

A PRIVATE AFFAIR

DISAPPEAR À LA MARLON BRANDO, OR TAKE IT SLOW IN LAUCALA. EXPLORE TWO EXCLUSIVE PACIFIC ISLAND HIDEAWAYS THAT TOP THE A-LIST OF ESCAPES EXTRAORDINAIRE.



THE BRANDO, AERIAL VIEW

© Tim McKenna

THE BRANDO (Polynesia)

ETHEREAL GRACE

For a Lilliputian speck on the map, this atoll astonishes even the worldliest of wayfarers. A twenty-minute private flight from Tahiti transports guests to Tetiaroa and her uninhabited ring of emerald islets cushioned by countless shades of blue atop a living reef. Hovering above this living necklace of twelve motus proves a glorious beginning to a peaceful but posh playground in the raw.

Fifty years after Marlon Brando discovered Tetiaroa while filming *Mutiny on the Bounty*, the reclusive actor's retreat has been transformed into an extraordinary private island eco-resort, courtesy of a vision decades in the making. Brando, who eschewed Mulholland Drive for this Polynesian paradise and way of life, might have been ahead of his time in his vision to conserve the islets that have been part of Tahitian lore for more than four thousand years. His dream was to create a self-sustaining island that would be a model for the rest of the planet for research, education and conservation. In 1999, he shared this vision with friend and Tahiti hotelier Richard Bailey, and together they conceived the world's first post-carbon resort. Ten years after the actor's death, The Brando opened its airstrip and began welcoming discerning guests and scientists alike.

Camouflaged by rich tropical foliage, The Brando's 35 sea-facing villas with infinity plunge pools peer onto pristine white sand beaches that feel virtually undiscovered. A soothing blend of contemporary and Polynesian design mingles seamlessly with high-end comforts hidden among the serenity of the pandanus and coconut palms.

All-inclusive perks include dishes inspired by French cuisine, cooked to perfection by Michelin-star chef Guy Martin, as well as activities and daily spa treatments. The Varua Spa is serenity personified—signature Polynesian treatments ensue in colossal birds' nests tucked away in the heart of Motu Onetahi next to a tropical pond where Tahitian royal family members indulged in beauty rituals years ago.

AN ECO-CONTENDER

The Brando echoes this past of a hedonist's delight; but more true to Brando's dream, precedent-setting innovative technology has achieved both a negligible carbon footprint and created a wealth of opportunities for the scientific community through the non-profit Tetiaroa Society.

The resort is powered by coconut biofuel and solar panels. Cutting-edge flow batteries are used to store solar energy power. Wastewater is filtered and used for irrigation. They recycle, compost, and have their own garden



TETIAROA ATOLL, FRENCH POLYNESIA



LUXURY VILLA AT THE BRANDO

© Tim McKenna

and honey farm. Transportation is by bicycle or sun-powered electric club carts. Most impressive, however, is the air-conditioning system. Guests are cooled by ocean depths of over a kilometre deep using only a pump and no electricity. It's a concept Brando himself conceived, and its scale exists nowhere else in the world.

These colossal efforts are invisible to private island sun-seekers, though The Brando is happy to show any guest behind the scenes. That is, if they're not too busy floating alongside the kaleidoscope of parrotfish, sea turtles and manta rays that can be found in the ethereal lagoon dubbed the "billionaire's pool" by Leonardo DiCaprio.

Equally out of sight are any hints of Brando's days here, with the exception of the nostalgic recreation of an old thatched-roof watering hole—"Bob's Bar"—named after a long-time friend of Brando's. Guests do well to enjoy a "Dirty Old Bob"—a concoction of Jack Daniel's, pineapple juice, lime, Angostura bitters and an ounce of the island's own local honey.

LAUCALA ISLAND (Fiji)

LAND OF PLENTY

The world's ultimate private island? 12 square kilometers of utopian emerald cliffs and blinding white beaches amidst tropical Fijian waters. A few acres from the Garden of Eden. Decadently-designed abodes masquerading as *bures* with 32 pools. An arsenal of aquatic vessels worthy of James Bond. Organic Michelin-worthy cuisine and a wine list Bacchus himself would approve of. The whole package has been tweaked to meet guests' every whim, to be wholly enjoyed in the delicious Fijian heat. It's the land of yes. The land of plenty. The land of Laucala.

The island was once the spiritual retreat of iconic entrepreneur Malcolm Forbes, so it's no wonder he chose it to be his final resting place. High upon a sparkling peak sits his gravestone, simply inscribed with "When Alive, He Lived." Today, Laucala remains heaven on earth for another businessman, the Austrian co-founder of Red Bull, Dietrich Mateschitz. The renowned private billionaire threw hundreds of millions of dollars and years of construction into what has now become not only his own retreat away from home, but a destination for other A-listers and celebrities who are willing to pay a premium for both privacy and gently-provided perfection. Refreshingly, there is no pretence here; only the delicacy of peace, frivolity and the world's best, well-served.

Unless guests prefer to fly in on their own private aircraft, Laucala Island is accessible only via a 50-minute flight from Nadi aboard the island's King Air B200 private jet. It's the beginning of a distorted reality in the most pleasant of ways. From the landing strip, one is suddenly sipping from a freshly cut coconut and being whisked off to one of 25 luxury villas or *bures* tucked into the cliffs, overlooking a lagoon, bordering a beach or perched atop Nawi Mountain.

The Fijian traditions of local doga timber, coconut husks and thatched sago meet the elegant designs of Lynne Hunt Studios. Quarters are spacious with private infinity pools, sprawling dressing rooms, state-of-the-art fully stocked wine fridges, indoor and outdoor stone tubs, showers and dining areas. Each *bure* is a clandestine hideaway with discreet, sweet-natured staff who are rarely seen but leave glorious gourmet gifts behind, such as après-swim canapés and freshly baked cookies, or a candlelit, white-linen barbecue should guests forgo one of the five restaurants on the island.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

From the more formal Plantation House to the open-air Asian fusion Seagrass Lounge and Restaurant, Laucala offers dining by design. Executive Chef Anthony Healy oversees the island's awe-inspiring, organic farm that provides 80% of everything that's served at the resort. Everything about the cuisine screams luxury, right down to the stunning Robbe & Berking cutlery. A farm tour is a must; the resort grows over 90 varieties of fruits, herbs and vegetables. Hydroponic lettuce, vanilla pods requiring painstaking manual pollination, dragon fruit, coffee, soursop, local Laucala honey, fresh tamarind jam, essential oils and candles custom produced for the spa. Even a sumptuous greenhouse that's home to almost 4,000 orchids. Most gasp-worthy, however, is the fact that Laucala boasts its own herd of Wagyu cattle flown to the island via private jet to graze in lush pastures. Today they're now happily reproducing, and the Wagyu beef is akin to butter on the palette. Not to take away from the Sulmtaler chickens, pigs and quails.

EVERY WHIM WELCOME

Nowhere else on the planet will you find the staggering 8-to-1 staff-to-guest ratio that Laucala offers, which in reality is greater given full occupancy is rare. In fact, the resort prefers a lower occupancy rate. This contributes to the no-appointment-necessary offerings of endless full-on activities. When the mood strikes, in minutes you'll find yourself atop a Fijian horse trotting along the beach, jet-skiing, snorkelling, kite-surfing, diving or golfing the award-winning, par-72 course designed by Scotsman David McLay Kidd. Laucala is home to an enviable fleet of 14 boats—including the Riviera Open Flybridge for game fishing as well as Dragon sailboats and traditional Fijian outriggers for that sunset cruise.

But the ultimate private island moment is probably best summed up when, on a whim, you find yourself in a 1.7 million dollar Deep Flight Super Falcon micro-submersible. A personal submarine, for short, and one of only three on the planet. When you're submerging into the depths of tropical waters unknown and a sea turtle unceremoniously passes you by, you realize you are left wanting for nothing on Laucala, land of plenty.



PENINSULA VILLA AERIAL VIEW, LAUCALA ISLAND



MAIN POOL, LAUCALA ISLAND



DEEPFLIGHT - HIGH PERFORMANCE PRIVATE SUBMARINE, LAUCALA ISLAND