

# COUNTRY GUIDE FOR

# FIJI



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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** South Pacific; Melanesia.

Ministry of Tourism and Transport  
PO Box 1260, 3rd Floor, Civic Tower, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 312 788. Fax: 302 060. E-mail: [ttuinalele@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:ttuinalele@govnet.gov.fj)  
**Web site:** <http://www.fiji.gov.fj>

Fiji Visitors Bureau  
**Head Office:** PO Box 92, Thomson Street, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 302 433. Fax: 300 970 or 302 751 or 300 986. E-mail: [infodesk@fijifvb.gov.fj](mailto:infodesk@fijifvb.gov.fj)  
**Web site:** <http://www.bulafiji.com>  
**Airport Office:** PO Box 9217, Nadi Airport, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 722 433 or 721 721. Fax: 720 141.  
**E-mail:** [fvbnadi@is.com.fj](mailto:fvbnadi@is.com.fj)  
This office is open extended hours and meets all international flights.

South Pacific Tourism Organisation  
**Street address:** Level 3 FNPF Place, 343-359 Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji  
**Postal address:** PO Box 13119, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 304 177. Fax: 301 995. E-mail: [info@spto.org](mailto:info@spto.org)  
**Web site:** <http://www.tcsp.com>

Fiji High Commission  
34 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DN  
**Tel:** (020) 7584 3661. Fax: (020) 7584 2838.  
**E-mail:** [fijirepuk@compuserve.com](mailto:fijirepuk@compuserve.com)  
**Opening hours:** 0930-1730 Monday to Friday.

South Pacific Tourism Organisation  
48 Glentham Road, Barnes, London SW13 9JJ  
**Tel:** (020) 8741 6082. Fax: (020) 8741 6107.  
**E-mail:** [southpacific@interfaceinternational.co.uk](mailto:southpacific@interfaceinternational.co.uk)  
**Web site:** <http://www.tcsp.com>

British High Commission  
PO Box 1355, Victoria House, 47 Gladstone Road, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 311 033. Fax: 301 406. E-mail: [ukinfo@bhc.org.fj](mailto:ukinfo@bhc.org.fj)  
**Web site:** <http://www.ukinthepacific.bhc.org.fj>

Embassy of the Republic of Fiji  
Suite 240, 2233 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007  
**Tel:** (202) 337 8320. Fax: (202) 337 1996. E-mail: [fijiemb@earthlink.net](mailto:fijiemb@earthlink.net)

Fiji Visitors Bureau  
Suite 220, 5777 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90045  
**Tel:** (310) 568 1616 or (1 800) 932 3454 (toll free; USA and Canada only). Fax: (310) 670 2318.  
E-mail: [infodesk@bulafiji-americas.com](mailto:infodesk@bulafiji-americas.com)  
**Web site:** <http://www.bulafiji.com>

Also deals with enquiries from Canada.

Embassy of the United States of America  
PO Box 218, 31 Loftus Street, Suva, Fiji  
**Tel:** 314 466. Fax: 305 106.

Honorary Consulate of Fiji  
130 Slater Street, Suite 750, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6E2  
**Tel:** (613) 233 9252. Fax: (613) 594 8705.

Canadian Consulate  
PO Box 10690, Nadi Airport, Fiji  
**Tel:** 721 936. Fax: 750 666.

**Country dialling code:** 679.

## 2 GENERAL

**Area:** 18,333 sq km (7078 sq miles).

**Population:** 775,077 (1996).

**Population Density:** 42.2 per sq km.

**Capital:** Suva. Population: 77,366 (1996).

**Geography:** Fiji is located in the South Pacific, 3000km (1875 miles) east of Australia and approximately 1930km (1200 miles) south of the Equator. It comprises 322 islands, 105 of which are uninhabited (some are little more than rugged limestone islets or tiny coral atolls). The three largest are Viti Levu (Great Fiji), Vanua Levu (Great Land of the People), both of which are extinct volcanoes rising abruptly from the sea, and Taveuni. There are thousands of streams and small rivers in Fiji, the largest being the Rewa River on Viti Levu, which is navigable for 128km (80 miles). Mount Victoria, also on Viti Levu, is the country's highest peak, at 1322m (4430ft).

**Government:** Republic since 1987. Head of State: President Ratu Josefa Iloilo since 2000. The President is appointed for a five-year term by the Great Council of Chiefs (Bosu Levu Vakaturaga), a traditional body with roughly 70 members consisting of every hereditary Fijian chief (or ratu). Head of Government: Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase since 2000.

**Language:** The official language is English, which is also taught in schools. The main other languages are Fijian and Hindustani. Chinese and Urdu are also heard in the markets.

**Religion:** Methodist and Hindu with Roman Catholic and Muslim minorities. A strictly fundamentalist Methodist version of Christianity is enshrined in, and informs, the Fijian Constitution.

**Time:** GMT + 12.

**Electricity:** 240 volts AC, 50Hz. Larger hotels also have 110-volt razor sockets.

**Communications:**

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 679. Outgoing code: 05. International calls can be made from hotels via an operator, or from the Fiji International Telecommunications (FINTEL) office on Victoria Parade in Suva.

**Mobile telephone:** Dual band. Roaming agreements in operation. Network provider is Vodafone Fiji (web site: <http://www.vodafone.com.fj>).

**Fax:** The FINTEL office in Suva also offers fax services. Major hotels have facilities.

**Internet/E-mail:** ISPs include Fiji Online, a subsidiary of Telecom Fiji (web site: <http://www.fijionline.com>) and fiji.net (web site: <http://www.fiji.net>). There are cybercafés in Suva and Nadi.

**Telegram:** Facilities are available at major hotels in Suva and at the FINTEL office on Victoria Parade.

**Post:** Airmail to Europe takes up to ten days. Post office hours: 0800-1630 Monday to Friday; 0800-1300 Saturday.

**Press:** The main English-language daily is the Fiji Times, which claims to be 'the first newspaper published in the world today' - a reference to Suva's position just to the west of the International Date Line; the other main English language paper is the Daily Post. Fiji Calling is the bi-annual tourist newspaper, which may be of interest to visitors.

**BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies:** From time to time these change.

**BBC:**  
MHz12.0811.779.7407.145

**Voice of America:**  
MHz17.7415.3011.725.985

### 3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>USA</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No	Yes

**Restricted entry:** Entry will be denied to persons who have been deported or removed from another country.

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for at least 3 months beyond intended period of stay required by all except holders of a Certificate of Identity including a photograph of the bearer. Holders of the certificate must obtain approval from the Fiji Immigration Department before arrival.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following who are issued a visitors permit on arrival valid for 1 month (extendable to 6 months):

- (a) nationals of countries shown in the chart above;
- (b) nationals of Commonwealth countries (except nationals of Cameroon, Mozambique, Namibia, St Kitts & Nevis and Sri Lanka who do need visas);
- (c) nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Monaco, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

**Notes:** (a) All visitors must hold onward or return tickets and sufficient funds to cover stay. (b) Transit visas are not required for travellers continuing their journey to a third country within 3 hours, provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport.

**Types of visa and cost:** Single-entry: £25. Multiple-entry: £49. Fees fluctuate according to exchange rates.

**Validity:** Visitors permits are valid for stays of up to 1 month, but can be extended for an additional 6 months on application to Immigration Dept, PO Box 2224, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji (tel: 312 622; fax: 301 653).

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

**Application requirements:** (a) Valid passport. (b) Completed application form. (c) 2 passport-size photos. (d) Sufficient funds to cover duration of stay. (e) Onward/return air ticket. (f) Copy of travel ticket/itinerary. (g) Copy of visa for next destination, if applicable. (h) Fee (payable in cash only). (i) Police clearance report (proof of no criminal record) from local police station (must be in English).

**Note:** Applicants must make their own arrangements for collection/return of passports.

**Working days required:** 2 weeks.

**Temporary residence:** Enquiries should be directed to the Embassy of Fiji or the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government Building, Suva.

## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Fijian Dollar (F\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of F\$ 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of F\$1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

**Currency exchange:** Exchange facilities are available at the airport, at trading banks and at most hotels. Cash dispensers may not accept foreign credit cards.

**Credit cards:** MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are accepted at a number of establishments. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

**Travellers cheques:** To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Australian Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Fijian Dollar against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=3.183.173.293.24 \$1.00=2.142.112.282.23

**Currency restrictions:** There are no restrictions on the import of foreign or local currency, provided declared on arrival. Unspent local currency can be re-exchanged on departure up to the amount of foreign currency imported. The export of local currency is limited to F\$500. The export of foreign currency as cash is limited to the equivalent of F\$5000.

**Banking hours:** 0930-1500 Monday to Thursday; 0930-1600 Friday. Restricted Foreign Exchange Dealers (authorised to issue foreign currency and travellers cheques for travel related purposes only): 0830-1700 Monday to Friday; 0830-1200 Saturday..

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following items may be imported by persons 17 years of age and over into Fiji without incurring customs duty:

500 cigarettes or 500g of tobacco goods; 2 litres of spirits or 4 litres of wine or 4 litres of beer; 114ml of perfume for personal use; goods to the value of F\$400.

**Prohibited Items:** All categories of firearms, ammunition and all narcotics. The import of vegetables, seeds, meat and dairy products requires a special permit from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests. The import of meat and dairy products from Tasmania is not permitted.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Feb 16 National Youth Day. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 28 Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day. Jun 18 Queen's Official Birthday. Jun 4 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Jul 23 Constitution Day. Oct 8 Fiji Day. Nov 14 Diwali. Dec 25-27 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Feb/Mar National Youth Day. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day. May 27 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Jun 18 Queen's Official Birthday. Jul Constitution Day. Oct Fiji Day. Nov 4 Diwali. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Dec 26 Boxing Day.

**Note:** Muslim and Hindu festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and therefore dates can only be approximations.

## 7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	1
<b>Cholera</b>	No	2
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	-
<b>Malaria</b>	No	-
<b>Food and Drink</b>	3	-

**1:** A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers over one year of age arriving from infected areas.

**2:** In opposition to WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is still a condition of entry for travellers entering Fiji from infected areas.

**3:** Mains water is normally heavily chlorinated, and whilst relatively safe may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available and is advised for the first few weeks of the stay. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat. Diarrhoeal diseases are common. Hepatitis A occurs. Hepatitis B is endemic. Dengue fever may occur.

**Health care:** The main hospitals are located in Suva, Sigatoka, Lautoka, Ba, Savusavu, Taveuni, Labasa and Levuka, with clinics and medical representations elsewhere throughout the islands. Medical insurance is recommended.

Travel - International

**AIR:** The national airline is Air Pacific (FJ), which operates to the Pacific Island nations as well as to New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Other airlines serving Fiji include Air New Zealand, Ansett, Korean, Polynesian Airlines and Qantas.

**Approximate flight times:** From Nadi to London is 27 hours 45 minutes (plus connection/stopover time), to Los Angeles is 9 hours 30 minutes and to Sydney is 3 hours 45 minutes.

**International airports:** Nadi (NAN) is 8km (5 miles) north of Nadi town on Viti Levu island. A bus to the city operates 0700-1830 (journey time - 20 minutes). Airport facilities include a 24-hour, 7-day bank (ANZ); an inbound duty-free shop; 24-hour bar; restaurant; left luggage office (24-hour); post office (0800-1530 Monday to Friday) and car hire (Avis, Budget, Central, Hertz and Roxy).

Suva (SUV) is actually at Nausori, 21km (13 miles) from Suva.

Nadi is where most international flights arrive, while Suva is the internal hub. Buses and taxis are available at both airports.

**Departure tax:** F\$20. Children under 12 years of age are exempt.

**Note:** In August 2000, Nausori Airport was closed to international flights, owing to the unstable political situation.



**AIR PASSES:** The Polypass (offered by Polynesian Airlines) allows the holder to fly between the Southern Pacific destinations of American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga; Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney in Australia; and Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington in New Zealand. The pass is valid for 1 year. Once a reservation has been made and travel begun, all travel must be completed within a maximum of 45 days. Tickets will be issued against the Polypass by any Polynesian Airlines office (a valid passport is also required).

The Visit the South Pacific Pass is valid for a number of airlines operating in the South Pacific, including Aircalin, Air Nauru, Air Niugini, Air Pacific, Air Vanuatu, Polynesian Airlines, Qantas, Royal Tongan Airlines and Solomon Airlines. Offering reductions of up to 50% on normal airfares, this sector-based pass allows for flexible island-hopping between the destinations of American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu and the more remote Melanesian and Micronesian islands, together with major cities in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane) and New Zealand (Wellington). The journey must be started outside the South Pacific and only one stopover in Australia is allowed. A minimum of two coupons must be bought before departure (a maximum of eight coupons can be purchased en route). For details and conditions, contact the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (see address section).

**SEA:** The international ports are Suva and Lautoka (Viti Levu). Passenger lines serving Fiji include Crystal, Cunard, Peter Deilmann, Princess Cruises, Seabourn and Society. Royal InterOcean is a cargo line which also carries passengers. There are regular sailings to Tuvalu, Kiribati, Samoa and Nauru.

Travel - Internal

**AIR:** Fiji's domestic airlines, Air Fiji, Air Pacific and Sunflower Airlines operate shuttle services around the islands, particularly between Nadi and Suva (Nausori) with additional regular flights to Vanua Levu, Kadavu and Taveuni. The flight time from Nadi to Suva is approximately 30 minutes. Air Fiji also operates from Suva to Ovalau, Koro, Cicia in the Lau group and Gau and from Nadi to Labasa. A 'Discover Fiji' ticket is available which gives virtually unlimited flights (Rotuma and Funafuti in Tuvalu not included) for 30 days. Contact Air Fiji, PO Box 1259, Suva (tel: 313 666 or 315 055; fax: 300 771; e-mail: [airfiji@is.com.fj](mailto:airfiji@is.com.fj); web site: <http://www.airfiji.net>). Sunflower Air operates four flights daily to Malololaitai (for Musket Cove and Plantation Village). There are less frequent departures to Kadavu, Labasa, Taveuni and Savusavu (tel: 723 555 or 315 755). Pacific Crown Aviation operates a helicopter out of Suva which is available for charter.

**SEA:** Government and local shipping companies operate freight and passenger services linking the outer islands. Cruises to offshore islands leave Nadi/Lautoka and Suva. A ferry goes back and forth regularly from Suva to Labasa, and to Ovalau and Koro Island. Yachts and cabin cruisers are available for charter. Inter-island trips can take anything from a few hours to a few weeks, and are generally very inexpensive. In general, timetables are not posted. Persons wishing to travel about the islands in this way should enquire at the offices of one of the local shipping agents, being sure to confirm all arrangements with the captain once the vessel is in port. A number of roll-on/roll-off ferries now operate between the major islands, greatly reducing journey times. These boats can take between 300 and 500 passengers and have a full range of facilities, including bar, TV lounge and snack bar. A new \$2.5 million catamaran has recently been launched by Beachcomber island resort and will provide two cruises from Fiji, servicing Nadi, Lautoka, Wananvu, Nanu-i-ra, and Savusavu.

**ROAD:** Traffic drives on the left. There are about 5000km (3100 miles) of roads, 1500km (930 miles) of which are paved and usable all year round. The approximate driving time from Nadi to Suva is three hours (on a tar-sealed road). The main roads on Viti Levu follow the coast, linking the main centres. Bus: Local open-windowed buses operate across Viti Levu and the other main

islands between all towns and on suburban routes. Express air-conditioned buses operate between Suva and Nadi and between Suva and Lautoka. Taxi: These are metered in towns. A fare table for long distances is required. Car hire: Car rental is available. Documentation: International Driving Permit required if driving a locally registered vehicle.

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** There are a good number of luxury hotels, the majority of which are located in Nadi, Sigatoka, Douba, Suva, Raki Raki, Tavua and Lautoka and off Viti Levu at Savusavu and Ovalau. There are also many small, inexpensive hotels throughout the islands. Increasing numbers of establishments are offering dormitory accommodation at cheap rates. Small resort islands include Beachcomber, Treasure, Castaway, Mana and Plantation Islands. A 5% hotel tax is levied on all hotel services charged to guests' accounts, including meals in hotel restaurants. For information, contact the Fiji Visitors Bureau (see address section), which can supply listings of hotels, their cost and facilities; or the Fiji Hotel Association, PO Box 13560, 42 Gorrie Street, Suva (tel: 302 980; fax: 300 331; e-mail: fha@is.com.fj). Grading: A star system is used to indicate the price range, as follows: 3-star (deluxe), 2-star (medium) and 1-star (budget).

**GUEST-HOUSES:** These are known as Budgetels. They are clean, comfortable and most have a licensed bar, pool and restaurant; some are air-conditioned with kitchens. There is a youth hostel in Suva.

## 9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

**Note:** Visitors are advised to avoid Suva at present, owing to the unstable political situation. Travel to Vanua Levu should also be avoided. However, the main tourist resorts, in the west of Viti Levu are trouble free.

There is much of scenic and historic worth in Fiji, including its copra, ginger, sugar cane and cocoa plantations. The capital, Suva, has many old shops and markets selling various artefacts and handicrafts. Places of historic interest include the National Museum, situated in the lush surrounds of Thurston Gardens next to Government House and the old Parliament Buildings. Other sites of note include the Cultural Centre at Orchid Island, the mysterious earthworks just outside of Suva, and the protected Bouma Forest Park and Reserve on Taveuni Island. 11 km (7 miles) from Suva, visitors can enjoy the beauty of the protected Colo-I-Suva Forest Park. Other natural attractions include the acres of orchids and flowering plants in the Garden of the Sleeping Giant at the foot of the Sabeto Mountains and the Sigatoka Sand Dunes off the main Queens Highway on Viti Levu. The ethnic variety of Fiji society can be seen mainly in the towns. There are powerfully built Fijians dressed in wrap-around sulus, numerous Indians, men in Western clothes, women wearing colourful saris and a scattering of European, Chinese and other Pacific Islanders. One celebrated tradition is the practice of fire-walking which has its origin in legend, although the Indian variant is performed for religious reasons. Tourists can pay to see these ceremonies but the ritual remains a religious penance and not merely a tourist attraction. Cruises on large schooners or yachts to the different islands can be arranged, and coach tours around the main islands are also available. For the hardy, hiking in the mountains with dramatic views of the islands is another option. Tavarua is one of Fiji's main tourist destinations, with over fifty resorts and hotels and excellent facilities for snorkelling and scuba diving. The new Outrigger Reef Resort, opened on October 1st 2000, is located in Korotogo near the scenic town of Sigatoka. It combines the qualities of mainland and island, with over 200 hotels and resorts. For **further information e-mail:** outrigger@is.com.fj

## 10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Watersports:** Watersports: Particularly well known for their soft coral reefs, Fiji's islands offer excellent scuba diving and snorkelling. On Viti Levu, the best dive sites are found on the Coral Coast and Pacific Harbour (both on the western side), where the well-known Beqa Lagoon, the crater of an extinct volcano that measures 16km (10 miles) across, is often frequented by groups. About 12km (7 miles) off the Viti Levu coast, Vatulele is known for its red prawns, regarded as sacred by local people. Northwest of Viti Levu, divers may head to the Yasawa and Mamanuca island groups; to the south lies Kadavua, where the Astrolabe, Solo, Namalata and Tavuki reefs are located. Vanua Levua and Taveuni are particularly good for land-based diving, and ecologically-minded operators have buoyed dozens of sites to prevent damage from anchors. The best sites around these islands include the Somosomo Straits (home to the Great White Wall, one of Fiji's most famous dive sites) and the Rainbow Reef (where over 20 dive sites can be found). Live-aboard dive tours are available to the more remote islands, such as Ngau, which has no resorts and where the local chief has to grant permission to dive the waters. Many hotels and resorts also offer opportunities to go sailing, windsurfing, waterskiing, canoeing, kayaking, parasailing, and game fishing. Although surfing is still relatively recent in Fiji, surfers have a seemingly endless choice of locations to choose from. Fiji's waves typically break on coral reefs. Most of the well-known spots are on or near Viti Levu and can often only be reached by boat. Tavarua Island is another favourite surfing spot. There are several surf camps, notably on Beqa and Yanuca islands. Visitors should note that there are dangerous rip tides along the reefs, and should take appropriate precautions.

**Adventure sports:** Adventure sports: The mangrove-lined tidal corridors can be explored on jet-boating trips, which depart every 15 minutes from Port Denauru, 7km (4 miles) from Nadi Town. Bamboo rafting (referred to locally as a 'bilibili' ride) is available along the streams and rivers.

**Hiking:** Hiking: Fiji's network of marked nature trails can be explored either individually or on organised guided walks. Activities such as birdwatching (as for example in the Colo-i-Suva Forest Park), ecotourism (studying the local fauna and flora) and swimming at the waterfalls are often combined with hiking tours. Visitors are reminded to respect local customs when passing through villages (see Social Conventions in the Social Profile section). The Lavena Coastal Walk starts at Lavena and follows the southeastern coastline of Taveuni, ending at the Wainabau Waterfalls; the Vidawa Forest Walk is a guided trip through the Bouma Forest Park. Marked trails (including wooden walkways and bridges) also exist in the Kula Eco Park, an area of coastal rainforest rich in wildlife (including fruit bats, parrots and marine turtles).

## 11 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Food & Drink:** International cuisine is available, but the local cooking is Fijian and Indian. Local dishes include kakoda (a marinated local fish steamed in coconut cream and lime), rourou (a taro leaf dish), kassaua (tapioca, often boiled, baked or grated and cooked in coconut cream with sugar and mashed bananas), and duruka (an unusual asparagus-like vegetable in season during April and May). Breadfruit is also common. Indian curries are served in all major hotels. A number of hotels and restaurants also serve the Fijian lovo feast of meats, fish, vegetables and fruit cooked in covered pits. Table service is normal, although some establishments offer buffet-style food at lunchtime. Hotels often serve meals to non-residents. Drink: A wide range of drinks

are available. Local beers are Carlton, brewed in Suva, and Fiji Bitter, brewed in Lautoka. Local wines include Meridan Moselle and Suvanna Moselle. South Pacific Distilleries produce Bounty Fiji Golden Rum, Old Club Whisky, Booth's Gin and Cossack Vodka. Throughout Fiji the drinking of yaqona (pronounced yanggona) or kava is common. In the past the drink was prepared by virgins, who chewed the root into a soft pulpy mass before adding water. It is made from the root of the pepper plant and the yaqona drinking ceremony is still important in the Fijian tradition, although it has also become a social drink. Bars and cocktail lounges have table and/or counter service. Only licensed restaurants, clubs and hotel bars can serve alcohol.

**Nightlife:** Major hotels and resorts have live bands and dancing during the evening. There are also nightclubs with entertainment, especially in Suva. Cinemas show English-language and Indian films. Most social activity, however, is in private clubs and visitors can obtain temporary membership through hotels. Hotels offer Fijian entertainment (meke) on a rotation basis.

**Shopping:** Favourite buys are filigree jewellery, woodcarvings (such as kava bowls) and polished coconut shells, sea shells, woven work (such as mats, coasters, hats, fans and trays), tapa cloth and pearls. Bargaining is not a rule in shops. Some shopkeepers will give a discount with large purchases. Duty-free items are available and include cameras, televisions, watches, binoculars, clocks, lighters, hi-fi equipment, pewter, crystal and porcelain. Shopping hours: 0800-1700 Monday to Friday; some shops have half-day closing on Wednesday and are open later on Friday; 0800-1300 Saturday.

**Special Events:** For further details, contact the Fiji Visitors Bureau (see address section). The following is a selection of the major festivals and other special events celebrated during 2001 in Fiji:

Jan 2001 New Year Celebrations. Feb Hindu Holi (Festival Of Colours); Super League two-day World Sevens Championship, Suva. Mar/Apr Ram Naumi (Birth Of Lord Rama), Suva Bay. Jun Taveuni Arts Festival (three-day festival of Arts, handicrafts, game-fishing, and boat-races). Jul Bula Festival, Prince Charles Park, Nadi. Aug Hibiscus Festival, Albert Park, Suva; Indian Firewalking Ceremony, Suva. Sep Sugar Festival, Lautoka; Heaven to Heaven Fiji International Triathlon. Oct Diwali Festival. Oct 1 Indian Firewalking, Mahi Devi Temple, Suva.

**Social Conventions:** Fijians are a very welcoming, hospitable people and visitors should not be afraid to accept hospitality. Informal casual wear is generally acceptable, as are swimsuits, as long as they are worn on beaches and not in towns. Smoking is only restricted where specified. Tips about visiting villages: The Fiji Visitors Bureau has the following advice for travellers visiting Fijian villages: visitors should be aware that they cannot just stroll into a village, which would be an intrusion of privacy. It is customary to purchase a bundle of unpounded yaqona (kava) - the traditional sevusevu (gift) - before visiting. When approaching the village, visitors should not enter immediately but wait nearby until someone comes to greet them and ask the purpose of their visit. They will then be taken to the Chief or Turaga Ni Koro (Headman), to whom the kava should be offered. Visitors who are accepted by the Chief will be assigned a guide and host. Once inside the village, please also note the following: visitors should dress modestly and not wear shorts or hats and women should not have their shoulders bare; shoes should always be taken off when entering someone's house or any other village building; visitors should speak softly and not raise their voices too much as this may be interpreted as expressing anger; visitors should show respect but be cautious about praise as Fijians will feel obliged to make a gift of an object if visitors show too much liking for it; Fijians will always, out of custom, ask visitors to stay or eat with them, but if one has already been invited, new invitations should be politely declined and possibly arranged for a later date; visitors who spend a night in the village should reward their host with a useful gift of similar value for each member of the party; it is not recommended to give money. Tipping: Small tips only for special services.

## 12 BUSINESS PROFILE

**Economy:** The economy is largely agricultural, with sugar as the main product; fisheries and timber are also important. In the industrial sector, low-grade copper deposits have been discovered, and commercial mining operations are expected to begin before the end of the century. There are a number of light industrial enterprises producing goods such as cement, paint, cigarettes, biscuits, flour, nails, barbed wire, furniture, matches and footwear, mainly for domestic consumption. In the service sector, tourism is Fiji's most important economic activity after agriculture but has been severely affected by political upheaval. The overall decline in trade and investment which began with the 1987 coup (and now accelerated by the events of 2000) has been compounded by the exodus of many ethnic Indian members of the business community. Fiji's largest trading partners are Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the USA and the UK; more recently, closer economic relations have been forged with other Asian countries, including South Korea, Taiwan and China.

**Business:** Lightweight or tropical suits are acceptable. Office hours: 0830-1700 Monday to Friday (some businesses/government offices close half an hour earlier Friday).

**Commercial Information:** The following organisation can offer advice: Suva Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 337, 29 Ackland St, Vatuwara (tel: 303 584; fax: 300 475).

## 13 CLIMATE

Tropical. Southeast trade winds from May to October bring dry weather. The rainy season is from December to April.

**Required clothing:** Lightweight for summer, rainwear for the wet season.

## 14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** The first inhabitants came from Melanesia some 3500 years ago and established a hierarchical society based on clans. Little is known of the islanders' history before the arrival of Europeans in the mid-17th century, in the form of an assortment of roving traders, missionaries and shipwrecked sailors. Relations between the indigenous community and the new arrivals were reasonably good, founded on mutually beneficial commercial activity until the establishment of plantations in the 1860s destabilised the economy. Serious friction between the Fijian chiefs and the Europeans ensued. On a broader front, imperial rivalry between the major European powers was reaching a climax in the Pacific. Thus, in 1874, Fiji became a British colony. Large numbers of workers from India were imported to develop a plantation economy - accounting for the islands' present ethnic mix, and consequently the tension between the two main communities which has blighted Fijian politics since independence. This came in 1970. For the next 17 years, the moderate conservative Alliance party governed without interruption. Foreign policy was (and still is) broadly pro-western, and geared towards the development of regional alliances such as the South Pacific Forum. As a member of the Forum, Fiji campaigned vigorously, along with its small neighbours, against French nuclear testing. It is also a member of the Commonwealth, from which it was temporarily suspended in 1987 and has been again in 2000. The 1987 suspension followed the general election that year which removed the Alliance Party from office.

The poll brought to power a coalition between the main ethnic Indian party, the National Federation Party (led by Marendra Chaudhry, see below), and the newly-formed Labour Party, which drew support from the growing multi-racial trade union movement. The new government had a majority of Indian ministers, which proved too much for many nationalist native Fijians (referred to as Taukei). This was the trigger for an army coup d'état, headed by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, with the declared intention of ensuring the preservation of Taukei rights. Colonel Rabuka declared himself head of an interim military government, pending a new constitution. When introduced, this constitution established Fiji as a republic for the first time, and created an assembly in which blocs of seats were allocated to specific ethnic groups, thereby guaranteeing a Taukei majority. This constitution was subsequently modified to reduce the pro-Taukei bias: the latest version - suspended following the political upheaval of 2000 (see below) - being promulgated in 1998. The former Governor-General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, became the country's first president. The first elections under the new constitution were held in 1992 and brought to power a coalition dominated by the principal ethnic Fijian party, Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT), and backed by two independent members and five others representing minority ethnic groups (Chinese and Europeans). Rabuka assumed the premiership. By the time the 1998 constitution came into effect, Fiji's poor economic performance had undermined the Rabuka government's popularity. It was little surprise in March 1999 when the main ethnic Indian party, the Fijian Labour Party, won an absolute majority in the Vela and an Indian prime minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, took office. The result was anathema to militant Taukei, including one, businessman George Speight, who had also lost lucrative franchises as a result of the change in government. In May 2000, Speight organised a coup, holding Chaudhry and other ministers as hostages while he issued a series of demands. The other main power centres in Fiji at this point - the army and the Great Council of Chiefs - reacted cautiously. The stand-off lasted two months: after initially conceding to most of the rebel demands (including the dismissal of Chaudhry), the military, led by Commodore Frank Bainamarama, took control at the beginning of July. A fortnight later, the military persuaded the Speight rebels to release their captives and guaranteed them a major role in the new government. But following disagreements between Speight and the military over appointments to the presidency and premiership, Speight and his colleagues were arrested (the unrest which the rebels had threatened failed to materialise). The situation now appears to be stabilising, although the long-term prognosis is at best uncertain. Little improvement may be expected in Fiji's faltering economy for the time being.

**Government:** The suspended 1998 constitution allows for a bicameral legislature. In the 71-member Vela (House of Representatives), whose members are popularly elected for five-year terms, over half the seats are allocated to specific ethnic communities (23 to Fijians, 19 to Indians); the remainder are open to be contested by anyone. The Seniti (Senate), which also serves a five-year term, has 34 members: 24 are elected by the traditional Council of Chiefs; the remainder are appointed. The Council of Chiefs elects the President to serve a five-year term. Fiji is located in the South Pacific, 3000km (1875 miles) east of Australia and about 1930km (1200 miles) south of the Equator. It comprises 322 islands. The two largest are the extinct volcanoes of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

There is much of scenic and historic worth in Fiji, including its sugar cane and cocoa plantations. The capital, Suva, has many old shops and markets selling artefacts and handicrafts. Places of interest include the National Museum, situated in the lush surrounds of Thurston Gardens, and the old Parliament Buildings. Other attractions include the acres of orchids and flowering plants in the Garden of the Sleeping Giant at the foot of the Sabeto Mountains.

Tourists can pay to see fire walking ceremonies, although the ritual does remain a religious penance. Yacht cruises to the islands can also be arranged.

Local dishes include kakoda (marinated local fish steamed in coconut cream and lime) and duruka (an unusual asparagus-like vegetable).

Most social activity occurs in private clubs. Visitors can obtain temporary membership through hotels.

## 15 OVERVIEW

**Country Overview:** Fiji is located in the South Pacific, 3000km (1875 miles) east of Australia and about 1930km (1200 miles) south of the Equator. It comprises 322 islands. The two largest are the extinct volcanoes of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

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