

do very high quality pandanus weaving; the intricate hat bands are especially nice. Credit cards are not used on the island. It's best to pre-book everything with a Papeete travel agent, who will meet your international flight with vouchers. I have found Tahiti Tours to be very professional. The weekly Hawaiian Air flight to Tahiti stranded us on the return for four days due to an electrical problem. Hawaiian's idea of compensation for this delightful side trip was a discount on future travel for those who stuck out the whole four days and squat for those of us who got home a little earlier without any help from Hawaiian. There are no accommodations for photographers even though world famous UWP's come here. Bring a waterproof hard case for your stuff and expect to do all care at your accommodation. (raiemantaclub.free.fr)

GUAM

Micronesian Divers, Outrigger Guam Resort, March 2004, Anne Warburton, Yorba Linda, CA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to Fahrenheit, choppy, currents. MDA is a quality operator. Diving is not the best and I would not return to dive there. (www.mdaguam.com)

HAWAII

Hawaiian guides have developed great skill in finding the unique: On the big island of Hawaii, Spanish dancers, rare juveniles, and lionfish are regulars. Kailua-

Kona is filled with trendy shops to extract dollars from tourists in tacky hula shirts. The diving is mostly lava flow dives with relatively low coral cover. There's excellent access to good shore diving. ... Kauai has special trips available only in the summer. ... Maui's diving is often to the backside of Molokini or Lanai and boats leave at 7 a.m., or earlier. ... Development in Honolulu has burned out most Oahu diving, but go to the northside. ... Some reefs are barren due to commercial collection for aquariums. There are few soft corals and dull hard corals, but colorful, plentiful, and unusual fish make the diving interesting. ... Expect clear water, visibility that's usually better than the Caribbean — around 100 feet — and air temperatures in the low 80s. Water temperatures hit the very low 70s in January and February ... From mid-December to mid-February, squalls can last several days; otherwise the climate's pleasant and unoppressive year-round. ... There are plenty of condos available everywhere (many with cars, which you'll need since the dive boats are not berthed at hotels); ask your dive shop to find you a place; they often have good prices.

Hawaii

Aloha Dive Company, October 2003. Nick Ferris, Arvada, CO. 850 dives. Vis 60 - 100 ft. Water: 78 -79 F. Aloha is an excellent operation, with a 25 ft. inboard drive boat; no head, 60%

canopy cover for divers. Maximum number of divers is six. On two days owner/operator Mike Nakachi took just the two of us out. We left early to beat the crowd, dive before the wind comes up, and get back in time to enjoy other attractions. Only people with compatible abilities and interests go on any given trip. This allows Mike and dive-master Earl to locate fascinating sea critters and photo subjects. They are very helpful with respect to photography. In our 4 outings we got great shots of octopus, Tinker's butterfly, and a bright red frogfish. Last year my wife and I were on the Kona Aggressor for twice as many dives, we had more interesting and productive dives with Aloha. Normal 2-tank morning dives within several miles of Honokohau Harbor cost \$95; Farther ranging trips are \$140. These prices are not out of line with what other Kona operators charge. Aloha washes off all their clients' dive gear upon return to shore, and will store it if requested until the next dive day. There was no hassle about bottom time, depth, or air pressure. Releases had to be signed, of course. A medical questionnaire was probably to determine the diver's ability to handle Buffy's (Mike's wife) cardiac cookies, which are legendary and addictive. Aloha Dive Company, Ph.: 1/800/708-5662 or Ph./fax 808/325-5560. (www.alohadive.com)

Aloha Dive Company, Ah Paradise, January 2004. Bob Lambertson (rdlamber@artsci.wustl.edu) St. Louis MO. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 77-79 F. Dives logged: 400+. Guidelines enforced: guided dives, guided by one

of the best. Mike Nakachi runs a world-class operation from his driveway. His 28', well-equipped boat is on a trailer when it's not in the water, giving him the flexibility to make the most of the opportunities in winter — when big swells attract the surfers but often shut up the diveboats in their harbors. If there is a place to dive, he'll get you there, either from Honokohau Bay, just north of Kailua-Kona, or from Keauhou Bay at the south end of the Kona Coast, just north of Cook's Bay and funky, less developed South Kona. Outstanding, personalized service by a real professional, considerate of his divers and their needs and interests. Let him know you are serious about fish watching and he will find endemics for you right and left, including the rarest ones. Add to that two mantas and a hammerhead in four dives (and Buffy's cookies!) — this diving is hard to beat. The South Kona sites are best — a little more expensive, because remote. Reserve well in advance. Mike has many repeat divers. You need a car, but the Kona Coast is that sort of place, and there's so much to see. Mike and Buffy can help with suggestions. Keauhou Bay has the architectural charm of coastal New Jersey so we tried Ah Paradise (www.ahparadise.com). Just a few rooms, all different, on a hobby farm (organic Kona coffee, best we tasted, and macadamia nuts) full of birds and other wildlife. South Kona is steep (great sunsets) and retro, resisting the homogenizing development farther north. The drive to the boat was 30-40 min., but worth it for us.

Aloha Dive Co., March 2004, Larry Sandusky (lsandusky18@msn.com) Meridian, ID. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 120 Feet. Water: 75 F, calm, currents. Aloha Dive Company is an exceptional operation. Mike and Earl bring topnotch marine life knowledge and unmatched enthusiasm to every dive. Service is equal to or better than live-aboards — i.e., fantastic! We dived a number of times over 4 days and our gear was cared for and rinsed properly daily, yet we only touched it when diving. Diving conditions and visibility were excellent, fish life prolific, and big animals were an extra treat! Our only dive companions were also *Undercurrent* subscribers. Best of all, when we left the Big Island of Hawaii we'd made friends in Mike and Earl!

Aloha Dive Company, King Kamehameha Kona Beach Resort, April 2004, Diana Dickinson, Sammamish, WA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy, surge. As always, diving with Mike and Earl was a joy. They go out of their way to query their customers and find out what they want to see — and then do their best to find those things. We saw turtles and dolphins, sharks and at least one manta. And we saw Tinker's butterflies, dragon morays, psychedelic wrasses, frogfish and bicolor anthias — it's not all big stuff with Aloha Dive Co. I did 12 dives over 6 days, and the guests on the boat ranged from 5 to 2; Mike never takes more than 6. The Kona coast has limited hard corals, and only a few soft corals, but we saw the best of it, including rare black coral. Most of the divers

who go out with Aloha are regulars who come back year after year. Mike and Earl certified my son 5 years ago and we've been diving with Aloha DC ever since—they just keep improving.

Aloha Dive Company/Big Island Divers/Timeshare in Waikoloa Village, April 2004, Rich, Parker, CO.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 78 Fahrenheit, calm. I was the only diver going out with Mike Nakachi and Earl of Aloha Dive Co.. They are native Hawaiians and make you feel at home right away. They take care of all your gear after you hand it up. Full 3000 psi fills. Mike and Earl have very laid-back personalities. As soon as we got to the first site (maybe 30-45 minutes), I got a thorough briefing and a longer list than usual of underwater hand signals (endemic species, fish that are sold for a lot of money, signs for sharks, etc.) But, when we got in the water things really got going! The laid-back Mike suddenly turned into a kid in a candy store. He would signal me to look here and there and every time there was something more exciting and interesting. Gray sharks, white tips, turtles, and rare Hawaiian species of every sort. After the dive we went through the book. Mike can seemingly recall everything he has ever seen on every dive, ever! The second dive is led by Earl, who asked me what I wanted to see. "Oh, how about that long-nosed hawkfish we just looked at in the book? Also, frogfish, an octopus, and a spotted eagle ray?" Moments later every wish was fulfilled. The rest of the week went almost exactly the same

way. I saw a pod of dolphins, more sharks, lionfish, black coral... the list was endless. Mike referred me to Big Island Divers for the night manta dive. They have a shop off the main highway. Nice folks and professional. There must have been six to eight mantas that evening. They hire a photographer who makes you pose with the mantas swooping over you (even if you don't want to). The experience was great. Bring one, if not two strobes. It's difficult to photograph the mantas because you have to hold your dive light tin one hand, pointed up, maintain your balance in the heavy surge while sitting on your tank, and operate your camera with your one available hand. I had an LED headlamp I brought, hoping to avoid some of these problems, but with all the jostling I lost the headlamp. I told the DM at Big Island Divers and he found the headlamp and shipped it back to me on the mainland! Mike and Earl of Aloha Dive Company deserve every bit of praise they regularly receive in *Undercurrent*. They are the pinnacle of service and professionalism. Buffy's cookies are every bit as good as what you hear!

Aloha Dive Co. June 2004, Bob Greaves, Las Cruces, NM. Vis: 80-100 feet. Water: 80-82 F. Experience: 300+. My tenth dive trip with Mike Nakachi and Earl. Service is outstanding. They take charge of your equipment on Day 1 'till the last dive — clean masks, change tanks, and rinse at end of dive day. They are always on the look for the unusual and little seen fish and critters. The nature of Kona diving is that max depths stretch to 100 or so

feet. I find plenty to see at 60'-80' and enjoy the bottom time at age 74. On this last trip there was plenty of dolphin action. During surface intervals, Mike would motor ahead of dolphin schools so we all could snorkel as they came by. Lots to be said for a limit of six divers.

Aloha Dive, June 2004, Marlin White (marlinteri.white@worldnet.att.net) Carson City, NV. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. Mike and Earl at Aloha Dive are the best! Mike is very eager to show his dive guests a good time and takes extra care to take divers to sites where they will see many critters. He knows the sea life very well and is able to discuss their habitat and life cycles. Both met all the needs of their charges. They run a very efficient operation and cater to their guests by selecting appropriate dive sites, sharing in the excitement of underwater discovery, caring for gear and exercising all precautions to ensure a safe dive every time we dropped. The response we received via email was prompt and helpful and when we arrived at the boat, we were not disappointed. We had read about Aloha Dive in the Chapbook and have had very good luck with our dives by following the recommendations of fellow divers.

Dive Makai, November 2003, Rick & Pamela Gordon (flashandfreckles@msn.com) Issaquah, WA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, choppy. We selected Dive Makai based on reviews in Chapbook. They met our

expectations. Like most boat diving in Hawaii, the attitude is pretty laid back and friendly and the diving is easy, but on the other hand, the dive operations are very professional and follow procedures more so than at other dive destinations around the world. Starting with removal of shoes before boarding to the fairly extensive dive briefings and “follow-behind-the-leader” style diving. But the Dive Makai divemasters (Lisa, Kendra, Kay, Alexa) all are knowledgeable and are excellent at finding the various critters which were requested pre-dive and also those critters that are rare and unique, so there was lots to see on every dive. Discussions between and after dives was always informative with good snacks provided. We also made dives with Sandwich Isle Divers and Kona Coast Divers and had good experiences with them also. We booked with the others because Dive Makai was fully booked on some of the days we wanted to dive. Next time, we will book well in advance. (www.divemakai.com)

Dive Makai, June 2004, Clare Petosa, Manasquan, NJ. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 70-80 degrees F. Experience: 150. Shore diving in Hawaii is excellent. Might have done more. Dive Makai great environmentalists - knowledgeable about behavior as well as identifying little creatures. Great guides – great operators!

Dive Makai, June 2004, Joanne & David Turner (djturner21@aol.com), Danville, CA. Vis: 50-100 feet. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 800+. Lisa and Kendra Choquette have one of the

best dive operations we have ever encountered. Their dive guides know more, show more, and care more for the environment and for the divers. On their 3-dive “adventure days,” they often go to the blue water to let divers snorkel in the open ocean. The whole operation is about education, the fun of diving, and the thrill of discovery. They really know the probable inhabitants of each dive.

Dive Makai, Kona Hawaiian Village, August 2004, Sandra J. Walzer (azlady@highstream.net), Prescott, AZ. Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, no currents. I wish I had scheduled all my dives before leaving home, since there were a few I would have enjoyed, but they were filled by the time I got to the island. DM is primarily a family operation that has been in business for 30 years. They are safety conscious; both of their divers and the underwater environment. As a senior diver, who does not get in the water as often as she'd like, I felt comfortable and appreciated the patience given to me to get my gills wet again. Thorough briefings were given before every dive, which was helpful, especially when you were looking at something like a juvenile rockfish! I think it's a 6 to 1 ratio of divemaster to divers, and they all seemed to know where every little critter was hiding. The boat was comfortable, but did not have a head, and the snacks were just okay. However, the fun, devoted, and a knowledgeable crew made up for any shortcomings.

Dive Makai, Kona Honu, September 2004 John Orange, Irvine, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F. Did one boat dive with Dive Makai (great snacks) and one with Kona Honu Divers (mostly fresh fruit). Both professional, helpful, fun. Best diving in Kona is the easy shore dives. Favorite place is Puoko. Lots of turtles, healthy coral gardens, garden eels in deeper sandy areas. We did 4 days of diving in Puoko, trying different entries from picturesque coves and small beaches. Very calm. Place of Refuge is a popular shore dive spot but not much fish and low vis in comparison. Small bucket of water for small cameras with both operators.

Diver II, November 2003, Bill Schlegel, Jefferson City, MO. Thought I'd take in the famous night manta ray dive off Kona. Went out with on the *Diver II* at 4:00 pm with the intention of doing an evening dive and then a night dive. The dive was aborted due to heavy sea conditions with swells of at least 8 feet and winds of 30 mph at the dive site. What was unusual though was that the captain let the divers vote on it, to see if they wanted to go into those seas — not a single one voted yes. Asked the captain and Divemaster later what they would have done if the customers had voted yes and they said that they would have overruled them. Very political way of handling bad seas. This is the worst they'd seen it in years. Kona is on the West coast of the Big Island. Most of the North and northeast beaches were closed along with highway 19 during this same storm, for the first time in

“36 years” according to one friendly tourist shop owner. Kona is usually very calm; it's famous for that. The East and northeast sides are where the heavy waves are expected.

Jack's Diving Locker, Fairway Villas, November 2003, Martin Raffauf (mr Raffauf@us.ibm.com) San Carlos, CA . Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. One of the Cadillacs of dive operations. Service is great. You meet everyday at the dive shop 3 blocks from the pier. They take and setup all your gear for you. Each diver has a numbered bag which is controlled by computer, so they know each day what boat (if you do multiple days) your gear goes to. When you get to the boat, gear is already setup. They shuttle divers to the pier with vans. On the boat, which is well setup, you go to the back, they put your gear on for you, and you jump in. After the dive, they take your gear and setup new tanks, at the end of the day, they wash it all for you and take it back to the shop for storage. Plenty of good scubapro gear and wetsuits are available for rental. Both large boats have hot showers, and onboard heads. They supply lunch on the two tank dives — good sandwiches, plus drinks and fruit juices. The advanced trips have breakfast fruits and pastry as well. The brand new dive shop is well setup for training. They have their own pool on site for the pool work. The staff is very friendly and helpful. Keller Laros takes some great digital video, and Doug Farr takes digital still photos which they sell after the dives. They are well setup and staffed

to do shore dives, we actually did a guided shore dive to check out our gear on the first day — something Jack's readily supported. Water temp was 78-80. Visibility was excellent — 100ft+ on some dives. Most of the sites are close in shore, so boat rides are short, as there is no real shelf on Kona side, and it gets very deep, close to shore. We saw sharks (white tip reef), one manta, plenty of turtles, eels, jelly fish, normal tropicals etc. Dive guides are very good at pointing out all the critters, and briefings are thorough and informative. The guides are very familiar with the fish life of Hawaii. Diving is \$95 for two tanks, \$135 for advanced. Jack's gives discount if you do multiple days with them. We stayed in a condo in Waikoloa resort that was excellent, called Fairway Villas. Food wise, most restaurants are very expensive, especially the hotels north of the airport, as you are basically a captive audience. If you are in a condo, shop at the new Costco and you can save a bundle on food for a weeks stay (as opposed to eating at hotels every day). Jacks boats all had camera rinse tanks. In fact the dive staff took video and digital stills on every dive.
(www.jacksdivinglocker.com)

Jack's Dive Locker, April 2004, David Richardson (parwilldo@AOL.com), Portland, OR.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 Fahrenheit, calm. The new shop is world class. The friendliness of the people may be the best you ever encounter. They do three dives a day takes the entire day to get the boat from the shop to the dock and

to the sites and back lugging the gear around. The shore diving is excellent for beginners. The primary reason to come to Kona is to see the whales, mantas and dolphins. If they are not here you may be disappointed. The night manta dive may be the most memorable of your life if the mantas show up

Jack's Diving Locker, Kona Islander Inn, May 2004, Richard Swan (rickofcampbell@yahoo.com) San Carlos, CA.

Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 50 to 120 Feet. Water: 78 F, choppy. Got certified. My instructor, Doug Farr, was excellent. He was patient, competent, and answered all our questions. My fellow classmate was a twelve year old boy, who needed a little extra help, especially in the classroom. Doug was very helpful, and at the same time let me work on my own pace so I did not have to wait around. The boat was more than adequate. The entire crew was very helpful and did their best to meet the needs of all passengers. After our first dive, the captain spotted a group of pilot whales and we were treated to 15 minutes following about 6-8 whales. The coral is boring and the sea life minimal. Did see some great turtles and a baby reef shark. The Kona Islander is one level above a dive. They have inadequate parking, never had maid service the whole week, and the food in the area was okay at best. My best two meals were at Subway! On my last day diving, I went on a manta ray night dive with Kona Coast Divers (Jack's was booked). Kona Coast spends the entire dive (50 minutes) with the mantas, so

you will get your fill. Snorkelers come too, and watch from the surface. It was fantastic. We had at least 12 mantas that put on a great show. My dive guide, Steve, took great care of me, knowing I was new. I might have gotten into trouble getting back to the boat without his help. This dive would probably entertain divers of any level. The next day I went to the volcano on the south side of the Island. The lava was flowing and was a fantastic experience. Be sure to book the manta ray dive in advance.

Jack's Diving Locker, June 2004, Clare Petosa, Manasquan, NJ.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 45 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, surge. The manta dive is a hit or miss with any dive op — always the possibility that mantas won't show up, as in our case — but that is certainly not the operators fault. I thought Jacks was good but there were a couple of inexperienced divers on our boat that really could have used the extra help and didn't get it. For more advanced divers, they were more than adequate.

Jack's Diving Locker, Kona Nalu Condos, Hawaii, September 2004, Steven C. Williams Highlands Ranch, CO.

Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 Fahrenheit, choppy. The Big Island has great shore diving. I wanted to do a night dive to see mantas. Jacks Diving Locker has a new dive shop that is fantastic. Their boats are good and the staff is professional though somewhat haughty. The divemasters are wonderful at finding stuff, but then often hog them and take photos themselves

which they sell t the dive shop. We never did see any mantas. Since the Kona Surf Resort closed and the lights went off, manta sightings may be hit and miss now.

Kona Honu Divers, Kanaloa at Kona (Outrigger), November 2003, Ted Shieh, M.D., Chicago, IL.

Our small group of divers booked with Kona Honu Divers, which operates on a new comfy 46 ft custom dive boat with attention to details for a recreational diver's needs — from the plentiful, shaded and sunny areas, to the netting on the rails (to safely hang your towels/wetsuits while boat steams), camera rinse buckets, to a real head. Glenn Anderson, the owner/ divemaster sets maximum at 18 divers. Our group of 7 divers had the boat practically to ourselves during the 3 days of 2 tank am dives, and the 3 tank all-day dives to South Kona sites. The boat did fill up for the 2 tank pm/nite dives — as did all the other boats in the area — to catch the mantas feast on light-concentrated plankton. All the DMs were exceptionally service oriented; checking with us regularly to see what else they can do to make us satisfied. Gear schlepping ended at the dock, where the crew grabbed our gear bags, and set everything up. Dives begin with us seated at the dive deck, after which the crew brought the gear and set the gear up on you, and do a safety check with you, before you take a giant stride to a long dive. It's almost like diving off a luxury live-aboard. The tanks are the thicker/heavier aluminum 80's, and are all filled to 3400 psi (and shave 4 pounds off the weight belts).

Therefore, all dives were well over an hour, even for the heavy breathers. Nitrox is available, but the types of dives didn't demand them. Dan ID tags are used for safety. Being eco-conscious, soda cans are recycled, and warm water showers were solar heated. Pineapples were beautifully presented every dive, as well as snacks & quality natural sodas! Sandwiches were served on the night dives and 3 tank dives. Frank and Glenn were great DMs, down-to-earth, friendly, and routinely giving us a thorough review of endemic & indigenous animals we expect to see, and site briefings. Frank is also very knowledgeable of the upside, and provided interesting facts on numerous landmarks, and on Hawaiian culture/history/stories between dives. Capt. Dennis and DM John were superb at what they do. Frogfish, lava tubes, caves, octopus, and numerous endemic invertebrates and fishes highlights the dives, and spinner dolphins are regularly sighted between dives. Manta dive was surreal; the juvenile mantas were so busy gorging the plankton around you that you have to be careful not to hit one when you enter the water — lights were everywhere, as were divers from all the various dive boats. The manta dive is good to do once — but very crowded at the dive site. Our boat was roomy enough that despite 18 passengers it was tolerable. (policy-1 DM to 6 divers). This "family oriented" newbie friendly dive boat is a rare find in land-based operations, and satisfied even the most demanding divers in our group. Booked Kanaloa at Kona condos with "partial ocean view" as an AA

Vacations package; got a free upgrade to an ocean front condo! The Lanai sits on the ocean front! Therefore, our group opted to eat "at home." All condos are privately owned and vary unit to unit. Do stop into the French bakery (off Route 11 next to Gold's Gym) for some great croissants before starting your dive day. (www.konahonudivers.com)

Kona Honu, Paniolo Greens, May 2004, Paul Lima (plintn@hotmail.com) Christiana, TN. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, surge. Signed up for 2-tank manta ray dive at Garden Eel Cove which is where the mantas come since the closure of the Kona Surf Hotel to the south. The Kona Honu is a large, new, clean boat with good setup and lots of room. Briefings were thorough and entertaining. It was a short ride to the site and we saw mantas as we attached to the fixed moorings. First dive was the evening dive and we saw our first daylight sighting of mantas above us. Went to 51 feet and watched the garden eel colony in the sand. Refreshments during the surface interval were very good with sandwiches, chips and a variety of soft drinks available. The night dive with the mantas was incredible. People had to time their giant strides to avoid landing on a ray. We were bumped repeatedly while on the surface waiting to descend. There were 15-17 mantas feeding at the lights set up on the bottom in about 30 feet of water. Each diver was provided a high illumination light source and several lights were set up on the bottom to draw plankton to

the site. A wonderful dive. The only drawback was that the divemasters did not seem to value the beautiful coral in their backyard. They had gauges unsecured and repeatedly bumped, touched, leaned on and kicked off the coral. Our group left with a bittersweet memory.

Kona Honu Divers, June 2004, Stu Asselin, Littleton, CO. Vis: 80-100 feet. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 13. Captain Glenn Anderson runs a 46 ft. dive boat — lots of room, wet/dry areas, a bathroom, and divers can go anywhere on the boat. The DM's were knowledgeable, patient, safety conscious, and gave excellent briefings. We did three in the morning, one afternoon single tank, and one night dive with six giant manta rays, a great highlight!

Kona Honu Divers, July 2004, Alex and Cindy Rasi, Northwood, OH. Owners Glenn and Maggie Anderson were congenial and ran an efficient operation. The divemasters were professional, enthusiastic, and safety conscious without being restrictive. The dive staff ensured the enjoyment of all divers. Kona Honu Divers boat was docked at Honokohau Harbor about 10 minutes north of Kona. Their 46-foot Newton was equipped with oxygen, fresh drinking water, working head, fresh water camera rinse bucket, ship-to-shore radio, and partial shade and sun areas. 3mm jumpsuits were available for rent. Our Nitrox fills were \$9 extra per tank. Fresh pineapple, cookies, pretzels, and juices after each dive. Dive briefings were thorough, describing U/W terrain, water conditions, and

probable sea life. The divemasters were excellent at finding interesting creatures and identifying them on their U/W slates. Different locations on every dive. They honored requested sites. Divemasters set up gear and helped divers on the stern platform. They changed tanks between dives and rinsed all gear including wetsuits on board. Divers were divided according to their ability and air consumption rates. When some divers ran low on air, they were escorted back to the boat, while those of us with remaining air continued our dives. Our bottom times were over an hour. The water was 78 degrees with 80 ft. visibility. Although we didn't see any sponges, gorgonians, or soft corals, the fish life was indeed colorful. There were also interesting underwater arches, lava tubes, and caverns to explore at some locations. We frequently enjoyed spinner dolphins frolicking off the bow or leaping and spinning near our boat. We witnessed a Triton's trumpet attack a crown of thorns. We observed several inquisitive octopi perched atop coral heads or free swimming. Occasional turtles. We encountered yellowtail coris, rock-movers, leaf scorpionfish, Moorish idols, butterflyfish (pennant, raccoon, ornate, pyramid, teardrop, lemon, long-nose, fourspot, threadfin, bluestriped, and pebbled.) frogfish, Hawaiian whitespotted toby, triggerfish (Picasso, lei, and black), Whitleys boxfish, spotted boxfish, peacock groupers, tang (yellow and convict), manybar goatfish, surgeonfish (gold-ring, orange-band, black, and orangespine), Hellers barracuda, cornetfish, yellow trumpetfish, wrasse (Hawaiian cleaner, psyche-

delic, ornate, saddle, and bird), bluestripe snappers, blackside hawkfish, barred filefish, bluestripe squirrelfish, porcupinefish, scorpionfish, Hawaiian sergeants, spotted puffers, needlefish, whitemouth and undulated morays, divided and fried egg nudibranchs, banded coral shrimp, a slipper lobster, and a tiger cowry. The manta ray night dive was awesome! Before sunset we dove the reef to orient us for the night dive and observed 7 mantas. Kona Honu Divers provided sub sandwiches, chips, and juice for dinner during the surface interval. After dinner we descended and assembled in a large circle around a crate containing U/W lights. Each diver also held a dive light above his/her head to concentrate the plankton. From every angle, huge mantas swooped in with mouths agape to funnel in the plankton. With 18 mantas passing overhead and somersaulting back to the light source, they would occasionally collide into us or each other! Kailua-Kona was touristy, but enjoyable. We recommend The Kona Brewing Company for great pizza, a microbrewery, and a wonderful outdoor garden restaurant. Bubba Gumps had delicious seafood and an oceanfront view. Quinns Almost By the Sea restaurant served tasty Ono sandwiches. Tour Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. You'll travel through fresh barren lava fields, to deserts, to grasslands, to lush tropical rainforests. Along the way you can visit quaint island churches, coffee plantations, the Black Sand Beach, Thurston Lava Tube (you can walk through it), and of course the craters, active steam vents, and volcano flows. It's very warm near sea level,

but chilly, windy, and sometimes rainy at the 4000 foot summit of Kilauea Caldera. Puuhonua O Honaunau (Place of Refuge) had an interesting self-guided tour and Hawaiian artifacts. Great snorkeling from shore adjacent to Honaunau. The climate was pleasantly warm, but surprisingly not humid even in July. There were no mosquitoes or no-see-ums. The sunsets were beautiful. We saw the green flash 3 times! Read Hawaii, The Big Island Revealed for unsurpassed knowledge.

Kona Honu Divers, Kona Seaside Hotel, September 2004, Chuck and Nancy Anson (nanson@owl.csusm.edu), Oceanside, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm. Good destination when the Caribbean was having one hurricane or tropical depression after another. Our original destination was Cozumel but hurricane Ivan had the airport closed, so we jumped on a last minute deal for Kona. Day time temperatures in the mid 80's, nights in the low 70's, few afternoon showers. Kona Honu Divers new 46' dive boat is wide and well laid out. Benches were along the outside rails with aluminum tanks behind and storage beneath. There were 2 tables in the center, a ladder to the top side bridge with seating for 12, a dry area forward, a marine head below, and 2 fresh water showers. There was room for 20 divers and we had 8 to 18, with only minor crowding around the snack table, which had sodas, pineapple, cookies, and sometimes melon and papaya between dives. The crew split divers up by skill level and provided

divemasters for groups of 2 to 6. The crew gave thorough briefings and knew the dive sites very well. The boat had all the safety equipment to satisfy U S Coast Guard and PADI requirements. Valet diving at its best. The crew took your gear on board, set it up for each dive, brought it to you on the aft dive platform. At the end of the day they rinsed and dried all your gear, including wet suits, stored it, and had it set up for you the next day. Manta night dive: they do a 2 tank dive at the same site in late afternoon and at night. Between dives they feed you sandwiches, chips, cookies, and sodas. By dark, four other diveboats moored at the site. They placed boxes with dive lights anchored to the bottom in 30' of water that were turned on before the dive to attract plankton. As we entered the water, we saw a huge 12' Manta doing ballet loops over the lights. We knelt on the bottom and watched this majestic show for 35 minutes before doing a tour of the reef at night to see lobsters, crabs, eels, octopi. The Manta found us again. There are more than 50 dive sites along the Kona coast. We saw 10 of them. The sites to the south of Kona had better topography, arches, swim throughs, caves, and lava tubes, but it is a longer boat ride and suited for more experienced divers. All the reefs were healthy with an abundance of hard coral and no algae. No sponges, soft corals, plate coral and large fish. We saw turtles and dolphin as we left the harbor. There were plenty of schooling fish such as raccoon butterfly, yellow tang and Moorish idols. It was good easy diving, a fun crew, and the price of the dive pack-

age was comparable to Cozumel. Kona Seaside Hotel, about 8 minutes from Honokohau Harbor where the dive boat was located. The hotel is older but in good repair, clean, quiet and nicely located near waterfront restaurants and shopping. They have rooms to suites. There are two swimming pools and well maintained landscape areas. You need a rental car.

Pacific Rim Divers, February 2004, Jim Perez (jperezmd@byu.net) Bellingham, WA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 Feet. Water: 75 F, calm. This dive operator meets you at the dock, and is not associated with a large hotel. The divemaster, and captain of their small vessel work very hard to make your dive experience enjoyable, with minimal work on your part. The boat only holds a maximum of six divers, and in our case, we only had three divers, and one snorkeler. Price was very reasonable for what was nearly a private charter! The boat ride is only 10-15 minutes, so it isn't long before you are in the water. They give you back your gear after they rinse it off for you. Patrice Heller was our divemaster and she was great! She gave us the option of tagging along with her, which we did, while she used her slate to name off the flora and fauna. (www.pacificrimdivers.com)

Pacific Rim Divers, King Kamehameha, March 2004, James Fillmore, Post Falls, ID. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, choppy, surge. Pacific Rim Divers runs a great operation. They have a modest sized boat, so they take a

max of 6 people out at a time. There were 3-6 divers on board in my case. Patrice works hard to make sure each trip is the best that it can be. The day of my first dive was just after a storm (a couple days before) so the swells were still pretty large. We stayed in the bay and made some nice dives (Turtle Heaven). Patrice carries a slate and points out and explains a lot of the rarer sightings. On my next dives Jason was the divemaster and he also did a great job pointing out critters and leading a tour. Other divers were newer and ran out of air faster, so on both dives after everyone else was back on the line doing safety stops he would do another loop with me looking for critters we might have missed on the early part of the dive. They manage all your gear for you. You give it to them early on, and they prep it all for you, and help you get in and out of the water (if you need it). They have a nice assortment of snacks for the surface interval (or on the way back): Patrice's famous brownies, fruits, veggies, etc. The only less than excellent item I would report is the organizational fact that they have people come to the marina, meet up with the boat on the trailer, wait for everyone to dribble in, launch the boat, and finally get under way. As long as you are relaxed about the day, it all goes fine. The King Kamehameha Hotel was OK. Mostly a big, not personal operation, except the restaurant staff is very friendly. The breakfast buffet is reasonably priced. The hotel is at a very convenient location to Alii Street where there are restaurants and shopping.

Worldmark, June 2004, Craig West,

Snowflake, AZ. Vis: 40-50 feet. Water: 75-80 F. Dives logged: 10+. Night Manta dive. Great crew from top to bottom – knowledgeable, helpful, enforced safety, but kept it fun. Great boat to snorkel/dive off, not too crowded, experienced staff!

Kauai

Bubbles Below, Radisson Kauai Beach Resort, August 2003, Ed Gross (ejg2putt@earthlink.net) Plano, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. Awesome diving. Niihau is a world class site. Spectacular volcanic formations. At Niihau Arches, there are some large volcanic rifts that form a large “stadium” - 3 sides enclosed by large, slanted, perfectly flat stone walls. As we entered the stadium, there were 12 to 15 large gray reef sharks, all curious about our presence. The monk seals are friendly and playful. The boat ride back from Niihau is everything they claim it to be. Its a tough ride back, but worth the effort if your bones can stand it. Not for the weak of heart or back. Even better than Niihau were all the large turtles at Shauna's Shelf. Over 40 table sized turtles at various cleaning stations. One large turtle was sitting in a slight depression as we swam up. After the turtle went to the surface to breathe, I measured the depression — it was over 5 feet across, and the turtle was bigger than the depression! Also saw two large white tips (> 5 ft), a reef scorpion fish, and > 1 ft bright blue frog fish on various dives at Kauai. Radisson was a nice place, good for

our family. A 2nd room was free, so the kids had their own room to stay in. It was on the east side of the island, and all diving leaves from Port Arthur on the west side — usually about a 30 to 45 minute drive. Boat was well equipped, especially for the open ocean crossing to Niihau. Comfortably handles 8 divers, unfortunately, sometimes we were dealing with > 10 divers, which made things a bit crowded. The dive guides were among the best we've had, and I liked their “everyone in and let's meet at the bottom” approach, especially when things were crowded. All the divemasters we had were extremely knowledgeable about the local fauna and flora. No rinse tank for cameras, but fresh water hose had ample supply of warm water.
(www.bubblesbelowkauai.com)

Bubbles Below, Aston Poipu Kai (condos), October 2003, Ted Shieh, M.D., Chicago, IL. Linda Marsh's reputation for being the dive operator in Kauai is confirmed during our 3 days of diving. Unusual SW winds made bumpy rides and sub optimal visibility at most dive sites; however, Linda never fails to make each dive exciting beginning to end. Nitrox was essential to maximize bottom time during many dives. Incredibly knowledgeable, Linda caters to the u/w photographer, the intellectually curious, to the newbies' needs individually. Her enthusiasm is what makes the experience. Green turtle cleaning station, white-tip reef sharks, endemic angelfishes, a giant trevally, rare invertebrates, lava caverns/tubes, highlight the dives. Great Linda stories fill the surface

intervals. Aston Poipu Kai: comfortable condos, roomy and well supplied kitchens. No A/C. Not much character, but has a laundry list of features, not to mention washer and dryer in the unit. The Beach House Restaurant on the waterfront is a good break from cooking. Good wine list, interesting menu using local ingredients, and enthusiastic wait staff.

Bubbles Below, November 2003, Bill Schlegel, Jefferson City, MO. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water temp 80 F. Surface conditions variable but calm in sheltered areas. Most of the operators are small, a boat of two and a few employees. There are about a dozen operators. We stayed at a timeshare/condo called the Lawai Beach Resort. It has beachfront, near Koloa and Poipu with good snorkeling right in front. Could even dive there as it's a sheltered lagoon. Nearby Poipu beach is a recommended beach dive. You can easily put 4 people in one of the 1500 sq. ft condo's. Then ask them to work on a price with the “owner” of that timeshare. There is a very good possibility that, if you have 4 people, you'll obtain a nicer room at a lower price, with more floor space than going to one of the big (but very nice) hotels. Rental car is a must also. An additional advantage is that this is the USA. Diving: Experience: > 500 dives plus technical. Temperature 80. Waves variable with very calm coves (dive sites) and heavy swells out in the open. Nitrox available. Decent coral; healthy but patchy as is typical of Hawaii. Bubbles Below provides expert divemasters with experienced boat operators. The boat I was on was

about 40 feet with twin inboards. Back rolls for entry. Very easy to use swim ladder for getting back on board. No head. They will lift your equipment out of the water for you, if you desire. All the necessary safety equipment (Radio, oxygen, and all Coast Guard required stuff). There is always one crewman on board. This is important to know because, while I was on Kauai, there was a big incident where another operator: single operator took 4 divers out, one got in trouble. The divemaster jumped in the water to help his customer and the two remaining customers on board lost sight of them and drove away! This left three people in the water for several hours. The diving is great. Hawaiian fish are fascinating and present in the thousands. Every fish seen in the typical fish guide was seen on the first dive. Saw more than ten green sea turtles at once (i.e., in a 360 degree view). There were turtle cleaning stations with three lined up, tail to nose, being cleaned by the typical wrasses and, in this case, surgeonfish. These were not little guys, but some were estimated to be 250 lbs. Also, saw one hammerhead. There were clouds of schooling Pacific barracuda. Very nice diving and would rate it comparable to any well known Caribbean site. Most of the diving on Kauai is on the South or southwestern side due to the tradewinds that produce heavy waves and surf on the other sides. Most operators work out of the Southwest part of the island also. None of the large hotels are nearby. This is rural Hawaii! Ni'ihau is a 70 miles (roundtrip) to the west, that is essentially uninhabited (sugar plantation).

The operators on Kauai will only go there in the summer months when the sea between Kauai and Ni'ihau is at it's calmest and will not guarantee taking you there because of the weather. Visibility of 150 feet, arches, caves, pelagics sharks, turtles, Hawaiian monk seals are advertised.

Bubbles Below, December 2003, Michael N. Hofman (mhofman@jmoyerlandscaping.com), San Francisco, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 74 to 78 Fahrenheit, surge. dove two day. The crew was organized, safety conscious and interested in making sure we had a good time (one of the days the seas were rough and so they credited us for half the cost)! Winter diving in Kauai is not as interesting (and much colder) than summer diving, but still saw some unique fish, interesting swim throughs and lots of turtles! Bring layers to keep warm! No special facilities for camera gear.

Bubbles Below, Gillin Beach House, April 2004, Pamela Arms (divepam@comcast.net), Narberth, PA. Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 Fahrenheit, calm, noCurrents. Did the Napali Coast dive, a long boat ride up the coast, but quite beautiful. The trip up is against the wave action on the coast so you get soaked. Our first dive was on Makena Crack and was pretty good — but fairly silted. In between we did a long run up the coast into the Queen's Chamber — it was extremely neat to go into this lava rock formation, which is like an above water blue hole. The water was

extraordinarily blue and the view of the NaPali coast was to die for! Bring your camera housing for the ride up — and to take pictures. The second dive was between the Crack and the Chamber — we saw several sharks, but none terribly interested in us. 1.5 hour ride back to Port Allen, a beautiful and non-touristy way to see the NaPali coast and the beaches and waterfalls along it . . . this is the part of the coast past Polihale that you cannot hike into! Bubbles Below were consistently good in their food and service. They have added a dedicated bubble watcher (Shauna, the daughter of the owner, who has been diving most of her life) in addition to the captain and divemaster. This redundancy is important, as I had been nearly lost at sea two years back on the backside of Lihua Rock in Niihau. There have been replacements in staff, due to poor customer service. This happened in late spring — so if you experienced less than pleasant captain service — expect to be happily surprised on your return trip. No specific camera area on the boat, though the Crew was accommodating with your camera in/out of the water.

Bubbles Below, Embassy Suites, May 2004, Donald A. (segundo@bigfoot.com) McDonald, PA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 30 to 45 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. Bubbles Below came very highly rated from several sources. Did not find them to be as good as advertised. Boat was very small with the large engine hatch cover taking most of the aft section. Ordered 32% Nitrox but when analyzed varied by as much as 4%.

Conditions were not good with lots of "snow" at most sites. Crew was very helpful in that they did not hassle if you wanted to do your own equipment setup. Both DM's were good at finding "critters." I would like to thank them for finding & returning a lost weight pouch, that was very thoughtful. Was disappointed that I did not get to do the trip to the Forbidden Island due to Linda (owner) being "off Island" that week. Take your own water/snacks. Water from cooler had a musty/stagnant taste. Snacks were either crushed candy bars or dry cookies.

Bubbles Below, Woodard House, Poipu Kai Resort, May 2004, Sandy Falen (skfalen@cox.net) Topeka, KS. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 73 to 76 F, calm. Be prepared for chilly water. The first few days, the water was no warmer than 73. Kauai diving is fascinating, but this is an algae reef, and while there's little coral, the tradeoff is lots of critters, and tons of turtles. Vis around Kauai could vary from so-so to excellent, but there was always lots to see. Linda Marsh, owner of Bubbles Below (www.bubblesbelowkauai.com) was terrific to dive with: enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and just plain fun. The members of her staff were delightful, too. They all seemed to love diving, and were happy to escort your dive, or let you do your own thing. We met at Port Allen Small Boat Harbor each morning at 7:15, with the boat returning between noon and one. A rinse bucket was provided at the dock, but I chose to take my gear home and rinse it there. Diving in Hawaii is more expensive than in the

Caribbean, but you can get a pretty good multiple day discount by booking at least three days. If you go in the summer months, don't miss the trip to Ni'ihau ("The Forbidden Island"). This is an all-day, 3-dive trip, with the 17-mile crossing taking about an hour and forty minutes. Snacks and bottled water are provided, along with Bubbles Below's famous "engine-block pizza" that's served hot after the second dive. The diving at Ni'ihau is nothing short of jaw-dropping, with vis exceeding 150', some ripping currents, sharks, turtles, monk seals, multiple variety of eels, and the geologic features that define the Hawaiian Islands: walls made of lava that layered up over the millennia like a stack of pancakes — and swim-throughs that were formed when the interior of the hot lava flow collapsed, leaving the cooled outer crust. Anyone who says "ho hum" after diving Ni'ihau doesn't know what they're seeing — this is truly spectacular diving that is best left to the experienced diver. Ask to go to the "turtle cleaning station" at Hale O Honu. On this shallow reef, scores of green sea turtles hovered in the water, heads and flippers dangling limp, while tangs and other reef fish enjoyed the all-you-can-eat buffet. This dive also featured a lionfish den, but I could scarcely pull myself away from the opportunity to float face-to-face with the turtles. The nonchalance displayed by these ancient creatures allowed me to use my close-up lens, capturing one turtle portrait after the other. I chose a vacation home in the Poipu Kai Resort, which was only a 20-minute drive away from Port Allen. It was an unbeatable value com-

pared to a hotel, and included a fully equipped kitchen, garage, patio with gas grill, and a utility room with a tub sink that was great for rinsing gear. Grantham Resorts (www.grantham-resorts.com), the booking agent, offers a wide variety of properties in all price ranges, and I give them a strong recommendation. For good food with a casual environment and reasonable prices, try Tomkats Grille in Old Koloa Town, and Brick Oven Pizza in Kalaheo. When you're touring western Kauai, check out Hanapepe Cafe. When you want a special dinner and exceptional service, try Plantation Gardens Restaurant and The Beach House — both were wonderful and worth every penny. And don't miss the roadside fruit stands, where you can load up on pineapple, mango, guava, sweet corn, and other delicious produce. Kauai is blessed with stunning scenery. The Waimea Canyon is not to be missed, but given its high elevation, visit it before your first dive day or after you've had plenty of off-gas time. And if you're adventurous enough to seek out "the end of the road" at Polihale Beach, be assured that the vision of this 17-mile long beach, wider than three football fields and dead-ending at the Na Pali Cliffs, is ample reward for the required drive down a road from hell.

Bubbles Below, June 2004, Marlin White (marlinteri.white@worldnet.att.net) Carson City, NV.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 15 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 82 F, choppy. This was the worst diving experience we have ever had. We arrived to meet

the boat and the first question we were asked was how we were going to pay for the diving. No one in the organization ever asked to see our certification. We headed out on the boat with a new boat captain and a new divemaster who was unable to find the mark for the mooring and struggled for several minutes until she was brought back on board and a second attempt was made. While she was inexperienced, she did everything she could to make our dive memorable. On the second day, we went out with a group of new divers, a new divemaster, and a new boat captain. It was disastrous! One of the new divers didn't like his fin so he took it off. In doing so, he lost track of his buoyancy and began to rise to the surface. The divemaster was not aware of this. The boy's father swam up to him and made him put his fin back on. The two descended and rejoined the group. It was one of the scariest dives I have ever been on. Thank goodness no one got hurt. The crew was cordial and shared critter information with us, but this did little to change our view of this operation.

Bubbles Below, Kuhio Shores Condos, August 2004, Steven C. Williams, Highlands Ranch, CO.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 Fahrenheit, choppy. Ni'ihau is a magnificent place to dive. Few soft corals, but hard corals, vast numbers of endemic species and critters, schools of fish, clarity of the water and underwater structure make up for it. Bubbles Below is a boat operation only, with no shop or shore facilities. The staff is great. The vessel,

Kaimanu, has no accommodations for photographers and room for only 6 divers to sit comfortably. Technically speaking, there is a "head" on board; a porta-potty in the tiny forward cabin — but no one uses it except in the most dire need as there is no privacy or ventilation and the boat briefing includes encouragement to pee/poop in the sea. The boat ride over to Ni'ihau is OK and takes about an hour and 45 minutes. But the return trip is brutal due to the wind kicking up in the afternoons and can take 2-3 hours or more. Sea Sport Divers vessel, Anela Kai, is a Pro48 that makes the trip to Ni'ihau much more enjoyable.

Fathom 5 Divers, Poipu Marriott, January 2004, Scott Page-Pagter, Valencia, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 85 Feet. Water: 73 to 76 F, calm. A great group to dive with. The only downside is going to their facility in town and having to meet and do paperwork in a shack in the back, then you drive down to the dock. We lucked out and had Ken and Len as our DM. He was amazing! He found things and places that no one else seemed to be able to. Frogfish, a school of seemingly millions of big eyes that let us swim with them, turtle cleaning stations, scorpionfish. These guys are good! Not really set up for photographers, but they went out of their way to take good care of cameras for you! (www.fathom-five.com)

Fathom Five/Bubbles Below, Cliffs Club, Princeville, Hawaii, August 2004, Michael & Elaine Jerome (ironmike1@charter.net), Beloit, WI.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm, choppy. Fathom-Five is a very good operation, we made a 2-tank dive with them on Sheridan-caverns and Harbor Ledges which both were great dives. This was the 5th time we dove Sheridan caverns and it gets better each time. Many green turtles, a few white mouth eels, a lot of reef fishes. The antler coral and the reef life looks healthy than 3 years ago. Fathom-Five is now using mooring sites. We love diving with Charlie and Lenny. Bubbles Below — first time diving with them. The first dive was a 2-tank dive on the Napili Coast which you can only get to by boat. Earl, the boat captain gave a great history lesson on the coast line. Linda did a great job by putting on some great corals and sites, we saw sharks and lots of fishes, ours first yellow frog fish. Both dive sites Mana 4 and Earl's cut were excellent dives. Made a trip to Niihau (the forbidden island), they left Port-Allen for the 17 miles crossing which was not bad and dove Key-hole, Vertical Awareness and Niihau arches. What a show of fishes; Hawaiian lionfish, bigscale soldier fishes, milletseed butterflyfishes, yellow tangs, bluespine unicornfish, surgeonfishes and Achilles tangs and schools of pennant butterfly fishes and monk seals and lots of dolphins.

FathomFive/OceanQuest Divers, Kuhio Shores Condos, September 2004, Steven C Williams, Highlands Ranch, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 10 to 30 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm. Great dive operation. They provide boat and shore dives

and have a good shop. The staff is great; helpful, friendly, professional, knowledgeable, but not overbearing or controlling. Their boats have no heads or UWP facilities, but they are the fastest on the island and get you to and from the dive sites quickly. No one on the island knows shore diving at Tunnels Beach better than George and Jeannette Thompson...this is a fantastic shore dive.

Seasport Divers, January 2004, Scott Page-Pagter, Valencia, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 65 Feet. Water: 73 to 79 F, calm. Although the diving was pretty good, this operator was less than good to dive with. They had too many people and made us all dive in their little groups. They put together people with no concern for level of certification. I (an instructor) was stuck with newbies and whenever the first person ran out of air we all went up, unless of course you got messed up and followed another group (as I did). They had cookies and water for us in between dives and after the 2nd dive we were all very hungry. Luckily (for the DM's) there was a boat nearby who they knew, so they got big sandwiches for themselves and then proceeded to eat them in front of the divers. Dive with Fathom 5 instead. Not a lot of photographic help. One small table in the center of the boat, but it was most often covered with the divemasters stuff. (www.seasportdivers.com)

Seasport Divers, Embassy Resorts, March 2004, Fred Zurbriggen, Salem, IL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 70 Feet. Water: 74 to 75 F,

choppy. American Airlines new schedule, St. Louis to Kauai, return flight has a 5 hr + layover in LA. They use small planes and they are packed. Diving is ok but not great. I'd rather dive Maui or the Kona area. Diving might be better in late spring and early summer. Most dive shops only dive the South region in the winter. Kauai is very beautiful and easy to explore. Our family loved the helicopter tour. The food & restaurants are not too expensive for an island. A typical fish dinner runs \$18 to \$250, beer \$3.50 to \$4.50. Dives are expensive \$100 + for a two tank dive and \$15 for Nitrox. Hawaii is still a great trip and worth hauling all your dive gear too.

SeaSport Divers, Kuhio Shores, August 2004, Steven C Williams, Highlands Ranch, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, choppy. SeaSport Divers is a first class operation. The dive vessel Anela Kai is the best on the island. They also have a good dive shop. The staff is great; helpful, professional, knowledgeable, but not overbearing or controlling. They use a DAN tag system for all divers. Excellent facilities for UWP on the vessel, including dry table under flying bridge, separate rinse buckets for cameras.

Maui

B and B Scuba, Ritz Carlton Maui, January 2004, Steve and Beth Welch (welch@rhinocomics.com) Highland Park, IL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy. My wife and I took

IANTD rebreather training from Brad Varney at B and B. They were professional, fun, and flexible. Small boats, no cattle operation here. On every dive had 3 divemasters in water on for 8 people. Kept beginners and experienced divers separate and spread the groups out so we weren't running into each other. Got out to Molokini very early to avoid the crowds, is definitely the way to go. Rebreather training was outstanding. We did two days of open water training as part of the course, then rented the gear for a third day to experience diving with it. The diving was excellent. However, recent swells have decimated some of the coral, as it looks like someone took a rake over the sea floor. Didn't matter to us as we loved the dives. Saw tons of tropical fish, and even a friendly manta at Molokini. On second dive near Kihei saw frogfish, octopus, flounder, etc. Blesi Varney, Brad's wife, is a wonderful divemaster and clearly loves to be in the water. Heard whales singing on every dive and saw whales on the way to and from the crater every day, including a breach on one occasion and a baby doing tail waves on another! Delicious food between dives; Blesi's turkey sandwiches on Hawaiian bread are special! Full fills. (www.bbscuba.com)

Ed Robinson, Westin Ocean Villas, October 2003, Greg Cruz (junk@teamcruz.com), Saratoga, CA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy. Excellent dive trip with Ed Robinson. Our guide Amy was very enthusiastic about all the creatures. From dragon wrasses to imperial shrimp to flame

angels and scorpion fish (leaf and devil). She found them all. Also saw mantas, greasy and white tip sharks, and Hawaiian turkey fish. I requested a frog fish for my wife, who had never seen one, and Amy delivered. The turtles at the wreck of the St. Anthony were a highlight. It was extremely windy. Lying by the pool was not really comfortable and our 5 month old baby was not a fan of the wind. For those traveling with children we highly recommend (www.thenannyconnection.com). They were an excellent babysitting service. We had Denise who our 5 month old loved. The Westin Ocean Villas in Kannapoli is a brand new time share property that opened 2 weeks before we arrived. Still had a lot of bugs to work out. Only one restaurant and not that good. Service was nonexistent and one day we did not receive our wake up call (thank God for the baby). Highly recommend Warren and Annabelle's Magic Show in Lahaina. An extremely fun evening. (www.mauiscuba.com/erd1.htm)

Ed Robinson's Diving, Four Seasons, May 2004, Michael Drumstas (griswald8@aol.com) **Worcester, MA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 150 to 200 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, choppy. We dove with Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures based on Undercurrent reviews and were happy that we took the advice. The boat leaves from the Kihei boat ramp after being towed to the ramp area (all operations in that area do the same). Shop was set up on the back of the boat by John, one of the captains. Dive equipment was brought on board by one of the crew after intro-

ductions and paperwork and also set up for you. After the boat was put in the water we boarded via a concrete dock. John would discuss the current weather conditions and then poll the divers as to what everyone wanted or hoped to see. A good briefing was given by the Captain and the a site briefing by one or both Divemasters which entailed the site and critters to be expected to be seen. Hand signals for critters were discussed along with such signals as to remember so that the D/M 's could better explain something back on board. We did two days of two tank diving and then the three tank adventure dive. We saw sharks (white tip) on all but one dive and viewed everything from turtles to some small invertebrates. Also spotted were some of the largest 12+ frogfish that I have seen to a few babies which were about 2 inches in length. Once the dive was completed the D/M's, Amy, Dave and Ricardo were more than happy to discuss what was seen and to look up in their books as to the exact species. Dives were planned out as to a max depth but air hogs were sent back to the boat and on all my dives I got back on board with 500 psi. The three tank first dive was to 130 fsw for five min. where we viewed a group of 16-20 gray reef sharks along with some newborns in the three foot range. Safety stops were required and extra time where the individual wanted to do some hang time was OK. A little pricey but all of Hawaii is so that to be expected. Camera rinse on board the dive boat. Crew careful handling equipment.

Kapalua Dive Company, Ritz Carlton Maui, January 2004, Beth and Steve

Welch (welch@rhinocomics.com) **Highland Park, IL.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy. Kapalua Dive Company operates from the Ritz Carlton as well as Kapalua Bay Resort. They are a small but excellent service oriented operation that specializes in shore diving and diving from kayaks. My wife dove with them 4 times and I dove with them twice. The operation is smooth and worry free. If you are at the Ritz you can take the shuttle to Kapalua Bay Hotel where you dive from their beach front. Owner Kevin McAfee is friendly, personable, and wants you to enjoy yourself. We did. The diving is low key and fun. You load your gear onto the kayaks for the kayak dive and paddle two coves over to a mooring. While paddling over, a whale breached about 50 yards from us, then swam under us and surfaced again about another 50 yards behind us. Once moored, we donned our gear and dove in shallow reef of 10 to 15 feet, and swam out to an area of about 40 feet. Lots of tropical fish, several turtles including some very large ones, and found an overhang with a resident white tip. Enjoyable, but seasoned divers might want more. We appreciate the nudibranchs, small stuff, and even the resident tropicals. Great volcanic rock formations. We heard singing whales on most of the dives, which is an experience in and of itself. Kevin and his staff are very professional, safety minded, and want you to enjoy the dives. Ritz: facilities and service are first rate. However, the Ritz is at the northwest tip of the island and is prone to strong winds and occasional

drizzle. We found that only a few miles south at Kapalua Bay and Lahaina it is sunnier and warmer, ditto for Kihei and Wailea. However, the north end of the island is beautiful and much less traveled. Kapalua Dive Company is a great outfit for shore and kayak diving. We also did a whale watch cruise with Pacific Whale Foundation and saw whales, spinner dolphins and turtles. Snorkeling off the boat was fun too. (www.kapaluaadive.com)

Lahaina Divers, private house rental, December 2003, John Nosworthy (penremo@delmarvanet.com) **Delmar, MD.** Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 10 to 70 Feet. Water: 73 to 78 F, calm, choppy, surge, currents. Very cool first time experience shared with experienced diver friends. There was 8 total of us, 6 of which are divers. This was a reunion of sorts with some not seeing each other for 25+ years. We stayed in Kihei at a wonderful house all to ourselves \$300/night for all of us! Not to mention the pool, pooltable, view of Molokini to the SW and the volcano to the East. When we rented tanks from Maui Dive Shop for our beach dives, and also while boat diving with them off Molokini Crater, all tanks were consistently at or above 3200 psi. We're talking dozens of tanks over the course of 2 weeks. On the other hand, while boat diving with Lahaina Divers, it seemed that every tank was at 2800 or less to start with? When we initially inquired of the staff on the boat, we were immediately offered our second tank, with the promise of finding "better fills" somewhere else on the boat first chance. Didn't happen. At this same time I was

also offered the explanation about “how some employee back at the fill station must have been in a hurry.” Ok, missing 400 to 500 psi for us heavy breather novices. I needed all my air to do the “suggested” safety stop. After the first tank was completed and we had some snacks and surface interval, just before suit up for the second tank at the conclusion of the briefing, it was announced “anyone on the boat that wishes they had a little more air was welcome to the 4 or so special all shiny new yellow aluminum tanks with more air in them for an additional \$7. My reaction was to immediately recalculate my intended tip to be at least \$7 less for what I concluded was an insult to my intelligence. The salesclerk/boat sign-up guy back at the dive shop said “2800 psi and up is considered a full tank.”

(www.lahainadivers.com)

Lahaina Divers, Maui Marriott, February 2004, Mark and Lindsay Dreyfus, Crystal Lake, IL.

Experience: 65 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 feet. Water: 75 to 80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: depth and air. Unlike John Nosworthy (March 2004), we like Lahaina Divers. Especially since they just got 2 new 46' Newton dive boats! No more cattle boats. (We dove with Lahaina Divers in 2001 and 2003). We also like them for their attention to customer service and their professionalism. We think of them as our friends.

Lahaina Divers, July 2004, Ed Gross (ejg2putt@earthlink.net), Plano, TX.

Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 Fahrenheit, calm. Molokini Crater. Lots of sharks, saw

black tips, white tips, grays, and Galapagos sharks on one dive on the back wall of the crater. Mantas seen frequently. A number of orange frogfish, and a painted yellow frogfish. helmet gurnard, in 30 feet of water off of Cliff House reef. Plenty of good macro life, also. Nudibranchs, blue dragons, and either a pygmy wrasse or a yellow-tail coris. Stayed at the northwest end of Maui in Kapalua, farther away from the Crater, but closer to Lanai and some good shore/shallow dives on the north end. AA Vacations had an all you can golf special at Kapalua, so we got in a lot of golf, also. Had a large villa with an extra large porch with a garden hose, great for rinsing equipment. Lacks soft coral color, but immense, healthy hard coral as far as the eye can see. Good selection of very unique creatures.

Maui Dreams Dive Co, September 2004, Laszlo Ilyes (amy_laz@netzero.net), Richmond Heights, OH.

Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 20 to 50 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 Fahrenheit, surge. On the SW coast of Maui there are several places for shore diving that you can access by car. Maui Dreams Dive Co. in Kihei offers tanks for as low as \$3 each depending on the number of dives you do. They have economical equipment rentals. (Quite refreshing in the otherwise expensive Maui). They drew us maps of the sites and were helpful, friendly, professional, and priced reasonably. The day usually starts calm, but the surge picks up as the wind increases throughout the day. Visibility can also decline significantly after the wind gets moving. As for dive sites here are our picks: Ulua

Beach (in Wailea): Public parking, freshwater showers, easy sandy shore entry, and generally calm conditions make this a great choice for a dive. Snorkeling is popular in the 5-20' depth range. A deeper reef at 30' is home to many butterfly fish, wrasse, puffers, and morays. The outermost reef at 40' is home to large sea turtles, triggerfish, butterfly fish, and an occasional eagle ray. Visibility deteriorates so get there before 8AM. The parking lot can also fill up. La Perouse Bay (South Makena): There is a 100 yard walk from the public parking, over a worn path of lava stones and sand, to a pebbly beach entry. You'll often find yourself virtually alone here. The bay is fairly well protected from surf and inside a marine reserve, with stiff penalties for fishing with hook or spear. The fish seem to know it and are approachable. The healthy reef levels out to a 45' sandy bottom about 150 yd. offshore. Dolphins are occasionally sighted. Bring tap water in bottles if you need to rinse your camera gear. Turtle Town/The 5 graves (Just N. of Makena Landing): There is a rocky entry about 60ft. from the road as you pass five graves. Surge can be difficult depending on the direction of the waves and conditions. Swim out on the surface along the rocky point (to your left). Descend when you are in about 25' of water. There are many caves in the coral, often containing turtles and large fish. They told us that white tip reef sharks are in the caves. There are many tame lemon butterfly and racoon butterfly fish used to divers because of the many snorkeling boat excursions. Unfortunately, I think the fish get fed,

based on their behavior. There are occasional mullet, large schools of Mu Fish (porgies), pufferfish, colorful wrasse, triggerfish, and of course many large sea turtles to make this dive site memorable. Several public beaches easily accessible to shore diving, have public freshwater showers. Beware of spearfishermen in shallower depths; they'll follow you around at the surface and then move in and kill the bigger stuff after they see your flash go off. On every dive we saw green sea turtles. (www.mauidreamsdiveco.com)

Mike Severns Diving, October 2004, David L Nutter, DDS (theparadoc@msn.com), Camas, WA.

Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 40 to 120 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F. Extremely good outfit that caters to small groups of divers with individual interaction. The staff was wonderful. Andy the captain was a one man comedy act, but took the safety issues seriously. Warren was an excellent divemaster. They took time to point out the critters, took pains to get us to the dive sites we wished to see, instead of automatic trips. We were allowed to dive our own profiles, with proper safety arrangements for unevenly paired divers on air time that didn't penalize the longer air diver. They made a special trip to the southeast end of Maui past Makena that is calm a few times a year. Caters to serious divers who would rather not go on a 'cattle drive'. They don't harass the wildlife, and all in all provided a nice dive experience. A huge switch from Lahaina Divers and some of the other larger outfits. Dive Makai on the Big Island is another fantastic dive team,

also. These two are similar.
(www.mikesevernsdiving.com)

Octopus Reef, August 2003, Steve Hess, San Francisco, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 F, choppy, no currents. Instead of getting bounced around on a boat trip to the dive sites, we contacted Octopus Reef and Renee met us at two shore dive sites (one day and one night). She picked the sites based on the conditions and knew the undersea inhabitants very well. My wife and I knew many of the fish we were seeing, but Renee was able to identify some new ones for us topside in her photo book before we dove as well as some others using a slate once we were under. We saw many rare wrasses and eels and a leaf scorpionfish. I tend to go slow and find the small critters while my wife looks at the big picture more. Renee's style was able to make it work for both of us.
(www.octopusreef.com)

Octopus Reef, February 2004, Helen Malnar, Tampa, FL.

Vis: 100-120 ft. Water: 75 F. Dive restrictions enforced: no deco. Rene Umberger of Octopus Reef offers dive training and guided ours of the many shore dive locations in and around the Kihei area. She also can arrange boat charters to go out to Molokini for some exciting wall diving, which is what I opted for during my trip to Maui. Rene met me at the Kihei boat ramp and had my 2 Nitrox tanks already on the boat. One reason I dive with Octopus Reef is because they offer Nitrox and many of the Maui dive operators don't. They take out small

groups and provide one on one service and attention. They provide excellent and safe equipment and are sincerely concerned about your comfort, both on the boat and in the water. Our trip out to Molokini turned out to be a whale watching trip, as most do at this time of year. The humpbacks were there in full force and we witnessed many groups at the surface on our way out to the dive site. Molokini is a half exposed crater that offers wonderful snorkeling in the crater "bowl" and a very dramatic wall to dive on the outside of the crater. Over the course of 3 days of diving out at Molokini we saw many white tip reef sharks, baby gray reef sharks, a manta ray, and on a safety stop on the back side of the crater, a 25 foot whale shark came up from the depths to give us a look! Rene and her partner Lynn are both experts at finding the critters and are careful to make sure the new divers to Maui see the many types of marine life that is prevalent there such as eels, turtles, frogfish and octopus. They know that I like to see big stuff, so for my days of diving, Rene had me out at Molokini for each and every dive. Whether you are a seasoned diver with thousands of dives or are just getting certified, Octopus Reef will accommodate you with excellent assistance, personalized service and sincere enthusiasm for diving that you can't find with the bigger operators.

Octopus Reef, February 2004, Mary Stenroos (Mstenroos@aol.com)

Holland, MI. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 73 F, calm. Rene of Octopus Reef was the consummate tour guide/instructor. She

made us feel very comfortable as newly certified divers. We were able to take a private 26 foot boat, with just ourselves and Rene for our boat dives. The captain of the boat was wonderful. We were learning and gaining confidence every minute of each of the four days. We saw wonderful ocean life and Rene was able to explain each and every thing we saw. She helped us get over our fears. Great for learning how to "stop and smell the roses" while you are diving. (There was a group of Ed Robinson divers that were moving so fast at Molokini, they completely missed the manta ray directly in front of them.) Rene made sure we received the full experience and history of south Maui diving.

Oahu

Captain Bruce's, August 2004, Ann Mcgrath, Alexandria, VA.

Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 10 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm, surge, currents. New owners Randy and Suzette who are very customer oriented — they promise "extreme comfort" and they deliver. The boat is large and comfortable, even with 15+ divers on board. They supply fresh pineapple, cookies, sandwiches, sodas and fresh water after the dives. There is even a hot water shower on the swim platform! Suzette picked me up in Waikiki at my hotel every morning, and dropped me off in the afternoon. They have large, comfortable vans for pickup and dropoff. Their divemaster, Cameron, is a riot! He's good at finding stuff to look at or photograph, and has a great positive attitude. Separate rinse

bucket for cameras — divemasters took good care of the camera equipment, and pointed out lots of stuff to photograph. (www.captainbruce.com)

Splash Dive Scuba, June 2004, James P. Smith, Cincinnati, OH.

Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 Fahrenheit, calm. Trip was booked on-line, scheduled as a 2-tank advanced dive, with instructor. Various locations were listed, including a Lave tube, and WWII Corsair, at depths to 100 feet. I was the only certified diver on the trip. The majority of customers, 30-plus, were nondiving tourists, along for an 'introductory dive' of a few minutes, at shallow depth, with an instructor. I was permitted to set my own profile, although with an instructor/buddy. We were in shallow water (40 feet, max.) not at advertised sites. It appears this site was selected for the introductory dives. Furnished dive gear was a basic BC & regulator, only an air gauge, and a single second stage. I had my computer so I could monitor my depth. The introductory divers had to dive in shifts, leading to a long on-site for the first dive. The boat returned to port between dives, to off-load the intro-divers. Due to the length of the first dive, I declined to do the second. The dive crew seemed competent and were helpful.
(www.splashdiveadventure.com)

See in Sea Scuba, May 2004, Brian Russell (brian_k_russell@hotmail.com), Somerset, NJ.

Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 60 to 90 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 Fahrenheit, calm. See in Sea Scuba a wonderful

operation. Bill Keen's enthusiasm about diving and just meeting people who were diving was infectious and his attitude made everyone feel comfortable regardless of experience. In Waikiki some operators have their own boats, others have an agreement with boat owners. Sea Scuba rents space on a forty foot catamaran along with other dive operators, which is ironic, given that they charge different prices. The choice of dive sites is left to the boat captain rather than the dive operators, so I ended up going back to the same site three times on a Monday, a Wednesday and a Friday. This was not a disappointment. The most frequently visited wreck was the YO-257, a WWII-era oil tanker. It was purchased by the Atlantis Submarine company after it was decommissioned, cleaned up to meet environmental standards and sunk in just over a hundred feet of water a mile from the Waikiki shore. I made my way to a permanent mooring, a hollow steel ball five feet across floating twenty feet below the surface. I noticed the Atlantis submarine about fifty or sixty feet under me. I watched the sub cruise slowly. I saw the passengers through the large portholes, and I beckoned with one hand and waved with the other. The passengers took pictures. I figure I'm in some photo album in Tokyo. I saw a sign on the sub, warning divers to stay away. I rejected the idea of going directly to a viewport, which would have thrilled the passengers, as well as the idea of causing some mischief by banging on the sub, which would have terrified them. The wreck, upright and intact, was structurally sound and safe to pen-

etrate. Square holes had been cut into the hull to make entry easy and to provide light to the inside. A large sea turtle had taken up residence inside. A frogfish sat on the superstructure. When we returned to the site for a third time, Bill took us to a nearby wreck, the San Pedro. We descended on the mooring chain to the YO-257, then crossed fifty yards to the San Pedro, which was also upright and parallel to the YO in eighty-odd feet of water. This wreck was not as safe to penetrate. The Atlantis sub was cruising a small distance above us and we could always see or hear it through most of the dive. From the San Pedro, The visibility was more than a hundred feet. I did not get to see the Corsair. In 1946, a pilot ran out of fuel and ditched his Corsair off the coast. His airplane sits upright in over a hundred feet of water. The cockpit is open, but divers have to be warned not to try to actually sit in the airplane as a couple of morays have taken up residence there. I did three other dives. One was to Turtle Canyons, which had a number of sea turtles among, on top of and sometimes under the coral ridges. Another was to the Rainbow reef, directly opposite the rainbow painted Hilton on Waikiki. The third was to the Kewalo Pipe. (www.divehawaii.com)

KIRIBATI (CHRISTMAS ISLAND)

Christmas Island is 1,300 miles due south of Hawaii, about a three-hour flight but across the International Date Line. It's the

world's largest coral atoll, 45 miles long and between seven and 25 miles wide, although lagoons make up nearly two-thirds of that area. The island was named after the day in 1777 when Captain James Cook first happened upon it, but it remained uninhabited until the 1950s, when the British chose it as the site for their nuclear weapons development and induced a small Micronesian work force from the Gilbert Islands to relocate there. The British pulled out, leaving behind a few Micronesians and a great deal of debris. Today the island's 4,400 residents are citizens of the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced cure-a-BOS).

Dive Kiribati, Captain Cook Hotel, January 2004. Bob Lambertson (dlamber@artsci.wustl.edu) **St. Louis, MO.** Vis: 100+ ft (in surge, 10-30 ft). Water 79-82 F. Dives logged: 400+. Dive restrictions enforced: all guided dives, geared to divers' experience and interests. Exotic and abundant fish, relatively undived reefs, a remote place. Kim Anderson is the key to it all, and if he moves on (as he talks of doing for his son's education), this unique opportunity may disappear. Kim is a character out of Joseph Conrad, living with his Gilbertese wife on the world's largest atoll (by surface area) in a community of several thousand Gilbertese and perhaps ten people of European descent. He has more commitment to getting his divers in the water than any operator I've met — the plane arrives early, and you can dive that day if you

want, giving you six plus days of diving in the seven-night package. He knows more about the marine life of the island than anyone else, because he has provided the logistic support for all the researchers who have worked there for nearly a decade. His outriggers go over the mountainous winter swells like waterspiders — go in summer if you're squeamish — and he'll take you as far as you need to go to find crystal-clear mid-Pacific water. We were his only divers that week — of the 900 visitors to Kiritimati a year, more than 800 must be bonefishermen. At one point, along with Kim, we just lay on our tanks on a rubble slope at sixty feet to watch a 12-foot manta dancing in our bubbles overhead for five minutes. At "Eel Pit" we had six species of morays, including five dragon morays, on a single dive. In the winter surge, that site had 10-30 foot vis, but we dove it repeatedly at our request. When you can see six exotic morays peeping out of a single hole in the coral, you don't need a lot of vis. We recorded 147 species of fish on 16 dives. At the Captain Cook (the only hotel) all our fellow guests were bonefishermen: a strange breed, even more obsessive than divers. By the time we breakfasted, about 8:00 am, they were already out on the flats, and after an early dinner, they either crashed, exhausted, or gathered to tie flies. Excellent company in their way (and interested in our perspective on the fish they stalk from the surface). The hotel is a mid-20th c. British officers' barracks, with thatched, stone cottages added. Take one of those, preferably one of the farther ones, close to the beach.

Guaranteed, you'll hear nothing but waves all night, and with the nearest upwind city 3,000 miles distant, the air may be the cleanest on earth. Food is so-so, supplies irregular — would you believe a hotel that runs out of coffee at mid-week? — all due to the limited communication with the outside world. But that's why you want to be there. There's a single (subsidized, nearly empty) round trip flight a week on Aloha from Honolulu, 1300 miles to the north. Tahiti is about the same distance to the south . . . but you can't get there from here. Frontiers Inc. has virtually exclusive representation (expense comparable to a Galapagos live-aboard) and is a classy agency whose real business is bonefishing and upscale hunting and fishing travel. I found them extremely helpful and easy to deal with. From the time you land on Kiribati, you become aware of the obstacles — political, social, and logistic — to a more open-market style of tourism in such a remote and undeveloped country.
(www.fun2do.com/divekiribati)

Dive Kiribati, June 2004, Ralph Bishop, Ithaca, NY. Dive experience: 45 years; 1000+ dives. Kim Andersen tries hard to run a good operation, but he faces what could be a microcosm of how mankind has managed to devastate the marine environment. It would seem to be a real "find" — few tourists visit there, and its isolation would seem to guarantee pristine diving. However, the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kitty-boos) is poor, the government is weak, and they are prone to corruption. Kiribati has two main population cen-

ters: overcrowded Tarawa and Christmas island. — they are moving people from the former to the latter. Since Kim started his business 12 years ago, the population has grown from 1200 to 7000, and the locals have turned to collecting tropical fish and fishing out every sizable fish, including sharks, of which the island had plenty just a few years ago. There are lots of tropicals, but the ones desired by aquarists are skittish. The island has little infrastructure and can't support a fast dive boat to take divers to the less-frequented, better areas, such as Bay of Wrecks, which must be dived from shore — difficult entry and exit in rough surf on a rocky shoreline. The main hotel, the Captain Cook, looks as if had been hit by a hurricane and partially repaired, thought my bungalow on the beach was fine and cooled by a nice breeze ... without the wind, it might have been unbearable. The dining room was gruesome; food was poor to fair — no fresh vegetables, mystery meat and overcooked fish. A young Hawaiian dive instructor, who got off plane with a massive speargun, spent the the week certifying 25 locals to dive for tropical fish he bragged about killing a Napoleon wrasse for a beach luau. (what rare Napoleon wrasse I saw that week was very elusive. The diving in general is fairly shallow, and the coral is mostly low hard corals; viz not spectacular, mantas can be seen on some dives, no large eels, but a good variety of smaller ones at Eel Pit. There is a nice wall at Bay of Wrecks, but it may not be diveable due to windy conditions (the wind blew hard the whole week; there is

nothing to do between dives except hunker down in the shade of the rattle-trap dive truck. Not the destination for the jaded diver who is looking for a unique location.

MICRONESIA

Kosrae

This small, unspoiled island didn't get jet service until 1987, and it still hasn't changed much. ... Its high volcanic peaks are lush and green, and a close, fringing reef makes the diving easily accessible, but it's not high-voltage diving on a par with Palau.

Sleeping Lady Divers, Kosrae Village Edolodge, February 2004, Jeanne & Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net) Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 F, calm. Most people fly from Truk Lagoon to Hawaii via Guam; we experienced the island-hopping route — Pohnpei, Kosrae, Kwajalein, and Majuro, with a four-day stopover on Kosrae. Major airline service only began in the late 1980's and the islanders voted to limit construction for tourism purposes, so Kosrae is untouched by large hotels. We stayed at the Kosrae Village Ecolodge, built and operated by Bruce and Katrina for the past ten years. There are ten individual open-air thatched huts sitting along a winding path through the jungle, close to the ocean. Our room had twin and double beds, both enclosed in spacious mosquito netting, so we did not feel claustrophobic. There was always a

breeze blowing outside; unfortunately it did not make it through the mosquito netting, although there was a ceiling fan and large floor fan. In fact, our only complaint was that it was sometimes too warm and muggy to sleep well at night. Mosquitoes were not a major problem. There was a table and two chairs, as well as a small refrigerator sitting atop some shelving. The bathroom/dressing area had more shelving and a large area for hanging clothes with another shelf above. The open-air shower was spacious, surrounded by bamboo walls, with hot water and fluffy towels. Tap water should not be used even for brushing teeth; fresh water was in the refrigerator, along with some local fresh fruit, replenished daily. The porch has a table, two chairs, beach view, and entertaining hermit crabs in the front yard. The restaurant is a large thatched building; most meals were not included, but were reasonably priced and quite tasty. Lunches on dive days were included. We dove for three days with Sleeping Lady Divers, the name deriving from the "sleeping lady" land formations. After a leisurely breakfast each day, we were transported about ten minutes to one of the three marinas on the island where we boarded small pontoon boats with no more than 4-6 divers each. Boat rides were 20-40 minutes. Moorings surround the entire island, so diving is possible somewhere in just about any kind of weather. Lunch during the one-1 ? hour surface interval was quite a spread: fix-your-own tuna, meat, and cheese sandwiches, local tangerines, and desserts, including what has to be some of the world's best brownies. The diving we