



London's latest tourism landmark The Shard

Shard offers the high life

By Sarah McCay

LONDON'S latest tourism landmark – The Shard – is launching itself into the Middle East market with its debut at Arabian Travel Market this month.

Promoted as a vertical town offering office, residential, hotel, dining and leisure facilities towering 310 m high, The Shard should strike a chord with Middle East travellers. Developed by Sellar Group, in partnership with the State of Qatar, The Shard and wider London Bridge Quarter are reinventing the way London is perceived, both by its inhabitants and by its millions of tourists each year.

"We have created a totally unique European building. The Shard is a vertical town comprising many of the elements you would find on a main thoroughfare – but we also offer visitors from home and abroad the chance to see London as it has never been seen before – from 800 feet in the air," said Irvine Sellar, chairman of Sellar Group.

"The Shard has been described as 'The New Tower of London' and, indeed, it has become a modern marker – a compass in our great city pointing towards a new symbol of hope and prosperity. It is a new contour to London's skyline. It provides a new mental geography, a new way by which people relate to the city," he added.

Designed by architect Renzo Piano, The Shard is Western Europe's tallest building at 310 m; it is also Europe's only truly multi-use building, offering London's highest visitor attraction, a luxury five-star hotel, award-winning restaurants, offices, retail and residential.

THE VIEW

The Shard has already become established as a global landmark – as easily recognisable as the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House and the Empire State Building. Its state-of-the-art viewing platform, aptly named The View from the Shard, opened in February 2013.

At 800 ft/244 m high – almost twice as high as any other London vantage point – it offers unrivalled views across the capital for up to 40 miles. Many of London's iconic landmarks, including the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and St Paul's Cathedral, can be seen from The View.

"The View from The Shard is fast becoming a 'must visit' destination for visitors to London. The attraction offers unrivalled views of the UK's capital for up to 40 miles, augmented by state-of-the-art technology to create a premium quality visitor experience. We were delighted to welcome our millionth visitor in February and look forward to welcoming many more guests from around the world in 2014 and beyond," says

Clive Stephens, CEO of The View from The Shard.

The View offers the very latest in viewing platform technology, evocative of that on offer at Dubai's Burj Khalifa. Digital interactive telescopes give crystal sharp views but also supply information about more than 200 landmarks in 10 languages, including Arabic. Visitors can also view day, night, sunrise or sunset panoramas as well as historic views of London selected from the Museum of London's archives.

Clive Stephens and his team will be promoting The View from The Shard at Arabian Travel Market this month, reflecting how important the Middle East tourism market is to The View.

TOURISM OFFERING

Set to open this May, the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard will occupy floors 34-52 of The Shard offering breathtaking views unmatched by any other London hotel. The five-star hotel will include 202 guestrooms and suites on floors 36-50, all featuring floor-to-ceiling windows.

The hotel will also provide three dining experiences including a cocktail bar on floor 52, complemented by an infinity pool, called Gōng. The hotel's signature restaurant and lounge, Ting, is also on level 52 while on the ground floor there is an artisan deli, Láng. In addition, the Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, will offer three river facing event spaces on level 34.

The Shard also provides its own array of award-winning restaurants on levels 31-33, which have become among the hottest dining venues in London. The building's food and beverage offering includes a triple height atrium bar, a live music bar, restaurants such as Aqua Shard, New York-style grill Oblix, and spicy northern Chinese cuisine at Hutong.

To complement the tourist offering Sellar Group is creating a boutique shopping mall on the main route from London Bridge Underground station, Joiner Street and the entrance to The Shard Viewing Gallery. Known as The Shard Arcade, the mall will be home to a range of international aspirational retailers.

LONDON BRIDGE QUARTER

The Shard forms the centre point of a huge regeneration project, known as London Bridge Quarter being undertaken by Sellar Group.

London Bridge Quarter also includes The Place, set to become the new UK headquarters of News UK, one of the world's leading media groups and owner of The Times, Sunday Times, Wall Street Journal, Dow Jones and HarperCollins. Further development will comprise a 160,000 sq ft, 27 storey, residential building containing 150 apartments, new public space, extensive landscaping and a new multi-level retail space. ■

Britain eyes record arrivals

By Ravi Kalmady

MORE than 250 UK-based companies and 228 international buyers marked the recent 2014 Hosted Buyers Marketplace (HBM) in London, the biggest travel trade event hosted by VisitBritain, the national tourism board of Great Britain.

The annual gathering held at the iconic Wembley Stadium, produced 8,500 appointments between Britain's travel trade delegates and global buyers representing 22 key markets. The event was covered by media from 20 markets.

"While 2013 was a record year for British tourism with 33 million visitors, reflecting a six per cent increase over 2012, we are forecasting an even better year in 2014 with the volume of inbound tourism expected to grow by 1.8 per cent," said Sandie Dawe, chief executive, VisitBritain.

"Visitors spent a record £21 billion (\$35 billion), exceeding all expectations, and marking an increase of more than 13 per cent over 2012," added Dawe, noting that spending is likely to be up by 4.2 per cent this year.

The tourism campaign has kicked off strongly this year. January, generally a quiet month, saw holiday visitor numbers up 19 per cent over the same month in 2013.

Meanwhile, VisitBritain is going ahead strongly with its successful GREAT Britain campaign.

"Our international tourists are starting to see and do more across the country, which tells us that our GREAT campaign is not only working, but influencing travel too. Holiday figures are up across the whole of Britain with robust growth for Scotland, Wales, Rest of England and London," said Dawe. Those who viewed the GREAT campaign are twice as likely to travel to Britain in the next three years.

While France, Germany and the US continue to be the top inbound markets for the UK in terms of visit volumes, only the UAE from the Middle East was ranked among the top 25. Visitors to Britain from the Emirates increased 4 per cent in 2013 over the 2012 figure of 256,000 visits.

Meanwhile, VisitBritain is attempting to bring about a paradigm shift in the way Britain is perceived in the Middle East.

"A shift in focus from a luxury and shopping holiday to one that focuses on countryside, culture and heritage could probably take from three to five years," Dawe told *TTN*.

"We're trying to project an image as a family destination in the region," she said. "So we're trying to promote attractions such as Leatherland, the zoo, the parks and the Chessington World of Adventures to Arab travellers who come in large family groups."

With 73 per cent of visitors to the UK arriving by air, Britain has prioritised aviation capacity.

In terms of seat capacity, Heathrow handled a record 72.3 million passengers in 2013. While the New York route claimed the largest seat capacity of 1.97 million, the



Another successful Hosted Buyers Marketplace held in London's Wembley Stadium



Dawe... inbound tourism expected to grow by 1.8 per cent in 2014

Dubai-Heathrow secured the second spot with 1.59 million, ahead of Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Paris.

Coming to accommodation, the latest annual capacity data shows the number of bedspaces at 1.41 million in the UK, an increase from 1.11 million in 2000.

Of an estimated 14,000 rooms in the 'active pipeline' expected to open in the UK in 2014, London will claim 5,600 rooms, representing a 4 per cent on the number of available rooms in 2013.

While 11 per cent of the current UK active hotel bedroom pipeline is five-star, 29 per cent is four-star. Growth continues to be in the budget segment, accounting for 51 per cent of all rooms in the pipeline.

New hotels opening soon include Cromlix House Hotel, owned by tennis superstar Andy Murray in central Scotland and the Shangri-La Hotel at The Shard in London. As the tallest hotel in Western Europe, the Shangri-La occupies levels 34 to 52 of the 72-storey Shard, and is the Hong Kong-based luxury hotel group's third in Europe, after Paris and Istanbul.

To keep up with the anticipated hike in tourism momentum, Britain is offering a spate of new attractions and activities.

A new art project, The Invisible City, has been revealed for Regent's Park and is due to open this summer, set to be one of 2014's most unusual events. James Bond fans will have the opportunity to check out the largest official collection of original James Bond vehicles that will be on display at the Bond In Motion exhibition that opened recently in London.

Britain's 'summer season' is peppered with lively music festivals throughout the destination – Isle

of Wight Festival and Glastonbury in June, T in the Park, Perth and Kinross in Scotland in July, to name but a few. The historic city of Bath, west England, will hold a number of fashion, history, music and heritage festivals throughout May. The Museum of London will also open its Sherlock Holmes exhibition in October, which will explore how Holmes has transcended literature onto stage and screen.

This is also the year that the Commonwealth Games come to Glasgow (July 23 – August 3). In addition to the Games, a cultural programme will showcase Glasgow's, and Scotland's, arts and music.

A dazzling line-up of events is also drawn up for 2015. In the works is a new visitor attraction based on the most successful ani-

A total of 109 countries worldwide have direct flights to Britain, which land in 37 airports spread across the UK and Channel Islands. The country is currently serviced by 128 carriers

mated film franchise of all time, Shrek. The landmark attraction will open at London's County Hall, South Bank in the summer of 2015.

Also in the pipeline is the new Back to the Future Musical opening in London, 30 years after the film with the same name was released. The Commonwealth Institute is having an £80 million transformation and will open in brand new premises in Kensington in 2015. The Design Museum will greatly expand its education events with state-of-the-art facilities.

Looking further ahead, VisitBritain is targeting 40 million visitors by 2020, who will spend £31.5 billion (\$52.6 billion).

While the US tops the list of top 20 markets with a potential growth of £1.17 billion (\$1.9 billion), Saudi Arabia claims the second spot with a potential growth of £469 million (\$784.4 million). Percentage-wise, that's a whopping 181 per cent increase over the Kingdom's 2011 spend. The UAE, at 12th place, is projected to spend £383 million (\$640.5 million) in 2020 in the UK, a 50 per cent increase over its spend two years ago. ■

WIN BY NUMBERS

14,000	Rooms expected to open in the UK in 2014
4pc	Increase in London rooms in 2014 over 2013