

seemed quite healthy with little bleaching or dying coral to be seen. Lots of fish life. Maitai in Bora Bora quite nice. clean A/C room with ocean view. Great staff, nice beach with decent snorkeling and great lagoon views. Hibiscus on Moorea a bit more economical and rustic. A bit of a bug problem and although owners were friendly and the grounds nicely kept, I would stay elsewhere. Food extremely expensive so we walked to local groceries and stocked up on French cheeses and baguettes and did our own breakfast and lunches. Tahitian and French cuisine very good with The Mayflower in Moorea and The Bounty in Bora Bora being stand-outs. Both islands' topside sites are as impressive as the underwater sites. My nondiving wife took a ferry to Tahiti to see Papeete and do some shopping and had a great time all around exploring the islands.

GUAM

Guam is largely a stopover for flights to Micronesia and the reefs aren't up to a dedicated dive vacation.

MDA, Holiday Inn, February 2005, Jeanne & Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net), Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 F., calm. We've been through Guam so many times, we decided to see what Guam's all about. We contacted MDA via email and they arranged everything, including our room at the Holiday Inn at a good price, including buffet breakfasts. We spent 5 days driving around, seeing ev-

erything and did 6 dives. The two MDA dive boats we were on were well run, with adequate space. The crew seemed friendly and professional. Four of the dives were done with most of the passengers being Japanese; they brought their own gear and divemasters, and did their own thing. Two of the dives were mainly locals and a few soldiers off an aircraft carrier. We did not have a guide, but no problem, as we kept the repeat customers in sight. The underwater terrain is volcanic with not much coral. We dove their blue hole twice, saw the Atlantis submarine underwater, and did 3 easy drift dives. A beginning diver would have fun, as the diving is easy and there's enough to see. An experienced diver would probably get bored after a few dives. Guam doesn't have that "exotic island" feel, but it makes a decent alternative to Hawaii for stopping off and getting rid of jet lag. The water is warmer than Hawaii, but the diving is not as good. It's a big shopping area for the Japanese, and not as pricey as Hawaii. It's a lovely island with a lot of history.

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. Diving is mostly on lava flow with little coral cover, but the tropical fish are colorful, unique, and generally plentiful. There's also good shore diving. Kauai reef diving is passable, but unique trips are available in the summer. Maui's diving is often to

the backside of Molokini or Lanai and boats leave at 7 a.m. or earlier. Turtles are common, occasional white tip sharks add to the fun, and the reef fish are colorful. Most reefs around Honolulu and Oahu have declined considerably, but there is decent diving toward the north side. Hawaii has virtually no controls over divers who collect reef fish for aquariums. Nine months a year expect clear water, visibility usually better than the Caribbean — around 100 feet — and air temperatures in the low 80s. Water temperatures hit the low 70s in January and February when squalls can last several days and cut visibility. There are condos for rent everywhere and you'll need a car since dive boats are not berthed at hotels.

Hawaii

Aloha Dive Company, Marriott, August 2004, John Stevens, Arlington, VA.

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. I dived with them four days and three they went to shallow sites consisting of little more than rubble. They have the same problem as many small single boat operations. When they had inexperienced divers they cater to the lowest denominator. They weight up the guests, throw them in, and watch them sink to the bottom. I could swear the divers hitting the rubble would have been seen on seismographs around the world. I expected more from these people. Not set up for photographers.

Aloha Dive Company, February 2005,

Bob Greaves, Las Cruces, NM. Experience: 350+ dives. Vis: 50 to 90 ft. Water: 78 F, choppy. I have been diving with Aloha Dive Co. every year since 1997. Mike Nakachi and Earl Kan have always done their best to make every dive a fun experience. They certainly know the dive sites and underwater areas along the Kona Coast. Most days start with "what would you like to see?" Their record for filling their requests is rather high.

Aloha Dive Company, Royal Kona Resort, February 2005, Richard Troberman (tmanlaw@aol.com), Seattle, WA.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 to 78F., calm. Aloha is a first class dive operation. Owner Mike Nakachi and first mate Earl Kam have an amazing knowledge of these waters and the fish and creatures and their service is unsurpassed. I timed this trip to coincide with the annual whale (humpback) migration to the Hawaiian calving grounds, and I wasn't disappointed. The whales were abundant, and it was not at all unusual during the rides to the dive sites or during the surface intervals to see whales breaching, spy-hopping and tail-slapping on the surface. On occasion, a curious whale would even venture near the boat. On our first dive, we were treated to four large manta rays being cleaned, as they circled around us almost continuously throughout our dive. On a subsequent dive it was four eagle rays. On another dive we were treated to several grey reef sharks, white-tip reef sharks, barracuda, and jacks. And during our surface intervals we were often surrounded by schools of spinner dolphins or pacific bottlenose dolphins. We also saw eight

large mantas on the surface on the way to one dive site. This was some of the best large animal diving I have ever experienced anywhere (although it is not always like this). And, Buffy's (Mike's wife) amazing cookies between dives! The Royal Kona Resort is an older hotel (built in the 60) that has seen better days, but it is in a prime location on the water at the edge of town, within convenient walking distance of everything, and is a great value for the money.

Aloha Dive Company, Waikoloa Village condos, March 2005, Don Lipmanson (dlipman@mcn.org), Sebastopol, CA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 68 to 80 Feet. Water: 77 to 78F., calm, choppy. Owner Mike Nakachi and divemaster Earl merit all the praise that many other Chapbook reporters have given. They choose daily sites based on currents and on the interests of their clients, and are masters at finding all kinds of critters, large and small. They are supportive of the occasional snorkeler who accompanies a diver. Book early, because they have such a dedicated following that it's hard to find a spot on their fast six-pack boat. Homemade brownies and cookies are indeed sensational. Aloha leaves the harbor earlier than most operations, taking advantage of the typically calmer morning water and returning in plenty of time for afternoon onshore activity. First timers to Big Island diving might want to start by snorkeling in the lagoon at Kahalu'u beach, where the assortment of fish is just fantastic and will make identification easier at depth. Food-wise in South Kohala, Roy's Waikoloa Bar and Grill is first-rate, and Cafe Pesto at Kawaihae offers well-prepared, affordable meals.

Bottom Time Hawaii, March 2005, Ed and Friedel Cunningham (Divears4u@aol.com), Northridge, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 73 to 78 F, choppy. We were so comfortable with this dive operation that we had our 10-year-old daughter certified by them. They were patient, caring and handled her with kid gloves. She did her book and pool work in two days and then her open water dives. She loved it. She then did a twilight/night dive. We have been to Kona often in the past including summer time and October where the visibility was better and there was less surge. Captain Jeff is the best! Nick did the teaching and he was awesome with our daughter.

Dive Makai, King Kamehameha, Earle Caldwell (gitarzan56@earthlink.net), Burbank, CA. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 79 to 83 F, calm and flat, no currents. The dive operators (Dive Makai) are the best in Kona. Great dive briefing — great locations — great crew.

Dive Makai, March 2005, Steve Machoian (smachoian@msn.com), Annapolis, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 77F., calm, surge. Well run operation with detailed and informative pre dive briefings. The boat holds 12 divers and you go out in two groups depending on experience levels (or do your own thing). In any event you are under the boat after about 50 minutes and you can stay down or surface depending on your air. Kendra stayed down with me over 80 minutes on several dives including a really neat dive into an open cave called "Freeze Face." She

really loves what she does and takes her camera with her on most dives. Kendra was good at finding all types of marine life. Dive Makai uses low volume steel 80s and all fills were a consistent 2500 psi. As reported in Undercurrent, Dive Makai has been sold.

Dive Makai, Hale Kona Kai, July 2005, J. Ferguson, Herndon, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Water: 79 to 82 F., calm, surge, currents, no currents. They leave early from Honokohau Harbor. Be prepared for a pretty smelly place from all the fishing boats. Don't rush into getting your gear on. The briefings are 5+ minutes. They give you info on what to expect underwater — the layout of the dive site, currents, and what kind of critters and fish you should look for. Not only do you see pictures during the dive briefing, but you learn about fish behavior and how they change from juveniles to adults. In one place, they told us about a hybrid tang and where to look for it! After the dive, be prepared for the talk of what everyone saw and the picture books will come out to identify the finds. Adventure Day — they go places outside their normal areas that are fun for the crew and passengers. Here's where you become aware that they have no head on the boat. Dive Makai has sold, but I understand that most of the crew will be staying. Each of the divemasters is great.

Jack's Diving Locker, June 2005, Bob Peterson, Pacific Palisades, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 0 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. I dive the night manta ray dives off Kona airport and the old Kona Surf (Sheraton). I have dove with them in the past and unfortunately they

are now too big to care. They seem to have hired new and less than experienced divers. Their operation is as close to a cattle car as I care to be on and their service is quick and brusque.

Jack's Diving Locker, Hale Kona Kai condominium, August 2005, Marc & Anne Bressman. (mbressman116712@comcast.net), Cherry Hill, NJ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm. Jack's is a professional, well-run operation. They were accommodating and friendly. There were no time limits for dives and the DMs were fabulous at finding fascinating critters. Hawaii coral is boring compared with the Caribbean but the fish are colorful and different. The owner loves diving and took a great video of one dive. The condo was in walking distance to restaurants and the dive shop. It overlooked the bay and we enjoyed breakfast on our lanai.

Kona Coast Divers, Paniolo Greens, October 2004, Scott (warranty6@aol.com), N. Attleboro, MA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, choppy. Resort was clean and large enough, though falls short on amenities. It is on a golf course and 30 min. drive to dive shop. Our friends stayed at Kona Hilton. the place to be. The two highlights were the night dive with feeding manta rays and dolphins galore! During our surface interval we spotted a large pod. We donned our snorkel gear and 3 pods with 100's of dolphins passed through us, though they did not interact, it was stunning. Some interesting points were lava tubes and lava canyons, Several species of

morays such as white mouth, zebra and margins, colorful nudibranchs, Moorish idols, triggers and surgeonfish were abundant. Currents were strong — weight heavier than normal.

Kona Coast Divers, December 2004, Kevin Elman (Hammerhead7@comcast.net), Greeley, CO. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, surge, currents, no currents. Divemasters did a great job, I never touched my gear and it was set up perfect. I want to dive their dock, what a pre-dive show, eagle rays and turtles wow. Teri the shop owner is a great communicator and made sure we knew what was happening all the time. Boat was good although I'm not convinced on the plastic tubs. One of my days of diving got canceled, because of no divers. In KCD defense, Teri did allow me to go on the Night/Manta dive at the same cost, it just made for a long day (4 dives). One briefing by the boat captain followed by a divemaster briefing is a bit much, especially if the water is rocking the boat. Cruise ship divers running out of air make for a bad outing (divers need more than a C card and a review of the log book should be part of the check-in). The surge on the manta dive was absolutely dangerous for new or inexperienced divers and I'm surprised no injuries occurred. Bring money Hawaii diving is not cheap. Have a back-up plan for canceled dives (other dive operators phone numbers). UW Photography Comments: Lots of Small fish, got a great shot of a green frog fish. Some dives were better than others. Rinse buckets devoted to camera equipment and staff good about handling equipment.

Kona Coast Divers, July 2005, James Heimer (jmsjnk@earthlink.net), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm, no currents. Kona Coast Divers a friendly and accommodating operation. It is at the harbor a few miles north of the town of Kona. They have their shop on the dock with the boat a few feet away. There were 13 divers on their 40+ foot boat with a capacity of 20. Nine were from a cruise ship, and a family of five was doing their checkout dives. Julie did a masterful job checking everyone in. Dwayne (former Marine) was the divemaster for the students, while Bob (also former Marine) handled the experienced divers. The tanks were set up by the staff and Captain Bob down the center of the boat's aft deck, divers sat on the sides and front with gear under the diver's seats. At the site, the non students suited up first. Each diver put on their weight belt and took mask, fins, and snorkel to sit at the back of the boat with their feet on the dive platform. The tanks and BC's were brought to the divers, then they stood up and stepped off. It was easy. The water was clear, cooler than the Caribbean, and the fish were different and colorful. There are a variety of angel, butterfly, and surgeon fish. The coral was in good shape and prolific at sites near the airport and the natural energy research station (about a 10- 20 minute boat ride). We saw a frog fish and a crown of thorns star fish, along with the usual Hawaiian tropicals. Two morning dives from 9 a.m. or 2 p.m. and a twilight and night manta dive for \$80 to \$100/diver. Boat had large rinse tanks for cameras and "cameras only" was enforced. No

facilities to load or open cameras on board, nor was there separate storage. As weather was calm and only two people were using cameras, cameras were put in rinse tanks for trip to and from dive sites.

Kona Coast Divers, September 2005, Bud (lancecowan@yahoo.com), Scotts Valley, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, choppy. I completed an Advanced Open Water course with Kona Coast Divers. I was pleased with the quality of their services. The owner, Julie, and Captain Bob and the three instructors were excellent. Expectations of the course were made clear, and each instructor was courteous and patient. Kona Coast diving conditions are consistently good and well suited for continuing diver education. The proximity of their boat to the shop was particularly appealing.

Kona Honu Divers, February 2005, Bob Kaszynski (rkasz@comcast.net), Kittery, ME. Experience: 100+ dives. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 76 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 500 psi return. Dive with the DM or your own plan. This is an organized operation with Glen Anderson as CEO and pineapple cutter. The boat, Kona Honu, is the best dive boat on the island, designed by Glenn. Fresh water camera tank, real showers, plenty of room and easy to get around. He gives a good briefing before and is knowledgeable about fish and critters. Turtle Pinnacle is a great place for green turtle lovers. We saw a cleaning station with colorful tangs and surgeon fishes doing their job. Glen uses the new heavy aluminum tanks, reducing the amount

of weight you'll need. He has a large, efficient shop downtown often operated by his better half, Maggie. Glen is a real pleasure to dive with and his DMs are well trained, competent, helpful with your equipment, and even rinse your suit before you leave the boat.

Kona Honu Divers, Hapuna Prince Beach Resort, May 2005, Tom Dudnyk (tdudnyk@bigfoot.com), Solebury, PA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 85 Feet. Water: 75 to 77 F, choppy. We like operators that cater to us 100%, requiring us only to suit up and jump overboard. We hate schlepping gear and weight belts and then rinsing stuff. The boat is large (46') and real comfy. The crew is outstanding, knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful (a 10 out of 10). We did a night manta dive, after a brief tutorial of the individual manta rays we might see, we all knelt on the sea floor in a circle with our lights held over our heads. In the middle of our circle was a milk crate with two more lights pointed toward the surface. At least 6-8 large mantas swam and circled — inches from our faces — for 40 minutes non-stop. Of particular fun was Big Bertha, a 14' beast that just couldn't stop gorging herself on the plankton. Surreal and amazing. Two red fish swam over the lights in the light box. A moray then swam into the light box and stuck his head out. Then, a turtle swam up to everyone in the circle wondering what all the fuss was about. Kona Honu Divers is a 'can't miss' dive operation.

Kona Honu Divers, Hale Kona Kai, June 2005, Bob Souza, Felton, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Dove

3 days, including the manta night dive. They tended to stay close to the harbor (high fuel cost with big boat?), not discussing site options with the divers. Try to do a lot on a single boat ... experienced divers, beginners, resort dives and snorkelers. Slow process at dock to get going every day. The boat is nice, with plenty of room but can get congested during gear up and entry at the rear as a camera table creates 2 single file aisles to access the dive platform. The crew handles all gear from the dock, setting up and changing tanks, bringing your BC to the platform, etc. in a pleasant manner. Nice dual platform/ladders in rear for easy water entry and exit. Divers are split into groups of about 6-8 per divemaster. Diving is pleasing, with absence of great corals. Many tropicals, turtles, eels, dolphins, nudibranchs, Spanish dancers, some interesting lava formations with swim throughs. The night manta dive is worth the price of admission, for divers and snorkelers (we had mainly snorkelers). Snacks and drinks are provided. If diving multiple days you still need to take your gear with you every day. Overall a nice boat and good crew, but I am sure there are better choices for the serious diver. Accommodations at the Hale Kona Kai were good. It is a condo complex right at the south edge of Kailua-Kona village, right on the waterfront, you are a giant stride from the ocean. Condos are individually owned, but a number are represented at www.halekonakaihkk.com. Unit was clean and mold free with full kitchen, dishwasher, cable TV, beach towels, mats and chairs. Complex has nice quiet pool, bar-b-que, elevator and free parking.

Kona Honu Divers, Outrigger Ke-auhou, June 2005, Elaine Matthews (elaine@venturesetc.com), Redondo Beach, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 25 to 75 Feet. Water: 72 to 76 F, calm. Professional and excellent and did a good job accommodating a variety of dive levels and desires. Being experienced, I was most interested in moving slowly and not being asked to leave the water with 1800 psi. They were good about returning to shallow diving at the end of the dive, and allowing those with air to continue for 5-20 minutes. They offered a variety of dive leaders, good with dive briefings and making sure you had the best dive. They had good boat entry and exit plans and added staff as they added divers. Good checklists to ensure that all divers were on the boat. One day there were 16 divers, but the boat was never crowded and they always treated us respectfully. They also manage the manta ray night dives. They have good visual aids with pictures, and ensure that the manta's are kept safe. The hotel, which has multi-star rating, is a bit worn. I have been there three times in the past two years, and the rooms are looking weary, and the staff is getting less and less accommodating. For the price, you can do better on the island. UW Photography Comments: Good water tanks. Reasonable place to change strobes, etc. No "clean area" for working on a camera.

Kona Honu, July 2005, Craig Grube (grube@cox.net), Virginia Beach, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F., choppy. Kona Honu has a 46' boat. They carry your tank to the edge of boat and suit you up. The night manta dives were great.

Accommodate the snorkelers of your family and divers. The first time, a 35-minute show by one 14' manta, that we signed up to do it two nights later. The second time two mantas for about 30 minutes. Mantas come within a foot of you. The pre-manta dive is a nice reef with lots of corals and sand patch with garden eels. Lots of fish and moray eels, nudibranchs. Saw mantas on the pre-night dive as well. They took us to sites where we requested to see frogfish and eagle ray and we saw both. Good food and drinks. The crew is friendly and knowledgeable. Both manta dives had about 12 divers and 6 snorkelers on a large boat...plenty of room. They rinse all gear and wetsuits as well.

Kona Honu Divers, October 2005, Diane Hamilton, Phoenix, AZ. One of the best operations I have been with. They took all the work out of the dives by setting up, breaking down and changing over all equipment. They guided all dives and were safety conscious. The boat is fast and comfortable and the crew is top notch. My buddy had some equipment trouble and they took care of it by making a loaner available and arranged to fix her gear while we were diving.

Pacific Rim Divers, December 2004, Brian and Kaye Walsh (brianandkaye@walsh.net), Kaaawa, HI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 70 to 72 F, choppy, no currents. This trip was our second with Patrice at Pacific Rim Divers on the Kona Coast. The boat is a clean and shiny six-pack launched each morning from the marina. A recent make over has made the boat seem larger and is

easy to maneuver in gear. They set up for you before coming aboard and make the entry and diving as easy as possible, great for beginners such as my daughter who with us this trip. Patrice is extremely knowledgeable about the area and is more concerned about good dives for her guests than getting to the closest spot and get it over with. Her boat captains have always been much like her, competent and pleasant with great attitudes. Divers can either stay with her, and boy can she spots things, or range out on their own within reason. Your bottom time is limited only by your own air and she will stay out with you as long as you last. Our dives were always over an hour as the coast of the Big Island is generally a gradual slope allowing you to go to 80 feet or so and then drift up the shelf exploring. There is a protected zone where there has no fish collection allowed for many years so the tropics are plentiful as well as eels and many little critters such as shrimp and nudibranchs. We stopped and watched schools of dolphins each morning as we left the harbor. Water, snacks (including yummy brownies) and a warm water shower on board and extremely competent and pleasant people make for an enjoyable dive experience.

Pacific Rim Divers, House rental, February 2005, Steve Machoian (smachoian@msn.com), Annapolis, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 77F., calm, surge, currents. Patrice runs efficient operation. You meet at the marina at 7:45 AM. A newly overhauled boat, plenty of shade, with twin Yamaha 150s, mean no smelly fumes and no

sunburn. The boat holds 6 divers and we were never cramped. All entries are back rolls. Patrice takes the group down (you can go on your own) finds and writes on her slate what the marine life is. Great for me, as I had never dove the Pacific. After an hour Patrice will come up but, divers can stay down (computer divers) provided you do not go into decompression, there are a minimum of two divers in the water and you start your safety stop with 500 psi left in your aluminum 80. Doved the Black Hole, Suck Um Up (Toilet Bowl), Turtle heaven, Lion Fish Arch, Golden Arches and Eel Cove, where we did see a beautiful dragon moray. During our surface interval one day we must have seen 500 Spinner Dolphins breaking water and playing, along with two whales. Good munchies, fruit and her famous brownies during the trip. Bring your own milk! We rented a house in Kohala Ranch which was quiet and secluded but a 40 minute drive to Kona.

Red Sail Sports, Hilton Waikaloa Village, March 2005, Keith & Ellen Irwin, San Jose, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy, no currents. Typical Kona diving. Lots of lava tubes and hard coral. Saw a few turtles and small critters. Only four of us on the boat. Red Sail divemaster was friendly but didn't show us anything. Just swam along. Rental gear was marginal. We couldn't get space with Kona Coast Divers, our preferred dive shop.

Sea Paradise, Holua Resort, October 2004, Paul and Donna Lima (plintn@hotmail.com), Christiana, TN. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to

150 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, calm, surge, no currents. Returned for the fourth time. Based in Keauhou Bay, about 7 miles south of Kailua-Kona and about 15 miles south of the airport, they access sites south of most of the other dive companies which means no crowds and more pristine sites. Even though their boat is old and slow it is comfortable enough and can accommodate 12 divers in somewhat crowded conditions. Fresh pineapple, pretzels and candy bars along with water and lemonade. The thing that sets Sea Paradise apart is the attitude of the crew who really enjoy diving and go out of their way to comply with guest requests for dive sites and activities. Captain Tim is knowledgeable about history and the area as well as humorous. We ran into a school of spinner dolphin near the entrance to the bay and he turned the boat so we could have time to watch them ride the bow wave and spin in the air. Scott and Phil were our divemasters at various times and let us dive our computers with no time pressure at all. On Ironman day (3rd Saturday in October) many roads were closed so we were able to dive Kealakekua Bay, mooring at a restricted mooring ball since the site was involved with Ironman activities. Two wonderful dives in this pristine Marine preserve. It was like diving in a clear, calm aquarium with huge plate corals, fields of finger coral and numerous fish. We stayed behind the group to watch a large green moray and peacock grouper hunting together. No-one placed demands on us to rejoin the group. On yet another trip we surfaced from a dive to find 5 bottlenose

dolphin near the boat. Captain Tim gave us the choice of snorkeling with the dolphin during our surface interval or moving to another site. We chose to spend 50 minutes watching them swimming and mating within touching distance (though, of course, no one tried to touch them).

Torpedo Tours, Hale Kona Kai, July 2005, J. Ferguson, Herndon, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: to Feet. Water: 79 to 79 F., calm, no currents. We did a one tank Manta Ray Night Dive with Torpedo Dives. The new site where the mantas show up has lots of great night diving in the area, so we didn't just sit and watch for the mantas. Lots of cool stuff. There were about 50 divers, each holding a light up to attract the mantas. There was also a powerful light in the center. Four manta rays showed up for the feeding — between eight and 11-foot wingspan. They got to within inches of us. The flips and barrel rolls were awesome to watch. Torpedo Tours allows a local photographer to video their groups. We got the DVD — it was expensive (\$72 I think).

Wanna Dive, Stayed at a B&B, August 2005, Melody Spencer (mspencer_biology@yahoo.com), Pataskala, OH. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 79 to 81, calm. Wonderful experience. Mike and Steve made sure every detail is covered and that everyone is taken care of. They provided a cooler full of cold drinks that had water, Powerade, etc. Between dives we had a wonderful deli sandwich. They had places on the front of the boat to keep things dry and a place to store the dive bags, etc.

Kauai

Bubbles Below, March 2005, James Keithly (james_keithly@yahoo.com), Seattle, WA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 150 Feet. Water: 73 to 75 F. Had an enjoyable days diving with Linda and her crew. The divemasters know the fish and critters well and we had a good time diving them. Diving in Hawaii isn't on par with the Caribbean or Indo-Pacific, but the turtles at House of Honu are second to none. We only had one divemaster for an evening and night dive, and given the level of experience of some of the divers, current, and the number of folks, it was busier than I'd prefer. All the other dives had two divemasters and went easily.

Bubbles Below, Marriott Kauai Beach Club, September 2005, Jerry and Christy Bonnington (gbonnington@comcast.net), West Linn, OR. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy. For years I've been trying to get to Ni ihau, but never made it until this year. We made two trips and a trip to the Na Pali coast Diving on Ni'ihau was worth the effort to get there. Many endemic and rare critters. Beautiful wall dives, swim throughs, arches, caves. Saw sharks on every dive, encountered several pods of spinner dolphins. The dive operation was as good as it has ever been. Several new dive masters have added to the already great crew. Linda runs a great operation. They will make accommodations for underwater camera gear. Fresh water rinse available, but no rinse bucket.

Fathom Five, Hyatt, November 2004,

Eric Frick (pande296@sbcglobal.net), Elmhurst, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. My e-mail inquiry received a prompt response and my reservation was handled well. As reported in Undercurrent, you check in at the shop and are then directed to drive a short distance where you meet the boat which is kept on a trailer. You receive a briefing and they take your equip. on board the boat. You then drive a couple of miles to the harbor where you are put on the boat and it is backed down the ramp into the water. The dive staff was friendly and helpful. The boats accommodate 6 divers well but are far from new. Runs from the harbor to the dive sites were brief at under 20 min. I visited during the season when they do not make the long crossing to Ni'ihau due to high winter swells. I imagine the crossing would not be too comfortable on these boats, even in suitable weather. I signed up for 2 morning 2-tank trips. On the second trip we were lead by owner George Thompson. His enthusiasm and knowledge of underwater critters made the trip even better. Hyatt is super-swank and pricey. UW Photography Comments: Cameras were carefully handled by boat capt. but no facilities on shore or on the boat

Seasport Divers, May 2005, Doug Ruby (dsruby@sandia.gov), Albuquerque, NM. Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 120 to 150 Feet. Water: 75 to 77F., calm, choppy. We dove Ni'ihau with SeaSport Divers. They have a wonderful custom fitted PRO 48' dive boat Certified for 42 passengers and 30 Divers. They limit it to only 12 divers for the trips to the Island of Ni'ihau. They had no qualms

about changing course to follow the pilot whales, as well as completely circling the island of Lehua crater to see the dozens of spinner dolphins playfully jumping and spinning inside the crater walls. We even caught a glimpse of 2 of the last humpbacks of the season in the distance. Monk seals came by and they caught a 40 lb. yahoo trolling during a surface interval. They were pleasant to dive with and let us dive our own profiles while making sure we had plenty of air left for 5 minute safety stops. They had soapy water in large troughs at their store for rinsing our gear. And their big comfortable boat, with head, made the rough channel crossing much more pleasant. They charge exactly the same price as Bubbles Below, but have superior facilities and are more pleasant people to dive with as well.

Maui

B&B Scuba, Westin Maui, December 2004, Martin Raffauf (mraffauf@us.ibm.com), San Carlos, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, choppy. Must dive early in the day as the winds pick up past noon, and conditions get rough, so most all diving is done 6am — 11am. B&B Scuba a good operation. First boat to leave every day for Molokini. Molokini superb — viz 150 feet — saw mantas, sharks, turtles and lots of fish. Actually watched a grey reef shark chase and try and bite the tail off of a mid sized manta ray — manta got away. B&B operation good, nice, smooth, all gear is handled for you once on boat. Good experienced guides who know the sites and fish life. Second dive is usually along south Maui coast, we did Puulani

— excellent, more mantas, many large turtles, a few more sharks, and lots of critters. Viz on this close in dive about 80 feet. B&B has a dive shop in Kihei, also good for tank rentals and recommendations for shore dives. Maui Shore diving quite good if you follow the 6-11 am rule. Viz, depending on conditions usually 60 feet or so. Dove Makena Landing and Old Airport Kaanapali. South side sites seem to have better and easier conditions than West Maui sites. There is some good snorkeling on north side — Black Rock and off the Hyatt Beach is a turtle cleaning station — saw some 25 turtles there on one snorkel. Westin — typical large hotel, rooms small in need of refurbishing. Food at hotels over priced and nothing special. Plenty of better restaurants that are cheaper. Pacificos in Lahaina is a good bet. In general the south side of the Island (Kihei/ Wailea) is less crowded and has better dive sites. Lanai diving is good, but longer boat trip. B&B is about the cheapest at \$109/person, although that includes all gear and wetsuits if needed. Most operators are more. Shore diving is cheap — we figured our expense at B&B for shore rental came out to \$9.50 per dive, and that included the dive flag float (required by Hawaii law or \$50 fine).

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, September 2004, Lisa Vitale, Austin, TX. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 Fahrenheit, choppy, surge. The dive operation, including divemasters and boat crew, was great. Very knowledgeable and safe. We dove Molokini (back side wall and front side) and Makena Beach. There were a slight surge and a moderate cur-

rent on all three dives. I was disappointed with the diving, the coral was drab, no color. There were not many fish, but the fish we did see were interesting and so different from anything I have ever seen in the Caribbean. Saw several different frog fish species, a couple sharks from a great distance, and not really any large pelagics. Not any interesting formations (rock or coral). I booked the 3-tank adventure dive which is advertised in their brochure for the “experienced and aggressive divers” and that they “invite a select group” of divers for this dive. Due to some issues with one diver, I found out later that this diver was a relatively new diver, so I was disappointed that person was allowed on this boat. I enjoyed diving with this operation.

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, Renaissance Wailea, July 2005, Jim Yeomans (jim.yeomans@ev1.net), Scottsdale, AZ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 75 to 77 F., calm, no currents. Crew was personable and knowledgeable. Briefings every dive. The captains (Will, Mark and Bill) were great about finding lots of stuff and were careful to only lead dives in conditions that were manageable. We did many interesting drift dives. They managed to show me every critter I could possibly come up, with the sole exceptions of mantas and whale sharks (both difficult requests, so not their fault). Saw lots of white tip reef sharks, a grey reef shark, a couple of spotted eagle rays, lots of turtles, frog fish, tons of eels, flame angelfish. I dove with them for six days (a Lanai trip, two three day adventure dives, and three days of two tank boat dives). Renais-

sance Wailea is nice, and the service is good, but pricey with respect to food and drinks. Lots of places in Kihei were more reasonable (e.g., LuLu's, Bada Bing). Sunsets are nice from Sea Watch Restaurant, or Capische Restaurant (but pricey). Fireworks at Wailea are pretty small townish, and don't last long. UW Photography Comments: One of Ed's boats had a separate rinse bucket for cameras, but the other one just had a couple of tubs (with no fresh water) underneath the place where divers sat. Ed's staff was careful with equipment, especially cameras, and was good about handing them down to you at the start of a dive.

Extended Horizons, October 2004, Butler (nora.mel@verizon.net), Claremont, CA. Experience: 900+ dives. Vis: 50 to 75 ft. Water: 76 to 78 F, calm & flat, not currents. Went to Lanai @ Cathedral I and Sergeant Major dive sites. Excellent rental equipment but no computer and costs more than Severns. Good pre-dive information, excellent dive guides. Lots of lava. Quite a few tropical fish

Extended Horizons, July 2005, Matthew Nathan, San Francisco, CA. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F., choppy. Great dive operation. Unlike many in Maui, the boat was driven by a licensed captain, all dives included an instructor in the water, the operation is fully insured and it was not a cattle boat. 2 tank boat dives to Lanai were good. Only 13 divers, split into two groups. Divemasters set up your gear for you on both dives. Also did a night dive from the beach with Warren. Great! Tons of eels

(white mouth, snowflake, leopard, and congers), lots of shrimp, crabs, lobster and more, sleeping turtles and all kinds of creatures endemic to Hawaii. They are in Lahaina.

Hawaiian Rafting Adventures, October 2005, Ed Strange (ca_bear70@comcast.net), Nevada City, CA. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 35 to 50 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 Fahrenheit, surge. Did a manta dive with Hawaiian Rafting Adventures, based at Mala Wharf, Front St., Lahaina. The dive site is 500 yards off the West Maui coast, 10 Mi. South of Lahaina, better accessible by boat because of the strong surf. The dive is over lava formations with moderate reef growth in 30'-50' where mantas congregate in the late afternoon/early evening to be "cleaned" of parasites by wrasses. Visibility was 35'-50' due to recent rain and runoff. Within 3 minutes of entering the water, two mantas were spotted 25' from us, lazily cruising the reef. Both had wing-spans of 12'-15' and we spotted other pairs intermittently through the dive, but finally found the "sweet spot" with about 5-min. of air left. 18-20 mantas circling overhead at about 25', while we watched in awe from 50'. Hawaiian Rafting Adventures uses RIB diveboats, taking 12 divers max. on their excursions (ours had 10). You must drive to their facility, check in, load your gear on the boat, and walk to the dock (300 yards) while they launch the boat. Crew has excellent knowledge of the area, pointing out the good and not-so-good beach dive areas that we passed, with entry points and reef locations at each. We saw quality rental gear on other divers and Nitrox is available. There are not a lot of accommodations on a 25'

RIB, but the trips to the dive sites are fun, also, riding the afternoon swells in the Maui/Lanai channel.

Lahaina Divers, October 2004, Liz Morini (eemorini@yahoo.com), Plymouth, MA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. calm, currents. 2-tank afternoon dive; an excellent operation. We were cruising Hawaii on Royal Caribbean's Serenade of the Seas, so we had limited time on each island. We dove the previous day with Jack's Diving Locker in Kailua-Kona on the Big Island. Wasn't too impressed with the staff at Jack's. They seemed a little bored with their jobs. In comparison, the Lahaina Divers crew was more enthusiastic and pleasant. Also, they served excellent post-dive cookies. Mala Pier was our first dive site, a 3-5 minute boat ride out of Lahaina harbor. Within the first 5 minutes of the 1st dive, we saw a white tipped shark, a large green turtle and a spotted devil ray. We had to buck a strong current while descending but once we reached the pier and leveled off at about 40-45 feet, the current wasn't much of an issue. Not too many fish but it was interesting cruising around the sunken pilings and looking into crevasses. Saw a few more turtles, large and small. Depth was restricted due to the shallowness of the dive site. Our 2nd dive was Jodo Temple, a short distance from the first dive site. We saw at least 20 turtles, mostly green turtles but a few hawksbills as well. Most of the turtles were resting in the sand between coral heads; others were swimming freely. I swear the largest one was at least 5 feet long but by the time I saw him, I was already at my safety stop and he was 30 feet below me. He was lying

in the sand underneath the boat and looked enormous.

Lahaina Divers, Extended Horizons B&B and Eldorado Hotel, March 2005, Donald Hoft, Holliston, MA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 74 to 77F., calm, choppy, surge, currents, no currents. I struggled with Extended Horizons: really nice people who work hard but schedule is irregular, when boat is full it's really tight, and on average I have not found Lanai diving (their destination) as consistent and good as other places. I shifted to Lahaina Divers (in Lahaina marina), convenient for those staying in Lahaina and Kaaanapali area. Two really good boats even with a full house (24 divers, but mostly less). Loads of room. Staff is excellent, they have 1 DM to 8 divers and seem to keep like experience levels together. They dive all the destinations — Lanai, Molokini Crater and Maui and do 2 nite dives/week. Crew wants to help you have the best experiences possible. Best diving was on Molokini Crater. The backside (south) is considered "advanced" due to currents and depth but is really good diving and in my experience is okay for most divers except beginners. Inside (north), on the Crater ends are also good and not too busy. Lots of boats at the crater with snorkelers/divers but they are in closer so you are not over-run. On the backside you see plenty of sharks, plenty of the tropicals (many endemic), octopus etc. Also interesting on the wall were its features, overhangs, etc.. On inside it's more variable, shallower but interesting (spotted a manta here last fall). Whales have migrated here for the winter and often serenaded

during our dives, also we never made the boat trip out without spotting several whales along the way. Lanai diving didn't treat us too good on either trip, but it's worth another try. Water was cold; most were in more than 3mm. At my age I require more than most and was in a 3mm shorty over a full 3mm. DM.s were mostly in 7mm, not surprising being in the water consistently. Last fall I dove with Ed Robinson's out of Kihei-3 tank backside dives on Molo-kini were great, as was crew/boats. It's just a long haul from Lahaina. Pretty good diving. Maui also offers plenty of topside attractions. Dive boats at both operations had camera tanks, and were careful handling camera.

Maui Divers, December 2004, Kevin Elman (hammerhead7@comcast.net), Greeley, CO. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 160 Feet. Water: 77 to 81 F, choppy. Divemaster (Ryan) outstanding diver and did a great job of pointing out things. Boat was clean and staff seemed concerned about safety and that everyone was having a good time. The wind Sucked! Huge waves (6 - 8 feet) made even a seasoned vet like me a little anxious....it was a washing machine. Due to the wave action our Molokini back wall dive was cancelled (we dove the crater itself and I was just as happy) and our night/dusk dive was cancelled. Sometimes knowing which shop to show up at is confusing. I loathed having to fill out the waiver everyday, when it clearly had a date range line (i.e., Dec 1 — Dec 7), this is over kill! Hawaii diving can cause sticker shock, and is a little pricey. Bring your own snacks, they tend to be a little skimpy and the days can be long (a

thermos of soup would be great). Dress in layers, I bring an Uzi dive gear wind breaker and I'm glad I did. Take a dive light on every dive, there's plenty to see in the lava formations, if you're looking. I could want better topside communication with the shops and maybe better photo arrangements. Boat staff exceptional and handled the crazy weather well. The snack table was also the photo table. The staff was good about handling the equipment. Rinse buckets were designated for photography.

Maui Dreams, April 2005, M. Thomas Livesay, DuPont, WA. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 30 to 150 Feet. Water: 70 to 75 F, calm, surge. I dove with Maui Dreams for my AOW certification. Teri, was an excellent instructor. Fun, patient, knowledgeable, and flexible. She knew the "secret" spots and let divers feel like they were on their own profiles despite diving with small groups. Let her know if you are willing pay extra to go on nicer dive boats (the shop doesn't own any boats, but boat dives are included with AOW certs). The owner, Rachel, is also customer oriented, and emails/calls are answered within hours! Good equipment, and they don't "nickel and dime" you here.

Maui Dreams, May 2005, Chris Behan (behan5@netscape.net), Howell, MI. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 68 to 70 F, calm. Rachael was fabulous! Talking and setting up with her was almost as fun as the dives themselves. She was patient and thorough, and made sure that we were properly weighted and trimmed (we dive mostly fresh water). We dove with her off Uluva beach in southern Maui

and the facilities were excellent: close parking, showers and restrooms, and a nice grassy area to set-up and hang out between dives. We saw eight turtles ranging from small juveniles to a huge turtle that I had to swim away from to get all of it framed. Rachael provided us with photos she took of us during the dive. There was a great amount of macro subjects and turtles, but no larger fish.

Mike Severns, October 2004, Mel Butler (nora.mel@verizon.net), Claremont, CA. Experience: 900+ dives. Vis: 50 to 75 ft. Water: 76 to 78 F, calm & flat, no currents. Went south area of Maui. Well organized. Excellent rental equipment and computer. Nice boat and crew. Good pre-dive information. Twelve people in two groups of six with dive guide.

Mike Severns, November 2004, Shawn Nelson (snelson@blackhole.com), Monticello, MN. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm, no currents. Class act. Since this isn't part of a resort, many divers just dive one day, so the crew went out of their way immediately to get to know you and what you want to see on your dives. They want you to have a great and safe time. Their boat "Pilikai" (embrace the sea) is a 38 ft. Munson and can comfortably handle two groups of six. The boat had a new paint job. While there is no rinse tank other than a bucket, they do have a fresh water shower on the back of the boat for rinsing off gear. There is no table for cameras but they have a carpeted area where they are kept safe. They provide you with an endless supply of fresh

cookies, caramel rolls, fruit, water, pop and on the three tank dive day they provided excellent sandwiches. Owner Pauline Fiene led a dive group one day and was awesome! The camaraderie of her crew is spectacular. Their briefings are complete with pictures of what you should look for. Andy has been with them seven years and one dive he spotted six octopi that would have gone unnoticed. 25% of the sea life is endemic to Hawaii and these guys show them off. The crew tending to the boat during our guided dives went diving during our surface intervals — something we have never seen before. They also go out of their way to comfort and help divers who are new or rusty. They let you dive your own profile, requiring you to surface when your buddy does — if you have one. We also went shore diving with some equipment rented from Maui Dreams Dive Co. in Kihei. Andy took us on a night shore dive with another couple to "5 Caves, 5 Graves" and we had an awesome dive. They warned us not to leave any valuable items in our car in sight but that didn't stop thieves from breaking in and stealing from our trunk while on a dive. UW Photography Comments: No rinse tank but a fresh water bucket and shower. Also, a carpeted area set aside for cameras.

Mike Severns, January 2005, Rich Orman (richorman@comcast.net), Aurora, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 76 F., calm. Three two tank dives. Excellent customer service, a good boat, and good dives. The boat holds 12 divers, which were divided up into equal groups with one divemaster each. One

dive each day was inside Molokini “crater,” with the other dives either being on the back side of Molokini, or at sites within a mile of the Maui coastline. I saw sea turtles and white-tipped reef sharks on almost every dive, along with great sponges and some coral. There are a great many fish. We saw a great many humpback whales on the surface, and heard them in the water. A group with another dive master saw False killer whales, which is apparently pretty rare for Maui divers. Check in for the boat is 6:15 a.m. at the Kihei boat ramp, to take advantage of the calm conditions early in the morning. You can plan on getting back anywhere from 11:30 to 12:30. The divemasters were accommodating, asking every diver what they wanted to see, and where they wanted to go, before making a decision. They were great at finding hard to see sea life, and helping you with the equipment. They also had great food onboard, including huge cookies, muffins, crackers, fruit, bottled water, soft drinks, coffee, and hot chocolate. You don’t need to wake up extra early to get coffee and breakfast, as they provide it for you. All in all, a first rate operation that I would highly recommend. Two tank night dive only goes out on Thursday nights, and costs about \$140 without equipment. The dive meets at 3:00 p.m. at the Kihei boat launch. The first dive is not quite twilight. You then move to the second dive site while the sun is setting and get in the water when it is completely dark. In between dives they serve you dinner, which normally consists of cold cut sandwiches, but that night included a lot of grocery store sushi. They take you to some really nice dive sites, including

one where we saw two octopi, a large “daytime” octopus, and a much smaller “Hawaiian” octopus.

Mike Severns, Various B&Bs, February 2005, Larry Schuth, (Lschuth@eznet.net), Hilton, NY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 F, choppy, no currents. Chose Mike Severns based on Chapbook and was not sorry. Best dive boat I have been on. Fruit, water, cookies, gorp, sodas, and warm cinnamon buns. Great dive briefings, including pictures. Heard whale songs on every dive. On the backside of Molokini we saw one gray, and seven white tip sharks and a manta. Another day my nondiving wife went along and they outfitted her with snorkel gear so she got to see underwater at Molokini. Had an encounter with three whales (from the boat) close up for 30 minutes. Close enough to hear them breathing. Once we had only four divers. DM was great at finding the small stuff.

Mike Severns Dive, April 2005, Norm Jensen, Boise, ID. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 F., no currents. Professional, first class operation oriented towards smaller groups of divers. Because they have a powerful boat, they can visit less frequented dive sites. Warren, the divemaster, who formerly practiced dentistry, provided a comprehensive, educational briefing that, in addition to the marine life, included geology and other natural history of the site. He was adept at locating unusual creatures. The Pinnacles included prolific marine life and an interesting swim through. The visit to Molokini crater featured garden

eels, white tip sharks and abundant tropical fish with the usual gin clear water. Warren was attuned to the abilities of the divers in his group and gave us appropriate leeway.

Mike Severns, July 2005, Craig Grube (grube@cox.net), Virginia Beach, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 70 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F., choppy. They took us to the inside of Molokini and then to St. Anthony's wreck. The Molokini dive was about an hour with nothing really spectacular going on. The wreck dive had many large turtles, schools of fish, large frogfish. The dive briefings were thorough and many fish behaviors they described we saw. The boat was alerted about a pod of dolphins and they took the extra time to find them and then the boat went with the spinners for about 15 minutes. Had variety of drinks and home made cookies. Excellent operation with a nice boat. They take up to 12 divers. Helped with gear in and out of water, had rinse tank for cameras only.

Mike Severns, Marriott, July 2005, J. Ferguson, Herndon, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: to Feet. Water: 79 to 79 F., calm, choppy, currents, no currents. They leave early to get out to Molokini before the hoards of dive boats and snorkelers. They have yummy treats — the cinnamon rolls are to die for. Their dive briefings are detailed — entrance/exit, dive site geography, and most important, what type of fish and critters that you'll see. We dove many sites around Molokini Blots of white tip and gray reef sharks. The back wall is an incredible dive. After our three tank dive, the trip back from Molokini

was wild — they hand out rain jackets that you definitely need. We also dove 85-foot Pinnacle and La Perouse on one of the three tank dive days. More sharks and lots of big morays. Also, lots of Pacific tropicals — including flame angelfish and reticulated butterflyfish. The divemasters are great at spotting cool stuff and make sure that everyone can see them. After one dive, I realized that my camera had disappeared. I had clipped it to my gauges, but one clip was broke. They went in to look for it, but no luck. I appreciated their efforts. (It was time for a new camera).

Mike Severns, Haleakala Shores Condos, September 2005, Sherrie Barker, Jefferson, OR. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, surge. The majority of the 10 divers on this trip were fairly new. Most wanted to see turtles, big critters. The crew — Jeff, Andy, John and Sharon — headed for the back wall and did a careful evaluation. Water conditions were not good — we were between Hurricane Jova and another storm — so we dove the end of the crater nearest Maui's shore. Vis was great even with the surface chop. We were impressed with the number of fish and critters — 4 sharks, a manta, ulua, flame wrasse, eels, octopus, conger eel. We headed to Turtle Town off 5 Graves/5 Caves. The surface chop had increased, so we did this as a drift. Turtle count — 11 in one visual sweep. The fish were numerous and varied. Andy waited at the surface with us while the boat came to pick us up. The crew was terrific, knowledgeable and enjoyed what they do. They're so safety conscious that they put an extra computer on one of our regs! We

would have gone out another day, but from our vantage point on the beach, we could see boats rocking in the surf and opted to watch this time. Haleakala Shores is a couple of blocks from the Kihei boat ramp. Rented via the Internet, we had the top corner condo overlooking Kamaole III and the ocean. The only drawback is the noise from the street below.

Octopus Reef, November 2004, Deborah Telesmanic (barracuda@pacific.net), Potter Valley, CA. I booked an "Extended Horizons" boat for a day trip (2 dives) to Molokai or Lanai (we were lucky and got to Molokai) Because of the channel that has to be crossed from Maui to these islands, there's only a few companies that go there using the larger boats (no 6-packs). The boat company will allow one of Octopus Reefs instructors to ride along free as a private guide and my buddy and I pay for the service of the guide for the day (\$100, plus optional tip). Well, we got in the water first and got to stay under almost twice as long as the main group of divers — using our computers — on both dives. We got to see lots of stuff probably missed by the big crowd (the O.R. women are incredible sources of info about all the sea-life), and shot great photos that were clear of the junk inevitably kicked up by a gaggle of divers. This is the sort of day trip that may be a once in a lifetime adventure and my buddy and I were so glad we spent the extra bucks to do it right. Rene, Lynn and Victoria at Octopus Reef are all awesome to dive with on any/all types of dives, but I especially recommend this extra service.

Prodiver Maui, May 2005, Chris Behan, Howell, MI. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 68 to 72 F, choppy. They miscalculated a weight adjustment and sent me into the water carrying 42 pounds of lead versus the 28-30 I need and thought I was wearing. Though I felt heavy on deck, the captain (who seemed to be in a rush to get me into the water) assured me that the adjustment he made was correct and that I was "good to go." Even with my BC partially inflated, this added up to a barely controllable descent. I went from the surface to 25 feet in 3-4 seconds — not good for inner ears. Though I finished the dive, my ears were messed up and I didn't feel like taking the next dive. Upon discussing the issue with the boat captain, he stated that 42 pounds was probably close to the right amount of weight since I was wearing a 7mm wetsuit. As it turns out, he had gotten his OW certification a few months before his job on the dive boat. From now on nobody touches my stuff but me — lesson learned the hard way. The cookies were fine though.

Prodiver, July 2005, Craig Grube (grube@cox.net), Virginia Beach, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F., choppy, currents. They were open to where we wanted to dive, the back wall of Molokini. Small boat that took small groups (only four of us). Very knowledgeable about the marine life. They had soda, coffee, fresh fruit, hot cocoa. They let both dives run about 55 minutes each. Saw a school of 13 reef sharks, then isolated white tips. Full help with gear, and they supplied all gear if needed,

including computers. Second dive was near shore with morays, octopus and several large turtles. They leave early in the morning while the seas are still calm and get you back by 10:30. Great operation. They had a small boat and no rinse tank for cameras, but they hosed them off with fresh water after dives.

Prodiver Maui, Mana-Kai Maui, September 2005, Tim Nugent, Huntington Beach, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives.

Vis: 125 to 175 Feet. Water: 80 to 80 F, calm, surge. Excellent 6-pack operation. Their 34' boat leaves from Kihei boat ramp shortly after 5:45 am six days/week with six divers max. First dive is always Molokini, a 15 minute ride. We were in the water by 6:30 and back to the docks by 10-10:30. Molokini has excellent visibility, 150' or more. The advantage of leaving so early is to be the first boat there. By midmorning, the tiny crater has 10+ boats moored there. The density of the hard corals impressed me. The second dive each day became a let down, as it was just offshore of Wailea, with mediocre visibility (50'~75') and reef conditions. However, it was geared toward seeking a specific target; turtles, frog fish, etc. and was mostly successful. Surface intervals were short, with the tightest 35 minutes. As an old timer who has most of the tables memorized, I find this practice uncomfortable, no matter what my computer says. Each dive was more than an hour. The DM would send each person or team up as their air dwindled, and had no problem staying down until we were ready to come up. Gary and Larry, the two owners are nice, easy-going guys. They were comfortable allowing my wife and me

wander off on our own. The boat driver was attentive and always ready for a quick pick-up. Using an aerial photo showing all reefs, sand patches and cuts, I had the most useful dive briefing ever. Once underwater, I already knew my way around from the photos. Prodiver Maui was recommended by the book Maui Revealed. This book also found us our condo, Mana Kai-Maui, less than a minute drive from the boat ramp. Mana Kai-Maui is on the beach at the Kihei/Wailea townline. Excellent place to stay, however I learned the value of making reservations through the onsite management company. We booked through an off-site property mgmt company, and had to drive 3 miles to a mall to check in and out, could not use front desk support for beach towels, had no daily maid service, etc. This was our first time traveling with two little kids and with advance planning, it came off nicely. UW Photography Comments: Boat crew was adept at camera handling. Boat could use a rinse bucket, instead of just a fresh water hose.

Oahu

AAA Diving, Ohana Waikiki West, June 2005, J. Ray Behnke (raybeee@yahoo.com), Taylorsville, UT. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis:

70 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to F., choppy. This is advertised as the least expensive diving on Oahu. My wife and I just planned one day diving and the rest of the week we would spend with the kids. AAA has a beautiful, immaculate, fully equipped boat. We were the only two aboard. He has great electronics aboard and told us that the underwater terrain in this location would be inducive for

pelagics. We immediately saw a couple of shark in profile. I thought, "Very nice reef sharks!" A few minutes later, I saw two more who were turned toward me: hammerheads! We were in a school of 15 twelve to fifteen footers. What a thrill! Saw three huge puffers and some typical colorful Hawaiian fish. The owner said he'd been on 6000+ dives and never saw a hammerhead. He jumped into the water but they had departed so he still hasn't seen them. But he did see two large lobsters. He has other dive shops trying to coax the location out of him but he won't divulge. Hotel was fine, nothing fancy, but in a great location a block and a half from Waikiki Beach and in the middle of all kinds of entertainment, shopping, restaurants, etc.

Aaron's Dive Shop, Stayed in a B&B, August 2005, Melody Spencer (mspencer_biology@yahoo.com), Pataskala, OH. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, surge. We were not asked to see our C-cards. They had us set up the equipment on the shore and then they loaded it on the boat for us. I was quite hot trying to get ready as the boat had no shade and they were telling us to hurry. I had not done a backward roll from a boat before and they were not willing to help me. (I felt like they were drill sergeants. The dive was not well explained other than to follow the divemaster. They forgot the water and didn't have any snacks. (we always carry water just in case) Everything in the bag got wet as there were not any places on the boat for dry storage. There was only a 15-minute surface interval. The highlight was a green sea turtle cleaning station. Too many prob-

lems with the dive operators. They were helpful on the phone and e-mail. It just didn't carry over to in person.

Aloha Dive Shop, February 2005, Bob Kaszynski (rkasz@comcast.net), Kittery, ME. Experience: 100+ dives. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 80 F, choppy, surge. The Aloha Dive Shop is located in the Hawaii Kai shopping center, a great location. There is a 30-ft. catamaran, though showing its age, parked right behind the shop. Monique, the fairly new owner, can be pleasant, but only when she wants to be. I was taking my wife and two older children who would be snorkeling. We were not told where we would be going, not even the possible sites, until we were well underway. The operation at the dive shop was disorganized. I was supposed to borrow a pair of fins which never made it to the boat. Fortunately, another diver had an extra pair. I got the feeling the owner could care less whether my family and I had a good time or not, and safety was never a topic. The DM, Steve, made up for her shortcomings. He was knowledgeable, helpful and fun. The Capt. was also terrific. The DM himself had to deal with three introduction divers, two certified divers and four snorkelers. Both dives were shallow with a max depth of 40 ft. We did see a lot of green turtles and a cleaning station with tangs and surgeonfishes. Snacks were minimal during the surface interval. However, Capt. Wade did locate some whales and dolphins which were most exciting for my family of snorkelers.

AquaZone Diving, January 2005, Dan and Tammy Guill (mavrick2@worldnet.att.net). Experi-

ence: 800 to 1000 dives, Master Scuba Diver Trainer and Dive Master. We went on three week trip to Oahu, to mix a business with pleasure and we planned on making six to eight dives. We should have left our gear and our C-cards at home. I decided to test the waters with AquaZone Divers, a five star PADI facility and signed up for a two tank boat dive. After a short boat ride to the Makena area, we did an 80 foot dive to the most pitiful excuse for a wreck, I have ever seen. "Baby barge" measured 25 feet by 25 feet and I think someone must have scared all the fish away, before we could get down there. The second dive was better, I saw two turtles, two eels and some small but colorful fish. This dive was a two minute ride from the "baby barge." As for the restrictions, I was amazed. "You will stay behind the instructor that is leading your group— the instructor should not have to look any further than directly behind him to make sure everyone is accounted for. Do not go off to the right, do not go off to the left — we will all dive the instructor's profile and we will all ascend with the first diver that runs his tank to 1000 psi." I surfaced with over 1500 psi on my first dive, so I was given a 63 cubic foot tank instead of an 80 cubic foot tank for the second dive. The two young instructors and the boat captain were extremely nice to everyone. They did their job and abided by their store policies. We talked to South Seas Divers, another five star PADI facility and it sounded promising at first, but then they started talking about diving and the "baby barge" came up like one of the options for that day, so we opted out though they were

giving us 50% off because we were dive professionals. I called Aaron's Diving, yet another five star PADI facility, since he had such a great brochure. When I got Mr. Aaron on the phone I asked him what area they dove in and he said the east and west side of the island. Then I started to tell him about my concerns about the quality of the dive sites because so far I was only shown some pretty poor diving. In the 30 seconds it took to make that statement, he asked my three times "who was it?" By the third time he was yelling it at me. I thought it best to simply hang up. We decided to change our flight plans and go home five days early.

AquaZone, Marriott, June 2005, JoAn Ferguson, Herndon, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: to Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F., calm. AquaZone was in our Marriott on Waikiki. Although we didn't have reservations, we could dive with them the next day. We were impressed with how organized and helpful they were — during the reservation process, transportation to the boat, getting suited up, and diving. They treated everyone the same, so highly experienced divers may find this level of help and direction to be annoying and undesirable. Our first dive was the Corsair. Lots of tropical fish, including a leaf scorpionfish. There is a field of garden eels around the wreck that they tell you to look for during the dive briefing. Our second dive as Turtle Canyons. Lots and lots of turtles — mostly 2-3 feet long. They hide under the ledges of the craters. Unfortunately you could also see the tumors growing over their eyes and around their heads.

Capt. Bruce's Scuba Charters, September 2005, Art Sundberg, Georgetown, DE. Experience: 1000+ dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 80-82 F, calm and flat. www.captainbruce.com, 1-800-535-2487. Prompt pickup and drop-off from hotels in Waikiki, transportation included to west shore dive sites, with large selection. Short boat ride to sites, wrecks and lava formations. Excellent dive guides/masters and boat operations/safety. No worries.

Ocean Concepts, February 2005, Bob Kaszynski (rkasz@comcast.net), Kittery, ME. Experience: 100+ dives. Vis: 80 to 90 ft. Water: 78 F. This is the best dive outfit on Oahu for beginner and advanced. A little drive up to Waianae, 1 hour or less from Honolulu is well worth the trip. I think they will also pick up. The operation is organized. Jim Byrem, owner, takes a personal interest and meets every class. He greets the class, gives the introduction, the site and safety talk, and is professional and knowledgeable. Their boat goes to several sites, i.e., The Mahi; Makaha Caverns; Airplane Ledge; Black Rock Caverns and others, each worth more than one dive. The Mahi is at 100 ft. with a sand and lava bottom and we saw eagle rays and a white tip shark. Our DM, Josh, was great at finding things under rocks, identifying fish, shells and putting an octopus on my face mask. Kim, another DM, is great and difficult to keep your eyes off, her pair, of eyes, holds your attention, plus she's a nice person and a good DM. The hang bar makes the 15-foot stop comfortable. A nice plus is the juice, fruit before the dive but the lunch between

dives consisting of Doritos and the best sandwich on the island, big cut-up subs. First-class operation.

Reef Trekkers, December 2004, Kathy English, Menan, ID. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 feet. Water: 77 F, calm. I was on a dive trip with 14 people from Idaho to Truk Lagoon aboard the Odyssey. On the way back we had scheduled 3 days in Hawaii to recuperate. We set up diving with Reef Trekkers because they told us we could all go on our own boat and choose the sites. We didn't want any wrecks because of Truk and were interested in lava tubes, and coral reef. 3 of us talked to them prior to the trip and were all told no problem to go where we wanted. They came to pick us up in a 10 person van (15 of us and all our gear). They ran all of our credit cards before we left for the boat — right in the van (now I know why). When we arrived at the boat, it was a rented boat with another dive shop's divers already on board. We asked about our previous arrangements and were told they would not have said any of that. All of us were liars, I guess. We were informed the first dive was to be a wreck, the Y0257. I almost left then and called my credit card company but decided to go and report it in Undercurrent instead. Before we left, yet another dive shop's divers got onboard. 30 divers in all (moooooo!). The first dive was pretty forgettable except for a couple of turtles. There was a strong current and stopping to look at anything was difficult. The second dive was more fun. It was to Turtle Canyons and lived up to its name. There were several friendly turtles there. The reef, however,

was nearly dead. I was shocked to see the shape it was in compared to Kauai. I have never been more disappointed with a dive operation.

Reef Trekkers, Marriott, June 2005, JoAn Ferguson, Herndon, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: to Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F., calm. Reef Trekkers picked up people at different hotels along Waikiki, and then headed for the harbor. We were surprised that many different dive groups (led by different Dive Ops) were on the same boat. Before the trip we received an email indicating their requirements related to medical conditions. Apparently not everyone in the group received this email, so there was a lot of frustration when one person checked yes to medication but didn't have a full medical release with him. The prior week he was on a live-aboard in Palau — but there were no exception to this rule! IMHO, this attitude in dive operators doesn't encourage truthful completion of a medical form. Oh... then they didn't bother checking for C-Cards! They told us to stay in one area of the boat. Getting our equipment on was challenge due to the cramped conditions. Reeftrekkers did their best to help. We dove the Sea Tiger Wreck (lots of nooks and crannies, including an opportunity to swim into the bridge). This would have been a better dive if there hadn't been so many divers on it from our boat. Our second dive was Kewalo Pipe; lots of corals and critters have turned it into an artificial reef. They broke us into smaller groups (our family of three was one group) to each dive with a divemaster.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Bako Divers, Hotel Robert Reimers, Majuro, August 2004, Jeanne & Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net), Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 84 to 84 F, calm, choppy. We stopped in Majuro on the way to Bikini Island to see what the diving was like and to get rid of some jet lag. We flew to Honolulu, where we spent the night at the convenient Honolulu Airport Hotel. We caught the 7 A.M. flight to Majuro, arriving early afternoon. We were met by a hotel representative and transferred to the hotel. The rooms are basic, but OK; book a cottage. We ate most of our meals at the hotel; some were quite tasty. There's not much else to do besides dive. Jerry Ross of Bako Divers did everything he could to keep us happy. There were three to five guests on the boat. We left 9:30-10:00 a.m. returned around 3:00 every afternoon, with at least an hour between dives. One of our favorite dives was Pokelap, with a small WWII hellcat at 110', and lots of bommies in shallower water. It was also a great place to find the endemic 3-banded anemone fish, lionfish, and lots of shrimp gobies. Another favorite was Cenpac with a shipwreck at 105', 2 big bumphead wrasse, and groupers. The water inside the lagoon was like glass a couple days: getting outside the lagoon through the narrow gap was interesting, and re-entering was like surfing. There were no soft corals, and the hard corals were low. Some dives had more fish than other; Jerry has an interesting way to "call sharks" up from the depths. We