

Oct '08

Take the magic carpet to the new Wedgwood Museum

The Potteries is about to welcome a new landmark building and visitor attraction to Stoke-on-Trent – The Wedgwood Museum, at Barlaston.

Opening October 24th, the £10-million Museum will house the majority of the Wedgwood ceramic archive and art collection to create a new museum of international significance. Not since 1906 will so much of the archive have been out of storage and on view to tourists, scholars and visitors from around the world.

The first thing visitors to the company's headquarters in Barlaston will see is the striking new state-of-the-art building. After stepping through the glass doors, they will then be treated to an incredible eye-catching display of one of the world's finest collections of Wedgwood. Even for non-connoisseurs, the sight of so much world class ware in one location is likely to leave a lasting impression.

The displays are chronological, but with the idea of putting people at the centre. It has been the designers, craftsmen and 'fire' men over the years who have made Wedgwood into the company it is today, and this is being reflected in the evocative and futuristic galleries.

The ceramics themselves have also been reunited with the manuscripts in the new Museum...alongside an impressive photographic record of employees at the Etruria factory before the turn of the 19th century.

One of the highlights of the Museum – which is expected to attract 100,000 visitors a year - is the interactive "magic carpet ride", allowing visitors to "fly" around a computer generated copy of Wedgwood's first purpose built factory in Etruria!

The Museum also has its own education facilities, a reference library, specially built bottle ovens, and 18th century display areas. Special low level displays and items have been created for younger visitors – along with plenty of 'hands-on' opportunities.

Visitors will also be able to see 20 iconic items specially chosen for permanent display – including the world famous Portland Vase, and the First Day Vase made by Josiah Wedgwood himself to commemorate the building of his Etruria factory.

The Museum now complements the existing visitor facilities at Wedgwood, which include the Visitor Centre, various exhibitions, a factory tour, film theatre, retail areas, restaurant and Wedgwood Tea Room. Together, the site will offer "an enhanced opportunity for visitors to enter the world of this quintessential English brand".

The appearance of the Museum coincides with the build-up to the 250th anniversary, in 2009, of Wedgwood itself. Full details of the 2009 events programme will be unveiled early next year. But it is already known that special anniversary items will be produced by Wedgwood's master craftsmen, with exhibitions staged both at the home of Wedgwood in Barlaston at its award-winning Visitor Centre, and in its markets worldwide. For further information, visit www.visitstoke.co.uk.

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