



TAMMY PELUSOIS / ISTOCKPHOTO

The True Fiji

UNTIL I VISITED THE SMALL VILLAGE of Namatakula in Fiji, I never really thought about the effects of responsible travel. As I watched children play and villagers becoming curious of my presence, I learned firsthand the impact I, as a traveler, have on our global communities. Given the opportunity to immerse myself in a Fijian village, a cross-cultural exchange took place forging a connection between the villagers and myself.

Agriculture and tourism are the main economic sources for Fiji. Learning that a standard meal at a local resort is equivalent to what the average Fijian may earn in a month was disheartening. Though villagers are the main labor source for resorts, adequate revenues are not being shared among local villages.

Homestays are a way of keeping tourism dollars in villages and communities, while allowing travelers an opportunity to experience Fijian life.

Knowing that my stay contributed to the infrastructure of Namatakula further increased my awareness of responsible travel. I have committed myself to supporting local efforts, communities, and schools wherever my travels may take me. As I departed, the villagers said “Vinaka” meaning thank you. I say, “Vinaka to you, Namatakula,” for giving me the true Fijian experience.

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YOU'RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.