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Acqualina manages kid care with summer camp partnership

By [Mary Gostelow](#) on 6/23/2020

GOSTELOW REPORT—“Running a summer camp is actually just an extension of what we do year-round,” says Deborah Yager Fleming, CEO and partner of Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach, Sunny Isles Beach, Florida, which is one of the 34 properties taking part in Embark Beyond’s Camp Embark.

With nearly all summer camps in the USA annulled for the 2020 season, Jack Ezon, founder of New York-based travel advisory Embark Beyond (four young kids) and his managing director, Julie Danziger (three kids) were talking about how they would manage kid care during the long school vacation time.



Deborah Yager Fleming with camp team members on the resort's beach

Hence the idea of Camp Embark, luxury camps across North America. While parents at all Camp Embarks have wellness and other activities, if wanted, kids' days run from morning to evening, with meals, games, contests, storytelling and more. For the camps, Embark Travel has selected properties with ample space, existing activities and those that could make quick sign-up decisions – none on the final list is part of a mega-brand.

"As an independent that is a member of Leading Hotels of the World we can adapt quickly, and that is why I was able to say yes to being part of Camp Embark without requirements of going through various levels of decision-making by others," Fleming said.

"Although my own son is now 20, I clearly remember how important summer camp was. When I was contacted by Jack and Julie I was elated to have Acqualina participate, since our brand is synonymous with family travel at any time of the year," she explained. "At least 20% of our total-350 team-count are young millennials. In addition, our own AcquaMarine Children's program, operating since our 2006 opening and complimentary to hotel guests, was designed and inspired by our ocean and all its sea life. Embark Beyond replicates this, for their campers to have fun learning and discovering love and respect for the sea."

The resort, on 4.5 acres of beach-set land, has 450 feet of shoreline. There are 98 rooms and suites, plus 188 residences. At any time during a typical summer it has 50% repeat guests, average size of party six persons (two adults and four children). The marketing agreement with Camp Embark also publicizes the fact that the resort, which closed March 21, re-opened on June 15.

"During the closure, I realized that since the original opening 14 years ago I had honestly had little time for true contemplation," said Fleming. As a kid herself she wanted to be a broadcast journalist, and for the past three months she has led webcams to look at every degree of service.

She has been a regular performer on Zoom chat shows and, on Friday, she will be a star performer on thenewtravelconference.com, "helping the industry recover from coronavirus." What now seems like a long two months ago she hosted a one-off Easter webcam for regular guests (she is humbled by how many have been in contact, and #acqualinathome has been an indispensable communications tool).

The overall result, she says, is ready-set-change.

"We need to be more agile, to adapt even faster. Our service is going to be even better," she promised, adding that her team has always been forward-thinking but now, more than ever, everyone needs to learn how to deal with obstacles.

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