

# Beautiful Pacific

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## The Coral Coast

Fiji's most popular tourism area is the Coral Coast which offers both small and large beach resorts and lots of sightseeing tours, cultural centres and historical sites to keep you busy. The Coral Coast comprises two distinct halves - the dry coast between Nadi and Korotogo with perpetual sunshine and the tropical rainforest coast between Korotogo and Pacific Harbour which is more rugged with rainforested hills, more cloud cover and higher rainfall (mostly in the afternoons). The new Momi Bay Resort development with championship golf course, Natadola beach and the large 400-room Fijian Resort are a 20 to 50 minute drive south of Nadi along the dry sunny coast.

Just outside the market town of Sigatoka is the Sigatoka Sandunes National Trust Site. Guides can be provided and there are well maintained tracks leading through coastal forest to the sandunes which help preserve and protect this fragile ecosystem. Pottery sherds dating to 3000 years ago are scattered in the sand, evidence of settlement by the early lapita people. The sandunes reach heights of up to 50 metres and the wild beach with crashing waves makes an exceptional place to walk and surf.

Two roads lead inland either side of the Sigatoka River and each offers great sightseeing through valleys and rural farms with two points of particular interest. On the Sigatoka Town side of the river, about 2 miles inland, is the Nakabuta Pottery Village. The village makes traditional style pottery and demonstrations are displayed in the large Meeting House bure. On the other side of the river is the Tavuni Hill Fort National Historic Site. A trail leads up a steep hill, the top of which an ancient Tongan Fort remains. Highlights of this historic site include the killing stone, used in the times of Cannibalism, and sweeping views across the Sigatoka River Valley.

Beyond Sigatoka Town, the scenery begins to change from sweeping rolling hills to a more rugged coastline. There is also a distinct change in climate - here begins the wet tropical side of Viti Levu. For many, this vibrant scenery with swathes of emerald green are refreshing. Here too begins a parade of traditional fishing villages along the coastal highway. There are several resorts along the coastal highway including small motels on the quaint Korotogo Strip, the large Outrigger Hotel, Hideaway Resort, Tambua Sands, The

## Warwick and The Naviti.

From Korolevu, there are several tours available into the rainforest to see waterfalls, caves and local villages. As the hills become more rugged, the coastal highway detours inland. Set in secluded bays off the highway are two lovely small resorts, mango Bay for budget travellers and The Wellesley for more upmarket clients. Both are on picturesque beaches and have access to great snorkelling, game fishing and shark diving off Beqa Island.

Pacific Harbour is the tourism centre in the Suva area. It lies about half an hour drive west of Suva City towards the Coral Coast. Here there are several hotels including The Pearl South Pacific set alongside a lovely beach and a number of fine independent restaurants as well as a cultural centre, a fantastic golf course, deep sea fishing and diving specialists to the amazing coral reefs off Beqa and for the shark diving offshore. Discover Fiji Tours offer exciting river trips up the Navua River into the stunning rainforested interior and to waterfalls or even Grade 4 white water river rafting on the Lua River (from November to April only).

The stunning interior of Viti Levu is constantly veiled in clouds and often its roads under water. The area offers waterfalls, Fijian villages are found throughout this interior, many of which are far from roads and electricity. Here lies the most remote and conservative village environments, and the most hospitable of Fijians. The region is steeped in history and tradition, has some breathtaking mountain scenes, river gorges, caves, waterfalls indigenous flora, bird life and scenic lookouts. The area is excellent to explore but there is nowhere to stay, buses are infrequent and no tour companies offer these off the beaten track itineraries.

Suva City is the cosmopolitan capital of Fiji with a population of around 150,000. Downtown Suva is set alongside a picturesque harbour on a small peninsula backed by tropical rain forest and high mountains on the wet south east coast of Viti Levu. The city has plenty of historical buildings amongst the rapid addition of high rise office blocks and there's a good selection of hotels aimed mostly at business travellers and the best shops, restaurants and bars in Fiji. This is a great place to spend a day or night and is less than an hour by road from the Coral Coast.