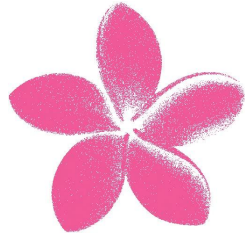
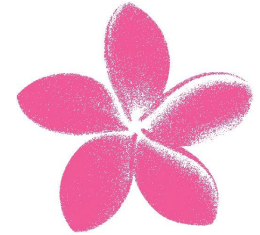


Projects Abroad

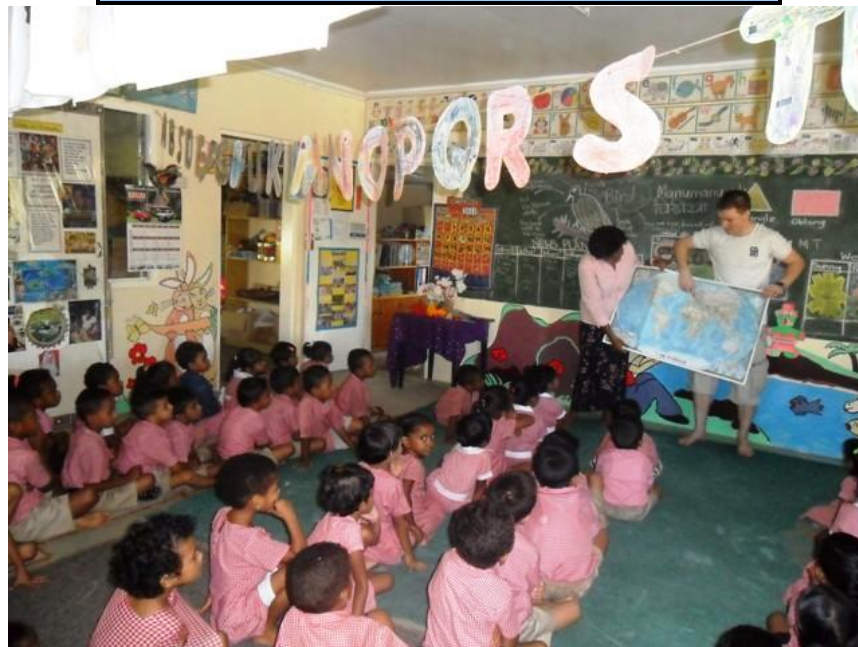


Fiji



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

March
2011



Issue
No. 15

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Bula !

Another month gone by, I can hardly believe how time seems to fly over here! Welcome to our March newsletter, our 15th edition for Fiji.

For those volunteers that have been and gone, I hope this jogs some happy memories. For those who will be coming to join us soon, I hope this gets you even more excited about your upcoming trip 😊

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 March news.

All the best

Anne
Xxx



Cover Photo: Steijn van Der Craats showing his Kindergarten class where Germany is on the map!

Pacific Harbour – The adventure capital of Fiji

The Islands of Fiji are obviously well known for their picturesque white sand palm-fringed beaches and crystal clear waters. This is all very true, however there is also another side to Fiji that is lesser known...the adventurous side! Pacific Harbour is the area in which a lot of the adventure sports are centred. Pacific Harbour is located on the south coast of Viti Levu, about half an hour west of Suva, and about two and a half hours south-east of Nadi. It is therefore more accessible as a day-trip to our volunteers based in Suva, but also well worth a weekend trip from Nadi.

First up you have white water rafting on the upper Navua river. From Pacific Harbour it's about 1 hour drive inland on a very bumpy track to the point where you are dropped in the river. Whilst it may not be hardcore cling-on-for-dear-life rafting, you do pass through many rapids, and the scenery is simply stunning. You glide through magnificent canyons, and will no-doubt on more than one occasion be subjected to the obligatory dunking under one of the many waterfalls that cascade down the canyon walls. The full day trip includes a stop for a picnic lunch on the side of the river. An exhausting but great day out!



For those wanting a bit of excitement but not wanting to give up the full day you have the Zipline. It is situated about 20 minutes outside of Pacific Harbour. The circuit only takes about 20 minutes to complete (or longer if there are a lot of people). You walk for 5-10 minutes to get to the start platform, and there are a total of ten platforms and decks. These connect the eight zip lines up to 150 meters (500 feet) long and up to 20 meters (65 feet) high, zigzagging across the beautiful Wainadoli River. The professional guides will normally offer to take your camera for you and snap photos and videos of you as you are going round the circuit, so you get some nice (free) souvenirs to take away with you!



Saving the best til last (in my humble opinion) you have the diving in Beqa (pronounced Benga) Lagoon. For those wanting to do something a bit different that gets the adrenaline pumping, the shark feeding dive is for you. It may not be everyone's cup of tea being deep underwater surrounded by huge numbers of sharks, but it certainly is an awesome experience for those brave enough! The first dive goes down to 30 meters so you do need

to be a certified diver (although it is a deep dive they will still take you if you are certified to just Open water) in order to take part. On a normal day you will see between 20-30 huge Bull sharks, as well as Blacktip Reef Sharks, Whitetip Reef Sharks, Grey Reef Sharks, Silvertip Sharks, Tawny Nurse Sharks, Sicklefin Lemon Sharks, and if you're lucky the occasional Tiger Shark. In addition, you can also encounter Giant Groupers, Maori Wrasse, Rainbow Runners, Giant Trevally, Java Morays, Eagle Rays and more than 400 species of tropical reef fish. You are not in a cage, but the dives are extremely well organised and very safe. The dive is not technical as most of the time you are kneeling on the ocean floor watching the 'feeders' hand feed the sharks with huge fish heads in front of you. I would highly recommend this to any certified divers as it's probably the closest you will ever get (in a safe way!) to these huge underwater predators.



After all these adventurous activities, if you are staying for the weekend, there are some nice spots along the beach to stay. The most popular is undoubtedly Uprising Beach Resort. They have dorm accommodation as well as private bureas (the former very reasonably priced and the latter quite expensive). The accommodation is spotless and it's on a beautiful stretch of beach. Central Pacific Harbour is about a 10 minute walk down the main road. So basically this area of Fiji has something for everyone, but especially those willing to go off the beaten track and looking for a bit of adventure.

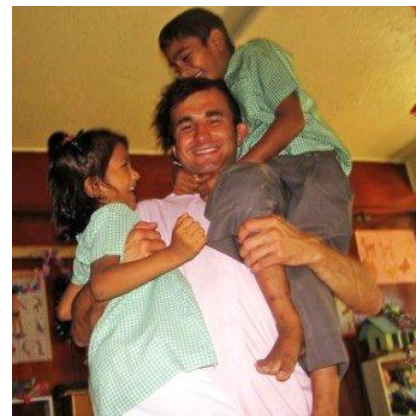
News and updates

It's the end of an era for Projects Abroad in Nadi...our three volunteers who have been here for the past six months all left in March. The first to go was **Franziska Froberg** from Germany. She spent the first four months of her project at Treasure House Childrens Home, and finished up with a month of teaching at Mt St Mary's School. She also took some time out in the middle to travel to New Zealand.



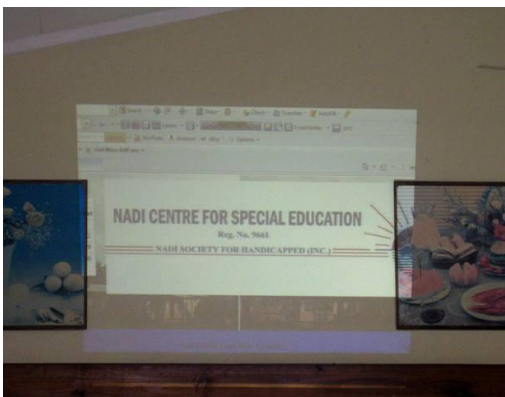
Viviane Deprez from Belgium has also been working at Treasure House Childrens home for the time she was here. She will undoubtedly be missed by her host mum Elenoa and the rest of the family who have treated her as one of their own for the past 6 months. I'm sure that the staff and children at Treasure House will miss Franzi and Viviane very much.

Last, but certainly not least, **Maciej Sulek's** time came to an end. He was given a big send-off party by Nadi Muslim School, where he was working in the Kindergarten. Maciej became very well known all over Nadi and is leaving a great many friends behind. I'd like to thank all three of them for their hard work during the 6 months they spent with us. We miss you!



Website launch for Nadi Centre for Special Education.

On 31st March the Centre for Special education in Nadi along with the Nadi Society for the Handicapped (INC) threw a party to celebrate the launch of their website www.NadiSpecialEducation.com.fj They have been looking forward to this occasion for a while, so it was great to be invited the join in the celebrations.



It was quite a formal event, with members from the Board and also the Ministry of Education invited as special guests. Speeches were made and there was a lot of praise for the Projects Abroad volunteers. The formal part was followed by tea and snacks in one of the classrooms. There was a really great turnout and it was lovely to be invited to take part in the occasion.

Hearing tests at Nadi Centre for Special Education:

In March we welcomed two volunteers from New Zealand, one of which already had a connection to the Nadi Centre for Special Education. Devon Francis and Georgia James have actually been working at Treasure House Orphanage in Nadi, but in addition to this they conducted hearing aid tests at the Nadi School for Special Education. Devon's mother works for Phonak in New Zealand, an organization that provide aids for people with hearing impairments. Her mother is here for a week in April so in preparation for her arrival Devon has been testing the equipment of those who currently have hearing aids so that she can advise her mother what specific parts are needed. It is amazing how many children have been going through their daily life with virtually no hearing even though they have an aid, just because it's been damaged or broken. I'm sure the children and staff at the school are very grateful for this combined effort to improve their quality of life and to help enhance their learning potential.



Devon and Georgia doing the hearing tests

Suva placements:

With a roll of almost 80 children in two sessions, Dilkusha Methodist Kindergarten in Suva is amazingly well managed by Teacher Esther, who proved to be an excellent supervisor to Courtney Lohmann during her month long placement. Co-organised by Teacher Shavin and Sera, the parents and children of the kindergarten organized a surprise farewell party for Courtney at the end of her time here. She was treated to a variety of snacks and lunch and also received some very touching and heart-warming pressies from the children. A big thumbs-up to the Teachers and Parents for being such wonderful hosts to Courtney – she had an experience of a lifetime.

Mum of the month -Marie Titifanua.

Marie is a full time housewife. She has five children in total, two of which are married and the other three live and work in Suva. Her husband, Wilson Titifanua is a construction manager for Habitat. The house is situated at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac in Namaka, about 5 minutes from Nadi Airport. It takes about 20 minutes to get into Nadi town by bus. There is a small shopping area about 5 minutes' walk away from the house.

This is what two recent volunteers Florence and Kristine had to say about their host:

"Marie is a great welcoming host mum. She has a big heart and an even bigger family! Marie gives us endless laughs and amazing cakes. We've felt so at home and comfortable with Marie which has contributed to an overall amazing stay so far in Fiji. It is safe to say that we would return not only to Fiji but to stay with Marie in the near future. We can only thank Marie for both her great hospitality and her friendship"



By Florence Boniface (UK) and Kristine Kilmark

The Fun stuff: Fiji Social events

Suva :

The weekly social is an event looked forward to by all the volunteers as it is an opportunity for them to get together to share experiences and stories over a drink or two and maybe some dinner. So far it has been nice and cosy with 5 -7 volunteers at a time, but we are looking forward to busier months ahead. By default, favorites seem to be the Bad Dogs Restaurant and Bar, Fringing Reef Restaurant and the Suva Bowling Club and the after dinner spot O'riellys. We look forward to adding more fun and educational activities and events in our future socials; stay tuned.

Holi Festival (By Karen Wardle, Australia. Teaching volunteer March/April)

Last Saturday I attended a Hindu celebration that was held at the U.N Park in Suva. When I arrived I was approached by some friendly locals who explained the meaning of the festival. The Holi festival is celebrated every year and it traditionally signifies the beginning of spring. There was loud music being played and food stalls selling Indian sweets. The best part of the day was when people started painting each other with bright colours, signifying the colours seen during spring. Some people were completely covered in colour. I had a really good time, made some new friends and left with pink and yellow paint smeared all over my face.



Nadi :

The end of the month social was a feast at Bamboo on Wailoaloa beach. It's the same spot where we had a host dinner in January, and as that was such a success we wanted to treat our volunteers too! As before there was a huge spread of food and drinks, and we had all 20 Nadi volunteers in attendance along with our 3 Projects Abroad staff members.



Maciej Sulek and Tom Smith (pictured left) were invited to a wedding on Beachcomber Island one weekend. They even donned the traditional Bula shirts and Sulus for the occasion.

Miscellaneous

Random:

Lily Worcester and Ariella Levine were scouted by a local fashion boutique and asked to model some of their clothes for them. They appeared in the weekend Fiji Sun looking very glamorous.



Donations:

Franziska Froberg donated bags of books / crafts / activities / clothes for the volunteers to use with the children at the

Orphanage and at the schools and Kindergartens.

Lily Worcester and Ariella Levine also left a box of school materials for the orphanage.

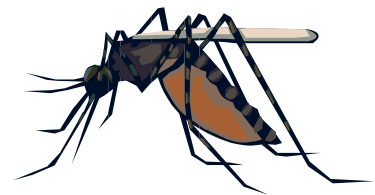
Nadi Airport School received a donation of school supplies from the family of past teaching volunteer Daniel Murphy.

Janelle Matthews and Viviane Deprez left some resources for the children at Treasure House Orphanage.



Tip of the month:

Don't forget to pack the bug spray. Mosquitoes here do not carry the threat of malaria, but they do still bite! They are mostly out and about in the evenings, so it's good to carry repellent with you just in case. Because of the humid climate here bites and cuts can get infected very easily, so if bitten try your best not to scratch (although I know it's hard)!



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 Karen Wardle, Kristine Kilmark, Florence Boniface and Chinnamma Reddy for their contributions to this issue.

Until next month...

Vinaka vaka levu!

xxx

