



Focus on...



Character mascot, 99 Village, Jahra, Krishna Swamy talks about original comic books, the theme park's inauguration, and what it is really like to be a superhero

How did you get job working as a character at the 99 Village theme park?

I have been working at the 99 Village in Jahra on a contract basis for the past three years. I used to take care of the maintenance of some of the rides in the park.

One day I was asked by the manager to wear Jabbar's costume when the park was inaugurated this year.

What is the story behind the particular character that you act?

I act out Jabbar whose real name is Nawaf Al-Bilali. He was a typical teenager from Saudi Arabia until one day, tragedy struck. While fleeing away from blackmailers with his little sister Naof, Nawaf stepped on a landmine. The explosion shattered a hidden gem, embedding shards of the stone in his skin. Nawaf saved his sister, but the slivers of gemstone that were lodged in his body triggered a startling transformation.

Suddenly the teenager was transformed into a man-mountain, a giant standing over two metres tall and weighing almost 200kg. Jabbar is super-strong and nearly invulnerable.

Are you a fan of the original comic books?

I have become a fan of the 99 comics only recently after the 99 Village was inaugurated. I have read the stories in Arabic and I like them very much. It is a story pertaining to this region and the 99 are the world's first superheroes based on Islamic culture and history. The series promotes tolerance with the characters being young boys and girls who battle injustice in order to make a better world.

Can you describe your daily routine?

My work starts at 16:00 when the park opens to the public and I finish work by midnight when the park

closes. I shake hands with all the visitors in the park, especially the children. I also have photos taken with them. During the weekend we have entertainment programmes with magicians and a marching band.

What challenges do you face in your day-to-day work?

Sometimes when the children are naughty, they keep punching and hitting me as they assume I am strong due to the costume I wear.

Who is your personal favourite character from the 99 destination?

My favourite character is Mumita who is a runaway teen from Portugal. She has lived on the streets and fought for everything she ever had. She is an expert fighter and has a talent for chess.

Tell us about a funny experience you have had at work since the park opened?

I had a funny experience during the inauguration of the 99 Village. It was my first time that I had worn Jabbar's costume. We were walking in the park meeting the visitors and children would start crying and running away when seeing me because of the size of the costume.

What do you like to do in your free time when you aren't working as a superhero?

I don't get much free time because by the time I come back from work it is 03:00. On weekends I go to the mall or the seaside with my friends.

A postcard from the Golden Triangle



Travelling is a passion of mine and I am lucky that my job allows me to visit some amazing countries. The Golden Triangle is one of the most memorable destinations I have visited in the very North of Thailand. This is the area where Laos, Myanmar and Thailand meet.

Even from the initial arrival, which was by a long-tail speed-boat down the river to the jetty, where we were greeted by elephants who then took us safely to the resort, it was clear that this was going to be an adventurous journey of discovery. The area was bursting with culture and the people were truly warm and friendly.

We stayed at Anantara Golden Triangle which overlooks the forest by the Mekong River that separates Laos from Thailand. My days were spent uncovering the native traditions of the area such as taking in all the delights I came across at the fruit and vegetable markets as part of a Thai cooking class, visiting the local temples, taking the three country tour, a trip to the Opium Museum, trekking the hilltops, and dining in the rice padi fields.

An undisputed highlight of my stay would have to be the elephant camp. Set within the resort's lush bamboo forest, the camp is home to almost 40 elephants. I was lucky enough to enjoy a once in a life time opportunity to learn how to 'drive' an elephant by taking part in a three-day mahout training course. As well as learning the commands and some log rolling skills, we took the elephants to bathe in the river!

The entire stay was truly unrivalled and an experience I will never forget!



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