

Mamanuca & Yasawa Groups

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Best Places to Eat

- Navutu Stars (p133)
- Mantaray Island Resort (p132)
- Botaira Beach Resort (p133)
- Travellers Tea House (p136)

Best Places to Stay

- Coconut Beach Resort (p135)
- Beachcomber Island Resort (p119)
- Blue Lagoon Beach Resort (p136)
- Navini Island Resort (p120)
- Castaway Island Resort (p123)

Why Go?

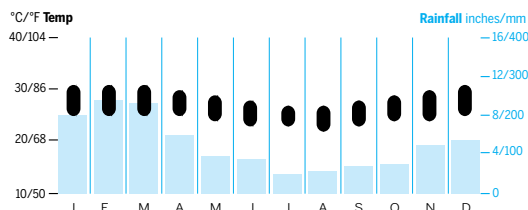
They're but a streak on the map, the 50-odd islands that make up the Mamanuca and Yasawa groups are a behemoth of beauty that pack a powerful – and paradisiacal – punch. Though they're easily accessible from Nadi, the region is home to everything far-flung-tropical-island daydreams are made of: rustling palms, obscenely blue waters, blinding white sands and local smiles just as bright. Incredibly, this eden is open to all; no matter your budget, you'll find quality accommodation and million-dollar views.

The 20 or so picture-perfect coral atolls and islands of the Mamanucas arc west through the large lagoon formed by the Malolo Barrier Reef and Viti Levu. It's a treasure trove of surf breaks, sea turtles, reef sharks and vast schools of multicoloured tropical fish.

To the north, the volcanic islands of the Yasawas reward visitors with blue lagoons, exquisite beaches, technicolour coral gardens and craggy landscapes aching to be explored.

When to Go

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May–Oct Generally sunny dry days, with cool(ish) nights that make for good sleeping.

Oct–Dec Fewer travellers, greater choice of accommodation; evening rainstorms and humidity increase.

Jan–Mar Steamy green wet season; expect some transport delays in stormy weather.



Mamanuca & Yasawa Groups Highlights

- 1 Waxing up your board – the mighty surf breaks of **Cloudbreak** (p115) and **Restaurants** (p115) await.
- 2 Re-enacting your favourite scene from Tom Hanks' *Cast Away* on **Modriki** (p122), where the film was shot.
- 3 Treating the kids to a holiday they'll never forget at **Treasure Island** (p120) or **Castaway Island** (p123).
- 4 Frolicking in the fluorescent waters of the **Blue Lagoon** (p135).
- 5 Catching a water taxi (or joining a tour) to the magical, mystical **Sawa-i-Lau Cave** (p137).
- 6 Living like a local at a **Waya village homestay** (p130).
- 7 Island-hopping on the **Yasawa Flyer** (p127) to see if the sand is any whiter at the other end of the island chain.
- 8 Diving off a boat and doing your best to keep up with the giant **manta rays** (p131).

MAMANUCA GROUP

'Tropical paradise' might be the most hackneyed cliché in the travel-writing world, but there's no getting away from it here: the Mamanuca islands tick every box, with brochure-blue seas and beaches so brilliant they're Hollywood celebrities unto themselves. With romance, relaxation and a disproportional number of fantastic resorts on offer, the Mamanuca group is unsurprisingly one of Fiji's most popular destinations.

Though they're valued more for their natural attributes than any contribution they make to the national culture, nobody could accuse the Mamanucas' beauty of being shallow: kaleidoscopic coral reefs and masses of marine life await those who take the plunge into their crystal-clear waters. Despite the subsurface calm, the Mamanucas are also home to a collection of world-class surf breaks.

Back on sand, the islands have enough facilities, activities and adventure opportunities to satisfy every day-tripper (and there are a lot of them). Those who come to stay are welcomed with a bellowing *bula!* and sunny hospitality, whether they choose family-friendly, couples-only or budget accommodation.

Life here bears little resemblance to the realities experienced by most Fijians. Only two resort islands, Mana and Malolo, support Fijian villages, though tourists outnumber locals. Not that they mind – almost all resorts lease their land from local communities and so, while heavy physical and metaphorical rain clouds may hang over the mainland, the sun always shines on the magical Mamanucas.

Activities

The Mamanucas are all about water sports and extreme relaxation. Whether you are staying for a week or visiting for a day, non-motorised water sports (like snorkelling, windsurfing, kayaking and sailing in catamarans) are nearly always provided free of charge. However, the moment an engine is fired you can expect to be billed. Village trips or snorkelling on the outer reef cost between \$25 and \$50 per person, and reef-fishing trips average around \$150 to \$170 per hour for four people. Island-hopping tours cost anywhere between \$80 and \$200 per person, depending on how many islands are visited and whether lunch is included.