

But leading a dive group under the conditions that we were diving in with defective safety equipment was irresponsible. I mentioned it to the second captain, who was also the cook, and he was flippant about it, explaining that his new Scubapro equipment that he received when he arrived on the boat was defective and had to be returned. The rest of the young crew was outstanding in their behavior and professionalism. Simon, Tuomo (Findlander, not Tahitian) and Chris did an outstanding job leading a bunch of old people thru the passes and corners of French Polynesia. they outperformed their superiors. A local lady named Grace was the dive boat operator and she did an outstanding job of handling the boat in seas as high as 8 to 10 feet of rolling waves. While the planes of Tahiti Nui are fairly new, the seats are narrow and closely spaced. I was amazed at how little room they gave you. They serve two meals during the trip and each seat has its own video screen which displays the route information including arrival and departure times along with the altitude, outside temperature and progress indicators. You had your choice of four movies in English or French.

HAWAII

Kona

Aggressor II, March 2004, Sue Taylor (staylor@courier.com) Hayward, CA. Vis: 100-150 ft. Water: 74-78 F. Amazing! What else needs to be said? Our trip started with a great dinner and slide show on the highlights of the

island of Kona compliments of Captain Rob. So much for land and we were off ! We woke up our first morning at our dive site and after an amazing breakfast we shuffled into the water. This is not the week to diet! Our dive sites just got better and better. From micro to big fish (dolphins, whales, hammerheads) to the amazing ones in between (frog fish, octopus, scorpion fish) or maybe just doing somersaults in the surge — we found it all! Many divers on our trip had something that they really wanted to see and/or photograph. It appears that our wish lists were knocked off by the end of the trip! Should I talk about the manta night dive? OK, I won't say anything except one word — amazing. If you don't know what I'm talking about, you need to sign up for this trip! Let's talk about the crew and yes I need to use the word amazing once again. Chef Zach — not one stomach grumbled hunger! I'm just amazed our wetsuits still fit at the end of the week. Captain Rob — thanks for the memories we took home! ! Dave — for finding and pointing out all the little guys we swam right by. Professor Mike — for finding the most amazing Kodak moments and keeping everyone in line. Randy — Tahiti is lucky to get you. Kona will miss you. Todd — your patience is amazing and helps show us to slow down and enjoy every moment. Thank you one and all! This was my first live aboard trip and I'm totally hooked! I was surprised at the equipment problems that I had. Just routine things (mouthpiece cracked, mask broke in half — don't ask me how, drysuit exhaust valve got stuck open, now I

know why the save a dive kit is so important. I also found out that a small good first aid kit is also helpful. Again, the boat had the basics but if your goal is to stay onboard all week, it's better to be prepared. One passenger got a nasty cut underwater and lucky that he did not end up leaving the boat. Notes for live aboards. I brought 3 bathing suits, 2 pairs of shorts and maybe 2-3 t-shirts (slept in one) and one long sleeved for evenings. That's it. Pack light. Bring extra gear — not clothes! (www.aggessor.com)

MICRONESIA

Palau

Big Blue Explorer, August 2003, Rick Hart (rick-hart@comcast.net) Richardson, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy, currents. The ship is an old Japanese communication vessel. The good news is that it is huge! There is lots of room to move around and the ship is stable. The bad news is that because it was built to Japanese height standards, you may have some areas like the stairs that are low and you will bump your head. The beds are short and the mattresses are really thin. Having said all this, the crew (particularly Lynne — mgr.) are happy to take care of any needs they can. My hot water was out on my shower and I mentioned this to Lynne before a dive, and it was fixed when I got back. The crew is very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and fun. The food is buffet style and very good. Sharks were everywhere. This is a high energy dive experience. Those who

were not Nitrox certified took the course. The video of the dives were awesome. This is truly a dive trip of a lifetime (Jellyfish Lake, Blue Corner, German Channel, Crystal Cavern, and sharks sharks, sharks!!!! All the dives were minutes away from the main ship. The main ship had a room dedicated to photographic equipment. (www.palausecuba.com)

Big Blue Explorer, March 2004, Tom Lathrop (Thomaslathrop@aol.com), Palm Desert, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives is: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 73 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm, currents. Last year, on trip on *Big Blue*, the boat that advertized 18 max divers had 24. We were given a complementary trip this year and had only 10 other divers — what a difference. The *Big Blue* is huge so on the mother boat 20 plus divers is not a problem but in the skiffs you notice a huge difference. Also the dive groups were more relaxed on the time limits with fewer divers to worry about. Lynn the cruise director did a great job; Terry our divemaster who had been on the boat during our first trip is great. Entire crew is wonderful We had missed a typhoon by one week and even though our weather was perfect the currents brought in some cold water. My 3 mil was no match for the low 70's water (I will always bring more thermal protection even in the tropics). This is a great trip and is priced right. We all received a free DVD of the trip.

Ocean Hunter, Fish & Fins, February 2004, Steve Kohl, (stkohl@msn.com) Brush Prairie, WA. Experience: 375+

Steve, 160 Sybil dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 79 to 82 F. Ocean Hunter is well set up dive boat with separate crates and hangers for all dive gear. Refill tanks for air and nitrox, plenty of water for showers. Captain Sixtei and divemaster Troy were excellent. The chef Arlee was fantastic — caught fresh fish for sashimi and sushi. Small live-aboard — 5 to 6 guests and 3 crew — aft cabin is very spacious with private head and AC control. Food remarkable and catered to our dietary needs (low carb). Fresh sashimi great! Dive guides safe, knowledgeable, extremely helpful — all dives directly from back of boat — no dinghy needed, but available! Diving in Palau fabulous — coral has recovered to a large extent. We avoided the crowds on this boat. Blue Corner and Peleliu amazing! Not for novice. Night dives were fantastic with blooming soft and hard coral, lobster-filled canyons. Special dive to Mandarin Lake to see mandarin fish as well as to Jelly Fish Lake — amazing. Land-based lodging at the Carolines with separate bungalows and breakfast on front porch overlooking ocean. Has access to Palau Pacific resort for beach and pool. Free shuttle, great value and lovely. Fish and Fins: Great kayaking among Rock Islands. Good land tours available, but ask for air conditioned car. (www.oceanhunter.com)

Ocean Hunter II, July 2004, Rebecca Funderburk (ppapoose@aol.com), Greeley, CO. Vis: 75-100 feet. Water: 82 F. Dives logged: 342. Our group was to be on the *Aggressor II*. They had an accident and were unable to accommo-

date our group. They offered the *Ocean Hunter II* — one of the most wonderful trips I have ever taken. We had 14 divers (the boat holds 12) and the captain gave up his quarters for us. The divemasters were competent and with us every step of the way. Food was unusual and good. We loved diving off the main boat. Diving was spectacular.

Ocean Hunter II, July 2004, William Zaggle, Eaton, CO.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 90 F, calm. Our replacement after the *Palau Aggressor* had a mishap with a container ship and was put out of commission. Cabins were spacious, comfortable, clean and well equipped with their own toilet, sink and shower. (Ok, maybe a little more hot water if you're the last one in but it was never cold). Lots of AC plugs and a small desk in each cabin with dimmable lights. Top deck had lounge chairs. Master cabin had it's own private deck and TV/VCR/refrigerator. Food was a new restaurant each night. With four meals and five dives a day, all we did was eat and dive. Service was 5-star. Nitrox, Air available with Tri-mix on the way. This boat was built from the ground up as a serious dive operation. 12 Large 24x24, covered, padded, semidry shelves with 12, 110v and 12, 220v plugs for chargers. Warm dry towels after each dive. Large rinse tank at dive platform. nice high speed PC and huge monitor in common area for reviewing photos. Printer available. This is the best setup I have ever seen for serious photographers. I had both still and video cameras with lights. Almost

everyone of our 14 divers had camera equipment. We had plenty of space and extra left over.

Ocean Hunter, August 2004, Bob & Doris Schaffer, (seamom@earthlink.net), Fallbrook, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives Vis: 20 to 40 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit, choppy, surge, currents. We hit bad weather and couldn't get to many dive sites and visibility was affected. Runs to the dive sites we could get to were long and difficult, but this may have been attributed to the weather. Dived Blue Corner three times and it's still one of the best dives we've ever experienced. Ocean Hunter I carries only six divers. Because a trip costs about \$500 more/person than other live-aboards, our expectations were high, but we were rather disappointed. Boat looks a bit run-down and needs cleaning and maintenance. Bed was extremely hard and uncomfortable (which could be easily rectified with a foam pad). Towels were changed only once in 7 days. We felt "nickel and dimed" with the charges for soft drinks, beer and wine—and wine was exorbitant at \$30 and \$40 per bottle. Other quality live-aboards include all drinks in the cost and we would have expected such because of the higher/ person cost (and so little alcohol is consumed on a dive boat). And the major discomfort — the toilet, which sits up too high off the floor! On the plus side, the food was plentiful and quite good. Because the boat is so small, there were only 3 crew members — a captain, a divemaster and a cook. All three were very pleasant and competent young men and most accommodating. This was our fourth

trip to Palau and our 28th live-aboard trip. The space for UPWs is very small, but it's only a six-passenger boat. Fortunately on this trip, there were only two of us using cameras, so it didn't become a problem. Crew was very accommodating in assisting the UPWs with their cameras and equipment.

Palau Aggressor II, March 2004, Sherwin Isenberg, MD, Los Angeles, CA. Experience: 490 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 feet. Water: 79–82 F. Even on cloudy, overcast days, with reduced visibility, Palau is still amazing. My third trip to Palau and the dives are still terrific. At German Channel at feeding time, the regulators almost fell out of our mouths observing schools of mackerel, barracuda, tuna, and about five other species in their ballet — more than 2,000 fish! Ulong Channel — full of close sharks and flying with the current. Beauty of Blue Corner limited by lack of sunlight, but still a charge. The boat is state-of-the-art and the crew is absolutely first class. When the weather became foul, we dove three interesting WWII Japanese wrecks in the harbor, a great variety of dive sites, The bad? The fact that the week had to end. (www.aggressor.com)

Palau Aggressor II, March 2004, Steven Goldstein (sgarch@pacbell.net) Sacramento, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 175 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F calm. Palau remains my favorite dive location worldwide. *Aggressor* provides a dependable, if somewhat structured, week of excellent live-aboard diving. Crew, particularly Captain Jeff and divemaster Doug were

extraordinarily friendly, helpful and fun to be with. Local crew members were terrific sources of information and equally friendly. The food was a little disappointing because of the lack of fresh fish. Kitchen did very well with what they had and you never get a chance to be hungry. Warm towels on the dive deck when you get out of the water. Skiff is raised and lowered hydraulically at rear dive deck so access is the best of any live-aboard I have done. Don't bother taking sweats for cool evenings if you go in the spring — it never got cool. Palau is a long way away and merits sticking around or tagging on another location since you have to fly so far to get there, but don't miss this place. The *Aggressor* trip is a bit pricey but worth every penny of it. Dive deck photo table adequate for about half the divers taking pix. Would be tight if whole boat was photographing.

Palau Aggressor, April 2004, Diana Dickinson, Sammamish, WA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. The *Palau Aggressor* is a clean, well-maintained, and carefully run boat. The food was excellent. There were 18 of us on board and it was not uncomfortable. It should have been a great trip. Why wasn't it a great trip? Mostly it was the "control freak" factors: we did the dives the captain wanted us to (even if that meant diving Blue Corner three times); we came up at 60 minutes (even if we'd done a shallow drift dive and still had air left). All dives were done in the big group of 18. In all fairness, I think most people on board liked diving Blue

Corner more than I did, and were happy to dive it three times. I would have liked to spend more time at Peleliu, especially because the weather was calm — we did only two dives there. The corals varied in health: at Peleliu, both hard and soft corals were healthy and plentiful. At Blue Corner, a lot of the hard coral was dead — just too much impact from school after school of divers reef-hooking in to watch the huge schools of fish and sharks play in the current. (On one dive, there were 11 dive boats there.) Blue Corner has huge schools of jacks, pyramid butterflies, and plenty of passing sharks — and of course, there's Sweetie, the friendly (and huge) Napoleon wrasse who likes to be petted. Peleliu was fascinating, above and below water. The *Aggressor* arranged for a land tour of that fascinating piece of WWII history. We saw remnants of the war all over the reef at Orange Beach, including unexploded shells and pieces of landing boats. There were anemones and clownfish at every dive site—some holding on even in heavy current. Hawksbill turtles were seen on about half the dives. There are huge giant clams on several dives. There were tuna and many large groupers (the largest was at least 6 feet long). The soft corals showed lingering impact from the El Nino of 98. A few spots seemed to have minimal damage, but others clearly had been wiped out. About half the dives were reefhook dives, in which we cruised along the reef wall until it was time to ascend to the plateau of the reef and hook in — then watch the passing fish over the dropoff. Current over the top of the reef

varied from mild to "screaming" (hold onto your mask and hope your fins stay on)! Palau is a long plane flight and an expensive one. We spent a recovery night (after the flight there) at the Palau Pacific Resort, which is expensive and luxurious, with great food. The beach at the Palau Pacific has nice snorkeling—my son and I saw an octopus there and tridacna clams of varying sizes, as well as plenty of smaller fish. I'm not sure that the *Aggressor* has major advantages over land-based diving in Palau. Most of the dive sites are 45 minutes from Koror, and only in Peleliu were we completely alone.

Palau Aggressor, April 2004, Greg Regnier (gregnier.entract@rcn.com), Chicago, IL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 Fahrenheit, calm, currents. Great boat. The crew, extremely helpful, friendly and fun. The cuisine, superb, given the limitations of local ingredients. The boat is a 110' catamaran, recently overhauled and very comfortable. The great accommodations are roomy and pleasant. Sleeping configurations are a queen sized bunk on the lower tier a full sized bunk on the upper tier. The diving is good. We had a full boat, a drawback when there are 16 divers in the water being shepherded to a dive site. The sites themselves are interesting, riding the currents at Blue Corner and diving into Blue Holes makes for a nice dive, but by the third time at Blue Corner, I had had enough of hooking in and watching the sharks. One worthwhile diversion at Blue Corner is "Sweetie" the Napoleon Wrasse that frequented the area. Some

of the guests encountered a Spotted Eagle Ray and I, and a few others spotted a large Hammerhead Shark, but other than this there were no large animal encounters. There were a lot of turtles, lion fish, and fish in general, and the coral was very healthy, but with the currents it was difficult to just settle-in and watch. Doug, the ship's photographer and dive instructor, certainly had a wonderful collection of excellent underwater and above water shots. The uniqueness of the scenery and the sunsets are very conducive to bringing out the artist in any photographer.

Truk

Odyssey, September 2003, Ernie Krumbein (Passtoant@att.net) Munster, IN. Dives logged: 500+. Vis: 35-100+ ft. Water: 84 F surface and at depth. Dive restrictions enforced: Be sensible. I have experienced several live-aboards and the *Odyssey* is by far the finest in all areas. I can fully understand why she wins "the best live-aboard in the world" award for the past 3 years. I saw no area in which improvements could be made. (www.trukodyssey.com)

Odyssey, January 2004, Jeanne & Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net) Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 F, calm. This was our third trip to Truk Lagoon, our first trip on the *Truk Odyssey*. The sixteen of us had plenty of room to roam! There are two single rooms and seven doubles, six of which have single beds that can be separate or pushed together as a king. Room #9,

our room, has a double bed and upper single berth, perfect for storing all that extra stuff. Even though it is smaller than the other rooms, its still bigger than cabins on many other boats. The dining room has seating for four people at each of six tables. Meals are served buffet style. Breakfast included cereals, fresh fruit, juices, toast, and oatmeal, or you could order a hot meal off the menu such as eggs, pancakes, or waffles. Lunches always included salad plus a range of food from hamburgers to rice mixtures, and dinners included salad, usually a choice of meat or fish dishes, vegetables, and dessert. Cookies, candy, etc., are always available, as are soda, beer, wine, and alcohol. Once you started drinking, you stopped diving for the day. Of course there are special snacks after morning and afternoon dives. The food ranges from good to excellent. There is a sundeck, which also has a shady area, a salon with TV, DVD, and library, and of course the dive deck. Tanks are filled at your station so your BC never needs to be changed. Entering and exiting is easy off the lower platform and it's possible to climb up the ladder with or without fins. The hang bar at twenty feet can give you quite a ride as the boat swings. We were able to make up to five dives each day although most of us stopped after four except for a couple of night dives, which were OK, but not great. The wrecks themselves are fantastic; after 60 years they've become reefs in the shape of wrecks and wrecks on the inside. We noticed more deterioration in the past two years than in the previous twelve.. We were given

thorough dive briefings so we could find things on our own, and one or two crewmembers were in the water on every dive for anyone wanting a tour. Many of us purchased the set of wreck slates with diagrams of each wreck and carried them underwater with us. Nitrox is included in the price, and larger 112 cubic foot tanks are available for the air hogs. Technical diving equipment— doubles, oxygen, etc., are available for an additional charge. Depth limits were suggested as far as what would be interesting to see so as not to waste time and air, but not enforced. We also did one shark feed and no sand was stirred up to ruin photos. Stayed overnight at the Blue Lagoon Hotel, adequate but a bit pricey. The food in their dining room was quite good and reasonably priced. You can relax, walk the grounds or arrange for a half-day tour. This will also work if you are flying out on the 2:30 am flight. Town is at least a twenty-minute walk; there are a few stores.

Odyssey, April 2004, Wyatt R. Skaggs (wyray@aol.com), Laramie, WY.

Vis: 40-80 feet. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 400+. Excellent boat, no restrictions, everything was superb. Condition of wrecks deteriorating quickly. Artifact collecting strictly prohibited. Air travel in and out of Chuuk is difficult and at odd hours. No island touring available.

Odyssey, May 2004, Martha & Jeff Hubbard (hubbard182@att.net), Glenmont, NY. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 Fahrenheit, calm, choppy. This

was our 2d Odyssey trip in nine months. The first trip was too short, so this one was two weeks. *Odyssey* is home to Captains Lenny and Cara, and ship's cat Shasta. One feels like a guest in their home. The staterooms are spacious, with private heads and individual A/C controls. The dive deck is efficient and roomy. Dive briefings are excellent and detailed. The divemasters will lead you or you can follow the excellent plastic slates which *Odyssey* has produced. Most of the wrecks, all sunk in February 1944, are in excellent condition and the dives are magnificent. We have made several dives on a number of the wrecks, and find that familiarity leads to discovering more and more! Nitrox 30% (MOD 143 ft) for those certified – get certified on this trip if you aren't – and 112 cu ft steel tanks (if you want) make long dives accessible to everyone. We averaged 52 min. Our only deco dive (166 ft) was San Francisco Maru, on Nitrox 24%. Well worth the deco time hanging on the line. If you don't fancy that, a simultaneous no-deco dive on a shallower wreck is available. There is nothing like descending to the deck at 70 ft, along the companionway, through the pilot house, into the engine room, down three stories past the machine shops and crew quarters, and out the torpedo hole! Lennie and Cara are attentive to divers' wishes. There are usually two dives in the morning and afternoon, night dive after dinner. (We prefer the night dive before dinner, but it does keep the kitchen staff up.) We had a dive computer threaten to quit, and Lenny produced a Suunto for back-up. Several minor gear repairs were han-

dled with blinding speed. The Chuuk airport is a Hell-hole. The Guam flight leaves at 2:25 AM, which is good news because the airport building during daytime could cook pizza. At 2 AM, it's about 95 degrees inside, 90 outside. Four big air conditioners decorate the wall, but are not switched on. Take bottled water, but have your shots up to date if you visit the rest rooms. Luggage inspection is manual, thorough, and surprisingly fast and gentle. Continental and Con Micronesia have good on-time records and the airport staff are pleasant. E6 on board. Skilled crew to help if you want it. Big photo table with compressed air. Dedicated camera/computer rinse tanks.

Odyssey, May 2004, Tripp Jones MD (Tjones@sc.rr.com) Columbia, S.C.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 15 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm, no currents. This is a superb dive operation. It's a long way and long time to get there from the East Coast of US, but worth the travel. I came in 1996, and brought my wife and 2 sons this time and we all had a great dive trip. It is magnificent. The wrecks are accessible to most divers and it is awesome in its grandeur. The dive staff is superb, allowing one to dive his/her own profile, but available if needed. The wrecks are slowly deteriorating, but the soft corals are a dream for a photographer. The service by the crew is exceptional and the accommodations and food are fine. I can think of no criticism for the dive operation. They are professional, courteous and really try to make your week of diving the best. The trip back to the Mainland is a bear,

having to fly out of Truk at 2:25 am (that's right, 2:25 am)! A stopover in Honolulu makes it bearable. We flew Continental and have no complaints. This is a trip for seasoned divers and well worth the effort and money to make it at least once in your life.

Odyssey, August 2004, Bob & Doris Schaffer, (seamom@earthlink.net), Fallbrook, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 15 to 30 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit, choppy, surge. This was our fourth trip to Truk and second on *Odyssey*. We encountered bad weather, arrived 2-1/2 days late (because of Typhoon Chaba) and visibility was the worst we've ever experienced. Wrecks still make interesting diving and the collection of soft corals, anemones, tropical fish and small critters is just amazing. Some wrecks are so large that it may take two or more dives to completely see one wreck. *Odyssey* is an outstanding boat; crew is knowledgeable and accommodating and they pretty much leave experienced divers alone but happily provide information and assistance when requested or they think it is necessary or would be welcome. Food is very good, plentiful and well-prepared. Everything is included (soft drinks, beer, wine, Nitrox) which makes the trip a good value and we didn't feel "nickel and dimed" for every little thing. Cabins are very comfortable and everything works. Boat could use more comfortable lounges on the deck and more attention to laundering the blankets and bedspreads between guests, but these are minor inconveniences. *Odyssey* schedules a shark feed on the outer wall of the

lagoon and while we don't particularly like shark feeds and didn't think it was needed since there seemed to be plenty of sharks without the feed, we did participate and got some pretty good video footage. Captain Lenny and First Mate Cara do a great job. Excellent trip. UW Photography Comments: Among the best of any of the live-aboards. Large 3-tier table and charging stations in video lounge with plenty of receptacles in a secure and dry area.

Odyssey, August 2004, Cliff Schaffer (cliff@slmclaw.com), Los Angeles, CA. Vis: 30-60 feet. Water: 80-82 F. Dives logged: 1,000+. Diving on WWII wrecks left after the US attack on Truk in 1944, although they conduct one of the best shark dives I have been involved with. Typhoon resulted in hold up in Tokyo, Guam & Hawaii. Most divers arrived late, but boat efficiently picked all up at airport and motored to boat in lagoon. Excellent crew, ample camera space, loads of common area, large library of CD movies with players in each stateroom, food by buffet could have been a little better. Large staterooms. Dive own profile, dive off boat's platform, which had hot shower and war towels on return. Nitrox included. Visibility was poor with lots of scatter. Ample, but beautiful jellyfish. Wreck, external and internal penetration was good with lots to see. You don't "enjoy" Truk Lagoon — you "experience" or find it "interesting." It would be like going to the Holocaust Museum or Hiroshima and someone asking whether you "enjoyed" it.

SS Thorfinn, February 2004, Harry White (harrywhite@rcn.com) New York, NY. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. Went with a group of 5 Northeast divers and 1 California diver; there were no others on the boat. An excellent, idiosyncratic boat run by an idiosyncratic captain. Rooms were comfortable but smallish and oddly shaped (heads were large); food was decent but not memorable (but who cares — the diving was); attention to customers was excellent. Geezer gas was available albeit at extra charge. Once the dive crew got to know that we were competent (5 of us dive in the Northeast, usually decompression dives, often past 130 feet; the California diver demonstrated that he learned our style fast), limits were not imposed. (www.thorfinn.net)

Truk Aggressor, May 2004, Greg Regnier (gregnier.entract@rcn.com), Chicago, IL. Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 65 to 85 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm, no currents. Some of the most interesting diving I have experienced in the 30 plus years. The sense of history and seeing firsthand the tragic toll of war is overwhelming. The *Truk Aggressor* is a very comfortable boat. The accommodations may be a little tight, there's not a lot of clearance on the top bunk, but by boat standards, everything is roomy. This was not a full boat. The corals that encrust the wrecks are incredible. Healthy, diverse, colorful and plentiful just begins to describe the bounty of corals that you find. Add to this an abundance of fish, nudibranchs, tiny,

tiny critters, warm water and no currents and you have the makings of the perfect place to get up close and personal while you observe the sea life. The wrecks are eerily impressive. Silent testimonials to the violence of war and the vulnerability of the men and machines attacked at sea. It is proper to have a solemn respect for the grave sites upon which we are lucky enough to be allowed to dive. The diving is surprisingly easy. The wrecks offer easy penetration and swim throughs for the most part. The *Aggressor* crew conducted comprehensive, detailed pre-dive briefings that provided a history of the boat, the things that we would see, the types of animals that had settled on the wreck and any potentially hazardous areas to avoid. Although there are deep diving opportunities at Truk, the deck of the San Francisco Maru is at 165', you don't have to go deep to enjoy the diving. In fact, there are advantages to not going deep in that you don't have to spend long times on a hang bar decompressing. Most of the dives were no deeper than 110' and you make a natural ascent up the structure of the wreck. Diving on Nitrox also limits the depth of the dives, but offers a nice safety margin for multiple dives. There were a couple of dives where I switched to air and made dives to 145', so there is a degree of flexibility in how you conduct your dives. (www.aggressor.com)

NEW CALEDONIA

Nai'a, July 2004, Rob Mougey Highlands Ranch, CO. Experience: 501-1000 dives Vis: 20 to 80 Feet.