



WYBOSTON LAKES

## Wyboston Lakes: Arena Travel/Stitchtopia 2013 Case Study, October 2013

### Background

Arena Travel is the UK's leading fully bonded specialist tour operator. The company organises a range of special interest tours and holidays with specific hobbies and interests in mind. The annual 'Stitchtopia' residential event has been developed in partnership with Rowan, the internationally renowned, designed luxury handknit yarn company. It gives enthusiasts for knitting, stitching and quilting the chance to learn and develop new skills with like-minded people and engage with tutors with world-class knowledge and experience.

### The Challenge

The 'Stitchtopia 2013' event was to be a complex one, covering an extended period of four days and three nights. It required a venue that would provide several adjacent teaching rooms for craft knitting sessions for small groups, together with larger spaces for presentations and activities involving all attendees. One particular need was for an area that could house 16 Bernina sewing machines, each of which is a significant size and requires its own 'work stations'.

Arena Travel also required a room with enough capacity to allow the organiser to 'mock up' a retail shop and to hold a fashion show during one of the evenings.

The venue would need to be accessible for people attending not only from across the UK, but also from Scandinavia and Canada. It would also demand good quality overnight accommodation for more than 100 guests and event staff. In this regard, it would be ideal that bedrooms would be located as close to the rooms where classes and presentations would be taking place, as the majority of attendees would be of middle age and above.

### The Solution

Arena Travel decided on Wyboston Lakes Training Centre, which met its brief in every respect. It is a self-contained residential venue with meeting facilities and bedrooms close together. Its central location, close to main road routes, railway station and airports made it very accessible for guests and staff, whichever mode of transport they were using.

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The organisers had exclusive use of the Oakley Suite, a distinct area of the centre which is separate from other activities on the site. The Suite provides an ideal mix of rooms of different sizes and configurations: it has six main conference rooms - the largest of which is 135 square metres in area - and a further 14 smaller syndicate rooms. It also has its own coffee lounge and a private area for event organisers. All six conference rooms were used by Arena Travel for demonstrations of individual crafts, with the largest room, the Oakley Conference Room, also designated for the shop and the fashion show.

Wyboston Lakes was also particularly responsive to the special demands of the group - for example, in terms of the flexibility of its delegate packages. Conventionally, a 24 hour delegate package includes breakfast, dinner and lunch; however many of the attendees did not require lunch after the generous breakfasts provided by the Centre's catering team. Wyboston Lakes accepted this, adjusted the 24 hour rate accordingly, and offered lunch only as an optional extra.

### Feedback

Stitchtopia 2013 was a highly successful event for Arena Travel and its guests. "Wyboston Lakes provides much more than an ideal portfolio of teaching and meeting spaces and a very convenient location - even more important, they are outstandingly flexible and responsive," said David Caddick, Product Marketing Manager at Arena Travel. "Despite our demanding spectrum of requirements, the venue just did it - no debate, no fuss. We had no hesitation in rebooking the venue for next year's event."

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