



Ask Dr. Debbie...

FJI - the most beautiful place on earth!

By Debra A. Hill, MD

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 13 years old I remember eagerly awaiting a visit to my Grandmother's to hear about her most recent trip to Fiji. It sounded like such an exotic place just from the sound of the name—and it seemed like it was at the end of the earth. I'll never forget the beaming smile that my Grandmother had on her face when she responded to my question, "Well Gramma what was it really like?" She paused and took a deep breath and said, "I've traveled all over, and Fiji is truly the most beautiful place in the whole world!" From that day forward I had decided that in my lifetime I had to go to Fiji and see the most beautiful place in the whole world.

Six years ago, my husband and I had just started training for the 2000 Long Beach Marathon, when we heard that our good friend, and mentor, Scott Raish, who had trained and certified us as NAUI Dive Instructors, was planning a group trip to Fiji. We were a bit concerned about how we were going to keep up with our running schedule while there, but I could hardly contain my excitement about this opportunity to at last live out my dream to go to Fiji, the most beautiful place in the world—and to even get to scuba dive there too!

We immediately contacted Scott to let him know that we were very interested. We had been afraid that such a place might be too costly and out of our budget,

but to our surprise it was quite affordable then, and still is!

It was a fantastic experience from the very beginning! We all boarded a bus that had been arranged by Scott to head off to LAX at around 8:00pm and by 11:00pm we were on the plane and on our way non-stop to Fiji. The plane was fairly empty and so we were able to put up the arm rests and stretch out and sleep until morning when we arrived in Fiji. It was great—so easy to go to such a far away place! We then boarded a bus for an hour or so ride to the boat that was to take us to the Resort on Beqa. Beqa is pronounced like "Benga." We skimmed across the most azure water I've seen, for about 45 minutes and arrived at the lagoon where the boat anchored and we climbed aboard some small shore boats that brought us into knee deep water where we then waded to the white sand beach of the lagoon and were greeted by the warmest and friendliest people you could imagine.

There it was, Beqa Lagoon, an azure blue lagoon surrounded by a crescent shaped white sand beach bordered by a beautiful, lush green jungle. And then, of course, there were the clear blue skies that go on forever too! The air was warm and balmy. The water was warm, about 80 degrees-- and crystal clear with the most colorful soft corals I've ever seen! The Island has no cars, only six tribes that live around the edge of the island, and, this beautiful resort. I

knew then exactly what my Grandmother meant.

This was truly the most beautiful place in the whole world—an oasis in the sea, a little remote paradise, a glimpse of heaven on earth!

From the beach we were escorted to the main Bure where we were given a cool, tropical drink while we listened to a tall, dark, Fijian man, with a welcoming voice and a wide smile, describe what we were about to experience over the ensuing week. Then we were off to get settled in to our Bures. The Bures were nestled in among the Palm trees, and a wandering brook. We were amazed at the beautifully carved doors and the tropical décor of our little hut—such luxury in such a remote little tropical island!

There is so much more to tell - I don't want to spoil all of the surprises that await you there, but I do highly recommend the massages, and the romantic, Champaign picnic to your own private island where you can skinny dip, or do whatever....

And, by the way, we were able to keep up our running schedule. Each morning we'd run on the trail through the jungle for about 45-60 minutes and on a couple of occasions we'd kayak before breakfast. It was awesome!

I did get some recent info from the resort regarding the full range of non-diving and diving activities

that they offer, as well as their menus and more that I'd like to share with you. I hope you find this helpful, and that you will be able to come with me back to Fiji, the most beautiful place in the world!

Yours Truly,

Debbie Hill Titus, MD
(Your local Fiji Funatic!)

P.S. If you'd like to view a short video clip of Fiji, you can do so by going to: <http://www.divein.tv/pages/directorscut.php>, and clicking on "DIVE IN – A Touch of Diving." It is a short video clip that covers diving in about four different locations in the world, and one of them is Fiji.

Dr. Deb also asked Scott Raish to give up some travel tip for the upcoming FIJI trip...

Travel Insurance:

If you are interested in obtaining travel insurance, first check with your home owners insurance and see what they cover. If your home owners insurance does not cover travel abroad then you can try Travelex (<http://www.travelex-insurance.com/home.asp>). Use location #05-8204.

Insurance: I strongly suggest diving insurance. We use DAN insurance. Make sure you purchase the "Preferred Plan" for complete coverage and protection. <http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/insurance/index.as>.

If you are interested in getting insurance for your diving or photo equipment you might want to look into Diving Equipment Protection Plan (DEPP) at <http://www.equipmentprotection.com/programs/depp.html> We cover all of our dive and photo equipment annually

Equipment Considerations:

For those of you who have not been on a dive travel excursion before here are some things to consider when trying to decide what equipment to bring.

Water temperature will be around 80° F. to 85° F. Most people use just a dive skin. I on the other hand I like to be really warm when I dive and I use a 3mm suit. I plan to partake in a couple of daily beach dives and after a couple of dives I might become chilled. Hey, I'm on vacation, not at work. Here is a link to a historical graph of the

FIJI MARINE IDENTIFICATION REFERENCES:

Tropical Pacific Invertebrates: A Field Guide
Patrick L. Colin & Charles Arneson
ISBN 0-9645625-0-2, Beverly Hills, CA:
Coral Reef Press (1995)

Corals: A Quick Reference Guide
Julian Sprung
ISBN 1-833693-09-8; (Miami, FL:
Ricordea Publishing (1999)

Indo Pacific Coral Reef Field Guide
Gerald Allen/Roger Steene
ISBN: 981-00-5687-7 ©Tropical Reef
Research

Southeast Asia Tropical Fish Guide
Rudie Kuiter/Helmut Debelius
ISBN-none. Available through IKAN
ikanuw@aol.com

Nudibranchs and Sea Snails; Indo-Pacific
Field Guide
Helmut Debelius
ISBN-none. Available through IKAN
ikanuw@aol.com

Coral Reef Animals of the Indo-Pacific
(Animal life from Afirca to Hawai'i exclusive
of the vertebrates)
By, Terrence M. Gosliner, David W.
Behrens and Gary C. Williams
ISBN #0 - 930118-21-9

water temperatures in Fiji. (<http://www.naia.com.fj/research/water.html>)

I highly recommend a dive computer to get the maximum out of your diving. If you don't have one, now is the time to start looking. Try your local dive shop and the Internet.

Another question that came up was about fins. For the Fiji trip I use my warm water full foot fins. The ones that have a full foot pocket and you don't wear booties with them. The water is warm enough and I don't plan on doing any reef trekking to go diving, so booties will not be required. That saves on packing space and weight.

The dive masters discourage the use of gloves. They don't want you to be touching the coral and reef inhabitants.

A dive light is recommended if you plan to night dive. You will be able to dive nightly from the resort and there will be one or two nights the resort will have boat night dives scheduled for an additional fee.

Now is when you want to check and overhaul your equipment. Do not wait until the third week in July, like someone we know, to check your equipment and then find out it needs to be serviced.

Baggage Considerations:

Directly from the Air Pacific web site.
<http://www.airpacific.com/website.nsf/FaqDetail#FAQ006>

What is my baggage allowance?

If traveling to/from the United States, the piece system will apply. This limits a passenger to check in 2 pieces of checked baggage, each weighing no more than 32kgs (70 lbs.) and each piece measuring no more than 62 inches in linear measurement (sum total of length, height & width). The total linear measurement of both pieces of baggage must not exceed 106 inches. This is from Air Pacific but, a different page. It has a smaller weight allowance but does not mention a dimension restriction.

<http://www.airpacific.com/website.nsf/PacificVoyagerClass>

Luggage

Pacific Voyager passengers are entitled to check in 20kgs of luggage, plus one piece of cabin baggage weighing not more than 4kgs.

Travellers to and from Los Angeles are entitled to check in 2 pieces of luggage, each weighing no more than 30kgs (approximately 66 lbs). Go figure.

Your check-in luggage will be x-rayed and most likely opened for destruction, opps, I mean opened for further inspection. The inspectors seem to enjoy destroying neatly packed dive equipment and camera cases. Dive equipment and underwater camera paraphernalia seem to key inspectors interests when they are x-rayed. We suggest that you carry on your dive computer and film.

Let's review:

Let's review before I loose you to all those links on the "Travel Information" page.

1. Send in your deposit. Balance due on or before May 21, 2006.
2. Get passport now if don't have one. They are required for entry into and exit out of Fiji.
3. Get dive equipment purchased, inspected or overhauled if needed
4. If you need to contact me I may be reached at the following numbers:
 - a. Work – 562-694-5040
 - b. Mobil – 714-713-7431
 - c. E-mail – salr@cox.net

FIJI Trip Links

Travel Tips

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1114.html
<http://www.alltraveltips.com/>
<http://www.tsa.gov/public/display?theme=175>
<http://www.fodors.com/traveltips/>

Beqa Lagoon Resort/MarlinBay Resort

<http://www.beqalagoonresort.com>
<http://briefcase.yahoo.com/salr@flash.net>
<http://www.undercurrent.org/subscribers/UCnow/RRpt.php?ukeyg=050107180125609>
<http://www.expedia.co.uk/pub/agent.dll?&qscr=dspv&htid=1109892&zz=1105862895920&>
http://www.tropicalfiji.com/Resorts/marlin_bay_resort/
http://south-seas-adventures.com/fiji-resorts/Marlin-Bay-Resort_Fiji.php
http://www.pacificislandtravel.com/fiji/hotels/marlin_bay_res.html
http://www.fijifvb.gov.fj/accom/listing/marlin_bay.htm
<http://www.worlddive.com/destin/land/FIJI/marlinbay.htm>
http://www.fijifvb.gov.fj/activity/listing/marlin_bay.htm
<http://www.beqadivers.com/map.htm>
<http://www.airpacific.com/>
<http://www.blue-oceans.com/scuba/fiji/>
<http://www.naia.com.fj/research/water.html>
http://www.photius.com/wfb/wfb1999/fiji/fiji_geography.html
<http://www.fiji-islands.com/fijimap.html>
<http://www.21stcenturyadventures.com/brochure/listings/marlinbay.html>
<http://dive.scubadiving.com/tripfinder/main.php/operator/view/97>
<http://www.fiji.gov.fj/>
<http://fijilive.com/>
<http://www.dive.inthepacific.com/dive/regions/fiji/statpage.jsp?pid=54024>
<http://www.beqadivers.com/sport.htm>
<http://www.kasson.com/southpac.htm>
<http://www.fiji.to/legends/firebeqa.htm>
<http://www.undercurrent.org/UCnow/dests/FijiInfo.shtml>
<http://www.seaofcortez.com/beqalagoonmap.html>
http://www.reefrainforest.com/cgi-bin/rf/ausgabe/rf_out.cgi?action=lae_frame&template=lae_index1&fir=100&lang=e&laekey=54&fs=11
http://www.fohub.com/TRAVEL/SIT/sit_pages/2715.html
<http://www.pacificnavigator.com/fiji/aboutfiji/legends.html>
<http://www.goals.com/WorldDiveQuest/Fiji.asp>
<http://www.gbscuba.com/DiveTravel/fijimarlinbayresort.htm>
<http://www.internetfiji.com/core/links.html>
<http://www.underwatercolors.com/fiji.html>
<http://weather.yahoo.com/forecast/FJXX0009.html>
<http://outdoorplace.org/beekeeping/peace.htm>
<http://www.deepdiscoveries.com/beqaisland.htm>
<http://www.aquaadventures.com/travel/beqa.shtml>
<http://www.seafiji.com/BeqaLagoon.htm>

Photos from FIJI



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