

*Jacinta Lane – March 2019*

“Bula family! Welcome home!” is the warm greeting we receive on arrival to the stunning Sheraton resort. I won't talk too much about this resort as she is getting a complete make-over after October 2019. All I know is she was already beautiful, so I am very excited to see what they do to make her even better! Watching the sunset across the horizon from this beach front resort and sinking our toes in the sand while we ate our dinner was a treat.

We flew across the Pacific on board Fiji Airways in Business class, which was a treat I could get used to! We were very spoilt with extra legroom, personal iPads, chef designed meals and a personal flight attendant to meet our every need. If you are travelling for a special occasion, it is worth the upgrade to feel like a true VIP.

Our first morning in Fiji started with buffet breakfast and then site inspections of the Sheraton Villas and the Westin Denarau. The Sheraton Villas won't be closed for renovations and they really don't need to be. They are absolutely huge and perfect for large families or a group, with their 3-bedroom villas accommodating up to 7 guests! They feature a full kitchen, laundry, lounge and either garden or ocean views. You will also get full use of all facilities of the Sheraton and the Westin when staying here.

The Westin is a short walk from the Sheraton or you can take the “Bula Bus” which circles the whole island. The Westin has more of a Fijian feel to it with traditional thatched bures on the beach and over the pool and Fijian décor in the room. They also provide guests with cultural experiences such as fire walking and meke dancing.

After our hotel inspections, we headed to Denarau Marina to check in for our Captain Cook Cruise – a true highlight to our trip. If you love the water and everything about the beach, then you need to put this trip on your bucket list!

We are welcomed by the staff with songs, dance and a light lunch, before arriving to Tivua Island, where we had the entire island to ourselves. Here, we had a chance to snorkel the reef, kayak, paddle board, swim, play beach volleyball or just relax in the sun.

In the evening, we had dinner in the dining room and all the staff members were introduced to us one at a time. Because the ship only has 63 cabins, it is very small and intimate, so you do get to know these staff members very well over the coming days.



Our second day on board was in Fiji time. We had the option to do some more snorkelling, but I chose to relax on the beach and soak up some sun.

Once back on board, Amelia had a cultural talk in lounge, where she told us a bit more about their culture, beliefs and growing up in Fiji. It was very fascinating and in the evening, we got to visit a local village and immerse ourselves into their culture a little more. The locals greeted us with a Bula song and unveiled a lovo they had on the beach, which we got to enjoy for dinner. After dinner, we were entertained with traditional dances and a kava ceremony.

The next morning, we visited Ratu Namasi Memorial School (from Kindergarten to grade 7) where the children all got together to sing and dance for us, before showing us around their school and participating in a friendly game of volleyball.



In the afternoon, we visited Sawa-i-lau beach and swam in the limestone cave. The surrounds were stunning and very surreal! The water was about 10 metres deep and crystal clear. The rock formations and remoteness of the cave was just stunning. After our cave swim, we took the tender

over to Blue Lagoon beach, which was the film location of the movie “Blue Lagoon”. The water here was crystal clear and bright blue and the sand a bleached white. It was hard to believe it was a real place and not just something you see in movies.



Our final day was another one on Fiji time with a choice of snorkelling and glass bottom boat tours in the morning and again in the afternoon. The afternoon snorkel was the best of the entire trip. Everyday just became more remote and more beautiful at every stop with our very last trip absolutely topping it. We spent some time at “Barbecue Beach” named because there is no shade, so the tourists get Barbecued, (The Fijians have a brilliant sense of humour) which is located across from Manta Ray Island Resort. The coral and sea life here were just so vivid and if you’re lucky, you will get to see Manta Ray swim through the channel (seasonal).

For our last night on board, we had to celebrate with our new friends and what better way to do that than with hermit crab races, kava and karaoke!!

We were farewelled the next morning with a goodbye song and big cuddles from the staff who made us feel like this was our new home by learning our names and doing whatever they could to make our stay comfortable. Their warm hospitality and sense of humour is what keeps bringing people back to their little piece of paradise.

Back on Viti Levu, we took our time to experience some of our popular resorts and also sight see around Nadi. Our first stop was the Shangri-Las resort which is newly renovated and huge! They do have a stunning chapel on the beach, so it is certainly a perfect spot for a wedding, as the resort is still big enough that you can enjoy your space and with the new upgrades, they have sectioned off part of the resort as adult only, with adults only pool and bar/dining area. This area includes the gorgeous adult only reef view burees. They are a massive 131sqm of absolute luxury with ocean views, a spa bath, indoor and outdoor shower, a king bed and your personal buggy to get around the resort.

In the family friendly part of the resort also has a choice of restaurants, pool, water sports and kids inflatable waterpark, which the kids just love.

On our way around the Coral Coast, we did stop at the Momi Battery Site, which is worth the visit if you are a war history buff. The information centre tells about the history of the war and how the Fijian's planned to protect themselves and their allies from Japan. The views from the hill are also spectacular and worth the stop for this reason alone.

We spent our night at the Warwick Fiji on the Coral Coast. It is quite a drive from Nadi, but I do think this resort is worth it. From the moment we arrived, the staff were so happy and welcoming it felt like a big warm hug. Our room was large and welcoming with stunning views of the garden and water. The Warwick also has an adult only area with adult only restaurants and a pool, 5 restaurants and 6 bars including a swim up bar. We were fortunate enough to have dinner served to us at their seafood restaurant "Wicked Walu". This restaurant is a gorgeous short walk across the water to it's own island and you can dig your toes into the sand while you enjoy delicious and fresh seafood.

The next morning was Fiji time and we headed to the Naviti for lunch. The Naviti's top selling point is that it is an all-inclusive resort. Golf greens, water sports, cultural experiences, sunset cruise, main meals, kids club and drinks all included in one price. The rooms are large and spacious. The family rooms were particularly great as they can accommodate up to 2 adults and 3 children plus an infant, so they are great for our large families. They also have interconnecting rooms and beach bures for intimate retreats. We noticed a lot of families enjoying this resort and I think it is a great flop and drop resort where you can enjoy yourself and not stress about the bill upon check out. Fabulous for our families or travellers on a budget.



Our last night was spent at the stunning Outrigger Resort. Another massive resort, but a gorgeous 5-star luxury getaway. The bures are large and comfortable with the added bonus of your own

personal butler who helps you unpack, book day tours, make restaurant reservations and brings your bubbles and canapes in the evenings. I think this is a gorgeous resort for couples who may be celebrating a special occasion or are just looking for a romantic escape and can enjoy the adult only bars, nightlife and pools. They do have family bures, a kids club, nannies and a family friendly pool for our families as well. The buffet dinner is themed and changes nightly and they have nightly entertainment such as meke dancing, fire twirling, lovo etc.

It was fantastic being able to see the different resorts to suit different clients and I am looking forward to helping our clients book their next holiday to Fiji! Vinaka!