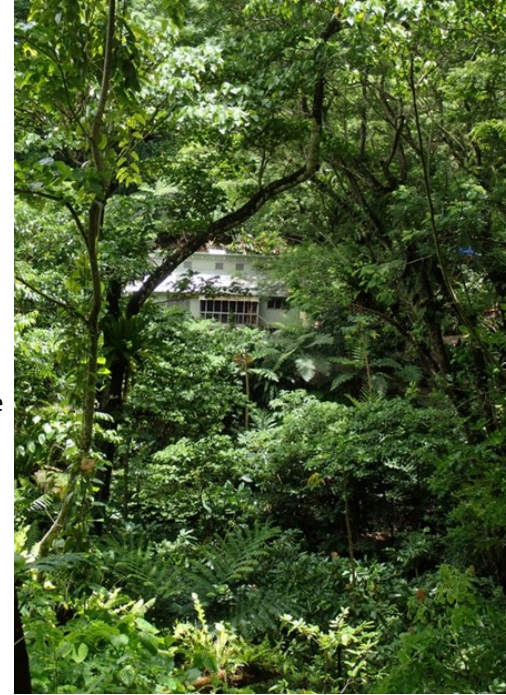




## KokoMana – come and experience the magic of cocoa and chocolate... in a beautiful forest environment!

KokoMana works its chocolate magic among giant rain trees in a peaceful forested valley hidden behind Daku Resort, just a couple miles from the centre of Savusavu town. At first sight, some visitors think that this is a natural rainforest. However, as you take the tour, the neat rows of carefully tended cocoa trees become apparent, set in a diverse ‘agroforestry’ system that includes over thirty other species of useful trees and shrubs, and provides ‘ecosystem services’ such as replenishing soil fertility and protecting the land from erosion. The knowledgeable guides demonstrate the various Pacific crops and trees, as well as explaining how the system works, for a healthier environment and to sustain the livelihoods of smallholder farmers – as well as producing fine-flavour cocoa.

Tasting the sweet, fruity pulp from a ripe cocoa pod, visitors will start to understand the process, part culinary art and part science, of transforming the beans (which initially have no hint of a chocolate taste) into fine chocolate. Every step of the process is explained, from fermentation and sun-drying, through roasting, cracking, winnowing, conching and refining... to the final step in the magic, ‘tempering’ the molten chocolate by hand on a stone table, to give the chocolate the gloss and ‘snap’ of a fine chocolate bar.



Because this is a small-scale, working operation, visitors will not see all steps in the process being conducted on a particular day. However, there is always something interesting going on, a variety of ‘visual aids’ are used to fill in the gaps... and everyone has the opportunity to taste the finished product!

Groups are small (maximum of ten people at a time) and informal, with visitors encouraged to ask questions, take pictures and generally explore their own particular interest in cocoa and chocolate. Tours take around an hour-and-a-half, depending on the dynamics of the group, and at the end of the tour, visitors are invited to linger in the ‘information centre’ that KokoMana is developing (with books and a slide-show) covering not just cocoa, but other crops, agroforestry and natural history.

Because of the diverse plant life and very low use of agricultural chemicals, birds and insects flourish in this little piece of paradise. Visitors interested in bird-watching should bring their binoculars (there are several Fijian bird species to be seen and heard) and the KokoMana team will point out some of Fiji’s endemic butterflies that are being encouraged to multiply on this biodiverse farm.



And, of course, if you like the product, you can buy bars of chocolate to take home as presents or just to indulge yourself, along the next steps of your journey!

