



SSV SOUTH PACIFIC-FIJI

# Fiji: Yasawa Tropical Kayak Expedition

Nine day trip



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## The Trip

Fiji is an archipelago made up of 330 islands with a coastline of over 1129 kilometres; the perfect island paradise for a sea kayak trip! The Yasawa group is a chain of 16 islands located north-west of Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. On the *Yasawa Tropical Kayak Expedition*, our group of paddlers will spend six days kayaking along the Yasawa archipelago, staying in small island villages, camping on remote beaches and finishing with a night at a picturesque resort. Days will be spent exploring the palm-fringed coastline by kayak, snorkelling tropical reefs and on the last day of the trip, an opportunity to swim with manta rays. This itinerary is suitable for those with prior paddling experience and fit, active beginners who are keen for an adventure.

## A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

**Day 1:** Pre trip briefing & overnight at our Nadi hotel.

**Day 2:** Boat to Tavewa Island, Yasawas. Afternoon instructional paddle. B • L • D

**Days 3–7:** Kayak through island chain. B • L • D

**Day 8:** Paddle to Barefoot Manta. Overnight at the resort. B • L • D

**Day 9:** Day at the resort with an opportunity to snorkel with manta rays. Afternoon boat to Nadi. Trip concludes. B • L

## Meeting Place and Time

We meet at our group hotel at 8:00 pm on Day 1. Room check in is available from 2pm. Hotel accommodation is based on twin share rooms, 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. The group hotel provides a free airport shuttle bus for all international arrivals.

## Sea Kayaking

This trip is designed for paddlers who have previous experience, however, we will consider fit and active beginners who are looking for an adventurous escape.

We ask that you prepare for the trip by doing some regular paddling prior to your trip departure. The degree of difficulty of the trip **will depend on the weather** we encounter and although the sea and weather conditions in the outer islands are predominantly stable, with windier conditions we may require a full day of paddling. The approximate distance we expect to paddle is around 90 kilometres and includes one open water crossing with accompanying swell. The kayaks will be loaded with food, water and kayak equipment enabling us to be self-sufficient. 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. It is important to know that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members. We generally limit our group size to a maximum of 10 clients, plus two guides.

The kayaks are stable and ideally suited for this trip, with a mix of single and double craft. Our trip leaders are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional wilderness guides. There will be a thorough briefing on all aspects of the trip with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks on the second day of the itinerary.

## Proposed Itinerary

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

**Day 1:** Arrive Nadi. If arriving by an international flight today, the group hotel will provide a free airport to hotel transfer. The trip briefing with your guide is held at 8pm in the hotel. If your flight arrives after this, please advise our office. The briefing lasts for approximately one hour and it's a good idea to eat dinner prior to the meeting. All your luggage may be taken with you to our base on Tavewa Island. Dinner tonight is not included.

MEALS NOT INCLUDED/NADI HOTEL

**Day 2:** After an early breakfast at the hotel, the group will transfer to Denarau marina for the 8.45am boat to the islands. The *Yasawa Flyer*, the boat servicing the Yasawas, is a 267-passenger catamaran. All luggage can be taken with you on the boat, but please keep your valuables on your person during the journey. It's a good idea to bring some snacks and reading matter for the approximate five hour, 72 kilometre trip to Tavewa Island. On arrival into the Blue Lagoon, the group transfers from the *Yasawa Flyer* to our base on Tavewa by a small boat. The combination of reefs, close island grouping and shallow waters create the stunning aqua colours for which this area is known. Our base camp has a dining bure (hut) and grassy campsites to pitch a tent. After customising the kayaks and getting acquainted with the expedition gear, we'll have an orientation

paddling session in the lagoon. Your guide 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). Luggage that you don't require while kayaking will be stored and then transported to you at Barefoot Manta resort at the end of the trip. Watching the sunset from the beach, followed by a delicious tropical dinner, is a great way to end the first day in the islands.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 3:** After a hearty breakfast, we load the kayaks and paddle 15km to Navotua village. With favourable tides, we'll enjoy a picnic lunch and swim where fringing reefs run directly off the beach. After rounding the point of Nacula Island we head for Navotua, one of our favourite spots due to the warm welcome and hospitality that we receive from the locals. There will be time for a snorkel and to explore the village and surrounds before dinner.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 4:** Today 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 continue paddling to an uninhabited island with great snorkelling before returning to Navotua village (paddle distance approximately 11 kms). We round out the day with afternoon entertainment provided by the village and an invitation to join the chief for a social kava party in the evening (kava is non-alcoholic drink with mild, numbing effects).

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 5:** Farewelling Navotua, we paddle back to Tavewa Island, exploring the outer coastline, if weather permits, and the many inlets and bays of Nacula en route. Paddle distance is about 15kms. Return to our base on Tavewa Island.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 6:** Today we pack our snorkelling gear and picnic lunch and head off on a day trip to explore the Blue Lagoon. We seek the best coral reefs for snorkelling and heavenly beaches for relaxation before returning to Tavewa. Paddling distance today is approximately 10kms. Tonight we repack for the southern leg of the journey. Luggage not required while kayaking will be transferred to Barefoot Manta resort.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 7:** We'll aim for an early start as we head south along the island chain. Our paddling route takes us past Matacalevu and along the length of Yaqueta Island. We cross Bligh Strait to the large island of Naviti. Our overnight stop will be a remote beach camp. Paddling distance today is approximately 20 kms.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 8:** We continue our paddle along Naviti Island, stopping for a swim or snorkel en route to Barefoot Manta resort on Drawaqa Island. On arrival, we'll settle into our island accommodation and enjoy a relaxed tropical dinner at the resort's restaurant. Paddling distance approximately 15kms.

**B • L • D / RESORT ACCOMMODATION**

**Day 9:** Today the group will have the opportunity to snorkel with the magnificent manta rays that feed in the narrow channel between Drawaqa and Naviti Islands, an amazing experience and a highlight of the trip. After lunch it's time to farewell your guides before departing on the *Yasawa Flyer* at 3pm. The *Flyer* arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 6.00pm. Trip concludes.

**B • L / NO ACCOMMODATION INCLUDED**

## End of Trip

We finish the trip with a boat transfer from Barefoot Manta to Denarau marina in Nadi. 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 at Barefoot Manta, or another island in the Yasawas 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 six weeks prior to your trip departure date so we can change your boat reservation (a boat surcharge may be applicable). To save transfer time to and from the islands, you may like to consider booking a seaplane transfer (an additional cost). The views from the plane are spectacular! A short list of Yasawa resorts and seaplane operators recommended by past trip participants are included on the last page 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 small coral cays. Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, covers 10,388 square kilometres, has 80% of the population and its highest peak, Mt. Victoria, is 1323 metres. The Yasawas are a chain of 16 volcanic islands with summits ranging from 229 to 579 metres.

Fiji has three official languages—Fijian, Hindi and English—but there are some 300 communalects (variations) in the Fijian language. It's a good idea to learn a few Fijian words and before you know it you'll be saying Bula to all you meet!

## Climate

Generally you will experience a mild tropical climate from May to November. The weather is generally drier in the Yasawas than on the main island of Viti Levu. Nights may be cool, perhaps 16-20 degrees C. The days are generally hot and dry with temperatures ranging from 24-30 degrees C. There may be some spells of cloudy weather and showers. Humidity increases in October and November and the trade winds blow from May until November.

## Trip Organisation

The sun sets quickly in the tropics and paddling days will start early to take advantage of daylight hours and cooler temperatures. It's a good idea to pack 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 around mid afternoon. 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 guides' role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. Should you have any concerns or queries 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 while 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 (including Covid-19 infection), injury, trip cancellation 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.

## **Time & Communication**

Nadi is two hours ahead of Australian Eastern standard time.

There is normally decent mobile phone coverage in the Yasawas, with a few 'back spot' exceptions. The local phone providers in Fiji are Digicel and Vodafone. It is possible to buy a Fijian SIM card for an overseas phone in Nadi. Phones can be re-charged at our base on Tavewa Island and in Navotua village, however, there are a couple of days during the trip when charging is not possible.

## **Accommodation**

We spend the first night in our group hotel in Nadi and the last night of the trip at Barefoot Manta resort in simple, private accommodation. Rooms are based on twin share, although single rooms may be requested for an additional charge.

We will stay in two person screened tents when camping. There are composting toilets at both our base on Tavewa and in Navotua village. Bush toileting at other times may be required and your guide will brief you on procedures.

We have not included a hotel on the last night as many people choose to extend their stay in the islands or sometimes depart on a late evening flight when available.

## **Meals**

On the kayaking trip, the food is freshly prepared by the guides who are all fantastic wilderness cooks. On longer paddle days, breakfasts consist of cereal, fresh fruit, toast or local roti and condiments. On more relaxed mornings, the guide will cook a hot breakfast of bacon and eggs or pancakes. Lunches are picnic-style, with a selection of cheese, cold meat, fresh vegetables, fruit, bread and/or salads. Dinners are two to three courses prepared with fresh ingredients and varied daily. Dinners may be pasta, curries, Asian stir fries or Mexican style. We'll try to supplement meals with freshly caught fish.

**We are happy to cater for vegetarians and other special dietary requirements. Please specify your dietary requirements on your online form.**

Some specialist diet food products are not available to buy in Fiji. For example, gluten-free cereal and UHT soy milk are sometimes hard to find, therefore, we recommend you bring some from home for your personal consumption during the trip.

In Nadi town there are many restaurants to choose from. 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. While in the Yasawas, our drinking water comes from rain water tanks. This can be boiled on request.

## **Cultural Considerations**

It is very important to behave in a respectful way towards both the people and their land. While 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 to wear swimwear in a village and a 'sulu' or a sarong should be carried by both men and women to cover up when necessary.

While 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 swimwear to 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 often offer their own limited food to strangers. We will be self-contained and provide all our own food and camping equipment to minimise 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, or community, 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 Navotua school and community fund we established in 1988. Southern Sea Ventures manages the fund in conjunction with the village chief and the school secretary. The purpose of the fund is to assist with community projects, such as installing solar panels or compost toilets and for the education of the village children.



The Navotua Infant Primary School opened in October 2013 and has been generously stocked with school supplies donated by our trip participants. A donation to the village fund may be something you may wish to consider after you have completed a trip. Contact the office for more details.

## 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 takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc. We have installed composting toilets on Tavewa and Navotua.

## Money Matters

### Your tour cost includes:

- Nadi hotel accommodation on a twin share basis for the first night of the trip.
- Simple twin-share resort accommodation on the last night of the trip.
- Internal boat 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).
- Support boat for the two day paddle between Tavewa and Barefoot Manta.
- Group first aid kit.

### Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Meals in Nadi (except breakfast at the hotel).
- Single supplements.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Travel insurance.
- Accommodation and transfers in Nadi at the end of the trip.
- Items of a personal nature such as WIFI charges and laundry.

## Money to Bring With You

\$200 Fijian cash will be more than enough to bring during the kayaking and it is unlikely you will be able to spend that. Fijian cash will be required if you'd like to



purchase a coffee and/or snacks at Denarau marina before boarding the *Yasawa Flyer* or an ice cream while on board. Some of the islands we visit may have handicrafts to purchase and only Fijian cash is accepted. The amount required in Nadi for meals will generally be covered by about FJ\$50–\$80 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.

### **Currency**

The unit of currency is the Fijian dollar. The exchange rate is approximately AU \$1 = FJ \$1.40 or US\$1=FJ\$2.00.

### **Tipping**

Tipping may be expected by the local people for services such as baggage handling, taxis or in restaurants. Our guides do not expect tips.

### **Security**

Theft is a consideration in Fiji (like at home) and it's 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, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief.

### **Medical Matters**

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. Please note any allergies and list your medications and what they taken for. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities and attention to medical matters is vital.

### **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.

### **Mosquito Borne-Diseases**

Fiji has no incidence of malaria, however, in urban areas dengue fever has been recorded. The outer Yasawas are in a rain shadow and as a result, there is a low risk of contracting mosquito-borne diseases while kayaking in the islands. Prevention is the key and a few simple measures can mitigate mosquito contact both on mainland Fiji and during your kayak trip. Precautions to be taken include regularly applying insect repellent (containing DEET) and, where possible, avoiding sheltered areas where mosquitoes are more abundant than in windy areas. Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts in the early mornings and evenings. Use mosquito nets if staying in unscreened accommodation. Please note, all our tents are screened.

## 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 (reef safe and water resistant variety at least SP30).
- Lip protectant (high SP factor).
- Band-aid strips.
- Insect repellent.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- A mild antiseptic soap/liquid handwash.
- Rapid Antigen Tests for Covid-19 self-testing.

## 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 we carry everything with us and it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. In your kayak all equipment is packed in water-proof containers. We recommend you bring your own small 5–10 litre dry bag for items you may need during the day while kayaking.

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. All gear should fit into about half a large garbage bag. Any luggage not required while kayaking will be stored at our base on Tavewa Island and transferred to Barefoot Manta.

## Gear List

### Essential Items:

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

- 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, e.g. straw hat 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.
- Two long sleeve lightweight shirts. A synthetic shirt is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling and a separate camp shirt for mosquito protection in the evening.
- Two or three T-shirts.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length trousers to wear in camp.
- 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) 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 paddling shoes and sand in the evenings).
- Reef shoes or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly for paddling.
- Lightweight socks to wear with your running shoes in the evening for mosquito deterrent.
- 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 useful).
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive in Fiji).
- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine.
- 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, so you should bring your own mask, snorkel and fins (short fins are preferable to long fins as there is less potential to damage coral). 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 (and prevent sunburn).
- Pillow case or very small pillow (e.g. airline pillow). It must fit into your dry bag.

**Optional items:**

- Camera with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof.
- A book for relaxation time.
- 10 metres of lightweight clothesline.
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Ear plugs—noisy roosters!!

**Delays or Problems**

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures. A Fijian number for your guide will be provided on your final trip itinerary.

**SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES**

[ssvtrips@southernseaventures.com](mailto:ssvtrips@southernseaventures.com)

[www.southernseaventures.com](http://www.southernseaventures.com)

## **Fiji Travel Information**

### **Fiji Visitors Bureau**

A comprehensive guide to travel in Fiji.  
<http://www.fiji.travel>

**For those wishing to spend more time in the beautiful Yasawa Islands, the following resorts are located near the trip finish point and serviced by the Yasawa Flyer (surcharge applicable):**

### **Octopus Resort**

A resort on a lovely bay with different styles of accommodation to suit most budgets.  
[www.octopusresort.com](http://www.octopusresort.com)

### **Barefoot Manta Resort**

This is where we stay on our last night in the islands. A simple resort with dorm beds and private rooms. Offers snorkel trips to swim with the manta rays.  
[www.barefootmantafiji.com](http://www.barefootmantafiji.com)

### **Paradise Cove**

An upmarket resort nestled in a picturesque cove.  
<http://www.paradisecoveresortfiji.com>

**Seaplane transfers to and from the Yasawa islands and the mainland:**

### **Pacific Island Air**

[www.pacificislandair.com](http://www.pacificislandair.com)

### **Turtle Airways**

[www.turtleairways.com](http://www.turtleairways.com)

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