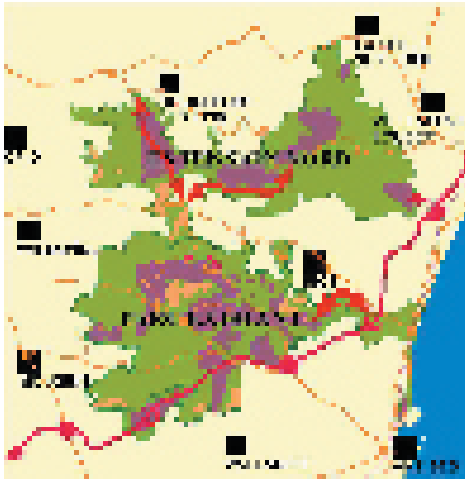


Media Review

We look at media reports of four destinations in different sectors.



The geography of Sophia Antipolis

Partnership and job creation at Sophia Antipolis

Sophia Antipolis is a science and business park situated near Nice on the south-west coast of France, which is home to companies from the telecoms, computer software, biotechnology and environmental science sectors. It has been evolving since 1962, when IBM and Texas Instruments both set up offices in the area, and is a leading example of an integrated education, research and commerce destination. The name Sophia Antipolis is derived from two Greek words, 'sophos', meaning wise and Antipolis, the ancient name for Antibes, which is just a few kilometres to the south.

The last year has seen a huge expansion of Sophia Antipolis's IT sector, in particular internet start-ups, for whom some of the postgraduate schools are acting as incubators. One case example, reported by the *Financial Times* (20 April 2000), is Eurecom: 'Budding entrepreneurs are housed in the numerous incubators being set up by companies and research institutes. One example is [Wimba.com](http://www.wimba.com), which has developed software for the transmission of voice messages that does not require broadband internet access. Four students and one of their professors operate

Wimba from an office provided by Eurecom, a telecommunications engineering postgraduate school in Sophia. Eurecom set up its incubator last year, with Wimba as its first guest. Both sides are expected to benefit from the arrangement. Wimba is planning to double its staff after completing a second round of venture capital financing this year.'

The benefits of partnership and collective action are illustrated not simply by the relationships nurtured between education and commerce, but also by the sheer scale and momentum of job creation at Sophia Antipolis. More than 1,200 companies are based in the park, employing 22,000 people, most of whom are engineers. As the *Financial Times* reports, 'Officials estimate that the park has generated another 150,000 jobs indirectly. Executives involved in the running of the park say at least one new company is created every week. They also say the pace at which new companies are being created is accelerating.'

Sophia Antipolis on the web:

www.saem-sophia-antipolis.fr/anglais/

AccueilFR.htm

www.ceram.fr/site-us/ceram/cer_sop.htm

Looking forward to the Millennium Link

As *The Guardian* reported on 14 December 1999, 'Planning permission for Scotland's big wheel, a rotating boat lift 115 feet high and described as "the biggest working sculpture in the world", was granted unanimously by Falkirk Council's planning committee yesterday'. The wheel, to be situated outside Falkirk in central Scotland, will re-establish the link between the Forth & Clyde and Union canals, lost in the 1930s when a flight of old locks was closed. The wheel is part of a larger project, the Millennium Link, which will restore the 70-mile canal link from Glasgow to Edinburgh, involving the construction of a new canal section and other features such as aqueducts, locks and tunnels.

Long before planning permission for the wheel was granted, back in February 1997, the project as a whole received a grant of £32m from the Millennium Commission. The grant to the Millennium Link was received with great enthusiasm by Sir Peter Hutchison, vice-chairman of British Waterways, who has led the project. Sir Peter told

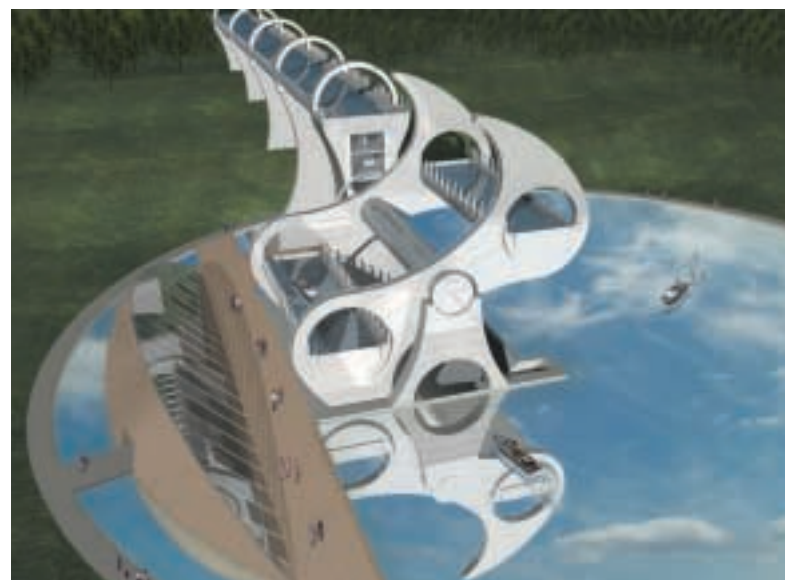
the *Daily Telegraph* that the wheel would attract visitors from throughout Scotland and beyond, and that 'it will be the focus for restoring dynamic economic growth to the Lowlands'. The Link as a whole, which is expected to attract 10 million visitors each year and be used by around 500 boats, is due to open in autumn 2001.

Also expressing his strong support for the project at its outset was the Millennium Commissioner, the Earl of Dalkeith, who told the *Telegraph*, 'This is tremendous news for people throughout central Scotland. This project is truly millennial in its scale and vision and a wonderful bridge to the twenty-first century. It restores an artery of great historic importance and in doing so enables it to make a substantial contribution to the community once again.'

Millennium link on the web:

www.saem-millenniumlink.org.uk

www.britishwaterways.co.uk



The gigantic boat lift is eagerly awaited
Picture courtesy of British Waterways



Tate Modern has been a media success
Photo: Marcus Leith

Tate Modern opens perfectly

The Tate Modern gallery on London's Bankside carried off an extremely accomplished opening in the middle of May. After an almost universal media fanfare, Tate Modern began greeting visitors successfully on the 12th of May. In its first weekend it pulled in approximately 65,000 visitors, almost double the Dome's figure. A Tate spokesperson told *The Independent* that the visitor make-up had been varied: 'On the first day we had quite a large percentage of foreign tourists, then others who had slipped out of their offices during the lunch hour and lots of people who had taken the day off work'.

The focus was always going to be on Tate Modern's queues and visitor flow control as compared to the Dome's poor initial response. A stunning 15,000 visitors made the trip to the gallery each day in the first week of May. Another Tate spokesperson told *The Times* that the gallery was having to regulate the flow of visitors, to ensure conditions inside the gallery remained conducive to viewing the paintings and installations: 'People are being held in the turbine hall until

enough people have come out. It's about 500 out, 500 in.'

The media's first impressions of the visitor destination in action were very favourable. Alex O'Connell, writing in *The Independent*, commented that, 'Despite the numbers, the gallery's cavernous turbine hall retained the impression of spaciousness. The queues for a cappuccino in the café and the Louise Bourgeois interactive sculpture – particularly popular with children – were never more than 20 minutes long.'

Tate Modern on the web:

www.tate.org.uk/modern/default.htm

Packing in visitors at the London Eye

Even before it had opened, slightly behind schedule, the London Eye was one of the hottest subjects for debate in the capital. Rather than focusing on whether it was a good idea or not, most discussion centred on the experience it would offer passengers. Just how far would you be able to see? What would be the best time of day to take a ride? How long would the ride be? By February, 630,000 people had decided that they had to find out, and had secured their chance to do so by ordering advance tickets.

Jamie Bowden, a spokesperson for the London Eye, told *The Independent* that the wheel's owner, British Airways, was overwhelmed. 'We are well within what we expected in our business plan,' he said. 'It shows there is a huge demand from Londoners and visitors to London to get a new perspective of the capital.' Bowden also told *The Independent* that he had had inquiries from film crews, fashion shoots, and travel firms who had said it was 'the new symbol of London'.

So popular has the London Eye proved in the short space of time in which it has been operational that a host of cities worldwide have already expressed an interest in replicating the attraction. Paul Bates, BA's London Eye project director, told *The Guardian*, 'All being well, we would be very interested in building and running overseas wheels ourselves. People have realised there is something unique about this kind of observation wheel.' At the same time, however, Rachel Dibsdale, a spokeswoman for the London Tourist Board, commented to the same newspaper that 'Like the Eiffel Tower and the Empire State building, the Eye is rapidly becoming an icon, so it would be nice to keep it exclusive to London'.

If, as seems likely, the London Eye exceeds its visitor projections in its first year, the chances are that it will be a part of London's landscape for many years beyond the five for which initial permission was given.

London Eye on the web:

www.british-airways.com/londoneye



A new icon for London