



RATED>TRAVEL

Kinder surprise

HIGH JINKS: Older kids are kept busy



JUMP around on a bouncy castle, crawl on all fours through a soft-play adventure playground before plunging head-first into a sea of balls.

Right, that's the dads sorted, now what can the kids do?

Welcome to the world of Kinderhotels, a unique collection of family-friendly hotels in the Austrian Alps that make it really easy to take little ones abroad.

There is so much to keep your tiny terrors occupied, the biggest

BY DOUGLAS WIGHT

dilemma is what to do next. And the great bit is that parents and grandparents can join in as much as they like.

Not all Kinderhotels are alike, because they are independently owned and managed. Some are luxury hotels with spas, swimming pools and tennis courts, while others are simple Alpine farmsteads.

We enjoyed a fabulous stay at the Hagleitner Hotel in Zell am See, an hour's drive from Salzburg in the stunning Alps.

The Hagleitner boasts five-smiley status—the Kinderhotel grading system that lets you know what services you can expect from your

hotel. Five smileys indicates the top level of child care with a maximum number of fully-qualified on-site childminders, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a hi-tech child monitoring system and four-star accommodation.

The hotels also supply buggies, changing equipment, sterilising kits, bibs and organic baby food, all free.

Circus

To anyone who's struggled to take babies abroad and keep their luggage allowance below that of a travelling circus this is something of a godsend.

Airport transfers also add to the hassle-free trip with taxis that arrive

complete with the right child-seats. The Hagleitner stands out because its luxurious Mavida Spa—a child-free zone—gives adults some respite from the children.

Wearied grown-ups can relax with a stress-busting massage, bob about in a flotation bath, kick back on water beds or lounge in the sauna.

If though, like us, relaxation means being around your excited offspring all day long, this is the place for you.

You'll need the little blighters by your side if you're going to play on all the cool toys and bouncy castles.

The safety of children on holiday has become a burning issue since the Madeleine McCann case. And

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the Hagleitner offers a whole range of childcare services.

Qualified childminders are on hand as babysitters and they also staff the crèche and kids' clubs, where activities are provided for children up to 14.

Determined to test the facilities, we left our two girls in each place for a morning.

Parents are given a mobile phone on arrival and, to their credit, carers ring at the first sign of any problems.

And if you use a babysitter, the hotel provides monitors so you can listen into the bedroom.

Hagleitner also pioneers an innovative service where the cordless phone in the room is

paired with the mobile you're given. Any noise in the room triggers the alarm and your phone rings, enabling parents to hear a disturbance or crying baby.

Away from the hotel, the picturesque surroundings of Zell Am See offer lots for families, regardless of the season.

Relaxed

Set up initially as a ski resort, the village provides ski lessons and transport to many of the local resorts, particularly slopes on Kitzsteinhorn glacier in nearby Kaprun in winter months.

But in the summer the slopes are transformed into excellent

destinations for mountain bikers and hikers. And the recent acquisition of a site on the banks of Lake Zell offers free watersports for guests.

There's no excuse for not exploring—the hotel even has free use of mountain bikes with child seats.

Even the stress of meal times is removed with a relaxed buffet service that provides wholesome grub for tots and delicious spreads for grown-ups.

The Kinderhotel idea is a great concept that hotels in the UK could do with following. As any parent knows, guaranteed family-friendly service can be hard to find.

GETTING THERE

THERE is a good choice of scheduled or low-cost flights from many UK airports to Austria. See www.ba.com, www.easyJet.com or www.ryanair.com

Kinderhotels offer all-inclusive holidays from £546 a week (family of three). For information visit www.kinderhotels.co.uk or call 0845 0822 422 (1850 930 430 from Ireland). For flight connections check Austrian National Tourist Office www.austria.info "How to get there". For car hire from £22 per day see www.holidayautos.co.uk or call 0870 400 0010. For airport parking see www.aph.com



THE HOTELS THAT ARE JUST MADE FOR KIDS



ALPS AT HAND: Stunning scenery



PLAIN SAILING: Kids can try all sorts of activities



LUXURY: Hagleitner's outdoor pool



CRECHE COURSE: Non-stop fun for younger kids



SPLASHDOWN: And there's a choice of pools