



Volunteer Guide

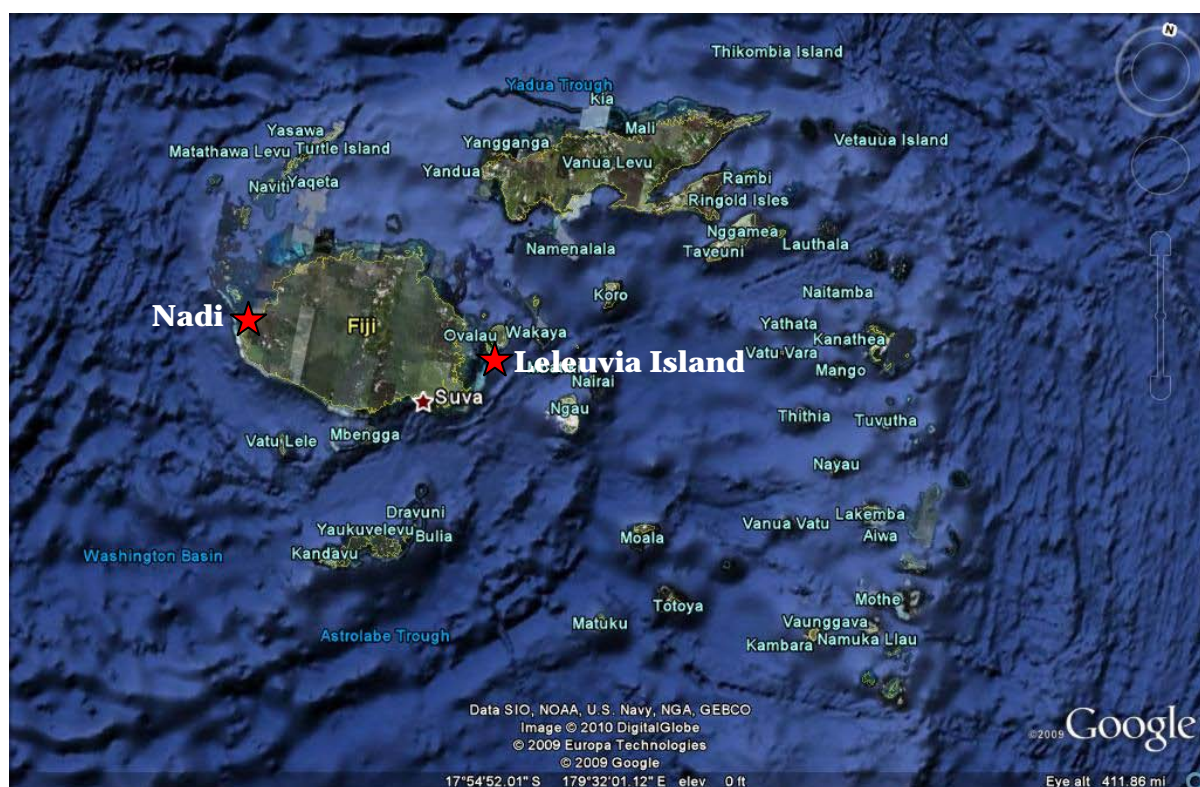


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1. Fiji - Overview



Map 1: The Fiji Islands showing Leveuvia Islands Location (Source: Google Earth)

Fiji lies north of the tropic of Capricorn between 16° and 20°S latitude and 177°W and 175°E longitude, east of Australia and slightly west of the International Date Line (GMT +12). Fiji is a large archipelago located in the South Pacific, east of Vanuatu, west of Tonga and south of Tuvalu. This island state comprises approx 330 islands, of which 106 are permanently inhabited. The population of Fiji is around 853,445 (2006), 87% of whom inhabit the two major islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

Historically Fiji is the Tongan name given to the nation that was known to the local inhabitants as “Viti”. The Tongan people actually called the nation “Fisi” which was later translated by Captain James Cook as Fiji. The two main islands are called Viti Levu and Vanua Levu which translates to Great Fiji and Great Land respectively. The first human inhabitants of Fiji arrived around 1,000 B.C. Europeans first came across Fiji when a Dutch explorer visited in 1643, searching for a great southern land. The Fijian islands were colonised by European settlers in the nineteenth century and came under British control in 1874. On the 10th of October 1970 Fiji was granted independence from the United Kingdom and is now known as “The Republic of Fiji”.

Fiji has an amazing array of biodiversity, most of which occurs in the marine environment. There are hundreds of species of hard and soft coral, sea fans and sponges, a recorded 1,200 species of fish, nearly 500 species of mollusc including over 250 nudibranchs and over 100 bivalves in Fijian waters. Four of the seven species of marine turtle visit the waters of Fiji; three of which nest on its beaches between the months of November and February including the green (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*). The loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) only feeds in Fijian waters and does not nest. Over 12 species of cetacean are also believed to visit the surrounding waters throughout the year. Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) often pass within sight of our island during their austral winter migration (June, July,

August), and we have a resident, year-round pod of spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) in the waters surrounding Leleuvia, who frequently make an appearance during local boat journeys. Some Fijian communities have a close relationship with the ocean, using certain marine fauna as totems of admiration and association.

Terrestrial wildlife is not as diverse as that of the marine environment. Fiji has only six species of native mammals, and all are species of bat. The Indian Mongoose was introduced in the late 1800's to eradicate the introduced rat population but has now become a pest species preying upon native wildlife. There are just over 80 species of terrestrial and freshwater birds, 37 are endemic to Fiji and approximately 10 have been introduced. Fiji has 27 species of reptile including the four species of marine turtle. Most are lizards, including the endemic Fijian crested iguana, yet there are two species of terrestrial snake. There are three species of amphibians; two are native, the Fiji tree frog and the Fiji ground frog. The cane toad was introduced to help control pest insects in sugar cane fields and is now itself considered an international pest by many countries due to its huge numbers and lack of predators.

1.1 Lomaiviti Group & Leleuvia Island

The Fijian Archipelago Islands; Viti Levu to the west, Vanua Levu to the north and the Lau Island Group to the east, creates a horseshoe arrangement which encloses the relatively shallow Koro Sea, named after Koro Island at the centre. The Koro Sea is scattered with islands from the Lomaiviti Group which is known to the locals as 'The Heart of Fiji'. The Lomaiviti Group consists of seven main islands and a number of smaller ones, including the largest island of the group Ovalau, Koro and Gau Islands. The Lomaiviti Group covers a total area of 411 square kilometres and had a combined population of 16,214 in the last census held in 1996. Politically the Lomaiviti is one of the fourteen provinces in Fiji and is one of three traditional chiefly hierarchies in Fiji.

Our project is based on the island of Leleuvia, part of the Lomaiviti group of islands. Most visitors to Fiji remain in the west of Viti Levu, meaning that you can escape the usual touristy islands and experience the real Fiji when joining our project. More importantly, the lower visitor numbers have prevented the explosion of dive and boating operators that exist in most other tropical coastal locations. The vast majority of dive sites we survey have never been dived before and there are many more areas as yet unexplored, giving our volunteers the unique opportunity to experience some of the most diverse and least explored marine habitats in Fiji.

Leleuvia is a tropical paradise, consisting of a small jungle of coconut palms, ringed by white sand beaches and turquoise waters. Forty minutes by boat to both the mainland and the nearest town, Levuka – on nearby Ovalau Island, means Leleuvia feels perfectly remote – the ideal place to 'get away from it all', with none of the noise and stress of modern living. Yet we are close enough to the mainland to permit frequent visits from our project partners, in case of emergencies and for stocking up on essential supplies when necessary!

The waters surrounding Leleuvia are home to endangered marine turtles, reef sharks, migrating hump back whales, occasional spinner dolphins and hundreds of species of tropical fish and corals. Climate change, destructive fishing practices and Fiji's growing population pose increasing threats to these hugely important underwater systems.

The climate is warm all year round, with similar daily land and water temperatures usually averaging 30°C in summer and 22° in winter. This means a 5mm full wetsuit is more than sufficient for most divers in winter, with many volunteers choosing to dive in 3mm short wetsuits or boardies and rash vests in the summer months.

South Pacific Projects shares Leleuvia with a small backpacker resort, this means, unlike similar marine conservation projects run by other organisations, we have the use of a restaurant (and home-cooked meals), beach bar, laundry facilities, proper flushing toilets and showers and even sun loungers on our beautiful beach (for your free time!) Electricity is currently only available in the evening, produced by diesel generator. However, new energy systems are currently being explored by the resort, and may be in operation in the near future.

1.2 Fijian Climate

Fiji has a tropical maritime climate that is influenced by the topography of the islands along with the trade winds and currents of the south-west Pacific Ocean. Seasonal variations in temperature along the coast are minimal with a mean winter temperature of 23°C and 27°C in summer. Water temperatures also fluctuate little and usually do not drop below 20°C due to the west ward flow of the warm South Equatorial Current waters which then turn south into the East Australian Current. The humidity also fluctuates little with an average of 77% during the dry season and 88% in the wet season.

Fiji has two distinct seasons, the dry (Jun – Oct) and the wet (Nov-Apr) season. The wet season is characterised by heavy rain falls, usually in the afternoon and evening, leaving the days relatively bright and sunny. The heavy night rain falls are usually carried on the predominantly easterly trade winds that dominate late in the wet season. Rainfall in Fiji is influenced by the topography of the island. Islands with a high and rugged interior, such as Viti Levu, create a rain shadow over the west side of the island as a result it receives considerably less rain fall than the east side. This is due to the easterly trade winds that arrive late in the wet season months and carry very humid air that gets trapped against the islands topography which cools at the higher altitudes and ultimately produces precipitation. Cyclones are also associated with the Fijian wet season; the south west pacific region receives up to five tropical storms annually. During the dry season the temperature and humidity drops, south easterly trade winds predominate the dry season. With Leleuvia just off the eastern coastline of Viti Levu, it is protected from the open ocean by a series of barrier and fringing Reefs that run the circumference of Viti Levu. The adjacent lagoonal waters as a result are generally calm.

1.3 Fijian Language & Culture

Fiji is steeped in a rich and fascinating culture that has developed since it was first inhabited, approximately 1,500 - 3,000 B.C. The Fijians cultural beliefs run deep within their family lives, although it is now somewhat altered since the first European settlers arrived, the Fijian people still honour and respect their cultural past and heritage which is evident throughout Fiji's many islands. Fijian people hold respect and honour above all other attributes and focuses these qualities on all facets of their lives. They have strong family connections, which will soon become obvious once you spend some time with our local Fijian host communities.

Fijian people are some of the friendliest and most generous race of people that you will ever have the pleasure of meeting. In the past if volunteers find themselves unwell they will find the nurturing hands and smiling faces of the Fijian people there to aid in their recovery. Fijians are also genuinely welcoming to all foreigners, developing strong friendships with all that are open to their island charms.

Prior to European settlement the Fijian people followed pagan beliefs. Since Christianity's introduction by European missionaries and its acceptance by the Fijian people it has become the major religion of nearly all native Fijians. European settlers also introduced the Indian Culture to Fiji,

by bringing Indian Labourers to Fiji's shores during the 19th century. This has introduced a large element of Hindu beliefs into the Fijian Culture. Today the population of Fiji is composed of a majority of native Fijians (54%) followed closely by Indo-Fijians (38%). The remainder of the Fijian population is divided between other ethnical groups including Chinese and European denominations. The Fijian people are culturally diverse, celebrate and accept each other's cultural beliefs and promote equality between the various races.

The main languages spoken in Fiji are Fijian, Hindi and English. Fijian is spoken by all native Fijians; however, there are many dialects of the Fijian language depending on the region. The Fijian language is beautiful to listen to, especially when listening to the harmonious voices of Fijians singing around a bowl of kava or in church. Hindi was introduced with the arrival of the indentured Indian population and is still the main language of Indo-Fijians. English is also widely spoken in Fiji as it is taught in the local schools. Older and more remote Fijian populations may not speak any English. As a sign of respect to the Fijian people we recommend you to learn as a minimum some basic Fijian words and phrases during your stay with us. Fijians love for foreigners to attempt to speak their language. When you make a mistake trying to speak Fijian do not be offended by their boisterous laughter as they appreciate any effort and often will work with you to correct the sentence.

'Fiji time' is a phrase that you will become familiar with on your expedition with us. It simply means that there is a relaxed approach to the factor of time and especially punctuality (probably the most relaxed we've ever experienced). Volunteers often find it to be a welcome change from their normal lives at home, where we can be so used to running on tight schedules. While you are with us on the expedition we limit the effect of 'Fiji Time' on our diving and teaching schedule, but it is inevitable for you to experience the mysterious time warp sensation.

2. Getting Here

Once you have made the decision to come to our stunning island and you have confirmed your position on an expedition, you should book your flight to Fiji as soon as possible. Generally, the earlier you book your flights the cheaper the ticket. Although it is your responsibility to book your international travel arrangements we are able to advise you and furthermore help you with most internal travel and accommodation arrangements.

2.1 Visas

The majority of nationalities do not require a visa or permit to enter the country; however, we would like to advise all volunteers to check before booking. On arrival volunteers of most nationalities are typically given a 4 month tourist visa, this is a requirement to participate on our expedition. If you intend to stay for longer than 4 months please contact SPP staff to discuss your length of stay. As a condition of entry all volunteers must also have a passport that is valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond their departure date and a valid return ticket. While passing through Fijian immigration and filling out any immigration forms it is **important** to state that you are a **tourist** in order to be given a 4 month tourist visa. **Do not** declare yourself as a researcher, volunteer or other; otherwise it is likely that immigration will only issue you with a 2 week business visa.

2.2 International Travel

There are many international airlines that arrive in Fiji, the majority of which arrive in Nadi International Airport (*pronounced Nan-Di*). Nadi is located on the north-west coast of the main island of Viti Levu, approximately 4 hours by road from the Capital Suva. The main-stream airlines that disembark into Fiji are:

- Air New Zealand – www.airnewzealand.com
- Air Pacific (Fiji's International Airline) – www.airpacific.com
- Korean Air – www.koreanair.com
- V Australia – www.vaustralia.com.au
- Virgin Atlantic & Pacific Blue (Virgin Airlines) – www.virgin-atlantic.com & www.pacificblue.com.au

The most common lay-over and direct flight locations from the U.K., Europe and North America are Seoul, Korea (Korean Airlines) and Los Angeles (Air Pacific and Air New Zealand). While in the Southern Hemisphere flights depart directly to Fiji from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane from Australia (Air Pacific, V Australia and Pacific Blue) and Auckland and Christchurch from New Zealand (Air New Zealand and Air Pacific). Please enquire with your chosen airline any weight restrictions regarding luggage and be aware that even the basic essentials of diving (e.g. fins, wet suit, dive boots, etc.) can add to your luggage weight.

We recommend that you book your ticket as soon as possible to take advantage of any low cost saver seats, special offers and to ensure your place on an expedition! Book your flights either over the internet (sometimes the most cost effective method) or directly with the airline or a reliable travel agent. We also recommend arriving at least a day prior to the expedition start date, giving you time to overcome any jet lag and to acclimatise to Fiji's tropical climate. For those that are feeling adventurous it also gives you an opportunity to see some other locations around Fiji.

2.3 Accommodation in Nadi

Once you arrive in Nadi you need to make your way to Suva, the capital, for the start date of your expedition. The group will meet at 6pm on the stated start date in the Restaurant Area of the Raintree Lodge www.raintreelodge.com located in the suburb of Colo-i-Suva just outside the City. Before you travel to Suva, there are several travel options to choose from which will be explained in the next section, you might want to stop in Nadi to break up your trip and to get over any jet lag. This is also convenient for any flights that arrive late in the afternoon or during the night. Nadi is also the gateway to the Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands off the north-west coast of Viti Levu. Please let us know if you intend to stay in Nadi and we will be able help you with your accommodation bookings.

Nadi Bay Hotel

Web: www.fijinadibayhotel.com

Email: nadibay@connect.com.fj

Phone: (+679) 672 3599

We highly recommend staying at the Nadi Bay Hotel. It is located less than 10 minutes from the international airport and there is a free transfer to the hotel from the airport (just request the transfer when booking). Information about the free shuttle service departure location and time is available upon arrival at the airport. There is a range of clean and cheap rooms available at the Nadi

Bay and with the hotel's facilities of a restaurant, bar, swimming pools, internet access and proximity to the centre of Nadi City it is the perfect place to have a break before the start of the expedition. There are also several restaurants and bars located within walking distance on the Nadi Bay Resort. There is a taxi rank located directly out the front door to take you to the airport or around town and buses that depart daily to Suva.

2.4 Internal Travel to Suva

You need to be at the Raintree Lodge in Colo-I-Suva by 6pm of the start day of your expedition, which means that you will make your own way from Nadi to Suva, perhaps accompanied by other members of your group. There are several ways to do this, please inform South Pacific Projects of your desired method and we can help you book your internal travel.

Flights – Pacific Sun

Web: www.pacificsun.com.fj

Email: reservations@airpacific.com.fj

Phone: (+679) 6720 888

Flights depart from Nadi Domestic Airport to Suva (Nausori) Airport every day, up to seven times a day. Flights start from \$120 FJD and only take 30 minutes to reach its destination; international flights can be connected with the Pacific Sun domestic flights but allow enough time for flight delays and transfers to the domestic airport. Suva (Nausori) Airport is located approximately 30 minutes from the Raintree Lodge and 45 minutes from Suva City by taxi. Taxis that take you toward Suva, including the Raintree Lodge, will not run on the meter. A price needs to be arranged before you depart. The cost will be approximately \$15 to \$20 FJD.

Bus - Coral Sun Fiji

Web: www.coralsunfiji.com

Email: reservations@csf.com.fj

Phone: (+679) 672 3105

The Coral Sun Bus departs from Nadi Airport to Suva City at 7:30am and 1:00pm daily. The bus also makes a stop at the Nadi Bay Hotel at 7:45am and 1:15pm on its way to Suva, along with numerous other hotel stops on its way down the coral coast. The cost of the bus is \$22 FJD and the trip takes approximately 4 hours to reach its final destination, The Holiday Inn Suva, where you will disembark. The Holiday Inn is located in the centre of Suva and it is easy to locate a taxi that will take you to the Raintree Lodge in Colo-i-Suva (*pronounced Tholo-ee-Suva*). It is common sense to request that the taxi driver use the taxi meter and if you are unable to locate a taxi that will take you on the meter, just walk a small distance down the road and hail a taxi from the main street or ask reception at the Holiday Inn to call a taxi for you. The trip via taxi from the Holiday Inn should cost between \$8 and \$10 FJD, depending on traffic.

Mini Bus – Viti Mini Buses

Viti Mini Bus is a small transport operation that makes regular trips between Nadi and Suva. There are no time tables or schedules, the mini-buses depart when the all seats are full. On a typical day mini-buses may depart every 30-45 minutes. Viti Mini Buses operate from the centre of Nadi and most taxi drivers should be able to take you directly to them, their location is near the craft market. The cost of the trip is approximately \$20 FJD and it takes about the same time as the Coral Sun Bus (above). The final stop is in the centre of Suva, at the rear of the Village 6 Cinema. From here you will

need to take a taxi to the Raintree Lodge, please read through the above section “Bus – Coral Sun Fiji” for advice on catching a taxi from the centre of Suva.

Private Taxi and Mini Bus

Private Taxis and Mini-Buses to Suva can usually be arranged from the Nadi Bay Resort Hotel and from the Airport. Private transport direct to the Raintree Lodge will cost between \$160 FJD and \$230 FJD, depending on the driver and whether it is a taxi or a mini bus. Taxis can take a maximum of three passengers with luggage. A 15 seat mini-bus can normally accommodate up to ten people with luggage.

2.5 The Raintree Lodge – The Pick Up

Web: www.raintreelodge.com

Email: raintreelodge@connect.com.fj

Ph: (+679) 332 0562

Address: Princess Rd, Colo-I-Suva (opposite the Colo-I-Suva Police Station)

The Raintree Lodge is the location where the group meets at the start of each expedition. Please be in the restaurant area of the Raintree Lodge on the start date at 6pm to meet and greet the rest of your expedition team and SPP staff members. The Raintree Lodge is beautifully located within the Colo-I-Suva Forest Park (*pronounced Tholo-ee-Suva*) on the outskirts of Suva City, approximately 15 minutes by taxi. This is the location where the expedition begins. If you arrive at the Raintree Lodge before the start date that is not a problem, please just let us know and we can help you book accommodation at the Raintree Lodge before the expedition start date. If you miss the pickup, do not worry. We can help you arrange to get out to Leleuvia Island, just call either Howard (+679 733 7270) or Tristan (+679 737 7297) in country and we will organise transport to get you over to the island as soon as possible!

2.6 Taxis in Fiji

The majority of Taxi Drivers in Fiji are honest and helpful; however, as in any country, there are a few that will try and take advantage of newly arrived travellers. Here are a few helpful guidelines to help you with any potential taxi disputes:

- In Nadi the majority of taxis do not use the meter, although this is slowly changing. You must arrange a price with the driver for your trip before you depart. A trip from the airport to either the Nadi Bay Resort Hotel or into Nadi Town should be no more than \$10 FJD.
- In Suva all taxi drivers are required by law to use the meter for short trips (under 16km or 10 miles). This includes from Suva Central to the Raintree Lodge which is 12km or 15 minutes away
- For longer trips (over 16km or 10miles) taxi drivers will not use a meter and you will have to arrange a price. This is up to you to decide, but a good rule of thumb is for every minute of driving it should cost you approximately 2/3 of \$1 FJD, e.g. for a 30 minute trip should cost approximately \$20 FJD.
- In Suva before entering a taxi ask the driver politely if they will use the meter (for short trips), if they refuse then there are always lots of other taxis around.

2.7 Travel Before & After an Expedition

All travel during the expedition is arranged by SPP; this includes transfers to and from Leleuvia Island and any expedition related trips throughout the expedition dates but does not include any additional trips outside of the expedition, optional trips or departing an expedition before the end date.

If you have the time and some extra funds, we would strongly recommend exploring other areas of Fiji either before or after your expedition. There is an almost limitless supply of islands to explore, not to mention the other surrounding island nations of the South Pacific like New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu. Short haul air travel between Pacific Islands can be very economical.

2.8 Between Expeditions

If you are staying on for longer than 6 weeks, e.g. for a twelve week expedition, you will have the option to leave the island for several days during interphase and accompany the volunteers and staff members back to Suva, or stay on Leleuvia Island. Whether you stay on Leleuvia or return to the mainland, you are responsible for your personal expenses for this period. It is possible to stay in backpacker accommodation and eat for a daily budget of around \$60 FJD (South Pacific Projects staff have done this and can advise on economical options). Of course, if you want to spoil yourself, there are many more mid-range and luxury accommodation options to choose from (some of our volunteers have done this and we can advise on good options in all price ranges for you). If you do choose to leave Leleuvia, you can return again with the newly arriving volunteers. This gives you the opportunity to catch up with all the elements of city life, including internet, espresso coffee and fast food (don't do it!). Just ask SPP staff members for ideas on where to go.

3. Your Expedition

We want your expedition experience to be one that is both rewarding and enjoyable. For each volunteer this can mean something different. Our aim is to exceed your expectations and cater to the individual, as well as the group.

3.1 Our Project Team

Whilst onsite, there are a number of individuals who will instruct and assist you in all aspects of expedition life. The South Pacific Projects team consists of:

Howard Foster – Managing Director

Howard spent nearly two years setting up this project and it is a true labour of love. Howard has worked in more than twenty countries and now thinks of Fiji as home. He held the position of Expedition Manager for the first year of project operation in 2009. This year Howard will remain responsible for all aspects of the project, but he now has the additional and growing responsibility of strengthening and building on the constantly evolving partnerships and developing our long-term goals.

Tristan Simpson – Research Director

Tristan helped set up the project with Howard is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project, as well as overseeing and directing the research carried out by our volunteers, and all of the survey and ecological training that volunteers receive. Tristan is driven to ensure that what we achieve together is beneficial to our host communities and our local project partners. He is happy to

spend extra time with volunteers who may be struggling with some of the finer points of species identification (E.g. “Tristan, is that a Red Snapper or a Midnight Snapper?”)

Ian Routledge – Diving Manager

All diving related activities are Ian’s responsibility. Ian is as passionate about diving as he is about the conservation of this incredible environment and a strong addition to our team. Ian’s duties include briefing and all volunteers on our diving regulations at the start of each expedition, and ensuring these regulations are adhered to. Ian will also conduct all dive training and First Aid training during each expedition.

Taryn Foster – Field Scientist

Taryn, working alongside Tristan, will spend the first part of the expedition teaching volunteers about the marine environment, species of interest, and survey techniques. Together, Taryn and Tristan ensure that the training volunteers receive is of a high quality, guaranteeing that the data we collect is both robust and valuable. Upon completion of the expedition training phase, Taryn will manage and supervise the collection of data, and other research activities.

Taioni Vakamoce Delai – Community Representative

Tai accompanies Howard to all stakeholder and community meetings, acting as both interpreter and liaison. As a local, Tai is well aware of the pressing issues facing the communities in our region, and he acts as our trusted and respected community representative. Tai is also instrumental in helping to train the Fijians who take part in South Pacific Projects’ Marine Science Scholarship Programme. Tai joined us with no dive experience and in 2009 we trained him up to PADI rescue diver and he’s now working on his PADI Divemaster as he joined us as a non-diver and is now working on his Divemaster.

Jone Salele – Boat Captain

Jone is our boat driver, and therefore a very important part of our day-to-day activities. He has extensive local knowledge to help him navigate through the numerous reefs in the local waters, and he has been instrumental in helping us to find new and exciting sites for recreational diving.

For further information on the above team members, please see the ‘Our Team’ page on the South Pacific Projects website.

Local Staff

One of the advantages of sharing our island home with a small family resort is that during your time on the island, you will become very close to the Fijians who staff the resort. When asked about favourite aspects of the whole expedition experience, numerous past volunteers referred to gaining a new Fijian ‘family’ as one of the many highlights.

Other Volunteers

In 2009, South Pacific Projects hosted volunteer groups ranging in size from six to eighteen, from fifteen different countries and aged from 18-64yrs. Joining our project will give you the opportunity to make new and lasting friendships with groups of people from all backgrounds, some of whom you may never otherwise meet in your daily life at home. Prior to beginning your expedition, we will do our best to put you in touch with your fellow volunteers. This will allow you to share information and travel plans (past volunteers have often chosen to meet up in Nadi one or two days before the scheduled pick-up) and ensure you begin to feel relaxed with your new colleagues before the project even starts.

3.2 Food, Accommodation & Island Facilities

Food & Water

The home-cooked food you will receive whilst onsite is varied and healthy. There are western favourites as well as more traditional Fijian dishes, including a delicious weekly 'Lovo' (meat, fish and vegetables slow-cooked in an underground oven). Generally meals consist of fruit, vegetables and rice alongside a main course of chicken or locally-caught seafood. We can cater for vegetarians; however any other special dietary requirements we may struggle to provide for as a lot of specialist foods available in the West are unavailable in Fiji. Please contact us first to ensure we can cater for your needs as it may be too late once you arrive in Fiji. Many special foods and supplements freely available in the west are not found in Fiji. You will receive three meals each day as part of the expedition, including tea and coffee at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Added to this, you may purchase snacks from the beach bar and can stock up on your favourite treats in Suva, before heading to the island.

Drinking water onsite is collected rainwater. Due to the pristine nature of most of the South Pacific, this rainwater is clean and safe to drink; therefore water purification tablets are not necessary. Many volunteers, however, do choose to flavour their water with cordial until they become use to the taste (different to water you will be used to out of the taps at home as it is not full of chemicals).

Accommodation & Amenities

Volunteer accommodation consists of several comfortable wooden cabins, a larger bungalow and a couple of smaller, thatched, traditional 'bures' – all a stone's throw from the beach. These rooms are communal, and sleep from two to four volunteers each, with bunk beds and space for storing belongings. However, should you require private accommodation; single rooms are available for a supplement of £400 per six-week expedition. Pillows, bed linen and mosquito nets are all provided. There is a large communal toilet and rainwater shower block close to the accommodation units, with separate male and female facilities.

As you will discover, for a remote Pacific island, the accommodation is very comfortable. We've found (through experience!) that comfortable living and eating well make for a more enjoyable and - more importantly - more productive research expedition.

Other Facilities

As mentioned previously, there is a small beach bar on the island. Due to diving regulations, on six evenings each week (Sun-Fri) we impose a 'two small beers' limit on alcohol consumption – however relaxing by the beach and watching the sunset with a cold drink (soft or otherwise) is an experience you will never tire of. Moreover, on Saturday nights – the beach bar is home to our often hilarious themed parties, sometimes fuelled by more than two small beers as our restriction is lifted (there is no diving scheduled for Sundays!)

Our classroom also double as a private cinema and as well as a good stock of relevant marine documentaries, Tristan has a huge movie collection – so all tastes can be satisfied! (If you're a fan of romantic comedies though, let it be known that Tristan's collection is sadly missing that genre, so please bring some of your own!)

Communications

Communicating home is relatively easy despite the remoteness of the project site. Mobile phones are used all over Fiji, and on most international mobile phone contracts text messages can be sent and received cheaply from countries outside Fiji, though please remember to set your phone up for international roaming before leaving home. There is mobile telephone reception on Leleuvia

through the local Vodafone and Digicel networks, and many past volunteers have purchased cheap Fijian mobiles in the capital city prior to arriving on the island to keep in touch with home and tell friends and family about their amazing experiences! In larger towns and cities such as Suva and Levuka it is normally possible to use email quite cheaply too. South Pacific Projects also has its own P.O. Box so volunteers may receive gifts and correspondence. If you would like to receive mail while on an expedition with us please have it sent to:

South Pacific Projects, Leleuvia Island, P.O. Box 2361, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji Islands

If mail is sent to our postal address we will endeavour to pick it up as soon as possible, typically this will coincide with a SPP staff member's trip into Suva. Please note that if you send large packages or packages of value to this address it will be stopped by customs and opened for inspection. Please do not send any food or illegal items to this address.

3.3 Diving

SCUBA diving on the coral reefs of the Kubuna Waters where we are based is nothing short of stunning. Varying from shallow inner reef channels to deeper outer reef areas, the sites we visit offer experienced and new divers alike the chance to encounter a wide range of the different habitats you will learn about during your time with South Pacific Projects. As an added bonus, when conducting reconnaissance dives, there is a very good chance that you will be one of the first people to ever dive at that site in this remote region of the Pacific Ocean.

Dive Safety

Of course the primary consideration of SCUBA diving in a remote area is safety. All survey and recreational diving is carried out according to strict diving protocols, and under the guidance of the site Expedition and Diving Managers. As a result, there has never been a diving accident at South Pacific Projects. One safety protocol we adhere to is to dive six days a week at most – allowing one day a week for residual decompression purposes. In addition, we only accept volunteers who are PADI Advanced Open Water qualified or above at the completion of the expedition training phase (whether dive training has taken place with us or prior to joining our project). This ensures all divers are comfortable in the water and familiar with good diving practices and has the added benefit of helping to prevent diver damage to the marine environment we are trying to protect. All Volunteers are also required to pass a swim test before taking part in any water-based activity. This is 400m in length with no time limit.

New & PADI Open Water Divers

For those who have never dived before, the warm, clear waters surrounding Leleuvia are the perfect place to learn. Training to PADI Advanced Open Water occurs within the first ten days or so of the expedition, alongside the science and survey training. Manuals can either be bought individually before joining the expedition – allowing you to get a head-start on the required theory – or can be purchased onsite at our own dive centre, please see the Other Costs section of this guide for prices or contact us for more information. If purchasing a manual before your arrival in Fiji you must obtain new/current manuals with all Knowledge Reviews in place. If you wish to get a head start on your knowledge reviews please complete all Knowledge reviews of the Open Water Manual and the Peak Performance Buoyancy, Navigation, Boat Dive, Night Dive and Deep Dive of the Advanced Open Water Manual.

Qualified Divers

For those divers already PADI Advanced Open Water or above – the first two weeks of the expedition will allow you to refresh your dive skills and explore the beautiful dive sites around our

island home, whilst practising your species identification. If you are a qualified diver who has not dived for six months or more, we require you to complete a PADI SCUBA Tune Up with us at the beginning of the expedition as part of our safety protocols. Please notify us in advance if you require a SCUBA Tune Up.

Number of Dives

We ensure that every volunteer completes at least one survey dive per day, five days a week, with an additional recreational 'fun' dive on the sixth dive day. However, this is a guideline and of course dependent upon weather and sea conditions. When the science and PADI training has been completed, there will be opportunities to do more dives. Again, this is dependent on weather and sea conditions and the completion of the daily survey dives which always take priority.

Water Conditions

Underwater visibility depends on the weather and the season, though generally varies between 15m to 40m, with annual average water temperatures of 26°C. Wetsuit choice is up to personal preference, but most volunteers have been comfortable with a 5mm full wetsuit during the austral winter and a 3mm 'shortie' wetsuit during the summer months.

Further Dive Training

Once the initial dive training, and science and survey training has been completed, you have the opportunity to undertake further PADI dive qualifications should you wish. All of our previous groups have included several volunteers who completed the PADI Emergency First Response First Aid course and the PADI Rescue Diver qualification. We also offer the chance to become a PADI Professional Diver, with the PADI Divemaster course available for those volunteers staying with us for 12 weeks or longer. Please see the Other Costs section in this guide for more information on additional training.

3.4 Our Research

Our research aims to be adaptive to the needs of the local community, our project partners and other local stakeholders. We collaborate directly with the relevant local representatives and specialists that have extensive knowledge and experience in the various realms of conservation. These specialists are representatives from three of our partner organisations; the University of the South Pacific, www.usp.ac.fj the Department of Fisheries www.fisheries.gov.fj and the Fijian Locally Managed Marine Area Network, (FLMMA), www.lmmanetwork.org It is through these mutually beneficial relationships that we are able to complete our valuable research objectives.

Research Location

Currently we are conducting our research in the Kubuna Waters of the Bau Tikina and the Moturiki Qoliqoli of Moturiki Island. Leleuvia Island is situated toward the northern boundaries of the Kubuna Waters, which border the southern boundary of the Moturiki Qoliqoli. Our location is optimal for working in both regions, contributing our research and conservation efforts in their adjacent waters. The Kubuna Waters directly support through subsistence, artisanal and commercial fisheries the seventeen settlements (including the three villages on Bau) that inhabit the south-eastern periphery of the main island of Viti Levu and several islands scattered within its waters. The Moturiki Qoliqoli provides sustenance for the ten coastal villages located on Moturiki Island. The expanse of our research location is formidable (over 300km²), stretching from the southern reaches of the east coast of Viti Levu to the northern reaches of Moturiki Island and includes the largest open ocean passage (Daviti levu) on the eastern coast of Viti Levu (the 'main island of Fiji) and several large river systems that flow into the lagoonal waters. The coral reefs vary from large barrier reefs, fringing

reefs to large scattered patch reefs throughout the waters. Incorporated into the region are extensive mangrove, sea grass and delta ecosystems.

Need for Research

Despite the wealth of local knowledge the community members have about their marine environment and its resources there has been a visible decline in the fisheries stocks in the adjacent waters. Coastal communities reliant upon subsistence, artisanal and commercial fishing for food and income need to sustainably manage their marine resources for the future generations. In our research location there is an ever increasing infringement from poachers taking marine resources from the local communities that need them. Illegal fishing practises are also evident in the region, including shark finning operations, marine turtle poaching and spear fishing with SCUBA equipment. Added to these local threats are the numerous anthropogenic threats that negatively impact the region's marine environment.

Research Objectives

We aim to facilitate the objectives of the community members, our project partners and local stakeholders. Their local knowledge and experience cannot be understated and without their assistance and support our project would have less chance of success. All the research that South Pacific Projects is conducting is supported by our project partners, host community and local stakeholders.

Primary Objective

Over the course of 2009 we had numerous meetings with communities and project partners in order to develop our objectives for the region. As a consequence our primary objective was established: to collect a comprehensive multi-faceted marine resource data set in the region that will enable the local communities under the guidance of our project partners to make more informed decisions regarding the sustainable management of their marine resources. This in turn may lead to the establishment of a network of locally managed marine area networks, potentially then officially gazetted by the Department of Fisheries.

Secondary Objectives

Aside from the primary objective we also have several secondary research objectives to complement the work that we are carrying out and to further our research efforts in the region. In addition to the marine research we endeavour to conduct any supplementary research that our project partners deem important to their work in the region. We do this by suggesting methods for collecting the required information and being adaptive to our location. We are also open to any independent research by our project partners and volunteers, providing a base of operations to conduct their work.

Research into alternative sources of livelihood is also important to our overall objectives for the region. By working with communities to develop sustainable alternatives we can help alleviate the increasing pressures on their marine resources. In this light we aim to develop capacity building programmes for our project partner staff and community members, giving the opportunity to further their experience in conservation and also to mutually exchange ideas and knowledge. We conduct various education and awareness programmes to relay our findings to the local communities and to our project partners. This represents the most essential, yet often neglected aspect of any conservation and research project.

Current Research

In 2009 South Pacific Projects initiated a comprehensive baseline assessment of the surrounding reefs. The objectives of the baseline assessment are to obtain quantifiable biological data;

specifically we are recording the benthic substrate composition, fishery invertebrate densities, fish trophic level abundances and targeted fish densities and biomass estimates across the span of the entire adjacent reef ecosystem. The baseline assessment is unbiased in its methods, assessing all visible reefs within a set radius of Leleuvia Island to obtain a broad scale assessment of the region as a whole. We are utilising internationally recognised and academically supported methods to conduct the surveys. Our thorough science training programme helps to ensure that volunteers are collecting as accurate and precise data as possible on a volunteer expedition.

In 2010 we aim to complete the baseline assessment of the region. At the conclusion of the baseline assessment we will begin a targeted fisheries stock assessment in partnership with the Department of Fisheries and the Fijian Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA). The stock assessment will focus on the regions fishing grounds, fishing methods, calculating catch per unit effort (CPUE), identifying targeted fishery species and recording the biomass and density of fishery stocks. The overall objective is to have a greater understanding of the regions fishing practises and fishery stock levels.

South Pacific Projects is also working with the Fijian Sea Turtle Steering Committee (FSTSC) to develop a set of standard marine turtle monitoring methods that will be conducted nationwide. SPP is trialling and conducting various survey methods in the adjacent reef waters and presenting our findings to the FSTSC, helping to formulate a monitoring plan. SPP volunteers have been helping to conduct a set of distribution swims on reef crests near our island to help ascertain the distribution, density and habitat utilisation of the local marine turtle foraging population.

Science Training

At South Pacific Projects we take pride in our science training programme. The majority of volunteers arrive with the common desire to help in our conservation efforts but with little or no experience in marine conservation. By the time volunteers leave our project they are better equipped with a greater understanding of all facets of marine conservation. We have also trained and worked with volunteers that have relevant graduate and post graduate degrees in marine biology and ecology, catering to their more advanced academic experience. We believe that with the right training and guidance all volunteers can positively contribute towards collecting accurate and useful data.

Volunteers will begin the intensive scientific training programme soon after their arrival in Fiji. Do not worry; we aim to make the learning experience fun and enjoyable for both the volunteers and staff members. You also learn at your own pace and staff members will be there to help you every step of the way and spend time with the individual volunteer to get each through. The training involves mostly field based activities including many SCUBA diving and snorkelling excursions as well as informal lectures, workshops, tutorials, group discussions and practise tests to help you learn your species. Prior to your departure SPP will send you the species lists that you will be learning while with us in Fiji. Volunteers also learn our survey methods through a presentation series that are quickly followed by on land and in water practice sessions to get volunteers ready for surveying.

The training period takes a minimum of two weeks and may take longer depending on the individual. During this period volunteers are asked to take several tests based on each species list to show that they are confident in the accurate identification of our survey species. Tests are both computer and in-water based and volunteers are required to achieve a set score before they can begin surveying. Essentially the quicker you learn the species, the sooner you can make your contribution to our surveys. As all volunteers learn at a different pace we aim to cater to the individual needs, conducting tests when volunteers feel ready to be tested.

Recommended Books

We strongly recommend that all volunteers purchase a reef fish identification guide for the South-West Pacific region. The following guide has been found to be the most helpful in learning the fish species on our species lists; in addition volunteers have appreciated having a good guide book to identify any of the 1,200 species they might encounter on the reefs.

Title: Reef Fish Identification Tropical Pacific

Author: Allen, G.R., Steene, R. & Humann P.

Year Published: 2003 (it has since been republished)

Cost: £20 (approx')

Our project site on Leleuvia Island has several second hand copies but in the past volunteers have appreciated having their own copy to make notes in, to study and to take back home to remember the fish they have seen and learnt while with us. The guide book can be purchased or ordered from most book stores, including Amazon (www.amazon.com). Please order your book well in advance of your departure date.

Independent Research

South Pacific Projects aims to encourage independent research by volunteers, increasing the scope of our research for the region. If while volunteering with South Pacific Projects you would like to conduct your own research or if you want to solely focus on your research project please contact SPP to discuss your options prior to your departure. SPP is partnered with many respected and legitimate authorities in research, management and community work in Fiji. We can put you into contact with the respective specialists or most knowledgeable people in that field. We may also be able to help you design your methodology approach and to provide insight into the region we work in.

3.5 Your Safety

Safety on our expeditions has always been our number one priority. A rigorously researched and practised casualty evacuation plan is in place with links to the nearest recompression facility and hospitals. Our nearest recompression chamber is only 90 minutes by boat and road from Leleuvia. Our Evacuation Plan is constantly re-checked to ensure that it runs as smoothly as possible in the case of an emergency. All of South Pacific Projects staff members are first aid qualified, and with the exception of Jone (our boat driver), are all very experienced SCUBA divers, trained to at least PADI Rescue Diver or Divemaster.

Upon first arriving onsite, you will be fully briefed on our safety procedures and protocols. These protocols continue for the duration of the expedition, with dive regulations reiterated prior to each dive, and disciplinary measures taken when these regulations are ignored. E.g. a minor breach of dive protocol results in you missing the following days dives. These procedures are in place for the safety of all volunteers and staff members, and as such we take them very seriously. The camp and research vessels carry waterproof mobile telephones, and there is always a designated staff member on land when there is diving going on, in case of an emergency. Oxygen and first aid kits are carried on the dive boat and are also stored at the camp.

All volunteers must obtain a 'fit-to-dive' medical certificate from their doctor prior to joining one of our expeditions (downloadable from our website). Furthermore, everyone involved in diving with South Pacific Projects is required to have DAN (Divers Alert Network) diving insurance to cover participation in all marine activities whilst on Leleuvia www.diversalertnetwork.org All volunteers must also have adequate travel insurance that covers them for the duration of their stay, in case of

non-diving incidents arising. It is very important that your insurance includes and will cover any pre-existing medical conditions. If you choose not to take out DAN insurance and travel insurance, you will not be permitted to join the project after your arrival in Fiji. Please contact us for further information and advice.

3.6 Money

South Pacific Projects aims to keep your costs as minimal as possible while on expedition with us in Fiji. Please read the other costs page that explains any additional costs volunteers may need to incur while with us on site. The Fijian Dollar (FJD) is the only currency that is widely accepted in Fiji, you must obtain Fijian currency for any purchases within Fiji.

Fijian Currency

The currency of Fiji is the Fijian Dollar (\$) or FJD. The value of the Fijian Dollar fluctuates greatly over the year like most currencies, below are some of the main exchange rates as of January 2010. For up to date currency exchange rates please go to www.xe.com

- United Kingdom £1 = \$3.1 FJD
- Europe €1 = \$2.72 FJD
- United States of America \$1 USD = \$1.92 FJD
- Canada \$1 CAD = \$1.82 FJD
- Australia \$1 AUD = \$1.72 FJD

Withdrawing Money in Fiji

There are many facilities to withdraw money in the major towns of Fiji, including the Nadi International Airport, Nadi, Suva and Levuka. In the smaller and more remote villages of Fiji and on Leleuvia Island there are no such facilities available and SPP is unable to exchange money for volunteers. Please check with your respective banks if your credit and debit cards can be used in Fiji and ensure you have the appropriate PIN numbers and account details to withdraw money overseas. Most major cards work in Fiji including Visa, MasterCard and American Express; however, obtaining money through credit accounts can be difficult and it is best to have a link to your debit, savings or cheque account to obtain money. Traveller's checks and other currencies can also be exchanged in the major cities and most currencies will be accepted, but we recommend bringing Sterling, Euros or US dollars if you are unsure.

Most banks and money exchange businesses are closed both Saturday and Sunday (aside from the airport) but ATMs or cash points operate seven days a week. You will need to withdraw enough money to sustain you while you stay on Leleuvia Island. There will be few opportunities for you to venture back to the larger towns to retrieve more money but it can be arranged if necessary. The amount you spend will be completely up to the individual. Leleuvia Island is remote and therefore there are limited opportunities to spend money while with us except from the bar for snacks and drinks. It is recommended that you withdraw more money than you expect to spend, if you have any money left over at the end of the expedition you can always exchange back into your native currency when you return home. We recommend that volunteers bring a mixture of cash, traveller's checks and bank cards to ensure that you can access your money while in Fiji. Traveller's checks are also recommended as they can be reclaimed in the event they are lost or stolen.

Costs on Site

There is little opportunity to spend money on Leleuvia Island aside from snacks and drinks that can be purchased from the bar. The bar has various snacks such as crisps/potato chips, biscuits/cookies and peanuts along with an assortment of non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks. As a site rule we only

allow staff and volunteers that are diving the following day a maximum of two alcoholic drinks the night before. We recommend that volunteers budget approximately \$70 FJD per week for additional costs on site, though you may spend nothing at all or a lot more if you buy a couple of rounds of drinks on Saturday nights!

Additional Costs

Please read the [Other Costs](#) page of the website for any other additional expenditure such as additional PADI dive courses, costs during interphase and any other additional expenditure.

3.7 Other Activities

Other activities available include snorkelling, kayaking, volleyball, stargazing, as well as learning to dance Fijian-style for those volunteers brave enough to ask the always-willing local staff to teach you the most popular Meke (traditional Fijian dance) of the moment! We also schedule Fijian language lessons with the local staff, which can then be practiced most evenings around the kava bowl.

On non-diving days, volunteers are encouraged to take part in teaching environmental awareness and conservation topics to children in lessons at the village schools, or to attend meetings of the village Chiefs and Marine Protected Area (MPA) committees which regularly take place to discuss progress with the management of the region's unique marine environment. South Pacific Projects acts as an environmental advisor and facilitators in community meetings, giving volunteers a valuable insight into some of the practicalities of our participatory approach to integrated coastal zone management.

4. Before You Depart

This section will advise you on what you need to bring and what you need to do before you depart.

4.1 What You Need

Travel Arrangements:

- International Airline ticket to Nadi, Fiji
- Passport – Valid for at least 6 months after your departure date
- Visa – only if necessary from your home country
- Internal travel to Suva
- Accommodation in Nadi or Suva – If arriving before expedition start date

If you need help organising internal travel to Suva or pre-expedition accommodations please contact SPP staff, we will be happy to help.

Insurance:

- Travel insurance
- Divers Alert Network Insurance www.diversalertnetwork.org

We recommend that you get travel insurance that covers medical, theft, lost baggage and force majeure such as floods and cyclones/hurricanes. We do not expect that you will need to claim, but it is better to plan for any eventuality. Divers Alert Network Insurance is essential to dive with us.

Money:

- Cash - Fijian currency
- Traveller's Checks – Can be used in the event of an emergency
- Debit and Credit Cards

Medicals:

- PADI dive medical – Essential
- General check-up – Essential
- Vaccinations – Essential
- Dental check-up – Recommended

All volunteers are required to bring their signed PADI Dive and SPP medical forms with them to Fiji for our records. If you fail to do so you will have to undergo additional medicals in Fiji before you can join the expedition.

Dive Equipment:

- SCUBA Equipment – Recommended, but not necessary
 - Buoyancy Control Device (BCD)
 - Regulator
- Mask and Snorkel - Essential
- Dive fins – Essential, we recommend that you purchase fins that require dive boots
- Dive Boots – Essential, if you purchase fins that require them
- Dive Watch (waterproof to at least 20 BAR or 200m) or Dive Computer – Essential
- Wet Suit – Essential, 3mm or 5mm short or long depending on season
- Rash Vest – Highly recommended, ideal for snorkelling to prevent sunburn!
- Dive Knife – Essential
- Dive Torch – Essential, for volunteers that are completing the PADI AOW or any night dives
- Dive Slate – Recommended
- Dive Certificates/Cards – Essential, if you have completed any dive courses

Personal Items:

- Clothes:
 - T-Shirts
 - Shirts
 - Shorts
 - Swimmers/Bathers/Board Shorts
 - Underwear
 - Socks
 - Long Pants
 - Jumper/Pull Over/ Fleece
 - Water Proof Jacket
 - Hat
 - Sunglasses – Strong UV protection and polarised lenses are recommended
 - Flip-Flops/Thongs
 - Reef Walkers/Dive Boots
 - Enclosed Footwear
 - Towel

- Toiletries:
 - Deodorant
 - Biodegradable Shampoo & Conditioner
 - Biodegradable Soap/Body Lotion
 - Dental Hygiene (toothbrush, paste, floss etc.)
 - Any other essential toiletries
- Other Essentials
 - Torch – your waterproof dive torch can double
 - Spare Batteries or rechargeable batteries with recharger
 - Power adapter for the pacific region
 - 1Litre Water Bottle
 - Sunscreen (Spf 30+)
 - Camera
 - Underwater housing for digital camera - Recommended
 - Dry bag
 - Biodegradable laundry detergent – If washing your own clothes
- Suggested Luxury Items
 - iPod/MP3
 - Portable Speakers
 - Books – we also have a library
 - Laptop/External Hard Drive/ Thumb or Pen Drive for storing photos, presentations
 - Favourite spreads and treats you can't do without (Marmite if you're Brit'!)
 - Hammock
 - Sleeping bag – Recommended if coming between May - September

First Aid Kit

- Essential First Aid Kit:
 - Prescribed medications
 - Alcohol/Antiseptic wipes
 - Antiseptic Cream/Gel
 - Hydrogen Peroxide 3% or 6% w/w – Good for removing sand from cuts
 - Water proof plasters/band-aids
 - Sterile gauze
 - Micro-pore tape
 - Thick adhesive water proof tape
 - Cotton buds
 - Latex gloves
 - Assorted bandages
 - Tweezers
 - Paracetamol and Ibuprofen – Painkillers
 - Anti diarrhoea tablets – e.g. Imodium
 - Rehydration Salts
 - Anti-bacterial hand gel
 - Sanitary items for females
- Suggested Additions:
 - Vitamin supplement tablets
 - Mosquito repellent
 - Antihistamines
 - Aloe Vera gel or other after sun

South Pacific Projects has several comprehensive first aid kits on Leleuvia Island that are at the disposal of the volunteers and staff. They are restocked when necessary but they are also dependant on the volunteers bringing individual first aid kits to help supplement them for individual use. Most travel/hiking stores sell basic first aid kits that contain most of the items mentioned above. Before purchasing a first aid kit have a look through the contents, any items that are missing can usually be purchased at a pharmacy or supermarket.

Learning Material

- Essential:
 - New PADI Manuals – For respective dive courses
 - Fish Identification Book
 - Read all web-site material
 - Read all Volunteer Guide information (you're doing that now!)
- Recommended:
 - Fiji travel guide – e.g. Lonely Planet
 - Fijian phrase book

Donation Items for Environmental School Club

This is only a suggested item and can be anything from children's books and learning material (ages 5 to 12 years old), stationary to games including footballs or rugby balls.

4.2 Healthy Start

It is important that you are prepared both physically and mentally for your expedition and that you know what to expect. For the duration of your expedition you will be located on a remote tropical island, for most people this is a dream come true; however, it does come with it inherent risks and limitations. South Pacific Projects does their utmost to ensure the health and safety of their volunteers while on expedition but there are a few things that you can do to prepare for the trip.

Medicals

It is essential that volunteers make an appointment with a general practitioner, travel doctor or medical clinic prior to their departure. We recommend that you make an appointment a minimum of one to two months prior to your departure to allow enough time to receive any recommended vaccinations and to obtain any prescription medication that you may need.

In addition volunteers must see a general practitioner to complete and sign the SPP medical forms. It is essential that volunteers receive a qualified Doctor's approval for diving and taking part in general expedition life before you depart. Volunteers must bring the signed documents with them to Fiji to be stored with our records, without the documents volunteers are unable to take part in any diving or expedition activities.

Vaccinations

Please consult your doctor or a travel clinic about recommended inoculations for Fiji prior to your departure (some inoculations require more than several weeks to take effect). The standard inoculations that you should ask your Doctor about before your trip are:

- Polio, tetanus and BCG (Tuberculosis)
- Yellow fever
- Diphtheria

- Typhoid
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Rabies

Let Us Know

If you have any medical conditions, disabilities, dietary requirements or any other special needs it is imperative that you contact SPP staff prior to booking with us. We have had numerous volunteers with various limitations or special needs and have been able to cater for them, but only as they informed us prior to departure. By telling SPP staff members we can prepare for any contingency while giving you the best experience possible. We use the utmost discretion when informed of any condition that you may have.

Getting Fit

We recommend that you obtain a good level of fitness before you depart. Working and diving in a tropical environment can be physically demanding, considering that you will be in the water potentially every day of the week. Along with participating in dive courses, lectures and workshops you can guarantee that you will be both physically and mentally tired at the end of most days. We recommend that volunteers obtain fitness through swimming training, giving you greater confidence and enjoyment in the water. It is also a requirement that volunteers swim 400m unaided prior to conducting any in-water activities.

Common Site Ailments

There are several risks associated with living and working in a remote tropical environment which can be exacerbated by continuously going in the water and living on an island. We will advise you on the best course or action to prevent any ailments from disrupting your expedition. If you do become sick or have any wound become infected, you must tell SPP staff immediately so that we can prevent it from getting worse and interrupting your diving schedule. If the treatment is beyond our capabilities we are in close proximity to three hospitals and medical centres, including Suva Private Hospital which is only 90 minutes away.

Abrasions: Cuts and grazes are the most common ailments to affect volunteers while with us. They can easily be prevented by being aware of your surroundings and wearing appropriate footwear in and out of the water. They are also inevitable while working outdoors. If you do get an abrasion it is important that you keep it clean and dry when out of the water, regularly changing the dressing and preventing sand from entering the wound.

Mosquito Bites: Everyone is affected by mosquito bites differently. For most they are irresistible to scratch which can often lead to infection. Try to prevent mosquito bites by wearing long sleeved shirts and pants after dusk pants and by using insect repellent. If you are bitten, try and refrain from scratching or rubbing them (though this is a real test of willpower!). Use anti-histamine if necessary. Dengue fever is also occasionally present in Fiji, though none of our volunteers have ever suffered with this condition.

Blisters and Rubbing: With most new clothing items there is a chance that they may cause blisters or rubbing. This is especially true for flip flops and dive equipment including dive boots, fins and wet suits. When purchasing these items please ensure that they are the right size by trying them on properly before you buy them. Blisters and raw skin from rubbing can often lead to secondary infection if not looked after.

Dehydration: It is important for all volunteers to stay hydrated while on site. Dehydration is the most common cause of tiredness, causing volunteers to become lethargic. Diving and working in hot conditions can easily lead to dehydration, even on cool overcast days it is easy to become dehydrated. Make sure that you drink adequate water to stay hydrated; we recommend at least 2 litres of water a day. It is also important to maintain your bodies' salt levels to offset salts lost via sweating and the increase in water intake otherwise water will not be absorbed into the body. Rehydration salts are important elements of your first aid kit and can greatly help you recover from dehydration.

Sunburn and Heat Exhaustion: Fiji can be a very hot and humid country depending on the time of year. Sunburn can be very painful to bear and can last for days. We recommend that you wear adequate sun protection (sunscreen, t-shirt, sunglasses and a hat) to prevent sunburn, but if the allure of sunbathing is too great please know your own bodies' limits and not stay in the sun for too long. Heat exhaustion can also be common for those that spend too much time in the sun. Remember that you have four to twelve weeks to work on a tan; don't let it spoil your first week on Leleuvia!

Diarrhoea and Other Stomach Problems: It can be fairly common while travelling to get a digestive system infection that can cause diarrhoea or cramps. It can be caused by many things from lack of personal hygiene, different food or water than you are normally used to or ingesting a bacteria or virus. The chances of obtaining a stomach bug can be reduced if you use an anti-bacterial gel after you use the bathroom and before you eat. We also recommend that you know where the water you are drinking comes from. This is typically not a problem on Leleuvia as the water we drink is pure collected rainwater.

4.3 Essential Reading

Before booking and paying for your expedition it is mandatory for each volunteer to read the following text and documents in their entirety:

- Our web site pages (www.southpacificprojects.org) – The web site contains all the necessary information about our project in Fiji including our costs and frequently asked questions
- This Volunteer Guide – This document complements to the web page text and helps you organise and prepare you for your expedition
- Our Terms and Conditions – This document goes through our booking conditions, responsibilities of south Pacific Projects and the volunteer and liability

4.4 What you need to send us

Before you depart there are several forms and details that you need to send South Pacific Projects to complete the booking process. Please send the required forms at least four weeks prior to your departure date.

1. **Volunteer Details Form:** Gives us all the details of you that we need
2. **South Pacific Projects Medical Form:** Needs to be completed and signed by a qualified physician
3. **PADI Dive Medical:** Needs to be completed and signed by a qualified physician
4. **Terms & Conditions:** Is a legally binding contract that needs to be completed and signed by the volunteer

As stated, once you have completed the above volunteer details form, the medical forms and the terms and conditions you are required to send a copy to South Pacific Projects. Do not forget to

check that you have filled out each form correctly and ensure that you sign and date where appropriate on each form once completed otherwise you will have to resend a complete copy. There are two options to send the required forms:

1. Scan a clear low resolution copy and save the copy to your computer, attach it to an email and send it to either [Howard](#) or [Tristan](#) – Recommended as we would prefer to reduce paper usage
2. Mail a clear photo copy to, please note it may take several weeks to reach its destination:

South Pacific Projects
Leleuvia Island
P.O. Box 2361
Government Buildings
Suva, Fiji

4.5 Documents you need to bring to Fiji

There are several documents that you need to bring with you to Fiji to hand over to the staff member that meets you at the Raintree Lodge on your expedition start date. Once SPP staff obtain each of these forms for our records we will go through the details individually to make sure that our records are correct. These include:

- Completed PADI Dive Medical Form – Original Copy
- Completed SPP Medical Form – Original Copy
- Completed Volunteer Details Form – Original Copy
- Completed Terms and Conditions Form – Original Copy
- Photocopy of your passport and return airline ticket
- Photocopy of your travel insurance details
- Photocopy of you DAN insurance details
- Photocopy of you Dive Qualifications

4.6 Payment

Payment Method

We currently have three methods of payment that can be used to pay for your expedition. Please notify SPP as to which method you would prefer to use.

Option 1: Through our website we have a payment page www.southpacificprojects.org/pay On this page there is a secure PayPal link that directs you to our PayPal payment site. You can either pay using an existing PayPal account by logging in or you can pay directly using you credit card or bank account details if you do not have a PayPal account. PayPal is a secure way to pay over the internet.

Option 2: Notify SPP that you would like to receive an invoice before you pay. Please ensure that you have given us your correct email address as the invoice will be sent to your email address. You may then make payment via PayPal on the internet as mentioned above.

Option 3: The third option for payment is a direct monetary transfer from a bank account of your choice to our SPP bank account. Most banks allow their customers to make an international bank transfers if you are situated outside of the United Kingdom and can commonly be done using internet banking. Please check with your bank to see if you can make a payment using this method.

If you would like to make your payment using this method please contact SPP and we will give you our account details.

Deposit

Once you have decided to join an expedition, contacted SPP and read the web page pages, this Volunteer Guide and the terms and conditions you need to pay a deposit in order to hold your position on the expedition you want to take part in. A minimum deposit of £150 is required to hold your position and can be paid using any of the methods described above.

Once you have paid your deposit you will need to pay the remaining difference at least six weeks prior to your departure. If you are booking within six weeks of your departure date we ask that you pay the required amount as soon as possible, likewise you may wish to pay the full balance straight away.

Total Payment

All costs displayed on the website are in the British Currency Sterling or Pounds (£). All payments need to be the equivalent of the Sterling price. South Pacific Projects will contact you individually regarding your total costs prior to your payment, including any additional dive course costs. Please note that currency values fluctuate continuously. If paying by PayPal there is an automatic currency converter that will ensure that you will pay the right amount, if paying through a money transfer you will have to discuss with your bank the required amount as there will be the addition of international transfer fees. Payment of the total balance must be made four weeks prior to your departure. If you fail to pay the amount on time you may lose your position on the expedition and your deposit. Please pay your balance on time and if you having difficulties please contact SPP to notify us of the delay.

4.7 Ready to Go!

If you have completed all that is requested then you will be ready to go so get excited! Do not forget that if you have any questions please contact South Pacific Projects at any time and we will help you along every step of the way. We look forward to seeing you out on Leleuvia Island, your new island home for your expedition.