

Fiji Forbes Laucalala

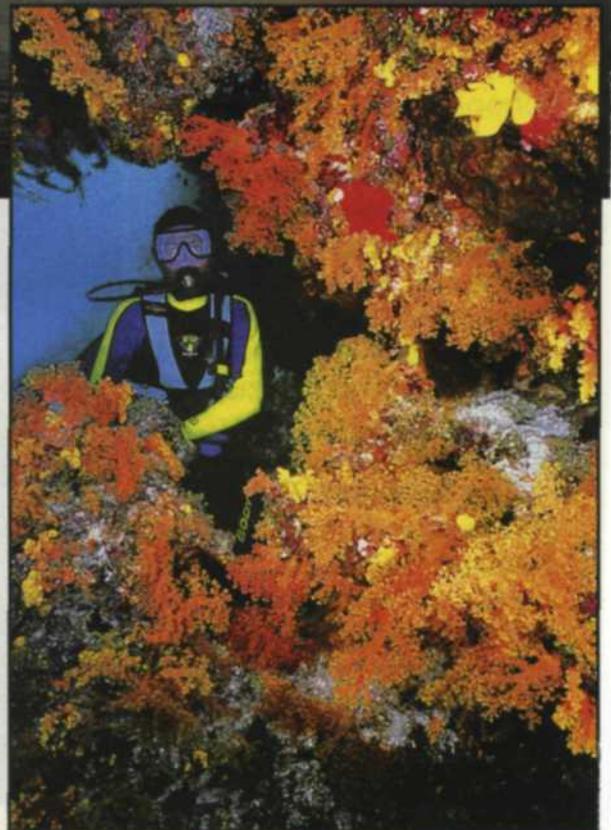
The Ultimate Island Dive Retreat

**TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK AND
SUE DRAFAHL**

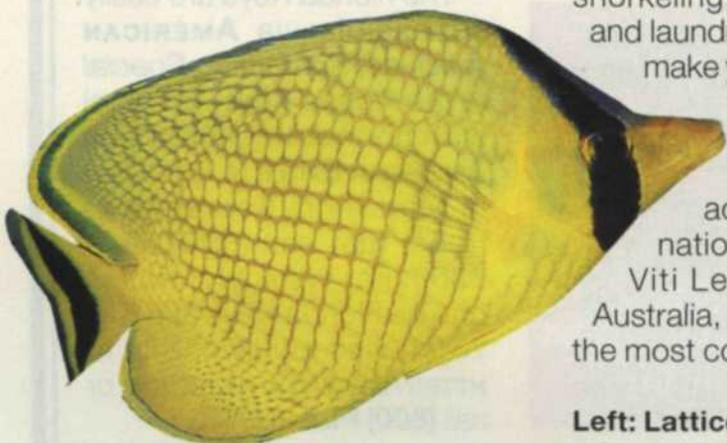
Let's face it. Most people today have lives that can get pretty stressful. When you finally have a chance to break away from it all, you want a dream dive vacation that truly lets you unwind. We've found a special place that offers world-class diving, first class treatment and an island atmosphere that registers a zero on the stress meter! The first time you visit Laucalala (La-THAH-La), Fiji, you may even have to pinch yourself just to make sure you're not dreaming!

Laucalala is a small, 3,000 acre island that was originally the getaway for publisher Malcolm Forbes. It has since become one of the most prestigious resorts in the world. Still owned and operated by Forbes Magazine, the resort is all inclusive: food, drink, deep sea fishing, diving, snorkeling, sailing, hiking, tennis, waterskiing and laundry services. Everything is designed to make your stay as comfortable as possible.

Before we tell you more about the resort, let's get you there. This island retreat is remote but easy to access. You fly first to Nadi, the international hub of Fiji, on the main island of Viti Levu. Nadi can be accessed from Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Japan but the most common approach is a direct 10 hour



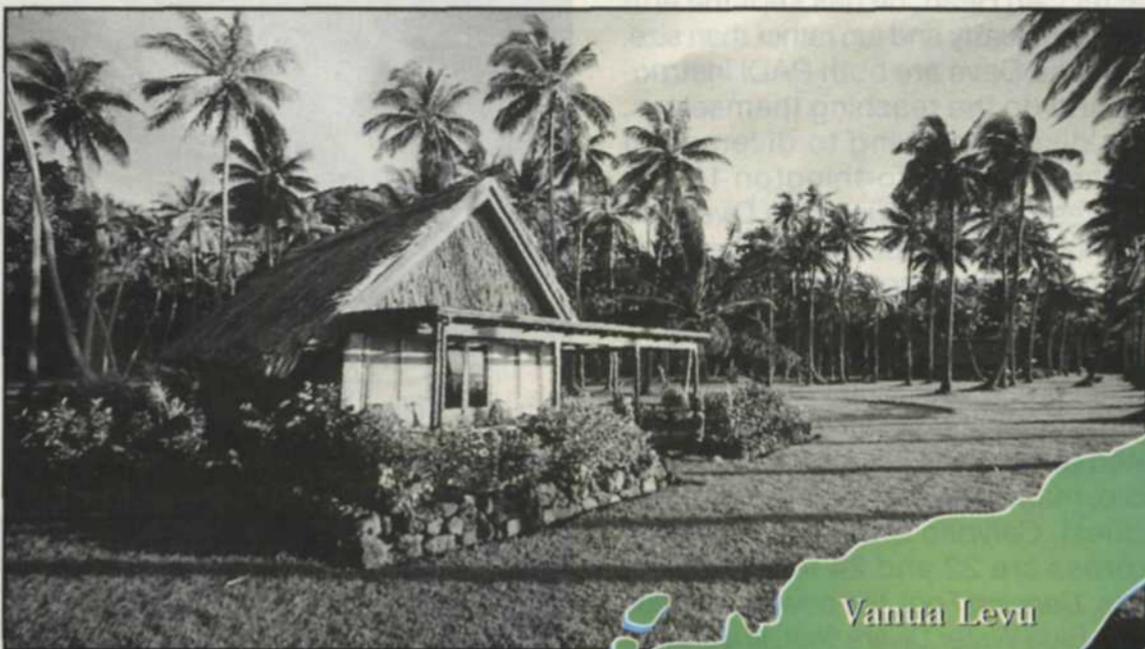
Top: The color streaked sky above Laucalala is reflected in the calm Koro Sea, which caresses the palm strewn 3,000 acre island. **Above:** Soft corals flourish in Fiji's nutrient rich currents. **Below:** A fleet of five dive boats is at the disposal of Laucalala's guests.



Left: Latticed Butterflyfish (*Chaetodon rafflesi*)



Above: *Cassiopea* sp. undulates through inky waters. Below: Beachfront bures may entice divers to spend more time on this paradisiacal island than on the reefs.



Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles. You then board Sunflower Airlines for a short 190 mile flight northeast to Laucala.

At Laucala you will be greeted by friendly staff members who will transport your luggage to one of seven bures (Fijian cottages) along the beach. Each exquisitely decorated bura has an air-conditioned bedroom and fan ventilated living room, bar and kitchen. Your kitchen is well stocked with drinks, fruit and snacks. There are five single bures and two bures that offer two bedrooms. Considerable spacing among bures provides privacy found in very few resorts in the world today.

Each morning your breakfast is prepared in your bura by your "bura girl." You decide the night before when you want breakfast and your bura girl will have it piping hot, ready for you to enjoy. Lunch can be served most anywhere—your bura, Malcolm Forbes' house, on the dive boat, in the Treehouse or on the beach—you choose. The evening meal is usually at the main Plantation House unless a barbecue is scheduled near the beach.

Timetables and schedules at Laucala don't exist. At first, this may surprise you but when the staff asks you when and where you want to dive, you'll know Laucala is a special place. If you want to dive in a small group or just with your buddy, no problem. With five boats avail-

able, just about any combination of time, destination or dive group size is possible. You can easily make two to four dives per day depending upon what other activities interest you.

If you're not spoiled enough, we'll add more. The staff picks up your dive gear from your bura, sets it up on the boat, rinses it between dives and has it ready for the next day of diving. They offer more than 20 regular dive sites, including walls, coral bommies, current passages and reef diving in depths to 130 feet. If you tell them what type of diving you like,

us a view of what seemed like acres of fluorescing red and yellow anemones.

One of our most unusual night dives was on **Boat House Reef**. It actually is the boat dock. You pick the time for the dive, show up at the dock; your dive-master and dive equipment will be ready and waiting. As you sit on the edge of the dock, you will be helped into your gear and then taken on an incredible underwater tour featuring a variety of animal life. At depths from 15 to 50 feet we saw juvenile Sweetlips, lobster, Lionfish, hermit crabs, squid, puffers, starfish, Upside Down Jellyfish, Batfish, shrimp and moray eels. Oh, what a night!

If your quest is for larger fish, you can ask to dive **The Wall**. This vertical, 2,000 foot wall is home to larger pelagics such as Bronze Whalers and tuna. When you tire of the big fish, you can move closer to the wall and swim over the thickly populated soft coral and gorgonians. In addition to the 20 standard



Fiji Forbes Laucala has seven immaculate bures for its guests. Each has a living room, bar and kitchen and either one or two air-conditioned bedrooms.

they will do their best to find sites that fit your needs.

On our trip we wanted to photograph fish, fluorescent anemones and make a couple of night dives. "No problem," was the reply. For our fish dive we went to **Frank's Place** and saw triggerfish, puffers, fish cleaning stations, several types of wrasses and a couple of sharks off in the distance. Our fluorescent anemone dive on **Anemone Reef** gave

dive sites, Laucala's dive boats can reach at least 30 other sites around Matagi, Qamea, Taveuni and the end of the Somosomo Strait.

If you're still not impressed, read on. Each boat is run similar to the skiffs off many worldwide live-aboards. You swim wherever you want. When you have used about 80 percent of your air, come up; the boat will be there to pick you up. This is absolute comfort in diving. There is no swimming against currents, no strain, no stress.

There is a full photo lab at the Plantation House. You can get your slide film processed, rent photo gear or talk to Ric and Carol West about getting a videotape of your trip. They have a full-blown editing system that allows them to make high quality tapes of your dive trip.

The adventuresome birdwatcher or hiker can walk all or part of the 11 mile road surrounding the island. Just decide where

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made to record white tones accurately in varying light conditions, such as indoor or outdoor. Most cameras have white balance controls for indoor (video light), outdoor (sunlight) and automatic; some have automatic white balancing.

WIDE-ANGLE LENS: A lens with an angle of view wider than the angle of view of the human eye.

ZOOM (ZOOMING): Changing the image size (from wide angle to telephoto) without changing camera to subject distance.

ZOOM LENS: A lens that is adjustable for a range of focal lengths from wide angle to telephoto.

ZOOM RATIO: The change in focal length a zoom lens can produce. An 8x (8:1, "eight to one") zoom lens magnifies subjects when set for the telephoto position, as compared to subject size in the wide angle position. 🐟

FIJI FORBES LAUCALA

(Continued from Page 25)

you want to stop and start and you will be transported to the drop-off site and picked up afterward. A bus tour includes an island overlook and a glimpse inside the late Malcolm Forbes' house.

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. The outer islands can be reached via the local carriers, Air Fiji and Sunflower.

Air Pacific	Qantas
(800) 227-4446	(800) 227-4500
Air Fiji	Sunflower Airlines
(800) 677-4277	(800) 224-0220
(310) 670-7302	

The key to Laucala is that you can customize your vacation around your likes and dislikes. This fabulous Fiji getaway is totally inclusive of everything your heart desires. Everything, that is, except stress! The friendly folks at Fiji Forbes are waiting to pamper and spoil you and you'll love every minute of it. We sure did!

For information, contact Fiji Forbes Laucala, P.O. Box 149, Fort Garland, Colorado 81133; (800) FORBES-5 or (719) 379-3263; fax (719) 379-3266. 🐟

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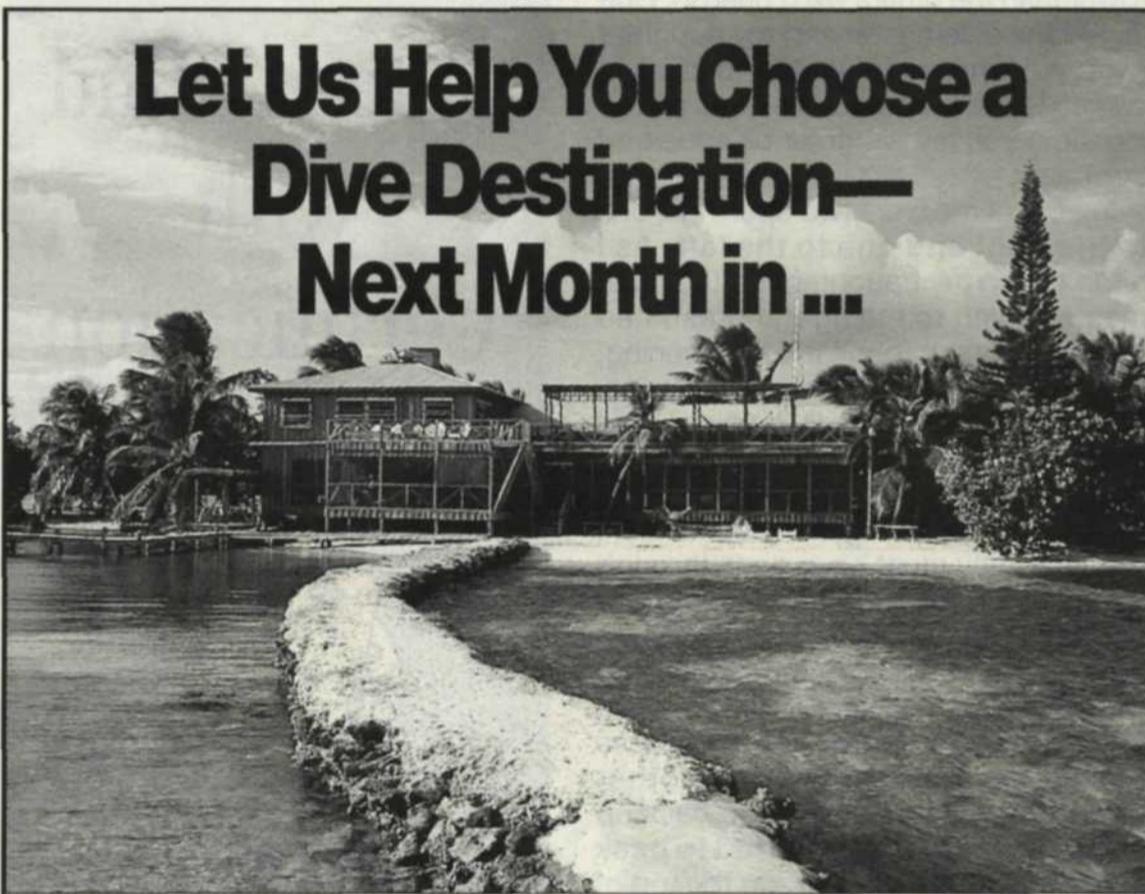
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