



Fiji's Kokomo Private Island Resort Announces Global Best Practice Approach to Environmental Sustainability

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Fiji's most exclusive private island resort, Kokomo Private Island, is leading by example in its endeavour to operate as an environmentally sustainability resort and ensure the preservation of its beautiful habitat. Initiated by owner Lang Walker, an expert team has been assembled with efforts towards sustainability seamlessly incorporated into the resort's guest experience.

Various environmentally sustainable initiatives are underway and new practices being trialled, but key to the resort's efforts is the Kokomo Coral Restoration Project, launched by resident marine biologist, Cliona O'Flaherty, in March 2018. The focus of which is on the advancement of methods that will help to protect the islands surrounding reefs.

With an awareness of the threat that climate change is having on coral reefs globally, due to rising water temperatures, the project is working to minimise the impacts of global warming on coral reefs. The long term objective of which is for the findings to be shared and adopted on an international scale.

"Our aim is to assess the limited coral thriving and adapting to the rising water temperatures, identifying these heat-resistant 'super corals'," says O'Flaherty. "We have implemented a restoration strategy, cultivating them in a nursery on the island. In this nursery setting we are aiming to heal the coral, letting it grow bigger and bushier, making it much more likely to survive on the reef when replanted and not be washed away by a big storm."

"The initiative Kokomo Private Island has taken with this project should inspire luxury islands and hotels around the world to take responsibility for their own ecosystems and find ways to make them sustainable for years to come. Guests are able to participate in all different stages of the coral planting during their stay on the island, helping to make a difference on their holiday and leave their personal positive stamp on Kokomo's reef."

Kokomo Private Island is also working in collaboration with the Manta Trust, a global organisation that aims to preserve and protect manta rays, which are classified as "vulnerable" under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. This is the first manta-tagging project in Fiji, and the first acoustic tagging project in the South Pacific for manta rays.

Since 2017, Kokomo has identified and recorded data on more than 40 Manta Rays, increasing the size of the Manta Trust Fiji Database by over 20 per cent. By painstakingly photographing individual rays, and mapping the unique spot patterns on their bellies – much like fingerprints – Kokomo identified 22 mantas in 2018 alone, contributing invaluable data.

Following the success of these initiatives, Kokomo has begun a mangrove forest restoration program, which aims to maintain the islands' mangrove population – a fundamental part of the local ecosystem. Mangroves mitigate cyclone surges and tsunamis, as well as being five times more efficient than rainforests in sequestering carbon, harbouring many coral reef fish and providing nurseries for juvenile sharks. This vital project not only aims to sustain Kokomo's mangroves, but to expand them, transplanting to local communities in need.

While important, these significant marine initiatives are only part of Kokomo's commitment to environmentally sustainable operations. The resort's initial focus remains on farm-to-table culinary offerings, incorporating as much of the produce grown over their five and a half acres of farm land, as well as implementing sustainable fishing practices.

"It's all about knowing what the chefs need and implementing catch and release for anything beyond that. We have a very healthy fishery thanks to our no fishing zone around our beach, helping sustain the marine ecosystem. Our master fisherman who has worked in the warm waters of Fiji for 10 years, educates the local fisherman as well as the Kokomo guests who thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to fish for their own meals in a sustainable fashion," says Jacques Louw, Resort Manager.

Finally, the island is installing a bottling plant, allowing pristine Fijian water to be distributed to guests and staff on site, in glass, and is on track to eliminate the use of plastic water bottles entirely. All staff living and working on the island use custom-issued aluminium water bottles, with filtered drinking stations around the island.

Kokomo is committed to working towards achieving sustainability in the South Pacific's most breathtaking location by continuing to educate guests and locals on our on island initiatives. The resort has invested heavily in the island's movement towards sustainability, and will continue to focus on preserving this unique ecosystem into the future.

Images located here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/55qqcgk805jszjc/AACt6FAAA9rqCmuY5iGm8rcOa?dl=0>