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# After Oscars, Awards Season Veterans Hit the Private Island of Kokomo, Fiji

By [ALENE DAWSON](#)

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The Oscars can be a joyous but also stressful time for Hollywood. After the nonstop campaigning, highs and disappointments, projects heralded and snubbed, the urge to flee L.A., unplug and get your head back together can feel like a necessity. Australian billionaire and property developer [Lang Walker](#)'s new ultra-luxurious, exclusive \$100 million retreat [Kokomo Private Island Resort, Fiji](#), is the oasis to soothe and recharge your soul. *Variety* chatted with Walker about his passion project and secrets to his success in business.

## Privacy Matters

[Kokomo](#) Private Island Resort caters to celebrities and anyone else needing a far-flung paparazzi-free sanctuary.

The resort offers 21 open-plan, beachfront villas and five three-bedroom to six-bedroom residences discreetly garden-walled for privacy. Special packages include private in-residence catering, an in-house chef, butler and nanny. You could easily spend the entire stay in your villa. Even on a blustery day, it's a romantic and meditative experience.

## Ecology Meets Luxury

For those venturing out, Kokomo is a PADI 5-Star Dive Resort. Guests can scuba dive, snorkel, sail, fish, swim, paddleboard, deep-sea fish, enjoy the abundance of coral reef and more. On land, hike to waterfalls, enjoy the spa, delicious made-to-order meals, and workout with a private trainer at [the hilltop](#) gym. There are kids and teens programs. The island's ecological, conservation and sustainability projects including an on-site water filtration system, gray-water collection system, organic garden, coral gardening project and beekeeping. Their [Dock to Dish](#) Community Supported Fishery and Foraging program is recognized by the [United Nations Foundation](#). Walker's goal is for [Kokomo Private Island Resort](#) to be one of the top 10 resorts in the world. Rates start at \$2,500/night. Kokomo is available for exclusive-use buyouts starting at about \$100,000 per night.

Variety talked with Walker about his vision for the resort.

**Did you always have a dream of owning your own private island? Did you dream of that as a little kid?**

I probably did. I wouldn't say so much a dream. We've always done a lot of boating ... I'd look at these beautiful islands and think — that would be very, very nice to have a nice anchorage there for three or four days. Pick up the anchor and go somewhere else. It wasn't until I saw the beauty of this place [Kokomo] that I thought we might lay the anchor down a little bit longer.

**Why did you decide to open it up to the public rather than keep it to just friends, colleagues and family?**

It costs so much money.... I had to try to get some of my money back! It cost a little bit more than I thought. That's what my granddaughter first said. "Grandpa, there are other people on our island."

**Was it, in part, the challenge of developing the island that you liked and attracted you?**

It really was a challenge. We're in the development business and everything we do — we always try to tackle very difficult projects and very challenging projects. It got me thinking about how we would put this together and all of the various aspects [we wanted to incorporate]: For families who just want to get away and not see anyone, honeymoon couples. With the size of the island and the natural creatures, there is something for everyone.

**Did you go into the project knowing that sustainability would be a key feature of the resort?**

It's first and at the forefront of our minds that sustainability had to be at the highest level ... I think the next stage we'll be looking at is wind and solar power.

**You've been involved with so many major projects in America, Canada, Australia, Malaysia — how have you seen sustainability and environmental concerns evolve in the construction business and in public desires since you started your career?**

At the moment we're developing lots in Sydney and we've been working to provide natural habitats and koala corridors making sure that they don't get out onto the roads. It's a community initiative. We want to be at the forefront of all of those issues.

**Even in the United States, there is a long history of tension between the people who vacation in a resort and the people who live there year-round. How do you garner respect rather than resentment from the people who live where you set up a development — whether it's a neighborhood or a whole island?**

I've developed and built probably 20 spec homes in Aspen and now I have a home there. I know exactly what you're saying about tourists coming in. I think in this case over here the local Fijians are partners. They get a 10% share in the welfare of the island. We set up medical care and education for them ... we buy the fish from the locals. We have quite a lot of respect for them and I think with the Fijians it's quite important to respect their culture and work with them. I think we have a good relationship in this part of the world. And we've created jobs.

**Were there any big mistakes you made along the way?**

I think I made lots of mistakes. I could write a book about all of the things that have happened. I think not knowing what was going to come up over the horizon is probably the biggest issue for me. You know the reliability of getting things built — a luxury resort — on a remote island 40 miles away from the closest big town — that was challenging. Just getting the basics.

**You spend three months a year sailing your yacht. Do you think there is a link between those who are successful at business and those who crave adventure? If so, why do you think that's true?**

I do. I have been sailing competitively, racing sailboats, since I was a young kid ... and the comparison with business is that what I learned from sailing is — you can have three races in one day ... there is always something different. There are many different things that are thrown up at you every minute — the wind shifts. And to be successful at that you have to be in the moment. I think that in business it is almost the same. These challenges come your way on a daily basis. That's the challenge and the exciting thing. Events come up that you have to make a decision about. They may not always be the correct decision, but you have to make a decision and move forward. And I think that's the comparisons with the adventure of racing yachts and business. The challenging conditions that can change every hour.

**How do you maintain the privacy of celebrities when they visit your island?**

You've got the beautiful walks around the big villas...paparazzi — we don't have anything like that here...There are plenty of places where you can just tuck away and not see anyone and come out when you want to. With some of these celebrities, people don't even know they are on the island.

**For those in Hollywood, including those who are already successful, who want to be a version you, what are your top three tips for success?**

Gee —that's a tough one. I think humility is probably near the top. Hard work, but it's also about having a vision and desire. More than a desire, a real passion for doing everything well. Not half doing things...It's really just doing the work. If you spend 10-12 hours a day or longer at work, make sure every one of those hours is going to achieving the best.

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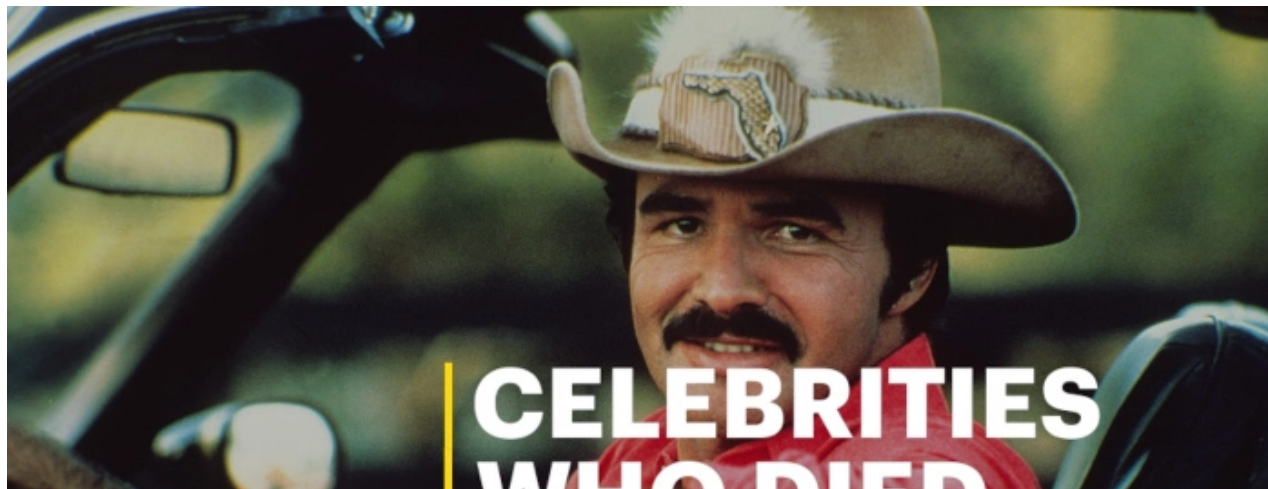
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