Fiji Caqalai

Arrival

Please note that arrival logistics may be altered at short notice – check for updates regularly to ensure you are aware of any late changes.

Visa Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the correct visa for your trip.

Depending on the duration of your project, you will be required to obtain a "Limited Authority to Work" or a "Short-term Work" visa for your time in Fiji. Please see the instructions in the "Additional Information" Section. Please be aware that due to immigration requirements for volunteers, failure to adhere to any of the requirements may restrict your ability to take part in our program or significantly reduce your time in country. If you have any questions, please contact your Country Expert.

Keeping in Touch

You will have limited access to long-distance communications whilst on the program, so make sure friends and family know how often they can expect to hear from you. Mobile/cell phones: Reception is available on base, although it can be poor at times. It is possible to purchase pay-as-you-go Fijian Sim cards for unlocked phones in Nadi pre-departure.

Internet: There is no general internet access for volunteers on base. The SIM and Credit must be purchased prior to island deployment. It is possible to purchase a pay-as-you-go mobile internet USB stick or wifi modem, however internet signal can be poor at times.

If your bags go missing in transit, don't panic! This does occasionally happen, and you are usually reunited with your belongings within a few days. Consult airline representatives in the baggage claim area. You may be given a file/reference number; it is wise to also ask for a contact telephone number for follow-up.

Living Conditions

Facilities will be more basic than you are accustomed to – please travel with an open mind and a willingness to adapt to local conditions.

There is rain water available for cooking, drinking, and washing. Ground water is pumped for other ablutions. Careful water conservation is necessary and water may be rationed during droughts. Basic flush toilet facilities and cold water showers are available.

Participants share daily duties to ensure the smooth running of base, including cleaning, cooking, kitting up boats, tidying the grounds and other chores.

For internship volunteers, during the second part of the program (approx. weeks 12-24) you will be based at your dive centre placement in shared accommodation. The exact location will be discussed with you during your program. Accommodation will vary depending on your placement location.

Food

Volunteers take it in turns to prepare meals for the group. Food is a very basic, mostly vegetarian diet: meat is usually provided on base twice per week. Breakfast could be porridge, fruit or toast. Lunch and dinner are a mixture of lentils, beans and vegetables with pasta, rice, noodles, roti, cassava or dalo. Please note, Caqalai is a dry base, no alcohol is permitted on base.

Electricity

Supply: 240V 50Hz
Between 17:00 and 22:00 each evening volunteers take it in turns to charge devices from the island generator.

Laundry

You can wash your clothes on base (hand washing) or arrange for them to be washed locally. Cost is around $15FJD for a large bag.

Getting Around and Exploring Further

You will be based on Caqalai island, approximately 1 hour by boat from the Viti Levu Mainland and a further 45 minutes to the capital, Suva. You will be working on nearby islands and coastal reefs around the base. In order to travel independently around the area on your days off you must prebook water taxis with the staff; there is usually a water taxi each morning and afternoon to and from the mainland. Costs will vary based on destination, but would normally be between $50-150FJD return.

You will have time off and be free to travel in the local area on the weekends, usually from around 14:00 Friday, coming back to base by 17:00 on Sunday. In this time you could do day trips such as visiting the old colonial capital Levuka, on nearby Ovalau, or trekking up the mountains there. You can also go snorkeling or scuba diving, relax for a night or two in a nearby resort or go further afield on Viti Levu. Before and after your program there are countless attractions that can be reached after a day or two of travelling. You could visit the Dolphins at Moon Reef, take a ferry to Taveuni - 'the garden of Fiji' or explore the interior of Viti Levu - the possibilities are endless!

Finance

Local currency: Fijian Dollar

Participants typically spend approximately FJD$100 per week for phone credit, drink, snacks etc. when staying on base at weekends. For venturing off Caqalai at weekends, bring additional funds to allow for extra activities, food, travel and stocking up on supplies; past volunteers and staff suggest around FJD300 for time off base (such as scuba diving FJD$180 2 tank dive, resort visits FJD$85+ Including food, or meals off base approx FJD$30. For those who want to travel further in the island group, before or after the program, we suggest an approximate figure of FJD180 per day for budget travel, food, and accommodation.

For Internship volunteers, please note that during your work placement in the 2nd part of your internship, in many cases you are responsible for purchasing your own food, and so you should budget accordingly. Most interns, plan to spend around $20 FJD per day, however this can vary by location.

We recommend that you travel with cash as your main source of funds, although having a credit/debit card as a backup is wise. There are NO ATM’s on Caqalai and volunteers should withdraw cash before deploying to the island. In major towns (Nadi, Lautoka, Pacific Harbour, Suva) ATMs points are widely available. However, be aware that if you travel around small islands in the Fiji Group ATM points are few and far between!

For internships volunteers you will also be responsible for PADI professional membership fees upon completion of your Divemaster and may need to add professional dive insurance depending on the particular requirements of your dive shop placement. Please be aware that some dive placements may have an associated additional travel costs of no more than 150USD.

Background Check

A background/police check is required for this program

Health & Safety

When travelling you should be aware of the risk of opportunist crime and take common sense precautions to minimise the chance of becoming a victim. The vast majority of visits to Fiji are trouble-free, but if you have any specific questions about your safety and security on the programme please contact us.

A change of environment, climate, food and lifestyle often results in minor, and occasionally more serious, illness. Please inform staff if you feel unwell at any time. If you need to see a doctor during your stay, we usually recommend travelling to Suva (1 hour by boat and 45-minute drive) and visiting the clinics at either Fiji Care or MIOT Pacific Hospital, both on Amy Street. For major emergencies volunteers would be taken to MIOT Pacific Hospital or Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva; volunteers must ensure their insurance covers international and local evacuation in case of a medical emergency.
We have emergency procedures for all foreseeable events, the staff are first aid trained and you will receive a safety briefing on arrival.

Please note that the NGO cannot provide specific medical advice. Please consult your primary care provider (doctor, GP, etc.) or visit a travel clinic for further information. You must be forthcoming about any health issues before you begin the program as failure to do so may have serious consequences for you, the staff and other participants, including your removal from the program.

**Pre Departure Training**

Participants in both Community and Marine conservation programs will receive project-specific Training Manuals; please read these thoroughly and familiarize yourself with the information. Staff in the field will provide training on the skills required, but the more you know before arriving, the quicker your training will be. Marine conservation participants will be allocated to survey groups (benthic, invertebrates or fish); it will benefit you greatly to learn as much as possible from your survey group before you arrive.

You will also benefit from researching more about local history, culture and customs before you travel.

**Packing List**

**Essential Equipment:** These are items which staff in the field have deemed as required, or which previous volunteers all agree are must-haves.

**Essential for all Caqalai participants**

- 1 Large Rucksack (Backpack): (65+ litres / 4,000+ cubic inches) for use throughout the program (preferable to a suitcase or hold-all).
- 1 Daypack (Backpack): (25+ litres / 1,500+ cubic inches)
- Shorts/ board shorts or baggies are great, quick drying items
- Swimwear
- Flip flops
- Sun hat the sun gets very hot during the day when working so a hat is essential for most people
- Sarongs/Sulus for both men and women
- Modest top that cover shoulders, midriff and cleavage for women, Bula shirt or equivalent for men
- Sunglasses; make sure they offer 100% UV/polarized protection. Cheap glasses can cause more damage than good
- Raincoat
- 1 or 2 long sleeve tops and a pair of light trousers, to protect against mosquito's and for colder evenings
- 3 to 4 casual outfits – for weekends and base
- Bed linen (1 pillowcase and either 1 single flat or fitted sheet or a cotton sleeping sack (not sleeping bag)
- Travel towel an old and worn towel will dry more quickly, or you can buy a quick-drying travel towel.
- Sun cream: water resistant and high factor, at least SPF 30+, preferably eco-friendly and bio-degradable
- First Aid kit - We recommend including: bandages, micro-pore tape, cotton wool, plasters/band aids, gauze, antiseptic cream, zinc and castor oil (for wetsuit rashes), anti-fungal cream, anti-bacterial cream, antibiotic cream, re hydration salts, paracetamol and ibuprofen, laxatives, Imodium, antihistamines, anti-itch cream, tweezers
- Any prescribed medication you need during your trip. Make sure it bears your name and description of reason and dosage.
- A strong powerful flashlight/torch and a headlamp, preferably rechargeable
- Re-usable Water bottle and/or camelback/water bladder (if compatible with backpack) - because the planet doesn't need any more plastic waste.
- Toiletries: preferably bio-degradable and eco-friendly; you can stock up in Suva at weekends.
- Mosquito net (box net recommended)
- Insect repellent: we recommend using a natural based product such as citronella and eucalyptus, as DEET-containing repellent is harmful and believed to be carcinogenic
- Photocopies of important documents
- Pens and notebooks
- Spare batteries – for head torch and other devices
- Washing powder - If you plan to do your own laundry (also preferably bio-degradable and eco-friendly

**Essential for Community Participants**

- Change of sarongs/sulus for both men and woman, for delivering workshop in communities
- 1 or 2 spare tops which cover shoulders & midriff, for working in communities
- 1 or 2 pair of long shorts for both men and woman, for walking between villages
Shortly after arriving on the island, it would be a good idea to build up your physical fitness in the preceding weeks to the expedition. A program that includes certain amount of aerobic exercise is recommended to achieve an appropriate level of fitness. The work that you will be doing is often physically demanding, ranging from short hikes between villages on neighboring Moturiki Island to beach cleans, building projects to carrying dive tanks – and all manner of other physical activities.

As you will be living on a small island and travelling regularly by boat, all participants must complete a 200-meter swim shortly after arriving on the island.

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**Essential for Marine Conservation participants**

- Mask & snorkel
- Fine & booties: Open-heel fine are highly recommended; if bringing closed-heel fins you must also bring booties for walking in shallows
- Wetsuit (recommended 3mm Nov-My & 5mm June-Oct)
- Waterproof watch (suitable for 30m depth) ideally; a dive computer is highly recommended
- Delayed Surface Marker Buoy (DSMB) with spool reel
- Certification cards
- Dive slate and pencil
- For Marine conservation interns: A dive computer is essential equipment

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**Highly Recommended Equipment**

**Recommended for all participants**

- Camera: a good dry box or bag filled with lots of silica gel will help to prevent humidity damaging your equipment.
  - Pen knife / Leatherman
- Money belt/bum bag/fannypack
- Dry bag: - For cameras and other valuables dry during boat crossings
- Book, music player, speaker/pod
- Hammock
- A summer sleeping bag or blanket for April-August when the water can be cooler
- Vitamins: - We will always try to ensure that fresh fruit and vegetables form a part of the regular meals supplied, however, you may also wish to bring a supply of vitamins and supplements with you.
- Snacks/sweets: There are some snacks available to buy on base, but it's a good idea to bring your own too, as town trips are limited to the weekend. Anything you think you might crave or miss- even people without a sweet tooth will crave snacks! Granola bars, chocolate, dried fruit an beef jerky serve as good snacks in between the 3 daily meals provided.
- Sewing kit
- Electrical adapter to convert both socket style and voltage if necessary. Solar powered charger or battery bank
- Travel games / playing cards
- Clothing pegs

**Recommended for Community participants**

- Mask, snorkel, fins & booties: Open-heel fins are highly recommended; if bringing closed-heel fins you must also bring booties for walking in shallows
- Waterproof watch

**Recommended for Marine Conservation participants**

- Wrist-mounted diving compass
- Diving computer – All dives are planned using the RDP tables but a dive computer is extremely HIGHLY RECOMMENDED on this program and for the best dive practice in general. If you are considering purchasing a diving computer, research the best value options. Computers are essential equipment for Marine Conservation Interns
- For Marine Conservation Interns a laptop or tablet are very useful for internship assignments, research etc though they are brought at your own risk. We suggest keeping them out of sight to reduce the chances of theft and in a dry bag with silica gel to prevent humidity damage
- Pair of old trainers or waterproof walking/shoes sports sandals and 1-2 pairs of thin, quick drying socks for walking between villages.

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**Additional Information**

**Physical fitness**

It would be a good idea to build up your physical fitness in the preceding weeks to the expedition. A program that includes a certain amount of aerobic exercise is recommended to achieve an appropriate level of fitness. The work that you will be doing is often physically demanding, ranging from short hikes between villages on neighboring Moturiki Island to beach cleans, building projects to carrying dive tanks – and all manner of other physical activities.
Diving Requirements for Marine Conservation participants

You should receive a PADI Medical Statement from the NGO— you can also download a copy from the PADI website (www.padi.com). You must answer all the questions with YES or NO. If you answer ‘yes’ to any of the questions you are required to have a consultation with a doctor and your doctor must sign and stamp this form. The NGO requires that you return to us the original signed medical statement certifying that you are physically and emotionally fit to scuba dive (this must be current, i.e. within 6 months of departure and updated if there are any changes to your status). Please make sure you provide full details on the relevant forms contained within this pack. These should be completed and returned, with your PADI Medical Statement at least 12 weeks before you travel. It is essential that we have the most comprehensive information possible on your medical history / conditions to pass on to medical specialists in the unlikely event of an emergency. If you have any concerns about your diving fitness, or if your doctor needs more information on diving medicine please refer to the following websites. Please take particular note of this if you have any specific medical conditions such as asthma.

1. Divers Alert Network (DAN - www.diversalertnetwork.org/join/index.asp?RC=1842280) is a highly respected industry body. The site features over a hundred articles and papers on medical issues facing divers.
2. The Diving Disease Research Centre (www.ddrc.org) has some good articles on diving medical issues and contact details for practitioners at the Centre.

Dress Code

It is important to take into account cultural considerations when packing for your program. In the community, women must wear a full length sulu (sarong) or skirt & cover their shoulders at all times. It is perfectly fine to wear short sleeved shirts as long as shoulders are covered. It is acceptable for volunteers to wear long work trousers during construction work though during all other times women should wear sarongs. Men should wear sarongs and short sleeved shirts to community functions and on Sundays but at other times it is acceptable to wear trousers or long shorts.

Volunteers, when teaching at the school, should plan to wear sarongs and either a collared short-sleeve shirt (polo shirt) or the Fiji t-shirt (provided on arrival). On base, volunteers are free to wear what they wish, although must be respectful and modest, especially when visiting the island community on the Caqalai Resort

Visa

We have compiled a list of guidelines and requirements, which will help navigate the requirements of Fiji immigration. So that you can head straight over to base, one of our Fiji staff will submit this documentation on your behalf at the immigration office in Suva. Please read the guidelines and requirements carefully and make sure you have all documentation and fees ready to hand over at your pick up.

Immigration Guidelines

1) Arrival in country - On the plane you will be given an arrival card. When answering the question about why you are visiting Fiji—you must tick the business box. We know this sounds strange but in Fiji volunteers are currently classed as working. You will then be issued a 14-day visita permit. Please make sure the immigration official has handwritten 14 days on the stamp. If you do not receive this then please ask to speak to a senior immigration officer to update and explain that the NGO will be applying for a work permit on your behalf.

2) Documentation - Depending on the duration of your project, there are 2 types of permit that you can apply for as a volunteer in Fiji, the Limited Authority to Work permit (max 3 month) or the Short-Term work permit (max 6 months). For your application you will need to provide the following documentation and fees.

Flight Itinerary - All volunteers must provide a paper copy of their onward flight itinerary. This flight itinerary must be to your country of origin, so if you are travelling to another country after Fiji, e.g. Australia or New Zealand, then you need to provide the full itinerary all the way back to your home country. The copy of your itinerary must also include an E-ticket number, if you can’t find this then ask your travel agent or airline for confirmation.

Criminal Background Check - All volunteers are required to have a CRB check before joining Fiji. Please ensure you have a hard copy of the document with you. This must be an up to date original hard copy of the document (they will not accept copies or scans) and it needs to be in English. Please bring a photocopy of your criminal background check as well.

Passport Photocopy - Please arrive with a paper copy of your passport photo page.

Fees (Please have these ready for collection at your pick up). The limited Authority to Work visa (Max 3 month) is $180 FJD. The short-term work permit (Max 6 month) is $632 FJD.

Have a good trip and we will see you soon in the Pacific!