
ANOTHER FIJI FIRST FOR LIKULIKU LAGOON RESORT

Fiji's unique resort joins National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World.

Fijian owned and multi award-winning Likuliku Lagoon Resort, is delighted to announce that they have been accepted as a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World (NGULW) - the first and only one in Fiji and one of only two in the Pacific.

When Likuliku Lagoon Resort opened in 2007, it blazed a trail for Fiji with the country's first and only over-water bures/bungalows and immediately set new benchmarks for cuisine and service. In the 11 years since, the Resort has garnered an enviable reputation for excellence whilst continuing to set more benchmarks for not only service and experiences but in environmental practices. National Geographic Unique Lodges has exacting and uncompromising standards, and to be accepted into their portfolio of Lodges is a testament to the excellence that Likuliku has achieved. And, like all of the exclusive Unique Lodges of the World, Likuliku chooses to tread lightly - celebrating nature rather than conquering it, supporting cultural heritage and engagement with local communities, in addition to offering an authentic, quintessential Fijian experience in pristine ocean and wilderness surroundings.

"We are honoured that Likuliku Lagoon Resort has been selected to join this extraordinary and prestigious collection of boutique accommodation around the world" says Steve Anstey, Ahura Resorts, Group General Manager. "Becoming a member of the National Geographic Unique Lodges collection - with its esteemed global reputation in hospitality and conservation and cultural experiences, was a natural fit and step forward for us."

Steve continues, "We have always been environmentally focused as one needs to be when building and operating in pristine locations. During construction, extraordinary care and attention was taken to protect the natural resources including our reef and forest areas which were always intended to be a focal point of the Likuliku experience. Programs based on marine flora and fauna including turtle conservation, coral and clam planting, and consultation with the local community to install marine protection areas on reefs in order improve fish stocks, have been in place since we opened".

Likuliku's environmental initiatives took a dramatic turn in 2010 when a single Fiji Crested Iguana "*Brachylophus Vitiensis*" was found at Likuliku. The Fiji Crested Iguana is classified as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List 2007 (1), and listed on Appendix I of CITES and was thought to be extinct on the island of Malolo as there had not been any sightings for over 30 years. Like most animals on the brink of extinction, the demise of the Fiji Iguana has been largely due to the destruction of their natural habitat, which in the case of the Fiji Crested Iguana, is Dry Forest. Through urbanisation and development, the complex and diverse Dry Forest ecosystem has been radically diminished and along with the introduction of non-native animals - including rats, cats, mongoose and goats - which consume either the Iguanas or compete for their food sources, the Iguanas have over time simply disappeared.

Dry Forest once covered most of the islands in the Mamanuca Group, yet today only one percent of this ecosystem remains in the country, making it one of the most endangered on the planet. On Malolo Levu Island only 3% of Dry Forest remains. Since Dry Forests are crucial to the survival of the Fiji Crested Iguana and other wildlife, Ahura Resorts embarked on a major regeneration and restoration program. It established the first Dry Forest Nursery in Fiji on the island at Likuliku and using a scientific method, focused on growing 12 particular species that, once planted in a 10m x 10m grid, would provide a prototype Dry Forest suitable for Crested Iguana habitation.

Over a period of 4 years, this reforestation initiative in combination with a controlled program of invasive species eradication - particularly cats and rats, started to bare fruit. Leading up to this time, the Iguanas found were serendipitous. Suddenly they were visible in the wild but still in low numbers. This enabled the start of a catch, tag and release program whereby Iguana activity could be tracked and monitored in the wild. In addition, Likuliku was granted a permit to hold and breed Crested Iguanas in captivity and today cares for 4 breeding pairs. Likuliku is the only facility in the world to hatch Iguana eggs in captivity under natural conditions ie not in an egg incubator.

Likuliku's Fijian owner, Tony Whitton adds, "To become part of this extraordinary and internationally renowned worldwide network and being associated with the significantly historical organisation that is National Geographic, is a culmination of all that has been achieved for our young resort company and the product that is Likuliku Lagoon Resort. This a global stage like no other, and to be the first and only in Fiji is a credit to the Ahura Team on creating a product worthy of this type of attention and inclusion".

Guests who book their experiences at the Likuliku Lagoon Resort through National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World www.nationalgeographiclodges.com will also enjoy exclusive, specially-designed eco experiences.

(1) IUCN Red List: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) List of Threatened Species™ is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species.

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AHURA RESORTS

The Warm Heart Of Fiji.

ABOUT AHURA RESORTS

Ahura was an ancient god of creations who symbolised life, kindness, equality, care of the environment, charity, loyalty and faithfulness to settlement, tribe and county. The omnipresent sun was an enduring symbol of radiance, purity and life sustenance. Today, Ahura Resorts embodies these same values. As a 100% Fijian-owned company, with over 15 years experience in tourism and hospitality throughout the Pacific, Ahura is dedicated to providing quality holiday and lifestyle experiences while preserving cultural values and the surrounding environment. Ahura is the management company operating one of Fiji's most popular and well-known resorts — Malolo Island Fiji, and the luxury escape for couples which features Fiji's first and only authentic over-water bures — Likuliku Lagoon Resort. Experience the Warm Heart of Fiji with Ahura Resorts. www.ahuraresorts.com

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