

# Bay of Islands, Lau Group, Fiji

*Adina anchored in one of the many coves of the Bay of Islands with no-one else in sight*



**Remote and beautiful, Tom Partridge recommends a visit to this untouched Pacific island anchorage**

**F**iji offers extensive cruising grounds and if there is one area sailors dream about visiting, it's the remote Lau Islands located in the east of the country. Traditional customs still abound in these green fertile islands but getting there is not easy. The Fijian authorities make it compulsory for cruisers to check in on one of the main islands of Viti Levu or Vanua Levu. This often means a tough upwind slog against the prevailing south-east tradewinds or waiting for more northerly winds to make your way back east. But the reward is worth it for those who are persistent or patient.

The Bay of Islands lies within the Vanua Balavu Island in the north of the Lau Group. This area was last charted in 1876 and neither paper nor

electronic charts, which can be up to 0.6 nautical miles out, can be relied on. One option is to use satellite images to plot your route by using free software such as GE2KAP or SAS.Planet. The 185m-wide Qilagilh Pass in the north-east is the most favoured entry point through the reef protecting the islands; it has two clear and well maintained white transits that can easily be lined up to ensure a safe entry.

Good eyeball navigation throughout Vanua Balavu is critical – dedicate one person to keep an eye open for patches of coral reef and wear a good pair of polarised sunglasses. Always try to have the sunlight behind you or above you so you can clearly see any obstructions. Once through the pass you then need to head south five miles to Dalaconi village to perform a sevusevu ceremony offering a gift of kava roots to the chief in return for permission to anchor in the Bay of Islands. Holding is in coral and sand and given calm conditions why not spend a day or two there to enjoy village life?

Returning north, again keep a clear eye open for scattered coral reefs. The Bay of Islands offers several well-sheltered anchorages amongst scattered rocky outcrops with crystal clear waters. Anchoring is

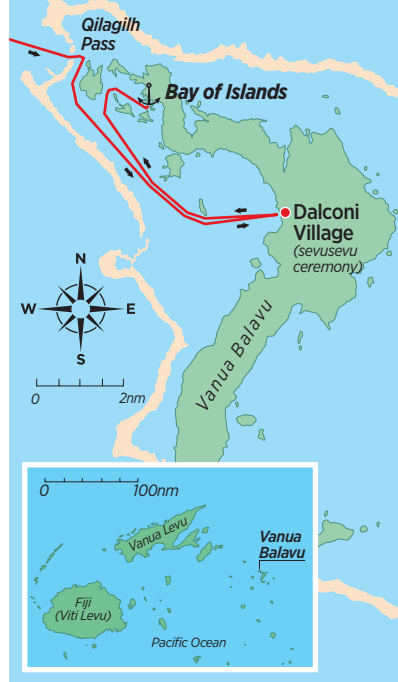
#### Waypoints for Qilagilh Pass

Approach: 17°08.798'S, 179°05.602'W

Pass Approach: 17°09.316'S, 179°03.568'W

Centre of the Pass: 17°09.487'S, 179°02.995'W

End of the Pass: 17°09.463'S, 179°02.762'W



PHOTOS: TOM PARTRIDGE / CHART: MAXINE HEATH/YM



**Explore the many coves of the Bay of Islands in your dinghy, by kayak or on a paddleboard**

typically in sand and coral with depths of 5-10m. Be careful as depths can be deceptive. Send a dinghy out if unsure.

For the adventurous, the Qilagilh Pass offers excellent fishing or scuba diving if you have your own kit.

This is truly one of the few places in the world where you can experience picturesque anchorages with local customs and smiling people always around with a friendly call of 'Bula!' 