



Newly Remodeled
Namale Resort —
Set Amid the Tropical
Splendor of

Spectacular Savusavu

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Sometimes daily strife and stress make it difficult to enjoy time with your loved one. It seems that even when you do get a little time together, you never really relax. We've been looking for the answer to this problem and think we have found it at Namale Resort—a special place in Fiji that offers a private getaway, where you can put the romance back into your life.

Namale Resort is nestled among 121 acres of beautifully manicured jungle gardens with three miles of ocean frontage on the Koro Sea. Owned by American entrepreneurs Tony and Becky Robbins, it recently

Top inset: The bure that houses Namale Resort's reception area and boutique. Background: Pastel soft corals on a reef near Savusavu.

underwent a \$2.5 million renovation and the results are marvelous.

The eight thatched *bures* (Fijian cottages), perched atop lava pinnacles, were designed around the giant rain-trees that dot the property. Each *bure* is actually two buildings joined by a connecting hallway, ensuring luxury and privacy. The bathrooms have either glassed-in showers that open to your private outdoor deck or a spa tub surrounded by windows that overlook the sea. Your outdoor deck has comfortable rocking chairs so you can sit and enjoy a good book or just relax and enjoy the view.

Some people come to Namale Resort to relax, rest and unwind. Others find they cannot fit in all the available activities during their short stay. Namale offers sunbathing, horseback riding on the beach, visits to the local village, tennis on lighted courts, beach volleyball, basketball, waterskiing, windsurfing, sailing, canoeing, kayaking, snorkeling and world-class scuba diving. A gentle rain forest hiking trail winds along a river to a breathtaking waterfall. You can even melt away in the hottub and be swept away by the magnificent colors of the Fijian sunset.

As you can see, there is much more to do than just scuba dive. But, since you



SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Namale Resort is best known for:

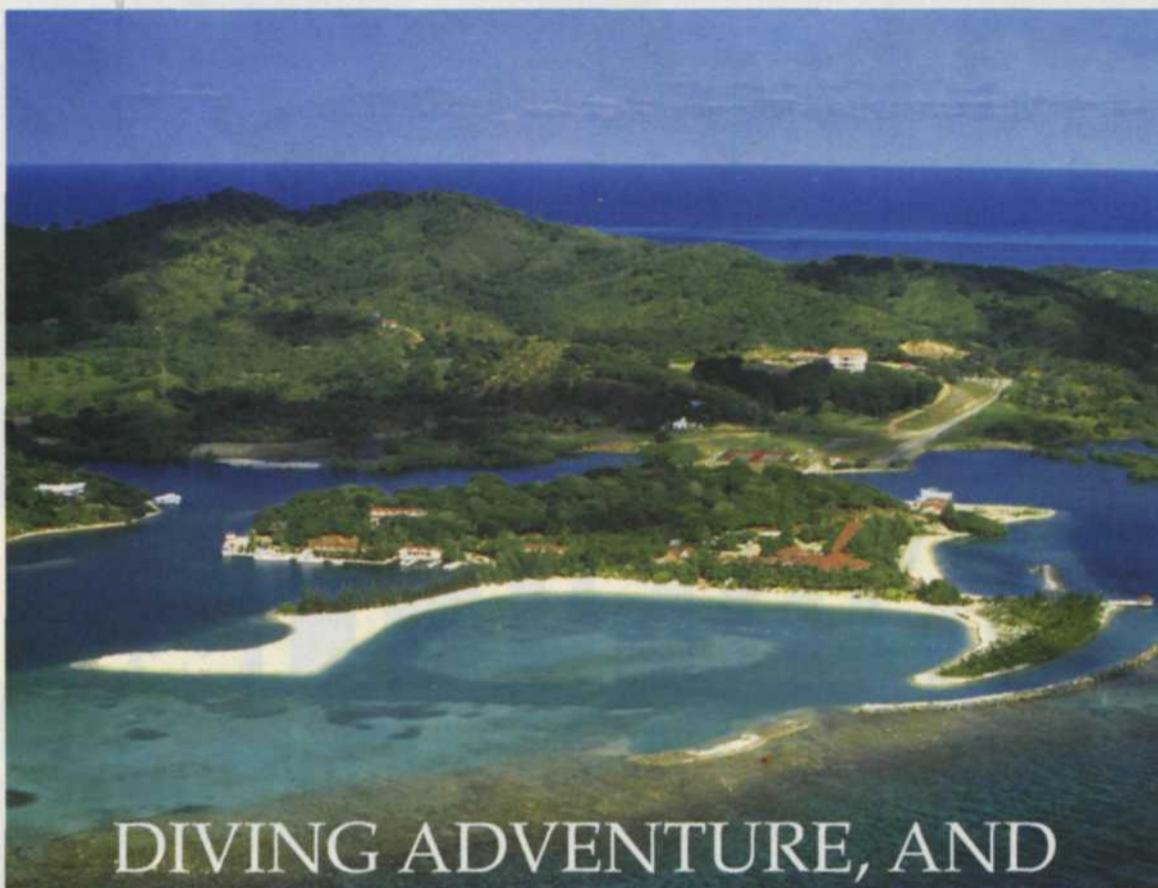
- Pastoral serenity
- Dramatic walls
- Giant soft coral trees
- Abundant fish and invertebrates

are reading SKIN DIVER, you probably want to know all about the diving.

The PADI dive shop sits right at the edge of the marina. If you haven't brought gear, they will provide anything you need and it will be included in the price of the diving. The shop features an area where the staff will hang and store your dive gear between dives. Namale offers two tank dives in the morning to some of Fiji's finest sites.

Our first dive was to a pinnacle called **Dream House** just minutes away. Once we jumped into the water, we were met with a friendly school of Batfish. They circled us, providing some fine photo opportunities. Once we dropped deeper, the soft corals were in full color even

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SPECTACULAR SAVUSAVU

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though there was virtually no current. Schools of glistening Barracuda cruised the edge of the reef.

The next dive site was called **Fan Fair** and, as you might guess, the bommies were covered with seafans. There were several swim-throughs and everywhere we looked fish and critters were waiting to have their pictures taken.

Tunais Reef is group of 20 untouched coral bommies that allow an easy dive

above 60 feet. The plate corals were so pristine we had the feeling we were the first to see them.

On the Savusavu side of the island we dived the great **Hole in the Wall**. As we cruised the edge of the reef, we came across a large hole in the wall that dropped down to the depths of the reef. The diversity of animal life found on this reef would challenge any site worldwide.

Although it is a long boat ride, occasionally Namale makes the trek to **Namena**. This world famous site features the thrill of diving the tidal exchange through a cut in the reef that surrounds



Top: The tastefully furnished interiors of the bure reflect a strong Fijian influence. Above: The bedrooms are airy and comfortable.

the island. As the current carries you, you are greeted by sharks, rays and large critters that are normally skittish.

As you can see, the diving was fantastic but we were here to experience all that Namale had to offer. Try as we might, we just couldn't fit all the other activities into our afternoons. There're just too many things to do! As the sun showed its final colors of the day, we headed hand in hand to the main bure for pre-dinner drinks with the other guests.

FIJI BOUND

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi takes approximately 10 hours. Namale Resort, in Savusavu on Vanua Levu, is an hour's flight from Nadi via either Air Fiji or Sunflower Airlines.



Air Pacific
(800) 227-4446

Qantas Airlines
(800) 227-4500

Air Fiji
(800) 677-4277 (in U.S.)

Sunflower Airlines
(888) DIVE FIJI (in U.S.)

In true island flavor, we were notified for all meals by the rhythmic beat of the *lali* drum. At Namale you can elect to dine and converse with the other guests or enjoy total privacy. There are several private decks with awesome ocean views

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SPECTACULAR SAVUSAVU

perfect for an intimate candlelight dinner for two. The cuisine is a wonderful combination of Fijian, Indian and European delicacies mixed with fresh fruit and vegetables. The restaurant features fine wines from all over the world, a sure complement to the meal.

Namale Resort is the perfect place to enjoy the total Fijian experience. We were warmly welcomed into the neighboring village where we witnessed the Fijian's simple lifestyle. In the evening, the Namale band serenaded us with native songs and shared a *bilo* (half a coconut shell) of *kava*. We were also treated to a *meke*, a festival of dance and song, presented by members of the local village. The magic of Fiji seems to be everywhere at Namale!

Namale Resort provides a sanctuary of seclusion that allows a romance to rekindle or to blossom and grow. The Fijian people offer friendship freely and smiles flow easily. As they sing you *Isa Lei*, the Fijian farewell song, they know you'll be back. You're a member of the Namale family now and you've experienced paradise.

For more information/and or reservations, contact Namale Resort's U.S. office at (800) 727-FIJI, (619) 535-6381 or fax (619) 535-6385. 🐟

Dive Notes

THE DIVE SHOP: The Dive Shop, Barbados' oldest established dive operation, is now offering dive trips to the east side of the island. Owner/operator Haroon Degia is expanding The Dive Shop's range to provide divers with the opportunity to experience the high energy diving available in this seldom visited area. Dramatically different from the more



photo/Bill Harrigan

protected west coast, the east coast features coral covered boulders and many large pelagics, including occasional Manta Ray sightings. Because the east coast is exposed to the trade winds, especially during the winter months, diving there is weather dependent. Summer is the best time to schedule your trip if ex-

ploring the east coast is on your agenda.

Barbados has excellent diving year-round on the entire south and west coasts, with some of the finest wrecks and reefs in the Caribbean. The Dive Shop is centrally located on Carlisle Bay, only minutes away from most dive sites. Three superb wrecks, *Eillion*, *Ce-Trek* and *Berwyn*, are in shallow water less than five minutes from the shop. The *Berwyn* is a superb location for photographers, offering many opportunities for every lens and strobe combination. The *Stavronikita*, a 365 foot freighter sunk in 1978, is only a short run to the north. Also close by is a wide variety of reef dives, with profiles from 20 to 130 feet.

The Dive Shop is the only operator with a location at the Bridgetown Cruise Ship Terminal, a great convenience for divers arriving by cruise ship. Step off the ship with only your C-card in your pocket and The Dive Shop will arrange everything else, including rental gear. A full range of PADI, NAUI and ACUC instruction is also available.

For more information call The Dive Shop at (800) 513-5823, (246) 426-9947 or fax (246) 426-2031. 🐟

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