

rest of the dives. Yap Divers were lax about checking/testing tanks prior to dives. Guides seemed bored and so were we. I would not bother to go to Yap again. We were told other dive operations on the island chase the mantas so they are not as visible as they once were. Good food at the hotel restaurant, hotel was clean but smelled musty, damp and many of the rooms were tired-looking. A new section was just renovated but we weren't in it. My husband was here two years ago and never saw a manta. Three days of diving and zilch. He was year at same time of year.

NEW ZEALAND

Dive Tutukaka, March 2007, Roger Cooper (rcooper@aga.org), Washington, DC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 21 to 22 C, calm, surge. New Zealand is said to have more divers per capita than any other country and the diving at Poor Knights Islands (on the East Coast of the North Island) helps you understand why. Poor Knights is a series of volcanic peaks some miles off the east coast of the North Island. It is a complete sanctuary — no boats are allowed to land on the islands and the animal life is totally protected — something like the Galapagos without the people. We encountered huge stingrays cruising the channel and tunnel between two islands. They looked like battleships but swam like eagle rays. Also saw large schools of fish, eels, scorpionfish, etc. A large manta ray that passed below me just after I surfaced. I believe it was Cousteau who said that the Poor Knights offered “the best sub-tropical diving in the world.” Air at a lovely 79 degrees in early March (end of their summer).

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Some of the world's finest diving is in this land just north of Australia. While there are several dive lodges with excellent diving, it's a dream destination for live-a-boards. Unique critters abound. Muck diving is great for macro photographers and there are plenty of sites with big fish, big coral and brilliant coral. It's also a naturalist's paradise with beautiful topography: volcanoes, steaming jungles, butterflies as big as birds and walking-stick insects a foot long, and splendid Birds of Paradise. Most rain comes in heavy afternoon downpours. Take a week to stay in fine lodges like Karawari or Tari to visit indigenous, still primitive cultures, among the most interesting on the planet. Port Moresby is an unsafe city, although the big hotels are fine, as is a cab trip to the superb giant crafts market. Loloata Island Resort, which has fine diving, is 25 minutes from the airport and they'll arrange round-trip transportation. Malaria prophylaxis is still essential. English gets you by everywhere.

Loloata Resort, March 2007, Nannette and Bill Van Antwerp (nannettev@gmail.com), Valencia, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 15 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. Loloata Resort on Bootless Bay is on a small island about 30 minutes by car, then 15 minutes by boat from Port Moresby. The resort itself has 21 rooms, 15 without air conditioning and 6 with. We had a deluxe queen bedroom that was a good 5-minute walk from the main lodge where we had breakfast and dinner. The grounds of the resort were rustic with several dozen wallabies freely roaming

the grounds, and a dozen or so large Victoria crowned pigeons. One of the pigeons was nesting and quite aggressive, rewarding us with a couple of welcoming pecks but nothing serious. The room was nice, with gorgeous hardwood floors and interesting woven tapestries on the walls. It had a large picture window looking out onto the bay and a nice large porch with two comfortable chairs to sit in and watch the sunrise. The only blemish was the shower, where the enamel had rusted through with large rust spots on the floor. Water was hot and the water pressure was impressive, much better than many US-based hotels. Each room had a small daybed that was useful as a charging station and storage facility for camera gear, a small table and a refrigerator stocked with safe drinking water as well as gear for making coffee and tea. Food was quite good, with cereal and toast available at 6 AM and hot breakfast at 7 AM. Lunch was buffet-style and dinner included soup, a main course and dessert. Wine and beer were available at reasonable prices but the red wine by the glass was sweet and not interesting. The staff was friendly and accommodating. The diving in Bootless Bay was good and quite varied. The dive boat was a 30-foot Reefmaster set up with 24 tank racks. The first dive of the day was done with Aluminum 80s and the second dive was done with Al 65s. We had only 3 divers on the boat so it felt spacious, but with 12 divers it could be crowded. No head on the boat, but the ocean was close by. Dive entry was a giant stride off the back, then follow the mooring line to the dive site. All the sites we dove had permanent mooring buoys. After the dive you hand up your camera and fins, and climb what has to be the best dive boat ladder I have seen with broad steps, a platform

at the bottom and a nice angle, not straight up. Between the two morning dives there was tea, fruit and cookies. After the second dive we headed back to a hot lunch, dove again at 2 PM and then a night dive for those interested. The dive guides, Francis, Archie and Sibbo, were helpful and always adept at finding the small critters that we were interested in filming. After our last dive, the dive team washed our gear and carried it up to our room where they hung it out on the balcony to dry. Gear was put together on the boat each morning and taken off and rinsed each evening. We dove 3 wrecks and 6 other sites, all relatively close to the lodge since it was often quite windy. We saw both the biggest grouper either of has ever seen at more than 6 feet long and some tiny pygmy seahorses. Diving conditions were varied as well; some sites had 80-foot visibility but one site we dove was green with 15-foot visibility but lots of small critters. The critter list included pygmy seahorses, a beautiful orange rhinopias, twin spot gobies, large groupers, two big olive sea snakes, numerous nudibranchs, small red frogfish, pipefish, moray eels, white leaf scorpion fish, porcelain crabs, several types of anemone fish including true clowns, mantis shrimps, some small (1 inch) octopus, a large ugly stonefish, several crocodile fish, many lionfish on the wrecks, an interesting red dragonet that remains nameless, lots of tiny shrimps and crabs, particularly at night. At one pinnacle we swam with a large school of sweetlips and a Napoleon wrasse came to visit, and on our last dive we filmed a long nose filefish swimming in the staghorn coral. UW Photography Comments: There is no central place for charging batteries and working on cameras near the dive shop and the rooms weren't set up for it

either. We resorted to using the rooms ironing board for a work station. There was no rinse bucket for cameras on the boat, but after each dive one of the dive guides used a fresh water shower to rinse off the cameras.

Loloata, August 2007, Gene Huff (huffsgsj@aol.com), San Ramon, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, choppy. Loloata is about a 15-minute van ride and then a 15-minute boat ride from Port Moresby, but it is in another world. The driver picked our group of four up at the airport and within minutes we were driving through open country to a dock where a boat was waiting to take us to Loloata island. Loloata Island is tucked in Bootless Bay and protected by a peninsula from Port Moresby. Being close to Moresby, it is used by locals and ex-pats as a quick getaway from the stress of the city. Quite a few guests were there just for a night or two between flights or to get a snorkel trip in to nearby Lion Island. The resort itself is a series of duplex rooms facing the bay and mainland. We stayed in air-conditioned rooms set about a 5-minute walk from the main grounds and slightly up on the hill running down the spine of the small island. The view was nice and these six rooms were far removed from any noise in the common area. The only bad part of the walk was going by the diesel generators. The resort is centered loosely behind a reception/dining area that faces the bay. Boats deliver people and goods to the end of a fairly long pier that leads to the grounds. The resort is the only thing on the island. The grounds are fairly well maintained although showing signs of age and not exactly 5 star. Our room was fairly large with queen and twin beds, a desk and a large balcony. The balcony was used almost every night

as a cool breeze brought us outside. Breakfast was made-to-order eggs, pancakes or cereals and fruit. Lunches and dinners were served banquet-style and had a variety of beef, lamb, chicken and fish courses, and vegetarian was always an option. Our group found something to rave about at almost every meal. Diving consisted of two morning dives, a return to the island for lunch, and then an afternoon dive. The longest trip we made was about 45 minutes. First dives were to 75 to 100 feet for 50 to 75 minutes. One thing to point out is second tanks were aluminum 63s unless 80s were requested. A surface interval on the boat included cookies and fruit, water and fruit drinks, coffee, tea or soda. A short motor led to the second dive, usually a bit shallower, although all but the muck dives went to 65 feet or beyond. Afternoon dives were closer in, and all but one day dictated by where we could get out of the afternoon wind and chop. I found the diving to be outstanding; most of the dives found greenish water with 30- to 60-foot visibility on the outer bommies and reefs and less on the muck dives. The relatively cool water provides plenty of nutrients, though, and the fish life took advantage of it. Large schools of big sweetlips and snappers hung out at current edges. Butterflyfish, some endemic, angelfish and anemonefish were thick. Gray and whitetip reef sharks were seen. Three wobbegongs, including one large male, holed up and allowed for some good pictures. We saw a half-dozen lacy scorpionfish including three on one dive, all different colors. Pygmy seahorses were seen numerous times including 4 on one fan. Other interesting finds included a pipehorse, several types of scorpionfish, mantis shrimp, several types of pipefish, striped garden eels, olive and several banded sea

snakes, octopus, squid, and too many nudibranchs to count. The muck diving around Lion Island provided shrimps, crabs, nudibranchs, and other interesting sights at every turn. We dove several wrecks that were quite nice. On a night dive off the end of the pier I found squid, lionfish and an octopus in an old coffee cup with a clam shell for a front door. The crew, DMs Yoshi, Franco and Junior, and hands Sebo and Richard were all friendly and helpful. The dive shop is small and I would bring my own repair kit or backup equipment. Two boats handled up to 8 divers each fairly comfortably and the DMs led those who wanted to be led and let others go their own way. Set your gear up the first day and they take care of it the rest of the time. Bugs were not a problem, although I did get bit up on the stomach one night. We used DEET when going out for long and at dinner. Power is on 24 hours. Bring converters for electronics. There really is no bar and night life is conversation with other guests. Moresby is close by, though, and \$15 gets you a ride to town and the driver stays with you. PNG Arts really is worth a visit. Don't plan to go out on your own.

Tawali Resort, November 2006, Carol Conroy, San Diego, CA. Experience: 850+ dives. Vis: 40-100 Feet. Water: 76-80 F., calm, light chop. I traveled to the Tawali Resort with 22 other divers on a group trip with a professional dive travel agency group leader. All were highly experienced and well-traveled divers. Originally our group was limited to 18 people, but the resort owners built more bungalows and told our leader they could now accommodate 26 divers. Although they had the rooms, they did not have the diving infrastructure. We paid for 4 boat dives per day and we only had 3 boat dives per day. We

paid for 8 days of diving, but we left the resort at 4:30 am and flew out at 7:20 am on the 9th day, so we couldn't get in a full 8th day of diving. On the 8th day there was a single boat dive offered; doing this dive meant divers would be entering the water 21 hours before their flight the following day. Some of us chose to decline this dive for safety and other reasons. Unlimited shore diving was advertised; we had to almost beg for a twilight or night dive and we were told we had to be accompanied by a dive guide (although this did not always happen). The system for signing up for a dive was simple, yet didn't work well. There was no guarantee that after you signed up, the site the boat was going to might be switched several times. Despite repeated requests by many divers to do a pre-breakfast shore dive, this was not arranged until our 8th day at the resort, the morning before we left. I did 21 boat dives in 7 days and had to repeat many of the dive sites, diving three sites twice and two sites 3 times. It appeared that there were not enough sites within a reasonable (~1-2 hour) boat ride to provide more options. Although some of us would have liked to do a 4th dive upon returning to the resort (which, because of the long boat rides, would give us an hour surface interval), this was not possible — it appeared because they had to refill the tanks when the boats returned as they did not have any extra tanks for shore diving. "World class muck diving" was advertised, yet I dove only one muck site (three times!) in a week and did not see nearly as much on those three dives as in a single dive in Lembeh Strait (North Sulawesi, Indonesia). I don't know if it was because the dive guides were not as skilled at finding critters or because there were just less critters. Although "optional night boat dives" were

advertised as included in our package, the only night boat diving was being taken in a small boat to be dropped in near the coral with the mandarin fish — about a 1-minute ride that I would have preferred to swim. There were two boats, one with 12 divers and the other with 16 divers; they were both very comfortable and well laid out. You could opt to follow dive guides or not and it was very unusual for a dive to be less than 1 hour long. The only time I felt rushed was during the surface interval between the 2nd and 3rd dive; it seemed as if the dive guides wanted to get us back in the water quicker than I would have preferred. The smaller boat had engine problems for the last half of the week, resulting in having to sometimes change to dive sites not as far away from the resort (thus repeating some dive sites). This same boat had a broken ladder (finally fixed by the 7th day) and a bathroom door that was broken (everyone who used it was locked in). Early during the week, we actually ran out of drinking water on this boat after our last dive and traveled about an hour without drinking water back to the resort. The (friendly) local dive guides clearly were overworked. They put their hands on the coral and one dive guide told us that he didn't care what happened to the coral because he was only working there for a few more years. Upon returning to the boat during a shallow muck dive, I saw toilet paper in the water under the boat. Another diver told me later she had observed the crew emptying the marine head on dive sites while divers were in the water. Promoted as a dive resort catering to underwater photographers, the smaller boat did not have a camera rinse tank and there were no rinse tanks at the docks or in the rooms. When we asked, we were told most people take

a shower with their camera to rinse it off! The rooms were beautiful and clean but had inadequate lighting to work on cameras or to read. The resort was managed by a friendly couple, who appeared stressed and overworked and confused by our requests. Tawali certainly is a beautiful resort in a beautiful part of the world, and overall I would rate the diving as good to excellent. However, maybe Milne Bay is still best left to dive on a live-aboard boat.

Tawali Resort, December 2006, Lydia Bezeruk (lyd2and@yahoo.com), Port Moresby, NCD. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 15 to 20 Meters. Water: 27 to 29 C, currents. Tawali Resort is set in a truly beautiful location in the jungle about an hours drive and 15-minute boat trip from Alotau airport. Run by a combination of Americans and Australians, you are made to feel part of a community as soon as you enter the doors. It has about 15 rooms, large and basic (no TVs) but tastefully designed, each with a balcony looking out through the jungle over the water. Meals are buffet style with the occasional bbq, generally involving fresh fish. Diving facilities are well organized. There is a dive centre with several boats, including 1 large boat which carries about 25 divers and mainly goes to the outer reef about 2 hours away. This boat is well equipped and is positively luxurious compared to some dive boats I've been on, with room for people to accommodate themselves in comfortable deck chairs and read on the trip in and out to the reef. Lunch, snacks, hot and cold drinks are served all day. On the first day, we mainly dived an outer reef site called Little China which had strong currents and lots of fish. I would recommend this only for experienced and fit divers. The second day, we went to Lauanda and Deacons (inner) reefs.

Lauanda was a fantastic muck dive: lots of octopus, goatfish, pipefish, eels, nudibranchs and an irascible brown-marbled grouper who kept attacking divers. And the house reef at the resort is almost as good as the diving!

Tawali, March 2007, Richard Whiting (rcjwhiting@verizon.net), Columbia, MD. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, currents. Tawali offers pristine Indo-Pacific diving with lots of variety — walls, bommies, muck, drift, a great house reef. Sightings ran the gamut from barracudas, hammerheads and Napoleon wrasse, squadrons of devil fish to incredible small critters — ghost pipefish, pygmy seahorses, myriad nudibranchs, tiny crabs and shrimps — sometimes one on top of another. Bettina at DiversionOz could not have been more helpful. I usually book independently, but the connections, and dealing with Air Nuigini, get complicated, so I used an agent and every connection went off without a hitch. The dive routine was either 3 tanks with lunch on board, or 2 tanks, back to the resort for lunch, and 2 more tanks. The dive crews were flexible — a daily recommendation was made by Bob where to go, but really, whatever we asked for we could do — as many tanks daily as our computers would allow. Night dives were available as often as desired, and the house reef offered interesting and almost unlimited bottom time, if not as scenic and colorful as the other reefs. Most of the trips were from 5 to 30 minutes from the resort, with the exception of a magical 3-tank trip across the channel to dive near Normanby Island that took about 90 minutes to reach. The resort itself is beautiful and nicely situated on a bluff overlooking Milne bay. Lots of native woods, carvings and crafts everywhere. Rooms are spacious,

with private balconies overlooking the lagoon. There is friendly, helpful staff everywhere. The daily meal routine is breakfast at 7:00 (coffee and tea available at 6 and in-room), lunch at noon, dinner at 7:00. The food was much better than most resorts I've been to, and the day boat lunches were by far the best I've ever had. The chef started with a different soup every night — all delicious. Dinner and breakfast are served buffet-style, with lots of variety — dinner offered chicken, pork, veggies, breads, potatoes, fantastic fresh fruit (surprisingly little fish) and dessert. Vegetarian dishes were also available — not just an offer to eat more bread and potatoes. Breakfast had fresh bread for toast, eggs, bacon, sausage, cereals, fruit, and often French toast or pancakes. Negatives to report were that my rental regulator occasionally went into free flow when testing the purge valve (fixed quickly), and the small dive boats were not especially comfortable — a small seat with room for 2 in front of the wheel house — other divers sit on the edge of the boat to and from the sites. If there were more divers, we would have spent more time on the larger boats (we were on one for the trip to Normanby), which are huge by comparison. Spacious decks, lots of seating, on-board head, big camera/gear table etc. Tawali exceeded my high expectations. All the people were exceptionally friendly, knowledgeable and supportive.

Tawali Resort, June 2007, Fred Turoff (fturoff@temple.edu), Philadelphia, PA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 15 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, calm. Tawali Resort is situated on a peninsula, about 60 feet above sea level. The resort is comfortable and welcoming, with native woods, architecture and artwork all around. The main salon sits in a large building that includes the reception

area, dining room, kitchen and store. Meals were delicious, plentiful, varied in main courses, and accompanied by fresh local fruit attractively decorating the main serving table. Waitresses and cooks were responsive and attentive, as was management. We ate most meals with co-owner Rob van der Loos, who has been in this area his whole life and is full of stories and knowledge. All guest rooms are nearby, with wooden walkways connecting all areas. The dive dock is at the bottom of a wooden walkway on one side of the peninsula while the dive shop is on the other side, down another walkway, next to a local village. Once you do your first dive, all gear is kept at the dive shop between boat trips, washed and dried when it can be. However, camera gear is kept in your room, and is carried down and up by you, unless you ask a dive guide to help. Underwater life was varied and plentiful. We did most dives at nearby reefs, and most were relatively shallow, which allowed us lots of time to see the critters and fish indigenous to Milne Bay. Dives often lasted over 80 minutes, with a top length of 122 minutes. The dive boats used for these trips were small, fitting 4-6 comfortably, although during my visit the biggest group we had was 5 divers and 1 snorkeler. Both boats had sun-cover, so we could avoid lots of sun if so desired. A central table unit held cameras, snack, towels and drinks. A rinse tank for cameras was lacking on these small boats, but since these dives were relatively local, we dunked cameras when we returned in the tank by the dive dock. We had a trip one day to outer reefs on the Chertan, the live-aboard that Rob operated in previous times. This gave us three dives away from the resort area. We found a lacey scorpionfish and epaulette sharks on two of them, which gave

us photographers excellent subjects. Our dive guides were able to give us personal attention, as the dive groups were small. They did their best to find us all manner of UW life to see and photograph. The group of guests who were there when I was arrived and left on different schedules, occasionally our dive group dropped to two and once, only me. Spending a 90+ minute dive with my own guide gave me plenty of photo-ops. My trip occurred at the start of the rainy season, and we had nearly constant rain for these four days and nights, so gear stayed wet. The rain provided one unusual outing on the fourth rainy day, as we began a dive under overcast, drizzly skies. Perhaps an hour into the dive, we noticed a brown river overhead that turned into a brown cloud. It was the runoff from four days of rain emptying into the bay. This spread over the entire surface, making day into twilight. It must have confused the critters, as a peacock mantis shrimp, normally skittish and staying near its burrow during the day, stood on a flat area and allowed us photographers close access with several minutes of image-making. Upon ending our dive, we pierced perhaps 3 feet of cooler, fresh but muddy water with a half-inch visibility to reach the surface. I couldn't see my outstretched arm until my faceplate emerged from the muddy layer. The variety of nudibranchs and flatworms equaled or beat my trip two years ago to Kungkungan Bay. Our guides found pygmy seahorses (*H. Denise*) on several dives, but of course, when I set up my camera for extreme close-up (105 mm and a +4 diopter), we found none. Ghost pipefish of several varieties were regularly found, with a large variety of reef fish as well. Cuttlefish appeared on many dives, and on the dive where we found a blue-ring

octopus, we also observed two large day octopi involved in mating ritual that covered several coral heads. Three different species of mantis shrimp were seen, including one female peacock mantis with eggs. Numerous other shrimp and crab species were found in anemones and crevices and on the sand or mud. Another mating ritual was observed when we found a female and two male Pegasus sea moths. Frogfish occurred on only a few dives, and large fish were seldom seen on the local dives. I found a 1.5 cm adult Moyers dragnet looking like a white kite with red highlights. A pod of spinner dolphins visited the bay next to the resort and entertained us twice, plus when returning from the day trip to outer reefs on the Chertan, a pod of them played in our bow wave for over five minutes. Once we passed a minke whale going the other way. From the outdoor lounge area at the resort, those watching the sea saw a leaping minke whale and a leaping manta. Getting to Tawali involves a trip through Port Moresby, PNG. During my 6-hour layover there between flights, I went to the Airways Hotel for a meal to pass time. I took a taxi to PNG Arts, a showroom of native artwork, and had the driver wait for me to take me back to the hotel, where I had checked my carry-on luggage. Almost all buildings had surrounding walls topped with razor wire, indicating quite a problem with what the taxi driver described as rascals, which we would describe as thieves and thugs. I was warned not to venture in public with valuables, including a camera on my shoulder. UW Photography Comments: Cameras were kept in rooms, so they had to be carried down to the boat and back up. The rinse tank by the dock was adequate but not always filled for us. However, filling it was easy. Dive guides

treated cameras well and were eager to show UW life. Silt on bottom and in water after rain and runoff interfered with photography some.

Tawali, August 2007, Stephanie Knott (knottsteph@yahoo.com), Portola Valley, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm, choppy. We were a little concerned about traveling to Papua New Guinea, given what we had read about how dangerous Port Moresby is. We never left the airport, however, except to walk between the domestic and international terminals. The return flight from Tawali was delayed by four hours. The airline decided to use the plane for a few other trips before coming to pick us up. Consequently, we missed our connection to Brisbane and on to Sydney. We were re-scheduled to Cairns, where we spent the night (missing our reservation for that night in Sydney) and flew out early the next morning. Airlines PNG picked up the tab, including a good dinner. Tawali is a nice resort. The rooms are large, with two comfortable queen beds and a deck overlooking the water. The deck had towel racks for drying gear, which was nice. The rooms have ceiling fans and good air conditioning (although it's a bit loud), and there was plenty of hot water. Each room was part of a duplex, however, and you could feel neighbors walking around. We were informed that none of the in-room safes worked, but you could leave valuables in the resort safe. The main lounge and dining room were cooled by fans and were also large and pleasant. However, the doors would blow open (and bang shut) in the wind. The noise was annoying, and open screen doors do not exclude mosquitoes. We occasionally got bites in the dining room and lounge, although overall the bugs weren't much of a problem. Free and fast wireless

internet! The staff were all pleasant and helpful. Food was generally adequate with good variety (wins the prize for creative use of leftovers), including soup every night. In two weeks, we only had fresh fish two or three times. The chicken was usually good, but the beef was tough. There was usually, but not always, fresh fruit for dessert. Dinner desserts were invariably ice cream with some sort of plain cake (although once there was a good chocolate mousse). The wine selection was limited, as they were out of most of the white wines on the menu. We dove from either the 60-foot Explorer or one of two 15-foot boats. We never had more than seven divers on the Explorer or four on the smaller boats, which had dual outboard engines. The Explorer was comfortable, with a large covered area, bench for cameras and gear, camera rinse bucket, mask rinse bucket (by special photographer request), and marine head with warm shower. The Explorer was used to go to the outer reefs and occasionally to nearer sites, if there were at least four divers. The smaller boats were partially covered and were used for shorter trips. The diving was excellent, although the outer reef sites (bommies) generally had larger schools of larger fish. If weather permitted and there were more than four divers, we went to the outer reef (about 1-1/2 hours away). However, if anyone wanted to go to closer sites (for example, muck sites), the resort would arrange a smaller boat to accommodate them. Trips to the outer reef included three dives, with snacks and hot drinks between dives and lunch after the second dive. Trips to the closer sites included two dives, with lunch served back at the resort. Afternoon and night dives were available on request. We did a dusk dive near the resort to see the elusive Mandarinfish

but the much-anticipated spawning didn't happen that evening. There were lots of pristine hard corals and areas of soft corals, with large barrel sponges. There were many snappers, jacks, fusiliers, barracuda, the occasional shark or turtle, and lots of smaller tropicals (tons of anthias). We saw cuttlefish on at least half the dives and lots of different nudibranchs. On the outer reefs, we also saw hairy ghost pipefish (twice), harlequin ghost pipefish, thin pipefish, pigmy seahorses (how the guides find them ...), Milne Bay epaulette sharks, and leaf scorpionfish. Closer sites included walls and muck sites. The muck sites had harlequin ghost pipefish, mantis shrimp, harlequin shrimp, fire shells, porcelain and decorator crabs, bubble shells, more nudibranchs, tiny (half-inch) frogfish, a large and brightly colored sea urchin (*Asthenosoma* sp.?), sea stars, various juvenile fish, and so many lionfish (of several species) that we stopped looking at them. The dive staff were great: always pleasant, helpful, more knowledgeable than most we've encountered, and enterprising (when one of the engines on the smaller boat failed, they immediately arranged for another boat to pick us up so we wouldn't be delayed). Dive times usually exceeded an hour. Divers usually set up their gear for the first dive of the day, and the staff changed out the tanks thereafter. They did not rinse one's gear, however, except after the final dive of the trip.

Walindi, August 2007, Gene Huff (huffsgsj@aol.com), San Ramon, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm. Got stuck in Port Moresby one night because Air Nuigini canceled flight. Port Moresby is worse than any other Central American or South Pacific city of its size I have been in. The resort is

an hour from the small airstrip by van. The accommodations are quite nice, with bures set apart in a lush landscaped setting on Kimbe Bay. Our bure, the largest, was three large rooms including a couch, several chairs, a dining table and separate kitchen area. Meals are taken in a central communal area with an air-conditioned small dining area and library. A small pool centers this communal area with a bar to one side and a larger outdoor dining area on the other. The pictures and descriptions on their website are accurate. Breakfast is cereal and fruit or made-to-order eggs, pancakes or French toast. Fresh coffee is always available. Lunches are on the boat or on a small island if you do three dives a day, or back in the dining area if you do two. Dinner is banquet-style. The only significant complaint involved dinner where they ran out of food, or certain basic items like soup, several nights. They do not cater to night divers, and although they offer night dives, there were no arrangements for late arrivals or holding of a plate. The meals were filling and offered good variety but the food tended to be bland and uninspired. Not what I would expect from a resort of this price. The diving was quite good. All the diving is done from one of two boats that depart from their jetty. There were only four or five people doing three daily dives so the boat was not crowded. Our DM, Keiko, captain Martin, and deck hand Peter were all friendly and accommodating. Keiko let us all dive our own profiles. On about half the dives we ended up splitting up between photographers and cruisers. The reefs are in excellent shape and the deeper bommies held attractions like schooling batfish, sharks, dogtooth tuna, trevally, mantas, cuttlefish, and healthy schools of the usual reef fish. In-shore

reefs sported Mandarinfish, cuttlefish, several types of pipefish, lots of lionfish, anemonefish, numerous species of shrimps, nesting titan triggerfish, several species of shrimp gobies, razorfish and nudibranchs. On one dive, about 10 dolphins joined us on a reef for a minute or two. Reef fish life is on par with Fiji outer islands. The corals and fans are in outstanding shape, although with little current, they are not huge on the inshore reefs. Typical days were 45 minutes out to the first site, a 60- to 75-minute dive depending on depths that were 75 to 100 feet, a cruise toward shore for your interval followed by another 70-minute or so dive in shallower water. Lunches were usually taken on a small island, followed by a dive close-by in shallower water. Then motor back in for 30 minutes or so. Night dives departed about 30 minutes before sunset. Visibility was over 100 feet on the outer bommies and the worst was still 30 or so on an enjoyable WWII Zero near shore. The dive shop really is not one, so bring repair kits or backup gear. Kimbe Bay is fairly protected and we never had combined seas over about three feet. Walindi is pretty far removed from anything, so you should not plan on activities other than a visit to the local village or a birding hike. Most of the guests were divers, with a few trekkers and birders in the mix. Bugs were not a problem, although we did use DEET when we went out. Free internet was available on one slow connection in the library. UW Photography Comments: Boats only had fresh water tubs for photo gear. No area to work on gear on boat. Bring converters.

PHILIPPINES

One can get a great week of div-