

# Privacy please

A TROPICAL ISLAND ... THAT'S EXCLUSIVELY YOURS. FRANCES HIBBARD SETS SAIL FOR RATUA, SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN

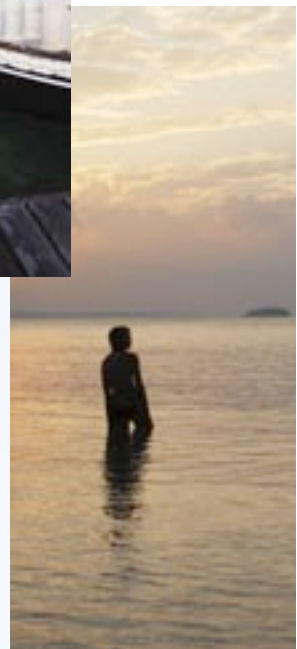
Good things come to those who wait. And the journey to Ratua, a private island in the Vanuatu archipelago, is all about the pot of gold at the end of the tropical rainbow.

Indeed, getting to this former coconut plantation turned exclusive retreat is half the fun. But the protracted journey — involving several plane trips, car rides and, ultimately, a speedboat — also has a point. By the time your cruiser docks at Ratua's jetty, some 30 minutes off the coast of Vanuatu's largest island, Espiritu Santo, and you're greeted by staff bearing scented towels and welcome cocktails, you're completely ready to be seduced by the charms of this sandy-beached sliver of paradise. That it's completely, utterly yours to enjoy? Well, that's just a happy bonus.

The philosophy of Ratua is luxurious (and exclusive) escapism, but with minimal disturbance to Vanuatu's largely unspoiled essence. And so pleasures here are of the simple kind: waking at dawn to spot giant turtles playing in the waves; deep sleeps on day beds overlooking your personal private beach; an afternoon horse ride through the coconut palms to the wild western shore; long, lazy dinners at the Yacht Club — Ratua's ambient social hub, where antique lanterns and a bonfire light up the beach and the staff serves freshly caught seafood and produce grown in the island's kitchen garden.



Looking out from Ratua island's jetty.



Ratua's 10 guest villas were all transported piece by piece from Indonesia and rebuilt on site. Their mood is romantically rustic, with thatched roofs, four-poster beds set with mosquito nets, and the sound of the waves lapping at the rocks for company. Robinson Crusoe wishes isolation looked this good.

We take the boat to the adjacent island of Malo, and kayak quietly through the waterways until we come to the magical Blue Hole, an enchanted spot where towering tropical trees reach for the light and thousands of butterflies flit constantly above the volcanic crater that is filled with crystal-clear water of the deepest green.

It's still; it's silent; it's as though we've been given exclusive access to a very secret garden. And in a way, we have. Pssst: the password is Ratua. ■

*Ratua Private Island, via Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu, +61 (0) 2 9280 2205; [www.ratua.com.au](http://www.ratua.com.au). Air Vanuatu flies to Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu, directly from Sydney and Brisbane, with additional connecting flights from arrivals into Port Vila, [www.airvanuatu.com](http://www.airvanuatu.com)*



The endless skies and blue waters at Vanuatu.



Model Pania Rose, on location at Ratua, Vanuatu.



Dream job: the BAZAAR team at work shooting for our November issue.

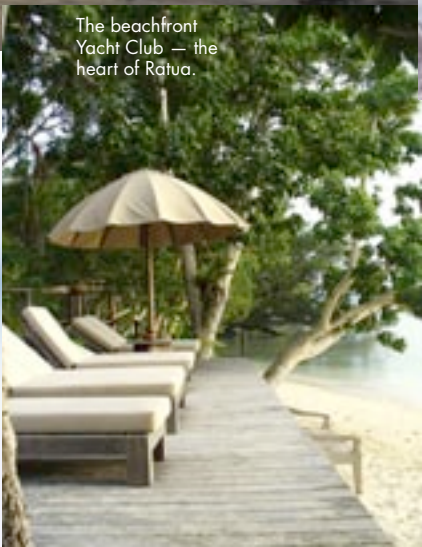
The old-style canoe can be taken to the neighbouring islands.



An Indonesian day bed on a guest terrace: the perfect place to turtle watch.



BAZAAR was here ... tropical island style.



The beachfront Yacht Club — the heart of Ratu.



Model Michelle McCullum strikes a watery pose.

SIMO | LEKIAS; FRANCIS HIBBARD