

## DAY 8 – Fiji River Trip



After a lazy day it was time for adventure again! We decided to do a river excursion and cultural experience with a couple waterfalls thrown in.

The downside was that the drive was 3 ½ hours! ARGH, but you gotta do what you need to, to see stuff – and we do like to see stuff!!, so we grinned and bared it.

The day began at 6.30AM and a long drive in a bus to the river. We then embarked on the strangest looking boat I have ever seen (funny how no matter where we go we land up on a boat at some stage???)

It is basically this ridiculously long canoe with an outboard engine on the back. Can take up to 10 people sitting next to each other and is only about 2 feet wide.

What is most disconcerting is that 5 minutes after leaving the dock the captain began to bail the boat out!! Now, **there's** a confidence booster when you're told you're going 20 miles up the river!



The first stop was at a local village where we were accepted as guests and had to perform the Kava ceremony. This means that one of our tourist party of 8 (2 yanks – us – and 4 Aussies) needed to elect a Chief to accept the bowl of kava. For some reason I was elected as the Chief. So I had to do the ceremony which was fun. Kava is a drink they make which has no alcohol in it, but has a kick to it as the plant has some sort of tranquilizer in it. Makes your lips numb! Weird.



This picture was taken from my viewpoint where I was sitting directly across from the village chief.

The ceremony was interesting, very traditional and educational.

After this we were taken around the village and shown how they live, in terms of the children, weaving and how they make their houses.

Our lunch was cooked in the

ground, wrapped in banana leaves on hot rocks.

What was interesting is that they did introduce some modern conveniences such as aluminum foil to wrap the food in!

The food was good, but definitely different – for me not a daily driver, for sure but a nice experience.

Fijians are very friendly and always have a smile for you.



There are a lot of Indians here, probably brought by the British as they ruled the island for over 100 years until 1970. So the drive was interesting because we saw a lot of Hindu temples. Also the beaches here are not very pretty, the sand is dirty brown and because they have a 5-7 foot tide swing at low tide they are pretty sucky compared to Florida and the Caribbean. But the landscape certainly is spectacular. Drivers are very courteous (unlike the Caribbean where you think you will die at any moment), there are signs all over warning people to slow down and they do. No kamikaze driving like in Jamaica or BVI.

Every few miles there is a village, speed bumps to slow the traffic. Towns are very small and overall the country is VERY underdeveloped compared to the

Caribbean. Road conditions suck just like the Caribbean and the maximum speed is 80KMP (50MPH), although it is doubtful you will ever even see that speed. Anyways, back to the adventure...



After leaving the village we ran upriver for about 30 minutes to the water fall.

Quite stunning and only a short walk from the river.

After this we were loaded on a bamboo raft to drift down the river so they could show us how it was done in the old days.

These rafts were made to get their produce down to the market.

Pretty basic construction and an interesting experience.

Actually, after about 20 minutes, we were very happy to get back in the strange canoe – all of a sudden it seemed a lot safer!!



Some of the rapids we went through were quite exhilarating and even I was a little nervous, but the captain seemed to know what he was doing.



Rapids, crazy stuff in a motorized canoe only 4 inches above the water



Seriously? You parked this in the freakin' river?



What the hell is that thing? A demon from hell?



The "chief" dancing with the other villagers



It is very lush and the growth looks impenetrable



Our tour guide taking no prisoners from the waterfall!!!