

# SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES

## FIJI NORTHERN YASAWAS

### EIGHT DAY TRIP WITH SIX DAYS SEA KAYAKING

Fiji is an island nation comprised of 322 islands spread over 230,000 square kilometers. The Yasawa group is a chain of 16 islands located north-west of Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. We spend our time in the Yasawas kayaking between islands, camping on isolated beaches, snorkelling the coral reefs and staying in small native villages getting to know the friendly locals. This is a trip that will appeal to all your senses, giving a well-earned break from the stress of modern life.

#### A QUICK ITINERARY

Day 1	Pre trip briefing & overnight at our Nadi hotel.	
Day 2	Boat to Yasawas and begin sea kayaking.	LD
Days 3-7	Kayak through island chain.	BLD
Day 8	Morning on Tavewa Island, boat to Nadi. Trip concludes.	BL

#### MEETING PLACE AND TIME

We meet at our group hotel, Mercure Nadi at 8:00 pm on Day 1. You can check into the hotel anytime after 2.00 pm on Day 1. Hotel accommodation is based on a twin share room but single supplements are available for an additional charge.

#### HOW TO GET THERE

Flights to Nadi can be booked through a travel agent or through airline websites. Mercure Nadi provides a free airport shuttle bus for all international arrivals. The hotel is five kms from the airport and three kms from Nadi town.

#### SEA KAYAKING

Sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably fit person can participate in and could be compared to brisk walking or cycling. Some previous paddling experience can be useful. The degree of difficulty of the trip **will depend on the weather** we encounter. The sea and weather conditions in the outer islands are predominantly stable but in windier conditions we may require a full day's paddling. An "average" paddling day will range from 3-4 hours and we mix in as much snorkeling and exploration walking as we can fit in. We ask that all participants should feel confident in swimming.

The kayaks are stable, easy to paddle and control and ideally suited for this remote trip. They are very forgiving and are suited for beginners to experts. The kayaks are designed as an expedition boat and it is important to keep gear to a minimum, because we carry on board with us all of our food and equipment. We use a combination of double and single kayaks. Our guides are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional wilderness guides. On Day 2 you will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks. We generally limit our group size to a maximum of 10 clients, plus two guides.

In general, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling, so it's a good idea to begin some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming well before the trip. If you have not paddled before we highly recommend some kayak tuition before your trip and we may be able to suggest a local operator near your home.

## PROPOSED ITINERARY

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Please note that weather conditions can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary.

Day 1: Arrive Nadi. If arriving by an international flight today, Mercure Nadi will provide a free airport to hotel transfer. Upon leaving customs, a Fiji Visitors Bureau agent will show you where the shuttle is waiting. Flight arrivals vary so the trip briefing is held at 8pm in the hotel. If your flight arrives after this, please advise our office so we can arrange an alternate time. We will issue watertight bags to carry your personal gear during the kayak trip and give a trip briefing for approximately an hour so it is a good idea to eat dinner prior to the meeting. The bags are between 25-35 litres in volume (about 2/3 the size of a pillow case). Your guides are preparing for the trip during the day but will leave a phone number at the front desk if you have any problems. Dinner on Day 1 and breakfast the next morning are not included in the trip cost.

Day 2: A group transfer to Denarau marina for the 8.30am boat to the islands. The Yasawa Flyer, the boat servicing the Yasawas, is a 267 passenger catamaran. The Flyer transports us approximately 72kms to Tavewa Island and the Blue Lagoon, arriving at approximately 1.30pm. It's a good idea to bring some snacks and reading matter for the boat trip. From the Yasawa Flyer, we will transfer to our base on Tavewa Island by small island boat. The combination of reefs, close island grouping and shallow waters create the stunning aqua colours for which this area is famous. Our Fijian hosts will make us comfortable at their island home, providing a dining bure and grassy campsites. After customizing our kayaks and getting acquainted with our expedition gear we'll have an instructional paddling session before a short excursion in the lagoon. Watching the sunset from the beach in front of our tents is a great way to end the day followed by a wholesome tropical dinner.

Day 3: Load our expedition craft and weather permitting we paddle 15 km to Navotua. With favourable tides we'll have lunch where fringing reefs run directly off the beach. After rounding the point of Nathula Island we head for the small village of Navotua. The villagers of Navotua are particularly friendly and the special warmth and reception we receive in this village has made it our favourite spot. Personal escorts will show us through nearby plantations and the village, where we can observe the making of mats and perhaps the building of a Fijian bure (hut). If the winds are too strong we will only paddle what is comfortable and then transfer to an accompanying boat to cover the remaining distance. This is a long day of paddling so we utilize a local boat to carry equipment and food.

Day 4: We paddle 6-8 km to Sawa-I-Lau and back, a scenic island with sharp limestone peaks and salt-water caves that make for fascinating exploring. We round out the day with afternoon entertainment provided by the village and an invitation to join the chief for a social kava party in the evening. (Kava is non-alcoholic drink with mild, numbing effects)

Day 5: We paddle 10 km to Vawa Island, an uninhabited island with beautiful white sandy beaches. We have the afternoon to explore the island and enjoy its many snorkelling sites. We camp underneath coconut palms and we can even try our hand at climbing some of the low coconut trees to secure vital ingredients for our tropical punch!

Day 6: A day of leisure to relax, explore nearby reefs, kayak to a distant shoreline of golden beaches, climb the island peak or just laze on our own secluded island beach.

Day 7: Paddle back to Tavewa, exploring the many inlets and bays of Nathula en route (15 km). Time permitting, we can snorkel off the back of the island. Tonight we enjoy our last island dinner together, listening to the rustling of the coconut palms. Savouring the flavours of the South Pacific is a great time to reflect on the trip and dream about our next adventure!

Day 8: We spend a relaxing morning on Tavewa Island before departing on the “Yasawa Flyer” at 1.30 pm. The “Flyer” arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 5.45pm. Trip concludes.

### **END OF TRIP**

We finish the trip with a boat transfer from the Yasawa Islands to Denarau Marina in Nadi on Day 8. Accommodation on this night (and transfers to your hotel) need to be booked by you and are not included in the trip cost. You may like to extend your stay in the Yasawas at one of the resorts and return to the mainland on a later day. If you would like to stay longer in the islands, please let us know at least one month prior to your trip departure date so we can change your boat reservation (boat surcharge applicable). A few suggested Nadi hotels and Yasawa resorts are listed at the end of these notes.

### **THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE**

The many islands of Fiji are spread around the reef-strewn Koro Sea in the southwest Pacific Ocean. About 100 of over 300 islands are inhabited, and range from large mountainous wooded landmasses to coral cays that you can walk across with a few steps. Its population of 861,000 is made up of 37% Indians and 57% native Fijians. The remaining population is made up of Chinese, European, Rotuman and other Pacific islanders. Native Fijians are Melanesians with some Polynesian traits. Fiji’s main island, Viti Levu covers 10,388 sq. km. and its highest peak, Mt. Victoria, is 1323 meters high. It has 80% of the population and is the major centre for air and sea communication in the southwest Pacific. The Yasawas are a chain of 16 volcanic islands with summits ranging from 229 to 579 meters. The Yasawas are strictly populated by native Fijians.

Fiji has three official languages, Fijian, Hindi and English, but there are some 300 communalects (variations) in the Fijian language. English is widespread and most young people have a good working grasp of English. Although some of the older generation may have difficulties speaking, most understand English.

### **CLIMATE**

Generally you will experience a mild tropical climate from May to November. The weather is generally drier than on the main island of Viti Levu. Nights will be cool, perhaps 16-20 degrees Celsius with some spells of cloudy weather and rain. The days are generally hot and dry with humidity increasing in October and November. The trade winds blow from May to November.

### **TRIP ORGANISATION**

The sun sets quickly in the tropics so paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures. It’s a good idea to pack up your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tents so that loading for departure can be organised. On a paddling day we’d like to be on the water before 9:00am and arrive into camp just after lunch. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

On the kayaking trip the food is mainly fresh with some dried meals for the last two days. We will try to supplement this with freshly caught fish! (N.B. for vegetarians and those who have special dietary requirements, we are happy to make the necessary arrangements).

On arrival in camp you will be expected to unload your own boats, set up tents and perhaps each night a few can help with preparing the evening meal. Rest days are spent at your leisure.

### **EXPEDITION STAFF**

Your kayak guides will be two of our most experienced leaders. The guide’s role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and

liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

### **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures is not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and Southern Sea Ventures will do its best to rectify the situation. Please understand that in this part of the world, delays and waiting are commonplace and whilst we do our best to keep to schedule it is not always possible. We are sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole Fijian island experience.

### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

### **AIRPORT TAXES**

These are your responsibility and are not included in your tour costs.

### **TIME & COMMUNICATION**

Nadi is two hours ahead of Australian Eastern standard time. Mobile coverage (by Vodaphone) is sometimes patchy in the islands.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Our group hotel, Mercure Nadi, is comfortable and clean. Rooms are based on twin share although single supplements may be requested for an additional charge. We will stay in two person tents whilst kayaking. We have not included a hotel on your last night as many people choose to extend their stay in the islands or sometimes depart on an evening flight when available.

### **FOOD AND WATER**

Nadi is a small town but there are many restaurants to choose from. European, Chinese, Fijian and Indian food is available. As with any change in diet, it is wise to accustom yourself slowly to different foods. It is recommended to wash any fruit bought in the market. Tap water in the hotel is chlorinated, and we use boiled or sterilised water during kayaking.

### **CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It is very important to behave in a respectful way towards both the people and their land. Whilst the islanders will never rebuke you for unknowingly offending them it is desirable to try to respect as many of their customs and beliefs as you can, for example, it is disrespectful for women to wear bathing suits in a village and a 'sulu' or a sarong should be carried by both men and women while kayaking (sulus can be bought in Fiji costing between \$8-\$12).

Whilst in a village it is disrespectful to: wear hats, sit on doorways or stand up during a 'sevu sevu' ceremony. Shoes should be removed when entering a Fijian hut. Simple courtesy and a bit of sensitivity will satisfy most of the customs of village life. Swearing is frowned upon.

Some basic practices you should observe are:

- ask the locals if they mind being photographed.
- restrict wearing bathing suits to remote beaches.

- In villages use a sulu with a shirt or long pants in the evenings. Shorts are acceptable during the day.

## **GIFTS**

Fijians are very friendly and will often offer their own food to strangers. We will be self contained and provide all our own food and camping equipment so as to minimize our impact on the villages.

If you bring any gifts we would prefer to make a presentation of them from the group to the village chief, rather than to individuals. This helps to reduce jealousy and expectations. We do pay when we stay in a village and that money goes to the community in an equitable fashion for things like building supplies for cyclone damaged houses. If you would like to provide something personally, consider making a donation to the education fund we have set up.

\*\*In 1998 we established an education fund for the village of Navotua through donations from past clients. Southern Sea Ventures manages the fund in conjunction with the village chief of Navotua. It is not possible to transfer funds directly to the education account as it is for domestic Fiji use only but our guides are happy to deposit money at the bank in Nadi. The purpose of the fund is to provide some assistance in primary and secondary school fees in the village as many children do not have the opportunity to complete their schooling. This is something you may wish to consider after you have completed a trip as it is very satisfying to see a donation help put a child through school. Primary school fees are approximately \$60 per annum but secondary fees vary from \$200-\$600 so any assistance we provide is of tremendous help to villagers who often earn less than \$200 per year. The fund has proved very successful and it is great to see more possibilities open up for the younger generation.

## **CONSERVATION**

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints". We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc. We have installed composting toilets in each of the villages we visit to dispose of the group's human waste.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

The humidity is always high in Fiji and as we are paddling in a salt water environment the delicate electronics in digital or film cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of Silicon Packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries for a digital camera as there is no opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity during our island stay. If you are using a film camera it is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged! Low speed films are fine on the water but in the villages some higher speed films are useful. We recommend all film be purchased and processed in your home country. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it. It is inconvenient to find fault with the camera during a trip.

## **MONEY MATTERS**

Your tour cost includes:

- Hotel accommodation at our group hotel on a twin share basis for the night listed on the itinerary
- Internal boat and bus transfer excluding airport transfers
- Double and single expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment
- Two person tents
- Sleeping mats (full length thermarest pads)
- Watertight bags for your personal gear
- Professional Guides
- All meals except in Nadi
- Group first aid kit

Your tour cost does not include:

- Meals in Nadi as outlined above
- Alcoholic beverages
- Airport taxes (if any) on departure from Nadi
- Travel insurance
- Accommodation for the night of Day 8
- Transfers in Nadi at the end of the trip on Day 8
- Items of a personal nature such as postage and laundry

### **MONEY TO BRING WITH YOU**

\$100 Fijian cash will be more than enough to bring during the kayaking and it is unlikely you will be able to spend that. The amount required in Nadi for meals and sightseeing will generally be covered by about \$40-\$60 a day, and alcohol would be additional. Souvenirs and crafts are available. There are ATM machines at the airport and in the main centres and there is a 24 hour bank at the airport. This is the most efficient way to obtain Fijian dollars. Credit cards are accepted in larger stores or hotels but don't rely on being able to use one everywhere. Traveller's cheques and cash can be changed at the airport or banks in the larger towns and cities but can take time.

### **CURRENCY**

The unit of currency is the Fijian dollar. The exchange rate is approximately AU\$1 = FJ\$1.70.

### **TIPPING**

Tipping is not expected by the local people for services like taxis or baggage handling.

### **SECURITY**

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline ticket and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. Theft is a consideration in Fiji (like at home) so it is always a good idea not to leave things unattended when in the towns or villages. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewelry and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet. You may also like to look up the contact details of your country's consulate in Fiji.

### **MEDICAL MATTERS**

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately.

#### Hygiene

Be conscious of hygiene. Regularly wash your hands, be wary of uncooked food and wash fruit or preferably peel it (with clean hands!).

#### Vaccinations

For entry into the Fiji Islands there are no statutory vaccinations at the time of writing. However you should check with your doctor or medical centre for current information.

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your Group Leader know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

### Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP15)
- Lip protectant
- Band-aid strips
- Insect repellent
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness
- A mild antiseptic soap

### Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

## **EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING - WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING**

To minimize our impact on the villages and the environment through which we pass, we travel self sufficiently. That means that we carry everything with us, so it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. In your kayak all equipment is packed in water proof containers. However we recommend you bring your own small 5-10 litre dry bag for items you may need during the day while kayaking. You will not need a lot of clothing for the towns, one change should suffice. We recommend casual clothes suitable for warm weather, preferably with a high content of cotton (which is cooler and breathes well). Excess luggage can be stored on the island while out kayaking. Keep in mind that water is scarce on some of the islands and there are no shops. We will carry our own drinking water but it may be several days before we can wash with fresh water instead of salt.

The list below should be used as a guide when packing but it should all fit into about half a garbage bag in size.

### **GEAR LIST**

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, eg. straw, with a strap to put under your chin, is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck, can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea, in particular the type that can be added to conventional sun-glasses by slipping them onto the arms.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- Two or three T-shirts or short sleeved shirts for camp.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- One pair of light weight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimwear
- Sulu or sarong (this can double up as a 2<sup>nd</sup> sheet)
- Very light weight fleece jacket (not a heavy jacket) i.e. Polartec 100 is sufficient, or a sweatshirt.
- Sleeping sheet
- Sleeping bags are not generally required with fairly mild nights but you might like to bring a small airline size blanket. If you tend to feel the cold easily and if you do choose to bring a sleeping bag, ensure it is lightweight, very compact and zips open.
- One pair of running shoes (recommend to get away from wet thongs and sand in the evenings)
- Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly.
- Lightweight socks to wear with your running shoes and perhaps your sandals if the sand is irritating your feet.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).

- Minimal toiletries. A bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is very useful.
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive and difficult to obtain in Fiji).
- 1 or 2, one litre water bottles. The type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc. (try and avoid day packs with metal zips as they will corrode)
- Snorkelling gear is not provided nor is it readily available to hire. So you should bring your own mask and snorkel. Fins are optional. Really keen divers might bring a small but bright waterproof torch for night snorkelling.
- Lightweight cycling gloves can ease blistering if you are not used to paddling.
- Pillow case or very small pillow (eg.airline pillow). It must fit into your dry bag. A pillow case can give you the flexibility to make for a comfortable sleep

#### Optional items.

- Camera and film, with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof
- Book.
- 10 metres of lightweight clothesline
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash
- Ear plugs – Noisy roosters!!

#### **RECOMMENDED READING**

Lonely Planet Guide to Fiji (latest edition is 2009).

On Fiji Islands by Ronald Wright.

Footprints in Fiji by Geoff Raymond

The Fiji Explorer's Handbook by Kim Gravelle.

Matanitu by David Routledge.

Fijian Phrasebook, Lonely Planet.

The Drama of Fiji by John W. Coulter.

Fiji Islands Handbook by David Stanley, Moon Publications.

Fiji's Natural Heritage by Paddy Ryan.

A Guide to the Birds of Fiji & Western Polynesia, Dick Watling.

The Snorkelers Guide to the Coral Reef, Paddy Ryan.

#### **OPTIONAL DIVING OR FISHING TRIP**

There is opportunity on the final morning of the trip to fit in a scuba dive or a fishing trip before departing the islands at lunchtime. If diving is of interest you must bring along your PADI certification and advise us so it can be booked. A dive is approximately FJ\$100.

#### **DELAYS OR PROBLEMS**

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287.

#### **SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES**

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## **PLACES TO STAY AFTER END OF TRIP**

The Yasawa Flyer arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 5.45pm on Day 8. Alternatively, you may choose to extend your stay in the islands at one of the resorts and transfer on a later day. Please let us know your arrangements as soon as possible as we may need to change your boat reservations.

For a comprehensive guide to accommodation in Fiji, take a look at the Fiji Visitors Bureau website, [www.bulafiji.com](http://www.bulafiji.com)

Hotels in the Nadi area:

Mercure Nadi-(where we stay on Day 1 of the trip) five kms from Nadi international airport and three kms from Nadi town.

[Mercure.com/Fiji-Nadi](http://Mercure.com/Fiji-Nadi)

Tel: (679) 6722255

Tanoa International Hotel-3 minutes from Nadi International airport.

[www.tanoahotels.com](http://www.tanoahotels.com)

Tel: (679) 6720277

Nadi Bay Resort Hotel-a well regarded backpacker resort with different accommodation choices.

[www.fijinadibayhotel.com](http://www.fijinadibayhotel.com)

Tel: (679) 6723599

There are a number of 4 and 5 star resorts located in the Denarau area including:

Sheraton Fiji Resort-5 star

[www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=485](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=485)

Tel: (679) 6750777

Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island-4 star

[www.radisson.com/fiji](http://www.radisson.com/fiji)

Tel: (679) 6756677

For those wishing to spend more time in the beautiful Yasawas, these resorts can be reached from our base on Tavewa Island.

Nanuya Island Resort- An island close to our base on Tavewa Island. A boat transfer from our base to Nanuya can be arranged on Day 8 for a small cost.

[www.nanuyafiji.com](http://www.nanuyafiji.com)

Tel: (679) 6667633

Octopus Resort-a resort with different styles of accommodation to suit most budgets. From our base on Tavewa Island, a boat transfer on the Yasawa Flyer takes approx. 2 hours. Surcharge payable for boat transfer.

[www.octopusresort.com](http://www.octopusresort.com)

Tel: (679) 6030070

Otto and Fanny's Place- very simple accommodation on Tavewa Island.

[www.ottoandfanny.com](http://www.ottoandfanny.com)

Tel: (679) 6666481