

Hot spots *Atlantis, The Palm, Dubai*

What is it? An almighty US\$1.5 billion project that opened recently in Dubai. With 1,539 rooms in a resort that sprawls over 46 hectares, Atlantis, The Palm, offers an open-air marine centre packed with dolphins, 17 restaurants, a host of luxury boutiques and Aquaventure – a water-themed amusement park. **Can I really swim with sharks?** The main attraction at Aquaventure, Atlantis' sprawling water park, is the



Ziggurat, an unattractive 30-metre monument-cum-water slide. Guests make what is called the “leap of faith” into a shark-infested lagoon. Just don’t let on that the sharks and the people are separated by a thick sheet of glass.

What else makes the water park so special?

Aquaventure’s massive beach is linked with 2.3km of man-made tidal rivers that churn through high-intensity rapids, waterfalls and wave surges, which guests ride through on inflatable rafts. It’s all surrounded by a lush, green, tropical landscape – planted by man, of course. Don’t drink cocktails in the water, though. You may think it’s a tropical paradise, but a guard with a whistle will soon burst that bubble.

How can I meet the dolphins? Dolphin Bay is a strictly supervised education centre where you can swim with them. It’s not as personal as you might like – you’re bundled into a group of ten for the meet – but it’s still worth it to see a dolphin smile up-close.

Where’s the best place to eat? The snobbish Nobu is already booked until Christmas, but it is Ronda Locatelli’s Italian excellence that’s getting foodies

excited all over town. The Michelin starred restaurant is set out around a giant, mushroom-shaped four-furnace pizza oven.

What are the rooms like? They range from regular guest rooms to the presidential suites at the top. With en suite his-and-hers bathrooms, complete with hot-jet tubs and a private butler you might think you’ve died and gone to artificial heaven.

What are the best rooms available? Undoubtedly the Neptune and Poseidon suites in the Lost Chambers, a series of rooms and halls built below the water line of the Ambassador Lagoon. Here you can do whatever it is you do in your bedroom or bathroom, under the watchful eyes of over 65,000 exotic sea creatures.

Can I go for the day? Pint-sized guests can enter Aquaventure for 190 dirhams (HK\$400). For guests taller than 1.1 metres, the price is 220 dirhams.

And the cost to stay? Room rates range from US\$454 to almost US\$9,000, for the Lost Chamber suites. All rooms include free access to Aquaventure. For details, visit www.atlantisthepalm.com, or call +971 4 426 1000. *Rebecca Wicks*