



# a magical fijian HAVEN

STORY BY TANIA DE JONG

MELBOURNE-BASED ENTERTAINER TANIA de Jong was fortunate to stay at one of the world's most beautiful resorts in Fiji. She filed this report for miceASIA.net magazine.

**L**iku Liku means "calm waters" and there was no doubt about the wonderful sense of calm that set in progressively during my stay at this outstanding resort. Liku Liku Lagoon Resort is situated on Malolo Island, the largest of the beautiful Manūmuca group of islands. Fly into Nadi and then catch a catamaran, helicopter or sea plane into this wonderful haven.

As we approached we could see and hear a group of people singing and playing guitars. Upon disembarking they adorned us with their specially-designed necklaces and we realised that the musical welcome was just for us. Another song, huge smiles and shouts of "bula" immediately created a feeling of warmth and love.

We stayed in a Deluxe Oceanfront Bure with its own plunge pool. All the bures have gorgeous outdoor day beds, outdoor showers and sun lounges on the foreshore which is literally 10 metres from your front door. The bures are large, very comfortable and beautifully appointed in a rustic modern Fijian style and have wonderful views of the lagoon. They are romantically lit every night when you return from dinner and every afternoon your biscuit jar is topped up with the most delicious freshly baked white chocolate and macadamia cookies.

And that is just the start of the gastronomic delights. Meal times are keenly observed in the dining area overlooking the lagoon. You can choose your own table each day ranging from undercover, on the terrace or a romantic dining option right on the waterfront. The food is really top class with young Australian chef Shane Watson creating some of the best menus I have experienced in a while. He has the local suppliers bringing him the pick of local fish, mud crabs, scampi, beef and other produce and has spent a great deal of time

getting to know where to obtain the finest vanilla beans, fresh herbs, spices and so on.

Breakfast ranges from yummy pastries and freshly baked breads to a juice maker for a very healthy start to the day. Cooked offerings include hand picked mud crab omelette with papaya relish, poached eggs with young asparagus, marlin and hollandaise sauce or banana pancakes with pineapple and passionfruit sauce and coconut ice-cream. The menus change every lunch and dinner.

Everyone raved about the food and, in spite of being full every meal, we could not wait to see the next offerings. There was also a traditional Lovo and Meke night combining fire-cooked traditional dishes including fish in coconut milk, taro, pork and a cultural performance by the local dancers and singers. Other themed dinners included an Indian night and a BBQ night complete with divine chilli mud crabs, whole baby snappers... is your mouth watering yet?

## Overwater bungalows

Liku Liku is a trail blazer in so many respects. It was the first Fijian resort to build overwater bungalows. And they are stunning. The main difference between them and the other bures is the fact that you can sit on your balcony and watch the fish swim past or look through the glass viewing pane which is specially-lit at night. And to go snorkeling you literally just climb down a small ladder and you are above the reef. They also have gorgeous baths from which you look out over the water and view the stunning sunsets.

Activities might include a snorkeling safari setting off right outside





your bure. It is just a short swim out to a gorgeous coral reef. I counted well over 100 varieties of the most gorgeous tropical fish enjoying their home among some beautiful coral gardens.

I was also lucky enough to see a sea snake (sea krait) - a sparkling but deadly black and white banded animal that could be mistaken for a rare piece of jewellery. Surrounded by a number of other gorgeous islands you can be dropped off at one for a picnic complete with gourmet lunch, umbrellas and snorkeling gear.

Or you may like to get really energetic and kayak to some of the other islands. Finally landing on one isolated beach I really felt like I was on the set of "Survivor" complete with a range of marine life, coconut husks, beautiful seashells and not a soul in sight (except for the herd of wild goats who ran off into the forest).

Other options are a trip to the local Fijian village. Just a short speedboat trip around the corner we were welcomed with a traditional song, kava ceremony, a small market selling sea shells and other arts and crafts made and sold by the women and children and then a walk through the village observing the locals going about their day, cooking bread fruit, climbing up trees for coconuts, giving respect to their humble church and cemetery. It's amazing to think that many of these people never leave the village they are born in. Somehow life in Fiji reminds us all to slow down and appreciate what we have. The people radiate happiness and a desire to serve.

There is a range of walking tracks around and many provide wonderful views of the aquamarine waters and surrounding beaches and islands. Shell collecting is also fun with cowries dotted all over the shore line. Other activities might include a guided tour of the archaeological sites, basket making, a game fishing trip, scuba diving and snorkeling at nearby sites, and island hopping.

Tatadra Spa is located on site and offers a range of treatments including restore and relax massages, hot stones and couples pampering complete with local aromatherapy coconut oils to dissolve that last bit of stress.

## Meetings and incentives

The island is especially popular with those celebrating their honeymoon, renewal of vows or a special anniversary. It is a very romantic and luxurious destination and fits that "once in a lifetime" wow experience. While we were there I counted Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Canadians, New Zealanders, Americans, Germans, English, Italians, Russians and, of course, Australians.

This resort is certainly attracting the international market. It is also ideal for small incentive groups, board and executive team retreats. While we were there Destination Events organised an incentive reward for 10 couples from Mercury. The resort provides a private dining and conference room for up to 20 people plus group activities can be organised to suit.

This is the perfect reward for top performing staff members.

We were very sad to leave and, in true Fijian tradition, were serenaded by the staff with the haunting harmonies of Isa Lei at our final dinner. I could not hold the tears back. I so wanted to stay in that calm and beautiful haven.

The final verse of Isa Lei translates as:

Isa Lei, the purple shadow falling,

Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow;

O, forget not, when you're far away,

Precious moments beside dear Suva.

We will not forget Liku Liku. To learn more visit [www.likulikulagoon.com](http://www.likulikulagoon.com), telephone +679 672 0978 or [enquiries@ahuraresorts.com](mailto:enquiries@ahuraresorts.com).

**Tania de Jong AM is the inspiration, co-founder and artistic director of Pot-Pourri and of Music Theatre Australia (MTA) one stop entertainment national and international. Tania is on the Board of Child Abuse Research Australia. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in June 2008 for service to the arts. Visit: [www.musictheatreaustralia.com.au](http://www.musictheatreaustralia.com.au); [www.pot-pourri.com.au](http://www.pot-pourri.com.au).**