

A Week at the Octopus Resort
or
A Little Slice of Paradise

Rosie couldn't say enough good things about Waya Island and the Octopus Resort. We've kept in touch since 2009 when she guided me on a month long trip in Australia and New Zealand for Overseas Adventure Travel. She is an amazing, wonderful, energetic and kind woman.

She, her friend Marilyn and their families have been visiting the Octopus Resort for 25 years. From when it was just two little huts on a beach, to a full-fledged all-inclusive property, it is their favorite place to get away from it all. I once asked her about the name -- and she said in the old days that octopus was all there was to eat!

There are two sister resorts: Paradise Cove and Blue Lagoon Resort, owned by the same family. She thought we would enjoy the Octopus Resort more for its laid-back atmosphere.

The company's goal has been to keep their resorts as traditional as possible so guests can relax and experience Fijian hospitality. It didn't take much for us to decide to follow Rosie's advice.

Octopus resort is fairly easy to get to when the company's booking agency handles the details including reservations on the Yasawa Flyer (fast ferry) and sends explicit instructions how to get there.

On the appointed day, Joan and I make our way to Denarau Port. The boat makes a daily run from this marina to the Mamanuca and Yasawa islands. Stops are dependent on where people need to get on or off. These tiny islands don't have docks, so small boats meet the Flyer and transfer passengers and luggage to the beach.

Just traveling and looking at these sweet little islands is a treat as many are just big enough for just one home or one hotel.





It is a 2 1/2 hour ride to Waya island which is situated at the entrance to the 20 island archipelago that make up the Yasawa group. Joan and I pay a little extra for access to the Flyer's Captains Lounge which offers comfortable seating, complimentary snacks, drinks and air conditioning.

When our stop is announced, we make our way to the back of the ferry, point out our luggage and unceremoniously jump from the ferry in to a small boat for the transfer to the beach.

Once we reach the beach, we are greeted with music and song and directed to comfortable seating for an orientation.

Antonella Felini (aka Ella), the resort manager, welcomes us and her first directive is "slow down and get ready to be on Fiji-time here!" Even though there are lots of daily activities, as well as a beautiful beach to enjoy, doing nothing is strongly encouraged.



Then we are escorted to our accommodations. Rosie recommended each of us reserve a beachfront buré (pronounced boo-ray). They are designed as a traditional Fijian thatched-roof house with its own private beach area including a palapa and lounge chairs - everything surrounded by gardens.



So I reserved #10 and Joan #11 for five nights. We move to garden burés (not as nice) for the extra two nights we booked when our Undiscovered Destinations itinerary changed and the beachfront properties were no longer available.

The main room has a king size bed as well as twin bed, along with plenty of storage space.

I especially love the outdoor shower set in its own private garden.

There is a flat-screen TV, but I never turned it on and a complimentary well-stocked mini-bar.



Views from my porch



The resort is mainly all-inclusive offering many free activities such as basket weaving, jewelry making, coconut bowling, sulu (sarong) tying, etc. You pay extra for some activities like the Manta Ray snorkel, cooking classes, guided hiking, premium drinks, and specialty coffees, etc.



I make good use of the spa services throughout the week. The spa ladies are the sweetest and huggiest people on earth. Prices are reasonable the services professional and relaxing.



It doesn't take long to fall into a routine consisting of meals, activities, reading, spa appointments, lounging around, more meals along with little naps here and there. I had hoped to do some snorkeling, but didn't want to go out in open water alone, so never did. This is my one regret.

Food at the resort is excellent. The buffet breakfast includes an egg station; there is a lunch menu with additional specials written on a blackboard; and a three course dinner menu, including dessert. Some evenings there is a buffet and we had a barbecue buffet as well as a fish/seafood buffet. Our package also included a private dinner on the beach, which was an interesting experience.



Though this was not our most favorite dessert (though it was very good), it was our favorite *description* of a dessert:

Poached meringue and sorbet floating on a mascerated tropical fruit salad surrounded by a minted fruit soup sea.



Photos by Joan

Rosie also recommended that we attend Sunday church in nearby Nallauwaki village. Ella organized a boat for several of us, so we wouldn't have to deal with the steep walk over the hill to the village.

Missionaries have made their mark here and most residents on this island are Methodist. Nallauwaki is a lovely village with neat homes framing the path to church. As we arrived, the children's service had just finished and they were coming out holding their lesson books, the younger children with crayons in hand.

Each group has its place in the large church. The choir takes the front pews to the right. Children settle in to the pews behind them, with women participants (and moms) behind them. Guests (us!) are escorted to the front pews to the left with male parishioners filling in the rest of the pews.

Drums call villagers to the service. Women read prayers aloud from their Bibles, which sounds like chanting. Soon men arrive. Everyone is dressed in their Sunday best.

Then the choir begins to sing, I glanced back to the entrance thinking angels must have walked in. The choir is magnificent with harmonies that made my skin tingle and my brain wobble and reverberate.

The men sitting near the altar are the lay preacher and the main preacher - who gave a fire and brimstone sermon.

All too soon services are over and we return to our resort.

Many of the workers at the resort come from this village. It is a reciprocal relationship as, in addition to paying for the long-term lease to use the land, the resort has organized community aid and education programs that pay for books, housing and teachers as well as medical assistance for the villagers.



The Purse!

I love my purse that looks like a Buré and used it all week around the resort. Julie had been so helpful to me in hand-sewing a backpack, I thought she might enjoy having it. And she did!



The property has accommodations in all price ranges, from 45 FJD (\$23USD) a night to 2299FJD (\$1150USD) a nite.



The beachfront burés face west, so I never missed a beautiful Fijian sunset.