

Suva, Fiji – Day 56 Nov. 22:

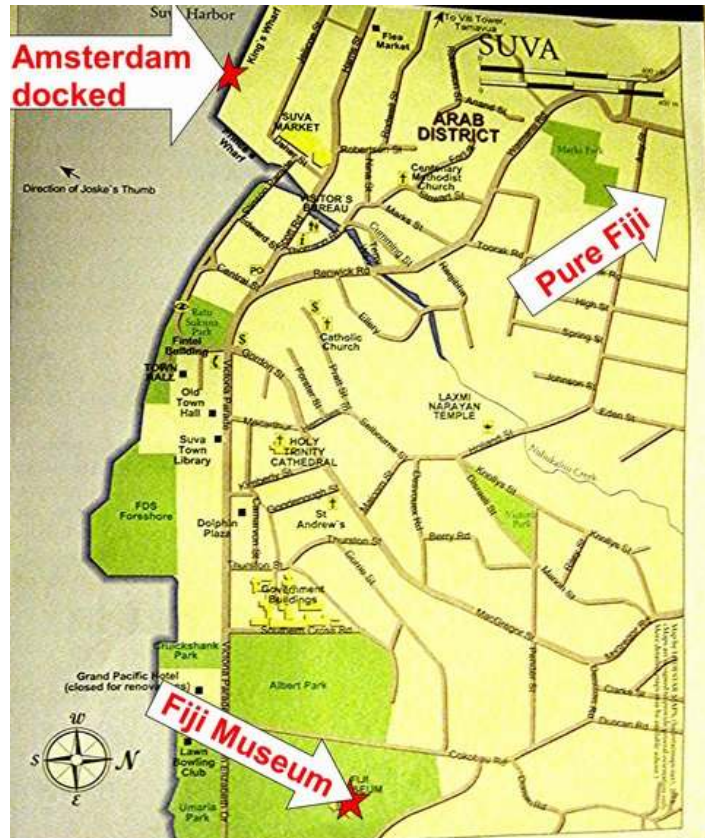
The first event of the day was seeing the pilot boat from Suva Harbor after it dropped off the pilot who could get us safely through the reef and into our dock at Suva, Fiji.

Suva is the capital city of the independent island nation of Fiji which is located about 2000 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia.



Suva is in the southeast corner of the main island of Viti Levu as shown in the map on the left. Viti Levu is the largest of the 333 islands making up the nation of Fiji.

By 8am the Amsterdam was docked in Suva. The location of the Amsterdam in Suva and some of the sites we were to visit today are shown in the map of Suva on the right.



We had signed up for a tour organized by Cruise Specialists International (CSI) and led by our CSI Ambassador Lucia Barnhoorn. We met in the

Ocean Bar at 9am and went out onto the dock to meet our bus. The bus was a comfortable air conditioned vehicle, shown on the left, and our tour group took less than half the seats.



Our local guide was a big Fijian man named Ryan, shown on the right talking to Ron, one of our fellow passengers. The man Ryan introduced as his assistant, Bruce, turned out to be the boss who was evaluating Ryan's tour guide capabilities today. At the end of the day we thought Ryan did a great job and hopefully, so did his boss.



Our bus headed north along the shoreline of the bay. One of the first of many signs we saw of entrepreneurial activity in Suva was a collection of seagoing shipping containers for sale or rent.



Our bus took us by the island prison and then by a cemetery.

Ryan said the cemetery is cared for by the prisoners. It appeared to be well maintained as shown in the picture on the left.



We passed by some undeveloped area that had lush tropical growth with small houses tucked in amongst the trees. We stopped for a while at a spot where Ryan showed us tapioca plants shown below.



He then showed us young taro plants, on the left, the roots of which are eaten much like potatoes.

We drove on through a neighborhood that Ryan said represented where the wealthy people of Suva lived. Here are a couple examples of the houses we saw.



Not far away were some examples of homes for not-so-wealthy Fijians, as shown on the right and below. In fact, Ryan said these particular homes were on government land and the people



were basically squatters who might be thrown out at any time. Ryan said that a typical wage for Fijians would be 7000 to 8000 Fijian dollars (~\$4500 - \$5000 USD) per year.

We arrived at the front gate of a company called Pure Fiji and were ushered into the building for a tour. We met our hostess, Dewani, shown below, and she



took us through the Pure Fiji story and production line.

Pure Fiji is a company that was started in the proverbial small kitchen by a mother and daughter team back in the year 2000. They manufacture and market a wide range of products for body care (skin and hair). They pride themselves on using natural, eco-friendly raw materials and energy in their production line.

Pure Fiji projects an image of involvement with the community and as part of this effort they provide a room where local artists display their work which is for sale. After a brief



tour through this room filled with paintings we were taken to another room where about 20 of the blue shirted workers greeted us with refreshments and a lively Fijian song of welcome, as shown on the left.

The party warmed up even more when some of us tourists were swept up in the merriment. As usual, Barbara was standing right up front and became part of the excitement as shown on the right.



The festivities eventually came to an end. We were then given a tour of those parts of the plant where there was no danger that we would contaminate the lotions and other Pure Fiji ointments that they make for body care. They showed a yard where a vegetable garden was producing healthy looking lettuce and other vegetables, as shown on the right. Dewani said that food grown in the garden was used for lunches by the employees.



The employees leave their work uniforms at the plant and they are washed there to ensure cleanliness. Dewani was proud of the fact that they use the solar powered facilities shown on the left to dry the clothes after washing.

We were impressed by the fact that great stacks of “Pure Fiji” boxes were in the hallways of the plant and apparently ready for shipment. Some of the staff presented their product line on a table for the visitors (particularly the ladies) to inspect and purchase. They also gave away a free sample of body lotion to each of us. The



company has two buildings in the factory complex and about 200 employees. It appears to be a healthy bit of entrepreneurial success in the Suva landscape.

Before we left the Pure Fiji plant we took advantage of one of their posters to log in the visit of Barbara's library card to Suva, Fiji. In the picture on the right her card is proudly displayed in front of the Pure Fiji sign at the factory.

We left the Pure Fiji plant and continued our tour of Suva.



There appeared to be a lot of stores and businesses in buildings with fairly new construction. This pharmaceutical service center shown on the left would be a good example of what we saw.

According to our guide, Ryan, the Fijian people have a high regard for education and we drove by many primary and secondary schools, like the SUVA Grammar School shown on the right. A lot of the schools had some religious denomination affiliation.



Our next stop was the Governor's palace where a uniformed guard stands at his post at the gate, as shown on the left. The guard stands there 24 hours a day without showing any expression when people approach. We tourists milled about taking pictures of the statue-like fellow looking for the slightest change of facial expression.

Lucia had the grand idea of having us gather around the guard for a picture of the CSI tour people in one group. That exercise went very well and the picture Ryan took with our camera is shown below. Lucia, on the far left, looks justifiably proud of getting her crew this far on the tour without any lost stragglers (or excess molestation of the uniformed guard). We really appreciate the effort she and Henk put in to making our cruising experience so enjoyable.



A current world politics footnote on the visit to the Governor's Palace was provided by a sign posted prominently next to the gate, as shown on the right. The sign served notice in large letters that the new fence around the Palace was build with aid from China. Our guide, Ryan, later said that China was active in helping Fiji develop their natural resources.



From the Governor's Palace we drove to the Fiji Museum where we saw a display of ancient outrigger type boats used by early natives and also some artifacts from the days when cannibalism was practiced in Fiji.



On the left is a picture of one of the larger boats the Fijians used for long voyages. It was essentially a raft made of large bamboo trunks with a palm frond shelter. A sail was erected to provide mobility. Exhibits like this just increase our admiration of the courage of these early explorers who populated the

South Sea Islands using these small and vulnerable vessels.

Of course, our interest was peaked in the direction of the cannibal artifacts that the museum might have. It turned out that they don't have a huge inventory but one display that caught our interest was the leather soles from the boots worn by the Rev. Baker, as shown on the right. These leather artifacts from Rev. Baker were all that were recovered from the village where he and his followers were killed and eaten because of what we might consider a trivial matter today.



The story provided in the display goes like this. In 1867 the Rev Thomas Baker along with a Fijian minister and 8 student teachers were hacked to death and eaten. This happened in the village of Nabutautau in the central part of the main island of Viti Levu. Cannibalism was a form of religion where it was believed you could gain the strength of vanquished foes by eating them and at the same time it was the ultimate disgrace to the victim, his family and his descendants. Of course, Christians preached against this alternative religion so pagan cannibals could easily be talked into killing and eating Christians. It was common at the time for Fijian Christians to be killed and eaten but no European Christian minister had been treated in this way until it happened to Rev. Baker. He and his followers were killed and eaten on the orders of a Christian chief from

Nabutautau village. The chief felt slighted when Rev. Baker decided to hold a meeting in a neighboring village rather than at Nabutautau. The orders went to Pagan Fijians who had no trouble carrying out this cannibalistic tradition. One of the ironies of the event is that Rev. Baker and his party were killed and eaten at the orders of an early Fijian Christian convert.

Another display related to cannibalism in the museum was a ceremonial wooden fork used to carefully pick up parts of the victim during the meal. The display is shown on the left (no extra charge for the reflected image of Barbara's feet). Such wooden forks are a much sought after item by tourists which the native craftsmen are happy to provide. In fact we have bought a couple in our time.



All of the parks and government grounds around Suva seem to have beautiful landscaping. Here is a photo we took in the park at the Fiji Museum.

We got back on the bus and drove to our next stop which was a shiny modern department store known as Tappoo City in downtown Suva.

We were the second cruise ship to visit Suva in two days so they were ready for us.

Up on the third floor a band was playing, “You are my



Sunshine” with a nice snappy beat. The music could be heard all over the store because of the tall open foyer which contained the elevators and escalators. We went up to the third floor to hear the music better and get a photo of the band which is shown on the left. The old familiar ballad of “You are my Sunshine”

was also played at a large aquarium show we attended in Dalian China on October 14. We suspect that when the marketers are selecting music for audiences with a significant sprinkling of Westerners present they know what will get our attention. While we were on the third floor we noticed that the Amsterdam was visible through the restaurant windows, as shown on the right. This photo provides some perspective on how close the downtown area is to where the cruise ships tie up.



We left the store and on the sidewalk out front saw, Danu, our lead dining room steward taking a break from shipboard responsibilities. This was a photo opportunity too good to miss so in an instant we snapped Danu's picture, as shown on the right. People who know us have gotten used to this knee jerk reaction we have for taking pictures and fortunately they are mostly resigned to it. Danu had just a short time for exploring Suva so he quickly pressed on his way.



From the department store it was a very short bus ride back to the ship where we said goodbye to our tour group and walked back in to Suva.



We wanted to spend a few minutes just browsing through the woodwork and other craft items for sale along the sidewalk and in the stores. One of our favorite souvenir stores in Suva is Jack's of Fiji. Today Jack's had a large banner across the front emblazoned with the words "Calling All Shop-a-holics", as shown on the left. Heading this international call to action we obediently stepped right in.

With thoughts of our upcoming departure from the ship and return home we want to minimize what we have to pack in our suitcases. This has cooled the frenzied buying that we did early in the cruise. However, Jack's had a nice display of placemats with a tapa cloth design. These won't take up much room in the luggage so we made what hopefully is the last purchase of the cruise.

We returned to the Amsterdam and enjoyed the sail-away at 5pm. The uniformed Suva band came onto the pier and played for us as we moved away from the pier. We quickly sailed out through the opening in the reef and were on our way to Pago Pago in American Samoa, our next port of call.

We cross the International Dateline on the way to Pago Pago so tomorrow will be November 22 just like today. Our friends from Oregon, Bill and Dolores, made reservations for the four of us in the Canaletto Restaurant for 6:30pm on November 22. The fact that 6:30pm on November 22 will happen twice in two days on the Amsterdam

led to some temporary confusion but we got it straightened out before going to dinner on the wrong November 22. With this adjustment for crossing the Dateline folks back in the Western hemisphere will find the blog appearing to come out later than it has been for the last month or so.

With a fairly stiff wind blowing and a gently rolling sea the Amsterdam plowed on through the night. Tomorrow is a day at sea on our way to Pago Pago, American Samoa, where we expect to dock the day after tomorrow.