



My Kind of Waterpark, CoCo Key Is!

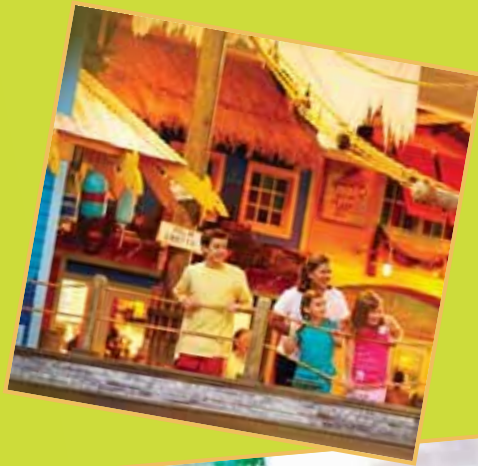
Chicago's CoCo Key
Water Resort brings fun
(and profit) to hotels

By Robin Kirk



CoCo Key reflects Key West's tropical appeal.





CoCo Key Water Resort, at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest Hotel, made its first splash on Dec. 21, 2006. As the largest indoor water resort in Illinois, it boasts 65,000 square feet of fun and holds 190,000 gallons of water.

Today, the CoCo Key Water Resort in Arlington Heights, Illinois, is just one of Denver-based Sage Hospitality's 11 CoCo Key Water Resorts under development or opened. Developed and launched by Sage Hospitality in 2006, CoCo Key stands to become the largest water resort brand in the country.

To support Sage's rapidly growing water-resort division, the company recently hired a brand vice president with a background in entertainment, enhanced its operations team and are establishing, to a larger degree, a water resort management team based out of its Arlington Heights property.

A splashing start

CoCo Key's unique market niche is giving new life to upper-end mid-market and upper-market properties. All CoCo Key Water Resorts are built adjacent to hotels with large meeting or convention space in suburban areas near major metro markets to tap the widest possible audience: group meetings, the individual corporate traveler and families seeking an escape close to home.

By developing a water resort on an existing hotel site, properties continue to house their core meetings and corporate business, while also bringing in new business during weekends and mid-week. This is especially attractive to local families during traditional holidays, school breaks and long holiday weekends,

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such as Columbus Day and Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Historically, most water resorts have existed solely in resort locations, but CoCo Key operates under a different business model. By combining families seeking a quick getaway with the existing group and branded corporate transient base, it is able to leverage against downturns in the economy and return maximum profitability to hotel owners and operators.

Hotels are traditionally a leading-edge indicator of a falling economy, but by combining the water-resort aspect with existing hotels near large metro areas, CoCo Key properties have the ability to hedge against that trend.

In an economic downturn, these water resorts will represent THE family vacation instead of going to Florida or flying 3,000 miles to a major vacation destination.

And, if the economy is good, they are a third or fourth mini "day vacation" for families and nearby visitors.

Playing on our strengths

All CoCo Key Water Resorts use brand partners within the same business space. Sage Hospitality works with traditional hotel brands such as Sheraton, Holiday Inn, Marriott and its Courtyard brand, and adds the CoCo Key Water Resort brand. Using two specific brands in one business is virtually unheard of, but it's been a successful business model and revenue generator.

The co-branding extends beyond the four walls of the hotel, as food and beverage outlets are branded, too. For example, at CoCo Key Water Resort in Arlington Heights, we feature A&W, Pizza Hut Express and Starbucks Café. By successfully clustering brands in one location, we can support the concept of a highlevel guest service while simultaneously driving customer recognition and sales.

Developing water resorts in this manner also gives Sage-run CoCo Key hotels a big edge over other water resort properties. Our development cycle is shorter--generally 12 to 18 months--and the cost of entry is lower, allowing for revenue enhancement and a return to profitability faster than our competitors in the fast-growing water-resort segment.

Let the water works begin

In Arlington Heights, in concert with the other resorts, the "CoCo Key" moniker, along with the décor and atmosphere, reflect Key West's tropical appeal. It's a laid back atmosphere, full of sunshine and a wel-

Guests enjoy a variety of activities at CoCo Key.





coming tropical environment.

This design and image consistency from resort to resort also enables us to develop one core set of marketing materials and messages that are adapted for individual properties and events, resulting in a savings and enhancement of our marketing dollars.

The resort is designed to imitate a stroll through Key West. Waterpark guests can take a walk to Rusty's Dive Shop and the Coral Reef Cavern, then check out the outdoor dining on Duval Street and view the amazing sunsets from Mallory Square. Brightly colored cabanas, swaying palms, fragrant hibiscus, native artwork and thatched roofs make the atmosphere as authentic as possible.

In Arlington Heights, our 100-member-plus staff includes the newly created position of director of memories and experiences, tasked with developing a host of additional entertainment options for younger guests.

Activities range from hair art to soap making, to using the services of a professional face painter to family caricatures; we offer unique activities to further enhance the visit. This also serves as yet another revenue opportunity for the property.

On site in Arlington Heights, we feature

CoCo Key SUPPLIERS

Development/Design: Development: Wave Development
Design: Architectural Design Consultants Inc.
Aquatic Design: Water Technology, Inc.

Building Construction: Horizon Construction

Aquatic Construction: Neuman Group

Waterslides: Whitewater West Industries

Wave river: Neuman Pools

Raft/Tubes/Mats: Neuman Pools

FEC equipment: Family Entertainment Group

Children's equipment: Whitewater West Industries

Furniture: Grosfillex and Gar

Lockers: SmarteCarte

Pool and/or deck coatings:

Pool: SunStone, Deck: Applied Flooring

Filtration equipment:

Neptune Benson / Triton II pressure sand filters

Pumps: Pentair / ASC / Aurora

Chemical controllers: Chemtrol 2000

Admission system: InfoGenesis

Uniforms: Water Safety Products



Birthday parties at CoCo Key are popular with all ages.

eight waterslides of varying sizes. Our goal was to create opportunities for kids ages 4 to 13 and keep them coming back several times a year, to explore new slides and activities. “Shark Slam” is a thrilling body slide with curves, “Gator Gush” is a full-speed splashing body slide with banked turns, and “Barracuda Blast” sends one or two people at a time, on a raft, through jaw-dropping curves. “Pelican’s Plunge” is the largest slide at 352 feet.

For the youngest guests, we created “Parrot’s Perch,” an interactive play island with slides, zero-depth-entry area, water cannons and a huge bucket that dumps 300 gallons of water every few minutes. “The Dip in Theatre Children’s Pool,” a shallow-water pool, allows kids to float in the water while enjoying movies and animation on a movie-size projection screen. The activity has generated additional weekend revenue through packages. The Key Quest Arcade features a host of interactive, state-of-the-art video games and entertainment for all ages.

CoCo Key DETAILS

Park name: CoCo Key Water Resort at the Sheraton Chicago Northwest Hotel

Location: 3400 W. Euclid Avenue
Arlington Height, IL

web site: www.cocokeywaterresort.com

Owners: Sage Hospitality Resources

Admission prices: Pricing starting at \$19 weekday and \$39 weekend
(prices are subject to change and based on availability)

Dates open: Open everyday

Size/Acres: 65,000 sq. ft.

Capacity: 1333 in the Waterpark

Number of employees: 150

Clientele (local vs. tourist): Destination and local guests.
Overnight guests and day passes

Future expansion plans: CoCo Key Water Resort developments are underway in Kansas City, Mo.; Mt. Laurel, N.J.; Waterbury, Conn. and Fitchburg, Mass.

Unique park programs: Mommy and Me: Moms and their children ages six and under, featuring special pricing. Cabanas and Party Rooms are available for birthday parties and group events.

Staff retention programs or in-service programs:

Staff reward incentive program. Weekly In-Service, Ellis & Associates programs.

For those who prefer to lie out in the summer months, we feature an outdoor tanning deck with an Outdoor Splash Pad...

The entire family can sail down "Coconut Grove Adventure River" together, a tube ride through the 321-foot-long water island with splashy coconut surprises along the way. Or they can enjoy a more active approach in the "Coral Reef Cavern," an activity

pool that features lily pads, water basketball and an animated coral reef backdrop.

Five private, uniquely decorated and thatched cabanas also are available for the day for \$100 - \$150. These represent both a guest amenity and additional revenue generator for the property. Aside from their convenient pool-side location, they feature a television, refrigerator, lockable safe and private butler service inside.

Because CoCo Key is a family destination, we also offer our more mature guests a tropical haven to relax in: the Palm Grotto Spa and the Seascape Spa, a mini tropical whirlpool oasis. For those who prefer to lie out in the summer months, we feature an outdoor tanning deck with an Outdoor Splash Pad to welcome them back to the water resort action with cascading towers of water to cool them off.

The Callaloo Grill features our previously mentioned branded partners, A & W and Pizza Hut Express. The Wet Rooster Bar is a full-service, open-setting bar that overlooks the entire water resort, perfect for parents who want to relax and still keep a watchful eye on the kids.

Since our opening, we've hosted dozens of parties, developing a variety of birthday packages to meet a wide range of pricing needs. Not surprisingly, the Cabanas are also used as party rooms for smaller birthday and group events. The park also hosts special programs and activities, including Mommy and Me for moms and their children ages 6 and under, featuring special pricing during school days.

Launched less than two years ago, the CoCo Key Water Resorts and its parent company, Sage Hospitality, stands to become a real presence in the waterpark community and in the country, bringing a little bit of Key West to the rest of America. [WWA](#)

Author bio:

Robin Kirk is Vice President of the Water Resorts Division of Sage Hospitality Resources, one of the nation's leading hotel management and development companies encompassing CoCo Key Water Resorts. He is responsible for the operation of CoCo Key Water Resorts located throughout the country.

CoCo Key Water Resorts are now open at Sheraton Chicago Northwest Hotel, Arlington Heights, Ill.; Clock Tower Resort, Rockford, Ill.; Cherry Valley Lodge, Newark, Ohio; Sheraton Ferncroft Resort, Danvers, Mass.; Holiday Inn Omaha Convention Center, Omaha, Neb.; and Sheraton Cincinnati North, Cincinnati, Ohio. Additional CoCo Key Water Resort developments are underway in Kansas City, Mo.; Mt. Laurel, N.J.; Waterbury, Conn. and Fitchburg, Mass.

