

# Dive into the HEART of Fiji



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*Fiji's best dive resort also a playground for families*

# *Volivoli, the total Fiji experience*



*By Laura Waters*

**I**t's no secret that Fiji loves families. The locals are famously friendly and the classic South Pacific beaches offer a haven for kids to play and swim. But if you don't want your precious dive holiday watered down by crab racing, sandcastle competitions and minimal opportunities to dive, then check out the rugged and lush north coast of Viti Levu where you just might be able to keep everyone happy.

Rakiraki or Bligh Waters as it is also known, is an easy two-hour drive from Nadi, and gazing out to sea from its perch on a headland is Volivoli Beach Resort.

This four star property recently won the ANZ Fiji Excellence in Tourism Award for Quality Accommodation. However it's more than just a pretty place to chill out

**...A network of passageways between pinnacles at Amazing Maze is lined with soft corals and fans, creating a kaleidoscope of colour...**

and soak up the sun; this is also the gateway to some world-class diving. With Fiji often touted as the soft coral capital of the world, the dive sites at nearby Vatu I Ra Channel are arguably the cream of the crop.

### **Three dives before lunch**

Volivoli's owners are Kiwi brothers, Nick and Steve Darling. Both are passionate scuba divers and the

workshop at in-house Ra Divers is so shiny and well equipped it would make a grown man weep. Every day dive boats depart for two or three tank morning dives to a selection of over 50 different sites.



Golden Dreams features swim-throughs absolutely festooned with yellow soft corals. Poke amongst the whip coral and you'll find ghost pipefish and scorpionfish while barracuda and reef fish buzz overhead. A network of passageways between pinnacles at *Amazing Maze* is lined with soft corals and fans, creating a kaleidoscope of colour that is a photographer's dream. The coral is healthy too, no doubt due to the proximity of the cooler and nutrient rich currents of the channel combined with low pollution and few other boats.

**...Snorkelling on the house reef is popular - keep an eye out for the resident white frog fish, seahorses and ornate ghost pipefish...**

Beyond the famous soft corals and sea fans, *Breathmaker* offers a deeper dive with the chance to see big fish and sharks such as white tip, black tip, whalers and grey reef. Wreck lovers will enjoy the *Papuan Explorer*, Fiji's largest and most accessible wreck, located in 20m and teeming with marine life.

### Family time

Dive boats return in time for lunch, leaving hours free for family time and a little exploring topside. Adventurous kids are well catered for here, though there is no organised kid's clubs or child minding on offer. It's all about getting out in the great outdoors with activities like swimming (in the pool or off the beach), fishing and paddling.



*Premium Ocean View Villa*



*Spa facilities*





Free kayaks and paddleboards are a great way to explore the thriving mangrove system offshore. Snorkelling on the house reef is popular with kids of all ages (keep an eye out for the resident white frog fish, seahorses and ornate ghost pipefish). For the more committed, an introductory scuba experience or a full SSI open water dive certification is available.

### Excursion options

While there is plenty to do right from the resort, venturing a little further afield allows you to see a different side of Fiji, away from

the sun lounges and cocktails. Excursions nearby include paddling on a bamboo raft through stunning mountain scenery on the Wainibuka River (a tributary of the Rewa River, Fiji's biggest)

**...Think double-smoked Wainadoi pork loin in whiskey and honey glaze, or soft shell crab with papaya and lemongrass salsa...**



or swimming beneath one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the country - Savulele. In the pretty highland village of Nabalasere, every building is painted in the same shade of mint green. For the energetic, a trek up the extinct volcano of Mount Tomanivi (Fiji's highest at 1,324m) offers spectacular views out to the distant Yasawa Islands.

### Hungry?

All this exercise can really drive an appetite and the food at Volivoli is far above what you'd expect on your average dive holiday. Think double-smoked Wainadoi pork loin in whiskey and honey glaze, or soft shell crab with papaya and lemongrass salsa. Even a simple burger or wood-fired pizza here is memorable. Kokoda Fish - marinated in lemon and served in coconut sauce - is a Fijian classic. And if you want to take a bit of the local cuisine home with you, you can learn to make it yourself in one of the resort's cooking classes.

If you're feeling a little lazy, grab a cocktail and hammock at the beach bar to watch the sunset, or try a restorative spa treatment.

### Bedtime?

When it comes to bedtime, families have a choice but even the most basic rooms have an ocean view and can sleep four. If you feel like spreading out, the new two bedroom luxury villas give parents a little privacy, along with two bathrooms and a private swimming pool.

A stay at Volivoli ticks off every diving family's needs. It's luxurious yet unpretentious, and the warmth and relaxed nature of its owners clearly reflects in the rest of the team that work here.

If you're not travelling with a family of your own, you'll very soon feel part of theirs.

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# Bring the Family to Fiji with **DIVE** magazine

Dive into the heart of Fiji and the warm and vibrant pacific waters around Rakiraki. Base yourself at this Beach Resortm located on the northern most tip of Viti Levu, for an amazing diving experience. Teaming with life and colour, the nutrient rich waters provide some of the healthiest reefs with stunning colourful corals, walls, bommies and an abundance of marine life. Be prepared for encounters with turtles, anemone fish, eagle rays, white tipped and grey reef sharks.

## *Dive Rakiraki region and stay at Volivoli resort*

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