

hours. Most smile if you catch their eye. Excellent local carvers offer some exquisite pieces worked out of native hardwoods or river rock. Fish themes predominate.

Adventure Sports is not for the weak or the disorganized. You're expected to load your own equipment into the boat, and also to unload it, rinse it off, and store it back in the dive shop after your dive. If anything breaks, there's no fully stocked service center available; come prepared. The boat is a long, narrow aluminum skiff with no easy way to reenter once you have back-rolled into the water. Boat rides can be an hour or more, and wet.

If you're prepared for all of this, it's great place to go. I wanted a look at the edge of the civilized planet, and I got a room with an edge-front view.

Reservations: Uepi can be contacted through Tropical Paradise in Australia, phone/fax 011-61-77-75-1323. Adventure Sports on Gizo can be reached at 011-677-60253 or fax 011-677-60297. Island Dreams Travel (800-346-6116) offers a 7 nights of lodging/6 days of diving with Adventure Sports on Gizo for \$795, which includes airport transfers, daily breakfast, diving, taxes, and some tours.

Air: Fares fluctuate but run around \$1,100 to \$1,500. It's not always easy to get around the islands once you arrive. Solomon Air changes schedules continuously, searching for elusive profit. Be prepared to wait. The Solomons are a good add-on for a Fiji trip, with incredibly low fares to the Solomons out of Nandi.

On Uepi, bungalows run \$51 a day (double occupancy) and meals (the only game in town) \$40 a day. Dives are \$32 per.

Check dive travel wholesalers for package prices.

General: The Solomon Islands are an archipelago covering 10,639 square miles in the southwest Pacific about 1,200 miles northeast of Australia. Part of the British Commonwealth, the islands are a parliamentary democracy with a population of 350,000. The capital is Honiara on the island of Guadalcanal.

Each island in the Solomon group contains a mountain range; some peaks reach 4,000

feet. The climate is tropical, with temperatures of 70–90°F year round. The annual rainfall ranges from 60 to 200 inches, so one way or another, you'll probably get wet.

Health & Welfare: For information on how to protect yourself from the extremely high incidence of malaria in the Solomons (not to mention other horrid tropical diseases like dengue fever), call the Center for Disease Control's international travelers hotline at 404-332-4559.



Flotsam & Jetsam

The Anti-Shark

An electronic anti-shark device being tested in South Africa shows promise of being very effective in repelling sharks by leaking a specific kind of electricity into the sea around the diver or surfer.

I've felt like I must have been wearing just such a device on some dives, when everyone else sees the sharks except me. However, I suppose I wouldn't mind flicking the on switch of an anti-shark appliance if I had to float on the surface for any length of time.

Crooked Island

A few reports have trickled in over the past couple of years recounting excellent diving around Crooked Island in the Bahamas. I've been trying to coax an editor down to

Pittstown Point, a small resort on the island, although the resort wasn't really set up for divers. With its nearby runway, it catered mainly to families with private planes.

Pittstown Point is now Caribe Bay and things seem to have changed drastically. It's being promoted not only as a dive resort but for its natural park/preserve research program that aims to prove the only way to enjoy our marine world is without unduly harming or disturbing it.

Exactly what this means, we'll have to find out, but I've heard that diving guests will be able to participate in marine studies if they so desire by reporting on marine life they see. The program is being set up under the auspices of the Bahamas National Trust, the Aquarium of the Americas, the Virginia

Institute of Marine Science, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Maybe now I can get an editor to take a look and report back on diving Crooked Island.

Just Charge It

We received a letter from Caribbean Adventures Dive Travel noting that they were missing from our June '94 article on credit card surcharges assessed by dive travel agents. For the record, they accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover without penalty for all dive travel, except for large groups, and American Express as well for some airlines. Call Caribbean Adventures at 800-934-DIVE.

Bite-Size Hammerheads

Papua New Guinea has rolled around to the top of my "Where I really want to go" list again. I heard this story third hand, so the details are missing, but it went something like this: While diving off Walindi Plantation in Papua New Guinea, divers spotted a couple of tall fins from the dive boat. They turned out to be orcas. Divers were able to enter the water and swim with the beasts — a thrill in itself — but the real stimulation began when one of the orcas appeared from the deep with an enormous hammerhead in its mouth. As the hammerhead was eaten and pieces of it started to float about, a large group of sharks (including oceanic whitetips) moved in for appetizers. No one had a still camera.

I've heard that the full and detailed story, along with another great orca story from Walindi, will be printed soon in an issue of *Ocean Realm*. Try to catch it there.

Scratch Sangalakki

The resort of Pt. Sangalakki in Indonesia has been shut down by the Indonesian government. Borneo Divers, the operators of the resort on Sangalakki (and another on Sipadan), state that Pt. Sangalakki is being shut down for "very complex but technical reasons on the island's status, one of which is obtaining the necessary permit to operate in the National Park."

My guess is that the reasons for the closing of Sangalakki go beyond normal political problems. It appears that the family of Borneo Divers' Indonesian partners are involved in an Indonesian banking scandal that has caused all of their assets to be seized. Sangalakki has probably been caught in the crossfire.

In a Hollywood-style response, Borneo Divers flew a large amphibious cargo plane to Sangalakki and scooped up everything that wasn't bolted down, including dive boats and the resort staff, and escaped to Manado, Indonesia. Look for a new resort to emerge in Manado in the near future.

Borneo Divers are not the only ones to lose with the closing of Sangalakki. Those of us who had Sangalakki on our to-do lists will be disappointed, but the big losers are the turtles. Borneo Divers had spent a lot of money buying the rights to the turtle eggs in order to protect and increase the turtle population. It's my understanding that the turtle egg rights have already been put back on the market.

Comments?

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P.O. Box 90215
Austin, TX 78709

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