



No Worries

Portugal's Martinhal Family Hotels & Resorts keeps the whole gang in mind **by ELYSE GLICKMAN**

WHEN IT COMES TO UPSCALE FAMILY TRAVEL, on-site kids' clubs are as much of a selling point of five-star luxury resorts as are pool areas, spas and restaurants. And it's more so if parents are not keen on "family resorts" defined by cartoon characters, movie merchandise and boisterous crowds. Hoteliers with a vested interest in family clientele recognize that a supervised room with games, books and crayons, along with pool time, is not going to cut it with a modern generation of worldly kids.

By observing the reactions of their own children during family vacations, finance executives Roman and Chitra Stern devised a business model for an all-inclusive five-star resort concept based in Portugal. Rooms, amenities, activities and packages would not just be built around and customized to all members of a family, but also made for all kinds of families, from couples with one or two children to extended family groups and LGBTQ families. Portuguese destinations would be an integral part of the experience, so each property would be designed around what its location had to offer.

The Stern's vision came to life in 2010 with the first Martinhal Family

Hotels & Resorts location in Sagres, in the Algarve region of southern Portugal. Their formula proved successful, leading to an opening in Quinta do Lago, also in the Algarve, in 2015, as well as in Cascais, just west of Lisbon, in 2016.

Later in 2016, the Chiado location opened in Lisbon. Billed as the "world's first city-center elegant family hotel," it offers a city spin on the Martinhal approach to family travel.

"Martinhal's expression of five-star luxury is more interactive, immersive and inclusive than other luxury properties," explained Chitra Stern. "When parents want to explore on their own, they can leave children under the care of a fully trained staff with peace of mind. Kids, meanwhile, can play without fear but also have age-appropriate experiences specific to Portugal. We also offer





Opposite page:
The Cascais
location opened in
2016. This page,
from top: Kids
have plenty of
space to play; a
villa kids' room;
the Cascais
property is located
near the coast.



“Martinhal’s expression of five-star luxury is more interactive, immersive and inclusive than other luxury properties.”

cultural and nature-focused activities incorporating the entire family. This results in a vacation that’s more meaningful, and memories that are more cohesive for the entire family.”

According to the Sterns, Martinhal further distinguishes

itself by allowing families to customize the stay for individual children’s needs when booking. By paying attention to custom kids’ amenities kits, safety features and dietary requirements in the rooms and villas as well as in public areas, Martinhal resorts free up parents to concentrate on enjoying time with the kids, grandparents and other family members in the group.

“All parents have to do is pack some clothing and fly the family over,” Stern said. “We provide everything else, from a selection of kitchen-made baby food and special baby menus, to simple foods for young kids, and gourmet options for parents and teens. We have playrooms set up in the dining rooms so that when kids finish their meals before the parents, they can play or run around outside under staff supervision. We also provide the means for parents to introduce their kids to a broader range of foods and flavors than they otherwise may not encounter at home. The beach resort locations offer ‘picnic breakfasts’ for mornings when parents want a quiet one-on-one start to the day with their kids.”

All Martinhal resorts have dedicated programs and play areas for infants, toddlers and older children that are colorful and inviting, but not “branded” (except for Martinhal’s own fox mascots and vintage cars adapted for children). Stern notes that parents are encouraged to spend time in the baby area of the Kids Club so they can witness their youngest children enjoying the experience.

The beach resort properties also offer interesting menus of outdoor activities for the whole family, running the gamut from bike rentals (at all locations) to equestrian programs, surfing lessons, fishing, golf and tennis. The Sagres and Cascais resorts are outfitted with Finisterra Spas, which offer services for adults, teens and children. The Chiado property is walking distance from major museums, the waterfront and public transportation. In addition to tours, it also has a “Pajama Club” program until 10 p.m., allowing parents to enjoy date nights. ●

The Details: Martinhal Family Hotels & Resorts
(www.martinhal.com)