

THE sweetest ADVENTURE

Take a bunch of children. Add a dash of tropical weather and a heap of fun. Fold in a team of high-spirited counsellors. Remove the parents and leave to simmer. The result: a place where kids and teens can be anything they want to be.

WORDS: CANDICE LANDIE
(@CANDICE_LANDIE)



Camouflage jacket. Check. Goggles. Check. Loaded rifle. Check. Game face. Double check. I laboriously analyse my surroundings like a lioness at sunset in search of fresh meat. Eureka! I find it – the perfect tree behind which to execute my strategy: tall and wide to hide me yet close enough to enemy lines for a few precision shots.

My hungry eyes zone in on a vulnerable target. She looks weak, worn out from the day's activities. I reckon she won't be able to outrun my bullet. With the butt of my rifle pressed against my right shoulder, I mark my aim and fire, hitting my target on the left hip. Her distressed cry rips through the air. It was my first attempt at paintball and victory was sweeter than cane fields in the summer time.

This is just one of more than a hundred activities on offer at Sugar Bay Resort for kids and teens in Zinkwazi, located along the far north coast of Durban. Strategically set next to a lagoon and beach, you can do everything from dance lessons, arts and crafts, wall climbing to kayaking and body boarding.

Blueprint for kids

Professionally designed by husband-and-wife duo Nick and Zoë Ellender, Sugar Bay stretches over 6.5ha of land, with enough space for a soccer field, 25m pool, obstacle course, dining room and theatre. The waterfront has private access to the lagoon and beach, and is stocked with boats, boards and water toys.

Safety first

It wasn't merely the activities that captured me but rather the young guests' safety and wellbeing. As a mother, I know the paranoia that comes with leaving your kids in an unfamiliar environment, especially a place that has, in peak season, up to 200 youngsters. Will they be safe? Will they receive the attention they're accustomed to? What if they don't fit in?

Which is why the highlight of my visit was watching the Sugar Bay counsellors at work. They're best described as a special breed: young adults with a zest for life, unlimited patience and infinite energy. At the camp, they take on aliases such as Rooibos, Milo, Alaska, Dodge, Mozam and Dashboard. As different and rather eccentric as these alter egos may appear, they all have one thing in common: an immense passion for their work. And it shows on the faces of the young girls and boys who repeatedly return to the camp. For added peace of mind, electric fences, CCTV surveillance, night watchmen and fire alarms secure the resort.



#FYI

- SUGAR BAY RESORT HAS A HEALTH CENTRE FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES.
- COUNSELLORS ARE TRAINED IN THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS.
- EVERY ACTIVITY PROMOTES MENTAL CONCENTRATION, PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.
- RELIGIOUS AND DIETARY PREFERENCES CAN BE CATERED FOR.
- EVERY WEEK AT SUGAR BAY IS UNIQUE BECAUSE THEY HAVE DIFFERENT THEMES. THIS IS IN ADDITION TO THE NORMAL 100 ACTIVITIES.
- NO TWO PEOPLE ARE EVER ALLOWED TO BE ALONE TOGETHER. A CHILD CANNOT BE ALONE WITH A COUNSELLOR OR ANOTHER CHILD.





Get in touch

holidays@
sugarbay.co.za

www.sugar
bay.co.za

Around the table

At the end of each full day, the kids retreat to their resting grounds – spacious wooden cabins with en-suite bathroom facilities. Two or more counsellors are assigned to each cabin, where the girls and boys are separated. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at set times every day; it's compulsory for all campers (counsellors included) to dine together. Nutrition is an important deciding factor when it comes to the menu.

Over breakfast, I was invited to join a yoga session on the beach. You're probably expecting me to brag about how this was the most invigorating workout my body has undergone in a long while. But I decided to decline for one reason: the morning sessions start at 5:30am. Instead I chose to leave the early morning rising to the younger generation – the ones blessed with the abundant stamina.

I spent most of day two hopping from one activity to the next, observing the kids' reactions, taking in their joy and anticipation. I saw a young me in many of their faces. Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher, poet and composer, says it best: "In every real man a child is hidden who wants to play." At Sugar Bay Resort, you never stop playing! Don't believe me? Just ask your inner child...

LETTERS FROM PARENTS

"My son had the time of his life. He said the counsellors treated him as one of them. He never felt out of place or spoken down to. They have made such an impact on him. He tells me he wants to become a teacher and treat kids like he was on camp because that's how they should be treated. To a little boy who lacks a role model in his life, this experience was the best thing for him."

Desireé Pretorius

"I was definitely not going to send my daughter to camp for an entire week. Which crazy parent does that? But she still chats about her incredible time at Sugar Bay. She also added that the meals were more satisfying than her mom's. A special thank you to Tomado, Flash and Kodak. These names came up in all conversations."

Prem Soobramoney

"My kids have come home excited and happy. They had a wonderful holiday filled with activity and adventure. Thanks so much for taking care of them, especially the one with delicate skin. I am a happy mom. I will definitely recommend you to our friends."

Petra Bainbridge

