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Menu



## Essay: Fiji Facts

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The facts that make Fiji what it is today has been molded by its rich history of imigration, its seperation from Britian, and its lushish beautiful island.

Geographic area. Fiji consists of 332 islands in the South Pacific and about 110 of these islands are inhabited.

The total area is 7,054 sq miles. FIji is dominated with mountainous terrain and mostly dormant volcanoes.

The larger islands are the solidification of the molten lava and rocks erupting from the volcanoes is responsible for the formation of the islands. However, the smaller islands of Fiji are made of coral reefs.

Population. The total population of Fiji is 903,207 people.

Government structure. Fiji's government is republic. This country took independence on October 10, 1970.

Demographics.

Natural Resources. Main natural resources of Fiji include timber, copper, gold, fish, offshore oil and hydropower.

Exports. Fiji's main exports are sugar, garments, gold, timber, fish, molasses, mineral water and coconut oil. Other domestic exports that have increased for the past five years are ginger, flour, taro and sweet biscuits. The main export destinations are USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and other Pacific island countries. The main import items are manufactured goods, machinery, petroleum products, food and chemicals from Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, NZ and China.

Imports. Fiji mainly imports fuel, telecommunications equipment, recreational vehicles, rice, cane sugar, wheat, pharmaceutical products, meat and natural gas. Fiji's main imports partner is Singapore (accounting for around 57 percent of total imports). Others include New Zealand, United States, Thailand, Japan, China, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

Agricultural products. Agriculture, which was once a major stronghold of Fiji's economy, now comprises only 8.9% of the nation's GDP. More than three-quarters of all Fijian households used to engage in agricultural-related activities, but now many of those workers have switched over to the growing service industry.

Sugarcane is Fiji's most important agricultural industry, accounting for over one-third of all of Fiji's industrial activity. Indigenous Fijians own most farmland and local residents of Indian ancestry farm it and produce about 90% of all sugarcane, which is then processed into raw sugar and molasses in the Fiji Sugar Corporation, which is predominantly owned and run by the government. The European Union is the largest export market for Fiji's sugar. Coconut and copra (the dried meat of the coconut) are also important agricultural products that are widely used and exported from Fiji. There was a ban on exporting copra until 1998, and since then a new copra-buying company has emerged, raising the price of copra considerably. Fiji also grows and exports bananas, pineapples, watermelons, cereal, rice, corn, ginger, cocoa and tobacco.

Foreign exchange. 1 Fijian Dollar equals 0.54 US Dollar

Currency. The Fijian dollar has been the currency of Fiji since 1969 and was also the currency between 1867 and 1873. In 1969, coins were introduced in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10 & 20, with a 50 coin issued in 1975. On 15 January 1969, the government introduced notes in denominations of 50 cents, \$1, \$2, \$10, and \$20; the \$5 note was not issued until 1970. The Central Monetary Authority took over the issuance of paper money in 1974, issuing the same denominations, although the 50 note was replaced by a coin on 3 March 1975. In 1986, the Reserve Bank of Fiji began issuing notes. The \$1 note was replaced by a coin in 1995. The \$50 note was introduced in 1996, followed by a \$100 note on 10 April 2007.

## Culture

Language. Fijian, Hindi, and English became the official languages after independence in 1970, and linguistic autonomy was guaranteed by the constitution of 1997. English is the language of interethnic communication, administration, government, trade and commerce, and education. Fijian and Hindi often are spoken at home and are used in religious contexts and on radio and television.

Food. In a culture of gift giving, feasting on special occasions is a common practice among ethnic Fijians. The offering of food in substantial quantities (magiti) is an essential aspect of traditional community life. Ceremonial foods may be offered cooked or raw and often include entire pigs, oxen, or turtles as well as everyday foods such as canned fish and corned beef. The offering of ceremonial food often is preceded by the presentation of a "lead gift" such as whale's teeth, bark cloth, or kava. Among Indo-Fijians, feasting is associated with marriages and religious festivals. Kava and alcoholic drinks may be drunk on these occasions. Today, seafood, beef, poultry and pork are essential foods in Fiji. Some of the most commonly-used ingredients that are used in Fijian cuisine include breadfruit, cassava, yam, taro root and different leaves. Many beverages, soups, salads and appetizers are prepared with commonly found fruits in Fiji, such as mango, banana, guava and pineapple. Coconut milk can also be used with these fruits to make sweet, salty and/or spicy dishes.

Religion. A multi-racial, multi-cultural nation, Fiji is represented by all the major religions of the world. This is quickly obvious to the visitor who will see Christian churches, Mosques, Sikh and Hindu temples in towns and the countryside. More than half of Fiji's population are Christians (52.9%), Hindus (38.1%), Muslim (7.8%), Sikhs (0.7%), Others (0.5%).

Industry. Most industrial production involves tourism, sugar, clothing, and gold mining. In 1994, over three hundred thousand tourists and seventeen thousand cruise ship passengers visited the islands. Most hotels are situated on secluded beaches and offshore islands; individual thatched tourist cabins are loosely modeled on village architecture. The largely government-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation has a monopoly on sugar milling and marketing. There is a rum distillery at Lautoka.

#### Travel

Documentation. A passport is necessary for everyone entering Fiji. The passport has to be valid at least three months beyond the intended date of departure from Fiji. However, it is recommended that travelers have a passport that is valid for six months beyond the date of departure. Most countries, including Fiji, also require that you have blank pages in your passport with an adequate amount of space for the necessary stamps that you may need when entering or departing the country. It is recommended that you have at least two free pages in the visas section of your passport before traveling to any international country. A Visa is not required if you are coming from the United States, visitors without Visa can stay up to 4 months, with an possible 2 month extension.

Modes of transportation. Fiji offers multiple ways to travel within its country such as:

1. Bus
2. Taxis
3. Rental Car
4. Ferry
5. Plane
6. Helicopter
7. Seaplane
9. Scooter
10. Bike

Transportation cost. Fiji has a very good transportation system, so you can choose from several options on how you would like to explore and get around these beautiful islands. In cities, buses and taxis are the main modes of transportation, though there are many other ways of getting around, too. Buses run regularly between cities and towns on the main island of Viti Levu. Taking the bus is an inexpensive way to get around the islands. It costs only F\$12 to take the express bus along the Queens Highway, which takes approximately four hours. Taxis are another inexpensive mode of transportation. In Suva, a taxi ride generally costs up to F\$5, though it can get you a long way. Around Nadi, it can cost F\$8-10 to get to the town from the airport. Taxis are especially convenient to get around at night. It is not advised to walk through the cities alone at night, as muggings have been reported. If you want to travel Fiji at your own time and pace, renting a car is a good idea. Renting from name brand companies are best, as although they are more expensive. Ferries are an excellent way to see the beautiful sights if you have enough time to spare. The ferries are able to carry vehicles and cargo, plus snacks, food and drinks are sold on board as well. However, most ferries do not arrive or leave at the time that is appointed, so if you need to get somewhere at a particular time, travelling by ferry might not be the best mode of transportation. If you want to get somewhere quickly or want to travel between islands, flying is an excellent choice. Fiji offers different ways to travel including riding a light airplane, a helicopter, and sea planes. Flights are up to F\$400 return from Nadi to the northern islands and up to F\$300 return from Nadi to the southern islands. The resort islands of Malolo Lailai and Mana in the Mamanucas are visited daily with 10-minute flights costing around F\$80 return. Motorcycles, scooters and bikes are other fun ways to get around Fiji on your own terms. Drivers in Fiji also do not have much driving education and are not accustomed to cyclists on the road, so take caution if you are riding on roads, and avoid biking at night when visibility is low. Thrifty Car Rental offers motorcycles and scooters at around F\$35 to F\$60 per day for scooters and 125cc for motorcycles.

#### Customs

Clothing. The dress code in Fiji is quite strict and conservative. Wearing bathing suits, short shorts and tank tops in public is seen as a lack of respect. Revealing too much skin in Fijian villages is considered offensive. Men should always wear shirts in town, and women should wear skirts or dresses that cover at least the upper legs while seated.

Tipping and bargaining. Tipping is not customary in Fiji, so leaving a tip is up to the customer. Bargaining is

common in smaller shops. Once an item is purchased, it cannot be returned. Sales are final.

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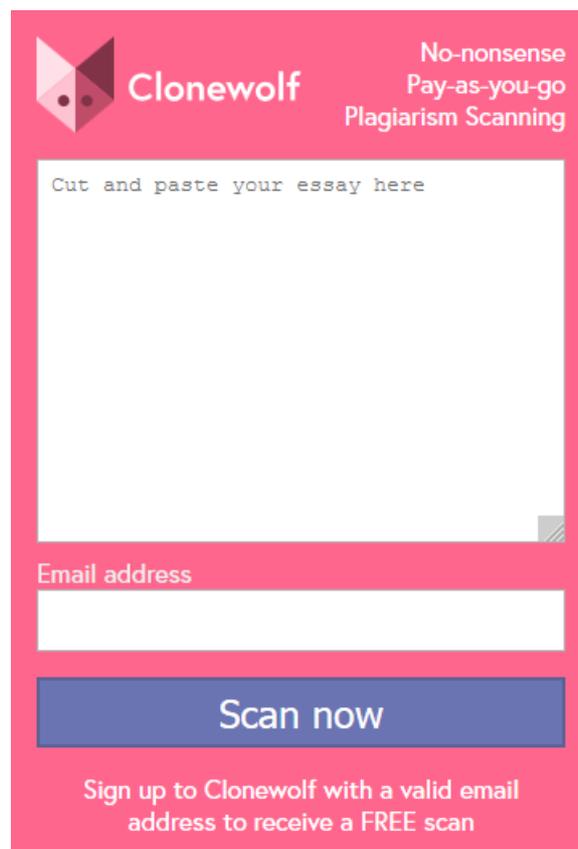
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