

A HUNDRED HIGHLIGHTS AT THE V&A

As a taxi driver, you will have driven past the Victoria and Albert Museum many times. But do you have any idea of exactly what is inside the building? Recently a group of taxi drivers who are studying the Cab Guiding Course run by The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers went along to the V&A in South Kensington to see what the museum holds. Founded in 1852 and originally called The Museum of Manufacturers, the Museum was then housed in Marlborough House, before moving to its present site in 1857 and being renamed The South Kensington Museum.



The tour we were given gave just a glimpse into the many treasures that are in the Museum. Whatever your interests, there is sure to be something in amongst the 3000 years worth of artefacts from around the world's richest cultures, from furniture, ceramics, photography, sculpture, and fashion. When you first enter the main entrance of the Museum you will see the stunning V&A Rotunda Chandelier. The beautiful shades of blues and green in this sculptured chandelier dominate the entrance, hinting at the beauty of the galleries beyond. It is by Dale Chihuly, one of the most celebrated artists working in glass today. In 1899 Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of the new building designed to give the Museum a grand façade. It was at this point that the Museum was renamed The Victoria and Albert Museum.

This national museum of art and design covers a 12 acres site and it actively encourages visitors to interact with the objects and feel the history for themselves. In the British Galleries corsets can be tried on, giving an insight into days gone by when ladies fainted all too often due to the restricting underwear they wore. In the Fashion Gallery the famous dress often referred to as the Elvis dress, worn by Diana, Princess of Wales, is on display. The Asian and Islamic Galleries display a wealth of objects including the largest dated carpet in the world, the beautiful Ardabil carpet which dates from the 16th century. The V&A boasts a large collection of Renaissance sculpture and has the most important collections of Rodin's outside France. A magnificent hall houses cartoons by Raphael, which were conceived as designs for tapestries for the Sistine Chapel. These are owned by the Queen.

In the British Galleries the story of British design from 1500 to 1900 comes alive. Here visitors can see items such the Great Bed of Ware, which

was referred to in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. The bed was once used by travellers visiting an inn in Ware, Hertfordshire, hence its name. Throughout the Museum there are interactive displays telling visitors more about the exhibits and the background information that brings these things alive. The Museum also has exhibitions – at the moment The Golden Age of Couture which is running until 6th January 2008.

Entry to the Museum itself is free, a charge is made for exhibitions. There are also tours each day, which are available as detailed below.

Museum Opening Hours

10.00 to 17.45 daily

10.00 to 22.00 Fridays (selected galleries remain open after 18.00)

Closed 24, 25 & 26 December

The tunnel entrance to the V&A is open from 10.00 - 17.30 daily but may be closed, on occasion, on the advice of London Underground.

TOURS

These free tours run every day. They tell the history of the V&A and introduce a selection of its treasures.

* 10.30 Introductory Tour

* 11.30 Introductory Tour

* 12.30 British Galleries Tour

* 13.30 Introductory Tour

* 14.30 British Galleries Tour

* 15.30 Introductory Tour

All tours last approximately one hour and start at the Meeting Point in the Grand Entrance unless otherwise instructed. If you are hearing impaired, please ask the Information Desk for the sound enhancement equipment.

If you would like to know more about The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers please contact the Clerk on 01494 765922 who will be delighted to help you.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A senior taxi salesman is encouraging all cabbies to unite in an effort to find a cure for children with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Harvey Cohen, whose youngest grandson has the heartbreaking disease, hopes that through his daughter's campaign 'One can make a difference', the lives of thousands of young children can be drastically improved. "The belief of this campaign is that you can really make a difference," states Harvey. "It's absolutely vital that we increase awareness and raise money in order to fund research programmes dedicated to finding a cure or treatment. In our line of business we pride ourselves on assisting people with all types of disabilities. Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is the most aggressive form of Muscular Dystrophy which affects almost exclusively boys."

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is a severe and progressive genetic muscle wasting disease for which there is no cure. Young men usually die in their late teens or are left wheelchair bound, unable to move unaided. The hope for families lies in new treatments that can slow or stop the fatal condition in its tracks.

Harvey Cohen works as a senior taxi salesman for M&O Manchester, one of the UK's nine official dealerships for LTI's cabs. Andrew Shaw, dealer principal of M&O Manchester said: "We fully support Harvey in



his quest to raise awareness and funds for this worthy cause. When I was told about the 'one can make a difference' campaign, I didn't think twice about lending my support. I hope that other cab drivers will feel the same so that we can give new hope and comfort to young children across the UK."

Anyone wishing to make a donation or to find out more about the 'one can make a difference' campaign should visit www.ocmad.net, the North West arm of Action Duchenne.