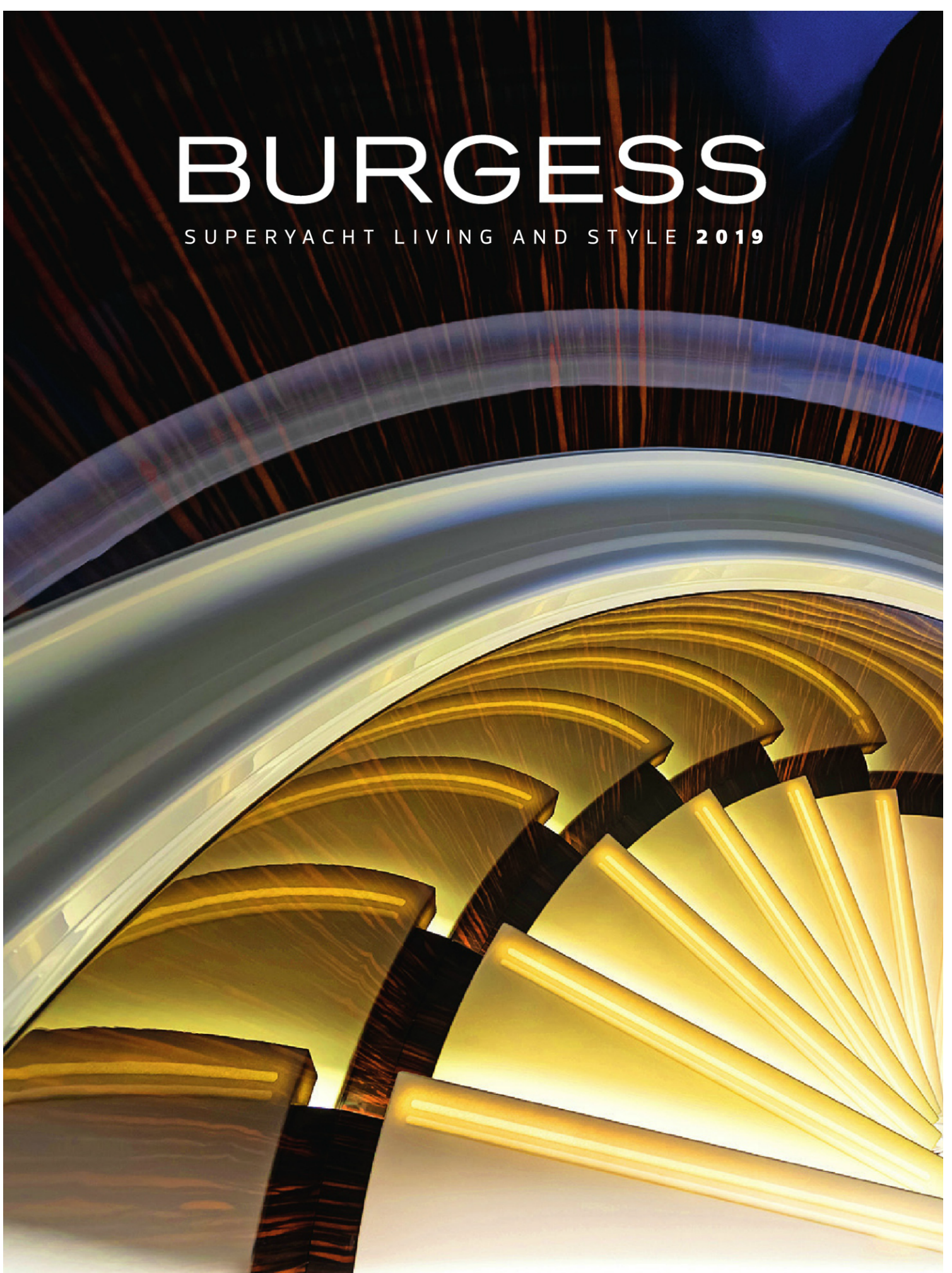


BURGESS

SUPERYACHT LIVING AND STYLE 2019





Opposite: Lang Walker relaxing on his private island retreat in Fiji. Below: the boat-friendly hideaway is encircled by one of the world's largest reefs



FALLING FOR FIJI

Miriam Cain goes 'down to Kokomo' to talk to the Australian superyacht owner and property developer Lang Walker about his idyllic South Pacific island retreat

When Lang Walker called his first dinghy *Kokomo* at the tender age of 10, he could never have imagined that the name would become part of a boating dynasty that has culminated in a 58-metre (192ft) super-sloop and that it would even grace his own private island.

Although he didn't take the name from the famous Beach Boys song, it couldn't be a more appropriate moniker for his own island retreat in the South Pacific. As the song goes: "Everybody knows a little place like Kokomo/now

if you want to go and get away from it all/go down to Kokomo". It's the perfect soundtrack to a breathtaking island hideaway.

As one of Australia's most successful property developers, Walker is one of the lucky few who has been able to use his considerable wealth and business knowledge to ensure that he is never far from his two passions – the ocean and his family.

His love of the water began as a child, learning to sail with his family off the coast of his native Australia. He went on to become an avid One-Design competitive sailor, with

back-to-back wins in the Farr 40 Australia championships and the Farr 40 Circuit, and has been involved in the build of three sailing superyachts, all of which he has raced on the world superyacht regatta circuit. Today, he is the proud owner of the sailing yacht *Kokomo*, which at the time of her build in 2010 was an evolution in sailing yacht design and winner of many awards.

Walker's ambition and search for perfection is evident in all that he does, and with the opening of Kokomo Private Island Fiji in 2017, and two complex regeneration projects



"I fell in love with the place in a way that I have never done before"



under way in Sydney, his zest for taking on a challenge has certainly not waned with age. Fortunately, both the sailing yacht *Kokomo* and the island resort allow him to spend valuable time with family aboard and ashore, while enabling him to continue to meet his business commitments at the helm of the Walker Corporation.

He is also an ardent, highly experienced diver. It was during a dive trip in the South Pacific on board his 39-metre (128ft) powerboat that he visited the island of Yaukuve Levu in Fiji. "A friend had told me about the island, which had been left partly developed by a luxury resort operator but was in a dilapidated state having sat idle for six years," he explains. "As soon as I stepped ashore, I was attracted to its natural beauty and surroundings."

He immediately spotted the potential of the island. Not only does it provide the ability to moor a yacht, even at low tide, but it is surrounded by the Great Astrolabe Reef,

which is one of the largest barrier reefs in the world. "I have taken on many complex projects in my career, but none has been as challenging as Yaukuve Levu," he admits. "Although we inherited a blueprint for the development, the island needed vision, a lot of patience and huge financial investment."

A VERY PERSONAL VISION

When he speaks about the project, you sense his passion. He says: "I fell in love with the place in a way that I have never done before with any other development. This one is very personal. My vision from the outset was to create the best island resort in the Pacific Ocean."

The resulting *Kokomo Private Island Fiji* is one of the world's ultimate high-end destinations. Developed with a focus on sustainability, the 57-hectare (140 acres) island has been transformed into an extraordinarily luxurious tropical retreat, dotted with pockets of lush rainforest and long stretches of white sand.

As a superyacht owner, Walker understands the importance placed on superlative service, privacy and luxury by discerning travellers. The island is run just like a yacht, albeit with a greater number of guests and staff. Accommodation comprises five stand-alone private hilltop residences with views over the jewel-toned South Pacific, 21 beachfront villas, all with their own pool and garden, and an owner's beachfront residence, where Walker resides for several months of the year.

The cuisine on the island is very much a farm-to-table affair, with most produce either coming from the island's own farm or locally sourced from surrounding waters and neighbouring islands. "Fiji is not renowned for its cuisine, but we wanted to buck this trend and provide our guests with a six-star gastronomic experience, using the freshest ingredients available," he explains. "Guests also have the opportunity to catch their own dinner, with fishing trips on offer from the resort."



Left: the South Pacific resort has been designed to be in keeping with the island's natural environment, using Fijian traditions and local materials. Below: Walker's sailing yacht, also called Kokomo



With the Great Astrolabe Reef just offshore, visitors will discover a rich diversity of marine life while diving, snorkelling, kayaking or fishing in one of the world's most beautiful natural reefs. "Whether experienced divers or complete novices, we cater for all abilities because we are a five-star PADI dive resort, offering daily excursions to the surrounding and outer reef," he adds. "The Outer Great Astrolabe Reef provides the more adventurous guests with the opportunity to swim with manta rays and turtles, and even spot whales."

ACTIVITIES, REST AND RELAXATION

Back on shore, the resort is set up for both family groups and couples. "In the privacy of your own villa it feels like you could be the only person on the island," he says. "But there is also no limit to the activities and services if you want to be entertained and pampered."

Walker has eight grandchildren and knows the importance of catering to all age groups.

"The kids club and two main pools are set away from the main restaurants and pool so that children can make as much noise as they like without ruffling any feathers," he says. "There is a pizza restaurant for them, too."

Guests seeking rest and relaxation can try the treatments at the exclusive spa. There are also private meditation, yoga and Pilates classes.

Walker adds that the island is extremely superyacht-friendly, welcoming guests to step ashore for a few days or just a few hours, enjoying the cuisine or replenishing supplies. "Your chef can select fresh ingredients from our kitchen gardens," he says. Yachts up to 60 metres (197ft) can drop anchor just off the island, while larger boats can moor outside the reef and come ashore by tender. It is the ultimate anchorage, particularly if you are cruising the South Pacific or en route to Australasia. And, with New Zealand hosting the 2021 America's Cup, Walker may soon find himself welcoming quite a few boats. ☺



Kokomo is available for charter

KOKOMO

Length overall: 58.4m (191.6ft)
 Built: 2010 (refit 2018), Alloy Yachts, New Zealand
 Guests: up to 10 in 5 cabins
 Winter cruising location: please enquire
 Summer cruising location: please enquire

For more details, see pages 206 to 207