

LIFESTYLE

FOOD, TRAVEL AND INTERIORS INSPIRATION

ISLAND IN THE SUN

This month we transport you to Fiji to visit the six-star Kokomo Private Island Resort and the Royal Davui Island Resort, then fly to London to view designer Matilda Goad's vibrant home.

Lazy days await
at Kokomo Private
Island Resort, Fiji.

Paradise found

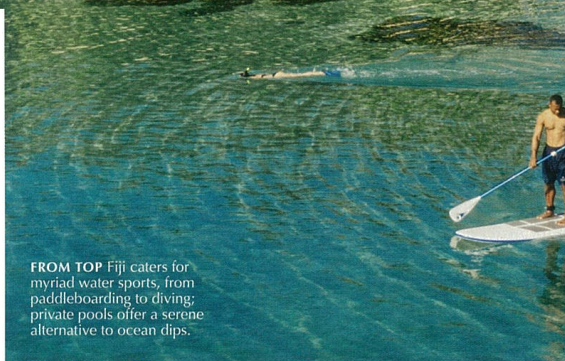


A haven in the Pacific throbbing with glorious beaches, spectacular forests and vibrant culture, Fiji has something for everyone – from first-timers to seasoned travellers

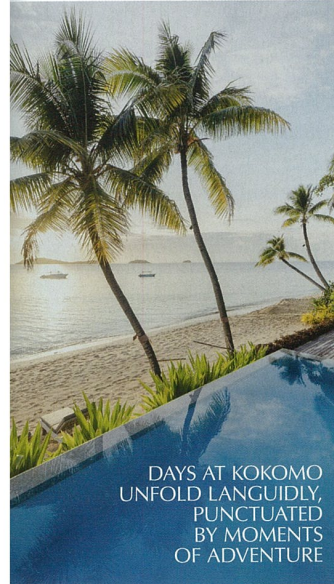
KOKOMO

I have a problem with passports. It's not them, it's me. Seriously, it's all me. I've turned up to airports with a cancelled passport, with an expired passport and, most recently for a trip to Fiji, with a passport that had only two months left on it. That passport belonged to my 10-year-old daughter. Yes, I did glance at it before the trip, but surely two months would be fine for Fiji? No, it was far from fine, and I was left pleading with a Fiji customs officer while my mum and two daughters stood beside me wondering who this mad, desperate woman was. I'm not sure if the officer felt sorry for me or couldn't bear to listen to me begging anymore, but by some miracle he said yes. I've never been more grateful for Fijian hospitality. When I grow up, I hope to be one of those organised adults who always travels with a valid passport.

My mum turned 70 last year, and to celebrate I want to go on a girls' trip. Kokomo Private Island seems like a once-in-a-lifetime experience, somewhere we'll never forget. After a quick four-hour flight from Sydney to Nadi, we're escorted to the resort's



FROM TOP Fiji caters for myriad water sports, from paddleboarding to diving; private pools offer a serene alternative to ocean dips.



DAYS AT KOKOMO UNFOLD LANGUIDLY, PUNCTUATED BY MOMENTS OF ADVENTURE



Each of Kokomo's 21 beachfront villas has an infinity pool (left) as well as a private deck and garden.



WHAT TO PACK

For the visitor, life on the islands is easy and simple. Just take some books, swimsuits and sun protection.



FROM TOP LEFT Eres shorts, \$370, at farfetch.com, and swimsuit, \$1045; Mulberry cap, \$260; Glossier Lip Balm and Skin Salve, \$27; Celine sunglasses, \$790.

turquoise waters of the South Pacific give way to a verdant speck of land fringed by powder-white beaches. This remote haven in Fiji's Kadavu archipelago is about to become my home for the next three nights, and I think I could cry from happiness.

Kokomo is nestled on the pristine shores of Yaukuve Levu Island and was created by the late property developer Lang Walker, who saw the island while passing by on his superyacht. Kokomo opened its doors in 2017 with a simple yet ambitious goal: the ultimate private island experience. As I step onto the wooden jetty, I can't help but feel that Walker has succeeded.

Our beachfront villa, one of 21, is a masterclass in understated luxury. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame postcard views of the ocean, while the private infinity pool merges seamlessly with the sea. The soothing neutral interiors are accented with local art, striking a balance between sophistication and island charm.

But Kokomo's true allure lies beyond its luxe accommodation. The resort sits on the edge of the Great Astrolabe Reef, the world's fourth largest barrier reef. Moments after we arrive, we don our snorkel gear and plunge into the crystal-clear water. Within moments, we're surrounded by a kaleidoscope of marine life – parrotfish in electric blue, curious clownfish darting among anemones, and even a graceful sea turtle gliding by.

As the sun sets, we head to the Beach Shack, one of Kokomo's three restaurants. Here, we meet chef Caroline Oakley, the culinary mastermind behind the resort's farm-to-table

philosophy. "We grow about 80 per cent of our produce right here on the island," she says, showing us the impressive two-hectare organic farm. Later, over a dinner of coral trout and home-grown vegetables, I understand why Kokomo has a reputation as a gastronomic destination.

Days at Kokomo unfold languidly, punctuated by moments of adventure. We spend mornings exploring the coral gardens with the resort's marine biologist, learning about the reef restoration project. Afternoons are reserved for indulgent treatments at the Yaukuve Spa Sanctuary, where traditional Fijian techniques are incorporated into modern therapies.

One evening on a sunset cruise, cocktail in hand, we watch spinner dolphins leap alongside. It's a magical moment that encapsulates the unspoiled beauty of this corner of the world.

But it's the Fijian staff who truly bring Kokomo to life. Their warmth and laughter are a constant reminder that I'm experiencing not just a luxury resort but a slice of Fijian culture.

As we board the helicopter to depart, our hosts serenade us, and I reflect on the unique alchemy of Kokomo. It's not just the pristine location or world-class amenities, it's the feeling of having discovered a secret paradise catering to your every whim while allowing you to connect deeply with nature and culture.

Kokomo Private Island may be one of the world's most exclusive resorts, but its greatest luxury is the sense of connection it fosters – with the environment, with the Fijian people and, ultimately, with oneself.