

Top things to do in Fiji! (not the usual suspects) - Skyscanner New Zealand

You could be forgiven for thinking Fiji is all about beaches, palm trees and cocktails in coconuts. Sure Fiji has all of these things in spades. But there is more. Much more. [Skyscanner New Zealand](#) travels beyond the island resorts to find Fiji's real charms.



Island hop your way to tropical paradise

Island hopping is to Fiji what shopping is to Melbourne. Seriously, if you don't find yourself lolling on a sunlounge overlooking the azure waters of a Fijian island paradise, well you're really not trying.

At last count Fiji had over 330 islands (don't worry, there are more popping up as resort developers create lagoons and beaches to plop luxury bures upon), one third of which are uninhabited. The Yasawa Islands are a string of bejewelled beach-lined treasures a short seaplane or speedboat ride from Nadi. [Yasawa Island Resort & Spa](#) on the northernmost island watches over one of the prettiest stretches of sand in an archipelago blessed with some of Fiji's best beaches.

Nearby, the Mamanuca Islands have a couple of contenders for most memorable beaches in the South Pacific. Remember Tom Hanks and his mute volleyball co-star Wilson in the movie Castaway? The movie was filmed on Monuriki Island (also spelt Modriki), which is actually not quite as isolated as movie producers would have us believe. Hanks could have saved himself a whole lot of heartache had he swum the across the passage to Malolo Island with its fabulous overwater bungalows at [Likuliku Lagoon Resort](#).

Unleash your inner Tarzan at Tavenui

waterfalls

It's difficult to know exactly how many rivers rumble through Taveuni Island's dense forest as much of the island is impenetrable, uninhabited national park. Known as the Garden Island thanks to a combination of high humidity and consistent rainfall that encourages lush foliage growth, burbling rivers means just one thing. Yes, that's right: waterfalls! Created by cascading molten lava a gazillion years ago, formerly rough surfaces have been caressed by burbling water to become as smooth as a baby's bottom.

These crevices have become natural rock slides. Whether you attempt the Waitavala Falls slide Tarzan-style on your bare feet (as the locals do!) or bump and bounce ungracefully on your backside, either way you'll plop into the rock pool at its base pumped with adrenaline.

Visit Fiji's famous fresh produce markets

Fresh food markets are everywhere across Fiji and are a splendid way to pick up fresh fruit while getting to know the locals and learn what they're dishing up for dinner. While supermarkets & mini marts offer staples, most Fijians shop at the local market where the food is always fresh and cheap.

You'll find vendors selling everything from whole fish to trussed up mud crabs, bananas to breadfruit, taro to tapioca. There's usually a spice merchant too whose aromatic wares are displayed in baskets laden with richly coloured spices and herbs. Forgo a sleep in and head to the market early when it's at its most liveliest.

If you're looking to purchase kava as an offering for a village visit, you'll find yaqona root vendors doing a roaring trade too. Cast your eyes beyond the piles of yaqona (which is pounded into a powder, mixed with water and filtered through silk to make kava) and you'll likely see a bunch of seemingly stupefied men sitting cross-legged around a kava bowl.

Attend a Sevusevu ceremony

Once you've purchased your yaqona (or kava root) you'll be all set to pay your respects to village elders by way of a Sevusevu ceremony, the traditional method of requesting permission to visit a village. A typical Sevusevu goes something like this.

Visitors are invited to take a seat on a woven pandanus mat, often beneath the thatched roof of an open-sided bure. After presenting the Chief's representative with your kava root, he will give thanks for your gift before welcoming you to the village.

Then it's time for the most exciting part of the Sevusevu when the kava bowl is prepared and visitors are invited to partake in the kava drinking ceremony. A coconut shell cup is refilled and passed to each person to drink. A cousin of the pepper plant, kava has a slightly peppery taste and has a sedentary-like effect on drinkers. It looks like muddy water and tastes not dissimilar.

Once the formalities are dispensed with you're essentially considered family and are free to use the beaches, swim in the sea and hang out in the village like a local.

Savour the hymms of a church choir

While we're talking tradition, Fijian religion is strongly influenced by European Christian Missionaries who lobbed into the South Pacific in the early 19th century. Christianity remains the dominant faith: churches are as prevalent as schools and its usual for a place of worship to dominate village life.

Whether you're atheist, ambivalent or a devotee, attending a Sunday service is worth it purely to savour the hymms and harmonies of a Fijian choir in full song. Psalms rising above the palms are a goose bump-worthy way to spend a Fijian Sunday. Don't forget to dress modestly. Brightly coloured floral Bula shirts are most welcome!

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About the author	
	<p>Fiona Harper //</p> <p>Fiona Harper is an Australian travel writer who likes to get offroad and offshore. Follow her at Travel Boating Lifestyle.</p> <p>Widely travelled, highly acclaimed and much published, Fiona's articles & images are published across the globe. When not writing she's probably running a marathon or exploring the world by foot, bike, kayak, camel or boat: whatever mode of transport she can get her hands on!</p>