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# Adopting A Manta Ray (And A Trip To Swim With Them) Just Might Be The Coolest Gift To Give This Year



**Breanna Wilson** Contributor   
Travel



Divers with a reef manta ray and shoal of fish. KOKOMO PRIVATE ISLAND

It's here. That time of the year when have you to absolutely rack your brain to find the perfect gift for that someone in your life who already has everything.

New luggage? They already bought the newest piece from Away last month.

A weighted blanket? There's one already on their bed.

Apple AirPods or an iPhone 11? They already have both of those too.

And in our age of extreme consumerism, does that person *really* need another product that is just going to eventually end up in landfill? Especially since whatever you end up buying probably isn't even something that they wanted in the first place. (Channel your inner Greta Thunberg and just think about that for a second.)

So, why not [adopt a reef manta ray](#), one of the coolest creatures in the sea, and do a little good this holiday season by contributing to manta ray conservation efforts, making you the coolest gift giver on the planet (quite literally), instead?

Because that's exactly what [Kokomo Private Island's Manta Conservation Project](#) is letting guests (and non-guests) do. Adoptions are on a donation basis with the donation going directly to the [Kokomo Manta Conservation Project](#), a project that works hand in hand with the [Manta Trust](#) and the [Manta Project Fiji](#), to help purchase tags for the island's Kokomo Acoustic Manta Project, the first project in the South Pacific of it's kind. The project is aiming to tag 18 manta rays this season, with each tag costing approximately \$450, which also happens to be the amount I would suggest as your donation minimum.

So, what happens when you adopt? Well, for starters the person you gift the adoption to will get to name their manta ray. (Manty Python and the Holy Tail and Mantruella De Vil have quite the ring to them, don't they?) And once the manta ray is tagged, updates on the manta's growth and overall wellness will be sent out in regular bi-monthly email updates. The update will also include where the manta has been sighted since the last update as well as developments in the ongoing research efforts by the team, and what the project is accomplishing in the South Pacific.

Overall, the project is working towards estimating the size and movement of Fiji's manta population, with the overall hope of raising awareness for their conservation needs and the benefits of putting sustainable tourism procedures in place. Led by marine biologists Luke Gordon and Cliona O'Flaherty, it's the cleaning stations around Kokomo Private Island that are particularly active for these sightings, and just one of the reasons why adopting through the Kokomo program is one of the best in the world to be a part of.

"The feeding aggregations [around Kokomo] are currently seen nowhere else in Fiji; being in the middle of a cyclone of 40-plus huge manta rays is an experience you will never forget" says Gordon.

"Since 2017 Kokomo and the Manta Trust has helped increase the size of the Fiji database by more than 60% and beginning in August 2019, the South Pacific Acoustic Manta Conservation Project aims to tag 18 animals in its first season, with a network of 11 receivers placed around the island to record their movements," according to O'Flaherty.



Kokomo Private Island, Fiji. KOKOMO PRIVATE ISLAND

But really, the best part of this whole adoption program is that this is finally your excuse to book a trip to the South Pacific and Kokomo Private Island, where Cliona will take you out herself to search for your new adopted friend. And since there's been an unusually large number of manta ray pods making their way through this part of the Fijian islands in the last few years, this is one of your best chances to have a once in a lifetime experience swimming with them. (Just keep in mind these are wild animals after all, and spotting them isn't always a guarantee, but searching for them is half the fun.)

Plus, this isn't the only sustainability project the team at Kokomo has going on. When you visit, ask them about their [Seabin Project](#), [Mangrove Reforestation Program](#), [Coral Restoration Project](#) and [Sea Foraging Program](#), all projects that booking a stay on the island helps support. And really, being a part of those efforts is cooler than any gift you could ever give this holiday season.

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**Breanna Wilson**

As a travel journalist I cover everything from adventure travel to the best in outdoor travel gear. Over the years I've found myself riding reindeer in Mongolia, off-road rallying in the PNW, paragliding in Oman, and drinking chacha with the world's coolest locals in Georgia. If it's an adventure, it has my name written all over it. **Read Less**

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