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After 102 years at the same Fort Worth address, the iconic workwear brand moves downtown.



Top: A view of the new Luv. Tuesday in downtown Fort Worth. Dickies relocated its headquarters last summer from West Valley to downtown. The Tower complex. Above: Dickies associates take a small work break in front of the original Williamson-Dickie sign at the new location in downtown Fort Worth.

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BY CHRIS RIEMENSCHNEIDER
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

We had been in Tokyo only four hours, and I already feared we were headed to jail.

It's one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, but they don't take credit cards? I irately asked my friend, as we stared at a rather hefty bill at a whiskey bar deep in the city's Shinjuku ward.

We had no yen on us yet. Our ATM cards did not work. And, of course, we did not speak Japanese well enough to reassure the stern-looking woman behind the bar that we would not run out on our tab.

This was the first of many instances on our trip to Japan last summer where I felt like your average underprepared, overconfident American.

I'm an experienced international traveler, mind you, and usually a good planner. But between a busy schedule at home, a reliance on a third friend who had Japan on his bucket list - but apparently did not consult any other lists - plus maybe a little cockiness, the country repeatedly threw me off my game.

Here's what I learned from my first Japanese trek. I believe I'm not being overconfident when I say it won't be my last trip there.

1. Cash is king: Probably half the restaurants and bars we went to did not accept credit cards or virtual pay. It's not for lack of technology; they're smartly avoiding fees. Also, Japanese people don't have to worry about getting robbed at gunpoint like Americans do. So go ahead and bring dollars to convert to yen. Plan ahead for wiring money if need be. And/or consult your bank to make sure your



A view of Mount Fuji while standing on it, left, vs. 30 miles away on a train from Kyoto to Tokyo three days later.

COMMENTARY

Eight lessons I learned about visiting Japan

ATM card will work there. Mine never did.

(Side note: We made it out of the Tokyo whiskey bar thanks to a German regular there who spoke English well enough to convince our server to take U.S. dollars with a healthy tip.)

2. Shop for flights from other cities: Delta Air Lines flies nonstop from Minneapolis-St. Paul to Tokyo Haneda Airport every day, but I saved about \$500 last year by booking a \$300 Delta flight to Los Angeles and then a \$850 Singapore Airlines flight to Tokyo from LAX. Booking separately via Seattle was

cheaper, too. At press time, though, Delta's nonstop fares from MSP for April and May were comparable, so you never know.

3. Google Translate is a godsend: I had never used the app before Tokyo, and I would not go back without it. We held our phones up to just about every restaurant menu to translate the Japanese letters into English via this app. Sometimes the results were a bit askew, i.e. "fat pig balls" at one restaurant. But it's always ballpark-close anyway. (Side note: The "balls" were delicious; really just

chunks of pork belly.)

4. Real sushi is not like the American version: If your idea of sushi is California rolls and other sticky-rice concoctions with fancy adornments, then maybe you should go to California instead. What we had throughout our trip was more like sashimi - raw slabs of fish served with a little rice on the side. The wider array of raw seafood offered had me turning green, but it didn't stop my friends, who ordered selections that included slimy sea urchin in Tokyo's famed Tsukiji fish market. (Side note: They both regretted the sea urchin.)

5. Don't be fooled by sake: It comes in flowery bottles you pour into little sipping cups, often in fruity or sweet flavors. Don't let the cuteness fool you into over-imbibing. Be careful. Be inquisitive, too. The servers will be happy to coach you to find your favorites. Luckily, we learned all this before hitting the self-serve Sake Cafe Lab 250 in the shrine-adorned city of Nikko, where the bottles are attached to machines that operate via tokens to help yourselves. "God help us," was my friend's response.

6. Check the weather before heading to Mount Fuji: We spent one full day

and night on the iconic volcanic cone, but we barely got a glimpse of it. It was rainy and overcast the whole time. Two days later, though, while riding a train from Kyoto back to Tokyo, we got a crystal-clear view of the mountain from about 30 miles away. We were as awed as we were frustrated. If only we had switched days.

7. Spend more time in Kyoto: Sure, I'd heard it was a nice city with a lot of culture. But I didn't fully fathom how downright soulful and soothing Kyoto would be until our two days there. We crammed in all the top sights, including the otherworldly Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, ornate Kinkaku-ji temple, Nij Castle and the steep climb under the arches at Fushimi Inari Shrine and Mount Inari - a way better hike than our cloudy trek on Fuji. Even better were the smaller finds, like the lesser-known temples tucked into neighborhoods and a counter eatery where I had the best gyoza of my life. I would have been happy spending twice as much time in Kyoto just to stroll the clean and scenic streets and finding those more random highlights.

8. You can't conquer Tokyo in one trip: We covered a lot of territory in our four days there, bouncing from the must-see Tokyo Tower to the eye-candy-ish Mori Art Museum to a divine tonkatsu restaurant called Butagumi up in the Nishiiazabu neighborhood. We did too much bouncing around, though, with too many rides on the crowded metro trains. Find more condensed, walkable routes, and save farther-off sites for your next time there. Also, instead of picking hotels near our chosen daytime highlights, I would've gone with one in the neighboring Shibuya or Shinjuku wards, where we spent most nights.

Lush foliage, dazzling beaches put Fiji's islands on the map

BY ANNE Z. COOKE
Tribune News Service

NADI, FIJI ISLANDS
"That's Tom Hanks' island, in 'Cast Away' the movie," said the passenger sitting nearby, on the rear deck.

We'd seen him standing in line, a college kid in a red shirt, packing and repacking a knapsack while we waited to board the early morning ferry out of Viti Levu, largest of Fiji's 330 islands. Leaning over the railing, he pointed at the horizon and a faint grey-green shape.

"Its real name is Motiki, and it's small, just 100 acres," he said. "But the beach is awesome. Tourists can't wait to go."

No surprise there. For most South Pacific travelers, nothing rivals Fiji's sandy beaches, palm-shaded gardens, starchy nights and Melanesian hospitality. We'd island-hopped over the years, tried a dozen different beach resorts, and liked most of them. Until 2019, when we joined a hiking group for a long look at the island's mountains.

Finally last fall, with COVID in decline and Fiji open for tourists, we hoped a plane and headed back, this time for another look at what makes the country tick. Finding hotels wasn't easy; Fiji is to Australians what Hawaii is to Americans. But we crossed our fingers, found five with rooms and struck gold at three places begging for a repeat visit.

The Fiji Orchid, a stately manor house near Viti Levu's northwest shore and the former home of Hollywood actor Raymond Burr, star of the



Folklore says that ancient spirits left the world from Ulivunavatu Mountain, on the northeast shore of Viti Levu in Fiji.

detective series "Perry Mason," felt nothing like a hotel and everything like a home away from home. With an inviting living room and framed memorabilia, it beckoned at the end of a very long day.

Hotel Manager Deepika Dimlesh arranged an authentic Fijian dinner, and co-owner Gordon Leevie told tales of Fiji life in the early days. Though Nadi (NAN-dee) International Airport was 20 minutes away, our bare (BOO-ray room, house), one of six in the lush tropical garden, was as quiet as a cemetery.

"We've had guests who stayed for weeks," said Dimlesh at dinner. "One was even writing a book. But most are international travelers, businessmen flying through. We tell them, if you have a layover

er don't try to sleep in the lounge. We'll pick you up, you can use the pool, eat dinner or go to bed, and we'll drive you back."

Curious about Lautoka, Viti Levu's second-largest town on the northwest shore, we hired tour guide and driver Kesha Goundar, who (like many Fijians) speaks Fijian, English and Hindi. Stopping at the town's huge covered market, he bought a couple of kava "sticks," the gifts we would need - for the chief - if we visited a village.

Then it was on to the Sabeto Mountains and the Garden of the Sleeping Giant. A popular park, it was founded by Burr, a worldwide orchid collector. Hundreds of orchids, planted along the trail to the summit, a huge head-like rock, are the highlight of a visit. And the ad-

acent forest - a tower of vines, shadowy branches and strange flowers - was a set waiting for a movie.

The next day we headed upcountry to Navala Village, the country's last thatched village, driving past barnyards, gardens, sugar cane fields, villages, the occasional manufacturing plant and Methodist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Catholic-oriented primary schools.

At first glance Navala looked empty, until guide Mark Navaroka came out to collect our \$25 entrance fee and a kava stick for the chief.

"This is how we used to build houses," he said, leading us inside the chief's official structure, where a couple of village leaders sat cross-legged, talking. "They built it in 1954 when five dying

Catholic villages joined together," he continued, leading the way to the school and church.

Turning onto the Nausori Highland Road - not another car in sight - we lurched uphill over a rocky track for more than an hour, each hill steeper than the one before, until we rounded the top, a photographer's delight. Finally, around the corner, we passed two hunters on horseback with rifles and dogs.

Moving to Viti Levu's southwest corner, we checked into the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, a 35-acre landscaped property on Natadola Bay. And instead of salesmen in suits, the hotel was as busy as a country club on a holiday weekend. Dads and kids played volleyball; moms worked out at a fitness center. We spotted kids racing hermit crabs, and others learning Fijian words and Polynesian dances. Menus at the hotel's several restaurants listed continental and some Fijian dishes, and our favorite, the lively Toba Bar & Grill, took our

order in five minutes and served the food in 10. Coaxed into trying the Jet Ski "experience," we flew over the waves, riding tandem behind two watersports guides. But the skis were tramped by the hotel's Coral Planting project, headed by marine scientists Lawaki Koroywa and Luke Romatataba. Joining them in the water, we learned how to plant healthy corals onto damaged reefs.

Most memorable was the river cruise with Singatoka River Safari. Wide and long, the river winds through an endless valley, weaving past rocky hills, farms and meadows. Children splashed in it and men scrubbed their horses, waving as we passed. Festal and peaceful, it was a nod to an older century. The 35-mile-long trip

ended at a village, with a tour, lunch at the community center and a kava ceremony - shared cups - with the chief and town fathers. Kava is calming, some say. Just more weak tea, say others.

How many villages are there, we wondered. "Hundreds, but that's not all," said the hotel's desk clerk. Each indigenous Fijian family belongs to a village that owns the land it's on. It's like a clan, she explained. And only indigenous Fijians can own land. So add all the villages and their land and it's nearly 90% of the country.

"The government makes Fiji's laws, but the villages rule themselves. That's why they're important."

As our last week approached, we took the ferry to Lomani Island Resort - an adults-only beach resort - on Malolo Lailai island, a single hour's ferry ride to the mainland and Nadi International Airport. You can stay overnight and still make it to the airport on time.

But it wasn't the beach that earned the gold star. It was the charming cottages, each with a private yard and plunge pool. The smiling waiters and creative, chef-designed meals, served at candle-lit tables. The "double-X" swimming pool and the water sports center. "It's peaceful here," said Shelley White, the general manager, when we met at the cocktail hour. "And quiet. But with Nadi next door, we stay busy with weddings and anniversaries, and lately, even business retreats. We can order everything we need and get it delivered the next day," she said.