

Denarau Island, Fiji. Fly, flop and have some fun.

By Fran McDermott



©McLennan, Sofitel, Fiji Resort and Spa

Denarau has always been a favourite destination of mine. Admittedly I love it for the ease. Or more to the point, the ease of travelling there with the kids in tow. Depending on the speed of airport processing, you, or in my case we, can be checked in and poolside within an hour.



Convenience aside, Denarau's other strong suit is its choice. Nowhere else in the South Pacific will you find so many five-star properties in such close proximity. They all provide comfortable accommodation, exceptional "Fijian smile" service, and top quality food and beverage outlets. A pavement boardwalk along the Denarau waterfront connects all the hotels. It's a great option for a stroll - whether you just want a bit of exercise, or you want to check out the other hotels and have a cocktail at a different bar.

Radisson Blu Resort Fiji

The Radisson Blu Resort Fiji has made an art out of entertaining children, and their kid's club is rightly considered one of Fiji's very best. The kid's club staff (known as the Banana Boys) have got to be the happiest bunch of Fijians on the planet - and that's saying something. Their genuine joy for life is infectious, and visiting kids just can't get enough of it. They entertain them all day, play with them in the pool, go down the waterslide with them - the fun is never-ending! Having said that, Radisson Blu is perfect for adults, too. The resort has recently been through a refurbishment, and their dining options have stepped up a level. This includes the fabulous Thai restaurant, Chantara, which people come from all over Denarau to experience.

The accommodation options at Radisson Blu are spacious, and they come with home comforts like dining room tables and sofas. Plus they feature full kitchens and laundries, which is especially handy when you're with kids. This property is a must visit if you have young children, but beware; it's busy, noisy, and filled with plenty of happy laughter! However, you can always find some peace and quiet by the adults-only pool - that's where you'll find those hard working parents enjoying some time out!

Sheraton Fiji Resort

Sheraton Fiji is another luxurious property in a stunning tropical garden setting on the beachfront. The resort boasts some stylish dining options, including the signature Flying Fish restaurant by Peter Kuruvita. Of all the dining on Denarau, this is one of my favourites - it's on the beachfront so you can dine with the sand between your toes, it has a relaxed vibe, top quality cuisine and attentive service. After dinner, it's nice to wander a few steps and land on a lounge and enjoy the live music at Chime Bar.

New additions to the resort include a sushi bar, a noodle bar and a sandwich bar. These provide a fresh, quick and easy fix for a delicious lunch! Being an avid shopper, I've always loved the Sheraton Fiji Resort for its retail. The duty-free and local gift shops, provide plenty of choices, and are a welcome distraction when I need to escape the sun (or the kids). The Denarau Island Convention Centre is also located at the Sheraton Fiji - it's the largest meeting space on Denarau Island.



Radisson Blu



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Waitui Beach Club a new addition to Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa, is an exclusive adult's only area with its own pool, champagne bar, poolside cabanas and restaurant.

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Culinary adventures

Sheraton Fiji Resort has put together two special food adventures for both adults and children. The adult version is their 'Farm 2 Fork' Tour which gives grown-ups the chance to visit some of the local farms that provide the resort with fresh local produce. And to finish off the day, Chef Prabhat Prawin creates and hosts a family style lunch. When it comes to the kids, there's 'Kids Can Cook'. A fun and highly interactive cooking class where the little ones learn a little bit about making pastry, sandwiches and savoury dishes. And then parents join in later and enjoy the little chefs creations!

Sheraton Denarau Villas

The Sheraton Villas are another personal favourite. They have a great set-up when travelling with the kids. This includes two and three-bedroom villas with full kitchens. The villas are perfect for families; they provide space and privacy, and they're not quite as hectic as some of the neighbouring properties.

Westin Denarau Island Resort

When you arrive at The Westin, you feel like you are in Fiji. The dark wood, Fijian art work and local style and design are stunning, and welcoming. The property aims to provide its guests with a sense of well-being. The Heavenly Spa by Westin is a good place to start. It's a wonderful place and given the opportunity I would recommend a visit.

A benefit of staying at one of these Marriot Resorts, (the Westin Denarau Island Resort, Sheraton Fiji Resort and Sheraton Denarau Villas) is you can use all the shopping, dining, bars and facilities at all three resorts and charge back to your room.

And if you want to mix your visit to Denarau Island with an outer island experience, you can create a package to Sheraton Tokoriki Island - which will reopen in February 2017.

Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa

Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa is yet another Denarau property that suits families and couples. The rooms are luxurious; the beds are super-comfortable. The rooms also look out towards the ocean. The So Spa is a perfect place to relax and pamper yourself - even if you haven't booked anything, keep a look out for their daily specials.

V Restaurant is their Signature dining establishment and provides "a second to none" fine dining experience. La Parisienne Café makes a perfect flat white and yummy fresh juices, as well as light and easy café style breakfasts and lunches. For the kids, Sofitel's waterslide is a big attraction. Non-stop fun in the sun!

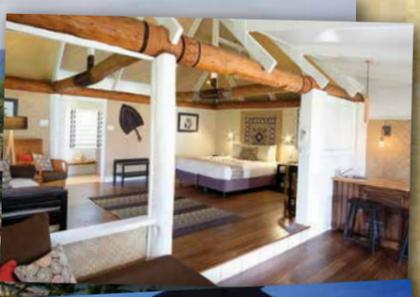


Kids Can Cook, Sheraton Fiji Resort



Heavenly Spa by Westin, Westin Denarau Island Resort

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Waitui Beach Club ©McLennan_Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa



Hilton Fiji Resort and Spa

Waitui Beach Club at Sofitel Fiji

This is a first on Denarau, and an absolute must visit if you're travelling without your children and want some peace and quiet. Waitui Beach Club is an adults-only property. There is a lovely pool complex with comfortable loungers and couches, and staff who are there to cater to your every whim. For example, you'll be welcomed by a staff member, who will then accompany you to your position in the sun, or in the shade. They'll lay your towel out for you and provide you with water and sunscreen. Now that's what I call service!

The menu is delicious and healthy - it's been specially created by a top Australian nutritionist. The beachfront a la carte breakfast offers a variety of smoothies to suit your mood or need, and happy hour between 5pm and 6pm sees you served with complimentary cocktails and canapes. The quiet relaxing tunes in the background lull you into a sense of relaxation (or sleep). Also on the agenda should you wish, are yoga classes and a full gymnasium. I couldn't fault the Waitui Beach Club and rate it as one of my top picks if I have the opportunity to get away without the kids.

Hilton Fiji Resort and Spa

The Hilton Fiji is a top property. The rooms have a real sense of style, and all of them look out to the ocean. If you have children with you, the ground floor rooms are perfect as the kids have plenty of grass to run around on, while you can lounge on the patio, keeping one eye on them and one eye on the sunset.

The Hilton pools are also very impressive. They have a large adults-only pool, and the option of a la carte adults only breakfast at Maravu Restaurant. Parents will also like the fact that Kids Eat Free with a paying adult. For the kids, there are plenty of activities in the pool. My kids couldn't believe their luck when the activities staff announced an ice-cream eating competition was about to take place. Needless to say, they made the most of it.

The adults also have a bit of fun too. My sister won the swimming race one day - her prize a well-earned cocktail! They have water basketball, plus a water balloon catching competition - it's light-hearted fun and a great way to break up the day. After all that there was only one thing left to do - wander off for a massage at the open cabana spa near the pool.

Port Denarau

Once you have settled into your hotel and spent a couple of days by the pool, you often feel like branching out. Which is when Port Denarau comes into its own. It's just around the corner, so you can either jump on the Bula Bus, catch a taxi for \$7 or walk if you're feeling energetic.

There are plenty of dining options - I'd recommend, Lulus, Rhumba, the Yacht Club, Hard Rock Café, Cardos, Amalfi Italian, and there are many more.

There is a very relaxed holiday vibe at the Port. For the ladies, you can get your nails and hair done, or have a massage or treatment at one of the day spas. There are shops galore, too. There are the duty-free options, the famous Jacks of Fiji, and one of my favourites, Cloudbreak, where you can always pick up some great boardies and rashies for the kids.

There is also a supermarket if you want to stock up on some bottled water or snacks for the kids. And I highly recommend a visit to Victoria Wines, where they stock a huge selection of wine and beer at very reasonable prices. They even deliver to your hotel if you pre-order your beverages.

Of course, the Port is the hub for all day trips and transfers to the islands. You will find Adrenalin Fiji, a well-established adventure company who have been in Fiji since the 90's. They'll take you on an action-packed jet-ski tour, and they have a variety of beautiful boats that offer various cruises. A day trip to the islands is a great way to spend a day, with a delicious lunch and top quality wines included.

If you want to splash out, the kids will love the Big Bula Waterpark which is home to oodles of waterslides and activities. And next door there's a mini-golf course and bungee tramps.

If you keep going a little further, you come to the Denarau Golf and Racquet Club. It's a great place for a pizza, cold beer and a game of pool. The atmosphere is very relaxed. It's also a great spot to watch the sport - particularly when there's an All Blacks game on! Just remember to get there early as the place does get packed out.

All in all, Denarau Island is a great place to visit. On your arrival, you immediately feel like you're on holiday. There are plenty of activities and dining options. You will never feel rushed. And when it's time to leave, you're only a 20 minute drive back to the airport. Too easy. **FI**



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