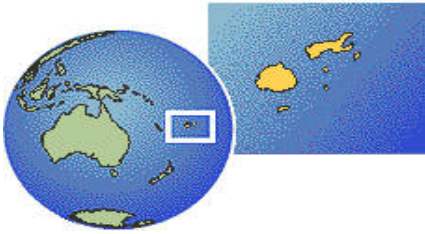


Projects Abroad



Fiji

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

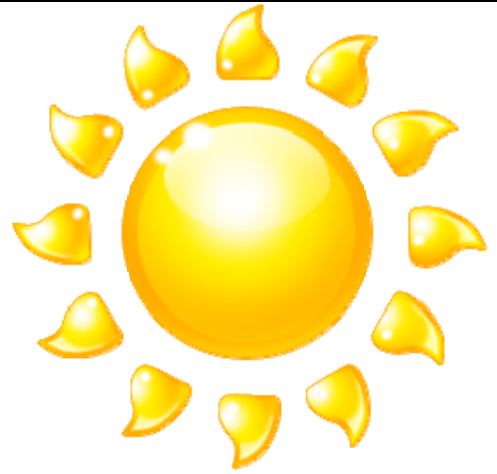
February
2011



Issue
No. 14

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Bula from sunny Fiji!

**Welcome to the February edition of our
Projects Abroad Newsletter for Fiji.**

**We're getting busier and busier as the school year gets in full swing.
There's been a lot of hard work put in this month in both Nadi and Suva,
but also some great weekend trips for you to read about.**

**As always if you have any suggestions, comments or contributions, please
contact me by email at
annebuglass@projects-abroad.org**

I hope you enjoy reading our February news.

All the best

**Anne
Xxx**

NB. Cover photo is volunteer Simon Stanfield with his class at Dilkusha Boys School.

News and updates...



Nadi news

As our numbers continue to increase we have had to take on more host families to accommodate them. A new one in Nadi for february is Lilian Rakoroi. Lilian lives with her three children just off the Queens Road, about a 20 minute walk to Nadi town. Sonal Patel was our first volunteer to stay with Lilian, and after her feedback it seems Lilian will become a very popular host in the future. The next volunteer is lined up for April so we hope they enjoy their stay as much as Sonal did.



Volunteer Daniel Dinu got into his role as 'Teacher Daniala' in true Fiji fashion and donned a traditional Sulu (see above photo) for his final few days at Nawaka Village Kindergarten.

Kathryn Kirk and Lucy Wells who are from our Australia office in Adelaide were thankfully able to come and help out in Fiji whilst I was back in the UK in February. Thanks for doing such a good job ladies ☺.

Suva news

(by Chinnamma Reddy)

The capital city welcomed its pioneer Projects Abroad volunteers, Ida Jensen and Helena Jensen on January 27th, 2011. After weeks of running around various government ministries and departments here in Suva, we were finally able to formalise their placements and I must say that some very wonderful people exist in this country who can make such volunteering experiences the best in the world!

A big dhan-ya-vaad (thank you) to Mrs Sushila Sami who was such a brilliant host to the two girls and an enormous vinaka-vaka-levu (thanks you very much) to the staff of St Johns Association of Fiji, Raiwaqa Health Clinic and the Gospel Kindergarten for providing Ida and Helena the opportunity of a lifetime. They sure did not want to say goodbye to all the wonderful people they met while being here for their one month placement.

The month of February saw the arrival of Courtney Lohmann, Andrea Rothenbuhler, Joseph Hobdell, Josephine Skat-Rordam and Simon Stanfield who brought with them their volunteering enthusiasm and anticipation of learning and absorbing what Fiji had to offer in terms of culture, cuisine and life style.



Our Suva volunteers

Caqalai – By Courtney Lohmann

For those volunteers heading to the Suva area for your project, get excited, we have a



weekend island escape all our own! The first weekend I was in Nausori, I decided to head out to Levuka to see the old original capital city of Fiji. It was a bus, ferry, bus kind of trip and very fun! Levuka is a great little town with loads of character and charm! I spent the night in the Royal Hotel and enjoyed it greatly. I was able to walk around town and see all of the sites in

about 2 hours and really enjoyed the locals and the food!

I then met up with Ty and got into a boat heading for Caqalai; Ty is the manager of the Caqalai Resort. After about an hour boat ride, we arrived to the most beautiful little beach I have ever seen (and I'm from Florida in the US, so I've seen a lot of beaches there and all over the world). Caqalai is all that Lonely Planet says it is and more. Its a small island that you can walk around in 15 mins.

The resort is small and the only thing on the island. It houses 32 guests at full capacity plus the staff which I would estimate at around 8, and two resident dogs. Good little fellows! The resort is all inclusive; pay one fee and you get to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner plus afternoon tea and sleep. The dorm was great! I slept



the best I've slept during my whole stay in Fiji there. I think it was the constant ocean breeze. The toilets are a bit interesting, but they flush! The showers, some are outdoor type showers, others are in a building, of sorts, but there are no doors. I didn't have any problem with either and both only offer cold water but after a day in the sun, it felt like heaven! The staff are absolutely amazing.

On Saturday night several of the men gathered and played music and sang, and guests are welcomed to join in if they choose. There is also kava in the evenings and a big bonfire at night on the beach. It was spectacular! The food was great as well; Big lovo meal with fresh caught fish on Sunday! I was in heaven for 2 1/2 days.

Now on to the beach and snorkeling...I have to say, it is the only snorkeling I've done in Fiji to this point, but I know it will rival if not surpass any that I'm about to do in the West. I've read and heard from locals that the snorkeling here is the best in the country and the least talked about. All I can say is WOW! I strapped on my snorkel gear, walked out into the water until I was about 10 feet from shore and started to see the most beautiful coral and fish I've ever seen. It is literally as if every beautiful coral photo you've ever seen comes from this area. The bright colors and variety keep my mind and heart racing for hours. The fish are electric in colour and shine with the sun. I couldn't resist all that the island had to offer and the best part is that there is so much coral to see you can explore all day for several days. I don't dive, but they offer diving as well and am told its also great. The water is crystal clear!

The beach is amazing With its soft, white sand. Its a place I didn't want to leave. They also offer to take guests to the neighbouring island village for Sunday church. I went; It was moving and beautiful and the villagers were wonderful! Everything about this island it

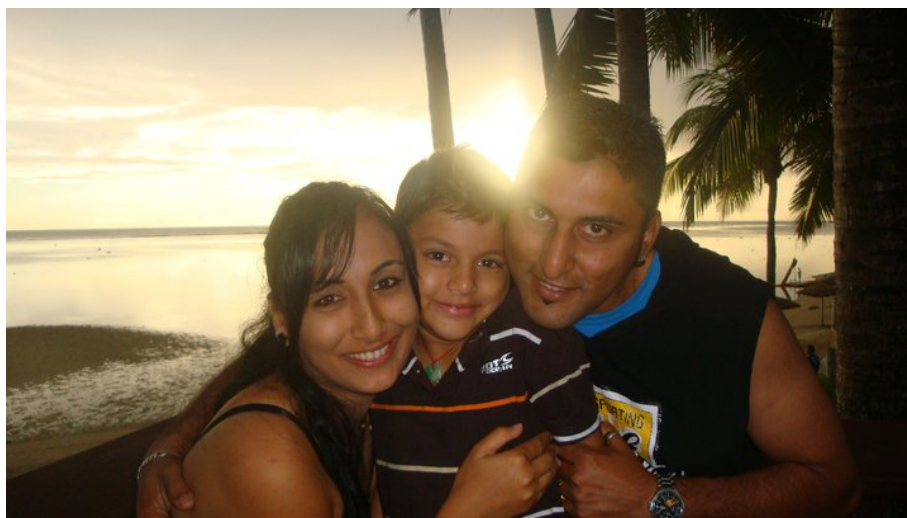


amazing and should be experienced by all. The return trip to the mainland was via a boat and we got off at a pier on the King's Road. You can either pre-arrange for a taxi to pick you up there or flag down a bus on its way into Nausori/Suva. You can also start your trip from here. The resort will pick you up from this same pier. For all our Suva volunteers, this is

the best weekend trip I've found! I hope you enjoy it as well!!!

By Courtney Lohmann, (USA), Care volunteer February 2011.

Host of the month...Shabreen Abadan.



“When I arrived in Fiji, I was unsure about what to expect. After many, many hours of plane travel, I was tired and missing my family back in the States already. However, it didn’t take long before I felt like I had a family in Fiji as well. My host mom Shabreen, her husband Tufel, and their son Tashkeel were so welcoming and friendly. They helped me settle in right away, and clearly wanted me to be as comfortable as possible. I was so grateful that they would graciously open up their home to me.”

“During my stay in Fiji, I was fortunate to get to know each member of the Abadan family, and I am very happy to be able to call them my dear friends. Shabreen is a young, vibrant woman whose personality could light up any room. She works very hard to maintain her home and take care of her family, and I found her dedication to be truly inspiring. Shabreen and I bonded easily, and chatting with her over afternoon tea was always a highlight of my day. She is full of jokes and laughs, so I always looked forward to coming home to see her after a long day of teaching in school. Also, Shabreen is a fantastic cook! She worked very hard to serve delicious, home-cooked meals of authentic Indian food daily.”

“Tufel usually had to work during the daytime, but I enjoyed talking to him in the evenings. The knowledge that he passed on to me about the Fijian/Indo-Fijian culture, language, and traditions was invaluable, and I could always count on him to give me helpful advice about staying safe in town and while travelling. I will never forget my first afternoon in Fiji, when Tufel picked a coconut from a tree in the front yard and chopped it open so that I could taste fresh Fijian coconut milk! Tashkeel was the sweetest host brother, and I spent many happy afternoons playing with him on the swing or exploring the neighbourhood. Our schools were very close to each other, so we usually travelled back and forth together, and I loved getting the chance to hear about first-grade from the perspective of such an adorable little boy. Tashkeel did a great job generously sharing his house and his family with me, and he always provided hilarious entertainment!”

“Spending time with my host family was definitely one of the most meaningful parts of my summer with Projects Abroad in Fiji. The opportunity to get to know such great people was incredible, and I could not have organised it on my own. Shabreen, Tufel, and Tashkeel really made my experience unforgettable. I still regularly keep in touch with them via email, facebook, and text, and I am hoping to return to Nadi to visit them at their beautiful home as soon as I can!”

- by Julie Hughes

"About a week before I was going to Fiji for four months, I was informed that I was going to stay with the Abadan-family. On my 'My Projects Abroad' website there was some information, as well as a picture. My host mum, host dad and their little son Tashkeel looked very nice, and I was very excited to meet them!"

"When I arrived in Nadi, and was driven to their house in Namaka, my first impression was good. They had a nice house, and all the palm and mango trees in the area seemed very exotic for a Danish girl like me! When I got out of the car Shabreen hugged me, and introduced me to her husband Tufel and very cute son Tashkeel.. Everything was so new for me, but I was very happy, and later I was introduced to her brother and cousin, both very funny boys!"

"As August went by, they took me to the movies, and on a picnic to the beach, I really felt like a part of the family. We always had afternoon tea together, when Tufel came home from work, and Shabreen's tea is indeed the best I've ever tasted! I miss it here back in Denmark. Sometimes we had homemade ice cream as well, it tasted so much better than the ones on sale in stores! I'm a vegetarian, and my family were extremely nice to always make food for me that was tasty. My favourite was pouri with mashed pumpkin, and samosas with potatoes."

"In September, I was thinking about where to go on a one-week vacation, and when Shabreen suggested taking me to her home-island of Vanua Levu, I was so excited! At the end of the month, we went there with Tashkeel (Tufel stayed in Nadi because of his work) and I was shown both towns on the island, Labasa and Savusavu. That was really a wonderful trip, and between the two towns we drove through mountains covered in rainforest, it was so beautiful. On one of the days we went swimming in a river, and it started to rain; it was quite magical. In Vanua Levu, I was introduced to a lot of family members, and they were so lovely!"

"Back in Nadi, I started working in the kindergarten again, and in the afternoons I often went shopping or to eat pizza with Shabreen. In the evenings the whole family watched Hindi-soap operas (many of them with subtitles), and it was very cosy. My family were very warm, and made me feel like a part of them. I really had a great experience in Fiji."

- By Helga Nielsen

"I volunteered in Fiji from August to November, 2010. My host family were an Indian family - the Abadans. From day one they made me feel very welcome and they quickly touched my heart. Especially my host mum Shabreen, who was not just my "mami" but a friend, with whom I could share everything. A loving and sacrificial mum and wife and the best host mother one could have ever imagined. I was so lucky to stay with this family - not just because Shabreen was a very good cook!"

"Altogether I can say that those three months on the other side of the world were one of the best times of my life and my host family contributed a lot to it! I miss them so much and hope to see them again one day. I will keep them and all those memories in my heart forever."

- By Franziska Schewe

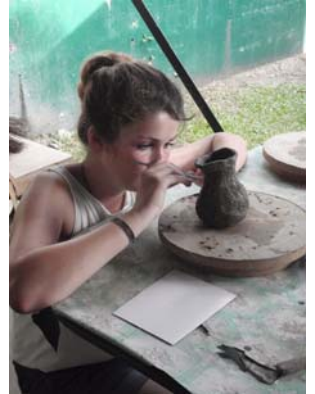


The fun stuff...social update!

Instead of the usual monthly social of going out to dinner, for our Nadi bunch we decided to do something a bit different that would allow our volunteers a bit more of a cultural insight into some traditional Fijian crafts. We enlisted the help of the people at

CreatiVITI, a local volunteer run arts group whose aim is to promote traditional contemporary arts and crafts in Fiji. The organisation's mission is to "develop arts and crafts in Fiji through training, promotion and the enjoyment of creative expression in a setting accessible to the whole community". They invited three local artists to come and teach our volunteers their craft one afternoon. We were split into three groups: pottery, weaving, and masi printing.

In the pottery class we were taught how to make a small water jug, using locally sourced clay that has been dug by hand from hills and valleys around Fiji. The clay is mixed, sieved and sun-dried to produce a blend that they call 'momi mud'!



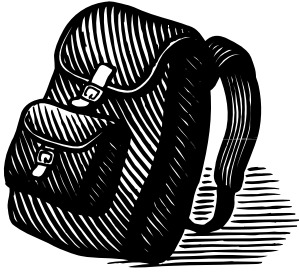
The printing was done on traditional bark cloth paper known as 'masi', and using templates the volunteers created their own designs with natural charcoal dyes. Traditionally the patterns usually form a grid of squares, each of which contains geometrical patterns with repeated motifs such as fish and plants. Traditional dyes are usually black and rust-brown, although other colours are sometimes used. Traditionally the cloth was primarily used for clothing, but now cotton and other textiles have replaced it as it loses all its strength when wet and falls apart. Nowadays masi is still often worn on formal occasions such as weddings but more often it is exchanged as gifts at these occasions. It is also used for its decorative value and is often found hanging on walls as a decoration.

Finally our volunteers were taught the art of weaving. Once again using locally sourced materials and some nifty finger work, each of us by the end of it were able to walk away with a book mark and a rose made by our own fair hands!



In Suva our volunteers have been busy having fun too! Ida and Helena enjoyed an amazing time at the ZipFiji location in Pacific Harbour. Courtney Lohmann went in for an adventurous ride up the Navua River with the Rivers Fiji crew. She also spent two nights at the island resort of Caqelai, transiting via Levuka and describes her experience as "exhilarating with amazing snorkeling" – see Courtneys feature article above. Simon Stanfield, Joe Hobdell, Courtney Lohmann and Andrea Rothenbuehler chilled-out at the Uprising for a long weekend.

Miscellaneous



Tip of the month...

There have been a few incidences recently of bags being delayed on arrival into Fiji. I would highly recommend all people travelling to Fiji to pack a spare set of clothes and any essential items in your hand luggage...just in case!

Donations...

Marieke Schneider sent over a big box of goodies for Namaka Public School. There were clothes that were distributed by the teacher to the poorest children, games and sports equipment. The children and the teachers were so excited to receive the treats, and they all send their love and thanks to 'Teacher Mari' back in Germany!



The children at Namaka Public School after receiving Marieke's gifts.

Recipe of the month – Palusami



A traditional Fijian dish made with taro leaves (swiss chard or big spinach leaves make a good substitute). The usual filling is corned beef and onion but seafood is delicious too.

2 or 3 dozen young taro leaves
500ml coconut cream
200g cooked corned beef
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
2 medium tomatoes, thinly sliced
Salt

Method

Remove the central stalk from the leaves, soften them in hot water until pliable, and then arrange in order of size, so that the smaller ones are on top. Make sure any holes are covered. For individual servings, hold the leaves in the palm of your hand to form a cup. For larger servings, place in a shallow round bowl. Put half the coconut cream and the beef in the centre of the leaves, add a layer of tomato and onion, season with salt, then top with the remaining coconut cream (you may not need it all). Fold over the leaves to make a neat parcel, and secure the ends with a toothpick. Wrap in foil, place in a covered container and bake in a moderate oven for 30-40 minutes (longer for a larger parcel). Alternatively, cook in a steamer. Serve hot or cold

As usual there are many ways in which you can *Stay Connected...*



Our Facebook page is a great way to chat with volunteers who are already here in Fiji, to meet those who may be coming out here soon, or get advice from volunteers who have been and gone.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=157824798691>

Our blog will keep you up-to-date with the latest stories:



http://www.mytripblog.org/mod/blog/group_blogs.php?gl=true&group_guid=2887



...and of course we have the monthly Fiji newsletter:

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/fiji/newsletters-from-fiji/>

A special thanks goes to Courtney Lohmann, Julie Hughes, Franziska Schewe, Helga Nielsen and Chinnamma Reddy for their contributions to this issue.

Until next month...

Vinaka vaka levu!

xxx

