

Taveuni



The island of Taveuni is a vast and luscious garden: a tropical flower garden on land and a coral garden beneath the sea. It is easy to get to, relatively small, and far from crowded. Bring an umbrella, though: it rains here.

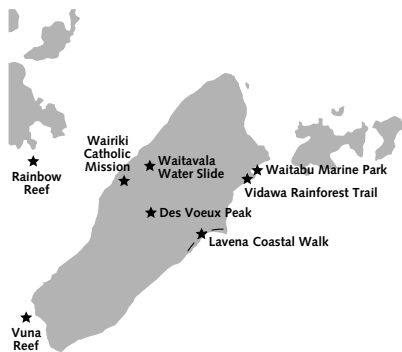
Taveuni's volcanic past is evident in its many black-sand beaches, but the beaches at Lavena and Matei have some white sand and are good for swimming and snorkelling. The nearby islands of Laucala, Matagi and Qamea have stunning beaches. The eastern side of the island has dramatic waterfalls while the southern coast boasts caves and blowholes.

Indigenous Fijians make up most of Taveuni's population, with a few hundred Indo-Fijians and a growing number of expats, mainly North Americans. Taveuni is the chiefly island for the northern part of Fiji. The Tui Cakau (King of the Reef) is based in Somosomo. It is the third-highest chiefly title in Fiji, and more than one branch of a fractured family would like to claim it as their own. Accordingly, there's a low rumble of traditional politics bubbling below the surface. The current Tui Cakau supported Speight's 2000 coup.

There are no big towns on the island. Taveuni's main income is from agriculture, mostly copra and to a lesser extent *dalo* (taro plant) and *kava* crops. Many of Taveuni's hotels, restaurants and dive shops are in Matei, within walking distance of the airport. The land here was once a single copra plantation, since subdivided and sold.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dive the Somosomo Strait around the incredible **Rainbow Reef** (p212)
- Snorkel gorgeous **Vuna Reef** (p212)
- Celebrate Mass joyously at **Wairiki Catholic Mission** (p215)
- Trek the lush **Lavena Coastal Walk** (p222) and wash off the sweat in a deep waterfall pool
- Take a guided day hike along the **Vidawa Rainforest Trail** (p221)
- Raft, snorkel and learn about reef conservation at **Waitabu Marine Park** (p222)
- Manage not to kill yourself at **Waitavala Water Slide** (p215)
- Scale the 1195m **Des Voeux Peak** (p215) at dawn, 'twitching' for orange-crested doves



■ POPULATION: 12,000

■ AREA: 442 SQ KM

Geography & Geology

Much of Taveuni's coastline is rugged, set against some of Fiji's highest peaks. Des Voeux Peak reaches up 1195m and the cloud-shrouded Mt Ulugalau, at 1241m, is the country's second-highest summit. The volcanic soil and abundant rainfall make Taveuni one of Fiji's most fertile areas. While

the northeast of Taveuni is fringed by reefs, the southwest has deep water close to shore.

Orientation

Most visitors arrive by air at Matei airport in the north of the island. Heading southeast you eventually reach Bouma National Heritage Park, where the road stops at Lavena.

TAVEUNI

4 INFORMATION

Colonial National Bank.....	1	D3
Garden State Price Point.....	(see 1)	
Hospital.....	2	B2
Kool's Accommodation Internet.....	(see 14)	
Police Station.....	3	D3
Police.....	(see 2)	
Post Office.....	(see 12)	
Ross Handicrafts.....	(see 12)	

5 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Aqua-Trek Taveuni.....	(see 13)	
Blow Hole.....	4	A3
Dolphin Bay Divers.....	(see 10)	
Pro-dive.....	(see 19)	
Taveuni Estates Dive & Golf.....	5	B2
Tavoro Waterfalls Visitor Centre.....	6	C2
Wairiki Catholic Mission.....	7	B2
Waitavala Water Slide.....	8	B2

SLEEPING

Chottu's Motel.....	9	D3
Dolphin Bay Diver's Retreat.....	10	A2
Dolphin Bay Diver's Taveuni Guest House.....	11	A3
First Light Inn.....	12	B2
Garden Island Resort.....	13	B2
Kool's Accommodation.....	14	C3
Lavena Lodge.....	15	C2
Matangi Island Resort.....	16	D1
Palms.....	17	B2
Qamea Resort & Spa.....	18	C2
Sunset Accommodation.....	(see 26)	
Susie's Plantation Resort.....	19	A3
Vatuwiri Farm Resort.....	20	A3
Vuna Lagoon Lodge.....	21	A3

EATING

Garden Island Resort Restaurant.....	(see 12)	
Kaba's Supermarket.....	22	C3
Kumar's Restaurant.....	23	D3
Makulava Restaurant.....	(see 12)	
Milk Bar.....	(see 1)	
Taveuni Estates Clubhouse Restaurant.....	(see 5)	
Vegetable stalls.....	24	D3
Wathi-po-ee Restaurant.....	(see 12)	

TRANSPORT

Beachcomber Cruises.....	(see 12)	
Budget Rent a Car.....	(see 1)	
Bus Station.....	25	C3
Consort Shipping.....	(see 12)	
Government Wharf.....	26	B2
Grace Ferry.....	27	C3
Korean Wharf.....	(see 26)	

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Heading southwest from Matei you reach the towns of Somosomo, Naqara and Waiyevo where most of the budget accommodation, shops, services and not much of the beauty of the island are located. If you arrive by boat it will be at one of the three wharfs in the Waiyevo area. In the south of the island you'll find a few low-key resorts around Vuna. The road doesn't go much further than this making the southeast coast almost inaccessible.

Dangers & Annoyances

Theft is a problem – although locals say you're more likely to lose food and booze than laptops and cameras. Always lock your door when sleeping and keep valuables out of sight. Don't wander around alone at night.

All of Taveuni's electricity is supplied by generator. Upmarket resorts have 24-hour power; however, some budget and mid-range places only run their generators in the evening, usually between 6pm and 10pm. Keep a torch handy.

Activities

DIVING & SNORKELLING

Taveuni is world-renowned among divers. In the Somosomo Strait, you can expect to see a gazillion fish, the occasional shark or turtle, fantastic coral and, in November, perhaps even pilot whales. The patch reefs are fairly shallow (10m to 22m) while the strait's fringing reef has wall diving (15m to 30m), larger fish, and is more exposed to weather and surge. Novice divers may find the currents challenging, however, a descent line is generally used; the area is not just for experienced divers as there are many different sites.

Colourful soft-coral sites include the famous **Rainbow Reef**, which fringes the southwest corner of Vanua Levu but is most easily accessed from Taveuni. There are a plethora of sites on this reef. See p61 for more details. The island is especially hot and humid in January and February when the water clarity is reduced due to plankton blooms and northerly winds from the equator.

There is plenty for snorkellers, too. Vuna Reef off southern Taveuni boasts dazzling coral and improbable creatures. The three small islands immediately offshore from Naselesele Point in Matei have good snorkelling (the third is known as the local 'Honeymoon Island'). You can also snorkel happily at Prince Charles Beach or Beverly Beach.

There are a number of dive operations on Taveuni, and the upmarket resorts on the offshore islands of Matagi and Qamea have diving for their guests.

Aqua-Trek Taveuni (☎ 888 0286; www.aquatrek.com), based at Garden Island Resort (p216), is a well-equipped dive shop with good boats, Nitrox facilities and a photo centre. It organises dives at Rainbow Reef. Two dives cost \$165 and six dives (three days) cost \$470 (tanks and belts supplied only). Equipment rental costs \$35 per day or \$25 per day if three days or more. PADI Open Water Courses cost \$660 and one-day dive introductions are \$148.

Dolphin Bay Divers (☎ 888 0531, 992 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com) operates from Dolphin Bay Divers Retreat (see p217) on Vanua Levu, but is more easily accessed from Taveuni. It offers a two-tank/night/shore dive for \$130/80/45. It also has multiday dive packages and offers a number of courses including the PADI Open Water Course (\$500), rescue (\$450) and dive master (\$1100). As well as Vuna Reef, it also does dive trips to Rainbow Reef and other sites in the area. Divers taking a course get free accommodation in the dorm and airport transfers from Matei.

Pro-dive (☎ 888 0125; www.susiesplantationresort.com) is based at Susie's Plantation Resort (see p217). Two-tank dives cost \$170, including gear, and the PADI Open Water Course is \$495. Rainbow Reef dives are \$195 and multiple dive packages are available.

Swiss Fiji Divers (☎ 888 0586; www.swissfijidivers.com), near Beverly Beach in Matei, provides high-quality gear including computer consoles, masks with underwater communication, and scooters. Two-tank dives cost \$185 including gear, and PADI Open Water Courses cost \$600.

Taveuni Estates Dive (☎ 888 0063; www.taveuni.dive.com), located on Taveuni's southwest coast, has an enthusiastic manager and experienced staff who welcome nonguests. A two-tank dive/PADI Open Water Course costs \$210/660. It also offers snorkelling trips for \$80 to \$110 per person, depending on group size.

Vunibokoi Divers (Dive Taveuni; ☎ 888 0560; www.tovutovu.com), Tovu Tovu Resort's dive operation in Matei, is ecstatically recommended by customers. Popular divemaster Tyrone Valentine (scion of an old colonial family) has logged an incredible 14,000 dives,

mostly around Taveuni. Dives are in the Rainbow Reef area and a two-tank dive/PADI certification costs \$195/650.

HIKING

Taveuni's Lavena Coastal Walk and Tavoro Waterfalls in Bouma National Heritage Park are must-dos. Avid walkers could also consider the guided Vidawa Forest Walk, also in Bouma, or Des Voeux Peak. If you're super keen and don't mind mud, you can also seek out a guide in Somosomo and trek up to Lake Tagimaucia.

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Taveuni is one of Fiji's best areas for bird-watching. Over 100 species of bird can be found here. Try Des Voeux Peak at dawn for a chance to see the rare orange dove (the male is bright orange with a green head, while the female is mostly green) and the silktail. Avid bird-watchers also recommend the Vidawa Rainforest Hike. Another good site is near Qeleni village southeast of Matei. On the Matei side of the village, follow a 4WD track for 3.5km up the mountain. Here you might see parrots and fantails, particularly in August and September when they're nesting. The deep-red feathers of the kula parrot were once an important trade item with the Tongans. The forested Lavena coast is also a good spot to see orange or flame doves, Fiji goshawk, wattled honeyeater, and grey and white heron. Vatuwiri Farm Resort at Vuna Point in the south is a great place for viewing fruit bats. Down south you can also see and hear magpies, introduced to control insects in the copra plantations.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Raikivi Game Fishing (☎ 888 0371) in Matei will take you near Qamea in search of sailfish, wahu, maimai and skipjack tuna. Half-/full-day trips cost \$570/900 for up to six people.

Tango Fishing Adventure (☎ 888 0680; makaira@connect.com.fj) takes you fishing for big game aboard the *Tango* with Captain John Llanes Jr who has over 30 years experience. The boat has GPS, VHF and seven rod holders. A half/full day costs \$520/900.

Taveuni Estates (☎ 888 0441), see p218, welcomes visitors to its nine-hole golf course (\$40 green fee or there's a \$50 lunch-and-golf deal), four tennis courts (\$15) and swimming pool.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The flights between Taveuni and Viti Levu are stunning, giving you a chance to peer down at the gorgeous reefs. At Matei airport, both **Sun Air** (☎ 888 0461) and **Air Fiji** (☎ 888 0062) have at least two flights daily to/from Nadi (1½ hours) and also Savusavu, but be aware that both routes are often heavily booked. Air Fiji flies twice daily to Suva as well (45 minutes). See p259 for more details.

BOAT

The Government Wharf for large vessels, including *Spirit of Free Enterprise* (SOFE) and *Adi Savusavu*, is about 1km from Waiyevo, towards Naqara. Smaller boats depart from the Korean Wharf, a bit further north. **Consort Shipping** (☎ 888 0339; First Light Inn, Waiyevo), **Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 888 0036; Wathi-poe Restaurant, Naqara) and **Suilven Shipping** (☎ 888 0261) have regular Suva–Savusavu–Taveuni ferries with competitive rates. Suilven is the most comfortable and reliable service. **Grace Ferry** (☎ 888 0320; Naqara) runs a bus/boat trip to Savusavu and Labasa (\$20). The boat departs from the Korean Wharf at 8.45am. The booking office is the green building in Naqara – ask locals for directions.

For more information on these ferries see p261.

Getting Around

Taveuni's main road hugs its scenic coast from Lavena in the east, up north and around to Navakawau in the south. At the time of writing it was sealed from Matei to Wairiki. There are also a couple of inland 4WD tracks. Getting around Taveuni involves a bit of planning, the main disadvantage being the length of time between buses. To get around cheaply and quickly you need to combine buses with walking, or take taxis. You can rent 4WDs in Naqara; however, it's far cheaper to hire a taxi for the day.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

From Matei airport expect to pay about \$18 to Waiyevo, and \$50 to Vuna (about one hour) in a taxi. Most upmarket resorts provide transfers for guests.

BUS

Local buses are the best way to meet locals. **Pacific Transport** (☎ 888 0278) has a depot

in Naqara, opposite the Taveuni Central Indian School. From Monday to Saturday, buses run from Wairiki to Bouma at 8.30am, 11.30am and 4.20pm. The last bus continues to Lavena where the first bus of each morning starts out at 5.45am. On Tuesday and Thursday, all buses go as far as Lavena. On Sunday there is one bus at 3.30pm from Wairiki to Lavena and one from Lavena to Wairiki at 6.45am.

Going south from Naqara, buses run to Navakawau at 9am, 11.30am and 4.45pm Monday to Saturday, returning at 5.30am and 8.15am. On Sunday a bus departs Navakawau at 6.45am and returns from Naqara at 4pm. From Matei, buses run to Wairiki at 11.30am Monday to Saturday and also at 7am and 3pm, Monday to Friday, during school term times.

The bus schedule is very lax; buses may show up early or an hour late. Be sure to double check the time of the return bus when you board, just to make sure there is one.

CAR

In Naqara, **Budget Rent a Car** (☎ 888 0291; gardenstate@connect.com.fj; Garden State Price Point; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat & Sun) has 4WDs for \$125 to \$185 per day.

TAXI

It's easy to find taxis in the Matei and Waiyevo areas. It may be wise to book ahead on Sunday. Hiring a taxi for a negotiated fee and touring most of the island's highlights in a day will work out cheaper than hiring a car. Try **Nand Lal** (☎ 888 0705). You may be able to get one for under \$120 for the day; ask a local to negotiate it for you. For destinations such as Lavena you can go one way by bus and have a taxi pick you up at the end at a designated time (but arrange this before you go).

WAIYEVO, SOMOSOMO & AROUND

This part of the island is important but unattractive. Somosomo is the largest village on Taveuni and headquarters for its chiefly leadership. The **Great Council of Chiefs' meeting hall** (*bure bese*) was built here in 1986 for the gathering of chiefs from all over Fiji. Somosomo runs directly into Naqara, the village with the largest shopping area – but don't expect a mall. You'll find a couple of gloomy supermarkets, the island's one bank (no

ATM), transport links and two budget hotels. A short taxi ride or a long, dusty walk away is Waiyevo, the administrative capital of the island, with the hospital, the police station, a budget hotel and resort, and more ferry links. About 2km further south of Waiyevo is Wairiki village, which has a general store and a beautiful old hilltop Catholic Mission.

Information

EMERGENCY

Hospital (☎ 888 0444; Waiyevo)

Police (☎ 888 0222; Waiyevo) The main police station is at the government compound behind the Garden Island Resort in Waiyevo. There is also a police station in Naqara.

INTERNET ACCESS

Garden State Price Point (☎ 888 0291; Naqara; per min \$0.50; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat & Sun) One pricey computer.

Kool's Accommodation (☎ 888 0395; Naqara; per min \$0.20; ☎ 4-9pm)

Ross Handicrafts (☎ 330 9872; Waiyevo; per min \$0.22; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) Next to the post office.

MONEY

Colonial National Bank (☎ 888 0433; Naqara; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri) The only bank on the island will exchange currency and travellers cheques but won't do cash advances and doesn't have an ATM.

Kaba's Supermarket (☎ 888 0088; Naqara; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat & Sun) Offers cash advances on credit cards, up to \$500, although it charges 5% commission.

POST

Post office (☎ 888 0027; Waiyevo; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2pm-4pm Mon-Fri) Among the shops beneath the First Light Inn.

TELEPHONE

You'll find a cardphone at the post office as well as outside the supermarkets in Naqara.

Sights

INTERNATIONAL DATELINE

For workability, the International Dateline doglegs around Fiji, but the 180-degree meridian actually cuts straight through Taveuni, about a 10-minute walk south of Waiyevo. Along the side of the road to Wairiki, a small, red survey beacon marks the spot. If you take the road uphill from Waiyevo (towards the hospital) and cross the field on the right, you'll find a big sign with a bit of

local information and a map. Dateline nerds might enjoy the 'half in one day, half in the other' photo.

WAIRIKI CATHOLIC MISSION

This grand mission looks out over the Somosomo Strait. Its beautiful interior has an impressive beam ceiling and, reputedly, French stained glass. In the presbytery, there's a painting of a famous battle in which a Catholic missionary helped Taveuni's warriors develop a strategy to defeat their Tongan attackers. It's worth attending Mass at 7am, 9am or 11am on Sunday; the congregation sits on the floor and belts out tremendous song.

The mission is about 20 minutes' walk south along the coast from Waiyevo. You can't miss it on the hill to the left. A dirt track behind leads up to a huge white cross. The views from here are superb.

WAITAVALA WATER SLIDE

This natural water slide is only for the brave. A bruise or two is unavoidable as you fly down these rock chutes. If there's been rain it can be dangerous; wait until you see locals going down it before you make an attempt.

It's about a 25-minute walk from Waiyevo. With the Garden Island Resort on your left, head north and take the first right at the bus stop. Take another right at the branch in the road, pass a shed and then go left down a hill. You'll see a 'waterfall' sign. The river is on the Waitavala estate, which is private land, so if you pass anyone on your way there, ask if you can visit.

LAKE TAGIMAUCIA

Lake Tagimaucia is in an old volcanic crater, in the mountains above Somosomo. At 823m above sea level, masses of vegetation float on the lake, and the national flower, the rare *tagimaucia* (an epiphytic plant) grows on the lake's shores. This red-and-white flower blooms only at high altitude from late September to late December.

It is a difficult trek around the lake as it is overgrown and often very muddy; you'll need a stick to find firm ground. The track starts from Somosomo where you need to present the Chief with a *sevusevu* and ask permission. Take lunch and allow eight hours for the round trip.

THE LEGEND OF THE TAGIMAUCIA

There once lived a young girl with a wild spirit and a tendency to be disobedient. On one fateful day, her mother lost her patience with the girl and beat her with a bundle of coconut leaves, saying she never wanted to see her face again. The distraught girl ran away until she was deep in the forest. She came upon a large vine-covered *ivi* (Polynesian chestnut) tree and decided to climb it. The higher she climbed, the more entangled she became in the vine and, unable to break free, she began to weep. As giant tears rolled down her face they turned to blood and, where they fell onto the vine, they became beautiful white-and-red *tagimaucia* flowers. Calmed by the sight of the flowers, the girl managed to escape the forest and, upon returning home, was relieved to find an equally calm mother.

DES VOEUX PEAK

At 1195m, Des Voeux Peak is the island's second-highest mountain. On a clear day, the views from its peak are fantastic. It's possible to see Lake Tagimaucia and perhaps even the Lau island group. Allow three to four hours to walk the 6km up, and at least two to return. It's a steep, arduous climb in the heat, so it's best to start out early. Try to make it up there by dawn if you are a keen bird-watcher. To get here, take the inland track just before you reach Wairiki Catholic Mission (coming from Waiyevo). Alternatively, arrange for a lift up and then walk back at your leisure. On weekdays it's sometimes possible to hitch a ride with Telecom or Public Works Department (PWD) workers who go up to service their equipment. (The First Light Inn can sometimes arrange this for guests.) Taxis can be fairly pricey.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Garden Island Resort (☎ 888 0286; www.aquatrek.com; dm \$38; 📶) The only top-end hotel in the area (see p216) also has two four-bed dorms, which are good value

First Light Inn (☎ 888 0339; firstlight@connect.com.fj; Waiyevo; r with fan/air-con & bathroom \$55/60; 📶) This inn is a clean, friendly hotel with a kitchen for guests. Satellite TV is provided by the

enormous satellite dish in the backyard. The reception doubles as the office for Consort Shipping; if you turn up late in the evening or on Saturday (and perhaps Sunday) afternoon, there won't be anyone there.

Kool's Accommodation (☎ 888 0395; kools@connect.com.fj; Naqara; dm/s/d \$15/25/35; 📺) Cheerful Kool's was renovating at the time of writing, and adding a restaurant (breakfast/lunch/dinner \$8/10/12) specialising in Indo-Fijian food. Private, fan-cooled hotel rooms have bathrooms. Electricity comes on from 4pm to 9pm, when you can watch satellite TV or borrow videos from Kool's library. Laundry is \$5.

Chottu's Motel (☎ 888 0233; Naqara; s/d/tr budget \$25/35/55, deluxe \$45/55/60) Chottu's has big, deluxe rooms with kitchens, phones, satellite TV and hot showers. The budget rooms share a cold-water bathroom and a kitchen.

Sunset Accommodation (☎ 888 0229; s/d/tr \$15/25/40) This place is basic but very cheerful. Two cottages each have a double and single room and a kitchen, and mosquito nets and fans. There's electricity in the evenings. Ask to see both cottages – one has an outside bathroom. The building is very near the Korean Wharf at Lovonivonu. Look for a sign for Bucalevu School at the bend in the road between Naqara and Waiyevo.

TOP END

Garden Island Resort (☎ 888 0286; www.aquatrek.com; dm \$38, s/d/tr \$166/210/250; 📺 📺 📺) Some guests rave about this apparently unremarkable place. It's the only resort in the area, and it's popular with dive groups. The rooms are clean and comfortable with air-con and sea views. The pool and restaurant-bar area looks out to the Somosomo Strait and Vanua Levu beyond. There is an optional meal plan for \$80 per person.

The resort has a children's pool and under-16s stay for free. There is no beach, but you can swim here at high tide. (Watch the current, though, and don't swim near Korean Wharf as sharks are sometimes attracted here by fish-cleaning.) Aqua-Trek (see p212) runs snorkelling trips to the nearby Korolevu Island and the Rainbow Reef. Transfers to and from the airport are \$40 per person.

Eating & Drinking

Garden Island Resort Restaurant (☎ 888 0286; Waiyevo; lunch/dinner \$17.50/35; 🍳) breakfast, lunch & dinner) It's a pleasant place. The tables have

a view of the pool and garden and in the evening there's live local music, which non-guests can attend if they eat there. The bar is well stocked but, unless you're a guest, you'll only be served alcohol if you've ordered food.

Wathi-po-ee Restaurant (☎ 888 0382; Waiyevo; meals \$5; 🍳) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, breakfast & lunch Sat & Sun) A basic place with omelettes and sausages for breakfast, and oily Sino-Fijian food for lunch and dinner, this is the de facto restaurant-bar for the First Light Inn. Around the back are a few tables under a corrugated iron roof bearing the restaurant's old name, The Cannibal Café, and its notorious slogan, 'We'd love to have you for dinner'. Not a bad spot for a beer.

Makuluva Restaurant (☎ 994 5394; Waiyevo; breakfast/lunch \$3/4; 🍳) 8am-4pm Mon-Fri & Sun, dinner by arrangement) This place looks like a fresh-fish shed – and, in fact, it is, but there's a restaurant around the back. Order dinner in advance, before 4pm (you can either drop off your order at the fish shed or call the owner on her mobile). Makuluva is run by Seventh Day Adventists, and may be one of the few places open on Sunday.

Kumar's Restaurant (☎ 888 1005; Naqara; breakfast \$2, meals \$4; 🍳) breakfast, lunch & dinner before 7pm Mon-Sat) Kumar's is a friendly Indian place with good curries served in a rustic, shedlike atmosphere.

Milk Bar (Naqara; snacks \$3; 🍳) 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) Disguised behind the Hot Bread Kitchen sign, it has a few tables and serves fresh chop suey, pizza and sandwiches.

For self-caterers, **Kaba's Supermarket** (☎ 888 0088; Naqara; 🍳) 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat & Sun) is fully stocked. There is also MH Supermarket in Somosomo (which sells alcohol, but not on Saturday afternoon or Sunday) or the Wairiki supermarket which is open on Sundays. It can be difficult to buy fresh fruit and vegetables as the villagers usually grow their own; try the stalls along the main street of Naqara. There are also a couple of bakeries in Naqara.

SOUTHERN TAVEUNI

The main villages on southern Taveuni are Naqarawalu, in the hills, and, on the southern coast near Vuna Reef, Kanacea, Vuna and Navakawau.

Check out the **blow hole** on the dramatic, windswept South Cape. As the water jumps

DRUA

For assisting him in a war against the people of Rewa, Ratu Cakobau presented King George of Tonga with a *drua*, a traditional catamaran. Named *Ra Marama*, the *drua* was built in Taveuni in the 1850s. It took seven years to complete, was over 30m long and could carry 150 people. Hewn from giant trees, it could out sail the European ships of the era.

Building *drua* could involve entire communities; some boats could carry up to 300 people. Their construction often involved ceremonial human sacrifices, and the completed vessel was launched over the bodies of slaves, which were used as rollers under the hulls. The last large *drua* was built in 1913 and is on display at the Fiji Museum in Suva. If you visit the island of Kioa, north of Taveuni, you can still see fishermen out in small, one-person *drua*.

up through the volcanic rock, it creates rainbows in the air. It's best at low tide when it can reach up to the top of the palm trees on shore. At high tide it can be barely visible. The water here is very changeable and, if conditions turn bad, the waves can quite suddenly pound the shore; be wary of climbing down on the rocks.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Dolphin Bay Divers Retreat (☎ 992 0531, 888 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com; Vanaira Bay, Vanua Levu; dm/house tent/bure per person \$20/25/45; 📺) This retreat is an excellent, cheap, friendly place on Vanua Levu, although it's most easily accessible from Taveuni. The *bure* are okay, although there is no hot water and the showers are only curtained off. The house tents – all of which face the sunrise – are fantastic, and include a bright, cheerful, three-bed tent dorm. The mattresses are comfortable but it is bit of a walk from the tents to the shared bathrooms. A resort tent, with tent bathroom, should now be in operation. Most of the guests here are divers, but snorkellers will also enjoy the fantastic undersea scenery. There is no spearfishing. Startlingly, Dolphin Bay has a lovingly tended wine list, with mainly Australian wines priced around \$25. Nights here are boozey and companionable, like the owners.

Transfers from Taveuni cost \$50 return. Meal plans are \$35 per day with snacks. Important: Dolphin Bay connects through Vodaphone and there is no Vodaphone connection and no mobile-phone reception at Buca Bay on Vanua Levu. Do not turn up at Buca Bay and expect to phone Dolphin Bay Divers. You will be stranded, although the locals will put you up for the night.

Dolphin Bay Divers Taveuni Guest House (☎ 888 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com; r \$35, per person \$20) This is a big, spotless house with two double bedrooms with shared bathroom, generally used by guests of Dolphin Bay Divers before or after their stay at the resort. There is a lounge with views to Vanua Levu, and the owners reputedly cook delicious Indian food. Lighting is electric by day, lanterns by night.

Susie's Plantation Resort (☎ 888 0125; www.susiesplantationresort.com; s/d/tr bure \$70/120/150; lodge divers/nondivers \$20/25; 📺) Susie's is a former plantation set in a peaceful location with gorgeous sea and sunset views. The double room (\$50) with attached hot-water bathroom in the main house is spacious and comfortable and the six garden *bure* (one large enough for four people) are basic but clean. There's *kava* drinking in the evenings and on Friday nights there's a *meke* (traditional dance). An all-meal plan is available for \$39. There's excellent snorkelling and diving through Pro-Dive (see p212). Major credit cards are accepted.

Vuna Lagoon Lodge (☎/fax 888 0627; dm/s/d \$15/30/50) Visit Vuna if you want contact with Fijian village life in a beautiful setting. There are simple, clean rooms with bathroom (one with four beds), two minutes' walk from Vuna village on the edge of Vuna Lagoon. The house has a kitchen, a laundry with washing machine, a sitting area, and electricity from 6pm to 11pm. Self-caterers can cook for themselves with free fruit and vegetables from the garden; however, bring all other supplies. Otherwise, home-cooked meals are available for \$15. There is a sandy beach nearby so bring your own snorkelling gear. To find the lodge, turn down the dirt lane towards the coast at Vuna village; it's the last blue house on the left. It's best to call ahead.

Palms (☎/fax 888 1241; adult/child under 12 \$65/32.50) The Palms is a tremendously atmospheric, 120-year-old plantation house with

five bedrooms, a big kitchen, a grass tennis court and a beautiful view. There are mangos, avocados, pineapples and pears in the garden, a barbecue and *lovo* (pit oven) outside and a cook available on request. The owner prefers a week's notice but it's worth calling anyway. The house is on the left just before you reach Taveuni Estates. The Palms is the one with, um, all the palms.

TOP END

Vatuwiri Farm Resort (☎ 888 0316; vatuwiri@connect.com.fj; cottages d incl meals \$340; ☒ closed from mid-Oct–early Jan) Unlike any other resort you'll set foot in, this is one of the last working estates in the South Pacific still in the hands of the founding family. Five generations of Tartes have lived on Vatuwiri, Taveuni's biggest cattle farm and largest single producer of copra. A visit here gives you a chance to experience life on a plantation in one of the two small cottages perched on a lawn on the water's edge. Both have gorgeous views with high tide bringing colourful fish to the doorstep. The Tartes are branching out into horse-riding holidays, and there are loads of activities available, such as swimming and snorkelling, or you can just enjoy the peace and quiet.

Eating & Drinking

Taveuni Estates Clubhouse Restaurant (☎ 888 0441; breakfast/lunch/dinner \$8/15/20; ☒ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri–Sun & Mon–Thu only if booked) Taveuni Estates is a development of private, expat housing about 8km south of Waiyevo, but the restaurant, bar and sporting facilities are open to the public. The restaurant serves good breakfasts and claims to make the only true cappuccino on the island. The menu is mainly Western and management plan to install a wood-fired (of course) pizza oven.

Local nightlife in the area tends to centre around the *kava* bowl, but the clubhouse bar at Taveuni Estates is a great place to stop off for a drink in the unlikely event you are in the area.

MATEI

Matei is a residential area on Taveuni's northern point. Much of the freehold land has been bought by foreigners searching for a piece of tropical paradise. Within easy vicinity of the airport, there are a number of

places to stay, some of the island's best dining options, dive shops and a couple of OK beaches. There's also snorkelling nearby.

Information

Matei doesn't have much in the way of services. There are cardphones at the airport and outside the Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket and Sonal Shopping Centre. The larger supermarkets and top-end resorts accept credit cards, but you may be charged extra. Some resorts will also change travellers cheques.

Police There is a police post at the airport.

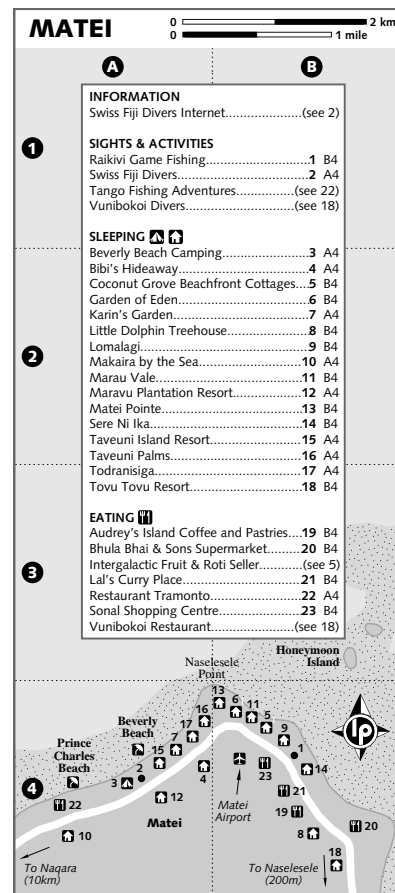
Swiss Fiji Divers (☎ 888 0586; per min \$0.25; ☒ 9am–5pm) Get online at this dive shop on Beverly Beach.

Sleeping BUDGET

Beverly Beach Camping (☎ 888 0684; sites per person \$10) One of those magical spots where everybody makes friends easily and camping isn't a chore, this small site is set on a white-sand beach, beneath fantastic, huge, poison-fish trees. The camp has very basic facilities including flush toilets, shower and a sheltered area for cooking and dining. The owner sometimes brings around fresh fruit and vegetables in the morning. He can also provide equipment for snorkelling and fishing, and he'll rent you a kayak for \$10 per person. Beverly Beach is about 15 minutes' walk west of the airport.

Tovu Tovu Resort (☎ 888 0560; www.tovutovu.com; bure with/without kitchen \$95/75, fbure \$125) Built on a subdivided copra estate, and owned by the Petersen family who once ran the plantation, the Tovu Tovu takes pride in its history. There's even a family chapel – still in use – on a hill overlooking the *bure*. The accommodation, good for the price, is fairly comfortable with hot-water bathrooms and fans. The restaurant (see p220) offers a rare pocket of nightlife in sedate Taveuni. The excellent Vunibokoi Divers (p212) is based here. The resort is a 20-minute walk south-east of Matei airport, past the Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket. Meal plans cost \$45 per person

Bibi's Hideaway (☎ 888 0443; sites per person \$15, r \$50, 2-bedroom cottage \$90, s/d/f bure \$60/70/90, villa \$110) This cheap (even the low prices are negotiable), relaxed and friendly resort was started by its affable Fijian owners on the suggestion of the author of the first Lonely Planet guide to Fiji. The newest *bure* is very good value,



and Bibi has built a free emergency rain shelter *bure* for faint-hearted campers. Rooms vary, but all are clean and well-kept (only the bathrooms in the lodge are a bit rundown). Guests love the vibe at Bibi's – but bring mosquito coils. There's electricity in the evenings but no hot water at any time.

Little Dolphin Treehouse (☎ 888 0130; d cottage \$90) This place was built as a sleep-out and looks like a slightly precarious kind of proto-pagoda. The breeze-cooled bedroom is upstairs, with a comfortable queen-size bed and a veranda looking out to the ocean. Downstairs is a kitchen and hot-water bathroom. There are a couple of shelves of books – a big plus in Taveuni, where there is no bookshop.

MIDRANGE

Karin's Garden (☎ 888 0511; www.karinsgardenfiji.com; d/tr/f \$195/250/320) A lovingly cared for two-bedroom cottage with a bird's-eye view of the reef, a kitchen, sitting room and veranda, Karin's is only rented out as a single unit. The rooms are big and cosy, the owners affable and relaxed, and there is a two-night minimum stay. There's beach access at the end of the property where, on a clear day, you can see large fish – and, on a lucky day, perhaps even dolphins – swimming past.

Matei Pointe (☎ 888 0422; www.taveuniresort.com; d bure walk-in rate from \$120, otherwise per day/week \$260/1490, beachhouse per day/week \$460/2980; ☒ ☒) There are lovely views, gardens, caretaker family and beach at the closest accommodation to the airport. Just step off the plane and look for the sign. The spacious new Bula House has three bedrooms all with en suite, steps to a pretty pocket of white sand, great views from a big deck, washing machine and phone. The Beach House has 2.5 bedrooms, a kitchen and a huge deck. The three big *bure* with kitchens are better than basic – a bargain at the walk-in rate – but already showing signs of tropical wear.

TOP END

Taveuni Palms (☎ 888 0032; www.taveunipalmsfiji.com; d villa \$1580, per extra person/child \$375/290; ☒ ☒) Breathtakingly beautiful, completely tasteful and directly on the beach, Taveuni Palms boasts two villas, each on their own private half-acre with private beach and swimming pool (one has a private spa, the other an infinity pool) and personal chef. The cook will prepare a five-course meal for you every night, but the villas have kitchens anyway. One villa has an attached sleep-out for kids, and the resort provides a free nanny (who may even stay over in the sleep-out). Both villas are fitted with incredible entertainment centres with big TVs, DVD players and stereos. It is hard to imagine a better luxury resort in Fiji. There's a five-night minimum stay.

Taveuni Island Resort (☎ 888 0441; www.taveuniislandresort.com; bure \$1500; ☒ ☒) This is a small, opulent resort on a hill over the beach, all polished wood and wicker, with a swimming pool and absolutely gorgeous views. The *bure* are made of rock and wood and are very private. Some have the biggest bathrooms in Taveuni, if not in Fiji; they're the

same size as some budget *bure*. The resort is popular with honeymooners. Meals are a gourmet's delight and are included in the price. No children under 15 are allowed.

Maravu Plantation Resort (☎ 888 0555; www.maravu.net; s/d/tr standard *bure* \$310/450/560, deluxe *bure* \$370/570/690, s/d oceanview villa \$580/990; 🚽 🚿) You have to cross the road to get to the beach from this tastefully decorated resort, a former copra plantation that nonetheless has ocean views from the lovely, deluxe 'ocean-front' villas. (The cheapest villas have no water views, no air-con, and are a couple of minutes' walk from the beach). Free activities include horse riding, mountain biking and kayaking. Meal plans offer two/three meals per day for \$55/85, but the food is disappointing.

Garden of Eden (☎ 888 2344; 2-bedroom house \$200; 🚽) This huge, timber home, with shuttered windows, dark-wood furniture, and inexplicable Oriental touches to the décor, is a great choice for families. There's a large empty loft space for kids to hang out in, a great deck, and a private pool that is as big as some resort pools. The ocean view is partly obscured by some authentically Garden of Eden-style lush foliage. There's 10 hours of power a day.

Coconut Grove Beachfront Cottages (☎ 888 0328; www.coconutgrovefiji.com; *bure* \$270-340) It's a pretty little resort with three spacious, comfortable cottages, a good restaurant, and a secluded white-sand beach. The Mango and Banana *bure* have rock showers; all have 24-hour electricity. The Californian owner, Ronna, is friendly, knowledgeable and (praise God!) efficient. She'll paddle you out to a great snorkelling spot in her kayak just for the exercise.

Makaira by the Sea (☎ 888 0680; makaira@connect.com.fj; *bure* per day/week \$230/1400) Makaira by the Sea is really Makaira up a hill, over a road and by the sea, but the sole *bure* has a deck with a panoramic view, and even the bathroom boasts ocean views from the tub. It's clean, compact and very private. Meals are also available (from \$15, including vegetarian). Makaira is a \$3 taxi ride from Matei airport, but only a three-minute walk from Tramonto's licensed restaurant. The family that runs Makaira also owns Tango Fishing Adventures (p213) across the road.

Todranisiga (www.travelmaxia.com; d \$230) This is a well-appointed new fan-cooled *bure*

on the beach side of the road, with a gas stove top outside on the balcony. Inside, it's furnished with a fine timber table and candlesticks for romantic dining. There's also a comfortable king-size bed for romantic postdining. The en suite includes an ocean-facing outdoor hot-water shower. You can walk to the beach through an improbably lush garden. The owner will cook lunch or dinner (\$15) on request.

Lomalagi, Sere Ni Ika & Marau Vale (☎ 888 0522; www.fiji-rental-accommodations.com; Lomalagi d per day/week \$270/1700, Sere Ni Ika d per day/week \$380/2440, Marau Vale d per day/week \$442/2900, extra person \$30) Three beautiful, beachfront expat-owned holiday homes are among a number of properties for rent through Matei identity Bob Goddess; rates include a housekeeper. Ideal for families, houses are spacious and fully equipped. Some have beach access, kayaks and outdoor rock showers. Marau Vale is Bob's own fine house with a fantastically equipped kitchen. Lovely Lomalagi has steps that go down to a private cove, and three glass walls give the master bedroom unbelievable views. Sere Ni Ika has three bedrooms, and the whole front of the house can be opened out to the fresh air. These houses all tend to be well stocked with books and videos and, unlike many properties on the island, they have not been allowed to slowly deteriorate.

Eating & Drinking

Coconut Grove Restaurant (☎ 888 0328; meals \$15, 3-course dinner \$40; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Coconut Grove has great food made from fresh ingredients. The menu includes vegetarian dishes, home-made pasta, soups, salads, fish and delicious desserts and brownies. Meals are served on the veranda, overlooking the water and nearby islets. Try the best fresh-fruit shakes on Taveuni for \$5. Place your dinner order before 4pm; there are usually only three choices, always including one fish and one meat. There is an Island Tunes and buffet night on Saturdays.

Vunibokoi Restaurant (☎ 888 0560; dinner mains \$18; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tovu Tovu Resort has a friendly, comfortable restaurant with an outdoor deck overlooking the island of Viubani. The food is surprisingly tasty and very good value and, on Friday, there's a popular buffet and music night (\$20). It's worth popping in just to have a drink, especially on a Sunday night.

Lal's Curry Place (☎ 888 0705; meals \$12; 🍳 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) You know Mrs Lal mixes her own garam masala because there are chillies and cumin drying in the sun on her front lawn. She serves big plates of good, filling curries with roti, rice and dahl. Her husband, Nand, is a knowledgeable, reliable taxi driver.

Restaurant Tramonto (☎ 888 2224; pizza from \$18, meals \$18; 🍳 lunch & dinner) A pretty restaurant on the water, the Tramonto specialises in pizza. There's a menu of other well-prepared dishes, but the ingredients may not always be available. Ring to book ahead, tell them what you'd like, and they'll tell you if you can have it. It's a great spot for a sunset dinner. On Sunday there's a buffet dinner (\$25) and on Wednesday there's a barbecue (\$20); reservations are required.

Audrey's Island Coffee and Pastries (☎ 888 0039; coffee & cake \$7; 🍳 10am-6pm) US-born Audrey serves sweet snacks on the deck of her own home. You can chat to her while you eat naughty pastries and drink even naughtier coffee with a sly shot of Kahlua.

Bhula Bhai & Sons Supermarket (☎ 888 0462; 🍳 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-11am, 3-5pm Sun) It sells a range of groceries (including disposable nappies, not including beer), phonocards, stationery and film, and accepts Visa and MasterCard (10% commission, \$90 limit). It has a public phone and a petrol pump (petrol is not served on Sundays). **Sonal Shopping Centre** (☎ 888 0431; 🍳 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-11am Sun), near Matei Point, is another well-stocked supermarket that doesn't sell beer. There are a couple of pool tables outside.

Opposite Coconut Grove there's a guy who will shout, leap around, perhaps even run across the road to get to your attention. He means you no harm. He has come from another planet to sell you fresh fruit or fish roti from his small gate-side stall.

Really good rotis (\$1.50) can be bought at Matei airport.

EASTERN TAVEUNI

The local landowners of beautiful eastern Taveuni have rejected logging in favour of ecotourism, under the banner of the Bouma Environmental Tourism Project. Scenes for the 1991 movie, *Return to the Blue Lagoon*, were filmed at Bouma National Heritage Park's Tavoro Waterfalls, and at Lavena Beach.

Bouma National Heritage Park

This **national park** (admission \$8) protects over 80% of Taveuni's total area, covering about 150 sq km of rainforest and coastal forest. The park has the three **Tavoro Waterfalls** near the falls' visitor centre, each with natural swimming pools.

The first waterfall is about 24m high and only 10 minutes' walk along a flat cultivated path. There's a change area, picnic tables and barbecue plates. The second waterfall, a further 30 or 40 minutes along, is a bit smaller but also has a good swimming pool. The track is quite steep in places, but has steps, handrails and lookout spots to rest. As you near the second waterfall, deep in the rainforest, you'll have to cross a river; a rope is suspended across the water to balance you as you leap from stone to boulder. Reaching the third fall involves a hike along a less maintained, often muddy path through the forest for another 30 minutes. Smaller than the other two (about 10m high), it has a great swimming pool and rocks for jumping off (check for obstructions first!). If you bring your snorkelling gear, you'll be able to see the hundreds of prawns in the water.

If you are a keen walker, try the **Vidava Rainforest Trail**, a full-day guided trek led by shamans. Beginning at Vidava village, it passes through the historic fortified village sites of Navuga and follows trails into the rainforest where you'll see lots of birdlife. The trek then takes you to the Tavoro Waterfalls. You can only do this walk with a guide and need to book in advance. The trip runs Monday to Saturday and can take a maximum of eight people (\$60/40 per adult/child). It includes pick-up and drop-off at your hotel, guides, lunch, afternoon tea and park admission fee. Book through **Tavoro Waterfalls Visitor Centre** (☎ 888 0390; 🍳 9am-4pm).

If you are in the mood for a marathon, it is possible to catch the early morning bus to Bouma (45 minutes from Matei, 1½ hours from Naqara), make a flying visit to all three waterfalls, and catch the early afternoon bus at about 1.40pm on to Lavena. In a rush you can also do the coastal walk before dark and either stay overnight at Lavena or be picked up by a pre-arranged taxi. But this is Fiji – you'll be the only one rushing. For transport information see p213.

Waitabu Marine Park

This area is excellent for snorkelling or lounging on the white-sand beach. It is only possible to visit the park with a guide. The village of Waitabu has set up a half-day tour that includes a local guide, guided snorkelling, a *bilibili* (raft) ride, morning and afternoon tea in the village, and transport to and from Matei (\$40 per person, or \$35 each if a group of four or more). There's also a Backpackers' Tour with guided snorkelling and boat transfers (\$20 per person). Bookings are taken on ☎ 888 0451.

Lavena Coastal Walk

The 5km Lavena Coastal Walk is well worth the effort to get to – and the effort it takes to get around. The trail follows the forest edge along a white-sand then volcanic-black beach, passes peaceful villages, and climbs up through the tropical rainforest to a gushing waterfall. There's some good snorkelling and kayaking here and Lavena Point is fine for swimming.

The path is well-maintained and clearly marked. About halfway along the trek, watch for the *vatuni'epa*, bizarre rock pedestals formed by the erosion of the coral base along the coast. Past these, the path seems to disappear at Naba settlement: follow the path onto the beach, then follow the shore past the *bure* and cross the stream to where the path reappears. Further ahead is a suspension bridge and eventually the trail takes you up the valley of Wainibau Creek.

To reach the falls at the end of the trail, you have to walk over rocks and swim a short distance through two deep pools. Two cascades fall at different angles into a deep pool with sheer walls. If you're visiting in the rainy season, the rocks near the falls can be slippery, if not flooded; it can be difficult and dangerous to reach the falls at this time. Ask at Lavena Lodge for current conditions. At any time of year (even if it hasn't been raining), violent flash floods can occur and readers have advised staying to the left of the pool, where you can make an easier getaway.

The park is managed through Lavena Lodge (see right). Entrance to the park is \$5, or \$15 including a guide. You can also take a guided sea-kayak journey and coastal walk for \$40 (including lunch). Usually you can order a meal for when you return to the lodge (\$10) but it's a good idea to bring

along some food and definitely bring water. Kayaks can be hired for \$40 per day.

Lavena village is about 15 minutes' drive past Bouma, 35 minutes from Matei. However, by local bus it takes about one hour from Matei or just under two from Waiyevo. Expect to pay about \$30 for a taxi to/from Matei. See p213 for information on transport services.

Sleeping & Eating

Lavena Lodge (☎ 888 0116; tw per person \$15) Run by friendly, informative staff, the lodge has basic, clean rooms, and a shared kitchen and bathroom. Electricity is supplied in the evening. There's a maximum of eight people. Next to a beach, this is a great place to relax after a hard day's hike. Meals are available (\$7 breakfast, \$10 lunch or dinner). There's a tiny shop in the village, but if you're planning to cook, bring your own supplies.

Tavoro Waterfalls Visitor Centre (☎ 888 0390; sites per person \$10; 🕒 9am-4pm) This place offers simple meals (\$5 to \$10) in a lovely spot. You can picnic by the river here, too. There's a kitchen, toilets and an open shower for campers, as well as a covered eating area. The generator kicks in at the evening. Staff will let you store your bags here while you hike up to the falls.

OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Qamea, Laucala and Matagi are a group of islands just east of Thurston Point, across the Tasman Strait from northeastern Taveuni. All three of the islands have lovely white-sand beaches. The original inhabitants of Qamea and Laucala were displaced by local chiefs in the mid-19th century for siding with Tongan chief Enele Ma'afu during a war. Today, Laucala and Matagi are privately owned. Generally the only travellers who see these beautiful islands are resort visitors or divers heading for Motualevu Atoll (p62), although the adventure cruise ship *Tui Tai* sometimes stops at Laucala.

Matagi

Stunning horseshoe-shaped Matagi (area: 1 sq km), formed by a submerged volcanic crater, is 10km off Taveuni's coast and just north of Qamea. Its steep rainforest sides rise to 130m. The bay faces north to open sea and there is a fringing reef on the south-west side of the island.

The witches'-hat-style deluxe *bure* at **Matangi Island Resort** (☎ 888 0260; www.matangiisland.com; s/d/tr standard bure \$470/792/964, deluxe bure \$608/1084/1410, d treehouse \$1352, child 2-11 \$150; 🚻 🚿) have more space inside than furnishings. You could turn a cartwheel in one, should you feel so inclined. The high ceilings help the air flow without fans. Each *bure* is surrounded by a neat tropical garden. The beach is lovely, and the 'treehouses' are perched 5m up in the tree canopy with views to the beach through some fairly dense foliage. The pretty restaurant, where all meals are taken, looks over Qamea and out to the ocean. Rates include all meals, most activities and transfers to and from Taveuni. Matangi boasts 30 dive spots within 10 to 30 minutes of the island; a two-tank dive is \$225 (including gear) at the resort's dive shop.

Qamea

Qamea (area: 34 sq km) is the closest of the three islands to Taveuni, only 2.5km east of Thurston Point. Its villages came under harsh attack by Cyclone Ami in early 2003. The island's coast has a number of bays with white-sand beaches and a narrow mangrove inlet on the west side. The interior, especially on the north side, is covered with steep green hills and sloping valleys. Qamea is rich in birdlife and is also notable for the *lairou*, the annual migration of land crabs. For a few days from late November to early December, at the start of their breed-

ing season, masses of crabs move together from the mud flats towards the sea.

The magnificently thatched *bure* at **Qamea Resort & Spa** (☎ 888 0220; www.qamea.com; d/tr bure \$1250/1540, d premium villa \$1910; 🚻 🚿) lie on a long stretch of beautiful white-sand beach. The resort is decorated with an eclectic selection of artworks and crafts, most of which seem to be from Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. Rates include meals and transfers to and from Taveuni; children under 16 are not accepted unless you book the entire resort! There is excellent snorkelling just offshore as well as windsurfing, sailing, outrigger canoeing, nature walks, village visits and fishing trips. The spa offers 55 different treatments, and there's a dive shop where two two-tank dives/PADI Open Water Courses cost \$260/950, including gear. Only Qamea dives the site known as Australian Coconut.

Laucala

Just 500m east across the strait from Qamea, 30-sq-km Laucala was once owned by the estate of the late US millionaire Malcolm Forbes. The upmarket hideaway he built, Fiji Forbes, is now a ghost resort. The fans still turn in the *bures*, as the people from the nearby Forbes-built settlement – which looks more like a midwestern town than a Fijian village – seem never to have turned them off.

During the 2000 Speight Coup, the resort was occupied by opportunists, who beat up the managers.

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