

# Viti Levu



Frequently referred to as ‘the mainland’ Viti Levu is that hub of a place where commerce, industry and the small matter of running a country supersedes the idyllic holiday business ‘offshore’. Around three-quarters of the population resides here, many in the three biggest cities; Suva, Lautoka and Nadi. That said, don’t forget that we are talking about Fiji, so while Viti Levu may be all the above to the local population, for visitors it’s an opportunity to discover a Fiji you never imagined.

With the exception of Natadola, Viti Levu’s beaches run a poor second to the sublime shorelines on the outer islands; but the island’s best features lie elsewhere. Turn your attention from the coast and plant it firmly in the cooler climbs of the interior’s dramatic highlands. Trek through national parks, freshen up under a waterfall or 10 and visit a local village without the gimmicky hype. Marvel in the views and history of hill forts or get caught up in the heady hype of a local festival. Don your culture vulture hat and delve well beyond the brochures in Fiji’s sultry capital. Sporting the country’s most diverse population, cuisine, cultural attractions and nightspots, Suva is the best spot to simmer in the local culture.

Quite simply Viti Levu is all things Fijian that an idyllic beach is not. But, if you’re still yearning for a slice of the coast, escape to enigmatic Nananu-i-Ra island in the north, renowned for its windsurfing and diving, or pick and choose from the smorgasbord of resorts along the Coral Coast.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a southern road trip along the scenic **Coral Coast** (p103)
- Trek the spectacular mountains of **Koroyanitu National Heritage Park** (p143)
- Savour some urban culture in **Suva’s bars** (p133) and **restaurants** (p130)
- Explore Fijian culture at the **Fiji Museum** (p121) and **Ka Levu Cultural Centre** (p103)
- Kayak or raft the mighty **Navua River** (p113) in the rugged Namosi Highlands
- Dive at **Beqa Lagoon** (p115) and **Nananu-i-Ra’s** (p140) vivid reefs
- Tackle the surf or soak up the sun at **Natadola Beach** (p102)
- Ride the waves – surf **Frigates Passage** (p116) or windsurf **Nananu-i-Ra** (p140)



■ POPULATION: 581,000

■ AREA: 10,400 SQ KM



## Geography & Geology

At 10,400 sq km, Viti Levu (Great Fiji) is Fiji's largest island. The roughly oval-shaped island (146km from east to west and 106km from north to south) has a mountainous interior scattered with remote villages. The highest Fijian peak, Tomanivi (Mt Victoria; 1323m) is at the northern end of a high backbone running north-south. Rugged ranges and hills slope steeply down to the low-lying coast. Viti Levu has four large rivers: the Rewa and the Navua Rivers form fertile delta regions near Suva; the Sigatoka River flows south to the Coral Coast; and the Ba River flows north.

## Orientation

Suva, the country's capital, largest city and main port, is in the southeast. Most travellers, however, arrive in the west at Nadi International Airport, which is 9km north of central Nadi and 24km south of Lautoka.

Nadi and Suva are linked by the sealed Queens Road along the 221km southern perimeter of Viti Levu, which contains a

scattering of villages and resorts known as the Coral Coast. Many minor roads lead off this road to isolated coastal areas and into the highlands. Most are unsealed and often too rough for non-4WD vehicles. Between the wetter months of November and April, some roads can become impassable. The fertile Sigatoka Valley, formed by Fiji's second-largest river, extends far into the highlands.

Heading north from Suva, the Kings Road is mostly sealed and travels for 265km through Nausori (where Suva's airport is located), the eastern highlands, Rakiraki and Ba on the north coast, and on to Lautoka.

There are three roads leading up from the coast to the Nausori Highland villages of Navala and Bukuya (beginning at Ba, Nadi and Sigatoka).

## Getting There & Away

Most travellers arrive in Fiji at Nadi International Airport (although some do arrive at Suva's Nausori airport). See p254 for contact details of airline offices. Nadi is

also a main domestic transport hub. From here there are flights to many of the other larger islands and reliable boat services and cruises to offshore islands. See p259 and individual island chapters for information on interisland flights and boat services.

## Getting Around

For those in a hurry or after a scenic flight, there are cheap, regular light plane flights between Nadi and Suva for around \$160.

Viti Levu has a regular and cheap bus network. Express buses operated by Pacific Transport and Sunbeam Transport link the main centres of Lautoka, Nadi and Suva, along both the Queens and Kings Roads. Most will pick up or drop off at hotels and resorts along these highways. Look for timetables at their offices in Lautoka. Slower, local buses also operate throughout the island and even remote inland villages have regular (though less frequent) services. These trips might take awhile as they stop frequently along the way. Before heading to an isolated area, check that there is a return bus so that you don't get stranded without any accommodation – sometimes the last bus of the day stays at the final village.

Companies and services available:

**Coral Sun Fiji** (☎ 672 3105) Runs comfortable, air-conditioned coaches between Nadi and Suva (\$20, four hours, once daily), stopping at resorts on the Coral Coast.

**Feejee Experience** (☎ 672 0097; www.feejeeexperience.com) Offers hop-on-and-hop-off coach and accommodation deals. See p265 for more information.

**Pacific Transport Limited** Lautoka (☎ 666 0499; Yasawa St) Nadi (☎ 670 0044) Sigatoka (☎ 650 0088) Suva (☎ 330 4366) About six express buses run daily between Lautoka and Suva (\$12.50, five/six hours for express/regular) via the Coral Coast. Generally it's OK to turn up at the bus station, but you can book in advance for an extra \$0.50.

**Sunbeam Transport Limited** Lautoka (☎ 666 2822; Yasawa St) Nadi (☎ 927 2121) Suva (☎ 338 2122/2704) Around four Lautoka-Suva express services go daily via the Queens Road (\$12, five hours). Also around six services daily travel via the Kings Road.

**United Touring Fiji** (☎ 672 2811; www.atspacific.com/fiji; Nadi Airport) Has two daily air-conditioned services between Nadi and Suva (\$25, 4½ hours) departing 7.30am and 1pm, dropping off at Coral Coast resorts along the way. Nadi to Korolevu is \$18.

Minibuses and carriers (small trucks) also shuttle locals along the Queens Road. Taxis

are plentiful, but drivers don't always use meters, so confirm the price in advance. Viti Levu is also easy to explore by car or motorbike, although for the unsealed highland roads you'll generally need a 4WD. See p263 for rental details.

# NADI & THE WEST

## NADI

pop 30,900

Something of a perennial adolescent, Fiji's third-largest city Nadi (pronounced *nandi*) seems to be in a constant pursuit of identity. Not sure whether it's a city, tourist junction or business hub, it seems to have settled on urban centre for the time being. The population resides in several villages strung out along and just off the Queens Road, and the northern horizon is dominated by the Nausori Highlands, which loom hazily over town.

For visitors most action takes place in busy, dusty 'downtown' where Main St provides 1km or so of shopping, eating and other commercial options. In the back streets small businesses cater to everything from auto needs to sunburn. Most visitors use Nadi as a stopover to acclimatise and make the most of the infrastructure before heading out to more picturesque locales. If you're looking for something quieter Lautoka with its more authentic atmosphere is a better option. There is also accommodation between the two towns at Vuda Point and near the Sabeto Mountain Range. Nadi makes no bones about the fact that it's no idyllic snapshot of Fiji, but once you've got your head around this you're likely to enjoy the place more. As one wise traveller said, 'It is what it is'.

## Orientation

From Nadi airport the Queens Road heads north to Lautoka and 9km south to downtown Nadi. Nadi's Main St extends southward from the Nadi River for about 800m to the T-junction at the large Swami temple. From here the Queens Road continues right to Suva, while Nadi Back Rd bypasses the busy centre and rejoins the Queens Road back near the airport. The road to the Nausori Highlands leads off into the mountains from Nadi Back Rd.

## VITI LEVU IN...

### Four Days

Acclimatise yourself by dabbling in Nadi's souvenir shops and markets (p86) and gaping at the vivid **Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple** (p77). Test your tastebuds with a curry lunch at **Saffron the Corner** (p85) or **Tata's** (p86) or save your appetite for a beer at **Ed's Bar** (p86) and a teppanyaki feast at **Daikoku** (p85).

On day two head south and spend the morning chilling out amid the spectacular orchids at the **Garden of the Sleeping Giant** (p89) then take your first ocean dip at **Natadola Beach** (p102). Picnic on the beach or dig into a seafood lunch at **Natadola Beach Resort** (p102).

Spend day three traversing the **Sigatoka Sand Dunes** (p105) or for something less energetic, mingle with the wildlife at **Kula Eco Park** (p107). Check into a Coral Coast resort in **Korotogo** (p107) or **Korolevu** (p111) and laze the afternoon away poolside.

On day four head further east to Pacific Harbour. Kayak or raft up the **Navua River** (p113) or take a day trip out to **Beqa Lagoon** (p115) and snorkel and dive in one of Fiji's finest reefs. Treat yourself to an indulgent night at the **Pearl South Pacific** (p114) or immerse yourself in a village at **Navua Upriver Lodge** (p114).

### One Week

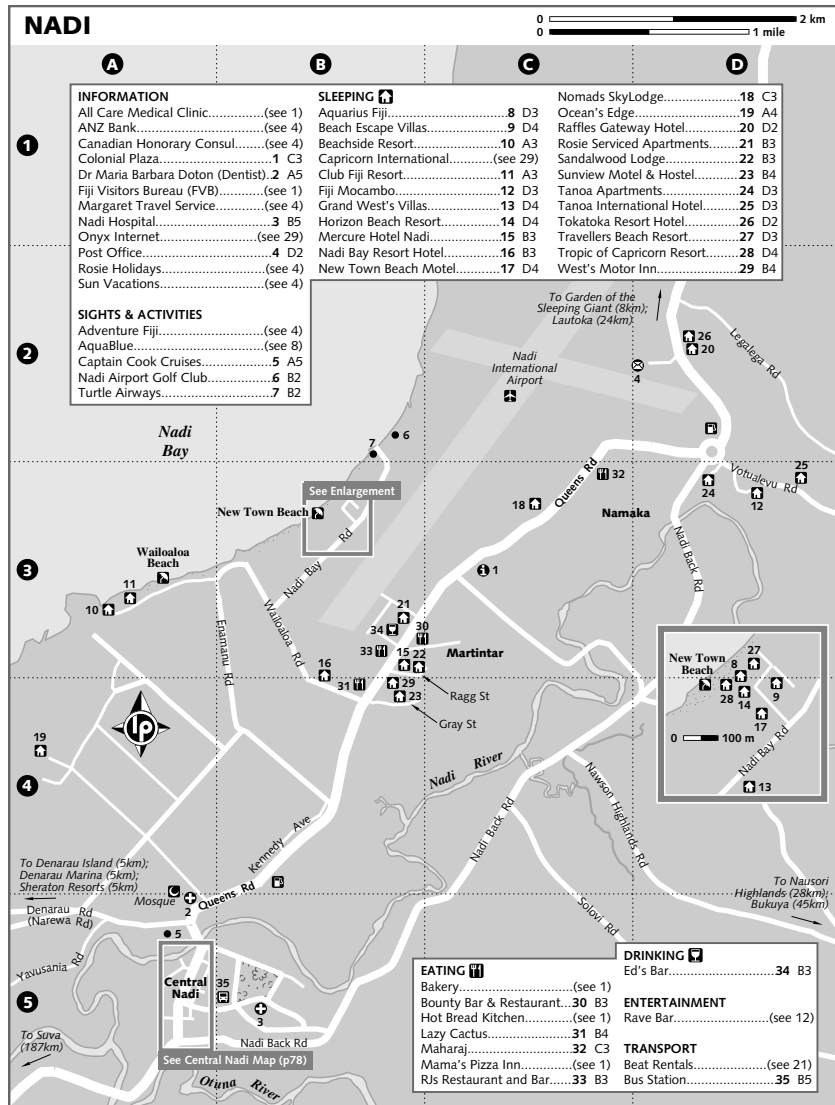
After your four-day meander through the Coral Coast head to Suva and a return to urban life. Dose up on culture at the **Fiji Museum** (p121), fuel up on a curry or Fijian speciality at the **Old Mill Cottage** (p131), savour a Fiji Bitter and some Suva hospitality at **Traps Bar** (p133) and then escape the crowds with a night at the **Raintree Lodge** (p128).

On day six start early and head north along the Kings Road to Ellington Wharf. Jump across to **Nanau-i-Ra** (p140) and spend a couple of days snorkelling, diving, windsurfing, kayaking or doing nothing at all. If you want to escape the coast make your way to **Lautoka** (p90) and soak up the balmy atmosphere of Fiji's second-largest city or head into the interior for a tour of the **Nausori Highlands** (p143).

The market, bus station and post office are downtown just east of Main St.

Just north of downtown, between the mosque and the Nadi River, Narewa Rd leads west for 6km to Denarau island, where you'll find Nadi's most upmarket resorts, and Denarau Marina, where boats depart for Mamanucas and Yasawas.

Near Martintar village, Wailoaloa Rd also turns west off the Queens Road and after 1.8km hits Wailoaloa Beach. To reach New Town Beach, turn right off Wailoaloa Rd after 1.3km and continue for another 1.3km. You can also get to Wailoaloa Beach along Enamanu Rd, which extends south from the coast.



## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 911)

**Fire** (☎ 911)

**Police** (Map p78; ☎ 911/670 0222) On Korovolu Ave.

### INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is easy to find in downtown Nadi and costs around \$0.10 per minute. Most backpacker lodges also offer Internet connection.

**Bula Internet Cafe** (Map p78; Main St, Nadi; per hr \$3; ☎ 8am-8pm) Also has a fax service, digital photo scanning and CD burning.

**Connect Cafe** (Map p78; ☎ 670 7365; Shop 6, Connect Arcade, Lot 7, Queens Rd, Nadi; per hr \$5; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Fast and reliable.

**Onyx Internet** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0088; Rm 201, Capricorn International Hotel, Martintar; per hr \$6; ☎ approx 9am-5pm) You can also download images from digital cameras onto CD.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

For medical treatment, contact any of the following.

**All Care Medical Clinic** (Map p76; ☎ 6720 960; Colonial Plaza, Queens Rd, Namaka; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Dr Maria Barbara Doton** (Map p76; ☎ 6700 899; Queens Rd, Nadi; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue, Thu & alternate Sat) Dentist.

**Nadi Hospital** (Map p76; ☎ 670 1128; Market Rd, Nadi; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, till 4pm Fri, till noon Sat)

### MONEY

At the airport arrivals concourse there is an ANZ bank (open for all international flights). Elsewhere banks usually give a slightly better rate. Downtown, on Main St, ANZ, Westpac and Colonial National Bank all have ATMs and exchange money.

**Just Exchange** (Map p78; ☎ 670 5477; Ground fl, Prouds Bldg, Main St, Nadi) Foreign currency exchange with no commission.

### POST

**Post office** Airport (Map p76; ☎ 6722 045; Nadi International Airport) Downtown (Map p78; ☎ 670 0001; Sahu Kahn Rd, Nadi)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

Many hotels have their own travel desks.  
**Fiji Visitors Bureau** (FVB; Map p76; ☎ 672 2433; www.bulafiji.com; Suite 107, Colonial Plaza, Namaka; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, to 4pm Fri) Fiji's official tour-

ism bureau is excellent. Friendly and helpful staff provides accurate information.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

Many of Nadi's numerous travel agencies are at the Nadi International Airport arrivals area on the ground and 1st floors. Domestic plane tickets can be bought directly from the Air Fiji and Sun Air offices at the arrivals concourse.

Some travel agencies specialise in budget accommodation and offer good deals, particularly for the islands. Be mindful though that you're not receiving independent advice, as it's largely based on the commission the agencies earn, not the best value for your dollar. For budget accommodation, both the resort and you will be better off financially if you book directly.

See p239 for information on booking accommodation, particularly offshore budget options.

Some agencies:

**Argo Travel & Foreign Exchange** (Map p78; ☎ 670 1645; argotravel@connect.com.fj; 267-269 Main St, Nadi)

**Awesome Adventures Fiji** (Map p78; ☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com; 2/534 Main St, Nadi; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) Operates the *Yasawa Flyer* to the Yasawa and Mamanuca islands as well as arranging budget-accommodation packages for these islands.

**Margaret Travel Service** (Map p76; ☎ 672 1988; fax 672 1992; 1st fl, Nadi airport concourse)

**Rosie Holidays** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2755; www.rosiefiji.com; Nadi airport concourse) Organises road tours, cruises, treks, accommodation, and is an agent for Thrifty Car Rental.

**Sun Vacations** (Map p76; ☎ 672 4273; www.sunvacationsfiji.com; Nadi airport concourse)

### Dangers & Annoyances

Downtown you may be pestered by sword-sellers and overly keen souvenir vendors. While Fiji is a relatively safe place to travel, there are occasional muggings and thefts in the Nadi area, not limited to lone travellers. Avoid wandering with valuables or packs along the beach or quiet roads such as Wailoaloa Rd or along Wailoaloa and New Town Beaches, especially at night.

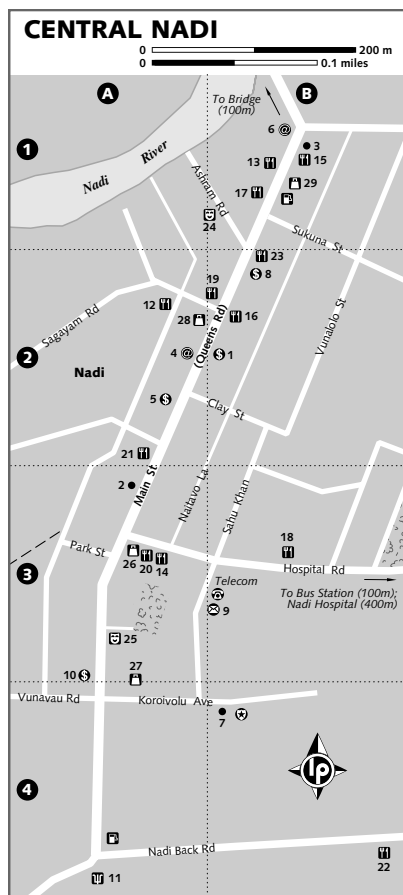
### Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple

At the base of Main St, away from the commercial hype, this peaceful Hindu temple (Map p78; ☎ 670 0016; admission \$3.50; ☎ 5am-8pm) strikes a vibrant pose against a dramatic mountain backdrop. The prolific wooden



carvings of Hindu deities travelled all the way from India, as did the artists who dressed the temple in its colourful coat and impressive ceiling frescos. You can wander around the main temple to see Lord Shiva's various forms, all incarnations being manifestations of the One Supreme Lord. This is a Murugan temple and worship of Lord Murugan is equivalent to the worship of nature. He is the guardian deity of the seasonal rains.

Nadi's Festivals such as Karthingai Puja (held monthly), Panguni Uthiram Thiru-naal (in April) and Thai Pusam (January) attract devotees from around the world. Devotees circle around the temple where they offer banana, smash a coconut, burn some camphor and receive blessing from the priest.



Visitors are welcome as long as they wear neat and modest dress, and haven't consumed alcohol or nonvegetarian food that day. It is fine to take photos in the grounds but not inside the temple. The grounds themselves are a tranquil spot to reflect and distance yourself from Nadi's boisterous main drag.

## Activities

### DIVING

There are two good diving outfits in Nadi, both of which cover a range of sites in the Mamanucas and come with excellent reputations for equipment, safety and instruction. **AquaBlue** (Map p76; ☎ 672 6111; www.aquabluefiji.com; Lot 33, Wasawasa Rd, New Town Beach) A no-frills, small diving operation offering one-/two-tank dives (\$120/160) and PADI Open Water Course (\$500).

**Dive Tropex** (Map p88; ☎ 675 0944; www.divetropex.com; Sheraton Fiji Resort, Denarau) One-/two-tank dives (\$120/185) and PADI Open Water Course (\$670).

### INFORMATION

ANZ Bank.....	1 B2
Argo Travel & Foreign Exchange.....	2 A3
Awesome Adventures Fiji.....	3 B1
Bula Internet Café.....	4 A2
Colonial National Bank.....	5 A2
Connect Café.....	6 B1
Divisional Registrar.....	7 B4
Just Exchange.....	8 B2
Post Office.....	9 B3
Westpac Bank.....	10 A3

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple.....	11 A4
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### EATING

Chefs the Edge.....	(see 12)
Chefs, the Restaurant.....	12 A2
Continental Cakes & Pizza.....	13 B1
Curry House.....	14 A3
Daikoku.....	15 B1
Hot Bread Kitchen.....	16 B2
Mama's Pizza.....	17 B1
Market.....	18 B3
Saffron The Corner.....	19 B2
Seafood Garden Bar Restaurant.....	20 A3
Sental Seafood Restaurant.....	21 A2
Supermarket.....	(see 16)
Tata's.....	22 B4
Ziggag Café.....	23 B2

### ENTERTAINMENT

Galaxy 2 Cinema.....	24 B1
Novelty Cinema.....	25 A3

### SHOPPING

Fiji Surf.....	26 A3
Handicraft Market.....	27 A3
Jack's Handicrafts.....	28 A2
Nad's Handicrafts.....	29 B1

## HINDU SYMBOLIC RITES

Around 35% of Fijians practise Hinduism, and the distinctive and sometimes flamboyant temples and shrines in which they worship are dotted liberally around Viti Levu. Sculptured deities and colourful frescoes pose photogenically against a tropical or mountain background; taking a reverent five minutes to pay your respects can be a cathartic experience regardless of your religious persuasion. The most celebrated of Fiji's Hindu temples is the Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple in Nadi, which was constructed and decorated in part by craftsmen flown in from India.

A Hindu temple symbolises the body, the residence of the soul. Union with God can be achieved through prayer and by ridding the body of impurities (meat cannot be eaten on the day of entering the temple).

Water and fire are used for blessings. Water carried in a pot with flowers is symbolic of the Great Mother (the personification of nature), while burning camphor symbolises the light of knowledge and understanding. A trident is used to represent fire, the protector and the three flames of purity, light and knowledge.

Hindus also believe that the body should be enslaved to the spirit and denied all comforts. Consequently fire walking is practised in order to become one with the Great Mother. Hindus believe life is like walking on fire and that a disciplined approach, like the one required in the ceremony, helps them to achieve balance, self-acceptance and to see good in everything.

Before entering a Hindu temple always ask permission and remove your shoes. Photography outside the temple is generally OK but considered offensive inside.

## HIKING

There are hiking possibilities, including trekking tours, in the Koroyanitu National Heritage Park (see p143) and the Nausori Highlands (p143 and p81).

## RIVER RAFTING & KAYAKING

Several companies operate exciting river-rafting and kayaking trips to the superb Namosi Highlands and will pick-up/drop-off from Nadi.

**Discover Fiji Tours** (☎ 345 0180; www.discoverfijitours.com) See p113 for more information.

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147; www.riversfiji.com; Pacific Harbour) See p113.

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 331 5730; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) See p128.

## MOUNTAIN BIKING

Based at Stoney Creek Resort, **Wacking Stick Adventure Tours** (Map p88; ☎ 672 4673, 995 3003; www.wackingstickadventures.com) rents good mountain bikes for \$25 per day and sends you off with a map to explore the cane fields and the foothills of the Sabeto Mountains and Valley.

It also offers good half- and full-day tours, including the Sleeping Giant Bike and Hike tour (per adult/child \$135/110, Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday), which

includes a visit to the Garden of the Sleeping Giant and a hot spring, a bike ride around the Sabeto area, and a hike to a cave and a waterfall through jungle. There are also half-day and sunset tours (from \$120 per person) and for the really energetic, three- or five-day tours (from \$1500 per person), which include all meals and accommodation.

## GOLF & TENNIS

The **Denarau Golf & Racquet Club** (see p87), on Denarau island, offers tennis and has an 18-hole golf course.

**Nadi Airport Golf Club** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2148; 18 holes \$15), at New Town Beach, is a much cheaper golf option. Clubs and pull-cart are an extra \$30.

## JET-BOAT TRIPS

For those in need of an adrenalin rush **Jet Fiji** (☎ 675 0400; reservations@jetfiji.com.fj; per adult/child \$85/40; 30min) has a roaring, hair-raising tear around the Nadi River mangroves. It departs from Denarau Marina and there's a courtesy minibus for transfers from Nadi hotels.

## Tours

Most tour companies will pick up guests from their hotels.

## VITI LEVU FOR KIDS

Fiji's main island has plenty to offer families with young tackers in tow. If you're staying in the Nadi area try a day cruise to one of the **Mamanuca** or **Yasawa islands** (below).

A day on the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** (p103) is a fun way for kids to gain an appreciation of Fiji's landscape and the barbecue lunch is a family-oriented affair. Nearby, the **Ka Levu South Pacific Cultural Centre** (p103) showcases Fijian singing, dancing and ceremonies that will entertain children. A little more kitsch and flashy are the demonstrations, boat tours and mock battles at the **Arts Village** (p113) in Pacific Harbour.

The Coral Coast is home to a number of attractions that will appeal to kids. Take them horse riding at **Natadola Beach** (p102) or along a private stretch of coast at the **Beachhouse** (p111). Show them Fiji's less-domesticated wildlife at the excellent **Kula Eco Park** (p107).

The **Fiji Museum** (p121) is choc-full of cultural and historical exhibits (including cannibal utensils – eeeewwwww) that will capture inquisitive young minds. You can also take them for a dip with local families at the **Suva Olympic Pool** (p126) and then a swing on the monkey bars at the family-infested **Umaria Park** (p127). The picnic tables at this esplanade playground make it perfect for a lunch pit stop.

Off the northern coast, **Nanau-i-Ra** (p140) is only a short hop from the mainland and offers calm swimming and snorkelling seas, and self-catering accommodation. Kids can also partake in kayaking and windsurfing here.

Many of the resorts have abundant activities to occupy the kids. Some kid-friendly resorts:

**Shangri-La's Fijian Resort** (p103)

**Hideaway Resort** (p112)

**Sonaisili Island Resort** (p90)

**Sheraton Denarau Villas** (p87)

**Naviti Resort** (p111)

## OFFSHORE ISLANDS

You'll need to head out of Nadi to dabble in the dreamy beaches synonymous with Fiji, and the Mamanuca islands are close enough for an easy day trip.

Organised trips to Robinson Crusoe Island (p102) just offshore from Viti Levu and south of Nadi are also an easy and fun day excursion.

The following companies offer tours to the Mamanucas and some also go to the Yasawas. Most of these trips depart from Denarau Marina. **Blue Lagoon Cruises** and **Beachcomber Cruises** depart from Lautoka. **Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 672 3828/666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; day tour per adult/child \$80/40) Runs day trips to Beachcomber Island where there are lots of water sports on offer. Included in the price are lunch, coral viewing and fish feeding.

**Blue Lagoon Cruises** (☎ 666 1622; www.bluelagooncruises.com) Has floating-hotel cruises to the Yasawas. Cruises are generally prebooked, although sometimes there are last-minute deals. See p160 for more details.

**Captain Cook Cruises** (Map p76; ☎ 670 1823; www.captaincook.com.au; 15 Narewa Rd, Nadi) Has a day trip to Tivua island aboard the magnificent *Ra Marama*, a tall ship.

See p149 for more information. It also runs floating-hotel trips to the Yasawas (see p160).

**Coral Cats** (☎ 651 3475; sailfiji@connect.com.fj; per person \$130) Offers day cruises around the Mamanucas on a 13m high-speed catamaran, with a stop at Malololailai. Snorkelling gear and a barbecue lunch are included in the price. This is a good option if you're looking for a smaller group tour.

**Fun Cruises Fiji** (☎ 670 2433; funcruises@connect.com.fj; Port Denarau) Offers day trips to uninhabited Malamala island. See p149 for more details.

**MV Sundancer** (☎ 672 0786; www.sundancerfiji.net; per day \$1750) If you've got the cash and you're looking for something more intimate, charter this 13m yacht for day trips including fishing and snorkelling gear and lunch. It can accommodate up to six people, all of whom will be thoroughly pampered.

**Oceanic Schooner Company** (☎ 672 2455; funcruises@connect.com.fj; Port Denarau) Has sailing trips from Port Denarau to the Mamanucas. See p149 for more information.

**South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj; ☎ departs Denarau Marina 9am) Offers sailing tours to several of the Mamanuca islands; see p149 for more destinations and prices. It also runs day tours to the Yasawas (see p160). Most of these include lunch and resort facilities but check for any hidden extras.

## SCENIC FLIGHTS

Most domestic flights are scenic, especially on a sunny day. It takes only 10 minutes to fly from Nadi to the Mamanucas and the islands, coral reefs and depths of blues and greens are gorgeous when seen from above – snorkellers and divers will drool at the sight. **Sun Air** (☎ 672 3016; www.fiji.to) flies to Mana and Malololailai (see p150 for more information). Confirm in advance if you wish to use a resort's facilities.

Joy flights over the Nausori Highlands and the patchwork farmland of the Sigatoka Valley are also spectacular. For details of **Turtle Airways** (Map p76; ☎ 672 1888, www.turtleairways.com) and **Island Hoppers** (☎ 672 0410; www.helicopters.com.fj) services, see p260.

## THE HIGHLANDS

Organised tours are the easiest way to see the high country and visit interior villages.

The highland village of Abaca in the Koroyanitu National Heritage Park is an easy day trip from Nadi or Lautoka; **Mount Batilamu Trek** (☎ 664 5747, 927 3592) has trips to this region; see p143.

**Adventures in Paradise** (☎ 652 0833; www.adventuresinparadisefiji.com) offers Cannibal Cave and Waterfall day tours on the Coral Coast, where it is based, and will collect guests from Nadi hotels. See p107 for more details.

**Adventure Fiji** (bookings through Rosie Holidays; Map p76; ☎ 672 2755; www.rosiefiji.com; Nadi International Airport) can organise four- or six-day 50km highland treks (per person \$485/670) through the province of Ra. By bus, boat train and foot, you'll follow a route used by missionaries since 1849. Accommodation and meals are in villages. The trek is run from May to October with a maximum of 15 people aged 12 to 60 years. Pick-ups from Nadi hotels can be arranged.

## TRADITIONAL BURE

Before the age of concrete and brick, Fijian villagers resided in traditional thatched dwellings known as *bure*. Travellers to Fiji will become familiar with the term almost immediately as it is virtually synonymous with the concept of accommodation at every price range.

In the past, these homes were dark and smoky inside, with no windows, usually only one low door, and with hearth pits where the women would cook. The packed-earth floor was covered with grass or fern leaves and then finely woven pandanus leaf or coarse coconut-leaf mats. Sleeping compartments were at one end, behind a bark-cloth curtain, where people slept on woven mats and with wooden headrests.

Traditional *bure* are usually rectangular in plan, with timber poles and hipped or gabled roof structure lashed together with coconut-fibre string. Thatch, woven coconut leaves or split bamboo is used as wall cladding, and roofs are thatched with grass or coconut leaves. *Bure* are cheap, relatively quick to build and withstand the elements well. Communities band together to finish a *bure* in a few weeks and re-thatch every couple of years. Most villages still have some traditional-style *bure* but, as the traditional structure of village life breaks down and natural materials become scarcer, most Fijians now find it easier and cheaper to use concrete block, corrugated iron and even flattened oil drums.

The *bure* advertised on your resort brochure is likely to be a long stretch from its forbearer. Although budget resorts offer rustic and Spartan constructs, most *bure* at resorts are mock structures to provide travellers with a dose of indigenous Fijian culture without losing the creature comforts they so crave.

## Bure Kalou

In the days of the old religion, every village had a temple, or *bure kalou*, also used as a meeting house for the men. These buildings had a high-pitched roof and usually stood on terraced foundations. The *bete*, or priest, who was an intermediary between the villagers and the spirits, lived in the temple and performed various rituals, including feasting on slain enemies and burying important people. A strip of white *masi* (bark cloth) was usually hung from the ceiling, serving as a connection to the spirits. The construction of such a temple required that a strong man be buried alive in each of the corner post holes.

See p143 for more on organised tours and visiting the mountains independently.

## Sleeping

Regardless of what the websites or brochures promise there are no appealing beaches in the Nadi area. That said, the resorts located at the grey-sand New Town or Wailoaloa Beaches are fairly isolated and peaceful, while those in Martintar and along the Queens Road are conveniently placed on the main bus route.

On arrival at Nadi International Airport you will be bombarded with a huge range of accommodation options. Most hotels have free transfer vehicles awaiting international flights, so it is best to already have some idea of where to go for the first night.

## BUDGET

### Along the Queens Road

**Sandalwood Lodge** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2044; sandalwood@connect.com.fj; Ragg St, Martintar; s \$75-95, d/tw \$85-105; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This hotel offers perky, self-contained rooms with blindingly colourful décor, small kitchenettes and TVs. They're neat and great value for self-caterers and families, plus the location off the main road promises a good night's sleep. Garden Wing rooms on the ground floor have patio doors leading to the pool, while the Orchid Wing rooms upstairs have balconies and more modern and spacious interiors.

**Nadi Bay Resort Hotel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 3599; www.fijinadibayhotel.com; Wailoaloa Rd, Martintar; dm \$21-25, s/d without bathroom from \$60/80, s/d/tr with bathroom \$85/100/110, 2-bedroom ste \$120; 🍷 🍷 🍷) One of Nadi's best-equipped budget resorts, the Nadi Bay buzzes perennially with the tank-top, cargo-clad 18- to 35-year-old set. It has the ambience of a shopping mall and is best suited to social animals, but the tide of facilities includes two excellent restaurants (mains \$10 to \$20), two bars, a palm-fringed pool, laundry service, luggage storage and tour desk. Dorms range in price from crowded, fan-cooled options to spacious, modern, air-conditioned rooms devoid of bunks. The single and double rooms and the suites are comfortable and clean.

**Nomads SkyLodge** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2200; www.nomadsskylodge.com.fj; Queens Rd, Namaka; 8-/6-/4-bed dm \$22/24/26, tw & d \$35-120; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Reposed over sloping green grounds with oceans of room and tree coverage, this sizeable property has plenty of options including neat and

plain dorms, standard, Spartan twins and rooms with air-con, bathrooms, phone, TV, fridge and towels. It's a little like a school camp for grown ups; groups ply in to take advantage of the basketball and volleyball courts, games room, and space.

**Sunview Motel & Hostel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 4933; sunviewmotel@connect.com.fj; 14 Gray St, Martintar; dm from \$20, d/tw/f \$50/55/90; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A find for backpacking baby boomers, this pristine hostel has squeaky-clean dorms, compact rooms, polished wooden floors, spacious communal areas and extremely friendly hosts. Leave party plans at the gate; this is a modest and quiet option.

### New Town Beach

A haul from downtown and the main road, New Town Beach offers budget travellers a cluster of backpacker resorts amid a smattering of wealthy residential properties. It's a peaceful area with great views of the Sabeto Mountain Range across the water.

**Aquarius Fiji** (Map p76; ☎ 672 6000; www.aquarius.com.fj; 17 Wasawasa Rd; dm \$25-28, r \$80-90; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Aquarius swims in South Pacific kitsch and warm vibes. The restaurant and pool area stretch languidly onto the beach where hammocks provide hangover respite to the beer-weary. All dorms and rooms have bathrooms and are stocked with cheerful décor. 'Oceanview' rooms upstairs have balconies overlooking the beach. The facilities are good and it's a professional setup.

**Tropic of Capricorn** (Map p76; ☎ 672 3089; chopkins@bigpond.net.au; 11 Wasawasa Rd; dm \$15, s/d \$30/40; 🍷 🍷) This small and homely option is run by the ebullient 'Mama' who's warmer than a hot choccoy on an arctic night. The main building sits on a patch of beach and contains spotless dorms and a central dining area. Roomy singles and doubles are located in a two-storey house around the corner with shared bathrooms and a kitchen. Travellers return here for the home-away-from-home vibes.

**New Town Beach Motel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 3339; newtownbeach@connect.com.fj; r/f \$40/50; 🍷 🍷) Small and unassuming, this unpretentious motel hides behind a panel of foliage and is good for travellers beating a retreat from the hollering crowds. The fan-cooled rooms are neat, petite, and lovely. A wee restaurant (mains \$10) on-site serves simple and filling fare.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Tanoa Apartments** (Map p76; ☎ 672 3685; www.tanoahotels.com; off Votualevu Rd, Namaka; r/ste \$170/215; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Perched above the city, this lofty option is one of Nadi's best. The superb apartments have sophisticated décor, stone walls and heavy wooden doors to imbue a touch of the Mediterranean. The cool interiors contain floor-to-ceiling timber wardrobes, modern kitchens and cushioned window benches with sweeping views of the highlands. Each apartment is doused in natural light and there's more than enough space to spread out and make yourself at home. The more expensive penthouse suites have a mezzanine level with single beds.

**Travellers Beach Resort** (Map p76; ☎ 672 3322; beachvilla@connect.com.fj; Wasawasa Rd; dm \$15, s \$33-40, d \$40-70; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The digs at this com-modious and long-standing resort are adequate without being outstanding but the sociable atmosphere is the main drawcard. There's a poolside bar and restaurant (mains \$13 to \$20) and facilities include laundry service, tour desk and Internet access.

More budget options:

**Horizon Beach Resort** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2832; www.horizonbeachfiji.com; 10 Wasawasa Rd; dm without/with air-con \$10/17.50, s/d/f with fan \$35/40/55, s/d/f with air-con from \$40/55/75; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Good range of rooms plus a restaurant and bar. Popular with a young backpacker crowd.

**Beach Escape Villas** (Map p76; ☎ 672 4442; www.beachescapefiji.com; off Wasawasa Rd; dm without/with air-con \$18/22, d & tw \$40-65; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Pleasant timber villas with verandas but the maintenance is lackadaisical.

## MIDRANGE

Most of the midrange hotels are located along the Queens Road between downtown Nadi and the airport. Rooms generally have air-con, TV, phone and fridge, and most hotels have tour desks, luggage storage, courtesy airport transfers and restaurants open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

### Along the Queens Road

**Raffles Gateway Hotel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2444; www.rafflesgateway.com; Namaka; r \$70-130; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Raffles lays on a spread of charm from

the mock colonial entrance to the central pagoda topped with a fine head of bougainvillea. Cheaper standard rooms are pinchy but cool and crisp while the superior rooms are a leap in value with their lounge settings, TVs and private patios. There's also a poolside restaurant (mains \$20 to \$30) and a grassed central courtyard with sun lounges. Kids will love the waterslide.

**Capricorn International** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0088; www.capricorn-hotels-fiji.com; Queens Rd, Martintar; r incl continental breakfast \$85-110, f \$160; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The Capricorn's colourful and pleasant rooms are a tad dated but all have mod-cons and gargantuan beds. Pricier deluxe models come with a balcony. The two-bedroom family suite is good value for a small army and the property includes a spacious restaurant (mains \$10 to \$25), laundry service, salon and small shop.

**Mercury Hotel Nadi** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2255 reservations@mercurenadi.com.fj; Queens Rd, Martintar; r \$135; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This hotel has been renovated into a flashy haven of creature comforts. All rooms have a bar fridge, TV, phone and glossy bathrooms. The 'deluxe' rooms come with a king-size bed and are larger than the 'superior' rooms but the latter are more modern. The extensive grounds encompass a sprawling alfresco restaurant (mains \$20) and family-pleasers such as table tennis, trampolines and a large pool.

**Rosie Serviced Apartments** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2755; reservations@rosie.com.fj; Queens Rd, Martintar; r \$70-115; 🍷 🍷) The block's a bit of an ugly duckling and the décor hasn't had a make-over in a while, but these studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments are meticulously maintained and great value for self-caterers. There's enough room in even the studios to accommodate a small nation and each apartment comes with a balcony and semi-modern, fully equipped kitchen.

**West's Motor Inn** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0044; westsmotorin@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd, Martintar; r \$55-85; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Circumnavigating a central pool, this hotel offers colourful, tiled deluxe rooms with TVs and pool views or older standard rooms. The poolside bar-restaurant (dinner \$14 to \$19.50) offers OK meals.

### New Town Beach & Wailoaloa Beach

**Grand West's Villas** (Map p76; ☎ 672 4833; grandwestvillas@connect.com.fj; Nadi Bay Rd, New Town Beach;



r\$95-160; 🏠 🚗) It looks a little lonely, planted on the road to New Town Beach, but this condominium-style complex has white and bright studios, villas and one-bedroom apartments. The latter are fully self-contained and can accommodate four people. It's a good option if you've got wheels.

Wailoaloa Beach, about 1.5km southwest of New Town Beach, is quiet, isolated and a world away from downtown Nadi. The drawback is a lack of transport.

**Beachside Resort** (Map p76; ☎ 670 3488; www.beachsidesortfiji.com; Wailoaloa Beach Rd; r\$60-90, f\$125; 🏠 🚗 🚿) The moniker's a tad misleading, but this compact and personal resort (away from the beach) has stylish and immaculate rooms dressed in timber and Fijian prints. Cheaper rooms are tucked behind the main complex, while the pricier ocean view suites have balconies overlooking the central pool. The trendy Coriander Cafe (mains \$12 to \$24) dishes up inventive fare along the lines of Thai chicken pizza or coconut fish bites. The Beachside has friendly and professional staff.

**Club Fiji Resort** (Map p76; ☎ 670 20150; www.clubfiji-resort.com; Wailoaloa Beach Rd; d \$100-165; 🏠 🚗 🚿) One for the comfort-needy looking to avoid the big resorts, this lively property has classy, Mediterranean-style villas decked out in mahogany and Italian tiles, plus smaller, timber and thatched *bure*. Oceanview *bure* are more expensive again (\$180 to \$300). The restaurant (mains \$12 to \$30) hosts Mexican, Mongolian and Fijian theme nights and live entertainment.

**Ocean's Edge** (Map p76; ☎ 651 1560; www.oceansedge.org; Fantasy Forest Park, Nadi; r\$150; 🏠 🚗) Tucked away in a slowly progressing residential estate, this health and fitness complex has four trendy units with timber decks, edgy-urban interiors and extras such as fridges and individual libraries. Access to the pristine pool and gym are included in the price but you'll need a car to reach anywhere else.

## TOP END

**Tokatoka Resort Hotel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0222; tokatokaresort@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd, Namaka; r\$175-230; 🏠 🚗 🚿) This low-rise, upscale resort carpets itself over a lush tropical setting and lays out semidetached, private villas, the most expensive of which are one-bedroom and self-contained. All digs are fresh and polished and facilities include a restaurant

(mains \$15 to \$30), health spa, and glorious swimming pool with water slide. It is access-friendly to disabled people.

**Fiji Mocambo** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2000; mbo@shangri-la.com; Namaka; s/d from \$180/210; 🏠 🚗 🚿) Like an anchored *Love Boat* this capacious resort keeps coach tours and fussy guests happy with boutiques, a business centre, nine-hole golf course, spa, nightclub, restaurant and pool. The superior rooms are like upgraded motel rooms with generic décor, but a small jump in price will get you a classy, renovated 'deluxe'. Most rooms have beautiful highland views.

**Tanoa International Hotel** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0277; www.tanoahotels.com/international; d from \$195; 🏠 🚗 🚿) Another flashy, self-contained resort, this hotel is loaded with facilities and distractions, making it popular with package pool addicts and families from Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Rooms are sassy and Westernised and guests won't need to lift a finger for anything.

See p87 for details of the Sheraton hotels on Denarau island.

## Eating

Nadi is a tourist town catering well for a variety of tastes and budgets. Most places serve a mixture of traditional Fijian, Indian, Chinese and Western dishes, and there are lots of cheap lunch-time eateries downtown. Some of the resorts have special *lovo* nights, where food is cooked in a pit oven.

## RESTAURANTS

### Central Nadi

**Chefs, the Restaurant** (Map p78; ☎ 670 3131/3322; Sagayam Rd; mains \$30-45; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; 🚿) One of Nadi's finest; this swanky restaurant is perfect for a splurge on taste and atmosphere. Meals match the refined surroundings with a truly global menu offering roasted duckling ravioli, Afghan chicken and excellent seafood dishes.

**Chefs, the Edge** (Map p78; ☎ 670 3131; Sagayam Rd; mains \$16-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; 🚿) The café version of the main event upstairs has a roomy and relaxed interior and serves Indian and Thai curries as well as pizza, pasta, salads and burgers. The air-con will allow you to enjoy the vindaloo even in summer.

**Seafood Garden Bar Restaurant** (Map p78; ☎ 670 1302; Hospital Rd, Nadi; mains \$15-30; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner; 🚿) A jack-of-all-trades, this breezy

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Daikoku** (Map p78; ☎ 670 3622; Main St, Nadi; mains \$20-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Behind a fortress of ornate timber doors, Daikoku is about having as much fun as you can filling your belly. Patrons sit around large square hotplates while their individual chef performs the sometimes gentle, sometimes energetic, always entertaining art of *teppanyaki*. Also gracing the menu is delicate sushi and sashimi as well as traditional pickles and Japanese beer to whet the palate. The atmosphere is intimate, the service flawless and the food utterly sublime.

restaurant dishes up good fish and chips, Indian curries and traditional *lolo* (coconut cream) in duck, chicken, beef, crab, fish and lobster versions. The crowd is touristy and the fare tame but it hits the spot.

**Sentai Seafood Restaurant** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0928; Main St, Nadi; mains \$12-25; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) The décor may be shambolic but Sentai's Asian infusion menu knows exactly what it's doing. There's a heavy emphasis on seafood and adventurous souls can tuck into a *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumber) combination hotpot. There's always beef in black-bean sauce or prawns with lemon and ginger for the meek.

**Mama's Pizza** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0221; Main St, Nadi; mains \$8-20; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🚿) It serves traditional crowd-pleasers as well as wood-fired gourmet treats including garlic-glazed chicken, smoked *walu* (butter fish) or eggplant and sun-dried tomato pizzas. Pastas and salads are also up for grabs. Mama's downtown outlet is cool, dark and inviting.

## Other Locations

**Lazy Cactus** (Map p76; ☎ 672 6890; Queens Rd, Martintar; mains \$12-20; 🍷 lunch & dinner) This snappy little cantina oozes a warm atmosphere and delicious smells. The food is Mexican and the cooks mean business – burritos, enchiladas and a kicking *camarones en mojo de ajo* (shrimp with garlic, chillies and butter). You can dine inside or in the pleasant courtyard.

**Bounty Bar & Restaurant** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0840; 79 Queens Rd, Martintar; lunch \$10-20, dinner \$20-45; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🚿) This convivial restaurant-cum-bar boasts seafaring décor, expats at the bar and a constant, happy buzz. The menu is a

who's who of seafood, steak and meaty grills, with the odd curry and stir-fry thrown in.

**Maharaj** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2962; Queens Rd, Namaka; dishes \$6-15; 🍷 dinner) The spicy curries served at this long-standing Indian eatery are generally considered to be Nadi's finest. They can be hit and miss, but when the chef's on a roll the food is hot enough to induce a sweaty coma.

**Mama's Pizza** (Map p76; ☎ 672 0922; Colonial Plaza, Queens Rd, Namaka; mains \$8-20; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🚿) Another outlet of this Nadi institution (see left), the Namaka restaurant has diner-style booths.

**RJs Restaurant & Bar** (Map p76; ☎ 672 2900; Queens Rd, Martintar; mains \$20-30; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sun) A carnivore's delight, RJs sizzles up prime fillet steaks, veal masala, char-grilled ribs and plenty of seafood options. There's a Hungarian goulash for the left-of-centre palates and all servings are hearty. The wine list is suitably impressive.

The restaurants at a number of hotels welcome nonguests. Inventive fare at reasonable prices is cooked up at the Nadi Bay Resort Hotel (p82) and Beachside Resort (opposite). In New Town Beach, Travellers Beach, Aquarius Fiji and Horizon Beach resorts (p82) boast lively bars and restaurants.

Nonguests are also welcome at the fine-dining restaurants at the Sheraton resorts on Denarau (p87).

## CAFES

**Continental Cakes & Pizza** (Map p78; ☎ 670 3595; Main St, Nadi; meals \$6-16; 🍷 8am-6pm; 🚿) This long, narrow café lures locals and visitors with fresh, deli-style sandwiches, subs and rolls, and pizzas. Sponge cakes, slices, pies and other sweet goodies flaunt themselves under a glass cabinet and the coffee here is good.

**Saffron the Corner** (Map p78; ☎ 670 1233; Main St, Nadi; mains \$8; 🍷 breakfast & lunch; 🚿) Delicious curries served in one-meal-a-day portions display themselves under the counter at this corner diner. The ambience is a tad fast-food chain and you'll need to contend with Hindu tunes butchered by a drum machine, but it's a good spot for a mountainous feed.

**Curry House** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0798; Hospital Rd, Nadi; mains \$8-18; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular with travellers, this atmospheric curry joint is busy but served so. Traditional Indian curries and side dishes are vacuumed



at an alarming rate. You can dine air-con or alfresco, although the outside seating is right next to a busy intersection.

**Zigzag Cafe** (Map p78; ☎ 670 5442; Ground fl, Prouds Bldg, Main St, Nadi; snacks \$3-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☒) Fresh fruit smoothies, club sandwiches and bakery goods cater to an almost exclusively tourist clientele at this Western-style café, but the coffee is strong and the crisp interior provides cool respite from the heat.

The kiosk at Domestic Departures at the airport has good-quality local food at local prices, while the one at International Departures is priced for tourists. If you have a bit of time to kill before a flight try the poolside bar at Raffles Gateway Hotel, opposite the airport entrance.

### QUICK EATS

The bottom end of Main St in downtown Nadi has a number of cheap curry houses, all of which expend far more energy on the cheap nosh than on the dim surrounds. You can lunch for around \$4.

**Tata's** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0520; Nadi Back Rd, Nadi; meals \$4; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, till 5pm Sat) You won't find this unadorned little curry house on any of the tourist brochures and its location ain't exactly salubrious, but Tata's serves some of the best, and hottest curry in the country. It's legendary among the locals.

**Hot Bread Kitchen** Downtown (Market St, Nadi) Namaka (Map p76; Colonial Plaza, Queens Rd, Namaka) This chain bakery has two outlets in Nadi, both of which are good for lunches and snacks on the run. Tasty sausage rolls and pies go for under \$1 and there's a steady stream of fresh bread and sweet rolls.

### SELF-CATERING

Nadi has a large produce market (Map p78; Hospital Rd, Nadi), which sells lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. Good-quality meat, however, is not so easy to come by. There are several large supermarkets and bakeries downtown as well as along the Queens Road at the Colonial Plaza and at Namaka.

### Drinking

**Ed's Bar** (Map p76; ☎ 672 4650; Lot 51, Queens Rd, Martintar) Nadi's best watering hole draws local and visiting social animals and keeps them happy with cheap beer and friendly staff. There's a small dining section inside but the bar is the main event, where stool seating,

pool tables and live bands dominate. Tables outside catch the breeze but they generally fill by late afternoon so you'll have to strap your beer boots on earlyish to nab one.

**Bounty Bar & Restaurant** (79 Queens Rd, Martintar; see p85) Another favourite with those in the know, the Bounty hosts a solid drinking phase somewhere between dinner and the live music. Things get loud, beery and fun as the night draws on. You're sure to meet your new best mate here.

The bars at the Aquarius Fiji (p82), Travelers Resort (p83) and Nadi Bay Resort Hotel (p82) are also atmospheric options for a beer or cocktail. Also, check out Rave Bar (see following) or the Planters Club and Planters Lounge (p88).

### Entertainment

**Rave Bar** (☎ 672 2000) A nightclub at the Fiji Mocambo (p84) has live bands, karaoke and rave music. There is a cover charge and a dress code (no flip-flops or shorts) and the crowd is unsurprisingly touristic.

The Sheraton Royal has a disco Thursday to Saturday, nightly live Fijian music, and fire-walking and *meke* (Fijian dance) nights (see p88).

Two cinemas downtown that show a mix of Hollywood and Indian Bollywood movies are **Galaxy 2 Cinema** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0176; 5 Ashram Rd, Nadi) and **Novelty Cinema** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0155; Upstairs Nadi Civic Centre, Main St, Nadi). Admission is around \$4.

### Shopping

Nadi's Main St is largely devoted to souvenir and duty-free shops. Popular souvenirs include printed designs on *masi* and *tanoa* (bowls for drinking *kava*, a narcotic Fijian drink). See p251 for general information.

**Jack's Handicrafts** (Map p78; ☎ 670 0744; Main St, Nadi) Unashamedly aimed at the tourist wallet, this outlet of Jack's is colossal in size and contents. Crafts, clothing, jewellery and house items are sold at reasonable prices but it's all fairly mass-produced and you're unlikely to find anything truly unique here.

**Nad's Handicrafts** (Map p78; ☎ 670 3588; Main St, Nadi) Competing fiercely with Jack's, Nad's has the same stock for the same prices and lures shoppers with a 'Fijian warrior' at the gates promising the best deals in Nadi.

**Handicraft Market** (Map p78; Korovulu Ave) You may pick up something more authentic at the

handicraft market but check out the prices in the shops beforehand to ensure you really are getting a bargain. Be aware that wooden items are unlikely to have been treated and may be quarantined once you get home.

High-quality handicrafts are sold at the Pacific Art Shop in the Sheraton Fiji Resort, Denarau (see right).

**Fiji Surf** (Map p78; ☎ 670 5960; cnr Main St & Hospital Rd, Nadi) This little surf shop sells trendy surf wear, boards and equipment. It also repairs and rents boards and can be a good source of information for general surf conditions.

### Getting There & Around

Nadi International Airport is 9km north of downtown Nadi and there are frequent local buses from just outside the airport that travel along the Queens Road to town (\$0.65); otherwise a taxi is \$10. Most of the hotels have free transfer vehicles awaiting international flights. From Nadi bus station (in downtown Nadi) there are buses to Lautoka and Suva; nonexpress buses can be picked up at regular bus stops along the Queens Road. For details of domestic flights from Nadi, see p259.

Buses depart from New Town Beach for downtown Nadi (\$0.64, 15 minutes, six services Monday to Saturday). A taxi costs \$4/6/10 to the Queens Road/downtown/airport.

For details on ferries to the Mamanuca islands and Yasawa islands, see p150 and p161, respectively. Most boat companies and organised tours will pick up guests from Nadi's hotels. You can get to Denarau island independently: **West Bus Transport** (☎ 675 0777) has six buses Monday to Saturday (fewer on Sunday) from Nadi bus station to Denarau island. The first is at 8.30am and the last at 5pm (\$0.65, 30 minutes).

Taxi drivers are always on the lookout for business. They don't use meters so confirm prices in advance. Remember if they are returning to base, you pay less. See p263 for a list of car- and motorbike-hire companies.

### AROUND NADI Denarau Island

Developing at the speed of light, this upmarket island (2.55 sq km) is laden with fancy resorts, with even fancier extensions on the way. Although it's only 6km west of Nadi town, the disparity couldn't be starker. Everything here is manicured to perfection and if you're looking to splash some cash, enjoy a

dose of pampering and avoid Nadi altogether the island's got your name stamped all over it. Denarau is a reclaimed mangrove area and the beach has dark-grey sand, however the pools are heavenly and the Sheraton Resorts take day-trippers to a private offshore island with white-sand beaches.

**Pacific Art Shop** (☎ 675 0677; Sheraton Fiji Resort) is pricier than the downtown Nadi options but this upmarket handicrafts shop sells high-quality arts goods.

### ACTIVITIES

Many trips to nearby islands (see p80) depart from Denarau Marina.

Dive Tropex (p78) is located in the Sheraton Fiji Resort.

**Jet Fiji** (☎ 675 0400; reservations@jetfiji.com.fj; per adult/child \$85/40; 30min) tears around the Nadi River mangroves in a jet-boat.

The **Denarau Golf & Racquet Club** (☎ 675 9711; info@denarougolf.com.fj) caters mainly to guests of the Sheraton hotels. It has an immaculately groomed 18-hole golf course with bunkers in the shape of sea creatures. Green fees are \$110 for 18 holes and \$70 for nine holes. Equipment hire is an additional \$16/32 per nine/18 holes. A game of tennis will set you back \$20/25 per hour on a synthetic/grass court. Racquet hire is \$12 per person.

### SLEEPING

**Sheraton Royal Denarau Resort** (☎ 675 0000; fax 675 0818; sheratondenarau@sheraton.com; r incl breakfast from \$630; ☒ ☺ ☒) The oldest of the Sheraton establishments at Denarau is still one of the most handsome hotels in Fiji and certainly the most Fijian flavoured of the group. The hotel rooms are casually splendid and come with all wonders of modern technology. The resort itself is tucked into a beautifully maintained tropical garden.

**Sheraton Fiji Resort** (☎ 675 0777; www.sheraton.com/fiji; r incl breakfast from \$540; ☒ ☺ ☒) The middle of the Sheraton sisters is uberchic and laid out in Mediterranean splendour. Low-rise condos, separated by gulfs of thick grass and multihued flora have ocean views and all the five-star perks. There are seasonal price variations and most patrons arrange some sort of package deal or discount.

**Sheraton Denarau Villas** (☎ 675 0777; www.sheraton.com/denarauvillas; r incl breakfast from \$640, ste incl breakfast from \$870; ☒ ☺ ☒) The classiest of the lot, the Sheraton Villas are a series of modern

one-, two- and three-bedroom bungalows with opulent interiors and small kitchens. The 'infinity' pool is unbearably blue, you can pamper yourself in the 'Mandara Spa' and staff wait on you hand and foot.

The hotels run a baby-sitting service. In addition there are some 18 restaurants, and just about any activity you can conjure on offer.

## ENTERTAINMENT

The Sheraton hotels host a plethora of bars. The Planters Club at the Sheraton Royal is a mock-traditional pub that converts to a disco Thursday to Saturday. Also here is Planters Lounge, a sweeping cocktail bar with live Fijian music nightly. On Wednesday night you

can catch fire walking, and a *meke* is held every Saturday night (\$50/25 per adult/child over 12 including a *lovo* dinner).

Young families are well catered for at the Sheratons with a daily entertainment programme for children.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are local bus services from Nadi to Denarau island (see p87; a taxi from Nadi town costs \$12 and from the airport \$24.

## Foothills of the Sabeto Mountains

The undulating countryside between Nadi and Lautoka offers isolated accommodation with soaring mountain backdrops or ocean views. It's a lovely area to explore by local

bus, mountain bike, motorbike, hire car, taxi or organised tour. One tour company that rents mountain bikes and organises trips here is Wacking Stick (see p79).

The **Garden of the Sleeping Giant** (☎ 672 2701; Wailoko Rd; adult/child/family \$12/6/30; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun), at the foothills of the Sabeto (Sleeping Giant) Mountain Range, is a peaceful place for a picnic or to spend a few hours strolling around the lily ponds and forested tracks. The garden is awash with Fiji's largest collection of orchids as well as vivid indigenous flora. About 6km north of Nadi airport turn inland off the Queens Road along Wailoko Rd for about 2km. A taxi from Nadi will cost around \$13.

Further north along the Queens Road visit **Lomolomo Guns** for a short walk and a great view. The abandoned WWII battery, built to protect Nadi Bay, is on a rise at the foot of the Sabeto Mountains. The turn-off is 400m north of Lomolomo police station and about 8.5km north of the airport. Follow the dirt road for about 300m, turn left and follow the road up and around for about 400m.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Stoney Creek Resort** (☎ 672 2206; www.stoneycreekfiji.net; Sabeto Rd; dm \$20, s/d without bathroom \$30/45, d/tr with bathroom \$55/75; ☎ ☎) It's a little bit 'wild west', a little bit Mountain Momma and a lotta of Fiji. This retreat, hidden at the base of the highlands, is a superb budget option. Dorms are reminiscent of train carriages and share an open communal area. *Bure* are kitsch and cosy and come with breakfast, privacy and sweeping mountain views. On site is a saloon-style bar and a restaurant (meals \$6 to \$10; open breakfast, lunch and dinner), which serves pastas, burgers and grills. Activities include mountain biking (\$25 per person per day), horse riding and kayaking.

The resort provides a free airport shuttle; otherwise a taxi costs \$10/14 from the airport/downtown. There are also regular 'Sabeto' buses from Nadi bus station, which can also be picked up at the Sabeto Rd/Queens Road junction (\$1, 12 buses between 8am and 5.30pm).

## Viseisei & Vuda Point

About 12km north of Nadi airport the Queens Road bypasses the village of Viseisei, which receives tourists on organised tours. Viseisei was the home of the late Dr Timoci

Bavadra, whose government was deposed by Fiji's first coup in 1987. The *matagali* (extended family or landowning group) here own and lease several of the Mamanuca islands to resorts. Local buses between Nadi and Lautoka go past the village.

About 1km north of Viseisei there is a turn-off from the Old Queens Road to Vuda Point peninsula, which juts out towards the Mamanucas between Nadi and Lautoka. According to local legend the first Melanesians arrived in Fiji at this spot circa 1500. Today it's mostly farmland interrupted by two resorts, which are pleasant alternatives to staying in Nadi. Also here is the **Vuda Point Marina** (☎ 666 8214; vudamarina@connect.com.fj), a thriving boaters lure.

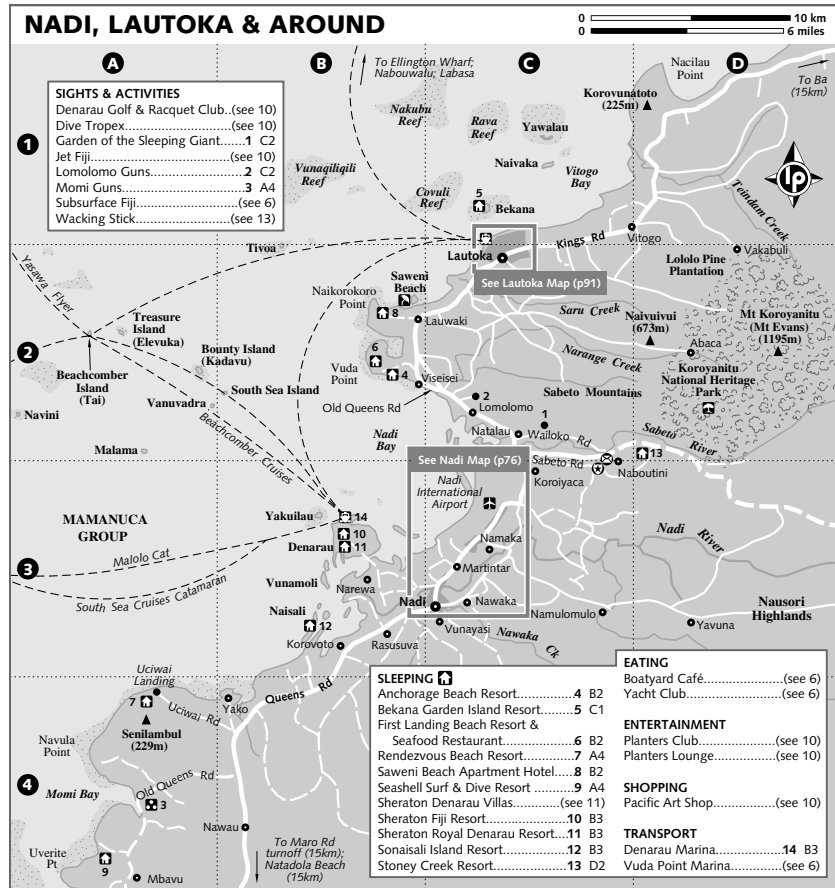
There is a good dive operation at the First Landing Resort, **Subsurface Fiji** (☎ 666 6738; www.subsurfacefiji.com), which runs diving trips to the Mamanucas and southern Yasawas reefs. A two-tank/PADI Open Water Course costs \$190/560.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**First Landing Resort** (☎ 666 6171; www.firstlandingfiji.com; r incl breakfast \$145-220; 2-bedroom villa incl breakfast \$440-520; ☎ ☎ ☎) Perched on the water's edge and dripping in palms and colourful foliage, this resort is a made-to-order brochure-retreat and the package-holiday guests who fill its rooms are not disappointed. Nestled into the thick gardens, the *bure* and villas are like cheerful hotel rooms, with bright, tiled bathrooms and bedrooms, and mosquito-screened verandas. Although the beach had fallen victim to energetic renovations at the time of writing, the lagoon-style pool proved adequate compensation.

**Anchorage Beach Resort** (☎ 666 2099; www.anchoragefiji.com; r \$95-200; ☎ ☎ ☎) On a great hilltop site with panoramic views of Nadi Bay and the Mamanucas, this middling resort fits somewhere between idiosyncratic and generic. The rooms and villas are a little weary, yet the whole place is less premeditated than many of the other resorts in the area, so it's a good option for unfussy families and couples. The beach is a five-minute walk down the hill and there is a small pool but no organised activities.

**First Landing Seafood Restaurant** (mains \$16-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Serves excellent seafood alongside fairly timid pastas, burgers and other resort-style food. The outdoor seating



is particularly pleasant and offers uninterrupted views of the closer Mamanucas.

**Yacht Club** (mains \$8-17; ☺ lunch & dinner) It screams 'members only' from a sign out the front but that's all bravado and travellers are more than welcome. Dinner mains consist of Cajun steak, curries and stir-fries and the beach-shack structure makes for breezy dinner surroundings.

At Vuda Point marina, the **Boatyard Café** (snacks \$4-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch) dishes up breakfasts, muffins, sandwiches, cakes and roti wraps to tables with water views. The marina also has a good **store** (☺ 7.30am-7pm), laundry and other services for yachties.

### Naisali Island

Like Denarau, Naisali (42 hectares) is on the edge of the mangroves. This long, flat island is just 300m off the mainland, and about 12km southwest of Nadi. The resort is on a dark-sand beach with quick access and great views to the Mamanucas.

The large luxury **Sonaisali Island Resort** (☎ 670 6011; www.sonaisali.com; r incl breakfast \$420, ste incl breakfast from \$580; ☒ ☺ ☎ ☎) is a self-contained dose of fancy Fiji. Hotel rooms in the double-storey building have sea views and plenty of added extras and there are capacious, thatched *bure* with high ceilings and elevated verandas. The resort's facilities include a beauty spa, sunken bar and pool-side, beachfront restaurant (meal package per adult/child \$65/35), free kids club, and more activities than you could possibly exhaust.

Naisali is a 25-minute drive followed by a three-minute boat shuttle from Nadi airport. Turn off the Queens Road at Nacobi Rd and drive for a couple of kilometres by sealed road to the resort landing and taxi stand. A taxi here will cost about \$20.

### Uciwai Landing

Uciwai Landing, used by surfers to access the Mamanuca breaks and island resorts on Namotu and Tavarua, is 18km southwest of Nadi. Surfing is really the only reason to head here – it's accessed by a dirt road

The lingo and 'tude hang thickly in the air at **Rendezvous Beach Resort** (☎ 651 0571; www.surfdivefiji.com; camping per person \$35, dm incl meals \$55, s/d incl meals from \$75/140; ☎ ☎) where an unfussy target market mill about the simple lodgings with the languid gait of seasoned surfers. Quick access to the Mamanuca surf

breaks and dive sites are the attraction and the idea is to spend as much time away from the resort as possible. Accommodation is in minimal bungalows and there's plenty of grass to pitch a tent. Renovations were under way at the time of writing.

Surfing boat fees per day are \$50, which includes a packed lunch. A two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$150/500.

Resort transfers from Nadi airport are \$40, or there are local buses to Uciwai from Nadi bus station (\$1.50) departing at 8am, 1.30pm and 5.30pm weekdays, and 7am, 1pm and 5pm Saturday.

## LAUTOKA

pop 43,270

Fiji's second-largest city creeps up on you like a delicious noontime nap. Wide streets steeped in foliage create a permanently relaxed ambience and the backdrop of the Koroyanitu (Mt Evans) Range acts as a reminder that the urban reaches are well and truly finite. At the waterfront, a picturesque esplanade stems the low-rise construction, and yachts and cruise ships hang languidly and unobtrusively offshore. Lautoka's downtown grid teems with the ambling saris of a strong Indo-Fijian presence, and the shops, services and large market here provide a pleasant commercial alternative to Nadi.

The Lautoka Sugar Mill has been operating here since 1903 and the local economy still relies heavily on the diminishing sugar industry. In the latter half of the year little sugar trains putt along the main street, which is lined with royal palms. There is also the smell of woodchips in the air.

### Information

#### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 911)

**Police** (☎ 911/666 0222; Drasa Ave)

#### INTERNET ACCESS

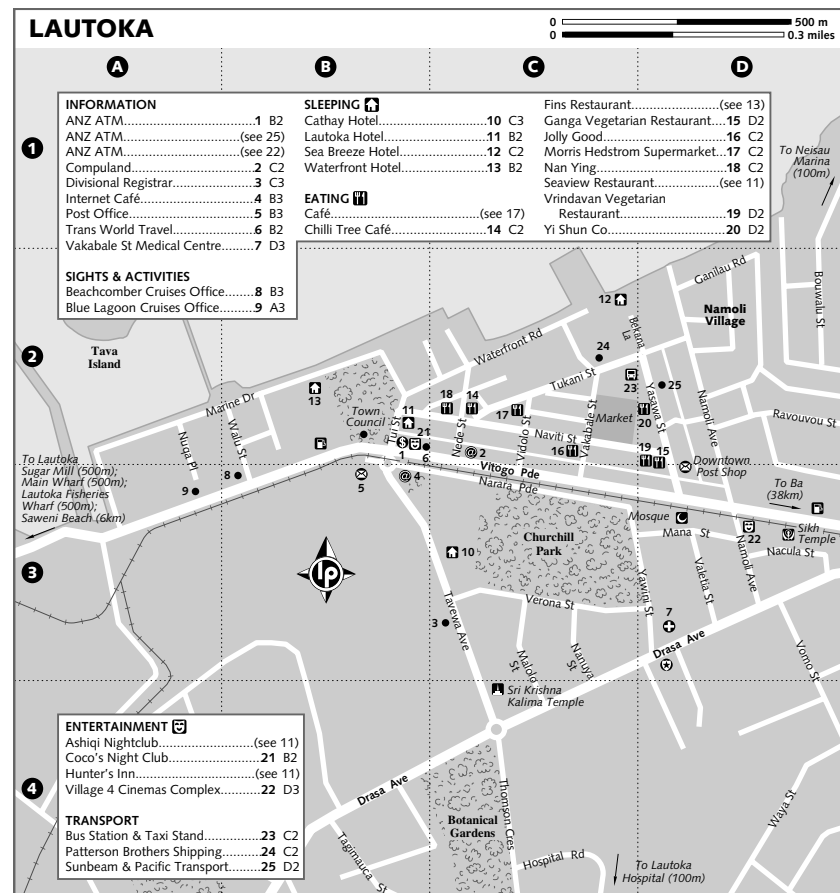
**Complund** (☎ 666 6457; 1st fl, 145 Vitogo Pde; per hr \$5; ☺ 8am-8pm)

**Internet Café** (cnr Narara Pde & Tavewa Ave; per hr \$5; ☺ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, till noon Sat)

#### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Lautoka Hospital** (☎ 666 0399; Thomson Cres) South of the Botanical Gardens.

**Vakabale St Medical Centre** (☎ 665 2955, 995 2369; 47 Drasa Ave)



### MONEY

There are several banks downtown that will change money and travellers cheques. There are ANZ bank ATMs on Vitogo Pde, Yasawa St and near the cinema on Namoli Ave.

### POST

**Post office** (cnr Vitogo Pde & Tavewa Ave) Has public phones.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Trans World Travel** (☎ 665 1566, 666 5466; 138 Vitogo Pde) Can handle all tour and travel needs.

### Sights & Activities

**Koroyanitu National Heritage Park** is a fantastic place for hiking (see p143).

**Saweni Beach** is fairly unappealing but popular with locals for weekend picnics. It is 2km off the Queens Road and the turn-off is 6km south of Lautoka.

Cruises are offered by:  
**Beachcomber Cruises/Resort office** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; 1 Walu St)  
**Blue Lagoon Cruises** (☎ 666 1622; www.bluelagooncruises.com; 183 Vitogo Pde)

### Sleeping

**Lautoka Hotel** (☎ 666 0388; ltkhotel@connect.com.fj; 2-12 Naviti St; dm \$15, r \$35-65; ☺ ☺) Aged like a vintage beer, this hotel has lost some of its kick but it still puts a smile on your face. Rooms are cosy and welcoming and the more expensive versions have air-con,



private bathrooms and TVs. The corner balcony provides sweeping views of the street below and the whole place is charming in a faded, distinguished kind of way.

**Waterfront Hotel** (☎ 666 4777; waterfront@connect.com.fj; Marine Dr; r \$120-140; ☎ ☎ ☎) Lautoka's top hotel has a breezy waterfront location and the ambience and trimmings of a mid-range US hotel chain. Spacious rooms have generic, cheerful décor plus air-con, balcony and TV. The more expensive executive rooms also have lounge settings. On site is a gym, small children's playground, bar and Fins Restaurant (see p101).

**Sea Breeze Hotel** (☎ 666 0717; fax 666 6080; Bekana Lane; s \$35-50, d \$40-55; ☎ ☎ ☎) Tucked down an alley near the city centre, the Sea Breeze has piously austere rooms (the dominating embellishment is the bedside bible), which provide spotless and tranquil sanctuary to noise-weary travellers. Cheapest are the fan-cooled digs, but the more expensive, seaview rooms with air-con are the nicest. There's also a TV lounge, a bar and a restaurant serving breakfast (\$4 to \$10).

**Cathay Hotel** (☎ 666 0566; www.fiji4less.com; Tavewa Ave; dm/r from \$14/40; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Cathay's spacious rooms have nifty 1970s décor but the cleanliness of a 1920s Paris boarding house. It's a decent option for a cheap doss and the compact dorms have private bathrooms. There's also a loud TV lounge attached to a bar and restaurant (meals \$10; open for breakfast and dinner), which serves filling but stodgy omelettes, burgers and curries.

**Saweni Beach Apartment Hotel** (☎ 666 1777; www.fiji4less.com; dm \$17, ste \$80-100; ☎ ☎ ☎) The neat bungalow-style apartments at the Saweni, 8km south of town, have modern kitchens, cheerful décor and oodles of room in the lounge and bedrooms. It's a great option for families, self-caterers and those looking for a base to explore the nearby highlands, but you'll want your own wheels and imagination – there's little to do at the resort but paddle in the pool. Splurgers should take advantage of the opulent Beach House (\$375), which has two-bedrooms, polished floors, TV, DVD, stereo and five-star class.

**Bekana Garden Island Resort** (☎ 664 0180; www.bekanaislandfiji.com.fj; d \$125-280; ☎ ☎ ☎) This sassy, family-friendly resort occupies a small island close to Lautoka and is a good escape from the urban crowds. There are three types of smart *bure*, the largest of which is split

level, right on the water and can accommodate a family of four. On site are a restaurant and bar and the resort offers a plethora of activities, including waterskiing, windsurfing, snorkelling, kayaking and more. The beach itself isn't spectacular but there's a pool and the resort is a fun spot to spend a few days. The resort runs a regular shuttle service from Lautoka Fisheries Wharf.

## Eating

Lautoka has fewer restaurants than Nadi or Suva; however, there are lots of inexpensive lunch-time eateries frequented by locals. They usually offer Indian, Chinese and traditional Fijian fare.

**Chilli Tree Café** (☎ 665 1824; 3 Tukani St; meals \$6-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☎) This corner café satiates fussy palates with fabulous muffins, focaccias, quiches, wraps, cakes and great coffee. The interior is more nanna than nouveau but the 180-degree windows make for great people watching.

**Jolly Good** (cnr Naviti & Vakabale Sts; meals \$3.50-5.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tasty takeaway including chop suey, curries and chicken and chips fill the hot counter at this outdoor restaurant. The seating is shaded and enclosed and it's a great place to mingle with locals and fuel up on the cheap.

**Seaview Restaurant** (☎ 666 0388; cnr Naviti & Tui Sts; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Beneath the Lautoka Hotel, the Seaview has an extensive menu boasting fresh seafood, Fijian dishes, triple-decker club sandwiches, salads, roasts, curries and more. The cool interior has low lighting and lacklustre furniture but the convivial vibes and excellent food more than compensate.

**Virindavan Vegetarian Restaurant** (☎ 666 2990; 88 Naviti St; meals \$4-7.50; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Wed, till 6.30pm Thu & Fri, till 5pm Sat; ☎) This clean and bright Indian eatery serves good vegetarian curries and thalis as well as colourful and delicious Indian sweets. The spacious interior is laid out like a diner and you choose your meals from the front counter.

**Nan Ying** (☎ 665 2668; Nede St; mains \$12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun; ☎) Diminutive and commonplace from the outside, this Asian restaurant simmers in delicious smells and sizzles up some of the finest seafood dishes in Fiji – coconut crab, baked

(Continued from page 92)

lobster or salt and pepper fried prawns to name a few. Fragrant poultry and noodle dishes also grace the menu.

Also recommended:

**Ganga Vegetarian Restaurant** (cnr Naviti & Yasawa Sts; meals \$2-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Popular Hare Krishna restaurant serving good vegetarian meals.

**Fins Restaurant** (☎ 666 4777; Marine Dr; mains \$12-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Cosmopolitan dining at the Waterfront Hotel.

The **café** (Naviti St; meals \$3-5; ☎ breakfast & lunch) at the Morris Hedstrom supermarket also has good-value fast food. Adventurous self-caterers can stock up on Chinese groceries at **Yi Shun Co** (☎ 666 4615; Sugar City Mall, Yasawa St) and everyone else will be happy with Lautoka's produce market.

## Entertainment

Lautoka has a small number of pubs and clubs, which are generally on the seedy side.

**Coco's Night Club** (☎ 666 8989; 151 Vitogo Pde) Probably the most welcoming club in town, Coco's puts on live music most Friday and Saturday nights as well as happy hours nightly (5pm to 9pm). The crowd is generally relaxed and mixed.

**Seaview Restaurant** (cnr Naviti & Tui Sts) The small bar at this restaurant is frequented by expats talking business or more sociable topics. It's a nice spot to grab a table and enjoy a few beers before dinner.

**Village 4 cinema complex** (Namoli Ave) Hollywood and Bollywood screen in harmony at Lautoka's main cinema. Tickets are \$4, except on Tuesday when they're \$3.50.

More clubs:

**Ashiqi Nightclub** (Lautoka Hotel; Tui St) Bollywood hits at alarming decibels.

**Hunter's Inn** (☎ 666 0388; Lautoka Hotel, Tui St) Popular with a Fijian crowd.

## Getting There & Around

Lautoka is 33km north of Nadi and 24km north of Nadi airport. Local buses shuttle between the two towns every 15 minutes during the day (\$2) and less frequently in the evening. There are also regular express buses along the Kings and Queens Roads, as well as carriers (small trucks) and minibuses to Suva. Sunbeam Transport and Pacific Transport have offices in Yasawa St

opposite the market and both have frequent services to/from Nadi (\$2.80, 1½ hours) and Suva (\$13, six hours).

Local buses connect Lautoka with Saweni Beach (\$1, 45 minutes, six daily) Alternatively any local bus to Nadi will drop you at the turn-off, from where it is an easy walk along 2km of unsealed road. A taxi will cost approximately \$8/25 from Saweni to Lautoka/Nadi airport.

**Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; 1 Walu St) runs ferries twice daily to Beachcomber and Treasure Islands. **Patterson Brothers Shipping** (☎ 666 1173; 15 Tukani St) runs interisland ferries to Vanua Levu.

Lautoka is easy to get around on foot. Taxis are plentiful and short rides are cheap.

## MOMI BAY

South of Nadi the Queens Road winds through cane fields; the first interesting detour is to Momi Bay and along the coast on Old Queens Road The turn-off is about 18km south of Nadi (27km from the airport). Some local buses take this dusty unsealed route, but if you jump off you will have to wait a while for the next one. The 29km of unsealed road back to the Queens Road takes you through beautiful farmland, cane fields and pine plantations. There are lots of small temples and mosques in the area.

The **Momi Guns** (adult/child/family \$3/1/6; ☎ 9am-5pm) is an evocative WWII battery on a hilltop about 6km from the Queens Road turn-off, coming from Nadi. The position of the battery was crucial as it overlooks the single entry into Western Fiji for large ships – the Navula Passage. The restored bunkers and fine collection of photos provide a tangible sense of the site's activity when in service. Take your camera – the views to the Navula Passage, Malolo Barrier Reef and Mamanuca islands are quite breathtaking.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Seashell Surf & Dive Resort** (☎ 670 6100; www.seashellresort.com; camping \$10, dm incl meals \$60, s/d/tr \$40/65/75, ste \$150-220; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Something between a shack and the Shangri-La Fijian, this isolated resort has an undiscovered air about it. The grassy grounds encompass simple dorms, unadorned but comfortable lodge rooms and classier *bure* and suites. Lodge room 1 will get you ocean views. Also on site are a tennis court, children's

(Continued on page 101)



playground, restaurant (meals \$10 to \$20; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner) and enough palm trees for a whole island. The *bure* are self contained.

There are plenty of activities on offer from Scuba Bula including diving (a two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$170/550) and surfing in the Mamanucas at Wilkes Passage, Mini Clouds and Desperations.

### Getting There & Away

The resort is about 30km from Nadi. From Nadi, travel about 11km along Old Queens Road, then turn right and continue for another 1.5km. Airport transfers by resort minibuses are \$15 each way and taxis cost \$50 (45 minutes). Local buses depart from Nadi bus station (\$2, one hour, three daily). There is also a daily 1.30pm local bus from Sigatoka (\$3, one hour) and taxis charge \$40.

### ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND

This small coral island, also known as Likuri, is near the passage into Likuri Harbour just offshore of Natadola Beach.

There are day trips here from Nadi and Coral Coast hotels on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday (\$90 per person), but staying overnight is much better value. The resort also offers a four-night sailing adventure to the Yasawa islands on the 15m yacht *Pelorus Jack* (per person \$500), which includes all meals and accommodation on the boat.

Like bees to Bacardi, budget travellers in the 18- to 30-year-old bracket swarm on **Robinson Crusoe Island Resort** (☎ 651 0100; [www.robinsoncrusoeislandfiji.com](http://www.robinsoncrusoeislandfiji.com); dm/s/d incl meals from \$70/90/170; 🍷) for dizzy fun packaged in a cultural wrapping. The accommodation is basic and comfortable; small thatched private *bure* or bunk beds in the large dorm share communal bathrooms and showers are by bucket and hand-pump. It has a gorgeous white-sand beachfront with sunsets Hollywood would pay for. Buffet meals are served in a large horseshoe-shaped shelter with a sandy central area for performances. The entertainment programme is intense and some will undoubtedly find it a little tacky – your boat is ‘attacked by cannibals’ on your arrival. But if you go into the whole affair without expecting the height of cultural experiences you’ll have a blast.

Activities on offer include windsurfing, snorkelling, volleyball and the use of paddle boards. Nautilus Divers offers two-tank dives/PADI Open Water Courses for \$120/450.

The resort operates a bus/boat return transfer to/from Nadi (\$70).

### NATADOLA BEACH

Gorgeous Natadola Beach is Viti Levu’s best. Its vast bank of white sand slides into a cobalt sea, providing good swimming regardless of the tide level. If you want to snorkel, surf or windsurf, take your own gear. Natadola’s strong currents often defy the brochures so instead of glassy, still conditions you may find sufficient churn for good body surfing. Take care; the varying conditions and undertow have caught out even experienced surf swimmers and readers have reported injuries. For nonswimmers Natadola is an utterly photogenic spot to zone out but watch your valuables as there have been reports of theft.

Local villagers offer horse riding along the beach (\$10) and sell green coconuts for drinking, and necklaces; unfortunately they can be pretty pushy. If you don’t want to take them up on their offer issue a firm but polite ‘no thank you’ and put some distance between you and the car park.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Natadola Beach Resort** (☎ 651 1251; [www.natadola.com](http://www.natadola.com); r incl breakfast \$250; 🍷) A pretty splash of Spain, this resort shuns mod cons and opts for privacy and class instead. Plump sofa chairs and beds, cool wooden interiors and private courtyards make for idyllic rooms. The restaurant-bar (mains \$10 to \$25; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner) serves great seafood and is open to nonguests. The resort is small, intimate and isolated and a couple of days should satiate all those urges you’d had to escape civilisation.

Mia and Sara are a married couple in the nearby village of Sanasana who offer warm and hospitable **homestay accommodation** (incl meals \$35-40). To contact them call the only phone in the village on ☎ 651 0926 between 10am and 1pm and ask for Mia or Sara. Then call back in 10 minutes to speak to them.

InterContinental were constructing a lavish five-star resort at Natadola at the time of research. For information click onto [www.natadolafiji.com](http://www.natadolafiji.com).

### Getting There & Away

Natadola Beach is fairly isolated and makes a good day escape from Nadi. The Maro Rd turn-off heads south to Natadola off the Queens Road, 36km from Nadi (45km from the airport) just past the police post. The beach is signposted.

Paradise Transport buses head to Natadola from Sigatoka (\$2.50, one hour, four daily on weekdays). The Coral Coast Scenic Railway runs tours to this beach (see below). Keen walkers could follow the track between Yanuca and Natadola Beach. It is a pleasant 3½-hour walk. You can catch the train or a bus back.

### YANUCA & AROUND

Past the turn-off to Natadola, the Queens Road continues southeast, winding through hills and down to the coast at Cuvu Bay and Yanuca, about 50km from Nadi. Yanuca itself is a blink of a village but it’s home to a couple of good attractions.

The station for the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** (☎ 652 8731; Queens Rd) is at the causeway entrance to the Shangri-La Fijian Resort. It offers scenic rides along the coast on an old, diesel sugar train, past villages, forests and sugar plantations, to beautiful Natadola Beach. The railway was once used for transporting cane and passengers to the Lautoka Mill. The 14km trip takes about 1¼ hours, leaving at 10am and returning at 4pm (\$80 including barbecue lunch). It is a popular trip with families and guests of the Fijian Resort suffering hangovers or sunburn.

**Ka Levu South Pacific Cultural Centre** (☎ 652 0200; <http://fijiculturalcentre.com>; admission 1-hr/day \$25/100; dm incl meals \$65, d & tw \$75, r \$90-135) is a purpose-built centre featuring cultural dancing, *kava* ceremonies, handicrafts and cooking in a faux-Fijian village. It’s well set-up and best for a cultural insight rather than handicrafts. You can overnight in neat dorms and doubles with shared bathrooms, crisp hotel rooms with funky décor or spacious self-contained units. All rates include tours of the centre. Bernie’s Bar is on site.

At the cultural centre, **Gecko’s Restaurant** (mains \$15-30; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) cooks up great steaks and fish curries.

The sprawling five-star **Shangri-La’s Fijian Resort** (☎ 652 0155; [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com); r incl breakfast from \$490; 🍷 🍷 🍷) occupies the entire island of Yanuca (43 hectares) and is perfect for

families seeking pure R&R and indulgence. You can while the hours away by one of the three palm-skirted pools or work off a cocktail or 10 with a bout of golf, tennis, jet-skiing, parasailing, snorkelling, water-skiing, fishing or even cycling. Coral Coast Scuba Ventures (p107) is based here. Two children can share a room with parents for free and then be shunted (lovingly) into the child care centre. The squeals of delight indicate they won’t mind a bit. Yanuca island is just offshore and linked to the mainland by a causeway.

### Getting There & Away

The Fijian Resort is about a 45-minute drive from Nadi and 11km west of Sigatoka. There are regular express buses, minibuses and carriers travelling along the Queens Road. A taxi to Nadi airport is about \$70 and the Coral Sun Fiji coach costs \$15.

## CORAL COAST

A wide bank of coral offshore gives this stretch of coast between Korotogo and Pacific Harbour its name. Flanked by waves of richly vegetated hills and a fringing reef that drops off dramatically into the deep blue of the South Pacific Ocean, it’s the most scenic slice of the Queens Road and resorts of all standard exploit the views. The scenery peaks around Korolevu. This said, the Coral Coast’s beaches are poor cousins to those on Fiji’s smaller islands and most swimming is done in hotel pools. Travellers are better off focussing on highlights such as the Sigatoka Sand Dunes, Tavuni Hill Fortification, Sigatoka Valley and, near Pacific Harbour, river trips in the Namosi Highlands and diving in the Beqa Lagoon. Lounging in a resort is also a prime pursuit in these parts.

The Queens Road is sealed and largely hugs the coast; unsealed roads head inland off the highway and up into the highlands. Both Sunbeam Transport and Pacific Transport have regular buses along the Queens Road.

### SIGATOKA

pop 8000

Sigatoka (pronounced sing-a-toka) is an industrious and compact town perched next to a fertile swathe of the Sigatoka River, Fiji’s second-largest river. Surrounded by small

villages and inhabited by farming communities, it also acts as a service town for the Coral Coast region. There is a produce market in the heart of town, a few souvenir shops, a large mosque and a fantasy-style, privately owned mansion on the hill behind the town. For visitors it's really a place to stock up on travel needs; a couple of hours will exhaust your souvenir cravings.

### Information

Westpac and ANZ have banks in town.

**Gerona Medical & Surgical Clinic** (☎ 652 0128; Sigatoka Valley Rd)

**TWicks Internet Café** (☎ 652 0928; 50 Sigatoka Valley Rd; per hr \$6) Internet access.

### Sleeping & Eating

Sigatoka doesn't offer any outstanding accommodation options and unless you're stuck, you're much better off heading to nearby Korotogo (p107).

**River View Restaurant** (☎ 650 1530/1520; jrms traveltroups@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd; mains \$16-30; ☹ lunch & dinner; ☒ ☒ ☒) This elevated restaurant has lovely river views and serves

great seafood in a cavernous dancehall-like interior. The space is absorbed by happy chatter when it's occupied and there's a modicum of clean, white and bright rooms attached (dorms \$20; rooms \$45 to \$65). All except the dorms include a private bathroom and fridge.

**Hotel Riverview** (☎ 652 0544; s/d \$35/45; ☒) Across the roundabout from the Sigatoka Club, the Riverview has weary but tidy rooms that are fair value for the price. The beds are more than a tad saggy but the balconies offer decent views.

**Sigatoka Club** (☎ 650 0026; mains \$8-20; ☹ lunch & dinner) Downstairs from the River View Restaurant, this club is the best drinking hole in town with waterfront booths, oceans of sunlight and decent pub nosh.

**Vilisite's Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 650 1030; Queens Rd; mains \$8-20; ☹ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☒) Spectacular seafood dishes are served in kitschy tropicana surrounds at this deservedly popular Fijian eatery. The menu is extensive and also includes curries and Chinese options but you'd be nuts to bypass the shellfish. Takeaway is also available.

**Le Café** (☎ 652 0668/877; 28 Queens Rd; meals \$10-15; ☹ breakfast & lunch; ☒ ☒) The only café-style eatery in Sigatoka dishes up tame but tasty burgers, sandwiches, curries, snacks and utterly perfect omelettes. The surrounds are pleasant and tables are given plenty of space. It's Sigatoka's nicest spot for brekkie.

**Raj's Curry House** (☎ 650 1470; Queens Rd; mains \$7-12; ☹ lunch & dinner) The setup may be a little on the shadowy side but Raj's lives up to its name with curries that make your tastebuds dance. Vegetarians are well catered for and locals test their mettle here on a regular basis.

Self-caterers can stock up at the market and the Morris Hedstrom supermarket.

### Getting There & Around

Pacific Transport and Sunbeam Transport run several express buses a day between Nadi and Sigatoka (\$4, 1¼ hours) and between Sigatoka and Suva (\$8, 2¾ hours). Add about an hour for nonexpress buses.

There are also carriers, minibuses and taxis along the Queens Road.

### AROUND SIGATOKA

#### Sigatoka Sand Dunes

One of Fiji's natural highlights, these impressive dunes (adult/child/family \$8/3/20; ☹ 8am-6pm) are a ripple of peppery monoliths skirting the shoreline near the mouth of the Sigatoka River. Windblown and rugged, they stand 5km long, up to 1km wide and on average about 20m high, rising to about 60m at the western end. Do not expect golden Sahara-like dunes, as the fine sand is a grey-brown colour and largely covered with vines and shrubs. The dunes have been forming over millions of years and archaeological excavations here have uncovered pottery more than 2600 years old and one of the largest burial sites in the Pacific. A mahogany forest was planted in the 1960s to halt the dunes' expedition onto the Queens Road and the state-owned part of the area was declared a national park in 1989.

The dunes are quite spectacular and a great place for a walk. On a hot day visit before 11am or after 3pm. Enter through the Sigatoka Sand Dunes visitors centre at the western end of the dunes, 4.5km southwest of Sigatoka on the Queens Road. From here there are trails to the dunes; avoid eroding the fragile dunes and stick to the trails.

Allow about one hour for the round-trip walking tour and take plenty of water and sunscreen.

### Lower Sigatoka Valley

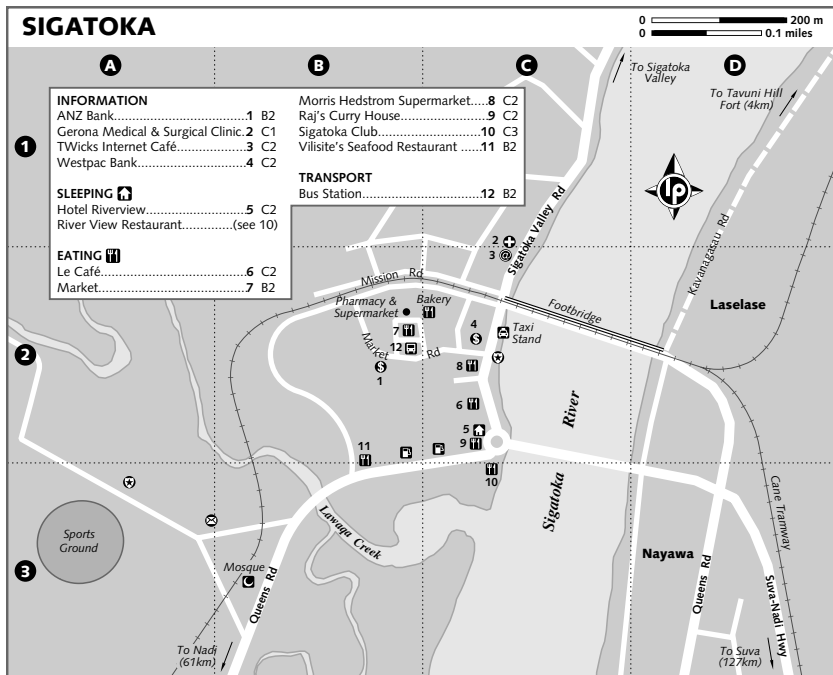
The Sigatoka River's tributaries originate as far away as Tomanivi (Mt Victoria) and the Monasavu Dam. The river has long provided a line of communication between mountain peoples and coast dwellers, and the fertile river flats are productive agricultural land. Almost 200 archaeological, cultural or historically significant sites have been found in and around the valley; sadly, many of the sites are being taken over by farmland or housing.

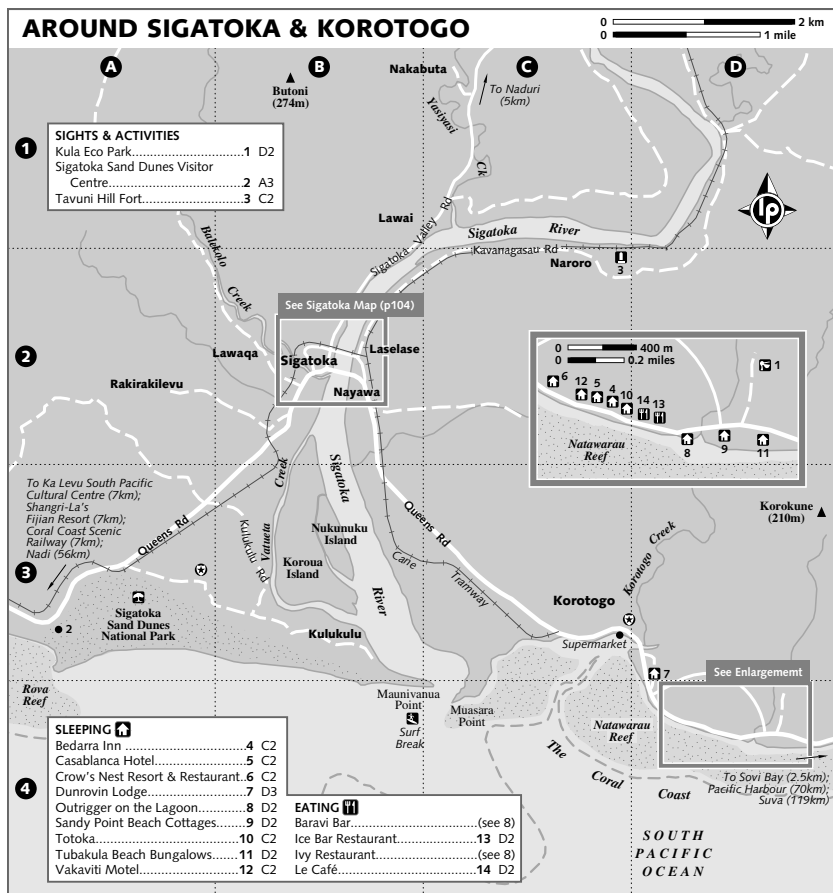
This fertile river valley is known as Fiji's 'salad bowl'. Cereals, vegetables, fruits, peanuts and sugar cane are grown here, mostly on small-scale farms. The Sigatoka Valley Rural Development Project (SVRDP) coordinates cropping programmes and provides training for farmers on up-to-date techniques and irrigation systems. Much of the produce ends up at the municipal markets, and vegetables such as eggplant, chilli, okra and root crops such as *dalo* (taro), *tavioka* (cassava) and yams are exported to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. It's a great landscape to fly over, with the mountains, the patchwork valley, the muddy brown river flowing into the blue ocean, and the Coral Coast's vast fringing reef.

Two valley villages are known for their **pottery**: Lawai and Nakabuta. The latter is home to one of Fiji's best potters, Diana Tugea. Visitors are welcome at both villages. If turning up unannounced, you should ask the first person you meet to guide you. They will take you to a pottery *bure* with various works on display. Large, smooth cooking pots are the traditional pots from this area, but small items such as pottery pigs and *bure* are also sold to tourists who visit the area.

### SURFING

The Sigatoka area has Fiji's only beach-break. Most other areas have fringing reefs but here the fresh water has prevented their formation. The break is over a large, submerged rock platform covered in sand. Surfing is at the point-break at the mouth of the Sigatoka River and beach-breaks pound the shore. You need your own transport to get here.





### GETTING THERE & AWAY

You can visit Lawai and Nakabuta by just hopping on a local bus. Paradise Valley buses travel up the Sigatoka Valley on the western side of the river. Lawai is about 2.5km north of Sigatoka. Nakabuta is twice as far (\$5 by taxi, \$0.60 by bus, or a 10-minute drive). There are regular buses to Naduri, which pass Lawai and Nakabuta (every one to two hours from about 6.30am to 7.30pm). On weekends services are less frequent. Heading inland by local bus offers beautiful scenery. Try a ride to Keiyasi village about 55km upriver (\$5, about four hours return). The morning buses generally return (check with the bus driver), while the afternoon buses stay in the village overnight.

### Tavuni Hill Fort

Built in the 18th century by Tongan chief Maile Latumai, this **fort** (adult/child/family \$12/3/30; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1.30pm Sat) was a defensive site used in times of war and is one of Fiji's most interesting historical sights. It provides an excellent insight into the strong precolonial links between Tonga and Fiji and although there are many like it scattered all over Fiji, this is the most accessible for visitors. The site has been restored and has an information centre. The centre was set up in a combined effort between the Ministry of Tourism and the people of Naroro, and received funding from the European Union (EU). It now provides income to the local villagers whose ancestors lived in the fort.

Chief Maile Latemai and his clan fled Tonga to escape a dispute during an era of political and social upheaval. He and his entourage of servants sailed all the way in a double-hulled canoe and arrived in the Sigatoka area in about 1788. They originally set up in Korotogo but were kept on the move by constant tribal warfare. Eventually the local tribes accepted the newcomers, and the chief was given some land and a local wife.

The steep limestone ridge, about 90m high at the edge of a bend in the Sigatoka River, was an obvious strategic location for a fortification. From this position the surrounding area could easily be surveyed, both upstream and downstream and the views are spectacular. Substantial earthworks were carried out to form *yavu* (bases for houses) and terraces for barricade fencing. There are also a number of grave sites, a *rara* (ceremonial ground), a *vatu ni bokola* (head-chopping stone), and some beautiful curtain figs and an *ivi* (Polynesian chestnut tree) on the site.

Tavuni fort is about 4km northeast of Sigatoka on the eastern side of the river, above Naroro village. There are regular local buses that pass Tavuni Hill (about \$0.60). They leave Sigatoka bus station and travel along Kavanagasau Rd heading for Mavua (seven times on weekdays between about 7am and 5.30pm). A taxi to the fort is about \$5 one-way.

### KOROTOGO & AROUND

The start of the Coral Coast begins in earnest at this condensed group of hotels flanking the water. Korotogo itself is a small village but travellers will find themselves outside of its confines. When sunny, the region is pretty, sparkling and pleasant. When overcast, the menacing skies provide an atmospheric respite if only for a couple of days. Korotogo is the best area to lodge when exploring the sights around Sigatoka.

On most parts of the coast the beach is tidal and, except for some lagoons, is only suitable for swimming and snorkelling at high tide. Sovi Bay, 2.5km east of Korotogo is OK for swimming; however, be careful of the strong channel currents.

### Sights & Activities

#### KULA ECO PARK

This **wildlife sanctuary** (☎ 650 0505; www.fijiwild.com; adult/child \$15/7.50; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) is a must

for fans of the furred, feathered and scaled. Supported by the National Trust for Fiji and several international parks and conservation bodies, the park showcases some of the country's magnificent wildlife, including hawksbill sea turtles (hand fed at 11am, 1pm and 3.30pm daily), musk parrots, collared parrots (the kula bird), goshawks, peregrine falcons, honeyeaters, fruit bats, raptors and owls. It also acts as an educational facility for schools and runs invaluable breeding programmes with success stories for the Pacific black duck (Fiji's only remaining duck species), and the crested and banded iguana.

All of this aside, ambling down the wooden walkway amid indigenous flora and fauna is a thoroughly enjoyable tourist excursion. A stream runs throughout the park in the wet season with plenty of bridge crossings.

### DIVING

**Coral Coast Scuba Ventures** (☎ 652 8793; www.coralcoastscuba.com), based at Shangri-La's Fijian Resort, takes dive trips to some of the Coral Coast reefs and passages around the area. A two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$230/670.

### Tours

**Adventures in Paradise** (☎ 652 0833; www.adventuresinparadisefiji.com; tours per person from Coral Coast/Nadi \$100/120) Offers day trips to the Naihehe cave (see p145), and tours to the village of Biausevu and the Savu Na Mate Laya waterfall near Korolevu. Tours include a village visit, *kava* ceremony, lunch and transport. Its office is in a small group of shops just west of Outrigger on the Lagoon.

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147) Offers great rafting trips up the Navua River and pick up from Coral Coast resorts. See p113 for more details.

### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Vakaviti** (☎ 0800 650 0526, 650 0526; www.vakaviti.com; dm \$15-20, r \$70-80; ☎) Tumbling down a steep and densely vegetated embankment overlooking the water, Vakaviti is a small resort with a good variety of accommodation. Bright and modern motel rooms open onto a lovely pool area with wooden decking and a barbecue, and there are generous *bure* tucked amid the jungle, closer to the road. The dorms are spick and Spartan.

**Casablanca Hotel** (☎ 652 0600; fax 652 0616; s/d \$45/64; ☎) This mock-Moroccan mansion



run by the exuberant Mostafa offers self-contained rooms of varying size and quality. The interiors are a little dated and haphazard but comfortable nonetheless and each room has splendid views. The commodious family room has the most modern interior and a fabulous balcony. It's great value but ask to see a few rooms before you choose.

More budget options:

**Dunrovin Lodge** (☎ /fax 652 0235; dm/s/d \$20/40/50) Small lodge with kitchen, TV room and laundry.

**Crow's Nest Resort** (right; dm \$25) This midrange option also has a clean eight-bed dorm.

### MIDRANGE

**Tubakula Beach Bungalows** (☎ 650 0097; [www.fiji4less.com](http://www.fiji4less.com); dm \$17.50, s/tw without bathroom \$40/45, ste \$80-120; ☎) If it weren't for the palm trees, swimming pool and waterfront setting, this low-key resort would be right at home in the mountains. Simple dorms, singles and doubles have shared facilities and the excellent A-frame chalets have strapping timber frames, modern kitchens and verandas with slouchy wooden seats. It's perfect for self-driving, self-catering, self-sufficient travellers, although there's a restaurant (p110) attached.

**Sandy Point Beach Cottages** (☎ 650 0125; [cbcom@connect.com.fj](mailto:cbcom@connect.com.fj); ste from \$90; ☎) Tucked off the roadside and nestled into a tree-littered patch of the seaside, Sandy Point has five quaint and comfy self-contained cottages. The tropical setting is overshadowed somewhat by the proliferation of satellite dishes but these provide satellite TV. It's a peaceful setting and a favourite with in-the-know Suvanites.

**Bedarra Inn** (☎ 650 0476; [www.bedarrafiji.com](http://www.bedarrafiji.com); r \$110-155; ☎) This large white hotel offers spiffy rooms with tiled floors, spotless interiors and plenty of natural light. Budget rooms are fan-cooled, two-bedroom, self-contained and sleep up to four. The lofty deluxe rooms don't have kitchens but include balconies and air-con, although unless it's stifling the budget rooms are better value. There's also a restaurant (right) and small lounge bar with TV. It's a good option for those after a more intimate atmosphere than the larger resorts.

**Totoka** (☎ /fax 650 1083; d \$100) This wee B&B has one charming double room with polished timber furnishings and plenty of character. It can accommodate a family of

four with an adjoining room and there's a lived-in central TV room and kitchen. It's quiet and homely.

**Crow's Nest Resort** (☎ 650 0230; [www.crownsnest.fiji.com](http://www.crownsnest.fiji.com); dm \$25, r \$135-145; ☎) This well-ordered resort offers split-level timber bungalows with lovely balconies and views but slightly tired and mismatched interiors. Each is self-contained and large enough to sleep a family but some of the kitchens look precolonial. There's a restaurant (see p110) and there are Fijian dancing shows every Saturday night.

### TOP END

**Outrigger on the Lagoon** (☎ 650 0044; [www.outrigger.com/fiji](http://www.outrigger.com/fiji); r from \$590; ☎) Huge, five-star and sassy, the Outrigger has stylish rooms in the four-storey main building with balconies or verandas, and superb views over the resort grounds and coral reef. Fanned out amid the lush beachfront gardens are fabulous *bure* (from \$1020), which have high ceilings lined with hand-painted *masi* cloth. Facilities include three restaurants, bars, a nightclub and child-minding. There is a Fijian fire-walking show (per person \$20) every Tuesday night (nonguests welcome).

### Eating

**Bedarra Inn Restaurant** (☎ 650 0476; Bedarra Inn; mains \$15-30; ☎) lunch & dinner) This hotel restaurant serves the best food in the area. Inventive steak, chicken and stir-fry dishes are on the menu as well as perfectly cooked, fresh seafood. You can dine in the atmospheric restaurant or at the poolside tables, which offer great ocean views.

**Ice Bar Restaurant** (☎ 650 1513; Queens Rd; mains \$10-20; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Delicious seafood and Indian curries are served in this open-air eatery with wooden bench tables and seating. It's attached to a small supermarket and while the setting is utterly unsophisticated, the food is excellent.

**Le Café** (☎ 652 0877; Queens Rd; mains \$10-15; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Just west of the shops; Le Café has a Swiss chef Jean Pierre, who cooks European-style food, although tasty pizzas are the speciality. There's also a nightly happy hour from 5pm to 7pm.

Outrigger on the Lagoon (above) has several dining options including the **Baravi Bar** (☎ meals \$15-25; ☎) lunch & dinner), which serves a Mongolian barbecue for lunch and pasta at

### FIRE WALKING

Of all Fiji's cultural rituals, the extraordinary art of fire walking is perhaps the most impressive. Watching men display the poise of a lead ballerina while they traverse a pit of blazing embers without combusting is truly baffling. Even more mystifying is the fact that, originally, this ritual was practised in Fiji only on the tiny island of Beqa, and by two neighbouring and disparate cultures for completely different reasons. Perhaps there's simply something in the water.

### Fijian

Indigenous Fijian fire walking is known as *vilavilairevo* (literally 'jumping into the oven'). The ability to walk barefoot on white-hot stones without being burned was, according to local legend, granted to a local chief by the leader of the *veli*, a group of little gods. Now the direct descendants of the chief (*tui qalita*) serve as the *bete* (priests) who instruct in the ritual of fire walking.

Preparations for fire walking used to occupy a whole village for nearly a month. Firewood and appropriate stones had to be selected, costumes made and various ceremonies performed. Fire walkers had to abstain from sex and refrain from eating any coconut for up to a month before the ritual. None of the fire walkers' wives could be pregnant, or it was believed the whole group would receive burns.

Traditionally *vilavilairevo* was only performed on special occasions in the village of Navakaisese. Today, though, it's performed only for commercial purposes and has little religious meaning. There are regular performances at the Pacific Harbour Arts Village, at the larger resort hotels, and at Suva's annual Hibiscus Festival.

### Hindu

The Hindu fire walking is part of an annual religious festival coinciding with a full moon in July or August and lasts 10 days. It takes place at many temples in Fiji, including the Mariamma Temple (Map p119) in Suva.

Preparations for the ceremony are overseen by a priest and take three to 10 days, with the fire walking the climax of the ritual. During this period participants isolate themselves, abstain from sex and eating meat, and meditate to worship the goddess Maha Devi.

The participants rise early, pray until late at night, survive on little food or sleep and dress in red and yellow, which symbolises the cleansing of physical and spiritual impurity. Yellow turmeric is smeared on the face as a symbol of prosperity and power over diseases.

On the final day the participants at the Mariamma Temple bathe in the sea. The priests pierce the tongues, cheeks and bodies of the fire walkers with three-pronged skewers. The fire walkers then dance into an ecstatic trance for about 2km back to the temple for the fire walking; their altered state enabling them to perform the feat.

Devotees' bodies are whipped before and during the ceremony. If fire walkers are focused on the divine Mother they should not feel pain.

A decorated statue of the goddess is placed facing the pit for her to watch and bless the ceremony. It only takes about five seconds to walk along the pit, which is filled with charred wood raked over glowing coals, and the walk is repeated about five times to chanting and drumming.

Hindu fire walking is a religious sacrament performed mostly by descendants of southern Indians. They believe life is like walking on fire; discipline helps them to achieve a balanced life, self-acceptance and to see good in everything.



night; and the elegant **Ivy Restaurant** (mains \$20-35; ☎ dinner), which caters only to adults and serves exquisite and contemporary fare.

More hotel restaurants:

**Tubakula Beach Bungalows** (☎ 650 0097; meals \$8-17; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Burgers, steaks and sandwiches.

**Crow's Nest Resort** (☎ 650 0230; mains \$15-30;

☎ lunch & dinner) Serves good, if overpriced food from a cosmopolitan menu.

## Getting There & Around

Pacific Transport and Sunbeam Transport run regular buses along the Queens Road, stopping at resorts along the way (about \$5 from Nadi, 1½ hours). Coral Sun Fiji has air-conditioned coaches that also stop outside resorts (\$8 from Nadi, 1½ hours). There are also local buses that are slightly cheaper but take longer. A taxi from Korotogo to Sigatoka is \$5, and around \$45 to Nadi.

## KOROLEVU & AROUND

Further east, the section of the Queens Road between Korotogo and Korolevu is the most beautiful. The road winds along the shore, with scenic bays, beaches, coral reefs and mountains; photo opportunities beg around every bend. It's an especially spectacular trip at sunrise or sunset. A good range of places to stay pepper the coast, each pocketed within their own private cove.

In the village of Vatukarasa, west of Korolevu, **Baravi Handicrafts** (☎ 652 0364; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-5pm Sun) is a souvenir shop that sells local crafts, clothes and jewellery.

East of Korolevu, the Queens Road turns away from the shore and climbs over the southern end of Viti Levu's dividing mountain range. To the east of this range the road improves and the scenery changes to lush rainforest as the road winds its way past wider bays.

## Activities

Take care while swimming; currents can be dangerous and there have been drownings near here. At Hideaway Resort (see p112) there is a right-hand **surfing** break for experienced surfers at the passage about 100m from the shore – the best chances of good surf are between January and May. It is also possible to surf offshore from Waidroka Bay Resort (opposite) and at Frigates Passage in the Beqa Lagoon.

The turn-off to the village of **Biausevu** is about a 15-minute drive east of Hideaway Resort. The village is 2.5km inland, and a waterfall is an easy 15- to 30-minute walk from the village. See p36 for information on village etiquette.

**Adventures in Paradise** (☎ 652 0833) has trips into the interior, including to Biausevu, from Korolevu; see p107.

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147) offers great rafting trips; see p113 for details.

The Coral Coast offers some spectacular **diving** within close distance to the shore and it's a good place to learn. Votua Reef is home to some notable sites including Morgan's Wall, which is popular with barracuda,

sea fans and lionfish. **Mike's Divers** (☎ 653 0222; www.dive-fiji.com) is based in the area and offers a two-tank/PADI Open Water Course for \$150/600. It picks up from most places around Korolevu.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Beachhouse** (☎ 0800 653 0530, 653 0500; www.fijibeachhouse.com; camping per person \$16, 4-/3-/2-bed dm \$25/28/30, d \$80; ☎) A mammoth budget spread, this place welcomes backpackers with simple digs and heady social activity. Dorms are in two-storey houses and the doubles are colourful duplex bungalows. All facilities are shared. Activities include horse riding (\$15 per hour) and a recommended waterfall trek (\$5), for which sandals are a must. Travellers lounge under coconut trees on the pleasant beachfront area and move to a small deck close to the water to sit and drink at sunset or night. The Coconut Cafe (p112) serves good lunches.

**Namatakula Village Homestay** (www.fijibure.com/namatakula/index.htm; per adult/child incl meals \$70/\$35) This village homestay is about as close as you'll get to the real deal. Simon and Judith Batibasaga welcome travellers into their home and afford them an insight into village life. The accommodation is simple and the meals generous but the real payoff is the opportunity to visit the school, attend a mass and immerse yourself in a traditional village.

**Waidroka Bay Resort** (☎ 330 4605; www.waidroka.com; dm \$22, d \$100-155) This resort has seen more owners than a New York penny in recent years and the dorms and atmosphere could use a little TLC, but the majority of clientele are surfers and they don't seem to be comfortable, though, and each has a veranda facing the water. There's a communal TV lounge and restaurant (meals about \$10; open for lunch and dinner) serving hearty meals. It's best suited to avid divers – Waidroka has its own dive setup (1-1/2-tank dive \$105/175) – bird-watchers and surfers, although the latter will need to pay \$60 per day for transfers out to Frigate Passage.

Transfers for up to four people cost \$15/110/100 from either Korovisilou village/Nadi/Suva.

## MIDRANGE

**Tambua Sands Beach Resort** (☎ 650 0399; www.tambuasandsfiji.com; d \$155-170; ☎) Smear across a pretty slice of coast, this friendly resort will suit intrepid travellers looking to indulge. *Bure* are beachside or oceanview; the latter are pricier but dressed up like chic holiday flats and better value. All *bure* have plenty of window space to let the breeze in. The manicured lawns are littered with sun lounges and there of plenty of activities on offer. The restaurant (mains \$15 to \$30; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner) has a good à-la-carte menu.

**Mango Bay Resort** (☎ 650 1565; www.mangobayresortfiji.com; dm \$40, r \$150-220; ☎) This resort was in the making at the time of research. It promises a seven-bed dorm, safari tents that can sleep up to three and Fijian *bure* with atrium showers and verandas. It seeks to target the 18- to 35-year-old set with full moon parties, cocktails and sunset bonfires and will probably do quite a good job of it.

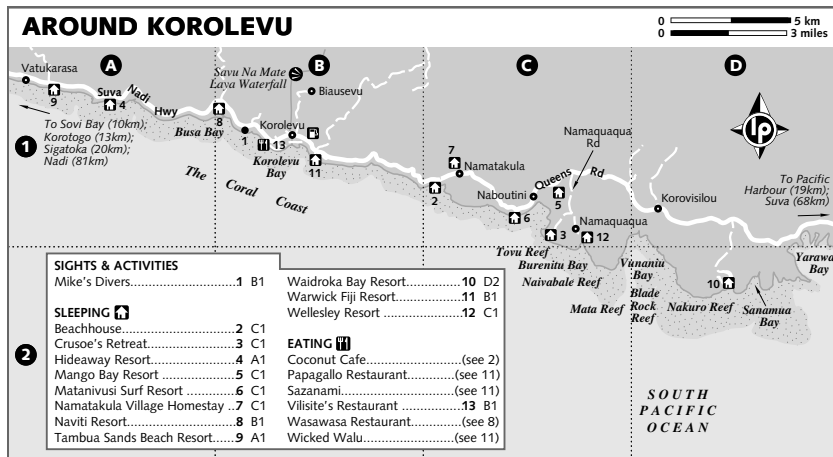
**Waidroka Bay Resort** (d/tr *bure* \$100/140) There are comfortable, fan-cooled, oceanfront *bure* at this budget resort (see left).

## TOP END

**Crusoe's Retreat** (☎ 650 0185; www.crusoesretreat.com; r incl breakfast \$240-280; ☎) Blessed with one of the Coral Coast's most sublime locations, this small resort is hidden by a lush plummet of hills and boasts a white, secluded beach. Scattered around the colourful grounds are 28 spacious and fan-cooled *bure* with polished Fijian interiors. There's a tennis court and a restaurant (mains \$15 to \$25; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner) serving classy fare. **Dive Crusoes** (www.divecrusoes.com) charges \$210/680 for a two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course. Return transfers to the resort from Nadi or Suva cost \$75/150 one-way/return.

**Naviti Resort** (☎ 653 0444; www.navitiresort.com.fj; r \$320-340, ste \$570; ☎) Heavy on the greenery and light on the concrete, the colossal Naviti is about as pretty as large-scale resorts go. Like all five-star joints the rooms are packed with amenities and very comfortable, but it's the health spa, nine-hole golf course, kids' club, copious activities and excellent service that distinguish it from the rest. It has good access for the disabled.

**Warwick Fiji Resort** (☎ 653 0555; www.warwickfiji.com; s & d incl breakfast \$350-550, ste incl breakfast



\$740; ☒ ☒ ☒) This five-star and suitably fabulous resort has panoramic views, glossy rooms, five restaurants and bars, two pools, a nightclub and gym, and free kayaking, snorkelling and windsurfing. It's family friendly and you won't need to think about a thing.

**Hideaway Resort** (☎ 650 0177; www.hideaway.fiji.com; d/tr \$320-510; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) A package-holidayer's stomping ground, this expansive resort teams with American, Australian and New Zealand families and couples. Accommodation ranges in size and price from tidy and classy 'frangipani bure' to cavernous two-bedroom villas. The meticulous grounds include man-made sand alcoves and plenty of grassy sunbaking plots, and there's a superfluity of cruise ship-like entertainment and activities to slake stimulus junkies. The three-course meal plan is \$75 per person per day and this place is super child-friendly.

**Wellesley Resort** (☎ 650 0807; www.wellesleyresort.com.fj; Man Friday Rd; d incl meals from \$280; ☒ ☒ ☒) This brand new boutique resort has 15 lavish suites, world-class cuisine and a stunning location. It's definitely one for the couples.

**Matanivusi Surf Resort** (☎ 992 3230; www.surfing.fiji.com; d per person incl meals \$400; ☒) Another new five-star option in the making, Matanivusi is planted right on a lagoon and should be an opulent ecoretreat for avid surfers and divers. It has access to three right-hand breaks that are about a 10-minute boat ride into the lagoon, and surfers can also be taken to Frigates Passage. Nonwater babies will be just as welcome and pampered. Rates will include all meals, transfers, surfing and snorkelling.

## Eating

**Vilisite's Restaurant** (☎ 653 0054; Queens Rd; mains \$20-45; ☒ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Dripping in tropical garb in front of sweeping ocean views, Vilisite's is the nicest restaurant in the area outside of the flashy resorts. Plentiful quantities of fresh seafood dishes including king prawns, lobster, octopus and seafood curries are dished up in large quantities by uberfriendly staff.

**Coconut Cafe** (☎ 653 0500; meals \$4-9; ☒ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Based at the Beachhouse (p111), this casual restaurant serves a set dinner each night plus fresh and tasty pitas, rolls and smoothies for lunch. It's a nice place to stop for a lunch or snack break but

dinner is essentially a guest-only affair and needs to be ordered by 4pm.

Visitors are welcome at the larger resorts' restaurants. The first three below are at the Warwick Fiji Resort, see p111.

**Papagallo Restaurant** (mains \$15-25; ☒ dinner) Good pizza and pasta.

**Sazanami** (mains \$15-30; ☒ dinner) Japanese cuisine including teppanyaki grills.

**Wicked Walu** (mains \$25-35; ☒ dinner) Excellent steaks and seafood; reservations recommended.

**Wasawasa Restaurant** (Naviti Resort, p111; meals \$35; ☒ dinner) International themed buffet nights.

## Getting There & Around

There are plenty of buses shuttling along the Queens Road (getting to Suva or Nadi costs about \$6) and drivers will pick up and drop off at resort gates. The Warwick and the Naviti have a free shuttle bus for guests going between the resorts and Nadi International Airport. Taxis to the airport cost about \$85/95 one way/return for the 1½-hour ride, or \$20 for the 20-minute drive to Sigatoka.

## PACIFIC HARBOUR & NAVUA

Leaving the glorious vegetation and hilly passes of Korolevu in your wake and entering Pacific Harbour is a bit like dipping your toes into the Twilight Zone. The widely spread cul-de-sac streets, flawless lawns and ordered river setting are more 'soccer mum and bridge parties' than anything Fijian. The town started as a planned, upmarket housing and tourism development, and although the large grassy blocks are brochure-perfect, many are still waiting to be filled with the anticipated boom. For visitors the attraction lies outside the sleepy town. Offshore, Beqa (pronounced *ben-ga*) Lagoon has world-class diving and an awesome surf break and inland are the spectacular Namosi Highlands (p146) with opportunities for kayaking and white-water rafting.

The small but lively town of Navua, on the banks of the wide Navua River, is 39km west (a 20-minute drive) from Suva and 143km from Nadi. Early in the 20th century, sugar cane was planted here and a sugar mill built, but this activity ceased as the drier western region proved more productive. Farmers of the delta region then turned to dairy farming, cattle grazing, rice and other crops. Many of the old buildings in the town date from the beginning of the 20th century.

## Sights & Activities

### ARTS VILLAGE

This faux **village** (☎ 345 0065; www.artsvillage.com; tours per adult/child from \$35/18; ☒ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) is unashamedly 'Fiji in a theme park', but it still draws the tour buses in by the convoy. Within the Disneylike confines are a temple, chief's *bure*, cooking area with utensils and weaving hut. Fijian actors dressed in traditional costumes carry out a mock battle. Tours include an Island Boat Tour (one for the kids), Island Temple Tour and Arts Village Show. There's also a fire-walking and *meke* show every Thursday (per adult/child \$45/25; 11am). It's good fun for families but a far cry from authentic village life.

### MARKETPLACE

Attached to the Arts Village, the Marketplace is a modern congregation of eateries and souvenir shops selling Fiji-style resort wear and some very good but pricey handicrafts. New shops are springing around this area all the time; at the time of research a shop renting scooters and mountain bikes was being touted. It's a pleasant spot to mill about for an hour or so.

For superb views of Beqa Lagoon take a sunset or sunrise walk up to the hilltop.

### GOLF

**Greens South Pacific** (☎ 345 0022; 9-/18-holes \$20/40) is a gorgeous, 18-hole golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr, who has designed more than 200 courses around the world. The proliferation of bunkers and canals is a challenge for avid golfers. Club rental is \$15/20 per nine-/18-holes.

### DIVING

There are more than 20 dive sites near Pacific Harbour, mostly within Beqa Lagoon. Based at the Pearl South Pacific (p114), **Aqua-Trek Beqa** (☎ 325 0324; www.aquatrek.com) is one of the best diving operations in the area. A two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$170/700. Keen divers can take advantage of 10 dives for \$750. Aqua-Trek also operates shark-feeding dives (\$200 for two dives), which get rave reviews from readers.

**Beqa Adventure Divers** (☎ 345 0911; www.fiji-sharks.com) also has shark-feeding dives (see p58 for details). The **Pacific Safari Club** (River Dr; see p114) has a small diving outfit. A two-tank dive costs \$95.

## FISHING

**Xtasea Charters** (☎ 345 0280; www.xtaseacharters.com) operates fishing charters on a cruiser for up to six people including gear and tackle for \$1540. The vessel can also be chartered for day cruises (price on inquiry).

## SURFING & SWIMMING

There is first-class surfing at Frigate Passage and surf camps on Yanuca island (p116). The beach at Deuba is reasonable for swimming.

## VILLAGE VISITS

There are market boats and local buses to/from Namuamua and Nukusere villages about 20km up the Navua River. The trip can take up to two hours, depending on the river's water level and general conditions. Before visiting a village, see the boxed text, p36.

## Tours

Based at Pacific Harbour, **Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147; www.riversfiji.com) offers excellent kayaking and white-water rafting trips into the Namosi Highlands (p146) north of Pacific Harbour. It is well organised and has excellent equipment.

The day trip to Wainikoroiluva (Luva Gorge) is highly recommended – fine for novices and those of average fitness. The scenery is well worth the two-hour bumpy trip by carrier up the hills to the Namosi Valley. At Nakavika village the chief and his family welcome you to their home for a chat, *kava* and a *sevusevu* (ceremony whereupon a gift is presented to the village chief). From here you paddle downstream (four hours) by inflatable kayak over stretches of gentle rapids and past waterfalls. At Namuamua village, where the river joins the Upper Navua to become the Navua River, you take a motorised longboat (1½ hours) to Nakavu or Navua. Food, drinks and equipment are included in the price (per person \$190).

For gorgeous gorges and more advanced rapids try the day trip to the Upper Navua River (per person \$260). It is more physically demanding and spends seven hours on the water. The one-hour road trip to Nabukevu village is as rough as it is scenic, then it's all aboard an inflatable raft down to Wainadiro or Waimogi.

**Discover Fiji Tours** (☎ 345 0180; www.discoverfiji.com), based in Navua, has several tours

to the Navua River area. Tours include waterfall visits, 4WD trips, trekking, kayaking and white-water rafting and cost from \$130/145 including transfers from Pacific Harbour/Suva. All tours last 10 to 12 hours and include lunch. Some also include *bilibili* (bamboo rafting). It also offers one- to three-day guided treks across the Namosi Highlands, camping overnight in villages.

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 331 5730; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) offers canoe tours to the Navua River, picking up passengers from Pacific Harbour as well as from Suva hotels.

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Pacific Safari Club** (☎ 0800 3450 498, 345 0498; www.pacificsafari.com; River Dr, Pacific Harbour; dm/d/f \$20/55/65; ☒ ☑) This compact resort has a single-storey block of excellent self-contained flats with tidy, floral interiors and spotless kitchens. Some also have TVs. It's all fairly Westernised and is located in a convenient spot on the canal. There were expansion plans at the time of research.

**Deuba Inn** (☎ 345 0544; theislander@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd, Deuba; s/d without bathroom \$20/35, r \$55-65) Behind the outstanding Kai Yanuanu restaurant (right) this inn has two self-contained units which are slightly shabby but roomy. One is significantly more comfortable so ask to see both if you can. Singles and doubles are in basic, portable-style units that are far more welcoming on the inside than the outside.

**Coral Coast Christian Centre** (☎ 345 0178; coralcoastcc@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd, Deuba; s/tw from \$12/21, d \$45) It's frugal and strict (no alcohol on the grounds thanks very much) but this school camp-like setup has medically clean accommodation in simple cabins with shared bathrooms and kitchens or self-contained motel units. There are also a children's playground and laundry facilities on-site.

**Tsulu Bunkhouse & Apartments** (☎ 345 0065; www.artsvillage.com; dm \$26-30, d \$68-98, 1-1/2-3-bedroom apt \$150/300/600; ☒ ☑) Attached to the Arts Village, the Tsulu had not opened its doors at the time of research but promises to be a place worth checking out. Its décor is island style, right down to the unique swimming pool and its swim-up bar. The doubles have air-con and shared kitchens; the more expensive ones also have

en suites and a balcony. The apartments have air-con, kitchen, room entertainment and balconies.

**Navua Upriver Lodge** (☎ 334 2549; navrest05@yahoo.com; Nuku Village; dm/d incl meals \$45/65) Situated about 25km north of Navua town, this Fijian-run lodge offers travellers a genuine river-village experience. Accommodation and food is simple and the surrounding environment is simply stunning. Call the lodge from Navua and they'll arrange a *bilibili* transfer (per person \$15). The 1½-hour ride up the Navua passes some 20 waterfalls.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Club Coral Coast** (☎ 345 0421; clubcoralcoast@connect.com.fj; Lot 12 Belo Circle, Pacific Harbour; r without/bathroom \$40/90, f \$120; ☒ ☑ ☑) Occupying it's own bend in the river, this petite resort has a series of split-level rooms with wicker furniture, sunny décor, kitchenettes and patios. Rooms with shared facilities are cosy and neat. Immersed in the leafy grounds are a small pool and tennis court.

**Pearl South Pacific** (☎ 345 0022; www.thepearlsouthpacific.com; Queens Rd, Pacific Harbour; r \$300-360, ste \$640; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) Revamped and reworked with industrial-strength botox this is now one of Fiji's finest hotels. No expense is spared in the Fijian-Asian fusion rooms, which contain TV, phone, marble bathrooms, low-slung beds and private decked alcoves with cushioned sun lounges. The rest of the resort is littered with sueded box couches, oriental-style booths, vast open-air terraces, restaurants and bars backed by mirrored water features. Style gurus will overdose here.

**Lagoon Resort** (☎ 345 0100; www.lagoonresort.com; Fairway Pl, Pacific Harbour; r \$160-260, ste \$300; ☒ ☑ ☑) This grandiose hotel presides over the river like an engorged colonial estate. Pristine white, it has stately rooms with river views, balconies, TVs, fridges, phones and sumptuous marble bathrooms. The whole place is polished and elegant and staff are extremely friendly.

## Eating

**Kai Yanuanu Restaurant** (☎ 345 0544; Deuba Inn; Queens Rd, Deuba; mains \$14-30; ☒ ☑) breakfast & dinner) This humble dark horse serves outstanding seafood alongside curries, chicken and steaks. The interior is decked out with soft

lighting and chic beach-house décor. The fruit crushes are thick enough to make your straw stand on end.

**Pastry Bure** (☎ 345 0126; Arts Village Marketplace; meals \$4-10; ☒ ☑) breakfast & lunch; ☒ ☑) The place to be for breakfast, this nifty little café cooks up delectable pancakes, sandwiches, quiches, muffins, croissants and other baked goodies with a fat side of happy vibes. Coffee addicts will appreciate the hot and strong brews here.

**Lagoon Resort Restaurant** (☎ 345 0100; Fairway Pl, Pacific Harbour; lunch mains \$8-15, dinner mains \$20-30; ☒ ☑) lunch & dinner) The Lagoon's regal restaurant serves hearty sandwiches and curries for lunch and fancy dinner mains such as char-grilled *mahi mahi* (a local fish), beef tornadoes, and angel-hair pasta with prawns. Seating is at high-backed chairs and the floor-to-ceiling windows provide ample vistas of the green lawns.

**Oasis Restaurant** (☎ 345 0617; Arts Village Marketplace; mains \$10-30; ☒ ☑) lunch & dinner; ☒ ☑) Burgers, sandwiches, tortillas, curries and a whole lotta seafood is served at this atmospheric restaurant. Darkened wood tables and seating adorn the cool interior and there are bookshelves of second-hand books to pass the waiting time.

Fine dining options at the Pearl South Pacific (opposite):

**Mantarae Restaurant** (mains \$25-35; ☒ ☑) dinner) Sophisticated cuisine and wine list.

**Bistro** (mains \$15-25; ☒ ☑) lunch) Casual atmosphere and fare.

Self-caterers can stock up at the **supermarket** (Arts Village Marketplace).

## Getting There & Around

Pacific Harbour is about an hour's express bus ride from Suva and around three hours from Nadi. There are frequent Pacific Transport and Sunbeam Transport buses travelling the Queens Road between Lautoka and Suva, as well as vans and carriers. The first bus from Pacific Harbour to Lautoka (\$9.70, four hours) leaves at about 7.50am and the last at around 7pm. The first bus to Suva (\$3.20, one hour) leaves at 10.35am and the last is at 10pm. A taxi to Suva costs \$35; call **Ratan's Taxi** (☎ 346 0329). Ratan provides excellent commentary and manages to make friends out of every fare. Taxis to Nadi cost about \$110.

The regular express buses along the Queens Road stop at Navua, 10km east of Pacific Harbour. They take about 50 minutes from Suva and about ¾ hours from Nadi.

## OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Offshore from Pacific Harbour, a 64km-long reef encloses the 360-sq-km **Beqa Lagoon** and the islands of Beqa and Yanuca. The lagoon has many famous dive sites: Side Streets (soft corals, coral heads and gorgonian fans); Frigate Pass (a 48m wall with large pelagic fish, including white-tip reef sharks); and Caesar's Rocks (coral heads and swim-throughs). See p58 for more details. Surfing is first-class at **Frigate Passage**, also known as **Kavu Kavu Reef**, southwest of Yanuca island. It has left-hand waves, which can get really big. The break has three sections, which join up under the right conditions: the outside take-off, a long, walled speed section with a possibility of stand-up tubes; and an inside section breaking over the shallow reef and finishing in deep water.

## Beqa

The high island of Beqa (area 36 sq km), about 7.5km south of Pacific Harbour, is visible from the Queens Road and even from Suva. The island is about 7km in diameter with a deeply indented coastline and a rugged interior with ridges averaging 250m and sloping steeply down to the coast. The surrounding coral reef is famous for its dive sites. Beqa has two upmarket resorts, one budget resort and eight villages. The villagers of Rukua, Naceva and Dakuibeqa are known for their tradition of fire walking.

Formerly the Marlin Bay, **Beqa Lagoon Resort** (☎ 330 4042; www.beqalagoonresort.com; 4-15-17-nights per person from \$1710/2050/2340; ☒ ☑) no longer appeals to the adult-only crowd and a change in mood comes courtesy of new two-bedroom *bure* designed specifically for families. Couples will still love the opulent bathrooms and interiors of the double *bure* though and the surrounding landscape and sea still lends itself to excellent snorkelling, kayaking, unlimited shore diving, hiking to waterfalls and village visits. There's a large restaurant-lounge *bure* serving fabulous food and a pool on a nice coconut tree-fringed beach. They resort charges \$160 for a two-tank dive or two half-day surf lessons. Rates include all transfers from Nadi



**THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Lawaki Beach House** (☎ 992 1621; www.lawakibeachhouse.com; camping \$50, dm/s/d \$65/95/160) Aptly named, this small resort sits in front of an isolated beach on the southwestern side of Beqa island at Lawaki. Comprising of two double *bure* with en suites and verandas and a six-bed dorm, the unobtrusive and cosy set-up blends well with the surrounding environment. Guests mingle together in the communal TV lounge soaking up the relaxed mood. There is good snorkelling off the secluded pristine white-sand beach, as well as visits to the nearby village and gorgeous sunsets. Rates include three meals, and children under 12 pay 15% less. The hospitality here is legendary.

The resort offers transfers from Pacific Harbour on a covered, aluminium boat (one-way per person \$130), which has its own radio and life jackets. Alternatively you can catch the small public ferry from the Navua Jetty. The ferry usually leaves at noon and 2.30pm on weekdays, and costs \$50 per person one way. You should call the resort first to confirm one will be there. Be aware that the ferry trip can be rough, and depending on the weather, it may be unsafe as they normally do not carry life vests or a radio.

as well as meals and children are charged no more than 50% of the adult rate, depending on the package.

Two more five-star options:

**Lalati Resort** (☎ 347 2033; www.lalati-fiji.com; 7-night package per person from \$2920; ☎) Intimate and lavish – worth the splash. Rates include all transfers and meals.

**Kulu Bay Resort** (www.kulubay.com; d 7-nights \$2000; ☎) A five-star romantic hideaway. Rates include all meals and most activities. Boat transfer from Pacific Harbour is \$65 per person.

**Yanuca Island**

Tiny Yanuca is a hilly speck inside Beqa Lagoon, about 9km west of Beqa. It has comely beaches, good snorkelling and is close to the humbling breaks of **Frigates Passage**. Unsurprisingly it lures avid surfers, many of whom come for a week, slip into the lifestyle, and stay for a month. If living

in your swimmers 24/7 is your idea of bliss then you've found utopia. The island has two surf camps and one small village.

**Batiluva** (☎ 345 1019, 992 0019; www.batiluva.com; dm/d incl meals \$150/300) This long-standing camp is the stuff of surfers' dreams. The sturdy accommodation structure houses three spotless and airy dorms as well as two double rooms. Guests are ensured plenty of space and comfort and the owners are extremely hospitable. 'Gourmet jungle meals' are included in the tariffs and the food is superlative. If any of the guests are successful in their fishing expedition their catch is seared up for dinner or prepared into perfect sushi. The beach here is quite pretty, but for a good snorkel you need to go on a short boat trip (free of charge). Daily boat trips to the surf break are also included in the price. Transfers from Pacific Harbour are \$50 return per person.

**Yanuca Island Resort** (☎ 336 1281, 997 8958; www.frigatesreef.com; dm/s/d \$40/70/120). Were Robinson Crusoe a surfer he'd bless his surf booties if he stumbled across this place. Run by the softly spoken Wise, this simple camp is etched into a protected, grassy groove of the island. Guests here focus on surfing rather than partying but the atmosphere is utterly warm and friendly. The camp is staffed by locals and financial gains provide a source of income for the neighbouring village – Yanuca. There is one dorm with solid timber bunks and mosquito nets plus two cabins with private bathrooms attached. Meals, which are plentiful, tasty affairs (breakfast/lunch/dinner \$10/15/15), are served in an open-air dining area. Snorkelling straight off the tiny beach is good but most guests head out to the reef on a daily basis. Boat transfers to Frigates Passage cost \$50 and return transfers from Pacific Harbour are \$80 per person.

**Vatulele**

pop 950

The beautiful island of Vatulele (31 sq km) is 32km south of Korolevu, off Viti Levu's southern coast and west of Beqa Lagoon. It is 13km long and mostly flat, the highest point being just 33m above sea level, with scrub and palm vegetation. The western coast is a long escarpment broken by vertical cliffs formed by fracturing and uplifts. A barrier reef up to 3km offshore forms a lagoon on

**A SURFER'S GUIDE AT A GLANCE** *Andrew Bock*

Aquamarine water and curling, coral-reef waves surround the Fijian islands. Fijian villages own the reefs and often lease surfing rights to select resorts. Individuals who want to surf without staying at these resorts need to observe Fijian custom, buy *kava*, and approach village chiefs for permission to surf. But, if you're so inclined, exploring will pay off in Fiji – there are many unsurfed waves. At these places, too, you will need to buy *kava*.

Most surf pitches over outer reefs, in passages, and is for intermediate to advanced surfers only. For these reefs, you need boats and guides. Marine safety can be lax so ask for oars, life jackets and drinking water, if not radio service, on board.

Southerly swells are consistent from May to October but there is surf year-round. The trade winds are southeast and off-shore at famous breaks. Northerlies, from November to April, are off-shore on the Coral Coast.

Booties are wise, sunscreen and rashies (wetsuits) essential and a compass helps. Good boards are scarce but **Fiji Surf** (☎ 670 5960; cnr Main St & Hospital Rd) in Nadi has everything – advice, lessons, tours and equipment.

See the relevant sections for more information on the major surfing locations below.

**Viti Levu – Coral Coast**

**Beachhouse, Korolevu** (p111) Has average rights.

**Hideaway Resort** (p112) A hollow, high-tide right.

**Matanivusi Surf Resort** (p112) Has exclusive access to several rights and all-day access to Frigates Pass.

**Natadola Beach** (p102) Beginner beach breaks and an outside left.

**Sigatoka** (p105) Has good beach breaks.

**Waidroka Bay Resort** (p111) Has access to Frigates Pass but only go out at high tide.

**Viti Levu – Frigates Pass (Kavu Kavu Reef)**

This reef has a world-class left, rarely crowded, 15km off Yanuca island. Some resorts on the mainland have access to Frigates (see above); from Beqa Lagoon access is from:

**Batiluva resort** (opposite)

**Yanuca Island Resort** (opposite)

**Beqa Lagoon Resort** (p115)

**Waidroka Bay Resort** (p111)

**Mamanuca Islands**

Breaks shared by budget mainland resorts such as Seashell Surf & Dive Resort (p101) and Rendezvous Beach Resort (p90) include Wilkes Passage – a fast, long right – Mini Clouds and Desperations. These breaks can get crowded. Other options:

**Tavarua Island Resort** (p157) Exclusive access to world-famous Cloudbreak and Restaurants. Approach Tavarua well in advance to join a public session on Saturday but it can be a lottery.

**Namotu Island Resort** (p157) Has Namotu Lefts and Swimming Pools.

**Yasawas & Vanua Levu**

Northerly swells are common from November to March, and hit reefs outside the northern Yasawas and Vanua Levu. Apart from the Great Sea Reef near Kia island, these regions remain unexplored.

**Kadavu**

King Kong lefts are exclusive to Nagigia Island Resort (p228). Surfable gaps in the Great Astrolabe Reef include Vesi, Naiqoro and Sosi Passages. Access is via Albert's Sunrise Resort or Matava Resort (p226).

**Southern Lau group**

Kabara island and many others have breaks, but there are no surf resorts and access is strictly by village permission.





(and the museum). Beyond Albert Park, the road is renamed Queen Elizabeth Dr and heads out past Suva Point and around to the University of the South Pacific (USP) and National Stadium on the eastern side of the peninsula.

Drivers may find central Suva's one-way streets, angled intersections and contorted loops a bit challenging at first. There are three major roads in and out of the city: the Queens Road from Nadi; Princes Rd to the north (the scenic route to Nausori); and the Kings Road from Nausori and the international airport. The Kings Road meets Princes Rd closer to Suva, where it turns into Edinburgh Dr. Edinburgh Dr and the Queens Road converge at Walu Bay roundabout; if you're heading downtown, head south from here onto Rodwell Rd, which you can follow past the bus station and market, across Nubukalou Creek and into central Suva.

## Maps

The **Fiji Visitors Bureau** (FVB; Map p122; cnr Thomson & Scott Sts) can provide a basic, photocopied map of Suva. For something more detailed, head around the back of the Government Buildings to the **Map Shop** (Map p122; ☎ 321 1395; Rm 10, Department of Lands & Surveys; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-3.30pm Mon-Thu, till 3pm Fri). It stocks a good map of Suva and the surrounding areas, as well as large survey maps of the rest of Fiji.

## THE HEADSTRONG REVEREND BAKER

Thomas Baker, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary, was killed on 21 July 1867 by the Vatusila people of Nabutautau village (also known as Navatusila), deep in the isolated Nausori Highlands. A few years earlier Baker had been given the task of converting the people of the interior of Viti Levu to Christianity. Baker's predecessors had been able to convert many groups peacefully (and without becoming dinner), and he was advised to keep to these areas. But out of impatience, martyrdom, foolhardiness or the urge for success, he ignored the advice and with it crucial cultural know-how.

The highlanders associated conversion to Christianity with subservience to the chiefdom of Bau. As they were opposed to any kind of extended authority, knocking off the reverend may well have been a political manoeuvre. However, a second and more widely believed theory maintains that it was Baker's own behaviour that brought about his nasty end. Apparently, the local chief had borrowed Baker's comb to festoon his voluptuous hairdo. Insensitive or forgetful of the fact that the chief's head was considered sacred, Baker grabbed the comb from the chief's hair. Villagers were furious at the missionary for committing this sacrilege and killed and ate him in disgust. According to one local, his ancestors ate everything, 'even tried to eat his shoes', but one is now exhibited in the Fiji Museum.

In 2003, believing they had suffered a curse of bad luck as a result of their ancestors' culinary habits, the people of Nabutautau held a tribal ceremony to apologise to the descendants of the missionary. Around 600 people attended, including Thomas Baker's great-great-grandson and Prime Minister Lasenia Qarase.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Bookmasters** (Map p122; ☎ 331 888; 173 Victoria Pde) Good range of guidebooks, paperbacks and more.

**Fiji Museum** (Map p122; ☎ 331 5944; www.fijimuseum.org.fj; Thurston Gardens; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat)

The gift shop stocks a good selection of Fijian books on history, cooking and birds.

**Republic of Cappuccino** (ROC; Map p122; Renwick Rd) A good café that has a book exchange.

**Suva Bookstore** (Map p122; ☎ 331 1355; Greig St) Children's books and Fijian and Indo-Fijian cookbooks.

**USP Book Centre** (Map p119; ☎ 321 2500; www.uspbookcentre.com; USP) Excellent selection of local and international novels, Lonely Planet guides, and Pacific nonfiction. Pricey but you can order online and it delivers.

## Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 911)

**Fiji Recompression Chamber Facility** (Map p122; ☎ 999 3506, 885 0630; cnr Amy & Brewster Sts)

**Police** (Map p122; ☎ 911/331 1222; Pratt St)

## Internet Access

Internet access is cheap and abundant in Suva.

**Alpha Computer** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0211; 181 Victoria Pde; per hr \$6; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) Internet access and digital camera downloads to CD.

**Connect Internet Café** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0777; Post Office Bldg, 10 Thomson St; per hr \$5; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat) Broadband access.

**Cyberzone** (Map p122; ☎ 331 6967; Upstairs, 107 Victoria Pde; per hr \$4.80; ☎ 24 hr) Slow access but always open.

**Fintel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2933; 158 Victoria Pde; per hr \$5; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Fast and reliable. Also sells telecards.

**Your Friendly Internet Café** (Map p119; ☎ 327 0166; Shop 7, Sports City Centre, Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala Bay; per hr \$6; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun)

## Medical Services

Visits to general practitioners are usually \$10 to \$20.

**Boulevard Central Pharmacy** (Map p122; ☎ 330 3770; Shop 13, Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre)

**Boulevard Medical Centre** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3355; dbmconnect.com.fj; Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre, 33 Ellery St) Excellent reputation.

**Colonial War Memorial Hospital** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3444; Waimanu Rd)

**Fiji Recompression Chamber Facility** (Map p122; ☎ 885 0630; recompression@connect.com.fj; cnr Amy & Brewster Sts)

**Maharaj Medical Centre** (Map p119; ☎ 327 0164; Sports City Centre, Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala Bay; ☎ 9am-1pm, 2-5pm & 6-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Private medical centre.

**Pharmacy Plus** (Map p122; ☎ 330 5300; 190 Renwick Rd) Large and well-stocked pharmacy.

## Money

ATMs are scattered along Victoria Pde. Some hotels provide foreign exchange but the rates are usually uncompetitive.

**ANZ bank** (Map p122; ☎ 132 411; 25 Victoria Pde) ATM and foreign exchange.

**Money Exchange** (Map p122; ☎ 330 3566; cnr Thomson & Pier Sts) Foreign exchange.

**Westpac bank** (Map p122; ☎ 132 032; 1 Thomson St) ATM and foreign exchange.

## Post

**Post office** (Map p122; ☎ 330 2022; Thomson St)

## Tourist Information

**FVB** (Map p122; ☎ 330 2433; www.bulafiji.com; cnr Thomson & Scott Sts) Friendly, knowledgeable and unbiased staff.

**South Pacific Tourism Organisation** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4177; www.spto.org; 3rd fl, Dolphin Plaza, cnr Loftus St & Victoria Pde) Promotes tourism in the region; the website has a travel directory.

## Travel Agencies

See p261 for contact details of interisland ferry agencies and p135 for airline offices.

**Hunts Travel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 5288; fax 330 2212; 1st

fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St) Hunts can book domestic and international flights along with hotels and cars.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Suva suffers many of the same dangers as most urbanised centres. Pickpockets roam; keep your valuables out of sight, particularly in crowded areas such as the market or on dance floors. Walking around during daylight hours is perfectly safe; however, as soon as night begins to descend it's a no go. From dusk onwards locals are smart enough to catch a taxi, even for a distance of 300m, so you should be as well. Taxis are metered, cheap and safe.

## SIGHTS

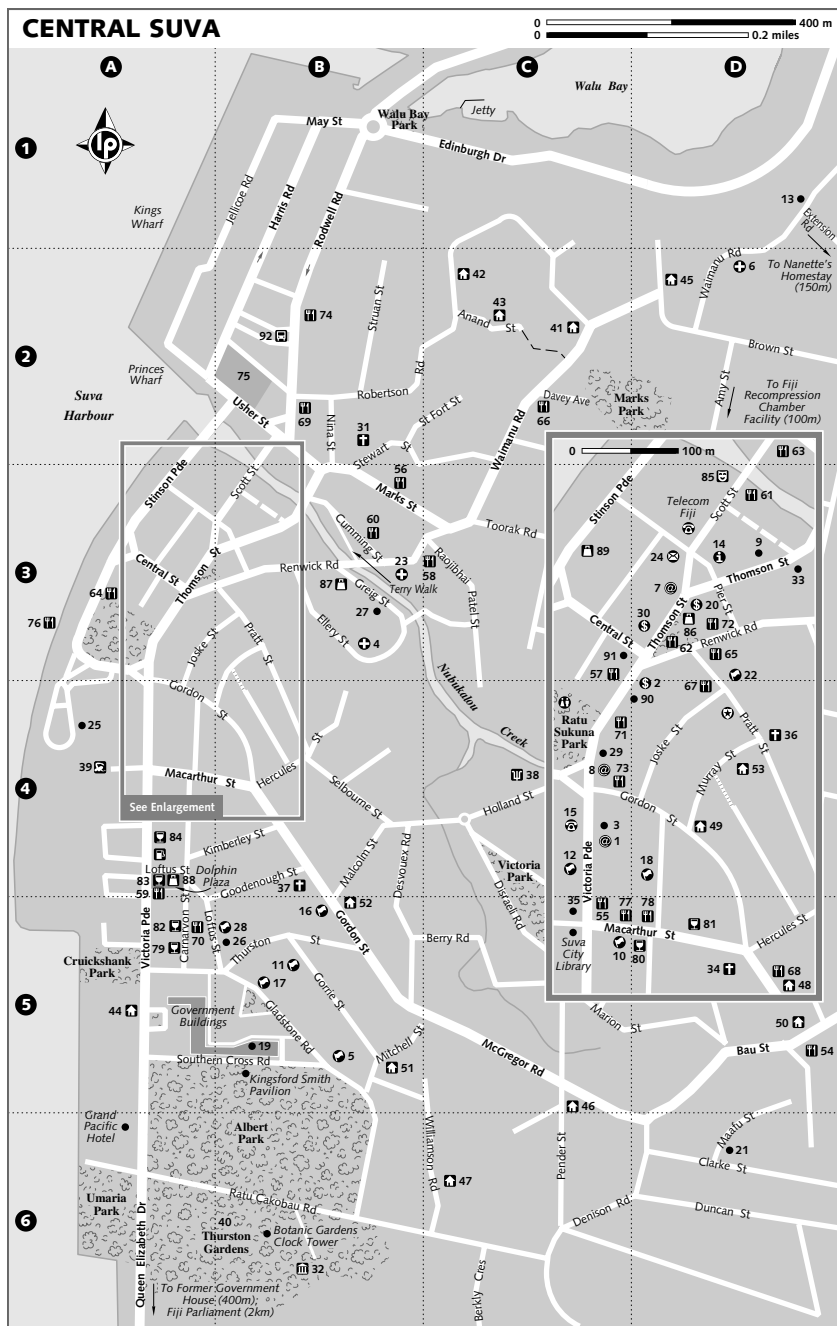
### Fiji Museum

In the heart of Thurston Gardens, this excellent museum (Map p122; ☎ 331 5944; www.fijimuseum.org.fj; Ratu Cakobau Rd; adult/child \$7/5; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat) captivates visitors with a journey into Fiji's archaeological, political, cultural and linguistic evolution. Original examples of musical instruments, cooking apparatus, jewellery – including chiefs' whale-tooth necklaces, and a daunting array of Fijian war clubs and cannibal utensils imbue a vivid insight into traditional life. The growing influence of other South Pacific and European cultures on the Fijian islands is also demonstrated through exhibits on pottery, fishing methods and trade; while descriptions throughout bestow a heightened understanding and awareness of the country's customs and people.

Taking centre stage is the massive Ratu Finau (1913); Fiji's last *waqa tabus* (double-hulled canoe), which measures 13.43m in length and includes an enclosed deck for inclement weather. It's a spectacular feat of design and engineering.

The ground floor also contains a good book and souvenir and shop and upstairs, the small **Indo-Fijian Gallery** features magnificent works by the country's finest contemporary artists.

The museum continually undertakes archaeological research and collects and preserves oral traditions. Many of these are published in *Domodomo*, a quarterly journal on history, language, culture, art and natural history that is available in the museum's gift shop. It also organises craft demonstrations; contact the museum for times.



<b>INFORMATION</b>		Garrick Hotel.....	33 D3	L'Opera.....	68 D5
Alpha Computer.....	1 C4	Holy Trinity Cathedral.....	34 D5	Morris Hedstrom Supermarket.....	69 B2
ANZ Bank.....	2 D4	Old Town Hall.....	35 C5	Old Mill Cottage.....	70 A5
Bookmasters.....	3 C4	Roman Catholic Cathedral.....	36 C4	Palm Court.....	71 C4
Boulevard Central Pharmacy.....	(see 4)	St Andrew's Church.....	37 B4	Pizza Hut.....	(see 77)
Boulevard Medical Centre.....	4 B3	Shree Laxmi Narayan Temple.....	38 C4	Republic of Cappuccino.....	72 D3
British Consulate.....	5 B5	Suva Olympic Pool.....	39 A4	Republic of Cappuccino.....	(see 88)
Colonial War Memorial Hospital.....	6 D2	Thurston Gardens.....	40 B6	Sichuan Pavilion Restaurant.....	(see 33)
Connect Internet Café.....	7 D3			Singh's Curry House.....	73 C4
Cyberzone.....	8 C4	<b>SLEEPING</b>			
Dominion House Arcade.....	9 D3	Annandale Apartments.....	41 C2	Suva Municipal Market.....	75 B2
Embassy of Nauru.....	10 C5	Capricorn Apartment Hotel.....	42 C2	Tiko's Floating Restaurant.....	76 A3
Embassy of Tuvalu.....	11 B5	Colonial Lodge.....	43 C2	Victoria Wines & Spirits.....	77 C5
European Union		Holiday Inn.....	44 A5	Zen Restaurant.....	78 D5
Representative.....	12 C4	Motel 6.....	45 D2		
Fiji Disabled People's		Peninsula International Hotel.....	46 C5	<b>DRINKING</b>	
Association.....	13 D1	South Seas Private Hotel.....	47 C6	Barn.....	79 A5
Fiji Visitors Bureau (FVB).....	14 D3	Southern Cross Hotel.....	48 D5	Birdland R&B Club.....	80 D5
Fintel (Fiji International		Sunset Apartment Motel.....	49 D4	O'Reilly's.....	(see 77)
Telecommunications).....	15 C4	Suva Apartments.....	50 D5	Purple Haze Nightclub.....	81 D5
French Embassy.....	(see 9)	Suva Motor Inn.....	51 B5	Shooters Tavern.....	82 A5
High Commission of Papua New		Tanoa Plaza Hotel.....	52 B5	Signals Night Club.....	83 A4
Guinea.....	16 B5	Town House Apartment		Traps Bar.....	84 A4
High Commission of Tuvalu.....	17 B5	Hotel.....	53 D4		
Hunts Travel.....	(see 9)	<b>EATING</b>			
Japanese Embassy.....	(see 9)	Aberdeen Grill.....	54 D5	Ashiyana.....	(see 35)
Korean Embassy.....	(see 29)	Bad Dog Cafe.....	55 C5	Cakes 2000.....	56 B3
Malaysian Embassy.....	18 D4	Map Shop.....	19 B5	National Trust for Fiji	
Money Exchange.....	20 D3	New Zealand Embassy.....	22 D3	Pharmacy Plus.....	23 B3
Post Office.....	24 D3	Registrar General's office.....	25 A4	Representative of the Federated	
States of Micronesia.....	26 B5	South Pacific Tourism		Organisation.....	(see 88)
Suva Bookstore.....	27 B3	US Embassy.....	28 B5	Vanua Arcade.....	29 C4
Westpac Bank.....	30 D3				
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Centenary Methodist Church.....	31 B2	Kahawa.....	65 D3
		Fiji Museum.....	32 B6	Korea House.....	66 C2
				Lantern Palace.....	67 D4

**Thurston Gardens**

After visiting the museum, ponder on your new found knowledge with a wander through these compact but beautiful gardens (Map p122). The dense conglomeration of native flora and surrounding lawns are less manicured and more scattered haphazardly but heavy landscaping would detract from the tropical element. The colourful vegetation will generate appreciative murmurs from the casual visitor and much of the vegetation is also labelled for the benefit of avid horticulturalists. Crisscrossing walking trails traverse the park, and bench seating provides sensory-fatigue relief. It's a lovely spot for a picnic, particularly if you camp yourself under one of the grand and stately fig trees.

**Parliament of Fiji**

Opened in June 1992, the **parliament complex** (Map p119; ☎ 330 5811; www.parliament.gov.fj; Battery Rd; admission free) must be one of the world's most striking political hubs. Designed in post-1987-atmosphere, the aim of maintaining indigenous-Fijian values is apparent through the open-air corridors, traditional arts and structures and *masi* cloths throughout. The main building, *vale ne bose lawa* (parliament house), takes its form from the traditional *vale* (family house) and has a ceremonial access from Ratu Sukuna Rd. The complex is 5km south of the city centre. It's easiest to reach by taxi; however, you can hop on a bus along Queen Elizabeth Dr and walk along Ratu Sukuna Rd for 1km.



## WINGING IT

Charles Kingsford Smith was the first aviator to cross the Pacific, flying in his little Fokker trimotor, *The Southern Cross*, from California to Australia. The longest leg of the flight was the 34-hour trip from Hawaii to Fiji. Suva's Albert Park, with its hill at one end and the Grand Pacific Hotel at the other, was made into a makeshift landing strip for his arrival. Trees were still being cleared after Smith had already left Hawaii. Kingsford Smith and his crew arrived on 6 June 1928, and were welcomed by a crowd of thousands, including colonial dignitaries who had gathered at the Grand Pacific Hotel to witness and celebrate this major event. Because the park was too short to take-off with a heavy load of fuel, Smith had to unload, fly to Nasilai Beach and reload for take-off to Brisbane and Sydney. Kingsford Smith and his crew were presented with a ceremonial *tabua* (whale's tooth) as a token of great respect.

It's advisable to call ahead if you want to tour the grounds, but you can also obtain a visitor's pass from the guard at the main entrance. It's also possible to sit in on a parliamentary session by phoning in advance.

## University of the South Pacific

With beautiful lawns and excellent facilities, the USP's **Laucala Campus** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3900; fax 330 1305) offers some picturesque strolling and fascinating people watching. This is the biggest of USP's campuses, and with more than 11,000 students it attracts attendees and staff from all over the South Pacific as well as the USA, New Zealand and Australia. Mingling among Fijian students you're likely to see young academics from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. The university itself is jointly owned by the governments of 12 Pacific countries and is a fee-paying institution. Many students rely on scholarships for which the competition is fierce.

The campus is on the site of a New Zealand seaplane base and inside the north-western entrance, on the right, is a small **botanical garden** with peaceful trails winding around Pacific trees and plants. You can also visit the **Oceania Centre for Arts & Culture**

where you can see temporary exhibits of paintings and carvings and sometimes even catch an artist at work. The Oceania Dance Theatre and other performance groups use the centre and you can usually catch a free rehearsal on weekday mornings. The centre also produces CDs of Fijian music with a modern twist.

The university's main entrance, off Laucala Bay Rd, is a 10- to 15-minute drive from downtown Suva. There are frequent buses to the USP: the Vatuwaqa bus departs opposite the Dominion House Arcade in Thomson St, near the FVB or you can hop on a Raiwaga bus from Victoria Pde. The taxi fare from the city is about \$4.

## Colo-i-Suva Forest Park

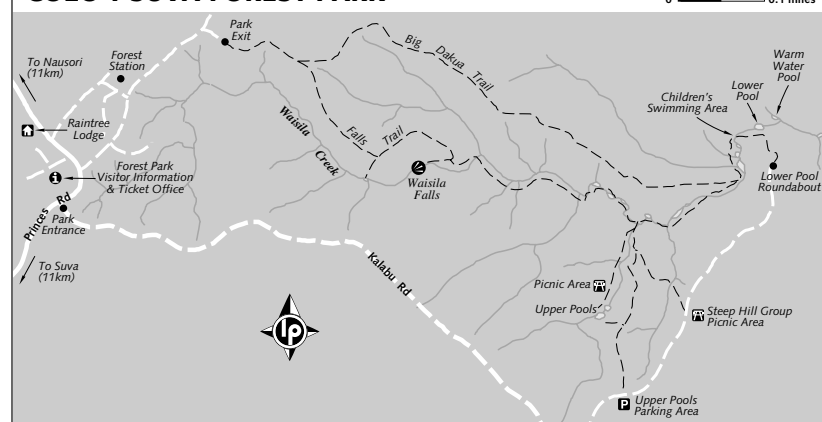
This lush rainforest **park** (☎ 332 0211; adult/child \$5/1; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Sun), pronounced *tholoe-soo-va*, is a 2.5-sq-km oasis teeming with vivid and melodic birdlife and tropical flora. The 6.5km of walking trails navigate clear natural pools and gorgeous vistas, with just a touch of Indiana Jones in the rope swings over water and stone steps across streams. Sitting at an altitude of 120m to 180m, it's a cool and peaceful respite from Suva's urban hubbub.

Flowing through the forest is the Waisila Creek, which makes its way down to the Waimanu River and is the water catchment for the Nausori/Nasinu areas. The creek gives rise to natural swimming holes, and there are picnic tables, shelters and change rooms as well as a superb lookout. Dense patches of mahogany distinguish themselves from the native vegetation. Planted after a period of aggressive logging in the 1940s and '50s, they have stabilised the topsoil without impinging on the indigenous vegetation.

Among the wildlife are 14 different bird species, including scarlet robins, spotted fantails, Fiji goshawks, sulphur-breasted musk parrots, Fiji warblers, golden doves and barking pigeons.

Colo-i-Suva Forest Park is located 11km north of Suva on Princes Rd. The visitor information centre is on the left side of the road as you approach from Suva; buy your ticket here and then head to the entrance booth on the other side of the road. Before entering ask the guards about the security situation within the park. In recent years there have been some distressing attacks

## COLO-I-SUVA FOREST PARK



and as the park is open to the public, it's difficult to monitor who goes in and out. You can pay an additional fee (on asking) to have a guard accompany you and if traveling alone this is definitely recommended.

The park receives an annual rainfall of 420cm, with showers about four days each week. The trails can be extremely slippery so be sure to wear good footwear. If you drive out to the park, leave any valuables at the visitor information centre.

The Sawani bus leaves Suva bus station every half-hour (\$0.65, 20 minutes). If driving, take Princes Rd out of Suva, past Tamavua and Tacirua villages.

## Churches & Temples

Despite their cosmopolitan lifestyle, the majority of Suva's Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians are still very religious and dash off to temple or church on a regular basis. While few of these buildings are interesting in themselves, a couple are worth a gander if you're in the neighbourhood.

Just east of downtown, the bright orange-and-blue **Shree Laxmi Narayan Temple** (Map p122; Holland St) generally has a caretaker around to let you in for a look. The South Indian fire-walking festival is held during July or August at the **Mariamamma Temple** (Map p119; Howell Rd, Samabula). See p109 for details of this ceremony.

**Holy Trinity Cathedral** (Map p122; cnr Macarthur & Gordon Sts), with its unique boat-shaped interior, interesting Fijian tapestries and wood-beamed ceiling is a peaceful retreat.

The gigantic tree in front of the church is a showcase of Pacific plants with cacti and ferns making themselves at home in its branches. The 1902 **Roman Catholic Cathedral** (Map p122), at the corner of Murray and Pratt Sts is built of sandstone imported from Sydney and is one of Suva's most prominent landmarks; unfortunately, it's most often locked. For a rousing chorus of song on a Sunday morning, head to the **Centenary Methodist Church** (Map p122; Stewart St); the pitch is more invigorating than dulcet and it often fills the surrounding streets.

If you entered town via the Queens Road, you likely passed **Suva cemetery** (Map p119). Graves are dug by the inmates from the 1913 prison just down the road, and then decorated with bright cloth.

## ACTIVITIES

Suva all but closes down on a Sunday so try to organise activities in advance or attend a Fijian church service to hear some uplifting, boisterous singing.

## Trekking

Colo-i-Suva Forest Park is an easy place for bushwalking close to Suva (see opposite for details). You can also hike to Mt Korobaba, about a one- to two-hour walk from the cement factory near Lami. Joske's Thumb is an enticing spectacle for serious climbers; check with FVB about getting permission. A climb to this peak was featured in the film *Journey to the Dawning of the Day*.



Keen trekkers should contact the Rucksack Club for weekly walking adventures either inland or to other islands. Ask the FVB for the latest contact number because the membership changes regularly, as most of the 80 to 100 members are expats on contract in Fiji. The club hosts fortnightly meetings on Wednesday nights at St Andrew's Church (on Gordon St) in appreciation of Fiji's beauty and culture, with guest speakers and performers.

### Swimming

The **National Aquatic Centre** (Map p119; ☎ 331 8185; Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala Bay; admission \$3; ☎ 6am-8pm Mon-Sat year-round, 9am-6pm Sun Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Sun Jul-Sep) was built for the 2003 South Pacific Games and includes a 50m and 25m pool. It's the best spot in Suva if you're looking to do some laps rather than just cool off.

Seldom crowded, the giant, outdoor **Suva Olympic Swimming Pool** (Map p122; 224 Victoria Pde; adult/child \$1.65/0.80; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat Apr-Sep; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat Oct-Mar) is an oasis on a hot day. Entry is fantastically cheap; child entry is for age 13 and under. There is a kiddies' play area, lap lanes and change cubicles (\$2 deposit). Keen lap swimmers can also attend the **USP's 25m pool** (Map p119; admission \$2; ☎ 7am-6pm).

Between Suva and Colo-i-Suva, **Wailoku Falls** is not a good place for a dip as muggings are a very common occurrence.

The nearest decent beach is at Deuba, close to Pacific Harbour. It is a 50-minute drive from Suva, although by local bus it can take much longer. Alternatively, there are the freshwater pools at Colo-i-Suva Forest Park (p124).

### Diving

**Beqa Divers Fiji** (Map p119; ☎ 336 1088; www.beqa-divers.com; 75 Marine Dr, Lami) is about a 10-minute drive from Suva. It offers two-tank dives/PADI Open Water Courses to Beqa Lagoon for \$145/550. This outfit also offers overnight trips including accommodation from \$255, which includes return airport transfers, twin or double-share accommodation, two-tank dives and a picnic lunch.

The **Holiday Inn** (Map p122; ☎ 330 1600; Victoria Pde) can organise dive trips to Beqa Lagoon with Aqua-Trek (p113), based at Pacific Harbour.

### Surfing

There is a surf-break near Suva lighthouse, accessible by boat; the **Fiji Surf Association** (☎ 999 7719) may be able to give some advice on how to get out there and on local conditions.

### Sailing

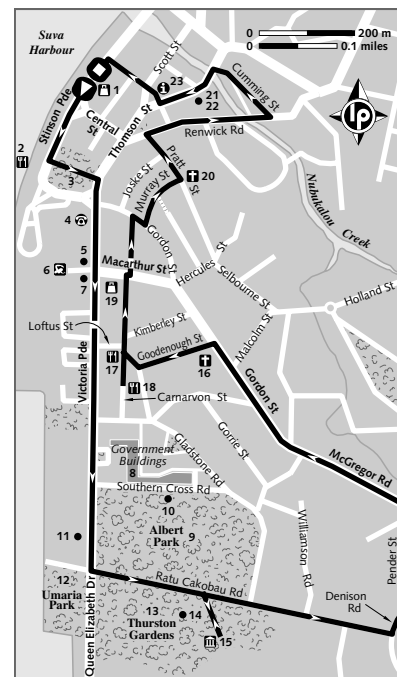
Visiting yachties can get membership at the **Royal Suva Yacht Club** (Map p119; ☎ 331 2921; rsyc@connect.com.fj; ☎ office 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). Mooring fees for a small yacht start at \$40 per day. Prices for larger yachts depend on the size of the boat and length of stay. The club has bathrooms with hot water, and a laundry, which are open 24 hours a day. There's also a restaurant, an ATM and also a kid's playground. The **bar** (☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, till midnight Fri & Sat) here is a popular watering hole for yachties and locals and has great views of the Bay of Islands and the mountains, including Joske's Thumb. Even without a yacht, overseas visitors are welcome and can be signed in. The notice board in the clubhouse is a good place to find boats looking for crew.

### WALKING TOUR

Downtown Suva has a scattering of colonial buildings and places of interest in between the shops and office blocks, making it a pleasant place to wander around. Give yourself several hours for this tour, taking lunch and other pit stops into consideration.

Start your pedestrian journey on Stinson Pde at the **Suva Curio & Handicraft Centre** (1; p134). Have a good look around but don't make any purchases yet – there are a few more shops on the itinerary. Cross to the opposite side of the street and follow the esplanade south, taking in the gorgeous views of Suva Harbour and Joske's Thumb. Once you reach **Tiko's Floating Restaurant** (2; p131), one of Suva's finest eateries, cross the road and amble through the tree-lined **Ratu Sukuna Park** (3) to Thomson St. Continue south down Victoria Pde, past the pale, colonial 1926 **Fintel building** (4) and the 1904 **old town hall** (5). Now home to several restaurants, the old town hall building was once used for dances, bazaars and performances. The **Suva Olympic Pool** (6) is set back between this building and the 1909 **Suva City Library** (7).

Continue down Victoria Pde. On your left hand side are the stately **Government Buildings**



#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Stinson Pde  
**Finish** Stinson Pde  
**Distance** 3.5km  
**Duration** two to four hours

(8), built between 1939 and 1967. Presiding over the manicured green lawns are statues of Ratu Cakobau and Ratu Sukuna. In the block south of the Government Buildings is **Albert Park** (9), a large sporting field where you can often catch rugby union teams in action or training. The park is named after Queen Victoria's husband and was given to the Fijian Government by the Australian Polynesia Company as an incentive for moving the capital to Suva. Towards the back of the park are a cricket ground and tennis courts. The **Kingsford Smith Pavilion** (10), named after the famous aviator who landed here in on Southern Cross Rd. On the seaside opposite the park is the glorious old **Grand Pacific Hotel** (11). Built in 1914 by the Union Steamship Company, its ship-style architecture is remi-

niscant of the luxury liners that once plied the seas. The splendid white façade hints at the hotel's former glory but it has remained abandoned and in a continuing state of decay since closure in 1992. A string of redevelopment plans and backers have failed to prove fruitful but in 2005 a joint venture by the Fiji National Provident Fund and the Fiji Investments Corporation promised to restore the Grand Pacific to its former position of top billing among Suva's hotels.

Just past Ratu Cakobau Rd you'll stumble across **Umaria Park** (12) where you can take a breather. If you've got kids in tow they'll enjoy scrambling over the colourful monkey bars and playground. A scattering of concrete picnic tables and benches make this a popular spot for picnicking families on the weekend.

Cross the road at the corner of Ratu Cakobau Rd and Queen Elizabeth Dr and enter **Thurston Gardens** (13; p123). Meander through this colourful and balmy park, which was built in 1913 and named after Sir John Bates Thurston, an amateur botanist who introduced many ornamental plant species to Fiji. Within the grounds is the **Botanic Gardens Clock Tower** (14) and the **Fiji Museum** (15; p121).

Keep walking east along Ratu Cakobau Rd and climb into the escalating inner suburbs. Turn left at Pender St and left again at McGregor Rd. Amid the tranquil residential streets you'll find sweeping views of the city below. Continue along McGregor Rd, which turns into Gordon St and leads back to the city centre. Turn left at Goodenough St, with **St Andrew's Church** (16) on the corner. Follow Goodenough St and dog-leg onto Carnarvon St. If you need a pick-me-up drop into **Republic of Cappuccino** (17; p133) or head to the **Old Mill Cottage** (18; p131) for a traditional Fijian feast.

Stroll north past the bars and clubs of this little back road and duck into the **Government Crafts Centre** (19; p134) on Macarthur St. This small outlet sells some of the finest crafts in Fiji. Continue walking north along Carnarvon St, crossing Gordon St to Murray St. At the corner of Murray and Pratt Sts is the sandstone **Roman Catholic Cathedral** (20; p125), one of Suva's most prominent landmarks.

Turn left onto Pratt St and then right onto Renwick Rd. Window shop your way to Cumming St. Turn left to immerse yourself in Suva's little India, with curry houses, sari

sellers, souvenir shops and the scent of incense thick in the air. In the 1920s this street was known for its *kava* (*yaqona*) saloons and 'dens of iniquity'.

Turn left onto Thomson St and make your way past the stately old **Garrick Hotel (21)**. Built in 1914, it's now home to shops and the **Sichuan Pavilion Restaurant (22)**; p132). Make a right at the 1912 **FVB building (23)** and head towards the water and your starting point at the Curio & Handicraft Centre. If you've got any energy left spend it on a bout of souvenir shopping.

## TOURS

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 359 3230; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) Offers several tours on the Navua River that pick up from Suva hotels. There are rafting and canoeing tours (per person \$115), half- and full-day tours to Nasilai village (per person \$60/85) and city tours of Suva that take in the Fiji Museum and bushwalking in Colo-i-Suva Forest Park (per person \$70).

**Discover Fiji Tours** (☎ 345 0180; www.discoverfiji.com) Based in Navua, this outfit also offers canoe trips along the Navua River to a waterfall (see p113).

## HOME AWAY FROM HOME

On the outskirts of Suva, away from the flashy shops and colonial homes, thousands of people are living in settlements of tiny, corrugated-iron huts. These dilapidated settlements have little sanitation and often no water supply. In April 2002, more than 60,000 Fijians were landless and squatting, a number that is continuously climbing with the country's unsolved land issues.

Indigenous Fijians have traditional ownership rights to over 80% of the country's landmass, large tracts of which they've leased to Indo-Fijian farmers for the past century. However, with these leases coming to an end and ethnic friction heightened by recent political events, many indigenous landowners are turfing Indo-Fijian farmers off property where their families have lived for generations. Most Indo-Fijians are fleeing to the cities for safety. Unfortunately, with their livelihood gone, many families are ending up in suburban squatter settlements.

These impromptu, crowded towns are not strictly Indo-Fijian. The substantial pay cuts and rise in unemployment that have followed the country's coups have left many urban indigenous Fijians unable to pay the rent. Their only means of survival is also to head for the squatter settlements.

In 1994 the government of the day approved a policy to upgrade squatter settlements. Since then, many landless families have been promised resettlement, particularly evicted Indo-Fijians. However, the constant juggling of politics and politicians in Fiji has left many families squatting for more than a decade. Some have turned to begging and others attempt to sell crafts to tourists.

The Government does acknowledge the severe impact this issue has made on Fiji's social and economic fabric and between 2000 and 2005 around \$11.3 million was spent on squatter resettlement, mostly in the form of estates (primarily around Lautoka) and new housing developments. Unfortunately, the proportion of squatters continues to outgrow the solution; a survey conducted by the Fijian Government's Squatter Resettlement Unit in 2005 concluded that some 90,000 people in Suva would be living as squatters by 2006. For the majority of these families, the immediate future continues to look dim.

## SLEEPING

Suva has some excellent budget accommodation, some good midrange motels and self-contained apartments and a couple of quality top-end options. There are also several dodgy places along the northern stretch of Robertson Rd that are the haunts of prostitutes and their clients; if you notice no other travellers and a lot of traffic, you may want to move on.

### Budget

**Raintree Lodge** (Map p125; ☎ 332 0562; www.raintreelodge@connect.com.fj; Princes Rd, Colo-i-Suva; camping per person \$12.50, dm \$18-20, d \$60-110; ☒ ☑ ☒) Immersed in a lush rainforest with glassy lakes and prolific birdlife, this tranquil retreat has tidy bunk dorms in timber cottages and a two-storey cabin containing cosy doubles with ceiling fans, plump beds and a chunk of balcony with water views. A few stylish and intimate *bure* sleep four; all rooms have shared facilities. Activities on offer are abundant and there's a beautiful open bar and restaurant (p130).

The Tacirua Transport bus to Sawani passes the Raintree Lodge (\$1, 20 minutes, half-hourly to hourly). Expect to pay about \$12 for a taxi ride here from Nausori airport.

**South Seas Private Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2296; www.fiji4less.com; 6 Williamson Rd; dm \$14, s/d/f \$25/35/40; ☒) The sweeping interior veranda, classic white exterior and symposium of trees at this glorious old hotel will work the smile lines of any Pacific romantic. Clad in a sea of polished timber, the interior is reminiscent of a 1920s ocean liner and houses neat, simple and spacious rooms. Dorms have large steel bunks and all but one room has shared facilities. It doesn't see a huge amount of human traffic, which may be a plus or minus depending on your preference.

**Colonial Lodge** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0655; colonial.lodge@connect.com.fj; 19 Anand St; dm \$30, s \$65, d without/with bathroom \$80/90) Run by a friendly and boisterous family, this budget homestay is housed in a restored colonial bungalow with cheerful doubles upstairs, a large and airy dorm downstairs and a voluminous room with bathroom. Breakfast is included in the tariff and dinner is also available on request. There's a veranda where you can lounge in a hammock and it's close to the city centre.

**Suva Apartments** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4280; fasa.noc@fasanoc.org.fj; 17 Bau St; s/d/tr from \$45/60/75; ☒ ☒) Originally built to accommodate Fijian Olympians, this apartment block contains 20 modern and spotless units with fully equipped kitchens. You certainly get value for money and it's an excellent option for long stays, though the abundance of concrete and steel creates a slightly clinical ambience. It fills up quickly so bookings are advised.

Two good and central options with dated, but accommodating apartments:

**Sunset Apartment Motel** (Map p122; ☎ 330 1799; fax 330 3446; cnr Gordon & Murray Sts; dm/s/d from \$12/45/55; ☒)

**Town House Apartment Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0055; townhouse@connect.com.fj; 3 Foster St; s/d \$55/70; ☒)

### Midrange

**Suva Motor Inn** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3973; www.hexagonfiji.com; cnr Mitchell & Gorrie Sts; d 110-175; ☒) Fab for families, the Suva Motor Inn is a little humble with its title. Smart and fresh studio and two-bedroom apartments contain sunny furnishings, modern kitchens (including microwaves) and enough room to accommodate a wee troupe. All rooms

have balconies (ask for one with Albert Park views) and the water slide attached to the central pool is a kid-magnet.

**Nanette's Homestay** (Map p119; ☎ 331 6316; www.nanettes.com.fj; 56 Extension St; r \$90-100; ☒ ☒) Housed in the upper echelons of a large residence near the hospital, this B&B is so friendly you'll want to pack the staff in your suitcase. The four upstairs rooms with bathroom vary in size and some have deliciously large tubs. There's also a communal TV lounge and kitchen. Downstairs are three schmick apartments (\$135 to \$150) with modern kitchens. You'll feel well looked after here.

**Motel 6** (Map p122; ☎ 330 7477; fax 330 7133; 1 Wulu St; r/f \$70/95) This complex is perched at the end of a cul-de-sac off Waimanu Rd with boggling harbour views. It offers well-maintained motel rooms with TV, fridge and tea and coffee facilities, and also one-bedroom family rooms with small basic kitchenettes. It's spotless, friendly and very secure and the out-of-the-way location makes for a contented night's sleep.

**Capricorn Apartment Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 330 3732; www.capricorn-hotels-fiji.com; 7 St Fort St; r \$100-130; ☒ ☒) Cool, inviting, secure and friendly, this block of apartments sits high on Toorak hill and buzzes with a happy, personable air. Mix-and-match décor fills the self-contained units and not a cushion is out of place. The well-equipped kitchens contain microwaves and some of the balconies have addictive city and harbour views.

**Holiday Inn** (Map p122; ☎ 330 1600; reservations@holidayinnsuva.com.fj; Victoria Pde; r \$120-200; ☒ ☒ ☒) This inn occupies a great location on the harbour shore, across from the Government Buildings and near the museum. Rooms are generically spacious, cool and comfortable and will please picky travellers. The inn patently appeals to business travellers and those on coach tours and it has the facilities to match. However, the staff is a tad apathetic and there's a dearth of atmosphere.

**Peninsula International Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3711; www.peninsula.com.fj; cnr McGregor & Pender Sts; s/d \$75/90; ☒ ☒ ☒) Pleasantly situated in a leafy residential area, the Peninsula is a little confused and tired but does its best to provide reasonable value. Behind a large cream façade are several floors of snug single rooms and roomy, well-lit doubles. All come with TV, tea and coffee and phone. There is also a restaurant and bar on-site.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Homestay Suva** (Map p119; ☎ 337 0395; home staysuva@connect.com.fj; 265 Princes Rd, Tamavua; d incl breakfast \$165-195; ☎) The pool deck alone looks like a photo shoot for *Vogue*, and the interior follows suit. Suva's finest location to rest the head is a gorgeous colonial house with indulgent rooms containing classy décor and plush bathrooms. The beds are so comfortable you'll forget all about the sightseeing, and the common living areas are littered with sophisticated furnishings. Cheapest are the rooms downstairs in the house; those upstairs are a tad pricier (\$180) and top of the line are the capacious and modern studio rooms, which have balconies, TVs and kitchenettes. All rooms come with a bathroom.

Guests are treated like royalty but children aren't welcome. An excellent breakfast is served on the terrace overlooking the pool and bay, while home-cooked dinners (per person \$35) are available on request. Definitely book in advance.

Also recommended:

**Southern Cross Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 4233; southerncross@connect.com.fj; 63 Gordon St; r \$100-135; ☎) Smart rooms, popular with business travellers.

**Annandale Apartments** (Map p122; ☎ 330 9766; annandalefiji@hotmail.com; 265 Waimanu Rd; r \$50-90; ☎) Friendly joint with a good range of rooms, including two-bedroom apartments.

### Top End

**Tanoa Plaza Hotel** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2300; www.tanoahotels.com; cnr Gordon & Malcolm Sts; r \$185-200; ste \$410; ☎) Opened in 2003, this sleek and sophisticated hotel caters to comfort-needy creatures with capacious beds, chic interiors, fully-equipped minibars and pamper products in the bathrooms. It's the most stylish of Suva's hotels and views from floors 5 and up are simply dazzling. The suites on floors 8 and 9 are heavenly.

**Raffles Tradewinds Hotel** (Map p119; ☎ 336 2450; www.traffletradewinds.com; Queens Rd, Lami; d/tr/f from \$130/170/270, ste \$280; ☎) This one-time starlet has let herself go in recent years, but she's still snazzy enough to turn heads. Accommodating rooms have a touch of the flashy airport lobby about them, but with TV, phone, bathtub, fridge, hairdryers

and balconies no-one's really complaining. Rooms come in studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom configurations. Raffles' best feature is its superb waterfront location; the hotel is frequently used as a conference centre.

### EATING

For a compact city Suva offers a relatively diverse and multicultural array of eateries. It's the best place in Fiji to try authentic Fijian and Indo-Fijian food but there are plenty of Western-style options on offer if your tummy and palate are timid.

### Restaurants

#### WESTERN

**JJ's on the Park** (Map p122; ☎ 330 5005; Stinson Pde; mains \$15-25; ☎) lunch & dinner) Dishing up good Western-style food and blessed with terrific harbour views from the 180-degree glass frontage, JJ's is an atmospheric place to dine. Salads, burgers, enchiladas, steak and fresh seafood dishes are served in generous quantities and the wine list is impressive. The surrounds are glossy and polished, service is attentive and a Fijian Belafonte often taps the ivory in the background.

**Malt House Brewery & Restaurant** (Map p119; ☎ 337 1515; 88 Jerusalem Rd, Vatu; mains \$15-30; ☎) lunch & dinner) Never short of a happy crowd, this bar-restaurant entertains patrons with delicious home-brew and even better food. Wood-fired pizzas go down well with the ales and lagers made on the premises but you can also treat your tastebuds to some of the most refined and creative seafood and meat dishes in Fiji. It's a bit of a trek from the centre (a taxi should cost about \$6) and often filled with a boisterous din, but leaving Suva without a night here would be a crime.

**L'Opera** (Map p122; ☎ 331 8602; 59 Gordon St; mains \$20-35; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat, brunch Sun; ☎) Decadent to the extreme, L'Opera is a luscious slice of Italy from the ornate fabrics gracing the walls and high-backed chairs to the lovingly made gnocchi and ravioli. Authentic tuna, veal and lobster dishes are also on offer and the antipasto and wine list are excellent. Pure romance.

**Raintree Lodge** (see p128; mains \$12-23; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Suva's most tranquil restaurant sits on an open-air veranda above a peaceful lake. Dappled sunlight filters through the surrounding rainforest and bird calls

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Old Mill Cottage** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2134; 49 Carnarvon St; dishes \$6-12; ☎) 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, till 5pm Sat) Housed (as the name suggests) in a gracious old timber cottage, this Suva institution is the city's best spot for adventurous gastronomes to dabble in authentic Fijian fare. Exotic dishes including *palusami* (meat, onion and *lolo* wrapped in *dalo* leaves and baked in a *lovo*), curried shellfish, and seaweed or fish stewed in *lolo* assemble themselves underneath the front counter alongside Indian curries and vegetarian dishes. You can also dig into a traditional roast. Addicted office workers cram into the joint for lunch, parking themselves at tables on the front veranda or at the large booth seating inside. The spacious interior is filled with a pleasant cross-breeze (which may be of assistance with some of the curries) thanks to open doors at both ends and ceiling fans. Helpings are huge and \$10 will easily buy your main meal of the day.

accompany your meal. Traditional Fijian fare, inventive vegetations options and fragrant curries are served and the pancakes at breakfast are legendary.

**Tiko's Floating Restaurant** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3626; off Stinson Pde; mains \$20-35; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Elegant and devoid of pretension, Tiko's serves excellent surf-and-turf fare, including New Zealand steak and fresh local fish (*walu* and *pakapaka*), on board a gracious cruising vessel. The wine list includes Grange Hermitage and the windowed walls bathe the place in amber at sunset. It's best enjoyed on calm nights.

**Bad Dog Cafe** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4662; cnr Macarthur St & Victoria Pde; mains \$15-25; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This trendy drinking hole serves tasty bar snacks and crowd-pleasing mains. Cajun chicken, Thai curries, burgers, squid rings and potato wedges accompany your beverage of choice and you can scoff it at a booth or window table.

**Raffles Floating Restaurant** (Map p119; ☎ 336 2450; Queens Rd, Lami; mains \$15-30; ☎) lunch & dinner) The floating restaurant attached to Raffles Tradewinds hotel is one of the most scenic spots in Suva to dine. Lunch is the best time to enjoy the harbour views, when the glass windows surrounding the interior flood the room with light. Seafood and classy steak

dishes feature highly on the dinner menu, but lunch is a cheaper and more relaxed affair. The burgers here are legendary.

**Aberdeen Grill** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0384; 16 Bau St, Flagstaff; mains \$20-35; ☎) lunch & dinner) This stately restaurant has the interior of an old boys' club; plenty of dark wood, brass, mock antique seating and wide bay windows. The food is similarly conservative, but it's done well. European-influenced chicken, seafood and steak are the predominant stars of the carnivorous menu. Lunch is a three-course set menu (\$25).

Also recommended:

**Pizza Hut** (Map p122; ☎ 331 1825; Victoria Pde; mains \$9-25; ☎) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Inventive pizzas served in huge quantities. Takeaway is available.

**Suva Yacht Club** (Map p119; ☎ 331 2921; mains \$12-20; ☎) lunch & dinner) Global menu with indoor and outdoor seating.

### INDO-FIJIAN

There are enough hole-in-the-wall curry houses in Suva to set your head spinning and your mouth watering. This is where those on tight budgets can eat like kings.

**Curry House** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3756; 44 Waimanu Rd; meals \$4-10; ☎) 9am-5pm Curry Hill, till 2.30pm Sat; ☎) This industrious curry house serves excellent lamb, chicken, fish and vegetarian curries in a canteen-style setting. The pakoras, samosas and other sides are hefty and fresh and a good option if you're on the run. It gets busy so the earlier you eat lunch the shorter the table wait.

**Singh's Curry House** (Map p122; ☎ 359 1019; Gordon St; meals \$4-10; ☎) lunch & dinner; ☎) Owner Mamaji runs a tight ship at this great little curry joint, where a delectable array of mostly South Indian curries tempts diners from the front counter. Seating is at booths or you can take away. It's one of the few places open on a Sunday and a great option for vegetarians.

**Ashiyana** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3000; Old Town Hall Bldg, Victoria Pde; mains \$10-15; ☎) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun) For an Indian feast in more refined surrounds, Ashiyana is a step up in atmosphere and style from the curry houses and serves good thali and tandoori dishes. The spicy curries here are legendary – even the taxi drivers consider them hot.

**Govinda's Vegetarian Restaurant** (Map p122; ☎ 330 9587; 93 Cumming St; meals \$5-7.50; ☎) 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 2pm Sat; ☎) Saris and families



dominate the patronage at this vegetarian restaurant, which is a good indication of the authenticity of the food. The array of thalis is impressive but you should definitely leave room for the delicious Indian sweets on display. Indian tunes fill the background.

### CHINESE

**Capital Palace** (Map p122; ☎ 331 6088; 64 Victoria Pde; mains \$10; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☒) It seems half of Suva converges here for the excellent Sunday yum cha but the regular menu also sites authentic delights including shark-fin soup and fried squid with chilli plus infusions such as sesame chicken with *dalo*. Mouth-watering smells and a happy din surround diners.

**Lantern Palace** (Map p122; ☎ 331 4795; 10 Pratt St; mains \$7.50-10; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Dimly lit and suitably oriental in its décor, this long-standing institution offers a fairly predictable Chinese-Western menu with a few left-field gems thrown in such as garlic *bêche-de-mer* in chilli sauce. The banquets here are good value.

**Sichuan Pavilion Restaurant** (Map p122; ☎ 331 5194; 6 Thomson St; mains \$13-18; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Occupying a 1st-floor corner of the Garrick Hotel, this elegant restaurant serves a refreshing alternative to the ubiquitous chow-mien and chop-suey menu, with Sichuan dishes the speciality. On balmy days the alfresco seating on the balcony induces long and lazy lunches.

### JAPANESE & KOREAN

**Daikoku Restaurant** (Map p122; ☎ 330 8968; Victoria Pde; mains \$15-20; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The acrobatic culinary skills of Daikoku's chefs are reason enough to spend an evening here, and the seafood, chicken and beef seared on the sizzling teppanyaki plates would hold up to any Tokyo restaurant. Sushi and sashimi is also on the menu and a happy chatter fills the room. Bookings are recommended – it's one of Suva's finest and is often full.

**Zen Restaurant** (Map p122; ☎ 330 6314; Level 1, Pacific House, Butt St; mains \$15-22; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat) This small and intimate restaurant serves delicately presented sushi, tempura, *udon* (wheat noodles) and *soba* (buckwheat noodles) dishes as well as a modicum of Korean meals. The graceful décor features Japanese screens, and soft Japanese tunes play in the background. The menu provides helpful pictures for the uninitiated.

**Korea House** (Map p122; ☎ 331 1711; 178 Waimanu Rd; mains \$12-17; ☺ lunch & dinner) The interior of this restaurant may lose its oomph once you pass the grand entrance flanked by a Korean mural but the food does not. Pungent *kimchi* (pickled vegetables) and sticky Korean barbecue dishes are served as well as authentic squid, pork, tofu, prawn and chicken. There's a \$10 lunch special and many dishes attract a 10% discount at night.

### Cafés & Quick Eats

**Cafe Tivoli** (Map p119; ☎ 338 5407; Garden City Complex, Grantham Rd, Raiwai; meals \$6-13; ☺ breakfast & lunch) The café of the moment, Tivoli serves salsa-and-cheese stuffed croissants, mammoth bagels and toasted focaccias, eggs any style you like and dense quiches. Tables are scattered beneath a breezy outdoor pagoda and there are delicious sweet treats if you still have room.

**Focaccia Café** (Map p122; ☎ 330 9117; Vanua Arcade, Victoria Pde; meals \$5; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) This bustling city eatery serves fresh burgers, wraps, rolls, kebabs and focaccias at counter-seating or tables in the arcade lobby (it sounds incongruous but it works). The breakfasts are hot and filling and staff supremely friendly.

**Palm Court** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4662; Queensland Insurance Bldg, Victoria Pde; meals \$4-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) Another popular city café, Palm Court keeps tourists and office workers full and happy with tasty cooked breakfasts, toasted sandwiches, curries and chicken and chips. Plastic tables are arranged beneath umbrellas to shield the sun and meals are dirt cheap.

**Cakes 2000** (Map p122; ☎ 330 8994; 113 Marks St; meals \$5-7; ☺ 7.30am-4pm; ☒) This café-cum-bakery-cum-cake shop dishes up hearty breakfasts and the best sausage rolls and pies in town. Tuck into overstuffed sandwiches or Fijian faves such as *palusami* stuffed with fish and roast lamb neck for lunch, or just gorge on a tiramisu and baileys or choc-orange-chip cheesecake.

**Headworks** (Map p122; ☎ 330 9449; Upstairs, cnr Renwick & Thomson Sts; dishes \$4; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Overlooking Suva's main drag, this is a great pit stop if the hustle is tiring you. The wicker seating on the balcony catches plenty of breeze and although the lunch options (omelettes, sandwiches and rolls) are limited, the smoothies are a meal unto themselves.

Both outlets of **Republic of Cappuccino** (ROC; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun; ☒) Dolphin Arcade (Map p122; ☎ 330 0333; Dolphin Arcade, Victoria Pde); Downtown (Map p122; ☎ 330 0828; Renwick Rd) serve good coffee, juices, smoothies and snacks in air-conditioned surroundings.

For the coffee addicts:

**Kahawa** (Map p122; ☎ 330 9671; 1st fl, Suva Central, Renwick Rd; snacks \$3-6; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Hot and iced coffees plus wraps and sandwiches.

**Jardin** (Map p122; ☎ 331 8588; Shop 25, Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre, Victoria Pde; snacks \$4-7; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☒) Great coffee and cake.

Suva has a few food courts: one at **Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre** (Map p122; Ellery St), another upstairs in **Harbour Centre** (Map p122; Scott St) and one at **Dolphin Plaza** (Map p122; cnr Loftus St & Victoria Pde). All have a variety of takeaway-food outlets, including pizza, pasta, Chinese, curries and Fijian dishes for around \$5.

### Self-Catering

**Suva Municipal Market** (Map p122; Usher St) is the best place for fish, fruit and vegetables. There are a couple of supermarkets on Rodwell Rd, facing the market and bus station. At the

**Hot Bread Kitchen** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3919; Scott St; ☺ 5.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat) you can pick up fresh cheese-and-onion loaves and coconut rolls. For something to wash it all down with, try **Victoria Wines & Spirits** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2884; Victoria Pde; ☺ 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, till 2pm Sat).

### DRINKING

Suva has a good mix of drinking and dancing dens and Friday and Saturday nights see Victoria Pde swarming with clubbers and bar-hoppers. Check out the *Fiji Times* entertainment section for upcoming events and what's on at nightclubs. You don't need to get completely dolled up but if you're wearing shorts or flip-flops you'll be turned away. Watch out for pickpockets on the dance floor and always take a taxi after dark, even if you're in a group – walking home is dangerous.

**Traps Bar** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2922; Victoria Pde) Something of a subterranean saloon bar, Traps is one of Suva's best drinking holes. Take a seat in the public pool room with wide-screen TV (yes with sports) or join the happy din at the main bar, which also features a vibrant dance floor. The crowd is generally young and trendy, but not pretentious. Live music is frequent as are Bob Marley sing-alongs.

### MOVING TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

Dancers pay homage to the steady beat of the drums, seemingly oblivious to the spectators. The poorly lit room is crowded with both tourists and locals yelling *'bula'* to one another over the din. As a big, indigenous Fijian man – who should be playing the chief in this scene – approaches with a flower behind his ear and a pitcher of beer on his tray; you don't need any reminding that this is no *meke*. This is Saturday night in Suva, when the country's urban youth let down their hair and pole dance to pop music.

Fiji's urban youth face many of the same difficulties as young people around the globe: teenage parenting, crime, drugs and skyrocketing unemployment (only one in eight school leavers finds a job). However, these youths also find themselves straddling two opposing worlds – the traditional, conservative society of the villages many have left behind, where life was filled with cultural protocols; and on the other hand, the liberal, individualist lifestyle of the modern and increasingly Westernised city. With 90% of its airtime devoted to Western sitcoms and serials, young people watch television filled with an irrelevant and often unattainable world. On the positive side, the rising club and café culture is bringing together youths from indigenous and Indo-Fijian backgrounds, in the midst of a city filled with ethnic tension. On the negative side, many face the near impossibility of surviving unemployment in the city; returning 'home' to a village sporting dreadlocks and skin-tight jeans isn't much easier. Youth have little room to voice their own opinions and it's not entirely surprising that many look for routes out of the country.

This is not the Fiji of postcards, of grass skirts and beachside *lovo*; however, it's well worth grabbing a cappuccino or putting on your dancing shoes to check out Fiji's rising urban youth culture. It's an unexpected eye-opener.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**O'Reillys** (Map p122; ☎ 331 2968; 5 Macarthur St) O'Reillys kicks the evening off in relatively subdued fashion – relaxed punters playing pool or watching sport on the numerous TVs. But it brews quite a party as the hours tick by and come 11ish the place is generally throbbing with a gleeful crowd of locals and travellers. There's no distinct age code – backpackers, foreign contractors, locals and expats fill the dance floor, shaking their bits to Europop, soft metal, techno, peppy country and western...basically anything that keeps the crowd moving. Forget warm pints of Guinness; the only Irish quality about O'Reillys (aside from the name) is that it's enough fun to knock your socks off.

**Bad Dog Cafe** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4662; cnr Macarthur St & Victoria Pde) Despite the name, this is one of Suva's stylish bars and heady cocktails and imported beers are served to chilled beats. The atmosphere is dark and swanky and you can grab a booth or prop yourself beneath the funky lighting at the bar.

**Birdland R&B Club** (Map p122; ☎ 330 3833; 6 Carnarvon St) This underground bar looks like a jazz and blues den and the smoky air certainly adds the appropriate bouquet but the live music is mostly in the form of rock, played loudly on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

**Barn** (Map p122; ☎ 330 7845; Carnarvon St) It's a rugged, country-and-western bar with live music nightly except Sunday and Monday. Music is country with a bit of pop and reggae thrown in for good measure. The cowboy crowd is a little older.

**Purple Haze Nightclub** (Map p122; ☎ 330 3092; McArthur St) Inflatable aliens, neon planets and a wall mural suggesting 'Purple Haze is the best nightclub in the universe' fit in quite nicely at this eccentric club. Fijian and Hindi pop and R'n'B pump out of the speakers at intergalactic decibels; it's gay-friendly.

**JJ's on the Park** (Map p122; ☎ 330 5005; Stinson Pde) This classy eatery also has a long bar, which is a nice place to sip a cocktail or glass of red. The atmosphere is refined and relaxed and caters to an older crowd. A piano player often provides the background music.

### Alternatives:

**Shooters Tavern** (Map p122; Carnarvon St) Good for a beer buzz and rock soundtrack.

**Signals Night Club** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3590; 255 Victoria Pde) Gay-friendly nightclub playing decent dance tracks.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Cinemas

**Village 6 Cinema Complex** (Map p122; ☎ 330 6006; Scott St; admission \$6) Suva's flashy commercial cinema complex shows recently released Hollywood and Bollywood films.

Check out the *Fiji Times* entertainment section for cinema listings.

### Sport

Fijians are fanatical about their rugby and, even if you aren't that keen on the game, it's worth going to a match. The season lasts from April to September and teams tough it out at the **National Stadium** (Map p119; Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala). The atmosphere is huge. Ask at the FVB if there will be a match during your stay.

You can also catch players training hard at Albert Park during the week.

## SHOPPING

Suva is bursting at the seams with shops; whether you're looking for souvenirs, a new swimsuit or some new music, you've come to the right place.

### Souvenirs & Handicrafts

**Government Crafts Centre** (Map p122; ☎ 331 5869; Macarthur St) Although its goods are generally more expensive than elsewhere, this craft shop sells high-quality work by local artisans so it's a better place to head for a unique piece. Moreover, it assists rural artisans in the process.

**Free Shop** (Fiji Retail Enterprise Engine; Map p119; ☎ 3593 201; 1st fl, Garden City, Raiwai) Supported by the UN Development Program, the Free Shop sells excellent jewellery, clothing and crafts by local artists. Each item is given a small write-up to provide background information on the piece. Prices are also reasonable.

**Suva Curio & Handicraft Centre** (Map p122; Stinson Pde) This crafts market has endless stalls and is an interesting place to wander through. It can offer some fantastic buys but be prepared to bargain! Not all artefacts are as genuine as the vendor would like you to

believe; if you aren't an antique expert, only pay what the object is worth to you.

**Jack's Handicrafts** (Map p122; ☎ 330 8893; Thomson St) Jack's sells a good selection of crafts, souvenirs and Fiji-made clothes at reasonable prices.

**Pure Fiji** (Map p119; ☎ 338 3611; 52 Karsanji St; ☎ 10am-12.45pm Sat) This spot is actually a classy day spa, but every Saturday morning you can purchase their exquisite creams, soaps and scrubs made from coconut oil and other natural extracts at bargain prices.

**ROC Market** (Map p122; Victoria Pde; see p133) The Dolphin Arcade outlet of the Republic of Cappuccino holds a small but eclectic market on the third Sunday of every month. Stalls feature homemade food, arts and crafts at reasonable prices.

## Music

**Procera Music Shop** (Map p122; ☎ 331 4911; Greig St) Procera sells hard-to-find Fijian and other South Pacific releases as well as plenty of Hindi pop.

**Boom Box** (Map p122; ☎ 330 8265; Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre; Ellery St) This chain outlet is a good spot to head for recent and popular Western and Fijian releases. Most music is imported and fairly pricey.

## Water Sports Gear

**Wai Tui Surf** (Map p122; ☎ 330 0287; Queensland Insurance Bldg, Victoria Pde) If you're looking for beachwear, daypacks, snorkel gear or surf boards, this place sells plenty of name brands.

**Bob's Hook, Line & Sink** (Map p122; ☎ 330 1013; Harbour Centre, Thomson St) Bob's sells good snorkelling, diving and fishing gear.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Suva is well connected to the rest of the country by air and interisland ferries, and to western Viti Levu by buses and carriers. Most international flights, however, arrive at Nadi International Airport.

## Air

Nausori International Airport is around 23km northeast of central Suva. There are no direct local buses between Suva and the airport, but **Nausori Taxi & Bus Service** (☎ 331 2185, 330 4178) has regular buses between the airport and the Holiday Inn hotel in Suva (\$3). Otherwise, a taxi from the airport to/from Suva costs a standard \$20 (taxi driv-

ers generally won't budge on this). Alternatively, cover the 3km to/from Nausori's bus stations by taxi (about \$3), and catch one of the frequent local buses to Suva for about \$1.65. Allow plenty of time, as some buses speed while others crawl.

See p259 for domestic flight routes.

Airline offices in Suva:

**Air Fiji** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3666; suvasales@airfiji.com.fj; 185 Victoria Pde)

**Air New Zealand** (Map p122; ☎ 331 3100; www.pacificislands.airnewzealand.com; Queensland Insurance Bldg, Victoria Pde)

**Air Pacific** (Map p122; ☎ 330 4388; www.airpacific.com.fj; Colonial Bldg, Victoria Pde)

**Qantas** (Map p122; ☎ 331 1833; fax 330 4795; Colonial Bldg, Victoria Pde)

**Sun Air** (Map p122; ☎ 330 8979; Victoria Pde)

## Boat

From Suva there are regular ferry services to Vanua Levu and Taveuni with **Consort Shipping** (Map p122; ☎ 330 2877; fax 330 3389; Ground fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St) and to Levuka (Ovalau) and Labasa (Vanua Levu) with **Patterson Brothers Shipping** (Map p122; ☎ 331 5644; fax 330 1652; Suites 1 & 2, Epworth Arcade, Nina St). See p261 for more information about ferry services.

## Bus & Carrier

There are frequent buses operating along the Queens Road and Kings Road from Suva's **main bus station** (Map p122; Rodwell Rd). If you can cope with busy bus stations and sometimes crowded buses, they are more fun and better value than tourist buses and will stop at resorts along the way upon request.

Small trucks or carriers with tarpaulin-covered frames on the back also take passengers along the Queens Road. If you're travelling in a group, you can usually get a taxi for little more than the price of a bus.

## GETTING AROUND

It is easy to get around central Suva on foot. Local buses are cheap and plentiful and depart from the main bus station. There are relatively few buses in the evening and barely any on Sundays.

Taxis are cheap for short trips (\$3), and in Suva they actually use the meter! The city's one-way looping streets may make you think the taxi driver is taking you on a goose chase; drivers along Victoria Pde may

get caught on a long run around the market and wharf area. Suva is *not* considered a safe place to wander around at night and you'd be nuts not to hop in a taxi. To order one call **Jason's Taxis** (☎ 337 2220), **Carnarvon Taxi** (☎ 331 5315), **Sanyo Cabs** (☎ 330 4541) or **Piccadilly Taxis** (☎ 330 4302; 🕒 24hr).

See p263 for car-rental companies in Suva.

## KINGS ROAD

Carving a route partially through the interior of Viti Levu, the Kings Road is just as spectacular as the Queens Road but the absence of infrastructure and coastline adds a remote flavour to it. Distances between villages are greater and the ascent into the highlands produces humbling scenery. The road coils and extends for around 256km, linking Suva to Lautoka via the east and north of the island. It's a great trip either by bus or car, but the road is unsealed between Korovou and Dama. Promises to amend this have been in the pipeline for many years but work appears to be carried out at an excruciatingly cautious rate; nevertheless locals maintain an optimistic outlook. You may even be driving on tar when you read this.

### NAUSORI & THE REWA DELTA Nausori

pop 22,000

The township of Nausori is on the eastern bank of the Rewa River, about 19km north-east of downtown Suva. It has the country's second-largest airport and is a bustling service centre and transport hub for the largely agricultural and manufacturing industry workers. If you're passing through there are a few banks and inexpensive eateries near the market and bus stations.

Now a major rice-producing region, the town developed around the CSR sugar mill, which operated here for eight decades until 1959. Growing sugar cane proved more successful on the drier western side of Viti Levu.

There are many eroded ring-ditch fortifications in the Rewa Delta. About 10m wide with steep, battered sides and a strong fence on the inner bank, they were necessary for the survival of a village in times of war, protecting it against a surprise attack.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

The Kings Road from Suva to Nausori is the country's busiest and most congested stretch of highway; regular buses (\$1.50, 30 minutes) travel this route. The Nausori bus station is in the main street. **Sunbeam Transport** (☎ 347 9353) has regular buses to Lautoka via the Kings Road (\$9.90, 4½ hours, six daily between 6am and 5pm).

### Nausori International Airport

The airport is about 3km southeast of Nausori, 22km from Suva. Qantas and Air Pacific have international flights here and Air Fiji and Sun Air have domestic flights (see p259 for details). The airport premises are small, with a newspaper stand (selling a few magazines, books and phonecards) and a snack counter. An ANZ bank opens for international flights only.

There are regular buses from Nausori airport to nearby boat landings: Bau Landing, Wainibokasi Landing (for Naisali village) and Nakelo Landing (for Toberua). From Nakelo Landing there are local village boats, which you may be able to join or hire to explore the area.

Nakelo Landing is on the Wainibokasi River, southeast of the airport. If driving from Nausori, turn left before the airport and then take the first right. Follow the road for 5km and turn right before Namuka.

### Nasilai Village & Naililili Catholic Mission

Nasilai village is home to the well-known potter Taraivini Wati. Pottery is a major source of income for the village, and when large orders are placed, everyone participates in the process, helping to collect and prepare the clay and make the pots. When a baby girl is born in the village, a lump of clay is placed on her forehead. It's believed she will then automatically know how to carry on the pottery-making tradition.

Catholic missionaries from France built the Naililili Catholic Mission at the turn of the century. The stained-glass windows, imported from Europe, incorporate Fijian writing and imagery. The delta area on which the mission is built is a flood plain and so the priests no longer live here.

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 331 5730; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) runs tours of the Rewa Delta and Nasilai village, departing from Suva hotels (see p128).

There are regular buses to Wainibokasi Landing from the Nausori bus station. If driving from Nausori, head southeast for 6km on the road that runs parallel to the Rewa River. Pass the airport entrance and turn right at the T-junction. The landing is a further 1km before the bridge across the Wainibokasi River. There you can catch a boat to the Naililili Catholic Mission, which is almost opposite the landing, or take a short trip downriver to Nasilai village. Ask a local for permission to visit the village and take along some *kava* for a *sevusevu*.

### Bau

If you fly over the island of Bau today it is bizarre to think that in the 19th century such a tiny speck of land was the power base of Cakobau and his father Tanoa (see p28). In the 1780s there were 30 *bure kalou* (ancient temples) on the small chiefly island, including the famous Na Vata ni Tawake, which stood on a huge *yavu* faced with large panels of flat rock. Also of interest are its **chiefly cemetery**, **old church** and a **sacrificial killing stone** on which enemies were slaughtered prior to being cooked and consumed.

To visit the island and possibly stay the night you must be invited by someone who lives there or have permission from the **Ministry of Fijian Affairs** (Map p122; ☎ 321 1458; Government Bldgs, Suva). Dress conservatively, take a large *waka* (bunch of *kava* roots) for presentation to the *turaga-ni-koro* (chief).

There are regular buses from Nausori bus station to Bau Landing, which is northeast of Nausori airport. If you are driving from Nausori, turn left before the airport and after about 4km turn left at the intersection and follow the road to its end. Boats cross to nearby Bau. Boats also leave from Bau Landing for the island of **Viwa**, where missionaries lived during Cakobau's time.

### Toberua

This small island (2 hectares) is just off Kaba Point, the easternmost point of Viti Levu, about 30km from Suva.

**Toberua Island Resort** (☎ 347 2777; www.toberua.com; s/d from \$380/420, child under 16 free; 🍷) is the perfect island hideaway for those seeking some South Pacific solitude. Originally built in 1968 as an American millionaire's hideaway, it's since reinvented itself to cater to unfussy couples and families. The 15 wa-

terfront *bure* scattered along the beach have gloriously high roofs, minibars, sunbeds and stylish bathrooms. The *bure* are large enough to house a family. Meal plans for adults/children are \$110/50 per day and the cuisine is excellent. Toberua only receives about one-third of Suva's annual rainfall so the climate is balmy for most of the year. At low tide the beach is used for golf and there is snorkelling (you will probably see sea snakes), paddle boating, and tours to the nearby island bird sanctuary and mangroves. A two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$165/550. Transfers involve a taxi from Nausori airport/Suva to Nakelo Landing (\$18/35) followed by a boat trip (\$75/35 per adult/child, 40 minutes).

### KOROVOU TO DAMA

While the Kings Road is mostly sealed, the 56km section between Korovou and Dama is not. Although locals tackle the route in 2WDs it's best traversed with a 4WD and a prayer to the god of suspension. After a downpour you can throw the complication of mud into the equation and some off-road experience is recommended. The reward is the untouched landscape, devoid of a coastline and commercial infrastructure. It's one of the most scenic road trips in the country and travelling by bus will afford the views without the hassle.

Korovou (one of many towns known literally as 'new village') is not much more than a transport intersection, about 50km north of Suva. There are a few shops near the bus stop, and a post office across the river near the roundabout. From here, the Kings Road continues to the northwest and over the hills. Another unsealed road follows the coast to Natovi Landing (see p138), a 20-minute drive from where there are bus/ferry services to Labasa (Vanua Levu) and Levuka (Ovalau). See p261 for details. Arranged boat pick-ups to resorts on Leluvia and Caqalai islands are from Waidalce Landing, southeast of Korovou.

About 14km from Korovou on the Kings Road you'll pass the beautiful **Uru's Waterfall**, which descends over a rocky slope on the northern side of the road and ends its journey in a serene pool surrounded by colourful foliage. It's possible to swim here – just ask one of the villagers for permission and assistance navigating the descent.



**Wailotua Snake God Cave**, 23km west of Korovou, is reputedly one of the largest caves in the world (no arguments from this quarter). The name derives from six glittering stalactites in the shape of snakes' heads. During times of war the village would pack up en-masse and seek shelter in the cave's pitch-black labyrinth, which culminates in a huge chamber inhabited by bats. To get here hop on one of the Suva–Lautoka buses and ask the driver to let you off at Wailotua village. Ask the first person you approach if you can visit the cave; they'll organise a couple of lads to guide you through it by lantern. This is the village's main source of income and a \$15 donation is well worth the tour and commentary.

Between Korovou and Rakiraki the Kings Road crosses dairy-farming country (land given to returned soldiers after WWII), winds through hills and along the Wainibuka River, and passes many villages where you'll receive a friendly wave. Watch out for mad drivers and the odd timber truck that hurtle along the gravel, and expect delays at milking time when cows plod along the road. You may see the occasional *bilibili*.

### Natovi Landing

There is a general store at Natovi Landing but little else. Patterson Brothers has a bus/ferry service (\$45, Monday to Saturday); bus between Suva and Natovi and ferry to Nabouwalu on Vanua Levu. It also has a Suva–Natovi–Ovalau bus/ferry service (\$24, daily except Sunday) to Buresala Landing, with a bus connection to Levuka.

It is possible to travel north by road and meet the Kings Road again further on, but the road deteriorates significantly as you approach Mt Tova.

**Natalei Eco-Lodge** (☎ 881 8220; dm/r incl meals \$35/100), in Nataleira Village, offers travellers the opportunity to diverge right off the beaten track and into a cultural adventure. The double and dorm *bure* are frugal but exploring the surrounding landscape is the real appeal here. Close to Mt Tova, the area offers some excellent hiking and the Bligh Waters are renowned for snorkelling and diving. It's also a great opportunity to immerse yourself in a Fijian village. There are buses from Suva (\$4, three hours) departing at 1.30pm, 2.30pm and 4.30pm daily and returning at 6am, 7am and 8am.

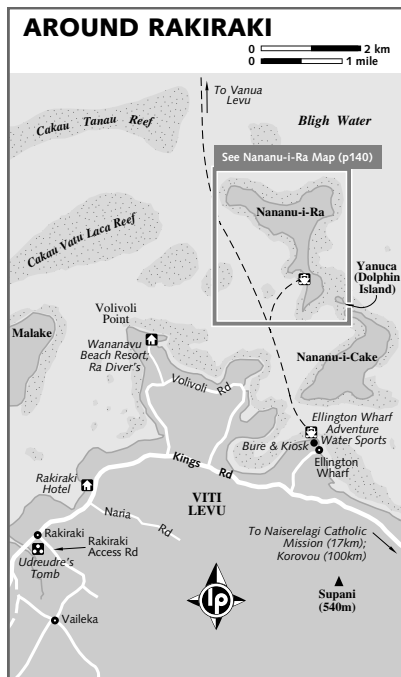
### NAISERELAGI CATHOLIC MISSION

About 25km southeast of Rakiraki is this old mission (1917) overlooking Viti Levu Bay. The church is famous for its mural depicting a black Christ painted in 1962 by Jean Charlot. The three panels of biblical scenes depict Christ on the cross in a *masi sulu* (sarong) with a *tanoa* at his feet. Indigenous Fijians are shown offering mats and *tabua* (whale's tooth), and Indo-Fijians presenting flowers and oxen. Visitors are welcome and a small donation is appreciated.

From Vaileka or the Kings Road intersection, take the Flying Prince local bus (\$2, 30 minutes, five to eight daily) ideally before 9am when buses are more regular. Otherwise it will cost \$30 return by taxi. Naiserelagi is just south of Nanukulua village, on the right past the school. The mission is on the hill, about 500m up a winding track.

### RAKIRAKI & AROUND

The scenery is stunning along the Kings Road winding down from the mountains from Dama past Viti Levu Bay and to the beautiful region of Rakiraki, Viti Levu's northernmost



### AN UNEARTHLY APPETITE

In 1849, some time after Ratu Udreudre's death, the Reverend Richard Lyth asked Udreudre's son Ratavu about the significance of a long line of stones. Each stone, he was told, represented one of the chief's victims, and amounted to a personal tally of at least 872 corpses. Ratavu went on to explain that his father consumed every piece of his victims of war, sharing none. He ate little else, and had an enormous appetite.

tip. The climate on the northern side of the **Nakauvadra Range** is similar to that of western Viti Levu, drier and suited for growing sugar cane. According to local legend, the imposing mountains are the home of the great snake-god Degei, creator of all the islands. The opening and closing of his eyes is the cause of night and day, and thunder is said to be Degei turning in his sleep.

The turn-off to **Ellington Wharf** is about 5km east of Rakiraki (at the 112.4km post from Lautoka), and the wharf is a further 1.5km by sealed road. Nananu-i-Ra (p140) is just a short boat ride offshore. Ferries also leave from the wharf for Nabouwalu on Vanua Levu (see p261); there are plans to build a large marina here.

West of Rakiraki, there is a turn-off that leads past the sugar mill to the small service town of **Vaileka** (about 2km inland from Rakiraki). Here there is a bus station, taxi stands, market, supermarket and a few cafés (one with Internet access). You can change travellers cheques at the Westpac bank (only open Tuesday and Thursday) or at the Colonial National Bank.

When heading west out of Rakiraki, keep your eyes peeled for **Udreudre's Tomb**, the resting place of Fiji's most notorious cannibal (see above). While it may be overgrown it is just by the roadside on the left, about 100m west of the Vaileka turn-off.

About 10km west of Rakiraki near Vitawa is a large outcrop known as **Navatu Rock**. There was once a fortified village on top of the rock and it was believed that from here spirits would depart for the afterlife.

### Tours

**Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports** (☎ 669 3333; www.safarilodge.com.fj) offers lots of water-

based activities including: two-hour snorkelling trips around Nananu-i-Ra (from \$25 per person) and windsurfing (from \$70 per person per hour) plus sailing, fishing, kite-surfing and diving. Especially interesting are the sea kayaking safaris (\$960/2200 for three/seven days), which include all meals, accommodation in villages and a qualified guide. These trips come highly recommended by travellers.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Rakiraki Hotel** (☎ 669 4101; www.tanoahotels.com; Kings Rd; s/d \$65/100; ♿ ♿) Located 1.8km east of the Vaileka turn-off; this colonial lodge is nestled into spacious grounds dripping in bougainvillea and mango trees. Within two-storey blocks the hotel rooms are more 1970s than 1870s but each comes with firm beds, tea and coffee, TV and glorious garden vistas. There are cheaper, simple rooms (\$40) in an annex with private bathrooms. The hotel has a pool with lovely wooden decking, half-size tennis court, lawn bowling and nine-hole golf course nearby. The restaurant-bar (meals \$16 to \$20; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner) open to visitors, has standard fare including curries, roasts, fried fish, grilled steak and vegetables.

**Ellington Wharf** (☎ 693 3333; dm/d \$20/60) If you've made it to the wharf it's preferable to head to Nananu-i-Ra, but if you get stuck you can bunk down in a clean dorm or comfortable double here. The structures are thatched from the outside but tiled, polished and modern within and one of the doubles has a bathroom.

**Wananavu Beach Resort** (☎ 669 4433; www.wananavu.com; d from \$290-320, f \$480; ♿ ♿) East of Rakiraki at the northernmost point of Viti Levu, this is a lovely midrange resort. The hillside position has beautiful views of Nananu-i-Ra island and the mainland's mountainous coastline. The comfortable *bure* have balconies, and at a pinch can accommodate up to four people. There are also three self-contained two-bed villas down near the water. Ask about walk-in deals. Visitors are welcome at the restaurant/bar (meals \$10 to \$35; open breakfast, lunch and dinner), which has gorgeous views and good food. The beach here is semi-man-made and requires some maintenance, but it's pleasant nonetheless. There's also a marina, tennis and volleyball courts,

and diving and snorkelling through either Ra Divers (opposite) or **Kaiviti Divers** (☎ 669 4522; www.kaivitidivers.com).

The turn-off to the resort from the Kings Road is about 3.5km east of the Vaileka turn-off. Follow the unsealed (sometimes muddy) road to the north for about 3km. Airport transfers from Nadi are \$100 by taxi or \$15 per person by minivan. A taxi to Vaileka from the resort will be \$10.

Vaileka has a few cheap cafés near the bus station, and a cake shop at the Community Centre building. The **Coconut Cafe** (meals \$4-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) at Ellington Wharf serves delicious curries, fish, soups and snacks.

### Getting There & Around

Sunbeam has regular express buses along the Kings Road from Suva and Nadi, which stop at Vaileka and the turn-off to Ellington Wharf. Flying Prince local buses also run between Vaileka or the Kings Road intersection and Naiserelagi (\$2, 30 minutes, five to eight daily). To avoid lugging groceries and gear the 1.3km to the wharf, though, get off at Vaileka and catch a taxi for around \$8. Sharing a taxi from Nadi is another option (about \$90).

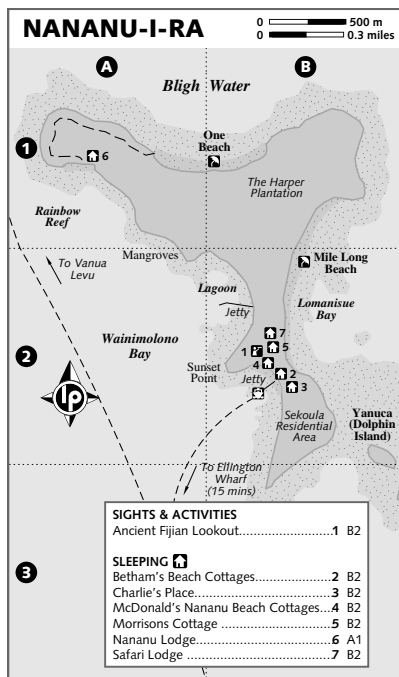
Nananu-i-Ra is just a 15-minute boat ride from Ellington Wharf. All the resorts on Nananu-i-Ra have their own boat transfers. Arrange your pick-up in advance (there is also a phone at Ellington Wharf). Boat transfers for the budget resorts are around \$20 per person return.

From Ellington Wharf there is a Patterson Brothers ferry twice a week to Nabouwalu, southwest Vanua Levu (see p261).

### NANANU-I-RA

This pocket-sized paradise is a must on any northern Viti Levu itinerary. Beautifully hilly, the 3.5-sq-km island is surrounded by scalloped bays, white-sand beaches and mangroves. Cattle grazing has cleared much of the dense vegetation and today rolling hills of grass inhabit the interior. It's only 3km north of Ellington Wharf, but the atypical landscape and small enclave of wealthy holiday homes exaggerates the distance.

Nananu-i-Ra is an excellent option for those who want an offshore-island experience but minimal boating and associated cost. It's also renowned for windsurfing and diving. The island has no roads and no



village – most of the residents are of European descent so there's not much contact with traditional culture here.

### Activities

#### TREKKING

Great for trekking, the island has wonderful views to the mainland; a common sight from the southern side is billowing white clouds swallowing the volcanic Nakauvadra mountain range in the background. The grassy hilltops also provide bird's-eye views of the surrounding turquoise reefs. If your time is right with the tides you can walk around the island in about four to five hours and pass the mangroves at low tide. Part of the island is rocky so shoes are recommended.

#### KAYAKING

McDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages (p142) rent out kayaks. Weather permitting, kayaking around the island would take four to five hours.

Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports offers sea-kayaking tours on Nananu-i-Ra (see p139).

### BOVINE BULLIES

Some of Nananu-i-Ra's long-term residents have become an unlikely menace to unaware tourists taking leisurely beach ambles or hilly strolls and the threat is enhanced somewhat by their harmless appearance. In the mid-1960s an American millionaire bought a sizeable chunk of the island and cleared it for cattle grazing. It proved to be a fruitful venture and cattle have become a permanent fixture of the Nananu-i-Ra's landscape. Unfortunately, an absence of management in recent years (the said millionaire passed away some years ago) has left some of the cows at a loose and uninhibited end. Consequently a group of bovine renegades now roam the island and these wild cows have been known to chase tourists up the beach, surprising them first with an (un)coordinated assault from the mangroves. Proposed land sales and development over the next few years may solve the problem once and for all but in the meantime keep a keen eye out for hoof prints in the sand and disturbances in the scrub.

### DIVING & SNORKELLING

Snorkelling offshore you can expect to see some coral, abundant fish, and, on the north side of the island, many sea snakes. You can also go on snorkelling trips to the outer reefs with McDonald's Cottages (p142) and Ellington Wharf Adventures Water Sports (p139). The surrounding reefs and especially **Bligh Water** to the north have some amazing dive sites (see p59). The weather, though, can be tricky; while rainfall is relatively low it can be very windy.

**Ra Divers** (☎ 669 4511; www.radivers.com), based at Nananu-i-Ra will pick up from Wananavu Beach Resort, on the mainland, and from the budget resorts on Nananu-i-Ra. It charges \$400 for a six-tank dive and \$550 for a PADI Open Water Course.

**Crystal Divers** (☎ 669 4747; www.crystaldivers.com) also operates here.

### FISHING

Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports (p139) offers three-/seven-day fishing tours in that cost \$1000/2200 and include equipment for hand, sport and game fishing,

accommodation and meals. A one-day excursion costs \$100/400 for hand line/game fishing including lunch. There's a minimum of two people for the latter.

Ra Divers organises game fishing charters around Nananu-i-Ra. The boats are only small and can carry a maximum of four people; hats and sunscreen are recommended. A half-/full-day charter including all equipment and refreshments or lunch cost \$350/650 for the boat.

### WINDSURFING

The climate here is relatively dry (water supply is sometimes a problem on the island) and the island's exposure to the trade winds make it especially suited for windsurfing. Many windsurfers come here, especially from June to August when winds are generally 10 knots or more almost every day. Book ahead during this period. Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports hires out equipment (see p139).

### Sleeping & Eating

It's a good idea to book accommodation in advance, especially if you want a cottage, as the island can get busy, particularly from June to August. Take cash and plenty of change, as not all places accept credit cards. All the budget places are well set up for self-caterers (linen and cutlery provided). Both Betham's and McDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages have an outdoor café open to outsiders.

Three of the budget places are close together facing the same bay – it's a narrow isthmus and there is another beach east that is generally more exposed to the wind (good for windsurfing or kitesurfing). Power is supplied by generator, which stops after about 10pm.

We have received negative feedback about Safari Lodge and do not recommend it.

**Betham's Beach Cottages** (☎ 669 4132; www.bethams.com.fj; dm/r \$20/110) This professionally run property accommodates guests in cottages akin to upmarket caravan cabins. Each is fully furnished and decked out with good kitchens. The eight-bed dorm is spacious and has its own kitchen, bathroom and veranda. Betham's is quite spread out so you get a decent dose of privacy. The open-air café (mains \$16 to \$26; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) serves good, if pricey, meals.

**McDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages** (☎ 669 4633; dm/tw/r \$20/75/95) McDonald's is a super-tidy scattering of cabins on a nicely landscaped property right in front of the jetty. The cute blue and yellow cottages are self-contained, spotless and can accommodate up to four people (extra bodies are \$9 a pop). The dorm is also roomy and clean. There are hammocks out the front with uninterrupted views of the mainland. The outdoor restaurant (meals \$10 to \$20; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) serves pastas, chicken, *lovo* and curries. Snorkelling gear/kayaks are \$6/8 per half-day. You can snorkel off the jetty (lots of colourful fish) or do day trips to the reefs at Bligh Water (\$25 per person, minimum four people).

**Charlie's Place** (☎ 669 4676; dm/d \$20/80) Run by Charlie and Louise, this place offers the most privacy. There are two self-contained cottages on the hill, each with well-equipped kitchens and laundry. The more spacious one is used as a dorm and has views to both bays. The other also has a lovely view and is good for families. There is also a cottage in the garden next door.

Also available:

**Morrisons Cottage** (☎ 669 4516; tipple@connect.com.fj; dm \$25, d without/with bathroom \$75/100) Simple bungalows on spacious grassy grounds. Closed November to May.

**Nananu Lodge** (☎ 669 4290; www.nananuislandlodge.com; camping per person \$15, dm \$20, d without/with bathroom \$40/60, f \$120) Well-established with good accommodation. Home to Feejee Experience (p265) when it hits the island.

Self-caterers can buy basic supplies from the shops at Betham's Beach Cottages and McDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages, but it's best to bring supplies over from the mainland, especially fruit and vegetables.

## TAVUA & BA

Tavua is a small, quiet agricultural town with lots of temples, churches and mosques. The Emperor Gold Mining Company began mining here in the 1930s. Gold is Fiji's third-largest earner of foreign exchange. Most of the mine's 1500 workers live in **Vatukoula**, a purpose-built town of about 5000 residents, 9km south of Tavua. Take a ride on a local bus to see the contrasting housing for workers and their bosses. From Vatukoula, drivers may take the scenic back

road to Ba, which passes cane farms and Indian settlements.

In the dry season head up to the hill town of Nadarivatu, from where you can hike to Fiji's highest peak Tomanivi (Mt Victoria) or Mt Lomalagi. See p145 for more details.

Further west is the township of Ba, and while there is not much reason for the average traveller to stay here, the bustling town is worth a look. People here are soccer mad. The local team often wins national tournaments – try to catch a match. Ba also boasts Fiji's best racecourse, and the town's horse-racing and bougainvillea festivals are in September. Local buses travel between Ba and picturesque Navala (p144).

If you want to break your journey you can overnight at the small and comely **Tavua Hotel** (☎ 668 0522; dm/s/d \$18/45/70; ☎) or at the **Ba Hotel** (☎ 667 4000; 110 Bank St; s/d from \$40/60, ste \$75; ☎). Both hotels have reasonably priced restaurants and bars.

## VITI LEVU HIGHLANDS

Climbing into the interior of Viti Levu will change all your perceptions of Fiji. This is the Fiji you never knew about. The sultry heat of the beach eases into a cooler clime and tracks snake their way through massive grassy moguls. Shifting green hues replace the dominant blue of the sea and the diversity of foliage and birdlife seems to increase tenfold.

There are small, largely self-sufficient villages and settlements scattered through the hills. Koroyanitu National Heritage Park and the Nausori Highlands have some fantastic trekking and opportunities to work the camera. That one jumper you packed may also get a workout; the mountainous inland areas can get chilly, particularly at night.

### KOROYANITU NATIONAL HERITAGE PARK

If you are a keen walker or nature lover, the Koroyanitu National Heritage Park in the mountains about 10km southeast of Lautoka is definitely worth a visit. Contact Ms Kalesi Bose at the **Abaca Visitor Cen-**

**tre** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 1234; admission \$5) for more information. There are six villages within the park that cooperate as part of an ecotourism project. They maintain the landscape and tracks and subsequently earn tourist dollars through village stays and manning the office.

Abaca (pronounced am-barth-a) village is at the base of **Mt Koroyanitu** (Mt Evans). The area has beautiful walks through native Dakua forests and grasslands, bird-watching, archaeological sites and waterfalls.

### Trekking

Those who make the climb to the summit of **Castle Rock**, from Nase Lodge, will be rewarded with panoramic views of the Mamanucas and Yasawas. A marked track leads its way up; it takes about four hours (one way). There is also a two-hour hike that takes in a waterfall, the terraced gardens at Tunutunu and the Navuratu village site. A full-day hike to Mt Koroyanitu visits the remains of a fortified village.

**Mount Batilamu Trek** (☎ 664 5747, 927 3592; fax 664 5547) organises 2½-day tours up the Sabeto Valley. The tour starts with a 4WD up to the village of Navilawa for a *sevu-sevu*. After a night in the village community hall you will be taken on the walk up to Fiji's sleeping giant (Mt Batilamu, five to eight hours). There you'll be rewarded with gorgeous views of Nadi Bay and a bed in Fiji's highest *bure* at about 1150m. On the following day you head down to Abaca and are then transported back to Nadi or Lautoka. Everything will be organised for you, including meals, drinks and transport to and from Nadi/Lautoka hotels for \$360. Trips depart Tuesday and Thursday from mid-April to mid-November.

### Sleeping

You can experience highland village culture by staying with a family in Abaca. Village stays are \$35 per night, including all meals and can be organised through the Abaca Visitor Centre (above).

**Nase Lodge** (camp sites per person \$10, dm \$25) is an old colonial lodge about 400m uphill from the village. It has 12 bunk beds, a living area, cooking facilities, a cold-water shower and toilet. You can order meals at the village for \$5/7/10 to \$15 for breakfast/lunch/dinner, but you should also take some groceries

as there is only a small village shop. Make bookings at the Abaca Visitor Centre.

### Getting There & Away

There are no buses to Abaca but you can contact **George Prasad** (☎ 664 5431, 991 6956; george\_prasad@hotmail.com), who operates transfers from Nadi to the village (\$25/50 one way/return).

If driving from Nadi, turn right off the Queens Road at Tavakubu Rd past the first roundabout after entering Lautoka. Continue for about 6.5km, past the police post and the cemetery, then turn right at Abaca Rd. It is a further 10km of gravel road up to the village, suitable for 4WDs only, and about one hour's drive from Lautoka.

### NAUSORI HIGHLANDS

In stark contrast to the dense rainforests of the eastern highlands, the Nausori Highlands ascend into the interior in a panorama of grassy moguls. Massive folds of pale green tussle and tumble into the background as the coastline diminishes along the horizon. There are patchy areas of forest and small villages scattered in the hills; the more remote the more traditional the villagers are in their ways. Sunday is a day of rest, for church and spending time with the family, so visits to villages on this day may be disruptive and unappreciated. The villagers in Navala are Catholic, while in Bukuya they are Methodist.

If you have your own transport the loop from Nadi to Ba, going part of the way (to Bukuya) and then either back down to Nadi, or down via the Sigatoka Valley is a fun and usually easy day trip. You'll need a 4WD and you should check road conditions before heading off, especially during the wet season, as bridges occasionally wash out. Fill up on petrol before heading for the hills as there is nowhere to refill.

### Tours

The following companies do pick-ups from Nadi and Lautoka.

**Mountain View Tours** (☎ 651 3620) Operates small-group sightseeing and trekking tours into the area. A Navala day tour costs \$130 per person visiting both Navala and Bukuya, and including a picnic lunch and *kava* ceremony. It also offers a three-day/two-night trek through the area for \$240 per person, which includes a guide, village-stay accommodation, all meals and transfers.



**Rosie Holidays** (☎ 672 2935; [www.rosiefiji.com](http://www.rosiefiji.com)) Offers a one-day Nausori Highland Trek (per person \$80), which includes transfers, a two-hour trek and lunch at Yavuna village.

### Navala pop 800

Nestled in the rugged grassy mountains is Navala, by far Fiji's most picturesque village. Navala's chief enforces strict town-planning rules: the dozens of traditional thatched *bure* are laid out neatly in avenues, with a central promenade sloping down banks of the Ba River. All of the houses here are built with local materials; the only concrete block and corrugated iron in sight is for the school and radio shed (housing the village's emergency radio telephone). The rectangular-plan houses have a timber-pole structure, sloping stone plinths, woven split-bamboo walls and thatched roofs. Kitchens are in separate *bure*, and toilets in *bure lailai* (little house).

Navala is a photographer's delight but you need to get permission to take shots, even from across the bridge. The *turaga-ni-koro*,

Karoalo Vaisewa, allows tourists to visit and take photos but they must present a *sevusevu* and a donation of \$15. If you arrive independently, ask the first person you meet to escort you to the chief.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Bulou's Lodge & Backpacker Hostel** (☎ 666 6644, after the beeps dial 2116; dm \$45, bure per person \$55) Located 1km past Navala village and on the right about 50m before a river crossing. It is run by a retired Fijian couple, Seresio and Bulou N Talili, and their son Tui. Activities include visiting the village, horse riding (\$20 for a few hours), swimming, and trips up to the Talili's farm (a two-hour walk uphill), from where you can see the offshore islands in the distance. The home is on the river's edge from where you can take *bilibili* trips in the dry season.

There is a traditional *bure* in the garden or you can stay in the 10-bed dorm attached to their house; they have cold-water showers and flush toilets but no electricity. All meals and *kava* are included in the nightly

### CANNIBALISM

Archaeological evidence from food-waste middens shows that cannibalism was practised in Viti Levu from 2500 years ago until the mid- to late-19th century, during which time it had become an ordinary, ritualised part of life. In a society founded on ancestor worship and belief in the afterlife, cannibalising an enemy was considered the ultimate revenge. A disrespectful death was a lasting insult to the enemy's family.

Bodies were either consumed on the battlefield or brought back to the village spirit house, offered to the local war god, then butchered, baked and eaten on the god's behalf. The triumph was celebrated with music and dance. Men performed the *cibi*, or death dance, and women the *dele* or *wate* an obscene dance in which they sexually humiliated corpses and captives. Torture included being thrown alive into ovens, being bled or dismembered, being forced to watch their own body parts being consumed or to have to eat some themselves!

Mementos were being of the kill to prolong the victor's sense of vengeance. Necklaces, hairpins or ear-lobe ornaments were made from human bones, and the skull of a hated enemy was sometimes made into a *tanoa*. Meat was smoked and preserved for snacks, and war clubs were inlaid with teeth or marked with tally notches. To record a triumph in war, the highlanders of Viti Levu placed the bones of victims in branches of trees outside their spirit houses and men's houses, as trophies. The coastal dwellers had a practical use for the bones: leg bones were used to make sail needles and thatching knives. Sexual organs and fetuses were suspended in trees. Rows of stones were also used to tally the number of bodies eaten by the chief.

The growing influence of Christianity had the greatest impact on cannibalism and the practice began to wane in the mid 1800s. By all accounts it had ended by the turn of the century. Western fascination with the gruesome practice has remained alive and well, however, and souvenir cannibal forks are sold in abundant quantities. Traditionally chiefs used these to as it was forbidden for human flesh to touch their lips. Considered sacred relics, these forks were kept in the spirit house and were not to be touched by women or children. Today it would appear they make interesting wall features.

fe. Bulou's home cooking is good, with plenty of home-grown fruit and vegetables including local dishes such as *palusami*. It is best to ring in advance in case they have to stock up on food in town. Take some food as a present for them. Bulou sells her handicrafts (pandanus mats and printed *masi* cloth) for reasonable prices. Ring Bulou's Lodge in advance and they will pick you up from Navala.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are local buses from Ba to Navala (\$4, 1½ hours, twice daily). There is one at 5.15pm, but the 12.15pm one is better to avoid arriving at the village when it's dark. Buses return to Ba at 6am and 8am. Carriers cost about \$60 one way for the vehicle. The rough, gravel road has a few patches of bitumen on the really steep bits. While only about 26km away, Navala is about an hour's drive from Ba, past the Rarawai Sugar Mill, through beautiful rugged scenery.

If driving from Ba, there are a couple of turns to watch out for – at the police post take the left turn passing a shop on your right, and at the next fork in the road, keep left. The road is rough and rocky, but usually passable as long as the car has high clearance – but seek local advice on conditions before heading out. The Ba River floods occasionally and the concrete bridge just before the village becomes impassable.

### Bukuya pop 700

The village of Bukuya is at the intersection of the gravel roads from Sigatoka, Nadi and Ba. The drive from Sigatoka up the Sigatoka Valley is a stunning 1½ hours, as is the journey from Ba via Navala. From Nadi along the Nausori Highlands Rd it takes about 1½ to two hours.

Bukuya is a little more commercial than Navala, but still a worthy cultural experience. If you want to overnight here call **Moses** (☎ 651 1852) who lives in the village, but the easiest way to organise a village stay is on a tour. See p143.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

All roads to Bukuya are rough and unsealed, and are best suited to a 4WD or, if the weather is fine, at least a vehicle with high clearance. It's a bone-crunching ride in the

back of a carrier, which will cost around \$50 to/from Ba or \$15 to/from Navala.

### NADARIVATU, NAVAİ & KORO-NI-O

The forestry settlement of Nadarivatu (30km southeast of Tavua) is a beautiful highland area. Hike up to Mt Lomalagi (meaning 'sky' or 'heaven' in Fijian) for great views (three hours return). The **Forestry Office** (☎ 668 9001) can arrange camping, dorm accommodation or a homestay with a local family (bring provisions and give money or groceries to cover costs). Alternatively, seek permission from the manager at **Vatukoula's Emperor Gold Mining Company** (☎ 668 0630) to stay at their rethouse. It is spacious and has an open fire.

Navai, 8km southeast of Nadarivatu is at the foot of Fiji's highest peak, **Tomanivi** (Adam and Eve's Place; 1323m), also known as Mt Victoria. Allow at least five hours return to hike from the village. Guides can be hired for \$10. The last half of the climb is practically rock climbing and can be very slippery.

The Wainibuka and Wainimala Rivers (eventually merging to form the Rewa) originate around here, as does the Sigatoka River. Past Navai the road deteriorates, and is recommended for 4WD vehicles only. Koro-ni-O (meaning 'Village of the Clouds') and the **Monasavu Dam** are about 25km to the southeast. The Wailoa/Monasavu Hydroelectric Scheme here provides about 93% of Viti Levu's power needs.

### Getting There & Away

The turn-off to the hills, crossing Fiji's highest mountain range and eventually ending up in Suva, is about 3km east of Tavua. The windy, rough gravel road climbs sharply, affording spectacular vistas of the coast and takes about 1½ hours by 4WD. Local bus services from Tavua ceased operating due to poor road conditions. The road from Navai to Suva is barely passable; avoid it unless you have a 4WD or are getting a lift in a carrier.

### UPPER SIGATOKA VALLEY

Using local buses is an easy and cheap way of sightseeing. The **Naihehe cave**, about an hour's drive upriver from Sigatoka, was once used as a fortress by hill tribes and has the remains of a ritual platform and

cannibal oven. Adventures in Paradise (p107) offer guided tours of the area, departing Nadi and the Coral Coast.

### NAMOSI HIGHLANDS

The steamy Namosi Highlands north of Pacific Harbour have Fiji's most spectacular mountain scenery (dense lush rainforests, steep ranges, deep river canyons and tall waterfalls). If you have your own wheels (preferably 4WD) take a detour as far inland as

you can from Nabukavesi, east of Navua. If you intend to visit a village take along some *kava*. Sunday is observed as a day of rest.

Tour company **Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147; www.riversfiji.com), offers trips to this beautiful area that travellers otherwise rarely see. It also offers kayaking and white-water rafting. See p113 for more information.

**Discover Fiji Tours** (see p113), and **Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (p128) both offer tours into the Navua River area.