

Fiji April 2002

Craig and I decided to take up Scuba Diving, a sport we had always wanted to try. We took our lessons from Boise Water Sports during February 2002 and decided instead of doing our open water dives in Blue Lake, Wendover during February (brrrrrr) that it would more fun to travel with Boise Water Sports to Fiji in April and do our 4 required open water dives there !

Since our cousins, Kenny and Cindy are also divers, we told them about the dive trip to Fiji and they wanted to join us. Little did we realize that this group of people on the trip would soon become the official “Scuba Toes” and many of us would continue to dive together for years to come and also enjoy other sports like motorcycle riding and hiking.

If you are not familiar with where Fiji is located, it is in the South Pacific, past Australia and is made up of over 333 islands. The dive group from Boise Water Sports would be staying on the small island of Bega (pronounced “benga”) at the Marlin Bay Resort. The group of divers met in the LAX airport and began our long journey around the world. We left LAX on April 11 @ 7:35pm and arrived on the island of Vita Levu, Fiji on April 13 @ 5:00am. Upon our arrival in Fiji, we then boarded a bus and traveled for 2 hours to the town of Pacific Harbor and caught a 30 minute boat ride to the island of Bega.



Marlin Bay Resort was laid out with a central area for drinks, dinner, entertainment, and the pool. The “buras” (individual lodging huts) are situated throughout the resort with privacy and are surrounded by Koi ponds.



Main dining, bar, and pool area



Our bure with bedroom and living area

We soon developed a routine: gourmet breakfast, 2 boat dives with a surface interval swimming in the lagoons, gourmet lunch. Afternoons were spent either diving, going to the local village to attend school or church, hiking to waterfalls, or learning about the local Fijian culture. Our evenings were a gourmet dinner and local Fijian education and entertainment.



Afternoon lesson on basket weaving from a palm frond



Bula Night ! One of the evenings was called Bula Night with singing and dancing. Katherine and I got some Sulu's (sarong) and with the help of the local women, were able to fashion a dress.



One of our afternoon hikes to the waterfall that produces the "Fiji" water. The path along the beach took us to the local village where we attended school and church. We brought school supplies from the States and gave them to the school and children of the village, they were very appreciative.



Before dinner one evening we learned about the drink called Kava. It is mixed in a bowl with water by hand and then a shared cup is passed around to drink. It is rumored to have an effect like alcohol and make you tipsy and....tastes like dirt.



One afternoon and evening we were entertained by the local fire walkers. It was amazing watching them walk across the hot coals which had been burning and smoldering all day.



Lazy afternoon – Katherine sleeping. Prior to dinner we enjoyed conversations at the bar area. This area is all located under the same roof so it was very easy to have one person sleeping and right behind them others chatting or swimming off to the side of the building.



Local entertainment before dinner. This is the dining area where we ate family style.

Craig and I were a little worried that we would not enjoy diving and we took a chance by trekking across the world for our first real open water dives. Okay, I have to admit...Craig knew HE would enjoy it. Me, I was scared. I'm claustrophobic, afraid of heights, can't swim well and am intimidated by the Ocean, or should I say I have a fond respect for the Ocean. However, the diving part of the trip was phenomenal! 2 hours after arriving at Marlin Bay Resort, Charlie (owner of Boise Water Sports and organizer of the trip) needed to get some of our initial dives out of the way, since the next day we'd be doing our first boat dives. So we suited up and did our first shore dive in open water. I was in the water up to my thighs when Charlie said, "okay lay down and start floating." The first thing I saw when I put my face in the water was a HUGE bright blue starfish. I was so distracted and in awe of what I saw in front of me and beyond, that I didn't even realize when I could no longer touch and we were down at 25'! The rest they say...is history – I was hooked!



One of our surface intervals jumping off the top of the boat into the lagoon. We would sometimes swim ashore and crack coconuts for a snack. Unfortunately, early into the trip, Craig jumped off the roof and hurt his shoulder. He was in terrible pain, sleeping on the couch with his shoulder elevated and on ice. The only time his shoulder felt better was when he was diving and underwater.



A surface interval hanging on the boat and chatting.



After our first dive, we decided to call ourselves the “Scuba Toes” and paint dive flags on each big toe. At first the men were leery, but Craig stepped right up and showed them how to do it. Even the local dive crew joined in the fun. The tradition of “Scuba Toes” was born. The group photo is most everyone from our trip: Charlie, Delana, Joe, Gun, Captian G., Tara, Katherine, Dics, Holly, Rene, Dave, Cindy, Kenny, Cliff, George, and Craig.

After a few week full of adventures, it is time to say goodbye to Marlin Bay Resort. The group departed and everyone flew back to Boise. Cindy, Kenny, Craig, and I stayed one more week to enjoy the interior and more culture of Fiji.



Kenny and Cindy had a timeshare, so the four of us stayed in Pacific Harbor at the Fiji Palms Resort (located on the island of Vita Levu). Within walking and bicycle distance was a local market, restaurants, and cultural center with museum. We also traveled to the capitol city of Suva one day for some shopping.



Craig and Cindy enjoying the pool.



Craig and I with one of the guards at a local plantation.



During one of our travels, we stopped along the road to enjoy some fresh sugar cane. Before leaving Boise, a co-worker gave us some supplies and wanted us to contact a friend of theirs in Fiji. It just so happened that out of the 333 Fijian islands, our last week was only a few hours drive from Jim and Wati Lutu. Kenny, Cindy, Craig, and I enjoyed a nice visit with Wait and her family and they appreciated all of the gifts from the States.

One of the highlights of our trip was White Water Rafting the Navu River. We took a 2 hour drive up into the mountains in the back of the truck below. The roads were dirt and a few bridges were washed out. From the truck, we hiked through the jungle with our helmet, paddle, and life vest to get to the beginning of the river. I cannot describe how beautiful it was, it was surreal and out of a dream. The walls to the canyon were about 200' high with just a narrow passageway of water. Our guide asked us to count how many waterfalls we saw during the trip and we eventually lost count after 100. Half way into the trip, we stopped along the shore for lunch and enjoyed many "accidental" falls over the side of the raft to get wet.



Truck we traveled in to the river



Our guides preparing lunch



Fiji is a wonderful place with such a diverse group of people. The local Fijians and Indian. Their cultures are extremely different, yet they are able to co-exist in peace. We look forward to going back and exploring more of the islands and culture.