

costs are not cheap. However, our trip aboard the Bilikiki was one of the best we have ever experienced. You must be self-sufficient so bring your own pharmaceuticals including antibiotics (and leave them with Michelle on your way out). UW Photography Comments: Boat was photo-friendly. Good camera table and other photo accouterments. E-6 film developed quickly. Dive briefings included lens and photo recommendations and dive master Monte was available to lend individual advice.

## TONGA

**Nai'a, August 2005, John Sommerer, (sommerer@comcast.net), Silver Spring, MD.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 73 F, calm. Nai'a quality and service up to usual high standards. Best crew on any live-aboard we've been on. Kava party is tops! Cruise directors Josh and Liz pleasant, went the extra mile helping with lost luggage situation, and produced a fantastic trip video. Whales not as plentiful as in 2003, and encounters more limited (some lasted four hours that trip). Some bad weather may explain this, but I can't help thinking that something bad is happening (covert whaling?). Diving was pretty good, especially at night. A few "destination quality" sites (Ladd's Reef and Table for 200), and really healthy hard corals. Tonga whale trip with sites depending on looking for whales. Situation in Tonga is deteriorating. We were there during an extended strike of Government employees, and there is open disapproval of the royal family. Check on current political situation and state of infrastructure before going to Tonga.

UW Photography Comments: Great camera room, rinse tanks, handling and assistance from crew.

**Nai'a, August 2005, Bruce Wapen, Foster City, CA.** Experience: 400 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 70 to 74 F, choppy. This was basically a "snorkel with the humpback whales" trip — open ocean. That part was great (a 5). The diving was not the attraction.

**Nai'a, August 2005, Richard Nelson (chard@alum.calberkeley.org), Oakland, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 73 to 75 Fahrenheit, choppy. Terrific boat, friendly, capable, professional crew. The Tonga trips are all about whales, so reef diving was incidental. We were on a charter to develop a whale website for the Imaging Foundation, so we placed more emphasis on whales. Some divers were disappointed that we didn't do more diving, but the crew tried to accommodate, within the parameters of our expedition. Snorkeling with the humpback whales is wonderful. One encounter lasted over an hour, and the photographers got some great pictures. Other encounters were briefer, but still breathtaking. As for the diving, we didn't get to their best sites, but some reefs we visited were good, healthy, and with abundant, diverse fish life. Other sites were merely OK. Nothing difficult or challenging, but it was colder than most people expected. Some of the crew wear drysuits. Light suits were fine for the snorkeling and a couple of dives per day. The food would be great for the five-dive-a-day Fiji schedule, but seemed excessive for the amount of diving we were doing. We felt overfed.