

time out

The magic of Shangri-La

Looking for a family weekend away or holiday break? Here's just the place

FOUND IN LIMPOPO, a short hour's drive outside of Johannesburg, Shangri-La Country Hotel and Spa is the ideal weekend family getaway. Named for the fictional, mystical place described in James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*, Shangri-La is synonymous with a hidden paradise - isolated from the outside world. Shangri-La means "the place of eternal youth", and once you've entered the magnificent archways of this jewel in the Waterberg, time stands still. The secluded sub-tropical paradise in the heart of the Bushveld offers all the amenities and service you'd expect from a four-star property - without the hefty price tag.

The hotel, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is the ideal destination for families, offering child-care facilities, family-friendly restaurants and numerous activities for both young and old.

The hotel has a fenced game breeding programme, and you are spoilt with views of springbok, impala, nyala and rare breeds of antelope. To keep the kids occupied, take a hike to the majestic 350-year-old wild fig tree or play a game of putt-putt or volleyball. Other family-friendly

activities include a pool and a giant outdoor chess set.

For the more adventurous, there's game viewing, zip-lining, 4x4 trails, hot-air ballooning, horse-riding and abseiling in the area which enjoys a mild year-round climate. Nearby Modimolle has numerous historical places of interest and Bela Bela, just under 25km away, is renowned for its therapeutic hot springs, spa and endless fun in the Forever Resorts Warmbaths water park.

During the school holidays, Shangri-La offers supervised children's activities. Budding chefs can don their chef whites and join a Junior MasterChef Class to learn how to conjure up delicious dishes, guided by the in-house culinary team. For the adventurous, there's action cricket, touch rugby and action soccer. Other fun activities include clay building, "eye-spy", painting, marshmallow golf, musical chairs and much more. In summer, there are swimming pool games in a safe, monitored environment.

At night, kids join in the a la carte dining experience, which includes a selection of themed dinners including Greek, Chinese, Italian and braai evenings. If you want some alone time, book a child-minder to look after your kiddies while you indulge in a romantic candle-lit dinner and the children are treated to a kiddies' movie night to watch the latest animated and family-friendly blockbusters, complete with popcorn, sodas or pure fruit juices for the health-conscious parent. Child-minders can also be pre-arranged for day-time baby-sitting duties, or to watch over youngsters in their dedicated children's room, which is equipped with toys, the latest X-box game, beanbags, a flat-screen TV, loom-bands and colouring books.

Families are accommodated in one of four family units, which have adjoining rooms for children, king-sized beds for the adults, showers or baths. Two of the family rooms have prime positioning near the game camps so you can see the antelope, indigenous Boschveld chickens, monkeys and baboons from the wide colonial porch. Besides the wildlife, the hotel's resident water-loving Labradors and coy cats provide endless amusement and occasional friendly companionship.

Another fantastic family activity is the highly recommended star-gazing in the rustic amphitheatre or cosy boma. Wait for the stars to come out and showcase the Southern Hemisphere's striking Milky Way; from the Southern Cross to Orion, depending on the time of the year, guests young and old will be amazed. The setting of both venues is on the edge of Shangri-La's main building and the only light is from the fire that crackles in the background, while the sounds of the vervet monkeys, meerkats and owls creates the mood of being in the heart of Africa.

A true family experience. **FH**



The Family Package, which includes kiddies programme activities, is available during the October and December school holidays. Pay only R2 290 per family per night inclusive of dinner and breakfast in a two-bedroom Family Room, offering one main bedroom, sleeping two adults, and an inter-leading single bedroom for one child.

For more information and to book, call Shangri-La direct on (27) (014) 718 1600; email bookings@shangrila.co.za or visit www.shangrila.co.za.