

PACIFIC & ASIA

Fiji: Yasawas Ultimate Tropical Expedition

Tropical Paddling Adventure

11 day trip



Fiji: Yasawas Ultimate Tropical Expedition



11 day trip 8-9 days kayaking

Fiji is an archipelago 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 *Ultimate Tropical Expedition*, a select group of paddlers will spend eight to nine days kayaking the entire length of the Yasawa island chain. Keeping a flexible itinerary, the group will kayak between islands, camp on isolated beaches, stay in small native villages, snorkel and even enjoy a spot of fishing. The trip includes several challenging open sea crossings, which is sure to thrill our band of adventurers!

Group numbers will be limited and we require all participants be at least intermediate paddling standard.

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 3–10: Kayak through island chain. B • L • D

Day 11: Morning on Kuata Island, 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 a twin share rooms but 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. We will mostly paddle single kayaks but would like to have at least one double along for safety reasons. We ask that you prepare for the trip by doing some regular paddling prior to the trip. We will paddle loaded kayaks enabling us to be self-sufficient during the trip. The degree of difficulty of the trip **will depend on the weather** we encounter. The sea and weather conditions in the outer islands are predominantly stable but in windier conditions we may require a full days paddling. There will be at least two open water crossings with accompanying swell. An "average" paddling day will range from five to six hours and we mix in as much snorkelling and exploration walking as we can fit in. The approximate distance we expect to paddle is around 120-130 kilometres. 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.

The kayaks are stable and ideally suited for this remote trip. It is important to keep personal gear to a minimum as we carry all of our food and equipment in our kayaks. Our trip leaders are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional wilderness guides. You will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of the trip with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks on Day 2 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 to our itinerary.

Day 1: Arrive Nadi. If arriving by an international flight today, the group hotel will provide a free airport to hotel transfer. Upon leaving customs, a Fiji Visitors Bureau agent will direct you to the hotel shuttle bus. The trip briefing with your guide is held at 8pm in the hotel. If your flight arrives after this, please advise our office so we can arrange an alternate time. The briefing lasts for approximately one hour so it's a good idea to eat dinner prior to the meeting. During the trip briefing 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 not required while kayaking can be stored at the group hotel, to be picked up on your return to the mainland. Dinner tonight is not included in the trip cost.

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. It's a good idea to bring some snacks and reading matter for the boat transfer and please do keep your valuables on your person during the journey. The *Flyer* transports us approximately 72 kms to Tavewa Island and the Blue Lagoon, arriving at 1.45pm. From the *Yasawa Flyer*, we will transfer to our base on Tavewa Island by small island boat. The combination of reefs, close island grouping and shallow waters

create the stunning aqua colours for which this area is famous. Our base camp has a dining bure (hut) and grassy campsites to pitch your tent. After customising our kayaks and getting acquainted with the expedition gear, we'll have an orientation paddling session in the lagoon. 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: Load our expedition craft and paddle 15km to Navotua village. With favourable tides we'll have lunch where fringing reefs run directly off the beach. After rounding the point of Nacula Island we head for Navotua. The villagers of Navotua are particularly friendly and the special warmth and reception we receive has made it our favourite spot. We will have time for a snorkel in the reefs off shore and explore the surrounds before settling in for the evening.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 4: We paddle to the caves at Sawa-l-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 delightful 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: Paddle back to Tavewa Island, exploring the outer coastline (weather permitting) and the many inlets and bays of Nacula en route. Return to our base on Tavewa Island.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 6: After breakfast, we'll pack our snorkelling gear and picnic lunch and head off to explore the inner reaches of the Blue Lagoon, just off Matacawalevu Island. We seek out the best coral reefs, explore a delightful maze of sandbars and time permitting, visit the local primary school. Paddling distance today is approximately 15kms. Tonight, we repack for the southern leg of the journey.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 7: We'll aim for a dawn start as we have a long paddling day. We round Matacawalevu, paddle along the length of Yaqueta Island and on to the large island of Naviti. On crossing Bligh Straight there is a great opportunity to troll and catch a fresh fish dinner! Paddling distance approximately 23 kms.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 8: We paddle the length of Naviti Island and choose our evening campsite depending on the wind direction. Paddling distance approximately 20kms.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 9: We cruise along several small islands before setting off on our second open water crossing to Waya island, hoping to land at Wayalevu village. There is opportunity for a short hike for superb views of our paddling route. Paddling distance is about 14 kms.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 10: We paddle the rugged coast of Waya and then along Wayaslailai before reaching our final stay at a simple resort on Kuata Island. We'll enjoy our last dinner together, celebrating the expedition and dreaming about the next adventure! Paddling distance about 21 km.

B • L • D / SIMPLE RESORT ACCOMMODATION

Day 11: We spend a relaxing morning snorkelling and cleaning up before departing on the *Yasawa Flyer* at 4.00pm. The Flyer arrives at Denarau Marina in Nadi at approximately 6.00pm. Trip concludes.

B • L / ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

End of Trip

We finish the trip with a boat transfer from the Yasawa Islands to Denarau marina in Nadi on Day 11. Accommodation on this night (and transfers to your hotel) need to be booked by you and are not included in the trip cost. If departing Fiji the evening of Day 11, we recommend not booking a flight that departs before 10pm.

You may like to extend your stay in the Yasawas at one of the resorts 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 (boat surcharge may be applicable). To save transfer time to and from the islands, you may like to consider booking a seaplane transfer (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 coral cays that you can walk across with a few steps. Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, covers 10,388 square kilometres and its highest peak, Mt. Victoria, is 1323 metres. Viti Levu has 80% of the population and is the major centre for air and sea communication in the southwest Pacific. 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. English is widespread and most young people have a good working grasp of English. Although some of the older generation may have difficulties speaking, most understand English.

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 to November.

Trip Organisation

The sun sets quickly in the tropics so 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. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members. 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. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries 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, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons, 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. Mobile coverage (by Vodaphone and Digicell) is sometimes patchy in the islands. It is possible to buy a Fijian SIM card for an overseas phone in Nadi.

Accommodation

Our group hotel is comfortable and clean. Rooms are based on twin share, although single rooms may be requested for an additional charge. We will stay in two person tents while kayaking. 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 an evening flight when available.

Food & Water

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 and bread. 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! Please note that for the last couple of paddling days the guides may use dehydrated meals.

We are happy to cater for vegetarians and other special dietary requirements. Please write your dietary requirements on your medical 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.

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 for women to wear bathing suits in a village and a 'sulu' or a sarong should be carried by both men and women while kayaking (sulus can be bought in Fiji costing between \$10–15).

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 bathing suits to remote 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 so as 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 in each of the villages we visit to dispose of the group’s human waste.

Photography

The humidity is always high in Fiji and as we are paddling in a salt water environment the delicate electronics in cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries as there is no opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity during our island stay. It is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it.

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 and bus transfer excluding airport 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).
- Group first aid kit.

Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Meals in Nadi (except breakfast at the hotel on Day 2).
- Single supplements.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Airport taxes (if any) on departure from Nadi.
- Travel insurance.
- Accommodation for the night of Day 11.
- Transfers in Nadi at the end of the trip on Day 11.
- 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. Souvenirs and crafts are available to buy at some of the islands we visit. The amount required in Nadi for meals and sightseeing will generally be covered by about \$40–60 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 \$1.44 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

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline voucher and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. Theft is a consideration in Fiji (like at home) so it is 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. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet. You may also like to look up the contact details of your country's consulate in Fiji.

Medical Matters

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so 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.

Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip, it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

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 netted.

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 (water resistant variety at least SP30).
- Lip protectant.
- Band-aid strips.
- Insect repellent.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- A mild antiseptic soap/liquid handwash.

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 that we carry everything with us, so 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.

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), i.e. Polartec 100 is sufficient, 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 thongs 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 very useful).
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive and difficult to obtain in Fiji).
- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- 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.
- Book.
- 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 in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287.

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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.

Tel: NZ(64) 34429998 or toll free +NZ 0800449944 • www.octopusresort.com

Barefoot Manta Resort

A simple resort with dorm beds and private rooms. Offers snorkel trips to swim with the manta rays.

Tel: (679) 7763040 • www.barefootmantafiji.com

Paradise Cove

A newish and upmarket resort nestled in a picturesque cove.

Tel: AUST (61) 2 83171638 • <http://www.paradisecoveresortfiji.com>

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

Pacific Island Air

Tel: (679) 6725644 • www.pacificislandair.com

Turtle Airways

Tel: (679) 6721 888 • www.turtleairways.com