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Getting Started

Blessed with some of the warmest people on the planet and a genuine zest for tourism, Fiji lends itself to all genres of travel. Honeymooners, divers, backpackers, families, bird-watchers, adventurers, independent travellers and tour groups all flock here to make the most of the stunning landscape and abundant sunshine. Luxury beachside resorts and private transport cater to tourists looking for pure R&R with minimum effort. But it's also easy to get off the tourist trail and explore the archipelago independently, regardless of your age or budget. Travellers in this camp can make the most of good transport networks and plenty of accommodation in popular destinations, with minimum preplanning. Peak-season travel will require more thought, as will reaching remote areas such as the Lau, Moala and Rotuma islands.

Fiji is also one of the South Pacific's major transit hubs. Even if you're just stopping over for a day or two, it's worth getting out and seeing something. Better yet, extend your stay (most airlines will allow you up to three months for a stopover) and really experience the country. Those visiting Fiji on a package tour should consider exploring Fiji for a week or two; many agents will allow you to extend your stay on either side of your accommodation package when you book.

Whatever your preferred approach to travel, bear in mind that Fiji is not a 'budget' destination per se and caters better to midrange wallets. That said, plenty of backpackers head here and travel comfortably enough without spending a ransom.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit is during the so-called 'Fijian winter' or 'dry season', from May to October. This time of year is more pleasant with lower rainfall and humidity, milder temperatures and less risk of meteorological hazards such as cyclones. Consequently these six months make up the high season, when airfare and accommodation costs are at their highest. Expect costs to peak in June and July.

Fiji is an archipelago of over 300 islands, covering a total area of more than 1.3 million sq km, with a land area of 18,300 sq km and a population of only 836,000.

See Climate Charts (p246) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Insect repellent, which is sold in city pharmacies but needed most elsewhere.
- Plenty to read – bookshops are only found in cities.
- Reef shoes to protect yourself and the reefs that surround most of Fiji's islands.
- A Zen-like patience to cope with 'Fiji time', which is more official than GMT.
- Wedding rings if you're here to get hitched (p241).
- Your own snorkel and mask as they'll probably get a daily workout.
- Checking the current visa situation (p253).
- Keeping abreast of the current political climate – Fiji likes to coup.
- A waterproof camera to capture your marine encounters and make your friends jealous.
- Sunscreen and a raincoat to combat tropical climate conditions.
- Seasickness tablets if you don't have sea legs – with over 300 islands, there are a lotta boats in Fiji!

Fiji's 'wet season' is from November to April, with the heaviest rains falling from December to mid-April. This is when tropical cyclones, or hurricanes, are most likely to occur. Strong, destructive cyclones are, however, a fairly rare phenomenon in Fiji. The country has been hit by an average of 10 to 12 cyclones per decade, with only two or three of these being very severe.

If you're travelling during the wet season it's best to head to drier regions such as the Mamanuca and Yasawa island groups. That said, December and January are also busy months as they coincide with school holidays in both Australia and New Zealand, and Fijians visiting relatives. In February and March, and even November, however, Fiji sees fewer tourists and you're more likely to get bargains on your accommodation. The temperature during these months is also fairly appealing so you get the best of both worlds. The Diwali Festival (p248) is held in late October or early November and can be a fun, if manic time to be in Fiji.

Fijian school holidays can have an impact on accommodation availability. They generally last for two weeks from late April to early to mid-May and mid-August to early September. Summer holidays run from early December to late January.

HOW MUCH?

Taxi in Nadi or Suva \$4-10

Snorkel hire \$5-10

Local bus ride \$0.65

Coffee \$2

Cocktail \$6

See also Lonely Planet Index, inside front cover.

COSTS & MONEY

Although cheaper than many Pacific countries, Fiji doesn't provide travellers with the same value as, say, Southeast Asia. Many backpackers are surprised to discover that Fiji is not a US\$20-a-day destination.

Regardless of your budget, accommodation will easily be your greatest expense. Restaurants, transport and shops can be extremely good value, particularly in more remote areas; however, anything geared for tourists is far more expensive. On average, budget travellers can expect to pay about \$60 to \$90 per day for food, transport and accommodation. If you stay in dorms and dine on corned beef, you can do it for a little less. Island-hopping is generally fairly pricey: if you're planning to move around a lot, expenses will go up. It's good to plan your route to avoid backtracking.

Solo midrange travellers can expect to pay around \$180 per day, and couples can expect to pay around \$120 per person per day. These costs are based on transport, comfortable accommodation and eating out three times a day. Abundant self-catering options enable travellers in this price bracket to reduce their overall costs significantly; shopping at local markets for fruit and veggies is cheap. Families benefit the most from self-contained units as children are often charged either heavily discounted rates or nothing at all. Other tips to reduce daily costs include always looking for a 'return' boat, on its way back to base, and asking for walk-in rates at hotels – they can be a fraction of the advertised rate.

Resorts usually include all meals and plenty of activities in their tariffs, and hover around \$200 to \$300 per night for a single or double room, and \$300 to \$400 for a family. They can be especially good value for the latter, particularly as many offer free kids clubs. Moreover, some of the activities kids most enjoy, such as swimming, are free. Top-end options can cost anywhere up to \$2000 a night for accommodation, food, alcohol and activities.

Most budget and midrange accommodation includes Fiji's 12.5% VAT (value-added tax) in the advertised rates, but this is not always the case with top-end options, so check before you book. All rates quoted in this book are peak season rates, which tend to be 10% to 20% higher than low season rates. See p239 and p66 for more information.

TOP TENS

Festivals & Events

Fijians love to celebrate and barely need a reason to do so. The country's festivals calendar is enhanced by two distinct cultures and the following are 10 reasons to get stuck into it. See p248 for more details.

- Hindu Holi (Festival of Colours; nationwide) February or March
- Ram Naumi (Birth of Lord Rama; Suva) March or April
- Bula Festival (Nadi) July
- Hibiscus Festival (Suva) August
- Hindu Ritual Fire Walking (nationwide) August
- Fiji Regatta Week (Musket Cove) September
- Lautoka's Sugar Festival (Lautoka) September
- Ram Leela (Play of Rama; Labasa) October
- Diwali Festival (Festival of Lights; nationwide) Late October or early to mid-November
- South Pacific World Music Festival (Savusavu) November

Must-See Flicks

Stoke your enthusiasm for a trip by getting an eyeful of the scenery and a mindset of the culture. Although Fiji hasn't exactly been the target of many films, the following were filmed, if not also set here. They range from the outstanding, award-winning *The Land Has Eyes*, to the swashbuckling, tacky iconic and plain ridiculous. See p40 for reviews of some of them.

- *The Land Has Eyes* (2004) directed by Vilsoni Hereniko
- *Coral Reef Adventure* (2002) distributed by Macgillivray Freeman
- *Flynn* (1993) directed by Frank Howson
- *Cast Away* (2000) directed by Robert Zemeckis
- *Mr Robinson Crusoe* (1932) directed by Edward Sutherland
- *The Blue Lagoon* (1979) directed by Randal Kleiser
- *The Dove* (1974) directed by Charles Jarrott
- *Savage Islands* (1983) directed by Ferdinand Fairfax
- *His Majesty's O'Keefe* (1953) directed by Byron Haskin
- *Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid* (2004) directed by Dwight Little

DIY Cultural Experiences

Plenty of travellers come to Fiji on package holidays to avoid having to think too hard about how to enjoy what the country has to offer. But delving into the real Fiji on your own is so easy it requires minimal effort and brain cells. Below are some of the best cultural experiences to be had in this archipelago; all are unmissable.

- visiting a village (p245)
- watching a *meke* (dance; p41)
- drinking *kava* (p67)
- witnessing fire walking (p109)
- eating at a *lovo* (feast cooked in a pit oven; p67)
- rafting on a *bilibili* (bamboo raft; p243)
- offering *sevusevu* (presentation of a gift; p35)
- appreciating a Hindu temple (p77)
- catching a rugby match (p38)
- shopping for souvenirs and saris (p251)

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Sticking your head in a good book is a great way to get a feel for Fiji. Your local bookshop or library is best placed to advise you on the availability of the following recommendations. Many of the books listed below can also be ordered online through the **USP Book Centre** (Map p119; ☎ 321 2500; www.uspbookcentre.com; University of the South Pacific, Suva) or bought on the campus. Other books can be purchased at the Fiji Museum in Suva.

On Fiji Islands by Ronald Wright is an oldie but a goody. It's a great read to get your head around the history, culture and flavour of the country, complimented by personal anecdotes of the author's travels.

Also good for a beautifully humanistic impression of the country is *Footprints in Fiji* by Geoff Raymond – an endearing and humorous memoir of an Australian family that moved to Fiji in the mid-80s to run a resort abandoned by its previous owners.

The Heart's Wild Surf by Stephanie Johnson is a bodice ripper set in 1918 about a colonial family on Taveuni coping with the cultural and social differences of their surrounding environment.

Kava in the Blood by Peter Thomson is a strong, evocative autobiography of a white Fijian who became a senior civil servant and was imprisoned by Rabuka during the 1987 coup.

Happy Isles of Oceania by Paul Theroux is an account of this legendary travel writer's journey through the Pacific in a collapsible kayak. He provides a frank personal impression of the politics, culture and aesthetics of the countries he visits.

Two excellent photographic books are *Children of the Sun* by Glen Craig, which gets under the skin of the country by capturing its diverse population, and *Fiji: The Uncharted Sea* by Federico Busonero, which is a visual celebration of the archipelago's exquisite marine life and beaches.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Web is an absolute goldmine for travellers. Before leaving home you can research your trip, hunt down bargain airfares, book hotels, check on weather conditions or chat with locals and other travellers about where to go...and where to steer clear of.

Try the following websites for useful information on Fiji.

Fiji Times (www.fijitimes.com.fj) Fiji's daily newspaper online.

Fiji Village (www.fijivillage.com) Excellent site updated with daily news and links to local events, including music, movies and sport.

Fiji Visitors Bureau (www.bulafiji.com) Fiji's official tourist site, offering information on accommodation, activities and getting around, with links and an email directory.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Get started on your Fiji planning with snapshots of the country, travel links, postcards from other travellers, and the Thorn Tree travel forum.

Smart Traveller (www.smartraveller.gov.au) The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade's official travel advisory site.

South Pacific Tourism Organisation (www.spto.org) Useful travel directory with info on South Pacific countries.

Fiji's national rugby team has won the Rugby World Cup Sevens twice – first in 1997 and then again in 2005.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

WELL TRODDEN, WELL DESERVED Two Weeks / Western Isles & Coral Coast

Begin your fling in **Nadi** (p75), taking a day to acclimatise. Then get off the mainland and onto a boat heading to the **Mamanucas** (p147) and what you really came for – sea and sun. Revel in romance at **Tokoriki** (p154) or **Matamanoa** (p153), party at **Beachcomber island** (p151) or **Mana** (p152), or entertain the family at **Treasure** (p151) or **Castaway** (p154) island. But don't stop here: board the *Yasawa Flyer* for some island-hopping through the **Yasawas** (p158) to get into or away from it as much as you like. Bliss out on a postcard-perfect beach on **Waya** (p163), **Nacula** (p168) or **Nanuya Lailai** (p167), where you can paddle in the Blue Lagoon. Once you've had your South Seas fix, head back to the mainland to see what else Fiji has to offer.

From Nadi, take a trip along the Coral Coast. Picnic on **Natadola Beach** (p102) and chug into the verdant interior on the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** (p103). Don the sneakers and trek the **Sigatoka Sand Dunes** (p105) or marvel at wildlife in **Kula Eco Park** (p107). Rest up at a resort at **Korolevu** (p110) and spend a couple of days inside, outside, poolside and barside. Amble into **Pacific Harbour** (p112) and spend a day diving **Beqa Lagoon** (p115) or rafting the mighty **Navua River** (p113). Finish your trip in **Suva** (p118).

Fabulous beaches and a dose of the mainland dominate this route. Enjoying parties in the Mamanucas, seclusion in the Yasawas and urban culture on the mainland will take about a fortnight but you could take three weeks. All up you'll cover 550km.



VANUA VENTURE

Nine Days / Suva to Vanua Levu

Beginning in **Suva** (p118), spend a morning at the excellent Fiji Museum and then feast on some fabulous fare, have a drink with a local and stock up on souvenirs. After exhausting Suva's urban comforts, flee the mainland on a flight to **Vanua Levu** (p191) and land yourself in **Labasa** (p204), 'India Town', where you can fuel up on some of the finest curries in Fiji. Visit the Wasavula Ceremonial Site and take a side-trip to the mystifying **Cobra Rock** (p207) inside the Naag Mandir Temple.

Continue your Vanua Levu adventure by jumping on a bus and heading south to **Savusavu** (p193). This scenic journey is a highlight in itself. Spend a day taking in Savusavu's sights; do the touristy thing at Copra Shed Marina and save enough stamina for a beer at the atmospheric Savusavu Yacht Club or Planters' Club. Take a day trip to the rich and colourful **Waisali Rainforest Reserve** (p202) and then spend a couple of days **hiking** or **kayaking** (p195), exploring the lesser-travelled Vanua Levu.

Time to head to gorgeous **Taveuni** (p210). If you've got sea legs catch a ferry, but the flight provides some spectacular views. **Somosomo** (p214) is a good base from which to explore the surrounding area. First on the itinerary should be a day snorkelling or diving magnificent **Rainbow Reef** (p61). Back on dry land, you'll want to marvel at the **Wairiki Catholic Mission** (p215), scare yourself silly on the **Waitavala Water Slide** (p215) and climb to the top of the world...well to the top of **Des Voeux Peak** (p215), which is just as good.

This route takes in Fiji's other 'mainland' – Vanua Levu. Trek, shop, eat and drink here before hopping over to neighbouring Taveuni with its spectacular snorkelling, diving, mountains and water slides. In total this trip covers about 420km.



ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

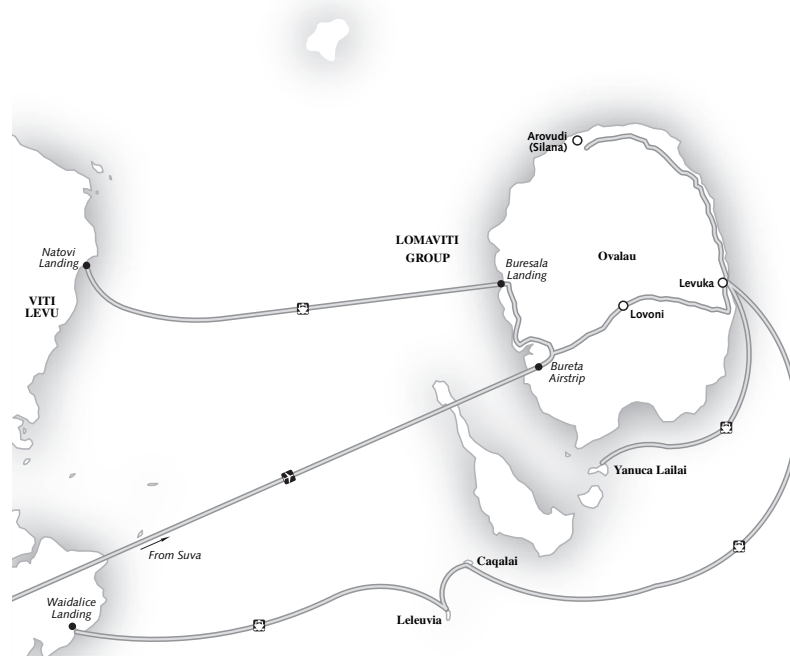
MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

One Week / Lomaiviti Group

If you prefer to get off the beaten track and you're happy to put in a little effort, the following should be just the ticket. From Suva head to **Lomaiviti Group** (p170). The easiest way is to fly, but if the adventurous can take the ferry from Natovi Landing. Start your travels in Ovalau island, home to one of Fiji's most picturesque towns and original capital, **Levuka** (p174). Littered with colonial buildings and boasting a harmonious, multicultural population, this town and its surrounds deserve three days or so. Travel by bike or make the most of the sights by travelling on foot, including revisiting the town's rich history at the branch of the Fiji Museum here. Spend a day in the village of **Lovoni** (p176), nestled into a crater in the centre of Ovalau, and in **Arovudi** (Silana; p177) with its remarkable church.

Once you've had your urban fix head to the beach. From Levuka, book a passage to the coral island of **Caqalai** (p180) and leave consumer crutches behind. Take a day or two to circumnavigate this tiny island (it only takes 15 minutes). Make the most of its dazzling beaches and dabble in some excellent snorkelling and diving. Finish up the week with a flutter on some of the less frequented islands of **Yanuca Lailai** (p180) or **Leleuvia** (p189). Boasting chilled-out budget resorts and pocket-size beaches, both are a quick trip from Levuka, or catch a weekly service between Caqalai and Leleuvia. From Caqalai and Leleuvia you can also catch a boat to the mainland and make the whole jaunt a round trip.

Heading into the middle of nowhere will plant you in the unhurried Lomaiviti islands. Exploring colonial heritage and Fijian history in Levuka plus a round of hopping across coral islands and remote beaches will cover about 200km.



NORTHERN PASSAGE One to Two Weeks / Northern Viti Levu & the Highlands Starting in Nadi, turn your eyes away from the water and plant them firmly on the hilly climb into Viti Levu's imposing interior. The **Nausori Highlands** (p143) are an easy day-trip from tourist central and feature some of Fiji's most verdant scenery. Hire a 4WD or take a tour to **Navala** (p144), one of the most photogenic villages in the Pacific. Spend another three days exploring the nearby interior on a trek through **Koroyanitu National Heritage Park** (p143).

This route takes you into Viti Levu's dramatic highlands and Lautoka. You'll then visit petite Nananu-i-Ra before traversing eastern Viti Levu on the lush Kings Road. Top it off by fleeing tourism altogether on the remote Lau islands. The journey covers around 620km.

Next on the itinerary is to head north from Nadi. You can do this route in a 4WD but regular buses are easy and fun. First stop is **Lautoka** (p90), an Indo-Fijian centre and Fiji's second-largest city. Spend a couple of days soaking in the city's relaxed atmosphere and dose up on curries and Bollywood. Continue your coastal journey along the rugged **Kings Road** (p136) and head to petite and pretty **Nananu-i-Ra** (p140). Exhaust yourself windsurfing, swimming, snorkelling, diving or doing nothing at all.

Back on the mainland navigate your way south into Viti Levu's dramatic eastern interior, visiting the distinctly Fijian church at **Naiserelagi** (p138) and the humbling **Wailotua Snake God Cave** (p138). End the day in **Suva** (p118) and indulge in some cosmopolitan hospitality.

The final leg of your itinerary can be a three-day escape to Fiji's remote far east. Book a flight to **Vanua Balavu** (p232) in the Lau island group. Explore exquisite coves, beaches and inland walks ignored by most tourists. Delve into the island's Tongan influence then kayak and snorkel the spectacular **Bay of Islands** (p232).



TAILORED TRIPS

IN PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT BEACH

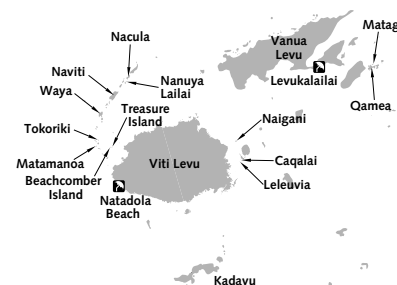
It's no accident that Fiji is synonymous with sun, sand and sea. Boasting over 300 islands, the archipelago offers copious versions of the perfect beach. The Mamanucas are a good place to start, with wide sandy beaches populated by partygoing backpackers at **Beachcomber Island** (p151) or families indulging in innumerable water sports at **Treasure Island** (p151). If you're looking for something more exclusive, the intimate beaches at **Matamanoa** (p153) and **Tokoriki** (p154) should be just the ticket.

The Yasawa islands are home to two of Fiji's finest: Oarsman's Bay's sublime beach on **Nacula** (p168) and the exquisite beach of the Blue Lagoon in **Nanuya Lailai** (p167). On **Waya** (p163), the Sunset Beach Resort sits on a beautifully thick curve of beach and Botaira Beach Resort on **Naviti** (p164) is planted on a long stretch of soft, white sand.

Glorious **Natadola Beach** (p102) is Viti Levu's best stretch of shoreline and **Levukalailai** (p203) on Vanua Levu hugs 5.5km of superb coast.

Miniscule **Caqalai** (p180) in the Lomaivitis is a coral island renowned for its perimeter of lovely beach. Other prime beaches nearby lie on **Lelevuia** (p189) and **Naigani** (p190).

Taveuni has world-class diving and divine beaches at **Matagi** (p222) and **Qamea** (p223), and on **Kadavu** (p224) you'll find gorgeous swimming beaches at Dive Kadavu Resort and Nagigia Island Resort.



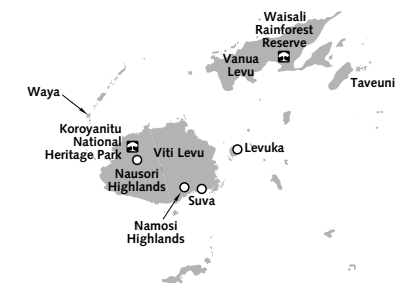
HIKERS' DELIGHTS

Many of Fiji's islands are thick with mountainous terrain, providing plenty of opportunity to work the pins in splendid surroundings.

Viti Levu's interior is a vast area of forested land with some great treks. Close to Nadi and Lautoka, **Koroyanitu National Heritage Park** (p143) is a must for hikers, with a four-hour trail to the summit of Castle Rock as well as a full-day trek through the park. There are also trekking tours in the **Nausori Highlands** (p143) and the rainforests of the steamy **Namosi Highlands** (p146).

On Vanua Levu, the **Waisali Rainforest Reserve** (p202) features a short but spectacular descent to a waterfall. Hilly **Waya** (p163), in the Yasawas, is crisscrossed with hiking trails leading to the Yalobi Hills, which offer 360-degree views of the entire chain of islands on a clear day.

Head to **Taveuni** (p210) for the stunning Lavena Coastal Walk – a 5km trail through forests, beaches and villages. Elsewhere on the island you can climb Des Voeux Peak for panoramic views and the chance to see Fiji's orange dove. Bouma National Heritage Park has challenging tracks with three waterfalls to reward your effort. Inside the park you can also tackle the shaman-guided Vidawa Rainforest Hike.



Snapshot

Picture-postcard perfect, Fiji comprises classic tropical islands of white sand and coconut palms, and steamy green hills and forests. Unfailingly hospitable, Fijians will gladden the hearts of visitors.

Beyond the scenery and warm welcomes is a dynamic cultural landscape. It's a heady mix of indigenous Fijian traditions that sit colourfully – if not always comfortably – alongside the more recent influences of British colonisers, Indian indentured labourers, Chinese traders and other Pacific islanders. Visitors with time to scratch below the surface will be enthralled by the country's variety of cultural celebrations, contrasts and subtle conflicts.

A vibrant civil society includes church groups, unions and nongovernmental organisations that campaign loudly and vigorously in the media and on the streets. Some of the current issues on the agenda are the ending of 99-year Indo-Fijian land leases, environmental concerns ranging from forestry to fishing to municipal waste disposal (see p55), and the rights of women and minority groups. Last but by no means least, there is the opposition to (and, in a few cases, support of) the controversial Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity (PRTU) Bill, intended to resolve ongoing effects of the most recent coup in 2000. This active local scene provides a context for the work of Fiji's community of visual artists, writers and – most recently – film makers, with Fiji's first locally made movie, *The Land Has Eyes*, entered in the Foreign Language section of Hollywood's 2005 Academy Awards (see p41).

Fiji, independent since 1970, is a parliamentary democracy. Since 1987 it has experienced three coups that unseated elected governments. These coups articulated a usually covert tension between many indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Related issues currently on the political agenda include land rights (with a number of Indo-Fijians being forced off their leased land and either migrating or drifting to squatter settlements) and more equitable inclusion of Indo-Fijians in the political process (see p31). Despite the separation of powers between state, church and military, the Methodist Church is highly influential in public affairs, and the Fiji military remains a force to be reckoned with politically, with its commander publicly criticising the PRTU Bill's clause to grant amnesty to the participants of the 2000 coup.

A small but growing source of income is the remittances sent home by Fijians living and working overseas, particularly soldiers employed by the British Army and by security companies in trouble spots such as Kuwait and Iraq. The major sources of foreign exchange continue to be sugar exports and tourism. Sugar processing makes up one-third of industrial activity, but this may be affected by the expiration of Indo-Fijian sugar-farmers' land leases. Tourism has bounced back after the 2000 coup, and the lack of hotel rooms, rather than the lack of tourists, is a current preoccupation. In a post-9/11 world, Fiji and the Pacific is still seen as a safe and, well, pacific, destination.

FAST FACTS

Population: 836,000

GDP: US\$1.8 billion

GDP per capita: US\$2151

Annual inflation rate: 4.2%

Land area: 18,270 sq km

Length of coastline:
1129km

Length of sugar-cane
railway: 597km

Number of phone land
lines: 102,000

Number of airports: 28;
3 with sealed runways

Year women given the
right to vote: 1963

The Authors



JUSTINE VAISUTIS **Coordinating Author, Viti Levu, Yasawa Group, Kadavu Group, Lau & Moala Groups, Rotuma, Directory, Transport**

Justine has selflessly researched many a beach for Lonely Planet, having contributed to seven guides including *Queensland & the Great Barrier Reef* and *Australia*. Accordingly, she journeyed to Fiji with the cocky gait of a seasoned beach bum and found that her know-how had nothing on her know-now. Tireless diving and snorkelling expeditions, village visits, *kava* drinking, cultivating a 'Fiji Bitter' beer belly, highland treks – and scrutinising 40-odd beaches – instilled in her a great love for all things Fijian. Justine resides in Melbourne, where she is just as selflessly devoted to pub crawls, cricket and escaping to the beach.

The Coordinating Author's Favourite Trip

To be honest my favourite trip would last 12 months – six on the beach and six on the road. Of course 'the road' consists of mountains, islands, reefs...and roads. I'm a water baby and a sucker for those utopian Yasawas (p158). As a novice diver I go giddy in the coral here but I'd be cheating myself if I skipped the Astrolabe (p62) and Rainbow Reef (p61). To avoid becoming thoroughly waterlogged, I'd head to Suva (p118) for a 'bitter' and a curry with the locals before working the pins in the Namosi Highlands (p146). The picturesque town of Levuka (p174) would be the next port of call before wrapping things up on a beach at Caqalai (p180). Sure you could do it in a fortnight...but I'm using indulgent license.



MARK DAPIN **Mamanuca Group, Lomaiviti Group, Vanua Levu, Taveuni**

Fiji will always have a special place in Mark's heart, as it was there he failed his first driving test. Mark is a features writer for *Good Weekend* magazine in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Melbourne Age*. He began life in England, where he squandered every opportunity offered, before reinventing himself in Australia at the age of 26. He has travelled to more than 60 countries, and written travel stories for many newspapers and magazines including the *Guardian* and the *Times*. He was once an editor-in-chief of a group of men's magazines and – all too briefly – *Harness Racing News*. He is the author of *Sex & Money* – ostensibly about men's magazines – but actually about him. Mark lives in Sydney.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the Internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.

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CLAIRE WADDELL

Mamanuca Group, Lomaiviti Group, Vanua Levu, Taveuni

While Mark did all the glory work, Claire drew the maps, checked the facts, looked after the baby and walked all over the place carrying a blue clipboard. Born in Sydney, Claire took an Arts degree at Sydney University then a Diploma of Journalism at MacLeay College. She has worked as a magazine subeditor at Fairfax and Australian Consolidated Press. She has travelled throughout Europe, Central and South America, and parts of Asia. She is Mark's partner and Ben's mum.



VIRGINIA JEALOUS

Snapshot, History, The Culture, Environment, Food & Drink

Virginia has previously roamed bits of the Philippines, East Timor, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia for Lonely Planet. Between 2004 and 2006 she took off her LP hat to work full-time with a Pacific regional nongovernmental organisation, based in Suva. A growing relationship with *dalo* (taro plant) and a variety of root vegetables – as well as some other, possibly more useful, Fiji-specific experiences – led her to reviewing and rewriting five of the introductory chapters for this guide.

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CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Jean-Bernard Carillet wrote the Diving chapter. Born with restless feet and fins, his journeys have led him to the best dive destinations in the world, including French Polynesia, New Caledonia, the Red Sea, the Caribbean and, lately, Fiji and Vanuatu. As a dive instructor and incorrigible traveller, Jean-Bernard has written widely for various French publications, including *Plongeurs International* magazine. He has also coordinated and co-authored two Lonely Planet diving guides: *Tahiti & French Polynesia* and *The Red Sea*.

Clement Paligaru is an Indo-Fijian who came to Australia in 1984. An Asia-Pacific specialist, he has worked as a radio journalist and producer for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for over 10 years. Clement currently produces Radio Australia's daily *In the Loop* programme, which profiles the cultures and societies of Oceania. Clement wrote the Indo-Fijian History & Culture chapter.

Michael Sorokin wrote the Health chapter. Dr Sorokin has extensive experience as a physician and GP in South Africa, the UK, the Pacific Islands and rural South Australia. He has special interests in rheumatology, infectious diseases and preventative medicine. Dr Sorokin was recently awarded the Order of Fiji in recognition of his services to health care in Fiji. He is partly responsible for the maintenance of the Traveller's Medical & Vaccination Centre (TMVC) database and helps with reference material for the continuing education of TMVC medical staff.