

INFOMERCIAL

The Next Battleground in Fiji's Tourism Boom Isn't Rooms – It's Coffee



Inventor Bill Purton (left). Photo: Supplied

As visitor arrivals hit record highs and high-value travellers reshape expectations, Caffe Assist sees a growing opportunity to redefine resort hospitality through perfectly textured milk and consistent premium coffee.

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For tourists – Fiji has always been a tropical paradise defined by crystal-clear waters and 300 plus islands surrounded by rainbow-coloured coral reefs, that make it a world-class destination for diving, snorkelling, and luxury resort escapes.

Beyond Fiji's natural beauty, celebration and warmth of its people and relaxed island lifestyle – all contributing to making it a thriving tourist destination.

As a country and tourist destination – Fiji's tourism hasn't only rebounded from COVID – it's surged into record territory. Visitor arrivals soared to 986,367 in 2025, the highest on record – making tourism a major contributor of more than 40 per cent to Fiji's economy – transitioning firmly from recovery into expansion. Revenues are climbing just as sharply, with earnings rising

more than 25 per cent year-on-year hitting approximately \$918m in a single quarter.

As the numbers grow, so too does competition – increasingly, the battle is being fought on experience.

It's this evolving landscape that Caffe Assist, an Australian-based company built on precision and consistency, is setting its sights on Fiji. The company believes the next phase of growth in the region's resort sector won't be driven by scale alone, but by the finer details that shape a guest's stay – and something as deceptively simple as a cup of coffee is the trigger.

Central to this move are Bill Purton, an inventor with a global reputation for systems innovation, and Mario Colaiacovo, a strategist focused on unlocking opportunity in hospitality markets. Both see Fiji not just as a destination, but as a gateway to a broader Asia-Pacific expansion.

"Fiji has moved beyond recovery," Colaiacovo says.

"It's now a high-performing tourism market attracting global travellers with increasingly sophisticated expectations. That changes what resorts need to deliver."

Those expectations are being shaped by a shifting visitor mix. Growth from key international markets – including the U.S., U.K. and Europe – is bringing a new group of travellers accustomed to premium food and beverage standards. For Australian and New Zealand visitors, long regarded as some of the most discerning coffee consumers

in the world, expectations are even higher.

"Guests arrive with a benchmark in mind," Colaiacovo says.

"They expect the same quality they would get in Melbourne or Sydney – and they notice when it's not there."

That expectation gap is precisely where Caffe Assist sees its opportunity.

The company's flagship innovation, the Legato, is built around a simple but often overlooked truth – the quality of coffee is defined not just by the espresso, but by the milk. Perfectly textured milk – smooth, velvety, with consistent microfoam – is what transforms a standard cup into a premium experience.

"Milk is the hardest part to get right," Purton says. "It's also the part that varies the most. You can have great beans and a good machine, but if the milk isn't textured properly, the coffee falls short."

The Legato eliminates that variability.

By automating the milk texturing process, it delivers precise, repeatable results every time – producing the kind of consistency typically associated with highly skilled baristas.

In environments like resorts, where staffing turnover and training limitations can impact quality, that consistency becomes a powerful advantage.

"It's about perfecting the most difficult element of coffee making," Purton explains.

"When you control the milk, you control the outcome."

Purton's focus on precision is entrenched in a career that began far from coffee machines and resort lounges. Purton is the man who invented the card counting machine used in casinos globally – a system designed to bring accuracy and integrity to high-volume, high-stakes gaming environments.

That experience, he says, directly informs his approach to hospitality. "In casinos, there's no tolerance for inconsistency," he says. "You're dealing with systems that need to perform perfectly, every time. Coffee, particularly in a resort setting, isn't that different. Guests expect the same standard, whether it's their first cup or their fifth."

For Purton's resort operators, those expectations are becoming increasingly important.

While growth is expected to moderate to around 2 to 3 per cent annually, the industry is entering a new phase – one defined less by volume and more by value.

Premiumisation, operational efficiency and guest experience are now central to how resorts differentiate themselves competitively globally.

Coffee, once an afterthought, is emerging as a key touchpoint. From breakfast service to poolside relaxation and post-dinner indulgence, it's one of the most frequent and visible interactions a guest has with a resort's offering. In an era of online reviews and social media, consistency in those moments matters.

"A great coffee elevates the entire

experience," Colaiacovo says. "A poor one can undermine it. That's the reality."

Delivering consistently high-quality coffee in Fiji presents unique challenges.

Geographic isolation, supply chain complexities and workforce dynamics can all impact the ability of resorts to maintain standards. Traditional espresso setups, heavily reliant on skilled baristas, aren't always suited to these environments.

Legato address exactly those issues.

By removing the variability of manual milk texturing, the Legato allows resorts to deliver premium coffee with minimal training, faster service and greater operational efficiency. Staff can focus on guest interaction and service, while the system ensures the product itself meets a consistent standard.

"We're not replacing the human element," Purton says. "We're supporting it. The aim is to make it easier for operators to deliver the level of quality their guests expect."

Caffe Assist is actively exploring partnerships within Fiji's resort sector, engaging with operators looking to enhance their food and beverage offering as part of a broader push towards premiumisation.

For Purton, Fiji represents more than just a new market. It's a strategic entry point into a region experiencing sustained tourism growth and transformation. Across the Asia-Pacific – resort development is accelerating, driven by rising global travel demand and continued investment in infrastructure.

According to Colaiacovo, tourism in this region is one of the great growth stories. "But it's also becoming more sophisticated. Resorts are competing on experience, not just location. That's where we fit."

As Fiji continues to attract nearly one million visitors annually – and as those visitors bring with them higher expectations and greater spending power – the opportunity for innovation in hospitality is only set to grow.

For Purton, the trajectory is clear.

"Fiji is already a world-class destination," he says.

"What we're seeing now is the next phase – refining the experience, lifting standards, and focusing on the details that matter."

From the precision of casino floors to the relaxed luxury of island resorts, his journey reflects a consistent philosophy – those systems, when designed properly, can enhance human experience rather than replace it.

That philosophy in Fiji is now being applied to one of the smallest yet most significant details of a guest's day.

Not just coffee – but perfectly textured milk, every time.

In a tourism market that hasn't only rebounded but is redefining itself, that level of consistency may prove to be exactly what sets the next generation of resort experiences apart.

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