



What is the Friendly Invasion?

‘The Friendly Invasion’ is a new tourism pilot project to encourage US visitors to visit East Anglia. The project will produce a set of bookable packages, tours, trails and itineraries. Developed during the Autumn of 2016, these products will be launched in February 2017.

East Anglia is one of several successful applicants to benefit from the £40m Discover England Fund, a central government funded program of activity, supported by match funding by partners in the public and private sectors.

Administered by Visit England, the Fund will see a program of activity to ensure England stays competitive in the rapidly growing global tourism industry, by offering world-class English tourism products to the right customers at the right time.

The Discover England Fund has made an award of £237,000 to ‘The Friendly Invasion’, which will in total amount to a £387,000 project. As well as bookable itineraries for US group travel operators to sell, ‘The Friendly Invasion’ will also include on-the-ground product development.

Visit East Anglia is leading the initiative, working with organisations including Visit Cambridge and Beyond, Visit Essex, Visit Norfolk, Visit Suffolk and Lincolnshire. Also involved are the Imperial War Museum Duxford, Madingley American Cemetery and Memorial, the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich and Eighth in the East.

Why now?

2017 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of American forces into the region in 1942. Evidence suggests that interest has increased among US tourists and the US memorial groups in particular in seeing for themselves ‘where Grandpa Joe was based in the second world war, and where Grandma Mabel came from’. Memorial group membership is high and the family trees of the 180,000 servicemen based in East Anglia are large. For example, through just one link, Duxford and 8th in the East, we have sourced a 30k+ database of potential visitors.

The Second World War American story is unique to East Anglia, and we believe that it has the potential to generate interest and international visits to Discover England, and that it can be interpreted to resonate with a domestic audience, for example the stories of the Americans bringing peanut butter, chewing gum, Coca Cola, swing and jazz and nylons to the country and their influence on our culture today.

Seventy-five years ago, the world came to East Anglia. In 2017, we'd like to welcome them back.

What are you doing?

This product is currently fragmented and disjointed. Key assets include the Imperial War Museum Duxford, Madingley American Cemetery and Memorial, 2nd Air Division Memorial Library, the East Anglian Film Archive and a wide range of museums at former air bases spread across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire.

This project will give the key assets and associated products a cohesive, over-arching umbrella product so that it can be promoted and sold to US visitors.

The packages, tours, trails and itineraries will also include the services, facilities and experiences that a US visitor requires on a visit to England, focusing particularly on heritage, historic links such as the Pilgrim fathers, food and drink and pastimes.

The Friendly Invasion product will be delivered through the development of a number of headline activities:

- A brand toolkit for 'The Friendly Invasion'
- The production of 3 itineraries
- The development of new working relationships with memorial societies
- a stakeholder event on 20 February 2016 at the IWM, Duxford.
- A familiarisation trip for the travel trade to the UK between 18 and 25 February 2016

The new product will be tested with outbound group travel and tour operators based in the US, as well as independent travellers.

How are you developing the product?

We have appointed an industry expert to develop a series of three, five and seven-day itineraries that will form the bookable packages. We are also developing a brand toolkit for the product, and working with an experienced copy writer to produce online and print marketing materials, to support the promotion of the packages.

What's more, we are working with local partners to develop and improve the content associated with this heritage, this includes photography and film, archive film, onsite interpretation and the development of digital resources, including heritage marketing and interpretation.

When will the product be launched?

The new Friendly Invasion product and associated itineraries will be launched at a major stakeholder event next year. This will take place at the prestigious Imperial War Museum, Duxford, on Monday 20 February 2017.

The date marks the very day that Brigadier General Ira C Eaker arrived to establish the US Army Air Forces in Britain. The date also falls on President's Day in 2017, a US Public Holiday.

The event will bring together key-note speakers, tourism, heritage and business partners from across the region, alongside US tour operators who will be visiting as part of the Familiarisation trip to the region.

Between now and 20 February 2017, the project team will be busy working with you to research and develop the itineraries, associated content development and promotional activities. However, the official launch of the product and marketing material, both online and in print, will be in late February 2017.

Before Christmas 2016 you will receive further information about the stakeholder event next year. You will also receive detailed information about how the itineraries are developing and how you can work with us to share these.

I'd like to be involved. How can I support you?

There are many ways you can get involved in this exciting project. The simplest way to help us is by sharing information about our work with your colleagues and partner organisations.

We are looking for companies who would be interested in partnering with us through a range of sponsorship opportunities. Through our stakeholder event in 2017 and publications, we can offer to you the opportunity to reach a comprehensive range of US, national and regional customers.

Please drop us a line if you would like to discuss sponsorship opportunities with us.

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Visit East Anglia Ltd

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