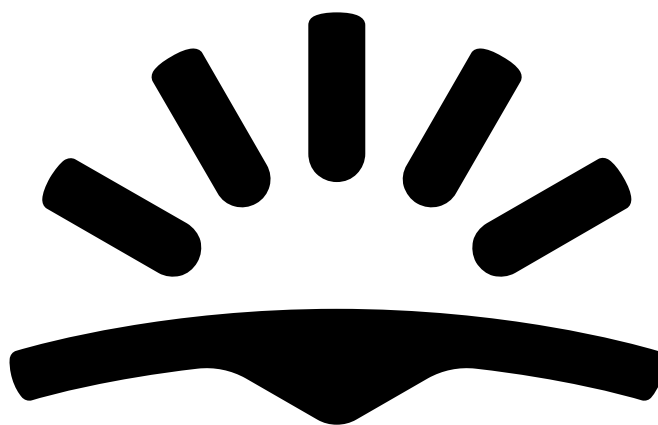


## Cruising Fiji on a cultural & colonial cruise | Skyscanner Australia

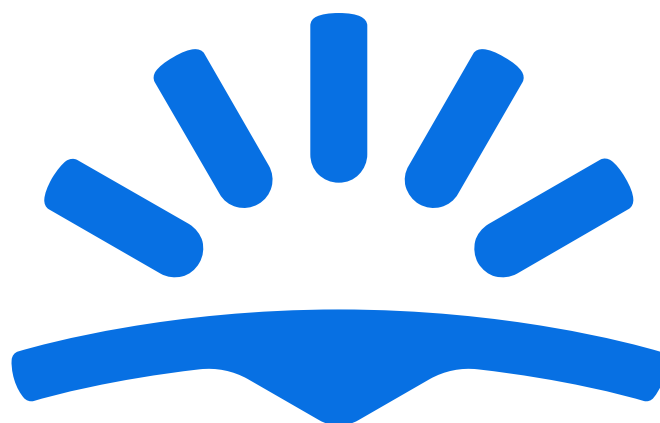
[Skyscanner Australia](#) hops on board MV Reef Endeavour with Captain Cook Cruises to explore Fiji's colonial history and traditional customs on a Fiji cruise holiday

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A time capsule from Fiji's colonial days, Levuka is a popular stopover on Captain Cook's 7 night *Colonial Fiji Discovery Cruise*. In its day Levuka was a wild town with a reputation for drunkenness and debauchery. Today's Levuka is far different, having developed as a popular Fiji cruise destination with a colourful history. From the 1850's the former capital of Fiji's streets were awash with an unruly rabble of vagabonds and vagrants, traders and whalers. Lawlessness abounded in the port 'town' as ship captains followed the trail of empty gin bottles through the passage into the anchorage. An important trading post and port, at one point more than 50 saloons and bars kept this mob hydrated, though the Royal Hotel today is the only one remaining. It's the oldest continuously operating hotel in the South Pacific. The hotel's crow's nest was a favoured spot for sea captains to keep an eye on their vessels anchored in the harbour.



Long before email was invented, carrier pigeons 'working' for the Fiji Postal Service were housed in a pigeon loft opposite the Post Office on Beach St where a drinking fountain stands today. The birds covered the 65km to Suva in about half an hour. Bestowed with UNESCO World Heritage status in 2013, these days Levuka's wide harbour-front streets hum to the Sacred Heart Church faithful or tourists disembarking from Captain Cook Cruise's *MV Reef Endeavour*.



More history unfolds at nearby Makogai Island where a leper hospital operated from the early 1900's until the 1960's. Patients were relocated from across the South Pacific to be housed in the leprosarium established on Makogai Island.

Tropical Cyclone Winston unleashed its fury on the island last year, stripping the trees of every skerrick of greenery, flattening buildings and terrifying all in its path. Left shell-shocked and with their village destroyed, cruising yachties under the leadership of charity Sea Mercy pitched in to help rebuild homes and the school. Canadian yachtsman David Hartman spent three months helping, returning to Makogai for the first-time onboard *MV Reef Endeavour* in an emotional reunion.



As is customary when visiting a village, our Makogai visit begins with a sevusevu

ceremony as MV Reef Endeavour crew request permission to use village land, passing over yaqona (kava) as a gift to village elders. With formalities dispensed with, passengers are free to snorkel, swim and laze around on the beach, enjoying the tranquillity of island life on 'Fiji time'.

Later, back onboard the ship most of the 50-strong village arrives to perform a cultural demonstration, known as meke, with much singing, dancing and laughter. Everyone gets involved from youngsters who do much of the dancing through to elders who sit cross legged on woven pandanus mats, singing, clapping and playing guitars. Ladies wear colourful dresses with flowers in their hair or tucked behind their ears while men dress up as warriors with their faces adorned with war paint.



Onboard *MV Reef Endeavour* the atmosphere is convivial with a relaxed, friendly crew. Between further daily excursions to the town of Savusavu, Taveuni Island waterfalls and Sunday church services, we snorkel coral reefs, swim in tepid tropical waters or float in the ships pool, cocktail in hand. Late in the afternoon we gather on the aft deck for sundowners as tropical islands slip past. Crew entertain each night with cultural performances, often alongside the kava bowl, which we're invited to share.

After seven days cruising Fiji we've made wonderful new friends amongst passengers and crew. But we've also gained an insight into Fiji's intriguing culture and history.

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