The Fiji Compendium
A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

A Waterfall in Taveuni Island taken by Paul Woodford of Australia

IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!

Rev 2016.3 – November 1, 2016

We welcome updates to this guide!
(epecially for places we have no cruiser information on)
Email Soggy Paws at sherry –at- svsoggypaws –dot- com.
You can also contact us on Sailmail at WDI5677

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## Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.0</td>
<td>25-Jun-2012</td>
<td>Initial version, still very rough at this point!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1</td>
<td>30-Jun-2012</td>
<td>More Updates, added Cheshire’s Lau Group notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2</td>
<td>03-Jul-2012</td>
<td>More Updates</td>
</tr>
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<td>A.3</td>
<td>10-Jul-2012</td>
<td>Added Carina notes on Vanua Levu and Soggy Paws notes on Dakuniba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.4</td>
<td>20-Jul-2012</td>
<td>Migration’s &amp; Delos Inputs on the Lau, and some inputs on Budd Reef.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Midnight Sun inputs on Southern Lau &amp; Soggy Paws initial Vanua Balavu info</td>
</tr>
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<td>A.6</td>
<td>09-Aug-2012</td>
<td>Incorporated Shandon inputs on the Lau, and Java inputs on Levuka and Makongai, and Cruising Guide cross references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.7a</td>
<td>20-Aug-2012</td>
<td>Pincoya’s Inputs on Kadavu and some of the Lau Group, and lots of other minor updates and refinements.</td>
</tr>
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<td>A.8</td>
<td>19-Sep-2012</td>
<td>Lots of minor updates and corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.9</td>
<td>18-Sep-2012</td>
<td>Koro Island Updates from s/v Koro</td>
</tr>
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<td>A.10</td>
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<td>Added Kadavu/Astrolabe Reef inputs from Sarah Jean II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.1</td>
<td>03-Mar-2013</td>
<td>Soggy Paws filling in notes from cruising in Eastern Fiji in 2012. And cruising in Western Fiji in early 2013. New stuff on Namena, Ovalau (Levuka), Suva, SW Coast of Viti Levu, Mbenga, Yasawas, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.2</td>
<td>21-Mar-2013</td>
<td>Update on Waitui Marina and Arrival Procedures</td>
</tr>
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<td>B.3</td>
<td>20-Apr-2013</td>
<td>Minor updates -- final notes before leaving Fiji -- Unless YOU SEND ME UPDATES!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.4</td>
<td>26-Jun-2013</td>
<td>Inputs from s/v Namani on diving with Jack at Viani Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.5</td>
<td>10-Aug-2013</td>
<td>Inputs on diving and exploring Kadavu from Mediteraneo and Gypsy Heart. Various inputs from s/v Radiance on cruising spots in Viti Levu &amp; the Yasawas. Medical care in Suva from Slipaway. Various additional tidbits from Carina letters in 2010/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11-Sep-2013</td>
<td>Input from Namani on medical care in the Yasawas. And Southern Cross on Taveuni, Vanua Balavu, and Namena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.7</td>
<td>23-Nov-2013</td>
<td>Input from Fruit de Mer on cruising the Labasa River (N Coast Vanua Levu) and Leleuvia (S of Ovalau), and Soggy Paws on the islands S of Ovalau. Update from Aqualuna on Little Bay, Vanua Balavu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.8</td>
<td>15-Jun-2014</td>
<td>Updates on Gulf Harbor Radio Wx Net and…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016.1</td>
<td>15-Jun-2016</td>
<td>Updates and waypoints for Budd Reef, Yanuca, and Cobia from s/v The Rose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016.2</td>
<td>09-Sep-2016</td>
<td>Updates from Storm Bay of Hobart on Savusavu and Vuda Marina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>01-Nov-2013</td>
<td>Several minor updates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Organization of the Guide .................................................................................................................. 10
1.2 Overview of Fiji .................................................................................................................................... 10
1.3 Time Zone ............................................................................................................................................. 10
1.4 Weather in Fiji ..................................................................................................................................... 10
  1.4.1 General Weather Conditions June-November ................................................................................. 10
  1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email/SSB ................................................................................. 14
  1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice .................................................................................................................. 14
  1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet ............................................................................................................. 15
  1.4.5 Tropical Weather (Dec-April) ........................................................................................................... 17
  1.4.6 Understanding the South Pacific Weather Patterns ............................................................................ 19
  1.4.7 Professional Weather Routing ......................................................................................................... 20
1.5 Customs & Immigration ....................................................................................................................... 21
  1.5.1 Pre-Arrival Notice of Arrival REQUIRED .................................................................................... 22
  1.5.2 Initial Entry into Fiji ......................................................................................................................... 24
  1.5.3 Yacht Movement Within Fiji .......................................................................................................... 24
  1.5.4 Duty Free Length of Yacht Stay Within Fiji .................................................................................... 25
  1.5.5 Fees and Charges Assessed on Yachts Entering Fiji in Savusavu .................................................... 25
  1.5.6 Tourist Visas For The Crew of Yachts Entering Fiji ....................................................................... 26
  1.5.7 About the Fiji Cruising Permit(s) ..................................................................................................... 27
  1.5.8 Biosecurity/Quarantine (and Bringing Pets into Fiji) ...................................................................... 28
  1.5.9 Importation of Spares and Repair Parts .......................................................................................... 29
  1.5.10 Departure Procedures .................................................................................................................... 30
1.6 Local Information and Customs ........................................................................................................ 31
  1.6.1 Sevusevu for Dummies .................................................................................................................... 31
  1.6.2 Tackless II's First Sevusevu ............................................................................................................. 35
  1.6.3 Waitui Marina's Info on Sevusevu ..................................................................................................... 36
  1.6.4 Carina on Fijian Culture ................................................................................................................... 37
  1.6.5 Delos on Sevusevu and Kava Drinking in Kadavu .......................................................................... 38
  1.6.6 Island Bound's First Village Encounter in the Yasawas ................................................................. 40
  1.6.7 Fijian Pronunciation ........................................................................................................................ 45
1.7 Yachtsmen's Services - Overview ...................................................................................................... 45
  1.7.1 Money ............................................................................................................................................... 45
  1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline ......................................................................................................................... 45
  1.7.3 Propane (Cooking Gas) .................................................................................................................... 46
  1.7.4 Groceries ......................................................................................................................................... 46
  1.7.5 Water ............................................................................................................................................... 48
  1.7.6 Boat Parts & Repairs ....................................................................................................................... 48
  1.7.7 Shipping Parts and Mail into Fiji ..................................................................................................... 48
  1.7.8 Medical and Dental .......................................................................................................................... 52
1.8 Getting Visitors In and Out ................................................................................................................. 52
  1.8.1 Getting from the Nadi Airport to Where You Are .......................................................................... 52
  1.8.2 Legalities & Crew Lists .................................................................................................................... 53
1.9 Communications ................................................................................................................................. 54
  1.9.1 VHF .................................................................................................................................................. 54
1.9.2 SSB Radio Nets ................................................................. 54
1.9.3 Telephones & Cell Phones....................................................... 55
1.9.4 Internet Access .................................................................. 56
1.9.5 News ................................................................................. 57
1.10 DIVING ............................................................................. 58
1.11 HAULOUT, STORAGE, AND REPAIR FACILITIES ....... 58
1.11.1 Savusavu ........................................................................... 58
1.11.2 Western Fiji ....................................................................... 59
1.11.3 Suva Area ........................................................................ 59
1.11.4 Leaving your boat in Fiji for the Cyclone Season ............ 60
1.12 TSUNAMI INFORMATION .................................................. 64
1.13 CRUISING INFORMATION SOURCES .......................... 64
1.13.1 Fijian Websites ................................................................ 64
1.13.2 Curly in Savusavu .............................................................. 64
1.13.3 Cruiser Reports ................................................................. 65
1.13.4 Pacific Puddle Jump Yahoo Group ................................... 69
1.13.5 Noonsite .......................................................................... 69
1.13.6 Seven Seas Cruising Association .................................... 69
1.14 PRINTED SOURCES ............................................................. 69
1.14.2 Migrant Cruising Notes for Fiji - Phil Creggeen ........... 70
1.14.3 South Pacific Anchorages – Warwick Clay .................. 70
1.14.4 The Pacific Crossing Guide – RCC Pilotage Foundation .. 71
1.14.5 Landfalls of Paradise – Earl Hinz .................................. 71

2 PASSAGE REPORTS ................................................................ 71

2.1 FROM ELSEWHERE TO FIJI .............................................. 71
2.1.1 Tonga to Fiji ...................................................................... 71
2.1.2 The Samoa to Fiji ............................................................. 71
2.1.3 Between New Zealand and Fiji ....................................... 71

2.2 PASSAGES WITHIN FIJI ..................................................... 73
2.2.1 Savusavu To the Lau Group ............................................. 73
2.2.2 Suva to Kadavu ................................................................. 74
2.2.3 Suva to the Lau ................................................................. 75
2.2.4 Northern Lau to the Southern Lau ................................. 76
2.2.5 Savusavu East to Fawn Harbor or Taveuni / Viani Bay ... 78
2.2.6 Savusavu to Lautoka/Vuda Point Area ........................... 79
2.2.7 Savusavu to Yasawas ....................................................... 82
2.2.8 Savusavu to Suva ............................................................. 82
2.2.9 The Lau Group to Taveuni Area ..................................... 82
2.2.10 Tavenui Area to Savusavu ............................................. 83
2.2.11 From Western Vanua Levu to the Northern Yasawas ... 83

3 VANUA LEVU AND SAVUSAVU ......................................... 84

3.1 SAVUSAVU ......................................................................... 84
3.1.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities ................................. 85
3.1.2 Marinas and Anchoring ..................................................... 86
3.1.3 Internet ............................................................................ 88
3.1.4 Yacht Services ................................................................. 89
3.1.5 Getting Visitors in and Out ............................................. 91
3.1.6 Entertainment and Eating Out ...................................... 92
3.1.7 Diving ................................................................. 92
3.1.8 Exploring Vanua Levu by Land ............................................. 93
3.1.9 Cousteau Resort Anchorage ............................................... 94
3.1.10 South Coast of Vanua Levu - West of Savusavu ......................... 94
3.1.11 Namena .............................................................. 94
3.1.12 Nasasoni Point ........................................................ 98
3.1.13 Coconut Point / Nabouwalu ............................................. 98
3.2 SOUTH COAST OF VANUA LEVU - EAST OF SAVUSAVU ............... 99
3.2.1 Fawn Harbor .................................................................. 99
3.2.2 Dakuniba & Nasasobu Bay ............................................... 102
3.2.3 Viani Bay ..................................................................... 105
3.2.4 Currents in the Somosomo Straits ........................................ 113
3.2.5 Buca Bay .................................................................... 113
3.3 NORTH COAST OF VANUA LEVU (WEST TO EAST) ...................... 115
3.3.1 Naviqiri (Naviqiri) ............................................................ 116
3.3.2 Vunisuni Bay ................................................................ 121
3.3.3 Nukubati ................................................................. 122
3.3.4 Palmlea Farms .............................................................. 128
3.3.5 Blackjack Bay .............................................................. 130
3.3.6 Up the Labasa River ...................................................... 131
3.3.7 Lagi Bay and Also Island ................................................ 132
3.4 WEST COAST OF VANUA LEVU ........................................... 136
3.4.1 Bua Bay ................................................................... 136
3.4.2 Yadua Island .............................................................. 136
4 REEFS AND ISLANDS OFF VANUA LEVU - EAST OF SAVUSAVU............ 139
4.1 TAVEUNI ......................................................................... 139
4.1.1 Currents in the Somosomo Straits ......................................... 139
4.1.2 Paradise Resort and Vuna Point .......................................... 139
4.1.3 Somosomo ................................................................. 140
4.1.4 Naselesele Point / Matei .................................................... 142
4.1.5 Vurevure Bay (East Side of Taveuni) .................................... 145
4.2 KIOA ISLAND .................................................................. 149
4.3 RABI (RAMBI) ISLAND ....................................................... 150
4.3.1 Nuku ................................................................. 150
4.3.2 Albert's Cove ............................................................. 150
4.3.3 Katherine Bay ............................................................ 152
4.4 MATAGI (MATANGI) ISLAND ............................................. 153
4.5 QAMEA ........................................................................ 153
4.5.1 Naiviivi Bay ............................................................... 153
4.5.2 North Shore Anchorage ................................................ 156
4.6 BUDD REEF (YANUCA & COBIA) ...................................... 156
4.7 ISLANDS/REEFS BETWEEN VANUA LEVU AND THE LAU ............ 164
4.7.1 Welagilala ................................................................. 164
4.7.2 Cakaugalu ............................................................... 165
5 THE LAU GROUP, NORTH TO SOUTH ........................................ 165
5.1 CRUISING PERMITS AND ANCHORING FEES .............................. 165
5.2 GENERAL INFORMATION .................................................. 166
5.2.1 Soggy Paws - Aug 2012 - Medical Info ................................... 166
5.2.2 Migration - 2012 ........................................................ 168
5.2.3  Mandala - 2011 .......................................................... 168
5.2.4  Carina - August 2010 - Lau History .................................. 169
5.2.5  Shandon - Aug 2010 .................................................. 169
5.2.6  Cyan - SSCA Bulletin - June 2008 ....................................... 171
5.2.7  Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007 ............................................... 172
5.3  Naitauva ................................................................. 176
5.4  Vanua Balavu & The Exploring Isles ...................................... 177
5.4.1  Internet and Cell Access ............................................. 177
5.4.2  Adavami (Western) Pass ........................................... 178
5.4.3  Quilaqua (North West) Pass ........................................ 178
5.4.4  Daliconi Village and The Bay of Islands ......................... 179
5.4.5  Malaka Bay (Just SE of Daliconi) .................................. 183
5.4.6  Bavatu (Mbavatu) Harbor ......................................... 184
5.4.7  Horse Bay ........................................................... 185
5.4.8  Little Bay & Mavana Village ....................................... 186
5.4.9  Mavana Village ..................................................... 187
5.4.10  Avea Island and Village ......................................... 189
5.4.11  Lomaloma Village .................................................. 189
5.4.12  Susui (Southern Village) ........................................... 191
5.4.13  Munia Island (Near Tonga Pass) ................................ 194
5.4.14  Tonga Pass (Southern Pass) .................................... 194
5.5  Vekai Island .......................................................... 195
5.6  Tithia ................................................................. 195
5.7  Lakeba (Lakemba) .................................................... 196
5.8  Oneata ................................................................. 199
5.9  Komo ................................................................. 201
5.9.1  Pincoya - July 2012 ................................................ 201
5.9.2  Migration - June 2012 .............................................. 201
5.9.3  Shandon - 2010 ..................................................... 201
5.9.4  Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007 ........................................... 202
5.10  Mothe (Moce) .......................................................... 202
5.11  Yagasa Levu (Yangasa) ............................................... 203
5.12  Namuka-i-Lau .......................................................... 204
5.13  Fulaga (Vulaga, Fulanga) .............................................. 206
5.13.1  Idyl Island - July 2013 - Fulaga Update ......................... 207
5.13.2  Soggy Paws - August 2012 - Timing the Pass ................ 207
5.13.3  Pincoya August 2012 .............................................. 208
5.13.4  Migration June 2012 ............................................ 208
5.13.5  Midnight Sun - July 2012 ........................................ 210
5.13.6  Delos - June 2011 ................................................. 211
5.13.7  Mandala - 2011 .................................................... 213
5.13.8  Cyan - SSCA Bulletin June 2008 ................................. 213
5.14  Ogea (Ogea) .......................................................... 215
5.15  Moala ................................................................. 217
5.15.1  Delos - June 2011 ................................................ 217
5.15.2  Shandon - 2010 .................................................... 218
5.15.3  Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007 ........................................... 219
5.16  Totoya ................................................................. 221
5.17  Matuku ................................................................. 225
5.18  Kabara (Kambara) .................................................... 227
6  KORO SEA AND EAST COAST OF VITI LEVU ............................................................... 228
  6.1  KORO ISLAND ........................................................................................................... 228
  6.2  OVALAU .................................................................................................................... 232
       6.2.1  Levuka (Port of Entry) ..................................................................................... 232
       6.2.2  Rukuruku (NW Corner of Ovalau) ................................................................. 235
       6.2.3  Hurricane Hole (SW Side of Ovalau) ............................................................... 235
       6.2.4  Caqalai (Island/Resort 8 miles south of Levuka) ........................................... 236
       6.2.5  Leleuvia (Island/Resort 8 miles S of Levuka) ............................................... 236
       6.2.6  Toberua Island (Island/resort 19 miles south of Levuka) ......................... 237
  6.3  MAKOJAI (MAKONGAI) ....................................................................................... 238
       6.3.1  Makongai Channel .......................................................................................... 242
  6.4  NAIGANI .................................................................................................................. 243
  6.5  WAKAYA ................................................................................................................ 243
  6.6  NGAIU (GAIU) ....................................................................................................... 244

7  SOUTHERN VITI LEVU & SUVA ........................................................................... 245
  7.1  SUVA ....................................................................................................................... 245
       7.1.1  The Royal Suva Yacht Club ........................................................................... 245
       7.1.2  The Tradewinds Hotel Anchorage (now Novotel) ....................................... 250
       7.1.3  Medical/Dental Services in Suva .................................................................. 251
       7.1.4  Yacht Services in Suva ................................................................................. 253
       7.1.5  Touring Viti Levu by Car ............................................................................... 254
       7.1.6  Flying Crew/Visitors in and out of Suva ....................................................... 255
  7.2  SUVA TO LAUTOKA ............................................................................................... 256
       7.2.1  Pacific Harbor ............................................................................................... 256
       7.2.2  Serua Harbor ................................................................................................ 257
       7.2.3  Vunaniu (Vuna Nui) ...................................................................................... 257
       7.2.4  Somosomo Bay ............................................................................................. 257
       7.2.5  Cuvu (Thuvu) Harbor .................................................................................. 258
       7.2.6  Natadola Bay ................................................................................................ 258
       7.2.7  Likuri (Robinson Crusoe Island) .................................................................. 259
       7.2.8  Momoi Bay .................................................................................................... 259
  7.3  BEQA (MBENG) .................................................................................................... 260

8  KADAVU (KANDAVU) AND THE THE GREAT ASTROLABE REEF ............................ 264
  8.1  ASTROLABE REEF AND PASSES AND ISLANDS N OF KADAVU ................. 265
       8.1.1  Usborne Pass .................................................................................................. 265
       8.1.2  Herald Pass .................................................................................................... 265
       8.1.3  Dravuni Island ............................................................................................... 265
       8.1.4  Navara Island ............................................................................................... 265
       8.1.5  Yaukuvelailai Island ..................................................................................... 266
       8.1.6  Bulia Island ................................................................................................... 266
       8.1.7  Yabu Island .................................................................................................. 266
       8.1.8  Vuroleva Island ............................................................................................ 267
       8.1.9  Ono Island .................................................................................................... 267
       8.1.10 Pass between Ono Island and Kadavu ......................................................... 269
  8.2  NORTH COAST OF KADAVU, NEAR ONO ......................................................... 269
       8.2.1  Kavala ............................................................................................................ 269
  8.3  SOUTHEAST COAST OF KADAVU ....................................................................... 271
       8.3.1  Naigoro Bay & Naigoro Pass ....................................................................... 271
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.3.2 Vacaleva and Korolevu Pass</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.3 Gala Bay (Access to Airport, Weekly Market)</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 WEST END OF KADAVU</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.1 Denham Island</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 NORTHWEST COAST OF KADAVU (WEST TO EAST)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.1 Talaulia Bay</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.2 Soladamu (Veggies)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.3 Vunasei (Airport and Fresh Markets)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.4 Drue</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 WESTERN VITI LEVU (LAUTOKA, VUDA, DENERAU, MAMANUCAS, YASAWAS)</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 YACHT SERVICES IN THE LAUTOKA AREA</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.1 Boatyards</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.2 Engine Repair</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.3 Mechanical Repair</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.4 Electrics &amp; Electronics</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.5 Carpentry</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.6 Rigs &amp; Sails</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.7 Metalwork</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.8 Hull &amp; GRP (Fiberglass) Repair</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.9 Refrigeration</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.10 Air Conditioning</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 LAUTOKA / NADI AREA</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.1 Clearing In &amp; Out</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.2 Lautoka &amp; Bekana Island</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.3 Saweni Bay</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.4 Vuda Point Marina</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.5 Port Denarau</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.6 Nadi</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 THE MAMANUCA GROUP</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.1 General Info</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.2 Musket Cove (Malolo Lai Lai)</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.3 Navadra Island</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.4 Mana Island</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.5 Elevuka / Treasure Island</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 THE YASAWA GROUP (S TO N)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.1 General Information</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.2 Internet and Cell Phone Coverage</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.3 Waya Island</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.4 Drawaqa Island &amp; Nanuya Balavu (Just South of Naiviti) - Manta Rays</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.5 Naviti Island (Somosomo)</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.6 Blue Lagoon (Nanuya Lailai)</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.7 Sawa-i-lau Bay</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 NORTH COAST OF VITI LEVU</td>
<td>315</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.1 GENERAL INFO</td>
<td>315</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.2 NE CORNER OF VITI LEVU</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.1 Nanu-inau Passage</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.2 Nanu-i-Ra</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.3 Volivoli Point</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 NW CORNER OF VITI LEVU</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction
The original Compendium for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we’ve learned while cruising the Tuamotus in 2010 and 2011. Now the idea has migrated with Soggy Paws, from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, Hawaii, the Cooks and Samoas, Tonga, and now Fiji.

If you haven’t found our other ‘Compendiums’, they’re available online at http://svsoggypaws.com/files/

It is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in places that the guides don’t cover.

To compile this ‘compendium’, we have used all sources at our disposal, including websites, blogs, emails, and our own experience. We always try to indicate the source of our information, and the approximate time frame.

If your information is included in this guide, and you object to its inclusion, please just email us, and we’ll remove it. But this is a non-commercial venture mainly to help cruisers from all of our collective experiences.

1.1 Organization of the Guide
This guide is loosely organized by area in Fiji. We are still learning our way around, so the organization may be more logical as we cruise Fiji. We started with the major headings of A Yachtsman's Fiji, Michael Calder's book, but have slowly been re-arranging things as we cruise.

1.2 Overview of Fiji

1.3 Time Zone
Note that you cross the international dateline when arriving in Fiji from the Cook Islands or Samoa.

Fiji is GMT +12 (one hour less than Tonga). Example: If it’s Tuesday 09:00 in Tahiti, its Wednesday at 08:00 Tonga time, and 07:00 Fiji Time.

Fiji is generally on the same time zone as NZ. Fiji does observe daylight savings time.

1.4 Weather In Fiji

1.4.1 General Weather Conditions June-November
Similar to French Polynesia in June-August, it is warm during the day but cools down nicely at night.

By October it is starting to warm up some. There are still lows and cold fronts going through the area in October, bringing alternately rainy and squally weather, and then fine clear weather.

There is also the possibility of the South Pacific Convergence Zone dropping into the area from the west, bringing very wet weather.
1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email/SSB

Soggy Paws - 2012: In our transit through this area, what we used most of the time for watching the weather were 3 files (via the free service Saildocs):

A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days

send spot:17.2S,179.0W|10,3|PRMSL,WIND, WAVES, RAIN, LFTX

A ‘local’ GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days, and included sea state information

send GFS:20S,15S,177W,177E|.5,.5|6,12..120|PRMSL,WIND,HTSGW,WVDIR,RAIN

A ‘wide range’ GRIB that watched conditions approaching well to the west and south of us. The area we request while in Fiji is 05S-40S,160E-170W on a 3x3 grid, for the next 10 days. This is about a 25K GRIB file. This provided a good long range forecast.

send GFS:00S,40S,160E,170W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN

The Fiji text forecast files.

send nadi.fiji
send http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/10040.txt

During times of tropical activity, we also found these two sources useful for additional perspective

http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA14-TROPICS_INMARSAT (this is Met14.trop on Saildocs)

http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/data/raw/fz/fzps40.phfo.hsf.sp.txt (this is FZPS40.PHFO (S Pacific 0-25S, 120W-160E) on Saildocs)

We also got the Nadi Fleet codes daily, but rarely looked at them unless we were puzzled by the current wx.

Send fleet.nadi

We found 6 possible sources of weather useful while away from internet in this area

The Fiji Met office produces 2 products that cover the area, one is the ‘Fleet Code’—a coded text file that can be pasted into a software program that will decode the codes into a surface analysis chart that covers from New Zealand east to about 120W. Download the Fleet Code program on the Pangolin website www.pangolin.co.nz before you get out of internet range. The saildocs request is send fleet.nadi.

The second product is a text version that is not coded. The saildocs request is send nadi.sopac.
The Nadi Fleet Forecast as Decoded by PhysPlot

**GRIB files.** GRIB files seem to be generally accurate except when stalled cold fronts from NZ run into troughs or convergence zones which lurk sometimes over Tonga. Then, no one, including the Fiji, or NZ weather offices do a very good job of predicting what the wind will do exactly in any given location.

**New Zealand Weather Faxes**

They only have one transmitter in NZ, so each product is broadcast on a different frequency every 15 minutes starting at xx00 (5Mhz), xx15 (9Mhz), xx30 (13Mhz), xx45 (16Mhz daytime, 3Mhz nighttime). All times are Fiji Island Local times (+12UTC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
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<th>5807</th>
<th>9459</th>
<th>13550.5</th>
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(subtract 1.9 to get dial frequency)

**Hawaii Weather Faxes**
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Local</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Coverage Area</th>
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<td>0524</td>
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<td>0555</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0649</td>
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<td>40S - 05N, 130W - 165E</td>
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<td>0740</td>
<td>WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1102</td>
<td>48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1115</td>
<td>72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1141</td>
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<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<td>2354</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

On the Web

The full Hawaii schedule is available as a text email via Saildocs or online at http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/hfhi.txt

The Streamline is available at this URL:
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif

And the Significant Cloud Features here:
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/neph.gif

The Sat Photo is here: http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

Getting the Hawaii Faxes via Email from Winlink or Iridium email (FTP mail)

From s/v Whoosh: Here are the files I've been sampling using NOAA's FTP file server because I don't find these in the Winlink catalog and Sailmail won't offer graphics files/attachments.

This just boils down to sending an email to winlink with some special commands in the body of the email. They require opening up your file size limit (to 40K in some cases) but one or two are practical with a good connection, without using up all one's time. These are the same products available via wxfax IF propagation supports getting them in a viewable, usable form, and IF the timing fits the crews' other plans. So the FTP option is just another arrow to have in the quiver.

PJFB10.TIF - Pacific Wind/Wave Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
PWFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
PJFI10.TIF - 48HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
PWFA11.TIF - Pacific Streamline Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
QYFA99.TIF - Tropical Surface Analysis 40S-40N, 100W-120E (Most Current)
PBFA11.TIF - Significant Cloud Features 30S-50N, 110W-160E (Most Current)
PYFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)
PYFI11.TIF - 48HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)
To get any of these, you address an email to:
ftpmail@ftpmail.nws.noaa.gov
No subject; use the following format with one or more files listed:

    open
cd fax
get PJFI10.TIF
quit

I'm finding that connecting to the Winlink Hawaii station must be done the evening before I do a morning weather report (in order to connect) - do either of you pull down winlink files in the early a.m.? For me, this means using some stale f'cast products (e.g. that streamline analysis) but doing so seems better than not having it altogether.

Note: To get any of these via internet directly, prefix the product above with
http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/
If you have trouble viewing or downloading as TIF file, try changing the .TIF to .GIF
For an printable listing of current Pacific “Fax” products
http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/rfaxpac.txt

Note: This method does not work with Sailmail, because Sailmail will strip any attachment larger than 30K.

1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice

The best source of voice weather for Fiji is the new Gulf Harbor Radio net, which is now on 8116 kHz or 8752 kHz, Monday-Saturday NZST 7:15am, May - November

David Sapiane (s/v Chameleon) is located in Gulf Harbor, NZ (or out cruising in the Western Pacific) and is easily receivable by boats in the western South Pacific islands, and enroute to/from NZ.

2014: The latest info on Gulf Harbor Radio scheds and frequencies is available on this website:
http://www.yit.co.nz/gulf-harbour-radio
If you register on YIT and send in position updates, when Gulf Harbor Radio is operating (cruising season, from May to November). David includes reports for places where boats have position reports on YIT.
You can get some weather on the Rag of the Air, on 8173 at 1900z. When you check in, Jim, the net controller, will normally give you 36 hrs of GRIB file information for your location. Towards the end of the net, Jim reads the text weather for Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa.

There is also a net in German on at 2000UTC (8am Fiji time) on 10.090 USB and (later?) on 14770 USB. We were told that if you ask politely, they will give you wx info in English if you need it. At least one of the weather guys on this net has a professional forecaster background.

Taupo Maritime Radio ZLM
03:03, 09:03, 15:03, 21:03 UTC – 6224khz and 12356khz
03:33, 09:33, 15:33, 21:33 UTC – 8297khz and 16531khz

NavArea XIV includes:
- Islands - Equator to 25S, 160E to 120W
- Subtropic - 23S to 40S, Australian Coast to 120W
- Pacific - 25S to 55S, 170W to 120W

1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet

Soggy Paws has compiled a bunch of specific South Pacific weather links on their website. These are mainly for French Polynesia, westward to NZ, and northward to Hawaii. Here

These are all the government office forecast products that I have found to be useful. (and a few non-govt sites)

**Color Satellite View of Entire SW Pacific**

http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html

It requires Flash (didn’t seem to work on my IE installation, and may not on an iPad, but works well on Chrome).

**Fiji Met Service**


**New Zealand Met**


These are great maps in small (PNG) format—about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices’ websites).
**Australia Met**

And here’s for Australia. There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:


**NOAA Charts in Color from Hawaii**

Though these are highlighted in color (much easier reading), they are small files, only about 30K each.

Current Streamline and Streamline Loop:
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/streamloop.gif

24, 48, 72 Hr SFC Prog for Entire Pacific
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/24hrsfcprog.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/48hrsfcprog.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/72hrsfcprog.gif

Full List of Hawaii Marine Weather Products:

**Satellite Pictures**

This is likely available on a marine weather site somewhere, for slow connections here’s the link I use for a small B/W Pacific Satellite:

http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

This picture is updated about every 15 minutes, and if you download and save successive files, you can get a fairly nice moving satellite picture using a photo viewer that will cycle through photos.

For a really nice animated color Sat picture of the SW Pacific, use this link. It requires Flash (didn’t seem to work on my IE installation, but works well on Chrome).

http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html

**Bob McDavitt’s Weekly Weathergram**

http://weathergram.blogspot.com

**Met VUW**

Note this is from the University of Victoria at Wellington (NZ), and is the weather source that the Kiwi’s swear by. But it looks kind of like ‘repackaged GRIB files’.

Passage Weather
Note this is mostly 'repackaged GRIB' files
http://www.passageweather.com

Windguru - Namena (near Savusavu)
http://www.windguru.cz/int/index.php?go=1&vs=1&sc=207054

1.4.5 Tropical Weather (Dec-April)

Soggy Paws 2012: We have only experienced one tropical season in this area. So we don’t really know enough to know whether our experience is typical or not. But here’s what we got.

The official tropical season runs 1 Dec - 30 Apr. But the height of the activity seems to be 15-Jan through 15-March.

From about Jan 15, the SPCZ descended on us, and lay right along a line from the Solomans down across Fiji and down to Tonga. The wind in Fiji was NW and cloudy/rainy for weeks on end. And a new tropical low spawned in the NW and came towards Fiji about once a week. Some of lows have been just squally, one or two turned into ‘Named Storms’ and got pretty violent. At least one popped up out of a blob of rain over Fiji and built into a cyclone between midnight and 6am (mostly affecting Tonga, not Fiji), and was on top of Neiafu by 7am--with no warning whatsoever. This was right as an MJO peak was passing over us. So when Bob McDavitt starts talking about MJO’s, pay attention.

Check this link for more info on the current state of the MJO:

The main cyclone forecasting in our area is handled by Fiji. Fiji is not like the US National Weather Service. The frequency of bulletins is not very good, and they don’t forecast much more than about 24 hours in the future.

If the tropical system drops below 25S, Fiji stops reporting on it, and Wellington, NZ, picks it up (but lackadaisically). We had one system that walked along 25S, and it seemed neither weather center wanted to take responsibility for it.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Center is not supposed to be forecasting cyclones in our area, however, they do. If there is an active system, they have a graphic and text forecast out for 120 hours.

http://www.usno.navy.mil/JTWC/

I could not find a weather product in Airmail for the text forecast, but once you request it via internet, you can then request the text file directly via Saildocs. For example, clicking on the link on the above page ‘TC Warning Text’, brings up the following file:
You can then request this from Saildocs by requesting:

```
```

This works. Though if the link gets too long, you might have trouble with the 72-character limit on Sailmail.

The Fiji Tropical Weather information can be gotten on Sailmail by requesting Met.14trop

This is the URL in that Sailmail weather product:

```
http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA14-TROPICS_INMARSAT
```

This is a conglomeration of tropical and high seas warnings, and sometimes runs so long when there are active warnings that Sailmail truncates it. Sometimes, the report is not there, and we get nothing.

There are two satellite photo links that I have been using to monitor squally weather and tropical storms. These are big, animated, infrared satellite photos, but if you have internet, they are the best source of what’s happening right now:

```
```

This is from American Samoa, and includes only Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. You can zoom in a little to better see what’s happening in Tonga.

For a bigger picture, all the way out to the eastern edge of Australia, this link is better:

```
http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemli/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html
```

Finally, if you don’t have all this internet stuff, a long range, wide-area GRIB file is much better than nothing. We request this one to be sent daily:

```
GFS:05S,40S,160E,165W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN
```

It is about 40KB, so you might have to request something smaller if you don’t have Winlink (to get around Sailmail’s size limitations).

**Carina - February 2011 - Savusavu During Cyclone Season:** Weather, as always, keeps us on our toes. First there was cyclone Wilma that formed north of us and went east before making an abrupt turn SW, a wee bit too close to ignore. American Samoa got hammered but our friends are safe, Tonga was lucky enough to have it slide by to the east, but New Zealand (yes, New Zealand) got hammered.

At least a week was lost waiting through our most recent cyclone watch as squalls with heavy rain kept us continuously opening and closing hatches and ports. A low pressure system that pundits were sure would be a cyclone, sat roughly 150 miles north of us and refused to move. Long term weather reports of a week ago showed it brushing us with storm force winds, though such forecasts can be hundreds of miles off track. As the result of this prediction, we stripped our sails and began to prepare, stocking up on essential foodstuffs (flour, milk, eggs, pasta, plus batteries) and helping to secure empty, abandoned and derelict boats in our midst.
As of this morning, this low has moved off to the west and is now, finally, ramping up into a cyclone, though it is expected to go west and to not threaten us further. Whew. Queensland Australia, still reeling from the worst floods in decades, has been brushed by Cyclone Anthony which keeps reforming and re-curving back towards Cairns. We remain vigilant as it's mid season and atmospheric instability reigns.

Though we have helped to improve the mooring lines of various boats in our vicinity, we were especially leery of our large, neglected neighbor, Dorcas Sue, and have taken special steps to secure her lines to her mooring. This seriously decaying sailboat has been on the same mooring for the last five years and was a disaster even as it first arrived here, the subject of "The Tale of the Dorcas Sue" written by the poor soul recruited to help deliver it. Apparently the owner continues to pay the mooring fees but is old and in poor health and we don't think Dorcas Sue will ever sail again.

Eventually, a weather window opened for us when cyclone Yasi, which had formed to Fiji’s northwest, decided to head west and disrupt life in Australia rather than our own. It was believed that this would be the end to cyclones for awhile, though our first week out and while in Nasasobu, a great hurricane hole, Vanuatu was the lucky recipient of the biggest and nastiest one of the year (so far), Atu.

We left Savusavu bay in February on a short cruise around SE Vanua Levu and Taveuni Islands during a rare period of settled weather in the Southwest Pacific. In contrast to our trip to Fawn Harbor during "sailing season", we had nice light winds and an easy motorsail. This trend continued for our whole trip.

1.4.6 Understanding the South Pacific Weather Patterns

Several really good sources of instructional material on South Pacific weather exist.

Bob McDavitt’s “Mariner’s Met Pack for the Southwest Pacific” ISBN 1-877197-08-04 published by Captain Teach Press, Auckland, NZ. Though Bob is located in NZ and his weather focus is mainly the western portion of the South Pacific, his instruction manual covers a lot of useful information for the South Pacific in general. Purchase online: Waypoint Books Bluewater Books

If you can’t find it, email Bob at bob@metbob.com

Jim Corenmans “Letters from the South Pacific” originally published in the late 1990’s in Latitude 38 Magazine. Copies of this series of articles are floating around among boaters, and might be found on Latitude 38’s website. Jim had a great article on understanding South Pacific weather that is still really helpful to newbies entering French Polynesia.

Download from here: http://svsoggypaws.com/files/index.htm

David Sapiane’s Weather for the Yachtsman. I downloaded this document from the Pangolin site:

http://www.pangolin.co.nz/jetsam/view_article.php?id=19

It is an 11-page Word document dated June 2008, with a bunch of good information on terminology and understanding weather for the South Pacific.
Some practical tips on planning a passage can be found here:  
http://www.pacificyachtdeliveries.co.nz/weather.htm

The Hacking Family has a great circumnavigation website, and their South Pacific weather page is here: 
http://hackingfamily.com/Cruise_Info/Pacific/SPacific_Weather.htm

Check the Pacific Puddle Jump ‘Files’ section on Weather, there are usually some good, updated documents there.  http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/

1.4.7 Professional Weather Routing

One of the most-mentioned names in the South Pacific when talking about the weather is Bob McDavitt.  Professional forecasts can be obtained from Bob McDavitt.  Email him for detail at bob –at- metbob.com

Soggy Paws used a USA-based weather router named Ken McKinley at Locus Weather for the Easter Island to Pitcairn and Gambiers legs of their trip.  Ken did a good job for them.  Email Ken at locuswx – at - midcoast.com.

Another weather person in the area is David Sapiane on s/v Chameleon.  David was a professional forecaster for the US NWS in Hawaii, and he and his wife have cruised all over the SW Pacific, so he knows the weather patterns inside and out.  They are usually on nets in the area (more on the NZ ham nets than the local SSB nets, which seem to change from year to year).  He’s well worth listening to and would be worth paying for weather routing service by email or radio, if he’s offering it.

From the Sailmail website, here are some comments and a more complete list of weather routers:

There are a number of meteorologists that are in the business of providing custom weather forecasts for cruisers (and especially wealthy racers).  These services are particularly helpful for determining when to leave on a passage.  These meteorologists are also willing to send you periodic emails during your passage with custom routing advice and forecasts.  Generally these services cost from $75 to $300 per passage, depending on whether you want continuing help during your passage and how often.  All of the services below are familiar with sending advice via SailMail.

We highly recommend the use of a consulting meteorologist, particularly for new cruisers who have not yet become confident in their ability to interpret weather data.

Commanders’ Weather MA USA, 603-882-6789  
info@commandersweather.com, www.commandersweather.com

Rick Shema, WeatherGuy.com HI USA, 808-291-9949  
hawaii@weatherguy.com, www.weatherguy.com

Chris Bedford, Sailing Weather Services MA USA, 617-926-7457  
sailwx@mediaone.net, www.sailwx.com

Bob McDavitt, METSERVICE New Zealand, 649 377 4831  
bob@metbob.com
PredictWind offers a service in which they can send you text routes for your boat for a fee. See http://www.predictwind.com for more information.

1.5 Customs & Immigration

The best most complete information I found about customs and immigration for yachts entering Fiji was originally from the Waitui Marina (Savusavu) website, maintained by the SSCA cruising station there. However, that cruising station has moved on, and the Waitui Marina website is no longer operational (Mike and Kendra from Bebe Electronics are no longer running Waitui Marina). Fortunately, I had already copied most of it before it disappeared (below), but it's no longer being updated.

Some official Fiji websites that might be helpful:
http://www.frca.org.fj/yachts-arrival/
http://yachthelp.com

From the (former) Waitui Marina Website (2012): Although we go through every effort to keep this page current and relevant (as well as other cruiser information boards), Fiji is a country whose government is very much in a transition period. Thus, we cannot promise that any of this will be true or factual when you actually come to Fiji, so please use this information as merely a guide, and strictly at your own risk.

IMPORTANT NOTE EFFECTIVE 19 April 2009! The New Legal Order of the Government of Fiji has announced that there the Public Emergency Regulations (PER, essentially what is commonly called martial law) are in force for a period of thirty days (or more) as the Government transitions. It is our opinion that if you have weapons on board, you should seriously consider not entering Fiji until the PER's have been lifted (it is still in effect as of early 2013). In addition, please complete every field on the C.2.C. Notice of Arrival Form. If a field is not applicable to you or your vessel, enter ‘N/A’.

The Government very much wants to promote more visiting cruising yachts and I believe that it is sincere in its beliefs. Fiji remains a very beautiful and peaceful place, however, if you disagree with the Government, it is prudent to keep your opinions on your yacht before you come ashore.

Please also be advised that all officials are required to identify themselves to you with a warrant card, but you may not inhibit them in the performance of their duties, and they are authorised to take any steps they may deem necessary to exercise their duties.
1.5.1 Pre-Arrival Notice of Arrival REQUIRED

IMPORTANT: 48 Hours Notice of Arrival REQUIRED Prior to Arrival

Effective 1 July 2007, the form C.2.C (Download PDF File From Fiji Customs Website) must be on file at FIRCA a minimum of 48 hours in advance of arrival in Fiji, via fax to FIRCA at the port you would like to enter. Please note the word minimum means that you can fax it in before you depart your last port in order for it to be on record upon your arrival. This requirement was forced on Fiji by the G-8, don't blame us!

Suva-FIRCA FAX Number 67-93-302-864
Lautoka-FIRCA FAX Number 67-96-665-961
Savusavu-FIRCA FAX Number 67-98-850-728
Levuka-FIRCA FAX Number 67-93-440-425

If that link doesn't work, here's the main customs link: http://www.frca.org.fj/

Soggy Paws - 2012: We downloaded the latest C2-C form in MS Word format entitled "FIJI ADVANCE INFORMATION OF ARRIVAL YACHTS/SMALL CRAFT" and filled it out on the computer, converted it to a PDF file (CutePDF, free), and emailed it to the email address yachtsreport@frca.org.fj. We did this almost a month before we finally arrived in Fiji. We got an email acknowledgement back from the Customs office within a day.

Then, when we finally left Tonga for Fiji, we emailed a short text note to the same address (with the text from the original message and receipt confirmation in the body) that we were finally underway and expected to arrive in Savusavu on a specific date. Not sure this last email is required, but easy to do, so we did it. I did NOT receive an acknowledgement back from this message.

This form also has the fax number for Fiji Islands Customs Service of (679) 330 2864 (the main Suva number above).

1.5.2 Initial Entry into Fiji

Note: See a 2016 report of clearing in to Savusavu in the Savusavu section.

IMPORTANT: See Notice of Arrival Requirements above.

Ports of Entry: You can enter at any of the following sea ports of entry: Suva, Lautoka, Savusavu, Levuka

You CANNOT stop anywhere prior to clearing customs in one of these ports. And we have heard of cruisers being threatened with a fine for just having a friend in a dinghy hanging on the side of the boat talking, before clearing customs.

Arrival Procedures

Regardless of which port you enter, you have to see Ministry of Health, Customs Department, Ministry of Agriculture (Quarantine Dept), and Immigration.

In Savusavu, if you contact either Waitui Marina or Copra Shed Marina, and get on one of their moorings, they will arrange for the officials to come to your boat upon arrival.
The arrival paperwork you will eventually need is:

Clearance from last port of call

Inward Report C.2.C

Stores List C11 (Given to you by Customs when they board your vessel).

Passenger List C10 (Given to you by Customs when they board your vessel).

Parcel List C4 (Given to you by Customs when they board your vessel).

Crew List

Crew Declaration List C12 (Given to you by Customs when they board your vessel).

List of Dangerous Drugs

List of Arms and Ammunition

Declaration of Net and unregistered tonnage and maximum draft on arrival

Declaration of explosive on Board (Form D)(Given to you by Customs, if needed, when they board your vessel).

Customs Declaration for High Dutiable Stores (liquor, cigarettes, tobacco)

Biosecurity paperwork (Given to you by Biosecurity)

**Procedure:** Once you arrive at the port of entry the customs will seal all your high dutiable goods on board or it will be detained and brought to our warehouse for safe keeping. Once you are finally departing customs will place the dutiable goods on board. (I've never seen or heard of this allowed for vessels less than 200 tons, the Fijian cut-off between a yacht and a ship. You might be the first, but I wouldn't bet on it!)

Arms and Ammunition

You have to declare to customs upon your arrival which will be detained and handed over to the police for safe keeping.

To get them back when you leave, you have to give customs 24 hours notice for your departure so that arrangements can be made from Fiji Police to place them on board. (Not to worry, this really is true, you will get them back, but I'd give them a bit more than 24 working hours to do so.)

**Animals Aboard**

See the Fiji Biosecurity website:


Animals and birds should be caged until seen and cleared by Quarantine Department of Fiji. (Dogs and cats are no problem; they are quarantined on your vessel. I don't know about 'exotics', I'd suggest you consult with Quarantine before you arrive if you have them.)
1.5.3 **Yacht Movement Within Fiji**

**Soggy Paws - June 2012:** As of June 2012, they have again revised the procedures and requirements. Public Circular 2/2012, dated June 14, 2012, was handed to us by Customs on our arrival in Savusavu that said:

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Revised Yacht Clearance Procedure

All yacht owners, marinas and related stakeholders are hereby informed that as part of our revised yacht coastal clearance procedure, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority will be issuing only a single (one) Customs Coastal Clearance for all cruises made within Fiji waters by a visiting yacht upon the issuance of the necessary cruising permit from the I Taukel Affairs Board.

However, the yacht master shall be required to provide weekly updates on his/hers vessels status, movements and location. Communications can be made through any of the following:

Channel 16 radio
Telephone: 324-3782 324-3747 324-3315
Customs Hotline: 324-3666
Email: [yachtsreport@frca.org.fj](mailto:yachtsreport@frca.org.fj)
Facsimile: 330-2864 (Suva) 666-5961 (Lautoka) 344-0425 (Levuka)
885-0728 (SavuSavu)

Further clarification can be had by contacting the Manager Border Control, Mr. Vijendra Kumar at 324-3335. The above is effective immediately.

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You still need to apply for and receive a Cruising Permit, in your arrival port. This is normally facilitated by the marina, for a small fee. And you still need to do paperwork with Customs when you first leave your port of arrival to cruise within Fiji.

As far as we understand, the marinas where yachts hang out will email weekly reports about who is at their facility, and when yachts are NOT at a 'facility', they should be reporting weekly where they are. It is suggested that you include a Lat/Long with your emailed report, because place names are a bit iffy in Fiji (chart names do not agree with local names, and spelling issues).

1.5.4 **Duty Free Length of Yacht Stay Within Fiji**

Length of Yacht Stay (As of 31 December 2009) (Originally From Waitui Marina)

On 21 November 2008, Commodore Bainimarama, in his annual budget address, announced that the duty free period of yacht importation was restored to what it had been in 2006. In fact, when Circular 7 of 2008 was issued, he actually went one step further: The duty-free period is now a full 18 months, without a need to apply for an extension, but no extentions are to be granted in addition to the 18 months.
He further removed the '9 month out' requirement, which will allow yachts transiting Fiji late in the cruising season to summer over in NZ or Australia to return to Fiji again at the beginning of the cruising season.

There is also to be released a 'National Yacht Policy' in January 2009, addressing, amongst other things, the needs of 'superyachts'.

In our opinion, this is a very significant step taken by the government to recognise the value of cruising yachts to the Fiji economy as a whole. After the 18 month stay was announced, Immigration's proceeded to amend the code to allow the 18 months for yachts, and, after a somewhat over-zealous Customs Official tried to side-step the intent of government, he was brought back to reality BY government (reference this memo), which indicated to us, of how supportive this government is to the cruisers.

If you would like to import your vessel, the 5% import duty announcement is somewhat misleading, as it is not listed as such in the duty rate book; it is the minimum rate to be charged after individual approval is obtained from the Comptroller. Unless you manage to gain approval, the 'general' import duty, VAT and fees will be assessed on vessels as follows:

You will need to have an independent survey by a FIRCA approved surveyor (for planning purposes, ~F$600) to establish the worth of your vessel.

You will need to retain a customs agent (again, only for planning purposes ~F$400).

You will need to pay an excise duty of 27% on the assessed value of the yacht.

You will need to pay 12.5% VAT on the assessed value of the yacht, PLUS duty charged.

Based upon the assessed value of your vessel, you will be charged at a rate of 1/60 of the total duty and VAT assessed on your vessel per month of stay, but the entire duty and VAT amount must be paid 'up front', to be refunded after your departure from Fiji.

You might want to enquire how long it takes to process the refund before paying the deposit.

1.5.5 Fees and Charges Assessed on Yachts Entering Fiji in Savusavu

Soggy Paws June 2012: The fees have gone up recently. We entered during office hours in Savusavu. We were presented with bills (as we had no Fijian money at the time of clearance) for $172.50 FJ for 'Ministry of Health - Medical Inspection and Issuance of Certificate of Pratique' and $89.70 for 'Biosecurity - Boarding of Sailing Yacht During Normal Hours. We paid these in person in cash at the appropriate office the following day.

We have heard from boats checking in at other places that these fees are standard in Fiji at this time.

We did not hear of anyone in June 2012 complaining of being charged overtime for arriving at lunchtime, though it's always possible, especially if you NEED to be cleared immediately. The marinas arranged for the officials to come out after lunch no problem. We also heard over the Rag of the Air, that if you arrived just before sunset, you could anchor overnight just outside the harbor (maybe take a mooring), stay aboard, and clear in the morning at normal office hours, with no overtime charge. These kinds of informal relaxing of the rules can change at any time, however.
From Waitui Marina - As of 5 May 2010 in Savusavu: We distinguish Savusavu from the other three ports in Fiji, as it is the smallest and does not have round the clock officials available and is thus likely to be the most costly. In addition, since we are here, it is easy for us to verify the charges.

Please remember that as a country, Fiji is not operating under a Constitutional Government, but an Interrum Government by decree, and that all rules and laws are subject to change without prior notice, so please do not cite this page as being the authoritative source if you are assessed fees not listed. Please note that all boarding officers must identify themselves and must issue a government receipt for all fees collected. All fees must be paid in Fiji Dollars. Some boarding officers have allowed the fees to be paid in other currency, exchanging it themselves, but this has led to some problems with overcharging on the exchange rates.

To make this simple (ha!), if you enter Savusavu during working hours, which is defined as being 0800-1300 or 1400-1630, Monday-Thursday (1300-1600 on Friday) and it is not a national holiday, it will cost you a total of F$53.50. This can be broken down into F$33.75 Health Fee, and a F$20 incineration fee by Agriculture, although that hasn't been assessed lately.

If you enter between 1/2 hour after sunrise until 0800, or after 1600 hours and 1/2 hour and before sunset, or during the daily lunch break (1300-1400) the authorities MUST be notified and you MUST obtain clearance that day, and you will be assessed the following charges:

Health-The basic F$33.75, plus F$9.00 if you arrive during their lunch break. Otherwise, the basic fee (F$33.75), plus 3 hours overtime at F$15.28/hour (F$45.84 total).

Customs (who are also the Primary Line Officers for Immigrations)-There is no fee for their services, however, if you arrive during their lunch break, they will assess a fee of F$18. At this date (5 May 2010), if you arrive during the hours that you are required to clear in, but outside of working hours, you will be assessed 3 hours overtime at F$25/hour (F$75.00 total). There is a move afoot in Customs to assess a fee of F$54 if you arrive between 1630-2000, escalating to F$75 2000-0800 that is on hold. Your guess is as good as ours as to When, or if, this will begin to assessed

Agriculture/Quarantine-No basic fees, F$44.97 is assessed if you clear between 1630 until 1 hour before sunset. Otherwise three hours overtime at F$17.98 hour plus cab fare, billed at F$7.00, for a total of F$60.95.

1.5.6 Tourist Visas For The Crew of Yachts Entering Fiji

As of 31 March 2009-originally from Waitui Marina website

Most nationalities will be granted a 4 month tourist visa upon your arrival. You may apply for an extension for an additional 2 months (total of 6 months) for a nominal fee (as well as filling out a long form!).

At the end of six months, you may apply for 'Special Purpose Permit for Yacht Owners and Crew', which is valid for up to six months, and may be renewed for another six months (bringing the total immigration stay to 18 months). This fee is not nominal, but you do not have to post a bond, either.

If you need to leave your vessel and fly out (or crewing on another), merely go to Immigration FIRST and get a letter from them explaining what you are doing. If you fail to do this, you will
have a very large problem when you try to return without a round-trip airline ticket to another country.

Imigrations is, as a rule, very courteous and helpful, provided that you talk to them first about anything out of the ordinary. 'Act in haste, repent at leisure' is a very poor idea.

'Tourist' does not mean doing a little work 'on the side' or starting your own ferry service! The Republic of Fiji welcomes new, legal, business ventures at all times, contact the FTIB for more information.

If you are caught doing any work, even if not for profit, you will have a large fine levied on you before you are expelled with a penalty re-entry period assessed on your passport (yes, Immigrations have networked computers and they know how to use them!).

If you need/want to take on Fijian crew or to act as a pilot, make sure that (again) that you speak to Customs FIRST to ensure that there isn't any misunderstandings or anxieties.


1.5.7 About the Fiji Cruising Permit(s)

Waitui Marina - 2012: If you want to visit any place besides the Ports of Entry, you will need to obtain a Cruising Permit from the Ministry of Fijian Affairs. There is no charge for this document, but the agents may charge you a nominal fee to cover expenses (Waitui charges F$5.00).

The Cruising Permit is in the Fijian Language and is an introduction of you and your vessel to the village mayor (Turanga Ni Koro) and is requesting him/her to extend courtesy to you. It IS NOT to the village 'chief', the Turanga Ni Vanua; frequently the mayor doesn't even have a title.

A little bit of the Fijian culture here: The titles in Fiji (and Polynesia) are up to 2000 years old and are family/clan based, little different than the pre-Christian Nordic culture. The presentation of sevusevu to the Turanga Ni Vanua of kava is a request to him/her to allow you to (temporary) reside in his/her lands (the qoliqoli, the water, you can think of as the aquatic version of the village commons). During your period of time there, you are in essence pledging your allegiance to the family and becoming a vassel. They, in turn, allow you priviledges, including the use of, the commons.

To translate to a historic English perspective of the same situation: Sir John Clayton, Lord Greystoke (Turanga Ni Vanua) has a village on his lands, Smallshire. You have a letter from PM Pitt in London in your hand to give to the Lord Mayor (Turanga Ni Koro) of Smallshire explaining that you are a legal visitor. If you would like to use the village commons, you must speak with Lord Greystoke to obtain his permission. He does have other knights of the noble class on his lands, also addressed as 'Sir' (Ratu) or 'Dame' (Adi, pronounced 'ahndee), but he is the sole Lord of the land.

In the more 'touristy' areas, this process is considered nothing more than a source of free grog (kava), in others, it is taken very seriously and don't do it if you don't mean it! (Although you may not be permitted to stay: You’re not in Kansas anymore Toto!).

See section above about 'Yacht Movement in Fiji' for latest developments on the cruising permit.
1.5.8 Biosecurity/Quarantine (and Bringing Pets into Fiji)

Compadre - October 2012 (from Noonsite): Fiji now calls Quarantine, Biosecurity, and they are expecting advance notification of arrival as well! Advance notification should be emailed (a minimum of 24 hours in advance of arrival) to yachtinfo@biosecurityfiji.com. If you need any clarification you can write to them at info@biosecurityfiji.com

This is from their website:

Fiji Biosecurity
All ships and vessels travelling to Fiji need to meet a number of requirements before and on arrival to ensure Fiji’s environment, economy and people are protected from invasive pests and diseases.

This page sets out the requirements for ships and vessels.

Yachts
Yachts and pleasure crafts are welcome in Fiji. However, international yachts entering Fiji waters are considered to be of a high biosecurity risk and are closely monitored by BAF. Hence it is important for yacht owners to be aware of the clearance procedures for yachts and other pleasure crafts.

Biosecurity clearance procedures
• Once in Fiji waters, the yachts should proceed to the designated port of entry
• The master or captain of the yacht must declare to BAF the following:
  o the destination seaport in Fiji and the estimated time of arrival of the vessel
  o its immediate preceding port or place of call
  o the proposed itinerary of the vessel until it leaves Fiji
  o the presence of any live animal or live plant on the vessel
  o any other matter relevant to facilitating biosecurity landing clearance of the yachts that is specified by BAF

This above declaration must be made at least 24 hours before the estimated time of arrival.
• The vessel master must complete a Master’s Declaration Form declaring all biosecurity risk items on board that are either restricted or prohibited.
• Items to declare include:
  o Foods (tinned/packed), including meat, sausages, salami, ham, poultry, eggs, milk, butter, cheese, honey etc;
  o Plants or parts of plants (live or dead) including vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, bulbs, flowers (fresh or dry), mushrooms, straw, bamboo or any other articles made of plant materials;
  o Animal products including feathers, fur/skin, shells, hatching eggs.
  o Animals, reptiles, fish, birds (or parts thereof), alive or dead, stuffed or mounted;
  o Soil or equipment used with animals of any kind or that has come in contact with soil;
  o Biological specimens including vaccine cultures, blood or any other biological specimen; and
  o Domesticated pets to be bonded and kept on board the vessel at all times (cats/dogs/birds etc).
Some of these items will not be permitted to be kept aboard the yacht for the duration of the visit in Fiji. What is allowed to stay aboard will be at the discretion of the Biosecurity officer at the time of inspection, depending on the risk they represent.

The yachtmaster should also ensure that no refuse containing any animal, plant, animal product or plant product is discharged from the yacht into the sea while the yacht is in Fiji. All refuse generated on the vessel is placed in a suitable leak-proof container, with a lid, and the container is securely fastened at all times and kept aboard the yacht. The refuse can only be removed from the yachts under the directions of the Biosecurity Officer.

**Live animals on yachts**

Yachts arriving in Fiji with live cats, dogs, pet birds etc must pay a bond as security against the dogs, cat and pet birds etc coming ashore while in Fiji’s territorial waters. The bond payment is $FJD $1,500 which is refundable upon departure from Fiji, if bond conditions are not breached.

In general no animals will be permitted to come ashore in Fiji and must remain on board the vessel at all times while in Fiji’s territorial waters.

Cat and dogs and other pet animals may not be imported into Fiji via yachts.

Cats and dogs must be vaccinated against rabies not more than 12 and not less than 6 months before arriving in Fiji. One month after the rabies vaccination of the dog, it must be subjected to the Rabies Neutralization Antibody Tire Test (RNATT) with a positive result of no less than 0.5 IU per ml.

By taking these precautionary measures visitors will enjoy traversing the pristine waters of Fiji without the worry that their pets may be posing a risk to the native fauna, flora, the environment and the friendly people of Fiji.

Pet birds (e.g. parrots, finches, canaries etc) on yachts must be free Newcastle Disease without vaccination, must have been tested free of Newcastle Disease six (6) months prior to arrival in Fiji, must not have been in the waters of countries not free of Newcastle Disease without vaccination less than six (6) months prior to arrival in Fiji. Pet birds must be in locked cages at all times, and the animal must not be brought on shore at any time.

Other species of pet animals are prohibited from entry into Fiji waters via yachts.

Vaccination certificates and laboratory tests results must be original and made available to Biosecurity Officers when Biosecurity Boarding Inspection are carried out at the First (1ST) Port of Entry.

For further information or clarification please contact the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji on phone 3312512, fax 3305043 or email info@biosecurityfiji.com. Enquiries can also be made in person at any of the BAF office.

1.5.9 **Importation of Spares and Repair Parts**

Originally from Waitui Marina, As of 26 March 2008

Although the merchants of Fiji far prefer that you buy from them (and remember, they have to cover very large duties and VAT, which are included in the shelf prices), you may import, duty, VAT and service charge free, spares for your vessel.
After you clear, on the upper right hand corner of the Customs document, you will see a number referred to as a 'Rotation Number'. If you have your shipper include that number on the face of any parcel addressed to you, you will only be charged a clearance fee of F$2.40 (not the service charge, an importer has to pay a total of four fees!). You will also need a copy of the document and a photo ID to pick up the package.

If the spares (or gifts) include electronic media (CD, DVD, etc.), Customs will verify to ensure that you are not importing pornography. The agents enforce the rules, they don't make them. Please don't be rude to them for doing their job!

If you intend to have spares shipped in prior to your arrival in Savusavu, a caution to you about the inbound courier services.

Only DHL and EMS (Express Mail) comes directly to Savusavu, regardless of any claims that an agent may make to you. If you choose to utilise any of the other services, it will be delivered to 'someplace' in Viti Levu, and then you will have a frustrating, and possibly expensive, time trying to get the parcel re-routed up to Savusavu, assuming that you can find it.

1.5.10 Departure Procedures

Info originally from Waitui Marina:

You are required to obtain outward clearance from Fiji Customs at the port of departure.

What if I have some problem with my yacht and cannot leave the port after I have cleared out?

Inform the customs authority within 24 hrs from the time of your clearance. You will have to obtain another clearance when you finally leave.

Soggy Paws - April 2013 - Checking out in Savusavu: We tied up to the Copra Shed Marina dock in Savusavu to take on water before leaving to head north to the Marshall Islands. (Schedule this with Copra Shed BEFORE you go in, and there may be a small charge). It is best to go in to the dock (in front of the bar) at high tide, and when it has NOT been raining much. (the water quality from the hose degrades if there has been a lot of rain in the last 1-2 days). We filter our water through 2 filters before it goes in the tank, and have a Seagull filter to filter out any taste and/or bacteria at the tap.

After filling up, we walked down to Customs and Immigration, and checked out. We had previously checked with them about the procedure and the timing, so we were able to finish the process efficiently.

The officials did NOT opt to come to our boat. However, a friend with a dog who was leaving, was required to bring his boat into the dock, and Customs and Immigration personally visited.

When we checked out, we were told that we MUST leave within 2 hours, and we did leave Savusavu harbor within that time period. By the time we got everything completed, it was nearly sunset and we were exhausted. Rather than go to sea that night (not quite prepared on deck, etc), we went out to the Cousteau Resort and anchored for the night to load up the dinghy, prepare for the passage, and get a good night’s sleep. We left at the crack of dawn the next morning.

Chesapeake - August 2012 - Checking out in Lautoka: Our check out at Lautoka went smoothly. They're open M-Th 8:30-4:30 Friday 8:30-3:30. Closed Saturday/Sunday.
Allow an hour for the check-out at least. We got there at 2pm and 2 others were ahead of us. The boat ahead of us had come in the day before near end of the day and was told to come back the next day. After completing paperwork you take the Customs guy out to your boat and he does a quick visual inspection, then you take him back. Be sure to bring a dinghy anchor because you tie off at the steps by the wharf and need to drop an anchor to prevent the dinghy from getting swept under the wharf.

There was a lot of smoke in the air and we've been told sticky stuff lands on your boat and is hard to remove, so you don't want to anchor there for more than a few hours. There's a bay 2 miles south of Lautoka, called Saweni Bay, where you can anchor away from the pollution, if you plan to stay longer. Anchoring at Lautoka is easy, mud bottom.

**Carina - April 2011 - Weather Delays after Checking Out:** As our visa expiration date approached, we had no trouble getting ready for our passage to Vanuatu but weather did not cooperate. A large trough which was generating a series of deep lows formed in the Coral Sea and headed east. This, combined with adverse conditions in the southern ocean, created strong winds and seas to 17 feet, winds and waves from different directions.

These were not conditions in which a prudent sailor would go to sea, though many did as directed by authorities. That being said, the officials we were dealing with weren't making the rules and they are operating under a military dictatorship, so sticking to the letter of the law, rather than logic, is understandable.

However, we decided not to go to sea under these potentially hazardous conditions and waited quietly for six days for conditions to improve.

### 1.6 Local Information and Customs

#### 1.6.1 Sevusevu for Dummies

The following was copied from the Ocean Cruising Club website: [http://cic.oceancruisingclub.org/cruising_areas/264-fiji](http://cic.oceancruisingclub.org/cruising_areas/264-fiji)

A Beginner’s Guide to the Kava Ceremony - from Misty McIntosh of Tamoure.

Peter, Misty and Tamoure, their Oyster 435, left the UK in 1993 and have spent the past five years cruising the South Pacific.

First a confession – the Skipper and I are a pair of traditional (some might say old-fashioned) middle-aged Brits, who probably need an attitude change. We love cruising the Pacific islands and discovering different cultures, but when it comes to matters of food and drink we know what we like and we like what we know – preferably accompanied by a glass of chilled Chardonnay!

The native experience is not something we actively seek out. Many years ago a friend, veteran of two circumnavigations, introduced us to the term ‘snooly’ as used to describe local food of suspect origin and little visual appeal. The first time we were invited to Sunday lunch in a lovely Fijian village, among the many goodies put before us was ‘snooly on a leaf’ – there being few plates and only one fork. And surprisingly tasty it was too!

The ‘up’ side of having such a conservative attitude to life and all its adventures is that we always strive to do the right thing as far as local etiquette is concerned – though we’d love a rule book at the entrance to each village! Imagine our apprehension, on arrival in Fiji for the first
time, regarding the kava ceremony and all it entailed. We understood the basic rules and knew what was expected of us, but the finer points remained a bit of a mystery.

Once you start cruising in the South Pacific you have to put aside all previous ideas you may have had about who owns what. All land belongs to someone – and it’s not ‘the public’. There is some government-owned land, but the seafront and the bits you’d like to explore will usually belong to the nearest village and within the village individual families will own certain areas, called ‘gardens’, where they grow their crops. To anchor, swim, walk ashore etc without asking permission is the equivalent of a total stranger pitching his tent or caravan on your front lawn back home! You wouldn’t much like it, and even if he asked you’d probably still say no.

Luckily for yachties there is a way round this in Fiji, which involves visiting the village Chief and presenting him with a gift of kava roots in a wee ceremony where he will grant you permission to remain on his property, walk through his village, swim in his sea etc. You are now accepted as a member of the village – which brings certain obligations to behave accordingly. ‘Modest’ dress is a must, no hats or sunglasses should be worn and backpacks should be carried anywhere but on the back. The villagers probably won’t show open disapproval if their social codes are broken, but it pays to respect their ways. A formal farewell – plus a thank you, of course – on leaving relieves the village of any further responsibility for you.

Kava (also called yaqona) comes from the roots of the pepper plant, which are ground to a powder in a sort of giant pestle and mortar. Then (this is where it gets a bit disgusting!) it goes into what looks to foreign eyes like an old tea towel, water is poured on/squeezed through to a certain strength – and when the whole thing looks just like muddy dish water, guess what? You get to drink it! (And if you think that’s bad enough, in the past the roots were first chewed by young women to soften them prior to the addition of water!). It is mildly narcotic and has a numbing effect on lips and tongue. The locals call it ‘grog’ and it is widely drunk throughout Fiji and other South Pacific countries. Only recently have the Fijian Police been banned from drinking it while on duty!

It’s very much a male thing. At the end of a day’s work on the plantation the men gather and knock back the grog. They will sit cross-legged (there’s a certain lack of chairs in these family villages) round the kava bowl – frequently, but not always, a special wooden bowl which may be beautifully carved and of some antiquity – and pass the stuff round in a half coconut shell. In markets, wherever there is a gathering of men (usually idle men) there will also be a kava bowl, regardless of time of day. In certain areas kava drinking to excess has become a serious social problem, though the participants are more likely to be torpid and lethargic than drunk and disorderly.

The first time I saw kava it was on the counter of the hardware section at the back of a supermarket. ‘That’s funny,’ thought I, ‘they’re obviously washing some mechanical parts in oily water...’ then I saw the coconut shell and the penny dropped. This was no dirty water in a plastic basin – this was the staff’s kava bowl. No wonder we were apprehensive – and not the only ones either. We met a couple who’d actually bought some ‘instant’ kava powder (not what’s required for the Chief, it must be the roots) to try in private – just to check they could get it down! Gagging in front of your hosts would be considered rude.

To the uninitiated – the ‘kava virgin’ – there seems a minefield to be negotiated before that half coconut shell comes your way, but there is absolutely nothing to worry about. It is all made incredibly easy for the anxious yachtie.
First worry – how will I recognise kava and how much do I buy? No problems there, since it is the most obvious thing you will see in every Fijian market. It looks like a bundle of sticks, and on Tamoure I am slightly ashamed to say that ‘presenting sevusevu’ – to give the ceremony its proper title – quickly became ‘playsticks’! As in: ‘We’d better go and do playsticks!’ In the market, kava will most likely be gathered into pre-wrapped bundles of varying sizes, so your only decision is a financial one. We found $10–15 seemed acceptable. As with wine, some kava is better than others and therefore costs more, depending on where it comes from, but our palates haven’t reached that level of sophistication.

Second worry – we know we must find the Chief on arrival in an anchorage but how will we recognise him? A sponsor is supposed to accompany us and introduce us, but where do we get one of those? In fact, finding either the Chief or someone to lead you to him is no problem at all. What we’d failed to allow for was that our presence in an anchorage doesn’t go unnoticed. Even if we could see no sign of a village the locals knew we were there, and they also knew it would only be a matter of time before we came ashore clutching our playsticks. It’s easy in a remote bay off a small village to imagine you are pioneers in the presentation of your kava. Wrong! The villagers know all about it and have been doing it among themselves for years. It’s part of their tradition and shows an age-old respect for elders. Because they are such friendly, helpful people they will not embarrass you by leaving you to struggle on your own to find the Chief. There will always be at least one person at the water’s edge to greet you – and if you arrive outside school hours, well ... you’ll be mobbed.

Our first experience was a little confusing since the person who came to greet us was an elderly man who looked pretty Chief-like – and in fact was more imposing than the Chief himself. Fortunately there was also a woman near the water’s edge, so I was able to make a discreet inquiry as to whether or not this was the Chief. It later became obvious that whilst visitors may be important, we’re not that important – you will never be welcomed ashore by the Chief himself!

And so to the presentation of your kava. You will be introduced by the person accompanying you and then invited inside the Chief’s house (leaving your shoes at the door). Some Chiefs speak English – our experience was a mixture – but the person who met you coming ashore most certainly will, and he will keep you right and interpret for you. I always felt as a woman that it was important to hang back and look meek! Men rule in these parts and if you’re a bit of a chatterbox you’d do well to keep quiet. The Chief – whether English-speaking or not – will be exceptionally polite, but he is unlikely to be interested in small talk from the little woman. Sorry girls!

You will be invited to sit on the floor – remember that shortage of chairs – cross-legged for men, legs tucked under for women. You lay your kava in front of the Chief, thus giving him the opportunity to refuse it, though I’m sure this is unheard of. The official greeting is ‘noqu sevusevu gor’. We haven’t a clue what it means, but on those occasions we have remembered the words the response has been one of utter delight! Well worth the effort. The Chief will then make a speech of welcome, long or short, in English or Fijian. Our first experience was of a very long speech, the only words we understood being ‘ScotLAND-y’ and ‘vinaka’ (thank you). Along with our kava we always take something small for the children, and perhaps for the Chief’s wife, to hand over as we leave, but ‘playsticks’ should take priority on your first trip ashore. You may be asked for your cruising permit, so you should bring it with you.
Unless you’re very lucky, or very well padded, the funny bone on your ankle will be the first to complain and here we come to a new worry – how to leave without causing offence. You’re not supposed to stand while the Chief is sitting, yet it would be rude of him to rush his guests away. You could be locked into this all day unless you find some diplomatic way out! We’ve tried: ‘We’ve taken up too much of your time ...’, but that’s a very British concept which doesn’t really work, since they generally have all the time in the world. Asking if we may now visit the village, or perhaps even the school, is a good exit line – it would be rude for the Chief to refuse your request, so you’re released.

As yachties we are generally ‘off the beaten track’, but we did have one negative experience at an inland village, close enough to Nadi to be on the tourist run, where sevusevu was expected. A very surly Chief was quick to take all we were carrying, which was more than usual since we were in a car and at the end of our time in Fiji with some playsticks to spare. He then demanded an unreasonable amount of money to walk round the village, with his son as compulsory guide, though the price went down a bit on receipt of some sweets for his children. (Yes – the old candy bribe, I’m afraid!). We were disappointed to witness the ‘ugly’ side of tourism, but I suppose it’s inevitable, and just proves that you are more welcome by yacht than by car!

As for actually drinking your gift, we stumbled quite by accident on a useful ploy that worked for a while. We arrived off our first Fijian village late in the afternoon – not undetected though, as two young lads were soon on their way out to greet us on a flimsy piece of driftwood. Capsize was inevitable so we invited them on board for coke and cookies, in the course of which we established that yes, there was a village, with a Chief, but it would be all right to come ashore in the morning to present sevusevu. This allowed us to get the boat squared away in time for a nice glass of Chardonnay at sunset! This worked for us on several occasions since even the most hardened Chief isn’t into kava drinking first thing in the morning. However we hadn’t allowed for the fact that our success was largely due to visiting Chiefs too old to work, or doing playsticks on a Saturday when the village was at rest.

Not surprisingly, our luck eventually ran out. We arrived earlier than usual and went ashore immediately, only to be told the Chief was in the plantation and we should come back after 4pm. This was our first ‘end of the day’ experience – we suspected where it was leading – and we were passed from one villager to another before being handed across to English-speaking Mark, whom we assumed to be the Chief, young though he was. We were ushered into the family house, assumed our positions on the floor and laid our bundle in front of him. Usually at this point the Chief picks up the kava, looks at it as if he’s never seen it before, and then launches into the speech of welcome. But Mark did nothing. We were horrified! What had we done wrong? What terrible blunder had we made? The three of us sat around staring at the kava, making idle chitchat, and two of us were seriously concerned at what dreadful gaffe we’d committed. All was soon made clear with the arrival of an elderly man – Mark’s father, the Chief! We’d thought Mark looked a bit young for such high office. To our utter amazement the Chief was wearing a navy blue T-shirt with the word ‘Scotland’ and a wee thistle logo on the pocket! We couldn’t get over this. Mark spoke good English and was able to explain the significance, and our delight, to his father. It was fairly obvious we were in for our kava baptism and this seemed an appropriate occasion.

After the speech of welcome we three trooped outside for the pounding of our root, and quite hard work it was too. I was greatly relieved to see Mark take the tea towel needed for the next
stage from a washing line – we’d imagined a manky old rag! It was more of a pouch than a plain
towel, into which went the newly pounded kava. Then we retreated inside, since the next stage
– getting the brew at ideal strength – required the supervision of father. Mark poured water over
the towel, squeezed the contents, and caught the end result in the family’s beautifully ornate
kava bowl. At intervals he would pass a small cup to the Chief for sampling, and only when
Papa gave the thumbs up did our little ceremony begin. It definitely helped our stomachs to see
it prepared before our eyes! It may not be to our taste but it did seem reasonably hygienic.

We could not have had a more polite tutor than Mark. He asked if it was our first time – I think a
wise answer would be yes, even if it wasn’t! This meant Peter was given a modest sized portion,
I was able to ask for a small without causing offence, and as a couple we were unlikely to be
involved in an all-night session. I’m pleased to say we managed seconds, without gagging or
pulling faces, but I think we’d have had difficulty with thirds, which we declined. On acceptance
of the cup you say ‘bula’, clap once, and down it in one gulp – you may be glad you asked for a
small! – and then clap three times. We often got the claps muddled up but it never seemed to
matter. Willing participation was more important than getting all the moves right.

The whole experience was handled with such charm and courtesy it made us a bit ashamed of
our earlier reluctance and deviousness. Perhaps if we’d been younger, scruffier, less respectful
of their ways, they might not have tried so hard to make it ‘easy’ for us. One forgets the Fijians
appreciate that this is not part of our culture, and they are such nice people that they would
never embarrass a visitor. We were always left with the impression that they’re just thrilled you
have tried. We came away smiling – kava virgins no more!

Subsequent visits made playsticks much easier. Our apprehension was gone and we didn’t feel
we’d embarrass ourselves, or our hosts, when offered the kava cup – but it’s no substitute for a
nice glass of Chardonnay!

1.6.2 Tackless Il’s First Sevusevu

We could see the village of Navigiri (pronounced Na-ving-giri) on a saddle between the peak of
Monkey Face and another humungous vertical rock bluff. We had chosen this as our first village
to visit because several people had described it as an especially nice village.

Although proper protocol is to go ashore promptly and introduce yourselves to the village chief,
the unsettled weather and the fact we had the dinghy on deck persuaded us to wait til morning.
At dusk, however, a panga with four men approached without a light. Only one spoke English
and we understood they were coming from a day cutting firewood on Yaqaga Island. We
apologized for not coming ashore right away, and asked them to inform the chief that we would
come in to make our sevusevu (pronounced: servuservu) first thing. He reminded us of the tide
issue, and suggested earlier would be better than later, an observation we would appreciate the
next day. I, of course, fretted all night that we had started off on the wrong foot.

The next morning we launched the dinghy and headed for shore. Before leaving the boat we
had dressed ourselves properly (no knees, no shoulders, no sunglasses, no hats!), practiced
our basic spiel (“Bula! My name is Gwen. My name is Don. Could you please take us to the
toranga ni koro so we can make our sevusevu.”), and extracted the first bundle of yagona (kava)
from the stash we purchased at the Savusavu market.
Fiji fiercely protects the traditions of its people, and while visitors are welcome, proper behavior is expected. I don't think either of us has been so self-conscious in decades!

We were met on the muddy beach by the usual passel of children, only these youngsters were wielding child-sized machetes! (Eek, were we in trouble already?!) An older boy was brave enough to try his school English, and we ventured our prepared spiel in Fijian, and in no time we were led to a couple named Sara and Freddy.

Sara and Freddy, both of whom spoke confident English, were neither of them the official toranga ni koro, but they seemed to be the designated ambassadors to visiting yachties of which there have been several over the past couple of years. In fact, the first thing they did was sit us down on a mat in their house and share with us photos of their favorite yachties, who turned out to be cruisers we knew – Chris and Katie of Billabong (from our first year in the Pacific) and the Repass family of Convergence.

Sara and Freddie led us to the chief's house at the top of the hill. Along the way we introduced ourselves and shook hands with every adult we passed (including the toranga ni koro!). The chief's house looked little different from the others on the outside (except for a padlock on the outside of the door!), but inside he had a bookshelf with a TV, DVD player and a telephone! We slipped off our shoes and sat where directed on the woven pandanus mat, while Freddy made our introduction, a formalized speech in soft-spoken Fijian, of which I only understood the word "America." He placed our bundle of yagona on the floor between them, and when the chief picked it up and the men clapped, we were in. We'd been advised that often the chief never speaks with you, but this one did exchange a few words with us about life in the United States, before we were ushered on our way. Sara was walked us around the extent of the village and we shook more hands and snapped more pix.

How one ever went cruising in the days before digital cameras, I cannot imagine. Everybody we met wanted their picture taken, and then to see it on the little screen. This was a wonderful development for me, because I am often too shy to ask to take pictures of people, and therefore never have them. Not so in Navigiri. I have dozens, and because the people are not self-conscious, every photo is beautiful.

We met men building a house, people preparing pandanus for mat weaving, ladies doing the laundry under the shared spigot, and a couple peeling and cutting cassava for the big Sunday meal.

There were toddlers playing naked in a tub, and grandmothers sweeping the church. It was a busy place, but everybody took time for us!

1.6.3 **Waitui Marina's Info on Sevusevu**

Your Fijian Cruising Permit is in the Fijian Language and is an introduction of you and your vessel to the village mayor (Turanga Ni Koro) and is requesting him/her to extend courtesy to you. It IS NOT to the village 'chief', the Turanga Ni Vanua; frequently the mayor doesn't even have a title.

A little bit of the Fijian culture here: The titles in Fiji (and Polynesia) are up to 2000 years old and are family/clan based, little different than the pre-Christian Nordic culture. The presentation of sevusevu to the Turanga Ni Vanua of kava is a request to him/her to allow you to (temporary)
reside in his/her lands (the qoliqoli, the water, you can think of as the aquatic version of the village commons). During your period of time there, you are in essence pledging your allegiance to the family and becoming a vassel. They, in turn, allow you privileges, including the use of, the commons.

In literally English: Sir John Clayton, Lord Greystoke (Turanga Ni Vanua) has a village on his lands, Smallshire. You have a letter from PM Pitt in London in your hand to give to the Lord Mayor (Turanga Ni Koro) of Smallshire explaining that you are a legal visitor. If you would like to use the village commons, you must speak with Lord Greystoke to obtain his permission. He does have other knights of the noble class on his lands, also addressed as ‘Sir’ (Ratu) or ‘Dame’ (Adi, pronounced ‘ahndee), but he is the sole Lord of the land.

In the more 'touristy' areas, this process is considered nothing more than a source of free grog (kava), in others, it is taken very seriously and don't do it if you don't mean it! (Although you may not be permitted to stay: You're not in Kansas anymore Toto!).

1.6.4 Carina on Fijian Culture

Carina - SSCA Newsletter - September 2011: Fiji is one of the friendliest places you'll ever travel. It's impossible to walk down the street without being greeted with bula (pronounced “buuuulaaaah” with a smile) by many. Fijians have a strong sense of ethnic pride and learning the cultural folkways and mores is helpful. We used a Pacific languages/culture book by Lonely Planet Publications to augment the information gleaned from guidebooks. We learned that we should not expose knees or shoulders and wear no hats or sunglasses in villages, and not to carry a bag over our shoulders. It’s also a very serious mistake to ever touch the head of any Fijian chief as the head is considered sacred. In town, slacks or shorts or even bare shoulders are acceptable, but may not be in villages where men and women alike wear sulus (a type of skirt akin to a pareo).

Indo-Fijians, originally introduced to work the cane fields, but now Fijians for several generations, tend to be shopkeepers and professionals (doctors, dentists) and we found little chance to visit an Indo-Fijian village. Ethnic Fijians tend to be more laid back and seem to eschew commercial enterprise. Christianity, Hinduism and Islam were all represented. Most adults and children of school age speak English, though both Fijian and Fijian Hindi are widely spoken.

Land ownership laws are a hot issue in Fijian politics and as visitors we could gain no in-depth understanding of this complex and divisive subject.

Kava is serious business in Fiji and both major ethnic groups partake. To visit many anchorages and villages requires a Sevusevu or offering to the village chief or the turago ni koro (hereditary chief). Generally the Sevusevu offering is kava root (only root, no powdered kava).

This tradition isn't just for us visitors; it is done by Fijians amongst themselves. We were recently in a village in the Yasawas and a group of Fijian police came to visit the village. The police presented Sevusevu to the chief and asked permission to call a meeting of the villagers. Kava root is sold in convenient ½ kilo wrapped bundles in the public market. The current price for a ½ kilo is $10 FJD. An inexpensive gift, e.g., tea or cookies, is recommended if you visit a Fijian home.
Doing Sevusevu is really very simple: dress up in a floral (bula) shirt (or any sleeved shirt) and a sulu or long trousers (no t-shirts or shorts) and go to shore and inquire as to where to find the chief. Also, do not wear hats or sunglasses within the village. Someone will take you by the hand and bring you to him (or rarely, her). You will be directed to sit on a pandanus mat across from the chief and will present the kava root by placing it on the mat in front of the chief. Do not hand the kava directly to the chief.

Introduce yourself and any crew members with you and, if you have any boat cards, present them to the chief and any other notable at this time. If the chief picks your kava gift off the mat, you’re half way there.

During our Sevusevu ceremonies, we asked permission to be accepted by the village and to snorkel, fish and use the village walkways or visit any sites such as waterfalls, petroglyphs, etc. Inevitably there will be another villager present, an elder usually, and the chief and the villager, if you are accepted, will chant a prayer and clap their cupped hands, called a cobo (thom BOW). When they are done you will be subjected to a friendly interview and you will be asked where you are from, if you have children, what work you do for a living, etc.

It is a good idea to talk specifically about what you’d like to do (hike, fish, snorkel, take photos) and to ask what restriction are placed on you in the village or any tabu (pronounced TAM boo) areas not to be visited. We’ve never found anyone judging us or trying to make us feel uncomfortable if we made a mistake, e.g.,

continuing to wear a hat or sunglasses in a village; people will go way out of their way to make you feel welcomed. If at all possible, be sure to visit again before you leave and offer a sincere vinaka vakalevu (thank you very much). It is a good idea to bring along a small thank-you gift as often the village will give YOU a gift when you leave.

Before venturing out of your port of entry, stock up on kava, but also lollies (for kids and adults alike) and tea (bags, as they’re considered indulgent compared with loose tea), brown sugar, those horrible but ubiquitous breakfast biscuits, rice, small cans of corned beef and maybe some long bars of soap used for washing clothes. Not all chiefs drink kava; one we met was a member of a fundamentalist religion, so we gave him a box of tea and a bag of sugar.

### 1.6.5 Delos on Sevusevu and Kava Drinking in Kadavu

From their blog in 2011, describing a sevusevu in Kadavu's village of Kavala: We were met on the beach by a friendly villager wearing a Fijian Health Ministries rugby jersey. He conversed with another man who quickly ran off into the village to summon the chief. 15 minutes later we were led into the community hall to await the chief. Our guide told us that the community hall was built by the USA in 1984 as part of an international aid program. Sure enough there was a beaming picture of Ronald Reagan in the corner to commemorate the hall.

The chief entered and introduced himself in Fijian, our guide translating as he spoke. We sat in a circle and presented our Sevusevu (ceremonial kava bundle). The kava was carefully unwrapped and passed back and forth between the chief and 2 others. Each looked at us and spoke a blessing for us and the kava we were about to consume. The chief then looked at us and smiled. We were now guests of his village, and under his protection. We were allowed to anchor in their bay, fish for food, get water, and explore their island. The people here are so
friendly it’s hard to describe the feeling of genuine welcome you receive. They are Melanesian here, with much darker skin and broader features than the Polynesians to the East.

The kava roots were placed in a large metal urn and bashed into a powder with a heavy metal rod. Less than 5 minutes of bashing turned our roots into a fine powder suitable for straining into kava. These guys don’t mess around with their kava making gallons of the muddy brown liquid at a time. A huge kava bowl about 3 feet in diameter was brought out. The kava bowls here are incredible examples of wood carving and are relics of the village. They are passed from generation to generation and nobody really knows how old they are. We guessed a minimum of 150 years for 3 generations of use. In fact nobody really knew how old the village was either. They all just shrugged their shoulders and said “Very old.”

Water from a 5 gallon container was poured into the bowl and over the fine sack containing the kava powder while another man massaged the sack until the water was the appropriate color of brown. The Chief drank first, followed by the village elders, then us. Finally the other men in the village were allowed to drink.

Each round was initiated by someone clapping 5 times. Three claps in quick succession followed by a slightly delayed clap. The fifth clap seemed to be a random amount of seconds later and was the sharpest and loudest. We never could figure out the rhythm to the claps as they always changed. We were told that only in Kadavu were 5 claps used for the ceremony. Half coconut shells were filled with the murky brown water and passed to one person at a time. The idea is to drink the kava, or grog as it’s known here, in one large gulp. Random clapping ensues while you are drinking. After your coconut shell is empty it’s passed back, refilled, and passed on to the next person in the circle.

The kava here is stronger than the stuff in Tonga, but not as strong as in Vanuatu even further to the west.

After 5 straight hours of sitting around the bowl and drinking countless shells we had a slight numbing sensation throughout our whole bodies. We felt very calm and peaceful and didn’t really want to get up and move around too much. You could definitely tell the villagers were drunk by looking at the expressions of their faces and look in their eyes. It’s not an alcohol drunk like we’re used to though. More of a soothing, relaxing, numbing sensation that takes over your whole body. Nobody gets violent or loud on grog. People get very quiet with a distant look in their eyes. Apparently the more kava you drink the more it affects you and these guys drink every day for their entire lives. Maybe we’ll feel the effects more in the future but for now we mostly pee a lot.

Each hour we sat around the bowl brought in more villagers as they came down the mountain from tending their crops. At one point there were close to 20 men around the bowl and one woman. Although the women are allowed to participate in the ceremony they typically do not. Nobody really explained why to us, that’s just how it is.

We also found out in traditional Fijian custom a man is not allowed to speak to, acknowledge, walk on the same path, or even touch a dirty dish of the uncle on his father’s side. We asked about this because the man serving our kava was the nephew of one of the elders and he always used a separate kava bowl for him and never directly addressed him. Imagine not being able to talk to or look at your uncle for your entire life. Especially tough since you live in the same village and work together day in and day out.
At some point the sun set and the grog drinking was put on hold. It’s against custom to drink grog in the dark and since the one generator in the village had run out of oil there were no lights. Nobody worried about not having electricity. No radios, no refrigerators, barely any lights so what was to worry about? Shortly a boy returned with a kerosene lantern and we continued with the flickering light casting dancing shadows on the community hall walls. We called it a night at about 8PM, not being able to stuff another shell of kava into our bodies. We headed back to Delos for a deep sleep filled with kava enhanced dreams. After a night of drinking kava not only did we sleep exceptionally well but the dreams are the most vivid and colorful you could possibly imagine.

1.6.6 Island Bound’s First Village Encounter in the Yasawas

Ed note: I have moved this from the section on Waya in the Yasawas to here, because it is more about the “first experience” with a village, than it is about Waya itself.

The village at Waya Island in the Yasawas was our first experience with a real outer-island village…First on the agenda when we arrived at Waya was a trip into the village of Yalobi. Before we could tour the village or set off to snorkel or fish we needed to meet the island chief and present our sevusevu. Sevusevu is a gift of kava -or yagona as the local Fijians call it- respectfully given to the village chief.

Armed with the name of the village chief from friends back at Vuda we landed the dingy and asked directions to Tai Toms bure (Grandpa Toms house.) As we walked along a well worn path through the small village people were up and about and busy with the days work. The path took us through lines of bures and past the village church towards the high hills that rise behind the village proper. We were surprised by how green everything was despite Cyclone Evan’s recent rampage especially since the trees around Vuda were stripped almost completely bare.

Once near the Chief’s bure, our guide went to alert the chief to our arrival. After a brief wait nearby we were ushered inside his small house and instructed to sit down on the woven floor mat that took up most of the small room. We were introduced to Chief Tai Tom who is chief of the largest of the five clans on Waya Island. Once settled on the floor we passed over our sevusevu which Tai Tom accepted and then paused to say a prayer over the kava. Once the gift was excepted he answered a few of our questions and told us who was in the photographs that lines ceiling edges of the bure. Then with a nod and a smile he welcomed us again and gave his permission for us to freely walk the village and to enjoy the island for the rest of our stay and stated the rest of our visit was free.

The village was wide awake and at work getting ready for the evening’s New Years Celebration yet when we stepped out of Tai Toms bure we were immediately invited into the home next door for tea. This home seemed to be the main bure for Tai Toms clan and quickly filled with other clan members and a gaggle of kids. After introductions all around we were invited to settle once again onto the floor mats for tea and bread. The ladies of the clan had been busy preparing fresh baked breads for the celebration and there was a line of platters along the mat heaped to overflowing with scones and slices of buttered bread along with tea cups filled with boiling water and the leaves from something they grow locally. Everyone present welcomed us and asked questions while passing around the breads and a big bowl filled with sugar for the tea. The room filled up around us as other clan members came in to say hello and then slowly emptied again as our celebrity status faded into the more important duties of the upcoming party. Finally as we
headed out the door to venture further into the village we ere heartily asked back for lunch and dinner and of course church.

After accepting the invitation for lunch we set off through the village to explore. Every person we met offered a hearty bula! And everyone seemed eager to stop their New Years preparations and visit a bit. We left a trail of balloons for the kids as we worked our way along the village paths and stopped to talk with a couple of preteen boys who were playing with their pet iguana who seemed happy to rest atop one boys head heartily chowing down on hand fed hibiscus blossoms. Next we were invited into another home to peruse some goodies offered up for sale and Barbara had her first chance to shop for souvenirs. We came came away with a salt cellar shaped like a kava bowl, a handmade rag rug, a green shell bracelet and a cannibal fork. Human flesh was -for some unknown reason- not to be touched with ones hands. Go figure. I wish I could be there to hear the conversation at her next potluck dinner when she brings out the new serving piece.

Next stop was the dispensary, where the new island nurse was settling in accompanied by the district doctor and the outgoing nurse. The nurse was on day one of a three year assignment and Barbara being an emergency room ARNP helped lead the walk to the village dispensary.

Next stop was a visit with a couple of older gentlemen who were sitting in the cool shade. Simmi and Api chatted us up for a few minutes while more kids were lured in by the balloons. Interestingly Simi leaned in and whispered his wish for three balloons for himself before suggesting to Bill that they would be happy to teach him how they fish if Bill would be willing to pick them up in our dinghy the next morning for a bit of fishing. With a time set up to meet for fishing the next morning we walked on headed for the islands elementary school.

The boarding school was currently empty -closed down for summer break- but normally is filled with 150 of the islands elementary aged children. The school is a great asset to the village as most school in Fiji comes at a price. The governments have been promising free education for years but apparently the only place that promise has come true is in some of the islands outer islands. The city folks of the two big islands still must find a way to afford tuition, books and uniforms along with room and board for those who must travel. Unfortunately for we were trying to cross the beach to the school at high tide and had a choice of wadding in up to our belly buttons or trying back another time. We decided to stay dry and instead headed back to the boat for a quick swim before lunch with Tai Toms clan.

We had been told that lunch would be from 12 to 1 which evidently meant that it would begin sometime between 12 and 1. We arrived back at the clans biggest house at about 11:45 where we found no one seemed to be remotely ready for lunch or for visitors. I managed to committed an obvious faux pas by peeking in the door way and stepping in when we saw a faw of the people we had met that morning. We had returned with a bowl filled with orange slices and a jug of juice to share and so I stepped inside with a friendly smile and outstretched hands. No one spoke and then I noticed the look on Tai Toms face. There were no words to understand but the look was obvious, a major faux pas. I should not have stepped inside so we whirled around again and out the door. We stood there a moment sort of shuffling our feet and trying to interpret what we had just done. It caused a tiny ruckus and soon we were escorted across the grass to a nearby home and instructed to sit on the porch with a one legged man who was sitting in the shade watching the village go by.
We waited there on the covered porch sitting cross legged on a mat with our back up against a pile of lumber waiting and chatting with the man whose porch we were apparently occupying. Eventually lunch began to appear and clan members turned up. The women began bringing out big pots of food and someone brought a table cloth nd spread it out in front of us then brought plates and silverware. Eventually serving dishes of food appeared. We all three just sat there trying to read what was expected of us until I couldn't stand it any longer and went over to offer up the juice and the fruit and offer to help. Reluctantly they allowed me to carry over a plate of food and then we were encouraged to serve the food around. Evidently we were eating with the one legged man and everyone else would be eating across the way under the porch of the clan house. We were served smoked fish, rice, curried potatoes with tinned fish, creamed taro leaves and stems and lobster in coconut milk. Eventually a few other men came and set at the end of the porch but their only real interaction was to ask Bill for a jug of diesel to fuel the village generator “to pay for our nights at anchor.”

We left lunch feeling a bit awkward but with another invite to attend the 4pm church service which it was our intention to attend but back on the boat we swam and rested from the heat and hemmed and hawed over whether or not we would go back for church. The night before while at anchor we had heard the church service in action. The village generator was cranked up to power a microphone and the resident pastor was in high form. Between periods of lovely singing the man spent several hours yelling and screaming at his flock and quite frankly we were all inwardly hoping to come up with some excuse for not attending. So once the subject was open it became clear that since no one had their hearts set on attending we would quietly sit this one out. We all swam, I managed to whip up some pretty authentic chicken khorma with rice, roti and chutney and Barbara had a bit of time to break out her drawing pencils and get a bit of sketching in. Yes I'm sure the services would have been an experience but it was one we just couldn't throw any enthusiasm into.

At eight the next morning Bill set off to pick up Simmi and Api for some reef fishing leaving Barbara and I drinking our morning caffeine and happily chatting away the next few hours while we waited for the dinghy to return so we could get in some snorkeling. The fishing was going to take some logistics though with first a pick up of the boys in town then a trip back for a tour of the boat and some orange drink some fishing gear and the gift of a baseball hat for Api. Surprisingly the guys didn't return for several hours but they had three nice fish with a fourth set aside for bait. We took a fillet off the walu (Spanish mackerel) put the bait fish in the fridge and sent the rest home with Simmi and Api with plans to meet again at dusk for more.

Barbara and I were off to snorkel's soon as Bill returned from dropping off the boys and we were in or a great treat. The snorkeling at the pass between Waya and Wayasewa was the best I had seen since Fakarava. The fish were abundant, the coral was alive and colorful and the visibility was decent despite Evan kicking things up. I have been surprised and alarmed at the state of most of the coral reefs I have seen during this trip.

I am no scientist and have little to make comparison other than Bill and my 2003 trip to Tahiti where we were enchanted by the colorful coral gardens. But everywhere we have been the majority of the reefs have been dead or dying. At times it felt like the whole worlds ocean are nothing but a giant dust storm of gray covering reefs and rocks. Fakarava being the one exception. Even the exact reefs we experienced in Tahiti ten years ago didn't hold a candle to the memory we carried of them. Some of that might be faulty memory. We remember the
Tahitian islands of Huahine and Raitea being gardens of color swimming with fish. Were they really that much better then or have we just experienced more of both great and not so great reef diving and snorkeling? Perhaps some of both but Fakarava and now Waya renewed my belief that there is still some amazing places to see. On the other hand sadly it means that our worlds reefs are being wiped out at an amazing rate by nature -such as cyclone damage- and by man from pollution, over fishing and too much contact. OK off my soap box. It was great snorkeling there even if we didn't see a single reef shark -much to Barbara’s relief.

That evening after fish tacos Bill gathered up his fishing gear careful to search out a few lures and flashlights he wasn't going to regret leaving behind. Simmi and Api were showing him how they reef fish but as most Fijians they were not shy in asking for things as gifts. So he packed up some gift lures he felt we could live without, a couple of flashlights (torch in Fiji) we could spare to loose and measured out the gas to be sure we would have enough one for a final morning snorkel trip and set off to pick up the boys. With torches in hand they set off to the outer reef at seven and didn't return until ten! They had a bag full of fish and Simmi and Api seemed happy as Bill ferried them back to the village with new flashlights in hand and all the fish. A long day for everyone so we were all off to bed with plans in mind for a final 8am snorkel then back to the boat to weigh anchor for our five our trip back to Vuda.

The next morning suddenly our plans were changing -as plans often do. A bleary eyed Bill climbed out of bed to go to the loo and was astonished to see Api sitting atop an odd plastic kayak/raft. It was 7am, Barbara and I are both still in bed ( I have been awake aproximatly 90 seconds now) when I heard Bill say “ummm do you want to come aboard?) Api it seems was on a mission. He was patiently waiting outside for us to wake up so he could ask a question: would we be willing to take Lucy back to the mainland with us as she needed to return to work in Nadi. No problem. But almost before Bill could finish saying yes to Lucy coming with us for the five hour passage he was asking if we could also bring her daughters. OK, change of plans.

For any of you who don't know all that well I am NOT a morning person. I have been known to become a little …..umm...grumpy when changes are thrust on me. So here I'd been awake for about 90 seconds thinking first that company was suddenly coming aboard and then hearing that we are taking strangers on as crew for the passage home.

A five hour passage in Fiji is pretty much paradise for us: but it can be hot, really hot. We would be sailing for five hours in the blazing sun with just so much shifting shade available and no groceries put in for the trip and no juice, no soda, no plans period for doubling up our crew list. OK, it took me a moment or three but I can get on board with this but OK, regroup, new plan.

First on the list our snorkel trip: a bit shorter maybe but one last chance for Barbara to experience our Fiji home with mask and fins. Then back to the boat to gobble down cereal and complete a rush job on preparing for passage while Bill heads in to the village to pick up our passengers where surprise, surprise, Simmi has decided he would like to come along too.

I now have four extra guests for the day none of whom have ever been on a sail boat and all of whom are soon lounging comfortably in the cockpit. Simmi settles in with an air of..........entitlement…..as if it is his castle. He takes one of the two cockpit cushions and stakes out the shadiest bit of cockpit where he stayed while we got underway. Once the getting underway work was done -boat tours for all, lessons on flushing the toilet, dinghy on davits, ladder up, fenders up, anchor up, everyone settled, gates closed and sails up- I sit down on the combing with the sweat dripping down my face while Simmi turns to me and informs me that
Lucy needs to be in Nadi by 3pm for work. But it was 11am and we were still four hours away from the marina and another hour by bus away from Nadi. I explained that I was sorry but it would be a five hour trip and that there simply wasn't anything we could do about the timing. He frowned and scowled and explained that the power boat the villagers usually make the trip on only takes an hour!

With no shade left in the cockpit I retreat below to the dinette to cool down and stretch out on the cushioned dinette seat while Simmi sits staring down at me through the companionway. Once I cool down it's time to try to pull something together for lunch. An hour or more of passing things up and down to the cockpit commences as I begin by pouring cups of orange drink, peeling and cubing a pineapple and making up a platter of tuna salad sandwiches. Poor Bill must have winced when he innocently asked me if we had any of those brownies left while I was trying to juggle the line of dishes returning to my sink, refill the drink glasses, clean up the pineapple juice on the counter and grab the last half a tuna sandwich while the sweat poured into my eyes and I began feeling the telltale signs of being seasick wash over me. I barked at him and told him the brownies were going to have to wait I needed to come up for some air!

After lunch (and brownies) I looked down to see Simmi stretched out on the cushy dinette seat below. No problem one less body in the cockpit was a good thing. A bit later I went below for another lesson on toilet flushing and Simmi informed me while wearing his own baseball hat and holding on to my last remaining custom embroidered Peterson 44/Island Bound baseball hat that he would like a baseball hat of his own since we had given one to Api. I explained he couldn't have mine it was special to me but scratched one up for him from our cabin. He accepted it with resignation then napped while I moved outside. After the nap I found him staring at me again and went below to find out what he was up to. He explained that he would also like to have one of our solar panels so he wouldn't have to rely on the village generator for light. At this one I almost laughed but he went on to explain that since we were heading for Vanua Levu and the town of Savu Savu in a few months he would like a ride there with us and we could perhaps bring the solar panel then.

Now first let me explain that when we leave the island of Viti Levu after cyclone season it will be our first opportunity to explore Fiji's other big island. When we go we will want to explore the parts of the Yasawa Group we can't make it too this season and the northern end of Viti Levu and so will meander our way to Savu Savu over weeks. Sorry Simmi you're not coming with us. But as I found myself making a mental inventory of what we had given away in Yalobi and wondering what I was really feeling inside about the gift giving experience I started to understand the fine line between the Fijian normal of asking for gifts and those who take it far past that norm.

That inventory? Two baseball hats, the 2L pitcher I took to lunch filled with juice, a Rubber Made collapsible bowl, 4 lures, 2 torches, a tank of premix (plus two tanks for fishing,) all the fish save for one fillet, lunch, a pan of brownies, five packets of juice and four free rides to the main land. Plus he asked for the solar panel and the extra dinghy we have stored on deck. Simmi had the whole thing down to an art and simply asks for whatever catches his eye expecting and knowing that if he keeps asking eventually something is likely to trickle down. I explained that since the panels are special marina panels and couldn't easily be replaced we simply couldn't do without them. He pouted and went back up on deck. None of the things we gave away could we not live
without. And yes we were able to say no when we needed. On one hand it felt good to be able to give something to people who we know do not have a lot. In fact we had planned for it with purchases of rice, canned goods, school supplies, hooks, soap, laundry powder, lolly pops and balloons for the kids purchased just for our time in Fiji. But when the fine line was crossed giving to Simmi began to feel...........creepy to use Barbara's term.

We made it back to Vuda without incident and grabbed the center buoy instead of our spot at the quay so we could offload everyone via the dinghy to shore. We were worried that offloading people and bags over the bow to the quay would be too difficult since it often requires tightrope walking and some pretty big jumps or climbs. SO pictures all around and lots of waving and they were off to find their way to Nadi.

Honestly the day turned out to be an adventure. And in between conversations with Simmi it was a grand opportunity to ask questions and learn more about Fijian life and village life particularly. All of our guests spent at least part of the trip napping in the heat (they explained they had all been up late drinking yagona for New Years the night before) which opened up time to talk one on one with everyone at least a little bit. Lucy explained that she likes living in Nadi and would never consider moving back to her home village. She likes being a city girl and being able to flip a switch for alight, watch tv and shop whenever she wishes. Her daughter Tupo lives with her mom in town, works and has her friends on the mainland. Both explained they grow bored after a few days in Yalobi. Maggie was most interested in knowing we were hoping to go to the Lau Group in the spring which brought tears to her eyes as she explained she hadn't been back to her village in over ten years. She gave me the names of people we can look up when we arrive which will be a great way to break the ice there. Simmi I could do without seeing again but since we are likely to go back to Yalobi I will have to learn to love.

At dinner a few nights later our friend Grant on Lochiel shared his own experience in Tonga: he had been asked to take one man to the mainland and maybe one of his friends but arrived to pick him up to find 12 giant Tongan men waiting for him. They were so big he had to take five trips to his boat to get them all aboard! I just hope the next time there is no one floating around our boat for an hour in the wee hours of morning waiting for one of us to stumble to the loo.

### 1.6.7 Fijian Pronunciation

Calder's guide has a pretty good summary of the pronunciation issue.

### 1.7 Yachtsmen's Services - Overview

#### 1.7.1 Money

The currency in Fiji is the Fijian dollar. Exchange Rate mid-2012 is about $1FJD = .55-.60 USD. There are ATMS in most larger cities

#### 1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline

In Fiji, the gasoline they commonly sell near the water is called "premix", and it is gasoline premixed to a 50:1 ratio. *s/v Zephyr says June 2012:* We took the dinghy over to the
commercial docks here in **Lautoka** to fill our 5 gallon tanks full of gasoline. They don't sell it. Only Diesel, Kerosene, and Premix (50-1). Had to take a taxi into town (not far--$3.00 each way) to get them filled.

In Lomaloma, Vanua Balavu, Lau Group, Soggy Paws found both gasoline and premix being sold. But we were told they do run out on occasion. In the rest of the Lau, it is very hard to come by, so stock up before you leave civilization. You will be using your dinghy a lot in the out-islands, for exploring and snorkeling. The price seems to be fixed, because the price of gasoline in the remote Lau was the same as in Savusavu, within pennies.

**Duty-free diesel in Fiji?** (answered by the SSCA Cruising Station in Savusavu, Sep 2011)

Unless you cleared in as a ship (or possibly as a so-called 'super-yacht', which isn't a yacht, but a charter boat), there is no duty-free provision in the tax code, and the price of fuel is set by the govt (Commerce Commission)

The shortages of pre-mix outboard fuel outside of Suva is a direct result of the price of pre-mix being less than the purchase cost for the bowsers. It's all a very political process, sorry.

**Fuel in Savusavu as of May 2012:** $2.64 FJ / liter  No fuel dock, but gas station across the street. (note 3.8 liters in a US gallon)

Diesel can be purchased on Vanua Levu in Savusavu, Mate, Somosomo (Taveuni), Wairiki, Nuku (Rabi), Labasa.

Premix fuel 50:1 for 2 stroke engines can be bought in almost all villages and settlements, but non-premix is hard to find 'out island'.

**1.7.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

LPG Bottles in Vanua Levu can only be refilled in Savusavu and Lambasa.

Waitui Marina in Savusavu helps with the propane fills, they announce on the Savusavu VHF net (Ch 68 at 830) when they're going to arrange a propane pickup, so if you need propane, check with them when you arrive. Their cost for a 9Kg bottle was $42FJ and $22FJ for a 5Kg bottle. It appears that they charge only for the gas cost and no service fee.

There is a propane refill station just outside the Vuda Point Marina on Viti Levu.

**1.7.4 Groceries**

There are usually tiny stores in every village, but pickings can be slim. You should provision as if you won't find any stores.

Good grocery stores can be found in all the major cities. See individual town discussions for details. The largest grocery chain in Fiji is Morris Hedstrom. See their location map for an idea of where you will find reasonable provisioning:


There is a liquor store on the waterfront road in Savusavu that has lots of imported goods--where you can find those specialty items you've been looking for. Likewise, there's another one on the road into Lautoka from Vuda Point Marina.
There is a Cost-U-Less in Suva similar to the one in Pago Pago, American Samoa—a Costco-type store with lots of (pricey) imported goods.

**Carina - SSCA Newsletter - Oct 2011:** Ethnic Indian restaurants are a great value, so if you like curry and roti, you’ll be in heaven in Fiji. In general, finer restaurants will disappoint.

Value Added Tax (VAT) is 15% in Fiji and is widely applied. Prices are posted as VAT inclusive. USD to FJD conversion hovered between $1.80-$2.00 FJD/USD in late 2010-spring 2011.

We found most larger towns have at least one grocery store; Morris-Hedstrom (MH) appears to be the most common. Credit cards are accepted, but there may be a commission applied.

Wine, beer and spirits are generally sold in a separate section of the store, and prices are particularly dear, especially imported alcohol.

Commodities are readily available—flour, sugar, rice, UHT milk—but because of the ethnic mix of the country, so are exotic spices and dozens of varieties of tea. Good quality coffee is expensive, but is available; good quality tea is widely available, loose or bagged.

Health products are available: toothpaste, shampoo, etc.

The best meat is obtained in a specialty meat shop, though grocery stores carry frozen chicken and seafood and some fresh meats. The specialty meat shops are usually exceptionally clean and air conditioned and offer competitive prices. Free-range beef tends to be chewy, pork is good and economical, and frozen chicken quite acceptable. Lamb is available, but we did not partake.

Most fish for sale is frozen, and much of it is reef fish (ciguatera IS in Fiji, so it’s best to eat only pelagic fish species). Imported farmed seafood (prawns, etc.) can be found.

Local cheese is about 2/3 the price of the NZ imports. Grating cheese and mozzarella is difficult to find.

For some reason, pasta tends to be expensive (and often weevil-infested). All flour should be sifted at least once. Eggs are local, fresh and sold unrefrigerated.

The prices for alcohol can range from expensive to prohibitively expensive as they are heavily taxed, with imported spirits carrying the bulk of the tax burden. Even locally produced Fiji Bounty-brand rum (116 proof!) is $43.95 FJD (about $24 USD) for a 750-ml bottle. An imported 750-ml bottle of Macallans 12-year-old scotch whiskey (Philip’s favorite scotch) retails for a whopping $289.95 (about $160 USD!) Not surprisingly, Philip is not sipping scotch in Fiji.

Larger towns generally have ATMs and a public market that bustles everyday, but particularly on Saturday when vendors arrive by bus from villages near and far, bringing the freshest of produce. Locally grown produce is modestly priced, but imported produce is fairly outrageous due to high import duties imposed by the government. Celery is $1 FJD per individual stalk, imported sweet bell peppers (called capsicum here) are either $26 or $36 per kilo, for green and red respectively. Lovely Asian eggplant is ubiquitous, as are hot peppers. Potatoes, onions, cabbage, bok choy and Fijian “spinach” are generally available. Kumala (sweet potato) tends to be seasonal. Taro (called dalo) and cassava are available year round as are Fiji staples.

Sewing shops abound, and gorgeous bright clothing is worn by everyone—ethnic Fijian or Indo-Fijian, men, women and children—from floral “island prints” to saris. In fact, handmade clothing
is a bargain here, and you can buy a full floral-print outfit of a dress and full-length underskirt for about $25 FJD ($14 USD).

### 1.7.5 Water

Water is available at the Copra Shed Marina dock in Savusavu, (there is a $5FJD fee if you want to tie up to take on water).

In Viti Levu, water is also available at the Fuel Dock at Vuda Point Marina, at the Royal Suva Yacht Club, and at Port Denarau Marina.

### 1.7.6 Boat Parts & Repairs

There are good marine stores and hardware stores in all the normal yacht ports in Fiji. Plus there are two haulout facilities for yachts. See the Lautoka section (Western Fiji) and Savusavu section (Vanua Levu) for specifics in each area.

However, for bonafide imported marine items, you will pay dearly. For those things you cannot find in Fiji, it is possible to ship items in duty free (see next section).

Curly (see Savusavu for more info on Curly) recommended on the VHF if you need dive gear and other stuff imported to check with Aquatek in Suva. He also recommended a place called Marine Safety Services in Suva for dinghy repair and liferaft servicing.

Soggy Paws bought a large solar panel from Clay Engineering in Suva, over the phone, and had it shipped via CDP (the Fijian version of UPS) to Savusavu for only $35 FJ. So don't rule out shopping for larger items in Suva.

You can also ship in items 'duty free' after you have arrived in Fiji and have your Customs Rotation Number. See Carina's information below and the Customs section for more info.

**Rigging:** We didn't use the services, but we picked up a card somewhere for Westside Rigging and Wire in Lautoka, Bruce Vasconcellos. 999-8838 or mothership@connect.com.fj

**Bruce Vasconcellos - August 2014:** I am Bruce Vasconcellos formerly from Hawaii (20 years ago) I am a rigger with Kos (Hammer Wire ). We have rigging in stock from 3mm or 1/8” to 16mm (5/8”) I also have all the fittings and a swager to attach to these sizes.

We are 15 minutes from Nadi Internationi Airport which we can pick up and copy any rigging and send to anywhere needed. I’ve been a rigger for more than 40 years and know furling systems and their problems with a wealth of contacts for parts if I don’t have them here.

Regards, Bruce Vasconcellos, Westside Rigging and Wire Ltd.

Lot 2 Dreketi Feeder Road, Saweni, Lautoka, Fiji Is.

E-mail: mothership@connect.com.fj

Phone (679)9998838

Skype: mothershipcharters

### 1.7.7 Shipping Parts and Mail into Fiji

**Soggy Paws March 2013:** Here is the Copra Shed Marina mailing address, for sending via US Priority Mail:
S/V Boat Name, Rot No: number
Your Name
c/o Copra Shed Marina
Post Office Box 262
Savusavu, Fiji Islands

When your mail/parcel is received at the post office, they will notify Copra Shed, and Copra Shed will call you on the VHF to let you know that it is there. You must then go clear your stuff yourself (see comments below).

I believe this same approach will also work if you send it to the Vuda Point Marina—they get a notification that your package has arrived, and you must go yourself to Lautoka to clear the package. Carina (below) reports that they got a FedEx delivery at Vuda Point.

**Changing Spots - SSCA Newsletter - April 2013:** When I inquired about shipping stuff to Fiji from the U.S., there wasn’t much information other than it was reliable, would take 10 to 30 days, and to avoid FedEx. Here’s my limited experience with shipping 22 Pounds of stuff from Port Supply in Fort Lauderdale to Suva, Fiji.

It was shipped on September 22, U.S. International Priority Mail, and arrived at the post office in Suva on October 8 with a notification to me at the Royal Suva Yacht Club (RSYC). The cost was $201 USD. Then it took me three days to get the items from the post office, but it could have been two days, if I’d known the ropes ahead of time. One thing that made it more difficult than normal was because the value was over $1,000.

To pick up your items you need to first pick up the original post office notification letter from the RSYC, and take it with your boat documents to the Customs wharf.

At the gate, ask where Customs is. Your documents should include passport, entry documents and cruising permit, which must include your “Rotation Number” Then you go to the post office to do their paperwork and check the contents of your package. Either a Customs agent will accompany you or you will arrange a time to meet him there.

Overall it was a favorable experience, since I got what I wanted, but it was not without glitches. Armed with the information here, you should be able to avoid the glitches. In theory, you should have your package on your boat within hours.

RSYC kindly offers their postal service address for your use. Here’s how it should be addressed:

S/V Boat Name, Rot No: number
Your Name
c/o Royal Suva Yacht Club
P.O. Box 335
Suva, Fiji

If you use the other recommended shipper, DHL, you can use their street address. But I have no experience with that.

Total cost when shipped via USPS Priority Mail was $201 USD. The Fiji shipping agent was free! (but not really needed after all). The Customs fee was F$3.00. The taxi for Customs Officer, to and from RSYC was F$9.00 (including tip). F$1=USD $0.56.
For the details, and explanation of why it took three days to pick it up, please read on.

The package arrived in Suva before we did. Knowing that there were some expensive items in the package, and not knowing the situation at the post office, we cut short our wonderful trip from Savusavu to Suva. We arrived Sunday afternoon and took one of the free moorings at Lami, just outside of Suva.

Monday morning was an easy bus ride to the city. And Suva really is a city. Although I don’t really care for cities, I haven’t seen one in almost two years and I was like a kid in a candy store walking the three blocks from the bus station to the post office. International mail is upstairs.

The Customs/post office worker said I needed the notification that was sent to the RSYC, and that it needed to be taken to Customs at the wharf. It was a nice 20-minute walk to the yacht club. They said they didn’t have the post office notice. Of course, when I told them the post office had just told me it was delivered (and the date), they actually looked for it, and found it.

The wharf with the Customs office (actually there are two offices, and no signs, and both are upstairs in different buildings) is only a short walk from the post office. They said I needed to use an agent to be able to get the items. When questioned, they replied that the items were over $1,000. The agent company was Williams and Gosling, only about two blocks away. They were great (when we were done, the front office folks called a taxi for us, and when it didn’t show up promptly, called and read them the riot act). The air conditioning was nice, too. Koto took my information and made copies. He didn’t understand why this was needed, but that afternoon went to the post office to pick it up. Of course, they wouldn’t give it to him and said I needed to go to Customs at the wharf to pick it up. He was emailing me, with copies to others, so my plan was to take all the emails (in my iPad) and try to make sense out of this run-around.

Early Tuesday afternoon I showed up at the Customs wharf, but they were out to lunch. So off to the post office I went rather than just wait.

At the post office I was introduced to the PO Customs chief, Joe, who had met with Koto, my agent. He said he also talked to the wharf Customs chief, Jay, and everything was taken care of. I just needed to talk to him. Back at the wharf Customs office (lunch is over at two), they didn’t know who Jay was. But suddenly it became clear that there were two Customs offices, and he was at the other office. It turns out that a Customs officer needs to pick up the package with me, and see that it is actually delivered to the boat. Since there was now an impressive tropical downpour, with no hint of letting up soon, I agreed to meet the Customs officer at the post office the next afternoon at 2 p.m. I don’t think they would have appreciated the dinghy trip, since the dinghy floorboards were deep under water when I got back to the dinghy.

The next morning we moved the boat to anchor off the RSYC, and I walked to the post office early to start any paperwork needed. Good thing too, since they wanted the original notification letter, which was still with Koto. Twenty minutes later I was back and we started going through the invoice, checking off all of the items in the box. What a relief to know it was all there. And yes, everything was boat-related. He didn’t have a problem with the polar fleece either. Post Office Pick-up Cost:F$3.

When the wharf Customs officer arrived at the Post Office, there were a few more forms to do, and off we went. He even carried the box for me. We flagged a taxi to the yacht club, took the dinghy to Changing Spots and he set the box on the aft deck. DONE. He wouldn’t stay for cookies.
Since I was responsible for his return to work, I gave him F$5 for the return taxi fare. The fare was only F$3.60.

Yes it was a hassle, but it is their country and their way, and nobody was out to fleece me. The people were nice about it. And I got my big box of new toys, in a not untimely manner, with nothing missing or broken.

**Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011:** We found it relatively easy and reliable to obtain marine supplies while in Fiji.

That being said, we have had to challenge two attempts at assessing duty by the Fiji Customs Agent stationed at the Post Office. Our challenge included an appeal to a higher authority and a letter explaining the goods being received.

The postal system is reliable and U.S. Priority mail arrives within about 10-14 days, depending on weekends and holidays. What is critical to know is that the package must be addressed to the vessel in transit along with the VERY IMPORTANT yacht rotation number, which is the number assigned to your vessel by Customs.

When you arrive in Fiji, or even change your “home” port (say, move from Savusavu and then check in at Lautoka), you are issued this number. For vessels arriving in Savusavu in 2010, the rotation number was AY2010/## and in Lautoka it was LY2010/##. The two digits ending the rotation numbers are assigned based upon the number vessel you are when you check in the port.

If this rotation number is not included in the shipping address of a package, Customs charges will automatically apply. Therefore, you cannot have a package shipped to you in Fiji until you have this number, unless you are willing to pay import duties, which can total up to as much as 42% of the value of goods shipped plus shipping.

When you arrive at the post office to pick up your correctly addressed package with your rotation number, you must present your ship’s papers. You will be charged a nominal $3.00 FJD fee, and your package will be released to you.

**FedEx** deliveries were brought to us at Vuda Pt. with only an $18 FJD Customs delivery fee, apparently to pay for the Customs agent traveling with the FedEx agent (Carpenter’s Fiji). Most marinas and yacht service companies will allow you to use their P.O. Box or physical address to send a package, but you are solely responsible for package clearance. Packages will be held at the Post Fiji office for 28 days.

**Originally from Waitui Marina, As of 26 March 2008**

Although the merchants of Fiji far prefer that you buy from them (and remember, they have to cover very large duties and VAT, which are included in the shelf prices), you may import, duty, VAT and service charge free, spares for your vessel.

After you clear in with Customs, on the upper right hand corner of the Customs document, you will see a number referred to as a ‘Rotation Number’. If you have your shipper include that number on the face of any parcel addressed to you, you will only be charged a clearance fee of F$2.40 (not the service charge, an importer has to pay a total of four fees!). You will also need a copy of the document and a photo ID to pick up the package.
If the spares (or gifts) include electronic media (CD, DVD, etc.), Customs will verify to ensure that you are not importing pornography. The agents enforce the rules, they don't make them. Please don't be rude to them for doing their job!

A caution to about the inbound courier services, for mail/parcels to Savusavu:

Only DHL and EMS (Express Mail) comes directly to Savusavu, regardless of any claims that an agent may make to you. If you choose to utilise any of the other services, it will be delivered to ‘someplace’ in Viti Levu, and then you will have a frustrating, and possibly expensive, time trying to get the parcel re-routed up to Savusavu, assuming that you can find it.

1.7.8 Medical and Dental

There are a number of clinics and small hospitals around Fiji. There are even government-sponsored nursing stations in the far-flung islands in the Lau Group. But in general, if you want anything major done, everyone flies to Suva. We even know of two cruisers who were medically evacuated by helicopter, one from Musket Cove and one from remote Fulaga in the Lau Group.

There are (at least) two hospitals in Suva, the public and Suva Private Hospital.

There is a recompression chamber in the public hospital in Suva.

There is a decent dentist in Labasa on Vanua Levu, that many cruisers have used (bus over from Savusavu). There is an excellent dental surgeon in Suva.

See the respective sections (Suva and Savusavu) for more details on what's available.

1.8 Getting Visitors In and Out

Flights into Fiji all originate from the international airport in Nadi. Here are some airline links that may help you get travel sorted out:

http://www.airpacific.com/ - Fiji airline that flies Tonga-Fiji-LAX

http://airnewzealand.com.au/ - Air New Zealand also flies from Fiji to other international destinations via NZ.

1.8.1 Getting from the Nadi Airport to Where You Are

The international airport for Fiji is in Nadi, near Lautoka, on the west coast of Viti Levu (the big round island). If you are on Viti Levu, it is easy for visitors to get to you by taxi and/or shuttle service. There are regular shuttles to/from the airport to Suva, Port Denarau, and Lautoka. Vuda Point Marina is a little more difficult, but accessible by taxi (approx cost $25FJD)

If you are somewhere other than Viti Levu, there are two ways for visitors to get from Nadi to where you are–by plane or by ferry.

The airplane, of course, is the easiest, quickest, and most expensive. There are regular direct flights from Nadi to many islands throughout Fiji. Check the local airline for the schedule for your location (some flights may only be once or twice a week). The local regional airline is called Pacific Sun, but it is an arm of Air Pacific (I think), http://airpacific.com
Ferry: There are ferry routes all over Fiji—taking passengers from major islands to Suva, or from the western islands to Lautoka. Ferry services usually only run once or twice a week (except maybe more frequently on the shorter, more traveled routes).

There are at least 2 ferry services that go from Suva to Savusavu, so the route from the airport is Nadi airport to Suva by ground shuttle or taxi to the ferry terminal to Savusavu. See the 'Getting Visitors In and Out' in the Savusavu section for one detailed account of the route from Savusavu through Suva to Nadi.

This is similar to many many other locations within Fiji, including remote places like the Lau Group. However, the more remote places only get visiting freight/ferry ships about once a month.

1.8.2 Legalities & Crew Lists

Radiance - June 2013 - One-Way-Ticket Letters from Immigration: We needed to get two, one for each of us at a different time. The first time, we were at Musket Cove, and we paid $30 for Sophie to get it for us (she procured the letter in an accelerated manner which was much appreciated).

The second time, we went directly to immigration in Lautoka and the captain wrote the request letter on the spot, and handed the paperwork to the immigration officer. After a few photocopies, the officer told us to come back the following day at 10am to pick it up. Painless and free!

Our cab driver had taken us directly there and had waited patiently for us to finish up. His name was Ravin, and he usually hangs out near the wharf where you dinghy in from the anchorage, but his tel. number 931-7068.

From the SSCA Cruising Host in Savusavu - Flying Guests in to Fiji (PPJ 10/2011)

On the guests, will they be leaving Fiji with you as crew, or will they just be with you for a couple of weeks, then fly back?

If they are going to fly in on a one way ticket, you'll need to get a letter from Immigration by presenting your ship's papers to Immigrations, with a copy of their passport and flight information, otherwise, they will not be allowed to board an aircraft destined for Fiji.

In either scenario, you'll need to add them to your crew list at both Immigration and Customs. You will need to have their passports with you (and preferably them as well) to add them to your crew list.

If short term guests, you'll also need to have them signed off your crew list after you depart.

I understand the temptation is to say 'how will they ever know?', but for the avoidance of more problems is there is any sort of a drama, the paperwork is just a brief annoyance.

Anything for the boat, save alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, can be imported duty/VAT free. To do so with the least problems, try to have the shipper mark the parcel 'yacht-in-transit', and put your rotation number (on your check-in paperwork) on the parcel.

The rotation number is issued when you clear your boat with customs, it will be in the form of 'AY2011-0nnn', which is your temporary import permit number.
This would apply to your guests if they are carrying in stores for you, although, in general, apparently tourists aren't given the going over in Nadi that locals are given.

If your supplies are coming in via Post, you'll need to pay a F$3 clearance fee per shipment.

Soggy Paws - Dec 2012 - Flying In: We left our boat in Savusavu, flew out to the U.S. for a few months, and returned in Dec 2012. Before we left Savusavu, we got Immigration to give us a letter indicating we had a yacht in Fiji (so we could fly in with a one-way ticket). We had several suitcases full of "boat parts" and food items, and had no problems clearing through Customs. If you're bringing food items, however, you should check with the Fiji Biosecurity website to make sure nothing you are bringing in is prohibited.

We bought limit of brand-name duty free liquor on arrival at the airport in Nadi. It was expensive but the rot-gut stuff they sell here is both expensive and terrible-tasting.

1.9 Communications

1.9.1 VHF

General VHF Advice that applies to all areas: Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are 'tuned' for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you’re close enough). You don’t need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are ‘duplex’ channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated ‘a’, like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF’s in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

In Fiji, there is surprisingly little use of the VHF. Therefore, most yachts that have their radio on are on VHF channel 16. In Savusavu, the cruiser net is on 68 in the mornings, but still most people are on VHF 16 for calling purposes. The marinas all monitor 16.

1.9.2 SSB Radio Nets

The primary net for the SW Pacific is the Rag of the Air Net, operating out of NE Fiji. This net is on 8173 at 0700 Fiji time (1900z). This net covers boats on passage to/from Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Minerva Reef, and NZ. The primary net controller, Jim on Also Island in Fiji, can be a
little light and hard to hear, especially if you are in Fiji. But there is some weather info given daily on the net. Jim is usually audible to most of Fiji by 0715.

David Sapiane on s/v Chameleon (and his wife Patricia), who used to be giving weather on the Rag of the Air net, split off in 2012 to become Gulf Harbor Radio. In 2012, they were on at 1930 UTC (0730 Fiji time) on 8752 USB (alternate freq 8297). However, it is unclear whether they will be doing weather on an organized basis during 2013 (they may be cruising on their yacht Chameleon).

There is also a net in German on at 2000UTC (8am Fiji time) on 10.090 USB and (later?) 14770 USB. We were told that if you ask politely, they will give you wx info in English if you need it. At least one of the weather guys (s/v Ana Maria) has a professional forecaster background.

If you’re a ham, for longer passages, we always checked in with the Pacific Seafarer’s Net. This is also a good frequency to have saved in case of emergency—the Hams on the PacSea net will move heaven and earth to help any boat with a true emergency—ham operator or not. Even when there is no net going on this frequency, there are often hams monitoring the frequency for emergency traffic.

The Pacsea net operates on 14,300 Khz USB at 0300 UTC. They start with a ‘warmup session’ at 0300, where you can call in and chat, and maybe hook up with someone who will make a phone call to the US for you. They start calling boats on the roll call at 0330, and when they finish (30-60 minutes later), they call for boats getting ready to go on passage to get on the list for tomorrow’s net.

The net control is usually in Hawaii, but there are always relay stations on both sides of the Pacific to help with weaker signals.

Also for hams, Tony’s Maritime Net is on 14315 USB daily at 2100UTC, and 7087 LSB follows the above at about 2135UTC.

### 1.9.3 Telephones & Cell Phones

There appear to be 2 major cell phone providers in Fiji--Vodafone and Digicell. Both have booths in Savusavu (and I would suspect at the airport and other major arrival locations). It took us 10 minutes, our passport, and $5FJ to get a sim card for our unlocked quad-band cell phone. This is a pre-paid account--no commitments required. You buy ‘top up’ cards from cell phone stores or other stores, and add money to your account.

The Vodafone website in Fiji is:


The Digicell website in Fiji is:

http://www.digicelfiji.com/

Word is that Vodafone has much better coverage than Digicell in Fiji. However, there are some places where Digicell has coverage and Vodafone does not (out at Namena, for example).

To dial the U.S. from a Fijian cell phone, dial 001-XXX-XXX-XXXX. To have friends and family dial a Fijian cell phone from the U.S., dial 011-679-number.
Vodafone has a current promotion for calls to the U.S. (and probably other major foreign countries) of $.20 per minute--there's a special dialing prefix. Ask at a Vodafone dealer if this promo is still on, and how to dial.

1.9.4 Internet Access

In general, internet in Fiji is much better (faster) than Tonga and French Polynesia, and cheaper than most places. There are two options--one is to use wifi as you normally would, and the other is to buy a cell phone-based 'dongle' and use cellular broadband.

In Savusavu, there are several 'Connect' wifi hotspots that are reachable from an on-board wifi system. These are put up by Telecom Fiji, and require you to buy a voucher ashore before you can use them. Check before you leave the boat whether you can connect to a Connect hotspot. Also some cruisers were given a free 1-week voucher by Telecom Fiji (office next to Surf and Turf Restaurant on the street side). This free voucher was for one week of unlimited internet that was pretty good and pretty fast (a good way to get your antivirus and Windows updates out of the way!). The Connect vouchers for regular access cost $5 and are good for 1½ hours of internet time.

The second option is cellular broadband (3G), offered in Fiji by Vodafone (a world-wide company with good infrastructure). Vodafone's name for this is "Flashnet". You buy (or supply) a 'dongle' and then pay for the data you use. I am told that this option keeps you connected in most places in Fiji (but not at Also Island), at a reasonable price. Below is Vodafone's data coverage chart.

Note that this may not be completely up-to-date, as it shows no access at the north end of Taveuni, but we got the best internet outside of Savusavu right there at Matei. We also had very slow access from some fringe areas (Budd Reef) by putting our 'dongle' on a USB extension cable and hanging it in the rigging. In the fringe areas, you may be able to use Sailmail/Winlink via Telnet where nothing else will work (so if you don't have Telnet configured for your Airmail installation, you should get it configured).
Soggy Paws already had a 3G cellular data dongle (USB) from ATT in the U.S. (bought on eBay and opened for use on all provider networks), but the Vodafone dealer in Savusavu said the price was the same $39 FJ for just the sim, or $39 for the sim and the dongle.

For $39, you get the stick, the sim, activation, and 1GB of data. Another 4GB can be purchased for $100 FJ (smaller increments possible too). After a month's worth of more-than-the-average-user (but no streaming video or music), we have only used 2.5GB of our 5GB. 5GB should last most cruisers all cruising season in Fiji. I spent more than $139FJD in a month for much slower internet in Tonga!!

We successfully installed the Vodafone sim in our Sierra Wireless dongle and are able to use it in our Cradlepoint 'hotspot' device (a router for multiple computers to use the stick at the same time). The Huawei stick that Vodafone gave us did NOT work in the Cradlepoint.

Friends with a 3G iPad said the Vodafone sim worked in their iPad too, so I would assume it would work for iPhones, etc. (and an iPhone can also be made into a hotspot).

Vodafone may also sell Vodafone routers--so if you have multiple computers to connect, ask about that when you go to buy your sim card. (They are normally called "MiFi" devices).

The Vodafone Fiji web page for internet (Prepaid Flashnet) is here:


1.9.5 News

Here are some English language Fijian news websites:

Fiji Times - http://www.fijitimes.com/


Regional News from New Zealand Herald: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/


Here are some sources of radio news that we used to keep abreast of what was happening in the world:

English Language Voice News

As the internet proliferates, English-language voice broadcasts on SSB seem to be dwindling. Many of the broadcasts you can find these days by dialing around are either religious-oriented, or anti-American oriented (so listen carefully!).

I did a lot of research on the internet before we left Central America, but I found that what worked best was to dial around on the 9Mhz band at the time of day I wanted to listen to news (morning and evening are the best times for propagation).

We found the BBC on 9695 am at 1600-1700 UTC (mornings) and 12095 usb at 0100UTC (afternoons).

And Radio Australia on 9580 at 1700 UTC.

News via Email
I don’t know of any news service that formulates a customizable daily news email for yachts at sea (if you do, please email me, see email address at front of this guide).

But we had success, using Sailmail, in subscribing to a ‘daily news email’ from Reuters. We set it up so it went to a shore email address, and then we used Sailmail’s Shadowmail feature to retrieve the daily emails when we felt we needed/wanted news, and had good enough propagation, to retrieve the email, stripped of all the graphics and stuff.

The daily 'US News', coming in through Sailmail, was only 7Kb. It contains the ‘top 10’ headlines, with a one sentence summary of each. Check out what Reuters offers at http://links.reuters.com

I am sure there are many other similar sources of a daily news email, but try them out on your internet email before you subscribe via your Winlink/Sailmail account!! And if you have Sailmail access, I strongly recommend you check out Shadowmail (it is not offered/supported under Winlink).

1.10 Diving
The major diving centers in Fiji are
Rainbow Reef - The White Wall, etc in the Somosomo straits, between Taveuni Island and Vanua Levu's SE coast. Most dive operations operate out of facilities on the SW coast of Tavenui Island, or from Viani Bay.

Mbennga, Astrolabe Reef and Kandavu (south coast of Viti Levu, near Suva). There are several dive operations based at small resorts in these areas, plus live-aboard dive boats that leave from Suva.

Savusavu and Namena Reserve. There are 2-3 dive operations based in the Savusavu area that dive the reefs on the south coast of Vanua Levu, and the Namena Reserve. There is also a resort on Namena Island.

Western Fiji. I am sure there are a number of dive facilities operating from Lautoka/Vuda area, and in the Mamanucas and Yasawas, but we haven't been there yet, so I don't have much information.

See the diving notes in the appropriate section for what we know about diving these areas.

1.11 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities
(Original list from John Neale, Mahina Tiare III, from Noonsite.com, August 2011, additional comments and links added by Soggy Paws)

1.11.1 Savusavu
2016 Updates: Storm Bay of Hobart reported that they had a pleasant stay at Waitui Marina, and that the moorings were being maintained. The old fixed dock was destroyed in a cyclone, but there is a floating dock for dinghies.

Copra Shed has expanded their docks.

The Savu Savu Marina has a haulout facility.
From Early 2013: **Copra Shed Marina** - has both moorings and some dockage, with electrical service, with a nice facility to match, including a marine store, restaurant, showers, and laundry. See website for details, or cruiser comments in the Savusavu section. Email contact: coprashed@connect.com.fj

Copra Shed continues to upgrade their docks and facilities.

**Waitui Marina**, next to Copra Shed, has moorings, a bar, restaurant, dive shop, showers, and laundry. They have a dock that's only suitable for dinghies, and moorings. Fiji Lovo night and Indian Food Night for cruisers that is always fun, has great food and often great music.

Note: As of Jan 2013, Bebi Electronics is no longer affiliated with or hosting Waitui Marina's website. I do not have an alternate website.

In our opinion, Waitui Marina is the most decrepit yachting facility in Fiji. In 2012, their moorings were the best in Savusavu, but with the departure of Michael and Kendra in late 2012 (Americans who were running the moorings), I would not assume that their moorings are still being properly maintained. The owner of the building itself has continually refused to put any money into the Marina building and facilities like the bathrooms—even a coat of paint. It may be a good "bottom dollar" place, but your wife will not be happy with your choice.

**Savusavu Marina**: The new development with marina, upriver from Copra Shed, has not sold any of their building sites yet and their "marina" remains one very small dock accessible at HW. In 2012 they put in 5 moorings off their facility, and have permission from the government to add more. [http://www.marina villagefiji.com/marina.html](http://www.marina villagefiji.com/marina.html)

**1.11.2 Western Fiji**

**Vuda Point Marina** is slightly busier than the last few years, but always manages to find moorage for cruisers passing through. They sell out of dry storage space ashore fairly early before each cyclone season, so it is important to contact them well before arrival if one plans on using that service. They lower yachts keels into holes dug in the boatyard, supporting the hull with large tires. In the past, theft from boats dry-stored in this manner has been a problem.

**Boabab Marine** - is a yacht repair service and brokerage that services both Vuda Point Marina and Port Denarau. +679-664-0827

**Musket Cove Marina** on Malololailai Island in western Fiji is slightly busier than last year with all moorings taken, but still plenty of room to anchor safely. Their annual Musket Cove Race Week usually has an excellent turnout of yachts from many countries.

**Port Denarau Marina** near Nadi has added moorings and is having yachts Med-moor stern to one of their long docks so that they can accommodate more cruisers. The number of marine stores and services within the marina complex continues to grow.

**1.11.3 Suva Area**

**Royal Suva Yacht Club**: Limited dockage $50FJ per day. Fuel dock, dinghy dock, bar, and restaurant. Close to downtown Suva.

**Tradewind Moorings**: off the Novotel (ex Tradewinds) Hotel: A couple of free moorings are available for yachts, courtesy of Tony Philips, the owner of Copra Shed Marina and Vuda Point
Marina. This is a fairly protected anchorage, with a place to put your dinghy, but no other facilities. Easy bus ride to downtown.

**Drydock Facilities:** There are several drydock facilities in Suva, suitable for larger vessels.

**1.11.4 Leaving your boat in Fiji for the Cyclone Season**

**2016 Updates:** Savusavu got really smacked by a cyclone in 2015—the cyclone passed SOUTH of Vanua Levu and therefore the winds were coming from the west, right into the mouth of the harbor. About 12 boats ended up high and dry on the reef, a few with major damage. However, most were eventually floated by hard work and cruisers helping cruisers. (see Curly's blog).

**Soggy Paws - March 2013:** Both Savusavu and Vuda Point fared well when Cyclone Evan passed in December 2012… with some notes:

In Savusavu, one boat on a private mooring "walked" its mooring nearly the whole length of the mooring field, hitting a couple of boats before coming to rest alongside the Copra Shed dock. In post-cyclone discussions, it became apparent that little attention is paid to whether moorings are properly sized for the boats that are on them, and some are better maintained than others. Waitui Marina USED to have the best-maintained moorings, but now that they are under new management, who knows how that will go. Bottom line, inspect your own mooring, and be prepared to add components if needed.

Port Denarau Marina was nearly completely destroyed, and one boat sunk at the dock.

Vuda Point Marina fared well, except their "boom" designed to keep the surge out broke on deployment, and there was an incredible amount of movement in the in-the-water portion of the marina. Many boats suffered hull and toe-rail damage as the tightly-packed boats moved against each other, some extensive. Boats on the hard were OK, though a few were poorly prepared and lost things like solar panels, etc. A few were leaning in their keel holes (with unknown resulting stress to the keel).

One person’s opinion…From s/v Learjet, Glenn Andert’s Blog, around 2012:

**Location 1 - Savusavu in the Water:** You can leave your boat on a storm mooring in Savusavu. The harbor is well protected. There are plenty of friendly people around to look after your boat. And Savusavu is just a really nice place. If you plan ahead, you can book a mooring (the best moorings are booked nearly a year in advance, so plan ahead!!).

**Location 2 - Vuda Point Marina in the Water or Out.**

You can leave your boat at Vuda Point Marina. This is the most common option. And they have a lot more capacity. You can leave it in the water, or you can leave it on the hard with the boat sitting on tires with the keel resting on the bottom of a trench. There is capacity here for many more boats.

Since this is the common choice, you'll need to book early.

**Location 3 - Musket Cove:** Some smaller cats have been left in a variety of places. One is past the bridge inside the tiny lagoon at Musket Cove.

**Location 4 - Port Denarau Marina:** The Fiji Guide to Marine Facilities says that Denarau has wonderful new facilities.
Location 5 - Other "Cyclone Holes": There are many many spots within the Fiji cruising area that are known as good cyclone holes. They would be good options if you are aboard and cruising, but probably not good options if you wish to leave your boat unattended. The best information about possible cyclone holes while out cruising Fiji can be obtained from Curly. See the Cruising Resources section.

Tradeoffs: Whether any location is safe from a direct hit from a strong cyclone is hard to tell---there isn’t much in the way of anecdotal data because none of the major locations have been subject to a direct hit.

Note: In Dec 2012, Cyclone Evan hit the west coast of Viti Levu, the Vuda Point and Port Denarau area pretty hard.

At Vuda Point, boats in the water sustained a fair bit of damage to rubrails and stanchions, due to the movement of boats in the tightly-packed circle. Boats on the hard were mostly OK—lots of trees down and debris. Many boats “tilted” in their cyclone holes (unknown whether this caused any keel issues down the road). But no boats sunk or severely damaged.

Reports from Denarau were not so good. Most boats left the dock. One large yacht left at the dock was reportedly sunk. The docks were pretty much totally damaged.

Most boats in that area not at Vuda Point, went up the river N of Lautoka, and tied up into the mangroves. I have heard no reports of major damage.

At Savusavu, your boat is connected to the bottom by just its mooring. You can put in a new mooring and all that – but it's still just one string. For that reason alone, I would not leave ‘Learjet’ there. The other reason is that at 56 feet I don’t think there would be enough swinging room for ‘Learjet’, in my opinion.

Neither the holding in the lagoon at Denarau, nor the dock facilities are up to the job of keeping your boat there during cyclone season.

You can leave your boat in the water at Vuda Point. The marina is a circle, the boats are moored with the bows of all the boats connected to a central point, and the sterns are connected via individual strong points in the circular quay. No dock fingers to get involved during the cyclone fun, which is probably good.

Personally, I would not leave ‘Learjet’ in the water here. It will only take one boat getting lose in the confines of that small circle to wreak havoc on lots of other boats.

Or leave it on the hard at Vuda Point, with the boat sitting on tires with the keel resting on the bottom of a trench. There is a lot more distance between boats this way. And it seems a lot more secure to me. They could accommodate ‘Learjet’ “in a hole”, though they would have to dig one about a meter deeper to get her bottom sitting on the tires. With the boat on the shock absorbing tires and the keel stuck in the trench, I think the odds of a boat getting knocked over are pretty slim.

But, what about the trees all around? The stuff on all those other boats that is not properly lashed? The wood laying around? The rickety out buildings that would explode into fragments in a real blow? Etc. The boat might remain standing, but it could also also have many tens of thousands of dollars of damage from flying debris. I would not leave ‘Learjet’ here either, unless extenuating dire circumstances left me no other option.
**Theft:** Savusavu has a good reputation. There is significant security at Vuda Point. After having spent a couple months there, I would lose a little, but not too much, sleep over theft.

**Aging:** Your boat will take an incredible beating on the hard for months during the tropical summer. Sails delaminating. Seals going bad on engines, pumps, etc. There is a long list here.

**Contamination:** Being on the hard at Vuda Point means: Your boat is in and surrounded by dirt blown around by wind which can be pretty fierce sometimes. Your boat will be covered by the debris from the surrounding trees. Some have nice purple berries that will stain just about any painted surface. Let’s face it, your boat will be a bloody mess when you come back.

Your keel sits in a trench which will typically have standing water, and the tires all have standing water, all of which support a few billion mosquitoes. An army of insects is just waiting to crawl up. I can almost guarantee that you’ll have all kinds of interesting critters living inside your boat when you get back.

**Collateral damage:** They control the weeds in the boat yard with “weed whackers”. Cheap and efficient. But your boat is also at risk from flying rocks. Some friends of mine had to repaint their boat (which had just been painted the year before) as a result. I was there after this event, and had other friends getting rocks on their boats while in the water! As far as I know, they haven’t stopped the weed whacker business. I certainly would not leave ‘Learjet’ there unattended now that she has a new paint job.

**Hot, dusty and buggy:** If you leave your boat on the hard, you’ll spend significant time out of the water at both ends of your stay. It is going to be very hot, dusty and buggy. I found that if I was not covered head to foot with repellent, I’d be eaten alive by the mozzies. They don’t control them, and there is a lot of standing water. And while there is not a big history of mosquito-borne disease there, getting lots of mozzie bites is just not safe. So be prepared for some “this is not fun” time.

**Customer service:** I made a special effort to keep good relations with the management and the staff. As a result I generally felt well taken care of and welcome. However, there is a serious mismatch between between expectations and reality. I had quite a few friends that felt pretty “unwelcome” at times. And there were a few times I felt that way as well. Funny thing is that Vuda Point and the major marina at Savusavu (The Copra Shed) are owned by the same guy, but the “feel” at Savusavu is very friendly, and the “feel” at Vuda Point is sometimes yes, sometimes no.

**Government regs:** Honestly, I don’t know what the situation is now. 6 months ago it sounded like you would have to pay an import duty to keep your boat in the country for more than 3 months. Recently I heard they backed away from that. Better check with customs first.

**Insurance:** If you insure your boat, don’t forget to investigate this very very carefully. I’ve had plenty of discussions with people that had already committed to leaving their boats only to discover after it was too late to back out just how much trouble their insurance company was going to create with last minute surprises.

**Caretaking:** At Vuda Point, you can hire Baobab Marine to watch after your boat. They are quite diligent.

**Summary:** My own personal take is that I would not leave ‘Learjet’ in Fiji because I wouldn’t trust that she would be safe from a cyclone. And if were not for that issue, I would struggle
getting past the 2nd level of issues because I am certainly on the “fussy” side. I can do the passage (to New Zealand) in less than a week, with 4 adults aboard, and with regular contact with an onshore weather router. I've done 6 now, and have yet to be “pasted”. So, for me, the passage is preferable to leaving her.

On the other side: lots of people have left lots of boats there for lots of years now, and still do, and generally with good success.

From an anonymous cruiser on Noonsite.com:

**Vuda Point** in Viti Levu, Fiji, is a very useful Anti Cyclone Marina with hardstanding, marina berths, and dug out cyclone holes, where many Insurance companies will insure yachts throughout the cyclone season. It is a very attractive marina with two contractors, a chandlery, shop, cafe and seaview restaurant at sensible prices. There are also reasonable showers and washing facilities.

Whilst it is a pleasant marina with very good yard staff, we would like to pass on the following information to fellow cruisers so they can arrive prepared:

The marina does not have pontoons, so getting on and off the boat can be tricky at times. Planks can be used in a set-up similar to the pasarel system.

Most of the electrical connection boxes at the dock are purely a household system and therefore may not be waterproof.

The Marina boasts a yacht hoist. The maintenance of this however (at the time of writing) is poor, especially to the tyre area where all of the tyres currently being used have huge bits of rubber hanging from them, exposing the inner tube. Vuda Point marina has good, experienced operators, but they may operate on their own even when moving large yachts, with nobody watching apart from the driver. When your boat is being moved around in the hoist, there may be damage to the sides of it as there are many pot holes within the marina and the yachts tend to swing from side to side as the hoist moves through the pot holes. The slings are also pretty old and not very well maintained.

The hard standing is generally in poor condition and certain areas are prone to flooding. The marina does occasionally use pumps to clear the water out.

Mosquitos are very much present and there appears to be little spraying of any insecticides to help alleviate this problem.

Branches from trees may be a problem to yachts as they are placed in the cyclone hole, however these are trimmed on request but at a cost.

All ladders, scaffolding, metal drums, yacht legs, wooden benches and electricity are charged for. After antifouling there is also a charge for relocation of the yacht legs.

There is water both on the hard and at the marina berths, but this may occasionally be subject to water restrictions. No hose pipes are provided.

There is a fuel dock for all boats run by the chandlery shop. All fuel prices are the same as they are controlled by the local government.

There is a 7.5% levy imposed by the marina, on both labour and materials on all work carried out by the local companies. Local government taxes are levied on top of this.
1.12 Tsunami Information
The entire Pacific Basin is subject to tsunamis. Since we have been in the Pacific (3 years), there have been 3 significant tsunamis which have affected cruising locations (American Samoa and Tonga in 2009, So America, Galapagos & Panama in 2010, Hawaii & Mexico in 2011). The tsunamis originate in various locations, but the worst origination locations were Japan and Chile, however, many 'tremors' happen in these locations that do not cause widespread tsunamis.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center website is located here:
http://ptwc.weather.gov/

If you have onboard email, it is a good idea to subscribe to tsunami warning emails while you are in the Pacific, which you can do on this website. It might be useful to first subscribe from your internet email for a little while, to understand what messages might be coming your way, and how often, before you chance clogging up your onboard email.

1.13 Cruising Information Sources
We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don’t mind that we’ve gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don’t have internet.

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what ‘a foot under the keel’ means, for example.

Where it’s important, we’ve annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

1.13.1 Fijian Websites
Here are some websites you should visit when you are looking for Fiji information:
Yacht Help Fiji - http://yachthelp.com
National Trust of Fijian Islands: http://www.nationaltrust.org.fj/
Yacht In Transit - A website maintained for cruising sailboats, based in NZ, but covering the western Pacific where the Australia/NZ boats cruise. http://www.yit.co.nz/quick-start-guide

1.13.2 Curly in Savusavu
Curly is a cruiser and a 25-year resident of Fiji who resides in Savusavu Harbor on the M/V Curly (a houseboat), and sometimes does deliveries of yachts to and from other locations in the South Pacific.

Curly is an excellent source of information for cruisers passing through Savusavu. During "cruising season" he conducts twice-weekly 'chart marking' seminars aboard his boat--going over your cruising plans and providing advice and words of wisdom about cruising in Fiji. He charges a modest fee of $10 FJ per boat to attend the seminar and $25 FJ for his 'chartlet pack'--paper copies of some of the most common passages in Fiji, with waypoints. If your plans are for cruising other areas not included in the chart pack, and Curly has waypoints for that area, he will email you the waypoints he has, if you've bought his basic chart pack.

Curly provides this contact information:
If others wish to obtain Chartlets or Information please pass on my email address: 3DN6593 at Sailmail.com..... used every day

curlycarswell@gmail.com ....used only to receive or send Attachments and when in Internet Contact.

Fiji Cell (679)868 0878

Also, I generally listen to Rag of the Air on 8173 SSB USB at 1900 UTC.

1.13.3 Cruiser Reports

For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser’s websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of a Seven Seas Cruising Association bulletin. For the sources reported below as 2009-2013, much of the info has come directly from our cruising friends, helping to round out the information in our various Compendiums.

If you run into someone who has contributed to a Compendium input, please thank them appropriately. So many people are cruising and using the information, and so few take the time to contribute!

For the Fiji information, we are especially indebted to Curly, and s/v Billabong and s/v Opus for lots of waypoints and information.

Heart of Gold (late 1990’s) - We are indebted to Jim and Sue Corenman for their Letters from South Pacific, originally published in Latitude 38 in the late 1990’s, referenced in our Weather section, but also which contain a bunch of still-relevant information about cruising in the South Pacific.

Sloepmouche (Nov 2004) - Sloepmouche is a 46’ Cross Trimaran with a 5’ draft, with Luc Callebaut & Jackie Lee aboard. They have a website, but I have lost the link. Google them!

Passage (2005) - These notes came from the Vavau Cruiser's Guide, which attributes s/v Passage http://svpassage.com

Ocelot (The Hacking Family) (2004) - This is a family traveling around the world on a catamaran. They have done a great job documenting where they’ve been and what they’ve learned. They were in Fiji in 2005.

http://hackingfamily.com

Tackless II (2005-2006) - T2 is a 44’ CSY center cockpit cruiser (5.5’ draft). They were in Fiji in 2006-2007.

http://www.thetwocaptains.com/logbook/southpacific.htm


http://www.sailbillabong.com

Cheshire (2007) - Cheshire visited Fiji and did a great write-up on their Lau Group experiences in September/October 2007, both as an overview in the December 2007 SSCA Bulletin, and in a separate PDF file which is available as an SSCA Additional Publication.
Cheshire’s draft is only 3 feet, so be a little more cautious than normal with their shallow anchorage waypoints. (But the only place we’ve found this to be an issue is their anchorages in Ongea in the southern Lau).

**Cyan (2008)** - Cyan used Cheshire’s Lau Group notes and added their own, for a more complete picture of the Lau group. Most of this was published in the SSCA Commodore’s Bulletin, but other information came directly from their website.

http://www.starsonthesea.com/laugp.htm
http://sailingcyan.blogspot.com

**Carina (2010-2011):** Carina arrived in Fiji (Savusavu) in June 2010, and stay over through cyclone season, departing in April 2011. They cruised the south coast of Vanua Levu, the Lau Group, bits of the Koro Sea and the Mamanucas, and to Vuda Point Marina and back.

They have a 32-foot monohull with a draft of under 6 feet. Their website can be found at http://www.sv-carina.org.

**Migration (2010-2012)** - Migration is a trimaran with a beam of 25’ and 4’9” draft with Bruce Balan and Alene aboard. Some of their comments in this booklet come from Bruce’s website.

http://brucebalan.com/migrations

They have also contributed a few comments via the PPJ Yahoo Group over the past few years. But the primary info on the southern Lau islands came from a very detailed email sent to me specifically for Compendium publication. (thank you again, Bruce and Alene!)

Bruce also wrote a very good article for Latitude 38 on South Pacific weather, which can be found on our website, here: http://www.svsoggypaws.com/files/

**Delos (2011):**  http://svdelos.blogspot.com

**Stray Kitty (2011):**  http://www.ellsay.ca  A catamaran

**Mr John VI (2009)** - These comments came from a PDF file floating around on the web called Mr John in Fiji or Mr John’s blog. It seems to be a compendium of his own experience in 1987 and revisiting again in 2008/9, and shared experiences from other yachts. Useful guide and it includes some sketch charts which are not included here, so you should download a copy for yourself. John has graciously given us permission to host a copy on our website, you can download it here: http://svsoggypaws.com/files

Mr. John IV is a Bristol 35.5 with a fairly shallow draft (for a monohull). He has a tendency to want to anchor in shallow water, so if you have boat with a draft over about 5 feet, take care!

Mr. John also has a blog, where they elaborate more on their experiences at each place. http://yachtmrjohn.blogspot.com

**Nine of Cups (2011)** - Nine of Cups is a deep draft 44’ cruiser.


**Whoosh (2010)** - Whoosh ‘s major contribution is the weather sources information.(see Weather section)

**Mahina Tiare III (2010/2011)** - John and Amanda Neal run a custom Offshore Sailing Experience business call Mahina Expeditions. They have criss-crossed the Pacific and shared their experiences on their website and on noonsite.com.


**YOLO (2012)** - “YOLO” (You Only Live Once) is a 42 foot PDQ catamaran owned by Karen and Jason Trautz.

[http://yolotrautz.blogspot.com](http://yolotrautz.blogspot.com)

**Mandala (2011)** - The comments from Mandala on the Lau Group were originally found on Noonsite, who reported the following:

Our thanks to Adrian Faulkner of Sail Yacht MANDALA for this interesting and useful report. Adrian is happy to help others with info. Contact him at mandala@inspire.net.nz.

We would like to add our thanks as well.

**Shandon (2010)** - David Mitchell of s/v Shandon compiled his notes on a cruise through the Lau in Aug/Sep 2010. We have only taken excerpts from this published report. There are other useful bits of information (photos and sketch charts, mainly) that we have not included. You can download this report published by the RCC as a PDF file. It is available for download as a free e-book on Amazon.com, or directly from the RCC website here:

[http://www.rccpf.org.uk](http://www.rccpf.org.uk)

**Pincoya (2012)** - Gene and Gloria of s/v Pincoya traveled from Suva to Kadavu thru the western Lau islands to Fulaga, then north to Vanua Balauv, where we met them. They spent an exhausting afternoon with us giving verbal notes and waypoints from their chartplotter, and also gave us the text of their blog for Kadavu and the Lau. We have since plotted most of the waypoints, and hope that we have correctly corrected the obvious errors.

Pincoya is an Island Packet 44 with a 5-6 foot draft.

[http://www.sailblogs.com/member/smilin1/](http://www.sailblogs.com/member/smilin1/)

**Sarah Jean II (2012)** - Norm and Beth Cooper of s/v Sarah Jean II spent 2 weeks in Kadavu in August 2012, and wrote up their experiences and anchorage waypoints for us.

Sarah Jean II is a Saga 43.

[http://www.sailblogs.com/member/sarahjean2/](http://www.sailblogs.com/member/sarahjean2/)

**Soggy Paws (2012-2013)** - Soggy Paws arrived in Fiji in June 2012, and stayed over in Savusavu for the 2012/2013 cyclone season. While much of the factual information we gather goes directly into the Compendium, there is a lot of additional info in our blog.
Soggy Paws is a CSY 44, a 44 foot monohull with a 5.5’ draft. Soggy Paws’ blog is here:
http://svsoggypaws.blogspot.com

Namani (2013) - Namani is a 1981 Dufour 35’ sloop. They crossed the Pacific to Tonga in 2012, and spent the cruising season in 2013 in Fiji. Their blog is here:
http://www.sailblogs.com/member/namaniatsea/

Nadine from Namani is the author of a book for sailing families who home school called "Lesson Plans Ahoy: Hands-on learning for sailing children and home schooling sailors", available through Amazon in print or Kindle versions;
http://www.sailkidsed.net

Radiance (2013): Mark V. Ward KL2RZ, Laurence Blakely KL2WZ. Radiance is from Seward, Alaska, and a member of SSCA and OceansWatch. Their blog is here:
http://www.sailblogs.com/member/thebigblue/

Gypsea Heart (2013): Cruised Fiji during cruising season 2013, and specifically contributed information on diving in Kadavu area.
http://www.svgypseahert.com/

Southern Cross (2013): Cruised Fiji during cruising season 2013, and specifically contributed information about Vanua Balavu, Taveuni, and Namena.
http://sailingwithmarkandvicki.blogspot.com

Fruit de Mer (2013): Gerrit and Anne-Mieke cruised Fiji for 6 months in 2013. Contributed specific information about their cruise on the Lambasa river and our their stay at the anchorage of tiny Leleuvia island (South of Ovalau). In general we like to say that our C-map electronic charts, official update Jeppesen Company 2011, turned out to be reliable for us.

Aqualuna (2013): Jonathan and Gabrielle cruised Fiji in 2013, and sent us an update on the Lau Group. Their blog (mostly pictures) can be found here:
http://blog.mailasail.com/aqualuna

The Rose (2014): Pat and John - We are aboard our Kelly Peterson 46 “The Rose”. Our blog site is at sailblogs.com under The Rose. But our blogs are usually more experiential rather than informative so this was an exception to write up the waypoints etc
Storm Bay of Hobart (2016), with Aussies Margaret Beasley and Chris Wilkie aboard, arrived from American Samoa in July 2016, cleared in at Savusavu, hauled the boat to Vuda, and cleared out in late August/Early September from Vuda.

1.13.4 Pacific Puddle Jump Yahoo Group

This is a ‘group’ on Yahoo where the people gathering in South and Central America meet to share information about crossing the big puddle. Fortunately, many previous years’ jumpers come back and share their information with the newbies. A good source of information, but not very organized, and full of bloat from people who ask the same questions over and over again, without doing any research of their own.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/

You must be a member to read or post anything on this site, but if you are getting ready for a Pacific crossing, it is well worth a few minutes to sign up for Yahoo and then sign up for this group. Be sure to explore the Files and Links pages, there is lots more information there.

1.13.5 Noonsite

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

http://www.noonsite.com

1.13.6 Seven Seas Cruising Association

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

http://www.ssca.org

1.14 Printed Sources

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).


First published in 1987, with an update in 1993, this guide has recently been re-published by Michael Calder as a PDF file on the internet for free download, as a 3rd edition. 265 pages of still mostly-relevant information on Fiji. Get your FREE copy here:


Michael Calder’s Preface to the 3rd edition:

After many requests to reprint this book, all of which I have refused on the grounds that it is now 18 years since it was last updated, I have now decided to make it available as a historic reference in electronic format. One reason for this is that I have found that copies of the original
2nd Edition were being offered for sale online for prices as high as $200. Whether anyone would pay such a sum is problematic.

There has been a slight change in layout to facilitate on screen display.

Since this book was last published the world has discovered the Internet which now hosts the World Wide Web – the Web. In a way the Web has probably made much of this book unnecessary. I note that all the information that appeared in Chapter 2 – Rules, Regulations & Customs is now available on the Web and I have used the official Fiji Revenue & Customs Authority website at http://www.frca.org.fj/ to bring this section up to date.

Generally however I have not updated the navigational information. In the intervening years there has been considerable growth in yacht cruising and in the number of marinas and yacht agents available in Fiji. I have noted these are new marinas and quoted their URLs where available. Where a marina has its own web site I have removed any conflicting information.

The Super Yacht chartering industry in Fiji is growing and the Super Yacht Charter Decree was introduced in 2010 and is applicable to Super Yachts that are being charted within Fiji Waters and these yachts must have locally based 'Recognised Super Yacht Agent'; there are now at least four all of whom have comprehensive web sites. One of these, Yacht Help Fiji, (http://www.yachthelp.com/) publishes an annual Fiji Marine Guide. This concise brochure contains essential information for visiting yachts. An online version is available for a modest fee via their website.

In the Preface to the 2nd Edition I mentioned my aversion to “GPS Coordinates". We now have that wonderful resource Google Earth and I am sure many of you will do just what I have done and compare my chartlets to the satellite imagery. In some places the imagery is good; in others, Vanuabalavu for instance it is poor and there is a probable error in the latitude that I give for Qilaqila Passage of about 0.4 miles. As I have said 'The chartlets that I have drawn are illustrative, positions given are approximate and are there only to enable correlation with the same feature on the published chart.'

Be warned and put your trust in the Mk.I eye-ball.

1.14.2 Migrant Cruising Notes for Fiji - Phil Cregeen


1.14.3 South Pacific Anchorages – Warwick Clay


Reported by s/v YOLO in July 2011: South Pacific Anchorages GPS Locations:

We noted that the anchorage locations stated in South Pacific Anchorages by Warwick Clay did not match up with our C-Map NT+ plotter locations, or our backup GPS units. In general, Clay's locations were slightly east of the actual locations and usually on land.
1.14.4 The Pacific Crossing Guide – RCC Pilotage Foundation


1.14.5 Landfalls of Paradise – Earl Hinz


2 Passage Reports

2.1 From Elsewhere to Fiji

2.1.1 Tonga to Fiji

Kanaloa 2002: We had a good passage to Savusavu in Fiji, going through the pass at night, keeping a close eye on the radar, which showed the reefs and islands as we passed between. We used the following waypoints, which worked well for us:

1) 17°28’S, 178°36’W;
2) 17°31’S, 179°37’W.

Savusavu is a port of entry and a delightful anchorage, with moorings opposite the Copra Shed or Waitui Marina, costing $10 a night. Both marinas will arrange your cruising permit, which takes three to four working days. Fuel, water, cooking gas and most provisions are readily available and, in most cases, cheaper than Tonga.

2.1.2 The Samoas to Fiji

Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016: Our passage from American Samoa to Savusavu was uneventful, plenty of SE breeze and a pesky southerly swell so we had that S Pacific roll that most will recognize! We came in through the Nanuka pass, it was deep and no problem. Our transit began in late afternoon and we could easily see Welangilala Island to port. After Cyclone Winston we wondered whether the light on that island would be working, but after sunset it was visible, so in July 2016 it was functional.

2.1.3 Between New Zealand and Fiji

Most cruisers leave from Opua and make a stop at Minerva Reef (if needed to let a weather systems go by), and make landfall at either Lautoka, Suva, or Savusavu. Savusavu is reported to have easier clearing in.

On the return, most cruisers depart from Lautoka/Vuda/Denarau area or Suva, for the trip back to NZ. Though you can leave from Savusavu, this adds another day to the trip (more wx uncertainty).

The passage usually takes 7-14 days, though one boat took a month. Sometimes the "weather hold" at Minerva can be long, and unpleasant (but better than being at sea).
Here is a quote from our friends on Dream Away about their 2013 trip from NZ to Fiji: "We finally escaped from Minerva Reef after 12 days, as another northerly followed the bad winds. We spent quite a lot of our time saying “we should never have come in here, vectoring off to Tonga would have been a much better idea”. Once we got to Savusavu we met two of the boats who had decided to make a run for it ahead of the big wind/swell. Both had damage, and one had stopped in Totoya for several days, losing his best anchor there."

From our friend Rob on Changing Spots in Nov 2012: "Don’t know if you heard it was a miserable trip to NZ. One boat was lost, Windigo, and as I write a NZ navy ship should be there to take the 2 people off her. A freighter and a cruising boat have been standing by, but the conditions are still too rough there for them to get close. Lots of boats reporting damage on the SSB nets. I shredded my bow net, and lost my gennaker which was lashed to it. Should be in Opua late Sat night. It has been a journey of too much wind or not enough wind, and for those coming from Fiji, from the wrong direction."

On Windigo, from a news report: "The injured crew of a yacht that rolled in 10m seas between New Zealand and Tonga are awaiting rescue after activating their emergency beacon at around 6.30pm yesterday (7 November).

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) is also investigating a second distress beacon from an unknown vessel activated at around 5am this morning 230km southwest of Tonga.

The crew of the 11.6m (38ft) Windigo – a 52-year-old British man, and a 43-year-old Auckland woman – are understood to have sustained mild to moderate head injuries after their yacht rolled. The man has also suffered a back injury. The yacht left Tonga two days ago.

The yacht is afloat, but disabled and taking on water about 700km southwest of Tonga and 1260km northeast of New Zealand in 40 knot (75 km/h winds).

A RNZAF P3-Orion from Whenuapai reached the scene at 1am today, establishing communications with the yacht and dropping a liferaft.

It returned to New Zealand to refuel and is now en route to investigate the second distress beacon.

A French navy Guardian aircraft is flying from Noumea to the Windigo’s position, and will arrive shortly before 2pm.

Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator Keith Allen said another yacht, Adventure Bound, was around 70km from the Windigo’s position but capable of travelling at only 3-4km/h in the conditions.

“The two people aboard have secured themselves in the stern section of the yacht. They have a liferaft but in the conditions they are reluctant to leave the yacht until they have to,” he said.

“That is the correct approach for them to take.”

And from the couple themselves, several weeks later: "Recently Steve & I (Tania) were on passage between Tonga and New Zealand and we were hit by a severe storm and rolled, we sustained a fair amount of damage to our home of the last 3yrs, she has no steering (possibly), no bilge, no battery (possibly..as we left the motor running) no lights, and a broken starboard
hatch. SHE CAN SAIL all rigging and sails in excellent condition. We are uninsured (unfortunately) and would love to see her again!!!

Windigo was spotted abandoned/afloat on 17 November 2012 at 24 degrees, 49.3min South 179 degrees, 49.2min East

Conclusion--lots of boats make this trip numerous times, but it isn't a passage to be taken lightly. You really need to make sure you have an experienced weather person giving you advice, and even then still might encounter some significant weather, coming or going from NZ.

2.2 Passages within Fiji

2.2.1 Savusavu To the Lau Group

Soggy Paws - July 2012: We just missed a weather window that would have been perfect for going directly from Savusavu to the Northern Lau (Vanua Balavu), and so waited another 2 weeks (while cruising NE through Viani Bay and Taveuni and up to Budd Reef) before we got another window. We were looking for winds 15 knots or less and E-NE. We did eventually get it.

We debated whether to leave from Budd Reef, or move down to Matagi for a closer shot. In reality, the only benefit in leaving from Matagi is that you can leave after dark, where it would be a little risky traversing Budd Reef after dark.

We pulled anchor from our anchorage on the west side of the islands at 4pm, and motored in light easterly winds out the south pass (16-33.18S / 179-41.01W). We had scoped this area on the way in in good light, and knew it to be pretty much wide open. The only thing we had to avoid was an area of coral close to the NE of Raranatiqa Island.

Once outside the reef, we headed straight for our waypoint NE of Motu Lailai. Continuing on this course would take us straight into the NW pass at Vanua Balavu. But for two reasons, once clear of Motu Lailai, we opted instead to head for just west of Kanacea Island (just west of Vanua Balavu). The first reason was that this was a much more comfortable point of sail for us in the ENE winds, and the second was that we expected to arrive about 2am, and it would be more comfortable killing time in what was forecast to NE at 20, in the lee of Vanua Balavu and Kanathea, rather than off the NW tip of the island.

The 20 knots never materialized, but we were still glad we had taken this choice. The one boat that was trying to head for the NW pass eventually gave up and followed us, as they weren't having much fun beating into the wind and seas.

Once in the lee of Kanacea and Vanua Balavu, we took down most of the sail and spent the rest of the night slowly jogging upwind under reefed main in the comfortable conditions. At 8am we were outside the Adavaci Pass. The light was in our eyes, but the conditions were good, and the waypoints were good, so we just proceeded slowly with a good lookout on the bow, and had no problems. Five other boats followed us in this pass.

From the pass, we headed for the southern tip of the island to the east of the pass, and from there straight east into Daliconi. There were no reefs or hazards on this course. Waypoints for the pass and Daliconi Village are in the Vanua Balavu section.
Shango - June 2012 - Savusavu to Vanua Balavu: We did a quick overnight from Savusavu to the Adavaci Pass on the west side of Vanua Balavu. We have attached some Adavaci pass waypoints if you want to go directly in to Daliconi for sevusevu. (If you go in the Qilaqila pass, which has a nice range, you are still ten-ish miles north of your sevusevu site.) We have modified these waypoints from ones we used from a boat called Cyan. They wrote a good article in the November 2008 SSCA Bulletin. They give a variety of waypoints which are useful.

Adavaci 1:  017-13.6851 S / 179-01.2963 W
Adavaci 2:  017-13.6523 S / 179 01.2015 W
Adavaci 3:  017-13.6021 S / 179-01.1103 W
Adavaci 4:  017-13.5813 S / 179-01.0268 W

Daliconi Anchorage:  017-13.1750 S / 178-57.9830 W

Carina - August 2010 - Savusavu to the Lau: We waited a week at Lescieva Point (off Cousteau Resort, and another two windy weeks at Fawn Harbor, for the wind to die down enough to head for the Lau.

Finally, with the migration eastward of the last of a series of big high pressure systems in the subtropical Pacific, and the formation of a low pressure system near Australia, winds finally began to calm down.

Those with experience advised us to wait at least until the second day of calm before venturing out to windward in the Koro Sea, so wait we did. Dawn of August 5 found us making final preparations for going to sea. By 8 am local, we had our anchor up and were slowly working our way out the dog-legged passage in the reef and into 2 meter seas. The tide was ebbing, so despite the seas, we made good time until we rounded Tavenui Island and lost its protection. Twenty hours later, diesel engine still rumbling and pushing us into the wind and short confused swell, we passed through the reef at Qilaqila (ng-eelah-ng-eelah) and inside the atoll surrounding Vanua Balavu, Lau province, three weeks to the day after we left Savusavu to travel 110 nautical miles to reach the Lau.

2.2.2 Suva to Kadavu

Pincoya - June 2012: We departed Suva early Sat morning in a brisk SE wind, 18 to 25. We were immediately close hauled with the new jib sheeted inside the shrouds. Even so, we were unable to make the rhumbline to Herald Pass. Our friends on Noe Noe, starting right behind us in their Farr 40, was able to hold the course and speed by us, although delayed by hooking (then losing) a mahi just out the reef.

At the end of a long day, we turned upwind to motorsail the 6 miles we couldn’t make and entered the pass as a strong squall hit us. Quickly putting in a second reef, we proceeded through and to the island of Dravuni, where we had a lee anchorage. Noe Noe was able to proceed to Naqura Bay where their friends on Fortaleza were anchored and waiting for them.

Shango - June 2012: We waited a couple extra days in Suva for more easterly wind for our crossing to Kadavu and it was worth it. We had a wonderful sail at 60-88 AWA with 15-20 knots and blue sky. We’re at Ono island and will do sevsevu this morning. Looking forward to exploring and doing a couple dives. So far Kadavu looks a lot like the Lau Group. Much more remote than I expected.
**Felicity - 2003:** We left Suva at about 2100, with Ken watching radar and the charts and using the well marked range we safely passed through the reef entrance to Suva. We had a nice uneventful sail to Kadavu. As it was only about a 60 mile trip, we arrived before daybreak, so we have to wait for dawn so we could enter the pass in the reef. I had emailed the Dive Kadavu Resort with some diving questions. They had promptly replied that yachties were welcome to use the resort and dive with them. I was warned however, that we should expect a crowd as a rally from NZ was also expected to arrive over the next couple of days.

Once the sun started to rise we could see the mountainous island of Kadavu. We had planned to go somewhat out of the way to enter the main reef pass, but soon heard all sorts of discussion on the VHF channel 16 about boats from Dive Kadavu coming out to lead the arriving NZ rally boats in through the smaller and much more direct reef entrance. We soon were being led into the reef by a small fiberglass boat.

We were showed where to anchor in the small anchorage off the resort and soon were comfortably anchored and putting the boat in order after our short overnighter.

**2.2.3 Suva to the Lau**

**Pincoya - July 2012 - Kadavu to Southern Lau via Matuku:** We went from Suva to Kadavu to the southern Lau. When we left Kadavu for the Southern Lau (first stop, Matuku), we went out the Naigara Pass, on the NE tip of Kadavu. It was a hairy exit, we wouldn’t recommend it!

Our friends on Noe Noe and Fortaleza went N and exited above the N Astrolabe and were able to lay Matuko; probably a better strategy in strong SE trades. Their tack N was protected where ours wasn’t.

We left from Kavala Bay on the NE side of Kadavu; a decent jumping off place for our planned passage to Matuku. Spending the night in a calm anchorage, Pincoya decided to go through Ono Passage and out Naingaro pass on the south side.

Tony on Forteleza had an infected foot and along with Noe Noe they were going to stay a day or two extra. Once through the pass around 11:00 am, we set the sails for Matuku, an overnight passage. We then called Noe Noe and Forteleza and let them know what the seas and wind were doing. At the time, the seas were 1 meter and winds enough to the ENE that we would have to tack our way to Matuku, but not great distance.

Based on that information Noe Noe and Forteleza also decided to leave, an hour or so behind us. Shortly after that, the winds moved more ESE which made our passage even longer as we had to do a series of tacks. The seas were not too great and the sun was mostly shining so it was a good day for a sail.

As the sun went down, Gene was able to see the green flash for the second time ever, a special event. But that did not mean an easy trip! We did our big tack during the night, and, sad to say, even with the new blade sail rigged inside the shrouds with barber haulers, we are not able to tack better than 120 degrees "course made good" although on the compass it seems closer to 100. And of course as you try to steer closer to the wind your speed drops. We have learned never to steer past neutral helm, meaning our boat needs to have a small amount of weather helm to maintain any speed at all.
We try to set things so we are going at least 5 knots. At night we usually put in a first reef in the main in case we get surprised by the winds changing or a squall comes. We find the leech of the new sail flutters or flogs a lot also and are experimenting with where blocks can be placed on the toe rail to improve that. A bit more frustrating than we hoped with the new sail.

Next morning we found that Noe Noe and Fortaleza were almost to Matuku while we were still 10 miles away. We continued our tack to just N of the island, then motor sailed to the pass into Matuku Harbor and the village of Lomati around 9:00 am.

On the fishing front, both Noe and Fortaleza had caught fish but we had no strikes. We anchored in 15 meters in the harbor, a totally protected bay.

**Matuku to Fulaga:** What can one say about another upwind passage. Gene had a bug a day or so before we left Matuku, but I had felt fine until we started our passage. Even though we had take stugeron, our seasickness medicine, everything hit me at once. I felt awful the entire trip. It did not help that the seas were two meters and again we were close hauling our way across to Fulanga.

Because the wind was from the ESE and we wanted to go E, we started on a starboard tack going toward Totoya Island, 20 miles away. Then to a port tack to miss Totoya and get below the rhumb line from Matuku to Fulanga, as the weather was forecasting a change to the SE sometime. At 2 am, that change happened and as we were about 4 miles S of the rhumb line, we tacked E. At first we were holding the line, but as time passed, the wind shifted back more to ESE and we had to veer N.

Come daybreak, I put out the port rod lure and was going back to put out another when that reel drag went off. Yippee, **fish on!** But by the time I got the jib furled and boat slowed up into the wind, I was about spooled out as this is my smallest reel. I started fighting the fish which by now was at least 300 yards back and deep. I was barely able to hold the rod and had to keep it propped against the boat some of the time. During the next half hour I was able to get some line back, but at that time this fish had had enough and took off. I got spooled again and clipped the reel on to a second rod, letting the first rod go overboard. I had read about this but never tried it before. Unfortunately, this second line broke immediately right where the swivel was connected so I ended up losing the fish, the lure and plus rod and reel..... I have since stripped all old line off and retired all snap swivels. This large fish had also damaged the fishing rod holder. As we approached Fulanga, we did hook a mahi mahi, and brought it right up to the boat, where it unfortunately jumped off the hook. So no fish for Pincoya, except for a small skipjack we caught the first day. It turned out to be pretty good eating; we are having a hard time remembering why we don't like skipjack.

### 2.2.4 Northern Lau to the Southern Lau

**Soggy Paws - August 2012:** We really wanted to make the 100 mile jump from Vanua Balavu to Fulaga as 2 day-sails with an overnight at Lakeba. We wanted to be able to fish and see the islands we were passing by. But after planning it out, it looked just a little too far to make the 60 mile pass-to-pass distance from the Tonga Pass at the south end of Vanua Balavu to the anchorage at Lakemba, in daylight. It would be marginal in the winds we like to sail in, and we’d be anxious about speed all day and probably have to motorsail to keep our speed up to make Lakeba in daylight. We'd also have to wait a couple more days in Vanua Balavu for the
(hopefully) perfect wind--ENE at 15-17 (what we needed for speed). So we finally decided to do this as one overnight.

We left the village of Susui about noon, and motored straight east to the opening in the pass. We had 2 other boats with us, and all of us caught a nice fish before exiting the pass. We saw whales inside and outside the pass here (mid August).

We wished we’d left an hour or two earlier from Susui, because our fly-bys of Vekai and Tuvutha were in poor light and we didn't get to see much.

The rest of the night was nice--one of the nicest sails we’ve had in a while. We had 10-12 knots of wind, about 65 degrees relative, and the seas were down--partially because of the reefs and islands to the east, and partially because of several days of light winds. Sweet sailing--with the steady winds the autopilot and sails were happy, and watchstanding was easy.

We passed close west of Lakeba around midnight (we had waypoints for the anchorage, so knew our chart was pretty good, and also used radar to verify). We were able to pull in 5 bars on our Vodafone internet stick as we sailed by, but the speed was slow and so we didn't get much accomplished in the 45 minutes we had a connection. We also had cell coverage, but didn't try any calls.

By dawn we were just west of Namuka, and now hard on the wind. We couldn't quite make the pass at Fulaga, on the NE coast, so we sailed as best we could into the lee on the west side of Fulaga, and then motorsailed around to the pass close to the reef (in very light conditions, very good sun). Again, our 2010 version CMap (CM93v2) chart was positionally accurate but not very detailed.

We just happened to arrive right at slack low tide, and had only about ½ knot of incoming tide. The tide/current differences noted by Migration in the Fulaga section are accurate, except it was slack low, not slack high. The entry was easy using notes and waypoints in the Fulaga section.

Yinka - June 2012: Yinka headed 120nm south leaving Vanua Balavu, Northern Lau mid afternoon.

We had a Wahoo on before the pass - a good omen. We stopped fishing but just at happy hour the skipper saw birds working and couldn't resist putting the line back out... but before he could get the lure set and the drag on, we had on a yellowfin tuna... yeha!!! We then topped that off with a spectacular sunset and the legendary 'green' flash.

Our overnight passage was perfect sailing due south in an easterly of 15 knots with flat seas. The sky was an astronomers dream no clouds, no moon and the milky way shining bright.

The day dawned blue and the skip couldn't resist fishing when we saw the telltale white birds working the surface... Mahi Mahi!

We made landfall at Fulanga 19.08S / 178.34W. A rather dodgy tidal pass navigated and we we're in paradise. OMG this place is stunning!
2.2.5 Savusavu East to Fawn Harbor or Taveuni / Viani Bay

Soggy Paws - July 2012: There are 2 approaches to getting east to the Taveuni area in the prevailing wind conditions. One way is pure sailing, and the recommendation from Curly is to sail south close-hauled about 5-10 miles, until you can tack over and lay your destination (Fawn Harbor, Dakuniba, or the entry to Somosomo Straits).

The second is motor sailing, which is what we did. We had a 4th of July party the night before, so didn't do what we'd originally planned--move out to the Cousteau Resort anchorage the afternoon before. So we dropped our mooring in Savusavu harbor at "sparrow fart" (first light), and motored out following waypoints and our inbound track. We motored fairly close around the reef (being careful not to be too close!), and headed east for our waypoint at the entry to Dakuniba Bay.

The wind started out calm, but picked up and was actually blowing pretty hard in the area off Lesciaciva Point and east of that for about 5-10 miles. Our speed, motorsailing with high RPMs, dropped to about 3.5 knots between the wind and seas, and our ETA at Dakuniba was looking pretty grim. But knowing that we had Fawn Harbor as an alternate, we kept going. Within the next hour, we got out of the 'wind compression zone' off Lesciaciva Point, and in the lee from big Taveuni Island out to the east. The wind veered a little more SE (from Taveuni, and draw over the 'mainland' where the land was heating up, we think), and we were able to ease back on the throttle, and still arrived at Dakuniba entry by about 1:30pm. With the sun at our back, waypoints, and a Google Earth chart, this was an easy entry.

We spent a week a Dakuniba, and then used our Google Earth chart to navigate the 5 miles inside the reef from Dakuniva to Viani Bay (just across Somosomo Strait from Taveuni).

From here, the whole NE side of Vanua Levu is accessibly by day-hops in mostly protected water.

Carina - July 2010 - Savusavu to Fawn Harbor: Raising a double-reefed mainsail, we began motoring from the protection of the Savusavu Bay on towards the mouth where the waves began to rise, driven by days of strong trade winds on the Koro Sea. We gave the dangerous point a wide berth, following our incoming waypoints, with the knowledge that the reef extends well beyond the limits indicated by the lighthouse. Turning SE towards the Lau Group (a wild and seldom visited chain of islands), the "noserly" wind and short steep waves nearly stopped us dead. We fell off the wind a bit and continued forward, our sails set too tight to the wind to sail with just sails alone, and quickly realized that at our present 2 knots of boat speed, we would not count on getting to Lau today, or even tomorrow.

Our alternative had been to head up the southern shore of Vanua Levu Island and seek shelter in Fawn Harbor behind a wide coral reef to wait until there was a break in the trade winds. Fawn Harbor is home to the village of Bagasau and also to the Pickering plantation. The Pickering family has a reputation for being warm and friendly to yachts. To get to Fawn Harbor, however, we still needed to beat off the lee shore, which is lined with reef. Continuing to motor sail, Carina took most waves gracefully, though occasionally one particularly nasty one slapped her right on the nose, sending water down the decks and even onto the face of the helmsman.

We finally reached a safe distance offshore the mouth of Savusavu Bay and allowed the large aluminum yacht, Adamite, which was fast coming up, to tack behind us and bear away, and then we tacked and pointed almost due east on the compass. At this point we thought we could
sail, but an adverse current and the short seas and our too tight point of sail precluded it and we rolled in the genoa and resigned ourselves to motor sailing under main and staysail. Hours later, having achieved longitude 179-30 E, winds clocked a bit and Carina took off like a rocket, bashing through the waves in excess of 6 knots now under reefed sails alone. We knew at this point we would make the dog-legged reef passage at Fawn Harbor with the sun still high in the sky, so we continued on.

One mile from the reef entrance we lowered sail and began motoring while straining to see the reef and its break. When viewed from almost due south upon approach, the reef entrance was not evident - its first aid to navigation is a log marking, though not quite, the limit to the reef on the starboard. Breakers along the length of the reef were "dead" ahead as Carina surfed wind waves and swell that continued to roll in, making Leslie even more anxious she would normally be on an approach to hard, crunchy, hull-wrecking things. Philip, as usual, was a lot more sanguine about our approach. Relatively confident in our twice-checked GPS waypoints which were obtained from at least two sources, we continued on and shot through the pass with Philip on the bow confirming the location of the reef and bommies (patches of coral that rise up almost to sea level from the ocean floor). Once inside, we could see only reefs stretching east and west for miles and miles, and we continued deep into the bay to anchor off the Pickering Plantation. Except for the south, "reefy" side of the bay, mangroves line the shoreline with coastal mountains rising behind.

### 2.2.6 Savusavu to Lautoka/Vuda Point Area

Curly recommends that if you are on a schedule and need to do a fast trip to Lautoka, on the west coast of Viti Levu, the absolute best method is to sail south out of Savusavu, staying in deep water and in the clear, and pass around the south coast of Viti Levu. You can do this safely in an overnight, where the more direct route along the north coast of Viti Levu is reef-strewn and needs to be done carefully and only in good daylight. It normally takes 3-4 days of day-hops to make the trip.

The slot between Vanua Levu and Viti Levu experiences a venturi effect when strong winds are blowing, and the winds there can often be 10-15 knots higher than prevailing conditions (which means 35-40 knots when there are forecasts of 20-25 knot tradewinds).

**Carina - September 2010:** We left from Savusavu and first stopped in Koro Island (Dere Bay) and then Makogai and Naigani Island, then north across Viti Levu. We were headed ultimately to Vuda Point Marina for a haulout.

From Naigani, we sailed approximately ten miles through rough and shallow waters littered with hazards, before slipping inside Viti Levu’s barrier reef on its southeast shore. From here to Lautoka, we navigated a narrow channel bordered on our south, or port side, by the beautiful, yet spare, rocky mountains of Fiji’s largest island and, on our north, or starboard, by a nearly impenetrable barrier of reef and rock. This lightly inhabited part of Fiji is very dry, sere even, and the hills and mountains reminded us of Montana, without the bears and wolves but studded with palm trees.

Once inside the reef, we enjoyed great sailing on flat water as the trade winds wrapped neatly around the mountainous island, keeping the warm fresh breezes always astern. Reaching and running northwest and around the tip at Nananu I Thake before turning southwest, we breezed along at nearly hull speed with a bit of genoa pulling, averaging 35 miles per day and were
safely anchored each day long before reef spotting became more difficult with the sun's decline. Jibing leisurely every so often, we'd almost forgotten the feeling of sailing in protected waters from our Puget Sound sailing days.

Fiji is not a place for sailing if you are faint of heart, however. Uncharted rocks, reefs and small islands abound and many boats come to grief plying these waters. This season, many of our friends admitted to bouncing off or grinding onto reefs around Fiji. We figure that our reef is out there somewhere, we just hope Carina's husky little hull is up to the bump. We'd rather not test her, though, so during most of our sailing time we post one of us on the bow trying to spot obstacles. Then too, in Fiji we only sail during daylight hours and try to be safely anchored by mid afternoon.

After a few days of this easy existence, we reached the port city of Lautoka where we checked in with the Customs officials to obtain clearance to proceed to Vuda Point, about 6 miles further.

**Tackless II - August 2007:** Well before the crack of dawn Tuesday morning, the anchor was up and Tackless II and crew were underway away from Savusavu Bay. That's how it felt the first few hours: that we were wrenching ourselves away from a place we had quite settled into. But fickle as we are, by the time the sun rose, we were looking ahead to new vistas and new adventures.

Our course was south to the Makongai Channel that cuts between the end of the Namena Barrier Reef and the reefs surrounding the Makongai Island Group, which is just northeast of the historically significant island of Ovalau. (The city of Levuka on Ovalua -- the base of early European colonizers -- was the first capital of Fiji.)

My original idea had been to take this trip slowly, leg by leg, stopping over at Namena and Makongai which are said to have great diving, and then onward, leisurely, to Vuda Point around the top of Viti Levu by the route inside the reefs. Last week's weather delay, however, robbed us of the time to be leisurely, and new wx forecasts threatened a possibility of high winds returning. With Uncle Bill's return ticket just a week away, we felt we ought to keep moving.

**Day 1:** The day was gorgeous, clear skies and crisp air. Of course, having waited out the heavy winds, we now had too little, and we were forced to motorsail most of the morning. But who could complain! The boat motion was dreamy, an easy swishing over the seas under blue sky, and we enjoyed a decadent lunch of baguettes (frozen from Futuna) with pate and brie!

As we approached the Makongai Channel, however, the wind steadily picked up until before we knew it we were bashing in 20+ knots, the sea abruptly stirred to whitecaps far and wide! Even so, having reached the channel early – about 1300 – we decided to push onward to the next stop, Naigani Island, a mere fifteen miles further on. This, probably, was not a particularly wise decision, because those fifteen miles were across Fiji's infamous Vatu-I-Ra channel, where winds funnel and accelerate between Vanua Levu and Viti Levu. Had something not gone quite right, there we would have been, at the end of a long day, up the proverbial creek.

Things did not go wrong, however, and once we realized we still had a full main up (we so rarely do these days!) and got it reefed, our ride settled back into the manageable and we laid Naigani comfortably before dusk.

From offshore, we'd been skeptical that the three steep lumps of the island seemingly huddled in the sea of whitecaps could provide a comfortable anchorage for us where it was alleged to be
at the north end. But, in fact Cagabuli (Thangambuli!) (17°34.33'S; 178°44.65'E) proved to be a charming cove with a sand bottom and a white sandy beach with palm trees, all within the embrace of two curving reefs. Although the wind gusted around the north end of the island, the boat sat comfortably back-winded stern-to-the beach. According to the cruising guide, the only village on Naigani is a few coves further on, while a small resort is at the southeast end.

With towering cumulus clouds massed on the sunset horizon over the north end of Viti Levu and with bats chattering in the forest ashore, the only clue that we didn't have the island to ourselves was the cackle and crow of common chickens.

Ed Note: This waypoint plots out in the middle somewhere. I believe the place they stopped was here: 17-34.31S / 178-40.67E

**Day 2:** The next morning, after indulging in a leisurely breakfast that we felt we deserved to enjoy in the beauty of our surrounds, we moved onward, in part motivated by a radio call from our young friends Tricky and Jane on Lionheart, who, after stopping at Makongai, had determined they must press on due to some battery problems. We "allowed" them to catch up to us as we sailed up the coast and traveled tandem with them the rest of the way around.

The north coast of Viti Levu is quite handsome with lots of inlets with small beaches, small Fijian villages, and waving coconut palms. As we reached the northernmost tip at **Volivoli Point** with the off-lying Nananu islands, the development became abruptly more westernized with expensive-looking housing on the islands and a large, eye-catching resort on the mainland point(a little Internet research reveal the new resort is **Wananavu Beach Resort**) on the mainland point, all in a landscape now reminiscent of the California coast. We didn't get to rubber-neck to the degree we might have liked, because the channel requires some abrupt changes of direction as it wends its way among the reefs. Since we'd been sailing with main only, this called for some quick gybing back and forth, for which we were quite grateful to have an extra hand on board!

As we started down the back side of Viti Levu, the landscape suddenly became reminiscent of Baja, with dusky brown mountains ranging high and haunting behind arid looking grasslands in the foreground. The Fijian national pastime of burning fields was well in evidence by the haze that pooled in this valley or the other. In fact, from the anchorage we found about five in the afternoon, the flames of several hillside blazes burned like beacons in the dark. Fortunately, they were all downwind.

**Day 3:** We woke early again to another crystal clear day and were underway one behind the other by 0630 passing a landscape from which the majesty gradually drained away to a fairly blah palette of browns. This area, the Ba roads, is said to be the fast-growing district in Fiji, but for sure it must be inland somewhere, because, but for a big wharf, there was little sign of it on the coast. An interesting anecdote, however, is that I had strong cellular broadband service the whole way (except in the lee of Naigani), and I confess I spent some time on the computer during the boring stretches.

We passed through the busy port of **Lautoka** a little after midday. Lautoka is Fiji's second largest city (after the capital of Suva) and is the center of the sugar industry, long the economic mainstay of the country. Wood chips must also be a major product, judging by the huge pile rising behind the commercial docks. Several mini-cruise ships were moored in the roadstead, but other than a yard stacked with containers, a small marina, and the commercial docks, there
was not much on the shoreline to catch our eye. Offshore there is the island of Bekana with a small resort and several sailboats on moorings. We'd been advised that to check in to the port of Lautoka it was preferable to moor out at Bekana, and dinghy across to the port, but we didn't stop as the marine brochure for Fiji advised we could check in from Vuda Marina by bus. And so, we pushed onward the last few miles, rounding the headland where Fiji's first settlers are reputed to have landed, to pull into **Vuda Point Marina** by mid-afternoon.

### 2.2.7 Savusavu to Yasawas

**Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008:** Leaving Savusavu, we planned to cross Bligh Water and take the course inside the reef north of Viti Levu.

After crossing **Wainunu Bay** west of Savusavu, we anchored near **Coconut Point** at **Nabouwalu Bay**, north of the wharf in 19’ with plenty of space for several boats.

The next day we sailed on to big, shallow **Bua Bay**, 12 miles away, for two comfortable, protected nights working on catch-up jobs because there is nothing to do there.

Our next anchorage, sailing west, was much better. We anchored with seven other boats in **Yadua Island** (pronounced YaNdua) for a few days. The reef there was our best snorkeling yet, and there are several places to explore in the dinghy or a possible walk to the village, which is known for its traditional bures or grass houses.

We changed our plans to sail to straight to Lautoka and decided to go to the Yasawas by sailing west straight across Bligh Water for the northernmost land, **Yasawa Island**, anchoring in **Yasawairara Bay**. We had requested, and Savusavu Customs granted us, clearance for the destination of Lautoka via the Yasawas, so we didn’t have to check-in there first before touring these islands.

The passage just north of Yasawa Island was accurate on the charts for a cut through to the western side of the chain, although we couldn’t find any information about it in guides.

We did have to rush across Bligh Water, motor-sailing even in 15 knots before it became too late in the afternoon to see the reefs. We made the 55-mile trip by 2:30 p.m. and had good light to see all hazards.

### 2.2.8 Savusavu to Suva

**Soggy Paws - Jan 2013:** We "cruised" between Savusavu and Suva in January (summer months with light winds), with the following stops: 20 miles to Namena for a couple of days of diving. 20 miles to Makongai. 20 miles to Levuka, and then 40 miles to Suva. We mostly motorsailed because the wind was ~10 knots SE. This was an easy trip (but might be considerably harder during tradewind season when the wind is blowing 15-20 kts).

### 2.2.9 The Lau Group to Taveuni Area

**Shango - June 2012:** This was a fast off the wind sail. We left Vanua Balavu out the NW pass and made a flying trip to Welagilala to break up the passage to Matagi. It’s a beautiful island but the anchorage is a bit lumpy in seas. Great holding in sand.

Matagi’s Horseshoe Cove is a beautiful anchorage. The snorkeling is terrific which should suggest to you that the anchoring is a bit bony.
2.2.10 Tavenui Area to Savusavu

**Cyan:** After our brief stop in Taveuni, we took a mooring from Jack in Viani Bay on the east end of Vanua Levu to meet up with several old friends. This was a picturesque location but not the right place in a blow because it's open to the SE.

After killing a few days in Viani Bay waiting for the weather to calm down, socializing and making many new friends, we decided to go ahead and sail on to Savusavu even if it was a bit rough. We hadn't provisioned in over 30 days and were getting tired of canned foods and no beer!

In four years of blue-water cruising, Cyan has seen 10-12 foot seas many times but never as close and steep as the ones on the Koro Sea the day we left Viani. Cyan was heaving and rolling with swell on the beam, but it was only inconvenient and tiring and never really dangerous.

We took water and spray in the cockpit several times and often the steep wave would block our whole side view.

The heavy weather just concentrates and funnels through between the main islands of Fiji. We were really ready now for some protection and rest.

2.2.11 From Western Vanua Levu to the Northern Yasawas

**Tortuguita - September 2013:** There's an old guy in Savusavu named Curly that makes money giving a weekly seminar about navigation in the Fiji Islands. Don't get me wrong, Fiji is a challenging place but in my opinion, he embellishes the difficulty and makes everybody scared to venture out of the well defined cruising paths that he has mapped out or places that he doesn't like for one reason or another. This 'scary factor' helps him sell more seats for his seminars. Curly briefs about 250 cruisers every year.

Some of the charts for this area haven't been surveyed for over 100 years. Not that a million year old reef would up and move but now with the accuracy of GPS and our electronic charts, hazards aren't where they put them on a century old chart. So you do have to use your eyes and read the water to move around here. 9AM to 3PM is best with blue sunny skies. Reefs are not seen well with an overcast.

The Yasawa Group is west of the main islands of Vanua Levu and Viti Levu. The clouds are usually rained out by the time the tradewinds push them over the main islands. The islands do cause gap winds in the 30 mile wide passage between them. They act like a huge nozzle that accelerates the wind in and downwind of the pass.

We left from Savusavu and anchored overnight at Coconut Point on the SW end of Vanua Levu. The next day we went out to Yadua Island, where we stayed for a few days, enjoying being away from the crowds.

From Yadua we could have waited for good winds to cross the pass to Viti Levu or gone more downwind and headed to the Yasawas. Since Curly had everybody worried about the masses of uncharted reefs, we figured we would go where everybody else wasn't. To the Yasawas.

We had a good track on the electronic chart of our arrival in to Watering Bay and there weren't any really close passes to hazardous reefs if we went around the west side of Yadua. So we...
left at 3AM in order to arrive at the first of the reefs to the east of the Yasawas before noon. It would then be 3 more hours through the reefs to our first anchorage.

We had nice wind until the gap effect calmed down and then we had to motorsail. We anchored at Blue Lagoon. This is where the movie Blue Lagoon with Brooke Shields was filmed in the ‘80s. It was a well protected anchorage and we slept well but was more hype than Blue Lagoon.

3 Vanua Levu and Savusavu

3.1 Savusavu

Soggy Paws – 2016: We left Fiji in early 2014, and we haven’t gotten any updates with useful information on Savusavu since then. Several changes I know about, however.

Mike from Bebi Electronics is long gone, and Waitui Marina is being run by someone else, so there is no telling what the state of the marina or the mooring is.

Curly Carswell is now an official Cruising Station for SSCA, as well as the ICA. He is still alive and kicking and providing cruiser briefings, and living on his houseboat in the Savusavu mooring field.

Curly has a blog where he does the daily weather and cruiser updates.

http://curlycarswell.blogspot.com

He is still the best source of cruising information in Fiji, and much of our info came from him originally. If you get to Savusavu, give Curly a big hello from Soggy Paws.

The cyclone that hit Savusavu in early 2016 hit the cruising community and the marinas hard. A couple of boats were destroyed and a number of them went hard aground on various reefs surrounding the anchorage. Curly and the affected cruisers rallied and most of the boats have been pulled off and refloated. Repairs will be being made to boats and facilities for quite some time. Waitui Marina’s dock was destroyed, but has been replaced with a floating dock.

If you are in the area for cyclone season, you might consider looking for an alternate hiding place if a big cyclone is coming. Savusavu is fairly well protected, but with many boats on non-maintained moorings, it’s not a great place to weather a strong cyclone. Only one or two boats breaking loose during the storm can cause serious problems for everyone there. Take a close look at the Dakanuba/Nasasobu Bay, about 30 miles east of Savusavu. Another great spot for cyclone protection is a river near Jim Bandy’s place on Also Island, on the NE coast of Vanua Levu. Jim can show you the spot. However, both of these places are pretty remote, so if you do have damage to your boat, getting help for repairs/refloating will be much harder to organize.

Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008: Savusavu is good! We arrived here from Opua, New Zealand, on June 9, 2008, after a nine-day, 1,300 nm, pretty-much-routine rhumbline passage skirting west of Minerva reefs. We stayed at Savusavu for two weeks hooked to a mooring at the Copra Shed Marina in the well-protected channel. There were a slew of other boats streaming in there from Tonga and NZ and taking moorings nearby at this popular cruisers node.
Our stay was long enough to get to know Savusavu and its environs—plus its local characters—pretty well. The downtown is a quarter-mile stretch of not-too-badly-paved road along a waterfront with businesses below a lush green, jungle-covered hill.

The town has numerous hardware stores, clothing stores, pharmacies, barber shops, CD and DVD shops, several churches, two bakeries and a sizeable daily veggie, fruit and fish market. Next to the market are the taxi and bus stations and lots of inexpensive taxis and buses for island travel. There are several grocery stores, one of which is big enough to be called Super Market and have carts.

All of the town’s facilities are within just a few minutes easy walking distance from Copra Shed (and their two dinghy docks), which tends to be the center of gravity for cruiser and yachting activity in Savusavu. We found prices on everything in the town establishments to be quite reasonable.

A major yachting personality in Savusavu for cruisers is a colorful guy named Curly Carswell. Everybody knows him. He’s a tall, slim, somewhat stately looking Kiwi guy with bushy white beard and hair—very friendly and quite helpful to cruisers. Curly offers ‘Chart-Marking’ seminars for arriving cruisers a couple of times a week. He charges a nominal fee for this, and provides handouts with waypoints and sketch charts, plus personalized advice on routing and everything else. We found Curly’s data useful and reliable for anchorages and passage tracks in certain waters of Fiji.

There are several area attractions, such as a pearl farm, forest preserve, hot springs and steam vents, of which there are a couple right in the shoreline next to Copra Shed, so at low tide you can walk over there and stand in the steam coming out of the rocky beach. One day we watched a couple of local guys scrape the hair off a large pig lying in the hot steam before butchering it. Savusavu also has numerous souvenir shops and a couple of nice hotels.

On Mondays in June, a typical massive white cruise ship would anchor in the bay off the city wharf. Passengers were brought ashore by the cruise ship shore boats to the Copra Shed’s west dinghy dock. As expected, lots of people would be in town on those days. Tours were arranged by agents in the Copra Shed, musicians were present on the dock, flowers and signs everywhere welcomed the mostly elderly tourist folks—typically Australians or New Zealanders.

Vendors had their temporary booths set up all along the street near the Copra Shed, hawking handicraft wares of all sorts. By sundown on those days the mostly white-haired cruise ship folks, the booths and the big white ship would be gone.

### 3.1.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities

**Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016:** Clearing into Savu Savu. We called Savu Savu port control. It does not exist. Our call was intercepted by Jolene, the manager of the Waitui Kelekele marina who gave us all the information we needed. More on that in a minute.

Waitui Marina will bring the officials to your boat, free of charge. Whichever marina you stay at or if you anchor out, you will need to answer some preliminary questions over the radio first, basics such as last port of call, number of crew on board, etc. Our favourite was “has the behaviour of the rats and mice on board changed??” fortunately not rats or mice!

Officials were:
1. Health, this officer will come alone first, to ensure the crew is healthy. Health charged $163.50 FJD.

2. Customs and immigration came together the day we cleared in. (Two separate officials) They were professional and efficient. No charge for either of these services.

3. Biosecurity (fancy name for quarantine). He came on his own, and asked a few questions about what food we had on board. Nothing was confiscated and he asked that we take our garbage to the marina’s bin, no special bin. There was a fee of $85.02.

We paid both of the fees the day following clearing in, as we had no FJD on arrival. No problems with that, both offices were an easy walk from the marina dinghy dock.

Before you leave Savusavu to go cruising, you have to get a Fijian cruising permit. Jolene at Waitui organized ours, $10FJD. It’s in Fijian language so you can show it to any locals that you might visit. Then you go to Customs and they give you permission to leave to cruise Fiji. There were no restrictions on where you could go (Lau group included). Currently Customs ask you to email them once a week with your location, crew details and intended itinerary:
yachtsreport@frca.org.fj

All the officials in Savu Savu were terrific. Professional, friendly, easy to deal with. Totally recommend it as a place to clear in.

Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008: Either Copra Shed or Waitui Marina will arrange for you to check in with Customs, Immigration, Agriculture and Quarantine officials when you arrive at the mooring area from a foreign port. The officials come out to your boat, usually all together as a group, and they are very efficient and friendly. But you must later go promptly to their respective offices to pay fees, with the longest walk (about 15 minutes) being to the hospital east of town to pay quarantine fee.

Upon arrival in Savusavu Bay, you head east, first passing the Cousteau Resort anchorage area to starboard, then the town’s commercial wharf (where there may be a ferry). At this point you should call the Copra Shed marina or the Waitui Marina on Channel 16 regarding moorings available. Either will direct you further to a mooring.

### 3.1.2 Marinas and Anchoring

**Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016:** There are now three marinas in Savusavu. As you arrive, Waitui is the first, then Copra Shed, then Savusavu Marina which is right up the inlet.

We stayed at Waitui Kelekele Marina. ( ph +679 885 3057, fax: + 679 885 0266, waituimarinafiji@gmail.com ) Based on previous comments about Waitui we had not planned to use this marina, which is in fact a series of what we understand to be well maintained moorings, and a floating dinghy dock to access the marina building. There was a large dock which was destroyed in Cyclone Winston, and it is unclear at this stage whether this will be rebuilt.

Jolene the manager of Waitui answered our calls on arrival. She was friendly, professional and gave us all the information we needed re clearing in, without any hard sell about using their moorings. However we decided to try one of their moorings for the night, and ended up staying for over two weeks. Jolene is a huge asset to Waitui, she creates a cruising community, knows everyone by name, is a wonderful host to Savu Savu and Fiji, and is ably assisted by Vitali, who runs the marina workboat and ferries officials to your boat.
The marina building is somewhat ramshackle, but has a certain charm to it! There are hot showers and a laundry service as part of the building, also Fiji Meats. There is a bar upstairs and restaurant downstairs. Fish and chips were $5, excellent value and yummy. By chance we ran into a local diver who services the moorings and he said they are solid. It blew while we were there and we were fine. Cost was around $12 FJD per day, there is a weekly rate too. Waitui does curry nights and local Fijian specialty nights as well.

A further sweetener for Waitui is that Jolenes’ 4 year old daughter Leila is often there. She is a total sweetheart, and of course has MANY cruising aunties and uncles. We felt sad to leave! Waitui Kelekele marina has a Facebook page, check it out if you are interested.

You can tell from all this that we would totally recommend Waitui. If you want a dock to tie up to, then Copra Shed is an option. We talked to others who were there and they were very happy with the setup there too. Savu Savu marina is a ways out of town and not as convenient, but we have little experience to comment further.

**Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008:** The Savusavu channel does not provide much anchorage except some deep anchoring in its western-most area near the west end of the adjacent island. But there are many moorings located right in front of the town’s main downtown street with convenient access to the town via the two dinghy docks at Copra Shed Marina.

The town is definitely third world in nature, but its commercial district is bustling with activity every day except Sunday. People in the area are extremely friendly and outgoing. Everyone speaks English, but the two common ethnic groups, Fijian and Hindu, also speak their respective ethnic languages.

Two so-called marinas, Copra Shed and Waitui, provide moorings in the channel, available (in June-July 2008) for a daily rate of around $10 Fiji Dollars (about $6 USD), which includes use of or access to all their ancillary shoreside facilities.

The main marina operation is Copra Shed, with their office in an attractive new building having an expansive wooden-deck dock. Copra Shed has two pontoon dinghy docks, clean restrooms, showers, laundry service (they do it for you), and a potable water spigot at the west dinghy dock ramp. Also in the building are a variety of small business shops and offices, two small restaurants, plus an active yacht club with a busy bar and live music some evenings and on Saturday on the adjacent lawn. Next door there are a couple travel agent offices, an Internet cafe, and a small chandlery.

The other marina operation is the Waitui Marina—smaller, rougher, a little cheaper, but also with good moorings for rent. Its facilities are somewhat sparse in a building containing a dive shop, second-floor bar, kayak and Hobie cat rentals, and attached pier—to which on one day we saw a 40’ steel monohull careened at low tide for quick repair of a leak below its waterline.

There is much activity at the Copra Shed, facilitated by its nice building and numerous other in-the-building activity centers. Usually the Copra Shed office manager, Dolly, responds on VHF to boats arriving and calling for Port Control and not knowing who’s on first in the area. If the Copra Shed doesn’t respond, then often Waitui Marina (either Michael or his wife, Kendra) will answer your call and give directions regarding availability of their moorings and contacting officials for you.
The Copra Shed and Waitui marinas, in addition to providing moorings and making contact for you with officials upon your arrival, will make applications for the issuance of the mandatory Fijian Cruising Permit that each boat must have to cruise Fiji waters. This process takes a few days after an application form is filled out by a skipper before you receive your permit.

The Copra Shed and Waitui marinas are, in a sense, competitors, but they cordially act more like mutual aid agents, often referring boats to one another’s marina for moorings or for help with officials depending on how booked up or busy they are.

During the two weeks in June while we were in Savusavu, three rally groups arrived and congregated in the channel near the Copra Shed and Waitui marinas. So a lot of boats were seeking more moorings than were available, and some had to anchor near the wharf south of the moorings area. Things then got a bit crowded and busy in the Copra/Waitui area, but it was never bad. I don’t think that situation would be the case after the first week of July.

Copra Shed allows up to eight boats to med-moor tie to their dock, stern-to, with bow anchors in channel. I noted several fairly large boats (well over 50’) tied up stern to there. Copra has at least one large mooring buoy in the creek, right out in front (designated “Tau”). It was the mooring our boat, a Spindrift 43, was on. That mooring can easily handle a 50’ boat. Copra always sends a man out in a skiff to aid boats picking up a mooring.

As to attractiveness between Copra Shed and Waitui Marinas, my sense was that Copra Shed is the smoother, more complete, and, for us at least, more palatable operation for the average cruiser. The Waitui Marina operationally seemed a bit rough around the edges. But to their advantage Waitui was a bit less expensive than Copra Shed. Both Michael and Kendra, who run Waitui, are articulate, knowledgeable, friendly, helpful and very polite people. Noteworthy is Michael’s side operation of producing and selling a variety of inexpensive LED lights. That service, called BEBI, is unusual and quite good. They are also and SSCA Cruising Station.

### 3.1.3 Internet

**Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016:** We bought a Vodafone simcard for both data and phone. It worked brilliantly, best internet in ages! We paid $5 for the sim and took the $45 FJD for a month internet package. Worked in most places in Fiji.

**Soggy Paws – 2012:** In Savusavu, there are several ‘Connect’ wifi hotspots that are reachable from an on-board wifi system with a good antenna. These are put up by Telecom Fiji, and require you to buy a voucher ashore before you can use them. Check before you leave the boat whether you can connect to a Connect hotspot.

The second, much better option is cellular broadband, offered in Fiji by Vodafone and Digicel (both world-wide companies with good infrastructure). You buy (or supply) a ‘dongle’ and then pay for the data you use. I am told that this option keeps you connected in most places in Fiji (but not at Also Island), at a reasonable price.

In mid-2012, you could buy a ‘dongle’ from Vodafone for $35, which comes with 1GB of data. For another $100FJ, you can add another 4GB. That should keep you in ‘internet’ for a full cruising season. We found good coverage all over Fiji, including up the Yasawas.
3.1.4 Yacht Services

Lunch in Fiji is generally taken between 1-2pm.

**VHF Net:** There is a daily cruiser's net at 0830 on VHF Channel 68 every morning, offering up a warm and fuzzy mixture of news and helpful info.

**Water:** There is a tap at Copra Shed near the dinghy dock, and people are allowed to come fill jugs. It is also possible to go alongside to fill up.

We tied up to the Copra Shed Marina dock in Savusavu to take on water before leaving to head north to the Marshall Islands. You must ask the management at Copra Shed and schedule this before you go in, and there may be a small charge. It is best to go in to the dock (in front of the bar) at high tide, because of the dock configuration. It is best to take on water (anywhere in Savusavu) when it has NOT been raining much (the water quality from the hose degrades if there has been a lot of rain in the last 1-2 days).

We filter our water through 2 filters before it goes in the tank, and have a Seagull filter to filter out any taste and/or bacteria at the tap.

The fittings at the dock hose connection did not fit our U.S. hose. We worked with the day shift "guy" at Copra Shed to get a proper connection and enough hose to fill our tanks on both sides of the boat. (you should check this ahead of time).

The water pressure at the dock was very low, and almost stopped when

**Diesel (Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008)** There are a couple of service stations (one at each end of town) for obtaining engine oil, filters, and jerry-jugging diesel or petrol (gasoline).

Diesel fuel can also be trucked in and pumped directly into your boat while you tie up temporarily to a small fuel dock just west of Copra Shed, but the truck is available only several days in advance of delivery and only if several boats share at least 1,000 liters. Arrange for the diesel delivery at the chandlery in the Copra Shed. Diesel on June 27, 2008 was $1.98 FD per liter or about $4.88 USD per gallon. Exchange rate then was 0.65 USD per FD.

**Banking:** (Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008): The town has several banks, one of which is Westpac, which is affiliated with Bank of America— so if you have a BofA account, as we do, you can get cash at their ATM without an international transactional fee.

**Rigging:** There is a local guy named Wayne who does rigging work in Savusavu cell phone 999-6370. s/v Far Star had some rigging work done by him at good prices and good work. Can climb the rig, and knows rigging work.

**Electrical / Electronic** - Michael of Bebi (pron Bambi) Electronics who did electrical and electronic troubleshooting and repair in Savusavu, is no longer in Fiji, and after a year and a sad story, Bebi Electronics is no longer.

**Computer Repair:** (Soggy Paws – 2012) There are several 'computer repair' places in Savusavu and Labasa, so if your item is portable, you may be able to get some inexpensive repair done in one of the shops in town.
We took several items to Ramesh Chand at **Moon Electronics**--located in the alley next to Savusavu Computers (on the main street). Ramesh said he would come out to boats and do work onboard if necessary. Contact Ramesh at ramexchand65@yahoo.com or 969-0332.

We gave a broken computer "brick" to Ozi of **Ozi Electronics**, to see if he could fix it. He called us on the cell phone 2 days later and told us he'd identified the broken part, but can't determine the part number to replace it. He seemed knowledgeable, and had good communications skills, so if you have something electronic--give Ozi a try.

**Fiji Computers** (near the eastern M&H on the same side of the street) only charges $15 FJ to assess your problem and give a firm quote for repair. They also sell computer accessories and supplies (like USB GPS's, USB drives, external hard drives, and even laptops).

**Engines and Transmissions:** Several people have recommended a guy named Leon to a cruiser with serious transmission problems. Leon's cell number is 979-7730. He operates out of a shop at the head of the bay in Savu Savu. However, he is more often found at the Copra Shed bar than in his shop.

**Savu Savu Yacht Club:** The SSYC is co-located with the Copra Shed Marina. SSYC membership $10FJ, proceeds go to help promote youth sailing in SS.

**Stainless Steel Welding** - There is a local guy named Wayne who can do welding work in Savusavu cell phone 999-6370. Leon at Savusavu Marina (at the east end of the bay) can also do welding and machine shop work. However, he is more often found at the Copra Shed bar than in his shop.

**Woodworking** - We needed a hefty 4x4" hardwood beam cut and shaped. Disish at the "tools handles shop" in the alley next to Savusavu Computers did a good job of doing exactly what we wanted from our sketch. He supplied the nice piece of hardwood, and worked on Sunday to get it done for us. 925-6923

**Medical** - There is both a clinic and a hospital in Savusavu. Ask on the VHF net. For most really serious issues, it seems that most people go to Suva or back 'home'.

**Dental** - There are apparently no dentists in Savusavu, but you can take a bus inexpensively to **Labasa** and there is a good dentist right near the bus station. Several cruisers have used this dentist for teeth cleanings and fillings. If he is not comfortable with your dental issue, he will recommend another dentist (probably in Suva) who can handle it. Dr. Kishor Kumar, Dental Surgeon Office 881-3475 Alt (cell) 921-7581 or kumar_shivaan@yahoo.com

Changing Spots' additional comments on Dr. Kumar: I have a very favorable report regarding the dentist in Labasa. Four of us went for a cleaning (one also had 5 fillings done, for F$245 total!). We were all impressed. Dr Kishor Kumar did a cleaning, and thorough exam, for F$45. He also did an excellent job of education, not just ragging on you to do more whatever. He (they?) is across the street from the Civic center, about a block away from the bus stop/market area.

**Propane Fills** - Fiji Gas (Ph# 885-0437) During cruising season in 2012, Waitui Marina would periodically organize a trip to Fiji Gas with cruiser's propane bottles. Whether they'll still do this with the change in management in 2013, is unknown. There seemed to be no trouble filling either US or European tank valves.
3.1.5 Getting Visitors in and Out

Soggy Paws – 2012: The international airport for Fiji is in Nadi, near Lautoka, on the west coast of Viti Levu. There are two ways for visitors to get from Nadi to Savusavu—by plane or by ferry. The plane, of course, is the easiest, quickest, and most expensive. The flight is direct from Nadi to Savusavu.

There are at least 2 ferry services that go from Suva to Savusavu, so the route is Nadi airport to Suva (ferry terminal) to Savusavu.

Here is info from Linda (ex-Sea Flyer) on the Savusavu to Nadi trip to meet an outgoing flight leaving late the next evening in Nadi:

The ferry works out well. I got a seat on the Lomaiviti Princess in the 1st class section—for a last minute fare of FD$60. This section which is air conditioned and not as many people. The floor is carpeted and everyone is asked to not wear their shoes on the boat. Everyone sleeps on the floor as it is more comfortable than the airline-style chairs to sleep.

The Lomaiviti Princess leaves at 5 p.m. on Tues (they ask you to arrive 2 hrs prior to leaving and will store your luggage in a locked cage) and arrives at 7 a.m. in Suva on Wed. I bought my ticket in advance (a few days) and the price was FD$60, I think. It was cheaper than the 'shared room' price on the other ferry and much nicer (I saw no cockroaches!).

This would mean going a day before you need to be there; but, have you been to Suva? South Seas Private Hotel offers a double with bath for FD$64, 1 double or 2 twins shared bath FD$51 and dorm room for $21 ea. It is an older hotel with character, clean and right above Albert Park where there is a very interesting museum. You can easily spend a day seeing Suva and visit the Royal Suva Yacht Club which is a ways out of town but an interesting Yacht Club with lots of folks and a marina.

I had already seen Suva, so instead I wanted to go to Vuda Point to see the marina. There are lots of shuttles to the airport and I paid FD$20 to have them take me all the way to the marina at Vuda Point (instead of the airport) so I could hang out at the marina instead of the airport all day.

Next to Vuda Point Marina, is First Landing Resort and they have a room that cruisers can stay in for about FD$45 I think. It is a beautiful resort which you can look at on the internet and could call and ask if the special cruiser's room is available and what the price is. It would give you a chance to check out Vuda and maybe catch up with some of the cruisers there. There is a bar and restaurant at the marina, a coffee shop and, of course, First Landing Resort is beautiful with a man made island that is in the shape of a very large foot.

From Vuda Point Marina, I then took a taxi to the airport for FD$30 (20-25 min away), to catch my flight leaving at 10pm. It was a good way to spend the day instead of sitting at the airport. There is also a hotel where you turn off Queens Highway to get to the airport that allows you to spend the day by the pool if you buy a meal there. I have done that in the past and napped in a lounge chair and then walked to the airport. The airport will store your luggage if you go directly to the airport and then you can walk to the hotel and relax there for the day.

Ferry Schedules: Consort shipping has a web site and you can get current schedules off that site: http://www.consortshipping.com.fj
Goundar Shipping (Lomaiviti Princess) does NOT have a web site. Call them at 330-1035 for booking information. Our ticket had this email address on it: goundarshipping@kidacom.fj but no idea if they can/will respond to reservation requests at this email address.

Here is their current schedule (Aug 2012):

Leaving Suva Monday and Friday evenings around 18:00h, check in is around 16:00. She goes via Koro to Savusavu (and then on to Taveuni), arriving in Savusavu early the following day. She leaves Savusavu for Suva Tuesday evenings at ~8pm and Sunday mornings at ~6pm getting into Suva the following morning.

3.1.6 Entertainment and Eating Out

Massages & Thermal Baths (from Storm Bay of Hobart, July 2016): We went to a thermal bath at the local health centre, great! Jolene at Waitui had details. It’s an easy walk from marina, a few minutes only. $15 per person, lovely setting, can take up to 6 people in three separate very clean tubs. Aaaaahh!

Also went for a full body massage ($50FJD) to Una, once again Jolene at Waitui knows how to get hold of her. Fantastic! She does the massages at her house. I went with a headache I had for a few days, left without it. Wish I could have her on tap. Recommended!

Joseph's Decked Out Café - Steps from Copra Shed Marina. Happy Hour Thur-Sat 5-7pm, live music on Fridays and Saturdays 6pm. Free wifi with meal (limitations imposed). Local beer $3.50 FJ

Wiatui Marina - Sunday night, curry night $10pp. Tuesday night, Fijian night $10pp. Listen for announcements on the local VHF net.

Copra Shed Marina - Has a nice restaurant on the water, and also a more casual place on the street.

Surf and Turf (on the water with a dinghy dock) - On the water, upscale dining. Street side, local dishes (cheaper), and homemade ice cream.

Sea View Café: Located right next to the Customs building (near Waitui Marina). Indian and local dishes, reasonably priced. Sea View also does 'cooking classes' in their kitchen to help cruisers learn how to look local and Indian foods. Sea View also has occasional special nights (Steak Night), usually advertized on the VHF net in the morning. Reservations appreciated.

Chinese: Just beyond Sea View Café (walking from Copra Shed towards Waitui) is a Chinese restaurant. Also good inexpensive food.

The Oasis: The Oasis is a clean and neat restaurant just beyond Waitui Marina (walking out of town). They serve the usual array of Indian and Chinese food, with boneless meat in the curries. They have no liquor license, so stop in the liquor store on the way there to buy what you want to drink. Wine glasses supplied by Oasis on request.

3.1.7 Diving

Korosun Divers - assoc with Joseph's Decked Out Café. The operator of Korosun Divers can usually be found in Joseph's from 2-5pm weekdays, and Joseph's has brochures and phone numbers if you're just passing by.
3.1.8 Exploring Vanua Levu by Land

Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016: We took a mini bus across to Labasa ($10 each person each way, about 1 ½ hours each way, nice van, Jolene organized) and went to the dentist. Dr Kishor Kumar had been recommended by others in the compendium, but he was booked out for about 10 days. We went to his son, in the same building, and he was fine. We both had our teeth cleaned and checked, $60FJD. No x ray machine, you have to go to the hospital for that, we didn't. Labasa is interesting! A working cane factory dominates the town, and it is very Indian. Lots of beautiful saris and colours. Went to a vegetarian Indian restaurant for lunch, it has a big Hare Krishna sign on the main road. YUM!

Soggy Paws – 2013: The biggest town on Vanua Levu is Labasa (pronounced Lambasa), which is a 3 hour bus ride from Savusavu. It is only $6.50 FJ for the bus, one way, and is a great way to get out and see the countryside for very little money.

Halfway across to Labasa is the Waisali Forest National Park, which is a forest preserve with hiking trails, etc. Open Mon-Sat 9am-3pm. Catch the Labasa bus to get there, but check on times for the return bus. I think in general that one bus may run back and forth between Labasa, making the trip 3 times. The last bus passes by around 5 or 6 pm.

Changing Spots – 2013 – Trip to Labasa:

The Grand Eastern hotel was very nice, and under US$75 per night. They didn’t have a vacancy when I called, but I managed to get rooms online. I also heard good reports of the North Pole hotel (not found online), on the main street, and it might be a few $ cheaper.

We took the van instead of the bus, since it is less than 2 hours, rather than over three. The idea is to get to the Westpac bank, about 7:30 AM, to make sure you get a seat. We were the only 4 people. He dropped us off right at our hotel. Next day, we called him (Tawake, 8492208), and he agreed to give us a ride, and picked us up from the restaurant (in the pouring rain). The van was full. I don’t know if he regularly offers this service, but it was very convenient, and only F$10 per person each way.

We also learned that many auto parts, particularly those regarding safety, are free of any mark up, and are very inexpensive. Belts, oil filters, and light bulbs come to mind.

FYI, I think the rainy season just started with a vengeance!

Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2008: Inexpensive buses at the bus depot in Savusavu can take you to various places on the island, such as across its mountainous interior to Labasa, a much larger town of a similar structure and character as Savusavu. The inland scenery and small villages along the way make the daylong round-trip interesting. We found Labasa itself offered little to attract the cruiser other than more of the same that’s available in Savusavu.
3.1.9 **Cousteau Resort Anchorage**

**Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011:** Jean Cousteau Resort anchorage is northeast of the resort along the shore just inside Lesiaceva Point. Watch for coral heads (bommies).

Approximate location: 16°48.609'S / 179°17.305'E,

It is only three miles from Savusavu, but it feels to be worlds away. There is no access to the resort except for pricey meals if previously arranged.

There is excellent snorkeling on the reef towards the lighthouse. You can reach Savusavu for provisioning by foot, metered taxi or infrequent bus (or long dinghy ride).

**Windcastle - SSCA Newsletter - July 2008:** When we returned to Savusavu Bay after exploring Taveuni and Viani Bay, we anchored in front of the Cousteau Resort. There we took our dinghy into Savusavu and the Copra Shed dinghy dock for supplies and visiting other yachts. The Cousteau anchorage is very good in prevailing easterly weather, but can get nasty if the wind blows from the north, and a sizeable fetch can result in untenable seas and a dangerous coral reef lee shore.

3.1.10 **South Coast of Vanua Levu - West of Savusavu**

Ordered from Savusavu, headed west...

3.1.11 **Namena**

Namena is a large thumb-shaped reef, sticking out from the south coast of Vanua Levu, SW of Savusavu. There is a small island inside the reef with a small anchorage, and can be a destination for divers, or an intermediate stop on the way to Viti Levu or the N Coast of Vanua Levu. You can pick up the single mooring there (first come first served) or anchor near the mooring.

The mooring is located at 17-06.738S / 179-05.56E. There is some nice reef structure near the mooring, so if you must anchor, anchor carefully--generally in the deeper water free of coral.

There is a small resort on the island.


Phone: (679) 828-0577 ~ Email: moodysnamena@connect.com.fj

Namena is also a Marine Reserve. Details on the reserve can be found here:

[http://www.namena.org](http://www.namena.org)

To quote from the website:

Surrounding the tiny island of Namenalala, the approximately 70 square kilometer Namena Marine Reserve was established in 1997, stretching between the two main Fijian islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

Basically, an NGO named The Coral Alliance has encouraged the village (located on the south coast of Vanua Levu) that "owns" Namena Reef to establish a Marine Reserve. To anchor or dive there, you must pay a user fee of $35 per person per year. This money pays the village to not fish there.
Southern Cross - August 2013: While everyone told us that the only way to dive Namena is via Cousteau's resort, Koro Sun, or self-support, none of those options suited us, so I tried calling Moody’s Namena resort (881-3764) to see if they would take us diving. After some hesitation, they agreed. It seems that all of the current guests were non-divers, and the dive staff had nothing to do. So for F$60 per tank, we had our own dive boat. The divemaster, Sio, was very competent and helpful, and the other two crew members were great too. We dove Grand Canyon and The Chimneys the first day, and found them to be just as vibrant and beautiful as everyone had described them to be.

We stayed on the mooring ball, and while it was not the most peaceful anchorage (winds were SE 20 while we were there), the dramatic setting made up for slightly diminished comfort. The view of western Vanua Levu was impressive, and the croaks and cackles of the nesting red-
footed boobies were entertaining. In the morning I walked to the bow and saw a large turtle munching the growth on the mooring line.

We're planning to dive here a second day before heading to Makogai.

**Soggy Paws - January 2013 (very calm weather):** There is one mooring behind the island off a little beach at 17-06.738S / 179-05.56E. This was in reasonable condition when we were there, and is reasonably protected in SE winds. There are several spots to anchor also, on either side of the mooring, but you have to anchor in fairly deep water to be clear of the coral.

You can see the Moody's landing on the NW side of the island, as you approach from the Savusavu area. The "headquaters" of the marine reserve is located at the landing. You can dinghy over, or wait until they come out in the launch to pay the fee. When you pay, you are given a tag that indicates you have paid. In early 2013, they were still using the 2012 tags (but made us pay again for 2013)--the new tags had not arrived yet.

There are several openings in the reef on the northeast side and on the southwest side. Curly in his briefings provides sets of waypoints for the North Save-a-Tack passage and the South Save-a-Tack passage, but here are midpoints for each of these passes:

**North East Pass:** 17-04.31S / 179-06.44E

**South West Pass:** 17-07.44S / 179-04.48E

There is some current normally flowing through the passes and over the reef--usually a knot or so. In the middle of the NE Pass are several "bommies", but depths on top of these are 25'. They cause a lot of current swirl in the pass.

So we headed for the anchoring spot that Tobi recommended, near the 2 dive sites we wanted to see first, Chimneys and the Tetons. The conditions were perfect for diving--about 5 knots of wind and flat seas. Sure enough, Tobi's anchor spot was a winner--a small patch of sand next to a big bommie (Western Pacific lingo for 'coral head'). We carefully placed our anchor and backed down slowly, making sure we didn't get into any coral. It was about 50' deep, but the water was clear enough to see sand vs coral on the bottom. 17-06.74S / 179-03.83E

Then we loaded our dive gear in the dinghy and dinghied a short distance over to the "Chimneys" (aka 2 Thumbs) dive spot. 17-06.79S / 179-03.82E. We dropped the anchor in sand and snorkeled a little bit to get the lay of the dive site. Here, there are 2 pinnacles coming up from about 80 feet to the surface, ringed with all kinds of fish, invertebrates, and hard and soft corals. We did our typical half-a-tank dive. Because Dave and I are easy breathers, we can get a pretty good 35 minute dive on half a tank. That's normally enough to see what there is to see. When we got down to a third of our tank to go, we headed to the second pinnacle and circled around it a couple of times, before heading back to a safety stop near the dinghy. At 15-20 feet (the safety stop depth), there is a huge amount of sea life, so the 3 minute stop passed quickly. This was truly gorgeous diving.

We went back to the boat and had a nice lunch, and then dinghied over to the dive spot known as The Tetons for a second dive. Again, very nice coral diving.

The next day, we got going reasonably early, and headed for North Save-a-Tack. We anchored Soggy Paws in about 35' nice sand, behind the reef near the drop-off (17-04.38S / 179-06.51E), and proceeded in the dinghy to the Grand Central drift dive start location (around 17-04.26S /
179-06.59E). This is right off the end of the shelf, on the south side of the pass--where the depth goes from about 50 feet to 100 feet in a sheer drop.

We put on our gear, repositioned the dinghy to the correct spot, and hopped in and descended quickly, with the dinghy in tow on a long line. We were being swept in with the current (not bad in deep water, but runs pretty swiftly on the tops of the shallow bommies). We picked a spot right on the drop-off and placed the dinghy anchor in a rock cleft, and spent about 10 minutes swimming around on the edge of the drop off. As promised, we saw lots of big fish and a few sharks. The conditions were good and the water was clear. But we couldn't stay down long at that depth, so we eventually picked up the anchor and drifted in with the current. (Other divers have gone NNW along the face of the drop-off). There are a couple of big canyons where the bottom goes from 50' to 20' rapidly. One such dive spot is called Kansas (17-04.32S / 179-06.42E). But we thought the best part of the dive was along the drop-off.

Just as we got out of the water, the Cousteau dive boat pulled up with a load of divers. Those suckers were paying $150 USD each for that dive!

After lunch, we went back to the west side of the Namena reef and dove the Mushroom dive site--another big bommie rising up out of the 100-foot depths. (17-06.35S / 179-03.59E). We picked out a nice sand spot near the bommie to anchor Soggy Paws (17-06.35S / 177-03.63E).

We could have spent another week diving without getting bored, but we had business in Suva and we had to get going.

**Beach House - August 2011 - Diving:** Namena Island is 20 miles southwest of Savusavu and en-route to Suva, Fiji's Capital City. The Moody's who own Namena, collect an annual $25.00 Fijian per person to use the islands dive sites and two moorings. This fee is given to the few islanders who used to live here from what we understand--payment to keep them from fishing out the diving areas.

When we arrived at Namena, another boat was on the mooring that we could use (the second one was too close to the reef for our length), so we anchored. At first, we just relaxed and caught up from our whirlwind tour of North Fiji and chilled out. The anchoring conditions were not ideal and we were getting into less than 7 feet of water occasionally. As such, we were happy to pick up the mooring on our second full day at Namena.

The next day we went ashore where we met Nigel. Nigel is primary dive guide and confirmed that the Moody’s do not allow outside visitors to go with their dive operation. Apparently, The Moody’s owned a resort in the San Blas Islands of Panama and were burned out by drug smugglers and hence have a bit of bias about outsiders. We did not meet Mr. Moody, but Nigel told us the story and apparently he will only take his own guests from his resort. Most days their dive boat isn’t close to full, but it’s just another of those stories from the South Pacific.

Nigel was very helpful and said if necessary we could follow the dive boat to any of the sites. As we had very good GPS coordinates provided by Collin of “Koro Sun Divers” in Savusavu, we went it alone. The current can be quite strong at “North Save-A-Tack Pass”, home to the dive site, “Grand Central Station”.

We hit the site just before slack high tide and found it to be a winner – as advertised. It even had a bit of a “train station” feel to it, but that’s not why it’s called Grand Central Station. A large sand flat about 65-90 feet deep goes right to the square edge of the reef. There, the drop off is
straight down to around 300+ feet. The edge of this cliff was amazing. Gray Reef sharks, schools of barracuda with 400+ animals, large jack schools, cleaner station pinnacles and more. We saw small schools of yellow fin tuna too.

It was pretty rough out there, but the dive was well worth it.

That afternoon, we did the other main entrance to the reef, “South Save-A-Tack Pass”. Here we dove “The Chiminey's”. We swam around the five pinnacles all within sight of each other. There we swim through's, schools of 10,000+ bright orange Anthias, Square Spot Anthias, Lion Fish, Clowns and many species of anemones. Schools of Unicorn Fish (yes they have horns like unicorns!), COLOR, COLOR, COLOR and….it was easy diving.

Anja and I were even able to “school” inside the barracuda school here and watch endlessly while large Jacks came in to have their gills cleaned by the small cleaner wrasse. These wrasse are the sea going equivalent of a dental hygienist.

We were able to hit the tides right again the next day and did both dives a second time. Both sites, just as good the second time. On our second day, Suzi and Dave from s/v “Sidewinder” out of Laguna Beach, California did the dive out of their dinghy as well. They had a guide from the Cousteau resort with them and it was even rougher. We all had an adventure and a good time doing Grand Central Station again.

3.1.12 Nasasoni Point

Carina - September 2011: Nasonisoni Pass: It is possible to anchor on the east side of the pass up near the village of Namalata. However, if you leave Savusavu early enough in the day, you can travel through the pass and anchor west of Nasonisoni Island at 16°55.361’S / 178°59.469’W. The water clarity is poor here and coral abounds, so proceed slowly and post a bow watch.

A note on Nasonisoni Pass: take caution during ebb tides when tradewinds are blowing hard; we’ve heard reports of difficult conditions. If you can, travel at slack tide, though we passed through at mid tide during a new moon and had about 1.5 knots of favorable current. We could find no advice to mariners about currents here, though the tide station is nearby at Nadi (Vanua Levu).

3.1.13 Coconut Point / Nabouwalu

Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011: Coconut Point (Nabouwalu): You can anchor outside the concrete dock in sand, protected from waves by the reef. We were visited by officials here looking to examine our coastal clearance.

Approximate location of anchorage: 16°59.630’S, 178°40.970’E.

The passage through the reef to Bligh Water is roughly three miles west of Nabouwalu.
3.2 South Coast of Vanua Levu - East of Savusavu

3.2.1 Fawn Harbor

Accapella - July 2012: We had a good cell phone signal on our Vodafone sim card last time we were there, but could get no internet access. Seemed like the signal was there, but no connection. It may have been a temporary equipment problem.

Nine of Cups - 2011: We have a penchant lately for going around things. We left Savusavu to head the 40nm east along the south coast of Vanua Levu to Fawn Harbour. Using Calder's "A Yachtsman's Fiji" cruising guide proved most helpful.

Coastal navigation and eyeballs ruled the day. The chartplotter was definitely off. The "beacons" shown are really no more than large stakes sticking up out of the water, hard to spot, but
definitely good markers once they're in view. Note the village of Bagasau is written on the map as "Mbangasau", as it is pronounced.

Anchorage: 16S43.48 / 179E43.64 - 35'

We made our first sevusevu in Fiji in the village of Bagasau. Tai, the son's chief and spokesman for the village, welcomed us, chatted with us a bit, accepted our gift of kava and brought us to the chief's house to do the formal ceremony. Because the village of Bagasau is primarily a Seventh Day Adventist village, neither the chief nor his son consumes kava. They accepted the gift as tradition, but the rest of the ceremony was not performed.

Carina - SSCA Newsletter - July/Aug 2010: One mile from the reef entrance we lowered sail and began motoring while straining to see the reef and its break. When viewed from almost due south upon approach, the reef entrance was not evident - its first aid to navigation is a log marking, though not quite, the limit to the reef on the starboard. Breakers along the length of the reef were "dead" ahead as Carina surfed wind waves and swell that continued to roll in, making Leslie even more anxious she would normally be on an approach to hard, crunchy, hull-wrecking things. Philip, as usual, was a lot more sanguine about our approach. Relatively confident in our twice-checked GPS waypoints which were obtained from at least two sources, we continued on and shot through the pass with Philip on the bow confirming the location of the reef and bommies (patches of coral that rise up almost to sea level from the ocean floor). Once inside, we could see only reefs stretching east and west for miles and miles, and we continued deep into the bay to anchor off the Pickering Plantation. Except for the south, "reefy" side of the bay, mangroves line the shoreline with coastal mountains rising behind.

A dog-leg entrance brings you into an inner bay; anchor in eastern lobe of bay at approximate location 16°43.53'S, 179°43.74'E. Do Sevusevu with Chief Maya in Bagasau, but also go ashore and meet the friendly Pickerings. They'll direct you to the hot springs.

We waited nearly two weeks behind the protection of the massive reef to windward at Fawn Harbor and here we would experience winds gusting to over 30 knots, sometimes for days and days without a break. Thankfully the holding was good and we worried little about dragging into the coral behind us.

Accessible from the bay at Fawn Harbor are two villages, Bagasau (BANG-ga-SOW) and Fawn Harbor. When we arrived there were two other yachts in the bay rafted together.

Tuki, a local Fijian crewing one of the other two yachts, helped to introduce both Brian and Philip to the chief of the "vanua" (land) surrounding the bay. The chief, Maya, is a handsome man in his mid-sixties. Deeply religious, he neither drinks alcohol, smokes or drinks kava. Brian and Philip visited with Maya who performed a sevusevu, a customary ceremony to welcome visitors to the village (the bay in which sailboats anchor is considered part of the vanua of the village) and explain any rules or taboos imposed on visitors. At most sevusevu ceremonies, the visitor presents a small gift of kava root, which is pounded into powder then mixed with water and drunk out of large round bowl using a cup in the form of a half of coconut shell. Kava has a taste somewhat like peppery, dirty root (which is exactly what it is) and the effect of the drink is that is leaves the tongue and lips a little numb. A sense of euphoria is said to follow a period of continued drinking.
Since Maya drinks no kava, we presented gifts of tea and butter cookies. To get to his home from the anchorage required a dinghy ride through a narrow shallow channel that winds through overhanging mangroves, passable only at mid tide or higher. Maya ensured our welcome in the bay and its islands and gave us permission to fish, snorkel, explore, etc. Tuki also introduced us to the local Pickering family who, almost to the person, comprise the tiny neat settlement of Fawn Harbor on the hillside overlooking the bay and the reef.

The village of Fawn Harbor is accessed through another slough cut into the fringing mangroves, dry at many tides. Even at the best of tides (mid tide or higher) a dinghy is grounded well away from land and access to shore is by walking through the muck. This takes some getting used to and Leslie never seemed to rid herself of the feeling of "ewwww!" Local skiffs tie to the mangroves or anchor the length of the channel and someone is always tending boats and moving them to keep them afloat and out of trouble.

As you climb the path away from the slough, the first home you reach set amongst other small homes dotting the manicured slope, is that of Lima Pickering, a lovely petite 70 year-old woman with lots of energy and a quick smile. To her, we also offered a gift of tea as well as the novel, Cold Mountain, which we had found in a book exchange in Savusavu. We knew ahead of time she loved to read. As Lima chatted, pretty 5 year old Rita, her great grandchild, inspected us carefully with wide deep-brown eyes.

From Lima's home, we set off in search of Fawn Harbor's hot spring but quickly got lost in the jungle. Returning to the graded dirt road, we back-tracked toward town and came upon Michael, Lima's nephew, leading a bay stallion and walking beside his two boys who sat astride a walleyed grey stallion. The mellow work horse, used for hauling logs in the jungle, was tolerant of the boys as they tugged on his rope bridle (led through his mouth as a form of bit) while we chatted with Michael and snapped photos (we'll post these as soon as we get back within internet range).

Returning two days later, laundry bags bulging, we finally did find the hot spring due to the efforts of Lima's son, Tony, who guided us. The hot spring was a joy. Set in the jungle aside a mountain stream, the glorious, just-right-hot, sweet-water flows into the first rocky pool from a bamboo spigot stuck into the hillside. From this pool, water cascades into two additional pools before joining a cool, clear stream. We scrubbed our bodies and our laundry and returned, refreshed, to the bay to find we had to battle short, 1 meter breaking wind waves to reach Carina. Though it was difficult, we did manage to get our laundry aboard without an additional (seawater) rinse.

All the while at Fawn Harbor, tremendous waves continued to hit the fringing reef and the sound was like the booming of distant artillery. Finally, with the migration eastward of the last of a series of big high pressure systems in the subtropical Pacific, and the formation of a low pressure system near Australia, winds finally began to calm down. Those with experience advised us to wait at least until the second day of calm before venturing out to windward in the Koro Sea, so wait we did. Dawn of August 5 found us making final preparations for going to sea. By 8 am local, we had our anchor up and were slowly working our way out the dog-legged passage in the reef and into 2 meter seas. The tide was ebbing, so despite the seas, we made good time until we rounded Tavenui Island and lost its protection. Twenty hours later, diesel engine still rumbling and pushing us into the wind and short confused swell, we passed through the reef at Qilaqila (ng-eelah-ng-eelah) and inside the atoll surrounding Vanua Balavu, Lau
province, three weeks to the day after we left Savusavu to travel 110 nautical miles to reach the Lau.

3.2.2 Dakuniba & Nasasobu Bay

Maxsea shows this place as 'Dakuniba' but Google Earth has it labeled Nasasobu. They are a pair of bays about 6 miles east of Fawn Harbor. Mid channel waypoint is 16-46.168S / 179-49.534E. The pass is easy, but you need a good lookout on the bow as there are occasional bommies once inside the pass.

These are the waypoints we (Soggy Paws) used, and they worked for us, but we also had a good lookout on the bow. Use the waypoints to find the entry, but your eyes and common sense on going through the pass.

DAKUN1 S16°46.5997' E179°49.3001'
DAKUN2 S16°46.1688' E179°49.5346'
DAKUN3 S16°46.0512' E179°49.6722'
DAKUN4 S16°45.8628' E179°49.7657'
DAKUN5 S16°45.8441' E179°50.2099'

Note that this pass is where the sailboat Touche was lost in May 2012, exiting, following their inbound track, in 25 kt winds. We have never heard exactly what happened, but based on our snorkel reconnaissance, if a large SW swell is running, the pass may be breaking in areas that weren't breaking on calmer days.

Soggy Paws - July 2012: We chose to go to Dakuniba because it is linked by an inside-the-reef route into Viani Bay (takes eyeball navigation, but saves some miles of open ocean). If weather conditions were such that we couldn't make Dakuniba in time, our plan was to stop at Fawn Harbor instead. But we got going at 6am, on a light easterly day, and motorsailed and made Dakuniba at about 2:30pm.

We went inside the eastern bay (Nasasobu) and anchored in 40-45' mud/sand, great holding and great protection. This would be a good place to be in a blow, and is in fact one of Curly's "hurricane holes".

Anchorage position: 16-54.07S / 179-51.05E

Google Earth also shows a catamaran anchored at: 16-45.29 S / 179-51.10E, right off David's house, but we found that to be about 60' deep, and so anchored further in, in 45'.

We ended up with 6 boats in the bay and there was still plenty of room. The bay is completely mangrove-lined and offers some interesting exploration by dinghy and kayak, as well as some hiking ashore. We met one boat who had been there almost 2 weeks.

We found weak 2G Vodafone internet at this anchorage (get a USB extension cable and hang your dongle in the rigging). Cell phone bars were also almost nil, but probably usable if you get high enough on your boat.

There are several settlements nearby. A family (David is the 3-family patriarch) lives on the hill on the SW end of the bay. They are nice people and you should stop in and say hello. David is VERY welcoming. He shared with us whatever fruit was in season, took us on a hike to the
Viani Bay overlook, and urged us to come ashore and use his water to do laundry. If you go all the way up the middle of the 3 creeks at the NE end of the bay, you will end up at David's Copra Shed (at high tide).

But the 'chief' who 'owns' the area and the waters is in Dakuniba (approx 16-44.75S / 179-50.79E), around in the next bay. So the next morning we dinghied around and did our sevusevu with Chief George. This was our first and we were really nervous about the whole thing. It it was easy. A young guy named Chris who spoke good English met us on the beach, and presented sevusevu to Chief George. They collected a number of villagers and we sat in a circle in the meeting area, the kava was presented, the chief said a few words in Fijian with head bowed, and we were introduced, and they said we were done. We took a few pictures, then sat and chatted with them for a few minutes about things to do around there, and then left, free to explore on our own.

Check the tides before you go. High tide is best, and don't stay too long (or plan accordingly). With a 4-6 foot tidal range, it can be quite a challenge getting back to water at low tide, after you've left your dinghy under the trees at high tide.

In the afternoon, the weather was really settled, so we went out to the reef to anchor and snorkel. Chris recommended that we go back in during the night, just in case bad weather comes, but we decided to stay out overnight. From about 2 hours before high tide to 2 hours after high tide, it got a little rolly, but otherwise wasn't bad.

The winds here do not seem to blow with the prevailing weather (which right now is supposed to be 12 knots ESE). In the late afternoons we've had light westerly winds, and overnight light NEly winds. The swell is currently supposed to be 1.5m outside. In higher winds and seas this might be a challenging anchorage.

**Reef Anchor position:** We picked our way in in good light to anchor at: 16-46.473S / 179-50.216. This is in 15-feet good sand with 360 degree swinging room. Room for at least 3 boats. There is supposedly a high-tide dinghy pass to get outside the reef, near here, but we haven't found it yet.

**Diving:** We went out into the pass at what we believe to be low tide, and found very little current. We waited awhile for the current to positively start flowing in, and 2 hours later, it still felt like there was some current flowing out. While we waited, we snorkeled around and eventually decided to anchor the dinghies on the point on the S side of pass, well out from the breakers, and dive down the the face of the reef--no current there, slightly better visibility, and somewhat interesting. Even 2 hours after what we believed to be low tide, the visibility in the pass was not very good. High tide was after dark, and again early in the morning, so we couldn't go back to check if it eventually got better.

**Carina - February 2011:** Arriving in Nasasobu Bay, we quickly dropped our anchor, launched the dinghy and motored over to a small beach where three houses overlooked the water. On going to shore, we were greeted by Charlie Rounds, who lives in one of the hillside houses. Charlie helped us gut and steak the fish we had caught off Fawn Harbor. In exchange, we gave him enough fish steaks for all the residents in the houses above. We kept two huge 3 inch thick steaks for ourselves (one for supper and one for the freezer) and placed the remainder in Zip-Loc bags to be used as gifts to George, the chief of Dakuniba village which was in the bay to our north.
It is traditional in Fiji to attend a sevusevu (welcoming) ceremony when you anchor near a village, during which you introduce yourself, present a gift (kava root) and ask permission to stay in the anchorage and visit the village and surrounding mountains and waters. Not wishing for the fish to spoil, we dinghied the 1/2 mile to the village and were met by Semici who brought us to George's house. George is a muscular, physically fit 75 year old who is, shall we say, dentally impaired. He was quite happy to receive the gift of kava we had brought but was amazed at the amount we gave him: ~35 lbs. of wahoo. George and Semici did the usual prayer over the kava but during our interview he kept lifting up the bags of fish and smiling. It was a lot of fish and would feed many people.

The following morning we dinghied over to Dakinuba and met on the beach Farasiko (known to some as Sautini), who walked us through the immaculately clean village of tiny homes set around a large central grassy field where a dark blue, and humble, wooden, Catholic church dominated the scene. A "lali" or a hollowed out log drum sits beside the church and is drum which for generations has called villagers to prayer, announced births, wars, etc.

We crossed a stream and began to climb through plantings of cassava and bananas and soon heard the stream cascading through the thick wet vegetation. Almost immediately we came to a waterfall or a series of waterfalls as the stream wandered around house-sized boulders and crashed down into hollows carved out of the rock over millennia. Hand to hand we climbed and crossed the stream and followed our guide on a faint path to the site of "vatuvola" or written stones. No one knows how old they are, or what they mean but they are widely believed to have been carved by the earliest settlers to Fiji.

Back in the village, we were invited to sit and rest under the ancient banyan trees (called "buka" in Fijian) at the landing and were soon joined by other villagers including Peter, the "turago ni koro" (or hereditary chief). In typical village style we sat for a couple of hours while we helped to strip pandanus leaves of thorns in preparation for weaving, took lots of photos and answered dozens of questions. The highlight of our visit (or so it seemed) was when we brought out lollies...the kids eyes got huge and their tongues told of their want for the sweets and even the adults were scrambling. Such a simple thing to us but a thrill to these isolated islanders.

Back over in "our" bay, we explored ashore a bit, meeting eventually everyone living in the three homes made of a hard wood called vesi: David & Margaret, Bertha and George, adopted beauty Neomi (ñOH my); George's brother Charlie; Enid and Ella. Bertha and George's other children were in school at Taveuni. The homes were not by any stretch pretty, with flat tin roofs and ells extending in all directions but once you got your shoes off and got inside they were dry and comfortable and immaculately clean. Power in generated on site by solar panels or a small generator. Electronic gadgets were few (Margaret's sewing machine is driven by a treadle) but photos fill the walls and lovely hand crocheted covers graced the furniture. Ella's home was filled with historic photos of large wooden merchant sailing ships built by her late husband Arthur which were used for transporting passengers and copra during the days of prosperity for copra plantations. Still, the estate has 400 cattle ranging free in the mountains, and although the homes appear modest and we are SURE the men work very hard, life seems comfortable. Too, they have a gorgeous view of the bay, the reef and the surrounded mountains, as breezes tickle the curtains.
We also ventured into the creeks on the north of the bay, which were difficult to visualize from afar as their entrances were mere divots in the mangrove boundary. When the tide was high we had enough water to cross the muddy entrances and once inside both creeks we found they were lovely calm waterways about 15’ wide that wound this way and that and intermingled with the surrounding mangrove forests. Unknown avian inhabitants called out our presence but we saw few amongst the orchid-dotted (and spider webbed) trees. A pollen (red and unidentified) floated slowly with us as we pushed inside with the last of the rising tide. We half expected a howler monkey to begin his roar or a crocodile to slither off the bank...but then remembered this was Fiji.

While ashore one day we received permission to burn our trash in the inter-tidal zone of the beach.

One feature of Nasasobu bay was the flying fox colony on the point to our west. We are not sure yet if these are the endangered monkey faced bats of the Mirimiri genus but these bats certainly did NOT seem endangered; there were thousands of them lined up like clothes hanging out to dry. These bats are relatively small but with large wings and an finger-like protuberances projecting from the middle of each wing. At dusk they fill the sky in the bay and even swoop down and seem to take sips of water. We've never had them come so close to us at anchor and we just sat quietly and enjoyed the show.

Our interactions with the locals were warm and wonderful. We took lots of photos and printed what we could as souvenirs, dispensed lollies to kids and adults alike, dispensed a bit of disinfecting scrub and antibiotic ointment to treat a festering wound, and bought a mangrove bark tapa from a lovely woman, Paulini, who generates money to care for her grandchildren and her disabled husband this way. Philip gave multiple "tours" of our nesting dinghy, of interest to these islanders who seem to be looking for alternatives to large vessels that suck expensive fuel (kayaks have become common for fishing or traveling about).

In return we received gifts of bananas, pineapples, pawpaw, passion fruit and dozens of glorious lemons. In fact one morning we woke to find a large 10 liter bucket in our dinghy filled to overflowing with lemons and passion fruit. We later found out this was a gift from David, Margaret's husband, but probably in thanks from the settlement for the antibiotics and disinfecting scrub we donated.

One fine day we headed for the village intent on hiking the “highway” which we understood traveled high into the hills and offered views. It was Monday but the village was bustling and everyone was dressed in their best as this was the day of the monthly visit from the priest; and mass had been said mid-morning. Directed to the road by Sia and her husband Mika, we crossed the stream and started up the terminus of the Hibiscus "Highway”. Here, it's merely a grassy double track that looks as if vehicle traffic is rare. A mountain bike or a horse (common here) seem like the better vehicles on this road. The climb was gradual, though significant, and the views were fabulous of both Nasasobu and Dakuniba bays and the barrier reef beyond, plus the village nestled into the valley.

3.2.3  Viani Bay

Namani - June 2013 - Lessons Learned from a Day on Rainbow Reef: We have a few comments aimed at helping others make a day out snorkeling or diving with Jack into a great experience. Our day turned out to be more stressful than I imagined it would and we’d like to
share what we learned from the experience. Jack is a generous and knowledgeable man but I think we may have assumed too much in what we asked of him. These comments are made with a full recommendation for Jack and his piloting service which we very much appreciate. However, we caution others not to make assumptions about how the day out on the reef will run.

We had difficulty contacting Jack since his phone and VHF were out, and we were anchored on the far side of the bay without easy step-ashore access to his home. Some other cruisers very kindly set up a date for us: 10am the next day, the same time every other group had gone out on over the past couple of days. Only later did we realize this was one mistake; set your departure time up with an eye on getting to the reef at slack tide, and ask for Jack’s input. It turns out that 10am had been a great time four days earlier, but by now the tide cycle had changed enough, but Jack was too accommodating to suggest a different time, and we didn’t get to really communicate with him before our departure.

When we got to his submerged mooring (3 meters below the surface) at the reef, the current was about 3 knots and it was very, very difficult for us to get a line around it. It took about 30 minutes of trying attempts by two exhausted snorkelers to get a line on. Meanwhile, our boat was much too close to the crashing outer reef edge for comfort. Had we known how difficult the whole mooring procedure would be, we would have asked Jack to talk it through on the way out. Jack later said that a different arrival time would have been better but I think his mild and considerate Fijian manners did not allow him to bring this up when the outing was initially organized. We sat it out a little on deck until the current eventually eased, just as Jack said it would.

**Lesson learned: pick your time carefully, talk the procedure through.**

*Ed note:* To get the best out of the Rainbow Reef dive, the professional dive companies wait for a ripping NE current, which (we think) is on a falling tide. So the best time to get hooked on the mooring is at slack high tide, and wait a bit for the current to start before you make your dive. The dive is interesting no matter what the tide, but the soft corals come out more when the current is strong--but that makes your dive a very short one!

Secondly, we feel we may have overtaxed Jack’s skills with our mixed group interests. We had two scuba divers, five adult snorkelers, and two very young kid snorkelers. The priority was the kids, so we asked for a quiet spot where the others could find something interesting to see. Jack said it would be no problem, once again, being supremely accommodating. However, with the current and wind, it proved very, very stressful to me (and probably to Jack) to have our group split in several batches out on the open reef with Jack trying to pilot three dinghies out in building seas over quite a wide area.

**Lesson learned: keep to a maximum of two groups,** such as adult divers and adult snorkelers, or snorkelers of two ability levels but no divers. (Maybe other people like to live dangerously, but I only wanted a pleasant day out on the reef!)

Meanwhile, the wind and waves picked up surprisingly quickly, so our boat, which was left on the mooring, started heaving wildly on its mooring line (picture bow six feet out of the water, then crashing back down). We needed to make a quick exit, which was a real challenge. When we did all get back, climbing from the dinghies to the deck was hard, especially for Jack, who does not live on a sailboat and isn’t perhaps the limber young chick he once was.
Lesson learned: Check the forecast carefully and be ready to ditch the excursion immediately if conditions change.

Finally, only half of our group were really fluent English speakers, and even those had to ask Jack to repeat a few things to understand. His English is excellent but it’s just the accent we have to tune in to. Once the boat was moored, we all set off on our various drop-offs expecting clear instructions on how this should all operate, but we never got clear instructions. Jack dropped the divers off and pointed out where they should go (“swim until the current slows and we will meet you there”), and off they went, swept away by a huge current. Then he came back for the snorkelers, and told the adults to jump in at a certain point. He also sent in the dad tending the two young kids, and then took off with the kids still in the dinghy, intending to bring them to the quieter water. But the dad (whose English is a bit shaky) was expecting to stay with the kids (and so did the kids, who freaked out), so it was a momentary crisis. We quickly resolved it, with the dad getting back in the dinghy to rejoin the kids.

Lesson learned: make sure everything is clear to everybody before you leave the mother ship. Maybe have Jack draw a sketch of the area so you understand where to meet and how the reef is shaped there. Don’t split into more than two groups.

I completely endorse Jack who provides a wonderful service for sailors at a very fair price ($10 per person). But be cognizant that he’s basically a pilot, and not a professional tour organizer with western safety standards (that’s why he charges F$10 and the dive operators F$180 to take you out). These comments are purely cautionary. Many, many groups go out and have wonderful, safe excursions with Jack. You can do the same if you keep these pointers in mind.

Soggy Paws - 2013 - Jack's new number at Viani Bay: 846-2380

Rayfiki - 2012 - Taxi Service to/from Savusavu or Labasa - We have been using a guy named Bhupen at phone number 997-8553 to help us shuttle guests in and out. We have been hanging out in Viani Bay, and we have had Bhupen meet us in Buca Bay several times to take our guests to the airport, and pick up the next set of incoming guests from the airport and bring them to Buca Bay. He has been really reliable and also helped with some provisioning logistics as part of his taxi service.

Soggy Paws - July 2012 - Inside Passage from Dakuniba to Viani Bay: After nearly a week at Dakuniba, the wind hadn’t let up much, but we were ready to move. So we opted to take the 'inside the reef' passage to Viani Bay (one reason we chose Dakuniba instead of Fawn Harbor for our first stop).

Ideally, this passage should be done at low tide (so the reefs are visible) and in good light. Well, the day we did it, it was nearly high tide and cloudy.

But we had a really good Google Earth chart of the reef area we had to go through, and 2 sets of tracks from other boats. The most helpful track was one that was annotated with 'Don’t go this way! Use the other pass!'

I had used the Google Earth chart and the tracks from others to plot a route through the reef (several zig-zags were required), and downloaded it to the Garmin. With Dave on the bow, and me following the planned route, and our friends on Challenger following us, it was pretty easy. Even on a cloudy day at high tide, Dave could see the shallow spots pretty well. And every one he pointed out, I could see on the chart anyway.
Soggy Paws - July 2012 - Viani Bay General Info: We arrived in Viani Bay about an hour later. We surveyed most of the eastern shoreline of the bay on our way in (making water, so needed to keep running the engine anyway). We were looking for a protected-from-the-wind, not-too-deep, no-coral anchorage big enough for 2 boats. There were a couple of not-too-deep spots, but we could see on the fishfinder that the bottom was full of coral. We ended up giving up and dropping anchor in a corally spot near Jack Fisher's place (where there were a couple of other boats already).

After one calm night and one really windy bouncy night on anchor, with our chain jerking on the coral, we checked out Jack's second mooring and found it adequate for most conditions, so we moved to his mooring.

Jack's mooring is in about 60 feet. Approximate position of his outer mooring is: 16-45.0S / 179-53.28E

It had about a 60-lb CQR, about 5 feet of heavy ship's chain, then about 20 feet of normal yacht-sized anchor chain, which was wrapped twice around a big coral head. From this, 1.25" line on a good shackle comes up to the buoy (several lengths tied together, and one length was 2x5/8" line)... a typical 'island' mooring--not storm strength but good enough for most conditions. The other boat on his other mooring said their mooring was about the same.

Our mooring loop at the top was nearly chafed through by some lazy cruiser who put only one length of line through the loop from one bow to the other--a sure way to saw through a mooring loop in a short time. (The proper way is 2 lines, one from each bow cleat, each through the loop, and back to the SAME cleat, which eliminates the 'sawing' effect as your boat swings back and forth). We tied our mooring lines, a primary and a backup, around the stout mooring line itself.

Diving: We had already arranged a day of diving (by email and phone) with Taveuni Ocean Sports. Our friend Linda from Sea Flyer had dived with Julie for a couple of dives on the reefs off Taveuni and just raved about Julie (see below). Unfortunately, she wasn't aboard the first day, but her guys were good safe dive boat operators (just not as good as Julie). We ended up doing a second day's worth of diving with Julie the next day, as the conditions were supposed to be 'perfect' for the White Wall dive. We agree that Julie is great and runs a great operation. There are several other operators in the area, but I highly recommend Taveuni Ocean Sports.

Had we not been in a hurry and had not already booked dives with TOS, we probably would have ended up just going out diving with Jack Fisher as our guide. Though TOS is very good, they are expensive, and with all our own equipment and a compressor aboard, we don't need that kind of service. Though we negotiated a 'backpacker' rate with TOS, it was still pricey for our limited budgets, and the other local dive operations' published rates are the same as TOS's.

Jack, on the other hand, guides divers on the same dives for $10 FJD per person per day (about $6 US). You take him aboard your boat, he takes you out to the dive area to a safe big-boat anchor spot, and then he takes you to the same 'famous' dive spots in your dinghy. These are all 'high current drift dives', so you really need a surface support vessel. He gives you the dive briefing on the surface, and then stays in your dinghy and follows your bubbles until you surface. At this price, it is typical to have 3-4 yacht crews doing this at the same time--pick one big boat to go out in, drag 3-4 dinghies behind it, and Jack deftly pilots the 'raft' of dinghies while the divers are down. We met several boats who'd been hanging out in Viani bay for weeks
dive with Jack. We plan to come back during the summer months and do a lot more diving on the reefs off Viani Bay with Jack.

The dives we did were great, especially the famed 'White Wall' dive. But even the 'lesser' spots were full of fish, and lots of live soft and hard corals. Dave got some great pics which we'll post when we have time and good enough internet.

There are also several hikes ashore, and the bay is great for exploring by kayak.

**Jack** has a VHF radio that is not working right now. His cell phone is 978-476-2846-2380, but when we were there, Jack had trouble keeping it charged. If you anchor in front of his place, he'll row out in the morning and talk to you, or you can dinghy in to his beach to say hi. His mooring/anchoring area is around 16-44.98S / 179-53.26E. There are currently 2 moorings there. And Jack's house is just inland from his beach located at approximately 16-44.86S / 179-53.27E. He has some fairly aggressive dogs on his property, but they seem more inclined to bother the locals than the cruisers.

For **provisioning**, you can either take your own boat across to one of the several towns right across Somosomo Straits to Somosomo or Waiyevo in Taveuni, or Jack can arrange a launch trip for you.

Soggy Paws was moving north anyway, so we anchored at Somosomo and walked to a relatively well-stocked MH Grocery Store, and walked downtown to the fresh fruit and veggie market. (see the Taveuni section on Somosomo for more details). It's only a 1 hour trip in the big boat across to Somosomo.

**Sea Flyer - June 2012 - Diving:** Today we went scuba diving with a dive company from Taviuni. They came to the boat and picked us up and took us to 2 real neat places on the reef. They have 1500 kinds of fish here and 400 kinds of coral. Hawaii has 400 kinds of fish and 15 kinds of coral. Very Nice dives. We saw a Blue ribbon eel, they only live in Fiji and are rare even here. Lots to take pictures of and the dive master goes slow enough to take your time taking pics. But with the current some times you have to hold on to a rock to keep from going too fast.

We did Rainbows End and the Mini White Wall, the Great White Wall, and Jacks Place.

The dive operation is [Taveuni Ocean Sports](http://taveunioceansports.com/) Email: dive@nakiafiji.com +679 867 7513

Julie Kelly Owner/Operator.

Julie is very good and very nice, Does first class dives. Nice boat only 4 people to a dive master.

The **Great White Wall** can only be done about every ten days due to tide currents It is fantastic Go in top of big lava tube come out the bottom of the reef at the Great White Wall. More soft corals than you can imagine, and fish that are nowhere else. She will show you the little things and go slow enough for you to take all the pics you want. That dive goes to 90 ft. We were in the water 62 minutes. After the bottom of the Lava tube you slow go up.

**Jack's Place** was a shallow reef dive Max 60 mostly 25 ft. Julie will show you an 80 year old giant clam. The reef is teaming with life. We took our time and spend 80 minutes underwater, and still had air.
Yes Jack is still around. He is Not a scuba diver so can't show you anything on a dive. You really need a guide on these dives the first time anyway. Don't Anchor on the reef. The dive co. have a mooring with a submerged Ball they put in and they use. Jack is fine for snorkel trips.

This is all from Viani Bay. The dive co. will come pick you up from your boat for no extra $$ and even gave us a few lbs. of organic Tomatoes. We have now done 2 days with them About $200 Fiji each If you use a credit card cheaper if you do cash.

**Soggy Paws Note - July 2012:** Though Sea Flyer raved about how good Julie from Taveuni Ocean Sports was, and we agree, there are a couple of other dive operations out in that area that you can also use. We have no other info on these other operations.


[http://www.dolphinbaydivers.com/about.html](http://www.dolphinbaydivers.com/about.html)  (Curly recommends this one in his briefing)

**Acapella - July 2012:** We could get Internet and Cell Phone access in Viani Bay using Vodafone.

**Tackless II - July 2007 - Diving:** The last stop on our circumnavigation of Vanua Levu is many people's first stop. Viani Bay is a large, multi-lobed bay right at the east "corner" of the south coast fronting directly onto the reefs of the Somosomo straights, the locations of Fiji's world famous scuba dives.

We picked our way through the reefs on our way in from Buca Bay, grateful for the full sun, because our CMap charts are still off. Conveniently, the NZ sloop Steelheart motored right past us, so, since they'd been to Viani before, we followed them in to the center anchorage right below the home of the Fisher family, who own much of the acreage here. Jack Fisher, a stout man of about sixty, is known for guiding visiting yachties whether on treks in the hills or to the delights of the reefs. Jack came by shortly after we got the hook down, and we made a plan to dive the next day.

However, within an hour, two more boats arrived in the anchorage. Another Kiwi boat called Tokimata and the American 44-foot Voyage catamaran Wind Pony. The Voyage cats' charter base is in Soper's Hole, Tortola, so every time one of these handsome craft sails by we enjoy a little nostalgia. The crew on Wind Pony, Dick and Lynn of St. Paul, MN, and their visiting friends Joe and Molly were also interested in a trip out to the reefs, so pretty soon the plan was modified for us ALL to go aboard Wind Pony.

For this kind of thing, cats just can't be beat. There we were, eleven people including Jack, with an absurd amount of space to enjoy the ride. And, in a way that wouldn't have happened easily otherwise, we all quickly got to know one another.

The good news from our point of view is they weren't all divers. On our first trip out, only three of us, Don, Peter of Tokimata, and I, dove the famous **Purple Wall**, while the others snorkeled the top of the reef. Jack gives a briefing on the site, and then he takes you out in your own dinghies, following your bubbles as you go with the current. For this service, he charges F$10pp. For experienced divers with their own equipment and an onboard compressor like us, this is a deal that is hard to beat! But for more novice divers or for people without gear, there is a professional dive operation at the east end on the bay called Dolphin Divers, so no one need miss out
The Purple Wall is one of the most beautiful dives I have ever done, and as you can guess, that is saying a lot. Ever since my trip to the Red Sea in 1984, I have had a soft spot for soft corals. Up until this dive, I have been disappointed that the soft corals we’ve been seeing have been the leather corals and other spongier sorts -- interesting, but usually drab. The soft corals I remember from the Red Sea were inflated bouquets of color -- pinks, oranges and yellows.

Jack dropped us in up current, and we swam down the reef to about forty feet. For the first few minutes I was unimpressed. Then we rounded a bend and the wall exploded with a profusion of soft corals, which for some reason are all in purple hues! They were dark purple, lavender or white with purple trim! It was a spectacular display. Plus there were loads of fish, and lots of crinoids, relatives of feather starfish that filter feed at night but curl up in the day. Most eye-catching were the little orange basslets that mass around the corals providing quite the color contrast, and at one spot I saw a pair brilliant yellow goatfish against the purple. Talk about Nature's palette! We also saw two huge Napoleon wrasses, thousands of butterfly fish, and enough fish of "shootable size" to satisfy Don's meaty fancies. (It seems he doesn't need to actually be spear-fishing, he just likes to see something he could!) At the end of the dive was a swim-thru cavern, clad in every color soft and cup coral you can imagine, along with beautiful sea fans, wire corals, and gorgonians. Since this cave both ends the Purple Wall dive and begins the famous White Wall dive, you have seen it photographed in dozens of dive magazines.

Then, as if all this weren't enough, as we did our safety stop, what should swim up but a manta ray! He was not huge, probably about 10’ wide, but he was deeply black and feeding at the surface. The snorkelers all jumped back in the water to see him.

The next day, we dived the Cabbage Patch. Relatively new divers, Dick and Lynn of Wind Pony had opted to snorkel yesterday, but encouraged by our great dive, they decided to give it a shot. Unfortunately, the current was much stronger here than we'd had yesterday, which made things a bit more challenging, but Jack put our dinghy anchor down so that Lynn would have a descent line. It was a good move for all of us. We crept up and over the edge of the wall and again enjoyed the profusion of soft corals, these of mixed colors, purples and yellows with lots of colorful fish. The soft coral wall was over too quickly thanks to the current, so the second half of the dive was up on the ledge going from bommie to bommie. A bommie is an isolated coral patch, often attaining significant height, each providing shelter for a huge range of fish. On this stretch, we saw many large fish between the bombmies -- groupers and snappers and god knows what! We also had several sharks, including a 10’ lemon shark resting on the bottom.

Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: After our brief stop in Taveuni, we took a mooring from Jack in Viani Bay on the east end of Vanua Levu to meet up with several old friends. This was a picturesque location but not the right place in a blow because it’s open to the SE. We got a weather break for one day, and Chuck got to dive with the folks on Water Musik in a great location in Rainbow Reef with Jack as our guide. He only charges $10 per person to show cruisers all the best spots for diving or snorkeling, but folks are telling him to increase that because it’s such valuable information. All the divers were excited and impressed even though Rainbow Reef was not rated the “10” it used to be due to storm damage. It’s still considered a great dive for variety and quality of color in the coral.

Veella - SSCA Newsletter - August 2002: As we headed east, we stopped in Viani Bay, a large, well-protected bay. Locals gave us a warm welcome, greeting us with a handful of limes
and inviting us to sign their guest book, as other yachtyes had before. They offered to take us to the best snorkel and dive spots, get our laundry cleaned and to take us to a farm where we could replenish fruits and vegetables. They even offered to buy us dry goods across the strait when they went by boat to the nearest town.

We snorkeled daily in Viani Bay, continuing our perpetual search for fish and coral types that we’ve never seen, and were richly rewarded. We motored our dinghy out to the world-renowned Rainbow Reef, anchored off and spent hours exploring. The coral reef was randomly layered with purple, pink, orange and yellow soft corals resembling flowers in an English garden undulating in the swell. We spotted Christmas tree worms of various colors, tiny lobsters and moray eels.

When we needed to replenish our supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables, we set out for a farm visit. Litia, a young Fijian, took us up past the school house and over a high hill, through forest and swamp lands and eventually to a clearing, where a bull casually grazed. We made our way to what looked like an abandoned farmhouse and were welcomed by an Indian man and two Indian women who invited us in side. Litia gently washed and dried our feet, then suggested we sit on a woven mat on the floor of the kitchen. They asked if we were hungry and, although we indicated that we had eaten breakfast, we soon found ourselves served a delicious Indian meal consisting of curried jackfruit, cooked Fijian spinach, roti (tortilla-like bread) and sweet limeade made with brown sugar.

The Indian farmer showed us around his rented property, taking us along a riverbed on which he delivered copra to boats which anchor in a nearby bay. He explained how he had lost the lease of the sugar cane land his family has cultivated for generations as many Indians have. Many leases are expiring and are not being renewed. The farmer also spoke of the tensions between the indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians: the hard working Indian farmers can’t understand why the Fijians don’t work their land, and the Fijians think the Indians are only interested in money and are worried they will lose their land and prosperity to aggressive Indians.

He spoke openly with disparaging remarks about the Fijians in front of Litia, although her family is not part of a traditional communal village and their relationship seemed different than his relations with his other neighbors. While we tried to talk to the women, we soon realized that they did not speak English.

After generously sharing his time, he finally took us to the fields where we could pick the vegetables we wanted, including eggplant, cucumbers, long beans, bok choy, green onions, cilantro, papaya, jackfruit and even corn that had been grown from special seeds bred for the tropics by the University of Hawaii. It was a special treat to harvest our own fresh food. Only the day before, after a snorkel in a remote area, we explored ashore and harvested a few papaya from a deserted property — a risky move since all land in Fiji belongs to some one, although the trick is figuring out who owns it before attempting to pick. The derelict bure (thatched hut) appeared to have been untouched for years, and ripe fruit was falling from trees overgrown with bougainvillea.

An other time, when we visited ashore to a property owned by an absentee American but managed by several Fijian Indian caretakers, we were encouraged to pick whatever we wanted, so we harvested limes, sour oranges and papayas to our heart’s delight. It is sometimes hard to
find fruit to buy in stores, as there is no need to sell it because everyone has fruit growing in their gardens. We feel so resourceful when we can catch our own or trade for fish, fruit and vegetables.

3.2.4 Currents in the Somosomo Straits

There are current arrows on the CMap charts that run NE and SW in the straits, with no indication of what tide the current runs what way. Based on local observations and conversation with dive companies, it goes NE on the ebb (falling tide) and SW on the flood (rising tide). About 2-3 knots. If the wind is blowing strong out of the East, there can be quite a wind-against-current chop on the ebb.

You can go close in to Taveuni to get out of most of the wind and chop.

3.2.5 Buca Bay

Rayfiki - 2012 - Taxi Service to/from Savusavu or Labasa - We have been using a guy named Bhupen at phone number 997-8553 to help us shuttle guests in and out. We have been hanging out in Viani Bay, and we have had Bhupen meet us in Buca Bay several times to take our guests to the airport, and pick up the next set of incoming guests from the airport and bring them to Buca Bay. He has been really reliable and also helped with some provisioning logistics as part of his taxi service.

Nine of Cups - 2011: From Fawn Harbour, we moved around the southeast corner of Vanua Levu, through the Somosomo Strait to a protected anchorage at Buca (Boo-tha) Bay just off the village of Loa. Our timing during the short trip had been excellent with an ebb tide giving us a push through the Straits and sun to read the waters enroute. Our luck held as the rain started just as we finished anchoring and tidying up Cups for the night.

Anchorage: 16S40.47 / 179E49.69 - 40'

Loa village is home to about 60 people. It's small, but extremely friendly and we met several people in our short stay. Three buses per day run along the unpaved coast road for the 2-1/2 trip to Savusavu. There is a gas station with limited hours which offered diesel, gasoline and kerosene.

The next town of Natuvu was a Seventh Day Adventist village. There was a small mini-mart in Natuvu. We replenished our peanut supply, but there was little else available...but you could buy phone cards for your cell phone

Seine and her son and husband rowed out to the boat to bring us a huge supply of pawpaw (papaya) and bananas.

Tackless II - June 2007: We sailed away from Albert Cove mid morning on Monday. Our route took us down along the west coast of Rabi Island, passing the principal village of Nuka, with light-colored reefs between us and shore. Things got a little dicey at the southernmost end as we crossed back into the eastern hemisphere again and the CMap charts failed to knit together. We had heard a lot of bad reports about CMap in this part of Fiji, but it was just hard to accept after it being so reliable all the way around Vanua Levu. As we sailed further and further along,
past Kioa Island and approaching Buca Bay (pronounce Bu-tha), we must have been off by nearly a mile!

To add to our discomfort, the pass east between Kioa and the mainland refused to reveal itself. It looked like we were sailing into a closed bay, and our guidebook let us down with no detailed drawings or pix of it as to where would be best to anchor! Fortunately, we spied by binocs a sole sailboat with a triple spreader rig and red sail covers anchored dead ahead that stood good odds of being the yacht Red Sky. Like Sequester at Also Island, we had not previously met Red Sky, but we had communicated with them by radio and email, so wanted to meet them in person.

Red Sky was anchored in a dimple along the southern shoreline of the bay. Actually they turned out to be on a mooring, of which there was only one, so we had to drop the hook in 70’ (16°40.443'S; 179°51.363'E), and the afternoon wind being nor'east we settled right back with the shore off our stern. Hmmm. Steve and Carol promptly paddled over in their two-man inflatable kayak, and we had one of those instant impromptu get-togethers that cruisers have.

Steve and Carol had found this place by walking down the road from their previous anchorage further up the bay. What had caught their eye was a house and garden with a painted gate saying Welcome to Valesia, so they had walked in. It turned out to be the home of an enterprising young Fijian couple – Joe and Sau -- who have recently moved back here from Savusavu. Joe has undertaken a new baking business, producing loaves of coconut bread (with wholemeal loaves planned to start production next week) from a wood-fired oven in their back yard that are distributed not just around the bay but to Rabi and Kioa by ferry. Sau, an experienced seamstress, makes clothing and takes on various sewing projects. Red Sky was taking advantage of her skills and having screens made for their hatches. Joe and Sau plan to build a couple of bures for backpackers and hope to draw more cruisers with the bread-baking, sewing and laundry services.

We met Joe and Sau in person the next morning when we took Red Sky's suggestion to checkout the new clinic being built up the coast. The clinic, a huge undertaking of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, is a pleasant mile or so walk up the road. It is a large, modern concrete structure in a broad lawn of tall red coconut palms. We are told it is funded by a couple of doctors who have been organizing medical missionary visits here over the past ten years. Indeed a large group of physicians were here earlier in the month.

The managers of the project – Wayne and Lois -- live up a road just beyond the clinic, so we climbed it to see if we might meet them. It turned out they were gone to Savusavu for the day, but Wayne's 80-year-old parents, recently arrived from Colorado, were glad to welcome us. They showed us around their son and daughter-in-law's interesting living arrangements: a sort of pop-up geodesic tent known as a yurt! The yurt sat annexed to a concrete kitchen/shower/laundry annex and a shady porch where we sipped lemonade. The view was outstanding.

Upon our return to Valesia, Joe produced a couple of cool drinking coconuts to refresh us and before we knew it we were seated at their kitchen table enjoying a fish soup and sweet potato lunch. That led to checking out some of the Fijian outfits that Sau has produced,…which led to my taking one home with me, a great buy at just F$20. At last I have proper attire for church or funeral! If we just had more time to linger, Sau would take my measurements and sew an outfit specifically tailored for me. I am tempted to come back with fabric and get some lightweight tops
made with just enough shoulder coverage – no more no less – to be acceptable to the village fashion police; my stateside tanks are too skimpy and my cotton T-shirts too hot!

Just beyond Joe and Sau's place is a complex belonging to an Indian family. Sonny, the patriarch, has built several boats in his yard, including the ferry Raja, that came in and dried out with the tide for some bottom work while we were there. More currently, he runs a major grocery distribution center, which services all of Buca Bay as well as Kioa and Rabi. We took a stroll down the aisles and were impressed with the volume of staples. In charge during our visit was one of Sonny's two sons who are home for a month-long break from the University of the South Pacific in Suva.

That evening, Steve and Carol reciprocated by inviting us aboard their boat for cocktails. These two condo captains don't often get to go aboard a REAL sailboat. Red Sky is a Santa Cruz 50, and inside everything is built to minimize weight. There are no bulkheads, the barest furniture, and the sole is slats rather than solid flooring. Carol tells me that they go twelve knots where we'd go five, and that the boat can do much faster. Yikes, I think I'd get a nosebleed from the speed.

In the morning, all four of us went ashore to say goodbye to Joe and Sau. They had made lemon leaf tea and fresh coconut bread for us, and the men left with gifts of Sau-made shirts. Well, if they learn not to give everything away, I think this couple could be the future of Fiji. I asked Sau what she thought made the two of them so motivated compared to typical Fijian villagers, and she attributes it to her "urban exposure" and to her father and brothers having businesses in Suva, essentially just being a few generations up the experiential curve. It's an indication that things can evolve here after all.

### 3.3 North Coast of Vanua Levu (West to East)

If you are contemplating a cruise around Vanua Levu, you should try to find a copy of *Carpé Diem's Cruising Guide To A Secret Fiji*. This is a PDF file floating around the fleet that details a cruise along the north coast of Vanua Levu in Fiji. I had it posted on our website for awhile, but was asked to take it down by the original author (Hilton on Spindrift II), so you'll have to find a copy for yourself.

Hilton's comments to me: As you will have discovered on your cruises the mere fact that we cruisers visit changes the lives of the locals. Sometimes but not necessarily for the best. In some ways I regret making that guide.

"There will be no lending, selling, trading, showing, sharing, giving away or discussing this guide with fellow cruisers or any other interested parties.

You will not acknowledge to others that you have seen this Guide on the pain of having to share your anchorages with too many boats."

Suffice it to say that, if you want to get off the beaten path, a cruise of the north coast of Fiji is one of the best places to go.
3.3.1 Naviqiri (Navigiri)

**Tackless II - June 2007:** We left Bua Bay and navigated on our own up the channel through the reefs around Vanua Levu’s northwest corner.

This brought more easy sailing with plenty of wind over absolutely flat seas. The landscape was gorgeous around a huge nob of land fist ed around a mountain called Seseleka, which then opened into the rather dramatic **Rukuruku Bay**. Suddenly the wind shifted forward and accelerated down the valleys, giving Don quite the handful as we heeled over and close-reached through a stretch named appropriately "Wilson Patch." (I don't know who Wilson was, but where are several "Patches" named for him around these parts!) (Addendum: I later learned that "Wilson" is James Wilson, an early missionary explorer to Fiji...surely a relative!)

The winds dropped right off and skies cleared as we entered the channel called **Monkey Face Passage**. The channel gets its name from a rock formation on the top of Uluinasiva mountain. If Seseleka looks like a fist on the chart, than Uluinasiva is the cocked thumb. The rock formations on top were eye-catching from every angle, but neither of us saw a monkey's face. Perhaps it's better coming the other way?

This channel delivered us officially onto Vanua Levu's north side. Even as the sky turned blue and the clouds thinned, the landscape altered to the same grassy slopes, broken by clump of trees and magnificent rocky outcrops, that's we'd seen in our road trip earlier.

On the port side, a very striking island named **Yaqaga** (I would guess pronounced Yanganga) rose up, setting the stage for a horizon filled with small islands and craggy mountain peaks.

Don steered Tackless along the line of seven beacons (nautical name for a pole with a mark on top), that kept us clear of the reef line, even as we furled the sails and engaged the engine to motor us into the teeth of a rising wind, as we pushed hard the last few miles to our planned anchorage in **Naurore Bay**. We rounded into it and nosed into a spot behind a small islet off **Wairagia Point**, getting the anchor down moments before the rain squall blew through, whiting out everything around us.

We could see the village of **Navigiri** (pronounced Na-ving-giri) on a saddle between the peak of Monkey Face and another humungous vertical rock bluff. We had chosen this as our first village to visit because several people had described it as an especially nice village.

Although proper protocol is to go ashore promptly and introduce yourselves to the village chief, the unsettled weather and the fact we had the dinghy on deck persuaded us to wait til morning. At dusk, however, a panga with four men approached without a light. Only one spoke English and we understood they were coming from a day cutting firewood on Yaqaga Island. We apologized for not coming ashore right away, and asked them to inform the chief that we would come in to make our sevusevu (pronounced: servuservu) first thing. He reminded us of the tide issue, and suggested earlier would be better than later, an observation we would appreciate the next day. I, of course, fretted all night that we had started off on the wrong foot.

The next morning we launched the dinghy and headed for shore. Before leaving the boat we had dressed ourselves properly (no knees, no shoulders, no sunglasses, no hats!), practiced our basic spiel ("Bula! My name is Gwen. My name is Don. Could you please take us to the toranga ni koro so we can make our sevusevu."), and extracted the first bundle of yagona (kava) from the stash we purchased at the Savusavu market.
Fiji fiercely protects the traditions of its people, and while visitors are welcome, proper behavior is expected. I don't think either of us has been so self-conscious in decades!

We were met on the muddy beach by the usual passel of children, only these youngsters were wielding child-sized machetes! (Eek, were we in trouble already?!) An older boy was brave enough to try his school English, and we ventured our prepared spiel in Fijian, and in no time we were led to a couple named Sara and Freddy.

Sara and Freddie, both of whom spoke confident English, were neither of them the official toranga ni koro, but they seemed to be the designated ambassadors to visiting yachties of which there have been several over the past couple of years. In fact, the first thing they did was sit us down on a mat in their house and share with us photos of their favorite yachties, who turned out to be cruisers we knew – Chris and Katie of Billabong (from our first year in the Pacific) and the Repass family of Convergence.

Sara and Freddie led us to the chief's house at the top of the hill. Along the way we introduced ourselves and shook hands with every adult we passed (including the toranga ni koro!). The chief's house looked little different from the others on the outside (except for a padlock on the outside of the door!), but inside he had a bookshelf with a TV, DVD player and a telephone! We slipped off our shoes and sat where directed on the woven pandanus mat, while Freddy made our introduction, a formalized speech in soft-spoken Fijian, of which I only understood the word "America." He placed our bundle of yagona on the floor between them, and when the chief picked it up and the men clapped, we were in. We'd been advised that often the chief never speaks with you, but this one did exchange a few words with us about life in the United States, before we were ushered on our way. Sara was walked us around the extent of the village and we shook more hands and snapped more pix.

How one ever went cruising in the days before digital cameras, I cannot imagine. Everybody we met wanted their picture taken, and then to see it on the little screen. This was a wonderful development for me, because I am often too shy to ask to take pictures of people, and therefore never have them. Not so in Navigiri. I have dozens, and because the people are not self-conscious, every photo is beautiful.

We met men building a house, people preparing pandanus for mat weaving, ladies doing the laundry under the shared spigot, and a couple peeling and cutting cassava for the big Sunday meal.

There were toddlers playing naked in a tub, and grandmothers sweeping the church. It was a busy place, but everybody took time for us! And, so, as you might expect, we will go back tomorrow for church. We said yes to the invitation once Don saw that the church had pews. He's not much for extended floor sitting.

When it was time to head back to the boat, we found that the outgoing tide had left the dinghy high and dry on the beach. We have a very heavy dinghy, I'm sorry to say, and the nifty wheels we were accustomed to using in Mexico, were back in a locker on the boat. Sara and a young boy each took a corner and helped us carry it in four stages out to the water. Even then, we had to walk it a fair distance, and paddle even farther before we could get the motor down halfway. Sadly, even that was too soon, and the prop caught an unseen rock, to become Don's afternoon project. I'm making banana bread to bring to the Sunday meal.
Katie and Chris of Billabong stayed here in Navigiri a month and the Convergence crew a week. I'm not sure we have that luxury, thanks to our slow start and our ambitious schedule. But tomorrow is church, and Monday we will visit the school and learn a bit about weaving mats, so for now, home is Navigiri.

Our second day in Navigiri was a Sunday, and because church is the keystone of life in Fijian communities, Don and I accepted Sara and Freddy's invitation to spend the day with them. We got ourselves as properly dressed as we could manage (Don in long pants and collared shirt and me in a dress!), and dinghied ashore at about 9:30am, beaching the dinghy in the mud to the amusement of a gang of kids all properly dressed in sulus and crisp white shirts.

The dominant building in Navigiri is the big yellow Methodist church. Its members come not just from Navigiri but from several other nearby villages, by foot or by boat, just as residents of this village who attend a different denomination church travel to it. Everybody was dressed to the nines. The women and girls mostly wore the traditional Fijian outfit of a cap-sleeved dress over a color-coordinated sulu beneath. The men and boys wore western-style dress shirts and ties over their formal sulus, and almost every elder man wore a sport coat! This in heat that had me utterly wilting because I had to wear a linen top over my calf-length dress because it was sleeveless! (In Fiji a woman's shoulders should be covered.)

Sara led us to the pews on the right, where we were joined by most of the old ladies of the congregation. Across from us on the left, sat all but the littlest kids. In the main nave of the church, the choir sat on the right, the women in front, the men behind them. The balance of the congregation also split themselves by sex, with the women filling the left hand pews, and the men behind the choir on the right. The only exception to this was the chief and his wife, who sat together in the front pew on the left.

The service was two long hours, of which we understood not a word….except "Jisu" and "Amen." There was not even a single sentence in English to give us the gist of things, as we'd gotten at the Catholic church in Tonga. Still there were several aspects of the service that made it well worth our while. First, the singing of Pacific peoples is invariably impressive, with powerful voices and beautiful harmonies (although the tunes here seemed more westernized than they had in Tonga or Easter Island). Sara thrust a hymnal in my hands, and to please her I made an effort to sing along, despite not understanding the words. According to Don, this caught the attentions of a lot of the choir and apparently bought me a lot of brownie points, which came back to me all afternoon… "You sing in Fijian!"

The other aspect that delighted us was the people watching. It seems there is a universal human-ness about people in church, the little kids in their Sunday outfits being distracted by their mothers, the older kids fidgeting and punching each other in the far pews as the service wore on, but best of all the sisterhood of the ladies as they goosed and batted one another with their fans. (And have I said a special prayer for the old woman who pressed up me her feather edged fan for the duration?)

Sara kept whispering to me, as the service inched along to its end, that soon we would leave and go home and lie down, and sure enough, after we waded through all the post-service handshaking, we went back to Sara and Freddy's and, provided with pillows stretched out on the floor with Freddy and the kids.
Meanwhile Sara laid the tablecloth in the center of the floor, …with silverware AND cloth napkins provided for the ka’palangi (foreigners)… and set up upon it the big Sunday meal that she had cooked earlier.

The meal was superb: tender chunks of octopus in coconut milk, palusami (taro leaf in coconut milk), and huge chunks of boiled cassava and yam, along with my loaf of banana bread which was a huge hit. Like Tongans and Samoans, Fijians eat mostly with their fingers with a fingerbowl of water at each end of the table for cleaning up. To our relief, unlike in Tonga, we all – men, women, kids and guests – ate together at the same time.

In all the houses around us, all the other families were doing the same, and afterward, everyone retired to cool shady spots outside to rest and visit.

During none of these events (church included) was the digital camera allowed to sit idle. Like a movie director, Sara told me what pictures to take of whom, and amazingly everybody seemed thrilled to pose, pose again, and yet again.

I was sent running up hill and down to catch this group or that, these adorable children or that grandmother, the old folks sitting around the kava bowl, or the men watching the rugby finals on TV through the chief’s window. Everybody was happy to pose, singly and in groups, and this with absolutely no indication they thought they would ever see the prints. Just a glance at the little screen on the back was enough. I wish we’d had a second camera to take pictures of the picture-taking.

Finally as the tide began to come back in, we took our leave, and once back on the boat peeled off our dress clothes sodden with sweat and dove into the water to cool down..........Aaaahhhhhhh ...... It’s a good thing we anchored on the far side of the bay.

**Day 3 - T2:** At ten o’clock the next morning Sera led us through the village and out the back side where we found a real road. Well, a real dirt road, down which a carrier truck travels at least once a week. (There are no cars in Naviqiri, but there are a number of horses!) This road led out of town through a stretch of garden allotments (for the people on this side of the village), up a hill, through some piney woods and down the hill to the school shared with the nearby village of Nasau (Na-sow).

The school, which serves all the elementary grades, was sited in a huge open area, its buildings wrapping around three sides of playing field (rugby is the lead sport.) In front are the houses the teachers live in. Behind them is the cookhouse, then the "cafeteria," next boys and girls dormitories, and then, across the back, the classrooms. Although most of the children walk the mile or so from home to the school, others who live a bit farther out, board during the week.

The school currently has 98 students, and they were all assembled in one classroom, cross-legged on the floor, boys on the right and girls on the left, for us to do our thing! I don't know what exactly we were thinking…well, yes I do! We thought we’d just stand in the back and watch a lesson. But NO! We were the first white visitors to the school (that the teachers knew about…actually, we're fairly sure our friends on Billabong visited a couple of years ago!), so next thing we know we are front and center. What a sea of eyes and smiles!

At the teacher's suggestion, I told them a little about our travels, improvising a map of the Americas on the blackboard. Then we took questions which ran the gamut from President Bush
(Help!!!!!!) to climates in the United States to how we deal with storms on the boat. Don stood in the corner videotaping the whole thing and adding his comments here and there.

Now understand, while all these kids study English in school, they were all pretty shy about actually speaking it out loud. There was a lot of mediation by the teachers. But when the questions ran out, it was the kids’ turn to perform for us. With no conductor required, the kids launched into their school song, a rousing multi-verse song in multi-part harmony. Like the adults in church, the kids’ singing voices were strong and confident. Song is obviously a big part of their culture.

Up to our departure, the kids were awesomely well behaved, but as we exchanged thank yous with the teaching staff outside the classroom and the assembly broke up to return to their own rooms, the kids launched themselves into another series of songs while crowding about the windows and doorways trying to get into the background of the inevitable round of photographs Sera had me snapping! It was quite comforting that kids are kids the world around.

On our way back through Naviqiri to the dinghy, we diverted to the outermost house in the village. Perched on a hilltop, #45 is one of the few houses to command a view of the bay and is the home of Mr. & Mrs. Sunaki. Mr. Sunaki had approached Don after church the previous day, and invited us to stop by.

Mr. Sunaki is a retired policeman from Suva, which definitely gives him and his home a more cosmopolitan air than most of the other houses in the village. In addition to the mats in the main room, they had two beds, as well as two more beds and a table and chairs in the kitchen area. Around the "rim" of the room were hung framed photographs from his career in uniform, as well as shots of his children and grandchildren in their careers (also uniformed!—police and military.)

Mrs. Sunaki put on a nice tea for us, with cups on a silver tray and biscuits with butter and jam. We talked about retirement, the building of his house here, and like all parents, about what our kids are doing. Mr. Sunaki told us many people thought he should start a business in Labasa upon his retirement, but he didn't see why. He is perfectly happy puttering in his garden, growing the things they need to eat. Still, Navigiri must be a big change from the capital city.

The tides have not been with us during our time in Naviqiri. With the high tide coming in the morning, all our arrivals had been a piece of cake. Departures, however, have invariably happened at low tide. After the first day, when Sera and Villie had had to help us lug the dinghy to the water, Don had dug out our "Happy Wheels", in storage since Mexico, and mounted them back on the transom. It still wasn't fun, but at least they made low tide departures doable.

On that Monday afternoon, when we straggled hot and tired to the beach, the tide presented us with one of the bleakest prospects we have ever faced. It must have been dead DEAD low, the water 150-200' from the beached dinghy. I'm sure Sera thought we were nuts, but by this time, as usual, all we could think about was getting back to the coolness of T2 at anchor.

Sera was right. We were nuts. The 200 feet across which we had to drag the dinghy, was not nice hard-packed sand, but glutinous, sucking mud, pocked with rocks. Don pulled and I pushed. Believe me, the "Happy wheels" were not remotely happy...and neither were our Crocs! And then, once we were finally afloat, we still had to paddle another 200 feet before we could get the outboard down.

But, oh when you need a swim, you need a swim! How do people live on land?
3.3.2 Vunisuni Bay

Tackless II - June 2007: The next morning we were underway from Naviquiri as soon as the sun was high enough to see the reefs. We had no real firm destination in mind, just the waypoints of several possibilities. There wasn't a lick of breeze, so it was definitely a motorboat ride, but at least this gave us the chance to really top up the new batteries.

Landward the striking rock outcrops of the Monkey Face peninsula gave way to an even ridgeline behind a fairly smooth foreground. Here and there we saw a roofline or a column of smoke to suggest a village that might or might not be indicated on the chart, but most the noticeable difference was that these hillsides were thickly forested.

We motored most of the day generally northeastward through clumps of islands and reefs, impressed with both the accuracy of CMap and the Fijian nav aids, although in most cases the topmarks had been replaced by birds!

Near the outflow of the Dreketi River we crossed paths with two men in a fishing boat. The boat was piled high with net, and a reasonable pile of fish lay in the shade in the bottom of the boat. In the heat of the windless day, the men wore several layers of clothing, including shirts wrapped around their heads. When they pulled up to chat, we gave them some cold water to drink.

We had been thinking we might explore the Dreketi River by dinghy, a trip that probably would have been really interesting. But given the feeble condition of our outboard, it didn't seem the wisest idea. Alternatively, we considered dropping the hook in the lee of one of the little offshore islands, but the bottom stayed stubbornly at 65'.

So in the end we continued on up to Ravi Ravi Point. Once again the mountains, both inland and along the coast, turned lumpy and craggy, making a more interesting landscape. Two possible anchorages were noted in the fourteen-year-old cruising guide.

The first turned out to now be a pearl farm, so we gave that a miss, but the bay on the east side appeared open and uninhabited. As much as we enjoyed our village stay at Navigiri, we were ready for a stop with no sevusevu and no dress code. Vunisunu Bay fit the bill.

However, as placid and inviting as it appeared, we came near to disaster on our approach. Being out of the way, there were no handy beacons marking the reef, and of course now the sun suddenly slipped behind a cloud. Don passed the wheel to me and jumped up to the ratlines to keep a lookout. He didn't make the first rung before he shouted, "Left, Left. LEFT!!!!" I swung the wheel to the left and looked right. Bright green corals that looked like they must only be just below the surface slid past the beam and then dropped away with the turn. It took several minutes for our hearts to start beating again. Needless to say Don stayed up in the rigging until we'd found our anchorage in the center of the reefs.

It really is amazing the thin line between good luck and bad. What in fact was a very lucky thing continues to sober us with its nearness to what could have been a major mishap! Of course, they don't call these old CSYs "reef-wreckers" for nothing. The hull would have come out alright, but we can't be so sure of the rudder and prop not to mention the living reef, that, at a quick glance, seemed pretty healthy!

But this is what being explorers is all about. We are hardly the first cruisers to explore this part of Fiji, but it is off the beaten path. We do have surprisingly good charts to depend on, yet when
we “pull off the highway”, we are on our own. On the other hand, the rewards of these out-of-the-way places are what it’s all about. The sunset and the stars in a sky untainted by civilization is incredible.

3.3.3 Nukubati

Tackless II - June 2007: "Nukubati is a small luxury private island, secluded with an untouched natural splendor, a remote haven surrounded by white sand, lush rainforest and crystalline coral reefs." So goes the text in the eight-page color brochure for Nukubati Island Resort, the laid-back luxury resort tucked into a perfect alcove of a bay about five miles beyond our last anchorage. We didn't know much about it as we approached, except that it was an exclusive sort of place, and as we dropped our hook in the bay we weren't sure what kind of reception we would receive.

http://www.nukubati.com/

It is a striking setting. The resort occupies one of the two Nukubati (pronounced Nook-oom-Bar-Tee) islets that are joined together like Siamese twins by a mangrove bank. On the mainland behind the resort rise the crests of a multi-peaked mountain ridge, densely clothed in rainforest and old coconut plantations, while in front is an apron of white sand (from which the island gets its name, as "nuku" means sand), a rarity in these parts. An assortment of dive boats and runabouts are moored in the shallows, handsome squares of red umbrella shade private beach chairs, and roofs of thatch peek out from under coconut palms.

Nobody came out to run us off, so we tentatively made our way ashore around happy hour, to introduce ourselves and see if we’d be allowed to buy a drink. The main pavilion, of similar concept to Joe and Julie’s new place up the coast, is a large open-fronted building with high ceilings, thatched roof, and the same style of plaited wall covering, in this case bamboo.

But while Joe and Julie’s place is raw and new, the décor of this space had the mellowed maturity of years of careful nurturing. In the back of the room to the right is a bamboo bar while to the left is a cozy reading nook and 3,000 book library. Comfortable chairs and sofas cluster in conversational groupings in the middle, and across the front are seven red-clothed dining tables. Plants and flowers augment the view, and I immediately recognized the maqimaqi (mangheemanghee), a traditional Fijian rope art that Julie had described to me, adorning the junction of every post and joist.

Two lovely young ladies in flowered dresses met us, tittered when we asked the price of a cocktail, and went to find the owner – Jenny Leewai Bourke.

Jenny is a handsome woman of Fijian and Chinese extraction who, with an elegant graciousness, made us welcome to have a drink or dinner should we choose. Let me say up front, that thanks to our background in the charter business, we were sensitive to the private nature of the resort and understood that anything we might do here would be a privilege not a right. Our discretion in this more than anything paved the way for a very enjoyable stay that ended up lasting a week.

A small plate of canapés came with the drinks, followed shortly by dishes of peanuts, roasted coconut, and an Indian version of wasabi peas. Jenny sat with us and told of the history of the resort, an effort she and her Australian husband Peter started sixteen years ago, and sighed over the impact of the December coup on the country's tourism industry. Indeed, that first
evening, at a time of year when she might expect to be full, there was only one honeymoon couple at the resort, who kept to themselves, playing Scrabble by the beach until they couldn't see any more! Seduced by the ambience, we made reservations for dinner the next night.

Saturday dawned crisp and clear. Feeling motivated, we pumped up our two inflatable kayaks and set out for a paddle, which eventually carried us all the way around the Siamese-twin islands. The second island is not part of the resort and has several nice homes. Kids called, "Bula!" as Don paddled near, while I hung back to enjoy the aesthetic of the mountain peak thrusting up from behind. Thick mangroves clothed the south, east and north faces of the pair, and they are girdled by a shoal of sand, weed and coral all the way around. Had we made our paddle circumnavigation at low tide, we would have had to cover twice the distance at least, but as it was it felt like a pretty good workout. We topped it off with a refreshing swim off the back of the boat.

In the afternoon, we watched new arrivals zoom past Tackless from the resort’s dock on the mainland. For new arrivals, the staff assembles on the beach and meets them with music and flowers leis, and when we came ashore for dinner, we found there were now six guests, two American couples and one from Australia. Sunset is a big deal at Nukubati, and rightly so. The view west to the horizon is uninterrupted making it perfect for green flashes. Jenny celebrates sunset every evening with complimentary champagne. Since we didn't know, this left us with cocktails in one-hand and champagne in the other! Probably not the best mix.

Nukubati makes a big deal about the guests’ right to privacy and rightly so. The honeymooners we'd seen the first night certainly liked to exercise that right. However, since we two captains have all the privacy we need onboard, when we come ashore we hope for a little socialization. Fortunately, this evening four of the guests joined us and Jenny around the hors d’oeuvres. We introduced ourselves as the couple with the bure in the bay!

Dinner was served at individual tables as the mood took. Every evening Nukubati's kitchen offers two choices and Don and I split the menu down the middle. For appetizer, he had their version of poisson cru (raw fish salad in coconut cream) while I had a plate of eggplant caponata; for the entree, Don selected the lobster mornay while I had filet of local beef in rocket sauce (rocket is the name of arugula in this part of the word!) Dessert was Nukubati Pie, a coconut custard cream, with a scoop of ice cream. Afterwards, as the other guests had escaped to their bures, Jenny invited us to linger for a glass of port.

Ah, the good life. It seemed a long, long way from village life in Navigiri, and yet, in its own way, equally Fijian. Maybe even more so, preserving and celebrating as it does the finer traditions of architecture, style, and art, of which there is little sign left in the villages.

By the time we left, the tide was low and the sky lit only by stars. Our nightly view of the resort – the shrouding palm trees just slightly spot-lit against the night sky, (as we paddled our way out to water deep enough for the outboard)– is one Nukubati's guests never see. Views from the water are always the sweetest.

Over the port Saturday night, Jenny asked if we might like to join her for church in the nearby village of Nuqumu (Nung-goo-moo), which is how we came to be dressed in our church duds and waiting to be picked up the next morning at 0930. We felt just a tad shanghaied when the boat finally arrived to pick us up at 1000 and Jenny wasn’t in it. However, John and Leanne, the
couple from Perth, and two staff members we’d met, Salote and Rajeli (Rrray-chell-li), were.

Apparently, Jenny had had some unexpected friends arrive for a visit.

Nuqumu is one of three villages on the shores of Nukubati Bay and is the home village for Salote and Rajeli. Set on level lawn in the midst of coconuts and breadfruit trees, the small houses were more squarely aligned around the church and a playing field than they had been in hilly Naviqiri.

Nuqumu’s church, also Methodist, was much smaller than the one we’d attended the previous Sunday, and from the outside it appeared so decrepit as to give us pause over the addition of four large-sized foreigners! Inside, however, was charming if a bit shabby. To my surprise, I realized that despite being a closed-in building, its underlying shape was the eight-sided lozenge of Samoan fales. Equally surprising were the tall windows all around, which had actual glass in sashes that stood open like French doors to the breeze and rustle of the trees. The walls were a soothing blue, with the altar and pulpit dressed out in lavender satin and lace, and these were topped by three flower arrangements (that may well have been plastic!) The pews were old and handmade, if not actually hand-hewn, with tall backs and narrow benches. The five rows squeezed in on the left, as last week, were packed with kids, but this time the pews on the right were given over to the choir. This left two banks of five pews each in the main nave for the balance of the congregation...of which there were about ten people until our party of six arrived!

We were late, about twenty minutes after the "bell" (drum beat) for the ten o'clock service, and had to wait for a prayer to finish to slip into our seats -- front row, of course, for the honored guests! Despite our tardiness, shortly after our arrival, a handsome young man in the choir (Rajeli’s brother, we later learned) stood up and made us a formal speech of welcome in English. And that, except for the collection, was about it for anything we visitors could understand. Fortunately, this service was shorter than the Naviqiri one (shortened further by our late arrival), and, while the choir did its best, its smaller number made for a less vigorous performance. The highlight of the service for us came at the end, when the children, being dismissed, came each and every one to shake our hands!

Back at the resort we met the friends that had waylaid Jenny. Like Jenny, James and his wife Pearlie, divide their time between Australia and this part of Fiji, and, again like Jenny, James, grew up in this area. The difference is that James is almost the last trustee of his Scottish great-grandfather’s estate which contains over a thousand acres of copra plantations in this part of Vanua Levu. Copra is the dried meat of the coconut, which in the past was in high demand for many oils and products, and the copra industry was once the economic mainstay of many tropical nations. Copra fell out of favor when substitutes were found with less cholesterol and saturated fat, and thereby the financial underpinnings of many island peoples went down the drain. We’ve seen the impact over and over in our travels, for example the Kuna Indians of Panama’s San Blas Islands or the Marquesans in French Polynesia, where many landowners we met were cutting down their coconut trees and putting in Nonni. (Nonni is a tree which produces a fruit that appears to have some great health benefits when fermented. Here in Fiji, Nonni is called Kura, and we are taking a dose of it every morning. It tastes horrid!)

A new wind is blowing through the coconut plantations, however. Research has revealed that the historic way of extracting coconut oil – where the oil from pressed coconut is allowed to naturally separate – as opposed to the technological system of heating it that overtook the old
way – actually produces a better product. Now known as "virgin coconut oil", it may in fact be the most healthful oil of all! New interest is also burgeoning in coconut as a crop for biofuels as well as for virgin coconut oil, and entrepreneurs are setting up plants here to produce it. The problem is that many old plantations, like the ones in James' family, have been neglected in recent generations, and the task of overhauling things and restoring them to productive status is monumental.

So James and Pearlie are here trying to get a grip on things, and they invited us to come visit. James and Pearlie's estate at Nukubati Bay stretches from the mangroves at the water's edge to the ridgecrest of the mountains in a broad swath between two local villages...some 800+ acres! We drove the dinghy across the bay, found the post indicating their access channel, and rowed in up a thin channel cut through the mangroves. Having seen us coming, our hosts were waiting to greet us on the muddy bank created by a fresh water stream and the tide. After anchoring the dinghy where we hoped it would be floating by the time we were ready to leave, we followed them up a path into the woods.

We really had no idea what to expect. The word "plantation" to Americans conjures images of the old south, of grand houses with white columns – the Tara of "Gone with the Wind." But rural Fiji is much more rustic than the South has been in a century. These plantations and farms are still in the mold of those pioneers who forged the American West or the Australian Outback. In Vanua Levu, outside of the two main towns, there is little modern infrastructure. The roads are dirt; electricity, when it exists, comes from private or shared generators; and the phones (maybe one per village) are radio telephones.

On top of that, the main house on James plantation has been closed up for years, and what caretaker there was seems to have drifted away. In Fiji "abandonment" means fair game, so not only has the house been scavenged for furniture and utensils, but somebody made fair headway dismantling structural beams! James and Pearlie had warned us they were "camping out."

The house at the top of the hill had that square shape common to farmhouses world around, but no second story as we'd see in American, and its exterior was clad in what James called "cement tiles", big squares of gray siding made out of concrete and chicken wire. It has once boasted a bathhouse with running water which had been completely dismantled and carted away, as had the outside kitchen. But inside was a surprise. It was much bigger than it seemed, with a far more complex architecture than we'd seen in village homes. When James had grown up here it had five large bedrooms, and had been the center of a completely self-sufficient estate, where everything consumed by its residents was grown or made on site. James and Pearlie had put together a nice galley plus a bed room for themselves (on air mattresses!), and despite the ravages of the scavengers, it still had a solid homey feel to it.

Pearlie served us a nice lunch of curry, rice and roti, over which James told us a lot about Fijian history and how it led to the situation Fiji finds itself in today, a country hugging to itself the traditions of its ethnic identity, where people like James and Jenny, of mixed ethnicities, not to mention Fiji's huge Indian population, will never be considered real Fijians. And, and you might expect, we talked a lot about coconuts, their past and their future.
After lunch James led us all on a hike through the woods to show us the plantation’s second house. When another family member had the plantation house, James and Pearlie had some years back fixed this secondary house up for themselves. Now his current caretaker and his family live there while they cope with restoring the big house. The woods we tramped through held a mix of full-grown tree species, the more amazing in that they grew in what was once the plantation’s rice field. The coconut groves are similarly overgrown, and James is trying to come up with ways to sell the trees for wood while recovering and replanting the coconut groves.

Obviously, it is very hard to capture here all the things we learned about Fiji from our afternoon with James (not to mention our stay with Jenny at Nukubati). It is a complex country, with tasks both physical, technological and social to master.

**Beach Feast**

On Sunday, as we were taking our leave from Nukubati resort after church, Jenny had invited us to come ashore Monday night for a "beach barbecue" she and her staff were putting together. "Very informal," she said, "we all eat together."

After a day on shore tramping through the woods, we were hot and sweaty and hurried back to the boat for a shower and change of clothes and arrived on the beach just in time for the sunset champagne (Yes, Uncle Bill, there was a great green flash!) and the gathering of beach chairs around a huge square fire Jenny’s guys had built on the sand.

On top of the fire was a layer of black rocks, and, as the fire burned down and the rocks got hot, they threw on fish, clams, breadfruit, eggplants, cassava and who knows what else. While the tourists sipped fru-fru cocktails (by now we are pretty much one of the gang!), Jenny's girls laid out a long line of mats on the grass, and set the "table" for our meal.

The only thing informal about the feast we enjoyed that night was that the staff ate with us. When you consider that there were only six resort guests, we two interlopers, plus Jenny and her visiting daughter, the staff, ten or twelve in number, outnumbered us!

But what a meal! In addition to all the goodies cooked on the fire, there were several dishes all cooked in coconut milk, that came out from the kitchen: fresh water mussels, ferns, pumpkin and seaweed, all dishes from Jenny and the staff's roots and all really yummy. There was also a boiled taro to go with the roasted veggies and roots and a seafood soup in coconut bowls. Unlike the umus we went to in Samoa and Tonga, silverware and napkins had been provided, and although everybody sure used the heck out of the later, most were good sports and ate Fijian style with their fingers. This was far and away the best "traditional" meal we have enjoyed anywhere, and it was particularly special because we came as Jenny's guests.

**Attempted Diving**

About ten years ago, Jenny and Peter added diving to Nukubati's offerings. It's a natural for this, because the north side of Vanua Levu is framed by the sinuous Great Sea Reef, the third largest barrier reef in the world. The Great Sea Reef, in most places, is about ten miles from the main island, except where about halfway along it loops out in a horseshoe shape around the island of Kia. Nukubati is well positioned for its boats to scoot out to Ravi Ravi Pass for dives outside the Reef as well as inside.
Since the resort’s signature is privacy and personal attention, their dive operation works pretty much the same way, so we did not assume we would be able to dive with them. And in fact, Jenny had left it up to the guests to decide. I’m glad to say we were voted in…but, as it turned out we never did dive with them. I woke up the morning after the barbecue with a pounding headache, which I attributed to the mix of the sunset champagne and an alcoholic concoction called a Nukubati Sunset. It was a helluva time to remember that after my bout of the bends, I am not supposed to drink before diving. How ironic that it was one of the few drinks I have had all season!

So we cancelled, which worked out okay because Jenny had forgotten to tell the dive staff to prep for us! Clearly it wasn't meant to be. I stayed low all day, and we decided to skip happy hour ashore, because we'd been told a kava party was scheduled, the last thing my head needed. What we didn’t realize was that the kava party came complete with an evening of traditional music by the staff. We could hear just enough of it wafting over the water to make me pout at missing it. If our dinghy hadn’t already been up, I’m sure we would have scooted in and lurked!

**Attempted Departure**

Wednesday morning we decided that it was probably time to move on. It would be easy to grow roots here, and while I believe we were welcome to stay, there were things on our To Do List that we couldn’t tackle here. For one we needed to get to Labasa and get a new prop for the dinghy. For another we still had to strip the cockpit teak, sand and re-Cetol it, not an activity we thought the resort would appreciate. Plus we had called our friends Joe and Julie to tell them we were on our way. So we probably should be on our way.

We went ashore to pay our bar bill, and to take our leave, which we did over tea and pineapple muffins, plus a chance to help sample a new appetizer-- of smoked wahoo, watercress and sprouted coconut heart in chili vinaigrette – destined for the night's dinner menu. Before taking off, Jenny gave us the 25-cent tour of the parts of the resort we hadn't seen: her extensive gardens, fruit trees, dive shop, power plant, watermaker set up, tennis court (!), and one of the honeymoon bures being readied for a new arrival. The bure was handsome, with a large sitting area, king-sized bed, two person shower, and even an enclosed sunbathing area where “Europeans can sunbathe topless.” Each bure also has a thatched outside sitting area and its’ own two beach chairs.

All in all, Nukubati Island Resort is an awesome operation, one that takes constant attention by a huge staff, a fact we respect even more after seeing at James and Pealie's how the environment makes it so much work. In a way, Nukubati is a modern version of what James' great-grandfather's estate was in its heyday, self-sufficient and catering to many. But, as beautiful and well-conceived as the resort is, it was the graciousness with which we were received and included that made our stay in the anchorage so special – all the sweeter because they had no obligation to extend it to us.

Back on the boat, we hoisted the outboard and made ready to leave. Only then did we notice the increasing overcast and an odd wind springing up from an unusual direction. On this side of the island, our reception of the radio weather forecast is unreliable, and we hadn't stressed when we couldn't copy it that morning. Every day we'd been here had been sunny and clear.
What was afoot? We decided to sit tight through lunch, and then, when there was still no improvement, hang in one more night. If there was something brewing, there is little better place on this whole coast to be than this bay, where we could, if necessary pick up the anchor and tuck way back in under James & Pearlie’s place.

The next morning we were socked in! Not just overcast, but low clouds rolling down the mountains and wiping out the visibility with misty showers. Yet the morning radio forecast insisted on the usual "Fine" weather for the area?! So…we waited, and sure enough, after breakfast, the rain rolled back, the clouds parted, and the dive boats from Nukubati left. Business as usual. Fortified by the forecast, we picked up our anchor and motored out.

We weren't more than a few miles along, when the clouds and showers rolled back in, and the wind came around on our nose! Wouldn't you know? Fortunately, our route was entirely along the well beaconed channel, so between that and CMap, and the comforting reality that the depth on this stretch was such we could drop anchor anywhere if we had to, we were able to continue the thirteen miles to the waypoint we had off our friends Joe and Julie's resort outside of Labasa.

3.3.4 Palmlea Farms

SSCA Bulletin - January 2012: (Cruising Station Update): Global cruisers Joe and Julie Smelser traveled more than 60,000nm by boat before settling down in 2004 on Fiji’s paradise island, Vanua Levu. Often called Fiji’s best kept secret, Vanua Levu is Fiji’s second largest island. Its mountainous spine divides the island into the wet rainforest of the south coast and the sunny cane-covered hillsides of the north.

Julie vividly remembers sailing out of Lautoka, Fiji, in 1992 on a perfect day just knowing they’d return one day. And they did. Having sailed in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Pacific, the Smelsers now gladly call Fiji home.

In 2005 they started construction of Palmlea Farms Lodge, an eco-resort that is part of an oceanside farm encompassing 40 acres of meadows and hills. The organic farm specializes in the breeding and development of the Boer goats, the world’s largest meat goat, and the Smelsers participate significantly in the local farming community.

Located inside the Great Sea Reef, the world’s third longest continuous barrier reef, Palmlea is a dream-come-true for weary sailors.

The anchorage, well protected behind the reef, is calm and peaceful with good holding in mud and sand. A 150' pier, great for dinghy tie-up, extends from the mangrove-fringed shore and leads to a well-worn path up to the lodge. The lodge itself is open, airy and inviting with a bar and dining room, lush organic gardens, a saltwater lap pool and, if you want to take a break from the boat, luxurious thatched covered bures. Palmlea graciously extends discounts to SSCA members.

Only a short ride from Labasa, Fiji’s largest Indo-Fijian city, cruisers can take advantage of experiencing a unique blend of Fijian and Indian cultures. The Palmlea Lodge offers as much or as little as you’d like to do. You can chill out using the lodge’s facilities to swim or just lie in a hammock. There are walks and hikes to take with panoramic views of the reef and Lion’s Head Rock and great bird watching opportunities. The Smelsers can even arrange an invitation for
your boat to visit the more remote island of Kia with traditional Fiji villages, about 17 miles away and situated right on the reef.

Several passes through the reef offer easy access to this secure anchorage at 16°24.728'S, 179°14.120'E. From this point, it's possible to day hop from anchorage to anchorage inside the protection of the reef west around Vanua Levu and back to Savusavu or head out through one of several passes to the Yasawa group or other destinations within Fiji.

Contact SSCA Cruising Station Hosts Joe and Julie at Palmlea Lodge in advance to let them know you're coming. They'll stand by on VHF Channel 16 to welcome you.

Email: palmleafarms@yahoo.com
website: www.palmleafarms.com
Tel: 679 828 2220.

Tackless II - July 2007: Just as we dropped the anchor in ten feet of water (at dead low tide), our radio squawked "Tackless II, Tackless II...Palmlea Base." Glancing over their panoramic front railing, Joe and Julie Smelser had noticed the top of our mast sticking up above the mangroves. With plans made to hike up for dinner, we set to tidying up the boat and having lunch.

The shoreline here, mangrove cloaked every bit of the way, extends another mile or so off the bow to a point around which is the wide expanse of Labasa Bay (pronounce Lambasa). Farther east, large mountains pile up in layers on the horizon, with a few islands extending the line into an arc to the NE. To the north are several low-lying islets, above which pokes the silhouette of tall Kia Island that stands like a lone soldier about twelve miles away in the great oxbow loop of the Great Sea Reef. No houses are visible, not even the teal roofs of our friends’ resort. It is a pretty spot to sit, if more of an open roadstead, than the comfortable nook we usually think of as an anchorage. Fortunately, the prevailing winds come from the SE to E, and the little upturned tip of a point off the bow seems to be enough to keep our water nice and quiet.

In mid-afternoon, we looked to have enough water to get the dinghy to Joe and Julie's dock. So we headed in and walked the nice road they’ve built through the mangroves and up through the fields to Palmlea Lodge. I described Joe and Julies new resort previously in the update of our road trip over from Savusavu (May 15), but in the month since our visit, they have finished construction of the third bungalow, the trellised garden, added a generator and new water tanks, and the bougainvillea is well on its way to making the front hedge Julie desires.

We had finished our tour and were toasting (with that devil champagne!) our debut as the first yacht to visit Palmlea, when the phone in the office rang. It was Jim Bandy, the voice we have listened to for three seasons every morning on his SSB radio net called "The Rag of the Air" (8173 mHz @ 1900 UTC). Jim lives on an island near the NE tip of this coast, and we plan a stop there before we turn the corner. Of course at the rate we are going, that is still weeks away. Anyway, Jim was in Labasa bringing a friend to the airport and wondered if Palmlea’s restaurant was open for dinner. Although the resort was not quite officially open yet, Joe had planned some local fish for the four of us.
Fortunately, Joe has a habit of over-apportioning, so there was plenty to expand dinner for four to dinner for six.

For cruisers, meeting a radio voice is a little like meeting a celebrity, but Jim in person was nothing like we had imagined from his voice. We had pictured a crusty codger well into his social security years (often the case with radio net controllers), retired from cruising to his tropical island. Instead he was a trim, tanned man about Don’s age, as was his friend Kurt from San Diego. From what we’ve put together from comments on the net, Jim has a boat building operation as well as one of the nascent virgin coconut oil processing setups, endeavors that he has undertaken almost as much from a missionary-like zeal to help the Fijian villagers as much as to support himself. We’ll no doubt learn a lot more about it all when we visit, but he has been having a tough time lately with government red tape and a lack of dependability in his workers.

For an architect and builder, Joe is a mighty fine cook. He has studied the cuisines of all the countries he has lived and worked in, and he will be the supervising chef, if not the actual hands-on cook, for Palmlea’s resort operation. Our meal was superb, an outstanding baked fish, what they call hereabouts a "coral trout", with sides of an eggplant medley and Tuscan roast potatoes. Over the meal we learned that Jim had once been a race car driver, which of course led to talk of the Indianapolis 500 ("Greatest Spectacle in Racing") and from there to motorcycles. Jim was not a Harley man, and Kurt rides a Big Dog. (I've seen the T-shirts, but never knew it was a bike!)

The evening lasted a lot longer than we'd planned, and when we got away to go home (after a debut walk down the hill in the dark!), we found the dinghy high and dry. @#$%#$@!!! Shades of Naviqiri! High and dry simply doesn't capture the reality of the muddy ooze and rock mix it was grounded on with about 40-50' to get to the water! The bugs were biting furiously, so no option now to sit tight and wait. We dragged the damn thing out one glopping foot at a time, bumping over rocks and losing our shoes every other step. I hate to think how we may have gouged the dinghy bottom. I've been afraid to look!

Several more posts on Palmlea...

3.3.5 Blackjack Bay

Tackless II - July 2007: We spent the night of July 5th anchored in a small dimple of a bay (S16°14.5; E179°31.9) on the west side of Vatudamu Point, a long finger of land thrusting north from the coast, dotted by a muffin-shaped islet at the end. Dubbed Blackjack Bay by Nigel Calder in his cruising guide (named for a boat that was at anchor with him), the anchorage proved to be one of the prettiest on our trip. Due east on a low isthmus was an actual sand beach – courtesy of the low tide – backed by coconut palms. Framing the low strip were rugged lumps of rock with eroded hollows where boulders had fallen out. I paddled the kayak all along the shore which was glad in some sort of pine tree, enjoying the scenery and listening to the sigh of the breeze through the pine needles. There is no other sound like that.

In the afternoon we had two visitors. The first was a panga-load of Fijian ladies being back chauffeured back by a lone man from their afternoon fishing to a village neither in sight nor on our chart. They rafted alongside to "chat" and peer in through the portholes! They were displaced by Jim Bandy, net control of the Rag of the Air SSB net, whom we are on our way to visit. Jim was making the run from Labasa to "Also Island" (his home base) in a work boat that could make the trip in about three hours – a trip that will take us altogether about twelve! Jim
paused for a cold beverage and a quick chat about approaches tomorrow, before he was on his way, needing to make home base before dark.

Evening was stunning, with just the barest loom of Labasa to the west challenging Venus and her starry companions and the strand of lighted fishing boats out on the reef for the night.

We got an early start this morning, exiting through the great Sea Reef at Sausau Pass to sail and motorsail eastward to Nukudamamu Pass.

3.3.6 Up the Labasa River

Fruit de Mer - September 2013: Cruising the Lambasa River seemed interesting to us. None of the writers of the cruising pilots we know of, cruised the Lambasa river themselves.

A French sailor who has been cruising Vanu Levu for five years told us it would be no problem with a boat that has a draught of 2 meters. Our boat has a centerboard making it possible to reduce the draught to 1.2 meter, so we thought "Let’s give it a shot."

High tide was 7.00 am and we went for the entrance, which is not where it should be according our C-map chart but, at a branch further South-West at approx. 16-23.61S / 179-18.80 E (lost our track due to a plotter problem)

The first couple of markers only had the green one in place and a tree branch instead of the red one, the second couple are both there, the third is only a green one.

Once inside, there is a fork in the river, with no markers showing where to go. We took the left fork that appears to go to the former entrance branch, least depth so far 2.8 meters (one hour after high tide).

The river deepened gradually to about 7 meters and we were enjoying it very much. The river is about 50 meters wide and we were sailing between two green walls of mangrove trees with the dark blue shade of the mountains in the distance. None of the markers on our chart exists any more except a red one where the first branch from the right joins the main branch, least depth found here is 2.9 meters, shallowest part of the river.

The first turn to the right following had on our chart an obstacle which is pretty obvious to see by the way the water is flowing, here we hugged the left shore.

Once in town where a small boatyard is situated approx. 16.25.54 S 179.22.35 E our chart shows a marker, not in place, probably instead a tree branch protruding from the water, to be sure we leave it to our right hand and had to hug the shore pretty close, depth 3 meter.

We anchored in front of the bridge in 3 meter, good holding. On the other side of the bridge is a fuel station and a good fresh produce and fish market. We tied up our dinghy at a boat of a resort near the market and stocked up our food supplies. Back at the anchorage we conveniently found a place to go ashore just before the bridge and only 50 meters away from the fuel station. We jerry-jugged some diesel but unfortunately this landing is used as a public toilet by a lot of men waiting for their buses.

Better to use the concrete dock near the anchorage and walk a bit further. In the afternoon the wind picked up to 20 knots, combined with the incoming tidal current (stronger than we expected) and made the boat turn in mad circles coming close to the shores of the rather
narrow river. So we decided not to stay for the night and pulled our anchor at 16.45 and just before dark we were back at the anchorage at Malau.

Glad to have done it and have experienced this lovely river.

3.3.7 *Lagi Bay and Also Island*

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Chartlet compliments of Midnight Sun
Chartlet compliments of s/v Billabong

**Midnight Sun - September 2012:** Also Island is a must visit for cruisers in a more remote part of Fiji, with an exceptionally good sheltered anchorage.

Jim and Kyoko Bandy sailed out from California in 1999 and made Also Island in Lagi Bay on the North Eastern corner of Vanua Levu their home. Jim has established a number of business enterprises to provide employment for the locals and runs “Rag of the Air”, the cruisers net for the SW Pacific. Jim & Kyoko love visitors & enjoy showing you their virgin coconut oil operation, boat building business, the well stocked shop and other business enterprises. Join in, help out and enjoy the walks & explore the long and interesting rivers.

See their web site at [www.alsoislandfiji.com](http://www.alsoislandfiji.com)

**Anchorage info:** Entering Nukusa Passage is straight forward and the CM93 charts (recording date 2005) are very accurate. Anchor at S16-13.2 ; E179-50.1 in depths of 6 to 8 meters in mud or call Jim on channel 14 for directions.

**Contact:** Jim can be contacted ahead of time on the Rag of the Air net 8173 at 1900z, by email at WDC7993 at Sailmail.com or Land Line phone at +679 828-3096.

**Soggy Paws - Mar 2013:** It is worth a visit to Also Island to meet Jim, the Net Control of the Rag of the Air, and an SSCA Cruising Station. It is great to see all his Fijian enterprises first hand.
This anchorage is only a daysail from the Rabi or Matei (N Taveuni) anchorages. Approaching the Also Island area, you can raise Also Island on VHF Channel 14. The chartlet above provides all the waypoints you need to get in there.

Cyclone Season Storage: Starting in the 2012/2013 cyclone season, Jim started accepting cruisers’ boats to be stored for cyclone season. The boats are anchored and tended to right off Jim’s facility at Also Island. But if a cyclone approaches, Jim will take the boat up into a nearby river, and secure the boat in a “hole” in the mangroves. We’ve been up this river with Jim, and it's the best cyclone hole in all of Fiji. There's a ~6’ bar at high tide to get into the river, but once in, it's nearly 20 feet for a long way up.

Tackless II - July 2007: Tackless II is comfortably at anchor (S16*13.2; E179*50.16) behind Also Island in Lagi Bay on the Udu Peninsula.

The Udu (pronounced Un-du) Peninsula is a 16-mile-long spear of land thrusting to the northeast from the east end of Vanua Levu. It's going to be some work to get around it on our next leg, but right now it makes us feel as far away from things as we have ever felt cruising.

We had a nice motorsail up here outside the Great Sea Reef. T2 never cares to go to windward, but the wind was light enough, the seas small enough, and the angle just off enough that we made excellent time with a pleasant ride, although, despite being on the outside of the reef, we caught no fish! The day was gorgeous, cool without a cloud in the sky, and we arrived at Nukudamu Pass with good light for the complicated reefs we had to negotiate to get in.

Our CMap-based chartplotter did a good job getting us through the maze all the way to the last bit. We got close enough to see Also Island, with the Also II, the Passport 42 that brought Jim and Kyoko here in the first place, on its mooring, but some river outflow turned the water abruptly brown in a broad band right across our route, and, of the promised pairs of markers, only one of each remained with no topmarks. Should that marker be taken to port or to starboard? What is reef and what is mud? We came to a standstill while Jim ran with his handheld radio to the top of his island and talked us through. Quite honestly, I'm pretty sure we didn't go where we were supposed to go, and when the depth sounder hit seven feet (we draw 5+) my heart about quit. Fortunately, it was dead low tide and, right or wrong, the rising tide would have rescued us, but we squeaked through with nary a bump.

The geology of Also Island seems very different than elsewhere on Vanua Levu. The island rises about twenty feet above sea level with sides of what looks like sculpted grey sandstone, and the topside of the island hangs over the edges for a rather Alice-in-Wonderland cartoon effect. Jim’s base is in a sort of gorge on the west end of the island with a hodgepodge of buildings ascending from the beach landing to his living quarters at the top. At beach level are the sheds for his boat building business and fuel drums for the fuel service he provides, next a tool shed, then a separate kitchen with a deck known as the "deck of knowledge and responsibility", above that a generator shack, then a little store he maintains for the local village, then a guesthouse, a bathhouse, his coconut pressing set-up, and finally the main "house" which is also his office, all connected by cement pathways, steps and elaborate flower gardens.

Above the buildings to either side are cleared lawn-like slopes, randomly planted with pineapple, pawpaw, banana and other shrubs, with a water tank at the very top and a bench pleasantly placed for an overlook. Quite the little domain
We came ashore mid-afternoon for tea. Tea was actually tea flavored with fresh mint leaves served with biscuits and pineapple jam. We were introduced to the main characters of Jim’s regular staff, men, women and children from the nearby village on the "mainland", and, as it was payday, a lot of little envelopes were changing hands, most of it then being spent in the store. A couple of hours after tea, came the end-of-week grog. Grog is the colloquial name for kava, and although not quite a traditional venue, it was the most informal and authentic kava experience we’ve yet had. Over the kava we learned the history of how Jim came to this remote spot and it is quite a tale.

Here’s the short version. Jim and his wife Kyoko crossed the Pacific in 2001 from California and Mexico on the Also II. They sailed into Lagi Bay (Lagi is pronounced Lang-ee) some five years ago, and like many handy cruisers he started fixing things, engines and outboards, for the local villagers. That grew to funding the bringing in of fuel and helping with boat building and other repair projects. One thing led to another and they soon found themselves completely entwined in village life and business. What really makes this story special is how the villagers reciprocated. They essentially gave Jim and Kyoko the island in the bay to keep them here!

It sounds simple and idyllic, but of course, nothing ever is completely. The red tape of the government seems constantly to throw obstacles in the path of all Jim’s various efforts, virtually all conceived for the benefit of the villagers, while the villagers themselves have such a laissez-faire attitude, that Jim never knows who will show up to work, the man he has spent weeks training, or someone totally new.

As the afternoon wore on, Jim became distracted over the delayed arrival of the Lady K. The Lady K (named for Kyoko) is part of a fishing cooperative Kyoko set up. Every day, the Lady K tows the village punts like a line of ducklings out to the reef for the day’s fishing, and at night she brings them back in again, and once a week she makes the run to Labasa as a transport ship, ferrying villagers back and forth and bringing in fuel for the depot and goods for the store. Labasa is three hours away by dirt road (it is currently closed by a landslide), but for the Lady K it is about an eight hour trip each way. Due around 4pm, she was late, but not only had her skipper not called to say he was running late, he was not answering the radio. Was the volume just turned down or was the boat in trouble amongst the reefs? Fortunately, just about dark, the Lady K finally pulled up to the beach.

Finally, after the boat was unloaded and the crowd dispersed back to the village, only Jim and 15-year-old Jali (pronounced like Charlie without the "R") remained, and they offered to share with us the supper that had been left for them.

Jale turns out to be another interesting story. Several years ago a couple of cruisers visiting Also Island became aware of Jale’s ambitions to become a doctor. After much consultation with Jale, his family and his teachers, the cruising couple determined to sponsor his education as far as he chooses to go. His side of the deal is he must make good grades. For this reason it was decided that he would live on Also Island in order to improve his English (the language in which all advanced studies is taught) and for Jim to help him with homework. In return, he helps out in the many ways a son would, setting the table and then doing the dishes afterward.

Note: as of 2013, Jale is still Jim's favorite success story… he is in Suva in Medical School, and still making good grades.
3.4  **West Coast of Vanua Levu**

3.4.1  **Bua Bay**

**Tackless II - June 2007:** Bula from Bua, Bua Bay, that is (16°51’S; 178°35’E).

We dropped Curly’s mooring out at Lesiaceva Point at about 0645 this morning and set sail westward.

Our first leg was about twenty miles to the **Nasonisoni Passage.** Outside the Point, the winds were brisk and the seas a bit lively, but, thanks to running down wind, we had a pretty good ride of it. We even caught a small tuna (just as I was wondering if we’d really want to deal with hooking up a fish!)

We were a tad anxious about whether the seas might be piling up a bit at the entrance to the **Nasonisoni Passage** -- a cut through the reef we need to take into the protected lagoon waters west of it, but up ahead of us by about a half hour was Peter of sv Seeker, who kindly radioed back to us the conditions as he arrived.

As is often the case, the reality of the pass was much less stressful than the anticipation from the charts. Although the Fijian buoyage is a little worse for wear sometimes, the marks are there, and even though the sky was stubbornly overcast, the reefs were plainly visible. We slid through the pass like a knife through butter, and then bore off on the other side on a lovely broad reach in 20 knots of wind with almost no sea, thanks to the protection of the outer reef. this is what sailing is supposed to be like!

Both boats ended up pushing all the way around to **Bua Bay,** on the northwest corner of Vanua Levu. Bua is a huge, protected bay with good holding in idyllic anchoring depths of 30-50’. We are not only the only two boats here, we appear to be pretty much the only signs of life around. I’m sure there’s a village up in the hills somewhere, but there’s no sign of it. Up ahead is a long low shoreline of mangrove, and it’s an anchorage to make us nostalgic for a working wind generator. After watching showers miss us all day, we got a good rinse down within minutes of setting the anchor. All in all the day’s program that would be hard to beat.

We could have stopped in a couple of other places along the way, but psychologically, since we were beginning to think we might never break free of Savusavu (not to mention run out of time to circumnavigate!), getting this far on the first day is a big boost to our optimism. Next destination is most likely Yadua Island, about eight miles off shore, a nice little side trip before we start up the north side.

3.4.2  **Yadua Island**

**Tortuguita - September 2013:** We sailed from from Savusavu in the early morning. We anchored overnight at Coconut Point (Nabouwalu) where John and Cyndi on Cynergy had been anchored from the day prior. We had nice Sundowners onboard Tortuguita and had a nice peaceful night.

The next morning, we went with Cynergy to Yadua. We anchored behind Motuba Island and dinghied to the village of Denimanu and presented Sevusevu to Chief Johnny. The island has a Kava drinking the first 15 days of the month so we did not have a proper Sevusevu, but Johnny welcomed us as members of the village for the duration of our stay.
The tide had gone out while we were there and the dinghy was about 40 yards to the water. It was going to be a long hard, scraping pull until about 15 guys and kids showed up, everyone lifted the dinghy and carried it to the water. This has NEVER happened to us anywhere.

Yadua was pretty much destroyed by Cyclone Evan last December so many of the houses are just pieced together temporarily. The government is building 19 new houses for the displaced families.

The wind was strong and some chop was getting in to the anchorage at high tide so on Sunday we moved the boat to Watering Bay. Cynergy went on to Cukova Bay for an early morning departure.

We met the village headman during our first visit to town. We thought his name was Mike Kelly but it was probably more like Michaeli. He had a stroke 6 years ago and wasn’t able to walk so well, otherwise he would have been our representative for Sevusevu. He invited us to come to lunch and then church on Sunday.

So, on Sunday, we dinghied about 20 minutes from Watering Bay to town and left the dinghy on the beach. We had a nice lunch, then tea and talked for a long time with the family. We also met with Pita the Ranger before and after church. He works for the Fiji National Trust and cares for the National Park on Yadua Taba, a small protected island on the southwest coast of Yadua. He had just arrived back from Suva asked me to help replace his engine cables and throttle control.

The 3PM church service was entirely in Fijian except about 10 words in English. The singing was incredible and the preacher was boring. It was now getting late so we headed back to Watering Bay. There is a diving operation that that leases this bay. They dive for Sea Cucumbers that are sent to Aisa for making sushi or whatever. They invited us to use their mooring which we gladly accepted since our chain was getting wrapped around a coral head.

The next morning we decided to try the overland route to town. Katea, who is married to Michaeli’s nephew, met us on the beach. We had tea and biscuits on TORTUGUITA and then headed out. We left the dinghy anchored in front of the dive compound. The hike was an hour, up and over the hill, through lava flows, forests, and fields. Booker and I blew out our flip flops on that trek.

I started out working with Pita on his engine and when we finished, had a late lunch. The church warden asked me to look at the church’s solar panels. The panels were washed away by Cyclone Evan last December but found under the sand. They were in surprisingly good condition except for the sand in the connection boxes. A testimony to Kyocera. However, all they have is the panels. For a proper system they need batteries, a controller, and inverter. Cost, about $2000 US which they don’t have.

By now, we had so many invitations to lunch and teas that we would have to stay a week but had to start thinking about leaving. One more day should do it or we will never leave. We got lost on our walk back to Watering Bay. The dive guys had moved the dinghy to the beach when the tide came in. Tides here are about 8 feet and the anchor would probably have pulled out.

I was invited to a grog (Kava) drinking party at the compound. They came out in their boat to pick me up but I knew better to have control of my own transportation. I went with them to a hut where about 15 guys were doing the grog thing. They had a steel pot that the Kava was
crushed in by a big steel bar. The Kava is then put in a cloth strainer, in a big bowl, and mixed. The cup is filled and passed. You make one clap before drinking and 3 after you are done. The claps should be deep, loud claps or you kind of get laughed at. We went round and round like this, talking, etc for over 2 hours. Quite fun, and very Fijian.

The next day, we took the dinghy to town. Chief Johnny wanted me to look at his generator which was beyond repair. We had tea and lunch with Pita and the family.

The village has a diesel generator that runs from 6:00PM to 8:30PM that runs the well pump to fill the smaller house tanks and powers the town. The guy in charge of starting it had been hearing a strange noise for the past month so I was asked to take a look at it. After over an hour of listening, disassembly, and head scratching, I concluded that since the generator was sitting on its little wheels, they had dug in to the dirt and it wasn’t sitting level and the oil dipstick was on the downhill side of the engine, that the oil was in reality low and the crankshaft bushing was running dry and making the noise. When I tilted it maybe 45 degrees toward that side, the noise went away. So I told the guy that he needs to get some wood or a pallet and shovel and make a perfectly level pad and fill the oil full full full.

Went back to Pita’s for tea, said our good byes to everyone and headed back to Watering Bay.

**Kittywake - July 2012:** Check with Customs before going to Yadua as we got a message from 1 FRCA person saying it was off limits. The others said have a good time!! Who knows!! *(seems better to beg forgiveness…Sherry)*

**Tackless II - June 2007:** Yadua is an island about fifteen miles from Bua Bay that many cruisers use as a jump off point from Vanua Levu for the west side of Viti Levu or, as our friends on s/v Seeker planned, across a stretch of sea known as Bligh Water to the Yasawa Island Group, Fiji’s westernmost strand of islands.

Yadua is said to have some very nice snorkeling, which was sorely tempting, but it is also known as a place where yachts get pinned down by the winds accelerating through the 35-mile gap between Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

We decided to skip Yadua--to get to Yadua would have been another nice brisk sail. To get back to continue our clockwise circumnavigation of Vanua Levu could be another thing altogether.
4.1 Taveuni

4.1.1 Currents in the Somosomo Straits

There are current arrows on the CMap charts that run NE and SW in the straits, with no indication of what tide the current runs what way. Based on local observations and conversation with dive companies, it goes NE on the ebb (falling tide) and SW on the flood (rising tide). About 2-3 knots. If the wind is blowing strong out of the East, there can be quite a wind-against-current chop on the ebb.

You can go close in to Taveuni (inside the reefs between the towns of Waiyevo and Somosomo, with someone watching closely on the bow) to get out of most of the wind and chop.

4.1.2 Paradise Resort and Vuna Point

Southern Cross - August 2013: Based on recommendations from John and Pat on The Rose, and Rich and Cindy on Legacy, we visited the Paradise Resort at the south end of the island,
near Vuna Pt. They have a single mooring for yachts, and there is no charge as long as you patronize the resort for dining or other services.

The mooring is located at 16-56.04S 179-54.00E, and is very calm in prevailing SE winds (best to telephone ahead (888-0125) to verify conditions). The resort owners, Allan and Terri, are gracious hosts, and all of the staff made us feel right at home. We enjoyed two dinners, and Vicki got a very good 90-minute massage. While we almost never visit resorts, this was a nice change of pace after several weeks in the outer islands.

The biggest benefit, however, was the proximity to Nabogiono Farms, 3km up the road toward Somosomo. The 3rd-generation owner of this property is Bobby Shankaran, and he is a passionate conservationist of the special plants and animals that live on Taveuni. His main business, apart from farming kava, fruits and vegetables, comes from birdwatchers looking to spot the brilliantly-colored orange dove, found only here and on neighboring Vanua Levu. That's what inspired our visit, too, but we ended up seeing and learning so much more. We tasted many new wild and horticultural products, such as cocoa and custard apple, and learned about medicinal and other uses of dozens of wild plants. We saw all kinds of beautiful birds and geckos. Bobby is a very interesting person and a terrific guide.

While we enjoyed the waterfalls, 180th meridian, and other attractions on Taveuni, Nabogiono Farms is what will stick in our memories. Bobby can be contacted at 9238612 (mobile), 8283677 (landline), or nabogiono@yahoo.com.au

4.1.3 Somosomo

Soggy Paws - July 2012 - Provisioning at the Town of Somosomo: We left Viani Bay around 9am and headed across the Somosomo Strait, across the dateline, through the reefs, to the tiny town of Somosomo, where we had heard there was an MH Grocery Store, and some fresh veggies to be had. Sure enough, as we got close to Somosomo, we could see the MH Grocery Store sign. We edged our way in really close to the black sand beach, before the bottom shallowed up to anchorable depths.

We ended up anchoring in about 25’ in what felt like good holding sand, at 16-48.18S / 179-58-295W. This was certainly good enough for a day anchorage and would probably be OK overnight, but we didn't stay overnight.

We opted to take 2 dinghies ashore for 3 boats, with no motors, so we could carry our dinghies clear of the beach and up to high ground. We actually ended up carrying them into someone's yard at the south end of the beach, after asking permission (Dave was worried about someone molesting the dinghies while they sat unattended).

A 5 minute walk to the left of the beach, and we found the MH Grocery Store, for a quick survey trip. It was reasonably well-stocked with staples and frozen goods, plus the more durable imported fruits and vegetables (potatoes, onions, carrots, garlic, celery, apples). We had provisioned well in Savusavu, so didn't need much, but Dave did buy all the 'plain' potato chips on the shelf and and Challenger was happy to find Raisin Bran cereal. Both bought those items right then, in case they wouldn't be there when we came back to really buy stuff later. Next, we walked 15 minutes in the other direction to find the actual 'downtown' of Somosomo, where we heard there was a fresh veggie market. By the time we got there, we were all starving, so we
first took advantage of a nice little restaurant next to the BSP bank (with an ATM). We got a nice sit-down meal for $6FJ, and enjoyed talking with the ladies running the tiny road-side restaurant.

The village market actually ends up being stalls lining the road in Somosomo. We found all the normal Fijian fruits and veggies there--nice tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, green beans, snake beans, bok choy, papaya, bananas, root vegetables, etc. We were under-stocked with Kava (for the village acceptance ceremony called sevusevu), and so Dave arranged to buy another 5 bundles at better prices than we found in the market at Savusavu. (Later we talked with a Fijian on the beach at Somosomo and he told us that the Indian shopkeeper who sold it to us charged us about double, because we were foreigners--he said we should have only paid about $6 for what was being sold in $10-15 bundles in Savusavu).

Because we were now lugging many pounds of fruits and vegetables, we organized a taxi back to the MH Grocery Store, for $1 per person. I volunteered to get out at the 'park' where our dinghies were, and babysit all the veggies, while the rest of the group went shopping at the MH. The park turned out to be the playing field for the school, and there was a constant stream of kids coming and going, plus games of 'dodge ball' and rugby going on. I got a chance to chat for awhile with the headmaster, who was enjoying his afternoon sitting under the tree and watching over his school.

By 4pm we were back aboard and hauling anchors, headed for the anchorage at Matei, the small town at the north end of Taveuni.

Corrie Schneider - Jan 2012:  (http://saltyschneider.blogspot.com/) (Crewing aboard a large yacht)  This morning we left Viani Bay somewhat early, heading for Taveuni Island, just across the Somosomo strait. Our sole purpose for the visit to the island was to reprovision, as after one week out in the cuts we are dangerously low on vodka, beer and produce.

Unfortunately there are no good anchorages around the town of Somosomo, where the M & H market is, and it was too rough to launch the tender. The captain did not think replenishing our supplies was worth the potential damage to the tender, which was probably a good call. So we hauled up the anchor for the second time and aimed for Kioa Island, about ten miles away.

Ed note:  In January, the winds often blow from the NW, this is probably why they found "no good anchorage"

Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011:  Open roadstead but protected during tradewinds. Anchor off the river mouth and dinghy ashore at the park. There's a large MH grocery store here.

You cross the dateline (180°W/E) as you travel between Viani Bay and Somosomo.

(more from an email - March 2011):  We came over from Viani Bay and stopped first at Somosomo, an open roadstead half way up Taveuni's western shore where we planned to buy groceries. The anchorage was unusually bouncy and with deep water even though it is located at the mouth of the Somosomo river. Leslie stayed aboard and kept watch while Philip bobbed off through the chop to make an uneventful beach landing. Immediately a gaggle of children, the oldest no more than 10, descended on Philip and enthusiastically helped him pull the dinghy up to the high tide line.
Groceries finally aboard, we up-anchored with alacrity and headed off into the unusual northerly chop headed for Naselelesele Point, at Taveuni's northern end.

4.1.4 **Naselelesele Point / Matei**

Chartlet compliments of s/v Billabong

**Aqualuna - November 2013:** We set sail at about 6 am from Vanua Balavu in the Lau Group for the nine hour sail to Matai on Taveuni Island to drop our guests off to catch a local flight and head back home. We had some extremely good sailing with the asymmetric up and humming along at 7 - 8 knots.

In Matai, we anchored off a small resort and got permission to land on the beach with B and B's luggage so that they could get a taxi to the airport only 2 mins away.

**Soggy Paws - July 2012:** We arrived in the area at almost sunset, and didn't feel comfortable going inside the reef. So we DID NOT go inside the reef per the sketch chart above, but opted to anchor in the open bay west of the point, at approx 16-41.59S / 179-53.66W, in about 35 feet with good sand and isolated coral heads. There is some swell in the bay, but it wasn't bad for an overnight anchorage. This would be a good anchorage for leaving in the middle of the night (for passage to the Lau)--easy in and easy out.

**Shango - June 2012:** The anchorage at the North end of Taveuni is at **Naselelesele Point**. It is behind a reef which stops the seas but not the wind. Those with wind generators will be thrilled.
Lots of hiking ashore but it requires figuring out the bus schedule (possible?) or catching a round trip cab for F$60 ish. We went to the Bouma National Heritage Park and hiked to the three sets of waterfalls. They were just beautiful if you like waterfalls.

**Accapella - 2012:** We had good phone and reasonable internet via Vodafone here. We also could sometimes get wifi onboard (with a booster/good antenna) from Coconut Grove Resort.

**Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011:** There is better protection here than the chart would indicate. The reef is broken to the north and west--slip inside and anchor at the approximate location 16°40.925'S, 179°52.426'W. Nice grocery store ashore (Bhula Bhai and Sons) and a few restaurants.

Snorkeling amongst the small islands was fine, but watch for speeding resort boats.

(more from an email March 2011:) The "town" of Matei, formerly a private estate, sits here but the land was last sold off for vacation homes for "palangis". The Taveuni airport is here.

Calder's Guide again guided us, though his chartlet was little better than the chart surveyed by the schooner Alacrity in 1880 and we were not sure whether the strange winds, chop and unusual NE swell would make the reef-studded anchorage untenable. We had a backup plan which included a route to another anchorage, 10 miles further.

We edged our way through a pass and found a large enough patch of sand in which to set our anchor and lay out our chain. All around us were coral "bommies", brightly colored tropical fish filled the water column and waves crashing over reefs nearby. Though residual swell from multiple points of the compass bounced us back and forth, the anchorage proved to be comfortable as we had cooling breezes, few bugs and only the occasional speeding work boat zipping by, heading for a distant beach landing.

We spent a few idyllic days here puttering around, watching weather form on Taveuni to our south while waiting for waters to calm so we could get in and go snorkeling at "Honeymoon Island" a pile of rocks in the middle of the anchorage. We did get in one day and saw some colorful hard and soft corals and small fish; it seems as if all the reef fish of size on shallow reefs are captured for food and we see them frequently in the public markets.

We only ventured to shore one day and encountered a boatload of locals arriving from the Ringgold Islands. We tried to donate a bunch of our excess bananas to them but, just like a surfeit of zucchini in mid-August in the states, they had enough of their own. They had a good laugh at our tiny dinghy but were very friendly and suggested we might want to visit their island but gave us few particulars, only that it was 18 miles north. Our chart suggests their island would be within the aegis of Budd Reef but that didn't give us confidence enough to venture there.

**Veella - 2002:** We anchored off a backpacker's campground at Beverly Beach at the northwest tip of Taveuni Island. In front of our boat, we snorkeled in water so clear that a mask and snorkel seemed extraneous, since we could see the fish and coral formations so well from the dinghy as we paddled to shore. The coral, damaged extensively only three years ago in a hurricane, has rebounded and made for some of the best snorkeling we've had. The area around the boat was teeming with wildlife with fish jumping most days, and we also saw a turtle, dolphins and several four-inch aquamarine cuttle fish.
On the west side of the island, we took a number of runs down a beautiful natural waterslide in the rain forest (near Somosomo, but inland). The stone is worn smooth by the cool, clear, fresh water that has been gushing down the rocks for centuries. Local Fijians we met there pointed out a location on the rocks where their ancestors sharpened their knives. We watched them enjoy their amazing local watering hole, sliding down the smooth rocks on their feet (as though riding a surf board). We zoomed down the chutes and slowed as we were dumped into the pools below, scooting along on our haunches after a brief pause to the next leg of the chute. When we returned days later after extensive rains, we were alone and the water levels were higher, making for a very different ride down the waterslide.

Extensive land in south eastern Taveuni has been turned into a nature reserve by four local villages. We enjoyed a long coastal walk to a beautiful waterfall, passing several traditional villages along the way. The trail followed the south eastern coast of the island, then began winding in land and uphill. The trail suddenly stopped short of the water fall, but we could see falls upriver and needed to hike 100 meters through a riverbed of partially submerged boulders, and then swim against a strong current upriver to reach them.

We found a small nook in the high rock walls where we could wedge our bodies in to rest from the forceful pull of the current and take in this beautiful sight. The immense volume of water pouring over the rocks was overwhelming, and we could barely hear one another. We saw people behind the falls swim out and around the falls and return to where they had been.

We turned to head back, not realizing initially that they weren’t just messing around, that they felt trapped by the strong back eddies that churned in the foaming water beneath the downpour. In seconds after letting go of the rock walls, we were swept half of the distance that had taken us five minutes to cover coming in.

As we reached the rocks where we’d left our pack, we heard calls for help over the roar of gushing water. A local Fijian advised them to dive deep to get below the surface current, and they were able to break free. The victims, now cold and frightened, were two “hunky” Swedes in their early twenties.

A storm in New Zealand created a large swell that threatened the southwestern coasts of Fiji, sparking severe wave warnings, evacuations and coastal road damage in the affected areas. While we were concerned about how they might affect the boat, in our safe anchorage on the opposite shore we felt no impact.

We visited a series of three gorgeous waterfalls on the edge of the rain forest, also on the east side of Taveuni. A short, easy walk took us to a high, narrow stream of water flowing into a large pool. Further hiking took us past scenic over looks and across a river to a more remote second falls, a shorter, higher-volume cascade with an intimate pool bel ow where we enjoyed a refreshing swim. Once we’d cooled down, our curiosity about the third waterfall took over, and we ventured up a steep and slippery trail. We lost then found the trail again as we traversed across the stream several times, and frogs jumped from our path. The third falls was an artistically arranged stack of rocks breaking the water flow into multiple cascades flowing to a lovely pool below. Each waterfall had incredible beauty with vastly different features. We could have lingered a full day at each, especially the second and third falls.

We’d had poor weather and radio reception several days running and wanted to get an updated weather forecast, so thought we’d stop by the airport on our way into town. (The airport is a
single runway with a tiny two-story building, and the town consisted of two stores smaller than a 7-11 with far less selection and a couple of tiny bun galow-style resorts.)

We asked the agent in the airport about weather and he pointed upstairs to the control tower. As we reached the top of the stairs, we were surprised to find a guy stretched out with a blanket with two gals also stretched out on nearby tables.

The next flight of the day wasn’t scheduled for an hour. They didn’t know anything about the weather, but were willing to call the international airport to let us ask.

The only instruments inside the control tower were a wind direction and speed indicator, a broken barometer and a radio. We joked about how tight airport security has gotten these days and the high stress job of an air traffic controller.

We loved Taveuni and look forward to returning. We became part of the small community there; many knew our names and where we were from long before we’d even been introduced.

4.1.5 Vurevure Bay (East Side of Taveuni)

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 175-177

Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2011: There is a mooring buoy here behind the pearl farm buoys; it had recently been surveyed when we were there, but otherwise anchor behind it to get protection from SE swell or in front of the river mouth of the prominent bridge. It’s a big bay but filled with coral.

See Cocotolli in the village for Sevusevu--don’t worry about finding him as someone will find you and escort you to him. If you are lucky, the welcoming entourage will include a bunch of delightful young boys.

Walk or take an infrequent bus south to Tavoro Falls or the Lavena Coast Walk. Vunivasa Estate dominates the northern shore; they grow pineapples and other crops. We had a lovely visit with Danes, Peter and Lillian, who have run the estate for 20 years and who are pioneering environmentally sound agronomy practices on Taveuni.

(more from an email March 2011): Safe water between Taveuni and Qamea Islands runs through a narrow channel between the islands with waves breaking over reefs stretching out more than a mile perpendicular to the land, so as we threaded our way Philip stood at the bow on reef watch.

Our entry proved uneventful and we searched for a mooring buoy whose coordinates had been given us. It wasn’t exactly where it was supposed to be, but it was the only buoy that was clearly not part of an array of buoys of pearl farm oyster cultivation lines, so we took it. Using unknown moorings is always a risk, though we knew friends on s/v Intention had used this buoy and we later found out it was laid as a cyclone mooring for three masted schooner and had been recently surveyed, so we felt better about hanging on it. Winds were from the north and we were in a tight circular area of water ringed by coral to our lee.

On our first trip ashore, we spotted four young boys loping along the beach towards the site we’d chosen to land. Laughing and waving the boys raced into the water and grabbed our gunwales just as we were thumping onto soft sand. Like Lilliputians they gathered up Bacio and carried her up the beach to a stump and set her gently down, all the while filling the air with giggles and questions. Philip dug into our backpack and produced some large mango flavored
lollies and the boys jumped on each other spoiling it up for our benefit. Of course we had to take their photos and that prompted even more little boy antics as they made faces and gestures while lounging on Bacio.

Soon, Jesse appeared, a father from the village who seemed to be just checking us out. Appointing themselves as our tour guides, the boys ushered us down the beach and bullied one of their own into climbing an overhanging coconut tree and kicking down green (drinking) coconuts for our benefit. Continuing on, they were intent on showing us the way to the home of Canadians Claude and Danielle, friends of more than one of our friends and recent pearl farmers. As it turns out, Claude and Danielle were not home but we sat at their landing at the confluence of a small deep creek and the sea, while the boys skillfully chopped our coconuts with razor-sharp cane knives (a kind of machete) and laughingly presented them to us like waiters. They were cute, nice kids and we got a big kick out of them.

Our first visit was to Jim Hennings, the 81 year old patriarch of the estate at a point of land inside the bay which is reached only by boat or a narrow path through the jungle. Jim, of German descent and whose grandparents settled in Fiji in the 19th century, was remarkably spry and lucid as we sat on a log (and he on a milk crate) at the entrance to his modest but large open home. A tractor load of kids came by and Jim introduced us to his son, Fred, and a whole bunch of his lovely ethnic Fijian grandchildren. When we asked him how many grandchildren he had, he laughed and said he’d lost count. One of the little girls, not more than 6 years old, proudly carried an old 12 gauge, single shot shotgun over her shoulder and with a somewhat haughty little-girl manner marched by us into the house. Still surviving on copra production with only 255 acres, Jim also has the usual complement of cattle, pigs, chickens and goats, all of which wandered through the scene as we chatted.

The next day, back in the village, we found Claude and Danielle on their way out. They were friendly, but in a hurry, offering us water and advice as they prepared their working punt for sea. The advice they gave was that since this day was Sunday, it was a good day for sevusevu as all the villagers in the Vurevure settlement should be at home. We were to find Cocotoli, the village chief. Back on Carina, we dressed up (Leslie wore a sulu over her capris and Philip, a clean bright bula shirt), gathered boat cards and a sevusevu-standard 1/2 kilo bundle of kava root (yaqona) and headed back to the village. Our pack of village boys were again on the beach but had doubled in size. Again, they escorted us along as they peppered us with questions and jostled each other as our procession traveled up the middle of the “highway”, which here is a rutted dirt road.

As we entered the village, eyes peered out from behind curtains, toddlers openly stared and adults waved and greeted us with a warm “bula”! At the porch of the chief’s home, there was a sudden shuffle and pandanus mats magically appeared and were laid on the wooden floor. Chief Cocotoli, obviously suffering from an infection of his eyes, removed his sunglasses (as we had done with ours before entering the village). The chief spoke little English, but Jesse (met the day before) and Tom, Cocotoli’s son, did most of the talking. For an hour or more we stayed and talked, as they, and Tom in particular, were curious about us. The pack of village children, grown in numbers still, sat quietly along the periphery. Tom produced and old and well worn atlas and we showed them where Washington State was in the USA. As is always the case, our professions, our ages and whether we had children was on top the list of things they ask. Finally, warmed by our welcome, we departed the chief’s home and into the pack of boys who
created quite a kerfuffle at the diminishing supply of lollies. Despite this, they surrounded us all the way back to the dinghy, stepping into any photo we tried to take along the way. As a team, they carried the dinghy like a litter for royalty, down the beach to the edge of the receding water and waved wildly as we motored away back to Carina. One boy nonchalantly tried to “stow away” on the stern of the dinghy waving to his friends as we pulled away, jumping off as the water started to deepen.

On our list of must-dos at this end of Taveuni was to visit the Bouma National Heritage Park which incorporates almost all of eastern Taveuni, a preserve of rainforest, reefs, waterfalls and wildlife. The following day we put ashore at Civa Pearl Farm once again, and encountered Danielle alone along with Mika, an employee. After a quick chat, Mika indicated he was from the village of Waitabu, which is in the park and he'd walk with us up the road; the park was roughly 4 kilometers away. In his mid-twenties, Mika chatted about the park and how his village has preserved the reef and supplements its income from dalo (taro) by hosting tours. On our way up the road, we passed the well constructed home of two Peace Corps volunteers who at the time were organizing villagers in various project.

Mika left us there and we continued up the "highway" to the Tavoro Falls visitor's center. We were the only visitors that day and Maria, the hostess, took our entrance money but also probed us about any fishing equipment we might have to trade. Promising to stop again before we went home, we walked up the neat path to the falls of the Tavoro River. Pictures cannot capture how lovely and soothing these falls were and how pristine the pool. Philip donned swim trunks, waded in and swam toward the chop at the base of the falls. Feeling the temperature of the water (cold!), Leslie decided that taking photos was a better idea. After Philip's brisk swim we climbed to the viewpoint above the falls and sat for a lovely rest looking east from Taveuni at the Koro Sea and Qamea island.

Later, back at the visitor’s center, Maria was keen to seal a deal and we agreed to accept papayas and lemons in return for the fishing equipment Maria wanted. It was a little odd, her husband was napping and ignoring us in another part of the picnic shelter while her small son, with a head full of kinky blond hair (seen often in Pacific islands) just looked at us like we'd dropped out of a space ship. We ended up getting a bunch of lovely fruit in trade for fishing equipment we were willing to donate so both sides were happy.

The following day, we set out to find Vunivasa Estate, a working farm of 3000 acres run by a Danish couple who Jim Hennings had suggested we should meet. Walking in the heat and rapidly rising humidity, it was an unusual hike as it was uphill both ways (or so it seemed). We eventually found the unmarked entrance to the farm and started down the drive. As the rutted drive descended toward the Tasman Strait sparkling in the morning sun, pineapple fields began to appear that filled most of the valley to our south and teams of farm workers moved slowly tending the crop. A lorry-load of pineapples slowly pulled away as we approached, bouncing towards the collection of farm outbuildings.

No one seemed to pay any attention to us, even as we waved and called "bula", until we passed through a gate. Here we were greeted by a dobermann pinscher galloping towards us. She was friendly enough but pushed us with her head, perhaps trying to steer us in one direction. To our left in the shadows of a tractor shed, we spotted a man who we thought must be Peter, since he looked a whole lot more like a Dane than anyone we'd met so far. He shrugged at us, and raised both hands in question and we went forward to greet him. Philip introduced us and
apologized for the intrusion and Peter, once he knew who we were, was very friendly, directing us through another gate into the garden surrounding the main house, to wait while he finished up conferring with his farm manager.

Peter soon bounded up the path and joined us, leading us to the old rambling wooden home as his dobermann circled us, seemingly excited by the unusual activity. Peter led us up the steps to the front porch, where at a small table sat Lillian, his wife, reading while a spectacular tabby cat snuggled her. Sitting and watching the water, we talked over glasses of freshly made papaya/orange juice, even touching on delicate geo-political subjects one wouldn’t normally discuss with strangers. However, Peter and Lillian quickly ceased to be strangers as we shared stories and learned of their projects to bring innovative earth-friendly and sustainable agriculture to Taveuni. To this end, they’ve established a Taveuni grower’s cooperative for the purposes of training and secured funding to bring a specialty (agronomy) volunteer to the island to help them. At the lunch hour, they insisted we join them in their dining room. Hundreds of books lined the room and we chatted of favorite books and authors through a healthy meal of mostly home grown food. We also talked terra preta, nitrogen fixers, sources of open pollinating seeds, plus literature, cyclones, health care and politics. Filled with food and good cheer, it was difficult to say goodbye to these kindred spirits, but by mid afternoon we ambled back up the drive and walked back to Carina.

At this juncture, we were ready to head back to Savusavu, though the remnants of a tropical low near Vanuatu kept delivering strong NW winds that would make sailing back an exercise in tacking across the choppy Koro Sea into almost 30 knots. So, digging deeply in our lockers, we unearthed a tiny store of patience and waited two more days before embarking. In the interim, we had the chance to revisit the village and say goodbye, though we missed (sadly) seeing the rambunctious boys who were all at school every week day about 5 km down the road at Bouma.

Stray Kitty - June 2011: This was a quick motor over to Vurevure Bay on the island of Taveuni. We came here to go to Bouma National Heritage Park’s Tavoro Waterfalls and Lavena Beach. The anchorage is next to a river and so is quite muddy. There is also a mooring ball one can use next to the pearl farm (run by a French –Canadian!)

We did our sevusevu in the village of Vurevure and met many locals. Along with our friends on Jackster, we walked down the road past two more villages Waitabu and Bouma. One simply cannot be in a rush whilst walking down a road on a Fijian island, everybody that you meet you must stop and have a chat, they will want to know where you are going, where are you coming from, if you like Fiji or not, and if it is your first time here, for us it turned into a very enjoyable activity. Even the Fijian children are extremely friendly and love to talk to visitors so they can practice their English. We walked back to Vurevure with many children returning from school. We met another man who invited us to his village so we could see what it is like to live in a Fijian village and he ran back to his house and gave us some bananas.

We arranged for a cab to pick us the following morning to take us to the base of the Tavoro Waterfalls. The first waterfall was a 10 minute hike and this is where they filmed scenes from the movie “The Return of the Blue Lagoon”. The second waterfall was another 30 minute hike, we swam at both – it really felt like paradise and extremely refreshing after a sweaty hike.

After lunch we decided we still had enough oomph in us to go and see Levuna Beach. We took about a 20 minute stroll on the beach when we got back to the village, the visitors centre said we had to come in and sign the guest book, then they told us that we had to pay $15.00 for the
privilege of walking down the beach! We were stunned! It is hard to argue with the Fijians though and so we paid a smaller amount after a bit of negotiation. Scenes from the movie were shot on this beach as well, so that’s what happens to places when they get popular – thanks alot Hollywood!

That evening we saw a ton of people out on the beach so we kayaked over to investigate; they were catching fish and roasting them on a stick!

4.2 Kioa Island
Corrie Schneider - Jan 2012:  (http://saltyschneider.blogspot.com/)  (Crewing aboard a large yacht) This morning we left Viani Bay somewhat early, heading for Taveuni Island, just across the Somosomo strait. Our sole purpose for the visit to the island was to reprovision, as after one week out in the cuts we are dangerously low on vodka, beer and produce.

Unfortunately there are no good anchorages around the town of Somosomo, where the M & H market is, and it was too rough to launch the tender. The captain did not think replenishing our supplies was worth the potential damage to the tender, which was probably a good call. So we hauled up the anchor for the second time and aimed for Kioa Island, about ten miles away.

Kioa Island is a very interesting place. It is not actually part of Fiji, although it is right in the middle of the Fijian islands. All of the inhabitants of Kioa are from the nation of Tuvalu in Micronesia. Just after World War II, when their atolls were ravaged by the war in the Pacific, the Tuvaluians purchased Kioa and moved there. Although they are Fijian citizens, they have their own government, language and customs. They also have retained their Polynesian features of straight black hair and lighter skin - and as there are only about 500 people on the island, there are hints of inbreeding as well.

We dropped anchor inside the reef and headed ashore. Victoria and I went with a woman and presented a bundle of kava to the chief of the village. When I gave it to him he said, "You should present it the Fijian way!" I asked, "How is that?" And he said, "I don't know! We are not Fijian!" It was a bit confusing but funny in a way.

After we paid our respects to the chief we hung out in the village. Kioa is known for its unique handicrafts, and while I did not think they were too different from the woven baskets and placemats we have seen along the way, we bought a few baskets and little trinkets. Sean and BJ shared beers and cigarettes with the men while I played ball with the little kids. Whenever they wanted my attention they shouted "Palangi! Palangi!" It reminded me of being in Samoa - as did the fact that "Hello" is "Talofa" - the same in Samoan.

The village was small and poor, the kids skinny and the dogs mangy. Nobody seemed to be concerned with dental care, most of the adults were missing teeth and the kids had rotting milk teeth. But they were kind and open, and invited us to come drink "coconut kava" (i.e. coconut alcohol) with them this evening. We said we would try to, and headed back to the boat.

After a lunch of sandwiches and cocktails, Sean noticed that we were dragging anchor in an anchorage where there is not much room to drag, as it is surrounded by reef on 3 sides. So, for the third time today, we pulled up anchor, and ended up moving to Rabi Island.
4.3  Rabi (Rambi) Island

Rabi Island has four villages populated by Micronesians originally from Banaba, in Kiribati. There homeland was ruined by phosphate mining and influx of settlers and more so during WWII when the Japanese invaded Banaba and massacred many villagers. Rabi was purchased for the Banabans by the British Government with Banabas own phosphate mining royalties. In 2000 the survivors were resettled here.

4.3.1  Nuko

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 164

Stray Kitty - June 2011: We stopped in the town of Nuko to ask permission from the chief and to let the police department know that we were going to be on the island however it was the Queens birthday and therefore a public holiday so the police office was closed and the chiefs were not there. We did manage to find the policeman at his house and he granted us permission to stay on the island, he did not want anything from us. We offered him some kava but he declined. We walked around the town, chatted with some very friendly locals, walked up to the Methodist church for a beautiful view then departed for Albert Bay.

4.3.2  Albert’s Cove

Chartlet compliments of s/v Billabong

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - 165-166
**Tackless II -** We had a nice stay at Albert Cove, largely due to getting to know Marjetka, the single-hander aboard the Little Mermaid. Marjetka has been here for two weeks and is likely to stay another two weeks. She has gotten quite involved with the two local "families" (no young children here since the school is in Nuku), and rows them out fishing in her small patched dinghy, a big service since they have no working boat of their own.

On Sunday morning I went ashore with Marjetka. Our first stop, after determining that "the old man is out fishing" is to feed our slop to two tethered pigs, who happily switch from munching coconut to chicken bones and mackerel heads! The "old man" paddles in from snorkeling with the bodies of three giant clams tethered to his belt. Lunch for his household, a son and another young man.

We enter the very low hut from the cooking area, the only eave I can get under. Inside I am surprised to see the complex "architecture" of the L-shaped abode, built of sticks lashed together, with open areas for windows, and complicated gables supporting a roof of thatch and corrugated mixed. It is a bit dark, but cool. After putting some pots to cook on the fire in the raised hearth in the cooking nook, the son opted for the hammock that swung a few inches off the ground and a newspaper from May, and we sat with Panea (the old man) on some comfy cushions over the ubiquitous mats.

Panea's English is pretty good, and he has a book he lends me for the evening telling the history and stories of the Banaban people of Rabi. However, Marjetka tells me Panea himself is actually of the Polynesian Ellis Island people that bought the next Fijian island south called Kioa to reduce population pressure on their own island. Panea definitely has a different look than Tina and her husband in the other hut down the beach who are of Micronesian stock and much darker and more angular. Panea keeps a log of the people who stop in Albert Cove to visit. There aren't so many, since it is slightly off the beaten track to Taveuni, but the boat signing the log ahead of Marjetka were the Swiss family, Andy and Marion we'd just met in Cawaro.

I stay and visit a bit with Panea, while Marjetka goes to put an epoxy patch on Tina's leaky canoe. Afterwards we pick up Don and go snorkeling on Albert Cove's inner reef. While Marjetka, Don and I are mostly sightseeing, it is all business for Panea. Over his shorts he dons a short-sleeve shirt over which he ties on a thin belt of twine. He's got mask and fins and is armed with a homemade Hawaiian sling made from a piece of 1/4-inch stainless-steel rod about five feet long fitted with a point at one end and strap, and an elastic arrangement I can't explain. From the pretty corals of the shoal, Panea sets off toward deeper water with Don working hard to keep up.

When Panea takes a shot at a fish, the whole spear goes flying free, dropping with or without fish wherever it may. Thus one must be careful about not shooting out into the deep! Don was impressed that Panea retrieves his spear on the same breath with which he shoots it! When he hits a fish, he runs a wire from his belt through the eyes before he slips it off the spear, so that he ends up wearing his catch around his middle. If he finds an edible shellfish on the bottom, he tucks that inside his belted shirt! Quite the system.

We'd already been in the water an hour when I realized I'd lost track of Don. Marjetka and I swam back to the anchored dinghy and still no sight of them. I had to swim back to Tackless, and climb up on the deck box with the binoculars to locate them in the glitter of the afternoon sun. By the time Don swam back to the boat, he'd been in the water two hours. As Marjetka
rowed by with Panea (who had the decency to look frozen), he had added an octopus to his
catch which he said he would cook up for our dinner!

All this, mind you, from a man who had a stroke a year ago and who still struggles to walk down
the beach!

It is after dark when Marjetka rows back with the octopus in a blue plastic pail. It has been
beaten tender and cooked in lolo (coconut milk). At first glance it appears intact, but, no,
Marjetka says, Panea kept the head which is their favorite part. What we have is all eight legs
attached to the throat! It was a big octopus! Marjetka, bless her, takes on the job of slicing him
up into more manageable pieces, while I make rice and green beans. And afterwards we each
have two legs left for another day!!!! We had a lovely dinner which only ended when, Cherie,
taking a break in the dinghy, got overly excited about the fish jumping around the boat and
plunged in after it. It took a little coordination of lights from T2 and Marjetka in the dinghy to fish
her out of the dark.

4.3.3 Katherine Bay

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - 166-167

Nine of Cups - 2011: It would have been easy to stay in Buca Bay. We had numerous
invitations for dinners and the people were interested in learning more about us and vice versa.

But as always, time was an issue and we moved on. We had planned to go to
Fiji's 3rd largest island, Taveuni, but the winds were inexplicably from the west
making anchorage there inadvisable. Instead, we took short trip past Kioa
Island to Katherine Bay on Rabi Island. We had been told the beaches of Kioa
were rich with chambered nautilus shells, but we were unable to find any.

Anchorage: 16S31-64 / 179W59.44 - 42'

Most noticeable when entering Katherine Bay is the huge church which dominates
hillside above the village. The magnificence of the Methodist church was much diminished on
closer inspection. Built in the 1960's, it lost its roof and ceiling two years ago in a cyclone and
the village has been working to repair it ever since.

The small village here is called Buakonikai. There was one main dirt road which ran
through town, lined with small tin-roofed, cement block houses. There was one tiny
store which sold only the very basics.

Like its neighbor Kioa, Rabi Island is home to a resettlement group only
this time it's the Banabans, formerly of Ocean Island (Banaba), a 6-sq
km raised atoll in Kiribati (Keer-ah-bas) aka the Gilbert Islands. Banaba was a tiny atoll.
They were relocated in 1945 at the end of WWII by the British because their island was being
exploited for phosphate mining by the BPC (British Phosphate Commission)

The Banbans maintain many of their own traditions including use of outrigger canoes for
handline fishing. Note the ubiquitous blue tarp sail

Everyone greeted us with "Mauri", the Banaban/Gilbertese greeting. Children sitting on
doorsteps waved and shouted to us.
4.4 Matagi (Matangi) Island

Chartlet compliments of s/v Billabong

Shango - June 2012: Matagi’s Horseshoe Cove is a beautiful anchorage. The snorkeling is terrific which should suggest to you that the anchoring is a bit bony.

4.5 Qamea

4.5.1 Naiviivi Bay

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 180-182
Carina - SSCA Newsletter - October 2012: Apply extreme caution coming in here; there is a large bommie awash that is unmarked (except by antifouling paint). Once inside, the perfect anchorage is taken by a mooring buoy that is not being maintained. The bay is quite small because of the fringing coral but the holding is good.

Go ashore to Sevusevu with Chief Moses at Vatusogusogu, though the site of the old dock is difficult at any but high tides. Further west, you can land on the beach and wade across the lagoon at the site of bridge supports (no bridge) and walk to the village.

(more from an email March 2011): We decided to press on to Qamea Island (pronounced Nggamea) and Naiviiri Bay from the north end of Taveuni. The bay indents Qamea from west to east for about a mile and is protected by extensive reefs.

As usual, we had a stiff noserly breeze. Just as we were rounding the northern extreme of Taveuni’s reef and with it as a lee shore, our engine faltered and nearly stalled. Les was at the helm and was going to turn west toward clear water in preparation for putting up our sails for a hasty retreat when the engine’s RPMs began to settle down to normal. The area we were
traveling is called the Tasman Strait and it is filled with shoals and reefs. Too, the light winds were easterly and sailing would require tacking through a dangerous maze, so we motored on.

As we neared the reefs guarding Naiviiri Bay, Carina's engine faltered once again but continued to run. After we were finally safely anchored, we decided it would be best to wait until the following day when the engine was cool to diagnose our problem. We suspected the problem was air in our fuel lines and this theory was borne out the next day when we found the secondary fuel filter canister nearly empty of fuel.

Naiviiri Bay is abuzz with boats servicing the three local villages as well as one posh resort. The people in the different speeding skiffs wave enthusiastically and yell "Bula! as they zoom by.

Just as we were finishing supper our first night here, a boat slowed and stopped and we were greeted by Jerry and Raphael, two thirty-something aged men coming back to the middle village ('Vatusogusogu or "VAH two songu songu"). In their skiff they had a huge bouquet of edible greens, probably what Fijians call "spinach". When we inquired if there was a village chief with whom we would do a sevusevu ceremony they advised that we should come ashore the next day to see Chief Moses, the chief in the village closest to where we were anchored. Moses' house is one among a cascade of neat but tiny homes and they advised we could easily find his house from the landing.

The following morning we arrived at the landing to find that the receding tide left only a quagmire of foot-thick, sticky black mud and getting ashore was difficult. Leslie stayed with the dinghy to keep it afloat hanging onto the oyster-encrusted remains of a long dock, while Philip struggled ashore with the bunch of kava roots for sevusevu.

Walking around and calling "bula" at the first house near the landing, Philip was greeted by Mariah, an extremely attractive Fijian lady in a bright red dress. As is typical, Mariah was full of questions about us which she delivered in rapid succession from her elevated porch. Learning we were trying to find Moses, she asked her daughter, Luci, to be Philip's guide. Slightly plump and shy, Luci displayed the striking features of mixed blood you sometimes see in Fiji: light skin, kinky blond hair but with Fijian features.

After a short walk, Luci pointed to particular house and urged Philip on. Philip was greeted at the door by Anna, Chief Moses's willowy and pretty daughter-in-law who offered to rinse his feet with fresh water prior to entering the house. The chief's home is modest with rooms partitioned off with thin plywood. Philip was directed to sit on the floor as Fijians do: legs crossed at the ankle with elbows resting on your knees, a position not easily assumed by palangis used to sitting in chairs. As per custom, Philip placed the gift of kava in front of the chief and asked that the gift be accepted and that Carina be allowed to anchor for a day or two off the village where we would be allowed access to shore. Moses laughed and invited Philip to stay as long as we wanted ("stay six months!" he said) and urged us to come to the village for dancing and kava later in the day. Moses also provided Philip with a "good pole" of mangrove to allow us to pole our way back out over the mud and coral and asked the beautiful Anna to guide him back to the landing. Dismayed by the muddy landing herself, Anna suggested next time we land further down the bay at the beach and walk to the village. We did try to attend the dancing ceremony but the path from the beach landing included a short but deep crossing of the lagoon which would only get deeper with the incoming tide. In addition, black clouds of an approaching squall began to fill the sky and we decided to cancel our trip.
We ended up spending nearly a week here. Philip developed a case of cellulitis on his shin (a painful swollen infection of the connective tissue) from bug bites that had gotten infected. This showed up immediately after he went slogging to the village through knee deep, brackish mud. It wasn’t a bad case but we knew we’d have to treat it aggressively with oral antibiotics and keep his legs (with many still-open sores from bites) out of seawater.

The other reason we stayed at Naiviiri was that our incoming GPS waypoints had brought us dangerously close to a reef that is awash at low tide. We knew approximately where it was, but we wanted good, high elevation sunlight for reef spotting to avoid this hazard while leaving the bay. Clear skies eluded us for many days as squalls rolled over the mountains and through the bay.

Finally convinced we had sufficient sunlight, we started off one day toward Vurevure Bay on Taveuni Island, a short hop of less than 5 nautical miles. Of course, just at the time we were approaching the area of the reef hazard, a dark cloud covered the sun and all obstacles seemed to magically disappear. Luckily, we slid past this isolated hazard by less than a boat length, though just as we passed it, we could just see a pale green (but very hard) ghost lurking beneath the water, barely visible in the diminished light.

4.5.2 North Shore Anchorage

The anchorage area is approximately 16-44.7S / 179-46.3W

Stray Kitty - June 2011: The Mitchell family lives where we anchored and have a plantation. However there are no coconuts on the palm trees! The last cyclone killed them all but the good news is that soon the coconuts will be back. Everybody in Fiji speaks very good English so it is very easy to talk to the locals.

Church service on Qamea – We were invited to come in on Sunday morning for a church service so we obliged. Everybody sits on woven mats on the floor, we were given a nice welcoming in English and they even apologized to us because the whole service was going to be in Fijian and we wouldn’t understand a spoken word, still it is always interesting to go to a church service. After church, we were given the most lovely of shells, three of them were nautilus shells which I have never seen before, they are beautiful.

4.6 Budd Reef (Yanuca & Cobia)

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 182-184
The Rose - 2014 - We have made three visits to Yanuca and the Cobia (pronounced Thombia) caldera this season. We keep going back because it is so beautiful and because the village is so friendly and unspoiled. In prevailing winds it makes a very convenient loop as a day trip up from Viani Bay or Kioa with a good angle on the wind to the west entrance. After a few days visit we continued to Matagi Island enjoying a nice angle on the wind for sailing there as well. Budds Reef is easy to enter and the lagoon is mostly wide open although a lookout on the bow is always prudent. We did find one uncharted bommie right on our path from the west entrance to the anchorage on the west side of the westernmost island of Yavu. (Aproximate waypoint of the bommie 16-29.875 S / 179-43.542 W). The snorkeling just north of the west anchorage (16-29.896 S / 179-42.989) is some of the best we've seen with coral lattice and lots of fish all an easy swim from the boat.

The only village is on Yanuca on the south east corner. The bay in front of the village is stunningly beautiful and has good sand for holding but can get rough if the swell is up (16-29.971S / 179-41.294 W). A dinghy entrance is well marked through the shore reef for visiting. The village does request a visit and sevu sevu prior to visiting the caldera of Cobia.

The sevu sevu is sincere and simple and we found the village people very friendly, warm and helpful. Willy is the son of the Chief and is a capable and personable guide for any activities in the island group. We have enjoyed great adventures with Willy climbing the caldera, diving, baking bread on the beach... He is a wonderful inroad to their island culture. On some Fridays the village performs a Mekka (Meki, dance/get-to-gether) which is reputed to be excellent.
Once sevu sevu is completed, if the tradewinds are blowing, the school anchorage on the north side of Yanuca is excellent with protection from the swell and great sand holding. (16-29.727 S / 179-41.772 W). Willy joined us here with his boat which we towed over to Cobia and then took over the shallow reef and into the Caldera itself. The reef is exposed at low tide and our draft did not allow us to sail into the caldera with the big boat but Willy's boat made the trip comfortable and easy. The steep walls are beautiful and the hike to the top is fun climbing up a web of roots to spectacular views of the surrounding reef. After the climb Willy rigged a "Fiji oven" and we baked bread on the beach where we found a nice nautilus shell. It was a magical day.

**Soggy Paws - July 2012:** From the north end of Taveuni, it was a short daysail up to Budd Reef. Yes, we actually sailed!! (This is a rarity moving upwind in Fiji--you wait for the light air days and motorsail.)

Budd Reef on the chart looks like an atoll reminiscent of places like Bora Bora in French Polynesia--solid reef around a center set of islands. But the reality is that the reef is not as solid as it looks on the chart. We were using the Opus/Billabong set of waypoints (see above chartlet), who's original source was Curly. Using that set of waypoints, and a Google Earth chart that wasn't perfect, and no other information, it looked like we could go in a SW corner pass, and make our way up to the village anchorage.

We ended up with 5 boats headed for Budd Reef, and it seemed like everyone took a different path in through the reef and headed for a different anchorage. Eagle's Wings and Sidewinder headed for the "school anchorage" on the north side of the main island. Us and Challenger headed for the "village anchorage" on the south side of the main island (after checking out the Budd-S waypoint for our planned exit to the south), and Chesapeake, coming late, was trying to decide which group to follow. We found that the ESE winds, which gained a little in strength after we took our sails down, was not conducive to either anchorage.

As Soggy Paws and Challenger were wandering back and forth in front of the village, scoping out the village anchorage, and preparing to anchor in a small patch of sand with not enough protection, we got a call from the Chief's son Willy, on a hand-held. He suggested that the best anchorage in the prevailing winds was neither of the ones we were collectively looking at, but on the west side of the main island. This was one we didn't have a track to get to, and the light was getting worse due to clouds and late afternoon sun. But we agreed the village anchorage wasn't that great, so we all headed for the west side of the big island (BUDAN2 on the chartlet).

What we found there was enough space for about 3 boats to squeeze into the lee, and not much more. The reef shown on the chart was not high enough to stop much of the wave action at high tide. Eagle's Wings, a larger boat, opted to anchor out in 70 feet of water, and Chesapeake went back to the roly "school anchorage". A day later, the wind went a little more south, and our tiny lee was gone. We ended up anchoring on the west side of the westernmost island, and that turned out to be a pretty good anchoring area, with enough space for all 5 boats. It was just a little far from the village.

After we got anchored, Willy came by in the village launch and picked up the crews from all boats to take them into the village for sevusevu. This was very nice, as it would have been a long wet dinghy ride.
We found a small, clean, and neat village of about 100 people. Willy assembled us on the floor in house, and collected his father the chief, to perform the sevusevu. Again, it was short and sweet, in Fijian, and with our presentation of kava and a prayer, we were accepted into the village. We didn't have to drink the kava. Willy gave us a short tour of the village and answered our questions, some of the ladies bought a few craft items, and then Willy took us all back to our boats before dark.

Village Anchorage: 16-29.96S / 179-41.29W - OK in E-NE thru W

School Anchorage: 16-29.69S / 179-41.77W - Southerly winds

West Anchorage: 16-30.09S / 179-42.12W - E-NE

Better Anchorage: 16-29.9S / 179-42.98W - SE-NE less wind and swell

On the way back to our boats, Willie offered to take us in the village launch to hike to the top of the crater on Cobia Island, in the northern part of Budd Reef. It is possible to take the big boat there, but it seemed easiest to go with Willie in the launch. He quoted a price of $20FJ per person for this trip.

The next day, we loaded 10 cruisers, and their hiking and snorkel gear into Willie's launch. The wind and seas were up in the lagoon, and it was a very wet ride over from where we were anchored to Cobia Island. The wind was a little more south than normal, and the beach that Willie normally stops at was not very tenable, so we circled the island counter-clockwise to the opening in the island facing NE. It was about mid-tide and falling, and the heavily laden launch just made it over the reef and into the bowl-shaped lagoon. Willie anchored the boat, and we spent the next 2 hours hiking up to the highest point on Cobia. From there we had a spectacular view of the entire reef and the village and islands to the SE.

The only boat we could see from the top was Chesapeake, who was anchored on the N side of the island in "School Bay". The rest of the boats were hidden from view. We were all a little anxious about our boats, because we were still anchored in the first night's anchorage, which was not very protected in winds from the SE. But we didn't see any boats floating off across the vista, so we assumed they were still firmly attached to the bottom where we left them (and they were).

After taking lots of pictures, and eating lunch, we hiked back down to the launch. By this time, the tide had come back in enough that we could get back out over the inner reef in the launch easily.

The next stop was the snorkle/dive spot. Unfortunately, we did not get a waypoint on this spot, but I'm sure Willie would be happy to take any visitor out there. This was a pretty amazing area with lots of profile, and big caves in the reef. The reef top was awash at about 2 feet, and the bottom behind us was about 80 feet. Live coral, lots of fish, etc. We had a great snorkel, and we hope to go back to dive that spot, maybe this summer.

When we got back to the boats, our anchorage area was pretty boisterous. Willie insisted that we move west to the west side of the westernmost island. We were reluctant to move because it was late in the day, the sun was in our eyes to the west, and visibility was bad. But we finally did, and were glad of it. We found that 'West Anchorage' to be much quieter in the prevailing conditions (though, from the chart, you would not expect it to be).
Since the weather was turning northeast, the direction we had been waiting for for a jump to the Lau, we only stayed another day in Budd Reef. But we hope to go back!

**Internet:** It's worth mentioning that in the two westward-facing anchorages, we had Vodafone cell and internet access--weak but usable with our dongle on a USB extension cable and tied as high as we could reach in the rigging.

**Stray Kitty - June 2011:** As we were coming into the anchorage otherwise known as Budd Reef, a man called us on the radio wanting to know who we were and asking us to come in and see him at the house with the blue roof.

**Yanuca village:** Once we were settled we dinghied over to pick up our friends on Jackster and dinghied into the village. Everybody was very friendly, we presented our sevu sevu and after chatting for a while, discovered that the chiefs son (who was the one in fact who called on the radio) was a tour guide and asked us if we wanted to go out tomorrow to catch some lobsters and do some snorkeling and hike to the crater of a close-by island called Corbia. Certainly! His name was Will and we asked if we could hike up the hill behind his home, he took us up and it was a wonderful view.

After we got back to the boat, Will called us on the radio to see if we like octopus as his sister just caught two of them. Chris went into shore to retrieve them and brought Will back to the boat with him. Because we didn't know how to cook it, he offered to come on to the boat and cook it for us!! He prepared some coconut milk from a real coconut and went to work. It was delicious and very tender. It would not have tasted like that if I had cooked it (not my specialty).

Today was a very long awesome day: Along with our friends on Jackster, we picked Will up at 8:00 a.m. and he brought with him some of his mothers' coconut pancakes, so after an amazing breakfast of pancakes and coffee we headed for Cobia Island about 4 miles away. Along the way we were accompanied by dolphins playing along the boat.

We tied up to a mooring buoy and dinghied to shore and hiked up the hill for an awesome view of the crater. We saw Will's brother and some other guys on the island as well. They were collecting wood to bring back to the island for firewood to roast the sea cucumbers that they sell to China. They also were catching themselves some fish for lunch with spears in the shallow water. It was incredible to see that people still do this. After catching their lunch, they cooked it on an open fire. Back at the boat, I made us hamburgers for lunch because Will told us he really likes beef but never gets a chance to eat it, his diet consist of mostly fish and sea food. He seemed very appreciative.

After lunch we went snorkelling out on the reef. Besides the reef fish and coral, we saw a turtle, a squid and Will free dived down about 20-25 feet to get us a clam which he cooked up on the boat for a little snack. He diced it up with lemon juice and salt. We felt bad eating it actually because it was such a beautiful creature and so much of it goes to waste - we found out later where it had come from, and we did indeed feel bad for consuming it.

Will drove the boat on the way back to the anchorage but the day wasn't over yet. Once it was dark, we got into our wetsuits and went hunting lobsters on the reef. Between us all we caught 6 lobsters, 1 crab and a parrot fish. We cooked it all up and had a pretty amazing feast on Stray Kitty. What a day!
**Quest 2005:** When we talked about going to Budd Reef (in north eastern Fiji) I didn't see how we would get there. Mainly because it isn't really a day hop from anywhere. Budd Reef is south and east of Albert Bay on Rabi, about 55 miles away.

We arrived late and conditions were NOT helpful. We had high tide and a cloudy sky. Scott put me on the bow and we motor forward slowly. Finally we saw the green patch we're looking for straight ahead. We cut just to the north of it and stay in deep water. We make it to the anchorage and a local guy shows us exactly where to drop our anchor. We hold tight that night and are ready for a look-see around the island the next day.

Our guide is none other than the chief's son who goes by the nom de plume of "free Willie!"

He brought us around to a beautiful beach between two of the three islands within the reef. Here the water ran fast and cool and the fish and corals thrived. Willie procured some liquid refreshment for us. Before leaving our boat he asked if we had a machete on board. I was surprised by the question, but glad that my son Drew had seen to it that we had one right inside our front door - just what every cruising yacht needs! If you plan to spend the day living off of coconuts.

You might be interested to note that Willie tied his boat just in the lee of the fringing reef to keep it safe from coral attacks. We're not keen on taking our inflatable dinghy any real distance or across sharp coral which would certainly damage both our aluminum hull and PVC tubes.

WE still hadn't visited the local school, nor had we visited the local chief. With Willie's help we were able to do that with little effort.

<photo> The kava gift is seen behind Willie's father (left) He is sitting with his grand child to his left and the Bible we gave to him in front of him. Every village we visit has expressed great enthusiasm for our Bibles. This place is quite remote. Willie told us hat the only other place he has EVER visited is Taveuni - an island about 15 or 20 miles away. Mind you, there is NO interisland ferry. And, in order for Willie to take us around the island we needed to provide gasoline for his outboard.

This charming village is the only habitation inside of Budd Reef. It's positioned on the center island, Vanuca in the most protected area. Even so, a cyclone whipped through the island three years ago destroying more than half of the homes and the Church - the foundation of which you see to the right. The village was well kept with trimmed grass, flowering shrubs and very little litter. Most of the houses lost in the cyclone have been rebuilt. Plans are being made for the rebuilding of the Church.

The Quest is anchored on the other side of the island in front of the school.

The children have to hike over a pretty big hill to go to school each morning.

The young man on our bow came with us from the village. It turns out that he's 15 years old (looks 10 or 12). He's finished with whatever schooling is available on the island. Further education is NOT in the picture and his future is uncertain. I'm pretty sure he'd never been on a boat like ours. Visitors to the island are few. Basically, he has nothing to do until he is old enough and big enough to safely free-dive for lobster, fish the surrounding reefs (which have already been overfished), or cut copra for 25¢/hr. Life in the villages is very limited.
Veilella - 2002: With 25-knot south easterly trades, we hoisted just the main for the short sail from Matagi to Budd Reef, and were hitting high sixes on the knotmeter as we approached the wide reef pass. Again, the sky clouded over but we were committed.

As we surveyed possible anchor ages we found deep water nearly up to the reefs on the shore line. We had marginal charts of the islets inside the reef, but the guidebook directions indicated that sand surrounded the islands, offering numerous anchoring options in various wind conditions.

We found that the outer reef offered little protection from the swell, but felt we could anchor safely in the lee of the island. The sun reappeared from behind the clouds, but then the engine died (turned out to be bad fuel). We were forced to beat into strong gusts spaced between lulls, trying to maneuver close to the beach reefs with a highly variable boat speed.

Challenging anchoring conditions combined with challenging sailing conditions meant we were exhausted when we finally found a spot that we could live with, and dropped the anchor under sail.

What we found upon arrival was different from what we were expecting based on the guide book; we would have waited for calm conditions given what we actually found. Strong williwaws made for more restless nights as we sailed around on our anchor, dragging the anchor chain across coral heads.

In the morning, the wind calmed slightly, and we were encouraged. When the conditions abated further, we planned to move the boat over closer to the village, present Sevusevu, and officially pay our respects to the village, then visit an extinct volcano crater.

We snorkeled in the crystal clear water in front of the boat, sighting more giant clams with brilliant blue mantles, lobsters, red spiny sea urchins, sea snakes and various types of anemones and soft coral. The biggest puffer fish we’ve ever seen surprised us; he was lurking near the entrance to a small cave that we swam into, and his head was about 12 inches in diameter (in a non-inflated state).

During the day the wind seemed to diminish promisingly, but at night fall we were again beset with williwaws that made for light sleeping.

In the daylight, we had our own little pocket of paradise, with interesting snorkeling, a tiny beach and bright sun shine, lulling us into thinking we had complete privacy until we were surprised by a boatload of visitors. We forget that, in these tiny villages, our arrival is a big event. We don’t appear and disappear anonymously as is possible in the US, but arouse immense curiosity. We get a chuckle out of the locals, suddenly having all kinds of important business taking them past our boat.

While normally there are only two speeds on their engines (off and top speed), they meander by our boat doing their best to see in the hull windows as they go by. Trying to stay cool in the tropics, we are not always fully clothed when hanging out at home! They usually wave and will stop by if we are outside, although not al ways.

Nearly everyone in Fiji is related, and we soon found our friends in Taveuni were relatives of our visitors from the small village of Yanuca (pronounced Yanutha).
During the night, the wind came up again and shifted slightly, funneling gusts around the top of the island. We swung around our anchor, our chain catching on several coral heads with a long fetch and short scope, now on a lee shore. The weather forecast promised more of the same and we decided we’d had enough.

Much as we wanted to make a proper visit to the village as we’d promised, we were beginning to feel our boat was at risk. We were wrapped around numerous coral heads, so had to carefully unwind our chain cinching up the chain as we drove forward in intense gusts, weaving a path to mirror that of the chain below, then quickly grab the anchor buoy to avoid wrapping it in the prop and pull away from the coral reef behind the boat.

Right after Garth finally got the anchor off the bottom and the buoy line aboard, the engine died and wouldn’t restart. By the time Garth dropped the anchor back down and it grabbed the bottom, we were less than a boat length upwind of a surface reef.

Our hearts were in our throats as gust after gust stretched the anchor chain, flirting with the reef behind us. We apparently bought some bad fuel in Tauranga (NZ) and we’ve been going through filters as often as we change our underwear. Whereas we might have sailed out the previous day, we now were so close to the reef on a lee shore that the coral off the point would have endangered us before we’d gotten any forward momentum.

Garth changed fuel filters yet again, ran the engine a while, then we crossed our fingers and gave it another try. Once we’d pulled away safely we felt like we’d earned a rest, yet we still needed to exit the reef pass and get to a safe anchorage 15 miles away.
4.7 Islands/Reefs Between Vanua Levu and the Lau

4.7.1 Welagilala

Chartlet Courtesy s/v Shandon

Shango - June 2012: We made a flying trip to Welagilala to break up the passage to Matagi. It’s a beautiful island but the anchorage is a bit lumpy in seas. Great holding in sand.

Kite - June 2012: Welagilala Pass

16-46.471 S / 179-07.621 W
16-46.417 S / 179-07.516 W
16-46.388 S / 179-07.436 W

Once clear of pass, turn northerly and head for old lighthouse on island. Anchor where the water turns turquoise in 20-35 feet. There is at least one reef off the beach that we saw so keep a good eye out. Otherwise, excellent holding in sand.

(It is probably possible to make your way around the western end and anchor in the lee in southeasterlies but you would want good light.)

Shandon - Aug 2010: The approach to the pass at Welagilala is straight forward. I took a waypoint of 16°46.30S 179° 07.70W off the chart and it worked. The post on the south side of the entrance is clearly visible. Width of pass approx 100m.7m in the pass then drops fast to
30m. Once inside the water is deep and bommie free. I was lucky to find a young humpback whale that broached about three boat lengths away. A dive boat was anchored inside the pass and reported good drift dives in the pass.

The island was deserted although there is a house on the south shore. The light did not appear to be working.

The only place to anchor is on the sand shelf on the south side of the lagoon. I dropped the anchor in 4m and fell back to 9m.

4.7.2 Cakaugalau

Shandon - Aug 2010: See chartlet under Welagilala. The sand cay on the inner edge of the reef is very visible and appears as a static white slash, as opposed to waves breaking on the reef. I came in from the west with a waypoint on the deepest area; this avoids shallows (less than 10m) to the south. I steered 110°M on the centre of the cay, sidestepping a couple of bommies which are easily seen and avoided.

There are coral patches in sand 5-10m. Below 5m there is a wide area in which to anchor, on glorious white sand, avoiding obvious coral patch (see photograph). The sand slopes gradually. I anchored in 4m.

The reef is shallow so there is quite a popple at high water.

Over 30 men were camping on the cay and diving for beche de mer (sea cucumbers).

I came out on 280° rather than 290°, which was a mistake as I ended up amongst the bommies on the south side of the entrance.

I might stop here for lunch but will not bother to stay over night.

5 The Lau Group, North to South

Calder's Yachtsman's Guide - Pg 101

5.1 Cruising Permits and Anchoring Fees

Soggy Paws - 2012: As of August 2012, there is no special permission paperwork required to visit the Lau Group. Your standard Fiji Cruising Permit covers cruising all over Fiji, and only requires a once-a-week email to Customs to report your current location.

Anchoring fees as reported by cruising yachts in the Lau are as follows:

Daliconi Village in Vanua Balavu (northern Lau) has revoked their flat fee structure and instead encourages a donation from each yacht, and offers a few services (tours, etc) in their area. They show arriving yachts their village ‘master plan’, which shows the projects that the village is working on, and you may allocate your donation toward a specific project. It does not go into the chief’s pocket as has been reported on the Rag of the Air.

Fulaga - Still is requiring a one-time flat fee of $50FJ, no matter how long you stay.

One cruiser (Midnight Sun) reported that the island near Fulaga, Ogea (Ongea), also asked for a $50 anchoring fee. Midnight Sun, finding a roolly and fairly exposed anchorage, opted to leave
rather than pay the fee. At least one other boat reported being asked for a fee, and also opted
to stay the night and leave in the morning, rather than pay the fee.

In August 2012, the village of Susui, at the south end of Vanua Balavu, started trying to charge
a fee. The first 3 yachts they approached with this fee (including Soggy Paws) said they would
leave immediately instead of paying the fee. After some discussion among the villagers, the fee
was rescinded and the 3 yachts were allowed to stay without paying anything. It is unclear
whether the village plans to keep trying to charge a fee—Soggy Paws urged them to offer
services (tours, etc) vs. charging an anchoring fee, but it was still under discussion at the time
we left. We also fixed the school generator for them, underlining our argument that cruisers can
be very helpful and generous to the outer villages.

Fees aside, all or most of the villages in the Lau still expect visiting yachts to do sevusevu.

**Yolo - June 2012 - Fees:** Fulaga is asking for a $50 per boat anchoring fee. We have visited
12 anchorages in the Lau and only been charged a fee in Daliconi and here.

**Mandala - 2011:** The recent directive from the Tourist Advisory Board advises those who want
to visit the Lau Group that the *qoliqoli* owners will be charging for anchoring. In the more remote
areas permission to anchor must always be sought from the *Turaga ni Koro* (village head), and
presumably this charge will be requested after giving the *sevusevu* gift. The TAB advises that
the *Qoliqoli* owners in the Lau will be charging F$10/day for the "Anchorage Fee" for yachts
(and up to $3500/day for cruise liners). No such charge is ever made in any other area of Fiji,
and it is not explained why Lau should be different.

On MANDALA’s recent 6-week cruise throughout Lau, no charge was made for our permit
(issued just after PM/dictator Bainimarama had visited Lau, and insisted that tourism be
encouraged for the sake of the economy).

Only once were we asked for an anchorage fee, in the village of Daliconi on Vanua Balavu.
Daliconi is the village that "owns" the Bay of Islands, a popular and beautiful area for yachts.
After *sevusevu*, we were presented with a demand for F$150 + $25/person for anchorage fee
(with no time period attached) for the Bay of Islands. We politely declined to pay, made a
donation to the school, and left a 4-page paper detailing a plan for tourism developments that
would help the village with revenue — and why charging for anchoring would not help them. Our
approach seemed to be well-accepted.

In the rest of the Lau there was never any charge mentioned, but this visit was before the TAB
directive mentioned above. How it will be handled by village leaders at other islands is not at all
clear, but almost certainly it will sometimes arise. Cruisers need to be prepared to be asked for
an anchorage fee, and to be clear how they will handle this. I suggest they point out that this
demand will keep visitors away, and will be harmful to the reputation of the Lau – and to decline
to pay.

5.2 **General Information**

5.2.1 **Soggy Paws - Aug 2012 - Medical Info**

We had a diving-related medical emergency in Fulaga in the southern Lau. Here is what we
know about medical facilities in the Lau group, as a result of that incident.
There are medical clinics on almost every island, usually in the largest village. Vanua Balavu’s clinic/hospital is in Lomaloma (we saw it, but did not go inside or ask any questions).

The medical facility in Fulaga is in the primary village of Moana-i-Cake (where you do sevusevu), is reasonably well equipped with a trained nurse with good English. The facility is equipped with a land-line connection to Suva, and an HF radio on which they can communicate with doctors located in Lakemba and Kanbara, and with doctors and hospital staff in Suva. I would assume that all the clinics are similarly equipped.

Neither the clinic in Fulaga nor anyone in the village has VHF radio (though we may donate one to the clinic before we leave). The nursing station has limited channels on the SSB radio, but does seem to monitor 8068.5 during the day--this frequency is what the nurses and doctors in the Lau use to communicate with each other (in Fijian). We were also successful in making contact (pre-arranged) with Sera, the nurse at Fulaga, on 4030.

We also understand from some tourist literature (Fiji Yachting Guide circa 2008) that Suva Radio (callsign 3DP) stands by on several frequencies, including 2182 and 6215, and they can provide medical advice by radio. But we did not attempt calling Suva Radio.

There is no airfield for medical evacuations in Fulaga, but the large protected lagoon makes it possible for a float plane to land in the lagoon, and they are also close enough to Suva to be able to send a helicopter that can land in the village. In order to get a medivac out of Fulaga, we had to first visit the village nurse, who did an assessment and called her boss, the doctor in Lakemba, who then elevated the request to Suva. We were told that they did several such evacuations in 2011, but ours is the first in 2012.

The doctor in Lakemba then has to elevate the request to Suva, and their first comeback was to try to get us to sail to Lakemba where there is an airfield, but we insisted on a medivac out of Fulanga due to the urgency of the situation. Within an hour, we had approval for the medivac all the way up to the Ministry of Health in Suva.

Three hours later, a helicopter landed in the village, even though the wind was blowing 20+ knots out of the SE. The helicopter is the preferred transport for urgent medical issues, because it can land directly at the hospital in Suva. It is important that you try to provide GPS coordinates for the expected landing area (our helicopter had to overfly 3 villages before he guessed correctly which one to land at).

There is no cell coverage in Fulaga and most of the southern Lau (but there is coverage in Lakemba). We used our satellite phone and HF to muster support from cruisers and US-based medical facilities (DAN and a relative of a cruiser who is a neurologist and a diver).

DAN’s diving insurance would have GREATLY facilitated medivac issues in this case, but our friend was covered by his other insurance (Blue Cross and Blue Shield) and had dropped his DAN insurance. DAN in this case was helpful with advice, but not with evacuation assistance.

His insurance company, at least in the initial phases, was not helpful (hard to contact (800 number with "please wait" and pushbutton menus, which our Sat phone did not do), did not understand the urgency of the situation, didn’t know where Fiji was or the difficulties of evacuation in such a remote place).

Also, though I am sure the nurse in Fulaga would have been responsive to our emergency in her official capacity, we felt that having made contact with the village, beyond just doing the
sevusevu, helped in our situation. By the time the emergency occurred, we had been to church in the village twice (and we are not generally church-goers), and attended several lunches in the village, had some villagers aboard Soggy Paws for a look-see, and spread a few small gifts around. By this time, we were almost family, and were treated as such. So it is useful to make a little time in your visit to establish a rapport with the nearby village(s)--you never know when you might need some help.

5.2.2 Migration - 2012

CMap charts are minimal on detail although accurate as to position for what they show. We found using Google Earth was excellent. As you probably know, one should make sure the GE cache is set to the maximum of 2 GB. You can then have most of the Lau Group islands in cache locally for when you don't have internet (provided you went and looked at all those places when you DID have internet).

As we had limited time we only went to 3 islands. We bypassed Vanua Balavu for two reasons. One, because we needed some less crowded time after Savusavu, Viani Bay, and Taveuni, and two, we didn't want to pay the high fees at Bay of Islands.

Mobile Phone/Internet Coverage: We had coverage for quite some time as we sailed south past Lakeba. But then we had nothing from Komo south (although see note below about coverage at Komo).

5.2.3 Mandala - 2011

The Mandala information came from a posting on Noonsite. "Our thanks to Adrian Faulkner of Sail Yacht MANDALA for this interesting and useful report. Adrian is happy to help others with info. Contact him at mandala@inspire.net.nz"

There are scores of islands in Lau, but many lack good anchorages. MANDALA visited five islands with good anchorages in 2011, and some pointers about them may be useful. There are NO cruising guides for Lau (other than Calder’s, and he does not go beyond Vanua Balavu), but I found the BRITISH ADMIRALTY PACIFIC ISLANDS PILOT VOL II (The Central Groups) very useful.

I had sailed to most of these islands in a previous yacht, in 1976, and found them still just as wonderful, and unchanged.

The island life is very simple, and the people are very poor in material terms. Most villages have a store, but there is little for sale. Fresh fruit and vegetables are hard to find, and villagers are not used to the idea of selling these things that are normally shared with friends and family. Premix petrol (and sometime diesel) is often available in bigger villages.

Most villages have a telephone at the post office, but internet is rarely available. Vanua Balavu and Lakeba have the only airports in Lau, and both have once-weekly flights. Cargo ships, with passengers, visit some islands roughly monthly (in theory), but this is as unreliable as the ships are old. Some islands we visited had not had a ship for two months. This means that their already meagre supplies are running out. Do not rely on buying any of your needs.
Often the best-stocked shop is associated with the Post Office: Post Shop sells everything from very-old eggs to groceries and school books! The Post Shops are always well-run and well-organised (apart from 3-month old "use-by" dates on the eggs, still for sale in one in VBI!).

**Weather:** The region is dominated by the SE trade winds which are usually from Force 3 - and mostly 5. Quite frequently these bring occasional showers. When fronts pass through heavy showers and rain are more frequent, making navigation in lagoons difficult. We had one period of frequent rain and Force 6 SE, E and NE winds, and this made cruising in the lagoons of Vanua Balavu too dangerous.

### 5.2.4 Carina - August 2010 - Lau History

The Lau islands of Fiji, including these northern islands, have an interesting history.

Lomaloma, the principal village of Vanua Balavu, was Fiji's first port and was once a small city with hotels, restaurants and even a botanical garden. During World War II, large US warships anchored in the narrow waters off the town. Today, it is little more than a quiet seaside village with two tiny grocery stores, a post office, a secondary school and a rudimentary public hospital.

Lomaloma's "suburb" of Sawana was the site where Tongan Christians, led by Ma'afu, arrived to subdue Fijian heathens after the murder of a missionary. After this, the Lau became and remained a province of Tonga and the Roko Tui Lau (King of the Lau) was the ruler of Fiji.

Tonga ceded the Lau to Fiji when Fiji became part of the UK but the Tongan architecture, art and language are still represented in the Lau. The people of the province are a mixture of ethnic Fijian and Tongan peoples, with only a smattering of Indo-Fijians working mostly on island plantations. Tongan is spoken in the far south of the archipelago. Also, the chief or king of the Lau is now called the Tui Layau and is located in Lakeba (lah KEM bah), the present day administrative capital of the Lau, far to the south. Even today, leaders of Fiji often come from the Lau.

### 5.2.5 Shandon - Aug 2010

**Communications:** All islands have telephone connections. A phone number starting with 6030... means a radio landline; in most cases, this will be a public telephone (v), rather than a direct line (dl). The call may be answered by the nearest person who will then have to search for the recipient. Best to give the contact name and say you ring back in ten minutes.

It is prudent and polite to make contact with the island you are about to visit giving an ETA. For this you can use a landline and a TFL Prepay card. They come in $3, $5 and $10. Your contact in one village will make the call for you, using your card. $3-cards are useful if you have to leave before the call can get through. Cards should be available in post offices but sometimes they run out so best to buy some before you head off. When you arrive at the next island, the chances are that your contact will be there to guide you in. Don’t forget to reimburse for the fuel ($15FJ per gallon).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Contact #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulaga</td>
<td>Mauana-I-Cake</td>
<td>Setareki Dawai</td>
<td>6030424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Village Code</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komo</td>
<td>Mosese Veilana Post master</td>
<td>6030405 (dl)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeba</td>
<td>Tubou</td>
<td>Mr Bole – chief’s spokesman</td>
<td>8220029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moala</td>
<td>Naroì</td>
<td>Bill Kamikanuca Policeman for yachts</td>
<td>6030307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moce</td>
<td>Nasu</td>
<td>Mr Joae Bese – post master &amp; mayor</td>
<td>6030407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motuku</td>
<td>Aroi</td>
<td>Roko Bale – chief. Varanisese Gade – Island Representative 2012</td>
<td>6030362 (v) 6030366 (dl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namuka-I-Lau</td>
<td>Metuisela Tukai</td>
<td>6030411 (dl) 6030412 (v)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogea Levu</td>
<td>Epeli Galui Headman – 2012</td>
<td>6030417</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oneata</td>
<td>Dakuiloa</td>
<td>Apakuki Tukana – chief’s son Mesake Taufa</td>
<td>850377 &amp; 6030 492 360 6715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totoya</td>
<td>Tovu Ketei</td>
<td>Rev Sekonaia Chief of chief’s number 2 Rupeni Masibabavu – Island Representative until 2011 Mr Tui post master.</td>
<td>6030343(v) 6030346 6030342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.6 Cyan - SSCA Bulletin - June 2008

About 200 miles to the east of the islands forming the main part of Fiji is a group of smaller islands and atolls called the Lau group. They cover 120 miles from north to south. About 20 of them are inhabited with small villages. These culturally unique islands value education, religion and customs. Modern conveniences are virtually nonexistent. The lucky villages have generators for electricity for two hours a day, when they work. Boats coming from Tonga have to sail right through these islands without stopping because a special cruising permit is needed. This requirement is strictly enforced with fines for violators.

We hadn’t definitely planned on sailing to the Lau group while Cyan was in Fiji during the 2008 cruising season. We had read about them in the SSCA article “The Lau Group of Fiji” by Cheshire (December 2007 Commodores’ Bulletin) and found it very helpful. All of its information is still relevant, so we just want to add to it from our 2008 experience. What aroused our interest in the Lau? We met Tai, owner of Hair Co in downtown Suva. She gave Lynn a good haircut and also raved about how we would miss the best part of Fiji if we skipped the Lau and that the folks there just love to see cruisers. She and her brother, an attorney with the government, arranged a written invitation from another brother in Thithia (Thi-THEE-ah), their home island. A large number of accomplished Fijians, both government officials and professional leaders, come from the Lau group. Their number is high in proportion to other locations because of the quality of their education and strong family units.

We pursued a permit from the Lau Provincial Office in Suva, inside the New World Market Complex right across from the bus station. We kept asking directions, and most everyone knew where it was. We met with David Uluilakeba, the head representative of Lau Islands and a descendant of the most recent Chief of the Lau. The requirement was for us to get a police investigation and write a formal letter stating the description of our vessel, all crew names, our specific purpose in visiting the Lau, which islands we wanted to visit and stating our requested visit dates. This process required a fee of $50 and $10 a day for our proposed visit of two weeks in the islands, which is sent back to the villages.

We also brought books, charts and the above SSCA article to show David that we had been reading about the Lau group since deciding to try and get a permit. We explained that SSCA was a way of cruisers helping each other with up-to-date information, and he read the article with serious interest, especially the part about the Lau office.

The next business day when we brought David our letter of intent, the fee in cash, the invitation from the resident of Thithia (not required but helpful) and a picture of Cyan (to show we were presentable), we had a nice visit with him that seemed like a job interview. He did put the boat picture on his wall and was impressed that we had given it to him. Apparently the Lau
representatives wanted to make sure we were on the “up and up.” It seemed that being Anglican churchgoers, as David was, helped him warm up to us a bit. They seem to want only those who are truly interested in the culture and beauty of the islands and not so much the big party crowd. He was specific that the approval could take two weeks, but the more we talked the warmer he became. Then, he emphasized that he had the authority to shorten the time, waive our police investigation and the permit would be ready the next day. It seems like they use this two-week time period and investigation as a cushion to deter the less serious or limit the more suspicious cruiser should they want to make it more difficult.

When Cyan’s captain, Chuck, picked up the permit, David seemed like an old friend and asked us to look up some relatives. Basically the Fijian folks are reserved but extremely well-meaning and helpful. We chose our four islands without a lot of research. We asked for permission to go to Fulanga, reputation for beauty; Lakemba, the capital of Lau; Thithia, due to our invitation; and the northernmost group, the Exploring Islands, Vanua Balavu, known for an abundance of anchorages and also the place that we had the most information about.

There is a Hydrographic Office near the yacht club, on a street just across from the prison, where we were able to buy recent charts for most areas of Fiji. We used South Pacific Anchorages by Warwick Clay for information on passes and possible anchorages. The only other guide about Lau Islands is Calder’s A Yachtsman’s Fiji, A Navigator’s Notebook, which is out of print, but we took a copy of a friend’s book. Cruisers should get a copy of Calder’s or write to us. Editor’s Note: this book may be available at West Marine.

As we write this, there are over 50 boats in Savusavu, and many of them wanted to get permits to cruise the Lau group. It has been reported that permits were easier to get last year. Suddenly, the Lau Provincial Office has only been issuing permits from Suva, and many are disappointed. Since the time that we got our permit, they have become even more conservative in the number of permits they are giving out. When we were in Daliconi, on Vanua Balavu, we were told that they have only seen three boats by the end of June 2008, compared with at least 22 by that time last year. No cruiser here can figure out the Lau Office priorities, and the Lau residents are greatly disappointed. Hopefully this situation will have resolved itself by next cruising season, and cruisers will have a greater opportunity to see some of what have been the most wonderful places in our cruising experience. Rumor has it that there may be slight fee increases, too.

5.2.7 Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007

We cruised the Lau Group in September and October 2007. We visited the islands of Moala (two villages), Ogea, Komo, Oneata, and Vanua Balavu. We enjoyed this area as much or more as any we have visited in three years of cruising, mostly due to the beauty and remoteness of the location, and the warmth of the people. The following notes are intended as a general guide based on our experience. Flexibility (especially regarding time) and self-sufficiency are necessary to enjoy your stay in the Lau Group. You should expect that some things will change, but I hope that you will have a wonderful time in this very special place.

Planning your itinerary: Permits are currently issued from Suva or Savusavu, and the islands' general orientation will direct an itinerary either north or south. Since the prevailing winds during the cruising season of May to October are E to SE, north is generally considered an easier direction to travel. However, some travel against the wind is required no matter from where you approach, as the Laus are at the SE corner of Fiji. During our stay a low pressure
system would pass south of Fiji from west to east, approximately once every one to two weeks. This caused the winds to lighten and back around to the NE, N, W and S before the trades re-established from the SE. This creates weather windows to sail against the trades, and we also found that we preferred to sail north just as the winds returned to SE, while the seas were still relatively flat. When the trades are established the seas can be quite rough with gusty winds and squalls. This makes passages slower and uncomfortable and navigation more difficult, as visibility above and through the water can be impaired and large standing waves can develop in the passes.

We found that the requirements of *sevusevu* together with anchoring led to a minimum stay of three days, and with weather considerations and village interaction, we usually stayed five days to a week in each anchorage. We recommend provisioning and fuel planning for a level of one to two weeks beyond your itinerary in case you are delayed due to weather, etc. Note that the three Moala islands are included as part of the area administered in the Lau Group; a stop here can be convenient especially when coming from Suva.

Be conservative in planning inter-island passages, especially during the day. Any trip you cannot easily make in five hours or less should be considered for overnight, as you'll need good light both for departing and entering lagoons. Also consider the tide and general conditions as you approach an entrance, as many passes have reefs in the middle or just inside the lagoon. When in doubt, stand-off or go somewhere else.

During *sevusevu* you may be asked how long you plan to stay on an island. We typically said “up to a week, depending on weather” and if it appeared we might stay longer, we checked in with the headman or the chief.

**Navigation:** The waypoints we list are from WGS 1984 datum, and are advisory only, not a substitute for official navigation aids and your own visual confirmation. Our charts seemed to be anywhere from 1/4 to 3/4 of a mile off from the WGS 1984 datum. However, they were internally consistent and largely complete. Thus we used our 1856 chart to get an accurate bearing line from a pass to a point on the island. Our predicted compass deviation of 12°E was accurate. Paper charts are often more detailed than our electronic CMAP, so we consulted both. Most charts (including CMAP) appear to be based on 19th century surveys, and are still pretty good, except coral profiles may change over time. Navigation aids, if any, were more often missing than present. When entering a lagoon, we noted our position at the entrance to the pass, and made sure to save our GPS track to follow out.

Never, ever navigate in a lagoon or near reefs unless you have proper light to see breakers and coral in the water. We speak from an unfortunate anchoring experience in the Tuamotus, which left us with a leaking hull and inability to steer due to a bent rudder post. We know of at least three boats in 2006 that were lost on reefs due to navigation errors in the dark. If the light is not good, stay at anchor, heave-to or sail off, no matter how good your radar, chartplotter or depth sounder is.

**Anchoring:** In Moala, we anchored in mud; in the outer limestone islands, in coral sand. Holding was good except in Cakoba on Moala, and that may have been related to inadequate scope (5 to 1) and topography (valley to funnel wind) for high wind. Some villages have large cement quays for supply boats and small inshore moorings for their fishing boats. Anchoring is your only option.
Consider your need for privacy in selecting an anchorage, as well as fetch and predicted wind direction and strength. During the middle of day you may be under observation on your boat at any time, more so if you are anchored near a village. Setting a waypoint where we dropped our anchor also helped us keep track of its location when the wind shifted, to determine if we appeared to be dragging. We rarely had trouble setting our 20 kg (44 lb) Delta, but we advise that you carry at least one and preferable two secondary anchors of differing types (ours are a 15 kg (33 lb) Bruce and a 20 kg Danforth). These can be set to keep the boat from swinging in the event of wind shifts, and in case the primary anchor cannot be easily retrieved.

**Weather:** Good weather information is very useful if not essential; not only for passage planning but to determine whether your anchorage will remain a stable location in changing winds. Very few anchorages are protected from all wind directions, and can become quite uncomfortable even if your ground tackle is holding well. Our daily Sailmail® download included the NadiSouth Pacific text forecast (nadi.sopac), the Fiji marine forecast (nadi.fiji); and an 8-day Grib file, extending to Australia and the N tip of New Zealand. The Grib file allowed us to monitor the high and low pressure systems driving our wind and waves.

Watch out for lows forming between Fiji and New Caledonia - these can pass close by and be very intense. If we expected conditions to change rapidly, sometimes we ordered a special Grib file in six-hour intervals. Other weather sources could include the NZ or US weather faxes, and check-in to New Zealand's Russell Radio. The “Rag of the Air” Net was unfortunately not audible for most of our trip.

**Sevusevu:** The requirement to present 1/2 kg (approx. 1 lb) of kava root to the village chief as soon as practicable after arrival, and before other activities such as snorkeling or fishing. We purchased a total of 5 kg (about 11 lbs) for FJ$36/kg at the market in Suva.

Bring the permit (a letter written in Fijian) to show the chief.

No activities on Sunday.

Women are not allowed to wear shorts in the village. A *sulu* is preferred, and if worn over shorts can be removed at the edge of the village.

Hats are not to be worn in the village (includes sun visors).

Dress must be presentable in the village (David was advised to wear a dress *sulu* if we visited Lakeba, the seat of the Lau high chiefs, especially when meeting the chief).

No alcohol ashore (and we were requested not to give any to villagers if asked, even on the boat).

No use of illegal drugs

Uninhabited islands are not to be visited

Please respect the wishes of the people

Also, please send copies of any photos you may take, via email to Ratu Tevita, and we were also encouraged to provide assistance to the villagers if possible, such as with engine repair.

**Gifts and Trade Items:** No gifts other than the *sevusevu* are required. However, donations of books, magazines, colored pencils and other simple things for kids, light fishing line, simple can
openers, handkerchiefs (required at school), balls and other simple toys, were either requested or very well received. The most popular item was several pairs of reading glasses of various strengths, which were quickly snapped up in Moala (fortunately the chief had first choice!). Cigarettes were also frequently requested by fishermen.

In selecting gifts to bring (or items to trade) consider the receivers, especially with regard to books and magazines. Islanders are Methodists and fairly conservative in dress and custom, although most have been exposed to Western culture on TV and in visits to Suva. Because we usually did not have enough of a gift (such as reading glasses) for all who might want it, we usually gave our donations to the chief, headman (or schoolmistress for kids’ things), to allocate.

You might be asked specifically for something, such as diesel, a spare belt to repair a generator, or prints of pictures that you take. It’s your choice to say yes, or no if you can’t spare the item - villagers are OK with either. Sometimes the best gift was a diagnosis and recommendation for a problem. In Ogea, the school had received a computer and the headmistress wanted to connect it to a battery bank. We successfully connected them with our 300 watt inverter, so she ordered her own from Suva.

**Interaction with Lau islanders:** We found the islanders to be warm, friendly, curious and innovative. Most places we went had already seen several cruising boats that year, yet we were treated as novelties and honored guests. Everywhere we went we were given coconuts and shared kava. Often we received other gifts such as papaya, freshwater prawns, and invitations to delicious Fijian meals. The South Pacific staples of fish, coconuts, fruits, root vegetables and greens have, even here, been enlivened by the Indian influence of spices and chili peppers, some of which are eaten raw with meals.

Compared to other places we had visited, especially French Polynesia, Lau islanders seemed quite self-sufficient. They catch or grow most of what they eat, and meet as many of their other needs as possible with what they have on the islands or in the water. Although plastic bags are still in regular use, we saw very little trash either in or away from villages. Public areas and houses were clean, and there was often a separate cooking house or covered space, sometimes used by several families. Furniture was rare; most people sit on the floor including for meals.

On one occasion, the village children found our inflatable dinghy to be an attractive new toy, and were towing it out for a spin when we arrived. With a word to the adults about this, our dinghy was declared “taboo,” and, we had no further trouble. To reduce temptation, we usually left the boat locked, including external lockers, and stowed everything we could. We had no problems with theft.

Lonely Planet provided further useful guidance for interacting politely with Fijians. Learning a few words of Fijian beyond *Bula* and *Vinaka* is greatly appreciated. The islanders are very social and visit one another at almost any time other than while sleeping. Be ready for them to pass by your boat, just to say hi or to offer you stuff, at any time (keep a *sulu* handy to cover up!).

**What’s in the villages:** Each village we visited had a primary school and a Post Office as well as a church. Most also had a health clinic staffed by a nurse. Most islanders have plantations outside the village where they grow coconuts and other produce for consumption. In some
places there is wood for lumber, and on Moala kava is grown for consumption and export to Suva. The larger volcanic islands have drinkable ground water, but on the smaller limestone islands the only freshwater is collected in cisterns, so don’t expect to top off your tanks.

Many homes have land line telephones, with connections to the rest of Fiji and the outside world. Naroi had a fax machine. The clinics have HF radios which are tuned to 4085 during business hours, and the nurses have a Net once or more per week. Internet is possible via the phone but since computers are scarce, nowhere we went had access yet. Satellite TV was available in some homes everywhere we went, allowing islanders to follow the Rugby World Cup. Many families had their own generator, as well as one or more large, village generators serving several families; these were typically run in the evenings until 2100 or 2200.

Cakoba Village on Moala had a small store which was regularly supplied from Suva, so we felt comfortable topping off on a few items such as garlic, eggs and milk without fear that we would leave them short. Because the other islands we visited are infrequently visited by supply ship, we didn’t inquire as to availability of provisions. Visitors to the Lau Group should be prepared to be self-sufficient for food, water, fuel and other supplies.

Miscellaneous: The chief’s authority is broad. In Cakoba, the previous chief did not like singing, so his approval was required even for informal performances. In general we were permitted wide freedom within the village boundaries to explore, snorkel, fish, etc. In places with one village, this includes the entire area within the reef. We asked and were always granted permission to burn plastic and paper trash completely on the beach, and to collect a few coconuts. We dumped glass bottles and cans on passage between islands (100+ft).

On Moala, we walked to a neighboring village with one of our Cakoba friends. We were discouraged from hiking on our own because the trails are confusing. Also, Soka’s company ensured we did not need to make sevusevu to the other chief. This wasn’t so important elsewhere, but it is a good idea to ask. On islands with several villages we always asked where the boundaries were for the village of which we were guests, to ensure we didn’t inadvertently trespass elsewhere. Do be careful of dogs, which may become aggressive if you are walking around without a Fijian.

During the first week of every month, the men of the village work on a communal project at the direction of the headman. Every afternoon during “village week” he walks though the village calling out the meeting place and scope of the next day’s work like a medieval town crier. Funds for materials are raised by an assessment of each family or through fund-raisers organized by the ladies.

5.3 Naitauba
Naitauba Island is a privately-owned island, owned by a religious sect. In a special arrangement, they own the island and the anchoring area. Passing yachts CANNOT anchor there without prior permission.

Contact info can be found here: http://www.naitauba.org
5.4 Vanua Balavu & The Exploring Isles

5.4.1 Internet and Cell Access

Rubicon - July 2012: Cell phones work in some places in Vanua Balavu, and you can sometimes connect with a Vodafone internet stick, but speeds are real slow and the connection is bad. Complicated websites won’t come up (ie Yahoo), but simple low-bandwidth websites could be accessed (Wefax pages I had previously bookmarked).

Soggy Paws - July 2012: We had adequate cell bars and slow internet (both on Vodafone) in these places:
- Daliconi Village anchorage
- Little Bay
- Avea Island (towards the southern end)
- Lomolomo

We have not been south of Avea Island in the boat yet, so can't tell you about Susui.

5.4.2 Adavaci (Western) Pass

Cruising Guide References: Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 111

Shango - June 2012: We did a quick overnight from Savusavu to the Adavaci Pass on the west side of Vanua Balavu. We have attached some Adavaci pass waypoints if you want to go directly in to Daliconi for sevusevu. (If you go in the Qilaqila pass, which has a nice range, you are still ten-ish miles north of your sevusevu site.) We have modified these waypoints from ones we used from a boat called Cyan. They wrote a good article in the November 2008 SSCA Bulletin. They give a variety of waypoints which are useful.

We moved their outer Adavaci pass waypoint even further out for comfort because the wind was pretty blowy as we approached and we wanted a larger margin for error. We also used some waypoints from Cheshire.

Adavaci 1: 017-13.6851 S / 179-01.2963 W
Adavaci 2: 017-13.6523 S / 179-01.2015 W
Adavaci 3: 017-13.6021 S / 179-01.1103 W
Adavaci 4: 017-13.5813 S / 179-01.0268 W

The bottom line is that with Calder's Yachtsman's Guide for reference you ought to be fine.

Our electronic charts were pretty far off (over half a mile) so they were just background noise (We were using both CM93 and Navionics). We also used chart F53 which covers the Northern Lau and which we purchased at the Copra Shed Chandlery. Not much use for the Bay of Islands but it's a good overview of the Island.

Soggy Paws - July 2012: Our CM93 (CMAP) charts were actually not far off. The 2010 version of the charts is definitely NOT ½ mile off. Our Garmin 2008 charts are also fairly accurate, though neither had detail in many places. We supplemented these with Google Earth Charts, which helped in many places confirm reef locations.

Cyan - 2008: We came into the reef by the Adavaci Passage on the west because we were coming from the SW and it worked out fine. Only one beacon on the SE part of pass. Our Raymarine Navionics Gold chart plotter was off by almost ½ mile at this island after being so close on the rest of the Lau islands.

Approach Pt from sea WP: 17deg 13.616S 179deg 01.096W
Mid-pass WP: 17deg 13.550S 179deg 00.805W
Pt on NW reef where other Beacon should be WP: 17deg 13.456S 179deg 01.035W
SW shoally side to avoid WP: 17deg 13.621S 179deg 01.229W

5.4.3 Quilaquila (North West) Pass

Cruising Guide References: Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 104-105
Soggy Paws - July 2012: We didn't come in this pass, but do know that the range markers for the pass are in place and should be readily visible.

Shandon - August 2010: There are many passes into the lagoon. The easiest is on the NW tip. The leading marks are clear white posts in white oil drums on white rocks.

In the lagoon, many of the posts have lost their top marks. Leave white with triangle facing up to seaward and black facing down on the land side.

Cyan - 2008: There were 3 markers for this pass on the charts but we only found one at the inside and it was bent over, a white top just barely visible at high tide.

Approach, lining up range markers WP: 17-09.502S 179-02.948W
Mid-pass Waypoint WP: 17-09.361S 179-03.384W
Clear, at end of pass WP: 17-09.228S 179-03.908W

The last waypoint is a line up point to enter this pass if coming from the rest of Fiji and the range markers are very evident. We had no problem but we were at full tide in the morning with some overcast and didn’t see the southern reef as well as well as we saw the waves on the reef on the northern side.

To prepare to leave by Qilaqila Pass and wait for the right weather, we moved to the larger U shaped cove behind the innermost range marker. We set the anchor right in the middle between the big rock on the north of the eastern cut and the center island. The current took us over towards the island and out of the bumps of the waves. It was plenty deep right up to the steep rocks and we enjoyed spending several days waiting for weather to leave. We found the best snorkeling right at the eastern cut at mid-tide and at a tiny beach beyond. Saw beautiful fish and interesting formations.

Cove anchorage WP: 17-09.839S 179-02.094W

Cheshire - 2007: Approach to Qilaqila pass: 17 09.2 S 179 04 W

This waypoint is set a little outside the pass, as there are plenty of reefs and rocks on either side of the approach. The beacon on the north side of the entrance is gone, and just a fragment remains of the beacon on the south side. So line up the white posts on Qilaqila well outside and keep a steady course. We went through at midpoint of a falling tide, and found fairly strong southward current in and outside of the pass.

5.4.4 Daliconi Village and The Bay of Islands

Cruising Guide References: South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 87, A Yachtsman’s Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 110-111

Southern Cross - August 2013: We were somewhat taken aback by the negative comments from earlier visitors to Daliconi, mainly regarding the payment of cruising fees. We certainly respect the opinions of earlier contributors, but our experience was different. While we were asked to "donate" F$30/person, we do not consider this at all out of line for the services that were so kindly given in return. This is a remote area with few sources of cash, and we were satisfied that the money was being used to benefit the community. Sam and Lako (who together form the backbone of the Daliconi tourism committee) gave us fresh produce and fresh fish. They answered endless questions and were always available. They collected our rubbish. They even filled our water jugs and brought them out to the boat.
Despite having already hosted 75+ boats this season due to the ICA and Oyster rallies, they seemed genuinely interested in us, and treated us like friends. Our fondest memory is an evening spent listening to music performed by two of their sons and two other young men, and drinking kava. We look forward to returning to Daliconi next year.

We loved the Bay of Islands, Bavatu, and the bommie outside of Little Bay that Midnight Sun told you about. We wish we had spent more time in Mavana, which is another reason we will return to Vanua Balavu.

**Java - September 2012 - Bakery now in Daliconi Village:** No longer do you have to go all the way to Lomaloma to buy bread--Daliconi Village now has its own bakery.

**Soggy Paws - August 2012 - Contact information for Daliconi Village:** Sam and Lako are the Daliconi Village Tourism Committee. They can be reached at 6030823 (land line) or 943-0831 (cell), or lako.newton@yahoo.com

**Rubicon - July 2012:** We did want to let you and the others know that apparently the Village of Daliconi that controls the Bay of Islands here has stopped charging a fee and instead is asking for a 'donation'. We heard this from the Cat 'Malikalalou' who we spent a few days with at Susui. So this is a good thing if they stick to it.

**Shango - June 2012:** Cyan describes their Vanua Balavu visit as their best sailing experience in their entire life. Not sure we have any one experience that stands above everything else, but Vanua Balavu and the Bay of Islands ranks as a definite highlight of our trip. We and Kite had the place completely to ourselves and were the first boats to visit this year (20 last year) so this may also make it extra special for us.

**Daliconi Anchorage:** 017-13.1750 S / 178-57.9830 W

From a “what to do” perspective there are several things that kept us entertained. We really enjoyed meeting the people in Daliconi Village. Our sevusevu was a neat experience and we returned to the village a couple times to visit. Both areas were lovely. (While you are there buy some virgin coconut oil for stir-frying. See Eroni.)

**Mandala - 2011:** Largest island group in Lau, has 5 wide passes into a lagoon 15 miles by 15 miles. With many islands inside the lagoon, and many excellent anchorages (including several hurricane anchorages), there are many cruising options here, and one could be happy for a month or more. There is superb diving on the reefs, but no facilities for divers. The Bay of Islands, an area of raised coral and jungle in the NW is well worth a visit, but the unrealistic financial demands of the “qoliqoli owners”, at Daliconi Village, rather spoils the feeling of welcome.

**Carina - August 2010:** We spent three interesting days visiting Daliconi, which included numerous visits to the primary school, ably managed by teachers Polini and Levi. The school consists of four tiny buildings, built on wooden stumps, set on the far end of a rugby playing field. Two of the buildings house classrooms and a small library (impressive in its collection of books), while the other two buildings were housing for the teachers. Thirty two children are educated in four rooms, inclusive of grades 1-8. There is little that is modern here, no audio-visual aids, no computers, not even electric lights, but the rooms are filled with creative stimulating visuals, including dozens of rhyming chants for learning languages (English and the Bauan dialect of Fijian), math, biology, reading, etc. Many posters warn of the hazards of
substance abuse. Polini and Levi seemingly love to teach and even took a couple of hours of their Saturday to give us (primary school level) lessons in Fijian.

While there, we also traveled across the island to visit Lomaloma and Sawana. One hot day we started out to hike there but had to abandon the trek just beyond the village of Malaka when we realized it would be 2 more hours of walking before getting to the village. (Much of the island’s jungles around the villages has been clear cut making the hike especially warm due to lack of shade.) Instead, we decided to make the trip 2 days later on the next run of a truck transport.

The truck transport costs $2.50 FJD ($1.25 USD) each way and travels the full length of the island three times a week, carrying passengers - young and old - and freight: pandanus leaves for weaving, fuel jerry cans, groceries, building supplies, etc. We were accompanied on our trip by Israeli who, unbeknownst to us had called ahead to John, an elder of Sawana. John met our truck and gave us a tour of Sawana, its meeting house and the chief’s residence, all the while explaining its history. This was a surprise and we were a bit chagrined that we had no gifts to thank John for his warm hospitality. John also commented that the village was keen to attract more yacht visitors and he asked for an email address where he might be able to write us for more ideas.

Hoisting anchor once more on our fourth day at Vanua Balavu, we reluctantly departed the village of Daliconi for Qilaqila, where we tucked into a snug, private 250’ wide cove with turquoise water set between two cave-studded limestone cliffs. Strong trade winds formed a wind eddy there and the harder the winds blew in the channel nearby, the closer Carina backed up into the cliff, settling in 15-30 feet of water almost within spitting distance of the rock.

Cyan - SSCA Bulletin June 2008: We needed to take advantage of mild weather and head north for Vanua Balavu in the Exploring Islands, which are in the largest enclosed reef in the Lau group, almost eight miles long.

The Bay of Islands and Batavu Harbor are both owned by the village of Daliconi near the Adavaci Passage in the western part of the reef. We later found out that before anchoring in these choice places, we needed to share Sevusevu and pay for a local permit in this village. We were happy to go back and do so. It was $25 Fiji for each crew for 30 days. It was a privilege to get the permit and share their heavenly location. These became our favorite anchorages in the Lau area. The villagers were welcoming and charming. We bought a seven-meal wahoo for $15 Fiji because we hadn’t managed to catch one ourselves, and it’s a Cyan favorite. They treated us to an outstanding local dinner of ceviche (the local way), taro, baked fish, molded cassava and banana rolls and taro greens (almost like turnip greens at home). Gourmet Fijian food!

We anchored twice in Bay of Islands for several days. We found the best coral heads for snorkeling are all in the passes between islands. We used our new inflatable kayak to explore all around the many islets and hidden coves.

Before setting off for the main part of Fiji again, we spent several days waiting for weather in the large cove anchorage (of the two that are to the east of the range markers in the Qilaqila Pass). The best place to anchor is right in the middle where the current swings towards the cliffs and you’re out of the chop. The eastern small cut is the best location for diving and has a variety of coral formations and large reef fish.
This whole journey has been one of the most rewarding of all the locations we have been in our four years of cruising and we would encourage folks coming to Fiji to seriously consider cruising the wonderful Lau Group.

After entering through Adavaci Pass, we passed Vanuahaloa Island on starboard and went north to Bay of Islands. We heard a radio call but thought it was from Lomaloma on the other side of the main island. We couldn’t see a village. It was from Daliconi to our East behind an island. They own Bay of Islands and we were supposed to have checked in there first and had sevusevu and got a permit, $25 Fiji each person for 30 days anchoring. It was still well worth it. This village is not named on the chart. We went back 4 days later after Bay of Islands visit to pay. I told them I would spread the word so they wouldn’t have to send a boat out to each cruiser to tell them about the permit.

DON’T LET THIS DETER YOU! Bay of Islands was one of our favorite places in all Pacific!!! It was a playground and we were all alone. We were the 3rd boat in Daliconi Village this year after last year when they had 22 boats by this time.

Daliconi Village WP: 17-13.140S / 178-57.400W
Anc in 28-34’ good but rocky holding WP: 17-13.175S / 178-57.983W

Our first anchorage in Bay of Islands was the 10 meter deep cove on Calders we called Chunky Rock Cove. We stayed 3 nights exploring all kinds of hidden nooks and coves in our kayak and snorkling mostly on shelves due to the depths.

Anchor in 22’ close to steep S wall in OK holding WP: 17-10.876S 179-01.334W

For our 4th day we anchored in Ship Sound. The passage there was exactly as Calders says with good visibility. The best snorkeling was on a large head between Ship Sound and the larger bay north, right in the middle.Apparently mid pass has the most nutritious location for sealife with the water flow. We saw loads of huge fruit bats roosting and flying around.

Ship Sound anchorage in 25’ good holding WP: 17-10.049S 179-00.918W

Our 5th day we anchored at the village getting our permit and had dinner with a family there.

Cheshire - SSCA Newsletter - 2007: Unmarked reef off Vanua Balavu N coast: 17-09.6 S / 179 01.0 W

Cheshire’s Bathtub anchorage: 17-10.65 S / 179-00.91 W 25 feet, sand and shallow coral

We briefly considered attempting to round the south point of Vanua Balavu, but were dissuaded by locals who said that it was shallow, rocky and no faster to go that way than to go around the east side of the island. We had a pleasant trip from Lomaloma to the Bay of Islands, mostly under sail. Most of the indicated marks were on station, but they looked in poor condition. Take special care from Blackswan Point to Batavu harbor as the navigable waters are narrowest there.

We also looked at the passages between Qilaqila island and Vanua Balavu, but they looked quite shallow and corally. So we went around Qilaqila and left the unnamed islands to the SE to starboard. Make sure to give the southmost piling at Qilaqila island lots of room to the S and east, and the reef extends well past it. Here the chart becomes quite inaccurate, as there are many little islands not shown. The sketches in Yachtman’s Guide are helpful, though we don’t
think there is enough room in Ship’s Pass for a ship so have renamed it accordingly. We approached it from the north along the mainland, through a shallow pass to a deep blue hole (100 feet), then immediately south. There isn’t much swing room so you might want to set a stern anchor or tie off to a tree.

As noted in Yachtsman’s Guide, the Bay of Islands is in the vanua of Daliconi village. Daliconi is not referenced on our charts and maps, and is several miles southeast of the Bay of Islands on the mainland. Had we known this we would have gone there first in Cheshire prior to going to the Bay of Islands. Instead we had a long, wet upwind dinghy ride across the next bay. You will need to go past Andavati Island, then head back towards the mainland - you should see the village across the bay. Sorry we can’t give a GPS position as we didn’t bring it with us. If you do choose the dinghy option, you can carefully go through the boat pass north of Andavati.

Daliconi’s chief was recovering from a stroke, so we made sevusevu with the headman. This village has an arrangement with Eco-Divers (ecodivers@connect.com.fj) and Yacht Help (info@yachthelp.com) in Savusavu and Nadi to invite yachts, for a fee of $25 per person for a 2 week stay. Superyachts are charged more. This covers garbage disposal, the right to anchor and self directed activities in the Bay of Islands. Additional activities such as meke, guided tours of underwater caves, etc. can be arranged. If you also wished to arrange a permit to visit other Lau islands, it sounds like that could be arranged here too. There is a store with the basics, and you might be able to arrange a trip to Lomaloma if necessary. We were able (and grateful) to top off our dinghy fuel, avoiding the need to row back!

There has been some friction between Daliconi and the privately owned Namalata Estates nearby, who have also been inviting yachts. Daliconi’s position is that Namalata’s invitation does not cover access to the Bay of Islands, which must be separately arranged and may cost more than dealing directly with the village. The residents of Daliconi are also currently seeking a fax machine, copier and computer for donation.

We only stayed a couple of days in this lovely area, but enjoyed some dinghy exploring amongst the islets. Two good snorkel spots are just off the southmost islets, and to the west of Cheshire’s bathtub.

5.4.5 Malaka Bay (Just SE of Daliconi)

Cruising Guide References: South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 87

Dream Away - August 2012: We anchored at 17-14.26S / 178-58.09W, out of view of the village, in about 14m mud with good holding. But we may have been in the way of the runway if we’d been there for a plane (Wednesdays?).

We also anchored another time at around 17-14.24S 178-58.06 W. At low tide the water goes out a considerable way from the slipway, but it is possible to wade through the mud

The bay is quite extensive, and seemed to be around 16-20m all over. The whole bay is surrounded by mangroves, which are fronted by reef running pretty much all around the bay, and there are also some isolated patches, so we’re not sure how much that would count as a good hurricane hole - we’d prefer to fetch up onto soft mud if something went wrong. There is only the one entrance, so that would be the only direction you would get any fetch. According to the locals, even when the wind is honking, the bay is quiet.
The village is totally separate from Daliconi, and unlike their avaricious neighbours, they make no financial demands upon you. You will need to do sevusevu upon arrival. The chief works at the airport (cutting grass, we think), so our sevusevu was at 07:15 on a Monday morning, and did not include a tasting. Graham had to wear a sulu. We were presented by Soni, who is a fisherman, and he and his wife Teupola (usually called Teu - pronounced tay-oo), and their 5 sons looked after us royally during our stay.

There is an ice factory on the quay. Tap water is freely available throughout the village from a borehole, but everyone catches rainwater to drink. A bus/lorry goes 3 mornings a week across to Lomaloma, sits there for about 1.5 hours, then returns. We got someone to look after our purchases, and walked home.

5.4.6 Bavatu (Mbavatu) Harbor

Cruising Guide References:  South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 87, Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 103, Pg 107, 109

Bavatu Harbor is the northernmost of the 3 bays on the coast north of Lomaloma. It is a huge bay, and includes the The Exploring Isles Yacht Club, which is owned/run by the same guy who owns the Copra Shed Marina in Savusavu. It is a fairly deep bay with 2 or 3 arms.

Bavatu is freehold land, and if only stopping there, you do not need to do sevusevu with any village.

Soggy Paws - July 2012: Bavatu Harbor is pretty easy in and out. There are some coral heads in sand (pretty visible) down in the southern end of the bay, just keep a good look-out. We happened to still have a trolling line out while exploring around in the bay, and caught a 12-lb Walu (Spanish Mackerel) while motoring around.

Also dragging a fishing line between the Bay of Islands and Bavatu was very productive (we caught 6 fish between 2 boats)

Entry Waypoint for Harbor:  17-10.6 S / 179-00.2 W

Yacht Club:  17-10.95 S / 179-00.2W  2 moorings

Anchorage 1:  17-11.25 S / 179-00.034 W  SE end of Bay, 20-40’ some coral

Anchorage 2:  17-10.9 S / 178-59.8 W  E end of Bay 15-40’ some coral

Anchorage 3:  17-11.2 S / 178-59.92 W  45’ tight quarters

Dinghy Landing for Steps/Path to Village:  17-11.24 S / 179-00.14

The bay is mostly very deep, except the west side of the bay south of the yacht club--it shallows rapidly and there are coral heads there, so use caution.

We spend about 5 days here (waiting for some wx to pass). The 'yacht club' was not open, but we (after asking Biu, the caretaker up on the hill), did happy hours on the dock. There is a fresh water tap with a limited amount of water there. One boat asked Biu if they could use the laser sailboats in the rack at the Yacht Club, and they spent an afternoon sailing in the bay with the gusty winds.

The caretakers had not been resupplied for over a month, and were getting low on provisions. So we traded some staple items for papayas and bananas.
**Hike to the Ridge Overlooking Bay of Islands:** Go up the steps (approx 270) to the top. At the top, follow the trail toward the right, to the top of the hill, where you will find the small village of caretakers. Here you can ask directions. The path continues on through the field the village is in, past a work shed, and then you go thru a gate and bear off to the right. Continue to follow the trail up to a ridge, and you will pass an obvious grave site. Go past the grave site onto the overlook. It is a stunning view of the Bay of Islands. Best in the morning when the sun is behind you.

There are a lot of trails in this area, if you’re into hiking. If you’re not sure where to go, stop and ask in the village.

**Shango - June 2012:** In Bavatu Harbour it’s neat to climb the stairs from the inner Harbour up to the “caretaker” village at the top of the hill. Sign their guest book and ask if it’s ok to go look at the plantation houses. Spectacular view. The houses are unoccupied at present. The owner may turn up at some point this season. The anchorage is deep and somewhat corally.

**Cyan - 2008:** We then anchored around to the north in Bavatu Harbor, a U-shaped bay safe inside the cliffs. Bavatu Coconut Plantation is located at the boat dock and up the longest staircase we have seen outside the Washington monument! The owner, Tony, was taking out charterers in his 85’ sailing vessel, Tau, when we met in Lakemba anchorage. He invited us to tour his plantation, meet the small village of his employees and see the houses. Fane is his supervisor there, and her husband offered to get us some lobsters in exchange for our spare dive mask. The mask was too big, but we bought those four beauties for $50 Fiji and felt like we got a good deal.

This is one of the most beautiful anchorages and quite an interesting location. After anchoring way back, right between the small island at the south of the large cove with the cliffs to the west, we came ashore at the boat landing and found the longest and most well built wooden staircase we’d ever seen. This must have been 15 stories high! At the top there is a large coconut plantation covering most of the eastern side. Tony owns the plantation and he gave us a letter of introduction that we presented to Fane, who is his plantation manager. We left gifts for the villagers and bought 4 amazing lobsters for $50 from Fane’s husband so he could get a new diving mask and spear fish on the reef for his village.

For **anchoring** in Bavatu Harbor, we would recommend the eastern anchorage instead of the southern one due to lack of breeze and a few bugs. We do want to mention that behind the small island at the south, is a nice set of coral heads to snorkel at mid-tide.

### 5.4.7 Horse Bay

Yachtsman’s Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 103, Pg 109

**Soggy Paws - July 2012:** We stopped in the bay that Calder calls Horse Bay. Most of the bay is somewhat exposed to the SE, and though there were attractive beaches, it didn't look like a good overnight anchorage. There was a small area in the SE corner of the bay that you could perhaps anchor one boat out of the swell and in reasonable depths.

Anchorage Spot: 17-11.524 S / 178-57.710 W  45’ unknown bottom

We saw an opening into a large inner bay just inshore from this anchorage spot, but it did not look navigable by a sailboat.
Note that this bay is part of the vanua of the village of Mavana.

5.4.8 Little Bay & Mavana Village

Yachtsman’s Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 103, Pg 109

Note that this bay is part of the vanua of the village of Mavana.

Soggy Paws - July 2012: We stopped in Little Bay on a survey trip, for a short overnight, and did NOT do sevusevu in Mavana. But we were noticed—Rubin, caretaker of the house/plantation on the beach just outside the bay walked around to see us at low tide. He said he could take the sevusevu for the village of Mavana, if we wanted. But we told him that we were coming back next week to stay longer, and we would do our sevusevu then.

If you plan to stay, you should either take your boat down to Mavana Village first, or go in your dinghy, and do your sevusevu (see Mavana Village info). Or dinghy around and talk to Rubin, on the house on the beach just east of Little Bay.

The entrance is very narrow, but once inside, there is room to anchor about 6 friendly sailboats of average size. Once inside, it is very protected.

Anchorage: 17-11.427 S / 178-57.151W

There is an opening into a large inner bay just inshore from this anchorage spot, but it did not look navigable by a sailboat. It is a really large bay and we had fun exploring by dinghy. This would be an amazing area to explore by kayak, too.

There is some good snorkeling/diving nearby…

Just inshore of the anchorage area, in the ‘neck’ of the passage to the inner bay, on the east side (left side going in), there is an amazing amount of soft coral. Best time for this snorkel is on an incoming tide, after the current has washed clean water in, and when the sun is high. On the opposite side of the pass is some nice sea fans.

Just outside the bay, on the west (left side going out) bank of the entry.

Best: At a coral head I have named ‘John’s Head’, after John on Midnight Sun who told us about it. Location: 17-10.385 S / 178-56.700 W. This is a mile outside the anchorage at Little Bay, and good for a snorkel or for a dive. The best area of the large coral mound is on the side toward Avea Island (the east side). Best time to dive is on a rising tide, a couple of hours after the tide turns inside Little Bay, and in the morning (where the sun will shine on the east side of the coral mound). There are some amazing beds of Lettuce Coral in about 30’ at the northern and southern extent of the best diving area. When there’s some current on the head, the soft corals are also out in full bloom. There’s really no place in reasonable depth to anchor the big boat out by this head, so anchor in Little Bay and dinghy out. It’s only a mile from the anchorage.

Midnight Sun - July 2012: Just 3 miles East of Bavatu is Little Bay, a gorgeous secluded anchorage surrounded by high hills with great protection & flat water. We have previously anchored here with 6 boats, but that was a bit too squeezy for us. Holding is excellent.

This bay belongs to the vanua of Mavana, so go there first for your sevusevu.
Little Bay has a Northerly facing very narrow entrance (17-11.21S / 178-57.113W), so watch out for the protruding horns on either side, it opens up into the anchorage & at its Southern end a narrow corridor leads to a large inland lagoon. Seaplanes used to land & hide here during WW2. The large inland lagoon results in a strong current through the long corridor providing for a fast snorkel & clumps of large red soft coral. Middle of an incoming tide & bright sunshine helps visibility.

A large unmarked coral head less than 1 mile due North of Little Bay, is a great snorkel or tank dive and offers a pretty drop off & an enormous lettuce leaf coral patch (Eastern & south eastern corner so morning sun is best). Anchor the dinghy in less than 2 meters on the reef in a sandy patch - a transit is to line up the marker just outside the Little Bay entrance and the distant hill through the Little Bay pass.

Two minutes by dinghy to the East of the entrance is “the Estate”. This is Mavana’s pig & cow farm. Rubin, his wife Melini & daughter Rebecca live at & manage the Estate & welcome visits. If you are in a group, Rubin will provide lunch at their gorgeous setting - a roast pig on the beach & lovo (underground oven) with sweet potatoes. For a 30KG pig (more than enough to satisfy 6 boats), total cost is an extremely reasonable $140. For a complete experience, those wishing to can watch the killing, gutting, skin preparation & roasting, including the famous Tongan technique of basting the skin with green coconut husks - an experience not to miss.

### 5.4.9 Mavana Village

Mavana Village is on the ‘mainland’ just opposite Avea Island. Mavana Village should be visited for sevusevu if you plan on stopping in Horse Bay or Little Bay. It is a very nice and neat village and supposedly has produced one or two Prime Ministers for Fiji.

**Aqualuna - November 2013:** We had to visit Manava village to present ‘Sevusevu’ to explore more of the islands and inlets near there. To get there we anchored in Little Bay, a very sheltered cove which could hold 6 small yachts. We took the dingy around to Mava’s pig and cow farm which is now run by a chap called Sotia Vuniwaqa. He greeted us on the beach and then took us on the 1-hour walk through the forest to Mavana Village.

We were very warmly greeted there and presented our Sevusevu plus some things for the school. The village looks very well to do and neat and tidy. This is not surprising as it has produced a Fijian President and a Prime minister it has also had a lot of money donated by the Canadian Government to reclaim land and make it look manicured. Nevertheless life continues there more or less unchanged for centuries.

There was a feast going on as one of the village elders had died, and the wake was huge with many other villages taking part in the feat. We were invited to join in and eat. So a place and food was set out for us on mats with a cloth under the awning, out of the sun. It was only the females eating, but our chaps were expected to join us. We had fish, cabbage, taro (a type of root) which is a bit clawy on the mouth, some meat. We were given forks but everybody else ate with their hands.

In another area there was an old small marquee where all the guys were drinking Kava and playing music on their guitars singing traditional Polynesian/Melanesian songs. Some of the women persuaded Bianca and I to dance. The children were fascinated by the cameras and wanted to have lots of photos taken.
We were invited to the men's tent and were offered Kava which we had a couple of coconut bowls of, deadens your mouth, makes it a bit numb and tastes like dish water, but had a mild soporific effect on you. After awhile we made our excuses to leave.

On our walk out through the village we were greeted by Allan who is American and Mexican (his Mum is Mexican). He told us his family were building a house on some land on the island across from the village and meanwhile they were renting a house in this village. They go back to California every now and again but his parents prefer to live in Fiji. He spoke fluent Fijian and of course Spanish and English, he goes to the local school for the older boys in the village on the opposite island.

Allan and the boys accompanied us back to the beach and our dingy a long, hot walk. The boys picked up one of the village horses and road it bare back behind us. When we got to the beach they climbed a coconut tree and gave us all very refreshing coconuts to drink. Sotia also gave us a Sour-sop fruit which is spiky with white flesh and tastes sweet sour. It was a wonderful experience, meeting a very happy and very generous village.

**Chesapeake - August 2012:** Chesapeake went Bavatu-Mavana (for sevusevu)-Little Bay in one day. When we arrived at Mavana, guess who met us--Sam from Daliconi. He was visiting family, and so accompanied us to do kava drop off with the chief's wife (chief not there), and then gave us a tour of the village. It is a very orderly village and quite large with an architectural mix of huts and prefab houses. The chief finally showed up--he was working in the garden and carrying a huge bag of coconuts. They gave us some very sweet small bananas and we each bought bok choy for $10 for a big bag that someone had just harvested for us. It was really low tide when we arrived, so we had to pull the dinghy on its wheels quite a bit in on soft sand filled with tiny black starfish.

Easy anchor outside Mavana (but not very protected) at 17-12.599s 178-55.692w.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** Mavana is a further mile or so to the East & just around the corner to the South from Little Bay. It is one of the most splendid villages we have ever seen.

We came in from the Susui area (in the south end of the Exploring Isles) and passed Mavana late in the day to anchor overnight in Little Bay. The next morning, we backtracked with the big boat the ~2 miles to Mavana to do our sevusevu. We anchored just inside the prominent coral head in the bay off the village. It's not a really protected anchorage, so only suitable for a day anchorage or very settled weather.

You can also dinghy around to the house on the beach next to Little Bay, and walk to Mavana from there. It's about a half hour walk to Mavana from Rubin's house. Or dinghy the whole way from Little Bay from Mavana.

The Chief of Mavana is now the ex-prime-minister (ousted in 2006), but he is usually not there. When we stopped in Mavana to present our sevusevu, our spokesperson was Tui. Tui looks after the Chief's House (the bright blue roofs prominently visible from the beach), who is usually away in Suva. He presented us to the 2nd Chief. Tui actually translated the sevusevu for us quietly in English as the 2nd Chief spoke--this was a first for us, after many years of cruising in Fiji and many many sevusevu experiences--it sure makes the sevusevu make more sense to us, understanding what is being said.
5.4.10 AVEA ISLAND AND VILLAGE

Soggy Paws - July 2012: We visited Avea Island on a short reconnaissance trip from the Bay of Islands. We did not know at the time that there was a village on Avea, and so were not prepared to make time to do a proper sevusevu. We stayed for a short overnight, but of course were noticed by the village. Sunday morning, as we were preparing to leave, a boat from the village came to talk to us, presumably to arrange a sevusevu. We told them that we were leaving, but would be back in a week or so to stay longer, and would do our sevusevu then.

The waypoint we'd been given by another boat--divers we met on Just in Time in Viani Bay, was presumably a dive spot. We found a so-so anchorage--somewhat rolly at high tide, though wind-wise it was completely protected from the tradewinds. There was coral nearby good for snorkeling, and a cute little bay with a beach (accessible only by dinghy, and only a mid-tide or higher).

Anchor Waypoint: 17-10.996 S / 178-54.348 W 25-40’ sand

The village is within dinghy distance of this spot, but it might be better to find a spot right off the village first, do your sevusevu, and then come up and anchor where we did.

Getting into this spot, we passed between two coral mounds that were easy to see, about a quarter mile west of the waypoint. We snorkeled on these mounds, and they were a decent snorkel, and might be a decent dive spot. On the rising tide, the water was reasonably clear. There is also coral inshore and a few hundred feet to the NNE of the anchor spot, that looked good, but we didn't snorkel.

From this anchorage, we explored in our dinghies, looking for a pass through the outer reef to go diving outside the reef.

Dinghy Pass Inner - 17-10.349 S / 178-54.429 W
Dinghy Pass Outer - 17-10.315 S / 178-54.447 W
Dive Spot - 17-10-239 S / 178-54.504 W

We did this exploration on a fairly calm day, on a rising tide, about an hour after low tide. The sea state in the GFS forecast was about 1.6meters. A lot of the reef in the area was breaking regularly, but this spot hardly ever broke. You would still need to exercise caution, but it's doable in a normal dinghy. We didn't actual dive here, but jumped in for a snorkel and it looked OK. The reef dropped off from 10 feet to 60 feet and beyond.

5.4.11 LOMALOMA VILLAGE

Chesapeake - August 2012: The bakery's oven is broken so bread supplies are limited. The place where eggs were plentiful a week ago has no eggs right now. Potatoes, onions and staples are still available.

Soggy Paws - July 2012: At the time we were in Daliconi, there were 7 boats all looking for a little reprovisioning. So we arranged with Sanila in Daliconi for one of the village's half-ton pickups to take us to Lomaloma and back. The cost round trip for the truck was approximately $75, which we split up among the people who wanted to go.

The supply ship had just visited Lomaloma a few days before, so we knew they were pretty well stocked. What we found:
- Cell phone coverage
- Potatoes and onions
- Staples like rice, sugar, flour, milk (boxed & dry), crackers, canned corned beef, etc
- Bread (white and whole wheat)
- Propane tank swap (arranged ahead of time, before the ship came)
- Eggs
- Premix fuel (gasoline) at $2.80/liter ('gas station' next to bakery)
- Post Office
- Western Union Office
- Small Hospital (we didn't check it out, but did see it)

The ride over and back in the pickup was well worth doing, even if you don't need any provisions.

The village of Daliconi does a regular run over to Lomaloma, so if you are by yourselves, you can likely get a ride over with villagers for a reasonable share of the cost of the truck.

We had good cell coverage there, and I'd assume that a Vodafone internet dongle works, but we did not take our computer on the trip.

You can also take a launch from Susui Village to Lomaloma (see Susui section for details).

**Shango - June 2012:** From Daliconi you can walk/hitch to Lomaloma to take a look around and buy bread and staples. **Lomaloma Harbor** isn't all that appealing in the trades but taking the boat around is an option.

**Mandala - 2011:** Population of VB is about 3000, in about 10 villages. The main village, Lomaloma, on the east coast, offers almost nothing beyond history, a post office and bread shop, and some very basic stores. The airport has once-weekly flights to Nausori, near Suva. Occasional ships bring stores and people, perhaps monthly. There is a high school, one rather basic guest house near Lomaloma, and a health clinic.

Cheshire Sep/Oct 2007:

End of reef off west side of Yanu Yanu island: 17 17.8 S / 178 59.1 W

Anchorage, Yanu Yanu island: 17 17.7 S / 178 58.9 W 11-40 ft sand

**Lomaloma,** the main village for the Exploring Isles, is just 3 miles NW across the bay from Susui. Our first visit Lomaloma was in a Susui village boto for a grocery top-off. Since the possible anchorages near town are somewhat exposed, especially if the wind is N of SE, we waited for calm weather before leaving our cosy bolt hole at Susui. The chart provides good guidance and bearing lines to avoid the reefs en route from Susui. The reef off Yanu Yanu extends a lot closer to Lomaloma than you might think - it’s end is currently marked. Yanu Yanu offers some SE protection if you anchor off the abandoned resort, but it drops off towards town. We dropped the anchor in 11 feet, and after deploying 180 feet of chain & rope our depthsounder showed 40 feet. Dinghy approach from the beach S of the quay is clear, no coral.

There are 2 stores with basic supplies: eggs (beware, can be old), rice, flour (with little bugs), UHT milk, sugar, but no canned tomatoes, a post office, police station and health clinic. Sometimes the stores carry kava root incase you are running low, and other goodies depending
on what the supply ship has brought. A secondary school accommodates kids from throughout the lagoon.

Internet access was available at Moana’s guesthouse about 1 km south of town on the road to Naqara (FJ$5/hour, good speed for dial up). There was no sign, so look for a group of traditional bures behind a wire fence on the water side. Owners Tevita and Caroline (she’s an Aussie) are building guest bures the traditional way to keep these skills alive. If you are in need of produce, try inquiring here as they also have a good sized farm.

5.4.12 Susui (Southern Village)

Susui is on the southern and windward side of Vanua Balavu and is very well protected. As of 2012, no fees for anchoring were required.

Soggy Paws - August 2012: On our arrival, the village of Susui, at the south end of Vanua Balavu, started trying to charge a fee of $50. At our sevusevu, they presented us with a nicely worded (but hand-written) piece of paper explaining the fee. We were the first yachts they approached with this fee. Three other boats arriving 2 days before were not asked for a fee. We three boats politely said that we would leave immediately instead of paying the fee.

After some discussion among the villagers present (Jacob and Save and the chief), the fee was rescinded and the 3 yachts were allowed to stay without paying anything. It is unclear whether the village plans to keep trying to charge a fee. Soggy Paws urged them to offer services (tours, etc) vs. charging an anchoring fee, but it was still under discussion at the time we left. We also fixed the school generator for them, underlining our argument that cruisers can be very helpful and generous to the outer villages.

This is a poor village (but very neat and clean)--their main village generator has been broken for 6 months, and after dark, it is dark in the village. They have no batteries and no solar panels that we saw. So we can sympathize with their quest for cash. We left them with a piece of paper listing the things they could do for cruisers that they could charge for (reef trips, selling fresh fruit & veggies, etc), and a flyer for their 'Hidden Lagoon Tour' they could show to cruisers.

Per Rubicon’s suggestion below, for cruisers interested in possibly bringing something specific to the village from Suva or Savusavu, the Administrative Head of the village is Tiko, and his cell phone is 759-6508.

The village representative for cruisers seems to be Jacob. His house is right on the beach to the right of the piles of rocks (which mark the dinghy area). The chief’s son is Save. The schoolteacher’s name is Soro. It was Jacob and Save who told us that they were against the $50 fee, but they were unable to get it rescinded until we refused to pay the fee.

Chesapeake - August 2012: Our anchors were up at 10am in Little Bay and we motored into the wind for the first 1.5 hours, then we could sail. We arrived in Susui and anchored at 1pm using Cheshire and Kittywake’s waypoints.

Approach waypoints: The entrance appears to be very open with no obstacles seen in the middle. On the east and west side of the entrance, in addition to reefs, there are pearl farms marked with bouys. The anchorage appears to be sand with scattered coral.

Sisui1 17-18.072s by 178-57.173w
Sisui2 17-18.669s by 178-57.141w
We're anchored at 17-20.459s 178-56.979w. The west side of the bay is full of reef which is why we're all anchored on the eastern side. There is plenty of space to anchor 6-7 boats in this bay.

After dropping the anchor, Jim snorkeled down to check the anchor. Shortly thereafter a Fijian named Jacob swam out to the boat, having been sent by chief Doji Bese, who was upset that Jim had gone into the water before coming for sevusevu.

It was low tide and we took Jacob back to shore so he could show us the path to the village between the wide reef. He apologized to the chief for us and we did a quick sevusevu (no drinking of kava) and then got a tour of the village. We met Sorovaki, the teacher that Rubicon mentions, and had a lengthy discussion about the village and their needs and desires.

Here's what we were told about Susui Village's rules and services:

**No fishing** between the 2 points of the bay.

Swimming and snorkeling are okay (after your sevusevu).

They have a long boat that will take us to Lomaloma for provisions. On the way back from Lomaloma, we'll swing into the hidden lagoon for a look. The cost for this trip is $50 roundtrip flat, not per person.

Jacob said his wife can do my laundry but I don't know yet what it will cost but i'm grateful.

We can dinghy into the hidden lagoon but can't fish in there as it's their fishing ground. We can, however, buy fish from them.

No burning of trash except in the designated spot. They will take our trash and put it in their pile.

They're proud that the anchorage is a marine reserve.

**Mailing address for the village:** Sekope Duri (Sekope is Fijian for Jacob), Susui Village, P.O. Lomaloma, Vanua Balavu, Fiji. You can also mail things to Sorovaki (pronounced Zorro) using the same address.

**Hidden Lagoon Excursion:** Jacob took us on an excursion in the village launch, to go out and snorkel just inside the outer reef and to see the Hidden Lagoon. In the Hidden Lagoon, they showed us how to collect oysters among the mangrove roots, and then they prepared a delicious oyster feast for us on the beach. We had a wonderful day with them.

**Kittiwake - July 2012:** The anchorage in Susui is good and there is all round shelter in a lagoon close by (called Hidden Lagoon) for inclement weather. For the hidden lagoon, ask Save or another local to guide you in - you have to cross the shallows before the entrance at high tide. Save does not have VHF as far as I know.

We anchored off the village at 17-20.42S, 178-56.92W - That is where we sat after 30 meters of chain were let out in SE wind so adjust accordingly.
In the Hidden Lagoon we were sitting at anchor at 17-20.56S by 178-58.00W but you would want to be a couple 100 ft east of that in deeper water.

You really need good light everywhere in the lagoon of the Exploring Isles as there are unchartered reefs and heads everywhere. Unfortunately, we did not save any other waypoints. But It's a magical place.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** Susui is a great village. Best one for getting bananas and papayas. Jacob was the the spokesman. Sevi is the best source with the bananas. Chief's name is Besi.

**Rubicon - July 2012:** We are presently anchored at Susui in Vanua Balavu the Lau Group. Beautiful place and nice village.

The village here on Susui does not charge a fee, yet. They are very aware of the fees being charged by other villages here in Vanua Balavu and other areas in the Lau group. Instead of a fee they are asking for donations to their "Youth Club". They say they want to use cash donations to purchase tools for farming and cooking utensils.

They put on a great dinner where the children did traditional dancing which was fantastic. Invitations were sent out to the three boats anchored here at that time to the dinner/dance. In the invitations was the request for donations and at dinner they asked us all for our contribution. The 3 boats discussed the donation and agreed we should keep it at about $50 per boat which seemed reasonable. All of the boats also made donations of school supplies, fishing gear, etc. These were all very much appreciated.

There is a thought among the cruisers that the cash that is donated goes elsewhere and does not trickle down to the village. For instance they have a village generator but no money for fuel.

We talked to the son and others involved and mentioned that visiting Yachts are reluctant to give cash donations due mainly to the fact that we're never sure where the donations go and that what the yachts would prefer to donate are items they really needed like tools and such or food supplies.

The school teacher and others are very open to this idea. The only problem is getting the information or list of needed items out to visiting yachts. We are working on getting an email address for the schoolmaster so cruisers can contact them before they leave Savusavu (*They never got an email address, but see the phone number for Tiko, the Susui Headman, in the Soggy Paws report from August 2012*).

We ended up staying 2 weeks in Susui. It is a nice village and very protected from most conditions.

**Cheshire - SSCA Newsletter - 2007:**

**Reef with beacon (post) between Tongan Pass and Susui Island:** 17-19.66S / 178-55.32 W

**Anchorage, Susui Island:** 17 20.44 S / 178 56.94 W 15 feet sand/coral

The beacon between Tongan Pass and Susui Island was present as a leaning post, and the reef it marks fairly visible with breaking waves at low tide. The beacon immediately NE of Susui was not present. When approaching the anchorage at Susui, keep well clear of the eastern point as the reef extends off. We found we had to go fairly deep into the bay to reach depths of less than 40 feet, but the anchorage had better protection than appeared on the chart. The village is at the head of the bay.
The village comprises about 90 people, one of the smallest we visited. They were quite welcoming. Although more yachts visit Vanua Balavu (Long Island in Fijian), many only visit the Bay of Islands and possibly Lomaloma, so Susui does not get so many visitors. The bay itself has been a World wildlife fund reserve, but you can still anchor there. A brief snorkel to check the anchor revealed many small jellyfish so we didn’t explore further. Our anchoring spot favors the east side of the bay for better protection and there is extensive reef off the west side of the bay. Just to the west of the village is a delightful shallow bay, with dramatic cliffs and caves, and good snorkelling around the rocks off the point. Approach with caution in your dinghy as it is ringed by reefs. The beach on the island’s windward side is a short walk from the village and is 1-2 miles long, best walked at low tide. We also walked around the island’s extensive interior for the better part of a day on the paths leading to plantations.

5.4.13 Munia Island (Near Tonga Pass)

Munia is in the vanua of the village of Avea, on Avea Island, halfway up the east side of Vanua Balavu. Cruisers regularly stop for a short overnight without doing a sevusevu with Avea Village, but if you play to stay longer, you should plan a stop at Avea for sevusevu.

Pincoya - August 2012: We came in Tonga Pass in the afternoon and anchored behind Munia Island at 17-21.344S / 178-52.961W

The wind, usually from the SE, wraps around the NE end of the island, and we were hanging ENE most of the night. Small wind chop. Not a big roll. 25-30’ Sand/Coral heads.

5.4.14 Tonga Pass (Southern Pass)

Cheshire Sep/Oct 2007: (use all information at your own risk!)

Tongan Pass: 17 19.93 S / 178 49.63 W

Rocks just inside pass, W side: 17 19.81 S / 178 49.71 W

We approached this pass from the south, and noticed that the waves became steeper as we approached the reef. We could not clearly see the reef until barely a mile off. We estimate that it was mid flood tide as we came through, and there were 3 foot standing waves in the middle of the pass. We favored the west side of the pass and got through without too much trouble. However, with the waves and flat, late afternoon light, it was difficult to see the rocks on that side until we were almost on top of them. The buoy marking the reef NW of the pass was not present, but the reef showed as a lighter color through the water. The islands in the lagoon are large enough that bearing lines can be used to navigate.

End of reef off west side of Yanu Yanu island: 17 17.8 S / 178 59.1 W

Anchorage, Yanu Yanu island: 17 17.7 S / 178 58.9 W 11-40 ft sand

Lomaloma, the main village for the Exploring Isles, is just 3 miles NW across the bay from Susui. Our first visit was in a Susui village boto for a grocery top-off. Since the possible anchorages near town are somewhat exposed, especially if the wind is N of SE, we waited for calm weather before leaving our cosy bolt hole at Susui. The chart provides good guidance and bearing lines to avoid the reefs en route from Susui. The reef off Yanu Yanu extends a lot closer to Lomaloma than you might think - it’s end is currently marked. Yanu Yanu offers some SE protection if you anchor off the abandoned resort, but it drops off towards town. We dropped
the anchor in 11 feet, and after deploying 180 feet of chain & rope our depthsounder showed 40 feet. Dinghy approach from the beach S of the quay is clear, no coral.

There are 2 stores with basic supplies: eggs (beware, can be old), rice, flour (with little bugs), UHT milk, sugar, but no canned tomatoes! a post office, police station and health clinic. Sometimes the stores carry kava root incase you are running low, and other goodies depending on what the supply ship has brought. A secondary school accommodates kids from throughout the lagoon.

Internet access was available at Moana’s guesthouse about 1 km south of town on the road to Naqara (FJ$5/hour, good speed for dial up). There was no sign, so look for a group of traditional bures behind a wire fence on the water side. Owners Tevita and Caroline (she’s an Aussie) are building guest bures the traditional way to keep these skills alive. If you are in need of produce, try inquiring here as they also have a good sized farm.

5.5 Vekai Island
Shandon - August 2010: The only reason for stopping here was because of the birds: light and dark phase red legged boobies, brown boobies, brown noddies, sooty and common terns.

The guano covered rock is clearly visible. The approach is straight forward from the NW (17°32.7S 178°50.2W). I had a minimum of 3.5m and came in on a bearing of 110°M on the north end of the rock.

I anchored on the north side of the rocky cay in 3.5m. With 25m of chain I fell back to 7.2m. Very popply at high water. Best used in settled weather or for lunch.

There is a small beach and vegetation on the SE side.

5.6 Tithia
Cyan - SSCA Bulletin June 2008: The next island was an even more interesting challenge to anchor. We only knew that Thithia had room for a supply boat, and we had heard of one boat anchoring somewhere there at some time. Without any chart detail or waypoints we scouted out the small harbor feeling like great explorers. We found a small, one-boat area just west of the jetty and anchored in 45’ with an added stern anchor to keep the swing in close and away from the reef. It was a good thing we left the little harbor open because at midnight, in a heavy thunderstorm, the “lit up like Christmas” supply boat anchored there just 300 feet from us.

There was a warm welcome for us in Thithia even though the host who invited us was in Suva for a council meeting and we didn’t get to meet him. We were treated to lunch after Sevusevu and a dinner of pig cooked in the lovo or earth oven by Apakuki, Emma and their family. We were introduced to their daughters as “temporary grandparents” for the visit and treated as family. We shared another Sevusevu with 14 other villagers that evening. It seems it was five years since the last cruising boat visited here. The ladies were especially happy with all the extra cosmetics Lynn could spare. Also easy to share were all the bracelets bought from children in South America two years ago.

We included Thithia on our list of islands to visit because this is where Tai, the hairdresser in Suva, is from and she arranged for her brother here to formally invite us. There was amazingly little info about the port or any available anchoring so we were on our own.
The accessible village, Tanukua, is right on the NW point of the island. We approached the Jetty Dock inside 5-6 l-beam pilings all in 40-45’ but since the supply ship comes in there we scouted out the area just south of it that looked wide enough to anchor. We set the anchor on line with the only “bent-over” piling up near the reef. We anchored in 45’ but after pulling back we were in 65-70’ after we let out 200’ of chain and set the stern anchor to keep us from swinging south. Sometimes the wind comes a bit north around the hills and drove us southerly but in no danger to the reef on the south.

Approaching the jetty:
Soundings begin about 290’ WP: 17-43.228S 179-20.021W
Exact spot of anchor WP: 17-43.367S 179-20.024W In 54’ depth

Inside harbor area near concrete slab WP: 17-43.355S 179-19.957W

We took the dinghy to the SW side in the middle of the jetty and tied it to the rocks with the dinghy anchor behind and easily found places to climb up to the muddy road.

At midnight our first night we were awakened in a thunderstorm by a huge spotlight shining around the ports. The supply boat that comes every 2 weeks was looking for the harbor to anchor in to unload passengers and crates. Good thing we didn’t risk it and anchor inside the harbor!!! He was 100’ away but looked closer in the rain.

We visited the village the next day for sevusevu and were helped by very attentive young men who took us to the assistant in charge. Apparently the few weeks we were in Lau Group all the chiefs had gone to Suva for a grand meeting about Lau policies. We never met a real chief.

We shared the kava grog and sevusevu ceremony with Apakuki in his home. His wife, Emma, fixed us lunch and later we returned for a roasted pig dinner and another sevusevu with grog in our honor. The last yacht there was 5 years ago. We got to ask lots of questions and get to know several villagers.

If you are older in generation than the hosts you are considered honorary parents and respected as such. The meals were packed with mostly unflavored cassava along with a small amount of rice and meat.

### 5.7 Lakeba (Lakemba)

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 87

**Migration - 2012: Mobile Phone/Internet Coverage:** We had coverage for quite some time as we sailed south past Lakeba.

**Midnight Sun - 2012:** Lakemba has 2 anchorages, one an indent in a reef, and one a pass that goes into the dock for the Lau Trader. Don’t go to the latter. The indent in the reef is much better than it seems. Though there was big swell outside, surfing waves on either side, but 16 meters depth, the anchorage was just fine. It is a good jumping off place for going further north and south in the Lau, because you can leave during the night.

**Mandala - 2011:** This roughly circular volcanic island, about 6 miles across, is the political centre of Lau, and the main village of Tubou is near the only well-protected anchorage. The channel through the reef off Tubou is very narrow (23 m wide), is only roughly marked and very challenging. Leading about half a mile inside the reef, the channel leads to a long jetty, and past this to a narrow anchoring basin about 6m deep on sand. Without swinging room I needed to
use three anchors to hold the yacht centred. With care there could be room for two yachts. The anchorage is calm, but difficult. I recommend taking a dinghy ride in before entering with the yacht. There is a large lagoon east of the island, with a pass into it, but it does not look attractive.

Population is about 2000, in 7 villages spread around the shore, with a road running right around. The island has an airport with weekly flights, and very basic shops and a clinic. There is a basic guest-house, and no other facilities for visitors or tourists.

**Shandon - September 2010:** The anchorage at Wainiyabia, 18°12.5S / 178°50.6W, on the west coast, can be approached without sun, as it is clean. It is off the last (southern) beach in the bay before the point. Behind it, on the shore, is a thatched ‘boat’ house. On the cliff above is a blue roofed house (looked grey to me), a traditional looking house in front (in fact an outdoor room and balcony; adjacent to the north is a ‘single-storey ‘yellow’ building. If Richard (Ric) & Lia Wallace are staying, Ric’s white fishing boat will be in the water and a white ‘banana’ boat may be on the beach. The boats were the first thing I noticed. From the anchorage the blue roof is 101°M and the boat house 102°M.

Anchor in 10m off the cut in the reef marked, possibly, by four branches. The beacons shown on the chart have gone.

Most of the reef either dries or is awash at LW. Tie to Ric’s mooring buoys or run up the beach.

**Cyan - SSCA June 2008:** We started our tour at the south of the Lau chain using the trades to help us move north. We only saw two boats in 23 days, and they were not cruisers but charter boats. We sailed on to Lakemba, the capital of Lau. It was a challenge just finding the 40-70' deep shelf off the reef that serves as an anchorage due to the sketchy information and thumbnail-sized image on our chart. It’s possible to dinghy inside the reef from mid-tide to high tide the five km to Tubou, and it takes less than an hour. Returning outside the reef took only a half hour.

While docking the dinghy to the rocks on our first visit, we were met by two soldiers who were adamantly saying, “You can’t come here! Go back to Suva!” We showed the sergeant our Lau cruising permit, he made a brief radio phone call and then became our new best friend, giving us fruit, snacks, coffee and a short ride to town. He then put us in the care of another soldier who was to be our guide around the village and take us to the assistant chief for Sevusevu and receiving our contributions. We returned to the village the next day for a visit to the vocational school, where we were interested in buying traditional carvings, and to the elementary school after meeting some teachers. We got a ride into town but it took 1½ hours to walk back (the walking was much needed). We also found the dinghy 400 yards from the low tide line on mud, so we let nature rule and waited two hours for the sea to come to us. Next time we will check tide levels.

Anchor off the Reef: Anchorage is in an indention in the reefs on the due west side of the island. There haven’t been any markers in recent memory no matter what the guides say and we could barely see through the trees trying to locate the roof of a house mentioned in Calder’s that we were supposed to approach towards. We found it a challenge just finding this more shallow anchoring plane [50-75'] by going south along and outside the reefs.

Approaching the open roadstead:
Soundings begin WP: 18deg 12.621S / 178deg 50.743W
Approach to spot WP: 18deg 12.653S / 178deg 50.607W
Exact spot of anchor WP: 18deg 12.674S / 178deg 50.500W In 54’ depth

Tony who owns Copra Shed Marina in Savusavu brought an 85’ sailboat from Savusavu said we were in his exact favorite spot when he comes to pick up charterers so he anchored behind us in about 65’. There is room for 2 boats to swing side by “close” side and the protection was remarkably good in up to 20 knots.

A dinghy can be motored the 3+ miles to the village at higher than mid-tide and it took us 1 hour paddling over 3 or 4 heads. We returned and motored outside and it took ½ hour. Wear life vests! We were just outside the surfing type waves…creepy!!!

When we got to the dock on the south side of Nadawa Passage at Tubou village, we were met by 2 soldiers who were adamant that “You cannot come here, go back to Suva!”. When they read our permit they turned into all smiles and welcomes, drove us to the barracks, gave us fruit and coffee and assigned a young, soldier to guide us around town.

We presented our kava gift and had sevusevu with the asst chief with no kava. He just took the package and our bags of gifts without staying to pound the kava and drink it. That was fine with us.

The village has a store that opens at 4pm but we weren’t around at that time. No other shops were found but fuel and premix are available.

We met some school teachers who told us that the vocational school had wood carving classes and sold their work. The school was sold-out of woodwork due to a craft show recently but meeting the head master and seeing his plans for making opportunities for new students was interesting. We got a ride into the town and walked back for 1 ½ hours in the heat and flies…whew! Then we found the full moon tide had gone waaaay out leaving the dinghy ¼ mile away from water on mud. We waited 2 ½ hours before we could get to a much enjoyed happy hour. We only stayed 3 nights and 2 days, then left at 5 am in an easy “getout” to Thithia.
5.8 Oneata

Chartlet courtesy of s/v Shandon

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 86

**Pincoya - August 2012:** The NW pass is open. The plusses on the chart are bommies, spread out. You will need to visually pick your way through the bommies, but it is pretty easy in appropriate light. Our route through the pass took us through these two waypoints.

Outside Pass  18-24.950S / 178-32.316W

The anchorage we used was at 18-26.017S / 178-28.881W in sand approximately 5m deep. As with most of the anchorages (except Fulaga), there was a slight swell at high tide. We stayed only one night, never went ashore. While there a boat with fishermen approached us and asked us if we had any cleaned fish scraps they could use for bait.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** Oneata is a strange place--it looks like you can find a calm anchorage there, but we didn't. The lagoon is so big and so deep and it was calmer outside than inside. Even in calm weather. Beautiful anchorage, but just not very calm.

**Shandon - 2010:** I aimed for Middle Passage, 18°25.7S 178°28.3W, and came in on approx 150°M pointing at the west end of the island. I came through some large bommies (min 10m). I could see Middle Passage to the east. I may have come in through the Middle Passage and
went between the bommies shown on the chart. Clean all the way to where I anchored in 10m. The glorious sand slopes gently and I could have gone closer.

The new house belongs to Mesake Taufa (see contact sheet). From there there is a path to Dakuiloa village where the chief lives.

The wind was coming down the coast making the anchorage roly, so I moved up the coast to my 'Islets Bay'.

At the northern end of the beach near the angled palm, a footpath leads to the other village, Waigori, where there is another chief. The path continues to Dakuiloa with a pleasant 20 minute walk.

With the wind in the east, I sailed round and anchored off Dakuiloa in sand, with patches of black grass, in 3m.

Cheshire - 2007:

Entrance to W transit pass: 18 25.03 S / 178 32.16 W
Anchorage: 18-25.9 S / 178-28.7W 27-30 feet, sand with bommies

Watch out for a finger of reef extending into the west pass from the north, at the lagoon end.

We chose to anchor on the north side of the island, though we were told that boats also anchor on the south side near one of the two villages. We anchored as close inshore as you will want to get, due to reefs near the shore and prickly rocks on either side. The bottom appears to slope gradually away and you could probably anchor further off just as well. The wind backed round the compass during our stay, including an unexpected night of N squalls with gusts well over 30 kt - quite rare according to the islanders. The holding was pretty good but we motored to relieve the pressure on the chain, as the lee hazards were quite close.

Waigori is actually the larger and newer village west of the original one shown on the chart, which may have been the only one when the survey was done. This older village is now called Dakuiloa. In the nineteenth century there was some disagreement that led to the founding of the new village, where the chief lives. This is also the site of the school and clinic. Both villages have churches and the original one has its own headman. You can make sevusevu at either village and be covered for the whole lagoon.

If you anchor on the north side, it is a long dinghy ride around. There are trails across the island to both villages, but the Waigori one is very overgrown - I could not have found it without a guide. The other trail to Dakuiloa is recommended, though you may need hunt a little to find the north end. Here is how:

There are several beaches between limestone points on the north side. The one nearest our anchorage has two wee islets offshore. Land your dinghy here on the east side (left side facing inshore) of the beach. Just inside the trees you should find an area clear of undergrowth, with low coconut palms further in. On the west (right hand facing inshore) corner of this cleared area, there is a coconut tree with Manaina carved into it. Next to the tree is a faint track leading into the coconut palms. In places it may be overgrown, and lead through small ponds, but eventually it will broaden out. A few side trails lead off to plantations, and the main trail should take you to the village (just past the pig pens) through a crude revolving gate in about 20 minutes. Bring the bug spray and a stick to clear away spider webs. Ask permission at
sevusevu to collect some of the delicious lemons on the trailside, and the leaves of the lemon tree also make a tasty tea.

You can hike to Waigori from Dakuiloa, past the grave of the first missionaries to visit Oneata. Both villages have goats, and there is usually a percussion of masi pounders to be heard. You can watch the women making the cloth and painting traditional designs.

The masi cloth is used for wedding clothes and other special occasions, or for decoration. It can be bought directly from the makers, and is sent to Suva along with frozen fish and beche de mer for sale. A small masi is $5-10, a large one will cost $100 or more.

5.9 **Komo**

Cruising Guide References: South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 86

5.9.1 **Pincoya - July 2012**

We went in one pass and out the other, and spent 3 nights of fairly settled wx (10-15kts ESE) 18-39.212S / 178-39.815W (inside pass)

Another pass Outside waypoint: 18-38.700s / 178-38.400W

Just inside 18-39.067S / 178-38.298W

Anchorage 18-40.663S/ 178-37.538W  Sand 10m

Easy trail from beach slightly more NE that goes up and over the ridge to the village. Obvious trail heading SE. 10 minute walk across the island to the village.

We found some great snorkeling at a dinghy pass on the NE tip of island, where the reef meets the island.

5.9.2 **Migration - June 2012**

Komo is a nice island and easy anchorage. About 30’ feet in sand. It wouldn’t be good if the wind wasn’t from the S to SE, unless it wasn’t too strong.

When we were there we had some ESE and it could be a little rolly at high tide. But it wasn’t a problem on our trimaran -- but it might be on a monohull.

There are two paths from the N side anchorage to the village on the S side.

Very fun and friendly teachers at the school: Headmaster Mateni, and teachers Save and Inoke.

From the top of the hill above the school you can get Vodafone service from Lakeba. The teachers call it Callback Mountain because they go up at night to call their friends and family.

We didn’t do much snorkeling, diving, or fishing here so have no comments on it. We did sevusevu in the village and there was no mention of a fee.

5.9.3 **Shandon - 2010**

The Komo East Passage is W-ID-E! The outer approach is 18°38.70S 178°38.40W. The bommie shown on the chart is there and clear to see. I came in on 165°M and cleared it. Note:
there are a number of bommies and shallow patches (>10m) outside the reef. The large rock, shown on the north reef above the 9 of 29 is a good beacon. Once inside I missed the second bommie and had a lovely tack up to the shore.

I anchored in the east position in 7m. The west position may be better as easier to land and possibly less popple. Walked up to the ridge and picked up a path by a garden that led down to the village via the Primary School.

Left via West Passage 18°19.23S 178° 40.34W. Cluster of bommies just before the pass. Ample room & depth between large north bommie and remainder.

5.9.4  **Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007**

Entrance to N Pass: 18 38.58 S / 178 38.53 W  
Entrance to W Pass: 18 38.9 S / 178 40.2 W  
Anchorage: 18 41.24 S / 178 38.66 W 26 feet sand

We approached Komo from the south, sailing up the east reef with a small pod of dolphins. There is a mid channel coral head in the east pass not shown on the chart. As the winds were predicted to back to the north, we chose to anchor south of the west end of Komo Levu. A shallow reef precludes sailing between Komo Levu and Komo Driki. Also keep well clear of the west point of Komo Driki as there is a reef extending here too. The water is somewhat deep up to the reefs that ring the shore, with some bommies.

We left from the West pass, which is wider. However the approach might be trickier as there is a large reef just to the south west.

The village is at the southeast corner of as marked and Suga, a resident, came to the beach near our anchorage to guide us. At low tide you can walk the length of the north and south coasts. If you anchor on the north side of the island, there is a trail from the east side of the coast to the village, passing by the school.

Most villagers (including the chief) attend a daily late afternoon church service. We made our sevusevu after this, then had to return to the boat rather quickly while daylight lasted. Komo has a larger population than similar sized islands (200 people). Its main export is hand braided coconut twine, at FJ$5/25 meters, and red clay which is used as pigment for masi, the painted bark cloth made on other islands.

We found good snorkeling on the north sides of Komo Driki, along the north side of the reef connecting it to Komo Levu and the west point of Komo Levu. The areas near the S reef were a bit bare but scattered large bommies inshore in 8-10 feet were interesting.

5.10  **Mothe (Moce)***

**Pincoya - July 2012:** We went in at the place shown on the chart as "boat passage" in flat dead calm. There wasn't a straight pass to go in, but an obvious open spot in the reef with only widely scattered bommies. In these near-perfect conditions, it wasn't hard to pick our way in between the bommies into the lagoon.
From Soggy Paws: after looking at Shandon's info and the Google Earth Chart: The Shandon waypoint below is obviously wrong (plots to the west of the atoll). But the Google Earth chart looks like it has a pass in the same position that Shandon indicates on his paper chart, at approx 18-41.4S / 178-28.78W Pincoya confirmed that this was the general area where they entered, but they did not give us a waypoint, because you must go in visually..

We anchored first up near the village of Nasaua, at 18-40.326S / 178-29.814W

Approaching the village, there is a reef with black ball on the end of the reef. Give this 20 meters clearance to clear the end of the reef. For dinghy access, there are 2 rock piles exposed at LW. The left one has a stick, the right one is not visible at high tide. It's a long muddy walk at low tide. Tie your dinghy to one of the rock piles and walk or wade in (this is better than trying to take the dinghy all the way in).

There is a second village on the island, Corotolu. It is just across a 'ditch' from Nasaua, and they share the same chief.

We spent a couple of weeks here, and were the only boat here.

Moce had some beautiful tapas for very reasonable prices.

The villagers later led us to the Coroni Island Anchorage at 18-41.931S/ 178-28.999W in among bommies, 4m deep. Beautiful, but we would have never gone in there by ourselves.

**Shandon - 2010:** The Boat Passage into the lagoon is a challenge, which may explain why so few yachts visit the island. I was the first in 2010. A waypoint of 18°41.3S 178°31.9W took me to a 7m-deep gap that was about 15m wide (Ed note, this waypoint is wrong). It was about LW+1.5hrs and the water was gushing out at about 1 knot. Once inside, the depth comes up to about 4m. Steer between the two shallow patches and make for the NW tip of Karoni Island.

The next gap is hardly 10m wide and passes within about 10m of the NW tip of Komo I.

Once through steer 250° towards the west reef, then curve slowly around leaving Moce to port. Look for a reddish float buoy marking the outer edge of a reef that nearly dries. The least depth is 4m. I anchored in 4m at 18°40.35S 178°29.73W. The beach and reef come out a long way and dry at low water. The two villages shown on the chart are, to all intents, one separated by a drain. The only chief is in Nasau.

Once through, steer 250°M towards the outer reef to gain deeper water, then steer gently to starboard towards the south tip of Moce.

5.11 Yagasa Levu (Yangasa)

*Cruising Guide References:* South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 86

**Pincoya - July 2012:** Yagasa is under joint control of Namuku, Komo, Mothe. Longboats go fishing for sea cucumbers. Someone told them that there are sea horses there, but they never saw them.

Big wide open pass 18-54.843S / to 178-29.693W to 18-55.622S / 178-29.250W

Anchored off Yagasu Levu in 10m clear water sand at 18-56.911S / 178-27.371W

Can Anchor off small islet SW, on N side.
**Migration - June 2012:** This is the largest of a group of uninhabited islands. A booby colony with lots of birds. Pass was wide open. Here are our waypoints:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waypoint</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 001</td>
<td>S18°54.706’ / W178°29.855’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 002</td>
<td>S18°55.781’ / W178°29.838’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W 003</td>
<td>S18°56.181’ / W178°29.356’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 004</td>
<td>S18°56.809’ / W178°27.309’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anchorred in 12-14 meters

I'm sure you could cut across the shallow crescent shown on the chart but we chose to go around it as visibility wasn't perfect when we entered. It was very windy from the SE but the anchorage was flat calm --- just some swirling winds occasionally. Pretty place with some interesting snorkeling including what looked like an underwater freshwater spring to the NE of the anchorage. We didn't go ashore. It didn't look possible where we were. We did not circumnavigate to see if it was possible somewhere else.

Fishing was good off the NE corner but sharks took our catch from the lines quickly.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** The villagers in Fulaga told us to be careful anchoring in Yagasu. There is no village there, and sometimes fishermen stopping there can steal stuff if you leave your boat unattended.

**Shandon - 2010:** I would not call here again except in very calm conditions. The islands are unoccupied. The approach is wide. The west side is protected from SE swell so the reef is difficult to pick up until close to.

I had been told of the anchorage on Navutuiloma – shown with the red anchor. The approach is possible but a mine field of vertical rocks and mushrooms with <7m between them. However, the anchorage looked shallow and exposed to the W20k blowing at the time. I ended up on the north side – black anchor – tucked in behind a steep bluff with a hole in it at water level.

The bottom is rough and smooth coral. There are two small sand patches just inside the bluff. I aimed for the inner one but over shot. I dived on the anchor (Rocna) and set it behind a coral ledge. The chain sank into the sand so I doubt if it has any holding power. The anchorage offered good enough protection although the popple came in at high water. Pity, because it is an attractive spot.

WP of anchorage: 18°57.7S 178°29.3W.

**5.12 Namuka-i-Lau**

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 86

**Pincoya - July 2012:**

**West Pass** - Line up a small rock islet, painted white, with white coconut tree on island. Is a man-made range. Some bommies close, but right there, easily seen, wide apart.

18-50.577S / 178-40.921W Outside pass
18-50.766S / 178-40.364W Outside harbor, some bommies on route.

Harbor anchorage
18-50.829S / 178-40.215W in 4-5m sand, good holding. Right off beach. Spokesman for beach has garden. Trail to village on left side of garden. 45 minute walk to village.

Other pass: Real tricky. There is a reef the runs out into the lagoon. You have to pass Inshore of this reef--you need almost touch the island. 4-5 meters deep. Scary

18-49.732S / 178-39.333W then hang a left and go out to 18-49.362S / 178-39.578W

**Shandon - 2010:** The first fact to know is that the anchorage is one of the most secure and the depth is under 5m, not 20m+ as shown on the chart.

I crossed the reef at 18°43.73S 178°39.84W with not less than 10m. Wiggling through isolated bommies under sail was not hard. The problem comes when rounding the NW tip to enter the anchorage.

Hug the cave point then come out to avoid the reef off the right point. Take your pick on where to anchor. 18°50.8S 178° 40.2W is where I ended up.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** Namuka i Lau is about 20 miles north of Fulaga, and is a great stop. Anchor on the west end of the island at approximately 18-50.8 S / 178-40.2W.

There is a path to the village from this anchorage (just inshore from anchor spot). After about 40 minutes of walking, you will come to a fork in the path, take the right fork. 45 minutes total walking time to the village. Spokesperson is pink house on the left. Beautiful lawn area, watch out for bees if barefoot. Anchorage all sand.

The village is located at approximately 18-51.1 S / 178-38.15 W.
5.13 Fulaga (Vulaga, Fulanga)

CYAN's Map of Fulaga - See Cyan Info Below

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 85-86

**Background info:** The primary village is called Moana-i-Cake (remember the "c" is pronounced "th"), the village next to that is Moana-i-Ra, and the village at the north end on the lagoon is Naividamu. You do your sevusevu in Moana-i-Cake and you are good for the whole lagoon.

Contact info for village

Mail:
Niko Fukana (this is I believe the chief's son, but address is same for all in village)
Muana-I-Cake
Vulaga P.A.
Lau
Fiji

They only get mail with the monthly supply boat.

**Village phone in Muana-i-Cake** - at Sikeli & Sera's house, which serves the entire village:
6030423 Call this number, ask for your party, and whoever answers the phone will go get whoever it is. Be prepared to hang up and call back in 10 minutes.
VHF: Soggy Paws gave Sera, the village nurse, a VHF radio. She theoretically is in her office around 8:30-4:30, and may have the radio on. She uses Fulanga Radio as her callsign. A good time to try to contact her is around 8:30am. She also stands by on SSB 8068.5--a 'chat' frequency for the Lau medical clinics--when she is in the office. So if you can't raise her on VHF, try this SSB frequency, and ask her to turn on the VHF. You need a pretty strong VHF with good antenna to talk reliably with Sera from the SE anchorage.

The VHF in the nursing station is using a tiny 'emergency' antenna (the only one Soggy Paws could spare), if you have a spare VHF antenna in working order, you might help out by upgrading their antenna installation for more reliable comms with the cruisers.

Prominent Village Names:

Note that most names that end in English with a consonant, have an 'i' added to the end when pronounced in Fijian. Ex: David is commonly called Daviti, Simon is Simoni, etc.

Chief's son - Miko or Niko (we think). Chief was away in Suva while we were there.

Teachers in the school - Tao (female, headmistress), David, Israel, George (young guys).

George's wife's name is Ma.

Cruiser representatives - Tai, Simon, Sera/Sikeli It used to be Tai that handled all or most of the cruiser contact, but with more cruisers visiting, they have started a system of rotating the duty/pleasure among volunteer hosts in the village. They should inform you of who your host is when you come in for sevusevu.

5.13.1 Idyl Island - July 2013 - Fulaga Update

We did meet Sikeli and passed along your Hello. He was helpful translating for some of the older people we fitted with reading glasses and we were also able to provide him with a pair and some sunnies. All told, we handed out about 80 pairs of readers and 150 sunglasses amongst the 3 villages - great to be able to help.

We have done 3 dives in the past 2 days, all to the right, as you exit the pass. The topography is amazing with all the canyons, caves and tunnels. Also saw about a dozen new-to-us fish. A few white tips cruising around and some big gouper and wrasse off the wall. Viz is about 100'.

We are really enjoying it here, even with the 20+ boats now in the lagoon! This place is now on the circuit. It will be interesting to see how the villagers handle the influx over the next couple of years. Times they are a'changin'.

5.13.2 Soggy Paws - August 2012 - Timing the Pass

Migrations' figure of 2 hours and 15 minutes after low tide, for the slack, based on the Moala tide from WXTide32, was spot-on for us. The outgoing tide goes slack at about this point, and within about 15 minutes, turns incoming.

The outgoing tide, even in fairly light conditions, makes a pretty daunting set of standing waves outside the pass. The current starts at about 1 knot outside the pass, and as the pass narrows and shallows, the current picks up to about 4 knots.

On the high tide, the slack comes almost at the same time as the Moala high tide, and lasts longer. The high tide slack lasts nearly an hour. If you are trying to snorkel or dive, it's best to
get out in the pass before the time of high tide. The water is clearer then, when the water is still incoming.

On the incoming tide, the pass is much easier to navigate by dinghy or big boat. In winds to 15 knots ESE-SE, there are almost no standing waves in the pass. (we haven’t been out near the pass in higher winds). While diving, you get about a half-hour warning before the current turns and starts going out--the water starts to cloud up a bit. It’s not as pretty then, but this seems to be the time of maximum fish--when the nutrients from the inner lagoon start flowing out the pass.

Even when the tide is in full flood, it's not bad, either in a dinghy or in a yacht. So if you're worried about the tide on entering Fulaga, try to do it on a rising tide (between 2 hrs after Low tide and about 30 minutes after High tide at Moala)

5.13.3 Pincoya August 2012

Pass - 19-07.360S / 178-32.360W outside

Pass on an outgoing tide, will have standing waves with eddies. They cut the corner coming in, to miss the worst of the waves.

Stay close to the rock/island on the port side.

Once inside, looking at line of islets. Can go thru 2 different ways.

Anchorages:

19-07.993S / 178-32.465 anchorage for pass & snorkeling. OK overnight. 6-7m sand/some coral.

Snorkeling inside the lagoon is mediocre in general.

There are small tiny passes to get out to the reef in your dinghy (with a strong motor). Anchor at 19-098.454S / 178-32.227W go there for dinghy ride thru islets. 3 little tiny passes that you can take the dinghy thru (4kts current in and out usually).

Favorite anchor spot was 19-09.155S / 178-32.415W sand 4-5 m. Hug bay with big sand spit, coconut trees, no swell or roll, good protection.

Sevusevu: 19-08.950S / 178-34.000W trailhead to village. Longboats, sailing canoe, building storage shed. Village 20 minutes walk, and buggy, dress for mozzies and take bug spray. It's not too bad IN the village, but the path to the village is bad.

They make and sell Kava bowls & other handicrafts in the village.

Anchorage approx 19-08.381S / 178-34.798W. Found clams in the sand, large size, cleared over the side first, then put in spaghetti.

Good snorkeling near (NW of) anchorage 19-07.236S / 178-33.116W along the inside reef. Limestone arch. 4m sand.

5.13.4 Migration June 2012

Fulaga is a really beautiful place. Often said to be one of the most beautiful in Fiji... and we agree. The only problem is that the chief is charging a flat fee of $50 when you go in for
Sevusevu (June 2012). It is totally worth it, but we don’t like it because if every island starts doing it... well...

**Important:** Sevusevu must be done at the town of **Muanaicake**, not at **Naividamu** which is the town you can see from within the lagoon. Muanaicake is where the head chief is. If you do sevusevu anywhere else, you will still have to do it at Muanaicake. More below.

**CMAP Chart (2008):** The location of the pass is correct but the detail within the lagoon is not correct. There are hundreds of small islands that are not shown on the chart.

**The Pass:** Absolutely excellent snorkeling. Make sure you go all the way out to the drop off. On the pass’s NW corner there are huge schools of snapper, barracuda, tuna, etc. There are also some sharks, turtles, and big grouper. There are a couple of nice pinnacles off the NE corner of the pass that are worth a snorkel or probably a dive.

As with most passes, the visibility for snorkeling is better on the incoming tide.

We used Cyan’s waypoints for the pass -- see below.

**Current in the Pass:** The current rips pretty good in the pass because it is so narrow. Low slack was at 1324 Local on the 3rd July 2012. *(Ed note: here are the Moala Tides for that day from WXTide32 and using Fiji Standard Time)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Tide</th>
<th>High Tide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:13 FST</td>
<td>17:06 FST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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Navigating through the lagoon and pass was pretty easy with good light. It is narrow. We saw 14’ minimum. After the pass, we sailed with just the jib and it was delightful.

**$50 Fee:** We feel it is very important that the chief and his second (Tai) understand how cruisers feel about the fee. Yes, it is not that much money (especially when compared to the fees charged at Daliconi in Vanua Balavu), but it’s the principle. We had a long discussion offering to make a donation to the school instead of paying the fee but we couldn’t get them to change their mind nor did they seem to understand why we didn’t like it. Tai speaks very good English (the chief does not speak English). Tai once worked at Musket Cove and is pretty savvy with the tourist trade. He asked why we shouldn’t pay a fee at Fulaga when yachts pay $10/night in Musket Cove. And when a cruise ship comes to Fulaga they must pay $1,500. He didn’t want to accept that at Musket Cove you are getting a mooring and facility access and the cruise ship is a commercial operation. So we paid the fee and just let him know that we didn’t think it was the friendly Fijian way that we had experienced everywhere else.

**Mosquitoes:** The mosquitoes ashore are ferocious. It seems like paradise must have at least one negative, so take your mosquito repellent ashore with you... especially when you hike the trail to Muanaicake. We’ve never seen so many mosquitoes in Fiji. The mosquitoes didn’t bother the other boats in the E anchorage but we did get some onboard. And they liked to sneak aboard by hiding in the dinghy as well.

**Anchorages**

**Yanuyanukalou:** Our favorite anchorage was at the small island of Yanuyanukalou. 20’ sand at 19°07.97’S / 178°34.31’W
4 people live on the island: The old man Bera, his son Cama, daughter-in-law Millie, and their adopted daughter, Buna. Very, very nice people. They have a little oasis in the middle of this big oasis. Cama, Millie and Buna will probably go to Suva so only Bera might be there. He is a very friendly man but speaks little English. He did say he would be happy to have visitors. One should always go in and greet him and ask permission to anchor at his island (and take him a gift if you'd like).

MUANAICAKE Village: For sevusevu you must go to the main village which is not the village you can see from the lagoon.

Anchorage off the path to the village: 019-08.9 S / 178-34.00 W

You can anchor the boat there or just take the dinghy from somewhere else in the lagoon (which we did). Whatever you do, take bug repellent!! The mosquitoes were ferocious on the path to the village.

East Anchorage: The E anchorage is beautiful and could fit several hundred boats. 10-20’ sand.

We anchored at 019-08.23 S / 178-32.39 W, but anywhere is fine. Just have a look out when coming into the area between the islands. I'm not a hundred percent sure but I think you must be down around 19-08.22’ S. The area to the N of this is too shallow (or is blocked by small islands).

MUANAIRA Village

Anchorage for the path to get to Muanaira Village: 019-08.24 S / 178-35.30 W

The village of Muanaira is very nice and we found the people friendly. We used this as a day anchorage for our visit. It's about a half mile dinghy ride to the path from this anchorage, through the tiny pass between the rocks to the SW and then to the SSE (I think) across the very shallow lagoon into a small inlet. Sorry, but don't have a lat/lon for the path. One will have to make an exploratory adventure of it.

You can also get to Muanaira by carrying on through Muanicake and on that path for 5-10 minutes.

There are hundreds of places you could anchor in Fulaga and you could spend months exploring.

5.13.5 Midnight Sun - July 2012

Notes taken over sundowners with Midnight Sun... Midnight Sun spent 5 weeks there.

The chief's assistant is Tai, who used to work at Musket Cove, and is very cruiser-savvy and speaks good English. There are several villages in the atoll, but you only need to do sevusevu at the #1 village. Ashore it can be buggy, because there is a big lake inside, with fresh water. But out on the boats, we never had a problem. Migration reported mosquitoes but they are a trimaran, and may have anchored too close to shore.

Tai organized everything for us, and took them to see the 82-year old chief Besi.

The primary village in the SW corner is the main village. Beyond that is the 2nd village.
Biu is the lobster guy, lives in the second village, is a pastor. Tai can get you set up to go lobstering with Biu.

The area they like was hanging out on the NE side of the lagoon.

Best fun snorkeling was in the pass.

**Entering the Pass:** Pass, entering, on port side, end of pass, rock/island 40' high, leave that rock/island to port, very close. You will see bits of black, that's shallow coral. Head for the sandy patch. 4.5 meters deep at low tide. In the pass, it's deep, its just inside that it shallows up. The pass is 25 meters wide and can have up to 4 knots of current. But don't worry about state of current on entry (some standing waves outside on an outgoing tide, but only for about 50').

On the incoming tide, it is flat calm. They have been in and out on their boat at all states of tide and aren't worried about it.

Best pass snorkeling is on either tide incoming our outgoing, at half tide, when the current is really moving. You will see lots of fish, sharks, barracudas, snapper, etc. The incoming tide is better with schools of fish. You need to start at the deep blue, where you see the big schools. They were told by the villagers that barracudar are OK to eat at Fulaga.

The $50 fee in Fulaga goes into community pot, not to the chief.

There is a shop in the village where you can buy biscuits, flour, and carvings like kava bowls. The village owns the shop, you cannot buy carvings from an individual. Everything that the village creates goes into the shop. The carvings are made from Vesi timber--grows in Fulaga.

The soil won't permit the growing of kava there, so they have to buy it all from other islands. Many of the islands in the Lau, including Fulanga, cannot grow kava. So it is scarce there. Buy your kava before you arrive, or in Matuku, or Taveuni.

**5.13.6 Delos - June 2011**

“What has been your favorite place?” This question is by far the most common we get from people and also the hardest to answer. The island of Fulaga (pronounced Fulanga) in the Lau group of Fiji may be the answer from now on. Fulaga is a horse-shoe shaped island in the Southern Lau group of Fiji’s untouched waters and is by far one of the most beautiful places in the South Pacific. Its inner lagoon is dotted with hundreds of small limestone islands with palms rising from them.

The bases of these islands have been worn away over time by the clear turquoise water to give them a mushroom top shape. Throughout the lagoon is an abundance of picturesque white sand beaches stretching as far as you can see. If the jungles of the Marquesas, the clear turquoise water of Bora-Bora, the limestone formations and caves of Niue and the beaches of Tonga all had a child this would begin to describe Fulaga. Anchoring here is as good as it gets with calm protected bays everywhere, none of which are deeper than 20 ft., all with sand bottoms.

We entered the pass at 19-07.243’S / 178-32.350’W with a bearing of 205 M. The pass is about 50 meters wide and the coral edges are easily visible. Apart from a few reported bommies toward the inside of the pass, which can easily be navigated with someone on the bow and good light, the minimum depth we saw was around 20 ft. Paul and I took the lead in the
dinghy to be safe and guide Delos in with frequent depth checks looking for the closest anchorage.

After days of beating into the trade winds we found an ideal, perfectly calm anchorage in 13 ft., sand, at 19 08.131'S 178 32.266'W. We all were in need of a good nights rest and crashed pretty early.

“Bula, Bula, Bula” Chico said from the fiberglass dinghy as it pulled up next to Delos around 11:00 a.m. the next day. She had a huge smile even though only having a few front teeth left.

The dinghy was filled with about 6 women all out on the water for a lovely Saturday of net fishing. The man driving was Mele (MAY-lay), the “mayor” of the main village and the husband of Chico. “Where you come from?” Chico asked. “The 3 of us are American and he is from Australia”, I said while pointing to Darren on the paddle board. For some odd reason Australians have strange reputations in these islands and always get shit from the locals, which of course obligates us to give him shit as well. Darren reckons it’s because Australia always beats Fiji at rugby. “Oye? hehehee, Australia” Chico said. We told them we would come into the village later that day and meet everyone and do our Sevu- Sevu with the chief. Brian showed Mele our Lau permit who stared at it blankly for 5 seconds then handed it to Chico. We came to the conclusion he could hardly speak English, let alone read it.

They pushed off of Delos all smiling and giggling and headed for the mangroves to do some more net fishing. An hour or so later only Mele and Chico returned inviting us to go fishing and collect oranges, then they would lead us to the anchorage in front of the village once they caught enough fish. Of course we jumped at the opportunity for random villager interaction and piled into the fiber. In the villages thus far only the women fish with nets so it was a spectacle for these women to see four grown white men jumping around in the mangroves and collecting fish for them. They laughed and teased us the whole time. We took a short break and went back into the mangroves which turned quickly into jungle. Two minutes away from the fishing spot was a huge orange tree. Chico wove a basket out of palm fronds in a matter of minutes and loved showing off how fast she was at it. Soon after, the basket was filled with oranges and we returned to collecting fish.

Chico later asked if we had a spare two liters of premix fuel because the supply ship wasn’t due to arrive for another five days. Instead of giving them our precious fuel we came up with an alternative plan that made everyone happy. “How bout all of you pile onto Delos and we will tow your boat to the village, saving you fuel”? Brian suggested. Chico looked so surprised at the idea of us allowing them to ride on the “big boat” as they called it. They gratefully accepted the offer and one by one piled into the cockpit of Delos.

With me up the mast looking for shallow areas and a local pointing the direction of the village, Delos wove in and out of the limestone islands until we came into a super protected lagoon with 3 or 4 men, each on a traditional Fijian canoe, line fishing.

We anchored at 19-08.935'S / 178-33.944'W and sat around while Chico and the gang went looking for crabs. As they passed by in the boat an hour later they waved at us to follow them to shore in our dinghy and walk to the village.

Village life in Fulaga is pure and simple. They make their money from carvings that get sent to the resorts and sold in the gift shops, although money is pretty useless in the villages because the carvings are also the main currency on the island. An 8 inch carved bowl is worth $8 credit
in the shop, a 9 inch carved bowl is worth $9 and so on. The shop owner then ships all the carvings back on the supply ship to be sold to tourists. Everything in the simple shop is purchased using this barter system for carvings.

Like other islands they live off a diet of fish, coconut, cassava, sweet potato and a type of sea algae they call “sea grapes”. Everything is of course boiled or cooked somehow in sweet coconut milk. The main reason why we loved Fulaga so much was simply the people. As we walked into the village we immediately noticed the well kept yards and homes. Even the dirt around the huts was raked daily.

The men stopped whatever they were doing to give us a big smile, say “bula, welcome to Fulaga”. We weren’t assigned a village guide like every other village nor were we asked for anything. We were able to walk around the village as we pleased when ever we really wanted, in fact each time we came to the village it was another person we met and talked to for a while. Children from everywhere would come running toward us and follow us everywhere, holding our hands. A few were so amazed with our skin they would rub our arms while looking at their own. “They don’t see too many Kaipalangis (white person)” one of the villagers explained.

They only see about three boats a year here and of the three one is a small ship that anchors outside the reef and takes old European tourist in to one of the pristine beaches for the day, no interaction with the village occurs though. The other cruising yachts that happen to make it all the way to Fulaga head straight to the one village that is visible from the inside of the lagoon and anchor there. Chico and Mele happen to be from a village on the outer side of the island which is connected to the lagoon by a 20 minute walk through the island.

We spent 8 days exploring Fulaga and could have easily spent another 3 weeks there. We wake boarded in and out of the limestone islands, held human remains of victims from cannibalism days, crawled from one kava party to another, made children cry because you were first white person they had seen, dove the most striking coral walls and met the most beautiful honest people. Fulaga truly was a once in a lifetime

5.13.7 Mandala - 2011

This island consists of an oval rim of jungle-covered hills of raised coral, around a lagoon about 6 miles by 5 miles. There is one 50m-wide pass into the lagoon, straight but challenging - and dangerous in bad weather or strong tides. Inside the lagoon are countless mushroom islets, and some larger islands, countless anchorages over white sand, usually <10m deep. At least one anchorage could be considered hurricane shelter. I consider this island to be Fiji’s most beautiful!

Population is about 400 in three villages, one village ((Naivindamu) on the W shore inside the lagoon and the other two outside, on the southern edge, with tracks leading from the lagoon to them. The head-village, Monacake, has the school and clinic, and is on the outer edge. No airport, and very infrequent ships make this a very isolated world, rarely visited by yachts.

5.13.8 Cyan - SSCA Bulletin June 2008

We motor-sailed 48 hours to cover the 200 miles from Suva to Fulanga. We chose a time right after the passing of a weather system (low, front, trough) when the wind will gradually move around from all directions, usually counterclockwise. This happens about every two to three
weeks and calms the trades that would have been against us while giving very little help from the west (like 5-8 knots). We had a full moon and clear weather for a nice passage.

We found the reef at Fulanga and followed it around northwards to the clear view of the pass.

We approached island from the west and followed the NE side of surrounding reef to the obvious pass which heads SW into lagoon. We stayed to the port [SE] side of the pass due to current drifting us NW to starboard, on a slight incoming tide, [1 hour before high tide in Lakemba, the only tide info we had]. Current was only moderate and depth was 14’ to 20’ in the pass but might be a bit deeper in very center of the 100’+ wide pass.

The pass was narrow and shallower than stated in "South Pacific Anchorages" (we saw 14’ but stayed to port due to the current in the middle), but we had no problem and stayed fairly close to the big rock island inside the entry on the port side to avoid two easily seen coral heads. Clay says that it's best to aim for the clearer water at high tide, and that seemed accurate. We also liked the clear, high tide water, better for snorkeling. We passed closer to the big rock just inside the pass, than expected and the coral head we saw might have been the eastern of the 2 shown in the "South Pacific Anchorages".

We found the village of Navendamu straight to the west and anchored there to go ashore for our offering of grog, yagona. That's the one pound (½ kilo) bunch of kava wrapped for us back at the Suva market. We had brought four at $12 each on average. Sulus (wraps) or skirts were worn over shorts (men and women); shoulders were covered but heads were not (it is an insult to wear a head-covering, even a visor); sunglasses were removed when entering the village. We were guided to the old chief, and our gift was accepted with a ceremony in Fijian and our cruising permit read and approved. We also brought pictures of our family and the boat, interior and exterior, because that is what was most often asked about. We formally asked for permission to anchor, dive, fish, burn trash on a secluded beach, hike and perform any other activity we might expect to do. This was always freely granted. A guide was always given for village tours and walks. One day we were respectfully asked not to come to the village due to a special church conference meeting, and we understood our place.

Our Pass Waypoints:

Line up outside pass WP: 19-07.310S / 178-32.404W
Middle of pass WP: 19-07.554S / 178-32.542W

I know this is more WP's than anyone needs but if I'd had had them on our Raymarine Plotter I would have felt better just looking at them all lined up. Our Raymarine 120 Navionics Gold chart was brief on this island but amazingly accurate.

Other waypoints we noticed inside reef:

Coral head on port in mid lagoon : 19-07.818S / 178-33.605W
[By sight from boat on our route NW thru lagoon]
Center Lagoon Rock 19-07.597S / 178-33.943W
[stands out in mid lagoon]
Village anchorage NW of "Onepalm" Isle: 19-07.306S / 178-36.628W

<<<<!!!!!!! Migration sez:: I think the above degrees of longitude should be 35.628 not 36.628 Otherwise it puts the anchorage on the W side of the island which you can't get to in a yacht.!!!!!!
Coralhead on way to cove from village: 19-07.967S / 178-35.118W [approx by sight]
"Protected Anchorage" 19-08.325S / 178-34.844W

**Village info:** We first anchored at the village in 15-20' for 2 nights for sevusevu, check-in with Chief and permission to fish, swim, explore, etc. There is a big, wide shallow reef [1-3'] all along in front of Navindamu village. Village personality was not as warm as we expected. We'd read that some remote villages they just want to know when you are leaving. We wanted carvings and had to pry info out of them. They are just not outgoing but, more private folks.

### 5.14 Ogea (Ongea)

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 85

**Pincoya - August 2012:** We went into pass SW. 19-10.607S / 178-27.452W

19-10.889S / 178-28.205W

Driki anchorage 19-12.315S / 178-26.049W at edge of sand shelf. Shelf is less than 3m, they anchored 5-6m, and back of boat off drop-off.

See the wreck on chart. Just inside wreck is great snorkeling, approx: 19-12.331S / 178-26.423W

We were asked for $50, but told them that we were leaving in the morning, and did not pay the $50.

N end of Driki is just spectacular, beaches, etc. But it is too shallow for big boats to anchor in.

Village on Ogea Levu: Cheshire's anchorage was too shallow in our opinion. We went up to the west side of Ogea Levu, and thought we could find a good anchorage, but the anchorage we spent overnight at was not good. Swelly.

From the blog: We motorsailed to the Ongea southern pass and planted the pick on the sw side Ongea Driki Island. We were well offshore but in only 3 meters deep water and exposed to the swell at high tide, rolling our way through the night.

The next morning, we went for a long dinghy tour, first to the North end of Driki where we found beautiful bays and beaches with many more small limestone islands with overhanging edges. Very beautiful, but unfortunately the bays were less than 3M deep and not possible for a yacht to anchor in the protected areas.

We then went to the SW corner and the barrier reef, exploring over to an old shipwreck; possibly an old fishing boat maybe 90 feet long. After admiring the rusted large engine, we turned back towards Pincoya. When we got to 4M deep water, we went for a beautiful snorkel around the stunning coral heads with large fish communities in them, very worthwhile!

Returning to Pincoya, we upped anchor and went to the S end of Ongea Levu, the northern island to explore the bay with the village. Again we were stopped in a beautiful but shallow bay, not deep enough to go near the village. We proceeded up the W side of Ongea Levu, hoping to find an anchorage protected from the prevailing SW swell and ended up anchoring in less than 3M at fairly low tide. We put out a stern anchor to hopefully keep us endwise to the large swell, but at 2am, we were rolled awake. Turns out I had placed the stern anchor too far on the port side and when the tide switched direction in the middle of the night, Pincoya swung all the way
to the port side sideways to the swell and the stern anchor would not bring us back. So we rolled our way to daybreak when we got the hell out of there! Oh, forgot to mention, a longboat with 2 locals paid us a visit at sundown, wanting us to come to the village and do sevu sevu, plus pay a $50 Fiji anchoring fee. We gave one a tour of our boat; they were disappointed to hear we would leave in the morning looking for smoother anchorages in the Yagasa cluster 12 miles N of us. Off they went and we tightened security by putting the fishing rods downstairs and the dinghy in the air with the genaker halyard.

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** When we were there, the villagers had heard that Fulaga was charging $50 to anchor, so they also instituted an anchoring fee. Unlike Fulaga, this is an exposed and rolly anchorage. We only stayed one night and left, without paying the fee.

**Shandon - 2010:** The approach and entrance are wonderfully straightforward. 19°10.8S 178°27.6S will take you to the deep, clean pass; >200m in the entrance to <10m inside. Then appeared clean with <10m all the way to where I anchored on sand. Once inside, aim for the bare, tall, broken cliffs (042°M) – photo 1. There is sand along the whole of the cliff face with a scattering of coral patches. I anchored in 5m 19°10.2S 178°26.1W in surprising peace and quiet whilst E20k stirred up wavelets between the islands.

Getting to the village is quite a trek. It is at the head of the bay to the east. The approach comes as a surprise as the bay is reminiscent of the Morbihan with islets scattered around the bay like confetti. Most of the bottom is white sand and shallow <1m at low water. Except for a shallow channel, the whole of the final approach to the village dries at low water; so if you do not want to drag your dinghy for much of the way, aim for high water when there will be 1m at the village.

There are beaches on Ogea Driki but precious few on south Levu, except at low water. Apparently there are beaches to the north.

Ogea Levu is one the most traditional villages I came across. Photo taking allowed on Sunday, but nothing else; no exchange of gifts, no generator. Church at 1000 – stunning singing.

**Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007:**

Entrance to pass: 19 10.8 S / 178 27.37 W

First anchorage: 19 10.4 S / 178 25.9 W 20-25 feet

Second anchorage: 19 10.18 S / 178 25.23 W 12 feet

Third anchorage: 19 09.94 S / 178 25.09 W 8 feet All sand

When we first arrived, we weren’t sure of the village location, so we anchored in a bight at the SW corner of Ogea Levu. This was a pretty place (first anchorage), but exposed SW to E. Two ladies who were fishing directed us to the village, in a bight off the large central bay, so we went there (second anchorage). This would be a suitable place for most cruising boats to anchor to visit the village for sevusevu, but it is exposed SW to SE. The following day we made our way to the third anchorage, which was well protected during several subsequent days of strong tradewinds and off the headland near the village. We had to cross a shoal between two islets, and saw the depthsounder reach 7.5 feet (high tide). Deeper draft boats will prefer the conventional anchorage off Ogea Driki. We did not visit it, and were warned that there were
many mosquitoes. It may also be possible to anchor in one of the northern or western bights of Ogea Levu.

**General:** The two bights adjacent to the village are very flat and dry out at mid to low tide. You can leave your dinghy part way down, but be prepared to wade back if the tide is rising.

The bay in which we anchored was beautiful, with wee limestone islets on eroded bases scattered through blue green water and many bights for exploring. We saw a large ray swimming about. At high tide, Ogea Levu is divided by a tidal stream, which is navigable by dinghy, from this bay to the large northwest bay. We debated whether Cheshire could make it in, as it is narrow in places. If so it would be a great hurricane hole, though the island is low enough to be subject to storm surge. There don't appear to be many paths on the island as most of the 20 families have a boat and commute thus to their plantations. The villagers were very friendly and came by to give us coconuts, lobsters and small bony fish.

We snorkeled on the reefs on the east and west sides of the lagoon, and found nicer coral on the west side, north of the pass. There was a fair current on the east side. Ogea used to be a center of traditional canoemaking, but this appears to have stopped with the introduction of outboards and panga style fishing boats. Lobsters are caught here and frozen for transport to Suva.

### 5.15 Moala

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 91, A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 112-113

The Moala Islands are a subgroup of Fiji's Lau archipelago. Its three islands (Matuku, Moala, and Totoya) are located west of the Lau Islands proper, and were historically linked more closely with Bau Island and Viti Levu than with Lau.

They were unified by Ratu Sukuna to part of the Lau congregation to support traditional gift through provision of taro and other vegetables. All three islands were not defeated by Enele Maafu but greeted him and his entourage as they first landed on their shores.

The main economic activity of the Moala Islands is coconut, and root crop farming including marine and fisheries.

### 5.15.1 Delos - June 2011

After our quick Astrolabe stop we attempted to sail to Totoya, an island directly East but the trades had backed slightly south east and pushed us to the north. After an overnight sail we ended up at an island called Moala. There isn't much in the way of cruising guides around here so we picked what looked to be a good break in the reef and slowly, slowly, slowly motored our way towards the island. Turns out we found a good break where we never saw less than 100 feet of water until very close to the shore.

We anchored off a picturesque beach and spent 2 days exploring the shore and reef between Delos and the beach.

The reef at Moala is one of the most incredible I've ever seen in my life. Such an abundance of coral and fish. I'd say you never have less than 10 types of coral in view at any one time.
There were ledges and drop-offs to explore, and undercut areas in the coral for free diving. We did four different snorkeling trips over our two days here and each time it got better and better. There is something cool about visiting the same spot in a reef over and over and seeing something different each time.

While exploring on land we found a fresh water stream coming down from the mountains, cutting through the beach to finally enter the lagoon. We hiked up and up and up the stream, hacking our way through dense jungle and scrambling up cliffs and boulders. The scenery was dense, untouched, and very raw. Vines hung from the trees thick enough to climb Tarzan style. The jungle was so dense it completely blocked out the sun, only allowing it to peek through every now and then. We could have spent all day hiking to reach the top but were content to sit at the top of a small waterfall and listen to the sounds of the jungle surrounding us.

Over the course of our stay no less than half a dozen local village boats cruised by, which was strange to us since we couldn’t see a village in either direction. All of them asked to see our papers which was also a bit off. We have never, ever been asked for papers anywhere and were feeling a bit unwelcome until the island police chief stopped by. He explained that there was an island meeting for all 13 of the villages on the island and we were anchored on the path to the village where the meeting was held today. Every boat that went by was full of island officials. We guessed they were really just curious and wanted to talk, using the guise of checking papers as an excuse to stop by.

He said we were welcome to stay as long as we wanted, and guests of anyone on the island were guests of the entire island. They had no hotels or tourist facilities on the island and didn’t get visitors very often.

He wanted us to come tie up at the pier in the main village, saying it would be much more convenient for us. I thought about the nasty concrete piers we’d seen over the past year in the South Pacific. Rusty re-bar sticking out at odd angles, terrible surge bashing you against the concrete, fenders rubbing and squeaking, locals gathering to look in your windows. Thank you, but we prefer to stay on the hook in our little slice of paradise.

5.15.2 Shandon - 2010

Moala is the largest island in the Moala Group with a population over 1,000 in nine villages. It has an airfield with weekly flights to Suva.

18°31.7S 179°56.3E will get you into the wide pass. The reef to the west is not a traditional, surf-breaking line, but largely a collection of bommies with virtually no surf. I came in on 150°M on East Cape although the GPS said COG was 160°. This leaves a cluster of small bommies about 30m to starboard. From there I came in on the leading marks. There are leading marks in the school – a large collection of buildings climbing up the hill at the east end of the village. The bottom mark is above the largest rectangle building (blue walls, green roof). The back marker is below the highest building with the corrugated-iron roof. Both markers look pale green rather than white. Course 177°M (190°T). This will take you to the Observatory Rocks. I anchored in their lee in 15m. It does not pay to go too close to the coral shelf off the beach as there are offlying bommies and the bottom is horrible loose and jagged coral. In 2008, I had to dive on the chain to release it. This year it came up without a snag.
I anchored in Mangrove Bay as light fading. Rather more bommies than indicated on chart. Surprisingly sheltered. Would use again.

At low water there is a long shelf approaching the landing area by dinghy. Landing & exiting by dinghy can involve much tugging, but there will be endless helpers if the school is out.

5.15.3 Cheshire - Sep/Oct 2007

We reached Moala after an overnight sail from Suva, in light southeasterlies building to moderate. We went first to Nairo village and then to Cakoba village.

NW point of reef approaching from Suva: 18 34.8 S 179 48 E

Nairo Village

Naroi village is on the NE point

Entrance to pass: 18 30.7 S 179 56.7 E

Since the GPS does not align with the chart, we followed the 2 leading lines provided on the chart, clear entrance into harbor.

Anchorage WP: 18 33.4 S 179 55.5 E Depth: 30-35 feet, mud

We considered anchoring in front of village, and decided instead on a site just off the quay for the supply ship, about 1/4 mile W of the village but still within their purview. This area had a small swell but appeared well protected from winds from the east to the WSW.

The beacon shown on our CMAP chart near here was not present. There was a small beach near the quay where we took the dinghy, then followed the track from the quay to the village.

Once in the village we got directions to the assistant chief’s house, who accepted our sevusevu on behalf of the chief who was in Suva. The assistant chief Naca then told us that the island’s chiefs had decided to charge fees to visiting yachts, or $100/day. We were shocked as we had not heard of this when we got our permit in Suva, and such a charge was well beyond our means. It also seemed excessive simply for the right to drop our anchor, especially in addition to sevusevu. In Suva, we paid $8/day to the yacht club to use their dinghy dock, get water, have showers, dispose of trash and temporary membership which included access to the laundry, bar, etc.

Naca then said another yacht had paid $100 to stay 3 days, which was what they could afford. We approached him the following day and offered to pay the same amount as at the yacht club, and he said to forget about it. The whole incident was quite odd, especially since we heard nothing about this at Cakoba, the other village we visited on Moala, nor in notes from Windsong who had visited Naro 2 months previously.

While we found Naca and the other villagers to be friendly, the whole thing made us uncomfortable and we decided to leave 2 days after arriving.

Naroi is the central village for the Moala subdivision, and it’s territory includes all the land around the NE corner of Moala. Supply ships visit regularly and there is an airstrip with a weekly plane. We saw a police station, post office, and large clinic with a resident doctor. There is probably a store. If necessary, water could be obtained here since Moala has a good supply of spring fresh water, as well as small amounts of gasoline, diesel, kerosene etc.
We didn’t snorkel or hike as our stay was short, but both are possible.

Cakoba Village

Entrance to pass: 18 38.4 S 179 50.35 E

We had intended to sail on to Matuku from Naroi, but the winds and seas had built more than we anticipated, so we turned in to Cakoba (Thakova) pass. The pass contains a dogleg and we would not advise following the leading line shown on the chart without a forward lookout and good through the water visibility.

Anchorage 1: 18-37.8 S / 179-52 E  Depth: 45 feet, mud
Anchorage 2: 18-37.7 S / 179-52.1 E Depth: 12 feet, mud

We chose to anchor off the village. We considered anchoring on the coast north of the village, but the reefs extend fairly far offshore, and in most places north and south the water gets deep once you are a safe distance off the reef. In Cakoba’s bight, the fetch was minimal, but a cleft extending eastward through the island behind the village created wind acceleration during reinforced trades.

We had some difficulty initially getting the anchor to hold off the reef on the south side of the village. We set our scope at about 4.5:1, deploying all our 160 feet of chain plus some line. Several nights later during strong and gusty tradewinds, the anchor began to drag. We considered anchoring further out in deeper and more exposed water, but chose not to for two reasons. While we have an additional 150 feet of chain that we can add to our primary rode, this would have taken some time to set up. Not far behind us were two reefs as marked on the chart, and we were worried about anchoring too close or even hitting them in the dark. So we made the risky decision to move Cheshire closer to Cakoba, setting the anchor just where the river channel widens the break in the reef. Even moving slowly and with a few on shore lights to guide us, we touched the port daggerboard on the reef, slightly damaging it. We deployed all the chain, giving us a scope of better than 10:1, then sat anchorwatch the rest of the night as we knew we had little room for manuevering.

In the morning, we found that not only were we near to reefs on either side, but we had managed to come in around a small point in the reef which was now about 50 feet behind us. We set our Danforth as a stern anchor, and our Bruce as a second bow anchor, with the aim to prevent further dragging or swinging into the nearby reefs. In hindsight, it would have been better to deploy the additional chain when we initially anchored. But fortunately we had no further trouble, and were able to retrieve all three anchors from the boat when we were ready to depart. The reduced wind strength, and of course good daylight, made this much easier.

General: We initially came ashore at mid day, and were invited to a communal lunch before meeting the chief for sevusevu. This set the tone for our visit. The village was the friendliest of our travels, with many people wanting to talk to us and constant invitations to lunch and dinner. We tasted many delicacies including delicious land crabs with spicy coconut milk, and were given freshwater prawns to take with us. Social kava drinking seemed a bit more common than other places as it is grown there and readily available. Women participate infrequently though Susanne was welcome to join in when she liked. We took our computer to the school and showed pictures of our travels, focusing on ones of interest to the kids such as the fantastic creatures of the Galapagos.
The older children understand English, and teacher Don translated for the younger ones. The week we spent here went by very quickly.

The village territory includes the bight, some coast to the north and south, as well as inland plantations.

**Facilities:** Trade is through the supply ship and the weekly plane at Naroi. Some kava is exported for sale in Suva. There is a store with basic supplies, including eggs, onions and some frozen goods. No produce is offered as villagers grow their own, and they fish and dive on the reef. As in Naroi, spring water is available, and you can join the village ladies doing laundry in the creek if you wish.

The water in the bight is a bit murky from the river. It was clearer around the larger offshore island where we went for a snorkel. A Tongan chief was apparently buried on the island for a while, though it is so small and steep that we weren’t quite sure how this was possible. We had a pleasant short hike to Kiti-i-Ra across the isthmus, and further hikes are possible - inquire if interested.

**5.16 Totoya**

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 89-90

**Mandala - 2011:** The island is about 5 miles wide, being the rim of a volcano with the crater open to the south, and a barrier reef around most coasts. The crater is accessible through a clear pass on the west side, and by a passage inside the reef. Anchorage in the crater is far from ideal, and very deep (20m+). We anchored on the N coast, open but calm in S winds, but did not go into the crater.

**Delos - June 2011:** We decided to leave Moala and press on towards our goal of Fulaga, still some 140 miles to the south east. The trade winds were now blowing northeast which was good since we needed to make a bit of southing. Right along the path south was the island of Totoya, originally our first intended destination. Sometimes it works out like this. Not only did we get blown off our course and see a really cool island like Moala, but now the wind gods smiled on us and allowed us to see another spectacular place like Totoya.

When you look at Totoya on the chart you just think to your self- “Wow, just the shape of that island is so cool we really have to visit it.” The island is obviously a breached volcano, with the southern portion eroded by the wind and waves to let the ocean pour in forming a huge lagoon. So we set off in the late afternoon, hoisted our storm jib, and settled in for an overnight sail beating into the wind and waves but feeling very comfortable.

We arrived in the early morning and attempted an entrance to the reef in what looked like a good place on the chart. With 12 foot waves breaking on the reef and uncomfortably light colored water where there should have been dark, deep water we chickened out. We turned Delos around and high tailed it out of there in a hurry. We were on a lee shore and should anything happen to the engine we would have been toast and smashed to bits in the surf. We sailed another two hours to the west coast of the island and found a well sheltered break in the reef to motor through. We went right up to the beach and anchored 30 feet of calm, protected lagoon.
The beach screamed “Welcome to Totoya!” so we donned our snorkel gear and swam in for a closer look. Once again, the reef between Delos and the beach didn't disappoint. The water was crystal clear and the reef was alive with coral and fish. We saw a few parrot fish approaching the two foot range. We explored inland finding an abandoned copra plantation but turned back when an impenetrable wall of jungle blocked our path. Mental note- never forget your machete!

The beach is one of the most picturesque I've ever seen. It's a perfect crescent shape, well protected, and gently slopes into the turquoise colored water. It’s backed by swaying palms and the sand is the perfect consistency. Not too fine and not too coarse.

We saw a village while sailing around the reef so we plan to dinghy there tomorrow for our sevusevu ceremony. We hope to spend a few days exploring this awesome island.

**Sundays in Totoya:** The first church service is at 5AM and lasts until 6AM. At 6AM they start cooking all the days meals in the underground oven. Then there’s another service at 10:00AM. Then they eat lunch and rest before the last service at 5:00PM.

Church is a huge deal here and such a central point of village life. Instead of church bells to call everyone in they beat on huge, hollowed out logs. The logs are easily 8 feet long and 3 feet thick with the center carved creating a huge drum. The logs are beat in a slow rhythm, alternating between two of the logs placed side by side. As the service approaches the rhythm speeds up and up until it ends in an orgy of fast paced beats screaming “Better be here now or you're gonna be late!”

With everyone wearing their Sunday best the villagers stream in the door. The choir sits up front on the right, the children sit up front on the left, and everyone else fills in behind them. All the villagers put on their Sunday best. Even the dirtiest, grungiest farmer wearing nothing but torn shorts the day before is cleaned up and looking sharp. Nothing says "I'm going to church" more than a dress pocket sulu, white shirt, and tie.

The predominant sects we've seen are Methodist and Wesley. On Totoya they are Wesley. The sermon was pretty intense at times with the preacher raising his voice and pounding his fist on the pulpit. You didn't need to be fluent in Fijian to realize he was pouring out some real fire and brimstone stuff.

The singing was harmonious and beautiful in it’s simplicity. No drums, no guitars, no piano or organ. Just a bunch of Fijians standing up and singing their hearts out. The service was entirely in Fijian except for the special prayer and blessing they did for Delos and her crew.

To my surprise I was then asked to give a speech in front of the congregation. I thanked them for their hospitality and warm welcome to their village. I said we were here to see their culture and way of life, that they were blessed themselves to live in such a beautiful place with an abundance of food from the land and ocean.

After church we sat down on a grass mat under the shade of swaying palms and enjoyed the fish from our spear fishing expedition the day before. No work on Sunday so all the food had to be gathered on Saturday, then prepared in the morning between services. The rest of the day is reserved for resting, socializing, eating, and of course, more church.

The fish was cooked whole in coconut milk and served with shaved green papaya. Even the eyeballs looking up at me from by bowl couldn't take away from the delicious blend of natural
flavors. The cassava from the lovo was awesome and perfectly moist with a slight infused coconut smoky flavor. The moisture from the palm fronds saturates the oven and bakes it perfectly trapping in the flavor. No chance of drying out anything here.

Cooking in the 'lovo' oven: They used the lovo to cook cassava, taro, yams, fish, and even whole pigs when they slaughtered one. I arrived at the cooking area to find a shallow hole dug in the ground filled with dried coconut husks. The coconut husks were covered with black volcanic rocks that litter the shore. The husks are lit on fire and allowed to burn until the rocks are white-hot, then they are removed leaving the burning hot rocks to fill the bottom of the hole. The rocks are covered with a lattice work of green palm shoots. The food is placed on top of the palm shoots, then covered with coconut fronds. The whole thing is covered in a few inches of dirt and left to bake while everyone goes about their business (church). No electricity, no cooking gas, no pots or pans, just what is readily available on the island.

The fish is cooked by the women. Here only the women cook the fish and the men cook the cassava.

In Totoya they make their money in two ways. The first is selling dried copra, which is the dried coconut meat used to make lotions, ointments, etc. They sell it for $.50 a kilo, or $1,500 a thousand kilos. This is a HUGE amount of coconuts. By the time you ship it to Suva you lose about 1/3 of the money for shipping, and make out with around $1,000 FJ for 3 months of hard labor. That’s around $200 per month US. They don’t have much so spend money on except outboard fuel, kava, Tabaco, flour, sugar, rice, and typical household items so it works out ok. The land and sea provides everything else.

The second way they make money is through weaving mats. These sell for about $60-$70 FJ a piece in Suva but the ladies need to travel to Suva personally. By the time they travel on the cargo ship, rent a stall in the market, and feed themselves during the trip they’re lucky to make $20 a mat, which can sometimes take 3 days to complete. Also not a lot of money. But they do have lots of time and know nothing else so that’s what they do.

After spending a few more days in the village I began to understand them a little better, and they began to understand us. They understood that we were traveling around by sailboat purely for the experience. Not for profit, not for someone else, but just for our own adventure and experience.

During our stay I donated some time to help the villagers set up a computer that had arrived a month before. It was donated by China Aid but no one knew how to set it up or plug it in. They had absolutely no idea what to do with this thing. It took me all of 10 minutes to plug it in and create a few user accounts for them. Good old Windows XP is now running in Navesi village.

We set it up in the school building and I asked them what they wanted to do with the computer. “Oh, I don’t know. What are computers used for?” Oh wow, where to begin here…. Do you like to watch movies? “Yes, of course!” Bingo! So I spent the next few hours copying various movies from our 3TB collection over to their internal disk. I also installed the latest version of VLC for them.

Our donation was an old pair of external speakers that Darren found in the rubbish pile outside is apartment in Auckland. Now they even had sound. You can just imagine a group of villagers huddled around a glowing screen inside a school room, with a generator humming in the
background while the likes of Mel Gibson and Lethal Weapon entertain them. Seriously, they asked for all the Lethal Weapon and Die Hard movies.

When we were there, the villagers caught a turtle to eat. They explained that they didn’t eat turtle very often. They were protected but in Totoya there were lots of turtles, unlike mainland Fiji where they had been fished out. They had eaten turtle for generations and believed it was their right to continue doing so. They only ate a few every month and it was considered a local delicacy. They served it with boiled cassava, bananas, and rice cooked with sugar and coconut milk. The turtle was an absolute delicacy. The meat was tender, smooth, and rich tasting at the same time. It literally melted on your tongue and saturated your taste buds. It reminded us of the most tender, slow roasted pork shoulder but with a much fuller taste.

Sometime after our arrival, we were invited to drink kava with some guys, but they asked us to bring the kava! Didn’t this stuff grow all over the place here? Wasn’t the gift of the kava bundle strictly ceremonial? Don’t you have heaps of the stuff lying around? Apparently not on Totoya. Kava doesn’t grow well everywhere and here the villagers had to purchase it just like everywhere else. This severely limited their kava consumption. On Totoya they only indulged twice a week for two hours each time. They couldn’t afford anymore. We purchased 6 bags of kava from the village store (tin shed) for $1 a piece, to share with our friends.

**Shandon - 2010:** I approached from the east and south of the island. 19°01.5S 179°51.5W is about 200m of the SW tip of the reef, course 275°M.

I came through the reef at 18°57.6S 179°54.3W steering 070°M for the obvious gap in the island (Nai Vaka Gap on the chart). This was a mistake as I had to wiggle and ended up on 100°M. Next time I shall continue up the reef to the enormous gap in the reef. Once inside, the lagoon is deep except for obvious reefs off the SW tip of the island. There is deep water inside the reefs of the village below the light house (not working), helped by four posts – all left to seaward.

There is a post on the west side of the Gullet.

Inside the crater, the old plug, I suspect, is not marked but waves should be breaking. I looked at anchoring off Dravaulu village (north of crater) but it looked very uncomfortable in the E15-20k. I sailed out and anchored in 4m on sand off Tovu on the east side, south of the concrete wharf (conspic). Warning: the hills act as a vortex and the easterly wind can blast in from all angles spinning a yacht around and pushing it onto the shallow shelf. Next time I will use two anchors and a Bahamian moor.

There are five villages, four on the water; each has a chief. Tovu is the head chief and it was not necessary to sevusevu with the others. The island spokesman until 2012 lives in the village north of the wharf, Ketei – see contact information – he may come out to your boat and will organise sevusevu and anything else you might want.25

I found nowhere to anchor on the west side from the Gap to the SW tip. The water is too deep and where it is shallow it looks full of coral.

Came out via shallow pass near the Gullet 19° 00.1S 179°50.7W WP outside the reef. Course in 302°M. Bearing on Yanutha I (82 ft) 333°M. 1m waves humped but not breaking. Would attempt only in calm conditions. Suspect about 5m but heart stuck between eyes and brain as looking at log rather than depth and very relaxed at 8.5m (log showing double speed)!
5.17 Matuku

Cruising Guide References: South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 90-91

Pincoya - July 2012: We used an ‘outside the pass’ waypoint of 19-09.284S / 179-43.774E, and then worked our way into the inner harbor.

We worked our way all the way into an anchorage off the village, where we were 100% protected. Approximate location: 19-09.66S / 179-45.15E

Need to consider tide when going ashore--there is a big mud flat at low tide with heavy sucky mud. Need to go barefoot.

We motor sailed to the pass into Matuku Harbor and the village of Lomati around 9:00 am. Entering the reef and navigating through to the village of Lomati was very scenic. This island reminded us of the Marquesas with the high and unique shaped mountains.

After anchoring, we headed to shore for sevu sevu. This was the first time that our kava roots were immediately pounded, made into kava and served to us!! Because of the rain, their kava was too wet and were appreciative of our gift. It was good to know that our kava we had bought in Suva tasted quite good as kava goes.

Around 50 people live in Lomati. When asking on the size of the village, we noticed that the villages always add that most of their people live in Suva.

Naisa, the village spokesman, arranged for us to hike up Karovava Mountain the next day.

As we left to go back to our boat, they gave us bananas which we were grateful for as it was some time since we had any. I made banana bread and took it to the village the next day along with some material and thread.

Our guides for the hike up to Korovava were Luke, Lai and Tats along with three dogs-- 3 strong young men in their early 20s, hiking barefoot through the jungle. We have a new appreciation for barefoot, if your feet are tough enough! They got good traction by using toes, whereas we in our shoes did a lot of slipping. The hike to Korovava was steep and thankfully only two hours up through the trees, mud and vines. Ropes were used to help guide us up steep, slippery and just made machete path. Pausing for a rest on the way up, they used their machete to cut branches which provided water. While we brought our own water, we did sample a drink from the branch. We were glad to arrive at the top and see the view of our boats and all the surrounding reefs and coral heads.

Heading down, the ropes were again secured and we slid our way back to Lomati. Here we saw Tats scramble quickly up a coconut tree with a machete, harvest six green coconuts. With machete in hand and a few whacks to the coconut, we were drinking some refreshing coconut juice which after a arduous hike was very refreshing. Once the coconut juice was drank, the coconut was chopped in half and we were served the soft coconut meat. This was a day where we were glad to be back to the boat for a cold beer and a rest. Later, Pincoya gave our guides a better and much longer rope.

It was time to check out the snorkeling. With wetsuits and snorkel gear, we took the dinghy out through the pass to the outside of the reef. There were incredible large coral heads surrounded by large schools of fish, larger fish than we have seen in some time.
During our stay, we also walked to the neighboring village whose name was too long and difficult to pronounce. There was a road built by the government to connect all the villages, even though there are no cars on the island. It is a wide, mostly weed covered trail that passes the pig pens, the rope bull and the horse that belongs to Lai. Around 3 km later, we arrived at the village and was greeted by that village’s spokesman. The primary school is located here and the village has 100 people. The children from the other villages board here during the week. They also had underground electric service to each bure from a central generator and 4 telephones. This village was located on a sandy beach, unlike the muddy mangroves access at Lomati.

We continued our walk to the beach to see the outside reef and waves. Along the way, we passed even more pig pens with many pigs and piglets roaming freely among the coconut trees. Once back at Lomati, we asked how do you determine whose pigs are whose. A simple answer, we call them for feeding and they recognize the voice. Who would have thunk!!!

We had also met Mapi and Peter in Lomati. Mapi needed a rope to tie his cow as it kept getting into everyone’s garden. Since Pincoya has so much excess rope, we gave him some. Another day, we were invited into their house for breakfast, tea and fresh baked buns. This was the most modern house we have seen outside of the major cities. It was built like any ranch house in the USA, furnished with table and chairs, two stainless steel sinks and faucets and gas stove and refrigerator. It was explained that family members that live in the USA sent them the money to build the house. There were actually four houses connected by concrete sidewalks. We wondered what Mapi did with the one cow. He explained the cow would be butchered and served as part of feast when his mother passed away. She lives in Suva. It must be tricky to time the life of a cow with the unknown expected death.

Lomati had plenty of water running from a nearby stream so we were able to shower with cold water and do our laundry in fairly modern utility sinks. They had flush toilets as well. Given how close they are to the water table and the lagoon, we did have to wonder what ever happened to the sewage drainage. Questions you sometimes don’t want to know the answer to.

Naisa and his wife invited us for dinner the last evening we were at Matuku. As we arrived, the table was set with plates and silverware on a cloth on the mat covered floor. It was wahoo season so it was quite a treat to have that along with clams in their shell steamed with onions in coconut cream, clam pieces with coconut milk and who knows what else served in taro leaves, and of course the standard cassava. This meal was the best we have had in any of the South Pacific islands. We brought in bits of dark chocolate which was a real treat for them along with balloons for the children.

After having spent 6 days here, it was time to move to the Fulanga in the southern Lau, some 105 miles due east. Another into the wind sail!!

**Midnight Sun - July 2012:** (On the Rag of the Air, when someone asked about fees): They entered the harbor, it’s a gorgeous island, the village was friendly, no fees. The Matuka the spokesman is Chiko. See anchorage spot on Google Earth. Nice little walks around. Small village. Good kava, can buy, quality is good. Luke was kid who showed them around. Guy with "J" is the representative. "Switched on".

**Mandala - 2011:** This is a beautiful, verdant, high volcanic island, with its crater open to the west through a wide, clear pass. There is an excellent, sheltered anchorage, 10 – 15m over
mud, inside the crater off the village of Lomati. Other deeper, less sheltered anchorages are in the channel inside the pass, to the north of the main channel (17m over sand), or south of the main channel, amongst coral (6m over sand). There are more marginal anchorages inside some narrow passes on other coasts.

Seven villages are spread around the coasts, with total population about 800. No airport, only occasional shipping and yachts (mostly surf and dive charters). Currently, a road is being built around the island, but the only vehicles to use it are horses. The main village is Yaroi, on the NW coast, with a clinic and school. Anchorage is possible off another delightful village, Makadru, south of the pass.

**Shandon - 2010:** Matuku Island has a dramatic, ragged back-bone more reminiscent of Polynesia (photo approaching NW corner from east). The harbour is well sheltered, deep but mud. I anchored at the east end in 5m, rather smugly but landed in some coral that had the chain grumbling all night. In the morning, I re-anchored in 15m and had a peaceful night. There is a cut north and south, which is fun to explore in the right conditions. The anchorages suffer from popple and I used a Bahamian moor to stop the anchor chain snagging on the small lumps of coral. The only other boat to visit in 2010 (Australian with 3-male crew) had to use local help to get off an inner reef.

I approached the harbour round the north end of the island. Closing the island on 260°M, 19°06.3S 179°45.2E is about 100m off the end of the reef, which was not breaking. The centre of the harbour entrance is 19°09.2S 179°43.7E. This is slightly south of the leading line shown on the chart and requires a dog leg to avoid the back of the outer reef. A post marks the northern limit of the south-side inner reef – opposite the wharf. The chief–of-chiefs lives in Aroi. The Island Representative lives in Makadvu.

Church on Sunday in Makadvu requires a tie and be ready to give a reply to a welcome speech.

5.18 **Kabara (Kambara)**

**Cruising Guide References:** South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 86
6 Koro Sea and East Coast of Viti Levu

6.1 Koro Island
For additional info on Koro Island, use the following resources:
Koro Island – [www.koroisland.com](http://www.koroisland.com) – Koro land and Homes for sale
Owners Community – [www.koroisland.org](http://www.koroisland.org) or [www.facebook.com/koroislandfiji](http://www.facebook.com/koroislandfiji)

The primary anchorage is in Dere Bay.

Contributed by Neal & Hwei-Ying Harrison, s/v Koro, from the 'Koro Yachting Guide'.

**Approach to Dere Bay:** Enter Dere Bay from 17-16'.2 S / 179-20'.5 E, avoiding the prominent Black Rock (visible at all tides) and surrounding reef fringing the whole SW quadrant of the bay.

Favour the North side of the bay standing off about 100 - 200m from the coast to avoid a large isolated reef (breaks at low tide in SW conditions) filling the south side between black rock and the Nth point.

There is plenty of room, the entry is about 500m wide, the above is only relevant in bad visibility and unsettled weather. Otherwise the entry is very apparent.

If approaching from North, stand well off the reef surrounding the whole NW corner of the island. Don’t think of entering the bay until you get to 17-15’.00 S / 179-20' 00 E, staying well clear of Nola Pt.

No responsibility accepted for the above, this is a guide, any skipper using it is responsible for their own navigation.

**Anchoring/Mooring:** Anchoring can be problematic as the whole bay is over 20m deep with broken coral bottom and isolated deep coral heads which you may get caught up on.

To protect the bay, the resort owners request that visiting vessels use the free moorings available (at user’s own risk). There are usually 2 or 3 moorings (2 or 3 pin Helix anchors with chain to Rode via a swivel) available at no cost (although buying a beer ashore is appreciated) - call Koro Beach Resort on VHF 16 or phone 368 3301 for best one to pick up. The resort sometimes uses one of the moorings if they need low tide access to the jetty. All-tide shore access is available using the long jetty extending from the east. Though Jackster reported seeing a mooring break loose, this has since been repaired. The moorings are inspected yearly. (if you see problems with a mooring while in Dere Bay, please report it to the Resort Manager).

**Things to do ashore:** There are 2 resorts – the one at the end of the jetty is only used for big functions but Koro Beach Resort is open during working hours. Meals and drinks
can be purchased here, and there is a lovely open-air bure to sit by the water. Wireless Internet access is available for a small daily fee. You can get to Koro Beach Resort by turning right at the end of the jetty and following the coast. (Using binoculars from your boat, you can see the pink house). It would be appreciated if you would make your presence known at the resort if you intend to stay awhile.

Dere Bay is overlooked by Koro Seaview Estates (Waisali Village), a freehold residential subdivision with over 40 homes, some permanently occupied - you are welcome to walk around but please respect owner’s privacy and properties.

**Koro Seaview Estates** is a residential development and has land and homes on the island for Sale. For more information please contact Joe Soecker at info@fijirealestate.com or call him at (679) 992-8111. He can arrange property tours for you. Maps and info are available at Koro Beach Resort. Ask for an information package.

**Local villages** – there are 3 villages within walking distance of Dere Bay – the first village, Nabasovi is about 30 minute walk from the jetty, Tavua is a further 5 minutes and Navaga another 5 minutes. If you intend to walk to the village, please be respectful of dress code. Ladies – cover your shoulders and knees. No hats or sunglasses when greeting people.

**Sevusevu** – if you intend to spend time here, swimming, snorkelling etc and/or walking to the local villages, it would be appropriate to do Sevusevu at either Nabasovi or Tavua village. Ask Koro Beach for further information.

**Waterfalls and Mantana Beach** – ask Koro Beach for further information.

**The Joglo House** – visit a beautifully reconstructed 300 year old home that was shipped to Koro Island from Java – the home can be toured with the caretaker, Waisake M-F 2-4 in the afternoon. [www.thejoglohouse.com](http://www.thejoglohouse.com)

**Turtle calling** is still practiced at Nacamaki Village on the north coast. Transport can be arranged for a fee and a donation to the village is expected, contact Tukini, the manager of Koro Beach Resort for further information.

**Bio-Diesel plant** – Fiji’s first Bio-diesel plant was opened in March, 2010 at Nacamaki Village on Koro Island. If you are interested in visiting it, contact Tukini (you may be able to combine it with Turtle Calling).

**Provisions available**: Nabasovi Village has 2 shops that sell basic goods such as flour, sugar, yeast, baking powder, drinks, onions, potatoes, garlic. Please respect the local dress code when entering the village.

Waisali Village has a shop that only sells kaivalagi goods: tins such as tomatoes, champignons, soya sauce, tofu, lasagne, chocolate, cheese, frozen chicken, chicken sausages and much more. It opens Saturday 0900 – 1600 and Wednesday 0900 – 1300. 

Beautiful fresh-water river prawns are often available – at least 24 hours notice is needed for the ladies to hike to the top of the mountains for the best prawns. Ask Koro Beach Resort for further information.
Bread, muffins and cakes can be baked by an ex-pat landowner, who works for the Koro Beach Resort – at least 24 hours notice is needed. Ring Juanjo on 867 4901 for further information or to place an order.

**Water available** - Ask at Koro Beach Resort

**Snorkeling/Diving** - Excellent! Many landowners have bought here because of the diving! Easy-to-get-to spots are at the Sand Island and Black Rock. For further information re diving and/or equipment ask at Koro Beach Resort.

Surfing - None

**Kayaking** - Lovely large bay, mainly reef-enclosed, great for kayaking.

**Other Anchorages**: The anchorage on the north of the island is marked on charts. We have never anchored there but have been told by other yachts that it can be rolly during extended trades. For extended stay, I believe it would be prudent to go ashore and do your Sevusevu at Nabasovi or Nacamaki village.

**Medical help**: Ask at Koro Beach Resort for directions to the nearest medical station (about 20 minutes away on foot) at Nabasovi village.

**Please note**: Respect the environment and the local residents. Waisali/Koro Seaview Estates is a private development with private roads. We try to keep Dere Bay as pollution free as possible. Police on the island do enforce customs and immigration duty and may ask for your papers, as well as prosecute offenses.

Boat owners are asked to abstain from the following, and will be held responsible for:

- Discharging toilets, bilges, kitchen water or fuel into the bay
- Throwing, disposing of and leaving garbage in the bay or bringing it ashore. Please be considerate. We are a small island.
- Doing repairs on vessels that cause pollution of the bay
- Anchoring in the bay without using the moorings – do not drag your anchor around in the bay, you are destroying the coral
- Taking fruit from private property around the development
- Trespassing on lots/houses without being invited by residents
- Excessive noise or disruption of existing communities on the island.
- Unsupervised children – they should be with an adult at all times

If you need assistance or items for your boat, please contact Tukini, the manager. Do not ask staff members. Tukini will help whenever possible. You can usually raise Tukini on VHF 16.

**Jackster - June 2011**: Dere, pronounced Ndere, Bay was a pleasant surprise. Clear entry in, a long white beach, two small resorts and with quite a community of expat houses in the hills surrounding and three fine jetty's extending into the bay. We dropped the hook in 10m in coral. You know it's coral by the hard grating sound as the chain pulls over it.
Later when we went ashore we learned that the mooring balls were not private as we’d thought, but available for visiting yachts to pick up and thus save the fragile coral. Always wanting to protect coral from damage we pulled the anchor up, getting snagged on the way up, and moved over to one of the balls. One other yacht was tied up, Koro, which belongs to Neil and Qui Ing who have a house here. He’d put them in and assured us they were checked and strong so when Cool Change, a NZ catamaran, came in we passed on the information and they decided to pick up a mooring ball too.

The wind piped up around 8pm and that's when we saw lights and realized that Cool Change was motoring behind us. It turned out the 'strong' mooring they were on had parted company with the sea bed and set them adrift. They did get the anchor down for the night but we were now concerned in these stronger winds up to 25 knots the same might happen to us so David stayed up until the wee hours on anchor watch. Our mooring held, but we were tired next morning.

**Diving:** One of the expats insisted on coming out with us in our dinghy to show us a spot to the north of Nanavuca rock in the middle of the bay. This is the only rock projecting above the water. We dropped the dinghy anchor into a patch of dead coral on top of a bommie and hopped in the water. What a wonderful surprise was waiting for us. Prodigious and healthy hard and soft corals, wonderful colours and 40m visibility – better than the famed Rainbow Reef in our most humble opinion.

**Stray Kitty - June 2011:** Our cruising guides didn’t say much about Koro Island but we decided to stop there because it was the halfway point between Taveuni and Levuka. On the way, we caught two huge mahi-mahi.

We ended up having a great time. We found “the longest dock in Fiji” for the dingy and was initially met by a very friendly local women who was from of all places-- Northern Ontario! She had just moved here in February of this year. As we walked around the beach trying to get our bearings we met more and more locals that were foreigners. We met a couple from New Zealand who spend their winters in Fiji and summers in New Zealand, we met a family with four children from Hawaii, a couple from Australia, a young couple from Washington, DC, another young couple with a baby from Argentina (him) and Great Britain (her) and the list went on. These people have decided to make Koro Island their home base either half the year or full time. They live totally off the grid: catching rainwater; using propane for refrigeration and stove, solar panels on the roof for electricity, grow their own vegetables and fruit, even have their own chickens (free range, of course!) – this all means that their expenses are very low. They can live for $1,000.00 or less a month and have a very tranquil life.

Turns out that a local Fijian corporation (owned by an Aussie) is selling lots or lots with homes (this is who built the longest dock) and all the foreigners who buy these live in this one area in Dere Bay, Koro Island. We found out that there are 40 lots left if anyone is interested in purchasing one.

The Fijian village of Nabuna is about two miles down the road and they seem fine with their neighbours, it seemed like a very contented place. There are 14 villages on Koro Island and on Saturday all 14 villages came together for a rugby tournament in Nabuna (Nainbuna). It was fun to watch and they seemed like talented players.
**Mooring balls vs anchoring:** The corporation has put in mooring balls and suggested that we use them to save the coral, however we had already anchored so we just stayed put. Another boat came in and took a mooring, that evening (luckily they were awake and were on the boat) the wind really picked up and the mooring ball broke free at the base and off they shot towards shore. Fortunately, they were able to re-anchor in the pitch dark surrounded by coral reefs and everything was fine. But that is the chance you take being on a mooring ball.

**Carina - August 2010:** Leaving Savusavu, and after a spirited upwind sail of 30 miles into modest trade winds, our first stop was at Dere Bay, Koro Island. The mountains of Koro are draped with lush jungle vegetation and the island is noted for its rambunctious and colorful parrots and for its abundance of freehold land that is slowly being developed by eco-conscious individuals looking for a tropical ocean paradise in friendly Fiji.

We expected to stay only one night but the place grew on us. Meaning to leave each subsequent day, we never even launched our dinghy so this is a place we hope to return to later in the season for more exploration.

### 6.2 Ovalau

#### 6.2.1 Levuka (Port of Entry)

**Cruising Guide References:** A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 95-97

**Fruit de Mer - September 2013:** We anchored in Lefuka for only one night. We found a proper dinghy dock at the steps at the root of the wharf belonging to the port authority. We had to pay $ 4.88 and that allowed us to stay for one month. However after one night we were fed up with the stench of the fish cannery, the noise of the powerplant and the rolly anchorage. The wind was forecast to go East in a couple of days so we looked for an anchorage close by to wait in more pleasant conditions. We decide to move to the tiny island of Leleuvia, only 8 miles South of Lefuka.

**Soggy Paws - February 2013:** We spent several days exploring the island of Ovalau on our way to Suva. We approached from Namena through the Makogai Channel (regretfully passing up Makogai because we didn't have time) on a beautiful clear day without much wind. Because the conditions were so perfect, we decided to sneak inside the reef at the very north end of the reef east of Ovalau. (17-43.52S / 178-50.89E)

This enabled us to travel south inside the reef, in calm water. We left our fishing line out and actually caught a small (but edible size) Walu (Spanish or Pacific Mackerel).

As we made our way south to our intended anchorage at Levuka, we wandered between the reef and the shoreline, checking out possible anchorages, and sightseeing.

The Levuka anchorage is somewhat exposed to the prevailing southeasterlies, and we were looking for an anchorage 'nearby' that would be better. We found several possibles--but since we had nearly no wind, it was hard to evaluate exactly how good (or bad) the anchorage would be if the winds were blowing 20 knots out of the SE. One possible we found, about 4 miles north of Levuka, is at 17-37.47S / 178-48.82E.
We eventually ended up at Levuka. Curly Carswell (Savusavu, Fiji guru) had told us to anchor close in, in 7 meters, a shade south of the "leading line". We looked around a bit and decided that this WAS the best anchor spot. The big pier for fishing boats and ferries, if you anchor close in, gives you a wee bit of protection from the chop and swell from the SE. So we dropped anchor at 17-40.97S / 178-50.15E.

While VERY convenient to town, and a spot at which you can check in to Fiji, this anchorage has two MAJOR drawbacks (besides it is slightly exposed in strong southeasterlies). First, the town generator is right at the base of the pier--right next to you. It is a very VERY noisy beast and runs 24x7. It was Sunday afternoon, and we didn't notice the second issue until Monday morning--when the Tuna processing plant cranked up. Whew!! We were right downwind of the tuna factory.

From FijiGuide.com "Ovalau's primary attraction is the old colonial capital of Levuka, a community of 1500 or so inhabitants. Nestled at the base of steep bluffs, Levuka has the ambience of a 19th century whaling town, which is exactly what it was. With weather worn clapboard buildings, narrow streets, and ever-friendly residents, Levuka's harbor and bars at one time welcomed vessels from every seafaring nation."

As soon as we got the anchor set, we went ashore and paid our respects to the Port Captain (there is a small dock at the base of the pier for dinghies and small boats--the PC office is right there). In fact the Port Captain had called us on VHF 16 as we were wandering around checking anchorages (wanting to know our boat name and intentions). We showed him our papers, and paid a small port fee (something like $10).

We had been out at Namena for a few days, so Dave offered to take me out to dinner in town. He had read in our Moon Guide about a couple of restaurants, and we had our friends on Java's recommendations, too. We walked the town looking for places to eat, but it turned out that only one place was open on Sunday--and not til 6pm.

It was 4:30pm, so we had an hour and a half to kill. Dave had read about a nice walk up into the hills, so we decided to investigate it a little bit. Then we found there was a river there, and Dave got hot on the trail of a waterfall. So we ended up hiking WAY up into the hill to the beginning of the town water supply, there was a tiny waterfall. Fortunately it was mostly paved (ending up being just a narrow one-person track at the end). But we got back to town at 6pm in our Sunday Best, all sweaty from a hike.

The only restaurant open on Sunday was a Chinese place, and we were keenly looking forward to some Chop Suey or Stir Fry, but were dismayed to find that they had NO VEGETABLES. Apparently there were no fresh vegetables on the island at all at this time. Ovalau is a small island not far off the coast of Viti Levu, the main island. But everything comes in by ferry. Being Sunday, all the grocery stores were closed.

Unfortunately, this lovely restaurant, with a nice balcony overlooking the harbor, also overlooked the town generator. Un-airconditioned, it was too hot INSIDE the restaurant, and they had 70's music blasting at too loud a volume to talk. Outside on the balcony, it was cooler, but you had to listen to the generator. We were fortunate to get our order in first, service was slow, and we ate our chicken and rice with canned vegetables and left.

The next morning, Monday, we spent about 10 minutes in the tiny M&H grocery store--getting a couple of things, but no fruits and veggies.
Dave was keen to see the Levuka Museum across the street, housed in the old Morris Hedstrom building. So we spent an hour looking at the combination Museum and town library. It was interesting reading about how the European traders had injected themselves in local politics between chiefs in Fiji, and ended up owning the country.

We inquired about taking a bus around the island, but found that there was no bus that GOES around the island. There is an old decrepit bus that goes one way, about a quarter of the way, and another bus that goes the other way, a quarter of the way. But the road is bad, and the trip is not cheap. The other half of the island has no road.

So we returned to Soggy Paws, hauled up the dinghy, and left Levuka to do our own exploring.

We spent the rest of the day gunk-holing counter-clockwise around Ovalau, checking out anchorages and sightseeing.

**Catamaran JAVA - July 2012:** We checked into Levuka from Vava’u, Tonga which is an easy sail around the bottom of the Lau Island group.

Levuka is a very rustic town with many buildings from the 1800’s when it was the first Capital of Fiji for 10 years until the torch was passed to Suva.

The reef entrance is wide with a large white beacon on South side of the pass. Head straight in the pass towards the church steeple, then turn port when in anchoring depth and proceed 50m towards reef projection marked with steel post.

Anchoring behind this projection gives some protection from tradewinds although there is no real protection from the wind and the waves on the reef produce some chop at high tide.

The other spot to anchor is on South side of tuna cannery (better anchorage during trades because you're upwind!) past the large Queen's Wharf off of the white pier and white-fenced Cession Site where Fiji was made a colony of England in 1874.

If checking in to the country you must anchor at the first point because it closest to the Customs and Port buildings which are at the North end of a small concrete wharf attached to the larger Queens wharf. You can tie up at either wharf for a $T1.94 hourly fee (after checking in) which we did for 24hrs when the winds were SE 30 kts, but you need good fenders. Check in was straight-forward except that Customs didn't know the new rules for cruising. (Watch out for the large Customs guy-he will ask for and then eat every cookie you have aboard-he ate all of Donna's homemade ones!) We explained the new rules and did get our Cruising Permit after they called Suva (this permit was good for the Lau's of course), but they still didn't understand (or seem to care about) the new call/email-Customs-every-week rule and simply gave us the departure form for checking into Savusavu after we cruise the Lau’s and Taveuni areas. Maybe they'll get the word in another year or so since few yachts check in here.

We enjoyed the small Museum, especially the labeled shell collection (no fee-donation only) which is housed in the original 1868 Morris & Hedstrom (MH) trading store (there's a new one across the street).
**Groceries:** You can buy veggies every morning by the taxi stand with Saturdays being the bigger market day. You can buy freshly canned tuna twice weekly direct from the Pafco Cannery for $F26-35 per 24-can case depending on what grade you want.

There is one **bank** w/ATM, one **internet** place, and one **gas station** close to the wharf.

Our favorite cafe was the upstairs Kim's Paak Kum Lounge for cheap Asian/Fijian dishes.

There is a large **hospital** on the North end of town.

**Potable water** is free at the dock.

### 6.2.2 Rukuruku (NW Corner of Ovalau)

**Migration July 2012:** We are hanging out at Rukuruku at the NW corner of Ovalau. Wonderful village and anchorage. Approx anchorage spot: 17-38.22S / 178-45.26E.

Kava is the main export of RukuRuku. A truck drives to Levuka with the crop nearly every day, and we were able to hitch a ride.

**Mr John IV - 2010:** The first place we looked at on the west coast of Ovalau was Rukuruku, which is a bay on the northwest coast that has a resort (of sorts) in it. We were not too struck on what we saw, the resort and surrounding area looked a little run down, and the water in the bay was far from clear; we also felt it was a bit exposed to the west should there be an offshore breeze or should a thunderstorm go through.

### 6.2.3 Hurricane Hole (SW Side of Ovalau)

There is a rumoured "cyclone hole" on the SW side of Ovalau. It's location is approx 17-44.31S / 178-45.84E.

**Soggy Paws - February 2013:** We were keen to check out a place that Curly had showed us, labeled "Hurricane Hole". We eventually found the place and agreed with another cruiser, Mr John IV, who said it was a snug anchorage, but isn't quite protected enough to be a Hurricane Hole. (but it was way better than remaining off Levuka in a blow). The best spot was saw was about 17-44.09S / 178-45.99E.

**Mr. John IV - 2010:** We moved on down the coast from Rukuruku until we reached a bay known as Hurricane Hole although the true name is Wainaloka Bay; here we found a very nice, flat, peaceful, and secluded anchorage. The only drawback was that the water was a little murky and did not encourage swimming, the whole bay was fronted by mangroves, and there was no beach anywhere to be seen.

I did however discover that a dinghy could be taken to shore in the northeast corner of the bay, where a small river gave way to a channel through the mangroves. This channel was accessible about three hours either side of High Water and its inner end provided a couple of good spots to leave a dinghy near the village of Wainaloka and right next to the main road. Follow stakes into the shore. Suggest you present a bundle of Kava to the chief and ask permission to leave your dinghy there.
If we had been in possession of a clearance for this island, it would have been a great place to go exploring from. As it was, we didn't and thus maintained a low profile out in the bay, which was none the less, quite pleasant.

I'm not sure about this place being a Hurricane Hole for a small yacht. If it blows from the west, there is too much fetch. It is a nice quiet anchorage in normal or even fresh tradewind conditions.

Approach: 17-44.40S / 178-45.60E
Anchorage Position: 17-44.256S / 178-45.976E

6.2.4 Caqalai (Island/Resort 8 miles south of Levuka)

Even though it was getting late in the day, we decided not to anchor in Hurricane Hole, but press on south to an anchorage off one of the two islands on the south end of Ovalau that supposedly had a "Backpacker Resort" on the island.

There are reefs all over in this area, and we'd certainly ignored AGAIN Curly's advice to only travel between 10am and 2pm so you can see the reefs. GoogleEarth Charts are our friend. It also helps a lot that the regular electronic charts (CM93 C-Map charts dated 2010, and our Garmin charts dated 2008) are reasonably detailed and reasonably accurate in most places.

We ended up at tiny Caqalai Island (anchorage: 17-44.15S / 178-43.80E). Caqalai is pronounced Thang-a-lie in Fijian. We spent some time trying to find a protected spot that wasn't too corally and wasn't too deep, and finally found a spot we thought was OK. Again, the wind was really light when we were there (5 knots).

On our chart, there is no island there--just a reef. But this island is owned by the Methodist Church in Ovalau, and has rustic accommodations for about 20 people. We went ashore and talked with the people there. As it was off-season, there was only one guest and she was leaving tomorrow. The 3 Fijian caretakers on the island apologised for the messiness of the island--they had not yet properly cleaned up after getting blasted by the edge of Cyclone Evan in mid-December. (But weren't working very hard on cleaning up, either). We asked if we could get dinner there, and ended up paying $15FJD per person for a small whole fish and some cabbage and rice. But it was interesting hanging out.

This would be a more fun stop during Fiji’s cruising season, when the island ashore is occupied. However, it might not be a good place to be in real windy conditions.

6.2.5 Leleuvia (Island/Resort 8 miles S of Levuka)

Fruit de Mer - Sep 2013: We were at anchor in Levuka, and after one night we were fed up with the stench of the fish cannery, the noise of the powerplant and the rolly anchorage. The wind is forecast to go East in a couple of days so we looked for an anchorage close by to wait in more pleasant conditions.

We decide to try the tiny island of Leleuvia, only 8 miles South of Levuka. We called the resort manager who told us we are welcome and they have a mooring free to use.
We made one tack to seaward from Lefuka, and turned towards the entrance of the Moturiki channel.

At 17.48.05S and 178.47.33E we were heading towards the middle of the two small islands.

At 17.47.80S 178.43.35E we turned to port at 17.48.03S 178.42.93E (as soon as root of landing dock resort is visible) we were met by a boat from the resort who directed us on a direct course towards our mooring at 17.48.50S 178.43.07E.

There is plenty of room also for anchoring in sand and coral in 10-12 meter, good protection but open to all wind directions except North East.

We had Vodafone mobile internet reception.

The staff and management of the resort were quite welcoming and we were invited to come ashore, where we had a very nice meal in their recently renovated restaurant in a pleasant atmosphere.

We snorkeled the reef near the anchorage and found it quite nice, lots of soft coral that we haven’t seen anywhere else in Fiji. Interestingly enough, the resort is growing coral themselves— they put small pieces of living coral in pieces of cement with a hole in it and once large enough plant it around the island. Where there is coral, there is fish and tourists will follow is their philosophy.

Indeed much more pleasant to stay a couple of days than in Lefuka.

6.2.6 Toberua Island (Island/resort 19 miles south of Levuka)

After an overnight at Caqalai, the next day, we headed further south into the reefy areas south of Ovalau. Dave wanted to check out another possible “cyclone hole” Curly had pointed out, down along the coast of Viti Levu. However, we never got that far—it was dicey getting in, and didn’t look like we could get far enough in shore to get any real protection in bad weather.

So we stopped instead at Toberua Island. (anchorage: 17-58.58S / 178-42.17E) Toberua Island Resort is another resort on a small island in the reefy area between Ovalau and Viti Levu. What a difference from last night's stop at Caqalai. This resort is owned by Kiwis and is an extremely well manicured family resort. The buildings were nicely constructed, and everything was in its place. The Fijian staff was impressively friendly.

Immaculate Grounds at Toberua Island

We introduced ourselves and asked if "yachties" were welcome ashore (sometimes they are, sometimes they are not). The owners happened to be in attendance, with brand
new managers, one of whom was a former sailor/cruiser. So they said, "Yes, we welcome well-behaved yachties ashore."

The Workout Bure at Toberua

We got a grand tour of the island, besides some 20-odd "bures" (thatched guest quarters), there was a sort of barracks at the back for the Fijian staff, a huge generator, a workshop, and water storage. There is a dive shop and "water sports" building out by the beach. And the place was full...

Dave Gets a Briefing on the Route Out the Reef to the Southeast

We talked with the dive shop operator, to get a little coaching on getting out of the reef toward the southeast tomorrow. Everyone was very friendly and helpful. Wished we could have stayed a couple of days, done some diving, and hung out.

6.3  Makogai (Makongai)
Cruising Guide References:  A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 98-99

Java - July 2012: Makogai has two passes to enter; West one is easier and larger than East one. Should go slow and watch the water color for depth changes.

Waypoints for East Pass that worked for us (Least depth = 7m):
Outside pass 17 25.340S  178 58.450E
Pass 01      17 25.415S   178 58.430E
Pass 02      17 25.476S   178 58.408E
Inside Pass 17 25.505S   178 58.306E

Curly's Charts has waypoints for West pass. Least depth 6m.

Once inside the lagoon, it is easy to navigate to either anchorage by staying in the middle of passages thru or around the two small islands. The most used anchorage is off the Agricultural Station (site of former leper colony) at 17 26.53S 178 57.10E in good holding 10-15m sand and small, low coral heads. There are two large bommies on the East side usually marked with stick or buoy.

If you want to be more alone, the NE bay around the corner is good also in E,S and W wind directions.
You must do **sevusevu** at the Ag Station (there is a headman (the Boss) there to take it) even though village is 1 1/2 hr lovely walk to windward side of island (more ruins along the way).

**Sights to see:** You can get the children to take you around to see the old Leper colony buildings, which once housed 5000 people. And also to see the ponds where they are raising the giant clams that used to be everywhere in the South Pacific. They have three in tanks so you can take pictures and will point out where there are bigger ones (3 ft long) that you can snorkle to in the lagoon. They also had a group of young turtles that they were raising in a tank.

This is a very interesting island with lots of good snorkling and sightseeing. It is on the way from Levuka to Koro Island or Savusavu. We ended up sailing an easy overnight trip from here, around the southern tip of Koro, and onto Vanua Balavu in the Northern Lau Islands.

**Stray Kitty - June 2011:** According to the weather forecast, a real nasty south-wester was heading our way, so we decided to move over to from Koro to Makogai which looked like a very protected anchorage, was only 25 miles away and situated half way to our next destination – Perfect! We sailed / motor-sailed through pouring rain and poor visibility. We chose to save some miles by going through the north-easterly entrance through the reef and although it was very narrow and pouring rain, we were still able to see the reefs and made it through without any drama.

We hunkered down in this anchorage for two whole days while the wind whipped and the rain pelted down, the weather forecasters were correct, it was wild out beyond the reef, we could see from the boat the difference between where we were and where it was unprotected.

Makogai used to be a Leper colony.

Once the weather cleared, we were very happy to get off the boat and stretch our legs on shore. We received a tour by the man who runs the clam research station. There are fragments of the leper colony still visible; like the old hospital, a movie theatre, the jail and the very overgrown cemetery.

We also received a whole education on how they grow the clams and giant clams, boy those suckers are huge! Once the clams are big enough, they move them from the tanks on shore to the water just past the beach, then they will move some to other locations around Fiji where they think the clams will be able to grow and breed.

**Beach House - August 2011 - Whales & Diving:** The weather was predicted to get nasty while we were at Namena Island. The mooring/anchorage area on Namena was not particularly well protected so we decided to head the 20 miles to Makongai Island. With a reefed main, it was a pretty bumpy ride in the short beam sea. We arrived at the island and anchored next to s/v “Castelel” a family of four out of Canada.

We went ashore on our second day and did “sevusevu” with Ketselle, the local village chief. He and two young researchers explained that they go up a hill (heart attack hill) and sit shifts counting the humpbacks which are now returning to Fijian waters after they were mostly wiped out in the 18th – 20th Centuries by whaling operations.
They said they had counted 60 last year and had seen some as recently as the previous week when the weather was more settled. The whales are there in the rough weather of course, they just can’t see them amongst the white caps. Ketselle gave us a tour of the village and the former Leper Colony facilities.

We also received a tour of the Giant Clam nursery. This was very similar to the one Cindy and I had visited last year in Aitutaki. The memories were certainly mixed.

The next day, Ketselle took me out with the dinghy to show me the local dive sites inside the reef. There were a series of at least six widely spaced pinnacles which I locked in the GPS waypoints on so I could find them the next day. It was pretty rough, even inside the lagoon, but small Makondronga Island would give us and the dinghy enough shelter to make the dives. We’d been told the liveaboard dive boats, “Nai’a” and “Island Dancer” both came here once/week so we expected some nice diving.

The next day, a 120 foot charter sailing vessel came inside and was taking two divers out coincidentally as we were leaving “Beach House”. We noticed a large breach.

This turned out to be a Mom and Baby Humpback inside the lagoon. Anja’s “sixth sense” was at it again! She predicted the snake to appear when we were at Cobia Island and she “had a feeling” about seeing a whale this entire trip. At first we got close and Mom wasn’t ready to settle down, but when the other dinghy left, she did and Anja got her first swim with a humpback whale! About a one minute snorkel, but if you never had this experience, it’s quite amazing. Imagine a “bus” swimming right up to you underwater with flukes! The mothers can weigh up to 40,000 lbs. (about 18 metric tons).

We then did the first pinnacle dive. It was nice, but not as nice as the Chimney at Namena. That afternoon we did a second pinnacle and realized that our time in Fiji was getting short. I’d already stayed a month longer than I’d planned.

**Carina - Sep 2010:** From Koro we expected a downwind sail to Makogai but again enjoyed an exhilarating to-weather passage under reefed main, staysail and reefed genoa. Approaching Makogai, we spotting first the masts of the luxurious 198 foot cutter-ketch, Adele, popping up above the island’s hills. As we rounded the northern tip of the island and headed south towards Makogai’s western pass, winds became norserlies and, with an incoming tide to boot, we furled sail and bashed the last mile or two under power up the Makogai channel.

Makogai’s entrance is a narrow break in an otherwise impenetrable reef that is 2 miles from the island. Much of the reef is invisible until you are almost upon it. The entrance buoy and range markers which are noted on our charts are no longer in evidence. And, in what is beginning to be a trend for us, clouds slowly engulfed the sun making coral spotting difficult just as we approached the pass. Luckily, we were able to identify Vatu Vula (white rock), a reef always with breaking waves that is a prominent feature nearby to the pass. We had been following waypoints developed by another cruiser - a path that almost, though not quite followed the entrance line of the chart - until it became clear we were getting WAY too close to the northern reef. We made a quick correction into deeper, clear water, moving even farther south of the charted entrance line. This experience once again reminds us that charts (many drawn by contemporaries of
Captain Bligh) as well as GPS waypoints are always suspect; keeping a sharp lookout is imperative.

Makogai is predominantly a marine preserve, though the southern part of the lagoon is open to subsistence fishing by villagers. Historically, thousands of victims of leprosy resided here in segregated leper colonies - one for ethnic Fijians and one for Indo-Fijians - separated by a few kilometers of jungle road. Today, much of the infrastructure, including the cement buildings and graded roads, have reverted to jungle-laden ruins. Seven families now live on the island and are employed by Fiji Fisheries in the cultivation and re-introduction of two species of giant clams. Even the cemetery is being encroached by the jungle, though the devout Christian Fijians have cut a neat path leading to it. The forlorn cemetery is sited deep in the jungle on a hillside; tripping vines and fallen tree trunks carpet the landscape. Many of the grave stones tilt at crazy angles and some of the cement crypts have caved in.

After a brief visit ashore, we learned that the village DID indeed have a chief and we were expected to present sevusevu. A few hours later, we returned with friends Rebecca and Patrick from Brick House for the brief ceremony. We sat on the floor of a great room in the chief's house. In the same room were all the village's children - on school holiday - who were watching a shoot-em-up, sci-fi movie, having taken advantage of a brief period when electricity was being generated to run seawater pumps to clam tanks. Competing with the noise, our group presented gifts of kava along with cookies and laundry soap to Wise, the chief's representative.

As it turns out, the chief, Carmeli, was high above us at an overlook attending to visiting scientists setting up for the first day of a month-long cetacean study. We met many of these scientists over the days, including Amanda (from Australia) and Sabrina (from Italy), plus representatives of Fiji Fisheries, and of the Wildlife Conservation Society. The scientists were quickly rewarded with sightings of (primarily) humpbacks and their calves, breaching, breeding, in mating rituals or just simply feeding within the lagoon. A chase boat was dispatched from the village with photography equipment aboard each time a whale was inside the lagoon, hoping to photograph dorsal fins or tails for identification of individuals for future study. Unfortunately, dive tour operators also showed up occasionally and, anxious to put their clients in the water with the giant mammals, began chasing them.

We spent another lovely week here at Makogai, hiking the length of the island, snorkeling and puttering around the lagoon in our dinghy. We saw, at close range, a giant clam "in the wild" on a bommie right in the anchorage. This animal was roughly four feet long and perhaps five feet in diameter. (If only we had an underwater camera!) We also watched as Fiji Fisheries tagged and released a green turtle, who was not at all amused by the proceedings. Green turtles nest on Makodroga, the small island within the lagoon, which is also home to a protected species of iguana that lives in its rare dry tropical jungle habitat. There are no hiking trails on Makodroga and Saras, the chief Fijian Fisheries scientist on site, didn't encourage us to go looking for the elusive iguanas. The weather was exceptionally calm for a couple of the days of our visit, allowing us and others to venture far out into the lagoon. There we viewed the amazing
underwater landscape through the bright clear water with visibility that seemed to be 100’ or so.

**Mr John IV - Sep 2010:** We didn’t really feel like anchoring off the village and doing Sevusevu, as we were a little worn from our sail; so we found another bay a short distance beyond the village which we called Sandy Bay as it was unnamed on the chart.

Anchor Posn: 17-26.033S 178-57.961E

It was a nice spot and it was good to be anchored in clear water over sand, however there was a swell hooking around the point and this made it somewhat uncomfortable even with a stern anchor out.

We settled down for a night of peace and quiet but were surprised when, just after dark, a fishing boat from the village came over to welcome us and get our Kava….. I was not impressed but maybe they thought we were going to leave the next morning without paying our dues!

When morning did come, we were ready to try another anchorage and were quite certain that the bay in front of the village could not be any worse than where we were; so moved off in that direction. Sure enough it turned out to be calmer, although we did have to anchor quite close to the shore due to the depth further out.


We all went ashore right away to pay our respects to the Chief of the village and to explain our absence the previous evening.

The Chief made us most welcome and showed us around the village. We were introduced to the whale watching station and were shown some of the pictures they had been taking of whales quite close to the island. As part of this effort they had set up an observation point on a peak overlooking the bay which was always manned during daylight hours; there were three volunteer watchers up there when we arrived, puffing, and panting after the uphill bash. Two young Australians and a Canadian were monitoring the horizon but hadn’t seen anything all day, in fact the only thing they had seen in a couple of days, was our arrival! There are however, whales which pass through this area and this study will enlighten us all of just how many and for how long they stay in these waters.

Back in the village we were brought up to speed on the growing program for Giant Clams, for which they have numerous tanks where these clams are bred and raised to a certain size before they are put back into the sea on the reefs around the island. There was also a turtle swimming in one of the tanks, he had been brought in with some injuries and having been ‘doctored’ will be released when considered fit enough to fend for himself.

**Fellow Traveler - 2010 - Snorkeling:** I found excellent snorkeling in the main bay on the island that forms the N. side of the bay - can’t miss the black rocks that come out at high tide - snorkel them! Probably great diving with all the reefs surrounding it.

**6.3.1 Makongai Channel**

The Makongai Channel can be boisterous with much wind.
**Tackless II - August 2007:** As we approached the Makongai Channel, the wind steadily picked up until before we knew it we were bashing in 20+ knots, the sea abruptly stirred to whitecaps far and wide!

**6.4 Naigani**

**Cruising Guide References:** A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 93-95

**Carina - September 2010:** After a trough passed, which had brought a brief period of cool cloudy weather, we set sail from Makogai to Naigani Island where we tucked against its north side, all the while protected by reefs stretching north and south both east and west of us. Here we'll wait out a period of accelerated trade winds before crossing to Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu.

The predicted winds found us yesterday and are expected to continue for at least two more days. Overnight we had continuous cycles of winds gusting from single digits to 30+ knots every few minutes, sending Carina backwards and heeling her until the snubber lines on the anchor chain caught and she pointed up.

"Our" island (there is a village and small resort on the opposite coast) protects us, but it is apparent we are experiencing wrap-around winds and perhaps a bit of catabatic wind that slides down the island's deep ravine. We have no appreciable wave action and have good holding in sand, so we're content to hunker down to chores while enjoying the surfeit of electrical power generated by our solar and wind power systems. The next leg of our journey passes though shallow waters dotted with reefs, charted and uncharted, and we'd prefer flat water and sunny weather to help us spot and avoid obstructions.

Anchorage Position: 17°34.25'S / 178°40.58'E

**Tackless II - August 2007:** We approached Naigani from the Makongai Channel. From offshore, we'd been skeptical that the three steep lumps of the island seemingly huddled in the sea of whitecaps could provide a comfortable anchorage for us where it was alleged to be at the north end. But, in fact Cagabuli (Thangambuli!) (17°34.33'S; 178°44.65'E) proved to be a charming cove with a sand bottom and a white sandy beach with palm trees, all within the embrace of two curving reefs. Although the wind gusted around the north end of the island, the boat sat comfortably back-winded stern-to the beach. According to the cruising guide, the only village on Naigani is a few coves further on, while a small resort is at the southeast end.

With towering cumulus clouds massed on the sunset horizon over the north end of Viti Levu and with bats chattering in the forest ashore, the only clue that we didn't have the island to ourselves was the cackle and crow of common chickens.

Ed Note: This waypoint plots out in the middle somewhere. I believe the place they stopped was here: 17-34.31S / 178-40.67E

**Migration - 2012:** We anchored here: 174-34.32S / 178-40.58E

**6.5 Wakaya**

**Cruising Guide References:** A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 99
6.6 NGau (Gau)

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 99-101

Midnight Sun - July 2012: At Ngau the preferred village for sevusevu is Somosomo Bay (approx anchorage area 17-59.06S / 179-14.24E). The spokesperson was Kharly. The next anchorage less than 1 mile South is excellent & often has Manta Ray visits in the afternoon--ask at the resort in that bay for details.
7 Southern Viti Levu & Suva

7.1 Suva
Midnight Sun - June 2012 - Dentist in Suva: The dentists name is Dr Vikash J Singh (BDS Adelaide)
Stewart Street Dental Practice
Vinod Patel Building
10 Stewart St Suva
PH 330 8882
email drsingh@connect.com.fj
Best dentist he's ever had, very modern.
The recommendation for this dentist came from Jim (Rag)'s dentist in Labasa.

7.1.1 The Royal Suva Yacht Club
Info from their website: http://www.rsyc.org.fj
Mailing Address: PO Box 335, Suva, Republic of Fiji Islands
Administration Phone: +679 3312921 | Fax: +679 3304433 |
Email: rsyc@kidanet.net.fj
"Welcome to Suva and welcome to the Royal Suva yacht Club. On behalf of the Commodore, Flag Officers, Committee and members you are welcomed to use the facilities at our club.
Bar, Restaurant, Sky TV, Rubbish Disposal
Toilets & Showers ($20.00 REFUNDABLE KEY DEPOSIT)
Pool & Snooker tables $2.00 per game (balls at bar)
Launderette services $3.50 per kg
Fuel & Water replenishment
Internet Service (Kidanet Wifi $6.00 per hr card)
Book Exchange
Shops – Dive Centre/Yacht Shop
A fee of $60.00 is payable to RSYC for transport and boat fees for the inspecting officers for your clearance.
Please note that you are expected to pay $5 a day per PERSON whilst you are here re the use of facilities at the RSYC.
Temporary mooring in the marina (limited) $50.00 per night, depending on size of your boat or $800 on monthly bases.
Once cleared by the relevant officials and your intentions are to use the RSYC’s facilities, you are required to register with the club (see administration Office) and a temporary membership will be issued."

**Far Star - September 2012:** Suva is the capital of Fiji. Far Star anchored in Suva two weeks at the Royal Suva Yacht Club preparing to depart Fiji.

The bay here has a mud bottom which has rather poor holding. A member of the yacht club told me that drilling here was done in preparation for adding a pier and the drill went to 18 meters of mud before hitting rock. Near the yacht club the water shallows up to less than six feet and drops to fifty feet further out.

There is a navigation hazard consisting of the over turned hull of a steel ship about 80 feet long which is awash at high tide and is visible about 4 feet at low tide. Recently a red and black striped pole about 8 feet high has been placed on the wreck to mark the spot.

This is an industrial port with many large ships operating in the harbor including tankers, freighters and cruise ships. The waters are dark and there is evidence of oil spills on the surface from time to time. The bottom is littered with debris. At least a dozen large ships are anchored at all times with many of these near the yacht anchorage. Some are abandoned. Approaching the harbor from sea at night there are blue range lights but few buoys. The channel is deep but care is to be taken to stay clear of the reefs.

The anchoring area is open to the south and SE and subject to a 1-mile fetch which builds to a 3 foot chop in winds of 25-30 knots. This caused six boats to drag at once as the weather moved in. Far Star being one of these. The yacht club sent out boats to help the stricken yachts. There is a mud bar down wind which collected several of these yachts.

The yacht club has facilities for transient yachts and welcomes them. Sometimes there are slips available for cruisers by stern tie. Access for sailboats is generally only at high tide which rises about four feet. The club charges $50.00 FJD a day for slips. If you wish to anchor out and use the club facilities you have access to the club restaurant, bar, hot showers, fuel dock, dinghy dock and water for $5.00 a day per crew member. Members are friendly and share lots of local information. The club sponsors racing on the weekends. Ask if you would like to crew.

Transportation around the city is by bus ($.70) and cab (around $4.00) to down town. There is a large Mercado near the bus terminal a short ride from the club.

There are several hospitals in town including a private hospital. The public hospital, Colonial War Memorial, has a hyperbaric chamber for divers which is also used to treat other patients with medical issues non-dive related. It sees about 400 patients a year in the chamber. The facilities at the hospital are somewhat primitive to first world standards with wards rather than private rooms, cold water showers, no hospital attire or ice. Patients live in their street clothing for the most part. There is little privacy and rather noisy conditions. However, the staff is very kind and attentive to the needs of patients.

There are several groceries including a Cost-U-Less ($8 cab ride from the club) and the MHCC downtown ($4 cab ride). Also there are many stores and shops for all kinds of
products and clothing. I have not found a marine parts store though there is a shop for outboard engines and diesel mechanics. There is a Furuno Radar / ICOM dealer and a hardware store a short walk from the club. Ask the club staff for details.

Customs is a quick cab from the club.

**Eating Out:** There are the usual local restaurants. For something special, a friend took me to a going away dinner at a really good restaurant, Tiko. On a barge anchored along shore. Very good steaks. There is also a restaurant at the RSYC and they have rib eye steaks for $30. The food there is good and the restaurant is clean.

For the tourist there is the Fiji Museum and Botanical Gardens located near downtown which was closed on my attempted visit. Hours are 9-4 at a cost of $7.00 per visitor.

In all I had a pleasant visit enjoying the city and the club facilities. There was adequate provisioning, fuel and services available and accessible.

**Pincoya - June 2012:** Suva by South Pacific standards is a very modern and busy city. The city of Suva is a 20 minute walk for Royal Suva Yacht Club along a very rough, but busy street.

As you walk down town, you past the local prison that looks like it hasn’t had any improvements in 100 years. Next along the way are car dealerships, hardware store, Fiji gas, Fiji Brewery. Crossing the bridge you see the main commercial wharf, the local market. From there you move to the shopping district with all the small Chinese and Indian owned stores that carry everything from pans, assorted house wares, shoes, clothes, and fabric.

Two shopping malls, one is like a Nordstoms, the other with typical shops you see in a mall in the USA except anchored by the local MH grocery store. Both have food courts on the top floor serving Indian and Chinese food. The retail area was constantly filled with streams of folks shopping. Suva may have its poor areas, but you would never guess it by the people who were shopping.

The vegetable market proved interesting, large arrays of taro, pineapples, watermelons and oranges on display. Watermelon and oranges were definitely in season. Then kava, dried beans and spices were sold on the second floor. It was amazing all the kava up for sale. Since we were heading to the outlying islands, we did buy 8 kava bundles wrapped in newspaper and tied with ribbon to present to the local chief of each small group islands and villages on Kadavu as part of the required sevusevu ceremony.

The food in Suva is absolutely delicious. We generally ate out at lunch trying the different places, shopped and took a taxi with all our purchases back to RSYC. One of our taxi drivers suggested the Maya Dhab, a fine Indian restaurant. For $7 US dollars, we had a sampling of several different delicious Indian dishes with roti.

**Shango - June 2012:** A note about the anchorage at the Royal Suva Yacht Club. In our readings we never read about any bad experiences. Although it is quite big, we assumed the encircling reef would break the sea from the open S to NW quadrant. Bad assumption.
Even with the encircling reef, winds above 20 from S to NW make the anchorage very uncomfortable if not unsafe, despite the level of the tide. Twice in the last week we have had to leave and high tail it to the Tradewinds Anchorage.

Yesterday at 5:30pm on a rising mid tide with 20-25 out of the south there was at least a 3-4 foot chop. There are many large fishing boats and supply ships in various states of repair and last night as we were leaving for the safety of the Tradewinds, a 100+ foot fishing boat was dragging through the harbor....thank goodness we had a track to follow in the dark. It is definitely not a place to leave a boat unattended.

Despite the anchorage, if you choose to come, you will love the mechanical supplies and services here. You can get almost anything you need, (except 6 AWG butt connectors!) in the industrial area supporting the shipping fleet. Prices are great as well. The RSYC is a friendly and convenient spot, although it’s 6 foot fuel dock at high tide (5+foot tide) rules out many boats. Unfortunately there is no other fuel dock in town with a low speed fuel source.

**Mr. John IV - Sep 2010:** Anchorage position off RSYC : 18-07.317S 178-25.530E

We remained in Suva for two weeks and actually enjoyed it very much, the Yacht Club was most welcoming, and everyone in town seemed to be most friendly. We did have a few jobs to do and it was the Liferaft service that took up most of the time.

We used RFD to inspect and re-pack our RFD liferaft. On inspection we found a failed valve (a known manufacturing defect, according to RFD). It took the RFD agent over a week to get the replacement part (from N.Z.)..... I really would have thought that a main RFD agent in the hub of the Western Pacific, would have carried spares for all the rafts that RFD sells....especially parts that are known to be defective. This whole thing was a real confidence boosting exercise!

Some friends of ours took their Plastimo Liferaft in for a service at the same depot, their raft was eight years old and had never been serviced; Plastimo is supposed to be an inferior raft and RFD is supposed to be a Rolls Royce Raft.

Our friends were all done in four days, no problems and raft returned ‘shrink-wrapped’ which it was not apparently possible for ours.....we had to use the old bag, suck the air out and then do some botch up seal job on the end.

We had also wanted to do a ‘Hydro’ test on the bottle but this also wasn’t possible as they didn’t carry the replacement part for the automatic valve operation which would need replacing if the bottle were Hydro’d.

**Out on the Blue - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2009:** We arrived in Suva, Fiji, on Tuesday, June 30, 2009. The instructions were to call on VHF two hours out and tell them you were arriving. Our VHF has limited range, so we were close before we could contact Port Control. We anchored near the yellow buoy close to the Suva Yacht Club as instructed and waited for the authorities to arrive to check us in. The weather was typical of Suva with lots of heavy rain, and no one came!

The authorities finally arrived at 10 a.m.—the next day! We were visited by Health first ($33 Fiji dollars – FJD; $1 USD=$2.02 FJD) and then Customs and Immigration, who would not accept the forms that we had obtained over the Internet from the Tropicana
Restaurant in Tonga. They insisted that we fill out original forms, which they left us, with instructions to bring them to their office downtown. They also wanted $105 FJD to pay for their boat transportation.

Since we had not been ashore yet, we had no local money. They said to bring the money when we came to their office.

We also had to get a cruising permit to visit the Yasawa Island Group. You must list every place that you plan to stop, not easy when you are unfamiliar with the area. We spent half a day trying to find the Ministry of Internal Affairs to get the cruising permit. Then it took another half-day to find all the other offices to complete the paperwork. We talked to other cruisers who checked in at Savusavu or Latouka and had a much easier time. We would recommend not checking in at Suva.

The Suva Yacht Club charges $10 FJD a day to use their dinghy dock, which includes garbage collection, bar, nice restaurant, laundry, pool tables and ping pong. They also have a fuel dock with diesel at $1.50 FJD/liter, or about $2.81 USD/gallon, the lowest price we have seen since leaving Trinidad. The bad news is that they only have five feet of water at the fuel dock. We jerry-jugged 100 gallons, and then they ran out of diesel. That filled our main tank.

They have bus service going by on the street for 50 cents U.S. or taxis to downtown for $2 FJD.

There is a very large open-air market with good fresh meats and all the fruit and vegetables you could imagine.

They also had kava upstairs, which is necessary when visiting small native villages in the out islands. You must present a bundle of kava to the chief, along with any other gifts you have for the village, before you are welcome to be in the village. The chief and others sit in a circle on a mat with you, and they do several chants before the chief says “welcome to my village.” You are then free to go anywhere in the village. We did this twice and were offered fresh papaya by the ladies each time. They have a few rules: ladies do not dress like men (no shorts or slacks), no hats to be worn unless the man is bald, no swimwear or short shorts to be worn anywhere.

People were very friendly and always said hello (Bula Bula). The living conditions were very primitive, but everyone was well-fed and happy. Suva is a large city, and it is not recommended to wander around on the streets at night. Most of the stores and restaurants were Indian or Chinese.

There is a nice museum with full-scale large canoes that could carry several people on long voyages and many rooms that show the whole story of Fiji. Restaurants were very good and quite inexpensive, the best prices we have seen anywhere. There were some attacks on tourists in hotels, and the tourist business was so bad that they had closed down the tourist offices. It was difficult to get information about Fiji.

The other bad feature of Suva is the weather; it rains almost every day, very heavily at times.
If you want to visit the Yasawa Group of islands, west of the main island, you have to clear out of Suva and then clear in to Latouka on the west coast. This is Fiji’s second-largest city. You then have to list every island you plan to visit.

Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: Many cruisers begin their voyage around Fiji by checking in at Savusavu in the north or Lautoka in the west. Check-in is supposed to be an easier process in those locations, so the rumors go.

Unfortunately this can be a challenging position from which to branch out into the waters of Fiji. In New Zealand, we were advised not to avoid Suva by Bob on Sagittarius, who was heading for his eighth voyage to Fiji. We had a fine time in Suva and were able to provision and run errands, as well as take in some movies and socialize at the Royal Suva Yacht Club.

Our check-in wasn’t any more trouble than usual, and the main inconvenience was a $106 FJD (1 FJD = 0.629485 USD) fee for the official’s transportation to our vessel. They won’t use your dinghy, and the transport boat fee is not negotiable. We spent less than two weeks there before taking a perfect soft-weather window to the Lau group, 200 miles east, in west winds or dead calm.

7.1.2 The Tradewinds Hotel Anchorage (now Novotel)

Far Star - Sep 2012: Tradewinds is now called NovaTel. Tried but could not contact them by phone. However, there are 5 free mooring balls there.

Ocelot - 2005: To clear in Suva you’re supposed to anchor off the Royal Suva Yacht Club and await agricultural inspection. While there’s no charge for the inspection, they often charge $20 to hire the boat to come out, so it might be cheaper to go to the Yacht Club that night (the officials refuse to use your dinghy). The RSYC is pleasant enough but they try to charge $3/day even to anchor, and the anchorage (10-30’ in mud) is bleak and downwind of the highly odiferous garbage dump.

We much preferred to pickup one of Tony's free moorings off the Tradewinds Hotel, although it’s a bit further out of town. (NOTE: the hotel had some bad experiences with yachties in past years and has signs up to keep off their docks and grounds. We used both, as well as their water, pool, showers, etc., but we were careful to show our appreciation to the staff. Others did the same and relations now seem better.)

Suva check-in is on the main commercial wharf, but immigration often isn't there, requiring another taxi ride deeper into town. Taxis are cheap and plentiful, but make sure the driver uses his meter. Busses are frequent and even cheaper. The RSYC has a fuel dock, washer/dryer, bar, restaurant, and a small yacht shop. Pre-mixed dinghy fuel is often cheaper than mixing your own. Cooking gas is easy but involves a taxi ride to Lami, near Tradewinds. Lami also has a yacht shop, fiberglass shop, and canvas shop. Suva has a good labor force (very welcome after Tonga) and they’re cheap enough, but you must be right on top of them if you want quality. There were no sailmakers that we found.
7.1.3 Medical/Dental Services in Suva

Slipaway - July 2013 - Hernia Surgery: Rich recently had hernia surgery in Suva, and we were very impressed with the care he got, so thought the info might be useful.

Rich had a small hernia which became enlarged and uncomfortable while we were in Savusavu. We talked to Curly who recommended the Suva Private Hospital, but also told us that he felt the local doctor in Savusavu was very good. So, we went to see Dr. Ishaq, at the Savusavu Medical Center (across from the Hot Springs Hotel, not at the Savusavu hospital). Dr. Isaq was concerned about a strangulation and made a reservation for Rich to fly to Suva that afternoon, and also an appointment for him to see a surgeon that evening. (I was not able to get on the same flight as Rich because it was full, but I flew to Suva the next morning.)

When Rich arrived in Suva, he went to the Nasese Medical Center and was examined by two doctors. The first one, Dr. Om, was a general practitioner, and then he was examined by Dr. Sitiveni Vudiniabola (aka Dr. Siti). Rich was stable, bodily functions were normal, and he was not in pain (except when they tried to push the hernia back in place). Although the situation was not an "emergency," it needed to be taken care of in short order so that it did not become one, and they scheduled surgery for the next evening.

The Nasese Medical Center (tel 331 4450) is not the same as the Suva Private hospital, but it is listed on the U.S. Embassy website, and we were very pleased with the care Rich received. Dr. Siti (cell 925 8834) is an excellent surgeon and very experienced (53 years old). Rich had a "femoral" hernia, which is much less common than the inguinal hernias men often get, but Dr. Siti had experience with the femoral hernia as well and did a great job with what could have been a difficult surgery. (Dr. Ishaq later told us that the last femoral hernia he saw was while he was in medical school.)

The total cost of the surgery was $3,500 Fijian, and the Nasese Medical Center did not take a credit card, but we could easily make a couple of withdrawals from the ATM to pay in cash.

After Rich's surgery, we stayed on in Suva for a few days at a B&B called Island Accommodations (formerly known as Nanette's), 56 Extension Street, tel 331 6316. It was a little more expensive than a budget hotel (Fijian $125 vs $80), but it was very quiet and comfortable, included a full breakfast, free internet and free laundry (they do the laundry for you!). Also, we had access to a full kitchen and living room. The downtown area of Suva was about a 20 minute walk, or a $3 cab ride.

Hawkeye (formerly) - March 2013 - Emergency Evacuation & Care: I was visiting friends in Fiji and sailing OPB (other people's boats). On March 1, we provisioned the boat I was visiting for a few days and headed out to Musket Cove in the afternoon. We wanted to get in some more snorkeling and diving before my friend (also visiting) Sandy had to leave on March 15.

We were negotiating the reefs and were almost in the anchorage when I went down below to check my navigation system with Bill's chart plotter. When I looked at the computer, I shouted, "Look out!" just as we hit a reef. I was thrown across the main saloon and hit the rounded edge of a settee and ended up on the floor knowing
something wasn't right. Bill immediately threw the engine in reverse and got us off the reef. He and Sandy got the boat to a mooring as I lay on the floor testing my limbs to make sure I hadn't broken my back.

After they got the boat moored and determined that we were not taking on water, Bill scouted around and found Carmen, on the boat Relax who had been a flight attendant and was a PADI instructor. Carmen had had some emergency medical training. She gave me a thorough examination and made me as comfortable as possible by getting some large towels and putting them carefully under me as she did the exam. We all came to the conclusion that it was broken ribs.

I was able to get ahold of DAN, my travel insurance company, via Skype, and they took over trying to get me to medical services via a helicopter to a hospital in Suva. Molololailai is a pretty remote island. They do have an airstrip but it is not lit at night. DAN didn't realize this and called me to say a helicopter was on the way. A flat bottomed dive boat was arranged to take me from Turn the Page to shore. With great difficulty, I got myself off the floor, up the steps to the cockpit and then down into the dive boat. There were about 7 of us in the boat and every movement sent waves of pain through me. We got to shore and people got out rocking the boat and sending sharp pains to my ribs which they didn't realize.

No helicopter arrived and upon calling, it was discovered that it is against the law for helicopters to fly at night. From the boat, I got to shore, on to a golf cart and after a ride on a bumpy road, finally to a room at the hotel at Musket Cove. Sandy was in the room with me and we spent a long night with me in great pain waiting for sunrise and a helicopter. Finally at 9 a.m. the helicopter arrived and I was taken on a stretcher via a van to the airstrip where the helicopter loaded me on a stretcher and away we went. Poor Sandy tried to see the sights from the helicopter but was too worried about me to enjoy the 45 minute ride to Suva. Once we landed in Suva, I was whisked into a hospital and left on a gurney while Sandy got ahold of DAN again saying the hospital knew nothing about me arriving and questioning if we were at the right hospital.

Sure enough, we were not at the right hospital! So, off that gurney, into an ambulance and to another hospital which looked a lot better. The emergency room did indeed know who we were and why we were there and got busy with the paperwork and X-rays which did indeed determine that I had 3 broken ribs. Meds were given to relieve the pain and I was given a private room where Sandy could try to sleep in a reclining chair. More X-rays were taken the next day and it was determined that I had not punctured a lung which was great. I had two days of physical therapy in which they were able to teach me a deep breathing technique so that I would not be in danger of getting pneumonia and to teach me ways to help myself get around. This information was very helpful.

DAN kept in contact with us several times a day and a Chinese doctor saw me each day. After 3 days I was released and taken by ambulance to Vuda Marina where we had a small cottage and a rented hospital bed for me. At first, we thought I should be flown back to the states when Sandy was to leave but the more complicated and expensive it became, the more I felt that I should stay in Fiji and heal before heading back to the states. It was going to cost DAN a bundle of money to get me back so when I told them
that if I could just extend my Visa, that I could heal sufficiently to fly back as a regular traveler, paying for my own return ticket.

At one point, DAN people contacted the Chinese doctor and he said he had released me and that I was fit to travel. What he didn't tell them, was I could not fly in a regular seat! DAN as well as I was quite puzzled and DAN suggested I contact another doctor close to Vuda to give their opinion and then apply for the Visa extension. With some difficulty this was done and after three trips to Immigration, Sandy was successful in getting me the extension. I am now slowly recovering in a small cottage on the Marina grounds, eager to return to Bold Spirit, the boat I was staying on before all this happened.

7.1.4 Yacht Services in Suva

Soggy Paws - January 2013: We didn't spend a long time in Suva--about a week. But here's what we know.

**Taxis:** There are lots of taxi's in Suva. A big company you can call 24x7 to get a taxi sent to you is: 331-2100. Another one is Regent Taxi at 5000. We used a taxi driver named Muktal to run around. He knew where everything was (hardware stores, etc) and was friendly, resourceful, happy to wait for us, and relatively inexpensive: His cell is 847-7880. You could easily hire him for an hour or half day to run around getting stuff done. English is adequate, not perfect. Taxi's are easy to flag down out front of RSYC--it's getting back from wherever you are that can sometime be more challenging (unless you are right downtown).

**Marine Supplies:** There are two marine stores in Suva--one that is steps away from the RSYC docks, and one out on the main road between the Tradewinds Anchorage and Suva downtown. The latter is supposed to be the biggest/newest. All are owned by (I think) Tradewinds Marine (including the one in Savusavu and in Vuda Point). There is no price advantage in going to those in Suva vs Savusavu or Vuda Point, and all the more remote stores can get whatever's available anywhere in Fiji within a few days. They are fairly well stocked, and will order things for you if they don't have it. Prices are of course fairly high due to the normal markup, shipping, and Fiji Customs Duty.

**Provisioning:** There are a number of big supermarkets in downtown Suva. Supplies are better and prices are less than in Savusavu. The biggest is probably the M&H at MHCC--a mall-ish kind of place within walking distance or easy bus/taxi of RSYC. We also took the shoreline bus out to **Cost-U-Less** on the NE side of the Suva peninsula (out by the University of South Pacific). We took the bus out and a taxi back. Cost-U-Less seems to be the same as in American Samoa, but not as well stocked (at least when we were there). But we did find some American brand products that we'd been looking for. They also had some good-quality lamb chops at reasonable prices, something we'd not found at all in Savusavu. Worth a trip.

On the way back from Cost-U-Less in the taxi, we were in search of tomatoes, and ended up at **Whaley's**. They had a very nice supply of imported fruits and veggies, including some really nice quality tomatoes. Plus they had some really nice meats..."sea base" (small white filets, yummy), smoked ham, chicken, pork, and steak.
The taxi driver found the place, but the address on the card they gave us was 1-3 Rewa Street, Flagstaff, Suva. Ph: 330-1954.

The **Suva Market** is within walking distance of RSYC (or the bus station, if you're out at Tradewinds moorings). It is a vast market area, but without a lot of variety. You'll find the same old Fijian fruits and veggies, and if there is a shortage of something (ie tomatoes), you can walk the entire acre of market area and not find it. However, it is a great place to get fresh fruits and veggies. But we thought prices were higher than at the market in Savusavu (the best market, we think, in Fiji). When we were there, they were still recovering from Cyclone Evan, and there were shortages of the kinds of tender veggies that would get harmed by high winds (tomatoes, papaya, lettuce, etc).

**Hardware Stores:** There are a lot of marine-oriented supplies in the commercial area along the waterfront, including a good hardware store. We also had a taxi take us to a couple more huge hardware stores within a 5-10 minute drive of RSYC, looking for something specific.

**Solar Panels and Electrical Supplies:** Clay Engineering is located in Suva and regularly brings in solar panels from the U.S. and Asia, and related charging equipment (inverters, solar regulators, connectors, wiring). They were able to offer us a Yacht in Transit discount. We bought 1 large and 4 small solar panels from them. Ph 336-3880. They delivered the large panel to us in Savusavu for a reasonable price, and we picked up the 4 smaller panels later ourselves while in Suva.

**Chain and Anchor Galvanizing:** Not in Suva, but in Ba, north of Lautoka, but worth mentioning. We were in Vuda Point Marina and found Elisha Engineering who does galvanizing for large building construction. They were happy to re-galvanize our anchor and a portion of our chain. It is not hot-dipped, but "hot sprayed", and then coated with a hard clear coating (very durable). We hired a taxi to take the chain & anchor to Elisha Engineering in Ba, and then they delivered it back to us at Vuda. Another friend had it trucked from Savusavu to Ba and back. Not cheap but good quality galvanizing, and you can have them do only one section of your chain, if you wish. Elisha Engineering ph 667-0122 36-38 Nabeka St. Ba.

### 7.1.5 Touring Viti Levu by Car

**Pincoya - June 2012:** While waiting for our repair parts to arrive in Suva, we rented a car and took a tour of the island of Viti Levu. We can tell you that this is not advisable as the roads are in very poor shape and slow going.

By the time we picked up the rental car and started our drive, it was almost 9:00 am. We met a Swiss couple, Andy and Doris on Andori who had arrived from Tonga a week or so before us. They joined us on our long and uneventful travel around the island.

The highlight was traveling the King’s Road that was under extensive construction. The detours were quite rough and ugly making us glad we had rented a 4 wheel drive vehicle. Bridges were under construction, men shoveling rock by hand, a fairly new tractor trailer tipped over with a bent axle were part of our excitement.

Figuring we had passed the worst road, we thought we could make up time driving rest of the island, so we stopped at a historic Catholic church in a small village. After parking
the car half way up the hill because of the ruts, we walked the remaining way. Everyone was friendly and stopping to chat with us as we headed towards the church. There was no sign saying anything about the church or how old it really was, but as churches go, it was a very nice historic church having stained glass windows although numerous panes were broken. As we made our way back down the hill, a lady invited us to lunch. It was a very primitive home, made of corrugated metal roof sheltering the sleeping area and the common area where we ate rice with some yellow type split bean. Out back they had a shelter for the cooking and kitchen area. The father stopped by briefly. He was a bee keeper. They had four children with the oldest being 5 and the youngest a month old. With having so little, they were willing to share what food they had with us. It was very touching as to their generosity.

These are difficult situations as to how you can share a little with them without challenging their own pride or to create an atmosphere of welfare. When visiting under privileged countries, we try to never just give, but to exchange for produce or help with education. We gave Fiji dollars to help support the oldest girl, Paulina’s education as they need uniforms and etc for school. They were very appreciative.

As we continued on our journey, we realized that Fiji does not have much in the way of historic sites or points of interest. With a history of a lot of tribal wars and political unrest, there has been not a stable form of government to support development or finances available. We took a few other stops along the way to stretch our legs. It was disappointing that the roads were in such poor shape even around the major towns.

After a stop for dinner, we continued our way along in the dark. An exciting moment though was when all of sudden out of darkness appeared barrels attached by plastic ribbon, the road just dropped off and Gene had to swerve quickly to the oncoming side of the road. Fortunately, there were no oncoming cars at that moment. Gene drove the entire distance having to maneuver potholes, ruts and maintenance workers. It looks like most roads were under construction, but it never looked like much ever got completed. Arriving back to Suva around 9:00 pm, the gin and tonics at the RSYC were quite welcoming. It had been a long day.

### 7.1.6 Flying Crew/Visitors in and out of Suva

The international airport is in Nadi. Your options for travel between Suva and Nadi are as follows:

- **Private cab**: around $120 FJD
- **Express Bus**: $16 FJD
- **Shuttle Van**: slightly more than the Express Bus, but usually stop less and make the trip a little faster. Plan on about 4 hours to get between Suva and Nadi.

Bus schedules can be found here:
Soggy Paws 2012: When we flew in to Nadi airport, there was an information desk just outside the baggage claim / Customs area. We inquired about the transport options, and they were very helpful—calling to find out when the next bus was, and sending someone with us to the ticketing counter (which was not marked) to make sure we got to the right place and got on the right bus. The Express Bus is a nice new bus, with A/C and a movie.

7.2 Suva to Lautoka
Ocelot - 2005: Robinson Crusoe (Likuri) Island, on the SW corner of Viti Levu is also extremely yacht friendly and should not be missed. They have the best cultural shows we've seen in Fiji, including knife-dancing and fire-dancing, as well as the more traditional sort. The staff obviously really enjoys putting on the shows, and their attitude is infectious. Meals are only $4.50 for a nice buffet, which is a steal as, Ron, one of the owners, also owns the butchery in Nadi. They do a "Lovo" (ground oven, like the Tongan "Umu") lunch 3 times a week, accompanied by fire-walking and a cultural show.

Robinson Crusoe shows up as Likuri Island on the charts, about 7 miles SSE of Navula Passage (the main pass into Western Fiji). Although Likuri Bay is fairly accurately positioned, the chart has some errors: There is NO shallow spot to avoid on the way in - you could bring 60' (20m) in if you wanted - and anchorage off the island is 10-25' (3-8m) of good holding muddy sand. There's room for dozens of boats and the owners, 2 retired Aussie couples, are putting in free moorings to attract more yachts. They monitor VHF 10 and will gladly send a boat out to guide you in if you want (although it's only necessary if you arrive after dark).

7.2.1 Pacific Harbor
Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 196

Beach House - August 2011: We came to Pacific Harbor to do the "shark dive". We made the quick trip (20 miles) to Pacific Harbor from Suva in Beach House, in preparation for our shark dive the next day with Peter and Diana. We ended up sailing most of the way but to our surprise upon arrival, we discovered that Pacific Harbor was anything but….a harbor!

Pacific Harbor as it turns out is a river, about 60 feet wide and 7 feet deep at the entrance! This was a major surprise. No facilities, and the dive shop said, “no worries” you can anchor off our dock. Problem is, they didn’t take into account that there was a bridge which made getting our 78 feet of mast (off the water) more than an impossibility to get there. We were going to literally tie off in the mangroves on the side of the river as it was blowing a gale out in the bay and there was no close anchoring option.

In the nick of time, “Charlie”, a local live aboard diver operator, saw our plight and invited us to tie up to his dock for the two nights we’d be there. This was a gift, as Charlie had the only dock there that could handle “Beach House”. The river had a current which
switched with the tide and we would have to have anchored bow and stern or tied off to trees to prevent swinging.

7.2.2  Serua Harbor

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 192

7.2.3  Vunaniu (Vuna Nui)

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 192

Possible anchorage at: 18-15.79S / 177-52E (from someone's track)

Mr John IV - October 2010: Our next anchorage from Mbenga was Vuna Niu Harbour, four hours away on the mainland of Viti Levu. Here we managed to find a really nice bay tucked inside the reef, which gave us safe and secure anchoring conditions.

The sailing to get there was somewhat lively at times especially when we surfed down 12ft waves at over 7 knots otherwise they were round 6 - 9 ft. and the boat handled it well.

Using OpenCPN (with Google Earth charts) we had no difficulty finding the entrance, it is clear where the reef is, even in poor light....

Anchor Position: 18 15.739S 177 52.169E

We spent several days here as our friends Ed & Ellen had an oil leak on their engine, which turned out to be a pin prick hole in one of their oil line; this was an especially good anchorage for them as they were forced to sail in and were happy to find that they could do so without too much effort.

7.2.4  Somosomo Bay

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 194-195 (with chartlet).

Radiance - July 2013: We anchored in 60 feet off the eastern side of the central bay on the north end of Naviti, Somosomo Bay, at 17-05.57'S; 177 16.08'E.

We were greeted on the beach by Laurena who walked us through the village to the chief's house. On the way, she told us, "it is a lady chief." The chief accepted our sevusevu and handed us the visitor's book to sign, and asked for a monetary donation to the village. We were happy to make a $20 donation, but we didn't feel pressured either.

The village is spacious, neat, and very friendly. Nice landscaping. We enjoyed some very nice walks on the eastern peninsula, up the hills through long grass. We walked on a path over the flats to the eastern shore, searching for a World War II airplane that crashed here, and found ourselves in someone's yard. We found once again the yard had very nice landscaping and was well kept. We met the two residents who welcomed us and pointed us to the float that their grandson had attached to the plane. We donned our gear and swam out to check it out – pretty cool.
The man who was there told us that his grandfather saw the plane crash and remembers helping the pilot. The pilot's granddaughter apparently came to visit the site a few years ago!

The path from the cove to the eastern side of the island was very pretty and it was lovely to visit such a peaceful, neat residence.

There is a cell tower on the hill behind the village but it must be Digicel because our Vodafone dongle and phone do not work at the anchorage.

7.2.5 Cuvu (Thuvu) Harbor

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 196

The Royal Fijian Hotel is/was here.

Possible anchor spots: 18-08.16S / 177-25.06E or 18-08.05S / 177-24.82E (from some unknown boat's tracks)

Mr John IV - October 2010: A few days later we moved down the coast to Thuvu Harbour about five hours from Vanga Bay but unfortunately, this turned out to be a bit of a mistake. We anchored off the Fijian Resort and on arrival had to go ashore to fill out a few forms and pay 40 fijians dollars ($20 each) for the privilege of using the facilities in the hotel.

It was a nice hotel and not such a bad deal for the price as we got water, free internet and a safe place to leave the dinghy whilst ashore.

A real bonus was to meet up with a Fijian local ‘David’ who was really the descendent of the old Chief for the island on which the resort now stands; he was a mine of information and was a really good singer/guitar player so we had some great entertainment.

Next day, with our friends, we decided to take a tour into the interior to the Eco Park where we found lots of birds to keep us busy for a few hours.

The anchorage was not great to start with and was getting more lumpy as time progressed…. there was a big swell outside and it hooked into the bay…. on top of that there were Para-gliders and Banana Boats full of screeching kids getting towed around the anchorage most of the day….not much fun for us though, so we spent most of our time ashore.

In the end, it all got a bit much and the weather threatened to get worse so, after a very bad night of rolling and pitching, we were up early and heading for our next anchorage three hours away at Momi Bay

7.2.6 Natadola Bay

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 198

Beach House - August 2011: Late in the afternoon we pulled in to Natadola Bay where the new Intercontinental Hotel is located. We shared this anchorage with another boat. (no further information about the anchorage).
7.2.7  **Likuri (Robinson Crusoe Island)**

Cruising Guide References:  A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 198-199

**Sloepmouche - 2006:** This yacht-friendly island makes a great stopover anchorage when making the trip from Suva to Nadi or Lautoka. The entrance through the barrier reef is wide and position is quite accurate on the electronic CM93 charts. The route to the anchorage near the moorings of the resort boats is pretty evident on a low tide, as the shoals are uncovered; not so at higher tides. There are a couple of markers, but the best is to radio the resort on ch 10 VHF for directions or a guide boat. There is plenty of water inside, contrary to what is marked on the charts. We anchored just outside the resort boat moorings in <20ft of water at mid-tide. One caveat, there are very strong tidal currents in the anchorage, so make sure to dig the anchor in, allow swinging room, and make sure the dinghy motor is running well before you cast off from the big boat!

Not only does it provide great protection from the prevailing trades in reasonable depths and good holding, but Yacht Club Membership costs only $1 F plus a bottle of beer at the bar, and entitles you to inexpensive meals, 10% discount on drinks and other purchases, free dance shows, use of facilities, (except showers and laundry), and yachtie’s price on the shuttle boat to Viti Levu. Partner couples, Ann and Ron, Wayne and Kaz have turned this island into a proto-type Eco-conscious resort and a rising star in the Island Dance and Fire Show entertainment arena. We attended two of the 6 performances of the week, and were very impressed with the quality, energy and enthusiasm of the dance troupe. Each performance vibrated with their dedication to making every show seem like opening night; no indication that it was dead season, the hottest time of the year, or the 6th show of the week! The troupe is striving to become the most re-known Fire and Knife Dance performers in all of Fiji. The strength and stamina required for these dances is phenomenal.

**Aboard-a-Dream Nautilus Dive Center:** located on the RC resort grounds, this center is run by a very nice German couple, Tommy and Nadine. The dives are conducted on the long barrier reef that runs the length of the southwest coast of Viti Levu. They do one and two tank dives and Padi Certification courses. On our dive with them, there was a dramatic drop-off with swarms of snappers; we also saw a turtle, blacktip reef shark, napoleon wrasse, and clown trigger. Their project is to run their own mini live-aboard dive boat all around Fiji later!

7.2.8  **Momi Bay**

Cruising Guide References:  A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 199

**Mr John IV - October 2010:** After Thuvu Bay, Momi Bay was paradise, a nice calm anchorage with enough breezes to keep the power up for our laptops; it was really good to get tucked in behind the main island and behind a substantial reef system that took away the swell.

Although the forecast was for heavy rain and thunderstorms, we had been exceptionally lucky in missing most of it. We could see from our anchorage that inland, in central Fiji, they were having a bad time with Rain and HAIL! We only got a few sprinkles; Suva was
very badly hit, they had 280 ml of rain fall within 24hrs, causing flooding, closures of schools and businesses and blocked roads but here in ‘Nandi waters,’ where they needed the rain desperately, they had very little.

We stayed in Momi Bay for three days doing odd jobs round the boat and working on our lap tops, seeing as there was no good place to get ashore.

**Sloepmouche - 2006:** We decided to stop at the Seashell Cove Resort (South side of the bay) to break our trip. Luckily for us, On Saturdays, they have their lovo/meke night. Had an interesting chat with Virginia, the mgr who started the resort 20 yrs ago! Beware of the shallow plateau that extends far from shore and that you may not see at high tide (charts are accurate). Follow the dinghy channel marked by sticks, to get to the resort. Next morning, we met Sean & Michele, the Scuba Bula dive operators. Went for a 2-tank dive with them outside of Navula pass. Nice overhangs and tunnels. June-Sept is the best time to spot big pelagics, mantas, maybe even a whale shark! Best spot for surfing here too! (they had a big contest last week!). Just North of the Seashell, we saw the new Marriott Hotel in construction. They reclaimed the whole shallow reef area in front of their property. The plan is to have the top hotel of the chain here! Complete with marina and Disney World! Does the world change!!!

7.3 **Beqa (Mbenga)**

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - 187-191

**Radiance - July 2013 - Yanuca:** We had a fast sail in fresh trades from Suva to Yanuca*, the small island west of Beqa inside the lagoon. We had a good Google image and anchored on the west side of the island, at approx. 18-22.5S / 177-59.36E. The anchorage was reasonably protected.

We took the dinghy to the southern beach where there is an abandoned backpacker’s resort, and walked along the shore to the northern beach where we found a path through the island to the other side. The northern beach is difficult to access by dinghy at low tide.

After walking through plantations, we came upon the school grounds on the top of a hill overlooking the village. We walked down steps to the village and presented sevusevu which was accepted.

The village was, once again, very tidy with landscaping (roses!). We went back to the school to give them some notebooks we had brought, and had a nice visit with the principal. There are three additional teachers from all over Fiji – one was from the highlands on Viti Levu and had not been home in several years, she told us wistfully.

The high school is on Beqa. We learned some more Fijian, thanks to one of the school teachers who had a writing lesson on the blackboard.

A bit later the principal walked over to the west side of the island with two little kids to visit the boat. They were very polite and mindful, staying only a few minutes onboard. We were happy to give some coloring books to the kids and they were delighted to have their pictures taken aboard the yacht.
**Soggy Paws - Feb 1, 2013:** We entered Beqa from the Suva side, in the eastern pass. It is mid-summer now, and the wind has been light and variable for weeks. We still haven't put our genoa back on that we took down for Cyclone Evan. The GRIBS said we should have 10 knots from WNW. The Fiji Met forecast had a high wind warning and they were predicting 15-25 knots NW for all of Fiji. (There is a low south of Suva affecting the weather). Our eyes were telling us that the GRIB forecast was more likely. So we still didn't put our genoa up.

On the 25 mile passage, we mostly had 5-10 knots out of the SW-W (on our nose). Very briefly we had maybe 15. We ended up motorsailing.

**Pass midpoint:** 18-21.58S / 178-11.05E. This is a wide pass, and with SW winds, it was flat calm. We did notice some current, so entering in strong SE winds and a falling tide might be a little bumpy. A better pass in strong SE winds would be the N pass.

We had used Google Earth to spot a nice sandy spot just inside the pass. We were going to anchor and take a lunchtime snorkel around the pass. This turned out to look like a fairly nice anchoring spot, but was a lee shore in the westerly winds we had, so we passed it up. We couldn't find any place along that reef that was protected from westerlies, so we ended up anchoring on the east side of the island itself, for a short lunch stop and a bottom scrub.

About 4pm we hauled anchor and headed for Malumu Bay, the deep ravine in Mbenga. We had Google Earth charts and a track from another boat that we followed in. In the mouth of the bay was some kind of a resort. There were two dive boats on moorings right off the resort, and a couple of other small boats. We almost anchored just south of the resort, but decided to explore further in.

We ended up anchoring a good way in at 18-23.14S / 178-09.13E, this is a nice protected location. Though the Google Earth picture made it look like there were shoals on the way in, that turned out to be just shadows and wind. The depth started at about 50' at the entrance and slowly shoaled to about 25' where we anchored. The bottom on our fishfinder looked like mud all the way in.

We had a few mosquitos overnight when the wind dropped.

**Beach House - Shark Dive - Sep 2011 (by Dive Boat from Pacific Harbor):** I've heard forever about the shark feed dive near Beqa (Benga) Lagoon here in Fiji. This is where they get the “bigs”.

We loaded up all our gear on Aquatrek’s dive boat for the 15 minute ride to the site. It turns out that the dive is actually at the entrance to the bay we were in and no longer out in Beqa Lagoon which would have been another half hour ride. The weather was NOT cooperating. Pretty bumpy. The range of divers was from near beginner to instructor so the dive guides would have their hands full.

An interesting treat. Peter and I watched a “young lady” (83 years young!) get some assistance walking down to the dive boat. We thought to ourselves, really? This dive? Anyway, it turns out that Joyce started diving when she was 65. She had 750 dives
under her belt and had done this shark dive for YEARS 3 days/week during the prime 2 month season here in Fiji. She was sort of an honored celebrity (see photo gallery).

Joe, our dive guide gave a nice briefing and told us they were “overdue” for the tiger sighting. So I didn’t get my hopes up. I had brought both the still and video cameras and decided to go with the still on the first dive. It turns out, the “in house” videographer from Aquatrek’s camera wasn’t working so he took my video camera on both dives. I have yet to watch…. (soon!).

I went in first to get the camera out of the way of everyone else’s entry and Joyce went in right behind me. She whacked her head on her tank but thankfully was just fine.

All the divers were set up behind a “wall”, but I got to get into a photo pit which they had set up for the crazy photographer’s amongst us who like to get “CLOSER”…..

There were hundreds of fish, all very good sized and well fed from having two meals a day served by Aquatrek and Bega Adventure’s the other “Shark Feed” company that does these trips. Between them, these animals are fed at least 6 days/week.

The 50 gallon drum full of fish parts was hung in mid water by one of our guides and the action began.

At first, a few white tip, gray reef and several very large (10 foot – 3.5 meter) Tawny Nurse sharks showed up. The Tawny’s are very yellow in color, have very small mouths and look like they’ve small barbs under their lower jaws like a catfish.

Next came the Silver Tips and the Bulls!

The Silver Tips look like big Gray Reef sharks with silver highlights on all their fin tips. A very cool looking shark. Friend Terry Kennedy in Baja California told us that he thought Silver Tips were a “sharks…shark”! They looked it.

Now the Bulls are an entirely different critter. They were BIG. Very girthy as a sign of how well fed they were. “Big Mama” was about 10 feet long and about half that wide. Fortunately, none of these animals are interested in “us”.

All the sudden, I saw Joe take Joyce by the hand and swim her right into the melee. I thought this was some sort of Fijian ritual sacrifice….LOL. However, Joe was taking Joyce first but in turn, all the rest of the brave into an area where they could “pet” some of the sharks. Mostly the Tawny Nurse sharks which you will be glad to know have no teeth.

I got some decent photos (see photo gallery), but lots of “scatter” in the water will make many of them a tough “light room” project.

Second Dive: So now, Joe and Joyce are convinced that the Tiger will make her appearance on the second dive.

We go to a slightly shallower site and the melee renews. Two minutes later, here she came! About 12-14 feet of pure Tiger Girl! (see photo gallery). She had a pretty good sized gash on her right side which may have been a mating bite? The males literally bite the females (who’ve evolved a thick skin) when courting. She came right into the divers where yes indeed, I got to “pet” the Tiger Shark! Do not try this at home!
She was one of three tigers and the smallest that come to the feed on occasion. Joe told me that 10 years ago, they used to get up to 30 or so Tigers. Now only one and only “sometimes”. A wake up to the world that these magnificent predators are being fished out for their fins. Our Asian friends feel that their fertility is improved by such nonsense. When will the world wake up!?

**Mr John IV - Oct 2009 - Vanga Bay:** We had planned to head for Kadavu from Suva. Unfortunately, once clear of the reef, we found the seas were much bigger than expected and the wind in ‘not quite the right direction’, we sadly had to give up on trying to get to Kandavu Island and the Astrolabe Reef. Hence, we changed course and ran down wind to Mbengga Island, dropping anchor in Vanga Bay.

Anchor Posn: 18-24.338S / 178-06.197E (too close to shore)

This was not one our favorite spots, we just managed to anchor when we were hit with a 20 + knot down draft that lasted for several minutes, then died down to nothing giving us a nice calm anchorage only to be repeated every fifteen minutes or so. This wouldn’t have been so bad had these bullets of wind all been coming from the same direction but no such luck!

I wasn’t all that happy with the anchorage either, it certainly wasn’t a relaxing place so the next morning, as soon as it was light enough, we departed rather rapidly.

**Amante:** After a week we finally left Suva. We felt like there was more stuff we needed to get, but places like Suva can hold onto boats like a magnet, i.e. you can buy most anything and leaving a land of plenty can be difficult.

So we headed for the island of Beqa, about 25nm SW. It is surrounded by a lovely lagoon and we hoped to finally get some sunshine and nice diving.

We ended up anchoring in the bay you can see to the left, i.e. the saddle which is really an old volcanic crater. This is Malumu Bay and not described very well in any of our guides. It proved to be a great place to obtain shelter from the winds and seas. The main downside to this quiet environment is the water is murky and the shore is lined with mangroves. An additional problem is that Fijians are very territorial and you don’t go ashore without getting permission from the local chief. This requires a ceremony called “sevusevu” which involves an offering of the semi-narcotic plant known widely as kava.

The challenge in this case was trying to determine which village owned the land and water you see above. We decided to just stay on the boat.

After a day at Malumu we decided to sail for a small island to the west named Yanuca. There we hoped to find some great diving. The diving there may be great but the weather sucked big-time. We anchored in a coraline area with poor holding and had to listen anxiously all night while the anchor pretended to drag us toward the fringing reef a few hundred yards behind us. We could barely see the bottom because it was totally overcast. After rolling and grinding all night we opted to return to the cozy confines of Beqa’s Malumu Bay. Our decision was also influenced by the fact that the pious Fijians don’t approve of recreation on Sunday.

We have been stuck on the boat for almost a week now, imprisoned by lousy weather. As an expat in Tonga pointed out, the great secret to the South Pacific is the frequent
crappy weather. The great deserts of Australia spawn a succession of high, lows and fronts that sweep eastward and often increase as they do so. Oddly enough, the highs are often worse than the lows, because they reinforce the prevailing SE trade winds, making a pleasant 15kts more like 30, which means rough seas and poor visibility. The fronts add their own contribution in the form of unsettled skies and squalls. However, after 5 days of gusty gloom we plan to sally forth in the morning, to we hope a more pleasant stay near the island of Kandavu.

8  Kadavu (Kandavu) and the The Great Astrolabe Reef

Cruising Guide References:
South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 92-94
A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 70-88

Note on names and spellings of islands, bays and villages: Soggy Paws, when compiling this guide, did not have the nice (but expensive) detailed paper chart of Kadavu, that has the bays, islands, and villages listed. A lot of the Pincoya notes were taken verbally, and we've had a hard time correlating a few of the names named with places on the chart (except when waypoints provided). Our CMAP chart and Google Earth chart don't have much in the way of names on it. So we have done the best we can. If you have the nice detailed chart (available in Suva), it would help a lot.

Mediteraneo - July 2013 - Diving Around NE Kadavu: This month we spent 2 weeks around Kadavu Island where we (and a number of other boats: Superted, Victory, Gypsea Heart, Chapter 2 and CD) enjoyed great and affordable diving that we would like to let other cruisers know about.

Kadavu Island and Astrolabe Reef offer some of the top dive sites in Fiji. We would recommend Bruce O’Conner as a useful contact for diving around NE Kadavu. Bruce is an experienced local PADI dive master who knows the area well and will lead dives to the Naigoro Pass and other dive sites in the area. The Naigoro Pass offers spectacular drift dives with groupers aggregating around the pass entrance during spawning season (July to September).

Bruce will organise a boat and boatman to take care of the drift dive pick up. You can also have a lunch at his place between the two dives.

He has a small compressor and can fill your tanks after dives. For 2 dives, including dive boat and tank filling, expect to pay between F$50 and F$80 per diver - depending on the number of divers and the distance to the dive sites. This is a fraction of the price you would be paying in other dive shops in the area (FD230 plus). Bruce can be contacted by telephone +679 960-5298 or email bruceoconnordive@gmail.com and his house (position 18-59.61S / 178-28.92E) is a short dinghy ride north of the anchorage behind the Vatulutu Island (position 19-00.34S / 178-28.57E).

Sarah Jean II - August 2012 - Electronic Chart Accuracy: We found our Navionics and Nobeltec charts to be extremely accurate around the islands and through the passes.
Shango - June 2012 - Internet: The Vodafone connection in Kadavu is too weak to download anything….or maybe I should say that I don't have the patience to wait and wait and then wait again after the connection times out.

We did get some internet at Ono Island, but not down in Kadavu

8.1 Astrolabe Reef and Passes and Islands N of Kadavu

8.1.1 Usborne Pass

8.1.2 Herald Pass


Sarah Jean II - August 2012: We went through Herald Passage on our way out. Only one of the 4 markers is there - the NE one we think. Diamond Rock is located just inside and in the middle of the pass so one must choose a route north or south of the rock. We chose the wider southern route and had lots of room and depth.

8.1.3 Dravuni Island

Sarah Jean II - August 2012: Dravuni was one of our favorite places. Beautiful island with sandy beach, hike to the top of the hill with great views of the islands and the turquoise reef.

Contrary to some cruising guides, the people are very friendly here and welcoming. A cruise ship visits every few months which brings some money to the village here. They still welcome cruisers and we did sevusevu with the chief. The chief’s wife asked me for recipes for bread, cookies and muffins which I shared with her.

Anchored in 30’ feet of very clear water on sand. We could see the anchor as it dropped. Good holding.

Lat 18.45.4 S Long 178.31.1 E

Keep the green marker to starboard as you approach the village and anchorage - there is a big reef under the marker. Good snorkeling on this reef.

Great walking trails all over the island. Go up the hill for a great view.

Pincoya - June 2012: We came in Herald Pass and made our first anchorage in the lee of the island of Dravuni. We stayed there on Sunday and our friends on Noe Noe came up to Dravuni and we did sevusevu together with the headmen of the village. We then motored south to a protected anchorage area west of Navara Island.

Other cruisers have mentioned an unfriendly welcome at Dravuni, but we found the villagers very welcoming.

8.1.4 Navara Island

Pincoya - June 2012: We did sevusevu at Dravuni Island before stopping here. This island is controlled by Dravuni.
We anchored at 18-47.220S / 178-29.711E, and found decent snorkeling on the reef nearby.

The anchorage had some coral we listened to chain coral growlers during the night. This prompted us the next night to try using the large round orange fender float with our anchor chain for the first time.

### 8.1.5 Yaukuvelailai Island

After moving our boats to the lee of Island of Yaukuvelailai 2 miles away, we buoyed the last length of our anchor chain, which worked out very well and we got to have a quiet nights sleep! Tried it without the buoy the next night and the chain noise was loud, so it is full time new system for the rest of our trip.

Snorkeling around Yaukuvelailai showed moderately nice coral and small fish. We figure the locals keep the fish populations down. Next morning we decided to go out to the Takua Rocks about a mile E of us. Indeed we had a good snorkel with much nicer coral, but still small fish.

Anchorages:
- 18-47.900S / 178-31.400E

### 8.1.6 Bulia Island

**Pincoya - June 2012:** This morning we upped the anchor from Vuroleva Island, motored over the 2 mile pass to the village of Buliya and did our SevuSevu. This was very casual, but the local children walked us around their village and we met a number of villagers.

This village appears somewhat wealthy with a generator, freezer, wind generator, nice homes with concrete floors and glass windows. The inhabitants seemed very industrious grinding coconut to make virgin coconut oil, pandanus drying everywhere for later weaving into mats, making brooms, washing clothes, and generally working. Most of the men seem to work at the resort being built on a neighboring island.

We also got to see their extensive garden area with taro, tapioca, coconut, pandanus, and more. They seemed quite self-sufficient.

After this short visit, we returned to our dinghy as Pincoya was anchored in good waves on a lee shore and I got soaked getting dinghy back out to Pincoya.

### 8.1.7 Yabu Island

**Pincoya - June 2012:** The next morning we pulled up the anchor and headed for Yabu, a small island which was supposed to have a lot of birds and snorkeling. It was still part of Buliya domination. Cautiously, we moved slowly through and around the reef and coral ahead anchoring in 25 feet of coral and sand, at 18-50.678S / 178-30.067E.

Wetsuits on and into the dinghy, off we went to the north end of the island. Snorkel gear on, overboard and towing the dinghy, we moved with the current along a great coral...
garden that ran the entire length of the island, but no birds. An hour later, we were back in the boat, showered, pulled up the anchor and continued our way along the reef and island to Ono Island and Nagara Bay.

8.1.8 Vuroleva Island

Sarah Jean II - August 2012: Manta Rays – you can swim with the manta rays at the NORTH TIP of Vurolevu Island – the island directly to the NE of Ono Is. You can go there in your dinghy from the anchorage at Nagara Bay.

Go at high tide and you’ll see them gliding below the surface. Anchor the dinghy and jump in and swim with them. The water is colder in Kadavu so you’ll need wet suits.

Pincoya - June 2012: The last three days we have been anchored by ourselves off I. Vuroleva, between I. Buliva and I. Ono.


We have enjoyed the snorkeling here, discovering very nice coral heads S of the island, and on the north end got to swim with a beautiful manta ray, just under 2 meters wing tip to wing tip. Every time we see one we are taken with how graceful and majestic they are.

This was at the north end of Vuroleva at approximately 18-51.455S / 178-31.296E.

Another good snorkeling spot was at the south end at approx 18-51.929S / 178-30.842E. There were coral heads and some current, which made a nice drift snorkel.

8.1.9 Ono Island

South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 94 , A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 85-87

Sarah Jean II - August 2012 - Approach: We came from Makogai which is to say from the northeast as if from Suva. There are a number of passes through the reef. Our approach was mid-morning in overcast conditions so we elected to sail down the west side of the reef, past the Alacrity Rocks and into Nabouwalu Bay, one of two good anchorages on Ono. This pass is very wide and should be OK in most conditions. The marker on Alacrity Rocks is missing but the surf break on the rocks is quite visible.

If the weather is fair and you decide to go first to Dravuni Island, you can enter the lagoon through Usborne Passage to the north or Herald Passage just west of Dravuni. We did not go through Usborne Passage so have no comment.

Sarah Jean II - August 2012 - Anchorages

Nabuwalu Bay – west side of Ono – anchored in 50’ of water in the middle of the bay as we had strong winds from all directions and wanted to have swinging room. Good holding in mud.

Lat 18.52.4 S Long 178.29.6 E

The water is quite shallow approaching the village so we followed the route of the boats from the village. The big wheels on our dinghy were helpful to get ashore. It’s best to go ashore at high tide if possible.
The village is very friendly. We did sevusevu with the chief and then returned the next morning on Sunday to go to church. The pastor’s name is Steve and made a special announcement in church welcoming the guests from Canada. After church the chief’s wife invited back to their home for lunch for traditional Fijian food – pulisami, taro, and fish. The next day Steve was our guide on a hike over to Nagara village – about 3 hours return on a muddy path. We carried Kava with us and did seveusevu with the chief in Nagara when we arrived on foot.

**Nagara Bay** – north side of Ono. Anchored deep in 70’ in the middle of the bay away from the reef.

The depth drops off fast from the reef. Beautiful bay with views up to the islands to the north inside the Astrolabe Reef. Good holding.

Lat. 18.52.4 S Long 178.29.6 E

The weather was settled when we anchored in Nagara but there was good protection from the easterly winds. We went diving with Mai Dive – Jason or Richard – 603-0842. Their resort is on the east side of Ono but they came and picked us up in Nagara Bay.

We dove Naigoro Pass on NE end of Kadavu – a good drift dive. The next day we dove the Alcrity Rocks on the west side of Astrolabe Reef which had very interesting caves and tunnels. Great dive.

**Delos - May 2011:** We sailed to Kadavu from Beqa, about a 40 mile sail, and made our first landfall at Ono Island. Ono island is right next to Kadavu and the Great Astrolabe Reef, named for the ship Astrolabe captained by Dumont d’Urville. He ran aground here in 1827 and nearly lost his ship. Strangely enough the captain that told us where to look for the Lau permit also ran his sailboat aground and sunk it on the Astrolabe Reef. It took him 8 hours overnight to swim to the nearest island which happened to be Ono. This area is littered with the skeletons of hapless ships so we are not taking any chances. Having three sets of eyes forward looking for reef and slight variations in water color is the way to go.

We sailed into Ono Island racing the sunset and set our hook in an indent labeled Madre on the chart. The anchorage was calm and pleasant and we all went for a dip. Finally we’re back someplace where you can see the bottom in 60 feet of water!

During the night a few squalls rolled through and the breeze switched to Northerly which brought a rolling swell into the bay. Nothing dangerous, just enough to relentlessly roll Delos side to side as she lay at anchor. After a quick snorkel on the reef we decided to move on and find another anchorage.

**Pincoya - June 2012 - Nagara Bay:** After a stop for a snorkel at Yabu, we pulled up the anchor and continued our way along the reef and island to Ono Island and Nagara Bay.

Anchorage: 18-52.506S / 178-29.594E

Heading in about 9:00 am the next morning, we managed to wade our way the last bit along the mangroves as the tide was out. Bill, a village spokesman, met us on shore
and took us to the chief’s house, but no chief was there, as he was at the garden and would be back in 20 minutes.

In the meantime, Joe took us on a tour of the school which boards 23 children who stay there Monday through Friday aging from 6 years to 12 years. The children walk over from a nearby village on Sunday afternoon. Even the children who live in Nagara stay at the school during the week. The government provides funds to feed the children on Mondays and the families take turns each day, rotating between cooks and chaperones at night. The sleeping beds were all made with mosquito nets tied neatly over each bunk and bathrooms close by. When the children start secondary school, the families move to Suva where their children attend school. Joe said it was cheaper than paying board at the schools on Kadavu.

We continued on our way to Joe’s house and met his wife. Joe actually had sailed on a yacht from Fiji to Vancouver/Seattle a few years back with an American. The American has moved to Fiji and lives in Suva with plans to build a house in Nagara. To do this, he has to provide the chief with a whale’s tooth. We were not sure where this is obtained, but we are sure the Chinese and Japanese probably have an ample supply since they still slaughter whales.

We were introduced to the local minister and the children sang us several religious songs. The chief still had not arrived so sevusevu was still considered complete and we headed back to our boats to return later, as we had been invited into for dinner that night. (we ended up not going to dinner, because we got sick)

When Kirsty, Hugh, and Jean returned from the dinner, they brought a pot of the dinner for us. It was two different crabs which had been cleaned out then stuffed and baked. Plus taro root, a taro leaf cake dish, bok choy, and a plantain piece. The crabs, each done differently, while too salty, were delicious as was the taro leaf dish. We did have to return the pot, but the next morning as I was preparing to go into the village to do that, another villager pulled up alongside with a box of bananas asking for trade goods. We ended up giving him $5 and a couple canned goods. He in turn took in the pot with a bag of flour to Joe in the village, saving me a trip.

We left this anchorage as the wind started shifting to the E and ENE.

8.1.10 Pass between Ono Island and Kadavu

Pincoya - June 2012: The pass between Ono Island and Kandavu looks blocked with coral and difficult to navigate on the chart, but we found it to be an easy way into Naiganu.

8.2 North Coast of Kadavu, Near Ono

8.2.1 Kavala

Hibiscus: Great Anchorage - Medical Clinic and Store  18-58.45S / 178-24.98E

Pincoya - June 2012: The Kavala anchorage is: 18-58.999S, 178-25.158E
The reef to watch out for coming in has a marker but is not intuitive.
Approximate waypoint outside is: 18-57.355S, 178-25.474E. We came in from the W and left going E to Naigaro pass, so shaved this considerably from each direction.

**Delos - May 2011:** We set sail from Ono in the light breeze and slowly made our way to Kadavu, about 6 miles away. The path was totally within the reef of both islands so we kept a sharp watch with Paul and Brady on the bow looking for coral heads. The coral heads here can come up from depths of 90 feet rather suddenly and cause you real trouble. They are easily spotted with the sun overhead and a pair of polarized glasses.

We intended to sail to the East side of Kadavu and anchor close to Naigoro pass because it is supposed to have amazing diving. But on the way we spotted an interesting looking village on the shore so we sheeted in our sails and headed to starboard. 30 minutes later we dropped our hook in the calm waters of Kavala Bay, just off the village. We jumped in the dinghy, grabbed our Yaqona root (Kava) and made our way to the beach to ask the village chief permission to anchor.

Early the next day we headed back to the village for a tour of their fields. Apparently the ONLY source of income for the village is selling kava root to the people in Suva. Everything here (bricks for houses, cooking oil, lamps, petrol, etc.) is purchased with kava money. Of all the islands to land on we picked the kava capitol of Fiji! Sure enough, the kava we purchased in Suva had a Kadavu stamp on it.

The village was clean and orderly and all the houses (huts really) were in pretty good shape, all thanks to kava money. There were no chairs or tables, just a few cushions spread over the woven mats that served as a floor. A concrete foot path would it’s way through the center of the village keeping everything clean even when mud filled their yards.

Their fields were well tended and divided by clans. Apparently multiple clans lived in the village, each having their tract of land passed down from generation to generation. There were no fences or noticeable traces of land division, however it was blatantly obvious as our guides explained that their land extended from “The coconut tree on that ridge to the edge of the creek.” In addition to Kava they grew cultivated Taro and Casava for food while wild hot peppers, breadfruit, mango, papaya, vanilla, limes, and of course coconut grew in abundance.

We enjoyed Kavala’s hospitality for 4 days, always with our two trusty guides Navi and Kali showing us around. We were treated to another Kava ceremony at a village across the bay where we were the guests of honor and taken on a tour of the only store in the area.

We had a great beach day snorkeling, lounging, and playing a bit of beach rugby with the guys. Boy are they nuts for their rugby here! Somehow they keep up on all the international rugby news. On the way to the beach the guys caught a Wahoo and prepared it for us in a very unique way. A Fiji water bottle was cut up to make a bowl. The fish was chopped into chunks and mixed in the bowl with hot peppers and limes picked from the trees. Add a little saltwater and you have the Fijian version of ceviche. Absolutely delicious!

Our last day in the village we attended the church service. They are Methodist in Kadavu. The singing was beautiful but the sermon was in Fijian so we had no idea what
was going on. We just followed everybody else’s lead for standing and sitting. Towards the end of the ceremony they asked us to write down our names. The entire church then said a blessing and prayer for us to have safe travels.

8.3 Southeast Coast of Kadavu

8.3.1 Naigoro Bay & Naigoro Pass

South Pacific Anchorages - Pg 94, A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 79-81

Mediteraneo - July 2013 - Diving Around NE Kadavu: This month we spent 2 weeks around Kadavu Island where we (and a number of other boats: Superted, Victory, Gypsea Heart, Chapter 2 and CD) enjoyed great and affordable diving that we would like to let other cruisers know about.

Kadavu Island and Astrolabe Reef offer some of the top dive sites in Fiji. We would recommend Bruce O’Conner as a useful contact for diving around NE Kadavu. Bruce is an experienced local PADI dive master who knows the area well and will lead dives to the Naigoro Pass and other dive sites in the area. The Naigoro Pass offers spectacular drift dives with groupers aggregating around the pass entrance during spawning season (July to September).

Bruce will organise a boat and boatman to take care of the drift dive pick up. You can also have a lunch at his place between the two dives.

He has a small compressor and can fill your tanks after dives. For 2 dives, including dive boat and tank filling, expect to pay between F$50 and F$80 per diver - depending on the number of divers and the distance to the dive sites. This is a fraction of the price you would be paying in other dive shops in the area (FD230 plus). Bruce can be contacted by telephone +679 960-5298 or email bruceoconnordive@gmail.com and his house (position 18-59.61S / 178-28.92E) is a short dinghy ride north of the anchorage behind the Vatulutu Island (position 19-00.34S / 178-28.57E).

Soggy Paws - 2012: We have not been here yet, but we have a track from another cruiser that shows they got to Naigoro Bay, inside the reef from the east side of Ono, and anchored at approximately 19-00.36S / 178-28.55E.

Curly cautioned us about going to these SE coast bays, especially during the winter months, as we may get trapped inside the reef for several weeks due to high SE winds and/or swells. The SE-facing passes can be dangerous in strong conditions.

Pincoya - June 2012: We left Nagara Bay on Ono Island in the morning, as the wind was shifting into the bay and a storm was coming. Our friends on Fortaleza were in Matasawalevu Bay (just inside Naigoro Pass) on Kandavu on the NE corner, well protected from the expected northerly flick and we decided to sail there also.

We sailed with reefed sails in 15-20 knots. The sails helped us negotiate our way through the occasional reefs and bommies. Our chart plotter turned out to be reasonably accurate and after surviving the reefs of the Ono channel, and then outside
our bay, we got the anchor down alongside Fortaleza, who welcomed us and we gave
them some bananas.

**We anchored** at 19-00.082S, 178-28.207E  Our CMAP chart shows the name of the bay
as Matawalevu when you zoom in.

Approximate approach point outside bay is: 19-00.558S, 178-29,181E

The markers are visible and accurate, but may be a little confusing here.

The next morning we grabbed a Kava bouquet, picked up Tony and Kerre from
Fortaleza, and headed into the village up the very shallow bay.  We had to walk down a
tricky sea wall they had made as the tide was low, and met the welcoming committee,
where we did our sevusevu.  They promised they could get us some Papaya, coconut,
and would make us up a liter of coconut cream.  They invited us back the next day for
Kava!  They also told us the next village over the hill had a small store where we could
get a few things.  We asked about vegetables, but none here.  The men we met were
very friendly and happy.  Maybe they had been drinking a little kava! It was raining so
we decided to go right back to the boats, and had a lazy rainy afternoon.

It is nearly a straight shot out the Naigaro pass going E.  This pass is supposed to be a
good dive; we snorkeled it but had such strong currents and debris in water on outgoing
tide we couldn’t see much.  The pass is a Reserve, and the village wanted $5 per person
to let you snorkel.

**Going Out the Pass:** All three of us left the anchorage and went out the pass in fairly
strong tradewinds, and it was a struggle at the pass.  We were last and knew it would be
rough as we could see the others really rolling and disappearing in the wave troughs.
Noe Noe radioed us it was a bit "sloshy" but doable.

When we got there it was short interval 4+ meter seas and 25 knot winds on the nose.
We had sea water going over our bimini from the bow and had the throttle at about 3500
rpm, and were soaked.  A bit sloshy indeed!

After turning to starboard, it turned out to be a mostly downwind sail to the Inner Galoa
Bay near the airport.

**Shango - July 2012 - Diving:** At Kandavu we dove with Waisalima Dive. $210 for two
dives.  We anchored in Naigoro Bay and they picked us up.  Siewa, the dive master,
showed a couple of boats where to snorkel on Alacrity Rocks on the west side.  Don't
know whether he was moonlighting legally so you might want to bring it up rather quietly
with him when you're out with Waisalima.  We sent an email to Papageno to see if we
could dive with them and never received a response.  I'm told you can't anchor off the
Resort anymore as it's now a marine preserve.

**Delos - May 2011:** When we left the village, we anchored for an afternoon and enjoyed
a dive in Naigoro pass on the east side of the reef.  The visibility was good and the
coral was great.  The reef was healthy and alive with and abundance of fish life.  A good
pass dive always has sweet bottom topography.  Best of all the water temp is 81F!  We
had 6 foot breaking waves in Naigoro Pass on both sides of us.  Engine don't fail us
now!
The pricing sheet they emailed Soggy Paws was labeled **Totoka Water Sports**. The 2012 price for "2 Dive Package" was $210FJ, and for a "10 Dive Package" was $910FJ. Prices include marine fees for Naiqoro Marine Reserve, dive equipment, boat hire, and qualified dive guide. Note that our experience with the low-volume dive operations in Fiji are that prices are highly negotiable, especially if you bring enough divers to 'fill' their boat. So if you have 2-3 yachts with divers, negotiate as a group for better prices.

Totoka Water Sports are a PADI facility and offer standard PADI certification levels from 'Discover Scuba through Rescue Diver', and all the Dive Specialty courses.

From Cruising World's Blog - December 2010 - Diving:

In our first Fijian port of Savu Savu, I asked my friend John Neil off Mahina Tiare where he considered the best cruising grounds in Fiji to be. Without hesitation he said, “Skip the rest. Go directly to Kadavu.”

Coming from one who couldn’t count the number of times he has sailed through Fiji that was a strong recommendation. Nevertheless, we did not skip the rest. In fact, we explored every island, atoll and lagoon we could stick our anchor into from the Northeast to Southwest tips of that beautiful Melanesian nation.

However, from our first sighting of Kadavu, I understood exactly what John was talking about. Lying only 40 miles south of the main island of Viti Levu, Kadavu is inexplicably undeveloped. A spine of steep mountains runs down the center of the island, and much of the native jungle remains intact. Because the island has not suffered from the introduction of invasive wildlife species such as the predatory mongoose and mynah bird, the indigenous bird life is rich, boasting species either numerous or rare enough to draw amateur bird watchers and ornithologists alike.

The island hasn’t given way to extensive logging or clear cutting for sugar cane fields like its neighbor to the north because it boasts a more profitable crop - yangona, or the kava root that’s ground into a muddy liquid and drunk in copious quantities nightly throughout Melanesia. A few inconspicuous eco-tourism lodges quietly add to the economy and encourage the preservation of its natural beauty.

For all the beauty of the island itself, the most spectacular natural feature is the Great Astrolabe Reef which extends 30 kilometers north of the island into the clear waters of the Kadavu Passage. The reefs bends around on itself to form a thumb shaped lagoon in which ten beautiful islands lay. It then runs down to the eastern end of the island and wraps around the length of the southern coast.

While many of the world’s reefs have suffered from massive coral kill offs, the Astrolabe remains a vibrant garden of aquatic diversity. But even a reef as large as the Astrolabe cannot long withstand the pressures of commercial fishing. Modern equipment such as
outboard engines, sophisticated fish-finders, and scuba equipment have taken an obvious toll on the populations of fish, shells, bech-de-mer, and many other marine species. To create a safe haven and preserve prime breeding grounds, the French government, still active and influential in the South Pacific, has donated scientists, patrol boats and money to help establish and monitor the Naingoro Pass Marine Reserve on Kadavu’s eastern end.

I am an avid underwater hunter, and because I approach the sport with respect and restraint I am normally unapologetic about spearing a few fish for my dinner. But I do not regret the prohibition of fishing in these reserves. In fact I hope that they may be dramatically expanded to cover more significant and strategic areas of the world’s reefs. A well-policed reserve provides a natural baseline study area for scientists monitoring other reefs worldwide, and this is the critical starting point of all good science.

Through the draw of sustainable tourism reefs provide employment and much needed income to local villages. The awareness that the environment can have more value when preserved in its natural state rather than through an extractive grab of resource ultimately seeps into the consciousness of the people and fosters a gentler treatment of the surrounding sea and land alike.

We arranged to have a dive-master from a local dive resort meet us at an anchorage near the pass. He provided the dive-boat and tanks; we provided the rest of the equipment. Diana came along to snorkel the top of the reef while my nephew, Stephen, and I dug deep beneath the waves. As it was only Stephen’s fifth dive and I was pleased to see how attentive and professional Mica, our dive master, was. He knew the area intimately, explained our dive plan in detail, and then led us underwater into an area he called “The Fish Market.”

Lately I’ve found that I’m wrong so often that I am getting quite good at it. I’ve dived on some of the world’s most famous sites, the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, the Blue Hole in Belize, the hammerhead breeding grounds of Cocos Island off Costa Rica. These were places of such spectacular beauty that I fear I have become a bit jaded. I just assumed that I would have a pleasant little dive—nothing special mind you—see a few fish and a bit of coral, and at least Stephen would get a little more experience under his weight belt.

That he did, as did I. We both almost swallowed our regulators when moments after we hit the water a trevally the size of a Volkswagen Beatle came barging by. Behind him lay several mutant coral trout showing us the prominent fangs that earned them the Latin name of Leopardis or “leopard of the sea”. Two wise hawksbill turtles finned away from us, keeping a weary eye on us over their shoulders. A gang of teenage hoodlum snappers hung out in unison on the corner of a ledge. A giant grouper, dark, slow and scarred with age slunk out of his cave to assess our palatability.

As we swam further into the pass, the soft corals exploded into bizarre combinations of color as if we were in an animated fantasy film. Purple poka dotted Nudibranchs clung to the rocks glowing in electric blues and emerald greens. Christmas tree shaped coral polyps of orange, speckled white, cobalt blue and chocolate brown pulled back into the safety of their coral cones as we passed over enormous formations of coral resembling brains, tree branches, caribou antlers and fine lace. For as plantlike as coral appears it is
not a plant at all but a colony of animals cemented together to form an architectural wonder, or as Claire Booth Luce wrote “…coral cathedrals that dwarf in their majesty the grandest edifices of Man.”

To our right, the steep pass wall fell away into the deep dark blue. The menacing shadows of predators passed beneath us light dark storm clouds and lightning. Out here lurk not only the white-tip, black tip, and gray reef sharks, but the true tigers of the sea – galeocerdo cuvier, the tiger shark, reaching up to 25 feet in length.

It’s a humbling yet exhilarating experience to realize that here, down here, we fit into this food chain well below the top. We were immersed in our undersea world in every sense, but our pressure gauges warned us that this fantasy could not last forever. Too far into the red I reluctantly headed for the surface a hundred feet above. Once onboard, Diana, Stephen and I absolutely babbled in delight recounting all that we had seen.

Because I began my cruising career young, I’ve been graced with a long life full of adventure and wonderful experience. In fact I have somehow managed to create such a steady diet of far-flung foreign lands, varied environments, and diverse people that I am now at risk of taking it all somewhat for granted. But occasionally something special occurs that reminds me what a wild and wonderful planet we live on. Naingoro Pass, on the Great Astrolabe Reef, off Kadavu Island, in our world’s largest and arguably loveliest ocean was special, is special. If you ever get the chance to go to travel to Fiji don’t skip the rest of it for it is a lovely nation, but be certain not to miss Kadavu Island and its dazzling denizens of the deep.

8.3.2 Vacaleva and Korolevu Pass


Take care going in. They almost hit reef coming in, because reef protrudes. They weren't paying attention, taking down sails, etc.

Reef point to watch out for: 19-01.716S / 178-24.643E. Keep on stbd going in:

Stayed overnight, no sevusevu.

8.3.3 Galoa Bay (Access to Airport, Weekly Market)

Pincoya - July 2012: We anchored at Inner Galoa Bay near the airport, as Kirsty had to get her parents to the airport next day about noon. We were able to sail through the pass, into the bay, around Galoa Island, with no engine, a first for us.

We went in the pass between Esk Reef and Pearl Reef. The pass was a piece of cake. Orientation waypoint for the pass is 19-05.804S / 178-13.090E

Anchorage behind Galoa Island is 19-04.491S / 178-10.500E, fantastic protection.

Vunasea has a Friday morning market, hospital and airport. Cell phone coverage, but sketchy internet.
Anchorage close to airport: 19-04.039S / 178-09.747E Have to wait for high tide, or follow a longboat in. Park your dinghy there, walk a road about 20 minutes walk on a dirt road to airport & town. Go left of the airport to find the town.

Easiest way to get to the airport is to anchor off Vunisea on the north side, vs inner side.

We all walked to the airport next day which turned out to be a long walk. Not knowing where to go, we bushwhacked on a trace trail along the airport fence and cut across the runway, where a guard scolded us and told us the correct way to come from the bay using the road on the other side. This turned out to be a lot easier on our return. Anyway, we got Hugh and Jean off, then walked into Vunisea, going to several small shops and stocking up on a few things including some nice small tomatoes. The day pack got nice and heavy with everything from box milk to 5 papayas a shopkeeper gave us. We get to have green papaya steamed vegetable.

The fresh market will be on Fri, so we tentatively planned to stay this week where we were and leave on Sat for the next anchorage on our trek clockwise around Kandavu.

The next day, we upped the anchor and went out to the outer reef, where we went snorkeling. We anchored at 19-06.030S / 178-12.509 and then took the dinghy outside and snorkeled along the Esk reef--it is protected enough to snorkle even in SEly. Pearl Reef also... turtles & rays, etc.

It was a very calm day with smooth seas so we went outside the reef and it was a great snorkel with the prettiest corals we have seen so far and we got to see a turtle and some slightly larger fish.

Noe Noe stayed out overnight and caught a couple walu, a mackerel like fish.

We went back to the anchor area we liked behind Galoa I and hung out there till Fri morning when we all dinked over to the road landing by the airport runway and walked into the fresh market. It was tiny compared to Suva, but everything was grown fresh and cut this morning. We were able to get some great lettuce, bok choy, okra and eggplant, green onions, a pineapple, kumaru, ginger, and a couple tapioca roots. Plus we also bought a couple potatoes at a store, a bottle of rum at the “liquor store” and a loaf of whole grain bread. Good eating coming up! On returning to Pincarea, we stowed the dinghy and generally spent the day getting ready for moving around Kadavu.

Leaving Galoa out the same pass the next day, we struggled a bit getting east around The Great Sea Reef, to continue on around toward the west.

**8.4 West End of Kadavu**

**8.4.1 Denham Island**

Pincarea - July 2012: We left Galoa on the south coast of Kadavu, and headed west around the west end of Kavada. We passed by Dariqele Bay and village due to a large swell driving into the anchor area. We jibed around Denham Island in mostly fine weather still 20 knots plus, dropped the sail and motored in to look it over for anchoring. However, the area to anchor was 25 to 30 meters deep and near the fringing reef, so we
decided to continue. This area was quite developed with a resort on the beach and buries (cabin like) on the island.

8.5 **Northwest Coast of Kadavu (West to East)**

8.5.1 **Talaulia Bay**

Pincoya - 2012: After not finding a good anchorage at Denham Island, we put the sail back up, sailed around Cape Washington, where suddenly we were going into 20 to 28 knot winds. Down came the sails and we motored 3 miles to Talaulia bay which was calm and protected from the SE winds.

We anchored at 19-06.084S / 178-00.572E, south of Taiwava (sp?) Village.

We spent the next three nights here, recovering from our 35 mile trip from Galoa on the south side of Kadavu. There are three villages on the beach and no obvious attractions, so we didn’t go in for sevu sevu.

We did a jaunt up to Dawson Reef to **snorkel** with Pincoya. It was an adventurous anchor in 46 feet coral descending rapidly and our stern over 80 feet. A short day anchor only! We dinghied up and drifted back however the reef seemed mostly dead with few live corals. Quite a few fish though, and one nice coral head near where we anchored.

Highlights of our stay here were seeing a pod of dolphins, our first this season, and beautiful rainbows over the village and local mountain. This end of the island is very pretty with the mountain dominating, cliffs and sandy beaches, clouds streaming over the ridges. It is too bad that there are not more calm anchorages so you could explore this part of Kadavu.

8.5.2 **Soladamu (Veggies)**

Pincoya - July 2012: We heard there was a village called Soladamu with produce available on north coast. Pass thru Hope Reef for Vunasea or Soladamu 19-02.053S / 178-06.685E

**Hibiscus:** Anchorage waypoint for Soladamu: 19-04.250S / 178-06.90E Good place for veggies & sevusevu. Ask for Dan (inland a bit) to buy some fresh honey.

8.5.3 **Vunasei (Airport and Fresh Markets)**


Went in thru Namalata Reefs pass. 18-59.942S / 178-09.299E hung a hard left there and in to 18-59.386S / 178-07.736E. Working around a big reef.

Waypoint on the way in: 19-02.442S / 178-09.170E Go in thru some bommies, then this waypoint and go into anchor area (kind of a hook thing).

**Market:** It was tiny compared to Suva, but everything was grown fresh and cut this morning. We were able to get some great lettuce, small tomatoes, bok choy, okra and eggplant, green onions, a pineapple, kumaru, ginger, and a couple tapioca roots. Plus
we also bought a couple potatoes at a store, a bottle of rum at the “liquor store” and a loaf of whole grain bread.

8.5.4 Drue

Gypsea Heart - July 2013: After spending time with Mediterraneo at the Naigoro Pass in the Great Astrolabe, we sailed to the village of Drue on the NW coast of Kadavu and had a good diving experience with a local guide.

We anchored and went into Drue for Sevusevu. After the simple ceremony, we asked if there was someone who could show us some local dive spots. One of the villagers, Jerry, said he was a dive guide who previously worked as a dive guide for the local resort dive business for six years and could take us out on a long boat with a driver and Jerry would dive with us, all for FJD 100 per dive, provided that we supplied our own equipment and a SCUBA tank for Jerry (although he later provided his own empty tanks and asked us to fill them).

The three boats in the anchorage sent 4-5 people (FJD 20-25 per person) on five dives on the Namalata Reef (consisting of tall pinnacles) over three days and rated the dives as very good although not spectacular.

There is also a resort in Drue that offers full service dives at prices around FJD 200-250 per person.

There are mooring lines floating above some of the pinnacles that could be used for dinghies in calm weather provided you can find them and had permission to use them.

Note: prior to our departure, Jerry told us that the chief and others in the village were considering a fee of around FJD 150 per boat to dive on the reef. We told Jerry that such a fee would keep yachts away and a more reasonable fee would be FJD 5-10 per person per dive like other villages.

Any contribution or purchase in the village would be appreciated by the village, I'm sure.

9 Western Viti Levu (Lautoka, Vuda, Denarau, Mamanucas, Yasawas)

9.1 Yacht Services in the Lautoka Area

Important Note: This section is just contact info. See comments from cruisers on these boatyards and service companies in section 9.2.4. Not everyone is 100% happy with the service they got from people listed here, so BUYER BEWARE. Expect things to cost more, and take longer than they tell you!! Expect to have to be involved and supervise EVERYTHING and EVERYBODY, in order to get work done properly.

9.1.1 Boatyards

Baobab Marine - Operating Out of Vuda & Port Denarau Marinas
Tel:+679 664 0827 (Vuda) / +679 675-1120 (Denarau) Fax:+679 665 1727
marine@baobabindustries.com.fj

Services include painting, hull & grp repair, metalwork, diesel mechanical work, electrical & woodwork. Authorized dealer for YANMAR and MERCURY.
Noonsite has received mixed reports about this company (see adjacent).

Port Denarau Marina
Denarau Island , Viti Levu
Tel:(679) 750 600 Fax:(679) 750 700
http://www.denaraumarina.com/ , portdenarau@denaraumarina.com.

Part of a large resort complex on Denarau Island separated from Viti Levu by a causeway. Fuel dock, water, electricity, showers, laundry, 50 ton travel hoist, sailmaker, engineering and engine repair workshops, restaurants, banks and mini-market. New floating jetty February 2010 added 46 berths to marina, from 12 to 65 metres (10 for superyachts with 5m draft).

Vuda Point Marina
Vuda Road , P O Box 5717 , Lautoka, Fiji
Tel:(679) 666 8214 Fax:(679) 666 8215
http://www.vudamarina.com , info@vudamarina.com.fj

This is a full service marina, 40 and 63 ton travelift, hard-standing, laundry, internet cafe. Good place to leave boat unattended, advance bookings recommended. Boats placed for storage in in-ground berths. Chandlery, sail repairs, engineering services and hull repairs. Yacht Club, restaurant and bar. Provisions and liquor store. Super yacht facility being developed. A new Cat ramp capable of hauling out catamarans up to 12m wide is due for completion by the end of 2012. Marina holds a list of accredited contractors for boat work.

NOTE: Cruisers report that the entrance to the marina is not on the charts and the entrance channel is very badly marked, so it is not recommended to enter during the night.

Yacht Help Services
Vuda Point Marina , POC: Doug Cusick
Tel:(679) 666 8969 Fax:(679) 675 0905
maintainence@yachthelp.com

Cruising yacht facility: Services include antifouling, painting, rigging and fibreglass repairs, steel repairs, engine repairs, refrigeration service, water maker installations and electrical repairs. Painter "Peter" and his crew are now painters for Yacht Help. Yacht Help also has superyacht services operating out of Port Denarau.
Be sure to read comments in Section 9.2.4 about others experiences with these various companies.

### 9.1.2 Engine Repair

**Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services** - See contact info section 9.1.1

**Dans Outboard Motor Repairs**
Queens Wharf
Tel: (679) 651 3453/994 0718

**Lautoka Engineering**
Ravouvou St, Lautoka
Tel: (679) 666 1788

### 9.1.3 Mechanical Repair

**Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services** - See contact info section 9.1.1

**All Engineering (Fiji) Ltd**
6 Ravouvou Street, P.O. Box 1546, Lautoka
Tel: (679) 6652 696 Fax: (679) 6652 482
email: allengltk@connect.com.fj

All engineering services. Welding equipment and generator hire.

### 9.1.4 Electrics & Electronics

**Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services** - See contact info section 9.1.1

**Coms Ltd**
PO Box 985, Lautoka, Fiji
P.Kumar Electrical Services
PO Box 5033, 3 Namoli Avenue, Lautoka
Tel: (679) 666 2577 / 665 2577 / 651 0850, Mobile: (679) 992 9696 Fax: (679) 666 7696
email: allengltk@connect.com.fj

### 9.1.5 Carpentry

**Baobab Marine** - See contact info section 9.1.1

### 9.1.6 Rigs & Sails

**Marshall Sails**
Port Denarau Marina, Nadi
Tel: (679) 675 0996 Fax: (679) 675 0867
marshallsails@connect.com.fj

Westside Rigging and Wire Ltd.
Bruce Vasconcellos
Tel:(679) 9998838
mothership@connect.com.fj

Rigger for 28 years. Located just around the corner from Saweni Beach in Lautoka.

Bruce Vasconcellos - August 2014: I am Bruce Vasconcellos formerly from Hawaii (20 years ago) I am a rigger with Kos (Hammer Wire) We have rigging in stock from 3mm or 1/8” to 16mm (5/8”) I also have all the fittings and a swager to attach to these sizes.

We are 15 minutes from Nadi Internationi Airport which we can pick up and copy any rigging and send to anywhere needed. I’ve been a rigger for more than 40 years and know furling systems and their problems with a wealth of contacts for parts if I don’t have them here.

Regards, Bruce Vasconcellos, Westside Rigging and Wire Ltd.
Lot 2 Dreketi Feeder Road, Saweni, Lautoka, Fiji Is.
E-mail: mothership@connect.com.fj
Phone (679)9998838
Skype: mothershipcharters

Red Sky – August 2014: I have a Moody 54 named Red Sky. We were recently in Fiji at Vuda Marina and had Bruce re-rig our boat. Bruce and his crew did a great job and everything went to plan. When finished he spent two full days sailing with us tuning the rig and getting it perfect. We have now sailed to Australia and went through some very wild weather on the way. The same weather system dismasted a Bavaria 50 on the identical route. I had full confidence in my rig and it performed well. I am pleased to give Bruce Vasconcellos my endorsement and I would highly recommend him and his team.

9.1.7 Metalwork

Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services - See contact info section 9.1.1

9.1.8 Hull & GRP (Fiberglass) Repair

Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services - See contact info section 9.1.1

9.1.9 Refrigeration

Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services - See contact info section 9.1.1

P.Kumar Electrical Services
PO Box 5033, 3 Namoli Avenue, Lautoka
Tel:(679) 666 2577 / 665 2577 / 651 0850, Mobile: (679) 992 9696 Fax:(679) 666 7696
9.1.10 Air Conditioning

Baobab Marine & Yacht Help Services - See contact info section 9.1.1

P.Kumar Electrical Services - See contact under Refrigeration

9.2 Lautoka / Nadi Area

9.2.1 Clearing In & Out

There is much more on Customs & Immigration in Section 1.5.

Out on the Blue - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2009: We cleared into Suva, and then got a cruising permit to go from Suva to Lautoka. When we got to Lautoka, we took the dinghy in. (but if clearing in to Fiji here, they ask that you tie up to the main dock).

The national check-in was very easy compared to Suva. Latouka also has a large open-air market and good Internet and stores. We would check in here first if coming to Fiji.

Chesapeake - August 2012 - Checking out in Lautoka: Our check out at Lautoka went smoothly. They're open M-Th 8:30-4:30 Friday 8:30-3:30. Closed Saturday/Sunday.

Allow an hour for the check-out at least. We got there at 2pm and 2 others were ahead of us. The boat ahead of us had come in the day before near end of the day and was told to come back the next day. After completing paperwork you take the Customs guy out to your boat and he does a quick visual inspection, then you take him back. Be sure to bring a dinghy anchor because you tie off at the steps by the wharf and need to drop an anchor to prevent the dinghy from getting swept under the wharf.

There was a lot of smoke in the air and we've been told sticky stuff lands on your boat and is hard to remove, so you don't want to anchor there for more than a few hours. There’s a bay 2 miles south of Lautoka, called Saweni Bay, where you can anchor away from the pollution, if you plan to stay longer. Anchoring at Lautoka is easy, mud bottom.

9.2.2 Lautoka & Bekana Island

Taxi Lautoka - Radiance - June 2013: We used a cab driver regularly in Lautoka. His name is Ravin, and he usually hangs out near the wharf where you dinghy in from the anchorage, but his tel. number 931-7068.

Electrical Repair and Parts - Zephyr - July 2012: This morning I took in our DuoGen to have the bearings replaced. It has started to bind as the shaft turned around and around. We'd heard good things about an company in Lautoka called P. Kumar Electrical Services on Namoli St. I'd been in there before. Actually the first week we were in Vuda Point. I was looking for a step-down transformer and they carried them, along with just about any electrical component known to man. I brought the required bearings with me since I bought them yesterday. I couldn't find the seal that we needed but figured they could find it with little problem.
I stopped in a bit early at Kumars to check on progress. Well, they had the generator all taken apart and it was a mess. Inside the case was dirt and corrosion! It's not supposed to be in there--it has seals! They told me to come back after 1530 and I met with the owner of the shop--the Mr. Kumar. He had been there when they cracked open the case and water has poured out! It was a mess inside. There was dirt all through the unit. The two resistors in the bottom of the case were shot (lots of dirt and corrosion). It was worse than I could have ever imagined. This was going from a simple bearing replacement to a total rebuild! Here's another instance of something that is supposed to be built to withstand what ever Mother Nature can dish out and it has failed miserably. The repair estimate is between $700 and $800! That's going to hurt the cruising kitty big time. Oh well. Having rebuilt is still cheaper than buying a new one.

**Katipo - October 2011 - Bekana Island: Coordinates: 17 35 56S 177 26 606E**

It was another great sailing day today (west along the north coast of Viti Levu). Pleasant downwind sailing all the way, hand steering again through the reef passages. Unfortunately, the wind changed direction just as we were getting close to our destination of Saweni Bay, going round to the north with a weather forecast predicting it will stay this way for tomorrow too. So a quick decision had to be made to find a more sheltered anchorage. Hence, we are now anchored just off Bekana Island, which is close to Lautoka. In fact we are overlooking the large port and city. It is much bigger than we thought and does not look very appealing. Black smoke is pouring out of the chimneys of the sugar mill! The island of Bekana on the other hand looks to be a resort island with a lovely sandy beach.

We put the outboard motor on our dinghy and crossed the channel from Bekana Island to Lautoka and went into town.

An interesting place and many changes since we last came 35 years ago, en route by plane across the Pacific to Easter Island and South America. We did note that one can now obtain flat white coffee and chicken wraps if you wish.

The fruit and vegetable market was the best yet, lots of variety, clean, tidy and remarkably cheap. Then on to immigration to sort out the paperwork involved with Denise leaving Katipo this month to fly back to Auckland and Ted's arrival to sail on the voyage Fiji to Auckland. This took a while, two taxi trips and instructions to come back next Tuesday - but all is underway.

**Mr John IV - October 2010:** We spent some time in this area, between Denarau, Lautoka and Saweni Bay. The Lautoka anchorage was not a great place to hang about but we had to go there to get our clearance.

Anchorage Posn:  17-36.107S / 177-26.448E

Saweni Bay was a much nicer anchorage and was only a short bus ride away from Lautoka which is Fiji’s second largest city. There is a good market here and quite good shopping in general.

Going ashore at the Port, you MAY have to get a gate pass from Customs but generally they let you through. Best to have a photo ID with you.
Sloepmouche - 2006: Check-in at Cruise Ship/Container Ship wharf, offices are on the Quay. Put out a stern anchor if you put the dink at the stairs near the Blue Lagoon Cruises berths (a friend almost had his crushed under the pier by the rising tide.) Trash bins are across the roadway from the steps, and the gate is guarded at all times. $0.45 bus ride, $3 taxi, or 15 min walk to town. The Fruit and Veggie Market has good choice and the best prices of all others visited in Fiji. Go to the back corner, or outside vendors on Fri-Sat for best deals. $1F/hr (!!) internet in the Village 4 Cinema building. Newly opened, clean and quiet. We hope that it survives and thrives.

Every major chain of Supermarket has at least TWO stores in town. For refrigeration and electrical repair, we went to Kumar Electrical, on Namoli Ave further than the market; the personnel was nice and did their best. Cyclone season has it’s advantages, as the notorious black smoke-belching sugar mill is CLOSED until JUNE.

Just in front of Lautoka, Bekana's 6-7 yacht moorings are a reasonable dinghy ride away in relatively mild conditions, if you have an RIB and 10-15HP motor. It was much more pleasant here with a view of the resort and beach, than near the noise and traffic of the port area. Pick a mooring, then go in to ask, as they do not monitor VHF. Andrew, Fijian Chinese, born and raised in this area, has become a successful entrepreneur in Auz, and a few years ago, bought the mismanaged resort, which employs many of his childhood friends and buddies. He visits the island about once a month from Sydney and he welcomed us as warmly as any native Fijian, singing with his staff and sharing a bowl of kava. Sala, the full-time manager, was graciously warm and welcomed us to use the mooring, and come for the Friday Lovo/Meke (underground oven/Fijian dance) night, with the regular staff members providing the entertainment. While in the upper price range, the dining here is higher quality in terms of ambiance, attentive service, and presentation of gourmet cuisine when dining ala carte, and a beautiful buffet on Lovo night. Watson is a Fijian version of the proper “butler” with his grave and serious attention to the guests, making sure you are greeted by name each time he sees you. His side-kicks on the activities staff contrast well with their open “Bula”-ness, and when they all get together to sing, Watson is right in there offering Kava, and making you part of the family.

Ocelot - 2005: Lautoka, on the west end of Viti Levu, is the normal clear-out point. Calder talks about anchoring off the marina, but it was blown away years ago. You can still anchor there (15-40’ in mud) but there’s no easy way to get to town.

We picked up a free mooring off Bekana Resort, just 1 mile west of Lautoka. They were very nice, offering swimming pool and showers with the unspoken assumption that we’d spend some $$, so we usually went to their Happy Hour from 6-7pm, although only beers were discounted. We used Bekana as our base when cruising the Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups west of Viti Levu, and Bekana can ferry you ashore for a fee. All clearance offices are easy to get to on the commercial "Queen's" Wharf. There are some concrete steps at the base of the wharf that are handy to tie a dinghy to but you'll need an outboard to get there and a stern anchor to keep the dinghy from drifting under the bridge. This is probably the best way to access town, but it’s still about 1/2 mile (1km) walk or taxi ride.
Just south of the Queen's Wharf is the fishing dock which has fuel (they prefer you to take your jugs) but no water. Just across the street is Fiji Meats, which is excellent - good selection and quality - they'll sometimes even (re)trim it for you before weighing it. They'll vacuum bag and either chill or freeze your meat for you.

The best liquor stores are in Lautoka, but don't expect any bargains. Fiji Bitter is a passable brew (and much better than Tonga's aptly named Ik-ale) but it's still $0.90/can. Australian wines can be had for about $7/bottle and up. We rented a car in Lautoka ($42/day) but be advised that only the main road that goes around Viti Levu is paved.

### 9.2.3 Saweni Bay

**Katipo - October 2011:** We are now anchored in peaceful Saweni Bay along with one other yacht in 6 metres of water which makes a change from some of the deep anchorages of late.

This afternoon we went ashore and walked the 2.5 miles to Vuda Point Marina through the farm land, past sugar cane crops and small papaya plantations. Most of the way we walked along the narrow gauge railway track which carries the train and dozens of trucks loaded high with sugar cane to the processing plant in Lautoka. The only excitement was repelling a large barking, snarling dog which lunged at us as we went past one local's house. Fortunately I was carrying an old dried out sugar cane stick at the time which was most handy.

Vuda Marina is quite a place - about 100 boats in a circular basin all moored bow in and packed like sardines. It only has one very narrow entrance so is very sheltered from any rough seas outside. It is convenient to have water, power, butane filling station, and no worries about dragging anchors but it did not appeal to us - much more pleasant in Saweni Bay.

We will be here two or three days until we have completed our boat paperwork in Lautoka then we will likely move down to Denerau Island which is nearer to the airport and said to be a good place to anchor for a few days and stock up with fuel, water etc and carry on preparing Katipo for the return Voyage to Auckland. We look forward to catching up with the internet and any emails too.

**Fellow Traveler - November 2010:** Saweni is a very nice anchorage, usually millpond calm. It can get a bit choppy if the winds cause the land effects to come from the N. rather than any other quadrant.

Best anchorage is enter the reef opening and turn hard right, and anchor in the spot there, with reef on 2-3 sides. It is only 15-20 ft deep, with viscous mud. I would row ashore and drag my dinghy up the beach and lock it, but no one else locked theirs.

From the beach, it is a 1-2 km walk to the road where buses pass constantly between Nadi and Lautoka. A few times a day, they will pick you up right at the beach (ask at the little store there for schedule), but may take a circuitous route to town. You can walk to Vuda from Saweni by following the railroad track. Hot and dusty, but nice people met on the way. Carry a rock or two for any aggressive dogs, but they only bothered me when there were kids about...protective, I think, not mean.
**Carina - September 2010:** After Lautoka, it was a short hop down to Saweni Bay, a small anchorage on our way to Vuda Point. We were driven by stiff northeast winds and a bit of heavy wave action and the anchorage faced directly into both wind and waves.

We didn't have much of a choice, however, and dropped our anchor in about 30' of water between the entrance reefs and in front of two sailboats already in the bay. Even with over 200' of anchor chain deployed, we were dismayed to find Carina rapidly dragging her anchor towards the other boats; we decided to re-anchor. While pulling up our anchor, one of the sailboats decided to leave and we ended up taking that boat's spot, anchoring in about 15' of water with an anchor-sucking muddy bottom. This time our anchor held though Carina's bow pitched in the 5-6' swell.

The next day we dinghied to the shore and walked the one kilometer up the road past parched drought-scarred fields to the main road, called Queen's Highway here, where we caught a rattling local bus to Vuda Point. We wanted to check out the marina and boatyard and make arrangements for Carina's haul out the next day.

**9.2.4 Vuda Point Marina**

**Contact info:** Vuda monitors VHF Channel 16

Website: [http://vudamarina.com](http://vudamarina.com)

Tel: +679 666 8214
Fax: +679 666 8215
Skype i.d: vudamarina

Email: info@vudamarina.com.fj

**Postal Address:**
PO Box 5717
Lautoka, Fiji Islands

**Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016:** We wanted to haul the boat out before going home to Australia, one less thing to think about when we get home. We originally intended to haul at Port Denarau, as some other cruising friends had recommended it. Since our friends were there, management no longer allows you to stay on your boat while you are on the hard. So that was a complete deal breaker for us. I also had to drive the information gathering from Denarau every step of the way, it was not easy. I found out about not being able to stay on board by chance. There is nothing about this on their website.

So we turned to Vuda Point Marina. The marina has good information available online, and it is all correct pricing. They were organized, answered my emails immediately too. So we went there. Hauled out for a week, and spent a bit over a week in their harbour.

**Harbour:** is described elsewhere but is very protected. It was jam packed most of the time we were there, you med moor to the perimeter and are very close to your neighbours. But, the staff are generally great, the two women in the office are excellent. Power and water, and for a 40 foot boat we paid around $200FJD per week, power is another $5 a day. Weekly rates payable in advance. Nice facilities, washing machines...
work well and you can hang your washing out on lines at the back of their accommodation cottages. They gave us 2 hours internet a day free. (you have to go to the office each morning and get the codes ) I used the Vodafone system the rest of the time.

The Boathouse restaurant is part of the setup and it is excellent. Good food, great staff, daily specials, and superb location. We are not restaurant cruisers but went to their half price pizza nights and had our anniversary special dinner there, they spoiled us.

**Haulout:** Ours went pretty smoothly--all haulouts have their minor issues. Travel lift driver is super experienced. We worked mostly ourselves, ran into some strife as we wanted to use a local guy a friend had recommended, it was extremely difficult to do so and not a pleasant process. I guess like most yards they have their rules about who can come in and who cannot.

The chandlery has basics, we ended up using International antifouling as little else was available.

Lautoka is a 30 minute fun bus ride away, there are several hardware stores for paint supplies etc, a good market and plenty of supermarkets.

We are about to clear out, Vuda marina organized customs and immigration to come to Vuda marina, the marina charges $60 FJD to do this. Apparently there is no charge from either Customs or Immigration.

**Jaraman – Bad Experiences Getting Work Done – 2013:** We came to Fiji in October 2013 with the express purpose of hauling out for routine maintenance. Well ahead of time I did my research for available contractors and talked to several skippers who had been here before. Sources of information also included Noonsite and other cruisers' logs and blogs. With this information we decided to go with Yacht Help. I was in contact with them from July and they seemed helpful and efficient.

When we arrived in Fiji and caught up with several cruising friends, they all said "Oh! No! Not Yacht Help!" One of these naysayers was a skipper who had previously recommended them. "Not now." he said. But I felt committed as paint had already been ordered, so we hauled out at Vuda Marina and monitored everything closely. I kept a log of time workers spent actually working not wandering back and forth to get tools.

When our shaft was pulled to replace the cutlass bearing it was found to have pitting; minor at this point but as we would be in remote locations we decided to have a new one. Yacht Help organised for it to be brought in from New Zealand and tooled by All Engineering. They have a workshop at Denarau. When it was first installed, the thread was not correct. In trying to remove the jammed nut, the shaft and prop keyway were damaged by large tool marks. We sent it back to be rethreaded.

Painting proceeded Ok until the last coats, one all over the hull and two extra to waterline, were put on in the space of 2 hours. The painters maintained that they always did this. Consultation with International confirmed that a min of 6 hrs is required between coats. Yacht help agreed to repaint this part but tried to get us to pay for the paint.

One of our jobs was to fit extra solar panels. This required four small stainless steel brackets to be fabricated. The first ones, very rough and unpolished, were rejected by
us; the next company that came quoted FJD$1500.00; finally Yacht Help brought another person who could do the work for a cost that we still thought expensive but agreed to. It turned out that he was banned from working at Vuda. We agreed to go to Denarau for this when the other work was done.

When finishing up at Vuda, the invoice had 96hrs for painting. From my log, being very generous, I could only find 77hrs. The invoice was changed without question.

We went straight to Denarau to get the welding done. On the 5nm trip there, we found a shaft vibration noise that had not been present before. We let Yacht Help know immediately but decided to concentrate on the panels. The welder informed us that Denarau Marina would not let him work there either. The Yacht Help boss, David Jameison, sorted this out but we were rapidly losing confidence in them as project managers.

While my husband John had a short trip back to Australia, I oversaw the wiring of the solar panels into our existing controller. The young "electrician" didn't have a clue – I knew more about it than he did! He repeatedly turned up without tools, using ours or having to go back to the work shop. We lost a spanner overboard and a drill bit, broken. When we had first talked to Yacht Help about the panels I asked if they had waterproof connectors for the wiring. I was assured that they did. I asked this several times, specifying MC connectors. When it came time to do it they didn't have them, knew nothing about them and did a very poor job that will not be waterproof. I was very annoyed as there had been plenty of time to order appropriate fittings. As it was, not enough wire was ordered at first and we had to wait a week for more to come.

Yacht Help had no stock of electrical supplies. They used ours – even down to cable ties. We were always charged for two people even though one of them just handed the cable ties. There is seldom room on a boat for two people to work on any job.

Several hours were spent cable tying a big bundle of wires that later had to be undone to put the flooring back. A junction box was placed over the top of wiring for another instrument.

Other jobs I asked Yacht Help to help with were ignored or forgotten. I began to think that as we were not a Super Yacht, we were not worth worrying about. I got sick of phoning to chase things up. I think they are Yacht Helpless.

Now it came time to address the new shaft vibration. The alignment was checked and trialled and pronounced correct. We agreed to haul out to check the prop and pull the shaft if necessary – at Yacht Help’s expense, we understood. David from Yacht Help spent a long time looking at our prop.

After declaring he knew nothing about folding props, he pronounced that it had excessive wear. Our argument was that nothing had changed with the prop. A Volvo Penta dealer in Australia said that the wear we described was unlikely to cause the vibration we were experiencing.

Yacht Help proposed that cleaning the barnacles off the prop had caused it to vibrate!!?? The shaft was pulled and put on a lathe. We asked that it be tested with the hub and coupling in place but this was not done. I think the lathe was not big enough to do this.
Due to much time wasting, we were held in the slings overnight. In the morning we were informed that the fee for this was FJD$4000.00. The order form for the boat yard was to Yacht Help but suddenly David could not be found. We ended up paying the marina about $1400.00 to get back in the water.

We went back to Vuda and engaged Baobab Marine for a second opinion. Their mechanic did a much more thorough sea trial; we could see the whip effect in the shaft. We hauled out again.

The shaft was sent to another engineering works where it was tested with the coupling and hub in place and found to have two bends in it and to be incorrectly tapered. We had another shaft prepared and now have no vibration.

After a lot of prevarication, David Jameison refunded us the money we had spent on that shaft and the subsequent testing and haul out. The amount was close to FJD$4000 and we were prepared to take legal action to recover it. On several occasions David used coarse language and was insulting. The whole episode caused us much stress.

Problems also occurred with other businesses. I had contacted Marshall Sails several months in advance. We needed a new sailbag and dodger. I wanted to know lead time for ordering materials etc. Allan Marshall assured me that it could all be done in our time frame. When we got to Fiji and saw him, his overall lack of interest in our job was astounding. He couldn't make the new items we needed and only offered to restitch and patch the worn places. I had to phone several times to get even that done.

We consulted a Raymarine agent with regard to replacing our obsolete chart plotter. I was prepared to place an order for several thousand dollars worth of equipment. George didn't get back to us. I called several times and eventually gave up. Does nobody need the work in Fiji?

In summary when getting work done in Fiji, you do not need to engage one of the companies that purport to handle all aspects of maintenance. Individual workers can be sourced from lists provided by either marina. But if you have several different jobs it should be easier.

Both boat yards handled our haul out professionally but be very clear just what you are paying for. At Vuda our new antifoul was damaged on the later haul out but was repaired for us.

We found Yacht Help to be unprofessional, incompetent and dishonest.

Baobab had good equipment and their employees were competent. The principal, Brian Smith has a bad reputation. We found him to be volatile but he runs a professional business.

Bottom line: Watch everything, get a fixed price and have endless patience. We have had work done all around South East Asia and have not had a bad experience like Fiji.

**Fellow Traveler - November 2010 - Getting Work Done:** Vuda is a great place to have your boat painted, using Peter and his crew, called C-Pro, or just Peter Painter. He works out of Vuda, gives a quote, stays on schedule, etc. Everyone not only was very happy with the work, but all I know ended up being a friend of his. Very nice guy, and his
crew are all relatives. All are Polynesians from Rotuma, a part of Fiji, but a good bit to the N. I got to attend a Lomo at his house (Polynesian barbeque).

**Baobab**: I replaced my engine while hauled at Vuda Point, with Baobab doing the work. Key guy is Brian Smith, from South Africa. He is very knowledgeable, and was always nice when I dealt with him. But, his crew has gotten really huge - 45 people, I think. So, he is not really involved with the work directly anymore. The impression I got was that most of the guys were knowledgeable but kind of new to the boatie world...maybe diesel mechanics, but limit experience with boats, say.

They need to be supervised to insure they do a good job. For example, their plan was to glass the new blocks to carry my engine to the lightweight fiberglass drip pan under the engine. I told them that would not do, said they absolutely must be securely tied to either the older, wider beds, or to the bottom of the boat, and suggested they ask Brian. After wasting a bunch of time pondering it, Brian finally dropped by one morning and told them the same thing. But, if I had not been there questioning, my engine would be mounted to little more than air.

The work done was all professional, and with guidance, all very good quality. However, they are not neat workers, not used to thinking of boats as peoples homes. I worked with a guy in St John who did electrical work in houses and boats - instruments, autopilots, etc. If he drilled something, he immediately swept up the dust before it could get spread. These guys would not only leave it, they left the dirty rags, empty pop bottles, etc for me to clean up.

But, the three big problems were these: First, I was told it would take two weeks. It took 5. This was due to poor organization, lack of good supervision, and lack of planning.

Second, I specifically asked questions weeks before hauling out about the exhaust system, suggesting we order a muffler and hose. I was assured these items were in stock. It turned out that the muffler was not, and they did not discover this until it was time to install it. 4 days were wasted ordering one that turned out to not be available. Then, it was another week+ waiting for the one I found for it to arrive. I would consider it a mistake, but the other guy installing an engine the same time got the same story. Sounds like "tell them what they want to hear until the engine is paid for, then it is their problem how much the yard bill goes up."

Third, Fiji, as stated, has limited parts, so anything that is discovered to be needed for major work will have to be ordered, and it can take over a week to get stuff from Australia or New Zealand. You would think, being right there, with planes coming and going daily, it would be 2, 3 days max, but somewhere the chain breaks down, and your yard bill goes up again.

Having said all of that, I think I made the right decision anyway to do it here, as I am not going to Oz or NZ. The same problems, or worse, could happen in any 3rd world country. The work, properly directed, is good.

If you have a specific job that does not involve parts (or you know exactly which parts and can get them in advance) then Baobab might be fine. They also got me my Maxwell windlass at 2/3rds the West Marine price since it is a NZ product.
If you can just sit in an anchorage, or go sailing until your stuff comes in, they are fine. They have pulled out of Vuda Marina...local politics that I do not understand or follow. Or maybe a snit fit since he used to have the exclusive right to work there (his father-in-law owns Vuda) but due to complaints and dropping business for the boatyard about no competition and over-pricing, it was opened up.

Out on the Blue - SSCA Newsletter - June/July 2009:

The marina is easily identified as there is a large, white tank field just south of the marina. This excellent marina has a travel lift, storage yard, marine store, groceries, book exchange, deli and very nice restaurant out on the water. They have about 60 slips with buoys to tie to, stern or bow, and a short dock coming off the wall. There is power (240V, 50-cycle) and water at each dock. The fee is $.50 FJD/foot plus $3 FJD/day for power.

They can store boats with their keels in trenches. The power was sufficient to run two air conditioning systems. They have diesel at $1.56 FJD/liter=$2.82 USD/U.S. gallon. You can pull right up to the pump. This is one of the nicest marinas we have been in and definitely the least costly.

One word of caution: the Internet system here is not reliable. The problem is with their server; you normally only get 10-15% of the time you pay for. There are several Internet cafés in Latouka that only charge $1 FJD/hr.

There are detailed charts called Pickmere available at the Marina. They also have a good chart of the Yasawa Group of islands.

Shango - August 2012 - Boabab Marine & Vuda Point Marina: We got hauled for bottom painting and topsides waxing. Mo who drives the lift and generally is the day to day hands on guy is competent, friendly and a joy to work with. His helpers are also good at being very available to help with getting you in and out of the circular med moor area which can get quite full. The management has some silly rules but the office staff is also friendly and helpful. Clean showers, laundry, snack bar, grocery store, and a modest chandlery round out the main resources.

We had some stainless steel fabrication and a windlass motor rebuild done by Baobab. They have a very complete set of mechanical, woodworking, electrical, diesel repair, glass work, and painting workshops and experienced crew. The workers are well supervised by Brian, the owner, Dave the paint expert, and Lorrenzo the mechanical guy. The workers also are very professional.

The price for labor is 65 Fijian per hour so you can figure on work of good quality at 1/2 to 1/3 the cost in the States. I felt i got very good value. As you may know Promise had a failed SS anchor incident resulting in major, hull, engine, electrical, and interior joinery work. Baobab is doing the whole thing. I'm not sure there is much that Brian couldn't handle.

He also has a big operation at Port Denerau. He and Lorrenzo alternate days there.

Baobab is the Yanmar dealer for this part of Fiji and I got everything I needed in terms of spares.
We have seen several other individual mechanical and electrical guys doing work as well as a rigger but have no comments. There is also a second paint company here, Yacht Help, doing work as well. They are a bit cheaper but again I have no comments on them.

9.2.5 Port Denarau

http://www.denaraumarina.com/

Only 20 minutes drive from Nadi International Airport, Port Denarau Marina is Fiji’s premier marina facility. As the hub of the integrated Denarau Island Resort, Port Denarau Marina is the gateway to exploring our idilic sun drenched tropical isles of Fiji’s West Coast.

Provisioning is easy - with a supermarket, pharmacy and bakery at the end of the dock and Nadi and Namaka only a short bus or taxi ride away. Port Denarau Marina is walking distance to several international hotels, offering a vast array of recreational pursuits including an international 18 hole golf course - not to mention, being part of the largest retail/restaurant complex in the Nadi area.

Ed note: In cyclone Evan December 2012, Denarau sustained some major damage. Double-check on facilities before you visit in 2013.

Storm Bay of Hobart – July 2016: We wanted to haul the boat out before going home to Australia, one less thing to think about when we get home. We originally intended to haul at Port Denarau, as some other cruising friends had recommended it. Since our friends were there, management no longer allows you to stay on your boat while you are on the hard. So that was a complete deal breaker for us. I also had to drive the information gathering from Denarau every step of the way, it was not easy. I found out about not being able to stay on board by chance. There is nothing about this on their website.

Proximity - July 2013: We took a bus ride into Nadi and Port Denarau. Poor Denarau was really hit hard by the hurricane. I would say that only about a third of the docks are rebuilt and have boats on them. The rest are just gone. The stories about the Hardrock Café being gone are fiction. It is there as are all of the other businesses. Only the docks are missing.

Katipo - October 2011: A friend told us if we went to Denerau we would have to face civilization again - and it is true. From quiet Saweni Bay we have motored about 11 miles this morning (no wind) and are the only boat anchored off the Westin Hotel, which is one of several including the Sheraton and Hilton along the frontage here. Still I suppose we improve the view for the holiday makers and add a little colour and interest. We have a good view from the cockpit too - of tourist boats nipping back and forth to the picnic island nearby, others towing paragliders and jetskiers roaring by. Not so many canoes these days!!

This whole area has been developed at an amazing rate and is certainly most impressive. Adjacent to the ferry berth, where one can catch the ferry to Musket Cove etc, is Denarau Marina. We booked a swing mooring there from tomorrow which will be very convenient for fuel, water, diesel, getting some washing done and close to the airport for Denise flying out and Ted flying in next week.
This is a busy place with some berths for cruising boats in the marina, many berths for tourist ferries and charter boats, and a small number of swing moorings.

We motored in the next day and Denise made a perfect pick up of the buoy in front of the hundred tourists waiting for ferries, the hard drinking holiday makers in the bars on the wharf and the other moored boat owners!! The D and D team made it! (better than the next boat in which had four frustrating goes at picking up their mooring)

It is good here with plenty of activity going on around the harbour all day.

There is a new shopping area on the wharf, bread shop, small supermarket, water, diesel etc.

The town of Nadi is only a short bus ride away and is a busy place with a great fruit and veg market.

**Mr John IV - October 2010:** After the peace and tranquility of Momi Bay, we sailed up to Denarau Island, the hub of the tourist trade for Nandi Waters. It is packed with Hotels, a large residential development for up-market waterfront properties and a small Marina complex.

We did one night anchored off the Hotels but the next day found space to anchor off the Marina where we were sheltered by a breakwater and had all around protection; this was a relaxing position and was convenient to take local transport into Nandi, the main town for this area.

They have just laid Moorings here, so no more anchoring; there is a charge for Mooring but this includes the Marina facilities which we made good use of during our visit.

Whilst it is a tourist area and prices are marked up accordingly, with a little care, we managed to find some good bargains ashore. One of which was the Free Entertainment, (usually Friday and Saturday night 1900 to 2000)…… where we at last got to see some Fijian Dancing including a ‘Meke’; unfortunately the music was ‘canned’ but overall, it was a very good performance.

I can recommend the Mama’s Pizza with a beer and front seats for the performance.

**Fellow Traveler - 2010:** Denarau: it is more focused on the tourists who load onto the big boats that head out to the resort islands out West. It does have some slips with finger piers, and all docks are floating. It is a built at a shopping center, and Denarau is also the big resort area with golf courses, etc. So, upscale trendy restaurants and lots of shops. Some chandleries and repair facilities. F$10 to get to Nadi to shop via taxi. A bus runs infrequently.

You can anchor inside their harbor and it is flat calm and easy to row even and inflatable to the dock, but they charge a little. You can anchor outside with the mega-yachts, but it is a long dinghy ride in, and a wet one coming back in the afternoon.

**Sloepmouche - 2006:** This may be the new “in” spot for yachts, depending on what happens with future developments. Right now it is the area with the greatest concentration of “Chic” Hotels (Sheraton, Sofitel), golf courses, and time-share type villas. The marina is also the “Gateway to the Yasawas and Mamanucas, as the majority of charter cruise boats and shuttles depart from here. You can anchor behind
the protection of the breakwaters or dock. Port Denarau is out on a point, about 5 km from the main highway, 7km from Nadi, and about 20km from the airport. Public bus service is intermittent, but mini-vans frequently transport workers ($0.50 to the main rd), or there are taxis ($10), and hotel shuttles ($5) to Nadi.

One of the biggest cruise operators is Captain Cook’s Cruises, which offers every kind of formula, from luxury cruises to the Yasawas, 2-3 day sail cruises, day-long picnic and sailing, to the 2-4 hr cocktail and dinner cruise. For fun, and nostalgia, we went on a dinner cruise. (We used to run them in the Caymans). It was quite well done, the delicious, Amero/Euro cuisine, 3-course dinner was served formally in a dining salon as a Fijian group sang. After dinner, there was a presentation of Fijian traditional costumes, a refreshingly different change from the classic making-the-tourists-try-to-do-local-dancing. Actually, that was done earlier in the evening!

9.2.6 Nadi

Fellow Traveler - 2010: You can anchor over by Nadi, S. of the airport. I did not try it, but supposedly calmer than the outer bay by Denarau. I thought the groceries in Nadi were slightly better than Lautoka, no doubt due to the international crowd there.

There is an excellent meat market at the traffic circle where the road from Denarau meets the road from Lautoka to Nadi, a short walk from the central business area of Nadi. Called South Pacific Butchers. Way better than Fiji Meats, the main purveyor of meats in Fiji.

9.3 The Mamanuca Group

9.3.1 General Info

Soggy Paws - Feb 2013: Cyclone Evan swept down the Mamanucas and Yasawas, blowing about 90 knots. Many facilities (including Musket Cove) were damaged. But all are under repair as of Feb 2013. Make sure you ask around before heading out to a spot that’s been ravaged about in previous years.

Ocelot - Cyclone Season 2005: We’ve been having a delightful time in the Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands, west of Viti Levu, even during cyclone season, but we’re currently the ONLY cruising boat out here. Much of the fleet went to NZ for cyclone season, and the rest are sitting on their moorings in Savusavu, but there are good cyclone holes in Denerau (Nadi), Vuda Pt. Marina, Lautoka, and Musket Cove. We keep a close eye on the weather, but there are countless fun anchorages within 1 day’s sail. Be advised that many reef markers have blown down and not been replaced, especially in the less traveled areas.

In general, we’ve found that the Mamanuca’s have better coral and underwater visibility than the Yasawas to the north. The Mamanuca’s tend to have more up-scale resorts, and virtually all islands have at least 1 resort on them. Most of these seem friendly to yachts, even though we don’t spend a lot of $$. The Yasawa’s are further from the mainland and tend towards lower end backpacker-type resorts and local villages. If you visit the villages, you’ll need to do a Sevu-sevu
ceremony with the chief, bringing him a gift of Kava. Deserted anchorages are available but relatively rare. We enjoyed several days of isolated splendor in Navadra (30' in sand but we needed a stern anchor to keep us off the reef).

Sloepmouche - 2006: According to the Guides and other local sailors, there are only 2 good areas to anchor in the Mamanucas, unless the weather is exceptionally calm, as in the cyclone season. As popular and talked-about as the Mamanucas (and the Yasawas) are, it is surprising how little detail there is on the electronic charts. These were never well charted by any surveyors from whom all the official international charts are drawn, such as British Admiralty, therefore, there was little info when charts were amassed to create the electronic charts. Fortunately, the cruising guides have chartlets and good info to get you to the 2 anchorages. There are also at least sticks marking most major hazards, and good markers into these 2 places. Fiji Hydrographic Unit has some good charts of the area, published by the Fiji Govt.

9.3.2 Musket Cove (Malolo Lai Lai)

Zephyr - July 2012: A couple of days ago, between blows, we took a walk out to the end of the airport (yes, there is an airport on Mololo Lai Lai) runway and took a walk along the beach that runs along the northeast shoreline of the island. We looked left and right from the end of the runway and saw no one. We chose left as it should take us over to the cut between the two islands (Malolo & Malolo LaiLai).

Other than seeing a few foot prints in the sand, we saw no one. I guess all the guests at the numerous resorts stay on the beaches at their resorts and don’t venture out to see what else the island has to offer. This beach stretched for several miles with a great view of Viti Levu in the distance.

As we walked along the beach we saw several small islands off the shore just ready to be explored (if we had had a small boat). The beach was lined with palm trees and hundreds of coconuts as well as lots of plastic that had washed ashore. Add in a few old tires (heaven only knows where they came from) and you have a typical beach anywhere in the world. A delightful walk and we had it all to ourselves.

We returned to the "resort" and had lunch at the small cafe/store. One word of advice when you eat there. If it's busy, just go up to the doors to the kitchen and place your order. Don't wait for the one waiter to come to your table. We did and after 45 minutes of waiting, I finally went to the doors and placed the order. It arrived shortly after that. For a change, we had the Ham & Pineapple Pizza. The pizza had lots of ham, pineapple, and cheese but not much sauce.

Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: We sailed in to Musket Cove, which is in the Lautoka district, from the Yasawas. Folks are allowed one day there as a stop coming back from the Yasawas and then need to go to Lautoka to check in.

We stayed two extra days due to more stormy weather and needing to fix our windlass, and they seemed to understand. Fines can be given if a cruiser stays too long before letting them know and checking in.

Musket Cove was loaded down with cruisers on rallies, so we were ready to leave anyway. It’s quite attractive but also plush and expensive, and that wasn’t fitting our
cruising priorities. On the other hand, we joined loads of old friends there to catch up after the chores and before heading out.

**Tackless II - Aug/Sep 2007:** I would never in my wildest dreams have imagined that we would still be at Musket Cove two weeks after our friend Bill left. And what's more, we will be here two MORE weeks! Usually, we are not big joiners, preferring to slink away to some uninhabited cove as we did at the start of the season when we went west-about Vanua Levu rather than follow the crowd to Viani Bay. But, here we are, in the midst of a group scene the likes of which we haven't seen since Trinidad!

It's all about momentum, and I guess our Musket momentum started with a resolve to start walking in the mornings. It's easy here because there is a dinghy dock, so no struggling with shoes and socks and sand! The island is ideally laid out for the endeavor with dirt roads leading up to the ridge above the resort where the walker is rewarded with panoramas in every direction, including, of course, over the anchorage. Along the ridge are also the first homes in Musket Cove's residential development, all handsome and high-end -- stimulating for fantasies in the "what I would do with my lottery winnings" department.

From the ridge road there are about four turnoffs leading to distant corners of the island, all of which we have explored. Sometime during the first week of walking we met Tom of the catamaran Quantum Leap. The next day we joined up together with Tom and his wife Bette Lee (working herself back into this after a hip replacement), and since then the contingent has grown. We spend about 90 minutes a day at this. We are feeling very virtuous.

In addition to physical momentum there is social momentum, and on that front it seems that we have stumbled into the hands of a full-fledged organizer. Robin of the Voyage catamaran Endangered Species has organized day-trips, dive trips, dinners and potlucks which have filled up our calendar in a way we had not anticipated.

First we went diving with Robin and her husband Rick, a long run with four of us and gear in their dinghy out to a fairly dramatic pinnacle where the current made us think twice about going out again without a surface watch. Two days later Robin put together a gang that filled three dinghies for a run around the corner to a backpacker resort called Funky Fish for a great lunch overlooking the acrobatics two fabulous kite surfers making the most of the 20+ winds. Lunch was followed by a beer-drinking/snorkel stop at an offshore sand motu that uncovers with the tide. Shades of Beach Blanket Bingo!

Two days after THAT was the real pièce de resistance: A boat tour of the further Mamanuca islands. Spoilsport that I am, I couldn't imagine why people with their own boats would want to PAY to go on an island tour, but sure enough on Monday Robin managed to line up eighteen of us. And what a blast the day was! Despite piping winds over 20 knots, our aluminum boat with the two massive 220hp outboards took us on a high-speed ride all around islands that we now see really don't have anchorages for us to stop in!

We stopped once to snorkel a stunning reef of perfect hard corals and then made a pass by the island on which the great Tom Hanks' movie "Cast Away" was filmed (came home
and watched it again that night, and sure enough, it's the one!) before whipping around several more to our lunch stop.

Our destination resort (I am mortified to admit I never did get its name!) was the least tropical looking of any we have seen, with modern white structures and a stunning infinity pool that just drops away into the blue of the sea. The food in their stark white restaurant, however, was unexpectedly fine. I had a salad of octopus and feta cheese with mounds of fresh greens and was amazed when the advertised octopus was not pieces but was instead a veritable flock of tiny octopi that you popped in your mouth whole! Not for the squeamish! With the wind actually increasing in the afternoon, we voted to forego any more snorkeling efforts and settled instead on stops at several MORE island resorts (of which I pretty well lost track) at which we all mixed and mingled and got to know one another better over chilly beverages. This part of Fiji definitely takes the world prize for the number of resorts per square foot of land. Every turn reveals another! And business doesn't look bad!

Don and Bill had bought a dive package the first day here. Unlike many resorts, the Musket Dive package can be shared by all the crew members of a particular boat. Don and Bill used up only two dives of the fourteen that first day, so Don and I have also had to fit in some scuba diving. The day after our dinghy trip with Rick and Rob in, we went out on the Subsurface boat with three divers collected on the way from various resorts. This was the first two-tank dive (two dives, one after the other) we have done in a long time. Fortunately for me, most of the sites around here allow me to have a good dive while keeping to my modified depth range (max 50').

Our two dives were as different from one another as the two dive leaders were. The first leader, a man probably in his fifties, never once looked around for his divers, while the second after specifically saying that a dive is not a race, took off and left most of us in the dust. The first dive offered three "pinnacles" – more like three mounds – bedecked with large sea fans and many multi-colored crinoids (a species of feathery starfish that perch on coral to filter feed). Up shallow, I swam over a nice-sized turtle on the reef-top that everyone deeper missed. The highlight of the second dive, a shallow plateau with patch reefs, was memorable for the live Triton Trumpet shell, several small stingrays with blue spots, and lots of table corals.

That was the only two-tank trip we've taken, and it was also the last open boat we've taken. Since then the indefatigable Robin has managed to get the dive shop to run a special afternoon boat for our expanding gang of cruiser divers! This is ideal for us. A single dive to a destination of our choice, all with our own friends. Such a deal. Unfortunately, most of the dives we have done have been pretty average. This part of Fiji does have some nice hard corals, despite predation efforts by the nasty crown-of-thorns starfish, but the fish life is depressingly thin. For example, we did a striking afternoon dive on a vertical wall where there should have been a steady parade of pelagics, yet the open water to our right remained absolutely empty!

And as if all that wasn't enough to wear us out, we are also continuing to play with our young friends Tricky & Jane on Lionheart. Jane, a former competitive swimmer, has been teaching Tricky how to swim laps properly in the resort's pool, so Tricky has taken on giving Jane, me, and...drum roll...even Don WINDSURFING lessons. With the
resort's very reasonable hourly rate on boards that are nearly as wide as an aircraft carrier, these efforts have actually been quite successful. Who'da thunk it?

And finally, in an effort to see how many muscle groups we can shock, we all played golf this morning! Yes, GOLF! Behind the Plantation Island Resort on the other side of the runway, is a little 9-hole course. For $26F (About $15) we each got a full set of quite nice clubs, a pull cart, three tees and three balls. The course is, of course, mostly flat, but it has got some doozy hazards: sand traps that aren't much softer than the fairways themselves, water hazards that are gaping canyons because it is the end of the dry season, and a couple of holes with the sea along one side just waiting to eat up a slice. They charge $1F per lost ball, and we consider the outing a huge success because we came back with all our balls. This should not give you the mistaken impression that we played well. I would say we all played almost equally badly, landing balls in bushes, ricocheting off stands of bamboo, invariably putting our shots on neighboring holes...sometimes on both sides! Fortunately, there seemed to be only one other couple on the course...and they stayed well clear.

It is very hard for me to believe that all this has taken place in only two weeks. And in that time it has not actually been all play and no work. Don has worked on two watermakers (and discussed two others), plus I have booked tickets for cruisers on Tiffany's travel website via my cellular broadband card (www.thetwomomstravel.com) and done an interview and written another article!

Aren't we just the busy beavers! All this and barbecues most nights at Ratu Nemani Island, including last night's potluck for Robin's birthday. I'm sure you can guess how orchestrated THAT was!

Can we take any more? Well we'd better, because this Thursday starts the annual, week-long Musket Cove Regatta! We are signed up for pretty much all the events, which include two or three full-day "races" with the big boat (motors for the less than serious racers allowed) to other resorts for lunch, at least one of which is in pirate regalia, Hobie Cat races (if we ever find time to practice!), a best-ball scramble golf tournament (Oh, God!), kayak races, wet T-shirt contests, Hairy chest contests, pig roasts...well, I think you get the idea.

Sloepmouche - 2006: So much has been written and said about this traditionally yacht-friendly resort, that we will only mention recent changes. Musket Cove’s founder, Dick Smith loves yachts and yacht’s people, and established the famous Musket Cove Yacht Club with it's $1 membership for Captains of foreign vessels, cheap drinks Bar, and BBQ pits for yachts to get together and spin yarns. Meanwhile, Musket Cove Resort has turned into an up-market, 4 Star Resort. There’s good news and bad news. Good news is that there are plans to develop a full service yard on the island, with the hope to provide first-world class workmanship. Bad news is that, due to circumstances beyond the control of Musket Cove, one of Fiji’s most famous yachting events, the Musket Cove to Port Villa, Vanuatu Race will no longer be held. Instead, they will continue to have a week of Regattas and fun activities for yachts, which can then get acquainted and travel together to Vanuatu, without any official organization. It is unclear whether or not Musket Cove will still arrange for officials to be available for exceptional official clearing-out from Musket Cove. Rumor has it that, as Dick Smith gradually retires, those
inheriting the helm may not continue his advocacy for yachts. For the moment, members of the Yacht Club still have full use of the resort facilities, and a generous discount on the Malolo Cat ferry service to the Big Island.

**Ocelot - 2005:** Musket Cove (Malolo Lailai Is) has about 20 moorings ($6/day) as well as showers ($.60), the $2 bar with free BBQ pits, 2 useful stores, telephones, a small clinic, and a dive shop ($6/fill). They also have a small dock ($12/night for us), a fuel dock, and a good cyclone hole that requires a small bridge to be raised. There are paths for walking all over the island which offer great views of the surrounding reefs. Although quiet most of the time, Musket Cove is apparently the place to be towards the end of the season, as yachts gather to head west towards Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and OZ. Of the several resorts there, we preferred Plantation as they have 2 (salt) swimming pools, free showers, internet access, and tennis courts. Happy Hour (6-7) is followed by one of the best resort dinners we've found: $16 for a delicious buffet with 3-4 types of meat and a different theme each night, and a deadly desert buffet including fresh fruits, ice creams and sherbets. There's a brief cultural show most evenings.

**9.3.3 Navadra Island**

**Cruising Guide References:** A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 230-233

**Zephyr - July 2012:** Yesterday, we piled into our dinghy and motored to the far side of Navadra Island to a beach that is rarely visited by other cruisers. It's not anywhere near the anchorage and has quite a reef off it's shore keeping most boats away. We'd taken our small anchor with us and dropped it in a patch of sand offshore and swam into the beach.

This beach should be called "Plastic Beach". Everywhere we looked there were plastic jugs, bottles, tubs and one of a kind shoes. We even found a beach ball as well as a large line float. Tracy came upon a Chambered Nautilus shell with just a bit of it broken. She's been looking for them at every beach we go to and finally scored big time yesterday.

The beach was unusual in that is was made of of lots of sand but it was overlaid on a rock shelf(probably volcanic in origin). Instead of large areas of coral off the beach, it was spotty here and there attached to the rock shelf. We found rocks along the beach that had small bits of coral inside the rock and encrusted on the outside of them. First time we have seen such a thing.

**9.3.4 Mana Island**

**Carina - April 2011:** From Musket Cove, we then pushed on to tiny Mana Island and its small lagoon, home of three, count’em, three, backpacker "resorts" (tatoos at bargain rates and the beer flows freely) and a POSH alternative that is separated from the undeserving backpackers by a big ugly fence.

In the middle of this mess is a fairly good sized but poor Fijian village, where we presented "sevusevu" and then visited a village gathering during a "field day". Here we saw kids skipping rope, a first ever in the Pacific, and a big group of both adults and children playing a game we could not identify, though it seemed to be a cross between
cricket, rugby and tag and was played with a wicket of stacked coconut shells and a well
used tennis ball. There was a lot of gleeful running and ducking and dodging and it was
fun to watch even as we were gently interviewed by a small set of kava-inebriated young
men.

9.3.5 Elevuka / Treasure Island

Carina - April 2011: From Mana Island, we pushed on to an island called Eluvuka by
the locals, that is packed shore to shore with the Treasure Island resort, and is now
called, you guessed it, Treasure Island. They do not accommodate yachts here and we
had to wiggle in to anchor between bommies and moorings, even as fast ferries threw up
six foot wakes and the parasailers drifted by with their cables coming uncomfortably
close to our mast. Next day, we pushed on.

9.4 The Yasawa Group (S to N)

9.4.1 General Information

Namani - August 2013 - Medical Clinic Near Blue Lagoon: When a friend fell very ill
in the Yasawas, we were relieved to find there is a local medical clinic just north of the
Blue Lagoon.

The resort staff of the Blue Lagoon were very helpful in helping us arrange a skiff to take
the sick cruiser over within an hour of our call. It was a 20 minute ride through shallow
reefs; you need to know the way, so a skiff makes sense even at a cost of F$60-80. The
sick sailor was treated immediately and even given a free antibiotic. It's good to know
that there's help nearby as we were almost thinking of transporting her by ferry to the
mainland for help.
**Soggy Paws - Feb 2013:** Cyclone Evan swept down the Mamanucas and Yasawas, blowing about 90 knots. Many facilities (including Musket Cove) were damaged. But all are under repair as of Feb 2013. Make sure you ask around before heading out to a spot that's been raved about in previous years.

**Ocelot - Cyclone Season 2005:** We’ve been having a delightful time in the Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands, west of Viti Levu, even during cyclone season, but we're currently the ONLY cruising boat out here. Much of the fleet went to NZ for cyclone season, and the rest are sitting on their moorings in Savusavu, but there are good cyclone holes in Denerau (Nadi), Vuda Pt. Marina, Lautoka, and Musket Cove. We keep a close eye on the weather, but there are countless fun anchorages within 1 day's sail. Be advised that many reef markers have blown down and not been replaced, especially in the less traveled areas.

In general, we've found that the Mamanuca's have better coral and underwater visibility than the Yasawa's to the north. The Mamanuca's tend to have more up-scale resorts, and virtually all islands have at least 1 resort on them. Most of these seem friendly to yachts, even though we don't spend a lot of $$. The Yasawa's are further from the mainland and tend towards lower end backpacker-type resorts and local villages. If you visit the villages, you'll need to do a Sevu-sevu ceremony with the chief, bringing him a gift of Kava. Deserted anchorages are available but relatively rare. We enjoyed several days of isolated splendor in Navadra (30' in sand but we needed a stern anchor to keep us off the reef).

**Sloepmouche - 2006:** The electronic charts lack many details of this group. In addition to the cruising guides, there are some paper charts more detailed than the electronic ones. This set of 7 charts, known as the Pickmere Charts, have good detail of shorelines and reefs and some good notes, although they do not have soundings of the depths. Ours came as part of a chart package, perhaps inquire at the Fiji Hydrographic Office how to get them.

### 9.4.2 Internet and Cell Phone Coverage

We had pretty comprehensive cell and internet (via Vodafone dongle) throughout the Yasawas. It was spotted, but most of the 'popular' anchorages had coverage. Sometimes you had to get out of the cabin and out on deck to pull in a good signal. Having a cell antenna or cell booster would help.

### 9.4.3 Waya Island

**Radiance - July 2013 - Octopus Resort NO LONGER YACHT FRIENDLY:** The rugged coastline of Waya Island, with its high rocky peaks is stunning and reminded us of our home cruising grounds of Alaska.

We’d heard good things about the Octopus Resort being welcoming to yachtsies and since it also hosted a PADI dive center, had decided to stop and get our son certified there.
We anchored over sand in front of the resort in about 45’, at 17-16.59’ S / 177-06.23’ E and went ashore. There is a very narrow cut in the coral which is the only pass to get your dinghy ashore, but it was well marked with two buoys.

Upon landing, we signed the “yacht check-in book” at the dive shop and also checked in with Jo-Jo at the office.

My son was able to start the curriculum immediately, so after signing him up, my wife and I went to the coconut bar and ordered a beer.

About an hour later we were approached on the beach by Steve, the general manager, who informed us that “there would be a $25 per day charge to come ashore, use the pool, showers, etc.” (There had been no mention of at check-in from either the dive shop or the office.) I told Steve we had just signed my son up for a $750 dive class and we were not interested in those amenities. His rude reply: “If you come ashore, there is a $25 per day fee for yachtyes.” After pointing out that we would not be paying $37 for two beers, I told Steve that we would be taking our leave and go around the corner to anchor at the village of Nalauwaki.

The village anchorage was much better with less swell, better protection and more swing room, and there is a pleasant footpath from the village over the hill to the resort.

We did sevusevu with the chief and were able to purchase some kumala, cassava and papaya from the plantation. We enjoyed a nice hike up the fresh water stream at the far west end of the village. On the last day of my son’s class, we hiked over the hill to pay for the dive class. While waiting for him to finish the final exam, Steve and Jo-Jo were standing at the dive shop and my wife approached them to explain that we felt we had been treated rudely and to recommend that they make their policy clear.

Jojo acknowledged our concerns and explained that they had had some negative experiences with yachtyes over the past couple of weeks and that the $25/day fee was indeed a new policy. I also spoke to Steve and reiterated the only reason we had stopped was for my son’s dive course and because we’d read in the Fiji Compendium that it was a “yacht-friendly resort” and that their own website invites yachtyes to come ashore and enjoy the resort, but says nothing of a $25/day fee.

His reply: “If you own a yacht, you can afford the $25/day fee.” I told Steve that we would be sending an update to the Fiji Compendium reflecting the new policy. He told us that we were now trespassing and rudely demanded that we “leave the property and take your son with you.”

In all of our 6-weeks spent in Fiji, we have found the locals to be wonderful, friendly, polite and generous.

Unfortunately, Steve is not a local and our experience at Octopus Resort was the worst in Fiji. Whatever the website and previous compendium notes may claim, Octopus Resort seems to have changed their policy toward yachtyes – which are now clearly NOT welcome. Next time, we’ll give it a miss.

**Aqualuna - June 2013 - Dinner at Octopus Cove:** On our friends’ last night on board Aqualuna, or our way back to Denarau, we called into Octopus Cove where there is a resort and also a very nice reef. Gilly and Sam suggested dinner ashore as their treat
which was arranged. Lobsters were ordered by VHF and then Peter the manager came out by boat to see how we would like them cooked, so we said cold with mayo'. Talk about service with a smile it was amazing. Rather than take our dingy into the beach which had quite a bit of surf they sent a boat out to fetch us at 6 p.m. so enough time onboard to have a glass of wine and watch the sun set then ashore for cocktails before dinner. I took along a bag of fresh mint for Mohitos as last time they had no mint, I was very long on mint from my herb garden on board.

We were expecting to have dinner in the restaurant which has a sand floor but discovered they had laid a beautiful table for us on the deck by the beach under a palm tree. Not only was the table beautiful but so was the seafood platter of shellfish and squid as well as a dish full of very good spiny lobster, champagne also served with dinner, the service was excellent and very friendly we were made to feel like VIPs. There was nothing to fault at all. Jojo the Manageress also came over and had a chat we learnt alsorts of things. Peter and Jojo were managers of a restaurant in Japan for a long time and else where. They have been at the Octopus Cove for 6 months. The hurricane last December swamped the resort in sand and almost buried it so it had to be dug out again. The resort is very simple, some with dormitories for the backpacking crowd and some other more up market burhs but all share the same restaurant.

**Island Bound - December 2012:** The village at Waya Island was our first experience with a real outer-island village...First on the agenda when we arrived at Waya was a trip into the village of Yalobi. Before we could tour the village or set off to snorkel or fish we needed to meet the island chief and present our sevusevu. Sevusevu is a gift of kava -or yagona as the local Fijians call it- respectfully given to the village chief.

Armed with the name of the village chief from friends back at Vuda we landed the dingy and asked directions to Tai Toms bure (Grandpa Toms house.) As we walked along a well worn path through the small village people were up and about and busy with the days work. The path took us through lines of bures and past the village church towards the high hills that rise behind the village proper. We were surprised by how green everything was despite Cyclone Evan's recent rampage especially since the trees around Vuda were stripped almost completely bare.

I have heavily edited the below information to leave just the pertinent information useful to cruisers about Waya, and have moved their detailed account of their encounter with their first village in Fiji to the Compendium section on "Local Information and Customs".

Once near the Chief's bure, our guide went to alert the chief to our arrival. After a brief wait nearby we were ushered inside his small house and instructed to sit down on the woven floor mat that took up most of the small room. We were introduced to Chief Tai Tom who is chief of the largest of the five clans on Waya Island. Once settled on the floor we passed over our sevusevu which Tai Tom accepted and then paused to say a prayer over the kava. Once the gift was excepted he answered a few of our questions and told us who was in the photographs that lines ceiling edges of the bure. Then with a nod and a smile he welcomed us again and gave his permission for us to freely walk the village and to enjoy the island for the rest of our stay and stated the rest of our visit was free.
In our walk through the village, every person we met offered a hearty bula! And everyone seemed eager to stop their New Years preparations and visit a bit. We left a trail of balloons for the kids as we worked our way along the village paths and stopped to talk with a couple of preteen boys who were playing with their pet iguana who seemed happy to rest atop one boys head heartily chowing down on hand fed hibiscus blossoms.

Next we were invited into another home to peruse some goodies offered up for sale and Barbara had her first chance to shop for souvenirs. We came away with a salt cellar shaped like a kava bowl, a handmade rag rug, a green shell bracelet and a cannibal fork. Human flesh was -for some unknown reason- not to be touched with ones hands.

Next stop was the dispensary, where the new island nurse was settling in accompanied by the district doctor and the outgoing nurse. The nurse was on day one of a three year assignment and Barbara being an emergency room ARNP helped lead the walk to the village dispensary.

The boarding school was currently empty -closed down for summer break- but normally is filled with 150 of the islands elementary aged children. The school is a great asset to the village as most school in Fiji comes at a price. The governments have been promising free education for years but apparently the only place that promise has come true is in some of the islands outer islands. The city folks of the two big islands still must find a way to afford tuition, books and uniforms along with room and board for those who must travel. Unfortunately for we were trying to cross the beach to the school at high tide and had a choice of wading in up to our belly buttons or trying back another time. We decided to stay dry and instead headed back to the boat for a quick swim before lunch ashore.

The snorkeling at the pass between Waya and Wayasewa was the best I had seen since Fakarava. The fish were abundant, the coral was alive and colorful and the visibility was decent despite Evan kicking things up. I have been surprised and alarmed at the state of most of the coral reefs I have seen during this trip.

Sara Jean II - August 2012: Our next stop was Waya Island, a spectacular mountainous island that reminded us of the Marquesas.

We anchored in picturesque Yalobi Bay on the south side of Waya and took the dinghy ashore to do our sevusevu ceremony with Chief Tom. We sat on a mat in a circle in his home and he blessed the kava we had gifted to him (and a can of corned beef which the Fijians love) and clapped his hands, chanted and welcomed us to the village of Yalobi.

We met his wife Mary who invited us to church the next day on Sunday morning. The singing in this Methodist Church was awesome. One woman in the choir had an opera quality voice that rose above all the other excellent voices. And a combo rugby team and men's choir was in the village - about 30 young men with powerful voices.

The collective congregation just about blew the woven mat ceiling off the little church! There is a high mountain behind the village of Yalobi and we had arranged for the chief's son, Moses, to be our guide hiking up this mountain. So the next day we had expected a nice, pastoral walk climbing slowly through the grassy hills behind the village. Instead, he guided us along the beach and then straight up a black lava flow in a bee line for the
summit. It was like the Grouse Grind only instead of being in the shade of giant fir trees we were on black rock baked by the tropical sun. All of us, including the ladies, had a pretty good sweat going. That being said, the views over the bay and village were fantastic and worth the effort - looking down into the clear water and seeing all the surrounding reefs.

We visited the primary school in the afternoon, located on the beach near our anchorage. It is a large school by village standards with almost 200 children. It is a boarding school with about 130 kids living there Monday to Friday. As usual, the students and teachers welcomed us, the kids bolting out of the classrooms and swarming all around us - each with lots of questions. All the school lessons are taught in English so communication is no issue. They showed us their classrooms and a few of the older kids toured us through the dormitories and dining hall. It is a fact of life in remote Fijian villages that children at the age of 6 get in a boat on Sunday evening and go off to boarding school, returning to their home village on Friday evening. There is no high school in this area so the older kids go to boarding high schools on the Fijian mainland, returning home every few months.

Dreamcaper - August 2011: In few hours (from Lautoka) we arrived at Lukiluki Bay on the northwest side Waya Island but after checking out the anchorage it was too rolly. We then headed south to Yalobi Bay, the southernmost anchorage on Waya Island and anchored near reefs in 25' in calm waters.

Carina - April 2011: We found almost the perfect spot (for us) in a patch of sand in a lovely bay on the south end of Waya Island. Waya is the southern-most Yasawa but has the highest peaks and, though only 28 miles from Lautoka, feels like it's on a different planet. The village here is Yalobi (Yah LOAM bee) where stately Chief Tom accepted our "sevusevu" (of tea, sugar and crackers) and invited us to stay as long as we desired. "Stay a year!" he said, with a wide smile. The village sits in a lush valley that stretches up towards the island's peaks and is shadowed by the rugged 1,650' peak called Vatunareba.

Our first evening in the bay, a small cruise ship, the Reef Endeavor, came in and anchored behind us. Tom had explained to us that each week the villagers perform a "meke" (a traditional dance) for the tourists and are paid $150 FJD in return. We were invited to see the performance. This isn't a lot of money, but it surely helps to pay for the fuel required for the large village punt to travel once weekly to Lautoka to gather supplies and to collect the secondary school children who stay the week in the city. (At $2.60 FJD/liter for gas/oil pre-mix, this amount of money would buy about 14 gallons of fuel.) Unfortunately, the village did not receive any funds this week as a weather front passed through and dealt us driving winds and torrential rains and turned daylight into darkness. Though close by, the Reef Endeavor disappeared into this darkness, its blazing lights slowly fading into the falling rain. Despite the miserable conditions, we were snug and dry and in awe of the face of Vatunareba as cascades fell down nearly every crevice on its massive stone face and created a melodic, relaxing melody of falling water.

We only stayed three days in the village but had many pleasant walks and chats amongst friendly villagers who lived in a full range of homes. from thatch, to wood, to (more modern) concrete structures. Chief Tom explained that they were trying to
replace all homes in block construction to prevent as much destruction of homes from cyclones.

The children of the village were on holiday during this time, so each time we went ashore we had an entourage of children following us around. Visiting Yalobi was much like visiting the villages of rural Vanua Levu or Taveuni and made us wish we could push on further up the island chain. That was not to be, as we had packages waiting in the Lautoka Post Office and a deadline to be ready to leave Fiji. Saying our good-byes, Tom and Lolo presented us with a shell necklace and a lovely pandanus fan, as we gave fish hooks and ribbon and canned peaches. This being our last village stay in Fiji, it was the perfect finale to a nearly-perfect year.

Sloepmouche - 2006: The southern-most major island of the group, Waya’s silhouette made me think of “The Hobbit” and the evil land of Mordor. The peaks look like horns of the devil! We anchored in calm conditions in the north bay, Nalauwaki, in front of the village in about 14m (45ft) of water. The dark areas on the bottom turned out to be sea grass patches over sand, rather than hard corals. Our bugle anchor bit in well. The northern swells did not bother Sloepmouche. After sevusevu with the chief, we visited the “waterfall”. On the eastern-most corner of the beach, you can take your dinghy at mid-tide or better right up to where the river drains into the bay. Scramble up the river about 100yds and you’ll come upon a small fall with small pool. This used to be the water catchment area described in the guide, but the dam is now broken, and they have a new cistern in another area, so you can stand under the falls and sit in the pool anytime.

We took a well-beaten path over the ridge to the Octopus Resort. Formerly a Backpackers Resort, it has been nicely upgraded with bungalows, a cool, shady pool terrace, and bar and restaurant of 3 Star quality. This is a bonus for those paying for the dorm accommodation, as they get the “ambiance” and meal packages of a higher quality resort. There is a PADI dive center on site. We moved the boat around and anchored off the resort in ~30ft over sand and weed. Polly & Ross, the Scottish manager couple, make cruisers feel very welcome! We’re speaking about genuine pleasure to have you visiting, not the false smile that often only see $ signs in your eyes! We enjoyed several quality meals, relaxing in the pool after a guided walk across the island (you go by boat and hike back), did some scuba and enjoyed the meke on Friday night. If the wind turns more SW or W, it’s only 2 miles to go anchor back in the North bay. Nice to be in a resort where everyone is having a great time! Don’t miss this stop in the Yasawas!

9.4.4 Drawaqa Island & Nanuya Balavu (Just South of Naiviti) - Manta Rays

Sara Jean II - Manta Rays - August 2012: We are now anchored with 3 other boats near the south end of Naviti Island at Manta Ray Resort. The anchorage is just west of Drawaqa Island. We searched for the manta rays yesterday in the pass at the north of the island, along with many resort boats, but had no luck. Maybe tomorrow!

The next day we went snorkeling on the reef in front of the resort. It was an excellent spot with lots of fish. In the afternoon we went scuba diving to a site called the Caves of Babylon. There were, of course, lots of caves, tunnels and swim throughs to explore, followed by a nice wall dive. It was then back to the Sarah Jean for a quick rinse, fast
cocktail and then off to the resort for curry night. It was fun chatting with all the young backpackers from around the world.

This morning at the crack of dawn, Solo, our new Fijian bar friend and manta ray guide, came by Sarah Jean to inform us there were mantas in the pass. The kids jumped out of bed, grabbed their GO PRO underwater video cameras and roared off in the dinghy. They just returned and were pretty excited to have had an encounter. Yahoo - got to swim with the mantas. It's cloudy and a little rainy now so we're going to chill for while and have banana pancakes.

**Zephyr - July 2012:** We upped the anchor this morning from Navadra to head off to anchor off the Manta Island Resort on Drawaqa Island.

Using a Google Earth overlay on our chartplotter, we easily bypassed all the reefs in the area. We pulled in about 1330 and were safely anchored in about 75 ft of water shortly after that. About a 5 hour trip for the 23 miles it took to get here.

The big draw of the area is being able to swim with the **Manta Rays** that frequent the passes between the islands up here. You can paddle out on one of their kayaks or they will take you out in one of their boats to see them.

We had a breezy night here. The wind was still howling past us out of the northeast and the swell was coming from just about every direction. When we anchored, our bow faced the northeast. As the evening wore on, we started shifting at anchor. We had dropped right in front of a channel between two islands that have lots of water coming and going depending on the tide. When the tide is flooding, water pours south through the cut taking our stern south with it. When the tide ebbs, it flows north and so did our stern pushing itself against the wind. Half the boats were lined up one way and the rest went the other (those affected by the water flow). Through the evening and into the night, our anchor alarm kept going off as the tides changed. Up and down, all night long. We left this anchorage as soon as we could the next morning.

We were trying to find a place to sit out the rest of this wind.

North of us, were a couple of small bays we could hide out in. The first, **Vuata**, we decided was too small. A couple of miles farther was **Naatuvalo Bay**. This looked like a nice anchorage that would protect us from the winds.

It was less than 5 miles so a nice short hop.

We arrived in just over an hour and still the winds blew, hitting 35 knots in some places. The bottom was reported to be sandy and depths of 8 to 10 meters. Shallow for what we have been used to. As we came in, there was a catamaran anchored south of where we expected to stay. When we hit 44 feet, we dropped. We could have gone in farther but the charts we had showed two or three coral bommies that were allegedly between us and shore. We let the wind push us back and do the preliminary anchor setting and once that was done, I let out more chain and we powered backward and set it well in the sand on the bottom. We weren’t going anywhere. We ended up with 4 boats in this nice snug anchorage.

As the day has passed, the Yasawa Flier (tour boat and tourist shuttle) has come and gone twice. Picking up and dropping off guests at all the resorts throughout the Yasawa
Islands. It is bright yellow so you can see it a long way off. It’s in and out of here in about 10 minutes so it can make it’s rounds. In the end, it picks up and drops off the tourists in Denarau so it has quite a few miles to make in a day.

So now there are four of us sitting out the 25+ knot winds waiting for them to pass. We are having a nice afternoon, much more comfortable than we were yesterday.

Surprisingly, we actually have internet out here. There is a transmission tower right beside the anchorage so we have the luxury of having internet. Now it’s not fast by any means but we’re happy to have it.

Sloepmouche - 2006: We took the free mooring from the Manta Ray Island Resort, located in a pass between this island and Drawaqa. Between Drawaqa and Naviti, is another pass that at certain times, hosts manta rays which cruise back and forth in the currents feeding. Unfortunately, they hadn’t been seen for a while when we were there end of March.

Went for a reef dive with the center there on the patch reef on the west side. This reef had some nice swim-thrus and narrow canyons, some gorgonians, and some nice soft corals, as well as healthy hard corals. The richest color and life, like many sites in Fiji, are 15m or less, most vibrant right on the top of the drop-off. This was a relaxing drift dive. They accommodated us four 20 yr Instructor veterans, by letting us have free reign while the dive guide showed us the best attractions. Another guide took the less experienced. We appreciated this.

9.4.5 Naviti Island (Somosomo)

Cruising Guide References: A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 252

Aqualuna - May 2013: We anchored one night in Somosomo and found beautiful snorkelling, and a beautiful beach. We could not understand why the beach was unpopulated with no resorts until we had to pick our way through a very shallow reef to get to the beach. It was idillic.

Cyan - Somosomo - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: It was a nice run with only our genoa down from Sawa-i-lau to Somosomo on Naviti Island the next day, taking the western route with little chart and depth information, and again we found that any hazardous places were very obvious to careful navigators.

The easternmost of the three bays at Somosomo was just beautiful, and there is also choice snorkeling and beachcombing. There were few other boats or local fishing boats zooming by early in the morning.

The Yasawa villages understand that if cruisers just spend one night at an anchorage, taking a break on a voyage or waiting for weather, that Sevusevu is not really necessary, so we didn’t always go into the village to greet the chief unless we planned to dive or fish or stay several days. We had celebrated several extended Sevusevu ceremonies in the Lau group visit and were now avoiding it if acceptable. The villages began looking alike. But everywhere we went, we found a very sincere, welcoming and cordial people; we can’t praise them enough.
Tortuguita - Soso Bay - September 2013: Initially we were going to stay another day at Blue Lagoon, but knew there were better places so we headed out to the bay in front of Somosomo village on Naviti Island. We went around the west side of the islands and on arrival, the north swell that had been with us outside the reef, hadn’t calmed down and was pushing right in to Somosomo Bay. We made a 180 and headed to the bay on the south side of Naviti by the village of Soso.

In Soso we presented Sevusevu to the acting chief. We were welcomed as members of the village as we had in Yadua. They haven’t had a chief for 3 years since the last one died. It has taken so long to pick one because of the infighting between the old chief’s family members. The new chief will be inaugurated on October 10th. We were invited to stay for the festivities but there is no way.

The ladies that had taken us to the chief’s Bure (house) asked us to come back when we were done and look at some things they were selling. They didn’t have much but we felt obliged to buy something. However, one lady was selling small mats made of Pandamus leaves. We had wanted something to mount the Tapa on that we bought in Samoa so we went back to the boat, brought the Tapa, and contracted for the lady to make us a custom mat.

Instead of buying some tourist junk that we didn’t want, we asked the last lady that we hadn’t bought anything from if she would make us lunch when we came back the next day for the mat. She initially didn’t understand but finally she understood that she was going to be ‘like a restaurant’. She was overjoyed and made a nice meal of root crops with curried pumpkin and rice the next day.

We left right after this, as the wind switched more south and was blowing hard in to the bay so we had to find a new place.

Cyan - Soso Bay - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: Our next anchorage after Somosomo Bay was Soso Bay and village, where we did greet the chief and tour the village finding curious architecture at the church, community hall and some village homes. There is a creative builder there, and it has a unique look using carved wood and concrete abutments.

9.4.6 Blue Lagoon (Nanuya Lailai)

Namani - August 2013 - Medical Clinic Near Blue Lagoon: When a friend fell very ill in the Yasawas, we were relieved to find there is a local medical clinic just north of the Blue Lagoon.

The resort staff of the Blue Lagoon were very helpful in helping us arrange a skiff to take the sick cruiser over within an hour of our call. It was a 20 minute ride through shallow reefs; you need to know the way, so a skiff makes sense even at a cost of F$60-80. The sick sailor was treated immediately and even given a free antibiotic. It’s good to know that there’s help nearby as we were almost thinking of transporting her by ferry to the mainland for help.
**Aqualuna - June 2013:** We headed up to the Blue Lagoon, which has sheltered water on most sides and is easy to get to the beach to do walks in inclement weather. Just as well we did, as the winds the following night gusted at 40 knots with huge amounts of rain and lighting. Nice to feel safe and well anchored. On our way to the Blue Lagoon we caught three Tuna. The next morning we did a walk across to Lo's Tea House on the other side of the island. We all needed a leg stretch having been boat bound for three days.

The following morning we went for a very long walk along the beach half way around the island. The snorkelling was not brilliant but the whole area was beautiful with white soft sand. Back to a small hotel (12 rooms) for coffee and toast and booked a table in their restaurant that evening. Fresh lobster and Calamari were on the menu, but no whole lobster just in pasta with a local vegetable, which was delicious.

We met George, one of the hotel waiters, and asked him about the singing we had heard from the yacht that day he said they are a choir from his village. So he organised to pick us up in his boat and take us across to his village to church the next morning. The singing was awesome with full descant, alto and baritone just wonderful to listen to. The first hymn was "Bread of Heaven" so we were able to join in in English. The rest of the hymns and sermons and service was in Fijian but we were able to follow the service as it was the same format as in the UK.

The village had been hit by Typhoon/hurricane Evan last December. Many houses lost their corrugated iron roofs out to sea, but thankfully nobody was killed. Most of the houses have been built in concrete made with salt water and iron that rusts so they are going to rebuild in wood. In the village there are a few ruins of bamboo and Pandanas grass houses still standing.

**Soggy Paws - February 2013:** We hadn't actually planned to stop at Blue Lagoon. We only had one more day we could spend in the northern Yasawas and Dave was hot to see the caves at Sawa-i-Lau, so we were going to skip Blue Lagoon and go directly there.

However, we got halfway there and the weather turned worse. The wind was in our face and the weather overcast and squally, so we decided to duck in from the east side and see if we could find an anchorage protected from the NW-N-NE.

The passage starts at 16-59.56S / 177-22.28E and heads NW behind "Turtle Island". Turtle Island is a big-big-bucks resort and they don't want the cruisers anchoring near their island at all.

The normal cruiser's anchorage is at the very north end, off Nanuya Resort, approx 16-56.55S / 177-22.01E, but that didn't look very protected from the NW winds.
So we pulled in to a nice little cove on the south side of the north end of Turtle Island. We anchored in good sand in about 30’ of water, at about 16-57.13S / 177-22.256E. Having good Google Earth charts helped a lot in navigating in this area, as our C-Map and Garmin charts didn’t have much detail, and seemed off a bit.

Rutea - May 2012: Remember the Brooke Shields movie The Blue Lagoon? Well, we never saw it but thought that the Blue Lagoon would be a beautiful place to visit! Armed with our Garmin chart plotter, Navionix charts on the Ipad, two cruising books and one of us up on the bow we threaded our way from Waya Island through the reef strewn route to Nanuya Island and Nanuya Levu where they are still talking about Brooke Shields! There were reefs everywhere but none of the charts could agree on EXACTLY where so it ends up that eyeballing your way through them is just as good as following a chart..... It’s just a bit difficult to eyeball depth (especially when heading into the sun) so one moment we were in 60 feet of water and the next moment we were in 6 feet!

We are finally in a very protected and calm anchorage! We have had our fair share of roly anchorages and therefore sleepless nights! The Blue Lagoon is formed by four islands and is the most protected anchorage in the Yasawas. Upon arrival, we made our way ashore to make sevusevu and ask permission to anchor off of the village. The village has mostly disappeared as they have sold off most of the land to resorts, but the original landowner still living in her original home right on the beach and was happy to have us anchor in her front yard (so to speak). We are the first yacht of the season to visit the village and Lai, our hostess, made us feel very welcome and gave us the lowdown on where to snorkel, when to walk the reefs and who to visit. Since there is some SPCZ weather coming our way, we plan to spend a couple of days here.

Sunday afternoon we treated ourselves to lunch at the resort. Picture, if you will, a palm frond thatched roof covering a round, open-sided structure which is perched on a rocky spit of land overlooking turquoise water..... the breeze floats in cooling the 84 degree mid day heat, the palm trees sway and your server (a good looking, dark as night Fijian) brings you a beer (which is cheaper than a soft drink)! We did languish over that lunch- it was our first meal out in three weeks AND I ordered a salad, which was a treat because guess what we are out of! The Supermoon rose over Nanuya Sunday night and was huge and brilliant before disappearing into the SPCZ cloud band and as the wind had not yet picked up we were gently lulled to sleep.

Monday we returned to shore to visit some more with Lai. However she had left for the village on Matacawalevu to do some visiting (it’s school break so everyone is on holiday) and we instead visited with Bill. Bill is probably our age (but looks older!) and is from the village on the other side of the island where there are still ten families living. Since Lai and her family were gone, Bill was taking care of and watching over their house. Crime on Nanuya? While we sat there, Neal helping Bill make a broom by stripping the leaves off of the palm fronds and collecting the spines, we chatted about the village, Fijian life, some local gossip and “oh, did we have any AA batteries that we could give him?”. Since the tide was ebbing we next walked around the entire island of Nanyua-Sewa (it’s small) to visit the village on the other side and visit the famous Lo’s Tea House! Lo is very quick to tell you that ALL of the yachtsies visit her Tea House (she is very glad to hear that many more are on their way) and that the Tea House is in all of the tourist
brochures including the Lonely Planet Guide to the South Pacific! Leaving our shoes at the door, we passed on the hot tea or hot coffee, and we ordered orange soda (no ice, served in very old pink plastic cups) and were talked into a piece of Lo’s famous chocolate cake. I bought a coconut shell bracelet, oohed and ahhed over the other local handicrafts and we were once again on our way, promising to be good advertising ambassadors for the Tea House. Really, if you are ever in the area, do stop in!

The late afternoon finds us back on the boat overhauling the windlass- it’s in a million pieces but no problem, we’re only in 50 feet of water with 200 feet of chain out! It will be a two day project (at least) but there were no bearings left in it and it was a wonder that it worked at all. Got a bit of a lightening show in the early evening and then had to hail a power boat, that had just arrived an hour or two earlier, because he was dragging anchor and about to drag down right on top of us....... The clouds are thick tonight, no more Supermoon, but we could really use a good rain shower because Rutea is once again caked in salt!

Tomorrow? Who knows! Every day is different and something unexpected usually occurs! There are lots of nooks and crannies yet to be snokeled in the Blue Lagoon, villages to visit, Scrabble to be played and the never ending list of boat projects to be attended to. I know we sound busy but we also have time to email you, so........

At 5/7/2012 8:15 AM (utc) Rutea's position was 16°56.57'S 177°22.00'

**Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008:** We skipped Blue Lagoon intentionally due to the many tourist boats there. It just wasn’t interesting to us at this time.

**SloepMouche - 2006:** There are red and green markers that appear to be “red-right-returning “ with the anchorage as the return point. In other words, whatever direction you come in from, the markers will be the opposite to go out (green on the rt.). We anchored in 50ft. Not much room for more than 4-5 yachts, as South side is reserved for Lagoon Cruises.

**9.4.7 Sawa-i-lau Bay**

**Cruising Guide References:** A Yachtsman's Fiji, 3rd Ed - Pg 239, 243

**Aqualuna - May 2013:** We visited the village of Nabukeru which is where the cousin of an old Fijian friend of a friend lives, so we were invited to the village. We arrived with our Kava root, plus lots of other things including crayons for the school. We presented the Kava to the Mayor as the Village head was out diving for Lobster, which they sell to a hotel further down the island chain. The village also "owns" the underwater caves, they are coral uprisings from the sea.

The village we discovered has a lot of help from a Rotory Club in New Zealand who sent them money for food when the village crops were destroyed in the hurricane last December. They are remote and the only way in and out is via boat. The older children go to and live on the main island to go to school, but the village has a small school for primary children. The ladies of the village make and sell shell necklaces and trinkets for the tourists.
Some of the coral off the small beach we visited was good with amazing fish but lots of it was dead most probably due to the hurricane.

**Soggy Paws - February 2013:** We were heading north along the Yasawas looking for good diving. Unfortunately the weather wasn't cooperating much. We had a swath of SPCZ hanging over us, with attendant overcast, squally weather, and rain. Starting from Blue Lagoon, with wind from NE-N, we debated which side of the island chain we should go to get between Blue Lagoon and Sawa-i-Lau. We chose the west side, but should have chose the east side. Even though the wind was blowing from the NE, there was a big swell rolling in from the N-NW, and we made slow progress motoring into it.

The 8 mile trip took us about 2 ½ hours.

We anchored where others' tracks showed us was the best spot. Sure enough, the depths dropped from 70 feet down to about 40 in the NE corner of the lagoon. We dropped our anchor at about 16-50.80S / 177-28.09E in about 45-50 feet. Our friends on Turn the Page dropped first in about 35-40 feet, just west of us.

We arrived about 11:30, and we could see people on the beach near the spot where someone's track had annotated "caves", SE of the anchorage on the small island with the very tall cliff (approx 16-50.99S / 177-28.04E). According to our Moon Guide, this cave is the cave that Brooke Shields runs away to in the movie, Blue Lagoon. Of course we had to see it!!

Legend says that when the water level was lower, the caves would lead all the way to the Lau, hence the name of the bay Sawa-i-Lau, which probably means something like "porthole to the Lau".

So the guys hopped in the dinghy to go talk to the people on the beach--to find out whether we had to go do sevusevu in the village before we could check out the caves. It turned out that these were the cave attendants, and what we had though was laundry drying, was actually ladies with craft tables and sulus for sale. They said they were about to close up and head for their village, so if we wanted to see the cave today, we needed to do it now.

So we quickly gathered up "cave shoes", mask/snorkels, and a bundle of kava, and headed back to the beach. We paid $10FJD per person admission, plus a $10 (for the group) guide fee. And we handed over the bundle of kava to Luke, the head guy on the beach. He took the kava for the chief, Siona Ratu Levu, who resides in the westernmost village, Nabukeru, near the west entrance to the bay. 3 Hand claps and a few mumbles of thanks, and we were done with sevusevu.

Next we forked over the cash and got a briefing by Luke, who introduced us to our cave guides, Zack and Robert. They went into the cave with us, Robert staying in the outer cave and Zack guiding us with a light into the inner cave.

We enjoyed the cave visit (some of us more than others). It was an easy in and out even without swim fins. We would have enjoyed it more had we remembered to bring our own underwater flashlights, so we could explore on our own a bit. But they're not absolutely necessary as the guide has a flashlight. The first cave has plenty of natural light, but the second cave, which you swim into, is fairly dark.
We were fortunate to have arrived today (Friday)--the day before there had been a big cruise ship anchored just off where we were.

For planning purposes, the cave area (which is locked when there are no attendants) is open from 8:30am to 11:30am daily except Sunday. They stayed a little late to accommodate us. We got a phone number: 768-8898 it was not clear if this was a cell phone or a village phone, but you can call the number if you want to try to make special arrangements.

Cyan - SSCA Newsletter - December 2008: Next, we spent a few days in Sawa-i-lau Bay, having Sevusevu at the village, buying crafts from the ladies, snorkeling the reefs and also the cave (not really worth the $10 each fee but amusing for 20 minutes) and searching for, but not finding, cowry shells on the many beaches in low tide.

Weather was still a bit strong, and most of the Yasawa anchorages are somewhat exposed and rolly.

Sloempouche - 2006: Cave, dinghy Pass, and beaches. We anchored here late in the day, and the light was limited. Without depths on the charts, we carefully approached and discovered that the reef rises abruptly from 14m (45ft) to the surface. In the morning we awoke to a beautiful view of tall black peaks of basalt, sculpted rocks on the shoreline, beautiful blues of every hue from the deep of the bay to the aqua and green of the shallow sandy dinghy pass fringed with white sand, and the village spotted with a splash of painted building here or there. A hybrid of the Marquesas, Tuamotus, and Tonga.

The big attraction here is THE CAVE. Controlled by the village, by a locked gate, this unique geological feature can be visited M-Sat. From the anchorage, you can see the gate and stairway, dinghy there and a local will probably be there to greet you and take $5 entrance fee from each of you. Take snorkel gear and an underwater light to get your money’s worth. It really is an impressive natural cave. Sheer walls 30m high form a cylinder of light beaming in from the opening at the top, reflecting images of the gray-green walls on the surface of the 5-6m deep, clear, pool.

On the side opposite the stairs, a shallow breath-hold dive of about 10 seconds will take you into the “black” chamber. You are in total darkness with the ceiling of the cave far above and resonating sound of the water lapping. With a light, you can explore quite an extensive chamber and see light coming in from other “windows” in the rock.

If you are a good breath holder, at the end of the cave, is another underwater tunnel that requires about 20-30 seconds to swim with fins. Just about the time you have passed the point of no return, you see a sharp turn to your left and further, a bubble of air. As you burst into this, you’ll find yourself in another large chamber visited by very few people, because at the end, in the open air are the most delicate, white crystallized stalactites hanging from the walls totally intact!
10 North Coast of Viti Levu

10.1 General Info
Katipo - October 2011: Sailing through the reefs on the north of Viti Levu however is not a relaxing sail! It means frequent changes of direction, resetting the sails, gybing at times and trying to spot reefs most of which are submerged not far below the surface. Also we have the binoculars at the ready to try and see the markers off headlands or on reef edges.

Most of the markers are poles, some are missing and some have broken off leaving a stub just above the water. We take turns to steer while the other keeps ducking below into the chart room to check we are on course to the next GPS waypoint, marked as a cross on the chart plotter screen, or to scan ahead for markers using the binoculars. Also on straighter courses to fetch cold drinks (it has been around 30 degrees most days), make snacks or tea. Never a dull moment!

10.2 NE Corner of Viti Levu
Tackless II - August 2007: The north coast of Viti Levu is quite handsome with lots of inlets with small beaches, small Fijian villages, and waving coconut palms. As we reached the northernmost tip at Volivoli Point with the off-lying Nanu islands, the development became abruptly more westernized with expensive-looking housing on the islands and a large, eye-catching resort on the mainland point (a little Internet research reveal the new resort is Wananavu Beach Resort!) on the mainland point, all in a landscape now reminiscent of the California coast. We didn't get to rubber-neck to the degree we might have liked, because the channel requires some abrupt changes of direction as it winds its way among the reefs. Since we'd been sailing with main only, this called for some quick gybing back and forth, for which we were quite grateful to have an extra hand on board!

10.2.1 Nanu Passage
Sloempouche - 2006: The entrance to the Nanu Passage is NOT accurately placed on the CM93 electronic charts (Ed note: The 2009 and 2010 version of the CM93 charts seem to be correct), and there are NO permanent channel markers as indicated! On approach from the north, we saw only a giant orange buoy; could not see the reef because of clouds and high tide. Only at the last minute did we see that the GPS put us about 100 m too far to the EAST and we had to do a an abrupt 90 degree turn to starboard to avoid the reef and pass WEST of the orange buoy, which marks the east side of the pass. WHew! Be aware for the rest of the trip in. Safest is to arrive at low tide when all the dangers are exposed.

10.2.2 Nanu-i-Ra
Dreamcaper - August 2011: On Monday, we sailed 40 miles across the Bligh Waters (the western area between the two big islands of Fiji) from Nabouwalu on the northern big island of Vanua Levu to Nanu-i-ra on the southern island of Viti Levu.
It was a sunny/blue sky day with little wind but enough to keep our large sail filled. With one motor, we happily made it across in 7 hours on flat seas.

Upon our arrival, we called a local dive shop (listed in the Lonely Planet Guide) to find out if we could scuba dive with them and where they were located as we wanted to anchor near them. They directed us to a mooring right in front of their dive shop in a quiet bay on the east side of Nananu-i-ra, an island. After we were secured on the mooring, we snorkeled on the narrow reef, between the mooring and the island, which was profusely covered with healthy soft corals. The water was almost hot in spots and very cold in others. On Tuesday, our scheduled dive was canceled because it rained heavily in the morning. We spent the day catching up on chores and relaxing.

Although it was overcast on Wednesday, we went for a 2-tank dive in the afternoon to two dive sites: Cannibals' Caves and Amazing Mazes, both located on the reef 2 miles off shore. At maximum depths of 60', we saw a huge array of colorful soft and hard corals. The soft coral is often shaped like large mushrooms (10" tall) or massive flat flowers (2’ across) or balls of tiny white waving flowers or fans (2-3’ wide) in purples, pinks and browns. The hard corals are in traditional shapes but in many colors; some are brain coral striped with red or antler shaped tan coral with blue tips. Between the larger corals are bright spots of yellow, red, and orange, all visited by wildly colored reef fish. There were schools of small (3”) very purple fish with reddish plumes on their heads swimming with large schools of bright orange (2”) fish, all in and around the colorful corals. Outrageously colorful parrot fish also added to the scene. It was like Fantasia or a fairyland that one cannot imagine is real, but is. We wore short light wetsuits and the water was around 75 degrees, colder down below. By the second dive we were cold and ready to take a warm shower which we did upon our return to Dream Caper. Diving on a sunny day will make the colors even more vivid. We look forward to doing so soon when we visit the Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands, our next destinations.

10.2.3 Volivoli Point

Sloempouche - 2006 - The dive center that used to be on Nananu-I-Ra, has now opened it's own resort/dive center on Voli Voli Point, which is actually on the island of Viti Levu. Owned by Australians, Steve and Gail, and managed by their son, Steve and his wife, the resort is planning to put in moorings for yachts (?) on the west side of the point with the hopes of attracting cruisers here for diving and a friendly ambiance for knocking back a beer, having a reasonably priced meal or snack, and spinning tales, as well as offering internet and other services of interest to cruisers.

Already, the large, open-air, thatch-covered, bar/restaurant/socializing area serves an honest, nutritious, pleasing dinner. Value without the “chi-chi”. And not only ice cream, but sundaes, as well! The Walu was fresh, cooked just right, and the fries (chips) won the heart of the Belgian Capt.!

Having opening the original dive center in the Nananu-I-Ra area, “Ra Divers", Steve and his dive crew, who have worked with him from the beginning, know intimately the best diving in the area, and when to go where for greatest safety and enjoyment. Their 2 dive boats are comfortable and set up well. We dived 2 very colorful sites on some of the Bommies, northwest of Voli Voli, offering a lot of changing scenery and far and near
attractions: swim-thrus and look-thrus lined with soft corals and gorgonians, narrow canyons, schooling snappers and jacks, nudibranchs and close-up goodies, and we were fortunate to glimpse a bronze whaler shark, a new one for our list. Better value and better diving than the Mamanucas and Yasawas.

10.3 NW Corner of Viti Levu

10.3.1 Ba Roads

Mr John IV - October 2010: Anchor waypoint 17 25.045 / 177 42.137 E

11 Rotuma

Mr John IV - April 2011: Two days sail to the north of Round Island Passage is Rotuma, a little jewel of an island which is now a ‘Clearance Port’ for Fiji.

We tried to get there on our way north but the wind came around to the NW and that made the only real anchorage on the island very exposed and untenable. Thus we had to wait till we were south bound from Kiribati to get acquainted with this beautiful island.

The Southwest anchorage was recommended to us by the locals for when there are northerly conditions. We had a NE wind and a fairly big swell running whilst in the NE anchorage, thus we were rolling heavily at times.

We thought about moving around to the SW anchorage however others had warned that the southwest anchorage was very ‘tight’ and if the wind swung back to the SE (where it most often is) then we’d be in a right mess as the swell builds up very quickly.

Anchor Position: 12 29.256S / 177 07.273E

The two Way-points on the way in
12 29.233S / 177 07.202E
12 29.227S / 177 07.163E

Any further north and you will clunk the reef!!!!

Note: The ferry, when it comes, follows the same path indicated but once past the reef she swings to port, hard round to the north. Then she drops an anchor and back down to the end of the dock and drops her ramp (it’s a RoRo). If you anchor right off the dock you may have to move.

Clearing in to Fiji in Rotuma: We conveniently arrived in Rotuma on Monday the 11th April at 1100hrs, convenient because we were clear of any weekend overtime charges and we had plenty of day time remaining to get ‘cleared in’ with the officials.

The rough weather conditions to the north was sending some swell down and the anchorage was quite sloppy, we moved well in alongside the small jetty, probably further than most other yachts (with more than our four foot draft) would want to go but still we were rolling heavily. When the Customs, Health and Immigration authorities arrived on the jetty, they tooted to make their presence known and I went ashore in the dinghy to pick them up; this is always a tricky operation as most of the officials in the Pacific tend to be a little bigger than most of us yachtsies and our dinghy is very low in freeboard. The
swell didn’t make anything any easier and I was more than happy when I delivered them ashore again without any of them getting wet.

Rotuma has only recently become a Clearance Port and the main reason for this change is to allow the Rotumans to export some of the fresh produce that they grow on the Island, they have a ready market in Tuvalu and even Kiribati.

The Official’s were very welcoming and friendly so we were quickly cleared, however during the clearance procedure we discovered that the local bus service is no more and unlikely to be resurrected as the bus broke down and was sold off island to an Indian gentleman in Nandi.

On top of that the Island was short on fuel and supplies, the monthly ferry was due soon but until then, there would be little transportation on the move.

Whilst the Customs were aboard we made arrangements to get our coastal clearance for Lautoka on the Wednesday afternoon with the intention of a Thursday morning departure.

As we had no means of getting in touch with the customs other than somehow getting to the government station, we felt it best to have a fixed departure / clearance time in advance; as it turned out, this was a very good move!

On the Tuesday we had a go at walking to the Government Station, which is the closest thing they have here to a town. A couple of stores, a Post Office with internet on occasions but not this time as the computer had failed and was in Nandi for repair (that we also discovered from the Customs, who did very kindly say we could use theirs if we were stuck!).

From the dock they say it’s nine kilometres to the Government Station, we walked quite some distance before we found the ‘9KM’ sign but in the end it didn’t matter as it was just too far.

Without knowing that you are going to have some form of transport, Rotuma is limited as a place to visit… True, you can walk and you can get lifts (sometimes)....

Rotuma has a Web Page…. maybe, through that, you could make some arrangements before visiting?

12 Appendix A - Common Fijian Words

Bula - bool-ah - Hello
Yadra - yahn-dra - Good morning
Seqa na leqa - sanga na langa - No worries
Moce - Mow-the - Good bye
Moce Mada - Mow-the manda - See you later
Vinaka - Thank you
Vinaka Vaka Levu - Thank you very much
Formal hello - Ni Sa Bula (Nee-Sa-Boolah)
Yes - Io (Ee-yo)
No - Sega (Senga)
How much? - E Vica (Eh-vee-tha)
See you again - Sota Tale (Soh-tah-tah-lay)
13 Appendix B - Customs Forms for Fiji

http://www.frca.org.fj/yachts-arrival/
http://www.immigration.gov.fj
http://www.biosecurityfiji.com