

KICKING KIDS' CLUBS

Forget blunt colouring pens and crappy sticker books: these are super-sharp places to get smart

SIX SENSES ZIGHY BAY OMAN

Where can you go in the depths of winter that doesn't require a long-haul flight? Well, this is easy to get to, immensely good looking (sleek villas with private pools), the service is of the butler-with-buggy variety and, best of all, children will be superbly looked after. The whole place is a Middle Eastern wonderland with grazing goats, fig and lemon trees lining sandy paths that you can wander barefoot or by bicycle, vast buffets of the freshest fruits and sizzling mezze, and, ever-present in the background, those mysterious mountains. Chaica's, the kids' club for four-to-12-year-olds, is a riot of salt-dough art, rock painting and beach bowls, but it's the Teen Club that really revs up the thrills with adventure hikes, wadi swimming, canyoning, raft making, archery and Bear Grylls-style survival skills. When you want to gather en masse, sunset cruises into Haffa Bay (where local children take boats to school) or dhow trips with picnics are fun. There are also cinema screenings on the beach with popcorn and incredible homemade ice creams such as rose water, fragrant cinnamon or

saffron and honey. More traditional taste buds will enjoy the mini fish and chips, and maybe a banana split for pudding. Despite all the whizz-bang trimmings (Wi-Fi, private wine cellars), it very much feels like an Omani enclave – colourful, atmospheric and natural. And it's perfectly acceptable to lounge around on floor cushions, playing backgammon before feasting on a whole Shua lamb cooked underground in a sand pit for hours.

JOURNEY TIME A six-hour flight to Dubai then a two-hour drive
TIME DIFFERENCE +4 hours

INSIDER TIP The spa has the sweetest, stickiest dates, delicious ginger tea and some of the most intuitive therapists anywhere. Try the Indian head massage to release all that neck tension and leave you floating.

BOOK IT Cleveland Collection (+44 20 7843 3531; www.clevelandcollection.co.uk) offer seven nights at Six Senses Zighy Bay from £1,559 per adult and £279 per child sharing, including flights and transfers.

