

SEA CHANGE

# We Are Sailing



*Inveterate sailor Fiona Harper recalls her enduring love affair with the Pacific under sail, from the old Suva Yacht Club to secluded bays protected by unmarked reefs, from the Mamanucas to Marovo Lagoon in Solomon Islands, the magic never dims.*

Main picture: The Pacific; many islands, one small boat endless possibilities.  
Inset: Writer, Fiona Harper at home among the rigging.



Set your course and experience the Pacific in privacy if you're lucky enough to be sailing.

Despite 30-odd years since I first stepped aboard a yacht in the South Pacific, I can clearly recall how exotic Suva seemed back then. The sweet fragrance of frangipani filled the air. Palm trees whooshed overhead while the trade winds cooled the sweat on my skin. Iron-clad shopfronts, pot-holed streets and brooding laneways overhung with a tangle of powerlines begged to be explored. Fiji-Indian lady's colourful saris clashed pleasingly with floral dresses in the Mother Hubbard style favoured by Christian missionaries. In place of earrings ladies tucked freshly-plucked flowers behind their ears. Colourful, battered buses bounced along Queens Road outside the Royal Suva Yacht Club. White-shirted school boys, whose own youth would now be a distant memory, hung from glass-less windows enthusiastically shouting 'Bula!' (hello!) before hysterically giggling behind their hands.

My fascination with Fiji and the wider South Pacific remains. Back in 1980's Fiji our crew of four were delivering an 8m racing yacht, little more than an overgrown dinghy really, on the delivery voyage home after the Auckland to Suva Race. Waiting for an acceptable weather window for the 1,000nm run south, carefree days were spent swimming and snorkelling the coral reefs of the Mamanuca Islands.

Fast track to 2018 and I'm on a blue water cruising yacht anchored in Ships Sound, a slip of an anchorage with swinging room for one yacht, encased by weathered limestone pinnacles, vegetation clinging to their vertical sides as doggedly as those young school boys hanging

out of the bus. Fiji's far-flung Lau Island Group is about as remote as you can get without crossing into international waters. The islets of Ships Sound form an anchorage within the Vanua Balavu archipelago within a lagoon protected by a fringing reef that buffers the South Pacific Ocean rollers. The ridiculously blue sea is glassed-out calm. Barely a ripple breaks the surface. There are few beaches in the Bay of Islands due to the craggy volcanic topography, but the one we visit most often is shaded by trees laden with deliciously sweet pawpaw.

### *Downwind through paradise*

There is one yacht in an anchorage further north and a small coastal village an hour's sail to the south. Otherwise we have the entire archipelago to ourselves. Four weeks later we've explored every inch of this idyllic waterway by kayak, SUP board, dinghy and by leg power, snorkelling through coral gardens and swimming 'laps' around the islands. We make one foray to explore a mushroom shaped outcrop, scrambling over sharp volcanic rock which shreds my reef booties into ribbons.

Sailing the South Pacific on a yacht is an incredible privilege. This seagoing nomadic lifestyle offers extraordinary opportunities to explore little known places well away from tourist hot spots. The floating village of cruising yachties making their way across the South Pacific already know this. Caressed by the south easterly trade winds, a steady stream of ocean-crossing yachts call into Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu and

PRIVATE RESIDENCE COLLECTION  
IDEAL FOR FAMILIES

LUXURY, BEAUTY & PRIVACY  
"In one of the most stunning places in the world"

www.vomofiji.com

VOMO  
ISLAND FIJI

Malolo  
ISLAND FIJI

AUD\$ from **250\***  
per room per night for 2 or a family of 4

AHUR2481VT-HPH

## Be free at Malolo!

Malolo Island Resort is about a bure near the beach, surrounded by the world's friendliest people with a living and authentic culture. Perfect for families and couples alike, you can fill your day with a myriad of activities or simply unwind and do nothing at all.

Year round choose from F\$200 resort credits, Kids Eat FREE with 5 night stays, or between November and March, stay 5 nights and receive 1 extra night FREE!

Malolo. This is the way the world should be.  
T +679 672 0978 | malolores1@ahuraresorts.com  
www.maloloisland.com

For reservations and information visit [www.maloloisland.com](http://www.maloloisland.com)

\*Conditions apply.  
Approx rates only – check daily FOREX rates.

AHURA RESORTS The Warm Heart Of Fiji.



The waters really are gin-coloured and tranquil in the Pacific's myriad coves and bays known only to 'the floating village of cruising yachties'.

the Solomon Islands on a downwind sail through paradise. Samoa's undisputed attractions are many with their strong Polynesian traditions and locals who throw their arms open to travellers. Though, admittedly, the two main islands of Upolu and Savai'i offer plenty of challenges for visiting sailors with few safe anchorages. Where the coastline of these continental islands doesn't simply drop away into unfathomable depths unsuitable for anchoring, a handful of passages in the fringing reef mark the entrance to a serene bay. Asau Bay on the north side of Savai'i is one such haven. Though sailors need nerves of steel to navigate an unmarked narrow passage through the reef. The reward is a village that sits on the shore of a white sand beach, a low-key resort, Va-i-moana Seaside Lodge, with traditional fales for guest accommodation, and a beachfront restaurant and bar just made for leisurely afternoons on 'island time'.

*And the winner is ...*

Further westwards, Vanuatu is a popular cruising ground thanks to a string of 80-odd coconut palm-clad islands that run almost north south. The capital Port Vila sits on the shore of a pretty bay dotted with a couple of islands to break up the monotony of all that South Pacific Ocean blueness. But it's not just sailors who fall in love with Vanuatu – scuba divers are equally enamoured. Famous wreck dives like Million Dollar Point and SS President Coolidge offer divers the rare chance to dive on intact WWII relics.



TRAVELER  
Condé Nast  
TRIPADVISOR

**Fiji's highest rated luxury resort.**

Tokoriki Island Resort is Fiji's most awarded adults-only boutique island resort and the perfect destination for your next tropical escape. Enjoy our beautiful food, luxury spa, amazing diving & absolute beachfront accommodation.

Visit [tokoriki.com](http://tokoriki.com) or call +679 672 5927



**TOKORIKI**

ISLAND RESORT · FIJI



The Solomon Islands too are favoured by scuba diving sailors, the most accessible wreck being Bonegi 1, a WWII wreck off the beach near Honiara. But the real treasures of 'the Sollies' are well beyond the shore of downtown Honiara. Like Marovo Lagoon for instance. Covering around 700 sq km, roughly the size of Singapore, Marovo Lagoon World Heritage area is the poster child for pristine coral reefs, gin-clear water and picture perfect atolls, many of which are uninhabited. If there is a more tranquil lagoon in the South Pacific to drop anchor, mix a gin and tonic and become totally immersed in nature as the tropical sun dips below the aquamarine horizon, this sailing writer has yet to find it.

Sorry Fiji, despite my enduring love affair with your golden shores, lushly-gardened islands and underwater coral gardens, you've been out played by 'the Sollies.'

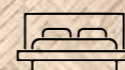
Drop anchor, mix a gin and tonic and become totally immersed in nature as the tropical sun dips below the aquamarine horizon.



Luxurious private beach houses in the South Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu.



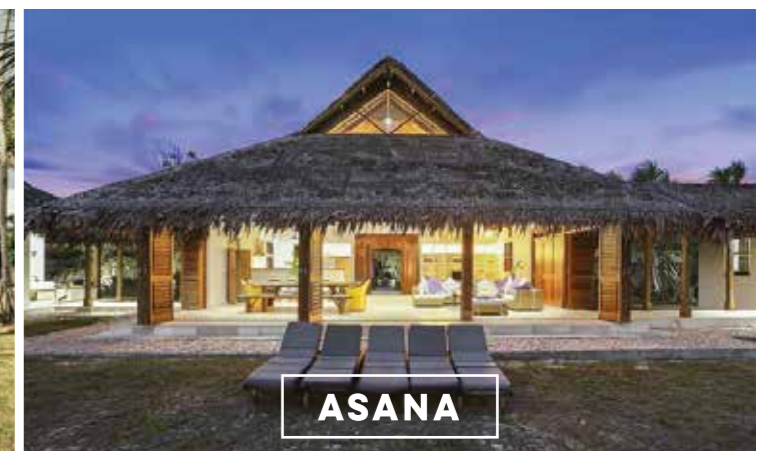
Sleeps up to 8 guests



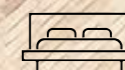
King x 2  
Double x 1  
Single x 2



Ensuite x 2  
Bathroom x 1  
Powder Room x 1



Sleeps up to 9 guests



Queen x 4  
Single x 1



Ensuite x 3  
Bathroom x 1  
Powder Room x 1

Our luxurious beach houses are equipped with everything you will need for a sophisticated island holiday to remember.

Being neighbouring beachfront houses, Gudfala + Asana offer the unique advantage of being able to be booked together. Sleeping up to 17 people, offering a genuine resort alternative for your wedding, family reunion or corporate retreat.

BEACH HOUSE  
HOLIDAY RENTALS  
VANUATU

To book visit:  
[beachhousevanuatu.com](http://beachhousevanuatu.com)