

to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, choppy, currents. Variety of dive sites created diversity of conditions. Top dive Nigali Passage, amphitheater from which we watched pelagics cruising the passage. All crew members attentive. All divers experienced. Dived from skiffs. Travel agency connected with Nai'a did excellent job of arranging air and keeping us informed of changes. Nice touches: stored dive gear during trip to New Zealand, posted divers' pictures on website. [explore@naia.com.fj](mailto:explore@naia.com.fj) [www.naia.com.fj](http://www.naia.com.fj)

## FRENCH POLYNESIA

**Paul Gauguin, December 2004, Russell Schroeder (scubatanks@yahoo.com), Grand Prairie, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm, no currents. The reason Radisson Seven Seas "Paul Gauguin" received Conde Naste's rating as the number one cruise ship in the world is the fantastic six star facilities and service. They have their own dive program, dive instructors, and a dropdown water sports platform. Zodiacs with four divers each leave the platform for the outside reef at different times for students and certified. They attempt to sort by skill level. They also will arrange for you to use shore based operations if you are interested in more challenging dives or shark feedings. The ship cruises at night and anchors in the lagoons at five different islands for the day. Standard cruise is eight days seven nights. Of all the islands, I would rate Moorea the highest with 10-20 blacktips on each dive as well as turtles and lionfish. The corals were pristine.

The dive from the ship also does a dive/fin/by the local shark feeding and most large lemon sharks will check you out. There is nothing cheap in French Polynesia you can check out hotel rates, inter-island airfare and meal prices on the net. I found this to make the small ship a relative bargain for seeing multiple islands and at least allowing some diving. I found brownandkeen-etravel.com to have the best rates and agent Susan Walsh has been diving with the ship five times and has a lot of great info and video to send. Dive Moorea first and then do the Paul Gauguin. The exceptional food and service on the ship will spoil you for anything after it. No tips, liquor in your room and 24 hr. room service (included).

**Paul Gauguin, July 2005, Arthur F. Graf, San Antonio, TX.** We were slated for a two-day stay at the Radisson Plaza Resort Tahiti. A quality resort with a fine beach but remote, but they have shuttle service to Papeete. I scheduled a dive with a local operator to check out my equipment and also so when the divemasters ask me when my last dive was I could say "yesterday". We were slated for a 10-day cruise on the Paul Gauguin, which holds 350 passengers and has a complete water sports program. The stern of the ship drops down, making an ideal water sports platform. They have a good scuba program for both advanced divers and beginner divers. All equipment, including scuba gear is top of the line and in first class condition. You can setup all your dives with them or split between them and shore-based dive shops. I dove Bora Bora Divers; the dives were disappointing — the last time I dove

Bora Bora the visibility was 100+, this time 20-30 feet. If the sharks and rays were there they were out of sight. The diving at Nuku Hiva, in the Marquesas, was an average step-well dive with quite a bit of sea life but the dive was in the surge zone. Next was one of my old favorites, Rangiroa. The Tiputa pass is an advanced dive. The seas were running 8 feet with a 2 ft. chop. Visibility was down to 25 feet instead of the usual 100+ thus we only saw a few of the sharks that make the pass their home. The next day the dive was on the Tiputa outer reef. Same weather conditions with low visibility so all the rays, sharks and turtles were mostly out of sight. The last dive was at Moorea at Shark Gallery. The last time I dove this it was an average dive, this time it was one of the best dives I have ever been on. Visibility over 100 feet. We dropped into the crater and six black tips greeted us, a large lemon came by. Several lionfish poked their heads out. We ran into several large schools of barracuda and reef runners. The reef fish were so thick that the divemaster would disappear. We were greeted by a large hawkbill and we spent 15 minutes being entertained. On the return to the boat black tips were there to bid us farewell. After passing through customs at Los Angeles we had to recheck our luggage at the international terminal. At the X-ray check in all bags had to be unlocked and they will not relock your bags, so I took all my baggage back to the American terminal where they would allow locked bags to be checked. While standing by while they were X-raying the luggage, the handlers were making a game out of seeing who could toss the luggage the

farthest so it would land on the conveyor belt. Luggage would bounce off the belt and hit the back stop before resting on the belt. I had my underwater video equipment in a Pelican case. The inspector opened, checked and relocked the case then instead of picking it up by the handle and placing it on the belt he cradled the case in his arms, walked over to the belt and dropped the case on the belt, knowing that it contained lights and a glass case.

**Tahiti Aggressor, May 2005, David L. Bader, Burke, VA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to F, choppy, currents. Some of the crew kept to themselves but others were entertaining. "Pass Flying" is not for the faint of heart but for experienced drift divers it's a blast. Lots of sharks on every dive. Great opportunities to get close for pictures. Turtles were friendly and would pose Boat was nice but no film processing or hot tub as advertised. I have a dispute with the SeaWave Communications. My onboard account stated a charge of \$47 but I was billed \$117 on my credit card. Beware of onboard Internet use. Aggressor could have done a better job of organizing divers in Papeete that has expensive taxi service. They also did not provide a day room in Papeete as advertised. Aggressor is still my live-aboard of choice!

## HAWAII

### Kona

**Kona Aggressor, May 2005, Toni Imwold (alohatnt@msn.com), Kaneohe, HI.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to