



Swaying palms at the Outrigger Resort, Fiji

Sunshine and smiles

Marianne Rogerson discovers a warm welcome in Fiji

“Bula! Bula! Bula!” This friendly greeting accompanied by a warm Fijian smile follows you wherever you go in Fiji.

This is my first time here; until now the closest I have come to the Pacific Island nation is sitting behind the blue-wigged supporters at the Hong Kong 7s. The exuberance and friendly demeanour of the North Stand fans is fully representative of the Fijian people as a whole, and the warm welcome and smiley faces remain my overwhelming memory of my trip.

My first glimpse of Fiji is the 90-minute drive to the Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort, which is located on the Coral Coast, an 80-kilometre stretch of beach on Viti Levu, the largest of Fiji's 333 islands. We pass by sugar plantations, swathes of palm trees, piles of mangoes in the makeshift street side market stalls and rural villages with smiling, waving children.



Floating around at Castaway Island

While the infrastructure and facilities of the Outrigger Fiji are reminiscent of many an Asian beach resort we have visited over the years, the feel is distinctly Fijian. Designed to resemble a local village, 47 of the 250 rooms here are individual 'bures' (villas) that are linked by meandering walkways that snake through the tropical gardens.

If you're a family that can't sit still on a beach holiday, then the Outrigger is ideal. There is always something happening here, from guided reef walks and sarong painting to tennis tournaments, cocktail making, golf competitions, basketball shoot-outs and more.

The kids club has its own comprehensive programme of activities both during the day and evening, leaving parents free time to hang out in the adults-only areas, which include a tranquil swimming pool with swim-up bar, the hilltop Kalokalo bar and the heavenly Bebe spa.

Another highlight here is the food, which totally surpasses expectations. With the resort boasting Fiji's Chef of the Year and Pastry Chef of the Year, you know you are not going to go hungry. Particular highlights include nibbling on seared scallops as the sun sinks into the ocean at Sundowner Bar & Grill, and a kokoda (raw fish salad) prepared tableside at the adults-only Ivi restaurant, recipient of the 'Best Visitor Dining Experience' prize at the 2017 Fiji Excellence in Tourism Awards.



The family pool at Outrigger Resort



Time for a sundowner at Outrigger



Sunset at Castaway Island



Time to relax on Castaway Island

All too soon our time at Outrigger Fiji is up. However, any disappointment we feel is soon alleviated by our arrival at our next destination, Castaway Island. Located in Fiji's Mamanuca Islands, a 90-minute boat ride from the mainland, Castaway Island is the idyllic Fijian beach holiday you have dreamed of. Crystal clear turquoise water, white powdery sand, swaying palm trees... Castaway Island has it all.

With just 64 bures, Castaway Island has an intimate and exclusive air to it, while maintaining a rustic and laid back ambience. Barefoot luxury is the name of the game here, with shoes entirely optional at dinner and despite 90% occupancy during our visit, it is never hard to find a secluded spot from which to gaze at the ocean.

During our stay we help plant Coral as part of the Outrigger reef conservation program OZONE, and visit Modriki Island, location for the Tom Hanks movie Castaway for a picnic lunch. Castaway Island is also just a short boat ride away from famous floating bar and restaurant Cloud 9.

The kids club is not much to look at, but that is almost the point. Kids aren't expected to hang out here for long; they will be far too busy hunting for coconuts or crabs, making shell necklaces on the beach or learning a traditional

Fijian dance. Additionally, the PADI dive centre offers dive courses for children aged 10 and up.

Once again, evening activities keep the kids entertained while mum and dad can dine barefoot on the sand at 1808, the resort's award-winning Fijian fusion restaurant, or prop up the bar, which stays open until the last person leaves. You can always find a secluded sun lounge to sleep on the next day.

outrigger.com, castawayfiji.com

Cathay Pacific flies four times a week between Hong Kong and Nadi, Fiji.
cathaypacific.com

Fun with the kids Fiji-style

Ecotrax Fiji

EcoTrax Fiji is the most unique and fun way to take in the Fijian countryside. Cycling along a disused sugar plantation railway on redesigned electric bikes, you get to take in the beautiful Fijian scenery at leisure, traveling past local villages and high fiving the little kids who run along and shout "Bula!" to you. The track ends at the stunning Vinibua beach, where you have an hour to hang out on a deserted sandy cove,



Cycle fun at Ecotrax

swim in the warm ocean and sip on a fresh coconut before cycling back to base.

ecotrax.com.fj

Kula Wild Adventure Park

Located right next door to the Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort, kids can hold an iguana or snake

at this wildlife park, and admire a wide range of native Fiji birds in the aviary. But there's much more fun to be had than that. There's also Fiji's only ziprail to whizz down, a fun water play splash pad and a super cool 100m water slide that cascades down through the rainforest. Entrance tickets include unlimited rides.



fijiwild.com

Sigatoka River Safari

Possibly the most thrilling way to see the Fiji countryside, this adventure combines the excitement of a jet boat ride up the river, with a visit to a local village. Here you can try out some local cuisine, get involved with a kava ceremony, join in with some traditional dancing and learn about the local way of life. sigatokariver.com

Modriki Island

Made famous by its starring role in the Tom Hanks movie Castaway, an afternoon on Modriki Island is the ultimate Robinson Crusoe experience. Except maybe not, as if you organize a picnic lunch here through Castaway Island, the package includes a sumptuous bento box lunch and champagne. But you will have the island practically to yourselves and can amuse yourselves with snorkeling, frolicking on the beach and taking fun photos with the "HELP ME" sign laid out in coconuts.



Community Tourism

Outrigger does a huge amount to help the local Fijian community and if you stay at one of their resorts you can sign up to their community tourism programme. A recent project has included helping to build new facilities at a local village school. This is a fantastic opportunity to not only meet the wonderful local Fijian people, but also an important way in which you and your family can give back to the local community. [a](#)



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