



Five-star

ENVIRONMENTALISM



Relaxing in environmentally-friendly luxury sounds like an impossible dream. But at Ziggy Bay, in Oman, the two ideals exist in perfect harmony

Georgina Wilson-Powell

The Six Senses Hideaway Ziggy Bay is exactly that. Hidden behind a mountain range in Oman, when you turn off the tarmac road and rattle over rocky desert you can't see the gatehouse. It looks like a dead end, then, like a trick of the light, it appears and you're off, twisting up and over the mountain. The resort is made up of 60 odd private villas, which each have their own infinity pool, deck and either have beach access, or are a mere 10 me-

tres from the shore. Ziggy Bay is a retreat for the recluse in you.

Nestled between the stark Musandam landscape and the azure sea, the self-contained five-star resort is paradise for those wishing to spend some quality time with family or friends. Your stay can be as simple as sitting in your completely secluded flint pool with a personal butler and chef on call, available for everything from simple room service to bespoke barbecues or champagne breakfasts. Or, if you want to leave your villa, you can sample the luxurious treats your hosts can whip up for you, which include private dining on top of a mountain for a romantic tete-a-tete, paragliding, wine tasting in the extensive cellar. You can also spend an hour or a day in the relaxing spa or take part in a yoga class or two.

It would be easy to write off Ziggy Bay as an indulgent treat for the rich and famous, but Six Senses doesn't just look after its guests, it also looks after the environment, and this ethos is evident in everything the resort does. For example, it does not buy

bottled water, instead it uses purified local well water served in reusable glass bottles, while food waste is composted or fed to the local herd of goats.

With a full time environmental officer in residence, there are plenty of green projects underway. These vary in size from giving monthly environmental training to staff, to long-term goals such as collaborating with the Environmental Society of Oman and the British Biosphere Expedition to help protect the local coral reef. The resort is even investing in a South Indian wind farm to help offset its carbon emissions.

At a more local level, the resort puts a percentage of its revenue into a social and environmental fund, which has seen it build new homes for villagers who live nearby, and until the summer paid for their children to be schooled in English and healthcare.

Ziggy Bay is also aiming to become fully self-sufficient. It has an organic garden to service its restaurants, which all staff help maintain, and is currently planning a bamboo garden. Bamboo is one of the most efficient plants for absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and produces 35 per

cent more oxygen than other plants. Until recently, guests could work in the garden or help to build walls, which has popular with people who expect luxury, but who also like to get their hands dirty.

A hotel's green credentials are often far more evident on its website propaganda than in the real world, and becoming environmentally friendly can be a convenient excuse for a hotel to tighten its luxury belt.

However, Ziggy Bay proves it is possible to offer a five-star break without having to wreck environmental havoc in the process.

The resort was a winner of the Gold Award for Best Environmental Hotel at this year's MENA Travel Awards and also scooped the first ever Estidama Sustainability Award from the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council.

Not only does Ziggy Bay prove it's cool to care about the effects our lifestyles have on the environment, it's also reassuring to know that with its help, we can be part of the solution, even when we're relaxing!

Man of the house!

When the wife and kids are away on holiday, how do the husbands cope with life as a 'bachelor'?

Alison Goveia

It's summertime, and once again expat families all over Dubai are jetting off on their holidays to escape the heat. Some return to their home countries to enjoy two months or more of cooler weather with relatives and friends, while others head to tourist destinations in the Far East, Europe and America.

But while the wife and kids are making the most of their break, spare a thought for the unfortunate fathers who are left behind to sweat out the summer on their own. These so-called

married bachelors remain in Dubai for a host of unavoidable reasons such as a lack of leave, dwindling financial resources, or, for some, because it is their only chance to get away from the chaos of family life and have a vacation of their own — at home!

These guys hold fort until the 'lady of the house' gets back. Husbands are forced to not only keep the house neat and clean, but also take care of other important chores like paying bills, buying groceries, walking the dog and remembering birthdays.

Now is the time when the wife is missed the most, if only they had paid more attention when she was around!

Take-away menus now become more popular and sought-after than before. After several attempts at trying to cook and burning the dishes, not to mention the food, most men prefer to order take-outs. Sales at restaurants experience a slight increase during the hotter months, bringing some relief to busi-

nesses suffering from the annual summer downturn.

Delivery boys can be seen in great numbers, tearing through the streets on their bicycles or motorbikes, delivering meals at break-neck speed.

Venu a delivery boy who has been delivering take-away orders to customers for the past five years, says: "Every year, we see an increase in take-away orders during the summer. This year is no exception. This boost in orders keeps the economy alive. It is a chain reaction — more orders mean more food to buy and more food to cook. It all helps to make more men happy!"

Mohit, a stay-at-home dad for the holidays, says: "Cooking at home is tedious. I come home late from work most nights. I would rather starve than have to cook in front of a stove after spending long hours stuck in traffic jams."

Another bachelor dad, Arun, says: "Cheap and affordable food is now

available in the supermarkets near where I live in Karama. Not only is the food tasty and to my liking, it saves me time and energy. Cooking is now a distant memory for me."

Vincent, another lonely bachelor dad, had this to say: "I spend most of my waking hours travelling to and from the office, do you expect me to work at home as well? After slogging it out at work, I prefer to unwind at a nearby hotel. The food is very economical and I enjoy the music."

"After spending several hours at the hotel, I head home for a few hours of sleep before I have to get up to an alarm clock, go to work and start the same routine all over again."

The life of a married bachelor does have its hardships, but it also has its benefits. However, just when it starts to get too lonely and boring at home, it is time to pick up the wife and kids from the airport, and the holiday is well and truly over.

