



The Gallivanter's Guide

100 CLUB

HONEST ADVICE FOR THE WORLD'S TOP TRAVELLERS

WHERE ARE YOU GOING NEXT?



The arrival jetty, at Kokomo Private Island, Fiji.

Hope springs eternal, as some parts of the world reopen and more of you begin to travel again. Some Members, however, never stopped and I found myself journeying virtually via your emails, from Europe to South America

and beyond, thanks to yacht charters, private planes and the typical ingenuity of the die-hard Gallivanter. It has been more difficult for some, though. Australian readers can now journey via their bubble to New Zealand, but most tell me that they

crave to go further afield, rather like those Members living in the UK, who have been isolated for many months. Frankly, planning ahead has become a near impossibility, as many of you have found. Cancelling your trips, rather than booking them

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At Kokomo Private Island, the private pool of a 1-bedroom Sunset Villa looks onto the beach beyond.

seems to be the new norm; but most of us have managed to go somewhere, even if it was not exactly on our wish-lists, although some of you have found yourselves in quarantine for 10 days, and not in the sort of hotel or resort you would normally choose! This month, we take a look at where you are going next...

Kokomo Private Island, Fiji.

Kokomo came up on our radar when ex-Aman Country Manager, Sean Flakelar, joined as General Manager early this year. After his short and rudely interrupted stint at Mexico's Cuixmala, Sean was looking for somewhere that was not too far from his home country, Australia. Kokomo was conceived and built by Lang Walker, one of Australia's

top property tycoons, so the fit seemed perfect, as a 6-hour flight between the two locations is nothing for a native Australian.

Famed for its world-class snorkeling, diving and fishing, the Great Astrolabe Reef is the fourth largest on our planet, and Kokomo is perfectly placed, with 140 private acres and, unusually for this region, long stretches of white sand beaches; truly, Paradise found.

Laid-back luxury is something that very

few resort developers manage to achieve and Sean, having spent over 20 years with Aman's understated benchmark design, knew exactly how to spot the real thing. He saw straight away that Kokomo was not trying to outdo Fiji's natural wonders, but was designed to frame them.

Two beaches front the island's 21 Sunrise and Sunset Villas, which range from 1-3 bedrooms; each Villa with its own infinity edge pool and private deck, opening on-



Arriving at Kokomo Private Island.



Comfortable 1-bedroom Sunrise Villa, at Kokomo Private Island.

Photography by Philippe Servais for The Gallivaner's Guide© and courtesy of hotels featured.



At Kokomo Private Island, the outdoor bathroom area of a 1-bedroom Sunrise Villa.

to virtually private stretches of white sand beach and crystal waters.

Then there are the five, 3-6 bedroom Residences, which nestle within the lush hill-top landscape, with extraordinary on-high views across the Kadavu Islands and, of course, their own large pools. Each Res-

idence is individually designed and configured and comes with a dedicated butler and nanny, if you choose to bring your children. Just about everything is included, from airport transfers to laundry.

The 3-bedroom Namara Residence is, perhaps, the most private, on the west side of

the island, and is perfect if you just want to stay put. As with all the Residences, it even has its own built-in barbecue, and, as with every accommodation on the island, the walls are dressed with original artworks by Chris Kenyon.

4-bedroom Residence, Dravuni, is, for me, the most stunning in terms of views. Set on the island's northwest peak, the huge seascape vistas are mesmerising.

That said, the Villas here put most resort accommodation in the shade. If you are a fan of One&Only Reethi Rah, or Cheval Blanc Randheli in the Maldives, then Kokomo has that same villa-to-beach feel.

Each has a spacious living room with kitchen area and 1-3 bedrooms. I like the Sunset Villas on the west shore, as I am not an early riser, but you may prefer the Sunrise Villas in the east. Happily, you can secure a 1-3 bedroom Villa on either side of the island, according to your preference.

The look here merges traditional Fijian design with a quiet contemporary style; the interiors by Sydney-based designer, Philip Garner, who was determined to keep them light and simple, so as to frame the ocean and rainforest vistas. Architect, Keith Lambert, was equally respectful of the island's natural beauty, sourcing sustainable build-



The living area of a 3 bedroom Sunset Villa, at Kokomo Private Island.



Looking down upon a 3-bedroom Sunset Villa, at Kokomo Private Island.

ing materials and ensuring a low environmental impact. Thus, fallen or old cinnamon trees were employed in the build, and local stone from the surrounding islands.

Sliding doors separate the spacious sitting areas from the bedrooms and bathrooms, which have both indoor and outdoor rainfall showers and secluded courtyards. Sensibly, given its remoteness, Kokomo's rates include three meals a day, whether in-room or in restaurant, together with laundry and pressing services and various one-off activities, such as a singular tank scuba dive and a short spa experience, per villa, per stay.

There are three dining venues, under three Head Chefs: Vincenzo Maione, who makes all the fresh pasta, Caroline Oakley, who heads up Walker D'Plank, which hides away by the jetty and serves South Pacific and

Asian style cuisine, and Shaun Thompson at the open-sided Beach Shack, which focuses on Mediterranean and modern Austral-



Casual eatery, Kokocabana, by the main pool.

ian fare. Menus feature locally sourced produce, much of it from the islands 5.5-acre organic farm, which provides vegetables,

chickens, eggs and even its own honey. Super-fresh fish comes from the island's unique dock-to-dish fishing enterprise.

Finally, there is Kokocabana, the resort's casual eaterie around the main pool, which serves lunch and dinner, including wood-fired pizzas, plus various refreshments; but if you feel like a special celebration, then opt for the new Chef's Kitchen, which seats 10 and is sited on the top of the helipad, with unparalleled views.

Aside from an excellent fitness facility and yoga, Kokomo takes its spa services very seriously; the Yaukuve Spa Sanctuary featuring five treatment rooms, hammams and hair salon. With its focus on all things natural, treatments are by chemical-free Sodashi skincare; all in all a perfect recipe for a true taste of Paradise. Do go.



At Kokomo Private Island, dinner at the Beach Shack, left, and, right, at Walker D'Plank.



Massage on the beach, at Kokomo Private Island.

kokomoislandfiji.com

Bamurru Plains, Australia.

These days, just watching the news raises

my stress levels, so the idea of going totally off the grid has started to appeal; but is there anywhere in the world now that is totally free of technocracy, with no mobile coverage, Wifi access or TVs?

How many of us could simply switch off from our gadgets and look up again to see the real world rather than the virtual?

At Bamurru Plains in Australia's Northern Territory, you can do just that, and believe me, experiencing the real world is pretty special. The camp does have a phone, but just the one, so your friends and family can get in touch in case of an emergency; a little like hotels were 50 years ago, when going on a vacation meant just that - you escaped.

Close to the whimsically named town of Humpty Doo, and around 62 miles from Darwin, Bamurru nestles in 117 sq miles of pasture, near Point Stuart in the Mary River region. Buffalos roam the ranges, but there is also a vast river fronting the property, with Malaleuca trees; white in the moonlight, with their papery barks, and tall savannah grasses and wetlands.

There is much for the senses to appreciate; the sound of white Corella cockatoos and Magpie Geese and the sudden blue flash of a Kookaburra. The Mary River is home to around 236 species of birds; many of which spend their time at Bamurru, such as the extraordinary Jacanas birds that seem



A simple entry-level Safari Bungalow, at Bamurru Plains, Australia.



The Kingfisher Suite, at Bamurru Plains, where you awake to the wildlife rather than to your Smartphone.

to walk on water. Then there are the Wallabies, which I never tire of watching, and a raft of reptiles that happily keep their distance.

Just 10 Bungalows sit amongst the grasses on the edge of the wetlands; a safari ex-

perience like no other, and although this is by no means a deluxe experience, hedonism is certainly catered for, with very comfortable beds and top notch linens. The difference is that here you wake up to the sounds and sights of the wildlife rather than to

your Smartphone.

The bathrooms are very well thought through, wrapped around one side of the bungalow, rather like those at Amanwana, replete with high-pressure showers and plenty of hot water. However, there are no



In true safari fashion, communal dining, at Bamurru Plains.



The main infinity-edge pool at Bamurru Plains, where rusticity has a decidedly upscale feel.

TVs, CD players, mini-bars, telephones, internet access or even a laundry service, so pack light, but make sure you have enough clothes for your stay.

Most of the property runs on solar power



Wildlife on your doorstep, at Bamurru Plains.

and during the dry winter months of April to October, airconditioning is available in three Bungalows, whilst for the rest of the year, ceiling fans are considered sufficient. Bamurru is closed from November to February, which is the wet, humid season, with the leisure period operating from May until the end of October. Children under 6 are, understandably, not allowed unless the entire camp is booked.

The 25 minute charter flight to Bamurru Plains from Darwin is a little like flying from Manila to Amanpulo, as the sights from the

air are almost better than from the ground; the stunning wetlands below, unique to this world. You land at Swim Creek Airstrip and from there, a member of staff will transport you to the Lodge, which takes around 30 minutes. Given the lack of luggage space on the plane, you are restricted to 15kg per person in soft bags; but if you need to store extra luggage, you can do this at the Chart-air terminal.

The focal point of Bamurru is its Lodge, which incorporates a peaceful Library nook, lounges, a Gallery shop and a communal

dining area; the front deck with its own barbecue firepit, an infinity edge pool that seems to merge with the wetlands and a covered lounge area for a shady drink when the sun is high, and maybe a chat with the lodge Manager, Andrew McEwan.

As with most safari lodges, dining is communal, but remarkably sophisticated, given the remoteness of the property. The day begins early with what is referred to as 'a light breakfast', but in fact includes rather more than I would normally eat, such as 'bush eggs' in any style and accompanied



A private lunch, at Bamurru Plains.



At Bamurru Plains, children (over 6) sleep in 'Swag Bags', whilst parents get the full bedonistic treatment, with super-comfortable beds and linens.

by bacon and various relishes, freshly baked muffins, muesli, yoghurt and so on. This sets you up for an early morning excursion with one of the Guides; an airboat safari across the floodplains, perhaps, or bird-watching from The Hide, a river cruise, game drive or guided walk. You choose. Then it's lunch at the Hide, or on the wild-life observation deck; with salads and such to keep you going until canapé and sun-downer time, which is followed by a 3-

course dinner with your fellow explorers on the Lodge's long wood table, hosted by one of the Guides. Here, succulent dishes emanate from the open kitchen, encompassing local recipes that are beautifully reimagined and well worth a photo, so bring a camera and wait until you get home to show the world on social media. There again, maybe you will decide to keep this place to yourself...

bamurruplains.com

Grand House, Algarve, Portugal.

I hesitate to write about countries being 'open' as restrictions appear to change from one day to the next, but many of you in the UK and Europe are heading to Portugal right now and it seems that Grand House, Algarve is a firm favourite.

The building started life in 1926 as a grand home for the region's wealthy tuna merchants, who traded in the border town of Vila Real de Santo António; now better known for its tourist shops and picturesque 18th Century Pombaline architecture.

Set in the less explored eastern Algarve, which borders Spain, this striking riverfront Belle Epoque mansion remained empty for over 20 years until a group of canny investors and hoteliers transformed it back in 2019 to its 'roaring twenties' glory, employing the Portuguese designers, White & Kaki.

Although the House is not on the beach, but is set in the town, overlooking the river and yacht marina, the hotel operates its own Grand Beach Club, which is 3km away, by hotel shuttle, where the Guadiana river meets the Atlantic Ocean.

Beach lovers will not be wildly impressed,



Relaxing on the deck of the Lodge, at Bamurru Plains, Australia.



Entrance to Grand House Algarve.

but then, this is more of a venue to lounge beneath a thatched palapa and catch the sun and sea breezes. A small infinity edge pool overlooks the water, together with a sandy sun deck by the public beach, which is so tiny that it disappears entirely when the tide comes in. Foodies, however, will relish this quirky little hideaway; its understated restaurant serving excellent local fare, such as a light Algarve Cataplana and giant



Sitting room overlooking the marina, at Grand House Algarve.

salt-baked prawns.

In this 30-room Relais & Châteaux property, which includes 6 suites, service from its young staff is warm and genuine, under German General Manager, Marita Barth, who has lived in Portugal for 20 years or more.

A great breakfast, with fresh local breads and pastries, is served in the hotel's evocative main restaurant, the Grand Salon, where a light lunch can also be had. Dinner is a

more elegant affair, including a very extensive wine list and a range of International and local dishes, from simple steaks to Portuguese fusion.

The rooms and suites are beautifully decorated in blends of soft white and neutral tones, parquet floors, antique chests and crystal chandeliers. Artworks, with references to the past, abound, from ancient prints to black and white lithographs.



View from Grand House Algarve of the marina.



Bedroom area of Grand House Suite, #201, at Grand House Algarve; the marina views beyond.

Most of the bathrooms are shower-only, stylishly tiled in black and white and with custom-made towels from the Portuguese city of Guimarães.

Although street-facing rooms are extremely light and airy, a marina/river-view is a

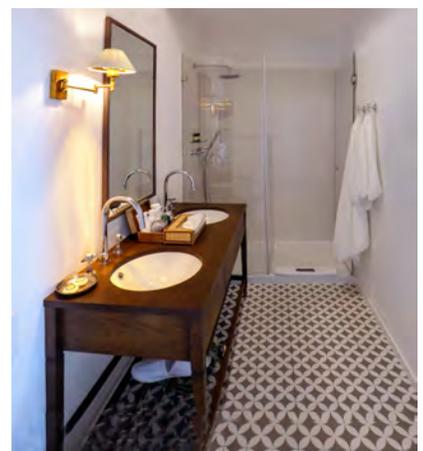
must, such as Medium Riverview Room, #212 on the second floor. Much better, though, is one of the Grand House Suites, such as #201. Although more like junior suites, these elegant enclaves have small sitting areas; the best of which is Grand

House Suite, #101, which has a furnished terrace overlooking the river, promenade and marina. However, the Grand Family Suite on the top floor is large enough to also accommodate one child on its sofa bed.

That said, I think that this hotel is much



The Grand Beach Club, at Grand House Algarve.



Bathroom of Grand House Suite, #201.

more suited to couples than to families. It is a very elegant grown-up hideaway that combines the historic town of Vila Real de San António with the sights and sounds of the water. Do go.

grandhousealgarve.com



Gallivanter's

Gossip

I REALLY LIKE THE LOOK of the new **Avani Seminyak Bali Resort**, which opens this month, as part of Minor Hotels growing portfolio. Sensibly, it offers just 16 roomy private pool villas and 21 apartment-style suites, designed for longer stays. The location is excellent, as it is close to all the best shops, art galleries and restaurants and just 30 minute's drive from the airport. The beach is around 10 minute's walk, but frankly, this is the sort of place that tempts you to stay put. The look is really fresh and contemporary, merging Balinese design with 21st Century living. avanihotels.com



WITH LONDON'S THE BEAUMONT HOTEL closed until July, head instead to **45 Park Lane**, which is now extremely relevant to those of us who prefer small city hotels with spas. Spas? Yes, the hotel has just completed a new wellness space which, along with a modest list of spa treatments, includes a gorgeous 20-metre indoor pool, personal training room, top notch gym, steam, sauna, hydrotherapy and a relaxation lounge that serves healthy cuisine. A spa was the only thing lacking at this hotel, so this is a great move. dorchestercollection.com

A MEMBER ALERTED ME TO A NEW HOTEL in **Auckland**, New Zealand. **The Hotel Britomart** is a zen-like, 99-room property in Auckland's best shopping and dining area, with Tom Hishon's all-day-dining 'kingi' restaurant, which specialises in sustainably caught seafood. Opt for one of the five spacious Landing Suites, at the top of the building and with sensational views. It is good to have somewhere like this in Auckland now that Mollie's Hotel is no longer under the original ownership. thehotelbritomart.com

IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE LONG-AWAITED Aman Cavtat on the Adriatic coast of **Croatia** is finally going to happen, with the announcement by Greek owner, Petros Stathis, that construction has now begun on the 50-room property. Stathis also owns **Aman Sveti Stefan**, which, allegedly has closed for the foreseeable future, due to local difficulties. Meanwhile, **Aman New York** heads towards its opening this spring, but not with Nicolas Béliard as General Manager, as he recently took on the post of GM at Washington's Hay Adams hotel instead.

IN THE USA, KEEP YOUR EYES ON AUBERGE HOTELS who plan on opening some very interesting new properties. **Wildflower Farms** in upstate New York's Hudson Valley is set to open in autumn 2022, on 140 unspoilt acres, and in 2023 Auberge will open the reimaged **The Hearst Hotel** in San Francisco, with 150 historically inspired rooms and suites in the iconic Spanish Revivalist Hearst Building. Both look extremely tempting. aubergeresorts.com

I USED TO BE A BIG FAN of the restaurant at **The Surrey Hotel** in New York's Manhattan, although less so of its accommodation. Remarkably, I hear that **Corinthia Hotels** (Maltese-based group currently with a number of hotels in Europe) will take over its operation and reopen in 2023, after a major renovation. This will be Corinthia's first US-based property and will offer 97 rooms and suites, to be designed by Martin Brudnizki, who is very well known in the hotel industry. I am curious to see how this goes!

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