

Monday July 5

Motored back to Lautoka for potatoes, gas and Kava root (for sevu sevu). Got conned into buying a couple of souvenirs in the market by a large gentle Fijian man with no teeth !.



Lautoka Harbour Wharf

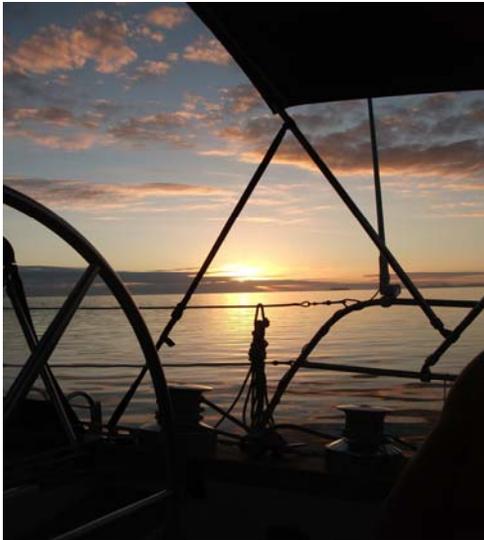


Buying Kava in the market

All done but 5pm by the time we're back on the boat. Decide to stay the night in Lautoka harbour and leave for the Yasawas tomorrow.

Tuesday July 6

Motoring up the coast following the shipping route on the chart to avoid the coral reefs to get to the passage through the coral at Thakau Undu Levu. Motor through and out the other side then sail to Vaututotolo, a large reef on the south side of Bligh Water. Anchored on a spot only 3.5 m deep just inside the reef – out in the middle of nowhere ! ALL the reefs are just below sea level so it looks like we're anchored in the middle of the ocean ! Very roilly night with a SW swell building during the night.



Wednesday July 7

Much calmer in the morning – although woken at 0200 and 0400 by the anchor alarm – we hadn't dragged, just swung around. Tea and breakfast out of the way, up anchor and off 355T across Bligh Water towards Tivolei reef. Just started and a local fishing boat comes by and asks us where we're going (is this the secret Fijian spy network at work ?)- told them we're headed for the Yasawas and

asked them where they were going fishing...here on this reef they replied; “Bula !” and goodbye...and then we hit a coral head with the foot of the keel !!

Breeze comes in about 1000 and we're sailing with the genoa up to Tivolei – turn onto 317T to head for Sawa-I-Lau Is. Fishing line went zing ! We've got a fish ! - but he's gone !...took the colourful foil bits off my home made lure and run off...that's the third time this has happened – at least we didn't lose the hook, trace and sinker this time !



The Lure !



Approaching Sawa-I-Lau

1400 anchored in the lee of Sawa-I-Lau Island (16deg50.78`S, 177deg28.01`E). Grab a kava root package and head for the beach in the dinghy. Greeted by a VERY large Fijian woman, with no front teeth and the most enormous boobs I've ever seen, who first asks us if we have any cigarettes ! She takes us to the headman's house where we meet the mayor and his wife, present the kava root for sevuvu and have a conversation about his village.



Me and the Mayor.....kava root between us



The communal village BBQ

The village was hit by a cyclone last year – destroyed their crops, damaged some buildings and he said they're only just recovering. A Rotary group from Melbourne sends them money each month to

buy flour, rice, tea etc, but one can't help thinking they'd be better off with some cattle and goats and someone sent out to teach them how to farm properly. In general they don't seem to do much at all. The Rotary group donated some gym equipment so the women could lose weight ! But the real problem, Chrissy explained (she's seen the same thing in Africa), is their diet...they eat kasava which is juts a starchy belly filler that doesn't provide any real nourishment or energy..and it just turns to fat.



Sawa-I-Lau Is from the bay



Village



The most important guys in the village !!

A cruise ship arrives every Thursday and disembarks about 50 to 60 folk who come a shore for a Fijian feast, which the cruise co. pays for (but provides the food as well). We're set to leave but have to view the handcrafts laid out on mats in front of the seated large ladies near the beach...mostly junk jewellery and a few shells – no thanks !

Back on the boat and a French couple from a catamaran Aninda put across in their dinghy and invite us for “aperitifs” at “six heures et car”....very nice !

Well, Anni and Daniel are very hospitable...pastis, wine, whisky....vine leaf wraps, hot crispy somethings, sweet potato pie....Anni never stops talking ...Daniel can't get a word in...while Anni is

showing Chrissy the capacious catamaran interior, I have a chat to Daniel about the boat. They've been away from France off and on for 7 years...he worked in Africa, India and the Mid East etc...they fly back to France every 6 to 9 months.

They invite us to join them on a visit to the Sawa-I-Lau caves in the morning before the hordes descend from the cruise ship. She explains that it will cost less if we go 4 together...only \$10...OK...see you in the morning !



French Catamarans “Aninda” and “Mowgli” at Sawa-I-Lau

Thursday July 8

Went to the caves with our French friends and the Fijian guide...climb the steps and there's a locked steel door in a concrete wall ! Once inside descend about 20 steps to the main pool – swim across and go under water under a rock and into a small tunnel; and then swim above water to a smaller cave which has a shaft going straight up to the outside - fantastic !

Back outside, we're ready to go and Anni informs us its actually \$10 per person..well we only brought \$10 with us so Daniel pays the guide and I give him our \$10 and say we'll bring over the other \$10. Back to boat, grab the \$10, straight over to Daniel “Merci beaucoup, tu es tres vite !” No problem, back to the boat again. Ten minutes later Anni and Daniel are putting over with the guide in their dinghy...sorry its actually \$10 for each boat as well....I've had enough of this, so I launch off...C'est ridiculeuse !, Hier soir le prix est \$10, ce matin le prix est \$20 et maintenant c'est \$30 !”

I have no more money...we manage to scrape up \$4 and give it the guide begrudgingly with shaking heads.

The cruise ship group arrives for their cave tours...if its \$10/person for them that's \$600 for a mornings guiding !

Friday July 9

A Spencer 40 Xanadu II arrives. We go over and meet Tony and Barbara..boat was built in 1983 by Don Senior ! (Don built DIVA in 1974). They've come from Savusavu through Bligh Water – talking to them I don't think they have a cruising permit for the Yasawas - nice couple, we may see them again as we go down the Yasawa group.



Xanadu II



Interesting rock formations

1500 picking up the anchor to move to Nadala Bay. Coming out of the pass from Sawa-I-Lau, we're overtaken by a large ketch SY Adele, 196 ft long !! they go past us and head further North. We enter Nadala Bay (Land Harbour), wind our way through the coral and anchor in 3m opposite a sandy beach only one other yacht here, Sea Rover Oyster 46...rather blowy night (16deg49.15'S, 177deg27.93'E



SY Adele....196ft long !! powering at 8 knots

Saturday July 10

Sea Rover departs in the morning – pancakes with maple syrup and banana for breakfast. Chrissy

writing up her diary in the cockpit on her little Samsung Atom laptop – a really neat little gadget ! Defrosted the freezer yesterday and in the nights it's got up to -10C...need to get it back on track . Saw Adele coming south again – we could see her at night North of us lit up like a Christmas tree. Took the dinghy to the beach – climbed a small hill – difficult going – coarse grass dead underfoot and holes everywhere – got to a rock to take some photos and came down again. Could see DIVA rolling quite a lot as the breeze has got up, moved Northish and the ocean swell is coming in.

Last weather fax we picked up showed a low passing below Fiji within 24hrs...time to go. Picked up the anchor and sailed back down the coast with genoa in 20knots, making 7.5knots – round the corner back into Sawa-I-Lau bay and its 20 knots on the nose with 1 m waves coming at us !..Difficult motoring against that...anchored back in the same spot next to Xanadu II, Sea Rover and Adele are in here too....much calmer.

Sunday July 11

Rainingpoured down all morning...bottled beer. Sun came out in the pm...swimming...but there's a lot of little tiny jelly fish in here and we both were stung on the legs and back....thank goodness for Aloe Vera Gel !! We watch the owner of Adele go for a row in his beautiful varnished lapstrake dinghy...as he comes past I call out "Nice boat!".."Thanks" he replies and keeps rowing !

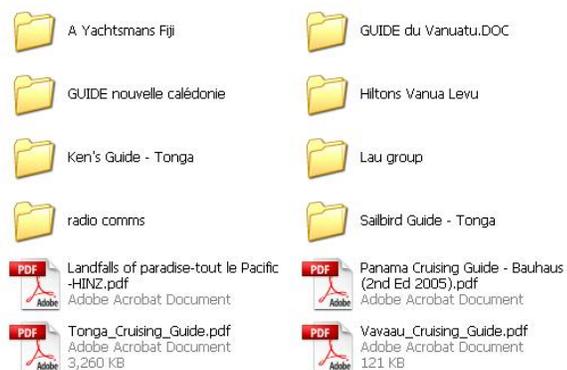
A calm evening...bbq steak and sausages for dinner...intention was to keep two sausages for tomorrow, but glutton that I can be, I eat them both

Monday July 12

O'cast morning, Chrissy is cleaning the interior of the boat while I'm making bread....weather map at 1045 shows the low to the south of Fiji with two frontal wands passing over the group. The high coming over the Tasman sea from Australia will bring S/SW winds before the E/SE comes back...we may stay here for another day.

Plan is to leave Fiji on the 24th to arrive in Vanuatu 28/29th...500 miles @125miles/day = 4 days. So clear out on 23rd, go to Vuda Pt for diesel and o'night in Musket Cove...means we need to be in Lautoka by the 22nd.

Dinghied over to the little island at very low tide...there's a graveyard here...some newish ones and some very old ones. Saw a young pig running around and a primitive pen probably used to keep pigs in when young. Found a giant clam shell in the sand...and a few other interesting shells.



Invited Tony and Barabara for coffee..Tony brought a memory stick with Pacific cruising guides on it....wonderful interactive guides for Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

Irish motor yacht Ulysses arrives...huge thing...crew went out fishing in the tender and within 10

minutes had caught a 3 ft long Walu....he couldn't deal with it and motored to the village and donated it to them.

Tuesday July 13

Xanadu leaving heading south to the Blue Lagoon...Ulysses and Adele leave both heading east. We up anchor and tottle off south to Malakita bay. What a beautiful place...white sand beach that stretches for about a mile. Small village with a stream that runs when it rains.



Amateurish attempt at a panoramic view !...Ben, maybe you can fix this up for me !



DIVA in Malakita Bay



Malakita Village

Went in with kava, met the chief's son..chief is out fishing back about 1600. Tried to sell us lobster..but we have no money...he doesn't believe me...I explain we got rorted at the caves and now have no cash...took a while to convince him and after that he was very offhand...just dumped our kava on the floor and told me I have to come back later to see the chief.. His wife lays down the law to Chrissy saying she MUST wear a sarong when in the village..its most important....bit of a joke really since there is a group of American teenagers here camping in the village (and no doubt paying well for the experiance) and the girls are romping around in very skimpy bikinis....Oh well...back to the boat for a couple of hours. Back in to see the chief, who can hardly get off his bed, but tells us we have the run of the place...go wherever you want (he really couldn't care less!)...getting latish so back to the boat for the evening.

Wednesday July 14 – Bastille day !

0750 Listening to the weather f/cast – Tony from Xanadu told me that Radio NZ Int'l broadcast on 11725kHz each day at 0750 with weather f'casts for all the islands from Tonga to New Caledonia...wish I'd known that a couple of months ago !!

Chrissy's yoghurt is a resounding success; powdered milk mixed and left o'night..spoonful of existing yoghurt in the morning, stir and sit in a bowl of warm water in the sun for about 4 hours and voila !

Thursday July 15

Left Malakati Bay, wended our way through the reefs on the northern approach to Nanuya-Sewa (the Blue lagoon), quite tricky dogleg / zigzag course to get into the western bay – totally protected anchorage (16deg56.6S, 177deg22 E). South end of the bay is occupied by Blue Lagoon cruise ships and their “ashore” entertainment area. Looks as though it could be crowded and noisy but doesn't turn out to be that way.



Windborne a wooden 1928 gaff rigged ketch from Whitianga NZ sails in and anchors behind us. Tusitala from Gulf Hartbour is here too and a US cat Quantum Leap. Aaron and Julian from Windborne dinghy over for a chat. They got blown onto a reef on Saturday night when their anchor dragged in 40 knots. Managed to get off by judicious use of their hydraulic anchor windlass and motor. They're going to the small resort on the north end of Nanuya -Sewa Is to see if they can get a cold beer. They seem successful, so we get organised (dressed) and dinghy in. There's a nice bar and restaurant and YES they take credit cards. Aaron and Julian are well on – 3 empty beer cans each on the table, sitting with Tom and Biddy from Quantum Leap. Aaron does charters for 3 mths out of Whitianga – he'd like to sell his house and sail around the world !



Windborne



Crew doing it tough in Blue Lagoon !

Tom is a doctor, Biddy a nurse – been slowly sailing round the world for the last 3 years – park the boat during the cyclone season and fly back to the US for 6 mths then pick up where they left off.

Couple of drinks later, we're off back to the boat...Tom and Bidy are dining in the restaurant to celebrate Bidy's birthday. I make a curry with beef and pork for dinner...enough left over for another dinner.

Friday July 16

Beautiful morning – Windborne weighs anchor and motors off to the west – then turns south – maybe we'll see them again. Bacon and eggs with left over potatoes for b'fast – yum !

We set off south towards Naviti Is and Somosomo Bay...beaut beam reach in ESE 15knots, turn to stbd, round the big reef, then to port and delightful sail in flat water right into Somosomo Bay...anchored under sail in 10m with sandy bottom..



Dinghied in to the beach for sevusevu; met by a charming Fijian lass – Veny – who explains that the chief of this village is a woman, but she is not here today so we will see her brother for sevusevu. Walking through the village we can't help but notice the difference of the northern villages- the houses are tidy, they have shrubs and flowers planted outside – the sand paths are swept !

We collect another woman Adinada, on the way and go to the chiefs house. We do sevusevu, there's a woman weaving a huge mat in the room also. There are 300 people in this village and they have their own kindergarten and medical clinic. Veny and Adinada ask if they can come to see the boat – sure no problem – Veny asks us if we would like some papaya – we explain the money issue and she says “you don't have to pay for everything – its just friendly” Very nice, thankyou and off we trot to Veny's house.

Veny takes a papaya down from a tree outside her house and goes inside to get a plastic bag to put it in...Come in she says inviting us into her home.

Its a concrete block affair with one large room(with a tiled floor!) and two bedrooms off. A mat is produced and we sit down. Veny asks if we would like tea – then returns with a plate of kasava and a bowl of noodle soup which we have to eat !.

Her daughter Vuny arrives home from school and then her husband Jack and a couple of relatives turn up for tea. Veny brings a kettle of boiled water, enamelled bowls (Fijian tea cups !), a bunch of lemon leaves and a container of brown sugar. Two lemon leaves with boiled water added to each enamel bowl and the sugar passed around. The lemon tea has a beautiful aroma and taste and is very refreshing.

All these people speak English quite well and the conversation is easy and pleasant. Jack and the lads go back to work (in the kasava plantation) and an older man (uncle?) arrives with a shoulder load of cut kasava stems which he leaves outside and comes in for a cup of tea..His English is very good and he is very interested to know where we came from, how the weather was, which way did we come a very gentle man



Veny and Vuny



Me...giant yams...and the charming old man

Time to go, down to the beach with Veny and Vuny, collect Adinada and a young girl (3?) all in the dinghy and off we go straight into a coral head. Broke the drive pin in the o'board propellor, so we're paddling – Adinanda on one side and me on the other – 4 adults and 2 kids in our dinghy is



Veny

Ben

Robert

Adinada...at home on the boat

too much, but we make it to the boat eventually. Two boys, Robert and Ben, arrive on a kayak – all aboard !- Inside – very impressed with everything – never been on a yacht before. Adinada asks Chrissy if she has anything for a headache, Chrissy gives her two aspirins which she pockets immediately. She then asks if we have any grog (kava) – we give her a bunch and she has a look of triumph in her eyes.. The boys have a good look around the boat – impressed with all the equipment.

We are further invited back to the village at 1100 tomorrow for yam tasting and who knows what else !

THE MILITARY REGIME / FIJI POLITICS

Time to go... meantime I've repaired the outboard so its a quick trip back to the beach. Its now about 1800...time for a beer !

An hour later a kayak approaches with two young women and a boy on board asking if we want to buy bananas or papaya...the money spiel again...they ask if they can come on board....sure...the older one explains they have been sent by grandma to apologise for Adinanda's kava request saying she shouldn't have done that...that's ok, no problem.

Well. These two young women turn out to be very articulate and the older one in particular very outspoken about the political situation in Fiji.

She tells us that soldiers arrived in the village a few days ago with NEW RULES.

ALL WOMEN to wear blouses with buttons - no T-shirts allowed – skirts , no shorts

AND NO LONG HAIR – so all the women had to have their hair cut short.

She told us that the army and the navy come around periodically to check that the rules are being followed and if not, offenders are whisked off to the mainland for court appearances, fines and possibly gaol ! BUT...this only applies in the islands, not the mainland !!

We were told that Bani Marama's military regime has declared that every commercial activity, no matter how small, requires a licence, and as a result, one young man from this village has been arrested, taken to the mainland for trial, his boat confiscated as well as his equipment, for DIVING WITHOUT A LICENCE ! He appears in court in Suva next week.

Bananarama has also stated that he wants to send all the Fijian Indians to India !. Considering they comprise more than 50% of the population and run all the businesses in Fiji, that would be economic suicide, but it seems he is intent on total control at any cost.

The politically aware woman is 25, married 4 yrs, but no children yet, and tells us that in the village she is looked at with more than a little bitterness because she has come here and not produced any children yet – the line of thought is that childless women are a drain on resources and should go back from whence they came !

They all finally go about 2000....now what happened to that beer ?



The boy, the young woman and the articulate one

Saturday July 17

1115 off to the beach again - Veny is not ready so we go for a walk on the beach with Vuny – get shown the pigs.... when we get back there's a mat spread under a tree with fresh bread and yams on plates and lemon tea of course!



Vuny, me and the pig...you can decide which is which !

Jacks mother and Veny's sister in law, Laura, is there and another one arrives a bit later.

The bread is actually fresh this morning from Lautoka. A small boat went to the mainland early this morning and came back with a load of “stuff” about 1130.

Veny produces a photo album from a visit by a swiss couple on an Amel 54 in May – they had a printer on board so printed out the photos for Veny.

Veny's two youngest children and two others are playing, chooks are walking around trying to steal food...its all very peaceful and friendly.

Jacks mother has an inflamed eye...its very red and the drops she has are out of date...I go to the boat and get some ointment which is good for conjunctivitis and eye infections – it seems to help.

Jack arrives with fish he's caught this morning spearfishing on the big reef outside the island.

Veny calls Chrissy over to say Jack said we can have a fish and did we want her to cook it for us, or would we cook it on the boat. I say we'll do it on the boat...Veny asks how – on the bbq – oh can you do one for me too ? She asks Sure !

She sets about descaling and gutting two middle size fish and we take them back to the boat with an 1800 rendez-vous on the beach to hands over Veny's grilled fish.

Put the whole fish in tin foil with sliced lime, salt n pepper and butter and grilled for 15 mins each side – beautiful !

Delivered Veny's fish, said goodbyes....Veny gave me her postal address so Chrissy can send prints of the photos she took.... promised to write and come and visit again.

Back to the boat and grill our fish....beautiful !!



Jacks mother with sister Laura...child...don't know



Jack's fish !

Sunday July 18

A Morgan ketch , Atlantia, from Scotland, arrived last night and anchored in front of us...this morning they're heading for the beach in their dinghy (church ?). A canoe paddles up – 3 guys have a chat – just going for a paddle before church they say.

1000 – Church has started, we can hear the singing – Chrissy gives the AOG lot 8/10 vs the Methodists 2/10 – based on the volume of the singing !

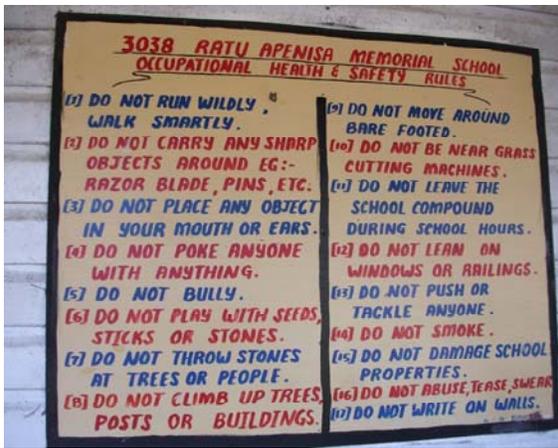
1100 we're off out of Somosomo Bay heading south inside the reef on the eastern side to the southern tip of Naviti Is. Breeze is light and we struggle to make more than 2 knotsbut we're not in a hurry. Breeze comes in about 1430 as we head around the point into Soso Bay and anchor under sail 17deg07.94S, 177deg13.34E.

1600 we're off to the village for seveusevu – met by a village elder to take us to the chief. Well, we thought Somosomo was well organised !..these guys have concrete footpaths, streetlights!, electricity routed to very house, satellite dishes for phone and TV with solar panels to power them. O'wise village life seems the same as usual; pigs, goats, kasava, coconuts – makes one wonder where all the money came from for all these improvements – maybe the chief was once a government minister (roads and energy perhaps !).

The chiefs house was clearly a des res (desirable residence – Chrissy's term) in its day, but like everything here, once its built it starts falling apart – they don't understand the concept of maintenance !

We go in and , as usual the chief is asleep on his bed and has to be woken to accept the sevu sevu...he gets up and we hear the unmistakable sound of the chief having a pee in a plastic basin !! He staggers out and flops into a chair...the village elder does the sevusevu chanting and clapping ...and unusually we aren't told we have the freedom of the village and the beach, which has been the norm.

Taro, a very well dressed young girl, is commanded to take us on a tour – shows us the remarkably well equipped primary school (70 children yrs 1 to 8) and the beautiful church which is written about in the cruising guides.



School rules – we should have these !

Inside of the church

I ask Taro about the electrical power....yes it comes from a generator – when we have diesel, right now we don't have any...!!

Tour done, back to the beach and Taro says “Ok you can go now”....really got the impression that they don't want palangi (white man) hanging around in their village, so one gets the obligatory tour in return for the kava and then its “on yer bike mate!”

Blowy night with wind blowing right into the bay...and no lights from the village – anchor chain graunching on the coral all night...but we didn't swing so no problems with it getting caught..didn't sleep well.

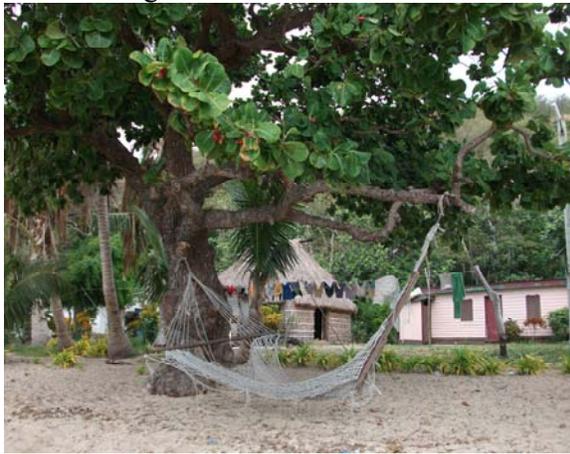


Monday July 19

Up and off...lets get out of here....lovely sail down to Waya Is. Arrived at the same time as Sulali (Mike and Jeanine) last seen in Vavau, coming in from the south.



Anchor in Nalauwaki Bay, North Waya Is. 17Deg16.45S, 177deg06.91E. Rather rolyly due to NW swell coming in.



Village scene



Pig pen in the rocks

Dinghy in for sevusevu...neat tidy village, chief awake and welcoming. Taken to the church and given the opportunity to put money in the collection plate ! Haven't got any, sorry – goodbye ! Walk along the beach to the creek outfall, nothing spectacular but has a certain charm. Mike and Jeanine row over for a couple of beers and chat about this n that. Very rolyly night...didn't sleep well.

Tuesday July 20

Bacon n eggs b'fast – feels good. .getting ready to go south.
Lazy sail inside the reefs down the west side of Waya Is. The scenery is spectacular.



Two hours later anchored in Yalobi Bay in front of the village. 17Deg18.61S, 177deg07.08E
There's a big school to the East of the village and another village across the bay on the adjacent island.

Usual dinghy in...young man takes us to the chief's house...he's on his bed, of course...but when he comes out he is clearly fully compus mentis (unlike the others), asks us where we are from, thanks us for visiting, gives us the freedom of the village, beach and water and wishes us well...nice man. We go for a walk on the beach down to the school and back. Chrissy goes snorkeling on the reef, I do this !



Real traditional Bure



Chrissy in the village, Diva behind

Adele the 196ft ketch comes in followed by a French cat and two other yachts.
Local fishermen come paddling past in their unique corrugated iron canoes (our OH&S folk would be apoplectic!), “Bula” “Good day fishing?” “Yes thank you....have a good evening”.. “and you”.....all very friendly and polite.



Beach looking towards the school



Local boat renovation business !

Wednesday July 21

Motored the 30 miles from Waya Is to the mainland. Fiji met issued a strong wind warning for today..25-30 knots, rough seas...we saw max 8 knots and no sea at all! Caught a small tuna on the way but lost it right at the last moment when reaching for the line to bring him onboard !

Anchored in Saweni Bay just south of Lautoka.

Tomorrow we head for Lautoka again... go provisioning and internetting on Thursday...clear customs on Friday morning, fill up with diesel at Vuda Pt after that and go to Musket Cove for the night before setting off for Vanuatu on Saturday morning.

So that's it from Fiji...well only the Yasawa Islands really....what a magical place, beautiful scenery, lovely people by and large (and man some of them are large !)...warm water, beautiful coral and and stunningly iridescent reef fish....I have to come back to this placeone could spend the whole cruising season here in Fiji and not see it all.



Where we went.....

So next stop Port Vila, Vanuatu...should be there by July 31.....