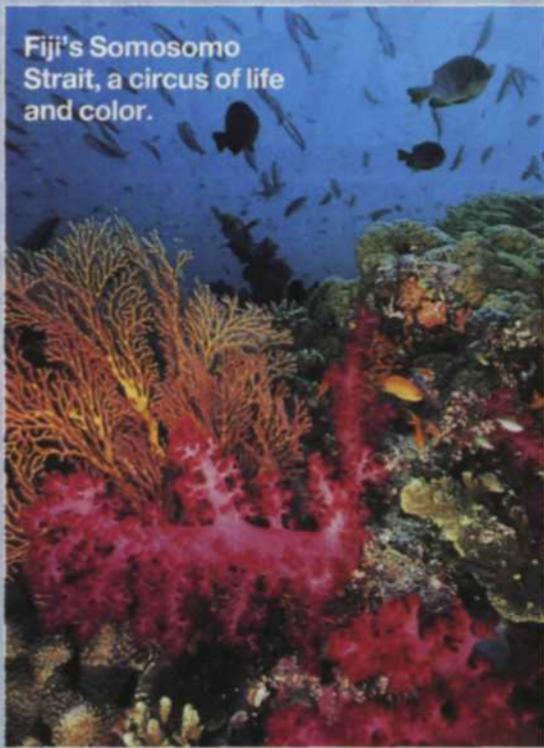


Ever wonder where each new day actually begins? When you visit the island of Taveuni, Fiji you will quickly find the answer. The International Dateline runs right through the middle of the island. For convenience sake, the dateline has been moved so that all the Fiji Islands are under one time zone.

Taveuni is the third largest island in the 300 plus island group of Fiji. It lies 90 miles northeast of the main island of Viti Levu. After you arrive on Taveuni, friendly taxi cab drivers can take you to the two most popular resorts along the coast. Both Dive Taveuni and Garden Island Resort are on the edge of the Somosomo Strait, where you can find some of the most beautiful diving in the world. The foliage along the way to both resorts is extremely dense and truly demonstrates what the color green is all

Fiji's Somosomo Strait, a circus of life and color.



of fish, eels, seasnakes, leaf fish and just about every other animal you dreamed of finding in Fiji. A typical day includes two single tank dives; one in the early morning and, after lunch, a second, early afternoon dive.

Most of the diving is in currents that range from a gentle flow to warp speed. Don't worry though, the dive-masters for these resorts have an excellent understanding of the currents and tidal exchanges of the Somosomo Strait, making current diving a breeze. In fact, if you have any fears about current diving, this is the place to rid yourself of them.

The first and most important part of learning to dive Taveuni is listening to the briefing. By giving the divemaster your attention you will learn how to get to the bottom, where to go and where

Taveuni



Fiji's Diving Gem

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

about. It's not uncommon to see huge leafy plants and flowers growing in the wild, plants you would expect to see only in expensive greenhouses stateside.

When you look at a map of the island you will see that your trip from the airport has only scratched the surface of what Taveuni has to offer. The southeast coast is lined with dozens of waterfalls, many of which are accessible through resort tours. One of the better known is 60 foot Bouma Falls, perfect for half and full day trips of hiking and swimming in the pools below the waterfalls. The falls are only about a ten minute walk from the main road through well manicured trails that lead to picnic tables, benches and a changing room. If you are adventuresome, you can make the 30 minute hike to a second 100 foot waterfall or even a third that is 25 feet high. Each has its own special beauty, unique to Fiji.

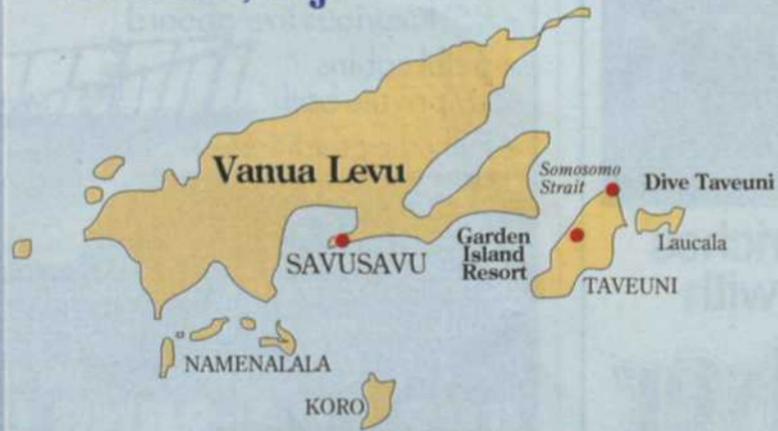
Before we look at the other adven-

tures found in Taveuni, let's move from fresh water to salt and talk about the main reason you would probably come to this peaceful island.

Diving at Taveuni is mainly in the Somosomo Strait, where the current exchange brings nutrient filled waters. This creates an intense environment, thick with soft corals, hard corals, tons



Taveuni, Fiji



Above: Susan Savela takes a close look at what seems to be a fluorescing anemone-fish. After diving off Taveuni you may find yourself disappointed anywhere else. Right: Pre-dive on a Garden Island Resort dive boat.

the currents drop to a minimum.

We could do a whole article on current diving in the strait but it's already been done (SDM May '92) and it's an excellent source of additional information. If you didn't read that issue, we will give it to you in a nutshell. Comfortable current diving is a combination of streamlined equipment, a proper understanding of current flow and proper swimming techniques. Equipment drag will slow you down and cause you to use additional energy. Keep your hoses and dangling equipment close to your body. Put your snorkel in a pocket or away from your facemask. Snug your mask up an extra notch and keep the air in your BC to a minimum.

Photographers have an additional problem as cameras create drag. If you use a wide angle system, fold up the flash arms until you are on the bottom. When you are swimming from one location to the next, hold the camera system close and parallel to your body. If you can hold it next to your tank there will be almost no drag. Have your system set on your favorite setting so you can tuck the camera away until you need to get that perfect shot.

When you jump into the water, make sure you time it close to your buddy's entrance. Move quickly to the bottom and look for small coral bommies. The current slows at these locations and will allow you to regroup. When you and your buddy are together, swim behind a bommie and you will find the current is minimal or maybe even nonexistent. You can then swim out into the current for your pictures, quickly seeking refuge behind the bommie afterward.

If the current gets stronger, concentrate on places where you can hold onto the bottom without endangering the animal life. Don't use live coral to steady yourself, look instead for a small dead area of the reef or a rock as a handhold. This keeps you in control so you don't come crashing into the coral unexpectedly.

On your first dive in the Somosomo Strait make sure you watch the dive-master and see how he/she uses the currents. Because of the high concen-

One Fijian word, *lomelagi*, perfectly sums up Taveuni's indescribable diving—heaven!



Blue Ribbon Eel Reef and Small White Wall. The problem is which one to dive. Each has its own special attractions, guaranteed to please.

Okay, let's look at what else you can do at Taveuni. If diving isn't enough you can explore a warrior burial cave in a 1,200

GETTING THERE

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop



Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi is approximately 10 hours. Taveuni can be reached via a short, one hour flight, arranged through a local carriers, Air Fiji.

Air Pacific
(800) 227-4446

Qantas
(800) 227-4500

Air Fiji
(800) 677-4277
(310) 670-7302

foot lava tube or maybe take advantage of some of the best birdwatching in the Fiji Islands. Other attractions include Lake Tagimaucia in an old crater high in the mountains, a rock waterslide near the Garden Island Resort or a visit to some of the friendly local villages. If you are a true sport enthusiast, you can go horseback riding, use paddle boats or hike the many trails around Taveuni. If it's starting to look as if you'll need to stay two weeks to truly enjoy this dive trip, you may be right. That's why so many Taveuni divers return year after year. If you have not been to Taveuni, be sure to put it high on your priority list. You won't regret it. 🐟

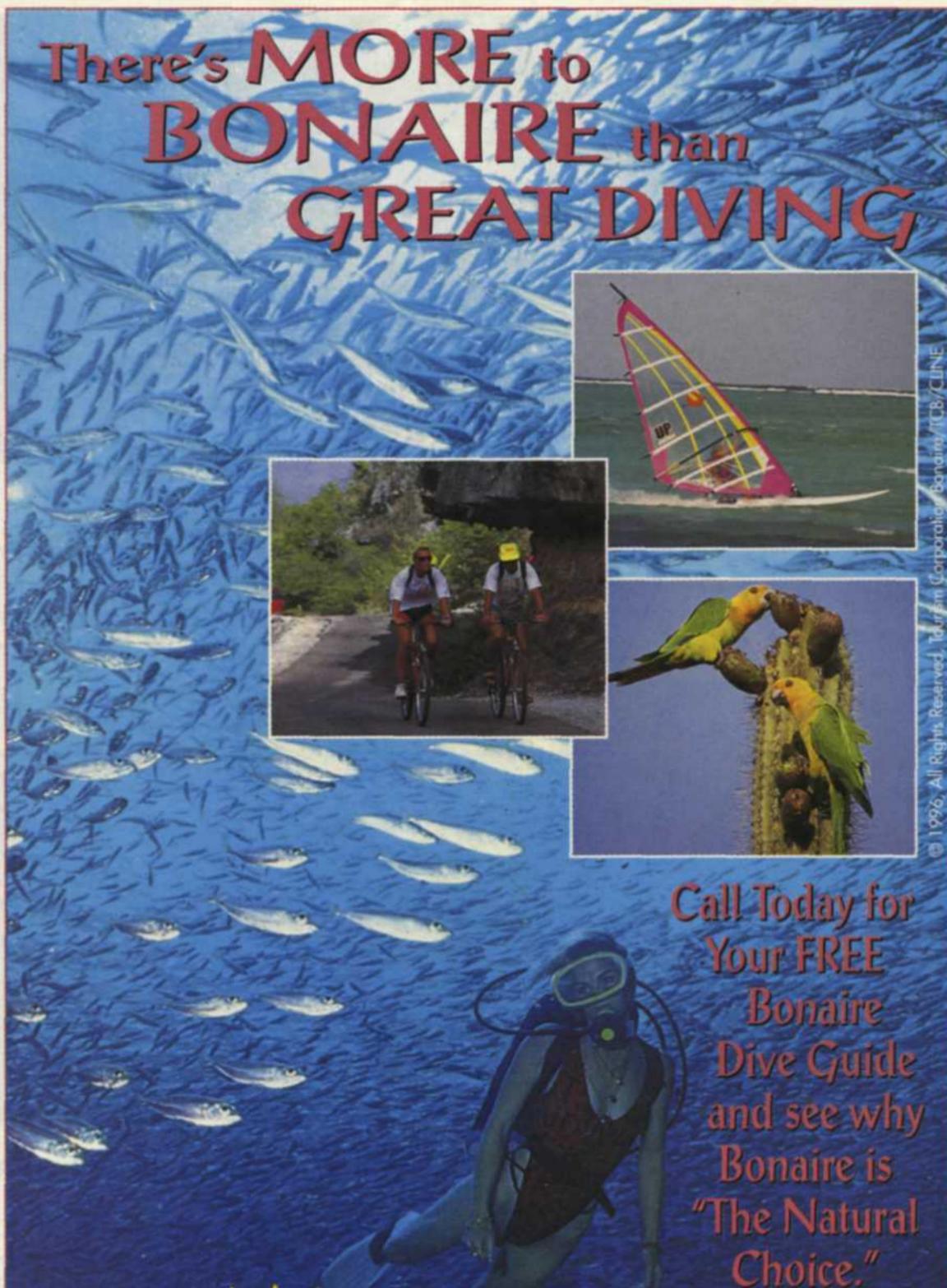
PADI'S SIXTH CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Dive Station/Florida Diving Institute in Orlando, Florida is the sixth PADI dive center to receive the Five Star Career Development Center Charter Member rating. This guarantees that students receive a complete vocational curriculum that will prepare them for a career in diving. Anyone interested in becoming an instructor will also be interested in the pre- and post instructor training and most importantly, the job placement services that a PADI CDC offers students. For more information on becoming a PADI instructor, contact The Dive Station/Florida Diving Institute, 3465 Edgewater Drive, Orlando, Florida 32804 or phone (407) 843-3483, (800) 282-3328, fax (407) 849-1427, e-mail kamfdi@aol.com. 🐟

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