

YOU WISH: THE SOLOMON ISLANDS



Fit for a King

PRINCE WILLIAM AND PRINCESS KATE STAYED AT TAVANIPUPU ISLAND RESORT ON THEIR LAST VISIT TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC... AND YOU CAN TOO.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **CHRISTINE RETSCHLAG**

If one is going to be marooned anywhere in the world for an extra night, then Tavanipupu Island Resort is arguably the prettiest scenario on the planet in which to find yourself. While Solomon Airlines runs a tight ship on its international routes, mixed communications, tropical weather and a variety of other issues endemic to the South Pacific can result in domestic delays. But not to worry, you're on island time here and there's nothing a cold local Sol Brew and a snorkel off the jetty won't fix.

In fact, Prince William and Princess Kate would concur. The British royals were so enamoured with Tavanipupu Island Resort on their 2012 visit to the South Pacific, they actually altered their plans to stay the night in one of the beautiful bures. Rumour has it that Prince George may have even been conceived here.

At the time of writing there were seven executive suites, all identical save for minor furniture variations and more plush furnishings in the Royal Suite. A cool calico mosquito net surrounds the generous bed which is the main focal point of each suite. Each has traditional high thatched roofs and mosquito screens framing the shuttered windows and doors. The large

bathrooms boast double basins, western toilet and indoor shower. But save your bathing for outside where you have your own private shower under the stars.

Situated in the Marau Sound in the eastern province, this island has a long and colourful history. In 1896 a group of Norwegians bought the freehold land from the locals for the cost of a smoking pipe, a musket and 10 shillings, and in 1978 they built a resort. Today, an 88-year-old Norwegian still lives in a hut on the island. The island belongs to the Solomon Island people under the National Providence Fund (NPF) or superannuation fund.

Tavanipupu Manager and Australian, Sean Tiesman became interested in the Solomon Islands back in 1988 when he played the role of a 1942 soldier in the film *The Thin Blue Line*. Sean employs 25 villagers full time and there are more workers engaged in building work on the island.

While most tourists flock to the western province, Sean says Tavanipupu is the closest and cheapest by flight and he aims to make it the most eco-friendly as well. A bunch of seedlings from Australia will be given to local farmers who will be encouraged to sell the produce back to

the island to make the type of top quality meals that are already served here. Think three-course meals such as tuna and lime in coconut milk; Indian fish curry with rice and vegetables; and banana strudel and home-made ice-cream for dessert.

This island boasts 15 types of orchids alone, and underwater it's a forest of lavender coral and colourful fish. With accessible reef wrapping around the entire 13ha island, it's little wonder Wills and Kate didn't want to leave. •

The writer was a guest of the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau - [@] <http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb> and Solomon Airlines - [@] <http://www.flysolomons.com>

TRAVEL FACTS

Prices start from \$180 for an executive suite and \$250 for the Royal Suite.

To book go to [@] <https://www.facebook.com/Tavanipupu-Island-Resort-10927655856383/?fref=ts> or email Sean directly at tiesmans@yahoo.com.au