

An aerial photograph of a tropical island resort. The image shows a dense forest of palm trees and lush greenery covering a hillside. A sandy beach runs along the bottom of the frame, meeting the turquoise ocean. Several buildings with grey roofs are nestled among the trees, and a swimming pool is visible in the center. The overall scene is idyllic and serene.

The tropical classic

Time passes seamlessly on a private island resort that embraces warmth and laid-back luxury.

Kokomo

FIJI





Story by Brooke Le Poer Trench

We approach Kokomo Private Island (qantas.com/hotels/kokomofiji), flying from the Fijian town of Nadi, after 40 minutes, skimming over lush rainforests before the landscape dissolves into aquamarine reefs and open sea. Once we land, voices rise in harmony as resort staff strum guitars and sing a welcome so beautiful I have to pretend it's just the wind causing my eyes to water.

We're led down a meandering footpath to our beachfront villa, one of 21 on Kokomo (along with five deluxe residences) that cater for both families and couples looking for escape. The villa has soaring ceilings and a quiet grace, with carved timber, handwoven details and an outdoor shower made for lingering. Beyond sun lounges and a plunge pool on the deck, the sea glitters like it's showing off.

Days at this resort fold into each other. After a deeply restorative massage in one of the treatment spaces dotted around the open-air wellness centre, I spend hours on a floating pontoon, gazing at the South Pacific. Between naps, I watch fish dart by and drink from fresh, chilled coconuts, served with a grin by a waiter on a paddleboard. Another afternoon is given over to snorkelling the outer reef, where a marine biologist leads us through coral gardens

fizzing with colour and we see turtles, giant clams and a reef shark that, thankfully, shows little interest in us. On the boat ride home, a bento box of seasonal fruits and baked treats refreshes our salty palates.

At night, we eat under slow-moving fans at one of the three restaurants. Light, clever dishes pulled from the island's garden and sea populate Beach Shack's menu, including coral trout sashimi, grilled quail with thyme jus and a lemon tart so good it's difficult to share. At Walker D'Plank, with hanging lanterns and tables perched on a deck by the water, chef Caroline Oakley decides what's on the menu for dinner depending on the day's catch and mood – tonight it's wok-fried lobster with green papaya. Tomorrow, who knows?

It's the relaxed pace, combined with the easygoing warmth of the people, who ensure every comfort is met, that makes this stay so appealing. Kokomo isn't about being pampered – even though you are – but about stillness, soft edges, time loosening its grip and the grounded ambience that results from natural beauty. "We could go anywhere," says Miriam, visiting for her seventh time. "But we come here to remember how to exhale." 🌿