



A Treat for the Senses

With the tropical delights of palm-fringed beaches caressed by turquoise water, Fiji is the ideal place for a relaxing break. Add in a stay at two stunning island resorts, the warm and friendly nature of the locals, and the fact that it is just a short flight from Australia, and you can't go wrong.

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Do you have a bucket list of holiday destinations? If Fiji isn't on it, then you really need to reconsider.

If you're looking for a luxury vacation, with as much adventure as relaxation, at an eco-friendly resort with the friendliest staff, then look no further. Fiji is only a short flight from the east coast of Australia, and it's the ideal place for a romantic getaway, a retreat with your girlfriends, or an unforgettable family holiday.

I land in Nadi, on the west coast of Viti Levu – one of the major islands in the archipelago. After the short 30-minute transfer from Nadi, I am welcomed to my first resort with cool towels and a delicious homemade ginger beer.

Six Senses Fiji is located on Makolo Island, so snugly tucked into the hills on the western side that it is hard to believe I'm not on a small, secluded island. After a quick tour around the resort via buggy so I can get my bearings, I am shown to my gorgeous beachfront pool villa by my GEM (Guest Experience Maker), Repeka. The villa has its own private outdoor plunge pool with access to the beachfront, a delightfully cosy king size bed (with blackout blinds for late sleepers) and a luxurious outdoor shower and bath.

This sustainable resort has a true commitment to protecting the environment, and it uses solar power, rainwater collection and its own water filtration system. All drinking water is bottled on the island. This negates

the need for plastic bottles, a staple in most Fijian resorts. In my room I find glass bottles with paper seals marking the date of bottling, to show that the water is fresh. Six Senses Fiji also has its own garden of vegetables, fruit and herbs – which are used by the restaurants to create deliciously fresh dishes. Growing its own local produce also helps the resort reduce its environmental footprint.

When it comes to food, the resort features two restaurants – each with their own cocktail bar. There is also an outdoor pizzeria, a gourmet deli and an incredible ice creamery full of homemade delights. My favourite lunch dish was the Kokoda, a delicate ceviche fish salad. When eaten by the pool with a living cocktail, what more could you want?

LUXURY EXPERIENCES

What's a living cocktail, you ask? Six Senses Fiji makes its own probiotic mixers using locally grown, natural ingredients such as turmeric root, ginger and layalaya (a local root similar to ginger). I even took a mixology class to learn how to make my own probiotic drinks at home – rather unsuccessfully, I might add. I'll leave it to the experts. But this is just one of the many courses that the resort offers. Take a macaroon masterclass, learn to scuba dive, make your own body scrubs in the Alchemy class, or even learn to surf.

Of course no tropical holiday would be complete without a trip to the spa. I started the day with a

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: A beachfront bure at Six Senses Fiji; The king-size bed; An Angelico cocktail at the Mixology class; The outside shower; The Kokoda ceviche fish salad; Making a body scrub at Alchemy; Snorkelling and diving are on the agenda; Every meal was simply exquisite; Multi-room villas with a pool/are available;

wellness assessment to pinpoint any areas that might need some special attention, and there are a number of personalised wellness programmes available for those wishing to make their holiday more health-focused. I enjoyed a 90-minute heated lava shell massage, perfect for easing those tense muscles.

With only 24 private pool villas, Six Senses Fiji is the perfect romantic getaway. But there are also a number of two- to five-bedroom villas if the kids won't let you leave without them.

After a few days of relaxation, it was time to transfer to my second destination via seaplane. After flying eastward over Viti Levu from Nadi airport, I'm dazzled by the view of the Great Astrolabe Reef – one of the largest barrier reefs in the world.

And nestled inside this amazing marine ecosystem is Kokomo Private Island Resort. As you circle over the island you get a stunning view, though it's hard to see more than the roofs, due to the lush green vegetation that covers the island.

Opened two years ago by developer Lang Walker, Kokomo is his own private holiday destination that he just happens to be happy to share with the rest of the world. His motto for the island is 'barefoot luxury', and guests are encouraged to follow suit. After a delightful welcome, complete with fresh, chilled coconut water, I'm shown to my luxurious beachfront villa, which is individually gated and wonderfully secluded from the neighbouring bures.

Fiji is made up of over 300 islands.



The single-bedroom villas feature a comfortable sitting room complete with complimentary snacks (like the very addictive homemade chocolate-covered honeycomb), an expansive bedroom, and a bathroom complete with the largest bathtub I have ever seen. There's also a tropical outdoor shower and a large private pool with amazing views across the beach.

There are also two- and three-bedroom villas available, as well as a number of amazing residences that come complete with a butler, a nanny and a chef, who will come by and whip up anything you fancy.

FINE DINING

My first dinner on the island at the Beach Shack restaurant was a degustational delight, with delicate seafood dishes created by executive chef Cory Campbell – former chef at Matt Moran's Barangaroo House – perfectly matched with wines from all around the world. After only two weeks on the island, Cory has already developed some truly masterful dishes that showcase the local produce. And should you ever get the chance to try the hibiscus tempura, I can guarantee it is an appetiser to remember.

At Kokomo, there are dozens of ways to fill your days, and you won't run out of things to do. I set out to the reef on the second day to go scuba diving and snorkelling, while others headed further afield to try their hands at deep sea fishing.

A trip to the reef takes only 20 minutes, so there's plenty of time left in the day when I return. The ideal amount of time for a visit to the spa, in fact – where it may take you a while

This page, left to right: A bedroom in a beachfront villa at Kokomo Private Island Resort. The villas have private pools.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: The Kokomo Private Island Resort farm; Walker D'Plank sits over the water; The interior of a Residence; Guests arrive by seaplane; Joe at the waterfall on Kadavu Island; Cory Campbell's Yellow Fin Tuna at Beach Shack; Yoga at one of the Residences; A diving desert at Beach Shack.

QANTAS RETURNS TO FIJI

After a hiatus of nearly two decades, Qantas is once again flying to Fiji. The flight is direct from Sydney to Nadi, operating four times a week on a Boeing 737 aircraft. The flights were a response to the growing demand for customers wanting a premium flight option. With Jetstar also offering four flights a week, it's easier than ever to hop from Australia to the sun-drenched Fijian islands. qantas.com.au

to choose your treatment from the expansive list. However, decadence should not be rushed. And as the sun sinks in the sky, it is time to head to another of the island's restaurants – Walker D'Plank.

This open-air restaurant is situated over the water. There's no set menu here – instead, head chef Caroline Oakley takes the time to meet with guests and offer specials based on that day's produce. But if none of it takes your fancy, she is happy to whip up something just for you. The dishes are generally served to share, but I wanted the fish curry all to myself. And the coconut lime sago for dessert was simply divine.

ADVENTURE IN STYLE

The following day I got a little more adventurous, with a trip to the waterfall situated on nearby Kadavu Island. My guide, Joe, was a wealth of information on the native plants and their uses. I am delighted to say that if I ever find myself lost in the jungle, I now know how to brush my teeth and calm an upset stomach.

The waterfall is about a 45-minute walk, mostly uphill, and rather muddy on this occasion. But it was well worth the effort. It was hard to believe the water could be so cold – but it didn't deter Joe from a prolonged dip. I did not last quite so long, however the return trip down the hill warmed me right up again.

I then spent the afternoon exploring Kokomo. An amazing coral reef surrounds the island, filled with fish, sharks (small ones, I promise), turtles, and the occasional manta ray. So snorkelling straight off the beach is

a must. You can also visit the coral farm, where Cliona O'Flaherty – the resident marine biologist – is working hard to restore the house reef that was damaged after 2016's Cyclone Winston, through transplantation and re-attachment techniques.

The final day at Kokomo starts with a choice of activities. Do I rise at dawn and go snorkelling with the turtles? Do I paddleboard or kayak around the island? Or take in a relaxing yoga class with an unmatched view? I decided to go for the turtle swim – but unfortunately, the turtles chose to sleep in this time. So I followed it up with yoga, before packing my bags and heading to the jetty for my flight back to the mainland.

I can say that Fiji will now have a special place in my heart. The people are so friendly and welcoming. The weather is superb – and even when it's not, there are so many things to do, to learn and to eat, that you can't possibly be disappointed. I can't wait to go back, and maybe take my children. Maybe. 🌴



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Dreaming of visiting Fiji? Bring a taste of the tropical island into your own home with this easy Kokoda recipe. With raw fish, lime and coconut, it couldn't be more delicious! mindfood.com/kokoda-recipe



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