

Veuve Cliquot Grande Dame Rose champagne, they fill your tub with scented oil, orchids and frangipani blossoms, and light a few dozen candles) or just want pretty good Indian Ocean diving with every luxury you can think of, this is the place.

MOZAMBIQUE

Ponta Mamoli, July 2006, Joe Puglia (jpuglia@aol.com), Orlando, FL.

Experience: 550 dives. Water: 68 F. The weather was sunny and a little windy. The seas were choppy. A few dives had moderate current. The reefs of Mamoli were magnificent. There are miles of uninterrupted coral heads that are in fantastic shape. The fish life was fantastic. We were diving off season and the water turned greener and greener as the week moved on. Bev and Kevin, the managers of Ponta Mamoli, said that the green was rare. The reefs were fantastic. We saw turtles, a variety of eels, rays (including electric rays), scorpion fish including a Mauritius scorpion fish. The schools of anthias were huge and beautiful to watch. On one dive there were over 50 lionfish. During most dives we were serenaded by whale songs. The resort was magnificent, with great service. The resort sits on a beautiful sand beach and is the only structure for miles. My wife and I walked the beach for an hour one afternoon and did not see another person. The food was excellent. The rooms are chalets built behind the dunes. They are a little small, with nice front porches and a spacious bathroom. You spend little time in the chalets so they are just fine. The resort has a variety of activities including horseback riding and hippo watching. The staff was friendly and attentive. The ride

from the South African border is one hour on dirt roads. It can be a little nerve-racking, but it adds to the adventure. Electricity is supplied by on-site generators, and to conserve fuel they are turned off at different times of the day. It was never a problem. We visited Mamoli as part of a larger trip that included a safari camp, Phinda, in South Africa. Ponta Mamoli is a gem!

SEYCHELLES

Billed as 3000 miles from anywhere, this group of islands has decent reef diving. From time-to-time live-aboards make the long trip to Aldabra, which has excellent diving. Island prices are high.

Coral Strand Hotel, December 2005, Alex Stuart (aastuart@pacbell.net), San Rafael, CA. Experience: 1400+ dives. There's a 12-hour time difference between California and the Seychelles. The Inner Islands of the Seychelles are granitic islands that are the remnants of the supercontinent that existed when Africa and the Indian subcontinent were still connected. Mahe has a high granite backbone running the length of the island. The left side traffic, roundabouts and the architecture of the houses and stores created a big similarity between Mahe and the Island of Grenada in the Caribbean. My hotel was in the Beau Vallon on the other side of the island from the capital Victoria. To get to the Beau Vallon area from Victoria, the road turns into switchbacks that take you to a pass over the heights that run through the center of the island. The Coral Strand Hotel is an older facility that is reasonably well maintained but is on the expensive side for what it offers. Dinner was overpriced and ordinary. Breakfast and

lunch were decent but also. It has a nice beach with a bit of surf, a nice swimming pool. There was a lot of wind and rain since the rainy season is from December through February. The day I arrived, I was off to a dive site called the Dragon's Teeth. This was an underwater ridge that had rocks breaking the surface. The water temps varied from 83-80 depending on the depth with vis around 50 feet. El Nino of 1997-8 bleached all the hard coral around the Inner Islands. The storms since then have broken up the hard corals and the reefs are now largely stripped granite boulders with a few small soft corals. The next day, the first dive was at Grouper Point. The wind and surge were bad and during the dive, I feared that I might feed the fish. Though the dive was mediocre, at the safety stop, a six-meter whale shark swam right over three of us, almost within arm's reach. Because of the poor weather, the operator decided to cancel the second dive. Every day, we had to don our dive gear and swim through the surf to and from the dive boat, basically doing beach entries and exits. My last day of diving was cancelled altogether as the weather continued to deteriorate. The dive shop allowed me to pick out four shirts with a face value of \$90 as compensation for my prepaid dives that were cancelled. I got to dive around other islands in the Seychelles, but generally cannot recommend the Inner Islands as a particularly desirable dive destination. The travel costs are high and the hotel and resort costs are among the highest in the market. I see no reason for going to the Seychelles to dive when the Maldives and Tanzania offer cheaper flights, healthier reefs, more fish and cheaper accommodations.

Octopus Diving, Azzura Pro-Diving

Center, Amitie Chalets, La Digue Dive Lodge, August 2005, Stanley Zuk (szuk@nyc.rr.com), New York, NY. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, choppy. Beautiful, peaceful islands with excellent beaches, particularly Anse Lazio, even while snorkeling there were many fish, turtles, and spotted eagle rays. Octopus diving was an efficient and nice operation, they let you dive your own profile. Visibility was bad, however, I could still make beautiful videos with reef white tip sharks, and many turtles present on almost every dive, eagle rays and huge humphead parrot fish. There were many big porcupine rays and large black spotted stingrays. Coral doesn't look interesting, but these are such beautiful islands, that just being there and enjoying LaDigue and Praslin is fabulous. Gorgeous and not overcrowded. Diving is pleasant, but doesn't come close to Fakarava, Palau, or Fiji, but the beauty and friendliness of the people make up for it. If you stay on Praslin rent a car, it's a must to get to know the island better. Great trips to Aride, and Curieuse Islands with tortoises, diving on LaDigue similar to Praslin.

TANZANIA

Sea Breeze Marine Ltd., White Sands Hotel, August 2005, Russ Battisto (Russ_Battisto@Comcast.net), Roseville, MN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, choppy, currents. Would bring my own gear instead of renting. Took getting used to the "European" metric gauges. Reef is far from shore. GPS was needed to find location. We rode out in a Zodiac which can be bumpy if the sea is choppy. Reef was deeper than I'm