

Q&A

GLENN NIALA

KIDS' CLUB & RECREATION MANAGER, SAII LAGOON MALDIVES

INTERVIEW BY Natalie Marsh

Q. The Maldives has traditionally been associated with couples – how is SAii Lagoon Maldives changing that?

A. Often in the Maldives you'll find just one property per island, but on this island we have three [SAii Lagoon Maldives, Hard Rock Hotel Maldives and The Marina @ Crossroads], which means we're able to offer a wider selection of activities and facilities. We have 12 restaurants in total, lots of watersports and two kids' clubs – one at SAii Lagoon and one at Hard Rock – and those staying at the latter can use both. They offer great programmes combining fitness, fun and creativity for kids of all ages.

Q. What is there to do?

A. There are many activities, including cooking classes, mocktail making, snorkelling, watersports and arts and crafts. We also run dance and fitness sessions. We always try to make sure our activities are fun enough to appeal across the board and, in keeping with the SAii brand, we strive to make sure they're authentic to the Maldives.

Q. Which activities are the most popular?

A. The most popular activities are those that give children the chance to really get stuck in. Kids tend to come right after breakfast, with some staying for a couple of hours and some staying all day. A few guests come two or three times a day just to join in the daily activities.



“Our activities for kids include watersports, arts and crafts, cooking classes and mocktail making”



GLENN'S TOP TIP

There are lots of hotels with kids' clubs in the Maldives, but make sure you research all the different activities on offer. Find out which age groups they cater for and whether they offer activities for older children too, to make sure you're suggesting the right option for clients.

Q. What do you do to ensure your role as a kids' club manager is successful?

A. It's vital to have a really well-organised structure to support programmes and ensure everything runs smoothly. If you're bringing together people with different nationalities, ages, backgrounds and personalities, I would say the most important thing is to be clear about what the objectives are. We train the team carefully and give clear aims and responsibilities to ensure it all runs like clockwork. Then we can overcome any challenges we face, and ensure we have a happy team and happy families.

Q. How have you adapted to changes due to Covid-19?

A. Some things have of course

had to be changed. Guests are expecting enhanced health and sanitation measures now. This includes deep-cleaning kids' club facilities, cleaning and disinfecting all toys and equipment, and checking kids' temperatures on entry. All team members also wear face masks, and all children and staff are obliged to wash their hands before each activity.

Q. Why do you think the Maldives is becoming more popular for families?

A. I believe demand has been driven by the development of new family-oriented resorts here. While

there are still a large number of adult-only islands, many have developed family-friendly facilities. There are also many more affordable options available in the Maldives now than there were previously, and with all-inclusive being the norm, families can budget everything in from the start.

Q. Are you seeing growing interest from the British market?

A. Absolutely. We already witnessed new business in the fourth quarter of 2020, and we're seeing strong demand for 2022. We also anticipate increased demand when the UK begins to relax its travel restrictions. **TW**