Headline: Fiji a ticket to paradise in South Pacific

Deckhead: Island chain is teeming with beauty and adventure

On a map, Fiji has the appearance of tiny droplets of land scattered in the South Pacific. Tiny jewels scatter some 1,300 miles from New Zealand to create a paradise travelers yearn to visit.

More than 300 islands – 106 are inhabited – comprise a country formed by volcanic activity around 150 million years ago. Beauty sprang from explosions and Fiji hasn’t looked back since.

This sparce nation attracts nearly 700,000 guests annually. They come to celebrate their honeymoons, take a bucket list vacation, surf, seek adventure and appreciate the archipelago’s toasty waves and coral reef.

Fiji affords you the delectable feeling of seclusion, keeping you as far away from reality as possible. Fiji Bitter beer whets your palate while watching the sun dip below the horizon. Birds chirp under a blanket of blue skies, dotted by pillowy clouds. The scent of saltwater wafts from the ocean. The experience leaves you awestruck.

Fiji lures visitors with its aquamarine waters and soft, warm sands that are found outside the doors of its myriad of resorts. Snorkel with manta rays in the Yasawas – a chain of 20 islands blessed with sparkling blue lagoons. Scuba dive near Taveuni – Fiji’s third-largest island and home of the worldly renowned Rainbow Reef. Party in the Mamanuca Islands that boast secluded resorts and served as the setting for Tom Hanks’ film “Castaway”. And don’t forget about the surfing.

Fiji is an indelible destination that flaunts beauty in many ways. The depth of its character has no boundary.

The Garden of the Sleeping Giant steals your attention away from the beach. Located in the foothills of Nausori Highlands, it’s known for its vibrant collection of orchids once part of a private collection owned by TV actor Raymond Burr. Take a “jungle walk” past a lily pond and through a native forest. It’s gorgeous, peaceful and a popular place to have a wedding ceremony.

Coral Coast is centrally located on the southwest side of Viti Levu and is populated by resorts and hotels. Pearly white sands nibble against crystal-clear waters to create a perfect setting.

Visit the Sri Siva Subramaniya Temple – the largest Hindu temple in the Pacific. Masterful Dravidian architecture and lively colors bring the temple to life. Remove your shoes upon entering and witness sacred statues and inspiring surroundings.

*Vilavilairevo* is Fijian for “jumping in the oven” and describes the practice of firewalking, a local practice that originated with a man named Tunaiviqalita of Beqa Island, who convinced a spirit god to allow him to have the ability to walk over scalding stones. Who can doubt it? Firewalking ceremonies take place at resorts throughout Fiji.

Port Denarau has a marina, shopping district, restaurants and a golf course. The Fiji Museum is filled with artifacts that span 3,700 years. Hop in a mud pool to absorb its healing properties – according to locals. Or zipline, hike, splash down water slides or admire the animals at Kula Wild Adventure Park in Sigatoka.

Fiji might seem like a world away, but it’s a worldly experience you won’t soon forget.

Cutline: TROPICAL BLISS – A colorful sunrise awakens a new day on Fiji Island. Image: Martin. Adobe Stock.