



Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System
Coordination Unit

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IAMSLIC 2008 Site Selection Committee,
c/- Beth Fuseler Avery
Director of Library Services
Western State College of Colorado

Dear Committee Members,

Proposal to hold the 2008 IAMSLIC Annual Meeting in Suva, Fiji

On behalf of IAMSLIC members in the Pacific region I am pleased to propose that the 2008 IAMSLIC Annual Conference be held in Suva, capital of the beautiful Fiji Islands.

Suva is a modern, multicultural city, small by American or European standards (population ca. 200,000) but with a good range of hotels, restaurants and attractions for international convention attendees. It is also home to the main campus of the University of the South Pacific, the regional tertiary institution jointly owned by 12 Pacific nations. The Coordination Unit of the Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System (PIMRIS) is based in the Lower Campus Library of the University, in the Marine Studies Programme complex. (Further information about the University, MSP and PIMRIS are all available at USP's website, www.usp.ac.fj)

Proposed Venue

The preferred site for the annual conference in Suva would be the MSP complex on the Lower Campus of USP. Here we have a state-of-the art lecture theatre (seating 180) with full audio-visual and PC projection facilities, with capacity to record sessions (audio or video) through the University's Media Centre. The lecture theatre is surrounded by classrooms and meeting rooms of various sizes, some with movable partitions. The Lower Campus Library has sufficient space in a back room to store conference materials. Several larger classrooms could serve as an exhibition space for poster displays and coffee breaks. A student computer laboratory on the floor below could provide Internet access to 20 or so people at a time; the Library has another dozen computers with Internet access (for attendees to check email, etc.)

Location

The Lower Campus is located only 10 minutes from the centre of Suva by car. Taxis are cheap and ubiquitous and buses running every 15-20 minutes pass very close to the front gate.

Catering

The MSP complex also has a waterfront cafeteria which regularly caters to university functions and external groups. The food is generally excellent (of course I am biased – I eat there almost every working day). Meals and coffee breaks would thus be easily catered for. A variety of local Fijian lovo foods and other Pacific delicacies could be provided, as well as Indian treats. Suva has a reasonable range of restaurants which could be booked for conference dinners or the banquet (mostly European, Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Korean – not much call for Mexican food here, sorry). Meals are relatively cheap (< F\$30 per person, depending on alcohol)

Accommodation

A stone's throw away from the MSP complex is the Lower Campus Lodge, which would be one option for convention attendees wishing to stay close to the meeting place, provided sufficient advance notice is given. In any case, the proximity of USP to the city centre makes a variety of accommodation options open to attendees, from five-star hotels to backpacker hostels. Rates at reasonable standard hotels start at around \$45 per night up to \$220 per night at the Holiday Inn. Many of the hotels are along the bus route to USP (F 60c max.); taxi fares would be under F\$3 from the city to USP. Some lovely small bed 'n' breakfast hotels are also available around Suva.

Local Attractions

Suva retains a fair number of colonial era buildings, as well as modern shopping complexes, and an "Indian quarter" of rustic streets crowded with small shops selling a variety of goods, so simply wandering the town can be entertaining. Specific attractions of interest include:

Fiji Museum – an excellent collection of regional artifacts, set amid the well-kept Thurston Gardens, displaying many South Pacific species of flowers and plants;

Municipal Markets – set on the waterfront, a good variety of handicrafts and goods from Fiji and neighbouring countries are available to souvenir hunters (traditional woven baskets and mats, jewellery, wooden bowls, dishes and carvings), etc.

Albert Park – a sports ground near the museum, famed for the landing of Charles Kingsford-Smith's plane on his trans-Pacific flight from the US to Australia in 1928.

Colo-i-Suva Rainforest Park – Just 11km north of Suva this national park offers walks amid lush tropical forest, with glimpses of native wildlife, waterfalls and mountain pools.

Further Afield

Guided tours to areas not far outside of Suva are available and a variety of seaside or mountain resorts can be booked for those interested in snorkeling, diving or mountain trekking. The Coral Coast is only an hour and a half away; Sigatoka a bit further on offers archeological sites amid sand dunes; on towards Nadi one can see WWII gun emplacements; and, off Nadi lay a wide diversity of island resorts.

Travelling to Suva

Most international flights into Fiji arrive in Nadi, on the west coast of Viti Levu (though they are talking about lengthening the runway at Nausori Airport so this might be an option by 2008). October is in one of the "shoulder seasons"; typical costs of return flights to Nadi from the west coast of the USA at this time of year are around US\$1100; about £1200 from London and around A\$500 from the east coast of Australia.

Regular flights across the island from Nadi to Nausori are available for less than F\$120 and buses make the trip in around 3 hours for around F\$45. Taxi fares from Nausori Airport into Suva are around F\$20 (40 minute drive).

Around Suva, taxis are cheap and ubiquitous. Some of the driving leaves a bit to be desired, but seatbelts are provided.

Caveats

We do not yet have a university calendar for 2008. The Fiji teaching year follows the Australia-New Zealand schedule, so second semester usually finishes in the third week of October. It is thus possible that the usual date of the IAMSLIC conference would have to be offset a week or two to ensure availability of all of the facilities at the MSP complex.

Finally, the political situation in Fiji should be mentioned. At present there is debate within the country and in diplomatic circles over proposed legislation on national reconciliation measures after the 2000 coup. Tensions may increase leading up to the national election due next year and without a crystal ball, none of us can predict what might eventuate here. By 2008, I suspect that things will have settled down again and Suva will be back to its normal friendly atmosphere.

Local Support

Suva has the largest number of libraries and information workers in the Pacific and this bid has the support of the Fiji Library Association as well as the senior management of the University of the South Pacific.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this proposal; we apologise for the delay in providing it. Please contact us for any further information you may need.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Nelson
PIMRIS Coordinator