

Vanua Balavu to Vanua Levu

October 25th At 6 am we departed the anchorage at Daliconi and once outside Andavathi Passage set up the O2 for a wing in wing sail.



For all you land lubbers out there that is when the mainsail goes one side and the genoa the other. It's not my favorite point of sail but when the wind does, we do.

Pottering along at a leisurely 6 to 7 knots we made our way across a very calm sea exiting the passage between the reefs of Kanathea and northern Vanua Balavu.

Once clear we set our sights on the SW corner of Taveuni Island 67 NM away. It won't be a fast sail but it should be comfortable, Maybe a big breakfast!!!!

Skimming along the south side of Malima Reef we picked up a 2 knot current and our little fiberglass pod of joy swept along at 8 knots with just 9 knots of wind speed. "Well that doesn't happen often" I thought, and it didn't.



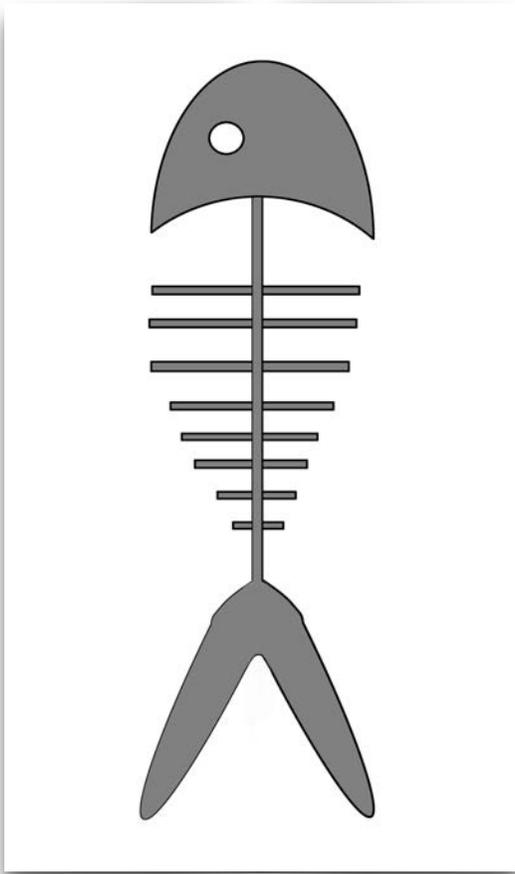
Ofelia uses the time to make cookies. she also baked some burger buns for our lunch.

We got 2 fish strikes along this reef, the first one escaped but the second, a big Mahi Mahi was well hooked and we managed to get it aboard. More badly needed fish for the freezer.



Kenny holding up our first Mahi Mahi for the day.

While Kenny was cleaning the first Mahi Mahi we got another strike and this one was a fighter. I gave him some line and let him work it out until exhausted, then I reeled him in.



No more fishing today, The freezer is full and I'm going to be eating Mahi Mahi until the cows come home, speaking of cows Anyone know where I can get a good steak?

Kenny is getting really good at cleaning fish and by the time he is finished the skeleton looks like the one the cat gets in a Walt Disney Cartoon. Just a head and a few bones.

One of Kennys cleaned Mahi Mahi

At 11:30 the wind is dropping and our speed is down to 6 knots. At this rate we will be well behind schedule for arrival behind Vuna Point and maybe have to do an evening approach. Not to worry though, the anchorage seems wide open.

Did I mention downwind sailing is not my favorite. Well at noon the breeze dropped yet again now only 7 knots and we are rolling along at about 5.

When this happens things start banging around and it becomes uncomfortable. I'm not complaining mind its just that well I, well its better when, I really do prefer, Oh hell! I'm complaining.

To make me feel better Ofelia made me a plate of “Mahi Mahi Sashimi”. Sounds like I’m speaking a foreign language here doesn’t it? Well it did make me feel better and with only 5 hours to go I can hang on, I guess.



A plate of very fresh Mahi Mahi Sashimi.

Finally at 3pm the wind freshened a little and change slightly to the south allowing us to swing our genoa over to the starboard side with enough angle to snatch a little air from behind the big mainsail.

The speed increased to a steady 7 knots and the mountains that started as a thin grey line on the horizon began to emerge from the ocean. “Taveuni a la vista” We are now sailing towards the sun and its power reflected from the surface of the ocean is intense.

South Cape has deep water right up to the coast so I don’t mind cutting the corner here a little but soon after we need to stay well off shore to avoid Vuna Reef, once beyond that we could head towards what was marked on the chart as an anchorage.

As we approached the coast we saw some moorings so we hooked up the O2 for the night and went into the resort.



Late afternoon sun sets the clouds ablaze over the island.



View from the dock at Paradise Taveuni Resort.

October 26th
We finally get to dive the famous rainbow reef today on the dive vessel Paradise Princess. It's a long run from the Paradise Resort taking about 40 minutes to an hour to get to the reef.

Unfortunately the reef was severely damaged by hurricane Winston about 5 years ago and recovery is taking time. The gardens of soft corals were no where to be seen. We did find a couple of spots on the dive that showed something of what it once was and hopefully will be again sometime in the future.



At the top of the reef millions of tiny fish dance in the sunlight as larger predators circle waiting for a chance to strike.



A parrot fish grazes on the reef while Pink Anthias and other tiny reef fish swarm over the coral darting left and right in unison as predators swoop in for a feed.



The largest patch of Cabbage coral I have ever seen.

On the second dive we finished off in about 15 meters of water over the largest patch of Cabbage coral I have ever seen. Gladly it was all in very good shape and the view was quite amazing.



Ofelia swims above a huge patch of Cabbage coral.

We finished of the day with dinner at the Paradise Taveuni Resort which has an enviable view of the setting sun every single night. Their water front overlooking the moorings is fringed with coconut palms and tropical ferns and that boys and girls, combined with a nice cold beer is about as close to paradise as you can get.



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October 27th

A very relaxing slow start was planned for today with the first thing on the agenda, a massage for Ofelia in at the Paradise Taveuni so at 10:00am we had Kenny drop us off at the hotel.



With the ambiance established by the subtle use of soft music, flowers and scents Ofelia submits her body to the administrations of the masseuse while I have strict instructions to get lost.

An hour later I was sitting by the pool just gazing out over the blue blue ocean when she re-appeared seemingly floating on a cloud. She glided to the seat opposite mine, hovering for a brief moment then descending as gently as a falling feather into the open arms of the chair.

“That was the best massage Ive ever had” was her claim as she dreamily sipped chilled water from a glass that magically appeared soon after her arrival.

Not wanting to spoil the moment for her with my sometimes less than gentle proclamations and thus rendering all results of her recent massage immediately void, I just sat there and continued to gaze out at the superb view across the moorings.



One could get very used to this lifestyle



The O2 sits on a mooring out from the Paradise Taveuni.

After a time conversation slowly recommenced and at about noon I finally said “lets go for a dive right under the boat”. The water under the mooring was incredibly clear and some coral heads could be seen below.

Back on the S/V O2, I set up the underwater camera with macro and Ofelia and I both jumped right of the stern of the boat and descended to the bottom 12 meters below. At first we found some scattered corals but swimming a little south we found a really nice little reef that had a lot of potential for shooting macro so I went to work at what I do best.



Cleaner Shrimp



A clown fish



Lion Fish

At 1730 we went back into the hotel for a glass of vino and dinner and the promise of yet another beautiful sunset.

We are the only people here in the resort and we had the patio all to ourselves except for the family dog “Betty”. The table was decorated beautifully with bougainvillea and green tropical leaves and we were made to feel quite special.



Ofelia and myself enjoying a wee glass of wine before dinner



The Paradise Princess

OCEAN 2OLDIERS



By Greg Hills and Ofelia Mendez

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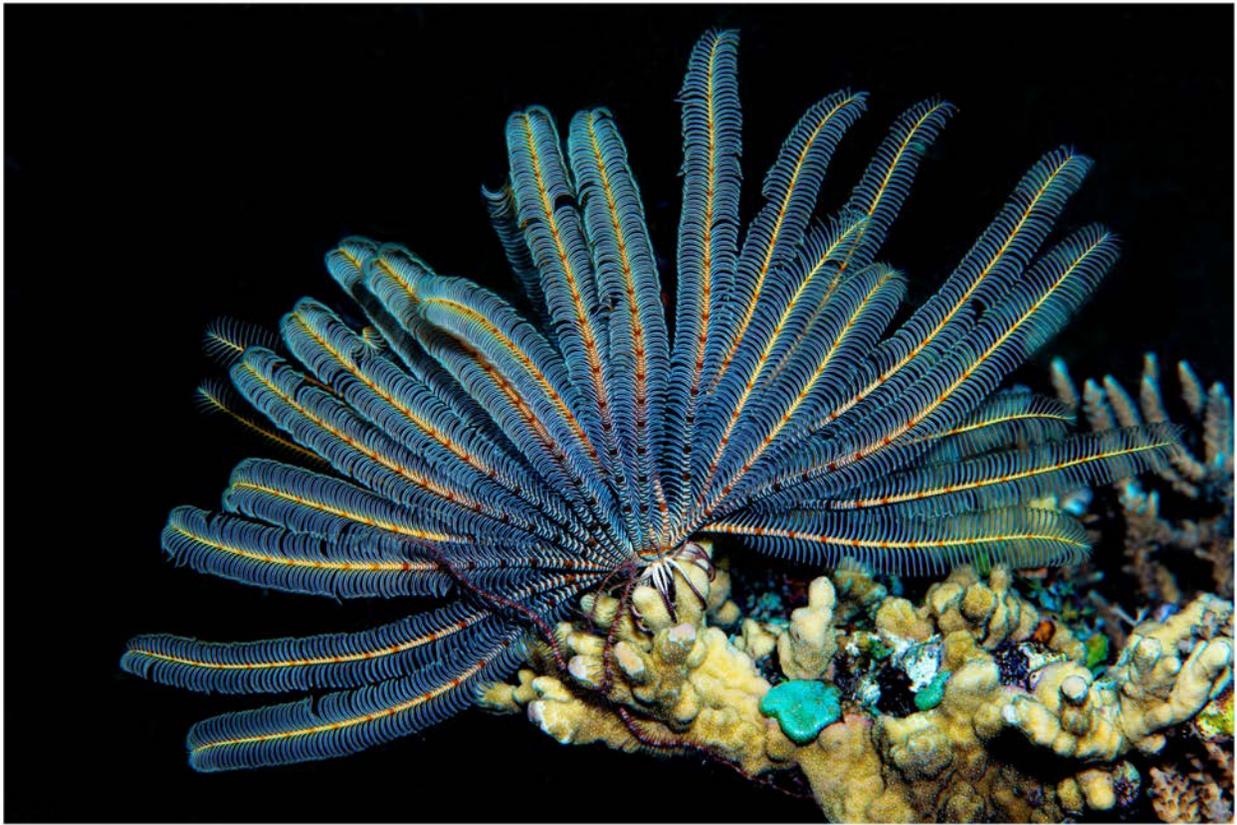
Tonight Kenny and I went for a night dive to see what the reef here has to offer in nocturnals so after the sun went down we suited up and jumped in at the back of the O2. It wasn't long before we started to see some critters and armed with the macro lens again. I started flicking away.



A beautiful blue puffer fish



A yellow Moray Eel checks out the big light



A crinoid spreads its tentacles to filter the water



A tiny very red shrimp well hidden in a coral hole.



Tiny shrimp give away their position as their eyes shine bright when hit by a flash light.



Once you see them you have to work quick as they don't hang around for too long. A quick flick off the tail and they disappear.

October 29th

Everyone was up early this morning so we decided to get our next passage over and done with. Its a down wind sail again today across Somo Somo Strait into the Koro Sea then a starboard tack up into Savusavu Bay. Total trip distance about 45nm so a short one.

We motor sailed for a while to make water and charge batteries but soon we had the engine shut down and under full main and genoa we are doing 8 knots in more or less the right direction.



We made Point Reef by 12:30 PM and swung the bow towards the village. A quick downwind jibe off the boom and genoa furling out and we accelerated to 11 knots as we came onto a beam reach. By 13:30 we had taken up a mooring in the town of Sevusevu.



Savusavu on the island of Vanua Levu is a yachtsman's retreat with very protected moorings and lots of shopping. Yeeehaaaw!



Copra Shed Marina



The O2 resting on a mooring in Savusavu.

October 30th
We did a little shopping, slept a quiet night on the mooring and decided that was enough civilization for us for right now “you have to ease back into these things after all” so at noon we sailed out along the coast to anchor about a ¼ mile from a nice looking resort hotel on Lesiaceva Point.

Not a bad anchorage but nothing to do here, with the wind over 20 knots we cant even go out to the reef to dive.

Well tomorrow is another day and a new adventure. Let's see where we end up.

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By Greg Hills and Ofelia Mendez

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