

# Introduction

I first noticed Undiscovered Destination's Pacific Explorer trip in Wanderlust Magazine, a UK publication. The article was a "round-up" of unique itineraries and this trip captivated my interest. I contacted the company and was the first to sign up for their June, 2019 departure. Their maximum is 12 participants and I didn't want to lose out.



Luckily friend Rosie S. had told me about a wonderful resort on Wawa Island, a few hours from Nadi, Fiji. So, based on her recommendation, Joan and I spend a week there prior to the group trip and Yolanda joins us for a few days. It is one of the smartest things I've done as it provides a head start on getting over jetlag and offers a nice way to ease into "Fiji Time."

Things happen with ambitious itineraries. A few weeks before the group trip begins, we learn that the island state of Wallis and Fortuna has been dropped from the itinerary due to flight schedules. Hence we spend more time in Fiji than we really wanted to.

The company's description is right -- *this is a trip for those with a sense of adventure and a great travel spirit.* And we needed lots of that good travel spirit as the trip progressed!

On Thursday, June 27th Joan, Yolanda and I meet the other participants - three men from the UK. We are to be a cozy group of six persons. It is not that the trip didn't fill, the maximum had been changed due to logistical reasons.

Soon we were on our way visiting seven island nations:

- \* Fiji
- \* New Caledonia
- \* Vanuatu
- \* Solomon Islands
- \* Federated States of Micronesia
- \* Kiribati
- \* Samoa

Changing currencies: every few days:

- \* Fiji Dollar in Fiji
- \* French Pacific Franc in New Caledonia
- \* Vatu in Vanuatu
- \* Solomon Dollar in Solomon Islands
- \* US Dollar in Micronesia
- \* Australian Dollar in Kiribati
- \* Tala in Samoa

And taking eleven internal flights with some airlines we had never heard of:

- \* Air Calin (one flight)
- \* Air Vanuatu (3 flights)
- \* Air Niugini (1 flight)
- \* Nauru Airlines (3 flights)
- \* Fiji Airways (3 flights)

This is not an easy trip. We move quickly from place to place, have flights at odd hours, and we deal with the six unique personalities of our fellow travelers. Though I'm glad I went, the trips' main failing was lack of a group escort coordinating sightseeing, hotel check-ins, meals, etc. Sometimes, important information, like meeting or departure times did not reach everyone.

We soon fall into two groups: the boys and the girls with minimal interaction except when sightseeing. Each of us fended for ourselves at hotels and restaurants.

But somehow it wrapped up well, and when it was time to hug goodbye, we each chose to remember the adventure, the kind and friendly people we met and the golden moments.

