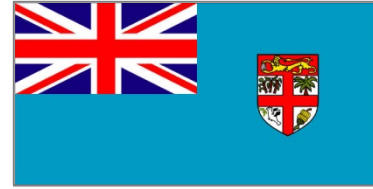


Fiji



Official name: The Republic of the Fiji Islands

Capital: Suva

Land: 18,272 sq. km

Population: 837,271 (2007)

Currency: Fiji Dollar

EEZ: 1.26 million sq. km

Language: English, Fijian, Hindi

Economy: Agriculture, clothing, fisheries, forestry, sugar and tourism

Religion: Christianity, Hinduism, Islam



(Source: www.lonelyplanet.com)

Brief history:

Fijian mythology states that the great chief Lutunasobasoba led his people across the sea to the islands of Fiji. History suggests that Fijians most likely arrived over 3,000 years ago from South East Asia. They were conquered by the Melanesians in 1500BC and uniquely, the two cultures mixed to form an incredibly developed society long before contact with Europeans.

The first European to arrive in Fiji was Dutchman Abel Tasman in 1643. The second explorer to arrive was British Captain James Cook in 1774. Despite these early arrivals, historians credit the discovery of Fiji to Captain William Bligh. He sailed through Fiji and charted it in 1789 after the famous mutiny on the *Bounty*.

Mid-century saw the arrival of Christian missionaries that would go on to have a profound influence on Fijian culture. Western-styled clothing was introduced and houses were built. As Christianity spread, it helped to end a great deal of the tribal warfare that was happening on the islands.

In 1874, Fiji was ceded to Great Britain. This was followed by more European settlers who brought deadly epidemics that nearly killed much of the indigenous population. In an attempt to preserve the culture of those Fijians who remained, the first governor under British rule, Sir Arthur Gordon, initiated a system that allowed Fijians to have a say in government. He also forbade the sale of Fijian land to non-Fijians. Gradually, the population began to rise again.

From 1879 to 1916 Indians came as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations. After the indentured system was abolished, many stayed on as independent farmers and businessmen. Today they comprise 43.6 per cent of the population.

Political overview:

The country's current political setup consists of the President as the Head of State with the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. Fiji's constitution provides for a bicameral parliament, which consists of the President, an elected house of representatives and a nominated senate with 32 members.

Under Fiji's current government, the country is divided into four districts for purposes of administration: the central district, based in Nausori, the northern district, based in Labasa, the eastern district, based in Levuka and the western district, based in Lautoka. Each district has jurisdiction over the provinces that are within its division. In total, there are 14 provinces, which are each governed by a council that have an executive head granted by the i-Taukei Board. These councils generally oversee urban affairs.

Economic overview:

A recent Asian Development Bank analysis describes that the Fiji economy picked up in 2013. This was stimulated by an expansion of government expenditure to rehabilitate and upgrade the country's road network and by increased investment and consumption. It also describes that business confidence is continuing to strengthen as clear progress is made towards election scheduled for September 2014.

The latest official estimate is that Fiji posted a 3.6% growth in gross domestic product in 2013 as the economy rebounded from poor performance in agriculture and mining and from severe flooding at the start of 2012.

Education overview:

Education in Fiji is centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. The administration, policy and delivery of educational services is managed and provided by the government through the Ministry of Education.

The education system in Fiji is based upon a 6-4-3 model where primary education makes up the first six years of formal education. The following four years (years 7-10) are within secondary school and a further three years of years 11, 12 and 13 will allow those that wish to pursue tertiary studies or vocational/technical programmes to move on further in their education.

Since its establishment in Fiji as the premier provider of tertiary education in the Pacific, Fiji has been a direct benefactor of the University of the South Pacific by the mere presence of its main campus in Suva. Prior to 2010, a number of government-owned institutions provided tertiary programmes in various fields such as medicine, nursing, technical, agriculture and teaching. These institutions were merged to form the Fiji National University in 2010. The establishment of the Fiji National University has made it the largest provider of technical and vocational tertiary education in addition to the more academic programmes that are offered by the various schools of the university. There are also a good number of private technical and vocational institutions run and managed by private organizations and some by religious and community groups. The University of Fiji, established in 2004 by an educational and social development organization is the third institution providing university education in Fiji.

The importance of education in Fiji can be gauged from how much it has been allocated in the national budget and in 2014 nearly 19% of Fiji's national budget or an equivalent of \$541.5 million has been allocated for the provision of free education. For secondary schools, government will provide \$31.5 million for tuition fees. Years 9 and 10, a total of \$440 per student instead of \$290 as was previously given. Years 11 and 12 will attract a payment of \$485 per student and Year 13 will attract a payment of \$610 per student. Government funding to all three universities totalled \$78.5 million.

Accrediting agency:

The Fiji Higher Education Commission is the accrediting agency for post-secondary education and training providers and programmes. The six-member Commission was appointed by the Minister for Education after the commencement on 1st January 2010 of its governing legislation known as the Higher Education Promulgation 2008.

Its role is to advise the Minister responsible for higher education, who is currently the Minister for Education, on the steps to be undertaken in developing and promoting the higher education sector. The latter includes regulating the operation of higher education institutions to enhance governance and productivity which will lead to quality education and training for individuals and the labour market. This will enhance the sector's contribution to the social, economic and cultural progress of the nation.

Immigration:

No documents or visas are required of passengers arriving and departing on the same thorough flight or transferring to another flight at the same airport.

A person entering Fiji for the purpose of immigration must hold a passport or an acceptable form of travel document which must be valid for 6 months from the date of arrival into Fiji and an immigration visa, the latter being issued at Fiji Embassies and Consulates abroad. Temporary visitors must be in possession of a valid passport, round trip tickets or thorough tickets to a country beyond Fiji and the documents required to enter that country. Sufficient funds for maintenance while in Fiji are also required. A temporary visitors stay is limited to 6 months.

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