

NEW BRITISH HOTELS FEATURE TECHNOLOGY

by Bruce Grant-Braham, FHCIMA,
Senior Lecturer, Bournemouth University.

BUTLINS' CRUISES AWAY FROM H-DE-HI!

Butlins' recently opened its first resort hotel of recent times, the Shoreline Hotel in Bognor Regis, to successfully move from the chalet era of its origins into a deliberately more luxurious style of hospitality.

The Shoreline, which combines style with all the traditional fun of Butlins, is said to herald a new era of both contemporary and sophisticated accommodation for the famous holiday resort organisation which attracts attract over 1.3 million guests a year. The building has been designed to be reminiscent of a cruise liner in shape, and the multi-million pound investment will deliver high levels of service, style and quality to existing, as well as new holidaymakers.

The new hotel boasts a range of impressive facilities including all-day check-in, room service, an English bistro restaurant, a stylish cocktail bar, landscaped gardens, leisure space, greater privacy as well as sea views from most rooms.

The bedrooms, with their wide screen TV's and DVD players, are core to the new plan of service offered by the hotel. Butlins is well established as a provider of family holidays and the broadcast technology, which is also integrated into the kids' accommodation, will help to solve many a problem when the weather outside is not as good as it might be and little people need occupying.

Butlins as an organisation is no stranger to hotels, having run the Metropole in Blackpool amongst others in the 1950s, but the Shoreline Hotel is probably unique in that all of its one hundred and sixty rooms are non-smoking. Three grades of bedrooms are on offer to hopefully suit all of the family. All include features including floor to ceiling windows with central window opening and balcony rail, a lounge area with leather chairs, wide screen TV and DVD, luxury king-size or twin beds, a separate children's area with "funky" bunk beds as well as an additional TV and games console. Ensuite bathroom with shower, bath and heated towel rail are standard as are, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer and safe, heating and comfort cooling. Travel cots are available free of charge if they are requested at time of booking and an internal phone is standard too.

For those wanting a little extra luxury there are luxury rooms such as Nelson's Stateroom. The south facing staterooms in the hotel offer direct sea views with a private balcony or a patio. They also have reserved parking facilities, a flat-screen TV, king-size bed, leather sofa

and armchair, fluffy bathrobes and slippers. The staterooms even include a telescope to enable guests to see far out to sea.

The Shoreline Hotel will boost the current five thousand holidaymakers that the south coast Bognor Regis Resort can currently accommodate in approximately 1,500 apartments.

Richard Bates, Operations Director, Butlins, endorsed the concept when he said, "£10million has been invested in Shoreline to create a unique balance of contemporary style to Butlins. The hotel will be a real perception changer for Butlins, enabling people to move on from any outdated images of the brand. Butlins is the best family holiday venue in the UK and with the addition of the Shoreline Hotel we are enhancing a wider accommodation offering to current and new guests. The accommodation is breathtaking and of course, there are few hotels that can boast a 100-strong entertainment team for guests' enjoyment a stone's throw away!"

FILLING ROOMS IS EASY!

London's new easyHotel is already ninety-four per cent full, and this is less than two months since its opening.

The key to easyHotel is low operating costs and therefore low prices. The concept is deliberately designed for city centres where the cost of property is high and where consumers are prepared to trade off space for a good price. easyHotel aims to provide a safe, clean room for the night under the secure umbrella of a well-known brand that is recognised for delivering a good quality alongside standardised service. In other words, bed and breakfast accommodation in this price bracket is often provided by un-branded suppliers where the quality is uncertain and can vary greatly.

The brand has already spread to Switzerland where in Basle (Riehenring) the easyHotel's twenty-four rooms vary in size from nine square metres to sixteen square metres. All rooms have a double bed and an en-suite shower room as well as pay as you go television. Twenty-one of the rooms have a window and those that don't, possess air conditioning.

easyHotel in London has proved to be a roaring success since its opening with double rooms costing as little as £20 a night – a remarkable price for central London. Without any advertising expenditure at all, the hotel had an occupancy rate of ninety four per cent for its first month of operation. Forward bookings for easyHotel London appear to be just as impressive with month two running at eighty-five per cent occupancy and month three at seventy-two per cent occupancy.

As the brand expands easyHotels will continue to be highly reliant upon technology, especially for their booking process. All easyHotel bookings are taken by credit card through the company's website, thereby reducing the human costs of reservation offices and staff. Dealing direct also removes agency commissions too. This is, of course, a well established business model employed in the company's sister budget airline. Technologically easyJet, in common with most budget airlines, uses the concept of yield management - the practice of adjusting prices up or down in response to demand in order to control yield which is usually computerized. The easyHotels too will follow the practise of yield management whereby prices increase as demand increases.

The first easyHotel in London is owned and operated by the easyGroup but all further growth is being managed through franchising. easyHotel in Switzerland, therefore, is managed by a local franchisee and the easyGroup is currently in discussions with other potential franchisees of the brand. It is envisaged that big cities like London would take several easyHotels so franchisees are being sought in the UK as well as in other major cities around the world.

Links:

Butlins Shoreline hotel : www.butlins.com/hotel

EasyHotel: www.easyHotel.com