

A HOLIDAY with a difference

A huge part of Fiji's charm is the warmth of the Fijian people, and now you can give back to local communities while on holiday



Fiji is a fab family destination, with luxe resorts, pristine islands, delicious seafood, amazing beaches and pools, and great kids' clubs. But why not extend your family holiday experience by getting involved with the local community and giving back? The concept of helping out while you're on holiday is gaining in popularity, particularly among families who want to show their children the importance of being altruistic. The Outrigger Enterprises group, which includes Outrigger Fiji on the Coral Coast, and Castaway Island in the Mamanucas, is leading the charge when it comes to voluntourism, offering plenty of great ways to give back to the local community. Here are some of the community tourism projects you can get involved with:

1 OUTRIGGER WALK FOR KIDS AT SIGATOKA

The annual Outrigger Walk-For-Kids Walkathon involves a 10km walk along the Queens Highway in Fiji. Participants are encouraged to ask friends and family

members to sponsor their walk, with funds going to development work and buying equipment for local schools in the region. In 2017, FJ\$10,000 was raised and this year's target of FJ\$15,000 is expected to be met, with plans to use the funds for the construction of teachers' housing at a rural school, and to purchase a new vehicle for the Sigatoka Special School. Outrigger Fiji Resort has had strong ties to the community for many years, helping to support the local schools and hospital through fundraising initiatives and giving guests the opportunity to be involved. The Walkathon takes place in April each year.

2 CORAL PLANTING AT CASTAWAY ISLAND

At Castaway Island guests can participate in the Mamanuca Environment Society (MES)

coral planting program, which replants living coral in reef systems around the island. This activity involves planting coral seedlings, which are then attached to a steel frame and submerged in the ocean. This activity is hugely popular with kids and is a great way to teach them about the importance of caring for the environment.

3 BUILD FISH HOUSES AT OUTRIGGER FIJI RESORT

OZONE (Outrigger's ZONE) is a global conservation initiative that aims to help protect coral reefs and the oceans surrounding Outrigger Resorts. One of the ways you can help out is by building 'fish houses' which are made from transplanted coral and then



located off the reef, not far from the shoreline. Outrigger also works with a local NGO and the department of fisheries to adopt and protect giant clams which live in the 'clam village' in front of the resort. Another fab activity for kids.

4 VISIT A LOCAL SCHOOL

Guests at Outrigger can visit the Conua Primary School in the Sigatoka Valley, where you can pitch in with painting or construction work, or just bring along some books and stationery for the children to use. The school is nestled in a lovely green valley and the children are gorgeous, warm and friendly, and always excited to meet visitors and make friends with visiting kids. You can also take part in a kava ceremony at the community hall.

You can pitch in with painting or construction work at the local school.



Words Nicola Cornville Photography Getty Images



MORE INFO

Outrigger Fiji is a family-friendly resort with a range of accommodation available from stylish apartments to beachfront bures. There are beautiful tropical pools, a fab kids' club and heaps of water sports and cultural activities for all ages, not to mention the divine hilltop Bebe Spa Fiji for parents needing a little R'n'R. Prices start from around \$175 a night for a resort view apartment, which sleeps two adults and two children. Visit www.outrigger.com for more details.

Castaway Island in the beautiful Mamanucas is a great option if you feel like getting away from it all. Accommodation consists of spacious

bures which sleep up to four people (or a family bure which sleeps up to 10). There's also a kids' club, family pool and four restaurants, from a casual pool bar to the elegant, feet-in-the-sand Restaurant 1808. You can relax in a hammock, go snorkelling or take the family island-hopping to Modriki Island, where the movie *Castaway* was filmed. Nightly rates for an Island bure (sleeps four) start from around \$630 and include a welcome cocktail on arrival plus complimentary use of snorkelling and non-motorised water sports equipment including catamarans and kayaks. Visit www.castawayfiji.com for more information and packages. •