

Hospitality Authentically African in the Pocono Mountains

An Interview with Donald C. Pleau, Jr.,
General Manager, The Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, Pocono Mountains



EDITORS' NOTE Don Pleau brings more than 30 years of experience in the food and beverage and hospitality industries, and has been a dedicated associate of Kalahari Resorts & Conventions for more than a decade. Most recently, he worked as the Corporate Director of Food and Beverage for Kalahari Resorts, as well as the Food and Beverage Director at Grand Harbor Golf and Beach Club. Pleau also holds certifications as a Sommelier by the Court of Master Sommeliers and as a Food and Beverage Executive by the American Hotel and Lodging Association.



Donald C. Pleau, Jr.

PROPERTY BRIEF The latest and greatest of Kalahari's family of African themed water park resorts and convention centers is The Kalahari Resorts & Conventions (kalahariresorts.com), in Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania. Visitors can experience the 100,000-square-foot indoor water park featuring a retractable roof, stand-up surfing or body boarding on the FlowRider; the twists and turns of the Anaconda and Swahili Swirl waterslides, and the relaxing lazy river and indoor/outdoor family hot tub. The property offers 457 beautifully appointed guest rooms and suites, three full-service dining options, and the fast-paced 30,000-square-foot Family Entertainment Center and rejuvenating Spa Kalahari and Salon. The Convention Center at Kalahari features 65,000 square feet of flexible meeting space for events both large and small, along with award-winning catering and state-of-the-art technology to make any event unforgettable.

Would you provide an overview of Kalahari Resort in the Poconos?

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions features a variety of on-site amenities and activities for guests of any age, all under one roof.

The Pocono Mountains are one of the premier tourist destinations in the country, and the area offers a multitude of amenities and attractions. The Poconos are also becoming the East Coast's Waterpark Capital, and indoor water parks provide these memorable experiences and a chance for families to reconnect.

One of the differentiators for Kalahari Resorts & Conventions is our authentic African theme. The owners, the Nelson family, went on a 23-day trip to Africa to source everything from artwork to coffee to ensure guests receive a world-away, beyond expectations.

Also, Kalahari Resorts & Conventions has a significant meetings and conventions space that is state-of-the-art alongside a sales and catering team that offers more than 400 years of experience. We can host a variety of events for any group type – from trade shows, exhibitions, conventions, conferences, and faith-based retreats to corporate meetings and more.

How critical is the suite offering as part of your room makeup?

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions is a family and group destination, which means we also need to ensure we have the proper accommodations to meet the demands of the variety of guests we host on-site.

Kalahari's traditional Desert Room is larger than the industry standard and can comfortably fit a group of up to six. For larger families or groups, we have a wide variety of suite offerings including the Two Room Family Suite; the African Queen Suite featuring a fireplace, table and chairs, a master bedroom with a king-size bed, a guest room with two queen beds, and a sleeper sofa; Whirlpool Suites; Royal Hospitality Suites; Honeymoon Suites; and the Penthouse Suite boasts a fireplace, dining area, wet bar, large balcony, three bedrooms, and a living room that can comfortably sleep up to 12.

Each of our guest rooms include a coffee maker, a vacation-sized refrigerator, a microwave, free Wi-Fi, voice mail, HD TV, an in-room safe, and pay-per-view movies.

Are the parks and activities a key differentiator for the property?

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions was built by a family for families, and we pride ourselves on offering a wealth of amenities and activities for all ages that will heighten the guests' experience.

The Indoor Waterpark features waterslides and fun for all including Splashdown Safari, an interactive play area with zero depth entry; Tiko's Watering Hole, which is a dedicated play area for the little ones with hands-on activities and pint-sized slides and lazy river just for them; a swim-up bar and whirlpools for those looking to relax; sky-high, heart-pumping slides for those looking for a thrill; Spa Kalahari, with a variety of full-service spa and salon offerings; family entertainment center with mini bowling, cutting-edge arcade games, a 3-D theater, and blacklight mini golf; The Adventurers Club, which provides complementary activities daily such as morning hikes, cookie decorating, photo scavenger hunts,

coloring contests, crafts, and finger painting; and Kalahari Fitness & Training offering certified personal training by appointment or free access to the fitness center.

How much of an emphasis have you placed on the food and beverage business?

Kalahari Resorts' food and beverage options cater to both adults and children, offering everything from traditional dining experiences to signature experiences unique to Kalahari Resorts including the Great Karoo Marketplace Buffett, with a full African theme that serves breakfast and dinner; Brandberg, which is a classic tavern with a modern twist; the Ivory Coast Restaurant with a cozy, casual atmosphere where guests can enjoy breakfast, sandwiches, salads, appetizers, and their favorite beverages; The Last Bite, a candy and ice cream shop with hand-dipped chocolate, caramel apples, homemade fudge, salt-water taffy, and ice cream; Java Manjaro, our signature coffee shop with smoothies, breakfast and lunch, and an impressive array of pastries and desserts; and Café Mirage, offering something for everyone such as freshly made pizza, salads, sandwiches, burritos, burgers, wings, beer, and wine.

Would you discuss the service standards at the property and your investment in training?

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions is committed to providing products and services that are beyond expectations – in order to do so, we take care and time in properly training all of our employees so they can deliver the best guest experience.

Kalahari Resorts also offers an internship program (University of Kalahari) that provides tomorrow's hospitality leaders the training and experience to thrive in this business (both personally and professionally). Our internships are categorized into four different program experiences: hospitality overview, supervisor and leader, culinary, or manger-in-training.

What are your key priorities for Kalahari Resort in the Poconos?

After opening just a few months ago, we already broke ground on phase II of construction, which will include doubling the number of rooms, adding 100,000 square feet of indoor water park space, and expanding the outdoor pool deck. When complete, Kalahari Resorts & Conventions will be one of the grandest resorts in the world that will be the ultimate oasis for families, young couples, and business travelers. We will continue to provide guests, locals, convention-goers, and anyone who walks through our doors an experience beyond expectation. ●