

## Barefoot, celeb-worthy escape: Azura Quilalea Private Island

Ready to feel like a rock star?

A gun-metal gray helicopter whisks you off to Azura Quilalea Private Island. Greeted by the manager, you walk along a shell-and-coral path to reception. The view encompasses a postcard-pretty beach in front of the resort's PADI dive center (top-notch, you discover later).

You're then shown to your hand-crafted villa – one of just nine. Facing the sea, it has coral stone walls, soaring makuti thatch roof and stone floor inlaid with shell mosaics. Your king-size bed is swathed with a cloud of mosquito netting (not needed, you happily realize). The rain-shower has swinging shutter doors opening onto a timber deck, furnished with couches and cushioned teak loungers under an umbrella. Louvered doors and windows, all wide open, let the cooling sea breeze in. There's no key (slide a wood latch to open and close the carved front door) – but you can lock valuables in a built-in, shell-encrusted box. A bottle of French Champagne from the owners' chateau in the Loire Valley, waiting in an ice bucket, begs to be popped and enjoyed. Such was our introduction to the sublime Azura Quilalea.

What really makes the Azura unforgettable is the bespoke service. Every evening, you gather for sun-downers at the convivial bar, where you discuss with the manager your preferred activities for the following day – spa treatment, helicopter sightseeing, private beach picnic? Dinner follows, perhaps by the pool or on the beach (each couple at a different private location) and fresh lobster is often featured.

The last evening, our butler (yes, you have a butler) surprised us with a scented bubble bath in a copper tub on our deck plus two gin-and-smashed-lime cocktails – a singular treat – which we loved.



PHOTOS COURTESY AZURA QUILALEA PRIVATE ISLAND