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ON THE ROAD

YOUR COMPLETE DESTINATION GUIDE
In-depth reviews, detailed listings
and insider tips



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SURVIVAL GUIDE

VITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO
HELP YOU HAVE A SMOOTH TRIP

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

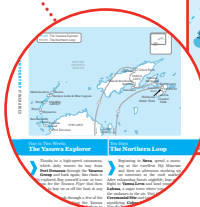
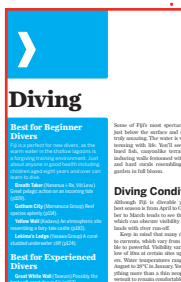
Dean Starnes,
Celeste Brash, Virginia Jealous

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

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Fijian Culture

It's easy to think of Fiji as a tropical island with white sand beaches and turquoise water. But there's much more to Fiji than meets the eye. The country is a blend of traditional Fijian culture and modern influences. The Fijian people are known for their warm hospitality and their love of music and dance. The country is also home to a variety of traditional crafts and art forms. The Fijian people are proud of their heritage and they want to share it with the world.

Fiji Today

The 2006 military coup, Commodore Frank Bainimarama and the subsequent political crisis have led to a series of government changes.

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5 1999

➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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Top Experiences >





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Dean Starnes

Coordinating Author Dean was an impressionable six when he first travelled to Fiji. The week he spent bobbing above the Mamanuca reefs with a leaky mask and a pair of floaties ignited a passion that has drawn him back on many occasions. Dean was also the coordinating author on the 8th edition of this guide and has worked on Lonely Planet titles for such far-flung destinations as Papua New Guinea, Mongolia and East Africa. Dean now lives in Auckland where he alternates between writing for Lonely Planet, freelancing as a graphic designer and shirking responsibilities. His book, *Roam; the Art of Travel*, and his website, www.deanstarnes.com, feature photography and stories about his wayfaring ways.

Read more about Dean at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/dean_starnes



Celeste Brash

Ovalau & the Lomaiviti Group; Vanua Levu & Taveuni; Kadavu, Lau & Moala Groups Celeste first visited Fiji in 1987 and seriously considered running away from home so she could stay there. As an adult she moved to sort-of-nearby French Polynesia, where she lived for 15 years before recently moving back to the US. Her award-winning travel articles and stories have appeared in *Travelers' Tales*, *LA Times* and *Islands* magazine and numerous other publications. She's written around 30 Lonely Planet guides on destinations around the world but considers the South Pacific her speciality.

Read more about Celeste at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/celestebrash



Virginia Jealous

Nadi, Suva & Viti Levu; The Mamanuca & Yasawa Groups Virginia lived, worked and travelled widely in the Pacific from 2004 to 2006, and contributed to Lonely Planet's South Pacific guides and the 7th edition of *Fiji*. Since then she's been looking for a reason to go back, and was very happy to share a few kava sessions with old friends while shamelessly picking their brains about the current Fiji scene. She was also reassured to find that, despite the vagaries of politics and

economics, Fiji welcomes travellers as warmly as ever.

Contributing Author

Clement Paligaru Clement wrote the Indo-Fijian Culture chapter. An Australian of Indo-Fijian descent, Clement is a radio and television journalist specialising in Asia-Pacific affairs. He has worked for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for almost 20 years.

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Bestselling guide to Fiji – source: Nielsen BookScan, Australia, UK and USA, March 2011 to February 2012

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Ten Days

Ten Days in the Sun

Begin your fling in **Nadi**, by taking a day or two to slow down and reset your internal clock to 'Fiji time'. Some of the best resorts can be found just outside of Nadi at **Port Denarau** and these are also handy to Denarau's golf course, shops and restaurants. Spend a morning admiring the orchids at the **Garden of the Sleeping Giant**, and an afternoon immersed in the nearby **Sabeto Hot Springs**. Follow this with a day trip climbing the **Sigatoka Sand Dunes** or horse riding along **Natadola Beach**.

By now you should be suitably relaxed and ready for the beautiful **Mamanuca Group**. It's probably best to base yourself on one island rather than spend your precious vacation packing and unpacking. Which resort you choose will largely depend on the style of vacation you're looking for. **Beachcomber Island** will appeal to party animals while those with families may prefer child-friendly options like **Treasure**, **Mana** and **Malololailai** islands. If you are wanting something more intimate, try romantic **Tokoriki**, the versatile **Matamanoa** or picture-perfect **Castaway**. Before returning to Nadi, be sure to take a day trip to **Monuriki**, made famous in the movie *Cast Away* starring Tom Hanks.



Two to Three Weeks Once Around the Block

This itinerary focuses on Fiji's 'mainland', Viti Levu. With roads and regular buses that circumnavigate the island, it's possible to construct your own tour and save a packet in the process. If you wanted you could travel the whole circuit in a day using public transport, although if you allow yourself plenty of time for excursions and beachside relaxation, two or three weeks should be ample.

Assuming you start in **Nadi** – although you could begin anywhere – follow the Coral Coast Hwy to the **Momi Guns**, and **Natadola Beach** for some horse riding. Chug into the verdant interior on the **Coral Coast Scenic Railway** and don your sneakers and trek to the top of the **Sigatoka Sand Dunes**. Kids will love feeding the wildlife at the **Kula Eco Park**, while mum and dad might enjoy a few days poolside at a resort in **Korolevu**.

Make your way towards **Pacific Harbour** to go diving with sharks in **Beqa Lagoon** or take a boat trip out to surf at the underrated **Frigate Passage**. Don't miss the opportunity to raft the canyons of the **Navua River** before heading to **Suva**.

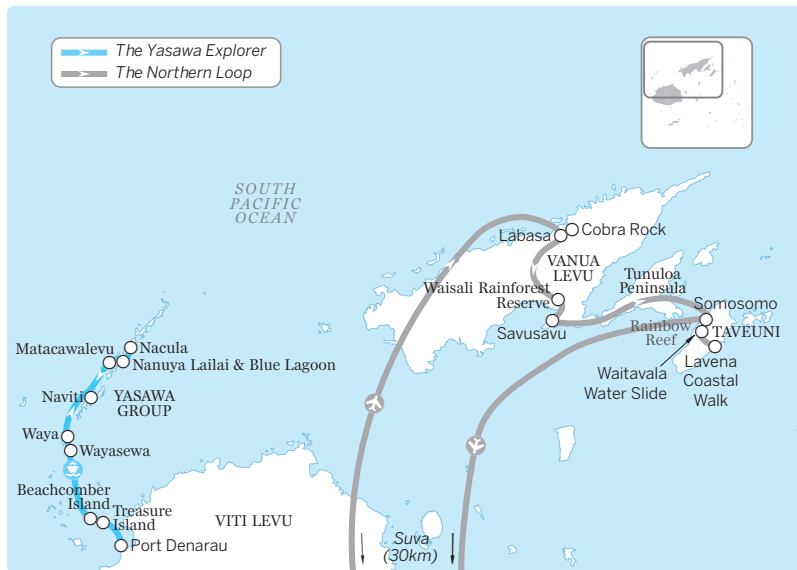
Spend a day or two exploring the nation's capital. Options include taking a crash course on local history at the Fiji Museum or swinging, Tarzan-style, into the refreshing pools at **Colo-i-Suva Forest Park**.

An interesting side trip is to buy a bus/ferry combo ticket to **Ovalau**, a small island off the coast of eastern Viti Levu. During colonial times **Levuka** was the nation's capital and it still retains a good measure of its Wild West vibe.

Back on the mainland complete your Viti Levu loop via the northern Kings Road, wind-surfing at **Nananu-i-Ra** or scuba diving at **Rakiraki**. From here, head back to sugar country and visit **Lautoka**, the second-largest city and a great base to explore the **Nausori Highlands**. A good option here is to spend a night or two at the traditional village of **Navala** before heading back to Nadi.



- » (above) Sonaisali Island Resort, Naisali (p70)
- » (left) Natadola beach, Viti Levu (p72)



One to Two Weeks The Yasawa Explorer

Thanks to a high-speed catamaran, which daily weaves its way from **Port Denarau** through the **Yasawa Group** and back again, this chain is readily explored. Buy yourself a one- or two-week pass for the *Yasawa Flyer* that then allows you to hop on or off the boat at any island you like.

The boat first heads through a few of the Mamanucas before reaching the Yasawa chain, so these islands are a good place to start. With wide sandy beaches and populated by partygoing backpackers, many young people choose **Beachcomber Island** as their first port of call, while families indulge in innumerable water sports on **Treasure Island**.

Spend the next few days on the sliver of sand that connects **Wayasewa** to **Waya** before drifting north to **Naviti** to snorkel with manta rays. Reboard the *Flyer* for a dash up to **Nacula**, or **Nanuya Lailai**, where you can paddle in the **Blue Lagoon**. From here, leapfrog your way back down the chain, stopping at **Matakawalevu** for further bouts of snorkelling and sunbathing on the aptly named and horseshoe-shaped Long Beach.

Ten Days The Northern Loop

Beginning in **Suva**, spend a morning at the excellent Fiji Museum and then an afternoon stocking up on souvenirs at the craft market. After exhausting Suva's nightlife, hop on a flight to **Vanua Levu** and land yourself in **Labasa**, a sugar town where you can smell the molasses in the air. Visit the **Wasavula Ceremonial Site** and take a side trip to the mystifying **Cobra Rock** inside the Naag Mandir Temple.

Continue your Vanua Levu adventure by jumping on a bus and heading south to **Savusavu**. Spend a day or two taking in the sights, and the evenings talking with visiting skippers over a beer. Take a day trip to the rich and colourful **Waisali Rainforest Reserve**, or rent a 4WD and brave the roads to the lesser-travelled **Tunuloa Peninsula**.

Then it's time to head to gorgeous **Taveuni**. If you've got sea legs, catch a ferry; if not, the flight provides some spectacular views. **Somosomo** is a good base from which to explore the surrounding area. Snorkel or dive at the magnificent **Rainbow Reef**, trek the **Lavena Coastal Walk** and scare yourself silly on the **Waitavala Water Slide** before heading back to Suva.

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