

A Fijian Experience

Holiday Sketching in Paradise

The small plane flew in low over azure blue waters and shallow coral reefs surrounding small islands with pristine white sandy beaches. The swaying palm trees and lush green vegetation seemed almost close enough to touch. A perfect landing had brought an enthusiastic sketching group to the tiny settlement of Savusavu, which is situated in a protected cove on the southern end of Vanua Levu. This unspoilt paradise was to be home to us for the next seven days.

The final destination was Daku Resort, situated several kilometres from the town. Undoubtedly it is one of Fiji's best kept secrets, nestled between virgin mountains bursting with rich vegetation and calm waters at the doorstep. Glorious tropical sunsets lit up the evening sky and turned the clouds rich red.



Being a small resort, each course participant had their own modernised bure accommodation (pronounced boo-ray) with incredible views and tropical flora right at the door. The sketching group were the only residents for the week, and friendships were made very quickly. Everyone was eager to explore the grounds where exotic flora of many different plant species flourished. The water lapped softly on the beach opposite the resort and the pool sparkled in the bright sunshine. This promised much more than ever imagined. The Fijian people are genuinely friendly and hospitable, and after settling into their rooms, a kava ceremony from the staff graciously welcomed everyone into their 'family' for their stay. The art group were from New Zealand and many parts of Australia. Laughter could be heard all week. The sun, the ambience of the location, the beauty of the flora and the wonderful local people were an unparalleled experience.



The organisation and professionalism of the Resort and the Course was outstanding. Drums would beat to call the group to breakfast, where smiling Fijian faces would greet us. The tables were set with crisp white cloths and flowers with the early morning dew still on their petals. After a healthy meal including local papaya, bright orange and luscious, the sweetest bananas imaginable and pineapple finely sliced and dripping with sweet nectar, the morning began with a workshop, followed by sketching in situ.

Sitting under the shade of the main communal bure, with the pool only metres away, what could be a more idyllic location? Inspiration and motivation was rampant.



One of the benefits and enjoyments of Holiday sketching in Paradise is the many unique places to sketch. Apart from the resort itself and the town bustling with the local people, the markets and sailing boats in the small harbour, there were exotic gardens further around the island where an exquisite morning or afternoon tea could be enjoyed. Private beaches with white sands offered incredible sketching opportunities.

The group's enthusiasm only became greater as the week drifted leisurely on. There was no television, radio or newspaper to distract from the art. Concentration was easy to sustain and the drawings and paintings progressed at high speed.

The great success of the week was also due to the various local excursions that were available. The group visited a large village around the island where a kava ceremony welcomed them, after necklaces of orchids, ixora and mussaenda of various colours were laid around their necks. A spirited meke followed, with hunting dances and spears, to the harmonious and unique singing of the natives. Leaving the village, the sounds of 'Isa Lei', the very touching Fijian song of farewell followed us.



Other optional trips were to rainforest reserves, a black pearl plantation and deserted beaches, fringed with palms. Members of the group also enjoyed quietly reading books, lazing by the pool or doing more sketching.

At night the group retired early, after buffet meals of crayfish, fresh local fish, and dishes using local produce from the markets and salads. Each evening brought a healthy and varied meal which was absolutely delicious.

Before leaving this wonderful location after an amazing week bursting with new experiences, a special dinner was followed by a meke, the traditional Fijian dancing. This was staged by the pool, gently lit by soft lights and the lapping of the water. A cheerful and high spirited time was enjoyed by all.

The staff farewelled their temporary 'family' with tears in their eyes, and a kava ceremony where kind words were spoken. Many firm bonds had been made. A relaxed and contented group flew from Savusavu to Nadi, with wonderful memories and their completed sketches as a very personal memento of their visit.



For more information or bookings:

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