

Playtime Paris in numbers

The international exhibition for childrenswear, maternitywear, nursery furniture and accessories, the 21st edition of Playtime Paris, took place as usual in the event spaces of the Parc Floral, Bois de Vincennes, in Eastern Paris at the end of Metro Line 1.

This was the show for the Autumn/Winter 2017 season; The continuing rapid growth of the childrenswear industry worldwide has encouraged Playtime to spread its wings, and successful editions now take place twice a year in Tokyo, and in New York, attracting exhibitors and buyers from all over the world. A new show, Playtime Berlin, will open for the first time in July 2017.

520 collections from all over the world exhibited in Paris this January - an increase of 20 on the same event last year. 100 of these brands were new to the exhibition, a testament to the success of Playtime Paris as a launchpad for new collections and brands.

59 exhibitors were from the UK, and of these 39 benefited from TAP grants from UK Trade and Investment (now DIT, the Department for International Trade). These grants are administered exclusively for DIT by UKFT, the trade association for the fashion & textile industry in the UK.

An impressive 7689 international buyers and Press visited the show, an increase of 4% on the previous January event. 55.3% were international (i.e. from outside France), 44.7% of visitors were from France, 6% from Asia, and 3.3% from the USA.

39.6% of visitors came on Saturday, 32.9% on Sunday, and 27.5% on Monday. As expected, visitor numbers were up on the July 2016 event. The security level in Paris was still very high, but the organisers took great care to check the credentials of all visitors and ensure that entrances and exits (of which there are many) were well supervised at all times.

The main markets from which visitors came were:

Europe:

1. Belgium
2. United Kingdom
3. Netherlands
4. Spain
5. Italy

Outside Europe:

1. United States
2. Japan
3. South Korea
4. Russia
5. China

Visitors came (in descending order) from:

France, Belgium, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Germany, United States, Switzerland, Japan, Portugal, South Korea, Denmark, China, Russia, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Norway, Canada, India, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Australia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Turkey, Taiwan, Israel, Morocco, Finland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Kuwait, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Cyprus, Argentina, Algeria, Estonia, Iceland, Chile, Jordan, Peru, Hungary, Thailand, Slovakia, Vietnam, Andorra, Colombia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Martinique, Monaco, Uzbekistan, Czech Republic, Réunion, Senegal, Saint Martin.

The majority of exhibitors show fashion and accessories for children; gifts and nursery/play furniture are also important at the show, and there is a very strong maternitywear section, which includes maternity and nursing underwear.

The Brits in Paris

59 brands and designers from the UK were at Playtime January 2017 (see here for full list):

http://www.ukft.org/documents/about/brits_around/Playtime%20Paris_Postcard_Jan_17_Web.pdf

They showed merchandise ranging from sustainable casualwear to nursery tepees, and from leather baby shoes to silicone teething jewellery. There were “regulars” such as The Bonnie Mob, Kite, Loud Apparel, Tootsa Maginty and Aden & Anaïs, alongside many newcomers such as Little Hotdog Watson, Mr Wolf, Owa Yurika and Forivor.

Every season UKFT asks exhibitors to contribute to the Playtime video which features only collections from the UK, and an excellent variety of merchandise was submitted – see the link below, which remains on www.ukft.org from one season to the next as an aide-memoire for buyers http://www.ukft.org/brits_around_the_world_loop.php?brits_event_id=26

How was business?

As usual, top department stores, independent retailers and buying offices from all over the world were well represented at the show; this included several Japanese and Korean buying teams, and an interestingly large number of buyers from Belgium. The general feeling amongst exhibitors was that the show was unusually busy on the Saturday, that good buyers were there throughout the show, and that they were writing orders.

Here's what some of the Brits in Paris exhibitors thought:

Catriona Alfaham of Sheffield-based baby footwear brand **Little Lulus**:

“This was our second Playtime Paris; it went well and we secured an order from Saudi Arabia, which is exciting. I have some good new contacts now with international buyers, and we got a lot of interest from Press, so I think slowly but surely our name is not so new anymore!”

Deborah Medhurst from baby and kidswear brand **noaddedsugar** from Petersfield, Hampshire:

“Playtime Paris is a key show in our selling season. The quality and volume of international buyers presents us with a highly efficient platform for making good business. The high standard of brands exhibiting ensures that we are exposed to, and can connect with ease to the key players in the kidswear industry. It is without a doubt that Playtime Paris has enabled us to grow our brand internationally”.

Dotty Dungarees said:

“Playtime Paris is always a great show for us – with a real mixture of buyers from Continental Europe, Scandinavia and Asia. It is a good opportunity for us to reconnect with some existing stockists, as well as meet new ones, and we look forward very much to exhibiting again in the Summer!”

Rebecca Attwood of **Forivor** said:

“Playtime Paris was our first experience of exhibiting our children's bedding outside of the UK. We were impressed by the international reach of the show, as well as the quality of stores and Press that we met during our time there. It was fantastic to have the opportunity to take Forivor into this market place with the support of UKFT. We would very much like to exhibit again at Playtime in July.”

First time exhibitor Kate Lockwood of **Little Lord and Lady**, the children's clothing brand with a heritage feel, from Huddersfield, West Yorkshire commented:

“Great opportunity to meet international retailers, bloggers and trade support such as designers. We were overwhelmed by the kindness and helpfulness of all the support staff, show organisers and trade stand hosts, as it was our first overseas show. A lot of interest every day in our new brand, and also people who had used the website to gain information about us first. The Playtime Paris website was very helpful and allowed us to consider many important aspects before the show. Love the new branding!”

Showing for the 6th time, Catherine Lobley of Sheffield-based **Poco Nido**, which offers clothing and footwear for little people said:

“Playtime Paris is always the highlight of our season, and never fails to disappoint. The show is always so well organised and inspiring. We see a good range of buyers, with French and Belgian dominating, along with a good mix of international buyers. This season was a great opportunity to open some new accounts, as well as taking repeat orders from existing customers.”

Playtime new exhibitor Jamie Bruski Tetsill of Glasgow-based gender-neutral clothing company **Shapes of Things** said:

“Playtime was a fantastic success! Shapes of Things welcomed many new stockists covering 21 international markets. We will be sure to return next session to continue our international development”.

A particular benefit to UK exhibitors showing at Playtime is that they are seen alongside their international competitors; this gives them additional credibility, and often opens doors to some of the best buyers from the UK who are visiting the show to seek out interesting new international collections.

Playtime Paris – the show

The Playtime Paris show team is very helpful, and the show is well organised – it is a magnet for good quality and directional childrenswear, babywear, maternitywear and other associated products. The layout is clear, the signage simple but easy to read. There is no longer a printed catalogue, but information on exhibitors, together with show plans is available through the new Playtime Paris app and on the exhibition website.

NEW NOW is a very interesting new section at Playtime, featuring 12 smaller stands for specially selected emerging brands, in a prominent section of the show. Of these, an impressive 4 were from the UK: Owa Yurika, MABLI, Vild, and Wonderers; it attracted the attention of buyers and Press, and worked well.

Design forms a significant part of the Playtime Paris show, and freelance designers have a section to themselves, selling artwork for printed textiles, gifts, apparel and furnishings – each has a small table on which to display their artwork.

There are also several excellent Trend areas, curated by trend forecasting agencies, and featuring the work of exhibitors as part of their forecasts for the coming season. These are exceptionally well put together, and are very popular with buyers every season.

The January event brings in more furs and leather (natural and faux), heavier knitwear, skiwear, quilted outerwear and hats. The July event attracts larger numbers of swimwear, beachwear and t-shirt collections; Both editions have largely moved away from very formal children’s and babywear; in their place we see more nursery furniture and decorative items, gift sets for baby and mother to be, and jewellery (maternity, baby and children’s).

The exhibition is spread through a series of single-storey buildings in the Parc Floral, the older buildings (kidswear and nursery accessories/gifts) lack air-conditioning and can get very hot, the newer buildings (housing the maternitywear collections) benefit from air conditioning. The organisers do their very best to make the building work for exhibitors and buyers alike...but the beautiful setting in the Parc outweighs some of the constraints of working in an exhibition centre which was not purpose-built. The show is well served with two restaurants on site, and there is an efficient shuttle bus service for exhibitors and buyers to and from the nearby Château de Vincennes Métro station. This season, a pre-bookable taxi service was also made available, which was a boon to buyers with appointments in the centre of the city.

The Spring/Summer 2018 edition of Playtime Paris will be held at the same location from 1 – 3 July 2017.

Thinking of exhibiting at Playtime Paris?

UKFT has worked with the Playtime organisers since the show started, and found them to be exceptionally helpful and encouraging to potential exhibitors. It must be remembered, however, that this is a very popular and successful international event, and the organisers are able to be very selective in their choice of new collections. As with most international exhibitions, the organisers tend to allocate space to “regulars”, before

they can find space for new exhibitors – this can be a little frustrating, but must be borne stoically as part of the process...

Potential exhibitors must first visit the show, to demonstrate their commitment and enthusiasm and as an essential part of their research, and should then approach the organisers in a considered but enthusiastic manner well in advance of the next event. Apply through <https://www.iloveplaytime.com> . Applications for the July show start as soon as the January show is over, and the same is true of the next season. UKFT has plenty of hints and tips on the process for new exhibitors.

Making the exhibition work for you...things to think about...

Detailed information on this subject is available UKFT's guide to overseas trade shows, "Making an Exhibition of Yourself" - please ask us for your free copy. The points below are summarised from this publication:

However good you are on other forms of social media, you need a good-looking website, kept up to date with new images and stories – to sell yourself both to buyers and to exhibition organisers.

You need to have your production organised well in advance, and to have your wholesale pricing structure in place. Think about your Terms and Conditions for selling to buyers, and what is going to be included in your price.

However good the trade show is (and Playtime is certainly one of the best!), you need to identify and contact potential buyers in advance of the exhibition to offer them an appointment (not at all easy, but keep at it!). Send each of them a personal email containing thumbnail images from your collection, and a really short but interesting introduction to your brand and why it's so different! Include a link to your look book, or your website or to a file sharing site. Do not send enormous look books as an attachment – they will hate you for ever!

Make the most of your stand with good strong visuals and a good quality logo; plan out your stand display in advance. Then think very hard about how you are going to really sell yourself and your collection to buyers.

For more advice and help on these and many other aspects of doing overseas trade shows successfully – contact Laurian Davies at UKFT on the address below, or phone 020 7843 9460.

Grants for showing at Playtime Paris?

Tradeshow Access Programme grants from the Department of International Trade (payable as a reimbursement after the show) are available exclusively through UKFT – please email Laurian.davies@ukft.org for the application forms and the Terms and Conditions for the TAP grant scheme.

New exhibitors must apply for a grant at the same time as applying for space at the show. The number of grants is always less than the number of companies which would like one, so it is important to apply as soon as you know that you would like to exhibit.

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