



My dad always tells the story of meeting his best friend, Columba, a Northern Irish millionaire, in **Club Med** Corfu back in 1964. They were competing all night to get a young Spanish lady's attention. Columba won her heart, but when he tried to bring her back to his hut, she revealed she was a nun and ran away in tears. They spent the rest of the **holiday** laughing over it at the bar, and the past five decades recounting how **Club Med** was the best **holiday** they'd ever had.

I'd heard on the grapevine, however, that Club Med's glory days were behind them and they'd morphed into just another all-inclusive resort with buffets and bingo. So it was with mixed feelings my family and I boarded a charter plane to Morocco.

Things looked rather dubious when we drove through Agadir with the resort rep. Frankly, it's not the nicest looking



We spent a large chunk of our week luxuriating in lazy breakfasts with our son, Charlie, having wine-soaked lunches *sans* child, and having the *cratic* with other guests over dinner. We'd flit between the communal or private tables, depending on how social we felt, and the food, given its buffet status, was a something of a revelation. Various chef's stations would set up on the terraces at meal times, serving up an amazing variety of dishes. As **Club Med** is a French-run resort, the standard of cuisine was – as you'd expect from a nation obsessed with freshness, flavour and the finest ingredients – superb. The wine supply was endless, and should you fancy a brandy, cocktail or fresh juice, your wish was their command.

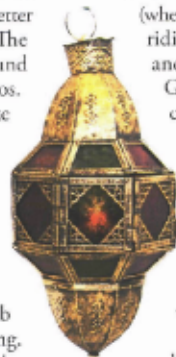
The parents' PARTY

spot, but the minute we entered the large wooden gates of **Club Med**, we were transported to paradise, where traditional Moorish buildings, lush palm-fringed gardens, walls swathed in bougainvillea, and pretty blue ponds rest in the midday sun.

The first of many bubbly GOs (**Club Med** staff) we encountered escorted us to our quarters – a small cottage-like room, with rather basic interiors, but with all the essentials and, better still, an annex room for our toddler. The cottages are set out in a semi-circle around a tropical garden, all with adjoining patios. The set-up nurtured an almost kibbutz-like vibe among guests, and brought me back to my backpacking days, when I'd pass many happy nights outside my room, chitchatting with like-minded travellers.

In contrast to the calmness of the cottages, down by the beach, the resort's main hub of dining terraces, bars, lounges, shops, a theatre, nightclub and various kids' amenities was buzzing. Upon first entering it on White Night (they have colour themes every evening), we were greeted not just by the many GOs, but plenty of guests, who came up to chat with our little boy. Having spent a lot of time in **hotels** and self-catering villas, where you'd spend weeks without befriending another soul, this unguarded friendliness was refreshing.

Want to take the hard work out of a **holiday** with little ones? **LIZ DWYER** unearths a Moroccan resort where parents can relax.



After breakfast, we'd drop Charlie off to the Mini Club. When he wasn't whisked off to the resort's Wild West ranch (where kids play tennis, try their hand at archery or horse riding), he ran amok on treasure hunts, had tea parties and took part in a fancy dress parade. The Mini Club GOs are all fully qualified childcare workers, who come from the Mary Poppins school of fun.

My husband played on the resort's golf course most mornings, while paddling in the sea was about the height of my pulse-raising activities.

Night time on **holidays** can be a real drama with kids, trying to find child-friendly eateries or a nice responsible babysitter that doesn't charge €20 an hour. At **Club Med**, the in-house, vetted sitters are €4 an hour.

For the first time in two years, we had a chance to relax, behave like adults, not just parents, and **holiday** like we used to pre-baby. The whole week, we spent €80, which included three nights' babysitting and some pretty lanterns bought on a trip to the souk. So, while the initial output of €969 per adult and €399 per child under five seemed steep, we've spent double that on **holidays** before, where we've come home so frazzled from all the stress of travelling with a toddler, we needed another one to recover.

Sunway Holidays is the exclusive Irish agent for **Club Med**. Prices include all flights, transfers, accommodation, meals, drinks, activities, children's clubs, 20kg baggage allowance, and all taxes, 01 288 6828; clubmedsunway.ie.