

STAY HERE
THE REMOTE RESORT
FIJI

THE GREAT ESCAPE

AFTER A BLISSFUL STAY AT THE REMOTE RESORT IN FIJI, Kelly Jane Gabriel UNDERSTANDS THE APPEAL OF PACKING IT ALL IN FOR ISLAND LIFE.



PADDLEBOARDING AT THE REMOTE RESORT



THE MAIN LODGE

You've got to admire a family that decides to leave the rat race and start life over; a simple island life, with two beautiful kids in tow, on a remote beach in northern Fiji. It takes guts and a lot of hard work, but Australians Dan and Natasha Dimmock decided to pursue their dream, and now own and operate a boutique luxury island getaway, The Remote Resort.

Three and a half years in the making, with Dan living on-site in a tent for a year and Natasha and the kids visiting from Brisbane, the barefoot luxury resort they have created makes for a unique and wonderful experience. I hesitate to call it a resort, as it feels so unreserved and intimate. Being warmly welcomed with a traditional kava ceremony shortly after arriving by boat, you remain more of a friend than a guest for your entire stay. With only seven bures, you won't ever queue for meals, activities or spa treatments. Everyone we met was friendly and low key, there's no room for snobbery here; this is an authentic island experience with a five-star twist.

The Remote Resort is designed with the intention of slowing guests down and encouraging them to disconnect from the rigours of everyday life. There is free WiFi access in the main pavilion, which is thankfully just inconvenient enough to keep you from constantly checking your phone as we are so programmed to do. Having teenag-

ers I loved this, I actually got to see their smiling faces instead of always looking at the tops of their heads.

True to its name, The Remote Resort is definitely secluded, but getting there was part of the adventure and I loved it. From Nadi Airport we took the most stunning one-hour plane ride with Island Hoppers Fiji. After landing in Savusavu the resort had organised a private car to take us on the one hour, 15-minute drive, which followed the turquoise sea past tiny villages, old homesteads and coconut plantations. As we got closer to the ocean, the bitumen ended and a 20-minute four-wheel drive adventure through the jungle began. At this stage we were grinning from ear to ear with the realisation that the 'real' world is now far behind us. The last part of the journey is a 15-minute boat ride spent lounging on beanbags in the sunshine on the top deck. When you hear the sweet sound of a Fijian welcome song, something inside tells you that you have arrived. Paradise. Alternatively, if that sounds like too much excitement, you can fly to Taveuni Island and take an easy 20-minute drive followed by a 20-minute boat ride.

The resort sits neatly on the edge of Rainbow Reef, a world-famous dive and snorkel sight. You will definitely want to spend some time there. Other activities include guided hikes to hidden waterfalls, kayaking and a visit to nearby vil-



Left: A new oceanfront villa at The Remote Resort.

Below: Arrive in style on Island Hoppers' fixed wing aeroplane.



lages. My daughter's favourite day was when we were dropped at a private beach with a picnic lunch. A large friendly pig that lives on a nearby farm, and who frequents this particular beach, just so happens to love coconuts. He begs like a dog until you open one for him. It is entertaining to watch a pig devour a coconut. Then, as if orchestrated, a rooster arrives to help clean up the scraps.

Dan and Natasha have done a terrific job with the villas. Admittedly, I was not expecting such luxurious and comfortable beach bungalows in such a remote location. This only serves as a testament to the couple's determination to produce a high quality service despite obvious hurdles. The beds and bedding are incredibly comfortable. All villas are oceanfront and have a large sundeck with plunge pool. The 92-square-metre two-bedroom villa is set at the end of the beach and is perfect for families. There is a bedroom with ensuite on each side of the full-size kitchen and bi-folding glass doors that open to the patio. They have also recently completed two oceanfront retreats that have a larger pool and deck area, which was perfect for a couples coconut scrub and banana leaf wrap.

All of the timber and furniture is local and was milled on-site with the help of neighbouring villagers.

The food is another highlight. Each morning during breakfast you are given a menu

with several choices for lunch and dinner. You can also choose where you would like to dine; on the beach under the stars by a bonfire was our favourite. Memorable meals included salt and pepper squid, coconut chickpea curry with freshly caught fish, vegetable stir-fry, grilled Spanish mackerel and delicious freshly baked bread. And make sure you try some of the homemade potato chips served at the bar – they are highly addictive!

By the end of our stay my partner was trying to convince me that we should buy the land around the corner and follow in Dan and Natasha's footsteps. Though it's a romantic idea, I'm happy to keep coming back to The Remote Resort for my island fix. Besides, I would miss those homemade potato chips.

● GET THERE

Transfers to the island are operated by Island Hoppers. Rates start from FJD740 (about A\$467) per adult and FJD516 (about A\$326) per child for a one way transfer from Nadi to Savusavu (rate includes 25 per cent taxes). islandhoppersfiji.com

● STAY HERE

Rates at The Remote Resort start from FJD1475 (about A\$940) per night (including 25 per cent taxes). fijiresort.com.fj



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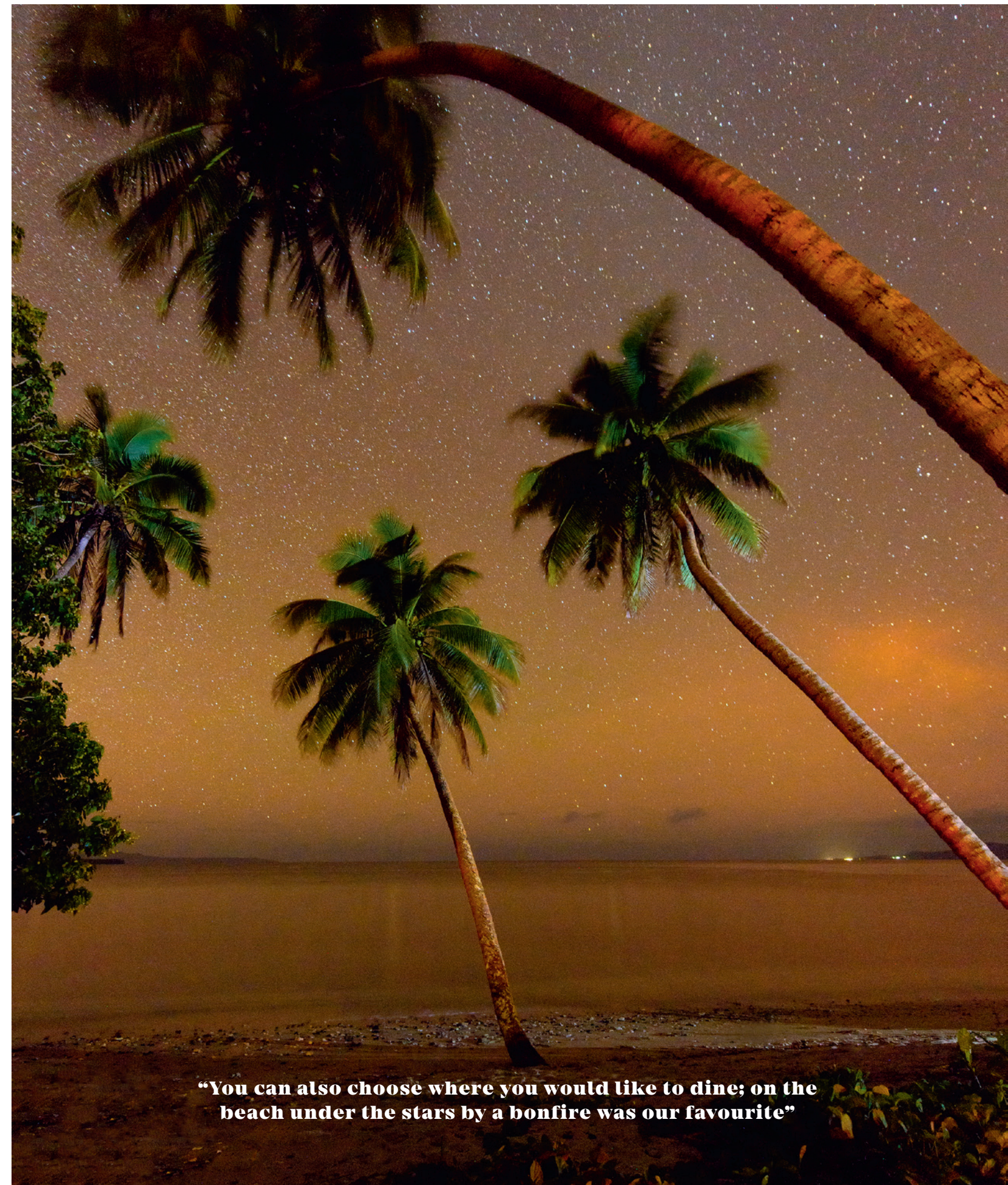


● RECOMMENDED READING

THE SHOESHINE KILLER by Marianne Wheelaghan

The Shoeshine Killer is the second of the bestselling Scottish Detective Lady mysteries, featuring DS Louisa Townsend from Edinburgh. Louisa is on her first visit to Fiji and immediately gets caught up in the search for a double killer. This takes her on a dangerous journey into Fiji's murky underworld, which is as far removed from the country's tourist images of blue lagoons and palm-lined beaches as possible.

tripfiction.com/books/the-shoeshine-killer/



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