

Projects Abroad *Fiji*

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



May Issue 2011 No. 17

Contents Page

- 2 Editor's Welcome note.
- 3-4 Volunteer Reflections – Cale Burge
- 5-7 News and Updates
- 8 The fun Stuff: Nadi and Suva Socials
- 9 Host Mom of the Month
- 10 Miscellaneous...Ins and outs, contact list etc
- 11 Staying connected



Bula!

My, how time really flies and yes it's the end of another month and I can hardly believe that I have been with Projects Abroad Fiji for almost a month now! Welcome to our May newsletter, our 17th edition from hot and sunny Fiji.

For those volunteers who have come and gone, I sincerely hope this brings back good and happy memories. For those of you who are planning to make Fiji your next destination, I hope this gets you even more excited about your up and coming trip.

Also on an even sadder note we had to say goodbye to Anne Buglass our former Assistant Country Manager and Editor of this newsletter who has returned to the UK and is now coincidentally the officer in charge for Fiji. All the best in your new role Anne and God Bless!

We also welcomed two new staff members to the Projects Abroad Fiji team, Jone Solinaikoroi who is our new Social Manager and Karishma Nandan who is an intern in our Suva office helping our Suva Regional Coordinator, welcome abroad!!

As always if you have any suggestions, comments or contributions, please feel free to contact me by email at jonesolinaikoroi@projects-abroad.org.

I hope you enjoy reading our May news.

Have a blessed month to you all!!!!!!!

Jone Solinaikoroi

XXX

Cover photo: Mariette Boenders with two of her charges at the Treasure House Orphanage.

Volunteer Reflections - Cale Burge

A quick Google for a certain island nation in the South Pacific pops out the old tourism slogan - "The way the world should be." From my personal experience, I can see no reason why they changed it; the words hold as true as ever. My time in Fiji was incredibly rewarding, enjoyable and just simply memorable, and I was only there for two weeks!! In hindsight, I could've been there for two months and still not wanted to leave.

I originally chose Fiji because, while it was admittedly close to home, more importantly, it was offering an opportunity to do something so dramatically different to what regular visitors would do. Before choosing Nadi, I was told that what the majority of tourists see of Fiji's capital consists of the airport after the flight in, and before the flight out. The luxurious island resorts, cruises and decadent living are, for the most part, located boat or plane trips away from the main island. Nadi was described as a sweaty, grimy town not boasting many, if any, compelling reasons to visit. Volunteering in Nadi would be truly different, and represented a chance to directly interact with the people and communities of Fiji, not simply the public face presented to tourists.

Now of course, it was lax of me to say that there's no reason to visit Nadi - that's not true, the Projects Abroad office is there!! My first impressions of the city were very different to what I'd been told - whilst the city was essentially located around one main street, there was still bustle and a vibrant feel to the place, as if energized to make the most of the day before the afternoon thunderstorms put life on pause for an hour or so. During the initiation tour, we ran into some of the other volunteers, and met more at lunch, and even more at dinner. I have to say, unequivocally, that the other volunteers in Fiji at the time I was there were some of the most amazing and incredibly fun people that I've had the fortune to meet, and they definitely helped make my time as great as it was. You're in an exotic country with people your own age, no study or exams to worry about, and with enough shared free time to really get to know them and have some great times together.

My project involved being a teacher's assistant at Nadi District School, helping out with a Year 2 Class of around 45 hyper-active six-year olds. I have to say, on the first day, having never taught young kids before, I was a bit bewildered. It definitely didn't help that 20 minutes into the first day, the teacher had to leave for the airport, and I was left in charge of the class; 45 noisy, energetic kids, with not even a basic knowledge of Fijian words to help me teach, or just control them! I was truly tossed in at the deep end!! But somehow, together, the kids and I found a way - through sign language, and then eventually what must only be at best pidgin Fijian, progress was made! Teaching them the magic of the number 14, correcting their backwards English characters, struggling to pronounce, let alone remember names, and then before anyone knew it, the day was over. It only got better from there. By the end of two weeks, we'd got up to 18, I had learnt all the names, all the faces and all the personalities, and had even helped every single kid make their very own paper crane! On a related note, I now know every possible way to go wrong while making a paper crane!!

My host family, the Wati Family, was just wonderful. Constantly accommodating, always boisterous, lively and helpful, there was always a crowd around the house just to have a talk with, or, depending on the hour, some kava with. I could walk to my placement, and despite the early morning symphony of roosters, cows and ducks, it was a great place to stay, with the people making it even better.

Overall, I'd recommend volunteering in Fiji to any and all who ask. The country is amazing, the people are friendly and amicable, the town is alive and varied, and the weekends bring opportunities of backpacking, travelling or cruising, often at the (always welcome) volunteer rates. My lasting impression of the country is that there's time for everything in Fiji - no rush, no stress, just Fiji. By comparison, I've been back in the real world two months, and I've only just found time to write this reflection. Fiji is a wonderful country, with wonderful people, and to volunteer there was overall, well, just terrific!

Cale Burge

News and Updates

First from Nadi

Holiday School, Nadi, Fiji

As a child, summer school, or “holiday school”, was always referred to as a wicked remedial punishment for those with less than stellar academic track records. The mere threat of having to remain in school, whilst others frolicked in the summer sun and sea, was generally enough to scare us students into actually finishing our required readings and then re-evaluating how good we actually were at pretending to pay attention. My preconception of holiday school also usually governed by the oldest and most scarily boring teacher around and plagued with monotonous worksheets and rain.

*In Fiji, it is safe to say that holiday school differs on all fronts. Instead of a woman older than time, our rambunctious group of volunteers has been busy replacing worksheets with games, crafts, and even some hidden learning. During the first week, we represented our appropriate nations and sent the students flying around the world with their own passports. They were introduced to the musical genius in *The Sound of Music* and several classic fairytales. On Wednesday, the students succeeded in physically exhausting more than several of us volunteers.*

With the advent of the weekend and no fewer than five volunteers, this present week began wonderfully with another tour of world monuments and landmarks with a journey into the animal kingdom and nature on Tuesday.

By week’s end, I can honestly say I will have mixed emotions. While incredibly excited to escape to an island, the past two weeks have been a far more rewarding experience than any amount of white sand. The children never cease to amuse and amaze and will forever be a memory I treasure.

Hannah Wallach



New Staff members!



***Jone Lalí Solinaikoro;** Recently joined the Projects Abroad Fiji Team as its Social Manager. Jone holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Language Literature from The University of the South Pacific and also holds a Diploma in Tertiary Teaching from the Fiji National University. He was previously employed in another NGO in Fiji known as the Citizens' Constitutional Forum as its Project Support Officer and was also previously a secondary school teacher. Jone says he has enjoyed the work he has done ever since he joined Projects Abroad, even though it's a totally different kettle of fish to what he is used to, and he hopes to expand more on his knowledge and skills.*



Karishma Nandan

Recently joined the Projects Abroad Fiji Team as an intern and General Assistant in our Suva office. Karishma holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Science. Previously she had been an intern for Worldlife Conservation Society for approximately 5 months in 2010 and was attached with the Land & Water Resource Management Department of the Ministry of Primary Industries conducting literature reviews for their project. She describes herself as a bubbly person and is enjoying her internship because she gets to work with an awesome team and also meet incredible people. She says her interest range from literature to science and everything in between and she is so excited about this internship and she knows that the experience gained will strengthen her view on life as a whole.

The fun stuff!

Nadi Socials:

Our monthly social for May was something totally different from the rest as the volunteers were treated to a afternoon of learning how to weave, masi printing and also how to make pottery and was held at the Creativiti Arts and Culture centre in Martintar, It was an afternoon of learning authentic Fijian Arts and craft from the experts at Creativiti. There were 20 volunteers who were split into groups of three and were each give 35 minutes to learn each trade and wasn't it an afternoon to remember



With so many beautiful islands close by, sometimes it's hard to know which one to visit (tough life I know!). A popular Island trip this month was Bounty Island in the Mamanuca group. Bounty Island got its name on the map a few years back when it played host to the TV reality show *Celebrity Love Island*. Please don't be put off by that insignificant fact however, as its well worth a visit for many other reasons. It's a mere 45 minute boat ride to reach this white sand beach, and the reef is right off the beach so beautiful coral and thousands of types of fish (including reef sharks) are no more than a few meters away. It takes approximately half an hour to circumnavigate the island, so you really do feel like you're in paradise!

Suva Socials:

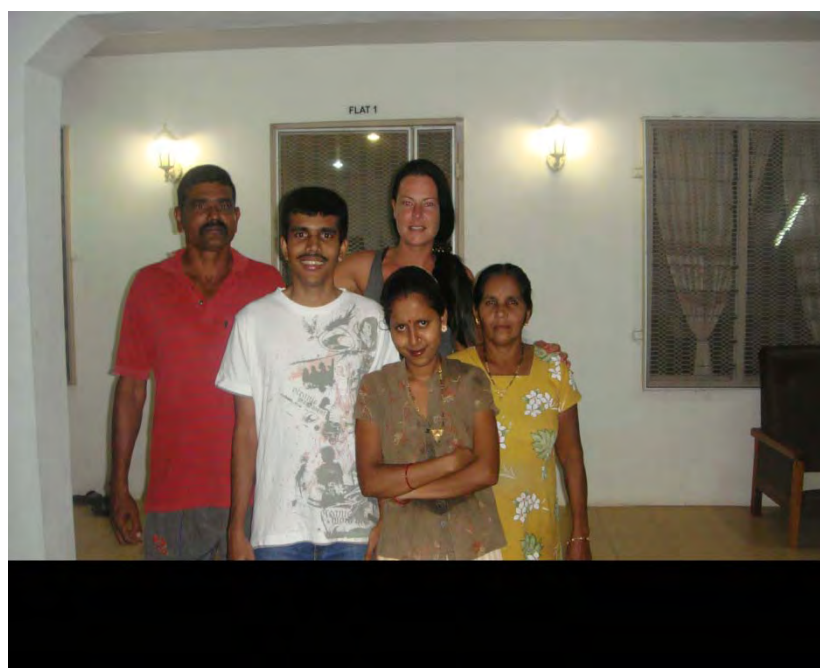
Suva vols have been quite busy during their weekends doing almost all of the fun stuff and activities there are to do in and around the capital. Their monthly social was also one with a difference because it was an afternoon of learning traditional Fijian pottery and at the most appropriate venue The Fiji Museum. The volunteers thoroughly enjoyed themselves and we were even visited by the local media The Fiji Times who interviewed our volunteers and we are looking forward for the story to appear.

Host Mom of the Month

Being a mom can be tough from time to time. You are not only supposed to tell your children what they shouldn't do or how they should behave in your home. You have to clean, cook, do the laundry and be there for them whenever they need you. You also have to be nice to all of their friends. Well these are some of the things a mum usually does for her kids, but you do for a totally strange girl. Cross the other side of the world, and you do it without even seeing a picture of her. That says a lot about a person. You haven't just opened your home, but also your heart. You give from yourself and make sure that everyone is alright.

I feel very lucky to have Mamta as my host Mom. When I am home and miss my kids, friends and family you are there for me and you are also the best cook I could wish for; because of our cultural difference I thought that I would be very hungry during my time in Fiji. But everything you have made for me is so nice and tastes great. Now you have started preparing lunch for the volunteers as a sort of business venture for whoever wants to try "real traditional Indian roti and curry". It's in your heart to take care and feel for me and this has made my time in Fiji more like being at home than I ever expected it to be.

With love Mariette.



Mariette with her host family.

Miscellaneous



Donations

A past volunteer Sonja Deuscher from Germany donated some educational materials for Nawaka kindergarten which was received with open arms by the teacher - in - charge. She said that this would greatly enhance the learning experience of Nawaka Kindergarten students. Once again a big vinaka vakalevu to Sonja!!!

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>

691

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 this issue goes to Hannah Wallach, Mariette Boenders, Cale Burge, Chinnamma Reddy, Anne Buglass for their excellent contributions to this issue.

Thank you for reading!

xxx

