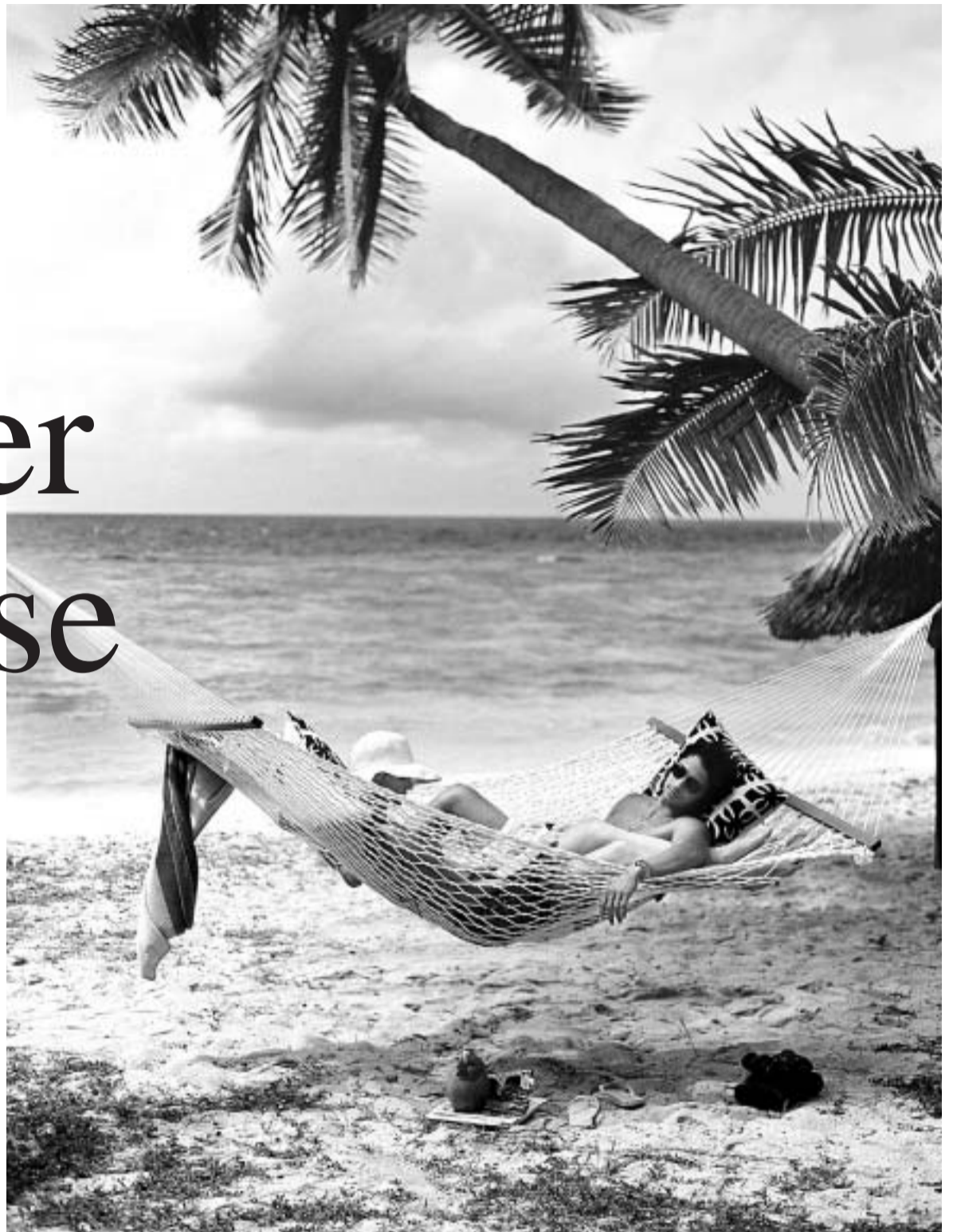




All day to sleep: beside the pool on Fiji's Vomo Island.



A stranger in paradise

Married couples aren't the only ones who can have fun on a tropic island, **Rachael Oakes-Ash** writes

fiji HONEYMOON destinations are off-limits to singletons. All those aquamarine waters, white sandy beaches and sunsets are created for the lucky in love.

But why should the marrieds have the privilege of access to paradise?

I am single and have been for 13 months and 12 days — not that I am counting.

With a one-in-three chance of staying single for the rest of my life, the only way I am going to see my fantasy honeymoon destination, Fiji, is to go on my own. So here I am.

The Sofitel Vomo Island is an hour's boat ride from Fiji's Nadi airport, past palm-fringed islands.

With 29 villas for two people set on a private island, Vomo is purpose-built for love.

This is where my honeymoon with myself begins.

The strong arms of islanders Wise and Situ they lift me from the Vomo boat.

Glad to be single, I allow myself to tumble into their strapping chests until I note their wedding rings and realise I am destined to be the only "unmarried" on the island.

The island's 100 hectares surround Mt Vomo, which provides the postcard setting for sunrise breakfasts served on white linen with champagne, or sunset cocktails carried up the mount.

In the morning the island is truly mine. While young lovers luxuriate in lie-in bliss, I am alone with the island's sea turtles and loving it.

Soon the female honeymooners suss me out and decide I am no threat. So I am not short of kayaking partners for the snorkelling trip to the neighbouring uninhabited isle, Vomo Lailai, where the waters are filled with Nemo and his parrot fish friends.

It seems every Fijian can sing, play a ukulele or strum a guitar.

The music has me crying, particularly as the islanders sing as we step into the boat to leave the isle.

Meals are included as part of the Vomo resort price. Lunch is served by the pool, on your personal bure

traveller's checks

Where: Sofitel Vomo Island Fiji.

How much: from \$1050 a night for two people, including all meals.

Getting there: Virgin Pacific Blue fly direct from Melbourne to Nadi. For bookings and fare specials visit www.virginblue.com.au. Transfers from Nadi to Vomo can be arranged by Sofitel Vomo Island.



deck or beachside on one of the platforms overlooking the ocean.

The island's Australian chef, James Garden, has designed a menu to keep bridezilla palates happy.

Kokoda, the local fish dish featuring coconut cream, peppers and lime, is a favourite.

The dinner menu really excels, with scallops, fresh potato gnocchi, prawns, lamb racks and reef fish, followed by vanilla poached pears.

Dining alone is confronting to some. My first night I am self-conscious until the general manager joins me. It's not often the expat staff on the island get to mingle with the guests usually joined at the hip.

As we open a third bottle of New Zealand's finest and more expats appear from out of the jungle, I feel the couples are missing out.

Later, while the loved ones were whispering sweet nothings into each others' ears, I was shouting from the roof tops, fuelled by kava.

They slept in, I saw the sunrise.



Life's a beach: (above) it's time to relax again.

Here comes dinner: (left) reef fish are one of the delicious offerings.

Romance: (below left) in the soft evening light, a honeymoon couple go walking.

Idyllic: (below) dinner for two by torchlight on the beach.

