



Seven Days in Fiji (Travelers Edition)

An eye opening account of a trip to Fiji just before Christmas 2005.

by Steve Glines

With Black & White illustrations.

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With full color illustrations.

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Review by Susan Tepper

If you were expecting a typical travel book, well forget it. *Seven Days in Fiji* will take you on a journey, for sure, but one that is atypical in every sense, not what you've come to expect from these types of books.

And you will be grateful. Because very quickly, without being aware, you are *traveling with Steve Glines*, part and parcel of his mind and body and spirit. That's how strong and persuasive his writer voice is, drawing you right in, first at the airport (where most journeys do begin), a place of dull repetitive blandness. *Keolar* says Glines about airport carpet, and right there you get it all: airports are places to move through, period; do not linger. His gaze is swift and his mind is swimmy, and you are right there, too. *Come with me to Fiji* he's offering, almost out of the corner of his eye. And you're glad to be going along because it's fun traveling with Steve, seeing the towns and beaches and mountains, the people and marketplaces, the little corrugated houses through the quirky lens of this generous storyteller. In Fiji, first in the town of Suva, he walks everywhere, despite being told to avoid certain places (like the red-light district). However the *ladies* and the *pufas* treat him respectfully, calling out polite salutations as Steve passes by every night. He loves to walk, and all that walking results in painful blisters you can almost feel rubbing against your own shoes. *Ouch!* Steve Glines, unselfconscious in his story telling, at times seems almost unaware of himself— though it's through him and with him that we learn about Fiji and its people. We learn it's a very clean place with a light pleasant scent of burning wood that hangs over the island, and that the British colonized Fiji in the late 1880's. There's a park called Albert Park, after Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria, and the buildings shadowing the park were built in the English style of the period (many interesting photos, past and present, are peppered throughout this book). Cricket is a national past time, as well as soccer, and the food served on Fiji is a hold-over from British colonialism and not that tasty. We find out that before the missionaries arrived, cannibalism was part of the cultural tradition, and that some Fijian's alive today knew someone who had been a cannibal. Glines presents this particular history of Fiji straightforward without histrionics. It can almost make you forgive the cannibals their predilection (steak by any other name...). There's a five hour taxi ride from Suva to Nadi, taking in the sights along the way. Aruind, the loquacious driver,

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smokes *spliffs* and insists on showing off the most beautiful sunset in all of Fiji (photo insert in book); then a slight detour to his family home for a spot of tea; another detour to meet Aruind's sister and *auntie*. Served a milky dusty concoction called *kava* (the national drink) out of a coconut shell, it numbed Steve's lips. *Seven Days in Fiji* is a beautifully rendered book, a delight to the senses. I can't take a trip this summer, but then I just did.