**Date of Trip:** 6th January – 19th January

**Project:** Teaching in Fiji

**Pre departure**

* I found Global Nomadic through STA Travel, the online booking system was easy enough to use.
* I asked staff at Global Nomadic which airport to fly to, I was told Nandi and Suva were both appropriate. When I researched flights to Nadi from Sydney seemed to be the better option than Suva. It was cheaper and there were more frequent flights. On arrival in Nadi, I found that we were to travel 4 hours by bus to Suva. After speaking to other volunteers who caught flights straight to Suva, they said the flight from Nadi to Suva was on a small plane and a bit scary. Also, the flight home from Suva was to leave at 6:30 am. In conclusion, it was still better to get the bus from Nadi to Suva! Traveling from Suva to Nadi during the day gave me the opportunity to see the country from coast to coast.
* I was given little information about the project or accommodation prior to departure. I was told I’d have an orientation when I arrived.

**Accommodation**

* I was unaware of what type of accommodation we would be staying in (turned our to be dormitory style) and did not know what to expect. e.g. I didn’t know you had to bring a towel and only had a small micro fibre towel for 2 weeks.
* Rose house was about 5 minutes walk from the centre where we had meals. It lacked facilities such a microwave, hanging space in the bathroom or rooms. It would be good to have a lounge area to make it feel a bit more like home. Another option would be to limit the amount of volunteers so that all volunteers stay at Frangipani house.
* I was fortunate to share a bathroom and toilet with one of The Green Lion staff. Other girls in the house had to share a bathroom and toilet, which was often not functioning well.

**Orientation week**

* Orientation week was very helpful. Some interesting activities were planned but could have been condensed into 3 days. I especially liked the waterfalls, the Kava ceremony, local markets and the museum.
* I have a feeling there are probably much nicer Islands to visit than Mosquito Island though.

**Teaching Project**

* I was fortunate that I was there for the beginning of the school year. If I had come a week earlier, I would not have been able to teach in the primary school as the students were on school holidays. It would be good to give volunteers a calendar of dates so they can plan their trip accordingly.
* I feel like projects could be more streamlined and more efficient by have having specific start dates for volunteers. e.g. Only have new volunteers start every second week, rather than every week. It would be easier for the staff to keep track of who is coming and going. It would also allow volunteers more time to bond with each other.
* I understand that the first week of school is very busy for staff. However, we did not have a formal introduction to the school. We did not get a chance to talk to the principal and we were not told what the expectations were. I am fortunate enough to have a teaching background and was able to cope with teaching a class by myself for 2 days while another teacher was sick. I’m sure other less experiences volunteers would have been overwhelmed by such a situation.
* Having seen what AOG Primary school is like, I would like to fundraise to help the school raise funds for computers.
* On my last day, the class sang me a farewell song and I thoroughly enjoyed teaching them about Australian culture.
* Since School was finished at 2:30 pm, there was plenty of time to sight see after school.
* Another highlight was going to a local community on 2 occasions. The first time we did a Sports day, playing games with the children. The second time, I went to tutor Year 1 and Year 2 students. The singing and how happy the children were impressed me.

**The Green Lion Staff**

* The Green Lion staffs are very friendly, helpful and approachable. The farewell ceremony is very touching and shows how much the staff cares about the volunteers.
* The food was typically Fijian, having a special meal once a week. I especially loved the fried cava chips. There was plenty of food each night.
* The local dogs (Ma Ma and Spot) were very cute and provided a lot of entertainment, especially for volunteers staying at the Rose. One of the dogs would always walk with you back to the Rose.
* Since the Rose is a 5 minutes walk, there is a security Guard to walk volunteers back at nighttime.

**Narere**

* Located about half an hour from Suva City. $1 bus ride, $16 by taxi. The bus is a lot of fun but a lot longer than a taxi.
* There is a local shopping mall about 10 minutes away with a cinema, Supermarket and restaurants. Volunteers often went there after dinner for drinks or a movie.
* Many of the volunteers go to a resort for the weekend. This gives a good break from the accommodation at the Green Lion but be aware of bed bugs and make sure to wash your clothes when you return from the weekend.

**Weather**

* November to April is rainy season. Fiji is prone to Cyclones; just before I arrived they had Cyclone Mona a mild cyclone with no real damage.
* Most of the time it was sunny but late afternoon there were often big storms, which were short. Be prepared for rainy weather.

**Conclusion**

The whole experience was authentic Fijian, rather than visiting Fiji as tourist and staying at a resort or hotel. I was able to gain a better understanding of the local people and customs. I was also able to make a real contribution to the local community and was constantly met with friendly people. Overall, better planning and communication would make the experience more efficient and enjoyable. However, I feel that this is a typically Fijian trait to ‘go with the flow.’