

UNDERBELLY TO LAUNCH NEW LONDON WONDERGROUND FESTIVAL ON EARLS COURT SITE

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The new London Wonderground at Earls Court will feature live shows, bars and street food

Underbelly has announced plans to launch a new festival in west London this summer. Located on the site of the former Earls Court 2 Exhibition Centre, the festival is called London Wonderground, the name of a former summer event run by Underbelly on the South Bank.

The announcement follows the news that the entertainment and events company is planning the return of Underbelly Festival, which also previously ran on the South Bank but will now move to Oxford Circus. London Wonderground is a partnership between Underbelly and owners of the site, Earls Court Development Company. Running from July 15 to September 26, it will feature live shows, bars and street food, vintage rides, live music and a beach. The site will be free to enter and there will be both free and ticketed events, with programming announced at the end of May.

Shows will be performed inside two venues: Underbelly's upside-down purple cow tent, Udderbelly, and a 1,000-capacity big top. Both venues will accommodate reduced seating capacities if social distancing measures are still required. The programme will include circus, comedy and family shows that will "champion the spirit and quality of the world-renowned Edinburgh Festival Fringe", where Underbelly is one of the event's main venue operators. There will also be an on-site training academy at London Wonderground, which will give young people and local residents the opportunity to learn new skills.

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Ed Bartlam, director of Underbelly, said: "London Wonderground is without doubt one of our most exciting and ambitious festival creations to date, and it feels so in the spirit of the heritage of Earls Court to be launching it as we come out of the pandemic. "We're dancing on toes on hot coals in our excitement to give people that live-entertainment experience again and to play our part in bringing some much-needed fun and socialising back to people's lives this summer.

"London Wonderground at Earls Court will do just that, with something for everyone, free entry to the site and a jam-packed programme of live shows to make you smile, laugh and gasp." Bartlam added: "Add to that outdoor food and drink, vintage rides and even a beach, and we think London Wonderground can truly become London's staycation destination this summer."

The opening of London Wonderground at Earls Court is subject to planning and licensing approval by Hammersmith and Fulham Council. Last week, Underbelly also announced that its Underbelly Festival will return to London this summer in a new location near Oxford Circus. The festival of cabaret, circus, comedy and family entertainment, which ran for a decade on the South Bank, will now run at a pop-up spiegel tent in Cavendish Square, beginning in early July.