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Beautiful Fiji: One Island, Two Ways

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14 Jul 2015 - 15 Mar 2021



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Malolo Island in Fiji's Mamanuca Group attracts loved up couples who cosy up in overwater bungalows. Pop around the point and families are having a ball in one of Fiji's best kids clubs. Fiona Harper checked in to check them out.

Tom Hanks and a bloodstained, weathered Wilson volleyball have a lot to answer for. Washed ashore on an uninhabited South Pacific island after a plane crash, Hanks spends four years on the island before being eventually rescued. In the 15 years since the film *Castaway* was shot on MonuRiki Island the island has developed a cult-like following among devotees who descend on the island daily.

Though Hanks was convincing enough to receive an Academy Award nomination, MonuRiki Island was the real star. One of 20 islands that make up the Mamanuca Islands in Fiji's southwest, MonuRiki is every bit as beautiful in real life.



Thanks to some clever cinematography it wasn't evident that MonuRiki is actually surrounded by other islands. One of them is Malolo Island which early Fijians knew as 'the island of the resting sun'. From a distance the setting sun creates the illusion that the sun is resting on the island - Fijian mythology says that Malolo was created by the gods to provide a resting place for the sun after a day of wandering.

These days Malolo Island is a popular resting place for holiday makers lapping up tropical sunshine. Most would be unaware that the island also holds a significant sacred archeological site - a magic wishing cave known as the Sacred Rock of the new moon (visitors are not permitted near the site).

Likuliku Lagoon Resort

Loved up couples check into romantic Likuliku Lagoon Resort which is home to Fiji's only overwater bures. Likuliku, which means 'calm waters', was an ancient safe harbour used by war canoes during historical tribal warfare. There's little such discord today beyond the odd lovers tiff over when is an appropriate time to order the day's first cocktail. It's hard to imagine any aggression in such a dreamy setting.

If you can't get a room in the coveted overwater bures, try your luck in luxury beachfront bures, some of which have private plunge pools. All come with beachfront decks and daybeds for leisurely lazing while outdoor showers shaded by tropical foliage are a novel way to wash the salt away after a beach swim. Bures are tucked away on a crescent-shaped cove rimmed with a strip of dazzling white sand shaded by coconut palms.

The best way to appreciate Malolo Island's raw beauty is by taking an early morning hike to the island's summit. On the way you'll pass Vatu Tagi Rock, a sort of ancient coconut telegraph. This legendary rock makes a wailing sound when struck and was used to send messages to surrounding islands. The distinct sound of a hollow log striking the rock called elders on Malolo to a chiefly meeting. From the summit the surrounding islands are bathed in golden early morning light. On the horizon a line of white water marks Cloudbreak, the famous surf break that attracts surfers from across the globe.

Malolo Island Fiji

Around the point from Likuliku Lagoon, Malolo Island Fiji is equally blessed with a white sand beach and fringing coral reef concealed by water the colour of a turquoise gemstone. The beachfront resort is popular with families thanks to Tias Treehouse kids club.

Kids can't get enough of their fun environment and island education program. The club's centre piece is a solo sailor's yacht named *Esperanza Viva* which ran aground on a reef near Musket Cove. The yacht was salvaged and sat amongst the landscaping of the swimming pool at Musket Cove Resort for a number of years before being recycled into a kids plaything on Malolo Island.

Adults aren't forgotten with a packed activities calendar to keep the most jaded island hopper amused. Thrills range from high action jet ski expeditions or romantic island picnics to meditative massages in a treatment room utilising tangled rainforest vines and trees in place of walls. An impressive white-washed Plantation style lodge and beachfront bures give the place a timeless elegance beneath a craggy forest-clad peak.

As beach side flaming tiki torches are lit at dusk I recall Tom Hanks efforts to create fire and idly wonder how I would survive if marooned on an uninhabited island. Embraced by the warmth of Fijian hospitality, the arrival of a cocktail interrupts my musing and I give it no further thought. Until next day while beach combing I come across some salt-hardened flotsam that could easily pass for the remnants of a leather volleyball. Whatever did happen to Wilson I wonder?

Fiona Harper is a travel writer specialising in cruising, active and soft adventures. Follow her at [Travel Boating Lifestyle](#)

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