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 paperwork, 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

stern deck is more collapsed. There was additional movement of the Saratoga bridge while we were there, causing low visibility; there was also some collapse on the Nagato. The dive crew does the heavy lifting of double tanks on and off the boat. It's also possible to dive a single with an H valve if you don't have wings and back plates. We set up our gear on the way out to the dive site, no more than 20 minutes. Upon arrival, the front of the small landing craft type boat is cranked down, divers make their way to the front edge, and jump in. After making sure everyone was OK, Jim or Gen rapidly descended with us on their tails and we spent the next 25-35 minutes being shown the best of the wreck; sometimes we had "free time" to explore as long as we were beginning our ascent on the line at a specified time. Dive times averaged 30 minutes and decompression averaged 45 minutes, depending on your computer. Depths ranged from 103' on the deck of the Saratoga to 174' on the Arkansas. At the end of each dive we took our double rigs off, handed them up to the dive crew and hoisted ourselves back into the boat. We usually had Jim, Gen, Rich, and Edward diving with us, but this depends on the number and competence of the divers. They made sure we saw everything, watched for any problems we might have with narcosis or equipment, and also made sure we put all the relics back where they belonged. While we were diving, the boat crew lowered the three-tiered decompression station. Ronnie did the underwater set-up and then waited for the divers to make their way from the required 2-minute, 40-foot stop to the 30-foot decompression bar; he watched for, and tried to stop, anyone making an unplanned, out-of-control ascent — decompression time for an unplanned surfacing is nasty. Once everyone was safely beginning their decompression, he also relieved photographers of their bulky cameras. An occasional shark or school of fish entertained us during the long decompression, but mostly we spaced out — after a couple of dives, you get used to it. Housing is basic but comfortable. Some rooms had two single beds; our room had a queen-size bed, a night stand, desk, chest of drawers, and a wall with an area for hanging things, a shelf above, and what could be another desk or camera equipment table. If there isn't a full compliment of divers, separate rooms are parceled out. The showers are hot, the AC is cold and the view from the porch is spectacular. At the end of each building is a large rinse basin and hanging area. There aren't any mosquitoes because there's no standing water. Breakfast consisted of cereal, juice, and eggs plus waffles, pancakes or French toast on a rotating basis. Lunches were usually a salad plus meals ranging from hamburgers to pizza to spaghetti. Dinners could be steak or pork chops along with a salad, vegetables, potato, and rice. Freshly made cookies were served at lunch and cake at dinner, along with ice cream from the 24-hour ice cream machine. Fruit punch, coffee, tea, and water were also available 24/7. Pop and Gatorade were extra, and beer was put out for dinner, also extra. Of course, the food served also depended on when the last barge arrived and what the airplane could bring. Diving these historical wrecks doesn't get any easier than this, but some of the wrecks are definitely showing their age; if Bikini is on your list, try to get there sooner rather than later.

Bikini Atoll Divers, October 2006, Patrick Wikstrom (mrpat@brmemc.net), Warne, NC. Experience: 501-1000

dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm. Bikini itself is only 586 acres. One plane a week arrives on Wednesday morning from Majuro. Just a handful of folks live on Bikini and most of them leave in November at the end of the dive season. Today the island looks absolutely beautiful, with gorgeous white sand and shell- covered beaches surrounding the island. The US Government conducts studies on well-organized stands of coconut palm trees to see how to stop the unacceptable uptake of radioactive cesium. No one is allowed to eat anything that grows on the island. Therefore, all food is brought in a few times a year on a barge and in coolers aboard the once-a-week plane. A few bird species, several different lizards, 30 or so feral cats, the lapdog dive shop mascot, and a family of mice that brazenly ran across the kitchen counters were the only animals I saw. Accommodations on Bikini consist of an assortment of well-maintained wood-framed plywood-sheathed structures. Our rectangular-shaped four-room housing unit had a long covered deck running the length of the building with a stunning view of the white sand beach and the lagoon. Each two-bed unit had a separate bathroom, individually controlled A/C, a dresser, bedside table, lamp, and alarm clock. Daily maid service included fresh towels and linens. Everything had been freshly painted inside and out, with rooms a variety of pastel island colors. Each guest house had its own rinse tank and gear drying station. The dive briefings were presented in a separate lounge building. The interior walls were covered in wreck photos and schematics of the ships sunk in the lagoon. A long folding table, well-worn couches, chairs, a ping pong table, library, and a 15-seat film screening room rounded out the accommodations. The dining hall and kitchen are housed in the old church building. A good-sized commercial kitchen turned out a variety of bland but voluminous stick-to-your-ribs meals. The dive op was competently organized by Jim Akroyd, an ex-British Special Forces veteran, and his American wife, Gennifer. Assisting them was an expert staff of native Bikinians and imported dive professionals. Diving was somewhat regimented, with a daily serving of two planned decompression dives which rarely vary from week to week. You dive their plan with three divemasters leading the dives and support divers helping out on the deco bar. Double steel 85s or single 104s were pumped up to 3400 psi. Two well-designed 26 ft aluminum launches with drop-down landing craft-style bows took a maximum of six divers to the wrecks. During my visit there were only five customers and we had ample room to stash our gear and set up our rigs. A substantial three-tiered decompression trapeze hung below the dive boat with 33, 23, and 13 ft deco bars. Surface-supplied oxygen (74%) was fed to all participants via hooka lines and ScubaPro R190 second stages. My bottom times ranged from 22 to 35 minutes — ascent and deco times ranged from 31 to 52 minutes, total dive times were up to 90 minutes. I was comfortable in a 1 mm skin suit and a 3 mm full suit should be enough for anyone. Every diver had to carry two decompression computers; dual gas models are almost essential. Check the web for recommendations. Our first dive was on the afternoon of our arrival and we did the checkout on the deck of the USS Saratoga at 110 ft. Three divemasters were in the water with an additional couple of support crew watching like hawks at the deco station. Follow the dive plan, and

perform the minimum required deco stops (2 min @ 80', 40', 30' then 5 min @ 20' and 10 min @ 10', or until your computer clears plus 5 min). As the week went on, the hang time increased significantly. Several days of 120 ft+ of horizontal vis. But some of the wrecks had murky silt clouds rolling about both inside and out from recent collapses and other violent disintegration. In the 60 years since the nuclear tests, these wrecks have slowly deteriorated. On our day of arrival the dive staff was literally in mourning. Two days before major sections of the bridge of the Saratoga had begun to buckle. Structural support beams crumbled on the flight deck and the topmost gun director on the bridge hung out over the deck looking like a marble about to roll down a Rube Goldberg contraption. At first they told us there would be no penetration of Sara this week, but a couple of days later they relented and let us explore inside. Penetration was conducted on particular ships on specific dives. Although approx $5 Grand for twelve dives seems like an awful lot of money. Believe it or not, it was worth it. Better go now before old Sara really falls apart.

Bikini Atoll Divers, April 2007, David Bader (davbader@aol.com), Norwood, NC. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 84 F, choppy, no currents. Depth on most dives is 180 feet for 30 minutes with EAN 75 DECO gas provided at a fixed decompression bar. Descents and ascents are made via buoy lines. All dives are guided by experienced divemasters as required by Bikini law. Wrecks have deteriorated so minimal penetration is possible. Divers should be experienced with good buoyancy control and varying style kicks to maneuver around the wrecks. Wreck reels and lift bags are not necessary but a good two-gas computer is a must. The dive operation will rent Dive Rite HEs at a reasonable cost. Weight limits are an issue with the local flight from Majuro but an excellent laundry is available so clothes can be minimal. Soap, shampoo and towels are provided as well. Make no mistake. The conditions are primitive. Flights arrive and leave only once a week. No shopping, medical facilities, or emergency care are available on Bikini. The closest chamber is a 30-minute boat ride and one hour flight — if a plane is available. This is outside the dive operation's control so they are conservative with dive procedures. Lodgings are comfortable and food is basic but plentiful. No alcoholic beverages were available. The staff and divemasters are great. Don't delay if you are considering diving Bikini. The wrecks aren't getting any younger!

Bikini Atoll Divers, July 2007, James Knieling (cooltravelnews@aaahawk.com), Las Vegas, NV. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 84 to 84 F, calm, choppy, surge, no currents. This is no place for beginners, only advanced divers. Deco dives every day and two a day. The staff and crew are excellent. The a/c is the best and rooms are basic but clean. If you don't bring it, you won't find it here. Rest between dives. Lots of jellyfish and tons of sharks, so no shore diving unless you are on the menu. Beautiful beach and sites. The Saratoga is caving in, but there are several other good wrecks. Personally, I would spend more time on Truk. However, if you are a warship person, and many are, this is still a great, though deco dangerous, place to dive.

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