



WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL

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Rivers Fiji

Fiji

The Navua River in Fiji carves through a steep black volcanic canyon whose walls are sometimes just five metres apart. Look up to the top of these ridges and you are surrounded by lush emerald rainforest - it all makes for an incredible place to go rafting. However the hardwoods that fill these rainforests are also highly prized for their timber, and the gravel that lines the riverbed ideal for building new logging roads.



Since 2000, Rivers Fiji has collaborated with indigenous landowners and the logging company that owns the land to create the Upper Navua Conservation Area (UNCA), a 16km long river corridor that hopefully will save the forest. In so doing they have created the first and only lease for conservation of its kind in Fiji, and most likely the entire South Pacific. It may well also be the only conservation area in the world funded entirely by white-water rafting trips.



By creating this conservation area on the country's third largest waterway, they have reduced the impacts of run-off from logging, which negatively affects marine biodiversity and coastal areas. Rivers Fiji also pioneered the establishment of Fiji's first Ramsar site in 2006, which now recognizes the UNCA as a wetland of international importance.

At the same time they have developed outreach programs in partnership with local NGO Nature Fiji, which provide local communities with a series of environmental education river trips. It enables them to experience first-hand

the economic, environmental, and cultural importance of where they live. Each year Rivers Fiji also brings over doctors and engineers from the US to run free medical clinics and build facilities to improve water quality for communities along the river's bank.

Most of all, its 4,500 guests per year bring in an annual trip revenue of approximately US\$800,000, with partner communities receiving US\$3 for every person who rafts with Rivers Fiji. To date the communities have earned more than US\$1,000,000. So while the canyon walls of the Navua River may be narrow, the benefits of Rivers Fiji's trips flow far and wide.

