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## Fatboys Swim: the amazing resort only a lucky few can visit

MARK HARADA ventures to Solomon Islands' Fatboys Resort, and finds it almost impossible to stay dry.

Typical of many Solomon Islanders, Fatboys Resort manager Mano Ziru Dhari is a friendly, yet slightly shy guy. But ask him what guests must do when staying at the resort, and his answer is unwavering: get in the water. It might sound obvious; but in this case, the obvious definitely bears repeating.



Lying on the fringe of the islet of Mbabanga, near Gizo town in western Solomon Islands, Fatboys Resort overlooks a see-through sea that extends to [Kennedy Island](#), a small isle made famous by JFK, and beyond that, the volcanic Kolombangara Island.

Fatboys almost has exclusive access to the water around here; the occasional family may wade by in a canoe, or fishermen with their morning haul, but you won't come across any tourists, save for the lucky few at Fatboys – and it really is only a few, with just four family-sized bungalows, a traditional honeymoon suite and one modern unit occupying the property.

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The pick of the bunch if you want the most authentic Solomons experience, the bungalows feature a front bedroom with a queen-sized bed and rear bedroom with three singles, all with mosquito netting. Made from traditional leaf and local hardwoods, each bungalow also has its own verandah and hammock to take in the views, and stairs directly onto the beach. It isn't five-star luxury, but it's clean, comfortable and best of all, oozes charm.

Fatboys' lobby, lounge and bar are located at the end of a long pier under a large, thatched roof. The sofas are cosy, and perfect to sink into with one of the resort's books or a SolBrew (the local lager) from the bar. But the small restaurant, which is incorporated into the same space, is arguably the standout here.



Staying true to a Fatboys philosophy rooted in indulgence (the resort is named after decadent '80s



Staying true to a Fatboys philosophy rooted in indulgence (the resort is named after decadent Joe the Fatboy' from Charles Dickens' The Pickwick Papers), the restaurant serves up huge meals that are equally big on taste, specialising in lobster, fish and whatever else the local fisherman happen upon. If you like crayfish, you'll love it here – for breakfast, lunch or dinner. But the eatery, which also welcomes non-staying guests, likewise serves up delicious local staples such as taro and cassava and tropical fruits, not to mention some of the best banana fritters you'll ever try.

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But at every turn, the water beckons. The activities centre will give you a mask and snorkel, and then it's straight in. While there are fish of all shapes and sizes around the edges of the pylons, and indeed further out, a cool place to snorkel is under the structure itself, where it's darker and there's marine life literally all around. Alternatively, take a kayak out to Kennedy and enjoy equally amazing snorkelling.

Elsewhere, there are no shortage of places to get your water fix: with its WW2 wrecks and awesome visibility, scuba diving in the Solomons is legendary, while fishing spots abound, and at least half a dozen surf breaks lie within a short boat ride from the resort.

Whatever else you do at Fatboys, and in Gizo, just be sure to hit the water at every opportunity. And you'll put a smile on Mano's face.





**What else to do?** A new 'triangular tour' takes in Solomon Islands' second largest town, the dusty but delightful Gizo, Kennedy Island, and a snorkelling trip, where guests can swim from one outer island to another. If you're around on a Sunday, you can even attend mass in a cute village on Mbabanga. You'll need to be accompanied by a guide, but the service is worth visiting for the wonderful hymns alone.

**Where to eat?** If you can drag yourself away from the dining at Fatboys (which is no easy feat), nearby Sanbis Resort cooks up delicious pizzas in the South Pacific's only overwater, wood-fire pizza oven. And yes, pizza does taste better when it's eaten overwater.

**How to get here?** Solomon Airlines flies from Brisbane to Honiara four times a week, and from Sydney once weekly. From Honiara, it's a scenic one hour flight to Gizo's Nusa Dua Airport, which sits atop its own island. Fatboys is a ten-minute boat ride from the airport.



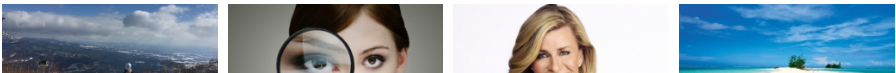
*The writer was a guest of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau.*

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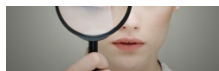
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