

red pygmy seahorses, a yellow ornate ghost pipefish, many nudibranchs, eels, clownfish, and two sea moths in the sand. Other sites had several types of frogfish, coral crabs, cleaner shrimps, ghost pipefish, and more. I saw at least one ornate ghost pipefish on every one of my seven dives. The dive staff does a good job of finding critters. A more distant site, Balicasag Island, had nice soft corals, a school of large barracuda, nice sea fans, a school of jacks, and of course the ghost pipefish. Fun day tours of Bohol: some ancient churches, a scenic river trip, and the "Chocolate Hills" that look like Hershey's kisses in the late afternoon sun.

**Sumisid Lodge, June, 2005 John Crossley, Fresno, CA.** This trip was organized by SeaQuest Dive Center ([www.seaquestdivecenter.ph](http://www.seaquestdivecenter.ph)), which operates both the Sumisid Lodge in Moalboal, and the Oasis Resort, on Alona Beach in Bohol. Seaquest arranged all the transfers, lodging and diving at a great price. Sumisid Lodge is on a funky little strip of beach in Moalboal, a 3-hour car ride from Cebu airport. It's got small dive resorts, restaurants, shops and bars. The beach is not great for nondivers. Sumisid Lodge is on the beach, with 11 basic, clean rooms, five of which have AC. The chef does an excellent job with fresh fish dinners with several other choices available. Their mango shakes are super. Staff is friendly and helpful. The dive shop is small with decent rental equipment. You can leave your gear in the shop overnight. They use two wooden pangas to get to nearby dive sites, and it was never crowded. We went out at 9 am and 2 pm, but they will go more often if you want. Water

averaged 82 and visibility 40 to 100 feet. The best dive sites were on Pescador Island, with nice soft corals, sea fans, schools of Jacks, and good tropical fish selection with an occasional frogfish and turtle. Sites closer to the resort had good variety of macro critters including mantis shrimp, lionfish, nudibranchs, clown fish, etc. We had four black and white banded sea snakes on one dive.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

There are a couple small dive operations on the out islands and a couple large live-aboards, but the beautiful reefs and good tropical fish life (some bigger fish too) are worth the long trip. Outside Honiara, the people are friendly and visitors are again traveling freely.

**Dive Gizo, Adventure Sports, Gizo Hotel, July 2005, Richard Haines ([haines2430@msn.com](mailto:haines2430@msn.com)), Colorado Springs, CO.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F., calm. The flights there are carefully orchestrated, so if you miss one connection, you might find yourself hanging around for an extra day or two or seven. The Gizo Hotel is the best place on the island. Rooms are plain but clean, comfortable, with lots of room, and it has a small pool. There isn't a phone or TV, but each room does have a fridge, and our room was air conditioned. The staff is friendly. All the fresh water is rainwater, collected off the roofs and stored in cisterns. Bottled water is available and runs about 50 cents (US) to a dollar at the hotel. Meals and drinks are charged to your room. Sodas are about

a buck and beer about two. Among the several great meals were king fish, mahi mahi) mud crab, several chicken dishes and few pasta dishes. Our bill was about \$200 for the week, and that included the 5% surcharge for using a credit card. Breakfast starts at 7:00; eggs, fruit, cereal, no juice, but plenty of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. You will need Solomon dollars to pay for stuff at the shops and a few meals at restaurants other than the hotel restaurant. Exchange money at the Gizo bank, a block from the hotel. We used "the bank of Danny" who was gracious to exchange money for us. The rate is about 7\$S to \$1 US. Town is like a fishing village; it was raining and the roads are dirt). We found a "department" store a block away and sodas were only 50 cents. Another tiny shop had Snickers bars for our chocolate cravings. At least half the shops are closed on Saturdays and all are closed on Sundays. Danny Kennedy is the operator of Dive Gizo/Adventure Sports. He is "Mr. Gizo Diving." Originally from Florida, he has lived in the Solomons for 20 years. He knows every dive site and trains his own guys. He has two shops, one in the hotel, but the main one is a 5-10 minute walk, across the street from the boats. He would pick us up at 9:00 every morning, and return us at the end of the day. He tries hard to get to know everyone and meet every ones needs. He arranged dinners at local restaurants and had dinner with us more often than not. He is quite the character. The boats (there are several) are small and fast, (dual outboards). The one we used most often had a canopy roof for shade. (Bring sun block!) 10 divers are "snug" with gear and extra

tanks, but we averaged 6-7 each day and were comfortable. Most dive sites are 10 minutes away. The standard tank is an AL 95. They do have AL75s and AL62s. All tanks were filled to 3000psi. The DMs are competent and provided thorough dive briefs. At the end of the day, (about 2:30-3:30) everyone would take their own mask and wetsuit and leave everything else. The DMs would break things down, rinse and hang it to dry. It would be in the boat ready for you in the morning. All your stuff can stay at the dive shop. Surface intervals averaged about two hours, and we would go to Danny's island (yes he has his own island "Nair") and grill some mahi mahi, or have some chili tuna sandwiches, fruit and cookies. A few times, we would go to Mbabanga island, (a small island) and visit Fatboy's restaurant. Grant (the owner) is one of kind. He is originally from Australia. Fatboy's is a nice place and has a mean fish and chips. Sundays he puts up a great buffet with live entertainment. (good stuff) Both are tropical paradise settings, and beautiful. Although the traveling to and from were a hassle and frustrating, our stay in Gizo was outstanding. We had a great time, learned some history, made new friends and the diving was fabulous. Make sure you bring whatever you need.

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## CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC LIVE-ABOARDS

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### AUSTRALIA

**Nimrod Explorer, September 2004,**