

PARADISE DIVE CLUB

Fiji Trip Report



Upcoming Meetings

Club meetings at Cody's Cafe

August 26
September 30
October 28

Deco Stops at HBC

5pm, 2nd Friday after
the club meetings

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Editor's Note

This special issue of the club's newsletter is dedicated to a trip report by one of our members. All photos by Jacek Smits.

Fiji Trip Report

By Jacek Smits

The Nai'a

I went to Fiji for a 7-day dive trip on the live-aboard ship Nai'a with my good friend and dive buddy Petrula, her brother-in-law, and his daughter. We booked directly with the Nai'a and communication was always prompt and clear. Getting there was easy. It's an 11 hour non-stop flight from Los Angeles to Nadi, Fiji, where we stayed in a hotel. We'd scheduled it such that we arrived on Friday for a Saturday boarding. Friday we spent resting and a little bit of sight-seeing. On Saturday we were picked up at the



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Newsletter	Jacek Smits

Mission Statement

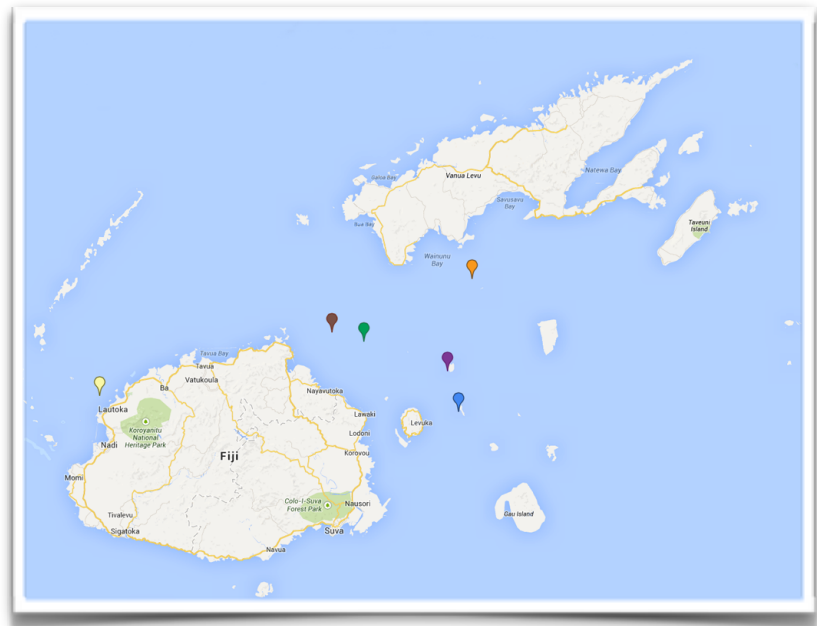
Paradise Dive Club is a social club whose members are divers with all ranges of experience. We focus on growing our sport and developing new friendships. PDC promotes fun, safe, exciting activities including underwater photography and environmental awareness. PDC was founded to provide social and recreational opportunities to people with mutual interests in SCUBA and skin diving, and to educate and inform its members and the general public in matters relating to diving, particularly in regard to issues involving coastal Santa Barbara County

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hotel around 1pm and taken to the boat in Lautoka, about 30 minutes north of Nadi.

After everybody was organized and had their dive gear set up, we motored out a little bit and did a quick check-out dive at Samu Reef (yellow marker on the map). Not a particularly great site but definitely a smart choice for the Nai'a (Fijian for dolphin) to do a check-out dive with a group of divers they don't know. After that we had our first dinner and an extensive briefing on how the week would go. The food on the Nai'a is fantastic. Nice variety, great



flavors and they paid attention to plating and serving. It was the best dining experience on my live-aboard trips so far. After dinner the engines started up for an overnight crossing (all crossings were overnight) to Bligh Waters where the diving would really begin on Sunday at the famous E6 and Mt. Mutiny dive sites (green marker).

After Bligh Waters we moved to Wakaya Island (blue), then Makogai Island (purple), Namena Marine Reserve for 2 days (orange), Vatu-I-Ra (brown), and back to Lautoka.

The boat is very stable and takes 18 passengers and 12 crew. The crew was awesome and always very helpful. The dive guides were fantastic and very knowledgeable about the local diving. As an aside, the Nai'a doesn't hire seasonal dive guides. The 2 dive guides on board were 8 months into a 3 year contract, which is

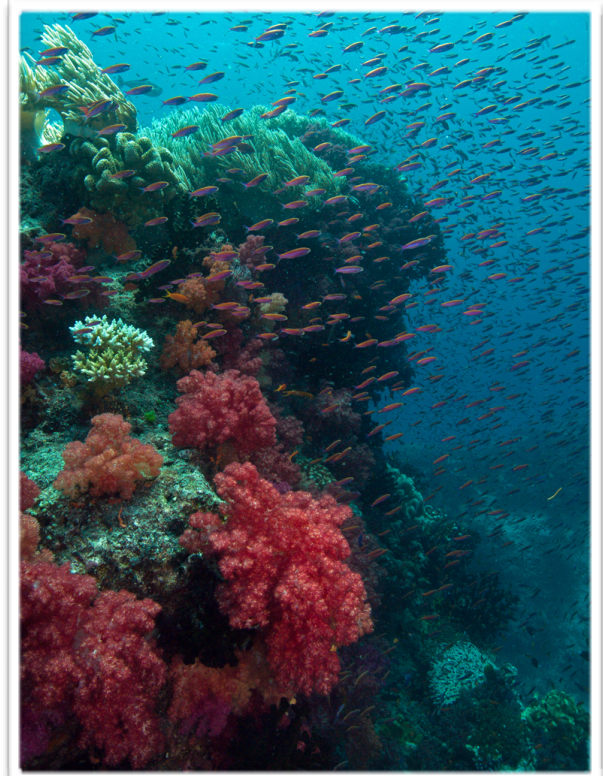
exceptional in that line of work. The rest of the crew had been part of the *Nai'a* many years as well. It showed in how the ship was run. The trip was well organized and ran very smooth. The cabins are roomy and comfortable. There's plenty of room in the salon, dive deck, and camera room. There is also a nice sun deck. Power is provided through local and U.S. receptacles throughout the ship which makes charging your batteries and devices very easy. They have nitrox on board which ended up running somewhere between EANx30 and EANx32.

The Diving

Prior to the checkout dive you set up your gear and after that you don't worry about it anymore. The passengers get divided into two groups of 9 divers (starboard and port) that determine which skiff you'll be using. The two skiffs dive different sites so you're always diving with a fairly small group: 8-9 divers and a dive guide. While the dive guides do their dive briefing the crew loads scuba gear and camera equipment into the skiffs. You step into the skiff from a low platform at the stern of the boat and they will take you to the actual dive site. Once there, the crew helps you into your gear and the dive starts with a backward roll.

The diving was very good and had quite a bit of variety. There were lots of big walls and interesting structures. We didn't see much big marine life on our trip (it is there) so the diving was about small and macro stuff, and beautiful "reef-scapes." All the dives ended up at bommies that were around 10-20 feet deep. Perfect for long safety stops.

There was a lot of freedom while diving. You could follow the dive guide closely or at some distance while doing your own dive. In our group the divers always spread out so it never felt crowded. The dive briefings were excellent so even if you lost track of the dive guide, it would be hard not to end up at the correct bommies where the skiffs would be waiting to take





comfortable crossings.

As you probably noticed, I have nothing but good things to say about this trip and the Nai'a. I highly recommend it if you're thinking about a dive trip to Fiji.

In addition to the dive trips around Fiji they also do 10-day trips in Tonga that include scuba diving as well as snorkeling with humpback whales in Tonga. That is a short season and they do only four or five 10-day trips. These trips are very popular and fill up fast. At this point you're probably looking at a trip in 2017.

References

[Web site of the Nai'a](#)

you back to the ship. Good visibility helps with that too! They didn't limit the dives (unless, occasionally, for specific reasons) so we'd usually have 80-90 minute dives and the skiffs would be waiting for you. Water temperature was right around 80°F throughout the week. A few times we had some current but nothing particularly strong. I'm sure that, at times, it can be.

We were lucky with the conditions. The week before our trip they had lots of rain, wind, and choppy seas. We had blue skies, sunshine, and calm seas for