

Return to paradise

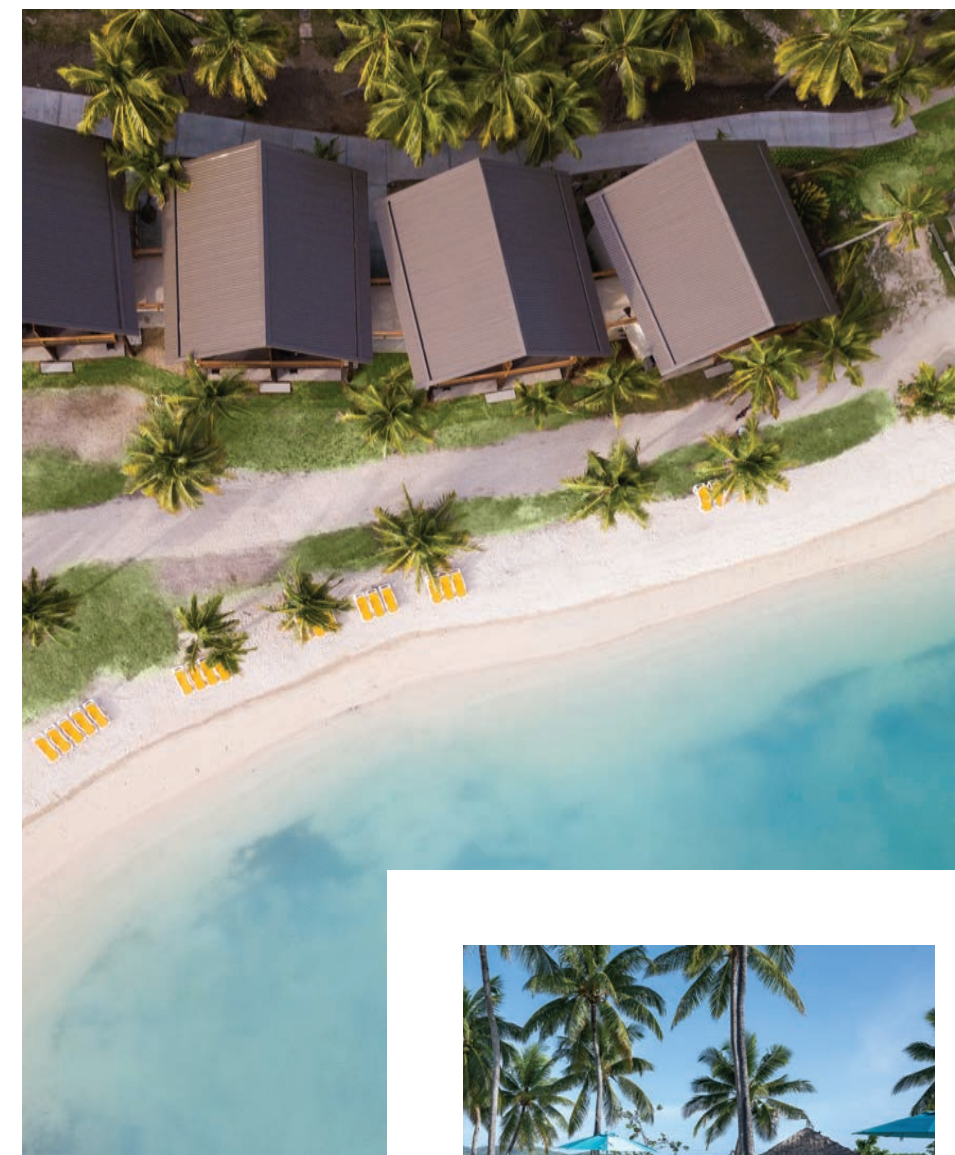
OHbaby! editor Kristina Rapley and her family revisit Plantation Island Resort, but was it as good as they remember?



You know those “we’ll definitely be back” holidays? Plantation Island in Fiji is one of those places and this year we actually pulled off a return stay! We first visited this sunny, secluded piece of paradise back in 2022, it was our first overseas adventure with our daughter Tallulah, who was three at the time. We returned this year and were delighted to find the island magic is still well and truly alive, with a few new-and-improved additions also.

Nestled in the heart of the pristine Mamanuca Islands, Plantation Island Resort caters to all kinds of travelers, but it’s most widely known as being one of the most family-friendly resorts in Fiji. Firstly, kids’ eat free! Breakfast, lunch and dinner are on the house for kids at two of the resort’s main restaurants. Kid’s club is also free for ages four to 11 and runs from 9am to 9pm daily.

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There’s a huge range of activities and learning experiences on offer, including cooking classes, arts and crafts, sandcastle competitions, and of course their legendary tie dye t-shirts. If you have an under four, they are still welcome at Kid’s Club accompanied by an adult (also nanny services are available for \$10 per hour).

Being school holidays, I was worried the resort might feel crowded, but it still had the laid back, easy breezy feeling it did back in 2022, even though that was just after the world opened back up again for international travel after the pandemic. They obviously planned the layout incredibly well to cater for busy periods, because although they were at full occupancy, it still felt lovely and quiet. There were never any long waits, the pools weren’t crowded, and there were still plenty of empty stretches of sandy beach to enjoy.



EAT
Plantation Island's buffet dinners are hard to beat! There's so much variety which is great when you have a little fusspot in the family like we do. Ashton and I enjoyed the themed nights (curry night on a Tuesday is a must if you love authentic Fijian Indian cuisine) and the beachfront location means you can sip on a cocktail from the bar and enjoy dinner

with a spectacular beach sunset. There are two other fantastic restaurants on site, as well as two bars, two coffee/smoothie bars, a snack bar, a 'milk bar' scooping ice creams, and they've also just opened a new eatery called Bowl, serving fresh, fast and authentic poke bowls.

PLAY

If you're anything like me, as long as there's a beach, good coffee, great food and cocktails, you're sorted. If you're anything like my husband, you

"The beachfront location means you can sip on a cocktail from the bar and enjoy dinner with a spectacular beach sunset every evening."

might need a little more action. Every day there are a multitude of activities and adventures you can book in for; from surfing, fishing and snorkeling to island hopping, dolphin safaris and cultural tours. There's also a massage spa and hair & beauty salon on site with a great range of treatments if that's more your style.

We rented bikes for the duration of our visit and I would highly recommend doing this. It was so fun cruising around the resort and meant you could get to and from activities or meals without getting too hot.

STAY

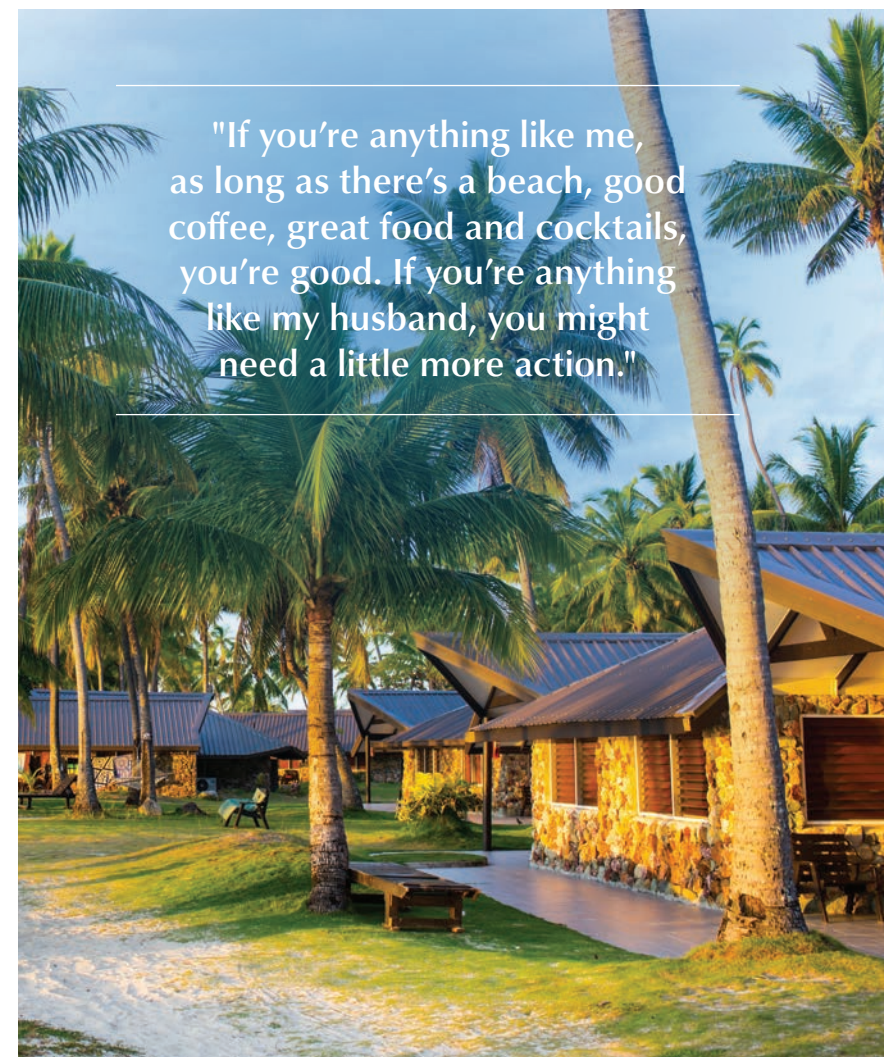
We opted for a beachfront bure again as we enjoyed the location so much last

time. These air-conditioned, two-bedroom bures are positioned right on the beach and have the most spectacular outlook. We spent every morning on the beach in our pjs, drinking coffee and enjoying refreshing morning dips in the crystal-clear ocean. It really is pure magic.

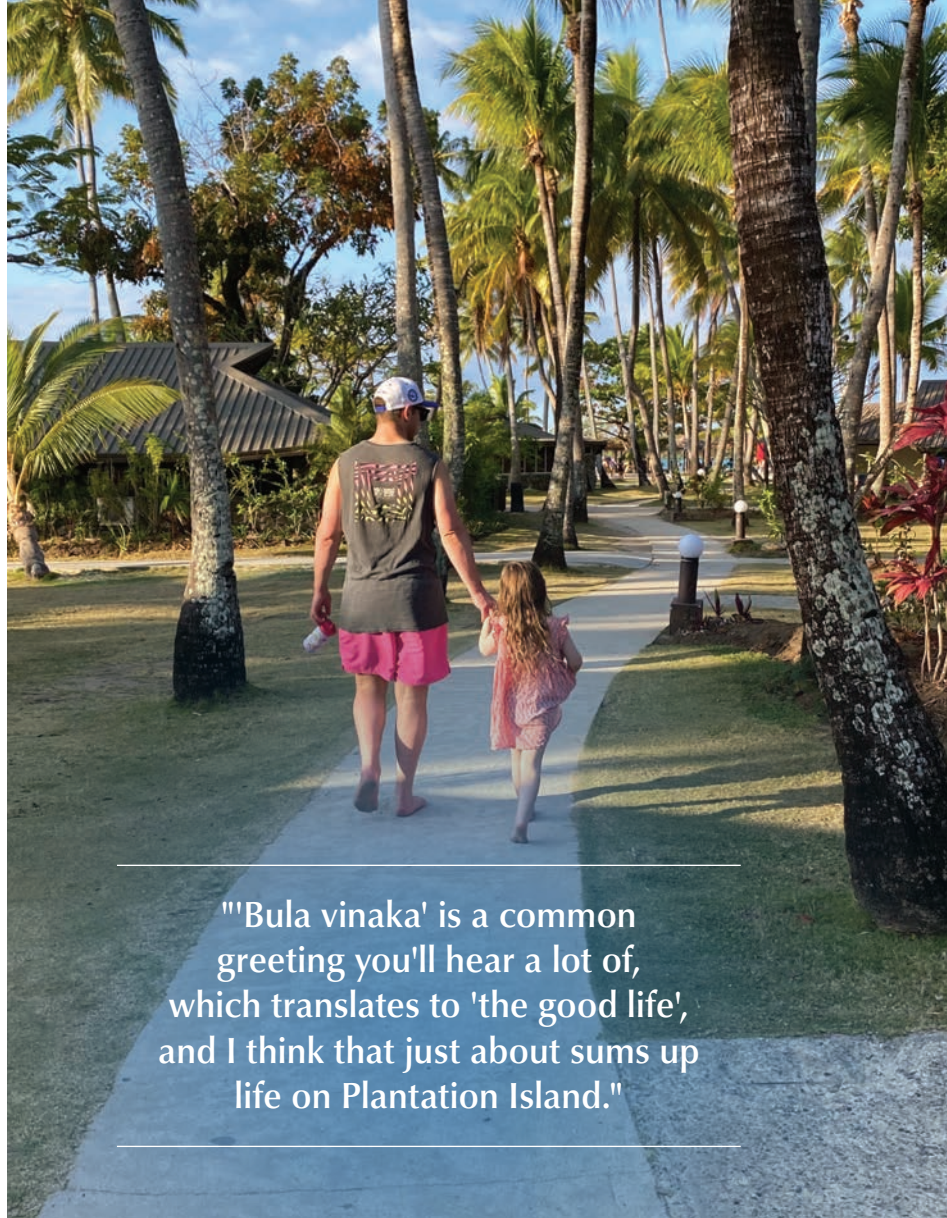
There are also garden bures available, set just a few footsteps back from the beach, as well as beachfront hotel rooms around the other side of the resort, studio rooms, garden rooms, and poolside rooms.

If you're wondering if Plantation Island Resort lives up to the hype, I can tell you unequivocally that it sure does.

As most people say of Fiji, it's the people that make every experience there extra special. The staff are so lovely, and they genuinely have so much care and affection for our little ones. The way their faces light up when they cross paths with children is such a delight to witness. "Bula vinaka" is a common greeting you'll hear a lot of, which translates to "the good life", and I think that just about sums up life on Plantation Island.



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KRISTINA'S FIJI TIPS

☆ **Snacks ahoy!** Food is expensive in Fiji, so make sure you pack lots of snacky things for the kids. We took packaged things in checked in luggage – chips, pretzels, crackers, muesli bars etc. They were so handy to have on hand to avoid any 'hangry attacks' and for travels days getting to and from the island.

☆ **Get crafty:** This one probably depends on how often you plan on utilising kid's club or the nanny services, but I packed a few new toys and crafty activities, and they were worth

their weight in gold! Tallulah spent hours happily playing and colouring, which gave Ashton and I space to relax.

☆ **No tap water:** You can't drink the tap water in Fiji, so be very diligent with using bottled water only for all drinking water and brushing teeth with. Consider taking a collapsible bath or bucket for little ones if you think they may not be able to shower without getting shower water in their mouths, as most of the rooms have showers only. ●

SHOUT-OUT TO:

Vinaka to Plantation Island Resort for hosting this stay. Visit plantationisland.com to see more.

PHOTOGRAPHY: KRISTINA RAPLEY AND PLANTATION ISLAND RESORT.