



Save an Island

Seacology partners with island populations to save their environment.



→ THINK A VOLUNTEER VACATION MEANS NOTHING but work? A **Seacology** trip to Fiji will change your opinion. Seacology's island projects range from establishing a marine reserve to providing running water, and you may be thanked for your efforts with a traditional feast of roast pig and other local dishes while islanders perform elaborately costumed spear dances in which everyone is encouraged to participate.

As a nonprofit, nongovernmental conservation organization, Seacology works to preserve fragile island environments and cultures around the globe, sponsoring more than 160 projects on 90 different islands. Individuals who contribute at least \$1,000 are invited to witness firsthand (at an additional expense) Seacology's projects in all corners of the globe, from Chumbe Island, Pemba Island and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean to Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in the South Pacific.

"Seacology is about mutual trust. We offer to build schools or hospitals and provide solar energy, medical equipment or a water supply for island villages," explained Dr. Paul Alan Cox, the founder of Seacology, who is also an ethnobotanist and a former mountaineering instructor. "In return, the villages promise to protect their rainforest or coral reef. This can be a big

sacrifice for them, since they may have little local support." According to Dr. Cox, villagers show a keen interest in Seacology projects and volunteers. "They like to see our people at work, look into our souls and determine if we are worthy partners in such an endeavor. We usually have a meal with the villagers, listen to their stories and often dance or sing with them.

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"One of the hallmarks of a Seacology trip is that donors have a good time doing good for other people," Cox said, "and we do our utmost to show our respect for the indigenous culture." However, this does not mean you have to rough it or tote bricks to help build a new footpath or bridge. "If we can have a luxury dive boat or a four-star hotel as our base, so much the better," Cox added with a smile.

Upcoming Seacology scuba-diving trips include the Red Sea. You'll travel with an experienced crew on the *Royal Explorer*, sleep in one of 12 private cabins with en-suite bathrooms, and photograph rare marine life in Seacology-funded marine sanctuaries.

Donor Trips for 2008: Madagascar and South Africa, May 10-24, from \$4,250; Red Sea Diving Expedition, November 6-20, price TBD; Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort, August 11-18, from \$2,360. All rates per person, based on double occupancy. seacology.com — LANIE GOODMAN