

CORK **INDEPENDENT** PROFILE

Alison Walsh

Wedding and Events Manager at Kinsale Hotel & Spa

When you were small, what did you want to be as a grown-up?

I must have changed my mind 100 times! I spent a long time thinking I wanted to be an optician. I also wanted to be a teacher and then decided I'd love to get in to health and safety, which I studied in CIT. But it became clear to me that I needed to work in an industry surrounded by people. I love working as part of a big team, and every hour in the hospitality industry is different. You meet new people every day at the hotel and I find it fascinating chatting to guests who tell you their stories of what brought them to Kinsale on their vacation.

Tell us about your career progression to your role today:

I started working in the hospitality industry in Kinsale when I was 15, taking a part time job in a local restaurant. From there I worked during college in a well known bar in Kinsale. I loved bar work. The atmosphere on Saturday nights and during festival weekends

was epic. I was very lucky to work with many of my good friends; we always had so much fun at work but we worked hard. Our bosses were the nicest people and I still say they are to credit for my work ethic. From there I started my admin roles in a leisure club, and from there, launched in to the hotel world. When I was 22, I started working at this very hotel as reservations manager. It was a new and challenging role for me but I loved it. I took a little break from Ireland a few years later, and headed off to Sydney where I worked in a financial services group. This led me right back to Kinsale Hotel and Spa, where I took up residence as Wedding and Events Manager!

What is the most enjoyable aspect of what you do?

I consider myself to be very lucky to work in the business of happiness! Couples who come to the hotel to meet with me are planning the most exciting day of their lives and it's very rewarding to be a part of that. I

love hearing their own ideas and I love pushing the limits at the hotel - couples will come to me with ideas and visions and it's up to me to make it happen. No two weddings are ever the same, so every day is new and exciting!

What motivates you?

The finished product. Walking out of here at the end of a wedding day, and seeing a couple who have put 12 months, maybe more, in to planning this day genuinely having the best day of their lives, what more motivation could you need?

What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

Be yourself, because at the end of the day, there is a place for everyone. I love meeting different characters every day, whether its staff or guests, and I just think at 15 everyone tries so hard not to stand out. But you know what, its ok to stand out!

If you weren't in the job you have, what would you be doing?

Now that's a tricky one! I actually don't know, I think I'm meant to be here!

What is your greatest life or career achievement to-date?

I don't know if I could pin it to one. My greatest work achievement I think would be the reputation I've built over the past few years, but then that's not just down to me. I'm

not a one man show, I have an amazing team here, and each and every one of them is involved in the wedding business in some way. My greatest life achievement is my little girl. She is a very bright, strong girl, and I know she is going on to great things!

Who has had the biggest influence on you in your life?

My friends, I have the best bunch of friends. Our teachers used to tell us in school that they had never seen a group like us. These girls that I started school with at five years of age are still a huge part of my life. We've gone travelling together, gone travelling alone, some have moved from Kinsale, some are married with babies, but we still manage to meet up regularly. 29 years of friendship ain't bad going!

In recent years, I have been so lucky to have found some truly amazing friends where I work. But if I had to say one person had an influence on my life, it would have to be Mandy Gabriel. I have never met anyone with such a positive attitude to career, life and everything in between. I didn't think that at my age I would change so much, but Mandy has taught me so much about career progression, buying houses, adulting, I'd be lost without her.

What is the life dream now?

A bit more travel. I

like to work hard and I like to reward myself and my family with travel. No matter what line of work you are in, it's so important to have something to look forward to, a little reward for the hard work. I basically like to always have a holiday on the cards, it keeps me motivated! I'm not long back from Paris, so I think it's about time now that I start looking at what's next.

How do you switch off?

That glass of white on a Friday evening! Or a night out on the town with the girls.

What is your favourite Cork memory?

I have so many memories from growing up in Kinsale. Nights out with the girls would always just end up in ridiculous laughter.

What is your favourite place in Cork?

It's a toss up between Fitzgerald's Park or Ballincollig Regional Park. A great day out that we all really enjoy. Take the bikes, grab a coffee and switch off.

Do you have a favourite quote or motto?

It's so Cork, but 'box it off'. When you are faced with a challenge, this is how we like to tackle it here in Kinsale.

Sit down, work it out and box it off. In other words, once it's fixed, leave it behind and move on. There's no point carrying it with you!

When are you at your happiest?

On holidays, anywhere warm, with a pool and a book!

Any regrets?

None. Everything that happens in life leads



factfile

Name and position: Alison Walsh

Age: 34 - for another few weeks!

Lives: Belgooly

Family: I share my home with my wonderful partner Tim and my little girl Eimear. We're very lucky to live just five minutes away from my mum and my sister-in-law. They're a huge help to us as we both work full time. I'm the baby of the family, one brother, one sister. My brother lives in the wonderful East Cork area, and my sister lives in Abu Dhabi. We have four nephews and two nieces, Eimear's 'best friends'

Pets: Two goldfish, Goldie and Nemo

Favourite thing about Cork: The Cork craic - there's no where like Cork for a night out on the town with the girls

Least favourite thing about Cork: Absolutely nothing!

One thing you'd change about Cork: I cannot think of a single thing!

you to where you are, and where I am right now is pretty good.

What is your hidden talent?

Organisation. It's bordering on annoying for those I live with and work with, but if anyone can tidy things away so well that they will never again be found, that would be me.

What might we be surprised to know about you?

I have an unnatural fear of spiders.

And I'm quite a rational person, so it's a bit silly!

Anything else you'd like to share with us?

No I think I better leave it there before I give too much away!



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