

Mamanuca Group



The Mamanucas are movie stars, Fiji's glittering jet set, forever photographed and fêted, valued more for their natural beauty than any contribution they make to the national culture. Tiny, uninhabited Monuriki (and not, ironically, Castaway Island) played the island in the Tom Hanks movie, *Cast Away*. The reality TV show *Treasure Island* was shot in the Mamanucas (although not, on Treasure Island). The Resort Walu Beach on Malolo featured in *The Resort*, another reality TV show. *Survivor: Fiji* was made on Bounty Island.

There are about 20 islands in the group, basking in a large lagoon formed by the Malolo Barrier Reef and Viti Levu. Many of the islands take day-trippers from the mainland, who gorge themselves on buffets washed down with Fiji Bitter, and sunbake on white sand beneath coconut palms. The ocean around the islands has some excellent dive sites and Fiji's gnarliest surf spots. The snorkelling here is generally fantastic with the clear waters offering fascinating windows into the undersea world.

Most of the habitable islands support a tourist resort (on land leased from nearby villages and/or a Fijian community). If there is a resort but no village, it is usually because there is no natural source of water. Most resorts bring in their water from the mainland by barge. A few of the smaller islands, such as Monuriki, retain significant areas of forest with native birds and reptiles. You often see heavy rain clouds hanging over Nadi and Lautoka while the drier, magical Mamanucas remain unaffected.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Surf the wicked left-hander at **Cloudbreak** (p149), and the other fantastic breaks of the southern Mamanucas
- **Snorkel** (p149) in azure water straight from the beach, almost everywhere
- **Dive** (p59) among big fish and harmless sharks at amazing sites such as Gotham City and The Supermarket
- Enjoy a sunset drink with the yachties at the **Ratu Nemani Island Bar** (p156) on Malololailai
- Party the night away at **Beachcomber Island** (p151), then next morning parasail over the scene of the crime to clear your head
- Enjoy an intimate break with your partner on beautiful, peaceful **Navini** (p151)
- Treat yourself to tasteful luxury on **Tokoriki** (p154)
- Have a wild night on the *kava* (a narcotic Fijian drink) in one of **Mana's** (p152) confusingly interconnected backpacker resorts



Getting There & Around

The price of a light-plane ticket is comparable with catamaran prices, and the flight over tropical islands with white-sand beaches is more scenic and much quicker (no more than 15 minutes). **Sun Air** (☎ 672 3016; www.fiji.to) has daily flights (although sometimes flights are cancelled if there aren't enough passengers) from Nadi to Mana (adult/child \$88/58 one way) and Malololailai (adult/child \$71/40). **Turtle Airways** (☎ 672 1888; www.turtleairways.com) and **Pacific Island Seaplanes** (☎ 672 5644; www.fijiseaplanes.com) offer more expensive seaplane flights to the Mamanuca resorts, as does helicopter outfit **Island Hoppers** (☎ 672 0410; www.helicopters.com.fj). For more information, see p260.

Awesome Adventures (☎ 675 0500; www.awesomefiji.com) runs the *Yasawa Flyer* (also known as the 'Yellow Boat'), which connects with South Sea Island and, on request, Bounty and Beachcomber Islands.

Beachcomber Island Cruises (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com) operates transfers to Beachcomber and Treasure Islands twice daily from Port Denarau and most days from Lautoka (one-way/return \$45/77, and half-price/free for children two to 16/under two), which includes pick-ups from Nadi. You can take a day trip to either island for the same price. Beachcomber also offers a water-taxi service for late flight arrivals and departures, for \$117 one way per adult.

Malolo Cat I & II (☎ 666 6215) are fast and comfortable catamarans that make the 50-minute trip between Malololailai and Denarau Marina three times daily (\$45/22.50 for an adult/child one way).

South Sea Cruises (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj) operates two fast catamarans that run a loop from Denarau to most of the Mamanuca islands, including: Malolo and Castaway (\$65 one way); Mana (\$70); Treasure/Beachcomber (\$55); Bounty (\$50); South Sea Island (\$30); and Matamanoa and Tokoriki (\$100). Hopping between islands costs between \$15 and \$75 depending on how far you want to go. Prices include transfers from Nadi. Children aged five to 15 are half-price, and those aged under five are free. There are six departures daily.

It's easy to charter a boat. Try **Sea Fiji** (☎ 672 5961; www.seafiji.net; Port Denarau), which offers a convenient 24-hour water-taxi service that can be economical if you are

in a group. For up to eight people, prices start at \$375.

Fully crewed yachts are a fun way to explore the group and can be chartered at Musket Cove Marina on Malololailai (see p155).

BOUNTY ISLAND

Bounty Island, also known as Kadavu, is a 20-hectare coral island just 15km offshore from the mainland. It's one of the best options for budget travellers. The flat island is rimmed by a white-sand beach where endangered hawksbill turtles nest and the marine reserve has some pristine coral for snorkellers.

Bounty Island Resort (☎ 651 1271; www.fiji-bounty.com; dm/r/bure \$46/143/234, child under 12 half price; ☎) is a happy place. Many people come here as a stopover between the mainland and the Yasawas, but it is worth a few days' R&R by itself. There are 12 new double *bure* (traditional dwellings) with tiled floors, air-con, fridge and bathroom, while the older family *bure* (with two bunks and one double bed) have air-con, fridge and bathroom, too. All the *bure* have ocean views and hammocks. They are very clean, but there is no furniture apart from the beds. The eight family rooms sleep six and are bright and clean. They have sinks but hot-water facilities are shared. The two dorms are clean and fan-cooled, but perhaps a bit hot. Meal packages are \$35 per person per day (children under 12 are half-price) and servings are generous. Nonmotorised sports equipment – including snorkels, canoes, kayaks, sailboards and trail bikes – is free. Diving can be arranged with Subsurface (see p149). Transfers are by South Sea Cruises or Awesome Adventures' *Yasawa Flyer* (see left).

SOUTH SEA ISLAND

Newly renamed South Sea Island is a tiny, flat, sandy island southeast of Bounty and Treasure Islands. You can just imagine the marketing geniuses brainstorming the new name. 'Hey, guys, we've got this, like, south sea island. How about we call it...'

In the middle of this fun, friendly island is **South Sea Island** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com; dm \$75; ☎), a double-storey *bure* with a restaurant and bar downstairs and a forest of beds (mostly bunks) upstairs. There are 32 beds in the main dorm, and two six-bed

family dorms. The beach is good for swimming and OK for snorkelling, and there is a fresh-water swimming pool and lots of water-play equipment including free snorkelling gear, paddleboards, sailboards and a sailing catamaran. Prices include three good meals a day.

Diving is through **Reef Safari** (☎ 675 0950; www.reefsafari.com.fj). It offers two-tank dives (\$170 including gear), night dives (\$100), and dive courses from PADI Open Water Course (\$530) to Divemaster (\$1500).

This island is an easy stopover for trips to the Yasawas but it can get crowded with day-trippers. Transfers are by South Sea Cruises or the *Yasawa Flyer* (see opposite).

BEACHCOMBER ISLAND

Tiny Beachcomber Island (Tai) is 20km offshore from the mainland. It is circled by a beautiful beach and an invading army of holiday-makers, approaching as parasailers from the air, kayakers from the water, and snorkellers from the undersea world.

Beachcomber is a famous party island that is almost completely covered by **Beachcomber Island Resort** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; dm \$79, s/d \$195/265, s/d *bure* from \$295/345, extra child/adult in *bure* only \$59/79; ☎ ☎ ☎), which caters for up to 250 energetic guests plus crowds of rowdy day-trippers. Entertainment includes live music and frenetic dancing on the sand dance floor in the big, lively bar.

Bunk upon bunk is crowded into the huge, dorm *bure*. Lockers are provided. The 16 modest twin lodge rooms with fridge and private bathroom are set some way from the beach. There are also 16 slightly rustic duplex *bure* and six premium beachfront *bure* – all with fridge and bathroom – although some of the bathrooms are outside. All accommodation is fan-cooled. The rates include surprisingly good meals.

Snorkelling equipment is free for house guests (\$10 for day-trippers). Sailing and windsurfing lessons are also free of charge. Also on offer are waterskiing (\$35), parasailing (\$65), jet-skiing (\$65 per 15 minutes), wakeboarding (\$35) and fishing trips (\$150 per hour for four people). Diving is through Subsurface (see p149).

A kids' club operates during the Australian and New Zealand school holidays.

Transfer is by the resort's catamaran service or South Sea Cruises (see opposite).

TREASURE ISLAND

Treasure Island (Elevuka) is a small coral island near Beachcomber Island.

Treasure Island Resort (☎ 666 6999; www.fiji-treasure.com; bure/duplex \$525/1050; ☎ ☎ ☎) caters well for families and honeymooners. The landscaped tropical gardens cover the entire island, which is encircled by a beautiful white-sand beach. It has 67 comfortable air-conditioned beachfront *bure*, each taking up to three adults, or two adults and two children under 16 years. Optional meal packages cost \$66/79 for two/three meals daily (half-price for kids under 12).

There is a pretty good gym and spa, a fun children's playground, and free Internet and guest laundry. Every *bure* (apart from the one facing the wedding chapel) is on the beach and has a hammock, and further down the beach are deckchairs and a beach umbrella. Many *bure* are semidetached, with an L-shaped living area. Some are divided into four apartments, enhancing the prevailing 1980s Queensland holiday-home feel.

There is nightly entertainment in the large, open dining room–bar, a games room and a freshwater pool. The resort has an excellent kids' club (for children aged three to 14) and babysitting is available for under threes (\$5 per hour). Nonmotorised activities are included in the rate. Diving trips are organised with Subsurface p149).

The island is serviced by South Sea Cruises and Beachcomber Island Cruises (see opposite).

VOMO

This wedge-shaped, 90-hectare island rises to a magnificent high ridge and has lovely beaches, good snorkelling and diving.

Vomo Island Resort (☎ 666 7955; www.vomofiji.com; garden/beachfront villa \$1590/1730; ☎ ☎ ☎) is a Sofitel luxury resort with a pool, a golf course and 'honeymoon island', Vomolailai, just offshore. The 29 very comfortable, air-conditioned villas each have a spa and a mosquito-proof deck. Rates include gourmet meals and nonmotorised activities. There is a three-night minimum stay. Most guests arrive by helicopter or seaplane (see p260).

NAVINI

From a distance, Navini looks like a round wafer biscuit topped with thick pesto. Up close, this small island is just as delicious.

It is surrounded by a white-sand beach and offshore reef. It's owned by the people of Solevu on Malolo, who used to fish here and hold meetings for their chiefs.

Navini Island Resort (☎ 666 2188; www.navini.fiji.com.fj; 1-bedroom/premier/duplex/honeymoon bure \$498/540/610/690; 📺) is a lovely Australian-run resort for a maximum of 30 guests (with 36 staff!). No day-trippers are allowed. Its 10 *bure* are all within 10m of the beach. One-bedroom *bure* are small but comfortable. Master bedrooms are at the back of the *bure*, through the sitting rooms. Duplex *bure* (sleeping five) have sitting rooms and the more spacious 'premier' *bure* (sleeping three) have verandas on two sides. The honeymoon *bure* have a private courtyard and spa. All guests usually eat at the same table. A three-meal plan costs \$96/55/40/20 for adult/child six to 12/child two to five/child under two. Two-meal plans are also available. The food is good, especially the fresh fish.

Snorkelling is excellent just off the beach. Kayaking, windsurfing, use of coral-viewing boards and morning trips, including fishing and visiting other resorts or villages, are included in the price. Diving and other motorised sports can be arranged with Subsurface (see p149).

Navini guests are picked up from Nadi or Lautoka hotels, taken to Vuda Point Marina and then catch a speedboat. Return transfers cost \$198/99/594 for adult/child/family.

DIVIDED LOYALTIES

Incredibly, a manned guard post and a high fence separate the upmarket Mana Island Resort from the three backpacker resorts on Mana. It is like a mini Berlin wall, dividing the wealthy west from the ragged poor in the east. Signs throughout Mana Island Resort warn 'nonguests' are not welcome in the restaurants, shops, even the toilets – nor can they use the beach shelters or deck chairs – but sick or injured backpackers are helped in the clinic.

The backpacker resorts are sewn into a ramshackle new Fijian village that grew up after local landowner Ratu Kini built a couple of demonstration *bure* to show the Japanese management of the Mana Island Resort how it was done. His relatives then moved into the *bure* and hooked up to the resort's electricity, causing a long-running court case. Ratu Kini and his brother both built small backpacker operations – Ratu Kini's and Mereani's. There is only a metre distance between the two resort bars, and Mereani's bar-reception area is wrapped inside Ratu Kini's, flanked on one side by its bar and on the other by its dining room, an enclave once again, like a mini former East Berlin. A third resort – Mana Island Lodge – was recently opened by another family member.

There is no longer a sense of aggressive competition between the resorts, since both the original brothers are dead. It's all a bit strange, though. That said, it won't spoil your holiday on Mana, which is very much a stop on the party circuit for British and Irish backpackers.

MANA

The beautiful but divided island of Mana is about 30km northwest of Denarau. The upmarket Mana Island Resort stretches between the north and south beaches over 80 hectares of leased land. There are three budget resorts next to the village on the southeastern end. The northern beach and the western beach (known as Sunset Beach) are quite good for snorkelling with lots of tiny colourful fish. Also check out the south beach pier, where the fish go into a frenzy under the night lights. Hike up to the tallest hill for a good view over the surrounding reefs.

There are good dive sites at the main reef off the island. **Aqua-Trek** (☎ 670 2413; www.aqua.trekdiving.com) caters for Mana Island Resort divers. A two-tank dive costs \$186 including equipment, and a PADI Open Water Course costs \$700. The excellent **Reef Safari** (☎ 675 0950; www.reefsafari.com.fj) services Mana's backpacker resorts. The diving and snorkelling sites are uncrowded and Reef Safari's reef talks inspiring. It offers two-tank dives (\$170 including gear), night dives (\$100), and dive courses from PADI Open Water (\$450) to Divemaster (\$1500).

Sleeping

You can use credit cards on Mana but you will need to bring some cash. Beware of theft on the beaches and in the dorms. Parts of Ratu Kini's and Mereani's are indistinguishable from the village (and, from each other).

To reach the various backpacker resorts, get off at the ferry wharf, turn left, and walk through the village until you reach the guardhouse. Each backpacker resort offers diving through Reef Safari (see opposite).

Ratu Kini Backpackers (☎ 672 1959; www.ratu.kini.com; camping per person \$35, dm \$45, s/d with shared bathroom \$75/95, s/d/tr with bathroom \$95/110/135) Most of the accommodation is set back from the beach in gardens among breadfruit trees, and it's almost indistinguishable from the village. Ask to see the newest rooms, which have big, very comfortable beds. The lively bar here is the centre of backpacker nightlife, since (a) it overlooks the beach and (b) there is a TV. You can use the bar wherever you stay, although Mana Island Resort guests may have to jump the fence (it happens!). The rates include huge meals. Activities include snorkelling trips (\$10 per person, plus \$10 snorkel hire), kayaking (\$5 per hour), visits to the island where the movie *Cast Away* was shot (\$50 per person including snorkel and lunch) and island hopping (\$45 per person).

Mana Island Lodge (☎ 681 3436; manalodge2@yahoo.com; dm/r \$60/130, tw/d bure \$150/200) The newest of the backpacker places, this lodge shows promise. At the time of writing, there was a restaurant here but no bar. All meals are included. The brand new fan-cooled *bure* have bathrooms but no cooking facilities. The eight-person dorm has its own bathroom and there is one private room nestled in the dorm. Snorkel hire costs \$10 per person but snorkelling boat trips are free, island hopping is \$45, fishing \$30.

Mereani's Backpackers Inn (☎ 651 3359, 995 6446; www.manaislandbackpackers.com; dm/s/d/beachfront \$45/75/95/200) Rates include three meals. All double rooms have a double bed, a single bed and a fan, apart from one room, which is air-conditioned. All facilities are shared. There is an eight-bed dorm, with two double rooms that can only be reached by walking through the dorm. The main, big, 20-bed, mixed dorm is in the village. Two bathrooms come off the dorm and there is another set outside for dorm users, just 3m away. The dorm will eventually be extended to meet the bathrooms. Activities include reef-fishing trips (\$5), four-island sightseeing (\$35), Tom Hanks picnic (\$50), snorkelling, as well as nightly *kava*.

Mana Island Resort (☎ 666 1455; www.manafiji.com; garden/deluxe bure \$336/504, ste \$784, honeymoon

bure \$1064; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) With 128 *bure* and 32 hotel rooms, this is one of Fiji's largest island resorts. It is owned by a Japanese company, and transport from the secluded honeymoon *bure* is by that most Japanese of vehicles, the golf buggy. The honeymoon *bure* have a very long deck (useful if you're taking a lot of people on your honeymoon) and overlook a secluded cove. Garden *bure* have room for up to four people, and deluxe oceanview, air-conditioned *bure* are spacious, elevated and have a porch.

Children aged under 12 years stay free and rates include breakfast and all non-motorised water sports. Snorkelling, fishing and island-hopping trips are also available. Diving is through Aqua-Trek (see opposite). Meal plans are available and there are two restaurants (lunch/five-course dinner \$16/55) and three bars. The South Beach Restaurant (mains from \$25) is a pleasant spot right on the beach. Resort facilities include a circular pool, a horizon pool and spa, tennis courts and a free kids' club for three to 12 year olds. Babysitting costs \$5 an hour.

Getting There & Away

Flying with Sun Air is the quickest (12 minutes) and most scenic way to get to the island (see p150). Mana is serviced by South Sea Cruises catamarans (p150). Guests of Mereani's and Ratu Kini's can use the resorts' own *Mana Flyer* transfer boat (\$80 return).

MATAMANOA

Matamanoa is a small, high island just to the north of Mana.

Matamanoa Island Resort (☎ 672 3620; www.matamanoa.com; d unit/bure incl breakfast \$330/510; ☒ ☑ ☒) has 20 *bure* overlooking a lovely beach. All *bure* have a veranda and beach views (half facing sunrise, half sunset). The 13 good-value air-conditioned units have garden views. The resort does not cater for children under 12 and is best suited to couples who want a relaxing holiday. Daily meal plans cost \$49/74 for dinner/lunch and dinner. There is a three-night minimum stay.

Nonmotorised water sports are free. Other activities include a trip to the nearby pottery village on the island of Tavua. Diving is with Aqua-Trek (see opposite).

Most guests arrive via the South Sea Cruises catamarans (see p150).

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Takoriki Island Resort (☎ 666 1999; www.takoriki.com; d bure \$825, extra person \$150, d villa \$1100; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This gorgeous resort caters mainly for couples. No children under 12 are allowed. The tasteful and comfortable air-conditioned *bure* can sleep three and are just a few steps from the beach. The five new villas have private plunge pools and large sandstones terraces. Lunch is served in the pleasant terrace and pool area while gourmet candle-lit, three-course dinner (\$45) is in the restaurant. Meal plans cost \$99 per day.

Nonmotorised sports are included in the rate. Dive Tropex Takoriki is equipped with excellent boats and gear. It has an interesting giant clam-farming dive site nearby and visits some pristine local sites. Many are very close to the island. The only blue coral in Fiji is located in the imaginatively named Blue Coral Reef. A two-tank dive trip costs \$190, a night dive \$100 and the PADI Open Water Course \$640.

Most guests take the South Sea Cruises' catamaran (p150) or a flight on a seaplane or helicopter from Nadi (see p260).

TOKORIKI

The small, hilly island of Takoriki has a beautiful, long fine-white-sand beach facing west to the sunset. Near the northern end of the Mamanucas, it has a special, remote feel. The resort here is superb, see above.

CASTAWAY ISLAND

Reef-fringed, 70-hectare Castaway Island, also known as Qalito, is 27km west of Denarau island.

Castaway Island Resort (☎ 666 1233; www.castawayfiji.com; garden/oceanview/beachfront/f bure \$680/790/890/1780; 🍷 🍷 🍷) covers about one-eighth of the island. There are a lot of families here, the majority from Australia and New Zealand. The simple fan-cooled *bure* are quite spacious and sleep four. White brick walls and thatched roofs give them an English-country look, belied somewhat by the intricate *masi* (bark-cloth) lining the ceilings. From the outside, it is as if a Cotswolds village had been picked up by a cyclone and deposited on a great beach. Inside, the *bure* are a little shabby but are being gradually

renovated. There is a swimming-pool bar, an open-air pizza bar with sea views, and a great dining terrace (all-day casual meals \$15; dinner \$42) overlooking the water. Alternatively pay \$79/39 adult/child per day for the unrestricted meal plan. The excellent kids' club will take three to 12 year olds off your hands except for a lunch break. Babysitting is also available.

All nonmotorised sports are free. Castaway Dive Centre charges \$105 (includes gear) for a one-tank dive and \$685 for unlimited dives. Open water courses are \$710. Several speciality diving courses are also offered.

Castaway Island Resort is serviced by South Sea Cruises catamaran (p150), and Pacific Island seaplane/Island Hoppers helicopter (\$65/186/210 one way). For more details see p260.

WADIGI

This cute, tiny, privately owned island (1.2 hectares) is just west of Malolo.

Wadigi Island Lodge (☎ 672 0901; www.wadigi.com; island charter per day d \$3595, extra person per day \$1155; 🍷 🍷) could be your own private island. Guests charter the whole place and nobody else is allowed to intrude. It caters for a maximum of six people (no children under 12). The luxury three-bedroom suite is perched atop the single hill with gorgeous sea views from the living areas and decks. Included are all meals and drinks (prepared by two gourmet chefs) as well as the use of snorkelling gear, kayaks, windsurfers and a 4m aluminium boat. There is a three-night minimum stay. Diving is available through Subsurface (see p149). Transfers (round trip from Nadi) can be via catamaran/seaplane/helicopter for \$114/308/368 per person.

MALOLO

Malolo is the largest of the Mamanuca islands with two villages, three resorts (with one more under construction), mangroves and coastal forest. The island's highest point is **Uluisolo** (218m), which was used by locals as a hill fortification and by the US forces in 1942 as an observation point. From here there are panoramic views of the Mamanuca islands and the southern Yasawas.

Diving offered by the resorts is with Subsurface (see p149).

Funky Fish Beach Resort (☎ 651 3180; www.funkyfishresort.com; dm/d \$30/80, 1-bedroom bure \$120,

2-bedroom bure \$240, extra person \$35; 🍷 🍷) This is affable former rugby All Black Brad Johnston's stab at the surfer/backpacker party market. The bright, happy *bure* have outdoor showers and bright yellow interior walls. The sand-floor bar stocks good Australian wines and is home to perhaps Fiji's only garden gnome. The chef here punches several divisions above his weight. There's an à-la-carte menu as well as a three-meal menu plan (adult/child \$40/20). Power is turned off at night, but it's a great little spot with good snorkelling and a swimming pool.

The best surf-breaks are accessible from here. On Saturday morning you can line-up for Cloudbreak when there is a changeover at Tavarua Resort, but you might not be let in. You can, however, surf Rourke's Passage, a tremendous right hander, and Desperation, which only works in certain weather conditions but also has a good right-hand break. Weather conditions are ideal for kitesurfing.

Resort Walu Beach (☎ 665 1777; www.walu.beach.com; dm incl meals \$90, 1-2-/3-bedroom bure \$450/580/690; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Walu Beach was built for a reality TV show *The Resort*, and also consumed a local timeshare operation. A manager was brought in to turn it into a real hotel in two weeks, but he was still here after 18 months. Walu Beach still feels a bit generic, particularly in its furnishings, but the bar is great, the food is very good, and the rather Spartan dorm, which is divided into six-bed rooms with private lockers, is fantastic value. Essentially, you get all the facilities of an international-standard resort for the same cost as a backpacker place. Meal plans are \$80 per person for those staying in *bure*.

There's a good beach, well-organised activities, and a real push to keep the party happening. Nonmotorised water sports are free.

Malolo Island Resort (☎ 672 4275; www.malolo.island.com; oceanview/beachfront/f bure \$542/632/1054; 🍷 🍷 🍷) It's a reasonable resort on the western side of the island. As well as making use of the white-sand beach and the usual resort amenities, guests can go hiking. There is a pool and a kids' club and rates, including all Nonmotorised water activities, are for two adults and up to two children. There is a hillside restaurant (mains \$32) as well as a beachfront bar/restaurant (mains \$26). Optional meal packages are adult/child \$85/42.50 per day.

Getting There & Away

Sun Air (\$70) flies to the airstrip on nearby Musket Cove, Malololailai. By seaplane it takes 10 minutes to Malolo. For more details see p150.

To get here by boat catch the *Malolo Cat* (\$45) via Musket Cove or a South Sea Cruises catamaran (\$65) and staff from your resort will pick you up from Malolo Island Resort. See p150 for more. The Resort Walu Beach runs the *Walu 6* speedboat from Denarau (\$65 per person each way, 45 minutes).

MALOLOLAILAI

Tranquil Malololailai is approximately 20km west of Denarau island and, at 2.4 sq km, the second-largest island of the Mamanuca Group. Apart from the three resorts, there is a marina with bar, grocery and café, a dive shop, a restaurant near the airstrip, and on the hill above Musket Cove there's a kitschy art/gift shop, **La Galerie** (☎ 651 0050), with a small book exchange, too.

Musket Cove Marina

In September each year, the **Musket Cove Yacht Club** (☎ 666 2215; www.musketcovefiji.com) hosts Fiji Regatta Week and the Musket Cove to Port Vila yacht race. Traditional nautical sports such as wet T-shirt, hairy-chest and beer-drinking contests feature in the programme. Yachts can anchor at the marina for \$10/60/220 per day/week/month. Berths start at \$16 per day. Call on VHF 68 for reservations. You can stock up on fuel, water and provisions at the general store. Second-hand books and a treasure trove of magazines are available from the office. The marina also offers a choice of charter yachts ranging in size from 6m to 32m; charter rates vary depending on duration and extent of services required.

Surfing

There is no official transport from Malololailai to the excellent surf-breaks at Malolo and Wilkes Passage, but Jacob ('Scobie'), a local villager, can get you there. He has a boat with insurance and life jackets. Contact him through the dive shop or on ☎ 925 8778 (or through his mum, Vienna, on ☎ 923 0828). If one/two to three/four to five people go, rates are \$40/30/25 per person.

Sleeping

Musket Cove Island Resort (☎ 666 2215; www.musketcovejiji.com; r \$250; d garden/lagoon/beachfront bure \$460/460/535, q villa \$660, extra person \$30; 🏠) This is a lovely, serene resort overlooking a lagoon. The yachties from Musket Cove Yacht Club lend life to the bars – especially at the Ratu Nemani Island Bar (where you can barbecue your own food) – but this a place to come for a quiet break. There are several types of accommodation, from hotel rooms to self-catering thatched *bure*. The newer Armstrong Island villas – clustered on an artificial island linked to the mainland by a bridge – have over-water verandas and a private pool, TVs and DVD players. The lagoon *bure*, configured so living rooms face the lagoon, have a fridge and breakfast bar, and are nicely decorated with *mangi mangi* (traditional weavings) and bamboo. Villas boast their own spa pools. Activities such as windsurfing, canoeing, hand-line fishing and snorkelling are included. Game fishing, diving (through Subsurface, see p149) and use of catamarans cost extra. Meal plans for Dick's Place (see right) are available (two/three meals per day \$67/82 for adults and \$41/\$33.50 for children under 12).

Lomani Island Resort (☎ 666 8212; www.lomaniisland.com; deluxe r \$575, honeymoon ste \$625; 🏠 🏠) Lomani is a labour of love developed by the children of the man who built Plantation Island. It is an intimate, adults-only resort with a huge pool, a classy Colonial-style bar and a decent outdoor restaurant. Big, bright rooms with huge balconies look out across the beach to the ocean. They're equipped with divan lounges, fridges and also DVD players. Lomani is one of very few places in Fiji where topless bathing is tolerated – at the quiet end of the 4km white-sand beach. Rates include breakfast and the usual nonmotorised activities; diving is available through Plantation Island's dive centre.

Plantation Island Resort (☎ 666 9333; www.plantationisland.com; d garden/beachfront \$248/371, studio/2-bedroom/beachfront bure \$371/470/545, 2 children under 16 free, extra person \$34; 🏠 🏠 🏠) There are kids spilling out everywhere here; they're in the sea, in the pool, painting T-shirts, climbing plaster cows, egg-and-spoon racing, watching TV and eating chips. Most of them are with the free Club Coconut, and look to be having a great time. There are three swimming pools: one for kids (with water slide), one es-

entially for adults, and one for all ages. The two-bedroom garden *bure* are popular and often booked out. They feature twin beds in the front, a big lounge area with sinks and the master bedroom at the back. There's a big bathroom, but none of the walls reach the ceiling. Rooms and *bure* accommodate up to four adults and one child, except the two-bedroom *bure*, which sleep up to eight. The new Plantation Village double rooms are bright and cheerful, with enclosed patios. They flank a large swimming pool, a little way from the beach. Staff here are friendly.

Meal packages are \$39/59 for two/three meals a day. Otherwise expect to spend from \$10 for lunch, \$23 for dinner or \$28 for a seaside barbecue. There is a well-stocked shop and you can enjoy rotis, samosas, burgers and pies (all \$8) at the Snack Bar looking out over the water. The Sunset Bar has cheap drinks from 2pm to 9pm.

The many activities include snorkelling trips, canoeing, windsurfing, paragliding, tennis and even lawn bowls. At Plantation Divers, a two-tank dive is \$142 (includes gear), and unlimited diving is \$640. PADI certification and various advanced courses are also available.

Eating

Coffee Cove (☎ 666 2215; lunch \$12.50; ☎ 10am-6pm) The bistro-style lunches overlooking a lagoon are good value, plus you can bring your own alcohol. Order barbecue packs by 4.30pm for you to cook at the Ratu Nemani Island Bar at sunset. A choice of meats comes with green salad, potatoes and garlic bread (\$16). Snacks, coffee and ice-creams are also served.

Ananda's Restaurant (☎ 666 9333; mains \$20; kids' meals \$9; ☎ lunch & dinner) Ananda's has a menu so long it almost covers a wall. The tables are outside, the food is good and there is often live music.

Flame Tree Restaurant (☎ 666 8212; lunch/dinner \$16/35; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is an 'adults only' restaurant, but not the sort of place where you lick your dessert off a naked body. Flame Tree is part of Lomani Resort, where no children are allowed. Dine quietly outside under the boughs of a flame tree. It makes a pleasant change from the sometimes crowded nights elsewhere.

Dick's Place (☎ 666 2215; breakfast from \$17, lunch \$14, dinner mains \$25, 3-course set menu \$30; ☎ breakfast,

lunch & dinner) Musket Cove Resort's restaurant serves international cuisine with some Indian and Fijian dishes and weekly barbecues. Thursday night is *meke* (traditional dance) night, and the only food available is pig on a spit and an accompanying buffet.

Musket Cove Trader (General Store; ☎ 666 2215; ☎ 8am-7pm) This general store is probably the best stocked shop in the Mamanucas, but it doesn't sell alcohol. It does, however, have a bakery and a reasonable selection of fresh vegetables. Rotisserie chickens (\$9.80) make a good picnic lunch. It's great for yachties.

Next door to Ananda's Restaurant, Ananda's Supermarket is smaller than the general store but still well stocked.

Getting There & Away

Sun Air has a shuttle service from Nadi to Malololailai (\$140 return). It is a lovely 10-minute scenic flight. The *Malolo Cat* catamaran runs three times daily. Return fares from Denarau Marina cost \$90/45 per adult/child and take 50 minutes.

NAMOTU

Namotu, a tiny (1.5 hectares) and pretty island next to Tavarua, is first and foremost a surfing resort, although game fishing is also popular here.

Namotu Island Resort (☎ 670 6439; www.namotuisland.net; 🏠 🏠 🏠) is a little bit of Bali in Fiji. If you're jetlagged, you might think you're in the wrong country – there are Balinese decorations everywhere. If you

don't surf – or at least fish – you might think you're on the wrong planet. Surf-breaks include Swimming Pool, one of Fiji's cleanest waves, and the consistently surfable Namotu Lefts (both exclusive to the resort) and Wilkes Passage. Diving can be arranged with Subsurface (see p149). Generally, guests are in groups and book in advance through **Waterways Surf Travel** (☎ in the USA 310-456-7744; fax 310-456-7755), but Namotu does occasionally take 'walk-ins' to fill out a group. No children under 12.

TAVARUA

This small coral island is at the southern edge of the Malolo Barrier Reef which encloses the southern Mamanucas. It is 12 hectares, rimmed by beautiful white-sand beaches and has great surf nearby at Cloud-break and Restaurants.

Tavarua Island Resort (☎ 670 6513; www.tavarua.com; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) is American-run and most of the guests are American surfers on week-long package deals. Accommodation is in simple elevated *bure* spaced along the beach. Rates include all meals, transfers from Nadi and boat trips to great surf breaks. Drinks are extra. Bookings are handled exclusively through **Tavarua Island Tours** (☎ in the USA 805-686-4551; fax 805-683-6696) in California. Reservations need to be made well in advance, although in the low season (December to February) the resort may accept 'walk-ins'.

Diving can be arranged with Subsurface (see p149).

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