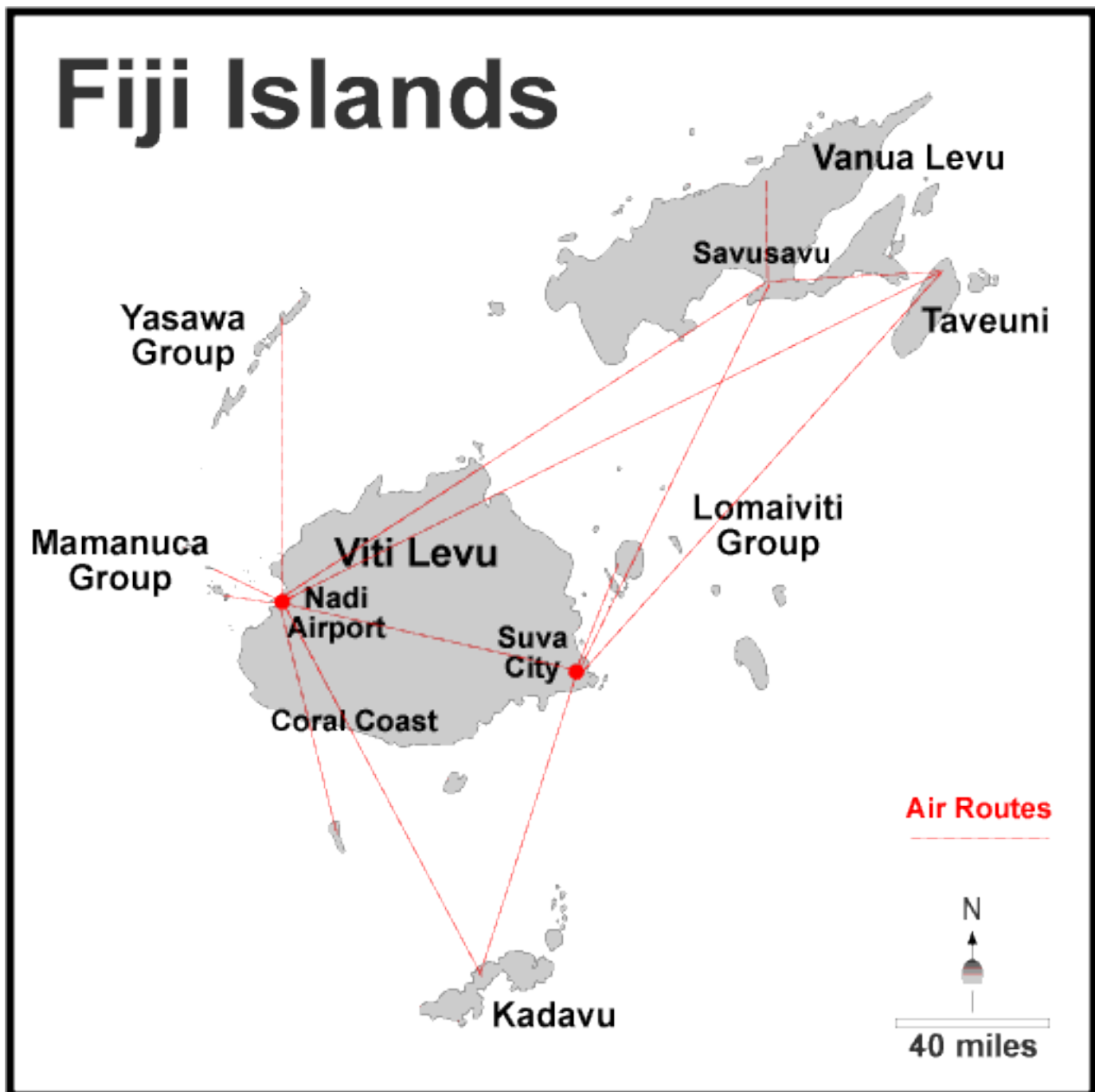


# Beautiful Pacific

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## Fiji Travel Guide



# Nadi Airport & Vicinity

Nadi Airport is the main tourist hub in Fiji and where all international flights arrive and depart. The town itself has little to offer the tourist but it does make an excellent base for exploring the surrounding countryside and offshore islands on day tours. Most of Nadi is set inland but the beach resorts around Nadi Bay make a good place to spend the night. However, don't expect a beautiful white sandy beach, swimming or snorkelling - only pleasant views of the offshore islands and along the coastline. For those heading to the outer islands, or on early morning or late evening flights, it's likely you'll need to spend a night here.

Nadi Town itself has lots of nice boutique shops selling Bula shirts and handicrafts, several good restaurants and a bustling local produce market. It's a functional town although here the tourism touts are on the streets trying to befriend you and sell their tours. There is a fine Indian temple at the end of town that is worth browsing around for a little peace and quiet. Getting around by taxi is easy and cheap.

Nadi's growing tourist hub is Denarau Island with two Sheratons, a Westin, a Sofitel and a Hilton amongst several other hotels. The beach on Denarau stretches for a couple of miles and makes for great beach walking - however, the sand is brownish from the nearby mangrove swamps and the sea is usually too murky for snorkelling. Most of the day cruises to the offshore islands as well as island resort transfers leave from Denarau Marina.

The Denarau Golf Course is a cart course only and costs around F\$120 per round. The course is long and flat with lots of bunkers and water hazards but is rather boring and has few nice scenic holes. Overlooking the golf course is the Golf Terraces which offer 1 to 3 bed apartments ideal for golf lovers and families.

About twenty minutes north of the airport is Vuda Point with its stunning views over the bay and of the surrounding mountains. Vuda has an picturesque sandy beach although the lagoon is too shallow for swimming or snorkelling. There are two resorts here which make pleasant bases: First Landing Resort is next to the marina and has the convenience of both day cruises and dive excursions: Anchorage Beach Resort has exquisite mountain views.

There are several attractions in this region including the Garden of the Sleeping Giant with its wonderful orchid gardens, and Koroyanitu National Park with its hiking trails, waterfalls and overnight accommodation. From the village, walking tracks head into the tropical rainforest to waterfalls, or along the grassy mountain ridges following the ancient walking trails that connect the villages of the interior. You can hire a guide from Abaca Village and walk cross country for days. For those with less time, the 3 hour loop trail offers a great variety of scenery and four waterfalls.

The Nausori Highlands makes an excellent day trip from Nadi, climbing high into the

interior. There are some stunning vistas along the dirt road, several walks and the ancient village of Bukuya which has some unique legends, sacred waterfalls and a village walking tour.

About 40-minutes inland from Ba along the north coast (also accessible from Nadi on a day tour) is the delightful 200-thatch bure village of Navala - the only one of its kind in Fiji and a step back in time. You can stay overnight just outside of the village at Navala Village Resort, overlooking the Ba River. Also along this coast is Nananu-i-Ra Island, one of Fiji's loveliest beach destinations. The moment you step onto the beach you can feel the relaxed atmosphere. The island has walking tracks meandering throughout its grassy hills. There are a couple of self contained bungalows for guests. Snorkelling, windsurfing and kite surfing are excellent.

## 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.

## Mamanuca Islands

Clearly visible from Nadi Airport, the Mamanuca Islands is a stunning collection of 23

small islands with stunning beaches. Situated in the lee of the main island of Viti Levu, the Mamanuca Islands boasts the finest holiday weather in Fiji - year-round sunshine, calm seas and gentle breezes. This is Fiji's tourism gem. With a choice of 18 resorts - 9 of which are on uninhabited islands - and as many day cruises from Nadi, a visit to the Mamanuca Islands is a must on any travel itinerary. Nowhere else in the South Pacific will you find such easy access to so many beautiful islands, all with perfect white sandy beaches and lots of water activities.

Although commercial tourism thrives, the physical make-up of the Mamanuca Group has enabled it to retain its laid-back unspoiled atmosphere. Most of the 18 island resorts are just that one island, one resort with no neighbours or overcrowding. The inner Mamanucas are made up of tiny flat coral islands, often taking just ten minutes to walk around. The outer Mamanuca Islands are volcanic in nature, including the largest island, Malolo, at just over 2400 acres. The volcanic islands are a better choice for those who like the freedom to explore, trekking to summits for sunset views and finding beaches with no-one on them.

Scuba diving and game-fishing are both excellent along the many outer reef passages, notably the 10-mile Malolo Barrier Reef, with all major resorts having their own dive operators base and game-fishing charters. The modern marina at Musket Cove offers skippered and bareback sailing charters and hosts several International Regattas during the sailing season between May and October. There are many other water activities on offer including para-sailing, jet-ski adventures, banana boat rides, wind-surfing, knee-boarding and kite-surfing, with most resorts providing complimentary sea kayaks, reef snorkelling trips and hobbie cats.

Staying on a small island also means you have no choice of dining except the resort restaurant, with inflated prices for both meals and drinks. Those looking to save money on their accommodation should consider staying in Nadi where rooms are far more competitively priced and independent restaurants are at hand, and instead take day cruises to various islands. There are many day trip options available in Nadi, from spending a day at an island resort starting at F\$69 per person including hotel pick-up, transfers and lunch, or taking a sightseeing trip by sail boat or sea-plane starting at F\$129.

## Yasawa Islands

The Yasawa Islands is a chain of 16 gorgeous sun drenched and rather barren volcanic islands with a scattering of smaller islands within its lagoons. The islands are renowned for their gorgeous beaches, tranquil lagoons, backpacker resorts and a handful of exclusive resorts and luxury overnight cruises. This is Fiji's tourism at its best - but its popularity in recent years has seen a gradual shift from a backpackers undiscovered paradise to a commercial well trodden tourist route with inflated prices. Nevertheless, the stunning coastal beauty remains and there are enough small hideaways to keep crowds to a

minimum.

The 16 islands that make up the Yasawas extend in a line north of the Mamanucas. They are reached by fast catamaran in 2 to 4 hours, or by seaplane in 30-minutes. The islands can roughly be divided into three groups: The majestic panoramas of Kuata, Wayasewa and Waya Island offer some of the finest coastal walks and beach scenery in Fiji. The fine white sand beaches and snorkelling with Manta Rays on Naviti Island and the myriad of islands, bays and secluded beaches of the popular Tavewa Region which boasts Blue Lagoon Beach, several luxury resorts and lots of budget beach resorts.

The northern cluster of islands around Tavewa offers a protected bay for sailing yachts and is the anchorage for luxury overnight cruises. The hills have good walking tracks and there's some great scuba diving. Snorkelling is generally good right off the beach. There are lots of backpacker resorts in this region as well as the delightful Navutu Stars, an upmarket resort with Mediterranean style villas and Italian dining. Fishing and diving are superb.

Off the east tip of Tavewa Island is Nacula Island. At ten kilometres long, Nacula is the third largest island in the Yasawas and there are several high peaks over 200 metres. The southern coast has some excellent walking tracks, several remote beaches and two excellent budget resorts. Safe Landing Resort fronts a gorgeous white sandy beach protected either side by rocky outcrops - snorkelling is superb a few hundred metres offshore along one of the walls. On the west coast is the delightful setting of Oarsman's Bay Resort. Apart from the fine white sand backed by palm trees and the turquoise swimming lagoon, there are lots of organised activities.

## Outer Islands

The outer Fiji islands are the hidden jewels of the country - away from the commercial centres you'll find plenty of delightful small boutique resorts offering first class service, genuine hospitality and the chance to explore some unique environments and traditional villages. Daily flights depart Nadi Airport for Kadavu in the Southern Islands, Ovalau (the old capital of Levuka) in the Eastern Islands and Savusavu (Vanua Levu) and Taveuni in the Northern Islands. These islands offer some of the best scuba diving reefs in Fiji, notably soft corals, as well as world class diving, hiking trails through rainforests and endemic birds.

Kadavu lies about 100km south of the main island of Viti Levu. It is a rugged island almost 60km in length and 14km wide with high volcanic peaks, rolling hills and many indented bays. There are few roads on the island and travel by small boats is the easiest and often only way to get about. The hilly interior offers good hiking trails, some nice waterfalls and several endemic species of birds including the colourful Kadavu parrot. The world famous

Great Astrolabe Reef stretches for 30km off the north east coast of Kadavu. Here you'll find outstanding hard corals, cabbage patches, fans, caves, wrecks and a fantastic array of marine life due to its rich currents as well as several dive resorts.

Levuka, the old capital of Fiji and main town on Ovalau, is a charming historical town with a very slow pace of life. There are several good colonial style budget hotels as well as independent restaurants, coffee bars and historical sights. The mountains behind Levuka are truly spectacular and there are several nearby trails into the rainforest and to swimming pools and waterfalls. Just offshore is the luxury Toberua Island Resort catering well for eco-tourists and diving enthusiasts. There are some wonderful mangroves nearby which are great for exploring as well as Booby colonies. Nearby is Wakaya island, an exclusive resort for the rich and famous.

Vanua Levu is the second largest island in Fiji. The northern half of the island is dominated by sugar cane farms. The main tourist region is along the tropical southern coast around Savusavu Town which is very scenic with lush rainforest and several nice beaches. The rainforest around Savusavu is accessible with several frequented trails to some excellent waterfalls and lookouts. Savusavu Town is a favourite destination for sailors, game fishing enthusiasts and scuba diving and has some excellent restaurants and several luxury resorts.

At the eastern end of Vanua Levu is Buca Bay, a popular spot amongst yachties with its winding coastline and many inlets. Buca Bay is also the closest spot to the colourful corals of world famous Rainbow Reef, but as yet there is no tourist accommodation here. Rainbow Reef is 32-km reef with over 16 excellent dive sites ranging from intermediate to advanced. Highlights include the Great White Wall (soft corals) and Annie's Bommie. The best place to access the Rainbow Reef is from the west coast of Taveuni. Also close to the Rainbow Reef are Rabi and Kioa, two unique islands with Polynesian cultures.

Taveuni is referred to as the Garden Island of Fiji. Its rainforest is breathtaking with lots of waterfalls and walking trails. Taveuni Island is undoubtedly the most popular island for eco-travellers. The most scenic area is Bouma National Heritage Park. Access to the park is from the north-east coast, with the main attraction being the Tavoro Falls (three lovely waterfalls between 10 minutes and an hour walk from the main road). At the end of the road is the attractive village of Lavena departure point for the 3 mile Lavena Coastal Walk along the forest edge, passing cove beaches and waterfalls. This coast can also be explored by kayak.

Off the north coast of Taveuni are three lovely islands all within 20 minutes boat ride. Qamea is the largest of these and is the twelfth largest in Fiji. It has lovely bays, lush rainforest and excellent bird life. Across from Qamea is the spectacular horseshoe shaped collapsed volcanic crater of Matangi Island. There's a beautiful beach in the horseshoe, and on the other side of the island is Matangi Island Resort which specialises in intimate weddings and has excellent diving around the reefs as well as great fishing.

Rotuma Island lies to the far north of Fiji, some 500km from Nadi. The Polynesian island has its own unique culture, language and history. The island is blessed with beautiful scenery, gorgeous beaches and some interesting archaeological sites including the huge kine'he'he platform and the grave of the kings at Sisilo. The island has walking tracks meandering throughout the interior and a sand coastal road that takes a full day to circumnavigate. Villages are spread out along the road, divided into seven districts. Tourism on Rotuma is virtually non-existent and there are no hotels here and infrequent flights. The cargo boat from Suva takes 2 days and 2 nights.