



Destination

THE PEARL, FIJI

Rooms 6 penthouses (from \$500), 72 deluxe rooms (from \$240).

Facilities Business and media centre, secretarial services, four restaurants, five bars.

Activities Game-fishing, white-water rafting, golf, shark diving, tennis, jet skiing and much more.

Clientele Energetic well-to-doers after some extreme rest and play.

Blast resort.

Serenity comes action-packed at The Pearl, Fiji.

Of all the spirit-lifting aspects of The Pearl resort, Fiji, none brings a broader beam to owner Eddie Phillips's face than how he stumbled across the name. "When my partnership with Vincent Rae [owner of Rae's on Watego's, Byron Bay] broke down," he says, "it was an aggravation in my life. Then I read in an article that a grain of sand makes its way into a clam, and the aggravation eventually becomes a beautiful pearl. When I discovered the name wasn't already registered, I cracked open a bottle of Dom Perignon, then took 'Rae's South Pacific' off all the signs..."

The Pearl couldn't feel less like the spawn of acrimony. Nuzzling into the powdery shorelines of Pacific Harbour, halfway between Suva and Nadi on the south coast of Viti Levu, this boutique hideaway excels at congenial comfort; a place where service and sybaritism clink glasses without any of the stifling formality that can blight the boutique experience.

For Phillips, there was only

one place to host his dream resort. "Fiji's going off for several reasons," he says. "Apart from being beautiful and full of lovely people, the South Pacific is the last frontier: the new Bali, which has become less popular because of the bombings and the way Aussies are being treated there."

But The Pearl's appeal goes beyond the country on whose Pacific-kissed shore it rests. It's a nit-picker's personal Room 101: every space is tastefully well-appointed; each activity involves the best possible setting (jet skiers get to slice swell over an area the size of some European states, bordered by the Pearl's private beach and the silhouetted lushness of Beqa and Yanuca islands, while divers can hob-nob with the reef sharks around the stunning Bega Lagoon); every table, hammock, lounge and bar stool offers a life-affirming view. No cocktail is made unlovingly (Icebergs proprietor and Pearl regular Maurice Terzini designs one for the resort each month) and no meal is uninspired (two of

Australia's finest chefs, Ben Tedrick and Brendon Hull, use produce from the local hydroponic farm to create exquisitely unfussy fine dining).

It feels as fully evolved as the marlins that snap at its jetty, but The Pearl remains a work in progress. "We've just finished schematic drawings for a spa," says Phillips, "and plans for a gym have been approved. We're also bringing the golf course back to condition of its heyday." (Designed by Robert Trent Jones Junior, the course — where Greg Norman won the South Seas Classic in 1979 — was once ranked number eight in the world. Think Royal Melbourne meets *Lost*.) "I've also got architects working on the possibility of a mini marina, modelled on the wharf of the Blue Hotel [formerly W] in Sydney." Watch this space — preferably from a silky day-bed, nursing a Mai Tai. **GQ** — Nick Scott

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