

# Fiji

A sprawling brew of lush islands surrounded by kaleidoscopic reefs, the many landscapes of Fiji interrupt the skyline with volcanic banks of green. Beneath the cobalt sea, the ocean teems with vivid coral and a wealth of marine life. But while the façade meets brochure expectations, it's only half the beauty. Equally vibrant are the Fijian people, whose unaffected warmth is tireless. The cheer of a single *Bula!* ('Hi! Cheers! Welcome!' all at once) can relax the most harried of tourists, and locals manage to imbue a sense of grace into everything they do.

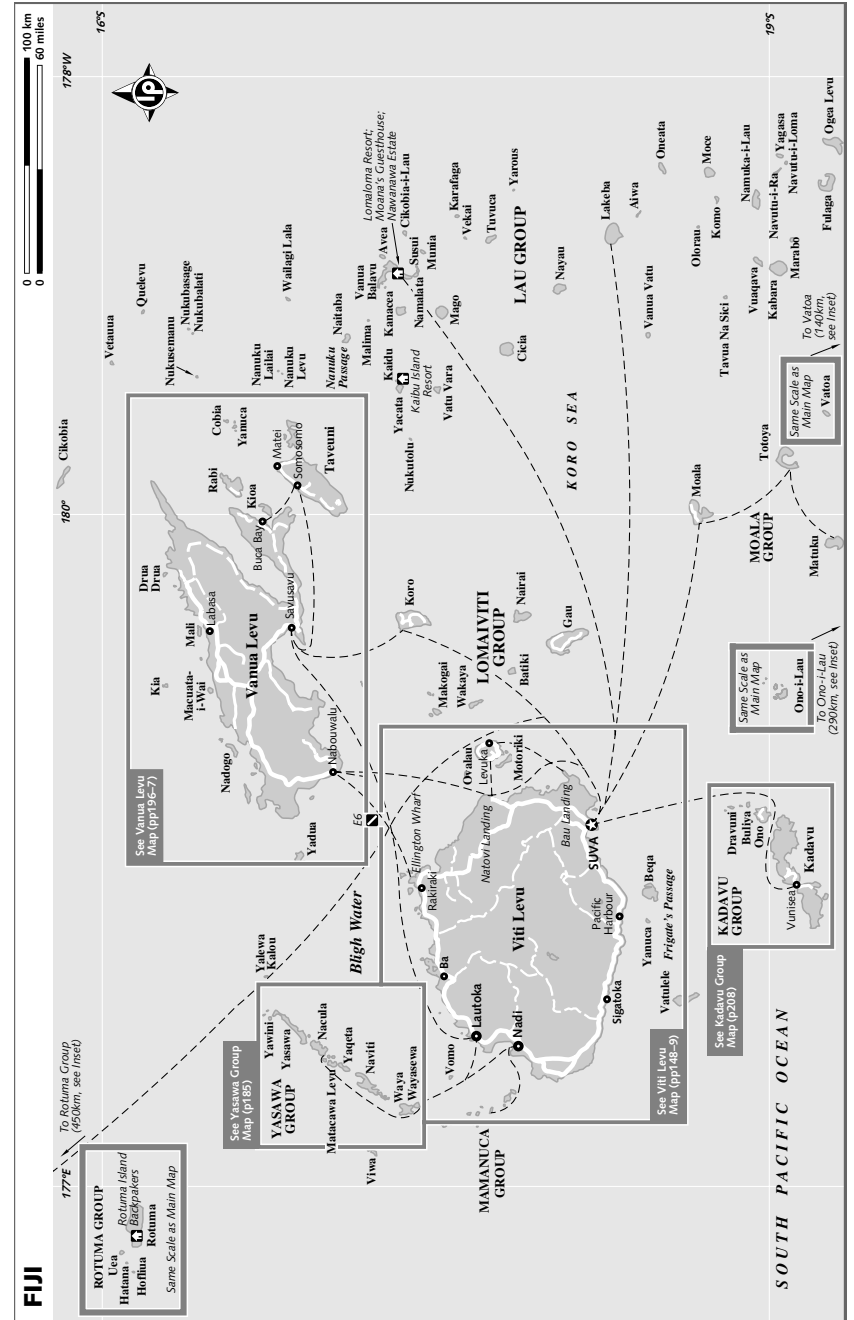
Encompassing some 332 islands, the Fijian archipelago is the quintessential holiday destination. Having been in the tourist game for several decades, Fijians have learned a thing or two about how to look after visitors and, more importantly, precisely when not to.

Most people head here for a dose of that somniferous sun. Comfortable resorts in the Yasawas and Mamanucas oblige with endless opportunities to swim, surf, snorkel, kayak or simply wallow. World-class diving can be found in the magical Astrolabe Reef off Kadavu or Somosomo Strait beneath Vanua Levu. Viti Levu, the largest island, offers a cultural feast: mountain villages, archaeological sites, colourful Hindu temples, and an urban *mélange*, where you can tax the credit card with souvenirs, saris, *sulus* and superlative cuisine. For the romantics and recluses there's harmony to be found on the remote shorelines of the Taveuni and the Lomaiviti Isles.

In a (coco)nut shell, Fiji is arguably the easiest place in the South Pacific to travel around. The population adopts you on arrival and, best of all, the place caters to backpackers, couples, families, retirees, adventurers, beach bums and everyone in between.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Fling yourself at the mercy of a party resort in the **Mamanuca Group** (p178)
- Make like the good, the bad or the ugly among the old western buildings of **Levuka** (p190)
- Trek or mountain bike your way to a summit in the **Viti Levu Highlands** (p177)
- Succumb to the sun and sea on postcard-perfect **Oarsman's Bay Beach** (p188) in the Yasawas
- Don a mask, fins and maybe even a tank to explore Taveuni's **Somosomo Strait** (p202) and Kadavu's **Great Astrolabe Reef** (p207)



## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Fiji has a mild, tropical maritime climate, with average temperatures of around 25°C throughout the year. Hot summer days can reach 31°C, but during the coolest months (July and August) the temperature can drop to between 18°C and 20°C. Humidity averages 70% to 80% in Suva year-round and 60% to 70% in Lautoka. The wet season ('summer') is November to April and the dry season ('winter') lasts from May to October, though rainfall occurs throughout the year. For general climate information and Suva's climate chart, see p827.

The cyclone season coincides with the summer wet season, November to April. Fiji has been hit by an average of 10 to 12 cyclones per decade, with two or three of them being very severe. In early 2003 Cyclone Ami hit northwestern Fiji, leaving Labasa under 1.2m of water and wiping out much of the sugar-cane industry.

May to October is the best period to visit Fiji, as temperatures are cooler in the dry season and humidity sits a comfortable distance below stifling. November, February and March are also good as there are fewer tourists and you're more likely to find bargain accommodation. Diwali is held in late October or early November and can be a fun, if manic, time to be in Fiji (see p211).

If you're travelling to Fiji during the wet season, it's best to head to drier regions such as the Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups. December and January are busy months as they coincide with school holidays in both Australia and New Zealand (NZ), and people visiting relatives.

### FIJI FACTS

- **Capital city (and island):** Suva (Viti Levu)
- **Population:** 840,000
- **Land area:** 18,300 sq km
- **International telephone code:** ☎ 679
- **Currency:** Fijian dollar (F\$)
- **Languages:** English, Fijian and Hindi-Fijian
- **Greeting:** *Bula* (Hello), Fijian; *Kaise* (Hello), Hindi-Fijian
- **Website:** www.bulafiji.com

## HISTORY Vitians

'Fiji' is actually the Tongan name for these islands, which was adopted by the Europeans. The inhabitants formerly called their home Viti.

Vitian culture was shaped by Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian peoples over 35 centuries of settlement. The Lapita people arrived from Vanuatu and the eastern Solomon Islands in about 1500 BC (see p39), and for about 1000 years they lived along the coasts and fished to their hearts' (and stomachs') content. Around 500 BC they became keen on agriculture and as a result the population shot up, tribal feuding got nasty and cannibalism became common.

## European Arrival & Settlement

In the early 19th century Fiji was known to European whalers, sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* traders. By the 1830s a small whaling and beachcomber settlement had been established at Levuka on Ovalau. It became one of the main ports of call in the South Pacific, and was the centre of the notorious blackbirding trade (see p46). Blackbirding originally encouraged the emigration of labourers from throughout the South Pacific (mainly the Solomons and Vanuatu) to work on Fijian plantations, but eventually the trade involved the kidnapping of islanders to work as labourers.

The introduction of firearms by the Europeans resulted in an increase in violent tribal warfare, particularly from the late 1840s to the early 1850s. The eventual victor, Ratu Seru Cakobau of Bau, became known to foreigners as Tui Viti (King of Fiji), despite having no real claim over most of Fiji.

By the mid-19th century London Missionary Society pastors and Wesleyan Methodist missionaries had found their way to Fiji, having entered the Southern Lau Group from Tahiti and Tonga in the 1830s. They gradually displaced the priests of the old religion and assumed privileged positions in island society, instilling a legacy of influence.

In 1849, when the home of a US commercial agent was accidentally destroyed by fire and not-so-accidentally looted, 'King' Cakobau was held responsible and presented with a bill for US\$45,000. In 1862

Cakobau proposed that Britain should foot the bill to cover his debts, in exchange for cession of Fiji. The British consul declined, but the rumours caused a large influx of settlers to Levuka. Cakobau's huge debt was not cleared until 1868, when the Australian Polynesia Company agreed to pay it in exchange for land.

In 1871 Cakobau formed a Fiji-wide government but, unable to maintain peace, it quickly crumbled. Two years later Britain agreed to annex Fiji, citing blackbirding as its principal justification. Fiji was pronounced a British crown colony on 10 October 1874.

## Colonial Period & Independence

Fiji's economy became depressed following the slump in the cotton market that occurred at the end of the US Civil War. Unrest and epidemics ensued, with measles wiping out a third of the indigenous population. Fearing a racial war, the colonial government sought the support of the chiefs in order to control the masses. The existing Fijian hierarchy was incorporated into the colonial administration and, in order to curb quibbling, the sale of land to foreigners was forbidden.

In 1882 the administrative capital was moved to Suva, as Levuka's geography hindered expansion. Under increasing pressure to make the Fijian economy self-sufficient, the colonial government turned to plantation crops, which demanded large pools of cheap labour. Indentured labour seemed the perfect solution and between 1879 and 1916 around 60,537 Indians were transported to Fiji on five-year work contracts. Many came with hopes of escaping poverty, but were faced with heavy work allocations, low wages, unjust treatment and rationed food. The overcrowded accommodation forced people of different caste and religion to mix. Despite the hardship, the vast majority of *girmityas* decided to stay in Fiji once they had served their contract and many brought their families across from India to join them. They were prohibited from buying land and discouraged from interacting with Fijians.

On 10 October 1970 Fiji regained its independence after 96 years of colonial administration. The new constitution followed the British model, although political seats and parties were racially divided.

Fiji's first postindependence election was won by the indigenous Fijian Alliance Party (FAP), and Fijians were at first optimistic about their future. However, underlying racial tensions grew as the economy worsened. Most shops and transport services were (and still are) run by Indo-Fijian families, and a racial stereotype developed portraying Indo-Fijians as being obsessed with making money. In reality, just like indigenous Fijians, the vast majority of Indo-Fijians belonged to poorer working classes and – unlike indigenous Fijians – they would never be able to have secure land tenure on their farming leases.

## The Era of the Coups

Greater unity among workers led to the formation of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), and in April 1987 an FLP government was elected in coalition with the National Federation Party (NFP). Despite having a Fijian prime minister and majority indigenous-Fijian cabinet, the new government was labelled 'Indian dominated' and racial tensions rose. On 14 May 1987, only a month after the elections, Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka took over the elected government in a bloodless coup and formed a civil interim government supported by the Great Council of Chiefs.

In September 1987 Rabuka again intervened with military force. The 1970 constitution was invalidated, Fiji was declared a republic and dismissed from the Commonwealth and Rabuka proclaimed himself head of state.

The coups, which were supposed to benefit all indigenous Fijians, in fact caused immense hardship. The economy's two main sources of income, sugar and tourism, were seriously affected and overseas aid was suspended. From 1987 to 1992 about 50,000 people – mostly Indo-Fijian skilled tradespeople and professionals – emigrated and ethnic tensions continued to stew for the next 10 years.

In the elections of May 1999 the FLP formed a coalition with the Fijian Association Party. Indo-Fijian Mahendra Chaudhry became prime minister, and indigenous Fijians were far from pleased. Convinced that their traditional land rights were at stake, many refused to renew century-old leases to Indo-Fijian farmers.

## INDO-FIJIAN HISTORY & CULTURE *Clement Paligaru*

With enterprise and resilience, Indo-Fijians have forged a presence that permeates the whole country. By 1919, when indentured labour was abolished, independent sugar-cane, cotton, tobacco and rice farms had been established by many Indo-Fijians on land mostly leased from indigenous Fijians, who had been granted sole ownership of land by the British Government. Other Indo-Fijians ran small stores or became public servants and maids. The big move into commerce began in the 1930s, following the arrival of a second wave of business migrants from India. There was no doubt that Indo-Fijians were hard working and many were becoming prosperous. Some indigenous Fijians found they didn't make bad friends either, but their success did not go down terribly well with others. This tension has continued to this day and has led to three coups since the mid-1980s.

The majority of today's Indo-Fijians are the descendants of indentured labourers who arrived in Fiji up to 130 years ago. Members of different castes were forced to share the same cramped quarters on plantations and were compelled to dispense with many of the social mores and rigidities they had brought from India. A more laid-back culture evolved, influenced by the infectious Pacific way of life.

The relative ease with which Indo-Fijians socialise and engage is one of the characteristics that set them apart from other Indians, especially the subcontinental middle classes. For example, in Fiji wedding invitations from economically disadvantaged or village-based relatives are seized upon by their well-to-do relatives as an opportunity to have a catch-up and indulge in

feasting and celebration. Such disregard for social codes would be frowned upon in India.

The Indo-Fijian community has forged a strong identity in its adopted homeland. For an Indo-Fijian, being ethnic Indian as opposed to being indigenous Fijian is about emphasising the importance of education and hard work to ensure a secure future. Add thriftiness for good measure and you have the core of the Indo-Fijian package.

India remains an important cultural beacon for Indo-Fijians, influencing rituals, culinary traditions, dress and entertainment. Most Indo-Fijians love homemade rotis (traditional breads) served straight from the oven, steaming-hot curries and rice, with condiments completing the meal. Many have a weakness for *mithai* (traditional sweets). Tradition, pride and identity have also ensured that saris, the colourful Indian dress worn by women, remain popular in Fiji. The Muslim- and Punjabi-influenced *salwaar-kameez* is also de rigueur.

Entertainment and recreation continue to have a decidedly subcontinental flavour for many Indo-Fijians, with local cinemas providing a regular dose of Hindi-language Bollywood films and music. Indo-Fijian home-entertainment systems are often tuned to provide Bollywood on tap, as well as an endless supply of Hindi-pop music videos. Apart from the pure escapism value, Bollywood films also provide many with the only connection they have with India and subcontinental Hindi.

India remains a cultural touchstone but most Indo-Fijians will never visit the subcontinent. Some may go there to explore their cultural

martial law. After eight weeks in captivity the hostages were released, and the 1997 constitution was revoked. The coup drew international disapproval and, once again, the economy collapsed, particularly the tourism sector. Speight was eventually arrested and charged with treason. He is currently serving a life sentence.

### To Be Continued...

In March 2001 the Appeal Court upheld the 1997 constitution and ruled that Fiji be taken to the polls in order to restore democracy. Laisenia Qarase, heading the Fijian People's Party (SLD), won 32 of the

heritage and ancestry, others might visit out of curiosity, but few are compelled to take the journey as an affirmation of their identity. It is to Fiji that they turn for that.

Most aspects of Indo-Fijian lifestyle and culture have comfortably coexisted for over a century with the indigenous Fijian way of life. Large numbers of Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians live side by side, work together and go to the same schools. But apart from attending some sports, entertainment and special occasions together, the two groups don't tend to engage socially. Their economic, educational, cultural and social priorities, including *tabu*, differ. These differences have proven rich fodder for political agitators seeking to exploit the insecurities of indigenous Fijians. Consequently, Indo-Fijians are still considered *vulagi* (visitors) by many indigenous Fijians.

Many Indo-Fijians have left the country in search of economic and political stability. However, this has not stalled the momentum of a mutual cultural exploration by Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians. Increasing numbers from both communities speak each other's language. In Fiji's cane belts on the western side of Viti Levu and around Labasa on Vanua Levu, many indigenous cane farmers who work alongside Indo-Fijians speak Fiji-Hindi fluently, while their families immerse themselves in Bollywood films. Indo-Fijian music and songs have even been recorded and released commercially by indigenous Fijian artists. Elsewhere, Indo-Fijians in rural communities, including former Christian mission settlements, also speak Fijian. More generally, indigenous women are wearing Indian jewellery and using sari cloth for trad-

itional outfits. Nightclubs are playing Bollywood DJ mixes. Bars are serving bowls of curry with drinks the way Indo-Fijians do in their homes. Across the country, sport, in particular soccer, continues to play an important role. Team members hold regular curry, beer and kava nights and banter in Hindi or Fijian. Indo-Fijians are now even playing the indigenous Fijian-dominated rugby. And when victorious national rugby sides return from overseas, Indian classical dancers greet them along with the thousands of Fijian spectators.

But the most amazing transformation that has taken place is the elevation of Indian food in indigenous Fijian life. In many homes, almost every second meal has to be curry. So be prepared for a spicy meal if you accept an invitation to an indigenous Fijian home anticipating islander food.

Annual festivals and events offer the visitor a chance to experience Indo-Fijian culture. Diwali (Festival of Lights) takes place across the nation around October or November. You can join in the fun by wearing some traditional gear (perhaps an Indian scarf or *bindi* on the forehead) and sharing *mithai* (sweets) and candles. Religious events include temple fairs, where thousands of Indo-Fijians gather to watch rituals and enjoy folksy meals. In Suva the South Indian fire-walking festival, held during July or August, takes place at the Mariamma Temple on Howell Rd in Samabula. On Vanua Levu, the Ram Leela festival is held at the Mariamma Temple in Vanivava around October.

*An Indo-Fijian, Clement Paligaru came to Australia in 1984. He has reported extensively on the Pacific region for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.*

was passed, and the police and military's strong opposition to the PRTU Bill fuels continuous rumours that another coup is in the offing. Stay tuned...

## THE CULTURE The National Psyche

If you've just read the foregoing brief summary of Fiji's history you might be hesitant to delve too deeply into the national psyche, which would be a shame because the Fijian people are the country's greatest asset. A smile goes a long way here, and Fijians of all backgrounds go to great lengths to make visitors feel welcome.

Sometimes, however, these lengths can be too great. Not wishing to disappoint, a Fijian 'yes' might mean 'maybe' or 'no', which can be disconcerting if not confusing for visitors. Face-to-face confrontation is rare, but debate is a healthy component of daily life (just scan the readers' letters of any newspaper and you'll get the gist). The different challenges facing indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians remain key to a sense of national identity, and you're likely to hear both sides of the story in complete candour during any visit.

## Lifestyle

### INDIGENOUS FIJIAN

Most indigenous Fijians live in villages in *mataqali* (extended family groups) and acknowledge a hereditary chief who is usually male. Each *mataqali* is allocated land for farming and also has communal obligations. Village life is supportive but also conservative; being different or too ambitious is seen to threaten the village's stability, and traditional gender roles are still very much in evidence.

Concepts such as *kerekere* (obligatory sharing) and *sevusevu* (a gift presented in exchange for an obligatory favour) are still strong, especially in remote areas. The consumption of *yaqona*, or kava, remains an important social ritual, and clans gather on special occasions for traditional *lovo* feasts and *meke*.

### INDO-FIJIANS

Most of this group are fourth- or fifth-generation descendants of indentured labourers. The changes these labourers were forced to undergo, such as adapting to living communally with Indians from diverse backgrounds, created a relatively unrestricted, enterprising society distinct from the Indian cultures they left behind. This is the basis for the Indo-Fijian culture of today.

Extended families often live in the same house, and in rural areas it's common for girls to have arranged marriages at a young age. Many women wear traditional dress, although dress codes are more cosmopolitan in Suva. See the boxed text, p140, for more details.

### ACTING FOR CHANGE *Anna Stone*

Priya and Jerry are a young couple in Fiji. Priya is from a working class Indo-Fijian family; Jerry is an indigenous Fijian, training to be a teacher. Priya's family expects her to marry someone they have chosen, as is Indian tradition, and not Jerry. The pressure and violence that comes with the resulting family conflict eventually becomes too much for Priya and she ends her life.

Priya's story is the subject of a new play, developed with funding from International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) by a group of young women and men in Fiji with help from one of the many local NGOs, Women's Action for Change. While this story is fictional, the type of family situation portrayed is known to most in Fiji.

The play, called *Another Way*, looks at how various pressures, such as unemployment, poverty, class conflicts and patriarchal attitudes, can have tragic consequences, including depression, alcohol abuse, violence and even suicide. As a conservative country, many topics such as sexuality, reproductive health and violence against women are often too difficult to discuss openly. One very popular and successful method used to work around this difficulty is to use theatre as a form of communication. Performances can be carried out anywhere and are often outdoors, with limited or sometimes no props, and audience members are encouraged to participate. Shows often end in lively discussions with traditional attitudes and beliefs being challenged. It is these discussions that make it possible for positive changes to the lives of Fijian women, particularly young women, to begin to take place.

Keep a look out for flyers advertising this or other similar plays. Most performances are in Suva, Nadi or Lautoka, however, Women's Action for Change is planning on expanding the areas they work in. Contact Women's Action for Change directly on ☎ 331 4363 for performance schedules or for more information on the project; for more details on the International Women's Development Agency go to [www.iwda.org.au](http://www.iwda.org.au).

*Anna Stone is an Overseas Program Manager with IWDA who worked in Suva for six months as an intern for UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) Pacific Regional Office.*

### MODERN PRESSURES *Virginia Jealous*

Fiji is becoming increasingly urbanised, and it is in the towns and cities that traditional values and the wisdom of elders are often less respected. Many young people travel to the cities for education, employment or to escape the restrictions of village life, but with increased freedom comes competition for jobs and a less supportive social structure. Television's mostly imported programmes present different values and send contradictory messages.

This urban drift is becoming a challenge for Fiji, with squatter-settlements on the edges of many towns. As everywhere, high levels of deprivation have led to the presence of beggars and street kids, and an increase in crime.

For those in work, disposable income is almost nonexistent. With wages for government workers around F\$150 a week – and just F\$50 for unskilled workers – finding rent is often hard enough. There are exceptions of course, and the salaries of some executives are on a par with the rich world. Spacious houses with big gardens reflect this affluence, but most homes are modest and often crowded.

### Population

Fiji's population hovers around 836,000 and growth has virtually halved in the last 30 years, due in no small part to political disharmony since independence. About 25% of Fijians are school age, and around 60% of the population are urban dwellers. Almost half the entire population resides in Suva.

### Multiculturalism

Fiji's population is the most multiracial in the South Pacific. Indigenous Fijians are predominantly of Melanesian origin, but there are Polynesian aspects in both their physical appearance and their culture. Most Indo-Fijians are descendants of indentured labourers. They constitute around 40% of the population, although large numbers continue to emigrate.

The government categorises people according to their racial origins, as you'll notice on the immigration arrival card. 'Fijian' means indigenous Fijian, and while many Indo-Fijians have lived in Fiji for several generations they are referred to as 'Indian', just as Chinese-Fijians are 'Chinese'. Fijians of other Pacific-island descent are referred to by the nationality of their ancestors. Australians, Americans, New Zealanders – and Europeans – are 'Europeans'. Mixed Western and Fijian heritage makes a person officially 'part-European'.

As the tourism industry continues to recover after the 2000 coup, increasing numbers of 'Europeans' (which in this case largely refers to Antipodeans, who are as

geographically far from Europe as the globe allows) are immigrating to establish resorts and other tourism ventures. As an overall percentage of the population the numbers are still tiny, although the effects are clearly obvious in some islands and towns such as Savusavu.

### RELIGION

Religion is extremely important in all aspects of Fijian society. Of the country's 52% Christians, about 37% are Methodists. Hinduism is practised by 38% and Islam by about 8%.

### ARTS

Indigenous Fijian villagers practise traditional arts and crafts, such as woodcarving and pottery, dance and music, and making *masi* (bark cloth, also known as *tapa*). Some arts remain an integral part of the culture, while others are practised solely to satisfy tourist demand. Indo-Fijians, Chinese-Fijians and other cultural groups also retain many of their traditional arts.

Contemporary art includes fashion design, pottery and, though not common, painting and photography. The most likely place to see contemporary work displayed is Suva.

### Dance

Visitors are often welcomed with an indigenous *meke*, a dance performance enacting stories and legends. They vary from tourist performances accompanied by a disco-Fijian soundtrack (common in resorts) to the traditional and low-key.

### SEARCHING FOR A NATIONAL IDENTITY

*Virginia Jealous*  
Fiji's demographic make-up of almost equal numbers of Fijians and Indians has shaped the country's culture, for both better and worse, and it remains a hot topic. The notion of racial integration has been discouraged since colonial days, and maintained by successive Fiji administrations. The tension between land-owning ethnic Fijians and entrepreneurial Indians is ongoing – in simplified terms, between those who have power but little capital, and those with capital but little power. Visitors will rarely sense this tension, and the upside of Fiji's cultural heritage is a heady mix of laid-back Melanesian lifestyle and Indian street scenes.

One of the best places to see contemporary dance in Fiji is the Oceania Centre for Arts & Culture (p167). The Oceania Dance Theatre and other performance groups utilise the centre, and you can usually watch a free rehearsal on weekday mornings. Temporary exhibits of paintings and carvings are also held here and you may even see an artist at work.

### Literature

Fiji's small community of poets and writers produce gritty and real literature. Joseph C Veramu's 1996 novel *Moving Through the Streets* is an eye-opener about disaffected youth in Suva. Daryl Tarte's historical saga *Fiji* and more recent novel *Stalker on the Beach* look at the influence of outsiders on the country.

*Beyond Ceremony: An Anthology of Fiji Drama* showcases some of Fiji's playwrights, including Wilsoni Hereniko, Sudesh Mishra, Jo Nacola, Raymond Pillai and Larry Thomas.

Since the 1970s Indo-Fijian writers have increasingly worked in English. Writers of note include Subramani, Satendra Nandan and poet Mohit Prasad (*Eating Mangoes*, 2001). The theme of the injustice of indenture rates highly in Indo-Fijian literature.

Collections of women writers' poetry include *Of Schizophrenic Voices* by Frances Koya and *Nei Nim Manoa* by Teresia Teaiwa.

*Kava in the Blood* (1999) by Peter Thomson is the evocative autobiography of a white Fijian who became a senior civil servant and was imprisoned by Rabuka during the 1987 coup.

### Music

Unsurprisingly, reggae has been a major influence on contemporary Fijian music, and you're likely to hear Bob Marley and his Fijian counterparts recycled continuously on popular radio stations. Even if you're not a reggae fan, there's something inimitably Fijian about wailing the latest reggae track out the window and waving comrade-like to locals on a road trip.

Seru Serevi, Danny Costello and bands including Delai Sea and Voqa ni Delai Dokidoki are examples of contemporary Fijian fare. Black Rose is Fiji's most successful music export. Choral CDs are also extremely popular, thanks to the tradition of enthusiastic Sunday service attendance. Missing out on the rousing but dulcet tones of a Fijian mass would be a crime.

Music from Bollywood films and Indian dance and pop music are popular, as is classical *qawwali*. Vocal, tabla (percussion) and sitar lessons are given at Indian cultural centres.

### Bark Cloth

You'll most likely become acquainted with *tapa* (also known as *masi* or *malo*), the Fijian art of making bark cloth, during your first shopping expedition. The cloth is made from the inner bark of the paper mulberry bush, which has been soaked in water and scraped clean, then beaten and felted for hours into sheets of a fine, even texture. Intricate rust and brown patterns are printed either by hand or stencil, often carrying symbolic meaning. The paints are traditionally made from an infusion of candlenut and mangrove bark; pinker browns are made from red clays, and black from the soot of burnt *dakua* resin and charred candlenuts. For more about *tapa*, see p57.

### LANGUAGE

The majority of indigenous Fijians speak Fijian at home. Indo-Fijians speak Fijian-Hindi but English is the official language and spoken widely.

### Fijian basics

Hello.	<i>Bula!</i>
Hello (response).	<i>lo, bula/la, bula</i> (more respectful).
Goodbye (if departing long-term).	<i>Moce.</i>
See you later.	<i>Au sa lliu mada.</i>
How are you?	<i>Ni sa bula?</i>
Good, thanks.	<i>An sa bula vinaka.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>Vinaka (vakalevu).</i>
Yes.	<i>lo.</i>
No.	<i>Sega.</i>
My name is...	<i>O yau o...</i>

### Fijian-Hindi basics

Hello. ('How are you?')	<i>kaise</i>
Fine response.	<i>tik</i>
Farewell.	<i>fir milegaa</i>
Yes.	<i>ha</i>
No.	<i>nahi</i>
What's your name?	<i>aapke naam kaa hai?</i>
My name is...	<i>hamaar naam...</i>

There are no equivalents for 'please' and 'thank you' in Fijian-Hindi. To be polite in making requests, people use the word *thoraa* (a little) and a special form of the verb ending in *naa*, eg *thoraa nimak denaa* (please pass the salt). For 'thanks', people often just say *achhaa* (good).

### ENVIRONMENT Geography

The Fiji archipelago has about 332 islands, varying from those a few metres in diameter to Viti Levu ('Great Land') at 10,400 sq km. Only about one-third are inhabited. The smaller islands are generally of coral or limestone formation, while the larger ones are of volcanic origin; hot springs continue to boil on Vanua Levu. Fiji's highest peak is Viti Levu's majestic Tomanivi (Mt Victoria) at 1323m.

### Ecology

Fiji's tropical forests are home to some of the richest natural communities in the South Pacific. Unfortunately, economic progress and the wheels of industry have been around 15% of these forests cleared since the 1960s. Logging remains a constant, but many villages are turning to ecotourism as an alternative means of

income. However, while remote villages can benefit from the income brought by low-impact tourism, even sensitive developments bring additional pollution and rapid cultural change. Some resorts like to include the tag 'eco' in their moniker without actually following through with the whole idea.

Waste management is a national problem and marine pollution near Suva is severe. Overfishing and destructive fishing techniques are commonly employed and global warming has contributed to extensive coral bleaching.

Greenpeace and WWF have offices in Suva and they campaign regionally on issues including ocean fisheries and climate change.

### BEST EATING

Fijian food is predominantly a blend of Fijian, Indian, Western and Chinese styles, and is best enjoyed at these top eating experiences.

- Old Mill Cottage (p173) is a humble café dishing up authentic Fijian fare, including *palusami* (food wrapped in taro leaves and cooked in a *lova*) and fish stewed in coconut milk.
- Capital Palace (p172) in Suva has chaotic, boisterous and delicious yum cha sessions on weekend mornings. The predominantly Chinese crowd is all the recommendation you need.
- The chefs at delicate Daikoku in Nadi (p156) and Suva (p172) sizzle up superlative teppanyaki and serve some of the finest sushi and sashimi in the Pacific.
- Vilisite's seafood restaurants in Sigatoka (p162) and on the Coral Coast (p164) cater to seafood fans, with a long menu of traditional and Western dishes from the deep.
- Ashiyana (p172) serves curries so spicy even the taxi drivers fear them.
- Tata's (p156) is an unadorned curry joint absent from the tourist brochures, but the hot and spicy dishes are amongst Fiji's finest.

## VITI LEVU

pop 581,000 / area 10,400 sq km

Viti Levu, the largest island in the Fijian archipelago, presides over the country like a great chief. It's where the wheels of industry, commerce and politics turn, and about 75% of the population reside. Rather than offering surf and sun, Viti Levu's greatest asset is its interior – a mass of dense and steamy highlands where you can trek mountains, freshen up under a waterfall and visit a traditional village. A ribbon of comfortable resorts skirt the island's south along the Coral Coast, overlooking a vivid reef just offshore. Suva, the largest city in the South Pacific, is a sultry hub of culture, cuisine and urban activity. In a phrase, Viti Levu is the 'other Fiji', offering visitors a wealth of landscapes and activities they never expected.

### ORIENTATION

Suva, the country's capital, largest city and main port, is in the southeast. Most travellers arrive in the west of the island at Nadi International Airport, 9km north of central Nadi and 24km south of Lautoka. See p150 for information on getting to and from Nadi airport.

Nadi and Suva are linked by the sealed Queens Rd which runs along the southern perimeter of Viti Levu (221km) and contains the scattering of villages and resorts known as the Coral Coast.

Heading north from Suva, the Kings Rd 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 Lautoka. South of Rakiraki is Fiji's highest point – Tomanivi (Mt Victoria) at 1323m.

Three roads head up from the coast to the Nausori Highlands' villages of Navala and Bukuya (via Ba, Nadi and Sigatoka).

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**Bookmasters** (Map p168; ☎ 331 888; 173 Victoria Pde, Suva) Guidebooks, paperbacks, novels and maps.

**Fiji Museum** (Map p168; ☎ 331 5944; Ratu Cakobau Rd, Suva) The museum gift shop stocks an excellent selection of Fijian history, culture and wildlife literature.

**Suva Bookstore** (☎ 331 1355; Greig St, Suva)

#### Internet Access

**Alpha Computer** (Map p168; ☎ 330 0211; 181 Victoria Pde, Suva)

**Bula Internet Café** (Map p152; Main St, Nadi)

**Connect Internet Café** (Map p152; ☎ 670 7365; Shop 6, Connect Arcade, Lot 7, Queens Rd, Nadi)

**Connect Internet Café** (Map p168; ☎ 330 0777; Post Office Bldg, 10 Thomson St, Suva)

**Fintel** (Map p168; ☎ 331 2933; 158 Victoria Pde, Suva) The Fiji International Telecommunications office offers Internet access.

**Internet Café** (Map p158; cnr Narara Pde & Tavewa Ave, Lautoka)

**Republic of Cappuccino** (Map p168; ☎ 330 0828; Renwick Rd, Suva) Wireless access.

**TWicks Internet Café** (☎ 652 0928; 50 Sigatoka Valley Rd, Sigatoka)

### Medical Services

**All Care Medical Clinic** (Map p152; ☎ 672 0960; Colonial Plaza, Queens Rd, Namaka, Nadi)

**Boulevard Central Pharmacy** (Map p168; ☎ 330 3770; Shop 13, Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre, Ellery St, Suva)

**Boulevard Medical Centre** (Map p168; ☎ 331 3355; FNPF Downtown Boulevard, 33 Ellery St, Suva)

**Colonial War Memorial Hospital** (Map p168; ☎ 331 3444; Waimanu Rd, Suva)

**Fiji Recompression Chamber Facility** (☎ 885 0630; cnr Amy & Brewster Sts, Suva)

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

**Lautoka Hospital** (☎ 666 0399; Thomson Cres, Lautoka)

**Nadi Hospital** (Map p152; ☎ 670 1128; Market Rd, Nadi)

### Money

ANZ, Colonial National Bank and Westpac branches are abundant in Nadi, Lautoka and Suva. Most have foreign exchange facilities and ATMs that accept MasterCard and Visa. You can also exchange cash at Nadi International Airport. Outside of these cities ATMs are virtually nonexistent and exchange facilities are limited to resorts.

Independent foreign currency exchange:

**Just Exchange** (Map p152; ☎ 670 5477; Ground fl, Prouds Bldg, Main St, Nadi)

**Money Exchange** (Map p168; ☎ 330 3566; Thomson St, Suva)

### Post

**Post office** (Map p158; ☎ 666 0987; cnr Vitogo Pde & Tavewa Ave, Lautoka)

**Post office** (Map p152; ☎ 670 0001; Sahu Khan Rd, Nadi)

**Post office** (Map p168; ☎ 330 2022; Thomson St, Suva)

### Tourist Information

**South Pacific Tourism Organisation** (Map p168; ☎ 330 4177; www.spto.org; 3rd fl, Dolphin Plaza, cnr Loftus St & Victoria Pde, Suva; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Useful agency and website.

**Visitor information centre** (Map p152; ☎ 672 2433; www.bulafiji.com; Suite 107, Colonial Plaza, Namaka, Nadi; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-4pm Fri) Head office of the Fiji Visitors Bureau (FVB), the government-run tourist information service.

**Visitor information centre** (Map p168; ☎ 330 2433; www.bulafiji.com; cnr Thomson & Scott Sts, Suva; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Suva office of the FVB.

### Travel Agencies

**Awesome Adventures Fiji** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com; 2/534 Main St, Nadi) Operates the *Yasawa Flyer* to the Yasawa and Mamanuca Groups (see p184).

**Hunts Travel** (Map p168; ☎ 331 5288; fax 330 2212; 1st fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St, Suva) Domestic and international flights, plus hotels and cars.

**Margaret Travel Service** (Map p152; ☎ 672 1988; fax 672 1992; Upstairs, Nadi airport concourse, Nadi)

**Rosie Holidays** (Map p152; ☎ 672 2755; www.rosiefiji.com; Nadi airport concourse, Nadi) Organises road tours, cruises, accommodation and Thrifty Car Rental.

**Sun Vacations** (Map p152; ☎ 672 4273; www.sunvacationsfiji.com; Nadi airport concourse, Nadi)

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Travelling around Viti Levu is easy and safe and most visitors will encounter a warm reception, particularly in rural areas. As with most urbanised centres, Nadi, Lautoka and Suva offer some dangers. Pickpockets roam, so keep your valuables out of sight, particularly in crowded areas like the market or dance floors. Walking around during daylight hours is a perfectly safe exercise; however, as soon as night begins to descend it's a no go. This is particularly pertinent in Suva – from dusk onwards locals will catch a taxi, even for a distance of 300m, so you should do so as well. Taxis are metered, cheap and safe (see p150).

There have been reports of muggings in Colo-i-Suva Forest Park (see p167), so head there in a group or pay the minimal fee for a guide.

### TRANSPORT

#### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

Most travellers arrive in Fiji at Nadi International Airport. See p213 for details of airline offices.

**Air Fiji** (☎ 331 3666; www.airfiji.com.fj; 185 Victoria Pde, Suva) and **Sun Air** (☎ 330 8979; www.fiji.to; Victoria Pde, Suva) provide a good network of domestic

#### VITI LEVU IN...

##### Four Days

In all likelihood you'll land in Nadi – Fiji's international air hub. While you're there, make the most of it by booking a tour to the Nausori Highlands (p151) to see what lies beyond that tumbling ascent of hills. On your return to Nadi enjoy your first Fiji Bitter at atmospheric **Ed's Bar** (p157), then soak up the alcohol with a Fiji-Mex feast at the **Lazy Cactus** (p156).

On day two get outta town and into the vivid orchids at the **Garden of the Sleeping Giant** (p153), then hit the souvenir shops and markets (p157) to put a dent in your wallet.

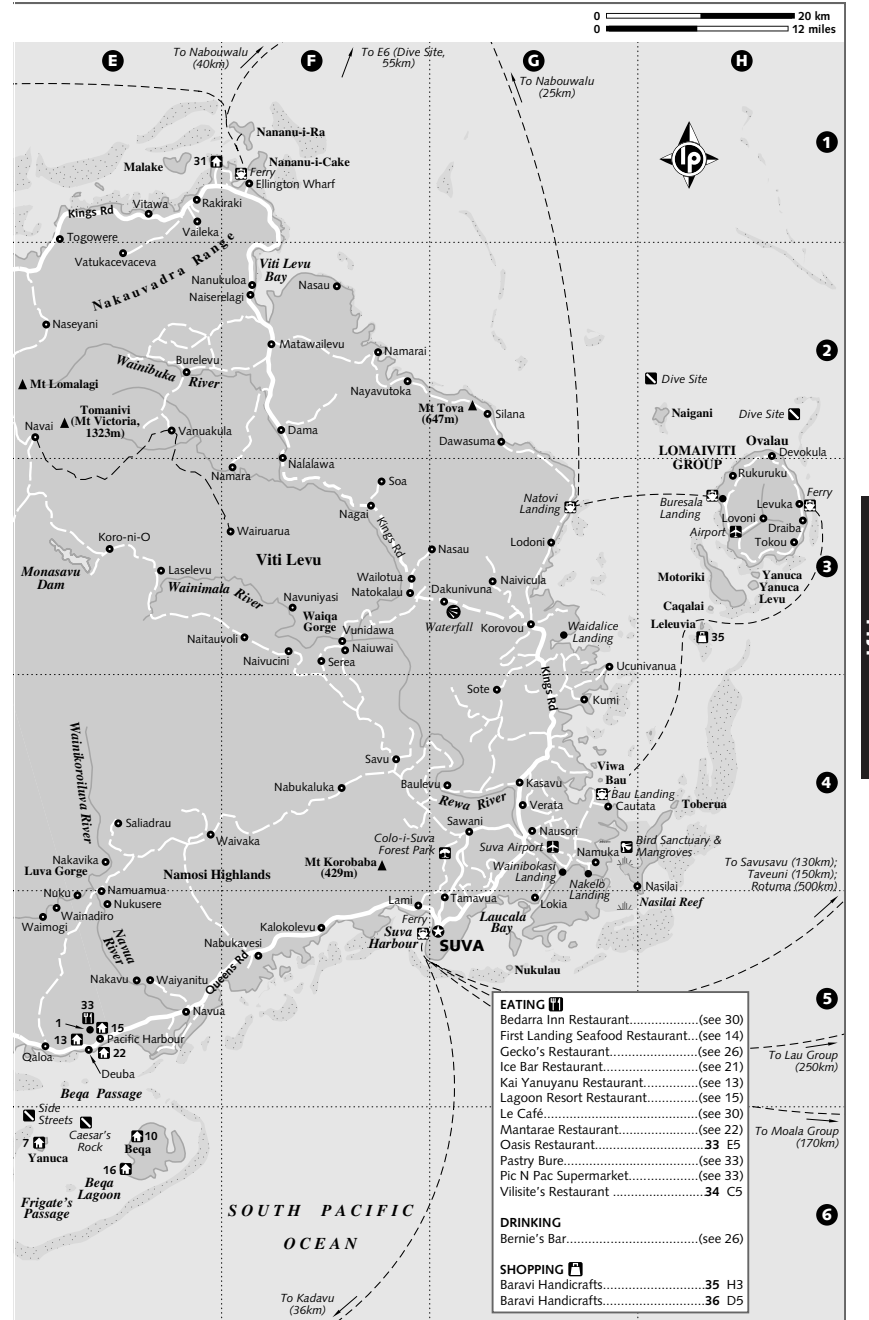
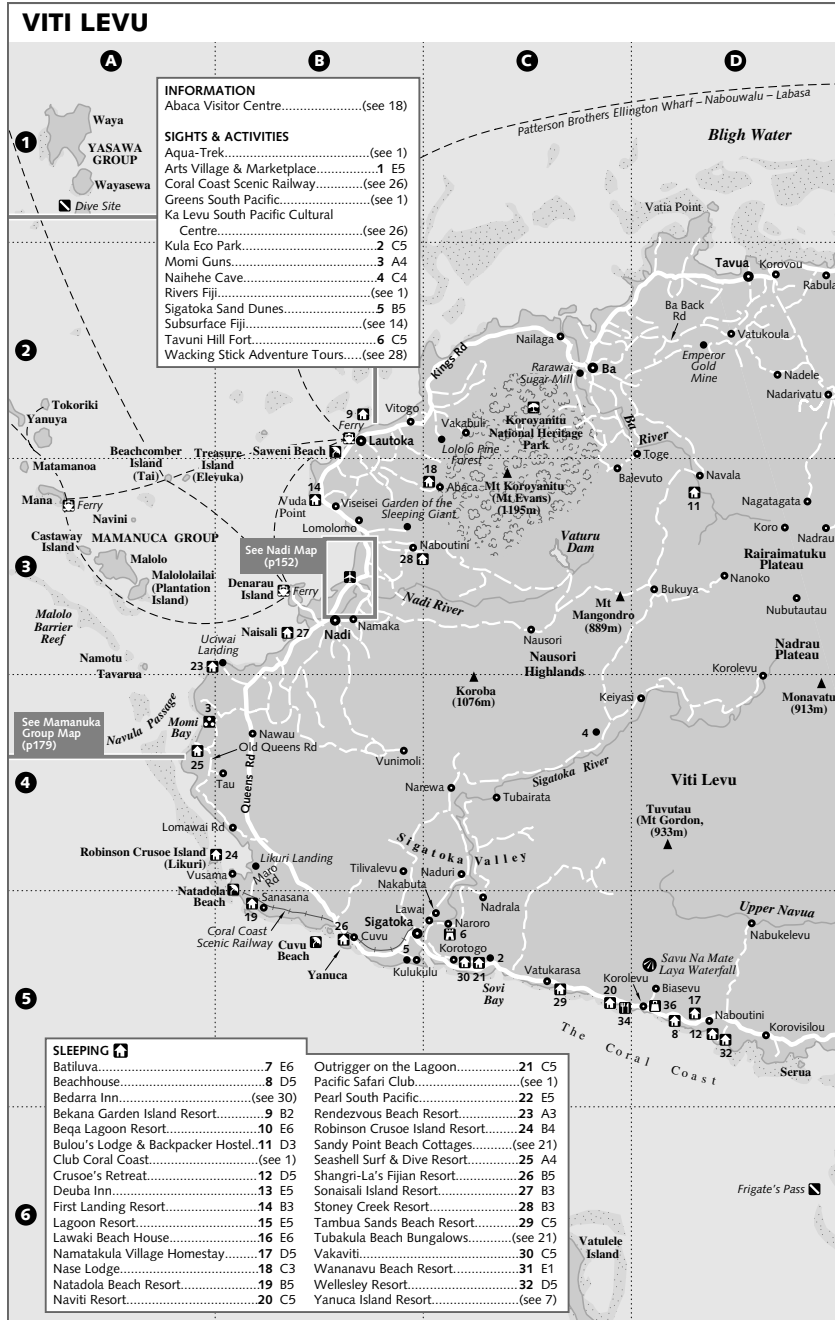
Day three is all about the coast. Start out with a morning picnic at **Natadola Beach** (p160), Viti Levu's finest stretch of sand, and then make your way to a Coral Coast resort (p164) for views of the offshore reef and some healthy pampering.

On day four scramble up and down the **Sigatoka Sand Dunes** (p162) or, for something less energetic, mingle with the wildlife at **Kula Eco Park** (p163).

##### One Week

Continue your Viti Levu exploration with a dose of diving in **Beqa Lagoon** (p165) or a kayak tour up the **Navua River** (p165). Rest the bones with an indulgent night at the **Pearl South Pacific** (p165).

Day six should place you firmly in Suva, where you can meander through the **Fiji Museum** (p166), fuel up on a curry or Fijian speciality at the **Old Mill Cottage** (p173) and savour the Suva nightlife at **Traps Bar** (p173).



flights from Nadi and Suva to many of the other larger islands. Main routes from Suva include: Kadavu (F\$260); Labasa (F\$210) and Savusavu (F\$160) on Vanua Levu; Taveuni (F\$200); Rotuma (F\$430); Vanua Balavu (F\$200) in the Lau Group; and Nadi (F\$170). Main routes from Nadi include Kadavu (F\$330), Labasa (F\$230), Savusavu (F\$220), Taveuni (F\$280) and Suva (F\$170).

## BOAT

The following ferry services link Viti Levu to the outer islands:

**Awesome Adventures** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com; 2/534 Main St, Nadi) Large catamaran to the Mamanuca and Yasawa Group islands (see p184).

**Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; 1 Walu St, Lautoka) Sails from Suva to Savusavu (see p194) and then on to Taveuni (p200).

**Consort Shipping** (Map p168; ☎ 330 2877; fax 330 3389; Ground fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St, Suva) Follows the same route as Beachcomber Cruises.

**Kadavu Shipping** (☎ 331 1766, 339 5000, 339 5788; Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva) Sails between Suva and Kadavu (see p207).

**Patterson Brothers Shipping** Suva (Map p168; ☎ 331 5644; fax 330 1652; Suites 1 & 2, Epworth Arcade, Nina St); Lautoka (Map p158; ☎ 666 1173; 15 Tukani St) Sails to Vanua Levu (see p194) and Levuka (see p190).

**Saliabasaga Shipping** (☎ 330 3403; Walu Bay, Suva) Sails from Suva to the Lau Group (see p209).

**South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj; Port Denarau, Nadi) Fast catamarans from Denarau Marina to the Mamanuca islands (see p179).

**Western Shipping** (☎ 331 4467; Naryan Jetty, Suva) Sails to Rotuma (see p189).

## Getting Around

Express buses, tourist buses, minibuses and carriers zip around the island via the Queens and Kings Rds. Sunbeam Transport and Pacific Transport are the main carriers on Viti Levu (see p215 for more information). Before heading to an isolated area, check that there is a return bus so you don't get stranded – sometimes the last bus of the day stays at the final village.

## TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Nadi International Airport is 9km north of downtown Nadi, and there are frequent local buses from just outside the airport along the Queens Rd to town (65c); a taxi is F\$10. Most of the hotels have free transfer vehicles awaiting international flights.

Nausori International Airport is 23km northeast of downtown Suva. There are no direct local buses between Suva and the airport, but **Nausori Taxi & Bus Service** (☎ 331 2185, 330 4178) has regular buses to and from the Holiday Inn in Suva (F\$3). A taxi to or from downtown Suva costs a set F\$20 (debate is futile). Alternatively, cover the 3km to Nausori's bus station by taxi (about F\$3), then catch one of the frequent local buses to Suva bus station for about F\$1.65.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Viti Levu is easy to explore by car or motorcycle, although for the unsealed highland roads you'll generally need a 4WD. See p216 for details of car-hire companies.

## TAXI

Taxis generally only use meters in Suva; elsewhere you need to agree on a price before setting out:

**Carnarvon Taxi** (☎ 331 5315) Suva

**Jason's Taxis** (☎ 337 2220) Suva

**Piccadilly Taxis** (☎ 330 4302; ☎ 24hr) Suva

**Ratan's Taxi** (☎ 346 0329) Pacific Harbour

**Sanyo Cabs** (☎ 330 4541) Suva

## VITI LEVU FOR CHILDREN

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 a resort on one of the **Mamanuca** (p180) or **Yasawa Group islands** (p185), many of which have abundant activities to occupy kids.

A day on the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** (see p161) is a fun way for kids to gain an appreciation of Fiji's landscape. Nearby, the **Ka Levu South Pacific Cultural Centre** (see p161) showcases Fijian singing, dancing and ceremonies that will entertain children. A little more kitsch and flashy are the demonstrations at the **Arts Village** (p164) in Pacific Harbour.

The Coral Coast is home to a number of attractions that will appeal to kids. Take them for a beachside horse ride at **Natadola Beach** (p160) or show them Fiji's less-domesticated wildlife at the excellent **Kula Eco Park** (p163).

The **Fiji Museum** (p166) is choc-full of cultural and historical exhibits (including cannibal utensils – *eeewwww!*) that will capture inquisitive young minds. You can also take them for a dip with local families

at the **Suva Olympic Swimming Pool** (p167) and then have a swing on the monkey bars at the family-infested **Umara Park** (p169). The picnic tables at this esplanade playground make it perfect for a lunch pit stop.

Off the northern coast, **Nananu-i-Ra** (p176) is only a short hop from the mainland and offers calm swimming and snorkelling, and a good amount of self-catering accommodation. Kids can also participate in kayaking and windsurfing here.

## TOURS

Day trips and cruises to the stunning Mamanuca and Yasawa Group islands are understandably popular. Malololailai, Mana, Beachcomber and Castaway usually take day-trippers. See p180 and p185 for more information.

Based at Stoney Creek Resort (p154), **Wacking Stick Adventure Tours** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 672 4673, 995 3003; www.wackingstickadventures.com) offers excellent mountain-biking tours into the highlands from F\$120/135 per half-day/day.

The easiest way to visit the majestic Viti Levu Highlands is on a tour. **Mount Batilamu Trek** (☎ 664 5747, 927 3592; fax 664 5547; per person F\$360; Tue & Thu mid-Apr–mid-Nov) organises 2½-day tours up the Sabeto Valley, which stretches between Nadi and Lautoka. Accommodation is in villages and tours include meals, drinks and transfers from Nadi and Lautoka hotels.

Additional highland tours picking up from Nadi:

**Mountain View Tours** (☎ 651 3620) Sightseeing and trekking tours for small groups from F\$130/240 per person for one-day/three-day tours.

**Rivers Fiji** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 345 0147; www.riversfiji.com) River-rafting and kayaking trips to the Namosi Highlands from F\$190 per person.

**Rosie Holidays** (Map p152; ☎ 672 2935; www.rosiefiji.com) Nausori Highland day treks per person F\$80.

## NADI

pop 30,900

Fiji's main tourist hub is a bit of everything to locals and a lot of nothing to visitors. This town-cum-city-cum-business centre is really an ever-growing urban sprawl, littered with hotels to accommodate the constant flow of travellers heading in or out. The population resides in several villages strung out along dusty patches of Queens Rd, and the northern horizon is dominated by the hazy Nausori Highlands.

While uninspiring, Nadi is a convenient base to organise trips around Viti Levu or to offshore islands. 'Downtown' is a kilometre or so of shopping, eating and other commercial options, and a good place to grab last-minute gifts before heading home.

Nadi makes no bones about the fact that it's the antithesis of island paradise; once you get your head around where it's coming from, you're likely to enjoy the place more fully.

## Sights

### SRI SIVA SUBRAMANIYA SWAMI TEMPLE

Striking a vibrant pose against a dramatic mountainous backdrop, this peaceful Hindu temple (☎ 670 0016; admission F\$3.50; ☎ 5am-8pm daily) leaves the hustle of Main St far in its wake. The soothing grounds are an excellent spot to contemplate philosophical theories... or just chill for a while. The temple itself

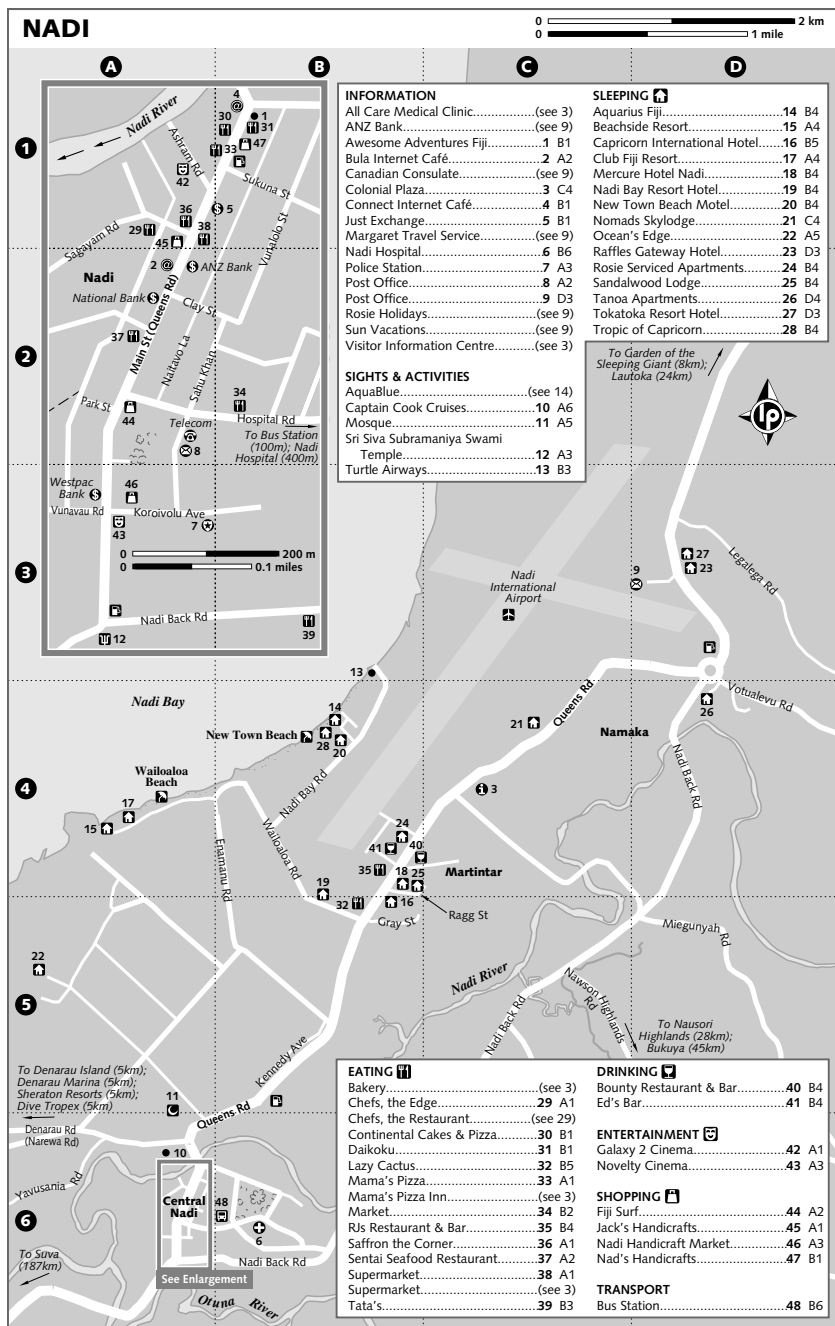
## HINDU SYMBOLISM

Tiny Hindu temples and shrines dot the Fijian countryside, each one symbolising the body or residence of the soul. For Hindus, union with God can be achieved through prayer and by ridding the body of impurities – hence no meat in the belly or shoes on the feet when entering a temple.

Inside the temples Hindus give symbolic offerings and blessings to their many gods. Water and flowers symbolise the Great Mother who personifies nature, while burning camphor represents the light of knowledge and understanding. Smashing a coconut denotes cracking humans' three weaknesses: egotism (the hard shell), delusion (the fibre) and material attachments (the outermost covering). The white kernel and sweet water represent the pure soul within.

Hindus believe that a body enslaved to the spirit and denied all comforts will become one with the Great Mother. Life is compared to walking on fire: a disciplined approach, like that required in the firewalking ceremony, leads to balance, self-acceptance and the ability to see good in all.





is decorated with carved wooden deities that travelled all the way from India, along with the artists who painted the multihued exterior and vivid frescoes.

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.

Visitors are welcome as long as they're dressed modestly and haven't consumed alcohol or meat that day. Don't snap photos inside the temple.

**GARDEN OF THE SLEEPING GIANT**

This beautiful garden (☎ 672 2701; Wailoko Rd; adult/child/family F\$12/6/30; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) is a tribute to the orchid, boasting dozens of varieties of the colourful flower amid a sea of tropical vegetation. Tucked beneath the foothills of the Sabeto mountain range, the garden offers visitors a network of walking tracks, lily ponds and perfect picnic spots. To get here, travel along the Queens Rd for about 6km north of Nadi airport and turn east onto Wailoko Rd for a further 2km. A taxi from Nadi will cost around F\$13.

**Activities**

**DIVING**

There are three good diving outfits in the Nadi area, all of which visit dive sites in the Mamanucas and come with excellent reputations:

- AquaBlue** (☎ 672 6111; www.aquabluefiji.com; Lot 33, Wasawasa Rd, New Town Beach, Nadi) One-/two-tank dives F\$120/160, PADI open water course F\$500.
- Dive Tropex** (☎ 675 0944; www.divetropex.com; Sheraton Fiji Resort, Denarau) One-/two-tank dives F\$120/185, PADI open water course F\$670.
- Subsurface Fiji** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 666 6738; www.subsurfacefiji.com) Based at the First Landing Resort (p156), a two-tank dive/PADI open water course costs F\$190/560.

**GOLF & TENNIS**

The **Denarau Golf & Racquet Club** (☎ 675 9711; info@denaragolf.com.fj; Denarau Island) has an immaculately groomed 18-hole golf course with bunkers in the shape of sea creatures. Green fees are F\$70/110 for nine/18 holes. A game of tennis costs F\$25 per hour on a synthetic or grass court. Racquet hire is F\$12 per person.

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

**SCENIC FLIGHTS**

On a clear day, most domestic flights offer gorgeous views of islands, coral reefs and blue-green waters. Easy day trips include Nadi to Malololailai and Mana in the Mamanucas (confirm in advance to use resort facilities).

- Charter services and joy flights: **Island Hoppers** (☎ 672 0410; info@helicopters.com.fj) Helicopter transfers and flights to Malololailai or Castaway (one way per person F\$210), 20-minute Sabeto Range flights (F\$170 per seat for four to six passengers).
- Pacific Island Seaplanes** (☎ 672 5644; www.fijisea.com) Transfers to the Mamanuca (Castaway Island F\$190), Yasawa and Lau Groups.
- Turtle Airways** (☎ 672 1888; reservations@turtleairways.com) Scenic flights and transfers to the Mamanucas and Turtle Island. Contact the company for rates.

**Sleeping**

The black-sand New Town and Wailoaloa Beaches will disappoint anyone with visions of a tropical isle, but these areas are quiet and peaceful and have some of the best accommodation options. Closer to town, there's a scattering of hotels along the highway and in Martintar which have easy access to buses in and out of downtown.

**BUDGET**

**New Town Beach**  
**Aquarius Fiji** (☎ 672 6000; www.aquarius.com.fj; 17 Wasawasa Rd; dm F\$25-28, d F\$80-90; ☎ ☎ ☎) A professional setup, with a good restaurant and bar, and pool area stretching languidly onto the beach. Hammocks strung between palms beckon sun addicts, and there's a central TV room for wet weather. Doubles are cheerful and sunny and those upstairs have balconies overlooking the beach. Dorms are en suite and comfortable.

**Tropic of Capricorn** (☎ 672 3089; chopkins@bigpond.net.au; 11 Wasawasa Rd; dm/s/d F\$15/30/40; ☎ ☎) Run by 'Mama', who knows a thing or 50 about Fiji and adopts all guests like stray kittens, this homy lodge sits on a patch of beach with tidy dorms and a central dining area. Spacious singles and doubles are in a two-storey house around the corner with shared facilities.

**New Town Beach Motel** (☎ 672 3339; newtownbeach@connect.com.fj; 5 Wasawasa Rd; r/f F\$40/50; ☎ ☎) Perfect for travellers looking for budget tariffs without the hype, this small and unassuming motel is nestled behind a fold of

trees. The fan-cooled rooms are neat, petite and lovely, and the small restaurant (mains F\$10) serves simple and filling fare.

### Along the Highway

**Sandalwood Lodge** (☎ 672 2044; sandalwood@connect.com.fj; Ragg St, Martintar; s F\$75-95, d/tw F\$85-105; 🏠 🚗 🚰) A budget option in a midrange shell, this lodge has self-contained rooms with perky décor, kitchenettes and TVs. Ground-floor rooms have patios leading to the pool, and those upstairs have larger interiors and balconies. The location off the main road promises a good night's sleep.

**Nadi Bay Resort Hotel** (☎ 672 3599; www.fiji.nadibayhotel.com; Wailoaloa Rd; dm F\$21-25, s F\$60-80, d F\$80-100, st F\$120; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) Perennially busy, the Nadi Bay is a one-stop backpacker hub with a range of dorms, doubles and suites, two excellent restaurants (mains F\$10 to F\$20), two bars, a palm-fringed pool and a smorgasbord of other facilities. It accommodates a sizeable clientele of 18- to 35-year-olds, and the atmosphere can be a little impersonal, but couples and groups love it.

**Nomads Skylodge** (☎ 672 2200; www.nomadsky.lodge.com.fj; Queens Hwy, Namaka; 8-/6-/4-bed dm F\$22/24/26, d F\$35-120; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) Something of a camp for grown-ups, this lodge has neat and plain dorms, spartan twins and air-conditioned bathrooms with phone and TV, all scattered throughout grassy grounds. There are also basketball and volleyball courts, and it's popular with tour groups.

### Other Areas

**Stoney Creek Resort** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 672 2206; www.stoneycreekfiji.net; reservations@stoneycreekfiji.net; Sabeto Rd; dm F\$20, s/d without bathroom F\$30/45, d/tr with bathroom F\$55/75; 🏠 🚗 🚰) Hidden at the base of the highlands, this resort has a taste of the Wild West with cosy dorms in mock train carriages and doubles with sweeping views in cute and private *bure*. There's a saloon-style bar and restaurant (meals F\$6 to F\$10) and a good range of activities on offer. The resort provides a free airport shuttle.

**Rendezvous Beach Resort** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 651 0571; www.surfdivefiji.com; Uciwai Landing; camping per person F\$35, dm/s/d F\$55/75/140; 🏠 🚗 🚰) The air is thick with the scent of board wax, sunblock and ocean lingo at this surfer retreat that offers minimal bungalows and oodles of grass

to pitch a tent. Boat transfers to the Manuca surf breaks cost F\$50 per day and a two-tank dive/PADI open water course costs F\$150/500. Transfers from the airport are F\$40.

### MIDRANGE

#### Wailoaloa Beach

**Club Fiji Resort** (☎ 670 20150; www.clubfiji-resort.com; Wailoaloa Beach Rd; d F\$100-165; 🏠 🚗 🚰) A lively option for midrangers looking to avoid the big resorts, Club Fiji has classy Mediterranean-style villas, ocean-view *bure*, and smaller timber and thatched *bure*. All digs are decent value and the on-site restaurant (mains F\$12 to F\$30) hosts Mexican, Mongolian and Fijian theme nights and live entertainment.

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

### Along the Highway

**Raffles Gateway Hotel** (☎ 672 2444; www.affles.gateway.com; Queens Rd; d F\$70-130; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰)

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Beachside Resort** (☎ 670 3488; www.beachsideresortfiji.com; Wailoaloa Beach Rd; d F\$60-90, f F\$125; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) Actually it's not quite Beachside – it's more like Beachnear. This small and personal resort may have a cheeky moniker, but the appealing digs, helpful staff, tidy grounds and funky restaurant atone. Stylish and immaculate rooms with polished tiled floors and plenty of natural light are dressed in timber and Fijian prints. The more expensive versions have balconies overlooking the pool and alfresco dining area, while cheaper (but no less classy) rooms are tucked behind the main complex. The compact grounds have a small splay of poolside sun lounges where you can sup on a freshly blended fruit cocktail. The resort's trendy Coriander Café (mains F\$12 to F\$24) dishes up inventive fare along the lines of Thai chicken pizza or coconut fish bites.

This well-established hotel with an expansive central lawn is opposite the airport. The rooms are good value regardless of the location; the small standard versions are cool and crisp, and pricier superior rooms have lounge settings and patios. There's also a poolside restaurant (mains F\$20 to F\$30) and kids will love the water slide.

**Capricorn International Hotel** (☎ 672 0088; www.capricorn-hotels-fiji.com; Queens Rd, Martintar; r F\$85-110, f 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 F\$10 to F\$25), laundry service, salon and small shop. Rates include breakfast.

**Mercuré Hotel Nadi** (☎ 672 2438/2255; reservations@mercurenadi.com.fj; r F\$135; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) Renovated and fancied up into a flashy haven of creature comforts, the Mercuré offers large 'deluxe' and modern 'superior' rooms, all of which have bar fridges, TVs and sassy bathrooms. Families populate the grassy grounds, which include a sizeable pool and alfresco restaurant (mains F\$20).

**Rosie Serviced Apartments** (☎ 672 2755; reservations@rosie.com.fj; Queens Rd, Martintar; r F\$70-115; 🏠 🚗 🚰) Persevere past the confronting brick exterior and you'll find meticulously maintained studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments which are great value for self-caterers. The décor could do with a lift but there's enough room in even the studios to accommodate a small nation and each apartment has a balcony.

### TOP END

#### Near the Airport

**Tanoa Apartments** (☎ 672 3685; www.tanoahotels.com; off Votualevu Rd, Namaka; r/st F\$170/215; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) This lofty complex exudes mountain vibes with cool stone walls, arched wooden doors and superb apartments catering to the self-contained sophisticate. Ample windows in each provide plenty of natural light and sweeping highland views, and the interiors contain modern kitchens, cushioned window benches and classy décor.

**Tokatoka Resort Hotel** (☎ 672 0222; tokatokaresort@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd, Nadi; r F\$175-230; 🏠 🚗 🚰) Low-rise but high-class, Tokatoka

has top-end trimmings without the usual sea of concrete and steel. Polished and semidetached villas are peppered throughout expansive grounds, thick with tropical vegetation. Some are self-contained and the wealth of facilities include a restaurant (mains F\$15 to F\$30), health spa and water slide.

### Denarau

Denarau is awash with Sheraton flair, each of the three flashy resorts having distinctive style and all the five-star perks. Couples, package holdovers and families constitute the bulk of guests, and the latter are well catered for with a daily entertainment programme for children and a baby-sitting service. In addition, there are 18 restaurants, a bevy of bars and plenty of activities. Industrious construction is expanding this resort island, with more top-end options in the making.

**West Bus Transport** (☎ 675 0777) has six buses daily (less frequently on Sunday) from Nadi bus station to Denarau Island. A taxi from downtown costs F\$12; one from Nadi airport costs F\$24.

**Sheraton Royal Denarau Resort** (☎ 675 0000; fax 675 0818; sheratondenarau@sheraton.com; r incl breakfast from F\$630; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) Although it's the oldest of the chain, this resort is the most Fijian-flavoured of the group. 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 F\$540; 🏠 🚗 🚰 🚰) *Trés chic* with a splash of the Mediterranean, these condos have ocean views and plenty of panache. Blocks are separated by grassy lawns and colourful flora. Seasonal price variations provide some great deals and advance booking is likely to reduce the rack rate considerably.

**Sheraton Denarau Villas** (☎ 675 0777; www.sheraton.com/denaravillas; r incl breakfast from F\$640, st incl breakfast from F\$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 the staff wait on you hand and foot.

## Sonaisali Island

**Sonaisali Island Resort** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 670 6011; www.sonaisali.com; r incl breakfast F\$420, st incl breakfast from F\$580; ☒ ☑ ☐ ☑) This fancy resort occupies an entire (teeny) island and offers comfortable (if a little predictable) hotel rooms with sea views. Voluminous suites are in thatched *bure* with high ceilings and elevated verandas. On-site is a beauty spa, poolside restaurant (meal package F\$65/35 per adult/child), free kids' club and more activities than you could possibly exhaust.

Naisali is a 25-minute drive and three-minute boat shuttle from Nadi airport. Turn off the Queens Rd at Nacobi Rd and drive for a couple of kilometres by sealed road to the resort landing and taxi stand.

## Other Areas

**First Landing Resort** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 6666171; www.firstlandingfiji.com; Vuda Point; r incl breakfast F\$145-220, st incl breakfast F\$440-520; ☒ ☑ ☐ ☑) Bursting with Australian, NZ and American package tourists, this brochure-perfect resort treats its guests to *bure* and two-bedroom villas with cheerful décor, tiled bathrooms and bedrooms, and mosquito-screened verandas. An abundance of palms and foliage keeps the ambience tropical, and the lagoon-style pool compensates for a lacklustre beach.

## Eating

Although small, Nadi caters to travellers' palates well with a decent variety of Indian, Chinese and Western cuisine, with many restaurants serving at least a couple of traditional Fijian dishes.

## CAFÉS & QUICK EATS

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

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

**Saffron the Corner** (☎ 670 1233; Main St, Nadi; mains F\$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 Hindi tunes butchered by a drum machine, but it's a good spot for a mountainous feed.

## RESTAURANTS

**Chefs, the Restaurant** (☎ 670 3131/3322; Sagayam Rd, Nadi; mains F\$30-45; ☒ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A Nadi institution, swanky Chefs is perfect for a splurge on taste and atmosphere. Meals match the refined surrounds and the global menu offers imaginative duckling ravioli, salmon and king prawns or Afghan chicken.

**Daikoku** (☎ 670 3622; Main St, Nadi; mains F\$20-30; ☒ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Perched around large square hot plates, patrons sip Asahi beer while their individual chefs perform the sometimes gentle, sometimes energetic, but always entertaining art of teppanyaki on exquisite chicken, beef and seafood dishes. There is also delicate sushi or sashimi for starters. Bookings recommended.

**First Landing Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 666 6171; www.firstlandingfiji.com; Vuda Point; mains F\$16-30; ☒ lunch & dinner) This resort restaurant is worth the trip for the excellent seafood, although the accompanying pastas, burgers and other resort-style food is fairly timid. It all goes down pretty well at the outdoor seating, which offers uninterrupted views of the Mamanucas.

**Chefs, the Edge** (☎ 670 3131; Sagayam Rd, Nadi; mains F\$16-30; ☒ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The café version of the restaurant upstairs has

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Lazy Cactus** (☎ 672 6890; Queens Rd, Martintar; mains F\$12-20; ☒ lunch & dinner) This snappy little cantina oozes a warm atmosphere, south of the border charm and delicious smells. The food is Mexican and it mean business: burritos, enchiladas, tortillas and other faves are up for grabs. But so too is a kicking *camarones en mojo de ajo* (shrimp with garlic, chillies and butter) and a chilli salt squid that leaves a sizzling reminder on your lips. You can dine inside or in the pleasant courtyard.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Ed's Bar** (☎ 672 4650; Lot 51, Queens Rd, Martintar) The place to hit the bitters in Nadi, Ed's is something of an institution/old friend/personality all of its own. Most nights it lures a buzzing and mixed crowd of tourists, locals and expats (is there anyone else left?) who return for the cheap beer and über-friendly bar staff. It's more than just a watering hole though – live bands often hit the boards in the main bar, and there's a small restaurant (mains F\$8 to F\$10) attached. A handful of breezy tables adorns the front entrance but you'll need to get your beer boots in early to beat the garrulous crowd.

a roomy and relaxed interior and serves pizza, pasta, salads and burgers. Best of all are the Thai and Indian curries and the blessed air-con cools that Vindaloo sting.

**Sentai Seafood Restaurant** (☎ 670 0928; Main St, Nadi; mains F\$12-25; ☒ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) The décor may be shambolic but Sentai's Asian-infused menu is deliberate and delish. There's a heavy emphasis on seafood and adventurous souls can tuck into sea cucumber combination hotpots. For the meek there's beef in black bean sauce or prawns with lemon and ginger.

Also recommended:

**Mama's Pizza** (Downtown ☎ 670 0221; Main St, Nadi; Namaka ☎ 672 0922; Colonial Plaza, Queens Rd; mains F\$8-20; ☒ lunch & dinner) Traditional crowd-pleasers, plus woodfired gourmet treats.

**RJs Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 672 2900; Queens Rd, Martintar; mains F\$20-30; ☒ dinner Tue-Sun) Good steaks, char-grills and seafood.

## SELF-CATERING

Nadi has a large produce **market** (Hospital Rd), with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. There are several large supermarkets and bakeries downtown, including at the Colonial Plaza.

## Drinking

**Bounty Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 672 0840; 79 Queens Rd, Martintar) This convivial bar/restaurant is thick with seafaring kitsch and hosts a solid drinking phase somewhere between dinner and the live music. Things get loud, beery and fun as the night draws on. Popular with expats.

The bars at Aquarius Fiji (p153) and Nadi Bay Resort Hotel (p154) are atmospheric options for a beer or cocktail.

## Entertainment

**Planters Lounge** (☎ 675 0000; sheratondenarau@shera-ton.com) Inside the Sheraton Royal (p155),

this sweeping cocktail bar features live Fijian music nightly. On Wednesday night you can catch fire-walking, and on Saturday nights a *meke* (F\$50/25 per adult/child over 12, including a *lovo* dinner).

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

## Shopping

Nadi's Main St is a tribute to souvenir and duty-free shops.

**Jack's Handicrafts** (☎ 670 0744; Main St, Nadi) This colossal outlet of Jack's sells touristy crafts, clothing, jewellery and items for the home at reasonable prices but it's all fairly mass-produced.

**Nadi Handicraft Market** (Koroivolu Ave, Nadi) You'll have a better chance of finding something unique here, but check the prices in the shops beforehand to ensure you really are getting a bargain. Wooden items are unlikely to have been treated and may require quarantine.

**Fiji Surf** (☎ 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.

More souvenirs:  
**Nad's Handicrafts** (☎ 670 3588; Main St, Nadi) Similar stock and prices to Jack's.

**Pacific Art Shop** (☎ 675 0677; Sheraton Fiji Resort, Denarau) High-quality goods at higher prices.

## Getting There & Around

See p215 for information on getting to and from Nadi by bus. Regular local and express buses travel along Queens Rd to New Town Beach and Denarau Island (see p155). Taxis are plentiful in Nadi, but they don't use meters; agree on a price before getting in.

## LAUTOKA

pop 43,274

Fiji's second-largest city belies its urban rank with corridors of thick foliage, ambling wide streets and a deliciously relaxed ambience. Although it lacks the substance for an extended stay, Lautoka has a small botanical gardens and a large produce and handicraft market, and is a pleasant alternative to Nadi. It also has one of Fiji's strongest concentrations of Indo-Fijian culture, and the downtown grid teems with swaying saris and aromatic curry houses.

The **Lautoka Sugar Mill** has been operating here since 1903 and the local economy still relies heavily on the diminishing sugar industry. In cutting season, sugar trains putt

along the main street and in September the city crowns a Sugar Queen at the annual Sugar Festival.

### Sleeping

**Waterfront Hotel** (☎ 666 4777; waterfront@connect.com.fj; Marine Dve; d F\$120-140; ☒ ☑ ☒) Lautoka's top hotel has a waterfront location and the ambience and trimmings of a midrange US hotel chain. Spacious rooms have balconies and generic and cheerful décor. On site is a gym, small children's playground, bar and restaurant (see opposite).

**Lautoka Hotel** (☎ 666 0388; ltkhotel@connect.com.fj; 2-12 Naviti St; dm F\$15, d F\$35-65; ☒ ☑ ☒) This gracious corner hotel may have lost some of its kick but the neat and cosy rooms are

still distinguished enough to put a smile on your face. Pricier versions have air-con, private bathrooms and TVs, and there's a sweeping balcony upstairs which provides great views of the street below.

**Sea Breeze Hotel** (☎ 666 0717; fax 666 6080; Bekana Lane; s F\$35-50, d F\$40-55; ☒ ☑ ☒) Tucked down an alley near the city centre, this hotel has piously austere rooms (embellished only by the bedside Bible) which provide spotless and tranquil sanctuary. The more expensive sea-view rooms with air-con are the nicest. There's also a TV lounge, a bar and a restaurant that serves breakfast (F\$4 to F\$10).

**Saweni Beach Apartment Hotel** (☎ 666 1777; www.fiji4less.com; dm F\$17, st F\$80-100; ☒ ☑ ☒) Around 8km south of town, this beachside resort has bungalow-style apartments with simple interiors, modern kitchens and oodles of room. There's also one opulent beach house (F\$380) if you're looking to splurge. It's a great option for families and self-caterers but you'll need a car to enjoy the area.

More options:

**Bekana Garden Island Resort** (Map pp148-97; ☎ 664 0180; www.bekanastrandfiji.com.fj; d F\$125-280; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Sassy, family-friendly island resort.

**Cathay Hotel** (☎ 666 0566; www.fiji4less.com; Tavewa Ave; dm/d from F\$14/40; ☒ ☒) Weary but good for a cheap doss.

### Eating

**Chilli Tree Café** (☎ 665 1824; 3 Tukani St; meals F\$6-12; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) 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.

**Nan Ying** (☎ 665 2668; Nede St; mains F\$12-20; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) This diminutive restaurant sizzles up some of the finest seafood dishes in Fiji – coconut crab, baked lobster or salt-and-pepper fried prawns to name a few. Fragrant poultry and noodle dishes also grace the menu.

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

vibes and excellent food more than compensate. It's also a pleasant spot for a predinner drink.

**Virdivan Vegetarian Restaurant** (☎ 666 2990; 88 Naviti St; meals F\$4-7.50; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) 7.30am-6pm Mon-Wed, to 6.30pm Thu & Fri, to 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.

**Fins Restaurant** (☎ 666 4777; Marine Dve; mains F\$12-25; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) breakfast, lunch & dinner) At the Waterfront Hotel (see opposite), this cosmopolitan restaurant serves salads, BLTs, Thai curries and good Fijian dishes. The menu caters to tourist tastes and the interior is flashy and cool. On breezy days the outside tables with waterfront views are the very best seats in town.

Other dining options:

**Jolly Good** (cnr Naviti & Vakabale Sts; meals F\$3.50-5.50; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tasty takeaway in an alfresco setting.

**Ganga Vegetarian Restaurant** (cnr Naviti & Yasawa Sts; meals F\$2-5; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) breakfast & lunch) Good vegetarian curries.

### Drinking & Entertainment

Lautoka has a limited number of pubs and clubs, which generally veer towards the seaside side.

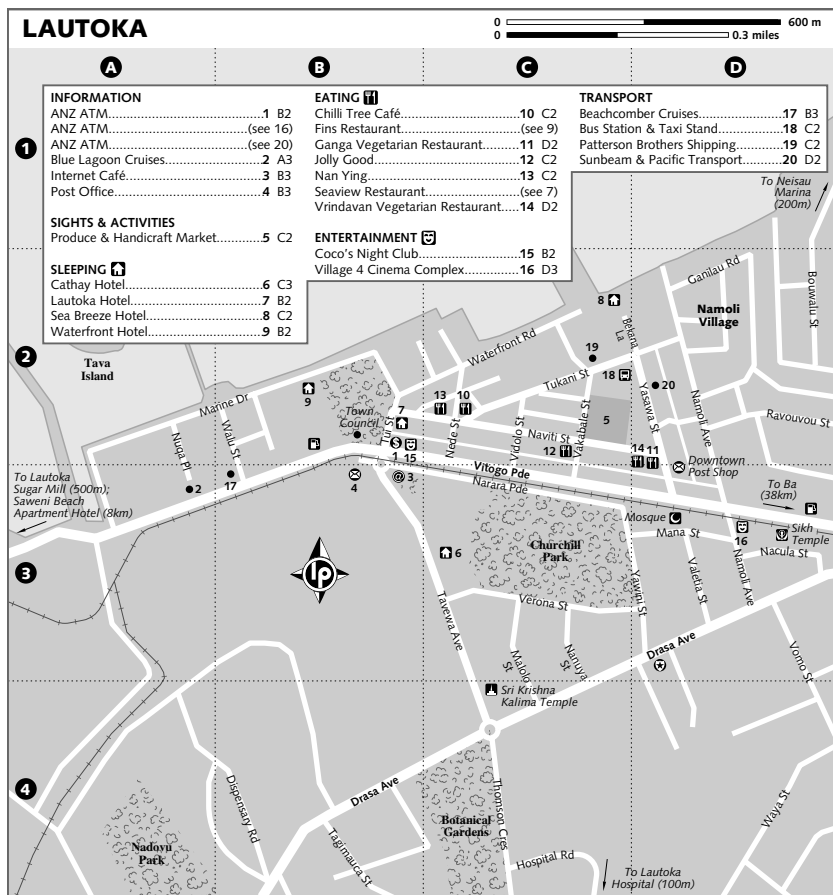
**Coco's Night Club** (☎ 666 8989; 151 Vitogo Pde) Probably the most welcoming club in town, Coco's puts on live music most Friday and Saturday nights, as well as happy hours nightly (5pm to 9pm).

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

### Getting There & Around

Local buses shuttle between Lautoka and Nadi every 15 minutes during the day (F\$2) and less frequently in the evening, as well as to and from Saweni Beach (F\$1, 45 minutes, six daily). There are also regular buses along the Kings Rd.

Sunbeam Transport and Pacific Transport also have frequent bus services to and from Nadi (F\$2.80, 1½ hours) and Suva (F\$13, six hours). Both companies have offices in Yasawa St, opposite the market, where you can pick up timetables.



Lautoka is easy to get around on foot. Taxis are plentiful and short rides are cheap. A taxi will cost approximately F\$8/25 from Saweni to Lautoka or Nadi airport.

## SOUTHERN VITI LEVU & THE CORAL COAST

South of Nadi the sealed and scenic Queens Rd winds through cane fields and sidles up to Viti Levu's southern coast. This region is peppered with small towns and accommodation options, particularly along the stretch of coastline known as the Coral Coast. Between Sigatoka and Pacific Harbour the road is flanked by waves of green hills on one side and a fringing reef that drops off dramatically into the deep blue of the South Pacific Ocean on the other.

### Momi Bay

The first interesting detour south of Nadi is towards Momi Bay along the old unsealed Queens Rd. The turn-off is 18km from Nadi.

En route you'll pass the **Momi Guns** (adult/child/family F\$3/1/6; ☒ 9am-5pm), an evocative WWII battery on a hilltop about 6km from the Queens Rd turn-off. The restored bunkers and fine collection of photos provide a tangible sense of the site's history and 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 F\$10, dm incl meals F\$60, s/d F\$40/65 ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) This isolated resort has grassy grounds with unadorned but comfortable dorms and lodge rooms, and classier self-contained *bure*. Lodge room number 1 will get you ocean views. The beach itself isn't spectacular, but it's family friendly and the activities include diving (two-tank dive/PADI open water course F\$170/550) and surfing.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Head 11km down Old Queens Rd, turn right and continue for another 1.5km. Airport transfers/taxis from Nadi are F\$15/50 each way (45 minutes). Local buses travel to and from Nadi (F\$2, one hour, three daily) and Sigatoka (F\$3, one hour, 1.30pm daily).

### Robinson Crusoe Island

This small coral island, also known as Likuri, is just off Natadola Beach.

Budget travellers swarm to the **Robinson Crusoe Island Resort** (☎ 651 0100; www.robinsoneislandfiji.com; dm/s/d from F\$70/90/170; ☒) for dizzy fun loosely packaged in a cultural wrapping. Accommodation is in basic thatched private *bure* or large dorms, all of which share bathrooms. There's a gorgeous white-sand beachfront and an intense (and slightly tacky) entertainment programme. Buffet meals are included in the rate and activities include windsurfing, snorkelling and diving (two-tank dive/PADI open water course F\$120/450). There are day trips from Nadi and Coral Coast hotels (F\$90 per person), but staying overnight is better value. Coach and boat transfers to and from Nadi cost F\$70.

### Natadola Beach

With a wide stretch of soft sand and several kilometres of pristine surf, Natadola is Viti Levu's best beach. Unlike surrounding beaches flanked by coral, Natadola provides good swimming regardless of the tide level and there is frequently enough churn for body surfing. Take care though, as the currents and undertow can be dangerous. 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** (F\$10) along the beach, but they can be 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; d incl breakfast F\$250; ☒) This intimate resort injects a soft splash of Spain into Fiji and skips the mod cons, opting for privacy and class instead. Plump chairs and beds, cool wooden interiors and secluded courtyards should satiate all urges to escape civilisation. The restaurant (mains F\$10 to F\$25) serves great seafood and is open to nonguests.

**Mia and Sara** (☎ 651 0926; incl meals F\$35-40) In the nearby village of Sanasana, Mia and Sara are a married couple who offer

### A HAIRY SITUATION

For indigenous Fijians the head is *tabu*. In reverence to this sanctity, Fijians once spent entire days with the hairdresser. As a symbol of masculinity and social standing, men sported flamboyant, often massive hairdos, ranging from the relatively conventional giant puffball (up to 30cm tall) to more original shaggy or geometric shapes. Styles were stiffened into place with burnt limejuice and dyed grey, blue, orange, yellow and white, sometimes striped or multicoloured. Women, on the other hand, wore far more conservative hairdos – close-cropped with random tufts dyed rusty brown or yellow. A wife's hair could never outdo her husband's and a husband's could not outdo the chief's.

People slept on uncomfortable-looking wooden pillows to keep their coiffure from being spoilt. The head was specially dressed for festive occasions with accessories like hair scratchers (practical for lice), ornamental combs, scarlet feathers, flowers and grated sandalwood. Shaving one's head was a profound sacrifice for a man and often done as a symbol of mourning or to appease a wrathful ancestral spirit.

Early Europeans were astonished by the variety of elaborate styles. Soon after a missionary measured one hairdo at 5m in circumference, the custom was deliberately suppressed by Christians who regarded the practice as not suitable for the 'neat and industrious Christian convert'.

hospitable homestay accommodation. To book, call them on the only phone in the village between 10am and 1pm. Ask for Mia or Sara, then call back in 10 minutes to speak to them.

The **InterContinental** (www.natadolafiji.com) group commenced construction of a lavish new five-star resort at Natadola in September 2005.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Paradise Transport buses head to and from Sigatoka (F\$2.50, one hour, four daily Monday to Friday). The Maro Rd turn-off heads south to Natadola off Queens Rd, 36km from Nadi, just past the police post; the beach is signposted.

The Coral Coast Scenic Railway (see below) runs tours to the beach. Keen walkers could follow the track between Yanuca and Natadola Beach (about 3½ hours) and then catch the train or bus back.

### Yanuca & Around

Past the turn-off to Natadola, Queens Rd winds southeast through hills and down to the coast at Cuvu Bay and Yanuca – a blink of a village which is home to a couple of good attractions and in close proximity to Sigatoka. There is also a small island named Yanuca where the Shangri-La's Fijian Resort resides.

The station for the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** (☎ 652 8731; Queens Rd) is at the causeway entrance to the Fijian Resort. It offers scenic

rides on an old diesel sugar train, past villages, forests and sugar plantations, to Natadola Beach. The 14km trip takes about 1¼ hours, leaving at 10am and returning at 4pm (F\$80 including BBQ lunch).

**Ka Levu South Pacific Cultural Centre** (☎ 652 0200; admission 1hr/day F\$25/100; dm incl meals F\$65, d & tw F\$75, r F\$90-135) is a faux-Fijian village featuring cultural dancing, kava ceremonies, handicrafts and cooking. You can stay overnight in neat dorms and doubles with shared bathrooms or choose a crisp hotel room or spacious self-contained unit. All rates include tours. Also on-site is Bernie's Bar and Gecko's Restaurant (mains F\$15 to F\$30), which cooks up great steaks and fish curries.

The sprawling five-star **Shangri-La's Fijian Resort** (☎ 652 0155; www.shangri-la.com; d incl breakfast from F\$490; ☒ ☒ ☒) occupies the entire island of Yanuca (43 hectares) and is perfect for families seeking pure R&R and indulgence. Two children can share with parents for free and there's a great child-care centre. You can laze by one of the three palm-skirted pools or enjoy a bout of golf, tennis, jet skiing, parasailing, snorkelling, water-skiing, fishing or even cycling.

The Fijian Resort is about a 45-minute drive from Nadi and 11km west of Sigatoka. Regular express buses, minibuses and carriers travel along Queens Rd (see p215). A taxi to Nadi airport is about F\$70 and the Coral Sun Fiji coach is F\$15.

## Sigatoka & Around

pop 8000

Sigatoka is a neat grid of a town tucked into green and fertile surrounds near the mouth of the large Sigatoka River. It makes for a pleasant amble and pit stop but largely acts as a service town for the Coral Coast region. There's a produce market, a few souvenir shops and a large hilltop mosque. An inordinate number of taxis populate the streets so you shouldn't have any difficulty travelling the very short distance from A to B.

### SIGHTS

#### Sigatoka Sand Dunes

Windswept and peppered with sheets of grey sand, these impressive **dunes** (adult/child/family F\$8/3/20; ☎ 8am-6pm) are one of Fiji's natural highlights. Several million years in the making, they stand around 5km long, up to 1km wide and on average about 20m high, rising to about 60m at the western end. Archaeological excavations have uncovered one of the largest burial sites in the Pacific, as well as pottery over 2600 years old. A mahogany forest was planted in the 1960s to halt the dunes' expedition onto the Queens Rd, and the state-owned part of the area was declared a national park in 1989 in an attempt to help preserve the site.

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 Visitor Centre, 4.5km west of Sigatoka, and allow about one hour for the walking tour.

#### Tavuni Hill Fort

Built in the 18th century by Tongan chief Maile Latumai, this defensive **fort** (adult/child/family F\$12/3/30; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1.30pm Sat) was used in times of tribal war. It's the most accessible fort of its kind in Fiji and provides an excellent insight into the strong precolonial links between Tonga and Fiji. The steep limestone ridge, about 90m high at the edge of a bend in the Sigatoka River, was an obvious strategic location and the views are magnificent.

The site has been restored as a means of income for villagers, and has an information centre, a number of grave sites, a *rara* (ceremonial grounds) and a *vatu ni bokola* (head-chopping stone). Regular

local buses pass Tavuni Hill (60c, seven a day on weekdays), about 4km north, from where taxis are about F\$5 one way.

### ACTIVITIES

#### Surfing

Sigatoka has Fiji's only beach break, over a large, submerged rock platform covered in sand. Surfing is possible at the point break at the mouth of the Sigatoka River.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Unless you're stuck, you're better off heading to the superior accommodation in nearby Korotogo. Self-caterers can stock up at the Morris Hedstrom supermarket.

**River View Restaurant** (☎ 650 1530/1520; jrms traveltours@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd; dm F\$20, r F\$45-65; ☎ ☑) This elevated restaurant has clean, white and bright rooms attached. All except the dorms include a private bathroom and fridge. The restaurant (mains F\$16 to F\$30) has lovely river views and serves great seafood in a cavernous dancehall-like interior.

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

Also recommended:

**Le Café** (☎ 652 0668/877; 28 Queens Rd; meals F\$10-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☑) Sigatoka's nicest spot for brekkie.

**Sigatoka Club** (☎ 650 0026; Queens Rd; mains F\$8-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Downstairs from the River View Restaurant, Sigatoka's best drinking hole with decent pub nosh.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Pacific Transport and Sunbeam Transport run several express buses a day to and from Nadi (F\$4, 1¼ hours) and Suva (F\$8, 2¼ hours). Add about an hour for nonexpress buses.

### Korotogo & Korolevu

The Coral Coast begins its dazzling thread in earnest at the small village of Korotogo, where travellers will find a surrounding scatter of accommodation.

The most scenic stretch of the coast sits between Korotogo and Korolevu, where

the road wraps itself around clear blue bays, beaches, coral reefs and mountains. Resorts to suit all budgets occupy private coves around the village of Korolevu and the hilly terrain offers panoramic photo opportunities. In most areas 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, but be careful of the strong channel currents.

### SIGHTS

#### Kula Eco Park

Supported by the National Trust for Fiji and several international parks and conservation bodies, this **wildlife sanctuary** (☎ 650 0505; www.fijiwild.com; adult/child F\$15/7.50; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) is a must for fans of the furred, feathered and scaled. Wooden walkways traverse streams, Fijian flora and a menagerie of hawksbill sea turtles (hand fed at 11am, 1pm and 3.30pm daily), musk parrots, collared parrots (the Kula bird), peregrine falcons, fruit bats and more. The park also runs invaluable breeding programmes, with success stories for the Pacific black duck (Fiji's only remaining duck species) and the crested and banded iguana.

### TOURS

**Adventures in Paradise** (☎ 652 0833; www.adventuresinparadisefiji.com; tours per person from Coral Coast/Nadi F\$100/120) offers day trips to the Naihehe cave (see p178) and tours to waterfalls near Korolevu. Tours include a village visit, kava ceremony, lunch and transport from Coral Coast and Nadi hotels.

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147, 999 2349; www.riversfiji.com) offers great rafting trips up the Navua River with transfers from Coral Coast resorts.

### SLEEPING

#### Budget

**Beachouse** (☎ 0800 653 0530, 653 0500; www.fiji.beachouse.com; Queens Rd; camping per person F\$16, dm F\$25-30, d F\$80; ☎) This expansive retreat has leafy green grounds, a pleasant beach and a heady social atmosphere. Dorms are in two-storey timber houses (triples are roomy and atmospheric) and doubles are in colourful duplex bungalows. The Coconut Café here serves rolls and smoothies for lunch and a set dinner. Activities include horse riding (F\$15 per hour) and a waterfall trek (F\$5).

**Vakaviti** (☎ 0800 650 0526, 650 0526; www.vakaviti.com; Queens Rd; dm F\$15-20, d F\$70-80; ☎) This small and personal resort tumbles down a steep, vegetated embankment overlooking the water. There are spotless dorms, bright and modern motel rooms which open onto a lovely pool and BBQ area, and generous *bure* tucked in amid the jungle, closer to the road.

**Namatakula Village Homestay** (www.fijibure.com/namatakula/index.htm; Namatakula; per adult/child incl meals F\$70/35) Readers recommend this homestay for an authentic taste of Fijian village life. Simon and Judith Batibasaga welcome travellers into their home for simple accommodation and generous meals. Guests have the opportunity to visit the school, attend a mass and immerse themselves in a traditional village.

### Midrange

**Tubakula Beach Bungalows** (☎ 650 0097; www.fiji4less.com; Queens Rd; dm F\$17.50, s/tw without bathroom F\$40/45, st F\$80-120; ☎ ☑) Excellent A-frame chalets with strapping timber frames, modern kitchens and verandas give this lovely resort a touch of the mountains, but the palm trees, swimming pool and waterfront setting are undeniably Fiji. Dorms, singles and doubles are simple and neat.

**Sandy Point Beach Cottages** (☎ 650 0125; cbcom@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd; st from F\$90; ☎) Tucked off the road in a forested patch of the seaside, Sandy Point has five quaint and comfy self-contained cottages. The tropical setting is overshadowed somewhat by a proliferation of satellite dishes but these supply satellite TV. It's a peaceful setting and a favourite with in-the-know Suvanites.

**Bedarra Inn** (☎ 650 0476; www.bedarrafiji.com; Queens Rd; r F\$110-155; ☎ ☑) This atmospheric hotel offers spiffy rooms with tiled floors, spotless interiors and plenty of natural light. Budget rooms are fan-cooled, two-bed and self-contained, and sleep up to four. The lofty deluxe rooms don't have kitchens but include balconies and air-con. There's also a restaurant (p164) and small lounge bar.

**Tambua Sands Beach Resort** (☎ 650 0399; www.tambuasandsfiji.com; Queens Rd; d F\$155-170; ☎) 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. Manicured lawns are littered with

sun lounges and there's a good restaurant (mains F\$15 to F\$30).

### Top End

**Crusoe's Retreat** (☎ 650 0185; www.crusoesretreat.com; Namaquaqua Rd; d incl breakfast F\$240-280; 🍷) In a sublime location, this small resort sits on a secluded beach behind a plummert of hills and encompasses 28 fan-cooled *bure* with polished Fijian interiors and a fabulous restaurant. A two-tank dive costs F\$210 and transfers from Nadi or Suva are F\$75 one way.

**Naviti Resort** (☎ 653 0444; www.navitiresort.com.fj; Queens Rd; r F\$320-340, st F\$570; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Heavy on the greenery and light on the concrete, the colossal Naviti is about as pretty as large-scale resorts go. Rooms are suitably stylish and packed with five-star amenities. The health spa, nine-hole golf course, kids' club, disabled access and excellent service distinguish it from the rest. The resort's Wasawasa Restaurant has meals from F\$35 and international-themed buffet nights.

More top-end options:

**Outrigger on the Lagoon** (☎ 650 0044; www.outrigger.com/fiji; Queens Rd; r from F\$590; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Stylish rooms and *bure*, superb views and excellent facilities in a five-star, four-storey shell.

**Wellesley Resort** (☎ 650 0807; www.wellesleyresort.com.fj; Man Friday Rd; d incl meals from F\$280; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Romantic boutique resort with 15 suites and a stunning location.

### EATING

**Vilisite's Restaurant** (☎ 653 0054; Queens Rd; mains F\$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 king prawns, lobster, octopus and seafood curries are dished up by friendly staff.

**Bedarra Inn Restaurant** (☎ 650 0476; www.bedarrafiji.com; mains F\$15-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner) It seems humble enough but the atmospheric restaurant at this hotel serves inventive steak, chicken and stir-fry dishes alongside perfectly cooked fresh seafood. You can down it all with good wine or a bitter inside the cool interior, or at poolside tables with great ocean views.

**Ice Bar Restaurant** (☎ 650 1513; Queens Rd; mains F\$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 Cafe** (☎ 652 0877; mains F\$10-15; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Serves European-style food and tasty pizzas. Happy hour takes place from 5pm to 7pm.

### SHOPPING

East of Korolevu, **Baravi Handicrafts** (☎ 652 0364; 🍷 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-5pm Sun) sells local crafts, clothes and jewellery.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The Korotogo area is about 8km east of Sigatoka, and Korolevu village is 31km east of Sigatoka. Buses ply the Queens Rd and will drop guests off outside resorts.

### Pacific Harbour

Prepared, planned and pedicured to a tidy point, Pacific Harbour is an upmarket housing development that emerges from the Coral Coast's dense vegetation like a flat, green Sahara. The wide cul-de-sac streets, flawless lawns and ordered river are the most suburban setting in Fiji. It's a novelty but local residents love it. Most visitors head here for fabulous golf, world-class diving in nearby Beqa (*ben-ga*) Lagoon and the opportunity to visit the Namosi Highlands to the north. The beach at Deuba is reasonable for swimming.

### SIGHTS

Take a sunset walk up to the hilltop for a lovely view of Beqa Lagoon. The **Arts Village** (☎ 345 0065; www.artsfactory.com; tours per adult/child from F\$35/18; 🍷 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) is an incongruous display of Fijian culture in a theme-show package. Fijian actors dressed in traditional costumes carry out mock battles, and there are firewalking and *meke* shows (adult/child F\$45/25) every Thursday at 11am. It's geared squarely at tour buses and families, all of whom enjoy it thoroughly.

Attached to the Arts Village, the **Marketplace** is a congregation of eateries and souvenir shops and a pleasant spot to kill an hour or so.

### ACTIVITIES Golf

The **Greens South Pacific** (☎ 345 0022; 9/18 holes F\$20/40) is a beautiful golf course littered

with challenging bunkers and canals. Club rental is F\$15/20 per nine/18 holes.

### Diving

Beqa Lagoon is a world-renowned dive site just offshore from Pacific Harbour. **Aqua-Trek** (☎ 325 0324; www.aquatrek.com) at the Pearl South Pacific (below) has an excellent reputation and offers two-tank dives/open water courses for F\$170/700, as well as shark-feeding dives (F\$200 for two dives) which get rave reviews from readers.

Pacific Safari Club (below) also has a small diving outfit and charges F\$95 for a two-tank dive.

### TOURS

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147, 999 2349; www.riversfiji.com; day tours per person from F\$190) Based at Pacific Harbour, Rivers Fiji offers excellent kayaking and rafting trips to the Namosi Highlands (p178). The Upper Navua River tour (F\$260 per person) takes in scenic gorges and advanced rapids.

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 331 5730; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) Offers tours to the Navua River, picking up passengers from Pacific Harbour as well as from Suva hotels (see p170).

**Discover Fiji Tours** (☎ 345 0180; www.discoverfiji.com) This outfit has several day tours (from F\$135 per person) to the Navua River area, which include waterfall visits, 4WD trips and kayaking.

### SLEEPING

**Pearl South Pacific** (☎ 345 0022; www.thepearlsouthpacific.com; Queens Rd; d F\$300-360, st F\$640; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Revamped and renovated into one of the country's finest hotels, the Pearl has sassy Fijian-Asian fusion rooms with private decked alcoves and cushioned sun lounges. The resort itself is littered with sueded box couches, oriental-style booths, vast open terraces, grassed sunbaking settings, restaurants and bars.

**Pacific Safari Club** (☎ 345 0498; www.pacificsafari.com; River Dr; dm/d/f F\$20/55/65; 🍷 🍷) Planted next to a breezy bank of the canal, this compact resort has a single-storey block of excellent self-contained flats with tidy, floral interiors and spotless kitchens. Some also have TVs.

**Club Coral Coast** (☎ 345 0421; clubcoralcoast@connect.com.fj; Lot 12 Belo Circle; r F\$90, f F\$120; 🍷 🍷 🍷)

Occupying its 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.

Also recommended:

**Deuba Inn** (☎ 345 0544; theislander@connect.com.fj; Queens Rd; s/d without bathroom F\$20/35, r F\$55-65) Dirt-cheap portable-style rooms and two weary units.

**Lagoon Resort** (☎ 345 0100; www.lagoonresort.com; Fairway Place; d F\$160-260, st F\$300; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Grand, colonial-style estate with dignified rooms, restaurant and service.

### EATING

**Kai Yanuyanu Restaurant** (Queens Rd; mains F\$14-30; 🍷 breakfast & dinner) Hiding behind the budget inn façade of the Deuba Inn (above) and dressed up like a retro beach house, this restaurant is Pacific Harbour's dark horse. It serves outstanding seafood alongside curries, chicken and steaks, plus fruit crushes thick enough to make your straw stand straight.

**Lagoon Resort Restaurant** (☎ 345 0100; Fairway Place; lunch mains F\$8-15, dinner mains F\$20-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The regal restaurant at the Lagoon Resort (above) serves hearty sandwiches and curries for lunch and fancy dinner mains, such as char-grilled *mahimahi* or beef tornadoes. Seating is at high-backed chairs and the floor-to-ceiling windows provide ample vistas of green lawns.

**Oasis Restaurant** (☎ 345 0617; Arts Village Marketplace; mains F\$10-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner; 🍷) Darkened wood tables and seating adorn the cool interior of this atmospheric restaurant and a wall of secondhand books alleviates the waiting game. The eclectic menu includes burgers, sandwiches, tortillas, curries and a whole lotta seafood.

More recommendations:

**Pastry Bure** (☎ 345 0126; Arts Village Marketplace; meals F\$4-10; 🍷 breakfast & lunch; 🍷) Delectable coffee, breakfasts and baked goodies.

**Mantarae Restaurant** (☎ 345 0022; Queens Rd; mains F\$25-35; 🍷 dinner) Sophisticated cuisine and wine list at the Pearl South Pacific (left).

Self-caterers can stock up at the **Pic N Pac Supermarket** (Arts Village Marketplace).

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Pacific Harbour is about an hour's express bus ride from Suva (F\$3.20) and around

three hours from Nadi (F\$8). A taxi to Suva costs F\$35; call **Ratan's Taxi** (☎ 346 0329).

## OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Offshore from Pacific Harbour, a 64km-long barrier reef encloses the exquisite **Beqa Lagoon**, world-famous for its dizzying dive sites, including Side Streets and Caesar's Rocks. Divers are joined by avid surfers who test their mettle on the powerful left-hand breaks at Frigate's Passage, also known as Kavu Kavu Reef. Anchored amid the lagoon are Beqa and Yanuca Islands; untouched bar a handful of inconspicuous resorts.

### Beqa

area 36 sq km

Volcanic and rugged, Beqa is known for its onshore villages that practise traditional firewalking, and for its fantastic offshore dive sites.

The cosy **Lawaki Beach House** (☎ 992 1621; www.lawakibeachhouse.com; camping F\$50, dm/s/d F\$65/95/160) sits in front of an isolated beach. Accommodation is in two double *bure* with en suites and verandas, or a six-bed dorm. There's also a communal TV lounge and good snorkelling just offshore. Rates include three meals and children under 12 pay 15% less. The hospitality here is legendary. Transfers from Navua cost F\$130 per person one way.

The façade of the **Beqa Lagoon Resort** (☎ 330 4042; www.beqalagoonresort.com; 4/5/7 nights per person from F\$1710/2050/2340; 🏠 🍷) looks exclusive but this opulent resort caters to families in purpose-built two-bedroom *bure*, as well as couples in romantic doubles. There's a lovely palm-fringed beach, and the surrounding landscape and sea lends itself to snorkelling, diving and hiking. Rates include transfers from Nadi and delectable meals. Child rates are heavily discounted.

### Yanuca

Compact and beautiful Yanuca is a mass of green hills, interrupted by a village and a couple of surf camps. The beaches here are lovely and it's a short boat haul to the surf breaks of Frigate's Passage.

Many a traveller hits the chic surf camp of **Batiuva** (☎ 345 1019, 992 0019; www.batiuva.com; dm/d incl meals F\$150/300) for a week and wakes up in a hammock a month later. The superb hospitality, laid-back vibes and

excellent food lull guests into an idyllic state, trumped only by superlative surfing. Sturdy dorms and doubles are airy and basic and transfers from Pacific Harbour are F\$50 return per person.

Etched into a grassy grove of the island, the simple **Yanuca Island Resort** (☎ 336 1281, 997 8958; www.frigatesreef.com; dm/s/d F\$40/70/120) is staffed by friendly locals (it's a source of income for the neighbouring village) and offers serious surfers and urban escapees peace and quiet. There is one dorm with solid timber bunks and mosquito nets, plus two cabins with private bathrooms. Meals (breakfast/lunch/dinner F\$10/15/15) are plentiful and tasty and return boat transfers to Pacific Harbour/Frigate's Passage are F\$50/80 per person.

## SUVA

pop 358,495

The Fijian capital is a sultry spread occupying a small peninsula jutting into the South Pacific Ocean. A cosmopolitan milieu of cultures and influences inhabits the warped downtown grid, where grand colonial buildings sidle up to modern high-rises and shopping plazas. Curry houses, sari shops and bric-a-brac traders huddle in small wynds plucked straight from a city in India. A breezy esplanade with fabulous views of Suva Harbour and Joske's Thumb marks the city's western border, and the density of the central business district dissipates in all other directions as residential pockets climb the hills of the outer suburbs. Clouds tend to hover over Suva and frequently dump rain on the city (around 300mm each year), but this can be a cool and welcome relief.

Around half of Suva's inhabitants are crowded into settlements on land that has no title, and crime and poverty are factors to be aware of (see p147). Suvans are incredibly friendly though, and the shops, sights, dining and ambience here can easily fill a two- or three-day itinerary.

## Sights

### FIJI MUSEUM

This excellent **museum** (☎ 331 5944; www.fiji.museum.org.fj; Ratu Cakobau Rd; adult/child F\$7/5; 🕒 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat) delves into Fiji's archaeological, political, cultural and linguistic evolution with original musical

instruments, pottery, jewellery and a magnificent double-hulled canoe. There's also a daunting array of Fijian war clubs and cannibal utensils.

The souvenir shop on the ground floor sells a diversity of books on Fijian culture and the small Indo-Fijian Gallery upstairs features works by the country's finest contemporary artists.

### THURSTON GARDENS

After visiting the museum, take a wander through these compact but beautiful gardens. The lack of fussy landscaping adds to the tropical element, with clusters of native flora scattered haphazardly throughout the lawns. Much of the vivid vegetation is labelled for the benefit of curious horticulturalists. Walking trails traverse the gardens 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.

### COLO-I-SUVA FOREST PARK

Eleven kilometres from downtown Suva, and at an altitude that reaches 600ft, this rainforest **park** (☎ 332 0211; adult/child F\$5/1; 🕒 8am-4pm Mon-Sun) is a cool and peaceful haven from the urban hubbub. Colo-i-Suva (tholo-ee-soo-va) has 6.5km of walking trails which navigate clear natural pools and gorgeous vistas, with just a touch of Indiana Jones in the rope swings over water. Fourteen bird species fill the park, including the scarlet robin, spotted fantail, Fiji goshawk and sulphur-breasted musk parrots.

The visitor information centre is on the left side of the road as you approach from Suva. Before entering, ask the guards about the security situation within the park. You can pay an additional fee (on asking) to have a guard accompany you and if you're travelling alone this is definitely recommended.

To get here, take the Saweni bus from Suva bus station (F\$1, 20 minutes, half-hourly).

### OTHER SIGHTS

The foreboding and handsome **government buildings** (1939 and 1967), at the end of Carnarvon St, are set on heavy foundations atop reclaimed land. Opened in 1992, the **parliament buildings** (☎ 330 5811; www.parliament.gov.fj;

Battery Rd; admission free) are far more aesthetic and adorned with traditional Fijian *tapa* clothes and works of art. 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.

Set in a breadth of breezy gardens, the University of the South Pacific's main **Laucala Campus** (☎ 331 3900; fax 330 1305) is a pleasant spot for a stroll and bout of people-watching. Students from islands throughout the Pacific attend the university and the cultural diversity is a curio in itself. Inside the northwestern entrance, on the right, is a small **botanical garden** with trails winding around Pacific trees and plants. You can also visit the **Oceania Centre for Arts & Culture**, where temporary exhibits and dance performances are held. It's often possible to catch a free rehearsal on weekday mornings.

## Activities

The **National Aquatic Centre** (☎ 331 8185; Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala Bay; admission F\$3; 🕒 6am-8pm Mon-Sat & 9am-6pm Sun Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Jul-Sep) was built for the 2003 South Pacific Games and includes a 50m and 25m pool.

The sizeable outdoor **Suva Olympic Swimming Pool** (224 Victoria Pde; adult/child F\$1.65/80; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri & 8am-6pm Sat Apr-Sep, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & 7am-7pm Sat Oct-Mar) is a family magnet and an oasis on a hot day. There is a kiddies play area, lap lanes and changing cubicles.

**Beqa Divers Fiji** (☎ 336 1088; www.bequadivers.com; 75 Marine Dr, Lami) offers two-tank dives (F\$145) and PADI open water courses (F\$550) in Beqa Lagoon.

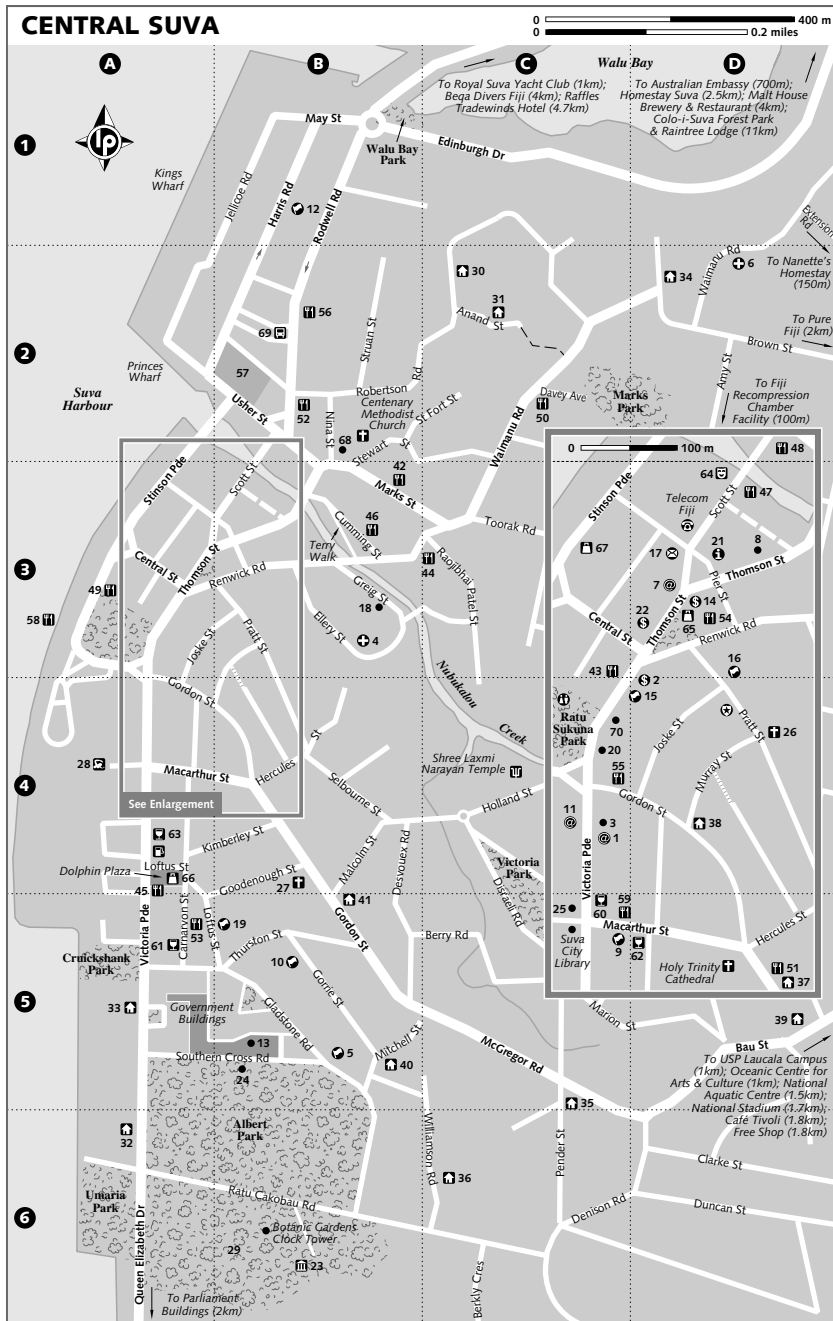
Visiting yachties can get membership at the **Royal Suva Yacht Club** (☎ 331 2921; rsyc@connect.com.fj; 🕒 office 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). Mooring fees for a small yacht start at F\$40 per day.

## Suva Walking Tour

Downtown Suva has a scattering of colonial buildings and places of interest, making it a pleasant place to wander around. Give yourself several hours for this tour.

Start your journey with that most Suvan of destinations – the **municipal market** (1). Ogle as traders ply their kava, vegetables and fruit, and take a snapshot of locals in motion. Make your way down Rodwell Rd, turn left onto Usher St, right onto Thomson and then immerse yourself in **Cumming St**





<b>INFORMATION</b>	Roman Catholic Cathedral.....26 D4	Morris Hedstrom Supermarket.....52 B2
Alpha Computer.....1 C4	St Andrew's Church.....27 B4	Old Mill Cottage.....53 A5
ANZ Bank.....2 D4	Suva Olympic Pool.....28 A4	Republic of Cappuccino.....54 D3
Bookmasters.....3 C4	Thurston Gardens.....29 B6	Republic of Cappuccino.....(see 66)
Boulevard Central Pharmacy.....(see 4)		Singh's Curry House.....55 C4
Boulevard Medical Centre.....4 B3	<b>SLEEPING</b>	Supermarket.....56 B2
British High Commission.....5 B5	Capricorn Apartment Hotel.....30 C2	Suva Municipal Market.....57 B2
Colonial War Memorial Hospital.....6 D2	Colonial Lodge.....31 C2	Tiko's Floating Restaurant.....58 A3
Connect Internet Café.....7 D3	Grand Pacific Hotel.....32 A6	Victoria Wines & Spirits.....59 C5
Dominion House Arcade.....8 D3	Holiday Inn.....33 A5	
Embassy of Nauru.....9 C5	Motel 6.....34 D2	<b>DRINKING</b>
Embassy of Tuvalu.....10 B5	Peninsula International Hotel.....35 C5	Bad Dog Cafe.....60 C5
Fintel.....11 C4	South Seas Private Hotel.....36 C6	Barn.....61 A5
French Embassy.....(see 8)	Southern Cross Hotel.....37 D5	Birdland R&B Club.....62 D5
German Consulate.....12 B1	Sunset Apartment Motel.....38 D4	O'Reilly's.....(see 59)
Hunts Travel.....(see 8)	Suva Apartments.....39 D5	Traps Bar.....63 A4
Japanese Embassy.....(see 8)	Suva Motor Inn.....40 B5	
Korean Embassy.....(see 20)	Tanoa Plaza Hotel.....41 B5	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>
Map Shop.....13 B5		Village 6 Cinema Complex.....64 D3
Money Exchange.....14 D3	<b>EATING</b>	
Netherlands Consulate.....15 D4	Ashiyana.....(see 25)	<b>SHOPPING</b>
New Zealand Embassy.....16 D3	Cakes 2000.....42 B3	Bob's Hook Line & Sinkers.....(see 47)
Post Office.....17 D3	Capital Palace.....43 C3	Government Crafts Centre.....(see 9)
Republic of Cappuccino.....(see 54)	Curry House.....44 C3	Jack's Handicrafts.....65 D3
South Pacific Tourism Organisation.....(see 66)	Daikoku.....45 A4	ROC Market.....66 A4
Suva Bookstore.....18 B3	Dolphin Plaza Food Court.....(see 66)	Suva Curio & Handicraft Centre.....67 C3
US Embassy.....19 B5	Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre.....(see 4)	
Vanua Arcade.....20 C4	Focaccia Café.....(see 20)	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Visitor Information Centre.....21 D3	Govinda's Vegetarian Restaurant.....46 B3	Air Fiji.....(see 59)
Westpac Bank.....22 D3	Harbour Centre.....47 D3	Beachcomber Cruises.....68 B2
	Hot Bread Kitchen.....48 D2	Bus Station.....69 B2
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Hot Bread Kitchen.....48 D2	Consort Shipping.....(see 8)
Fiji Museum.....23 B6	JJ's on the Park.....49 A3	Patterson Brothers Shipping.....(see 68)
Kingsford Smith Pavilion.....24 B5	Korea House.....50 C2	Sun Air.....70 C4
Old Town Hall.....25 C5	L'Opera.....51 D5	Taxi Stand.....(see 69)

(2). Suck in the scent of incense and curry and marvel at the stunning saris displayed in the shop windows. Turning right onto Renwick Rd, cross the river and drop into the **Republic of Cappuccino** (3; p173) for a coffee, or perhaps a recovery juice if the bitters got the better of you last night.

At the end of Renwick Rd, cross the road and make a beeline for the water by going down Central St. Take a breather on Stinson Pde and snap up the dramatic views of **Suva Harbour** and **Joske's Thumb** (4). Drop into the **Suva Curio & Handicraft Centre** (5; p174) and potter through the stalls of handmade arts and crafts. Turn left and follow the esplanade till you reach **Ratu Sukuna Park** (6). Amble through this tree-littered plot to make your way back to Thomson St. Continue south down Victoria Pde, past the pale colonial 1926 **Fintel building** (7) and the 1904 **old town hall** (8). Now home to several restaurants, the old town hall building was once used for dances, bazaars and performances. The stately 1909 **Suva City Library** (9) is also here.

Continue down Victoria Pde and take a rest at **Umaria Park** (10), teeming with kids scrambling over monkey bars and offering extensive water views in the background. On your right-hand side are the stately **government buildings** (11). Presiding over the manicured green lawns are statues of Ratu Cakobau and Ratu Sukuna.

In the block south of the government buildings, you may catch a rugby union team in action in **Albert Park** (12). On the northern edge of the park is the **Kingsford Smith Pavilion** (13), named after the famous aviator who landed here. On the seaside, opposite the park, is the Glorious old **Grand Pacific Hotel** (14). Built in 1914 by the Union Steamship Company, its ship-style architecture is reminiscent of the luxury liners that once plied the seas. The hotel has been abandoned since 1992 but restoration plans are under way.

Once you've passed the Grand Pacific Hotel, cross the road, keeping Albert Park on your left. At the corner of Ratu Cakobau Rd and Queen Elizabeth Dve is the entrance

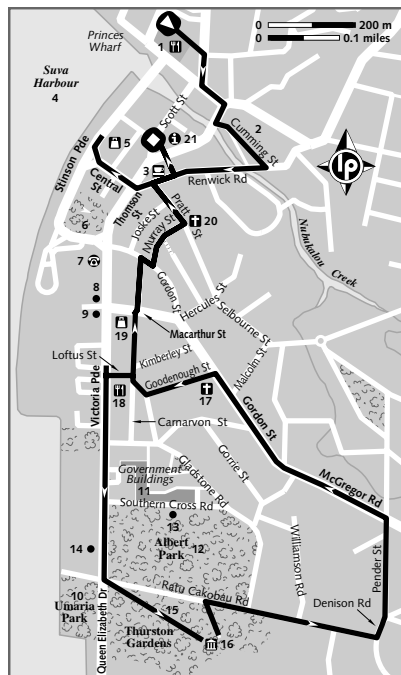
to **Thurston Gardens (15; p167)**. Meander through this balmy park and take a breather beneath one of the stately figs. Within the grounds is the **Fiji Museum (16; p166)**.

Continue east along Ratu Cakobau Rd and ascend into the inner suburbs. Turn left at Pender St and left again at McGregor Rd. Amid the tranquil residential streets you'll have 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 (17)** on the corner. Follow Goodenough St and dogleg your way back to Victoria Pde for a well-earned teppanyaki lunch at **Daikoku (18; p172)**.

Head back onto Carnarvon St to bypass the main drag. Stroll past the bars and clubs

#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Municipal Market  
**Finish** Visitor Information Centre  
**Distance** About 4km  
**Duration** Three hours



of this little back road and duck into the **Government Crafts Centre (19; p174)**, a small outlet which 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 1902 **Roman Catholic Cathedral (20)**, built of sandstone imported from Sydney and one of Suva's most prominent landmarks. Turn left onto Pratt St, right onto Renwick Rd and left onto Pier St to end your journey at the **visitor information centre (21; p147)**.

#### Tours

**Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji** (☎ 359 3230; www.wildernessfiji.com.fj) Picks up from Suva hotels and offers rafting and canoeing tours on the Navua River (F\$115 per person), half- and full-day tours to Nasilai village (F\$60/85 per person) and city tours of Suva (F\$70 per person).

**Discover Fiji Tours** (☎ 345 0180; www.discoverfiji.tours.com) Also offers canoe trips 20km inland along the Navua River to a giant waterfall (from F\$135 per person).

#### Sleeping

##### BUDGET

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

**South Seas Private Hotel** (☎ 331 2296; www.fiji4less.com; 6 Williamson Rd; dm/s/d/f F\$14/25/35/40; ☒) This glorious old hotel, with its ocean-liner interior and sweeping veranda, is one of Suva's most atmospheric buildings. Neat and spacious dorms have large steel bunks and all but one room has shared facilities. It doesn't see much human traffic, which may be a plus or minus depending on your preference.

More budget options:

**Colonial Lodge** (☎ 330 0655; coloniallodge@connect.com.fj; 19 Anand St; dm/s F\$30/65, d F\$90) Boisterous homestay with cheerful rooms. Breakfast included.

**Sunset Apartment Motel** (☎ 330 1799; fax 330 3446; cnr Gordon & Murray Sts; dm/s/d from F\$12/45/55; ☑) Central option with dated but accommodating apartments.

#### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Raintree Lodge** (☎ 332 0562; www.raintreelodge@connect.com.fj; Princes Rd, Colo-i-Suva; camping per person F\$12.50, dm F\$18-20, d F\$60-110; ☒ ☑ ☑) Dulcet bird warbles in the morning, lush patches of rainforest, sun-dappled hammocks...this tranquil lodge feels a galaxy away from downtown Suva. Fortunately, it's only 12km and F\$1 on the bus. Tucked into a private pocket of tropical forest, Raintree Lodge offers 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. There are also intimate *bure* with secluded balconies and lake views. Glossy lakes, prolific birdlife and wide patches of lawn mingle with the buildings, and there's an excellent restaurant (p173) overlooking the water. Catch the Saweni bus from Suva's bus terminal.

#### MIDRANGE

**Nanette's Homestay** (☎ 331 6316; www.nanettes.com.fj; 56 Extension St; d/st from F\$90/135; ☒ ☑) Tucked into a quiet residential area, this B&B has appealing bathrooms, some with deliciously large bathtubs. There's also a communal TV lounge and kitchen. Downstairs are three schmick apartments with modern kitchens. The staff are so friendly you'll want to take them home with you.

**Suva Motor Inn** (☎ 331 3973; www.hexagonfiji.com; cnr Mitchell & Gorrie Sts; d 110-175; ☑) Fab for families, the Suva Motor Inn has smart and fresh studio and two-bedroom apartments containing sunny furnishings, modern kitchens and oodles of space. All rooms have balconies (ask for one with Albert Park views) and the water slide attached to the central pool is a kid-magnet.

**Holiday Inn** (☎ 330 1600; reservations@holidayinn.suva.com.fj; Victoria Pde; d from F\$120; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) Right on the harbour shore, opposite the government buildings and museum, the Holiday Inn has spacious, cool and comfortable rooms. It appeals largely to business travellers and coach tours and has the facilities to match. On the downside, the staff can be slightly apathetic and the atmosphere is generic.

**Motel 6** (☎ 330 7477; fax 330 7133; 1 Walu St; d/f F\$70/95) Perched at the end of a cul-de-sac off Waimanu Rd, with boggling harbour views, this complex has well-maintained motel rooms with TVs and fridges and one-bedroom family rooms with small 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** (☎ 330 3732; www.capricorn-hotels-fiji.com; 7 Fort St; r F\$100-130; ☑ ☑) This secure and friendly 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 the well-equipped kitchens contain microwaves. Some of the balconies have dazzling city and harbour views.

Also recommended:

**Peninsula International Hotel** (☎ 331 3711; www.peninsula.com.fj; cnr McGregor & Pender Sts; s/d F\$75/90; ☒ ☑ ☑) Large hotel with snug rooms in a leafy residential area.

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

#### TOP END

**Homestay Suva** (☎ 337 0395; homestaysuva@connect.com.fj; 265 Princes Rd, Tamavua; d incl breakfast F\$165-195; ☑ ☑) Unmatched class and service and a pool deck straight out of a *Vogue* shoot make this Suva's finest location to rest the head. Stylish doubles reside in the colonial house and there are also capacious studio rooms with balconies, TVs and kitchenettes. You'll need to book in advance. No children.

**Tanoa Plaza Hotel** (☎ 331 2300; www.tanoahotels.com; cnr Gordon & Malcolm Sts; d F\$185-200, st F\$410; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) This sleek and sophisticated hotel caters to comfort-needy creatures with large beds, chic interiors, fully equipped minibars and pamper products in the bathrooms. It's the most stylish of Suva's hotels and views from the 5th floor and up are simply dazzling.

**Raffles Tradewinds Hotel** (☎ 336 2450; www.affles.tradewinds.com; Queens Rd, Lami; d/st from F\$130/280; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) Suva's onetime starlet has lost some of its sheen, but the waterfront location and well-maintained rooms are still snazzy enough to lure discerning guests. Rooms are sizeable and come with top-end trimmings, but they have a touch of the flashy airport lobby about them.

The Holiday Inn and Suva Motor Inn (see the midrange options) also have classy rooms in the top-end category. A joint venture has promised to transform the abandoned Grand Pacific Hotel opposite Albert Park into Suva's premier hotel.

## Eating

### INDO-FIJIAN

Suva has an excellent spread of hole-in-the-wall curry houses, where those on tight budgets can eat like kings.

**Ashiyana** (☎ 331 3000; Old Town Hall Bldg, Victoria Pde; mains F\$10-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun) For an Indian feast in 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.

**Singh's Curry House** (☎ 359 1019; Gordon St; meals F\$4-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) A delectable array of mostly South Indian curries flaunt themselves from the front counter at this cool and dark curry house. Vegetarians get plenty of choice and you can dine at high-backed booths or opt for a takeaway. It's one of the few places open on a Sunday.

**Curry House** (☎ 331 3756; meals F\$4-10; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat) This bright and busy curry house serves excellent lamb, chicken, fish and vegetarian curries in a canteen-style setting. The fresh pakoras, samosas and other snacks are a good option if you're on the run. Get in early to avoid a table wait.

**Govinda's Vegetarian Restaurant** (☎ 330 9587; 93 Cumming St; meals F\$5-7.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) Sari-clad families fill the tables at this vegetarian restaurant, which is a good indication of its authenticity. The array of thalis is impressive but you should definitely leave room for the delicious Indian sweets on display.

### JAPANESE, CHINESE & KOREAN

**Daikoku** (☎ 330 8968; Victoria Pde; mains F\$15-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Start the night with a round of sushi, sashimi and Asahi beers to whet the palate before moving onto Daikoku's speciality: seafood, chicken and beef teppanyaki. The food melts on the tongue and half the fun is watching the skilled chefs sear your fare in spectacular fashion on central hot plates. Bookings highly recommended.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Café Tivoli** (☎ 338 5407; Garden City, Grantham Rd, Raiwai; meals F\$6-13; ☎ breakfast & lunch) The menu at Suva's café of the moment is a positively cosmopolitan affair and fussy Westerners craving gourmet delights will go giddy at the sight of the deli-dishes. You may like to start the day with a croissant stuffed with salsa and cheese, eggs any style you like or perhaps a mammoth BLT bagel. Early sweet tooths can tuck into pancake stacks, pastries or sugary slices and baked treats. For lunch there are dense quiches and inventive salads. The food isn't the only stylish feature and you get to consume the culinary pleasures at tables scattered beneath a breezy outdoor pagoda.

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

**Korea House** (☎ 331 1711; 178 Waimanu Rd; mains F\$12-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) Guarded by a grand Korean mural, this restaurant serves pungent *kimchi* and sticky Korean BBQ alongside authentic squid, pork, tofu, prawn and chicken. The interior is plain and no-nonsense but the effort goes into the food. There's a F\$10 lunch special and daily dinner discounts.

### CAFÉS

**Cakes 2000** (☎ 330 8994; 113 Marks St; meals F\$5-7; ☎ 7.30am-4pm) If you're decadent you'll bypass the mains and go straight for the cheesecakes at this café-cum-bakery-cum-cake shop. If you're hungry you may begin with a hearty breakfast or divine sausage roll. And for the sensible? Tuck into overstuffed sandwiches or Fijian faves like *palusami* or roast lamb neck.

**Focaccia Café** (☎ 330 9117; Vanua Arcade, Victoria Pde; meals F\$5; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) This bustling eatery serves fresh burgers, wraps, rolls, kebabs and focaccias at its counter-seating or tables in the arcade lobby (it sounds incongruous but it works). The

breakfasts are hot and filling and the staff supremely friendly.

**Republic of Cappuccino** Dolphin Arcade (☎ 330 0333; Dolphin Arcade, Victoria Pde; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun); Downtown (☎ 330 0828, Renwick Rd; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) Serves good coffee, juices, smoothies and snacks in air-conditioned (and very Starbucks) surrounds.

### QUICK EATS

For around F\$5 you can tuck into takeaway fare at the food courts at **Downtown Boulevard Shopping Centre** (Ellery St), the **Harbour Centre** (Scott St) and **Dolphin Plaza** (nr Loftus St & Victoria Pde). All serve pizza, pasta, Chinese, curries and Fijian dishes.

### RESTAURANTS

**Old Mill Cottage** (☎ 331 2134; 49 Camarvon St; dishes F\$6-12; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Inquisitive gastronomes will love the authentic Fijian fare, including *palusami*, curried shellfish and seaweed or fish stewed in coconut milk, served at this humble Suva institution. Less adventurous diners can opt for Indian curries or traditional roasts. Devoted office workers park themselves at tables on the front veranda or large booths inside.

**Malt House Brewery & Restaurant** (☎ 337 1515; 88 Jerusalem Rd, Vatu; mains F\$15-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Delicious microbrews and food lure happy diners back to this popular spot for repeat performances. Wood-fired pizzas go down well with the ales and lagers, or you can tuck into inventive seafood and meat dishes. It's often filled with a boisterous din and worth the trek from downtown.

**Raintree Lodge** (☎ 332 0562; www.raintreelodge@connect.com.fj; Princes Rd, Colo-i-Suva; mains F\$12-23; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Suva's most tranquil restaurant sits on an open-air veranda above a peaceful lake at this lovely lodge

(see p171). Dappled sunlight filters through the surrounding rainforest and bird calls accompany your meal. Traditional Fijian fare, inventive vegetarian options and fragrant curries are served and the pancakes at breakfast are legendary.

**L'Opera** (☎ 331 8602; 59 Gordon St; mains F\$20-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat, brunch Sun) This luscious slice of Italy features ornate fabrics, decadent table settings and lovingly made gnocchi, ravioli and other pastas. Authentic tuna, veal and lobster dishes are also on offer and the antipasto and wine list are excellent. Pure romance.

**JJ's on the Park** (☎ 330 5005; Stinson Pde; mains F\$15-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Dishing up good Western-style food and terrific harbour views from the 180-degree glass frontage, JJ's is an atmospheric place to dine. Generous salads, burgers, steak and seafood dishes are served with an impressive wine list. The surrounds are glossy and polished and the service attentive.

More restaurants:

**Raffles Floating Restaurant** (☎ 336 2450; www.rafflestradewinds.com; Queens Rd, Lami; mains F\$15-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Beautiful harbour views at the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel (p171).

**Tiko's Floating Restaurant** (☎ 331 3626; off Stinson Pde; mains F\$20-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Excellent surf-and-turf fare in elegant surrounds.

### SELF-CATERING

**Suva Municipal Market** (Rodwell Rd; ☎ mornings Mon-Sat) The best place for fish, exotic fruit and vegetables, plus neon-coloured Indian sweets. It's also a great place to buy kava for village visits.

There are a couple of supermarkets downtown on Rodwell Rd. The **Hot Bread Kitchen** (☎ 331 3919; Scott St; ☎ 5.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) serves bakery goodies and **Victoria Wines & Spirits** (☎ 331 2884; Victoria Pde;

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Traps Bar** (☎ 331 2922; Victoria Pde) The entrance to this subterranean saloon bar is fairly unassuming – a couple of bouncers outside a dim doorway. But the low-key façade is just a ruse and Traps is one of Suva's best drinking holes. Enter the convivial bunker and you'll find yourself in the open main room with a pool table, wide-screen TV (yes with sports) and high benches lining the walls. The main bar simmers with the happy din of trendy young patrons meeting other trendy young patrons, but the crowd is friendly and unpretentious. As the night progresses you may find yourself on the dance floor, or accompanying the acoustic musicians croon Bob Marley melodies.

☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) sells a good range of grog.

## Drinking

Suva's drinking and dancing dens get happy and loaded on Friday and Saturday nights, when Victoria Pde swarms with clubbers and barhoppers. You'll need to don appropriate attire (no flip flops), 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 downright stupid.

**O'Reillys** (☎ 331 2968; cnr Macarthur St & Victoria Pde) Things start low-key at O'Reillys – a few quiet beers and a game of pool. But this bar manages to brew a party most nights and by 11ish the dance floor is generally throbbing with locals, travellers, students and expats. There's no distinct age code and the atmosphere is fun and friendly.

**Bad Dog Café** (☎ 330 4662; cnr Macarthur St & Victoria Pde) Despite the name this is one of Suva's stylish bars, where heady cocktails, tasty bar snacks 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.

You can also grab a sociable drink at the Malt House Brewery & Restaurant (p173) or JJ's on the Park (p173). The restaurant and bar at the **Royal Suva Yacht Club** (☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, 8am-midnight Fri & Sat) is a popular watering hole with great views of the harbour and mountains.

## Entertainment

Check out the entertainment section of the *Fiji Times* for upcoming events, cinema listings and what's on at nightclubs.

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

Two bar-cum-clubs featuring live music to busy crowds are **Birdland R&B Club** (☎ 330 3833; 6 Carnarvon St) and the country and western style **Barn** (☎ 330 7845; Carnarvon St).

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** (Laucala Bay Rd, Laucala). The atmosphere is huge. Ask at the visitor information centre (p147) if there will be a match during your stay.

## Shopping

**Free Shop** (☎ 359 3201; 1st fl, Garden City, Grantham Rd, Raiwai) Supported by the UN Development Program, the Free (Fiji Retail Enterprise Engine) shop sells excellent jewellery, clothing and crafts by local artists.

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

**Suva Curio & Handicraft Centre** (Stinson Pde) The endless stalls at this craft market offer some

fantastic buys, but be prepared to bargain if you want to get your money's worth. Don't expect genuine antiques, regardless of what the vendor tells you.

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

More shopping:

**Jack's Handicrafts** (☎ 330 8893; cnr Renwick Rd & Pier St) Souvenirs at reasonable prices.

**Bob's Hook, Line & Sink** (☎ 330 1013; Harbour Centre, Thomson St) Has a range of snorkelling, diving and fishing gear.

**ROC Market** (Victoria Pde; see p173) Small, eclectic market on the third Sunday of every month at the Dolphin Arcade outlet of the Republic of Cappuccino.

## Getting There & Away

Frequent local buses operate along Queens Rd and Kings Rd from Suva's main bus terminal. Small trucks or carriers will also take passengers along Queens Rd. If you happen to be travelling in a group, you'll find that you can often get a taxi for little more than the price of a bus.

Nausori International Airport is 23km northeast of central Suva. A taxi to town costs F\$20; see p150 for more details on the airport and how to reach it from Suva.

## Getting Around

It is easy to get around central Suva on foot. Taxis are quite cheap for short trips and they actually use the meter. The busy local bus station is next to the market: ask bus drivers or locals about the ever-fluctuating timetables.

## VITI LEVU'S KINGS ROAD

Less toured than the Coral Coast's highway, Viti Levu's Kings Rd courses through the island's interior, traversing farmland and remote highland villages. It lacks the coastal scenery of the Queens Rd but matches its beauty with highland ascents and kilometres of untouched landscapes. Meeting the northern coast at Viti Levu Bay, it then skirts the shoreline to its final destination at Lautoka, ribboning its way past rugged cliffs and an infinite ocean. It's a beautiful trip by bus or 4WD. The road is unsealed between Korovou and Dama and

some skill is required here, particularly in the wet. Another road follows the coast to Natovi Landing (about a 20-minute drive), from where there are bus and ferry services to Labasa on Vanua Levu (p215) and Levuka on Ovalau (p215).

## Nausori

pop 22,000

On the eastern bank of the Rewa River, Nausori is a bustling service centre for the area's agricultural and industry workers. Its only draw for travellers is its airport – the country's second largest. A couple of banks and some inexpensive eateries are near the bus station but you'll be better off staying in Suva, 19km southwest.

The airport, about 3km southeast of Nausori, is a hub for Air Fiji and Sun Air domestic flights. The airport premises are small and low-key with an ANZ bank open for international flights only.

## Vaileka, Rakiraki & Ellington Wharf

Heading northwest from Korovou is a stunning journey: the mountain road winds along Wainibuka River, past small villages and Viti Levu Bay and down to Rakiraki. Against the skyline, the imposing Nakauvadra Range is believed to be the home of the great snake-god Degei, creator of all the islands.

Inland from Rakiraki, about 2km off Kings Rd past the sugar mill, the township of **Vaileka** has a bus station, taxi stands, banks, a market, supermarket and a few cafés (one with Internet access).

The turn-off to **Ellington Wharf** is 5km east of Rakiraki; the wharf is a further 1.5km. A Patterson Brothers ferry travels to Nabuwalu in southwest Vanua Levu from here twice a week (see p215).

Heading out of Rakiraki towards Nadi, look out for **Udreudre's Tomb**, the resting place of Fiji's most notorious cannibal whose personal tally reached at least 872 corpses. It's about 100m west of the Vaileka turn-off, on the left.

## ACTIVITIES

**Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports** (☎ 669 3333; www.safarilodge.com.fj) offers two-hour snorkelling trips around Nananu-i-Ra (from F\$25 per person) and windsurfing (from F\$70 per person per hour), plus

### 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 parenthood, 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 the liberal, individualistic lifestyle of the modern and increasingly Westernised city.

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 strife. Many face the near impossibility of surviving unemployment. Although it's not the Fiji of postcards, Fiji's rising urban youth culture is an intrinsic aspect of the country and an unexpected eye-opener.

## DINING ON THE DEAD

Fijians began feasting upon one another as far back as 2500 years ago. In traditional Fijian society dining on the enemy was considered the ultimate revenge, as a disrespectful death was a lasting insult to the enemy's family and the departed spirit. When missionaries brought cannibalism to a halt in the late 19th century, it had become a ritualised part of everyday life. Bodies were either consumed on the battlefield or brought back to the village spirit house, where they were butchered, baked and eaten on the local war god's behalf. In celebration of the event, men performed the *cibi* (death dance) and women the *dele* – a dance in which they sexually humiliated corpses. Captives were often forced to watch their own body parts being consumed or even to eat some themselves!

For cannibalistic feasts, men fed themselves with special long-pronged wooden forks. Considered sacred relics, these forks were kept in the spirit house away from women or children. Mementos were kept of the victims to prolong the victor's sense of vengeance. Necklaces, hairpins or earlobe ornaments were made from human bones and skulls were sometimes made into *tanoa* (kava drinking bowls). Flesh was smoked and preserved for snacks, and war clubs were inlaid with teeth. Viti Levu Highlanders placed the bones of victims in tree branches as trophies and rows of stones were used to tally the number of bodies eaten by the chief.

Early European visitors and settlers were understandably obsessed with cannibalism. Those who managed to keep their wits and limbs about them recorded gruesome, fascinating stories.

sailing, fishing, kitesurfing and diving. Especially interesting are the sea-kayaking safaris (F\$960/2200 three/seven days).

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Wananavu Beach Resort** (☎ 669 4433; www.wananavu.com; d from F\$290-320, f F\$480; 🍴 🏠) On Viti Levu's northernmost point, this lovely resort has beautiful views of Nananu-i-Ra and the mainland's mountainous coastline. Comfortable *bure* have balconies, and there are three self-contained villas by the water. Visitors are welcome at the restaurant (meals F\$10 to F\$35), which has gorgeous vistas and food. The beach is partially manmade but it's pleasant nonetheless.

**Rakiraki Hotel** (☎ 669 4101; www.tanoahotels.com; Kings Rd; s/d F\$65/100; 🍴 🏠) Nestled into spacious grounds with colourful splashes of bougainvillea, this colonial lodge has comfortable hotel rooms with '70s décor in two-storey blocks. There are also cheaper, simple rooms (F\$40) in a separate annex. The pool is surrounded by lovely wooden decking and there's a half-size tennis court, and restaurant (meals F\$16 to F\$20).

**Ellington Wharf** (☎ 693 3333; dm/d F\$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 thatched structures are tiled, polished and modern within and one of the doubles is en suite.

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

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Sunbeam has regular express buses along the Kings Rd from Suva and Nadi (see p215), which stop at Vaileka and the turn-off to Ellington Wharf. To avoid lugging groceries and gear 1.3km to the wharf, get off at Vaileka and catch a taxi (F\$8). Sharing a taxi from Nadi is about F\$90.

## Nananu-i-Ra

area 3.5 sq km

Tiny Nananu-i-Ra is a hop and a skip from the mainland but vastly different in landscape and character. There are wide beaches, scalloped bays and soft, grassy hills offering views of the volcanic Nakauvadra mountain range across the water on the mainland. There are no roads and no village and most residents are of European descent so there's little contact with indigenous culture.

## ACTIVITIES

An abundance of sealife makes for great **snorkelling** offshore; head to the island's northern side for sea snakes. The island's exposure to the trade winds makes it popular for **windsurfing**, especially from June to August when winds are generally 10 knots and above.

Ellington Wharf Adventure Water Sports (see p175) hires out equipment.

The surrounding reefs and especially Bligh Water to the north have some amazing dive sites, but the windy weather can make it tricky. **Ra Divers** (☎ 669 4511; www.radivers.com) charges F\$400 for a six-tank dive and F\$550 for an open water course.

## SLEEPING & EATING

It's a good idea to book accommodation ahead as the island can get busy. There's no bank and some budget places do not accept credit cards. Power is by generator, so no lights or fans after 10pm.

**Safari Lodge** (☎ 669 3333; www.safarilodge.com; dm/d F\$25/80) Housed in a stylish two-storey house, this fresh new lodge has a six-bed dorm with private en suite, plus loft-style doubles. Plans for a restaurant, shop and private *bure* were afoot at the time of research. The excellent meals (F\$45 daily) include veggie curries, Thai soups and Fijian dishes. One of Fiji's finest beaches is at the front door.

**McDonald's Nananu Beach Cottages** (☎ 669 4633; dm/tw F\$20/75, r F\$95) McDonald's cute blue and yellow cottages are scattered throughout a nicely landscaped property right in front of the jetty. There's also a spotless and roomy dorm, restaurant (meals F\$10 to F\$20) and hammocks out the front with uninterrupted views of the mainland. Snorkel gear/kayaks are F\$6/8 per half-day.

**Betham's Beach Cottages** (☎ 669 4132; www.bethams.com.fj; dm/r F\$20/110) These self-contained cottages are like upmarket caravan cabins. Each is fully furnished, and the spacious eight-bed dorm has its own kitchen, bathroom and veranda. The open-air café (mains F\$16 to F\$26) serves good if pricey meals.

Also available:

**Charlie's Place** (☎ 669 4676; dm/d F\$20/80) Private cottages on the hill with good views.

**Morrison's Cottage** (☎ 669 4516; tippie@connect.com.fj; dm F\$25, d F\$100) Simple bungalows on spacious grassy grounds. Closed November to May.

**Nananu Lodge** (☎ 669 4290; www.nananuislandlodge.com; camping per person F\$15, dm F\$20, d F\$60, f F\$120) Well-established with good accommodation. Home to Feejee Experience (p216) when it hits the island.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Nananu-i-Ra is a 15-minute boat ride from Ellington Wharf, and each resort runs its

own transfers (around F\$20 per person return). Arrange your pick-up in advance.

## VITI LEVU HIGHLANDS Nadarivatu & Navai

The forestry settlement of Nadarivatu is a beautiful highland area with fresh mountain air. Hike up to Mt Lomalagi for great views (three hours return). The **Forestry Office** (☎ 668 9001) can arrange for camping, dorm accommodation or a homestay with a local family (bring provisions and give money and/or groceries to cover costs). Alternatively, seek permission from the manager at **Vatukoula's Emperor Gold Mining Company** (☎ 668 0630) to stay at the gold mine's spacious resthouse.

About 8km south of Nadarivatu, Navai 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 around F\$10. The last half of the climb is akin to rock climbing and can be extremely slippery.

The turn-off for Nadarivatu is about 3km east of Tavua – it's a steep, rough trip (30km, 1½ hours!) that should be only navigated in a 4WD. Local bus services from Tavua ceased operating due to poor road conditions. The road from Navai to Suva is barely passable and best avoided.

## Koroyanitu National Heritage Park

For nature lovers, the Koroyanitu National Heritage Park is definitely worth a hike. The area has beautiful nature walks through native Dakua forests and grasslands, bird-watching, archaeological sites, waterfalls and swimming. Contact the **Abaca visitor centre** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 1234; admission F\$5) for more information. Abaca (pronounced am-barth-a) village is at the base of **Mt Koroyanitu** (Mt Evans).

## ACTIVITIES

### Hiking

From Nase Lodge (p178), a climb to the summit of Castle Rock (about four hours) will reward you with panoramic views of the Mamanucas and Yasawas. You can hire local guides to take you there or on half- or full-day hikes of the area.

**Mount Batilamu Trek** (☎ 664 5747, 927 3592; fax 664 5547) organises 2½-day tours up the Sabeto Valley, including village visits and

transfers from Nadi/Lautoka hotels for F\$360. Tours depart Tuesday and Thursday from mid-April to mid-November.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Experience highland village culture with a **village stay** (per night incl meals F\$35), which can be arranged through the Abaca visitor centre.

**Nase Lodge** (camp sites per person F\$10, dm F\$25) This old colonial lodge, about 400m uphill from the village, has 12 bunk beds, cooking facilities, a cold-water shower and a toilet. Meals in the village cost around F\$5/7/15 for breakfast/lunch/dinner, but you should also take some supplies.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are no buses to Abaca but you can contact **George Prasad** (☎ 664 5431, 991 6956; [george\\_prasad@hotmail.com](mailto:george_prasad@hotmail.com)), who operates transfers to the village (F\$25/50 one way/return). If driving, turn inland off Queens Rd at Tavakubu Rd, then right at Abaca Rd. It's a further 10km of gravel road up to Abaca (4WD only).

### Nausori Highlands

The grassy slopes of the Nausori Highlands snake their way into the mountainous interior, leaving the coastline and panoramic views in their wake. This region is one of the best places to experience traditional Fijian culture in small villages and settlements scattered throughout the fantastic landscape. Sunday is a day of rest, so village visits may be disruptive and unappreciated.

### SIGHTS

#### Navala pop 800

On the banks of the Ba River, Navala is by far Fiji's most picturesque village. The houses here are all traditional *bure*, built with local materials. While it's a photographer's dream, you must ask permission to take pictures. The village welcomes visitors who present a *sevusevu* (a gift such as *yaqona*) and donation of F\$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 F\$45, *bure* per person F\$55) On the river's edge a kilometre south of Navala, this friendly place offers village trips,

swimming and *bilibili* (bamboo raft) trips. There is a traditional *bure* in the garden, or you can stay in the 10-bed dorm attached to the house; there are cold-water showers and flush toilets but no electricity. Meals include plenty of home-grown fruit and vegetables and local dishes. It's best to ring in advance.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are local buses from Ba to Navala (F\$4, 1½ hours, twice daily) – catch the 12.15pm to avoid arriving at the village when it's dark. Ring Bulou's Lodge in advance and they will pick you up from Navala. Carriers cost about F\$60 for the vehicle.

If driving from Ba, there are a couple of turns to watch out for: at the police post turn left, 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 – seek local advice before heading out.

### SIGATOKA VALLEY

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 (p163) offers guided tours departing Nadi and the Coral Coast.

### NAMOSI HIGHLANDS

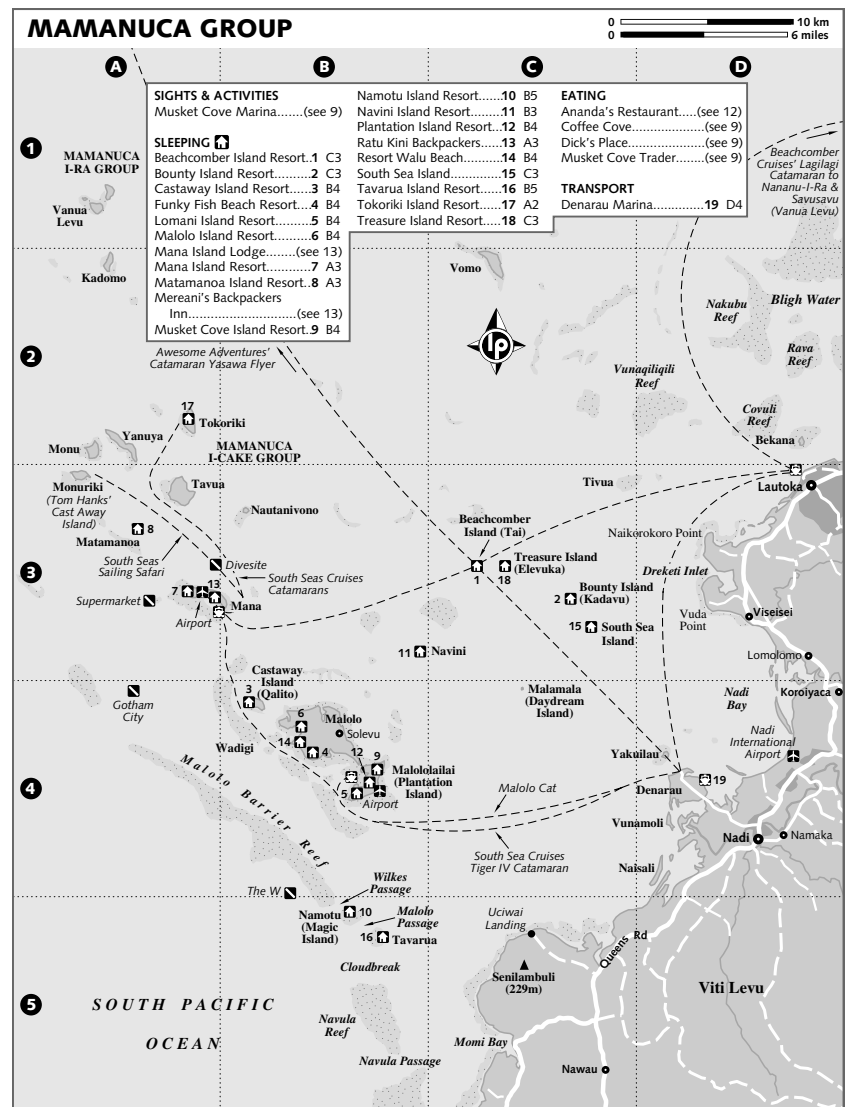
The steamy Namosi Highlands, north of Pacific Harbour, have Fiji's most spectacular scenery, complete with rainforests, steep ranges, deep river canyons and tall waterfalls. If you have your own wheels (preferably 4WD), take a detour inland from Nabukavesi.

**Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147; [www.riversfiji.com](http://www.riversfiji.com)) offers well-organised river-rafting and kayaking trips to the Namosi Highlands, with great equipment, from F\$190 per person.

Discover Fiji Tours and Wilderness Ethnic Adventure Fiji also offer tours into the Navua River area (see p165).

## MAMANUCA GROUP

White-sand beaches, crystalline seas, world-class snorkelling, diving and surfing – the Mamanucas are a magnet for travellers in urgent need of tropical therapy. Reliably sunny and basking in a lagoon formed



by the Malolo Barrier Reef and the mainland, these 20 islands promise a tangible replica of the brochure tease. Many take day-trippers from nearby Nadi and Lautoka, who gorge themselves on buffet food and recover on sunkissed beaches. For longer sojourns the spread of resorts caters to all budgets, so whether your taste

is champagne or Fiji Bitter you can enjoy their idyllic wares.

### Transport

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The following companies operate boat transfers from Denarau to the Mamanucas and inter-island transfers. Most include

courtesy pick-up from hotels in the Nadi region.

**Awesome Adventures** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com) The *Yasawa Flyer* sails to South Sea, Bounty and Beachcomber Islands.

**Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; one way/return F\$45/77, children under 16/2 half-price/free) Twice-daily transfers to Beachcomber and Treasure Islands. Also leaves from Lautoka.

**Malolo Cat I & II** (☎ 666 6215; adult/child one way F\$45/22.50) Fast catamarans to Malololailai (Musket Cove and Plantation Island Resorts) three times daily.

**South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj) Six daily catamaran transfers to: Malolo, Likuliku, Walu Beach and Castaway (F\$65 one way); Mana (F\$70); Treasure/Beachcomber (F\$55); Bounty (F\$50); South Sea Island (F\$30); and Matamanoa, Tokoriki and Amanuca (F\$100).

Prices for quick, scenic flights are comparable to catamaran prices. **Sun Air** (☎ 0800 672 5725, 572 3016; www.fiji.to) has daily flights (if there are enough passengers) from Nadi to Mana (adult/child F\$90/60 one way) and Malololailai (adult/child F\$75/40). Charter flights and helicopters are also an option; see p153 for details. Yachts can be hired at Musket Cove Marina on Malololailai.

## Activities

Mamanuca **diving** sites teem with fantastically gaudy fish circling impossibly psychedelic corals. Gotham City is three pinnacles in a passage in the Malolo Barrier Reef; it has soft coral and is named after the batfish. Inside the Malolo Barrier Reef is the famous Supermarket, at a depth of 5m to 30m, where you can see grey, white and black-tip reef sharks and the occasional bronze whaler. North Reef, also known as the Circus, has lots of clown fish, plate corals and nudibranchs.

Many of the resorts have their own dive outfits. **Subsurface Fiji** (☎ 666 6738; www.subsurfacefiji.com), based at the First Landing Resort (p156) north of Nadi, is a well-respected operation servicing numerous islands. A two-tank dive/PADI open water course costs F\$190/560. See p153 for other outfits based in Nadi.

## Tours

Day cruises to the Mamanucas from Nadi are exceedingly popular and generally include transfers from Nadi hotels, lunch and basic water activities.

**Blue Lagoon Cruises** (☎ 666 1622; www.bluelagooncruises.com) and **Captain Cook Cruises** (☎ 670 1823; www.captaincook.com.au; adult/child F\$95/47.50) offer combined cruises of the Mamanucas and Yasawas; see p185 for details. Captain Cook cruises also offers a starlight dinner cruise aboard MV *City of Nadi* (adult/child F\$99/50, three hours), including an à la carte three-course meal.

**Oceanic Schooner Company** (☎ 672 2455; funcruises@connect.com.fj; per person F\$165) offers a five-island champagne cruise aboard the 30m schooner *Whale's Tale*, stopping at Honey-moon and Nukuimana Islands.

**South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj) has a full-day catamaran and sailing cruise to three uninhabited islands, including a village visit (F\$165/90 adult/child). There are also day cruises to Castaway (F\$125/85 adult/child), Mana (F\$115/60 adult/child), Malolo (F\$115/60 adult/child), Treasure (F\$115/60 adult/child) and South Sea Islands (F\$99/50 adult/child).

More options:

**Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 672 3828, 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; full-day tour adult/child F\$80/40) Day trips to Beachcomber Island.

**Coral Cats** (☎ 651 3475; sailfiji@connect.com.fj; per person F\$130) Small-group day cruises around the Mamanuca islands on a high-speed catamaran.

## SOUTH SEA ISLAND

This tiny, flat, sandy island used to be known as Aqualand and is a fun and friendly option for budget travellers and day-trippers.

In the middle of the island, **South Sea Island** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com; dm incl meals F\$75; 🏠) is one double-storey *bure* with a restaurant and bar downstairs and a forest of beds (mostly bunks) upstairs. The main dorm has 32 beds and there are two six-bed family dorms. The beach is good for swimming and OK for snorkelling, and there's plenty of free water-play equipment. Diving is with **Reef Safari** (☎ 675 0950; www.reefsafari.com.fj), with two-tank dives/open water courses for F\$170/530.

See p179 for information on getting to South Sea Island.

## BOUNTY ISLAND

area 0.02 sq km

One of the best options for budget travellers, Bounty is a 20-hectare coral island with a pristine marine reserve and spectacular

snorkelling. Hawksbill turtles nest on the island's white-sand beach and the interior is home to the rare Fiji crested iguana.

The **Bounty Island Resort** (☎ 651 1271; www.fiji-bounty.com; dm/d/f F\$50/145/240; 🏠) has flashy double *bure* and a mix of old and new family *bure*, all with air-con, fridge and bathroom. They're super clean and each has ocean views and hammocks. The dorms are spotless but can get a bit hot. Meal packages are F\$35 per person and servings are generous. Children under 12 are half-price. Non-motorised activities, including snorkelling, canoeing and kayaking, are free and diving is with Subsurface Fiji (see opposite).

See p179 for information on getting to Bounty Island.

## BEACHCOMBER ISLAND

area 0.2 sq km

Sitting about 20km offshore, tiny Beachcomber Island (Tai) is covered entirely by a resort and circled by a beautiful beach. It has a reputation for revelry and generally attracts a young crowd.

The **Beachcomber Island Resort** (☎ 666 1500; www.beachcomberfiji.com; dm/s/d incl meals from F\$90/195/270; 🍷 🏠 📺) is a party place, catering for up to 250 energetic guests; a constant streak of day-trippers also peeps up the numbers. The colossal dorm *bure* is a crowded affair. There are also modest twin rooms set back from the beach, rustic duplex *bure* and six premium beachfront *bure* – all with fridge and private bathroom. Entertainment includes live music and frenetic dancing on the sand dance floor in the big, lively bar.

Snorkelling equipment is free for house guests. Also on offer are water-skiing (F\$35), parasailing (F\$65), wakeboarding (F\$35) and jet-skiing (F\$65 per 15 minutes). Diving is through Subsurface Fiji (see opposite). A kids' club operates during the Australian and NZ school holidays.

Transfer is by the resort's catamaran service or South Sea Cruises (see p179).

## TREASURE ISLAND

area 0.06 sq km

The coral Treasure Island (Elevuka) is covered in tropical gardens and ringed by a white-sand beach.

**Treasure Island Resort** (☎ 666 6999; www.fiji-treasure.com; d/f F\$530/1050; 🏠 📺 📺) is paradise for both honeymooners and families, with

landscaped tropical gardens that cover the entire island and comfortable beachfront *bure* with hammocks. There's an excellent kids' club, baby-sitting and nightly entertainment in the open dining room/bar. Nonmotorised activities are free and diving is with Subsurface Fiji (see opposite).

South Sea Cruises and Beachcomber Cruises offer transfers here (see p179).

## NAVINI

area 0.25 sq km

Surrounded by a white-sand beach and offshore reef, teeny Navini looks like a round wafer biscuit topped with thick pesto, and is just as delicious.

There are only 10 *bure* in the exquisite **Navini Island Resort** (☎ 666 2188; www.navinifiji.com.fj; d F\$500-690; 🏠), all within 10m of the beach. Cheapest are the small but comfortable one-bedroom *bure*. Duplex *bure* have sitting rooms and the more spacious 'premier' *bure* have verandas. Honeymoon *bure* have a private courtyard and spa. A three-meal plan of fresh and fabulous food costs F\$100 for adults, F\$55 for children aged six to 12, F\$40 for two- to five-year-olds and F\$20 for kids under two per day.

Snorkelling is excellent just off the beach and kayaking, windsurfing and village and fishing trips are free. Diving is with Subsurface Fiji (see opposite).

Guests are picked up from Nadi or Lautoka hotels; return transfers cost F\$200/100/600 for adult/child/family.

## MALOLOLAILAI

area 2.4 sq km

Tranquil Malololailai is the second-largest of the Mamanuca Group and encompasses three resorts, a marina and, on the hill above Musket Cove, a kitschy art/gift shop, **La Galerie** (☎ 651 0050), with a small book exchange.

## Festivals & Events

### MUSKET COVE MARINA

In September each year the **Musket Cove Yacht Club** (☎ 666 2215; fax 666 2633; www.musketcovefiji.com) hosts Fiji Regatta Week and the Musket Cove to Port Vila yacht race. Yachts can anchor at the marina for F\$10/60/220 per day/week/month. The marina also offers a choice of charter yachts, ranging in size from 6m to 32m.

## Activities

### SURFING

Jacob ('Scobie') operates boat transfers to the excellent surf breaks at Malolo and Wilkes Passages. Contact him through the island's dive shop or on ☎ 925 8778 (or through his mum, Viema, on ☎ 923 0828). Rates per person for one/two or three/four or five people are F\$40/30/25.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Musket Cove Island Resort** (☎ 666 2215; www.musketcovefiji.com; d F\$250-540; 🏠) Overlooking a lagoon, this serene resort has a range of accommodation, including hotel rooms and self-catering *bure*. The newer Armstrong Island villas (F\$660), clustered on an artificial island, have over-water verandas and a private pool, TVs and DVD players. Lagoon *bure* are nicely decorated and resort villas boast their own spa pools. Windsurfing, canoeing, hand-line fishing and snorkelling are free. Two-/three-meal plans at Dick's Place (see below) cost F\$70/85 for adults and F\$45/35 for children.

**Plantation Island Resort** (☎ 666 9333; www.plantationisland.com; d/f from F\$250/470; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Pure fun for families, Plantation teems with kids in the sea, in the pool, painting T-shirts, climbing plaster cows, egg-and-spoon racing...or just watching TV and eating chips. Accommodation includes the popular two-bedroom garden *bure* which feature large lounge areas and big, clean bathrooms. The new Plantation Village double rooms are bright and cheerful, with enclosed patios. Two-/three-meal packages are F\$40/60. There's also a shop and a Sunset Bar. Activities include snorkelling, canoeing, windsurfing, paragliding and lawn bowls. Plantation Divers charges F\$145/640 for a two-tank dive/unlimited diving.

**Dick's Place** (☎ 666 2215; meals F\$14-25; 🍴) breakfast/lunch/dinner) Musket Cove resort's restaurant serves international cuisine with some Indian and Fijian dishes and weekly BBQs. Thursday night is *meke* night, when the only food available is pig on a spit and an accompanying buffet.

**Coffee Cove** (☎ 666 2215; meals F\$12.50; 🍴 10am-6pm) Good-value, bistro-style lunches are served overlooking a lagoon here, plus it's BYO. Order BBQ packs by 4.30pm; they include a choice of meats, green salad, potatoes and garlic bread (F\$16). Snacks, coffee and ice creams are also served.

More sleeping and eating options:

**Lomani Island Resort** (☎ 666 8212; www.lomaniisland.com; d F\$580, st incl breakfast F\$630; 🏠 🏠) Intimate, adults-only resort with classy accommodation and an excellent restaurant.

**Ananda's Restaurant** (☎ 666 9333; mains F\$20; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Huge menu and alfresco, kid-friendly dining.

**Musket Cove Trader** (☎ 666 2215; 🕒 8am-7pm) Well-stocked general store, great for yachties.

### Getting There & Away

The Malolo Cat catamaran operates transfers from Denarau, and Sun Air has a shuttle service from Nadi. See p180 for details.

## MALOLO

The daddy of the Mamanuca Group has two villages, three resorts (with another under construction), mangroves and coastal forest. The island's highest point, **Uluisolo** (218m), offers panoramic views of the Mamanucas and southern Yasawas.

Appealing to the surfer/backpacker market, **Funky Fish Beach Resort** (☎ 651 3180; www.funkyfishresort.com; dm/d F\$30/80, f from F\$120; 🏠 🏠) has bright *bure* with outdoor showers and a sand-floor bar serving good Australian wines and impressive food. There's also good snorkelling and access to the best surf breaks. Diving is with Subsurface Fiji (see p180). There are no direct transfers, but the resort will collect you from **Malolo Island Resort** (☎ 672 4275; www.maloloisland.com; r F\$550-1060; 🏠 🏠 🏠), which has a good beach, kids' club and hillside restaurant. The **Resort Walu Beach** (☎ 665 1777; www.walubeach.com; dm incl meals F\$90, r F\$450-690; 🏠 🏠 🏠) is slightly generic but has a great bar and food.

Transfers to Malolo Island are with South Sea Cruises or Malolo Cat (see p180), or seaplane (see p153).

## CASTAWAY ISLAND

area 0.7 sq km

Reef-fringed, 70-hectare Castaway Island, also known as Qalito, is 27km west of Denarau.

The simple and spacious *bure* at the family-friendly **Castaway Island Resort** (☎ 666 1233; www.castawayfiji.com; d from F\$680, f F\$1780; 🏠 🏠) have white brick walls and thatched roofs, giving them an English-country look. The interiors are a little shabby but are being

gradually renovated. There is a swimming pool/bar, open-air pizza bar with sea views, fabulous dining terrace (all-day casual meals F\$15, à la carte dinner F\$42) and kids' club/baby-sitting service. Castaway Dive Centre charges F\$105/690/710 for one-tank dives/unlimited dives/open water courses.

South Sea Cruises (see p180), Pacific Island Seaplane and Island Hoppers (see p153) offer transfers.

## MANA

Beautiful Mana has good snorkelling and diving and a peppering of hills with spectacular views. Upmarket Mana Island Resort stretches for over 80 hectares between the north and south beaches, and there are three budget resorts, popular with partying British and Irish backpackers. Check out the south beach pier, where the fish go into a frenzy under the night lights.

**Reef Safari** (☎ 675 0950; www.reefsafari.com.fj) is an excellent dive outfit servicing the backpacker resorts. The diving and snorkelling sites are uncrowded and the reef talks are inspiring. Two-tank dives/night dives/open water courses cost F\$170/100/450.

### Sleeping & Eating

A manned guard post and a high fence separate the three backpacker resorts from the Mana Island Resort, like a mini Berlin wall, dividing the wealthy west from the ragged poor in the east. It was erected during a period of aggressive competition between the resorts, but although the boundary still stands, the mood has long since improved. The backpacker resorts are sewn into a ramshackle new Fijian village. To reach them, get off at the ferry wharf, turn left, and walk through the village.

**Mana Island Lodge** (☎ 681 3436; manalodge2@yahoo.com; dm/d incl meals from F\$60/130) The newest of the backpacker places has brand-new fan-cooled *bure* with bathrooms and an eight-bed en suite dorm. At the time of writing, there was a restaurant here but no bar. Snorkel hire costs F\$10 but snorkelling boat trips are free, island hopping is F\$45 and fishing F\$30. Diving is through Reef Safari (see above).

**Ratu Kini Backpackers** (☎ 672 1959; www.ratukini.com; camping per person F\$35, dm F\$45, s/d from F\$75/95) Most of the accommodation here is set back from the beach in gardens, so the resort is

almost indistinguishable from the village. The newest rooms have big, comfortable beds. The lively bar here overlooks the beach and is the centre of backpacker nightlife. Rates include huge meals and activities include snorkelling trips (F\$10 per person, plus F\$10 snorkel hire), kayaking (F\$5 per hour) and visits to Monuriki, the island where the movie *Cast Away* was shot (F\$50 per person, including snorkel and lunch). Diving is through Reef Safari (see left).

**Mereani's Backpackers Inn** (☎ 651 3359, 995 6446; www.manaislandbackpackers.com; dm/s/d incl meals F\$45/75/95; 🏠) All doubles have a double bed, a single bed and a fan, apart from one which is air-conditioned. All facilities are shared. The eight-bed dorm has two double rooms, and there's a large 20-bed mixed dorm in the village. Activities include reef-fishing trips (F\$5), four-island sightseeing (F\$35), a Tom Hanks picnic (F\$50) and snorkelling. Diving is through Reef Safari (see left).

**Mana Island Resort** (☎ 666 1455; www.manafiji.com; d incl breakfast F\$340-510, st incl breakfast F\$790-1070; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) One of Fiji's largest island resorts, this Japanese owned complex offers stylish accommodation. The honeymoon *bure* have a very long deck overlooking a lovely separate cove, shared only with other honeymooners. Garden *bure* sleep up to four people, and deluxe ocean-view air-con *bure* are spacious, elevated and have a porch. There are two restaurants (lunch F\$16, dinner F\$55 for five courses), three bars, tennis courts and a free kids' club. Children under 12 stay free and rates include all nonmotorised water sports. Diving is with **Aqua-Trek** (☎ 670 2413; www.aquatrekdiving.com) and costs F\$190/700 for a two-tank dive/open water course.

### Getting There & Away

Guests of Mereani's and Ratu Kini can use the resort's own *Mana Flyer* transfer boat (F\$80 return). Mana is serviced by South Sea Cruises catamarans, but flying with Sun Air is the quickest way to get to the island (see p179).

## MATAMANOA

Covered in dense vegetation, dotted with coconut palms and fringed by white-sand beaches, Matamanoa is a secluded and hilly island just north of Mana.



The midsized **Matamanoa Island Resort** (☎ 672 3620; www.matamanoa.com; d incl breakfast F\$330-510; 🏠 📺 📺) has 20 *bure* on a high point with verandas and views of a lovely beach, plus 13 good-value air-con units with garden views. Daily two-/three-meal plans cost F\$75/50 and there is a three-night minimum stay. No children under 12 are allowed.

Activities include a trip to a nearby pottery village on Tavua and diving is with **Aqua-Trek** (☎ 670 2413; www.aquatrekdiving.com; two-tank dives/open water courses F\$190/700).

Most guests arrive via a **South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj; F\$100) catamaran.

## TOKORIKI

Near the northern end of the Mamanucas, this small island has a beautiful, long white-sand beach and a remote feel.

Gorgeous **Tokoriki Island Resort** (☎ 666 1999; www.tokoriki.com; bure d F\$830, villas d F\$1100; 🏠 📺 📺) is one for the couples (children under 12 aren't welcome). Tasteful and comfortable *bure* are just a few steps from the beach and the five new villas have private plunge pools and large sandstone terraces. Lunch is served on a pleasant terrace and gourmet, candle-lit dinners in the à la carte restaurant.

**Dive Tropex Tokoriki** (www.tokorikidiving.com) charges F\$190/100/640 for a two-tank dive/night dive/open water course. It has an interesting giant clam-farming dive site nearby and visits some pristine local sites, including Fiji's only blue coral.

Most guests fly to Tokoriki or take a catamaran with **South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; www.ssc.com.fj; F\$100). Seaplane or helicopter are also options (see p153).

## TAVARUA

area 0.12 sq km

This small coral island is at the southern edge of the Malolo Barrier Reef which encloses the southern Mamanucas. Rimmed by beautiful white-sand beaches, it's close to Cloudbreak and Restaurants surf breaks.

Popular with American surfers, **Tavarua Island Resort** (☎ 672 3513; www.tavarua.com; s/tw incl meals F\$300/450) has accommodation in simple *bure* along the beach. Transfers from Nadi and surf trips are included and there's a minimum one-week stay.

Bookings need to be made well in advance through **Tavarua Island Tours** (☎ 805 686 4551; fax 805 683 6696) in California.

## NAMOTU

area 0.0015 sq km

Namotu, a tiny (1.5 hectares) and pretty island next to Tavarua, is first and foremost a surfing resort, although game fishing is also popular here.

Steeped in Balinese decorations, **Namotu Island Resort** (☎ 670 6439; www.namotuisland.net; 🏠 📺 📺) brings a little bit of Indonesia to Fiji. If you don't surf – or at least fish – you might think you're on the wrong planet. Surf breaks include Swimming Pool, one of Fiji's cleanest waves, and the consistently surfable Namotu Lefts (both exclusive to the resort), and Wilkes Passage. Diving is with Subsurface Fiji (see p180) and the resort arranges transfers from the mainland. Generally, guests book in advance through **Waterways Surf Travel** (www.waterwaystravel.com) in Malibu. No children under 12.

## YASAWA GROUP

Like the Mamanucas, the Yasawas enjoy dazzling dry sunshine, glassy lagoons and vivid snorkelling and diving. But dotted across 90km of reef, these 20 volcanic islands are grander in stature, their beaches a little emptier and landscapes a tad more rugged. Technology is an enigma and any stay longer than a day will nudge you surreptitiously into the true meaning of 'Fiji time'. Backpacker lodges have dominated here, but fancier digs are beginning to emerge.

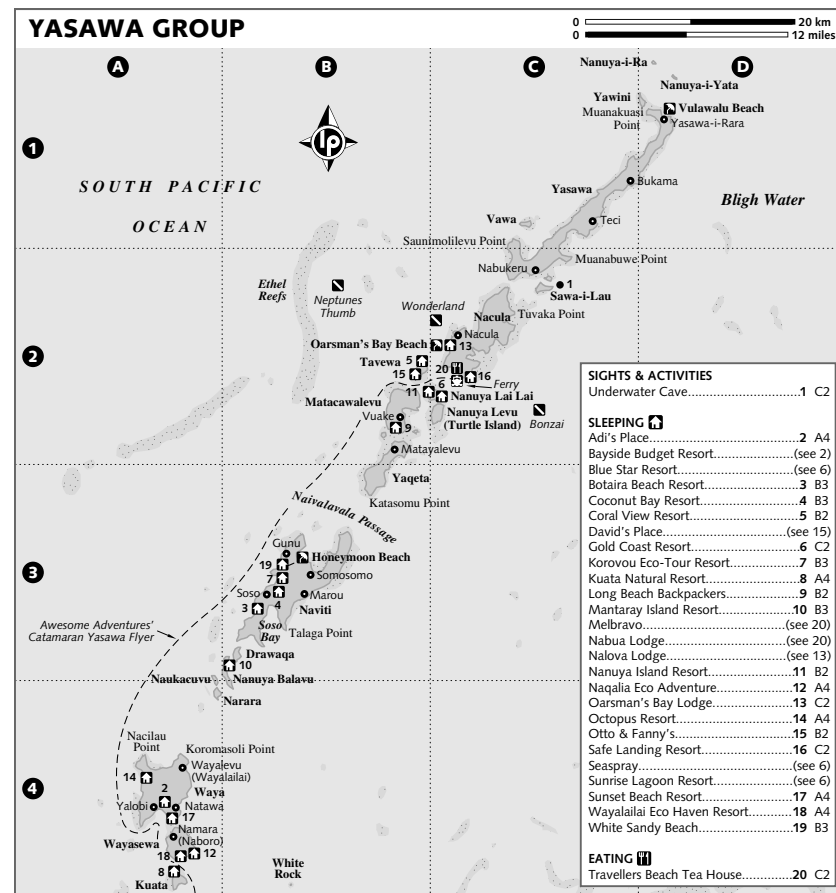
### Dangers & Annoyances

Some budget resorts offer their own, cheaper boat transfers to the Yasawas. The long trip is across an exposed stretch of water and weather conditions can change quickly. It's worth checking beforehand if boats have sufficient life jackets and a marine radio.

### Transport

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

The *Yasawa Flyer*, operated by **Awesome Adventures Fiji** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com), is a 25m catamaran with toilets, air-con and



snack bar that departs Denarau Marina at 9.15am daily and stops by every island in the group. Fares from Denarau include Kuata, Wayasewa or Waya (F\$75); Naviti (F\$80); and Tavewa (F\$95). Inter-island fares are around F\$60. Many resorts also charge a minimal (F\$5 to F\$10) transfer fee to collect guests from the Flyer. Island hoppers should consider a 'Bula Pass' (F\$250/ 370/400 seven/14/21 days) which enables unlimited travel but only one return to Denarau.

Awesome Adventures also offers three-/seven-night accommodation packages from F\$300/800 per person, but if you're looking for flexibility you're better off booking your accommodation separately.

At the time of writing there was rumour of another company commencing transfers to the Yasawa islands, departing from Lautoka.

**Turtle Airways** (☎ 672 1888; reservations@turtleairways.com) has daily seaplanes from Nadi to Tavewa Island (around F\$300, 35 minutes).

### Tours CRUISES

Floating hotel/cruise ships are a comfortable option for visiting the Yasawas. They generally include island and village visits and mainland transfers, and rates for children under 15 years are heavily discounted.

**Captain Cook Cruises** (☎ 670 1823; www.captaincook.com.au; 15 Narewa Rd, Nadi) Has four- and seven-night Mamanuca and Yasawa cruises

onboard the 68m MV *Reef Escape* with a swimming pool, bars, lounges and air-con. Accommodation ranges from cabins with bunk beds up to deluxe staterooms. Prices per person, twin share, including all meals and activities (except diving) start at F\$1260/2640 for three/seven nights. Children under two years old travel for free and those under 15 pay from F\$350.

**Blue Lagoon Cruises** (☎ 666 1622; www.bluelagoon.com; 183 Vitogo Pde, Lautoka) Offers cruises aboard huge motor-yachts from F\$1130/2480 for two/four nights per twin-share cabin. Seven-day Gold Club Cruises aboard the luxury MV *Mystique Princess* start at F\$4950 for a twin-share cabin. Children under 15 pay 11% to 15% depending on the cruise and those under two are free. Transfers, cruise activities and food are included.

**Awesome Adventures** (☎ 675 0499; www.awesomefiji.com) Three-night cruises on board the 27m *Wanna Taki* catamaran cost F\$330 per person, including meals, transfers and activities. The food is excellent and, although the boat looks snug, these trips are fun and relaxed, and travellers rave about them.

## KAYAKING

Australian-operated **Southern Sea Ventures** (☎ 02-8901 3287; www.southernseaventures.com) runs nine-day kayaking safaris through the Yasawas from May to October. Safaris cost from A\$1965 per person.

## SAILING SAFARI

**Captain Cook Cruises** (☎ 670 1823; www.captaincook.com.au) has sailing trips to the southern Yasawas aboard the tall-ship SV *Spirit of the Pacific*. Accommodation is in simple thatched *bure* ashore, or canvas beds below deck. Snorkelling, fishing, village visits and *lovo* feasts are included. Prices per person, twin share, for a three-/four-day trip are F\$510/680.

## KUATA

Petite and spectacular Kuata has unusual volcanic rock formations, caves, coral cliffs on the southern end and great snorkelling just offshore.

Sitting on a coarse sandy beach with Wayasewa hovering in the foreground, **Kuata Natural Resort** (☎ 666 9020, 933 4508; camping/dm/d incl meals F\$45/55/130) appeals to unfussy backpackers with a 20-bed and 10-bed dorm and

traditional en suite *bure* tightly arranged around the gardens. Standards are simple but the emphasis is on fun. The other side of the island has a nice beach and the best snorkelling. Transfers from the *Yasawa Flyer* cost F\$10 (see p184).

## WAYASEWA

Also known as Wayalailai (Little Waya), Wayasewa has good coral reefs. It's dominated by Vatuvula, a volcanic rock face gazing out at visitors as they arrive. The hike to the top is a fun scramble and views take in the whole Yasawa Group.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Wayalailai Eco Haven Resort** (☎ 666 9715, 672 1377; www.bbr.ca/Wayalailai; camping/dm/s incl meals F\$30/40/45, d incl meals F\$110-200) Owned and operated entirely by villagers, this two-tiered budget resort is tucked squarely beneath Vatuvula's granite façade. There are bamboo and thatched *bure* overlooking the ocean, wooden bunked dorms and snug singles and doubles in the ageing former schoolhouse. Diving is with **Dive Trek Wayasewa** (☎ 666 9715; two-tank dives/PADI open water courses F\$110/350).

**Naqalia Eco Adventure** (☎ 666 1572, 932 3446; camping incl meals F\$35) Around the corner from Wayalailai, this rudimentary camp is operated by two of the clans on Wayasewa. It's a quiet option and great for keen hikers and campers.

## Getting There & Away

Transfers to and from the *Yasawa Flyer* cost F\$5 (see p184). Wayalailai offers transfers to Viti Levu in a small boat (F\$60 one way, about 1½ to two hours, Monday to Saturday).

## WAYA

With rugged hills, beautiful lagoons and a periphery of long sandy beaches, Waya is exquisite on the eyes. One for the walkers, it also has a good network of trails snaking through the tropical vegetation of its hilly centre.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Octopus Resort** (☎ 666 6337; www.octopusresort.com; camping per tent incl meals F\$90, dm incl meals F\$80, d incl meals F\$145-200; ☒ ☑) Although it's one of the oldest resorts, the Octopus has evolved into

a chic Shangri-la. Stylish *bure* (some family-sized) are tiled and fan cooled, and come with roofless showers. The dorm is the best in the Yasawas (if not all of Fiji!) and camping is in large domed tents. The swanky bar-restaurant dishes up chilled tunes and fabulous food. At low tide the beach has good snorkelling and a secluded atmosphere. Baby-sitting is available and the resort's excellent dive outfit charges F\$150/480 for a two-tank dive/PADI open water course.

**Sunset Beach Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 6383; dm/d incl meals F\$55/140) Behind a wide curve of beach, this small and quiet resort has a basic five-bed dorm and five double *bure* with private bathroom. Accommodation is all thatched, as is the dining room which has a sand floor and long communal tables. The swimming here is lovely and you can walk across a tidal sandbar to Wayasewa. Transfers to and from the *Yasawa Flyer* are F\$10.

Small, budget options:

**Adi's Place** (☎ 665 0573, 9926 377; camping/dm/d incl meals F\$25/35/80)

**Bayside Budget Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 6383; dm/d incl meals F\$40/100)

## Getting There & Away

The *Yasawa Flyer* comes past Yalobi Bay daily (F\$75 per person each way; see p184). Octopus Resort operates its own transfers from Lautoka and Nadi in a solid, covered boat; one way costs F\$65/35 per adult/child.

## NAVITI & AROUND

area 33 sq km

One of the largest and highest (up to 380m) of the Yasawa islands, Naviti has a rugged volcanic profile and a dazzling snorkelling site where you can swim with manta rays. Korovou, Coconut Bay and White Sandy Beach resorts share a protected stretch of white-sand beach, but the swimming is bad due to a bank of dead and ugly reef. Fortunately, a short track (around a 10-minute walk) provides access to the pretty and secluded Honeymoon Beach.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Coconut Bay Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 1300; dm/d incl meals F\$45/120) A warm and friendly resort with roomy dorms and spotless doubles in duplex buildings, this spot is ideal for budget travellers looking to avoid the

party hype. The food is excellent and if you're here for a curry night you've hit the jackpot.

**Mantaray Island Resort** (☎ 664 0520; www.mantarayisland.com; camping/dm incl meals F\$25/35, d incl meals F\$100-150) Occupying its own wee island on a lovely beach with wide ocean views, Mantaray has a classy wooden dorm and beachfront *bure*. The resort also has an eco-bent and uses compost toilets.

**Botaira Beach Resort** (☎ 675 0499; www.botaira.com; dm incl meals F\$70, d incl meals from F\$280) This resort extends over a long patch of secluded beach thick with palm trees. Guests enjoy plenty of privacy in spacious timber *bure* with high roofs and bright bathrooms. The swimming and snorkelling are lovely. Botaira is a romantic spot for couples but it caters to all age groups.

Also available:

**Korovou Eco-Tour Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 2244; korovou@connect.com.fj; camping/dm incl meals F\$35/55, d incl meals F\$130-160) Pack-em-in resort appealing to a younger crowd. Two-tank dive/open water course F\$170/530.

**White Sandy Beach** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 1360; dm/d incl meals F\$55/130) Small and personable. Two-tank dive F\$170.

## Getting There & Away

Boat transfers to all of the above resorts are F\$80 each way with the *Yasawa Flyer* (see p184).

## TAVEWA

area 3 sq km

This small, low island houses some of the Yasawa Group's northern-most resorts. A pleasant beach unfurls itself on the south-eastern coast but it's often plagued by buffeting trade winds. Head to Savutu Point, just around the bend, for relief from the gales and lovely snorkelling. An ambling ascent to the top of the central crest affords photogenic views of the Yasawas, particularly at sunset.

**Westside WaterSports** (☎ 666 1462, 998 862; westside@divefiji.com) is an excellent dive operation catering to guests on surrounding islands. A two-tank dive/PADI open water course costs F\$160/580.

## Sleeping & Eating

These resorts offer boat trips to the Blue Lagoon (F\$10) and Sawa-i-Lau caves (F\$25; see p189).

**Otto & Fanny's** (☎ 666 6481; dm/d F\$45/90) Skirting flat grassy grounds with plenty of palms, this homy place has just five *bure* with private bathrooms and a 12-bed dorm. Two of the *bure* sleep up to four people, with one more secluded in the jungle and near the beach. Travellers talk the meals up here (meal packages per person cost F\$50), and the afternoon tea and accompanying cakes (F\$1.50) are the stuff of legend.

**Coral View Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 8876; coral@connect.com.fj; camping/dm incl meals F\$35/55, d incl meals F\$130-180) This constantly expanding resort has a steady buzz thanks to its spunky staff and range of accommodation. There's a light and comfortable 16-bed dorm, spartan standard *bure* and swish new deluxe *bure* that are the best on the island. Unfortunately, the beach is virtually nonexistent but the resort offers plenty of activities.

**David's Place** (☎ 672 1820, 665 2820; davidspaceresort@yahoo.com; camping/dm incl meals F\$35/60, d incl meals F\$180) Also occupying capacious grounds, this resort has an abundance of simple *bure* with double beds, lights and mosquito nets. The more expensive deluxe *bure* have private bathrooms and are much more stylish, but there are only two so it's a good idea make a reservation before you arrive.

### Getting There & Away

The *Yasawa Flyer* costs F\$95 (see p184) and **Turtle Airways** (☎ 672 1888; reservations@turtleairways.com) seaplane flights from Nadi to Tavewa cost around F\$300.

#### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Oarsman's Bay Lodge** (☎ 672 2921; nacula@hotmail.com; camping per person F\$22.50, dm/d/f F\$50/140/240; ☒) Rumours about the fabulous beach here begin as a murmur somewhere around the Manucaus, building to a swell the further north you head. By the time the *Yasawa Flyer* hits the Nacula vicinity you'll hear just-departed guests waxing lyrical about it. The hype is well founded. A long swathe of powdery sand eases gently into a glassy cerulean sea, offering impossibly clear views to the bottom well past wading height. It's enough to lull even the staunchest workaholic into a halcyon torpor and the snorkelling is fantastic. The best news is that the small and tight-knit Oarsman's Bay Lodge does the beach justice. Clean and crisp *bure*, strung out on either side of the resort, have bright hues, modern bathrooms and private verandas. Families are catered for with interconnecting units. Above the central, open-air dining room is a 13-bed dorm, which has fairly close but atmospheric quarters and a lovely landing with views across the bay. The food here (additional compulsory meal plan per adult/child under 16/child under six F\$50/25/11) is very good, particularly on buffet nights. Payment by credit card only.

## NACULA

Blanketed with rugged hills and soft peaks, the interior of the third-largest island in the Yasawas is laced with well-trodden paths leading to villages and small coves. Beach devotees will be ecstatic to know that Nacula has spectacular swimming and snorkelling.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Nalova Lodge** (☎ 666 9055; d incl meals F\$195) Teeny Nalova has three homy *bure* with a modicum of furniture, wallpapered floors and simple bathrooms. Breakfast and lunch are enjoyed on your own porch and dinner is served in the small dining room. It enjoys *that* fabulous beach and the staff are lovely.

**Safe Landing Resort** (☎ 672 2921; nacula@hotmail.com; camping per person F\$12, dm F\$17-35, d F\$125-135) This neat little resort has timber, tiled and fan-cooled *bure* and fabulous deluxe dorms with private bathroom. Standard dorms are simpler, and the cheaper Fijian *bure* are basic thatched huts. The beach isn't huge but it's calm and private. The food (compulsory meal plan costs F\$45/21 per adult/child) is quite good and payment is by credit card only.

**Travellers Beach Tea House** (8am-6pm) Based in and out of a wee shack, this beachy place serves tea, coffee and cake (all F\$1.50).

Two slightly shambolic but spacious resorts with simple accommodation and meals are **Nabua Lodge** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 6369; dm incl meals F\$50, d incl meals F\$150) and **Melbravo** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 7472; dm incl meals F\$50, d incl meals without/with shower F\$100/150).

### Getting There & Away

The *Yasawa Flyer* costs F\$95 (see p184) and resorts charge a F\$10 transfer fee.

## NANUYA LAILAI

Home to that celebrated patch of water, the **Blue Lagoon**, Nanuya Lailai is a magnet for snorkellers, divers, luxury cruise boats and yachts who dabble in its gorgeous depths. The lagoon is actually similar to many of the Yasawa Group's lagoons, but the protected beach is lovely and the water is achingly lucent. Several budget resorts reside on the eastern side of the island, where the lagoon is deep and choppy.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Nanuya Island Resort** (☎ 666 7633; www.nanuyafiji.com; d incl breakfast F\$210-350) Right on the Blue Lagoon, this chic, indulgent resort has an understated air and exquisite vistas. Fijian-nouveau *bure* have thatched roofs and elegant interiors and the restaurant (mains F\$12 to F\$25) serves inventive fare.

**Gold Coast Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 9484; dm incl meals F\$40, d incl meals F\$120) This smallish resort is a good spot to escape the masses. It offers simple timber *bure* with sand floors and a nice stretch of beach. Meals often feature catch of the day.

Other budget options:

**Blue Star Resort** (☎ 992 5825; info@bluestarfiji.com; s incl meals F\$80-120, d incl meals F\$90-150) Quiet option with lovely *bure*. Reader-recommended.

**Seaspray** (☎ 666 8962; dm/d incl meals F\$45/95) Decent dorms.

**Sunrise Lagoon Resort** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 9484; dm/d incl meals F\$55/150) Reminiscent of a school camp with slightly sloppy facilities.

### Getting There & Away

The *Yasawa Flyer* charges F\$95 (see p184).

## MATACAWALEVU

This hilly, volcanic island is protected by the large Nasom Bay on its eastern side.

The accommodation and facilities at **Long Beach Backpackers** (☎ 666 6644, after the beep dial 3032; dm/d incl meals F\$55/90) are basic, but it sits on a lovely curved beach with a protected lagoon and has good snorkelling nearby. Transfer fees to and from the *Yasawa Flyer* are F\$10 (see p184), or F\$20 to meet the **Turtle Airways** (☎ 672 1888; reservations@turtleairways.com) seaplane at Tavewa Island (around F\$300 to Nadi).

## SAWA-I-LAU

At Sawa-i-Lau, underwater limestone rocks are thought to have formed a few hundred metres below the surface and then uplifted over time. Shafts of daylight enter the great dome-shaped cave (looming 15m above the water surface), where you can swim in the natural pool. With a guide, a torch and a bit of courage, you can also swim through an underwater passage into an adjoining chamber. The limestone walls have mysterious indecipherable carvings, paintings and inscriptions. Most Yasawa budget resorts offer trips to the caves (F\$25) and local cruise ships call here.

## ROTUMA

pop 3000 / area 30 sq km

Hovering some 450km north of the Yasawas, Rotuma is ethnically and linguistically distinct in Fiji's vast archipelago. The fiercely proud and friendly population carries a legacy of Tongan influence, and visitors are welcomed as participants rather than spectators. Those who make the effort to get here will be rewarded with the experience of a Polynesian outpost. The landscape is punctuated by volcanic craters rising up to 250m, and seabird colonies nest on the offshore islands of Urea, Hatana and Hofliua. The best time to visit is during *Fara*, an annual festivities period beginning on 1 December, when Rotuma's strong work ethic is replaced with six weeks of dancing, parties and general revelry. There are no banks or shops here.

## TRANSPORT

### Getting There & Away

**Air Fiji** (☎ 331 3666; www.airfiji.com.fj; 185 Victoria Pde, Suva) flies to and from Suva on Wednesday and Friday (F\$860). **Western Shipping** (☎ 331 4467; Naryan Jetty, Suva) operates the *Cagi Mai Ba* from Suva to Rotuma (deck/cabin F\$130/150, 36 hours); call for departure times and dates. Visiting yachts must obtain permission to anchor from the Ahau government station in Maka Bay, on the northern side of the island.

### SLEEPING & EATING

The easiest way to stay on Rotuma is through a Rotuman contact or their family. Alternatively, contact the Rotuman Island

Council via the visitor information centres in Nadi or Suva (p147).

**Mojito's Barfly** (☎ 889 1144; Motusa) has simple rooms with shared facilities, but they are generally reserved for government workers. Mojito's will provide meals on request, given plenty of notice.

## OVALAU & THE LOMAIVITI GROUP

area 484 sq km

Rustic and peaceful, this string of islands, just off the east coast of Viti Levu, has an infectious and languid pace that belies its historical significance, for this is where the Fijian nation was made. Picturesque Levuka, Ovalau's main town, was Fiji's earliest European settlement and the country's first capital, but political machinations have long since departed and today Lomaiviti, which literally means 'Middle Fiji', equally literally feels like the middle of nowhere.

South of Ovalau, the tiny coral islands of Lelevia and Caqlai have sandy beaches, good snorkelling and simple budget resorts. Hawksbill turtles visit to lay their eggs and a pod of around 10 humpback whales passes the east coast of Ovalau on their annual migration between May and September.

### Transport

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Air Fiji** (☎ 344 0139; fax 344 0252; Beach St, Levuka) has daily flights between Suva and Ovalau (F\$65). The airstrip is about a 40-minute drive from Levuka. Minibuses to the airport (F\$5 per person) will pick you up from outside the Air Fiji office or from your hotel on request. A taxi costs about F\$25.

**Patterson Brothers Shipping** (☎ 344 0125; Beach St) has a bus/ferry/bus service from Levuka to Suva via Natovi (F\$24, four hours); see p215 for more details. You can also opt to stay on the boat at Natovi and sail to Nabuwalu on Vanua Levu, and then continue by bus to Labasa (F\$55, daily except Tuesday).

Levuka is tiny and easy to get around on foot. There is a taxi stand opposite the Westpac bank, where carriers depart for Lovoni. Mountain bikes can be hired in town (see opposite).

## LEVUKA

pop 3750

Levuka is one of the most picturesque towns in the South Pacific. Remnants of its colonial past – timber pool halls, offices and stores – litter the streets like preserved props from an old western movie. But the sea and lush green mountains that contain the town are undeniably Fijian. The diverse population of indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, Chinese Fijians, part-European Fijians and the odd eccentric expat enhances the town's enigmatic charm and racial tensions are virtually absent.

### Information

**Colonial National Bank** (Beach St) Foreign exchange.

**Levuka Hospital** (☎ 344 0221; Beach St)

**Ovalau Watersports** (☎ 344 0166; www.owlfiji.com; Beach St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) Dive shop, information centre, tour booking office and Internet access.

**Police station** (☎ 344 0222; Totoga Lane)

**Post office** (Beach St) Cardphone outside.

**Visitor information centre** (☎ 330 0356; Community Centre, Morris Hedstrom Bldg; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) The Ovalau Tourist Information Centre has friendly and helpful staff.

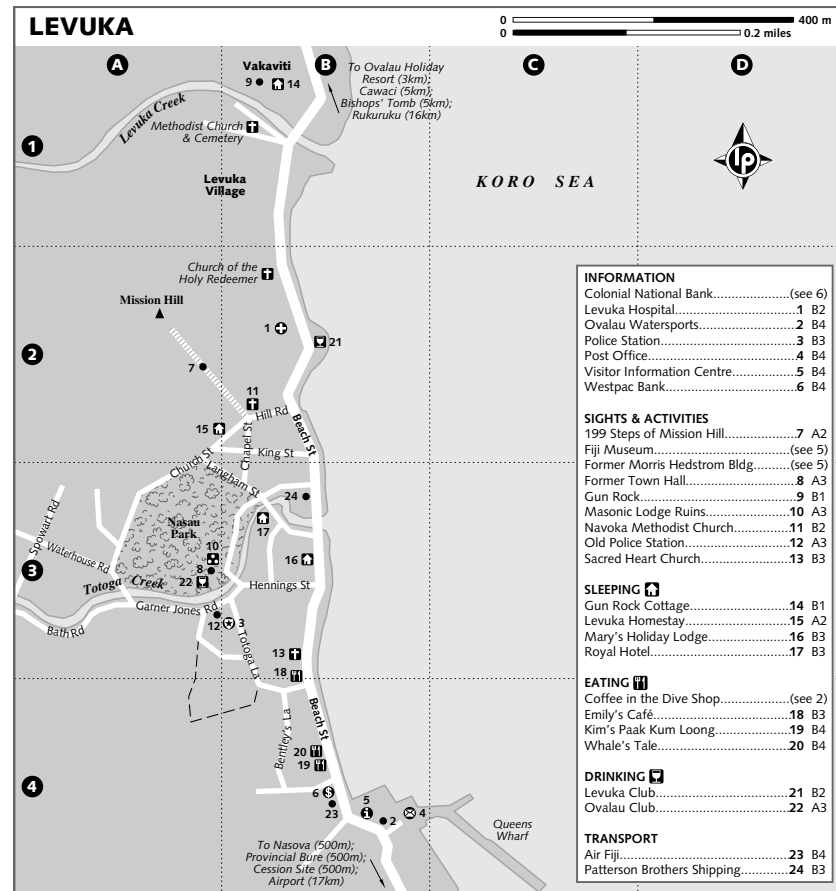
**Westpac** (Beach St) Foreign exchange, cash advances on Visa or MasterCard and Lomaiviti's only ATM.

### Sights

About 10 minutes' walk south of town is **Cession Site**, where the Deed of Cession was signed in 1874. Across the road the **Provincial Bure** sits like a loaf of wholemeal bread covered in straw. Prince Charles made his HQ here when he represented Her Majesty's Government during the transition to independence in 1970.

Downtown stands the former **Morris Hedstrom** trading store (1868), the first in Fiji. Behind its restored façade is a branch of the **Fiji Museum** (admission F\$2; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which offers a fascinating, if chaotically organised, glimpse of old Levuka through atmospheric displays.

Other buildings to keep an eye out for include the **Sacred Heart Church** (1858); Levuka's **original police station** (1874); the **Ovalau Club** (1904), Fiji's first private club; and the **former town hall** (1898). You'll also find the stone shell of the South Pacific's first **Masonic Lodge** (1875) and Levuka's only Romanesque building. It was burnt to



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a husk in the 2000 coup by villagers egged on by their church leaders. Local Methodists had long alleged that Masons were in league with the devil and that tunnels led from beneath the lodge to the Royal Hotel, through the centre of the world to Masonic HQ in Scotland. Surprisingly, this turned out not to be the case.

The **199 Steps of Mission Hill** are worth climbing for the fantastic view. The simple coral and stone Gothic-style **Navoka Methodist Church** (1864) near the foot of the steps is one of Fiji's oldest churches.

On Langham St, the **Royal Hotel** (1860s) is Fiji's oldest hotel, rebuilt in 1903. Check out the fantastic old snooker room, and play a game of hunt-the-Royal-Hotel-staff.

In **Cawaci**, north of town, Fiji's first two Catholic bishops rest in the Gothic-style **Bishops' Tomb** (1922).

### Activities

**Cycling** is a good way to explore Levuka and its surrounding area. The road to the south is fairly flat, and the north is OK until about Cawaci, after which it gets very hilly. Mountain bikes are available from Ovalau Watersports (opposite), costing F\$10/15 per half/full day.

Excellent **diving** sites in the Lomaiviti waters offer encounters with manta rays, hammerheads, turtles and reef sharks. There's stunning soft coral at Snake Island and Shark Reef in the Moturiki Channel,

and excellent hard coral at Waitovu Passage. Ovalau Watersports offers two-tank dives/open water courses/reef snorkelling trips for F\$150/460/40.

## Tours

**Epi's Midland Tour** (☎ 602 1103, 923 6011; [epitours@hotmail.com](mailto:epitours@hotmail.com); per person F\$35, minimum 4; 🚗 departs 10.30-11.30am Mon-Sat) takes you to Lovoni village in the crater of an extinct volcano. Transport is a combination of trekking and local carrier, the scenery is stunning and the storytelling is fantastic. The tour includes lunch in the village and a dip in the river. You can also book through the **Royal Hotel** (☎ 344 0024; [www.royallevuka.com](http://www.royallevuka.com)).

The Wednesday-only Silana Village Tour includes a *meke*, *lovo* and the chance to make your own handicraft item from coconut and pandanus leaves (F\$30 per person, minimum of six). Book at Ovalau Watersports (p190) or the Royal Hotel before 4pm on Tuesday. Before you set out, ascertain what the tour encompasses that day.

**Ovalau Holiday Resort** (☎ 344 0329; [ohrfiji@connect.com.fj](mailto:ohrfiji@connect.com.fj)) runs a Waituvu Tour for F\$15 per person. Travellers hike to the peak of Gun Rock, through pine forests and kava plantations, then swim in Waituvu waterfall. Book through Ovalau Watersports (p190).

Ovalau Watersports also offers day trips to Leleuvia or Caqalai (F\$50 per person, including lunch).

## Sleeping

**Levuka Homestay** (☎ 344 0777; [www.levukahomestay.com](http://www.levukahomestay.com); Church St; s/d incl breakfast F\$120/140) A lovely neocolonial-style house with great sea views from the deck, fantastic service and four big, bright, tremendously clean rooms on separate levels. The never-ending breakfast includes delicious doses of fruit, muesli, toast, banana pancakes, bacon and eggs. There is a high chair and a cot here for babies.

**Royal Hotel** (☎ 344 0024; [www.royallevuka.com](http://www.royallevuka.com); dm/s/d/tr F\$10/18/28/35, cottages F\$80; 🚗 📺 📶) Fiji's oldest pub is a proud timber building and an institution, with great views from private verandas and a unique colonial atmosphere. Some rooms (and beds) are better than others; try to get a sea-view room. Dorms are in a colonial-style house with kitchen facilities, and air-con cottages are in the front garden.

**Ovalau Holiday Resort** (☎ 344 0329; [ohrfiji@connect.com.fj](mailto:ohrfiji@connect.com.fj); camping per person F\$10, dm F\$12, s/d from F\$15/28; 🚗) This relaxing resort has landscaped gardens, a fab restaurant (see below) and a small white-sand beach across the road. Accommodation is in a cluster of comfortable bungalows or family-friendly cabins, which come with private facilities, kitchens and hot water. A taxi from Levuka costs F\$5.

Also available:

**Gun Rock Cottage** (☎ 344 0166; d F\$65) Fan-cooled one-bedroom, well-maintained cottage. About 1.6km from Levuka (F\$2 by taxi).

**Mary's Holiday Lodge** (☎ 344 0013; Beach St; dm/s/d incl breakfast F\$15/20/35) Rudimentary but friendly old hotel.

## Eating & Drinking

**Ovalau Holiday Resort** (☎ 344 0329; meals F\$7-13; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This resort restaurant serves a delicious hybrid of Indo-Fijian, Chinese and Western dishes that have become local cuisine. Try it at least once when you are in Levuka – it might be a good idea to ring ahead to warn them you're coming.

**Whale's Tale** (☎ 344 0235; snacks F\$5-9, three-course dinner F\$17; 🍳 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Levuka's most tasteful dining experience encompasses reasonable wine and above-par versions of pasta, burgers and fish, served in maritime-themed surrounds. Curiously, the all-day breakfast is not served at breakfast time as the restaurant is closed in the morning.

**Kim's Paak Kum Loong** (☎ 344 0059; mains F\$8; 🍳 lunch & dinner) Pull up a chair on the balcony and watch Levuka's somnambulant drift go by. Kim's eclectic menu includes standard Chinese dishes, very hot Thai curries and tasty Fijian-style fish, all cooked with flair and care. The big, eclectic buffet (F\$13.50) is the best option in town on Sunday night.

**Emily's Café** (☎ 344 0382; meals F\$1-7; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) By day, it's an ordinary greasy café fronted by an ordinary Chinese hot bread shop. By night, it's the surprisingly professional Ovalau Pizza, offering crispy, not-too-cheesy pizzas and a bicycle delivery service to local hotels. Delivery is free, but the pizza box will cost you 35 cents!

**Coffee in the Dive Shop** (snacks F\$3.50; 🍳 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) A Fijian-run café upstairs at Ovalau Watersports. Drop in for sandwiches or, er, a coffee at the dive shop.

Pleasant drinking holes:

**Levuka Club** (Beach St) Beer garden with sea and town views.

**Ovalau Club** (Garner Jones Rd) Atmospheric spot for a beer.

On Thursday local villagers come to sell fresh fruit and vegetables along the waterfront on Beach St. You can get most everything else at the numerous general stores on Beach St.

## CAQALAI

The gorgeous coral island of Caqalai comes close to the best a backpacker island can get. It's only a 15-minute walk around the island's beautiful white-sand beaches, which are fringed with palms and other large trees. If you're lucky, you may see dolphins and baby turtles.

The Methodist-run **Caqalai Island Resort** (☎ 343 0366; [www.owlfiji.com/caqalai.htm](http://www.owlfiji.com/caqalai.htm); camping per person with/without meals F\$25/12, dm/bure per person incl meals F\$35/45) is rustic (and dry, of course, but you're welcome to BYO). It has cold showers in shared bathrooms, but the food is delicious, the white-sand beach is scrumptious, snorkelling from the shore is spectacular and the staff are enormously welcoming. At low tide it's possible to walk out to Snake Island (named after the many black-and-white banded sea snakes found here) for even better snorkelling. Diving, village visits, boat trips to tiny Honeymoon Island and Sunday church services also fill the activity board. At night, there is singing, dancing and kava drinking beside a bonfire on the beach. There is a once-a-week trip to Leleuvia (F\$10).

If you're coming from Levuka, book transport and accommodation from Ovalau Watersports (p190). One-way boat transfers

cost F\$20 per person in a group, F\$30 for one person and F\$30 for a same-day return.

From Suva, catch the midday express bus to Korovou (F\$3.30) and ask the driver to drop you off at Waidalice Bridge. A daily boat leaves for Caqalai from the wooden shack at the northern end of the bridge at 2pm. Be warned, the boatride (F\$30, one hour) can be a white-knuckle affair and not for the faint-hearted in choppy conditions.

## LELEUVIA

area 0.17 sq km

Just south of Caqalai sits Leleuvia, another palm-fringed coral island with golden-sand beaches. Low tide is a good time to explore the island, when a vast area of sand, rock and tidal pools is exposed. It's also possible to swim off the western side or to do some OK snorkelling and great diving.

The **Leleuvia Island Resort** (☎ 330 1584; [www.owlfiji.com/leleuvia.htm](http://www.owlfiji.com/leleuvia.htm); s incl meals F\$45-60) feels a little unkempt and facilities are on the sloppy side, but there are some pretty *bure* and Lena, the manager, is a qualified pastry chef so the food is decent. Guests take breakfast and lunch on the island and dinner on the sand. The beer is cold from the restaurant and hot snorkelling from the beach.

Boat transfers to and from Suva are F\$30 each way (the boat ride is one hour from Korovou township, which is about 90 minutes by bus from Suva), and to and from Levuka costs F\$20 each way (one hour). Book through Ovalau Watersports (p190).

## NAIGANI

area 1.5 sq km

Also known as Mystery Island, mountainous Naigani has white-sand beaches, lagoons, a fringing coral reef, the remains of a pre-colonial hillside fortification and 'cannibal

### WHAT LIES BENEATH

If you head out to the islands south from Ovalau, your boat will likely travel through Qavo Passage, a break in the reef. Many indigenous Fijians believe that beneath these waters lies a sunken village where ancestral spirits continue to reside. Stories of fishermen hooking newly woven mats are whispered around Levuka. When passing over this *tabu* site, Fijians remove their hats and sunglasses and talk in hushed, reverent tones as it is believed that the spirits are capable of doling out nasty punishments to those who upset them. Whether or not you choose to believe the story, avoid offending and upsetting your hosts – respect their beliefs and follow suit. One tourist who refused to take off his baseball cap when we visited sent a Fijian woman into terrified hysterics.

caves', where 1800 villagers were slaughtered by marauding tribes. They are *tabu* and you should steer clear out of respect.

Naigani's village is about 10 minutes' walk from the unpretentious, family-friendly **Naigani Island Resort** (☎ 330 0925; www.naiganiresort.com; r F\$120-180; 📍). It offers spacious if slightly shabby cabin-style *bure* and great food; every Saturday night is *lovo* night. The white-sand beach here is pretty enough and there is good snorkelling just offshore. The day trip to Picnic Beach is also highly recommended for snorkellers. A free kids' club is available during Australasian school holidays, and baby-sitting is always available at F\$4.50 an hour.

Return transfers per adult/child are F\$50/25 to and from Suva, via Natovi Landing. Return transfers cost the same from Taviya village, near Rukuruku on Ovalau, and a taxi from Taviya costs F\$20. Ovalau Watersports (p190) can arrange transfers for F\$40 one way.

## NAMENALALA

area 0.4 sq km

Volcanic Namenalala rests on the Namena Barrier Reef, 25km off the southeastern coast of Vanua Levu. It has lovely beaches and an old **ring fortification**, but the villages disappeared long ago. The island has a nature reserve and is home to seabirds, red-footed boobies and a giant clam farm. From November to February, hawksbill and green turtles lay their eggs on Namenalala beaches.

The exclusive **Moody's Namena** (☎ 881 3764; www.moodysnamenafiji.com; 5 nights incl meals s/d F\$3190/4570; 📍 closed March and April) resort has just six timber-and-bamboo *bure* on a forested ridge. Free activities include windsurfing, fishing, snorkelling and reef excursions. Diving here (F\$85 per tank) is excellent. Transfers are included and children under 16 years aren't welcome.

## VANUA LEVU

pop 139,514 / area 5587 sq km

The 'mainland's' little sibling has a personality all of its own, abed by superb diving and snorkelling, welcoming villages, unspoiled countryside and soothing resorts. The nearby Rainbow Reef has some of the

best dive sites in the South Pacific, and the many deep bays are fantastic for kayaking.

Although it's Fiji's second-largest island and easily accessible, Vanua Levu manages to exude a feeling of remoteness and offers a window into traditional Fijian life. The north and west of the island are virtually untouristed. Favoured by yachties, the southeast is predominantly indigenous Fijian and home to gorgeous landscapes brimming with rainforests, coconut plantations and fantastic views of the ocean. In stark contrast, Savusavu is in the midst of a frantic property boom and restaurants, clubs and resorts seem to be emerging at a furious pace. What this spells for travellers is a healthy balance of tourism and tradition.

## Transport

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Air Fiji** (☎ 885 0173; Copra Shed Marina, Savusavu) has daily flights from Suva and Nadi to Labasa (F\$190/230) and Savusavu (F\$160/220). **Sun Air** (☎ 885 0141; Copra Shed Marina, Savusavu) flies from Suva/Nadi to Labasa (F\$210/230) and from Nadi to Savusavu (F\$230). Sun Air also has daily flights between Savusavu and Taveuni (F\$115).

**Consort Shipping** (☎ 330 2877; fax 330 3389; Ground fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St, Suva) sails from Suva to Savusavu at 6pm on Monday and Friday, and noon on Wednesday (cabin/seat F\$80/50, 12 hours). On Wednesday and Friday it continues for another eight hours to Taveuni (from Suva cabin/seat F\$90/55).

**Beachcomber Cruises** (Lautoka ☎ 666 1500; fax 666 4496; Savusavu ☎ 885 0266; Taveuni ☎ 888 0036) operates the 500-passenger *Adi Savusavu* between Suva and Savusavu (economy/first class F\$45/65, 11 hours), departing Suva at 10am on Tuesday, noon on Thursday and 6pm on Saturday. The boat also travels between Savusavu and Taveuni (economy/first class F\$25/45, five hours), departing Savusavu at 1am on Wednesday and Friday.

**Patterson Brothers Shipping** (Suva ☎ 331 5644; fax 330 1652; Suites 1 & 2, Epworth Arcade, Nina St; Labasa ☎ 881 2444; Nasekula Rd; Lautoka ☎ 666 1173; 15 Tukani St; Levuka ☎ 344 0125; Beach St) operates a bus from Lautoka to Ellington Wharf on Viti Levu (3½ hours), connecting with the *Ashika* ferry to Nabouwalu (3¼ hours) and then another bus trip to Labasa (four hours). Buses depart from the Lautoka office at 4am on Friday

and Monday, and from Labasa at 6am on Sunday and Wednesday. Patterson Brothers also operates a bus/ferry Suva–Natovi–Nabouwalu–Labasa service (F\$45) on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

**Grace Ferry** (Labasa Gulam Nabi & Sons; ☎ 881 1152; Nasekula Rd; Savusavu Country Kitchen; ☎ 927 1372) runs a daily bus/boat trip from Taveuni to Savusavu and Labasa (F\$20), departing at 8.45am from the Korean Wharf.

## SAVUSAVU

pop 4970

Not long ago, Vanua Levu's second-largest centre was a small and dusty peninsular town, easily outclassed by its fabulous views across the bay to the western mountain range. The views haven't changed but recent years have brought a property boom and the main street is now flush with good restaurants, lively bars and well-stocked shops. Scores of expats are putting down roots and the town has welcomed them vibrantly. Aside from the burgeoning population, yachties continue to arrive in increasing numbers and numbers are outgrowing moorings.

Savusavu Bay once saw a great deal of volcanic activity and **hot springs** continue to bubble near the wharf and behind the playing field. Don't even think about bathing in them – they're literally boiling.

## Information

ANZ, Colonial National and Westpac banks have branches in the main street. All have ATMs, foreign exchange services and give cash advances on major credit cards.

**Curly Cruising & Internet** (☎ 885 0122) Yachting information centre, tour office and Internet access.

**Customs** (☎ 885 0727; 📍 8am–1pm, 2–4pm Mon–Fri) West of the marinas.

**Hospital/Ambulance** (☎ 885 0444)

**Pharmacist** (📍 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sun) Next door to the Siloah Clinic.

**Police** (☎ 885 0222)

**Post office** At the eastern end of town near Buca Bay Rd.

**Savusavu Internet** (☎ 885 3250; Westpac Bldg)

**Siloah Clinic Private Health Centre** (☎ 885 0721; 📍 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) Behind Sivilven Shipping on the main road.

## Sights

Dating back to 1880 and originally one of Fiji's first copra mills, the **Copra Shed Marina** (☎ 885 0457; fax 885 0989; coprashed@connect.com.fj)

has been rebuilt into Savusavu's service hub for tourists and expats. It encompasses a bevy of facilities as well as a small historical display. Moorings in the pretty harbour between Savusavu and Nawi Islet cost F\$10/220 for a day/month in high season, F\$7/150 for a day/month in low season.

Close by is **Waitui Marina** (☎ 885 0536; fax 885 0344; 📍 dosed Sunday) based in a beautiful restored boatshed with showers and a private club. Moorings cost F\$10.

## Activities

### DIVING

Savusavu has excellent dive sites in and around Savusavu Bay, as well as along the coast towards Taveuni. The following companies have good reputations:

**KoroSun Dive** (☎ 885 2452; www.korosundive.com) Has a dive shop on the jetty. Two-tank/night dives F\$210/130, PADI open water course F\$750.

**L'Aventure Jean-Michel Cousteau** (☎ 885 0188; laventurefiji@connect.com.fj) Based at the Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort (p198). Two-tank dives F\$250 (without gear), PADI open water course F\$1000.

## Tours

**Eco Divers-Tours** (☎ 885 0122) Advertises a variety of individually tailored village, hiking and kayaking tours (prices vary according to duration). The shop also rents kayaks (from F\$15/55 per hour/day) and mountain bikes (F\$15/25 per hour/day).

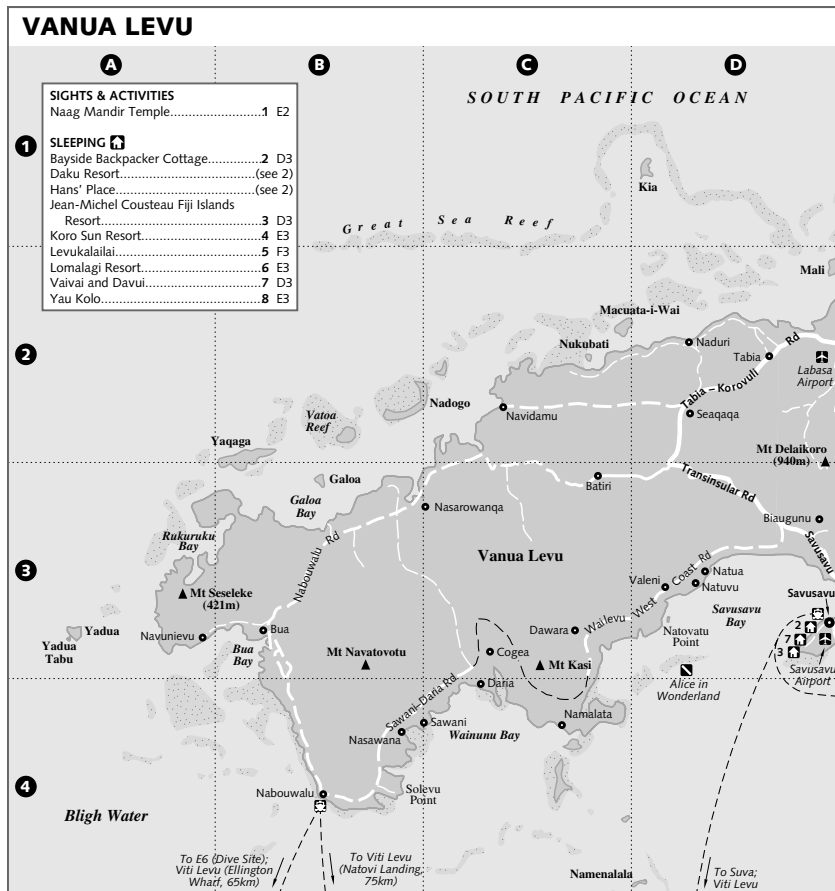
**Trip n Tour** (☎ 885 3154; tripntour@connect.com.fj; Copra Shed Marina) Offers a range of tours, including the Red Prawn Tour (F\$55/22.50 per adult/child) to Naweni Village, where locals call the unusual prawns which are so red they look cooked to the surface by chanting and slapping the water.

**Tui Tai Adventure Cruises** (☎ 885 3032; www.tuitai.com; 5 nights s/d from F\$2630/3450) Fantastic cruises between Vanua Levu, Taveuni and more remote islands such as Kioa and Koro. Snorkelling, kayaking, trekking, fishing and diving are par for the course, and dolphins and whales sometimes swim alongside the boat. Accommodation is in en suite air-con cabins.

More tours:

**Naveria Heights Lodge** (☎ 851 0157; justnaveria@connect.com.fj) Full and half-day mountain-biking (F\$45-75) and hiking (F\$35-65) tours.

**SeaHawk Yacht Charters** (☎ 885 0787; www.seahawkfiji.com) Day cruises aboard a 16m yacht with captain, cook and crew. Per person from F\$250.



## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Bayside Backpacker Cottage** (☎ 885 3154; [tripntour@connect.com.fj](http://tripntour@connect.com.fj); Lesiaceva Rd; s/d F\$40/50) This granny *bure* in the grounds of travel agent Eddie Bower's home, 3km from town, is a bargain. There are two single beds, a decent kitchen and a TV and DVD. Snorkelling at the pebble beach across the road is wonderful at high tide. The friendly Bowers will let you use their mountain bikes; otherwise, it's F\$3 by taxi into town.

**Hidden Paradise Guest House** (☎ 885 0106; s/d incl breakfast from F\$25/50; 🚻) Elenoa keeps a clean and friendly hotel with some of the cheapest doubles in Fiji. Rooms are basic and breeze-cooled with shared kitchen,

bathrooms and cold-water showers. One room has air-con. Avoid the windowless chamber Elenoa rents out if everything else is full.

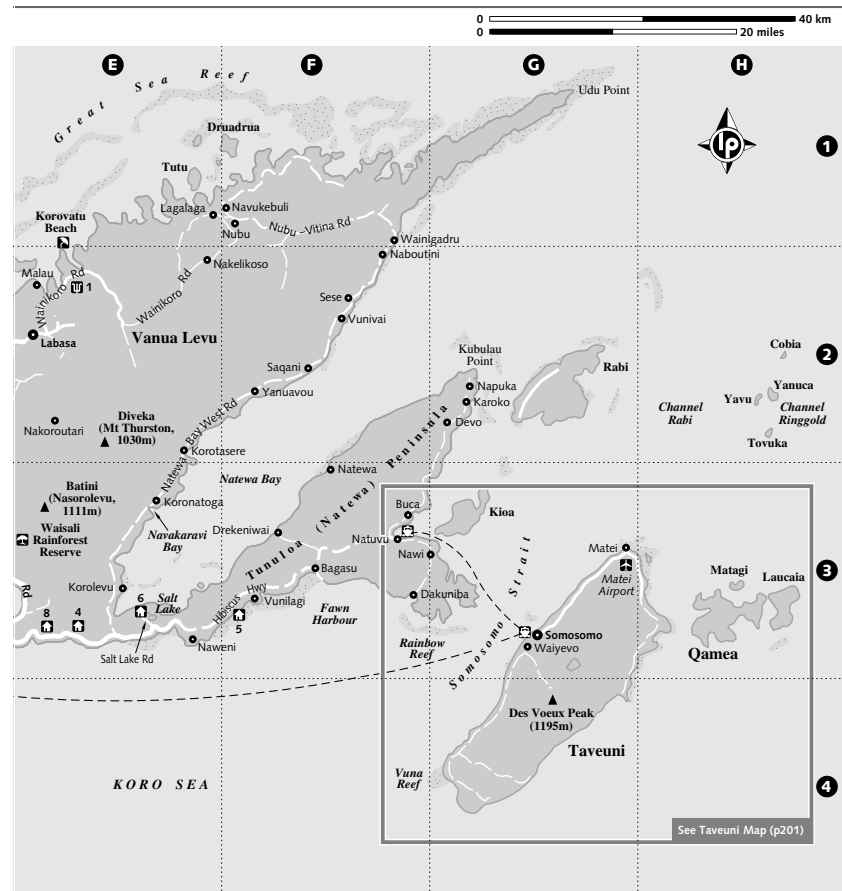
Also recommended:

**Yau Kolo** (☎ 885 3089; [yaukolo@yahoo.com](mailto:yaukolo@yahoo.com); Hibiscus Hwy; tent sites F\$12 per person, on-site tent incl breakfast s/d F\$20/30) Lush campground with two furnished tents and a beer garden.

**Vatukaluvu Holiday House** (☎ 885 0561; r F\$80) Fully furnished house with hot water and Sky TV. Inquiries through the Copra Shed Marina.

### MIDRANGE

**Vaivai & Davui** (☎ 885 3154; [tripntour@connect.com.fj](mailto:tripntour@connect.com.fj); Vaivai Nov-Apr/May-Oct F\$1320/1495 per week, Davui Nov-Apr/May-Oct F\$1150/1320 per week; 🚻) These



two grand two-bedroom, two-bathroom homes have huge decks and extraordinary views over Savusavu Bay. With room for six, Vaivai is the larger and the pick of the two, with a lush garden, a baby cot and even a telescope. The kitchen is equipped with Fisher & Paykel whitegoods, and the reef offers fantastic snorkelling.

**Naveria Heights Lodge** (☎ 851 0157; [justnaveria@connect.com.fj](http://justnaveria@connect.com.fj); Naveria Pde; r incl breakfast F\$140; 🚻) Owned by a fitness instructor and a massage therapist, this lovely house has unbeatable views, freshly baked bread, fabulously healthy food and excellent hiking and mountain biking. Caters to fitness freaks, couch potatoes and everyone in-between. Call for pick-up.

**Hans' Place** (☎ 885 0621; [www.fiji-holiday.com](http://www.fiji-holiday.com); Lesiaceva Rd; Yasiyasi studio day/week F\$80/400, Yaka cottage day/week F\$100/500) Just 3km out of town on Lesiaceva Point, these pretty, self-contained cottages are nestled in lush gardens 250m from the sea. Yasiyasi is a studio built of native hardwoods and Yaka is a one-bedroom cottage. They're perfect for couples. Local meals are available on request. It's F\$4 by taxi to and from town.

More midrange options:

**Copra Shed Marina** (☎ 885 0457; [coprashed@connect.com.fj](mailto:coprashed@connect.com.fj); r F\$165; 🚻) Two luxury units with good marina views.  
**Daku Resort** (☎ 885 0046; [www.dakuresort.com](http://www.dakuresort.com); Lesiaceva Rd; s/d incl breakfast from F\$95/130; 🚻) Quiet resort with sweeping sea views and a range of accommodation.

**Hot Springs Hotel** (☎ 885 0195; hotspings@connect.com.fj; r incl breakfast from F\$80; ♿ ♿) Atmospheric old hotel with harbour views and a majestic deck.

## TOP END

**Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort** (☎ 885 0188; www.fijioresort.com; d from F\$920; ♿ ♿) A beautiful boutique resort with lavish *bure*, gourmet meals (included) and a fabulous kids' club. The snorkelling and diving are as good as you would expect with *that* name attached. Excellent for families. It's F\$5 by taxi to and from town.

**Koro Sun Resort** (☎ 885 0262; www.korosunresort.com; Hibiscus Hwy; s/d incl meals F\$500/620; ♿ ♿) Facing a beautiful lagoon 13km east of town, this pretty resort has plush *bure*, tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, kayaks, bikes, kids' programme and a rainforest spa, where you can make like a Fijian meal and get wrapped in a banana leaf. Taxis to and from Savusavu cost about F\$12.

## Eating

**Surf & Turf** (☎ 851 0966; meals F\$8-20; ♿ lunch & dinner) Well trained by the culinary master at Cousteau's resort, the chef here cooks up fabulous...surf and turf dishes, which are devoured in upmarket surrounds. A lobster tail and fillet mignon dinner will set you back F\$50.

**Mo's Burgers** (☎ 885 3231; snacks F\$6-9; ♿ lunch & dinner) The fajitas here are made with baked rotis and the quesadillas with fried rotis, but everything is tasty and fresh in

this mutant Tex-Mex joint so very far from home. As well as burgers, Mo's offers pizza, fish and chips, and chicken and chips.

**Decked Out Café** (☎ 885 2929; mains F\$6.50; ♿ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A fine place to watch the world go by on a sunny day, this big, open deck right on the main street dishes up filling breakfasts, tasty burgers and sandwiches, and delectable fresh-fruit smoothies. There are also large and cheap daily specials.

**Daku Resort** (☎ 885 0334; meals F\$7-15; ♿ lunch & dinner) Spend the F\$3 taxi fare to dine poolside at this resort. Sandwiches, steaks and salads are up for grabs at lunch and at night you can chuck your own seafood or meat on the barbie, or have the chef do it for you.

Savusavu has a Morris Hedstrom Supermarket, a daily market selling fruit and veggies and a **Hot Bread Kitchen** (♿ 6am-8pm Mon-Sat, 6am-1pm Sun) for fresh bread.

## Drinking

**Waitui Marina** (☎ 885 0536) The balcony bar boasts classic South Pacific views of palm trees, yachts and an island beach, and the interior is suitably nautical. The atmosphere is friendly and comfortable and the bar is well stocked.

**Savusavu Yacht Club** (☎ 885 0685; Copra Shed Marina) It can get a little rowdy on Saturday nights, but otherwise this club has a friendly pub feel about it. Downing a bitter at the waterside tables is a good way to meet the local expats; happy hour is 5.30pm to 6.30pm.

## Shopping

**D Solanki** (☎ 885 0025) Head to this drapers for beautifully made, double-stitched and lined tailored saris at a bargain price. It also sells traditional Fijian dress and Western clothes.

**Art Gallery** (☎ 885 3054; Copra Shed Marina) and **Tako Handicraft** (☎ 885 3956; Copra Shed Marina) sell jewellery, sculptures, postcards and handicrafts by local artists.

## Getting There & Around

Savusavu airstrip is 3km south of town. Local buses pass the airport every so often, but a taxi to or from Savusavu only costs F\$2. See p194 for flight and ferry information for Vanua Levu.

Buses to Labasa (F\$6, three hours, five daily) depart from 7.30am to 3.30pm. Some buses take the longer, scenic route from Savusavu to Labasa along Natewa Bay, departing at 9am (F\$11.50, six hours).

Buses from Savusavu to Napuca (F\$6.30, 4½ hours), at the tip of the Tunuloa Peninsula, depart at 10.30am, 1pm and 2.30pm daily.

There are buses from Savusavu to Le-siaceva Point (70c, 15 minutes, five daily except on Sunday) between 6am and 5pm. For confirmation of bus timetables in the south, ring **Vishnu Holdings** (☎ 885 0276).

Carpenters Rental Cars can be booked through **Trip n Tour** (☎ 885 3154; tripntour@connect.com.fj; Copra Shed); prices start at F\$5 a day for a tiny sedan. Bula Re Café (opposite) is an agent for **Budget Rent a Car** (☎ 885 0377), where prices start at about F\$100 a day for a sedan and F\$120 for a 4WD.

## TUNULOA PENINSULA

The lush and scenic Tunuloa Peninsula is an excellent area to explore by 4WD. If you can arrange a guide in Savusavu or from your resort, it also offers great bird-watching and hiking. The bumpy, rough Hibiscus Hwy passes copra plantations, old homesteads and waving villagers. The road becomes extremely slippery with rain; if driving, double-check the tyres before you set out. There are no restaurants or shops along this route.

About 20km east of Savusavu, the Hibiscus Hwy turns south (right); the turn-off to the north (left) skirts Natewa Bay to Labasa. At Buca Bay the highway turns north (left) through the habitat of the rare silktail bird, sadly listed on the world's endangered-species list.

If you turn south (right) at Buca Bay, you'll head up over the mountain to the village of **Dakuniba**. The going is slow but you'll be rewarded with dazzling views. Just outside Dakuniba, mysterious **petroglyphs** are inscribed on large boulders; be sure to bring a *sevusevu* for the village chief.

The lovely new **Levukalailai** (☎ 888 0888; levukalailai@connect.com.fj; Hibiscus Hwy; d F\$210-250; ♿) is a resort-in-the-making. It will have a beautiful central lodge, made of exquisitely coloured Australian woods, with four ensuite rooms. The beach is a 5.5km stretch of pristine white sand, the best in Vanua

Levu. Fishing and snorkelling are great and Levukalailai is run on solar power.

**Lomalagi Resort** (☎ 851 0585; www.lomalagi.com; Salt Lake Rd; d incl meals F\$750; ♿) has views to die for and is the only resort at the base of Latevo Bay, the largest deep-water bay in the South Pacific. Villas are spacious with big kitchens and decks, but some of the décor is a bit naff. It's perhaps the only resort in Fiji to encourage midnight skinny dipping. Babies are welcome but no 'mobile' children under 12.

## LABASA & AROUND

pop 24,095

The air is thick with the smell of molasses in Vanua Levu's largest town. Sitting on the northwestern side of the island's mountain range, about 5km inland on the banks of the meandering Labasa River, Labasa is a sugar town, and crushed cane husks and sugar trains abound. The population is predominantly Indo-Fijian, and Bollywood tunes waft from countless trinket and sari stores.

While Labasa is a bustling trade, service and administrative centre, it doesn't have a lot to offer tourists. Most shops and services can be found on Nasekula Rd, the main street. In an emergency, contact the **police** (☎ 881 1222; Nadawa St) or the **hospital** (☎ 881 1444; Butinikama-Siberia Rd).

## Sights

### COBRA ROCK

Brightly painted red, yellow and blue, **Naag Mandir Temple** is built around the sacred Cobra Rock. About 3m in height, the rock's natural curved formation resembles a cobra poised to strike. Covered in colourful flower and tinsel garlands, the rock is beseeched with offerings of fruit, fire and coconut milk. Devotees swear that the rock grows in size and that the roof has had to be raised several times over the years. Remove your shoes before entering and circle the rock clockwise three or five times.

Buses from Labasa to Natewa Bay pass the temple; a taxi costs about F\$10. If you're driving, the temple is 10km from the turning for Wainikoro Rd; you'll pass two smaller temples on the way.

## Sleeping

**Grand Eastern Hotel** (☎ 881 1022; grest@connect.com.fj; Rosawa St; r F\$80-130; ♿ ♿) Labasa's most upmarket hotel has a pleasant colonial

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Bula Re Café** (☎ 885 0377; meals F\$6.50-15; ♿) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun; ♿) The outdoor tables with sweeping bay views are a suitable side dish to the inventive cuisine served at this progressive café. Snappy wordsmiths might describe the fare as mod or Nouveau-Fijian, which is apt if it describes a fusion of traditional and Western styles. Fresh seafood, creative pastas, delicate savoury crepes and excellent salads and curries give you a good indication of what's on offer. Vegetarians are also well catered for here and there are daily specials (lunch/dinner F\$10/17). Bookings are highly recommended for the Wednesday night *lovo* (F\$15).



atmosphere and a decent restaurant. Rooms have small porches with views of the river; it's worth paying the extra for the newer deluxe rooms for the actual river frontage.

**Labasa Riverview Private Hotel** (☎ 881 1367; fax 881 4337; Nadawa St; dm F\$15, s F\$30, d F\$45, st from F\$50; 🍷) Rooms are cosy and comfortable and the five-bed dorm has a clean, well-equipped kitchen. The hotel's bar and veranda overlook the river, and it's probably the best place for a cold beer in Labasa. A five-minute walk north of town, this place is peaceful, relaxed and has a very friendly proprietor.

## Eating

**Oriental Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 881 7321; Jaduram St; meals F\$7; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Labasa's most atmospheric restaurant serves tasty Chinese dishes and a few Fijian options. No caps or vests are allowed in the Chinese-Fijian interior, and although it feels slightly upmarket the prices are reasonable. Well-stocked bar.

**Govinda Restaurant** (☎ 881 1364; Nasekula Rd; snacks 30c, meals F\$4-7; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This Hare Krishna vegetarian restaurant serves fantastic thalis, samosas and sweets. The F\$4 deal is a delicious, healthy combo of curry, dahl, chutney and rice or two rotis.

**Grand Eastern Hotel Restaurant** (☎ 881 1022; Rosawa St) The atmospheric restaurant at the Great Eastern Hotel (p199) serves Western-style dishes.

## Getting There & Around

For flights head to the office of **Air Fiji** (☎ 881 1188; Nasekula Rd) or **Sun Air** (☎ 881 1454; Northern Travel Service office). The airport is about 11km southwest of Labasa; catch the Waiqe bus (55c, four times daily Monday to Saturday, as per flight schedule on Sunday). A taxi from Labasa costs F\$8. See p194 for flight and ferry details to and from Labasa.

There are regular buses between Labasa and Savusavu (F\$6, five times daily between 7am and 4.15pm, four on Sunday). A 9am bus takes the scenic route (F\$11.50, six hours) to Savusavu along Natewa Bay. Buses to Nabuwalu depart three times daily (F\$8, Monday to Saturday).

Taxis are plentiful, with the main stand near the bus station. **Budget Rent a Car** (☎ 881 1999; Vakamaisua) is south of town.

## KIOA

The island of Kioa is inhabited by Polynesians originally from the tiny coral reef island of Vaitupu in Tuvalu. The community purchased Kioa in 1947 to reduce population pressure on Vaitupu. The one village is colourful and immaculately kept, and the villagers are known throughout Fiji for their woven crafts. You cannot arrive without an invitation and there's no tourist accommodation. **Tui Tai Adventure Cruises** (☎ 885 3032; [www.tuitai.com](http://www.tuitai.com)) visits Kioa.

## TAVEUNI

Kaleidoscopic above and beneath, this small island is a haven for divers, bushwalkers and nature lovers. Some of Fiji's highest peaks reside here, including Des Voeux Peak (1195m) and the cloud-shrouded Mt Ulugalau (1241m), the country's second-highest summit. A volcanic past has left black-sand beaches skirting the perimeter, but Lavena and Matei has white sand and lovely swimming. Those seeking to abscond from the beaten track will find opportunity here to do so but the exercise should be tackled with an umbrella. It rains here!

The population is mainly indigenous Fijian with a smaller crowd of Indo-Fijians and expats. There are no big towns and the island's main income comes from agriculture.

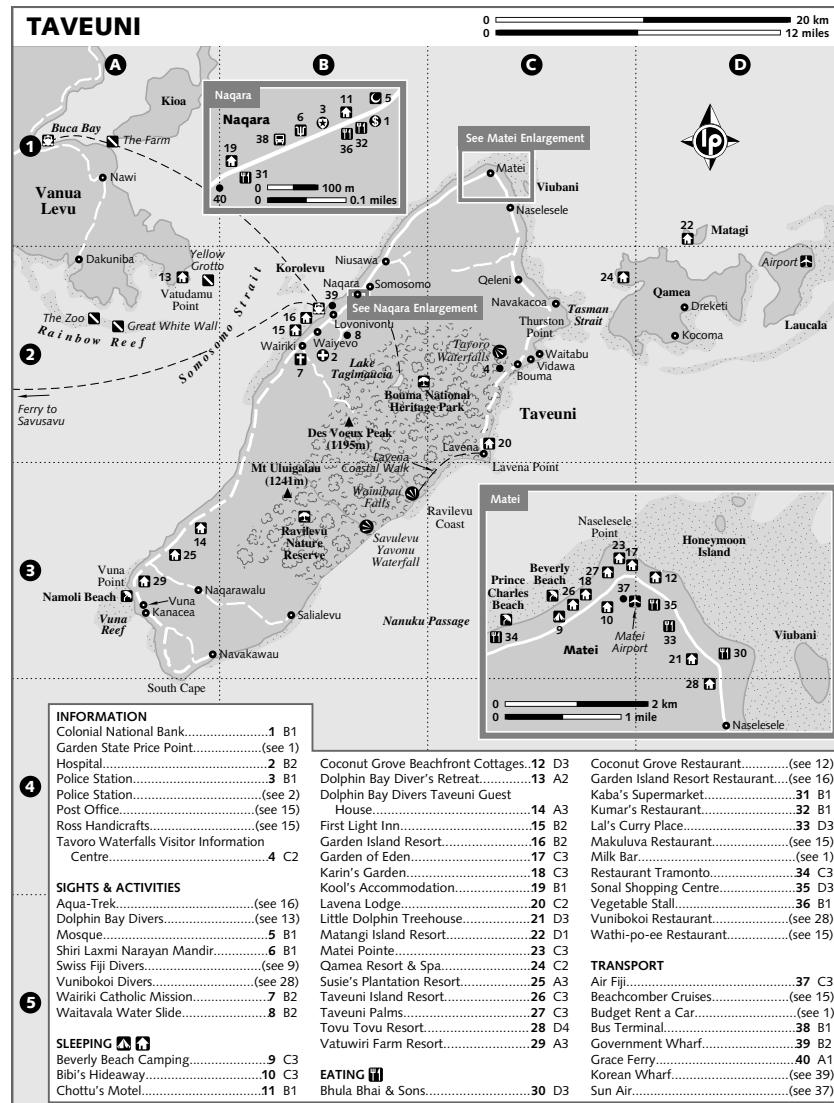
## Transport

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Flights between Taveuni and Viti Levu are stunning, revealing gorgeous reefs beneath. Both **Sun Air** (☎ 888 0461; Matei airport) and **Air Fiji** (☎ 888 0062; Matei airport) fly at least twice daily to and from Nadi (F\$280). Air Fiji also flies twice daily to and from Suva (F\$200) and Sun Air flies twice daily to and from Savusavu (F\$100).

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** (☎ 330 2877; fax 330 3389; Ground fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St, Suva; cabin/seat F\$80/50) and **Beachcomber Cruises** (☎ 888 0036; Naqara; economy/first class F\$45/65) sail three times a



week from Suva to Savusavu (12 hours) and on to Taveuni on Wednesday and Friday. Beachcomber takes five hours (economy/first class F\$25/45) and the trip with Consort takes eight hours (from Suva cabin/seat F\$90/55). **Grace Ferry** (☎ 888 0320; Naqara) runs a daily bus/boat trip to Savusavu and Labasa (F\$20, departs 8.45am) from the Korean Wharf.

## GETTING AROUND

Getting around Taveuni involves a bit of planning due to the length of time between buses. You can rent 4WDs in Naqara; however, it's far cheaper to rent a taxi for the day.

From Matei airport expect to pay about F\$18 to Waiyevo, F\$40 to Susie's Plantation

Resort and F\$50 to Vuna (about one hour) in a taxi. Most upmarket resorts provide transfers for guests.

### Bus

Taveuni's bus schedule is very lax, and buses may show up an hour early or late. Be sure to double-check return bus times when you board, just to make sure there is one.

**Pacific Transport** (☎ 888 0278) runs buses 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.

From Naqara, buses run to Navakawau at 9am, 11.30am and 4.45pm Monday to Saturday. There is only one bus on Sunday. From Matei, buses run to Wairiki at 11.30am Monday to Saturday, with additional services during school term times.

### Car

**Budget Rent a Car** (☎ 888 0291; gardenstate@connect.com.fj; Garden State Price Point; Naqara) has 4WDs for F\$125 to F\$185 per day.

### Taxi

Taxis are readily available in the Matei and Waiyevo areas – it may be wise to book ahead on Sunday. Hiring a taxi for a day to tour the island should cost under F\$120; try **Nand Lal** (☎ 888 0705). For destinations such as Lavena you can go by bus and return by taxi, but you must arrange this before you go.

## Activities

### DIVING & SNORKELLING

Taveuni is world-renowned among divers. The Somosomo Strait reveals a gazillion fish, sharks, turtles, fantastic coral and, in November, pilot whales. Sites include the infamous 32km-long Rainbow Reef, the Great White Wall, the Zoo and Vuna Reef. Water clarity is reduced in January and February due to plankton blooms and northerly winds from the equator.

There are numerous dive operations in Waiyevo, Southern Taveuni, Matei and the offshore island resorts.

There is plenty for snorkellers, too. 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.

### BIRD-WATCHING

Taveuni is one of Fiji's best locations for bird-watching, with over 100 species of birds to be found. Try Des Voeux Peak at dawn for a chance to see the rare orange dove and silktail. Along the Lavena Coastal Walk (p206), keep your eyes peeled for parrots, fantails, flame doves, the Fiji goshawk and wattled honeyeater. Avid bird-watchers also recommend the Vidawa rainforest hike in the Bouma National Heritage Park (see p206).

## WAIYEVO, SOMOSOMO & AROUND

While not the most picturesque part of the island, this area has the majority of services and can be a good base. Somosomo is the largest village on the island and headquarters for its chiefly leadership. Somosomo runs directly into Naqara, the village with the largest downtown, which constitutes a couple of gloomy supermarkets, the bank and transport links. A short taxi ride or a long dusty walk away is Waiyevo, with the hospital, police station and more ferry links. Another 2km south of Waiyevo is Wairiki village, with a general store and a beautiful old hilltop mission.

### Information

The larger supermarkets and top-end resorts may accept credit cards for a fee.

**Colonial National Bank** (☎ 888 0433; Naqara)

Foreign exchange but no cash advances and no ATM.

**Hospital** (☎ 888 0444; Waiyevo)

**Kaba's Supermarket** (☎ 888 0088; Naqara) Offers cash advances on credit cards with 5% commission.

**Police** (☎ 888 0222; Waiyevo) There is also a police station in Naqara.

**Post office** (☎ 888 0027; Waiyevo) Beneath the First Light Inn in Waiyevo.

**Ross Handicrafts** (☎ 330 9872; Waiyevo) Internet access.

**Swiss Fiji Divers** (☎ 888 0586; Matei) Internet access.

### Sights & Activities

Although the International Date Line officially doglegs Fiji, the **180-degree meridian** cuts straight through Taveuni, about a 10-minute walk south of Waiyevo. A red survey

beacon marks the spot along the water and there's an info board on the field above.

Grand **Wairiki Catholic 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 on Sunday at 7am, 9am or 11am; the congregation sits on the floor and belts out in tremendous song.

**Waitavala Water Slide** is a natural slide only for the brave. A bruise or two is unavoidable as you fly down the rock chutes. If there's been rain, it can be dangerous; watch a local go down before you attempt it. To get there, head north from Waiyevo, 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. This is private property so if you pass anyone, ask permission.

On a clear day the views from **Des Voeux Peak** (1195m) are fantastic – it's possible to see Lake Tagimaucia and perhaps even the Lau Group. Allow three to four hours to walk the steep and arduous 6km ascent and at least two to return. From Waiyevo, take the inland track just before Wairiki Catholic Mission. On weekdays it's sometimes possible to hitch a ride with public workers.

In the mountains above Somosomo, **Lake Tagimaucia** rests in an old volcanic crater some 823m above sea level. Fiji's national flower, the rare *tagimaucia*, grows on the lake's shores and blooms from late September to late December. The hike is overgrown and muddy, starting from Somosomo where you need to present the chief with a *sevusevu* and ask permission. Take lunch, and preferably a guide, and allow eight hours for the round trip.

**Aqua-Trek Taveuni** (www.aquatrek.com) at the Garden Island Resort in Waiyevo is a well-equipped dive shop with two-/six-tank dives/open water courses for F\$165/550/660.

### Sleeping

**Kool's Accommodation** (☎ 888 0395; kools@connect.com.fj; Naqara; dm/s/d F\$15/25/35; ☑) Cheerful Kool's was undergoing renovations at the

time of writing, and adding a restaurant (F\$8/10/12 breakfast/lunch/dinner) specialising in Indo-Fijian food. Private, fan-cooled hotel rooms are en suite and you can watch satellite TV or borrow videos from Kool's library.

**First Light Inn** (☎ 888 0339; firstlight@connect.com.fj; Waiyevo; r with fan/air-con F\$55/60; ☑) There seems to be a theme here – this is another clean and friendly hotel with en suite rooms and satellite TV. First Light also has a kitchen for guests' use. The place tends to be devoid of staff in the evenings and Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

**Garden Island Resort** (☎ 888 0286; www.aquatrek.com; dm/s/d/tr F\$40/166/210/250; ☑ ☑ ☑) The only resort in the area is rather unremarkable, but offers clean and comfy rooms with sea views. The pool and restaurant-bar area look out to the Somosomo Strait and Vanua Levu beyond. There is no beach, but you can swim here at high tide (but watch the current and steer clear of Korean Wharf). Transfers to and from the airport are F\$40 per person. Under 16s stay free.

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

### Eating

**Garden Island Resort Restaurant** (☎ 888 0286; Waiyevo; meals F\$15-35; ☑) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tables at this pleasant eatery have a view of the pool and garden, and in the evening there's live local music. The bar is well stocked, but only for diners or guests of the resort.

**Makuluva Restaurant** (☎ 994 5394; Waiyevo; snacks F\$4; ☑) 8am-4pm Sun-Fri) This place looks like a fresh fish shed – and in fact it is, but there's a restaurant around the back. Order dinner before 4pm (in person or by phone).

**Wathi-po-ee Restaurant** (☎ 888 0382; Waiyevo; meals F\$3-5; ☑) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, breakfast & lunch Sat-Sun) The de facto restaurant for the First Light Inn serves omelette and sausage breakfasts, and oily Sino-Fijian food for lunch and dinner. A few tables are scattered beneath a corrugated roof out the back, and it's a pleasant spot for a beer.

Snack bars and supermarkets:

**Kaba's Supermarket** (☎ 888 0088; Naqara)

**Kumar's Restaurant** (☎ 888 1005; Naqara; meals F\$2-4; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner before 7pm Mon-Sat) Good curries in a shedlike atmosphere.

**MH Supermarket** (Somosomo)

**Milk Bar** (Naqara; snacks F\$3; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) Behind the Hot Bread Kitchen sign, serves fresh chop suey, pizza and sandwiches.

## SOUTHERN TAVEUNI

The road south from Waiyevo winds along the rugged coast through beautiful rainforest, *dalo* and coconut plantations to Vuna and Kanacea villages. Check out the **blow hole** on the dramatic, windswept South Cape. As the water jumps up through the volcanic rock, it creates rainbows in the air.

### Activities

Diving and snorkelling on Vuna Reef and nearby Rainbow Reef are excellent. The following companies have good reputations: **Dolphin Bay Divers** (☎ 992 0531, 888 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com) Two-tank/night/shore dives F\$130/80/45. Open water courses (F\$500) and multiday dive packages also offered. Based at the Dolphin Bay Divers Retreat (below).

**Taveuni Estates Dive** (☎ 888 0063; www.taveunidive.com) Two-tank dive/open water course F\$210/660.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Vatuwiri Farm Resort** (☎ 888 0316; vatuwiriresort@connect.com.fj; d incl meals F\$340; ☎ closed mid-Oct-early Jan) One of the last working estates in the South Pacific and Taveuni's biggest cattle farm, Vatuwiri has two small cottages perched on a lawn on the water's edge. Both have gorgeous views and there's a fabulous swimming and snorkelling to be done here.

Also recommended:

#### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Dolphin Bay Divers Retreat** (☎ 992 0531, 888 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com; Vanaira Bay, Vanua Levu; dm/house tent/bure per person F\$20/25/45; ☎) This warm and inexpensive retreat is most easily accessed from Taveuni and offers fantastic house tents which face the sunrise and are equipped with comfortable mattresses. There's a cheerful three-bed tent dorm and an en suite tent was being constructed at the time of research. There are also adequate *bure*. A bonus is the lovingly tended wine list, which makes for boozy and companionable nights. Return transfers to Taveuni are F\$50 and daily meal plans are F\$35.

Dolphin Bay cannot be contacted (due to no mobile reception) from Buca Bay on Vanua Levu. If you turn up unannounced you'll be stranded, although the locals will put you up.

**Dolphin Bay Divers Taveuni Guest House** (☎ 888 0531; www.dolphinbaydivers.com; s/d F\$20/35) Large, spotless house with two double bedrooms and a shared bathroom.

**Susie's Plantation Resort** (☎ 888 0125; www.susiesplantationresort.com; dm/s/d/tr F\$25/70/120/150; ☎) Former plantation with gorgeous views and a range of rooms.

## MATEI & AROUND

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. It's near the airport, and there are a number of places to stay, some of the island's best dining options, dive shops, a couple of beaches and nearby snorkelling.

### Activities

The following diving companies service the Matei area and are recommended:

**Swiss Fiji Divers** (☎ 888 0586; www.swissfjdivers.com; near Beverly Beach) High-quality gear, including computer consoles and masks with underwater communication. Two-tank dive/open water course F\$185/600.

**Vunibokoi Divers** (☎ 888 0560; www.tovutovu.com) Dives in the Rainbow Reef. Two-tank dive/open water course F\$195/650. Based at the Tovu Tovu Resort (below).

### Sleeping BUDGET

**Tovu Tovu Resort** (☎ 888 0560; www.tovutovu.com; r from F\$75, f F\$125) Steeped in history, this resort is based on a subdivided copra estate and is still owned by the Petersen family who once ran the plantation. The accommodation is comfortable, with hot-water en suites and fans. There's a good restaurant (see opposite) and daily meal plans are F\$45. Tovu Tovu is a 20-minute walk southeast of Matei airport.

**Beverly Beach Camping** (☎ 888 0684; camping F\$10) Set on a white-sand beach beneath fantastic, huge poison-fish trees, this small and gorgeous camp has flush toilets, a shower and a sheltered area for cooking and dining. The owner sometimes brings around fresh fruit in the morning and can provide snorkelling and fishing equipment.

**Bibi's Hideaway** (☎ 888 0443; camping F\$15, s/d from F\$50/90, f F\$110) Cheap, relaxed and friendly, Bibi's has a variety of rooms and *bure*, all of which are clean and lovingly maintained. The newest *bure* (F\$60/70) is very good value, and Bibi has built a free emergency rainshelter *bure* for faint-hearted campers. The vibe here is gold. There's electricity in the evenings but no hot water at any time.

### MIDRANGE

**Karin's Garden** (☎ 888 0511; www.karinsgardenfiji.com; d/tr/q F\$195/250/320) A lovingly cared for two-bedroom cottage with a kitchen, sitting room, veranda and bird's-eye view of the reef, Karin's Garden 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.

**Little Dolphin Treehouse** (☎ 888 0130; d F\$90) Resembling a slightly precarious kind of proto-pagoda, this cute cottage has a breeze-cooled bedroom upstairs with a comfortable queen-size bed and a veranda looking out to the ocean. Downstairs is a kitchen and hot-water bathroom. Great for self-caterers but no children.

**Matei Pointe** (☎ 888 0422; www.taveuniresort.com; d per day/week F\$260/1490, f per day/week F\$460/2980; ☎ ☎) There are lovely views, gardens and beach at the closest accommodation to the airport. 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 telephone. Walk-in rates can be a bargain.

Also recommended:

**Coconut Grove Beachfront Cottages** (☎ 888 0328; www.coconutgrovefiji.com; r F\$270-330) Small and pretty resort with three cottages and a good restaurant.

**Garden of Eden** (☎ 888 2344; r F\$200; ☎) Huge, two-bedroom timber home.

### TOP END

**Taveuni Palms** (☎ 888 0032; www.taveunipalmsfiji.com; d F\$1580; ☎ ☎ ☎) Breathtakingly beautiful and

right on the beach, Taveuni Palms boasts two secluded villas, each with a private beach, swimming pool, state-of-the-art entertainment system and personal chef, who'll cook a five-course meal for you every night. If you're nuts, you can make use of the sparkly kitchens. One villa has an en suite sleep-out for kids, and the resort provides a free nanny. Five-night minimum stay.

**Taveuni Island Resort** (☎ 888 0441; www.taveuniislandresort.com; r incl meals F\$1500; ☎ ☎) A small, opulent resort on a hill overlooking the beach, all polished wood and wicker, with absolutely gorgeous views. The very private *bure* are rock and wood and some have Taveuni's (if not Fiji's) biggest bathrooms. This is a honeymooners' haven with gourmet meals and no children under 15.

### Eating

**Vunibokoi Restaurant** (☎ 888 0560; mains F\$18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tovu Tovu Resort (see opposite) has a friendly, comfortable restaurant with an outdoor deck overlooking Viubani Island. The food is fabulously tasty and on Friday there's a popular buffet and music night (F\$20); it's worth popping in just to have a drink.

**Lal's Curry Place** (☎ 888 0705; meals F\$12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) You know the garam marsala is authentic here because Mrs Lal dries the ingredients on the front lawn. She dishes up big portions of robust curries with roti, rice and dahl. Her husband, Nand, is a knowledgeable, reliable taxi driver.

**Coconut Grove Restaurant** (☎ 888 0328; meals F\$15-40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The restaurant attached to the Coconut Grove Beachfront Cottages (see left) serves excellent vegetarian dishes, homemade pasta, salads, fish and delicious desserts. The food is fresh and fine and meals are served on the veranda with water views. Order before 4pm.

**Restaurant Tramonto** (☎ 888 2224; meals F\$18-22; ☎ lunch & dinner) Pizza is the speciality at this waterfront restaurant, but other well-prepared dishes are served if ingredients are available (staff can tell you if you call ahead). On Sunday there's a buffet dinner (F\$25) and on Wednesday a barbecue (F\$20); reservations required.

Local supermarkets include **Bhula Bhai & Sons** (☎ 888 0462) and **Sonal Shopping Centre** (☎ 888 0431).

## EASTERN TAVEUNI

Eastern Taveuni's beautiful wild coast and lush rainforest are in good hands, with local landowners rejecting logging in favour of ecotourism. The venture is going fabulously, and the region is a magnet for nature lovers.

### Bouma National Heritage Park

This **national park** (admission F\$8) protects over 80% of Taveuni's total area, covering about 150sq km of coastal forest and rainforest. Within are several kilometres of bush walks, the three beautiful **Tavoro Waterfalls** and natural swimming pools. The walking track begins opposite the reception *bure*, south of the river in Bouma.

The first waterfall is only 10 minutes' walk along a flat path and is a great place for a dip. The second waterfall, a further 30 or 40 minutes along, is smaller but also has a good swimming pool. The track is steep in places, with a river crossing, but has steps, handrails and lookout spots to rest. The 30-minute hike to the third and smallest fall is less well maintained and often muddy. It has a great swimming pool and, if you bring your snorkelling gear, you'll be able to see the hundreds of prawns in the water.

If you are keen walker, try the **Vidawa rainforest hike** (☎ 888 0390; adult/child F\$60/40, maximum 8 people; ☞ Mon-Sat), a full-day guided walk taking in historic fortified village sites, rainforest and Tavoro Waterfalls. The trip includes hotel transfers, lunch and park fees. Book in advance through the Tavoro Waterfalls **visitor information centre** (☎ 888 0390; camping F\$10 per person; meals F\$5-10; ☞ 9am-4pm), which has simple camping facilities and serves meals in a lovely spot. There's a kitchen, toilets, an open shower for campers and a covered eating area, or you can picnic by the river. The generator kicks in for the evening. Staff will let you store your bags here while you hike up to the falls.

### Waitabu Marine Park

This area offers excellent snorkelling off a white-sand beach. You can only visit the park with a guide. The village of Waitabu has set up a half-day **tour** (☎ 888 0451; per person F\$35/40 for 1/4 or more), including a guided snorkel, *bilibili* ride, morning and afternoon tea in the village. There's also a

backpackers' tour with guided snorkelling and boat transfers (F\$20 per person).

### Lavena Coastal Walk

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

The path is clearly marked and well maintained. To see and reach the falls at the end of the trail, you have to walk over rocks and swim a short distance through two deep pools. If you're visiting in the rainy season it can be difficult, if not dangerous, to reach the falls. Ask at Lavena Lodge (see below) for current conditions. Violent flash floods can occur at any time of year (even if it hasn't been raining), and you should stay to the left of the pool where you can make an easier getaway.

The park is managed through Lavena Lodge. Park entrance is F\$5 or F\$15 with a guide. Kayaks can be hired for F\$40 per day and guided kayak tours are available.

Run by friendly, informative staff, **Lavena Lodge** (☎ 888 0116; tw per person F\$15) has basic, clean rooms, a shared kitchen and bathroom. There's electricity in the evening and 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 from the lodge (F\$7/10 breakfast/lunch or dinner). There's a tiny shop in the village, but if you're planning to cook, bring your own supplies.

## OFFSHORE ISLANDS

### Matangi

area 1 sq km

Stunning Matangi is 10km off Taveuni's coast, with steep rainforest rising 130m.

The deluxe *bure* at **Matangi Island Resort** (☎ 888 0260; www.matangiisland.com; s/d/tr incl meals from F\$470/800/970, child 2-11 F\$150; ☞ ☞) are roomy enough to turn cartwheels in and each is surrounded by a neat tropical garden. The beach is lovely, and the 'tree-houses' (F\$1360) are perched 5m up in the tree canopy. Rates include most activities and Taveuni transfers. Matangi boasts 30 dive spots within 10 to 30 minutes of the island; a two-tank dive is F\$230.

## Qamea

area 34 sq km

Only 2.5km east from Taveuni, Qamea is a green and hilly island skirted by bays with white-sand beaches. The island is rich in birdlife and notable for the *lairou*, the annual migration of land crabs.

**Qamea Resort & Spa** (☎ 888 0220; www.qamea.com; d/tr incl meals from F\$1250/1540; ☞ ☞) has magnificently thatched *bure* on a beautiful white-sand beach. There's excellent snorkelling, windsurfing, sailing, outrigger canoeing, nature walks, village visits, fishing trips and a spa offering 55 different treatments. Two-tank dives/open water courses cost F\$360/950. Rates include transfers to and from Taveuni. No children under 16.

## KADAVU

pop 12,000 / area 450 sq km

About 100km south of Viti Levu, this untamed group of islands forms a hilly and verdant backdrop against the empty sea. The absence of roads and infrastructure helps to maintain a prehistoric façade, and Kadavu's 72 villages still rely largely on subsistence agriculture. Tourism is expanding at a slow creep, enough to beckon travellers without impacting too greatly on the existing culture.

The magnificent and sizeable Astrolabe Reef is Kadavu's main lure. Cutting a vivid swathe around the group's base, it rewards visitors with some of the finest diving in the Pacific. But the interior is just as colourful and the lush rainforests, especially on the eastern side, are home to a wide variety of birdlife, including the celebrated Kadavu musk parrot.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The ferry trip to Kadavu from Suva can be rough and the timetable is erratic. Flying is a quicker and safer option. The small boats used for transfers to and from the airstrip often don't have life jackets or radios.

## ACTIVITIES

The mountains have rainforest, numerous waterfalls and **hiking** trails. Ask locals about current conditions before setting out. The isolated villagers are very traditional, so when visiting a village, ask to speak to the

*turaga-ni-koro* first, remove your hat and don't carry things on your shoulders.

Kadavu has excellent **diving**, with the famous Astrolabe Reef skirting the eastern side of the group. Expect to see brilliantly coloured corals, vertical drop-offs and a wonderful array of marine life. Unfortunately, the weather often dictates which sites are available, as visibility can range from 15m to 70m. Most resorts have dive outfits.

The best **surfing** in Kadavu is found around Cape Washington, at the southernmost end of Kadavu.

**Tamarillo Sea Kayaking** (☎ 04-239 9885; www.tamarillo.co.nz/index.html; per person F\$2600; ☞ May-Sep) offers interesting seven-day kayak tours around Kadavu with meals and accommodation in budget resorts and villages. All the resorts have two-person ocean kayaks for hire.

## TRANSPORT

### Getting There & Around

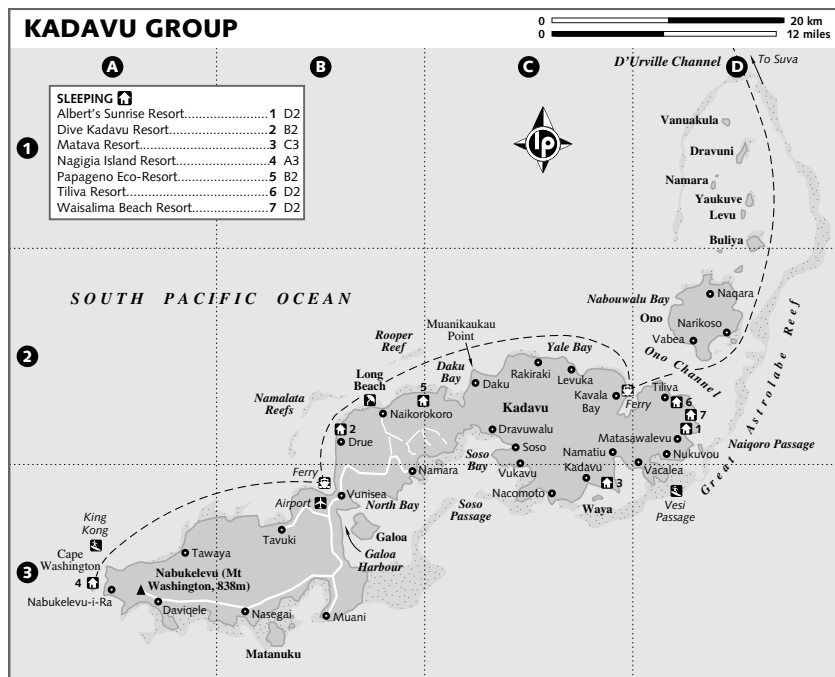
**Air Fiji** (☎ 331 3666; www.airfiji.com.fj; 185 Victoria Pde, Suva) has daily flights from Suva to Kadavu (F\$260, 30 minutes). **Sun Air** (☎ 0800 672 5725, 572 3016; www.fiji.to) has daily flights to and from Nadi (F\$330, 45 minutes). There is talk of another airport being constructed at the eastern end of Kadavu, which would reduce transfer times to nearby resorts considerably.

**Kadavu Shipping** (☎ 331 1766, 339 5000, 339 5788) in Suva operates the largely irregular and unreliable MV *Bulou-ni-Ceva* between Suva and Kadavu (F\$45 one way). It's mostly for cargo and local use, can take anything from four hours to two days and varies from bearable to terrible, depending on the weather.

Kadavu's few roads are restricted to the Vunisea area, except for one rough, unsealed road to Nabukelevu-i-Ra around the southern end of Kadavu. Small boats are the group's principal mode of transport. Each resort has its own boat and will pick up guests from Vunisea airstrip; make sure you make arrangements in advance.

## SLEEPING

**Papageno Eco-Resort** (☎ 330 3355; www.papagenoecoresort.com; s incl meals from F\$280, d incl meals F\$400-600; ☞) Ecologically friendly and embedded in a thick tropical garden, Papageno



is the quintessential island sanctuary. Cool garden rooms include futon-style beds and furniture made from local materials. Larger *bure* have plenty of space and privacy. The food is excellent and kava ceremonies, sea kayaking and hiking are all free. A two-tank dive/open water course costs F\$130/600.

**Matava Resort** (☎ 330 5222; [www.matava.com](http://www.matava.com); dm F\$20, d F\$110-170; ☒) In neat and lush grounds, this ecofriendly resort has charming thatched *bure* with modest furniture, verandas and plenty of sunlight. The pricier Honeymoon and Oceanview *bure* are blessed with wonderful views. Excellent meals (F\$55/20 per adult/child a day) are served on a large communal veranda. Matava offers dives from the Soso Passage to the Naitoro Passage, featuring excellent manta ray, cave and shark dives. Two-tank dives/open water courses cost F\$105/590.

**Tiliva Resort** (☎ 333 7127; [www.tilivaresortfiji.com](http://www.tilivaresortfiji.com); r incl meals F\$400-500; ☒) Ascending over a soft incline from the beach, this tranquil and refined resort has elevated *bure* with high roofs, four-poster beds and 270-degree timber balconies. Delicious meals are served

on a fabulous sweeping deck overlooking towering palms and shining parrots, and the hosts, Kim and Barbara, are exceedingly gracious.

**Dive Kadavu Resort** (☎ 331 7780; [www.divekadavu.com](http://www.divekadavu.com); s/d/f incl meals F\$320/560/980; ☒) This appealing resort enjoys one of Kadavu's finest snorkelling and swimming beaches. Modest *bure* have comfortable beds, verandas and tidy bathrooms, and there's a sociable, ocean-fronted bar. Management are extremely hospitable. Rates include airport transfers. Unsurprisingly, diving is a popular pastime and the Namalata Reefs, about 5km from the northwest coast, are a favourite haunt. A two-tank dive/open water course costs F\$170/600.

**Albert's Sunrise Resort** (☎ 333 7555; camping per person F\$6, dm/s/d F\$16/37/50) A family-run resort, Albert's offers travellers the flavour of a village visit. Fresh meals (per person daily F\$37) are served when they're cooked and activities are organised if there's interest. *Bure* are rustic and there's no electricity or hot water. One-way transfers to and from the Vunisea airstrip cost F\$100 for

up to two people. Albert's runs dive trips to Naitoro Passage. A two-tank dive costs F\$145, but you should check your equipment thoroughly beforehand.

More accommodation options:

**Nagigia Island Resort** (☎ 333 7774, 600 3051; [www.fijisurf.com](http://www.fijisurf.com); dm incl meals F\$115, d incl meals from F\$250; ☒) Remote and upscale surf resort with elevated rooms over the sea. Meal plans F\$60 per person daily. Return airport transfers F\$115.

**Waisalima Beach Resort** (☎ 331 7281; [www.waisalimafiji.com](http://www.waisalimafiji.com); camping per site F\$8, dm F\$12, d F\$130) Rough-hewn budget retreat with thatched *bure*, rudimentary bathrooms and hammocks. Meal plan F\$50 per day, return airport transfers F\$100.

## LAU GROUP

Scattered across Fiji's southwestern corner, halfway to Tonga, these 57 islands are some of the most remote and sparsely populated in all of Fiji. Thick perimeters of colourful reef wedge themselves between the ocean and secluded bays and beaches, and interiors are hilly and wild.

Lau islanders are known for their wood-carving and *masi* (bark cloth) crafts, and have been greatly influenced by neighbouring Polynesian cultures. Although the climate here is drier than most parts of Fiji, storms can be fierce and some of the bays are used as hurricane shelters by visiting yachts. Tourism is virtually nonexistent and you'll find no banks, but this is precisely why these islands appeal to hardened and patient explorers.

### Transport

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Air Fiji** (☎ 331 3666; [www.airfiji.com.fj](http://www.airfiji.com.fj); 185 Victoria Pde, Suva) flies between Suva and Vanua Balavu on Thursday and Sunday (F\$195). **Saliabasa Shipping** (☎ 330 3403; Walu Bay, Suva) has fortnightly trips to islands in the Lau Group aboard the MV *Tunatuki*, a cargo/passenger boat. One-way fares to Vanua Balavu are F\$90/120 per person for a deck/cabin including meals. Expect to spend about a week on board.

**Kabua Development Corporation** (☎ 330 2258; fax 332 0251; Muaiwalu Complex, Old Millers Wharf, Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva) and **Khans Shipping** (☎ /fax 330 8786; Mauiwalu Complex, Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva) operate infrequent boats to the Southern Lau Group.

Yachties wishing to visit Lau need to clear customs and immigration first (see p213), and then apply for permission from the Ministry for Fijian Affairs.

## VANUA BALAVU

area 53 sq km

This beautiful island, averaging about 2km wide, has lots of sandy beaches and rugged limestone hills. The celebrated **Bay of Islands**, also known as Qilasila, sits in the northwest pocket and is a spectacular site for diving, kayaking and swimming. **Lomaloma**, the largest village, was Fiji's first port, regularly visited by sailing ships trading in the Pacific. Today the people of Vanua Balavu largely rely on copra and *bêche-de-mer* for their income.

Covering all bases, **Moana's Guesthouse** (☎ 889 5006; r per person incl meals F\$85; ☒) has three unfussy *bure* on the beach shore, about 1km from the village, plus a Tongan-style cottage within the village. Snorkelling and fishing trips can be arranged.

The comfortable, colonial-style **Nawanawa Estate** (☎ 889 5144; [helenetuwai@hotmail.com](mailto:helenetuwai@hotmail.com); camping per person F\$10, s/d F\$40/70; ☒) homestay has friendly owners and fabulous meals (F\$5/10/12 breakfast/lunch/dinner).

## FIJI DIRECTORY

### ACCOMMODATION

Fiji has a good range of accommodation to suit all wallets. Budget travellers can expect to pay F\$20 to F\$30 for a dorm bed, F\$40 to F\$80 for a single room and F\$60 to F\$90 for a double in a hostel or inexpensive hotel with shared facilities. Many backpacker resorts in Nadi, Viti Levu's Coral Coast and the Mamanucas have excellent facilities, but budget places on the outer islands usually offer *bure* (thatched dwellings) and rudimentary facilities.

There is virtually no organised camping in Fiji. If you've got a tent in tow, seek permission before setting up camp anywhere. Most of Fiji's land, even in seemingly remote areas, is owned by the indigenous population, by *mataqali* (extended families) or villages. If you are invited to camp in villages, avoid setting up next to someone's *bure*. Doing so can be misinterpreted as implying that you feel the house is not good

enough for you to stay in. Ask where the best place to pitch your tent is and provide a gift or *sevusevu*.

Most accommodation in Fiji is mid-range; options include hotels, motels and resorts ranging from F\$80 to F\$150 for one person and F\$90 to F\$170 for two. Guests can expect bathrooms, TVs and bar fridges in hotels, and many lodges and resorts offer self-contained units. Top-end options generally include five-star chains and resorts, with prices ranging from F\$160 to F\$2000 per room.

The term 'resort' is used very loosely in Fiji and can refer to any accommodation near the sea, ranging from backpacker-style to pure luxury.

All accommodation prices quoted in this chapter are inclusive of Fiji's 12.5% sales tax.

## ACTIVITIES

### Diving & Snorkelling

Fiji offers some spectacular snorkelling. Among the best spots are Nananu-i-Ra off Viti Levu's northern coast, as well as islands in the Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups. Reefs are often very close to the coast, but in many places you can only swim at high tide and channels can be dangerous.

This is also a diver's Mecca with magnificent sites and dive resorts for every budget (see p70). Prices range from around F\$140 to F\$190 for a two-tank dive and F\$400 to F\$650 for a PADI open water certification course.

Companies with good equipment, instructors and reputations include **AquaBlue** (☎ 672 6111; www.aquabluefiji.com) in Nadi, **Subsurface Fiji** (☎ 666 6738; www.subsurfacefiji.com) in the Mamanucas and **Westside Watersports** (☎ 666 1462, 998 862; westside@divefiji.com) in the Yasawas.

### Hiking

Viti Levu and Taveuni are the best islands for hiking. Suva's Colo-i-Suva Forest Park and Taveuni's Lavena Coastal Walk have marked trails that don't require guides or permission. Hiking hot spots in the Viti Levu Highlands include Mt Tomanivi and Koroyanitu National Heritage Park. There are also some excellent trails on Waya in the Yasawas.

## PRACTICALITIES

- *Fiji Times* is the national daily newspaper. *Fiji Magic* (www.fijilive.com/fijimagic) and *Fiji Holidays* are free monthly publications with details and prices of accommodation, restaurants, activities and tours.
- The government-sponsored Fiji Broadcasting Commission has stations in English (Radio Fiji 3 and 104FM), Fijian (Radio Fiji 1) and Fiji-Hindi (Radio Fiji 2 and 98FM). Bula 100 plays an eclectic mix of pop, rock, reggae, dance, folk, country and local music. Fiji has one television station and Sky satellite TV in some resorts and bars.
- The video and DVD systems used in Fiji are PAL, which is the same as Australia, NZ, Europe, the UK and most of Asia and the Pacific.
- Electricity is supplied at 240V, 50Hz AC. Outlets use flat two- or three-pin plugs like those in Australia and NZ.
- Fiji follows the metric system of measurement. See the Quick Reference page for conversions.

## Kayaking & Rafting

Sea-kayaking tours are available around Nananu-i-Ra (see p175) and are offered by **Tamarillo Sea Kayaking** (☎ 04-239 9885; www.tamarillo.co.nz/index.html) off Kadavu. Based at Pacific Harbour, **Rivers Fiji** (☎ 345 0147; www.riversfiji.com) offers exciting river-rafting and kayaking trips to the superb Namosi Highlands.

## Surfing

Surfing usually requires boat trips as the majority of breaks are on offshore reefs. The best spots are in barrier-reef passages along southern Viti Levu (Frigate's Passage) and in the southern Mamanucas (Malolo and Wilkes Passages). These should only be tackled by experienced surfers. There are also breaks at Kadavu and a few places along Viti Levu's Coral Coast. The dry season (May to October) is the best time to surf due to low pressures bringing in big waves.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses open weekdays from 8am to 5pm, and some from 8am to 1pm on Saturday. Government offices are open from 8am to 4.30pm weekdays (to 4pm on Friday). Many places close for lunch from 1pm to 2pm and practically nothing happens on Sunday. Restaurants generally open for lunch (11am to 2pm) and dinner (6pm to 9pm) from Monday to Saturday, as well as dinner on Sunday.

## CHILDREN

Fiji is a major family destination and very child-friendly. Many resorts cater specifically for children, with baby-sitting, cots and high chairs, organised activities and children's pools. Some resorts have lots of levels and sand paths, however, which can make using prams and strollers difficult.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Fijian Embassies & Consulates

Fiji has diplomatic representation in the following countries.

**Australia** (☎ 02-6260 5115; fhc@cyberone.com.au)  
**Canada** (☎ 03-233 9252; fax 594 8705)  
**Japan** (☎ 03-3587 2038; www.fijiembassy.jp)  
**New Zealand** (☎ 04-473 5401; fax 499 1011)  
**UK** (☎ 020-7584 3661; www.fijihighcommission.org.uk)  
**USA** (☎ 202-337 8320; www.fijiembassy.org)

### Embassies & Consulates in Fiji

**Australia** (☎ 338 2211; fax 338 2065; 37 Princes Rd, Tamavua, Suva)  
**Canada** (Consulate; ☎ /fax 672 1936; Nadi airport)  
**France** (☎ 331 2233; fax 330 1894; 7th fl, Dominion House, Thomson St, Suva)  
**Germany** (Consulate; ☎ 331 2633; fax 330 2416; 80-82 Harris Rd, Suva)  
**Japan** (☎ 330 2122; fax 330 1452; 2nd fl, Dominion House, Thomson St, Suva)  
**Korea** (☎ 330 0977; fax 330 8059; 8th fl, Vanua House, Victoria Pde, Suva)  
**Nauru** (☎ 331 3566; fax 330 2861; 7th fl, Ratu Sukuna House, Suva)  
**Netherlands** (Consulate; ☎ 330 1499; fax 330 1618; Cromptons Solicitors, 1st fl, Victoria Arcade, Victoria Pde, Suva)  
**New Zealand** (☎ 331 1422; fax 330 0842; 10th fl, Reserve Bank Bldg, Pratt St, Suva)  
**Tuvalu** (☎ 330 1355; fax 330 8479; 16 Gorrie St, Suva)  
**UK** (High Commission; ☎ 322 9100; fax 330 1406; Victoria House, 47 Gladstone Rd, Suva)  
**USA** (☎ 331 4466; fax 330 0081; 31 Loftus St, Suva)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

See p289 for regional public holidays.

### February/March

**Hindu Holi (Festival of Colours)** People squirt coloured water at each other; best seen in Lautoka.

### March/April

**Ram Naumi (Birth of Lord Rama)** Hindu religious festival in Suva Bay. Worshippers wade into the water and throw flowers.

### July

**Bula Festival** One of Fiji's biggest festivals – held in Nadi with rides, music, shows and the crowning of 'Miss Bula'.

### August

**Hibiscus Festival** Held in Suva, with lots of floats.

**Fiji Ocean Swim** (www.manafiji.com/swim2.htm)

Competitors race a 3km course of ocean at Mana Island in this international swim event.

**Hindu Ritual Fire Walking** Performed by southern Indians in many temples.

### September

**Sugar Festival** Lautoka's streets come alive with parades and fun fairs.

**Fiji Regatta Week** (www.musketcovefiji.com) Annual, international regatta held at Muscat Cove in the Mamanucas.

### October/November

**Diwali Festival (Festival of Lights)** Hindus worship Lakshmi, houses are decorated, business is settled, and candles and lanterns are set on doorsteps to light the way of the god.

**Ram Leela (Play of Rama)** Hindus celebrate through theatrical performances the life of god-king Rama and his return from exile.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are fairly prolific in Suva, Lautoka and Nadi. Broadband access costs around 6c to 10c per minute. Access outside these cities is more limited and pricier (10c to 20c per minute).

Wireless Internet access is a recent phenomenon to Fiji thanks to **Unwired Fiji** (☎ 327 5040; www.unwired.com.fj); you'll need to purchase a special modem from them.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Fiji Government** (www.fiji.gov.fj) Contains press releases, news and immigration updates.

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

online.

**Fiji Village** ([www.fijivillage.com](http://www.fijivillage.com)) Geared for overseas Fijians, this site is updated with daily news and has excellent links to local events.

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

**Fijilive** ([www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com)) Live updates on Fijian news.

## MAPS

The best place to buy maps of the Fiji islands is the Map Shop in Suva. It sells big (1:50,000), detailed topographic maps of each island or island group, as well as maps of Suva. The *Fiji Travel Map* by Hema is the most useful map for tourists.

## MONEY ATMs

ATMs are common in urban areas and most accept the main international debit cards, including Cirrus and Maestro, as well as Visa and MasterCard.

## Currency

The local currency is the Fijian dollar (F\$), which is fairly stable relative to the Australian and NZ dollars. Exchange rates are given in the following table.

Country	Unit	Fijian dollar
Australia	A\$1	F\$1.30
Canada	C\$1	F\$1.55
CFP zone	100 CFP	F\$1.82
Easter Island	Ch\$1000	F\$3.34
euro zone	€1	F\$2.17
Japan	¥100	F\$1.52
NZ	NZ\$1	F\$1.09
Samoa	ST1	60c
Solomon Islands	SS1	24c
Tonga	T\$1	86c
UK	£1	F\$3.14
USA	US\$1	F\$1.72
Vanuatu	100Vt	F\$1.58

## Taxes

All prices quoted in this chapter are inclusive of VAT (value added tax), a 12.5% sales tax on goods and services.

## Tipping

While tipping is not expected in Fiji, many resorts have a 'Staff Christmas Fund' jar for tips. Indigenous Fijians generally don't like to bargain but bargaining is customary in

### HOW MUCH?

- **Taxi in Nadi or Suva:** F\$4-10
- **Snorkel hire:** F\$5-10
- **Local bus ride:** 65c
- **Coffee:** F\$2
- **Cocktail:** F\$6

### LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol:** F\$1.50
- **1L bottled water:** F\$1.50
- **Stubbie of Fiji Bitter:** F\$4
- **Souvenir T-shirt:** F\$20
- **Samosa:** 50c

most Indo-Fijian stores. Many Indo-Fijian shop owners and taxi drivers consider it bad luck to lose their first customer of the day; you can expect an especially hard sales pitch early in the morning as well as some good deals.

## TELEPHONE

The international telephone code for Fiji is ☎ 679. There are no area codes.

## Mobile Phones

**Vodafone** ([www.vodafone.com.fj](http://www.vodafone.com.fj)) is the only mobile phone company in Fiji. It operates a GSM digital service and has roaming agreements with Vodafone in Australia, NZ and the UK, as well as Optus in Australia.

Mobile phones and simcards can be purchased from **Vodafone** (Suva ☎ 331 4170; Post Fiji Bldg, Thomson St; Nadi ☎ 670 3666; Shop 153, Moraji Kalidas Bldg, Main St). Alternatively, mobile phones can be rented from some car-rental agencies.

## Phonecards

Public telephones require a phonecard, available from post offices, some pharmacies and newsagents. They come in denominations of F\$3, F\$5, F\$10, F\$20 and F\$50. You'll find public phones outside the post office but they're generally just for decoration and are rarely functioning. You'll also find them at resorts and around town.

For international calls, the cheapest calling cards are 'Call the World for Cheap' cards, available from shops in urban centres.

## TIME

Fiji is 12 hours ahead of GMT. When it's noon in Suva it's midnight the previous day in London, 5pm the previous day in Los Angeles, noon the same day in Auckland and 10am the same day in Sydney.

## TOURIST INFORMATION IN FIJI

The head office of the **Fiji Visitors Bureau** (☎ 672 2433; [www.bulafiji.com](http://www.bulafiji.com); Suite 107, Colonial Plaza, Namaka; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-4pm Fri) is in Nadi. There is also an office in Suva (☎ 330 4177; [www.spto.org](http://www.spto.org); 3rd fl, Dolphin Plaza, cnr Loftus St & Victoria Pde, Suva; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri).

The **South Pacific Tourism Organisation** (☎ 330 4177; [www.spto.org](http://www.spto.org); 3rd fl, Dolphin Plaza, cnr Loftus St & Victoria Pde, Suva; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) is another useful source of information.

## VISAS

A free tourist visa for four months is granted on arrival to citizens of more than 100 countries, including most countries belonging to the British Commonwealth, North America, much of South America and Western Europe, India, Israel, Japan and South Korea. Check [www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/fiji\\_faqs.shtml](http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/fiji_faqs.shtml) for a full list. You'll need to have an onward ticket and a passport valid for at least three months longer than your intended stay.

Nationalities from countries excluded from this list will have to apply for visas through a Fijian embassy prior to arrival.

Tourist visas can be extended for up to six months by applying through the Department of Immigration. You'll need to show an onward ticket, proof of sufficient funds and your passport must be valid for three months after your proposed departure. Apply at the **Immigration Department** (☎ 331 2672; Government Bldg, Suva).

# TRANSPORT IN FIJI

## GETTING THERE & AWAY Air

Most international flights to Fiji arrive at Nadi International Airport, with a few flights landing at Nausori International Airport near Suva.

As you enter the arrivals area in Nadi, you will be greeted by serenading guitar and a sea of smiling faces, mostly representatives

### DEPARTURE TAX

Fijian departure tax is incorporated into your ticket, so there is no need to pay it at the airport.

of local accommodation and the many travel agencies.

Nausori, 23km northeast of downtown Suva, is Fiji's second airport. Air Fiji has flights to Tuvalu, and Air Pacific and Qantas have direct flights to and from Sydney. Otherwise the airport is mostly used for domestic purposes.

The main carriers servicing Fiji are Air Pacific, Qantas, Air New Zealand, Korean Air and United Airlines. See p837 for details of air passes that include Fiji.

Fares from Sydney or Brisbane are typically A\$550/800 return low/high season. From Auckland to Fiji (three hours) costs about NZ\$460/730 low/high season. Fares from the USA vary greatly in price, depending on season and ticket restrictions. Los Angeles-Nadi with Air New Zealand is about US\$920/1300 low/high season. A return ticket from London to Nadi costs about £850/1100 low/high season.

The following international airlines fly to and from Fiji:

**Air Fiji** (☎ 672 2521, 331 3666; [www.airfiji.com.fj/index.cfm](http://www.airfiji.com.fj/index.cfm))

**Air Nauru** (☎ 672 2795, 331 2377/3731; [www.airnauru.com.au](http://www.airnauru.com.au))

**Air New Zealand** (☎ 331 3100; [www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz))

**Air Pacific** (☎ 672 0888, 330 4388; [www.airpacific.com.fj](http://www.airpacific.com.fj))

**Air Vanuatu** (☎ 672 2521, 331 3666/3055; [www.airvanuatu.com](http://www.airvanuatu.com))

**Aircalin** (☎ 672 2145; [www.aircalin.nc](http://www.aircalin.nc))

**Freedom Air** (☎ 0800 600 500; [www.freedomair.co.nz](http://www.freedomair.co.nz))

**Korean Air** (☎ 672 1043; [www.koreanair.com.au](http://www.koreanair.com.au))

**Pacific Blue** ([www.flypacificblue.com](http://www.flypacificblue.com))

**Qantas Airways** (☎ 672 2880, 331 3888/1833; [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au))

**Royal Tongan Airlines** (☎ 672 4355; [rtafiji@connect.com.fj](http://rtafiji@connect.com.fj))

**Solomon Airlines** (☎ 672 2831; [www.solomonairlines.com.au](http://www.solomonairlines.com.au))

**United Airlines** (☎ 61 131 777; [www.united.com](http://www.united.com))

## Sea

Travelling to Fiji by sea is difficult unless you're on a cruise ship or yacht.

Yachts need to head for the designated ports of entry at Suva, Lautoka, Levuka or Savusavu, to clear customs, immigration and quarantine. Present a certificate of clearance from the previous port of call, a crew list and passports.

Yachties need to apply to the **Ministry for Fijian Affairs** ([www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/m\\_fijian\\_affairs.shtml](http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/m_fijian_affairs.shtml)) for special written authorisation to visit the outer islands. Before departing, you'll again need to complete clearance formalities (within 24 hours), providing inbound clearance papers, your vessel's details and your next port of call. Customs must be cleared before immigration, and you must have paid all port dues and health fees.

## GETTING AROUND

By using local buses, carriers and ferries, you can get around Fiji's main islands relatively cheaply and easily. If you'd like more comfort, or are short on time, you can use air-conditioned express buses, rental vehicles, charter boats and small planes.

### Air AIRLINES IN FIJI

Air Fiji and Sun Air have regular inter-island flights by light plane. Most Air Fiji services operate out of Nausori, while Sun Air is based in Nadi. Sun Air often transports passengers' luggage in a separate plane, and arriving before or after your possessions is a common occurrence. See p147 for sample fares. You can sometimes get a discount if you book directly through the airline offices in Suva. Air Pacific was planning to re-enter the domestic market, with a plan to fly to Taveuni, Savusavu and other northern destinations.

**Air Fiji** (☎ 331 3666; [www.airfiji.com.fj](http://www.airfiji.com.fj)) Operates seven flights daily from Suva to Nadi; five to Labasa; two to Levuka, Savusavu and Taveuni; and one to Kadavu. It also flies twice weekly from Suva to Rotuma, Lakeba and Vanua Balavu, and once weekly to Moala, Gau and Koro. From Nadi, there are four flights daily to Savusavu, two to Taveuni and one to Labasa.

**Sun Air** (☎ 0800 672 5725, 572 3016; [www.fiji.to](http://www.fiji.to)) Has two flights daily from Nadi to Labasa and Savusavu; three to Taveuni; four to Malololailai and Mana; and one to Suva and Kadavu. It also has two flights daily between Suva and Labasa, and between Savusavu and Taveuni.

See p153 for information about charter services and joy flights that can be used as island transfers from Nadi.

### AIR PASSES

Air Fiji's 30-day Air Pass is US\$270. It's sold only outside Fiji together with an international air fare. The pass includes four flights, but you can add extra legs for F\$100 per sector. It's best to book your seats, as the small planes often fill up quickly. Children under 12 get a 25% discount and infants are charged 10%. There is a F\$100 predeparture cancellation fee, and reimbursement is minimal once in Fiji. If you change your mind, it will cost F\$100 to reissue your ticket.

### Bicycle

Fiji's larger islands have good potential for cycling, although some areas are extremely hilly and rugged and Fijian drivers can be rather unaware of cyclists. The best time to bike is in the 'drier' season and good spots include the Coral Coast on Viti Levu, the unsealed Hibiscus Hwy on Vanua Levu and Ovalau's coastal road. Bicycles can be hired on the Coral Coast, at Nadi and Ovalau and cost around F\$25 to F\$40 per day; always test the brakes and gears beforehand. Wacking Stick Adventure Tours near Nadi runs mountain-bike tours (see p151).

There seems to be no official road rule regarding cyclists, so the rule of thumb should be to assume that all vehicles have right of way.

### Boat

With the exception of the upmarket resort islands, often the only means of transport to and between islands is by small local boats, especially for the backpacker resorts. Life jackets are rarely provided; if the weather looks ominous or the boat is overcrowded, seriously consider postponing the trip!

Inter-island trips for sightseeing, catamaran transfers and sail cruises are available in the Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups.

### FERRY

Regular ferry services link Viti Levu to Vanua Levu and Taveuni, and also Viti Levu to Ovalau. Irregular boats also take passengers from Suva to the Lau Group, Rotuma and Kadavu. Ferry timetables are notorious for changing frequently and there is often a long wait at stopovers. Toilets can become filthy, so take your own toilet paper.

Note that most car-rental agencies won't let you take their car on board.

### Nadi-Mamanucas

**South Sea Cruises** (☎ 675 0500; [www.ssc.com.fj](http://www.ssc.com.fj); Port Denarau, Nadi) has a catamaran shuttling daily between Denarau Marina and the Mamanuca islands. See p180 for more information.

### Nadi-Yasawas

**Awesome Adventures** (☎ 675 0499; [www.awesomefiji.com](http://www.awesomefiji.com)), which also operates South Sea Cruises, runs a large yellow catamaran called the *Yasawa Flyer* to all the of the Yasawa Group islands, plus several of the Mamanuca islands daily. See p184 for more information.

### Suva-Savusavu-Taveuni

**Consort Shipping** (☎ 330 2877; fax 330 3389; Ground fl, Dominion House Arcade, Thomson St, Suva; cabin/seat F\$80/50) and **Beachcomber Cruises** (Lautoka ☎ 666 1500; fax 666 4496; economy/first class F\$45/65; Savusavu ☎ 885 0266; Taveuni ☎ 888 0036) sail three times a week from Suva to Savusavu (12 hours); see p194 for more details and p200 for details of onward services to Taveuni.

**Grace Ferry** (Labasa Gulam Nabi & Sons; ☎ 881 1152; Nasekula Rd; Savusavu Country Kitchen; ☎ 927 1372) has a bus/boat trip from Taveuni to Savusavu and Labasa (F\$20), departing at 8.45am from the Korean Wharf.

### Lautoka-Ellington Wharf-Nabouwalu-Labasa

**Patterson Brothers Shipping** (Suva ☎ 331 5644; fax 330 1652; Suites 1 & 2, Epworth Arcade, Nina St; Labasa ☎ 881 2444; Nasekula Rd; Lautoka ☎ 666 1173; 15 Tukani St; Levuka ☎ 344 0125; Beach St) operates a bus from Lautoka to Ellington Wharf (3½ hours), connecting with the *Ashika* ferry to Nabouwalu (3¾ hours) on Vanua Levu and then another bus trip to Labasa (four hours).

### Suva-Natovi-Nabouwalu-Labasa

Patterson Brothers Shipping travels this route (F\$45, 10 hours) on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

### Suva-Natovi-Buresala-Levuka

Patterson Brothers Shipping operates a daily service (F\$24), which involves a bus ride (1½ hours) from Suva (Western Bus Terminal, Rodwell Rd) to Natovi Landing, followed by a ferry to Buresala Landing (one hour) and another bus to Levuka (one hour). Buses depart Suva at 2pm and Labasa at 5am.

### Suva-Kadavu

**Kadavu Shipping** (☎ 331 1766, 339 5000, 339 5788; Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva) has irregular passenger services on the MV *Bulou-ni-Ceva* (F\$45 one way). The service can take anything from four hours to two days, depending on the weather.

### Suva-Rotuma

**Western Shipping** (☎ 331 4467; Naryan Jetty, Suva) operates the *Cagi Mai Ba* to Rotuma (deck/cabin F\$130/150, 36 hours). Call for departure times and dates.

### Suva-Lau Group

**Saliabasaga Shipping** (☎ 330 3403; Walu Bay, Suva) runs fortnightly trips to the Lau Group aboard the MV *Tunatuki*. One-way fares to Vanua Balavu are F\$90/120 for a deck/cabin, including meals; the trip takes around a week.

Infrequent boats to the Southern Lau Group are operated by **Kabua Development Corporation** (☎ 330 2258; fax 332 0251; Mauaiwalu Complex, Old Millers Wharf, Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva) and **Khans Shipping** (☎ /fax 330 8786; Mauaiwalu Complex, Rona St, Walu Bay, Suva).

### YACHT

Yachting is a great way to explore the Fiji archipelago. It is possible to charter boats or hitch a ride on cruising vessels. See p213 for information on documentation and immigration requirements.

### Bus

Catching a local bus on Fiji's larger islands is an inexpensive and fun way of getting around. While they can be fairly noisy and smoky they are perfect for the tropics, with unglazed windows and pull-down tarpaulins for when it rains. There are bus stops but you can often just hail buses, especially in rural areas.

Sunbeam Transport and Pacific Transport are the main carriers on Viti Levu; the latter also operates services on Taveuni (see p202 for details). Local companies operate buses on Vanua Levu; see p198 for services in Savusavu and p200 for Labasa.

Reservations are not necessary for local buses. If you are on a tight schedule or have an appointment, it may be a good idea to buy your ticket in advance, especially for coach trips over longer distances (eg Suva to Nadi).



Pacific Transport and Sunbeam issue timetables from their offices in Lautoka.

Bus companies in Fiji:

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

**Pacific Transport Limited** (☎ in Nadi 670 0044, in Lautoka 666 0499, in Sigatoka 650 0088, in Suva 330 4366) About six express buses daily between Lautoka and Suva (F\$12.50, five/six hours for regular/express) via the Coral Coast. Generally OK to turn up at the bus station, but you can book in advance for an extra 50c.

**Sunbeam Transport Limited** (☎ in Lautoka 666 2822, in Suva 338 2122/2704, in Nadi 927 2121) Around four Lautoka–Suva express services daily via the Queens Rd (F\$12, five hours). Also around six services daily via the Kings Rd.

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

## Car & Motorcycle

Ninety percent of Fiji's 5100km of roads are on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu (about one-fifth are sealed). Both islands are fun to explore by car.

## DRIVING LICENCE

If you hold a current driving licence from an English-speaking country, you are entitled to drive in Fiji. Otherwise, you will need an international driving permit, which should be obtained in your home country before travelling.

## HIRE

Rental cars are relatively expensive in Fiji. Despite this, it is a good way to explore the larger islands, especially if you can split the cost with others. The shorter the hire period, the higher the rate; a week or more with an international company will cost around F\$80 per day, excluding tax, but the same car can cost twice as much for one or two days' hire. It's usual to pay a deposit by credit card. If you don't have one, you'll need to leave a hefty cash bond. Generally, the larger, well-known companies have better cars and support, but are more expensive.

A valid overseas or international driving licence is required. The minimum age requirement is 21, or in some cases 25.

**Avis Rent a Car** (www.avis.com; ☎ Nadi airport 672 2233, Nausori airport 347 8963, in Suva 331 3833)

**Budget Rent a Car** (www.budget.com.fj; ☎ in Labasa 881 1999, Nadi airport 672 2636, Nausori airport 347 9299, in Suva 331 5899, in Taveuni 888 0291)

**Hertz** (www.hertz.com; ☎ Nadi airport 672 3466, Nausori airport 338 0758, in Suva 338 0981)

**Thrifty Car Rental** (www.thrifty.com; ☎ Nadi airport 672 2935, in Suva 331 4436)

Although not widely available, motorcycles and scooters are not a bad way to travel in Fiji. Rates start at around F\$35/60 for scooters/125cc motorcycles. **Beat Rentals** (Nadi ☎ 672 1471; Queens Rd, Martintar; Suva ☎ 338 5355; Grantham Rd, Nabua) have been in the game for a while.

## INSURANCE

Third-party insurance is compulsory and all car-rental companies add it onto the daily rental rate (count on F\$22 to F\$30 depending on the size of the vehicle). Personal accident insurance is highly recommended if you are not already covered by travel insurance. Renters are liable for the first F\$500 damage. Common exclusions, or problems that won't be paid for by the insurance company, include tyre damage, underbody and overhead damage, windscreen damage and theft of the vehicle.

## ROAD RULES

Driving is on the left-hand side of the road. The speed limit is 80km/h, which drops to 20km/h in towns. Many villages have speed humps to force drivers to respect the village pace. Seat belts are compulsory for front-seat passengers. Should you pick up a parking fine in Suva it's likely to be around F\$2.

## Tours

Fiji has many companies providing tours within the country, including hiking, cycling, kayaking, diving, bus and 4WD tours. Cruises to the outer islands such as the Mamanucas and Yasawas are popular (see p185).

Viti Levu has the majority of tours, including two popular backpacker options.

**Feejee Experience** (☎ 672 0097; www.feejeeexperience.com) Fun and social hop-on, hop-off bus/accommodation tours. Four-/six-day tours F\$430/600.

**Green Turtle Tours** (☎ 672 8889; www.greenturtle-tours.com/fiji) Small group tours around Viti Levu. Three-/four-day tours F\$720/1100.

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