

THE *Discerning* TRAVELLER

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Edwina McCann, editor of *Harper's BAZAAR*, shares the secrets of Laucala, the largest privately owned island in the southern hemisphere.

I have no need of an afterlife because I have been to heaven. When we touch down at the international airport in a private jet, it is clear that a holiday on exclusive Laucala Island is going to be like no other.

I have read up. The lush atoll boasts water and surf sports, a fleet of boats, a spa with all-natural island-

made products and a view to die for, horse riding, tennis courts, and an 18-hole championship golf course – not to mention fine dining in five restaurants and bars and a full agricultural operation, with all food grown and farmed on the island with the exception of Wagyu beef, which is flown in from Australia.

As the staff will tell you, on Laucala no-one says “No”. But best of all – and possibly something that no other destination can rival – it also delivers real privacy, complete with your very own beach.

This island, which sits to the north-east of Taveuni in Fiji, is the Hermès of luxury travel: exclusive, expensive and worth every cent. Laucala manages to be attentive to every detail and desire without sacrificing a friendly, human touch. There are no paparazzi here, which will be a big selling point for those to whom the island appeals. Indeed, Laucala Island is bound to become a hot spot for billionaires with young children.



HEAVEN

Laucala Island is so secret because while it sleeps a total of just 78 guests in 25 private residences spread across 12 kilometres, the guest count is usually much lower. With a staff of 350, you get the ratio... Not that you feel the staff are under your feet, because a clever coloured-coconut system (red for 'Keep out'; green for 'Come in and clean my private pool and villa') ensures that your holiday space is never invaded. And that's just the way the charming couple who manage the island, Maja and Thomas Kilgore, prefer to keep it.

"We want our guests to feel like they are being

welcomed into our home," the impeccably dressed Maja tells me.

Owner Dietrich Mateschitz is passionate about extreme sports, which explains the recent delivery of a super-fast catamaran from the Beijing Olympics. But he is less so, I'm told, about golf, which does little to explain the mind-boggling golf course, staffed by full-time professional Tony Christie and designed by David McLay Kidd, with undulating fairways and greens so, well, green, you wonder if it is real grass.

I doubt I will ever recover from my time on Laucala. "Where do we go from here?" I ask my

husband as we enjoy sunset with our girls on the exquisitely restored wooden yacht *Rere Ahi*. "We don't: we come back," is his response. Because we are sure there is nowhere that could rival the pristine Pacific privacy of Laucala Island, with its warm, tiki-torch-lit nights and sunny, smile-filled days.

So now you know the secret. Consider yourself one of Laucala's trusted and true.

For all pricing and bookings, please contact Travel the World.

Edwina McCann is the editor of *Harper's BAZAAR*. This is an excerpt from an article that first ran in the magazine in 2010.