

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES YASAWAS ULTIMATE TROPICAL EXPEDITION

ELEVEN DAY TRIP WITH NINE DAYS SEA KAYAKING

Fiji is an island nation comprised of 322 islands spread over 230,000 square kilometers. The Yasawa group is a chain of 16 islands located north-west of Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. On the "Ultimate Tropical Expedition", a select group of paddlers will spend nine days kayaking the entire length of the Yasawa island chain. Keeping a flexible itinerary, the group will kayak between islands, camp on isolated beaches, stay in small native villages, snorkel and even enjoy a spot of fishing. The trip includes several challenging open sea crossings, which is sure to thrill our band of adventurers! Group numbers will be limited and we require all participants be of intermediate paddling standard or higher.

A QUICK ITINERARY

Day 1	Pre trip briefing & overnight at our Nadi hotel.	
Day 2	Boat to Yasawas and begin sea kayaking.	LD
Days 3-10	Kayak through island chain.	BLD
Day 11	Morning on Kuata Island, boat to Nadi. Trip concludes.	BL

MEETING PLACE AND TIME

We meet at our group hotel, Mercure Nadi, at 8:00 pm on Day 1. Hotel check in is from 2.00 pm on Day 1. Hotel accommodation is based on a twin share room, single rooms are available for an additional charge.

HOW TO GET THERE

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

SEA KAYAKING

This trip is designed for paddlers who have some experience. We will mostly paddle single kayaks but would like to have at least one double along for safety reasons. We would ask that you prepare for the trip by doing some regular paddling. We will paddle loaded kayaks enabling us to be self-sufficient during the trip. The degree of difficulty of the trip **will depend on the weather** we encounter. The sea and weather conditions in the outer islands are predominantly stable but in windier conditions we may require a full days paddling. There will be several open water crossings with accompanying swell. An "average" paddling day will range from five to six hours and we mix in as much snorkeling and exploration walking as we can fit in. We ask that all participants expect an adventure and we will amend the itinerary to take advantage of the weather and opportunities as they arise.

The kayaks are stable and ideally suited for this remote trip. It is important to keep personal gear to a minimum as we carry all of our food and equipment in our kayaks. Our guides are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional wilderness guides. On the first day you will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of the trip with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks on Day 2.

PROPOSED ITINERARY



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

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

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

Day 3: Load our expedition craft and paddle 15 km to Navotua. With favourable tides we'll have lunch where fringing reefs run directly off the beach. After rounding the point of Nathula Island we head for the small village of Navotua. The villagers of Navotua are particularly friendly and the special warmth and reception we receive in this village has made it our favourite spot. We will have time for a snorkel in the reefs off shore and explore the surrounds. We round out the day with evening entertainment (Fijian style) provided by the village.

Day 4: We paddle to the caves at Sawa-I-Lau, a scenic island with sharp limestone peaks and salt-water caves that make for fascinating exploring. We will then carry on to Vawa Island, an uninhabited island with beautiful white sandy beaches. We have the afternoon to explore the island and enjoy its many snorkelling sites. We camp underneath coconut palms and we can even try our hand at climbing some of the low coconut trees to secure vital ingredients for our tropical punch!

Day 5: Paddle back to Tavewa, exploring the many inlets and bays of Nathula en route (20 km). Time permitting, we can snorkel off the back of the island. Tonight we will repack for the southern leg of our expedition.

Day 6: We'll aim for a dawn start as we have a long paddling day. We round Matacalevu, along the length of Yaqueta Island and then to the large island of Naviti. On crossing Bligh Straight there is a great opportunity to troll and catch a fresh dinner!

Day 7: We paddle the length of Naviti Island and meander through a number of smaller islands before camping at Narara island. Enjoy snorkeling in Narara's superb lagoon.

Day 8: We set off on our second open water crossing to Waya island, around Wayalevu to Kuata.

Day 9: Weather permitting, we will cross over to the remote islands of Eori or Vanua Levu in the Mamanuca group.

Day 10: Return to Kuatu and perhaps our final paddling day. We will have a resort dinner together, savouring the flavours of the South Pacific. A great time to reflect on the trip and dream about our next adventure!

Day 11: We spend a relaxing morning on Kuata Island snorkeling and cleaning up before departing on the Yasawa Flyer at 3pm. The "Flyer" arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 5.45pm. Trip concludes.

END OF TRIP

We finish the trip with a boat transfer from Kuata Island to Denarau Marina in Nadi on Day 11. Accommodation on this night (and transfers to your hotel) need to be booked by you and are not included in the trip cost. You may like to extend your stay in the Yasawas at one of the resorts and return to the mainland on a later day. If you would like to stay longer in the islands, please let us know at least one month prior to your trip departure date so we can change your boat reservation (there will be surcharges for extra boat transfers). A few suggested Nadi hotels and Yasawa resorts are listed at the end of these notes.

THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

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

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

CLIMATE

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

TRIP ORGANISATION

The sun sets quickly in the tropics so paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures. It's a good idea to pack up your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tents so that loading for departure can be organised. On a paddling day we'd like to be on the water before 8:30am and arrive into camp just after mid afternoon. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

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

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

EXPEDITION STAFF

Your kayak guides will be two of our most experienced leaders. The guide's role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. The guides will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

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

TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

AIRPORT TAXES

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

TIME & COMMUNICATION

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

ACCOMMODATION

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

FOOD AND WATER

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

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

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

- ask the locals if they mind being photographed.
- restrict wearing bathing suits to remote beaches.
- In villages use a sulu with a shirt or long pants in the evenings. Shorts are acceptable during the day.

GIFTS

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

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

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

CONSERVATION

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

PHOTOGRAPHY

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

MONEY MATTERS

Your tour cost includes:

- Hotel accommodation at our group hotel on a twin share basis for the night listed on the itinerary.
- Internal boat and bus transfer excluding airport transfers.
- Expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment.
- Two person tents.

- Sleeping mats (full length thermarest pads).
- Watertight bags for your personal gear.
- Professional guides.
- All meals except in Nadi.
- Group first aid kit.

Your tour cost does not include:

- Meals in Nadi as outlined above.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Airport taxes (if any) on departure from Nadi.
- Travel insurance.
- Accommodation on the night of Day 11.
- Transfers in Nadi at the end of the kayaking on Day 11.
- Items of a personal nature such as postage and laundry.

MONEY TO BRING WITH YOU

\$150 Fijian cash will be more than enough to bring during the kayaking and it is unlikely you will be able to spend that. The amount required in Nadi for meals and sightseeing will generally be covered by about \$40-\$60 a day, with alcohol extra. There are ATM machines at the airport and in the main centres and there is a 24 hour bank at the airport. This is the most efficient way to obtain Fijian dollars. Credit cards are accepted in larger stores or hotels but don't rely on being able to use one everywhere. Traveller's cheques and foreign cash can be changed at the airport or banks in the larger towns.

CURRENCY

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

TIPPING

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

SECURITY

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

You may also like to look up the contact details of your country's consulate in Fiji.

MEDICAL MATTERS

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

Hygiene

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

Vaccinations

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

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as



well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

Medical Supplies

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

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

Dental

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

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING - WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

To minimise our impact on the villages and the environment through which we pass, we travel self sufficiently. That means that we carry everything with us, so it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. In your kayak all equipment is packed in water proof containers. However we recommend you bring your own small 5-10 litre dry bag for items you may need during the day while kayaking. For general wear, we recommend casual clothes suitable for warm weather, preferably with a high content of cotton (which is cooler and breathes well).

Keep in mind that water is scarce on some of the islands and there are no shops. We will carry our own drinking water but it may be several days before we can wash with fresh water instead of salt.

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

GEAR LIST

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

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

Optional items.

- Camera and film, with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof
- Book.
- Hand reel and fishing line if you wish to fish.
- 10 metres of lightweight clothesline.
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Ear plugs – noisy roosters!!

RECOMMENDED READING

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

On Fiji Islands by Ronald Wright.

Footprints in Fiji by Geoff Raymond

The Fiji Explorer's Handbook by Kim Gravelle.

Matanitu by David Routledge.

Fijian Phrasebook, Lonely Planet.

The Drama of Fiji by John W. Coulter.

Fiji Islands Handbook by David Stanley, Moon Publications.

Fiji's Natural Heritage by Paddy Ryan.

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

The Snorkelers Guide to the Coral Reef, Paddy Ryan.

DELAYS OR PROBLEMS

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

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PLACES TO STAY AFTER END OF TRIP

The Yasawa Flyer arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 5.45pm on Day 11. Alternatively, you may choose to extend your stay in the islands at one of the resorts and transfer on a later day. Please let us know your arrangements as soon as possible as we may need to change your boat reservations.

For a comprehensive guide to accommodation in Fiji, take a look at the Fiji Visitors Bureau website, www.fijime.com

Octopus Resort-the resort on Waya Island. There are different styles of accommodation to suit most budgets. From Kuata Island, it's a half hour transfer on the Yasawa Flyer, heading north. Surcharge payable for boat transfer.

www.octopusresort.com

Tel: (679) 6030070

Hotels in the Nadi area:

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

Mercure.com/Fiji-Nadi

Tel: (679) 6722255

Tanoa International Hotel-three minutes from Nadi International airport.

<http://www.tanoa-international-fiji.com>

Tel: (679) 6720277

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

www.fijinadibayhotel.com

Tel: (679) 6723599

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

Sheraton Fiji Resort-5 star

www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=485

Tel: (679) 6750777

Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island-4 star

www.radisson.com/fiji

Tel: (679) 6756677