

# CENTURION

**SCULPTING OIL | OUT IN AFRICA  
LABORATORY LUXE | NATURAL WONDERS  
MALDIVIAN SHOWSTOPPER | EXTREME HOROLOGY**

Plus: Algae's Bloom, Seasonal Essentials and Dining in Toronto

SUMMER 2018



Breakfast with an enchanted view; Turtle Island's turquoise surrounds, right



## A Refuge Like No Other

Some things shouldn't change, says **ANN ABEL**, who revisited Fiji's Turtle Island and found its timeless charms as appealing as ever

**F**iji is awash with high-profile openings, some of them very nice, but there's often a rhythm and a sophistication to resorts that have been at it for years – places that have perfected their own particular blend of hospitality and have become destinations where guests return again and again, booking their stay for the following year before they depart.

Turtle Island is one such resort. American entrepreneur Richard Evanson sensed the potential on his first visit, in

1972, when it was overrun with wild goats. He bought the island, then called Nanuya Levu, in the Yasawa archipelago after only a fly-by and made it his life's work to rejuvenate it. (It is now called Turtle Island for obvious reasons, and it maintains a conservation programme in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund.)

Evanson meant for the island to be his home, but when the location scouts for the 1980 remake of *The Blue Lagoon* approached him, he agreed on the condition that they built staff housing at

a five-star standard so that he could run it as a resort after they left. His family has maintained control ever since.

There are couples who have come nearly each of the near-40 years that Turtle Island has been operational. And while it's the island's timeless simplicity that draws them back, the resort has evolved in sensible ways. The most recent refresh was last year and included new fabrics and wood carvings with patterns based on traditional Fijian symbols, rough-hewn four-poster beds made of tree limbs gathered on the island and updated technology – although there are still, blessedly, no TVs, phones or even wifi in the 14 freestanding *bures*.

What hasn't changed is the longtime staff, who are full of affection – there can be a lot of hugging and high-fiving – and can sing like you wouldn't believe. They still carry guests off the arriving seaplanes (a throwback from before there was a jetty), and they spend a day preparing a traditional *lovo* feast, much of which is cooked underground before being served with great fanfare and is followed by a *kava* ceremony in which everyone is friends, a Turtle Island tradition that perfectly captures the spirit here. [turtlefiji.com](http://turtlefiji.com) ●