

## DAY 6 - Fiji



As you can see by the above picture, today was beach and ocean day. If you own a sailing charter company, what do you do on your vacation? Charter a sailboat, of course!



We went out on a 75 foot catamaran for a day of sailing, snorkeling, beach combing and a beach BBQ – hang on, isn't that what we do for a living? OK, let's call it research, that way we can claim it as a tax deduction. ☺

We were picked up at our hotel and a short 15 minute drive to Denaru marina where all the charter boats are moored. It's also a tourist area with a Hard Rock Café and a few other stores.

Our Captain was Capt. Joshua who has had his license since 2000, but has already progressed to a category 5 license which is the highest level a charter captain can get.

The first interesting part was that the sailboat was equipped with two 70HP Yanmar diesel engines and one would not start. Unperturbed the captain took us out on one engine only and showed amazing handling skills in docking and anchoring with only the port side engine!



Wendy, of course, wasted no time in taking over the helm, as usual.

Can we say control issues???

What little wind there was, was on the nose, so they put up the jib for show and we motored out the channel to the snorkel reef.

What is interesting is just like they drive

cars on the left side of the road, the channel markers are opposite to the USA – Green, Right, Return!!

The boat had a crew of 4 including the captain and there were 30 passengers. Water and sodas were complimentary and they allowed you to bring your own booze.

Almost without exception all the tourists on board were Australian. Fiji is to Australia, what the Bahamas is to Eastern USA and what Mauritius is to South Africa. A tropical paradise a short 4 hour flight away.

Australians are very outgoing and friendly and we had soon made several more friends.



Super wide catamaran



I love my water proof camera!



The snorkeling was nice but not fantastic, I have done far better snorkeling in Hawaii and the Caribbean, but it was enjoyable.

As far as the boat is concerned, it was nice but not "Wendy Clean" and a couple things were fixed with duck tape! Seems like sailors are the same the world over. Old school, hank on 90% jib and roachy mainsail with lazy jacks no cradle. Hulls needed some cleaning and there was no instructions how to use the head. But the smiles were genuine and the crew capable.

The one thing the boat really needed was a swim step. After snorkeling scrambling back on the boat onto a swim platform 6 inches above the water would be tough for older people.

They did troll a fishing line behind the boat and caught a Spanish mackerel – I guess a way to supplement their income while working and providing entertainment for clients.



After snorkeling we went to a nearby beach where we had a BBQ lunch with a choice of steak and lamb sausage or fish and chicken. This is the beach where we had lunch.

The sail back was very pleasant, and they even pull the mainsail up, but the motor remained on.

That's pretty much what these big commercial cats are like, sails are really

for show. We had the same experience when we went to Jamaica.



Captain giving the safety speech



Encouraging tourists to participate



Showing us how to de-husk coconuts

In the USA I am used to being the center of attention because of my "Quaint" English accent and people are always coming up to me and asking me where I am from.

Well, things have changed. Over here my accent is too close to everyone else's and no one notices me. Instead WENDY is now the center of attraction because of her accent as Americans in these parts are pretty rare. Everyone comes up to her and says, "Are you American?" and then starts asking all kinds of questions about the States. It's quite a turnaround.

There was a little Aussie boy on the boat 5 years old who, on hearing Wendy's accent, asked her if she could speak like the tow truck does in the movie "Cars". Having seen the movie, we know the voice is done by Larry the Cable guy and Wendy is well acquainted with his hillbilly southern drawl. She did a perfect imitation and the kid was delighted!

A full day out on the water and we are tired, so, bar snacks for dinner and an early night in bed.