

Taka Dive, June 2007, David Shem-Tov (david@stubbs.co.uk), London, NA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 10 to 20 Meters. Water: 25 to 26 C, calm, choppy, currents. A previous correspondent named this dive operations previous boat as the 'Kaka'. Unfortunately, her description is still apt. This operation is targeted at inexperienced backpackers. Many are enticed by last-minute discounts, ensuring that the boat always leaves full. The boat operates on a tight back-to-back schedule, requiring passengers to vacate their cabins several hours before return to port so that they can be serviced by the crew. Great food and fairly attractive cabins on a well designed new boat could not make up for the most unpleasant cruise director and dive crew we have ever encountered on a live-aboard. Had there been an option to disembark during the three-day cruise, we would not have hesitated. We booked this cruise because it was operating during the minke whale season. Unfortunately, one of the two encounters with these skittish creatures was swiftly terminated by a crew member who donned scuba gear and jumped into the water (in contravention of Australian law) and ensured the immediate flight of the whale. UW Photography Comments: No electrical facilities except those in your cabin. Rinse tank was used for everything.

COOK ISLANDS

Tucked between French Polynesia and Tonga, the Cook Islands have a breezy South Pacific atmosphere. The main island of Rarotonga has good food and a variety of hotels. There's decent diving through a cut into the lagoon that has sharks and

strong current, but overall the diving falls short of other South Pacific locations. Even most New Zealanders, their closest neighbors, pass on the diving.

Amedee Diving Club, dove while on a cruise, February 2007, Dee Wescott (diverdee@mac.com), Waikoloa, HI.

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, calm. I found them because the company I contacted (from the cruise ship) was closed on Monday, so they turned us over to Amedee. You do need to know that you will be gone over lunch and they only provide tea, coffee and excellent pastries, so if you need more than that, bring it. They really try hard. The subjects available to shoot made up for any shortcomings on the part of the boat or operators. There was nothing much done for UWP, but they didn't know that we were UWP before we came and when they set the boat up.

FIJI

For left coasters, it takes about the same amount of time to get to Fiji as it does to the Caribbean: ten hours nonstop from L.A. Prices are comparable and air packages can include New Zealand/Australia extensions at little extra cost. Fijians are polite, friendly, modest, and religious, so watch your language, and wear nonrevealing clothes to town. Wetsuits are staples year-round; currents add coolness and in some places they're vigorous, so carry surface signaling devices. In September 2004, American Dan Grenier, the former operator of Crystal Divers, disappeared with another diver while leading divers from Bamboo Reef Resort on