

July 26: Today we departed the Tui Tai for the highly rated Qamea Resort and Spa. Five days on the Tui Tai and seven days at Qamea Resort. Lynn lamented that it wasn't seven and five instead. For Fiji, Qamea's location is remote. It has 17 private bures along the beach and coral reef. Ours was closer to the dive bure than to the dining hall bure. It was large and well equipped. In the end we really loved this place and could have stayed even longer.



A new spa area made up of several bures has just opened. Lynn and I will do a joint massage in the new spa later in the week. Food during the day is pleasantly good. Lynn is relaxing. It is Saturday.

July 27: Around 10 am I do a snorkel in front of our bure. We are in bure *Bune*, named for the native orange dove. I saw one at Kula Eco park. The fresh water pool is in our backyard. This snorkel is the best of the trip so far. Calm, clear, shallow reefs full of fish and corals. It is sunny and the fish colors are brilliant. There are many schools of fish and some fish are moderately large. The corals are of great beauty and variety, some soft and some hard. In the afternoon there is a snorkel trip by boat to a nearby reef. We go with the gentle current and eventually cross into a region of quite hot water. There are twigs and leaves in the water and visibility is altered as

warm and cold waters mix. At first I thought it was of volcanic origin but now think it may be the outflow from an underground river. We are near the shore and Fiji's islands have many rivers and streams. Why it is so warm is still a mystery. The guides seem disinterested in finding out the origin. [Below is a photo of me by Lynn.]



July 28: I do a morning snorkel out front. As I start out I am observed by 8 pairs of big eyes. It is a line of 8 squid (not a head to tail line but side by side about a foot apart). They hover and decide I am not going to eat them. Later I ask Sam at the dive bure about them and he tells me that they are seen there frequently. Nevertheless, it is my first encounter with squid after many years of snorkeling. Lynn is getting much more relaxed snorkeling and is getting some good underwater pictures. She especially likes to go out front and avoid getting on and off a boat (her hip has been bothering her). In the afternoon I go by boat to Nuku bay and have a nice snorkel in deeper water. A white tipped reef shark joins us. They are harmless and only grow to about two meters in length. The snorkeling at Nuku bay is excellent.







For contrast I will list most of the other sites where I have snorkeled.

Florida keys (late 1950's, scuba too; sinkholes)

Bahamas

Cancun (cenotes)

Costa Rica

Jamaica

Galapagos islands

Hawaii

Great Barrier reef

Fiji

Fiji snorkeling is the best.

July 29: Today we take a trip to a plantation across the bay from Qamea on Taveuni. The plantation is large and has many plants in cultivation. These include taro (root starch), pineapple, guava, coconut (oil), cassava (manioc, tapioca), giant caladium (elephant ears) and yaqona

(kava). Fresh guavas were picked and eaten. Once on the other side of the bay we are picked up by a truck. We ride in the open back of the truck, standing up. There are 8 of us and a new guide named Ali. He is very knowledgeable and fun. We ride high into the mountains and get a great view of the islands.



While lumbering up the rugged path the truck went under spider webs in the trees that were home to huge spiders, reminding me of *Argiope* in Florida. We then hiked through a jungle to the waterfalls. These falls are a smaller version of Bouma falls seen while on the Tui Tai, and remind one of rocky falls in north Georgia, although the rocks in Georgia are granite while those in Fiji are basalt. A cool dip in the falls' pool is welcomed. We cross a river on a "flying fox" to get to the falls. The trip out was uphill and steep. Lynn looked like she needed help. Ali offered to carry her out. Lynn refused. Ali insisted that he had done it before. He then pointed at one of our party, a *zaftig* lady, and declared he had even taken out one much larger than she! Lynn continued to demur and made it out by herself, bad hip and all.



We reversed our path and returned. We were back to the resort in time for a BBQ lunch and some snorkeling. By now I have located several sources for identifying fish and have a very partial list of what I have seen (names may vary in other locales):

- Scissortail sergeant (schools)
- Dusky anemonefish
- Blue-green chromis
- Clark's anemonefish
- Moorish idol
- Yellowbar parrotfish
- Dogface puffer
- Map puffer (huge)
- Bleeker's parrotfish
- Blue and yellow fusilier
- Emperor angelfish
- Longfin banner fish
- Trumpetfish

Bluestreak cleaner wrasse (in action cleaning)
Regal angelfish
Fiji devil damsel
Featherfin bullfish
Ovalspot coralfish
Longsnout coralfish
Saddled coralfish
Blue-blotched butterflyfish
Orange anemonefish
Blenny (type ?)
Mud-skippers
Longnose butterflyfish
White tipped reef shark
Humbug dascyllus
Grouper (type ?)
Lizard fish (fresh water)
Unicorn fish (schools)
Titan triggerfish (huge)
Clown wrasse

This list represents perhaps no more than a quarter or a fifth of the types of fish seen. Many individuals of each type were seen. Schools were commonplace.

July 30: I snorkeled all morning out front. In the afternoon I went on another snorkel trip by boat and saw several reef sharks. Lynn chose to attend a wedding on the grounds. The ceremony involved some native dances, costumes and singing.

July 31: In the morning I go on a group hike led by Percy, our Fijian guide. Lynn is supposed to meet me at a village later, getting there by boat. The group is about a dozen strong. The hike goes up and down, sometimes steeply, and sometimes in mud or tall undergrowth. We make the village in an hour and a half. There we meet in the center of a village. We have a kava ceremony, drink lemon tea and try some of the native foods. Cassava chips are popular with the "tourists." I like 'em too. Lynn does not show up. It turns out that it is very low tide at the time and it is impossible for a boat to get to the village through the mangroves. A boat comes part way up a tidal stream through a thick mangrove forest to fetch us. When we leave, we must wade through the mud until the stream is deep enough for our loaded boat to get out. Earlier we did something similar from the Tui Tai (below).



On the mudflats seen at low tide, there are many mud skippers and many many small fiddler crabs. The crabs “wave” at us and decide we are not going to harvest them. Lynn’s group went to a different village where they could get the boat to shore. In the afternoon, I go on the boat trip to Cabbage Patch Reef. Imagine water 30-50 feet deep populated by coral mounts. The coral here is primarily cabbage coral, looking ever so like so many cabbages, and green in color ! Fish abound. We see more reef sharks, one large one, and while boarding the boat to leave we watch a stingray swim under us at a depth of 40 feet. When I returned I took Lynn snorkeling on the beach front reef in late afternoon. I saw a crown-of-thorns starfish munching on coral. Remember a few decades ago when there was alarm that these starfish might devour the Great Barrier reef ? At night the skies are filled with stars. There is no back-light from cities, and low humidity. With my binoculars I again look at Jupiter, prominent in the high sky, and easily count 3 of 4 Galilean moons.

August 1: It is Friday, our last day at Qamea Resort and there is a gentle morning rain. Until today we have had ideal weather. At 11 am Lynn and I have our joint massage. I have the luck to draw Salome as my masseuse. She is superb. We snorkel for the last time in the afternoon. We need some time to dry out the equipment before we head for Atlanta.

August 2: We have a leisurely morning and Lynn enjoys the spa one last time. In early afternoon we take the Qamea Resort boat to Taveuni, some ten minutes away. We board a Qamea Resort van for Taveuni airport. In a few minutes we are there. It is a small building and short landing strip. Our flight out to Nadi is scheduled for 4 pm. At 3 pm a 6 seater arrives and takes us away. It is small enough that it never goes above 6,500 feet and the view is spectacular. Large reefs can be seen just below the surface and in the ocean between islands. We fly over Viti Levu to Nadi. From Nadi we catch a 10 pm flight to LA, where we arrive Saturday, August 2 at 1:20 pm. That is correct, we arrive earlier the same day. Time travel back in time can be done !! Another night in the airport Westin and home to Atlanta early in the morning of August 3. Great trip !

Happy birthday, Lynn !!!

