

Edinburgh Zoo is popular!

As Scotland's second-most popular paid tourist attraction, [Edinburgh Zoo](#) offers another reason to visit in addition to the 1,000 animals on show, with the opening of a major new exhibition.

The only official Scottish venue for EXPO NOW – Expo 2010 Shanghai Photograph Exhibition Tour, the touring exhibition provides an insight into the massive international 2010 Shanghai World Expo – a showcase for international culture and a major attraction for Chinese and international visitors. Covering five square kilometers, Expo has received over 31 million visitors since it opened in at the end of April (averaging daily visitors of over 350,000 a day) with displays from over 240 countries. Edinburgh is the third stop for the exhibition showcasing this, which so far has only toured to two other venues in the UK (London and Manchester) and will end its brief tour in Liverpool.

Speaking at a special reception held on the eve of the exhibition opening to the public in the Zoo's Budongo Trail hosted by Chen Xiaodong, Minister of the People's Republic of China in Edinburgh and attended by Ms. Tan Xiutian, Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Edinburgh, David Windmill, Chief Executive of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the charity that owns Edinburgh Zoo, said:- "We are honoured to have been chosen to host such a prestigious exhibition. Scotland has a long history of cooperation and collaboration with China and here at Edinburgh Zoo we are keen to work closely with our Chinese colleagues on animal conservation and research including a proposal that could see giant pandas at Edinburgh Zoo in the future. The 2010 Shanghai World Expo is an unbelievable event and this exhibition really shows the enormity of what has been achieved."

Mike Cantlay, Chair of VisitScotland, said: "Edinburgh is now

firmly established as a world class tourism destination, and if we have learned anything from the economic downturn, it is that tourism has been a vital buffer for the capital and indeed for Scotland, helping to protect its economy.

“As Scotland’s second most visited attraction, Edinburgh Zoo is to be commended for leading the way in developing international links with China. Having recently returned from Shanghai on a fact-finding mission with VisitScotland, we’re also actively tapping into opportunities in what is one of the world’s largest and strongest economies. Increased investment in Edinburgh Zoo will bring additional visitors to Edinburgh and Scotland, as well as helping strengthen the city’s economy at a time when public sector investment is in short supply.”

The exhibition includes a display of stunning images, photos and videos of the Expo venues along with celebrations being held by the participating organizations. The exhibition is being organized in Scotland by the Consulate General of China in Edinburgh in partnership with ARUP Scotland. The exhibition is on show in Budongo Trail from 30 July until 16 August and is free entry with normal zoo admission.

Retail sales up

New figures show an increase in the volume and value of retail sales in Scotland.

The latest Retail Sales Index shows:

- * The volume of sales in Scotland grew by 2.7 per cent annually and increased by 0.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2010

- * The value of sales grew by 3.3 per cent over the year and

increased by 0.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2010

Finance Secretary John Swinney said:-“This retail sales data shows that an integral part of Scotland’s economy is performing well, supporting the fragile recovery which is underway. Despite financial pressures faced by many families in Scotland, it is encouraging to see improved consumer confidence and support for retailers.

“The Scottish Government’s Economic Recovery Plan is supporting some 15,000 jobs in Scotland. But the progress we have made is put at risk by the UK Government’s approach of cutting public spending too quickly and too deeply. This highlights the need for Scotland to be given the same macro-economic powers as other nations. Financial responsibility will allow us to build on improving conditions and take decisions which can sustain and nurture long-term sustainable growth in our economy.”

The Retail Sales Index for Scotland provides an indication of economic growth for around five per cent of the Scottish economy. This index constitutes a component series of the Scottish Quarterly GDP publication.

Record passes at Higher grade

A new record pass rate for Highers, at 74.6 per cent, has been achieved by Scottish students this year whilst the strong record of achievement in Standard Grades has been maintained.

More than 160,000 young people who sat Standard Grades, Highers and other qualifications this school year will receive their exam results by post on August 5th. Around 35,000 students also signed up for the MySQA service and received

their results via text message or e-mail the day before.

Everyone receiving results can access immediate support from the National Exam Results Helpline, run by Skills Development Scotland, which offers free advice on university and college places as well as employment and training opportunities. Additionally, SDS will provide ongoing support for those young people without a clear progression pathway for as long as is needed.

The Scottish Government has already provided record levels of funding for universities, made additional college places available for the forthcoming year and announced thousands of training and work opportunities as part of a £6.5 million package of support called Step Forward Scotland, for the increased number of young people expected to leave school or college this summer.

Speaking ahead of a visit to the SDS helpline contact centre, Education Secretary Michael Russell said:-“I’d like to convey my congratulations to students, teachers and parents for their success and high levels of attainment, which confirms the strengths of the Scottish education system.

“The arrival of exam results is an exciting but often daunting time in any young person’s life. The national exam helpline ensures every student has the right support regardless of their results.

“We know from the national headline figures that yet again Scottish students are achieving excellent results with the record Higher pass rate particularly standing out. However, many young people can be disappointed or nervous, either by not getting the results they were hoping for or not being sure of what the next steps are.

“The National Exam Helpline will be open until August 28 and has 80 advisers on hand to help. Advice and information on a whole range of options, including the thousands of extra

opportunities Education Secretary Michael Russell visits the Skills Development Scotland exam results helpline. He is pictured with call adviser Lyndsay Plews.available through our Step Forward Scotland campaign for summer leavers, will be available to callers.

“Congratulations again to students and thanks to parents, teachers and examiners. I wish the very best of luck to students, whatever they go on to do next.”

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Chief Executive Damien Yeates said:-“SDS is committed to providing the tools young people need to maximise their strengths. Making the right choices after their results arrive can be critical to achieving this. Our exam results helpline provides vital, expert advice at what can be an anxious time for young people and their parents.

“It may be that individuals have done better than expected or perhaps not got the grades they had anticipated. SDS will be working to ensure that every Scottish youngster is signposted towards a positive destination, whatever results they get. The helpline is there so they can discuss options available to them and can also provide parents with an understanding of the education system and give them an insight into how they can help their young people cope during what can be a stressful time.”

Easyjet expansion



Paul Simmons UK Regional General
Manager of Easyjet

Low-fares airline EasyJet has today announced it will launch another two brand new routes from Edinburgh later this year – to Cologne and Paphos.

Flights to Paphos, in the southwest of Cyprus, will be available from November 3 (running twice weekly, Wednesdays and Saturdays), with fares starting at £31.99 (one-way).

Meanwhile flights to Germany's oldest major city, Cologne, will run four times weekly from November 26 (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays) with prices starting at £25.99 (one-way).

Sophie Dekkers, UK Commercial Manager of easyJet, said: "Our priority remains low fares to the most convenient airports so we are delighted to offer an even wider range of destinations to Scottish holidaymakers with the introduction of the Cologne and Paphos routes.

"These are the latest in a number of new route launches from Edinburgh, taking our total number of routes up to 20 from this popular airport. The new additions are testament to our continued commitment to Edinburgh and to offering our passengers as wide a choice as possible."

In the last nine months alone easyJet has announced the introduction of flights from Edinburgh to Lyon, Lisbon and Basel. It also marked a major milestone in May when its 300millionth passenger was identified on a flight from Edinburgh to Geneva.

easyJet has expanded its services considerably since it began operating out of Edinburgh 14 years ago. In November 1995 easyJet operated just 19 flights out of Edinburgh – by comparison, just last month easyJet operated more than 700.

Kevin Brown, Managing Director of Edinburgh Airport, said: "easyJet is a key partner for Edinburgh Airport and we are working together closely to make sure we can offer passengers

the best choice of routes and quality of service that we can. The addition of these new routes by easyJet is a great fit for our strategy to grow our outbound links with sun destinations and strengthen our links with European cities, developing our inbound traffic.

“Today’s announcement is a boost to the Capital and will bring more visitors to Edinburgh over the coming years.”

Edinburgh Festivals Forum

Edinburgh’s Festival Forum is gearing up to host the second annual debate about the future of the city’s festivals next month.

The Forum, the high level commission set up to ensure Edinburgh retains its position as the world’s leading Festival City, will bring together festival directors, organisers, promoters, venue and accommodation providers, key public agencies, elected members, stakeholders and audiences for the Edinburgh Festivals Open Breakfast Debate on Saturday 14 August 2010.

This important event, to be held at Fringe Central at the University of Edinburgh’s Appleton Tower, will be chaired by BBC broadcast Kirsty Wark, with panellists including Councillor Steve Cardownie, Deputy Leader and Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh Council; Jonathan Mills, Artistic Director of the Edinburgh International Festival; Ron Hewitt, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Festivals Forum; Andrea Miller, Head of Factual at BBC Scotland; Andrew Dixon, Creative Scotland’s new Chief Executive; and Faith Liddell, Director of Festivals Edinburgh.

The focus of the event will be to debate the issues and opportunities facing our festivals and identify joint strategies to address these now and into the future.

Issues raised in the debate and solutions proposed will be recorded and reported back to the full Festivals Forum.

Councillor Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh, said: "Edinburgh enjoys international renown as the World's leading Festival City, with millions of people from across the globe flocking to Scotland's capital every year to experience the best in arts, sport, music and culture. We simply cannot afford to be complacent, though, as there are other cities hot on our heels. This open debate will bring together key organisations and individuals who play a critical role in sustaining Edinburgh's world-leading status. By taking such a positive and proactive approach, we will ensure we are best placed to tackle whatever challenges lie ahead and harness every opportunity to continue to grow and thrive."

Festivals Forum Chair, Susan Rice, said: "The Festivals Forum was established to lead the strategic development of Edinburgh's internationally renowned Festivals. Much of our work centres on the national and international issues affecting the Festivals or concerns the UK and Scottish agencies that support the Festivals. Now an annual event, the Breakfast Debate allows us to engage the community that embraces the Festivals – the broad range of stakeholders who contribute to the success of the Festivals in myriad ways. We all share a passion for the Festivals, and a determination that Edinburgh remains the leading Festival City. It's important that every stakeholder – from theatre goer to theatre director – has the opportunity to have their say."

Tickets to the Edinburgh Festivals Open Breakfast Debate are free, available from the Fringe box office on 0131 226 0000 or at www.edfringe.com.

Exam results are in!

The wait for exam results is over and the early indications are that candidates have performed well in 2010 and that Edinburgh's overall good performance has been maintained.

While candidates have been on the emotional rollercoaster waiting for results, the Council's schools staff have been busy number crunching to work out how the city has performed as a whole.

Highlights include:

- * Performance in Highers has continued to improve in S5 and S6
- * Numbers of presentations and passes have increased in Advanced Highers
- * 92% of candidates sitting English and Mathematics at S-Grade achieved SQA level 3 or better
- * Good performance in the first year of Baccalaureate and Interdisciplinary Projects

City Education Leader Cllr Marilyne MacLaren said:

"We've analysed exam statistics for the city and early signs are showing that our pupils have performed very well.

"As an education authority we are particularly pleased with this because it shows, that despite the large savings we've had to make over the past two years, our efforts to focus on the highest quality learning and teaching and on excellence across the curriculum are making an impact.

"We will now go away and look at the results in more depth so we can see exactly where pupils are doing well and, more importantly, to identify where we need to provide more

support.”

“We’ve all sat exams in our time so it’s easy to imagine the anticipation and tension across hundreds of households in Edinburgh this morning. Results day is always nerve wracking but, regardless of grades, it’s a day for young people to look to the future and think about the next big steps in their lives.

“Whatever the grades, this is the next exciting stage of life for thousands of young people and I wish them all the best.”

Across Edinburgh’s secondary and special schools, 45,395 results were presented to 9,571 pupils with awards gained in a range of 72 different subjects. Subjects showing increases in popularity and passes include: Chemistry, Computing, Gaidhlig, History, Media Studies, Physics, Psychology, Technological Studies, and Urdu.

Festival in The Sky

✖ We will be candid here. The invitation to come along to the Festival in The Sky departure lounge was a freebie. So that might have coloured our opinion – except it would have taken more than two (plastic) glasses of Bulmers cider (flat) to do that.

[The Festival in the Sky](#) has been billed as the most way-out experience you might have this Festival. Well maybe it might be, but at £62.50 a pop you would expect a bit more than being strapped into a seat at a table, hoisted about a hundred feet into the air and then fed something that a chef can make (and you can eat) all in less than half an hour. Talk about fast food... Even though it was Tony Singh from Oloroso who was

cooking...how good can the food really be?



The Reporter could have had the chance to go up for £20.00 courtesy of [Itison](#) the events people, but declined gracefully. It just didn't seem worth the bother. It certainly was not worth the bother for the Festival in the Sky hosts and hostesses to even speak to you on arrival. The eternal personal conversation, so much the bane of all our lives, had to be finished first. The girl at the arrivals desk then had three attempts at listening to the names given and correlating that to the list in front of her.

No-one really took the time or trouble to explain what was going on, and one got the feeling that if this was America everything (for once) would be so much better. Certainly the idea is a good one, but the execution leaves a lot to be desired.



Cinema on Saturday

