

Island villas: Maldives, Bali and Fiji luxury stays



Vomo Fiji has white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters.

- Vanessa Mulquiney
- The Australian
- 12:00AM January 7, 2017

Villa life is more personalised than staying at a five-star hotel. It's about having fulltime staff available around the clock, from personal chefs to concierges, housekeepers to nannies and butlers.

Private villas also come with considerable bragging rights — who wouldn't love to live like a pampered A-list celebrity for a week? And island villas are not as prohibitively expensive as they once were, especially if you're travelling as a family or in a house-party group.

Here are three *T&I* favourites.

AMILLA FUSHI, THE MALDIVES

The Maldives was once a haven for honeymooners, but “there's been a significant shift from loved-up couples to the high-end family market”, says Michael Flynn, chair and founder of The Small Maldives Island, which owns Amilla Fushi, a resort on Baa Atoll, 30 minutes by seaplane from Male's Ibrahim Nasir airport.

Amilla Fushi features large villas as well as more mainstream resort-style accommodation, including overwater configurations with lagoon access and deck pools. “But families want to stay under one roof ... and have a high-end holiday villa experience,” Flynn says.

Amilla Fushi touts itself as “a home away from home”, but with its resident marine biologist, design magazine-worthy interiors and high ratio of staff to guests, this isn’t like any home we’ve experienced.

Baa Atoll is a World Biosphere Reserve, meaning it’s a protected marine haven rich in soft and hard coral, reef fish, manta rays, turtles and other underwater life.



Amilla Fushi in The Maldives.

And so to bed: There are six four-bedroom Villa Residences, including garden-level and upper-storey guest suites, beach courtyard, dining deck and staff quarters. The Amilla Villa Estate boasts six bedrooms, while the Great Beach Villa is the largest, with eight bedrooms.

Vibe: All villas are sleek, cool and contemporary and, given the location, each has a beachy, relaxed ambience. There are neutral colours, polished teakwood floors and glass walls that open to sand and sea. Attention to detail and family-friendly facilities such as a kids’ club are an attractive drawcard for the growing market of (mostly Australian) holiday-makers.

Dining: Each villa has a kitchen and katheeb (butler) on hand to prepare meals in-house but there are plenty of resort dining options along sandy paths, including Baazaar overlooking the infinity pool, which encompasses relaxed eateries such as Joe’s Pizza, Fresh, Fish & Chips, Grill and Wok.

A recently opened Japanese restaurant, Feeling Koi, sits on stilts high above the lagoon. The Wine Shop and Cellar Door houses a deli and more than 250 labels from across the world.

Highlights: If turtles and dolphins swimming by the house reef aren't enough, there's world-class diving on Amilla's doorstep, run by Dive Butler International, and Hanifaru Bay, a manta ray and whale shark hot spot, is a 10-minute speedboat ride away.

Tip: International music lounge franchise 1 OAK will open at Finolhu Baa Atoll Maldives, the nearby sister island "party" resort to Amilla Fushi, this year.

More: amilla.mv; finolhu.com.

VILLA ADASA, BALI

The three-bedroom Villa Adasa is located within the secure Laksmana estate in popular Seminyak on Bali's southwest coast.

Unlike some luxury villas where seclusion is practically guaranteed at settings in deep jungles or on private islands, Villa Adasa's additional drawcard is offering guests the best of both worlds — quiet time or the chance to be social.

Spend the day in seclusion, curled up with a book by the 14m pool or succumbing to an in-house spa treatment and, come evening, head to Ku De Ta or Sarong, both ranked on *The Miele Guide's* Top 20 restaurants in Asia.



The pool at Villa Adasa in Bali.

And so to bed: There are three ensuite bedrooms: one kingsize and two with a choice of twins or kings, plus two extra beds on request; events can be held for up to 25 people.

Vibe: The villa is contemporary in style, but there are plenty of beautiful Balinese touches. The 80sqm living pavilion features a traditional thatched roof, sandstone walls and a terrazzo floor lined by a fish pond with antique stone water features on one side, pool wall on the other. Soft cream sofas are punctuated with colourful batik cushions, while a teak dining table with wicker armchairs provides seating for eight. Adjacent to the green-tiled swimming pool, the kitchen's whitewashed shutters slide open to a bar fashioned from recycled teak.

Dining: Villa Adasa's fully equipped kitchen is staffed by a private chef and everything from an afternoon snack to five-course dinners and barbecues can be prepared, as well as a kids' meal plan. Tropical holiday G&Ts by the pool are practically obligatory.

Highlights: Foodies can join the chef on shopping trips to local open-air markets, including the seafood market at Jimbaran where catches come straight from the adjacent waters.



A living area at Villa Adasa.

Tip: This villa is a celebrity haunt. "Guests might be sleeping, sitting, swimming and dining at the same spot as Paris Hilton," says Linda Lim of Elite Havens, which manages Villa Adasa. "She was here last week with a friend."

More: elitehavens.com.

VOMO RESORT, FIJI

Fijian resort Vomo reopened in September after repairs and upgrades following Tropical Cyclone Winston in February. Changes have included the \$6.5 million addition of two residences: The Beach House and The Palms.

General manager Mark Leslie says: “It has been a challenging time; however, you have to experience a little rain to receive a rainbow and the enhancements we’ve been able to make during this closure have become our blessing.”

Vomo is just a 15-minute helicopter ride from Fiji’s Nadi international airport or a 75-minute boat ride from Denarau.



The Vomo Fiji resort entrance.

And so to bed: As well as resort accommodation, Vomo has four holiday residences. The newest additions, The Beach House and The Palms, comprise three and four bedrooms respectively, private pools, entertainment and media facilities, absolute beachfront views and dedicated concierge services.

Vibe: Think white-sand beaches and crystal-clear waters. Guests staying at the residences have access to all the facilities of the resort, which merges contemporary sophistication with the island’s natural surrounds.

Dining: The Reef Restaurant features daily-changing menus. In the evening, guests are entertained with acoustic Fijian and international tunes and private dining can be arranged. There are two bars, including Rocks Bar, perched above Rocks Beach and open 5-7pm for what else but “rocktails”.

Highlights: When villa life gets humdrum, make like Robinson Crusoe and escape to Vomo’s smaller sister, Vomo Lailai, a tiny isle about 1km away that can be booked for a day of romance and adventure. Staff deliver a gourmet picnic and two-way radio — what more do you need?

Tip: Fiji is set to be a hot destination this year with a new luxury focus thanks to openings such as Kokomo Island Fiji, a project by Australian developer Lang Walker. Think beachfront and hilltop residences and open-plan villas, including family styles of two or three bedrooms.

www.theaustralian.com.au/life/travel/island-villas-maldives-bali-and-fiji-luxury-stays/news-story/c3e9af07163488007f51dbb1d45446a8