

CHIC STAYS

CONDÉ NAST TRAVELLER'S
FAVOURITE PEOPLE ON THEIR FAVOURITE PLACES

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Although Samuel Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* offer a similar castaway adventure vibe, no fiction can really encapsulate the real-world wonder that is Soneva Fushi. Perhaps *The Swiss Family Robinson* or *Robinson Crusoe* come closer - but without the cannibalism and plus butlers! The most accurate analogy, however, is probably *Avatar*. When you arrive, it's like plugging into the Hometree; it's amazing how the human nervous system can connect with nature when you let it, and this is just the place for that. Rather than competing with nature's beauty, Soneva Fushi complements it. Here the beauty is bare: no harsh straight lines or modern angles. Instead, restaurants without walls invite organic gardens inside, and rough-hewn villas are built around elderly jungle trees, every structure unrefined and authentic.

My wife, Jacqui, and I first came to Soneva Fushi in December 2014, juggling three babies and way too many suitcases. Barefoot, we headed down the jetty, and our first impression was one of relief. The hotel is exactly what it purports to be: paradise. As soon as we set foot on the island, we always jump into the ocean, and the stress of the journey dissipates at first dunk. The mantra here is 'no shoes, no news' - and yes, once they come off, our shoes are relegated to the suitcase for the rest of the holiday. Villa number 14 on the sunrise side of the island is our favourite spot. The kids love the upstairs treehouse-inspired bedrooms under thatched roofs and swaying coconut palms.

Some of our most cherished moments at Soneva Fushi are our evening bike rides. We pack our pyjama-clad children into the trunks of our tricycles and ride the lily-lined paths to Bar(a) Bara, where they order chocolate cocktails (milkshakes) and we sit in hammocks over the dusky sapphire water and watch the sun melt into the horizon. And that's Soneva Fushi's secret: When you live slowly, you allow yourself the gift of time to appreciate everything to its fullest.







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CREDITS

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