

CREATING SURPRISES

A Swiss guest experience manager gives us a glimpse of her job and tells us why it is important to create surprises for hotel guests along the way

by Earth Saiswang



The Monttra Pattaya

Viktoria Cecilia Egli, 20, is a guest experience manager at The Monttra, one of the newest luxury boutique hotels in Pattaya. Yes, you read it right. Not front office manager, not guest relations manager, not concierge – but guest experience manager.

As a guest experience manager, Viktoria, a Swiss national, says she is in-charge of monitoring all operational departments throughout the hotel and assuring service excellence among all divisions. It is also her job to manage the unique service amenities at the resort, such as the soap concierge and skin supervisor.

Because the new resort is banking on exceptional guest experience indeed, Viktoria's duties go beyond and above the usual responsibilities of a concierge. For example, she creates surprises for their guests, which she considers a vital part of her job. "Nothing is too small or too trivial, if they would in any way help enhance the experience of a guest staying at their resort," she says.

There is something about communicating with guests, but most importantly for her, she loves to help and please, "f only for the smile they have on their face when we surprise or help them." Every time a guest smiles, she says, she sees a confirmation of a job well done, "better than any tap on the shoulder from your boss," she puts it.

Being there for guests and talking with them while listening carefully to what is being said in-between sentences, is as

much a part of her job, she believes. "This allows me -- us -- to surprise our guests with unexpected magic," she points out. "Of course, as a manager, I need to practice strong leadership skills and try to improve on daily basis how to lead a team of service superstars, for without a team there is no leader. This has become a core belief in how I do my daily job and deal with my fellow colleagues and guests."

Viktoria's typical day begins when she arrives at the hotel early in the morning and wishes all the employees a good day. "This gives me the chance to quickly chat with them and see if all is well personally and professionally," she says. "And they appreciate it very much. It motivates them further, knowing that someone listens to them."

Then she quickly enters her office to check for urgent emails or messages and prepare welcome cards for the day's arrivals. If there is a birthday or anniversary, Viktoria organizes a little surprise and hand cards to her team so they can give it to them.

At around 8:30 a.m., which is the usual breakfast time of guests, she makes her way to the restaurant to speak with guests. "This allows me to get instant feedback, and know if something was not up to their expectations, so we can immediately rectify the situation," she continues.

But it also allows her to check if the team can organize efficiently the guest's daily schedule, whether they want to have a private boat transfer being picked up from

the private beach, a day at the Nong Nooch Garden or a romantic dinner at the cliff side romance table.

"We have the most check-outs at non and it is highly important for me to catch up with guests again before they leave for home or to their next destination," she says. "This allows me to get a final feedback and opportunity to recover a situation if need be before they leave. We then present them with a farewell gift and send them off."

Once check-out rush hour is over, she returns to her daily routine: inspecting all areas including rooms of arriving guests to ensure that everything is topnotch. If there are honeymooners or anniversary couples arriving, she would prepare little surprise in their room. "I love doing this and I believe it adds a personal touch," she says.

She speaks with guests on the property and make sure they have what they need throughout the day. She said this again allows her to tell the guests about their unique services and inform them about the daily rotating free amenities they offer.

In the evening, before her shift ends, she usually takes a bit of time to reflect on her day, thinking what more can be improved and pinpointing in areas she was not yet completely satisfied with during her inspections before doing some admin work.

Then she goes home, but only to prepare for another day again when she could offer guests of The Monttra with more surprises. **LE**