

A bure in the shade of palm trees. Right: A guest finds solitude in the resort's pool.



Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort

BLISSFUL AQUATIC INDULGENCE

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



A golden crinoid, nestled in a field of stony corals, stretches its feathery arms into the nutrient rich water. Above right: Even the minutiae of the reef, such as this nudibranch, are exotic and beautiful.

We have known Jean-Michel Cousteau for more than 20 years and consider him one of the foremost experts on the underwater world. Years ago, when he decided to add Fiji as a Project Ocean Search location, we bombarded him with questions. We had not yet been to Fiji and wanted to learn everything we could so we'd be ready. Not long after that, we participated in a Fiji Project Ocean Search and worked with Jean-Michel in the making of his CD-ROM, *Cities Under the Sea*. Now Fiji is like a home away from home for us as we travel its islands for SKIN DIVER.

Jean-Michel, in conjunction with Post Ranch Inn, Big Sur, California, has developed the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort. This piece of paradise is in Savusavu, on Fiji's second largest island, Vanua Levu. Fiji, just northeast of Australia, is a group of more than 300 islands where the friendliest people on earth live. To get to the Fiji Islands Resort, you fly via Air Pacific to Nadi International Airport on Viti Levu. There you will be met



by a smiling representative of the resort, who will help you transfer to a smaller plane that will take you onto Savusavu. When you arrive there, you and your luggage will be quickly transferred to the hotel. Your vacation home will be one of 20 thatched roof bures (Fijian cottages) in a 17 acre coconut grove. The landscaping ensures privacy, yet all of the bures are within a short walking distance of the main bure, bar, dining room, dive shop and freshwater pool.

The resort is on a finger of land protruding from Savusavu, providing swimmers and snorkelers unlimited access to long beaches. There is a 100 foot long dock that allows easy water access. The fully equipped dive shop has plenty of rental gear available in case you forgot something or just wanted to travel light. The dive shop offers a variety of technical dive courses: TDI certifications in nitrox, advanced wreck, rebreather and technician/blender; and PADI certifications in two EANx specialties.

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JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU FIJI ISLANDS RESORT

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L'Aventure Jean-Michel Cousteau offers diving on some of Fiji's finest sites. The largest of the resort's two boats is a custom built 37 footer powered by two 330 horsepower engines. It carries 12 divers and offers individual compartments for dive gear. The other boat, a 23 footer, can accommodate 10 divers and two crew members. The three, five and seven day packages include two morning dives; afternoon or night dives are offered if there are enough guests interested.

Underwater photography services at the resort include E-6 processing, light boxes, camera rentals, courses and space on the dive boats dedicated to photo equipment.



We have logged more than 250 dives with the Fiji Islands Resort and find it one of the most fascinating areas in Fiji because it offers such underwater variety. What kind of diving do you like? No matter what your answer, this resort should be able to fill your requests. You can find most everything from deep walls with 200 foot plus visibility to muck diving with small critters most people have never seen. There are currents, no currents, small animals, big animals, canyons, walls and bommies. The sites are in three basic areas, Savusavu Bay, outside Savusavu Bay and Namena Island.

We love macro photography and have found more types of nudibranchs in **Savusavu Bay** than any other place in Fiji. The dive spot closest to the resort is **Spit Rock**. This bommie is a favorite with snorkelers as it is only a short swim from shore and offers calm conditions. The rock is home to several nudibranchs, clownfish, lionfish and some very organized cleaner fish.

Another favorite is **Mystery Reef**. In the middle of the bay, it has excellent visibility. At the top center of the reef are several large hard corals that slope down to a vast garden of soft corals that re-

semble gray, leafless dwarf trees about a foot high. Thousands of small critters hide under these corals, providing underwater photographers with a treasure trove of subjects.

On the outside of Savusavu Bay there is a heavy concentration of soft corals, seafans, large animals and schools of fish at depths ranging from 15 to 120 feet. The shallow portion of each dive is on the steep edge of the reef, offering lots of cracks and crevices. The sites usually drop to another ledge at 40 to 100 feet, then drop even deeper.

Canyons is typical of one of these dives and has fields of hard corals forming swim-throughs for both sharks and divers. **Jackson's** is loaded with gigantic seafans down to 90 feet, with soft coral gardens at the 40 to 60 foot level. One of our favorites is **Hole in the Wall**. The dive begins with an impressive swim along a



Above: L'Aventure, the resort's speedy and roomy 37 foot dive boat. Below: Jean-Michel Cousteau is the developer of this slice of paradise on Vanua Levu Island.



huge, deep wall and finishes with a quick trip through a hole that opens to an even deeper wall. Along this wall you will often see many schools of colorful fish and, on occasion, even larger animals.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

The Fiji Islands Resort is best known for:

- Friendly, welcoming people
- Privacy and personal service
- Proximity to some of Fiji's best and most diverse dive sites
- Incredible soft corals

Namena Island offers the best diving available from Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort. It is one of the best dive areas in the world. It's hard to describe the wonderful visibility, the abundance of animals, the vastness and the color found here. The resort makes regular trips to Namena about two to three times a week.

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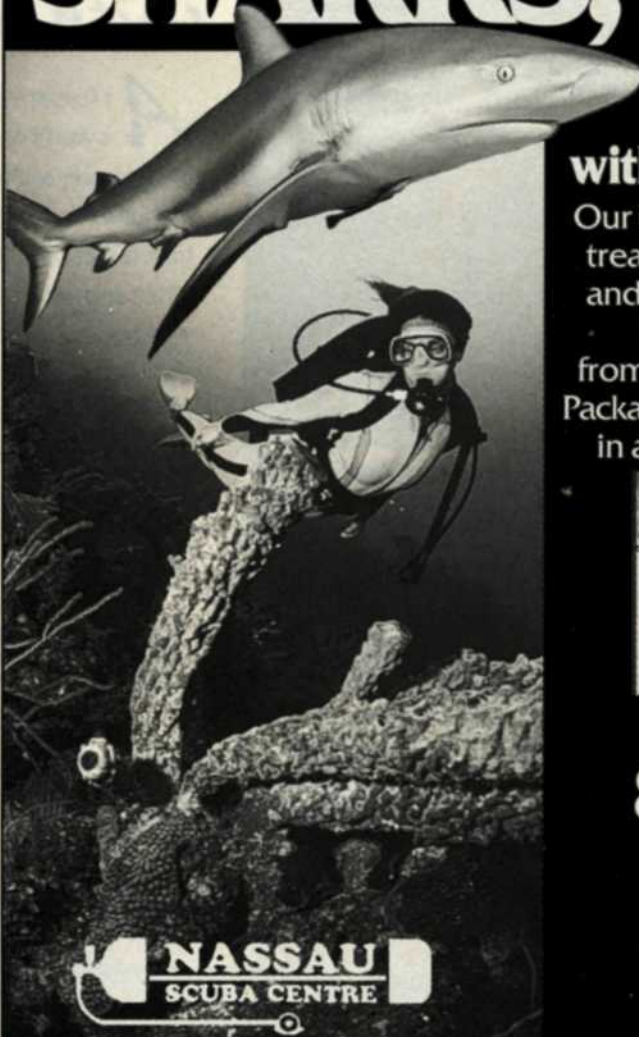
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JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU FIJI ISLANDS RESORT

The circular reef that surrounds the island creates a habitat for sharks, schools of Barracuda, rays, schools of parrotfish, octopus, nudibranchs, leaffish—you get the idea. If there is an animal that lives in Fiji, you'll probably see it here at Namena. There are one-half dozen sites here and all are spectacular.

FIJI BOUND

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 takes approximately 10 hours. The outer islands are reached via either Air Fiji or Sunflower Airlines.



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(800) 227-4446

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(800) 227-4500

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(888) DIVE FIJI (U.S.)

Believe it or not, not everyone loves diving as much as we do, thus the resort of-

fers Hobie Cats, kayaking, tennis, volleyball, snorkeling, village visits and some very interesting hiking expeditions into the rain forest and mangroves. The resort even offers Fijian craft classes for children.

Jean-Michel Cousteau says that "Fiji is one of the few places left where one can experience intact tropical forests, healthy reefs and a living culture of proud, indigenous people." Come experience Fiji to the fullest at Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort.

For more information, contact (800) 246-3454, (415) 788-5794 or fax (415) 788-0150. You can send e-mail to jmcfir@aol.com or visit the Web site at <http://www.jmcfir.com>. 🐟

Dive Notes

SHERWOOD'S OASIS REGULATOR COMBATS DRY MOUTH: The new Oasis regulator from Sherwood Scuba offers unique features to keep a diver's mouth cool and comfortable. Two special second stage moisture fins condense and return exhaled moisture. An exclusive, baffled exhaust tee breaks up bubbles, makes them small and moves them out of your line of vision. The unique Wisdom mouthpiece offers a natural fit and

helps reduce jaw fatigue. The regulator is designed to provide consistent air pressure even at low tank pressures.



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Sherwood, a manufacturer of gas control equipment since 1923, has been making high performance scuba gear for more than 30 years. It is a business unit of the Taylor-Wharton Gas Equipment Division of Harsco Corporation, an industrial products and services conglomerate with more than 175 major facilities in 30 countries, including the U.S.

For more information on Oasis and Wisdom from Sherwood Scuba, write to 2111 Liberty Drive, Niagara Falls, NY 14304-3744; phone (716) 283-2270 or fax (716) 283-2356. 🐟



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