SY Fiji Siren
A Liveaboard Dive Adventure
By Scott Lee, Images provided by Volivoli Resort, Aaron Wong, Matava Resort & Colin Gans

The two hour drive north from Nadi Airport to Raki Raki is known as one of the most picturesque in Fiji. The road undulates over lush green fields, through villages and small townships before emerging on the coast where it skirts the mangroves and crosses several shallow rivers as they meander to the sea.

Approaching Raki Raki the topography changes with large rock buttresses jutting out into the sea as if trying to get closer to the offshore islands that shimmer in the late afternoon sun.

Volivoli Resort, the departure point for Fiji Siren, sits on one such buttress surrounded on three sides by ocean. Built in 2005 it is a stylish modern resort with lush manicured gardens and excellent facilities.

After a relaxing morning enjoying the resort we were ferried out to the Fiji Siren to settle in before our departure.

Fiji Siren is the sixth superyacht built for the Siren Fleet, her sister yachts operate in the Phillipines, Palau, Indonesia and Truk Lagoon. Launched in December 2013, the 40 metre long Fiji Siren is a traditional gaff rigged Phinis design, purpose built for diving and is a result of the owners’ vast experience in
operating liveaboard destination dive charters. Comfortable cabins, well setup dive stations, good tenders, helpful staff, abundant hot water, great food, and excellent coffee deliver above the water while the diving can truly be described as sensational!

For six days we enjoyed three dives every day in what was a busy but thoroughly enjoyable schedule. We visited the Namena Marine Reserve, Wakaya (a playground of the rich and famous), and Vatu I Ra Passage enjoying water temperatures in the mid twenties and thirty metres visibility. We did wall dives and drift dives, swim-throughs and caves, we swam between reef structures over sandy bottoms and we dived bommies that disappeared thousands of metres below us. We saw sharks and rays, all manner of brightly coloured reef fish, schools of thousands of bait-fish and huge pelagics. We studied nudibranchs and marvelled at the hard and soft corals. The reefs were vibrant and healthy and the fish life prolific. In short we experienced some of Fiji's best diving, most of it well away from your typical tourist dive sites.

My most memorable dive was nearly a huge disappointment. It was supposed to be a manta ray dive, but the rays didn’t show! It was a pleasant dive anyway, with water temperature of 26 degrees, schools of Spanish Mackerel and Tuna, a few reef sharks and beautiful hard and soft coral, but no rays. Despondent and nearly out of air I was hanging onto the side of a bommie at 5 metres completing my safety stop when my luck changed. A huge adult male manta cruised onto the top of the bommie from behind me, stopping only three metres to my left. Immediately, a dozen or so Cleaner Wrasse left the safety of their coral hideouts and swarmed over the manta, picking off parasites and other tasty morsels. Oscillating the rear of his wings to maintain his position he hung otherwise motionless in the current beside me.

During our time together, 2 other rays came within 10 metres but seeing the 'cleaning station' was full, glided away to await their turn. A private viewing – fantastic.

My last dive was also a standout. E6 is a bommie in Vatu I Ra Passage that thrusts up from 1000 metres to the surface. E6 consists of two swim throughs that cut through the reef in a horseshoe pattern. The swim-through climbs from 25 metres to about 6 metres before dropping to 15 metres on the open end of the horseshoe and the huge drop below us. There are several small caves and caverns
around the entrance. While in one of the caves we could hear whale song from a group of whales in the passage about 500 metres away. It echoed and reverberated through the cavern system lasting about 10 minutes. It felt very humbling and quite emotional as we listened to these obviously intelligent creatures communicating. Back on the boat we surmised that the unique echo from this cave structure was used by the whales as a way-point as they negotiated the reef systems. A sort of ‘turn here’ in whale talk.

I love people with a passion, it doesn’t matter what, as long as they are passionate about something and to be surrounded by a group of like-minded people who shared a passion for diving was an exciting and rewarding experience. Every aspect of each dive was relived, photos were compared, and the ever present “critter book” (Asia Pacific Reef Guide) was passed around. Species were compared and analysed and previous experiences discussed. The closest comparison I can think of is the après-ski scene at any ski resort.
After a good day on the slopes. With hand movements and much arm waving, successes and failures were shared. At times it was noisy and excitable, sometimes it was serious and reflective. Passionate people doing what they most enjoy in life.

After sixteen dives in six days I am a far more confident and competent diver. I have a renewed interest in underwater photography and I have also made some new friends. Live-aboards are fun and very social. Many guests go on to become live-aboard regulars, taking friends or meeting up with others that they have met on previous trips - a sort of live-aboard fraternity that I am happy to be a member of.

This was my first live aboard experience and I can’t recommend it enough.
Experience the magnificent beauty of a remote tropical Fijian Island at Matava...Fiji Untouched. Traditional Bures hug the jungle fringes.

Dive the pristine Great Astrolabe Reef and come face to face with barrel rolling Manta Rays with our PADI 5* dive centre.

Explore jungle trails and waterfalls, snorkel in a myriad of colour, and relish a kayak or fishing adventure.

Unplug and recharge at Matava - Fiji...Untouched.

www.matava.com

Ra Dives Fiji operates from the resort giving you a water wonderland of some of the worlds best soft coral dive sites.

www.ra-dives.com/diving/fiji.html

The Fiji Siren is a live aboard boat offering you 7 or 10 night dive packages to Fiji’s most famous dive sites.

www.fisheye.com/diving/fiji.html

The Volivoli Beach Resort offers you relaxed, unspoil white sandy beaches, a range of water sports in a spectacular part of Fiji.

www.volivoli.com
Fiji is home to the happiest people and the best diving in the world, thanks to the crystal clear water, the white sand, and the tropical islands scattered in every direction. Known as, ‘The Soft Coral Capital’, it’s a place where the diving is great at any time of the year, where the visibility is limited only by your eyesight, and where the marine life is plentiful. Book your trip today.