

Projects Abroad

Fiji



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Bula!

Happy New Year, and welcome to the January edition of our Projects Abroad Newsletter for Fiji, and the 1st of 2011!!!

Well we've had an influx of new volunteers since the New Year began, and the new school year commenced on the 25th January, so there's plenty to report on.

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

I hope you enjoy reading our January news.

All the best

Anne
xxx



Suva - your newest volunteer destination in the Pacific



Projects Abroad is excited to extend a very warm welcome to the city of Suva – our newest volunteer destination in the Pacific. Suva is home away from home for most travellers. It is a vibrant city offering a unique blend of western rhythm with a traditional and colonial tempo. Suva became the capital city of Fiji in 1882, and has since grown to be one of the Pacific’s most dynamic and influential cities, often considered “the hub” of the Pacific.

Our care, teaching and medical placements are located within the Suva – Nausori corridor. There is a wide range of choices of kindergartens, orphanages and special schools under our care programme. The teaching programme also covers a broad range of teaching areas such as English, Math, Science, Physical Education (Sports), Art & Craft and so much more. This incredible diversity and the friendly nature of the locals allow each volunteer to become literally absorbed into the culture and lives of the people here in Suva. One could easily identify people from more than ten different nationalities walking the streets each day!

Whilst not only offering an exciting opportunity at the placements, Suva has so much more to offer with its unique taste in different cuisines and also the different flavours of its night-life. Not only this, but the country’s only Museum and the Thurston Gardens will certainly make its mark on those searching for the unique exhibits of the Pacific.



It is not going to be all about work here, with some very cool getaway options, weekends and holidays (for those who stay long enough). Those wanting an exhilarating experience will enjoy Zip Fiji and Rivers Fiji located just outside Suva. For a dip in the ocean and a nice relaxing lunch, Pacific Harbour would be your best bet. The waterfalls at the Colo-i-Suva Forest Park will certainly help you cool off during those hot summer Sundays and for an island escapade, Nulukau Island (formerly a state prison) will definitely be an exciting adventure. These are only just a few of the activities on offer, however, there is still so much more to see and do.

We definitely look forward to welcoming all new volunteers to Suva and are excited about sharing all that we have with our new visitors.

By Chinnamma Reddy (Projects Abroad Regional Co-ordinator for Suva)

News and Updates

Host thank you dinner

This month the Projects Abroad Fiji team invited all our host families to a dinner, to thank them for doing such a fantastic job looking after our volunteers. There were 45 in attendance, and we treated them to a huge buffet, hosted at Bamboo on Wailoaloa beach. It was a great opportunity for them to meet the other families and swap stories/advice etc.



End of Summer School

Summer School has finally come to an end. After a fun-packed six weeks of classes and activities, its back to regular school for the children in Fiji as the new school year started on the 25th January. It wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, who managed to keep the children entertained for 4 hours each day

with games, classes, activities etc. All of us at Projects Abroad Fiji would like to extend a big thank you to these volunteers, some who helped out for just a week or two, others who were there every day for the duration: Maciej Sulek, Andy Cochrane, Rob Robinson, Gwen Coe, Christina Jacob, Maxi Bohnert, Brandon Petrick, Sandra Langsted, Margaux Michel, Catherine Teymourzadeh, Tamsin Cardale, Pip Thompson, Kerry Clift, Isabelle Rechsteiner, Brooke Evans, Courtney Rohde, Rafaella Lechte, Julie Anderson, Franziska Frohberg, Joana Book and Celeste Velarde.



Medical placements.

We have now welcomed our first Medical volunteer in Fiji! Ida Jensen will be working with the St Johns Ambulance and Raiwaqa Clinic, based in Suva. We have more volunteers lined up to join the medical and nursing placements in the coming months, and look forward to hearing how they get on!

January host of the MonthThe Ram Family

"I arrived at my family's house in the stormy rain and crossed the flooded rickety drive. I rushed across some wooden planks and into the porch! There I was greeted with the largest and most brilliant smile from my host mum. Mrs Ram has what you call an ageless face, she is a mother through and through and loves to worry about all her kids all the time, which I soon found out would include me!"



Rob (left) and fellow volunteer Andy Cochrane with 'Mum' Uma.

"The family are FBI (Fijian Born Indian).

Mrs Ram is the head of the family consisting of Mr Ram and their four sons. Mr Ram is a majestic bearded legend and probably the best Indian cook in Fiji, although Mrs Ram is always telling him off for drinking too much grog (kava). The sons are great fun and it really felt that I had gained four brothers!"

"My first week there I had two other volunteers living with me: a lovely English lad called Andy with whom I shared a room, and Mrs Wilma, a vivacious retired Head teacher. We all had a great laugh together with Mrs Ram who would constantly natter with Mrs Wilma, who in turn would be continuously teasing Mr Ram."

"The family often sleeps in the large airy sitting room, which meant any evening we were up late we would have to wake the family to be let in. I felt awful to begin with having this arrangement, but Mr & Mrs Ram don't mind, in fact they are more concerned with making sure you are fed before you sleep, whatever time it may be! This arrangement will soon change as the Rams are in the middle of building a new room with en suite just for volunteers!"

"The family invited us to prayers, which involved music and singing, and lots of great Indian food. We were also invited to Mrs Ram's nephew's one year birthday party. It is the only one year olds birthday party in which the guests were warned not to get too rowdy even before the bar has opened. It was brilliant fun...not sure I have laughed so much in one night since!"

"Christmas was amazing, beer all day and a fat goat for dinner! Goat's blood, liver and curry, it was great. Mrs Ram told us we had to stay in with the family for New Year, and must have mentioned this to me a hundred times. Consequently lots of the volunteers came to the Rams for a party, where we let off fireworks and crackers as the clock struck midnight."

"The time I have spent with the Rams has been fantastic. I would like to thank them for allowing me to become part of the family and introducing me to the Indian Fijian way of life. I would also like to warn them my adoption papers are in the post!"

By Robert Robinson (UK) –Teaching volunteer Nov '10 – Jan '11

Social updates

New Years Celebrations in Nadi



We were down to fairly low numbers over New Years, with only about 12 volunteers in Fiji, but there were still plenty of celebrations. Some volunteers ventured to Suva where they had a large street

party. Others stayed with their families for the evening and then carried on the party until the early hours at the ever popular Ed's bar. With Fiji being just next to the International Date Line, it was nice to be one of the first countries in the world to see in 2011.

Road trip around Viti levu!

A group of volunteers took to the road and decided to circumnavigate Viti Levu in a weekend. In a hired minivan, they first headed north from Nadi on the famously potholed Kings road, battling very steep muddy tracks and rickety bridges along the way. They finally reached Suva nine hours after setting off! The following day the rugby sevens were on in Suva so they managed to squeeze in a few games (spectating not playing!) before heading back on the road for the slightly shorter stretch along the south coast to Suva, stopping at the beautiful Natadola beach on the way. I think they were all completely exhausted by the trip, but had a blast!



Island trip Highlights

A trip to Fiji isn't complete without a trip to Beachcomber Island. The resort is only about 45 minutes boat ride from the port, and is famous for being the party island. To top it off it also has some pretty good snorkelling for those who aren't too exhausted from the night before.



Octopus Resort is on one of the most southern islands in the Yasawa group, but is still a good two and a half hours boat trip from the mainland. It is however home to one of the most pristine beaches and fantastic snorkelling on the reef.

Sleeping Giant hike



A group of our volunteers decided to brave the sweltering temperatures and hike up the nearby Sleeping Giant hill, just north of Nadi. They seemed to completely unintentionally pick one of the hottest days we've had in Nadi in a while to tackle the climb, and I think it's fair to say most of them have never sweated so much in their lives!

Get-togethers

Our monthly social get together was at Sitar restaurant this month. A popular choice, and certainly one of my favourite places to eat in town, we were a table of 18 for a delicious dinner of Indian/Thai dishes.

Miscellaneous

Donations...



Julie Anderson came to Fiji for just two weeks along with her son Peter, to help in our Summer School during the January holidays. Not only did she do a wonderful job in the classroom, she was also kind enough to donate a bunch of children's books that will be used by other volunteers as teaching aides in the various schools and kindergartens they work in.

Other donations came from **Tracey Buckley**, who is a teacher in her home country Australia. Not only did she spend her school holidays teaching, but she also left behind materials for other volunteers to use in their classes doing arts and crafts etc. Thanks you both for your kind donations.

January Birthdays...



Franzi Frohberg celebrated her 20th birthday on the 15th January. Many happy returns! X

(...and of course I celebrated mine of the 9th January, but I'm not revealing which birthday it was!)



Franzi and her b'day cake!

Tip of the month...

If anyone is planning to send a donation to a school or host family here in Fiji, we recommend addressing it to our Projects Abroad office (c/o Projects Abroad, PO Box 3251, Nadi, Fiji), with a note inside explaining who it's intended for. Our staff can then collect it and pass it on to the relevant person. Duty must be paid on all parcels that arrive in Fiji, so some individuals may not want to collect the parcel if the duty is too high, and consequently it may be returned to the sender. All packages are held by customs at the airport. They are opened and checked upon collection, and the relevant duty is then paid. We therefore recommend not wrapping individual items too nicely (as it will be opened), and stating on the package that the value is below F\$100 (to minimise the duty to be paid). It is also a good idea to state on the package that it is a donation for a school /children (if this is in fact the case).

Recipe of the month:

Kokoda

This fish dish is a Fijian favourite and utilises common ingredients of the islands. It is the Fiji version of ceviche.

Ingredients:

- 4 large fillets of white fish such as mahi-mahi.
- Juice of 3 large limes.
- ½ teaspoon salt.
- 1 cup fresh coconut cream.
- 1 large onion, finely chopped.
- 1 small green chilli, seeds and stem removed, finely chopped.
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced.
- 1 bell pepper, seeds and stem removed, diced.



Preparation:

Cut the fish into bite-size pieces. In a non-reactive bowl, combine the fish, lime juice, and salt. Marinate overnight in the refrigerator.

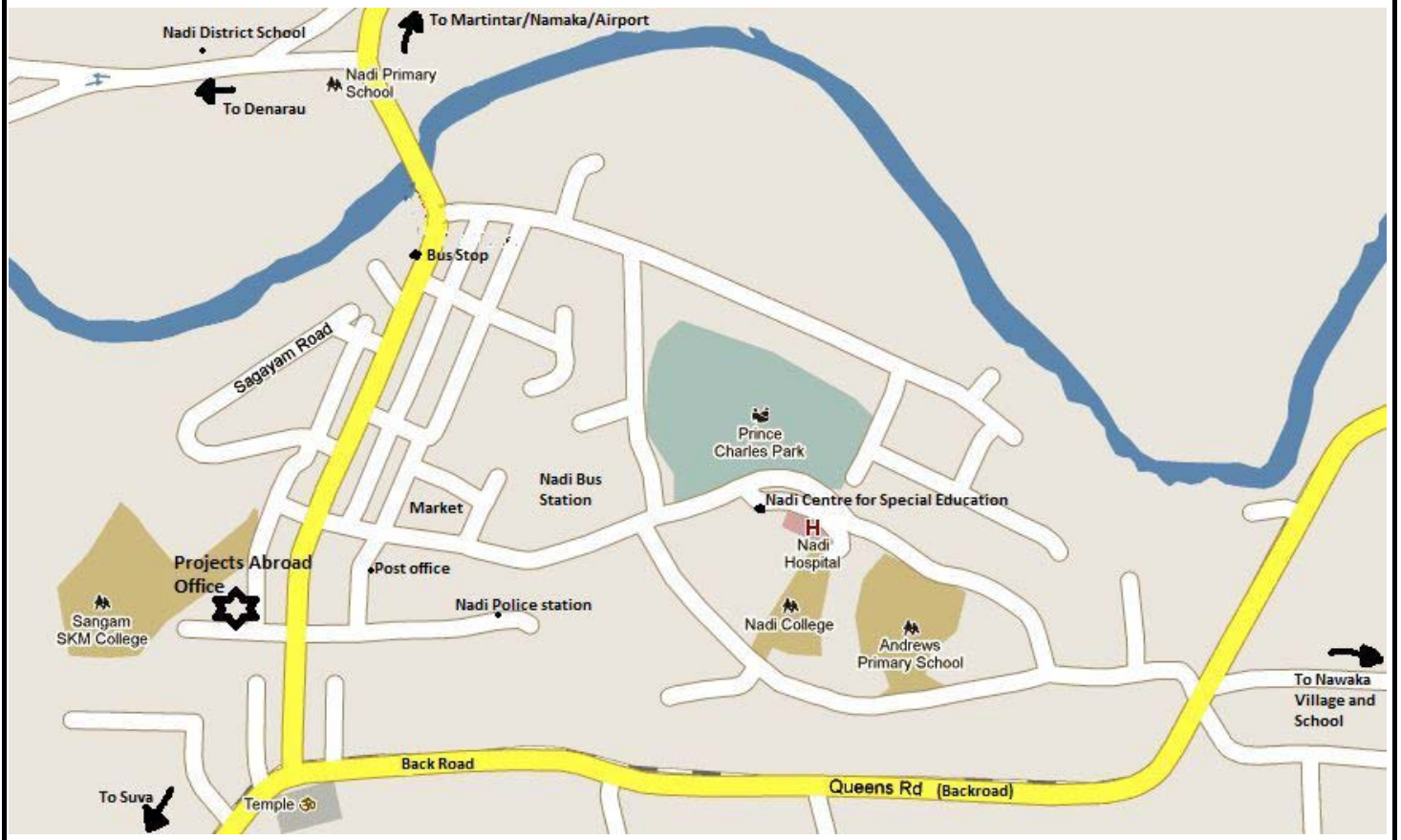
Remove from the refrigerator, add the coconut cream, chopped onion, and chilli just before serving. Sprinkle the tomatoes and bell pepper over the top. Serve on a bed of lettuce or in coconut *bilos* (half coconut shells), with a fresh fruit salad.

(6 to 8 servings)

Map of Nadi



Nadi Town Centre



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



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

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

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



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



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

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

A special thanks goes to Chinnamma Reddy and Robert Robinson for their contributions to this issue.

Until next month...

Vinaka!

xxx

