Throwing Down the (Beach) Towel
Dazzling sands, perfect palm trees and waters so blue they glow – Fiji’s beaches look airbrushed. While stunning stretches abound, it’s on the islands of the Mamanucas and Yasawas that you’ll find heavenly heavyweights. These beaches are the poster-child for paradise, luring thousands of visitors keen to discover their own South Sea idyll. The appeal of the islands stretches beyond holiday snaps; the reefs, bays and sublime sands have provided cinematic eye candy to films including Cast Away with Tom Hanks and 1980 teen-dream classic The Blue Lagoon.

Wetter is Better
Fiji’s calm seas belie the riot of life going on within. With seemingly endless stretches of intensely coloured reefs and more than 1500 species of fish and colossal creatures Fiji’s underwater world is worth the plunge. Seasoned divers and snorkellers will find plenty to excite them, while first-timers will be bubbling excited exclamations into their mouthpieces. Anywhere a fin flashes or coral waves you’ll find a diving or snorkel day trip and there are excellent live-aboard journeys for those after a truly immersive experience.

Beyond the Beach
While it’s easy to spend your holiday in, on or under the water, those who take the time to towel off will be rewarded by a wealth of terra firma treats. Fiji offers ample opportunities for hikers, birdwatchers, amblers and forest-fanciers, particularly on the islands of Taveuni – known as ‘The Garden Island’ for its ludicrously lush interiors – and Kadavu, a less-travelled slice of prehistoric paradise with almost no roads to speak of. If urban wildlife is your thing, Suva boasts a surprising nightlife scene, while towns like Savusavu entice with rollicking taverns and meet-the-locals haunts.

Why I Love Fiji
What makes Fiji exceptional isn’t any must-see sights or unforgettable experiences (though those are pretty thick on the ground); for me, it’s the people. Whether I’m visiting a village, dodging coconuts on the beach or walking through the big cities, nary a moment goes by without being dazzled by genuine smiles, bombarded by greetings of bula or having a shower of smooches land on my baby daughter. I get goosebumps recalling traditional, eerily beautiful songs of welcome and farewell. Even though we’re just passing through, I always come away feeling like a member of a big family. Fijians greet guests with a rousing ‘Welcome home!’…and they mean it.

A Warm Welcome
Fijian life revolves around the church, the village, the rugby field and the garden. While this may sound insular, you’d be hard-pressed to find a more open and welcoming population. Though the realities of local life are less sunny than the country’s skies – many regions are poor and lack basic services – Fijians are famous for their hospitality and warmth, which makes it easy to make friends or immerse yourself in Fijian culture on a village homestay.
Visa Application Process

Entering Fiji is very straightforward. To get a visa you’ll need an onward ticket and a passport valid for at least three months longer than your intended stay. A free tourist visa for four months is granted on arrival to citizens of more than 100 countries, including most countries belonging to the European Union, British Commonwealth, North America, much of South America, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, Russia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and many others.

Nationals from countries excluded from the list will have to apply for visas through a Fijian embassy abroad prior to arrival. More information can be found on the website of the Department of Immigration.

Visitors cannot partake in political activity or study, and work permits are needed if you intend to live and work in Fiji. Foreign journalists will require a work visa if they spend more than 14 days in Fiji.

Arriving by Boat

Those entering Fiji by boat are subject to the same visa requirements as those arriving by plane. There are other requirements for those entering Fiji by yacht.

Visa Extensions

In theory, tourist visas can be extended for up to six months by applying through the Department of Immigration. You’ll need to show an onward ticket and proof of sufficient funds, and your passport must be valid for three months after your proposed departure. Processing can be slow, and success is not automatic.
Weather

Low Season (Nov & Feb-Apr)
November to April is Fiji’s ‘wet season’, with heavy rains and high humidity. Fewer tourists equal reduced rates, though discounts are hard to come by in December and January during Australian and New Zealand school holidays.

Shoulder (May & Oct)
The shoulder season includes the ‘Fijian winter’ or ‘dry season’ (May to October), bringing low rainfall, low humidity, milder temperatures and a lower risk of cyclones.

High Season (Jun-Sep; Dec & Jan)
Peak seasons coincide with the school holidays in Australia and New Zealand. Prices go up by 10% to 20%; costs peak in June and July.

Currency
The local currency is the Fiji dollar ($); it’s fairly stable relative to Australian and New Zealand dollars. All prices quoted here are in Fiji dollars unless otherwise specified.

The dollar is broken down into 100 cents. Bank notes come in denominations of $100, $50, $20, $10 and $5. There are coins valued at $2, $1, $0.50, $0.20, $0.10 and $0.05.

It’s good to have a few options for accessing money – take a credit card, a debit card, and a small amount of foreign currency. The best currencies to carry are Australian, New Zealand or US dollars, which all freely exchangeable.

Before you head out to remote parts of Fiji, always check to make sure you can access money, use your plastic or change currency.

Tipping
Tipping is not expected or overtly encouraged in Fiji; however, if you feel that the service is worth it, tips are always appreciated.

Voltage
240V/50Hz
There is no malaria or rabies in Fiji. Health facilities are good; however, this is a small country with a limited budget, so "good" does not necessarily compare with the facilities of a well-developed country.

The overall risk of illness for a normally healthy person is low; the most common problems are diarrhoeal upsets, viral sore throats and ear and skin infections—all of which can mainly be treated with self-medication. For serious symptoms, e.g., sustained fever, chest or abdominal pains, it is best to go to the nearest clinic or doctor.

**Recommended Vaccinations**

There are no compulsory vaccinations needed for Fiji. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, regardless of their destination. Most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they’re given, so visit your physician at least six weeks before departure. A recent influenza vaccination is always a good idea when travelling, as are vaccinations for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid fever. If you have been in a country affected by yellow fever within six days of arriving in Fiji, you will need an International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever to be allowed entry into the country.

**Availability of Health Care**

Fiji has readily available doctors in private practice and standard hospital and laboratory facilities with consultants. Private dentists, opticians and pharmacists are also available. The further you get from the main cities, the more basic the services. Private consultations start from around $30. Fees for government-provided services vary from modest to negligible, but waiting times can be very long. Direct payment is required everywhere except where a specific arrangement is made, e.g., in the case of evacuation or where a prolonged hospital stay is necessary; you will need to contact your insurer.

**Water**

The municipal water supply in Suva, Nadi and other large towns is chlorinated and can usually be trusted, but elsewhere avoid untreated tap water. After heavy rain it's worth boiling the water before you drink it.

Source: Lonelyplanet.com