

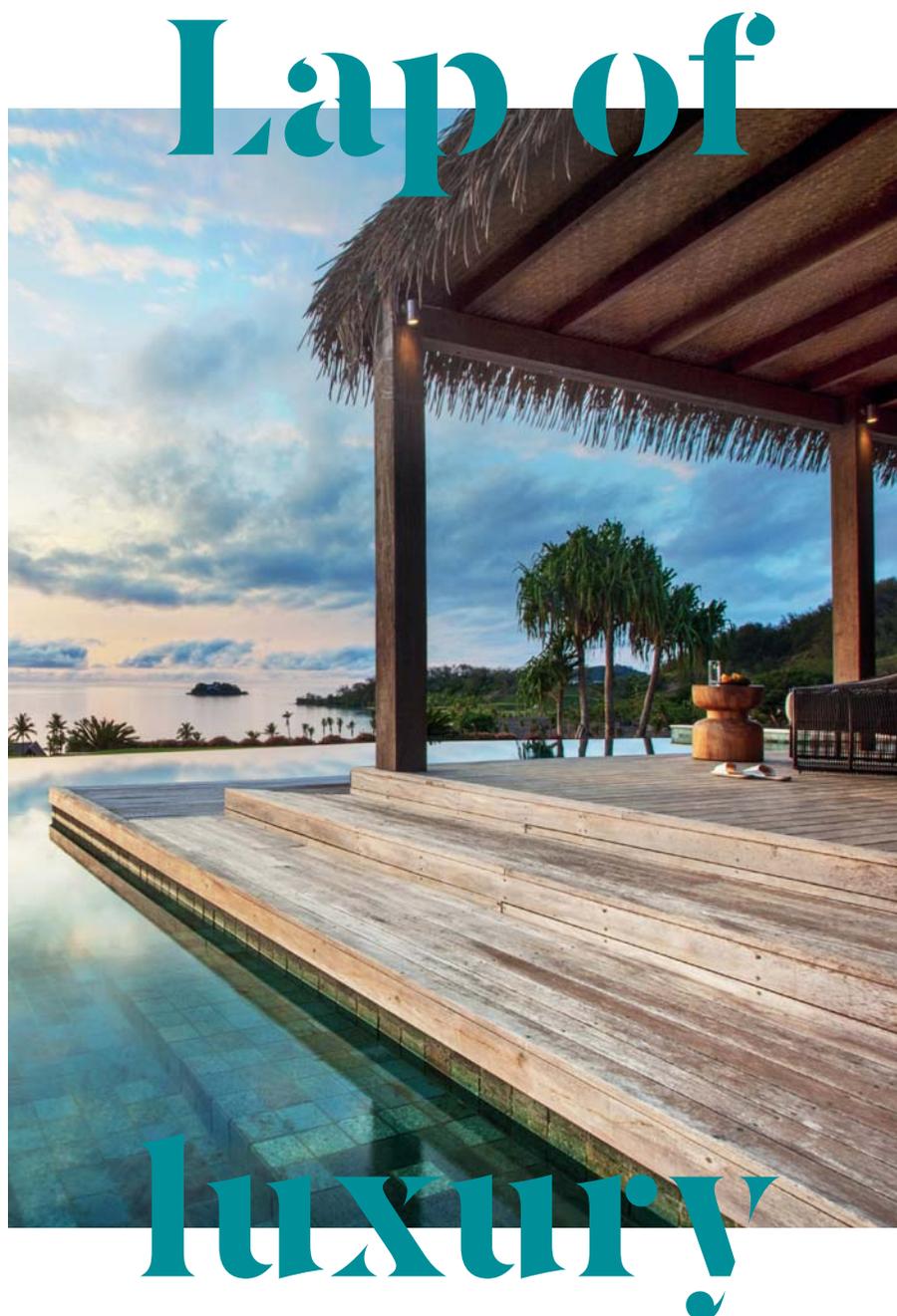


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Travel Fiji



Fiji's 300-plus islands offer ample spots to enjoy a tropical holiday, but the five-star options are where indulgence is kicked into overdrive. We explore two of the best.

STORY NIKKI BIRRELL



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This page: Likuliku
Lagoon Resort.
Opposite: Sunset at a
Six Senses Oceanview
Pool Residence.



I'M HERE IN Fiji to sample a couple of top-end resorts on Malolo Island and experience some of the luxury they offer. Malolo in the Mamanuca Islands is west of Nadi and south of the Yasawas, and my first stop is the new Six Senses Fiji, a 35-minute boat ride from Port Denarau Marina. A refreshing drink of kombucha and a Fijian welcome song fast-track my transition from traveller to pampered guest.

Next, I have a wellness analysis at the beautiful spa, the design of which is a contemporary take on a traditional village. The assessment measures your key physiological biomarkers and helps the team create a programme specific to your needs. That's backed up by the resort's restaurants – the menus show which meals fit with your plan. Of course that's just one way to go – everything is up to you.

The resort's cuisine is healthy, delicious

and locally sourced wherever possible. Many ingredients are plucked straight from the on-site gardens. Even some of the cocktails fit the wellness bill, using homemade probiotic beverages. So, for example, instead of a Pina Colada you could be sipping on a "Living Colada", with pineapple-infused rum, coconut vodka, pineapple shrub and coconut cream with a *tepache* (made from fermented pineapple skin) float.

Of course, all this culinary goodness can be delivered to your room. And that's a very tempting option when your beachfront villa, complete with private pool, is a little piece of paradise. There's an outdoor shower and a deep tub for soaking in under the stars.

A lighting system caters to every mood and need – romance, movie-watching, reading – and blinds can be operated without you having to leave your bed.

When you eventually venture out, there's plenty to be discovered, from morning yoga in an elevated pavilion to Zen moments in a meditation session (in-room, if you really can't bear to leave) to high-octane water excursions. I test the edges of my own comfort zone with a surf lesson in the lagoon. This beginner session doesn't even involve waves – just how to get comfortable on a board and balance on the water – but the term "wipeout" still applies. Great fun.

A guided snorkelling excursion reveals giant clams, countless varieties of fish and some of the work being done to restore and maintain the reef, including replanting coral cuttings.

You can exert yourself and then iron out the kinks with one of the spa's many holistic treatments. A traditional Fijian *bobo* massage involves a poultice of local herbs, so you feel kneaded as well as exfoliated.



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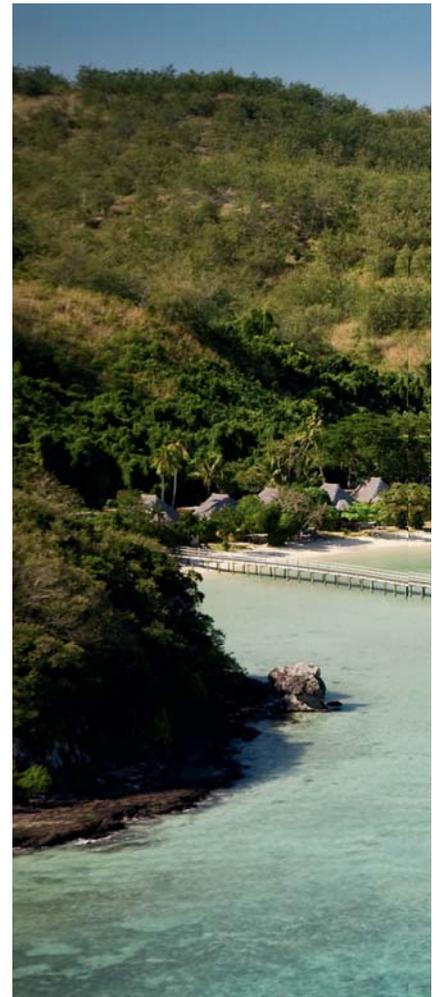


Clockwise from above:
Six Senses Beachfront Pool Residence; yoga is just one of the wellness options offered at the spa; a quiet nook; the view from a Beachfront Pool Villa.





Travel Fiji



Clockwise from above:
Likuliku Lagoon Resort
Deluxe Beachfront
Bure interior; the
over-water bures;
a bathroom; the
pool at the Likuliku
Lagoon Resort.





Alternatively, you can sweat it out in the sauna or steam room, before dipping in hot and cold plunge pools.

Sustainability is a priority. Six Senses has an off-grid solar installation and a reverse osmosis plant and water refinery producing high-quality drinking water.

When it's time to go and see what else five-star Fiji has up its tropical sleeve I wonder how anything can compare. Zipping away from the Six Senses dock to my next destination on Malolo Island, I'm very rested, peaceful and fully pampered.

As we pull up to the Likuliku Lagoon Resort dock, staff serenade us. Next, we're relaxing with a tropical drink at the jetty bar where, if you peer over the side, you can see colourful reef fish without even having to get wet. Okay, this works too.

First stop is a tour of one of the over-water *bures*. A huge tub is positioned beside

—
Next, I'm relaxing with a tropical drink at the jetty bar where, if you peer over the side, you can see colourful reef fish, without even having to get wet.
—

a large window for lagoon-view soaks. Out on the deck a ladder leads down to the water so you can snorkel or swim straight from your *bure*, then pop out to refresh under your outdoor shower.

You can also observe the ocean's activities through a glass floor section in the lounge. It's illuminated at night and there's always something, such as octopuses chasing

each other over the rocks and coral, to see. Who needs TV?

All meals are included in the tariff at Likuliku and the food's nothing short of scrumptious. Lunch and dinner menus, served in the Fijiana restaurant, change daily. One day you could be tucking into a starter of hand-picked island crab, cucumber, macadamia and watercress, and the next day perhaps a main of smoked pork loin with local octopus, romesco sauce, lemon and oregano. This is inspired cooking with a real tropical bent.

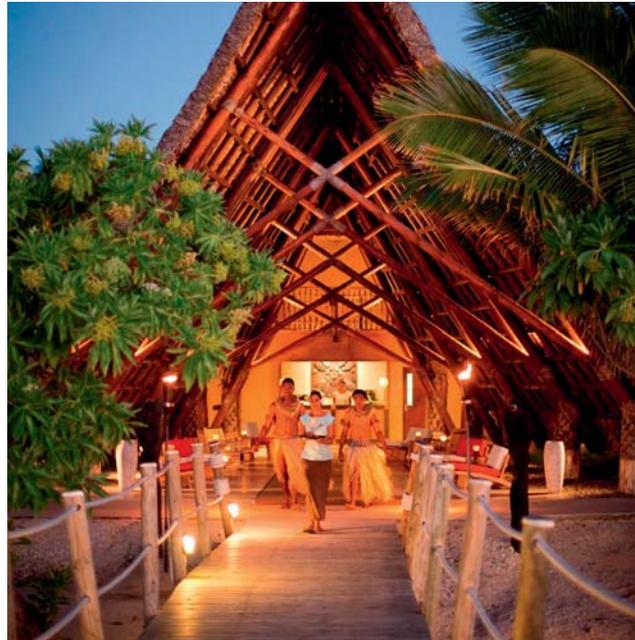
Likuliku is an adults-only resort, which shapes its character, and there's a sense of fun and decadence. On the extensive Tatadra Spa menu is Twilight Tadra, an evening for couples that includes Champagne, a foot scrub, a massage and a hydrating milk bath.

Early birds will always be rewarded with glorious sunrises in Fiji, but at Likuliku they

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Clockwise from left: Delicious seafood offerings at Likuliku Lagoon Resort; the reception area; diving is spectacular in Fiji.



take that to the next level with a pre-dawn excursion to private, uninhabited Mociu Island (or Honeymoon Island). Tuck in to a gourmet picnic on the beach afterwards and you'll feel like a pampered castaway.

The resort's herbal gardens supply a lot of the fresh produce for the kitchen, but its attention to nature also extends to the critically endangered Fiji crested iguana. The resort is heavily involved in efforts to protect the endearing reptile, and it's not surprising to learn that it has been named one of *National Geographic's* Unique Lodges of the World.

Come Friday at 6.30pm, everyone heads to Masima Bar for hosted drinks, a chance to mingle and get to know the staff and fellow guests.

The warmth and ease of the people here means you can't help but feel good in their company. No one more so than manager Tulia Seru, who started at the resort in housekeeping. She introduces a traditional *meke* performance, which clearly delights everyone, and then we head to the restaurant for a *lovo* (traditional Fijian underground cooking using hot stones) and South Pacific barbecue buffet.

It's an eye-popping spread and I load up on *kokoda* (fish marinated in citrus and coconut cream) and *lovo*-cooked *dalo* (taro), before a whole snapper, grilled to order, is laid before me. This feast, and the friendly company are fitting ways to end my five-star Fijian adventure on Malolo Island. sixsenses.com, likulikulagoon.com

Getting there

Air New Zealand offers daily non-stop flights to Nadi, Fiji, from Auckland and non-stop flights from Wellington and Christchurch from July to October, with connections across the domestic network.

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