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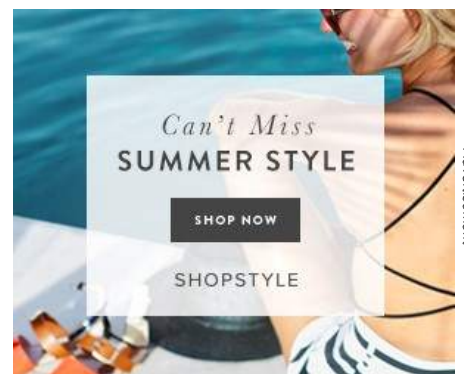
# Tavanipupu Private Island Resort, Solomon Islands: The South Pacific's best kept secret



Mal Chenu Apr 15 2016 at 8:45 AM



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The island resort: Tavanipupu Private Island Resort.

GIVE FEEDBACK

SHARE We're experiencing a Pijin language version of 'Who's on First'. Nudagus is telling us he is not the most important Gus on Tavanipupu Island. "There's another Gus," he says. "The other Gus is the boss so I'm 'Nudagus'. A-nother-Gus." He points to his 'Nudagus' nametag.

Right now Nudagus is more important than the other Gus as Nudagus is the Gus bringing the cocktails. We wonder whether he is called 'Nudagus' at home or what his name would be if the other Gus left the resort. But that way lies madness and we return to gazing at the radiant sunset over the lagoon.

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Tavanipupu Private Island Resort is the Solomons' most luxurious destination. Located in Marau Sound in Guadalcanal Province, it's

25 minutes by air from Honiara in an eight-seater Islander aircraft to a grass airfield, followed by a 20 minute boat ride to the resort.



Bungalows at Tavanipupu Private Island Resort.

The manicured resort is as stunning in real life as anything you could find in a travel brochure. There are just 11 bungalows of three different classes plus a 'Royal' bungalow and each is free-standing, spacious and quite luxe, certainly by Solomon's standards. All wooden with thatched rooves, vaulted ceilings and 'kastom' (traditional) furnishings and décor – plus shells and flowers – the bungalows reflect the serenity and beauty of the resort. My four-poster king bed is enveloped by a sprawling mosquito net that sways under the ceiling fan, the bathroom is modern and expansive and a porch with a day bed, hammock and lagoon views beckons.

Don't expect Wi-Fi, TV, air-con or drinkable tap water in your room. You won't miss them anyway. Tavanipupu is about the languid lagoon, sultry breezes, scuttling hermit crabs, reef snorkelling with endless visibility and the get-away-from-it-all story of a lifetime. They do have room service though – just bang the drum on your front porch and you'll get Nudagus. (Or Anuda-staffer, but let's not start that again.)

Anuda drum announces that lunch or dinner is served in the open-air dining room next to the bar. The menu mostly consists of fish from the lagoon and their own organic vegies and eggs. The meals we have are excellent and we also enjoy a breakfast on the porch, delivered right on 'Solomon's time' – 45 minutes late. Which couldn't have mattered less. Romantic dinners on the jetty are also popular.



The Royal Bungalow at Tavanipupu Private Island Resort.

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In addition to the sublime snorkelling, you can explore the island by bike or on foot and the tranquil lagoon by kayak or paddle board, although some parts of the lagoon are culturally significant and off-limits to women. All genders can take a sunset cruise, go on the market trip to Marau station on Thursdays or join a fishing expedition (\$AU150) to catch your dinner. You can arrange a day on your own sandy cay with a gourmet lunch and there's even a cosy little overwater Spa where you can have a massage while gazing into the water.

Locals claim Tavanipupu is the South Pacific's best kept secret but the secret was blown somewhat when the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge stayed here during their 2012 tour of the Pacific. They tell the tale of the cordon of coconuts laid around the Royals' bungalow by their security detail, who no doubt had a protocol to follow, even though the greatest threat would have been tripping over a coconut. They tell of Prince William's love of the cocktail he ordered, declaring it the "best Pina Colada in the world". And they claim this is where Prince George was conceived. How the Cambridges must have loved the paparazzi-free seclusion.

The Royal connection continues on the adjacent island of Marapa, where Wills and Kate visited the local traditional village. We follow in the Royals' paddle prints and take a dugout canoe on the short, wobbly ride across the channel.



Dancers at Tavanipupu Private Island Resort.

We receive a triple 'welkam' – women splash in the shallows, girls dance gracefully and men and boys put on an aggressive haka-like display. A palm tree planted by the future king of England now holds pride of place in the centre of the village. The villagers display their cooking, carving and construction skills with joyous, bright smiles and as we leave, they farewell us with laughter and waves while the youngsters show off with somersaults from the jetty. Visits here or to other villages can be arranged at Tavanipupu.

This may not be the easiest resort to reach but the experience is transcendent and you'll be able to drop the name Tavanipupu into conversations. Just pray they haven't hired a third Gus.

## TRIP NOTES

## MORE INFORMATION

[www.tavanipupu.com](http://www.tavanipupu.com)



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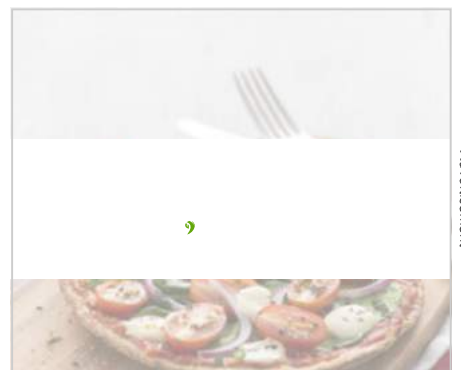


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Tavanipupu Private Island Resort. Photo: The Bondi Travel Bug

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## GETTING THERE

Solomon Airlines flies direct from Sydney and Brisbane to Honiara with connections to Marau airstrip. See [www.flysolomons.com](http://www.flysolomons.com); Phone 1300 894 311.

If you have a night or two in Honiara, stay at the Heritage Park Hotel. See [www.heritageparkhotel.com.sb](http://www.heritageparkhotel.com.sb); [www.mysolomons.com.au](http://www.mysolomons.com.au)

## STAYING THERE

Rates from \$A200 (Island) – \$300 (Royal) per bungalow per night. Transfers to and from the local airfield are included. Meal packages – essential unless you plan to survive on coconuts, crabs and fish you catch yourself – include full breakfast, a two-course lunch and a three-course dinner are available for \$A85 per person per day.

*Mal Chenu travelled as a guest of Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau and Solomon Airlines.*

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