

PRESS RELEASE



ENGLAND'S GREAT WEST WAY® LIVES UP TO ITS NAME AND ACHIEVES SUCCESS IN ITS FIRST YEAR

England's Great West Way is celebrating its first anniversary following a successful 12 months since its official launch at World Travel Market 2018.

The Great West Way is a multimodal touring route between London and Bristol, based on one of the first 'Great Roads' commissioned by King Charles I, encompassing world-renowned sights, iconic destinations and the yet-to-be-discovered.

In the last year, the Great West Way has accomplished what it set out to achieve which was to establish and raise awareness of the route and attract international visitors. Beyond that, the Great West Way has been nominated for several awards as well as winning an award for the 'Development of Incoming Group Visitors to the UK' at the 2019 Group Travel Awards.

The Great West Way has secured a growing network of Ambassador organisations, including four title Ambassadors; Bristol Airport, The National Trust, Canal & River Trust, and Great Western Railway (GWR). In partnership with GWR, the Great West Way Discoverer pass launched in June, making it the UK's largest integrated rail and bus pass, supporting the Great West Way's multimodal ethos.

To date, 250 Ambassadors and 25 destinations have collaborated with the Great West Way with the likes of Blenheim Palace, Bristol's newest attraction The Wave and Camping and Caravanning Club, all joining the network within the last few weeks. Since April, businesses and destinations have committed to the Ambassador Network for a minimum of three years, a new business model which is the first-of-its-kind. In addition to this, more than 60 Official Tour Operators are committed to developing, marketing and distributing on-brand Great

West Way programmes, helping to sustain awareness of the route and contributing to the tourism economy. A range of industry events were held this year across the route which saw attendance from more than 1,500 participants, as well as a pilot series of Welcome and Experience Workshops which were attended by a further 291 participants.

David Andrews, Director of the Great West Way, said: "Gaining the support of this many varied partners, including Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), businesses, attractions, environmental organisations and public sector bodies from across the route, in such a short space of time, is a significant achievement and one we're very proud of.

"Official Tour Operators are reporting sales for the Netherlands, Germany and the USA, markets that we have been actively targeting this year, all adding to the route's success."

In March, a multi-channel digital campaign was launched which achieved a reach of more than 7.6million, including 74k website visitors, 200k website page views, and 4million social media reach.

The first annual Travel Trade Directory was produced, with the second edition launching this week to coincide with World Travel Market 2019. A Great West Way Travel Magazine was published in March for the purpose of educating and inspiring consumers and to showcase the Great West Way's many Ambassadors. The magazine had an initial print run of 100k and was distributed to 110 WHSmith High Street Stores and WHSmith Travel Outlets, more than 200 hotels, as well as several international airlines including British Airways, Lufthansa and Virgin Atlantic.

Another achievement was the launch of the Great West Way Rough Guide, available to purchase by consumers and the trade. The 'tell it like it is' guide provides practical information and honest and independent recommendations.

David Andrews added: "To be able to work with such an iconic travel publisher was fantastic. Great West Way Ambassadors have reported visitors using and referencing the Rough Guide, which is exciting to all those that have supported this project from the very beginning.

“The support we have received from VisitEngland and the Discover England Fund has been instrumental in the development of the route. We are thrilled with what has been accomplished in this first year and we are keen to continue our work and achieve more in 2020 and beyond.”

The forthcoming annual Great West Way Travel Trade Marketplace event is taking place on Friday 22 November at the Castle Hotel in Windsor offering an opportunity to meet with supplier businesses and destinations from all sectors including accommodation, food and drink, places to visit, among others. The event includes a private tour of Windsor Castle, a Networking Welcome Dinner, one-to-one meetings at the Workshop, plus Discovery Visits for buyers to explore the route for themselves, which will take place from 22-24 November. For more information, visit: www.GreatWestWay.co.uk/marketplace

Great West Way representatives will be at this year’s World Travel Market again this year on the UKInbound Stand at Pod 44, where a new Travel Trade Directory will be available.

For more information on the Great West Way, visit: www.GreatWestWay.co.uk

Note to editors:

Photo caption: (L-R) David Andrews, Director at Great West Way, Jon Chamberlain, Marketing Manager at Destination Bristol, Claire Margetts, Head of Ambassador Network, Fiona Errington, Marketing Manager, Florence Wallace, Head of Travel Trade, Andrew Stokes, England Director at VisitEngland, Lyndsey Turner Swift, Head of England Planning and Delivery at VisitEngland/VisitBritain, Peter Wragg, Chairman, and Holly Windsor, PR and Communications Manger.

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About the Great West Way

The Story of the Great West Way booklet is available at: www.GreatWestWay.co.uk/storyoftheGreatWestWay

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