



Pick a Middle East property to suit kids of any age, writes Janine Kelso

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Epic water parks and eye-popping aquariums would be impressive attractions on any family holiday, but when parents and kids can get to them without even having to leave their resort, they make an even more convincing selling point.

The Middle East is already a hit with families seeking a hassle-free holiday with wall-to-wall sunshine, white-sand beaches and endless entertainment options. Now, helping to reinforce that family-friendly reputation, lavish hotels across the region are pulling out all the stops to dazzle their younger guests with some standout features.

From the budget to the brash, we round up a handful of the best family hotels across the Middle East to please even the fussiest of broods.

1 BURJ AL ARAB, DUBAI

This luxurious sail-shaped hotel famously offers 17 types of pillow, 24-carat gold-plated iPads worth £4,500 in every room, chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royces and an army of butlers. Its children's offering is no less grand, with youngsters being treated to bespoke bed, bath and beach attire, as well as a personal consultation with the chef to make sure the menus delight their delicate taste buds.

Myriad watersports are available for the whole family to enjoy, from windsurfing and kayaking to scuba diving and banana boat rides. Best of all,

children can feast on unlimited free ice lollies on the private beach.

The 202-suite hotel has a kids' club for three to 12-year-olds, and free entry to Wild Wadi water park next door, which has 30 rides and attractions certain to keep kids of any age entertained.

Recommend that clients book a family lunch at the hotel's gorgeous Al Mahara seafood restaurant, which has a floor-to-ceiling aquarium that's home to stingrays and zebra sharks.

2 JUMEIRAH BEACH HOTEL, DUBAI

With its striking wave-like design, this 619-room hotel is one of Dubai's most instantly recognisable structures. Ticking all the boxes for fun-loving families, the hotel has six swimming pools, including a children's pool with slides, a dive centre, a climbing wall, tennis courts, banana boat rides, Hobie Cat sailing, kayaking, windsurfing and unlimited access to Wild Wadi water park.

There are 20 tempting eateries to choose from, but best for families is Beachcombers restaurant, which has live cooking stations and a designated kids' area.

Parents in need of some alone time can leave children aged two to 12 in the kids' club, which has longer-than-average opening hours from 8am until 10pm, and has a huge area devoted to playing, swimming and chilling out.

3 ST REGIS SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT, ABU DHABI

This swish hotel is perfect for families who don't want to scrimp on luxury just because they've got kids in tow. It offers 24-hour butler service, an indulgent spa and 18-hole golf course. Younger ones are equally spoiled, as they're provided with their own adorably tiny slippers and dressing gowns, as well as cups of warm milk and treats left on their pillows at bedtime.

Nature-loving little ones will like the spectacular location of this hotel on a five-mile stretch of gorgeous sandy beach, where turtles nest and dolphins can be spotted cruising the shoreline.

Elegant Resorts' senior sales and product manager Pam Rutherford rates the property highly. She says: "For one to 12-year-olds, the hotel offers the Sandcastle Club, an adventurous and enchanting play area which is set within a cave-themed space with a sandpit and an outdoor pool. There's also a family pool and a children's pool with a water slide, keeping everyone entertained".

The 377-room hotel has seven restaurants, including a beachside seafood grill and a patisserie where sweet-toothed families can gorge on handmade chocolates.

4 THE PALACE AT ONE & ONLY ROYAL MIRAGE, DUBAI

Spanning 60 acres

of manicured gardens and boasting its own dreamy beach, this 231-room hotel has all the essentials for the ultimate family escape with its relaxed vibe and top-notch facilities.

Set within the upmarket One & Only Royal Mirage complex, clients can enjoy an abundance of watersports, including sailing, windsurfing, waterskiing, kayaking and fishing.

Parents in need of a break can head off to the spa and hammam, leaving children aged from four to 11 in the safe hands of the kids' club to try their hand at camel rides, henna painting, belly dancing and more.

Fun for the whole family can be found in the two pools and on the tennis, volleyball and basketball courts.

5 JA JEBEL ALI BEACH HOTEL, DUBAI

Parents can leave their wallets at home when staying at this five-star hotel as it's one of the only hotels in Dubai to offer all-inclusive, providing "an attractive price point for families", according to Kuoni commercial and product manager Sheena Paton.

Set on a palm-fringed 800m private beach, this 231-room hotel's newest star attraction is its inflatable water park, free to all-inclusive guests. Located just steps from the hotel beach, the water park is open to anyone over the age of six who can swim. There are also two children's pools for toddlers and older kids.



Kuoni offers five nights' all-inclusive at the JA Jebel Ali Beach Hotel from £3,647 for a family of four, with Gatwick flights departing in July and transfers. kuoni.co.uk

Carrier offers five nights' B&B at Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa - Al Waha from £2,370 per family, based on two adults and one child and including flights and private transfers, for travel during the May half-term. carrier.co.uk

Elegant Resorts offers seven nights' half-board at the St Regis Saadiyat Island Resort, Abu Dhabi, from £3,820 for two adults and two children, including flights departing May 9, transfers and lounge passes. elegantresorts.co.uk

Hayes & Jarvis can arrange four nights' half-board at Jumeirah Zabeel Saray from £2,049 per family of four, including flights departing June 14. hayesandjarvis.co.uk

LEFT: Atlantis The Palm, Dubai

FAR LEFT: Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Spa & Resort, Oman



shallow children's pool, ideal for timid paddlers, while kids over the age of seven can engage in an array of watersports, including sailing and powerboat courses. There's also a sizeable playground where little ones can let loose, and with 15 restaurants and bars, there are plenty of dining options.

Travel 2's assistant product manager for the Middle East, Nathalie Jones, says: "The Hilton Abu Dhabi is a family-friendly hotel offering great activities for young children and teens. The hotel also has a private beach."

8 ATLANTIS THE PALM, DUBAI

This Vegas-like resort hotel is a favourite destination for families thanks to its on-site Lost Chambers Aquarium and Aquaventure water park, which is free and unlimited for hotel guests. The former offers a dose of wow-factor, teeming with 65,000 exotic marine animals, including sharks, jellyfish and a rare albino alligator, and is one of those rare attractions which should be a hit with kids of every age.

Aquaventure, the Middle East's largest water park, has just as

“ There's all-round family entertainment in the form of camel rides, horse riding, watersports and diving

broad an appeal, with seven heart-pumping water slides - two of which catapult riders through shark-filled lagoons - alongside a gentler water playground for fun-loving tots to splash about in. That's not the end of the story at this property, which is as much an entertainment complex as it is a family hotel: there are dolphin swims at Dolphin Bay; a kids' club for three to 12-year-olds boasting activities galore, including two climbing walls and underwater movie screenings; while older siblings can head to teen hangout Club Rush to watch movies and play video games.

On a more practical note, the resort's 20 restaurants cater to even the fussiest of eaters, with allergy-conscious menus and cuisines that cover everything from sushi to pizza.

9 JUMEIRAH ZABEEL SARAY, DUBAI

A climbing wall and cinema are just a few of the cool facilities on offer for children at this Ottoman-inspired hotel. Set on a glorious stretch of sandy beach, the opulent 405-room property is located at the western end of the dramatic palm-shaped island Jumeirah Palm.

Families can enjoy one free entry to Wild Wadi water park, which boasts the world's first barrelling wave ride and one of

the largest wave pools.

There is a kids' club for children aged from four to 16, with more than 50 activities on offer, including a mini water park and soft-play area for little ones. Active families can also enjoy tennis and watersports, and if parents fancy some quiet time, babysitting can be arranged.

"The Jumeirah Zabeel Saray is a great option for families with plenty to do," says Hayes & Jarvis Middle East destination manager Sheryl Drane. "It has

flexible half-board dine-around and complimentary water park access, and the hotel offers fantastic kids' and teen clubs, which is all you need to keep the children busy while relaxing."

10 JUMEIRAH MINA A'SALAM, DUBAI

Little nippers will love feeding sea turtles in the lagoon of this 291-room boutique hotel, which sits within the expansive Madinat Jumeirah resort. With an emphasis on water-related fun, guests travel around the resort via its two-mile network of waterways in small traditional boats, as well as enjoying unlimited access to the Wild Wadi water park.

Grown-ups can indulge in the spa or shop in the traditional-style souk, after dropping children off at the kids' club (for four to 12-year-olds).

For all-round family entertainment, there are tennis and squash clubs, a range of watersports - from windsurfing to waterskiing - and more than 40 restaurants. Parents who fancy a date night can take advantage of the hotel's babysitting service. tw



LEFT: Sinbad's Kids' Club, Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai

aged from four to eight, which offers a range of Omani-inspired activities such as henna painting and camel rides.

Older kids in search of adventure can have a go at diving or sailing, while teens can spend their days in GameZ, a games room loaded with video games, electronic darts, air hockey and snooker.

Family rooms have interconnecting bedrooms, all of which feature a DVD player and a PlayStation. As an added selling point, guests can also use the facilities of the sister properties Al Bandar and Al Husn, including 11 gourmet restaurants.

7 HILTON, ABU DHABI

Located on the buzzing Corniche, this plush Abu Dhabi stalwart is set right on its own sandy beach.

The 327-room property has a

The resort's 10 restaurants serve an array of international cuisine, including Italian and Mexican fare, but do suggest that parents spoil themselves at least once by dropping their brood off at the crèche, kids' or teens' clubs, and enjoying a meal at DiVAZ, a floating restaurant where diners can tuck into just-caught fish while soaking up the stunning views.

For an extra charge, there's all-round family entertainment in the form of camel rides, horse riding, watersports and diving.

6 AL WAHA AT SHANGRI-LA'S BARR AL JISSAH RESORT & SPA, OMAN

The largest of the three hotels at this five-star resort, the 262-room Al Waha has been created with families in mind, with pools for toddlers and older kids, a water play area and a cheery kids' club for children

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