

SPONGEBOB MEETS GOURMET INCLUSIVE



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Karisma Hotels & Resorts is poised to open the first Nickelodeon international hotel, the Nickelodeon Hotel & Resort in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic. The resort, which is set to debut in May, is targeted to families and multigenerational groups, markets that Karisma has long specialized in.

"Families have always been important to Karisma Hotels & Resorts. Generational travel is not a new trend and is a key market segment for any brand," says Mandy Chomat, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Karisma. "Karisma has approached the family market as we do all markets – by delivering unforgettable experiences that foster togetherness and are realized through exceptional service, innovative amenities and accommodations, stylish design and unique programming."

The beachfront Nickelodeon resort will feature 208 oversized suites, including what Karisma calls Jacuzzi Pads, Jacuzzi Swim-up Pads, Jacuzzi Flats and Jacuzzi Swim-up Flats. Four two- and three-bedroom Super Villas include the Pineapple Villa, inspired by SpongeBob SquarePants' own home in Bikini Bottom.

At the heart of the resort, the Nickelodeon Village will offer a wide array of areas, features and amenities for kids.

Due to early interest and demand, Karisma says it plans to open a second Nickelodeon resort on Mexico's Riviera Maya.

It was through Karisma's partnership with Nickelodeon to create the Nickelodeon Experience at the company's Azul Hotels that plans for a Nickelodeon hotel took root. The Nickelodeon Experience gives kids

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the chance to interact with Nickelodeon characters and includes custom kids' check-ins, Nickelodeon Concierges, a Nick Toy Lending Library, character dining opportunities, character meet-and-greets, and the Kids Club by Nickelodeon.

"Family travel is an extremely important part of the mix for Karisma Hotels & Resorts – in addition to romance and foodie travel," says Chomat. "We've been pleased to see a steady increase in families visiting Karisma Hotels & Resorts since the introduction of new programs like the Nickelodeon Experience at Azul Hotels, and new properties such as Generations Riviera Maya and the Nickelodeon Hotels & Resorts Punta Cana."

Karisma, which has traditionally attracted a strong following from the East Coast, Midwest and South, is attracting increasing numbers of families from the West Coast now that flights have been introduced out of California and Washington, he says.

Chomat calls Karisma's Gourmet Inclusive Experience the company's "biggest differentiator" when it comes to distinguishing the company from its competition.

The Gourmet Inclusive Experience includes accommodations, all meals at all of the resorts' restaurants, premium drinks, in-room minibar, 24-hour room service, and personalized service, including a full-service

concierge, hospitality desk, beach and pool butlers, and romance maitre d's.

"Our Gourmet Inclusive properties were designed to ensure there's something for everyone, including babies, toddlers, kids, teenagers and, of course, parents and grandparents," says Chomat.

In the final analysis, Chomat attributes much of Karisma's success to the travel agent community. "Travel agents play a key role for Karisma, including in its family niche," he says. "While many other players have shifted to focus on direct bookings, Karisma Hotels & Resorts has reinforced its commitment to our valued partners by introducing new incentives and tools that help agents sell."

The company has demonstrated its commitment to agents – specifically its nearly 800 Gourmet Inclusive Vacation Consultants (GIVC) – by boosting commissions from 19 to 21 percent.

The 21 percent commission, which took effect on Jan. 1, applies to all Karisma properties and all room categories sold by GIVC specialist agents.

The GIVC program, which was launched in 2008, provides top-producing Karisma agents with a portfolio of marketing tools and sales incentives.

For more information on Karisma's brands and agent-friendly programs, call 800-899-3191 or visit www.karismatravelagents.com.

