



MOON HANDBOOKS

FIJI



DAVID STANLEY

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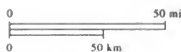
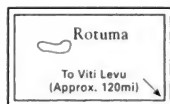
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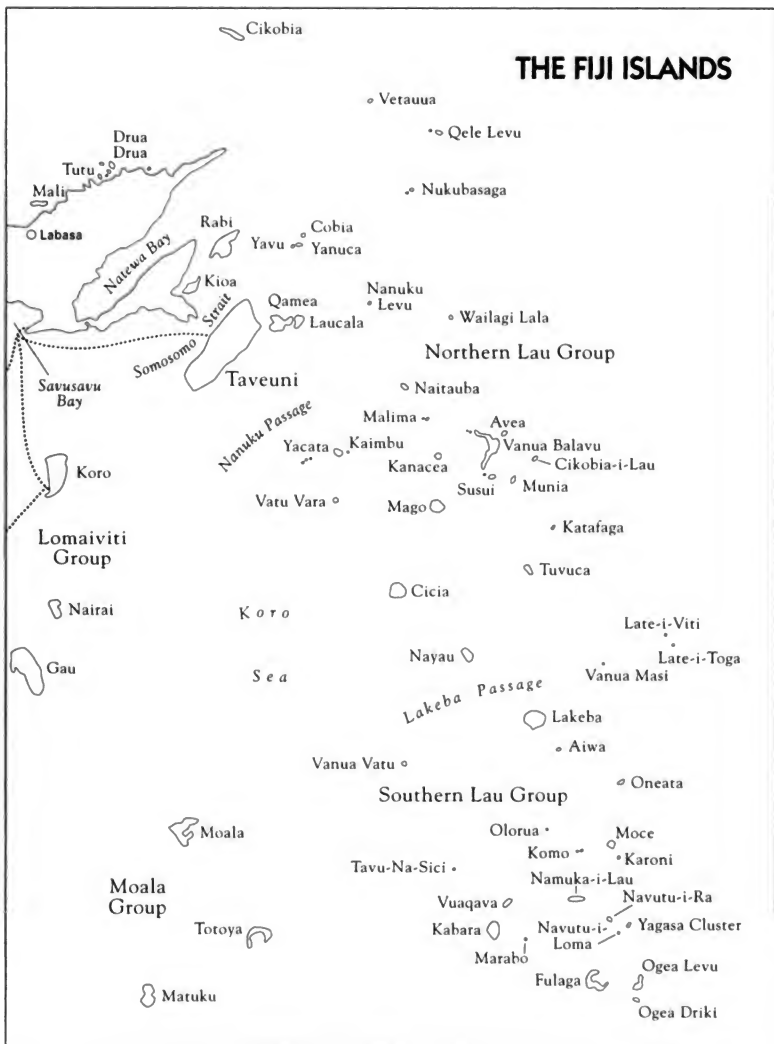
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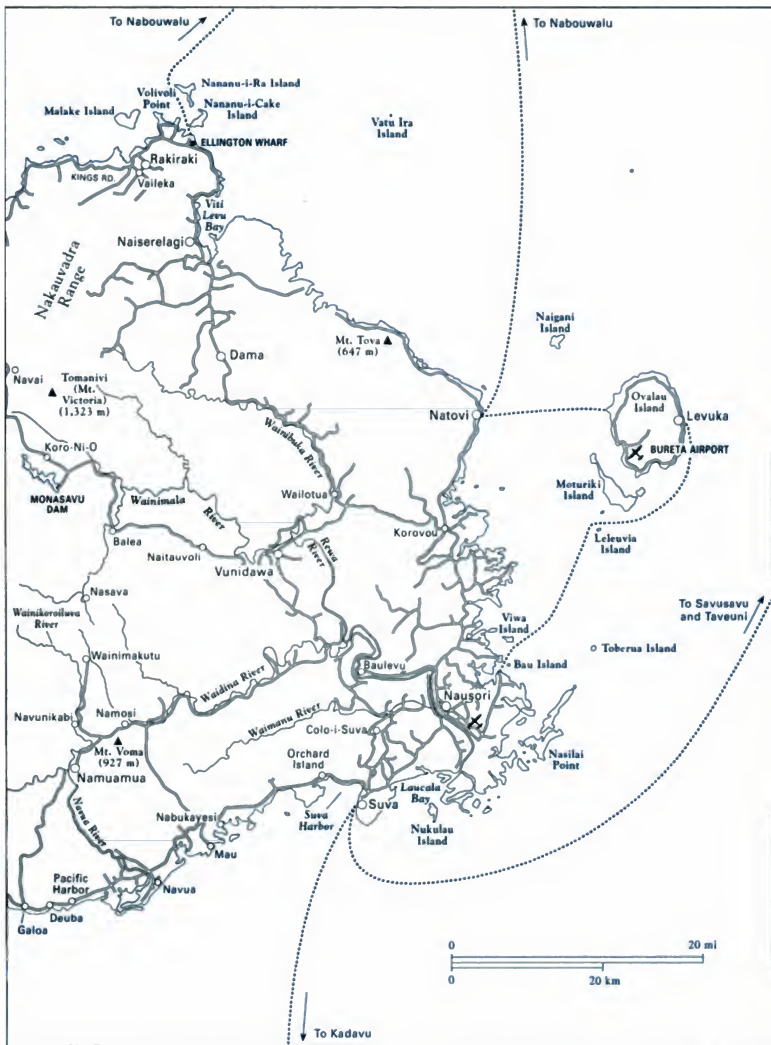


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THE FIJI ISLANDS







MOON HANDBOOKS

FIJI

SIXTH EDITION

DAVID STANLEY



MOON HANDBOOKS: FIJI

SIXTH EDITION

David Stanley

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ABBREVIATIONS

A\$—Australian dollars	4WD—four-wheel drive	N.Z.—New Zealand
a/c—air-conditioned	GPO—General Post Office	pp—per person
ATM—automated teller machine	HI—Hosteling International	SDA—Seventh-Day Adventist
C—Centigrade	km—kilometer	STD—sexually transmitted
C\$—Canadian dollars	kph—kilometers per hour	disease
CDW—collision damage waiver	mm—millimeters	tel.—telephone
EEZ—Exclusive Economic Zone	MV—motor vessel	U.S.—United States
F\$—Fiji dollars	no.—number	US\$—U.S. dollars

SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

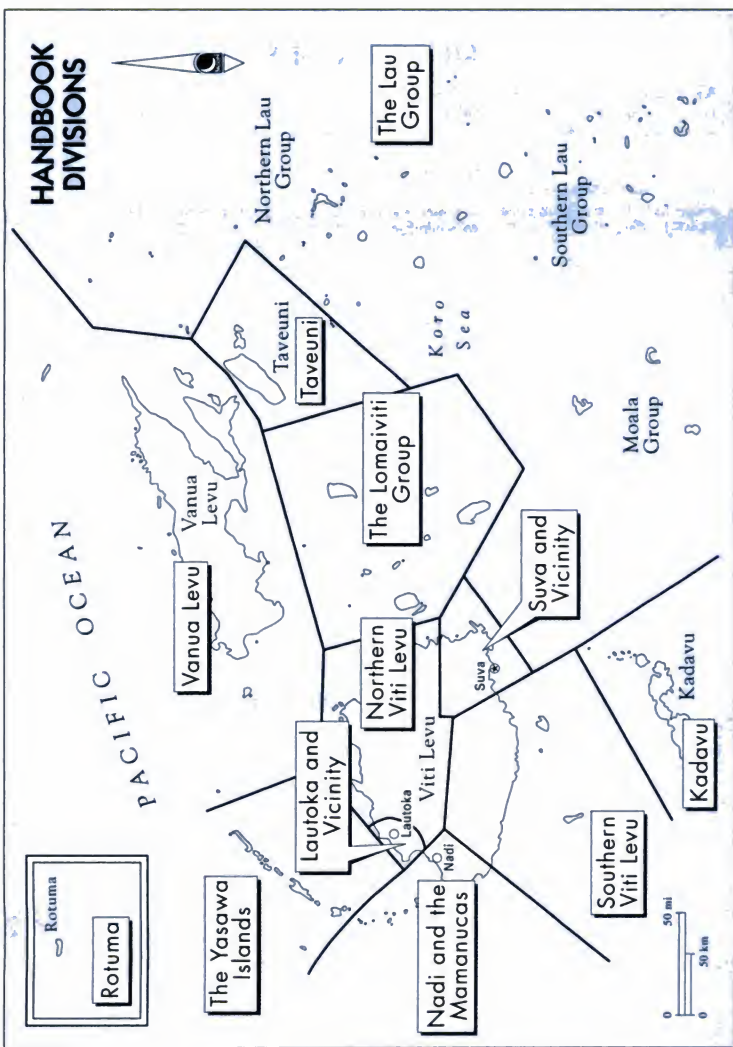
When early British missionaries created a system of written Fijian they established a unique set of orthographic rules followed to this day. In an attempt to represent the sounds of spoken Fijian more precisely, they rendered "mb" as **b**, "nd" as **d**, "ng" as **g**, "ngg" as **q**, and "th" as **c**. Thus Beqa is pronounced *Mbengga*, Nadi is *Nandi*, Sigatoka is *Singatoka*, Cicia is *Thithia*, etc. In order to be able pronounce Fijian names and words correctly, visitors must take a few minutes to learn these pronunciation rules. Turn to the Capsule Fijian Vocabulary in the back of the book for more information.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE RANGES

Throughout this handbook, accommodations are grouped in the price categories that follow based on the price of a double room. The conversion rate used is indicated below, and of course, currency fluctuations and inflation can lead to slight variations.

Under US\$25	(Under F\$56.25)
US\$25–50	(F\$56.25–112.50)
US\$50–100	(F\$112.50–225.00)
US\$100–150	(F\$225.00–337.50)
US\$150 and up	(F\$337.50 and up)

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MAP SYMBOLS

	Primary Road		Capital City		Mountain
	Secondary Road		City		Waterfall
	Unpaved Road		Town		Campground
	Railroad		Point of Interest		Mangrove
	Ferry		Accommodation		Swamp
	Trail/Footpath		Restaurant/Bar		Reef
	Airfield/Airstrip		Other Location		Water
			Golf Course		

YOU WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD

Travel writing is among the least passive forms of journalism, and every time you use this book you become a participant. I've done my best to provide the type of information I think will contribute to making your trip a success, and now I'm asking for your help. If I led you astray or inconvenienced you, I want to know, and if you feel I've been unfair somewhere, don't hesitate to say. I can't predict the future and some things are bound to have changed. If you write and tell me, I'll be able to enter your corrections in the next edition, which is probably already in preparation even as you are reading this.

Unlike many travel writers, this author doesn't accept hospitality from tourism businesses or obtain VIP treatment by announcing his arrival. At times that makes it difficult to audit the expensive or isolated resorts, thus I especially welcome comments from readers who stayed at the upmarket places, particularly when the facilities didn't match the price. If you feel you've been badly treated by a hotel, restaurant, car rental agency, airline, tour company, dive shop, or whomever, please let me know, and if it concurs with other information on

hand, your complaint certainly will have an impact. Of course, we also want to hear about the things you thought were great.

When writing, please be as precise, accurate, and fair as you can. Foreign travel is an individual experience, and one person's preferences and opinions may vary from those of other visitors. What was heaven for one can be hell for another. The more feedback we receive from all of you out there, the clearer the general patterns will become (and we can tell when we receive a rush of very similar letters orchestrated by a tourism operator). Reader's letters are examined during the concluding stages of editing the book, so you really will have the final say. If *Moon Handbooks: Fiji* helped you, please help us make it even better. Address your feedback to:

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IS FIJI SAFE TO VISIT?

On May 19, 2000, gunmen took control of Fiji's parliament and the prime minister and other members were held hostage for 56 days. At press time a military-backed regime was still in power, yet the situation is calm and the country is as safe to visit as it has ever been. Reports of an increase in crime have been exaggerated, and the post-coup curfew has been removed. For visitors, the biggest change from 1999 is that it's no longer difficult book a hotel room or an interisland flight. These days backpackers often have a whole dormitory to themselves, and many upscale accommodations are offering specials. So unless you like large crowds and high prices, this is a good time to go to Fiji.

Of course, that doesn't mean that everything is back to normal. The 1997 Constitution is still in doubt and an unelected caretaker government is attempting to draw up a racially weighted replacement. But while it's important that pressure for a return to democracy be maintained from both inside and out-

side Fiji, tourism boycotts hurt the average Fijian a lot more than those responsible for Fiji's current political and economic demise. Thus I repeat, there's absolutely no reason to defer your trip to Fiji. Even the capital Suva—where the coup and a subsequent military mutiny took place—is quite safe during the day, and you always did need to take a taxi when returning to your hotel late at night.

The book was researched and written well after the coup attempt, and all changes up to mid-2001 have been noted. Most resorts and dive centers around Fiji are operating normally, although far below capacity. Virtually every business also catering to the local population (including all bus, ferry, and air services) is up and running. Turn to *The Fiji Crisis in History* to read up on the coup attempt, and visit a few of the websites in *Resources* for current information. Then relax and enjoy your holiday. Though Fiji is no longer "the way the world should be," it's still a wonderful place to visit.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The country of residence of those listed below are identified by the following signs which follow their names: au (Australia), ca (Canada), cy (Cyprus), de (Germany), fj (Fiji), gb (Great Britain), nc (New Caledonia), nl (Netherlands), no (Norway), nz (New Zealand), and us (United States).

The antique engravings by M.G.L. Domeny de Rienzi are from the classic three-volume work *Océanie ou Cinquième Partie du Monde* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1836).

I'm most grateful to Michael Field (nz) of Agence France-Presse for supplying me with an archive of his extensive coverage of the Fiji Crisis. Thanks too to all of the following readers who took the trouble to write us letters about their trips:

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All their comments have been incorporated into the volume you're now holding. To have your own name included here next edition, write: David Stanley, c/o Avalon Travel Publishing, 5855 Beaudry St., Emeryville, CA 94608, U.S.A. (email: info@travelmatters.com).

Attention Hotel Keepers, Tour Operators, and Divemasters

The best way to keep your listing in *Moon Handbooks: Fiji* up to date is to send us current information about your business. If you don't agree with what we've written, please tell us why—there's never any charge or obligation for a listing. Thanks to the following island tourism workers and government officials who *did* write in:

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From the Author

While out researching my books I find it cheaper to pay my own way, and you can rest assured that nothing in this book is designed to repay freebies from hotels, restaurants, tour operators, or airlines. I prefer to arrive unexpected and uninvited, and to experience things as they really are. On the road I seldom identify myself to anyone. The essential difference between this book and the myriad travel brochures free for the taking at tourist offices and travel agencies throughout Fiji is that this book represents you, the traveler, while the brochures represent the travel industry. The companies and organizations included herein are there for information purposes only, and a mention in no way implies an endorsement.



SALVATORE CASA

INTRODUCTION

Once notorious as the “Cannibal Isles,” Fiji is now the colorful crossroads of the South Pacific. Of the 322 islands that make up the Fiji Group, over 100 are inhabited by a rich mixture of exuberant Melanesians, Indo-Fijians, Polynesians, Micronesians, Chinese, and Europeans, each with a cuisine and culture of their own. Here Melanesia mixes with Polynesia, ancient India with the Pacific, and tradition with the modern world in a unique blend.

Fiji preserves an amazing variety of traditional customs and crafts such as kava or *yaqona* drinking, the presentation of the whale's tooth, firewalking, fish driving, turtle calling, *tapa* beating, and pottery making. Alongside this fascinating human history is a dramatic diversity of landforms and seascapes, all concentrated in a relatively small area. Fiji's sun-drenched beaches, blue lagoons, panoramic open hillsides,

lush rainforests, and dazzling reefs are truly magnificent.

Fiji offers posh resorts, good food and accommodations, nightlife, historic sites, outer-island living, hiking, kayaking, camping, surfing, snorkeling, and scuba diving. Traveling is easy by small plane, interisland catamaran, copra boat, outboard canoe, open-sided bus, and air-conditioned coach. With even a month at your disposal you'll barely scratch the surface of all there is to see and do.

Best of all, Fiji is a visitor-friendly country with uncrowded, inexpensive facilities available almost everywhere. You'll love the vibrant, outgoing people whose knowledge of English makes communicating a breeze. In a word, Fiji is a traveler's country *par excellence*, and whatever your budget, Fiji gives you good value for your money and plenty of ways to spend it. *Bula*, welcome to Fiji, everyone's favorite South Pacific country.

THE LAND

Fiji lies 5,100 km southwest of Hawaii and 3,150 km northeast of Sydney, astride the main air route between North America and Australia. Nadi is the hub of Pacific air routes, while Suva is a regional shipping center. The 180th meridian cuts through Fiji, but the international dateline swings east so the entire group can share the same day.

The name Fiji is a Tongan corruption of the indigenous name "Viti." The Fiji Islands are arrayed in a horseshoe configuration with Viti Levu (great Fiji) and adjacent islands on the west, Vanua Levu (great land) and Taveuni to the north, and the Lau Group on the east. This upside-down-U-shaped archipelago encloses the Koro Sea, which is relatively shallow and sprinkled with the Lomaiviti, or central Fiji, group of islands. Together the Fiji Islands are scattered over 1,290,000 square km of the South Pacific Ocean.

If every single island were counted, the isles of the Fiji archipelago would number in the thousands. However, a mere 322 are judged large enough for human habitation, and of those only 106 are inhabited. That leaves 216 uninhabited islands, most of them prohibitively isolated or lacking fresh water.

Most of the Fiji Islands are volcanic, remnants of a sunken continent that once stretched through Australia. This origin accounts for the mineral deposits on the main islands. None of Fiji's volcanoes are presently active, though there are a few small hot springs. The two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, together account for 87 percent of Fiji's 18,272 square km of land. Viti Levu has 57 percent of the land area and 75 percent of the people, while Vanua Levu, with 30 percent of the land, has 18 percent of the population. Viti Levu alone is bigger than all five archipelagos of Tahiti-Polynesia. In fact, Fiji has more land and people than all of Polynesia combined.

Viti Levu

The 1,000-meter-high Nadrau Plateau in central Viti Levu is cradled between Tomanivi (1,323 meters) on the north and Monavatu (1,131 meters) on the south. On different sides of this elevated divide are the Colo-East Plateau drained by the Rewa River, the Navosa Plateau drained

by the Ba, the Colo-West Plateau drained by the Sigatoka, and the Navua Plateau drained by the Navua. Some 29 well-defined peaks rise above Viti Levu's interior; most of the inhabitants live in the river valleys or along the coast.

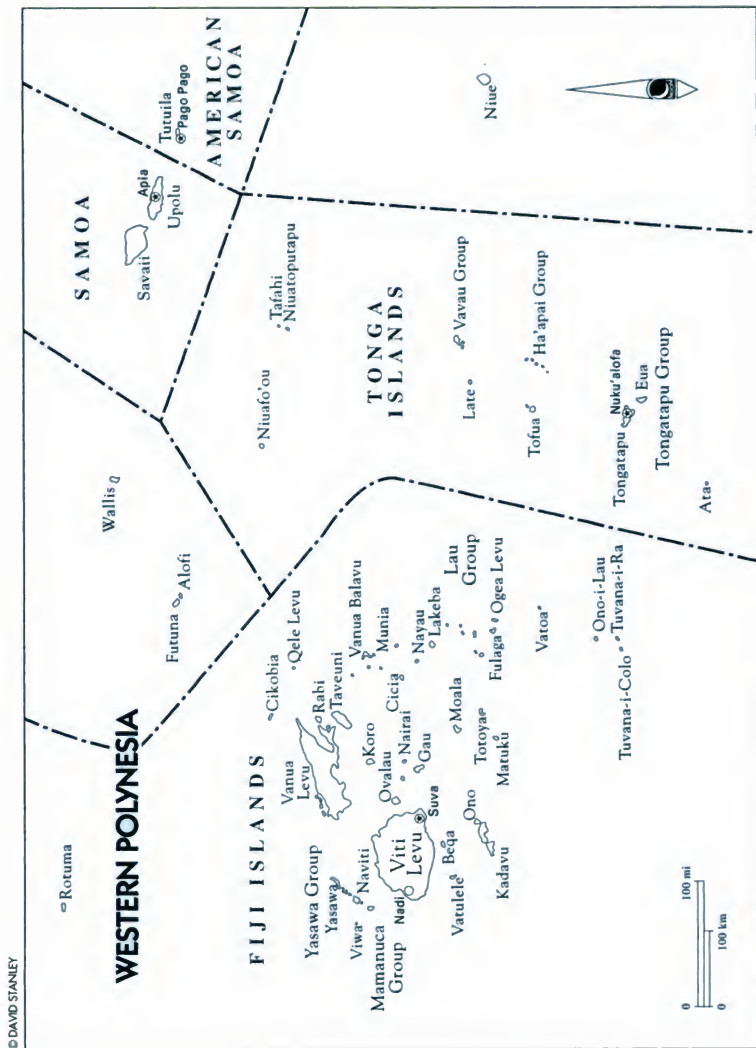
The Nadi River slices across the Nausori Highlands, with the Mount Evans Range (1,195 meters) towering above Lautoka. Other highland areas of Viti Levu are cut by great rivers like the Sigatoka, the Navua, the Rewa, and the Ba, navigable far inland by outboard canoe or kayak. Whitewater rafters shoot down the Navua and occasionally the Ba, while the lower Sigatoka flows gently through Fiji's market garden "salad bowl." Fiji's largest river, the Rewa, pours into the Pacific through a wide delta just below Nausori. After a hurricane the Rewa becomes a dark torrent worth a special visit to Nausori just to see. Sharks have been known to enter both the Rewa and the Sigatoka and swim far upstream.

Vanua Levu

Vanua Levu has a peculiar shape, with two long peninsulas pointing northeastward. A mountain range between Labasa and Savusavu reaches 1,032 meters at Nasorolevu. Navotuvotu (842 meters), east of Bua Bay, is Fiji's best example of a broad shield volcano, with lava flows built up in layers. The mountains are closer to the southeast coast, and a broad lowland belt runs along the northwest. Of the rivers only the Dreketi, flowing west across northern Vanua Levu, is large; navigation on the Labasa is restricted to small boats. The interior of Vanua Levu is lower and drier than Viti Levu, yet scenically superb: the road from Labasa to Savusavu is a visual feast.

Other Islands

Vanua Levu's bullet-shaped neighbor Taveuni soars to 1,241 meters, its rugged east coast battered by the southeast trades. Taveuni and Kadavu are known as the finest islands in Fiji for their scenic beauty and agricultural potential. Geologically, the uplifted limestone islands of the Lau Group have more in common with Tonga than with the rest of Fiji. Northwest of Viti Levu is the rugged limestone Yasawa Group.



Coasts and Reefs

Fringing reefs are common along most of the coastlines, and Fiji is outstanding for its many barrier reefs. The Great Sea Reef off the north coast of Vanua Levu is the fourth-longest in the world, and the Astrolabe Reef north of Kadavu is one of the most colorful. Countless other unexplored barrier reefs are found off northern Viti Levu and elsewhere. The many cracks, crevices, walls, and caves along Fiji's reefs are guaranteed to delight the scuba diver.

The configuration of the Astrolabe Reef off Ono and Kadavu islands confirms Darwin's Theory of Atoll Formation. The famous formulator of the theory of natural selection surmised that atolls form as high volcanic islands subside into lagoons. The original island's fringing reef grows into a barrier reef as the volcanic portion sinks. When the last volcanic material finally disappears below sea level, the coral rim of the reef/atoll remains as an indicator of how big the island once was.

Of course, all this takes place over millions of years, but deep below every atoll is the old volcanic core. Darwin's theory is well illustrated here, where Ono and the small volcanic islands to the north remain inside the Astrolabe Reef.

Return in 25 million years and all you'll find will be the reef itself.

CORAL REEFS

Coral reefs cover some 200,000 square km worldwide, between 35 degrees north and 32 degrees south latitude. A reef is created by the accumulation of millions of calcareous skeletons left by myriad generations of tiny coral polyps, some no bigger than a pinhead. A small piece of coral is a colony composed of large numbers of polyps. Though the reef's skeleton is usually white, the living polyps are of many different colors. The individual polyps on the surface often live a long time, continuously secreting layers to the skeletal mass beneath the tiny layer of flesh.

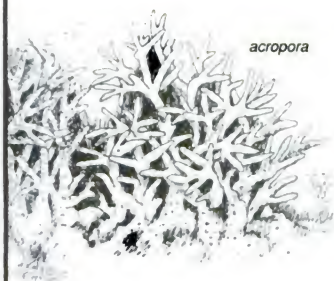
Coral polyps thrive in clear salty water where the temperature never drops below 18° C. They require a base less than 50 meters below the water's surface on which to form. The coral colony grows slowly upward on the consolidated skeletons of its ancestors until it reaches the low-tide mark, after which development extends outward on the edges of the reef. Sunlight is

GAU ISLAND CROSS SECTION

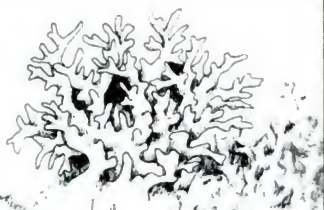


The difference between barrier and fringing reefs is illustrated in the southwest-northwest cross section of Gau Island (see the **Gau Island map**). The vertical scale has been exaggerated. The barrier reef

of Gau's southwestern shore is separated from the main island's coast by a deep lagoon, while only a tidal flat lies between Gau's northeastern coast and the edge of the fringing reef.

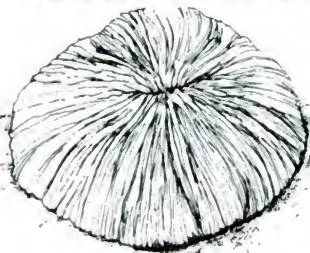


acropora



staghorn fire coral
(*Millepora accicornis*)

CORALS OF THE PACIFIC



mushroom coral
(*Fungia fungites*)

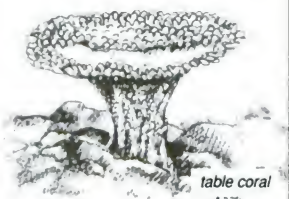
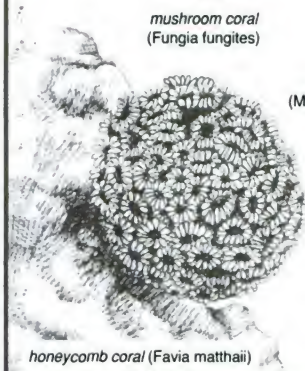


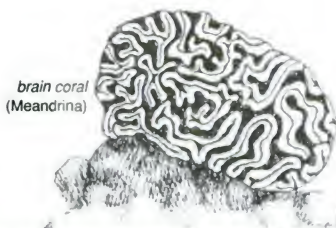
table coral
A. B. P. 70



elkhorn fire coral
(*Millepora platyphylla*)



honeycomb coral (*Favia matthaii*)



brain coral
(*Meandrina*)

critical for coral growth. Colonies grow quickly on the ocean side due to clearer water and a greater abundance of food. A strong, healthy reef can grow four to five centimeters a year. Fresh or cloudy water inhibits coral growth, which is why villages and ports all across the Pacific are located at the reef-free mouths of rivers. Hurricanes can kill coral by covering the reef with sand, preventing light and nutrients from getting through. Erosion caused by logging or urban development can have the same effect.

Polyps extract calcium carbonate from the water and deposit it in their skeletons. All limy reef-building corals also contain microscopic algae within their cells. The algae, like all green plants, obtain energy from the sun and contribute this energy to the growth of the reef's skeleton. As a result, corals behave (and look) more like plants than animals, competing for sunlight just as terrestrial plants do. Many polyps are also carnivorous; they use their minute stinging tentacles to capture tiny planktonic animals and organic particles at night.

Coral Types

Corals belong to a broad group of stinging creatures, which includes polyps, soft corals, stony corals, sea anemones, sea fans, and jellyfish. Only those types with hard skeletons and a single hollow cavity within the body are considered true corals. Stony corals such as brain, table, staghorn, and mushroom corals have external skeletons and are important reef builders. Soft corals, black corals, and sea fans have internal skeletons. The fire corals are recognized by their smooth, velvety surface and yellowish brown color. The stinging toxins of this last group can easily penetrate human skin and cause swelling and painful burning that can last up to an hour. The many varieties of soft, colorful anemones gently waving in the current might seem inviting to touch, but beware because many are also poisonous.

The corals, like most other forms of life in the Pacific, colonized the ocean from the fertile seas of Southeast Asia. Therefore the number of species declines as you move east. Over 600 species of coral make their home in the Pacific, compared to only 48 in the Caribbean. The diversity of coral colors and forms is endlessly amazing. This is our most unspoiled environment, a world of almost indescribable beauty.

Exploring a Reef

Until you've explored a good coral reef, you haven't experienced one of the greatest joys of nature. While one cannot walk through pristine forests due to a lack of paths, it's quite possible to swim over untouched reefs. Coral reefs are the most densely populated living space on earth—the rainforests of the sea! It's wise to bring along a high quality mask you've tested thoroughly beforehand as there's nothing more disheartening than a leaky, ill-fitting mask. Also, dive shops throughout the region rent or sell snorkeling gear.

Conservation

Coral reefs are one of the most fragile and complex ecosystems on earth, providing food and shelter for countless species of fish, crustaceans (shrimps, crabs, and lobsters), mollusks (shells), and other animals. The coral reefs of the South Pacific protect shorelines during storms, supply sand to maintain the islands, furnish food for the local population, form a living laboratory for science, and are major tourist attractions. Without coral, the South Pacific would be immeasurably poorer.

Hard corals grow only about 10–25 millimeters a year and it can take 7,000–10,000 years for a coral reef to form. Though corals look solid they're easily broken. By standing on them, breaking off pieces, or carelessly dropping anchor, you can destroy in a few minutes what took millennia to form. Once a piece of coral breaks off it dies, and it may be years before the coral reestablishes itself and even longer before the broken piece is replaced. The "wound" may become infected by algae, which can multiply and kill the entire coral colony. When this happens over a wide area, the diversity of marine life declines dramatically.

We recommend that you not remove seashells, coral, plantlife, or marine animals from the sea. Doing so upsets the delicate balance of nature, and coral is much more beautiful underwater anyway! This is a particular problem along shorelines frequented by large numbers of tourists, who can completely strip a reef in very little time. If you'd like a souvenir, content yourself with what you find on the beach (although even a seemingly empty shell may be inhabited by a hermit crab). Also think twice about purchasing jewelry or souvenirs made from coral or

seashells. Genuine traditional handicrafts that incorporate shells are one thing, but by purchasing unmounted seashells or mass-produced coral curios you are contributing to the destruction of the marine environment. The triton shell, for example, helps keep in check the reef-destroying crown-of-thorns starfish.

The anchors and anchor chains of private yachts can do serious damage to coral reefs. Pronged anchors are more environmentally friendly than larger, heavier anchors, and plastic tubing over the end of the anchor chain helps minimize the damage. If at all possible, anchor in sand. A longer anchor chain makes this easier, and a good windlass is essential for larger boats.

A recording depth sounder will help locate sandy areas when none are available in shallow water. If you don't have a depth sounder and can't see the bottom, lower the anchor until it just touches the bottom and feel the anchor line as the boat drifts. If it grumbles, lift it up, drift a little, and try again. Later, if you notice your chain grumbling, motor over the anchor, lift it out of the coral and move. Not only do sand and mud hold better, but your anchor will be less likely to become fouled. Try to arrive before 1500 to be able to see clearly where you're anchoring—Polaroid sunglasses make it easier to distinguish corals.

There's an urgent need for stricter government regulation of the marine environment, and in some

CLIMATE CHANGE

The gravest danger facing the atolls and reefs of Oceania is the greenhouse effect, a gradual warming of Earth's environment due to fossil fuel combustion and the widespread clearing of forests. By the year 2030 the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will have doubled from preindustrial levels. As infrared radiation from the sun is absorbed by the gas, the trapped heat melts mountain glaciers and the polar ice caps. In addition, seawater expands as it warms up, so water levels could rise almost a meter by the year 2100, destroying shorelines created 5,000 years ago.

A 1982 study demonstrated that sea levels had already risen 12 centimeters in the previous century; in 1995 2,500 scientists from 70 countries involved in an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change commissioned by the United Nations completed a two-year study with the warning that over the next century air temperatures may rise as much as 5° Celsius and sea levels could go up 95 centimeters. Not only will this reduce the growing area for food crops, but rising sea levels will mean salt water intrusion into groundwater supplies—a horrifying prospect if accompanied by the droughts that have been predicted. Coastal erosion will force governments to spend vast sums on road repairs and coastline stabilization.

Increasing temperatures may already be contributing to the dramatic jump in the number of hurricanes in the South Pacific. For example, Fiji experienced only 12 tropical hurricanes from 1941 to 1980 but 10 from 1981 to 1989, and in the face of devastating hurricanes, insurance companies are

withdrawing coverage from some areas. In 1997 and 1998 the *El Niño* phenomenon brought with it another round of devastating hurricanes.

Coral bleaching occurs when the organism's symbiotic algae are expelled in response to environmental stresses, such as changes in water temperature, and widespread instances of bleaching and reefs being killed by rising sea temperatures have been confirmed around Tahiti and Cook Islands. To make matters worse, the coral-crunching crown-of-thorns starfish is again on the rise throughout the South Pacific (probably due to sewage and fertilizer runoff that nurture the starfish larvae). Reef destruction will reduce coastal fish stocks and impact tourism.

Unfortunately, those most responsible for the problem, especially the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia, have strongly resisted taking action to significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions, and new industrial polluters like India and China are sure to make matters much worse. And as if that weren't bad enough, the hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) presently being developed by corporate giants like Du Pont to replace the ozone-destructive chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in cooling systems are far more potent greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide. This is only one of many similar consumption-related problems, and it seems as if one section of humanity is hurtling down a suicidal slope, unable to resist the momentum, as the rest of our race watches the catastrophe approach in helpless horror. It will cost a lot to rewrite our collective ticket but there may not be any choice.

FIJI CLIMATE CHART

LOCATION	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	ALL YEAR
Nadi airport, Viti Levu	C 27.0 mm 294	26.9 291	26.7 373	26.2 195	25.0 99	24.0 78	23.3 51	23.8 62	24.5 88	25.2 73	25.9 137	26.6 181	25.4 1,922
Yasawa Island	C 27.0 mm 281	26.9 287	26.6 344	26.4 168	26.0 110	25.3 106	24.6 45	24.8 68	25.1 90	25.7 78	26.1 187	26.7 165	25.9 1,929
Ba, Viti Levu	C 27.2 mm 322	27.1 409	26.9 387	26.5 203	25.3 101	24.1 67	23.3 46	23.8 65	24.7 72	25.5 91	26.1 126	26.1 228	25.6 2,117
Nadarnivalu, Viti Levu	C 21.6 mm 599	22.0 668	21.5 689	21.0 362	20.0 181	18.9 99	18.3 89	18.8 125	19.0 126	20.1 136	20.6 220	21.1 400	20.2 3,694
Rakiraki, Viti Levu	C 27.6 mm 307	27.6 371	27.3 372	26.8 236	25.9 122	24.9 66	24.2 47	24.6 68	25.1 74	25.9 83	26.6 140	27.1 221	26.2 2,107
Suva, Viti Levu	C 26.8 mm 314	26.9 299	26.8 386	26.1 343	24.8 280	23.9 177	23.1 148	23.2 200	23.7 212	24.4 218	25.3 268	26.2 313	25.1 3,158
Vunisea, Kadavu I.	C 26.4 mm 239	26.8 225	26.1 313	25.4 256	24.2 208	23.2 102	22.4 112	22.6 121	23.1 122	23.9 126	24.7 151	26.1 177	24.6 2,152
Nabouwalu, Vanua Levu	C 26.9 mm 328	27.1 354	26.7 352	26.3 275	25.5 198	24.7 130	23.9 96	24.0 114	24.4 139	25.2 164	25.4 208	26.3 279	25.6 2,637
Labasa, Vanua Levu	C 26.8 mm 449	26.8 457	26.6 465	26.2 236	25.3 97	24.4 86	23.8 38	24.2 60	24.7 77	25.4 96	25.9 210	26.4 263	25.6 2,534
Vunikodi, Vanua Levu	C 26.6 mm 302	26.7 377	26.6 409	26.3 225	26.0 143	25.3 131	24.6 92	24.7 90	25.0 114	25.6 132	25.9 264	26.6 220	25.8 2,499
Rotuma Island	C 27.4 mm 358	27.3 390	27.2 430	27.4 278	27.2 262	26.8 244	26.4 207	26.5 230	26.7 277	26.8 283	27.0 327	27.2 331	27.0 3,617
Matuku, Lau Group	C 26.8 mm 231	27.0 230	26.8 265	26.3 192	25.1 151	24.1 116	23.1 114	23.6 78	24.2 110	25.0 97	25.7 139	26.4 152	25.3 1,875
Ono-i-Lau, Lau Group	C 26.3 mm 201	26.5 199	26.4 266	25.7 196	24.3 144	23.4 109	22.4 90	22.4 94	22.7 106	23.6 114	24.5 128	25.3 145	24.4 1,792

A NOTE ON READING THE FIJI CLIMATE CHART

The top figure indicates the average monthly temperatures in degrees and tenths centigrade, while the monthly rainfall average in millimeters is given below. The last column gives the average annual temperature and the total precipitation during the year. These figures have been averaged over a minimum of 10 years, in most cases much longer. Altitude is a factor at Nadarivatu (835 meters); all the others are very near sea level. You will notice that the temperatures don't vary too much year-round, but there is a pronounced dry season midyear. Note, too, that some areas of Fiji are far drier than others.

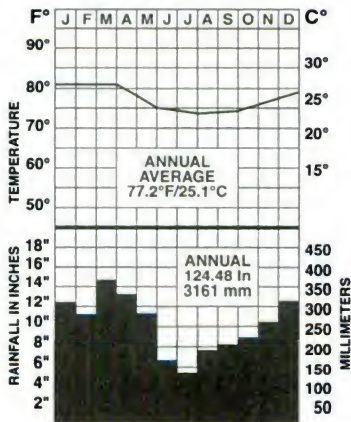
places coral reefs are already protected. Appeals such as the one above have only limited impact—legislators must write stricter laws and impose fines. If you witness dumping or any other marine-related activity that you think may be illegal, don't become directly involved but do take a few notes and calmly report the incident to the local authorities or police at the first opportunity. You'll learn something about their approach to these matters and make them aware of your concerns.

Resort developers can minimize damage to their valuable reefs by providing public mooring buoys so yachts don't have to drop anchor and pontoons and so snorkelers aren't tempted to stand on coral. Licensing authorities can make such amenities mandatory whenever appropriate, and, in extreme cases, endangered coral gardens should be declared off limits to private boats. As consumerism spreads, once-remote areas become subject to the problems of pollution and overexploitation. For example, the garbage is visibly piling up on many shores. As a visitor, do take a conservationist approach. For as Marshall McLuhan said, "On Spaceship Earth, there are no passengers, we are all members of the crew."

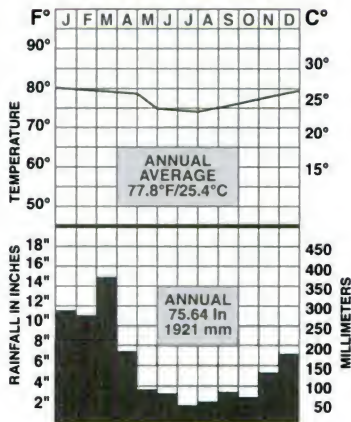
CLIMATE

Along the coast the weather is warm and pleasant, without great variations in temperature. The southeast trades prevail from June to October, the best months to visit. In February and March

SUVA'S CLIMATE



NADI'S CLIMATE



TROPICAL HURRICANES

The official hurricane (or cyclone) season south of the equator is November to April, although hurricanes can occur in May and October. Since the ocean provides the energy, these low pressure systems can only form over water with a surface temperature above 27° C; during years when water temperatures are high (such as during the recent *El Niño*) their frequency increases. The rotation of the earth gives the storm its initial spin, and this occurs mostly between latitudes five and 20 on either side of the equator.

As rainfall increases and the seas rise, the winds are drawn into a spiral that reaches its maximum speed in a ring around the center. In the South Pacific a cyclone develops as these circular winds, rotating clockwise around a center, increase in veloc-

ity: force eight to nine winds blowing at 34 to 47 knots are called a gale, force 10 to 11 at 48 to 63 knots is a storm, force 12 winds revolving at 64 knots or more is a hurricane. Wind speeds can go as high as 100 knots with gusts to 140 on the left side of the storm's path in the direction it's moving.

The eye of the hurricane can be 10 to 30 kilometers wide and surprising clear and calm, although at sea contradictory wave patterns continue to wreak havoc. In the South Pacific most hurricanes move south at speeds of five to 20 knots. As water is sucked into the low-pressure eye of the hurricane and waves reach 14 meters in height, coastlines can receive a surge of up to four meters of water, especially if the storm enters a narrowing bay or occurs at high tide.

the wind often comes directly out of the east. These winds dump 3,000 mm of annual rainfall on the humid southeast coasts of the big islands, increasing to 5,000 mm inland. The drier northwest coasts, in the lee, get only 1,500–2,000 mm.

The dry season (June to October) is not always dry at Suva, although much of the rain falls at night. In addition, Fiji's winter (May to November), the preferred months for mountain trekking, is cooler and less humid. During the drier season the reef waters are clearest for the scuba diver. Yet even during the rainy summer months (December to April), bright sun often follows the rains, and the rain is only a slight inconvenience. The trade winds relieve the high humidity. Summer is hurricane season, with Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga receiving up to five tropical storms annually.

In Fiji you can obtain prerecorded weather information by dialing 301-642. The same information is available on online at www.met.gov.fj.

Currents and Winds

The Pacific Ocean has a greater impact on the world's climate than any other geographical feature on earth. By moving heat away from the equator and toward the poles, it stretches the bounds of the area in which life can exist. Broad circular ocean currents flow from east to west across the tropical Pacific, clockwise in the North

Pacific, counterclockwise in the South Pacific. North and south of the "horse latitudes" just outside the tropics the currents cool and swing east. The prevailing winds push the same way: the southeast trade winds south of the equator, the northeast trade winds north of the equator, and the low-pressure "doldrums" in between. Westerlies blow east above the cool currents north and south of the tropics. This natural air-conditioning system brings warm water to Australia and Japan, cooler water to Peru and California.

The climate of the high islands is closely related to these winds. As air is heated near the equator it rises and flows at high altitudes toward the poles. By the time it reaches about 30 degrees south latitude it will have cooled enough to cause it to fall and flow back toward the equator near sea level. In the southern hemisphere the rotation of the earth deflects the winds to the left to become the southeast trades. When these cool moist trade winds hit a high island, they are warmed by the sun and forced up. Above 500 meters elevation they begin to cool again and their moisture condenses into clouds. At night the winds do not capture much warmth and are more likely to discharge their moisture as rain. The windward slopes of the high islands catch the trades head-on and are usually wet, while those on the leeward side may be dry.

FLORA AND FAUNA

FLORA

The flora of Fiji originated in the Malaysian region; in the two regions, ecological niches are filled by similar plants. Over 3,000 species of plants grow in Fiji, of which 476 are indigenous to Fiji and 10 percent of those are found only here. Taveuni is known for its rare climbing *tagimaucia* flower. The absence of leaf-eating animals in Fiji allowed the vegetation to develop largely without the protective spines and thorns found elsewhere, and one of the only stinging plants is the *salato*, a shrub or tree bearing large, heart-shaped leaves with purple ribs and ragged edges that inflict painful wounds when touched. Hairs on the leaves break off in the skin and the intense stinging pain begins half a minute later. This soon diminishes into an itch that becomes painful again if scratched. The itch can recur weeks and even months later.

Patterns of rainfall are in large part responsible for the variety of vegetation here. The wetter sides of the high islands are heavily forested, with occasional thickets of bamboo and scrub. Natural forests cover 40 percent of Fiji's total land area and about a quarter of these forests are classified as production forest suitable for logging. The towering *dakua* or kauri tree, once carved into massive Fijian war canoes, has already disappeared from Viti Levu, and the last stands are now being logged on Vanua Levu. Since the 1960s much replanting has been done in mahogany, a hardwood originating in Central America. The native *yaka* is a conifer whose wood has an attractive grain.

Coconut groves fill the coastal plains. On the drier sides open savanna or *talasiga* of coarse grasses predominates where the original vegetation has been destroyed by slash-and-burn agriculture. Sugarcane is now cultivated in the lowlands here, and Caribbean pine has been planted in many dry hilly areas, giving them a Scandinavian appearance. Around Christmas, poinciana or flame trees along the roads bloom bright red. The low islands of the Lau Group are restricted to a few hardy, drought-resistant species such as co-

conuts and pandanus. Well drained shorelines often feature ironwood or *nokonoko*, a casuarina appreciated by woodcarvers.

Mangroves can occasionally be found along some high island coastal lagoons. The cable roots of the saltwater-tolerant red mangrove anchor in the shallow upper layer of oxygenated mud, avoiding the layers of hydrogen sulfide below. The tree provides shade for tiny organisms dwelling in the tidal mudflats—a place for birds to nest and for fish or shellfish to feed and spawn. The mangroves also perform the same task as land-building coral colonies along the reefs. As sediments are trapped between the roots, the trees extend farther into the lagoon, creating a unique natural environment. The past decade has seen widespread destruction of the mangroves as land is reclaimed for agricultural use in northwest Viti Levu and around Labasa.

Many of Fiji's forest plants have medicinal applications which have recently attracted the attention of patent-hungry pharmaceutical giants such as SmithKline Beecham. The sap of the tree fern (*balabala*) was formerly used as a cure for headaches by Fijians and its heart was eaten in times of famine.

Though only introduced to Fiji in the late 1860s, sugarcane probably originated in the South Pacific. On New Guinea the islanders have cultivated the plant for thousands of years, selecting vigorous varieties with the most colorful stems. The story goes that two Melanesian fishermen, To-Kabwana and To-Karavuvu, found a piece of sugarcane in their net one day. They threw it away, but after twice catching it again they decided to keep it and painted the stalk a bright color. Eventually the cane burst and a woman came forth. She cooked food for the men but hid herself at night. Finally she was captured and became the wife of one of the men. From their union sprang the whole human race.

FAUNA

Some Fijian clans have totemic relationships with eels, prawns, turtles, and sharks, and are

able to summon these creatures with special chants. Red prawns are called on Vanua Vatu in Southern Lau, on a tiny island off Naweni in southern Vanua Levu, and on Vatulele Island. The Nasaqalau people of Lakeba in southern Lau call sharks, and villagers of Korolevu in central Viti Levu call eels. The women of Namuana on Kadavu summon giant sea turtles with their chants. Turtle calling is also practiced at Nacamakivi village, in the northeast corner of Koro. Unfortunately sea turtles are becoming so rare that the turtle callers are having less and less success each year.

Mammals

The first Fijians brought with them pigs, dogs, chickens, and gray rats. The only native mammals are the monkey-faced fruit bat or flying fox, called *beka* by the Fijians, and the smaller, insect-eating bat.

The Indian mongoose was introduced by planters in the 1880s to combat rats, which were damaging the plantations. Unfortunately, no one realized at the time that the mongoose hunts by day, whereas the rats are nocturnal so the two seldom meet. Today, the mongoose is the scourge of chickens, native ground birds, iguanas, and other animals, though Kadavu, Koro, Gau, Ovalau, and Taveuni are mongoose-free (and thus the finest islands for birdwatching). Feral cats do the same sort of damage.

Sealife

Fiji's richest store of life is found in the silent underwater world of the pelagic and lagoon fishes. It's estimated that half the fish remaining on our globe are swimming in the Pacific. Coral pinacles on the lagoon floor provide a safe haven for angelfish, butterfly fish, damselfish, groupers, soldierfish, surgeonfish, triggerfish, trumpet fish, and countless more. These fish seldom venture more than a few meters away from the protective coral, but larger fish such as barracuda, jackfish, parrot fish, pike, stingrays, and small sharks range across lagoon waters that are seldom deeper than 30 meters. The external side of the reef is also home to many of the above, but the open ocean is reserved for bonito, mahimahi, swordfish, tuna, wrasses, and the larger sharks. Passes between ocean and lagoon can be crowded with fish in transit, offering a favorite

hunting ground for predators.

In the open sea the food chain begins with phytoplankton, which flourish wherever ocean upwellings bring nutrients such as nitrates and phosphates to the surface. In the western Pacific this occurs near the equator, where massive currents draw water away toward Japan and Australia. Large schools of fast-moving tuna ply these waters feeding on smaller fish, which consume tiny phytoplankton drifting near the sunlit surface. The phytoplankton also exist in tropical lagoons where mangrove leaves, sea grasses, and other plant material are consumed by far more varied populations of reef fish, mollusks, and crustaceans.

Sharks

The danger from sharks has been exaggerated. Of some 300 different species, only 28 are known to have attacked humans. Most dangerous are the white, tiger, and blue sharks. Fortunately, all of these inhabit deep water far from the coasts. An average of only 50 shark attacks a year occur worldwide, so considering the number of people who swim in the sea, your chances of being involved are about one in a million. In the South Pacific shark attacks on snorkelers or scuba divers are extremely rare and the tiny mosquito is a far more dangerous predator.

Sharks are not aggressive where food is abundant, but they can be very nasty far offshore. You're always safer if you keep your head underwater (with a mask and snorkel), and don't panic if you see a shark—you might attract it. Even if you do, they're usually only curious, so keep your eye on the shark and slowly back off. The swimming techniques of humans must seem very clumsy to fish, so it's not surprising if they want a closer look.

Sharks are attracted by shiny objects (a knife or jewelry), bright colors (especially yellow and red), urine, blood, spearfishing, and splashing (divers should ease themselves into the water). Sharks normally stay outside the reef, but get local advice. White beaches are safer than dark, and clear water safer than murky. Avoid swimming in places where sewage or edible wastes enter the water, or where fish have just been cleaned. Slaughterhouses sometimes attract sharks to an area by dumping offal into the nearby sea. You should also exercise care in places

where local residents have been fishing with spears or even hook and line that day.

Never swim alone if you suspect the presence of sharks. If you see one, even a supposedly harmless nurse shark lying on the bottom, get out of the water calmly and quickly, and go elsewhere. Studies indicate that sharks, like most other creatures, have a "personal space" around them that they will defend. Thus an attack could be a shark's way of warning someone to keep his distance, and it's a fact that over half the victims of these incidents are not eaten but merely bitten. Sharks are less of a problem in the South Pacific than in colder waters because small marine mammals (commonly hunted by sharks) are rare here, so you won't be mistaken for a seal or an otter.

Let common sense be your guide, not irrational fear or carelessness. Many scuba divers come actually *looking* for sharks, and local divemasters seem able to swim among them with impunity. If you're in the market for some shark action, many dive shops can provide it. Just be aware that getting into the water with feeding sharks always entails some danger, and the divemaster who admits this and lays down some basic safety guidelines (such as keeping your hands clasped or arms folded) is probably a safer bet than the macho man who just says he's been doing it for years without incident. Never snorkel on your own (without an experienced guide) near a spot where sharks are fed regularly since you never know how the sharks will react to a surface swimmer without any food for them. Like all other wild animals, sharks deserve to be approached with respect.

Sea Urchins

Sea urchins (living pincushions) are common in tropical waters. The black variety is the most dangerous: their long, sharp quills can go right through a snorkeler's fins. Even the small ones, which you can easily pick up in your hand, can pinch you if you're careless. They're found on rocky shores and reefs, never on clear, sandy beaches where the surf rolls in.

Most sea urchins are not poisonous, though quill punctures are painful and can become infected if not treated. The pain is caused by an injected protein, which you can eliminate by hold-

ing the injured area in a pail of very hot water for about 15 minutes. This will coagulate the protein, eliminating the pain for good. If you can't heat water, soak the area in vinegar or urine for a quarter hour. Remove the quills if possible, but being made of calcium, they'll decompose in a couple of weeks anyway—not much of a consolation as you limp along in the meantime. In some places sea urchins are considered a delicacy: the orange or yellow urchin gonads are delicious with lemon and salt.

Other Hazardous Creatures

Although jellyfish, stonefish, crown-of-thorns starfish, cone shells, eels, and poisonous sea snakes are dangerous, injuries resulting from any of these are rare. Gently apply methylated spirit, alcohol, or urine (but not water, kerosene, or gasoline) to areas stung by jellyfish. Inoffensive sea cucumbers (*bêche-de-mer*) punctuate the lagoon shallows, but stonefish also rest on the bottom and are hard to see due to camouflaging; if you happen to step on one, its dorsal fins inject a painful poison, which burns like fire in the blood. Fortunately, stonefish are not common.

It's worth knowing that the venom produced by most marine animals is destroyed by heat, so your first move should be to soak the injured part in very hot water for 30 minutes. (Also hold an opposite foot or hand in the same water to prevent scalding due to numbness.) Other authorities claim the best first aid is to squeeze blood from a sea cucumber scraped raw on coral directly onto the wound. If a hospital or clinic is nearby, go there immediately.

Never pick up a live cone shell; some varieties have a deadly stinger dart coming out from the pointed end. The tiny blue-ring octopus is only five centimeters long but packs a poison that can kill a human. Eels hide in reef crevices by day; most are harmful only if you inadvertently poke your hand or foot in at them. Of course, never tempt fate by approaching them (fun-loving divemasters sometimes feed the big ones by hand and stroke their backs).

Birds

Of the 70 species of land birds, 22 are endemic, including broadbills, cuckoos, doves, fantails, finches, flycatchers, fruitdoves, hawks, herons, hon-



pink-billed
parrot finch

eyeaters, kingfishers, lorikeets, owls, parrots, pigeons, rails, robins, silktails, swallows, thrushes, warblers, whistlers, and white-eyes. The Fijian names of some of these birds, such as the *kaka* (parrot), *ga* (gray duck), and *kikau* (giant honey eater), imitate their calls. Red and green *kula* lorikeets are often seen in populated areas collecting nectar and pollen from flowering trees or feeding on fruit. Of the seabirds, boobies, frigate birds, petrels, and tropic birds are present. The best time to observe forest birds is in the very early morning—they move around a lot less in the heat of the day.

More in evidence is the introduced Indian mynah, with its yellow legs and beak, the Indian bulbul, and the Malay turtledove. The hopping Indian mynah bird (*Acridotheres tristis*), was introduced to many islands from Indonesia at the turn of the century to control insects, which were damaging the citrus and coconut plantations. The mynahs multiplied profusely and have become major pests, inflicting great harm on the very trees they were brought in to protect. Worse still, many indigenous birds are forced out of their habitat by these noisy, aggressive birds. This and rapid deforestation by man have made the South Pacific the region with the highest proportion of endangered endemic bird species on earth.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Three of the world's seven species of sea turtles nest in Fiji: the green, hawksbill, and

leatherback. Nesting occurs between November and February, at night when there is a full moon and a high tide. Sea turtles lay their eggs on the beach from which they themselves originally hatched. The female struggles up the beach and lays as many as 100 eggs in a hole, which she digs and then covers with her hind flippers. Female turtles don't commence this activity until they are 20 years old, thus a drop in numbers today has irreversible consequences a generation later. It's estimated that breeding females already number in the hundreds or low thousands, and all species of these magnificent creatures (sometimes erroneously referred to as "tortoises") now face extinction due to ruthless hunting, egg harvesting, and beach destruction. Turtles are often choked by floating plastic bags they mistake for food, or they drown in fishing nets. The

Fiji Fisheries Department estimates that between 1980 and 1989 over 10,000 hawksbill turtle shells were exported to Japan. The turtles and their eggs are now protected by law in Fiji (maximum penalty of six months in prison for killing a turtle). Sadly, this law is seldom enforced.

Geckos and skinks are small lizards often seen on the islands. The skink hunts insects by day; its tail breaks off if you catch it, but a new one quickly grows. The gecko is nocturnal and has no eyelids. Adhesive toe pads enable it to pass along vertical surfaces, and it changes color to avoid detection. Unlike the skink, which avoids humans,



tree frog



banded iguana

geckos often live in people's homes, where they eat insects attracted by electric lights. Its loud clicking call may be a territorial warning to other geckos.

One of the more unusual creatures found in Fiji and Tonga is the banded iguana, a lizard that lives in trees and can grow up to 70 centimeters long (two-thirds of which is tail). The iguanas are emerald green, and the male is easily distinguished from the female by his bluish-gray cross stripes. Banded iguanas change color to control their internal temperature, becoming darker when in the direct sun. Their nearest relatives are found in Central America, and how they could have reached Fiji remains a mystery. In 1979 a new species, the crested iguana, was discovered on Yaduataba, a small island off the west coast of Vanua Levu.

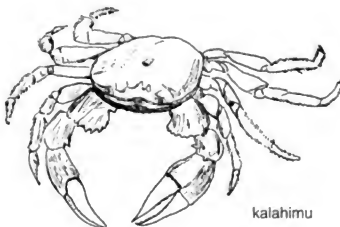
Two species of snakes inhabit Fiji: the very rare, poisonous *bolo loa*, and the harmless Pacific boa, which can grow up to two meters long. Venomous sea snakes are common on some coasts, but they're docile and easily handled. Fijians call the common banded black-and-white

sea snake the *dadakulaci*. The land- and tree-dwelling native frogs are noteworthy for the long suction discs on their fingers and toes. Because they live deep in the rainforests and feed at night, they're seldom seen.

In 1936 the giant toad was introduced from Hawaii to control beetles, slugs, and millipedes. When this food source is exhausted, they tend to eat each other. At night gardens and lawns may be full of them.

Insects and Arachnids

Not to be confused with the inoffensive millipedes are the poisonous centipedes found in Fiji. While the millipede will roll up when touched, the centipede may inflict a painful sting through its front legs. The two types are easily distinguished by the number of pairs of legs per body segment: centipedes one, millipedes two. Fiji's largest centipedes grow up to 18 centimeters long and can have anywhere from 15 to 180 pairs of legs. These nocturnal creatures feed on insects and may be found in houses while the two species of scorpions dwell only in the forest.



kalahimu

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

HISTORY

The Pre-European Period

The first people to arrive in Fiji were members of a broad-nosed, light-skinned Austronesian-speaking race, probably the Polynesians. They originated in insular Southeast Asia and gradually migrated east past the already occupied islands of Melanesia. Distinctive *Lapita* pottery, decorated in horizontal geometric bands and dated from 1290 B.C., has been found in the sand dunes near Sigatoka, indicating they had reached here by 1500 B.C. or earlier. Much later, about 500 B.C., Melanesian people arrived, bringing with them their own distinct pottery traditions. From the fusion of these primordial peoples was the Fijian race born.

The hierarchical social structure of the early Fijians originated with the Polynesians. Status and descent passed through the male line, and power was embodied in the *turaga* (chief). The hereditary chiefs possessed the mana of an ancestral spirit or *vu*. Yet under the *vasu* system a chiefly woman's son could lay claim to the property of his mother's brothers, and such relationships combined with polygamy kept society in a state of constant strife. This feudal aristocracy combined in confederations, or *vanua*, which extended their influence through war. Treachery and cannibalism were an intrinsic part of these struggles; women were taken as prizes or traded to form alliances. For defense, villages were fortified with ring ditches, or built along ridges or terraced hillsides.

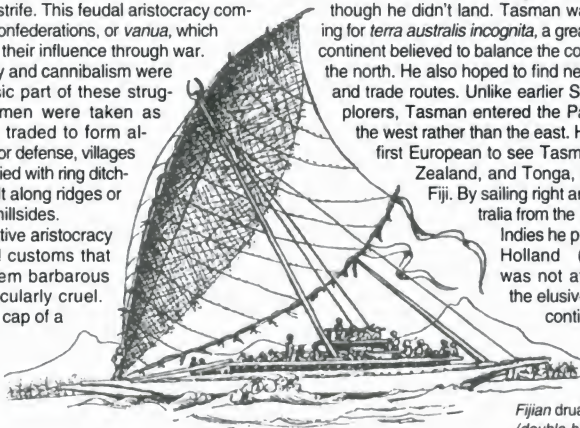
The native aristocracy practiced customs that today seem barbarous and particularly cruel. The skull cap of a

defeated enemy might be polished and used as a *yaqona* (kava) cup to humiliate a foe. Some chiefs even took delight in cooking and consuming body parts as their agonized victims looked on. Men were buried alive to hold up the posts of new houses, war canoes were launched over the living bodies of young girls, and the widows of chiefs were strangled to keep their husbands company in the spirit world. The farewells of some of these women are remembered today in dances and songs known as *meke*.

These feudal islanders were, on the other hand, guardians of one of the highest material cultures of the Pacific. They built great ocean-going double canoes (*drua*) up to 30 meters long, constructed and adorned large solid thatched houses (*bures*), performed marvelous song-dances called *meke*, made tapa, pottery, and sennit (coconut cordage), and skillfully plaited mats. For centuries the Tongans came to Fiji to obtain great logs for making canoes and sandalwood for carving.

European Exploration

In 1643 Abel Tasman became the European discoverer of Fiji when he sighted Taveuni, although he didn't land. Tasman was searching for *terra australis incognita*, a great southern continent believed to balance the continents of the north. He also hoped to find new markets and trade routes. Unlike earlier Spanish explorers, Tasman entered the Pacific from the west rather than the east. He was the first European to see Tasmania, New Zealand, and Tonga, as well as Fiji. By sailing right around Australia from the Dutch East Indies he proved New Holland (Australia) was not attached to the elusive southern continent.



Fijian drua
(double-hulled canoe)

FIJI ISLANDS CHRONOLOGY

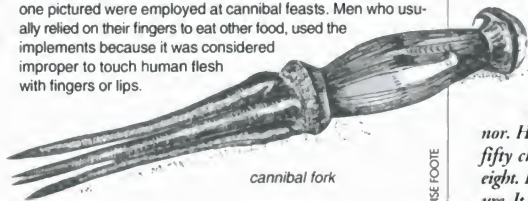
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|---|--|
| 1500 B.C. Polynesians reach Fiji | 1920 indenture system terminated |
| 500 B.C. Melanesians reach Fiji | 1928 first flight from Hawaii lands at Suva |
| 1643 Abel Tasman sights Taveuni | 1939 Nadi Airport built |
| 1774 Captain Cook visits southern Lau | 1940 Native Land Trust Board established |
| 1789 Bligh and crew paddle past Yasawas | 1942 Fijian troops sent to the Solomons |
| 1800 sandalwood discovered on Vanua Levu | 1951 Fiji Airways (later Air Pacific) formed |
| 1820 bêche-de-mer trade begins | 1953 Queen Elizabeth II visits Fiji |
| 1827 Dumont d'Urville visits Bau | 1965 Constitutional Convention held in London |
| 1830 Tahitian missionaries arrive in southern Lau | 1966 internal self-government achieved |
| 1835 Methodist missionaries arrive at Lakeba | 1968 University of the South Pacific established |
| 1840 American Exploring Expedition visits Fiji | 1970 Fiji's first constitution adopted |
| 1847 Tongan invasion of Lau led by Enele Ma'afu | 1970 Fiji becomes independent |
| 1849 home of John Brown Williams burns | 1973 sugar industry nationalized |
| 1851 first visit by hostile American gunboats | 1977 governor-general overturns election results |
| 1854 Chief Cakobau accepts Christianity | 1978 Fijian peacekeeping troops sent to Lebanon |
| 1855 Cakobau puts down the Rewa revolt | 1981 Fijian troops sent to the Sinai |
| 1858 first British consul arrives in Fiji | 1983 Monasavu Hydroelectric Project opens |
| 1860 founding of the town of Levuka | 1987 Labor defeats Alliance Party |
| 1862 Britain refuses to annex Fiji | 1987 two military coups led by Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka |
| 1865 confederacy of Fijian chiefs formed | 1987 Rabuka declares Fiji a republic |
| 1867 American warship threatens to shell Levuka | 1987 Fiji expelled from British Commonwealth |
| 1868 Polynesia Company granted the site of Suva | 1990 racially weighted constitution promulgated |
| 1871 Cakobau and Thurston form a government | 1992 Rabuka elected under gerrymandered constitution |
| 1874 Fiji becomes a British colony | 1997 constitution revised to allow common roll voting |
| 1875 measles epidemic kills a third of Fijians | 1997 Fiji readmitted to the Commonwealth |
| 1879 first indentured Indian laborers arrive | 1998 revised constitution comes into effect |
| 1881 first large sugar mill built at Nausori | 1999 Labor Party under Mahendra Chaudhry elected |
| 1881 Rotuma annexed to Fiji | 2000 civil coup in May topples government |
| 1882 capital moved from Levuka to Suva | 2001 Court of Appeals rules on legality of coup |
| 1904 first elected Legislative Council | |
| 1916 Indian immigration ends | |

In 1774, Captain Cook anchored off Vatoa in southern Lau. Like Tasman he failed to proceed farther or land. It was left to Capt. William Bligh to give Europeans an accurate picture of Fiji for the first time. After the *Bounty* mutiny in May 1789, Bligh and his companions were chased by canoe-loads of Fijian warriors just north of the Yasawa Islands as they rowed through on their escape route to Timor. Some serious paddling, a timely squall,

and a lucky gap in the Great Sea Reef saved the Englishmen from ending up as the main course at a cannibal feast. The section of sea where this happened is now known as Bligh Water. Bligh cut directly across the center of Fiji between the two main islands, and his careful observations made him the first real European explorer of Fiji, albeit an unwilling one. Bligh returned to Fiji in 1792, but once again he stayed aboard his ship.

CANNIBALISM

It has been said that the Fijians were extremely hospitable to any strangers they did not wish to eat. Native voyagers who wrecked on their shores, who arrived "with salt water in their eyes," were liable to be killed and eaten, since all shipwrecked persons were believed to have been cursed and abandoned by the gods. Many European sailors from wrecked vessels shared the same fate. Cannibalism was a universal practice, and prisoners taken in war, or even women seized while fishing, were invariably eaten. Most of the early European accounts of Fiji emphasized this trait to the exclusion of almost everything else; at one time, the island group was even referred to as the "Cannibal Isles." By eating the flesh of the conquered enemy, one inflicted the ultimate revenge. One chief on Viti Levu is said to have consumed 872 people and to have made a pile of stones to record his achievement. The leaves of a certain vegetable (*Solanum uporo*) were wrapped around the human meat, and it was cooked in an earthen oven. Wooden forks such as the one pictured were employed at cannibal feasts. Men who usually relied on their fingers to eat other food, used the implements because it was considered improper to touch human flesh with fingers or lips.



cannibal fork

Beachcombers and Chiefs

All of these early explorers stressed the perilous nature of Fiji's reefs. This, combined with tales told by the Tongans of cannibalism and warlike Fijian natives, caused most travelers to shun the area. Then in 1800 a survivor from the shipwrecked American schooner *Argo* brought word that sandalwood grew in abundance along the Bua coast of Vanua Levu. This precipitated a rush of traders and beachcombers to the islands. A cargo of sandalwood bought from the islanders for \$50 worth of trinkets could be sold to the Chinese in Canton for \$20,000. By 1814 the forests had been stripped to provide joss sticks and incense, and the trade collapsed.

During this period Fiji was divided among warring chieftains. The first Europeans to actually mix with the Fijians were escaped convicts from Australia, who showed the natives how to use European muskets and were thus well received.

White beachcombers such as the Swedish adventurer Charles Savage and the German Martin Bushart acted as middlemen between traders and Fijians and took sides in local conflicts. In one skirmish Savage was separated from his fellows, captured, and eaten. With help from the likes of Savage, Naulivou, the cannibal chief of tiny Bau Island just off eastern Viti Levu, and his brother Tanoa extended their influence over much of western Fiji.

In his book *Following the Equator*, Mark Twain had this to say about the beachcombers:

They lived worthless lives of sin and luxury, and died without honor—in most cases by violence. Only one of them had any ambition; he was an Irishman named Connor. He tried to raise a family of fifty children and scored forty-eight. He died lamenting his failure. It was a foolish sort of avarice. Many a father would have been

rich enough with forty.

From 1820 to 1850 European traders collected *bêche-de-mer*, a sea cucumber which, when smoked and dried, also brought a good price in China. While the sandalwood traders only stayed long enough to take on a load, the *bêche-de-mer* collectors set up shore facilities where the slugs were processed. Many traders such as David Whippy followed the example of the beachcombers and took local wives, establishing the part-Fijian community of today. By monopolizing the *bêche-de-mer* trade and constantly warring, Chief Tanoa's son and successor, Ratu Seru Cakobau (pronounced "tha-kom-BAU"), became extremely powerful in the 1840s, proclaiming himself Tui Viti, or king of Fiji.

The beginnings of organized trade brought a second wave of official explorers to Fiji. In 1827 Dumont d'Urville landed on Bau Island and met

Tanoa. The Frenchmen caused consternation and confusion by refusing to drink *yaqona* (kava), preferring their own wine. The American Exploring Expedition of 1840, led by Commodore Charles Wilkes, produced the first recognizable map of Fiji. When two Americans, including a nephew of Wilkes, were speared in a misunderstanding on a beach at Malolo Island, Wilkes ordered the offending fortified village stormed and 87 Fijians were killed. The survivors were made to water and provision Wilkes's ships as tribute. Captain H.M. Denham of the HMS *Herald* prepared accurate navigational charts of the island group in 1855–56, making regular commerce possible.

European and Tongan Penetration

As early as the 1830s an assortment of European and American beachcombers had formed a small settlement at Levuka on the east coast of Ovalau Island just northeast of Bau, which whalers and traders used as a supply base. In 1846 John Brown Williams was appointed American commercial agent, one step below a consul. On July 4, 1849, Williams's home on Nukulau Island near present-day Suva burned down. Though the conflagration was caused by the explosion of a cannon during Williams's own fervent celebration of his national holiday, he objected to the way Fijian onlookers carried off items they rescued from the flames. A shameless swindler, Williams had purchased Nukulau for only \$30, yet he blamed the Tui Viti for his losses and sent Cakobau a \$5,001.38 bill. American claims for damages eventually rose to \$45,000, and in 1851 and 1855 American gunboats called and ordered Cakobau to pay up. This threat hung over Cakobau's head for many years, the 19th-century equivalent of 20th-century third world debt. Increasing American involvement in Fiji led the British to appoint a consul, W.T. Pritchard, who arrived in 1858.

The early 1830s also saw the arrival from Tonga of the first missionaries. Though Tahitian pastors were sent by the London Missionary Society to Oneata in southern Lau as early as 1830, it was the Methodists based at Lakeba after 1835 who made the most lasting impression by rendering the Fijian language into writing. At first Christianity made little headway among these fierce, idolatrous people, and only after

converting the powerful chiefs were the missionaries successful. Methodist missionaries Cargill and Cross were appalled by what they saw during a visit to Bau in 1838. A white missionary, Rev. Thomas Baker, was clubbed and eaten in central Viti Levu by the *kai colo* (hill people) as late as 1867.

In 1847 Enele Ma'afu, a member of the Tongan royal family, arrived in Lau and began building a personal empire under the pretense of defending Christianity. In 1853 King George of Tonga made Ma'afu governor of all Tongans resident in Lau. Meanwhile, there was continuing resistance from the warlords of the Rewa River area to Cakobau's dominance. In addition the Europeans at Levuka suspected Cakobau of twice ordering their town set afire and were directing trade away from Bau. With his power in decline, in 1854 Cakobau accepted Christianity in exchange for an alliance with King George, and in 1855, with the help of 2,000 Tongans led by King George himself, Cakobau was able to put down the Rewa revolt at the Battle of Kaba. In the process, however, Ma'afu became the dominant force in Lau, Taveuni, and Vanua Levu.

During the early 1860s, as Americans fought their Civil War, the world price of cotton soared, and large numbers of Europeans arrived in Fiji hoping to establish cotton plantations. In 1867 the USS *Tuscaroga* called at Levuka and threatened to bombard the town unless the still-outstanding American debt was paid. The next year an enterprising Australian firm, the Polynesia Company, paid off the Americans in exchange for a grant from Cakobau of 80,000 hectares of choice land, including the site of modern Suva. The British government later refused to recognize this grant, though they refunded the money paid to the Americans and accepted the claims of settlers who had purchased land from the company. Settlers soon numbered around 2,000 and Levuka boomed.

It was a lawless era, and a need was felt for a central government. An attempt at national rule by a confederacy of chiefs lasted two years until failing in 1867, then three regional governments were set up in Bau (western), Lau (eastern), and Bua (northern), but these were only partly successful. With prices for Fiji's "Sea Island" cotton collapsing as the American South resumed production, a national administration

under Cakobau and planter John Thurston was established at Levuka in 1871.

However, Cakobau was never strong enough to impose his authority over the whole country, so with growing disorder in western Fiji, infighting between Europeans and Fijian chiefs, and a lack of cooperation from Ma'afu's rival confederation of chiefs in eastern Fiji, Cakobau decided he should cede his kingdom to Great Britain. The British had refused an invitation to annex Fiji in 1862, but this time they accepted rather than risk seeing the group fall into the hands of another power, and on October 10, 1874, Fiji became a British colony. A punitive expedition into central Viti Levu in 1876 brought the hill tribes (*kai colo*) under British rule. In 1877 the Western Pacific High Commission was set up to protect British interests in the surrounding unclaimed island groups as well. In 1881 Rotuma was annexed to Fiji. At first Levuka was the colony's capital, but in 1882 the government moved to a more spacious site at Suva.

The Making of a Nation

The first British governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, and his colonial secretary and successor, Sir John Thurston, created modern Fiji almost single-handedly. They realized that the easiest way to rule was indirectly, through the existing Fijian chiefs. To protect the communal lands on which the chieftain system was based, they ordered that native land could not be sold, only leased. Not wishing to disturb native society, Gordon and Thurston ruled that Fijians could not be required to work on European plantations. Meanwhile the blackbirding of Melanesian laborers from the Solomons and New Hebrides had been restricted by the Polynesian Islanders Protection Act of 1872.

By this time sugar had taken the place of cotton and there was a tremendous labor shortage on the plantations. Gordon, who had previously served in Trinidad and Mauritius, saw indentured Indian workers as a solution. The first arrived in 1879, and by 1916, when Indian immigration ended, there were 63,000. To come to Fiji the Indians had to sign a labor contract (*girmil*) in which they agreed to cut sugarcane for their masters for five years. During the next five years they were allowed to lease small plots of their own from the Fijians and plant cane or raise live-



CAINES JANIF LTD, SUVA

Blackbirded Solomon Islanders, brought to work on European-owned plantations in Fiji, wait aboard a ship off Levuka around the turn of the 20th century. In 1910, the Melanesian labor trade was finally terminated by the British, but a few Solomon Islanders stayed on, and small communities of their descendants exist on Ovalau and near Suva.

stock. Over half the Indians decided to remain in Fiji as free settlers after their 10-year contracts expired, and today their descendants form nearly half the population, many of them still working small leased plots.

Though this combination of European capital, Fijian land, and Indian labor did help preserve traditional Fijian culture, it also kept the Fijians backward—envious onlookers passed over by European and (later) Indian prosperity. The separate administration and special rights for indigenous Fijians installed by the British over a century ago continue today.

In early 1875 Cakobau and two of his sons returned from a visit to Australia infected with measles. Though they themselves survived, the resulting epidemic wiped out a third of the Fijian population. As a response to this and other

public health problems the Fiji School of Medicine was founded in 1885. At the beginning of European colonization there were about 200,000 Fijians, approximately 114,748 in 1881, and just 84,000 by 1921.

The Colonial Period

In 1912 a Gujerati lawyer, D.M. Manilal, arrived in Fiji from Mauritius to fight for Indian rights, just as his contemporary Mahatma Gandhi was doing in South Africa. Several prominent Anglican and Methodist missionaries also lobbied actively against the system. Indentured Indians continued to arrive in Fiji until 1916, but the protests led to the termination of the indenture system throughout the empire in 1920 (Manilal was deported from Fiji after a strike that year).

Although Fiji was a political colony of Britain, it was always an economic colony of Australia: the big Australian trading companies Burns Philp

and W.R. Carpenters dominated business. (The ubiquitous Morris Hedstrom is a subsidiary of Carpenters.) Most of the Indians were brought to Fiji to work for the Australian-owned Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which controlled the sugar industry from 1881 right up until 1973, when it was purchased by the Fiji government for \$14 million. After 1935, Fiji's gold fields were also exploited by Australians. Banking, insurance, and tourism are largely controlled by Australian companies today.

Under the British colonial system the Governor of Fiji had far greater decision-making authority than his counterparts in the French Pacific colonies. Whereas the French administrators were required to closely follow policies dictated from Paris, the governors of the British colonies had only to refer to the Colonial Office in London on special matters such as finance and foreign affairs. Otherwise they had great freedom to make policy decisions.

No representative government existed in Fiji until 1904, when a Legislative Council was formed with six elected Europeans and two Fijians nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs (*Bose Levu Vakaturaga*), itself an instrument of colonial rule. In 1916 the governor appointed an Indian member to the council. A 1929 reform granted five seats to each of the three communities: three elected and two appointed Europeans and Indians, and five nominated Fijians. The council was only an advisory body and the governor remained in complete control. The Europeans generally sided with the Fijians against any demands for equality from the Indians—typical colonial divide and rule.

During World War II Fijians were outstanding combat troops on the Allied side in the Solomon Islands campaign. In 1952–56 Fijians helped suppress Malaya's national liberation struggle. So skilled were the Fijians at jungle warfare against the Japanese that it was never appropriate to list a Fijian as "missing in action"—the phrase used was "not yet arrived." The war years saw the development of Nadi Airport. Until 1952, Suva, the present Fijian capital, was headquarters for the entire British Imperial Administration in the South Pacific.

In 1963 the Legislative Council was expanded (though still divided along racial lines), and women and indigenous Fijians got the vote for

A SKELETON IN BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR CLOSET

In 1957 and 1958 some 300 Fijian soldiers and sailors were employed by the British during a hydrogen bomb testing program in the Line Islands, presently Kiribati (between Hawaii and Tahiti). Three particularly dirty atmospheric tests took place off Malden Island in May and June 1957, and there were another six tests on Christmas Island in November 1957 and September 1958. The troops were exposed to significant levels of radiation, and numerous instances of test-related health problems have been documented among veterans. The most famous case involves Ratu Penaia Ganilau, later knighted and made president of Fiji, who landed barefoot on Malden immediately after a test in May 1957. Sir Penaia died of leukemia in 1993 after a long illness. Other Fijians were used to clear away thousands of sea birds killed by the blasts, or to dump drums of nuclear waste into the sea. Few protective measures were taken, and there have been accusations that the troops were deliberately exposed to radiation so they could be used as guinea pigs. Litigation against the British government began in 1997, but to date no compensation has been paid by the British to the Fijian victims of their tests.

the first time. Wishing to be rid of the British, whom they blamed for their second-class position, the Indians pushed for independence, but the Fijians had come to view the British as protectors and were somewhat reluctant. A Constitutional Convention was held in London in 1965 to move Fiji toward self-government, and after much discussion a constitution was adopted in 1970. Some legislature members were to be elected from a common roll (voting by all races), as the Indians desired, while other seats remained ethnic (voting in racial constituencies) to protect the Fijians. On October 10, 1970 Fiji became a fully independent nation and the first Fijian governor-general was appointed in 1973—none other than Ratu Sir George Cakobau, great-grandson of the chief who had ceded Fiji to Queen Victoria 99 years previously.

SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Political Development

During the 1940s Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, paramount chief of Lau, played a key role in the creation of a separate administration for indigenous Fijians, with native land (83 percent of Fiji) under its jurisdiction. In 1954 he formed the Fijian Association to support the British governor against Indian demands for equal representation. In 1960 the National Federation Party (NFP) was formed to represent Indian cane farmers.

In 1966 the Alliance Party, a coalition of the Fijian Association, the General Electors' Association (representing Europeans, part-Fijians, and Chinese), and the Fiji Indian Alliance (a minority Indian group) won the legislative assembly elections. In 1970 Alliance Party leader Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara led Fiji into independence and in 1972 his party won Fiji's first post-independence elections. Ratu Mara served as prime minister almost continuously until the 1987 elections.

The formation of the Fiji Labor Party (FLP), headed by Dr. Timoci Bavadra, in July 1985 dramatically altered the political landscape. Fiji's previously nonpolitical trade unions had finally come behind a party that campaigned on bread-and-butter issues rather than race. Late in 1986 Labor and the NFP formed a coalition with the aim of defeating the Alliance in the next election. In the April 12, 1987 elections the Coal-

ition won 28 of 52 House of Representatives seats; 19 of the 28 elected Coalition members were Indo-Fijians. What swung the election away from Alliance was not a change in Indo-Fijian voting patterns but support for Labor from urban Fijians and part-Fijians, which cost Alliance four previously "safe" seats around Suva.

The Coalition cabinet had a majority of Indo-Fijian members, but all positions of vital Fijian interest (Lands, Fijian Affairs, Labor and Immigration, Education, Agriculture and Rural Development) went to indigenous Fijian legislators, though none of them was a traditional chief. Coalition's progressive policies marked quite a switch from the conservatism of the Alliance—a new generation of political leadership dedicated to tackling the day-to-day problems of people of all races rather than perpetuating the privileges of the old chiefly oligarchy. Given time, the Coalition might have required the high chiefs to share the rental monies they received for leasing lands to Indo-Fijians more fairly with ordinary Fijians. Most significant of all, the Coalition would have transformed Fiji from a plural society where only indigenous Melanesian Fijians were called Fijians into a truly multiracial society where all citizens would be Fijians.

The First Coup

After the election the extremist Fiji-for-Fijians Taukei (landowners) movement launched a destabilization campaign by throwing barricades across highways, organizing protest rallies and marches, and carrying out firebombings. On April 24, 1987 Senator Inoke Tabua and former Alliance cabinet minister Apisai Tora organized a march of 5,000 Fijians through Suva to protest "Indian domination" of the new government. Mr. Tora told a preparatory meeting for the demonstration that Fijians must "act now" to avoid ending up as "deprived as Australia's aborigines." (In fact, under the 1970 constitution the Coalition government would have had no way of changing Fiji's land laws without indigenous Fijian consent.)

At 1000 on Thursday, May 14, 1987 Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka (pronounced "ram-BU-ka"), an ambitious officer whose career was stalled at number three in the Fiji army, and 10 heavily armed soldiers dressed in fatigues, their faces covered by gas masks, entered the House of Parliament in Suva. Rabuka ordered Dr. Bavadra

and the Coalition members to follow a soldier out of the building, and when Dr. Bavadra hesitated the soldiers raised their guns. The legislators were loaded into army trucks and taken to Royal Fiji Military Forces headquarters. There was no bloodshed, though Rabuka later confirmed that his troops would have opened fire had there been any resistance. At a press conference five hours after the coup, Rabuka claimed he had acted to prevent violence and had no political ambitions of his own.

Australia and New Zealand promptly denounced the region's first military coup. Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau attempted to reverse the situation by declaring a state of emergency and ordering the mutineers to return to their barracks. They refused to obey. The next day Rabuka named a 15-member Council of Ministers, which he chaired, to govern Fiji, with former Alliance prime minister Ratu Mara as foreign minister. Significantly, Rabuka was the only military officer on the council; most of the others were members of Ratu Mara's defeated administration. Rabuka claimed he had acted to "safeguard the Fijian land issue and the Fijian way of life."

On May 19, Dr. Bavadra and the other kidnapped members of his government were released after the governor-general announced a deal negotiated with Rabuka to avoid the possibility of foreign intervention. Rabuka's Council of Ministers was replaced by a 19-member caretaker Advisory Council appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs. The council would govern until new elections could take place. Ratu Ganilau would head the council, with Rabuka in charge of Home Affairs and the security forces. Only two seats were offered to Dr. Bavadra's government, and they were refused.

Behind the Coup

Immediately after the coup, rumors circulated throughout the South Pacific that the U.S. government was involved. Labor leaders had announced that nuclear warships would be banned from Fiji, and Foreign Minister Krishna Datt said he planned to join Vanuatu and New Zealand in pressing for a nuclear-free Pacific at the May 24, 1987, meeting of the South Pacific Forum. These moves challenged the military hegemony the United States had enjoyed in the region since 1942.

Two weeks before the coup, General Vernon A. Walters, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and a former CIA deputy director, visited Fiji. At a long meeting with Foreign Minister Datt, Walters tried to persuade the new government to give up its antinuclear stance. Walters told the Fiji press that the United States "has a duty to protect its South Pacific interests." Walters may have been involved in previous coups in Iran (1953) and Brazil (1964), and during his stay in Fiji he also met with Rabuka and officials of the U.S. Agency for International Development. A month after the coup at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Dr. Bavadra publicly accused the director of the South Pacific regional office of U.S. AID of channeling US\$200,000 to right-winger Apisai Tora of the Taukei movement for destabilization purposes.

Yet direct U.S. involvement in the coup has never been conclusively proven and the full story may never be told. Rabuka himself has always denied that the United States or any other foreign elements were involved. The events caught the Australian and New Zealand intelligence services totally by surprise, indicating that few knew of Rabuka's plans in advance.

Until the coup the most important mission of the Royal Fiji Defense Force was service in South Lebanon and the Sinai with peacekeeping operations. Half of the 2,600-member Fiji army was on rotating duty there, the Sinai force financed by the United States, the troops in Lebanon by the United Nations. During World War II Indo-Fijians refused to join the army unless they received the same pay as European recruits; indigenous Fijians had no such reservations and the force has been 95 percent Fijian ever since. Service in the strife-torn Middle East gave the Fiji military a unique preparation for its often political role in Fiji today. (Not many people outside Fiji realize that, after Australia and New Zealand, Lebanon is the foreign country most familiar to indigenous Fijians.)

The mass media presented the coup in simplistic terms as a racial conflict between Indo-Fijians and Fijians, though commentators with a deeper knowledge of the nature of power in Fiji saw it quite differently. Anthony D. van Fossen of Griffith University, Queensland, Australia, summed it up this way in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1987):

Although the first coup has been most often seen in terms of ethnic tensions between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, it may be more accurately seen as the result of tensions between aristocratic indigenous Fijians and their commoner allies defending feudalism, on the one hand, and the cause of social democracy, small-scale capitalism, and multi-ethnic nationalism represented by middle-class indigenous Fijian commoners and Hindus on the other.

In their October 1987 issue, *Pacific Islands Monthly* published this comment by noted author Brij V. Lal of the Australia National University:

More than anything else, the coup was about power. The emergence in an incipient form of a class-minded multi-racial politics, symbolized by the Labor Party and made possible by the support of many urban Fijians, posed a grave threat to the politics of race and racial compartmentalization preached by the Alliance and thus had to be nipped in the bud. The ascent of Dr. Bavadra, a chief from the long-neglected western Viti Levu, to the highest office in the land posed an unprecedented challenge to the traditional dominance of eastern chiefs, especially from Lau and Cakaudrove.

The comments above have appeared in several editions of this book, and in early 1998 the author received a letter from the noted Cook Islands academic Dr. Ron Crocombe, who had this to say in part:

I am saddened to see one who should be trying to give visitors balanced views, loading them with the biases of one side of a complex dispute. You speak of 83 percent of the land being owned by Fijians, but not that most of that is useless mountains, remote outer islands, or low fertility slopes, and that most of the top quality part of what is good agricultural land has been leased, against the owners' wishes in many cases, to Indian farmers and business-

men at rates fixed by law which are far below market value.

Labor as a "party that campaigned on bread and butter rather than race" is Labor ideology but not supported by facts. Labor was very much an Indian dominated and run party. Labor policy papers were prepared with minor exceptions by Indian and other non-Fijian persons. Tim Bavadra was a gentleman, but he always supported Alliance until he fell out with them and was chosen as the ideal front for an Indian dominated party in a context where the public was not yet ready for an Indian prime minister. Dr. Bavadra did not dare to stand for the Fijian seat in his electorate, and not only he, but every single Fijian who got in for the Coalition, got in on Indian and other non-Fijian votes through the cross-voting system of the time. With a cabinet held in place officially by its caucus (which was about three Indians to one Fijian) and unofficially by the people who provided the money and put them in power (almost totally Indian), it was indeed an Indian dominated cabinet, just as the former cabinets had been Fijian dominated.

The popular mythology put out by non-indigenous writers about the coup being nothing to do with race but about class to protect the chiefs is nonsense. Rabuka is from a low class and he toppled his high chiefly commander. He then neutralized the head of state who was his own personal high chief. The leading religious man for the Fijian ethnic nationalists was Manasa Lasaro, no high chief. The leading trade union man was Dan Veitata, a wharf laborer. The leading Fijian academic Asesela Ravuvu is no chief of any kind. Bavadra himself was a clan chief. Nobody seems to ask how the majority of Fijians feel, and I can assure you it is different from the vision portrayed. In your next edition do make it clear that this is a complex situation with many interest groups, and the basic issue is ethnicity, however unhappy that fact is these politically correct days.

The Second Coup

In July and August 1987 a committee set up by Governor-General Ganilau studied proposals for constitutional reform, and on September 4, talks began at Government House in Suva between Alliance and Coalition leaders under the chairmanship of Ratu Ganilau. With no hope of a consensus on a revised constitution, the talks were aimed at preparing for new elections.

Then, on September 26, 1987, Rabuka struck again, just hours before the governor-general was to announce a government of national unity to rule Fiji until new elections could be held. The plan, arduously developed over four months and finally approved by veteran political leaders on all sides, would probably have resulted in Rabuka being sacked. Rabuka quickly threw out the 1970 constitution and pronounced himself "head of state." Some 300 prominent community leaders were arrested and Ratu Ganilau was confined to Government House. Newspapers were shut down, trade unions repressed, the judiciary suspended, the public service purged, the activities of political opponents restricted, a curfew imposed, and the first cases of torture reported.

At midnight on October 7, 1987, Rabuka declared Fiji a republic. Rabuka's new Council of Ministers included Taukei extremists Apisai Tora and Filipe Bole, Fijian Nationalist Party leader Sakeasi Butadroka, and other marginal figures. Rabuka appeared to have backing in the Great Council of Chiefs, which wanted a return to the style of customary rule threatened by the Indian presence and Western democracy. Regime ideologists trumpeted traditional culture and religious fundamentalism to justify their actions. Nobody accused the United States of having anything to do with Rabuka's second coup, and even Ratu Mara seemed annoyed that Rabuka had destroyed an opportunity to salvage the reputations of himself and Ratu Ganilau. On October 16 Ratu Ganilau resigned as governor-general and two days later Fiji was expelled from the British Commonwealth.

The Republic of Rabuka

Realizing that Taukei/military rule was a recipe for disaster, on December 5, 1987 Rabuka appointed Ratu Ganilau president and Ratu Mara prime minister of the new republic. The 21-member

cabinet included 10 members of Rabuka's military regime, four of them army officers. Rabuka himself (now a self-styled brigadier) was once again Minister of Home Affairs. This interim government set itself a deadline of two years to frame a new constitution and return Fiji to freely elected representative government. By mid-1988 the army had been expanded into a highly disciplined 6,000-member force loyal to Brigadier Rabuka, who left no doubt he would intervene a third time if his agenda was not followed. The Great Council of Chiefs was to decide on Fiji's republican constitution.

The coups transformed the Fijian economy. In 1987 Fiji experienced 11 percent negative growth in the gross domestic product. To slow the flight of capital the Fiji dollar was devalued 33 percent in 1987, and inflation was up to nearly 12 percent by the end of 1988. At the same time civil servants, who make up half the workforce, had to accept a 25 percent wage cut as government spending was slashed. Food prices skyrocketed, causing serious problems for many families. At the end of 1987 the per capita average income was 11 percent *below* what it had been in 1980. Between 1986 and 1996 some 58,300 Indo-Fijians left Fiji for Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Nearly three-quarters of Fiji's administrators and managers, and a quarter of all professional, technical, and clerical workers departed taking tens of millions of dollars with them, a crippling loss for a country with a total population of under 750,000.

On the other hand, the devaluations and wage-cutting measures, combined with the creation of a tax-free exporting sector and the encouragement of foreign investment, brought about an economic recovery by 1990. At the expense of democracy, social justice, and racial harmony, Fiji embarked on a standard IMF/World Bank-style structural adjustment program. In 1992 the imposition of a 10 percent value-added tax (VAT) shifted the burden of taxation from rich to poor, standard IMF dogma. In effect, Rabuka and the old oligarchs had pushed Fiji squarely back into the third world.

In November 1989 Dr. Bavadra died of spinal cancer at age 55 and 60,000 people attended his funeral at Viseisei, the largest in Fijian history. Foreign journalists were prevented from covering the funeral. The nominal head of the unelected in-

terim government, Ratu Mara, considered Rabuka an unpredictable upstart and insisted that he choose between politics or military service. Thus in late 1989, the general and two army colonels were dropped from the cabinet, though Rabuka kept his post as army commander.

On July 25, 1990 President Ganilau promulgated a new constitution approved by the Great Council of Chiefs, which gave the chiefs the right to appoint the president and 24 of the 34 members of the Senate. The president had executive authority and appointed the prime minister from among the ethnic Fijian members of the House of Representatives. Under this constitution the 70-member House of Representatives was elected directly, with voting racially segregated. Ethnic Fijians were granted 37 seats from constituencies gerrymandered to ensure the dominance of the eastern chiefs. The constitution explicitly reserved the posts of president, prime minister, and army chief for ethnic Fijians. Christianity was made the official religion and Rabuka's troops were granted amnesty for any crimes committed during the 1987 coups. The Coalition promptly rejected this supremacist constitution as undemocratic and racist.

Not satisfied with control of the Senate, in early 1991 the Great Council of Chiefs decided to project their power into the lower house through the formation of the *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT), commonly called the Fijian Political Party. Meanwhile Fiji's multiethnic unions continued to rebuild their strength by organizing garment workers and leading strikes in the mining and sugar industries.

In June 1991 Major-Gen. Rabuka rejected an offer from Ratu Mara to join the cabinet as Minister of Home Affairs and co-deputy prime minister, since it would have meant giving up his military power base. Instead Rabuka attempted to widen his political appeal by making public statements in support of striking gold miners and cane farmers, and even threatening a third coup.

By now Rabuka's ambition to become prime minister was obvious, and his new role as a populist rabble-rouser seemed designed to outflank both the Labor Party and the chiefs (Rabuka himself is a commoner). President Ganilau (Rabuka's paramount chief) quickly applied pressure, and in July the volatile general reversed

himself and accepted the cabinet posts he had so recently refused. As a condition for reentering the government, Rabuka was forced to resign as army commander and the president's son, Major-Gen. Epeli Ganilau, was appointed his successor. With Rabuka out of the army everyone breathed a little easier, and the chiefs decided to co-opt a potential troublemaker by electing Rabuka president of the SVT.

Return to Democracy

The long-awaited parliamentary elections took place in late May 1992, and the SVT captured 30 of the 37 indigenous Fijian seats. Another five went to Fijian nationalists, while the 27 Indian seats were split between the NFP with 14 and the FLP with 13. The five other races' seats went to the General Voters Party (GVP).

Just prior to the election, Ratu Mara retired from party politics and was named vice-president of Fiji by the Great Council of Chiefs. An intense power struggle then developed in the SVT between Ratu Mara's chosen successor as prime minister, former finance minister Josevata Kamikamica, and ex-general Rabuka. Since the SVT lacked a clear majority in the 70-seat house, coalition partners had to be sought, and in a remarkable turn of events populist Rabuka gained the support of the FLP by offering concessions to the trade unions and a promise to review the constitution and land leases. Therefore Rabuka became prime minister thanks to the very party he had ousted from power at gunpoint exactly five years earlier!

The SVT formed a coalition with the GVP, but in November 1993 the Rabuka government was defeated in a parliamentary vote of no confidence over the budget, leading to fresh elections in February 1994. In these, Rabuka's SVT increased its representation to 31 seats. Many Indo-Fijians had felt betrayed by FLP backing of Rabuka's prime ministership in 1992, and FLP representation dropped to seven seats, compared to 20 for the NFP.

Ratu Ganilau died of leukemia in December 1993, and Ratu Mara was sworn in as president in January 1994. Meanwhile, Rabuka cultivated a pragmatic image to facilitate his international acceptance in the South Pacific, and within Fiji itself he demonstrated his political prowess by holding out a hand of reconciliation to the

Indo-Fijian community. The 1990 constitution had called for a constitutional review before 1997, and in 1995 a three-member commission was appointed, led by Sir Paul Reeves, a former governor-general of New Zealand, together with Mr. Tomasi Vakatora representing the Rabuka government and Mr. Brij Lal for the opposition.

The report of the commission titled *Towards a United Future* was submitted in September 1996. It recommended a return to the voting system outlined in the 1970 constitution with some members of parliament elected from racially divided communal constituencies and others from open ridings on a common roll of racially mixed electorates. The commissioners suggested that the post of prime minister no longer be explicitly reserved for an indigenous Fijian but simply for the leader of the largest grouping in parliament of whatever race.

The report was passed to a parliamentary committee for study, and in May 1997 all sides agreed to a power-sharing formula to resolve Fiji's constitutional impasse. The number of guaranteed seats for indigenous Fijians in the lower house was reduced from 37 to 23, and voting across racial lines was instituted in another third of the seats. The prime minister was to be required to form a cabinet comprised of ministers from all parties in proportion to their representation in parliament—a form of power sharing unique in modern democracy. Nearly half the members of the senate and the country's president would continue to be appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs. Human rights guarantees were included. The Constitution Amendment Bill passed both houses of parliament unanimously, and was promulgated into law by President Mara on July 25, 1997. In recognition of the rare national consensus that had been achieved, Fiji was welcomed back into the British Commonwealth in October 1997. The new constitution formally took effect in July 1998.

For many years it was unfashionable to look upon Fiji as a part of Melanesia, and the nation's Polynesian links were emphasized. The 1987 coups had a lot to do with rivalry between the eastward-looking chiefs of Bau and Lau and the Melanesian-leaning western Fijians. Ironically, some of the political friction between the dark-skinned commoner Rabuka and the tall aristocrat Ratu Mara can also be seen in this

light. The latter was always networking among Fiji's smaller Polynesian neighbors, and it was only in 1996 that Rabuka brought Fiji into the Melanesian Spearhead grouping that had existed since 1988. Of course, the pragmatist Rabuka was merely acknowledging the vastly greater economic potential of Melanesia, but he was clearly much more comfortable socializing with the other Melanesian leaders at regional summits than Ratu Mara ever could have been.

People's Coalition Government

In May 1999 Fiji's 419,000 eligible voters participated in the first election under the 1997 constitution. The IMF-style structural adjustment program of the previous government and a strong desire for change were key issues, and although Rabuka himself was elected, his SVT Party took only eight of the 71 parliamentary seats. The NFP allied with Rabuka was wiped out entirely by the Labor Party, which won all 19 Indo-Fijian seats, plus 18 of the 25 common roll seats elected by all voters. Two indigenous Fijian parties, the Fijian Alliance and the Party of National Unity, won a total of 14 seats. They also formed an alliance with Labor's 37 members to give "People's Coalition" an overwhelming 51 seats.

Among the seven women elected to parliament were Adi Kuini Vuikaba Speed, widow of former prime minister Timoci Bavadra, and Adi Koila Mara Nailatikau, daughter of President Mara. Labor leader Mahendra Chaudhry was appointed prime minister—the first Indo-Fijian ever to occupy the post. Two-thirds of Chaudhry's cabinet were indigenous Fijians, but it was quite different from the two previous governments, which had included no Indo-Fijians. Rabuka resigned from parliament soon after the election and was made chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs. His departure contributed to a feeling among grassroots Fijians that the Indians had taken over. If Dr. Tupeni Baba, Labor's second-in-command and an indigenous Fijian, had become prime minister, the situation would have been different, but Chaudhry's struggle had been long and his victory was so complete that he insisted on getting the top job. Baba became deputy prime minister. NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy issued a portentous warning at the time: "Fiji is not yet ready for an Indian prime minister."

Fiji's first democratic government in a dozen

years survived 365 days. Chaudhry vigorously pushed forward his reforms and applied the brakes to privatization, which won him few friends, and his relations with business and the media were antagonistic. In February 2000, the government introduced a "leadership honesty code" bill which would have required politicians to disclose their personal assets in private to the Ombudsman's office. Corruption had been rife during the Rabuka years, culminating in the collapse of the National Bank of Fiji in 1995 after F\$295 million had been siphoned off by politicians and Fijian chiefs through bad loans and other devices. Mismanagement and cronyism had led to huge losses by the Fiji Development Bank and provincial councils, and kickbacks were routine at Customs & Excise and other government departments. The Chaudhry government's anti-corruption drive was a blast of fresh air.

Reducing poverty was a high priority for the Chaudhry team. People's Coalition attempted to help Fijian villagers through affirmative action programs. The value added tax and customs duty on basic food items were lowered, utility rates were slashed, and loans were made available for small business.

People's Coalition also bucked the trend toward "globalization" and lobbied hard for fairer terms of trade. In recognition, Fiji was selected as the venue for the signing of what would have been the Suva Convention, a 20-year successor to Lomé Agreement governing trade between 77 African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) nations and the 15 European Union states. Dozens of ministers and high officials from these countries were scheduled to be in Suva on June 8, 2000, for the launch of this historic partnership agreement, but it was not to be.

After the May 1999 election, leaders of the defeated SVT party began working on strategies to bring down the People's Coalition government and return to power. In April 2000, the ultra-nationalist Taukei Movement was revived by Apisai Tora, a fringe politician deeply involved in the 1987 coups. Taukei's declared aim was to revise the 1997 constitution to ensure Fijian political supremacy. The SVT supported Taukei, as did some provincial administrations, but the Fiji army declared that it would not be drawn into any attempt to overthrow the government. Taukei agitators tried to make the future of Indo-

Fijian land leases an issue, and demonstrations began in Lautoka and Suva.

The Fiji Crisis

On May 19, 2000 a Taukei protest march wound down Victoria Parade in central Suva. When the thousands of marchers reached the gates of the Presidential Palace, they were told that gunmen had stormed Fiji's parliament, which had been in session, and had taken its members hostage. Many of the marchers rushed to the building, joining terrorists who were only too happy to have willing human shields. In central Suva gangs of thugs and protesters responded to news of the takeover by looting and burning Indian shops. Around 160 shops were emptied or destroyed in the three hours before the police began making arrests.

The initial assault on parliament was led by a failed businessman named George Speight, along with seven renegade members of the army's elite Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit (also known as the First Meridian Squadron) and 35 ex-soldiers, half of them ex-convicts. The highest ranking soldier present was retired major Ilisoni Ligairi, a former British Special Air Services warrant officer who had set up the CRW anti-terrorist unit in 1987. Speight had appeared in the Suva High Court on extortion charges five days before the coup, yet he declared he was acting to defend indigenous Fijian rights. In 1997 Speight had been forced to flee Australia after a pyramid scheme he had a hand in collapsed with A\$130 million in losses for gullible investors.

Yet to understand what was really happening, we have to back up a bit. In early 1999 a bitter struggle was being waged in government circles over who would gain the right to market Fiji's valuable mahogany forests worldwide. The Rabuka government was known to favor a U.S. company called Timber Resources Management, while the incoming Chaudhry government announced they intended to give the contract to the British-based Commonwealth Development Corporation on the basis of a recommendation from the Australian accountancy firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Speight had previously worked as a consultant for the Americans, and in June 1999 Chaudhry's Forestry Minister removed him from his position as managing director of the state-owned Fiji Hard-



*Parliament Building,
Viti Levu*

wood Corporation and Fiji Pine Limited because Speight had been a political appointee of the former regime. Chaudhry's surprise election in May 1999 had cost Speight and associates the chance to control the exploitation mahogany and pine tracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Just prior to his assault on parliament Speight had been trying to foment unrest among landowners by spreading disinformation about the rival bids and the Chaudhry government's intentions. Important figures in the previous Rabuka government were involved in the ongoing mahogany affair, including Rabuka's Minister of Finance and former Speight patron Jim Ah Koy. Speight's coup attempt may have had more to do with timber rights than indigenous rights. (No evidence of any involvement in the coup by foreign timber companies has emerged and none is implied here.)

Among the 45 persons taken hostage by Speight's gang were Prime Minister Chaudhry, and the minister of tourism and transport, President Mara's daughter. Ratu Mara immediately declared a state of emergency, and the Fiji Military Forces commander, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, ordered his men to surround the parliamentary compound. Unlike the situation during the 1987 coups, the army's high command and the bulk of its troops did not support the coup attempt. Bainimarama declined to use force to free the captives for fear of triggering a blood-bath, and many of the hostages were to spend the next 56 days sitting on mattresses with their lives in the hands of heavily armed goons.

On May 27, 80-year-old President Mara officially dismissed the elected Chaudhry government after Speight threatened to kill his daughter. The next day a mob of Speight supporters ransacked the offices of Fiji TV to protest coverage critical of the coup. Soon after a Fijian policeman was shot dead by gunmen near the parliament. On May 29, with the situation deteriorating, the army asked President Mara to "step aside" while it restored order. Mara thereupon withdrew to his power base on remote Lakeba in the Lau Group, the ignominious end of a long and distinguished career. That day Commodore Bainimarama declared martial law, abrogated the 1997 constitution, and assumed executive authority. Bainimarama ruled out any return to power by Chaudhry.

Meanwhile Speight was continually making fresh demands as the negotiations continued. A struggle for power was underway among the Fijian elite. The Great Council of Chiefs wanted to appoint the vice president, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, to replace Mara, and Speight insisted that Ratu Jope Seniloli, a retired school teacher with close ties to the chiefly Cakobau family but no previous political standing, must become vice president. Since the death of Ratu Sir George Cakobau in 1989, the once powerful Cakobaus of eastern Viti Levu had been eclipsed by their historic "Tongan" enemies from Lau, led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Seven weeks into the crisis Speight moved to have persons with Cakobau connections granted high positions in an interim administra-

tion. His choice for prime minister was Adi Samanunu Cakobau, Fiji's high commissioner in Malaysia and Sir George's eldest daughter.

That was the signal for Bainimarama, a long-time Mara ally, to order his army to tighten the noose around Speight by declaring parliament and nearby streets a "military exclusion zone." The next day (July 3) the Great Council of Chiefs named a civilian cabinet led by the former head of the Fiji Development Bank, Laisenia Qarase, another Mara man. This interim government had the army's blessing, and to win acceptance from the international community, high-profile Speight elements were shut out. These developments triggered widespread disturbances by grassroots Speight supporters throughout the country, including the occupation of tourist resorts, the blocking of highways, and the burning of the historic Masonic Lodge in Levuka. There was intimidation of Indo-Fijians living in rural areas of northeastern Viti Levu and central Vanua Levu, traditional Cakobau strongholds, with arson, looting, and ethnic cleansing. The military was unable to cope.

Visibly shaken, on July 9 Bainimarama agreed to an amnesty for Speight and the others on the condition that they free the 27 remaining hostages and surrender all arms. The Qarase interim government would be replaced, and Iloilo and Seniloli would become president and vice president. On July 13 the hostage crisis came to a peaceful end at a kava ceremony when Chaudhry magnanimously said that he held no personal animosity against Speight, though the army noted that not all of the missing weapons were turned in. Upon his release Chaudhry confirmed that he had been beaten by Speight's thugs early in the hostage crisis.

It's said that only the threat of a military coup from Bainimarama prevented President Iloilo, who was seen as overly sympathetic to Speight's cause, from accepting Adi Samanunu as prime minister. Former prime minister Rabuka (who remained on the sidelines during most of the crisis) remarked that Speight was only a puppet, brought in at the last minute by persons unknown. After the hostage crisis ended President Iloilo promised a thorough investigation to unmask the players behind the scenes, but nothing much has come of it.

Speight is only part-Fijian and the Taukei extremists represent a small minority of opinion in Fiji. By their reckless acts they have pushed Fiji back at least a decade politically, socially, and economically, and have done grave damage to human rights and the respect for the rule of law. The concerns of indigenous Fijians to protect their lands and culture were and are legitimate, but those interests have been enshrined in all three of Fiji's constitutions and no government would have been able to negate them. As previously in recent Fijian history, the race issue has been manipulated by defeated politicians and power hungry individuals, and rural villagers and marginalized urban Fijians proved effective tools in the hands of rabble rouser George Speight.

Interim Government

After the hostages were freed, Qarase simply stayed on as prime minister. In late July he appointed a cabinet consisting mostly of civil servants and opposition politicians, without any overt Speight insiders. Qarase announced that his military-backed regime would last 18 months, to give time for a new constitution to be drawn up and fresh elections arranged. However, during the week of July 17, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand announced sanctions against Fiji because the elected government had not been restored.

Speight's agitating continued with Qarase now the target of choice. On July 27 Speight was arrested at an army checkpoint between Suva and Nausori, and the next day the army rounded up 369 of his commoner followers in a forceful manner. Speight and cohorts were charged with carrying arms in contravention of the amnesty deal, and a week later the charge of treason was added. Speight and a dozen key figures in the coup attempt were sent to await trial on tiny Nukulau Island, a former picnic spot off Suva. In protest, pro-Speight soldiers kidnapped 50 Indo-Fijians at Labasa, but released them quickly when the army threatened to intervene.

In September the interim government set up a 12-member commission to review the 1997 constitution. Asesela Ravuvu, an academic with a long history of advocating hardline indigenous Fijian positions, was appointed chairman, and among the other members were three Speight

supporters. Most Indo-Fijians boycotted the process. The outcome was pending at press time, but it's widely felt that even if a Fijian supremacist constitution is imposed by force, it will serve only to isolate Fiji even further, just as Rabuka's racist constitution of 1990 was not widely accepted.

On the afternoon of November 2, 2000, what some saw as the final act in this tragedy unfolded at Suva's Queen Elizabeth Barracks, as 39 soldiers from the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit staged a surprise raid on army headquarters in an attempt to capture Commodore Bainimarama and seize control of Fiji for Speight. Loyal officers helped Bainimarama escape down a gully, and just before dusk the Third Fiji Infantry Regiment launched a fierce counter attack. Five rebels and three government soldiers died in the attempted mutiny, including several rebels who were beaten to death by army troops after being captured. Two dozen soldiers and civilians were wounded, and the army quickly rounded up the remaining mutineers. The nation was shocked by this unprecedented brutality. The plot thickened when it was revealed that ex-general Rabuka had been present at the barracks during the mutiny. Rabuka claimed he had gone there to mediate, but Bainimarama ordered him not to re-enter the facility.

After their release, a number of lawsuits were filed before the Fiji High Court claiming that the change in government was unconstitutional. On November 15, 2000, Chief Justice Anthony Gates issued a ruling in response to a plea brought by an ordinary Indo-Fijian farmer, Chandrika Prasad, who claimed that his constitutional rights had been violated by the coup. Gates agreed and declared the Speight coup null and void, the interim government illegal, and the 1997 constitution still the law of the land. Gates ruled that Ratu Mara was still the legal president of Fiji and that he had a duty to appoint a new prime minister from among the parliamentarians elected in 1999. Gates suggested that the interim government resign and allow the formation of a government of national unity comprised of elected members of parliament. That would get Fiji back on track.

A shocked Interim Prime Minister Qarase referred the case to the Fiji Court of Appeal, which upheld Chief Justice Gates' ruling in a historic de-

cision on March 1, 2001. Qarase and Iloilo both announced that the court's decision would be respected. Then began some complicated maneuvering in an attempt to give the interim government the facade of legality. The 50-member Great Council of Chiefs was convened at army headquarters in Suva, and they reappointed Iloilo and Seniloli to the presidency and vice-presidency. Fiji's top judges had suggested that the president recall parliament, and 40 of the 71 parliamentarians deposed by George Speight signed a petition asking that this be done. Yet President Iloilo dismissed Chaudhry and appointed his own nephew, Ratu Tevita Momoedonu, as prime minister. Momoedonu resigned the next day and advised the president to formally dissolve parliament, which he did. This allowed Iloilo to reappoint Qarase as "caretaker" prime minister until elections could be held. Qarase quickly brought back his old 30-minister cabinet, and the unelected government that the judges had declared illegal just two weeks before was back in business.

As this book goes to press Fiji's fate is still undecided, and moves to illegally revise the 1997 constitution continue. Under the current voting system, the Labor Party could easily be voted back into power, something the corrupt politicians and chiefs backing Qarase greatly fear. Ratu Mara is Qarase's customary chief, and it's believed the old leader is still pulling the strings from faraway Lau. Within the Labor Party, a leadership struggle is underway between Mahendra Chaudhry and his deputy Dr. Tupeni Baba. President Iloilo is ailing, and Speight-appointed Vice President Seniloli is unlikely to be accepted by many players as his successor. The struggle between tradition and modernity in Fiji is far from over—watch this space for future developments.

As could be expected, the Fiji Crisis had a disastrous impact on the economy. After positive growth of 7.8 percent in 1999, there was eight percent negative growth in 2000. By the end of 2000, over 7,400 people had lost their jobs. Tourist arrivals for the three months following the coup were only 37,126 compared to 120,156 for the same period in 1999, and the industry was losing US\$1 million a day. A US\$100 million Hilton Hotel project for Nadi was put on hold, and other major resorts at Natadola Beach and elsewhere were canceled.

The crisis has widened the gap between the haves and have nots in Fiji, and it will be at least a decade before the country recovers, assuming that all goes well.

New Zealand journalist Michael Field, who was in Fiji throughout the crisis, summed it up thus:

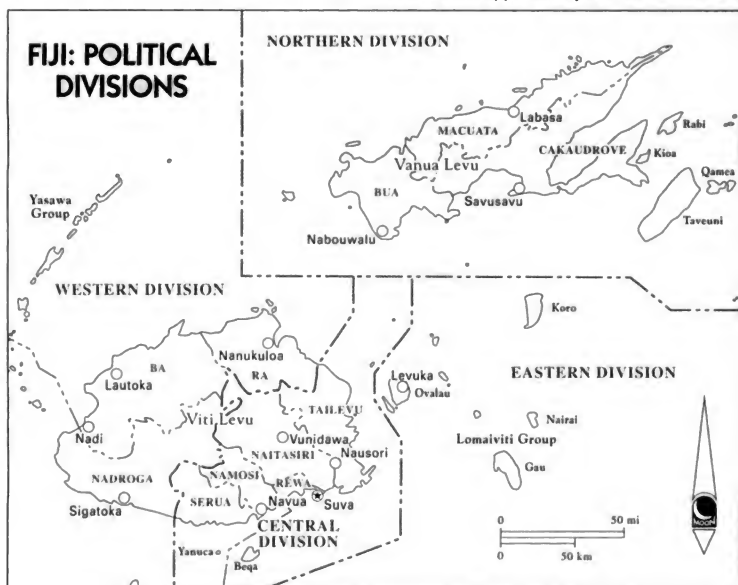
I found it more personal than any other story I've ever covered. People who had long ago stopped just being contacts and stories, but were friends to cherish and love, were hurting so much during those three months. The pain of knowing this was not a pain worth much at all compared to those who were seeing lives and dreams disappear in some indigenous nightmare. In one of the more telling moments Mara spoke of the way traditional Fiji had a procedure for reconciliation. Like other Polynesian cultures the business of saying sorry is deeply ingrained and much honored. What

he did not say was who was meant to apologize to who. And for what.

GOVERNMENT

The 1997 constitution provides for a parliamentary system of government with a 71-seat House of Representatives or "lower house" consisting of 46 members from communal ridings and 25 from multiracial ridings with elections every five years. Twenty-three communal seats are reserved for indigenous Fijians, 19 for Indo-Fijians, three for general electors (part-Fijians, Europeans, Chinese, etc.), and one for Rotumans. The leader of the largest party or coalition of parties in parliament is the head of government or prime minister. Parties with over eight elected members have the right to be represented in the cabinet and each of Fiji's 20 government ministries is run by a cabinet member. Voting is compulsory (F\$20 fine for failing to vote).

The 32-member "upper house" or Senate has 14 members appointed by the Great Council of



FIJI IN A COCONUT SHELL

DIVISION/ PROVINCE	HEADQUARTERS	AREA (square km)	POPULATION (1996)	PERCENT FIJIAN
CENTRAL DIVISION	SUVA	4,293	297,255	59.5
Naitasiri	Vunidawa	1,666	126,441	56.1
Namosi	Navua	570	5,893	91.4
Rewa	Nabalili	272	101,193	58.6
Serua	Navua	830	15,495	55.1
Tailevu	Nausori	955	48,233	67.7
WESTERN DIVISION	LAUTOKA	6,360	295,891	39.4
Ba	Lautoka	2,634	211,080	33.2
Nadroga	Sigatoka	2,385	54,049	52.5
Ra	Nanukulua	1,341	30,762	59.4
NORTHERN DIVISION	LABASA	6,198	138,754	46.9
Macuata	Labasa	2,004	80,151	28.2
Bua	Nabouwalu	1,378	14,977	73.6
Cakaudrove	Savusavu	2,816	43,626	72.0
EASTERN DIVISION	LEVUKA	1,422	40,755	89.4
Kadavu	Vunisea	478	9,539	99.2
Lau	Lakeba	487	12,203	98.6
Lomaiviti	Levuka	411	16,203	91.2
Rotuma	Ahau	46	2,810	5.8
TOTAL FIJI	SUVA	18,272	772,655	51.1

Chiefs, nine by the prime minister, eight by the leader of the opposition, and one by the Council of Rotuma. Any legislation affecting the rights of indigenous Fijians must be approved by at least nine of the 14 senators appointed by the chiefs. The Great Council of Chiefs also chooses Fiji's head of state, the president, for a five-year term. The three traditional Fijian confederacies are Burebasaga, Kubuna, and Tovata.

Aside from the national government, there's a well-developed system of local government. On the Fijian side, the basic unit is the village (*koro*) represented by a village herald (*turaganikoro*), who is chosen by consensus. The 1,169 villages and 483 settlements are grouped into 189 districts (*tikina*), the districts into 14 provinces (*yasana*). The executive head of each provincial council is the *roko tui*, appointed by the Fijian Affairs Board.

The national administration is broken down into four divisions (central, eastern, northern, and western), each headed by a commissioner. These civil servants and the 19 district officers work for the Ministry of Regional Development and Multi-Ethnic Affairs. The Micronesians of Rabi and Polynesians of Rotuma govern themselves through island councils of their own. Ten city and town councils also function.

Fiji has a High Court, a Fiji Court of Appeal, and a Supreme Court. The chief justice and eight other judges are appointed by the president after consulting the prime minister. With the collapse of parliament and a change of president in the wake of the Speight coup, the Supreme Court emerged as the last bastion of legality in Fiji's national system of government. Criminal and civil cases of lesser importance are handled in magistrates courts.

ECONOMY

Fiji has a diversified economy based on tourism, garment manufacturing, sugar production, gold mining, timber, commercial fishing, kava, and coconut products. Although eastern Viti Levu and the Lau Group have long dominated the country politically, western Viti Levu remains Fiji's economic powerhouse, with sugar, tourism, timber, and gold mining all concentrated there.

Aside from the cash economy, subsistence agriculture is important to indigenous Fijians in rural areas, where manioc, taro, yams, sweet potato, and corn are the principal subsistence crops.

Sugar

Sugar accounts for about 35 percent of Fiji's gross domestic product. Almost all of the cane is grown by small independent Indo-Fijian farmers on contract to the government-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation. Some 20,000 farmers cultivate cane on holdings averaging 4.5 hectares leased from indigenous Fijians. The corporation owns 595 km of 0.610-meter narrow-gauge railway, which it uses to carry the cane to the mills at Lautoka, Ba, Rakiraki, and Labasa. A shift away from carrying cane by rail in favor of truck trans-

port is hurting farmers by increasing costs. Fiji's four aging and inefficient sugar mills are in urgent need of modernization.

Nearly half a million metric tonnes of sugar are exported annually to Britain, Malaysia, Japan, and other countries, providing direct employment for 35,000 people. Workers cutting cane earn F\$8 a day and two meals. A distillery at Lautoka produces rum and other liquors from the by-products of sugar. Some 176,000 metric tons of Fijian sugar are sold to the European Union each year at fixed rates three or four above world market levels thanks to import quotas set forth in the Cotonou Agreement. The EU uses this successor to the Lomé Convention as a way of providing aid to 77 former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. Without these subsidies (worth F\$80–90 million a year), Fiji's sugar industry would collapse. Although the F\$200 million Fiji earns from sugar is far less than it makes from tourism, far more Fijians depend on this industry for their livelihood than rely on tourism.

Rice and Copra

Fiji now grows almost half the rice it needs and is trying to become self-sufficient. Much of the rice is grown around Nausori and Navua, and on Vanua Levu. Most of Fiji's copra is produced in Lau, Lomaiviti, Taveuni, and Vanua Levu, half by European or part-Fijian planters and the rest by indigenous Fijian villagers. Copra production has slipped from 40,000 tons a year in the 1950s to about 10,000 tons today due to the low prices paid to producers.

Kava and Water

Kava is the fastest growing agricultural crop, and in 1998 F\$35 million worth of the root was exported to Germany, the United States, and other countries where they are used by pharmaceutical firms to make antidepressants and muscle-relaxers. Large European, American, and Japanese corporations have filed multiple patents in an attempt to monopolize the many uses of the plant. It is believed that kava could eventually overtake sugar as a moneymaker unless new plan-

HOW A SUGAR MILL WORKS

The sugarcane is fed through a shredder toward a row of huge rollers that squeeze out the juice. The crushed fiber (bagasse) is burned to fuel the mill or is processed into paper. Lime is then added to the juice and the mixture is heated. Impurities settle in the clarifier and mill mud is filtered out to be used as fertilizer. The clear juice goes through a series of evaporators, in which it is boiled into steam under partial vacuum to remove water and create a syrup. The syrup is boiled again under greater pressure in a vacuum pan, and raw sugar crystals form. The mix then enters a centrifuge, which spins off the remaining syrup (molasses—used for distilling or cattle feed). The moist crystals are sent on to a rotating drum, where they are tumble-dried using hot air. Raw sugar comes out in the end.

tations in Hawaii, Australia, and Mexico steal the market.

Another miracle export is natural artesian water drawn from a well at Yaqara on north-western Viti Levu and bottled in a modern plant owned by David Gilmour of Wakaya Island fame. Gilmour gave the indigenous landowners of the watershed a 25 percent interest in his company, making them the richest clan in Fiji as sales of Fiji Water in the United States are booming.

Timber

Timber is increasingly important as 40,730 hectares of softwood planted in western Viti Levu and Vanua Levu by Fiji Pine and private landowners in the late 1970s reach maturity. Processing facilities for the 16,000 hectares of pine on Vanua Levu are inadequate and round logs must be transported to Viti Levu by truck and ferry at great expense. Milling and marketing is done by Tropik Timber, a Fiji Pine subsidiary.

In addition to softwood, around 30,000 hectares of hardwood (74 percent of it mahogany) planted in south-eastern Viti Levu after 1952 by the British is almost ready for harvesting (another 20,000 hectares in central Vanua Levu will be mature in a decade). With buyers in Europe and elsewhere increasingly averse to natural rainforest timber, Fiji is in the enviable position of possessing the largest "green" mahogany forest in the world. The government-controlled Fiji Hardwood Corporation was set up in 1997 to manage this asset, which has been valued as high as F\$510 million. Fiji already exports about F\$50 million a year in sawed lumber and wood chips (the export of raw logs was banned in 1987). A factory between Nadi and Sigatoka uses senile coconut trees to make quality furniture, flooring, and panels.

Yet outside the managed plantations Fiji's native forests are poorly protected from the greed

of foreign logging companies and shortsighted local landowners, and each year large tracts of pristine rainforest are lost. Now that all of the lowland forests have been cleared, attention is turning to the highlands. The pine and mahogany projects have had the corollary benefit of reducing pressure on the natural forests to supply Fiji's timber needs.

Fishing

Commercial fishing is important, with a government-subsidized tuna cannery at Levuka supplied in part by Fiji's own fleet of 17 longline vessels. The 15,000 metric tons of canned skipjack and albacore tuna produced each year comprise

Fiji's fifth-largest export, shipped mostly to Britain, Canada, and the United States (see **Ovalau** for more information).

In addition, 3,000 tons of chilled yellowfin tuna is flown to Hawaii and Japan to serve the sashimi (raw fish) market.

Mining

Mining activity centers on gold from the Emperor Gold Mine at Vatukoula on northern Viti Levu. Elsewhere on Viti Levu, Emperor controls a rich gold deposit at Tuvatu, unfortunately inside the Nadi water catchment area and thus an environmental threat. In 1998 the Mount Kasi gold mine on Vanua Levu closed due to low world prices, and the development of other gold fields has been frozen. In 1998 gold exports were worth F\$70.5 million.

Since 1984 Placer Pacific has spent US\$10 million exploring the extensive low-grade copper deposits at Namosi, 30 km northwest of Suva, but in 1997,

despite offers of near tax-free status from the government, the company put the US\$1 billion project on hold saying it was not economical.

Garment Industry

Garments are now Fiji's largest export and are produced by 100 companies that export their



Taro, which grows marvelously well in the rich soils of Fiji's bush gardens, is one of the staples of the Pacific and ensures a steady supply of nourishing food for the villagers.

clothes mainly to Australia and New Zealand. The South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA) allows Fijian products with at least 50 percent local content partial duty- and quota-free entry into those countries. Some foreign manufacturers have moved their factories to Fiji to take advantage of the low labor costs. SPARTECA rules prevent local manufacturers from importing quality fabrics from outside the region, limiting them to the bottom end of the market. The value of SPARTECA is gradually eroding and a new agreement to replace it is under negotiation.

The garment industry employs 16,000 people, with female workers earning an average of F\$60 a week. At peak periods the factories operate three shifts, seven days a week. Women working in the industry have complained of body searches and sexual harassment; those who protest or organize industrial action are often fired and blacklisted. About 1,000 recently arrived Asian workers are also employed in the factories. In 1998 Fiji exported garments worth F\$302 million.

Other Manufacturing

Companies that process food or make furniture, toys, or shoes are also prominent in the tax-free exporting sector. Until recently it was believed that manufacturing would eventually overtake both sugar and tourism as the main source of income for the country, but the globalization of trade and the progressive reduction of tariffs worldwide is cutting into Fiji's competitiveness. SPARTECA's local-content rule discourages local companies from reducing costs by introducing labor-saving technology, condemning them to obsolescence in the long term.

Economic Problems

In spite of all this potential, unemployment is a major social problem. The economy generates only 2,500 new jobs a year, but 15,000 young people leave school every year, and unemployment is at 15 percent. Immediately after the 1987 coups Fiji's currency was devalued 33 percent, and in January 1998 the Fiji dollar was devalued another 20 percent. These moves increased the country's competitiveness by giving exporters more Fiji dollars for their products and encouraged tourism, while lowering the real incomes of

ordinary Fijians. To stimulate industry, firms that export 95 percent of their products are granted 13-year tax holidays, the duty-free import of materials, and freedom to repatriate capital and profits. By 1999 some 131 factories were operating under these laws.

In 1995 Fiji's financial standing was severely shaken when it was announced that the government-owned National Bank of Fiji was holding hundreds of millions of dollars in bad debts resulting from politically motivated loans to indigenous Fijian and Rotuman politicians and businesspeople. The subsequent run on deposits cost the bank another F\$20 million, and the government was forced to step in to save the bank and cover its losses. In 1996 F\$80 million was spent on the bailout, and in 1997 another F\$133 million (or 12 percent of the 1997 budget) was diverted from development projects to cover it. Vast sums have been lost, an indication of a form of systemic corruption not usually noticed by visitors. The 1999 Colonial Life Insurance paid F\$9.5 million for a 51 percent interest in what was left of the National Bank.

Fiji has a debt of over F\$1,425 million, equivalent to 45 percent of the country's gross domestic product or about F\$1,850 per capita. Eighty percent of the country's budget goes toward debt repayments, public service salaries, and other recurrent spending. Rising public indebtedness and deficit spending are discouraging foreign investment. Cronyism and corruption, which the Chaudhry government attempted to control, have returned full force since the May 2000 coup.

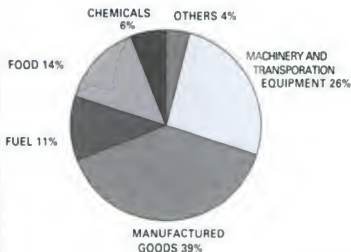
Trade and Aid

Fiji's balance of trade has improved in recent years, and although the country still imports 35 percent more than it exports, much of the imbalance is resold to tourists and foreign airlines who pay in foreign exchange. Garments are the nation's largest visible export earner, followed by raw sugar, unrefined gold, wood products, fish, kava, molasses, and ginger, in that order. Yet large trade imbalances still exist with Australia, New Zealand, and most Asian countries.

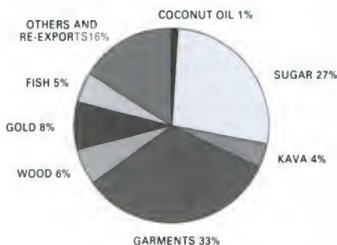
Mineral fuels used to eat up much of Fiji's import budget, but this declined when the Monasavu Hydroelectric Project and other self-sufficiency measures came on-line in the 1980s.

BALANCE OF TRADE

TOTAL IMPORTS
F\$1,434 MILLION
(1998)



TOTAL EXPORTS
F\$960 MILLION
(1998)



DAVID STANLEY

Manufactured goods, motor vehicles, food, petroleum products, and chemicals account for most of the import bill.

Fiji is the least dependent South Pacific nation. Overseas aid totals only F\$40 million a year or about F\$50 per capita (as compared to several thousand dollars per capita in Tahiti-Polynesia). Development aid comes from Australia (F\$15 million), the European Union (F\$10 million), Japan (F\$6 million), New Zealand (F\$5 million), and China (under F\$1 million). North American aid to Fiji is negligible. The New Zealand Government deserves credit for devoting much of its limited aid budget to the creation of national parks and reserves.

In the wake of the May 2000 coup, countries such as Australia have suspended their bilateral aid to non-humanitarian activities such as training and scholarships for the public service to give the interim government an incentive to return Fiji to a democratic system of government. Health and basic education assistance have not been affected, and small-scale projects aimed at helping poorer communities or supporting human rights have continued.

Aside from conventional aid, in 1996 Fiji earned F\$11.4 million from United Nations peacekeeping duties while the army's role in other multinational forces brought in another F\$5.8 million. (Since 1978 some 34 Fijian soldiers and civilian staff

have died while on peacekeeping duties). In early 2000 some 190 Fijian soldiers were sent to Timor, even though the U.N. is currently millions of dollars in arrears in its payments to Fiji for peacekeeping. Some 3,800 people serve in Fiji's military (1,000 of them overseas) costing the country over F\$40 million a year.

Tourism

Tourism has been the leading moneymaker since 1989, earning over F\$500 million a year—more than sugar and gold combined. In 1999 some 409,955 tourists visited Fiji—twice as many as visited Tahiti and 15 times as many as visited Tonga. Things appear in better perspective, however, when Fiji is compared to Hawaii, which is about the same size in surface area. Overpacked Hawaii gets nearly seven million tourists, over 17 times as many as Fiji. Tourist arrivals were down to 294,070 in 2000 due to the bad publicity surrounding the May coup attempt, but has since been slowly recovering.

Gross receipts figures from tourism are often misleading, as 56 cents on every dollar is repatriated overseas by foreign investors or used to pay for tourism-related imports. Sugar is actually far more profitable than tourism for Fiji. In 1997 the hotel industry employed 6,511 people (5,358 full-time and 1,153 part-time) with an estimated 40,000 jobs in all sectors related to

ECOTOURISM OR ECOTERRORISM

Recently ecotourism has become popular, and with increasing concern in Western countries over the damaging effects of solar radiation, more and more people are looking for land-based activities as an alternative to lying on the beach. This trend is being fueled by "baby boomers" who are eager to spend their disposable income on "soft adventure travel" in exotic locales. In Fiji the most widespread manifestation of the ecotourism/adventure phenomenon is the current scuba diving boom, and tours by chartered yacht, ocean kayak, raft, surfboard, bicycle, or on foot are proliferating.

This presents both a danger and an opportunity. Income from visitors wishing to experience nature gives local residents and governments an incentive for preserving the environment, although tourism can quickly degrade that environment through littering, the collection of coral and shells, and the development of roads, docks, and resorts in natural areas. Means of access created for ecotourists often end up being used by local residents whose priority is not conservation. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the creation of national parks and reserves in tropical countries is the ability of such parks to attract visitors from industrialized areas while at the same time creating a framework for the preservation of nature. For in the final analysis, it is governments that must enact regulations to protect the environment—market forces usually do the opposite.

Too often today what is called ecotourism is actually packaged consumer tourism with a green coating, or just an excuse for high prices. Some four-wheel-drive jeep safaris and jet boat excursions have more to do with ecoterrorism than ecotourism. A genuine ecotourism resort would be built of local materials using natural ventilation. That means no air conditioning and only limited use of fans. The buildings would fit into the natural landscape and not restrict access to customary lands or the sea. Local fish and vegetables would enjoy preference over imported meats on tourist tables, and waste would be minimized. The use of aggressive motorized transport would be kept to an absolute minimum. Cultural sensitivity could be enhanced by profit sharing with the landowning clans and local participation in ownership.

Ecotourism is a people-oriented form of tourism that should directly benefit the islanders themselves. At smaller, locally owned businesses, visitors get to meet locals on a more personal basis, while contributing to local development. Guesthouse tourism offers excellent employment opportunities for island women as proprietors, and it's exactly what most visitors want. Appropriate tourism requires little investment, there's less disruption, and full control remains with the people themselves. (For a more complete discussion of this topic than can be included here, visit www.planeta.com.)

tourism. Management of the top hotels is usually expatriate, with Indo-Fijians filling technical positions such as maintenance, cooking, accounting, etc., and indigenous Fijians working in more visible positions such as receptionists, waiters, guides, and housekeepers.

With an eye to profitability, many resorts try to use as many part-time workers as possible. Part-timers are usually not scheduled for any specific hours, but are kept on standby and only called in when things get busy or someone reports sick. Even then, they're often given only a four-hour shift. The hiring age for unskilled female workers is 18 to 25, though older women are occasionally hired for babysitting at a hotel. Women can keep working after turning 25, but they're usually shifted into less visible jobs like laundry work and cleaning. Unskilled men are

hired up to the age of 35, if they look okay.

Fiji has 220 licensed hotels with a total of around 6,000 rooms, over a third of the South Pacific's tourist beds. Most of the large resort hotels in Fiji are foreign owned (although the Tanoa and Cathay hotel chains are local Fiji-based enterprises). The Fiji Government is doing all it can to promote luxury hotel development by offering 20-year tax holidays on new projects. The May 2000 coup halted resort development and has had a heavy impact on expatriate-run ventures dependent on high occupancy levels.

The main tourist resorts are centered along the Coral Coast of Viti Levu and in the Mamanuca Islands off Nadi/Lautoka. Investment by U.S. hotel chains has increased as Japanese firms have pulled out. In 1996 ITT-Sheraton bought two luxury hotels on Nadi's Denarau Island from a group of

Japanese banks. In 2000 Outrigger Hotels of Hawaii built a major resort on the Coral Coast.

About 29 percent of Fiji's tourists come from Australia, 18 percent from New Zealand, 15 percent from the U.S., 10 percent from Britain, nine

percent from Japan, seven percent from continental Europe, and three percent from Canada. The vast majority of visitors arrive in Fiji to/from Auckland, Sydney, Tokyo, Honolulu, Los Angeles, and Vancouver.



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TUNA FLAKES
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THE PEOPLE

ETHNIC GROUPS

The Fijians

Fiji is a transitional zone between Polynesia and Melanesia. Indigenous Fijians bear a physical resemblance to the Melanesians, but like the Polynesians, they have hereditary chiefs, patrilineal descent, a love of elaborate ceremonies, and a fairly homogeneous language and culture. Fijians have interbred with Polynesians to the extent that they have lighter skin and larger stature than other Melanesians. In the interior and west of Viti Levu where there was not as much contact with Polynesians, the people tend to be somewhat darker and smaller than the easterners. Yet Fijians still have Melanesian frizzy hair, while most—but not all—Polynesians have straight hair.

The Fijians live in villages along the rivers or coast, with anywhere from 50 to 400 people led by a hereditary chief. To see a Fijian family living in an isolated house in a rural area is uncommon. The traditional thatched *bure* is fast disappearing from Fiji as villagers rebuild in tin and panel (often following destructive cyclones). Grass is not as accessible as cement, takes more time to repair, and is less permanent.

Away from the three largest islands the population is almost totally Fijian. *Mataqali* (clans) are grouped into *yavusa* (tribes) of varying rank and function. Several *yavusa* form a *vanua*, a number of which make up a *matanitu*. Chiefs of the most important *vanua* are known as high chiefs. In western Viti Levu the groups are smaller, and outstanding commoners can always rise to positions of power and prestige reserved for high chiefs in the east.

Fijians work communal land individually, not as a group. Each Fijian is assigned a piece of native land. They grow most of their own food in village gardens, and only a few staples such as tea, sugar, flour, etc., are imported from Suva and sold in local coop stores. A visit to one of these stores will demonstrate just how little they import and how self-sufficient they are. Fishing, village maintenance work, and ceremonial presentations are done together. While village life provides a form of collective security, individuals are discouraged from rising above the group. Fijians who attempt to set up a business are often stifled by the demands of relatives and friends. The Fijian custom of claiming favors from members of one's own group is known as *kerekere*. This pattern makes it difficult for Fijians to compete with Indo-Fijians, for whom life has always been a struggle.

The Indians

Most of the Indians now in Fiji are descended from indentured laborers recruited in Bengal and Bihar a century ago. In the first year of the system (1879) some 450 Indians arrived in Fiji to work in the cane fields. By 1883 the total had risen to 2,300 and in 1916, when the last indentured laborers arrived, 63,000 Indians were present in the colony. In 1920 the indenture system was finally terminated, the cane fields were divided into four-hectare plots, and the Indian workers became tenant farmers on land owned by Fijians. Indians continued to arrive until 1931, though many of these later arrivals were Gujarati or Sikh businesspeople.

In 1940 the Indian population stood at 98,000, still below the Fijian total of 105,000, but by the 1946 census Indians had outstripped Fijians 120,000 to 117,000—making Fijians a minority in their own homeland. In the wake of the Rabuka coups the relative proportions changed as thousands of Indians emigrated to North America and Australia, and by early 1989 indigenous Fijians once again outnumbered Indo-Fijians. The 1996 census reported that Fiji's total population was 772,655, of which 51.1 percent were Fijian while 43.6 percent were Indian (at the 1986 census 46 percent were Fijian and 48.7 percent Indian). Between 1986 and 1996 the number of Indians in Fiji actually decreased by 12,125 with the heaviest falls in rural areas. Aside from emigration, the more widespread use of contraceptives by Indian women has led to a lower fertility rate. The crude birth rate per 1,000 population is 28.4 for Fijians and 21.0 for Indo-Fijians.

Unlike the village-based Fijians, a majority of Indo-Fijians are concentrated in the cane-growing areas and live in isolated farmhouses, small settlements, or towns. Many Indo-Fijians also

live in Suva, as do an increasing number of Fijians. Within the Indo-Fijian community there are divisions of Hindu (80 percent) versus Muslim (20 percent), north Indian versus south Indian, and Gujarati versus the rest. The Sikhs and Gujaratis have always been somewhat of an elite as they immigrated freely to Fiji outside the indenture system.

The different groups have kept alive their ancient religious beliefs and rituals. Hindus tend to marry within their caste, although the restrictions on behavior, which characterize the caste system in India, have disappeared. Indo-Fijian

marriages are often arranged by the parents, while Fijians generally choose their own partners. Rural Indo-Fijians still associate most closely

with other members of their extended patrilineal family group, and Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs continue to restrict Indo-Fijian women to a position subservient to men.

It's often said that Indians concentrate on accumulation while Fijians emphasize distribution. Yet Fiji's laws themselves encourage Indians to invest their savings in business by preventing them or anyone else from purchasing native communal land. And it's a fact that Indo-Fijians earn 70 percent of the income and pay 80 percent of the

taxes in Fiji, something no government can ignore. Yet high-profile Indian dominance of the retail sector has distorted the picture somewhat, and the reality is that the per capita incomes of ordinary indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians are not that different. The Fijians are not poor because they are exploited by Indians; the two groups simply

amass their wealth in different ways. In large measure, Fiji's excellent service and retail sectors exist thanks to the thrift and efficiency of the law-abiding Indians. When you consider their position in a land where most have lived four generations, where they form almost half the



The descendants of the late 19th-century arrivals, such as this young woman, make up almost half of Fiji's population today. These indentured laborers faced many hardships and indignities, one of which stemmed from a British policy of allowing only 40 Indian women to be brought to the island for every 100 men.

population, where many laws are slanted against them, and where all natural resources are in the hands of others, their industriousness and patience are admirable.

Other Groups

The 5,000 Fiji-born Europeans or *Kai Vavalagi* are descendants of Australians and New Zealanders who came to build cotton, sugar, or copra plantations in the 19th century. Many married Fijian women, and the 13,000 part-Fijians or *Kai Loma* of today are the result. There is almost no intermarriage between Fijians (*Kai Viti*) and Indo-Fijians (*Kai India*) (though Fijians intermarry freely with Chinese and Solomon Islanders). Many other Europeans are present in Fiji on temporary contracts or as tourists.

Most of the 5,000 Chinese in Fiji are descended from free settlers who came to set up small businesses a century ago, although since 1987 there has been an influx of Chinese from mainland China who were originally admitted to operate market gardens but who have since moved into the towns. Chinese garment workers continue to arrive. Fiji Chinese tend to intermarry freely with the other racial groups.

The people of Rotuma, a majority of whom now live in Suva, are Polynesians. On neighboring islands off Vanua Levu are the Micronesians of Rabi (from Kiribati) and the Polynesians of Kioa (from Tuvalu). The descendants of Solomon Islanders blackbirded during the 19th century still live in communities near Suva, Levuka, and Labasa. The Tongans in Lau and other Pacific islanders who have immigrated to Fiji make this an ethnic crossroads of the Pacific.

Social Conditions

Some 98 percent of the country's population was born in Fiji. The partial breakdown in race relations since 1987 has been a tragedy for Fiji, though racial antagonism has been exaggerated. At the grassroots level, the different ethnic groups have always gotten along remarkably well, with little animosity. Unfortunately race relations in Fiji have been manipulated by agitators with hidden agendas unrelated to race. As important as race are the variations between rich and poor, or urban (46 percent) and rural (54 percent). Avenues for future economic growth are limited,

and unemployment is reflected in an increasing crime rate. Two-thirds of the rural population is without electricity.

Although Fiji's economy grew by 25 percent between 1977 and 1991, the number of people living in poverty increased by two-thirds over the same period. The imposition in 1992 of a 10 percent value-added tax combined with reductions in income tax and import duties shifted the burden of taxation from the haves to the have-nots. A third of the population now lives in poverty, and contrary to the myth of Indian economic domination, Indo-Fijians are more likely to be facing abject poverty than members of other groups. Single-parent urban families cut off from the extended-family social safety net are the group most affected, especially women trying to raise families on their own. As a Fijian woman on Taveuni told us, "Life is easy in Fiji, only money is a problem."

Literacy is high at 87 percent. Although education is not compulsory at any level, 98 percent of children age 6–14 attend school. Many schools are still racially segregated. Over 100 church-operated schools receive government subsidies. The Fiji Institute of Technology was founded at Suva in 1963, followed by the University of the South Pacific in 1968. The university serves the 12 Pacific countries that contribute to its costs. Medical services in Fiji are heavily subsidized. The divisional hospitals are at Labasa, Lautoka, and Suva, and there are also 19 sub-divisional or area hospitals, 74 health centers, 100 nursing stations, and 409 village clinics scattered around the country. The most common infectious diseases are influenza, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

LAND RIGHTS

When Fiji became a British colony in 1874, the land was divided between white settlers who had bought plantations and the *tauvei ni gele*, the Fijian "owners of the soil." The government assumed title to the balance. Today the alienated (privately owned) plantation lands are known as "freehold" land—about 10 percent of the total. Another seven percent is Crown land, 80 percent of it currently leased for periods of up to 99 years. The remaining 83 percent is in-

alienable Fijian communal land, which can be leased (about 30 percent is) but may never be sold. Compare this 83 percent (much of it not arable) with only three percent Maori land in New Zealand and almost zero native Hawaiian land. Land ownership has provided the Fijians with a security that allows them to preserve their traditional culture, unlike indigenous peoples in most other countries.

Communal land is administered on behalf of some 6,600 clan groups (*mataqali*) by the Native Land Trust Board, a government agency established in 1940. The NLTB retains 25 percent of the lease money to cover administration, and a further 10 percent is paid directly to regional hereditary chiefs. In 1966 the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA) increased the period for which native land can be leased from 10 to 30 years. The 30-year leases began coming up for renewal in 1997, and from 2000 to 2005 28 percent of the leases will expire (another 19 percent will expire from 2006 to 2010).

Many Fijian clans say they want their land back so they can farm it themselves, and Fiji's 20,000 Indo-Fijian sugarcane farmers are becoming highly apprehensive. If rents are greatly increased or the leases terminated, Fiji's sugar industry could be badly damaged and an explosive social situation created. In the event of a lease not being renewed, the government had been giving farmers the choice of being resettled or of receiving F\$28,000 in compensation money for improvements they had made. After the Speight coup, this program was withdrawn. To date, much of the agricultural land taken back by Fijian clans has simply gone out of production.

At the First Constitutional Conference in 1965, Indian rights were promulgated, and the 1970 independence constitution asserted that everyone born in Fiji would be a citizen with equal rights. These rights are reaffirmed in the 1997 constitution. But land laws up to the present have very much favored "Fiji for the Fijians." Indo-Fijians have always accepted Fijian ownership of the land, provided they were granted satisfactory leases. Now that the leases are endangered, many Indo-Fijians fear they will be driven from the only land they've ever known. The stifling of land development may keep Fiji quaint for tourists, but it also condemns a large

portion of the population of both races to backwardness and poverty.

GENDER ISSUES

Women in Fiji

Traditionally indigenous Fijian women were confined to the home, while men handled most matters outside the immediate family. The clear-cut roles of the woman as homemaker and the man as defender and decision-maker gave stability to village life. Western education has caused many Fijian women to question their subordinate position and the changing lifestyle has made the old relationship between the sexes outmoded. Women's liberation has arrived as paid employment expands and access to family planning better enables women to hold jobs. Fijian women are more emancipated than their sisters in other Melanesian countries, though men continue to dominate public life throughout the region. Tradition is often manipulated to deny women the right to express themselves publicly on community matters.

Cultural barriers hinder women's access to education and employment, and the proportion of girls in school falls rapidly as the grade level increases. Female students are nudged into low-paying fields such as nursing or secretarial services; in Fiji and elsewhere, export-oriented garment factories exploit women workers, paying low wages amidst poor working conditions. Levels of domestic violence vary greatly, though it's far less accepted among indigenous Fijians than it is among Indo-Fijians, and in Fiji's Macuata Province women have a suicide rate seven times above the world average, with most of the victims being Indo-Fijian. Those little signs on buses reading "real men don't hit women" suggest the problem. Travelers should take an interest in women's issues.

RELIGION

The main religious groups in Fiji are Hindus (290,000), Methodists (265,000), Catholics (70,000), Muslims (62,000), Assemblies of God (33,000), and Seventh-Day Adventists (20,000).

Around 40 percent of the total population is Hindu or Muslim due to the large Indo-Fijian population, and only two percent of Indo-Fijians have converted to Christianity despite Methodist missionary efforts dating back to 1884. About 78 percent of indigenous Fijians are Methodist, and 8.5 percent are Catholic.

Since the 1987 military coups, an avalanche of well-financed American fundamentalist missionary groups has descended on Fiji, and membership in the Assemblies of God and some other new Christian sects is growing quickly at the expense of the Methodists. While the Methodist Church has long been localized, the new evangelical sects are dominated by foreign missionaries, ideas, and money.

The Assemblies of God (AOG) is a Pentecostal denomination founded in Arkansas in 1914 and presently headquartered in Springfield, Missouri. It emphasizes the practice of glossolalia or "speaking in tongues." Although the AOG carries out some relief work, it doesn't involve itself in social reform in the belief that only God can solve humanity's problems. In Fiji, the number of AOG adherents increased twelvefold between 1966 and 1992. A large AOG Bible College operates in Suva, and from Fiji the group has spread to other Pacific countries.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church is a politically ultra-conservative group that grew out of the 19th century American Baptist movement. The SDA Church teaches the imminent return of Christ, and Saturday (rather than Sunday) is observed as the Lord's day. SDAs regard the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, thus much attention is paid to health matters. Members are forbidden to partake of certain foods, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, and the church expends considerable energy on the provision of medical and dental services. They are also active in education and local economic development.

The ecumenical **Pacific Conference of Churches** began in 1961 as an association of the mainstream Protestant churches, but since 1976 many Catholic dioceses have been included as well. Both the Pacific Theological College (founded in 1966) and the Pacific Regional Seminary (opened in 1972) are in southern Suva, and the South Pacific is one of the few areas of the world with a large surplus of ministers.

LANGUAGE

Fijian, a member of the Austronesian family of languages spoken from Easter Island to Madagascar, has more speakers than any other indigenous Pacific language. Fijian vowels are pronounced as in Latin or Spanish, while the consonants are similar to those of English. Syllables end in a vowel, and the next-to-last syllable is usually the one emphasized. Where two vowels appear together they are sounded separately. In 1835 two Methodist missionaries, David Cargill and William Cross, devised the form of written Fijian used in Fiji today. Since all consonants in Fijian are separated by vowels, they spelled *mb* as *b*, *nd* as *d*, *ng* as *g*, *ngg* as *q*, and *th* as *c*.

Though Cargill and Cross worked at Lakeba in the Lau Group, the political importance of tiny Bau Island just off Viti Levu caused the Bauan dialect of Fijian to be selected as the "official" version of the language, and in 1850 a dictionary and grammar were published. When the Bible was translated into Bauan that dialect's dominance was assured, and it is today's spoken and written Fijian. From 1920 to 1970 the use of Fijian was discouraged in favor of English, but since independence there has been a revival.

Hindustani or Hindi is the household tongue of most Indo-Fijians. Fijian Hindi has diverged from that spoken in India with the adoption of many words from English and other Indian languages such as Urdu. Though a quarter of Indo-Fijians are descended from immigrants from southern India where Tamil and Telegu are spoken, few use those languages today, even at home. Fijian Muslims speak Hindi out of practical considerations, though they might consider Urdu their mother tongue. In their spoken forms, Hindi and Urdu are very similar.

English is the second official language in Fiji and is understood by almost everyone. All schools teach exclusively in English after the fourth grade. Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians usually communicate with one another in English. Gilbertese is spoken by the Banabans of Rabi.

See the Capsule Fijian Vocabulary and the Capsule Hindi Vocabulary for some useful words and phrases.

CUSTOMS

Fijians and Indo-Fijians are very tradition-oriented peoples who have retained a surprising number of their ancestral customs despite the flood of conflicting influences that have swept the Pacific over the past century. Rather than a melting pot where one group assimilated another, Fiji is a patchwork of varied traditions.

The obligations and responsibilities of Fijian village life include not only the construction and upkeep of certain buildings, but personal participation in the many ceremonies that give their lives meaning. Hindu Indians, on the other hand, practice firewalking and observe festivals such as Holi and Diwali, just as their forebears in India did for thousands of years.

Fijian Firewalking

In Fiji, both Fijians and Indo-Fijians practice firewalking, with the difference being that the Fijians walk on heated stones instead of hot embers. Legends tell how the ability to walk on fire was first given to a warrior named Tui-na-viqalita from Beqa Island, just off the south coast of Viti Levu, who had spared the life of a spirit god he caught while fishing for eels. The freed spirit gave to Tui-na-viqalita the gift of immunity to fire. Today his descendants act as *bete* (high priests) of the rite of *vilavilavevo* (jumping into the oven). Only members of his tribe, the Sawau, perform the ceremony. The Tui Sawau lives at Dakuibeqa village on Beqa, but firewalking is now only performed at the resort hotels on Viti Levu.

Fijian firewalkers (men only) are not permitted to have sex or to eat any coconut for two weeks prior to a performance. A man whose wife is pregnant is also barred. In a circular pit about four meters across, hundreds of large stones are first heated by a wood fire until they are white-hot. If you throw a handkerchief on the stones, it will burst into flames. Much ceremony and chanting accompanies certain phases of the ritual, such as the moment when the wood is removed to leave just the white-hot stones. The men psych themselves up in a nearby hut, then emerge, enter the pit, and walk briskly around it once. Bundles of leaves and grass are then thrown on the stones and the men stand inside

the steaming pit again to chant a final song. They seem to have complete immunity to pain, and there is no trace of injury. The men appear to fortify themselves with the heat, gaining some psychic power from the ritual.

Indian Firewalking

By an extraordinary coincidence, Indo-Fijians brought with them the ancient practice of religious firewalking. In southern India, firewalking occurs in the pre-monsoon season as a call to the goddess Kali (Durga) for rain. Indo-Fijian firewalking is an act of purification, or fulfillment of a vow to thank the god for help in a difficult situation.

In Fiji there is firewalking in most Hindu temples once a year, at full moon sometime between May and September according to the



Indo-Fijians walk over hot coals at a religious festival to purify themselves or give thanks to Durga for assistance rendered.

Hindu calendar. The actual event takes place on a Sunday at 1600 on the Suva side of Viti Levu, and at 0400 on the Nadi/Lautoka side. In August firewalking takes place at the Mahadevi Sangam Temple on Howell Road, Suva. During the 10 festival days preceding the walk, participants remain in isolation, eat only unspiced vegetarian food, and spiritually prepare themselves. There are prayers at the temple in the early morning and a group singing of religious stories evenings from Monday through Thursday. The yellow-clad devotees, their faces painted bright yellow and red, often pierce their cheeks or other body parts with spikes or three-pronged forks as part of the purification rites. Their faith is so strong they feel no pain.

The event is extremely colorful; drumming and chanting accompany the visual spectacle. Visitors are welcome to observe the firewalking, but since the exact date varies from temple to temple according to the phases of the moon (among other factors), you just have to keep asking to find out where and when it will take place. To enter the temple you must remove your shoes and any leather clothing.

The *Yaqona* Ceremony

Yaqona (pronounced "yang-GO-na") is a tranquilizing, nonalcoholic drink that numbs the tongue and lips. Better known as kava, it's made from the *waka* (dried root) of the pepper plant (*Macropiper methysticum*). This ceremonial preparation is the most honored feature of the formal life of Fijians, Tongans, and Samoans. It is performed

with the utmost gravity according to a sacramental ritual to mark births, marriages, deaths, official visits, the installation of a new chief, etc.

New mats are first spread on the floor, on which a hand-carved *tanoa* (a wooden bowl nearly a meter wide) is placed. A long fiber cord decorated with cowry shells leads from the bowl to the guests of honor. At the end of the cord is a white cowry, which symbolizes a link to ancestral spirits. As many as 70 men take their places before the bowl. The officiates are adorned with tapa, fiber, and croton leaves, their torsos smeared with glistening coconut oil, their faces usually blackened.

The guests present a bundle of *waka* to the hosts, along with a short speech explaining their visit, a custom known as a *sevusevu*. The *sevusevu* is received by the hosts and acknowledged with a short speech of acceptance. The *waka* are then scraped clean and pounded in a *tabili* (mortar). Formerly they were chewed. Nowadays the pulp is put in a cloth sack and mixed with water in the *tanoa*. In the ceremony the *yaqona* is kneaded and strained through *vau* (hibiscus) fibers.

The mixer displays the strength of the grog (kava) to the *mata ni vanua* (master of ceremonies) by pouring out a cupful into the *tanoa*. If the *mata ni vanua* considers the mix too strong, he calls for *wai* (water), then says *lose* (mix), and the mixer proceeds. Again he shows the consistency to the *mata ni vanua* by pouring out a cupful. If it appears right, the *mata ni vanua* says *loba* (squeeze). The mixer squeezes the

Draped in croton leaves, the cupbearer offers a bowl of yaqona to a visiting chief at a formal kava ceremony.



TABUA

Yaqona (or kava) the Fijians share with the Polynesians, but the *tabua*, or whale's tooth, is significant only in Fiji. The *tabua* obtained from the sperm whale have always played an important part in Fijian ceremonies. In the 19th century they were hung around the necks of warriors and chiefs during festivals. Even today they are presented to distinguished guests and are exchanged at weddings, births, deaths, reconciliations, and also when personal or communal contracts or agreements are entered into. *Tabua*, contrary to popular belief, have never been used as a currency and can not be used to purchase goods or services. It is a great honor to be presented with *tabua*.



FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, CHICAGO, IL, USA

remaining juice out of the pulp, puts it aside, and announces, *sa lose oti saka na yaqona, vaka turaga* (the kava is ready, my chief). He runs both hands around the rim of the *tanoa* and claps three times.

The *mata ni vanua* then says *talo* (serve). The cupbearer squats in front of the *tanoa* with a *bilo* (half coconut shell), which the mixer fills. The cupbearer then presents the first cup to the guest of honor, who claps once and drains it, and everyone claps three times. The second cup goes to the guests' *mata ni vanua*, who claps once and drinks. The man sitting next to the mixer says *aa*, and everyone answers *maca* (empty). The third cup is for the first local chief, who claps once before drinking, and everyone claps three times after. Then the *mata ni vanua* of the first local chief claps once and drinks, and everyone says *maca*. The same occurs for the second local chief and his *mata ni vanua*.

After these six men have finished their cups, the mixer announces, *sa maca saka tu na yaqona, vaka turaga* (the bowl is empty, my chief), and the *mata ni vanua* says *cobo* (clap). The mixer then runs both hands around the rim of the *tanoa* and claps three times. This terminates the full ceremony, but then a second bowl is prepared and everyone drinks. During the drinking of the first bowl complete silence must be maintained.

Social Kava Drinking

While the passage above describes one of several forms of the full *yaqona* ceremony, which is performed only for high chiefs, abbreviated versions are put on for tourists at the hotels. However, the village people have simplified grog sessions almost daily. Kava drinking is an important form of Fijian entertainment and a way of structuring friendships and community relations. Even in government offices a bowl of grog is kept for the staff to take as a refreshment at *yaqona* breaks. Some say the Fijians have *yaqona* rather than blood in their veins. Excessive kava drinking over a long period can make the skin scaly and rough, a condition known as *kanikani*.

Individual visitors to villages are invariably invited to participate in informal kava ceremonies, in which case it's customary to present a bunch of kava roots to the group. Do this at the beginning, before anybody starts drinking, and make a short speech explaining the purpose of your visit (be it a desire to meet the people and learn about their way of life, an interest in seeing or doing something in particular on their island, or just a holiday from work). Don't hand the roots to anyone, just place them on the mat in the center of the circle. The bigger the bundle of roots, the bigger the smiles. (The roots are easily purchased at any town market for about F\$15 a half kilo.)

Clap once when the cupbearer offers you the *bilo*, then take it in both hands and say "*bula*" just before the cup meets your lips. Clap three times after you drink. Remember, you're a participant, not an onlooking tourist, so don't take photos if the ceremony is formal. Even though you may not like the appearance or taste of the drink, do try to finish at least the first cup. Tip the cup to show you are done.

It's considered extremely bad manners to turn your back on a chief during a kava ceremony, to walk in front of the circle of people when entering or leaving, or to step over the long cord attached to the *tanoa*. During a semi-formal ceremony, you should remain silent until the opening ritual is complete, signaled by a round of clapping.

Presentation of the *Tabua*

The *tabua* is a tooth of the sperm whale. It was once presented when chiefs exchanged delegates at confederacy meetings and before conferences on peace or war. In recent times, the *tabua* is presented during chiefly *yaqona* ceremonies as a symbolic welcome for a respected visitor or guest or as a prelude to public business or modern-day official functions. On the village level, *tabuas* are still commonly presented to arrange marriages, to show sympathy at funerals, to request favors, to settle disputes, or simply to show respect.

Old *tabuas* are highly polished from continuous handling. The larger the tooth, the greater its ceremonial value. *Tabuas* are prized cultural property and may not be exported from Fiji. Endangered species laws prohibit their entry into the United States, Australia, and many other countries.

Stingray Spearing and Fish Drives

Stingrays are lethal-looking creatures with caudal spines up to 18 centimeters long. To catch them, eight or nine punts are drawn up in a line about a kilometer long beside the reef. As soon as a stingray is sighted, a punt is paddled forward with great speed until close enough to hurl a spear.

Another time-honored sport and source of food is the fish drive or *yavirau*, in which an entire village participates. Around the flat surface of a reef at rising tide, sometimes as many as 70 men and women group themselves in a circle a kilometer or more in circumference. All grip a ring of connected liana vines with leaves attached. While shouting, singing, and beating long poles on the seabed, the group slowly contracts the ring as the tide comes in. The shadow of the ring alone is enough to keep the fish within the circle. The fish are finally directed landward into a net or stone fish trap.

The Rising of the *Balolo*

This event takes place only in Samoa and Fiji. The *balolo* (*Eunice viridis*) is a thin, segmented



closing the ring during a Beqa fish drive

worm of the Coelomate order, considered a culinary delicacy throughout these islands—the caviar of the Pacific. It's about 45 centimeters long and lives deep in the fissures of coral reefs. Twice a year it releases an unusual "tail" that contains its eggs or sperm. The worm itself returns to the coral to regenerate a new reproductive tail. The rising of the *balolo* is a natural almanac that keeps both lunar and solar times, and has a fixed day of appearance—even if a hurricane is raging—one night in the last quarter of the moon in October, and the corresponding night in November. It has never failed to appear on time for over 100 years now, and you can even check your calendar by it.

Because this rising occurs with such mathematical certainty, Fijians are waiting in their boats to scoop the millions of writhing, reddish brown (male) and moss green (female) spawn from the water when they rise to the surface before dawn. Within an hour after the rising, the eggs and sperm are released to spawn the next generation of *balolo*. The free-swimming larvae seek a suitable coral patch to begin the cycle again. This is one of the most bizarre curiosities in the natural history of the South Pacific, and the southeast coast of Ovalau is a good place to observe it.

CONDUCT

Foreign travel is an exceptional experience enjoyed by a privileged few. Too often, tourists try to transfer their lifestyles to tropical islands, thereby missing out on what is unique to the region. Travel can be a learning experience if approached openly and with a positive attitude. So read up on the local culture before you arrive and become aware of the social and environmental problems of the area. A wise traveler soon graduates from hearing and seeing to listening and observing. Speaking is good for the ego and listening is good for the soul.

The path is primed with packaged pleasures, but pierce the bubble of tourism and you'll encounter something far from the schedules and organized efficiency: a time to learn how other people live. Walk gently, for human qualities are as fragile and responsive to abuse as the brilliant reefs. The islanders are by nature soft-spoken and reserved. Often they won't show open disapproval if their

social codes are broken, but don't underestimate them. Consider that you're only one of thousands of visitors to their country, so don't expect to be treated better than anyone else. Respect is one of the most important things in Pacific life and humility is also greatly appreciated.

If you're alone you're lucky, for the single traveler is everyone's friend. Get away from other tourists and meet the people. There aren't many places on earth where you can still do this meaningfully, but Fiji is one. If you do meet people with similar interests, keep in touch by writing. This is no tourist's paradise, though, and local residents are not exhibits or paid performers. They have as many or more problems as you, and if you see them as real people you are less likely to be viewed as a stereotypical tourist. You may have come to escape civilization, but keep in mind that you're just a guest.

Most important of all, try to see things their way. Take an interest in local customs, values, languages, challenges, and successes. If things work differently than they do back home, give thanks that you are experiencing this different culture. Reflect on what you've experienced and you'll return home with a better understanding of how much we all have in common, outwardly different as we may seem.

Dress

It's important to know that the dress code in Fiji is strict. Wearing short shorts, halter tops, and bathing costumes in public shows a lack of respect. In a Fijian village it's considered offensive to reveal too much skin. Wrap a *sulu* around you to cover up. Men should always wear a shirt in town, and women should wear dresses that adequately cover their legs while seated. Nothing will mark you so quickly as a tourist nor make you more popular with street vendors than scanty dress. Of course, it is permissible to wear skimpy clothing on the beach in front of a resort hotel. In a society where even bathing suits are considered extremely risqué for local women, public nudity is unthinkable, and topless sunbathing by women is also banned in Fiji (except at isolated island resorts).

Questions

The islanders are eager to please, so phrase your questions carefully. They'll answer yes or no

according to what they think you want to hear—don't suggest the answer in your question. Test this by asking your informant to confirm something you know to be incorrect. Also don't ask negative questions, such as "you're not going to Suva, are you?" Invariably the answer will be "yes," meaning "yes, I'm not going to Suva." It also could work like this: "Don't you have anything cheaper?" "Yes." "What do you have that is cheaper?" "Nothing." Yes, he doesn't have anything cheaper. If you want to be sure of something, ask several people the same question in different ways.

Dangers and Annoyances

In Suva, beware of the seemingly friendly Fijian men (usually with a small package or canvas bag in their hands) who will greet you on the street with a hearty *Bula!* These are "sword sellers" who will ask your name, quickly carve it on a mask, and then demand F\$20 for a set that you could buy at a Nadi curio shop for F\$5. Other times they'll try to engage you in conversation and may offer a "gift." Just say "thank you very much" and walk away from them quickly without accepting anything, as they can suddenly become unpleasant and aggressive. Their grotesque swords and masks themselves have nothing to do with Fiji.

Similarly, overly sociable people at bars may expect you to buy them drinks and snacks. In the main tourist centers such as Nadi and Suva, take care if a local invites you to visit his home as you may be seen mainly as a source of beer and other goods. Also, don't be fooled by anyone on the street who claims

to work at your resort and offers to show you around. They only want to sell you something.

Although *The Fiji Times* is often full of stories of violent crimes including assaults, robberies, and burglaries, it's partly the novelty of these events that makes them worth reporting. Fiji is still a much safer country than the United States and tourists are not specifically targeted for attack, but normal precautions should still be taken. Keep to well-lit streets at night, take a taxi if you've had more than one drink, and steer clear of poorly dressed Fijian men who may accost you on the street for no reason. Don't react if offered drugs. It's wise to keep valuables locked in your bag in hotel rooms.

Women should have few real problems traveling around Fiji on their own, so long as they're prepared to cope with frequent offers of marriage. Although a female tourist shouldn't have to face sexist violence the way a local woman might, it's smart to be defensive and to lie about where you're staying. If you want to be left alone, conservative dress and purposeful behavior will work to your advantage. In village situations seek the company of local women.

Fiji has begun cracking down on foreign pedophiles, and in late 1999 an Australian accountant was sentenced to seven years in prison for two rapes and four indecent assaults involving underage girls. The case was widely publicized and the authorities are on the alert. The public has been asked to promptly report suspected pedophiles.

Littering is punished by a minimum F\$40 fine and breaking bottles in public can earn six months in jail (unfortunately seldom enforced).





ON THE ROAD

HIGHLIGHTS

Fiji is brimming with colorful attractions, splendid scenery, friendly people, and exciting things to do. From the gateway city **Nadi** with its numerous shopping and dining possibilities, it's only a quick commuter hop to the enticing **Mamanuca Group** with about half of Fiji's island resorts. The clear waters, golden sands, dazzling reefs, and good facilities have made this a popular vacation destination for Australians and New Zealanders, but islands like Malololailai, Malolo, and Mana also attract scuba divers and yacht enthusiasts. The long, narrow **Yasawa Group** off the sugar city Lautoka is wilder, mightier, and less developed than the Mamanucas: the beaches are longer, the jungle-clad mountains higher, and the accommodations rougher. It's Fiji's most magnificent island chain.

Fiji's mainland, **Viti Levu**, is the "real" Fiji, where much of the country's history has unfolded and the bulk of the Fijian people live out their

lives. The 486-km highway around the island passes a series of appealing cities and towns with bustling markets, bus stations, shops, cafés, clubs, monuments, and facilities of every kind. The **Coral Coast** in the south is the country's second resort area, with a series of large hotels nicely spaced between Nadi and Pacific Harbor. Visitors looking for more than only beach life often pick these resorts for the numerous tours and sporting activities available. **Pacific Harbor** itself offers access to some of the best diving, fishing, kayaking, white-water rafting, and golfing in the South Pacific, and **Nananu-i-Ra Island** off Viti Levu's north coast is a favorite of backpackers.

Fiji's current capital, **Suva**, has the country's finest cinemas, monuments, museums, nightlife, restaurants, stores, and all of the excitement of the South Pacific's biggest town. Ships, buses, and planes depart Suva for every corner of the

10 TOP SITES OF FIJI

- Bouma National Heritage Park, Taveuni
- Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, Suva
- Fiji Museum, Suva
- Frigate Passage, Beqa Barrier Reef
- Koroyanitu National Heritage Park, Lautoka
- Levuka, Ovalau
- Savusavu, Vanua Levu
- Sigatoka Sand Dunes, Viti Levu
- Tavewa and the Blue Lagoon, Yasawas
- Wayasewa and Waya Islands, Yasawas

republic. The campus of the region's main university, the headquarters of international organizations, government ministries, embassies, libraries, and the large trading companies are all here. It's a fascinating place to explore.

Several adjacent islands allow one to escape from Suva. **Kadavu** to the south is a characteristic Fijian island of small villages strewn between beaches and hills, but it's also a mecca for scuba divers who come for the Astrolabe Reef, and for surfers who have discovered Kadavu's waves. Several well established backpacker camps and upscale resorts make visiting Kadavu easy. Back toward Viti Levu are **Beqa**, with two upscale scuba resorts, and **Yanuca**, with inexpensive beach camps full of enthusiastic surfers.

Anyone with even the slightest interest in Fiji's vivid history won't want to miss **Ovalau Island** and the timeworn old capital **Levuka**. The town's long row of wooden storefronts looks like the set of a Wild West film, and there are abundant monuments, museums, and historic buildings to discover, all of it set below towering volcanic peaks. Despite these attractions, Levuka remains remarkably unvisited by most tourists, largely thanks to the absence of a good beach. It's the best preserved relic of the old South Seas anywhere between San Francisco and Sydney.

Across the Koro Sea from Ovalau is Fiji's second island, **Vanua Levu**, heart of the "friendly north." Because a slight effort is involved in getting there, far fewer tourists ply these exotic shores. Yet **Savusavu** is Fiji's most picturesque town after Levuka, set along a splendid wide bay with an attractive waterfront promenade. Long a center of the Fiji copra trade, planters from the surrounding farms still congregate at

the town's colonial-style club on Sundays. Two spectacular highways sweep away from Savusavu: one travels through the mountains to the mill town of Labasa, and another snakes east along the verdant coast to Buca Bay.

Repeat visitors and local Fijians often assert that **Taveuni** is Fiji's finest island, a claim which is difficult to deny. The island's high spine is draped in impenetrable rainforest, with huge coconut plantations tumbling to the coast. Magnificent waterfalls pour down the steep slopes, and the scuba diving is world famous. Yet Fiji doesn't end here: There are many little-known isles in the Lau and Lomaiviti groups, including some like **Vanua Balavu** with satisfactory facilities for visitors.

Budget travelers often appreciate Tavewa and adjacent islands, which rank high for their spellbinding environment, stimulating activities, and agreeable company. Waya and Wayasewa are similar. City slickers won't bore easily in Suva, and it's *the* place to be if you like studying. The city's excellent libraries and museums are meant to be savored slowly. Kadavu and Ono both have backpacker camps offering unlimited swimming, snorkeling, scuba, and exploring. Leleuvia just south of Ovalau is also great for a relaxing holiday with abundant diving. Taveuni and Vanua Balavu both possess inexpensive village-style lodgings. Two weeks is the absolute minimum required to get a feel for Fiji, and after a month you'll be in a position to begin planning your next visit.

Suggested Itineraries

Most visitors arrive in Nadi, with a large percentage immediately transferring to resorts in the Mamanucas or along the Coral Coast. Overland travelers intent on seeing Fiji on their own, should start moving the morning after they arrive. Save your sightseeing around Nadi until the end of your trip, when you have to be there to catch your flight.

Those with **one week** in Fiji can easily circumnavigate Viti Levu by public bus, and since there are far fewer places to stop along Kings Road, it's best to cover the north side of the island first. Starting from Nadi or Lautoka, you can easily make it through to Suva in a day. After a night or two there, fly to Levuka for two nights. Return to Suva on the early morning Patterson Brothers bus (daily except Sunday), then catch a con-

necting bus to somewhere on the Coral Coast. The next day you can head back to Nadi with time to stop at the Sigatoka Sand Dunes.

Visitors with **two weeks** at their disposal can also visit "the friendly north." The fast catamaran *Lagilagi* operates from Nadi or Lautoka direct to Savusavu twice a week. If your timing is wrong, consider the Patterson Brothers Lautoka-Rakiraki-Nabouwalu-Labasa bus-ferry-bus route, a tiring but intriguing trip. Another Patterson Brothers bus-ferry connects Savusavu to Taveuni via Natuvu. Depending on your schedule, there are ferries from Taveuni straight to Suva, or you can fly back to Savusavu and catch a ferry there. Then follow the Ovalau-Coral Coast route described above.

Visitors with **three weeks** can do the same, at a more leisurely pace. For a sidetrip to the Yasawa Islands from Nadi or Lautoka, you should allow about a week, but do it at the beginning of your trip as ferry services to Waya and Tavewa are at the mercy of weather conditions. Kadavu isn't quite as risky an excursion since you can fly out. Around Nadi, if you've only got a few days to spare, the Mamanuca Islands are an appropriate choice. Pick the backpacker camps on Mana or Malolo if you're on a low budget, Beachcomber or Malololailai if you've got more to spend, or Castaway, Treasure, or Malolo Resort if money isn't a big consideration. And for ecotourists, there's Koroyanitu National Heritage Park.



Parks and Reserves

The **National Trust for Fiji** (P.O. Box 2089, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji; tel. 301-807, fax 305-092) administers eight national parks and historic sites. Of these the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park and the Waisali Nature Reserve near Savusavu both have visitor centers easily accessible by public bus. Koroyanitu National Heritage Park, inland from Lautoka, is also easily reached and has accommodations for hikers. Although not an official reserve, the forested area around Nadarivatu in central Viti Levu is similar. Bouma National Heritage Park around Bouma and Lavena on the northeastern side of Taveuni features unspoiled rainforests and waterfalls reachable along hiking trails. The new Waitabu Marine Park is adjacent. Colo-i-Suva Forest Park behind Suva also beckons the nature lover with quiet walks through a mahogany forest and a new ecolodge. Further information on all of these is provided later in this handbook.

SPORTS AND RECREATION

Scuba Diving

Fiji has been called "the soft coral capital of the world" and few seasoned divers will deny that Fiji has some of the finest diving in the South Pacific, with top facilities at the best prices. You won't go wrong choosing Fiji. The worst underwater visibility conditions here are the equivalent of the finest off Florida. In the Gulf of Mexico you've about reached the limit if you can see for 15 meters; in Fiji the visibility begins at 15 meters and increases to 45 meters in some places. Many fantastic dives are just 10 or 15 minutes away from the resorts by boat (whereas at Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the speedboats often have to travel over 60 km to get to the dive sites). Here are some of Fiji's top diving locations:

- Great Astrolabe Reef, Kadavu (caves, marinelife)
- Namena Barrier Reef, south of Savusavu (giant clams)
- Rainbow Reef, west of Taveuni (crevices, soft coral)
- Side Streets, Beqa Lagoon (soft corals, sea fans)
- Supermarket, west of Mana Island (shark feeding)
- Wakaya Passage, east of Levuka (rays, hammerheads)

Diving is possible year-round, with the marinelife most bountiful from July to November. The best diving conditions are from March to December,

the calmest seas in April and May. Visibility is tops from June to October, then slightly worse from November to February due to rainfall and plankton growth. Water temperatures vary from 24° C in June, July, and August to 30° C in December, January, and February. Wetsuits are recommended during winter months.

Facilities for scuba diving exist at most of the resorts in the Mamanuca Group, along Viti Levu's Coral Coast and at Pacific Harbor, on Kadavu, Leleuvia, Beqa, Nananu-i-Ra, Tavewa, and Wayasewa, at Nadi, Lautoka, and Savusavu, and on Taveuni and adjacent islands. Low-budget divers should turn to the Kadavu, Leleuvia, Nadi, Taveuni, Tavewa, and Wayasewa sections in this book and read. Specialized nonhotel dive shops are found at Nadi, Pacific Harbor, Lautoka, Savusavu, and on Taveuni. When choosing a place to stay, pick somewhere as close as possible to the places you wish to dive as scuba operators generally resist spending a lot of money on fuel to commute to distant reefs.

Serious divers will bring along their own mask, buoyancy compensator, and regulator. If you've never dived before, Fiji is an excellent place to learn, and the Kadavu, Leleuvia, Musket Cove, Nadi, Nananu-i-Ra, Pacific Harbor, Taveuni, Tavewa, and Wayasewa scuba operators offer open-water certification courses lasting four or five days. The best course prices are usually offered by the Nadi-area dive shops, which can afford to charge less due to their high volume of customers. Leleuvia is also good. Learning to dive on Taveuni is over a hundred dollars more expensive. If you have children, Subsurface Fiji at Musket Cove Resort and on Beachcomber Island specializes in teaching diving to kids as young as 12! Many of the scuba operators listed in this book also offer introductory "resort courses" for those who only want a taste of scuba diving. For information about live-aboard dive boats see Scuba Cruises, which follows.

Snorkeling

Even if you aren't willing to put the necessary money and effort into scuba diving, you may want to investigate the many snorkeling possibilities. Some dive shops take snorkelers out in their boats for a nominal rate, but there are countless places around Fiji where you can snorkel straight out to the reef for free, mostly on small-

10 SAFETY RULES OF DIVING

1. The most important rule in scuba diving is to **BREATHE CONTINUOUSLY**. If you establish this rule, you won't forget and hold your breath, and overexpansion will never occur.
2. **COME UP AT A RATE OF 18 METERS PER MINUTE OR LESS**. This allows the gas dissolved in your body under pressure to come out of solution safely and also prevents vertigo from fast ascents. Always make a precautionary decompression stop at a depth of five meters.
3. **NEVER ESCAPE TO THE SURFACE**. Panic is the diver's worst enemy.
4. **STOP, THINK, THEN ACT**. Always maintain control.
5. **PACE YOURSELF. KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS**. A DIVER SHOULD ALWAYS BE ABLE TO REST AND RELAX IN THE WATER. Proper use of the buoyancy vest will allow you to rest on the surface and maintain control under water. A diver who becomes fatigued in the water is a danger to himself and his buddy.
6. **NEVER DIVE WITH A COLD**. Avoid alcoholic beverages but drink plenty of water. Get a good night's sleep and refrain from strenuous physical activities on the day you dive. Dive conservatively if you are overweight or more than 45 years of age. Make fewer dives the last two days before flying and no dives at all during the final 24 hours.
7. **PLAN YOUR DIVE**. Know your starting point, your diving area, and your exit areas. **DIVE YOUR PLAN**.
8. **NEVER EXCEED THE SAFE SPORT DIVING LIMIT OF 30 METERS**. Make your first dive the deepest of the day.
9. All equipment must be equipped with **QUICK RELEASES**.
10. **WEAR ADEQUATE PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AGAINST SUN AND CORAL**.

er outer islands. The beach snorkeling off Viti Levu and Vanua Levu is usually poor, and it's a complete waste of time around Nadi, Lautoka, Pacific Harbor, Suva, and Labasa. The snorkeling along the Coral Coast is fair, but only at high tide and even then you must take care with currents in the channels. Around Savusavu sharp rocks make it hard to get into the water at all (and the top beaches are private). On the other hand, you'll have no trouble finding glorious reefs in the Mamanuca Group, the Yasawas, off Nananu-i-Ra, Kadavu, Ono, and Taveuni, and at the small resort islands near Ovalau.

Be careful, however, and know the dangers. Practice snorkeling in the shallow water; don't head into deep water until you're sure you've got the hang of it. Breathe easily; don't hyperventilate. When snorkeling on a fringing reef, beware of deadly currents and undertows in channels that drain tidal flows. Observe the direction the water is moving before you swim into it. If you feel yourself being dragged out to sea through a reef passage, try swimming across the current rather than against it. If you can't resist the pull at all, it may be better to let yourself be carried out. Wait till the current diminishes, then swim along the outer reef face until you find somewhere to come back in. Or use your energy to attract the attention of someone onshore.

Snorkeling along the outer edge of a reef at the drop-off is thrilling for the variety of fish and corals, but attempt it only on a very calm day. Even then it's wise to have someone stand onshore or paddle behind you in a canoe to watch for occasional big waves, which can take you by surprise and smash you into the rocks. Also, beware of unperceived currents outside the reef—you may not get a second chance.

A far better idea is to limit your snorkeling to the protected inner reef and leave the open waters to the scuba diver. Yet while scuba diving quickly absorbs large amounts of money, snorkeling is free and you can do it as often as you like. You'll encounter the brightest colors in shallow waters anyway as lower than six meters the colors blue out as short wavelengths are lost. By diving with a scuba tank, you trade off the chance to observe shallow water species in order to gain access to the often larger deep water species. The best solution is to do a bit of both. In any case, avoid touching the reef or

any of its creatures as the contact can be very harmful to both you and the reef. Take only pictures and leave only bubbles.

Surfing

A growing number of surfing camps are off southern and western Viti Levu. The most famous is Tavarua Island in the Mamanuca Group, accessible only to American surfers on prepackaged tours from the States. Other mortals can also use speedboats from Seashell Cove Resort to surf nearby reef breaks at far less expense, or try to get a booking at the top-end surf resort on Namotu Island right next to Tavarua. Beach break surfing is possible at Club Masa near Sigatoka, and budget surfing camps have been built on Yanuca and Kadavu islands. In April 2000 a new surfing resort opened at Nagigia Island just off west Kadavu, and Batiluva Beach on Yanuca is very accessible. Surfing is the main activity at the Waidroka Bay Resort on the Coral Coast. Few of Fiji's waves are for the beginner, especially the reef breaks, and of course, you must bring your own board(s). There's surf throughout the year, with the best swells out of the south from March to October.

Fijian clans control the traditional fishing rights (*qoli qoli*) on their reefs, and on many islands they also claim to own the surfing rights. This can also apply at breaks off uninhabited islands and even ocean reefs. In past upscale surfing camps like Tavarua, Marlin Bay, and Namotu have paid big bucks to try to corner the right to surf famous waves like Cloudbreak and Frigate, and they often attempt to keep surfers from rival resorts away. Although none of this is enshrined in law, it's wise to keep abreast of the situation. When surfing in a remote area without facilities it's essential to present a *sevusevu* to the local chief and to be on your best behavior.

Windsurfing

Windsurfing is possible at a much wider range of locales than surfing, and many upmarket beach hotels off southern and western Viti Levu include equipment in their rates. Windsurfing is possible at most of the Mamanuca resorts, including Castaway, Musket Cove, Naitasi Resort, Navini Island, Plantation Island, Tokoriki, and Treasure Island. Other offshore resorts around Fiji offering windsurfing are Kaimbu Is-

land, Matana Resort, Naigani Island, Qamea Beach, Toberua Island, Turtle Island, and Vatu-elele. Almost all of the surfing camps also offer windsurfing. For those on a budget, check out the windsurfing at Nadi's Club Fiji.

Boating

Exciting **white-water rafting** on the cliff-hugging rapids of the Upper Navua River is offered by Rivers Fiji at Pacific Harbor. More white-water rafting is available on the Ba River below Navala. In central Viti Levu, villagers will pole you through the Waiga Gorge on a bamboo raft from Naitauvoli to Naivucini villages.

In the past, organized **ocean kayaking** expeditions have been offered among the Yasawa Islands, around Beqa and Kadavu, and in Vanua Levu's Natewa Bay (see *Getting There*, below, for details of sea kayaking tours). Those who only want to dabble can hire kayaks at Kadavu, Taveuni, Vanua Balavu, and Savusavu. Several upmarket Mamanuca Resorts loan kayaks to their guests.

Get in some **sailing** by taking one of the day cruises by yacht offered from Nadi. Yacht charters are offered at Musket Cove Resort in the Mamanuca Group.

Hiking

All of the high islands offer hiking possibilities and many remote villages are linked by well-used trails. The most important hike described in this book is the two-day Sigatoka River Trek down the Sigatoka River from Nadarivatu. Levuka makes an excellent base with the trail to The Peak beginning right behind the town, and a challenging cross-island trail to Lovoni is nearby. More arduous is the all-day climb to Lake Tagimaucia on Taveuni. Koroyanitu National Heritage Park near Lautoka offers many hiking possibilities, including the famous Mount Batilamu Trek. For some outer island hiking, you can walk right around Nananu-i-Ra in under a day, or across Waya or Wayasewa. Kadavu provides more of the same.

Bicycling

If you brought along a bicycle, you'll have several possibilities. Queens Road around the southern side of Viti Levu is favored by kamikaze drivers, so you're better off following the northerly

Kings Road from Nadi Airport. At Ellington Wharf near Rakiraki you can board the Vanua Levu ferry. However, the road from Nabouwalu to Labasa is long, and the mountain crossing to Savusavu hard, so to avoid all this, consider gliding direct from Nadi to Savusavu on the high speed catamaran *Lagilagi*. The Hibiscus Highway east from Savusavu to Buca Bay is undulating and picturesque. At Natuvu you connect with the barge to Taveuni, one of Fiji's finest islands for cycling. From Taveuni, catch a ship to Suva and return to Nadi via Kings Road. A side-trip to Ovalau on the Natovi ferry is highly recommended, if you have the time.

Golf

Golfers are well catered for in Fiji. The two most famous courses are the fantastic Denarau Golf Club, next to the two Sheraton hotels at Nadi, and the renowned Pacific Harbor Country Club, one of the finest courses in the Pacific. Many tourist hotels have golf courses, including the Mocambo at Nadi; the Fijian Resort Hotel and Naviti Beach Resort on the south side of Viti Levu; Naigani Island Resort and The Wakaya Club in Lomaiviti; and Taveuni Estates on Taveuni. More locally oriented are the city golf courses at Nadi Airport, Lautoka, and in Suva, and the company-run courses near Rakiraki and Labasa sugar mills and at the Vatukuola gold mine, all built to serve former expatriate staffs. All are open to the public, and only the Sheraton course could be considered expensive.

Team Sports

The soccer season in Fiji is from February to November, while rugby is played almost year-round. The main rugby season is from June to November when there are 15 players on each side. From November to March rugby is played as "sevens" with seven team members to a side. (The Fijians are champion sevens players, "wild, intuitive, and artistic," and in 1997 they defeated South Africa to take the Rugby World Cup Sevens in Hong Kong.) Rugby is played only by Fijians, while soccer teams are both Fijian and Indo-Fijian. Cricket is played from November to March, mostly in rural areas. Lawn bowling is also popular. Saturday is the big day for team sports (only soccer and lawn bowling are practiced on Sunday).

ENTERTAINMENT

It's cheap to go to the movies in towns such as Labasa, Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, Nausori, and Suva, if a repertoire of romance, horror, and adventure is to your liking (only in Suva can you see the latest Hollywood films). These same towns have local nightclubs where you can enjoy as much drinking and dancing as you like without spending an arm and a leg. When there's live music, a cover charge is collected.

A South Pacific institution widespread in Fiji is the old colonial clubs that offer inexpensive beer in safe, friendly surroundings. Such clubs are found in Labasa, Lautoka, Levuka, Nadi, Savusavu, Sigatoka, Suva, Taveuni, and Tavua, and although they're all private clubs with Members Only signs on the door, foreign visitors are allowed entry (except at the pretentious Union Club in Suva). Occasionally the bartender will ask you to sign the guest book or tell you to request authorization from the club secretary. Many

bars and clubs in Fiji refuse entry to persons dressed in flip-flops, boots, rugby jerseys, shorts, tank tops, or T-shirts, and one must remove one's hat at the door.

Fiji's unique spectacle is the **Fijian firewalking** performed several times a week at the large hotels along the southwest side of Viti Levu: Sheraton-Fiji (Wednesday), Fijian Resort Hotel (Friday), Outrigger Reef Resort (Friday), The Naviti (Wednesday), Hideaway Resort (Thursday), the Warwick (Monday and Friday), and Pacific Harbor (Tuesday and Saturday). A fixed admission price is charged but it's well worth going at least once. For more information on firewalking, see Customs in the Introduction. The same hotels that present firewalking usually stage a Fijian *meke* (described below) on an alternate night.

Fijian Dancing (*Meke*)

The term *meke* describes the combination of dance, song, and theater performed at feasts and on special occasions. Brandishing spears, their faces painted with charcoal, the men wear frangipani leis and skirts of shredded leaves. The war club dance reenacts heroic events of the past. Both men and women perform the *vakamalolo*, a sitting dance, while the *seasea* is danced by women flourishing fans. The *tralala*, in which visitors may be asked to join, is a simple two-step shuffle danced side-by-side (early missionaries forbade the Fijians from dancing face-to-face). As elsewhere in the Pacific the dances tell a story, though the music now is strongly influenced by Christian hymns and contemporary pop. Less sensual than Polynesian dancing, the rousing Fijian dancing evokes the country's violent past. Fijian *meke* are often part of a *magiti* or feast performed at hotels. The Dance Theater of Fiji at Pacific Harbor is well regarded.



Grasping war clubs, Fijian men perform a meke.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Public holidays in Fiji include New Year's Day (January 1), National Youth Day (a Friday in February or March), Good Friday and Easter Monday (March/April), Ratu Sukuna Day (a Monday around May 29), Queen Elizabeth's Birthday (a Monday around June 14), Prophet Mohammed's Birthday (anytime from June to December), Constitution Day (a Monday around July 27), Fiji Day (a Monday around October 10), Diwali (October or November), and Christmas Days (December 25 and 26).

Check with the Fiji Visitors Bureau to see if any festivals are scheduled during your visit. The best known are the Bula Festival in Nadi (July), the Hibiscus Festival in Suva (August), the Sugar Festival in Lautoka (September), and the Back to Levuka Festival (early October). Around the end of June there's the President's Cup Yacht Series at Nadi. Before Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, Hindus clean their homes, then light lamps or candles to mark the arrival of spring. Fruit and sweets are offered to Lakshmi, goddess of wealth. Holi is an Indian spring festival in February or March.

The International Triathlon at Nadi is in May. One of the main sporting events of the year is the **International Bula Marathon** held in June. The main event involves a 42-km run from Lautoka to the Sheraton at Nadi. The 12th **South Pacific**

Games, the region's major sporting event, will be in Fiji in 2003.

Total Event Co. (Private Mail Bag, Suva; tel. 314-766, fax 303-748, email: totalevent@fm96.com.fj), owned by Communications Fiji Ltd., organizes trade shows, concerts, product launches, gala dinners, theme functions, sporting events, opening ceremonies, etc.

When to Go

Compared to parts of North America and Europe, the seasonal climatic variations in Fiji are not extreme. There's a hotter, more humid season from November to April, and a cooler, drier time from May to October. Hurricanes occur during the "rainy" season but they only last a few days a year. The sun sets around 1800 year-round, and there aren't periods when the days are shorter or longer.

Seasonal differences in airfares are often more influential in deciding when to go. On Air New Zealand flights from North America the low season is mid-April to August, the prime time in Fiji. Christmas is busy but in February and March many hotels stand half empty and special discount rates are on offer. In short, there isn't really any one season which is the "best" time to go, and every season has its advantages.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The traditional art of Fiji is closely related to that of Tonga. Fijian canoes, too, were patterned after the more advanced Polynesian type, although the Fijians were timid sailors. War clubs, food bowls, *tanoas* (kava bowls), eating utensils, clay pots, and tapa cloth (*masi*) are considered Fiji's finest artifacts.

There are two kinds of woodcarvings: the ones made from *vesi* (*Intsia bijuga*)—ironwood in English—or *nawanawa* (*Cordia subcordata*) wood are superior to those of the lighter, highly breakable *vau* (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*). In times past it often took years to make a Fijian war club, as the carving was done in the living tree and left to

grow into the desired shape. The top *tanoas* are carved in the Lau Group.

Many crafts are alive and well, but some Fijians also carve "tikis" or mock New Guinea masks smeared with black shoe polish to look like ebony for sale to tourists. Also avoid crafts made from endangered species such as sea turtles (tortoise shell) and marine mammals (whales' teeth, etc.). Prohibited entry into most countries, these will be confiscated by customs if found.

Pottery Making

Fijian pottery making is unique in that it is a Melanesian art form. The Polynesians forgot how

to make pottery thousands of years ago. Today the main center for pottery making in Fiji is the Sigatoka Valley on Viti Levu. Here, the women shape clay by pressing a wooden paddle against a rounded stone held inside the future pot. The potter's wheel was unknown in the Pacific.

A saucerlike section forms the bottom; the sides are built up using slabs of clay, or coils and strips. These are welded and battered to shape. When the form is ready the pot is dried inside the house for a few days, then heated over an open fire for about an hour. Resin from the gum of the *dakua* (kauri) tree is rubbed on the outside while the pot is still hot. This adds a varnish that brings out the color of the clay and improves the pot's water-holding ability.

This pottery is extremely fragile, which accounts for the quantity of potsherds found on ancient village sites. Smaller, less breakable pottery products such as ashtrays are now made for sale to visitors.

Weaving

Woven articles are the most widespread handicrafts. Pandanus fiber is the most common, but coconut leaf and husk, vine tendrils, banana stem, tree and shrub bark, the stems and leaves of water weeds, and the skin of the sago palm leaf are all used. On some islands the fibers are passed through a fire, boiled, then bleached in the sun. Vegetable dyes of very lovely mellow tones are sometimes used, but gaudier store dyes are much more prevalent. Shells are occasionally utilized to cut, curl, or make the fibers pliable.

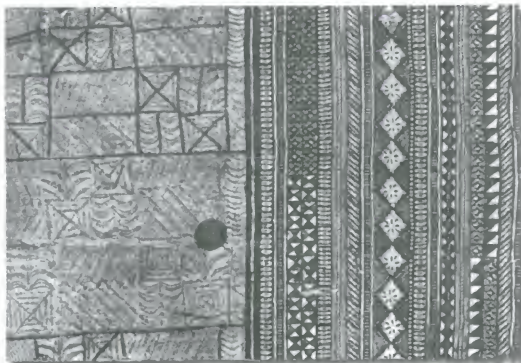
Tapa Cloth

This is Fiji's most characteristic traditional product. Tapa is light, portable, and inexpensive, and a piece makes an excellent souvenir to brighten up a room back home. It's made by the women on Vatulele Island off Viti Levu and on certain islands of the Lau Group.

To produce tapa, the inner, water-soaked bark of the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) is stripped from the tree and steeped in water. Then it's scraped with shells and pounded into a thin sheet with wooden mallets. Four of these sheets are applied one over another and pounded together, then left to dry in the sun.

While Tongan tapa is decorated by holding a relief pattern under the tapa and overpainting the lines, Fijian tapa (*masi kesa*) is distinctive for its rhythmic geometric designs applied with stencils made from green pandanus and banana leaves. The stain is rubbed on in the same manner in which temple rubbings are made from a stone inscription.

The only colors used are red, from red clay, and a black pigment obtained by burning candlenuts. Both powders are mixed with boiled gums made from scraped roots. Sunlight deepens and sets the colors. Each island group had its characteristic colors and patterns, ranging from plantlike paintings to geometric designs. Sheets of tapa feel like felt when finished. On some islands tapa is still used for clothing, bedding, and room dividers, and as ceremonial red carpets. Tablecloths, bedcovers, place mats, and wall hangings of tapa make handsome souvenirs.



Fijian masi (tapa)

SHOPPING

Most large shops in Fiji close at 1300 on Saturday, but smaller grocery stores are often open on Sunday. After the 1987 military coups most commercial business was suspended on Sunday, but these restrictions were dropped in 1996 and you'll find many restaurants and bars now open on Sunday. Indo-Fijians dominate the retail trade. If you're buying from an Indo-Fijian merchant, always bargain hard and consider all sales final. Indigenous Fijians usually begin by asking a much lower starting price, in which case bargaining isn't so important.

Fiji's "duty-free" shops such as Prouds or Tap-poo are not really duty-free, as all goods are subject to various fiscal duties plus the 10 percent value-added tax. Bargaining is the order of the day, but to be frank, Americans can usually buy most of the Japanese electronics sold "duty-free" in Fiji cheaper in the States, where more recent models are available. If you do buy something, get an itemized receipt and international guarantee, and watch that they don't switch packages and unload a demo on you. Once purchased, items cannot be returned, so don't let yourself be talked into anything. Camera film is inexpensive, however, and the selection is good—stock up.

If you'd like to do some shopping in Fiji, locally made handicrafts such as tapa cloth, mats, kava

bowls, war clubs, woodcarvings, etc., are a much better investment (see Arts and Crafts, above). The four-pronged cannibal forks available everywhere make unique souvenirs, but avoid the masks, which are made only for sale to tourists and have nothing to do with Fiji. If you're spending serious money for top-quality work, visit the Fiji Museum or the Government Handicraft Center in Suva beforehand to see what is authentic.

To learn what's available on the tourist market and to become familiar with prices, browse one of the half-dozen outlets of **Jacks Handicrafts** around Viti Levu. You'll find them in downtown Nadi, Sigatoka, and Suva. If the sales person is overenthusiastic and begins following you around too closely, just stop and say you're only looking today and they'll probably leave you alone.

You can often purchase your souvenirs directly from the Fijian producers at markets, etc. Just beware of aggressive indigenous Fijian "sword sellers" on the streets of Suva, Nadi, and Lautoka who peddle fake handicrafts at high prices, or high-pressure duty-free touts who may try to pull you into their shops, or self-appointed guides who offer to help you find the "best price." If you get the feeling you're being hustled, walk away.

Grog (kava) is mixed in a tanoa, such as this fine example carved from a single block of vesi wood. It is said that Fijians have yaqona in their veins instead of blood.



FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, CHICAGO, IL, USA

ACCOMMODATIONS

With *Moon Handbooks: Fiji* you're guaranteed a good, inexpensive place to stay on almost every island. Nearly every hotel in the country is included herein, not just a selection. We consistently do this to give you a solid second reference in case your travel agent or someone else recommends a certain place. To allow you the widest possible choice, all price categories are included, and throughout we've tried to spotlight properties that offer value for money. If you think we're wrong or you were badly treated, be sure to send us a written complaint. Equally important, let us know when you agree with what's here or if you think a place deserves a better review. Your letter will be taken seriously!

We don't solicit freebies from the hotel chains; our only income derives from the price you paid for this book. So we don't mind telling you that, as usual, some of the luxury hotels are just not worth the exorbitant prices they charge. Many simply re-create Hawaii at twice the cost. Even worse, they tend to isolate you in a American/Australian environment, away from the Fiji you came to experience. The luxury hotels may be worth visiting as sightseeing attractions, watering holes, or sources of entertainment, but unless you're a millionaire, sleep elsewhere. Plenty of middle-level hotels charge about half what the top-end places ask, while providing adequate comfort.

Dormitory, "bunkroom," or backpacker accommodations are available on all of the main islands, with communal cooking facilities usually provided. If you're traveling alone, these are excellent since they're just the place to meet other travelers. Couples can usually get a double room for a price only slightly above two dorm beds. For the most part, the dormitories are safe and congenial for those who don't mind sacrificing their privacy to save money.

Needless to say, always ask the price of your accommodations before accepting them. In cases where there's a local and a tourist price, you'll always pay the higher tariff if you don't check beforehand. Asking first gives you the opportunity to bargain if someone quotes an absurdly high starting price. Otherwise, hotel prices

are usually fixed and bargaining isn't the normal way to go.

Be aware that some of the low-budget places included in this book are a lot more basic than what is sometimes referred to as "budget" accommodations in the United States. The standards of cleanliness in the common bathrooms may be lower than you expected, the furnishings very basic, the beds uncomfortable, linens and towels skimpy, housekeeping nonexistent, and window screens lacking, but ask yourself, where in the U.S. are you going to find a room for a similar price? Luckily, good medium-priced accommodations are usually available for those unwilling to put up with Spartan conditions.

When picking a hotel, keep in mind that although a thatched bungalow is cooler and infinitely more attractive than a concrete box, it's also more likely to have insect problems. If in doubt check the window screens and carry mosquito coils and repellent. Hopefully there'll be a resident lizard or two to feed on the bugs. Always turn on a light before getting out of bed to use the facilities at night, as even the finest hotels in the tropics have cockroaches.

A room with cooking facilities can save you a lot on restaurant meals, and some moderately priced establishments have weekly rates. If you have to choose a meal plan, take only breakfast and dinner (Modified American Plan or MAP)

ACCOMMODATION PRICE RANGES

Throughout this handbook, accommodations are grouped in the price categories that follow based on the price of a double room. The conversion rate used is indicated below, and of course, currency fluctuations and inflation can lead to slight variations.

Under US\$25	(Under F\$56.25)
US\$25-50	(F\$56.25-112.50)
US\$50-100	(F\$112.50-225.00)
US\$100-150	(F\$225.00-337.50)
US\$150 and up	(F\$337.50 and up)

and have fruit for lunch. As you check into your room, note the nearest fire exits. And don't automatically accept the first room offered; if you're paying good money look at several, then choose.

A 10 percent government tax is added to all accommodations prices. Most hotels include the tax in their quoted rates, but some don't. You can often tell whether tax is included by looking at the amount: if it's F\$33 tax is probably included, whereas if it's F\$30 it may not be. When things are slow, specials are offered and some prices become negotiable, and occasionally you'll pay less than the prices quoted in this book. This is most likely to happen in February and March, the lowest tourist season. Otherwise, prices are usually the same year-round without seasonal variations.

Reserving Ahead

Booking accommodations in advance usually works to your disadvantage as full-service travel agents will begin by trying to sell you their most expensive properties (which pay them the highest commissions) and work down from there. The quite adequate middle and budget places included in this handbook often aren't on their screens, or are sold at highly inflated prices. Few hotels charging under US\$80 have the accounting wherewithal to process agency commissions. Herein we provide the rates for direct local bookings, and if you book through a travel agent abroad you could end up paying considerably more as multiple commissions are tacked on. Thus we suggest you avoid making any hotel reservations at all before arriving in Fiji (unless you're coming for a major event).

There aren't many islands where it's to your advantage to book ahead in the medium to lower price range, but you can often obtain substantial discounts at the upscale hotels by including them as part of a package tour. If you intend to spend most of your time at a specific first-class hotel, you'll benefit from bulk rates by taking a package tour instead of paying the higher "rack rate" the hotels charge to individuals who just walk in off the street. Call up some of the agents listed herein in Getting There and check their websites. **FijiBedBank.com** at www.fijibedbank.com books rooms online via a secure server, though only wholesalers and travel agents can use the service. **TravelMaxia.com** at [\[ia.com\]\(http://ia.com\) provides information that allows you to make direct contact with the resorts. The site **Pacificnavigator.com** is similar.](http://www.travelmax-</p>
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Accommodation Categories

Fiji offers a wide variety of places to stay, from low-budget to world-class. Standard international hotels are found in Nadi and Suva, while many of the upmarket beach resorts are on small islands in the Mamanuca Group off Nadi or along the Coral Coast on Viti Levu's sunny south side. The Mamanuca resorts are secluded, with fan-cooled *bure* accommodations, while at the Coral Coast hotels you often get an air-conditioned room in a main building. The Coral Coast has more to offer in the way of land tours, shopping, and entertainment/eating options, while the off-shore resorts are preferable if you want a rest or are into water sports. The Coral Coast beaches are only good at high tide and the reefs are degraded, while on the outer islands the reefs are usually pristine.

In recent years smaller luxury resorts have multiplied in remote locations, from the guest-accepting plantations near Savusavu and on Taveuni to isolated beach resorts on outlying islands such as Kaimbu, Kadavu (Matana), Laucala, Matangi, Beqa, Naigani, Namenalala, Nukubati, Qamea, Toberua, Turtle, Vatulele, Wakaya, and Yasawa. Prices at the "boutique" resorts begin at several hundred dollars a day and rise to four figures, so some care should be taken in selecting the right one. A few such as Beqa, Matana, and Taveuni are marketed almost exclusively to scuba divers, and Namenalala is a good ecotourism choice. If you delight in glamorous socializing with other upscale couples, Turtle and Vatulele are for you. Families are most welcome at Beachcomber, Castaway, Cousteau, Malolo, Maravu, Matangi, Naigani, Naviti, Plantation, Shangri-La's Fijian, Sonaisali, and Toberua, but children are generally not accepted at all at Kaimbu, Lomalagi, Matamanoa, Matana, Namale, Namotu, Natadola, Nukubati, Qamea, Turtle, Vatulele, Wadigi, Wakaya, and Yasawa. The very wealthy will feel at home on Kaimbu, Laucala, and Wakaya, whereas many of the Mamanuca resorts are designed for larger numbers of guests interested in intensive sporting and social activities.

The low-budget accommodations are spread

out, with concentrations in Korotogo, Nadi, Lautoka, Levuka, Suva, and Savusavu, and on Taveuni. Low-cost outer island beach resorts exist on Caqalai, Kadavu, Leleuvia, Mana, Nananu-i-Ra, Naviti, Ono, Tavewa, Waya, Wayasewa, and Yanuca. The largest budget chain in Fiji is Cathay Hotels with properties in Suva, Lautoka, and on the Coral Coast (visit their Fiji For Less website at www.fiji4less.com). Since September 2000 over a dozen new backpacker resorts have appeared in the central Yasawas under the auspices of the Nacula Tikina Tourism Association (www.fijibudget.com), with the support of millionaire environmentalist Richard Evanson. All of these cater to a younger crowd who decide where they'll stay as they go, and the easiest way to check on the availability of rooms is to call them up after you get to Fiji.

A few of the cheap hotels in Suva, Lautoka, and Labasa double as whorehouses, making them cheap in both senses of the word. At all of the low-budget hostels, women should exercise care in the way they deal with the male staff as we've received complaints about harassment. Many hotels, both in cities and at the beach, offer dormitory beds as well as individual rooms. Most of the dorms are mixed. Women can sometimes request a women-only dorm when things are slow, but it's usually not guaranteed. Some city hotels lock their front doors at 2300, so ask first if you're planning a night on the town. Several islands with air service from Suva, including

Koro, Moala, Gau, and Cicia, have no regular accommodations for visitors at all, so it's best to know someone who lives there before heading to these islands.

Camping

Camping facilities (bring your own tent) are found at backpacker resorts on Kadavu, Leleuvia, Mana, Ono, Ovalau, Rotuma, Taveuni, Tavewa, Caqalai, Waya, Wayasewa, and Yanuca Lailai Islands. A few shoestring hostels in Nadi and Savusavu also allow it, as do Viti Levu beach resorts like Seashell Cove, The Beachhouse, and the Coral Coast Christian Camp. On Vanua Levu, you can camp at Mumu Resort and at Buca Bay.

Elsewhere, get permission before pitching your tent as all land is owned by someone and land rights are sensitive issues in Fiji. Some freelance campers on beaches such as Natadola near Nadi and around Pacific Harbor have had their possessions stolen, so take care.

In Fijian villages don't ask a Fijian friend for permission to camp beside his house. Although he may feel obligated to grant the request of a guest, you'll be proclaiming to everyone that his home isn't completely to your liking. If all you really want is to camp, make that clear from the start and get approval to do so on a beach or by a river, but *not* in the village. A *sevusevu* should always be presented in this case. There's really nowhere to camp totally for free. Never camp



camping, Kadavu Island; where hotels don't exist, your tent is your home away from home

under a coconut tree, as falling coconuts can harm or kill you (actually, coconuts have two eyes so they only strike the wicked).

Staying in Villages

The most direct way to meet the Fijian people and learn a little about their culture is to stay in a village for a couple of nights. A number of hiking tours offer overnight stays in remote villages, and it's also possible to arrange it for yourself. If you befriend someone from an outlying island, ask them to write you a letter of introduction to their relatives back in the village. Mail a copy of it ahead with a polite letter introducing yourself, then slowly start heading that way.

In places well off the beaten track where there are no regular tourist accommodations, you could just show up in a village and ask permission of the *turaga-ni-koro* (village herald) to spend the night. Both Indo-Fijians and native Fijians will probably spontaneously invite you in to their homes. The Fijians' innate dignity and kindness should not be taken for granted, however.

All across the Pacific it's customary to reciprocate when someone gives you a gift—if not now, then sometime in the future. In Fiji this type of back and forth is called *kerekere*. Visitors who accept gifts (such as meals and accommodations) from islanders and do not reciprocate are undermining traditional culture and causing resentment, often without realizing it. It's sometimes hard to know how to repay hospitality, but Fijian culture has a solution: the *sevusevu*. This can be money, but it's usually a 500-gram "pyramid" of kava roots (*waka*), which can be easily purchased at any Fijian market for about F\$15. *Sevusevu* are more often performed between families or couples about to be married, or at births or christenings, but the custom is certainly a perfect way for visitors to show their appreciation.

We suggest travelers donate at least F\$20 pp per night to village hosts (carry sufficient cash in small denominations). The *waka* bundle is additional, and anyone traveling in remote areas of Fiji should pack some (take whole roots, not powdered kava). If you give the money up front together with the *waka* as a *sevusevu*, they'll know you're not a freeloader and you'll get VIP treatment, though in all cases it's absolutely essential to contribute something.

The *sevusevu* should be placed before (not handed to) the *turaga-ni-koro* or village herald so

he can accept or refuse. If he accepts (by touching the package), your welcome is confirmed and you may spend the night in the village. It's also nice to give some money to the lady of the house upon departure, with your thanks. Just say it's your goodbye *sevusevu* and watch the smile. A Fijian may refuse the money, but he/she will not be offended by the offer if it is done properly. Of course, developing interpersonal relationships with your hosts is more important than money, and mere cash or gifts is no substitute for making friends.

If you're headed for a remote outer island without hotels or resorts you could also take some gifts along, such as lengths of material, T-shirts, badges, pins, knitting needles, hats, acoustic guitar strings, school books, colored pens, toys, playing cards, fishhooks, line, or lures, or a big jar of instant coffee. Keep in mind, however, that Seventh-Day Adventists are forbidden to have coffee, cigarettes, or kava, so you might ask if there are any SDAs around in order to avoid embarrassment. Uncontroversial food items to donate include sugar, flour, rice, corned beef, matches, chewing gum, peanuts, and biscuits. One thing *not* to take is alcohol, which is always sure to offend somebody.

Once you're staying with one family avoid moving to the home of another family in the same village as this would probably be seen as a slight to the first. Be wary of readily accepting invitations to meals with villagers other than your hosts as the offer may only be meant as a courtesy. Don't overly admire any of the possessions of your hosts or they may feel obligated to give them to you. If you're forced to accept something you know you cannot take, ask them to keep it there for you in trust.

When choosing your traveling companions for a trip that involves staying in Fijian villages, make sure you agree on these things before you set out. Otherwise you could end up subsidizing somebody else's trip, or worse, have to stand by and watch the Fijian villagers subsidize it. Never arrive in a village on a Sunday, and don't overstay your welcome.

We recently received this comment from a Norwegian reader named Jorgen Langballe:

We were invited to the chiefly village of Nukubalavu, where we were introduced to the big chief of Savusavu and we had to do the

kava offering, keeping our heads low. I read about this in your book and thought it was an out of date fashion to bring kava around to give the chiefs when you travel, but the forms

here are quite serious, as we also experienced at a ceremony in town today when the president of Fiji was visiting on Coconut Day. No joke! He got a whole kava tree!

VILLAGE ETIQUETTE IN FIJI

- It's a Fijian custom to smile when you meet a stranger and say something like "Good morning," "Bula," or at least "Hello." Of course, you needn't do this in large towns, but you should almost everywhere else. If you meet someone you know, stop for a moment to exchange a few words. As you shake hands, tell the person your name.
- Fijian villages are private property and you should only enter after you've been welcomed. Of course it's okay to continue along a road that passes through a village, but make contact before leaving the road. Wait until someone greets you, then say you wish to be taken to the *turaga-ni-koro* (village herald). This village spokesperson will accept your *sevusevu* of kava roots and grant you permission to look around unless something important is happening, such as a funeral, celebration, feast, or church service (avoid arriving on a Sunday). A villager will be assigned to act as your guide and host. Yet even after this, you should still ask before taking pictures of individuals or inside buildings.
- If you wish to surf off a village, picnic on their beach, or fish in their lagoon, you should also ask permission. You'll almost always be made most welcome and granted any favors you request if you present a *sevusevu* to the village herald or chief. If you approach the Fijians with respect, you're sure to be treated the same way in return.
- Take off your footwear before entering a *bure* and stoop as you walk around inside. Fijian villagers consider it offensive to walk in front of a person seated on the floor (pass behind) or to fail to say *tulou* (excuse me) as you go by. Clap three times when you join people already seated on mats on the floor. Shake hands with your hosts.
- In a *bure*, men should sit cross-legged, women with their legs to the side. Sitting with your legs stretched out in front or with your knees up during presentations is disrespectful. After a meal or during informal kava drinking, you can stretch your legs out, but never point them at the chief or the kava bowl. Don't sit in doorways or put your hand on another's head.
- If offered *kava* (*yagona*), clap once, take the bowl, say *bula*, and drink it all in one gulp. Then hand the bowl back to the same person and clap three times saying *vinaka* (thanks). Don't stand up during a *sevusevu* to village elders—remain seated. When you give a gift hold it out with both hands, not one hand. Otherwise just place the bundle on the floor before them.
- It's good manners to take off your hat while walking through a village, where only the chief is permitted to wear a hat. Some villagers also object to sunglasses. Objects such as backpacks, handbags, and cameras should be carried in your hands rather than slung over your shoulders.
- Dress modestly in the village, which basically means a shirt for men and covered shoulders and thighs for women. Short shorts are not the best attire for men or women (long shorts okay), and bikinis are analogous to nudity (this also applies when swimming in a village river, pool, or beach). Wrapping a *sulu* around you will suffice.
- Don't point at people in villages. Do you notice how the Fijians rarely shout? In Fiji, raising your voice is a sign of anger. Don't openly admire a possession of someone as they may feel obligated to give it to you. If sharing a meal, wait until grace has been said before eating. Alcohol is usually forbidden in villages.
- Fijian children are very well behaved, and there's no running or shouting as you arrive in a village, and they'll leave you alone if you wish. The Fijians love children, so don't hesitate to bring your own. You'll never have to worry about finding a baby-sitter. Just make sure your children understand the importance of being on their best behavior in the village.

Village Life

As you approach a Fijian village, people will usually want to be helpful and will direct or accompany you to the person or place you seek. It's customary to present a *sevusevu* to the *turaga-nikoro* if you'd like to be shown around. If you show genuine interest in something and ask to see how it is done, you'll usually be treated with respect and asked if there's anything else you'd like to know. Initially, Fijians may hesitate to welcome you into their homes because they may fear you will not wish to sit on a mat and eat native foods with your fingers. Once you show them this isn't true, you'll receive the full hospitality treatment.

Consider participating in the daily activities of the family, such as weaving, cooking, gardening, and fishing. Your hosts will probably try to dissuade you from "working," but if you persist you'll become accepted. Staying in a village is definitely not for everyone. Many houses contain no electricity, running water, toilet, furniture, etc.,

and only native food will be available. Water and your left hand serve as toilet paper.

You should also expect to sacrifice most of your privacy, to stay up late drinking grog, and to sit in the house and socialize when you could be out exploring. On Sunday you'll have to stay put the whole day. The constant attention and lack of sanitary conditions may become tiresome, but it would be considered rude to attempt to be alone or refuse the food or grog.

With the proliferation of backpackers resorts, staying in villages has become much less a part of visits to the remoter parts of Fiji than it was a decade ago, and relatively few travelers do it today. The Australian guidebooks also discourage travelers from going off the beaten track. However, so long as you're prepared to accept all of the above and know beforehand that this is not a cheap way to travel, a couple of nights in an outlying village could easily be the highlight of your trip.

FOOD AND DRINK

Unlike some other South Pacific destinations, Fiji has many good, inexpensive eateries. The ubiquitous Chinese restaurants are probably your best bet for dinner and you can almost always get alcohol with the meal. At lunchtime look for an Indian place. The Indian restaurants are lifesavers for vegetarians, as all too often a

vegetarian meal elsewhere is just the same thing with the meat removed.

Many restaurants are closed on Sunday, and a 10 percent tax is added to the bill at some up-market restaurants, although it's usually included in the menu price. The service at restaurants is occasionally slow. Fijians have their own pace,

slicing breadfruit



DAVID STANLEY

FIJIAN AND INDIAN SPECIALTIES

Traditional Fijian food is usually steamed or boiled instead of fried, and dishes such as baked fish (*ika*) in coconut cream (*lolo*) with cassava (*tapioca*), taro (*dalo*), breadfruit (*uto*), and sweet potato (*kumala*) take a long time to prepare and must be served fresh, which makes it difficult to offer them in restaurants. Many resorts bake fish, pork, and root vegetables wrapped in banana leaves in a *lovo* (earth oven) at least once a week. Don't pass up an opportunity to try *duruka* (young sugar cane) or *vakalo* (fish and prawns), both baked in *lolo*. *Kokoda* is an appetizing dish made of diced raw fish marinated in coconut cream and lime juice, while smoked octopus is *kuita*. Taro leaves are used to make a spinach called *palusami* (often stuffed with corned beef), which is known as *rourou* when soaked in coconut cream. Taro stems are cut into a marinated salad called *baba*. Seasoned chicken (*toa*) is wrapped and steamed in banana leaves to produce

kovu. *Miti* is a sauce made of coconut cream, oranges, and chilies.

Indian dishes are spicy, often curries with rice and *dhal* (lentil soup), but orthodox Hindus don't consume beef and Muslims forgo pork. Instead of bread Indians eat *roti*, a flat, tortilla-like pancake also called a *chapati*. *Puri* are small, deep-fried *rotis*. Baked in a stone oven *roti* becomes *naan*, a Punjabi specialty similar to pita bread. *Palau* is a main plate of rice and vegetables always including peas. *Samosas* are lumps of potato and other vegetables wrapped in dough and deep-fried. *Pakor*as are deep-fried chunks of dough spiced with chili and often served with a pickle chutney. Yogurt mixed with water makes a refreshing drink called *lassi*. If you have the chance, try South Indian vegetarian dishes like *iddili* (little white rice cakes served with *dhal*) and *masala dosai* (a rice potato-filled pancake served with a watery curry sauce called *sambar*).

and trying to make them do things more quickly is often counterproductive. Their charm and the friendly personal attention you receive more than compensate.

The Hot Bread Kitchen chain of bakeries around Fiji serves fresh fruit loaves, cheese and onion loaves, muffins, and other assorted breads. The Morris Hedstrom supermarket chain is about the cheapest, and many have milk bars with ice cream and sweets.

The famous Fiji Bitter beer is brewed in Suva by Australian-owned Carlton Brewery Ltd., part of the famous Fosters Brewing Group. Another Carlton-owned company, South Pacific Distilleries Ltd., produces brandy, gin, rum, vodka, and whisky under a variety of brand names at their plant in Lautoka. Beer and other alcohol is only available at supermarkets in Fiji weekdays 0800–1800, Saturday 0800–1300. By law licensed restaurants can only serve alcohol to those who order meals. Drinking alcoholic beverages on the street is prohibited. Unlike Australia and New Zealand, it's not customary to bring your own (BYO) booze into restaurants.

More and more beverage manufacturers are marketing their products in environmentally unfriendly plastic bottles. The Greenpeace Pacific Campaign suggests that visitors purchase drinks in returnable glass bottles whenever possible.

Traditional Foods

The traditional diet of the Fijians consists of root crops and fruit, plus lagoon fish and the occasional pig. The vegetables include taro, yams, cassava (manioc), breadfruit, and sweet potatoes. The sweet potato (*kumala*) is an anomaly—it's the only Pacific food plant with a South American origin. How it got to the islands is not known.

Taro is an elephant-eared plant cultivated in freshwater swamps. Although yams are considered a prestige food, they're not as nutritious as breadfruit and taro. Yams can grow up to three meters long and weigh hundreds of kilos. Papaya (pawpaw) is nourishing: a third of a cup contains as much vitamin C as 18 apples. To ripen a green papaya overnight, puncture it a few times with a knife. Don't overeat papaya—unless you need an effective laxative.

The ancient Pacific islanders stopped making pottery over a millennium ago and instead developed an ingenious way of cooking in an underground earth oven known as a *lovo*. First a stack of dry coconut husks is burned in a pit. Once the fire is going well, coral stones are heaped on top, and when most of the husks have burnt away the food is wrapped in banana leaves and placed on the hot stones—fish and meat below, vegetables above. A whole pig may be cleaned, then stuffed with banana leaves and

THE COCONUT PALM

Human life would not be possible on most of the Pacific's far-flung atolls without this all-purpose tree. It reaches maturity in eight years, then produces about 50 nuts a year for 60 years. Aside from the tree's esthetic value and usefulness in providing shade, the water of the green coconut provides a refreshing drink, and the white meat of the young nut is a delicious food. The harder meat of more mature nuts is grated and squeezed, which creates a coconut cream that is eaten alone or used in cooking. The oldest nuts are cracked open and the hard meat removed then dried to be sold as copra. It takes about 6,000 coconuts to make a ton of copra. Copra is pressed to extract the oil, which in turn is made into candles, cosmetics, and soap. Scented with flowers, the oil nurtures the skin.

The juice or sap from the cut flower spathes of the palm provides toddy, a popular drink; the toddy is distilled into a spirit called arrack, the whiskey of the Pacific. Otherwise the sap can be boiled to make candy. Millionaire's salad is made by shredding the growth cut from the heart of the tree. For each salad, a fully mature tree must be sacrificed.

The nut's hard inner shell can be used as a cup and makes excellent firewood. Rope, cordage, brushes, and heavy matting are produced from the coir fiber of the husk. The smoke from burning husks

is a most effective mosquito repellent. The leaves of the coconut tree are used to thatch the roofs of the islanders' cottages or are woven into baskets, mats, and fans. The trunk provides timber for building and furniture. Actually, these are only the common uses: there are many others as well.



DIANA LASICH HARPER

Every part of the coconut tree (Cocos nucifera) can be used.

hot stones. This cooks the beast from inside out as well as outside in, and the leaves create steam. The food is then covered with more leaves and stones, and after about two and a half hours everything is cooked.

The *lovo* feasts staged weekly at many large hotels around Nadi or on the Coral Coast offer a

good opportunity to taste authentic Fijian food and see traditional dancing. These feasts are usually accompanied by a Fijian *meke* or song and dance performance in which legends, love stories, and historical events are told in song and gesture. Alternatively, firewalking may be presented.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Information

The government-funded **Fiji Visitors Bureau** (P.O. Box 92, Suva; tel. 302-433, fax 300-970, website: www.bulafiji.com) mails out general brochures and a list of hotels with current prices free upon request. In Fiji they have walk-in offices at Nadi Airport and in Suva. They also maintain a local toll-free information number at tel. 0800-721-721.

The Fiji Visitors Bureau sends out a tourism newsletter called *Bula News Update* over email twice a month. To subscribe, simply send a blank email to bulanews@fijivb.gov.fj with "Subscribe" in the subject heading and your email address will be automatically added to the distribution list. To be removed from the list, repeat the process with "Unsubscribe" in the subject heading.

Book buyers should browse the two book centers at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, as only these have a wide selection of titles.

Travel Agencies

If you like the security of advance reservations but aren't interested in joining a regular packaged tour, several local companies specialize in booking cruises, hotel rooms, airport transfers, sight-seeing tours, rental cars, etc. Only the Blue Lagoon and Captain Cook mini-cruises mentioned in Getting There really need to be booked from abroad; upon arrival you'll have dozens of hotels and resorts competing for your business at prices much lower than your friendly travel agent back home will charge. So rather than risk being exiled to one of Fiji's most expensive resorts by some agent thinking mostly about their commission, wait to make most of your ground arrangements upon arrival at Nadi Airport.

Fiji's largest in-bound tour operator is **Rosie The Travel Service** (P.O. Box 9268, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-935, fax 722-607, website: www.pacificnavigator.com), with a 24-hour office in the arrivals arcade at Nadi Airport and 14 branches around Viti Levu. This handbook will give you an idea what's out there, and upon arrival Rosie or one of the other agents at Nadi Airport will be able to explain current prices and check availability. In Australia advance book-

ings can be made through Rosie The Travel Service (Suite 505, East Towers, 9 Bronte Rd., Bondi Junction, Sydney, NSW 2022, Australia; tel. 61-2/9889-3666, fax 61-2/9369-1129, website: www.citysearch.com.au/syd/rosietours).

TOURIST OFFICES

Fiji Visitors Bureau, GPO P.O. Box 92, Suva, Fiji Islands (tel. 679/302-433, fax 679/300-970; website: www.bulafiji.com; email: infodesk@fijivb.gov.fj)

Fiji Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 9217, Nadi Airport, Fiji Islands (tel. 679/722-433, fax 679/720-141, email: fjvbnadi@is.com.fj)

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Suite 220, 5777 West Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045, U.S.A. (tel. 310/568-1616 or 800/932-3454, fax 310/670-2318; website: www.bulafiji-americas.com; email: infodesk@bulafiji-americas.com)

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Level 12, St. Martin's Tower, 31 Market St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia (tel. 61-2/9264-3399, fax 61-2/9264-3060)

Fiji Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 1179, Auckland, New Zealand (tel. 64-9/373-2134, fax 64-9/309-4720; website: www.bulafiji.co.nz; email: info@bulafiji.co.nz)

Fiji Visitors Bureau, 14th floor, NOA Bldg., 3-5, 2-Chome, Azabudai, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106, Japan (tel. 81-3/3587-2038, fax 81-3/3587-2563; website: www.tabi.or.jp/fvb)

South Pacific Tourism Organization, 48 Glenthams Road, Barnes, London SW13 9JJ, United Kingdom (tel. 44-20/8741-5566, fax 44-20/8741-6107, email: ajbalfour@aol.com)

South Pacific Tourism Organization, Petersburger Strasse 94, D-10247 Berlin, Germany (tel. 49-30/4225-6026, fax 49-30/4225-6287, email: 100762.3614@compuserve.com)

This locally owned business has provided efficient, personalized service since 1974.

Rosie's main competitor is the **United Touring Company** (tel. 722-811) with an office near the Fiji Visitors Bureau at the airport and tour desks at many Nadi and Coral Coast hotels. They are

very reliable. Numerous other private travel agencies have offices at Nadi Airport and in town, many of them oriented toward backpackers or budget travelers. These are discussed in this book's Nadi chapter. Also check the Bula Fiji Starter Packs described in *Getting There*.

VISAS AND OFFICIALDOM

Everyone needs a passport valid at least three months beyond the date of entry. No visa is required of visitors from 101 countries (including Western Europe, North America, Japan, Israel, and most Commonwealth countries) for stays of four months. Tickets to leave Fiji are officially required but usually not checked. The vaccination against yellow fever or cholera only applies if you're arriving directly from an infected area, such as the Amazon jungles or the banks of the Ganges River (no vaccinations necessary if you're arriving from North America, New Zealand, or Australia).

Fiji has diplomatic missions in Brussels, Canberra, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, Ottawa, Port Moresby, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Washington, Wellington, and Vancouver. The main ones are listed here.

Extensions of stay are given out by the immigration offices at Lautoka, Nadi Airport, Savusavu, and Suva. You must apply before your current permit expires. After the first four months, you can obtain another two months to increase your total stay to six months by paying a F\$55 fee. Bring your passport, onward or return ticket, and proof of sufficient funds. After six months you must leave and stay away at least four days, after which you can return and start on another four months.

Work permits are difficult to obtain and the fastest means of obtaining one is to invest US\$50,000 or more in the country. For information on business opportunities in your field of expertise, contact the **Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau** (P.O. Box 2303, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 315-988, fax 301-873, website: www.ftib.org.fj), Civic Tower, Level 6, directly behind the Suva City Library on Victoria Parade. Foreigners holding professional or technical qualifications in fields required by Fiji also receive preference. Fiji's diplomatic offices abroad should be able to provide advice.

DIPLOMATIC OFFICES

Permanent Mission to the United Nations, 630 3rd Ave., 7th floor, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A. (tel. 212/687-4130, fax 212/687-3963)

Embassy of Fiji, 2233 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20007, U.S.A. (tel. 202/337-8320, fax 202/337-1996)

High Commission of Fiji, 19 Beale Cres., Deakin, ACT 2600, Australia (tel. 61-2/6260-5115, fax 61-2/6260-5105)

High Commission of Fiji, 31 Pipitea St., Thorndon, Wellington, New Zealand (tel. 64-4/473-5401, fax 64-4/499-1011)

High Commission of Fiji, Defense House, 4th floor, Champion Parade, Port Moresby NCD, Papua New Guinea (tel. 675/321-1914, fax 675/321-7220)

High Commission of Fiji, 34 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DN, United Kingdom (tel. 44-171/584-3661, fax 44-171/584-2838)

Embassy of Fiji, 66 avenue de Cortenberg, B.P. 7, 1040 Brussels, Belgium (tel. 32-2/736-9050, fax 32-2/736-1458)

Embassy of Fiji, Noa Building, 14th floor, 3-5, 2-Chome, Azabudai, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 106, Japan (tel. 81-3/3587-2038, fax 81-3/3587-2563)

High Commission of Fiji, Level 2, Menara Chan, 138 Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (tel. 60-3/264-8422, fax 60-3/925-7555)

Fiji Trade and Tourism Commission, Suite 3212, 32nd Floor, 333 Keelung Road, Sector 1, Taipei, Taiwan (tel. 886-2/757-9596, fax 886-2/757-9597)

Fiji has four ports of entry for yachts: Lautoka, Levuka, Savusavu, and Suva. Calling at an outer island before clearing customs is prohibited. Levuka is the easiest place to check in or out, as all of the officials have offices right on the main wharf, and Savusavu is also convenient. To visit the outer islands, yachts require a letter of au-

thorization from the Secretary for Fijian Affairs in Suva, or the commissioner (at Labasa, Lautoka, or Nausori) of the division they wish to visit. Yacht permits to visit the outer islands must be obtained from the Provincial Desk Unit, 3rd floor, Native Land Trust Board building, Carnarvon St. and Gladestone Road, Suva.

MONEY

The currency is the Fiji dollar, which is about two to one to the U.S. dollar in value ($\text{US\$1} = \text{F\$2.25}$). To obtain the current rate, visit www.xe.net/ucc. The Fiji dollar is a stable currency, pegged to a basket of the U.S., New Zealand, and Australian dollars, the yen, and the pound.

The first Fijian coins were minted in London in 1934, but Fiji continued to deal in British currency until 1969 when dollars and cents were introduced (at the rate of two Fiji dollars to one pound). There are coins of one, two, five, 10, 20, and 50 cents and one dollar, and bills of F\$2, F\$5, F\$10, F\$20, and F\$50 (the F\$5 and F\$50 notes and F\$2 and F\$20 notes have confusingly similar colors and designs).

Banking hours are Monday–Thursday 0930–1500, Friday 0930–1600. Commercial banks operating in Fiji include the ANZ Bank, Indian-owned Bank of Baroda, Pakistani-owned Habib Bank, Colonial National Bank, Bank of

Hawaii, Merchant Bank, and Westpac Banking Corporation. There are bank branches in all the main towns, but it's usually not possible to change traveler's checks or foreign banknotes in rural areas or on the outer islands. Take care when changing at the luxury hotels as they often give a rate much lower than the banks. Recent cases of stolen traveler's checks being changed in Fiji has caused many hotels and restaurants to refuse them. It's a good idea to plan ahead and change enough money at a bank to get you through the weekends.

Credit cards are strictly for the cities and resorts (the most useful cards to bring are American Express, Diners Club, JCB International, MasterCard, and Visa). The ANZ Bank gives cash advances on MasterCard and Visa and has automated teller machines (ATMs) outside most of their offices. ATMs provide local currency from checking accounts and Visa and



MasterCard accounts at good rates without commission. Some ATMs (such as those at Westpac Bank and Colonial National Bank branches) accept only local debit cards. In some cases you'll need an access card to get at an ATM. Occasionally the machines won't work, in which case you'll almost always be able to get a cash advance at the counter inside (though not at the Colonial National Bank).

Ask your bank what fee they'll charge if you use an ATM abroad, what your daily limit will be, and if you'll need a special personal identification number (PIN). Cash advances against credit cards are considered loans and accrue interest from the moment you are paid. You may be able to avoid this by maintaining a balance on your credit card account. To avoid emergencies, it's better not to be 100 percent dependent on ATMs. If you're forced to get a cash advance through a large supermarket or resort, they'll probably take 10 percent commission for the favor. Many tourist facilities levy a five percent surcharge on credit card payments.

The import of foreign currency is unrestricted, but only F\$500 in Fiji banknotes may be imported or exported. Avoid taking any Fiji banknotes out of the country at all, as Fiji dollars are difficult to change and heavily discounted outside Fiji. The Thomas Cook offices in Suva and Nadi will change whatever you have left into the currency of the next country on your itinerary (don't forget to keep enough local currency to pay your airport departure tax at the check-in counter). Officially you're only allowed to export a

maximum of F\$5,000 in foreign cash, although this will only become an issue if they catch you for something else, such as narcotics, pornography, firearms, or immigration offenses.

For security the bulk of your travel funds should be in traveler's checks. American Express is probably the best kind to have, as they're represented by Tapa International in Suva (4th floor, ANZ House, 25 Victoria Parade; tel. 302-333, fax 302-048) and Nadi (Nadi Airport Concourse; tel. 722-325). If your American Express checks or card are lost or stolen, contact either of these. Thomas Cook has offices of their own at 30 Thomson St., Suva (tel. 301-603, fax 300-304), and in Nadi (tel. 703-110).

If you need money sent, have your banker make a telegraphic transfer to any Westpac Bank or ANZ Bank branch in Fiji. Many banks will hold a sealed envelope for you in their vault for a nominal fee—a good way to avoid carrying unneeded valuables with you all around Fiji.

In 1992 Fiji introduced a 10 percent value-added tax (VAT), which is usually (but not always) included in quoted prices. Among the few items exempt from the tax are unprocessed local foods, books printed in Fiji, and bus fares. Despite VAT, Fiji is one of the least expensive countries in the South Pacific, especially since the devaluation. Tipping isn't customary in Fiji, although some resorts do have a staff Christmas fund, to which contributions are welcome. Maybe have a quality baseball hat or a small bottle of nice perfume in your bag to give to anyone who has really gone out of their way for you.

COMMUNICATIONS

Post

Post offices are generally open weekdays 0800–1600 and they hold general delivery mail two months. Fiji's postal workers are amazingly polite and efficient, and postage is inexpensive, so mail lots of postcards from here! Consider using air mail for parcels, since surface mail takes up to six months. Most surface parcels do arrive eventually, and small packets weighing less than one kilogram benefit from an especially low tariff. Book rate up to five kilograms is also very low. The weight limit for overseas parcels is 10 kilograms. Post Fiji's *fast POST*

service guarantees that your letter or parcel will get on the first international airline connection to your destination for a small surcharge. Express mail service (EMS) is more expensive but faster and up to 20 kilograms may be sent (available to 28 countries). Main post offices all around Fiji accept EMS mail.

When writing to Fiji, use the words "Fiji Islands" in the address (otherwise the letter might go to Fuji, Japan) and underline Fiji (so it doesn't end up in Iceland). Also include the post office box number as there's no residential mail delivery in Fiji. If it's a remote island or small village

you're writing to, the person's name will be sufficient. Sending a picture postcard to an islander is a very nice way of saying thank you.

Aside from EMS, the other major courier services active in Fiji are **CDP** (tel. 313-077) at Labasa, Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, Sigatoka, and Suva, **DHL** (tel. 313-166) with offices at Labasa, Lautoka, Levuka, Nadi, Savusavu, and Suva, **TNT** (tel. 308-677) at Lautoka, Nadi, and Suva, and **UPS** (tel. 312-697) at Lautoka, Nadi, and Suva. To Europe or North America, DHL charges F\$140 for a small box up to 10 kilograms or F\$240 for a big box up to 25 kilograms.

Telecommunications

Card telephones are very handy, and if you're staying in Fiji more than a few days and intend to make your own arrangements, it's wise to purchase a local telephone card right away (coin telephones don't exist). In this handbook we provide all the numbers you'll need to make hotel reservations, check restaurant hours, find out about cultural shows, and compare car rental rates, saving you a lot of time and inconvenience.

By using a telephone card to call long distance you limit the amount the call can possibly cost and won't end up overspending should you forget to keep track of the time. On short calls you avoid three-minute minimum charges. International telephone calls placed from hotel rooms are always much more expensive than the same calls made from public phones using telephone cards (ask the receptionist for the location of the nearest card phone). What you sacrifice is your privacy as anyone can stand around and listen to your call, as often happens. Card phones are usually found outside post offices or large stores. Check that the phone actually works before bothering to arrange your numbers and notes, as it seems like quite a few of the 770 card phones in Fiji are out of order at any given time.

Magnetic telephone cards and Tele Cards are sold at all post offices and many shops in denominations of F\$3, F\$5, F\$10, F\$20, and F\$50 (foreign phone cards cannot be used in Fiji). It's wiser to get a F\$3 or F\$5 card rather than one of the higher values in case you happen to leave it behind in the phone (easy to do). Since domestic telephone rates are extremely low in Fiji, even the F\$3 card lasts ages. With a Tele Card you

scratch off a strip on the back of the card to reveal a code number. On hearing a dial tone, dial 101 and follow the voice prompts. The regular magnetic phone cards are easier to use as they need only be inserted into phones that will take them. The Tele Card is more convenient as it can be used from all types of phones.

As far as telephone charges go, Fiji is divided into three regions. Western includes all of Viti Levu west of Rakiraki and Sigatoka, plus the Yasawas. Eastern is all of Viti Levu east of Korolevu, plus Ovalau and Kadavu. Northern is Vanua Levu and Taveuni. Calls within a region are F\$0.20 per 45 seconds, while inter-regional calls are F\$0.20 per 15 seconds. Thus you can call anywhere in the country for a mere F\$0.20, though you get more time if the call is within the same region. On local calls you get 10 minutes for your F\$0.20.

Fiji domestic directory assistance is 011, international directory assistance 022, the domestic operator 010, the international operator 012. In emergencies, dial 000.

Fiji's international access code from public telephones is 05, so insert your card, dial 05, the country code, the area code, and the number (to Canada and the U.S. the country code is always 1). To call overseas collect (billed to your party at the higher person-to-person rate), dial 031, the country code, the area code, and the number. If calling Fiji from abroad, dial your own international access code, Fiji's telephone code **679**. There are no area codes in Fiji. If the line is inaudible, hang up immediately and try again later. Trunk Radio System (TRS) calls can be direct dialed from inside Fiji, but must go through an operator through from overseas. All such six-digit numbers begin with 11 and many are only answered at certain times of day (usually 0800-1000/1400-1600). You can search for any telephone number in Fiji at www.whitepages.com.fj and www.yellowpages.com.fj.

The basic long-distance charge for three minutes is F\$4.26 to Australia or New Zealand, F\$7.20 to North America, Europe, or Japan. All operator-assisted international calls have a three-minute minimum charge and additional time is charged per minute, whereas international calls made using telephone cards have no minimum and the charges are broken down into flat six-second units (telephone cards with less than F\$3

credit on them cannot be used for international calls). International calls are 25 percent cheaper Mon.–Fri. 2200–0600 and all day Sunday.

If you have a calling card or phone pass issued by your own telephone company, you can access an operator or automated voice prompt in your home country by dialing a “country direct” number from any touch-tone phone in Fiji. Such calls are billed to your home telephone number at the full non-discounted rate an operator-assisted call to Fiji would cost from your country, which in Fiji works out to about 50 percent more than using a local telephone card for international calls as described above. (Don’t be fooled by misleading advertisements implying that “direct” calls are cheaper.) Still, if don’t mind paying extra for the convenience, the “country direct” numbers to dial include:

- TNZ New Zealand 004-890-6401
- Telstra Australia 004-890-6101
- Optus Australia 004-890-6102
- AT&T United States 004-890-1001
- MCI United States 004-890-1002
- Sprint United States 004-890-1003
- Telecom Hawaii 004-890-1004
- Teleglobe Canada 004-890-1005
- BT United Kingdom 004-890-4401

The service is also available for calls to Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea. Even though the phone companies have the cheek to suggest it, never use a “direct” number to place a domestic call within a single foreign country or an international call to a country other than your own. The call will be routed through your home country and you’ll be shocked when you see the bill.

Fax

Faxes can be sent from the post offices in Labasa, Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, Sigatoka, and Suva. Outgoing faxes cost F\$5.50 a page to regional countries, F\$7.70 to other countries, both plus a F\$3.30 handing fee. You can also receive faxes at these post offices for F\$1.10 a page. The numbers you’ll probably use are fax 702-

467 at Nadi Airport Post Office, fax 702-166 at Nadi Town Post Office, fax 664-666 at Lautoka Post Office, and fax 302-666 at Suva General Post Office.

If a fax you are trying to send to Fiji from abroad doesn’t go through smoothly on the first or second try, wait and try again at another time of day. If it doesn’t work then, stop trying as the fax machine at the other end may not be able to read your signal, and your telephone company will levy a minimum charge for each attempt. Call the international operator to ask what is wrong.

The Internet

Fiji is the most advanced country in the South Pacific as far as the Internet goes. Most tourism-related businesses in Fiji now have email addresses and websites, making communication from abroad a lot cheaper and easier. When sending email to Fiji, never include an attachment such as Excel or Word files or photos with your message unless it has been specifically requested, as the recipient may be forced to pay stiff long distance telephone charges to download it. Many people delete such files unopened for security reasons.

To provide a ready reference resource, we’ve committed most Fiji email and website addresses to this book’s backmatter (overseas electronic addresses meant to be used prior to arrival in Fiji are embedded in this introduction). If you use the web, have a look at those listings now and check them whenever you require additional information. Even the most obscure backpacker hostels and outer island dive shops have websites these days! The electronic listings have been carefully assembled and tested to complement the data provided in this book, so use them as a second index. If an email address provided anywhere in this book doesn’t work, check www.bulafiji.com for an update.

In Fiji, public Internet access is offered by Telecom Fiji opposite the post office in Suva, a chance to catch up on your email. Other public cyber cafés are found in Nadi, Lautoka, Sigatoka, Pacific Harbor, Suva, and Savusavu.

MEDIA

Print Media

The *Fiji Times* (P.O. Box 1167, Suva; tel. 304-111, fax 302-011), "the first newspaper published in the world today," was founded at Levuka in 1869 but is now owned by publishing mogul Rupert Murdoch's estate. The Fiji government has a controlling 44 percent interest in the *Daily Post* (P.O. Box 2071, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 313-342), which is also partly owned by Colonial Mutual Insurance. The *Daily Post* appeared just after the Rabuka coups in 1987. Fiji's newest paper is the *Fiji Sun* (Private Mail Bag, Suva; tel. 307-555, fax 311-455), established in September 1999. The *Times* has a daily print run of 38,000, the *Post* about 16,000.

In a December 2000 paper, titled *Coup Coup Land: The Press and the Putsch in Fiji*, the coordinator of the University of the South Pacific's journalism program, David Robie, explored the role of the media in the Fiji Crisis:

On Chaudhry's release from captivity, he partly blamed the media for the overthrow of his government. Some sectors of the media waged a bitter campaign against the administration and its rollback of privatisation. In the early weeks of the insurrection, the media enjoyed an unusually close relationship with Speight and the hostage-takers, raising ethical questions.

Robie's entire paper can be found on his website www.asiapac.org.fj/cafeapacific, and it makes useful reading for anyone concerned about media accountability in such situations.

The region's leading newsmagazine is *Pacific* (P.O. Box 12718, Suva; tel. 303-108, fax 301-423), published monthly in Suva. There's also an in-depth Fijian news and business magazine called *The Review* (P.O. Box 12095, Suva; tel. 300-591, fax 301-930), which is worth picking up during your trip. Turn to Resources at the end of this book for more Pacific-oriented publications.

TV

Television broadcasting began in Fiji in 1991. Fiji 1 is on the air daily 1545-2230, with Aus-

tralian programming rebroadcast at other hours. Fiji 1 gives the Fiji news at 1800 and 2155, the BBC world news at 1830 and 2225. The government-owned Fiji Development Bank has a 51 percent share in the station. In addition to this free station, there's a paid service for which a decoder must be rented at F\$1 a day. The three paid channels are Sky Plus (English language programming), Sky Entertainment (Hindi programming from India), and Star Sports. The daily papers provide program guides.

Radio

A great way to keep in touch with world and local affairs is to take along an AM/FM shortwave portable radio. Your only expense will be the radio itself and batteries. Below we provide the names and frequencies of the local stations, so set your tuning buttons to these as soon as you arrive in an area.

Try picking up the BBC World Service on your shortwave receiver at 11.77 and 15.36 MHz. Also scan the airwaves for Radio Australia and Radio New Zealand International. Their frequencies vary according to the time of day and usually work best at night. Also listen for Radio Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, both often heard in Fiji when conditions are right.

Unfortunately Fiji doesn't have a shortwave broadcaster of its own, but privately owned **Communications Fiji Ltd.** (Private Mail Bag, Suva; tel. 314-766, fax 303-748, website: www.fijivillage.com) rebroadcasts the BBC World Service over 106.8 MHz FM 24 hours a day (available around Suva only). Communications Fiji Ltd. also operates three lively commercial FM stations, which broadcast around the clock: **FM 96** in English, Viti FM in Fijian, and Radio Navtarang in Hindi.



In addition, the quasi-official **Fiji Broadcasting Corporation** (P.O. Box 334, Suva; tel. 314-333, fax 301-643, website: www.radiofiji.org) operates five AM/FM radio stations: **Bula 100 FM** in English, Radio Fiji One (RF1) in Fijian for older listeners, Bula 102 FM in Fijian for younger listeners, Radio Fiji Two (RF2) in Hindi for older listeners, and Bula 98 FM in Hindi for younger listeners. The Bula stations (or "Bula Network") are funded by commercial advertising, while the public service Radio Fiji stations get a government grant.

At Suva you can pick up the local stations at the following frequencies: **FM 96** at 96.0 MHz, Bula 98 FM at 98.0 MHz, Navtarang at 98.8 MHz, **Bula 100 FM** at 100.4 MHz, Bula 102 FM at 102.0 MHz, Viti FM at 102.8 MHz, RF2 at 105.2 MHz FM, and RF1 at 558 kHz AM.

At Nadi and Lautoka check the following frequencies: **FM 96** at 95.4 MHz, Navtarang at 97.4 MHz, and Viti FM at 99.6 MHz. At Lautoka you'll also get **Bula 100 FM** at 94.6 and 100.0 MHz.

On the Coral Coast it's **FM 96** at 96.6 MHz, Bula 98 FM at 98.2 MHz, **Bula 100 FM** at 100.6 MHz, Navtarang at 101.6 MHz, Bula 102 FM at 103.0 MHz, Viti FM at 103.8 MHz, RF1 at 927

kHz, and RF2 at 1206 kHz. Around Rakiraki look for **FM 96** at 95.0 and 98.8 MHz, Navtarang at 97.0 MHz, and Viti FM at 104.8 MHz. Elsewhere in northern Viti Levu, you can get **Bula 100 FM** at 94.6 MHz, **FM 96** at 96.6 MHz, Navtarang at 101.6 MHz, and Viti FM at 103.8 MHz in Tavua and Ba. In Tavua tune in 107.8 MHz for Radio Kuola FM.

On Vanua Levu, check the following frequencies at Labasa: **FM 96** at 95.4 MHz, Navtarang at 97.4 MHz, Bula 98 FM at 98.4 MHz, Viti FM at 99.6 MHz, **Bula 100 FM** at 100.0 MHz, and RF2 at 810 kHz. Reception of any station is difficult at Taveuni.

The local stations broadcast mostly pop music and repetitive advertising with very little news or commentary (the presenters sometimes get things hilariously mixed up). Bula 100 FM broadcasts local news and a weather report on the hour weekdays 0600–2200 (weekends every other hour) with a special news of the day report at 1745, followed by the BBC world news just after 1800. The BBC news is also broadcast on Bula 100 FM at 1900 and 2100. Radio FM 96 broadcasts news and weather on the hour weekdays 0600–1800, Saturday and Sunday at 0800, 0900, 1000, 1200, 1300, 1700, and 1800.

HEALTH

Fiji's climate is a healthy one, and the main causes of death are non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. The sea and air are clear and usually pollution-free. The humidity nourishes the skin and the local fruit is brimming with vitamins. If you take a few precautions, you'll never have a sick day. The information provided below is intended to make you knowledgeable, not fearful. If you have access to the Internet, check www.cdc.gov/travel/austspac.htm for up-to-the-minute information.

Health care is good, with an abundance of hospitals, health centers, and nursing stations scattered around the country. The largest hospitals are in Labasa, Lautoka, Levuka, Ba, Savusavu, Sigatoka, Suva, and Taveuni. The crowded government-run medical facilities provide free medical treatment to local residents but have special rates for foreigners. It's usually no more expensive to visit a private doctor or clinic, where you'll receive much faster service

since everyone is paying. We've tried to list private doctors and dentists throughout the handbook, but in emergencies and outside clinic hours, you can always turn to the government-run facilities. Unfortunately, very few facilities are provided for travelers with disabilities.

To call an ambulance dial 000. In case of scuba diving accidents, an operating dive recompression chamber (tel./fax 305-154 in Suva or 850-630 in Savusavu) is available in Suva. The 24-hour recompression medical evacuation number is tel. 362-172.

Travel Insurance

The sale of travel insurance is a big business but the value of the policies themselves is often questionable. If your regular group health insurance also covers you while you're traveling abroad, it's probably enough as medical costs in Fiji are generally low. Most policies only pay the amount above and beyond what your national or group

health insurance will pay and are invalid if you don't have any health insurance at all. You may also be covered by your credit card company if you paid for your plane ticket with the card. Buying extra travel insurance is about the same as buying a lottery ticket: there's always the chance it will pay off, but it's usually money down the drain.

If you do opt for the security of travel insurance, make sure emergency medical evacuations are covered. Some policies are invalid if you engage in "dangerous activities," such as scuba diving, parasailing, surfing, or even riding a motor scooter, so be sure to read the fine print. Scuba divers may find it comforting to know that a recompression chamber is available at Suva, but even then an emergency medical evacuation by helicopter might be required and there isn't any point buying a policy that doesn't cover it. Some companies will pay your bills directly while others require you to pay and collect receipts, which may be reimbursed later.

Some policies also cover travel delays, lost baggage, and theft. In practice, your airline probably already covers the first two adequately and claiming something extra from your insurance company could be more trouble than it's worth. Theft insurance never covers items left on the beach while you're in swimming. All said, you should weigh the advantages and decide for yourself if you want a policy. Just don't be too influenced by what your travel agent says as they'll only want to sell you coverage to earn another commission.

Acclimatizing

Don't go from winter weather into the steaming tropics without a rest before and after. Minimize jet lag by setting your watch to local time at your destination as soon as you board the flight. West-bound flights to Fiji from North America or Europe are less jolting since you follow the sun and your body gets a few hours extra sleep. On the way home you're moving against the sun and the hours of sleep your body loses cause jet lag. Airplane cabins have low humidity, so drink lots of juice or water instead of carbonated drinks, and don't overeat in-flight. It's also wise to forgo coffee, as it will only keep you awake, and alcohol, which will dehydrate you.

Scuba diving on departure day can give you a severe case of the bends. Before flying there

should be a minimum of 12 hours surface interval after a nondecompression dive and a minimum of 24 hours after a decompression dive. Factors contributing to decompression sickness include a lack of sleep and/or the excessive consumption of alcohol before diving.

If you start feeling seasick on board a ship, stare at the horizon, which is always steady, and try to stop thinking about it. Anti-motion-sickness pills are useful to have along; otherwise, ginger helps alleviate seasickness. Travel stores sell acubands that find a pressure point on the wrist and create a stable flow of blood to the head, thus miraculously preventing seasickness!

Frequently the feeling of thirst is false and only due to mucous membrane dryness. Gargling or taking two or three gulps of warm water should be enough. Keep moisture in your body by having a hot drink like tea or black coffee, or any kind of slightly salted or sour drink in small quantities. Salt in fresh lime juice is remarkably refreshing.

The tap water in Fiji is usually drinkable except immediately after a cyclone or during droughts, when care should be taken. If in doubt, boil it or use purification pills. Natural artesian water in plastic bottles is widely available. Tap water that is uncomfortably hot to touch is usually safe. Allow it to cool in a clean container. Don't forget that if the tap water is contaminated, the local ice will be too. Avoid brushing your teeth with water unfit to drink, and wash or peel fruit and vegetables if you can. Cooked food is less subject to contamination than raw.

Sunburn

Though you may think a tan will make you look healthier and more attractive, it's actually very damaging to the skin, which becomes dry, rigid, and prematurely old and wrinkled, especially on the face. Begin with short exposures to the sun, perhaps a half-hour at a time, followed by an equal time in the shade. Avoid the sun from 1000 to 1500, the most dangerous time. Clouds and beach umbrellas will not protect you fully. Wear a T-shirt while snorkeling to protect your back. Drink plenty of liquids to keep your pores open. Sunbathing is the main cause of cataracts to the eyes, so wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat, and beware of reflected sunlight.

Use a sunscreen lotion containing PABA

A TRAVELER'S NOTES ON AIDS AND HIV

In 1981 scientists in the United States and France first recognized the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), which was later discovered to be caused by a virus called the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). HIV breaks down the body's immunity to infections leading to AIDS. The virus can lie hidden in the body for up to 10 years without producing any obvious symptoms or before developing into the AIDS disease and in the meantime the person can unknowingly infect others.

HIV lives in white blood cells and is present in the sexual fluids of humans. It's difficult to catch and is spread mostly through sexual intercourse, by needle or syringe sharing among intravenous drug users, in blood transfusions, and during pregnancy and birth (if the mother is infected). Using another person's razor blade or having your body pierced or tattooed are also risky, but the HIV virus cannot be transmitted by shaking hands, kissing, cuddling, fondling, sneezing, cooking food, or sharing eating or drinking utensils. One cannot be infected by saliva, sweat, tears, urine, or feces; toilet seats, telephones, swimming pools, or mosquito bites do not cause AIDS. Ostracizing a known AIDS victim is not only immoral but also absurd.

Most blood banks now screen their products for HIV, and you can protect yourself against dirty needles by only allowing an injection if you see the syringe taken out of a fresh unopened pack. The simplest safeguard during sex is the proper use of a latex condom. Unroll the condom onto the erect penis; while withdrawing after ejaculation, hold onto the condom as you come out. Never try to recycle a condom, and pack a supply with you as it's a nuisance trying to buy them locally.

HIV is spread more often through anal than vaginal sex because the lining of the rectum is much weaker than that of the vagina, and ordinary condoms sometimes tear when used in anal sex. If you have anal sex, only use extra-strong condoms and special water-based lubricants since oil, Vaseline, and cream weaken the rubber. During oral sex you must make sure you don't get any semen or menstrual blood in your mouth. A woman runs 10 times the risk of contracting AIDS from a man than the other way around, and the threat is always greater when another sexually transmitted disease (STD) is present.

The very existence of AIDS calls for a basic change in human behavior. No vaccine or drug exists that can prevent or cure AIDS, and because the virus mutates frequently, no remedy may ever be totally effective. Other STDs such as syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B, and herpes are far more common than AIDS and can lead to serious complications such as infertility, but at least they can usually be cured.

The euphoria of travel can make it easier to fall in love or have sex with a stranger, so travelers must be informed of these dangers. As a tourist you should always practice safe sex to prevent AIDS and other STDs. You never know who is infected or even if you yourself have become infected. It's important to bring the subject up *before* you start to make love. Make a joke out of it by pulling out a condom and asking your new partner, "Say, do you know what this is?" Or perhaps, "Your condom or mine?" Far from being unromantic or embarrassing, you'll both feel more relaxed with the subject off your minds and it's much



better than worrying afterwards if you might have been infected. The golden rule is safe sex or no sex.

By 2001 an estimated 36 million people worldwide were HIV carriers, and three million a year were dying of AIDS. In the South Pacific, the number of cases is still extremely small compared to the hundreds of thousands confirmed HIV infections in the United States. Yet it's worth noting that other STDs have already reached epidemic proportions in the urban areas of Fiji, demonstrating that the type of behavior leading to the rapid spread of AIDS is present.

An HIV infection can be detected through a blood test because the antibodies created by the body

to fight off the virus can be seen under a microscope. It takes at least three weeks for the antibodies to be produced and in some cases as long as six months before they can be picked up during a screening test. If you think you may have run a risk, you should discuss the appropriateness of a test with your doctor. It's always better to know if you are infected so as to be able to avoid infecting others, to obtain early treatment of symptoms, and to make realistic plans.

If you know someone with AIDS you should give them all the support you can (there's no danger in such contact unless blood is present).

rather than oil, and don't forget to apply it to your nose, lips, forehead, neck, hands, and feet. Sunscreens protect you from ultraviolet rays (a leading cause of cancer), while oils magnify the sun's effect. A 15-factor sunscreen provides 93 percent protection (a more expensive 30-factor sunscreen is only slightly better at 97 percent protection). Apply the lotion *before* going to the beach to avoid being burned on the way, and reapply every couple of hours to replace sunscreen washed away by perspiration. Swimming also washes away your protection. After sunbathing take a tepid shower rather than a hot one, which would wash away your natural skin oils. Stay moist and use a vitamin E evening cream to preserve the youth of your skin. Calamine ointment soothes skin already burned, as does coconut oil. Pharmacists recommend Solarcaine to soothe burned skin. Rinsing off with a vinegar solution reduces peeling, and aspirin relieves some of the pain and irritation. Vitamin A and calcium counteract overdoses of vitamin D received from the sun. The fairer your skin, the more essential it is to take care.

As earth's ozone layer is depleted due to the commercial use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other factors, the need to protect oneself from ultraviolet radiation is becoming more urgent. In 1990 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta reported that deaths from skin cancer increased 26 percent between 1973 and 1985. Previously the cancers didn't develop until age 50 or 60, but now much younger people are affected.

Ailments

Cuts and scratches infect easily in the tropics and take a long time to heal. Prevent infection from coral cuts by immediately washing wounds with soap and fresh water, then rubbing in vinegar or alcohol (whiskey will do)—painful but effective. Use an antiseptic like hydrogen peroxide and an antibacterial ointment such as neosporin, if you have them. Islanders usually dab coral cuts with lime juice. All cuts turn septic quickly in the tropics, so try to keep them clean and covered.

For bites, burns, and cuts, an antiseptic such as Solarcaine speeds healing and helps prevent infection. Pure aloe vera is good for sunburn, scratches, and even coral cuts. Bites by sand flies itch for days and can become infected. Not everyone is affected by insect bites in the same way. Some people are practically immune to insects, while traveling companions experiencing exactly the same conditions are soon covered with bites. You'll soon know which type you are.

Prickly heat, an intensely irritating rash, is caused by wearing heavy clothing that is inappropriate for the climate. When sweat glands are blocked and the sweat is unable to evaporate, the skin becomes soggy and small red blisters appear. Synthetic fabrics like nylon are especially bad in this regard. Take a cold shower, apply calamine lotion, dust with talcum powder, and take off those clothes! Until things improve, avoid alcohol, tea, coffee, and any physical activity that makes you sweat. If you're sweating profusely, increase your intake of salt slightly to avoid fatigue, but not without concurrently drinking more water.

Use antidiarrheal medications such as Lomotil or Imodium sparingly. Rather than take drugs to plug yourself up, drink plenty of unsweetened liquids like green coconut or fresh fruit juice to help flush yourself out. Egg yolk mixed with nutmeg helps diarrhea, or eat rice and drink tea for the day. Avoid dairy products. Most cases of diarrhea are self-limiting and require only simple replacement of the fluids and salts lost in diarrheal stools. If the diarrhea is persistent or you experience high fever, drowsiness, or blood in the stool, stop traveling, rest, and consider seeing a doctor. For constipation eat pineapple or any peeled fruit.

Other Diseases

Infectious hepatitis A (jaundice) is a liver ailment transmitted person to person or through unboiled water, uncooked vegetables, or other foods contaminated during handling. The risk of infection is highest among those who eat village food, so if you'll be spending much time in rural areas consider getting an immune globulin shot, which provides six months protection. Better is a vaccine called Havrix, which provides up to 10 years protection (given in two doses two weeks apart, then a third dose six months later). If you've ever had hepatitis A in your life you are already immune. Otherwise, you'll know you've got the hep when your eyeballs and urine turn yellow. Time and rest are the only cure. Viral hepatitis B is spread through sexual or blood contact.

There's no malaria here, but a mosquito-transmitted disease known as dengue fever is endemic. In early 1998 a major outbreak in Fiji resulted in an estimated 25,000 cases and 14 deaths. Signs are headaches, sore throat, pain in the joints, fever, chills, nausea, and rash. This painful illness also known as "breakbone fever" can last anywhere from five to 15 days. Although you can relieve the symptoms somewhat, the only real cure is to stay in bed, drink lots of water, and wait it out. Avoid aspirin as this can lead to complications. No vaccine exists, so just try to avoid getting

bitten (the *Aedes aegypti* or black and white striped mosquito bites only during the day). Dengue fever can kill infants so extra care must be taken to protect them if an outbreak is in progress.

Vaccinations

Most visitors are not required to get any vaccinations at all before coming to Fiji. Tetanus, diphtheria, and typhoid fever shots are not required and only worth considering if you're going far off the beaten track. Tetanus and diphtheria shots are given together, and a booster is required every 10 years. The typhoid fever shot is every three years. Polio is believed to have been eradicated from the South Pacific, and no cases of tetanus or diphtheria have been reported in Fiji in recent years.

The cholera vaccine is only 50 percent effective and valid just six months, and bad reactions are common, which explains why most doctors in developed countries won't administer it. Just forget it unless you're sure you're headed for an infected area. If you'll be visiting Tuvalu, Nauru, Kiribati, or anywhere in Micronesia before Fiji, ask your airline if a cholera vaccination is required. In that case you'll be able to obtain it locally without difficulty.

A yellow-fever vaccination is required if you've been in an infected area within the six days prior to arrival. Yellow fever is a mosquito-borne disease that occurs only in Central Africa and northern South America (excluding Chile), places you're not likely to have been just before arriving in Fiji. Since the vaccination is valid 10 years, get one if you're an inveterate globe-trotter.

Immune globulin (IG) and the Havrix vaccine aren't 100 percent effective against hepatitis A, but they do increase your general resistance to infections. IG prophylaxis must be repeated every five months. Hepatitis B vaccination involves three doses over a six-month period (duration of protection unknown) and is recommended mostly for people planning extended stays in the region.

WHAT TO TAKE

Packing

Assemble everything you simply must take and cannot live without—then cut the pile in half. If you're still left with more than will fit into a medium-size suitcase or backpack, continue eliminating. You've got to be tough on yourself and just limit what you take. Now put it all into your bag. If the total (bag and contents) weighs over 16 kg, you'll sacrifice much of your mobility. If you can keep it down to 10 kg, you're traveling *light*. Categorize, separate, and pack all your things into clear plastic freezer bags or stuff sacks for convenience and protection from moisture. Items that might leak should be in resealable bags. In addition to your principal bag, you'll want a day pack or flight bag. When checking in for flights, carry anything that cannot be replaced in your hand luggage. *The biggest mistake of first-time travelers to Fiji is bringing too much baggage.*

Your Luggage

Veteran travelers often recommend a small suitcase with wheels and a retractable handle that you can sometimes take aboard flights as carry-on luggage. Officially, economy passengers are only allowed one item of cabin baggage with overall dimensions no greater than 115 centimeters. The bag must be able to fit under the seat in front of you, and must not weigh more than five kg. In first and business classes you may carry two bags aboard, which when added together do not exceed 115 cm or seven kg in weight. Larger bags must usually be checked in at the airline counter.

Also ideal is a soft medium-size backpack with a lightweight internal frame. Big external-frame packs are fine for mountain climbing but get caught in airport conveyor belts and are very inconvenient on public transport. The best packs have a zippered compartment in back where you can tuck in the hip belt and straps before turning your pack over to an airline or bus. This type of pack has the flexibility of allowing you to simply walk when motorized transport is unavailable or unacceptable; and with the straps zipped in, it looks like a regular suitcase, should you wish to go upmarket for a while.

Make sure your pack allows you to carry the weight on your hips, has a cushion for spine support, and doesn't pull backwards. The pack should strap snugly to your body but also allow ventilation for your back. It should be made of a water-resistant material such as nylon and have a Fastex buckle.

Look for a pack with double, two-way zipper compartments and pockets you can lock with miniature padlocks. They might not *stop* a thief, but they will deter the casual pilferer. A 60-centimeter length of lightweight chain and another padlock will allow you to fasten your pack to something. Keep valuables locked in your bag, out of sight, as even upscale hotel rooms aren't 100 percent safe.

Clothing and Camping Equipment

For clothes take loose-fitting cotton washables, light in color and weight. Synthetic fabrics are hot and sticky, and most of the things you wear at home are too heavy for the tropics—be prepared for the humidity. Dress is casual, with slacks and a sports shirt okay for men even at dinner parties. Local women often wear long colorful dresses in the evening, but respectable shorts are okay in daytime. If in doubt, bring the minimum with you and buy tropical garb upon arrival. Stick to clothes you can rinse in your room sink, and don't bring more than two outfits. In midwinter (July and August) it can be cool at night, so a light sweater or windbreaker may come in handy.

The *sulu* is a bright two-meter piece of cloth both men and women wrap about themselves as an all-purpose garment. Any islander can show you how to wear it.

Take comfortable shoes that have been broken in. Running shoes and rubber thongs (flip-flops) are handy for day use but will bar you from nightspots with strict dress codes. Scuba divers' wetsuit booties are lightweight and perfect for both crossing rivers and lagoon walking, though an old pair of sneakers may be just as good (never use the booties to walk on breakable coral).

You'll seldom need a sleeping bag in the tropics, so that's one item you can easily cut. A youth

hostel sleeping sheet is ideal—all HI handbooks give instructions on how to make your own or buy one at your local hostel. If you bring a tent, don't bother bringing a foam pad as the ground is seldom cold here.

Below we've provided a few checklists to help you assemble your gear. The listed items combined weigh well over 16 kg, so eliminate what doesn't suit you:

- pack with internal frame
- day pack or airline bag
- sun hat or visor
- essential clothing
- only modest bathing suits
- sturdy walking shoes
- rubber thongs (flip-flops)
- rubber booties
- sleeping sheet

Accessories

Bring some reading material, as good books can be hard to find in resort areas. A mask and snorkel are essential equipment—you'll be missing half of Fiji's beauty without them. Scuba divers will bring their own regulator, buoyancy compensator, and gauges to avoid gear fees and to eliminate the possibility of catching a transmissible disease from rental equipment. A lightweight three-mm Lycra wetsuit will provide protection against marine stings and coral.

Neutral gray eyeglasses protect your eyes from the sun and give the least color distortion. Take an extra pair (if you wear them).

Also take along postcards of your hometown and snapshots of your house, family, workplace, etc; islanders love to see these. Always keep a promise to mail islanders the photos you take of them.

- portable shortwave radio
- camera and 10 rolls of film
- compass
- pocket flashlight
- extra batteries
- candle
- pocket alarm calculator
- extra pair of eyeglasses
- sunglasses
- mask and snorkel

- padlock and lightweight chain
- collapsible umbrella
- string for a clothesline
- powdered laundry soap
- universal sink plug
- mini-towel
- silicon glue
- sewing kit
- mini-scissors
- nail clippers
- fishing line for sewing gear
- plastic cup and plate
- can and bottle opener
- corkscrew
- penknife
- spoon
- water bottle
- matches
- tea bags

Toiletries and Medical Kit

Since everyone has his/her own medical requirements and brand names vary from country to country, there's no point going into detail here. Note, however, that even the basics (such as aspirin) are unavailable on some outer islands, so be prepared. Bring medicated powder for prickly heat rash. Charcoal tablets are useful for diarrhea and poisoning (they absorb the irritants). Bring an adequate supply of any personal medications, plus your prescriptions (in generic terminology) as American-made medications may be unobtainable in the islands. Antibiotics should only be used to treat serious wounds, and only after medical advice dictates their use.

High humidity causes curly hair to swell, straight hair to droop. If it's curly have it cut short or keep it long in a ponytail or bun. Water-based makeup is preferable, as the heat and humidity cause oil glands to work overtime. High-quality, locally made shampoo, body oils, and insect repellent are sold on all the islands, and the bottles are conveniently smaller than those sold in Western countries. See Health, above, for more ideas.

- wax earplugs
- soap in plastic container
- soft toothbrush
- toothpaste
- roll-on deodorant
- shampoo

- comb and brush
- skin creams
- makeup
- tampons or napkins
- white toilet paper
- vitamin/mineral supplement
- insect repellent
- PABA sunscreen
- lip balm
- a motion-sickness remedy
- contraceptives
- iodine
- water-purification pills
- a diarrhea remedy
- Tiger Balm
- a cold remedy
- Alka-Seltzer
- aspirin
- antihistamine
- antifungal
- Calmitol ointment
- antibacterial ointment
- antiseptic cream
- disinfectant
- simple dressings
- adhesive bandages (like Band-Aids)
- painkiller
- prescription medicines

Money and Documents

All post offices have passport applications. If you lose your passport you should report the matter to the local police at once, obtain a certificate or receipt, then proceed to your embassy for a replacement. If you have your birth certificate with you it expedites the process considerably. Don't bother getting an international driver's license as your regular license is all you need to drive here.

Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars are recommended, and in Fiji American Express is the most efficient company when it comes to providing refunds for lost checks. Thomas Cook also has offices in Fiji. Bring along a small supply of US\$1 and US\$5 bills to use if you don't manage to change money immediately upon arrival or if you run out of local currency and can't get to a bank.

Carry your valuables in a money belt worn around your waist or neck under your clothing; most camping stores have these. Make several

photocopies of the information page of your passport, personal identification, driver's license, scuba certification card, credit cards, airline tickets, receipts for purchase of traveler's checks, etc.—you should be able to get them all on both sides of one page. On the side of the photocopy, write the phone numbers you'd need to call to report lost documents. A brief medical history with your blood type, allergies, chronic or special health problems, eyeglass and medical prescriptions, etc., might also come in handy. Put these inside plastic bags to protect them from moisture, then carry the lists in different places, and leave one at home.

- passport
- airline tickets
- scuba certification card
- driver's license
- traveler's checks
- some U.S. cash
- credit card
- photocopies of documents
- money belt
- address book
- notebook
- envelopes
- extra ballpoints

FILM AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Scan the ads in photographic magazines for deals on mail-order cameras and film, or buy at a discount shop in any large city. Run a roll of film through your camera to be sure it's in good working order; clean the lens with lens-cleaning tissue and check the batteries. Remove the batteries from your camera when storing it at home for long periods. Register valuable cameras or electronic equipment with customs before you leave home so there won't be any argument over where you bought the items when you return, or at least carry a copy of the original bill of sale.

The type of camera you choose could depend on the way you travel. If you'll be staying mostly in one place, a heavy single-lens reflex (SLR) camera with spare lenses and other equipment won't trouble you. If you'll be moving around a lot for a considerable length of time, a 35-mm automatic compact camera will be better.

The compacts are mostly useful for close-up shots; landscapes will seem spread out and far away. A wide-angle lens gives excellent depth of field, but hold the camera upright to avoid converging verticals. A polarizing filter prevents reflections from glass windows and water, and makes the sky bluer.

Although film is cheap and readily available in Fiji, you never know if it's been spoiled by an airport X-ray on the way there. On a long trip, mailers are essential as exposed film shouldn't be held for long periods. Choose 36-exposure film over 24-exposure to reduce the number of rolls you have to carry. When purchasing film in the islands take care to check the expiration date.

Films are rated by their speed and sensitivity to light, using ISO numbers from 25 to 1600. The higher the number, the greater the film's sensitivity to light. Slower films with lower ISOs (like 100–200) produce sharp images in bright sunlight. Faster films with higher ISOs (like 400) stop action and work well in low-light situations, such as in dark rainforests or at sunset. If you have a manual SLR you can avoid overexposure at midday by reducing the exposure half a stop, but *do* overexpose when photographing dark-skinned Fijians. From 1000 to 1600 the light is often too bright to take good photos, and panoramas usually come out best early or late in the day.

Keep your photos simple with one main subject and an uncomplicated background. Get as close to your subjects as you can and lower or raise the camera to their level. Include people in the foreground of scenic shots to add interest and perspective. Outdoors a flash can fill in un-

flattering facial shadows caused by high sun or backlit conditions. Most of all, be creative. Look for interesting details and compose the photo before you push the trigger. Instead of taking a head-on photo of a group of people, step to one side and ask them to face you. The angle improves the photo. Photograph subjects coming toward you rather than passing by. Get consent before photographing people. If you're asked for money (rare) you can always walk away—give your subjects the same choice. There is probably no country in the world where the photographer will have as interesting and willing subjects as in Fiji.

When packing, protect your camera against vibration. Checked baggage is scanned by powerful airport X-ray monitors, so carry both camera and film aboard the plane in a clear plastic bag and ask security for a visual inspection. Some airports will refuse to do this, however. A good alternative is to use a lead-laminated pouch. The old high-dose X-ray units are seldom seen these days but even low-dose inspection units can ruin fast film (400 ASA and above). Beware of the cumulative effect of X-ray machines.

Store your camera in a plastic bag during rain and while traveling in motorized canoes, etc. In the tropics the humidity can cause film to stick to itself; silica-gel crystals in the bag will protect film from humidity and mold growth. Protect camera and film from direct sunlight and load the film in the shade. When loading, check that the takeup spool revolves. Never leave camera or film in a hot place like a car floor, glove compartment, or trunk.

TIME AND MEASUREMENTS

Time

The international dateline generally follows 180 degrees longitude and creates a difference of 24 hours in time between the two sides. It swings east at Tuvalu to avoid slicing Fiji in two. Everything in the Eastern Hemisphere west of the date line is a day later, everything in the Western Hemisphere east of the line is a day earlier (or behind). Air travelers lose a day when they fly west across the date line and gain it back when they return. Keep track of things by repeating to yourself, *If it's Sunday in Seattle, it's Monday in Manila.*

Fiji time is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus 12 hours, with daylight saving time in effect from November to February (GMT plus 13 hours). When it's noon in Fiji, it will be 1000 in Sydney, 1200 in Auckland (same time), 1300 in Tonga, 1400 the day before in Hawaii, 1600 the day before in Los Angeles, 1900 the day before in Toronto, and midnight in London, England. To look at it another way, Fiji is 20 hours ahead of California and also two hours ahead of Sydney, Australia! You can check the exact time locally in Fiji by dialing 014. Exact times are available at

www.worldtimezone.com/time-oceania.htm.

You're better telephoning Fiji from North America in the evening as it will be mid-afternoon in the islands (plus you'll probably benefit from off-peak telephone rates). From Europe, call very late at night. In the other direction, if you're calling from Fiji to North America or Europe, do so in the early morning as it will already be afternoon in North America and evening in Europe.

In this book all clock times are rendered according to the 24-hour system, i.e. 0100 is 1:00 A.M., 1300 is 1:00 P.M., 2330 is 11:30 P.M. There isn't much twilight in the tropics and when the sun begins to go down, you've got less than half an hour before nightfall. The islanders operate on "coconut time"—the nut will fall when it is ripe. In the languid air of the South Seas punctuality takes on a new meaning. Appointments are approximate and service casual. Even the seasons are fuzzy: sometimes wetter, sometimes drier, but almost always hot. Slow down to the island pace and get in step with where you are.

Measurements

The metric system is used in Fiji. Study the conversion table at the back of this handbook if you're not used to thinking metric. Most distances herein are quoted in kilometers—they

become easy to comprehend when you know that one km is the distance a normal person walks in 10 minutes. A meter is slightly more than a yard and a liter is just over a quart.

Electric Currents

If you're taking along a plug-in razor, radio, computer, electric immersion coil, or other electrical appliance, be aware that Fiji uses 240 AC voltage, 50 cycles. Most appliances require a converter to change from one voltage to another. You'll also need an adapter to cope with the three-pronged socket plugs (with the two top prongs at angles). Pick up both items before you leave home, as they can be hard to find here. Remember voltages if you buy duty-free appliances: dual voltage (110/220 V) items are best.

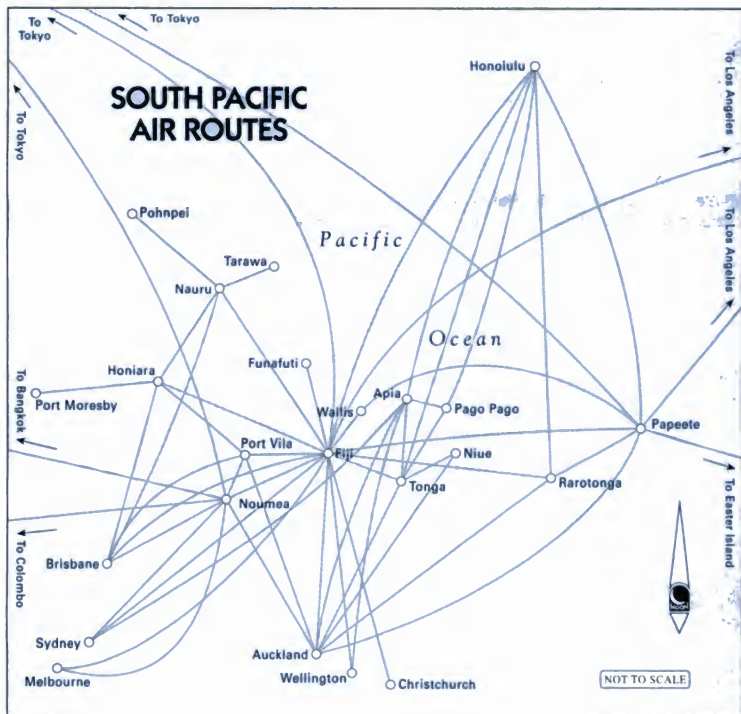
Videos

Commercial travel videotapes make nice souvenirs, but always keep in mind that there are three incompatible video formats in the world: NTSC (used in North America), PAL (used in Britain, Germany, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji), and SECAM (used in France and Russia). Don't buy prerecorded tapes abroad unless they're the same kind used in your country.

GETTING THERE

Fiji's geographic position makes it the hub of transport for the entire South Pacific, and Nadi is the region's most important international airport, with long-haul services to points all around the Pacific Rim. Twelve international airlines fly into Nadi: Aircalin, Air Fiji, Air Nauru, Air New Zealand, Air Pacific, Air Vanuatu, Ansett Australia, Korean Air, Polynesian Airlines, Qantas Airways, Royal Tongan Airlines, and Solomon Airlines. Air Pacific and Air Fiji also use Suva's Nausori Airport. The websites of all these carriers are linked to www.southpacific.org/air.html.

Fiji's national airline, **Air Pacific**, was founded in 1951 as Fiji Airways by Harold Gatty, a famous Australian aviator who had set a record with American Willy Post in 1931 by flying around the world in eight days. In 1972 the airline was reorganized as a regional carrier and the name changed to Air Pacific. Thanks to careful management, the Nadi-based company made a profit every year from 1985 to 1999 (a huge loss was sustained in 2000 due to the downturn in tourism in the wake of the Speight coup). The carrier flies Nadi to Apia, Auckland, Brisbane,



Christchurch, Honiara, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Port Vila, Rarotonga, Sydney, Tokyo, Tongatapu, Vancouver, and Wellington, and from Suva to Apia, Auckland, and Sydney. Qantas owns 46.5 percent of Air Pacific (the Fiji government owns the rest) and all Qantas flights to Fiji are actually code shares with the Fijian carrier. Qantas is Air Pacific's general sales agent in Europe, North America, and Australia, and you'll fly Air Pacific to Fiji if you booked with Qantas. Air Pacific code shares with Solomon Airlines when going to Honiara and Port Vila.

Preparations

First decide when you're going and how long you wish to stay away. Your plane ticket will be your biggest single expense, so spend some time considering the options. Read this entire chapter right through before going any further. If you're online check the Internet sites of the airlines, then call the airlines on their toll-free numbers to hear the sort of fare information they're providing. The following airlines have flights from North America:

Air New Zealand: tel. 800/262-1234, website: www.airnz.com

Air Pacific: tel. 800/227-4446, website: www.airpacific.com

Sometimes Canada and parts of the United States have different toll-free numbers, so if a number given in this chapter doesn't work, dial toll-free information at 800/555-1212 (all 800 and 888 numbers are free). In Canada, Air New Zealand's toll-free number is tel. 800/663-5494.

Call both Air New Zealand and Air Pacific and say you want the *lowest possible fare*. Cheapest are the excursion fares but these usually have limitations and restrictions, so be sure to ask. Some have an advance-purchase deadline, which means it's wise to begin shopping early. If you're not happy with the answers you get, call back later and try again. Many different agents take calls on these lines, and some are more knowledgeable than others. The numbers are often busy during peak business hours, so call first thing in the morning, after dinner, or on the weekend. *Be persistent.*

After you've heard what the airlines have to say, try the "discounters," specialist travel agen-

cies that deal in bulk and sell seats and rooms at wholesale prices. Many airlines have more seats than they can market through normal channels, so they sell their unused long-haul capacity to "consolidators" or "bucket shops" at discounts of 40–50 percent off official tariffs. The discounters buy tickets on this gray market and pass along the savings to you. Many such companies run small ads in the Sunday travel sections of newspapers like the *San Francisco Examiner*, *New York Times*, and *Toronto Star*, or in major entertainment weeklies.

Despite their occasionally shady appearance, most discounters and consolidators are perfectly legitimate, and your ticket will probably be issued by the airline itself. Discounted tickets look exactly the same as regular full-fare tickets but they're usually nonrefundable. There may also be penalties if you wish to change your routing or reservation dates, and they may carry other restrictions not associated with the more expensive fares. Such tickets may not qualify for frequent flier miles. The rates are competitive, so allow yourself time to shop around. A few hours spent on the phone, doing time on hold and asking questions, will save you money.

Seasons

The date of outbound travel from North America determines which seasonal fare you'll pay, and proper advance planning could allow you to reschedule your vacation slightly to take advantage of a lower fare. The following is Air New Zealand and Air Pacific's fare season schedule for flights from North America:

December 30–February 25—high season
February 26–April 30—shoulder season
May 1–June 21—low season
June 22–July 23—shoulder season
July 23–September 2—low season
September 3–December 7—shoulder season
December 8–December 16—high season
December 17–December 29—peak season

Air New Zealand and Air Pacific have made March to November—the top months in Fiji—their off-season because that's winter in Australia and New Zealand. If you're only going to Fiji and can make it at that time, it certainly works to your advantage.

For travel originating in New Zealand, the fare seasons are as follows:

January 17–January 30—shoulder season

January 31–March 31—low season

April 1–June 15—shoulder season

June 16–July 23—high season

July 24–September 7—shoulder season

September 8–October 10—high season

October 11–November 11—low season

November 12–December 2—shoulder season

December 3–January 16—high season

Call the airline to verify this information, as these things do change.

Travel Agents

Pick your agent carefully as many don't want to hear about discounts, cheap flights, or complicated routes, and will give wrong or misleading information. If you can find a local travel agent or "packager" who resells discounted tickets obtained from major flight consolidators, who've done well. Considerable consumer protection is obtained by paying by credit card.

Once you've done a deal with an agent and have your ticket in hand, call the airline again using their toll-free reservations number to check that your flight bookings and seat reservations are okay. If you got a really cheap fare, make sure the agent booked you in the same class of service as is printed on your ticket. For example, if you've got a K-coded ticket but your agent was only able to get a higher B-code booking, you could be denied boarding at the airport (in fact, few agents would risk doing something like this). An unscrupulous agent might also tell you that you're free to change your return reservations when in fact you're not.

Discover Wholesale Travel (949 South Coast Dr., Suite 450, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, U.S.A.; tel. 800/576-7770 or 949/833-1136) sells discounted air tickets and offers rock-bottom rates on rooms at top hotels. They sometimes have significantly lower fares for passengers booking within two weeks of departure ("distressed seats"). All of Discover's staff have been selling the South Pacific for at least 10 years.

Flight Coordinators (2950 31st St., Suite 140, Santa Monica, CA 90405, U.S.A.; tel. 800/544-3644, fax 800/581-5620, website:

www.flightcoordinators.com) has a website which lists exact airfares to Fiji from points all across the United States. A visit here will let you know how inexpensive the tickets can get.

Some of the cheapest round-trip tickets to Fiji are sold by **Fiji Travel** (8885 Venice Blvd., Suite 202, Los Angeles, CA 90034, U.S.A.; tel. 800/500-3454 or 310/202-4220, fax 310/202-8233, website: www.fijitravel.com). They make their money through high volume, and to attract customers they keep their profit margins as low as possible. Thus you should absorb the airline's time with all your questions about fare seasons, schedules, etc., and only call consolidators like Fiji Travel and Discover Wholesale Travel after you know exactly what you want and how much everyone else is charging.

For circle-Pacific or round-the-world fares try High Adventure Travel (www.airtreks.com) and Air Brokers International (www.airbrokers.com), both based in San Francisco.

A Canadian travel agent to try is the **Adventure Centre** (25 Bellair St., Toronto, Ontario M5R 3L3, Canada; tel. 800/267-3347 or 416/922-7584, fax 416/922-8136, website: www.theadventurecentre.com) with offices in Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Similar tickets are available in the U.S. from the **Adventure Center** (1311 63rd St., Suite 200, Emeryville, CA 94608, U.S.A.; tel. 800/228-8747 or 510/654-1879, fax 510/654-4200, website: www.adventurecenter.com).

Internet Bookings

For an exact fare quote you can book instantly online, simply access an online travel agency. You type in your destination and travel dates, then watch as the site's system searches its database for the lowest fare. You may be offered complicated routings at odd hours, but you'll certainly get useful information. You can also sign up to be notified by email when a special deal to your destination becomes available.

Try a couple of sites for comparison, such as **Microsoft Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Onetravel.com** (<http://air.onetravel.com>), **Sabre Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), **TicketPlanet.com** (www.ticketplanet.com), and **Trip.com** (www.thetrip.com). These companies are aimed at the North American market, so if you live in Europe, turn to **Flights.com** (www.flights.com) in Frank-

furt, Germany. In Australia it's **Travel.com.au** (www.travel.com.au) and **Flightcentre.com** (www.flightcentre.com.au). www.flightcentre.com links to similar sites in Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, while Travel.com.au has partners in New Zealand, Japan, and South Africa. Many more online agencies are listed on www.etn.nl.

At all of these sites, you'll be asked to pay by credit card over their secure server. If that idea worries you, look for a local packager willing to order online on your behalf. Since you'll have already checked the price yourself, you'll know if you're getting a good deal. Let your agent surprise you by finding an even lower online fare. After all, they should know this business better than you.

Student Fares

If you're a student, recent graduate, or teacher, you can sometimes benefit from lower student fares by booking through a student travel office. There are two rival organizations of this kind: Council Travel Services, with offices in college towns across the United States and a sister organization in Canada known as Travel Cuts; and STA Travel (Student Travel Australia) with a wholesale division known as the Student Travel Network. Both organizations require you to pay a nominal fee for an official student card, and to get the cheapest fares you have to prove you're really a student. Slightly higher fares on the same routes are available to nonstudents, so they're always worth checking.

STA Travel (www.sta-travel.com) offers special airfares for students and young people under 26 years old with minimal restrictions. Their prices on round-trip fares to Fiji are competitive, but they don't sell more complicated tickets to a number of points (standard routings like Los Angeles-Fiji-Auckland-Sydney-Bangkok-London-Los Angeles are their style). Call their toll-free number (tel. 800/781-4040) for the latest information.

Different student fares are available from **Council Travel Services** (tel. 800/226-8624, website: www.counciltravel.com), a division of the nonprofit Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). Both they and **Travel Cuts** (www.travelcuts.com) in Canada are stricter about making sure you're a "real" student: you must first obtain the widely recognized Interna-

tional Student Identity Card (US\$22) to get a ticket at the student rate. Some fares are limited to students and youths under 26 years of age, but part-time students and teachers also qualify. Circle-Pacific and round-the-world routings are also available from Council Travel Services, and there are special connecting flights to Los Angeles from other U.S. points.

Bula Fiji Starter Packs

If you book air only and would like the security a reserved room in which to recover from jetlag and get your bearings, **Fiji For Less** (www.fiji4less.com) offers a variety of "starter packs" that provide a transfer from Nadi Airport plus two nights accommodations at a budget Lautoka area or Coral Coast hotel such as Saweni Beach Apartments or Tubakula Beach Resort. Both resorts offer cooking facilities, and a few basic groceries are included to allow you to prepare your own breakfast without having to go out shopping. They'll even change money at bank rates without commission, and free luggage storage is available.

Since Fiji For Less accepts only direct bookings over the internet or by fax, and pays no commissions to wholesalers or travel agents, they're able to keep their prices low. The two-night transfer/bed packages to Tubakula offer the choice of staying in a dormitory, private room, or ocean-view bungalow. Prices at Saweni are slightly cheaper; the same deal is offered to the Cathay Hotel in Lautoka, if you'd rather be in a town.

Check the Fiji For Less website for current information. To book, send a fax to 679/308-646 in Fiji or 310/362-8493 in the United States stating your name, address, and contact information (phone, fax, or email) a few days before you leave for Fiji. Say which type of accommodations you prefer and give your flight details (remember the international dateline). In order to have a driver waiting at the airport, they'll need a credit card authorization. Confirmation will be faxed or emailed to you within 48 hours. The United Touring Company (UTC) at Nadi International Airport handles direct Bula Fiji bookings and transfers.

Current Trends

High operating costs have caused the larger airlines to switch to wide-bodied aircraft and long-

haul routes with less frequent service and fewer stops. In the South Pacific this works to your disadvantage, as even major destinations like Fiji get bypassed. Most airlines now charge extra for stopovers that once were free, or simply refuse to grant any stopovers at all on the cheap-est fares.

Increasingly airlines are combining in global alliances to compete internationally. Qantas is part of the "Oneworld" family (www.oneworldalliance.com) comprising American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, and Lan Chile, while Air New Zealand is a member of the "Star Alliance" (www.star-alliance.com) of Ansett Australia, United Airlines, Air Canada, Lufthansa, SAS, Singapore Airlines, Thai, All Nippon, and others. This is to your advantage as frequent flier programs are usually interchangeable within the blocks, booking becomes easier, flight schedules are coordinated, and through fares exist.

It's now possible to design some extremely wide-ranging trips by combining the networks of the two competing groups. For example, Oneworld's **Global Explorer** allows 28,500 miles travel and six free stops selected from over 400 destinations worldwide. A similar fare available only in the South Pacific and Europe is Star Alliance's **World Navigator**. Ask the airlines about these tickets.

Air New Zealand offices in North America sell a **World Escapade** valid for a round-the-world journey on Air New Zealand, Ansett Australia, Singapore Airlines, and South African Airways. You're allowed 29,000 miles with unlimited stops at US\$2,883. One transatlantic and one transpacific journey must be included, but the ticket is valid one year and backtracking is allowed.

Air New Zealand's **Pacific Escapade** provides a circle-Pacific trip on Air New Zealand, Ansett Australia, and Singapore Airlines. With this one you get 22,000 miles at US\$2,600 with all the stops you want (maximum of three each in Australia and New Zealand). You'll have to transit Singapore, and travel must begin in either Los Angeles or Vancouver (no add-ons). On both Escapades, should you go over the allowable mileage, 4,500 extra miles are US\$300. Reservation changes are free the first time but extra after that.

Northwest Airlines in conjunction with Air New Zealand offers a **Circle-Pacific fare** of US\$2,928

from Los Angeles with add-on airfares available from other North American cities. This ticket allows four free stopovers in Asia and the South Pacific, additional stops US\$75 each. To reissue or revalidate the ticket or to change dates also costs US\$75. It's valid six months but you must travel in a continuous circle without any backtracking. Air Pacific also has a Circle-Pacific fare, so compare.

AIR SERVICES

From North America

Air New Zealand and Air Pacific are the major carriers serving Fiji out of Los Angeles. Air Pacific flies nonstop from Los Angeles to Nadi five times a week (10.5 hours) and from Honolulu three times a week (six hours).

Air Pacific also flies from Vancouver to Fiji via Honolulu twice a week. Air New Zealand passengers originating in Canada must change planes in Honolulu or Los Angeles.

From Los Angeles, a seven to 30-day round-trip ticket to Fiji on Air Pacific is US\$1,018/1,208/1,478/1,528 low/shoulder/high/peak season. From Honolulu it's exactly US\$200 cheaper. These are the midweek fares—weekend departures are US\$70 more expensive—and some restrictions apply.

Air New Zealand

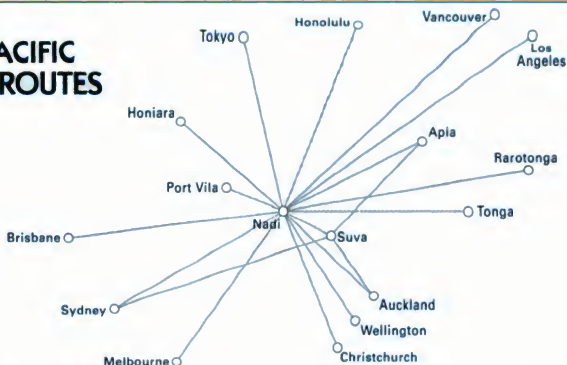
In the 1950s Air New Zealand pioneered its "Coral Route" using Solent flying boats, and today the carrier dominates long-haul air routes into the region by allowing stopovers in Tahiti, Cook Islands, and Fiji as part of through services between North America and New Zealand. Air New Zealand operates three nonstop Los Angeles to Nadi flights a week, and one Coral Route island hopper. Yet despite Air New Zealand's frequent services, travelers in Europe and North America sometimes have difficulty booking seats and it's advisable to reserve well ahead.

Round-trip tickets to Fiji on Air New Zealand usually cost exactly the same as on Air Pacific. Ask for the "No Stop Apex," which is US\$978/1,208/1,478/1,528 if you leave Los Angeles at the beginning of the week (US\$200 cheaper from Honolulu). To set out on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday costs US\$70 more. The

AIR PACIFIC FLIGHT ROUTES



NOT TO SCALE



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maximum stay is one month and you must pay at least one month before departure (50 percent cancellation penalty).

If you want to include a bit more of the South Pacific in your trip, consider Air New Zealand's "Coral Experience," which allows one stop plus your destination with additional stops available at US\$150 each. Thus you can fly Los Angeles-Tahiti-Rarotonga-Fiji-Los Angeles for US\$1,128/1,358/1,628/1,678 low/shoulder/high/peak season if you leave at the beginning of the week for a trip of three months maximum. Add US\$150 if wish to extend your period of stay to six months, plus another US\$70 if you'd like to set out on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Drop either Tahiti or Rarotonga from your itinerary and you'll save US\$150. Trips originating in Honolulu are US\$200 cheaper in all cases. Remember that the "Coral Experience" must be purchased 14 days in advance and there's a US\$75 penalty to change your flight dates. A 35 percent cancellation fee also applies after the 14-day ticket deadline.

For a more wide-ranging trip with fewer restrictions, check out Air New Zealand's "Coral Explorer Airpass," which costs US\$1,938/2,218/2,488/2,538 low/shoulder/high/peak season. This worthwhile ticket allows you to fly Los Angeles-Tahiti-Rarotonga-Fiji-Auckland-Tongatapu/Apia-Los Angeles or vice versa. Extend the ticket to Australia for US\$100 more; eliminate Auckland-

Tongatapu/Apia and it's about US\$100 less. Begin in Honolulu and it's US\$200 less again. You can stay up to one year but rerouting costs US\$75 (date changes are free). There's no advance purchase requirement and you can fly any day. To follow exactly the same routing minus one stop on a six-month "Coral Experience" with all its restrictions costs US\$1,778/2,058/2,328/2,378.

In Canada, Air New Zealand calls the same fares by different names: the "No Stop Apex" is the "Shotover Fare" while the "Coral Experience" is the "Bungy Fare" (but the "Explorer" is still the "Explorer"). The cheaper "Backpacker Downunder" fare from Canada must be purchased 14 days in advance and does not cover hotel expenses due to flight misconnections. On most Air New Zealand tickets special "add-on" fares to Los Angeles or Vancouver are available from cities right across the U.S. and Canada—be sure to ask about them.

Air New Zealand's cabin service is professional, and you'll like the champagne breakfasts and outstanding food with complimentary beer and wine. Another plus are the relaxing seats with adjustable head rests and lots of leg room. The *Life in Pacifica* videos about their destinations are entertaining the first time you see them, but after a while you might get bored. The only reading material provided is the *Panorama* in-flight magazine, the *Skyshop* duty free catalog,

AIRPORT CODES

AKL—Auckland	LEV—Levuka	SEA—Seattle
APW—Apia/Faleolo	LKB—Lakeba	SFO—San Francisco
BNE—Brisbane	MEL—Melbourne	SIN—Singapore
CHC—Christchurch	MFJ—Moala	SUV—Suva
FGI—Apia/Fagali	MNF—Mana	SVU—Savusavu
FUN—Funafuti	NAN—Nadi	SYD—Sydney
HIR—Honiara	NGI—Gau	TBU—Tongatapu
HNL—Honolulu	NOU—Nouméa	TRW—Tarawa
ICI—Cicia	OSA—Osaka	TVU—Taveuni
INU—Nauru	POM—Port Moresby	TYO—Tokyo
IPC—Easter Island	PPG—Pago Pago	VBV—Vanua Balavu
IUE—Niue	PPT—Papeete	VLI—Port Vila
KDV—Kadavu	PTF—Malololailai	WLG—Wellington
KXF—Koro	RAR—Rarotonga	WLS—Wallis
LAX—Los Angeles	RTA—Rotuma	YYR—Vancouver
LBS—Labasa	SCL—Santiago	YYZ—Toronto

and the *Primetime* entertainment magazine. These are unlikely to hold your attention for long, so bring along a book or magazine of your own (the daily newspaper is provided only to passengers in first class).

From Australia

Air Pacific offers nonstop flights to Nadi from Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney (all Qantas flights to Fiji are now operated by Air Pacific planes). From Sydney, Air Pacific also has direct flights to Suva. Ansett Australia operates a twice-weekly nonstop service from Sydney to Nadi. Air New Zealand is competing fiercely in the Australian market, and they offer competitive fares to many South Pacific points via Auckland.

You can usually get a better price by working through an agent specializing in bargain airfares rather than buying at the airline office itself. The airlines sometimes offer specials during the off months, so check the travel sections in the weekend papers and call Flight Centres International and STA Travel.

Apex (advance purchase excursion) tickets must be bought 14 days in advance and heavy cancellation penalties apply. The low season ex-Australia is generally mid-January to June and October to November. Shop around as you can often find much better deals than the published Apex fares, especially during off months.

From New Zealand

Both Air New Zealand and Air Pacific fly from Auckland to Nadi daily, and Air Pacific also flies from Christchurch and Wellington to Nadi and from Auckland to Suva. Unrestricted low airfares to Fiji can be hard to come by and some tickets have advance purchase requirements, so start shopping well ahead. Ask around at a number of different travel agencies for special unadvertised or under-the-counter fares. Agents to call include STA Travel and Flight Centres International.

Air New Zealand offers reduced excursion fares from Auckland to Fiji with a maximum stay of 90 days at NZ\$935/1,026/1,117 low/shoulder/high season (see Seasons above for the applicable dates). Seasonal specials are regularly available. It's often cheaper to buy a package tour to the islands with airfare, accommodations, and transfers all included, but these are usually limited to seven nights on one island and you're stuck in a boring tourist-oriented environment. Ask if you can extend your return date.

From Europe

Since no European carriers reach Fiji, you'll have to use a gateway city such as Los Angeles, Honolulu, Sydney, or Singapore. Air New Zealand offers daily nonstop flights London-Los Angeles, with connections in Los Angeles direct to Fiji three times a week. Similarly, Lufthansa's Frank-

furt-Los Angeles and Munich-Los Angeles flights code share with Air New Zealand's nonstop flights between Los Angeles and Nadi. This means that European passengers can fly to Fiji from London or Germany with only one change of aircraft (at Los Angeles).

Air New Zealand reservations numbers around Europe are tel. 03/202-1355 (Belgium), tel. 0800/907-712 (France), tel. 0800/181-7778 (Germany), tel. 800/876-126 (Italy), tel. 0800-2527 (Luxembourg), tel. 0800/022-1016 (Netherlands), tel. 900/993241 (Spain), tel. 020/792-939 (Sweden), tel. 0800/557-778 (Switzerland), and tel. 020/8741-2299 (United Kingdom). Ask about their Coral Route fares. Be aware that Air New Zealand flights can be heavily booked and reservations should be made far in advance.

Also call your local British Airways or Qantas office and ask what connections they are offering to Fiji on Air Pacific. It's possible that the disadvantage of having to change airlines halfway may be compensated for by a lower fare.

The British specialist in South Pacific itineraries is **Trailfinders** (1 Threadneedle St., London EC2R 8JX, United Kingdom; tel. 020/7628-7628, website: www.trailfinder.com), in business since 1970. Their nine offices around the United Kingdom and Ireland offer a variety of discounted round-the-world tickets through Fiji, which are often much cheaper than the published fares. It's easy to order a free copy of their magazine *Trailfinder* and brochures online.

Bridge the World (47 Chalk Farm Road, Camden Town, London NW1 8AJ, United Kingdom; tel. 44-20/7911-0900, fax 44-20/7813-3350, website: www.bridgetheworld.com) sells discounted tickets which include Fiji, Rarotonga, Tahiti, and a variety of stops in Asia. Also worth a try is **Tailor Made Travel** (18 Port St., Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 6AN, United Kingdom; tel. 44-1386/712-005, fax 44-1386/712-071, website: www.tailor-made.co.uk). Check the ads in the London entertainment magazines for other such companies.

In Holland **Pacific Island Travel** (Herengracht 495, 1017 BT Amsterdam, the Netherlands; tel. 31-20/626-1325, fax 31-20/623-0008, website: www.pacificislandtravel.com) sells most of the tickets mentioned in this section, plus package tours. Their website is immense. **Barron & De Keijzer Travel** (Herengracht 340, 1016 CG Am-

sterdam, the Netherlands; tel. 31-20/625-8600, website: www.barron.nl) also specializes in the Pacific islands and their website quotes exact flight prices! Also in Amsterdam, **Reisbureau Amber** (Da Costastraat 77, 1053 ZG Amsterdam, the Netherlands; tel. 31-20/685-1155, fax 31-20/689-0406) is one of the best places in Europe to pick up books on Fiji.

In Switzerland try **Globetrotter Travel Service** (Rennweg 35, CH-8023 Zürich, Switzerland; tel. 41-1/213-8080, fax 41-1/213-8088, website: www.globetrotter.ch), with offices in Baden, Basel, Bern, Fribourg, Luzern, Olten, St. Gallen, Thun, Winterthur, Zug, and Zürich. You can order a free copy of their magazine, *Globetrotter*, through their website.

Bucket shops in Germany sell a "Pacific Airpass" to the South Pacific that allows all the usual stops and is valid six months. All flights must be booked prior to leaving Europe, and there's a charge to change the dates once the ticket has been issued. One agency selling such tickets is **Walther-Weltreisen** (Hirschberger Strasse 30, D-53119 Bonn, Germany; tel. 49-228/661-239, fax 49-228/661-181, email: walther-weltreisen@t-online.de). Check the website of **Travel Overland** (Barerstr.73, D-80799 Munich, Germany; tel. 49-89/2727-6300, fax 49-89/3079-8893, website: www.travel-overland.de) for round-the-world tickets via Fiji.

The **Pacific Travel House** (Bayerstrasse 95, D-80335 München; tel. 49-89/530-9293, website: www.pacific-travel-house.com) offers a variety of upscale package tours. Similar is **Art of Travel** (Isartorplatz 1, D-80331 Munich, Germany; tel. 49-89/211-0760, fax 49-89/2110-7621, website: www.artoftravel.de). **Schöner Tauchen** (Hastedter Heerstr. 211, D-28207 Bremen; tel. 49-421/450-010, fax 49-421/450-080, website: www.schoener-tauchen.com) specializes in dive tours to Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

In Austria the South Pacific specialist is **Coco Weltweit Reisen** (Eduard-Bodem-Gasse 8, A-6020 Innsbruck; tel. 43-512/365-791, fax 43-512/365791-7, website: www.coco-tours.at).

REGIONAL AIRLINES

Aside from Air New Zealand, Air Pacific, Ansett Australia, Qantas, and Korean Air, a number of

regional carriers fly to and from Fiji. Samoa's **Polynesian Airlines** (tel. 800/264-0823) arrives from Apia three times a week. **Aircalin** (tel. 800/677-4277) flies to Fiji from Nouméa and Wallis. From Fiji, **Air Fiji** flies north to Funafuti in Tuvalu and east to Tongatapu. **Air Nauru** (tel. 800/677-4277) flies to Nadi from Nauru and Tarawa once or twice a week. **Royal Tongan Airlines** has flights to Nadi from Tongatapu three times a week. **Air Vanuatu** (tel. 800/677-4277) arrives from Port Vila. **Solomon Airlines** (tel. 800/677-4277) links Fiji to Honiara and Port Vila. **Korean Air** (tel. 800/438-5000) arrives from Seoul three times a week. Keep in mind that few regional flights operate daily and many are only once or twice a week.

Regional Air Passes

In 1995 the Association of South Pacific Airlines introduced a **Visit South Pacific Pass** to coincide with "Visit South Pacific Year" and the pass has been so successful that the Association decided to extend it indefinitely. This pass allows travelers to include the services of 10 regional carriers in a single ticket valid six months. The initial two-leg air pass has to be purchased in conjunction with an international ticket into the region, but additional legs up to a maximum of eight can be purchased after arrival. Only the first sector has to be booked ahead.

The flights are priced at three different levels. For US\$190 per sector you can go Fiji-Apia/Tongatapu/Port Vila, Tongatapu-Apia/Niue, or Nouméa-Port Vila. For US\$240 you have a choice of Honiara-Nadi/Port Vila/Port Moresby, Fiji-Nauru/Tarawa/Nouméa, or a variety of flights from Australia and New Zealand to the islands. For US\$340 there's Tahiti-Nouméa, Sydney-Tongatapu/Apia, or Fiji-Port Moresby. It's a great way of getting around the South Pacific.

Airlines which should know about this ticket include Air Pacific, Polynesian Airlines, Qantas, Royal Tongan Airlines, and Solomon Airlines, so call them up on the toll-free 800 numbers provided earlier. Also try **Air Promotions Systems** (5757 West Century Blvd., Suite 660, Los Angeles, CA 90045-6407, U.S.A.; tel. 800/677-4277 or 310/670-7302, fax 310/338-0708).

Air Pacific

Air Pacific has two different **Pacific Triangle Fares**, good ways to experience the region's variety of cultures: Fiji-Apia-Tonga-Fiji (US\$461) and Fiji-Nouméa-Port Vila-Fiji (F\$809). Both are valid for one year and can be purchased at any travel agency in Fiji or direct from the airline. Flight dates can be changed at no charge, but they're usually valid only for journeys commencing in Fiji. When booking these circular tickets, be aware that it's much better to go Fiji-Apia-Tonga-Fiji than vice versa, because the flights between Apia and Fiji are often fully booked while it's easy to get on between Tonga and Fiji. Also obtainable locally are Air Pacific's special 28-day round-trip excursion fares from Fiji to Apia (F\$645), Port Vila (F\$606), and Honiara (F\$1,098). Some of these fares have seasonal variations.

A **Pacific Air Pass** allows 30 days travel (on Air Pacific flights only) from Fiji to Apia, Tonga, and Port Vila (US\$462). This pass can only be purchased from Qantas Airways offices in North America and Europe, or from Air Pacific's U.S. office (Suite 475, 841 Apollo St., El Segundo, CA 90245-4741, U.S.A.; tel. 800/227-

4446 or 310/524-9350, fax 310/524-9356). Also available in North America only is the **Fiji/Vanuatu/Solomons Triangle Fare**, which allows you 60 days to go around this circuit at US\$648. Otherwise a six to 30-day Nadi-Honiara excursion fare is F\$1,153, sold worldwide.

Polynesian Airlines

Polynesian Airlines (www.polynesianairlines.com) offers a **Polypass** valid for 45 days unlimited travel between Nadi, Tongatapu, Apia, and Pago Pago, plus one round-trip from Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, or Wellington for US\$999. From Honolulu the pass costs US\$1,198, from Los Angeles US\$1,499. To extend the pass to Tahiti is US\$190 extra. Restrictions are that your itinerary must be worked out in advance and can only be changed once. Thus it's important to book all flights well ahead. A 20 percent penalty is charged to refund an unused ticket (no refund after one year).

Also ask about Polynesian's **Pacific Triangle Fare** (US\$395-500 depending on the sea-



son), which allows one a full year to complete the Nadi-Apia-Tongatapu-Nadi loop.

Air Nauru

Air Nauru (www.airnauru.com.au), flag carrier of the tiny phosphate-rich Republic of Nauru in Micronesia, has flights from Nadi to Nauru twice a week, to Tarawa weekly. From Nauru there are onward connections to Pohnpei, Guam, and Manila. An Air Nauru 30-day round-trip excursion fare from Nadi to Tarawa and Nauru costs F\$630 from February to November, or F\$810 in December and January (add A\$25 Nauru airport tax even if you're only in transit). The Air Nauru office in Ratu Sakuna House, Macarthur St. and Victoria Parade, Suva, can make the compulsory Nauru hotel reservation, beginning at A\$45/60/70 single/double/triple per night. It's an interesting sidetrip, worth considering.

Important Note

Airfares, rules, and regulations tend to fluctuate a lot, so some of the information above may have changed. This is only a guide; we've included a range of fares to give you a rough idea how much things might cost. Your travel agent will know what's available at the time you're ready to travel, but if you're not satisfied with his/her advice, keep shopping around. The biggest step is deciding to go—once you're over that, the rest is easy!

PROBLEMS

When planning your trip allow a minimum two-hour stopover between connecting flights at U.S. airports, although with airport delays on the increase even this may not be enough. In the islands allow at least a day between flights. Try to avoid flying on weekends and holidays when the congestion is at its worst. In some airports flights are not called over the public address system, so keep your eyes open. Whenever traveling, always have a paperback or two, some toiletries, and a change of underwear in your hand luggage.

If your flight is canceled due to mechanical problems with the aircraft, the airline will cover your hotel bill and meals. If they reschedule the flight on short notice for reasons of their own or

you're bumped off an overbooked flight, they should also pay. They may not feel obligated to pay, however, if the delay is due to weather conditions, a strike by another company, national emergencies, etc., although the best airlines still pick up the tab in these cases.

It's an established practice among airlines to provide light refreshments to passengers delayed two hours after the scheduled departure time and a meal after four hours. Don't expect to get this from Air Fiji or Sun Air at some outer island airport, but politely request it if you're at a gateway airport. If you are unexpectedly forced to spend the night somewhere, an airline employee may hand you a form on which they offer to telephone a friend or relative to inform them of the delay. Don't trust them to do this, however. Call your party yourself if you want to be sure they get the message.

Overbooking

To compensate for no-shows, most airlines overbook their flights. To avoid being bumped, ask for your seat assignment when booking, check in early, and go to the departure area well before flight time. Of course, if you *are* bumped by a reputable international airline at a major airport you'll be regaled with free meals and lodging and sometimes even free flight vouchers or cash payments (don't expect anything like this from Air Fiji or Sun Air).

Whenever you break your journey for more than 72 hours, reconfirm your onward reservations and check your seat assignment at the same time. Get the name of the person who takes your reconfirmation so they cannot later deny it. Failure to reconfirm could result in the cancellation of your complete remaining itinerary. This could also happen if you miss a flight for any reason. If you want special vegetarian or kosher food in-flight, request it when buying your ticket, booking, and reconfirming.

When you try to reconfirm your Air New Zealand flight the agent will tell you that this formality is no longer required. Theoretically this is true, but unless you request your seat assignment in advance, either at an Air New Zealand office or over the phone, you could be "bumped" from a full flight, reservation or no reservation. Air New Zealand's ticket cover bears this surprising message:

... no guarantee of a seat on a particular flight is indicated by the terms "reservation," "booking," "O.K." status, or the times associated therewith.

They do admit in the same notice that confirmed passengers denied seats are eligible for compensation, so if you're not in a hurry, a night or two at an upmarket hotel with all meals courtesy of Air New Zealand may not be a hardship. Your best insurance if you don't want to get "bumped" is to request seat assignments for your entire itinerary before you leave home, or at least at the Air New Zealand office in Nadi or Suva. Any good travel agent selling tickets on Air New Zealand should know enough to automatically request your seat assignments as they make your bookings. Check Air New Zealand's reconfirmation policy as it could change.

Baggage

International airlines allow economy-class passengers either 20 kilos of baggage or two pieces not over 32 kilos each (ask which applies to you). Under the piece system, neither bag may have a combined length, width, and height of over 158 centimeters (62 inches) and the two pieces together must not exceed 272 centimeters (107 inches). On most long-haul tickets to/from North America or Europe, the piece system applies to all sectors, but check this with the airline. The frequent flier programs of some major airlines allow participants to carry up to 10 kilos of excess baggage free of charge. Both commuter carriers in Fiji restrict you to 20 kilos total, so pack according to the lowest common denominator. Overweight luggage costs one percent of the full 1st class fare per kilogram—watch out, this can be a lot!

Bicycles, folding kayaks, and surfboards can usually be checked as baggage (sometimes for an additional US\$50–100 charge), but sailboards may have to be shipped airfreight. If you do travel with a sailboard, be sure to call it a surfboard at check-in.

Tag your bag with name, address, and phone number inside and out. Stow anything that could conceivably be considered a weapon (scissors, penknife, toy gun, mace, etc.) in your checked luggage. One reason for lost baggage is that some people fail to remove used baggage tags after they claim their luggage. Get into the habit

of tearing off old baggage tags, unless you want your luggage to travel in the opposite direction! As you're checking in, look to see if the three-letter city codes on your baggage tag receipt and boarding pass are the same. If you're headed to Nadi the tag should read NAN (Suva is SUV).

If your baggage is damaged or doesn't arrive at your destination, inform the airline officials *immediately* and have them fill out a written report; otherwise future claims for compensation will be compromised. Airlines usually reimburse out-of-pocket expenses if your baggage is lost or delayed over 24 hours. The amount varies, and your chances of getting it are better if you're polite but firm. Keep receipts for any money you're forced to spend to replace missing articles. If you notice that a bag has been mysteriously patched up with tape since you last saw it, carefully examine the contents right away. This could be a sign that baggage handlers have pilfered items from inside, and you must report the theft before leaving the customs hall in order to be eligible for compensation.

Claims for lost luggage can take weeks to process. Keep in touch with the airline to show your concern and hang on to your baggage tag until the matter is resolved. If you feel you did not receive the attention you deserved, write the airline an objective letter outlining the case. Get the names of the employees you're dealing with so you can mention them in the letter. Of course, don't expect any pocket money or compensation on a remote outer island. Report the loss, then wait till you get back to their main office. Whatever happens, try to avoid getting angry. The people you're dealing with don't want the problem any more than you do.

BY BOAT

Even as much Pacific shipping was being sunk during World War II, airstrips were springing up on the main islands. This hastened the inevitable replacement of the old steamships with modern aircraft, and it's now extremely rare to arrive in Fiji by boat (private yachts excepted). Most islands export similar products and there's little interregional trade; large container ships headed for Australia, New Zealand, and Japan don't usually accept passengers.

Those bitten by nostalgia for the slower prewar ways may like to know that a couple of passenger-carrying freighters do still call at Fiji, though their fares are much higher than those charged by the airlines. A specialized agency booking such passages is **TravLtips** (P.O. Box 580188, Flushing, NY 11358, U.S.A.; tel. 800/872-8584, website: www.travltips.com). They can place you aboard a British-registered Bank Line container ship on its way around the world from Europe via the Panama Canal, Papeete, Samoa, Nouméa, Suva, Lautoka, Port Vila, Santo, Honiara, and Papua New Guinea. A round-the-world ticket for the four-month journey is US\$12,725, but segments are sold if space is available 30 days before sailing. Insurance regulations limit the number of passengers aboard ship to 12 at a time. Similarly, TravLtips books German-registered Columbus Line vessels, which make 45-day round-trips between Los Angeles and Australia via Suva. These ships can accommodate only about a dozen passengers, so inquire well in advance. Also ask about passenger accommodation on cargo vessels of the Blue Star Line, which sometimes call at Suva and Nouméa between Los Angeles and Auckland.

Tourist Cruises

Blue Lagoon Cruises Ltd. (P.O. Box 130, Lautoka, Fiji; tel. 663-938, fax 664-098, website: www.bluelagooncruises.com) has been offering upmarket minicruises from Lautoka to the Yasawa Islands since its founding by Captain Trevor Withers in 1950. The two-night trips (from F\$1,100) and three-night trips (from F\$1,650) leave twice a week, while the six-night cruise (from F\$2,981) is weekly. Prices are per person, double occupancy, and include meals (excluding alcohol), entertainment, shore excursions, and tax (no additional "port charges" and no tipping). We quote the low season fare, but peak season costs 30 percent more (the complicated price structure depends on the day and month of departure). "A" deck is about 15 percent more expensive than "B" deck, but you have the railing right outside your cabin door instead of a locked porthole window. On the shorter cruises Blue Lagoon uses older three-deck, 40-passenger vessels, while larger four-deck, 60-passenger mini-cruise ships are used on the longer voyages. Since 1996 the 72-passenger, US\$8-

million luxury cruiser *Mystique Princess* has operated three-night trips from F\$2,156 twice a week. The meals are often beach barbecue affairs, with Fijian dancing. You'll have plenty of opportunities to snorkel in the calm, crystal-clear waters (bring your own gear). Blue Lagoon Cruises also offers occasional six-night cultural cruises to Levuka, Savusavu, and Taveuni. Though a bit expensive, these trips have a good reputation. There are almost daily departures year-round, but reservations are essential.

Captain Cook Cruises (P.O. Box 23, Nadi, Fiji; tel. 701-823, fax 702-045, website: www.captaincookcruises.com.au), on Narewa Road near the bridge into Nadi town, is also recommended. Like Blue Lagoon Cruises they offer unpretentious three/four-night cruises to the Yasawa Islands aboard the 63-meter MV *Reef Escape*, departing Nadi Tuesday and Saturday. The 60 double-occupancy cabins begin at F\$1,188/1,584 pp twin with bunk beds or F\$1,404/1,872 with normal beds. The two itineraries vary somewhat, and there's a discount if you do both in succession. The *Reef Escape* is the largest cruise ship based in Fiji, formerly used for cruises along Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The food is good, cabins bright, activities and entertainment fun, and there's even a miniature swimming pool and spa! Most of your fellow passengers will be Australians, which can be stimulating, and the Fijian staff will spoil you silly.

In addition, Captain Cook Cruises operates two/three-night cruises to the southern Yasawas on the topsail schooner *Spirit of the Pacific*—a more romantic choice than the mini-cruise ships. These trips depart Nadi every Monday and Thursday morning and cost F\$540/684 pp for two/three nights (children under 12 not accepted). You sleep ashore in double *bure*, the food is good with lots of fresh vegetables and salads, and the staff friendly and well organized. Captain Cook Cruises also sometimes uses the 34-meter square-rigged brigantine *Ra Marama* on these trips. It's a fine vessel built of teak planks in Singapore in 1957 for a former governor-general of Fiji. These trips can be booked through most travel agents in Fiji or via the phone numbers above; readers who've gone report having a great time.

If you're interested in seeing more of the South Pacific than only Fiji, visit the website of **Cruise West** (2401 4th Ave., Suite 700, Seattle, WA

98121-1438, U.S.A.; tel. 800/888-9378, fax 206/441-4757, website: www.cruisewest.com). A couple of times a year their flagship, the *Spirit of Oceanus*, does two-week cruises between Suva and Tahiti, visiting Taveuni, the Yasawas, and a host of remote islands straight out of Captain James Cook's journal.

Scuba Cruises

Five live-aboard dive boats ply Fiji waters. A seven-night stay aboard one of these vessels could run as high as F\$6,500 pp (airfare, alcohol, and tax extra), but the boat anchors right above the dive sites, so no time is wasted commuting back and forth. All meals are included and the diving is unlimited. Singles are usually allowed to share a cabin with another diver to avoid a single supplement. Bookings can be made through any of the scuba wholesalers listed under Scuba Tours below.

The five-stateroom *Sere Ni Wai* (or "song of the sea") is a 30-meter boat based at Suva and operating around Beqa, Kadavu, Lomaiviti, and northern Lau. Captain Greg Lawlor's family has been in Fiji for four generations, but his boat is new, launched in 1995. If you're already in Fiji, try calling **Mollie Dean Cruises** (P.O. Box 3256, Lami, Fiji; tel. 361-171, fax 361-137, website: www.sere.com.fj), which books divers on the *Sere Ni Wai* locally.

Another famous boat is the 34-meter, eight-cabin *Nai'a* which does seven-day scuba cruises to Lomaiviti and northern Lau at F\$6,075, or 10 days for F\$8,665, tax included. Captain Bob Barrel and Dive Director Cat Holloway have a longstanding interest in dolphins and whales, and whalewatching expeditions to Tonga are organized annually. Long exploratory voyages are occasionally made to places as far afield as Vanuatu and the Phoenix Islands of Kiribati. Local bookings are accepted when space is available and you might even be able to swing a discount. Call **Nai'a Cruises** (P.O. Box 332, Deuba, Fiji; tel. 450-382, fax 450-566, website: www.naia.com.fj). They have an office in the Cultural Center complex at Pacific Harbor.

Also based at Pacific Harbor is the 18-meter live-aboard *Beqa Princess*, operated by **Tropical Expeditions** (Charles Wakeham, P.O. Box 129, Deuba; tel./fax 450-666). The three spacious a/c cabins accommodate six divers on three-night cruises to the Beqa Lagoon for around

F\$450 pp a day. Get a few friends together and charter this boat for an unforgettable trip.

In 1998 the American-owned, 32-meter dive boat *Fiji Aggressor* (tel. 361-382, fax 362-930, website: www.pac-aggressor.com) was deployed to Nadi. The *Aggressor's* jet-driven launch zips divers to scuba sites at 30 knots, providing unlimited diving for 16 divers flown in on packages from the States. Unlike the eco-friendly *Nai'a*, which uses sails to cruise at night, this powerful catamaran projects an image of brute force.

The 26-meter *Princess II* (Tropical Dive, tel. 725-116, fax 725-220) has six air-conditioned cabins. It cruises regularly from Nadi to Taveuni via Wakaya Passage, Namena, and the Rainbow Reef. This boat was formerly called the *Matangi Princess II*, and things have improved since a recent change in ownership.

ORGANIZED TOURS

Packaged Holidays

Any travel agent would prefer to sell you a package tour rather than just a plane ticket, and it's a fact

CORAL REEF ADVENTURE

Since 1993, the live-aboard *Nai'a* has been the flagship of Fiji's diving industry, discovering and naming many remote sites now regularly visited by other boats. In addition to *Nai'a's* regular cruises around Fiji, Humpback whale tours to Tonga and scientific expeditions to the shark-infested waters of Kiribati are annual events. During late 2000 and early 2001, the MacGillivray Freeman Films IMAX production *Coral Reef Adventure* was filmed in Fiji by Howard Hall, who selected *Nai'a's* Cat Holloway and Rob Barrel as his guides, both topside and underwater. And *Nai'a* divemaster Rusi Vulakoro has one of the starring roles in the film. *Nai'a* passengers will recognize their favorite divesites on the giant screen, as well as the sharks, turtles, manta rays, sea snakes, gobies, and shrimp that they have come to love. One of the highlights of every *Nai'a* voyage is an afternoon spent in a village on the island of Gau. So impressed were Howard and Michelle Hall when they first visited Gau as *Nai'a* passengers that the whole village visit is captured in *Coral Reef Adventure*.

that some vacation packages actually don't cost more than regular round-trip airfare! While packaged travel certainly isn't for everyone, reduced group fares and discounted hotel rates make some tours an excellent value. For two people with limited time and a desire to stay in first-class hotels, this is the cheapest way to go by far.

The wholesalers who put these packages together get their rooms at rates far lower than what individuals pay, and the airlines also give them deals. If they'll let you extend your return date to give you some time to yourself, this can be a great deal, especially with the hotel thrown in for "free." Special-interest tours are very popular among sports people who want to be sure they'll get to participate in the various activities they enjoy.

The main drawback to the tours is that you're on a fixed itinerary in a tourist-oriented environment, out of touch with local life. You may not like the hotel or meals you get, and singles pay a healthy supplement. Yet unlike packaged holidays to the Caribbean or Hawaii, you probably won't be stuck in some huge group but will receive prepaid vouchers you turn in as you go. It's very rare to be escorted by a tour conductor. A few of the companies mentioned below do not accept consumer inquiries and require you to work through a travel agent. Do check all the restrictions.

Fiji Travel Warehouse (website: www.fijitravelwarehouse.com) allows you to bid on holiday packages to Fiji in three price categories. It's fun, and by comparing what they offer with the prices in this book, you'll be able to bid intelligently. The Warehouse sells only ground packages without international flights and no refunds are allowed.

Fiji Travel (8885 Venice Blvd., Suite 202, Los Angeles, CA 90034, U.S.A.; tel. 800/500-3454 or 310/202-4220, fax 310/202-8233, website: www.fijitravel.com) sells all-inclusive tours to Fiji's top resorts, books Blue Lagoon cruises, and has surfing/scuba packages. Their cheapest packages are about the same as regular airfare, such as US\$1,075 for seven nights (double occupancy) at Coral Village Resort or the Nadi Mocambo including round-trip flights from Los Angeles and transfers. If they'll let you extend your return date to allow some time on your own, it's a great deal.

A company dealing with all aspects of travel to Fiji is **Fiji Reservations and Travel** (Melissa McCoy, 355 Hukilike St., Suite 207, Kahului, Maui, HI 96732, U.S.A.; tel. 800/588-3454 or 808/871-5986, fax 808/893-0138, website: www.fijireservations.com). Check their website for surfing, kayaking, and diving tours, plus discounted packages to all the top resorts. They also arrange house rentals and land purchases.

Sunspots International (1918 N.E. 181st, Portland, OR 97230, U.S.A.; tel. 800/334-5623 or 503/666-3893, fax 503/661-7771, website: www.sunspotsintl.com) has an informative color brochure on Fiji, plus a good website. All of their agents have been to Fiji personally.

Rob Jenneve of **Island Adventures** (225 C North Fairview, Goleta, CA 93117, U.S.A.; tel. 800/289-4957 or 805/685-9230, fax 805/685-0960, email: motuman@101freeway.com) puts together customized flight and accommodation packages, which are only slightly more expensive than regular round-trip airfare. Rob can steer you toward deluxe resorts, which offer value for money, and he's willing to spend the time to help you find what you really want in planning your trip. According to him, "It's no problem to vary your nights, extend your return, or leave some free time in the middle for spontaneous adventure."

For bookings at upscale hideaways like Turtle Island and Laucala, you won't go wrong at **South Pacific Holidays** (10906 NE 39th St., Suite A-1, Vancouver, WA 98682-6789, U.S.A.; tel. 877/733-3454 or 360/944-1712, fax 360/253-3934, website: www.spac.com). Their website is the best of its kind, providing lots of useful information, specific prices, and a brochure request form. Other North American companies booking package tours to Fiji include:

Destination World, P.O. Box 1077, Santa Barbara, CA 93102, U.S.A.; tel. 800/707-3454 or 888/345-4669, fax 805/685-3385, website: www.southpacificgateway.com

Essence Tours, 809 North Sanders Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555, U.S.A.; tel./fax 760/375-6871, website: www.essencetoursfiji.com

Fiji Fantasy Holidays, 207 East Highway 260, Payson, AZ 85541, U.S.A.; tel. 877/727-3454, fax 520/472-2580, website: www.fijifantasyholids.com

Goway Travel, 5865 South Kyrene Road, Suite 2, Tempe, AZ 85283, U.S.A.; tel. 800/387-8850, fax 800/665-4432, website: www.goway.com

Goway Travel, 3284 Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M7, Canada; tel. 800/387-8850, fax 800/665-4432, website: www.goway.com

Goway Travel, 1200 West 73rd Avenue, Suite 1050, Vancouver, B.C. V6P 6G5, Canada; tel. 800/387-8850 or 604/264-8088, fax 604/267-2111, website: www.goway.com

Islands in the Sun, 2381 Rosecrans Ave., Suite 325, El Segundo, CA 90245, U.S.A.; tel. 800/828-6877 or 310/536-0051, fax 310/536-6266, website: www.islandsinthesun.com

Pacific Destination Center, 18685 Main Street, Suite A622, Huntington Beach, CA 92648, U.S.A.; tel. 800/227-5317 or 714/960-4011, website: www.pacific-destinations.com

Solace Destinations, 10625 N 25th Ave., Suite 200, Phoenix, AZ 85029, U.S.A.; tel. 800/548-5331, website: www.solace1.com

Travel Arrangements Ltd., 1268 Broadway, Sonoma, CA 95476, U.S.A.; tel. 800/392-8213 or 707/938-1118, fax 707/938-1268

From Australia

Hideaway Holidays (Val Gavriloff, P.O. Box 121, West Ryde, NSW 2114, Australia; tel. 61-2/9743-0253, fax 61-2/9743-3568, website: www.hideawayholidays.com.au) specializes in packages to Fiji and the South Pacific. They've been in the business for many years.

Qantas Holidays (Level 6, 141 Walker St., North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia; tel. 61-2/9957-0538, fax 61-2/9957-0393, website: www.qantas.com.au) offers a variety of standard consumer packages to Fiji. In Europe these trips can be booked through Qantas Holidays (Sovereign House, 361 King St., Hammersmith, London W6 9NA, United Kingdom; tel. 44-20/8748-8676, fax 44-20/8748-7505).

The **Pacific and International Travel Company** (Level 1, 91 York St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia; tel. 61-2/9244-1777, fax 61-2/9262-6318, website: www.pitc.com.au) books package tours to Fiji. Also check **Adventure World** (Third Floor, 73 Walker St., North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia; tel. 61-2/8913-0755, fax 61-2/9956-7707, website: www.adventureworld.com.au), and **Goway Travel** (350 Kent St., 8th floor, Syd-

ney, NSW 2000, Australia; tel. 61-2/9262-4755, fax 61-2/9290-1905, website: www.goway.com).

For discounted airfares, try **Trailfinders** (8 Spring St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia; tel. 61-2/9247-7666, website: www.trailfinder.com), with additional offices in Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, and Perth.

From New Zealand

ASPAC Vacations Ltd. (137 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand; tel. 64-9/916-9910, fax 64-9/916-9907, website: www.aspac-vacations.co.nz) has packaged tours and cruises to Fiji.

Travel Arrangements Ltd. (P.O. Box 297, Auckland, New Zealand; tel. 64-9/914-8728, fax 64-9/912-8728, website: www.travelarrange.co.nz) has been offering sailing holidays and package tours to Fiji for a quarter of a century.

Ray Aucott's **Fathom South Pacific Travel** (P.O. Box 2557, Shortland Street, Auckland, New Zealand; website: www.fathomtravel.com) is an adventure travel-oriented packager. Ray books rooms at all the top resorts, but he also has numerous options for scuba diving, surfing, water-water rafting, and fishing. Ninety-five percent of Ray's bookings are via the Internet.

Scuba Tours

Fiji is one of the world's prime scuba locales, and most of the islands have excellent facilities for divers. Although it's not that difficult to make your own arrangements as you go, you should consider joining an organized scuba tour if you want to cram in as much diving as possible. To stay in business, the dive travel specialists mentioned below are forced to charge prices comparable to what you'd pay on the beach, and the convenience of having everything pre-arranged is often worth it. Before booking, find out exactly where you'll be staying, and ask if daily transfers and meals are provided. Of course, diver certification is mandatory.

Before deciding, carefully consider the live-aboard dive boats previously mentioned. They're a bit more expensive than hotel-based diving, but you're offered up to five dives a day and a total experience. Some repeat divers won't go any other way.

One of the top American scuba wholesalers selling Fiji is **Poseidon Ventures Tours** (359 San



BOB HALSTEAD

feeding fish

Miguel Dr., Newport Beach, CA 92660, U.S.A.; tel. 800/854-9334 or 949/644-5344, fax 949/644-5392, website: www.poseidontours.com; or 3724 FM 1960 West, Suite 114, Houston, TX 77068, U.S.A.; tel. 800/468-0123 or 281/586-7800, fax 281/586-7870). They offer seven-night diving tours beginning at US\$895 including five days of two-tank diving, double-occupancy hotel accommodations, meals, taxes, and airport transfers (airfare extra). Poseidon also sells live-aboard diving.

Tropical Adventures (P.O. Box 4337, Seattle, WA 98109, U.S.A.; tel. 888/250-1799 or 206/441-3483, fax 206/441-5431, website: www.divetropical.com) also specializes in booking live-aboard diving with four boats to choose from. Expect to pay about US\$350 a night all-inclusive, and singles are expected to share (no supplement). Airfare is extra, and land-based packages are offered. Over 6,000 divers a year book through this company, which has been in business since 1973.

Another Fiji specialist is **Aqua-Trek** (110 Sutter St., Suite 205, San Francisco, CA 94104, U.S.A.; tel. 800/541-4334, website: www.aquatrek.com).

Aqua-Trek is unique in that they run their own dive shops at Matamanoa, Mana, Pacific Harbor, and Taveuni. **Island Dreams** (8582 Katy Freeway, Suite 118, Houston, TX 77024, U.S.A.; tel. 800/346-6116 or 713/973-9300, fax 713/973-8585, website: www.islandream.com) specializes in Fiji and the Solomons. Check their website for Ken Knezich's revealing resort reports in "Fiji on the Fly."

Dive Discovery (1005 A Street, Suite 202, San Rafael, CA, 94901, U.S.A.; tel. 800/886-7321 or 415/256-8890, fax 415/256-9115, website: www.divediscovery.com) caters to upscale divers who want only the best accommodations. This company also books the live-aboards, and their website explains it all.

In Australia try **Dive Adventures** (Level 9, 32 York St., Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia; tel. 61-2/9299-4633, fax 61-2/9299-4644, website: www.diveadventures.com.au), a scuba wholesaler with packages to Fiji. They also have an office in Melbourne. **Allways Dive Expeditions** (168 High St., Ashburton, Melbourne, Victoria 3147, Australia, tel. 61-3/9885-8863, fax 61-3/9885-1164, website: www.allwaysdive.com.au) organizes dive expeditions to all the Melanesian countries.

Dive, Fish, n' Snow Travel (15e Vega Pl., Mairangi Bay, Auckland 10, New Zealand; tel. 64-9/479-2210, fax 64-9/479-2214, website: www.divefishsnow.co.nz) arranges scuba and game fishing tours to Fiji at competitive rates.

Alternatively, you can make your own arrangements directly with island dive shops. Information about these operators is included under the heading Sports and Recreation in the respective chapters of this book.

Tours for Naturalists

Perhaps the most rewarding way to visit the South Seas is with **Earthwatch** (3 Clock Tower Place, Suite 100, Box 75, Maynard, MA 01754, U.S.A.; tel. 800/776-0188 or 978/461-0081, fax 978/461-2332, website: www.earthwatch.org), a nonprofit organization founded in 1971 to serve as a bridge between the public and the scientific community. The programs vary from year to year, but in past they've sent teams to study the coral reefs and rainforests of Fiji. These are not study tours but opportunities for amateurs to help out with serious work, a kind of short-term

scientific Peace Corps. As a research volunteer, a team member's share of project costs is tax-deductible in the United States and some other countries. For more information contact Earthwatch at the address above, or 126 Bank St., South Melbourne, Victoria 3205, Australia (tel. 61-3/9682-6828, fax 61-3/9686-3652), or Belsyre Court, 57 Woodstock Rd., Oxford OX2 6HJ, United Kingdom (tel. 44-1865/318-838, fax 44-1865/311-383), or c/o Promotech Inc., Ogimura Bldg. 6F, Kudan Minami 2-4-11, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-0074 Japan (tel. 81-3/3511-3360, fax 81-3/3511-4663).

Reef and Rainforest Adventure Travel (4000 Bridgeway, Suite 103, Sausalito, CA 94965-1444, U.S.A.; tel. 800/794-9767 or 415/289-1760, fax 415/289-1763, website: www.reefrainforest.com) books diving, kayaking, trekking, cruises, and other adventure tours to Fiji. Special tours designed for **families with small children** are also available. Check their website for details.

From August to November Joel Simon's **Sea for Yourself** (729 College Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025-5203, U.S.A.; tel. 650/322-1494, website: www.snorkeltours.com) offers personalized snorkeling tours to Fiji and Tonga. A 10-day tour with whale watching in Tonga and reef watching in Fiji costs US\$3,750 without airfare to Fiji (the same to Fiji alone will run US\$3,150). Joel only takes a dozen people at a time, and he's usually sold out months ahead. It's the *crème de la crème*.

Tours for Seniors

Since 1989, the **Pacific Islands Institute** (P.O. Box 1926, Kailua, HI 96734, U.S.A.; tel. 808/262-8942, fax 808/263-0178, website: www.pac-island.com) has operated educational tours to Fiji and the other South Pacific countries in co-operation with Hawaii Pacific University. Their **Elderhostel** people-to-people study programs designed for those aged 55 or over (younger spouses welcome) last two or three weeks. Check their website to learn what's available. These culturally responsible trips are highly recommended.

Kayak Tours

Among the most exciting tours to Fiji are the nine-day kayaking expeditions offered from May to October by **Southern Sea Ventures** (Al Bakker,

P.O. Box 781, Newport, NSW 2106, Australia; tel. 61-2/9999-0541, fax 61-2/9999-1357, website: www.southernseaventures.com). Their groups (limited to 12 people) paddle stable two-person sea kayaks through the sheltered tropical waters of the northern Yasawa chain. Accommodations are tents on the beach, and participants must be in reasonable physical shape, as three or four hours a day are spent on the water. The US\$1,050 price doesn't include airfare. In North America you can book through World Expeditions (580 Market St., Level 6, San Francisco, CA 94104, U.S.A.; tel. 888/464-8735, fax 415/989-2112).

Deluxe kayak tours to Kadavu, Fiji, are offered on the first Tuesday of each month from March to December by Michael and Melissa McCoy of **Kayak Kadavu** (tel. 800/488-3454 or 808/871-5986, website: www.fiji-kayak-kadavu.com). Their seven-night trips are US\$1,650 pp. An escort boat carries all the heavy gear, allowing participants the luxury of paddling a lightweight sit-on-top kayak around some really breathtaking locations. In North America book through Fiji Reservations and Travel (address above). Other kayaking trips to Ono and Kadavu are organized by **Tamarillo** (P.O. Box 9869, Wellington, New Zealand; tel. 64-4/801-7549, fax 64-4/801-7349, website: www.tamarillo.co.nz). There are 10 one-week trips from June to October at NZ\$1,835 from Nadi or NZ\$2,690 from Auckland.

Thailand-based **SeaCanoe International** (John "Caveman" Gray, fax 888-824-5621, website: <http://seakayaking-fiji.com>) organizes kayaking expeditions around Vanua Balavu and Taveuni. Consult their website for details.

Surfing Tours

The largest operator of surfing tours to the South Pacific is **The Surf Travel Company** (P.O. Box 446, Cronulla, NSW 2230, Australia; tel. 61-2/9527-4722, fax 61-2/9527-4522, website: www.surftravel.com.au) with packages to Frigate Pass, Waidroka, Namotu Island, and Seashell Cove. Surf/dive yacht charters are also arranged. In New Zealand book through Mark Thomson (7 Danbury Dr., Torbay, Auckland 1311, New Zealand; tel. 64-9/473-8388, fax 64-9/473-8698, email: surftravel_nz@hotmail.com).

For information on elitist tours to Tavarua Island and the famous Cloudbreak contact **Tavarua Is-**

land Tours (P.O. Box 60159, Santa Barbara, CA 93160, U.S.A.; tel. 805/686-4551, fax 805/683-6696). A one-week package will run US\$2,495, including everything except the taxi from the airport to the wharf (US\$30 round-trip). A non-refundable deposit of US\$250 is required to get on the waiting list. Tavarua is usually sold out six months in advance, but check with **Glob-al Surf Travel** (P.O. Box 2639, Wailuku, HI 96793, U.S.A.; tel. 808/244-1677, fax 808/244-3626, website: www.globalsurftravel.com) for "last minute opportunities."

Waterways Travel (15145 Califa St., Van Nuys, CA 91411, U.S.A.; tel. 800/928-3757 or 818/376-0341, fax 818/376-0353, website: www.waterwaystravel.com) handles bookings for Tavarua's neighbor, Namotu Island Resort. Seven-night package tours from Los Angeles with airfare, meals, and boat transfers included are US\$2,374 pp in the dorm or US\$4,138/5,196 single/double in a *bure*. Only group bookings for 20 or more persons are accepted from March to December (individual bookings accepted in January and February). Waterways will not find roommates for singles who wish to share a double *bure*. However they do keep a waiting list of people who wish to be informed if vacancies occur at any time of year. Additional information on both Tavarua and Namotu is provided in the Mamanucas chapter.

Hiking Tours

Yearround Adventure Fiji, a division of Rosie The Travel Service (P.O. Box 9268, Nadi Airport, Fiji; tel. 722-935, fax 722-607) runs adventuresome three and five-night hiking trips in the upper Wainibuka River area of central Viti Levu south of Rakiraki. Horses carry trekkers' backpacks, so the trips are feasible for almost anyone in good condition. Accommodation is in actual Fijian villages. The F\$693 pp price includes transport to the trailhead, food and accommodations at a few of the 11 Fijian villages along the way, guides, and a bamboo raft ride on the Wainibuka River. Trekkers only hike about five hours a day, allowing lots of time to get to know the village people. These tours begin from Nadi every Monday and Wednesday. In Australia bookings can be made through Rosie The Travel Service (Level 5, Suite 505, East Towers, 9 Bronte Rd., Bondi Junction, Sydney, NSW 2022, Australia;

tel. 61-2/9389-3666, fax 61-2/9369-1129, website: www.citysearch.com.au/syd/rosietours).

Yacht Tours and Charters

If you were planning on spending a substantial amount to stay at a luxury resort, consider chartering a yacht instead! Divided up among the members of your party, the per-person charter price will be about the same, but you'll experience much more of Fiji's beauty on a boat than you would staying in hotel. All charterers visit remote islands accessible only by small boat, and thus receive special insights into island life unspoiled by normal tourist trappings. Of course, activities such as sailing, snorkeling, and general exploring by sea and land are included in the price.

Yacht charters are available either "bareboat" (for those with the skill to sail on their own) or "crewed" (in which case charterers pay a daily fee for a skipper plus his/her provisions). On a "flotilla" charter a group of bareboats follows an experienced lead yacht.

Due to the riskiness of navigating Fiji's poorly marked reefs, yacht charters aren't as common in Fiji as they are in Tonga or Tahiti. All charter boats are required by law to carry a Fijian guide.

Musket Cove Yacht Charters (Private Mail Bag NAP 0352, Nadi Airport, Fiji; tel. 666-710 or 722-488, fax 662-633 or 720-387, website: www.musketcovefiji.com) offers fully crewed or flotilla yacht charters among the Mamanuca and Yasawa islands from their base at the Musket Cove Marina on Malololailai Island in the Mamanuca Group. Surfing and diving charters are available. Check Musket Cove's website for information. For example, the ketch *Hobo* can be chartered for Yasawa cruises at F\$700/950 a day for two/four people, provisions and crew included. **Sailing Yachting** (P.O. Box 28, Lautoka; tel./fax 668-628) controls the 14-meter yacht *Lea* based at the Vuda Point Marina, which also does Yasawa cruises.

Larger groups could consider the 27-meter ketch *Tau* at the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel, Suva, which costs US\$1,800/12,000 a day/week plus 10 percent tax for up to six persons, including all meals, drinks, and an experienced crew (scuba diving is extra). It's available year-round. For full information contact Bilo Ltd., P.O. Box 3084,

Lami, Fiji; tel. 361-057, fax 361-035, or talk to one of the brokers below.

The veteran of custom chartering in the United States is **Ocean Voyages Inc.** (1709 Bridgeway, Sausalito, CA 94965, U.S.A.; tel. 800/299-4444 or 415/332-4681, fax 415/332-7460, website: www.oceanvoyages.com). Unlike their competitors, Ocean Voyages has programs that individuals can join. In these "shareboat" charters, singles and couples book a cabin instead of an entire yacht. Typical prices range from US\$100–275 pp per day, and scuba diving is possible at extra cost on some boats (ask). Trips of a week or more can be arranged in the Yasawas, Mamanucas, Taveuni, and out of Suva. Longer Fiji/Tonga or Fiji/Vanuatu trips of two or three weeks are also possible. For example, the 22-meter sailboat *Golden Opus* accommodates four/six people at US\$16,500/17,500 a week all inclusive except for bar and communications. The

smaller *Tavake* does charters for two/four persons at US\$3,950/5,250 a week. In all, Ocean Voyages has 11 vessels in the area.

One of the classic "tall ships" cruising the South Pacific is the two-masted brigantine *Soren Larsen*, built in 1949. From May to November this 42 square meter rig vessel operates 10–17 day voyages to Tahiti, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia costing US\$1,300–2,500. The 12-member professional crew is actively assisted by 22 voyage participants. For information contact **Square Sail Pacific** (P.O. Box 310, Kumeu, Auckland 1250, New Zealand; tel. 64-9/411-8755, fax 64-9/411-8484, website: www.sorenlarsen.co.nz). Their U.K. agent is **Explore Worldwide** (1 Frederick St., Aldershot, Hants GU11 1LQ, United Kingdom; tel. 44-1252/760-000, fax 44-1252/760-001, website: www.exploreworldwide.com). Ocean Voyages Inc. handles bookings in North America.

MARITIME COORDINATES

ISLAND GROUP/ ISLAND	LAND AREA (SQ KM)	HIGHEST POINT (METERS)	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
VITI LEVU GROUP				
Beqa	36.0	439	18.40°S	178.13°E
Vatulele	31.6	34	18.50°S	177.63°E
Viti Levu	10,429.0	1,323	17.80°S	178.00°E
YASAWA GROUP				
Naviti	34.0	388	17.13°S	177.25°E
Yasawa	32.0	244	16.80°S	177.50°E
KADAVU GROUP				
Dravuni	0.8	40	18.78°S	178.53°E
Kadavu	411.0	838	19.05°S	178.25°E
Ono	30.0	354	18.88°S	178.50°E
LOMAIVITI GROUP				
Gau	140.0	747	18.00°S	179.30°E
Koro	104.0	522	17.30°S	179.40°E
Makogai	8.4	267	17.43°S	178.98°E
Ovalau	101.0	626	17.70°S	178.80°E
Wakaya	8.0	152	17.65°S	179.02°E
VANUA LEVU GROUP				
Namenalala	0.4	105	17.11°S	179.10°E
Qamea	34.0	304	16.77°S	179.77°W
Rabi	69.0	463	16.50°S	180.00°E

In Australia, **Paradise Adventures & Cruises** (Heidi Gavriloff, P.O. Box 121, West Ryde, NSW 2114; tel. 61-2/9743-0253, fax 61-2/9743-3568, website: www.paradiseadventures.com.au) specializes in privately crewed sailing trips in the Mamanuca and Yasawa groups. Paradise Adventures also has all-inclusive packages in conjunction with Blue Lagoon Cruises.

A few other private brokers arranging bareboat or crewed yacht charters in Fiji are **Charter World Pty. Ltd.** (23 Passchendaele St., Hampton, Melbourne 3188, Australia; tel. 61-3/9521-0033, fax 61-3/9521-0081, website: www.charterworld.com.au), **Yachting Partners International** (28-29 Richmond Pl., Brighton, Sussex, BN2 2NA, United Kingdom; tel. 800/626-0019 or 44-1273/571-722, fax 44-1273/571-720, website: www.ypi.co.uk), and **Crestar Yachts Ltd.** (125 Sloane St., London SW1X 9AU, United Kingdom; tel. 44-20/7730-

2299, fax 44-20/7824-8691, email: crestaryachts@mail.com).

BY SAILING YACHT

Getting Aboard

Hitch rides into the Pacific on yachts from California, Panama, New Zealand, and Australia, or around the yachting triangle Papeete-Suva-Honolulu. At home, scrutinize the classified listings of yachts seeking crews, yachts to be delivered, etc., in magazines like *Yachting* (www.yachtingnet.com), *Cruising World* (www.sailingworld.com), *Sail* (www.sailmag.com), and *Latitude 38* (www.latitude38.com). You can even advertise yourself for about US\$35 (plan to have the ad appear three months before the beginning of the season). Check the bulletin boards at yacht clubs, and explore the links at www

ISLAND GROUP/ ISLAND	LAND AREA (SQ KM)	HIGHEST POINT (METERS)	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
VANUA LEVU GROUP <i>(continued)</i>				
Taveuni	470.0	1,241	16.85°S	179.95°E
Vanua Levu	5,556.0	1,032	16.60°S	179.20°E
Yaduataba	0.7	100	16.84°S	178.28°E
LAU GROUP				
Cicia	34.0	165	17.75°S	179.33°W
Fulaga	18.5	79	19.17°S	178.65°W
Kabara	31.0	143	18.95°S	178.97°W
Kanacea	13.0	259	17.25°S	179.17°W
Lakeba	54.0	215	18.20°S	178.80°W
Ogea Levu	13.3	82	19.18°S	178.47°W
Ono-i-Lau	7.9	113	20.80°S	178.75°W
Vanua Balavu	53.0	283	17.25°S	178.92°W
Vuaqava	7.7	107	18.83°S	178.92°W
Wailagi Lala	0.3	5	16.75°S	179.18°W
MOALA GROUP				
Matuku	57.0	385	19.18°S	179.75°E
Moala	62.5	468	18.60°S	179.90°E
Totoya	28.0	366	18.93°S	179.83°W
RINGGOLD ISLES				
Qelelevu	1.5	12	16.09°S	179.26°W
ROTUMA GROUP				
Conway Reef	0.1	2	21.77°S	174.52°E
Rotuma	47.0	256	12.50°S	177.13°E

.cruiser.co.za and www.noonsite.com. The **Seven Seas Cruising Association** (1525 South Andrews Ave., Suite 217, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316, U.S.A.; tel. 954/463-2431, fax 954/463-7183, website: www.ssca.org) is in touch with yachties all around the Pacific, and the classified section "Crew Exchange" in their monthly *Commodores' Bulletin* contains ads from their members in search of or wishing to be crew. Also check **Boatcrew.net** (www.boatcrew.net), which brings captains and crew together for a fee.

But rather than trying to do your whole trip this way, it's much easier to sign up as crew on yachts already in the islands, and Suva, Suvasavu, Lautoka, and Musket Cove are the best places in Fiji to look for a boat. Cruising yachts are recognizable by their foreign flags, wind-vane steering gear, sturdy appearance, and laundry hung out to dry. Put up notices on yacht club and marine bulletin boards, and meet people in bars. When a boat is hauled out, you can find work scraping and repainting the bottom, varnishing, and doing minor repairs.

If you've never crewed before, it's better to try for a short passage the first time. Once at sea, there's no way they'll turn around to take a seasick crew member back to port. Good captains evaluate crew on personality, attitude, and willingness to learn more than on experience; so don't lie. Be honest and open when interviewing with a skipper—a deception will soon become apparent.

It's also good to know what a captain's *really* like before you commit yourself to an isolated week or two with her/him. To determine what might happen should the electronic gadgetry break down, find out if there's a sextant aboard and whether he/she knows how to use it. A run-down-looking boat may often be mechanically unsound too. Also be concerned about a skipper who doesn't do a careful safety briefing early on, or who seems to have a hard time hanging onto crew. If the previous crew has left the boat at an unlikely place, there must have been a reason. Once you're on a boat and part of the yachtie community, things are easy. (P.S. from veteran yachtie Peter Moree: "We do need more ladies out here—adventurous types naturally.")

Time of Year

The weather and seasons play a deciding role in

any South Pacific trip by sailboat and you'll have to pull out of many beautiful places, or be unable to stop there, because of bad weather. The favorite season for rides in the South Pacific is May to October; sometimes you'll even have to turn one down. Around August or September start looking for a ride from the South Pacific to Hawaii or New Zealand.

Be aware of the hurricane season: November to March in the South Pacific, July to December in the northwest Pacific (near Guam), and June to October in the area between Mexico and Hawaii. Few yachts will be cruising those areas at these times. A few yachts spend the winter in American Samoa and Tonga (the main "hurricane holes"), but most South Pacific cruisers will have left for hurricane-free New Zealand by October.

Also, know which way the winds are blowing; the prevailing trade winds in the tropics are from the northeast north of the equator, from the southeast south of the equator. North of the tropic of Cancer and south of the tropic of Capricorn the winds are out of the west. Due to the action of prevailing southeast trade winds boat trips are smoother from east to west than west to east throughout the South Pacific, so that's the way to go.

Yachting Routes

The South Pacific is good for sailing; there's not too much traffic and no piracy like you'd find in the Mediterranean or in Indonesian waters. The common yachting route or "Coconut Milk Run" across the South Pacific utilizes the northeast and southeast trades: from California to Tahiti via the Marquesas or Hawaii, then Rarotonga, Vava'u, Suva, and New Zealand. Some yachts continue west from Fiji to Port Vila. In the other direction, you'll sail on the westerlies from New Zealand to a point south of the Australs, then north on the trades to Tahiti.

Some 300 yachts leave the west coast of the United States for Tahiti every year, almost always crewed by couples or men only. Most stay in the South Seas about a year before returning to North America, while a few continue around the world. About 60–80 cross the Indian Ocean every year (look for rides from Sydney in May, Cairns or Darwin from June to August, Bali from August to October, Singapore from October to

December); around 700 yachts sail from Europe to the Caribbean (from Gibraltar and Gran Canaria from October to December).

Cruising yachts average about 150 km a day, so it takes about a month to get from the west coast of the United States to Hawaii, then another month from Hawaii to Tahiti. To enjoy the finest weather conditions many yachts clear the Panama Canal or depart California in February to arrive in the Marquesas in March. From Hawaii, yachts often leave for Tahiti in April or May. Many stay on for the *Heiva i Tahiti* festival, which ends on July 14, at which time they sail west to Vava'u or Suva, where you'll find them in July and August. From New Zealand, the Auckland to Fiji yacht race in June brings many boats north. In mid-September the yachting season culminates with a race by about 40 boats from Musket Cove on Fiji's Malololailai Island to Port Vila (it's very easy to hitch a ride at this time).

By late October the bulk of the yachting community is sailing south via New Caledonia to New Zealand or Australia to spend the southern summer there. In April or May on alternate years (2003, 2005, etc.) there's a yacht race from Auckland and Sydney to Suva, timed to coincide with the cruisers' return after the hurricane season.

Blue Water Rallies (Peter Seymour, Windsor Cottage, Chedworth, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL54 4AA, United Kingdom; tel./fax 44-1285/720-904, website: www.yachtrallies.co.uk) organizes annual round-the-world yachting rallies, departing Europe each October. Inquiries from both owners and potential crew members are welcome for these 20-month circumnavigations that visit Galapagos, the Marquesas, Tahiti, Tonga, and Fiji. Blue Water's professional support services will help make that "voyage of a lifetime" a reality!

Be aware of a law that requires foreign yachts departing New Zealand to obtain a "Certificate of Inspection" from the New Zealand Yachting Federation prior to customs clearance. This regulation has led to a 30 percent decline in the number of yachts visiting New Zealand. It's wise to consider alternative summer anchorages before sailing into a situation where some clerk could force you to spend thousands of dollars upgrading safety standards on your boat before you'll be permitted to leave.

Life Aboard

To crew on a yacht you must be willing to wash and iron clothes, cook, steer, keep watch at night, and help with engine work. Other jobs might include changing and resetting sails, cleaning the boat, scraping the bottom, pulling up the anchor, and climbing the main mast to watch for reefs. Do more than is expected of you. A safety harness must be worn in rough weather. As a guest in someone else's home you'll want to wash your dishes promptly after use and put them, and all other gear, back where you found them. Tampons must not be thrown in the toilet bowl. Smoking is usually prohibited as a safety hazard.

You'll be a lot more useful if you know how to tie knots like the clove hitch, rolling hitch, sheet bend, double sheet bend, reef knot, square knot, figure eight, and bowline. Check your local library for books on sailing or write away for the comprehensive free catalog of boating books available from International Marine Publishing (P.O. Box 182607, Columbus, OH 43218-2607, U.S.A.; tel. 800/262-4729, website: www.pbg.mcgraw-hill.com/im). Yachting books also can be ordered online through www.southpacific.org/books.html.

Anybody who wants to get on well in this situation must be flexible and tolerant, both physically and emotionally. Expense-sharing crew members pay US\$50 a week or more per person. After 30 days you'll be happy to hit land for a freshwater shower. Give adequate notice when you're ready to leave the boat, but *do* disembark when your journey's up. Boat people have few enough opportunities for privacy as it is. If you've had a good trip, ask the captain to write you a letter of recommendation; it'll help you hitch another ride.

Food for Thought

When you consider the big investment, depreciation, cost of maintenance, operating expenses, and considerable risk (most cruising yachts are not insured), travel by sailing yacht is quite a luxury. The huge cost can be surmised from charter fees (US\$600 a day and up for a 10-meter yacht). International law makes a clear distinction between passengers and crew. Crew members paying only for their own food, cooking gas, and part of the diesel are very different from charterers who do nothing and pay full costs. The crew is there to help operate the boat,

adding safety, but like passengers, they're very much under the control of the captain. Crew has no say in where the yacht will go.

The skipper is personally responsible for crew coming into foreign ports: he's entitled to hold their passports and to see that they have onward tickets and sufficient funds for further traveling. Otherwise the skipper might have to pay their hotel bills and even return airfares to the crew's country of origin. Crew may be asked to

pay a share of third-party liability insurance. Possession of dope can result in seizure of the yacht. Because of such considerations, skippers often hesitate to accept crew. Crew members should remember that at no cost to themselves they can learn a bit of sailing and visit places nearly inaccessible by other means. Although not for everyone, it's *the* way to see the real South Pacific, and folks who arrive by yacht are treated differently from other tourists.



Fijian bure

GETTING AROUND

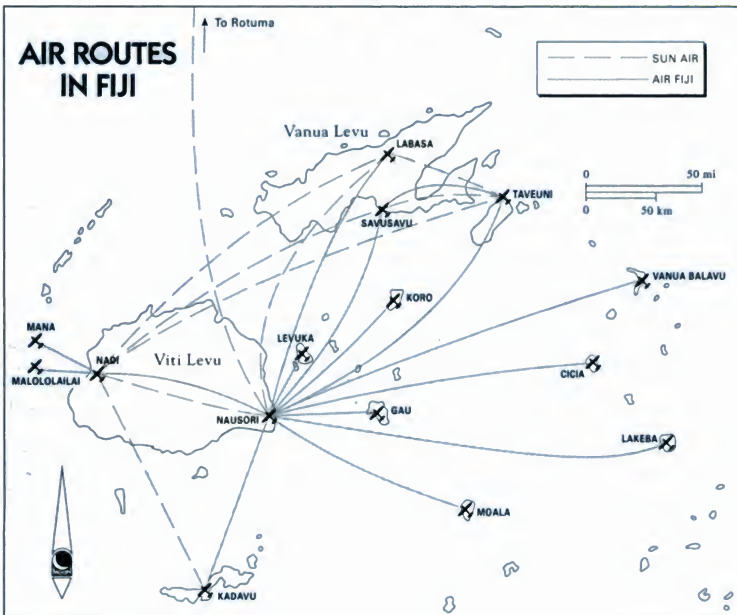
BY AIR

While most international flights are focused on Nadi, Fiji's domestic air service radiates from Suva and two local airlines compete fiercely.

Air Fiji (P.O. Box 1259, Suva, Fiji; tel. 313-666, fax 300-771, website: www.airfiji.net) flies their fast Brazilian-made Embraer Brasilias (30 seats), sturdy Canadian-made Twin Otters, pocket-size Britten Norman Islanders, and exotic Chinese-made Y12 Harbins from Suva's Nausori Airport six times a day to Labasa (F\$115) and Nadi (F\$90), twice a day to Levuka (F\$41), Savusavu (F\$90), and Taveuni (F\$114),

daily to Kadavu (F\$70), three times a week to Gau (F\$56), Vanua Balavu (F\$113), and Lakeba (F\$114), twice a week to Moala (F\$103), and weekly to Koro (F\$80) and Cicia (F\$105). Savusavu to Taveuni (F\$59) is twice daily (all fares one-way). The 30-day "Discover Fiji Air Pass" (US\$270) is valid on any four flights between Kadavu, Nadi, Savusavu, Suva, and Taveuni, but it must be purchased prior to arrival in Fiji. (In July, 1999, an Air Fiji flight from Suva to Nadi crashed into mountainside killing

all 17 persons aboard. Investigators blamed the accident on the pilot, who had received insufficient sleep the night before and had taken a sedative prior to the flight.)



Sun Air (P.O. Box 9452, Nadi Airport, Fiji; tel. 723-016, fax 720-085, website: www.fiji.to), formerly Sunflower Airlines, bases much of its domestic network at Nadi, with three flights a day to Labasa (F\$142), two a day to Suva (F\$90) and Taveuni (F\$159), two a day to Savusavu (F\$129), and daily to Kadavu (F\$90). From Suva, Sunflower has flights to Labasa (twice daily, F\$115), Nadi (two daily, F\$90), and Rotuma (twice weekly, F\$288). From Taveuni, they go to Savusavu (twice daily, F\$59) and Labasa (twice daily, F\$59). Flying in their 10-seat Britten Norman Islanders, versatile, 20-seat Twin Otters, or 20-seat Herons is sort of fun.

From Nadi, the busy little resort island of Malololailai gets 10 flights a day by Sun Air and six by Air Fiji (F\$37). Mana Island is visited eight times a day by Sunflower and four times by Air Fiji (F\$47).

Turtle Airways Ltd. (Private Mail Bag, NAP 0355, Nadi Airport, Fiji; tel. 721-888, fax 720-095, website: www.turtleairways.com), owned by Richard Evanson of Turtle Island Resort, flies their five Cessna 206 floatplanes and one DeHaviland Beaver three times a day from Nadi to Castaway and Mana Islands (F\$109 one-way, F\$218 round-trip). The Beaver is a classic aircraft, performing remarkable white-water takeoffs and landings.

Because only Nadi and Nausori airports have electric lighting on their runways, all flights are during daylight hours. Gravel runways and vintage planes are part of the fun of flying here. Those unaccustomed to island flying should prepare themselves for abrupt landings on short airstrips cut out of the bush or aircraft carrier-style takeoffs over the sea. The views from these low flying planes can be exceptional. Don't be surprised if one of the pilots opens his window during the flight to get a bit of air. What to you may seem scary is only routine for them. Always reconfirm your return flight immediately upon arrival at an outer island, as the reservation lists are sometimes not sent out from Suva. Failure to do this could mean you'll be bumped without compensation.

Student discounts are for local students only and there are no standby fares. Children aged 12 and under pay 50 percent, infants two and under carried in arms pay 10 percent. Be aware that flights on the domestic carriers booked from abroad or over the Internet are 25 percent more

expensive than the same tickets purchased in Fiji (and foreign tourists are also usually charged the higher "tourist price" when they book in Nadi). For example, instead of paying F\$37 to fly to Malololailai, you'll probably be asked F\$51 if you're at Nadi Airport. In this book we quote the local fare, but you won't always be able to get it. Sun Air, Air Fiji, and Turtle Airways allow 20 kg of baggage.

BY BOAT

Since most shipping operates out of Suva, passenger services by sea both within Fiji and to neighboring countries are listed in the Suva section. Ferries to the Mamanuca Group are covered under Nadi, those to the Yasawas under Lautoka and The Yasawa Islands, those between Vanua Levu and Taveuni under Buca Bay and Taveuni.

The largest company is **Patterson Brothers Shipping** (GPO P.O. Box 1041, Suva), set up by Levuka copra planter Reg Patterson and his brother just after World War I. Patterson's two Japanese-built car ferries, the *Ovalau* and *Princess Ashika*, are usually used on the Bure-sala-Natovi-Nabouwalu-Ellington Wharf run. Their third ferry, the *Island Navigator*, is the former *Queen Salamasina* purchased from Samoa for US\$74,410 in late 1999. Built in Perth, Australia, in 1977, the *Island Navigator* underwent major repairs at Nelson, New Zealand, after being damaged during Hurricane Ofa in 1990. It does trips to Lau and Rotuma. The barge *Yaubula* shuttles between Natuvu and Taveuni. Delays due to mechanical failures on Patterson's aging fleet are routine.

Consort Shipping Line runs the large car ferry *Spirit of Free Enterprise* from Suva to Koro, Savusavu, and Taveuni twice a week. The ferry *Adi Savusavu* of **Beachcomber Cruises** (www.beachcomberfiji.com) also visits Savusavu and Taveuni from Suva two or three times a week. This same company runs the high-speed catamaran *Laglagi* between Nadi and Savusavu twice a week. This 20-meter, 150-seat vessel, built in New Zealand in 2000, cruises at 36 knots.

Other regular boat trips originating in Suva include the Patterson Brothers "Sea Road" shuttle to Levuka and the weekly ferries to Kadavu.

By Ocean Kayak

Ocean kayaking is experiencing a boom in Fiji with kayaking tours now offered in the Yasawas, Kadavu, Taveuni, and Vanua Levu. Most islands have a sheltered lagoon ready-made for the excitement of kayak touring, and this effortless transportation mode can make you a real independent 20th-century explorer! Many international airlines accept folding kayaks as checked baggage at no charge.

For a better introduction to ocean kayaking than is possible here, check at your local public library for sea kayaking manuals. Noted author Paul Theroux toured the entire South Pacific by kayak, and his experiences are recounted in *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific*.

BY BUS

Scheduled bus service is available all over Fiji, and fares are low. If you're from the States you'll be amazed how accessible, inexpensive, and convenient the bus service is. Most long-distance bus services operate several times a day and bus stations are usually adjacent to local markets. Buses with a signboard in the window reading Via Highway are local "stage" buses that will stop anywhere along their routes and can be excruciatingly slow on a long trip. Express buses are much faster but they'll only stop in a few towns and won't let you off at resorts along the way. Unfortunately the times of local buses are not posted at the bus stations, and it's often hard to find anyone to ask about buses to remote locations. The people most likely to know are bus drivers, but you'll often receive misleading or incorrect information about local buses. Express bus times are posted at the stations and it's sometimes possible to pick up printed express bus timetables at tourist offices.

On Viti Levu, the most important routes are between Lautoka and Suva, the biggest cities. If you follow the southern route via Sigatoka you'll be on Queens Road, the smoother and faster of the two. Kings Road via Tavua is longer and can be rough and dusty, but you get to see a bit of the interior. Fares from Suva are F\$2.70 to Pacific Harbor, F\$6.35 to Sigatoka, F\$9.20 to Nadi, F\$9.60 to Nadi Airport, F\$10.55 to Lautoka,

and F\$12.15 to Ba. Fares average just over F\$2 for each hour of travel.

Pacific Transport Ltd. (GPO P.O. Box 1266, Suva, Fiji; tel. 304-366) has 11 buses a day along Queens Road, with expresses leaving Suva for Lautoka at 0645, 0830, 0930, 1210, 1500, and 1730 (221 km, five hours). Eastbound, the expresses leave Lautoka for Suva at 0630, 0700, 1210, 1550, and 1730. An additional Suva-bound express leaves Nadi at 0900. These buses stop at Navua, Pacific Harbor, Sigatoka (coffee break), Nadi, and Nadi Airport *only*. The 1500 bus from Suva continues on to Ba. If you want off at a Coral Coast resort or some other smaller place, you must take one of the five local "stage" buses, which take six hours to reach Lautoka via Queens Road. Sunbeam Transport operates five daily express buses between Sigatoka and Suva stopping at many resorts along the way.

The daily **Sunset Express** (tel. 382-515) leaves Suva for Sigatoka, Nadi, and Lautoka at 0845 and 1600 (four hours, F\$11). From the Lautoka end, it leaves at 0930 and 1515. In Suva, Sunset Express bookings can be made at Stall No. 51 in the Suva Flea Market opposite the bus station. At Nadi Airport, they're in office No. 21 upstairs from arrivals.

Sunbeam Transport Ltd. (tel. 382-704) services the northern Kings Road from Suva to Lautoka five times a day, with expresses leaving Suva at 0645, 0815, 1200, 1330, and 1715 (265 km, six hours). Another local Sunbeam bus leaves Suva for Vatukoula via Tavua daily at 0730 (seven hours). From Lautoka, they depart at 0615, 0630, 0815, 1215, and 1630. A Sunbeam express bus along Kings Road is a comfortable way to see Viti Levu's picturesque back side. These expresses only stop at Nausori, Korovou, Vaileka (Rakiraki), Tavua, and Ba. If you want off anywhere else you must take one of the two local buses, which take nine fun-filled hours to reach Lautoka via Kings Road.

Reliance Transport (tel. 382-296) also services Kings Road. **K.R. Latchan's Ltd.** (tel. 477-268) runs express buses right around Viti Levu.

There are many other local buses, especially closer to Suva or Lautoka. The air-conditioned tourist expresses such as UTC's "Fiji Express" cost twice as much as the services just described and are not as much fun as the ordinary expresses, whose big open windows with roll-down

canvas covers give you a panoramic view of Viti Levu. Bus service on Vanua Levu and Taveuni is also good. Local buses often show up late, but the long-distance buses are usually right on time. Passenger trucks serving as "carriers" charge set rates to and from interior villages.

Running Taxis

Shared "running" taxis and minibuses also shuttle back and forth between Suva, Nadi, and Lautoka, leaving when full and charging only a little more than the bus. Look for them in the markets around the bus stations. They'll often drop you exactly where you want to go; drawbacks include the less safe driving and lack of insurance coverage. In a speeding minibus you miss out on much of the scenery, and tourists have been killed in collisions. It's possible to hire a complete taxi from Nadi Airport to Suva for about F\$80 for the car, with brief stops along the way for photos, resort visits, etc.

Often the drivers of private or company cars and vans try to earn a little money on the side by stopping to offer lifts to persons waiting for buses beside the highway. They ask the same as you'd pay on the bus but are much faster and will probably drop you off exactly where you want to go. Many locals don't really understand hitchhiking, and it's probably only worth doing on remote roads where bus service is inadequate. In such places almost everyone will stop. Be aware that truck drivers who give you a lift may also expect the equivalent of bus fare; locals pay this without question. It's always appropriate to offer the bus fare and let the driver decide.

TAXIS

Fijian taxis are plentiful and among the cheapest in the South Pacific, affordable even for backpackers. Only in Suva do the taxis have meters, but everywhere it's easier to ask the driver for a flat rate before you get in. If the first price you're quoted is too high you can often bargain (although bargaining is much more accepted by an Indo-Fijian than by indigenous Fijian drivers). A short ride across town can cost F\$1–2, a longer trip into a nearby suburb about F\$3. Taxis parked in front of luxury hotels will expect much more than this, and it may be worth walking a short distance and flagging one down on the street.

Taxis returning to their stand after a trip will pick up passengers at bus stops and charge the regular bus fare (ask if it's the "returning fare"). All taxis have their home base painted on their bumpers, so it's easy to tell if it's a returning car.

Don't tip your driver; tips are neither expected nor necessary. And don't invite your driver for a drink or become overly familiar with him as he may abuse your trust. If you're a woman taking a cab alone in the Nadi area, don't let your driver think there is any "hope" for him, or you could have problems (videos often portray Western women as promiscuous, which leads to mistaken expectations).

CAR RENTALS

Rental cars are expensive in Fiji, due in part to high import duties on cars and a 10 percent government tax, so with public transportation as good as it is here, you should think twice before renting a car. By law, third-party public liability insurance is compulsory for rental vehicles and is included in the basic rate, but collision damage waiver (CDW) insurance is F\$12–20 per day extra. Even with CDW, you're often still responsible for a "nonwaivable excess," which can be as high as the first F\$2,000 in damage to the car! Many cars on the road have no insurance, so you could end up paying even if you're not responsible for the accident.

Your home driver's license is recognized for your first six months in Fiji, and driving is on the left (as in Britain and Australia). Get an automatic if you don't care to have to shift gears with your left hand. Seat belts must be worn in the front seat and the police are empowered to give roadside breath-analyzer tests. The police around Viti Levu occasionally employ hand-held radar. Speed limits are 50 kph in towns, 80 kph on the highway. Pedestrians have the right-of-way at crosswalks.

Unpaved roads can be very slippery, especially on inclines. Fast-moving vehicles on the gravel roads throw up small stones, which can smash your front window (and you'll have to pay the damages). As you pass oncoming cars, hold your hand against the windshield just in case. When approaching a Fijian village slow right down, as there may be poorly marked speed humps in the road. Also beware of narrow

bridges, and take care with local motorists, who sometimes stop in the middle of the road, pass on blind curves, and drive at high speeds. Driving can be an especially risky business at night. Many of the roads are atrocious (check the spare tire), although the 486-km road around Viti Levu is now fully paved except for a 62-km stretch on the northeast side, which is easily passable if you go slowly. Luckily, there isn't a lot of traffic.

If you plan to use a rental car to explore the rough country roads in Viti Levu's mountainous interior, think twice before announcing your plans to the agency, as they may suddenly decline your business. The rental contracts all contain clauses stating that the insurance coverage is not valid under such conditions. Budget has 4WD vehicles that may be driven into the interior. You're usually not allowed to take the car to another island by ferry. Tank up on Saturday, as many gas stations are closed on Sunday, and always keep the tank over half full. If you run out of gas in a rural area, small village stores sometimes sell fuel from drums. Expect to pay around F\$1.33 a liter (or US\$2.30 a US gallon).

Several international car rental chains are represented in Fiji, including Avis, Budget, Hertz, and Thrifty. Local companies like Central Rent-a-Car, Dove Rent-a-Car, Kenns Rent-a-Car, Khan's Rental Cars, Quality Rent-a-Car, Roxy Rentals, Satellite Rentals, Sharmas Rental Cars, and Tanoa Rent-a-Car are often cheaper, but check around as prices vary. The international companies rent only new cars, while the less expensive local companies may offer secondhand vehicles. If in doubt, check the vehicle carefully before driving off. The international franchises generally provide better support should anything go wrong. Budget, Central, Kenns, and Khan's won't rent to persons under age 25, while most of the others will so long as you're over 21.

A dozen companies have offices in the arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport and three are also at Nausori Airport. Agencies with town offices in Suva include Avis, Budget, Central, Dove, and Thrifty. In Lautoka you'll find Central. Avis and Thrifty also have desks in many resort hotels on Viti Levu. In northern Fiji, Budget has offices at Labasa and on Taveuni, but the other islands do not have rental cars.

Both unlimited-kilometer and per-kilometer rates are available. **Thrifty** (tel. 722-935), run

by Rosie The Travel Service, offers unlimited-kilometer prices from F\$95/570 daily/weekly, which include CDW (F\$700 nonwaivable) and tax, but one-day rentals have only 150 free kilometers. **Budget** (tel. 722-735) charges F\$99/594 for their cheapest mini, but F\$22 a day insurance (F\$500 nonwaivable) is extra. **Avis** (tel. 722-233) begins at F\$125/735 including insurance (F\$2,000 nonwaivable). Prices with Avis and Budget may be lower if you book ahead from the U.S. Though more expensive, the international chains are more likely to deliver what they promise because you've got a name to complain to if they don't.

The insurance plans used by all of the local companies have nonwaivable excess fees of F\$1,500–2,000, which makes renting from them more risky. Also beware of companies like Satellite and Tanoa which add the 10 percent tax later (most of the others include it in the quoted price). Of the local companies, **Sharmas Rental Cars** (tel. 701-160), at Nadi Airport and next to the ANZ Bank in Nadi town, offers unlimited-kilometer rates starting at F\$55 (three-day minimum), plus F\$15.50 a day insurance. On a per-kilometer basis, **Khan's Rental Cars** (tel. 723-506) in Nadi charges F\$18 a day plus F\$0.19 per kilometer and F\$16 CDW (F\$1,300 nonwaivable).

Many of the local car rental agencies at Nadi Airport offer substantial discounts on their brochure prices for weekly rentals, and you may be able to get a car for around F\$400 a week with kilometers, tax, and insurance included. Don't hesitate to bargain as there's lots of competition. Ask how many kilometers are on the speedometer and beware of vehicles above 50,000 as they may be unreliable. On a per-kilometer basis, you'll only want to use the car in the local area. Some companies advertise low prices with the qualification in fine print that these apply only to rentals of three days or more. Most companies charge a F\$15–40 delivery fee if you don't return the vehicle to the office where you rented it. If you want the cheapest economy subcompact, reserve ahead. Also be prepared to put up a cash deposit on the car.

If you do rent a car, remember those sudden tropical downpours and don't leave the windows open. Also avoid parking under coconut trees (a falling nut might break the window), and never go off and leave the keys in the ignition.

AIRPORTS

Nadi International Airport

Nadi Airport (NAN) is between Lautoka and Nadi, 22 km south of the former and eight km north of the latter. There are frequent buses to these towns until around 2200. To catch a bus to Nadi (F\$0.60), cross the highway; buses to Lautoka (F\$1.22) stop on the airport side of the road. A few express buses drop passengers right outside the international departures hall. A taxi from the airport should be F\$6 to downtown Nadi or F\$20 to Lautoka.

As you come out of customs uniformed tour guides will ask you where you intend to stay, in order to direct you to a driver from that hotel. Most Nadi hotels offer free transfers (ask) but you ought to change money at the airport bank before going. Agents of other hotels will try to sign you up for the commission they'll earn. Be polite but highly defensive in dealing with them. The people selling stays at the outer island backpacker resorts can be aggressive. Many of the Yasawas and Mamanuca resorts have offices in the airport concourse in front of you—the up-market places downstairs, the backpacker camps upstairs.

The actual office of the Fiji Visitors Bureau (tel. 722-433) is beside the bank to the left as you come out of customs. They open for all international arrivals and can advise you on accommodations. Pick up their brochures, hotel lists, and free tourist magazines.

There's a 24-hour ANZ Bank (F\$2 commission) beside the Visitors Bureau and another bank in the departure lounge. Their rates are about one percent worse than the banks in town. Quickly get in line to your left as soon as you come out of Customs as the bank line moves very slowly. Otherwise use the ATM on the wall to your left (Visa and MasterCard accepted).

Many travel agencies and car rental companies are also located in the arrivals arcade. The rent-a-car companies you'll find here are Avis, Budget, Central, Hertz, Kenns, Khan's, Roxy, Satellite, Sharmas, Tanoa, and Thrifty. All of the international airlines flying into Nadi have offices in this same arcade (Air Fiji represents Air Vanuatu).

The post office is across the parking lot from the arrivals hall (ask). The airport restaurant just before the security check at departures serves light meals. The left luggage service, near the less expensive snack bar in the domestic departures area, is open 24 hours (bicycles or surfboards F\$6 a day, suitcases and backpacks F\$4 a day, other smaller luggage F\$3 a day). Most hotels around Nadi will also store luggage. There's zero tolerance for drugs in Fiji and a three-dog sniffer unit checks all baggage passing through NAN.

Duty-free shops are found in both the departure lounge and in the arrivals area just before the baggage claim area. If you're arriving for a prebooked stay at a deluxe resort, grab a couple of bottles of cheap Fiji rum as drinks at the resort bars are expensive (you can usually get mix at the hotel shops). You can use leftover Fijian currency to stock up on cheap film and souvenirs just before you leave (film prices here are the lowest in the South Pacific). Prices vary slightly at the different duty-free shops and it's worth comparing before buying.

A departure tax of F\$20 in cash Fijian currency is payable on all international flights, but transit passengers connecting within 12 hours and children under the age of 12 are exempt (no airport tax on domestic flights). Have a look at the museum exhibits near the departures gates upstairs as you're waiting for your flight. The airport never closes. NAN's 24-hour flight arrival and departure information number is tel. 722-777.

Nausori Airport

Nausori Airport (SUV) is on the plain of the Rewa River delta, 23 km northeast of downtown Suva. Air Fiji runs an aviation academy at the airport. After Hurricane Kina in January 1993 the whole terminal was flooded by Rewa water for several days.

There's no special airport bus, and a taxi direct to/from Suva will run about F\$20. You can save money by taking a taxi from the airport only as far as Nausori (four km, F\$4), then a local bus to Suva from there (19 km, with ser-

vices every 10 minutes until 2100 for F\$1.35). When going to the airport, catch a local bus from Suva to Nausori, then a taxi to the airport (only F\$3 in this direction). It's also possible to catch a local bus to Nausori from the highway opposite the airport about every 15 minutes (50 cents).

Avis, Budget, and Hertz all have car rental offices in the terminal, and a lunch counter provides light snacks. You're not allowed to sleep overnight at this airport. The departure tax is F\$20 on all international flights, but no tax is levied on domestic flights. The airport information number is tel. 478-077.



NADI AND THE MAMANUCAS

NADI

At 10,429 square km, Viti Levu is the eighth largest island in the South Pacific, only a shade smaller than the Big Island of Hawaii. This 1,323-meter-high island accounts for over half of Fiji's land area, and Nadi itself is a main gateway to the entire South Pacific region.

Nadi International Airport faces Nadi Bay in the center of an ancient volcano the west side of which has fallen away. A small airstrip existed at Nadi even before World War II, and after Pearl Harbor the Royal New Zealand Air Force began converting it into a fighter strip. The U.S. military soon arrived to construct a major air base with paved runways for transport aircraft supplying Australia and New Zealand. In the early 1960s, Nadi Airport was expanded to accommodate jet aircraft, and today the largest jumbo jets can land here. This activity has made Nadi what it is.

The area's predominantly Indo-Fijian population works the cane fields surrounding Nadi. There aren't many sandy, palm-fringed beaches on this western side of Viti Levu—for that you

have to go to the nearby Mamanuca Group where a string of sun-drenched resorts soak up vacationers in search of a place to relax. The long gray mainland beaches near Nadi face shallow murky waters devoid of snorkeling possibilities, but okay for windsurfing and water-skiing. Fiji's tropical rainforests are on the other side of Viti Levu, not on this dry side of the island.

In recent years Nadi ("NAN-di") has grown into Fiji's third largest town with a population of 32,000. The town center's main feature is a long stretch of restaurants and shops with high-pressure sales staffs peddling luxury goods and mass-produced souvenirs. It's easily the most tourist-oriented place in Fiji, yet there's also a surprisingly colorful market (especially on Saturday morning) and the road out to the airport is flanked by an excellent choice of places to stay. Nadi is Fiji's "border town," and to experience "real Fijian life" you have to get beyond it. Nearby Lautoka (see the separate Lautoka and vicinity chapter later in this handbook) is far less foreigner oriented.

NADI AND THE MAMANUCAS



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Sights

Nadi's only substantial sight is the **Sri Siva Subrahmaniya Swami Temple** at the south entrance to town, erected by local Hindus in 1994 after the lease on their former temple property expired. This colorful South Indian-style temple, built by craftspeople flown in from India itself, is the largest and finest of its kind in the South Pacific. Visitors may enter this consecrated place of worship, but shoes must be removed at the entrance and you must cover bare shoulders or legs with a *sulu*. Smoking and photography are prohibited inside the compound (open daily 0500–1330, 1530–2000, admission free).

Sports and Recreation

Aqua-Trek (P.O. Box 10215, Nadi Airport; tel. 702-413, fax 702-412), on Main St. opposite Prouds in downtown Nadi, is a commercial diving contractor and diving equipment retailer, and they don't offer diving from Nadi itself. You can get information here on Aqua-Trek's resort dive centers at Mana Island, Matamanoa Island, Pacific Harbor, and Taveuni.

Dive Tropex (Eddie Jennings, P.O. Box 10522, Nadi Airport; tel. 703-944, fax 703-955), at the Sheraton Royal, offers scuba diving at F\$99/150/500 one/two/eight tanks including all

gear. When space is available, snorkelers can go along for F\$50. A four-day PADI certification course is F\$614. For an introductory dive it's F\$140. Several Japanese instructors are on the staff.

Much less expensive diving is offered by **Inner Space Adventures** (Frank Wright, P.O. Box 9535, Nadi Airport; tel./fax 723-883), opposite Horizon Beach Hotel at Wailoaloa Beach. They go out daily at 0900, charging F\$65/90 for one/two tanks, equipment and a pickup anywhere around Nadi included. Snorkelers are welcome to tag along at F\$25 pp, gear included. Frank's four-day open-water certification course costs F\$350—one of the least expensive PADI courses in Fiji. Not only that, after finishing the course, you'll pay only F\$30 a dive for subsequent dives!

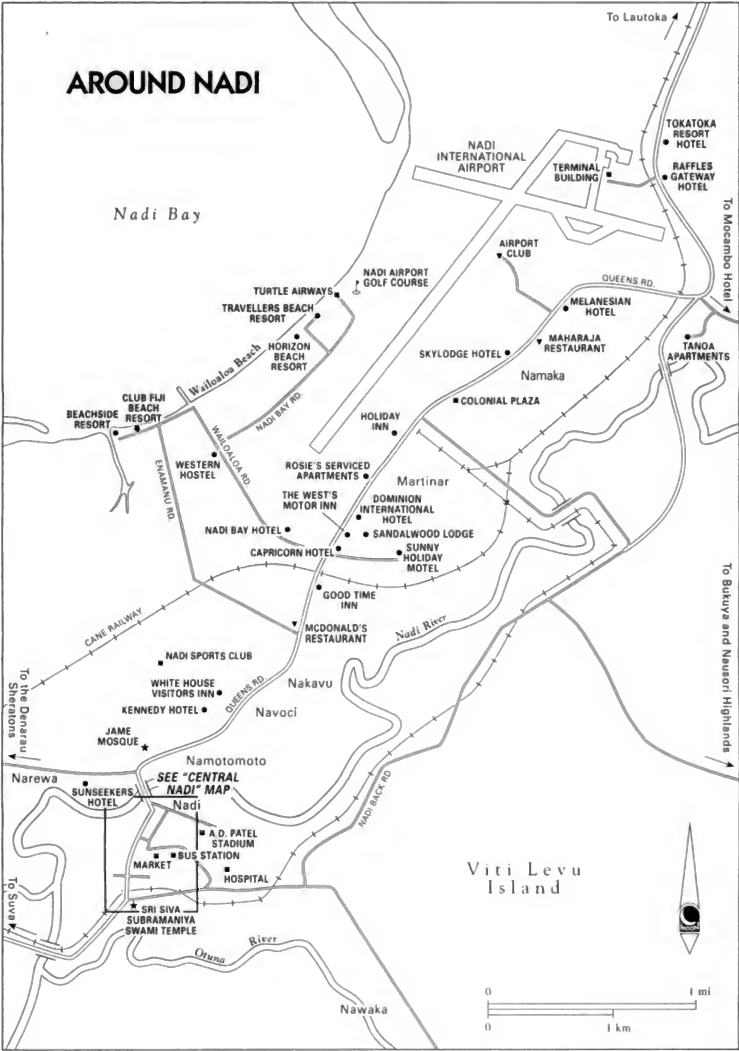
Atlantis Divers (P.O. Box 10655, Nadi Airport; tel. 702-704 or 702-911, fax 702-921) at Club Fiji provides complimentary pickups from Nadi hotels twice daily.

Babba's Horse-Riding (P.O. Box 2219, Nadi Airport; tel. 724-449 or 703-652) at Wailoaloa



Sri Siva Subrahmaniya Temple, Nadi

M.E. DE VOS



Beach offers one-hour beach rides at F\$15, 1.5 hours cross-country at F\$20, or a two-hour combination at F\$25. Longer rides can be arranged. Call them up for information.

The 18-hole, par-70 **Nadi Airport Golf Club** (P.O. Box 9015, Nadi; tel. 722-148) is pleasantly situated between the airport runways and the sea at Wailoaloa Beach. Green fees are F\$15, plus F\$20 for clubs. There's a bar and pool table in the clubhouse (tourists welcome). The course is busy with local players on Saturday but quiet during the week. Other golf courses are available at the Fiji Mocombo Hotel and at the Sheratons.

The 18-hole, par-72 course at the **Denarau Golf & Racquet Club** (P.O. Box 9081, Nadi Airport; tel. 759-710 or 759-711, fax 750-484) opposite the Sheratons was designed by Eiichi Motohashi. This fabulous course features bunkers shaped like a marlin, crab, starfish, and octopus, and water shots across all four par-three holes (the average golfer loses four balls per round). Green fees are F\$90 for those staying at one of the Sheratons, or F\$95 for other mortals. Golfers are not allowed to walk around the course, but a shared electric cart is included. Clubs can be rented at F\$30 a set. Call ahead for a starting time, and be aware of the dress code: collared shirt and dress shorts for men, smart casual for women, and golf shoes for all (no jeans, bathing suits, or metal spiked shoes). Ten tennis courts (four floodlit) are available here at F\$15/20 day/night per hour. Rackets and shoes can be rented at F\$8 each, and a can of balls is F\$5.

During the June–March sports season, see rugby or soccer on Saturdays at the A.D. Patel Stadium, near Nadi Bus Station. You might also see soccer on Sundays.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Under US\$25 in Town

Most of the hotels offer free transport from the airport, which is lucky because the selection within walking distance of the terminal itself is limited. To the right as you leave Customs, you'll see a group of people representing the hotels. If you know which hotel you want, tell them the name and if a driver from that hotel is present, you should get a free ride (ask). If not, the Fiji Visitors Bureau (tel. 722-433) to the left will help

you telephone them for a small fee. (The road from the north side of Nadi town across the bridge to the Sunseekers, White House, and Kennedy hotels, and the isolated roads to Wailoaloa Beach, may be unsafe, and after dark a bus or taxi is recommended in these areas, especially if you're carrying a backpack.)

There are three budget choices in the downtown area, two with confusingly similar names but under separate managements. The seedy **Nadi Downtown Motel** (P.O. Box 1326, Nadi; tel. 700-600, fax 701-541), also known as the "Backpackers Inn," occupies the top floor of an office building opposite the BP service station in the center of Nadi. It's a bit of a dive, and the only attraction is the price: F\$25 single or double with fan, F\$35 with a/c, both with private bath. The five-bed dormitory is F\$8 pp, and basic rooms with shared bath are F\$20. Definitely ask to see the room before accepting, expect dirty sheets, and, if you're a woman, don't tolerate any nonsense from the male motel staff. The adjacent Caribbean Jungle Night Club sends a steady disco beat toward the motel well into the morning. PVV Tours below the motel arranges transport to Nananu-i-Ra Island at F\$35 pp.

Around the corner on Koroivolu Street is the two-story, 31-room **Nadi Hotel** (P.O. Box 91, Nadi; tel. 700-000, fax 700-280). Spacious rooms with private bath begin at F\$39/48 single/double standard with fan, F\$48/58 superior with a/c, or F\$15 pp in a 10-bed dorm. Deluxe rooms with fridge are F\$57/68 single/double. Baggage storage is F\$2.50. The neat courtyard with a swimming pool out back makes this a pleasant, convenient place to stay. Some rooms are also subjected to nightclub noise however, so ask for a superior room in the block farthest away from Caribbean Jungle.

The two-story **Coconut Inn Hotel** (P.O. Box 2756, Nadi; tel. 701-169, fax 700-616), 37 Vunavau St., is around the corner from the Westpac Bank. The 22 upstairs rooms with private bath begin at F\$33/40 single/double (plus F\$12 for a/c), and downstairs is a F\$11 dorm (three beds). Beware of rooms without windows. It's a decent place.

The two-story **Hotel San Bruno** (P.O. Box 994, Nadi; tel. 700-444, fax 703-067), on Nadi Back Road east of the Sri Siva Subrahmaniya Swami Temple, is Nadi's newest hotel. The 13

fan-cooled rooms are F\$33/44 single/double, while the seven with air-conditioning are F\$44/55. A miniature swimming pool is in front of the billiard room. Though a bit away from the action, the hotel offers good value.

On Narewa Road at the north edge of Nadi town is the **Sunseekers Hotel** (P.O. Box 100, Nadi; tel. 700-400, fax 702-047). The 24 rooms here are F\$39 double with fan but shared bath, F\$44 with a/c and private bath, or F\$9 for a bunk in the six-bed dorm. There's a bar on the large deck out back, which overlooks the swimming pool (often dry) and surrounding countryside. Despite the sign, this is not an approved Hostel-ing International associate but it's still popular among backpackers. Airport pickups are free but to return to the airport you must take a taxi (F\$6).

Better is the two-story **White House Visitors Inn** (P.O. Box 2150, Nadi; tel. 700-022, fax 702-822), at 40 Kennedy Ave., up Ray Prasad Road just off Queens Road, a 10-minute walk north of central Nadi. The 12 fan-equipped rooms are F\$30 double with shared bath, F\$30/44 single/double with private bath, or F\$11 pp in the dorm. Rooms with air-conditioning cost F\$5 extra. The beds are comfortable, and a weight-watchers' toast-and-coffee breakfast is included in the price. You can cook your own meals in the communal kitchen, and there's a small grocery store across the street. This hotel is a fairly peaceful place. Though you'll hear a bit of traffic and animal noise, you won't be bothered by disco music. But you'll probably find the small swimming pool too dirty to use. Baggage storage is F\$1 per day (but only if you make your outer island bookings through them).

Half a block up Kennedy Avenue from the White House is the three-story **Kennedy Hotel** (P.O. Box 9045, Nadi Airport; tel. 702-360, fax 702-218), which really belongs in our US\$25-50 category though some low-budget beds are offered. The 16 a/c rooms with private bath, TV, and coffee-making facilities are F\$65 single or double without fridge, F\$71 with fridge, tax included. Deluxe two-bedroom apartments with cooking facilities are F\$110. Beds in the four fan-cooled, four-bed dormitory blocks cost F\$12 pp, or F\$15 for a bed in the eight-bed a/c dorm. Rooms with shared bath are F\$30. The Kennedy is quite popular but the cheaper rooms are rather small and shabby, so have a look before committing yourself. A plus are the spacious gar-

denlike grounds with a large swimming pool, and there's a restaurant/bar on the premises.

Under US\$25 Toward the Airport

The following listings are arranged by location, beginning with those closest to the airport, then proceeding to those on the way into town. The **Kon Tiki Private Hotel** (P.O. Box 10463, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-836) is set in cane fields a 15-minute walk inland from Queens Road, past the Fiji Mocambo Hotel (Votualevu bus). The 18 rooms go for F\$22/33/38 single/double/triple with private bath and fan, F\$42/46 with a/c, F\$10 pp dormitory (five beds), plus tax. Some hard drinking goes on at the hotel bar, so don't accept a room near it. Kon Tiki is all by itself down a side road, so you're dependent on the hotel restaurant for food, although a small breakfast is included and you may be able to use their kitchen. They arrange daily transfers to Nananu-i-Ra Island at F\$20 each way.

The **Melanesian Hotel** (P.O. Box 10410, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-438, fax 720-425), at Namaka, has two wings separated by a swimming pool, bar, and restaurant. The 16 rooms with bath in the old wing begin at F\$33/40 single/double, plus F\$10 extra for air-conditioning. Four five-bed dorms (F\$12 pp) are also available. The Melanesian's pride and joy is the new **Grand Melanesian Apartment Hotel** wing on the highway with 22 deluxe a/c rooms with fridge and TV at F\$66 for up to three people. All in all, it's a pleasant place to stop.

Much more basic (and rather sleazy) is the **Holiday Inn** (P.O. Box 1326, Nadi; tel. 725-076, fax 701-541), also known as the Rainbow Inn (no connection with the famous Holiday Inn chain). Rooms with private facilities in their old single-story block are F\$22/27 single/double. Air-conditioning is F\$5 more. Bargaining could reduce these prices. The Holiday Inn offers shared cooking facilities, luggage storage, and a bar. It's run by PVV Tours and not recommended.

Across the street from the Shell service station in Martintar and above the Bounty Restaurant is **Mountainview Apartments** (P.O. Box 1476, Nadi; tel. 721-880, fax 721-800) with six fan-cooled rooms with bath at F\$25/28 single/double. The two a/c rooms are F\$35 single or double. Two family rooms are F\$40/45 fan/air conditioned. It's okay for the price but rather dreary.

A bright, new place to stay is the **Sunview Motel & Hostel** (P.O. Box 9103, Nadi Airport; tel. 724-933), 300 meters down Gray Road behind Bounty Restaurant. The seven rooms in their new two-story building are F\$30/35 single/double, or F\$12 pp in a six-bed dorm, with toast, coffee, and juice in the morning included. Cooking facilities are available, and it's clean, quiet, and friendly.

The 14-room **Sunny Holiday Motel** (P.O. Box 1326, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-644, fax 701-541), on Northern Press Road behind The Night Owl Restaurant, is the cheapest place to stay around Nadi. It's F\$11/17 single/double with shared bath, F\$22/25 with private bath, or F\$6 in the four-bed dorm. Self-contained apartments with cooking facilities are F\$28/33, plus tax. In-veterate campers might like to know that this is about the only place in the area where you're allowed to unroll a tent (F\$4 pp). There's a pool table, TV room, bar, and luggage storage. It's all a little run-down, but friendly, uncrowded, and fine for those on shoestring budgets (but not recommended for single women). The Sunny Holiday books the daily PVV Tours shuttle to Nananu-i-Ra Island at F\$30 one-way.

The three-story **Good Time Inn** (P.O. Box 377, Nadi; tel. 725-610), on Queens Road just south of Martintar, has 20 noisy rooms with bath at F\$25/35 single/double. It's best avoided unless you're in for a brief encounter with one of the resident "girls."

A few hundred meters down Wailoaloa Beach Road off the main highway, in the opposite direction from the Sunny Holiday, is the **Nadi Bay Hotel** (Private Mail Bag, NAP 0359, Nadi; tel. 723-599, fax 720-092), a two-story concrete edifice enclosing a swimming pool. The 25 rooms are F\$35/45 single/double with fan, F\$20 extra for private bath and air-conditioning. An apartment with cooking facilities is F\$68/82 single/double. There's also a F\$15 dorm. Other features include a congenial bar and an inexpensive restaurant. The airport flight path passes right above the Nadi Bay and the roar of jets on the adjacent runway can be jarring. The Nadi Bay is run by an old Fiji hand named Errol Fifer, who once owned Mana Island. Fifer is an interesting person to meet. Recently the Nadi Bay Hotel has begun serving as a staging point for backpackers headed for the low-budget beach resorts around

Tavewa Island in the Yasawas, and the motel staff will know all about it.

Under US\$25 at the Beach

There are seven inexpensive places to stay on Wailoaloa Beach, also known as New Town Beach, on the opposite side of the airport runway from the main highway. Four of these lodgings are near the seaplane base and golf club, a dusty three-km hike from the Nadi Bay Hotel. Ask for their free shuttle buses at the airport or take a taxi (F\$6 from the airport or F\$3 from the junction at Martintar). The Wailoaloa New Town bus (F\$0.50) leaves Nadi Bus Station Mon.-Fri. at 0630, 0715, 0815, 1115, 1510, and 1610, Sat. at 0630, 0715, 0815, 1100, 1200, 1510, and 1610 (no service on Sunday).

The Wailoaloa Beach places are probably your best bet on the weekend, and sporting types can play a round of golf on the public course or go jogging along the beach (the swimming in the knee-deep water isn't great). The main base of Inner Space Adventures is here, and horseback riding is also on offer.

On your way to the beach you'll pass the **Western Hostel** (P.O. Box 9609, Nadi Airport; tel. 724-440) on Wailoaloa Road. Rooms here are F\$30/45 single/double, or F\$12 pp in the dorm, continental breakfast included. This hostel provides communal cooking, laundry, and TV facilities. It's a little far from everything.

The popular **Horizon Beach Hotel** (P.O. Box 1401, Nadi; tel. 722-832, fax 720-662) is a large wooden two-story building just across a field from the beach. The 14 rooms with bath begin at F\$35/39 single/double with fan, F\$45 with a/c. Horizon's 10-bed dormitory is F\$10 pp. No cooking facilities are provided but there's a medium-priced restaurant/bar. To use the washer/drier is F\$10 a full load. The Horizon is an excellent choice if you're interested in doing some budget scuba diving or taking a certification course with Inner Space Adventures across the street.

A hundred meters inland from the Horizon is the friendly two-story **New Town Beach Motel** (P.O. Box 787, Nadi; tel. 723-339). The seven clean rooms with fan are F\$39 single or double (or F\$14 pp in the five-bed dorm). There's no cooking, but a huge dinner is offered at F\$8.

A hundred meters along the beach from the Horizon is **Travelers Beach Resort** (P.O. Box

700, Nadi; tel. 723-322, fax 720-026). The 12 fan-cooled standard rooms with private bath are F\$33/39 single/double, the eight a/c rooms F\$39/50, the two a/c beachfront rooms F\$55 single or double, and the 13 villas with kitchenette F\$66 for up to four. Four four-bed dorms are provided at F\$11 pp. The villas are tightly packed in a compound a block back from the beach. There's an expensive restaurant/bar and a swimming pool, but many of the other facilities listed in their brochure seem to have vanished. The management style leaves something to be desired and complaints have been received.

Opposite the Travelers Beach Resort villas is a large modern house called **Mana Rose Apartments** (P.O. Box 2845, Nadi; tel. 723-333, fax 720-552). Ratu Kini Bokoniqiwa uses this place to accommodate backpackers on their way to his hostel on Mana Island. The three six-bed a/c dorms are F\$15 pp including breakfast, private rooms F\$25/45 single/double, and there's a plush lounge where you can relax. If you're not on your way to Mana, you may find the transient atmosphere unappealing.

Also on Wailoaloa Beach, a kilometer southwest of the places just mentioned, is **Club Fiji Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 9619, Nadi Airport; tel. 702-189, fax 720-350). It's three kilometers off Queens Road from McDonald's (F\$3 one-way by taxi). The 24 thatched duplex bungalows, all with veranda, private bath, solar hot water, and fridge, are priced according to location: F\$55 single or double for a garden unit, F\$95 ocean view. The eight a/c beachfront suites in a two-story building are F\$160/173 double/triple. One duplex has been converted into a pair of 12-person dormitories with bunk beds at F\$11 pp. Club Fiji's staff does its utmost to keep the accommodations and grounds spotless. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed, and you'll meet other travelers at the bar. Tea- and coffee-making facilities are provided, but there's no cooking. The Club's restaurant serves authentic Fijian food (main plates around F\$9). Special evening events include the *Jovo* on Thursday and the beach barbecue on Saturday night. Horseback riding is F\$15 an hour, the Hobie cat is F\$20 an hour, and windsurfing and paddle boats are complimentary. The day tour to Natadola Beach and the two-island boat trip each cost F\$45 with lunch. Atlantis Divers (tel. 702-704) runs a dive

shop at Club Fiji. For certified divers, there are two trips a day, otherwise sign up for a course. At low tide the beach resembles a tidal flat, but there's a small clean swimming pool, and the location is lovely.

Also very good is the **Beachside Resort** (P.O. Box 9883, Nadi Airport; tel. 703-488, fax 703-688), next to Club Fiji at Wailoaloa Beach. The 15 clean a/c rooms in the main building are F\$68/78 double/triple (reduced rates sometimes available). The rooms have fridges and tea/coffee, but no cooking facilities. Adjacent to the main building are three *bure* at F\$120 double, plus two smaller budget studios at F\$44 double. Beachside's breakfast and dinner plan is F\$30 (attractive dining room, fresh food). Despite the name, the Beachside isn't right on the beach, although it does have a swimming pool. A timeshare condo development called "Fantasy Beach Estate" is next door and beach access is possible through the Fantasy complex. There's also a yacht marina here. Your New Zealander hosts Philip and Jane will try to make you happy (with the help of offspring George and Ophelia, and their two cats).

US\$25-50

The medium-priced selections that follow are highly competitive and they often run specials that reduce the quoted rates by a third. **Rosie's Deluxe Serviced Apartments** (P.O. Box 9268, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-755, fax 722-607), in Martintar near Ed's Bar, offers studio apartments accommodating four at F\$69, one-bedrooms for up to five at F\$92, and two-bedrooms for up to seven at F\$123. All eight a/c units have cooking facilities, fridge, and private balcony. You may use the communal washer and drier free. Martintar Bakery next store sells bread, muffins, and newspapers. It's mostly used by people in transit and there's no swimming pool. The Rosie The Travel Service office at the airport is the place to check for specials and availability. Free airport transfers are provided in both directions, even in the middle of the night.

Sandalwood Lodge (John and Ana Birch, P.O. Box 9454, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-044, fax 720-103), 200 meters inland on Ragg Street near the Dominion International Hotel, has 34 a/c rooms with bath, Sky TV, fridge, and cooking facilities at F\$64/70/76 single/double/triple, plus

tax. In 2001 the Birches closed an older wing, which they had operated since 1981, that was closer to Queens road and moved their entire operation to this new complex. Two of the two-story blocks facing the swimming pool were built in 1992 and a third was added in 2001. Sandalwood caters to couples and families in search of a quiet, safe place to stay.

The West's Motor Inn (P.O. Box 10097, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-044, fax 720-071), also near the Dominion International, is another good choice. The 62 a/c rooms with private bath and fridge begin at F\$55 single or double standard (or F\$99 for a larger deluxe room). The name really doesn't do justice to this pleasant two-story resort hotel with its courtyard swimming pool, piano bar, restaurant, conference room, secretarial services, and UTC tour desk.

The Capricorn International Hotel (P.O. Box 9043, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-088, fax 720-522), between The West's Motor Inn and The Night Owl Restaurant, consists of two-story blocks surrounding a swimming pool. The 62 small a/c rooms with fridge begin at F\$85 single or double. Cooking facilities are not provided, but there's a restaurant/bar on the premises. Michael's Rent-a-Car and UTC Tours have desks here.

US\$50-100

The listings that follow are arranged starting from the airport heading into town. The **Tokato-ka Resort Hotel** (P.O. Box 9305, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-222, fax 720-400), a short walk north from the airport terminal, caters to families with young children by offering 116 a/c villas and rooms with cooking facilities, mini-fridge, and video beginning at F\$137 single or double. Eight rooms for guests with disabilities are available. Anyone planning a business meeting in Nadi should inquire about the 200-seat conference room that is provided free when at least 10 hotel rooms are booked. A Jack's Handicrafts outlet and a large designer swimming pool with a water slide are on the premises. A different buffet is offered every night (F\$22 including tea/coffee).

The two-story, colonial-style **Raffles Gateway Hotel** (P.O. Box 9891, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-444, fax 720-620), just across the highway from the airport, is within easy walking distance of the terminal. Its 92 a/c rooms begin at F\$117 single or double. Happy hour at the poolside bar

is 1800-1900—worth checking out if you're stuck at the airport waiting for a flight.

People on brief prepaid stopovers in Fiji are often accommodated at one of three hotels off Votualevu Road, a couple of kilometers inland from the airport (take a taxi). The closest to the terminal is **Tanoa Apartments** (P.O. Box 9211, Nadi Airport; tel. 723-685, fax 721-193), on a hilltop overlooking the surrounding countryside. The 23 self-catering apartments begin at F\$164 (weekly and monthly rates available). Facilities include a swimming pool, hot tub, and sauna. First opened in 1965, this property was the forerunner of today's locally owned Tanoa hotel chain.

A few hundred meters inland from Tanoa Apartments is the Malaysian-owned **Fiji Mocambo Hotel** (P.O. Box 9195, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-000, fax 720-324), a sprawling two-story hotel with mountain views from the spacious grounds. The 127 a/c rooms with patio or balcony and fridge begin at F\$198 for up to three persons including breakfast. Secretarial services can be arranged for businesspeople, conference facilities and a swimming pool are available, and there's a par-27, nine-hole executive golf course on the adjacent slope (free for guests). Lots of in-house entertainment is offered, including a *meke* once a week. A live band plays in the Marau Lounge Wednesday-Saturday 1800-2330.

Across the street from the Fiji Mocambo is the two-story **Tanoa International Hotel** (P.O. Box 9203, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-277, fax 720-191), formerly the Nadi Travelodge Hotel. It's now the flagship of the Tanoa hotel chain owned by local businessman Yanktesh Permal Reddy. The 133 superior a/c rooms with fridge are F\$190 single or double, F\$400 suite, and children under 16 may stay free. They have a half-price day-use rate, which gives you a room from noon until midnight if you're leaving in the middle of the night (airport transfers are free). The hotel's coffee shop is open 24 hours a day, and a swimming pool, fitness center, floodlit tennis courts, and a UTC tour desk are on the premises.

Several kilometers southwest of the airport toward town on Queens Road is the **Skylodge Hotel** (P.O. Box 9222, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-200, fax 724-330), which was constructed in the early 1960s while Nadi Airport was being expanded to take jet aircraft. Airline crews on layovers orig-

inally stayed here, and business travelers still make up 50 percent of the clientele. The Sky-lodge belongs to the Tanoa hotel chain. The 53 a/c units begin at F\$110 single or double; children under 16 are free, provided the bed configurations aren't changed. It's better to pay F\$22 more here and get a room with cooking facilities in one of the four-unit clusters well-spaced among the greenery, rather than a smaller room in the main building or near the busy highway. If you're catching a flight in the middle of the night there's a F\$55 "day use" rate valid from 1800 to midnight. Pitch-and-putt golf, half-size tennis facilities, a swimming pool, and a UTC tour desk are on the grounds. Airport transfers are free.

The **Dominion International Hotel** (P.O. Box 9178, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-255, fax 720-187), halfway between the airport and town, is one of Nadi's nicest hotels. This appealing three-story building was built in 1973, and they've done their best to keep the place up. The 85 a/c rooms with balcony or terrace are F\$116/121/130 single/double/triple, plus F\$20 extra if you want a "deluxe" with a TV and a bath tub instead of a shower. Their 50 percent discount on an extended stay rate allows you to keep your room until 2200. If you stay six nights, the seventh is free. Lots of well shaded tables and chairs surround the swimming pool, and the nearby hotel bar has a happy hour 1800–1900 daily. On Saturday night you'll be treated to a *meke* (F\$23). There's a Rosie There is a travel service desk at the Dominion, a barber shop/beauty salon, and a taxi stand. The hotel bottle shop facing the highway is open Monday–Friday 1100–2100, Saturday 1100–1400, 1600–2100, should you wish to stock your fridge. The tennis court is free for guests (day use only). The atmosphere is relaxed and not at all pretentious.

US\$150 and up

Nadi's big transnational resorts, the Sheraton Royal and the Sheraton Fiji, are on Denarau Beach opposite Yakulau Island, seven kilometers west of the bridge on the north side of Nadi town and a 15-minute drive from the airport. These are Nadi's only upmarket hotels right on the beach, although the gray sands here can't match those on the Mamanuca Islands. The murky waters lapping Sheraton shores are okay for swimming, and two pontoons have been an-

chored in deeper water, but there'd be no point in snorkeling here. Windsurfing, water-skiing, and sailing are better choices for activities.

Sidestepping the Waikiki syndrome, neither hotel is taller than the surrounding palms, though the manicured affluence has a dull Hawaiian neighbor-island feel. In 1993 a F\$15-million championship golf course opened on the site of a former mangrove swamp adjacent to the resort, and in 1996 ITT-Sheraton bought both resorts from the Japanese interests that had controlled them since 1988. Two-thirds of the hotel staff and all of the taxi drivers based here belong to the clan that owns the land on which these facilities stand. Plans for additional resort development in this area by Hilton and Accor/Novotel were put on hold after the May 2000 coup.

Almost all of the tourists staying at the Denarau resorts are on package tours, and they pay only a fraction of the rack rates quoted below. If you call, ask if there are any specials available. Both hotels are rather isolated, and the hotel restaurants are pricey, so you should take the meal package if you intend to spend most of your time here. Also bring insect repellent unless you want to be on the menu!

The **Sheraton Royal Denarau Resort** (P.O. Box 9081, Nadi Airport; tel. 750-000, fax 750-259) opened in 1975 as The Regent of Fiji. This sprawling series of two-story clusters with traditional Fijian touches contains 274 spacious a/c rooms between the golf course and the beach. Facilities include an impressive lobby with shops to one side, a thatched pool bar you can swim right up to, and 10 floodlit tennis courts. Due to a downturn in tourism in 2000, the Sheraton Royal was closed from June 2000 to March 2001. Hopefully this situation won't recur.

The Sheraton Royal's neighbor, the modern-style **Sheraton Fiji Resort** (P.O. Box 9761, Nadi Airport; tel. 750-777, fax 750-818), has 292 a/c rooms that begin at F\$545 single or double including a buffet breakfast and nonmotorized sports. For the presidential suite it's F\$1,133. This US\$60-million two-story hotel opened in 1987, complete with a 16-shop arcade and an 800-seat ballroom. Outstanding among the hotel boutiques is Michoutouchkine Creations with hand-decorated clothing by two of the Pacific's most famous artists, and the Pacific Art Shop with local paintings. Avis Rent-a-Car, UTC Tours,

and the Westpac Bank all have counters at the Sheraton Fiji.

Between the two Sheratons and opposite the golf club is a cluster of two-story buildings called **Sheraton Denarau Villas** (P.O. Box 9761, Nadi Airport; tel. 750-777), which opened in 1999. The 82 two- and three-bedroom a/c condos have kitchenettes, washer/drier, TV, and lounge, beginning at F\$885 for two adults and two children including breakfast. The swimming pool and bar face the beach.

Another new development, a bit south of the Sheraton Fiji Resort, is the **Trendwest Resort** (tel. 750-442, fax 750-441). It features a series of three-story blocks facing a large pool with a swim-up bar. Most of the 76 spacious self-catering apartments in this "vacation ownership resort" have been sold to individual buyers under a timeshare arrangement with WorldMark. Dive Tropex runs the scuba concession here.

A local bus between Nadi and the Sheratons operates about every hour (F\$0.50). It leaves Nadi Bus Station Monday–Saturday at 0800, 0830, 0930, 1015, 1100, 1200, 1300, 1430, and 1700, Sunday at 0830, 0930, 1300, and 1430. For the departure times from the Sheratons, add about 25 minutes to these times (which could change).

A taxi to/from Nadi town should be around F\$6, though the cabs parked in front of the hotels will expect much more—perhaps as much as F\$20 to the airport. Walk down the road a short distance and stop any taxi returning empty to Nadi, which shouldn't ask over F\$3. If your travel agent booked you into any of these resorts, you'll be wrapped in North American security and well sheltered from the real Fiji (the Mamanuca resorts are better value if your main interest is the beach).

FOOD

Downtown Restaurants

The **Daikoku Japanese Restaurant** (tel. 703-622; Mon.–Sat. 1130–1330, 1800–2100, Sun. 1800–2100), facing the bridge at the north end of Nadi, is the place to splurge on *teppan-yaki* dishes (F\$20–48) cooked right at your table.

Two good pizza places are opposite the Mobil service station on Main Street at the north end



An Indo-Fijian family enjoys a watermelon.

of Nadi town. **Mama's Pizza Inn** (tel. 700-221) serves pizzas big enough for two or three people at F\$7–23. Mama's has a second location in Colonial Plaza halfway out toward the airport. **Continental Cakes & Pizza** (tel. 703-595; daily 0900 until late), just down from Mama's, has three sizes of pizza from F\$7–19, plus deli rolls for F\$3.50, and delicious cakes for F\$2 and up. Their coffee is about the best in town, and the clean washrooms are a relief. The German owner Dietmar Luecke makes sure everything is just right.

Package tour buses often park in front of **Chefs The Corner** (closed Sun.), Sagayam Road and Main Street opposite Morris Hedstrom. This rather expensive self-service restaurant (entrées F\$6) does have some of the best-selling ice cream in town (F\$2–4). Just down Sangayam Road are **Chefs The Edge** (Mon.–Sat. 0900–2200) and **Chefs The Restaurant** (tel. 703-131; Mon.–Sat. 1100–1400, 1800–2200), both run by former Sheraton chef Eugene Gomes. At dinner the seafood and meat entrées average F\$36, or you can order something from the grill. It's international dining at its finest.

Chopsticks Restaurant (tel. 700-178; Mon.–Sat. 1000–2200, Sun. 0900–1400, 1800–2200), upstairs from the Bank of Baroda on the main street, offers a large selection of Chinese

dishes, curries, and seafood at excellent prices (entrées F\$4–10). A second Chopsticks location (tel. 721-788) is next to Morris Hedstrom at Namaka toward the airport.

The **Mid-Town Curry Restaurant** (tel. 700-536; closed Sun.), around the corner from Chopsticks on Clay Street, serves real Indo-Fijian dishes (F\$3-4) instead of the usual tourist fare, which means *very spicy*. Come early as they close at 1800. (Don't confuse this place with the tourist-oriented Curry Restaurant next to Mama's Pizza Inn.)

Be aware that the sidewalk terrace restaurants near Victory Tours (the "Tourist Information Center") on the main street in the center of Nadi are strictly for tourists not familiar with the local price structure.

Denarau Marina Restaurant
Cardo's Steakhouse & Bar
(tel. 750-900; daily 1000–2300),
at the Denarau Marina, offers
chargrilled steaks of 250, 300,
or 400 grams for F\$21–37.
Other meals from prawns to
pizza cost F\$13.50–31.50.
You'll get a good view of Nadi's
bustling tourist port from their
terrace. It's a perfect place to
eat out if you're staying at the
Sheratons.

Restaurants

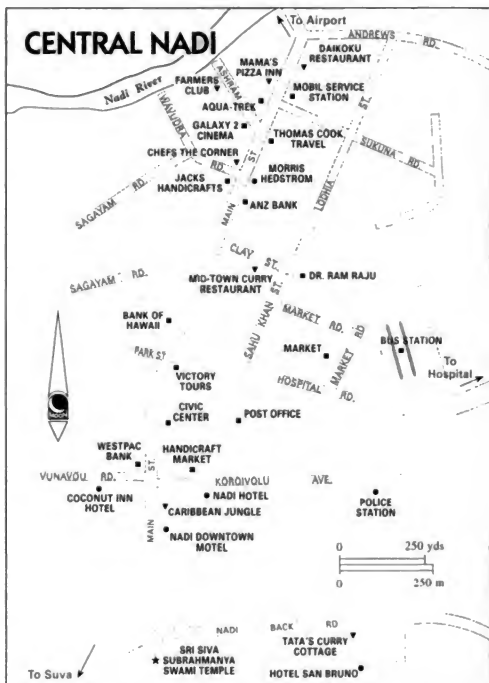
Toward the Airport

Poon's Restaurant (tel. 725-396), on Northern Press Road just east off Queens Road, beside a textile factory opposite The Night Owl at Martintar, offers filling meals at reasonable prices. The pleasant atmosphere and friendly service are pluses. Ordinary Chinese dishes are F\$3-10, special Chinese dishes F\$6-13, and European dishes F\$5-10. Complete Cantonese meals are F\$38/76 for two/four people.

RJ's for Ribs (tel. 722-900; Tues.–Sun. 1800–2300), in the Millennium Center opposite the

Dominion International Hotel, has a sister establishment in Beverly Hills, California. Pork barbecue ribs run F\$19, cordon bleu F\$27, and a skewer of garlic prawns F\$29 (all meals include the salad bar). Drinks at the Skytop Bar on the roof average F\$2.50 (Mongolian barbecue F\$6). See Star Sports TV and DVDs here, and sometimes there's live music. The Liberty Bar is on the ground floor of the same complex.

The **Bounty Restaurant** (Veronika and Brian Smith, tel. 720-840), a bit north and across the highway, has Chinese dishes and hamburgers for lunch, steaks and seafood for dinner. Lunch dishes average F\$8 here, while dinner plates are F\$15–25. There's also a popular tourist bar (happy hour 1700–1900). Many other restaurants are nearby and a good way to choose



among them is to check who is seated at their tables (no customers is a bad sign).

The **Maharaja Restaurant** (tel. 722-962), out near the Skylodge Hotel, is popular with flight crews who come for the spicy Indian curries, tandoori dishes, and fresh local seafood (main dishes F\$6–20). It's open daily, but on Sunday for dinner only (1700–2200).

ENTERTAINMENT

Nadi has three movie houses: **Galaxy 2 Cinema** (tel. 700-176), on Ashram Road between Tappoo and the Farmers Club; **Jupiter Cinema**, next to the Coconut Inn on Vunavau Street; and **Novelty Cinema** (tel. 700-155), upstairs from the mall at the Nadi Civic Center, not far from the post office. All show an eclectic mix of Hollywood and Bollywood films.

Bars and Clubs

The **Nadi Farmers Club** (tel. 700-415; Mon.–Thurs. 1000–2200, Fri. and Sat. 1000–2300, Sun. 0900–2100), just up Ashram Road from the Mobil station in Nadi town, is a good local drinking place where tourists are welcome. Be sure to check the club's restaurant at back of the building, which serves some of the best curries in Fiji at F\$3–6. The restaurant is open the same hours as the club, except Sunday when they close at 1500. It may be the best place to eat in Nadi.

Caribbean Jungle Night Club, next to the Nadi Hotel, has a live rock band 2100–0100 on Friday and Saturday nights. It's not a tourist scene, so be prepared. Locals call it "the zoo."

Martintar's top evening venue is **The Night Owl** (tel. 721-772; Tues.–Sun. 1800–0100), with a large restaurant and bar (happy hour 1800–2000). Admission to the bar is free except when there's a band and dancing. The restaurant is good for an upscale dinner (entrées around F\$16), and you have a choice of dining on their open terrace or in an air-conditioned room. It's a worthy choice for a night out and the security is good, but take a taxi back to your hotel.

Ed's Bar (tel. 724-650), a little north of the Dominion International Hotel, has a friendly young staff and you'll meet locals as well as tourists here. It's something of a surfer hang-out. Happy hour is 1700–2000 daily, with live music Friday nights (no cover). A plate of six big, spicy barbecued wings is F\$6.

The **Airport Club** (tel. 722-148; Mon.–Thurs. 1100–2300, Fri. and Sat. 1100–0200), in the Airport Housing Area down the road past Namaka Police Station and almost underneath the airport control tower, is an old-fashioned colonial club with tables overlooking the runways. It's an interesting place to sit and drink draft beer as planes soar above the swimming pool.

Cultural Shows for Visitors

The **Sheraton Fiji** (tel. 750-777) has a *meke* and *magiti* (feast) Thursday at 1800 (F\$49).



handicraft seller, Nadi

Wednesday at 2000 Fijian firewalking comes with the *meke* and a F\$12 fee is charged.

You can also enjoy a *lovo* feast and *meke* at the **Dominion International Hotel** (tel. 722-255) on Saturday (F\$23).

Shopping

The **Nadi Handicraft Market**, opposite the Nadi Hotel just off Main Street, provides you with the opportunity to buy directly from the handicraft's producers. Several large curio emporia are along Main Street, including **Jack's Handicrafts** (tel. 700-744), opposite Morris Hedstrom. Visit a few of these before going to the market, to get an idea what's available and how much your preferred items should cost.

Sogo Fiji (tel. 701-614), opposite the Bank of Hawaii, is the place to pick up tropical clothing and beachware. Prouds and Tappoo on the main street sell the type of shiny luxury goods usually seen in airport duty-free shops. Just beware of the friendly handshake in Nadi, for you may find yourself buying something you neither care for nor desire.

If you have an interest in world literature, you can purchase Indian classics and books on yoga at the **Sri Ramakrishna Ashram** (P.O. Box 716, Nadi; tel. 702-786), across the street from the Farmers Club (Mon.–Fri. 0800–1300 and 1400–1700, Sat. 0800–1230). There's a prayer session in the Ashram on Sunday morning, followed by a vegetarian feast.

Caines Photofast (tel. 701-608, 249 Main St. at Park St.) does one-hour color film developing.

INFORMATION

The **Fiji Visitors Bureau** office (P.O. Box 9217, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-433, fax 720-141) is in the arrivals concourse at the airport. There's no tourist information office in downtown Nadi, although a certain travel agency masquerades as one.

The **Nadi Town Council Library** (P.O. Box 241, Nadi; tel. 700-133, extension 126; Mon.–Fri. 0900–1700, Sat. 0900–1300) is upstairs in the mall at the Nadi Civic Center on Main Street.

Travel Agents

Rosie The Travel Service (tel. 702-726), at Nadi Airport and opposite the Nadi Handicraft

Market in town, is a reputable in-bound tour operator that books somewhat upmarket tours, activities, and accommodations. They'll often give you a discount on their day tours and trekking if you book directly with them. **Adventure Fiji** (tel. 725-598), two offices down from Rosie at the airport, is a branch of Rosie specifically oriented toward backpackers. The **United Touring Company** (tel. 722-811), at the airport and several hotels, is similar to Rosie and quite reliable.

The largest backpacker-oriented travel agency is **Victory Tours** (P.O. Box 251, Nadi; tel. 700-243, fax 702-746; Mon.–Sat. 0800–1700, Sun. 0930–1500) with offices in central Nadi and upstairs from arrivals at the airport. Their signposts read "Tourist Information Center," but this is a purely commercial operation. Victory sells a variety of 4WD and trekking "inland safari" excursions into the Nausori Highlands, and books low-budget beach resorts on Mana, Malolo, Tavewa, and Waya islands. Their prices oscillate according to supply and demand, and 10 percent tax will be added to any amount they quote.

Pacific Valley View Tours (tel. 700-600), at the Nadi Downtown Motel, is similar. Better known as PVV Tours, their specialty is Nananu-i-Ra bookings and transfers. Prices vary here and bargaining might work.

Many other budget travel agencies upstairs from the arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport make the same sort of bookings as Victory and PVV. For example, there's **Rabua's Travel Agency** (P.O. Box 10385, Nadi Airport; tel./fax 721-377) in office No. 23. The friendly manager Ulaiaisi "Rambo" Rabua books Wayalailai Resort on Wayasewa (his home island) and most other offshore backpacker resorts. **Margaret Travel Service** (Margaret and Tom Tinitali, P.O. Box 9831, Nadi Airport; tel. 721-988, fax 721-992), in office No. 9, and Loma at **Island Travel Tours** (tel. 724-033 or 725-930), in office No. 14, do the same. Among the backpacker resorts with offices of their own upstairs at the airport are Ratu Kini of Mana in office No. 33, Coral View of Tavewa in office No. 35, and David's Place of Tavewa in office No. 31. We've received several complaints about Fiji Holiday Connections in office No. 8, and experiences with the airport agents have been mixed.

There's little or no government regulation of the Nadi travel agencies, and some are rather ques-

tionable. To increase their business they'll often promise things the managers of the resorts may be unwilling or unable to provide. Cases of travelers reserving and prepaying a double room then ending up in the dormitory are not unknown. Other times you'll be assured that the boat of one resort will drop you at another, only to have the boatkeeper refuse to do so.

For this reason it's better to avoid prepaying too much at the Nadi travel agencies, so as to retain some bargaining leverage. This is especially true when planning an itinerary that involves staying at more than one resort. If you can manage to pay the boat fare one-way only (instead of round-trip), it'll be a lot easier to switch resorts, or just to walk out if the place you booked in Nadi isn't as nice as they said it would be. Otherwise tell the agent you want to use the South Sea Cruises ferries, which aren't directly connected to any resort. These agents collect commissions as high as 30 percent from the resorts and are unable to give you discounts, no matter what they say. Remember too that the Nadi agents only promote properties that pay them commissions, which are passed on to you in the end. If they warn you not to go somewhere, it may be because they don't get an adequate commission from that place.

Airline Offices

Reconfirm your flight, request a seat assignment, or check the departure time by calling your airline: Aircalin (tel. 722-145), Air Nauru (tel. 722-795), Air New Zealand (tel. 722-955), Air Pacific (tel. 720-888), Air Vanuatu (tel. 722-521), Ansett Australia (tel. 722-076), Korean Airlines (tel. 721-043), Qantas Airways (tel. 722-880), Royal Tongan Airlines (tel. 724-355), and Solomon Airlines (tel. 722-831). All of these offices are at the airport.

SERVICES

Money

The Westpac Bank opposite the Nadi Handicraft Market, the ANZ Bank near Morris Hedstrom, and the Bank of Hawaii between these, will change traveler's checks without commission. They're open Monday–Thursday 0930–1500, Friday 0930–1600. If you need a

Visa/MasterCard ATM, go to the ANZ Bank branches in downtown Nadi, at Namaka toward the airport, and at the airport itself. The Bank of Hawaii has a Bankoh ATM.

Money Exchange (tel. 703-366; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1700, Sat. 0830–1300), between the ANZ Bank and Morris Hedstrom, changes cash and traveler's checks without commission at a rate comparable to the banks.

Thomas Cook Travel (tel. 703-110; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1700, Sat. 0830–1200), beside Prouds on Main Street, is a good source of the banknotes of other Pacific countries—convenient if you'll be flying to Australia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, or Vanuatu and don't want the hassle of having to change money at a strange airport upon arrival. They'll also change leftover banknotes of these countries into Fiji dollars.

Tapa International (tel. 722-325), in the arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport, is the American Express representative. If you buy traveler's checks from them using a personal check or your American Express card, you'll have to actually pick up the checks at the ANZ Bank in Nadi town, so go early.

Post

There are two large post offices, one next to the market in central Nadi, and another between the cargo warehouses directly across the park in front of the arrivals hall at Nadi Airport. Check both if you're expecting general delivery mail. Nadi Town Post Office near the market receives faxes sent to 702-166. At the Nadi Airport Post Office the public fax number is 720-467. Both post offices are open Monday–Friday 0800–1600, Saturday 0800–1200.

Internet Access

Cybercafé (tel. 705-111; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1730, Sat. 0800–1600), 501 Main Street beside Mama's Pizza Inn in downtown Nadi, charges F\$0.20 a minute or F\$5 an hour for Internet access. Lots of other places in downtown Nadi also offer Internet access.

Internet Planet (tel. 725-130; daily 0900–2100), next to the Bounty Restaurant at Martintar, charges F\$2 for 15 minutes of access. Landmark Computers (tel. 721-155), upstairs in the adjacent two-story building, also has email.

At the airport, several of the backpacker travel agencies upstairs from the arrivals concourse offer email access, including Ratu Kini in office No. 33.

Immigration Office

Visa extensions can be arranged at the Immigration office (tel. 722-263; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1300/1400–1500), upstairs from near the Sun Air check-in counter at Nadi Airport.

Consulates

The **Canadian Consulate** (P.O. Box 10690, Nadi Airport; tel./fax 721-936) has a business office next to Hertz Rent-a-Car in the arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport. For the **Italian Honorary Consul** call Mediterranean Villas (tel. 664-011).

Laundromat

Self-Service Laundrette (Mon.–Sat. 0900–1700, Sun. 0900–1300), in a two-story building on Queens Road just north of Bounty Restaurant, charges F\$5 to wash and dry (soap F\$0.50).

Toilets

Public toilets are at the corner of Nadi Market closest to the post office, at the bus station, and in the Nadi Civic Center.

HEALTH

The outpatient department at **Nadi District Hospital** (tel. 701-128), inland from Nadi Bus Station, is open Monday–Thursday 0800–1630, Friday 0800–1600, Saturday 0800–1200.

You'll save time by visiting Dr. Ram Raju (tel. 701-375; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1630, Sat. and Sun. 0900–1230), Lodhia and Clay Streets, a family doctor specializing in travel health.

Dr. Abdul Gani (tel. 703-776; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1700, Sat. 0800–1300) has his dental surgery upstairs in the mall at the Nadi Civic Center near the post office.

Dr. Andrew Narayan (tel. 722-288) runs the Namaka Medical Center on Queens Road, about two km from Nadi Airport on the way into town. After hours press the bell for service.

Budget Pharmacy (tel. 700-064) is next to the Bank of Hawaii on Main St. in town.

TRANSPORTATION

See Getting Around by Air in the main Introduction for information on regular Air Fiji and Sun Air flights to Malololailai and Mana islands and other parts of Fiji.

Turtle Airways (Private Mail Bag NAP 0355, Nadi Airport; tel. 721-888, fax 720-095), next to the golf course at Wailoaloa Beach, runs a sea-plane shuttle to the Mamanuca resorts at F\$109 one-way, F\$218 round-trip (baggage limited to one 15-kg suitcase plus one carry-on). Ask about special backpacker fares to the Yasawa Islands.

South Sea Cruises (P.O. Box 718, Nadi; tel. 750-500, fax 750-501), owned by Fullers of New Zealand, operates a high-speed catamaran shuttle to the offshore island resorts on the 27-meter *Tiger IV*. The boat leaves from Nadi's Port Denarau daily at 0900, 1215, and 1515 for Treasure (F\$40 each way), Malolo (F\$50), Castaway (F\$50), and Mana (F\$50). Connections to Mamanuca or Tokoriki via Mana are available on the 0900 and 1515 services (F\$85). Interisland hops between the resorts themselves are F\$35 each. Children under 16 are half price on all trips (under five free). Be prepared to wade on and off the boat at all islands except Mana. If all you want is a glimpse of the lovely Mamanuca Group, a four-island, three-hour, nonstop round-trip cruise is F\$55. South Sea Cruises also sends the catamaran *Dau Veivueti* from Nadi to the Yasawa islands on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (turn to the Yasawa Islands chapter for details). Catamaran bookings can be made at any travel agency around Nadi, and bus transfers to the wharf from the main Nadi hotels are included.

Beachcomber Cruises (tel. 723-828) at Nadi airport operates the high speed ship *Lagilagi* to Savusavu Tuesdays and Saturdays at 0600 (five hours, F\$90). A courtesy bus picks up prebooked passengers at all Nadi hotels, and the *Lagilagi* will stop to collect people at Beachcomber Island upon request.

Highway Transport

Nadi's bus station adjoining the market is an active place. **Pacific Transport** (tel. 700-044) has express buses to Suva via Queens Road daily at 0720, 0750, 0900, 1300, 1640, and 1820 (188

km, four hours, F\$9.20). The 0900 bus is the most convenient, as it begins its run at Nadi (the others all arrive from Lautoka). Five other Pacific Transport "stage" buses also operate daily to Suva (five hours). The **Sunbeam Transport** express buses to Suva at 1100 and 1200 make resort stops along the way.

Local buses to Lautoka (33 km), the airport, and everywhere in between pick up passengers at a bus stop on Main Street, opposite Morris Hedstrom.

You can bargain for fares with the collective taxis cruising the highway from the airport into Nadi. They'll usually take what you'd pay on a bus, but ask first. Collective taxis and minibuses parked in a corner of Nadi Bus Station take passengers nonstop from Nadi to Suva in three hours for F\$13 pp.

For information on car rentals, turn to the Getting Around section in the On the Road chapter.

Local Tours

Numerous day cruises and bus tours operating in the Nadi area are advertised in free tourist brochures. Reservations can be made through Rosie The Travel Service or UTC, with several offices around Nadi. Bus transfers to/from your hotel are included in the price, though some trips are arbitrarily canceled when not enough people sign up.

The "road tours" offered by **Rosie The Travel Service** (tel. 722-935), at Nadi Airport and opposite the Nadi Handicraft Market in town, are cheaper than those of other companies because lunch isn't included (lunch is included on all the cruises and river trips). Rosie's day-trips to Suva (F\$56) involve too much time on the bus, so instead go for the Sigatoka Valley/Tavuni Hill Fort (F\$60 including entry fees) or Emperor Gold Mine (F\$52) full-day tours. If you're looking for a morning tour around Nadi, sign up for the four-hour Vuda Lookout/Viseisei Village/Garden of the Sleeping Giant tour, which costs F\$42, including admission to the garden (the lookout and garden are not accessible on public transport). These trips only operate Monday-Saturday, but on Sunday Rosie offers a half-day drive to the Vuda Lookout and Lautoka at F\$42 pp. Also ask about the full-day hiking tours to the Nausori Highlands (daily except Sunday, F\$66), the easiest way to see this beautiful area.

The **United Touring Company** (P.O. Box 9172, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-811, fax 720-389), or UTC, offers the same kind of day tours as Rosie at higher prices with lunch included. Their half-day Orchid Tour to Viseisei and the Garden of the Sleeping Giant is F\$45. UTC can also book budget-priced beach resorts on Viti Levu, such as Saweni and Tubakula, with air-conditioned bus transfers.

Victory Tours (tel. 700-243), also known as the "Tourist Information Center," offers "Sleeping Giant Safari Treks" with stays in different villages at F\$210/285 for two/three nights, plus tax. Hiking trips offered by **Adventure Fiji**, a division of Rosie The Travel Service, are more expensive than these, but the quality is more consistent (see Hiking Tours in the main Introduction). A guy named Peni, who often hangs out at the Nadi Handicraft Market near the post office, takes backpackers on three-night "waterfall tours" to Bukuya, a mountain village in the Nausori Highlands. Peni's "genuine Fijian lifestyle" tours are about F\$200 pp including meals and *bure* accommodations, but we've heard that they're rather disorganized with promised activities slow to materialize.

Should you not wish to join an organized bus tour from Nadi, you can easily organize your own **self-guided day tour** by taking a local bus (not an express) to the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park visitor center on Queens Road. After a hike over the dunes, catch another bus on to Sigatoka town for lunch at Le Café or the Sigatoka Club, some shopping and sightseeing, and perhaps a taxi visit to the Tavuni Hill Fort. Plenty of buses cover the 61 km from Sigatoka back to Nadi until late. All this will cost you far less than the cheapest half-day tour and you'll be able to mix freely with the locals.

Day Cruises

Food and accommodations at the Mamanuca island resorts are expensive, and a cheaper way to enjoy the islands—for a day at least—is by booking a day cruise to Castaway (F\$99), Malolo (F\$79), or Mana (F\$95) on the fast catamaran *Tiger IV*, operated by **South Sea Cruises** (tel. 750-500). The price includes transfers from most Nadi hotels, the boat trip, a buffet lunch on the island of your choice, nonmotorized sporting activities, and a day at the beach (children under 16

are half price). South Sea Cruises also has day-trips to the outer Mamanuca islands on the two-masted schooner *Seaspray* (F\$165 including lunch and drinks). Bookings can be made through Rosie The Travel Service or any other Nadi travel agent.

The **Oceanic Schooner Co.** (P.O. Box 9625, Nadi Airport; tel. 664-611, fax 664-688) does upscale cruises on the 30-meter schooner *Whale's Tale*, built at Suva's Whippy Shipyard in 1985. You get a champagne breakfast and gourmet lunch served aboard ship, an open bar, and sunset cocktails in the company of a limited number of fellow passengers for F\$160 pp. They're in office No. 26 upstairs from arrivals at Nadi Airport.

Captain Cook Cruises (tel. 701-823) runs day cruises to Tivua Island on the sailing vessel *Ra Marama* for F\$79 including a picnic lunch and drinks. Two bungalows on Tivua host those who'd like to stay overnight at F\$260 pp all-inclusive. Three-hour starlight dinner cruises on the ship *City of Nadi* are F\$85.

Guests staying at one of the Sheratons can take the **Bounty Island Day Cruise** (tel. 650-200) to tiny Bounty Island on the MV *TJ Blue* (F\$69 for a full day). Other companies offer day cruises to imaginatively named specks of sand such as Daydream Island (tel. 702-774), Malamala Island (tel. 702-443 or 664-611), and South Sea Island (tel. 750-500) costing F\$69-89, always including lunch and Nadi hotel pickups, and usually drinks and nonmotorized sporting activities as well. Children under 16 are usually half price. These trips are fine if all you want is a day at the beach, otherwise you'll find them a colossal bore. Any hotel tour desk can book them. Ask about reduced "early bird" prices, if you're willing to arrive and leave early.

Youthful travelers will enjoy a day cruise to **Beachcomber Island** (tel. 723-828), Fiji's unofficial Club Med for the under 35 set. Operating daily, the F\$69 pp fare includes bus transfers from Nadi hotels, the return boat ride via Lautoka, and a buffet lunch. Families should consider Beachcomber because children under 16 are half price and infants under two are free.

Thirty-minute jet boat rides around the mouth of the Nadi River are offered by **Shotover Jet** (P.O. Box 1932, Nadi; tel. 750-400, fax 750-666) about every half hour on Wednesday and Sat-

urday from Port Denarau (adults F\$69, children under 15 years F\$25). It's fairly certain the birds and fish of this mangrove area are less thrilled by these gas-guzzling, high-impact crafts than the tourists seated therein.

A better choice may be the exciting white-water rafting on the Upper Ba River offered by **Discover Fiji Tours** (tel. 450-180). It's F\$145 pp including transportation from Nadi, lunch, and a visit to Navala village. Turn to the Nausori Highlands section for information on the Upper Ba.

Flightseeing

Turtle Airways (tel. 721-888) offers scenic flights in their Cessna floatplanes at F\$77 pp for 10 minutes, F\$160 for 30 minutes (minimum of two persons). **Coral Air** (tel. 724-490) has an amphibious seaplane used mostly for flightseeing around Nadi and the Coral Coast, but also available for a landing on Monasavu Lake in central Viti Levu or trips to the Sawa-i-Lau Caves and the Blue Lagoon. **Pacific Island Seaplanes** (tel. 725-644, fax 725-641) does about the same using Beaver and Otter aircraft. **Island Hoppers** (tel. 720-410) proposes helicopter tours around Nadi and the Mamanucas.

SOUTH OF NADI

Sonaisali Island Resort

Opened in 1992, this luxury resort (Jan and Peter McGrath, P.O. Box 2544, Nadi; tel. 706-011, fax 706-092), down Nacobi Road from Queens Road, is on Naisali, a long, low island in Momi Bay, just 300 meters off the coast of Viti Levu. The core of the resort was rebuilt in early 2000 after a devastating kitchen fire. The 32 a/c rooms with fridge in two main two-story buildings are F\$320 single or double, and there are 49 thatched *bure* at F\$385-510 including breakfast and tax (no cooking facilities). Guests are expected to dress up for dinner in the restaurant. The resort features a full-service marina, a large freeform swimming pool, tennis courts, a children's program, and free nonmotorized water sports, but the snorkeling off their beach is poor. The resort's scuba operator Aaron McGrath takes guests out to unique locations such as Kingfisher Reef at F\$105/150 one/two tanks including equipment. PADI open-water certification

is F\$675 for one or F\$575 pp for two. Rosie The Travel Service has a desk at Sonaisali. A taxi from the airport might cost F\$25 and a shuttle boat provides free access to the island 24 hours a day.

Rendez-Vous Beach Resort

In early 2001 Ben Seduadua of First Divers established a backpacker camp called **Rendez-Vous Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 5857, Lautoka; tel. 706-447, 706-448, or 933-065) on Uciwai Beach north of Nabila village, right next to the landing for Tavarua and Namotu islands. Accommodations include four rooms (F\$50/80 single/double), a 20-bed dorm (F\$35 pp), and camping space (F\$25 pp), with three meals included in the prices. Scuba diving is F\$70/120 for one/two tanks, plus F\$10 per dive for gear. Ben's three-day open-water certification course is F\$400. (First Divers previously operated on Mana Island, and some readers reported that it was rather disorganized. Hopefully this has changed with the move to the mainland.) Surfing charters to the reefs off Namotu and Tavarua islands are F\$70 an hour for up to six people. Other activities include fishing and horseback riding.

Momi Bay

On a hilltop overlooking Momi Bay, 28 km from Nadi, are two **British six-inch guns**, one named Queen Victoria (1900), the other Edward VIII (1901). Both were recycled from the Boer War and set up here by the New Zealand army's 30th Battalion in 1941 to defend the southern approach to Nadi Bay. The only shots fired in anger during the war were across the bow of a Royal New Zealand Navy ship that forgot to make the correct signals as it entered the passage. It quickly turned around, made the proper signals, and reentered quietly. To reach the battery, take a bus along the old highway to Momi, then walk three km west. The Nabilla village bus runs directly there from Nadi four times a day. This historic site is managed by the National Trust for Fiji and open daily 0800–1700 (admission F\$2).

Seashell Cove

Seashell Cove Resort (Virginia Smith, P.O. Box 9530, Nadi Airport; tel. 706-100, fax 706-094), on Momi Bay, 37 km southwest of Nadi, is pop-

ular with the surfing/diving crowd. They have eight duplex *bure* with fans, fridge, and cooking facilities at F\$100 for up to three, and 16 clean rooms with lumpy beds and shared bath in the lodges at F\$55 single or double, F\$60 triple. Four larger units are available for families at F\$150 for up to six, and baby-sitters are provided. The three honeymoon suites are also F\$150. The big 25-bed dormitory above the bar is divided into five-bed compartments for F\$50 per bed including three meals. Otherwise, pitch your own tent beside the volleyball court for F\$10 per tent.

Cooking facilities are not provided for campers or lodge guests, although a good-value meal plan is offered at F\$35 pp and there's a small grocery store just outside the resort. A *meke* and Fijian feast (F\$20) occurs on Friday. Seashell's coffee shop is open until midnight, with a pool table and table tennis. Some surfers stay up all night drinking kava with the friendly staff, a great opportunity to get to know them. Baggage storage is available free of charge.

The beach here isn't exciting and at low tide it's a 10-minute trudge across the mudflats to the water. Amenities and activities include a swimming pool, day-trips to Natadola Beach (F\$35 including lunch), tennis, and volleyball. There's a horse used to walk kids under 10 around the resort but skip the kayaks as they leak and become unstable after 20 minutes. A two-island, three-resort day cruise from here costs F\$50.

Daily at 0700 the Seashell boat shuttles surfers out to the reliable left at Namotu Island breakers or long hollow right at Wilkes Passage (F\$30 pp). The boat also goes to Swimming Pools, Desperations, and Mini Cloudbreak, staying with the surfers while they surf. The famous Cloudbreak lefthander at Navula Reef between Wilkes and Seashell is visited only on Saturday (F\$40 pp). Seashell Cove is one of a limited number of resorts permitted to surf Cloudbreak through an exclusive arrangement with the traditional Fijian owners of the surf. Even then, expect crowds of 25 guys in the water—all other spots are less crowded. There's also an offshore break right at the Momi Bay Lighthouse. This type of reef break surfing can be dangerous for the inexperienced.

The well-organized scuba diving operation, **Scuba Bula**, run by Steve and Nicky Henderson,

has five-star PADI status and can handle to up to 24 divers at a time from beginners to advanced. The cost is reasonable at F\$60/105 for two tanks plus F\$15 for gear and F\$420 for a PADI certification course. Seashell divers experience lots of fish/shark action at Navula Lighthouse, and there's great drift diving at Canyons (the guides really know their spots). When there's space,

snorkelers are welcome to go along at F\$20 pp.

Airport transfers are F\$15 pp each way. Dominion Transport (tel. 701-505) has buses direct to Seashell from Nadi Bus Station at 1015, 1430, and 1730 (F\$1.55), and there are good onward connections from the resort by public bus to Sigatoka weekdays. A taxi from Nadi Airport will cost F\$40.

THE MAMANUCA GROUP

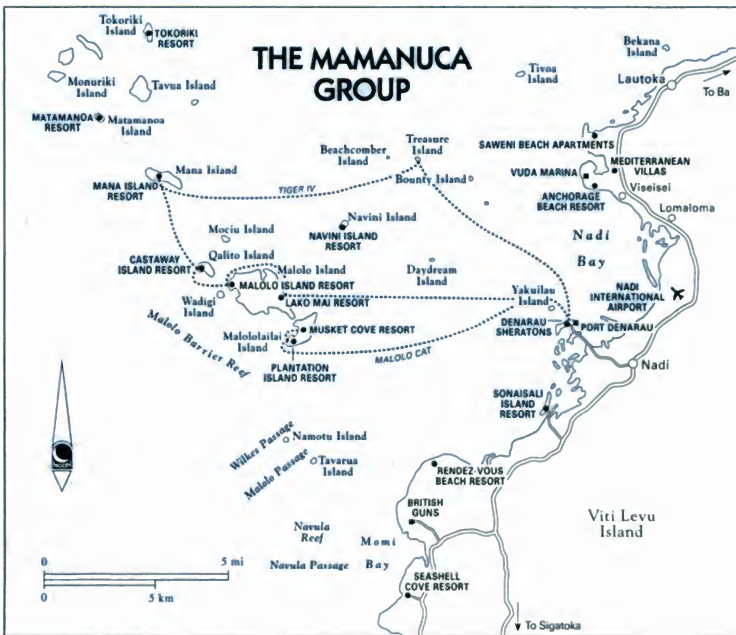
The Mamanuca Group is a paradise of eye-popping reefs and sand-fringed isles shared by traditional Fijian villages and jet-age resorts. The white coral beaches and super snorkeling grounds attract visitors aplenty; boats and planes arrive constantly, bringing folks in from nearby Nadi or Lautoka. These islands are in the lee of big Viti Levu, which means you'll get about as much sun here as anywhere in Fiji. Some of the South Pacific's finest scuba diving, surfing, game fishing, and yachting await you, and many nautical activities are included in the basic rates.

The Mamanucas are fine for a little time in the sun, though much of it is a tourist scene irrelevant to Fiji life. The only resort islands also in-

habited by Fijian villagers are Mana and Malolo, and those folks have recently established low-budget backpacker accommodations to make a little money on the side. If the beach and beyond are your main focus, you won't mind staying on a tiny coral speck like Beachcomber, Matamanoa, Namotu, Navini, Tavarua, and Treasure, but if hiking and land-based exploring are on your agenda you'll do better on the larger Yasawa Islands.

Dive Sites

Some of the most exhilarating diving is on the Malolo Barrier Reef and the passages around tiny **Namotu** or "Magic Island" where nutrients



are swept in by strong currents. Both pelagic and reef fish abound in the canyons, caves, and coral heads around Namotu, but in some places the action has been distorted by scuba operators who regularly feed the fish. The outer slopes of Namotu, where the reef plunges 1,000 meters into the Pacific abyss, feature turtles, reef sharks, and vast schools of barracuda, with visibility up to 50 meters. Dolphins also frequent this area.

Bigger fish, manta rays, and ocean-going sharks are often seen at **The Big W** on the outer edge of the Malolo Barrier Reef. Susie, the friendly bronze whale shark, happens by from time to time. Vertical walls drop 70 meters at this spectacular site.

In another passage in the outer barrier reef are the pinnacles of **Gotham City**, so called for the batfish seen here, along with brilliantly colored soft corals and vast schools of tropical fish.

One of the world's most famous reef shark encounter venues is **Supermarket**, a 30-meter wall just west of Mana Island. Grays, white tips, and black tips are always present, and you might even see a tiger shark. Divemasters hand-feed sharks over two meters long on this exciting dive.

Shallow Kaka Reef north of Mana Island is known as **The Circus** for the myriad clown fish and colorful corals. Eagle rays sometimes frequent the **South Mana Reef** straight out from the island's wharf. Other well-known Mamanuca dive sites include Japanese Gardens, Lobster Caves, the Pinnacles (near Malolo), Sunflower Reef, The Barrel Head, The Fingers, Jackie's Point, a B-26 bomber dating from World War II, and the wreck of the *Salamanda*, a decommissioned Blue Lagoon cruise ship.

MALOLOLAILAI ISLAND

Malololailai, or "Little Malolo," 22 km west of Nadi, is a 216-hectare island eight km around (a nice walk). Birders will appreciate the honeyeaters, bulbuls, fantails, and kingfishers they see and hear along the way. In 1880 an American sailor named Louis Armstrong bought Malololailai from the Fijians for one musket; in 1964 Dick Smith purchased it for many muskets. You can still be alone at the beaches on the far side of the island, but with two growing resorts, a marina, a nine-hole golf course, and projects for

lots more time-share condominiums in the pipeline it's becoming overdeveloped. An airstrip across the island's waist separates its two resorts; inland are rounded, grassy hills.

Plantation Island

Plantation Island Resort (P.O. Box 9176, Nadi Airport; tel. 669-333, fax 720-620), on the southwest side of Malololailai, is one of the largest of the resorts off Nadi. It belongs to the Raffles Group, which has other large hotels in Nadi and Suva. The 120 rooms are divided between 40 a/c hotel rooms in a two-story building and 80 individual *bure*. Prices begin at F\$190 single or double plus tax. The rooms have fridges but no cooking facilities, so add F\$55 pp for all meals. Plantation Island Resort tries hard to cater to families, with two children under 16 accommodated free when sharing with their parents and a children's meal plan at F\$32. Creche and babysitting services are available, and there's a new 20-meter waterslide and two pools. Free activities here include snorkeling gear, canoes, and sailing, and daily snorkeling and fishing trips are offered at no charge. Plantation's nine-hole golf course is toward the airport. This is a popular day-trip destination from Nadi, fine if you like the excitement of a lively resort.

Musket Cove

Also on Malololailai Island is **Musket Cove Resort** (Dick and Carol Smith, Private Mail Bag NAP 0352, Nadi Airport; tel. 662-215, fax 662-633, VHF 68), which opened in 1977. This is one of the few Mamanuca resorts that provides cooking facilities for its guests, but these vary according to the class of accommodations. Full facilities are provided in the six two-bedroom villas, costing F\$480 single or double, plus F\$20 per extra adult to a maximum of six. The eight seaview and four garden *bure* also have kitchenettes at F\$340 single or double. However, only breakfast bars are provided in the 18 beachfront and lagoon *bure* (from F\$396 single or double). Also with just a breakfast bar is The Lodge, a pair of five-bed dormitory *bure* costing F\$40 pp. The six a/c rooms (F\$220 single or double) upstairs in the resort's administration building have no cooking facilities at all.

Musket Cove's well-stocked grocery store sells fresh fruit and vegetables, and a coin laun-

dry is near this store. A F\$55 pp three meal plan is available at Dick's Place Restaurant and Bar by the pool. Otherwise lunch/dinner entrées average F\$13/22. Entertainment is provided every night except Sunday. The bar on Ratu Nemani Island, a tiny coral islet connected to the marina by a floating bridge, is popular among yachties off the many boats anchored here (all drinks F\$2.50).

Activities such as snorkeling, windsurfing, canoeing, line fishing, and taking village boat trips are free for Musket Cove guests. Paid activities include the Hobie cats (F\$12.50 an hour), kayaks (F\$25 an hour), and water-skiing (from F\$10). The launch *Anthony Star* is available for deep-sea game-fishing charters at F\$70 pp for four hours with a four-person minimum. The 10-meter cruiser *Dolphin Star* can be chartered for longer fishing trips at F\$120 an hour (maximum four people). The 17-meter ketch *Dulcinea* does cruises to Castaway Island (F\$42 pp without lunch), snorkeling and dolphin watching trips (F\$39 pp), and sunset viewing (F\$27 pp).

Subsurface Fiji runs the scuba diving concession at the Musket Cove marina, and many famous dive sites are less than 15 minutes away. It's F\$84/164 for one/two tanks including equipment, or pay F\$550 for the four-day PADI certification course (minimum of two persons). Children 12 years and up are accepted at their scuba school. Musket Cove Yacht Charters has a small fleet of charter yachts stationed at Musket Cove. Rates for a five-day crewed cruise to the Yasawas on the ketch *Hobo* begin at F\$700/950 a day for two/four adults, provisions included. Day charters cost less. Learn to sail lessons are F\$80 an hour.

Malololailai is a favorite stopover for cruising yachts because there is water and clean showers at the marina (mooring is F\$7/39/144 a day/week/month). Fuel and groceries are also available. The marked anchorage is protected and 15 meters deep, with good holding. Most of the boats in the Auckland to Fiji yacht race in June end up here just in time for the President's Cup, Fiji's prestige yachting Event. In mid-September there's a yachting regatta week at Musket Cove, culminating in a 965-km yacht race from Fiji to Port Vila timed for the boats' annual departure east, prior to the onset of the hurricane season. If you're on a boat in Fiji at

this time, Musket Cove is *the* place to be, and if you're trying to hitch a ride as crew you can't go wrong. There are even stories of people being *paid* to serve as crew for the race!

Getting There

Malololailai's grass-and-gravel airstrip is the busiest in the Mamanuca Group and serves as a distribution point for the other resorts. You can fly to Malololailai from Nadi Airport. Sun Air and Air Fiji have flights from Nadi between four and eight times a day between 0730–1730. The one-way fare is F\$37 for locals or F\$51 for tourists. Ask about same day round-trip fares on both airlines. Otherwise take the catamaran *Malolo Cat* from Nadi's Port Denarau at 1030, 1400, or 1700 (50 minutes, F\$37.50 one-way). A F\$49 day round-trip fare is also offered. From Malololailai, the *Cat* departs at 0900, 1230, and 1530. Call 702-774 or 662-215 for a free pickup at any Nadi area hotel.

MALOLO ISLAND

At low tide you can wade from Malololailai to nearby Malolo Island, largest of the Mamanuca Group. Yaro, one of two Fijian villages on Malolo, is known to tourists as the "shell village" for what the locals offer for sale (visitors to Yaro can expect to be charged a stiff admission fee, which includes a kava session with the chief).

A timeshare operation called the **Lako Mai Resort** (Private Mail Bag, Nadi Airport; tel. 706-101, fax 706-017) is near Yaro village, about three km from the Malolo Island Resort. The 12 *bure* and four Lockwood houses are owner-occupied and not open to casual tourists. Only resort residents may use the pool.

A bit east toward Solevu village is the **Malolo Camp**, also called "Suliasi Doko's Place," with a couple of *bure* to accommodate backpackers at around F\$90 for a double. A 12-bed dorm (F\$35 pp) and camping (F\$25) are also available, with all meals and activities included in the price. Bookings should be made through Victory Tours (the "Tourist Information Center") in central Nadi. A stay here can be combined with a sojourn at the backpacker places on Mana Island. The fast cat *Tiger IV* charges F\$50 from Nadi to the Lako Mai Resort, then it's F\$5 pp by speedboat di-

rectly to the Camp. Malolo–Mana on *Tiger IV* is F\$35. Low-budget travelers staying at the Malolo Camp are not welcome at the Malolo Island Resort.

Malolo Island Resort

The **Malolo Island Resort** (P.O. Box 10044, Nadi Airport; tel. 669-178, fax 669-197), formerly Naitasi Resort, is at Malolo's western tip. The resort is owned by the Whitton family of Nadi, which also runs Rosie The Travel Service. In 1999 the Whittons spent F\$3.5 million renovating Malolo Island Resort, which offers eight ocean-view *bure* at F\$330 double, 22 beachfront *bure* at F\$410, 20 deluxe beachfront *bure* at F\$465, and one family *bure* at F\$860 for up to eight persons. Two children under 12 can stay with their parents free. The meal plan costs F\$55 pp (half price for children). The Malolo Island Resort has a two-tier freshwater swimming pool, and most nonmotorized water sports are free; scuba diving with Subsurface Fiji costs extra.

The *Tiger IV* catamaran arrives three times a day from Nadi's Port Denarau at F\$50 each way. South Sea Cruises offers a day trip to Malolo Island Resort at F\$79 including lunch and watersports (children half price). Otherwise fly Sun Air or Air Fiji to Malololailai (F\$37), then catch a connecting speedboat straight to the resort at F\$20 pp each way (four-person minimum). The Turtle Airways seaplane from Nadi is F\$109 one-way.

THE SURFING CAMPS

Tavarua Island

Tavarua Island Resort (Jon Roseman, P.O. Box 1419, Nadi; tel. 706-513, fax 706-395), just south of Malololailai, caters to older, more affluent surfers than the places on Viti Levu, Yanuca, and Kadavu. Guests are accommodated in 12 newly renovated beach *bure* with hot showers and private bath, plus two larger family *bure*. A one week package from Los Angeles will cost US\$2,495 including airfare.

The facilities have been upgraded, with a lagoon-style swimming pool and a large hot tub. However, it's the exclusivity you pay for here, as Tavarua has negotiated sole access to some of Fiji's finest waves. There are both lefts and

rights in Malolo Passage at Tavarua, although the emphasis is usually on the lefts. When the swell is high enough you'll have some of the best surfing anywhere in the world. On the off days you can get in some deep-sea fishing, windsurfing, snorkeling, or scuba diving (extra charge). Surfing guests are expected to have had at least three years experience in a variety of conditions.

Bookings must be made six months in advance through Tavarua Island Tours in Santa Barbara, California. See *Getting There* in the main introduction for details. Local bookings from within Fiji are not accepted, and they're usually sold out anyway as Tavarua has become *the* place to go for top U.S. surfers. Keep in mind that you can sometimes surf the same waves as the Tavarua crowd while paying a lot less at Seashell Cove Resort or Rendez-Vous Beach Resort on the mainland. The difference is that you won't have the constant immediate access you have here.

Namotu Island

Just across Malolo Passage from Tavarua Island on tiny Namotu Island is **Namotu Island Resort** (Scott and Amanda O'Connor, P.O. Box 531, Nadi; tel. 706-439, fax 706-039), a "Blue Water Sports Camp" for surfers. It's similar to Tavarua but slightly more accessible. They have four beach *bure* with three beds, one duplex bungalow with two triple rooms, and two "VIP" dorm bungalows with six single beds. Children under 12 are not generally accepted.

All guests arrive on seven-night package tours from Los Angeles, costing US\$2,374 pp in the dorm or US\$4,138/5,196 single/double in a *bure*. All reservations must go through Waterways Travel in Van Nuys, California. See *Getting There* in the *On the Road* chapter. Local bookings from within Fiji are only possible in January and February, if space happens to be available. However, Namotu is usually sold out.

You must bring your own surfboards, sailboards, and kite sails as none are available here (currents in the channel often carry lost boards far out to sea). Snorkeling gear, kayaks, outrigger canoes, and wake boards are loaned free of charge. Fishing is also free, although lost lures must be paid for. Scuba diving is arranged through a neighboring resort at F\$80 per dive.

As at Tavarua, Namotu's market is mostly upscale American surfers and sailors who fly down from the United States to ride Fiji's spectacular waves. The famous Namotu Lefts peel off directly in front of their bar/restaurant area. Across Wilkes Passage is the more challenging Wilkes Right. Facing Tavarua off the south-eastern corner of Namotu is another right called Swimming Pools.

THE TINY ISLANDS

Wadigi Island

In 1998 a tiny resort called **Wadigi Island** (Ross and Jeni Allen, P.O. Box 9274, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-901) opened on the isle of the same name off the west end of Malolo. Each group gets the entire three-suite resort, costing F\$1,575 for a couple or F\$665 pp for up to six persons (children under 12 not accepted). Included in the tariff are all meals, drinks, transfers from Malolo, and sporting equipment such as kayaks, windsurfers, spy boards, fishing rods, and snorkeling gear. Only deep sea fishing and scuba diving cost extra.

Castaway Island

Castaway Island Resort (Private Mail Bag 0358, Nadi Airport; tel. 661-233, fax 665-753), on 174-hectare Qalito Island just west of Malolo, was built by Dick Smith in 1966 as Fiji's first outer-island resort. It's still one of the most popular, with higher occupancy rates than any other resort in Fiji. The 66 tastefully decorated thatched *bure* sleep four—F\$510 and up. No cooking facilities are provided but the all-meal plan is F\$55 pp. The *lovo* and *meke* are on Wednesday night, the beach barbecue on Saturday.

Among the free water sports are sailing, windsurfing, paddle boats, tennis, and snorkeling, but sport fishing and scuba diving are extra. The diving is with Karen and Craig Flannery, who charge F\$70/140 for one/two tank dives with shark feeding, plus gear. Their PADI certification course is F\$695 for one or F\$550 pp for two or more, and several other courses are also available. There's a swimming pool. Many Australian holidaymakers return to Castaway year after year; families with small children are welcome. A free "kids club" operates from 0900–1600 and

1900–2100 daily with lots of fun activities for those aged three and over, while mom and dad have some time to themselves.

There's the catamaran *Tiger IV* three times a day from Nadi's Port Denarau (F\$50 each way), and Turtle Airways has three seaplane flights a day from Nadi for F\$115. South Sea Cruises offers day trips to Castaway at F\$99 including lunch and non-motorized water sports (children half price). Only 20 persons a day are allowed to book the day cruises, so inquire early.

Navini Island

Navini Island Resort (P.O. Box 9445, Nadi Airport; tel. 662-188, fax 665-566) is a small, private resort on a tiny coral isle with only 10 beach-front *bure*. Rates vary from F\$380 double for a fan-cooled unit to F\$570 for the honeymoon *bure* with spa and enclosed courtyard. Discounts are available for stays over a week. The compulsory two/three meal package is F\$68/76 pp a day (no cooking facilities). Everyone gets to know one another by eating at a long table (private dining is also possible). Complimentary morning boat trips are offered, as are snorkeling gear, windsurf boards, and kayaks. Car/boat transfers from Nadi via the Vuda Point Marina are arranged anytime upon request (F\$160 pp round-trip). Only overnight guests are accepted.

Beachcomber Island

Beachcomber Island (Dan Costello, P.O. Box 364, Lautoka; tel. 661-500, fax 664-496), 18 km west of Lautoka, is Club Med at a fraction of the price. Since the 1960s this famous resort has received many thousands of young travelers, and it's still a super place to meet the opposite sex. You'll like the informal atmosphere and late-night parties; there's a sand-floor bar, dancing, and floor shows four nights a week. The island is so small you can stroll around it in 10 minutes, but there's a white sandy beach and buildings nestled among coconut trees and tropical vegetation. This is one of the few places in Fiji where both sexes might be able to sunbathe topless. A beautiful coral reef extends far out on all sides and scuba diving is available with Subsurface Fiji (F\$80/155 for one/two tanks, PADI open water certification F\$555). A full range of other sporting activities is available at an additional charge (parasailing F\$60, windsurfing F\$22 an

hour, water-skiing F\$32, jet skis F\$60 for 15 minutes).

Accommodations include all meals served buffet style. Most people opt for the big, open mixed dormitory where the 42 double-decker bunks (84 beds) cost F\$75 each a night. Secure lockers are provided. The 14 lodge rooms with shared bath at F\$179/238 single/double (fridge and fan provided) are a good compromise for the budget-conscious traveler. You could also get one of 22 thatched beachfront *bure* with ceiling fan, fridge, and private facilities for F\$270/320/395 single/double/triple. Small families should consider a *bure* as children aged 6–15 pay half price. The resorts' former water problems have been solved by laying pipes from the mainland and installing solar water heating.

Of course, there's also the F\$69 round-trip boat ride from Lautoka to consider, but that includes lunch on arrival day. You can make a day trip to Beachcomber for the same price if you only want a few hours in the sun. There's a free shuttle bus from all Lautoka/Nadi hotels to the wharf; the connecting three-master schooner *Tui Tai* leaves daily at 1000. Faster access is possible on the twin-hulled *Drodrolagi* from Port Denarau at 0900. Tuesday and Saturday mornings you can arrange to be picked up by the high-speed ship *Lagilagi* on its way to Savusavu (five hours, F\$90). Beachcomber has been doing it right for decades, and the biggest drawback is its very popularity, which makes it crowded and busy. Reserve well ahead at their Lautoka or Nadi Airport offices, or at any travel agency.

Treasure Island

Beachcomber's little neighbor, **Treasure Island Resort** (P.O. Box 2210, Lautoka; tel. 661-599, fax 663-577), caters to couples and families less interested in an intense singles' social scene. It's extremely popular among New Zealand and Australian vacationers and occupancy levels seldom drop below 80 percent. The resort is half owned by the Tokatoka Nakelo land-owning clan, which also supplies most of the workers, although the management is European. At Treasure, instead of helping yourself at a buffet and eating at a long communal picnic table as you would at Beachcomber, you'll be fed regular meals in a restaurant (meal plan F\$68 pp daily). Cooking facilities are not provided. The 67 a/c

units, each with three single beds (F\$495 single or double), are contained in 34 functional duplex bungalows packed into the greenery behind the island's white sands. Special dinners and evening entertainment are scheduled every other night. Some nautical activities such as windsurfing, sailing, canoes, and spy board, which cost extra on Beachcomber, are free on Treasure Island. Scuba diving is F\$99/150 including gear for one/two-tank boat dives. Unlike Beachcomber, Treasure doesn't accept any day-trippers. Guests arrive on the shuttle boat *Tiger IV*, which departs Nadi's Port Denarau three times a day (F\$40 each way, half price under age 16).

MANA ISLAND

Mana Island, 32 km northwest of Nadi, is well known for its scuba diving facilities and luxury resort, but in recent years a whole slew of backpackers' hostels have sprouted in the Fijian village on the eastern side of the island. There's much bad blood between the Japanese investors who run the resort and the Fijian villagers who accommodate the backpackers, and a high fence has been erected down the middle of the island to separate the two ends of the market. Uniformed security guards patrol the perimeter and shoestring travelers are most unwelcome anywhere in the resort, including the restaurants, bars, and watersports huts. Even the scuba diving facilities are segregated. In contrast, tourists from the resort are quite welcome to order drinks or meals at the backpacker camps.

Although this situation does poison the atmosphere on Mana Island slightly, there are lots of lovely beaches all around the island, most of them empty because the packaged tourists seldom stray far from their resort. The long white beach on the northeast side of the island is deserted. At the resort, the snorkeling is better off South Beach at low tide, off North Beach at high tide, but the nicest beach is Sunset Beach at the western end of the island. There's a great view of the Mamanucas and southern Yasawas from the highest point on Mana, a 15-minute hike from the backpacker camps, and splendid snorkeling on the reef. The Mana Main Reef is famous for its drop-offs with visibility never less



*Dream Beach,
Mana Island*

than 25 meters, and you'll see turtles, fish of all descriptions, and the occasional crayfish.

The presence of the resort supports the frequent air and sea connections from Nadi, and the budget places allow you to enjoy Mana's stunning beauty at a fraction of the price tourists at the Japanese hotels are paying. But to be frank, some of the backpacker camps on Mana are rather squalid, and the places on or around Tavea Island in the Yasawas offer better accommodations for only a bit more money.

The Backpacker Camps

Right up against the security fence near an enclosed sentry box is **Mereani's Backpackers Inn** (P.O. Box 10486, Nadi Airport; tel. 663-099 or 703-466, fax 702-763), a large house with dormitories of four, six, and eight bunks at F\$35 pp, and four double rooms at F\$77. When the five-bed dorm in the main hostel fills up, they open a big 10-bed dorm next to the staff quarters. If you have your own tent, you can camp at F\$25 pp. All rates include three generous meals served to your table (breakfast is a buffet). You can get drinks at their bar all day. Activities include deep-sea fishing trips (F\$15 pp an hour) and a four-island boat excursions (F\$20 pp). Those staying two weeks get an extra night free and several complimentary trips. To book call 702-763 in Nadi.

Ratu Kini's Resort or "Mana Backpackers" (P.O. Box 2845, Nadi; tel. 669-143, fax 720-552) has their dining area alongside the resort fence

right next to Mereani's Inn, but the large accommodations building is 100 meters back in the village. The concrete main house has one big 20-bunk dorm, another four-bunk dorm in the corridor, and two thatched dormitory *bure* with seven and 14 bunks in the backyard, all at F\$35 pp. The main house also contains two double rooms with shared bath at F\$75 double, and two better rooms with private bath and outside entrance at F\$85 or F\$110 double. One other large thatched *bure* in the backyard is F\$110 for up to four. Camping is F\$25 pp. Buffet-style meals are included in all rates (on Thursdays they prepare a *lovo*). Reader reviews of the food vary from "awful" to "outstanding." A full-day boat trip to Malololailai Island is F\$25 pp with spaghetti sandwiches for lunch. A two-hour snorkeling trip is F\$20 pp for the boat (minimum of two). Ratu Kini works out of office No. 33 (tel. 721-959), upstairs from arrivals at Nadi Airport. People on their way to Ratu Kini's often stay at Mana Rose Apartments near Travelers Beach Resort at Wailoaloa Beach in Nadi. Both Ratu Kini's and Mereani's have generators that only work at lunchtime and from 1700 until after midnight, at which time the fans go off. Expect water shortages, overcrowding, rather messy conditions, nocturnal animal sounds, a party atmosphere, and a total lack of privacy in the mixed dorms of both hostels. Unattended gear may disappear from the beach.

Another backpacker hostel called **Dream Beach** is on a splendid beach on the north side of Mana Island, across the hill from Ratu Kini's.

There are two seven-bunk and one eight-bunk houses, plus one private room with bath. Dream Beach is nicely secluded from the village and resort, but at last report it was closed. Check the current status by calling Island Travel Tours (P.O. Box 10725, Nadi Airport; tel. 724-033 or 725-930), in office No. 14 upstairs in the airport arcade at arrivals.

Ratu Kini Bokoniqiwa is a colorful character. He's the chief of 20 islands in the Mamanuca Group, but years ago he leased the western half of Mana Island to an Australian company, which sublet their property to the Japanese who now run Mana Island Resort. The resort's founder, Errol Fifer, still has a house at Sunset Beach, in case you bump into him. Mereani's is run by another branch of Ratu Kini's family and they compete fiercely. Dream Beach is run by Pastor Aisake Kabu.

Tourist Resort

Juxtaposed against the backpacker camps is **Mana Island Resort** (Private Mail Bag, Lautoka; tel. 661-455, fax 661-562), by far the biggest of the tourist resorts off Nadi. This opulent establishment boasts 128 tin-roofed bungalows clustered between the island's grassy rounded hilltops, white sandy beaches, and crystal-clear waters, and 32 hotel rooms in a pair of two-story blocks facing North Beach. The 85 garden bungalows are F\$270 single or double, while the 52 deluxe beachfront bungalows are F\$400 single or double. The 18 executive rooms are F\$550, tax included. Cooking facilities are not provided, so you'll have to patronize their restaurants (entrées F\$20 and up). Live entertainment is presented nightly, and three nights a week there's a Fijian or Polynesian floor show. The room rates include nonmotorized water sports, but water-skiing, para-flying, water scooters, game fishing, and scuba diving are extra. A sunset cruise from Mana Island aboard the schooner *Seaspray* is F\$55 (drinks extra).

Scuba Diving

Resort guests may patronize **Aqua-Trek** (tel. 669-309), which offers boat dives at F\$80 for one tank plus F\$15 for equipment or F\$390 for a six-dive package. Night dives are F\$95. They run a variety of dive courses, beginning with a four-day PADI open-water certification course (F\$600).

Underwater shark feeding is Aqua-Trek Mana's speciality, usually every Thursday and Sunday.

Aqua-Trek doesn't accept divers from the backpacker camps who must dive with **Atlantis Divers** (tel. 702-704), which has a dive shop adjacent to Mereani's Inn. They also take out snorkelers. Ratu Kini's dive operation is known as **Mana Pacific Divers**.

Getting There

The airstrip on Mana receives about a dozen flights a day from Nadi by Sun Air and Air Fiji (F\$47 each way). The terminal is a seven-minute walk west of the resort (to get to the backpacker camps, head for the wharf from which the security fence is visible).

If you're already staying in Nadi it's just as easy to arrive on the *Tiger IV* catamaran, which runs three times a day from Port Denarau (F\$50 each way including Nadi hotel pickups). Otherwise, South Sea Cruises runs a daytrip from Nadi including lunch at the resort for F\$95 (children under 16 half price). The ferry ties up to a wharf at South Beach, in fact, Mana is the only Mamanuca island with a wharf, so you don't need to take off your shoes.

Any Nadi travel agency or hotel can book these transfers but only buy a one-way ticket so you'll have the freedom to return by another means. By taking the *Tiger IV* or a plane to Mana you won't have to commit yourself to one backpacker hostel or another and can size up the situation when you get there. Ratu Kini's own shuttle boat leaves Wailoaloa Beach at 1100 daily, costing F\$35/60 one-way/round-trip including bus transfers from Nadi hotels.

THE OUTER ISLANDS

Matamanoa Island

Matamanoa Island Resort (P.O. Box 9729, Nadi Airport; tel. 660-511 or 723-620, fax 661-069 or 720-282), to the northwest of Mana Island, has 13 a/c hotel rooms at F\$230 single or double, and 20 fan-cooled *bure* at F\$380, plus tax. Stay six nights and the seventh night is free. Children under 12 are not accepted. A full American breakfast is included in the price but the lunch and dinner plan is F\$58 pp extra. No cooking facilities are provided but a fridge is in

CASTAWAY, THE MOVIE

In early 2001 moviegoers worldwide got a taste of the savage beauty of Fiji's westernmost islands from Robert Zemeckis' film *Castaway*. The story revolves around a Federal Express employee (Tom Hanks) who becomes stranded on an uninhabited tropical isle after his plane goes down in the Pacific. The plane-wrecked air courier eventually spends four years on the island, and to achieve the desperate look needed to play his role, Hanks had to lose 40 pounds and grow a ragged beard. Thus *Castaway* was filmed in two stages eight months apart, with the second portion shot on location in the western Mamanucas in early 2000. For this event around a hundred members of the film crew descended on tiny Monuriki Island, between Matamanoa and Tokoriki.

At the time, concerns were raised that there might be a repeat of the damaging controversy surrounding the filming of *The Beach* in Thailand, when Leonardo DiCaprio and 20th Century Fox were accused of inflicting serious environmental damage on Maya Beach in Krabi's Phi Phi Islands National Park. The avoid this, Zemeckis was careful to have veteran naturalist and author Dick Watling do an environmental impact assessment before the filming, and the film crew followed Watling's recommendations carefully. Later, when environmentalists from the World Wide Fund for Nature in Suva investigated the affair, they gave Zemeckis and his team high marks.

Ironically, 50-odd feral goats have long ravaged the vegetation on Monuriki, threatening the island's rare crested iguanas with extinction. The filmmakers offered to pay the Fijian landowners a bounty of F\$100 per goat to remove the beasts, but their offer was refused. To Monuriki's customary owners on nearby Yanuya Island, a steady supply of goat meat is worth more than money or iguanas. Although no Fijians appear in *Castaway*, it conveys well the spellbinding scenery of this exotic region.

every room. Complimentary afternoon tea is served at the bar, followed by snacks during happy hour 1730-1830. The tiny island's fine white beach and blue lagoon are complemented by a swimming pool and lighted tennis court. Scuba diving is with Aqua-Trek.

Boat transfers from Nadi on the *Tiger IV* are at 0900 and 1215 daily, costing F\$75 pp each way

with a change of boats at Mana Island. If you fly to Mana, it's F\$35 each way between Mana and Matamanoa. The schooner *Seaspray* operates all inclusive day cruises from Matamanoa for F\$120. This is the closest resort to Monuriki Island, the uninhabited island seen in the Tom Hanks film *Castaway*.

Tokoriki Island

Tokoriki Island Resort (P.O. Box 10547, Nadi Airport; tel. 661-999, fax 665-295) is the farthest Mamanuca resort from Nadi. There are 23 spacious fan-cooled *bure* from F\$475/525 double/triple (no cooking facilities). The resort faces west on a kilometer-long beach and water sports such as reef fishing, windsurfing, and Hobie cats are free (water-skiing and sportfishing available at additional charge). The scuba concessionaire on Tokoriki, William Wragg of Dive Tropex, charges F\$99/150 for one/two tanks including gear. At the center of the island is a 94-meter-high hill offering good views of the Yasawa and Mamanuca groups. As on Matamanoa, you must take the fast catamaran *Tiger IV* to Mana, then a launch to Tokoriki (F\$75 pp each way). The regular launch to Matamanoa and Tokoriki leaves Mana twice daily. If you fly to Mana, you can catch this launch straight to Tokoriki for F\$35. Turtle Airways charges F\$110 pp to fly from Nadi to either Matamanoa or Tokoriki.

Vomo Island

Standing alone midway between Lautoka and Wayasewa Island (see the Yasawa Islands map), 91-hectare Vomo is a high volcanic island with a white beach around its west side. Since 1993 the coral terrace and slopes behind this beach have been the site of the luxurious **Vomo Island Resort** (P.O. Box 5650, Lautoka; tel. 667-955 or 668-122, fax 667-997 or 668-500). The 28 large a/c villas with individual hot tubs run F\$847 pp double occupancy, including all meals, plus tax. Once part of the Sheraton chain, Vomo Island Resort offers swimming and snorkeling infinitely better than anything at Denarau. Scuba diving is with Tropical Dive. Helicopter transfers from Nadi Airport cost F\$835 pp round-trip, launch transfers from Nadi's Port Denarau are F\$990 per couple round-trip, or you can arrive on a Turtle Airways seaplane for F\$500 pp each way.



SALVATORE CASA

SOUTHERN VITI LEVU

The southwest side of Viti Levu along the Queens Road is known as the Coral Coast for its fringing reef. Sigatoka and Navua are the main towns in this area with most accommodations at Korotogo and Korolevu. This shoreline is heavily promoted as one of the top resort areas in Fiji, probably because of its convenient location along the busy highway between Nadi and Suva, but to be frank, the beaches here are second rate, with good swimming and snorkeling conditions only at high tide. Much of the coral has been destroyed by hurricanes. To compensate, most of the hotels have swimming pools and in some places you can go reef walking at low tide. Top sights include the Sigatoka sand dunes and the impressive gorge of the Navua River. The possibility of rainfall and lushness of the vegetation increase as you move east.

Getting Around

An easy way to get between the Coral Coast resorts and Nadi/Suva is on the air-conditioned **Fiji Express** shuttle bus run by the United Touring Company (tel. 722-821). The bus leaves the Holiday Inn Suva, Berjaya Inn, and other top

hotels in Suva (F\$30) at 0730 and calls at the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor (F\$26), The Warwick Hotel (F\$21), Naviti Resort, Hideaway, Tabua Sands, Outrigger Reef Resort (F\$20), Fijian Hotel (F\$17), most Nadi hotels, and the Sheratons (F\$7), arriving at Nadi Airport at 1200 (quoted fares are to the airport). It leaves Nadi Airport at 1245 and returns along the same route, reaching Suva at 1715. Bookings can be made at the UTC office in the airport arrival concourse or at hotel tour desks.

Also ask about the air-conditioned **Queen's Deluxe Coach**, which runs in the opposite direction, leaving Nadi Airport for Suva at 0730, The Fijian Hotel at 0900, the Warwick and Naviti at 1020, and Pacific Harbor at 1110. The return trip departs the Holiday Inn Suva around 1600, arriving at the airport at 2030 (F\$16).

Many less expensive non-a/c buses pass on the highway, but make sure you're waiting somewhere they'll stop. Pacific Transport's "stage" or "highway" buses between Lautoka/Nadi and Suva will stop at any of the Coral Coast resorts, but the express buses call only at Sigatoka, Pacific Harbor, and Navua. If you're on an east-

bound express, get a ticket to Sigatoka and look for a local bus (or taxi) from there. Sunbeam Transport express buses *do* stop at many resorts, so ask.

NATADOLA AND THE FIJIAN

Natadola Beach

The long, white sandy beach here is easily the best on Viti Levu and a popular picnic spot with day-trippers arriving on the sugar train from The Fijian Hotel on the Coral Coast. Care should be taken while swimming in the ocean as the waves can be unexpectedly strong. The small leftpoint break at Natadola is good for beginning surfers but one must always be aware of the currents and undertow. The left-hand breaks outside the reef are only for the experienced.

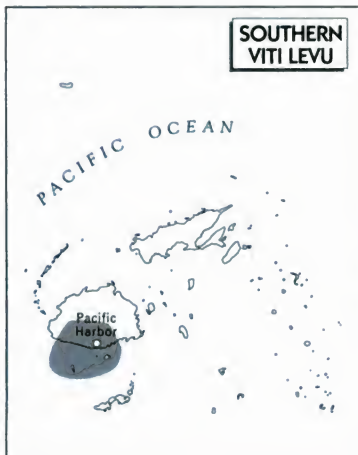
Plans to erect three or four luxury hotels on Natadola have been stalled by limited water supplies at the site. In 1999 it was announced that a 500-room resort to be managed by the Four Seasons chain would be erected here after the Fiji Government agreed to spend millions on infrastructure. Unfortunately for the local economy, the project was scrapped after the May 2000 coup. At the moment very few facilities are avail-

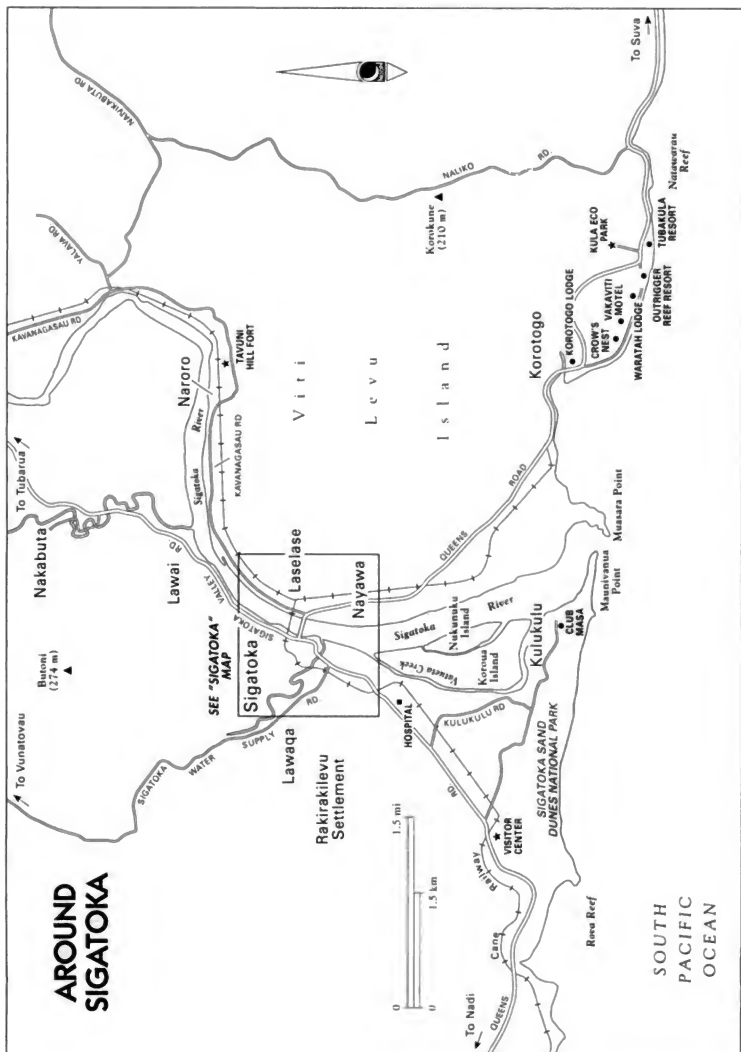
able here, although the local villagers offer horse-back riding. It may be possible to rent a *bure* in Sanasana village at the south end of the beach. In the past travelers have camped freelance on Natadola Beach, but theft is a real problem here. Don't leave valuables unattended on this beach.

The **Natadola Beach Resort** (Private Mail Bag 0381, Nadi Airport; tel. 721-001, fax 721-000) offers one block of three rooms, another block of four rooms, and two individual units at F\$350 single or double including continental breakfast. The luxurious "sand castle" villa is F\$450. Honeymooners are the target clientele and children under 16 are not accepted. Each of the 10 fan-cooled units has a fridge, but no cooking facilities are provided so you must use their restaurant. The long swimming pool meanders between huge native trees in a garden setting. The Natadola Beach Resort was built by New Zealander Peter Jones, who developed the Coral Coast Railway from Shangri-La's Fijian Resort in 1986. Peter has since sold the railway, but passengers still have lunch at the resort. Other day-trippers cannot order drinks here without also taking lunch.

A far less expensive place to stay is **Robinson Crusoe Island** (P.O. Box 2580, Nadi; tel. 550-050 or 700-026, fax 700-010), on Likuri Island, a small coral isle just north of Natadola. The two island *bure* with shared bath are F\$80 double, while the big *bure* dorm is F\$35 pp. Rooms in the Coconut House are F\$79 pp. Prices include all meals, and fishing, snorkeling, and windsurfing are free activities. Surfing is F\$25 pp (not including gear). Boat transfers from the Natadola Road Jetty are at 1000 and 1630, costing F\$20 pp round-trip for the boat only or F\$30 including bus transfers from Nadi. Day tours to Robinson Crusoe Island are F\$79 pp, Nadi hotel transfers and lunch included. Call ahead to check prices, as they do vary. The beach here is great, and it's a good alternative to the better-known Mamanuca resorts.

Paradise Transport (tel. 500-028) has buses on weekdays from Sigatoka to Vusama village about three km from the beach at 0900, 1200, 1500, and 1700. Otherwise get off any Nadi bus at the Tuva Indian School stop on Queens Road and hitch 10 km to the beach. It's also possible to hike to Natadola in three hours along the coastal railway line from opposite Shangri-La's Fijian Resort.





The Fijian

Shangri-La's Fijian Resort (Private Mail Bag NAP O353, Nadi Airport; tel. 520-155, fax 500-402) occupies all 40 hectares of Yanuca Island, not to be confused with another island of the same name west of Beqa. This Yanuca Island is connected to Viti Levu by a causeway 10 km west of Sigatoka and 61 km southeast of Nadi Airport. Former President Mara's wife is the main landowner of the island, although the resort itself is Malaysian owned. Opened in 1967, the 436-room complex of three-story Hawaiian-style buildings was Fiji's first large resort and it's still Fiji's biggest hotel, catering to a predominantly Japanese clientele. The air-conditioned rooms begin at F\$370 single or double, or F\$950 for a deluxe beach *bure*, plus tax. There's no charge for two children 18 or under sharing their parents' room, so this resort is a good choice for families. Shangri-La's Fijian offers a nine-hole golf course (par 31), five tennis courts, numerous restaurants and bars, three swimming pools, and a white sandy beach. Every Friday night there's firewalking, a *meke*, and a *lovo*. Avis Rent A Car has a desk in The Fijian.

John Anthony's **Coral Coast Scuba Ventures** (P.O. Box 812, Sigatoka; tel. 520-155 or 528-793, fax 520-356) has the diving concession at Shangri-La's Fijian Resort. There are morning and afternoon dives, costing F\$110/180 for one-two tanks including gear. Night diving is F\$130. Daily at 1300, there's a free scuba lesson at the Shangri-La's Fijian Resort's pool. Dive sites such as Nabaibai Passage, Barracuda Drift, The Wall, Golden Reef, and The Pinnacles are within a few minutes of the resort jetty.

Attractions near Shangri-La

Train buffs won't want to miss the *Fijian Princess*, a restored narrow-gauge railway originally built to haul sugarcane. It now runs 16-km day-trips along the coast to Natadola Beach daily at 1000. The station is on the highway opposite the access road to Shangri-La's Fijian Hotel, and the ride costs F\$69 pp including a barbecue lunch. For information about hotel pickups call the **Coral Coast Railway Co.** (P.O. Box 571, Sigatoka; tel. 520-434).

Across the road from the train station is the **Ka Levu Cultural Center** (tel. 520-200), a mock-Fijian village dispensing instant Fijian culture to

tourists for F\$15 pp admission. The walls of Gecko's Restaurant in the center are totally covered with colorful murals on the theme "a girl's night out" by Australian artist Kerry Melen.

Sigatoka Sand Dunes

From the mouth of the Sigatoka River westward, five kilometers of incredible 20-meter-high sand dunes separate the cane fields from the beach. These dunes were formed over millennia as sediments brought down by the river were blown back up onto the shore by the southeast trades. The winds sometimes uncover human bones from old burials, and potsherds lie scattered along the seashore—these fragments have been carbon dated at up to 3,000 years old. Now and then giant sea turtles come ashore here to lay their eggs.

It's a fascinating, evocative place, protected since 1989 as a national park through the efforts of the National Trust for Fiji. The **Visitors Center** (tel. 520-343; admission F\$5 pp) is on Queens Road, about four km west of Sigatoka. Exhibits outline the ecology of the park, and for an extra fee, park wardens will lead visitors along a foot-path over dunes that reach as high as 50 meters in one area. It's well worth a visit to experience this unique environment. Any local bus between Nadi and Sigatoka will drop you right in front of the Sand Dunes Visitors Center on the main highway (the express buses won't stop here).

KULUKULU

Fiji's superlative surfing beach is near Kulukulu village, five km south of Sigatoka, where the Sigatoka River breaks through Viti Levu's fringing reef to form the Sigatoka Sand Dunes. The surf is primarily a river-mouth point break with numerous beach breaks down the beach. It's one of the only places for beach-break surfing on Viti Levu, and unlike most other surfing locales around Fiji, no boat is required here. The wind-surfing in this area is fantastic, as you can either sail "flat water" across the river mouth or do "wave jumping" in the sea (all-sand bottom and big rollers with high wind). The surfing is good all the time, but if you want to combine it with windsurfing, it's good planning to surf in the morning and windsurf in the afternoon when the

wind comes up. You can also bodysurf here. Be prepared, however, as these waters are treacherous for novices. There's a nice place nearby where you can swim in the river and avoid the ocean's currents.

American surfer Marcus Oliver runs a small budget resort behind the dunes called **Club Masa** (P.O. Box 710, Sigatoka; tel. 925-717), also known as Oasis Budget Lodge, "a licensed private hotel for nomads of the winds and surf." The rates including two good meals are F\$40 pp in the 10-bed dormitory or F\$50 pp in the two double rooms and two four-bed rooms (two-night minimum stay). Camping is not allowed. There's no electricity, but the layout is attractive and the location excellent. Have a beer on their pleasant open porch. Food and drinks are not available during the day, so you should bring something for snacks. Sporting equipment is also not provided, and ask what time they plan to lock the gate before going out for an evening stroll (and leave your valuables behind as this is an isolated area). When Marcus is away, his father Gordon Oliver manages the property, and it's important to make a good impression when you first arrive as Gordon doesn't accept just anybody as a guest. It's a good base from which to surf this coast.

Sunbeam Transport (tel. 500-168) has buses from Sigatoka to Kulukulu village 11 times on Saturdays, eight times on Wednesdays, and six times on other weekdays, but none on Sunday and holidays. Taxi fare to Club Masa should be around F\$5, and later you may have to pay only a dollar for a seat in an empty taxi returning to Sigatoka.

SIGATOKA

Sigatoka ("sing-a-TO-ka") is the main center for the Coral Coast tourist district and headquarters of Nadroga/Navosa Province with a racially mixed population of 8,000. A new bridge over the Sigatoka River opened here in 1997, replacing an older bridge damaged during a 1994 hurricane but still used by pedestrians. The town has a picturesque riverside setting and is pleasant to stroll around.

You'll find ubiquitous souvenir shops and a colorful local market with a large handicraft section (especially on Wednesday and Saturday).

Jack's Handicrafts (tel. 500-810) facing the river is worth a look. Strangely, the traditional handmade **Fijian pottery** for which Sigatoka is famous is not available here. Find it by asking in Nayawa (where the clay originates), Yavulo, Nasama, and Lawai villages near Sigatoka.

Upriver from Sigatoka is a wide valley known as Fiji's "salad bowl" for its rich market gardens by Fiji's second-largest river. Vegetables are grown in farms on the west side of the valley, while the lands on the east bank are planted with sugarcane. Small trucks use the good dirt road up the west side of the river to take the produce to market, while a network of narrow-gauge railways collects the cane from the east side. You can drive right up the valley in a normal car. The locals believe that Dakuwaqa, shark god of the Fijians, dwells in the river.

The valley also supplies a fruit juice cannery at Sigatoka that processes bananas, mangos, guava, papayas, and tomatoes purchased from villagers who harvest fruit growing wild on their land (the creation of large plantations is inhibited by the threat of hurricanes). South Pacific Foods Ltd. sells mostly to the United States and Europe where their pulp has secured a niche in the organic food market. It's owned by the French transnational entrepreneur Pernod Ricard.

Also near Sigatoka, five km up the left (east) bank of the river from the bridge, is the **Tavuni Hill Fort** on a bluff at Naroro village. The fort was established by the 18th-century Tongan chief Maile Latemai and destroyed by native troops under British control in 1876. An interpretive center and walkways have been established, and admission is F\$6 for adults or F\$3 for children (closed Sunday). There's a good view of the river and surrounding countryside from here. Those without transport can take a taxi from Sigatoka to the reception area (about F\$15 round-trip including a one-hour wait). Otherwise the occasional Mavua bus will bring you here from Sigatoka. To walk from Sigatoka takes about an hour or so each way.

Accommodations

The **Riverview Hotel** (P.O. Box 22, Sigatoka; tel. 520-544, fax 520-200), above Melrose Restaurant facing the new bridge in town, has seven rooms with bath and balcony at F\$35/45 single/double.

The **Sigatoka Club** (P.O. Box 38, Sigatoka; tel. 500-026), across the traffic circle from the Riverview, has four fan-cooled rooms with private bath at F\$22/33 single/double, and a five-bed dorm at F\$11 pp. Check that there's water before checking in and bring mosquito coils. The rooms are often full, but the Club's bar is always perfect for a beer or a game of pool (three tables). The bar is open Monday–Saturday 1000–2200, Sunday 1000–2100.

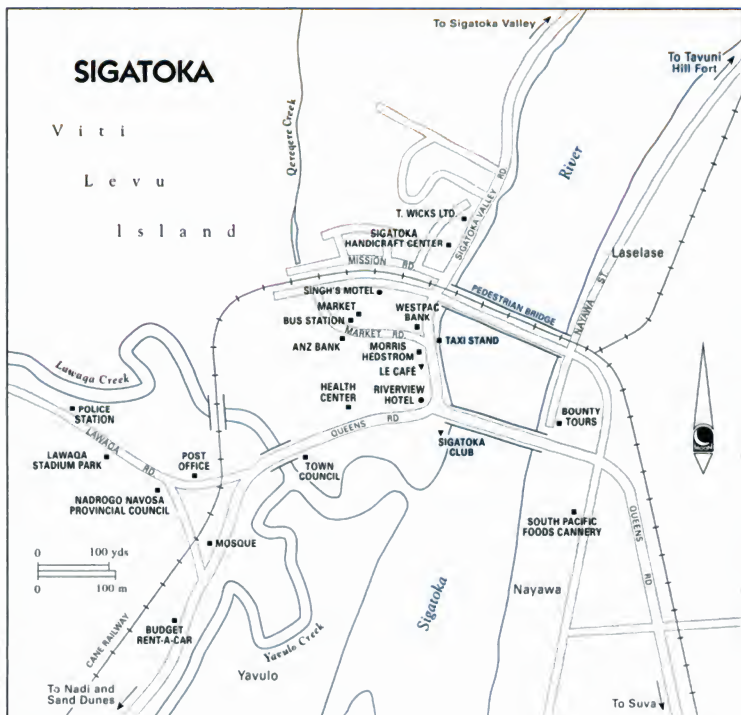
Singh's Backpacker's Motel (P.O. Box 247, Sigatoka; tel./fax 500-514), located on the road west of the pedestrian bridge, offers a large dorm at F\$12 pp, plus rooms for F\$25/30 single/double.

Food

The **Lucky Corner Restaurant** (tel. 520-275) in front of the bus station dispenses greasy fast food to bus passengers during their 15-minute stop here.

The **Rattan Restaurant** (tel. 500-819), further along the row of shops beside the market, has F\$3 chicken, fish, sausage, and chip meals in the warmer behind the front counter. More expensive a la carte dishes are served in the dark dining room in back.

Le Café (tel. 520-668; Mon.–Sat. 0900–1700), next to Jack's Handicrafts, is a branch of a restaurant of the same name at Korotogo. You have a choice of a dozen lunches for F\$5.50



(pizzas F\$6–17). Connect to the Internet at Le Surf Café here at F\$3.50 for 10 minutes.

Otherwise head over to the **Sigatoka Club** near the new bridge where meals average F\$5 at lunchtime (listed on a blackboard) but cost much more at dinner (printed menu).

Services

Of the four banks in Sigatoka, the Westpac is the most convenient since they have a separate overseas section at the back and you don't have to join the long queue of local customers. The ANZ Bank opposite the bus station has a Visa/MasterCard ATM outside their office.

The public fax at the post office is fax 520-220.

T-Wicks Ltd. (tel. 520-820), on Sigatoka Valley Road, offers email at F\$0.30 a minute.

Caines Photofast (tel. 500-877), between Lucky Corner and Rattan Restaurant, develops color film in one hour.

Health

The District Hospital (tel. 500-455) is just south-west of Sigatoka, out on the road to Nadi.

Dr. Gurusmarna D. Dasi (tel. 500-369) and Dr. Rudy Gerona and Dr. (Mrs.) Aida Gerona (tel. 520-128 or 520-327) all work out of offices on Sigatoka Valley Road, facing the river a bit north of the old bridge. They're open Monday–Friday 0830–1600, Saturday 0830–1300.

Patel Chemist (tel. 500-213) is behind the market.

Transportation

Pacific Transport (tel. 500-088) express buses leave Sigatoka for Suva at 0845, 0910, 1025, 1425, 1800, and 1945 (127 km, 3.5 hours, F\$6.35), and for Nadi Airport at 0935, 1115, 1220, 1500, 1800, and 2020 (70 km, 1.5 hours, F\$3.70). **Sunbeam Transport** has express buses to Suva at 0640, 0800, 1220, and 1320. Many additional local services also operate to/from Nadi (61 km). Beware of taxi drivers hustling for passengers in the bus station who may claim untruthfully that there's no bus going where you want to go.

Weekdays you can arrange your own 4.5-hour, F\$6 tour by taking the 0900 **Paradise Transport** (tel. 500-028) bus up the west side of the Sigatoka Valley to Tugarua and back. Carriers to places farther up the valley like Korolevu

(F\$7) and Namoli (F\$7) leave weekdays just after noon, returning the next day. They park beside a mango tree at the market, just around the corner from Sigatoka Bus Station.

Budget Rent-a-Car (tel. 500-986) is at Niranjana's, opposite the Mobil Service Station at the west entrance to town.

KOROTOGO

A cluster of budget places to stay and one large American-run resort are at Korotogo, eight km east of Sigatoka, with only the Outrigger Reef Resort, Sandy Point Beach Cottages, and Tubakula Beach Resort right on the beach itself. Most of the places to stay at Korolevu farther east are more upmarket. East of Korotogo the sugar fields of western Viti Levu are replaced by coconut plantations with rainforests creeping up the green slopes behind.

A road almost opposite Sandy Point Beach Cottages leads to a bird park called **Kula Eco**



The original explorers of Oceania, the Polynesians, left distinctive lapita pottery, decorated in horizontal bands, scattered across the Pacific. Around 500 B.C. the art was lost and no more pottery was made in Polynesia. Melanesian pottery stems from a different tradition. This antique water pot was shaped and decorated by hand, as are those made in the Sigatoka Valley today.

Park (tel. 500-505, fax 520-202; open daily 1000–1630, admission F\$11, children under 12 half price). It's your only chance to get a close look at the *kula* lorikeet, the Kadavu musk parrot, the goshawk, and others. The park has a captive breeding program for the endangered crested iguana and peregrine falcon. Displays explain it all.

Accommodations

The first place you reach as you arrive from Sigatoka is **Korotogo Lodge** (tel. 500-733), 400 meters north of the traffic circle at the west end of Korotogo. They have two family rooms at F\$40 single or double, and one smaller room at F\$25 single or double. It's F\$12 pp in the 10-bed dorm. Rooms by the hour are F\$10. You can use the communal kitchen, but it's all very basic and right on the noisy highway—not recommended.

The **Crow's Nest Resort** (P.O. Box 270, Sigatoka; tel. 500-230, fax 520-354), a few hundred meters southeast of the traffic circle on Sunset Strip, offers 18 split-level duplex bungalows with cooking facilities and verandah at F\$88 for up to four, breakfast included. The Crow's Nest Dormitory behind the reception is F\$20 pp including breakfast and dinner for the eight beds. The restaurant is behind the swimming pool. The nicely landscaped grounds are just across the highway from the beach and good views over the lagoon are obtained from the Crow's Nest's elevated perch.

The **Vakaviti Motel and Dorm** (Arthur Jennings, P.O. Box 5, Sigatoka; tel. 500-526, fax 520-424), next to the Crow's Nest, has three self-catering units at F\$45/65 single/double, and a five-bed family *bure* at F\$75 double. Children are F\$5 if naughty, free if good kids. Two rooms with shared bath are F\$40 double. There are two six-bed dormitories, one with a nice ocean view (F\$18 pp) and another with no fan (F\$15 pp). Stay a week and the eighth night is free. Facilities include a swimming pool and a large lending library/book exchange at the reception. At last report Vakaviti was for sale, so things could change. (Vakaviti means "the Fijian way of life.")

The **Casablanca Hotel** (P.O. Box 1486, Sigatoka; tel. 520-600), next door to Vakaviti, is a two-story hillside building on the inland side of Sunset Strip. Its eight a/c rooms with cooking facilities and arched balconies begin at F\$45/60 single/double.

A more upmarket place to stay is the **Bedarra Inn** (P.O. Box 1213, Sigatoka; tel. 500-476, fax 520-116), 77 Sunset Strip, with 21 a/c rooms with fridge in a new two-story block at F\$155 for up to four persons. You could be quoted a price much lower than this if you call to ask if any specials are on offer. It's all tastefully decorated but only four rooms have kitchens. A swimming pool, video room, and lounge round out their facilities.

Just a few hundred meters east near the Outrigger Reef Resort is **Waratah Lodge** (P.O. Box 86, Sigatoka; tel. 500-278), with three large A-frame bungalows at F\$44 double, plus F\$5 per additional person up to six maximum. The two rooms below the reception in the main building are F\$33/39 single/double. Cooking facilities are available. The swimming pool and charming management add to the allure. It's good value and recommended.

The 254-room **Outrigger Reef Resort** (P.O. Box 173, Sigatoka; tel. 500-044, fax 520-074) plunges down the hillside from Queens Road to a sandy beach. A great view of this Fijian village-style complex can be had from the reception. In 2000 the property underwent a US\$23.3 million redevelopment, and to provide more building space the main highway was rerouted away from the coast. The new hotel is owned by Australians Geoff Shaw and Bob Cliff, who also run Castaway Island Resort in the Mamanucas, and it's managed by Outrigger Hotels of Hawaii. The Outrigger caters to the middle market, providing comfortable, unpretentious facilities at affordable package prices. The four-story main building on the hill has 167 a/c rooms with ocean views and balconies, beginning at F\$410 for up to four people. Down near the million-liter swimming pool by the beach is a three-story block remaining from the old Reef Resort, with 40 a/c rooms starting at F\$495. Scattered around the grounds are 47 regular thatched *bure* with fan from F\$475, and five big duplex *bure* at F\$1,150 for a family of up to six. Rates include tax and a buffet breakfast. Wheelchair accessible rooms are available. Most guests have all-inclusive packages and pay substantially less than this. Even if you're not staying here, it's worth coming for the Fijian firewalking Friday at 1845 (F\$12), followed by a buffet and *meke* at the restaurant (F\$32). Tennis courts are provided, and Thrifty

Car Rental and Rosie The Travel Service have desks just off the lobby. The Avis office (tel. 520-144) is on the beach opposite Waratah Lodge just west of the hotel.

Sandy Point Beach Cottages (P.O. Box 23, Sigatoka; tel. 500-125, fax 520-147) shares the same beach with the adjacent Outrigger Reef Resort. Three fan-cooled double units with full cooking facilities are offered at F\$70 single, F\$80 double or triple, and a five-bed cottage is F\$130. Set in spacious grounds right by the sea, Sandy Point has its own freshwater swimming pool. The six huge satellite dishes you see on their lawn allow you to pick up 10 channels on the TV in your room. It's a good choice for families or small groups, but it's often full so you must reserve well ahead.

A bit east again is **Tubakula Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 2, Sigatoka; tel. 500-097, fax 500-201). The 23 pleasant A-frame bungalows with fan, cooking facilities, and private bath, each capable of sleeping three, vary in price from F\$60 in the garden to F\$73 facing the beach (F\$12 extra for a fourth person). Superior bungalows are F\$83 poolside or F\$97 beachfront. One self-catering house has three rooms with shared bath at F\$36/40 single/double. Their "Beach Club" dormitory consists of eight rooms, each with three or four beds at F\$15 a bed. Small discounts are available to youth hostel, VIP, and Nomads card holders, and if you stay a week you'll get 10 percent off. Late readers will like the good lighting. A communal kitchen is available to all, plus a swimming pool, games room, nightly videos, and mini-market. The snorkeling here is good, there's surfing and scuba diving nearby, and bus excursions are available. What more do you want? Basically, Tubakula is a quiet, do-your-own-thing kind of place for people who don't need lots of organized activities. Seated on your terrace watching the sky turn orange and purple behind the black silhouettes of the palms along the beach, a bucket of cold Fiji Bitter stubbies close at hand, you'd swear this was paradise! It's one of the most popular backpacker's resorts in Fiji and well worth a couple of nights.

Food

Facing the beach just west of the Outrigger Reef Resort is **Fasta Food** (tel. 520-619) with a blackboard listing a variety of dishes for F\$4-12. Pizza

is F\$6-30 (dinner only). To get there from the Outrigger, go down onto the beach and walk west.

A much better bet is **Le Café Garden Restaurant** (tel. 520-877; Mon.-Sat. 1600-2200), between Fasta Food and Waratah Lodge. Pizzas are F\$6-15, specials F\$7-15. Happy hour is 1700-1900. Under Swiss management, this place has class.

Another evening you could walk 800 meters west to the **Crow's Nest Restaurant** (tel. 500-230; daily 0700-1500/1800-2130). The best place for a meal out along this way is the **Bedarra Inn** (tel. 500-476; daily 0700-2200), with main dishes ranging from pasta Bedarra at F\$13 to lobster for F\$36. Their specialty is seafood curry, baked and served in a fresh whole coconut (F\$19). The **Sinbad Restaurant** (tel. 520-600) at the Casablanca Hotel isn't as nice as these, though prices are a bit lower.

Internet Access

Adventures in Paradise (P.O. Box 910, Sigatoka; tel. 520-833; Mon.-Sat. 0800-1830, Sun. 1000-1830), next to Fasta Food, offers an Internet connection at F\$0.30 a minute. They also sell tours to Biauisevu Falls (F\$79) and the Naihehe Cave (F\$99).

Getting There

Local buses on Queens Road stop at the doors of the Outrigger Reef Resort and Tubakula Beach Resort. For the Crow's Nest, Vakaviti, Casablanca, Bedarra, and Waratah, get off the bus at the traffic circle on the coast, just where the highway turns inland and heads east toward the Outrigger. From there, you follow the old highway (Sunset Strip) south along the beach to your hotel.

VATUKARASA

This small village between Korotogo and Korolevu is notable for its quaint appearance and the **Baravi Handicraft Boutique** (tel. 520-364), which carries a wide selection of Fijian handicrafts at fixed prices. They buy directly from the craftspeople themselves and add only a 20 percent markup, plus tax. It's a good place to get an idea of how much things should cost and is worth an outing by local bus if you're staying at one of the Coral Coast resorts.

KOROLEVU

At Korolevu, east of Korotogo, the accommodations tend to cater to a more upscale crowd, and cooking facilities are usually not provided for guests. These places are intended primarily for people on packaged beach holidays who intend to spend most of their time unwinding. Distances between the resorts are great, so for sightseeing you'll be dependent on your hotel's tour desk. An exception is the celebrated Beachouse, which opened in 1996. The Coral Village Resort and Waidroka Bay Resort farther east also accommodate budget travelers, but they're both far off the highway.

For scuba diving, it's **Mike's Divers** (Mike and Phylis Jaureguy, P.O. Box 136, Korolevu; tel./fax 530-222) at Votua village near Korolevu. Mike's prices are the best on this coast at F\$65/110/300/450 for one/two/six/10 tanks, plus F\$10 for gear. Night diving is F\$75. Non-divers can snorkel from the boat for F\$10 (or free from his beach). Non-swimmers can sit on his seaside verandah and have a cup of tea. All the usual courses are offered, including open-water certification at F\$395. Drift diving along Morgan's Wall is Mike's specialty (giant sea fans, soft corals, lion fish). Or ask to go to Turtle Town where all good turtles sleep.

Several companies offer tours to **Biausevu Falls** a 25-minute hike from Biausevu village, itself just under three km inland from Queens Road

between The Warwick and Vilisite's Restaurant. The trail to the falls zigzags across the river half a dozen times, but you'll enjoy a refreshing swim in the pool at the foot of the cascading waterfall. The village charges F\$5 pp admission to the area. Call Adventures in Paradise (tel. 520-833) in Korotogo for information on tours.

Accommodations

The **Tambua Sands Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 177, Sigatoka; tel. 500-399, fax 520-265), in an attractive location facing the sea about 10 km east of the Outrigger Reef Resort, conveys a feeling of calm and peace. The 31 beach bungalows are F\$85 garden or F\$115 beachfront for a double. No cooking facilities are provided. Though the restaurant is nothing special, there's a swimming pool, excellent live music most evenings, and a *meke* on Friday night. UTC has a tour desk at this hotel.

The 80-room **Hideaway Resort** (P.O. Box 233, Sigatoka; tel. 500-177, fax 520-025) at Korolevu, is three km east of Tambua Sands and 20 km east of Sigatoka. Set on a palm-fringed beach before a verdant valley, the smaller fan-cooled *bure* begin at F\$209 triple; larger units suitable for up to six people go for F\$390, a full breakfast included (no cooking facilities). Not all rooms have air conditioning. A five-day, five-dinner plan is F\$132. This resort provides entertainment nightly, including a *meke* on Tuesday and Friday, firewalking on Thursday (F\$15), and an all-you-can-eat Fijian feast Sunday night



two children near
Hideaway Resort

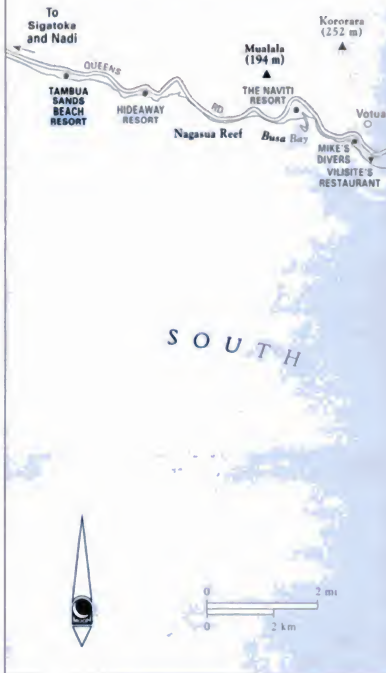
(F\$26). The Rosie The Travel Service desk arranges other trips and Thrifty Car Rental bookings. Surfing is possible on a very hollow right in the pass here (not for beginners), and scuba diving can be arranged.

The Naviti Resort (P.O. Box 29, Korolevu; tel. 530-444, fax 530-099), just west of Korolevu and 100 km from Nadi Airport, has 140 spacious a/c rooms and suites in a series of two-story blocks beginning at F\$293/403 single/double including all meals plus unlimited wine or beer and many activities. Breakfast is the best meal of the day. The all-inclusive price allows you to enjoy your holiday without mounting bills (a room alone is F\$230 single or double). There's fire-walking on Wednesday (F\$12) and a *lovo* on Friday (F\$19). The five tennis courts are floodlit at night. Nonguests may use the nine-hole golf course for F\$10, and scuba diving is possible. A fun park contains children's rides and games (admission F\$7). Other facilities include a mini fitness center, swimming pool, beauty center, and boutique. A free newsletter called *The Naviti Sandpaper* outlines each day's activities. Rosie The Travel Service has a desk at The Naviti. The resort shares its beach with a Fijian village.

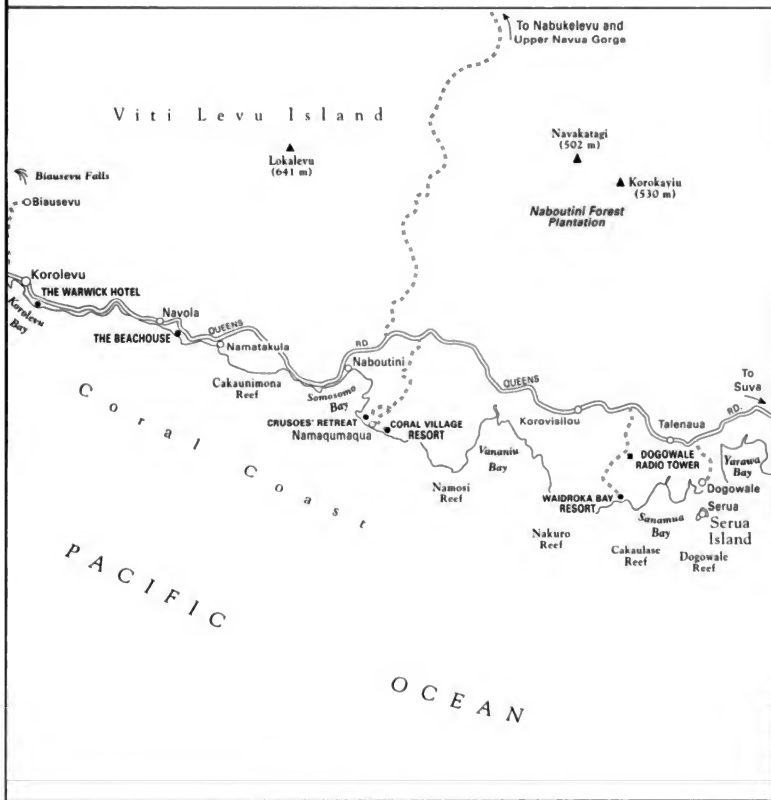
Vilisite's Seafood Restaurant (tel. 530-054; daily 0800–2200), by the lagoon between The Warwick and The Naviti, has four spacious a/c rooms with bath and fridge at F\$66 double, plus one four-person family room at F\$77. Though the accommodations are good value, "Felicity's Place" is better known for its restaurant, as this is *the* place to stop for food between Nadi and Suva. You might bump into your country's ambassador on their beachside terrace. The champagne sunsets here from 1800–1900 are unforgettable. The favorite lunch dish is fish and chips at F\$6/12 for a small/large portion. Otherwise there's chop suey or curries from F\$5–15. Dinner consists of a choice of six set seafood menus costing F\$20–35. Their gift shop has good prices on wooden drums. It's worth the taxi ride if you're staying at The Warwick or The Naviti.

The Warwick Fiji (P.O. Box 100, Korolevu; tel. 530-555, fax 530-010), on the Queens Road just east of Korolevu, 107 km from Nadi Airport, is the third-largest hotel on the Coral Coast (after The Fijian and the Outrigger Reef). Erected in 1979 and part of the Hyatt Regency chain until 1991, it's now owned by the same Singapore-

AROUND KOROLEVU



controlled company as The Naviti and there's a shuttle bus between the two. The 248 a/c rooms in three-story wings running east and west from the lobby are F\$286/321 double/triple with mountain views, F\$319/354 with ocean views, or F\$450/485 club suite. The Wicked Walu seafood restaurant on a small offshore islet connected to the main beach by a causeway serves large portions but is expensive (dinner only). The other hotel restaurants could be crowded with Australian families and you might even end up waiting in a long line (F\$60 meal plan). There's live



music in the Hibiscus Lounge nightly until 0100 and nightly disco dancing. The firewalking is on Monday and Friday at 1800 (F\$11). This plush resort is very much oriented toward organized activities with a complete sports and fitness center. Avis Rent A Car and UTC Tours have desks at The Warwick.

One of the South Pacific's best budget resorts, **The Beachouse** (P.O. Box 68, Korolevu; tel. 530-500, fax 530-400), is on a palm-fringed white beach just off Queens Road, between Navola and Namatakula villages, about five km

east of The Warwick. It's 35 km east of Sigatoka and 43 km west of Pacific Harbor—keep in mind that only local buses will stop here. Their slogan is "low cost luxury on the beach" and the whole project was painstakingly designed to serve the needs of backpackers (and not as a dormitory tacked onto an upmarket resort as an afterthought). The two wooden accommodation blocks each have four five-bunk dorms downstairs (F\$16.50 pp) and four triple fan-cooled loft rooms upstairs (F\$18 pp). In addition, 12 neat little units in a quadrangle at the heart of the



DAVID STANLEY

Myriad snails crawl for the money at Hideaway's weekly mollusk marathon.

property are F\$46 single or double. Campers are allowed to pitch their tents on the wide lawn between the rooms and the beach at F\$8.80 pp. Separate toilet/shower facilities for men and women are just behind the main buildings, and nearby is a communal kitchen and dining area. It's all very clean and pleasant. Afternoon tea and scones are F\$2. Lunch in their beachfront lounge consists of fish and chips or steak burgers, costing around F\$7. The closest grocery store is in Korolevu (there's only a tiny cooperative store in Namatakula). Not only is the ocean swimming good at high tide (unlike the situation at many other Coral Coast hotels where you end up using the pool), but they'll take you out to the nearby reef in their launch for snorkeling (F\$6 for a mask and fins, if required). However, do ask about the currents before going far off on your own—in 1998 two Korean tourists were drowned after being swept out through a reef passage. Other trips include a minibus tour to Bi-ausevu Falls (F\$4 for transportation, plus F\$5 admission to the falls). A shopping/shuttle to Suva

can be arranged (F\$12 pp round-trip, minimum of five). Sea kayaks and bicycles are loaned for free, and there's a bush track up into the hills behind the resort. The lending library serves those who only came to relax.

Crusoe's Retreat (P.O. Box 20, Korolevu; tel. 500-185, fax 520-666), by the beach four km off Queens Road from Nabutini, was formerly called the Man Friday Resort. The 21 large *bure* each have two double beds, a fridge, and a porch. The 11 "seaside" *bure* are F\$210 double, while the 10 "seaview" bungalows on the hillside are F\$186. Only units Nos. 1–6 have thatched roofs (No. 1 is the closest to the beach). Prices include all meals and non-motorized sports, scuba diving is available (extra charge), and a daily activity program is offered. The name alludes to Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, and the footprint-shaped freshwater swimming pool symbolizes Man Friday. This attractive resort is much more upscale than nearby Coral Village Resort, and although the beach isn't as nice, the snorkeling is comparable.

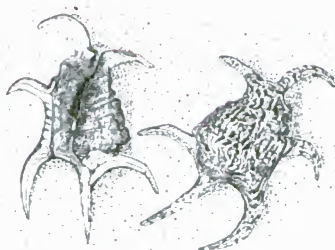
Coral Village Resort (Margaret and Tony Davon, P.O. Box 104, Korolevu; tel. 500-807, fax 308-383) was formerly known as Gaia Beach Resort. It's just beyond Namaquamaqua village, 4.5 km off Queens Road down the same access road as Crusoe's Retreat—the most secluded place to stay on the Coral Coast. The resort is set in a narrow valley that opens onto a lovely white beach (one of the Coral Coast's best) facing a protected lagoon. The eight large well-constructed bungalows with fan and fridge are F\$135 double including two meals (or F\$65 single or double without meals). There's also a five-bed dorm at F\$38 pp including two meals (F\$14 pp without meals). Cooking your own food is not possible, so you must patronize their restaurant, which luckily, is good. This hidden, peaceful place in harmony with nature is a great spot to relax. It's not at all crowded even when full. Therapeutic massage is offered, and Coral Village has its own dive shop right on the premises. Surfing, rafting, and fishing can be arranged. If you call ahead they'll pick you up from the bus stop on Queens Road (F\$3 charge to cover gas).

The **Waidroka Bay Resort** (P.O. Box 323, Deuba; tel. 304-605, fax 304-383) is up the steep, rough gravel road leading to the Dogowale

Radio Tower between Korovisilou and Talenaua, four km off Queens Road. After rains, an ordinary car might not be able to make it. Operating since 1995, Waidroka has earned a reputation as one of Fiji's top surfing resorts. Accommodations include an 11-bed dormitory at F\$18 pp and three lodge rooms with shared bath at F\$54 triple. The three neat little oceanfront bungalows with private bath, fan, bamboo walls, and covered deck are F\$99/134 double/triple. The optional meal plan is F\$38 pp a day (cooking facilities are not provided), otherwise entrées in the restaurant are F\$9–20. Videos are shown at the jungle bar at night. The surfing crowd loves this place, and it's the only "mainland" resort surfing Frigate Passage and six other local breaks. Three breaks are just a five-minute boat ride from the resort, and they'll ferry you out there at F\$20 pp for two hours. Snorkeling trips, which cost the same, are necessary, because Waidroka's beach is mediocre. Waidroka's 10-meter dive boat *Fiji Explorer* has two 200-hp en-

gines, which enables it to reach Frigate Passage in just 20 minutes (surfers pay F\$45 pp including lunch, with a F\$180 minimum charge for the boat). Scuba diving is F\$60/110 for one/two tanks, plus F\$15 for equipment. Open-water certification is F\$399 (advanced courses available). Sport fishing aboard *Fishing Machine* is F\$600/1,000 a half/full day for four persons. Call ahead and the resort folk will pick you up for free at Korovisilou village on Queens Road.

An Australian couple, Donna and Brian McDonald, run **Surfing Fiji Adventures** (P.O. Box 357, Deuba; tel. 923-230) out of their home on the hill behind the Waidroka Bay Resort. Their two-room pole house called "The Retreat" offers a magnificent view of the Beqa Lagoon, and Donna's cooking is fantastic (usually fish caught by trolling on the way back from the surf site). They charge around F\$30 pp to local surf breaks, staying out as long as you want (three-person minimum). Check their website for details.



spider conch, *lambris chiragra*

PACIFIC HARBOR AND VICINITY

PACIFIC HARBOR

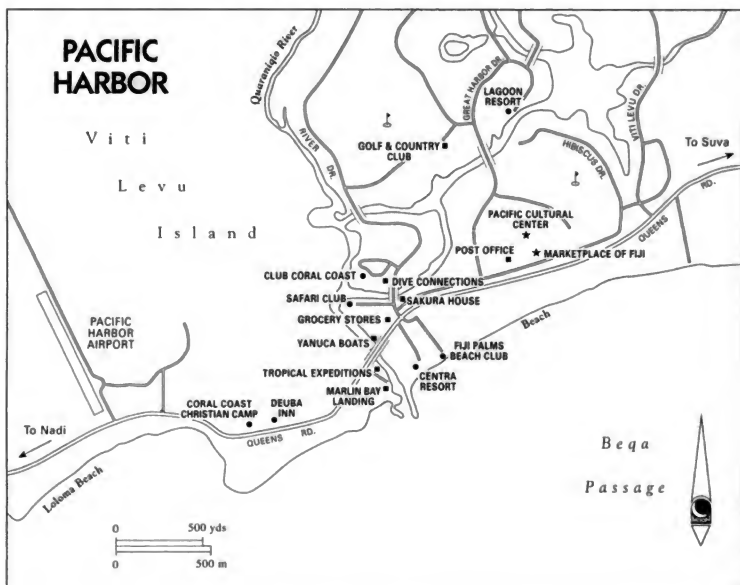
Southeastern Viti Levu from Deuba to Suva is wetter and greener than the coast to the west, and the emphasis changes from beach life to cultural and natural attractions. Pacific Harbor satisfies sporting types, while Fiji's finest river trips begin at Navua. In this area scattered Indo-Fijian dwellings join the Fijian villages that predominate farther west. All of the places listed below are easily accessible on the fairly frequent Galoa bus from Suva market.

Pacific Harbor is a sprawling South Florida-style condo development and instant culture village, 148 km east of Nadi Airport and 49 km west of Suva. It was begun in the early 1970s by Canadian developer David Gilmour (the current

owner of Wakaya Island) and his father Peter Munk, and good paved roads meander between the landscaped lots with curving canals to drain what was once a swamp. Many residents have boats tied up in their back yard, and if it weren't for the backdrop of deep green hills you'd almost think you were in some Miami suburb. In 1988 a Japanese corporation purchased Pacific Harbor, and many of the 180 individual villas are owned by Australian or Hong Kong investors.

Sights

At last report, Pacific Harbor's imposing **Cultural Center** (P.O. Box 74, Deuba; tel. 450-936) was closed due to financial difficulties and a drop in tourism, so call ahead if you were expecting to see a show. In the past, visitors were shown around a re-created Fijian village featur-





a model of a fortified village at the Pacific Harbor Cultural Center

ing a small "sacred island" dominated by a 20-meter-tall Bure Kalau (Spirit House). A tour guide "warrior" carrying a spear would give a spiel to visitors seated in a double-hulled *drua*, and Fijians attired in jungle garb would demonstrate traditional canoe making, weaving, tapa, and pottery at stops along the route. Performances by the Dance Theater of Fiji or Fijian firewalking ended the program. The Center's Waikiki-style **Marketplace of Fiji**, made up of mock-colonial boutiques and assorted historical displays, is still open and accessible free of charge. It's worth a stop as you'll be able to see quite a bit of the Cultural Center from the catwalk and there are a few tourist shops. The main Pacific Harbor post office (with two card phones) is next to the Cultural Center.

Sports and Recreation

Dive Connections (Leyh and Edward Harness, P.O. Box 287, Deuba; tel. 450-541, fax 450-539) at 16 River Dr., just across the bridge from the Sakura Japanese Restaurant, charges F\$65/100 for one/two tank dives (plus F\$30 a day for gear). Night dives are F\$80. Four-day PADI open water certification is F\$395 (medical examination not required), otherwise there's an introductory two-day package for F\$140. Fishing charters (F\$440/750 a half/full day) and picnic excursions to Yanuca Island (F\$45 pp including lunch and snorkeling) can be arranged on their 12-meter dive

boat *Scuba Queen*. Dive Connections also has a self-catering flat next to their office which they rent at F\$40 double. They'll pick up anywhere within eight kilometers of the Pacific Harbor bridge.

In early 1999 **Aqua-Trek Beqa** (Brandon Paige, tel./fax 450-324) opened a dive base at the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor's marina. Part of an American chain, Aqua-Trek Beqa sends its 11-meter boat, the *Aqua-Sport*, to the Beqa Lagoon twice daily. A two-dive excursion costs F\$150, plus F\$15 for gear. You may see several three-meter bull sharks on their shark dive, plus gray reef, black tip, white tip, and nurse sharks.

Beqa Divers (P.O. Box 777, Suva; tel. 450-323 or 361-088, fax 361-047), based at the Lagoon Resort, is a branch of Suva's Scubahire. Their dive boat *Fiji Diver* heads south for diving in the nearby Beqa Lagoon daily at 0900 (F\$143 with two tanks and a light lunch). David and Lorraine Evans pioneered diving on sites just north of Yanuca Island such as Side Streets, Soft Coral Grotto, Caesar's Rocks, and Coral Gardens. The *Tasu No. 2*, a Taiwanese fishing boat intentionally sunk near Yanuca in 1994, is a great wreck dive.

Tropical Expeditions (P.O. Box 129, Deuba; tel./fax 450-666), run by personable Charles Wakeham, operates the 18-meter live-aboard *Beqa Princess*, based near the bridge across the river from the Centra Resort. This relatively small live-aboard carries only six divers on three-night scuba cruises to the islands south of Viti Levu, or on day-trips to the Beqa Lagoon. Two-tank day trips are F\$120 including lunch or the boat may be chartered. A compressor is on board.

Baywater Charters (P.O. Box 137, Deuba; tel. 450-573, fax 450-606) has two game-fishing boats based here, the nine-meter catamaran *Marau II* and the 14-meter monohull *Commander One*. Charter prices are F\$500/900 for a half/full day including lunch for 4–6 anglers.

Aside from the Cultural Center, Pacific Harbor's main claim to fame is its 18-hole, par-72 championship course at the **Pacific Harbor Golf and Country Club** (P.O. Box 144, Deuba; tel. 450-048, fax 450-262), designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and said to be the South Pacific's finest. It's Fiji's only fully irrigated golf course with a complete sprinkler system. Course records are 69 by Bobby Clampett of the United States (amateur) and 64 by Greg Norman of Australia (profession-

al). The big event here is the Pacific Harbor Open in September. Green fees are F\$15/30 for nine/18 holes; electric cart rental is F\$20/35 for nine/18 holes and club hire is a further F\$20. You'll find a restaurant and bar in the clubhouse, a couple of kilometers inland off Queens Road.

Accommodations Under US\$25

The 10-room **Pacific Safari Club** (P.O. Box 221, Deuba; tel. 450-498, fax 450-499) is just down Atoll Place from Saku-ra House Restaurant. A bed in a four-bed dorm here is F\$18, otherwise it's F\$35/45 single/double with a/c, bath, TV, and full cooking facilities. The Safari Club is very convenient to the dive shops and express buses.

Club Coral Coast (Tak Hasegawa, P.O. Box 303, Deuba; tel. 450-421, fax 450-900) offers quality rooms with shared cooking facilities and fridge in large modern villas at Pacific Harbor. It's at 12 Belo Circle near Dive Connections. There are four a/c rooms with bath in one villa and two in another at F\$80/100 double/triple. Budget accommodation with shared bath and kitchen is F\$25/40 single/double. Facilities include a 20-meter swimming pool, jacuzzi, tennis, and many other sporting facilities.

For a cheaper room you must travel one km west of the bridge at Pacific Harbor. In 1994 the **Deuba Inn** (P.O. Box 132, Deuba; tel. 450-544, fax 361-337) opened at Deuba, 13 km west of Navua. They have 10 rooms with shared bath at F\$17/27 single/double and five self-catering units at F\$60/65/70 double/triple/quad. Camping is F\$10 pp. The Inn's main drawback is that you can't cook your own food in the cheaper rooms and meals at the restaurant add up. Their Planter's Bar is also handy if you're staying at the "dry" Christian Camp next door (happy hour 1800-1900).

Adjacent to the Deuba Inn is the friendly **Coral Coast Christian Camp** (P.O. Box 36, Deuba; tel. 450-178). They offer four five-bed Kozy Komer rooms with a good communal kitchen and cold showers at F\$14/22/32 single/double/triple (the warm shower in the ladies bathroom takes a 50-cent token). The five adjoining motel units

go for F\$28/44/58, complete with private bath, kitchen, fridge, and fan. Camping costs F\$8 pp. A small selection of snack foods is sold at the office. No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the premises; on Sunday at 1930 you're invited to the Fellowship Meeting in the manager's flat. The Camp is just across the highway from long golden Loloma Beach, the closest public beach to Suva, but watch your valuables if you swim here. The CCCC is a good place to spend the night while arranging to get out to the surfers' camps on Yanuca Island. Just avoid arriving on a weekend as it's often fully booked by church groups from Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon.



US\$25-50

Harbor Property Services Ltd. (P.O. Box 331, Deuba; tel./fax 450-959), with an office at the Marketplace of Fiji, rents out 23 of the Pacific Harbor villas at F\$80/95 double/triple. All villas have kitchens, lounge, and washing machine, and most also have a pool. The minimum stay is three nights and there's a slight reduction after a week. A onetime cleaning fee of F\$25 is charged, and F\$5 a day for electricity is extra.

US\$50-100

The 84 a/c rooms at the three-story **Centra Resort Pacific Harbor** (P.O. Box 144, Deuba; tel. 450-022, fax 450-262) are F\$158/188 single/double plus tax. Formerly known as the Pacific Harbor International Hotel, the Centra Resort has been the area's leading resort since 1972 and it's presently owned by Bass Hotels and Resorts of the United Kingdom. It's at the mouth of the Qaraniqo River, between Queens Road and a long sandy beach, on attractive grounds and with a nice deep swimming pool. Floodlit tennis courts are provided. The hotel restaurant serves burgers (F\$9) and pizza (F\$15) all day. Their dinner entrées run F\$14-30. Happy hour at the bar is 1730-1830, and it can get lively if the right folks are around. The resort offers a baby sitting service called the "Kids Only Club" for children 4-12.

The advantage of the **Fiji Palms Beach Club Resort** (P.O. Box 6, Deuba; tel. 450-050, fax 450-025), right next to the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor, is that the 14 two-bedroom apartments have cooking facilities, which allows you to skip the many expensive restaurants in these parts. It's F\$150 for up to six people for the unit (a week costs F\$900). Some of the apartments have been sold as part of a timeshare scheme.

The **Lagoon Resort** (Heather and Jim Sherlock, P.O. Box 11, Deuba; tel. 450-100, fax 450-270), formerly the Korean Village and before that the Atholl Hotel, is beautifully set on Fairway Place between the river and the golf course, a 10-minute walk from the clubhouse. It's also convenient for scuba divers with a dive shop on the premises. The 22 plush rooms with marble bathrooms and TV are F\$125 double but discounts are often offered. It's inland a couple of kilometers behind the Cultural Center, so take a taxi (F\$2).

Food

Kumarans Restaurant (tel. 450-294; daily until 2000), across the highway from the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor, has curry specials at lunchtime (F\$4-5), but the dinner menu is pricey (F\$6-12).

The **Oasis Restaurant** (tel. 450-617; daily 0930-1500/1800-2230), in the Marketplace of Fiji, has a sandwich (F\$5), salad, and burger (F\$7.50) menu at lunchtime, and more substantial blackboard specials for dinner (F\$15-30). A pot of tea is F\$2.50. Internet access here is F\$0.40 a minute, and a large selection of paperback books is for sale at F\$3 a book.

Deuba Fast Food (Mon.-Sat. 0900-1700), facing the highway near Rosie The Travel Service in the Marketplace of Fiji, lists various overpriced tourist dishes on their blackboard menu, but you can also get cheaper sandwiches and cold drinks.

There are four small grocery stores beside Kumarans by the bridge at Pacific Harbor. For fruit and vegetables you must go to Navua.

Health

Dr. Kamal Banerjee (tel. 460-950) has an after-hours clinic above Kumarans Restaurant.

Transportation

Only group charter flights from Nadi Airport land at Pacific Harbor's airstrip, but all of the Queens

Road express buses stop here. The express bus to Pacific Harbor from Suva stops next to the highway near the Centra Resort, a kilometer from the Cultural Center. The slower Galoa buses will stop right in front of the Cultural Center itself (advise the driver beforehand).

The air-conditioned Queens Deluxe Coach leaves from the front door of the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor for Suva (F\$7) at 1100, for Nadi at 1700 (F\$24). The air-conditioned Fiji Express leaves the resort for Nadi at 0830 (F\$26) and for Suva at 1615 (F\$14). Much cheaper and just as fast are the regular Pacific Transport express buses, which stop on the highway: to Nadi Airport at 0750, 0930, 1035, 1315, 1605, and 1835 (148 km, three hours, F\$7.30); to Suva at 1015, 1100, 1155, 1555, 1930, 2115 (49 km, one hour, F\$2.70). Sunbeam Transport buses to Lautoka stop here at 1100, 1210, and 1415.

Rosie The Travel Service (tel. 450-655) in the Marketplace of Fiji can make any required hotel or tour bookings, and they also represent Thrifty Rent-a-Car.

NAVUA

The bustling river town of Navua (pop. 4,500), 39 km west of Suva, is the market center of the mostly Indian-inhabited rice-growing delta area near the mouth of the Navua River. It's also the headquarters of Serua and Namosi Provinces. If low-grade copper deposits totaling 900 million metric tons located just inland at Namosi are ever developed, Navua will become a major mining port, passed by four-lane highways, ore conveyors, and a huge drain pipe for copper tailings. For at least 30 years, millions of tons of waste material will be dumped into the ocean every year by an operation consuming more fossil fuel energy than the rest of the country combined. The present quiet road between Navua and Suva will bustle with new housing estates and heavy traffic, Fiji's social and environmental balance will be turned on its head, and the change from today will be total!

Transportation

All of the express buses between Suva and Nadi stop at Navua. Large village boats leave from the wharf beside Navua market for Beqa Island

south of Viti Levu daily except Sunday, but more depart on Saturday (F\$10 one-way). Smaller flat-bottomed punts to **Namuamua** village, 25 km up the Navua River, depart on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday afternoons (F\$6 pp). You can charter an outboard from Navua wharf to Namuamua almost anytime at F\$60 for the boat round-trip. The hour-long ride takes you between high canyon walls and over boiling rapids with waterfalls on each side. Above Namuamua is the fabulous **Upper Navua**, accessible only to intrepid river-runners in rubber rafts. It's also possible to reach the river by road at Nabukelevu.

River Tours

An easy way to experience the picturesque lower Navua is with **Discover Fiji Tours** (Lionel Danford, P.O. Box 171, Navua; tel. 450-180, fax 450-549), which offers trips up the Navua River, leaving Navua at 1030 daily and returning at 1630. They take you upriver to a waterfall by motorized canoe. After a swim, you go to Namuamua village where you get a welcoming

kava ceremony and lunch. In the afternoon you float down the river on a bamboo raft (on Sunday the village visit is replaced by a riverside picnic). The cost is F\$60 pp from Navua (minimum of two). Call to arrange a pick-up at Pacific Harbor or meet them at their river base office in Navua (open 0930-1130, 1530-1700). Discover Fiji also arranges stays in the Fijian villages of this area at F\$35 pp including all meals.

Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji (P.O. Box 1389, Suva; tel. 315-730, fax 300-584) also runs full-day motorized boat trips 20 km up the river from Navua to Nukusere village, where lunch is served and visitors get an introduction to Fijian culture. Any travel agent in Suva can make the bookings (adults F\$69, children F\$36). In Nadi, book through Rosie The Travel Service (F\$100 including lunch). Wilderness also has canoe and rubber raft trips down the Navua River (F\$83). You must call ahead as they don't hang around in Navua waiting for customers to appear.

In addition, Mr. Sakiusa Naivalu (tel. 460-641) of Navua organizes upriver boat trips to Namuamua at F\$65 pp with the possibility of spending the night there. Readers found Sakiusa's tour "enjoyable."

The brochures of some of the Navua River tour companies promise a kava ceremony and other events, but these are only organized for groups. If only a couple of you are going that day, nothing much of the kind is going to happen. Ask when booking, otherwise just relax and enjoy the boat ride and scenery, and wait to see dancing at the Cultural Center. And even if there is a ceremony, you may find sitting on the hard floor uncomfortable. The bamboo raft trip may also be shorter than you expected, and the climb to the highest waterfall could be a strenuous. At some point, you may be asked to make a "contribution" to the village, and the ladies will display their handicrafts in a manner that makes it difficult to refuse to buy. Although this visit isn't for everyone, it could also be the highlight of your trip. (If saving money is a priority and you can get a small group together, it's much cheaper to go to Navua by public bus and hire a market boat from there.)

White-water Rafting

Exciting white-water rafting trips on the Upper Navua River west of Namuamua are offered by **Rivers Fiji** (P.O. Box 307, Deuba; tel. 450-147,



DR. NIELSEN

The tortuous Navua River drains much of central Viti Levu.

THE LEGEND OF MAU

Long ago a group of mountain warriors moved down to a coastal flatland. They built *bure* and called their new home Mau. The warriors brought with them many things, such as mountains, birds, springs, prawns, and a natural pool with a waterfall. Blessed by Mother Nature, they developed their culture. Today Mau is still set amidst tall mountains and thick jungles. The forests are full of tropical birds and beautiful flowers. A river flows to mangroves by the sea. The people of Mau reveal their ancient totems to guests, and take them fishing and snorkeling on the coral reefs. Visits that begin with a kava ceremony, always end with a heartfelt farewell.

fax 450-148), with an office on the grounds of the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor. You're driven over the mountains to a remote spot near Nabukelevu where you get in a rubber raft and shoot through the fantastic Upper Navua Gorge (inaccessible by motorized boat). Experienced paddlers can do the same on their own in an inflatable kayak, upon request. Due to the class III rapids involved, children under 12 are not accepted, but for others it's F\$160 including lunch.

Rivers Fiji also does a less strenuous run down the Wainikoroiluva River north of Namuamua, on which it's possible to paddle your own inflatable kayak. This costs F\$140 for adults, or F\$70 for children under the age of 12 who are floating with a paying adult. Two days of kayaking on the Wainikoroiluva is F\$430. If you're really keen, ask about overnight camping expeditions on the Upper Wainikoroiluva. These trips conclude with a motorized punt ride down the Lower Navua Gorge from Namuamua to

Nakavu village, where you reboard the van to your hotel.

Rivers Fiji also offers one-day sea kayaking trips to Beqa Island (F\$99 pp). You cross to Beqa by catamaran, then explore a tiny uninhabited island and paddle into Malumu Bay. Deep inside this cliff-lined bay, hundreds of fruit bats are seen clinging to the trees. A secret mangrove tunnel provides an escape south to the great blue beyond. A different trip takes you along the coast of Viti Levu from Pacific Harbor in a two-person sea kayak at F\$65 pp. It's a great way to explore the mangroves or glide across the reefs. All prices above include pickups around Pacific Harbor. Transfers from other Coral Coast and Suva hotels are F\$30 pp extra, from Nadi F\$45 extra.

Discover Fiji Tours (tel. 450-180) also does a Wainikoroiluva River trip between Naqarawai and Navunikabi villages, with white-water rafting, swimming at a waterfall, and a long boat ride down the river. It's F\$145/165 pp from Navua/Nadi (two-person minimum).

Toward Suva

Mikaele Funaki (P.O. Box 14328, Suva; tel. 387-951 or 381-391), "the master of eco-touring in Fiji," can arrange village stays in Mau on the coast east of Navua. A three-night **Island Villages Concept Tour** to Mau will cost F\$120 pp including transportation, accommodation, meals, hiking, and other activities. These trips generally set out from Navua on Wednesdays at 1300, but you must call ahead. It's a rare opportunity to go native.

The **Ocean Pacific Club** (P.O. Box 3323, Lami; tel. 304-864), near Nabukavesi village on a hillside between Navua and Suva, 3.5 km off Queens Road (and 25 km west of Suva), has eight duplex bungalows at F\$55 single or double.

ISLANDS OFF SOUTHERN VITI LEVU

VATULELE ISLAND

This small island, 32 km south of Viti Levu, reaches a height of only 34 meters on its north end; there are steep bluffs on the west coast and gentle slopes facing a wide lagoon on the east. Both passes into the lagoon are from its north end. Five different levels of erosion are visible on the cliffs from which the uplifted limestone was undercut. There are also rock paintings, but no one knows when they were executed. Vatulele today is famous for its tapa cloth (*masi*).

Other unique features of 31-square-km Vatulele are the sacred **red prawns**, which are found in tidal pools at Korolamalama Cave at the foot of a cliff near the island's rocky north coast. These scarlet prawns with remarkably long antennae are called *ura buta*, or cooked prawns, for their color. The red color probably comes from iron oxide in the limestone of their abode. It's strictly *tabu* to eat them or remove them from the pools. If you do, it will bring ill luck or even shipwreck. The story goes that a princess of yesteryear rejected a gift of cooked prawns from a suitor and threw them in the pools, where the boiled-red creatures were restored to life. Villagers can call the prawns by repeating a chant.

In 1990 Vatulele got its own luxury resort, the **Vatulele Island Resort** (P.O. Box 9936, Nadi Airport; tel. 720-300, fax 720-062) on the island's west side. The 18 futuristic villas in a hybrid Fijian/New Mexico style sit about 50 meters apart on a magnificent white sand beach facing a protected lagoon. The emphasis is on luxurious exclusivity: villas cost F\$2,500 per couple a night, including meals, alcohol, and tax. The minimum stay is four nights, and to make the resort more attractive to socialites, children are only accepted during "family weeks" once or twice a year. To preserve the natural environment, motorized water sports and a swimming pool are not offered, but there's lots to do, including sailing, snorkeling, windsurfing, paddling, tennis, and hiking, with guides and gear provided at no additional cost. Other than airfare to the island (see below), about the only things you'll be charged extra for are scuba diving (F\$150/225 for one/two

tanks) and massage (F\$135 an hour). Vatulele's new desalination plant ensures abundant fresh water. This world-class resort is a creation of Australian film producer Henry Crawford and thus appeals to the show business set, as well as upscale honeymooners (weddings arranged, bring your own partner). At Nadi Airport, you'll find them in office No. 15 upstairs from arrivals.

The 990 inhabitants live in four villages on the east side of Vatulele. Village boats from Viti Levu leave Paradise Point near Korolevu Post Office on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday if the weather is good. Resort guests arrive on a daily charter flight from Nadi, which costs F\$700 pp round-trip (or F\$2,000 for a special flight). The charters are operated by **Pacific Island Seaplanes** (tel. 725-644, fax 725-641), which uses a four-seat Beaver seaplane able to land on the lagoon near the resort. If weather conditions prevent use of the seaplane, a Twin Otter aircraft is sent. It lands on the island's small private airstrip near the villages, six km from Vatulele Resort.

YANUCA ISLAND

In 1994 a surfers' camp opened on a splendid beach on Yanuca Island, to the west of Beqa (not to be confused with the Yanuca Island on which Shangri-La's Fijian Resort is found). **Penna's Resort** (Ratu Penaia Drekeni, P.O. Box 39, Deuba; tel. 450-801), also known as Frigate Surfriders, offers cots in two four-person dormitory *bure* and five double tents at F\$65 pp for surfers, F\$35 pp for nonsurfers, plus tax. Included are accommodations and all meals, windsurfing, surfing, and sportfishing. Boat transfers are F\$20 pp round-trip. We've heard that Penna's camp is rather untidy and that the food is inadequate, but at least it's cheap.

A 10-minute walk from Frigate Surfriders is a second surfing camp called **Batiluva Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 149, Deuba; tel. 450-019 or 450-034, fax 450-067), which offers dormitory accommodations at F\$100 pp, or F\$120 pp in a *bure*—excellent value compared to places like Namotu and Tavarua. Included are gourmet meals, appetizers, kayaks, paddle boats, surfing,

snorkeling, village tours, and transfers. Fishing and scuba diving are available at additional cost. Batiluva is run by Americans Sharon Todd and Dan Thorn, who've paid a high premium to the landowners to be able to operate here. Their boats go to Frigate Passage every day (30–40 minutes away). In calm weather you can paddle right around Yanuca in about 1.5 hours using one of the resort's single or double kayaks. Batiluva's white sandy beach offers safe swimming, and you can snorkel on the reefs off the points. On weekends Suvasiders come over for picnics, and the Pacific Harbor crowd often comes for beach barbecues. During the sailing season, yachts rock offshore.

The lefthander in Frigate Passage southwest of Yanuca has been called the most underrated wave in Fiji: "fast, hollow, consistent, and deserted." The Frigate Surfriders leaflet describes it thus:

Frigate Passage, out on the western edge of the Beqa Barrier Reef, is a sucking, often barreling photocopy of Cloudbreak near Nadi. The wave comprises three sections that often join up. The outside section presents a very steep take-off as the swell begins to draw over the reef. The wave then starts to bend and you enter a long walled speed section with stand-up tubes. This leads to a pitching inside section that breaks onto the reef, and if your timing is right you can backdoor this part and kick out safely in deep water.

All surfing is banned on Sunday. Yet even without the surfing, Yanuca is still well worth a visit (great beach-based snorkeling). The resorts are across the island from Yanuca's single Fijian village, a 30-minute walk. Shells, mats, and necklaces can be purchased from the locals. As at neighboring Beqa, Fijian firewalking is a tradition here. Village boats to the one Fijian village on Yanuca depart on Monday and Saturday afternoons from the bridge near the Centra Resort (F\$4 pp).

BEQA ISLAND

Beqa ("MBENG-ga") is the home of the famous Fijian firewalkers; Rukua, Naceva, and Dakuibeqa

are firewalking villages. Nowadays they perform mostly at the hotels on Viti Levu, although the local resorts occasionally stage a show. At low tide you can hike part of the 27 km around the island: Rukua to Waisomo and Dakuni to Naceva are not hard, but the section through Lalati can be difficult. Malumu Bay, between the two branches of the island, is thought to be a drowned crater. Climb Korolevu (439 meters), the highest peak, from Waisomo or Lalati. Kadavu Island is visible to the south of Beqa.

It's quite possible to stay in any of the Fijian villages on Beqa by following the procedure outlined in Staying in Villages in the main Introduction. Ask around the wharf at Navua around noon any day except Sunday and you'll soon find someone happy to take you. Alcohol is not allowed in the villages on Beqa, so if you're asked to buy a case of beer, politely decline and offer to buy other groceries instead. The number one beach is Lawaki to the west of Naceva. Present the village chief of Naceva with a nice big bundle of waka if you want to camp there.

Mikaele Funaki's **Island and Village Concept Tour** (P.O. Box 14328, Suva; tel. 387-591 or 381-391, fax 300-945) organizes homestays at Naceva, home of the traditional firewalking priest of the Kulu clan, Naiseuseu, or another village on Beqa. The three-night tour is F\$130 pp including food and shared accommodations, local sightseeing and snorkeling tours, and return



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boat transfers from Navua. The packages begin from Navua every Tuesday and Friday at 1300. Call for information. Mikaele can also arrange "original" firewalking tours to Naceva for groups of 30 or more if given at least five days notice. Picnics on Stewart Island in the Beqa Lagoon are also possible. According to him, "this tour has been a sizzling experience for frugal travelers."

The **Marlin Bay Resort** (P.O. Box 112, Deuba; tel. 304-042, fax 304-028) opened in 1991 on a golden beach between Raviravi and Rukua villages on the west side of Beqa. The 16 *bure* go for F\$420 single or double, F\$500 triple. The five-star meal plan is F\$125 pp a day (no cooking facilities). There's a swimming pool. Most guests are scuba divers who come to dive the Beqa Lagoon, and it's worth noting the some famous dive sites like Golden Arch and Side Streets are on the west side of the reef and almost as far from the Marlin Bay Resort as they are from Pacific Harbor. They will take you there, however. It's F\$180 for a two-tank boat dive (plus F\$68 for equipment, if required). Unlimited shore diving is free. Surfing runs to Frigate Pass are arranged at F\$160 pp for

two sessions. The Marlin Bay boat picks up guests at a support base across the river from the Centra Resort Pacific Harbor, and these transfers cost F\$115 round-trip.

The new **Lalati Resort** (P.O. Box 166, Deuba; tel. 472-033, fax 472-034), at the north opening of Malamu Bay, has five deluxe *bure* at F\$875/1,100/1,465 single/double/triple including three gourmet meals, a two-tank dive, surfing, kayaking, windsurfing, and transfers from Pacific Harbor. Lalati has cast itself as an upscale sports resort with gourmet meals and spacious accommodations.

The 65 km of barrier reef around the 390-square-km Beqa Lagoon features multicolored soft corals and fabulous sea fans at Side Streets, and an exciting wall and big fish at Cutter Passage. Aside from its surfing potential, **Frigate Passage** on the west side of the barrier reef is one of the top scuba diving sites near Suva. A vigorous tidal flow washes in and out of the passage, which attracts large schools of fish, and there are large coral heads. **Sulfur Passage** on the east side of Beqa is equally good.



The golden cowry (Cypraea aurantium), which the Fijians call buli kula, is one of the rarest of all seashells. On important ceremonial occasions, a high chief would wear the shell pendant around his neck as a symbol of the highest authority.

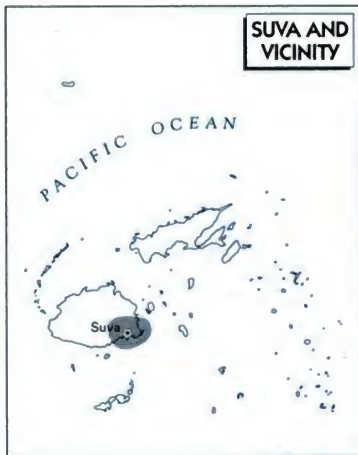


SUVA AND VICINITY

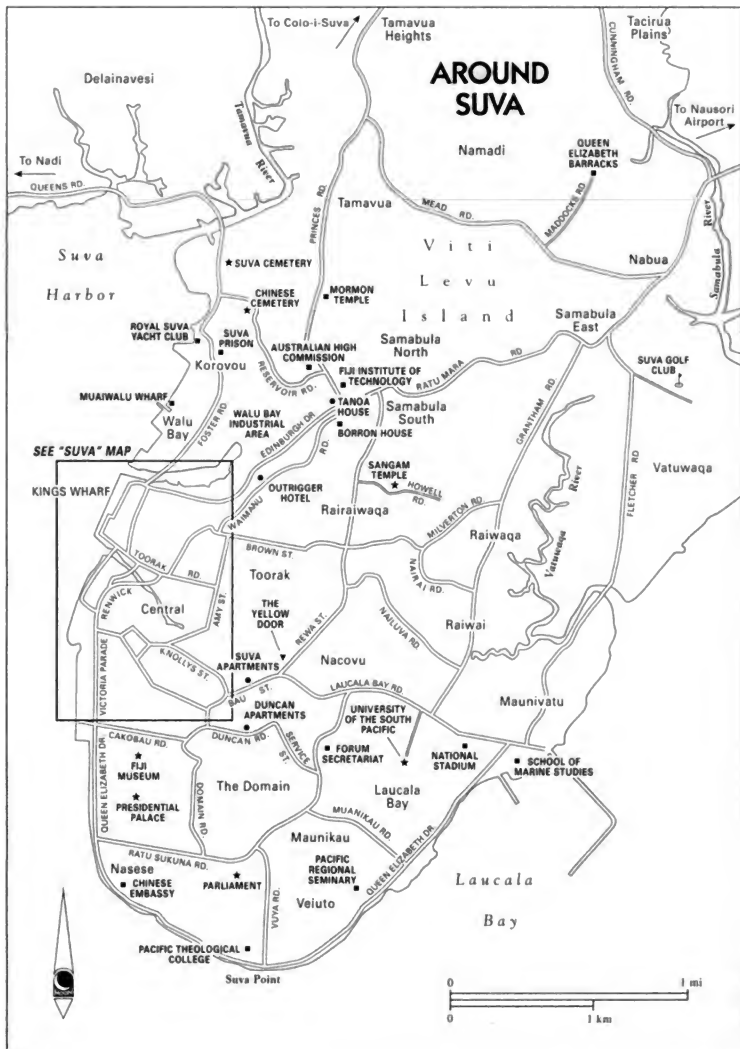
The pulsing heart of the South Pacific, Suva is the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Oceania. The port is always jammed with ships bringing goods and passengers from far and wide, and busloads of commuters and enthusiastic visitors constantly stream through the busy market bus station. In the business center there are Indo-Fijian women in saris, large sturdy chocolate-skinned Fijians, expat Australians and New Zealanders in shorts and knee socks, and wavy-haired Polynesians from Rotuma and Tonga.

Suva squats on a hilly peninsula between Laucala Bay and Suva Harbor in the southeast corner of Viti Levu. The verdant mountains north and west catch the southeast trades, producing damp conditions year-round. Visitors sporting sunburns from Fiji's western sunbelt resorts may appreciate Suva's warm tropical rains (which fall mostly at night). In 1870 the Polynesia Company sent Australian settlers to camp along mosquito-infested Nubukalou Creek on land obtained from High Chief Cakobau. When efforts to grow sugarcane in the area failed, the company convinced the British to move their headquarters here, and since 1882 Suva has been the capital of Fiji.

Today this exciting multiracial city of 170,000—a fifth of Fiji's total population and half the urban



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population—is also about the only place in Fiji where you'll see a building taller than a palm tree. High-rise office buildings and hotels overlook the compact downtown area. The British left behind imposing colonial buildings, wide avenues, and manicured parks as evidence of their rule. The Fiji School of Medicine, the University of the South Pacific, the Fiji Institute of Technology, the Pacific Theological College, the Pacific Regional Seminary, and the headquarters of many regional organizations and diplomatic missions have been established here. In addition, the city offers some of the hottest nightlife between Kings Cross (Sydney) and North Beach (San Francisco), plus shopping, sightseeing, and many good-value places to stay and eat. About the only thing Suva lacks is a beach.

Keep in mind that on Sunday most shops are closed, restaurants keep reduced hours, and fewer taxis or buses are on the road. In short, the city is very quiet—a good time to wander around in relative peace. If you decide to catch the Friday or Saturday bus/boat service to Levuka and spend the weekend there, book your ticket a day or two in advance. Otherwise, it's worth dressing up and attending church to hear the marvelous choral singing. Most churches have services in English, but none compare with the 1000 Fijian service at Centenary Methodist Church on Stewart Street.

The lovely *Isa Lei*, a Fijian song of farewell, tells of a youth whose love sails off and leaves him alone in Suva, smitten with longing.

SIGHTS

Central Suva

Suva's colorful **municipal market**, the largest retail produce market in the Pacific, is a good place to dabble. If you're a yachtie or backpacker, you'll be happy to hear that the market overflows with fresh produce of every kind. Bundles of kava roots are sold, and liquid kava is consumed, at *yaqona* dens upstairs in the market. On the street outside, Fijian women sell fresh pineapple and guava juice from glass "fish tank" containers.

From the market, walk south on Scott Street to the **Fiji Visitors Bureau** in a former customs house (1912) opposite Suva's General Post Of-

fice. At the corner of Thomson and Pier Streets opposite the visitors bureau is the onetime **Garrick Hotel** (1914) with a Sichuan Chinese restaurant behind the wrought-iron balconies upstairs. Go east on Thomson to the picturesque colonial-style arcade (1919) along **Nubukalou Creek**, a campsite of Suva's first European settlers. The empty block behind the arcade is the site of a former Morris Hedstrom store, which burned in late 1998.

Cumming Street, Suva's main shopping area, runs east from the park by the bridge over the creek. Suva's original vegetable market was here until it moved to its present location just prior to World War II. During the war Cumming

HANNAH DUDLEY'S LEGACY

One of the few Methodist missionaries to achieve lasting success proselytizing among Fiji's Indian community was an Englishwoman named Hannah Dudley who had previously worked in India where she learned Hindustani. An individualist unwilling to follow the usual rules for white evangelists laid down by the male-managed mission of her day, "our Miss Dudley" (as her fellow missionaries called her) arrived in Suva in 1903 to work among the indentured Indian laborers. Hannah adopted vegetarianism as a step toward godliness and visited the Hindu and Muslim women in their own homes as only a woman could. Through the woman and men she made contact with, and her Bible classes, she soon created a circle of Indian converts in Suva.

Although conditions for the Indians of her day were harsh, Hannah didn't protest to the colonial authorities as some other Methodist missionaries had, but gathered the needy and lost around her. Her own home became an orphanage and her Indian contacts and converts soon came to know her as *mataji*, the little mother. When Hannah returned to Calcutta in 1905 to work with the Bengali Mission, she took her orphans along. In 1934 members of the Indian Methodist congregation in Suva erected the Dudley Memorial Church on the spot where Hannah first preached. The cream building, strongly influenced by Hindu architecture with its domes and central Moorish arch, can still be seen at the corner of Toorak Road and Amy Street, just up the hill from downtown Suva.

Street became a market of a different sort as Allied troops flocked here in search of evening entertainment, and since the early 1960s Cumming has served tourists and locals alike in its present form. To continue your walk, turn right on Renwick Road and head back into town.

At the junction of Renwick Road, Thomson Street, and Victoria Parade is a small park known as **The Triangle** with five concrete benches and a white obelisk bearing four inscriptions: "Cross and Cargill first missionaries arrived 14th October 1835; Fiji British Crown Colony 10th October 1874; Public Land Sales on this spot 1880; Suva proclaimed capital 1882." Inland a block on Pratt Street is the **Catholic cathedral** (1902) built of sandstone imported from Sydney, Australia. Between The Triangle and the cathedral is the towering **Reserve Bank of Fiji** (1984), which is worth entering to see the currency exhibition (Mon.–Fri. 0900–1600).

Return to Suva's main avenue, Victoria Parade, and walk south past **Sukuna Park**, the site of pro-democracy demonstrations in 1990 and again very recently. Farther along are the colonial-style **Fintel Building** (1926), nerve center of Fiji's international telecommunications links, the picturesque **Queen Victoria Memorial Hall** (1904), later Suva Town Hall and now the Ming Palace Restaurant, and the **City Library** (1909), which opened in 1909 thanks to a grant from American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (one of 2,509 public library buildings Carnegie gave to communities in the English-speaking world). All of these sights are on your right.

South Suva

Continue south on Victoria Parade past the headquarters of the **Native Land Trust Board**, which administers much of Fiji's land on behalf of indigenous landowners. Just beyond and across the street from the Holiday Inn Suva is Suva's largest edifice, the imposing **Government Buildings** (1939), once the headquarters of the British colonial establishment in the South Pacific. A statue of Chief Cakobau stares thoughtfully at the building. Here on May 14, 1987 Col. Sitiveni Rabuka carried out the South Pacific's first military coup and for the next five years Fiji had no representative government. The chamber from which armed soldiers abducted the parliamentarians is now used by the supreme court, ac-

cessible from the parking lot behind the building. Prime Minister Timoci Bavadra and the others were led out through the doors below the building's clock tower (now closed) and forced into the back of army trucks waiting on Gladstone Road.

The main facade of the Government Buildings faces **Albert Park**, where aviator Charles Kingsford Smith landed his trimotor Fokker VII-3M on June 6, 1928 after arriving from Hawaii on the first-ever flight from California to Australia. (The first commercial flight to Fiji was a Pan Am flying boat, which landed in Suva Harbor in October 1941.) Facing the west side of the park is the elegant, Edwardian-style **Grand Pacific Hotel**, built by the Union Steamship Company in 1914 to accommodate its transpacific passengers. The 75 rooms were designed to appear as shipboard staterooms, with upstairs passageways surveying the harbor, like the promenade deck of a ship. For decades the Grand Pacific was the social center of the city, but it has been closed since 1992. The building is owned by the phosphate-rich Republic of Nauru, and ambitious redevelopment plans have been announced more than once, but as yet nothing has come of them.

South of Albert Park are the pleasant **Thurston Botanical Gardens**, opened in 1913, where tropical flowers such as cannas and plumbagos blossom. The original Fijian village of Suva once stood on this site. (It's fun to observe the young Indo-Fijian couples enjoying brief moments away from the watchful eyes of their families.) On the grounds of the gardens is a clock tower dating from 1918, and the **Fiji Museum** (P.O. Box



Suva's Grand Pacific Hotel in its heyday

2023, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 315-944, fax 305-143), founded in 1904 and the oldest in the South Pacific. The first hall deals in archaeology, with much information about Fiji's unique pottery. The centerpiece is a double-hulled canoe made in 1913, plus five huge *drua* steering oars each originally held by four men, several large sail booms, and a bamboo house raft (*bilibili*). The cannibal forks near the entrance are fascinating, as are the whale tooth necklaces and the large collection of Fijian war clubs and spears. The history gallery beyond the museum shop has a rich collection of 19th-century exhibits with items connected with the many peoples who have come to Fiji, including Tongans, Europeans, and Solomon Islanders. Notice the rudder from HMS *Bounty*. An air-conditioned room upstairs contains an exhibition of tapa cloth and displays on Indo-Fijians. The museum shop sells copies of the museum journal, *Domodomo*, plus other interesting books. Visiting hours are Monday–Friday 0930–1600, Saturday and Sunday 0930–1330, admission F\$3.30. It's one of Fiji's top sights and not to be missed.

South of the gardens is the **Presidential Palace**, formerly called Government House, the residence of the British governors of Fiji. The original building, erected in 1882, burned after being hit by lightning in 1921. The present edifice, which dates from 1928, is a replica of the former British governor's residence in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The grounds cannot be visited.

From the seawall south of Government House you get a good view across Suva Harbor to Beqa Island (to the left) and the dark, green mountains of eastern Viti Levu punctuated by Joske's Thumb, a high volcanic plug (to the right). Follow the seawall south past a few old colonial buildings, and turn left onto Ratu Sukuna Road, the first street after the Police Academy.

About a kilometer up this road is the **Parliament of Fiji** (1992), an impressive, traditional-style building with an orange pyramid-shaped roof. The main entrance is around the corner off Vuna Road. Thirteen huge tapa banners hang from the walls, and skillfully plaited coconut fiber ropes from the Lau Group and a pair of *tabuas* complete the decor. The location is spectacular with scenic sea and mountain views.

From May 19 to July 13, 2000, Fiji's prime minister and several dozen members of parlia-

ment were held hostage in the parliamentary complex by a gang of rebel soldiers and thugs led by bankrupt businessman George Speight, who claimed his coup attempt was in defense of indigenous Fijian rights. Although the hostages were eventually released, Speight's shameful acts have left Fiji without a constitution or elected government. Stolen during the occupation was the parliamentary mace, Chief Cakobau's historic war club originally presented to Queen Victoria and later returned to Fiji by Britain.

Both Protestants and Catholics have their most important regional training facilities for ministers and priests in South Suva, and the **Pacific Theological College** is just down Vuna Road from Parliament. From **Suva Point** nearby you get a good view of **Nukulau**, a tiny reef island southeast of Suva. This was the site of the residence of the first U.S. consul to Fiji, John Brown Williams, and the burning of Williams's house on July 4, 1849, set in motion a chain of events that led to Fiji becoming a British colony. Later Nukulau was used as the government quarantine station, and most indentured Indian laborers spent their first two weeks in Fiji here. Until recently it was a public park, but since July 27, 2000, coup leader George Speight and a dozen close associates have been imprisoned here.

From Suva Point it's a good idea to catch a taxi to the University of the South Pacific (F\$2). The Nasese bus does a scenic loop through the beautiful garden suburbs of South Suva: just flag it down if you need a ride back to the market (F\$0.50).

University of the South Pacific

A frequent bus from in front of the Vanua Arcade near the Bank of Hawaii on Victoria Parade brings you directly to the University of the South Pacific (ask the driver to let you know where to get off). Founded in 1968, this beautiful 72.8-hectare campus on a hilltop overlooking Laucala Bay is jointly owned by 12 Pacific countries. Although over 70 percent of the almost 4,500 full-time and more than 7,500 part-time students are from Fiji, the rest are on scholarships from every corner of the Pacific.

The site of the USP's Laucala Campus was a Royal New Zealand Air Force seaplane base before the land was turned over to the USP. As you enter from Laucala Bay Road you pass the

Fiji's emerald green banded iguana is the most striking reptile of the Pacific.



THE FBI TIMES

Botanical Garden (free) on the right, then the British-built Administration Building on the left. Next comes the \$3.5-million **University Library**, erected in 1988 with Australian aid. The design of the **Student Union Building** (1975), just across a wooden bridge behind the library, was influenced by traditional Pacific building motifs of interlocking circles. The pleasant canteen in the Student Union (open Mon.–Fri. 0800–1600, Sat. 0800–1300, with longer hours during the school year) is a nice place to stop for a coffee.

Several buildings south of this, past the ANZ Bank and the university bookstore, is a traditional Fijian *bure* called the Vale ni Bose, which is used for workshops and seminars. To the left of the *bure* is the **Oceania Center for Arts and Culture**, the university's art gallery (free) with a curvilinear mosaic floor. The center's director is the famous Tongan novelist Epeli Hau'ofa. To the right of (and behind) the *bure* is the **Institute of Pacific Studies** (P.O. Box 1168, Suva; tel. 212-332), housed in the former RNZAF officers' mess. This Institute is a leading publisher of insightful books written by Pacific islanders; these books may be perused and purchased at their bookroom inside the building.

Students from outside the Pacific islands pay F\$8,900 tuition to take five courses at the USP. Room and board are available at F\$4,400 a year,

and books will run another F\$750. There are academic minimum-entry requirements and applications must be received by December 31 for the following term. The two semesters are late February to the end of June, and late July until the end of November. Many courses in the social sciences have a high level of content pertaining to Pacific culture, and postgraduate studies in a growing number of areas are available. Check the university's website for more information.

The USP is always in need of qualified staff, so if you're from a university milieu and looking for a chance to live in the South Seas, this could be it. If your credentials are impeccable you should write to the registrar from home. On the spot it's better to talk to a department head about his/her needs before going to see the registrar.

Northwest of Suva

The part of Suva north of Walu Bay accommodates much of Suva's shipping and industry. Carlton Brewery on Foster Road cannot be visited. About 600 meters beyond the brewery is the vintage **Suva Prison** (1913), a fascinating colonial structure with high walls and barbed wire. Plans to replace this anachronism with a more modern facility have been on the back burner for years. One look at this place and you'll be a law-abiding citizen for the rest of your stay in Fiji! Opposite the

prison is the **Royal Suva Yacht Club**, where you can sign in and buy a drink, meet some yachties, and maybe find a boat to crew on. In the picturesque **Suva Cemetery**, just to the north, the Fijian graves are wrapped in colorful *sulus* and tapa cloth, and make good subjects for photographers. The graves are often dug by inmates from the nearby jail, a common practice in Fiji.

Catch one of the frequent Shore, Lami, or Galoa buses west on Queens Road, past **Suvavou** village, home of the Suva area's original Fijian inhabitants, and past Lami town to the **Raffles Tradewinds Hotel**, seven km from the market. Many cruising yachts tie up here, and the view of the Bay of Islands from the hotel is good.

Orchid Island

Seven km northwest of Suva is the **Orchid Island Cultural Center** (P.O. Box 1018, Suva; tel. 361-128). In the past it offered a good synopsis of Fijian customs through demonstrations, dancing, and historical exhibits, affording a glimpse into traditions such as the kava ceremony, tapa and pottery making, etc. At the miniature zoo you could see and photograph Fiji's rare banded iguanas and snakes up close. Replicas of a Fijian war canoe and thatched temple (*bure kalou*) were on the grounds. We've used the past tense here because Orchid Island has gone downhill and now looks abandoned, al-

though some readers report being admitted and shown around the empty, decaying buildings by residual staff who were only too happy to pocket their F\$10 pp admission fee. You might call ahead (and don't bother going on a Sunday). The Shore and Galoa buses pass this way.

Colo-i-Suva Forest Park

This lovely park, at an altitude of 122–183 meters, offers 6.5 km of trails through the lush forest flanking the upper drainage area of Waisila Creek. The mahogany trees you see here are natives of Central America and were planted after the area was logged in the 1950s. The park first opened in 1973. Enter from the Forestry Station along the Falls Trail. A half-kilometer nature trail begins near the Upper Pools, and aside from waterfalls and natural swimming pools there are thatched pavilions with tables at which to picnic. With the lovely green forests behind Suva in full view, this is one of the most breathtaking places in all of Fiji and you may spot a few native butterflies, birds, reptiles, and frogs. The park is so unspoiled it's hard to imagine you're only 11 km from Suva. Surprisingly few tourists manage to visit.

The park (tel. 320-211 or 322-311) is open daily 0800–1600, and there's a F\$5 pp entry fee (under age 12 F\$1, under six free) to cover maintenance and management. Security has im-



A good cross section of Fiji's flora can be seen in Colo-i-Suva Forest Park near Suva.

proved since a police post was set up opposite Raintree Lodge, but you must still keep an eye on your gear if you go swimming in the pools (valuables can be left at the park office). Colo-i-Suva is easily accessible on the Sawani or Serea buses (F\$0.75), which leave from Lane No. 3 at Suva Bus Station every hour (Sunday every two hours). A 22-seater minibus (F\$1.35) also operates and is much faster than the regular buses. It picks up passengers from a different part of Suva Bus Station—ask the drivers of the Nausori minibuses parked on the corner closest to the market. The last bus back to Suva is around 1800. A taxi will be F\$8. Make a circle trip of it by catching a bus from the park on to Nausori, rather than returning directly to Suva. And try to come on a dry day as it's even rainier than Suva and the creeks are prone to flooding.

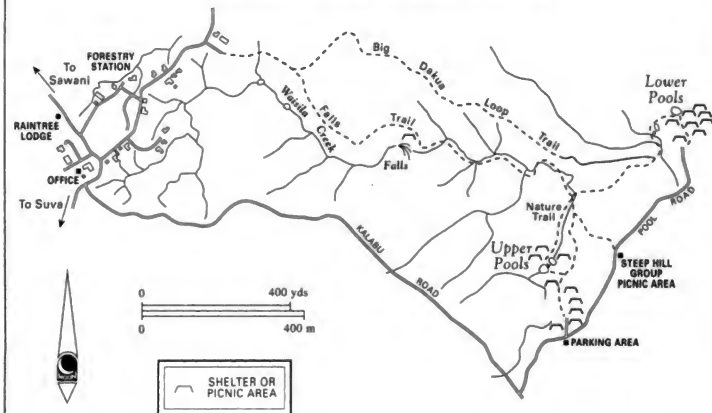
Also consider spending the night at Raintree Lodge, 50 meters from the entrance to the park (see Accommodations for details). Lunch and drinks can be ordered at the lodge's attractive restaurant/bar (tel. 320-562), which overlooks a small lake.

On your way back to Suva from Colo-i-Suva ask the bus driver to drop you at Wailoku Road, just past the Fiji School of Medicine in Tamavua Heights. Every half hour the Wailoku bus runs down the hill: stay on till the bus stops and turns around, then continue down the road a few hundred meters to a bridge. Take the trail on the left just across the bridge and hike about five minutes upstream to **Wailoku Falls**, where you can swim in a deep pool of cold, clear water amid the idyllic verdant vegetation. This nice picnic spot is on government land and no admission is charged. (There's no security here, so don't carry any valuables.) The nearby Wailoku Settlement is inhabited by descendants of blackbirded Solomon Islanders. If you only want to visit the falls, look for the Wailoku bus at the harbor end of Lane No. 2 at the market bus station.

Hiking

For a bird's-eye view of Suva and the entire surrounding area, spend a morning climbing to the volcanic plug atop **Mt. Korobaba** (429 meters), the highest peak around. Take a Shore bus to

COLO-I-SUVA FOREST PARK



the cement factory beyond the Tradewinds Hotel at Lami, then follow the dirt road past the factory up into the foothills. After about 45 minutes on the main track, you'll come to a fork just after a sharp descent. Keep left and cross a small stream. Soon after, the track divides again. Go up on the right and look for a trail straight up to the right where the tracks rejoin. It's a 10-minute scramble to the summit from here. A guide would be helpful.

There's a far more challenging climb to the top of **Joske's Thumb**, a volcanic plug 15 km west of Suva. Take a bus to Naikorokoro Road, then walk inland 30 minutes to where the road turns sharply right and crosses a bridge. Follow the track straight ahead and continue up the river till you reach a small village. Request permission of the villagers to proceed. From the village to the Thumb will take just under three hours, and a guide would be advisable. The last bit is extremely steep, and ropes may be necessary. It even took Sir Edmund Hillary two tries to climb the Thumb.

Sports and Recreation

Beqa Divers (P.O. Box 777, Suva; tel. 361-088, fax 361-047), 75 Marine Dr., opposite the Lami Shopping Center, is the country's oldest dive shop (established as Scubahire by Dave and Lorraine Evans in 1970). Their four-day PADI certification course (F\$495) involves six boat dives and Fiji's only purpose-built diver training pool is on their Lami premises. You'll need to show a medical certificate proving you're fit for diving. An introductory dive is F\$154. Beqa Divers arranges full-day diving trips to the Beqa Lagoon from their Pacific Harbor base for F\$143, including two tanks, weight belt, backpack, and lunch. Other equipment can be rented. Beqa Divers will also take snorkelers out on their full-day dive trips for F\$66 pp, snorkeling gear and lunch included. When things are slow they may offer a "special" reduced rate for the all-day scuba trip, if you ask. All diving is out of Pacific Harbor—the Suva office only takes bookings, does certification courses, and sells equipment. In past they've provided free dormitory accommodations to backpackers taking a course or diving with them.

Dive Center Ltd. (P.O. Box 3066, Lami; tel. 300-599, fax 302-639), 4 Matua St., Walu Bay

(opposite Budget Rent-a-Car), rents scuba gear (including tanks) at daily and weekly rates, and also fills tanks.

Surfers should call Matthew Light (tel. 998-830), who runs a shuttle out to Sandspit Light-house where there's good surfing on a south-west swell at high tide (F\$20 pp round-trip). He picks up at the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel in Lami.

At the 18-hole, par-72 **Fiji Golf Club** (tel. 382-872), 15 Rifle Range Rd., Vatuwaqa, the course record is 65. Green fees are F\$15/20 for nine/18 holes, club hire F\$20 for a full set, plus trolley hire at F\$3. Call ahead to ask if any competitions are scheduled as the course may be closed to the public at those times. Don't carry large amounts of cash or valuables with you around the course.

The **Olympic Swimming Pool**, 224 Victoria Parade, charges F\$1.10 admission. It's open Monday–Friday 1000–1800, Saturday 0800–1800 (April–September), or Monday–Friday 0900–1900, Saturday 0600–1900 (October–March). Lockers are available.

The Fijians are a very muscular, keenly athletic people who send champion teams far and wide in the Pacific. You can see rugby (April–September) and soccer (March–October) on Saturday afternoons at 1400 at the **National Stadium** near the University of the South Pacific. Rugby and soccer are also played at Albert Park on Saturday, and you could also see a cricket game here (mid-October to Easter). Soccer is also played on Sunday (but rugby is only on Saturday). The National Stadium will host the 2003 South Pacific Games.

ACCOMMODATIONS

There's a wide variety of places to stay, and the low-budget accommodations can be neatly divided into two groups. The places on the south side of the downtown area near Albert Park are mostly decent and provide communal cooking facilities to bona fide travelers. However, some of those northeast of downtown are dicey and cater mostly to "short-time" guests; few of these both-er providing cooking facilities. Many of the medium-priced hotels and self-catering apartments are along Gordon Street and its continuation, MacGregor Road. If you want to spend some

time in Suva to take advantage of the city's good facilities and varied activities, look for something with cooking facilities and weekly rates.

Your best bet if you want to go upmarket are the Southern Cross, Berjaya, and Peninsula International hotels, all within minutes of one another along Gordon Street. You can save money by calling ahead to all three to inquire about that day's "local rate," then take a taxi to the place of your choice. When things are slow, the receptionist may also agree to upgrade you to deluxe at no additional charge if you agree to stay for a few nights. Of course, these deals don't apply to overseas bookings.

Under US\$25 South

The 42-room **South Seas Private Hotel** (P.O. Box 2086, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 312-296), 6 Williamson Rd., one block east of Albert Park, really conveys the flavor in its name. The building originally housed workers involved in laying the first telecommunications cable across the Pacific, and until 1983 it served as a girl's hostel. Things changed when backpackers took over the dormitories (and break-ins through the floorboards by amorous young men came to an end). Today you can get a bed in a five-bed dorm for F\$11, a fan-cooled room with shared bath at F\$19/26 single/double, or a better room with private bath at F\$40 double—good value. You'll receive a F\$1 discount if you have a youth hostel, VIP, or Nomads card. This quiet hotel has a pleasant veranda and a large communal kitchen that may be used 0700–2000 only. For a refundable F\$10 deposit, you may borrow a plate, mug, knife, fork, and spoon, but there's a longstanding shortage of pots and pans (blankets in the rooms are also in short supply). It's possible to leave excess luggage at the South Seas for free while you're off visiting other islands, but lock your bag securely with a padlock that can't be picked. The staff changes money at bank rates. Catch a taxi here from the market the first time (F\$2).

Travel Inn (P.O. Box 2086, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 304-254), an older two-story building at 19 Gorrie St., is owned by the same company as the South Seas Private Hotel. There are 16 fan-cooled rooms with shared bath at F\$22/30 single/double, all with access to communal cooking facilities, and four self-contained apartments

for F\$49 triple daily (F\$12 extra for a fourth person). A small discount is offered to youth hostel, VIP, and Nomads card holders. There are plenty of blankets and good locks on the doors. Visitors from other Pacific islands often stay here, as this is one of Suva's better buys.

For a low-budget apartment with fan try **Pender Court** (P.O. Box 14590, Suva; tel. 314-992), 31 Pender Street. The 13 studios with kitchenettes begin at F\$35 single or double (10 percent reduction by the week), and there are also six one-bedroom apartments with kitchens for F\$45. It's sometimes a little noisy, and usually full.

Suva's original backpacker's oasis is the **Concunut Inn** (P.O. Box 14598, Suva; tel. 305-881), 8 Kimberly St., which charges F\$9 per bunk in the two four-bed dormitories. The four private rooms with shared bath are F\$20/25 single/double, and a small flat upstairs with private bath is F\$40 for up to three. The Inn offers cooking facilities and luggage storage (definitely, watch your gear). It's convenient to town and right on the fringe of the nightclub quarter (ask what time they lock the door if you might be returning late). It's far less crowded now than it was back in the days when it was the only cheap place to stay, and some of the long-term residents are real characters.

The high-rise **YWCA** (P.O. Box 534, Suva; tel. 304-829, fax 303-004) on Sukuna Park has two singles and one double available for female foreign visitors only (F\$10 pp).

Under US\$25 Northeast

Certainly the nicest budget place in this area is **Colonial Lodge** (tel. 300-655), 19 Anand Street. This old wooden house on a side street near town has two fan-cooled rooms with mosquito net and shared bath at F\$35/45 single/double. The large open dormitory downstairs is F\$15.50 pp. All rates include a full cooked breakfast (one of the best in Fiji); a good dinner is F\$6.60. The large sitting room and terrace upstairs make this a very pleasant place to stay. It's run by Susie, daughter of Emosi of Leleuvia Island, and her husband Joe, who works at Colo-i-Suva Forest Park.

An alley at the end of Anand Street leads straight up to **Anandale Apartments** (P.O. Box 12818, Suva; tel. 311-054), 265 Waimanu Road opposite the Oceanview Hotel. The 12 spacious two-bedroom apartments are F\$45/280/800 a

day/week/month for up to three or four people. A fridge, kitchen, sitting room, and balcony are provided in each. It's one of the best deals up this way.

The colorful, 44-room **Oceanview Hotel** (P.O. Box 16037, Suva; tel. 312-129), 270 Waimanu Rd., has two singles at F\$15, 33 doubles at F\$25, and nine four-person family rooms at F\$35. It has a pleasant hillside location, but avoid the noisy rooms over the reception area and bar. The new management has tried to clean the place up, and security has improved. It's one of the only "lowlife" hotels in this area with any atmosphere.

If your main interest is Suva's seedier side, two sleazy establishments are just down Robertson Road from the Oceanview. The 15-room **Motel Crossroad** (tel. 300-089), 124 Robertson Rd., is cheap at F\$20 single or double, but only hookers and johns ever stay there. Similar is the 23-room **Motel Capitol** (tel. 313-246), 91 Robertson Rd., with seven rooms with shared bath at F\$18 single or double, and 16 with private bath at F\$20-30.

It's hard to place the clientele at **Saf's Apartment Hotel** (Safique Mohd, P.O. Box 3985, Samabula; tel. 301-849), on Robertson between the Crossroad and Capitol. The 40 bare rooms with bath are F\$25 single or double downstairs, F\$35 upstairs, or F\$45 with TV and cooking facilities (F\$10 extra for a/c). A bed in an eight-bed dorm is F\$7 pp. There are nice views from the upper balconies of this three-story concrete building, but it's noisy and security could be a concern.

Just up Waimanu Road from the Oceanview is the 14-room **New Haven Motel** (P.O. Box 992, Suva; tel. 315-220), which is rather dirty and used mostly for one purpose. It's F\$25 single or double upstairs for all night or F\$10 downstairs for a short time.

In contrast to the places just mentioned, **Motel 6 Apartments** (P.O. Box 143, Suva; tel. 307-477, fax 307-133), 1 Walu St. off Waimanu Road, is one of Suva's best deals. Of the 16 clean, comfortable a/c rooms, the eight with fridge only are F\$44 single or double, while those with a balcony, cooking facilities, and a separate bedroom are F\$77. All rooms have regular TV, but if you want Sky TV it's F\$10 extra. There's a swimming pool and the balconies have an excellent

view of Walu Bay. Motel 6 only opened in 1999, and while these prices last it's a bargain.

Up the hill beyond the hospital is the two-story **Outrigger Hotel** (P.O. Box 750, Suva; tel. 314-944, fax 302-944), near the hospital at 349 Waimanu Road. The 20 a/c rooms with bath and fridge are F\$49/54 single/double. Most of the rooms have a good view of Suva Harbor. There's a pizza restaurant on the roof (pizzas F\$6-13). Unfortunately, feedback about the Outrigger is mixed (and it has no connection with the Hawaiian Outrigger chain).

The **Tanoa House Private Hotel** (P.O. Box 704, Suva; tel. 381-575), 5 Princes Rd. in Samabula South, is a totally respectable guesthouse run by Brian, an ex-colonial from the Gilberts. Tropical gardens surround this old wooden building near the Australian High Commission. If you're nostalgic for times past, you'll like the atmosphere and you'll meet genuine island characters. The 11 rooms with shared bath are F\$20/30/35 single/double/triple; breakfast is F\$5 extra, and other meals are available. It's across from the Fiji Institute of Technology near the end of Waimanu Road, too far to walk from downtown, but you can get there easily on the Samabula bus (or take a taxi).

Back down near the center of town, the **Kings Suva Hotel** (P.O. Box 15748, Suva; tel. 304-411) on Waimanu Road is rough, with four rowdy bars and more tramps than travelers. The 27 rooms are F\$15/20 single/double without bath, F\$25/30 with bath, but have a look beforehand as quality varies.

The friendly **Uptown Motel** (P.O. Box 15030, Suva; tel. 306-044, fax 306-094), 55 Toorak Rd., has 12 spacious self-contained rooms with balcony, phone, fridge, sofa, table and chairs, and coffee-making facilities at F\$28/39 single/double with fan, F\$50 with a/c and TV. One room has been converted into a six-bunk dorm at F\$12 a bed. It's convenient to the shopping district. Despite the noisy nightclubs just down the road, it's surprisingly peaceful here at night.

The 23 units at the **Tourist Motor Inn** (tel. 315-745), at 98 Amy St. several blocks east of Waimanu Road, are F\$20/30 single/double with fan. A family room costs F\$35. This three-story building painted pink and cream is seldom full. However, many of the people staying here seem to have more on their minds than sleep, and it

can be rather noisy with shouts and laughter echoing through the halls.

US\$25–50 South

Several apartment hotels on the hill behind the Central Police Station are worth a try. The congenial **Town House Apartment Hotel** (P.O. Box 485, Suva; tel. 300-055, fax 303-446), 3 Forster St., is a five-story building with panoramic views from the rooftop bar (happy hour 1700–1900). The 28 a/c units with cooking facilities and fridge are good value at F\$48/60/72 single/double/triple and up.

Nearby and under the same ownership is the four-story **Sunset Apartment Motel** (P.O. Box 485, Suva; tel. 301-799, fax 303-446), corner of Gordon and Murray Streets. Avoid the four rooms without cooking facilities that go for F\$38/50 single/double, and ask for one of the 10 two-bedroom apartments with kitchens and fridge at F\$45/59, or the deluxe apartment at F\$63/81. The two-bedroom apartments cost F\$11 per additional person. A place in their 12-bed dorm is F\$9 (no cooking). Some of the cheaper rooms are noisy and have uncomfortably soft beds.

The Town House reception also handles bookings at **Sarita Flats** (tel. 300-084), nearby at 39 Gordon St., where a bed-sitting room apartment with cooking facilities will be F\$80 single or double (extra adult F\$12). This two-story building lacks the balconies and good views of the Town House.

The **Southern Cross Hotel** (P.O. Box 1076, Suva; tel. 314-233, fax 302-901) is a high-rise concrete building at 63 Gordon Street. The 35 a/c rooms are F\$90 for up to three people. Beware of rooms on the lower floors, which are blasted by band music six nights a week. Ask for the 5th floor or at least the other end of the building. The hotel restaurant on the 6th floor serves delicious Fijian and Korean dishes. You reach the swimming pool through the bar.

Four-story Elixir Motel Apartments (P.O. Box 3059, Lami; tel. 303-288, fax 303-383), on the corner of Gordon and Malcolm Streets, has 14 two-bedroom apartments with cooking facilities and private bath at F\$61 without a/c for up to three people, F\$72 with a/c. Weekly and monthly rates are 10 percent lower.

The **Suva Motor Inn** (P.O. Box 2500, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 313-973, fax 300-

381), a three-story complex near Albert Park, corner of Mitchell and Gorrie Streets, has 37 a/c studio apartments with kitchenette at F\$100 single or double, F\$120 triple (10 percent discount by the week). The seven two-bedroom apartments capable of accommodating five persons are F\$170 for the first two, plus F\$10 for each extra person. A courtyard swimming pool with waterslide and cascade faces the restaurant/bar. This new building (erected in 1996) is well worth considering by families who want a bit of comfort.

The **Peninsula International Hotel** (P.O. Box 888, Suva; tel. 313-711, fax 314-473), at the corner of MacGregor Road and Pender Street, is a stylish four-floor building with swimming pool. The 32 standard a/c rooms are F\$90/110 single/double, while the eight suites with kitchenettes run F\$100/115. In 2000 another eight deluxe rooms were added, costing F\$110/130.

Twenty self-catering units owned by the National Olympic Committee are available at **Suva Apartments** (P.O. Box 12488, Suva; tel. 304-280, fax 301-647), 17 Bau St., a few blocks east of Pender Court. The 15 fan-cooled units in this new four-story building are F\$40/55/70 single/double/triple, while the five a/c apartments are F\$50/65/80. Ten percent is taken off on weekly rentals. By staying here you help support organized sports in Fiji!

Duncan Apartments (P.O. Box 11979, Suva; tel. 300-377, fax 308-716), 9 Duncan Road, has 15 self-catering a/c flats with TV at F\$60/400/850 a day/week/month for up to three people (add about F\$100 to the monthly rate for gas, water, and electricity). This well-kept two-story complex is in a nice residential area east of Albert Park.

Anyone with any sort of business at the University of the South Pacific should stay at **USP Lodges** (P.O. Box 1168, Suva; tel. 212-614, fax 314-827). The accommodations here are in two clusters. The Upper Campus Lodge, overlooking the Botanical Garden on the main campus, has six small flats with TV and cooking facilities at F\$49/59 single/double (or F\$320/390 a week). Four rooms with shared bath in an older wooden building here are F\$39/49—not as good a deal. Down beside Laucala Bay near the School of Marine Studies is Marine Lodge with 20 self-contained rooms at F\$44 single, and five self-catering units with TV at F\$49/59 single/double.

The reception for Marine Lodge is at Upper Campus Lodge. For a longer stay, ask about Waqavuka Flats near Upper Campus Lodge, which offers monthly rates. Rooms in both sections of USP Lodges are often occupied by students on a semi-permanent basis, so it's best to call ahead to check availability.

US\$25–50 Northeast

Up in the Waimanu Road area, the value-for-money **Capricorn Apartment Hotel** (P.O. Box 1261, Suva; tel. 303-732, fax 303-069), 7 St. Fort St., has 34 spacious a/c units with cooking facilities, fridge, and TV beginning at F\$85 single or double, F\$95 triple, plus tax. A room upstairs is F\$10 more, a one-bedroom flat another F\$20. The three- and four-story apartment blocks edge the swimming pool, and there are good views of the harbor from the individual balconies.

Tropic Towers Apartment Motel (P.O. Box 1347, Suva; tel. 304-470, fax 304-169), 86 Robertson Rd., has 34 a/c apartments with cooking facilities in a four-story building starting at F\$50/61/72 single/double/triple. Ask about the 13 "budget" units in the annex, which are F\$33 single or double with shared bath. Washing machines (F\$9) and a swimming pool are available for guests; screened windows or mosquito nets are not. This and the Capricorn are good choices for families.

US\$50–100

Suva's largest hotel is the **Holiday Inn Suva** (P.O. Box 1357, Suva; tel. 301-600, fax 300-251), on the waterfront opposite the Government Buildings. Formerly a Travelodge and now owned by Bass Hotels and Resorts, the Holiday Inn Suva is a big American-style place with 130 a/c rooms with fridge and TV beginning at F\$157 single or double. The newly renovated "superior" rooms are F\$228. The swimming pool behind the two-story buildings compensates for the lack of a beach and the view of Viti Levu from here is splendid. A UTC tour desk is at the hotel.

The nine-story **Berjaya Hotel** (P.O. Box 112, Suva; tel. 312-300, fax 301-300), part of the Best Western chain, at the corner of Malcolm and Gordon Streets, is the tallest hotel in Fiji. The 48 a/c rooms with fridge and TV all face the harbor. It's F\$134 single or double on the lower

floors or F\$146 on the upper floors, and on those days when they're giving the reduced "local rate" (ask) the Berjaya becomes good value. This Malaysian-owned hotel hosts Suva's only Malaysian restaurant.

The 109-room **Raffles Tradewinds Hotel** (P.O. Box 3377, Lami; tel. 362-450, fax 361-464), at Lami on the Bay of Islands seven km west of Suva, includes a 500-seat convention center, swimming pool, and floating seafood restaurant. Rates are F\$163 single or double, F\$191 triple with private bath, fridge, and air conditioning (reduced rates are often available). Many cruising yachts anchor here. Though bus service into Suva is good, the location is inconvenient for those without a car.

Eco-Accommodations

Raintree Lodge (Tom Davis and Nick and Barbara Vasutabu, P.O. Box 16655, Suva; tel. 320-562, fax 320-113), near the entrance to Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, caters well to both ends of the market. Their 22-bed split-level dormitory (F\$16.50 pp) shares toilet, cooking, and bathing facilities with the four double rooms at F\$55 (ask for room No. 1 in Dorm No. 1, which is the most private). Camping is F\$5 pp. More upscale are the four lodges or bungalows in another section just up the hill. These cost F\$110 single or double, and are quite luxurious with a sitting room, fridge, private bath, and deck overlooking a small lake (but no cooking facilities). Larger groups can book the family lodge at F\$220 for up to four people (plus F\$27.50 per additional person up to nine maximum). If you'll be using the cooking facilities, bring groceries from Suva as there's no store here. Raintree's large thatched restaurant/bar overlooks a former rock quarry, which has been converted into a lovely lake teaming with tiny tilapia fish. It's possible to borrow a bamboo raft and paddle out to the center of the lake for swimming. On Sundays there's a *lovo* (F\$16) at noon. Aside from its easy access to the forest park, the lodge can be used as a base for visiting Suva (the last bus back is at 1900 daily). Bus connections are covered in the Colo-i-Suva listing above. A taxi from Suva will cost F\$8 (if arriving by air at Nausori, call ahead for a free pickup). The whole complex is clean and new (opened September 1999), and a model for ecotourism in Fiji.

FOOD

Downtown Eateries

The American-style food courts in the **Downtown Boulevard Center** (tel. 305-590) on Ellery Street and in **Dolphins Food Court** (tel. 307-440; daily 0900–2100) at FNPF Place, Victoria Parade and Loftus, offer familiar, easy eating.

Jackson Takeaway (tel. 303-986; Mon.–Fri. 0730–1730, Sat. 0730–1600), in the old town hall next to the Ming Palace Restaurant on Victoria Parade, serves Chinese lunches for F\$3 or fish and chips for F\$2. It's also good for a quick cup of coffee.

Rachel's Deli & Bistro (tel. 309-993), 165 Victoria Parade opposite Fintel, has bagels, croissants, sandwiches, salads, burgers, pies, cakes, and cookies, all for under F\$5. There's a pleasant large seating area.

One of the few places serving a regular cooked breakfast (F\$6.50) is the **Palm Court Bistro** (tel. 304-662; Mon.–Fri. 0700–1700, Sat. 0700–1430), in the Queensland Insurance Arcade behind Air New Zealand on Victoria Parade. Their burgers and sandwiches are good at lunchtime.

An inexpensive snack bar with concrete outdoor picnic tables is at the back side of the **Handicraft Market** facing the harbor (the "long soup" is a bargain).

Low-budget snacks are also served at **Donald's Kitchen** (tel. 315-587), 103 Cumming Street. One block over on Marks Street are cheaper Chinese restaurants, such as **Kim's Cafe** (tel. 313-252), 128 Marks St., where you can get a toasted egg sandwich and coffee for about F\$1.50. There are scores more cheap milk bars around Suva, and you'll find them for yourself as you stroll around town.

An Austrian reader sent us this:

Why didn't you mention the market stalls? Burgers for F\$1, yummy cakes for F\$0.50, curry wrapped up in roti also F\$0.50, juices (not only guava and pineapple, but all kinds) for F\$0.20, lots of ivi (chestnuts) for F\$1, etc. It's the budget place to eat, and nice social surroundings too.

Fijian

A popular place to sample Fijian food is the **Old Mill Cottage Cafe** (tel. 312-134; closed Sunday and evenings), 49 Carnarvon St.—the street behind the Dolphins Food Court. Government employees from nearby offices descend on this place at lunchtime for the inexpensive curried freshwater mussels, curried chicken livers, fresh seaweed in coconut milk, taro leaves creamed in coconut milk, and fish cooked in coconut milk.

Indian

The **Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant** (tel. 314-154; closed Sunday), at the corner of Pratt and Joske Streets, serves ice cream (12 flavors), sweets, and snacks downstairs, main meals upstairs (available Mon.–Sat. 1100–1430, Fri. 1900–2100). If you want the all-you-can-eat vegetarian *thali* (F\$7.50), just sit down upstairs and they'll bring it to you. No smoking or alcohol is allowed.

A cheaper Indian place is the **Curry House** (tel. 313-756; closed Sunday) at two locations: 87 Cumming Street, and in Dolphins Food Court off Victoria Parade. Their special vegetarian *thali* (F\$3) is a good lunch and they also have meat curries from F\$5. Try the takeaway *rotis*.

Govinda Vegetarian Restaurant (Mon.–Fri. 0830–1800, Sat. 0830–1500), 93 Cumming St., has a combination *thali* for F\$6.50, plus sweets, ice cream, milk shakes, and masala tea.

Suva's only upscale Indian restaurant is **Ashiyana** (tel. 313-000; Tues.–Sat. 1130–1430, 1800–2200, Sun. 1800–2130), in the old town hall next to the Ming Palace Restaurant on Victoria Parade. Their hot and spicy dishes are prepared in a tandoor clay oven by a chef from India.

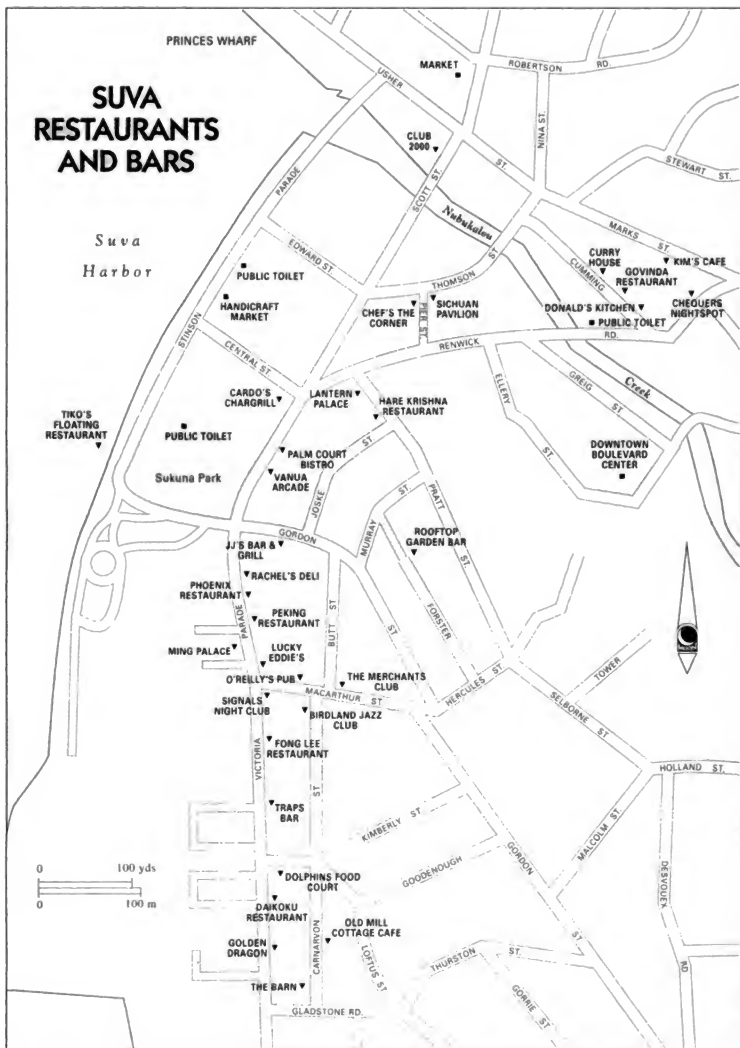
Asian

Not many Indian restaurants in Suva are open at night or on Sunday, so this is when you should turn to Suva's many excellent, inexpensive Asian restaurants. Most serve beer, while the Indian restaurants are usually "dry."

Two good-value Chinese places are adjacent on Pratt Street near Hare Krishna. Dishes in the glass-covered warmer at the **Lantern Palace Restaurant** (tel. 314-633) are under F\$4, while those at the **Guang Wha Restaurant** next door

SUVA RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Suva
Harbor



are about F\$3. The Guang Wha is more likely to be open on holidays and nothing on their regular menu is over F\$10.

The Sichuan Pavilion Restaurant (tel. 315-194; Mon.–Sat. 1030–2300, Sun. 1600–2300), upstairs in the old Garrick Hotel building at 6 Thomson St., is perhaps Suva's finest Asian restaurant. Employees of the Chinese Embassy frequent it for the spicy-hot Chinese dishes (though they're not as hot as Sichuan food elsewhere). Almost everything is good, but avoid the lamb. Entrées average F\$8–13. Weather permitting, sit outside on the balcony and watch all Suva go by.

The Phoenix Restaurant (tel. 311-889), 155 Victoria Parade, has inexpensive Chinese dishes like red pork with fried rice (F\$5) in their warmer and big bottles of beer. They're open on Sunday 1100–2100.

The popular **Peking Restaurant** (tel. 312-714; daily 1130–2230), 195 Victoria Parade, is only a bit more expensive than the down-market Chinese places, but the atmosphere is nicer and the meals are individually prepared (averaging F\$5–10). Small parties of four or more can order set dinner menus served in the traditional Chinese banquet manner (F\$10 pp and up). To sample all the specialties of the house, eight hours advance notice and a group of at least six is required (F\$21 pp).

Suva's most imposing Chinese restaurant by far is the 300-seat **Ming Palace** (tel. 315-111; Mon.–Sat. 1130–1430/1800–2200, Sun. 1700–2200) in the old town hall next to the public library on Victoria Parade. Weekdays there's a lunch buffet for F\$9 (dinner entrées are F\$9–18).

Fong Lee Seafood Restaurant (tel. 304-233; Mon.–Sat. 1100–1400/1830–2230, Sun. 1830–2230), 293 Victoria Parade, is more expensive than the Peking Restaurant and the dining area isn't as agreeable, but the food is said to be the tastiest in Suva (notice the many affluent local Chinese having dinner there). Lunch is cheaper than dinner at the Fong Lee, or you can eat at the **Hong Kong Palace** (tel. 301-519; Mon.–Sat. 1100–2230) next door for a third of the price.

For upscale Japanese food, it's **Daikoku** (tel. 308-968; Mon.–Sat. 1200–1400, 1800–2200), FNP Place, 359 Victoria Parade. The Teppan-Yaki dishes (F\$20–48) are artistically prepared right at your table.

The Korea House Restaurant (tel. 311-711; daily 0900–1500, 1700–2100), 178 Waimanu Road at Brewster, offers Korean dishes (F\$8–13), Chinese dishes (F\$6–9), bulgogy (F\$10), bibimbab (F\$8), and sashimi (F\$13–18).

The top place to eat Chinese style near the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel yacht anchorage is the **Castle Restaurant** (tel. 361-223; closed Sun.) in the Lami Shopping Center.

Better Restaurants

Tiko's Floating Restaurant (tel. 313-626; dinner only) is housed in the MV *Lycianda*, an ex-Blue Lagoon cruise ship launched at Suva in 1970 and now anchored off Stinson Parade behind Sukuna Park. Their steaks and seafood are good, and there's a bar called the Engineerroom. A real mountain of crabs will run F\$26. It's a romantic spot, and you can feel the boat rock gently in the waves.

Cardo's Chargrill (tel. 314-330), in Regal Lane around behind the Qantas and Air Pacific offices, is run by descendants of Espero Cardo, an Argentine gaucho said to have arrived on a Koro Sea cruise in the early 1800s only to have his cattle rustled from below deck by Fijian warriors. What's known for sure is that today you can sit at a table with a view of Suva Harbor and consume steaks of 250, 300, or 400 grams priced from F\$19–33. Fancier dishes on the main menu cater to other tastes.

The Nadi tourist-caterer Chef's has opened branches in Suva. **Chef's The Corner** (Mon.–Fri. 1800–2200), Thomson and Pier streets beside Jack's Handicrafts, serves coffee and snacks to the trendy youths who want to be seen here. **Chef's The Restaurant** (tel. 308-325) upstairs offers casual lunches (F\$9–14) from 1100–1400, and candlelight dinners (F\$22–36) from 1800–2200. Tourists and the affluent consume Chef's meat and seafood.

JJ's Bar & Grill (tel. 305-005; closed Sun.), at 10 Gordon St. just up from Sukuna Park, is a smart yuppie place with daily specials listed on blackboards. Soups, salads, and sandwiches are available at lunch, and if you don't want any of the main courses (F\$12–27) it's just as good to order a couple of appetizer dishes (the calamari friti come recommended).

Two trendy restaurants are at Flagstaff, halfway out to the university (take a taxi). The

Great Wok of China (tel. 301-285), corner of Bau St. and Laucala Bay Rd., features spicy Sichuan food, while **The Yellow Door** (tel. 314-998) on Rewa Street just opposite has a steak and seafood menu, as well as more Chinese dishes cooked in the wok (F\$6–10). Fish in coconut cream is F\$10.50, kokoda F\$5.50, steaks F\$11–13, and desserts to F\$5. Shrimp, prawn, and oyster specials are offered on weekends. Their Western-style dishes are among the best of their kind in Suva, and the local expats eat it up with good reason.

ENTERTAINMENT AND EVENTS

In 1996 **Village Six Cinemas** (tel. 306-206) opened on Scott Street, and you now have a choice of six Hollywood films several times a day. Regular admission is F\$4.50, reduced to F\$3.50 on Tuesday. The air-conditioning is a relief on a hot day. **Century Theater** (tel. 311-641), 67 Marks St., shows mostly Asian karate films or Indian movies in Hindi. **Phoenix Cinema**, 192 Rodwell Road north of the bus station, specializes in adult movies.

The top time to be in Suva is in August during the **Hibiscus Festival** fills Albert Park with stalls, games, and carnival revelers.

Nightclubs

There are many nightclubs, all of which have F\$3–5 cover charges on weekends and require neat dress. Nothing much happens until after 2200, and women shouldn't enter alone. Late at night, it's wise to take a taxi back to your hotel. Suva is still a very safe city, but nasty, violent robberies do occur.

Gays will feel comfortable at **Lucky Eddie's** (tel. 312-884; Thurs.–Sat. 1900 until late), 217 Victoria Parade, but it's not really a gay bar, as the Fijian women present try to prove. Nearby is **Bourbon Bluez** (tel. 313-927), beside Air Nauru across the street from O'Reilly's.

Signals Night Club (tel. 313-590; Mon.–Sat. 1900–0100), at 255 Victoria Parade opposite the Suva City Library, has a cover charge after 2000 Thursday–Saturday only.

A shade rougher but also very popular is the **Golden Dragon** (tel. 311-018; open Mon.–Sat. 1930–0100), 379 Victoria Parade.

Birdland Jazz Club, 6 Carnarvon St., up and around the corner from O'Reilly's Pub, tel. 303-833, open Tues.–Sun. from 1800, has outstanding live rhythm and blues from 2230 on Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. Other nights there's recorded jazz. It's a late night place where people come after they've been to others clubs. **Bojangles Night Club** (tel. 303-776), adjacent to Birdland, is a disco open nightly from 1800 (cover charge after 2200).

The Barn (tel. 307-845), 54 Carnarvon St., is a popular country and western club (open Mon.–Thurs. 1900–0100, Fri. 1800–0100, Sat. 1930–0100) with live entertainment and a cover charge from 2100.

The roughest of the downtown clubs is **Chequers Nightspot** (tel. 313-563), 27 Waimanu Rd., which has disco music nightly except Sunday. Happy hour is all day until 1900. Hang onto your wallet here.

Bars

O'Reilly's Pub (tel. 312-884), 5 MacArthur St., just around the corner from Lucky Eddie's, has a happy hour daily 1600–1900. It's a nice relaxed way to kick off a night on the town, and the big sports screen and canned music are tops. They're open Sunday.

The whimsically named **Bad Dog Cafe** (tel. 312-968), next door to O'Reilly's, is a trendy wine bar serving margaritas, sangria, and a dozen imported beers. Mexican dishes are on the food menu, and for F\$6 corkage you may BYO bottle of wine from the adjacent Victoria Wines shop. A back door from Bad Dog leads into the **Wolfhound Bar**, Suva's second mock Irish pub.

A block up from O'Reilly's is **The Merchants Club** (tel. 304-256; Mon.–Fri. 1600–2200, Sat. 1100–2200, Sun. 1100–1800), 15 Butt St. at MacArthur. Properly dressed overseas visitors are welcome in this classic South Seas bar.

Traps Bar (tel. 312-922; Mon.–Sat. from 1800), at 305 Victoria Parade next to the Shell service station, is a groupie Suva social scene with a happy hour until 1900 (drunks and youths under 18 are unwelcome here). There's live music from 2000 on Wednesday and Saturday, the nights to be there.

Shooters Bar (tel. 308-440), at 54 Carnarvon St. next to The Barn, has a happy hour Monday–Saturday 1700–2000. They play harder



Suva Lawn Bowling Club

DAVID STANLEY

rock music than the others and the atmosphere is somewhere between O'Reilly's and Traps.

The bar at the **Suva Lawn Bowling Club** (tel. 302-394), facing the lagoon opposite Thurston Botanical Gardens and just off Albert Park, is a very convenient place to down a large bottle of Fiji Bitter—the perfect place for a cold one after visiting the museum. You can sit and watch the bowling, or see the sun set over Viti Levu.

Club 2000 (tel. 304-112), in the former Metropole Hotel building upstairs at Usher and Scott streets near the market, supplies F\$1.30 mugs of beer and it's safe enough during the day. At night, you better know what you're doing.

Those in search of more subdued drinking should try the **Piano Bar** in the lobby at the Holiday Inn Suva (tel. 301-600), which often presents rather good jazz singers, or the **Rooftop Garden Bar** at the Town House Motel (tel. 300-055), which has a happy hour 1700–1900.

SHOPPING

The **Government Handicraft Center** (tel. 315-869 or 211-306; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1630, Sat. 0900–1200) behind Ratu Sukuna House, MacArthur and Camarvon Streets, is a low-pressure place to familiarize yourself with what is authentic. **Jack's Handicrafts** (tel. 308-893), Renwick Road and Pier St., has Fijian crafts and other tourist goods with prices clearly marked.

The large **Curio and Handicraft Market** (Mon.–Sat. 0800–1700) on the waterfront behind the post office is a good place to haggle over crafts, so long as you know how to spot what is really Fijian (avoid masks and "tikis"). Unfortunately many of the vendors are rather aggressive and it's impossible to shop around in peace. Also, never come here on the day when a cruise ship is in port—prices shoot up. And watch out for the annoying "sword sellers" mentioned in the main introduction as they could accost you anywhere in Suva. (Strangers who greet you on the street in Suva almost always want something from you.)

Cumming Street is Suva's busiest shopping street. Expect to obtain a 10–40 percent discount at the "duty-free" shops by bargaining, but *shop around* before you buy. Be especially wary when purchasing gold jewelry, as it might be fake. And watch out for commission agents who may try to show you around and get you a "good price."

The **Suva Flea Market** on Rodwell Road opposite the bus station features a large selection of island clothing and many good little places to eat. You won't be hassled here.

For more upmarket apparel, examine the fashionable hand-printed clothing and beachware at **Sogo Fiji** (tel. 315-007), on Cumming Street and on Victoria Parade next to the Bank of Hawaii. You could come out looking like a real South Seas character at a reasonable price.

J.R. White & Co. (tel. 302-325), in the mall behind Air New Zealand, has all kinds of sporting equipment (but not camping gear or backpacks). They can repair worn-out zippers.

Wai Tui Surf (tel. 300-287), next to J.R. White & Co., sells surfing paraphernalia, including stylish bathing suits.

The **Philatelic Bureau** (P.O. Box 100, Suva; tel. 312-928) at the General Post Office sells the stamps of Niue, Pitcairn, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, as well as those of Fiji.

Caines Photofast (tel. 313-211), Renwick Road and Pratt St. opposite The Triangle, offers one-hour color film developing.

INFORMATION

The **Fiji Visitors Bureau** (tel. 302-433; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1630, Sat. 0800–1200) is on Thomson Street across from the General Post Office. They have a good supply of brochures and can answer most questions.

The **South Pacific Tourism Organization** (tel. 304-177, fax 301-995), FNPF Plaza, 3rd floor, 343-359 Victoria Parade at Loftus St., provides information on the entire South Pacific. Ask for a copy of their free guidebook *The South Pacific Islands Travel Planner*.

The **Bureau of Statistics** (P.O. Box 2221, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 315-822, fax 303-656), 8th floor, Ratu Sukuna House, Victoria Parade and MacArthur, has many interesting technical publications on the country and a library where you may browse.

The **Maps and Plans Room** (tel. 211-395; Mon.–Thurs. 0800–1530, Fri. 0800–1500) of the Lands and Survey Department, Ground Floor, Government Buildings, sells excellent topographical maps of Fiji.

Carpenters Shipping (tel. 312-244), 4th floor, Neptune House, Tofua Street, Walu Bay (near Muaiwalu Wharf), sells British navigational charts of Fiji (F\$71 each). Nearby is the **Fiji Hydrographic Office** (tel. 315-457; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1300 and 1400–1600), Top Floor, Free-ston Rd., Walu Bay, with navigational charts of the Yasawas, Kadavu, eastern Vanua Levu, and the Lau Group at F\$22 a sheet (all other areas are covered by the British charts).

Bookstores

The **Dominion Book Center** (tel. 304-334), Dominion House Arcade behind the Fiji Visitors Bureau, has some books on Fiji.

The **Methodist Book Center** (tel. 311-466), 11 Stewart St. adjacent to Centenary Methodist Church, has a surprisingly good selection of local books on Fiji and the Pacific.

The **Fiji Museum** shop also sells a few excellent books at reasonable prices.

Suva's number one bookstore is the **USP Book Center** (tel. 313-900, fax 303-265; Mon.–Thurs. 0830–1615, Fri. 0830–1545) at the Laucala Bay university campus. Not only do they have one of the finest Pacific sections in the region, but they stock the publications of some 20 occasional publishers affiliated with the university and you can turn up some truly intriguing items. Also visit the Book Display Room in the **Institute of Pacific Studies** building (tel. 212-332), not far from the Book Center. They sell assorted books by local authors published by the IPS itself.

The **New Coconut Frond** (tel. 311-963), at the back of the Suva Flea Market on Rodwell Road, has a large stock of used paperbacks.

Libraries

The **Suva City Library** (P.O. Box 176, Suva; tel. 313-433, extension 241; Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri. 0930–1800, Wed. 1200–1800, Sat. 0900–1300), at 196 Victoria Parade, allows visitors to take out four books upon payment of a refundable F\$20 deposit.

The **National Archives of Fiji** (P.O. Box 2125, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 304-144; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1300, 1400–1600), 25 Carnarvon St., has an air-conditioned library upstairs with a large collection of local newspapers.

The excellent **Fiji Museum Library** (tel. 315-944; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1300, 1400–1600) is directly behind the main museum in a separate building. They charge F\$0.50 to use the facilities.

The library at the Laucala Campus of the **University of the South Pacific** (tel. 212-402) is open Monday–Friday 0800–1600 year-round. During semesters they also open Saturday, Sunday afternoon, and in the evening. A library tour is offered Friday at 0900 during the school year. You'll find a reading room with international newspapers downstairs. Tourists can request special permission to visit the Pacific Room up-

stairs once only. Otherwise, it's possible to buy a visitors card (F\$10) good for three days. To borrow up to five books a month from the library, one must pay F\$50 for an "external borrowers card" (photo required), which also allows access to the Pacific Room for one year. The library's Pacific Information Center sells *South Pacific Bibliography*, a detailed list of publications about the region. Prior to entry, bags must be left in a cloakroom behind and below the library.

The Alliance Française (P.O. Box 14548, Suva; tel. 313-802, fax 313-803), 14-18 MacGregor Road, has an excellent selection of French books, magazines, and newspapers. You're welcome to peruse materials in the reading room Mon.-Fri. 0900-1900. Ask about their video and film evenings.

Ecology Groups

The Greenpeace Pacific Campaign (tel. 312-861, fax 312-784; Mon.-Fri. 0830-1700) is above the Ming Palace Restaurant in the old town hall on Victoria Parade.

The Pacific Concerns Resource Center (tel. 304-649, fax 304-755), 83 Amy St., has a library open to the public Mon.-Fri. 0900-1300. A large collection of periodicals on Pacific environmental and social issues can be accessed here, and some books are for sale. The Center is the directing body of the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement, a regional grassroots coalition.

The South Pacific Action Committee for Human Ecology and Environment or SPACHEE (P.O. Box 16737, Suva; tel. 312-371, fax 303-053; Mon.-Fri. 0830-1630) has a resource center at the junction of Ratu Cakobau, Domain, and Denison Roads, a block back from the South Seas Private Hotel.

The National Trust for Fiji (P.O. Box 2089, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 301-807, fax 305-092), 3 Ma'afu St., manages eight nature reserves and historic sites around Fiji. Their neighbor, the **World Wide Fund for Nature** (Private Mail Bag, GPO Suva; tel. 315-533, fax 315-410), 4 Ma'afu St., assists various projects around the country for the support of wildlife and wild habitats.

Travel Agents

Hunts Travel (P.O. Box 686, Suva; tel. 315-288, fax 302-212), upstairs from the Dominion

House arcade behind the Fiji Visitors Bureau, is the place to pick up air tickets. They often know more about Air Pacific flights than the Air Pacific employees themselves!

Rosie The Travel Service (tel. 314-436), 46 Gordon St. near Sarita Flats, books tours and accommodations all around Fiji.

Airline Offices

Reconfirm your onward flight reservations at your airlines' Suva office: **Air Fiji** (tel. 313-666), 185 Victoria Parade (also represents Air Vanuatu and Polynesian Airlines); **Air Nauru** (tel. 312-377), Ratu Sukuna House, 249 Victoria Parade; **Air New Zealand** (tel. 313-100), Queensland Insurance Center, Victoria Parade; **Air Pacific** (tel. 304-388), Colonial Building, Victoria Parade; **Qantas Airways** (tel. 313-888), Colonial Building, Victoria Parade; **Solomon Airlines** (tel. 315-889), Global Air Service, 3 Ellery St., and **Sun Air** (tel. 315-755), Queensland Insurance Arcade above Air New Zealand (also represents Royal Tongan Airlines). While you're there, check your seat assignment.

SERVICES

Money

Rates at the banks vary slightly and you might get a dollar or two more on a large exchange by checking the Westpac Bank, ANZ Bank, and Bank of Hawaii before signing your checks. All of them have branches on Victoria Parade near The Triangle. The ANZ Bank has Visa/Master-Card ATMs at their main branch opposite Air Pacific, outside Village Six Cinemas, at Walu Bay Mobil Service Station, and at the ANZ Bank branch in Lami. The Bank of Hawaii has Bankoh ATMs at their main branch on Victoria Parade, at the food court in Downtown Boulevard Center on Ellery St., and inside Dolphins Food Court at FNPF Place.

Money Exchange (tel. 303-566; Mon.-Fri. 0830-1700, Sat. 0830-1300), Thomson and Pier streets opposite the Fiji Visitors Bureau, changes money at rates comparable to the banks. **Money World Fiji** (Mon.-Fri. 0830-1630, Sat. 0900-1230), inside Caines Photofast adjacent to the ANZ Bank, gives a better rate than the banks for traveler's checks.

Thomas Cook Travel (tel. 301-603), opposite the General Post Office, changes foreign currency (Mon.–Fri. 0830–1600, Sat. 0830–1200), at competitive rates, and sells the banknotes of neighboring countries like New Caledonia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu—convenient if you're headed for any of them.

On Sunday and holidays changing money is a problem (try your hotel if you get stuck).

Telecommunications

Fintel, the **Fiji International Telecommunications** office (tel. 312-933, fax 301-025), 158 Victoria Parade, is open Monday–Saturday 0800–1700 for long-distance calls and telegrams. The six private card phone booths here are the most convenient place in Suva to place either local or international calls. If you'd like to have some used Fiji phone cards for gifts or souvenirs, check the booths here as people often discard their cards when they're blank and the floor is usually littered with them.

Telecom Fiji operates a call center (tel. 303-300) at Downtown Boulevard Center in the mall off Ellery Street.

The public fax at Suva General Post Office is fax 302-666 should you need to receive a fax from anyone. Otherwise have your fax sent via Fintel at fax 301-025.

Internet Access

Internet access is available at the **Telecom Fiji Customer Care Center** (tel. 210-335; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1630), opposite the General Post Office and Fiji Visitors Bureau. The charge is F\$3.30 for the first 15 minutes, then F\$0.22 each additional minute.

Several other places around Suva also offer Internet access at F\$0.22 a minute, including the **Alpha Computer Center** (tel. 300-211; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1800, Sat. 0900–1600, Sun. 1000–1400), 181 Victoria Parade between Gordon and MacArthur.

The Republic of Cappuccino (tel. 300-333; Mon.–Fri. 0700–2230, Sat. 0800–2230, Sun. 1000–1900), in Dolphins Food Court at FNPF Place, Victoria Parade and Loftus, is Suva's only true Internet café. Aside from Internet access at the usual F\$0.22 a minute, they serve a variety of teas and coffees (F\$2–3).

Immigration

The **Immigration Office** (tel. 312-622; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1300, 1400–1500) for extensions of stay, etc., is on the 3rd floor at Suvavou House, Gladstone Road and Victoria Parade.

Cruising yachties wishing to visit the outer islands must first obtain a free permit from the Provincial Desk Unit at the **Ministry for Fijian Affairs** (P.O. Box 2100, Government Buildings, Suva; tel. 304-200), 3rd floor, Native Land Trust Board building, Carnarvon Street and Gladstone Road. They'll want to see the customs papers for the boat and all passports, but the procedure is fast and friendly. (Yachties anchoring off a Fijian village should present a *sevusevu* of kava to the chief.)

Consulates

The following countries have diplomatic missions in Suva: **China** (tel. 300-215), 147 Queen Elizabeth Dr., Suva Point; **Chile** (tel. 300-433), Asgar & Co. Optometrists, Queensland Insurance Building behind Air New Zealand, Victoria Parade; **European Union** (tel. 313-633), 4th floor, Development Bank Center, 360 Victoria Parade; **Federated States of Micronesia** (tel. 304-566), 37 Loftus St.; **France** (tel. 312-233), 7th floor, Dominion House, Scott St.; **Germany** (tel. 322-405), 30 Deovji St., Tamavua Heights; **Japan** (tel. 304-633), 2nd floor, Dominion House, Scott St.; **Korea** (tel. 300-977), Vanua House, Victoria Parade; **Malaysia** (tel. 312-166), 5th floor, Pacific House, Butt and MacArthur Streets; **Marshall Islands** (tel. 387-899), 41 Borron Rd., Samabula; **Nauru** (tel. 313-566), 7th floor, Ratu Sukuna House, Victoria Parade and MacArthur; **Netherlands** (tel. 301-499), Cromptons, Queensland Insurance Building behind Air New Zealand, Victoria Parade; **New Zealand** (tel. 311-422), 10th floor, Reserve Bank Building, Pratt St.; **Papua New Guinea** (tel. 304-244), 3rd floor, Credit House, Gordon and Malcolm Streets; **Taiwan** (tel. 315-922), 6th floor, Pacific House, Butt and MacArthur Streets; **Tuvalu** (tel. 301-355), 16 Gorrie St.; **United Kingdom** (tel. 311-033), 47 Gladstone Rd.; and the **U.S.A.** (tel. 314-466, fax 300-081), 31 Loftus Street. Canada and Italy have consuls at Nadi. (The Suva City Council has asked the U.S. embassy to relocate away from downtown Suva. The street in

front of the embassy was closed in 1999 after threats were received, creating traffic problems for the city.)

Everyone other than New Zealanders requires a visa to visit Australia, and these are readily available free of charge at the **Australian High Commission** (P.O. Box 214, Suva; tel. 382-219; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1200), 10 Reservoir Rd., off Princes Road, Samabula. You can also sit and read week-old Australian newspapers here. To get there it's probably easier to take a taxi, then return to town by bus.

Laundry

Gangaram's Laundry (tel. 302-269; Mon.–Fri. 0730–1800, Sat. 0730–1400), 126 Toorak Road, offers same day cleaning services.

Public Toilets

Public toilets are just outside the Handicraft Market on the side of the building facing the harbor; in the Thurston Botanical Gardens; in Downtown Boulevard Center on Ellery Street; beside Nubukalou Creek off Renwick Road; and between the vegetable market and the bus station. Most are free, but the public toilets in Sukuna Park are F\$0.24.

Yachting Facilities

The **Royal Suva Yacht Club** (P.O. Box 335, Suva; tel. 304-201, fax 304-433, channel 16), on Foster Road between Suva and Lami, offers visiting yachts such amenities as mooring privileges, warm showers, laundry facilities, cheap drinks, barbecues, and the full use of club services by the whole crew at F\$38 a week (F\$19 for solo mariners). There have been reports of thefts from boats anchored here, so watch out. Many yachts anchor off the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel on the Bay of Islands, a recognized hurricane anchorage.

HEALTH

Suva's **Colonial War Memorial Hospital** (tel. 313-444), on Waimanu Rd. about a kilometer northeast of the center, is available 24 hours a day in emergencies. The hospital charges commercial rates to nonresidents, so in non-life-

threatening situations you're better off seeing a private doctor.

HealthCare Pacific (tel. 303-404, fax 303-456), corner of Amy and Brewster Streets, is a modern private hospital which opened in early 2001. The **Fiji Recompression Chamber Facility** (tel. 305-154 or 850-630), donated by the Cousteau Society in 1992, is at HealthCare Pacific, but operates independently.

The **Downtown Boulevard Medical Center** (tel. 313-355; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1700, Sat. 0830–1130), in the mall off Ellery Street, has several foreign doctors (one female) on their roster, and a good **pharmacy** (tel. 303-770) is nearby.

The **J.P. Bayly Clinic** (tel. 315-888, Mon.–Fri. 0800–1600), upstairs at 190 Rodwell Rd. opposite the Phoenix Cinema, accommodates three doctors and a female dentist (Dr. Satya Khan).

Two other dentists are Dr. David M. Charya (tel. 302-160), The Dental Center, 59 Cumming St.; and Dr. Abdul S. Haroon (tel. 313-870), Suite 12, Epworth House off Nina Street (just down the hall from Patterson Brothers).

The **Fiji Women's Crisis Center** (tel. 313-300 answered 24 hours), 88 Gordon St. opposite the Berjaya Hotel, offers free and confidential counseling for women and children. Their office is open Monday–Friday 0830–1630, Saturday 0900–1200.

TRANSPORTATION

Although nearly all international flights arrive at Nadi, Suva is Fiji's main domestic transportation hub. Interisland shipping crowds the harbor, and if you can't find a ship going your way at the time you wish to travel, Air Fiji and Sun Air fly to all the major Fiji islands, while Air Pacific serves New Zealand, Tonga, and Samoa and Air Fiji goes to Tonga and Tuvalu—all from Nausori Airport. Make the rounds of the shipping offices listed below, then head over to Walu Bay to check the information. Compare the price of a cabin and deck passage, and ask if meals are included.

A solid block of buses awaits your patronage at the market bus station near the harbor, with continuous local service, and frequent long-distance departures to Nadi and Lautoka. Many of

ISA LEI (THE FIJIAN SONG OF FAREWELL)

*Isa, isa vulagi lasa dina,
Nomu lako, au na rarawa kina?
Cava beka, ko a mai cakava,
Nomu lako, au na sega ni lasa.*

*Isa lei, na noqu rarawa,
Ni ko sana vodo e na mataka.
Bau nanuma, na nodatou lasa,
Mai Suva nanuma tikoga.*

*Vanua rogo, na nomuni vanua,
Kena ca, ni levu tu na ua.
Lomaqu voli, me'u bau butuka,
Tovolea, ke balavu na bula.*

*Isa lei, na noqu rarawa,
Ni ko sana vodo e na mataka.
Bau nanuma, na nodatou lasa,
Mai Suva nanuma tikoga.*

*Domoni dina, na nomu yanuyanu,
Kena kau, wale na salusalu,
Mocelolo, bua, na kukuwalu,
Lagakali, baba na rosidadamu.*

*Isa lei, na noqu rarawa,
Ni ko sana vodo e na mataka.
Bau nanuma, na nodatou lasa,
Mai Suva nanuma tikoga.*

Isa, isa, you are my only treasure,
Must you leave me, so lonely and forsaken?
As the roses will miss the sun at dawning,
Every moment, my heart for you is yearning.

Isa lei, the purple shadows falling,
Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow.
Oh! Forget not, when you are far away,
Precious moments beside Suva Bay.

Isa lei, my heart was filled with pleasure,
From the moment, I heard your tender greeting.
'Mid the sunshine, we spent the hours together,
Now so swiftly those happy hours are fleeting.

Isa lei, the purple shadows fall,
Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow.
Oh! Forget not, when you are far away,
Precious moments beside Suva Bay.

O'er the ocean your island home is calling,
Happy country where roses bloom in splendor,
Oh, I would but journey there beside you,
Then forever my heart would sing in rapture.

Isa lei, the purple shadows fall,
Sad the morrow will dawn upon my sorrow.
Oh! Forget not, when you are far away,
Precious moments beside Suva Bay.

the points of interest around Suva are accessible on foot, but if you wander too far, jump on any bus headed in the right direction and you'll wind up back in the market. Taxis are also easy to find and relatively cheap.

Suva's bus station can be a little confusing as there are many different companies, and time tables are not posted. Most drivers know where a certain bus will park, so just ask. For information on bus services around Viti Levu and domestic flights from Nausori Airport, see Getting Around in the main introduction. Shipping services from Suva are covered below.

Ferries to Ovalau Island

Air Fiji flies from Suva to Levuka (F\$41) two or three times a day, but the most popular way to go is on the bus/ferry/bus combination via Natovi. This service is operated by **Patterson Brothers Shipping** (P.O. Box 1041, Suva; tel. 315-644, fax 301-652), Suite 1, 1st floor, Epworth Arcade off Nina Street. Patterson's "Sea-Road" bus leaves from the bus station opposite the Suva Flea Market Monday-Saturday at 1400 (F\$25). At Natovi (67 km) it drives onto an old Japanese ferry for Buresala on Ovalau, then continues to Levuka, where it should arrive

around 1745. For the return journey you leave the Patterson Brothers office in Levuka Monday–Saturday at 0500, arriving in Suva at 0800. These trips should take four or five hours right through, but can be late if the ferry connection is delayed. Bus tickets must be purchased in advance at the office, and on Saturdays and public holidays reservations should be made at least a day ahead.

You could also try going via Leleuvia Island Resort, though in early 2001 the Leleuvia boats weren't operating regularly due to a lack of business. In past the Leleuvia bus left Suva Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 1200 for Bau Landing, where you boarded a speedboat powered by two 40-horsepower Yamaha engines to Leleuvia Island and Levuka (four hours, F\$25 one-way). A stopover on Leleuvia is always possible (F\$45 round-trip from Suva). To check on the current situation, go to Sunset Apartment Motel (tel. 301-799), corner of Gordon and Murray Streets, or Colonial Lodge (tel. 300-655), 19 Anand St., Suva. Otherwise, call Leleuvia Island Resort at tel. 301-584.

When both services are functioning, we recommend traveling with Patterson northbound and Leleuvia southbound for variety and the most convenient timings. In good weather the Leleuvia boat is a lot more fun and follows a much more scenic route, with a cruise past Bau and a stop at Leleuvia. On the down side, they only use a small 15-person launch with a roof, so on a stormy day the much larger Patterson Brothers car ferry would be preferable. It's a beautiful circle trip worth the effort.

Ships to Northern Fiji

Patterson Brothers Shipping (tel. 315-644), Suite 1, 1st floor, Epworth Arcade off Nina Street, takes reservations for the Suva-Natovi-Nabouwalu-Labasa "Sea-Road" ferry/bus combination, which departs the bus station opposite the Suva Flea Market Tues., Thurs., and Sat. at 0530. Fares from Suva are F\$39 to Nabouwalu or F\$45 right through to Labasa, an excellent 10-hour trip. There may be special trips to Savusavu on holidays. Forthcoming departures are listed on a blackboard in Patterson's Suva office and the schedule varies slightly each week. Patterson Brothers also has offices in Labasa, Lautoka, Levuka, Savusavu, and Taveuni.

Taina's Travel Services (tel. 307-889, fax 306-189), upstairs in Epworth House opposite Patterson Brothers, handles bookings on the 65-meter MV *Adi Savusavu*, a former Swedish Scarlett Line ferry used on the Landskrona-Copenhagen run. Now operated by **Beachcomber Cruises**, this ferry generally leaves Walu Bay, Suva, northbound for Savusavu and Taveuni Tuesday at 1000 and Thursday at noon; Saturday at 1900 the *Adi Savusavu* goes to Savusavu only. Fares from Suva are F\$42/52 economy/first class to Savusavu or F\$47/55 to Taveuni. A bus connection from Savusavu to Labasa is an extra F\$5. The air-conditioned first-class lounge contains 30 airline-style seats, plus six long tables with chairs. If you're fast it's possible to rent a mattress in first class at F\$5 pp for the trip. Downstairs in economy are another 246 padded seats and space in which to spread a mat. The *Adi Savusavu* also carries 12 cars and 15 trucks.

Consort Shipping Line (P.O. Box 152, Suva; tel. 313-344 or 302-877, fax 303-389), in the Dominion House arcade on Thomson Street, operates the MV *Spirit of Free Enterprise* (popularly known as the "Sofe"), a 450-passenger car ferry that formerly shuttled between the north and south islands of New Zealand. The "Sofe" leaves Suva on Tuesday and Saturday at 1800 for Koro (nine hours, F\$32), Savusavu (14 hours, F\$36), and Taveuni (23 hours, F\$40/80 deck/cabin). The ship spends all day Wednesday and Sunday tied up at Savusavu, and Taveuni passengers can get off and walk around. The two-berth cabins of the "Sofe" are quite comfortable and good value at F\$70 pp to Savusavu or F\$80 pp to Taveuni. For a refundable deposit the purser will give you the key to your cabin, allowing you to wander around the ship without worrying about your luggage. Another advantage of taking a cabin is that you're able to order meals in the pleasant first-class restaurant. (Only cabin passengers may do this.) If you're traveling deck, take along something to eat, as the snack bar on board is unreliable.

Ship to Kadavu and Rotuma

In 1998 the choice of ships to Kadavu was cut in half when the MV *Gurawa* of Whippy's Shipping hit a reef near Alberts Place. **Kadavu Shipping Co.** (tel. 311-766, fax 312-987), in the Ports Authority office building between hangers Nos. 11

and 12, Rona Street, Walu Bay, still runs the *MV Bulou-ni-ceva* to Kadavu twice a week. The boat leaves Suva Monday and Thursday at midnight, with the Monday trip going to Matana and Unisea and not calling at Jona's, Albert's, or Matava. The Thursday boat reaches Albert's Place around 1400. Saturday around 1000 they pick up passengers to return to Suva, arriving at 1700. Fares are F\$42/55 deck/salon, but only the salon fare includes meals. Deck passengers can stretch out on long benches on the middle deck when it isn't crowded. Once a month this ship sails to Rotuma, a two-day journey costing F\$90/140 deck/salon. The *Bulou-ni-ceva* is a former Chinese riverboat now owned by Kadavu Province (the entire crew is from Kadavu).

Ships to Other Islands

Salia Basaga Shipping (P.O. Box 14470, Suva; tel. 303-403) runs the *MV Tunatuki II* to the Lau Group twice a month. This large metal trading ship styles itself the "inter island trail blazer." There are two four-bunk cabins, and the fare to Lakeba or Vanua Balavu is F\$77/110 deck/cabin one-way, meals included. Their office is in a container on Muaiwalu Wharf.

Patterson Brothers Shipping, mentioned above, will know about services to Lau and Rotuma on the large car ferry *Island Navigator*. They also handle the small wooden copra boat *Adi Lomai* to Lomaiviti, Lau, and Rotuma. Other small boats, such as the *Cagidonu* and *Taikabara*, run from Suva to Lau every week or two. Ask the crews of vessels tied up at Muaiwalu Jetty, Walu Bay, for passage to Nairai, Gau, Koro, Lau, etc. Don't believe the first person who tells you there's no boat going where you want—*keep trying*.

Food is usually included in the price and on the outward journey it will probably be okay, but on the return don't expect much more than rice and tea. If you're planning a long voyage by inter-island ship, a big bundle of kava roots to captain and crew as a token of appreciation for their hospitality works wonders.

Keep in mind that all of the ferry departure times mentioned above and elsewhere in this book are only indications of what was true in the past. It's essential to check with the company office for current departure times during the week you wish to travel. Quite a few ships leave Suva

on Saturday, but none depart on Sunday. Readers have questioned safety standards on these ships, some of which seem to be nearing the end of their working lives—use them at your own risk. To their credit, Patterson Brothers employees give a safety talk to passengers on some trips, explaining the lifesaving measures aboard ship. In 1997 the Patterson ferry *Jubilee* was scuttled by its crew after being declared unfit for service.

Ships to Other Countries

The Wednesday issue of the *Fiji Times* carries a special section on international shipping, though most are container ships that don't accept passengers. Most shipping is headed for Tonga and Samoa—there's not much going westward, and actually getting on any of the ships mentioned below requires considerable persistence. It's often easier to sign on as crew on a yacht and they probably will be heading west. Try both yacht anchorages in Suva: put up a notice, ask around, etc.

Neptune Shipping (tel. 304-528), 5th floor, Neptune House, Tofua Street, Walu Bay, represents the cargo vessel *Moana*, which sails occasionally from Suva to Wallis and Futuna, then on to Nouméa. This ship *does* accept passengers, although Neptune may advise otherwise. If you get this story just find out when the ship will arrive at Suva, then go and see the captain. This is a beautiful trip, not at all crowded between Fiji and Wallis. Book a cabin, however, if you're going right through to Nouméa.

Carpenters Shipping (tel. 312-244, fax 301-572), 4th floor, Neptune House, Tofua Street, Walu Bay, is an agent for the monthly **Bank Line** service to Lautoka, Port Vila, Luganville, Honiara, Papua New Guinea, and on to the United Kingdom. Again, they cannot sell you a passenger ticket and will only tell you when the ship is due in port and where it's headed. It's up to you to make arrangements personally with the captain, and the fare won't be cheap. Most passengers book months in advance.

Pacific Agencies (tel. 315-444, fax 301-127), on Robertson Road between Rodwell Road and Nina Street, knows about Pacific Forum Line container ships from Suva to Apia, Pago Pago, and Nuku'alofa, such as the Samoan government-owned *Forum Samoa* (every three weeks) and the Tongan government-owned *Fua Kavenga*

(monthly service). This office doesn't sell passenger tickets, so just ask when these ships will be in port, then go and talk to the captain, who is the only one who can decide if you'll be able to go.

The **High Commission of Tuvalu** (P.O. Box 14449, Suva; tel. 301-355, fax 308-479), 16 Gorie St., runs the *Nivaga II* to Funafuti about four times a year, but the dates are variable. Tickets are available with or without meals, first or second class. They only know about a week beforehand approximately when the ship may sail. After reaching Funafuti, the ship cruises the Tuvalu Group.

Williams & Gosling Ltd. Ships Agency (P.O. Box 79, Suva; tel. 312-633, fax 307-358), 189 Rodwell Road near the market bus station, books passengers on the Kiribati Shipping Services vessel *Nei Matangare*, which leaves Suva for Funafuti and Tarawa occasionally. The three-day trip to Funafuti costs A\$95/190 deck/cabin one-way, otherwise the seven-day journey Suva-Tarawa with a day at Funafuti is A\$184/368, meals included.

Taxis

Taxi meters are set at level one daily 0600–2200 with F\$0.50 charged at flag-fall and about F\$1 a km. From 2200 to 0600 the flag-fall is F\$1 plus F\$1.26 a km. You have to insist that they use their meter and it's a good idea if you'll be going far and aren't sure of the fare. Otherwise, just

ask for a flat rate, which shouldn't be over F\$2 in the city center or F\$3 to the suburbs. To hire a taxi for a city tour might cost around F\$15 an hour.

Long-distance taxis to Nadi and Lautoka park outside Foodland, corner of Robertson Road and Struan Street near the market. To Nadi it's F\$13 pp or F\$52 for the whole car. For an extra F\$30 or so, you should be able to negotiate a slower trip with stops along the way. Write out a list of the places you might like to stop and show it to the driver beforehand, so he can't demand more money later on.

Car Rentals

Car rentals are available in Suva from **Avis** (tel. 313-833) beside Asco Motors, Foster Road, Walu Bay, **Budget** (tel. 315-899), 123 Foster Rd., Walu Bay, **Central** (tel. 311-866), 293 Victoria Parade, **Dove** (tel. 311-755), Brewster Street near Korea House, and **Thrifty** (tel. 314-436), 46 Gordon Street.

Tours

For information on day-trips from Suva offered by **Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (P.O. Box 1389, Suva; tel. 315-730, fax 300-584), turn to the Navua and Nausori sections in this book. Wilderness also runs two-hour city sightseeing tours three times a day (adults F\$30, children under 12 years F\$15). These trips can be booked through any travel agency in Suva.

NAUSORI AND VICINITY

NAUSORI

In 1881 the Rewa River town of Nausori, 19 km northeast of Suva, was chosen as the site of Fiji's first large sugar mill, which operated until 1959. In those early days it was incorrectly believed that sugarcane grew better on the wetter eastern side of the island. Today cane is grown only on the drier, sunnier western sides of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The old sugar mill is now a rice mill and storage depot, as the Rewa Valley has become a major rice-producing area. Chick-feed is also milled here.

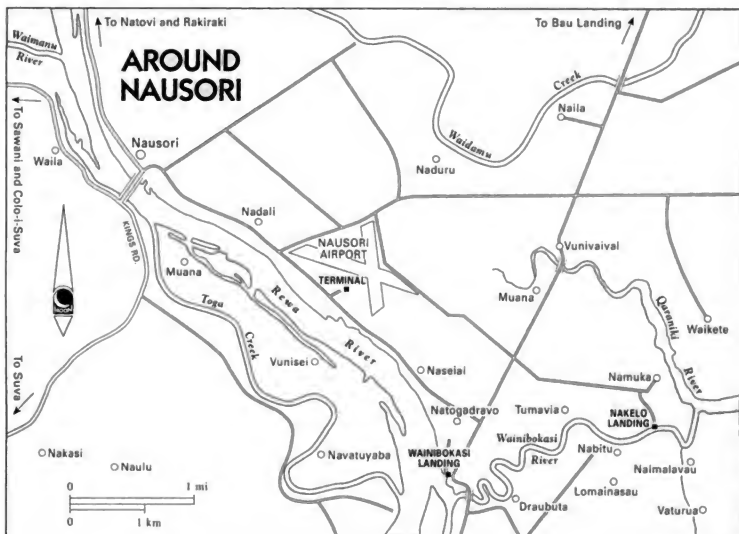
Nausori is Fiji's fifth-largest town (population 22,000) and the headquarters of Central Division and Tailevu Province. The Rewa is Fiji's largest river and the nine-span bridge here was erected in 1937. A new Rewa River bridge constructed with European Union aid money is expected to be operational by 2003. The town is better known for its large international airport

three km southeast, built as a fighter strip to defend Fiji's capital during World War II. There are several banks in Nausori (the ANZ Bank has an ATM). The population is predominantly Indo-Fijian. In mid-2000 the interior regions upriver from Nausori were scenes of terror as indigenous Fijian nationalists carried out ethnic cleansing operations against Indo-Fijians living in isolated farmhouses. Some 300 people from Baulevu village alone were evacuated to refugee camps.

The **Syria Monument** (1983), at the end of the Rewa bridge, commemorates the wreck of the iron sailing ship *Syria* on Nasilai Point in May 1884. Of the 439 indentured Indian laborers aboard ship at the time, 57 were drowned. The monument tells the story of the rescue of the others.

Accommodations and Food

The **Kings Nausori Hotel** (P.O. Box 67, Nausori; tel. 478-833), 99 Kings Rd., beside the chickenfeed mill, has three grubby rooms with



private bath and hot water at F\$25/30 single/double. The rooms are attached to the noisy bar and are rented mostly for "short times"—of interest only to people on the make. Due to licensing restrictions, women are not admitted to the hotel bar.

A far nicer drinking place is the **Whistling Duck Pub**, a block from the bus station in the center of town (ask directions). Upstairs in the adjacent building is **Windies Corner Restaurant** where you can get cold beer with your inexpensive curries (F\$3). It's also a good place for a coffee.

From Nausori

Local buses to the airport (F\$0.50) and Suva (F\$1.35) are fairly frequent, with the last bus to Suva at 2200. You can also catch Sunbeam Transport express buses to Lautoka from Nausori at 0715, 0855, 1240, 1405, and 1745 (246 km, 5.5 hours, F\$11.70).

AROUND NAUSORI

Rewa Delta

Take a bus from Nausori to Nakelo Landing to explore the heavily populated Rewa River Delta. Many outboards leave from Nakelo to take villagers to their riverside homes and passenger fares are around a dollar for short trips. Larger boats leave sporadically from Nakelo for Levuka, Gau, and Koro, but finding one would be pure chance. Some also depart from nearby Wainibokasi Landing.

At **Naililili** in the delta French Catholic missionaries built St. Joseph's Church of limestone in 1905 complete with stained glass windows. **Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (P.O. Box 1389, Suva; tel. 315-730, fax 300-584) runs occasional half-day boat tours of the Rewa Delta, with stops at Naililili, and at Nasilai village, where Fijian pottery is still made. The schedule is irregular, so call for information.

Bau Island

Bau, a tiny, eight-hectare island just east of Viti Levu, has a special place in Fiji's history as this was the seat of High Chief Cakobau, who used European cannons and muskets to subdue most of western Fiji in the 1850s. At its pinnacle Bau had a population of 3,000, hundreds of war canoes guarded its waters, and over 20 temples

TANOA~CANNIBAL KING OF BAU

Tanoa was about 65 years old in 1840 when the U.S. Exploring Expedition, under Lt. Charles Wilkes, toured Fiji. His rise to power threw the island into several years of strife, as Tanoa had to do away with virtually every minor chief who challenged his right to rule. With long colorful pennants hung from the mast and thousands of *Cypraea ovula* shells decorating the hull, his 30-meter outrigger canoe was the fastest in the region. One of Tanoa's favorite sports was overtaking and ramming smaller canoes at sea. The survivors were then fair game for whoever could catch and keep them. At feasts where most nobles were expected to provide a pig, Tanoa always furnished a human body. Wilkes included this sketch of Tanoa in volume three of the Expedition's monumental *Narrative*, published in 1845.



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stood on the island's central plain. After the Battle of Verata on Viti Levu in 1839, Cakobau and his father Tanoa presented 260 bodies of men, women, and children to their closest friends and allied chiefs for gastronomical purposes. Fifteen years after this slaughter, Cakobau converted to Christianity and prohibited cannibalism on Bau. In 1867 he became a sovereign, crowned by European traders and planters desiring a stable government in Fiji to protect their interests.

Sights of Bau

The great stone slabs that form docks and seawalls around much of the island once accommodated Bau's fleet of war canoes. The graves of the Cakobau family and many of the old chiefs lie on the hilltop behind the school. The large, sturdy stone church located near the provincial offices was the first Christian church in Fiji. Inside its nearly one-meter-thick walls, just in front of the altar, is the old sacrificial stone once used for human sacrifices, today the baptismal font. Now painted white, this font was once known as King Cakobau's "skull crusher" and it's said a thousand brains were splattered against it. Across from the church are huge ancient trees and the thatched Council House on the site of the one-time temple of the war god Cagawalu. The family of the late Sir George Cakobau, governor-general of Fiji from 1973–83, has a large traditional-style home on the island. You can see everything on the island in an hour or so.

Getting There

Take the Bau bus (five daily, F\$0.70) from Nausori to Bau Landing where there are outboards to cross over to the island. Be aware that Bau is not considered a tourist attraction, and from time to time visitors are prevented from going to the island. It's important to get someone to invite you across, which they'll do willingly if you show a genuine interest in Fijian history. Like most Fijians, the inhabitants of Bau are friendly people. Bring a big bundle of *waka* for the *turaga-nikoro*, and ask permission very politely to be shown around. There could be some confusion about who's to receive the *sevusevu*, however, as everyone on Bau is a chief! The more respectable your dress and demeanor, the better your chances of success. If you're told to contact the Ministry of Fijian Affairs in Suva, just depart

gracefully as that's only their way of saying no. After all, it's up to them. Alternatively, you get a good close look at Bau from the Leleuvia Island Resort shuttle service.

Viwa Island

Before Cakobau adopted Christianity in 1854, Methodist missionaries working for this effect resided on Viwa Island, just across the water from Bau. Here the first Fijian New Testament was printed in 1847; Rev. John Hunt, who did the translation, lies buried in the graveyard beside the church that bears his name.

Viwa is a good alternative if you aren't invited to visit Bau itself. To reach the island, hire an outboard at Bau Landing. If you're lucky, you'll be able to join some locals who are going. A single Fijian village stands on the island.

Toberua Island

Toberua Island Resort (Michael & Caz Dennis, P.O. Box 567, Suva; tel. 472-777 or 302-356, fax 472-888), on a tiny reef island off the east tip of Viti Levu, caters to upmarket honeymooners, families, and professionals. Created in 1968, this was one of Fiji's first luxury outer-island resorts. The 14 thatched *bure* are designed in the purest Fijian style, yet it's all very luxurious and the small size means peace and quiet. Compared to what places like Vatulele, Turtle Island, and Wakaya charge, the tariff is very reasonable at F\$410/480 single/double, plus F\$98 pp for three gourmet meals and F\$70 for boat transfers. Two children under 16 sharing with adults are accommodated free and they're fed for half price or less. Babysitters are F\$25 a day or F\$10 an evening. Toberua is outside eastern Viti Levu's wet belt, so it doesn't get a lot of rain as nearby Suva, and weather permitting, meals are served outdoors.

Don't expect tennis courts or a golf course at Toberua, though believe it or not, there's tropical golfing on the reef at low tide! (Nine holes from 90–180 meters, course par 27, clubs and balls provided free.) Sportfishing is F\$50 an hour and scuba diving F\$88/165 for one/two tanks. Massage is F\$55 an hour, or F\$35 for a half-hour foot massage. All other activities are free, including snorkeling, sailing, windsurfing, and boat trips to a bird sanctuary or mangrove forest. A swimming pool is provided. Launch transfers are from Nakelo landing.



NORTHERN VITI LEVU

NORTHWEST OF NAUSORI

Vunidawa

If you have a few days to spare, consider exploring the untouristed river country northwest of Nausori. The main center of Naitasiri Province is Vunidawa on the Wainimala River, a big village with four stores, a hospital, a post office, a police station, two schools, and a provincial office. There are five buses a day except Sunday from Suva to Vunidawa, but no bus connection to Korovou or Monasavu.

Go for a swim in the river or borrow a horse to ride around the countryside. Stroll two km down the road to Waidawara, where there's a free hourly punt near the point where the Wainibuka and Wainimala rivers unite to form the mighty Rewa River. Take a whole day to hike up to Nairukuruku and Navuniyasi and back.

River-Running

There's an exciting bamboo raft (*bilibili*) trip through the Waiqa Gorge between Naitauvoli and Naivuci-



© DAVID STANLEY

ni, two villages on the Cross-Island Highway west of Vunidawa. Two men with long poles guide each raft through the frothing rapids as the seated visitor views towering boulders enveloped in jungle. For the two-hour ride, an individual *bilibili* will have to be constructed for you. (There's no way to get a used *bilibili* back up to Naitauvoli.)

Raft trips are F\$40 pp, and unless you've rented a car, it will probably be necessary to spend the night at Naitauvoli. If you do stay

overnight, a *sevusevu* and monetary contribution to your hosts are expected in addition to the F\$40 fee. No trips are made on Sunday, so don't arrive on a Saturday. One Tacirua Transport bus a day (except Sunday) departs Suva for Naivucini at 1455 (F\$3.50); once there you'd have to look for a carrier on to Naitauvoli. In Suva, you may be able to arrange the above as a three-night package tour (F\$140) by calling Mikeale Funaki (tel. 387-951 or 381-391).

THE TRANS-VITI LEVU TREK

Experienced hikers can consider doing the rugged two-day trek from the Cross-Island Highway to Wainimakutu, up and down jungle river valleys through the rainforest. It will take a strong, fast hiker about three hours from Balea on the highway to Nasava, then another four over the ridge to Wainimakutu. The Trans-Viti Levu Trek passes through several large Fijian villages and gives you a good cross section of village life.

On this traditional route, you'll meet people going down the track on horseback or on foot. Since you must cross the rivers innumerable times, this trek is probably impossible for visitors during the rainy season (December to April), although the locals still manage to do it. If it's been raining, sections of the trail become a quagmire, stirred up by horses' hooves. Hiking boots aren't much use here; you'd be better off with shorts and an old pair of running shoes in which to wade across the rivers. There are many refreshing places to swim along the way. Some of the villages have small trade stores, but you're better off carrying your own food, and pack some *yaqona* as well. You can always give it away if someone invites you in.

But remember, you aren't the first to undertake this walk; the villagers have played host to trekkers many times and some previous hikers have not shown much consideration to local residents along the track. Unless you have been specifically invited, do not presume automatic hospitality. If a villager provides food or a service, be prepared to offer adequate payment. This applies equally to the Sigatoka River Trek, described later.

The Route

Bus service on the Cross-Island Highway from

Suva to Nadarivatu was interrupted in 1993 by Hurricane Keno, which destroyed the bridge at Lutu just beyond **Balea**, the Trans-Viti Levu trailhead. Buses now go only as far as Lutu, leaving Suva Monday–Saturday at 1330 (F\$5). The Lutu bus could drop you at Balea, otherwise large carrier trucks to Namosi and Lutu (F\$5–7 pp) park near Foodtown, corner of Robertson Road and Struan Street near Suva Market, and most depart around midday.

From Balea walk down to the Wainimala River, which must be crossed three times before you reach the bank opposite Sawanikula. These crossings can be dangerous and almost impossible in the rainy season, in which case it's better to stop and wait for some local people who might help you across. From Sawanikula it's not far to **Korovou**, a fairly large village with a clinic and two stores. Between Korovou and **Nasava** you cross the Wainimala River 14 times, but it's easier because you're farther upstream. Try to reach Nasava on the first day. If you sleep at Korovou you'll need an early start and a brisk pace to get to the first village south of the divide before nightfall on the second day.

From Nasava, follow the course of the Waisomo Creek up through a small gorge and past a waterfall. You zigzag back and forth across the creek all the way up almost to the divide. After a steep incline you cross to the south coast watershed. There's a clearing among the bamboo groves on top where you could camp, but there's no water. Before **Wainimakutu** (Nasau) the scenery gets better as you enter a wide valley with Mt. Naitaradamu (1,152 meters) behind you and the jagged outline of the unscaled Korobasabasaga Range to your left. Wainimakutu

is a large village with two stores and bus service to Suva twice a day (Mon.–Fri. at 0600 and 1300). This fact makes it wise to begin your trek early in the week in order to avoid getting stuck here on a weekend.

Namosi

The bus from Wainimakutu to Suva goes via Namosi, spectacularly situated below massive Mt. Voma (927 meters), with sheer stone cliffs on all sides. You can climb Mt. Voma in a day from Namosi for a sweeping view of much of Viti Levu. It's steep but not too difficult. Allow at least four hours up and down (guides can be hired at Namosi village). Visit the old Catholic church at Namosi.

There are low-grade copper deposits estimated at one-half million tons at the foot of the Korobasabasaga Range, which Rupert Brooke called the "Gateway to Hell," 14 km north of Namosi by road. No mining has begun due to depressed world prices of copper and high production costs, though feasibility studies continue. A 1979 study indicated that an investment of F\$1 billion would be required.



DAVID STANLEY

village on the Trans-Viti Levu trek

NORTHERN VITI LEVU

Northern Viti Levu has far more spectacular landscapes than the southern side of the island, and if you can only travel one-way by road between Suva and Nadi, you're better off taking the northern route. Kings Road is now paved from Suva north to Korovou, then again from Dama to Lautoka, and between Korovou and Dama the 62-km gravel road is smooth. (This section should already have been paved, but Fiji's current political situation has put many development projects on hold.) If driving, check your fuel before heading this way. Since Kings Road follows the Wainibuka River from Wailotua village almost all the way to Viti Levu Bay, you get a good glimpse of the island's lush interior, and the north coast west of Rakiraki is breathtaking. In years gone by, the Fijians would use bamboo rafts to transport their bundles of bananas down the Wainibuka to markets in Vu-

nidawa and Nausori, and the road is still called the "Banana Highway." These days many visitors stop for a sojourn on Nananu-i-Ra Island off Rakiraki, and intrepid hikers occasionally trek south down the Sigatoka River from the hill station of Nadarivatu.

Korovou and Beyond

A good paved highway runs 31 km north from Nausori to Korovou, a small town of around 350 souls on the east side of Viti Levu at the junction of Kings Road and the road to Natovi, terminus of the Ovalau and Vanua Levu ferries. Its crossroads position in the heart of Tailevu Province makes Korovou an important stop for buses plying the northern route around the island. Sunbeam Transport express buses leave Korovou for Lautoka at 0800, 0940, 1325, 1500, and 1830 (215 km, five hours), with local buses departing at 0920 and

0950 (7.5 hours). (Be aware that because "korovou" means "new village," there are many places called that in Fiji—don't mix them up.)

The **Tailevu Hotel** (P.O. Box 189, Korovou; tel. 430-028), on a hill overlooking the river just across the bridge from Korovou, has 14 rooms with bath and fridge at F\$28/45 single/double including breakfast, and four cottages with cooking facilities at F\$50 for up to four persons. Cheaper backpacker accommodation may be available if you call and ask, otherwise camping is F\$8 a night. This colonial-style hotel features a large bar and restaurant, and a dance band plays on Friday and Saturday nights. The Tailevu makes a good base for visiting the surrounding area.

For a sweeping view of the entire Tailevu area, climb **Mt. Tova** (647 meters) in a day from Silana village, eight km northwest of Naqatawa.

The large dairy farms along the highway just west of Korovou were set up after World War I. **Dorothy's Waterfall** on the Waimaro River, a kilometer east of Dakuivuna village, is 10 km west of Korovou. Uru's Snack Bar overlooking the falls is a nice picnic spot if you have your own transportation. At Wailotua No. 1, 20 km west of Korovou, is a large **snake cave** right beside the village and easily accessible from the road. One stalactite in the cave is shaped like a six-headed snake (admission F\$5). At Dama the paved road starts again and continues 45 km northwest to Rakiraki. (As you drive along this road you may be flagged down by Fijians emphatically inviting you to visit their village. At the end of the tour you'll be asked to sign the visitors book and make a financial contribution. If you decide to stop, don't bother trying to present anyone with kava roots as hard cash is all they're after.)

Ra Province

The old Catholic Church of St. Francis Xavier at **Naiserelagi**, on a hilltop above Navunibitu Catholic School, on Kings Road about 25 km southeast of Rakiraki, was beautifully decorated with frescoes by Jean Charlot in 1962-63. Typical Fijian motifs such as the *tabua*, *tanoa*, and *yaqona* blend in the powerful composition behind the altar. Father Pierre Chanel, who was martyred on Futuna Island between Fiji and Samoa in 1841, appears on the left holding the

weapon that killed him, a war club. Christ and the Madonna are portrayed in black. The church is worth stopping to see, and provided it's not too late in the day, you'll find an onward bus. Flying Prince Transport (tel. 694-346) runs buses from Vaileka to Naiserelagi at 1200, 1345, 1430, 1545, and 1600 (F\$1.70), otherwise all the local Suva buses stop there. A taxi from Vaileka might cost F\$20. At **Nanukuloa** village just north of here is the headquarters of Ra Province.

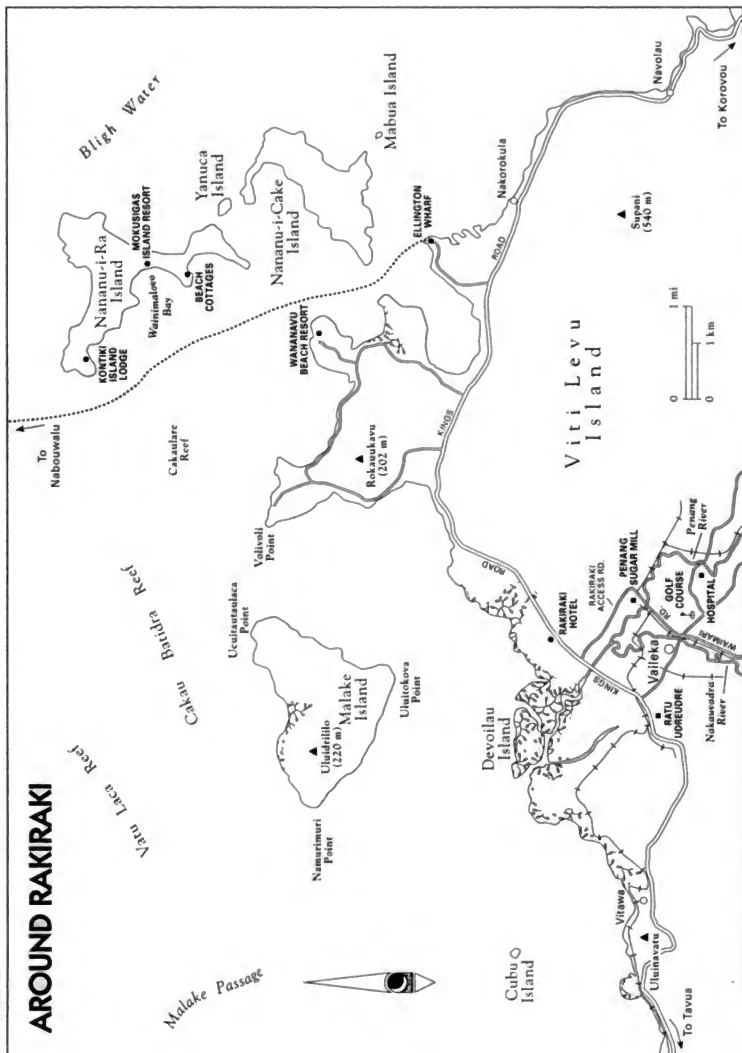
RAKIRAKI

This part of northern Viti Levu is known as Rakiraki, but the main town is called **Vaileka** (population 5,000). The Penang Sugar Mill was erected here in 1881. The mill is about a kilometer from the main business section of Vaileka, beyond the golf course. The sugar is loaded aboard ships at Ellington Wharf, connected to the mill by an 11-km cane railway. There are three banks and a large produce market in Vaileka, but most visitors simply pass through on their way to Nananu-i-Ra Island.

Accommodations and Food

The **Rakiraki Hotel** (P.O. Box 31, Vaileka; tel. 694-101, fax 694-545), on Kings Road a couple of kilometers north of Vaileka, has 36 a/c rooms with fridge and private bath at F\$99 single or double, F\$123 triple in the new blocks, and 10 rather musty fan-cooled rooms at F\$35/44/55 single/double/triple in the old wing. Reduced rates are sometimes offered on the air-conditioned rooms. There are no communal cooking facilities. The reception area, restaurant, and old wooden wing occupy the core of the original hotel dating back to 1945; the two-story accommodations blocks were added much later. Today the Rakiraki belongs to the Tanoa hotel chain. Extensive gardens surround the hotel, and the Rakiraki's outdoor bowling green draws middle-aged lawn bowling enthusiasts from Australia and New Zealand. Those folks like old-fashioned "colonial" touches like the typed daily menu featuring British-Indian curry dishes (F\$11-16 for entrées), and gin and tonic in the afternoon. The manager can arrange for you to play at the nearby nine-hole golf course owned by the Fiji Sugar Corporation (green fees are just F\$5, but

AROUND RAKIRAKI



you must bring your own clubs). The Tui Ra (or king of Ra) lives in the village across the highway from the hotel. Only the local or "stage" buses will drop you off on Kings Road right in front of the hotel (the express buses will take you to Vaileka). A taxi from Vaileka will be F\$2.

The upmarket **Wananavu Beach Resort** (John Gray, P.O. Box 305, Vaileka; tel. 694-433, fax 694-499), on a point facing Nananu-i-Ra Island, four km off Kings Road, is near Viti Levu's northernmost tip. There are 15 a/c bungalows costing F\$215–286 single or double—reasonable value for the quality. No cooking facilities are provided, but each room does have a fridge. Adjacent to the resort are three two-bedroom villas with kitchens renting for F\$375 for up to four persons. The Nananu-i-Ra dive shops offer scuba diving from the Wananavu, and a variety of other water sports are available. The resort has a swimming pool, tennis court, and small brown beach.

A number of restaurants near the bus station at Vaileka serve Chinese meals. At F\$6 a plate, **Gafoor & Sons** (tel. 694-225) is the most expensive as the Sunbeam express buses stop there. **Rakiraki Lodge** (tel. 694-336) on the west side of the square serves some excellent curry meals for F\$4 from a glass-covered warmer at the rear counter. The **Cosmopolitan Club** (tel. 694-330), two blocks from Vaileka bus station, is the local drinking place.

Transportation

A taxi from Vaileka to Ellington Wharf, where the Nananu-i-Ra resort launches pick up guests,

will run F\$10. Otherwise take a local bus east on Kings Road to the turnoff and walk two km down to the wharf. Some express buses won't stop at the turnoff (ask), but all buses from Lautoka and Suva stop in Vaileka.

Sunbeam Transport has express buses from Vaileka to Lautoka (108 km) at 1035, 1230, 1605, 1730, and 2105, and to Suva (157 km) at 0830, 0900, 1100, 1440, and 1850. More frequent local buses also operate.

West of Rakiraki

Right beside Kings Road, just a hundred meters west of the turnoff to Vaileka, is the grave of **Ratu Udreudre**, the cannibal king of this region who is alleged to have consumed 872 corpses. A rocky hill named **Uluinavatu** (stone head), a few kilometers west of Vaileka, is reputed to be the jumping-off point for the disembodied spirits of the ancient Fijians. A fortified village and temple once stood on its summit. Uluinavatu's triangular shape is said to represent a man, while a similar-looking small island offshore resembles a woman with flowing hair.

The **Nakauvadra Range**, towering south of Rakiraki, is the traditional home of the Fijian serpent-god Degei, who is said to dwell in a cave on the summit of Mt. Uluda (866 meters). This "cave" is little more than a cleft in the rock. To climb the Nakauvadra Range, which the local Fijians look upon as their primeval homeland, permission must be obtained from the chief of Vatuacevaceva village who will provide guides. A *sevusevu* must be presented.

NANANU-I-RA ISLAND

This small 355-hectare island, three km off the northernmost tip of Viti Levu, is a good place to spend some time amid tranquility and beauty. The climate is dry and sunny, and there are great beaches, reefs, snorkeling, walks, sunsets, and moonrises over the water—only roads are missing. Seven or eight separate white sandy beaches lie scattered around the island, and it's big enough that you won't feel confined. In the early 19th century Nananu-i-Ra's original Fijian inhabitants were wiped out by disease and tribal warfare, and an heir sold the island to the Europeans whose descendants now operate small

family-style resorts and a 219-hectare plantation on the island.

The northern two-thirds of Nananu-i-Ra Island, including all of the land around Kontiki Island Lodge, is owned by Mrs. Louise Harper of southern California, who bought it for a mere US\$200,000 in 1966 (she also owns a sizable chunk of Proctor & Gamble back in the States). Today some 22 head of Harper cattle graze beneath coconuts on the Harper Plantation, and the plantation management actively discourages trespassing by tourists. The manager lives in a house adjoining Kontiki, and it's common cour-

tesy to ask his permission before climbing the hill behind the lodge. (At last report, the Harper Plantation was for sale for US\$7 million on www.fijiestates.com.)

To hike right around Nananu-i-Ra on the beach takes about four hours of steady going, or all day if you stop for picnicking and snorkeling. The thickest section of mangroves is between Kontiki and Mokusigas Island Resort, on the west side of the island, and this stretch should be covered at low tide. However you do it, at some point you'll probably have to take off your shoes and wade through water just over your ankles or scramble over slippery rocks, but it's still a very nice walk. The entire coastline is public, but only as far as two meters above the high tide line. Avoid becoming stranded by high tide and forced to cut across Harper land.

An American couple, Edward and Betty Morris, have lived next to MacDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages since 1970. They spend four or five months a year on Nananu-i-Ra, otherwise they're in San Francisco. Ed is a former president of the International Brotherhood of Magicians and he doesn't mind sharing his magic with visitors, when he feels like it.

Scuba Diving

Ra Divers (Elizabeth and Graham Burnett, P.O. Box 417, Vaileka; tel. 694-511, fax 694-611) has been operating on Nananu-i-Ra for 10 years. They offer scuba diving at F\$85/150/650 for one/two/10 tanks, plus F\$15 for gear. Night diving is F\$100. Snorkelers can go along for F\$25 (mask and snorkel supplied). Ra Divers' resort course costs F\$150; full four-day PADI or NAUI certification is F\$600 if you're alone or F\$525 pp for two or more. They pick up clients regularly from all of the resorts. Some of Ra Divers' favorite sites are Breathtaker, The Amazing Maze, Dreammakers, and Neptune's Wedding Chapel. The diving here is only spectacular if you observe the small details—there's not the profuse marinelife or huge reefs you'll find elsewhere.

An American named Dan Grenier runs a more upscale dive operation called **Crystal Divers** (P.O. Box 705, Vaileka; tel./fax 694-877) at the south end of Nananu-i-Ra. Many of Dan's clients book from overseas via his Internet site, paying F\$110/215 for one/two tank dives, plus F\$45 a day for gear (if required). Dan prefers to work

with experienced divers and usually doesn't have time for certification courses unless a group is interested. His new jet boat *Crystal Explorer* allows him to offer live-aboard quality diving from a land-based location. He frequents extraordinary Bligh Water sites like Black Magic Mountain, Garden of Eden, Instant Replay, G-6, The Shark Pit, The Carnival, Purple Haze, and Steve's Wide Angle, and he's constantly searching for new locations. His personal service is a definite plus. Crystal Divers closes for annual leave in January and February.

Accommodations

Accommodation prices on Nananu-i-Ra have increased in recent years and the number of beds is limited. With the island's popularity still growing it's essential to call ahead to one of the resorts and arrange to be picked up at Ellington Wharf. None of the innkeepers will accept additional guests when they're fully booked and camping is not allowed. There's no public telephone at Ellington Wharf.

If you want an individual room or *bure* make 100 percent sure one is available, otherwise you could end up spending quite a few nights in the dormitory waiting for one to become free. All the budget places have cooking facilities and a few also serve dinner, but you should take some fruit and vegetables from breakfast and lunch, as shopping possibilities on the island are limited. There's a market and several supermarkets in Vaileka where you can buy all the supplies you need. If you run out, groceries can be ordered from Vaileka for a small service charge, and both MacDonald's and Betham's run minimarkets with a reasonable selection of groceries (including beer). They also serve hot dogs and other snacks. Also bring enough cash, as only the Mokusigas Island Resort accepts credit cards.

Of all the places on Nananu-i-Ra, **Kontiki Island Lodge** (P.O. Box 87, Vaileka; tel. 694-290) has more of the feeling of a low-budget resort, with ample opportunity for group activities. Because they cater mostly to backpackers, the dormitory guests are treated the same as everyone else, and the atmosphere is congenial. It's also ideal if you want to do your own thing, as the long deserted beach facing One Bay is just a 20-minute walk away. Kontiki is at the unspoiled north end of the island, with no other resorts or

houses (except the Harper caretaker) nearby. It's quite popular and on Saturday night they're always full. Reservations are essential, and call again the morning before you arrive to make sure they haven't forgotten you.

Kontiki offers three modern self-catering bungalows, each capable of sleeping four at F\$75. The two double rooms in each bungalow can be rented individually at F\$42/50 single/double. If you want more privacy, ask for one of the four rooms in the two thatched duplex *bure*, which are F\$35/40. The dorm bungalow has four beds at F\$16.50 pp, plus two double rooms at F\$40. Check your mosquito net for holes when you arrive. All guests have access to fridges and cooking facilities, but take groceries if you wish to cook as only a few very basic supplies are sold, including cold beer. Otherwise just ask for the daily meal plan, which is F\$20 pp. In the evening the generator runs until 2200.

At the other end of Nananu-i-Ra, a one-hour walk along the beach at low tide, are three other inexpensive places to stay, all offering cooking facilities. They experience more speedboat noise than Kontiki but are less crowded and perhaps preferable for a restful holiday. They almost always have a few free beds in the dorms, but advance bookings are strongly recommended.

MacDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages (P.O. Box 140, Vaileka; tel. 694-633) offers three individual houses with fridge at F\$61 single or double, plus F\$9 pp for additional persons, rooms with shared bath at F\$44 double, and two five-bunk dormitory rooms at F\$17 pp. Cooking facilities are provided in the dorm and a three-meal package is available at F\$33 pp. Mabel MacDonald's snack bar sells sandwiches and pizzas as well as groceries, and a Fijian *lovo* feast is arranged once a week. It's peaceful and attractive with a private wharf and pontoon off their beach. The snorkeling here is good.

Right next to MacDonald's and facing the same white beach is friendly **Betham's Beach Cottages** (Peggy and Oscar Betham, P.O. Box 5, Vaileka; tel./fax 694-132). They have five cement-block duplex houses, each sleeping up to six, with rooms at F\$75 single or double, F\$86 triple. The two mixed dormitories, one with 10 beds and another with six, are F\$17 pp. There's no hot water but cooking facilities and a fridge are

provided. The electric generator is switched off at 2200. Betham's shop also sells groceries and alcohol, and their beachfront bar serves dinner (as does the restaurant at MacDonald's). Sporting gear is available, and the Betham's staff work hard to keep you happy.

Sharing the same high sandy beach with these two is **Charley's Place** (Charley and Louise Anthony, P.O. Box 407, Vaileka; tel. 694-676) run by a delightful, friendly family. The dormitory building has six beds (F\$15 each) in the same room as the cooking facilities, plus one double room (F\$45). The adjacent bungalow can sleep up to six people at F\$55 for two, plus F\$5 for each additional person. Both buildings are on a hill and you can watch the sunrise on one side and the sunset on the other. Charley's also rents two other houses further down the beach, each F\$50 double.

US\$100-150

The **Mokusigas Island Resort** (P.O. Box 268, Vaileka; tel. 694-444, fax 694-404) opened on Nananu-i-Ra in 1991. The 20 comfortable bungalows with fridge are all the same and each accommodates three adults. The price varies according to the location with the ocean panorama units costing F\$350/380 double/triple, while lagoon vista units are F\$290/320. The four forest view bungalows up on the hill near the restaurant/bar are F\$260/290. Stay five nights and get the sixth free. The rates include a continental breakfast and boat transfers, but add 10 percent tax to all rates. Cooking facilities are not provided and but you can buy a F\$60 pp meal plan. The resort's dive shop is run by Ra Divers. To create a diving attraction, the 43-meter *Papuan Explorer* was scuttled in 25 meters of water, 60 meters off the 189-meter Mokusigas jetty, which curves out into the sheltered lagoon. The snorkeling off the wharf is good, especially at low tide, with lots of coral and fish. Don't be disappointed by the skimpy little beach facing a mudflat you see when you first arrive: the mile-long picture-postcard beach in their brochure is a few minutes away over the hill on the other side of the island. All the resort facilities, including the restaurant, bar, and dive shop, are strictly for house guests only. At Nadi Airport, bookings can be made through office No. 25 upstairs from arrivals.

Getting There

Boat transfers from Ellington Wharf to Nananu-i-Ra are about F\$20 pp round-trip (20 minutes), though the resorts may levy a surcharge for one person alone. Check prices when you call to make your accommodation booking. A taxi to Ellington Wharf from the express bus stop in Vaileka is F\$10 for the car. Several budget hotels in Nadi (including the Nadi Downtown Motel, Sunny Holiday Motel, Holiday Inn, and Kon Tiki Private Hotel) arrange minibus rides from Nadi direct to Ellington Wharf costing anywhere from F\$20–35 pp depending on where you book, though it's cheaper to take an express bus from Lautoka to Vaileka, then a taxi to the landing. Coming from Nadi, you will have to change buses in Lautoka.

As you return to Ellington Wharf from Nananu-i-Ra, taxis will be waiting to whisk you to Vaileka

where you'll connect with the express buses (share the F\$10 taxi fare with other travelers to cut costs). You could also hike two km out to the main highway and try to flag down a bus, but only local buses will stop at this junction.

Patterson Brothers operates a vehicular ferry between Ellington Wharf and Nabouwalu on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, a great shortcut to/from Vanua Levu (F\$33 one-way). The ferry leaves Ellington Wharf at 0630, departing Nabouwalu for the return at 1030. There's a connecting bus to/from Labasa at Nabouwalu (112 km). When enough truck traffic has built up, Patterson will run additional services on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, so ask. Often you'll be allowed to spend the night on the boat at Ellington Wharf. Patterson's best customers are large trucks carrying pine logs from Vanua Levu to the mills of Lautoka.

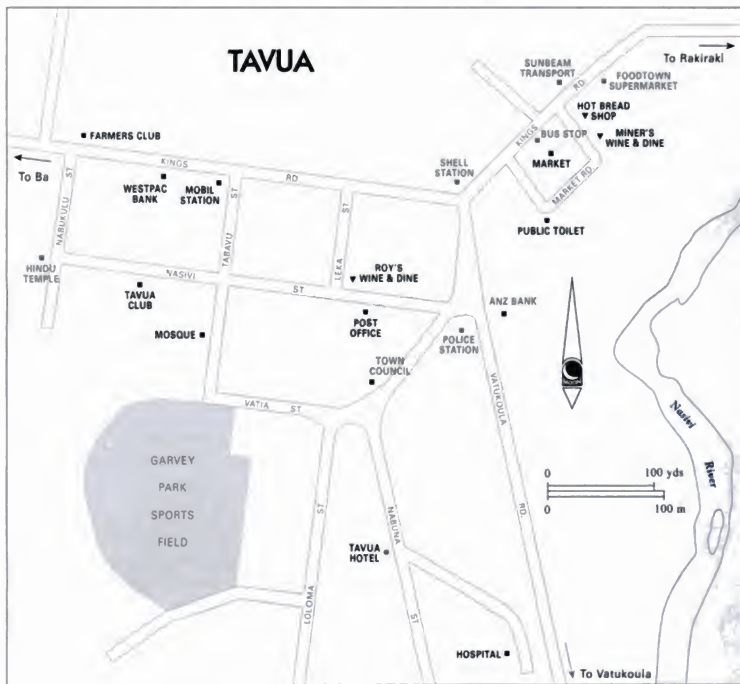
NORTHWESTERN VITI LEVU

TAVUA

West of Rakiraki, Kings Road passes the government-run Yaqara Cattle Ranch where Fijian cowboys keep 5,500 head of cattle and 200 horses on a 7,000-hectare spread enclosed by an 80-km fence. In 1996 an ultramodern artesian water bottling plant owned by Canadian businessman David Gilmour opened here, and plastic bottles of Fiji Water are now the country's fastest growing export. Tavua (population 2,500), an important junction on the north coast, is useful mostly as a base for visiting Vatukuola. Of

the three banks in Tavua, the ANZ Bank has a Visa/MasterCard ATM.

The two-story **Tavua Hotel** (P.O. Box 81, Tavua; tel. 680-522, fax 680-390), an old wooden colonial-style building on a hill, a five-minute walk from the bus stop, has 11 rooms with bath at F\$33/44 single/double (the one a/c room is F\$66). Ask about dormitory accommodations. Meals are F\$10 here. This hotel looks like it's going to be noisy due to the large bar downstairs, but all is silent after the bar and restaurant close at 2100. It's a bit rundown but okay for one night and a good base from which to explore Vatukuola.



Roy's Wine & Dine near the post office serves a lunch of cassava and fish for under F\$2. Socialize at the **Tavua Farmers Club** (tel. 680-236) on Kings Road toward Ba, or the more elitist **Tavua Club** (tel. 680-265) on Nasivi Street.

Transportation

Sunbeam Transport has express buses from Tavua to Suva (198 km) at 0725, 0750, 1000, 1340, and 1750, and to Lautoka (67 km) at 1130, 1320, 1655, 1825, and 2200. Local buses from Tavua to Vaileka (41 km), Vatukoula (8 km), or Lautoka are frequent, but the bus service from Tavua to Nadrau via Nadarivatu has been suspended.

VATUKOULA

In 1932 an old Australian prospector named Bill Borthwick discovered gold at Vatukoula, eight km south of Tavua. Two years later Borthwick and his partner, Peter Costello, sold their stake to an Australian company, and in 1935 the **Emperor Gold Mine** opened. In 1977 there was a major industrial action at the mine and the government had to step in to prevent it from closing. In 1983 the Western Mining Corporation of Australia bought a 20 percent share and took over management. Western modernized the facilities and greatly increased production, but after another bitter strike in 1991 they sold out, and the mine is now operated by the Emperor Gold Mining Company once again. The 700 miners who walked out in 1991 have been replaced by non-union labor.

The ore comes up from the underground area through the Smith Shaft near "Top Gate." It's washed, crushed, and roasted, then fed into a flotation process and the foundry where gold and silver are separated from the ore. Counting both underground operations and an open pit, the mine presently extracts 125,000 ounces of gold annually from 600,000 metric tons of ore. A ton of silver is also produced each year and waste rock is crushed into gravel and sold. Since 1935 the Emperor has produced five million ounces of gold worth over a billion U.S. dollars at today's prices. Proven recoverable ore reserves at Vatukoula are sufficient for another 20 years of mining, with another four million ounces awaiting

extraction underground. Low world gold prices have forced the company to stop exploration and reduce capital replacement to cut costs. In 1999 the Smith Shaft was deepened to allow easier access to high-grade ores.

The Emperor is Fiji's largest private employer and Vatukoula is a typical company town of 7,000 inhabitants, with education and social services under the jurisdiction of the mine. The 2,000 miners employed here, most of them indigenous Fijians, live in World War II-style Quonset huts in racially segregated ghettos. In contrast, tradespeople and supervisors, usually Rotumans and part-Fijians, enjoy much better living conditions, and senior staff and management live in colonial-style comfort. Women are forbidden by law from working underground. Sensitive to profitability, the Emperor has tenaciously resisted the unionization of its workforce.

To arrange a guided tour of the mine you must contact the Public Relations Officer, Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd. (Private Mail Bag, Vatukoula; tel. 680-477, fax 680-779), at least one week in advance (although at last report the tours were suspended). It's not possible to just show up and be admitted. Minibuses marked "Loloma" go from Tavua to Vatukoula every half hour, and even if you don't get off, it's well worth making the roundtrip to "Bottom Gate" to see the varying classes of company housing, to catch a glimpse of the nine-hole golf course and open pit, and to enjoy the lovely scenery. Rosie The Travel Service in Nadi runs gold mine tours (F\$52 without lunch), but these do not enter the mine itself and you can see almost as much from the regular bus for F\$0.50 each way. Cold beer is available at the **Bowling Club** (tel. 680-719; Mon.-Fri. 1600-2300, Sat. 1000-2300, Sun. 1600-2100) near Bottom Gate, where meals are served Monday-Saturday 1600-2100.

BA

The large Indo-Fijian town of Ba (population 15,000) on the Ba River is seldom visited by tourists. As the attractive mosque in the center of town suggests, nearly half of Fiji's Muslims live in Ba Province. Small fishing boats depart from behind the Shell service station opposite the mosque, and it's fairly easy to arrange to go along on all-

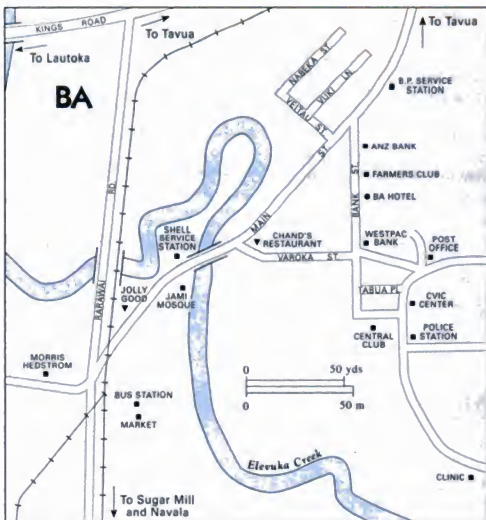
night trips. A wide belt of mangroves covers much of the river's delta. Ba's original town site was on the low hill where the post office is today, and the newer lower town is often subjected to flooding. Ba is well known in Fiji for the large Rarawai Sugar Mill, opened by the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. in 1886.

The **Ba Hotel** (P.O. Box 29, Ba; tel. 674-000, fax 670-559), 110 Bank St., has 13 a/c rooms with bath at F\$44/55 single/double—very pleasant with a functioning swimming pool, bar, and restaurant.

Of the many places along Main Street serving Indian and Chinese meals, your best choice is probably **Chand's Restaurant** (tel. 670-822), just across the bridge from the mosque. Their upstairs dining room (Mon.–Sat. 0800–2100, Sun. 1100–1500) serves an Indian vegetarian *thali* for F\$5.50, other meals F\$4–9. Chand's fast food center downstairs is great for a fast hot cup of tea, coffee, or milo. **Jolly Good** (tel. 671-885), across Main St. from the bus station and toward town, is clean and pleasant with main dishes around F\$4.

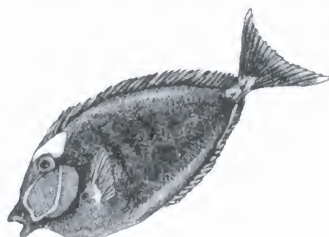
If you're spending the night here check out the **Town Square Cinema** (tel. 674-048) on Tabua Place just up the hill from the hotel. For drinks it's the **Farmers Club** (tel. 675-511), on Bank St. near the Ba Hotel, or the **Central Club** (tel. 674-348) on Tabua Place.

The ANZ Bank next to the Farmers Club has



a Visa/MasterCard ATM outside facing Bank Street. Otherwise try **Money Exchange** (Mon.–Fri. 0800–1700, Sat. 0830–1300), around the corner on Main Street.

Important express buses leaving Ba daily are the regular Sunbeam Transport buses to Suva via Tavua at 0655, 0715, 0915, 1300, and 1715 (227 km, five hours), and the one Pacific Transport bus to Suva via Sigatoka at 0615 (259 km, six hours, F\$12.15). Local buses to Tavua (29 km, F\$1.35) and Lautoka (38 km, F\$1.55) are frequent. Buses to Navala are at 1200 and 1715 daily except Sunday (F\$1.90).



The surgeonfish gets its name from the knife-like spines just in front of its tail. Extreme care must be taken in handling the fish to avoid severe cuts.

INTO THE INTERIOR

Nausori Highlands

A rough unpaved road runs 25 km southeast from Ba to Navala, a large traditional village on the sloping right bank of the Ba River. It then climbs another 20 km south to Bukuya village in the Nausori Highlands, from whence other gravel roads continue south into the Sigatoka Valley and 40 km due west to Nadi. The Nadi road passes Vaturu Dam, which supplies Nadi with fresh water. Gold strikes near Vaturu may herald a mining future for this area, if the water catchment can be protected. The powerful open scenery of the highlands makes a visit well worthwhile.

Navala is one of the last fully thatched villages remaining on Viti Levu, its *bure* standing picturesquely above the Ba River against the surrounding hills. When water levels are right, white-water rafters shoot the rapids through the scenic Ba River Gorge near here, and guided hiking or horseback riding can also be arranged. Sightseers are welcome, and it's possible to spend the night in the village for a reasonable amount, but one must pay a F\$10 pp admission/photography fee toward village development. If spending the night, also take along a *sevusevu* for the *turaga-ni-koro*. Access is fairly easy on the two buses a day that arrive from Ba. By rental vehicle you'll probably need a 4WD. During the rainy season, the Navala road can be flooded and impassable.

Several companies off tours to Navala village.

Fantastic Sights of Fiji (tel. 500-425) charges F\$145 from the Coral Coast or Nadi. Victory Tours (tel. 700-332 or 721-295) asks only F\$90 from Nadi, but village entry fees and tax are extra. Your best bet is probably **Discover Fiji Tours** (tel. 450-180), which combines white-water rafting on the Upper Ba River with a visit to Navala at F\$145, including lunch, transfers from Nadi or the Coral Coast, and rafting gear.

Bukuya in the center of western Viti Levu's highland plateau is less traditional than Navala and some of the only thatched *bure* in the village are those used by visitors on hiking/village stay tours organized by the backpacker travel agencies in Nadi. If interested, ask for Peni at the

Handicraft Market in Nadi. Reader Andy Bray of Hampshire, England, sent us this:

Peni's tour is very much what you make of it. We got three good meals a day, transportation, a wild pig hunt, eel fishing, a waterfall trip, visits to neighboring villages, and various river and jungle treks. If you're content to settle into the typically slow Fijian pace and be satisfied with maybe one good activity a day, you'll enjoy it. If you're used to hot running water, electricity, and constant activity, it's not for you. I found it helped to gently badger the hosts so they wouldn't forget we had activities in mind.

Victory Tours (tel. 700-332 or 721-295) in downtown Nadi offers day tours to a waterfall in the Nausori Highlands at F\$80 pp plus tax including lunch. **Rosie The Travel Service** (tel. 702-726), opposite the Nadi Handicraft Market and at numerous other locations, operates full-day hiking tours to the Nausori Highlands daily except Sunday at F\$66 including lunch, tax, and a souvenir *sulu*. The Tui Magodro, or high chief of the region, resides in Bukuya. During the Colo War of 1876, Bukuya was a center of resistance to colonial rule.

Nadarivatu

An important forestry station is at Nadarivatu, a small settlement above Tavua. Its 900-meter altitude means a cool climate and a fantastic panorama of the north coast from the ridge. Beside the road right in front of the Forestry Training Center is **The Stone Bowl**, official source of the Sigatoka River, and a five-minute walk from the Center is the **Governor General's Swimming Pool** where a small creek has been dammed. Go up the creek a short distance to the main pool, though it's dry much of the year and the area has not been maintained. The trail to the fire tower atop **Mt. Lomalagi** (Mt. Heaven) begins nearby, a one-hour hike each way. The tower itself has collapsed and is no longer climbable, but the forest is lovely and you may

see and hear many native birds. Pine forests cover the land.

In its heyday Nadarivatu was a summer retreat for expatriates from the nearby Emperor Gold Mine at Vatukoula, and their large bungalow still serves as a **Mine Resthouse**. The resthouse is rented out to the public only in exceptional circumstances, and there's a charge of F\$100 a night for the whole house (up to 10 people). For information contact the Public Relations Officer (tel. 680-477, fax 680-779) at Vatukoula. Visitors with tents are allowed to camp at the Forestry Training Center. Ask permission at the Ministry of Forests office as soon as you arrive. Some canned foods are available at the canteen opposite the Mine Resthouse, but bring food from Tavua. Cabin crackers are handy.

Only carriers operate between Tavua and Nadarivatu, leaving Tavua in the afternoon and Nadarivatu in the morning—a spectacular one-and-a-half-hour ride. Ask the market women in Tavua where and when to catch the trucks. They often originate/terminate in Nadrau village where you might also be able to stay (take along a *sevu* if you're thinking of this). It's also possible to hitch.

Mount Victoria

The two great rivers of Fiji, the Rewa and the Sigatoka, originate on the slopes of Mt. Victoria (Tomanivi), highest mountain in the country (1,323 meters). The climb begins near the bridge at Navai, 10 km southeast of Nadarivatu. Turn right up the hillside a few hundred meters down the jeep track, then climb up through native bush on the main path all the way to the top. Beware of misleading signboards. There are three small streams to cross; no water after the third. On your way down, stop for a swim in the largest stream. There's a flat area on top where you could camp—if you're willing to take your chances with Buli, the devil king of the mountain. Local guides (F\$10) are available, but allow about six hours for the round-trip. Bright red epiphytic orchids (*Dendrobium moh-li-anum*) are sometimes in full bloom. Mount Victoria is on the divide between the wet and dry sides of Viti Levu, and from the summit you should be able to distinguish the contrasting vegetation in these zones.

Monasavu Hydroelectric Project

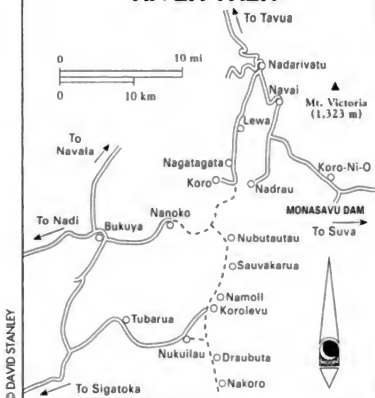
The largest development project ever undertaken in Fiji, this massive F\$230 million scheme at Monasavu, on the Nadrau Plateau near the center of Viti Levu, took 1,500 men six years to complete. An earthen dam, 82 meters high, was built across the Nanuku River to supply water to the four 20-megawatt generating turbines at the Wailoa Power Station on the Wailoa River, 625 meters below. The dam forms a lake 17 km long, and the water drops through a 5.4-km tunnel at a 45-degree angle, one of the steepest engineered dips in the world. Overhead transmission lines carry power from Wailoa to Suva and Lautoka. At present Monasavu is filling 95 percent of Viti Levu's needs, representing an annual savings of F\$22 million on imported diesel oil.

The Cross-Island Highway that passes the site was built to serve the dam project. Bus service ended when the project was completed and the construction camps closed in 1985. Traffic of all kinds was halted in 1993 when a hurricane took out the bridge at Lutu, although 4WD vehicles can still ford the river when water levels are low. At the present time buses go only from Tavua to Nadrau and from Suva to Naivucini, although occasional carriers go farther. In 1998 there were tense scenes near the dam as landowners set up roadblocks to press claims for land flooded in the early 1980s. In July 2000, during the hostage crisis at Fiji's parliament, landowners occupied the dam and cut off power to much of Viti Levu for almost a month. At last report, lawyers for the landowners were demanding F\$52.8 million in compensation from the Fiji Electricity Authority.

THE SIGATOKA RIVER TREK

One of the most rewarding trips you can make on Viti Levu is the three-day hike south across the center of the island from Nadarivatu to Korolevu on the Sigatoka River. Northbound the way is much harder to find. Many superb campsites can be found along the trail, and luckily this trek isn't included in the Australian guidebooks, so the area isn't overrun by tourists. Have a generous bundle of *waka* ready in case you're invited to stay overnight in a village. (Kava for presenta-

THE SIGATOKA RIVER TREK



© DAVID STANLEY

tions on subsequent days can be purchased at villages along the way.) Set out from Nadarivatu early in the week, so you won't suffer the embarrassment of arriving in a village on a Sunday. Excellent topographical maps of the entire route can be purchased at the Lands and Survey Department in Suva.

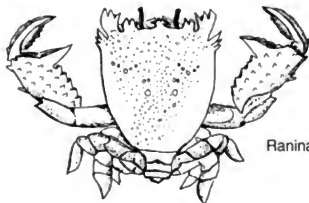
Follow the dirt road south from Nadarivatu to **Nagatagata** where you should fill your canteen as the trail ahead is rigorous and there's no water to be found. From Nagatagata walk south about one hour. When you reach the electric high-power line, where the road turns right and begins to descend toward Koro, look for the well-worn footpath ahead. The trail winds along the ridge, and you can see as far as Ba. The primeval forests that once covered this part of Fiji

were destroyed long ago by the slash-and-burn agricultural techniques of the Fijians.

When you reach the pine trees the path divides, with Nanoko to the right and Nubutautau down to the left. During the rainy season it's better to turn right and head to Nanoko, where you may be able to find a carrier to Bukuya or all the way to Nadi. If you do decide to make for Nanoko, beware of a very roundabout loop road on the left. Another option is to skip all of the above by taking a carrier from Tavua to Nadrau, from whence your hike would then begin.

Reverend Thomas Baker, the last missionary to be clubbed and devoured in Fiji (in 1867), met his fate at **Nubutautau**. Jack London wrote a story, "The Whale Tooth," about the death of the missionary, and the ax that brought about Reverend Baker's demise is still kept in the village (other Baker artifacts are in the Fiji Museum). You should be able to stay in the community center in Nubutautau. The Nubutautau-Korolevu section of the trek involves 22 crossings of the Sigatoka River, which is easy enough in the dry season (cut a bamboo staff for balance), but almost impossible in the wet (December to April). Hiking boots will be useless in the river, so wear a pair of old running shoes.

It's a fantastic trip down the river to **Korolevu** if you can make it. The Korolevu villagers can call large eels up from a nearby pool with a certain chant. A few hours' walk away are the pottery villages, Draubuta and Nakoro, where traditional, long Fijian pots are still made. From Korolevu you can take a carrier to Tubarua, where there are five buses a day to Sigatoka. A carrier leaves Korolevu direct to Sigatoka very early every morning except Sunday (F\$7), departing Sigatoka for the return around 1400 (if you want to do this trip in reverse). Reader Bruce French of Edgewood, Kentucky, wrote that "this trek was a big highlight of my South Pacific experience."



Ranina ranina

LOUISE FOOTE



SALVATORE CASA

LAUTOKA AND VICINITY

LAUTOKA

Fiji's second city, Lautoka (population 45,000), is the focus of the country's sugar and timber industries, a major port, and the Western Division and Ba Province headquarters. It's a likable place with a row of towering royal palms along the main street.

Although Lautoka grew up around the Fijian village of Namoli, the temples and mosques standing prominently in the center of town reflect the large Indo-Fijian population. In recent years things have changed somewhat with many Indo-Fijians abandoning Fiji as indigenous Fijians move in to take their place, and Lautoka's population is now almost evenly balanced between the groups. Yet in the countryside Indo-Fijians still comprise a large majority.

Shuttle boats to Beachcomber and Treasure islands depart from Lautoka, and this is the gateway to the Yasawa Islands with everything from Blue Lagoon cruises to backpacker resort shuttles and village boats. Yet because Lautoka doesn't depend only on tourism, you get a truer picture of ordinary life than you would in Nadi,

and the city has a rambunctious nightlife. There's some duty-free shopping, but mainly this is just a pleasant place to wander around.

For information on Beachcomber Island and Treasure Island resorts, both accessible from Lautoka, turn to The Mamanuca Group.

SIGHTS

South of the Center

Begin next to the bus station at Lautoka's big, colorful **market**, which is busiest on Saturday (open Mon.–Fri. 0700–1730, Sat. 0530–1600). From here, walk south on Yasawa Street to the photogenic **Jame Mosque**. Five times a day local male Muslims direct prayers toward a small niche known as a *mihrab*, where the prayers fuse and fly to the *Kabba* in Mecca, thence to Allah. During the crushing season (June to November) narrow-gauge trains rattle past the mosque along a line parallel to Vitogo Parade, bringing cane to Lautoka's large sugar mill.

Bligh Water





The Sunday afternoon festival and feast at Lautoka's Hare Krishna Temple, largest in the South Pacific, is worth attending.

Follow the line east a bit to the **Sikh Temple**, rebuilt after a smaller temple burned down in 1989. To enter you must wash your hands and cover your head (kerchiefs are provided at the door), and cigarettes and liquor are forbidden inside the compound. The teachings of the 10 Sikh gurus are contained in the Granth, a holy book prominently displayed in the temple. Sikhism began in the Punjab region of north-west India in the 16th century as a reformed branch of Hinduism much influenced by Islam: for example, Sikhs reject the caste system and idolatry. The Sikhs are easily recognized by their beards and turbans.

Follow your map west along Drasa Avenue to the **Sri Krishna Kaliya Temple** on Tavewa Avenue, the most prominent Krishna temple in the South Pacific (open daily until 2030). The images on the right inside are Radha and Krishna, while the central figure is Krishna dancing on the snake Kaliya to show his mastery over the reptile. The story goes that Krishna chastised Kaliya and exiled him to the island of Ramanik

Deep, which Indo-Fijians believe to be Fiji. (Curiously, the indigenous Fijian people have also long believed in a serpent-god, named Degei, who lived in a cave in the Nakauvadra Range.) The two figures on the left are incarnations of Krishna and Balarama. At the front of the temple is a representation of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Interestingly, Fiji has the highest percentage of Hare Krishnas in the population of any country in the world. The temple gift shop (tel. 664-112; daily 0900-1630) sells stimulating books, compact discs, cassettes, and posters, and it's possible to rent videos. On Sunday there's a lecture at 1100, *arti* or prayer (*puja*) at 1200, and a vegetarian feast at 1300, and visitors are welcome to attend.

Nearby off Thomson Crescent is the entrance to Lautoka's **botanical garden** (closed Sunday). It will be a few more years before the plants in the garden reach maturity, but the landscaping here is attractive.

DAVID STANLEY

Sugar and Spirits

Continue up Drasa Avenue a block from the garden and turn right on Mill View Road. The large Private Property sign at the beginning of the road is intended mostly to keep out miscreants and heavy vehicles, and tourists are allowed to walk through this picturesque neighborhood, past the colonial-era residences of sugar industry executives and century-old banyan trees. Just beyond the Fiji Sugar Corporation offices is the **Lautoka Sugar Mill**, one of the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. The mill was founded in 1903. Although mill tours are not offered, you can see quite a lot of the operation (busiest from June to November) as you walk down Mill View Road toward the main gate.

Continue straight ahead on Navutu Road (the dirt road beside the railway line) to **South Pacific Distilleries** (P.O. Box 1128, Lautoka; tel. 662-088, fax 664-361), where free plant tours can be arranged weekdays during business hours. This government-owned plant bottles rum, whisky, vodka, and gin under a variety of labels and, of course, molasses from the sugar mill is the distillery's main raw material. The **fertilizer factory** across the highway uses mill mud from the sugar-making process.

The Waterfront

Backtrack to the sugar mill and turn left toward **Fisheries Wharf**, from which you'll have a fine view of the huge sugar storage sheds next to the mill and many colorful fishing boats. If you were thinking of visiting the Yasawa Islands, this is where you'll board your boat.

To the north, just beyond the conveyor belts used to load raw sugar onto the ships, is a veritable mountain of **pine chips** ready for export to Japan where they are used to make paper. Forestry is becoming more important as Fiji attempts to diversify its economy away from sugar. The **Main Wharf** behind the chips is the departure point for the famous Blue Lagoon Cruises to the Yasawa Islands, plus the 39-meter Beachcomber Island shuttle boat *Tui Tai*. As you return to central Lautoka, turn left onto Marine Drive for its view of the harbor, especially enchanting at sunset.

North of Lautoka

One of the largest reforestation projects yet undertaken in the South Pacific is the **Lololo Pine Forest**, eight km off Kings Road between Lautoka and Ba. The logs are sawn into timber if straight, or ground into chip if twisted, then exported from Lautoka. There's a shady picnic area along a dammed creek at the forestry station where you could swim, but even if you don't stop, it's worthwhile taking the 1.5 hour round-trip bus ride from Lautoka to see this beautiful area and to learn how it's being used.

The buses follow a circular route, returning by a different road.

Sports and Recreation

Westside Watersports (P.O. Box 7137, Lautoka; tel./fax 661-462), on Wharf Road, organizes scuba diving trips, fills tanks, and does Yasawa island transfers. Diving is F\$88/145/200 for one/two/three tanks including gear. PADI open-water certification is F\$450 (five days), an introductory dive is F\$150. They'll take snorkelers out in the boat if space is available. Westside operates a dive shop on Tavewa Island.

Subsurface Fiji (Tony Cottrell, P.O. Box 1626, Lautoka; tel. 666-738 or 668-031, fax 669-955), at the corner of Nede and Naviti Streets near the Lautoka Hotel, also arranges scuba diving at F\$68/130/295 for one/two/six tanks, plus \$12 for equipment. They'll also take snorkelers along when they can. A four-day PADI certification course is F\$550, otherwise an introductory dive is F\$145. Divers should call for a free hotel pickup. Tank air fills at offshore islands can also be arranged. Subsurface handles all scuba diving at Beachcomber Island, Musket Cove, Navini Island, the Malolo Island Resort, and Treasure Island.

The **Lautoka Golf Club** (tel. 661-384), a nine-hole, par-69 course, charges F\$15 green fees plus F\$20 club rentals. A taxi from the market should cost around F\$3.

All day Saturday you can catch exciting rugby (April–September) or soccer (September–May)



near Lautoka, Fiji

games at the stadium in Churchill Park (admission is F\$3–5). Ask about league games.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Under US\$25

A good choice is the clean, quiet, three-story **Sea Breeze Hotel** (P.O. Box 152, Lautoka; tel. 660-717, fax 666-080), at 5 Bekana Lane on the waterfront near the bus station. They have 26 rooms with private bath from F\$33/34 single/double (rooms with a/c F\$45/49). A good breakfast is F\$8 extra. A very pleasant lounge has a color TV, and a swimming pool overlooks the lagoon. They'll often tell you that the cheaper rooms are full.

To be closer to the action, stay at the 38-room **Lautoka Hotel** (P.O. Box 51, Lautoka; tel. 660-388, fax 660-201), 2 Naviti St., which has a nice swimming pool. Room prices vary from F\$25/30 single/double for a spacious fan-cooled room with shared bath to F\$49 single or double for a/c and private bath, or F\$15 pp in the six-bed dorm. On weekends some rooms are subjected to a nocturnal rock beat from the adjacent City Pub.

Better are the 40 rooms at the friendly **Cathay Hotel** (P.O. Box 239, Lautoka; tel. 660-566, fax 660-136) on Tavewa Avenue, which features a swimming pool, TV room, and bar. The charge is F\$35/44 single/double with fan and private bath, F\$46/53 with a/c. Some of the rooms in less desirable locations have been divided into dormitories with two to five beds or bunks. Each dorm has its own toilet and shower at F\$12 pp (F\$1 discount for youth hostel, VIP, or Nomads card holders). The dorms here are the best deal in the city, otherwise take one of the superior air-conditioned rooms upstairs. The Cathay offers free luggage storage for guests, and the notice board at the reception often has useful information on travel to Fijian villages and the outer islands. The hotel bar upstairs is pleasant. Enjoy the lovely choral singing filtering over from the adjacent Methodist church at times.

The 18-room **Diamond Hotel** (P.O. Box 736, Lautoka; tel. 666-721) on Nacula Street charges F\$15/20 single/double for a room with fan. Though plain and basic, it's okay for one night if everything else is full.

Another step down is the **Mon Repo Hotel** (P.O. Box 857, Lautoka; tel. 661-595), 75 Vitogo

Parade, at F\$15/20 single/double with shared bath. This building is a former police station and hookers on the beat outside are still brought in (peep holes between rooms). After a night of revelry be prepared for the muezzin of the mosque across the street who calls the faithful to prayer at the crack of dawn.

US\$25–50

Lautoka's top hotel is the **Waterfront Hotel** (P.O. Box 4653, Lautoka; tel. 664-777, fax 665-870), a two-story building erected in 1987 on Marine Drive. It's part of the Tanoa hotel chain. The 47 waterbed-equipped a/c rooms are F\$88 single or double, F\$107 triple (children under 16 are free if no extra bed is required). There's a swimming pool, and members of tour groups departing Lautoka on Blue Lagoon cruises often stay here. The Waterfront's Old Mill Restaurant serves a three-course dinner for F\$21, Lautoka's finest dining.

FOOD

Several inexpensive local restaurants are near the bus station. **Jolly Good Fast Food** (tel. 669-980; daily 0800–2200), at Vakabale and Naviti Streets opposite the market, is a great place to sit and read a newspaper over a Coke. Their best dishes are listed on the "made on order" menu on the wall beside the cashier. Beef and pork are not offered, so have fish, chicken, mutton, or prawns instead—the portions are large. Eating outside in their covered garden is fun, and the only drawback is the lack of beer.

Morris Hedstrom (tel. 662-999; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1800, Sat. 0800–1600), Vidilio and Tukani Streets, is Lautoka's largest supermarket. At the back of the store is a foodcourt which offers fish or chicken and chips, hot pies, ice cream, and breakfast specials. It's clean and only a bit more expensive than the market places.

The **Pizza Inn** (tel. 660-388) in the Lautoka Hotel, 2 Naviti Street, serves pizzas for F\$9–30.

Indian

Naran Ghela & Sons Milk Bar (tel. 667-502; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1800, Sat. 0800–1630), 85 Vitogo Parade, is a good place for an Indian-style breakfast of spicy snacks, samosas, and sweets with coffee. **Maharaja's** at 91 Vitogo Parade

has F\$3 lunches of chop suey or fish and chips.

The Lautoka equivalent of Suva's Hare Krishna Restaurant is **Ganga Vegetarian Restaurant** (tel. 662-990; Mon.–Fri. 0730–1700, Sat. 0730–1630), on the corner of Naviti and Yasawa Streets near the market. It's best at lunch with a vegetarian *thali* plate for F\$4.75. Come anytime for ice cream and sweets.

The unpretentious **Hot Snax Shop** (tel. 661-306; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1800, Sat. 0830–1600), 56 Naviti St., may be the number one place in Fiji to sample South Indian dishes, such as *masala dosai*, a rice pancake with coconut chutney that makes a nice light lunch, or *samosas*, *iddli*, *puri*, and *palau*. The deep-fried *puri* are great for breakfast, and you can also get ice cream. This spot is recommended.

Chinese

Yangs Restaurant (tel. 661-446; Mon.–Thurs. 0800–1745, Fri. 0800–1800, Sat. 0800–1700), 27 Naviti St., is an excellent breakfast or lunch place with inexpensive Chinese specialties.

The air-conditioned **Sea Coast Restaurant** (tel. 660-675; closed Sunday), on Naviti St. near the Lautoka Hotel, has entrées for F\$5–9. It's the place to go if you want a large bottle of Fiji Bitter with your Cantonese food.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lautoka has a flashy new movie house called **Village 4 Cinemas** (tel. 663-555) at 25 Namoli Avenue. It costs about F\$3 to view a film on one of their four screens. Your only other choice is **Globe Cinema** (tel. 661-444) opposite the market.

The disco scene in Lautoka centers on the **City Pub** (tel. 660-388; Thurs.–Sat. nights), formerly called Hunter's Inn, at the Lautoka Hotel. Watch for special functions advertised outside, but it's rather rough and dark.

A safer place to go is **Coco's** (tel. 668-989; Tues.–Sun. from 2000) at 21 Naviti St., above The Cafe. Entry is free on Tuesday and Wednesday (on Thursday until 2100 only). Persons wearing T-shirt or flip-flops aren't supposed to be admitted, but tourists are exempt. The **Rooftop Bar & Grill** (tel. 668-988) above Coco's has happy hour from 1700–1900 with tall schooners of beer for F\$2.

Lautoka's old colonial club is the **Northern Club** (tel. 660-184) on Tavewa Avenue opposite the Cathay Hotel. The sign outside says Members Only, but the club secretary is usually willing to sign in foreign visitors. Lunch and dinner are available here Monday–Saturday; there's tennis and a swimming pool. The **South Seas Club** (tel. 660-784) on Nede Street is a less elitist place to drink.



Sunday Puja

The big event of the week is the Sunday *puja* (prayer) at the **Sri Krishna Kaliya Temple** (tel. 664-112) on Tavewa Avenue. The noon service is followed by a vegetarian feast at 1300, and visitors may join in the singing and dancing, if they wish. Take off your shoes and sit on the white marble floor, men on one side, women on the other. Bells ring, drums are beaten, conch shells blown, and stories from the Vedas, Srimad Bhagavatam, and Ramayana are acted out as everyone chants, "Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare." It's a real celebration of joy and a most moving experience. At one point children will circulate with small trays covered with burning candles, on which it is customary to place a donation; you may also drop a small bill in the yellow box in the center of the temple. You'll be readily invited to join the vegetarian feast later, and no more money will be asked of you.

INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Information

Caroline Tawake at **Tawake Travel Center** (P.O. Box 2322, Lautoka; tel. 954-056), 159 Vitogo Parade (in back of Tawake's Craft Designs near the Colonial National Bank), takes bookings for most of the Yasawa backpacker resorts. She'll help you choose the right place for you and is very friendly.

The **Department of Lands and Survey** (tel. 661-800; Mon.–Thurs. 0800–1300 and 1400–1630, Fri. 0800–1300 and 1400–1600), behind

the Commissioner Western Division office near the Cathay Hotel, sells excellent topographical maps of western Fiji at F\$5.50 a sheet.

The **Lautoka City Bookshop** (tel. 661-715), 19 Yasawa St., sells used books.

The **Western Regional Library** (tel. 660-091) on Tavewa Avenue is open Monday–Friday 1000–1700, Saturday 0900–1200.

Services

The Bank of Hawaii and Westpac Bank are on Naviti Street near the market. There's another Westpac Bank branch on Vitogo Parade a little west of the post office beyond the Shell station. The ANZ Bank on Vitogo Parade diagonally opposite the post office has a Visa/MasterCard ATM. A second ANZ Bank ATM is found next to Rajendra Prasad Foodtown on Yasawa Street opposite the bus station.

Money Exchange (tel. 651-969; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1700, Sat. 0830–1300), 161 Vitogo Parade just up from the ANZ Bank, changes traveler's checks without commission and buys/sells the banknotes of other Pacific countries.

The public fax number at Lautoka Post Office is 664-666. Check your email for F\$0.20 a minute at **Compuland** (tel. 666-457), upstairs at 145 Vitogo Parade.

The **Immigration Department** (tel. 661-706) is on the ground floor of Rogorogovuda House on Tavewa Avenue almost opposite the Sri Krishna Kaliya Temple. Customs is in an adjacent building.

Public toilets are next to Bay 1A, on the back side of the bus station facing the market.

Yachting Facilities

The **Neisau Marina Complex**, at the end of Bouwalu Street, fell on hard times after a hurricane twisted their wharf. At last report it was half abandoned, although some yachts still anchor there. So stay tuned.

The **Vuda Point Marina** (P.O. Box 5717, Lautoka; tel. 668-214, fax 668-215) is between Lautoka and Nadi, three km down Vuda Road off Viseisei Back Road. Here yachts moor Mediterranean style in a well protected oval anchorage blasted through the reef. The excellent facilities include a yacht club, chandlery, workshop, general store, fuel depot, laundry, showers, and sail repair shop.

Health

The emergency room at the **Lautoka Hospital** (tel. 660-399), off Thomson Crescent south of the center, is open 24 hours a day.

The **Vakabale Street Medical Center** (tel. 661-961; Mon.–Fri. 0830–1300 and 1400–1700, Sat. 0830–1300), near the corner of Vakabale and Naviti Streets not far from the market, includes a general medical practitioner and an acupuncturist on their roster.

Otherwise there's the **Bayly Clinic** (tel. 665-133, Mon.–Fri. 0800–1630, Sat. 0800–1300) at 4 Nede St., down from the Sea Coast Restaurant. You can see a dentist (Dr. Mrs. Suruj Naidu) and an eye doctor, as well as general practitioners here.

Dr. Suresh Chandra's dental office (tel. 660-999; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1700, Sat. 0800–1200) is opposite Village 4 Cinemas on Namoli Avenue.

TRANSPORTATION

Sun Air (tel. 664-753) is at 27 Vidilio Street.

Patterson Brothers (tel. 661-173), upstairs at 15 Tukani Street opposite the bus station, runs a bus/ferry/bus service between Lautoka, Ellington Wharf, Nabouwalu, and Labasa (F\$45), departing Lautoka on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday around 0445. This bus actually begins its run in Nadi, picking up passengers on Queens Road near the Westpac Bank around 0330. Patterson Brothers doesn't have an office in Nadi, and Nadi passengers must pay the driver as they board. If boarding in Lautoka, pay at the office the day before.

Islands in the Sun (tel. 661-500), Walu St. at Vitogo Parade toward the main wharf, books the high speed Beachcomber Cruises ship *Lagilagi*, which departs Lautoka for Savusavu at 0700 on Tuesday and Saturday (five hours, F\$90). The same office sells cruises to **Beachcomber Island** (F\$64 pp including lunch, reductions for children), departing Lautoka daily at 1000—a great way to spend a day.

Buses, carriers, taxis—everything leaves from the bus stand beside the market. **Pacific Transport** (tel. 660-499) has express buses to Suva daily at 0630, 0700, 1210, 1550, and 1730 (221 km, five hours, F\$10.55) via Sigatoka (Queens Road). Five other “stage” buses also operate

daily along this route (six hours). The daily **Sunset Express** (tel. 668-276) leaves for Suva via Sigatoka at 0900, 1330, and 1515 (four hours, F\$10). **Sunbeam Transport** (tel. 662-822) has expresses to Suva via Tavua (Kings Road) at 0615, 0630, 0815, 1215, and 1630 (265 km, six hours, F\$12.95), plus two local buses on the same route (nine hours). Sunbeam also has a bus to Suva via Sigatoka at 1015. The northern route is more scenic than the southern. Local buses to Nadi (33 km, F\$1.55) and Ba (38 km, F\$1.50) depart every half hour or so.

Car rentals are available in Lautoka from **Central** (tel. 664-511) at 75 Vitogo Parade.

SOUTH OF LAUTOKA

A popular legend invented in 1893 holds that **Viseisei village**, on the old road between Lautoka and Nadi, is the first settlement in Fiji. It's told how the early Fijians, led by Chiefs Lutunasobasoba and Degei, came from the west, landing their great canoe, the *Kaunitoni*, at Vuda Point, where the oil tanks are now. A Centennial Memorial (1835–1935) in front of the church commemorates the arrival of the first Methodist missionaries in Fiji, and opposite the memorial is a traditional Fijian *bure*—the residence of the present Tui Vuda.

Near the back of the church is another monument topped by a giant war club, the burial place of the village's chiefly family. The late Dr. Timoci

Bavadra, the former prime minister of Fiji who was deposed by the Rabuka coup in 1987, hailed from Viseisei and is interred here. Dr. Bavadra's traditional-style home faces the main road near the church. His son presently lives there, and with his permission you'll be allowed to enter to see the photos hanging from the walls.

All this is only a few minutes' walk from the bus stop, but you're expected to have someone accompany you through the village. Ask permission of anyone you meet at the bus stop and they will send a child with you. As you part, you could give the child a pack of chewing gum (give something else if your escort is an adult). There's a fine view of Nadi Bay from Viseisei and bus tours often stop here, as the souvenir vendors in the village indicate. In any case, don't come on a Sunday. A bypass on Queens Road avoids Viseisei, and only local buses between Lautoka and Nadi take the back road past the village.

A couple of kilometers from the village on the airport side of Viseisei, just above Lomolomo Public School, are two **British six-inch guns** set up here during World War II to defend the north side of Nadi Bay. It's a fairly easy climb from the main highway, and you'll get an excellent view from the top.

Accommodations

Saweni Beach Apartment Hotel (P.O. Box 239, Lautoka; tel. 661-777, fax 660-136), a kilometer off the main highway south of Lautoka, offers a row of 12 self-catering apartments with



The guns of Lomolomo on a hilltop between Lautoka and Nadi.

fan and hot water at F\$46/51 poolside/ocean views for up to three persons (fourth person F\$11 extra). The four rooms in the "brown house" on the beach are F\$36/40 with shared/private bath single or double. Several dormitories in the annex with two to four beds are F\$11 pp, or you can pitch your own tent here at F\$6 pp and still use the dorm's communal kitchen. A small discount is offered if you show a youth hostel, VIP, or Nomads card, and there's 10 percent off on weekly stays. It's a fine place to hang out. Fishermen on the beach sell fresh fish every morning, and cruising yachts often anchor off Saweni Beach. It's quiet and the so-so beach only comes alive on weekends when local picnickers arrive. Guests unwind by the pool. A local company offers scuba diving from Saweni. A bus runs right to the hotel from bay No 14 at Lautoka Bus Station three times a day. Otherwise any of the local Nadi buses will drop you off a 10-minute walk away (a taxi from Lautoka is F\$7 for the 18 km).

Mediterranean Villas (P.O. Box 5240, Lautoka; tel. 664-011, fax 661-773), on Vuda Hill overlooking Viseisei village just off Viseisei Back Road, has six individually decorated villas with fridge beginning at F\$77/90 single/double. Cooking facilities are not provided, but a licensed Italian seafood restaurant is on the premises. There's no pool and the beach is far from here, but the hotel has a private island for guests. This hotel acts as the honorary Italian consulate in Fiji. Local buses between Lautoka and Nadi stop nearby.

First Landing Resort (P.O. Box 348, Lautoka; tel. 666-171, fax 668-882) is next to the Vuda Point Yacht Marina, but otherwise not a very convenient spot. It's three km down Vuda Road from Mediterranean Villas and right past the oil tanks. On the plus side, the beach is better than those in and around Nadi. The 14 older a/c cottages are F\$176 single or double, while 10 larger cottages are F\$198 (extra persons F\$16.50). The units have a fridge but no cooking facilities. Breakfast is included in all rates. The large garden restaurant on the premises bakes pizza, seafood, and bread in a wood-fired stone oven. Tour groups often eat here.

In the same general area, a 15-minute walk along the beach from Viseisei, is the **Anchor Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 9203, Nadi Airport; tel. 662-099, fax 665-571), which has gone upmarket since being taken over by the Tanoa hotel chain in

1996. The nine garden-view rooms are F\$77 single or double, the seven ocean view or "panoramic" rooms F\$88, and the only two rooms with cooking facilities F\$89 (other guests must use the restaurant). Each room has a fridge and balcony. A swimming pool is on the premises.

KOROYANITU NATIONAL HERITAGE PARK

With help from New Zealand, an ecotourism project is underway between Abaca ("am-BA-tha") and Navilawa villages in the Mount Evans Range, 15 km east of Lautoka. Koroyanitu National Heritage Park takes its name from the range's highest peak, 1,195-meter Koroyanitu, and is intended to preserve Fiji's only unlogged tropical montane forest and cloud forest by creating a small tourism business for the local villagers. The village carrier used to transport visitors also carries the local kids to and from school, the women earn money by staffing the office or arranging room and board, and the men get jobs as drivers, guides, and wardens. By visiting Koroyanitu, you not only get to see some of Fiji's top sights but support this worthy undertaking.

Four waterfalls are close to the village, and Batilamu, with sweeping views of the western side of Viti Levu and the Yasawas, is nearby. More ambitious hikes to higher peaks beckon. The landscape of wide green valleys set against steep slopes is superb. Doves and pigeons abound in the forests, and you'll also find honeyeaters, Polynesian starlings, Fijian warblers, yellow breasted musk parrots, golden whistlers, fan-tailed cuckoos, and woodswallows. It's an outstanding opportunity to see this spectacular area. The park entry fee is F\$5 pp.

Sights

You can swim in the pools at **Vereni Falls**, a five minute walk from the park lodge. Picnic shelters are provided. From the viewpoint above the falls, it's 15 minutes up the Navuratu Track to **Kokobula Scenic Outlook** with its 360 degree view of the park and coast. The trail continues across the open grassland to **Savuione Falls**, passing an old village site en route (guide required). From Savuione there's a trail through the forest directly back to the park lodge. You

could do all this in just over two hours if you kept going and didn't lose your way.

The finest hike here is to **Mount Batilamu** along a trail which begins at the visitor center in Abaca village. You'll pass large kauri trees (*makadre*) and get a terrific view from on top. This part of the range is also known as the "Sleeping Giant" because that's how it appears from Nadi. Allow half a day return from Abaca to Batilamu.

The Batilamu Track continues across the range to **Navilawa** village, from which a six-km road runs south to Korobebe village where there's regular bus service to/from Nadi. Trekkers often spend the night in Fiji's highest *bure* on Batilamu, although less than a hundred people a year actually do this walk. An even more ambitious trek is northeast to **Nalotawa** via the site of Navuga, where the Abaca people lived until their village was destroyed by a landslide in the 1930s. To explore the various archaeological sites of this area and to learn more about the environment and culture, you should hire a guide (F\$10–20 a day).

Accommodations

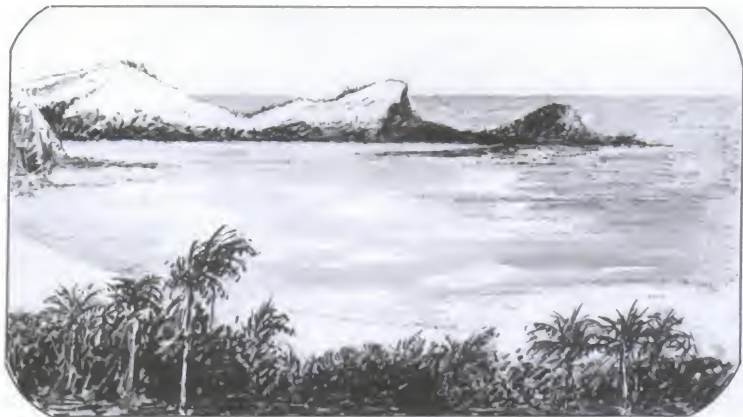
The **Nase Forest Lodge** (P.O. Box 6729, Lautoka), 400 meters from Abaca village, has two six-bunk rooms at F\$25 pp (or F\$80 for the whole room). Camping is F\$10 pp. Children under 15 are half price. Good cooking facilities are provided, but take food as there's no shop. Meals can be ordered at F\$5/7/10 for break-

fast/lunch/dinner. Otherwise you can stay with a family in Abaca or Navilawa villages at F\$30 pp including meals.

For information call tel. 651-168, 664-047, or 661-511. You can sometimes get directly through to Abaca village by dialing 666-644 (wait for two beeps, then dial 1234). You may get an answering machine, and they sometimes don't check their messages for a week at a time. The receptionists at the Cathay and Lautoka hotels in Lautoka may also be able to help you. (On Sunday, avoid entering the village during the church service 1000–1200. Village etiquette should be observed at all times.)

Getting There

The closest public bus stop to the park is Abaca Junction on the Tavakuba bus route, but it's 10 km from Abaca village. An official village carrier to the park leaves the Cathay Hotel in Lautoka around 0900, charging F\$9 pp (F\$15 if only one person). It returns to Lautoka in the afternoon. Ask at the hotel or call Mr. Vijendra Kumar (tel./fax 666-590) for information about these transfers. It's also possible to hire a carrier direct to Abaca on Yasawa Street next to Lautoka market at about F\$20 each way for the vehicle. Otherwise, the Lautoka hotels run daytrips at F\$43 pp including lunch and a guided hike to the waterfall. Travel agents in Nadi offer a two-day Batilamu Trek package at F\$250 pp. During the rainy season, floods can close the road to Abaca and the trekking possibilities may also be limited.



SALVATORE CASA

THE YASAWA ISLANDS

The Yasawas are a chain of 16 main volcanic islands and dozens of smaller ones, stretching 80 km in a north-northeast direction, roughly 35 km off the west coast of Viti Levu. In the lee of Viti Levu, the Yasawas are dry and sunny, with beautiful, isolated beaches, cliffs, bays, and reefs. The waters are crystal clear and almost totally shark-free. The group was romanticized in two movies about a pair of child castaways who eventually fall in love on a deserted isle. The original 1949 version of *The Blue Lagoon* starred Jean Simmons, while the 1980 remake featured Brooke Shields. (A 1991 sequel *Return to the Blue Lagoon* with Milla Jovovich was filmed on Taveuni.)

It was from the north end of the Yasawas that two canoe-loads of cannibals sallied forth in 1789 and gave chase to Capt. William Bligh and his 18 companions less than a week after the famous mutiny. Two centuries later, increasing numbers of mini-cruise ships ply the islands, but there are still almost no motorized land vehicles or roads. The thousand-dollar-a-day crowd is whisked by seaplane to Turtle Island, while the backpackers arrive from Lautoka or Nadi by boat.

Super exclusive Turtle Island Resort and the

backpacker camps on nearby Tavewa have co-existed for decades, but only in recent years have the Yasawans themselves recognized the moneymaking potential of tourism. Now a bumper crop of low-budget "resorts" is bursting forth, up and down the chain, as the villagers rush to cash in. The **Nacula Tikina Tourism Association** (tel. 722-921) coordinates the development of locally-owned backpacker resorts on all of the central islands around Tavewa. Thankfully the resorts associated with the scheme have committed to a code of conduct to preserve and protect the natural environment. In the local dialect called Vuda, *bula* is *cola* (hello) and *vinaka* is *vina du riki* (thank you).

Getting There

South Sea Cruises (P.O. Box 718, Nadi; tel. 750-500, fax 750-501) runs the fast catamaran *Dau Veivueti* to the Yasawas on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, leaving Nadi's Port Denarau at 0900 and Lautoka's Fisheries Wharf at 0930, and arriving at Waya at 1100, at Naviti at 1210, and at Tavewa at 1310. The return trip leaves Tavewa at 1330 the same

YASAWA ISLANDS

SOUTH
PACIFIC
OCEAN



days, with stops at Naviti at 1430, at Waya at 1510, at Lautoka at 1640, and reaching Port Denarau at 1720. The schedule is increased to daily service when things get busy. Fares from Nadi or Lautoka are F\$50/95 one-way/round-trip to Waya, F\$60/115 to Naviti, and F\$70/135 to Tavewa. Interisland fares within the Yasawas are F\$55. There are no refunds on the unused return portion of a round-trip ticket. The boat usually drops passengers on the beach right in front of their resort, but ask.

Next to a seaplane, this is the safest and most comfortable way to go by far (and it's the only Yasawa ferry service licensed and approved by the Fiji government). This boat even has a toilet! There are only 35 seats on the ferry and reservations are recommended. This is especially important for the return trip to Nadi if you have to connect with a flight, as the *Dau Veivueti's* captain is under strict orders not to accept additional passengers once the boat is full.

Recently **Turtle Airways** (tel. 721-888) has been offering reduced fares to backpackers headed for the low-budget resorts on or around Tavewa Island. Ask at the Turtle Island Resort office at Nadi Airport, a bit beyond the Fiji Visitors Bureau. It only takes 30 minutes by air from Turtle's Nadi base at Wailoaloa Beach all the way to the seaplane landing area off Tavewa's east coast. The emerald lagoons and colorful reefs are truly dazzling when seen from above.

Many of the Yasawa backpacker camps have boats of their own, and when with them booking it's best to avoid prepaying your return boat fare if there's any chance you might wish to move to a different resort after arriving. Don't believe anyone who tells you that the Tavewa boats will drop you on Waya, Wayasewa, or another island on their way back to Lautoka as the decision to do so is strictly up to the captain at the moment you wish to travel. They usually ask the same price from Tavewa to Waya/Wayasewa as they do from Tavewa to Lautoka.

However you go, never schedule a return to Nadi on the same day you must catch an international flight as adverse weather conditions can lead to the cancellation of all boat trips. This happens all the time, and even allowing two days leeway won't be sufficient if a hurricane warning has been issued. Also be aware of safety conditions on your boat, and organize a col-

lective protest if the captain seems to be packing in too many passengers just to make more money. For example, count the number of life jackets and don't allow them to load more passengers than that. Due to overloading and heavy seas, a backpacker boat sank on its way from Lautoka to Tavewa in 1999 and the 23 persons aboard spent 24 hours in the water before being rescued. The resort didn't even bother to report them missing, and only a chance encounter with a Blue Lagoon cruise ship saved their lives! There are few government controls over the small resort boats, and they aren't even cheap.

WAYASEWA ISLAND

Wayalailai Ecohaven Resort (P.O. Box 6353, Lautoka; tel. 669-715), formerly known as Dive Trek Wayasewa, is on the south side of Wayasewa adjacent to Namara village. In 1972 most of the villagers moved to the northwest side of the island, and since 1994 the east side of the village has been developed into one of the largest backpacker camps in Fiji. The location is spectacular, opposite Kuata Island directly below Wayasewa's highest peak (349 meters), with Viti Levu clearly visible to the east behind Vomo Island. Photos don't do this place justice.

The resort is built on two terraces, one 10 meters above the beach and the other 10 meters above that. The lower terrace has the double, duplex, and dormitory *bure*, while the upper accommodates the former village schoolhouse, now partitioned into 14 tiny double rooms, and the restaurant/bar. Rooms with shared bath and open ceiling in the school building are F\$40 pp, while the five individual *bure* with private bath and a small porch are F\$100 double. One duplex *bure* with four beds on each side serves as an eight-bed dormitory or *burebau* at F\$35 pp. The camping space nearby is F\$25 pp. If you pay seven nights the eighth is free. The minimum stay is three nights. Upon arrival, ask the staff to change the sheets if they haven't already done so.

Three meals are included in all rates and the food is reasonable with second helpings allowed (free tea and coffee throughout the day). A vegetarian meal is the same thing with the meat removed. Breakfast is served at 0700 to give you an early start. A barbecue and bonfire are held

on Wednesday night, and Sunday afternoon a *lovo* is prepared. There's no shortage of water. The electric generator goes off at 2200 and disturbances in the double rooms or dorm (if any) are more likely to come in the early morning as people get up to see the sunrise or to do a pre-breakfast hike. Wayalailai appeals to all ages, and the extraordinary mix of guests is also due to the emphasis on scuba diving. Informal musical entertainment occurs nightly, and because this resort is collectively owned by the village, the staff is like one big happy family.

There's lots to see and do at Wayalailai with hiking and scuba diving the main activities. The most popular hike is to the top of Vatuva, the fantastic volcanic plug hanging directly over the resort. The well trodden path circles the mountain and comes up the back, taking about 1.5 hours total excluding stops (a guide isn't really required). From the top of Vatuva you get a sweeping view of the west side of Viti Levu, the Mamanucas, and the southern half of the Yasawa chain—one of the scenic highlights of the South Pacific. From Vatuva you can trek northwest across the grassy

uplands to another rock with a good view of Yalobi Bay (also known as Alacrity Bay).

The more ambitious can hike right around the island in four or five hours. Begin from Wayalailai just as the tide is starting to go out and travel counter-clockwise to get over the hardest stretch first. Bush trails cut across the headlands to avoid coastal cliffs, but they're often hard to find, especially on the northeast side of the island. A sandbar links Wayasewa to Waya at low tide and it's possible to cross to the other island without removing your shoes. On your way around Wayasewa you'll pass two villages, Naboro and Yamata, both on the northwest side of the island, and if the tide is well on its way in by the time you get to Yamata, you should either look for a boat back to Wayalailai or ask about returning over the mountain (provided it's not too late).

The offshore reef features cabbage coral, whip coral, and giant fan corals in warm, clear waters teeming with fish, and scuba diving is well organized. Prices are F\$70/110/180 for one/two/four tanks, equipment included, and Wayalailai's inexpensive PADI open-water certification course (F\$350) makes this a great place to learn to dive.



If you're new to the activity, try the "discover scuba" resort course at F\$80. The resort's dive shop also caters to snorkelers with a snorkeling trip to Kuata Island at F\$4 pp (minimum of five), or snorkeling on a reef halfway to Vomo at F\$9 pp (minimum of six). With a buddy you could even snorkel over to Kuata, so long as you're aware of the currents (ask about this). There's a nice picnic beach on the side of Kuata facing Wayasewa, but the optimum snorkeling area is across the point on the southwest side. Look for the cave near the seagull rocks at the point itself.

Other activities include sunset fishing for F\$7 pp (minimum of five), and on Tuesday and Saturday there's an organized visit to Naboro village for a kava ceremony and traditional *meke* entertainment (F\$14 pp). Beach volleyball is every afternoon. No organized activities take place on Sunday.

Transfers from Lautoka on Wayalailai's own boat depart Monday–Saturday at 1300 (1.5 hours, F\$40 pp each way). The boat leaves Wayalailai to return to Lautoka Monday–Saturday at 0900. In both directions the boat fare includes bus transfers to/from Nadi/Lautoka hotels. Wayalailai also offers speedboat transfers to most other resorts in this area upon request: to Yalobi village on Waya Island at F\$15 pp, to Octopus Resort F\$20 pp, to Mana Island F\$60 pp (three-person minimum). You can also get there on the South Sea Cruises shuttle from Nadi at F\$50/95 one-way/round-trip (or F\$55 from Wayalailai to Tavewa).

You can book Wayalailai through **Rabua's Travel Agency** (tel. 721-377 or 724-364), Office No. 23, upstairs from the international arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport (ask for "Rambo"), or just call the number listed above. Be aware that Wayalailai's booking system is chaotic, and even those with firm reservations may still encounter confusion upon arrival about where they're supposed to sleep. Booking ahead from abroad is a waste of time. Just wait until you get to Fiji, then call them yourself or ask Rambo if he can get you a room.

WAYA ISLAND

The high island clearly visible to the northwest of Lautoka is Waya, closest of the larger Yasawas

to Viti Levu and just 60 km away. At 579 meters, it's also the highest island in the chain. Waya is an excellent choice for the hyperactive traveler as the hiking possibilities are unlimited. The selection of places to stay is the best in the Yasawas, and the beaches are very good. There aren't any up-scale Mamanuca-style tourist resorts around here, so it's a great place to experience unspoiled Fijian culture. So if you can live with a few rough edges, Waya is *the* place to go.

Four Fijian villages are sprinkled around Waya: Nalauwaki, Natawa, Wayalevu, and Yalobi. The rocky mass of Batinareba (510 meters) towers over the west side of Yalobi Bay and in a morning or afternoon you can scramble up the mountain's rocky slope from the west end of the beach at Yalobi. Go through the forested saddle on the south side of the highest peak, and follow



CAPTAIN WILLIAM BLIGH

In 1789, after being cast adrift by the mutineers on his HMS *Bounty*, Captain Bligh and 18 others in a seven-meter longboat were chased by two Fijian war canoes through what is now called Bligh Water. His men pulled the oars desperately, heading for open sea, and managed to escape the cannibals. They later arrived in Timor, finishing the most celebrated open-boat journey of all time. Captain Bligh did some incredible charting of Fijian waters along the way.

the grassy ridge on the far side all the way down to Loto Point. Many goats are seen along the way. An easier hike from Yalobi leads south-east from the school to the sandbar over to Wayasewa. At low tide you can walk across and there's good snorkeling anytime.

One of the most memorable walks in the South Pacific involves spending two hours on a well-used trail from Yalobi to Nalauwaki village. Octopus Resort is just over the ridge west of Nalauwaki, and from there it's possible to hike back to Yalobi down Waya's west coast and across Loto Point in another two or three hours. Due to rocky headlands lapped by the sea you can only go down the west coast at low tide, thus one must set out from Yalobi at high tide and from Octopus at low tide. It's a great way to fill a day.

Accommodations

Waya's newest place to stay is **Liavata Lodge** (P.O. Box 3894, Lautoka; tel. 669-042 or 976-778), near Nalauwaki village on northern Waya. Accommodations are F\$85 double in a *bure*, F\$35 pp in the dorm, or F\$25 pp if you camp. Transfers from Lautoka are F\$80 round-trip. The beach here isn't comparable to the one at Octopus Resort to the west, but it's better if you're interested in Fijian culture because the local villagers run the resort as part of an ecotourism project. They'll take you mountain climbing, caving, fishing, sailing, gardening, and storytelling—just name it. You can swim in a small freshwater pool near the lodge. It's also less expensive than Octopus and you should have no problems getting a reservation. The South Sea Cruises shuttle from Nadi will bring you right here.

On a high white-sand beach in Likuliku Bay on northwestern Waya is **Octopus Resort Waya** (P.O. Box 1861, Lautoka; tel. 666-337, fax 666-210), run by Ingrid and Wolfgang Denk. Nalauwaki village is a 10-minute walk away over a low ridge. The four solidly constructed tin-roofed *bure* with private bath are F\$110/140 garden/beach single or double. Otherwise it's F\$45 pp in a four-bed dorm, or F\$35 pp to sleep in one of Octopus's set tents. If you bring your own tent it's also F\$35 pp and there's an additional F\$5 per tent fee to set it up (this unusual rate is part of a deliberate attempt to avoid overcrowding). Another two *bure* and a six-bed dorm may have gone up by the time you get there, but the Denks

have no intention of expanding beyond that. Lunch and dinner are included in all rates. Drinks are served at their large restaurant/bar and a generator provides electricity in the public area each evening. Yachties are welcome to anchor offshore and use the facilities if they order some meals. When there's enough interest the Denks organize a *meke* (F\$15 pp). Fishing trips are F\$15 pp including lunch, but there's no scuba diving. Octopus is in a quiet, secluded location with some of Fiji's finest snorkeling right offshore (spectacular coral). It's one of the nicest backpacker resorts in the South Pacific—the equivalent of the upmarket Mamanuca resorts in almost everything but price. Reservations are essential as it's often full. Even then, a number of readers have complained about having their confirmed reservations canceled by Octopus at the last minute. Information may be available at the Cathay Hotel reception in Lautoka. Transfers depart Lautoka Monday at 1400 and Thursday at 1000, departing Waya for the return Monday and Wednesday at 0900 (F\$95 round-trip). The South Sea Cruises shuttle from Nadi costs the same.

Twin Peaks Resort (Kitione Vuataki, P.O. Box 1165, Lautoka; tel. 661-400 or 975-250) is on the Liku Lagoon, south of Octopus on Waya's unoccupied west coast. Once only a stopover camp for Captain Cook Cruises, it's now run as a Yalobi village youth initiative. The 12 thatched *bure* are F\$100 double including meals (or F\$80 after bargaining). Dormitory accommodations and camping are possible, but inquire about the rates as they vary. Lighting is by kerosene lantern. Twin Peaks is very isolated, but the scenery and sunsets are superb. Return boat transfers from Lautoka cost F\$70 pp. You can book Twin Peaks through Rabua's Travel Agency (tel. 721-377 or 724-364) in office No. 23, upstairs from arrivals at Nadi Airport.

Adi's Place (Adi Sayaba, P.O. Box 1163, Lautoka; tel. 926-377), at Yalobi village on the south side of Waya, is a small family-operated resort in existence since 1981. Although primitive, it still makes a good hiking base with prices designed to attract and hold those with bare-budgets. The accommodations consist of one eight-bunk dorm at F\$35 pp, a solid European-style house with three double rooms at F\$40 pp, and camping space at F\$25 pp. Lighting is by kerosene lamp. The rates include three meals,

but the food is variable with great meals served when Adi herself is present and little more than cabbage and rice at other times. If you've got a portable camp stove and a tent you can skip the meals and prepare your own food while paying F\$9 pp to camp. Bring your own alcohol. It's right on one of the Yasawas' finest beaches, and you can lie in a hammock and observe village life (church on Sunday, kids going back and forth to school, etc.). Every Monday a cruise ship calls at Yalobi and the villagers put on traditional dances, which Adi's guests can watch for F\$5 per head. Scuba diving is not available here and you should not leave valuables unattended. If you haven't been able to reserve one of the more structured Yasawa resorts such as Wayalailai or Coral View, you should have no problem getting in here, but it shouldn't be your first choice. Adi's boat, the *Bula Tale*, departs Lautoka's Fisheries Wharf for Yalobi at 1300 daily except Sunday, charging F\$45 pp each way for the two-hour trip. The boat usually stays overnight at Lautoka and leaves for Waya in the morning, returning to Lautoka in the afternoon, but this varies. Bookings can be made through the Cathay Hotel in Lautoka.

Adi's brother Manasa runs the **Bayside Resort** just past the school east of Adi's Place. The two rooms in the duplex *bure* are F\$77 double, while the two individual *bure* go for F\$88. The dorm is F\$35 pp (all prices include meals). Book through Rabua's Travel Agency (tel. 721-377 or 724-364), office No. 23, upstairs from arrivals at Nadi Airport.

A simpler budget place is **Lovoni Camping**, on a small rocky beach a 20-minute walk north of Natawa village on the east side of Waya. From Yalobi, it's a 30-minute hike across the ridge to Natawa. Lovoni is run by Adi's cousin Semi who had to rebuild everything after a hurricane in 1997. At last report there were two thatched *bure* at F\$35 pp including meals. Camping is possible. It's a place to hang out with some friendly people.

NAVITI ISLAND

Naviti, at 33 square km, is the largest of the Yasawas. Its king, one of the group's highest chiefs, resides at Soso, and the church there houses

fine woodcarvings. On the hillside above Soso are two caves containing the bones of ancestors. Yawesa, the secondary boarding school on Naviti, is a village in itself.

The recently opened **Korovou Resort** (P.O. Box 6627, Lautoka; tel. 666-644), on the west side of Naviti, has six thatched *bure* with private bath at F\$100 double, two *bure* with shared bath at F\$90, and a 14-bed dormitory at F\$38 pp. Camping is F\$27 pp (all prices include meals). The South Sea Cruises shuttle from Nadi is F\$60/115 one-way/round-trip. Rabua Travel Agency (tel. 721-377 or 724-364), in office No. 23 upstairs from arrivals at Nadi Airport, handles bookings. We haven't been able to get over to inspect it as yet, so please let us know what you find.

TAVEWA ISLAND

Tavewa is much smaller than Waya and twice as far from Lautoka, yet it's also strikingly beautiful with excellent bathing in the warm waters off a picture-postcard beach on the southeast side, and a good fringing reef with super snorkeling. Tall grass covers the hilly interior of this two-km-long island. Tavewa is in the middle of the Yasawas and from the summit you can behold the long chain of islands stretching out on each side with Viti Levu in the background. The sunsets can be splendid from the hill.

There's no chief here, as this is freehold land. In the late 19th century an Irishman named William Doughty married a woman from Nacula who was given Tavewa as her dowry. A decade or two later a Scot named William Bruce married into the Doughty family, and some time thereafter beachcombers called Murray and Campbell arrived on the scene and did the same, with the result that today some 50 Doughtys, Bruces, Murrys, and Campbells comprise the population of Tavewa. William Doughty himself died in 1926 at the ripe age of 77. Auntie Lucy Doughty, the person who pioneered tourism to Tavewa back in the late 1970s, lives next door to David Doughty's Place and sells books, maps, and postcards.

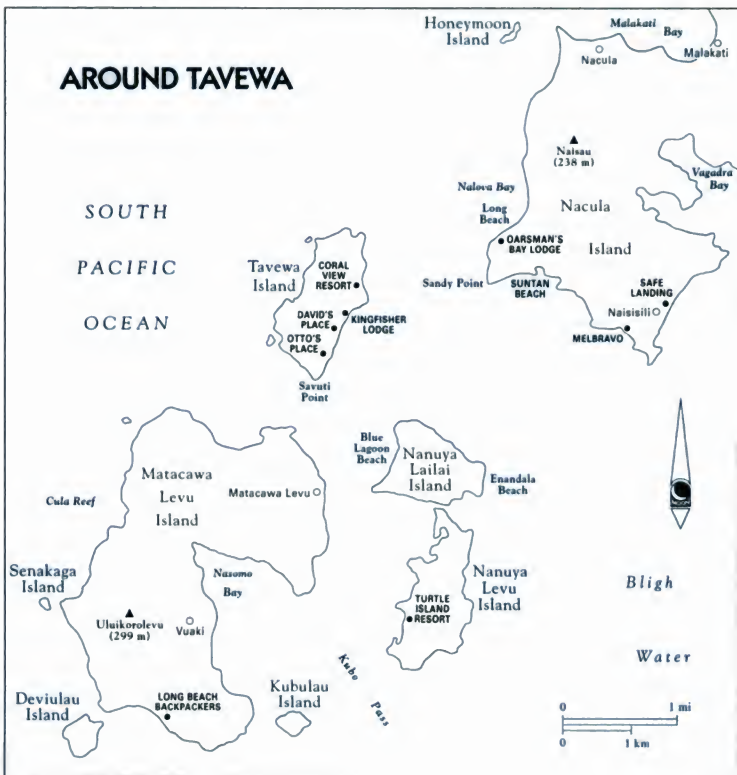
The islanders are friendly and welcoming; in fact, accommodating visitors is their main source of income. Most of their guests are backpackers who usually stay six nights, and most are sorry to

leave. It's idyllic but bring along mosquito coils, toilet paper, candles, a flashlight (torch), bottled water, and a *sulu* to cover up. Be prepared for water shortages.

Accommodations

On the east side of Tavewa are four family-operated backpacker resorts. **Coral View Resort** (P.O. Box 3764, Lautoka; tel. 662-648) nestles in a cozy valley on a secluded beach with high hills on each side. It has six small thatched *bure* at F\$77/88 double without/with electricity, four six-bunk dorm *bure* at F\$35 pp. Camping with your own tent is

F\$28 pp. Mosquito nets are supplied. You'll be lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves (unless you're in the two dorms near the noisy radio hut). Included are three meals (served promptly at 0800, 1200, and 1900) and one organized activity a day. Free boat trips are offered to Honeymoon Island, Blue Lagoon Beach, and two beaches on Nacula Island. The excursion to Malakati village on Thursday morning or the boat trip to the Sawa-i-Lau caves require a minimum of 10 people willing to pay F\$20 pp to operate. Snorkeling gear is free (F\$20 deposit). In the evening a string band plays in the restaurant/bar, and everyone sits



around talking, drinking, or playing cards. Although there are lots of organized activities, Coral View is also a place where people come to relax and socialize, and most of the guests tend to be under 35. When the shuttle boat arrives from Lautoka all resort residents (including Snoopy the dog) line up on the beach to shake hands with new arrivals. Coral View tries to provide resort-style service (the staff wears matching uniforms), and Uncle Robert de Bruce keeps a close watch over everything from behind the scenes. Robert's son Don is captain of Coral View's 12-meter *Sabob III*, which leaves Lautoka Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 1300, departing Tavewa for the return on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings (2.5 hours, F\$60/110 pp one-way/round-trip). Coral View bookings are handled at the reception of the Cathay Hotel in Lautoka, or at Coral View's Nadi Airport office (tel. 724-199) in office No. 35 upstairs in the commercial arcade at arrivals. The airport office will give you a 15 percent discount if you book directly through them and stay at least four nights (the bare minimum you'd want to stay in any case).

Kingfisher Lodge is Tavewa's newest and most upscale resort, offering a self-contained beach *bure* at F\$100 double. Beds in the three set safari tents in the garden are F\$30 pp.

David's Place (David and Kara Doughty, P.O. Box 10520, Nadi Airport; tel. 721-820) stands in a coconut grove near a small church on the island's longest beach. There are eight *bure* at F\$77/88 double without/with electricity and two 10-bed dorms at F\$35 pp (no electricity). Camping is F\$27 pp with your own tent. David's *bure* are larger and more comfortable than those at Coral View. Since they started cutting the grass the number of mosquitoes has declined, but the communal toilets and showers are inadequate when the place is full. Three huge meals are included in the price with the Thursday *lovo* and Saturday barbecue part of the regular meal plan (opinions about the food vary). At David's you don't get the free trips provided at Coral View (beach trips F\$5 each), and the optional tours cost F\$22 for the cave trip or to visit Naisilisi village. David's solid restaurant/bar, with a concrete floor under the thatched roof, serves as a hurricane shelter in times of need. David sells cold beer, soft drinks, and cigarettes here, and afternoon tea is available 1500-1630 to both

guests and nonguests at F\$2 a piece for some of the richest banana or chocolate cake in Fiji, plus tea. It's an island institution. In the evening people sit around playing backgammon and drinking kava, and often someone sings a couple of songs. In short, it's a good escape from civilization, and you'll be made most welcome. David's boats leave Lautoka Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 0830, returning from the island Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (F\$60 pp each way). Bookings can be made through David's Travel Service (tel. 724-244), office No. 31 upstairs in the arrivals concourse at Nadi Airport, or at the tour desk in the Lautoka Hotel.

Your final choice is **Otto's Place** (Otto and Fanny Doughty, P.O. Box 1349, Lautoka; tel. 661-462 or 666-481), on spacious grounds near the south end of the island. These remarkably hospitable folks have two large double bungalows with toilet, shower, and sink at F\$80 single or double, F\$95 triple, plus \$30 pp for three good meals. Four newer thatched *bure* with private bath cost the same. The single eight-bed dormitory is F\$35 pp, plus the F\$30 pp for meals. The generator is on 1800-2230, but the light is dim and fans are not provided. Yachties and people from the other hotels are welcome to order dinner here (F\$12-17 pp depending on what you want), so long as ample notice is given. Afternoon tea is served 1500-1700 (tea and cake for F\$2, or F\$1 for tea/coffee only). Ice cream and milkshakes are also available. Fanny prepares all the desserts for Turtle Island, which says something. Otto's offers privacy and a bit more comfort for a slightly higher price, and they may have beds available when all the others are full. You can book through Westside Watersports in Lautoka, which also arranges boat transfers at F\$70 pp each way.

Coral View caters more to the youth market while David's is fine for all ages. Pick Coral View or David's if you want a lot of activities packed into a brief stay, Otto's if you want to relax. Be aware that bungalows on the island are in high demand and unless you have firm reservations you'll probably end up camping or staying in a dorm. If you definitely want a *bure* and nothing else, make this very clear when booking. Once on Tavewa, it may be difficult to extend your stay without taking somebody else's room. If you're still in Lautoka and hear that your pre-booked room is no longer available because

people already there decided to stay a few more days, insist that it is they who must move into the dormitory and not you. Unfortunately, these things happen far too often.

Sports and Recreation

Westside Watersports has a dive shop on the beach between David's and Otto's where the price gets cheaper the more diving you do (F\$88/145/200 for one/two/three dives, subsequent dives F\$55 each). Open-water scuba certification is F\$450. Their two dive boats *Absolute II* and *Aftershock* go out at 0900 and 1400, and which side of the island you'll dive on depends upon the wind. Aside from the spectacular underwater topography, encounters with sea turtles, reef sharks, and eagle rays are fairly common. You can also rent snorkeling gear from Westside.

Blue Lagoon Cruises has leased a stretch of beach at the south end of Tavewa where you see a group of picnic tables. You're not supposed to swim here when the tour groups are present, otherwise it's the finest beach on the island.

Getting There

The Tavewa boats leave from Lautoka's Fisheries Wharf near Fiji Meats Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings, returning to Lautoka on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (F\$60 one-way). Try to pay only a one-way fare on the boat up front, allowing yourself the chance to go elsewhere if you don't like the lodgings you're offered. The boat ride from Lautoka can take anywhere from three to

six hours (or more), depending on weather conditions and the quality of the boat. Coral View and David's Place are very competitive, and David's guests are sometimes not allowed to use Coral View's better boat, the *Sabob III*. Don't expect luxuries such as toilets on these boats, so limit how much you drink before boarding. Also limit what you eat, or take seasickness pills if you're a poor sailor (a trip on one of the smaller boats can be frightful in rough weather). Be prepared to wade ashore at Tavewa.

You can also get to Tavewa on the South Sea Cruises shuttle from Nadi and Lautoka for F\$70/135 one-way/round-trip. An island hop from Tavewa to Naviti or Waya on their catamaran is F\$55. The smaller backpacker resorts on neighboring islands pick up guests at Tavewa. Turtle Airways (tel. 722-921) sometimes offers special "backpacker rates" on seaplane transfers from Nadi to Tavewa.

ISLANDS AROUND TAVEWA

Nacula Island

Ten-km-long Nacula, between Tavewa and Yasawa islands, is the third largest in the chain. From its contorted coastline rise hills like Naisau (238 meters) and Korobeka (258 meters). Of the four villages, Naisisili and Nacula are the most important, and the Tui Drola, or chief of the middle Yasawas, resides on the island. The island's uninhabited beaches have long been visited by



village house,
Nacula Village,
Yasawa Islands

backpacker tours from Tavewa, and recently five budget resorts have been built on the island. Meals are included in the rates quoted below.

Oarsman's Bay Lodge, on Long Beach at the southwest end of Nacula, has a large dormitory (F\$45 pp) and six new self-contained *bure* (F\$100 double). The first reports are good. (The owner of Turtle Island Resort provided an interest free loan for the construction of Oarsman's Bay.) Neighboring **Nalova Bay** has two more *bure* at F\$100 double.

Southeast toward Naisisili village are **Melbravo**, run by Penaia and Laite, and Sailasa Ratu's **Nabua Lodge** next door. Both offer dormitory and *bure* accommodations with shared bath on a good beach. Similar is **Safe Landing** run by Joe Poasa and family on the other side of Naisisili village. All three are F\$35 pp in the dorm or F\$77 in double room.

Nanuya Lailai Island

Nanuya Lailai, between Tavewa and Turtle Islands, is best known for Blue Lagoon Beach. The snorkeling is about the finest in the area, and this beach is often visited by cruise ship passengers. Boatloads of backpackers arrive from Tavewa for a swim when the packaged tourists aren't around, and many yachts anchor just offshore. You can tell the fish have been fed from the way they swim straight at you.

Recently the island's seven families have established five small backpacker resorts along Enandala Beach on Nanuya Lailai's east side. These folks are related to the Naisisili people over on Nacula, so visits there are easily arranged.

Sunrise Lagoon Resort (tel. 650-289) is run by a guy named Joe who charges F\$77 double in his five *bure*, or F\$35 pp in the dorm. Camping is F\$25 pp (meals included).

Nearby is **Seaspray** with *bure* and dorm beds, and **Al's Paradise**, run by Amelia and Aloisio Bogileka. They have two *bure*, one beachfront and the other in the garden (F\$77 pp), plus a five-bed dorm (F\$35 pp). You can get there on the Coral View boat.

Just south is the **Gold Coast Inn** with five *bure* at F\$70 double and one eight-bed dorm at F\$35 pp. Camping is F\$27 pp. **Kim's Place**, set a bit back on a terrace, is similar (all prices include meals).

Matacawa Levu Island

As yet only one backpacker resort has appeared on the long white beach beyond Vuaki village on Matacawa Levu's south side. **Long Beach Backpackers** (tel. 665-150) has six *bure* at F\$100 double and an eight-bed dorm for F\$51 pp.

All of the places just mentioned on Nacula, Nanuya Lailai, and Matacawa Levu have only opened very recently, so consider the details above as merely a starting point for your own inquiries. Check all prices carefully and ask which meals are included.

At Nadi Airport, the Turtle Island Resort office (tel. 722-921), on the left beyond the Fiji Visitors Bureau, should be able to provide more information. Other booking agents at Nadi Airport include Island Travel Tours (tel. 724-033 or 725-930) in office No. 14 upstairs from arrivals, and Rabua's Travel Agency (tel. 721-377 or 724-364) in office No. 23. Caroline Tawake at **Tawake Travel & Tourist Information Center** (tel. 954-056), 159 Vitogo Parade, Lautoka, can book any of these places.

Overseas bookings can be made through **South Pacific Holidays** (10906 NE 39th St., Suite A-1, Vancouver, WA 98682-6789, U.S.A.; tel. 877/733-3454 or 360/944-1712, fax 360/253-3934, website: www.fijibudget.com or www.affordablefiji.net).

NANUYA LEVU ISLAND

In 1972 an eccentric American millionaire named Richard Evanson bought 200-hectare Nanuya Levu Island in the middle of the Yasawa Group for US\$300,000. He still lives there, and his **Turtle Island Resort** (P.O. Box 9317, Nadi Airport; tel. 722-921 or 663-889, fax 720-007) has gained a reputation as one of the South Pacific's ultimate hideaways. Only 14 fan-cooled, two-room *bure* grace Turtle, and Evanson swears there'll never be more.

Turtle is Tavewa at 25 times the price. The 28 guests pay F\$2,700 per couple per night (or F\$3,270 in a grand *bure*), but that includes all meals, drinks, and activities. You'll find the fridge in your cottage well stocked with beer, wine, soft drinks, and champagne, refilled daily, with no extra bill to pay when you leave. Sports such as sailing, snorkeling, scuba diving, canoeing,

windsurfing, deep-sea fishing, horseback riding, guided hiking, and moonlight cruising are all included in the tariff. Lodge staff will even do your laundry at no charge (only Lomi Lomi massage costs extra).

If you want to spend the day on any of the dozen secluded beaches, just ask and you'll be dropped off. Later someone will be back with lunch and a cooler of wine or champagne (or anything else you'd care to order over the walkie-talkie). Otherwise use the beach a few steps from your door. Meals are served at remote and romantic dine-out locations, or taken at the community table; every evening Richard hosts a small dinner party. He's turned down many offers to develop the island with hundreds more units or to sell out for a multimillion-dollar price. That's not Richard's style, and he's quite specific about who he *doesn't* want to come: "Trendies, jetsetters, obnoxious imbibers, and plastic people won't get much out of my place. Also, opinionated, loud, critical grouches and anti-socials should give us a miss." It has been reported that the previous standard of "English-speaking mixed couples only" has been dropped. Ringo Starr is said to be a regular.

Of course, all this luxury and romance has a price. Aside from the per diem, it's another F\$1,710 per couple for roundtrip seaplane transportation to the island from Nadi. There's also a six-night minimum stay, but as nearly half the guests are repeaters that doesn't seem to be an impediment. (Turtle Island is off-limits to anyone other than hotel guests.) Turtle's success may be measured by its many imitators, including the Vatulele Island Resort, the Wakaya Club, Qamea Beach Club, Laucala Island, Kaimbu Island, Nukubati Island Resort, and the Yasawa Island Resort.

Turtle Island has also set the standard for environmentally conscious resort development. Aside from planting tens of thousands of trees and providing a safe haven for birds, Evanston has preserved the island's mangroves, cleverly erecting a boardwalk to turn what others may have considered an eyesore into a major attraction. A model of sustainability, the resort grows 90 percent of its own herbs and vegetables in an organic garden, gets honey from its own apiary, uses solar water heaters and wind-powered generators, and makes its own furniture from local timber. And some of Evanston's guests

do more than sun themselves. Every year since 1991 a group of California eye specialists has briefly converted Turtle Island into an unlikely clinic for dozens of Fijian villagers requiring eye surgery or just a recycled pair of prescription glasses, all for free. Nearly 160 local Fijians have jobs here, all to serve 28 guests!

Recently Evanston began an innovative program to save the endangered green and hawksbill turtles of the Yasawas. The resort now purchases all live turtles brought in by hunters, and auctions them to resort guests, with all proceeds going to the staff fund. The names of the new "owners" are painted on the shells, and the reptiles are released. Although the paint does no harm to the turtles, it renders their shells worthless in the turtle shell market, thereby prolonging the animals' lives.

Evanston has a reputation in Fiji, and some former Fijian employees have complained about being fed vegetarian food and subjected to authoritarian discipline. Contemporary Captain Bligh or not, Richard certainly is a character. During the 2000 coup turmoil, Turtle Island was briefly occupied by villagers from Naisisili on nearby Nacuala. They claimed that the island had been wrongfully given away by a Fijian chief in 1868 and still belonged to them. Over many bowls of kava, Evanston and the villagers came to an understanding, and Turtle Island is again as safe as safe can be. In true Hollywood fashion, some of the interlopers have now established backpacker resorts of their own on neighboring islands—all with Richard's blessing and full support! And so life continues on these legendary isles.

SAWA-I-LAU ISLAND

On Sawa-i-Lau is a large limestone cave illuminated by a crevice at the top. There's a clear, deep pool in the cave where you can swim, and an underwater opening leads back into a smaller, darker cave (bring a light). A Fijian legend tells how a young chief once hid his love in this cave when her family wished to marry her off to another. Each day he brought her food until both could escape to safety on another island. In the 1980 film *Blue Lagoon*, Brooke Shields runs away to this very cave. Many cruise ships stop at the cave and the backpacker resorts on Tavewa

also run tours. Yachties should present a *sevu-sevu* to the chief of Nabukeru village, just west of the cave, to visit.

YASAWA ISLAND

The Tui Yasawa, highest chief of the group, resides at Yasawairara village at the north end of Yasawa, northernmost island of the Yasawa group.

For many years the Fiji government had a policy that the Yasawas were "closed" to land-based tourism development, and it was only after the 1987 coups that approval was granted for the construction of **Yasawa Island Resort** (Garth and Denise Downey, P.O. Box 10128, Nadi Airport; tel. 663-364 or 722-266, fax 665-044 or 724-456). This exclusive Australian-

owned resort opened in 1991 on a creamy white beach on Yasawa's upper west side. Most of the resort's employees come from Bukama village, which owns the land.

The accommodations of four a/c duplexes at F\$1,690 double, 10 one-bedroom deluxes at F\$1,915, and a honeymoon unit at F\$2,365. A complete refurbishment of the units took place in 2001. All meals are included, but, unlike at most other resorts in this category, alcoholic drinks are *not*. Scuba diving, game fishing, and massage also cost extra. The Yasawa's only swimming pool is here. Guests arrive on a chartered flight (F\$700 pp round-trip), which lands on the resort's private airstrip. Children under 12 are only admitted in January.



KADAVU

This big, 50-by-13-km island 100 km south of Suva is the fourth largest in Fiji (411 square km). A mountainous, varied island with waterfalls plummeting from the rounded rainforested hill-tops, Kadavu is outstanding for its vistas, beaches, and reefs. The three hilly sections of Kadavu are joined by two low isthmuses, with the sea biting so deeply into the island that on a map its shape resembles that of a wasp. Just northeast of the main island is smaller Ono Island and the fabulous Astrolabe Reef, stretching halfway to Suva. A process is now underway to have Ono's fringing reefs declared a marine conservation area. The birdlife is rich with some species of honeyeaters, fantails, and velvet fruit doves found only here. The famous red-and-green Kadavu musk parrots may be seen and heard.

In the 1870s steamers bound for New Zealand and Australia would call at the onetime whaling station at Galoa Harbor to pick up passengers and goods, and Kadavu was considered as a possible site for a new capital of Fiji. Instead Suva was chosen and Kadavu was left to lead its sleepy village life; only today is the outside world

making a comeback with the arrival of roads, planes, and a handful of visitors. Some 10,000 indigenous Fijians live in 60 remote villages scattered around the island.

SIGHTS

The airstrip and wharf are each a 10-minute walk, in different directions, from the post office and hospital in the tiny government station of **Vunisea**, the largest of Kadavu's villages and headquarters of Kadavu Province. Vunisea is strategically located on a narrow, hilly isthmus where Galoa Harbor and Namalata Bay almost cut Kadavu in two.

The longest sandy beach on the island is at **Drue**, an hour's walk north from Vunisea. Another good beach is at **Muani** village, eight km south of Vunisea by road. Just two km south of the airstrip by road and a 10-minute hike inland is **Waikana Falls**. Cool spring water flows over a 10-meter-high rocky cliff between two deep pools, the perfect place for a refreshing swim

on a hot day. A second falls six km east of Vunisea is even better.

The women of **Namuana** village just west of the airstrip can summon **giant turtles** up from the sea by singing traditional chants to the *vu* (ancestral spirits) Raunidalice and Tinadi Caboga. On a bluff 60 meters above the sea, the garlanded women begin their song, and in 15 minutes a large turtle will appear. This turtle, and sometimes its mates, will swim up and down slowly offshore just below the overhanging rocks. For various reasons, the calling of turtles is performed very rarely these days.

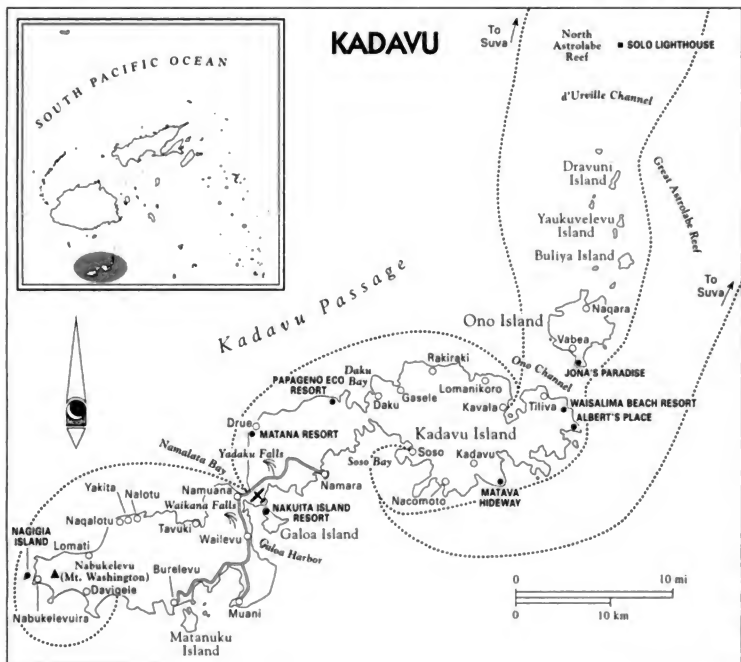
West of Vunisea

A road crosses the mountains from Namuana to **Tavuki** village, seat of the Tui Tavuki, paramount chief of Kadavu. A couple of hours west

on foot is the **Yawe District**, where large pine tracts have been established. In the villages of Nalotu, Yakita, and Naqalotu at Yawe, traditional Fijian **pottery** is still made. Without potter's wheel or kiln, the women shape the pots with a paddle and fire them in an open fire. Sap from the mangroves provides a glaze.

Another road runs along the south coast from Vunisea to **Nabukelevuira** at the west end of Kadavu. There's good surfing at Cape Washington in this area, and a deluxe surf camp on Denham Island just off the cape caters to the needs of surfers.

The abrupt extinct cone of **Nabukelevu** (Mt. Washington) dominates the west end of Kadavu and petrels nest in holes on the north side of the mountain. It's possible to climb Nabukelevu (838 meters) from Nabukelevuira. There's no trail—you'll need a guide to help you hack a way.





Shoppers from outlying villages headed for Kadavu's market land on this beach near Vunisea. The hiking trails of Kadavu vie with untouched beaches such as this one in "downtown" Vunisea.

The Great Astrolabe Reef

The Great Astrolabe Reef stretches unbroken for 30 km along the east side of the small islands north of Kadavu. One km wide, the reef is unbelievably rich in coral and marine life, and because it's so far from shore, it still hasn't been fished out. The reef surrounds a lagoon containing 10 islands, the largest of which is 30-square-km Ono. The reef was named by French explorer Dumont d'Urville, who almost lost his ship, the *Astrolabe*, here in 1827.

There are frequent openings on the west side of the reef and the lagoon is never over 10 fathoms deep, which makes it a favorite of scuba divers and yachties. The Astrolabe also features a vertical drop-off of 10 meters on the inside and 1,800 meters on the outside, with visibility up to 75 meters. The underwater caves and walls here must be seen to be believed. However, the reef is exposed to unbroken waves generated by the southeast trades and diving conditions are often dependent on the weather. Surfing is possible at Vesi Passage (boat required).

Many possibilities exist for ocean kayaking in the protected waters around Ono Channel, and there are several inexpensive resorts at which to stay. Kayak rentals may not be available, thus one should bring along a folding kayak on the boat from Suva. Several companies mentioned in this book's main introduction offer kayaking tours to Kadavu.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Around Vunisea

Manueli and Tamalesi Vuruya run **Biana Accommodation** (P.O. Box 13, Vunisea; tel. 336-010), on a hill overlooking Namalata Bay near the jetty at Vunisea. The six rooms are F\$40/55 single/double including breakfast, plus F\$5 each for a real Fijian lunch or dinner (or you can cook). They ask that you call ahead before coming.

Nakuila Island Resort (Bill and Serima Reece, P.O. Box 6, Vunisea, Kadavu; tel. 336-097), formerly Reece's Place, on tiny Galoa Island just off the northwest corner of Kadavu, was the first to accommodate visitors to Kadavu, and it's still the least expensive place to stay around Vunisea station. It's a 15-minute walk from the airstrip to the dock, then a short launch ride to Galoa itself (F\$8 pp round-trip). There are 18 beds in three Fijian *bure* and three two-room houses at F\$15 pp, and a F\$9 five-bed dormitory. Pitch your tent for F\$6 pp. Unless you have a camp stove, cooking your own food is not possible, but Serima is an excellent cook and three ample meals can be had for F\$18 pp. There could be minor water problems. They use an electric generator in the evening. The view of Galoa Harbor from Reece's Place is excellent, and there's a long beach nearby, but the snorkeling in the murky water is poor. For a small

fee they'll take you out to the Galoa Barrier Reef, where the snorkeling is vastly superior. Scuba diving and PADI certification courses are also offered. They'll also take you surfing on the Great Astrolabe. If you're there on Sunday, consider attending the service in the village church to hear the wonderful singing. Call ahead to check prices and availability.

A much more upscale operation is **Matana Beach Resort** (P.O. Box 8, Vunisea, Kadavu; tel. 311-780, fax 303-860) at Drue, six km north of Vunisea. The two ocean-view *bure* on the hillside are F\$200/330 single/double, while the six larger beachfront units are F\$220/370/495/580 single/double/triple/quadruple, three meals included (three-night minimum stay, children under 12 not accepted). Boat transfers from Vunisea airport are also part of the package. Sunsets over Mt. Washington from the bar's open terrace can be spectacular. Matana caters almost exclusively to scuba divers who've booked from abroad with **Dive Kadavu**. The morning two-tank boat dive is F\$165. Their PADI open-water certification course is F\$720. This whole operation meets the highest international standards. Windsurfers, sea kayaks, and paddle-boards are free. The snorkeling off Matana's golden beach is good, and the fantastic Namalata Reef is straight out from the resort (the Great Astrolabe Reef is an hour away). To snorkel from the dive boat is F\$35.

The **Papageno Eco Resort** (tel. 303-355, fax 303-533), formerly Malawai Resort, is on the north side of Kadavu 15 km east of Vunisea and accessible only by boat. The four colonial-style cottages are F\$340/565/730 single/double/triple including meals, airport transfers, and tax. The main house of this 140-hectare plantation is used as the resort's dining room. The usual sporting activities can be arranged.

Off West Kadavu

In April 2000 a surfing camp opened on tiny Denham Island off Cape Washington called **Nagigia Island** (P.O. Box 12, Vunisea; tel. 315-774). The seven neat little bungalows perched on a limestone cliff are F\$350 pp if you're willing to share a double or F\$400 single. The price includes transfers from Vunisea Airport, meals, and surfing boats. Scuba diving and fishing cost extra. There's good swimming directly below the units and at nearby sandy beaches. The tra-

ditional surfing season is April to November, but this resort has excellent surf during the other months as well, due to its outer reefs curving 270 degrees. For surfing details and advice on transporting your boards, consult their website.

On East Kadavu

Albert's Place (Albert and Ruth O'Connor, c/o P.O. Naleca, Kadavu; tel. 336-086) is near the Great Astrolabe Reef at Lagalevu at the east end of Kadavu. It's similar to the Nakuila Island Resort but more remote. Each of the 10 small *bure* has a double and a single bed, coconut mats on the floor, and a kerosene lamp for light at F\$16/32 single/double, or F\$12 pp in a six-bed dorm. Camping is F\$9 pp. The units share rustic flush toilets and cold showers with plenty of running water (except during droughts), and everything is kept fairly clean. Mosquito nets and coils are supplied.

Meals cost another F\$25 pp for all three, and Ruth O'Connor and her daughter Ramona serve huge portions. Their meals are exceptional, consisting of fresh fish, lobster, chicken curry, or seafood soup, and they bake their own bread daily. If you wish to do your own cooking, ask about this when booking, and bring your own stove and food, as little is available in Michel and Jesse's small store on the premises. There are several lovely waterfalls nearby where you can swim, and in the evening everybody sits around the kava bowl and swaps stories. As there are never more than 20 guests here at a time, it gets very chummy. The snorkeling off Albert's beach is excellent though the swimming is only good at high tide (Jona's on Ono has a far superior beach). Scuba with **Naiqoro Divers** (run by Albert's sons Bruce and Julian) is F\$40/80 for one/two tank boat dives, plus F\$20 a day for equipment. A five-day package with 10 dives is F\$330. Shore dives are F\$15 a tank if you have your own gear (a good idea as the supply here is limited). Naiqoro dives on both sides of the reef (some other area scuba operators only dive on the inner side).

The easiest way to get there from Suva is by boat on the *Bulou-ni-Ceva*, which will bring you directly to Albert's Place or to Kavala Bay (a good hour west of Albert's on foot). Albert will pick you up at Vunisea Airport at F\$60 for the first one or F\$25 pp for three or more for the two-hour boat ride (these prices are fixed, so don't

bother bargaining). Be sure to let him know you're coming. It's wise to allow plenty of time coming and going—plan a stay at Albert's Place early on in your visit to Fiji so you don't have to be in a big rush to leave. People rave about this property, just don't expect luxuries like electricity at those prices!

The Waisalima Beach Resort (P.O. Box 1366, Suva; tel. 336-081 or 321-899, fax 321-899) faces a two-km beach on the north side of Kadavu, between Albert's and Kavala Bay. This property was known as the Nukubalavu Adventure Resort until a fire destroyed the facilities in 1998, and the new Waisalima is primarily a dive center. The *bure* are F\$50/65/75 single/double/triple with shared bath, or F\$95/130/150 with private bath. Camping is F\$8/12/15, or it's F\$15 pp in the dorm. Waisalima's three-meal plan is F\$42 pp and the food is good and substantial (usually fish). Cooking facilities are not available. Land is for sale here (see their website), if you'd like to build a vacation home. The gorgeous Great Astrolabe Reef is only a five-minute boat ride away. Turtles, sharks, and big fish are seen on most channel dives, and the fish and coral on the reefs are first rate too. Two-tank dives are F\$120, plus F\$25 for gear. An open water certification course will cost F\$450. Diving at Waisalima is cheaper than at the Matana Resort, though they don't have the same kind of boats available. The Waisalima launch can pick you up at Vunisea airport (F\$50 pp each way with a two-person minimum), or come on the *Bulou-ni-Ceva*.

Not to be confused with the Matana Resort is **Matava, The Astrolabe Hideaway** (P.O. Box 63, Vunisea; tel. 336-098, fax 336-099), a 30-minute walk east of Kadavu village and almost opposite tiny Waya Island. The brown sandy beach in front of Matava is rather shallow but the snorkeling off Waya is fine. There are three thatched oceanview *bure* with private bath and solar lighting at F\$105 single or double, three waterfront *bure* with private bath at F\$89, two waterfront *bure* with shared bath at F\$50, and one dormitory at F\$17 pp. The meal plan is F\$42 pp. Scuba diving is available at F\$55/105/495 for one/two/10 tanks, plus F\$22 for equipment. PADI open-water certification is F\$495. Surfing trips are F\$30, plus F\$20 for board hire (if required). Kayaks, canoes, and windsurfers are for rent. Snorkeling trips to the Great Astrolabe Reef are

F\$15 pp, plus F\$10 for gear (if required). Guided two or three-day hiking trips with accommodations in Fijian villages can be arranged. Boat transfers from the airport are F\$27 pp each way.

Accommodations on Ono

Jona's Paradise Resort (P.O. Box 8, Vunisea; tel. 307-058), at Vabea on the southern tip of Ono Island, offers accommodation in five traditional beach *bure* at F\$70/140 single/double, or camping at F\$36 pp (minimum stay three nights). The deluxe *bure* is F\$160 double. Children under 12 are welcome at F\$35 in the parent's *bure*. Otherwise it's F\$50 pp in the dorm or F\$40 pp in a tent. All prices include three tasty meals but you might bring a few snack foods with you. It's a small, family-style resort with a steep white-sand beach, great snorkeling (hundreds of clownfish in crystal-clear water). Dive Kadavu has recently opened a base at the resort (see the Matana Beach Resort listing above for scuba rates). Husband Jona is the best fisherman around (expect fresh fish every day and mud crab occasionally), wife Ledua is a super cook, son Veita is an expert guide, and grandfather Villame is a master builder. One reader called this place "the image of paradise." The ferry *Bulou-ni-Ceva* drops passengers here once or twice a week, or you can arrange to be collected at Vunisea airport (F\$50 pp each way).

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Vunisea has no restaurants, but a coffee shop at the airstrip opens mornings, and two general stores sell canned goods. A woman at the market serves tea and scones when the market is open, Tuesday–Saturday. Buy *waka* at the co-op store for formal presentations to village hosts.

No banks are to be found on Kadavu, so change enough money before coming (and don't leave it unattended in your room or tent). Occasional carriers ply the 78 km of roads on Kadavu, but no buses.

GETTING THERE

Air Fiji arrives from Suva once a day (F\$70) and **Sun Air** has daily flights from Nadi (F\$90). Be

sure to reconfirm your return flight immediately upon arrival. Only Nakuita Island Resort meets all flights—boat pickups by the resorts on east Kadavu and Ono must be prearranged.

The speedboats to east Kadavu are usually without safety equipment or roofs and in rough weather everything could get wet. Have sunblock and a hat ready if it's sunny, bring rain gear if it's not, as it's a 1.5-hour ride to east

Kadavu or Ono. There's no road from Vunisea to east Kadavu.

Boats arrive at Vunisea from Suva about twice a week, calling at villages along the north coast. The MV *Bulou-ni-Ceva* of the **Kadavu Shipping Co.** (tel. 311-766) plies between Suva and Kadavu twice a week. Take seasickness precautions before boarding. For details turn to Transportation in the Suva section.



inlaid war club



THE LOMAIVITI GROUP

The Lomaiviti (or central Fiji) Group lies in the Koro Sea near the heart of the archipelago, east of Viti Levu and south of Vanua Levu. Of its nine main volcanic islands, Gau, Koro, and Ovalau are among the largest in Fiji. Lomaiviti's climate is moderate, neither as wet and humid as Suva, nor as dry and hot as Nadi. The population is mostly Fijian, engaged in subsistence agriculture and copra making.

The old capital island, Ovalau, is by far the best known and most visited island of the group, and several small islands south of Ovalau on the way to Suva bear popular backpackers' resorts. Naigani also has a tourist resort of its own, but Koro and Gau are seldom visited, due to a lack of facilities for visitors. Ferries ply the Koro Sea to Ovalau, while onward ferries run to Vanua Levu a couple of times a week.



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OVALAU ISLAND

Ovalau, a large volcanic island just east of Viti Levu, is the main island of the Lomaiviti Group. Almost encircled by high peaks, the Lovoni Valley in the center of Ovalau is actually the island's volcanic crater and about the only flat land. The crater's rim is pierced by the Bureta River, which escapes through a gap to the southeast. The highest peak is 626-meter Nadelaiovalau (meaning, the top of Ovalau), behind Levuka. Luckily Ovalau lacks the magnificent beaches found elsewhere in Fiji, which has kept the package-tour crowd away, and upscale scuba divers have better places to go, so it's still one of the most peaceful, pleasant, picturesque, and historic areas to visit in the South Pacific.

LEVUKA

The town of Levuka on Ovalau's east side was Fiji's capital until the shift to Suva in 1882. Founded as a whaling settlement in 1830, Levuka became the main center for European traders in Fiji, and a British consul was appointed in 1857. The cotton boom of the 1860s brought new settlers, and Levuka quickly grew into a boisterous town with over 50 hotels and taverns along Beach Street. Escaped convicts and debtors fleeing creditors in Australia swelled the throng, until it

was said that a ship could find the reef passage into Levuka by following the empty gin bottles floating out on the tide. The honest traders felt the need for a stable government, so in 1871 Levuka became capital of Cakobau's Kingdom of Fiji. The disorders continued, with extremist elements forming a "Ku Klux Klan," defiant of any form of Fijian authority.

On October 10, 1874, a semblance of decorum came as Fiji was annexed by Great Britain and a municipal council was formed in 1877. British rule soon put a damper on the wild side of the blackbirding. Ovalau's central location seemed ideal for trade, and sailing boats from Lau or Vanua Levu could easily enter the port on the southeast trades. Yet the lush green hills that rise behind the town were to be its downfall, as colonial planners saw that there was no room for the expansion of their capital, and in August 1882 Gov. Sir Arthur Gordon moved his staff to Suva. Hurricanes in 1888 and 1895 destroyed much of early Levuka, with the north end of town around the present Anglican church almost flattened, and many of Levuka's devastated buildings were not replaced.

Levuka remained the collection center for the Fiji copra trade right up until 1957, and the town seemed doomed when that industry, too, moved to a new mill in Suva. But with the establishment

THE RIDDLE OF THE JOYITA

One of the strangest episodes in recent Pacific history is indirectly related to Levuka. On November 10, 1955, the crew of the trading ship *Tuvalu* sighted the drifting, half-sunken shape of the 70-ton MV *Joyita*, which had left Apia on October 3 bound for Fakaofu in the Tokelau Islands north of Samoa, carrying seven Europeans and 18 Polynesians. The *Joyita* had been chartered by Tokelau's district officer to take badly needed supplies to the atolls and pick up their copra, which was rotting on the beach. When the vessel was reported overdue, a fruitless aerial search began, which only ended with the chance discovery by the *Tuvalu* some 150 km north of Fiji. There was no sign of the 25 persons aboard, and sacks of flour, rice, and sugar had been removed from the ship. Also

missing were 40 drums of kerosene, seven cases of aluminum strips, and the three life rafts.

The ghost ship was towed to Fiji and beached. Investigators found that the engines had been flooded due to a broken pipe in the saltwater cooling system, the rudder had been jammed, and the radio equipment wrecked. The navigation lights and galley stove were switched on. The *Joyita* hadn't sunk because the holds were lined with eight centimeters of cork. Though several books and countless newspaper and magazine articles have been written about the *Joyita* mystery, no one has learned what really happened, and none any of the missing persons have ever been seen since. Some relics of the *Joyita* can be seen in the Levuka Community Center.

of a fishing industry in 1964 Levuka revived, and today it's a minor educational center, the headquarters of Lomaiviti Province, and a low-key tourist center. Thanks to the tuna cannery, there's a public electricity supply.

It's rather shocking that Levuka still hasn't been approved by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, because Levuka is to Fiji what Lahaina is to Hawaii, a slice of living history. The false-fronted buildings and covered sidewalks along Beach Street give this somnolent town of 4,000 mostly Fijian or part-Fijian inhabitants a 19th-century, Wild West feel. From the waterfront, let your eyes follow the horizon from left to right to view the islands of Makogai, Koro, Wakaya, Nairai, Batiki, and Gau respectively. Levuka's a perfect base for excursions into the mountains, along the winding coast, or out to the barrier reef a kilometer offshore.

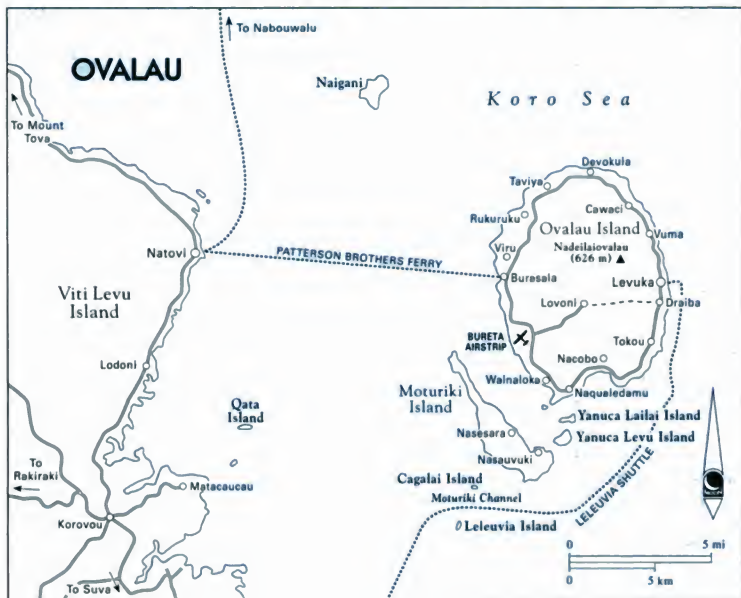
It's customary to say "Good morning," "*Bula*," or simply "Hello" to people you meet while strolling around Levuka, especially on the backstreets, and the locals have been rather put off by tourists who failed to do so. This is one of the little ad-

verse effects of tourism, and a very unnecessary one at that.

SIGHTS

Near Queen's Wharf is the old Morris Hedstrom general store, erected by Percy Morris and Maynard Hedstrom in 1880s, great-granddaddy of today's Pacific-wide Morris Hedstrom chain. The store closed when the lease expired in 1979 and the building was turned over to the National Trust for Fiji. In 1981 the facility reopened as the **Levuka Community Center** (tel. 440-356; closed weekends) with a museum and library, where cannibal forks vie with war clubs and clay pots for your attention. The many old photos of the town in the museum are fascinating, and a few relics of the mystery ship *Joyita* are on display. The Community Center receives no outside funding and your F\$2 admission fee helps keep this place going.

Stroll north along Levuka's sleepy waterfront past a long row of wooden store fronts that haven't





changed much in a century. The sea wall opposite was constructed by the Royal Engineers in 1874. Just beyond the wall is the **Church of the Sacred Heart**, erected by French Marist priests who arrived in 1858. The church's square clock tower was added in 1898 to commemorate the first priest, Father Breheret. The green neon cross on the stone tower lines up with another green light farther up the hill to guide mariners into port. The tower's French clock strikes the hour twice with a minute interval in between. Go through the gate behind the church to the formidable **Marist Convent School** (1892), originally a girls school operated by the sisters and still a primary school.

Totogo Lane leads north from the convent to a small bridge over Totogo Creek and the **Ovalau Club** (1904), adjoining the old **Town Hall** (1898), also known as Queen Victoria Memorial Hall. Next to the town hall is the gutted shell of the **Masonic Lodge building**, founded as "Little Polynesia" in 1875 and erected in 1924. In July 2000, the lodge was burned down by a frenzied mob from Lovoni, which had been told by superstitious preachers that it was a center of devil worship.

Follow Garner Jones Road west up the creek to the **Levuka Public School** (1879), the birthplace of Fiji's present public educational system. Before World War I the only Fijians allowed to attend this school were the sons of chiefs. Other Levuka firsts include Fiji's first newspaper (1869), first Masonic Lodge (1875), first bank (1876), and first municipal council (1877).

Continue straight up Garner Jones Road for about 15 minutes, past the lovely colonial-era houses, and you'll eventually reach a locked gate at the entrance to the town's water catchment. A trail on the right just before the gate leads down to a **pool** in the river below the catchment where you can swim. Overhead you may see swallows that live in a cave just upstream. The path to **The Peak** branches off to the left between a large steel water tank and the gate at the end of the main trail. It takes about an hour to scale The Peak through the dense bush, and an experienced guide will be required.

As you come back down the hill, turn left onto Church St. and follow it around past the sports field (once a Fijian village site) to **Navoka Methodist Church** (1862). From beside this church, 199 concrete steps ascend **Mission Hill** to Delana Methodist High School, which affords fine views. The mission school formed here by Rev. John Binner in 1852 was the first of its kind in Fiji.

North of Levuka

On a low hill farther north along the waterfront is the **European War Memorial**, which recalls British residents of Levuka who died in World War I. Before Fiji was ceded to Britain, the Cakobau government headquarters was situated on this hill. The 1870s cottage on the hilltop across the street from the monument is called **Sailors Home** for the steamship *Sailors Home*, which worked the England to China route in the 1850s.

The **Holy Redeemer Anglican Church** (1904) farther north has period stained-glass windows.

Follow the coastal road north from Levuka to a second yellow bridge, where you'll see the **old Methodist church** (1869) on the left. Ratu Seru Cakobau worshiped here and in the small cemetery behind the church is the grave of the first U.S. consul to Fiji, John Brown Williams (1810-1860). For the story of Williams's activities, see History and Government in the main introduction. Levuka Creek here marks the town's northern boundary. Across the bridge and beneath a large *dilo* tree is the tomb of an old king of Levuka. The large house in front of the tree is the residence of the present Tui Levuka, customary chief of this area.

Directly above this house is **Gun Rock**, which was used as a target by the captain of the HMS *Havanah* in 1849. The intention, of course, was to demonstrate to Cakobau the efficacy of a ship's cannon so he might be more considerate to resident Europeans. In 1874, Commodore Goodenough pumped a few more rounds into the hill to entertain a group of Fijian chiefs, and the scars can still be seen. Long before that, the early Fijians had a fort atop the Rock to defend themselves against the Lovoni hill tribes. Ask permission of the Tui Levuka (the "Roko") or a member of his household to climb Gun Rock for a splendid view of Levuka. If a small boy leads you up and down, it wouldn't be out of place to give him something for his trouble.

Continue north on the road, around a bend

and past the ruin of a large concrete building, and you'll reach a cluster of government housing on the site of a cricket field where the Duke of York (later King George V) played in 1878.

There's a beautiful deep pool and waterfall behind **Waitovu** village, about two km north of Levuka. You may swim here, but please don't skinny-dip; this is offensive to the local people and has led to confrontations in the past. Since they're good enough to let you use this idyllic spot (which they own), it's common courtesy to respect their wishes. (Also, avoid arriving on a Sunday.)

At Cawaci, a 30-minute walk beyond the Ovalau Holiday Resort, is a small white **mausoleum** (1922) high up on a point with the tombs of Fiji's first and second Catholic bishops, Bishop Julien Vidal and Bishop Charles Joseph Nicholas. The large coral stone church (1897) of **St. John's College** is nearby. This is the original seat of the Catholic Church in Fiji and the sons of the Fijian chiefs were educated here from 1894 onwards. The church's walls are three meters thick around the buttresses.

South of Levuka

The **Pacific Fishing Company** tuna cannery (P.O. Box 41, Levuka; tel. 440-055, fax 440-400) is just south of Queen's Wharf. A Japanese cold-storage facility opened here in 1964, the cannery in 1975. After sustaining losses for four years, the Japanese company involved in the joint venture pulled out in 1986, turning the facility over to the government, which now owns the



view of Levuka as seen from Gun Rock

The Provincial Council meeting place at Levuka is built to resemble a traditional Fijian chief's bure.



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cannery. In 1989 a F\$2 million state-of-the-art can-making factory opened alongside the cannery, and major improvements to the wharf, freezer, storage, and other facilities were completed in 1992. The plant is supplied with albacore tuna caught in Kiribati and Solomon Island waters by Taiwanese long-line fishing boats, and with skipjack and yellowfin by pole-and-line ships. For both environmental and quality-control reasons, fish caught with dolphin-killing nets are not accepted here. Part of the 15,000 metric tons of tuna processed and canned by Pafco each year is marketed in Britain by Sainsbury's and John West, and in Canada by B.C. Packers. In 1999 a five-year agreement was signed with the U.S. seafood company Bumble Bee to supply tuna loins to a cannery in San Diego, California, now Pafco's largest market. Seven hundred residents of Ovalau have jobs directly related to tuna canning and the government has heavily subsidized the operation to keep it going.

A little farther along is the **Cession Monument**, where the Deed of Cession, which made Fiji a British colony, was signed by Chief Cakobau in 1874. The traditional *bure* on the other side of the road was used by Prince Charles during his 1970 visit to officiate at Fiji's independence. It's now the venue of provincial council meetings. The adjacent European-style bungalow is known as **Old Government House** and the tribesmen who burned the Masonic Hall are rumored to believe that another secret tunnel begins beneath the building.

One of Fiji's most rewarding hikes begins at Draiba village, a kilometer south of the Cession Monument. A road to the right around the first bend and just after a small bridge, marks the start of the 4.5-hour hike through enchanting forests and across clear streams to **Lovoni** village. Go straight back on this side road till you see an overgrown metal scrap yard on your right, near the end of the road. Walk through the middle of the scrap yard and around to the right past two huge mango trees. The unmarked Lovoni trail begins at the foot of the hill, just beyond the trees.

The Lovoni trail is no longer used by the locals and requires attentiveness to follow, so consider Epi's Midland Tour if you're not an experienced hiker. Be sure to reach Lovoni before 1500 to be able to catch the last bus back to Levuka. In 1855 the fierce Lovoni tribe, the Ovalau, burned Levuka, and they continued to threaten the town right up until 1871 when they were finally captured during a truce and sold to European planters as laborers. In 1875 the British government allowed the survivors to return to their valley, where their descendants live today. In July 2000 a Lovoni mob again ran amuck through Levuka during the George Speight coup attempt.

If you forgo this hike and continue on the main road, you'll come to an old **cemetery** a little south of Draiba. A few kilometers farther is the **Devil's Thumb**, a dramatic volcanic plug towering above **Tokou** village, one of the scenic

THE TUNNELS OF LEVUKA

Early on Monday, July 10, 2000, toward the end of the hostage crisis in Suva, a mob from the mountain village of Lovoni sacked and burned Levuka's historic Masonic Lodge. They had first attempted to storm Queen's Wharf, but when the soldiers on duty there fired warning shots, the mob turned its attention to the lodge. Senior members of the Methodist Church in Levuka had been telling their parishioners for years that the lodge was a center of immorality and devil worship. Rumors also abounded of secret tunnels beneath the building that led to the Royal Hotel, or to Nasova House near the Cession Monument south of town. A few true believers were even convinced that a tunnel existed through the core of the earth to Scotland, the headquarters of the Masonic movement!

Frustrated at the wharf and unable to take over the nearby police station, the Lovoni people broke the lodge's windows and poured in gasoline; the lodge was soon set alight. An hysterical throng of 300 cheered and shouted, "Out with the devil!" as the building burned, and it's alleged that the *talatala* (head priest) of the local Methodist Church observed the entire event in ecstasy from Mission Hill. Some looting took place, and among the objects taken by

the mob were ceremonial swords and a human skull, a Masonic symbol of equality and mortality. What was never found was any trace of a tunnel, nor any of the ghostly British masons thought to use the passageway to attend secret rites.

All of this happened in support of the demand for amnesty by the George Speight terrorists in Fiji's parliament, and the mob was disciplined by an agitator named Bill, who made sure that none of Levuka's shops or other historic monuments were looted (only a few windows had been broken). The same group also invaded Levuka's tuna cannery and occupied it for several days. Later, when the army and police regained control of the town, some 120 people were identified as participants in the sacking of the lodge, most of them eventually being released by the courts. In recent years membership in the Masonic order has declined steadily around Fiji, and the Levuka lodge often had difficulty achieving the required quorum of eight persons at their monthly meetings. The lodge will not be rebuilt, but part of it will probably be left standing as a monument to the folly of mankind. The last sacking of Levuka by the Lovoni folk had been in 1855, and few residents ever dreamed it could happen again.

highlights of Fiji. Catholic missionaries set up a printing press at Tokou in 1889 to produce gospel lessons in Fijian, and in the center of the village is a sculpture of a lion made by one of the early priests. It's five km back to Levuka.

Wainaloka village on the southwest side of Ovalau is inhabited by descendants of Solomon Islanders from the Lau Lagoon region who were blackbirded in Fiji over a century ago.

Devokula Cultural Village

A Fijian cultural program for visitors has been created at Devokula on northern Ovalau, 11 km from Levuka. Day tours from Levuka include a welcoming ceremony at the village, followed by a village walk and a medicinal plant tour. A handicraft demonstration is presented, then there's a *lovo* lunch. This intensive short course in Fijian culture is followed by a Fijian *meke* with traditional dancing. The tour runs from 1100–1530 at F\$30 pp with a minimum of six participants. It's also possible to stay in the village at F\$55 pp

including meals, and this would allow you to take any of the three guided treks (F\$20 pp) or two coastal walks (F\$15 pp). Devokula was an information kiosk (P.O. Box 128, Ovalau; tel./fax 440-353) in Levuka. Otherwise ask Lisa or Julia at the Whale's Tale Restaurant or Andrea at Ovalau Watersports for information. With tourism way down since the Speight coup attempt, Devokula has almost died.

Sports and Recreation

Ovalau Watersports (P.O. Box 149, Levuka; tel. 440-344 or 440-611, fax 440-405), near the post office in Levuka, is run by Nobi and Andrea Dehm and Ned Fisher, who worked as dive-masters at Leleuvia Island Resort for many years. They offer diving around Levuka at 0900 daily at F\$130/550 for two/10 tanks including gear (minimum of two divers). An open-water certification course is F\$460. Snorkeling on the reef is F\$30 pp (minimum of five persons). Nobi and Ned also rent bicycles at F\$5/10/15 an

hour/half day/full day. Andrea can help you arrange any land tours you may require.

Ovalau Watersports' main venues are the Na Loba Loba Reef on North Ovalau with its schooling pelagics, and Moturiki Channel with colorful soft corals and clouds of reef fish. Eagle rays and hammerhead sharks are often encountered in Wakaya Passage, and you may spot pilot whales and dolphins swimming in the Koro Sea as you cross to/from Ovalau. The folks on the live-aboards also get to see these things, but at considerably higher cost.

At high tide, the river mouth near the Royal Hotel is an extremely popular swimming hole for the local kids (and some tourists). The rest of the day locals cool off by just sitting in the water fully dressed.

ACCOMMODATIONS

There's a good choice of budget places to stay around Levuka (and thankfully no luxury resorts). The **Old Capital Inn** (P.O. Box 50, Levuka; tel. 440-013) on Beach Street has 15 fan-cooled rooms at F\$13 pp. A separate cottage with cooking facilities is F\$44 for up to four persons. A cool breeze blowing in from the east helps keep the mosquitoes away. It's run by the same family that developed Leleuvia Island.

Mavida Guesthouse (Rosie Patterson, P.O. Box 4, Levuka; tel. 440-477) on Beach Street, which has functioned since 1869, is Fiji's oldest operating guesthouse. This classic English bed and breakfast owned by Patterson Brothers Shipping occupies a spacious colonial house on the waterfront near the Levuka Club. The 16 rooms in three buildings are F\$15/30 single/double, or it's F\$9 in the dormitory (F\$12 if you want a mosquito net), a cooked breakfast included. You can order an excellent dinner here. It's worth asking to see the room beforehand as all are different, and the nicest rooms go for F\$40 double.

For the full Somerset Maugham flavor, stay at the 15-room **Royal Hotel** (P.O. Box 47, Levuka; tel. 440-024, fax 440-174). Originally built in 1852 and rebuilt in 1913 by Captain David Robie after a fire in the 1890s, this is Fiji's oldest regular hotel, run by the Ashley family since 1927. The platform on the roof is a "widow's watch" where wives would watch for the overdue

return of their husband's ships. In the lounge, ceiling fans revolve above the rattan sofas and potted plants, and the fan-cooled rooms upstairs with private bath and minifridge are pleasant, with much-needed mosquito nets provided. Each room is in a different style. It's F\$19/28/36/44 single/double/triple/quad in the main building. There are also three a/c rooms with shared cooking facilities in a garden building at F\$55 double, plus one large family cottage capable of accommodating 11 persons in five rooms at F\$77 for the unit. The most deluxe accommodations are the two new self-catering cottages facing Beach Street, which go for F\$77 double. The 12-bed dormitory with cooking facilities is F\$10 pp. Checkout time is 1000, but you can arrange to stay until 1500 by paying another 50 percent of the daily rate (no credit cards accepted). Everybody loves this place, but don't order dinner as the food isn't highly rated. The bar, beer garden, snooker tables, dart boards, pool, gym, and videos (at 2000) are strictly for guests only. The anachronistic prices and colonial atmosphere make the Royal about the best value in Fiji.

Around the Island

The **Ovalau Holiday Resort** (P.O. Box 113, Levuka; tel. 440-329) is opposite a rocky beach at Vuma, four km north of Levuka (taxi F\$4). The two-room bungalows with kitchen and fridge are a bit overpriced at F\$77/99/121 single/double/triple. There's also a dorm which costs F\$28 pp including two meals, but at last report it was permanently occupied by the Chinese staff of a garment factory. Camping may still be possible at F\$8 pp. Given sufficient advance notice, the resort's restaurant does some fine cooking. Their Bula Beach Bar in a converted whaler's cottage adjoins the only swimming pool on Ovalau, and the snorkeling off their beach is okay. It's a nice place for an afternoon at the beach, even if you prefer to stay in Levuka.

During the George Speight crisis in July 2000, the Rukuruku Holiday Resort, on the northwest side of Ovalau, 20 km from Levuka, was occupied by about a hundred disgruntled villagers who claimed the land belonged to them. This turned out to be false, but by the time the authorities were able to restore order, the entire place had been gutted and destroyed. The resort remains closed, and the property has been sub-

divided into 22 lots for sale as sites for holiday or retirement homes. A vanilla plantation and beautiful verdant mountains cradle Rukuruku on the island side.

FOOD

Few of the guesthouses in Levuka provide cooking facilities, but four or five small restaurants face Beach Street. These spots are mostly patronized by foreigners, and prices are higher than in Suva or Lautoka, but with luck you'll enjoy some superior meals. In fact, many visitors seem to spend most of their time hopping from restaurant to restaurant.

Coffee in the Garden (tel./fax 440-417; daily 0800–1800), on the waterfront in Patterson Gardens between the Levuka Community Center and the power plant, is the perfect place for a breakfast of tea and muffins, or a coffee anytime.

Cafe Levuka (no phone), opposite the Community Center, has F\$7 dinner specials Monday–Saturday 2100. It's a good place to find out what's happening around town over coffee and cakes. Their fruit pancakes are great for breakfast (F\$5), but one reader complained of small dinner portions.

Kim's Restaurant (tel. 440-382), also known as Paak Kum Loong Wine & Dine, upstairs in a building near Court's Furniture Store, is Levuka's most popular restaurant. Lunch from the glass warmers near the door is F\$2.50–3.50, while the dinner menu includes Chinese dishes for under F\$8 (meals ordered from the menu are individually prepared). Also on the menu are five different Fijian dishes for under F\$9, and four vegetarian choices for under F\$5. Sundays from 1800 there's a buffet (F\$13), which includes salad and ice cream. Beer is available. If you can get a table, dine on their breezy front terrace with a view of the waterfront.

The Whale's Tale Restaurant (tel. 440-235) on Beach Street is a favorite for its real home cooking at medium prices. A cooked breakfast with coffee will be F\$7.50, buttered pasta for lunch costs F\$6.50, and the three-course dinner special with a choice from among five main plates is F\$12.50. They're fully licensed so you can get a beer with your meal, and their specially percolated coffee (F\$2.20) is the best in

town. They also sell bags of kava, Fijian handicrafts, and lovely tapa greeting cards.

The **Sea Site Restaurant**, a bit north of Whale's Tale, is basic but decent for ice cream. **Emily Cafe**, between the Sea Site and the Church of the Sacred Heart, is a better place for coffee and cakes.

ENTERTAINMENT

Despite the Members Only sign, you're welcome to enter the **Ovalau Club** (tel. 440-057), said to be the oldest membership club in the South Pacific. You'll meet genuine South Seas characters here, and the place is brimming with atmosphere. The original billiard table is still in use. Ask the bartender to show you the framed letter from Count Felix von Luckner, the World War I German sea wolf. Von Luckner left the letter and some money at the unoccupied residence of a trader on Katafaga Island in the Lau Group, from which he took some provisions. In the letter, Count von Luckner identifies himself as Max Pemberton, an English writer on a sporting cruise through the Pacific.

The **Levuka Club** (tel. 440-272) on Beach Street is a good place for sunsets, especially from the picnic tables in their nice backyard beside the water. Fewer tourists frequent the Levuka Club than the Ovalau Club, and it's a better choice if you only want a quick beer.

In 2001 **Cinema Levuka** opened next to Air Fiji. Aside from the films, it's about the only place in Levuka where you can get candy floss (cotton candy) and popcorn.

INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Information

Tabaki at the Levuka Community Center (tel. 440-356) may have information on the offshore island resorts and various land tours around Ovalau. You can borrow up to three books from the Community Center library for a F\$2 fee (plus a refundable F\$10 deposit).

Lisa at the Whale's Tale Restaurant (tel. 440-235) will be happy to give you her frank opinion of the offshore resorts—invaluable when planning a trip. Cafe Levuka maintains a "Tourist Information

Book" containing current information about almost every aspect of travel around Ovalau. Andrea at Ovalau Watersports is also very helpful.

Services

The Westpac Bank and Colonial National Bank on Beach Street change traveler's checks.

Old Capital Business Services (David Kirton, P.O. Box 149, Levuka; tel. 440-071), corner of Convent St. and Totoga Lane, offers email access, plus fax and photocopying services. Their handmade greeting cards are unique, and other local handicrafts are for sale.

Cafe Levuka will wash, dry, and fold your laundry within three hours for F\$8.50.

Public toilets are available across the street from the Colonial National Bank.

Levuka's new sub-divisional **hospital** (tel. 440-105) is on the north side of town. In 2000 F\$3.6 million were spent rebuilding this facility.

TRANSPORTATION

Air Fiji (tel. 440-139), across the street from the Levuka Community Center, has two flights a day between Bureta Airport and Suva (F\$41). The R. Chand and Sons minibus from Levuka to the airstrip is F\$3.60 pp (the minibus driver has an office down the alley beside Air Fiji). A taxi to the airport will run F\$19.

Inquire at **Patterson Brothers Shipping** (tel. 440-125), beside the market on Beach Street, about the direct ferry from Ovalau to Nabouwalu, Vanua Levu, via Natovi. The connecting bus departs Levuka Monday–Saturday at about 0500. At Nabouwalu, there's an onward bus to Labasa, but bookings must be made in advance (F\$50 straight through).

The bus/ferry/bus service between Suva and Levuka was discussed previously under Transportation in the Suva section. It should take just under five hours right through, and costing F\$25. The Patterson Brothers combination involves an express bus from Levuka to Buresala departing daily except Sunday at 0500, a 45-minute ferry ride from Buresala to Natovi, then the same bus on to Suva (change at Korovou for Lautoka). Bicycles are carried free on the ferry. Advance bookings are required on the Patterson Brothers ferry/bus service.

The other choice for Suva is the Leleuvia Island Resort boat, which should leave Queen's Wharf, Levuka, at 0900 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to Bau Landing, with a minibus to Suva (arriving at 1400, F\$35 one-way). Due to a fall in tourism this service was suspended recently, but you can learn the current situation by asking at Ovalau Watersports or the Old Capital Inn. From Levuka, the Leleuvia boat is more conveniently timed and there's a brief visit to Leleuvia Island, where free stopovers are possible. If possible, use a different service each way for a scenic circle trip from Suva.

Both taxis and carriers park across the street from the Church of the Sacred Heart in Levuka. Due to steep hills on the northwest side of Ovalau, there isn't a bus right around the island. Carriers leave Levuka for Taviya (F\$1.40) or Rukuruku (F\$2) villages Monday–Saturday at 0730, 1200, and 1700 along a beautiful, hilly road. During the school holidays only the 1200 trip may operate. Occasional carriers also go to Bureta (F\$1.30), Lovoni (F\$1.50), and Viru (F\$1.50). There's no service on Sunday.

On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 1200 it's possible to do a round-trip to Rukuruku for F\$4 as the carrier returns immediately to Levuka. Monday to Saturday you can have a day at the beach at Rukuruku by taking the 0730 carrier to Taviya, then walking the remaining kilometer to Rukuruku (from the top of the hill, turn right down the sideroad to the beach). Return to Levuka on the 1400 carrier from Taviya (check all this with the driver).

Tours

Epi's Midland Tour is a guided hike to Lovoni that departs Levuka Monday–Saturday around 1000 (F\$20 pp including lunch). You hike over and return by truck (or you can just go both ways by truck if you don't wish to walk). The route is steep, and rugged footwear is essential. At Lovoni you may go for a swim in the river or ask to meet the village chief. Epi is an enthusiastic guy very knowledgeable about forest plants and there have been very good reports about his tour. His reservations book is at the Royal Hotel reception. This tour is recommended.

Ovalau Tours and Transport (Mike Brook, P.O. Box 149, Levuka; tel. 440-401 or 303-551, fax 440-405), beside the Levuka Community

Center, operates day tours to Devokula village. The "tea and talanoa" program allows visitors to meet local residents in their own homes for tea and conversation (F\$15 pp). For F\$7 pp you can arrange an historical town walking tour with Henry Sahai, who has lived here since 1919. He's still very fit and quite a character (if there's only one of you, no problem). Internet access is available at F\$0.33 a minute (F\$2 minimum). If they're closed, ask Andrea at Ovalau Watersports around the corner if she has a key.

If you wish to organize your own tour, it costs F\$70 for the vehicle to hire a small carrier or taxi around the island.

ISLANDS OFF OVALAU

Yanuca Lailai Island

It was on tiny Yanuca Lailai Island, just off the south end of Ovalau, that the first 463 indentured Indian laborers to arrive in Fiji landed from the ship *Leonidas* on May 14, 1879. To avoid the introduction of cholera or smallpox into Fiji, the immigrants spent two months in quarantine on Yanuca Lailai. Later Nukulau Island off Suva became Fiji's main quarantine station.

In past it was possible to stay on Yanuca Lailai at **Lost Island Resort** (P.O. Box 131, Levuka). *Bure* accommodations and camping were available with three meals a day. In early 2001 this resort closed after the guy in charge immigrated to the United States, but current information should be available from Daniel Levi, who you can contact through the Levuka Community Center.

Moturiki Island

Small outboards to Moturiki Island depart Naqeledamu Landing most afternoons. The finest beaches are on the east side of Moturiki. Camping is officially discouraged, but possible.

Caqalai Island

Caqalai ("THANG-ga-lai") is owned by the Methodist Church of Fiji, which operates a small backpackers' resort (tel. 430-366) on this palm-fringed isle. The 12 dusty *bure* with broken beds are F\$30 pp (triple occupancy), or camp for F\$24 pp, three meals included. A communal fridge is provided. You must take your own alcohol as none is sold on the island. It's primitive but ade-

quate, and the island and people are great. Dress up for Sunday service in the village church and enjoy the *lovo* that afternoon. There's good snorkeling all around the island and you can wade to Snake Island, where banded sea snakes congregate. Information is available at Cafe Levuka and the Royal Hotel (boat from Levuka Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at F\$15 pp each way). The Royal Hotel also arranges daytrips to Caqalai Monday-Saturday at 1000 (F\$30 pp, minimum of two). Those already staying on Caqalai can make shopping trips to Levuka at a reduced rate.

Reader Philip R. Marshall of Playa del Rey, California, sent us this:

Caqalai is not for every tourist. It's very small, taking about 10 minutes to walk around, and has simple unhygienic facilities. The one outhouse-style toilet must be flushed with buckets of seawater. Bathing is accomplished in a small shed with brackish water hand-pumped into buckets. Electricity is generated only during dinner hours, if the generator works (it did briefly on only one of my three nights there). On the positive side, the people are wonderfully friendly hosts, with music and kava in the evenings, but there is little to do. The snorkeling is fairly good in the vicinity (bring your own gear). I think Caqalai might appeal to people who have not spent much time on islands, who would enjoy a rough Gilligan's Island experience.

Leleuvia Island

Leleuvia is a lovely isolated 17-hectare reef island with nothing but coconut trees, fine sandy beaches, and a ramshackle assortment of tourist huts scattered around. The small backpacker resort (P.O. Box 15212, Suva; tel. 301-584, fax 440-633) here is run by Emosi Yee Show of Levuka's Old Capitol Inn and Epenisa Cakobau, a jovial member of the indigenous Fijian nobility from Bau Island. Epenisa and his brother Tanoa have worked hard to upgrade the facilities that Emosi first created in the 1980s.

Accommodations including three meals run F\$28 pp in the dorm, F\$32 pp in a thatched hut, F\$36 pp in a wooden bungalow, or F\$22 pp if

you camp. Water is in short supply on Leleuvia, and bathing is with a bucket of brackish water. Lunch is served à la carte, and the small shop sells candy, cake, and drinks. The owners send as many people as they can to Leleuvia, and it can get crowded at times (pick Caqalai instead if you'd rather do your own thing).

Leleuvia is popular among backpackers who like to drink beer and party a lot (live Fijian music in the evening), so don't come expecting a rest. Actually, it sort of depends on who is on the island at the time. Peace returns around 2230 when the generator switches off and everyone falls asleep. Most travelers love it and some end up staying a month.

Plenty of activities are laid on, especially reef trips by boat and scuba diving, and on Sunday they'll even take you to church! For a nominal amount they'll drop you off on one-tree "Honey-moon Island." Leleuvia's diving concession **Nautilus Dive** offers scuba diving at F\$75/110 for one/two tanks. The resident instructors—a laid back American named Steve and a pair of Germans Martin and Thomas—have taught diving to quite a few guests. This isn't surprising because at F\$390, Nautilus' PADI open-water certification course is one of the least expensive in Fiji (this price only applies if several people are taking lessons at the same time). Many backpackers learn to dive at Leleuvia before going to Taveuni where such courses are F\$200 more expensive. The snorkeling here is also excellent though the sea is sometimes cold.

Getting there from Levuka is easy as transfers are available anytime at F\$25 pp round-trip (two-person minimum). Book through Ovalau Watersports or the Old Capital Inn. From Suva, the bus should leave daily at 1200, connecting with a speedboat via Bau Landing (F\$30/45 one-

way/round-trip). In Suva, contact Sunset Apartment Motel (tel. 301-799) on Gordon Street, or Colonial Lodge (tel. 300-655), 19 Anand St. Check well ahead as the Suva shuttles only operate when enough guests have booked. If there aren't enough people to run a bus from Suva, you'll be told to find your own way to Bau Landing, where the resort boat will pick you up at 1300. Call the island direct at tel. 301-584 to arrange this (ask if they'll refund the taxi fare between Nausori and Bau Landing). To go Levuka-Leleuvia-Suva or vice versa is F\$35.

Naigani

Naigani, 11 km off Viti Levu, is a lush tropical island near Ovalau at the west end of the Lomaiviti Group. It's just the right size for exploring on foot, with pristine beaches and only one Fijian village in the southwest corner.

Naigani Island Resort (P.O. Box 12539, Suva; tel. 300-925 or 312-069, fax 300-539), also known as Mystery Island Resort, offers 12 comfortable two-bedroom fan-cooled villas at F\$270 for up to five people. Six of the villas have double rooms attached which go for F\$170 double by themselves. The meal plan is F\$55 pp for three meals (no cooking facilities). There's a swimming pool with water slide. Some nonmotorized water sports are free, but fishing trips are charged extra. A nine-hole par-27 golf course is available. Tropical Dive offers scuba diving from Naigani to sites like Nursery and Swim Through at F\$125/170 for one/two tanks, plus F\$45 for gear. The daily minibus/launch connection from Suva at 1030 is F\$60 roundtrip. From Levuka, call them up and arrange to be collected by the speedboat at Taviya village on the northwest side of Ovalau (accessible by carrier) at F\$33 pp round-trip.

OTHER ISLANDS OF THE LOMAIVITI GROUP

Makogai

Makogai shares a figure-eight-shaped barrier reef with neighboring Wakaya. The anchorage is in Dalice Bay on the northwest side of the island. From 1911 to 1969 this was a leper colony staffed by Catholic nuns and many of the old hospital buildings still stand. Some 4,500 patients sheltered here including many from various other Pacific island groups. In the patients' cemetery on Makogai is the grave of Mother Marie Agnes, the "kindly tyrant" who ran the facility for 34 years. Both the British and French governments honored her with their highest decorations, and upon retiring at the age of 80 she commented that "the next medal will be given in heaven." Also buried here is Maria Filomena, a Fijian sister who working at the colony from its inception. After contracting leprosy in 1925 she joined her patients and continued serving them for another 30 years. Today Makogai is owned by the Department of Agriculture, which runs an experimental sheep farm here, with some 2,000 animals. A new breed intended as a source of mutton and bearing little wool was obtained by crossing British and Caribbean sheep.

Wakaya

A high cliff on the west coast of Wakaya is known as Chieftain's Leap, for a young chief who threw himself over the edge to avoid capture by his foes. In those days a hill fort sat at Wakaya's highest point so local warriors could scan the horizon for unfriendly cannibals. Chief Cakobau sold Wakaya to Europeans in 1840, and it has since had many owners. In 1862 David Whippy set up Fiji's first sugar mill on Wakaya.

The German raider Count Felix von Luckner was captured on Wakaya during World War I. His ship, the *Seeadler*, had foundered on a reef at Maupihaa in the Society Islands on 2 August 1917. The 105 survivors (prisoners included) camped on Maupihaa, while on 23 August von Luckner and five men set out in an open boat to capture a schooner and continue the war. On 21 September 1917 they found a suitable ship at Wakaya. Their plan was to go aboard pretending to be passengers and capture it, but a British

officer and four Indian soldiers happened upon the scene. Not wishing to go against the rules of chivalry and fight in civilian clothes, the count gave himself up and was interned at Auckland as a prisoner of war. He later wrote a book, *The Sea Devil*, about his experiences.

In 1973 Canadian industrialist David Harrison Gilmour bought the island for US\$3 million, and in 1990 he and wife Jill opened **The Wakaya Club** (P.O. Box 15424, Suva; tel. 448-128, fax 448-406), with nine spacious cottages starting at F\$3,320 double plus tax, all-inclusive (five-night minimum stay). Children under 16 are not accommodated. The snorkeling here is superb, and there's scuba diving, a nine-hole golf course, a swimming pool, and an airstrip for charter flights (F\$1,870 roundtrip per couple from Nadi). As you might expect at these prices (Fiji's highest!), it's all very tasteful and elegant—just ask Pierce Brosnan, Carol Burnett, Celine Dion, Bill Gates, Michelle Pfeiffer, or Burt Reynolds. It's a sort of country club for the rich and famous rather than a trendy social scene. Profits from the resort are used to fund public education in Fiji. A third of Wakaya has been subdivided into 100 parcels, which are available as homesites; red deer imported from New Caledonia run wild across the rest.

Batiki

Batiki has a large interior lagoon of brackish water flanked by mudflats. A broad barrier reef surrounds Batiki. Four Fijian villages are on Batiki and you can walk around the island in four hours. Waisea Veremaibau of Yavu village on the north side of the island has accommodated guests in past. Fine baskets are made on Batiki. Due to hazardous reefs, there's no safe anchorage for ships.

Nairai

Seven Fijian villages are found on this 336-meter-high island between Koro and Gau. The inhabitants are known for their woven handicrafts. Hazardous reefs stretch out in three directions, and in 1808 the brigantine *Eliza* was wrecked here. Among the survivors was Charles

Savage, who served as a mercenary for the chiefs of Bau for five years until falling into the clutches of Vanua Levu cannibals.

Koro

Koro is an eight-by-16-km island shaped like a shark's tooth. A ridge traverses the island from northeast to southwest, reaching 561 meters near the center. High jungle-clad hillsides drop sharply to the coast. The top beach is along the south coast between Mundu and the lighthouse at Muanivanua Point. Among Koro's 14 large Fijian villages is **Nasau**, the government center with post office, hospital, and schools.

The road to **Vatulele** village on the north coast climbs from Nasau to the high plateau at the center of the island. The coconut trees and mangoes of the coast are replaced by great tree ferns and thick rainforest.

At **Nacamaki** village, in the northeast corner of Koro, turtle calling is still practiced. The caller stands on Tuinaikasi, a high cliff about a kilometer west of the village, and repeats the prescribed words to bring the animals to the surface. The ritual does work, although the turtles are becoming scarce and only one or two may appear. If anyone present points a finger or camera at a turtle, they quickly submerge. Actually, it's not possible to photograph the turtles, as magic is involved—the photos wouldn't show any turtles. Anyway, you're so high above the water you'd need the most powerful telephoto lens just to pick them out. (One reader wrote in to report that no turtles have appeared since 1987, due to the killing of a shark by a local villager.)

The track south between Nacamaki and Tua Tua runs along a golden palm-fringed beach. There's a cooperative store at **Nagaidamu** where you can buy *yaqona* and supplies. Koro kava is Fiji's finest. A 30-minute hike up a steep trail from the coop brings you to a waterfall and idyllic swimming hole. Keep left if you're on your own (taking a guide would be preferable).

Koro has an unusual inclined **airstrip** on the east side of the island near Namacu village. You land uphill, take off downhill. Air Fiji can bring you here from Suva once a week (F\$80), and several carriers meet the flight.

The weekly **Consort Shipping Line** ferry *Spirit of Free Enterprise* plying between Suva and Savusavu/Taveuni ties up to the wharf near



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Muanivanua Point. The "Sofe" calls northbound in the middle of the night on Wednesdays and Sundays; the southbound trips stop at Koro late Monday and Thursday nights. The fare to/from Suva is F\$32/60 deck/cabin one-way.

There are no hotels on Koro, so you'll have to stay with locals or ask permission to camp. On both Koro and Gau your best bet is to wait till you meet someone from there, then ask them to write you a letter of introduction to their relatives back home on the island. It's always better to know someone before you arrive. Make it clear you're willing to pay your own way, then don't neglect to do so.

Gau

Gau is the fifth-largest island in Fiji, with 16 villages and 13 settlements. There's a barrier reef on the west coast, but only a fringing reef on the east. A hot-spring swimming pool is close to the P.W.D. depot at **Waikama**. From Waikama, hike along the beach and over the hills to

Somosomo village. If you lose the way, look for the creek at the head of the bay and work your way up it until you encounter the trail. There's a bathing pool in Somosomo with emerald green water.

A road runs from Somosomo to **Sawaieke** village, where the Takalaigau, high chief of Gau, resides. The remnants of one of the only surviving pagan temples (*bure kalou*) in Fiji is beside the road at the junction in Sawaieke. The high stone mound is still impressive.

It's possible to climb **Mt. Delaico** (760 meters), highest on the island, from Sawaieke in three or four hours. The first hour is the hardest. From the summit is a sweeping view. MacGillivray's Fiji petrel, a rare seabird of the albatross family, lays its eggs underground on

Gau's jungle-clad peaks. Only two specimens have ever been taken: one by the survey ship *Herald* in 1855, and a second by local writer Dick Watling in 1984.

The co-op and government station (hospital, post office, etc.) are at **Qarani** at the north end of Gau. Two ships a week arrive here from Suva on an irregular schedule, but there is no wharf so they anchor offshore. The wharf at **Waikama** is used only for government boats.

There are a number of waterfalls on the east coast, the most impressive are behind **Lekanai** and up Waiboteigau Creek, both an hour's walk off the main road. The "weather stone" is on the beach, a five-minute walk south of **Yadua** village. Bad weather is certain if you step on it or hit it with another stone.

No guesthouses are on Gau, but the driver of the carrier serving the airstrip may be willing to arrange village accommodations. Have your *sevu* ready and also contribute F\$20 pp a day, at least. The airstrip is on Katudrau Beach at the south end of Gau. The three weekly flights to/from Suva on Air Fiji are F\$56 each way.

A handmade resort called the **Nukuyaweni Outpost** (Kevin Wunrow, Bay of Angels, Private Mail Bag, Suva; tel. 440-880) is being developed on a point a couple of kilometers southwest of Somosomo. Conceived as a sort of artists' hideaway, the Outpost is scheduled to open in mid-2002. The four cottages, each with an outdoor bathing grotto, will run F\$11,000 a week all inclusive. Consult Nukuyaweni's website for details. Aside from the swimming pool, guests will be able to enjoy the great snorkeling off their 500-meter beach. There's extraordinary diving in Nigali Passage, just 15 minutes away by boat (large schools of big fish and manta rays).





SALVATORE CASA

VANUA LEVU

Though only half as big as Viti Levu, 5,556-square-km Vanua Levu ("Great Land") has much to offer. The transport is good, the scenery varied, the people warm and hospitable, and far fewer visitors reach this part of Fiji than heavily promoted Nadi, Sigatoka, and Suva. Fijian villages are numerous all the way around the island—here you'll be able to experience real Fijian life, so it's well worth making the effort to visit Fiji's second-largest island.

The drier northwest side of Vanua Levu features sugarcane fields and pine forests, while on the damper southeast side copra plantations predominate, with a little cocoa around Natewa Bay (the biggest bay in the South Pacific). Toward the southeast the scenery is more a bucolic beauty of coconut groves dipping down toward the sea. Majestic bays cut into the island's south side, and one of the world's longest barrier reefs flanks the north coast. There are some superb locations here just waiting to be discovered, both above and below the waterline.

Indo-Fijians live in the large market town of Labasa and the surrounding cane-growing area; most of the rest of Vanua Levu is Fijian. To-

gether Vanua Levu, Taveuni, and adjacent islands form Fiji's Northern Division (often called simply "the north"), which is subdivided into three provinces: the west end of Vanua Levu is Bua Province; most of the north side of Vanua Levu is Macuata Province; and the southeast side of Vanua Levu and Taveuni make up Cakaudrove Province. You won't regret touring this area.

Nabouwalu

The ferry from Viti Levu ties up to the wharf at this friendly little government station (the headquarters of Bua Province), near the southern tip of Vanua Levu. The view from the wharf is picturesque, with Seseleka (421 meters) and, in good weather, Yadua Island visible to the northwest. Nabouwalu has a high-technology 24-hour electricity supply system based on windmills and solar panels installed in early 1998. Most of the 600 residents of this area are indigenous Fijians.

Shlomo Trading (no phone) runs a guest-house behind their restaurant next to the store at the end of the wharf. The three rooms with shared facilities are F\$15 pp, breakfast included. The Shlomo Restaurant is there mostly for the

VANUA LEVU

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

SEE "AROUND LABASA" MAP

SEE "AROUND SAVASAVU" MAP

SEE "TAVEUNI" MAP



K O T O

S e a

To Suva

To Nadi and Ovalau

To Ellington Wharf

To Nadi

THE CRESTED IGUANA

In 1979 a new species of lizard, the crested iguana (*Brachylophus vitiensis*), was discovered on uninhabited Yaduataba Island, a tiny 70-hectare dot in Bligh Water off the west end of Vanua Levu. These iguanas are similar to those of the Galapagos, and they may have arrived thousands of years ago on floating rafts of vegetation. The same species was later found on some islands in the Yasawa and Mamanuca groups.

Both sexes are shiny emerald green with white stripes and the animals turn black when alarmed. The females have longer tails, growing up to 90 cm long. Both sexes have a yellow snout. They're not to be confused with the more common banded iguana found elsewhere in Fiji, the male of which is also green with white stripes while the female is totally green.

Yaduataba is separated from neighboring Yadua Island by only 200 meters of shallow water and upon discovery the iguanas were threatened by a large colony of feral goats that were consuming their habitat. Fortunately, the National Trust for Fiji took over management of the island, created an iguana sanctuary with an honorary warden from the Fijian village on Yadua, and removed the goats.

About 1,000 lizards are present, basking in the sun in the canopy during the day and coming down to the lower branches at night. It's possible to visit Yaduataba by taking the ferry to Nabouwalu, then hiring a local boat to Yadua where guides can be arranged. Information should be available from the National Trust for Fiji office in Suva.

benefit of truck drivers waiting for the ferry, and it's usually closed at night. A curry lunch runs F\$3.50. Local food is sold at the small market opposite this restaurant, and there's sometimes an open barbecue outside. Four small stores nearby sell groceries.

The lovely **Government Resthouse**, up on the hillside above Nabouwalu, has two rooms with shared cooking facilities at F\$10 pp. Try to make advance reservations with the district officer, Bua, in Nabouwalu (tel. 836-027). Upon arrival, you could inquire at the Administrative Offices next to the post office, up on the hill above the wharf. Another possibility is the **YWCA** in the village, which sometimes has a room for rent

at F\$15 pp. In a pinch, they'll probably allow you to camp. Otherwise **Mr. Gaya Prasad** runs a very basic *dharamshala* (guesthouse) with cooking facilities just behind the store with the petrol pumps near the wharf. Present him with a monetary *sevusevu* upon departure.

The large Patterson Brothers car ferry sails from Natovi on Viti Levu to Nabouwalu Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday around 0700 (four hours, F\$35). The same boat departs Nabouwalu for Natovi Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 1130. At Natovi there are immediate ferry connections to/from Ovalau Island and buses to Suva. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 1030 there's a direct Patterson Brothers ferry from Nabouwalu to Ellington Wharf near Rakiraki (F\$33), where there are connections to Nananu-i-Ra Island and Lautoka. Patterson Brothers may also have special trips to Natovi and Ellington Wharf on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday if there's enough demand from trucks, so ask. Getting a car onto the ferry without reservations can be difficult as over a dozen logging trucks are often lined up waiting to go. Patterson Brothers runs an express bus between Nabouwalu and Labasa for ferry passengers only (must be booked in conjunction with a ferry ticket). This bus takes only four hours to cover the 137 km to Labasa compared to the six hours required by the four regular buses, which make numerous detours and stops.

East of Nabouwalu

There's a 141-km road along the south coast of Vanua Levu from Nabouwalu to Savusavu, but eastbound buses only reach as far as Daria, westbound buses as far as Mount Kasi Gold Mine. The gap is covered by occasional carrier trucks. At Cogeia, five km north of Daria, are some small hot springs the local people use for bathing.

The **Mount Kasi Gold Mine** near Dawara, in the hills above the west end of Savusavu Bay, 70 km from Savusavu, produced 60,000 ounces of gold between 1932 and 1946. Beginning in 1979 several companies did exploratory work in the area in hope of reviving the mine, and in 1996 it was recommissioned by Pacific Island Gold, which began extracting about 40,000 ounces a year from the mine. In June 1998 the mine was forced to close and the 170 workers were laid off due to low gold prices on the world market. During the 1970s, bauxite was mined in this area.



*Dillon's fight with
the Fijians*

The Road to Labasa

The twisting, tiring north coast bus ride from Nabouwalu to Labasa takes you past Fijian villages, rice paddies, and cane fields. The early sandalwood traders put in at **Bua Bay**. At Bua village on Bua Bay is a large suspension bridge. Dry open countryside stretches west of Bua to Seseleka (421 meters).

About 13 km west of Lekutu at Galoa Bay, on the north side of the narrow neck of land that joins the Naivaka Peninsula to the main island, is **Dillon's Rock**. In September 1813 a party of Europeans took refuge here after being ambushed during a raid on a nearby village. After witnessing Swedish mercenary Charles Savage being killed and eaten by enraged Fijian warriors after he descended to negotiate a truce, Peter Dillon of the *Hunter* and two others managed to escape to their boat by holding muskets to the head of an important chief and walking between the assembled cannibals. (In 1826 Dillon earned his place in Pacific history by discovering relics from the La Pérouse expedition on Vanikolo Island in the Solomons, finally solving the mystery of the disappearance in 1788 of that

famous French contemporary of Captain Cook.)

About five km north of Lekutu Secondary School, one km off the main road (bus drivers know the place), is Fiji's most accessible yet least known waterfall, the **Naselesele Falls**. This is a perfect place to picnic between bus rides, with a nice grassy area where you could camp. The falls are most impressive during the rainy season, but the greater flow means muddy water, so swimming is better in the dry season. There's a large basalt pool below the falls, and since nobody lives in the immediate vicinity, you'll probably have the place to yourself. Much of this part of the island has been reforested with pine.

Farther east the road passes a major rice-growing area and runs along the **Dreketi River**, Vanua Levu's largest. A rice mill at Dreketi and citrus project at Batiri are features of this area. The pavement begins at Dreketi but older sections beyond the junction with the road from Savusavu are in bad shape. In the Seaqaqa settlement area between Batiri and Labasa, about 60 square km of native land were cleared and planted with sugarcane and pine during the 1970s.

LABASA

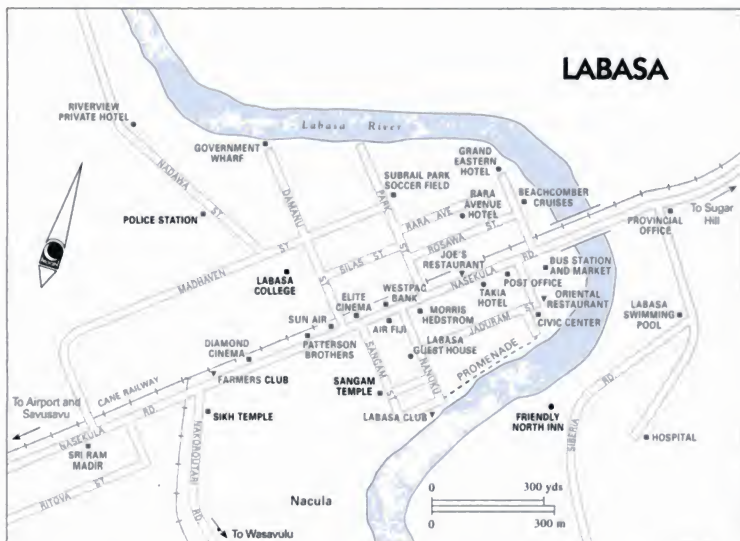
Labasa is a busy Indian market town that serves Vanua Levu's major cane-growing area. It's Fiji's fourth-largest town, with 25,000 inhabitants, four banks, and the Northern Division and Macuata Province headquarters. Vanua Levu's only sugar mill is here. Labasa was built on a delta where the shallow Labasa and Oawa rivers enter the sea; maritime transport is limited to small boats. Large ships must anchor off Malau, 11 km north, where Labasa's sugar harvest is loaded. Labasa's lack of an adequate port has hindered development.

Other than providing a good base from which to explore the surrounding countryside and a good choice of places to spend the night, Labasa has little to interest the average tourist. That's its main attraction: since few visitors come, there's adventure in the air, good food in the restaurants, and fun places to drink for males (a bit rowdy for females). It's not beauti-

ful but it is real, and the bus ride that brings you here is great.

Gabriel Teoman of Erl, Austria, sent us this:

After reading your remarks, I headed straight for Labasa upon arrival in Fiji and ended up spending a month there, moving back and forth between Sikhs in town, Indian sugarcane farmers in the surroundings, and Fijian villagers in the interior. It was there where I got introduced into both Indo-Fijian and Fijian culture, where I experienced a genuinely Fijian yaqona ceremony and a meke, got treated to both a Sikh and a Hindu wedding, made lots of friends, and saw people living up to the image of the "friendly north." Even though almost all of Fiji was superb, those weeks remain special.



If your time is very limited but you want to see a lot, catch a morning flight from Suva or Nadi to Labasa, then take an afternoon bus on to Savusavu, the nicest part of the trip. Otherwise stay in Savusavu and see Labasa on a long day-trip.

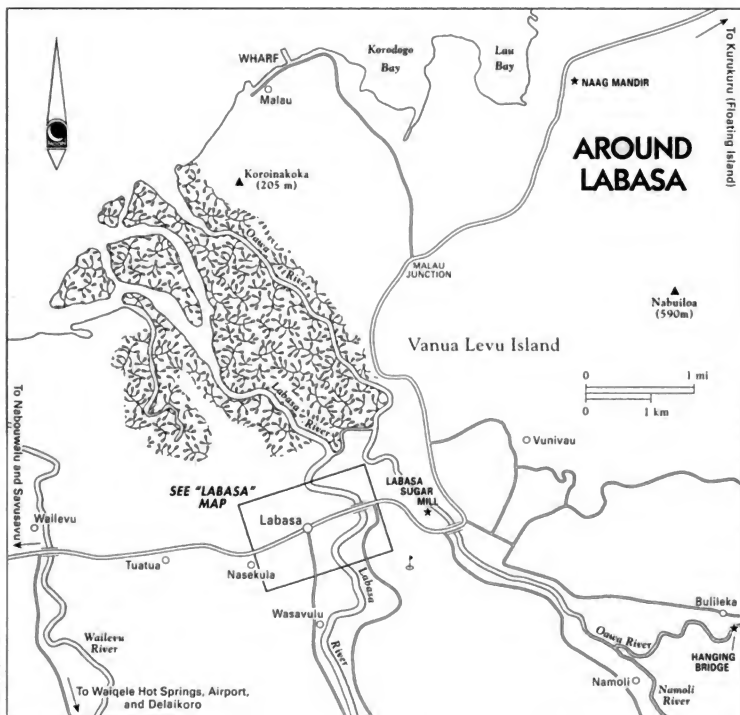
SIGHTS

Labasa has an attractive riverside setting with one long main street lined with shops and restaurants. The park along the riverside near the Labasa Club is quite pleasant.

The **Labasa Sugar Mill**, beside the Oawa River two km east of town, opened in 1894. At the height of the crushing season from May to December

there's usually a long line of trucks, tractors, and trains waiting to unload cane at the mill—a most picturesque sight. From the road here you get a view of **Three Sisters Hill** to the right.

Anyone with an interest in archaeology should take the two-km minibus ride to **Wasavula** on the southern outskirts of Labasa. Parallel stone platforms bearing one large monolith and several smaller ones are found among the coconut trees to the east of the road. This site (Fiji's first "national monument") is not well known, so just take the bus to Wasavula, get off, and ask. A small gift (F\$2) should be given to anyone who shows you around. The Fijian villager who does so will assure you that the monoliths are growing in size!



Around Labasa

The **Snake Temple** (Naag Mandir) at Nagigi, 12 km northeast of Labasa, contains a large rock shaped like a cobra that—as at Wasavula—Hindu devotees swear is growing. Frequent buses pass Naag Mandir.

On the way back to Labasa from Nagigi ask to be dropped at Bulileka Road, just before the sugar mill. Here you can easily pick up a yellow and blue bus to the **hanging bridge**, a suspension footbridge at Bulileka, six km east of Labasa. Get off the Bulileka bus at Boca Urata where it turns around. The hanging bridge is 150 meters down the road from that place (ask). Cross the bridge and continue through the fields a few hundred meters to the paved road where you can catch another bus back to Labasa. The main reason for coming is to see this picturesque valley, so you may wish to walk part of the way back.

The **Waiqeale hot springs** are near a Hindi temple called Shiu Mandir about four km beyond Labasa airport, 14 km southwest of town (green and yellow Waiqeale bus). Again, the only reason to come is to see a bit of the countryside.

You can get a view of much of Vanua Levu from the telecommunications tower atop **De-laikoro** (941 meters), 25 km south of Labasa, farther down the same road past the airport. Only a 4WD vehicle can make it to the top.

Farther afield is the **Floating Island** at Kurukuru, between Nakelikoso and Nubu, 44 km northeast of Labasa (accessible on the Dogotuki, Kurukuru, and Lagalaga buses).

At Udu Point, Vanua Levu's northeasternmost tip, a **Meridian Wall** was built just west of Unikodi village in 1999 to mark the spot where the 180-degree meridian and international date-line cut across the island. Both sunset and sunrise can be observed from the wall. Don and Seta Chute accommodate visitors to the area.

If you're a surfer, ask about hiring a boat out to the **Great Sea Reef** north of Kia Island, 40 km northwest of Labasa.

Sports and Recreation

The **Municipal Swimming Pool** (tel. 816-387 or 811-066), just before the hospital, is the place to cool off. Admission is F\$1.10. A snack bar adjoins the pool, and the Friendly North Inn's nice open bar is only a short walk away. Call before going, as the pool was recently closed.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Under US\$25

The 10-room **Riverview Private Hotel** (P.O. Box 129, Labasa; tel. 811-367) is in a quiet two-story concrete building on Namara Street beyond the police station. The four fan-cooled rooms with shared bath are F\$25/30 single/double, while another four with private bath are F\$30/40. There are also two deluxe a/c rooms with TV, fridge, and hot plate at F\$40/50/55 single/double/triple. The best deal is the breezy five-bed dormitory with a terrace overlooking the river at F\$15 pp (one of the nicest dorms in Fiji). Communal cooking facilities are available. There's a very pleasant riverside bar here. The friendly manager Pardip Singh will do his best to make you feel at home.

The **Farmers Club** (tel. 811-633) on the main street has two rooms at F\$10/14 single/double. You must arrive during regular business hours (Mon.–Fri. 0800–1600) to get one, and the street doors are firmly locked 2200–0800, so you won't be able to get in or out during those hours.

The **Labasa Guest House** (P.O. Box 259, Labasa; tel. 812-155), on Nanuku Street, has eight rooms at F\$17/22 single/double. Some rooms have a toilet and shower, while others don't, but the price of all is the same (the two back rooms are the best). Ask to be given a fan. You can put your own padlock on your door. Communal cooking facilities are provided but the Hindu hosts don't allow guests to cook beef on the premises, and previous visitors seem to have walked off with all of the cutlery. There's a laundry room in which to do hand washing. Prostitutes may solicit your business here.

The basic **Rara Avenue Hotel** (tel. 814-232) on Rara Avenue has seven overpriced rooms at F\$20/30 single/double or F\$40 with four beds. Only a couple of rooms have private bath and the whole place is a dive.

The high-rise **Takia Hotel** (P.O. Box 7, Labasa; tel. 811-655, fax 813-527), at 10 Nasekula Rd. next to the post office, has seven fan-cooled rooms at F\$35/45 single/double, 26 a/c rooms at F\$55/65, and one family suite at F\$70/80, all with private bath. The fan rooms are along the corridor between the disco and the bar, and will only appeal to party animals on Friday and Saturday nights (free admission to the disco for hotel guests).

A better medium-priced place is the **Friendly North Inn** (P.O. Box 1324, Labasa; tel. 811-555, fax 816-429) on Siberia Road opposite the hospital, about a kilometer from the bus station (F\$2 by taxi). The 10 a/c rooms with TV and fridge are F\$45/50 single/double, plus F\$10 extra for private cooking facilities (you may be granted free access to a communal kitchen if you ask). Opened in 1996, it's just a short walk from the municipal swimming pool, and the Inn's large open-air bar is a very pleasant place for a beer.

US\$25-50

The splendid **Grand Eastern Hotel** (P.O. Box 641, Labasa; tel. 811-022, fax 814-011) on Gibson Street overlooking the river, just a few minutes' walk from the bus station, reopened in late 1997 after a complete renovation and is now one of Fiji's top hotels. The 10 standard rooms with terraces in the wing facing the river are F\$70/95 single/double, while the larger deluxe rooms facing the swimming pool are F\$95/120. There are also four suites upstairs in the main two-story building, each capable of accommodating a family of up to five at F\$120 double plus F\$25 per additional person (children under 12 free). All rooms have a/c, fridge, and private bath. The Grand Eastern's atmospheric dining room and bar retain much of the colonial flavor of the original hotel despite modernization.

Offshore Resort

The luxury-category **Nukubati Island Resort** (P.O. Box 1928, Labasa; tel. 813-901, fax 813-914) sits on tiny Nukubati Island, one km off the

north shore of Vanua Levu, 40 km west of Labasa. The seven oversized fan-cooled bungalows are F\$1,685-1,920 double including meals (emphasis on seafood), activities, and return seaplane transfers from Nadi, with a seven-night minimum stay. Children are not allowed, and alcoholic beverages, sportfishing, golf, and scuba diving (certified divers only) are extra. This is the closest resort to the Great Sea Reef, fifth longest barrier reef in the world. No swimming pool is provided but the beach consists of white coral sand.

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

Food

Joe's Restaurant (tel. 811-766; Mon.-Sat. 0730-2130), upstairs in a building on Nasekula Road, has an inexpensive fast-food area, and a "wine and dine" section where you can order beer. Both are very popular, and the Chinese food served here puts Labasa's ubiquitous chow mein houses to shame. Most meals are F\$3-5 (prawns F\$8).

Slightly more upscale is the **Oriental Restaurant & Bar** (Mon.-Sat. 1000-1500, 1830-2200, Sun. 1830-2200) next to the bus station.

Simple Fijian, Chinese, and Indian meals are available for F\$3 at many places along Nasekula Road, including the **Wun Wah Cafe** (tel. 811-653), across from the post office, and **Bhindi's Refreshment Bar** (tel. 811-820) near Caines Photofast on Nasekula Road. Breakfast is hard to order in Labasa, although several places along the main street will serve buttered scones and coffee.

Entertainment

Elite Cinema (tel. 811-260) has films in English and Hindi and there's an evening show at 2000, while the **Diamond Cinema** (tel. 811-471) is closed at night.

This is a predominantly Indo-Fijian town so most of the nightlife is male oriented. The **Labasa Club** (tel. 811-304) and the **Farmers Club** (tel. 811-633) both serve cheap beer in a congenial atmosphere. Couples will feel more comfortable at the Labasa Club than at the Farmers, and there's a nice terrace out back facing the river and two large snooker tables. The bar up-

VIDI VIDI

Vidi vidi is a game similar to billiards except that the ball is propelled by a flick of the finger rather than the tap of a cue. Two or four players position themselves around a rectangular "cram board" with holes in the four corners. The eight or nine brown balls are placed in the center of the board and the players try to knock them into the holes using a striker ball. The red "king ball" must go in last and if a player knocks it in prematurely all the balls he had previously sunk must come out and be knocked in again. Originally played in India, vidi vidi was brought to Fiji by Indian immigrants.

stairs at the Farmers Club is a bit more sedate (and perhaps less colorful) than the one downstairs (both open daily 1000–2200).

The pub upstairs in the **Takia Hotel** (tel. 811-655) is a safe, fun place to drink, even though the bartenders are enclosed in a cage! There's also a disco at the Takia open Friday and Saturday 2030–0100.

Indian **firewalking** takes place once a year sometime between June and October at Agnimela Mandir, the Firewalkers Temple at Vuni-vau, five km northeast of Labasa.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Information and Services

There's a **public library** (tel. 812-894; Mon.–Fri. 0900–1300, 1400–1700, Sat. 0900–1200) in the Civic Center near Labasa Bus Station. **Public toilets** are adjacent to the library.

The ANZ Bank is opposite the bus station, and the Westpac Bank is farther west on Nasekula Road.

The public fax number at Labasa Post Office is fax 813-666.

One-hour color film developing is available at **Caines Photofast** (tel. 812-666) on Nasekula Road near the Bank of Baroda.

Health

The **Northern District Hospital** (tel. 811-444), northeast of the river, is open 24 hours a day for emergencies.

Less serious medical problems should be taken to a private doctor, such as Dr. Hermant Kumar of **Kumar's Medical Center** (tel. 814-155) on Jaduram Street near the Labasa Guest House. Nearby on Nanuku Street toward Nasekula Road is a private **dentist**, Dr. Ashwin Kumar Lal (tel. 814-077).

Labasa Drug Store (tel. 811-178) is on Nasekula Road opposite the post office.

TRANSPORTATION

Air Fiji (tel. 811-188), on Nasekula Road opposite the Westpac Bank, has service six times a day between Labasa and Suva (F\$115). **Sun Air** (tel. 811-454; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1700, Sat.

0800–1200), at the corner of Nasekula Road and Damanu Street, flies direct to Nadi (F\$142) four times a day, to Suva (F\$115) twice daily, and to Taveuni (F\$59) three times a week.

To get to the airport, 10 km southwest of Labasa, take a taxi (F\$7) or the green and yellow Waiquele bus. Sun Air has a bus based at the airport that brings arriving passengers into town free of charge, but departing passengers must sometimes find their own way from Labasa to the airport. Air Fiji's bus takes passengers to/from the airport at F\$0.65 pp (when operating).

Patterson Brothers Shipping (tel. 812-444; Mon.–Fri. 0900–1400, 1500–1630, Sat. 0900–1130) has an office near Sun Air on Nasekula Road where you can book your bus/ferry/bus ticket through to Suva via Nabouwalu and Natovi (10 hours, F\$45). This bus leaves Labasa at 0600 on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and passengers arrive in Suva at 1715. There's also a direct bus/boat/bus connection from Labasa to Lautoka (F\$45) via Ellington Wharf (near Nananu-i-Ra Island) on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and another service straight through to Levuka. Ask about the through bus/boat service from Labasa to Taveuni via Natuvu, departing Labasa Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 0600 (six hours, F\$19).

Beachcomber Cruises (tel. 817-788; Mon.–Fri. 0800–1700, Sat. 0800–1300), near Patterson Brothers on Nasekula Road, books passage on the car ferry MV *Adi Savusavu*. Their through bus/boat ticket to Suva via Savusavu is F\$48/58 economy/first class (or F\$6 less for the boat only). They also book the HSC *Lagilagi* from Savusavu to Lautoka and Nadi twice a week (five hours, F\$90).

Consort Shipping Line (tel. 811-144, fax 814-411) has an office at the Government Wharf at the north end of Damanu Street where you can book passage on the *Spirit of Free Enterprise* from Savusavu to Suva.

To be dropped off on Kia Island on the Great Sea Reef, negotiate with the fishing boats tied up near the Labasa Club. Village boats from Kia and Udu Point sometimes unload at the Government Wharf on the other side of town.

There are four regular buses a day (at 0630, 1030, 1300, and 1400) to Nabouwalu (210 km, F\$8), a dusty, tiring six-hour trip. Another five

buses a day (at 0700, 0800, 0930, 1230, and 1615) run from Labasa to Savusavu (94 km, three hours, F\$5), a very beautiful ride on an excellent paved highway over the Waisali Saddle between the Korotini and Valili mountains and along the palm-studded coast. Take the early bus before clouds obscure the views. Latchman Buses Ltd. (tel. 814-390) also has an express

bus departing Labasa for Savusavu daily at 0700 (two hours, F\$5).

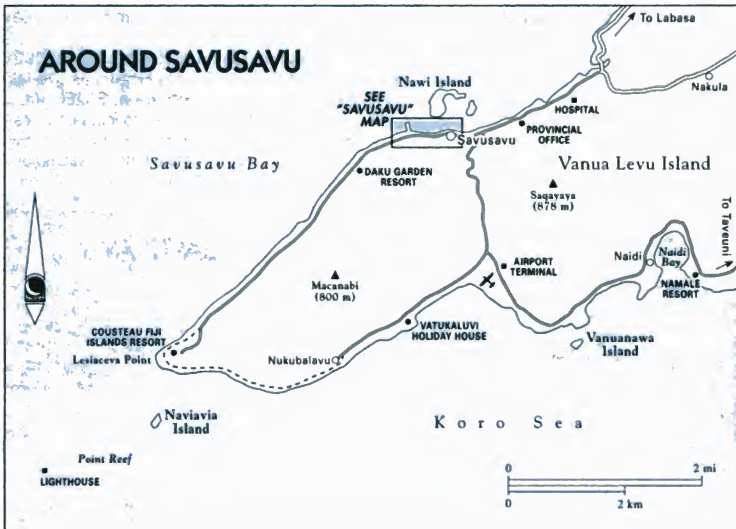
Rental cars are available from **Budget Rent A Car** (tel. 811-999) at Niranjans Mazda dealership on Zoing Place up Ivi Street from opposite the Jame Mosque at Nasekula west of town. Obtaining gasoline outside the two main towns is difficult, so tank up.

SAVUSAVU

Savusavu is a picturesque little town opposite Nawi Island on Savusavu Bay. The view from here across to the mountains of southwestern Vanua Levu and down the coast toward Nabouwalu is superlatively lovely. In the 1860s Europeans arrived to establish coconut plantations. They mixed with the Fijians, and even though the copra business went bust in the 1930s, their descendants and the Fijian villagers still supply copra to a coconut oil mill, eight km west of Savusavu, giving this side of Vanua Levu a pleasant agricultural air. The urban population of 5,000 is almost evenly split between Indo-

Fijians and indigenous Fijians with many part-Fijians here too. One of Fiji's largest white expatriate communities is also present.

Savusavu is Vanua Levu's main port, and cruising yachts often rock at anchor offshore, sheltered from the open waters of Savusavu Bay by Nawi Island. The surrounding mountains and reefs also make Savusavu a well-protected hurricane refuge. The diving possibilities of this area were recognized by Jean-Michel Cousteau in 1990 when he selected Savusavu as the base for his Project Ocean Search. Access to good snorkeling is difficult, however, as the finest



beaches are under the control of the top-end resorts and most other shore access is over extremely sharp karst. Although much smaller than Labasa, Savusavu is the administrative center of Cakaudrove Province and has three banks. In recent years tourism has taken off around Savusavu, with new resorts springing up all the time, though the town is far from spoiled.

Sights

The one main street through Savusavu consists of a motley collection of Indian and Chinese shops, parked taxis, loitering locals, and the odd tourist. The **Copra Shed Marina** is like a small museum with map displays and historical photos, information boards, and most of Savusavu's tourist services. In front of the marina is a stone dated to 1880, which is said to be from Fiji's first copra mill.

Visit the small **hot springs** boiling out among fractured coral below the Hot Springs Hotel. Residents use the springs to cook native vegetables; bathing is not possible. These and smaller hot springs along the shore of Savusavu Bay near the main wharf remind one that the whole area was once a caldera.

For a good circle trip, take a taxi from Savusavu past the airport to **Nukubalavu** village (six km, F\$6), at the end of road along the south side of the peninsula. From here you can walk west along the beach to the Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort on **Lesiaceva Point** in about an hour at low tide. Try to avoid cutting through the resort at the end of the hike as the Cousteau management disapproves. From Lesiaceva it's

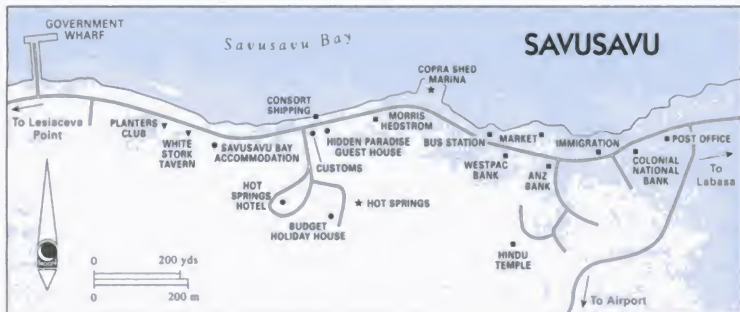
six km by road back to Savusavu.

For some mountain hiking ask one of the Labasa buses to drop you at the entry kiosk to the **Waisali Nature Reserve** established by the National Trust for Fiji in 1991, about 40 km northwest of Savusavu. This 116-hectare reserve protects one of Vanua Levu's last unexploited tropical rainforests with native species such as the *dakua*, *yaka*, and *kuasi* well represented. Viewpoints offer sweeping views and a nature trail leads to a waterfall where you can swim.

Sports and Recreation

Eco Divers (Curly Carswell, P.O. Box 264, Savusavu; tel. 850-122, fax 850-344) at the Copra Shed Marina offers scuba diving, snorkeling, dinghy hire, sailing, village visits, waterfall tours, and guided hiking. They charge F\$130 for a two-tank boat dive, or F\$495 for a PADI open-water certification course. Snorkeling from the boat is F\$18 pp if three or four people go, F\$25 pp for two people (two hours). Eco Divers and the Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort use 21 of the same buoyed dive sites off southern Vanua Levu. Ocean kayak rental is F\$35 a day, mountain bikes F\$20 a day. Three- to six-night guided kayak tours around northwestern Savusavu Bay are offered.

Savusavu Game Fishing (tel. 850-195), based at the Hot Springs Hotel, has two fast game fishing boats for hire at F\$250/400 a half/full day for the boat. Two to four people can go for that price. You'll be trawling for trevally, tuna, sailfish, marlin, or wahu (they recommend "tag and release" for billfish).



ACCOMMODATIONS

In Savusavu Town

We've arranged this accommodation section beginning at Savusavu Bus Station and working west through town to Lesiaceva Point, then east along the coast.

A dorm called the **Bosun's Bunks** (P.O. Box 262, Savusavu; tel. 850-457), above the Captain's Café in the Copra Shed Marina, has 10 beds at F\$10 pp a night.

Hari Chand's **Hidden Paradise Guest House** (P.O. Box 41, Savusavu; tel. 850-106), just beyond Morris Hedstrom, has six rather hot wooden rooms at F\$15/25/30 single/double/triple with fan and shared bath, including a hearty English breakfast. Cooking and washing facilities are provided, and it's clean and friendly—don't be put off by the plain exterior. You'll be well protected by iron grills, fences, and watch dogs. The Indian restaurant here is inexpensive, but pork, beef, cigarettes, and booze are banned. A member of the Chand family may offer to show you around the Hindu temple up on the hill, if you ask. Checkout time is 0900.

The **Hot Springs Hotel** (Lorna Eden, P.O. Box 208, Savusavu; tel. 850-195, fax 850-430), on the hillside overlooking Savusavu Bay, is named for the nearby thermal springs and steam vents. There are 48 rooms, all with balconies offering splendid views. Fan rooms on the second floor are F\$80 single or double, while the a/c rooms on the third and fourth floors are F\$125. The 12 ground floor rooms, each have four dorm beds at F\$25 pp including breakfast, are collectively called the **Rucksack Inn**. Though poorly maintained, this hotel is still a good deal. No beach is nearby, but the swimming pool terrace is pleasant. Every day at 1000 the hotel organizes a trip to "Barefoot Beach" across the bay at F\$15 including lunch. Many sporting activities can be arranged. This former Travelodge is a convenient, medium-priced choice, and the hotel bar is open daily including Sunday. Catch the sunset here at happy hour (1700-1900) and ask about the buffet dinner laid out on Saturday nights (F\$25).

David Manohar Lal's six-room **Budget Holiday House** (P.O. Box 65, Savusavu; tel. 850-149), also known as "David's Place," is just be-

hind the Hot Springs Hotel. Five rooms with shared bath cost F\$18/24/28 single/double/triple and one four-person family room is F\$30. The seven-bed dorm is F\$15 pp, while camping is F\$9/15 single/double. Stay over a week and you'll get 10 percent off and free laundry service. All rates include a cooked breakfast and there's a well-equipped kitchen. David's a delightful character to meet and also a strict Seventh-Day Adventist, so no alcoholic beverages are allowed on the premises. A cacophony of dogs, roosters, and the neighbor's kids will bid you good morning. It's often full with people from Eco Divers—call ahead.

Savusavu Bay Accommodation (P.O. Box 154, Savusavu; tel. 850-100), above Sea Breeze Restaurant on the main street, has five standard rooms with bath at F\$17/22 single/double, four a/c rooms at F\$40 single or double, and one large four-person family room at F\$60. Cooking facilities are provided, and on the roof of this two-story concrete building is a terrace where travelers can wash and dry their clothes or just sit and relax. Many of the rooms are rented on a long-term basis, and the atmosphere is not as nice as at the places previously mentioned.

The Anglican Diocese of Polynesia operates the **Daku Garden Resort** (P.O. Box 18, Savusavu; tel. 850-046, fax 850-334), one km west of the ferry landing. The six *bure* with fan and fridge (but no cooking) go for F\$66/100/122 single/double/triple. Five larger four-person villas with fully equipped kitchens rent for F\$88/110/132. Meals are served in a large *bure* next to the swimming pool at F\$9/13/20 for breakfast/lunch/dinner. Profits from the resort are used to send gifted children from remote areas to boarding school, so you'll be contributing to a worthy cause. Daku faces a beach with some snorkeling possibilities.

Around Savusavu

In 1994 oceanographer Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of the famous Jacques Cousteau, purchased a hotel on Lesiaceva Point, six km southwest of Savusavu. The **Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort** (Private Bag, Savusavu; tel. 850-188, fax 850-340) stylishly re-creates a Fijian village with 25 authentic-looking thatched *bure*. Garden accommodations, airport transfers, and all meals begin at F\$685/895/1,065 single/dou-

ble/triple, plus 10 percent tax. The rooms have fans but no a/c, telephones, or cooking facilities. The restaurant is built like a towering pagan temple and nonguests wishing to dine there *must* reserve (it's pricey and the food could be better). Children under 13 are accommodated free when sharing with their parents, and the resort's Bula Camp (operating from 0900-2100) is designed to help those aged three to nine learn while having fun. Free activities include sailing, kayaking, glass bottom boat trips, tennis, water aerobics, videos, slide shows, and cultural evenings. Fijian massage begins at F\$70. In addition, Gary Alford's outstanding on-site dive operation, "L'Aventure Divers," offers scuba diving (F\$145/245 for one/two tanks plus gear), PADI/TDI scuba instruction (F\$965 for full certification), and underwater photography courses (F\$565). Cousteau himself is in residence at the resort four or five times a year, and joins guests on the morning dive whenever he can. To find out if he'll be present during your stay, call the resort's San Francisco office at tel. 800/246-3454 or 415/788-5794. There's good snorkeling off their beach (ask about "split rock"), though the resort's large Private Property signs warn nonguests to keep out. A taxi from Savusavu will run F\$6. Bring insect repellent.

The **Vatukaluvu Holiday House** (P.O. Box 262, Savusavu; tel. 850-397), on the south side of the peninsula, one km west of Savusavu airport, accommodates four people at F\$55 for the whole breezy house (or F\$330 for two weeks).

Cooking facilities and fridge are provided, and there's good snorkeling off the beach. Ask for Geoff Taylor, vice-commander of the Savusavu Yacht Club. A taxi to Vatukaluvu will cost F\$3 from the airport, F\$5 from Savusavu.

The most upmarket place around Savusavu is **Namale Resort** (Anthony Robbins, P.O. Box 244, Savusavu; tel. 850-435, fax 850-400), a working copra plantation founded in 1874, on a white-sand beach nine km east of Savusavu. The superb food and homey atmosphere amid exotic landscapes and refreshing beaches make this one of Fiji's most exclusive resorts. The 12 thatched *bure* begin at F\$1,295/1,525 single/double, and rise to F\$1,750 double for the honey-moon *bure* with a private wading pool on its deck (add 10 percent tax to these nightly rates). The mosquito nets over the beds, ceiling fans, and louvered windows give the units a rustic charm. Included are gourmet meals and drinks, airport transfers, and all activities other than scuba diving. Namale caters only to in-house guests—there's no provision for sightseers who'd like to stop in for lunch. Children under 12 are also banned.

The **Koro Sun Resort** (Private Mail Bag, Savusavu; tel. 850-262, fax 850-352), once known as Kontiki Resort and before that Matani Kavika, is 15 km east of Savusavu on the Hibiscus Highway. The 13 tasteful hillside and garden bungalows are F\$720/820 single/double. The four two-bedroom bungalows are 25-50 percent more. Included are meals and airport transfers. Set in a well-kept coconut grove, the

Fijian schoolgirls smile for the camera at Savusavu, Vanua Levu.



JOHN PENSTEN

Koro Sun has nearby many interesting caves, pools, trails, falls, ponds, and lakes to explore. Scuba diving with Eco Divers is available (F\$145), including underwater weddings! A dive site known as Dream House is right at Koro Sun's front door. The snorkeling is fine as well, but the nearest beach is a kilometer away. There's a swimming pool, waterside, a nine-hole golf course, tennis courts, sport fishing, kayaking, massage, and many other activities.

Vanua Levu's only real backpacker camp, **Mumu Resort** (Rosie Edris, P.O. Box 240, Savusavu; tel. 850-416), 18 km east of Savusavu, occupies on the site of the spiritual home of Radini Mumu, a legendary queen of Fiji. The seven *bure* are F\$45 single or double, the four bunkhouse rooms F\$35 single or double, and the four-person "dream house" F\$60. There's also a six-bed dorm at F\$12 pp, and you can camp for F\$7 pp. Communal cooking and bathing facilities are available, and Mumu's kitchen serves tasty Fijian and European dishes at budget prices. Mumu is surrounded by the Koro Sea on three sides, and two small uninhabited islands nearby are easily accessible. Although the scenery is good, the snorkeling is poor; it's a very long swim over a shallow flat before reaching a snorkelable area. Unfortunately Mumu has gone downhill in recent years and maintenance has been neglected. There's no electricity or hot water, and one must be aware of their dogs. In the opinion of one Australian reader, it's completely overpriced. A taxi here from Savusavu should be F\$15, a bus around F\$1, but call ahead unless you're planning to camp.

Ms. Collin McKenny from Seattle runs the **Lo-malagi Resort** (P.O. Box 200, Savusavu; tel. 816-098, fax 816-099) on Natewa Bay, three km west of Nasinu village. It's three km off the Hibiscus Highway up Salt Lake Road, about 25 km from Savusavu airport. The six deluxe self-catering villas are F\$750-1,350 double including tax, transfers, and meals (children under 12 are not admitted). Reductions are possible for those who stay three weeks or more and wish to cook for themselves. The villas are well spaced along the hillside and each has an excellent view. This property is a working coconut plantation with 500 meters of waterfront on Fiji's largest bay. Two artificial waterfalls drop into the S-shaped

saltwater swimming pool. Kayaks, mountain bikes, and snorkeling gear are loaned free. A unique feature here is the "dolphin calling" trips when a Fijian boatman "calls" the dolphins using traditional magic. Collin says it works every time when the bay is flat and calm, and that two pods totaling as many as 100 dolphins are seen! The charge is F\$80 for the dolphins trip, including snorkeling (the same without the dolphins is F\$60). Nonguests are welcome to stop by for drinks, but call ahead to say you're coming if you'd like to order a meal.

Namenalala Island

Moody's Namena (Private Mail Bag, Savusavu; tel. 813-764, fax 812-366), on a narrow high island southwest of Savusavu in the Koro Sea, is one of Fiji's top hideaways. Hosts Tom and Joan Moody ran a similar operation in Panama's San Blas Islands for 15 years until June 1981, when they were attacked by Cuna Indians who shot Tom in the leg and tried to burn the resort. The media reported at the time that the Indians had been scandalized by hotel guests who smoked marijuana and cavorted naked on the beach, but Joan claims it was all part of a ploy to evict foreigners from San Blas to cover up drug-running activities.

In 1984, after a long search for a replacement, the couple leased Namenalala from the Fiji government, which needed a caretaker to protect the uninhabited island from poachers. Their present resort occupies less than 10 percent of Namenalala's 45 hectares, leaving the rest as a nesting ground to great flocks of red-footed boobies, banded rails, and Polynesian starlings. Giant clams proliferate in the surrounding waters within the 24-km Namena Barrier Reef, and from November to March sea turtles haul themselves up onto the island's golden sands to lay their eggs. The corals along the nearby drop-offs are fabulous and large pelagic fish glide in from the Koro Sea. Sea snakes abound. The Moodys have fought long and hard to protect Namenalala's fragile reefs from live-a-boards that sometimes use them for high impact night diving.

Each of the Moody's six bamboo and wood hexagonal-shaped *bure* are perched on cliffs, allowing panoramic views, while still well tucked away in the lush vegetation to ensure maximum privacy. Illuminated by romantic gas lighting,

each features a private hardwood terrace with 270-degree views. Alternative energy is used as much as possible to maintain the atmosphere (though there is a secret diesel generator used to do the laundry and recharge batteries).

The cost to stay here is F\$575/775 single/double plus tax, including all meals. The food is excellent, thanks to Joan's firm hand in the kitchen and Tom's island-grown produce. (One reader found the food too "American" and would have preferred more fresh fish.) The ice water on the tables and in the *bure* is a nice touch, but they don't sell liquor so bring your own.

This resort is perfect for bird-watching, fishing, and snorkeling, and scuba diving is available at F\$93 plus tax per tank (certification card required). The soft corals at Namenalala are among the finest in the world and the diversity of species is greater than on the Barrier Reef. If you want a holiday that combines unsullied nature with interesting characters and a certain elegance, you won't go wrong here. The remoteness is reflected in the price of getting there. Pacific Island Seaplanes charges F\$800–1,155 each way per couple for transfers from Nadi, or F\$400 each way per couple from Savusavu if booked through the resort. Moody's closes from 1 March to 1 May every year.

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

Food

The **Captain's Café** (tel. 850-511; open Mon.–Fri. 0830–2030, Sat. 0900–2100, Sun. 1100–2030) at the Copra Shed Marina is a yachting hangout claiming to offer "the best pizza on Vanua Levu," which isn't saying a lot when you think about it. Breakfast is F\$7, pizzas F\$6–26. It's mostly a lunch place. Pick up a newspaper and enjoy a leisurely read while waiting for your order to arrive. In the evening the outdoor seating on the wharf is nice but the food is nothing special. Most of Savusavu's hip young locals show up here eventually.

The **Wing Yuen Restaurant**, near the Colonial National Bank, is Savusavu's top Chinese place—don't be deceived by the shabby exterior or surly staff. The food is good and alcohol is available.

Check out the trendy **Café Bula Re**, upstairs in a building opposite the market. They offer breakfast (F\$3.50–7.50), crepes (F\$5), ice cream with coffee (under F\$5), cocktails (F\$4–6), Chinese dishes (F\$4.50–7.50), and a wide range of other meals for under F\$10. The service is poor but the food is "absolutely okay." Happy hour is 1800–1900.

An air conditioned, non-smoking restaurant called **Faletau's Daily Grind** (tel. 850-710), opposite the bus station, is run by a guy named Clay from San Francisco and his Fijian partner Annabelle. Their food is about the best in town, and it's about the only place where you can get a cappuccino or espresso.

The **Country Kitchen** (tel. 850-829) near the Westpac Bank opposite the bus station, offers large servings of curries, chop suey, and fried rice at F\$3.50–4.50.

Some of the cheapest and best curries in town are served at the **Seaside Cafe** (tel. 850-106) at Hidden Paradise Guest House. Also try the **Harbor Cafe** (tel. 850-150) next to the BP service station below the Hot Springs Hotel for Indian dishes. The food is much better than the exterior decor suggests.

The **Sea Breeze Restaurant** (tel. 850-100) below Savusavu Bay Accommodation serves mostly Chinese dishes (F\$3–5). It's open Sunday for lunch and dinner, but is not as pleasant as the other places around town.

The biggest market at Savusavu is early Saturday morning. Free public toilets are behind the market.

Entertainment

Drinkers can repair to the **Planters Club** (tel. 850-233; Mon.–Thurs. 1000–2200, Fri. and Sat. 1000–2300, Sun. 1000–2000) toward the wharf—this place is never out of Fiji Bitter. The weekend dances at the club are local events. Despite the Members Only sign, visitors are welcome. It's a vintage colonial club even without the colonists.

The **White Stork Tavern**, next to the Planters Club, is a rough public bar open Mon.–Sat. 1100–2100. If there's a dance on Friday and Saturday they'll stay open until 0100.

Level One (daily 1100–2100), the bar at the Copra Shed Marina, is rather hidden in the north-east corner of the building—ask.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Information and Services

Sea Fiji Travel (P.O. Box 264, Savusavu; tel. 850-345, fax 850-344), in the Copra Shed Marina, specializes in scuba diving and adventure travel. An adjacent shop sells nautical charts.

The ANZ Bank, Colonial National Bank, and Westpac Bank all have branches at Savusavu.

Internet access is available at **Savusavu Real Estate** (tel. 850-929; Mon.–Sat. 0800–1700, Sat. 0800–1200) in the Copra Shed Marina.

Yachting Facilities

The **Copra Shed Marina** (P.O. Box 262, Savusavu; tel. 850-457, fax 850-989) near the bus station allows visiting yachts to moor alongside at F\$10 a day. Anchorage and use of the facilities by the whole crew is F\$6 a day. You can have your laundry done for F\$7 (wash and dry).

Yachts can clear Fiji customs in Savusavu. Arriving yachts should contact the Copra Shed Marina over VHF 16. The customs office (where yachties must report after the quarantine check) is next to the BP service station below the Hot Springs Hotel. After clearing quarantine and customs controls, yachties can proceed to the Immigration Department, across the street from the Hot Bread Kitchen, a bit east of the market. If you check in after 1630 or on weekends or holidays there's an additional charge on top of the usual quarantine fee.

Health

The **District Hospital** (tel. 850-444; open 0830–1600) is two kilometers east of Savusavu on the road to Labasa (taxi F\$2).

Dr. Joeli Taoi's **Savusavu Private Health Center** (tel. 850-721; Mon.–Thurs. 0830–1600, Fri. 0830–1400) is between the Colonial National Bank and the post office.

TRANSPORTATION

By Air

Air Fiji (tel. 850-538), at the Copra Shed Marina, flies into Savusavu twice daily from Suva (F\$90) and Taveuni (F\$59). **Sun Air** (tel. 850-141), in the Copra Shed Marina, has flights to Savusavu

twice daily from Nadi (F\$129) and Taveuni (F\$59). The airstrip is beside the main highway, three km east of town. Local buses to Savusavu pass the airport about once an hour, or take a taxi for F\$2.

By Boat

The **Consort Shipping Line Ltd.** (tel. 850-443, fax 850-442), opposite the BP service station below the Hot Springs Hotel, runs the large car ferry MV *Spirit of Free Enterprise* from Suva to Savusavu (14 hours, F\$36 deck, F\$70 cabin). The ferry leaves Savusavu southbound Monday and Thursday at 1900, calling at Koro on the way to Suva. Late Wednesday and Sunday nights, the "Sofo" leaves Savusavu for Taveuni (F\$20 deck). These schedules often change.

Beachcomber Cruises (tel. 850-266, fax 850-499), at the Copra Shed Marina, runs the 65-meter car ferry MV *Adi Savusavu* from Savusavu direct to Suva Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at 1900 (F\$42/52 economy/first class). It leaves Savusavu for Taveuni Wednesday and Friday at 0100. Beachcomber also books the high-speed catamaran *Lagilagi*, which departs Savusavu at 1230 on Tuesday and Saturday for Lautoka and Nadi (five hours, F\$90). At Nadi a courtesy bus is provided to all hotels.

Patterson Brothers Shipping (tel. 850-161), upstairs in the Anderson Fong and Sons building next to the post office, operates the bus/boat connection to Taveuni via Natuvu, which should depart Savusavu on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 0900 (four hours, F\$15).

By Road

Buses from Savusavu to Buca Bay and Napuka leave at 1030, 1300, 1430, and 1600 daily except Sunday (three hours, F\$3.80).

Regular buses leave Savusavu for Labasa at 0730, 0930, 1300, and 1530, Sunday at 0930 and 1530 only (92 km, three hours, F\$5). This ride is easily the most scenic in Fiji. The Latchman express bus to Labasa (two hours; F\$5.20) departs Savusavu daily at 1430. There's also an irregular bus that takes a roundabout route via Natewa Bay between Savusavu and Labasa, departing both ends at 0900 (F\$10)—a scenic ride through an area seldom seen by tourists. Other Natewa Bay buses may finish their runs at Yanuavou or Wainigadru.

Buses leave Savusavu for Lesiaceva Point at 0700, 1200, and 1700 (F\$0.60). For more information on buses headed south or east of Savusavu, call Vishnu Holdings at tel. 850-276.

Numerous taxis congregate at Savusavu market; they're affordable for short trips in the vicinity.

Tours

Eco Divers (tel. 850-122) at the Copra Shed Marina offers a variety of day tours, including a

village tour (F\$20), plantation tour (F\$20), and a Waisali Reserve tour (F\$40). They only need two participants to run a tour.

SeaHawk Charters (P.O. Box 659, Savusavu; tel./fax 850-787) offers a five-hour yacht cruise on Savusavu Bay at F\$50 pp including lunch (minimum of two). The two-hour sunset cruise is F\$25 pp (four-person minimum). The 16-meter yacht *SeaHawk* can be chartered at very reasonable rates. Call or email for information.

BUCA BAY AND RABI

ALONG THE HIBISCUS HIGHWAY

This lovely (if dusty or muddy) coastal highway runs 75 km east from Savusavu to Natuvu on Buca Bay, then up the east side of Vanua Levu to the Catholic mission station of **Napuka** at the end of the peninsula. In early 2001 the road was being upgraded, a project which may last years.

Old frame mansions from the heyday of the 19th-century planters can be spotted among the palms, and offshore you'll see tiny flowerpot islands where the sea has undercut the coral rock. Buca Bay is a recognized "hurricane hole," where ships can find shelter during storms. Former Prime Minister Rabuka hails from **Drekeniwai** village on Natewa Bay, one of the largest bays in the South Pacific.

Large red prawns inhabit a saltwater crevice in the center of a tiny limestone island off **Naweni** village between Savusavu and Buca Bay. The villagers believe the prawns are the spirit Urubuta and call them up by singing:

*Keitou ogo na marama ni vuna
keitou mai sara Urubuta
I tuba i tuba e
I tuba i tuba e*

The island is accessible on foot at low tide, but a *sevusevu* must first be presented to the chief of Naweni for permission to visit (no photos). Your local guides will also expect compensation. Ask to be shown the weather stone on the beach and, perhaps, a second pool of prawns on the other side of the village.

There are petroglyphs (*vatuvo*) on large stones in a creek near **Dakuniba** village, 10 km

south of Natuvu (no bus service). Look for a second group of rock carvings a couple of hundred meters farther up the slope. The figures resemble some undeciphered ancient script.

Until July 2000 the **Buca Bay Resort** (tel. 880-370), next to the ferry wharf at Natuvu, offered rooms in a plantation house, a 12-bed dorm, and *bure*. A swimming pool and library were provided. Then during the chaos of the George Speight crisis in Suva, this resort was invaded by local villagers with land claims, so the owners closed their doors and left Fiji. At last report, the Buca Bay was still closed, so check before planning a stay. Yachties can still anchor off the resort. Activities in this area include a hike to Tagici Peak, bird-watching (the rare orange flame dove inhabits the upper forest), and the scenic three-hour afternoon bus ride to Napuka and back (Mon.–Sat. at 1300).

Buses to Savusavu leave Buca Bay at 0530, 0800, and 1600 (75 km, three hours, F\$3.80). The ferry *Grace* leaves Natuvu for Taveuni weekdays at 1100 (F\$7). The Patterson Brothers barge *Yaubula* departs Natuvu for Taveuni Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 1100 (F\$9, cars and vans F\$65). It's a beautiful boat trip, but can be rough if the wind is up.

Vanaira Bay

In 1998 the **Vanaira Bay Backpackers Haven** (P.O. Box 77, Waiyevo, Taveuni; tel./fax 951-083) opened on the bay of that name at the east end of Vanua Levu directly across Somosomo Strait from Taveuni. The only access is by boat from Taveuni at F\$25 pp round-trip (or F\$35 pp to Buca Bay). If you stay five nights, the transfer is free. *Bure* accommodations are F\$35 pp, dorm beds F\$30 pp, and camping F\$20 pp, meals in-

cluded. Vanaira is a working copra plantation, and when tourism is down, owner Douglas Thompson spends his time gathering coconuts, tending his cattle, and fishing. It's an electricity-free hideaway with snorkeling and hiking possibilities. Kayaks, windsurfers, and a Hobie cat are for rent. There's usually a boat over from Waiyevo on Friday afternoon, but call ahead.

For more upscale accommodations there's the **Rainbow Reef Resort** (tel. 880-900), on a secluded beach two bays southwest of Vanaira Bay. The three deluxe bure with curved decks, outdoor atrium showers, and king-size beds begin at F\$875 double plus tax, including all meals (drinks and scuba diving are extra). Add F\$250 plus tax for transfers from Taveuni Airport (minimum stay three nights). Children under 16 pay for their meals only. The famous Rainbow Reef is just minutes away by boat.

KIOA

The Taveuni ferry passes between Vanua Levu and Kioa, home of some 300 Polynesians from Vaitupu Island, Tuvalu (the former Ellice Islands). In 1853 Captain Owen of the ship *Packet* obtained Kioa from the Tui Cakau, and it has since operated as a coconut plantation. In 1946 it was purchased by the Ellice islanders, who were facing overpopulation on their home island.

The people live at **Salia** on the southeast side of Kioa. The women make baskets for sale to tourists, while the men go fishing alone in small outrigger canoes. If you visit, try the coconut toddy (*kaleve*) or more potent fermented toddy (*kamanging*). The Patterson Brothers ferry *Yaubula* often stops briefly at Kioa on its way to Taveuni.

RABI

In 1855, at the request of the Tui Cakau on Taveuni, a Tongan army conquered some Fijian rebels on Rabi. Upon the Tongans' departure a few years later, a local chief sold Rabi to Europeans to cover outstanding debts, and before World War II the Australian firm Lever Brothers ran a coconut plantation here. In 1940 the British government began searching for an island to

purchase as a resettlement area for the Micronesian Banabans of Ocean Island (Banaba) in the Gilbert Islands (present Kiribati), whose home island was being ravaged by phosphate mining. At first Wakaya Island in the Lomaiviti Group was considered, but the outbreak of war and the occupation of Ocean Island by the Japanese intervened. Back in Fiji, British officials decided Rabi Island would be a better homeland for the Banabans than Wakaya, and in March 1942 they purchased Rabi from Lever Brothers using £25,000 of phosphate royalties deposited in the Banaban Provident Fund.

Meanwhile the Japanese had deported the Banabans to Kusaie (Kosrae) in the Caroline Islands to serve as laborers, and it was not until December 1945 that the survivors could be brought to Rabi, where their 4,500 descendants live today. Contemporary Banabans are citizens of Fiji and live among Lever's former coconut plantations at the northwest corner of the island. The eight-member Rabi Island Council administers the island.

Rabi lives according to a different set of rules than the rest of Fiji; in fact, about all they have in common are their monetary, postal, and educational systems, kava drinking (a Fijian implant), and Methodism. The local language is Gilbertese and the social order is that of the Gilbert Islands. Most people live in hurricane-proof concrete-block houses devoid of furniture, with personal possessions kept in suitcases and trunks. The cooking is done outside in thatched huts.

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on Rabi, so take something else as gifts. On Friday nights the local *maneaba* in Tabwewa village rocks to a disco beat and dancing alternates with sitting around the omnipresent kava bowl, but on Sunday virtually everything grinds to a halt. Another charming feature: adultery is a legally punishable offense on Rabi.

The island reaches a height of 472 meters and is well wooded. The former Lever headquarters is at Tabwewa, while the abandoned airstrip is near Tabiang at Rabi's southwest tip. Rabi's other two villages are Uma and Buakonikai. At Nuku between Uma and Tabwewa is a post office, Telecom office, clinic, hand-icraft shop, and general store. The hill behind the Catholic mission at Nuku affords a fine view. Motorized transport on Rabi consists of two or

THE BANABANS

The Banaban people on Rabi are from Banaba, a tiny, six-square-km raised atoll 450 km southwest of Tarawa in the Micronesian Gilbert Islands. Like Nauru, Banaba was once rich in phosphates, but from 1900 through 1979 the deposits were exploited by British, Australian, and New Zealand interests in what is perhaps the best example of a corporate/colonial rip-off in the history of the Pacific islands.

After the Sydney-based Pacific Islands Company discovered phosphates on Nauru and Banaba in 1899, a company official, Albert Ellis, was sent to Banaba in May 1900 to obtain control of the resource. In due course "King" Temate and the other chiefs signed an agreement granting Ellis's firm exclusive rights to exploit the phosphate deposits on Banaba for 999 years in exchange for £50 a year. Of course, the guileless Micronesian islanders had no idea what the scheme was all about.

As Ellis rushed to have mining equipment and moorings put in place, a British naval vessel arrived on September 28, 1901 to raise the British flag, joining Banaba to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate. The British government reduced the term of the lease to a more realistic 99 years and the Pacific Phosphate Company was formed in 1902.

Things ran smoothly until 1909, when the islanders refused to lease the company any additional land after 15 percent of Banaba had been stripped of both phosphates and food trees. The British government arranged a somewhat better deal in 1913, but in 1916 changed the protectorate to a colony so the Banabans could not withhold their land again. After World War I the company was renamed the British Phosphate Commission (BPC), and in 1928 the resident commissioner, Sir Arthur Grimble, signed an order expropriating the rest of the land against the Banabans' wishes. The islanders continued to receive their tiny royalty right up until World War II.

On December 10, 1941, with a Japanese invasion deemed imminent, the order was given to blow up the mining infrastructure on Banaba, and on February 28, 1942 a French destroyer evacuated company employees from the island. In August some 500 Japanese troops and 50 laborers landed on Banaba and began erecting fortifications. The six Europeans they captured eventually perished as a result of ill treatment, and all but 150 of the 2,413 local mine laborers and their families were eventually de-

ported to Tarawa, Nauru, and Kosrae. As a warning the Japanese beheaded three locals and used another three to test an electrified anti-invasion fence.

Meanwhile the BPC decided to take advantage of this situation to rid itself of the island's original inhabitants once and for all to avoid any future hindrance to mining operations. In March 1942 the commission purchased Rabi Island off Vanua Levu in Fiji for £25,000 as an alternative homeland for the Banabans. In late September 1945 the British returned to Banaba with Albert Ellis the first to step ashore. Only surrendering Japanese troops were found on Banaba; the local villages had been destroyed.

Two months later an emaciated and wild-eyed Gilbertese man named Kabunare Koura emerged from three months in hiding and told his story to a military court:

We were assembled together and told that the war was over and the Japanese would soon be leaving. Our rifles were taken away. We were put in groups, our names taken, then marched to the edge of the cliffs where our hands were tied and we were blindfolded and told to squat. Then we were shot.

Kabunare either lost his balance or fainted, and fell over the cliff before he was hit. In the sea he came to the surface and kicked his way to some rocks, where he severed the string that tied his hands. He crawled into a cave and watched the Japanese pile up the bodies of his companions and toss them into the sea. He stayed in the cave two nights and, after he thought it was safe, made his way inland, where he survived on coconuts until he was sure the Japanese had left. Kabunare said he thought the Japanese had executed the others to destroy any evidence of their cruelties and atrocities on Banaba. After a postwar trial on Guadalcanal, the Japanese commander of Banaba, Suzuki Naqomi, was hanged for his crimes.

As peace returned the British implemented their plan to resettle all 2,000 surviving Banabans on Rabi, which seemed a better place for them than their mined-out homeland. The first group arrived on Rabi

on December 14, 1945, and in time they adapted to their mountainous new home and traded much of their original Micronesian culture for that of the Fijians. There they and their descendants live today.

During the 1960s the Banabans saw the much better deal Nauru was getting from the BPC. Mainly through the efforts of Hammer DeRoburt and the "Geelong Boys," who had been trapped in Australia during the war and thus received an excellent education and understanding of the white people's ways, the Nauruan leadership was able to hold its own against colonial bullying. Meanwhile the Banabans were simply forgotten on Rabi.

In 1966 Mr. Tebuke Rotan, a Banaban Methodist minister, journeyed to London on behalf of his people to demand reparations from the British for laying waste to their island, a case that would drag on for nearly 20 bitter years. After some 50 visits to the Foreign and Commonwealth offices, he was offered £80,000 compensation, which he rejected. In 1971 the Banabans sued for damages in the British High Court. After lengthy litigation, the British govern-

ment in 1977 offered the Banabans an *ex gratia* payment of A\$10 million, in exchange for a pledge that there would be no further legal action.

In 1975 the Banabans asked that their island be separated from the rest of Kiribati and joined to Fiji, their present country of citizenship. Gilbertese politicians, anxious to protect their fisheries zone and wary of the dismemberment of the country, lobbied against this, and the British rejected the proposal. The free entry of Banabans to Banaba was guaranteed in the Kiribati constitution, however. In 1979 Kiribati obtained independence from Britain and mining on Banaba ended the same year. Finally, in 1981 the Banabans accepted the A\$10 million compensation money, plus interest, from the British, though they refused to withdraw their claim to Banaba. (Much of the money "disappeared" between 1989 and 1991 during a period of corruption in the Rabi Council of Leaders.) The present Kiribati government rejects all further claims from the Banabans, asserting that they should be settled with the British. The British are simply trying to forget the whole thing.

three island council trucks plying the single 23-km road from Tabwewa to Buakonikai weekdays and Saturday mornings (under a dollar each way). Enjoy another fine view from the Methodist church center at Buakonikai. The islanders fish with handlines from outrigger canoes.

Up on the hillside above the post office at Nuku is the four-room **Rabi Island Council Guest House**. This colonial-style structure is the former Lever Brothers manager's residence and is little changed since the 1940s except for the extension now housing the dining area and lounge. View superb sunsets from the porch. One of the rooms is reserved for island officials; the rest are used mostly by contract workers. Other guests pay F\$55 pp a night, which includes three meals. The facilities are shared (no hot water) and the electric generator operates 1800–2200 only—just enough time to watch a video (the library next to the court house rents *Go tell it to the judge*, a documentary about the Banaban struggle for compensation).

Considering the limited accommodations and the remoteness of Rabi, it's important to call the **Rabi Island Council** (tel. 812-913, extension

30, or tel. 812-348, extension 31, fax 813-750) for guesthouse bookings and other information before setting out. You could also ask at the office of the Rabi Council of Leaders (P.O. Box 329, Suva; tel. 303-653, fax 300-543), 1st floor, Banaba House, Pratt Street (above Hare Krishna Restaurant), Suva, but they'll probably only refer you to the island council. Foreign currency cannot be changed on Rabi and even Fijian bills larger than F\$10 may be hard to break. Insect repellent is not sold locally.

To get there catch the daily Napuka bus at 1030 from Savusavu to Karoko. A chartered speedboat from Karoko to the wharf at Nuku on the northwest side of Rabi costs F\$40 each way, less if people off the Napuka bus are going over anyway. The Patterson Brothers ferry *Yaubula* between Natuvu and Taveuni calls at Rabi about once a month depending on cargo, usually leaving Natuvu at 1100 on a Tuesday or a Thursday (any Patterson Brothers office should know). The smaller ferry *Grace* also arrives from Taveuni occasionally. Two small trading vessels call at the jetty at Nuku on alternate Saturday mornings and they'll usually take you back to Karoko for F\$5.



SALVATORE CASA

TAVEUNI

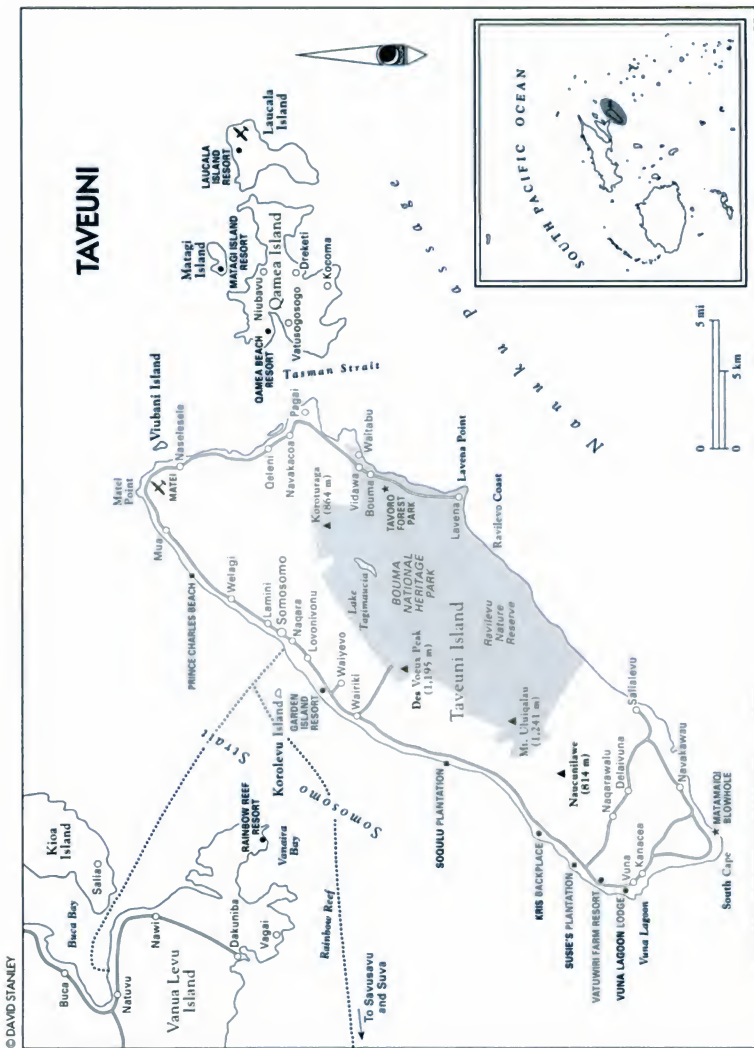
Long, green, coconut-covered Taveuni is Fiji's third-largest island. It's 42 km long, 15 km wide, and 470 km square in area. Only eight km across the Somosomo Strait from Vanua Levu's southeast tip, Taveuni is known as the Garden Island of Fiji because of the abundance of its flora. Around 60 percent of the land is tropical rainforest and virtually all of Fiji's coffee is grown here. Its surrounding reefs and those off nearby Vanua Levu are some of the world's top dive sites. The strong tidal currents in the strait nurture the corals, but can make diving a tricky business for the unprepared.

Because Taveuni is free of the mongoose, there are many wild chickens, *kula* lorikeets, red-breasted musk parrots, honeyeaters, silktails, ferntails, goshawks, and orange-breasted doves, making this a special place for birders. Here you'll still find the jungle fowl, banded rail, and purple swamp hen, all extinct on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The Fiji flying fox and mastiff bat are also seen only here. The Taveuni long-horn beetle is the largest beetle in Australasia.

The island's 16-km-long, 1,000-meter-high volcanic spine causes the prevailing trade winds

to dump colossal amounts of rainfall on the island's southeast side, and considerable quantities on the northwest side. At 1,241 meters, Uluiqalau in southern Taveuni is the second-highest peak in Fiji, and Des Voeux Peak (1,195 meters) in central Taveuni is the highest point in the country accessible by road. The European discoverer of Fiji, Abel Tasman, sighted this ridge on the night of February 5, 1643. The almost inaccessible southeast coast features plummeting waterfalls, soaring cliffs, and crashing surf. The 12,000 inhabitants live on the island's gently sloping northwest side. The bulk of the population is Fijian but Indo-Fijians run many of the shops, hotels, buses, and taxis.

The deep, rich volcanic soil nurtures indigenous floral species such as *Medinilla spectabilis*, which hang in clusters like red sleigh bells, and the rare *tagimaucia* (*Medinilla waterousei*), a climbing plant with red-and-white flower clusters 30 cm long. *Tagimaucia* grows only around Taveuni's 900-meter-high crater lake and on Vanua Levu. It cannot be transplanted and blossoms only from October to December. The story goes that a young woman was fleeing from her



father, who wanted to force her to marry a crotchety old man. As she lay crying beside the lake, her tears turned to flowers. Her father took pity on her when he heard this and allowed her to marry her young lover.

In the past decade Taveuni has become very popular as a destination for scuba divers and those in search of a more natural vacation area than is possible in the overcrowded Nadi/Coral Coast strips. Even the producers of the film *Return to the Blue Lagoon* chose Taveuni for their 1991 remake of the story of two adolescents on a desert isle. Despite all this attention, Taveuni is still about the most beautiful, scenic, and friendly island in Fiji. It's a great place to hang out, so be sure to allow yourself enough time there.

SIGHTS

Central Taveuni

Taveuni's post office, police station, hospital, government offices, and country club are on a hilltop at **Waiyevo**, above the Garden Island Resort. On the coast below is the island's biggest hotel.

The 180th degree of longitude passes through a point marked by a display called **Taveuni's Time Line** at Waiyevo, 500 meters up the road from the shops near the Garden Island Resort. One early Taveuni trader overcame the objections of missionaries to his doing business on Sunday by claiming the international date line ran through his property. According to him, when it was Sunday at the front door, it was already Monday around back. Similarly, European planters got their native laborers to work seven days a week by having Sunday at one end of the plantation, and Monday at the other. An 1879 ordinance ended this by placing all of Fiji west of the dateline, so you're no longer able to stand here with one foot in the past and the other in the present. Despite this, it's still the most accessible place in the world crossed by the 180th meridian.

To get to the **Waitavala Sliding Rocks**, walk north from the Garden Island Resort about five minutes on the main road, then turn right onto the side road leading to Waitavala Estates. Take the first road to the right up the hill, and when you see a large metal building on top of a hill, turn left and go a short distance down a road through a

coconut plantation to a clearing on the right. The trail up the river to the sliding rocks begins here. The water slide in the river is especially fast after heavy rains, yet the local kids go down standing up! Admission is free.

At **Wairiki**, a kilometer south of Waiyevo, are a few stores and the picturesque Catholic mission, with a large stone church containing interesting sculptures and stained glass. There are no pews: the congregation sits on the floor Fijian style. From Wairiki Secondary School you can hike up a tractor track to the large **concrete cross** on a hill behind the mission in 30 minutes each way. You'll be rewarded with a sweeping view of much of western Taveuni and across Somosomo Strait. A famous 19th-century naval battle occurred here when Taveuni warriors turned back a large Tongan invasion force, with much of the fighting done from canoes. The defeated Tongans ended up in Fijian ovens and the French priest who gave valuable counsel to the Fijian chief was repaid with laborers to build his mission.

A jeep road from Wairiki climbs to the telecommunications station on **Des Voeux Peak**. This is an all-day trip on foot with a view of Lake Tagimaucia as a reward (clouds permitting). The lake itself is not accessible from here. The rare monkey-faced fruit bat (*Pteralopex acrodonta*) survives only in the mist forest around the summit. Unless you hire a jeep to the viewpoint, it will take four arduous hours to hike the six km up and another two to walk back down.

One of the only stretches of paved road on southern Taveuni is at Soqulu Plantation or "Taveuni Estates" (tel. 880-044), about eight km south of Waiyevo. This ill-fated condo development features an attractive golf course (green fees F\$20) by the sea, tennis courts, and a bowling green, plus street signs pointing nowhere, empty roads, sewers, and 30 unfinished condominiums built by an undercapitalized real estate speculator who badly miscalculated Taveuni's potential for Hawaii-style residential development. Visitors are sometimes accommodated in a 120-year-old plantation house a four-minute walk from the golf course.

Southern Taveuni

Transportation to the south end of Taveuni is spotty with bus service from Naqara Monday–Saturday at 0800, 1200, and 1600 only.

Since the 1600 bus spends the night at Vuna and doesn't return to Naqara until the next morning, the only way to really see southern Taveuni is to also spend the night there. If this isn't possible, the roundtrip bus ride leaving Naqara at 0800 and around noon is still well worth doing.

The bus from Naqara runs south along the coast to Susie's Plantation, where it turns inland to Delaivuna. There it turns around and returns to the coast, which it follows southeast to Navakawau via South Cape. On the way back it cuts directly across some hills to Kanacea and continues up the coast without going to Delaivuna again. Southeast of Kanacea there is little traffic.

A hike around southern Taveuni provides an interesting day out for anyone staying at Susie's Plantation or one of the other nearby resorts. From Susie's a road climbs east over the island to **Delaivuna**, where the bus turns around at a gate. The large Private Property sign here is mainly intended to ward off miscreants who create problems for the plantation owners by leaving open cattle gates. Visitors with enough sense to close the gates behind themselves may proceed.

You hike one hour down through the coconut plantation to a junction with two gates, just before a small bridge over a (usually) dry stream. If you continue walking 30 minutes down the road straight ahead across the bridge you'll reach **Salialevu**, site of the Bilyard Sugar Mill (1874-96), one of Fiji's first. In the 1860s European planters tried growing cotton on Taveuni, turning to sugar when the cotton market collapsed. Later, copra was found to be more profitable. A tall chimney, boilers, and other equipment remain below the school at Salialevu.

After a look around, return to the two gates at the bridge and follow the other dirt road southwest for an hour through the coconut plantation to **Navakawau** village at the southeast end of the is-

land. Some of Fiji's only Australian magpies (large black-and-white birds) inhabit this plantation.

Just east of South Cape as you come from Navakawau is the **Matamaiqi Blowhole**, where trade wind-driven waves crash into the unprotected black volcanic rocks, sending geysers of sea spray soaring skyward, especially on a southern swell. The viewpoint is just off the main road.

At **Vuna**, lava flows have formed pools beside the ocean, which fill up with fresh water at low tide and are used for washing and bathing.

Tuesday around 1500 the local butcher dumps the week's offal into the sea near here and the sharks go into a feeding frenzy.



The ruins of the century-old Bilyard Sugar Mill at Salialevu, Taveuni, lie incongruously in the midst of today's coconut plantation.

Northern Taveuni

Somosomo is the chiefly village of Cakaudrove and the seat of the Tui Cakau, Taveuni's "king"; the late Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, last governor general and first president of Fiji, hailed from here. The two distinct parts of the village are divided by a small stream where women wash their clothes. The southern portion called **Naqara** is the island's commercial center with several large Indo-Fijian stores, the island's bank, and a couple of places to stay. Pacific Transport has its bus terminus here.

Somosomo, to the north of Naqara, is the chiefly quarter with the personal residence

of the Tui Cakau on the hill directly above the bridge (no entry). Beside the main road below is the large hall built for the 1986 meeting of the Great Council of Chiefs. Missionary William Cross, one of the creators of today's system of written Fijian, who died at Somosomo in 1843, is buried in the attractive new church next to the meeting hall. There's even electric street lighting in this part of town!

The challenging trail up to lovely **Lake Tagimaucia**, 823 meters high in the mountainous interior, begins behind the Mormon church at Naqara. The first half is the hardest. You'll need

a full day to do a round-trip, and a guide will be necessary as there are many trails to choose from. You must wade for a half-hour through knee-deep mud in the crater to reach the lake's edge. Much of the lake's surface is covered with floating vegetation, and the water is only five meters deep.

Bouma National Heritage Park

This important nature reserve between Bouma and Lavena in northeastern Taveuni has been developed with New Zealand aid money. In 1990 an agreement was signed with the communities of Waitabu, Vidawa, Korovou, and Lavena putting the area in trust for 99 years, and the Tavoro Forest Park at Bouma was established a year later. The Lavena Coastal Walk, Vidawa Rainforest Hike, and Waitabu Marine Park are other features of the park, and the various admission fees and tour charges are used for local community projects, to provide local residents with an immediate practical reason for preserving their natural environment.

There are three lovely **waterfalls** just south of Bouma (admission F\$5). From the information kiosk on the main road it's an easy 10-minute walk up a broad path along the river's right bank to the lower falls, which plunge 20 meters into a deep pool. You can swim here, and change rooms, toilets, picnic tables, and a barbecue are provided. A well-constructed trail leads up to a second falls in about 30 minutes, passing a spectacular viewpoint overlooking Qamea Island and Taveuni's northeast coast. You must cross the river once, but a rope is provided for balance. Anyone in good physical shape can reach this second falls with ease, and there's also a pool for swimming. The muddy, slippery trail up to the third and highest falls involves two river crossings with nothing to hold onto, and it would be unpleasant in the rain. This trail does cut through the most beautiful portion of the rainforest, and these upper falls are perhaps the most impressive of the three, as the river plunges over a black basalt cliff, which you can climb and use as a diving platform into the deep pool. The water here is very sweet.

A new activity in this area is the six-hour **Vidawa Rainforest Hike** during which local guides introduce the birdlife, flora, and archaeological sites of the area to visitors. You scramble over

volcanic ridges offering spectacular views and explore old village sites with their temple platforms and ring ditches still clearly visible. Your guide brings it all to life with tales of the old ways of his people. A picnic lunch is served by a spring-fed stream deep in the interior. The trek ends at Bouma Falls where hikers are rewarded with a refreshing swim. The F\$60 pp cost (F\$40 for children) includes park entry fees and transportation from anywhere on northern Taveuni (call 880-390 to book).

Similar is the **Waitabu Marine Park** where a lagoon area two km before Bouma has been declared a "no fishing" sanctuary for fish and snorkelers. The F\$50 pp tour price also includes snorkeling gear, transportation, and food. Book five-hour snorkeling tours here through the dive shop Aquaventure (tel. 880-381) south of Matei Airport. Reductions for children are available. The departure time varies according to tide and weather conditions. These tours are good value, and you'll be supporting a worthy cause.

At Bouma, visitors can sleep on mats in the house behind the park information kiosk (tel. 880-390) at F\$5 per head; otherwise it might be possible to camp or stay with the locals. Bouma is easily accessible by public bus daily except Sunday. If you depart Waiyevo or Naqara on the 0800 bus, you'll have about three and a half hours to see the falls and have a swim before catching the 1400 bus back to Waiyevo. This second bus does a round-trip to Lavena, six km south (the 0800 bus finishes at Bouma), and it's worth jumping on for the ride even if you don't intend to get off at Lavena.

The **Lavena Coastal Walk** officially opened in 1993. You pay your F\$5 admission fee (separate from the F\$5 fee charged at Bouma) at the Lavena Lodge Visitor Center, right at the end of the road at Lavena. Guides are available at F\$10/15 pp a half/full day. From the Visitor Center you can hike the five km down the Ravilevo Coast to **Wainibau Falls** in about an hour and a half. You'll pass Naba village, where the descendants of blackbirded Solomon Islanders live to this day, and a suspension bridge over the Wainisairi River, which drains Lake Tagimaucia in Taveuni's interior. The last 15 minutes is a scramble up a creek bed, which can be very slippery as you wade along. Two falls here plunge into the same deep basalt pool and dur-

ing the rainy season you must actually swim a short distance to see the second pool. Diving into either pool is excellent fun. Be on guard, however, as flash flooding often occurs. Keep to the left near the base of the falls. Several lovely beaches and places to stop are along the trail (allow four hours there and back from Lavena with plenty of stops).

If you also want to see **Savulevu Yavonu Falls**, which plummet off a cliff directly into the sea, you must hire a boat at F\$75 for up to three people or F\$25 pp for up to six. Intrepid ocean kayakers sometimes paddle down this back side of Taveuni, past countless cliffs and waterfalls. The steep forested area south of Wainibau Stream forms part of the Ravilevu Nature Reserve.

Lavena Lodge, a pleasant European style building with running water and lantern lighting, has four rooms (two doubles and two three-bed dorms) at F\$15 pp. Sinks are provided in the rooms, but the bath is shared. Good cooking facilities are provided and you can eat at a picnic table on a hill overlooking the beach or on the lodge's terrace. Dinner can be ordered for F\$7. A village store is opposite the lodge, and two other small trade stores are nearby (however it's best to bring groceries with you). The villagers will prepare meals for you at F\$7 each. Mosquito coils are essential (the flies are a nuisance too). An excellent golden beach is right in front of the lodge, and at Ucuna Point, a five-minute walk away, is a picnic area where you can spend an afternoon (be careful with the currents if you snorkel). It's a great place to hang out for a few days—the film *Return to the Blue Lagoon* was filmed here. To book, call Lavena via radio telephone at 116-801 (answered 0800–0900, 1400–1500 only). It's not possible to visit Lavena as a day-trip by public bus (taxis charge F\$50 round-trip to bring you here). Buses depart Lavena for Naqara Monday–Saturday at 0600 and 1400, Sunday at 0730.

SPORTS AND RECREATION

Taveuni and surrounding waters have become known as one of Fiji's top diving areas. The fabulous 32-km Rainbow Reef off the south coast of eastern Vanua Levu abounds in turtles, fish, overhangs, crevices, and soft corals, all in 5–10

meters of water. Favorite dive sites here include Annie's Bommie, Blue Ribbon Eel Reef, Cabbage Patch, Coral Garden, Jack's Place, Jerry's Jelly, Orgasm, Pot Luck, The Ledge, The Zoo, and White Sandy Gully. At the Great White Wall, a tunnel in the reef leads past sea fans to a magnificent drop-off and a wall covered in awesome white soft coral. Beware of strong currents in the Somosomo Strait.

Unfortunately, we've recently received a number of complaints about some of the Taveuni dive shops. We've heard about "coral bashers" who carelessly throw the anchor into live coral, or use coral heads to balance themselves against the current. Other operators dive on inferior local reefs rather than commute long distances to the best spots, while one is snobbish and particularly contemptuous of budget travelers. We encourage readers to speak up if they witness any eco-unfriendly behavior by divemasters or their fellow divers. It's also unwise to snorkel out to the edge of the reef alone on Taveuni, as shark attacks are not unknown here (elsewhere in Fiji, they're extremely rare).

Way back in 1976, Ric and Do Cammick's **Dive Taveuni** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-445, fax 880-466) pioneered scuba diving in this area, discovering and naming most of the sites now regularly visited by divers. These days they cater exclusively to small groups that have prebooked stays at the Taveuni Island Resort from abroad. Nonguests need not apply.

Walk-in divers are welcome at **Swiss Fiji Divers** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel./fax 880-586), just down the road from the Taveuni Island Resort and a short distance from most of the places to stay on northern Taveuni. Divemasters Dominique Egerter and Evi Antoniotti charge F\$180 for a two-tank dive. For those staying longer, they have five-day packages for F\$869 or ten days for F\$1,430. Rental gear is F\$60. Their 4–6 day PADI openwater course is F\$693, and many other specialized dive courses are offered. A "discover diving" experience is F\$275. This is Taveuni's newest dive shop and their equipment is first rate. Readers have remarked on their professionalism.

Aquaventure (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-381, fax 880-371), run by Tania de Hoon, has its base on the beach a few minutes walk south of Swiss Fiji Divers. Tania charges F\$130

for two tanks, plus F\$22 for gear (F\$566 for 10 dives). Trips start at 0800 and 1300. Night dives are F\$90. Aquaventure's five-day PADI certification course costs F\$600 including six dives (or F\$130 for an introductory dive). Ask Tania about snorkeling trips to Waitabu Marine Park (F\$50 pp all inclusive).

Aqua-Trek Taveuni (tel. 880-544, fax 880-288), at the Garden Island Resort, caters mostly to divers who've prebooked from the States. The daily two-tank dives are F\$165 plus gear (no one-tank dives). PADI scuba certification costs F\$660, or take a one-tank "discover scuba course" at F\$148. You'll find cheaper dive shops, but Aqua-Trek's facilities are first rate. This is the closest dive shop to the famous Rainbow Reef.

Budget-minded divers should check out **Vuna Reef Divers** (P.O. Box 69, Taveuni; tel. 880-531, fax 880-125), also known as The Dive Center, run by a guy named Roland at Susie's Plantation. He offers boat dives at F\$95 for two tanks (plus F\$15 extra for gear). Roland's four-day PADI scuba certification courses (F\$400) usually begin on Monday, and Susie's makes a perfect base for these activities.

Nok's Dive Center (P.O. Box 22, Taveuni; tel. 880-246, fax 880-072), at Kris Backplace north of Susie's, offers diving at F\$66/88 for one/two dives, plus F\$11 a day for gear. Night dives are F\$66. Snorkelers can go along in the boat for a nominal fee, although some dive sites are not really suitable for snorkeling (ask). Nok's also does four-day PADI certification course. Divers from both Nok's and Susie's dive mostly on the Vuna Reef, as the Rainbow Reef is far away from them.

Geoffry Amos (tel. 880-371), who lives in the house marked Raikivi between Dolores Porter and Sere-ni-lka at Matei, does game fishing trips on his boat the *Lucky Strike*. It's F\$450/800 for a half/full day for up to six people (all fish caught belong to the boat).

Adjacent to Aquaventure is **Ringgold Reef Kayaking** (tel. 880-083) with lots of two-person fiberglass kayaks for rent (F\$8 an hour). It's run by Keni Madden who lives up the hill. He often takes prebooked groups on four-to-seven day ocean kayaking trips to Yanuca and Gamea islands.

The dive shop at the Garden Island Resort rents kayaks at F\$20 an hour.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Places to stay are scattered all around Taveuni, with the largest cluster in the vicinity of Matei Airport. The smaller medium-priced places are often heavily booked, so it's important to call ahead to check availability. Be aware that some Taveuni hotels and resorts are run in a rather pretentious, personal manner which doesn't always work, and over half the complaints we receive regarding tourist accommodations in Fiji relate to places on Taveuni and its adjacent islands. Don't go by the glowing reports of travel agents or glossy magazine journalists who came on freebie trips: ask other travelers who have been there recently for specific personal recommendations.

Taveuni still doesn't have a public electricity supply but most of the places to stay have their own generators, which typically run 1800-2100 only. The following listings are arranged from north to south.

Under US\$25 North

Niranjan's Budget Accommodation (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-406) is just a five-minute walk east of the airport. The four rooms in the main building, each with two beds, fridge, fan, and cooking facilities, go for F\$35/45 single/double. The electric generator is on 1800-2200, you hope. Niranjan himself is very hospitable guy.

The best place on Taveuni to camp is May Goulding's **Todranisiga** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; no phone), on a bluff overlooking the sea 500 meters south of the airport terminal. The two set tents with four mattresses each are F\$15 pp (or F\$50 for the whole tent). You could also pitch your own tent on a large grassy area for F\$15 pp. An open-air kitchen *bure* is provided. You'll see some stunning sunsets from this hill, which is nicely secluded from the road and quite safe.

Beverly's Campground (tel. 880-684) is just north of Prince Charles Beach, a bit over one km south of the airport. Run by Bill Madden, it's a peaceful, shady place, adjacent to Maravu Plantation's beach. It's F\$7 pp in your own tent, or F\$10 pp to sleep in a set tent. The toilet and shower block is nearby. Cooking facilities are

MATEI AIRPORT AREA

PACIFIC OCEAN

Tasman Strait

Nayagiyagi Island

Nayanuyunuku Island

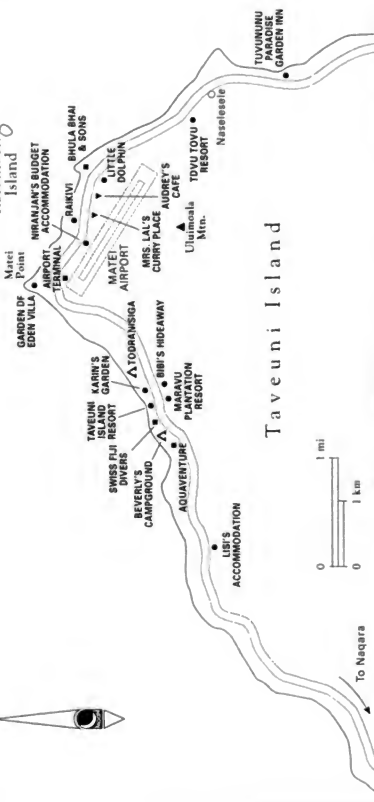
Natadrua Island

Koronibelo Island

Viubani Island

Strait

Somosomo Strait



Taveuni Island



available, but bring groceries (Bill provides free fresh fruit from his garden daily). The kitchen shelter by the beach is a nice place to sit and swap traveler's tales with the other guests. The clean white beach is just seconds from your tent.

A few hundred meters south is **Lisi's Accommodation** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-194), in a small village across the road from a white-sand beach. It's F\$7 pp to camp, or F\$15 pp in a clean four-room bungalow with shared cooking and bathing facilities. Your friendly hosts Mary and Lote Tuisago serve excellent Fijian meals at reasonable prices. Horseback riding can be arranged here.

Under US\$25 Center

The original budget hotel on Taveuni was **Kaba's Motel & Guest House** (P.O. Box 4, Taveuni; tel. 880-233, fax 880-202) at Naqara, which charges F\$25/35/40 single/double/twin in one of four double rooms with shared facilities in the guesthouse. The cooking facilities are very good. The newer motel section is F\$45/55/60 for one of the six larger units with kitchenette, fridge, fan, and private bath. The water is solar-heated, so cold showers are de rigueur in overcast weather (ask for a discount in that case). Kaba's Supermarket is just up the street. No check-ins are accepted after 1800. Naqara is a convenient place to stay for catching buses, but at night there's nothing much to do other than watch the BBC on TV.

A friendly Indo-Fijian family runs **Kool's Accommodation** (tel. 880-395), just south of Kaba's Motel at Naqara. The six rooms in two long blocks facing the eating area are F\$25/35 single/double, and cooking facilities are provided (but no fridge). It's basic and overpriced for what it is.

Sunset Accommodation (P.O. Box 15, Taveuni; tel. 880-229), on a dusty corner near the wharf at Lovonivonu, has two basic rooms behind a small store at F\$15/20 single/double. Again, this is mostly a low-budget place to crash.

The **First Light Inn** (P.O. Box 3, Waiyevo; tel. 880-339, fax 880-387), near the Garden Island Resort at Waiyevo, was built just in time for the millennium celebrations in late 1999. This large, two-story concrete building has 20 rooms with bath and TV at F\$45/55 fan/air conditioned for up to three people. Communal cooking facilities are provided. Local contract workers

sometimes book rooms here on the weekends to watch the football games on TV and have fun, so be prepared.

Under US\$25 South

Kris Backplace (P.O. Box 22, Waiyevo; tel. 880-246, fax 880-072), between Soqulu Plantation and Susie's Plantation in southern Taveuni, is on a beautiful stretch of rocky coastline with crystal clear snorkeling waters. You can count on a good place to pitch your tent (F\$7 for the first person in the tent and F\$4 for the second). The two thatched two-bed *bure* are F\$35 double, and there's also a five-bed dormitory *bure* at F\$15 pp. The friendly managers will allow you to pick fruit at no cost from their plantation, and a three-meal deal is F\$25 or you can cook your own. Scuba diving is available.

Susie's Plantation Resort (P.O. Box 69, Waiyevo; tel. 880-125 or 880-531), also known as Nomui Lala, just north of Vuna Point at the south end of Taveuni, offers peace and quiet amid picturesque rustic surroundings, at the right price. The 10 rooms in the plantation house are F\$30/40 single/double with shared bath, or F\$50/55 with private bath. Two simple seaside *bure* rent for F\$55 double, and a larger family *bure* costs F\$70. A place in the six-bed dorm is F\$15, and camping is F\$10 pp (tolerated but not encouraged). You can cook your own food (a well-stocked grocery store is at Vatuwiri Farm, a 10-minute walk south). Otherwise meals are available in the restaurant (F\$30 meal plan), housed in the oldest missionary building on the island (nonguests welcome). Electricity is available only during the dinner hours. This atmospheric resort right on the ocean has its own resident diving instructor, who leads daily trips to the Great White Wall and Rainbow Reef. The PADI scuba certification course offers a great opportunity to learn how to dive, but even if you're not a diver, you'll enjoy the superb snorkeling right off their rocky beach or at nearby Namoli Beach (better at low tide, as the current picks up appreciably when the tide comes in). Horseback riding can be arranged. One reader thought Susie's overpriced.

Vuna Lagoon Lodge (Adi Salote Samanunu, P.O. Box 55, Waiyevo; tel. 880-627), on the Vuna Lagoon near Vuna village, a kilometer south of Vatuwiri Farm, has rooms at F\$30 double with shared bath or F\$50 with private bath. Dorm beds

cost F\$15. Cooking facilities are provided or you can order meals. Since it's adjacent to the village, you should ask if you'll need to bring a bundle of kava roots for the chief when booking.

US\$25–50

Tuvununu Paradise Garden Inn (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-465), 700 meters east of Naselesele village in northern Taveuni, offers eight rooms in a large wooden building overlooking Viubani Island at F\$55/75 single/double, or F\$24 pp in the backpacker dorm. Camping is F\$9 pp. The tidal flat in front of the inn is beautiful but not ideal for swimming. At last report the Tuvununu was closed.

The Petersen family runs the **Tovu Tovu Resort** (tel. 880-560, fax 880-722) at Matei just east of Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket. It's across the road from a rocky beach with murky water, and guests often walk the two km to Prince Charles Beach to swim. The two front *bure* capable of sleeping three are self-catering at F\$75 single or double. Just behind are another two *bure* with private bath but no cooking at F\$50/65, and up the hill is a large dormitory *bure* with a communal kitchen at F\$15 pp. A budget *bure* with shared bath is F\$25 double. Camping is not allowed. The tin roofs are covered with thatch to keep them cool. The three-meal plan is F\$35 pp, and the restaurant terrace is a nice place to sit and socialize.

Little Dolphin (tel. 880-130), opposite Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket, less than a kilometer east of the airport, has an airy, two-story cottage with cooking facilities called the "treehouse." At F\$75 a night it's good value. Little Dolphin is run by an Australian named Scott who is a mine of information. He has a three-person outrigger canoe that he rents to guests at F\$25 a day.

Several expatriate residents of the airport area have built nice little bungalows next to their homes or fixed up rooms in their personal residences that they rent to tourists. For instance, Audrey of **Audrey's Cafe** (tel. 880-039), half a km east of the airport, has a deluxe cottage with tile floors at F\$100 (children not admitted)—readers have recommended it. **Sere-ni-lka**, opposite Mrs. Lal's Curry Place, is a three-bedroom house right on the coast at F\$200/1,000 a night/week including a kitchen and fridge. It's owned by Fred Gartely of Hawaii, and the Sun

Air agent at the airport, Dolores Porter (tel. 880-299), handles bookings. Dolores has a place of her own two houses west known as **Lomalagi Beachfront Cottage** (no sign), right opposite Niranjan's Budget Accommodation. The two rooms are F\$100 double, and Dolores is particular about who she accepts. A few more places like this exist (including one which asked not to be included in this handbook).

Bibi's Hideaway (P.O. Box 80, Waiyevo; tel. 880-443), about 600 meters south of the airport, has something of the gracious atmosphere of the neighboring properties without the sky-high prices. A bed in a two-bed room in a cottage is F\$30 pp, while a larger family unit is F\$70. The film crew from *Return to the Blue Lagoon* stayed here for three months, and with the extra income the owners built a deluxe honeymoon *bure* with a picture window, which is F\$80. All three units have access to cooking facilities and fridge, and you can pick fruit off their trees for free. Bibi's is located on lush, spacious grounds, and James, Victor, and Agnes Bibi will make you feel right at home. It's an excellent medium-priced choice if you don't mind being a bit away from the beach.

Karin's Garden (tel. 880-511), almost opposite Bibi's Hideaway 650 meters south of the airport, overlooks the same coast as the overpriced Taveuni Island Resort next door. Their two screened bungalows with fan are F\$95. It's nice but the beds are a bit soft. You can cook and there's a restaurant on the premises.

US\$50–100

The Garden Island Resort (P.O. Box 1, Waiyevo; tel. 880-286, fax 880-288) is by the sea at Waiyevo, three km south of Naqara. Formerly known as the Castaway, this was Taveuni's premier (and only) hotel when it was built by the Travelodge chain in the 1960s. In 1996 the scuba operator Aqua Trek USA purchased the property and upgraded the facilities. The 30 a/c rooms in an attractive two-story building are F\$146/184/218 single/double/triple, or F\$33 pp in the two four-bed dorms. The buffet meal plan is F\$80 pp, and eating by the pool is fun (dinner reservations before 1700 required). There's no beach, but the Garden Island offers a restaurant, bar, evening entertainment, swimming pool, excursions, and water sports. Snorkeling trips

(F\$20) are arranged to Korolevu Island at 1000 and 1400, and a large dive shop is on the premises. Ask about guided hikes to the Kulanawai Waterfalls, a great half-day trip (F\$25). The Garden Island is a nice place to hang out if you like large hotels.

The **Vatuwiri Farm Resort** (c/o Postal Agency, Vuna; tel. 880-316) at Vuna Point, a kilometer south of Susie's Plantation, offers the possibility of staying on an authentic working farm established in 1871 by James Valentine Tarte. The family's history was the subject of a 1988 novel by Daryl Tarte. Today the Tartes produce beef, vanilla, and copra, and rent three small cottages to tourists for F\$120 double a night. Three good meals are F\$35 pp extra. The rocky coast here is fine for snorkeling, and horseback riding is available. The Tarte family is congenial, and this is perhaps your best chance to stay on a real working farm in Fiji.

US\$150 and up

Directly opposite the airport terminal is the **Garden of Eden Villa** Peter Madden (tel. 880-252), a large three-bedroom house capable of accommodating six people at F\$700 a night including meals (minimum stay one week). Set on a bluff above the sea, this place is a favorite retreat of Fiji's president and other VIPs. Book through Destination World listed herein in Getting There. Some deluxe cottages on Matei Point nearby rent for F\$225 a day and up—expensive but outstanding.

About 600 meters south of the airport are two of Taveuni's most exclusive properties. **Maravu Plantation Resort** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-555, fax 880-600) is a village-style resort on a real 20-hectare copra-making plantation. It's run by a young German couple, Angela and Jochen Kiess, who've worked hard to make their operation eco-friendly. The atmosphere is quiet with good service from an attentive staff. Maravu offers 10 comfortable *bure* with ceiling fans from F\$475/720/880 single/double/triple, but including memorable meals, transfers, tax, horseback riding, bicycles, and some other activities. This is a good choice for families as up to two children under 14 can stay free, paying only for their meals (F\$50–75 per day per child). The landscaped grounds are safe for kids, there's an elegant

bar, spa, and swimming pool for adults, and the weekly *meke* is fun for all.

Almost across the street from Maravu Plantation is the deluxe **Taveuni Island Resort** (Ric and Do Cammick, c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-441, fax 880-466), formerly known as Dive Taveuni and before that Ric's Place. It's patronized by an eclectic mix of scuba divers, anglers, and honeymooners who arrive on prepaid packages. The six deluxe *bure* are F\$845/1,175 single/double, including meals and transfers. In addition, the cliff-top honeymoon *bure* is F\$1,390 double all inclusive. No alcohol is sold here, so bring your own. The open terrace dining area and the swimming pool added in 1997 merges scenically with the sea on the horizon. Be aware that only registered house guests are welcome on the property. This resort is closed in February and March.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Food

Several stalls in the fish market opposite the Garden Island Resort serve cheap picnic table meals. Frank Fong's **Waci-Pokee Restaurant** (tel. 880-382; Mon.–Sat. 0730–1800), below the First Light Inn in Waiyevo, serves tasty Chinese and local meals for around F\$5. You can eat in the thatched **Cannibal Cafe** directly behind the Waci-Pokee. A piece of chocolate cake is under a dollar but their slogan is “we’d love to have you for dinner.” Order at the restaurant.

Kumar's Restaurant (Mon.–Sat. 0700–1800), opposite Kaba's Motel & Guest House at Naqara, is the cheapest regular restaurant on the island with curries in the F\$4 range. Stick to the Indian dishes.

The snack bar at Matei Airport (open only at flight times) sells excellent curry *rotis* for F\$1.50. They're kept under the counter, so ask. A coffee is F\$0.60.

Mrs. Lal's Curry Place (tel. 880-705), just east of the airport, serves spicy takeaway Indian meals at F\$10 a serve. You must carry the food back to your hotel as no tables are provided here.

Audrey's Island Cafe & Pastries (tel. 880-039; daily 1000–1800), run by a charming American woman at Matei, serves afternoon tea to guests who also enjoy the great view from her

terrace, and Audrey has various homemade goodies to take away.

The **Vunibokoi Restaurant** (tel. 880-560), at the Tovu Tovu Resort east of Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket at Matei, has a nice terrace where nonguests can order upscale meals prepared by Mareta, once the star chef at a small American-run resort. The Friday night *lovo* buffet here is F\$16.50.

Groceries

Those staying on the northern part of the island will appreciate the well-stocked **Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket** (tel. 880-369) at the Matei Postal Agency between the airport and Naselese village. A Tele Card phone is outside the store and a hairdresser is adjacent. Bhula Bhai & Sons is closed on Sunday, but a smaller Indian store 100 meters east and across the road will sell to you through the side window that day.

The variety of goods available at **Kaba's Supermarket** (tel. 880-088) in Naqara is surprising, and a cluster of other small shops is adjacent. The **Morris Hedstrom** supermarket (tel. 880-053) is a bit north in Somosomo. Small grocery stores also exist at Wairiki and Waiyevo. The only well-stocked grocery store in southern Taveuni is at Vatuwiri Farm, a kilometer south of Susie's Plantation.

Entertainment

The **180 Meridian Cinema** at Wairiki shows mainly action and horror films at 1930 on weekends.

The **Taveuni Country Club** (tel. 880-133), next to the police station up the hill at Waiyevo, is a safe, local drinking place. It's open Wednesday–Saturday 1400–2200 only.

The only tourist-oriented nightlife on Taveuni is what's offered at the **Garden Island Resort** (tel. 880-286), which stages a *meke* and *lovo* at 1800 (F\$38 pp), but only when enough paying guests are present. **Maravu Plantation Resort** (tel. 880-555) also offers a weekly *meke* with dinner (F\$40). It's a wonderful splurge, but you must reserve in the afternoon.

Shopping

Ross Handicrafts (tel. 309-872), below the First Light Inn in Waiyevo, has a typical selection of Fijian handicrafts.

Services

Traveler's checks can be changed at the Colonial National Bank (Mon.–Thurs. 0930–1500, Fri. 0930–1600) in Naqara. They don't give cash advances on credit cards.

Card phones are at Matei Airport, at Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket in Matei, at Krishna Brothers Store in Naqara, and at the fish market in Waiyevo.

The island's hospital (tel. 880-444) at Waiyevo received a F\$2.4 million upgrade in 2000.

TRANSPORTATION

Getting There

Matei Airstrip at the north tip of Taveuni is serviced twice daily by **Air Fiji** (tel. 880-062) from Suva (F\$114) and Savusavu (F\$59), and by **Sun Air** (tel. 880-461) from Nadi (three a day, F\$159), Suva (daily, F\$114), and Savusavu (twice daily, F\$59). Sun Air also arrives from Labasa (F\$59) three times a week. Flights to/from Taveuni are often heavily booked, so reconfirm to avoid being bumped. You get superb views of Taveuni from the plane: sit on the right side going up, the left side coming back. Krishna Brothers (tel. 880-302) in Naqara is the agent for Air Fiji. Book Sun Air flights through their airport office or the Garden Island Hotel.

Consort Shipping operates the twice weekly *Spirit of Free Enterprise* service from Taveuni to Suva via Koro and Savusavu (23 hours, F\$40/80 deck/cabin). Taveuni to Savusavu is F\$20. This ferry departs Taveuni southbound Monday and Thursday at noon, having left Suva northbound Tuesday and Saturday at 1800. The Consort agent is the First Light Inn (tel. 880-339) in Waiyevo, and you'll get a F\$5 discount by purchasing your ticket there.

The **Beachcomber Cruises** car ferry *Adi Savusavu* departs Taveuni for Savusavu and Suva Wednesday and Friday at noon. It takes five hours to reach Savusavu, and after a three-hour stop continues to Suva, where it arrives at Thursday and Saturday morning (F\$47/55 economy/first class). The agent is Ian Simpson (tel. 880-187 or 880-261) at the fish market opposite the Garden Island Resort (F\$5 discount on advance ticket sales here).

Patterson Brothers operates the barge *Yaubula* between Taveuni and Natuvu at Buca Bay on Vanua Levu, leaving Taveuni Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 0900 (two hours, F\$9), leaving Natuvu at 1100. They also carry cars and vans for F\$65. Through boat/bus tickets with a bus connection at Natuvu are available to Savusavu (four hours, F\$15) and Labasa (six hours, F\$19). The Patterson Brothers agent is Frank Fong (tel. 880-382) at the Waci-Pokee Restaurant below the First Light Inn in Waiyevo. Try to buy your combined boat/bus ticket from Frank a day before, otherwise get one on the ferry itself as you board (arrive an hour before departure and be fast at holiday times as the 60-seater bus does fill up, unlike the 100-passenger ferry which always has space available). Coffee and snacks are sold aboard the barge.

The small passenger boat *Grace* departs Taveuni for Natuvu Monday–Friday at 0900 (two hours, F\$7). If you miss the bus connection to Savusavu (F\$3.80), you'll have to wait around at Buca Bay all day for another bus (Public buses run from Natuvu to Savusavu only in the early morning and at 1600). If no bus is around, you should be able to find a carrier, but expect a rough trip. The *Grace* also does trips to Rabi (F\$7 pp) whenever there's cargo. Information on the *Grace* is available from Mr. Latchman Prasad (tel. 880-134), who lives opposite Kaba's Supermarket in Naqara.

If you arrive by boat at Taveuni, you could disembark at any one of three places. Some small boats from Vanua Levu transfer their passengers to the beach at Waiyevo by outboard. The large ferries from Suva tie up at a wharf a kilometer north of Waiyevo. There's another wharf called the "Korean Wharf" at Lovonivonu village, a kilometer north again, midway between Waiyevo and Naqara. This wharf is usually used by the Vanua Levu ferries and other smaller cargo boats.

Getting Around

Pacific Transport (tel. 880-278) buses leave Waiyevo and Naqara northbound to Bouma (F\$2) Monday–Saturday at 0800, 1130, and 1700; southbound to Vuna (F\$2.65) they leave at 0800, 1200, and 1600. The northbound 0800 bus turns around at Bouma, but the 1130 and

1600 buses carry on to Lavena (F\$3.05). Both of the 1600 buses stop and spend the night at their turn-around points, Lavena and Navakawau, heading back to Naqara the next morning at 0600 (at 0800 on Sunday). Sunday service is very infrequent, although there are buses to Bouma and Vuna at 1600. Check the current schedule carefully as soon as you arrive and beware of buses leaving a bit early. The buses begin their journeys at the Pacific Transport garage at Naqara, but they all first head south to Waiyevo hospital to pick up passengers.

One of Taveuni's biggest drawbacks is the extremely dusty/muddy road up the northwest coast, which makes it very unpleasant to walk anywhere between Wairiki and the airport when there's a lot of fast traffic passing. This combined with rather expensive taxi fares and sporadic buses make getting around rather inconvenient. The road is currently being upgraded, so things could change. Taveuni's minibus taxis only operate on a charter basis and don't run along set routes picking up passengers at fixed rates. The taxi fare from the wharf to Naqara is F\$3; from the airport to Naqara it will be F\$12. In general, the taxi fare will be about 10 times the corresponding bus fare. Otherwise, save money by using the buses for long rides and taxis for shorter hops.

You could hire a minibus taxi and driver for the day. Write out a list of everything you want to see, then negotiate a price with a driver. The Garden Island Resort minibus is F\$80 to Bouma or F\$100 to Lavena for up to four people (five persons and up is F\$20 pp). **Budget Rent-a-Car** (tel. 880-291) at the BP service station opposite Kaba's Motel in Naqara rents Suzuki jeeps at F\$125 a day all included. They're also supposed to have compact cars at F\$70, but they're often "all out."

When enough tourists are on the island, Mr. Nand Lal (tel. 880-705) operates a regular shuttle service to Bouma National Heritage Park at F\$10/15 pp round-trip from Matei to Bouma/Lavena. The shuttles should leave Matei at 0900, 1200, and 1400, but it all depends on demand. Call him up, or ask at Mrs. Lal's Curry Place just east of Niranjani's Budget Accommodation in Matei. Nand's 15-seater van is available for private hire anytime.

OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Qamea Island

Qamea ("ngga-ME-a") Island, just three km east of Taveuni, is the 12th-largest island in Fiji. It's 10 km long with lots of lovely bays, lush green hills, and secluded white-sand beaches. Land crabs (*lairo*) are gathered in abundance here during their migration to the sea at the beginning of the breeding season in late November or early December. The bird life is also rich, due to the absence of the mongoose. Outboards from villages on Qamea land near Navakaoa village on the northeast side of Taveuni. The best time to try for a ride over is Thursday or Friday afternoons. Vatusogosogo, one of six villages on Qamea, is inhabited by descendants of black-birded Solomon islanders.

Backpackers can stay on Qamea with **Stan Mitchell**, who lives at Niubavu village on the north shore opposite Matangi Island. To stay in one of the six *bure* is F\$11, or camp for F\$8. The toilet and shower are in Stan's house. If you brought groceries from Taveuni you can cook for yourself, otherwise your hosts will feed you. Set on a small bay just back from the beach, it's a lovely spot and the nearby Fijian villages can be visited. It's even possible to arrange scuba diving. Speedboat transfers to Qamea are F\$50 per trip (round-trip). To arrange a stay, ask for Byron Fisher or Cyril Mitchell who work in the Air Fiji office (tel. 880-062) at Matei Airport.

The **Qamea Beach Resort** (c/o Postal Agency, Matei; tel. 880-220, fax 880-092), on the west side of Qamea, has 12 thatched *bure* at F\$1,015/1,240/1,465 single/double/triple, and one split-level honeymoon villa at F\$1,575 double (children under 13 not admitted). Meals, boat transfers, and tax are included. All units have a ceiling fan, minibar, and hammock-equipped deck. Meals are served in a tall central dining room and lounge designed like a *burekalou* (temple). Activities such as snorkeling, sailing, wind-surfing, village tours, and hiking are included in the basic price, but fishing and scuba diving are extra. The snorkeling right off Qamea's 400 meters of fine white sands is superb and there's also a freshwater swimming pool.

Matangi Island

Matangi is a tiny horseshoe-shaped volcanic island just north of Qamea, its sunken crater forming a lovely palm-fringed bay. The island is privately owned by the Douglas family, which has been producing copra on Matangi for five generations and still does. In 1988 they diversified into the hotel business.

Matangi Island Resort (Noel Douglas, P.O. Box 83, Waiyevo; tel. 880-260 or 880-776, fax 880-274), 10 km northeast of Taveuni, markets itself as a honeymoon destination by advertising in the U.S. bridal magazines. It tries to do the same as far as scuba diving goes, but the prime dive sites in the Somosomo Strait are too far away to be visited from this resort. The snorkeling here is fine. Matangi's three treehouse *bure* are intended for the recently wed (F\$976 double). Other guests are accommodated in the neat thatched *bure* scattered among the coconut palms below Matangi's high jungly interior. The seven deluxe *bure* are F\$772 double, while the two standards and one duplex are F\$556. Prices include meals, snacks, laundry, and tax, but return boat transfers from Taveuni are F\$80 pp extra. Reader Louise Spergel sent us this:

We stayed in one of the deluxe bure—not a treehouse. The round room was attractively decorated and had a half wall up the middle dividing the sleeping area from the sitting area. The bed had very romantic looking mosquito netting. However, for that price, the bed shouldn't have been so saggy. The bathroom was small and we had hot water for showering most days. Every room comes with a giant umbrella since it rains a lot. The meals at Matangi were mediocre. We were very unhappy with the dive shop. Most of the dive sites they took us to weren't very good. Activities other than diving were randomly scheduled and canceled, and people weren't always told.

Laucala Island

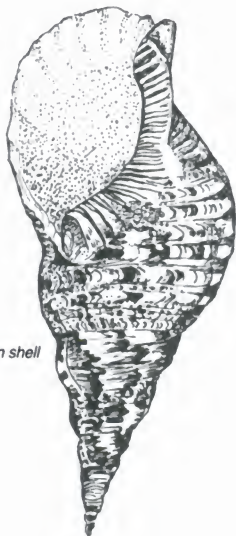
Laucala Island, which shares a barrier reef with Qamea, was depopulated and sold to Europeans in the mid-19th century by the chief of Taveuni, after the inhabitants sided with Tongan

chief Enele Ma'afu in a local war. Today it's owned by Steven Forbes, son of the late multi-millionaire businessman and New York publisher Malcolm Forbes, who is buried on the island. In 1972 Malcolm Forbes bought 12-square-km Laucala from the Australian company Morris Hedstrom for US\$1 million. He then spent additional millions on an airstrip, wharf, and roads, and on replacing the thatched *bure* of the 300 Fijian inhabitants with 40 red-roofed houses with electricity and indoor plumbing. Forbes's former private residence stands atop a hill overlooking the native village, the inhabitants of which make copra.

In 1984, six years prior to his death in 1990, Forbes opened his island to affluent tourists who now stay in seven *bure*, each with living room, bar, and kitchen. The housekeepers prepare

guests' breakfasts in their cottages; other meals can be taken in the plantation house, in Forbes's house, at the beachside barbecue area, or as a picnic anywhere on the island. The price is F\$1,200 pp per night (three-night minimum stay), including all meals, "a reasonable supply" of liquor, sports, scuba diving, and deep-sea fishing. The charter flight from Nadi to Laucala Island is F\$700 pp round-trip. The resident general manager of **Fiji Forbes Inc.** (P.O. Box 41, Waiyevo; tel. 880-077, fax 880-099) is the only chief on Laucala. We've heard good things about this resort from people in a position to know. (During the turbulence following the Speight coup attempt in mid 2000, Laucala Island was invaded by thugs with scores to settle, and the resort managers were beaten and held 24 hours. Peace has now returned to the island.)

triton shell





THE LAU GROUP

Lau is by far the most remote part of Fiji, its 57 islands scattered over a vast area of ocean between Viti Levu and Tonga. Roughly half of them are inhabited. Though all are relatively small, they vary from volcanic islands to uplifted atolls to some combination of the two. Tongan influence has always been strong in Lau, and due to Polynesian mixing the people have a somewhat lighter skin color than other Fijians. The westward migrations continue today: over 40,000 Lauans live on Viti Levu and under 13,000 on their home islands. Historically the chiefs of Lau have always had a political influence on Fiji far out of proportion to their economic or geographical importance.

Vanua Balavu (52 square km) and Lakeba (54 square km) are the largest and most important islands of the group. These are also the only islands with organized accommodations, and Vanua Balavu is the more rewarding of the two. Once accessible only after a long sea voyage on infrequent copra-collecting ships, four islands in Lau—Lakeba, Vanua Balavu, Moala, and Cicia—now have regular air service from Suva. Occasional private ships also circulate through Lau, usually calling at five or

six islands on a single trip. No banks are to be found in Lau and it's important to bring sufficient Fijian currency.



Few of these islands are prepared for tourism, so it really helps to know someone. But contrary to what is written in some guidebooks, individual tourists *do not* require a special permit or invitation to visit Lau—you just get on a plane and go. (Cruising yachties do need a permit.) Since the best selection of

places to stay is on Vanua Balavu, that's the logical place to head first. Words like pristine, untouched, and idyllic all seem to have been invented for Lau, and the unconditional friendliness of the local people is renowned. This is one area where you don't need to worry about bumping into a McDonald's!

NORTHERN LAU

VANUA BALAVU

The name means the "long land." The southern portion of this unusual, seahorse-shaped island is mostly volcanic, while the north is uplifted coral. This unspoiled environment of palm-fringed beaches backed by long grassy hillsides and sheer limestone cliffs is a wonderful area to explore. Varied vistas and scenic views are on all sides. To the east is a 130-km barrier reef enclosing a 37 by 16 km lagoon. The Bay of Islands at the northwest end of Vanua Balavu is a recognized hurricane shelter. The villages of Vanua Balavu are impeccably clean, the grass cut and manicured. Large mats are made on the island and strips of pandanus can be seen drying before many of the houses.

In 1840 Commodore Wilkes of the U.S. Exploring Expedition named Vanua Balavu and its adjacent islands enclosed by the same barrier reef the Exploring Isles. In the days of sail, Lomaloma, the largest settlement, was an important Pacific port. The early trading company Hennings Brothers had its headquarters here. The great Tongan warlord Enele Ma'afu conquered northern Lau from the chiefs of Vanua Levu in 1855 and made Lomaloma the base for his bid to dominate Fiji. A small monument flanked by two cannons on the waterfront near the wharf recalls the event. Fiji's first public botanical garden was laid out here over a century ago, but nothing remains of it. History has passed Lomaloma by. Today it's only a big sleepy village with a hospital and a couple of general stores. Some 400 Tongans live in Sawana, the south portion of Lomaloma village, and many of the houses have the round ends characteristic of Lau. Fiji's first prime minister and later president, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, was born in Sawana.

Sights

Copra is the main export and there's a small coconut oil mill at **Lomaloma**. A road runs inland from Lomaloma, up and across the island to **Dakuilomaloma**. From the small communications station on a grassy hilltop midway there's an excellent view.

Follow the road south from Lomaloma three km to **Narocivo** village, then continue two km beyond to the narrow passage separating Vanua Balavu and Malata islands. At low tide you can easily wade across to **Namalata** village. Alternatively, work your way around to the west side of



Vanua Balavu, where there are isolated tropical beaches. There's good snorkeling in this passage.

A guide can show you **hot springs** and **burial caves** among the high limestone outcrops between Narocivo and Namalata. This can be easily arranged at Nakama, the tiny collection of houses closest to the cliffs, upon payment of a nominal fee. Small bats inhabit some of the caves.

Rent a boat to take you over to the **Raviravi Lagoon** on Susui Island, the favorite picnic spot near Lomaloma for the locals. The beach and snorkeling are good, and spelunkers can check out the cave where the god of shells resides. **Munia Island** is a privately owned coconut plantation where paying guests are accommodated in two *bure*.

Events

A most unusual event occurs annually at Masomo Bay, west of **Mavana** village, usually around Christmas. For a couple of days the Mavana villagers, clad only in skirts of *drauniquai* leaves, enter the waters and stir up the muddy bottom by swimming around clutching logs. No one understands exactly why, and magic is thought to be involved, but this activity stuns the *yawa*, or mullet fish, that inhabit the bay, rendering them easy prey for waiting spears. Peni, the *bete* (priest) of Mavana, controls the ritual. No photos are allowed. A Fijian legend tells how the *yawa* were originally brought to Masomo by a Tongan princess.

Accommodations

Moana's Guesthouse (P.O. Box 11, Lomaloma; tel. 895-006) in Sawana village is run by Tevita and Carolyn Fotofili, with the help of daughter Moana. It's F\$44 pp including all meals and snacks to share an oval-ended Tongan-style house with a three-bedded dorm and double room. Another room is available in an adjacent house. In 2000 the Fotofilis built three traditional-style Tongan *bure* on the beach about a kilometer away (F\$65/110 single/double all inclusive). Children under 12 are half price. A boat is for hire for use on trips around Vanua Balavu.

If Moana's is full, try Mr. Poasa Delailomaloma (tel. 895-060) and his brother Laveti's guest house in the middle of Lomaloma village, a short walk away. Both Poasa's and Moana's make perfect bases from which to explore the island, and you get a feel for village life while retaining a degree of privacy.

You can also stay at Joe and Hélène Tuwai's **Nawanawa Estate** (P.O. Box 20, Lomaloma; tel. 116-833), a kilometer from Daliconi village near the airport on the northwest side of the island. They meet all flights (transfers F\$25 pp round-trip) and can accommodate 10 persons in their own home on the estate. In the unlikely event that they were full, something else could be arranged. The Tuwais charge F\$50/90 single/double including meals (children under 10 F\$30). You'll share their attractive colonial-style home with solar electricity (no generator noise).



Moana's Guesthouse

Aside from hiking, snorkeling, kayaking (F\$5 an hour), and fishing, you can ask to be dropped on a deserted island for a small charge. If you have a tent, you can camp all by yourself there at F\$10 a day for two without food. Boat trips to the pristine Bay of Islands for caving and snorkeling are also possible (F\$90 for two people). Island tours by road are F\$60 for three people. All three places just mentioned accept cash only (take insect repellent and sunscreen too). You could also take a *sevusevu* of kava roots for the village elders, if you so desired.

In 1994 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, paramount chief of the Lau Group, opened the **Lomaloma Resort** (P.O. Box 55, Lomaloma; tel. 895-091, fax 895-092) on tadpole-sized Yanuyanu Island just off Lomaloma. The six round-ended *bure* (or *fale*) furnished in the traditional style catered mostly to upmarket scuba divers. The Lomaloma Resort has been closed for several years and it's uncertain if it will ever reopen.

Getting There

Air Fiji flies to Vanua Balavu three times a week from Suva (F\$113). The flights are heavily booked, so reserve your return journey before leaving Suva. A bus runs from the airstrip to Lomaloma. After checking in at the airstrip for departure you'll probably have time to scramble up the nearby hill for a good view of the island. Boat service from Suva on the *Tunatuki II* is only every two weeks (F\$77/110 deck/cabin).

Several carriers a day run from Lomaloma north to Mualevu, and some continue on to Mavana.

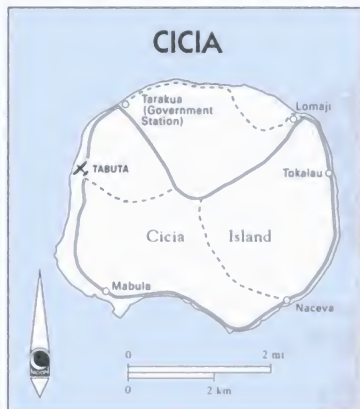
OTHER ISLANDS OF NORTHERN LAU

After setting himself up at Lomaloma on Vanua Balavu in 1855, Chief Ma'afu encouraged the establishment of European copra and cotton plantations, and several islands are freehold land to this day. **Kanacea**, to the west of Vanua Balavu, was sold to a European by the Tui Cakau in 1863, and the Kanacea people now reside on Taveuni. **Mago** (20 square km), a copra estate formerly owned by English planter Jim Barron, was purchased by the Tokyu Corporation of Japan in 1985 for F\$6 million.

Naitauba is a circular island about 186 meters high with high cliffs on the north coast.

Originally owned by Hennings Brothers, in 1983 the island was purchased from TV star Raymond Burr by the California spiritual group Johannine Daist Communion for US\$2.1 million. Johannine Daist holds four-to-eight-week meditation retreats on Naitauba for longtime members of the communion. The communion's founder and teacher, Baba Da Free John, the former Franklin Albert Jones, who attained enlightenment in Hollywood in 1970, resides on the island.

There's a single Fijian village and a gorgeous white-sand beach on **Yacata Island**. Right next to Yacata and sharing the same lagoon is 260-hectare **Kaimbu Island**, which was owned by the Rosa family from 1872 to 1969, when it was purchased by fiberglass millionaires Margie and Jay Johnson. In 1987 the Johnsons opened a small luxury resort on the island, and although they sold Kaimbu in 1996, their son Scott stayed on as manager together with wife Sally of the Taveuni Cammick clan. **Kaimbu Island Resort** (Kaimbu Island Postal Agency; tel. 880-333, fax 880-334) consists of only three spacious octagonal guest cottages renting at F\$2,250 per couple per night (minimum stay seven nights). A private party of six can hire the entire island at F\$5,600 a day (children are only accommodated on entire island bookings). The price includes gourmet meals, drinks, snorkeling, sailing, wind-



surfing, sportfishing, scuba diving, and just about anything else you desire (except a swimming pool). They cater to people who want personalized service and total privacy. The chartered flight from Suva or Taveuni to Kaimbu's central airstrip is another F\$2,225 per couple round-trip. Add 10 percent tax to all rates. Bookings are handled by **Kaimbu Island Associates** (P.O. Box 10392, Newport Beach, CA 92658, U.S.A.; tel. 800/473-0332, fax 949/644-5773; email: kaimbu@earthlink.net).

Vatu Vara to the south, with its soaring interior plateau, golden beaches, and azure lagoon, is privately owned and unoccupied much of the time. The circular, 314-meter-high central limestone terrace, which makes the island look like a hat when viewed from the sea, gives it its other

name, Hat Island. There is reputed to be buried treasure on Vatu Vara.

Katafaga to the southeast of Vanua Balavu was at one time owned by Harold Gatty, the famous Australian aviator who founded Fiji Airways (later Air Pacific) in 1951.

Cicia, between Northern and Southern Lau, receives Air Fiji flights from Suva (F\$105) once a week. Five Fijian villages are found on Cicia, and much of the 34-square-km island is covered by coconut plantations. Fiji's only black-and-white Australian magpies have been introduced to Cicia and Taveuni.

Wallagi Lala, northernmost of the Lau Group, is a coral atoll bearing a lighthouse, which beckons to ships entering Nanuku Passage, the northwest gateway to Fiji.

SOUTHERN LAU

LAKEBA

Lakeba is a rounded volcanic island reaching 215 meters in elevation. The fertile red soils of the rolling interior hills have been planted with pine, but the low coastal plain, with eight villages and all the people, is covered with coconuts. To the east is a wide lagoon enclosed by a barrier reef. In the olden days, the population lived on Delai Kedekede, an interior hilltop well suited for defense.

The original capital of Lakeba was Nasaqalau on the north coast, and the present inhabitants of Nasaqalau retain strong Tongan influence. When the Nayau clan conquered the island, their paramount chief, the Tui Nayau, became ruler of all of Southern Lau from his seat at Tubou. During the 1970s and 1980s Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the present Tui Nayau, served as prime minister of Fiji.

Sights

A 29-km road runs all the way around Lakeba. From the Catholic church you get a good view of **Tubou**, an attractive village and one of the largest in Fiji, with a hospital, wharf, several stores, and the Lau provincial headquarters. Tubou was originally situated at Korovusa just inland, where the foundations of former houses

can still be seen. Farther inland on the same road is the forestry station and a nursery.

The Tongan chief Enele Ma'afu (died 1881) is buried on a stepped platform behind the Provincial Office near Tubou's wharf. In 1847 Ma'afu arrived in Fiji with a small Tongan army ostensibly to advance the spread of Christianity, and by 1855 he dominated eastern Fiji from his base at Vanua Balavu. In 1869 Ma'afu united the group into the Lau Confederation and took the title Tui Lau. Two years later he accepted the supremacy of Cakobau's Kingdom of Fiji, and in 1874 he signed the cession to Britain. Alongside Ma'afu is the grave of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna (1888–1958), an important figure in the development of indigenous Fijian self-government. David Cargill and William Cross, the first Methodist missionaries to arrive in Fiji, landed on the beach just opposite the burial place on October 12, 1835. Here they invented the present system of written Fijian.

Coconut Factory

Four km west of Tubou is the coir (husk fiber) and coconut oil factory of the **Lakeba Cooperative Association** at Wainiyabia. Truckloads of coconuts are brought in and dehusked by hand. The meat is then removed and sent to the copra driers. Coconut oil is pressed from the resulting copra and exported in drums. The dry pulp re-

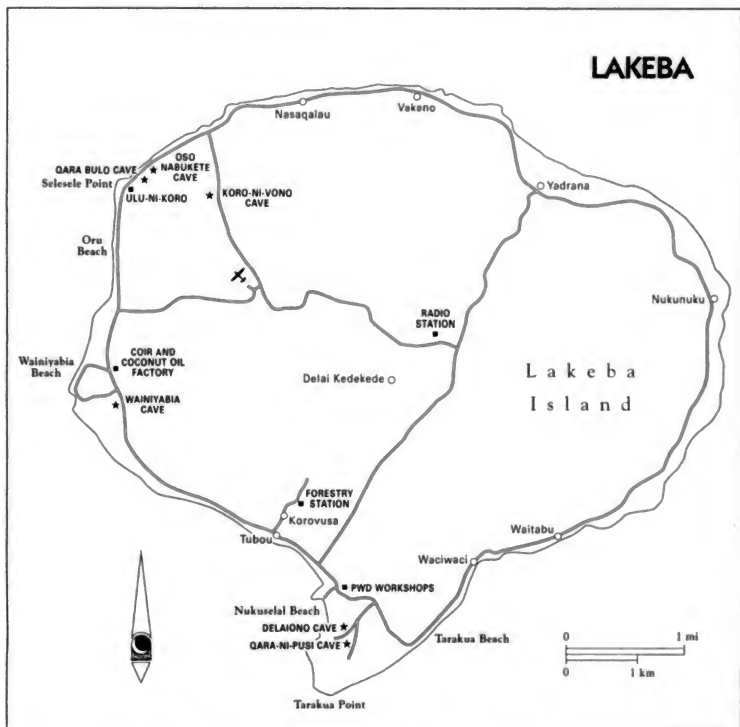
maining after the extraction is bagged and sold locally as feed for pigs. The husks are flattened and soaked, then fed through machinery that separates the fiber. This is then made into twine, rope, brushes, and doormats, or it is bundled to be used as mattress fiber. Nothing is wasted. Behind the factory is Wainiyabia Beach, one of the most scenic on Lakeba.

Nasaqalau and Vicinity

The finest limestone caves on the island are near the coast on the northwest side of Lakeba, 2.5 km southwest of Nasaqalau. **Oso Nabukete** is the largest; the entrance is behind a raised limestone terrace. You walk through

two chambers before reaching a small, circular opening about one meter in diameter, which leads into a third chamber. The story goes that women attempting to hide during pregnancy are unable to pass through this opening, thus giving the cave its name, the "Tight Fit to the Pregnant" Cave.

Nearby is a smaller cave, **Qara Bulo** ("Hidden Cave"), which one must crawl into. Warriors used it as a refuge and hiding place in former times. The old village of Nasaqalau was located on top of the high cliffs behind the caves at Ulu-ni-koro. The whole area is owned by the Nautoqumu clan of Nasaqalau, and they will arrange for a guide to show you around for a fee. Take a



flashlight and some newspapers to spread over the openings to protect your clothing.

Each October or November the Nasaqalau people perform a shark-calling ritual. A month before the ritual, a priest (*bete*) plants a post with a piece of *tapa* tied to it in the reef. He then keeps watch to ensure that no one comes near the area, while performing a daily kava ceremony. When the appointed day arrives, the caller wades out up to his neck and repeats a chant. Not long after, a large school of sharks led by a white shark arrives and circles the caller. He leads them to shallow water, where all but the white shark are formally killed and eaten.

East of Tubou

Two less impressive caves can be found at Tarakua, southeast of Tubou. **Qara-ni-pusi** has a small entrance, but opens up once you get inside. **Delaiono Cave** is just below a huge banyan tree; this one is easier to enter and smaller inside.

The number one beach near Tubou is **Nukuselal**, which you can reach by walking east along the coastal road as far as the P.W.D. workshops. Turn right onto the track, which runs along the west side of the compound to Nukuselal Beach.

Into the Interior

Many forestry roads have been built throughout the interior of Lakeba. You can walk across the island from Tubou to Yadrana in a couple of hours, enjoying excellent views along the way. A radio station operates on solar energy near the center of the island. **Aiwa Island**, which can be seen to the southeast, is owned by the Tui Nayau and is inhabited only by flocks of wild goats.

Accommodations

Jekesoni Qica's Guesthouse (c/o Lau Provincial Office, Tubou, Lakeba; tel. 823-188) in Tubou offers rooms with shared bath at F\$25 pp for bed and breakfast. Other meals are F\$5 each. **Ratu's Inn** (tel. 823-081) is similar. The locals at Tubou concoct a potent homebrew (*uburu*) from cassava—ask Jack or the Ratu where you can get some.

Mikaele Funaki (tel. 387-591 or 385-419) in Suva, "the master of eco-touring in Fiji," can arrange village accommodations in Nasaqalau

on northern Lakeba at F\$28 pp a day including meals and cave tours.

Getting There

Air Fiji flies to Lakeba three times a week from Suva (F\$114). A bus connects the airstrip to Tubou, and buses run around the island four times weekdays, three times daily weekends.

OTHER ISLANDS OF SOUTHERN LAU

Unlike the islands of northern Lau, many of which are freehold and owned by outsiders, the isles of southern Lau are communally owned by the Fijian inhabitants. This is by far the most remote corner of Fiji. In a pool on **Vanua Vatu** are red prawns similar to those of Vatulele and Vanua Levu. Here the locals can summon the prawns with a certain chant.

Oneata is famous for its mosquitoes and *tapa* cloth. In 1830 two Tahitian teachers from the London Missionary Society arrived on Oneata and were adopted by a local chief who had previously visited Tonga and Tahiti. The men spent the rest of their lives on the island, and there's a monument to them at Dakulua village.

Moce is known for its *tapa* cloth, which is also made on Namuka, Vatoa, and Ono-i-Lau. **Komo** is famous for its handsome women and dances (*meke*), which are performed whenever a ship arrives. Moce, Komo, and Olorua are unique in that they are volcanic islands without uplifted limestone terraces.

The **Yagasa Cluster** is owned by the people of Moce, who visit it occasionally to make copra. Fiji's finest *tanoa* are carved from *vesi* (ironwood) at **Kabara**, the largest island in southern Lau. The surfing is also said to be good at Kabara, if you can get there.

Fulaga is known for its woodcarving; large outrigger canoes are still built on Fulaga, as well as on **Ogea**. Over 100 tiny islands in the Fulaga lagoon have been undercut into incredible mushroom shapes. The water around them is tinged with striking colors by the dissolved limestone, and there are numerous magnificent beaches. Yachts can enter this lagoon through a narrow pass.

Ono-i-Lau, far to the south, is closer to Tonga than to the main islands of Fiji. It consists of three small volcanic islands, remnants of a single

Matuku Island,
Moala Group



ROBERT KENNINGTON

crater, in an oval lagoon. A few tiny coral islets sit on the barrier reef. The people of Ono-i-Lau make the best *magi magi* (sennit rope) and *tabu kaisi* mats in the country. Only high chiefs may sit on these mats. Ono-i-Lau formerly had air service from Suva, but this has been suspended.

The Moala Group

Structurally, geographically, and historically, the high volcanic islands of Moala, Totoya, and Matuku have more to do with Viti Levu than with the rest of Lau. In the mid-19th century, the Ton-

gan warlord Enele Ma'afu conquered the islands, and today they're still administered as part of the Lau Group. All three islands have varied scenery, with dark green rainforests above grassy slopes, good anchorage, many villages, and abundant food. Their unexplored nature yet relative proximity to Suva by boat make them an ideal escape for adventurers. No tourist facilities of any kind exist in the Moala Group.

Triangular **Moala** is an intriguing 68-square-km island, the ninth largest in Fiji. Two small crater lakes on the summit of Delai Moala (467 meters) are covered with matted sedges, which will support a person's weight. Though the main island is volcanic, an extensive system of reefs flanks the shores. Ships call at the small government station of Naroi, also the site of an airstrip that receives **Air Fiji** flights twice a week from Suva (F\$103).

Totoya is a horseshoe-shaped high island enclosing a deep bay on the south. The bay, actually the island's sunken crater, can only be entered through a narrow channel known as the Gullet, and the southeast trades send high waves across the reefs at the mouth of the bay, making this a dangerous place. Better anchorage is found off the southwest arm of the island. Five Fijian villages are found on Totoya, while neighboring **Matuku** has seven. The anchorage in a submerged crater on the west side of Matuku is one of the finest in Fiji.



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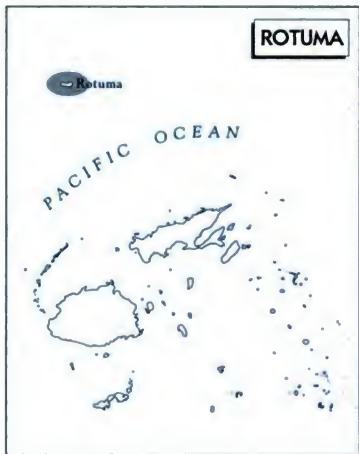
ROTUMA

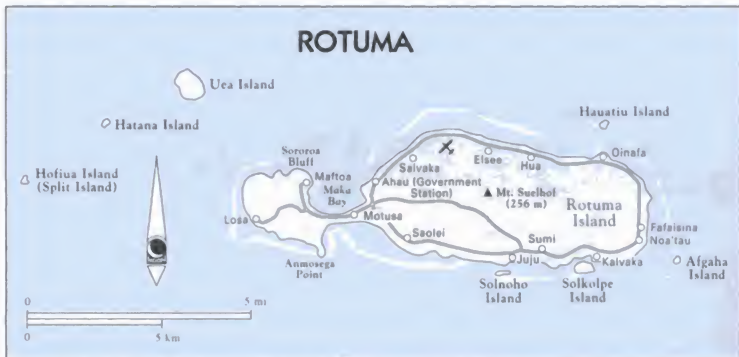
This isolated six-by-14-km volcanic island, 600 km north of Viti Levu, is surrounded on all sides by more than 322 km of open sea. There's a saying in Fiji that if you can find Rotuma on a map it's a fairly good map. The climate is damp and hot.

In the beginning Raho, the Samoan folk hero, dumped two basketfuls of earth here to create the twin islands, joined by the Motusa Isthmus, and installed Sauifitoga as king. Tongans from Niuafo'ou conquered Rotuma in the 17th century and ruled from Noa'tau until they were overthrown.

The first recorded European visit was by Captain Edwards of HMS *Pandora* in 1791, while he was searching for the *Bounty* mutineers. Tongan Wesleyan missionaries introduced Christianity in 1842, followed in 1847 by Marist Roman Catholics. Their followers fought pitched battles in the religious wars of 1871 and 1878, with the Wesleyans emerging victorious. Escaped convicts and beachcombers also flooded in but mostly succeeded in killing each other off. Tiring of strife, the chiefs asked Britain to annex the island in 1881, and it has been part of Fiji ever since. European planters ran the copra trade from

their settlement at Motusa until local cooperatives took over.





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Rotuma is run like a colony of Fiji, with the administration in the hands of a district officer responsible to the district commissioner at Levuka. Decisions of the 15-member Rotuma island council are subject to veto by the national government. A desire for independence is felt among some Rotumans, and recently Internet hucksters from the United States have tried to exploit this in the hope of creating a tax-free state that they could use for money laundering, gambling, and other anti-social activities. Some 2,800 Rotumans presently inhabit the island, and another 4,600 live in Suva. The light-skinned Polynesian Rotumans are easily distinguished from Fijians. The women weave fine white mats. Fiji's juiciest oranges are grown here and Rotuma kava is noted for its strength.

SIGHTS

Ships arrive at a wharf on the edge of the reef, connected to Oinafa Point by a 200-meter coral causeway, which acts as a breakwater. There's a lovely white beach at **Oinafa**. The airstrip is to the west, between Oinafa and Ahau, the government station. At **Noa'tau** southeast of Oinafa is a coop store; nearby, at **Sililo**, visit a hill with large stone slabs and old cannons scattered about, marking the burial place of the kings of yore. Look for the fine stained-glass windows in the Catholic church at **Sumi** on the south coast. Inland near the center of the island is Mt.

Suelhof (256 meters), the highest peak; climb it for the view.

Maftoa across the Motusa Isthmus has a cave with a freshwater pool. In the graveyard at Maftoa are huge stones brought here long ago. It's said four men could go into a trance and carry the stones with their fingers. **Sororoo Bluff** (218 meters) above Maftoa should also be climbed for the view. Deserted **Vovoe Beach** on the west side of Sororoo is one of the finest in the Pacific. A kilometer southwest of Sororoo is **Solmea Hill** (165 meters), with an inactive crater on its north slope. On the coast at the northwest corner of Rotuma is a natural **stone bridge** over the water.

Hatana, a tiny islet off the west end of Rotuma, is said to be the final resting place of Raho, the demigod who created Rotuma. A pair of volcanic rocks before a stone altar surrounded by a coral ring are said to be the King and Queen stones. Today Hatana is a refuge for seabirds. **Hofiua** or Split Island looks like it was cut in two with a knife; a circular boulder bridges the gap.

PRACTICALITIES

Accommodations

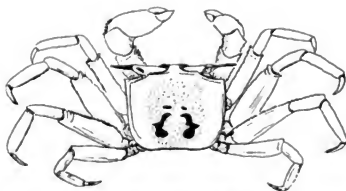
Few organized accommodations exist on Rotuma. Many Rotumans live in Suva, however, and if you have a Rotuman friend he/she may be willing to send word to his/her family to expect you. Ask your friend what you should take along

as a gift. Although the Colonial National Bank has a small branch at Ahau on Rotuma, you should change enough money for all local expenditures before leaving Suva.

Rotuma Island Backpackers (P.O. Box 83, Rotuma; tel. 891-290) is operated by Vani Marseu of Motusa village who asks F\$15 per couple to pitch a tent.

Getting There

Sun Air (tel. 891-084) flies to Rotuma from Suva twice weekly (F\$288). **Kadavu Shipping** (tel. 311-766) operates the ship *Bulou-ni-ceva* from Suva to Rotuma once a month (two days, F\$90/140 deck/cabin each way). Ask around Walu Bay and at Patterson Brothers Shipping for other ships from Suva.



racing crab (Ocypode ceratophthalmus)

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A definitive study of kinship, houses, food, life-cycles, land, spirits, personality, values, and administration.

Roth, G. Kingsley. *Fijian Way of Life*. 2nd ed. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1973. A standard reference on Fijian culture.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Capell, A. *A New Fijian Dictionary*. Suva: Government Printer, 1991. A Fijian-English dictionary invaluable for anyone interested in learning the language. Scholars have a generally low opinion of this work, which contains hundreds of errors, but it's still a handy reference. Also see C. Maxwell Churchward's *A New Fijian Grammar*.

Griffen, Arlene, ed. *With Heart and Nerve and Sinew: Post-coup writing from Fiji*. Suva: Marama Club, 1997. An eclectic collection of responses to the first coups and life in Fiji thereafter.

Hereniko, Vilsoni, and Teresia Teaiwa. *Last Virgin in Paradise*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1993. The Rotuman Hereniko has written a number of plays, including *Don't Cry Mama* (1977), *A Child for Iva* (1987), and *The Monster* (1989).

Kikau, Eci. *The Wisdom of Fiji*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1981. This extensive collection of Fijian proverbs opens a window to understanding Fijian society, culture, and philosophy.

Pillai, Raymond. *The Celebration*. Suva: South Pacific Creative Arts Society, 1980. A collection of short stories in which the heterogeneous nature of Indo-Fijian society is presented by an accomplished storyteller.

Tarte, Daryl. *Islands of the Frigate Bird*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1999. A novel about the struggle for survival of Central Pacific peoples.

Veramu, Joseph C. *Moving Through the Streets*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1994. A fast-moving novel providing insights into the lifestyles, pressures, and temptations of

teenagers in Suva. Veramu has also written a collection of short stories called *The Black Messiah* (1989).

Wendt, Albert, ed. *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English Since 1980*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1995. This worthwhile anthology of contemporary Pacific literature includes works by 10 Fijian writers including Prem Banfal, Sudesh Mishra, Satendra Nandan, and Som Prakash.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Douglas, Ngaire and Norman Douglas, eds. *Pacific Islands Yearbook*. Suva: Fiji Times, 1994. First published in 1932, this is the 17th edition of the original sourcebook on the islands. Although the realities of modern publishing have led to the demise of both the *Yearbook* and its cousin *Pacific Islands Monthly*, this final edition remains an indispensable reference work for students of the region. Copies can be purchased from The Fiji Times (tel. 304-111), 177 Victoria Parade, Suva.

The Far East and Australasia. London: Europa Publications. An annual survey and directory of Asia and the Pacific. Provides abundant and factual political and economic data; an excellent reference source.

Fry, Gerald W., and Rufino Mauricio. *Pacific Basin and Oceania*. Oxford: Clio Press, 1987. A selective, indexed Pacific bibliography, which actually describes the contents of the books, instead of merely listing them.

Gorman, G.E., and J.J. Mills. *Fiji: World Bibliographical Series, Volume 173*. Oxford: Clio Press, 1994. Critical reviews of 673 of the most important books about Fiji.

Lal, Brig V., and Kate Fortune, eds. *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. This important book combines the writings of 200 acknowledged experts on the physical environment, peoples, history, politics, economics, society, and

culture of the South Pacific. The accompanying CD-ROM provides a wealth of maps, graphs, photos, biographies, and more.

Snow, Philip A., ed. *A Bibliography of Fiji, Tonga, and Rotuma*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969.

BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS

Some of the books listed above are out of print and not available at bookstores. Major research libraries should have a few, otherwise check the specialized antiquarian booksellers or regional publishers listed below for hard-to-find books on Fiji. Sources of detailed topographical maps or navigational charts are provided in the following section. Many titles can be ordered online through www.southpacific.org/books.html.

Armchair Sailor Seabooks, 543 Thames St., Newport, RI 02840, U.S.A. (tel. 800/292-4278, fax 410/847-1219, website: www.armchair-sailor.com). An outstanding source of charts and cruising guides to Fiji and the Pacific.

Bibliophile, 24A Glenmore Rd., Paddington, Sydney, NSW 2021, Australia (tel. 61-2/9331-1411, fax 61-2/9361-3371, website: www.ozemail.com.au/~susant). An antiquarian bookstore specializing in books about Oceania. View their extensive catalog online.

Book Bin Pacifica, 228 S.W. Third St., Corvallis, OR 97333, U.S.A. (tel. 541/752-0045, fax 541/754-4115, website: www.bookbin.com, email: pacific@bookbin.com). Their indexed mail-order catalog, *Hawaii and Pacific Islands*, lists hundreds of rare books, and they also carry some the titles from the Institute of Pacific Studies in Suva.

Books of Yesteryear, P.O. Box 257, Newport, NSW 2106, Australia (tel./fax 61-2/9918-0545, website: www.abebooks.com/home/booksofyesteryear). Another Australian source of old, fine, and rare books on the Pacific.

Books Pasifika, P.O. Box 68-446, Newtown, Auckland 1, New Zealand (tel. 64-9/303-2349, fax 64-9/377-9528, website: www.ak.planet.gen.nz/pasifika). Besides being a major publisher, Pasifika Press is one of New Zealand's best sources of mail order books on Oceania, including those of the Institute of Pacific Studies.

Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, P.O. Box 1168, Suva, Fiji Islands (tel. 679/212-018, fax 679/301-594, website: www.usp.ac.fj/ips). Their catalog, *Books from the Pacific Islands*, lists numerous books about the islands written by the Pacific islanders themselves. Some are rather dry academic publications of interest only to specialists, so order carefully. The Institute's Book Display Room on the USP campus in Suva sells most of these books over the counter. For Internet access to the catalog, see the University Book Centre listing which follows.

Pacific Island Books, 2802 East 132nd Circle, Thornton, CO 80241, U.S.A. (tel. 303/920-8338, website: www.pacificislandbooks.com). By far the best U.S. source of books about Fiji. They stock many titles published by the Institute of Pacific Studies.

Peter Moore, P.O. Box 66, Cambridge, CB1 3PD, United Kingdom (tel. 44-1223/411177, fax 44-1223/240559). The European distributor of books from the Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific.

Serendipity Books, P.O. Box 340, Nedlands, WA 6909, Australia (tel. 61-8/9382-2246, fax 61-8/9388-2728, website: www.merriweb.com.au/serendip). The largest stocks of antiquarian, secondhand, and out-of-print books on the Pacific in Western Australia.

University Book Centre, University of the South Pacific, P.O. Box 1168, Suva, Fiji Islands (fax 679/303-265, website: www.uspbookcentre.com). An excellent source of books written and produced in the South Pacific.

University of Hawaii Press, 2840 Kolowalu St., Honolulu, HI 96822-1888, U.S.A. (tel. 808/956-

8255, fax 808/988-6052, website: www.uhpress.hawaii.edu). Their *Hawaii* and the *Pacific* catalog available online is well worth requesting if you're trying to build a Pacific library.

MAP PUBLISHERS

Defense Mapping Agency Catalog of Maps, Charts, and Related Products: Region VIII, Oceania. National Ocean Service, Distribution Division, 6501 Lafayette Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737-1199, U.S.A. (tel. 301/436-8301, fax 301/436-6829, website: <http://chartmaker.nod.noaa.gov>). A good source for nautical charts of the Pacific.

Fiji Hydrographic Office. (Marine Department, P.O. Box 362, Suva, Fiji; tel. 315-457, fax 303-251). Produces navigational charts of the Yasawas, Kadavu, eastern Vanua Levu, and the Lau Group. Their U.S. agents are Captains Nautical Supplies (2500 15th Ave. West, Seattle, WA 98119, U.S.A.; tel. 800/448-2278, fax 206/281-4921, website: www.captainsnautical.com) and Pacific Map Center (560 N. Nimitz Highway, Suite 206A, Honolulu, HI 96817, U.S.A.; tel. 808/545-3600).

International Maps. Hema Maps Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 4365, Eight Mile Plains, Queensland 4113, Australia (tel. 61-7/3340-0000, fax 61-7/3340-0099, website: www.hemamaps.com.au). Maps of the Pacific, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Samoa.

Lands and Surveys Department. (Plan and Map Sales, P.O. Box 2222, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji; tel. 211-395, fax 309-331). The main publisher of topographical maps of Fiji with a 1:50,000 series covering most of the country.

PERIODICALS

Banaba/Ocean Island News. Stacey M. King, P.O. Box 149, Miami, Queensland 4220, Australia (tel./fax 61-7/5575-9005, website: www.ion.com.au/~banaban). This lively newsletter covers virtually everything relating to the Banabans of Fiji and Kiribati.

Commodores' Bulletin. Seven Seas Cruising Assn., 1525 South Andrews Ave., Suite 217, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316, U.S.A. (tel. 954/463-2431, fax 954/463-7183, website: www.ssca.org; US\$53 a year worldwide by airmail). This monthly bulletin is chock-full of helpful information for anyone wishing to tour the Pacific by sailing boat. All Pacific yachties and friends should be Seven Seas members!

The Contemporary Pacific. University of Hawaii Press, 2840 Kolowalu St., Honolulu, HI 96822, U.S.A. (www.uhpress.hawaii.edu, published twice a year, US\$35 a year). Publishes a good mix of articles of interest to both scholars and general readers; the country-by-country "Political Review" in each number is a concise summary of events during the preceding year. The "Dialogue" section offers informed comment on the more controversial issues in the region, while recent publications on the islands are examined through book reviews. Those interested in current topics about Pacific island affairs should check recent volumes for background information.

Europe-Pacific Solidarity Bulletin. Published quarterly by the European Center for Studies Information and Education on Pacific Issues, P.O. Box 151, 3700 AD Zeist, the Netherlands (tel. 31-30/692-7827, fax 31-30/692-5614, website: www.antenna.nl/ecsiep).

Journal of Pacific History. Division of Pacific and Asian History, RSPAS, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia (fax 61-2/6249-5525, website: <http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/spin/RSRC/history/jphsite.html>). Since 1966 this publication has provided reliable scholarly information on the Pacific. Outstanding.

Journal of the Polynesian Society. Department of Maori Studies, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand (www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/ant/JPS/journal.html). Established in 1892, this quarterly journal contains a wealth of material on Pacific cultures past and present written by scholars of Pacific anthropology, archaeology, language, and history.

Pacific. P.O. Box 913, Honolulu, HI 96808, U.S.A. (tel. 808/537-9500, fax 808/537-6455, website: www.pacificislands.cc). In January, 2001, Hawaii-based *Pacific Magazine* (founded in 1976) merged with Fiji-based *Islands Business* to create a single magazine with North Pacific and South Pacific editions. The South Edition is still published in Suva. Since the demise of *Pacific Islands Monthly* in June 1999, *Pacific* has emerged as the only monthly newsmagazine covering all of Oceania. A subscription will help you keep in touch.

Pacific News Bulletin. Pacific Concerns Resource Center, 83 Army St., Tororak, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji Islands (fax 679/304-755, website: www.pccr.org.fj; US\$15 a year to Australia, US\$30 a year to North America and Europe). A 16-page monthly newsletter containing up-to-date information on nuclear, independence, environmental, and political questions.

Pacifica Review. The Institute for Peace Research, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3083, Australia (www.latrobe.edu.au/www/socpol/pacifica.htm). A journal focusing on peace, security, and global change in the Asia Pacific region.

Review. P.O. Box 12095, Suva, Fiji Islands (P.O. Box 12095, Suva; fax 679/302-852, website: www.review.com.fj, email: review@is.com.fj). A monthly news magazine with excellent coverage of business and politics in Fiji. Read the electronic edition (for a fee) at www.fijilive.com.

Surf Report. P.O. Box 1028, Dana Point, CA 92629, U.S.A. (tel. 949/661-5147, fax 949/496-7849, website: www.surfermag.com/travel). Each month this newsletter provides a detailed analysis of surfing conditions at a different destination (the last report on Fiji was issue 7 #12). Back issues on specific countries are available at US\$8 each. This is your best source of surfing information by far, and the same people also put out the glossy *Surfer Magazine*.

Tok Blong Pasifik. South Pacific Peoples Foun-

dation of Canada, 1921 Fernwood Road, Victoria, BC V8T 2Y6, Canada (tel. 250/381-4131, fax 250/388-5258, website: www.sppf.org; C\$25 a year in Canada, US\$25 elsewhere). This lively quarterly of news and views focuses on regional environmental, development, human rights, and disarmament issues.

Undercurrent. P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94966, U.S.A. (www.undercurrent.com, US\$39 a year). A monthly consumer protection-oriented newsletter for serious scuba divers. Unlike virtually every other diving publication, *Undercurrent* accepts no advertising or free trips, which allows its writers to tell it as it is.

OTHER RESOURCES

DISCOGRAPHY

Fanshawe, David, ed. *Exotic Voices and Rhythms of the South Seas* (EUCD 1254). Cook Islands drum dancing, a Fijian *tralala meke*, a Samoan *fiafia*, a Vanuatu string band, and Solomon Islands panpipes selected from the 1,200 hours of tapes in the Fanshawe Pacific Collection. This recording and many like it can be ordered through www.southpacific.org/music.html.

Fanshawe, David, ed. *Spirit of Melanesia* (CD-SDL 418). Saydisc Records, United Kingdom (www.qualiton.com). An anthology of the music of the five countries of Melanesia with seven tracks from Fiji. Recorded in 1978, 1983, and 1994.

Linkels, Ad, and Lucia Linkels, eds. *Rabi* (PAN 2095). Music from Rabi, the new home of the exiled Banabans of Ocean Island, recorded on the island in 1997 and 1998.

Linkels, Ad, and Lucia Linkels, eds. *Tautoga* (PAN 2097CD). The songs and dances of Rotuma, Fiji, recorded on the island in 1996. It's believed the *tautoga* dance arrived from Tonga in the 18th century.

Linkels, Ad, and Lucia Linkels, eds. *Viti Levu* (PAN 2096CD). This unique recording provides 20 examples of real Fijian music, from Isa Lei to Bula rock, plus four Indo-Fijian pieces. Recorded between 1986 and 1998, it's the best of its kind on the market. The three Linkels compact discs from PAN Records form part of the series "Anthology of Pacific Music" and extensive booklets explaining the music come with the records.

Music stores can order through Arhoolie, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530, U.S.A. (tel. 510/525-7471, fax 510/525-1204, website: www.arhoolie.com/catalog/pan.html).

TOP 20 FIJI WEBSITES

David Robie's Café Pacific

www.asiapac.org.fj/cafepacific

This personal website of the coordinator of the University of the South Pacific's journalism program is brimming with links to provocative articles and analysis not found elsewhere.

Dive Fiji

www.divefiji.com

Provides loads of specific information on scuba diving all around Fiji, with handy maps, photos, and links.

Fiji Budget

www.fijibudget.com

An umbrella website for over a dozen backpacker resorts and dive shops in the central Yasawas. You can download their brochure as an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file.

Fiji Government Official Site

www.fiji.gov.fj

This crispy clear, dynamic site is well worth visiting to taste the image local politicians and bureaucrats try to present to the world. You can listen to Fiji's national anthem, peruse recent news briefs, and consult topographical maps. The press releases are often edifying.

fijilive.com

www.fijilive.com

News and editorials from the *Daily Post*, business news, exchange rates, and a lively forum.

Fiji Meteorological Service

www.met.gov.fj

Everything you ever wanted to know about Fiji's weather, including a daily Fiji weather bulletin and regional forecasts for 10 other Pacific countries.

Fiji Online Travel Bureau

www.tourismfiji.com

Run by the Fiji-based travel agency UTC, this site provides lots of useful visitor information, including a clickable map of Fiji's regions.

FijiShop.com

www.fijishop.com

Your chance to familiarize yourself with the sort of tourist products you'll be able to buy in Fiji. It's tasteful design, easy navigation, and authenticity have earned it a place here.

Fiji Village

www.fijivillage.com

Radio station FM 96's site provides breaking news and headlines from *The Fiji Times*. Listen to the top 10 songs in Fiji, read the classifieds, or send a free Fiji postcard.

Fiji Visitors Bureau

www.bulafiji.com

This site is used by Fiji's national tourist office to disseminate information about accommodations, activities, transportation, events, and the like. Precise, factual information is provided about most tourist facilities.

Fiji Yachting

www.fijiyachting.com

A detailed cruising guide to Fiji with maps, descriptions, anchorages, marinas, regulations, charters, a slide show, and more. Perhaps the best Fiji website of all.

OT&T

www.etcotoursfiji.com

Tastefully presented cultural and background information on Levuka and Ovalau, with just the right mix of tourist information and photos.

People's Coalition Government

www.pcgov.org.fj

Refreshingly different from all the rest, this site

will bring you up to date on Fiji's progress toward the restoration of democracy.

Radio Fiji News

www.radiofiji.org

Delivers the latest news, weather, or sports report in English, Fijian, or Hindi; announces upcoming events; and you can request a song to be broadcast on any of their five stations.

Rivers Fiji

www.riversfiji.com

Provides extensive information on white-water rafting and kayaking on southern Viti Levu, and their "release of liability form" really tells it as it is.

Rob Kay's Fiji Guide

www.fijiguide.com

The original author of Lonely Planet's Fiji guide offers a variety of travel information and tips not found elsewhere on the web. His whole book is available online here.

Rotuma Website

www2.hawaii.edu/oceanic/rotuma/os/hanua.html

Every niche relating to Rotuma is here, including history, culture, language, maps, population, politics, news, photos, humor, proverbs, recipes, art, and music.

Savusavu Fiji

www.savusavufiji.com

The pleasant design conveys the atmosphere of Savusavu, the way Fiji used to be. The photos, fast facts, and links introduce you to the accommodations, diving, sailing, fishing, transport, and tours of the town.

South Pacific Organizer

www.southpacific.org

The personal website of the author of *Moon Handbooks: Fiji* provides updated links and travel tips for the entire region. Many of the books and compact discs reviewed in Resources can be ordered through this site.

Travelmaxia.com

www.travelmaxia.com

This online travel agency is a major clearing house for bookings and information. The numerous outside forms and links are useful.

WEBSITE DIRECTORY

Affordable Fiji, Yasawaswww.affordablefiji.net**Air Fiji, Suva**www.airfiji.net**Air Pacific, Nadi**www.airpacific.com**Applied Geoscience Commission, Suva**www.sopac.org.fj**Aqua-Trek, Nadi**www.aquatrek.com**Aquaventure, Taveuni**www.aquaventure.org**Australian High Commission, Suva**www.austhighcomm.org.fj**Avis Rent-a-Car, Nadi**www.avis.com.fj**Banaban Society, Australia**www.ion.com.au/~banaban**Beachcomber Island, Nadi**www.beachcomberfiji.com**Beachouse, Korolevu**<http://fijibeachouse.8m.com>**Beachside Resort, Nadi**www.beachsideresortfiji.com**Bedarra House, Sigatoka**www.bedarrarfiji.com**Beqa Divers, Pacific Harbor**www.beqadivers.com**Bethams Cottages, Nananu-i-Ra**www.bethams.com.fj**Blue Lagoon Cruises, Lautoka**www.bluelagooncruises.com**British High Commission, Suva**www.ukinthepacific.bhc.org.fj**Bureau of Statistics, Suva**www.statsfiji.gov.fj**Captain Cook Cruises, Nadi**www.captcookcrus.com.au**Castaway Island, Mamanucas**www.castawayisland.com**Central Rental Ltd., Nadi**www.central-rent-car.com.fj**Club Fiji, Nadi**www.clubfiji-resort.com**Communications Fiji Ltd., Suva**www.fijivillage.com**Constitutions of Fiji, Suva**www.fijiconstitution.com**Coral Air, Nadi**www.coralair.com**Coral Coast Scuba Ventures, Cuvu**www.coralcoastscuba.com**Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort, Savusavu**www.fijioresort.com**Crow's Nest Resort, Korotogo**www.crowsnestfiji.com**Crusoe's Retreat, Korolevu**www.crusoesretreat.com**Crystal Divers, Nananu-i-Ra**www.crystaldivers.com**Daku Resort, Savusavu**www.dakuresort.com.fj**Department of Information, Suva**www.fiji.gov.fj**Devokula Cultural Village, Ovalau**www.culturefiji.com**Discover Diving**www.dive.inthepacific.com**Discover Fiji Tours, Navua**http://fathomtravel.com/fiji/discover_fiji**Dive Connections, Pacific Harbor**www.pacific-harbour.com/diveconn**Dive Fiji, Nadi**www.divefiji.com**Dive Kadavu, Kadavu**www.divekadavu.com**Dive Taveuni, Taveuni**www.divetaveuni.com**Dive Tropex, Nadi**www.divetroplex.com**Dominion International Hotel, Nadi**www.dominion-international.com**Eco Divers, Savusavu**www.skyboom.com/ecodivers**Embassy of the United States, Suva**www.amembassy-fiji.gov**Emperor Gold Mine, Vatukuola**www.emperor.com.au**Fiji Aggressor, Nadi**www.pac-aggressor.com**Fiji American Civil Rights Association**www.fijiamr.org**Fiji Bed Bank, Nadi**www.fijibedbank.com**Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, Suva**www.radiofiji.org**Fiji Business Directory, Suva**www.fijibusiness.com

Fiji Business News, Suva

www.fijibiznews.com

Fiji Classifieds, Suva

www.classifieds.com.fj

Fiji Escape, Suva

www.fijiescape.com

Fiji Estates, Suva

www.fijiestates.com

Fiji Football Association, Suva

www.fijifootball.com

Fiji For Less, Suva

www.fiji4less.com

www.fiji4less.com.fj

Fiji Gallery, Fiji

www.fijigallery.com

Fiji International Telecommunications, Suva

www.fintel.com.fj

Fiji Island White Pages

www.whitepages.com.fj

Fiji Islands Yellow Pages

www.yellowpages.com.fj

Fiji Live, Suva

www.fijilive.com

Fiji Meteorological Service, Nadi

www.met.gov.fj

Fiji Museum, Suva

www.fijimuseum.org.fj

Fiji Natural Artesan Water

www.fijiwater.com

Fiji Now, Ba

www.fiji.nu

Fiji Online, Suva

www.fiji-online.com.fj

Fiji On Sale, Suva

www.fijionsale.com

Fiji Rugby, Suva

www.rugby.com.fj

Fiji's Blue, Suva

www.fijisblue.com

Fiji School of Medicine, Suva

www.fsm.ac.fj

Fiji Shop, Fiji

www.fijishop.com

Fiji Television Ltd., Suva

www.fijitv.com.fj

Fiji Trade & Investment Bureau, Suva

www.ftib.org.fj

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Suva

www.bulafiji.com

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Auckland

www.bulafiji.co.nz

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Los Angeles

www.bulafiji-americas.com

Fiji Visitors Bureau, Japan

www.tabi.or.jp/fvb

Fiji Wala, Fiji

www.fijiwala.com

Fiji Web Center, Nadi

www.ivanetdesign.com/fijiweb

Fiji Women's Crisis Center, Suva

www.fijiwomen.com

Fiji Yachting, Suva

www.fijiyachting.com

First Divers, Nadi

www.ivanetdesign.com/firstdivers

First Landing Resort, Lautoka

www.firstlandingfiji.com

Forum Secretariat, Suva

www.forumsec.org.fj

Free-Fiji.com

www.freefiji.com

Greenpeace Pacific Campaign

www.greenpeace.org.au

Harbor Property Services, Deuba

www.pacific-harbour.com

Hello Fiji, Suva

www.hellofiji.com

Hideaway Resort, Korolevu

www.hideawayfiji.com

Hot Springs Hotel, Savusavu

www.savusavufiji.com

Internet Fiji, Suva

www.internetfiji.com

Invest in Paradise, Pacific Harbor

www.fiji2000.net

Island Hoppers, Nadi

www.helicopters.com.fj

Jack's Handicrafts, Nadi

www.jacks.handicrafts.com.fj

Journalism Program, USP Suva

www.usp.ca.fj/journ

Just Pacific, Fiji

www.justpacific.com

Khans Rent-a-Car, Nadi

www.khansrental.com.fj

Koro Sun Resort, Savusavu

www.korosunresort.com

Kula Eco Park, Korotogo

www.fijiwild.com

Lagoon Resort, Pacific Harbor

www.lagoonresort.com

Lalati Resort, Beqa

www.lalati-fiji.com

Leleuvia Island Resort, Levuka

www.owlfiji.com/leleuvia.htm

Lomalagi Resort, Savusavu

www.lomalagi.com

Malolo Island Resort, Mamanucas

www.maloloisland.com

Maravu Plantation Resort, Taveuni

www.maravu.net

Margaret Travel Service, Nadi

www.fijiislandstravel.com

Marlin Bay Resort, Beqa

www.marlinbay.com

Matamanoa Island Resort, Mamanucas

<http://matamanoa.bulafiji.com>

Matangi Island Resort, Taveuni

www.matangiisland.com

Matava Astrolabe Hideaway, Kadavu

www.matava.com.au

Mike's Divers, Votua

www.dive-fiji.com

Ministry of Mineral Resources, Suva

www.mrd.gov.fj

Mocambo Hotel, Nadi

www.shangri-la.com

Mollie Dean Cruises, Lami

www.sere.com.fj

Mokosoi Products, Suva

www.mokosoi.com.fj

Mokusigas Island Resort, Nananu-i-Ra

www.mokusigas.com

Moody's Namena, Savusavu

www.bulafiji.com/web/moodys

Moon Handbooks: Fiji

www.southpacific.org/fiji.html

Musket Cove Resort, Mamanucas

www.musketcovefiji.com

Nabuk Charters, Taveuni

www.nabuk.com

Nacula Tikina Tourism Association, Yasawas

www.fijibudget.com

Nadi Bay Hotel, Nadi

www.fijinadibayhotel.com

Naglgia Island, Kadavu

www.fijisurf.com

Nai'a Cruises, Pacific Harbor

www.naia.com.fj

Nalgani Island Resort, Lomaiviti

www.naigani.com

Namale Resort, Savusavu

www.namalefiji.com

Namotu Island Resort, Nadi

www.namotuisland.com

Natadola Beach Resort, Sigatoka

www.natadola.com

Navini Island Resort, Mamanucas

www.navinifiji.com.fj

Naviti Resort, Korolevu

www.navitiresort.com.fj

Nista Design, Pacific Harbor

www.nista.com

Nukubati Island Resort, Labasa

www.nukubati.com

Nukuyaweni Outpost, Gau

www.bayofangels.com

Octopus Resort, Waya

www.octopusresort.com

Outrigger Reef Resort, Korotogo

www.outrigger.com/fiji

Ovalau Holiday Resort, Levuka

www.ohrfiji.com

Ovalau Tours and Transport, Levuka

www.ecotoursfiji.com

Ovalau Watersports Ltd., Levuka

www.owlfiji.com

Over Here Fiji, Pacific Harbor

www.overherefiji.com

Pacific Concerns Resource Center, Suva

www.pcrc.org.fj

Pacific Forum, Fiji

www.pacificforum.com

Pacific Island Seaplanes, Nadi

www.fijiseaplanes.com

Pacific Magazine, Suva

www.pacificislands.cc

Pacific Navigator, Nadi

www.pacificnavigator.com

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www.sppf.org

PVV Tours, Nadi

www.pacificvalley.com.fj

Papageno Eco Resort, Kadavu

www.papagenoecoresort.com

Paradise Properties, Pacific Harbor

www.paradiseproperties.com

People's Coalition Government, Fiji

www.pcgov.org.fj

Philatelic Bureau, Suva

www.stampsfiji.com
Plantation Island Resort, Malololailai
www.plantationisland.com
www.plantation-island.com
Qamea Beach Resort, Qamea
www.qamea.com
Ra Divers, Nananu-i-Ra
www.radivers.com
Raffles Gateway Hotel, Nadi
www.ivanetdesign.com/gateway/home.htm
Raffles Tradewinds Hotel, Suva
www.ivanetdesign.com/tradewinds/home.htm
Rainbow Reef Beach Estates, Vanua Levu
www.rainbowreeffiji.com
Rainbow Reef Resort, eastern Vanua Levu
www.rainbowreefresort.com
Raintree Lodge, Colo-i-Suva
www.raintreelodge.com
Resort Homes Fiji, Deuba
www.resorthomesfiji.com
Rivers Fiji, Pacific Harbor
www.riversfiji.com
Rob Kay's Fiji Guide
www.fijiguide.com
Rosie The Travel Service, Nadi
www.citysearch.com.au/syd/rosietours
Savusavu Today, Savusavu
<http://skybusiness.com/savusavutoday>
Sailwing Yachting, Lautoka
www.nauticabusiness.com/sailwing
Sandollars Gifts, Suva
www.sandollars.com
Scuba Bula, Nadi
www.scubabula.com
Sea Fiji Travel, Savusavu
www.seafiji.com
Seashell Cove Resort, Nadi
www.seashellresort.com
Shangri-La's Fijian Resort, Nadi
www.shangri-la.com
Sheraton Fiji Resort, Nadi
www.sheraton.com/fiji
Significantly Original Holidays, Levuka
www.soholidays.com
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South Pacific Business, Pacific Harbor
www.southpacificbusiness.com
South Pacific Employment, Pacific Harbor
www.southpacificemployment.com

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www.spto.org
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South Seas Private Hotel, Suva
www.fiji4less.com
Subsurface Fiji, Lautoka
www.fijidiving.com
Sun Air, Nadi
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www.ivanetdesign.com/sunvacation
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www.surfingfiji.com
Swiss Divers, Taveuni
www.swissfijidivers.com
Tambua Sands Beach Resort, Korolevu
www.tambuasandsfiji.com
Tanoa Hotels, Nadi
www.tanoahotels.com
Taveuni Development Co., Suva
www.fijirealestate.com
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Tourist Information Center, Nadi
www.fijiadventures.com.fj
TravelMaxia.com, Pacific Harbor
www.travelmaxia.com
Treasure Island Resort, Mamanucas
www.treasure.com.fj
Tropical Dive, Matangi Island
www.matangiislanddive.com
Tropical Dive, Naigani
www.fijiscuba.com
Turtle Airways, Nadi
www.turtleairways.com

Turtle Island Resort, Yasawas
www.turtlefiji.com
United Touring Company, Nadi
www.tourismfiji.com
University Book Centre, Suva
www.uspbookcentre.com
University of the South Pacific, Suva
www.usp.ac.fj
Vakaviti Motel & Dorm, Korotogo
www.bulavakaviti.com.fj
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www.vanairabay.com
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www.vatulele.com
Victory Inland Safaris, Nadi
www.victory.com.fj
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www.vomofiji.com
Wadigi Island Lodge, Mamanucas
www.wadigi.com
Waidroka Bay Resort, Coral Coast
www.dive-surf-fiji.com.fj
Waisalima Beach Resort, Kadavu
www.fijilive.com/waisalima
Wakaya Club, Lomaiviti
www.wakayaclub.com
Wananavu Beach Resort, Rakiraki
www.wananavu.com
Warwick Fiji, Korolevu
www.warwickfiji.com
Wayalailai Eco Haven Resort, Yasawas
www.bbr.ca/wayalailai
Worldskip Fiji
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World Wide Fund for Nature, Suva
www.wwfpacific.org.fj
Women in Fiji, Suva
www.women.com.fj
Yacht Help, Lautoka
www.yachthelp.com
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www.yasawa.com

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GLOSSARY

adi—the female equivalent of ratu

AIDS—Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

archipelago—a group of islands

atoll—a low-lying, ring-shaped coral reef enclosing a lagoon

balabala—tree fern

balawa—pandanus, screw pine

balolo—in Fijian, a reef worm (*Eunice viridis*)

bareboat charter—chartering a yacht without crew or provisions

bark cloth—see tapa

barrier reef—a coral reef separated from the adjacent shore by a lagoon

bêche-de-mer—sea cucumber; an edible sea slug

bete—a traditional priest

bilibili—a bamboo raft

bilo—a kava cup

blackbirder—A 19th-century European recruiter of island labor, mostly ni-Vanuatu and Solomon Islanders taken to work on plantations in Queensland and Fiji.

Bose vaka-Turaga—Great Council of Chiefs

Bose vaka-Yasana—Provincial Council

breadfruit—a large, round fruit with starchy flesh, often baked in the *lovo*

bula shirt—a colorful Fijian aloha shirt

buli—Fijian administrative officer in charge of a *tikina*; subordinate of the roko tui

bure—a village house

BYO—Bring Your Own (an Australian term used to refer to restaurants that allow you to bring your own alcoholic beverages)

caldera—a wide crater formed through the collapse or explosion of a volcano

cassava—manioc; the starchy edible root of the tapioca plant

chain—an archaic unit of length equivalent to 20 meters

ciguatera—a form of fish poisoning caused by microscopic algae

coir—coconut husk sennit used to make rope, etc.

confirmation—A confirmed reservation exists

when a supplier acknowledges, either orally or in writing, that a booking has been accepted.

copra—dried coconut meat used in the manufacturing of coconut oil, cosmetics, soap, and margarine

coral—a hard, calcareous substance of various shapes, composed of the skeletons of tiny marine animals called polyps

coral bank—a coral formation over 150 meters long

coral head—a coral formation a few meters across

coral patch—a coral formation up to 150 meters long

cyclone—Also known as a hurricane (in the Caribbean) or typhoon (in Japan). A tropical storm that rotates around a center of low atmospheric pressure; it becomes a cyclone when its winds reach force 12 or 64 knots. At sea the air will be filled with foam and driving spray, the water surface completely white with 14-meter-high waves. In the Northern Hemisphere, cyclones spin counterclockwise, while south of the equator they move clockwise. The winds of cyclonic storms are deflected toward a low-pressure area at the center, although the “eye” of the cyclone may be calm.

dalo—see taro

deck—Australian English for a terrace or porch

Degei—the greatest of the pre-Christian Fijian gods

desiccated coconut—the shredded meat of dehydrated fresh coconut

direct flight—a through flight with one or more stops but no change of aircraft, as opposed to a nonstop flight

drua—an ancient Fijian double canoe

dugong—a large plant-eating marine mammal; called a manatee in the Caribbean

EEZ—Exclusive Economic Zone; a 200-nautical-mile offshore belt of an island nation or sea-coast state that controls the mineral exploitation and fishing rights

endemic—native to a particular area and existing only there

ESCAP—Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

expatriate—a person residing in a country other than his/her own; in the South Pacific such persons are also called “Europeans” if their skin is white, or simply “expats.”

FAD—fish aggregation device

fissure—a narrow crack or chasm of some length and depth

FIT—foreign independent travel; a custom-designed, prepaid tour composed of many individualized arrangements

fringing reef—a reef along the shore of an island

GPS—Global Positioning System, the space age successor of the sextant

guano—manure of seabirds, used as a fertilizer

guyot—a submerged atoll, the coral of which couldn't keep up with rising water levels

HIV—Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the cause of AIDS

hurricane—see cyclone

ivi—the Polynesian chestnut tree (*Inocarpus edulis*)

jug—a cross between a ceramic kettle and a pitcher used to heat water for tea or coffee in Australian-style hotels

kai—freshwater mussel

kaisi—a commoner

kava—a Polynesian word for the drink known in the Fijian language as *yaqona* and in English slang as “grog.” This traditional beverage is made by squeezing a mixture of the grated root of the pepper shrub (*Piper methysticum*) and cold water through a strainer of hibiscus-bark fiber.

kerekere—asking or borrowing something from a member of one's own group

knot—about three kilometers per hour

kokoda—chopped raw fish and sea urchins marinated with onions and lemon; called *sashimi* in Japanese

koro—village

kumala—sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)

kumi—stenciled tapa cloth

lagoon—an expanse of water bounded by a reef

lali—a hollow log drum hit with a stick

Lapita pottery—pottery made by the ancient Polynesians from 1600 to 500 B.C.

LDS—Latter-day Saints; the Mormons

leeward—downwind; the shore (or side) sheltered from the wind; as opposed to windward

live-aboard—a tour boat with cabin accommodation for scuba divers

LMS—London Missionary Society; a Protestant group that spread Christianity from Tahiti (1797) across the Pacific

lolo—coconut cream

lovo—an underground, earthen oven (called an *umu* in the Polynesian languages); after A.D. 500 the Polynesians had lost the art of making pottery, so they were compelled to bake their food rather than boil it.

magiti—feast

mahimahi—dorado, Pacific dolphinfish (no relation to the mammal)

mana—authority, prestige, virtue, “face,” psychic power, a positive force

mangrove—a tropical shrub with branches that send down roots forming dense thickets along tidal shores

manioc—cassava, tapioca, a starchy root crop

masa kesa—freehand painted tapa

masi—see tapa

mata ni vanua—an orator who speaks for a high chief

matrilineal—a system of tracing descent through the mother's familial line

meke—traditional song and dance

Melanesia—the high island groups of the western Pacific (Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea); from *melas* (black)

Micronesia—chains of high and low islands mostly north of the Equator (Carolines, Gilberts, Marianas, Marshalls); from *micro* (small)

mynah—an Indian starlinglike bird (*Gracula*)

NAUI—National Association of Underwater Instructors

NGO—Nongovernment organization

NFIP—Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific movement

overbooking—the practice of confirming more seats, cabins, or rooms than are actually available to insure against no-shows

Pacific rim—the continental landmasses and large countries around the fringe of the Pacific

PADI—Professional Association of Dive Instructors (also Put Another Dollar In or Pay And Dive Immediately)

palusami—a Samoan specialty of coconut cream wrapped in taro leaves and baked

pandanus—screw pine with slender stem and prop roots. The sword-shaped leaves are used for plaiting mats and hats.

parasailing—a sport in which participants are carried aloft by a parachute pulled behind a speedboat

pass—a channel through a barrier reef, usually with an outward flow of water

passage—an inside passage between an island and a barrier reef

patrilineal—a system of tracing descent through the fathers' familial line

pawpaw—papaya

pelagic—relating to the open sea, away from land

Polynesia—divided into Western Polynesia (Tonga and Samoa) and Eastern Polynesia (Tahiti-Polynesia, Cook Islands, Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand); from *poly* (many)

punt—a flat-bottomed boat

Quonset hut—a prefabricated, semicircular, metal shelter popular during World War II; also called a Nissan hut

rain shadow—the dry side of a mountain, sheltered from the windward side

rara—a grassy village square

ratu—a title for Fijian chiefs, prefixed to their names

reef—a coral ridge near the ocean surface

roko tui—senior Fijian administrative officer

roti—a flat Indian bread

sailing—the fine art of getting wet and becoming

ill while slowly going nowhere at great expense

salusalu—garland, lei

scuba—self-contained underwater breathing apparatus

SDA—Seventh-Day Adventist

self-catering—see self-contained

self-contained—a room with private facilities (a toilet and shower not shared with other guests); as opposed to a "self-catering" unit with cooking facilities; the brochure term "en-suite" means the bathroom is shared

sennit—braided coconut-fiber rope

sevusevu—a presentation of *yaqona*

shareboat charter—a yacht tour for individuals or couples who join a small group on a fixed itinerary

shifting cultivation—a method of farming involving the rotation of fields instead of crops

shoal—a shallow sandbar or mud bank

shoulder season—a travel period between high/peak and low/off-peak seasons

SPARTECA—South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement; an agreement that allows certain manufactured goods from Pacific countries duty-free entry to Australia and New Zealand

SPREP—South Pacific Regional Environment Program

subduction—the action of one tectonic plate wedging under another

subsidence—geological sinking or settling

sulu—a wraparound skirt or loincloth similar to a sarong

symbiosis—a mutually advantageous relationship between unlike organisms

tabu—taboo, forbidden, sacred, set apart, a negative force

tabua—a whale's tooth, a ceremonial object

takia—a small sailing canoe

talanoa—to chat or tell stories

tanoa—a special wide wooden bowl in which *yaqona* (kava) is mixed; used in ceremonies in Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa

tapa—a cloth made from the pounded bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). It's soaked and beaten with a mallet to flatten and intertwine the fibers, then painted with geometric designs; called *siapo* in Samoan, *masi* in Fijian.

tapu—see *tabu*

taro—a starchy elephant-eared tuber (*Colocasia esculenta*), a staple food of the Pacific islanders; called *dalo* in Fijian

tavioka—tapioca, cassava, manioc, arrowroot

teitei—a garden

tiki—a humanlike sculpture used in the old days for religious rites and sorcery

tikina—a group of Fijian villages administered by a *buli*

timeshare—part ownership of a residential unit with the right to occupy the premises for a certain period each year in exchange for payment of an annual maintenance fee

TNC—transnational corporation (also referred to as a multinational corporation)

trade wind—a steady wind blowing toward the equator from either northeast or southeast

trench—the section at the bottom of the ocean where one tectonic plate wedges under another

tridacna clam—eaten everywhere in the Pacific, its size varies between 10 centimeters and one meter

tropical storm—a cyclonic storm with winds of 35 to 64 knots

tsunami—a fast-moving wave caused by an undersea earthquake

tui—king

turaga—chief

turaga-ni-koro—village herald or mayor

vakaviti—in the Fijian way

vigia—a mark on a nautical chart indicating a dangerous rock or shoal

VSO—Volunteer Service Overseas, the British equivalent of the Peace Corps

waka—whole kava roots

windward—the point or side from which the wind blows, as opposed to leeward

yam—the starchy, tuberous root of a climbing plant

yaqona—see *kava*

yasana—an administrative province

zories—rubber shower sandals, thongs, flip-flops

CAPSULE FIJIAN VOCABULARY

Although most people in Fiji speak English fluently, mother tongues include Fijian, Hindi, and other Pacific languages. Knowledge of a few words of Fijian, especially slang words, will make your stay more exciting and enriching. Fijian has no pure *b*, *c*, or *d* sounds as they are known in English. When the first missionaries arrived, they invented a system of spelling, with one letter for each Fijian sound. The reader should be aware that the sound "mb" is written *b*, "nd" is *d*, "ng" is *g*, "ngg" is *q*, and "th" is *c*.

Au lako mai Kenada.—I come from Canada

au la o—Vanua Levu version of *barewa*

au lili—affirmative response to *au la o* (also *la o mai*)

Au ni lako mai vei?—Where do you come from?

Au sa lako ki vei?—Where are you going?

barewa—a provocative greeting for the opposite sex

bula—a Fijian greeting

Daru lako!—Let's go!

dua—one

dua oo—said by males when they meet a chief or enter a Fijian *bure*

dua tale—once more

e rewa—a positive response to *barewa*

io—yes

kana—eat

kauta mai—bring

kauta tani—take away

kaivalagi—foreigner

koro—village

Kocei na yacamu?—What's your name?

lailai—small

lako mai—come

lako tani—go

levu—big, much

lima—five
loloma yani—please pass along my regards

maleka—delicious
magimagi—coconut rope fiber
magiti—feast
marama—madam
mataqali—a clan lineage
moce—goodbye

Na cava oqo?—What is this?
Nice bola.—You're looking good.
ni sa bula—Hello, how are you? (can also say *sa bula* or *bula vinaka*; the answer is *an sa bula vinaka*)
ni sa moce—good night
ni sa yadra—good morning

phufter—a gay male (a disrespectful term)
qara—cave

rewa sese—an affirmative response to *barewa*
rua—two

sa vinaka—it's okay
sega—no, none

sega na leqa—you're welcome
sota tale—see you again

talatala—reverend
tabu rewā—a negative response to *barewa*
tolu—three
tulou—excuse me
turaga—sir, Mr.

va—four
vaka lailai—a little, small
vaka levu—a lot, great
vaka malua—slowly
vaka totolo—fast
vale—house
vale lailai—toilet
vanua—land, custom, people
vinaka—thank you
vinaka vakalevu—thank you very much
vu—an ancestral spirit

wai—water

yalo vinaka—please
yadra—good morning
yaqona—kava, grog

CAPSULE HINDI VOCABULARY

aao—come
accha—good
bhaahut julum—very beautiful (slang)
chota—small (male)
choti—small (female)
dhanyabaad—thank you
ek aur—one more
haan—yes
hum jauo—I go (slang)
jalebi—an Indian sweet
jao—go
kab—when
kahaan—where
kahaan jata hai—Where are you going?
kaise hai?—How are you?

khana—food
kitna?—How much?
kya—what
laao—bring
maaf kijye ga—excuse me
nahi—no
namaste—hello, goodbye
pani—water
rait—okay
ram ram—same as *namaste*
roti—a flat Indian bread
seedhe jauo—go straight
theek bhai—I'm fine
yeh kia hai—what's this?
yihaan—here

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Three decades ago, David Stanley's right thumb carried him out of Toronto, Canada, onto a journey that has so far wound through 174 countries, including a three-year trip from Tokyo to Kabul. His travel guidebooks to the South Pacific, Micronesia, Alaska, Eastern Europe, and Cuba opened those areas to budget travelers for the first time.

During the late 1960s, David got involved in Mexican culture by spending a year in several small towns near Guajuato. Later he studied at the universities of Barcelona and Florence, before settling down to get an honors degree (with distinction) in Spanish literature from the University of Guelph, Canada.

In 1978 Stanley linked up with future publisher Bill Dalton, and together they wrote the first edition of *Moon Handbooks: South Pacific*. Since then, Stanley has

gone on to write additional definitive guides, including *Moon Handbooks: Fiji*, *Moon Handbooks: Tahiti*, and *Moon Handbooks: Tonga-Samoa*, and early editions of *Moon Handbooks: Alaska-Yukon* and *Moon Handbooks: Micronesia*. He wrote the first three editions of Lonely Planet's *Eastern Europe on a Shoestring* as well as the first two editions of their guide to *Cuba*. His books have informed a generation of budget travelers. Stanley's personal web address is www.southpacific.org.

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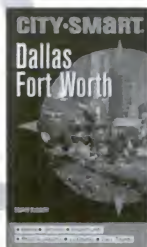
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U.S.~METRIC CONVERSION

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters (cm)
 1 foot = .304 meters (m)
 1 yard = 0.914 meters
 1 mile = 1.6093 kilometers (km)
 1 km = .6214 miles

1 fathom = 1.8288 m

1 chain = 20.1168 m

1 furlong = 201.168 m

1 acre = .4047 hectares

1 sq km = 100 hectares

1 sq mile = 2.59 square km

1 ounce = 28.35 grams

1 pound = .4536 kilograms

1 short ton = .90718 metric ton

1 short ton = 2000 pounds

1 long ton = 1.016 metric tons

1 long ton = 2240 pounds

1 metric ton = 1000 kilograms

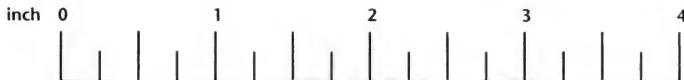
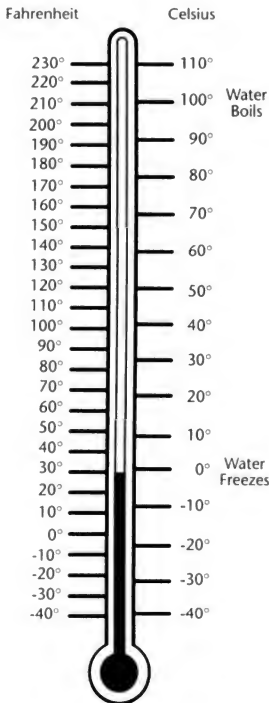
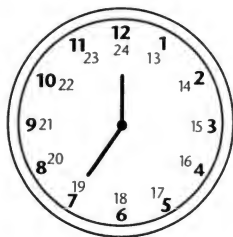
1 quart = .94635 liters

1 US gallon = 3.7854 liters

1 Imperial gallon = 4.5459 liters

1 nautical mile = 1.852 km

To compute celsius temperatures, subtract 32 from Fahrenheit and divide by 1.8. To go the other way, multiply celsius by 1.8 and add 32.



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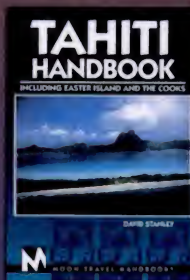


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