the childhood home of the ‘Virgin Queen’, and to mark the event there will be a series of special lectures about her life, Tudor politics and the era’s everyday people. Further information: +44 (0)1707 287010.

Shaw’s Corner  www.nationaltrust.org.uk/shawscorner
Ayot St. Lawrence (nr. Welwyn)
This was the former home of Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw for more than 40 years. 2008 will see the 70th anniversary of the presentation of an Oscar to Shaw in 1938, and the museum room will contain an exhibition about the occasion, and his connections to the film industry. The property will open next year from the 15 March to 2 November. Further information: +44 (0)1438 820307.

Norfolk

BeWILDerwood  www.bewilderwood.co.uk
Hoveton/Wroxham
This popular 50-acre wild and imaginative adventure park has several new additions for 2008. TODDLewood is a mini play area for the under 5’s, with their very own ‘Broken Bridge’ and zip wire. Whilst the new ‘Boggle Bank’ is the place to get the Boblett - the official BeWILDerwood currency which can be used in the park. There is also a ‘Completely WILD card’ - a season ticket valid for up to six people and offering unlimited visits during 2008. Further information: +44 (0)1603 783900.

Cromer Zoo
Hall Road, Cromer
A new zoo will be opening at the seaside town of Cromer (Norfolk) in around late May or early June 2008. It comes nearly 24 years after the last one shut. Around 400 animals will form the collection, including big cats, flamingos, toucans and crocodiles. The zoo is owned by Ken Sims, proprietor of the Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens (nr. Great Yarmouth, Norfolk). Further information: +44 (0)1493 369477.

Lynn Museum  www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk
Market Street, King’s Lynn
The museum is in the middle of a major £1.2 million re-development, mainly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Norfolk County Council. The building has been restored to its former glory, and a new entrance area constructed. The 4,000 year old (Bronze Age) timber circle of ‘Seahenge’ will go on display in spring 2008. This astonishing find was discovered and excavated at nearby Holme-next-the-Sea (nr. Hunstanton) in 1999. The site comprised an oval ring of timbers nearly 7 metres in diameter, formed from 55 oak posts that originally stood side by side around 2 metres high. At the centre of the ring was a massive upturned oak tree stump. Further information: +44 (0)1553 775001.

Merrivale Model Village  www.greatyarmouthmodelvillage.co.uk
Marine Parade, Great Yarmouth
One of Great Yarmouth’s best-loved attractions will see a new batch of models added for 2008, including High Street shops, a watermill, the ‘Lord Help Us’ Hall, a fire station and a zoo building. In 2007, Merrivale won ‘Attraction of the Year in Great Yarmouth’. Further information: +44 (0)1493 842097.

The Mo - Sheringham Museum  www.sheringhammuseum.co.uk
Gun Street/Promenade, Sheringham
In December 2006, Sheringham Museum was successful in its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a major grant to build a new museum. The old location, set in a series of fishermen’s cottages is now closed, whilst the museum’s new home (on the seafront) called ‘The Mo’ is now under construction. It will house interactive displays and artefacts, plus three of the town’s historic lifeboats. The museum is due to open in early 2009. Further information: +44 (0)1263 823464.
Norwich Cathedral  www.cathedral.org.uk
The final stage of an ambitious development at the cathedral is now underway. The new hostry will be constructed on the site of the original one which was demolished 500 years ago. It will incorporate the surviving arch and ancient walls uncovered during archaeological digs. An area near to the west door that is currently closed off to the public will eventually house the cathedral’s visitor and education centre, and complement the award-winning refectory in its look and materials. The work is due to be completed by April 2009. Further information: +44 (0)1603 218300.

St. John’s Cathedral  www.stjohncathedral.co.uk
Earlham Road, Norwich
The cathedral has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of just under £1 million towards an ambitious project to encourage more people to discover and enjoy the listed building. Work will be done to improve the visitor and educational facilities. The cathedral, designed by George Gilbert Scott Junior, was opened in 1910. Work should begin on site this year (2008) and be completed within twelve months. Further information: +44 (0)1603 624615.

Sandringham  www.sandringham-estate.co.uk
nr. King’s Lynn
The country retreat of H.M. The Queen will be holding an exhibition entitled ‘Laying his Majesty’s Table: the Housekeeper’s Heritage’ - running 22 March to 25 July and 3 August to 26 October. When the new housekeeper took over at Sandringham in Autumn 2006, she began working through cupboards and presses to make the first inventory for many years of the stocks of table linen stored all over the house - and she was amazed at some of the things that came to light. Sandringham was used by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra for entertaining shooting guests, local friends, neighbours, estate staff, Royal relations and visiting monarchs and courtiers. From cupboards and cabinets, domestic treasures have been unearthed which testify to the crowded schedules and abundant hospitality of the Edwardian era. On display will be priceless linen of matchless quality - set with services of china and glass, all showing the skill and artistry of weavers, painters and engravers of a bygone era. Other pieces uncovered by the housekeeper are reminders that Sandringham was also the centre of a short-lived but vital revival of flax-growing in Norfolk. Further information: +44 (0)1553 612908.

Titchwell Manor Hotel  www.titchwellmanor.com
Titchwell (nr. Brancaster)
The hotel offers a delightful fusion of modernity and traditional values with contemporary furnishings. 2008 will see the hotel undergo several refurbishments, including a new bar and sea-view dining area. It will also be the 20th anniversary of the hotel since the Snaith Family took over in August 1988. Further information: +44 (0)1485 210221.

Travelodge: Great Yarmouth  www.travelodge.co.uk
Sidegate Lane, Beach Park, Gorleston, nr. Great Yarmouth
A new 52 bedroom Travelodge has opened in this popular seaside resort. It represents a £2 million investment in the town. Further information: +44 (0)871 984 6366.

Suffolk

The Arc  www.arc-burystedmunds.com
Bury St. Edmunds
Opening in Spring 2009, this £100 million mixed-used development is set to rejuvenate the heart of the historic market town of Bury St. Edmunds. An open streetscape design will be surrounded by key retailers, including a Debenhams department store, plus 35 other shops (such as Top Shop, Waterstones and HMV). A new public square, a 500 seater public venue and 850 parking spaces complete the development.

Carters Ceramic Designs  www.cartersteapots.com
Debenham (nr. Stowmarket)
This ceramics studio has developed a reputation throughout the world for producing British designed and made unusual teapots. Established in 1978, Carters will celebrate their 30th anniversary in March 2008. Visitors can view the teapots being made and painted, plus have-a-go themselves with ‘Paint your Own’. There is also a tea shop, with home-made cakes and scones. Further information: +44 (0)1728 860475.
Coastal Voyager  www.coastalvoyager.co.uk
The Harbour, Southwold
The vessel has been completely re-fitted over the winter 2007/8, with two new engines that have lower emissions - hence a much quieter ride which is great for the wildlife based trips. There is also a new full day adventure called the “Wetter the Better”, involving a challenging dip in the ‘Triton’ where you get the full stormy treatment - wind, waves and a life raft. Don’t panic, its all under control in an indoor purpose built facility. You can also enjoy private hire of Coastal Voyager in ‘Drive of your Life’, and experience first-hand what being behind the wheel is like. Further information: +44 (0)7887 525082.

Kesgrave Hall  www.milsom-hotels.co.uk
Kesgrave (nr. Ipswich)
This Grade II listed Georgian mansion is being transformed into a new hotel and restaurant by ‘Milsom Hotels’. The group already owes hugely successful properties at Dedham and Harwich in Essex. This new site will incorporate a 100 seat bar/restaurant, meeting and private dining facilities, an outside drinking area and 15 bedrooms - all overlooking the 38 acres of park and woodland. The new hotel is set to open in April 2008, and represents an investment of about 4 million. Further information: +44 (0)1206 323150.

The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum  www.mslr.org.uk
Wetheringsett (nr. Stowmarket)
There are several new developments in 2008. A new trackside walk will be open on days when the steam train is not running. New undercover accommodation has been built for the museum’s restoration projects. In 1908, the first passenger train ran on the railway, and in September there will be a celebratory weekend. Further information: +44 (0)1449 766899.

West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village  www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/weststow.htm
Icklingham Road, West Stow, nr. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk
A new reconstructed Anglo-Saxon building, the ‘Farmers’ House’ will open in 2008. It replaces one which was destroyed by fire in February 2005. Further information: +44 (0)1284 728718.

Coming soon… (projects on the horizon)

Butterfly World (London Colney, nr. St. Albans, Hertfordshire) - includes the world’s biggest butterfly walk-through exhibition.  www.butterfly-world.org

Center Parcs (Warren Wood, nr. Woburn, Bedfordshire) - new holiday village will open in 2010. 700 forest lodges and a 75 bed hotel.  www.centerparcs.co.uk

Nirah (Bedford, Bedfordshire) - will promote understanding of the connection between freshwater and life, including a tropical biotope, water adventure park, hotels, plant/aquatic centre and spa.  www.nirah.org

Sn0asis (Ipswich, Suffolk) - winter sports experience, including world’s largest indoors ski slope.  www.snoasis.co.uk

Please note: No part of this information sheet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.