PE Journal

Newsletter No. 01

October 2026

Notes from Fiji

Communities, opportunities and a different approach to development.



Extraordinary natural environment, strong village communities and a well-established tourism industry.



Key themes for this edition:

- Meeting people
- Local enterprise
- Tourism and ownership
- The Ringgold Islands
- Villages and local markets
- Practical infrastructure
- Ideas for Project Earth



Meeting People

I've been travelling through Fiji over the past few weeks, meeting people, visiting communities and learning more about the way life and business operate across the islands.

One of the most interesting things about travelling here is the opportunity to meet people whose circumstances, experience and knowledge are quite different from my own.

Much of my time has been spent talking with local people about their communities, their work, the businesses operating around them and the opportunities they see for the future.



Vilage life, strong culture and local enterprise.



Tourism and communities

Fiji has an extraordinary natural environment, a well-established tourism industry and strong village communities. But there are also significant differences between the prosperity generated by tourism and the economic opportunities available to the people living nearby.

Connecting opportunities

I've become increasingly interested in how those two things might be better connected.

These conversations are helping me think about how Project Earth might operate in practice.



Talking with local people about communities and opportunities.

Taveuni — Local Enterprise and Practical Infrastructure

I'm staying at Maravu Lodge, which is an interesting example of a tourism business operated by local people.

- No Western managers.
- Day-to-day operation handled locally.
- Useful example of how tourism facilities can function without relying on imported management.



Maravu Lodge, Taveuni
Locally operated.

It raises an interesting question about the next stage of local participation in tourism: not simply operating a business, but having an ownership interest in the assets and income it generates.

Solar power proposal

The lodge relies on diesel-generated electricity. To conserve fuel, the power is switched off for several hours during the middle of the day.

We've started looking at a preliminary proposal to use solar panels to provide daytime electricity while retaining the existing generators as backup.



Rooftop solar panels
preliminary proposal.

- Initial idea is to avoid battery storage, provided an electrical assessment confirms a simpler system would be practical.
- Could reduce costs and improve services for a locally operated business.
- Still work to do before this could become a project.

Tourism and Community Ownership

I've been speaking with a local engineer who works for Beca and is involved in refurbishing a nearby island. He has been telling me about the development, which I understand involves an island recently purchased by Red Bull.

Our conversations have led to a broader idea that I think is worth pursuing.

What if local communities could become owners of the tourism developments taking place around them?

Tourism can generate substantial income, but people in nearby villages may participate mainly through employment, services or negotiated payments. Those are important benefits, but they are not the same as ownership.

How can local communities participate in the long-term value of tourism developments?



Island development
and local opportunities.

Community ownership model

- Community could hold an ownership interest through a trust or another suitable legal structure.
- Part of the income could support participating households.
- Another portion could be invested in community infrastructure, education or future development.
- Details need careful consideration: how ownership is financed, how benefits are distributed and how community interests are protected.
- Any proposal would need to be developed with the relevant communities and customary rights holders.
- These are early discussions, but I think the underlying principle is important: communities should have opportunities to participate in the long-term economic value of developments associated with their land and resources.





View from Taveuni towards the northern islands. Exploring opportunities for community participation.

Looking North — The Ringgold Islands

I'm staying near Matei Airport, at the northern end of Taveuni. From here, I've become interested in the Ringgold Islands, which lie further north.

- Local pearling operation in the area.
- I haven't yet identified much commercial fishing activity or substantial port infrastructure.
- That doesn't necessarily mean these things don't exist. I simply haven't had the opportunity to investigate them properly.



The Ringgold Islands.

The islands seem worth exploring, particularly in relation to marine enterprise, transport and small-scale infrastructure.

- Could better landing facilities, refrigeration or transport connections support existing local economic activity?
- Before developing any proposals, I would want to understand how the islands are used, who holds the relevant customary rights, what enterprises already operate and what the communities themselves consider important.



For now, the Ringgold Islands are another place on my list to learn more about.



Exploring small-scale marine enterprise and local opportunities.



Connecting Villages and Local Markets

Another idea I've been exploring concerns the relationship between villages and the local economy more broadly.

Village communities have strong knowledge, skills and resources. Better connections to local markets could help create more opportunities for small enterprises and increase local income.



Local produce and village markets.

Possible areas of focus

- Agriculture and food production.
- Local crafts and skills.
- Transport and logistics.
- Tourism services and supplies.

Any approach would need to be developed with communities, based on their own priorities and with respect for customary rights and local ways of operating.

Next Steps

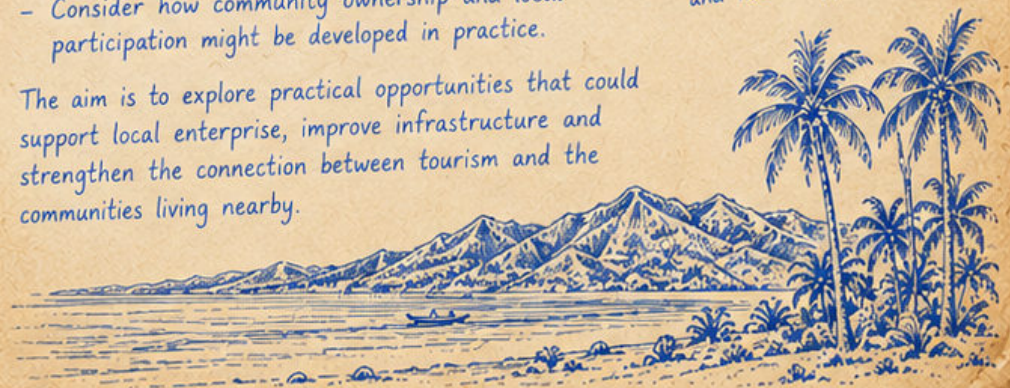
These are early ideas, not confirmed projects. The next steps are to:

- Learn more about the communities, opportunities and local context.
- Discuss ideas with local people and existing operators.
- Explore potential partners and funding options.
- Identify what further information and assessments would be useful.
- Consider how community ownership and local participation might be developed in practice.



Village life, local enterprise and future opportunities.

The aim is to explore practical opportunities that could support local enterprise, improve infrastructure and strengthen the connection between tourism and the communities living nearby.



People, Culture and Local Knowledge

One of the most valuable aspects of travelling in Fiji has been meeting people with very different experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

Learning from local communities

- Strong community culture and local knowledge.
- Deep connection to land and sea.
- Practical skills and experience in agriculture, fishing, tourism and small business.
- Valuable insights into opportunities and challenges.

These conversations are helping me better understand local priorities and the importance of respecting customary rights and established ways of operating.



Talking with local people and learning from their experience.



Natural Environment

Fiji's natural environment is extraordinary, with healthy reefs, forests and rich biodiversity.

- Beautiful landscapes and marine areas.
- Important ecosystems and habitats.
- Opportunities for sustainable tourism, conservation and local enterprise.

Any development needs to consider environmental protection and long-term sustainability.



Coastal environment, Taveuni.



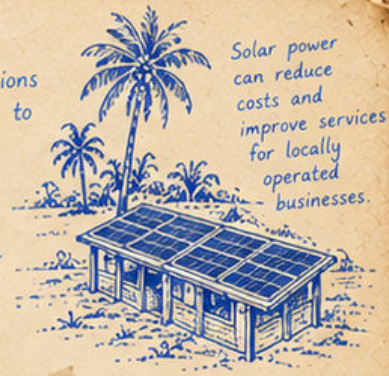
Healthy oceans and coastal areas provide opportunities for communities and future development.

Ideas for Project Earth

These are early ideas based on conversations and observations in Fiji. They are not confirmed projects, but possible areas to explore further.

Local infrastructure

- Solar power for tourism businesses (e.g. Maravu Lodge).
- Better landing facilities and transport connections for outer islands.
- Small-scale infrastructure to support local enterprise.



Solar power can reduce costs and improve services for locally operated businesses.

Tourism and community ownership

- Explore models for community ownership in new resorts.
- Ensure local participation in the long-term value of tourism developments.
- Consider trusts or other legal structures.
- Support community infrastructure, education and future development.



Tourism development with local ownership opportunities.

Villages and local markets

- Stronger connections between villages and local markets.
- Support for agriculture, food production and local crafts.
- Opportunities for transport, storage and small enterprises.



Local produce and crafts can support village incomes.

Marine enterprise

- Explore opportunities in areas such as pearling, fisheries and marine-based tourism.
- Assess what infrastructure might be useful, such as refrigeration or transport links.
- Understand existing activity and community priorities before developing proposals.



Marine environments and sustainable opportunities.

Next steps

- Learn more about the communities, opportunities and context.
- Discuss ideas with local people and existing operators.
- Identify potential partners and funding options.
- Consider how community ownership and local participation might be developed in practice.



Early ideas to explore and develop with local communities.

Getting around — Boats, Flights and Ferries

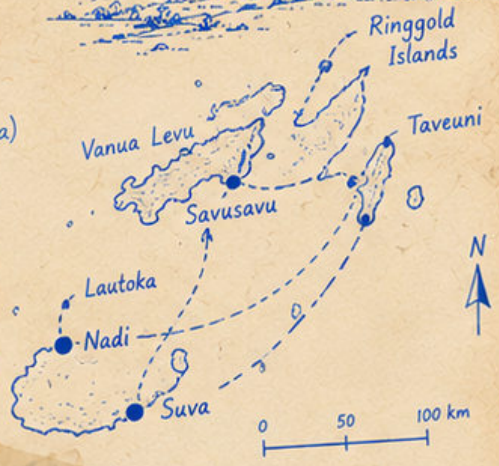
Fiji's islands are connected by a mix of small planes, ferries and private boats. Each has advantages and limitations depending on cost, time, weather and destination.



Options I've been using

- Domestic flights (Nadi – Taveuni via Suva)
- Inter-island boat transfers
- Local ferries (e.g. Suva – Vanua Levu)
- Private boats and crew opportunities
- Local buses and vehicles on the islands

Travel requires flexibility. Schedules can change due to weather, demand and local conditions. It's important to plan for extra time and costs.





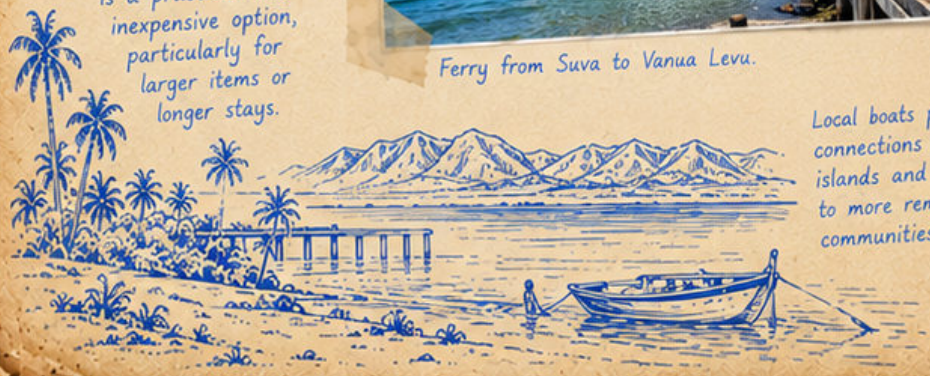
Flight to Taveuni.

Domestic flights are a quick way to reach Taveuni, with views over the islands.



Ferry from Suva to Vanua Levu.

The inter-island ferry is a practical and inexpensive option, particularly for larger items or longer stays.



Local boats provide connections between islands and access to more remote communities.

Living and Working on Taveuni

Taveuni has a strong sense of community, with people involved in tourism, agriculture, fishing and local enterprise. There are opportunities to learn, contribute and develop ideas for Project Earth.



Village life, strong culture and local enterprise.

Observations

- Communities are welcoming and open to discussion.
- Local knowledge is invaluable.
- There is a strong culture and sense of place.
- Many people are already involved in sustainable practices.
- There is interest in projects that create local opportunities.

Local enterprise examples

- Tourism accommodation and services.
- Agriculture (e.g. vanilla, tropical fruit).
- Fishing and marine activities.
- Local crafts and markets.
- Transport and logistics.
- Maintenance and construction.
- Food production and supply.



Village on Taveuni.

Ideas for Project Earth

- Support local enterprise and community-led initiatives.
- Explore opportunities for small-scale infrastructure.
- Consider renewable energy, water and waste solutions.
- Learn from existing models and local knowledge.
- Focus on practical, achievable projects that create long-term value for local communities.



Local agriculture and small enterprise.



Simple, practical infrastructure can support local communities and enterprise.



Coastal life and marine opportunities.

Project Earth — From Ideas to Action

These notes bring together what I've seen and learnt on Taveuni and nearby islands, and how it might contribute to Project Earth.

The focus is on practical, achievable projects that support local communities, protect the environment and create long-term value.



Working at Maravu.

Key themes

- Local ownership and participation.
- Small-scale, practical infrastructure.
- Tourism, agriculture and marine enterprise.
- Renewable energy and water solutions.
- Skills, education and knowledge sharing.
- Respect for culture, land and customary rights.

Working with local people

The most valuable insights come from conversations with local people — resort staff, village members, boat operators, market vendors and community leaders. Their experience and knowledge are essential for understanding what is possible and what is needed.

Any project must be developed with local participation and respect for customary rights and existing ways of operating.

Potential project areas

- Solar power for lodges and villages.
- Better transport and landing facilities.
- Local food production and markets.
- Marine conservation and tourism.
- Support for local crafts and small business.
- Community-led tourism developments.
- Training, education and youth opportunities.





View from Taveuni towards the northern islands.

Taveuni and the surrounding islands offer a unique combination of natural beauty, rich culture and opportunities for sustainable development.

Next Steps and Invitation

These are initial next steps to explore how Project Earth could support local enterprise and community-led development on Taveuni and nearby islands.



Immediate next steps

- Continue talking with local people and operators.
- Learn more about community priorities.
- Identify specific opportunities for small-scale projects.
- Explore potential partners and funding options.
- Assess practical requirements (land, resources, approvals).
- Develop concept designs and preliminary budgets.
- Test ideas with local communities before proceeding.

Possible pilot projects

- Solar power for Maravu Lodge (diesel reduction).
- Community tourism and accommodation models.
- Support for local agriculture and food supply.
- Marine-based tourism and conservation activities.
- Skills training and support for small enterprises.
- Infrastructure improvements (e.g. landing facilities).



Coastal opportunities for local enterprise.

Longer term opportunities

- Community-owned tourism developments.
- Renewable energy, water and waste solutions.
- Marine conservation and sustainable use.
- Education, training and youth engagement.
- Strengthening local markets and transport links.
- Replicable models for other islands and regions.



Simple, practical infrastructure can support local enterprise and reduce costs.



Invitation

This is an open invitation to local people, potential partners and supporters to explore these ideas together. Project Earth is about practical action, working with communities and creating opportunities that respect people, place and the environment.