

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 lava flow dives with little coral cover, but the tropical fish are colorful, unique, and generally plentiful. There's access to good shore diving. Kauai reef diving is passable, but the attraction is unique trips available only 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, the occasional white tip shark adds to the fun, and the reef fish are colorful. Most reefs around Honolulu and Oahu have declined considerably, but there is some 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 that's 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 storms 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, Mauna Loa Village, February 2007, Julie Arismendi (juliearismendi@yahoo.com), Clements, CA. Experience: 350 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 67 to 78 F, calm and flat, choppy, no currents. Best operator for experienced divers in Hawaii. If you want it, they'll

do their darnedest to find it and almost always are successful. Mike and Earl have spent their lives on the island and know every inch of it. Great variety and we always see something spectacular.

Big Island Water Sports, September 2006, Ron Steedman (rlumenator@aol.com), Cape Coral, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 90 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Due to our arrival time on a cruise, we had no option other than to use the cruise ship dive operation. Although the dive operation itself was good, there was the normal problem in diving with a cruise; too many inexperienced divers, preventing the divemaster from doing much of anything other than preventing them from getting lost or drowning. We were disappointed with the lack of corals and gorgonians, and just the overall underwater topography. We dove Golden Arches and Golden Eel sites, and did get to see fish we don't normally see in Florida or the Caribbean, such as Picasso triggers, kole and yellow tangs, bird nose wrasses, a school of needlefish, and also a crown of thorns, and some variations of other fish. Black sand was unusual. The Hawaiian Islands are beautiful and well worth a visit.

Dive Makai, September 2006, Peter Tsugawa (petertsugawa@earthlink.net), Emeryville, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, calm, surge. After emails and phone conversations with Tom Shockley (the original owner), I was sold. All of the guides and Mike were fantastically friendly, very service-oriented, gave very detailed briefings of each site and, most importantly, the fish we would try to see. I learned more about fish on this trip than all my years of diving. We saw things not many other dive operators would have been

able to point out (blue stripe pipefish, Whitley's boxfish, gigantic pregnant frogfish and male side kick, etc.) Slow-paced dives (great for photographers) and I averaged 60-75 minute dives well within safe recreational diving parameters and computer NDL. They were a great group and Tom found a great new owner to carry on the traditions he had established over the years. It's not a fancy operation, no shop, limited snacks, but a very fun group to dive with and outstanding service. They rinse and store gear for multiple dive days. I had just switched from my trusty N5 system to a dual strobe digital system and Dive Makai and Kona combination was about as good as it gets for learning a new system. Very slow and stopped diving pace, very small groups (as low as 2-6 max per guide), great pre-dive fish identification briefings and extended bottom time at your ability.

Dive Makai, Kona Coast Resort, Phase II, June 2007, Lee Fenner (lee.scuba@yahoo.com), Beachwood, OH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 75 to 79 F, calm, surge. Dive Makai is a high quality operation. Their website information is accurate. Boat takes maximum of 12; 10 on adventure (3-tank) days. Dives are guided, with max. group size of six. Divemasters and owner, Mike (who also dives and drives the boat some days), are extremely friendly, fun, and safety-conscious; but do not impose time limits. They guide using a nice, slow pace and make sure everyone sees the critters. We dove with them six days in row. Manta Ray 2-tank night dive is a must! 1st dive is late afternoon fam dive for area orientation. 2nd dive starts after dark. We saw two mantas up close and personal. We watched them and a friendly moray eel for 30 minutes before finishing the hour dive with a tour. Towels, dry area,

water, tang, and snacks (Costco cookies, carrots, trail mix, and chex mix) are provided. They will keep BC/reg, mask/fins when diving multiple days, but you must take wet gear off boat. They rinse gear daily, and your wet stuff if you want to wait. Boat is ideal for diving and is trailered. You meet in the Honokohau Harbor parking lot and wait for launch at one of two boat ramps. They use steel 80 cu. ft. tanks and start you with six less lbs than you normally use. Of our 13 dives, only one was less than an hour. We got back about 12:30 to 1 p.m. from 2-tank days and at 5:30 p.m. from the 3-tank. Humane pee rule is briefed. If you pee in your wetsuit, they ask you remove your wetsuit and boots before moving off the back of the boat and then rinse yourself and wet gear in the ocean. Rear deck area is large with two ladders, so this isn't too tough to do. Make sure you visit the seahorse aqua farm (www.seahorse.com) about 5 miles from the harbor. They run tours M-F and you can make 2 p.m. tour after diving. Reservations are required. Kona coast underwater topography is beautiful, with lava swim-throughs and pinnacles. Not fishy and large critter sightings are rare. Standard reef fish with some endemic to Hawaii. Saw three sharks and three turtles over the six days. Dolphin schools were spotted on surface. Despite surge most of the time (down to about 20 ft), conditions are great for beginners and those wanting nice, easy, peaceful dives. Kona Coast Resort is about 7 miles south of Kailua-Kona and is a timeshare complex surrounded by golf courses. Some units have ocean view. Units are superb and kept up in near-immaculate condition! Medium-sized rinse tub on boat (also used for lights). Dry area upfront.

Dive Makai, Kona Coast Resort (timeshare), August 2007, James A. Heimer

(jmsjnk@earthlink.net), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, no currents. Dive Makai operates out of Honokohau Harbor. You meet them for the two-tank morning dives at 7:30 a.m. (trade winds make afternoon diving uncomfortable, so dive operators prefer to get an early start and get back before the seas pick up). You drive up to their trailered 34 boat, load your gear on board, then walk to the boat launch to board the boat once it is in the water. Most of the dive sites are within a 20-minute boat ride, and the crew will tailor the selection to the interests of the divers (macro photography, for example). Most dives we did were in the 60- to 80-foot range, with most of the sea life of interest shallower. We saw frog fish, about four species of morays, and multitudes of the colorful wrasse and butterfly fish for which Hawaii is noted. The three crew give detailed dive briefings, and one or two will guide the group, although you have the opportunity to dive your own profile and stop to do photography. The Manta Dive is definitely a staged event. Divers (and snorkelers) from several dive operations assemble in Garden Eel Cove near the airport on their respective boats at dusk (Dive Makai does an afternoon dive as a prelude to the night Manta Dive), then enter the water and add their dive lights to a light array placed in the middle of a sand patch in about 35 feet of water. At least six put on a real performance as they looped and swooped through the soup of plankton attracted by the lights. We concluded this night dive by following several hungry morays hunting on the reef — the yellow tang population took a hit. As an indication of how good Dive Makai is, on the second day of diving we had five tourists on board, three locals, and one Dive Makai dive

master on her day off diving from the boat. UW Photography Comments: Small rinse bucket and fresh water hose on boat for cameras; storage was under seats — no camera table. No shore facilities available, but could use boat wash-down area for quick rinse after the dive.

DiveTek, June 2007, Peter Korn (korn@chutpah.org), Oakland, CA.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. DiveTek was fabulous. For a small extra fee, they provided steel tanks for my wife and me (96 cu. ft. for me, 116 cu. ft. for her — different sizes by my request). They were especially accommodating of my wife's needs (she has rheumatoid arthritis, and they allowed her to walk down into the water via their stairs, and then helped her don her pre-weighted BC; the reverse returning from the dive). They checked in with us a fair amount at first (good as my wife is still a fairly new diver), then cut back from that as we demonstrated our competence. Large and nice boat, especially in relation to the number of divers (space for ~40 tanks behind the benches, half covered). The first day there were three staff (our guide Janice, the owner Keith, and the boat captain), four diving customers, and one staff friend diving (with a rebreather). Second day my wife and I were the only paying customers, with two staff (same guide and captain) and the same rebreathing staff friend. Another accommodation for us: instead of their usual 7:30 am departure time, they departed at 9 am, allowing us time to drive the 90 minutes to Kona from our family's place in Naahlehu (we were the first to book, so our desire set the departure time). My one minor complaint: our wetsuits didn't get enough of a rinse by the staff, especially as we left them overnight for the second dive.

We saw eagle rays, dolphins, octopuses, nudibranchs, trumpet and cornet fish, the beautiful egg roe of a Spanish dancer, a frog fish, and of course, lots of eels (especially at the Garden Eel Cove site) and other local fish. Thanks to our larger capacity tanks, our dives lasted from 53-74 minutes (at max depths ranging from 54-76 feet).

Jack's Dive Locker, November 2006, Jack Gullo (jgullo@carr.org), New Windsor, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. Shore diving at its best. Daily tank rentals with unlimited fills make diving easy. Shop provides maps of the dive site — both on the road and in the water. Dive, drive back to the shop, exchange the tank, drive and dive. Some dive sites can only be done when the wind is not creating huge waves. Jack's is a friendly, convenient operation.

Jack's Diving Locker, Vacation Rental Home - Aloha House, February 2007, Craig Lazanich (clazanich@sbcglobal.net), Sebastopol, CA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 72 to 78 F, surge. We shore dove at Honaunau (Place of Refuge) off two step — this was a nice dive with lots of coral and lots of reef fish. Kealakekua Bay dive was shallow (under 35 feet) — also lots of coral and reef fish. We rented all our gear from Jack's Diving Locker for the shore diving. They provided site maps and directions for good shore diving. We dove off their boat for the night manta ray dive. They do a nice 2-tank dive and allow you to dive your own profile while still guiding the group. The boat is small and the head stinks to high heaven. There is little bench space and little shade. They take a max of 12 divers and 4 snorkelers. Our trip had 12 divers and 3 snorkelers. They did a good job on safety and site

briefing. Both dives are at the same site. The split the group in 2 and a DM led each group. Shep and Jim were knowledgeable about the site and the sea life we encountered. JDL stresses conservation and protection of the mantas and careful instructions to the divers. The mantas were amazing and we could also hear the whales in the distance. A little more food to eat during the surface interval would have been nice since the dive goes from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. (or tell you ahead of time to bring dinner). They provided a half sandwich, potato chips and Chips Ahoy cookies. We only saw turtles while snorkeling. We did not see any dolphins.

Kohala Divers, November 2006, Lori Pottinger, Berkeley, CA. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm. Kohala Divers is a great small dive operation working the Kohala Coast. If you're staying in the condos north of Kona (or Puako rentals, as we did), this is the place to dive. They often do Puako (awesome), or sites north of Kawaihae harbor which the Kona resorts would have a long boat ride to see. We were very impressed with how their divemaster worked with two kids getting certified. The rest of the crew was helpful, informative, very nice, and generally took us to some interesting sites. The caveat was that we went right after the big earthquake, so some sites were damaged that they hadn't had a chance to visit yet. Silting and broken corals were the main damage. Kohala Divers also rents tanks and other gear if you want to do your own shore diving. They gave us great service and wonderful tips for good spots at Puako. We'll be back.

Kohala Divers, Waikoloa Beach Resort, September 2007, Michael Drumstas (mike@delphinusdiving.net), South

Grafton, MA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 81 F, calm. Kohala Divers is located in Kaiwihae shopping center across from the harbor, 45 minutes north of the airport and town of Kona. The operation, which is owned and run by Rebecca and Gregg, is convenient if staying in the hotel district that encompasses a 5 mile corridor around Waikoloa. We stayed in the Waikoloa Beach Resort in a 2-bedroom condo, found on VRBO.com, \$150 per night, 5 minutes from A-Bay beach. Dive shop was 15-minute ride. Diving was scheduled at 7:30 a.m. and boat left pretty much at 7:45 each morning, with dive sites determined by weather, seas, and who on the boat was a return diver so as to not dive the same site. We (Wife >300 dives) dove 5 days with the dive crew and were pleased by their willingness to keep everyone quite content. One dive was started with a small current and the entailing swim back was tedious, but, according to Robin, our divemaster, this was done so that she could locate some pelagics for us, which she most certainly did by finding three eagle rays swimming in formation! Dove south of Kohala at 6 Caves, Puako Point, Puako 38 and Turtle Dome . Puako 38 is a mooring ball and the site of the most incredible turtle cleaning station. All sites north of Waikoloa have great fish life and an extraordinary array of lava tubes that contain fantastic marine life. Saw white tip sharks, octopus, blue dragon nudibranch along with two or three others in 11 dives. Helmet conch, white mouth eel, pyramid butterfly fish, rock movers in juvenile, adolescent and adult stages, flame angelfish, grouper, schools of black durgons as well as schools of yellow tangs. What Hawaii lacks in soft corals, it sure as heck makes up for in abundant sea life. Water temp and vis is the best in September and October, and

tourism has dropped off significantly so the Island is manageable when it comes to visiting topside attractions such as Volcano National Park, Mauna Kea, Waipio Valley etc. Rebecca and Gregg would point out the numerous boats at dive sites that were fish collectors, literally collecting thousands of fish for export for salt water aquariums. It was said that upward of 30 thousand yellow tangs alone are removed monthly. We went to sites where a frog fish was seen for weeks on end, then gone, and other such instances where large groups of tangs would congregate but then only few remain. These people are making a great living for themselves, but what brings Hawaii more income, divers who stay at resorts and condos, contributing to the local economy for a week or two at a time, or these self-serving individuals who only take from a great resource and contribute nothing in return? I only wish the dive operators on the island of Kona would band together and get legislators to enact some serious restrictions before the fish are decimated and divers go elsewhere. Kohala Divers run a tight group of employees who make the diving enjoyable without that "stay in a tight formation and follow me" attitude. Once you establish that you are a competent diver, they give you the option to wander and hang back doing your own thing. I am a NAUI instructor and can say that their pre-dive briefings were concise, along with the boat briefing and emergency action plan .There were also large groups of dolphin that would follow the dive boat almost daily.

Kohala Divers, Hilton Grand Vacations Club, September 2007, Charles W Donaldson (mail7239@gmail.com), Portland, OR. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 72 F, choppy. Kohala Divers is located at

the Kawaihae Shopping Center, up the Kohala Coast from Kona. Hilton Grand Vacations Club at Waikoloa is 30 minutes north of Kona and 25 minutes south of Kawaihae. Given the terrible traffic conditions trying to get into Kona from the north, going up the coast looked good to us. After researching Undercurrent and Scuba Board, I called and reserved two days worth of diving for my adult son and myself. On our first day, we had 7 divers and 2 DMs. A boat briefing was conducted before the boat left the dock. The two refresher divers went off with their instructor and the other DM led our two dives. She provided a good dive site and critter briefing before the dive. Entry is from the back of the boat. Divers sit down, put on their fins while the crew humps your BC to a location behind you and helps you put it on. Divers stand up and do a giant stride into the water. We were advised to descend with our buddies and hang out in the vicinity of the boat until the DM had all divers in the water and down. DM let those wishing to follow on a tour of the dive site. Buddy pairs dive on their own if they wished. The North Kohala Coast is less visited than the area around Kona and the lack of diver and other impact shows in the excellent condition of the coral and abundance of critters. On our 3rd dive we saw a flight of 3 eagle rays that appeared unbothered. Swim-throughs and lava tubes were available on each site and the DMs were happy to take those who wanted to visit them inside. Alternative routes were offered for those who did not. I would rate the dive operation, its equipment, and especially the staff as excellent. UW Photography Comments: Tank only for cameras; crew helpful in getting cameras in and out of water.

Kona Honu Divers, September 2006, Ray Simpkins, Novi, MI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, calm, no currents. Really friendly and customer-oriented. Their boat is in great shape. The dive guides knew a lot and were eager to share. I wish I would have brought a hood for the manta night dive. As for the manta dive, it is one of the most awesome experiences of my life. I took 40 minutes of video and hardly had to edit it. We had 5 show up at our dive. Saw a tiger shark, a few dolphins in the distance, and lots of turtles and tons of eels. I have dove Maui and Lanai but they don't compare to the Big Island. Stayed in a condo and it was nice. Did the volcano thing. We only stayed for 9 nights. UW Photography Comments: had a large bucket and a table on the boat. No rinse tanks on land as the boat is docked at a marina.

Kona Honu Divers, Private Condo , October 2006, John and Sandra Quick, Grand Rapids, MI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, choppy, surge. Our sixth trip to the Big Island. We enjoy it for the endemic species encountered and for the topside attractions. Sometimes we hike in Volcano National Park for a week and then dive week two. We typically rent one of the plentiful private condos. A favorite source for picking out accommodations in Hawaii is "The Big Island Revealed" by Wizard Pubs. They have books on Kauai and Maui too. We usually find their recommendations right-on. We like the Big Island in September and October because kids are back in school and the water is about as warm as it is going to get. First time diving with Kona Honu Divers. Decided to try them after reading good reviews here. Enjoyed our week mightily. Nice operation. Roomy, clean,

well-appointed boat. Friendly and professional staff. We even dove the day of the earthquake, October 15, 2006, even though some staff had damage to their own homes. We showed up at the boat after the initial quake (power and water was disrupted at our condo...what were we to do?) A few other folks showed up, so out we went. Experienced an aftershock under water which was a first (hopefully last). Not really a big deal ... it was a low, steady rumble like a cruise ship was parked over you, idling! Tough we have 450-500 logged dives each, we were often grouped with newbies. No attempt to split up experienced and newer divers. We suppose that was for dive guides benefit so they didn't have all newbies, but it is irritating to be held hostage to the person who consumes air the fastest.

Kona Honu Divers, April 2007, Michael Emerson (medas2005@msn.com), Eden Prairie, MN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, choppy, surge, no currents. Kona Honu Divers was a first class dive operation with a nice boat. We dove 6 dives. My 14-year-old daughter received her advanced certification during the trip and the instruction seemed quite thorough. The boat was beautiful and had great covering for those who wanted to avoid the sun. We got to see schools of spinner dolphins on the way to the dive sites almost every day. The weather was beautiful, although an unusual NW (arctic!) wind brought in more surge than would be typical in early April. We stayed in an ocean view condo which held my family of five comfortably. The condo was Kona Makai on Alii Drive. It was a bit of a drive, especially in traffic, to get to the harbor where the boat was. The manta night dive lived up to its billing even though only one manta

showed up for the show. Kloie (they all have names) did a great performance. On several occasions Kloie brushed right over the top of my children. Puts the whole experience at Stingray City to complete shame. Aquarium was the best dive and we saw some pretty unusual critters including a frogfish and several unusual eels. The real prize, a dragon eel, eluded us on the trip. We also saw a pair of leaf scorpion fish. Compared to other dive destinations in the Pacific, the subject matter was pretty limited. Did see a couple of nice nudis, a frogfish, and a manta that was a challenge to photograph.

Kona Honu Divers, White Sands Village, June 2007, Tim Kolakowski (tkolakowski@choiceonemail.com), Erie, PA. Experience: 251-500 dives.

Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm. It had been 12 years since our last trip to Hawaii. The must-sees include a trip to the Volcano National Park (4000+ feet) and the Moana Kea Observatory (peak 13000+ feet, Visitors Center 9000 feet), and a drive to Hilo and around the island (worth the time). At sea level, take the time to kayak to see the dolphins at Kealakekua Bay, see the City Of Refuge (snorkel here also), boogie board at Magic Sands Beach, and snorkel right offshore at many different beaches in the area. \$120/night for our 2 bedroom/2 bath condo at White Sands Village, 4 miles south of Kona. Check www.sunquest-hawaii.com — they are a rental agent for dozens of condos, hotels, and houses. The beach resorts are 10 to 30 miles north of Kona; there you will spend big \$. The diving was good. Since all my diving has been in the Caribbean, even the common fish were new to me. More colorful than the Caribbean, too, corals and fish both. Many eels, including pairs in the same spot. A few turtles too. Lots of dolphins

on the surface, and I heard the clicking underwater, but saw none. If you're a Caribbean diver, you're used to being picked up and dropped off ... not here. I had to call around until I found Kona Honu Divers, who were able to pick me up in the morning. No one else would. They are an excellent operation, particularly for a newer diver. Wonderful service on the boat, excellent guides. Lots of help available for my new digital camera. The highlight was the night Manta Dive! We saw 2, but other nights saw 8, 10, 12 of them, up to 14' wingspan, giants ballet dancing through the light, passing an inch from our heads!

Kona Honu Divers, August 2007, Scott Johnson (scottj96@aol.com), Murrieta, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. The sixth time I have dove the Kona area. Kona Honu Divers have the best dive guides/instructors I have dove with in Kona, and the boat was great. But they mixed snorkelers, new and experienced divers, specialty divers, etc. on the boat. One day we had about 20 people on the boat plus crew. I resist using the term cattle boat as the staff really busted their butts trying to make you happy. If I had not paid for the weeks dives with Kona Honu, I would have probably gone over to Big Island Divers. They have a smaller boat and only divers on the boat (or the ones I've been on); plus, you can rinse your gear and store it at their shop. Kona Honu did store my BC and wetsuit. Kona Honu is a great operation along with Jacks, I just like smaller groups. Kona Honu is supposed to have a smaller boat arriving in November, catering just to divers. The diving in Kona was nice but uneventful, great visibility, not much in the way of marine life. I could tell a noticeable lack of marine life from the previous years perhaps many of the fish became sushi.

When asking about lack of marine life and seeing small boats with fishing nets near the dive sites, I was told that was an ongoing issue with the state to try to stop it, along with restricting spear fishing. I noticed were snorkel operations out swimming with the dolphins, at least 4 different boats that had snorkelers in the waters and another 4 that looked like they were waiting to jump in as they were chasing the dolphins. The dive ops consider it harassment of the dolphins (which there are laws against). The operators get by with saying they are some type environmental study group or the dolphins came up to their boat. The highlight was the manta dive. The first night we were skunked, the other night I went out was the most incredible manta dive I have ever done (I have done eight manta dives in six trips to Kona). Ten mantas plus Big Bertha came in — wow! This dive alone is worth the trip to Kona. This year the water was a bit cool; temps ranged from 79 to 81. In past years, I have enjoyed 81- to 83-degree water temps.

Kona Honu Divers, September 2007, Ed Neff (neff@compasewsn.com), Troy, NY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 70 to 75 F, calm. I booked the day trip (two dives, with the first being a brief but complete refresher) and then the night dive with the mantas. A large school (20+) of pilot whales was close to our dive sites and we were able to snorkel with them. We saw at least one and maybe two white tip sharks swimming with the whales. Lots a individual pictures were taken, but no way to set up a picture exchange exists with this dive shop — they are rethinking this for future use. The night dives were OK. Both were at the same site and the first was sort of an orientation for the second. The second night dive was the real show. Several

other dive operators were also at the site. All the operators know the drill and have a well rehearsed program. Divers in the water. Park on the bottom for 40 minutes with you lights up and watch the show. Those who were snorkeling were on the surface with lights pointed down. With all the light, the mantas put on a show. Kneeling for 40 minutes in a crowd is getting a little difficult for my old knees. Reports in Undercurrent about this operation are absolutely correct. This is a first class operation. They took my gear the day before the first dive, installed new batteries in my dive computer, delivered my equipment to the boat and set up all of my equipment for every dive. The staff carried the BC and tank to the dive platform and confirmed that everything was set before we went off the platform and into the water. They washed the gear and stored it overnight for the night dive the next day. The night dive they shot a video that could be purchased.

Pacific Rim Divers, August 2006, Patricia Watson (pwatson@brightok.net), Eucha, OK. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 45 to 65 Feet. Water: calm, surge, no currents. Patrice (in charge), Dave and Carlos are savvy, witty, and experienced. Patrice, especially, works as hard as any divemaster we've encountered to find the critters for you, and with her ever on-hand slate, lets you know immediately what you are seeing. She picked up a sea cucumber and carefully dug a small crab out of the anal opening to show us, then carefully put him back and replaced the cucumber! From years of diving the area, she knows where everybody lives or can be found at all the sites. Divers are free to go it on their own, though, if they prefer. (You'll miss a lot!) She is also sensitive to currents, and careful to go elsewhere

if conditions are not conducive to good diving. And the refreshments! Best ever, including great deli wraps one day, brownies to die for every day, a variety of fruit, nuts, chips, etc., and a new (for us) snack: green soy beans in the pod, to which we became addicted. Crunchy and delicious! The like-new boat takes a maximum of six divers, has a shaded area, and is well equipped for safety and comfort.

Pacific Rim Divers, August 2007, Ruth K Nelson (murnel@att.net), Tulsa, OK. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, no currents. One day 40 of dolphins stayed with us for the entire hour and ten minutes we were in the water. Pacific Rim Divers is a small, personal, high-service dive operation. Boat takes maximum of 6 divers. They serve you home-made brownies, fresh fruit and a host of other goodies during the surface interval. When you are finished diving, they wash your equipment. They have rental equipment and nitrox. Loved the diving and we all had a great time.

Kauai

Bubbles Below, January 2007, John Andrews (jbandrews@austin.rr.com), Austin, TX. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 1 to 100 Feet. Water: 72 to 75 F, choppy. We went on 4 dives with Bubbles Below. The first two were daytime dives. Our guide was Linda. She was very thorough about checking our documents and equipment to make sure everything was in working order. She laid out each dive for us clearly. Linda was super-knowledgeable about the marine life in the area. We asked to see sharks, eels and turtles and she made sure we saw them. We also saw many varieties of surgeonfish, triggers, tangs, butterflyfish, damselfish, etc. My

youngest daughter is not yet certified so she stayed topside with Capt. Earl. He helped her spot turtles and other marine life on the surface. The crew was efficient and safety conscious. The boat was nicely set up for diving and large enough to comfortably accommodate the passengers. Bubbles Below doesn't take out more than 8 divers on any one trip. We wanted to dive Niihau. Bubbles Below had enough divers to fill the boat, but decided against the trip due to weather conditions and a stronger current in the area than is normal. Our 3rd and 4th dives were night dives. Because of traffic we were about 30 minutes late, but we called in and the crew held the boat for us. We were on a different vessel this time ... twin-hulled. Once again there was lots of room and the boat was well-organized. We saw plenty of marine life, whales, and a monk seal. Turtles were all over the place once again. There were many, many different species of fish in and around the corals. Lobsters were in abundance as well. The crew was great about helping with our gear and making sure our diving needs were met. Bubbles Below is a family run operation. These guys focus on dive trips only, and don't have a store front. I'll be going out with them again on a return trip to Kauai this summer. UW Photography Comments: Dive operators were fairly accommodating, although we felt a little rushed at times.

Bubbles Below, Marriott Kauai Beach Club, February 2007, Jerry and Christy Bonnington (gjb@mtaonline.net), Eagle River, AK. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 74 to 75 F, calm. This is our 8th or 9th year of diving with Linda and Bubbles Below. We were able to take a rare February trip to Niihau. We had an absolutely perfect day of diving! The diving at Niihau is pristine, with great visibility

in winter. We encountered mantas, sharks, whales (both humpback and pilot), spinner dolphins along with the usual Hawaiian endemic species. The dive master, Joe, did a terrific job and was extremely knowledgeable about the critters and the topography and natural history of Kauai. Peter was the captain, and made this a special trip. As usual, we were all well fed and taken care of. We actually were able to snorkel and swim with the whales on the crossing back to Port Allen! Linda's enthusiasm hasn't waned over the years, and somehow she continues to employ the best dive crews.

Bubbles Below, Keahuna Plantation, September 2007, G. R. Benson (gbenson@tribcsp.com), Casper, WY. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, surge. Dive sites were varied and full of marine life. Lots of sharks, turtles, seals, eels, lionfish, frogfish, Moorish idols, several species of butterflyfish, etc. (Corals and sponges are not what you look for here.) Interesting turtle 'cleaning stations' where several 200+ lb. turtles (paying no attention to divers) allowed tang to eat the algae off their shells. Owner of Bubbles Below, Linda (for over 20 years), knows the underwater environs around Kauai like no other. As divemaster she pointed out lots of fish and critters indigenous to Hawaii, telling us the common as well as scientific names. Friendly and efficient crew were helpful and most were knowledgeable too. Trips to NaPali and Niihau (only available weather permitting) were worth the extra time and cost, offering changes in scenery and marine life. Boats (6 pack and 8 pack) are beginning to show their age, but adequate. No fresh water dunk tanks or tables for camera gear. They leave from Port Allen — south shore. Good dive briefings

before each dive. Ample water, sodas, cookies, candy, etc. between dives.

Seasport Divers, October 2006, Roger Cole (coleroger@msn.com), Genoa, NV. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 72 to 75 F, calm, no currents. I had called in my reservation a couple days before and what gear I needed was ready and waiting. The DM had me try it for fit. They verified my C card, loaded us into a van and we went to the boat. Aboard they briefed us on boat equipment, safety, etc., assigned us numbers and had a roll call. The DM explained dive computers and related gear. At the first dive site the conditions were perfect — dead flat, no wind or chop and below the vis was 60 feet plus most of the time and no current. We were assigned 5 divers per DM and could pretty much do our own thing as long as we checked with the DM occasionally for air check (good idea for the newer divers). He showed us many fish, turtles and other interesting creatures, corals and formations. We were around 90 to 95 feet for 27 minutes that dive, which required a 3-minute stop at 15 feet on the ascent. Back aboard we answered to roll call and proceeded to the next site. Plenty of bottled water and munchies. The second dive was pretty much the same except depth was around 35 to 50 feet for 45 minutes with a 3-minute stop at 15 feet. This was my second year diving with Seasports and I was very satisfied with all aspects of the operation. The equipment is very good, the crew is fantastic, boat is big and wide enough to accommodate all 12 of us and our gear. A plus for me is the ladders on the boat. They slope away from the boat and have wide flat rungs with good rails. Makes it much easier to get aboard for us older folks.

Seasport Divers, February 2007, Marta Arensberg (mjarens@comcast.net), Issaquah, WA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 72 to 75 F, choppy, surge, no currents. Divers grouped by certified or non-certified. Divemaster led dives, mandatory 3 min stop at 700 lbs. Excellent fish ID by divemaster throughout dive. Video review at shop upon return. DVD purchase available, good quality. Boat spacious, great Captain, clean and safety conscious. Wonderful personnel at Seasport Divers, Poipu location. Meet at dive shop, show c-card and rent gear if needed. Nitrox available for each dive. Five-minute van ride to harbor where their spacious boat, Anela Kia, takes up to 16 divers, but both trips I was on had only 6 divers on board. Plenty of space even with a full load on board. Capt. Andrew was professional and happy to accommodate us each trip. Dive masters Ryan and Nico (on trip one) and Mike (on trip two) were excellent dive guides. They took the time to search out the usual and not so usual cast of Hawaiian waters creatures and fish. Wonderful sightings including a purple leaf scorpion that looked like an orchid! Saw Indian nudibranch, Spanish dancer nudibranch egg sacks, several large frog fish, fuchsia flat worms, octopus, tiger cowry, Hawaiian green sea turtle, fried egg nudibranch, and the list goes on. The entire crew was happy to share their underwater world with us, new diver and veteran divers alike. They handled our personal gear with care, and explained rental gear to those in need. The Anela Kai is the largest dive boat on the South Kauai shore. Seasport Divers shop has many great “divers needs” available for sale.

Seasport Divers, Hanalei Bay Resort, May 2007, Nili Hudson (nili@nilihudson.com), Los Angeles, CA. Experi-

ence: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 82 F, surge. It has taken me 3 trips to Kauai to get to Niihau. This is a 2-hour trip to the Forbidden Island which can only be visited certain times of the year due to high seas. There are roughly 200 native Hawaiians on this privately owned island and we are forbidden to go ashore. A 3-tank dive day that began at 6:00 a.m. when we met up at the dive shop on the South Shore in Poipu and ended at 6:00 p.m.. I've dove both the South and North Shores of Kauai and have considered Hawaii slightly overrated for diving, but, Niihau has been fabulous. There is an overwhelming lack of coral, marine plants and sponges but magnificent walls of volcanic rock with incredible shapes and formations, yet, there was an abundance of fish. 2 of the 3 dives we did were drift dives and there was a moderate but considerable current. Moorish idol, crown of thorns, long nose butterfly, porcupine pufferfish, red heart sea urchin, saddle wrasse, raccoon butterfly, black tip reef shark, spotted eagle ray, monk seal, spinner dolphins, blackside hawkfish, manybar goatfish, star pillow, tiger cowrie shell, convict tang, pennantfish, arc-eye and longnose hawkfish, Hawaiian squirrelfish, bluestripe snapper, orangebar surgeonfish, lei triggerfish, milletseed butterflyfish, zebra flatworm, bandit angelfish, reticulated butterflyfish, whiteline triggerfish, eye striped, goldring and orange spine surgeonfish, Hawaiian dascyllus! It was a glorious day with the sun shining and the seas calm on the ride over. Unfortunately, I experienced my first bout of sea sickness on the way back; it is a rough ride back, so be prepared. It was a lovely boat and the crew were somewhat helpful and did their best to leave me alone. The ride over was beautiful and

we were entertained with stories about the islands history, inhabitants and folklore. Directly off of Niihau is Lehua, where we dove at Vertical Awareness, Keyhole and Niihau Arches — Arches being the most architecturally interesting with swim-throughs and cave-like formations. Max depth was 103 feet on the first 2 dives and 68 feet on the last. I enjoyed Seasport Divers and would certainly give them high marks. UW Photography Comments: Small bucket on boat for rinsing. Small table but not designated solely for cameras so there were potential hazards.

Lanai

Trilogy Excursions, Four Seasons Manele Bay Resort, October 2006, Wayne and Stephanie Batzer (wbatzer@prodigy.net), Waipahu, HI.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, choppy. On Trilogy's website were listed the week's dive activities, and advertised a "Drift Dive Friday," restricted to only those divers who had dived and passed muster previously during the week, or those who were drift dive certified. As a drift dive instructor, I called Trilogy's 1-800 number for their website. It took five calls before the phone was ever answered. I explained that a group of 4 of us from Oahu who were drift dive instructors and certified drift divers wanted to go on the Friday drift dives. I was questioned about our experience level (over 100+ drift dives in Palau, Pohnpei, Hawaii, etc.), and our familiarity with the Hawaiian waters. I was told two things: bring your drift dive certification cards; book through the Manele Bay concierge. I called the concierge, explained the desire again to charter a 2-tank drift dive for 4 locals, and the concierge booked us. Upon

arriving and checking in for the dive, I found out that although we were booked locally, we were being booked at the tourist rate. The concierge called the dive operation, and that was resolved. Then the concierge told us a fifth person had been booked onto our charter. I noticed that he was an OW diver. We were not informed of any change to the dive plan. We went to the first dive site after receiving the boat briefing, and received a safety brief consisting of a few hand signals, a dive time of 35 minutes at 60 feet, and a return to boat pressure of 500 psi. I told the guide that we would be nowhere near 500 psi at that time, and he brushed it off. We descended, and the guide paid very close attention to the OW diver as he descended, as he should, and then he took off like a shot, leaving us. We followed more slowly so we could get photos. We caught up, and the guide took off again, headed back to the boat to a swim through. He and the OW diver swam through, and disappeared. We went through, took photos, and circled the coral formation. We stayed under the boat a while longer, and at 55 minutes we did our safety stop, and ascended. When we got to the dock, the guide asked me to use the dive computer to calculate our bottom time at 60 feet with a 40 minute interval. The SUUNTO yielded 41 minutes, and the guide left. He came back, pulled us off the boat, and began to lecture us about exceeding the PADI standard dive tables and his worry about liability. I became quite upset, as we had chartered the boat for the advanced dives, planned our dives at the appropriate depth, and dived them safely. We asked the guide what he wanted, and he said to dive his plan. We went out of the harbor and stopped at first cathedral. The guide went in the water, did no safety or dive

site briefing, had the OW diver come in, and then descended without us. We followed, and he was rushing off yet again. We went into the cathedral behind him, he immediately exited, and took off. With him nowhere in site, we exited the cathedral and did a slow circle, and found him. As soon as we reached him, he took off again. I saw him ascend, so gave the safety stop sign to my companions, and exited the water. As on the first dive, neither he nor the driver helped us onto the boat or with gear removal. We also were not assisted out of the boat at the end of the day. Absolutely no support for underwater photography, and the dive guide did not bother to brief on any photography subjects or take the time to let us do any photography, despite 3 of 4 of us traveling with cameras.

Maui

B&B Scuba, June 2007, Fiona Rattray, Elora, On. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm, choppy, surge. I noticed two locals spearfishing off the beach at my condo, and they recommended B&B Scuba "in a little mall behind the Taco Bell." for to rent tanks and weights and get good directions for shore diving. They have a dive boat, too, but I wanted to just shore dive. I did Ulua beach, Kiawapaka beach, and Palaua beach, just poking around, taking my time and looking at critters. A good Maui "secret," and I liked the shop's attitude.

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, August 2006, Jeanne and Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net), Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 F, calm. We dove three days with Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures and stayed in a pleasant bungalow attached to Ed's house

consisting of a living/dining room, full kitchen, bedroom with queen-size bed, and bath. Another bedroom and bath can be utilized at an additional cost. There is also an elevated deck from which the ocean and sunsets can be viewed. Also available are a grill, coolers, laundry, and covered parking, all at a very reasonable price. A two-minute walk down the street is the main office for Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, also where they keep their two boats and another rental chalet. Our car rental was from Maui cruisers, with extremely reasonable prices and older automobiles with character that made us look like locals. We had a ten-minute drive to the dock where the boats were launched; awaiting us at 6:30 a.m. were a welcoming staff with coffee, juice, bagels, and waiver forms. Departure was 7 a.m., gear was handed up to the boat and put together by the staff; no more than 10 guests plus staff were on each 30' or 32' boat. Four to six divers are grouped with a guide; each of the three guides we dove with was competent and enthusiastic, looking for things to point out to us. Although we dove Molokini Crater four times, we never did the same dive site twice; they try to give repeat customers new dives each time. The three-tank day the water was flatter than normal so they excitedly took us to "Turtle Rock," a site they only get to 20 times a year, an hour and a half away. Between dives on two-tank days we were offered fresh fruit and pastries, three-tank days also included do-it-yourself sandwiches. Water, lemonade, and soda were always available. The diving is pleasant, not much coral since this is a volcanic island, but the turtle-cleaning station is pretty cool, and we saw several kinds of eels, two giant frogfish, an eagle ray, octopus, a few sharks, and Spanish dancer eggs. An-

other pretty cool dive was the wreck of the Corinthian, a fairly new wreck sunk by the Atlantis sub; our captain timed our dive to coincide with the passing of the Atlantis, so we got to wave at the passengers. During the winter months listening to the whale songs underwater is a rush. We explored the island, doing several early morning hikes. And on our last morning on Maui we experienced our first earthquake, a 6.6 with the epicenter off the Big Island. Airports and electricity were disrupted throughout the Hawaiian Islands for several hours — it took us an extra four hours to make our way from Maui to Honolulu, where we were staying overnight to catch an early morning flight to Bikini. There was no electricity in any of the hotels, including Waikiki, which were overflowing with tourists whose flights were cancelled. Luckily the electricity came back on by 1:00 a.m. and the airport was functional earlier than that. When we arrived at the Honolulu airport at 5 a.m., it looked like a refugee camp with people sleeping everywhere, and there were already long lines of travelers trying to get home. Not too many trying to get to Bikini, though, and we left on time for a fabulous week of deep wreck diving on World War II wrecks.

Ed Robinson's, Marriott Ocean Club, December 2006, Hilary (OreDen@ aol.com, Vancouver, WA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 200 Feet. Water: 74 to 77 F, calm. The crew was outstanding, both on land and in the water, and we saw more marine life than we've ever seen on previous trips to Maui. They tend to dive deeper profiles than other operators on Maui, even on their 2-tank charters. A diver should be comfortable doing a 90-foot dive and boarding a boat in moderate seas before booking with Ed Robin-

sons. They frequently do live boat dives and when the trade winds kick up, reboarding the boat can be challenging. Ironically, our best charter started out with us not being sure we would be able to dive that day. On the way out of the harbor, the boat started overheating and our captain, Mark, had to shut down the engines. Eventually we were underway again. Because the temperature was creeping up again and Mark didn't want to abort the trip, he simply feathered back the ailing engine and let the other one do more work. He also chose S. Maui off-shore sites instead of taking us to Molokini. Our first dive had us dropping in on 5 spotted eagle rays, all of which stuck around for the first few minutes of our dive we not only heard extremely loud and melodic whale song, but we saw a huge variety of nudibranchs, leaf scorpionfish, Hawaiian lionfish, Commerson's frog fish (2), a huge variety of shrimp, many aggressive damselfish, and some unique, curious pipefish. Of course this is in addition to a large variety of tropical fish and a few turtles. Our second dive turned out to be just as good, as we immediately dropped down and had a close encounter with a manta! We again heard the incredible loud voices of the humpback whales and scanned the blue water for a sighting, but of course never saw one. This dive was as good as the previous one, with us finding the same assortment of marine life. Everywhere we looked there were lionfish, various cleaner shrimp, leaf scorpionfish, and we were treated to a couple of mantis shrimp — the amazing creatures that our DM, Dave, found for us. There were a couple of photographers. Dave always went at a perfect (slow) pace so that we could find, see and photograph everything possible, and his skill at finding tiny creatures was amazing.

We dove with Ed Robinson's the next day and, although we didn't have the quantity of rare and amazing sightings that we did the day before, we still were treated to whale song, sharks, a close encounter with a hawksbill turtle, and many, many creatures we had seen during the previous week ... just not all on the same dive.

Ed Robinson's, May 2007, Bob Barada (bbarada@pacbell.net), Walnut Creek, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, calm. Nice, calm water because the trade winds laid down for a few days. We dove both ends of Molokini and the back side. Small gray reef sharks, one white tip. Three spotted eagle rays flying in formation. Lots of fish and eels, including alligator sand eel and garden eels. One frogfish. Essentially drift diving format off Molokini with the boat following the divers. Dove off Kihei twice. Lots of huge green turtles, including a well-populated cleaning station. Some fairly rare fish like turkey fish and lion fish. One octopus. Numerous nudibranchs. Ed Robinson dive operation is "valet style" with them hooking up and handling your gear for you. Dive masters found all the rare and small stuff. We dove Nitrox (\$15 each tank) and the Dive master diving air stayed shallower the second dive so he could stay down as long as we did and not approach NDL limits, allowing us to utilize all our gas. One Dive master to each 6 divers. We had lots of leaking O-rings, one bad enough that it shortened his dive.

Ed Robinson's Maui Adventures, May 2007, Roger Roth (rroth2@cincinnati.com), Cincinnati, OH. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 76 F, calm. There were numerous turtle encounters, eels, and frogfish most every day. It was also

enjoyable to listen to the whale songs. Molokini Crater was dived a lot as per divers' requests and it never got boring, whether inside the crater, on the outer rim, or on the backside of Molokini. We also had a number of manta encounters. Nudibranchs were abundant, as were the beautiful butterflyfish, angelfish, squirrelfish, hunting jacks, bannerfish, Moorish idols, sergeant majors, and surgeonfish. Ed's crew was fabulous at finding flame angelfish, harlequin shrimp, decoy scorpionfish, Spanish dancer, and a juvenile milky scorpionfish. Ed has a new type of diving he calls his "Adventure X" trip, where more experienced divers are allowed to dive their own profiles whether with a buddy or solo. Some of these dives can also be at deeper sites where many operators don't visit. When I had a regulator malfunction, Ed's crew had an extra one onboard and mine was switched out between dives. His crews are knowledgeable about the dive sites as well as the marine life. They are also reef-conscious. UW Photography Comments: Ed Robinson has a good rinse tank onboard his boats, his crew is attentive to divers and their cameras, and the crew handle the cameras well.

Ed Robinson Dive Adventures, Hyatt Regency Maui, September 2007, James A. Heimer (jmsjnk@earthlink.net), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, currents, no currents. They go out of the Kihei Boat Ramp on West Maui, as do many other dive operators, an hours drive from the Kaanapali Resort, where we were staying, and due to the afternoon trade winds, everyone starts diving at 6:30 in the morning to be back before the seas pick up. A 5:30 stop at the Lahaina Safeway for coffee and donuts to go became part of the routine. ERDA has two 30' aluminum

boats on trailers at the boat ramp (every other dive operator does the same), onto which gear can be loaded before parking nearby. When the boats are launched, you hop aboard. Your BC and regulator will be on a tank, with fins, booties, mask and wet suit neatly stowed nearby, courtesy of the two-member boat crew and two dive masters on board. Each boat takes a max of 12 divers, divided into two groups of six with a dive master guide for each. Each of our three-day two-tank dives started at the Molokini crater, about 15 minutes from the harbor. We did two drift dives with current and blue water safety stops around the tips of the crater, then — on the specific request of my wife with a view toward macro photography — did one no-current dive with the boat anchored on the mid reef dead center on the crater. These dives might go as deep as 100 feet, and the second dives each day were done at a near shore site, though at 65 feet, we usually were limited by bottom time, not air. The visibility at the crater was in the 100-foot range, and we saw white tip sharks in groups, eels, frogfish, a flying (or helmet) gurnard, and schools of the more common (in Hawaii) millet, pyramid, and raccoon butterfly fish, plus wrasse, squirrel fish, spotted grouper, and more. On the shallow dives with lower visibility, we encountered large, approachable turtles, leafy scorpion fish, cleaner shrimp at work on eels, and spinner dolphins at the start of the dive and a lone, curious bottlenose at the end. Dive masters tended to overestimate the abilities of the divers in an attempt to offer them the most interesting diving opportunities. This resulted in one diver making her first open ocean dive and first dive after certification a drift dive in 80 feet of water and a 2 knot current with a

blue water safety stop required prior to recovery at the end. We doubt she will ever put fins on again. When we had specific requests to accommodate photography (e.g., no current, boat at anchor), they spent time at three different sites evaluating conditions before picking one that turned out to be the best dive of the trip, and they would have done the same for anyone who made specific interests known to the crew. UW Photography Comments: Plastic tubs to store cameras under seats and rinse bucket on boat. No facilities on shore, except to use hose at boat wash-down area.

Extended Horizons, August 2007, Steven Rosenfeld, Westlake Village, CA. Experience: 1000 dives. Vis: 50-100 feet. Water: 80 F, calm to choppy. The boat is a 32' vessel built for diving. There are tank racks with storage for dive gear underneath. If your dive bag is too large, it is stored up forward until the end of the trip. The vessel has a head on board and cover from the sun. The boat is small but well organized. They take out 12 divers with 2 dive guides and break off into 2 groups. The first trip was to Lanai, about a 45 minute boat ride. We dove the First Cathedral and the second dive was at Fish Rock. Both were great dives with good conditions. The reefs in the area appear to be in good shape. On another day we dove the wreck of the Carthaginian; it was sunk off of Lahaina in 2005 by the Atlantis Submarine Company. The wreck lies in about 95 feet of water on a sandy bottom. The divers stay on the wreck when the submarine circles closely, exchanging photo ops with the divers. The second dive was on the remains of an old pier near the boat dock. We had 100' visibility and saw turtles and 5 eagle rays. The trips are 2-tank dives and run about 4-5 hours. The boat

has drinks and snacks. The crew was friendly and knowledgeable.

Lahaina Divers, Marriott Ocean Club, December 2006, Hilary, Vancouver, WA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 200 Feet. Water: 74 to 76 F, calm. We have been diving with Lahaina Divers for several years. Although we only use them for our Lanai trips, due to their large, comfortable boats and the easy crossing from Lahaina, we were very disappointed on this trip and likely will not use them again. We have always known that they run fairly strict depth and time limits due to their charter schedule and short SIs; however, we have never felt as restricted as we did on this trip. We did two charters with them, and although the first one was fine, we heard some complaints from other divers and our second charter echoed those complaints. Our DM on our second charter treated us as if we were newbie divers, even though he was well aware of our history with Lahaina Divers and our experience level. It appeared that most of the divers on that charter were rather new and we were two of a small handful of divers who had our own gear. The DM asked us for our tank pressure not 10 minutes into the dive and seemed shocked when we had over 2200 psi, but didn't ask again until the end of the "tour." We were hurried along through the cathedrals with very little time to look for small critters and take pictures. 30 minutes into each dive, we found ourselves under the boat and spent the rest of our dives there ... which turned out to be the best part of our dives. It was very clear that the DMs who have been around for awhile offer more personalized service and listen to their clients' needs, while the newer people seem to follow a routine instead. They hurry you along the dive route, don't find or

point out any interesting critters (and I found a lot that the DM blew past), and are uncomfortable giving much latitude to experienced divers.

Maui Dive Shop, Hyatt Regency Maui, January 2007, Paul Schmieder (pschmieder@sbcglobal.net), Bellville, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 72 to 74 F, calm, choppy, no currents. On our first full day we were strolling along Whalers Village to buy gifts for our home folks when, turning a corner, I came face to face with the northern branch of Maui Dive Shop. I signed up for a next day 2-tank trip to the Cathedrals on Lanai and, the day after that, another 2-tanker to Molokini Island, a semi-submerged volcanic crater. Because late morning and afternoon trade winds tend to increase choppiness, the dive groups for these trips assemble dockside at Wailea Harbor by 6:30 am, which is just before dawn. Coming from the U.S. central time zone proved to be advantageous and with our 4-hour difference in relative times the early start was enjoyable. As night turned into day, we were well on our way toward the Cathedrals on Lanai, which is 25 miles or about a 2 hour boat ride away. Maui Dive Shops boat is equipped for up to 24 divers but, amazingly, there were only 6 divers and 4 crewmembers on board. I was just past the peak tourist season when they're typically packed to capacity and, otherwise, they'll run even if there is only one diver booked. Apparently, this is their time to enjoy the wonder of diving, as well. With just 6 divers we were allowed the leeway to dive and explore according to the pre-determined depth limits and our available air as long as we had more than their minimum 800 lbs. PSI air in the tank before ascending to a safety stop at 15 feet. The crew was exceedingly friendly, helpful and per-

formed all the first/second stage, tank and BCD connections. Additionally, the dives were guided with enthusiasm and an inclination to show a Hawaiian newcomer everything. Hawaiian diving, it does not have Caribbean-esque coral formations — they tend to be shorter and more tightly grouped, almost cauliflower-like in texture — but diving here does have plenty of volcanic formations and an abundance of fish. And so, on the next day I fell in love with Molokini, which is a shorter boat ride of about 10 miles and where I could actually hear distant whale song while underwater and in the midst of a host of colorful fish. I did not dive on the third day so that I would be able to safely drive to the top of Haleakala, Maui's dormant volcano, on day four. At 10,023 feet in elevation it was necessary to follow post-dive altitude protocol, but well worth the view.

Maui Dive Shop, June 2007, Fiona Rattray, Elora, On. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Maui Dive Shop has several locations on the island. I wasn't able to get in with Mike Severns, my first choice, but did get the last spot on the advertised "two-tank Molokini crater" dive for the next day with MDS. The first dive was on the crater, the second was 5 caves. There were maybe 20 divers on the Kama Kai, which departed from Maalaea Harbor, not nearly as close as the Kihei Boat Ramp. The ride out was a long one. There was a 20-minute delay as the boat needed its head pumped out; again, no biggie, but if the departure time is stated as 6 a.m., it does seem like forever to wait near the pumper truck while it does its job. Divers were sorted into three groups. Each group had a divemaster, and how the system worked was head up when you reach 800 PSI.

Hoovers went up first, and those with better lungs or SAC rates stayed longer with the divemaster. It did accommodate all levels of experience. Molokini Crater was fun. We went down to a sand chute that launched out into nothing at the drop off. Lay in the sand at 88 feet looking at garden eels for a bit. The divemaster found a frogfish. Also a baby whitetip shark. But why do Hawaiian divemasters insist on writing aloha on sea cucumbers, then holding them up for all to see? One by one the other divers went up, till only one other and myself gamely dived on with the divemaster. Lots more to see with less other divers around! The second dive at 5 caves included a brief detour into a lava bubble cave that had air in it. Saw a zebra stripe moray fighting? mating? with another moray. Lots of turtles. Water and cookies provided on boat.

Maui Dreams, Mana Kai Condominiums, June 2007, Fiona Ratray, Elora, On. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm, choppy, surge. I chose Maui Dreams due to Undercurrent reviews. I met Rachel at the shop, got tanks and weights squared away, and followed her truck and the scooters to Keawapaku Beach. Parking fills up early, but we were there at 8 a.m. to catch the less windy part of the day. After a briefing on how to use the scooter and review of safety procedures, we geared up and waded out. In about 5 feet of water, Rachel showed me how to hop on the scooter and start and stop (this model you hold between your knees and fly like Superman underwater). Rachel then took me on a tour of the reef and headed out to the St. Anthony wreck. Normally this could be a 45-minute swim out, but on the scooter it took 8 minutes max. James Bondish to arrive at the wreck, put the scooters down in the sand, and swim around

the divers off a dive boat who were also doing the wreck. Heh heh. Shaken, not stirred. The second dive was a mystery location, some reeflet jutting off the sand plain, covered in fish and invertebrates. Eels, leaf scorpionfish, school of bannerfish, and so on. This was a meditative 77-minute dive, and we still had air to spare. Rachel is a great guide, knows lots about the local fish life.

Mike Severns Diving, October 2006, Bill McGrath (wfm3@cornell.edu), Chandler, AZ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm, choppy. Overall, this is a wonderful dive operator for either advanced or beginning divers. The divers are broken up into small groups, and are led by a divemaster. He or she will lead the divers on a well-guided tour of the underwater environment, showing the habitual locations of many interesting, and often rare, critters. The dives are preceded by a thorough briefing on both the underwater topology and the likely critters to be seen. Books with good photographs are used (one of which was written by Pauline Fiene, the owner) so that the divers will know what they might see. If you began the dive with a buddy, both divers are expected to start up when the first diver reaches 700 psi. If you dive with someone who uses air at a vastly different rate, this could be problematic. If you came by yourself, they won't arbitrarily pair you with someone, so you will have more flexibility. If you sip air, you can dive your own computer profile without pre-set time/depth limits. We dove Molokini Crater every day because recent heavy rains made the viz poor at the dive sites near shore. Late in our trip, after the rains abated, we were able to dive the Landing Craft, the St. Anthony's Wreck, and 85 Foot Pinnacle. Each of these sites has its own interest-

ing collection of resident critters, and the divemasters made a great effort to point them out. The boat is meticulously maintained, and takes a maximum of 12 divers. The snack table is loaded with yummy fresh cookies, tasty sticky buns, and salty snacks like nuts, crackers and pretzels. Fruit, soda, water and hot coffee are also provided. The crew was friendly and fun. Each diver was polled as to what he/she would like to see on the dive, and that information was used as one of the criteria for site selection. Crew members happily entertained questions on local flora and fauna. They also ascertained the experience level of each diver so that no one would be placed in a situation in which they might not be comfortable. I was with my girlfriend who is a newbie to diving. I am an Assistant Instructor with a lot of experience. We were both happy with the approach taken by Mike Severns Diving.

Mike Severns, Marriott Renaissance Wailea Beach, March 2007, Ron Wade (wader1352@hotmail.com), Chicago, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 72 to 74 F, calm. Picked Mike Severns based on other positive reviews on Undercurrent.org. They were a great dive operation. thorough briefings by divemasters who had a minimum of 6 years experience diving Maui. Provided warm cinnamon rolls, cookies, trail mix, goldfish, pretzels, bagels, coffee, hot chocolate, water, soda and juice. Quite a spread. focused on safety — well equipped boat with EPIRB, oxygen and first aid kit. Took max of 12 divers, split into two groups of 6, each with their own divemaster. Kept buddies together, but didn't force singles to buddy up. Saw lots of great indigenous sea-life, 15+ sea turtles on one dive, could also hear the humpback whales singing during the dives. No

preset dive site schedule — crew polled the divers and took requests. Molokini crater was a interesting site — we got there early and beat the other dive and snorkel boats. Boat leaves from Kihei boat launch at 6:30 a.m. — convenient to Wailea and Kihei resorts. Separate rinse tank and camera storage area that was clearly marked off. Divemasters went out of their way to point out unique small critters and also did their best to let photographers get the pics first before others took a look and stirred up the sand.

Mike Severns, April 2007, Hank Goichman (goichphoto@earthlink.net), Los Angeles, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 F, calm, currents. The first dive at Molokini Crater was beset with problems — mainly a strong current. The dive master admitted to taking us too far and then we had to literally hold onto coral to get back to the boat. When I surfaced, I had no air but did do a safety stop at 20 feet. We saw one shark in the distance. The other dives were uneventful; the vis at Molokini was excellent (close to shore was only 40-50 feet). The operation is still good, but having dived in Puerto Rico last year at La Parguera, I found the diving in Maui somewhat disappointing. When you can see the large critters. things even out a bit; however, if you do not, well, it is still fun, but not great. The max. number on the boat was 10. They meet at 6:15 at the Kihei boat ramp. There are snacks and drinks onboard. On the closer-in dives there were many turtles and a large sting ray. If you book 3 days of diving, you get a discount.

Mike Severns Diving, June 2007, Chris Jones (cj_cos@msn.com), Colorado Spring, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 65 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 79 F,

choppy, surge. Their guides take an extraordinary amount of time on pre-dive briefings to tell you specifically what to look for and to explain any behaviors you might expect from the sea life. They answer any questions, and do not guess if they do not know. The dives are relaxed, with special attention focused on getting all divers (in two small groups of up to 6 each) in close to see the small critters. There is personal follow-up after the dive to answer any questions you have. They make every attempt to accommodate requests; the dive sites for the day are not chosen in advance, but only after consultation with their customers. There is a high chance that every first dive of the day will be out at Molokini (not a bad thing!). Pauline (the owner) takes an extraordinary amount of pride in her operation and her DMs, and it shows. All guides have extensive experience and/or backgrounds in marine biology or marine science. The attention to divers needs and customer service is outstanding. On one dive, we were dismayed by the underwater presence of one of our dive group (nicknamed the “human torpedo” or “coral smasher”). When communicating this to the crew, the boat captain suited up and dove with just the two of us on the next dive! Experienced divers are trusted and respected; new divers are given more attention. Single, experienced divers are not forced to buddy up with another single. UW Photography Comments: A specific set-aside area for cameras and that the crew took the time to hand down cameras from the boat after divers were in the water. Boat Captain Andy is knowledgeable about UWP and served as a good resource for other UWP.

Mike Severns Diving, June 2007 Mike Davis, New Zealand. Experience: 1400

dives. I dove Molokini crater off Maui for 3 days with Mike Severns Diving. I found them an excellent little dive organization. Pauline Fiene is one of the most outstanding dive guides I have dived with in a 45-year dive career. Her dives were orchestrated like an underwater ballet and her knowledge of Hawaiian marine life was exceptional with superb, informative pre- and post-dive briefings.

Mike Severns Diving, June, 2007, Bill McCausland (wsmcc@earthlink.net). Sebastopol, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 80 feet. Water: 78 F, calm in morning, whitecaps in afternoon. Mike Severns Diving makes world-class diving out of non-world-class dive sites. We were amazed at how good the diving was. Pauline Fiene-Severns, a biologist with over 7,000 dives (mostly in Maui, but also while doing research in Indonesia) and co-author of “Molokini Island: Hawaii Premier Marine Preserve, is clearly the best divemaster we have ever had. The two-tank dive operation goes out and comes back early to beat the afternoon rough seas caused by the trade winds. The operation is seamless and well-organized. The 38-foot well-maintained boat has twin Volvo Penta Sterndrives engines — no diesel fumes — and there is a head and fresh water rinse. The 12 diver maximum is divided into two divemaster-led groups. The personable divemasters have the winning combination of being completely knowledgeable, intelligent, and having good social skill. They alternated providing expert dive orientations that focused on the topographic features and sea life of each dive site. Each divemaster was excellent. Pauline is charmed and a mistress of underwater nuances. The boat captain kept things running smoothly and had a knack of piqu-

ing an irreverent sense of humor in everyone. We dived the Kihei-Wailea coast, Makena Beach, and inside the terraced basin and backside wall of the crescent-shaped Molokini crater. There was a WWII landing craft at one site and a 40-foot wreck at another. We used mooring sites on the inside of the Molokini and the rest were drift dives. Corals included black (Molokini wall), cauliflower, finger and antler. We saw a lot of sea life: long-nosed butterflyfish, frogfish, snapper, manybar goatfish, juvenile yellowtail wrasse (clownfish look alikes) and various other wrasse, parrotfish, spotted boxfish (spectacular looking), sea cucumber, endemic sergeant, scorpionfish, thornback cowfish, Hawaiian squirrel fish, Hawaiian garden eels, brown anemone, lionfish, Hawaiian bigeye, damselfish, common chub, fantail filefish, blennies and the endemic Ewa blenny, porcupine puffers, triggerfish, gobies, mantas with remora attached, white tip reef sharks, blue dragon nudibranch (intriguing sighting), flatfish, yellow tang, octopus, trumpetfish, needlefish, jacks, lizardfish, Hawaiian green turtles, et al. We thought that the turtles were on the payroll — one actually brushed me as it cruised by. All the other divers were experienced and had dived at world-class dive sites. Comfort with buoyancy control is important to be able to take it all in. Dale and Rich Pounder's B&B, Eva Villa — privacy in a quiet Kihei-Wailea neighborhood: a studio, two bedroom and a cottage — that's it — and a reasonable price. There is a pool and barbeque with a non-party atmosphere. Five minutes from the Kihei Boat Ramp — site of dive departures.

Prodiver, February 2007, Scott George (scottgeo@earthlink.net), Hawthorne, CA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 130 to 150 Feet. Water: 73 to 76 F, choppy,

surge. Based upon feedback I saw in Undercurrent, I went with Prodiver out of Wailea. Prodiver was an excellent operation. They limit their boat to 6 divers maximum and they are the first boat out of the Kihei boat ramp each morning. The first dive is at the Molokini Crater and the second dive is usually a site near the South Maui shore (our group's second dive was at 5 Caves). That means getting up early since the boat leaves at 6:00 AM, but it also means you beat the dozens of snorkel boats to Molokini. You also get back to the ramp after the second dive before 11:00 AM so you have the rest of your day to do things on shore. Prodiver are professional and unlike many of the Maui cattlecar operations. Most people diving with them are experienced so the only limit they place on divers is to surface when you get to 800 psi. The diving is not as spectacular as a lot of other destinations but it is worthwhile. The visibility at Molokini is fantastic (reliably over 100 ft). While Maui lacks colorful corals, the fish here can be interesting and many are unique to Hawaii. You can expect to see a lot of turtles (although not typically at Molokini). There are some reef sharks and occasional manta rays. I saw two frogfish, at least six turtles, two octopus, and three dragon morays on the second dive. Great destination for families and nondiving activities.

Scuba Shack, January 2007, George Entwisle, Cashiers, NC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 73 to 76 F, no currents. We ended up diving our third day with another dive operation because of their restrictions on peeing. On the second day of diving, the owners daughter told the dive master to give us our dive briefing before we were loaded on the boat, and if any one of us said anything about

peeing in your wetsuit, that the whole group would be taken off the boat and lose their day of diving. Both divemasters were helpful, but the owner and his daughter were not conducive to diving with the restrictions on peeing. If a diver is well hydrated, there is no way you are going to go more than an hour underwater without peeing.

Oahu

AAA Diving, July 2007, Paul Pruitt (wyrfox@mac.com), Half Moon Bay, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 73 to 79 F, calm, surge. On Oahu there seems to be a dive retail shop near every hotel; however, a trip to the docks only finds six dive boats. AAA Diving (and its unique Brit transplant owner, Alex Mason) is a professional service that does not charter through the dive shops. You call and arrange directly, and while the boat could hold 18 divers, he considers it full at 12. AAA does not offer a cheap dive trip, but gives the divers what they want, including long runs to the sea mounts or the signature wreck dives. His unending British humor is sarcastic, witty, and makes surface intervals equivalent to London Standup. His staff is as good as it gets, with only certified instructors as divemasters, so divers get on-the-spot lessons and advice on how to improve their skills. We did four dives on a weekday, leaving at 7:30 am for two tanks, a lunch break at the docks, and two-tank afternoon dives leaving from Keehi. Alex does not accept credit cards, so an afternoon run to the ATM was necessary to pay the bill. The boat is almost new, CG-certified and all emergency gear and oxygen were in first-class condition. Entry and exits are off the swim platform at the rear. While Hawaii may not have the color

and fish of the Caribbean, Alex and his team found dragon eels, giant morays and turtles to put on an Oahu show for us. UW Photography Comments: The rinse tank was stolen from the boat the night before, but AAA allowed the cameras unlimited access to the fresh water shower to rinse. Gear was handled carefully and passed to the diver after entry and quickly moved away from the stern upon entry by the crew.

Island Divers Hawaii, April 2007, David Schwab (schwabd@bunt.com), APO, AE. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 10 to 25 Meters. Water: 72 to 74 F, calm. Dive masters were capable and safety conscious. Boat had divers from other dive operations, so it wasn't "our" boat. Decisions on dive sites were made by the captain; I ended up diving day 1 and day 2 on the same sites. On day 3, the owner dived with us and we got to dive different sites! First dives were wrecks to 30 meters; second dives were shallow after 40+ minute surface interval. I rented gear ... good equipment (BCs were new) and well maintained. Owner Matt allowed me to trade in a BC for a wing (first time for me) on my last day and then dived with me. Personal attention was appreciated; I'd dive with him in more challenging dive conditions. DMs generally took really good care of the novices and too much care of experienced divers. Once they had observed that I was a frequent diver as well as an instructor, they relaxed.. Every effort made by DMs to show critters and other interesting sights to all divers. Super experience for novices; average to above-average for experienced divers, who just have to be patient. Great place to dive with a non-diving spouse/girl/boyfriend or child.

Kaimana Divers, Queen Kapioloni Hotel, January 2007, Tom Carlson

(tcarlson06@gmail.com), Tacoma, WA.

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, calm, choppy, surge, no currents. Gabe Scottie runs his own dive business and offers a personal touch not often found with other dive operators. He picked us up promptly at our hotel every day and got us into some wonderful Hawaiian diving. The first day we did buoyancy and skills checks in a pool, then did a two-tank shore dive; the next two days with him were boat dives. He knows all the boat operators and got us onto and off the boats with ease. We dove the SW, S and SE portions of Oahu with Gabe. We received a thorough briefing on each site. Our first dive with Gabe was a two-tank shore dive at Kahe Point Beach Park (Electric Beach). There is shade, bathroom, and shower available. This is a really good shore dive site. This site is located next to an electric plant. There is a sandy entry point next to the concrete wall of the plant and an easy surface swim out to about 15 feet deep to drop down onto the coral-encrusted pipe that discharges warm cooling water from the power plant across the street and attracts a large variety of life. Corals and a plethora of sea life encompass this site with a max. depth of about 35 feet. The scuba diving was fantastic and we heard the sounds of the spinner dolphins the whole time we were doing scuba dives. Saw snowflake moray eel, green sea turtles, spotted eagle ray, white tip reef shark, trigger fish, blue line snapper, sergeant major, Moorish idols, yellow tangs, convict tangs, black durgon, porcupine puffers, trumpet fish, and pencil urchins! The second day we did a two-tank boat dive off the Kahala Kai, a 40-foot catamaran at Nautilus Reef, and then off to Kewalo Pipe. Nautilus Reef is a series of finger reefs formed in a spiral shape in about

30-40 feet of water. Good viz, about 80-100 feet, and many tropicals including several different types of moray eels and lizard fish. Max depth 55 feet; saw abundant sea life at both sites. It was shallow so we had long bottom times at two wonderful dive sites. The third dive session with Gabe was on a smaller boat out of Hawaii Kai (SE) on a 30-foot boat, the Honey II. We dove Anglers Reef and Koko Craters. Max depth of 47 feet. At Anglers Reef we saw more green turtles, triggerfish, elegant coris, yellow margin and white mouth morays, striped belly puffer, octopus and many other tropicals. Second dive was at Koko Craters, which is named for the large volcanic Crater Kokohead, which overlooks the entire Maunaloa Bay area. This was an awesome second dive of the day. This is a shallow reef dive that contains a series of small crater-shaped reefs at about 35 feet deep, thus providing ample dive time. There are large resident green sea turtles at this site, slipper lobster, as well as many schools of fish, eels. After our dives each day with Gabe we would return to the shop and it was time to get the logbooks out and start identifying the creatures we saw. Gabe is an excellent instructor and has such a positive attitude he is always a pleasure to be around and to dive with. Shore diving site had bathrooms and showers as well as shade. Boats all had rinse tanks for camera stuff.

Oahu Scuba Divers, Ohana East Hotel, August 2007, Fiona Rattray, Elora, On.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm, choppy. I chose Ohana East due to previous reports in Undercurrent, and was happy with the choice. From my ocean view room, I could actually see the ocean. I was able to make my own meals. Stocked up on food at a supermarket. Oahu Scuba Divers advertises service

with a difference. You choose the sites you'd like to dive, and Lisa and Roger find a charter boat to take you there (they don't have their own boat). You can rent gear from OSD if you need to. Tanks filled to 3000 PSI. I requested the Corsair wreck and dived it on the first day. Roger pointed out octopus, a stingray, morays and a type of shell that burrows along the sand bottom. OSD picks you up from your hotel, and takes you and your gear to whichever marina the boat is leaving from. Three of the four days of diving were with the Enzo, great boat and captain. Either Lisa or Roger will divemaster, and you get a detailed site description, wildlife guide and photographer all in one. We also dived the Sea Tiger, Turtle Canyon, Kawalo Pipe, Spitting Cave, and a few more sites. The current on the YO was screaming, so that dive was redirected to the Sea Tiger again, where we saw a turtle napping inside the wheelhouse. Lots of sharks, endemic Hawaiian fish, and turtles overall. Lisa and Roger had a nice picnic lunch prepared, complete with tablecloth and napkins. Two days we ate on shore, the other day on the boat between morning and afternoon boat dives. Lots of water, juice and snacks also provided by OSD. At the end of the day, you get dropped off at your hotel again. Lisa and Roger are the nicest folks and even had Hawaiian tree and flower guidebooks, and gave helpful hints on where to find topside attractions too. Able to rent camera from Oahu Scuba Divers; CD of photos burned at end of dive trip.

ScubaDrew VideoWorks, Ohana East Hotel, May 2007, Fiona Ratray, Elora, On. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm, surge, no currents. I drove out to meet Drew in the parking lot at Shark Cove, Haleiwa. I had the gear, and Drew

provided the tank and weights for shore diving. Besides divemastering, Drew shoots a video of your dive that you can purchase from him. There are a number of swim-throughs at Shark Cove, and Drew took me and another diver on quite a wonderful tour of the right-hand side of the cove, pointing out numerous turtles, nudibranchs, octopus, conger eels, and other assorted critters. The second dive we did on the left-hand side, and went on another swim-through where we saw the largest fish I'd seen on Oahu — trevally? — and some other cool critters.

Waikiki Divers, October 2006, Roger Cole (coleroger@msn.com), Genoa, NV. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 72 to 75 F, choppy, surge. I was picked up at my hotel and taken to the shop where we gathered our gear. When the group finally straggled in, we vanned to the dock and offloaded our gear. Had to wait while one of the DMs "taught" a group of first timers about boat diving, gear and procedures. The boat was way too small for the number of divers. With fins and tanks on, my feet were under the fins of the diver across from me. The exhaust fumes constantly boiled back into the boat and the only way to breathe was to stand up and face into the wind. The first site was about 35 to 40 feet for 40 minutes with several sea turtles, pipefish, coral heads and schooling fish. DM I had made us stay real close to him for some reason. I couldn't figure why because all of us are well experienced. The other DM had the new divers. Second dive was similar. We anchored off a reef teeming with sea turtles and schooling fish. Some interesting coral formations, too. Some of us held a sea turtle while the DM removed a fishhook from its mouth. Quite a surge and current on both dives so the air went faster than

normal. It contributed to less vis than one would expect. I booked this trip through the concierge at the hotel. He recommended them because he's working on his cert with them. Had I known, I would have booked elsewhere.

Waikiki Diving, January 2007, Lyn Greenhill (lyn.greenhill@yahoo.com), Granite Bay, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 73 to 74 F, choppy, surge. Oahu diving is mostly geared to the "intro to scuba" people, based on my 6 dive trips there. They are not used to experienced people with good air consumption; I routinely surfaced with 1500 psi. There are 3 main areas for diving at Oahu — west side, Waikiki, and Maunalua Bay. The west side has only a few good sites and is a long way from Waikiki — over an hour drive. If you must go there, dive with Ocean Concepts. Waikiki has some interesting spots, some prepared wrecks and a few nice reefs. Maunalua Bay has the most spots and some are very good. My personal favorites are Fantasy Reef, the Corsair, and Sea Cave. The North shore is diveable only in summer, and then from the shore. Most of the operators don't have their own boats so charter space from a few boat captains. This is fine if you like mixed crowds. Waikiki Diving has their own boat which is 27' long and can hold a maximum of 10 divers, which they launch from Maunalua Bay. If the wind is blowing (which is pretty much a given in Hawaii), you're in for a wild ride if they go to the outer sites. They didn't have a camera bucket except on 1 of the 4 trips I went with them, and they also didn't provide any water after diving (a real oversight in my opinion). They did try to accommodate our preferences for sites, depending on the wind. They also will pick you up at your hotel, and then take you to their shop to fill out paper-

work, pick up any gear you might need, and then drive you to the boat. If you have your own stuff, this is a real waste of time, so sleep in and just meet them at the boat. On two of the trips they used 63 cubic foot tanks on the second dives, which were shallow, in order to cut bottom time. This is really tacky.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Bikini Atoll Divers, October 2006, Jeanne and Bill Downey (downdive@comcast.net), Baden, PA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm, choppy, no currents. This was our second time making the long trek to Bikini Island; Three Americans and two Brits. From the U.S. it's time-consuming but fairly simple as long as the planes fly — overnight in Honolulu, catch a 7 a.m. flight that arrives in Majuro before lunch, overnight again and catch one more early flight to Bikini Atoll on the once-a-week Air Marshall flight, also arriving before lunch and in time for your first dive on the deck of the *Saratoga*. Arrival is actually on Eneu Island with a 20-minute boat ride to Bikini Island. We were in the water diving by 3:00 pm the day of our arrival. The operation was pretty much the same this year — Jim, Gen, Edward, Ronnie, and the rest of the dive staff are still there, along with newcomer Rich, who previously spent 8 years operating a dive shop in Okinawa. We did a total of 12 dives on the same wrecks as last year — the *Saratoga*, *Nagato*, *Anderson*, *Apogon*, *Carlisle*, *Lamson*, and *Arkansas*, but there is now more damage to the *Saratoga*. The *Saratoga* bridge is starting to lean and the hanger deck to collapse, which eliminated our dives through and around that area. We also noticed the