



Sea-kayaking in KADAVU

BY SARAH DANIELL

I'm sitting cross-legged on the floor in the community hall of an outer island village. Before me on a woven mat is a plate laden with home-made cakes and a jug of fresh lemon-leaf tea.

"Kana vakalevu, eat plenty," says Iokimi, an old Fijian guy sitting next to me. "We don't like it when tourists come here and just pick at the food."

It is not so much an invitation as an order to eat, and I'm not going to argue. We are, after all, in Kadavu (pronounced kan-da-vu), the island group whose name comes from two words: kana, to eat, and davo, to lie down. Eat and lie down. I like that.

I'm part of a group of travellers of various ages from various countries, sea-kayaking our way around the beautiful, road-less coastline of Kadavu Island, under the guidance of Tamarillo Active Travel.

Not only sea-kayaking; in fact each day our guides take us snorkelling in indescribably idyllic lagoons and lead us on short walks through the rainforest to swim in clear, natural pools beneath towering waterfalls.



"...I needed a destination with enough tourism infrastructure to support our tours - regular flights, small resorts, expert guides - but no more than that. In Kadavu I found exactly what I was looking for."

Tamarillo's first tours were led in 1998. Ratu Bose, a traditional chief in Kadavu, skippered the support boat on the very first tour and still works with Tamarillo today as director and operations manager.

Tamarillo's kayaking base and guesthouse is on Ratu Bose's family settlement, a peninsula of land known as Natubagunu. It was on this very spot that the first Fijians set foot on Kadavu Island more than 2000 years ago.

"The place-names tell the story," explained Ratu Bose when we visited.

"Those ancestors of mine would have arrived on this beach hungry and thirsty after the long ocean voyage. They found no stream here so they called the place Natubagunu, which means something like 'no water, keep moving'. They carried on around the point and found a big river flowing out into the bay.

"There they could drink, gather food and rest, so they called it Kadavu - eat and lie down".

Each night on our tour, we stay in one of Kadavu's small resorts, allowing us to rinse off our salt and sand-encrusted bodies under a hot shower, and enjoy a cold drink and a hearty meal before sleeping on comfortable beds.

Tamarillo is in fact Fiji's only sea-kayaking company to run resort-to-resort trips, rather than camping. The superior comfort level ensures we're all well-rested and ready for each day's adventures.

My partner in the double sea-kayak is guide Petero Uluinaceva, from Ono Island. This is fortunate for me, less so for him. We follow the contours of the shoreline, gliding across coral gardens as graceful frigate birds soar overhead.

Through the trees we catch glimpses of the Kadavu parrot, one of four species of birds found only here in this island group.

Adrenalin Fiji
100% Fun in Fiji!!

game fishing
boat charters
push bikes & scooters
jet skis & watersports
nadi village tours
jet boat rides
scuba diving
surfing

SCAN HERE

tripadvisor f YouTube

Book Now at Port Denarau Marina, at any Adrenalin Beach Bure or Visit Your Resort/Hotel Tour Desk
T| 675 1288
www.adrenalinfiiji.com



"I was kayaking along with a friend, getting to know the area for the trips to follow, when I saw this solitary, bare-footed figure on the beach, beckoning us to come in. I'll never forget Taito's first words as we reached the shore: "Come in, I've been expecting you."

We paddle over glittering water twenty shades of blue and flying fish skid across the our bow. It's about 40 minutes to our first beach-break, where we dive into the sea to snorkel.

Petero, ever the gentleman, spears a fish for lunch - a ritual he repeats each day, afterwards cooking the fish over a fire on the beach. Wild chillies and lemons picked from nearby trees complete the dish. Delicious!

We carry on to another beach and meet an old man named Taito, a Fijian with tales of omens and butterflies. Taito lives in a nearby village but frequently retreats to his 'bachelor pad', a comfortable cave at the end of the beach.

The day Taito met Norris, back in 1997, started out as any other day. He awoke, did some gardening and gathered

firewood. Then he noticed two butterflies persistently fluttering around the entrance to his cave, which he took as a sign two visitors would arrive. Without knowing who those visitors might be, he went and speared a good-sized fish, prepared lunch, and waited.

Before long he saw two kayakers rounding the point and paddling across the bay. Norris said: "I was kayaking along with a friend, getting to know the area for the trips to follow, when I saw this solitary, bare-footed figure on the beach, beckoning us to come in. I'll never forget Taito's first words as we reached the shore: "Come in, I've been expecting you". It seemed a strange and magical experience to follow this old man to his cave and find lunch all prepared as if he had known all along that we would arrive".

In 1999, an Italian woman waded ashore Kadavu Island. Marina Mantovani had not planned to come here; in fact she had not even planned to visit Fiji. "I left Italy with a ticket to Australia, and the idea of travelling on to the Cook Islands. In Sydney, I learned there were no direct connections with the Cooks so I bought a ticket to Fiji instead.

During the flight, I studied my guidebook and it seemed to me that Kadavu was the most interesting, remote-yet-accessible destination. The ferry from Suva dropped me off in chest-deep water, and as I struggled holding my bag above my head, I thought to myself, where on earth am I?"

On-shore, Ratu Bose, Anthony and a group of their sea-kayaking guests helped Marina feel welcome. Today, she is the third partner in Tamarillo Active Travel, a 'mini-multinational', as Marina describes it. In addition to their adventures in Kadavu, Tamarillo offers hiking and food tours in Italy and customised adventures in New Zealand.

Our journey ends at Matava Resort. Perhaps, this place



should be spelt with an 'aah' at the end, because on first seeing this place with its beautiful rooms, tranquil spa, lush gardens and sense of unpretentious luxury, you can't help but sigh. The food at Matava is legendary, as is our host Maggie, who is elegant, entertaining and hilarious.

Today, our final day in Kadavu, a guest caught a yellow-fin tuna so tonight's menu features fresh sashimi with sweet potatoes and salad greens from the resort's organic garden. My body feels weary and sun-burned but definitely stronger and more healthy as I sit down to dinner.

The cold, white wine tastes incredibly good - perhaps assisted by the remoteness of the location and the thirst I have worked up paddling to get here.

As the sun sets, the lanterns are lit. The smiling faces of my travelling companions glow in the evening light. The meal is served and I have but two things on my mind: to eat and lie down - kana, davu. Kadavu.

For more details, contact www.tamarillo.co.nz



GO SURF FIJI

SURF TRIPS | LESSONS | BOARD RENTAL

Catch the best waves on the planet!



Visit Your Resort Tour Desk
P|675 1288 M|923 3122
www.gosurffiji.com