

Tongan diving is, in general, drift diving. There are few dive spots that are anchorable. This requires use of a dive boat, something we were not accustomed to. After all, we had our own boat. Nevertheless, we discovered that the pre-trip claims were true. Our night dives, done by dinghy from our sailboat with rented tanks, were good but not fantastic.

We made contact with Dolphin Pacific from home via fax before our trip and negotiated a discount for five divers doing five 2-tank dives. When we arrived, we contacted Dolphin Pacific easily over the radio and they agreeably met us the next morning for a dive. We hopped on their motor boat, had a speedy (20- to 40-minute ride) to the site, and did two dives.

On each dive, one staff member stayed with the boat and the other went down with us. Of our party, two were older and appreciated the services of Dolphin Pacific's guide; the other three of us took off on our own. During the 2-week period, this schedule worked well. Dolphin Pacific kept us informed of their other commitments and we were able to dive, more or less, any place and at any time we wanted.

Our bottom times were good, mostly in the 70- to 90-minute range, with dive depths ranging from 50 to 122 feet. Although the staff had to sit in the hot sun while we drained the filled-to-3,200-psi tanks below, the only comments were good-natured joking.

When currents were present, we simply dove with the current and popped up when air ran low. In each case, the Dolphin Pacific boat had been watching our bubbles and jetted a hundred yards or so to pick us up. We felt safe in their hands and if they

kept the best dive sites secret, we never knew it. To give you an idea of the diving, here are some comments from our log:

Sea Fans at Tu'ungasika, water temp 79–80F, entered with Mo of Dolphin Pacific and took a guided tour. Through the sea fans and a cave to Nitrogen Narcosis Valley, a beautiful wall filled with live corals and lots of fish. Skipjack tuna, a sea snake, piles and piles of coronetfish, as well as the usual assortment of brightly colored smaller species. After the valley, we went over to a coral head and looked for Clownfish Heaven. Hundreds (or is it thousands?) of clownfish, each defending its own one square foot of anemone. This dive has a dangerous current and must be timed correctly.

Swallow's Cave, water temp 77–81F, thermocline at 35–40 feet,

the first we found in Tonga. A spotted eagle ray greeted us as we entered the water. Generally an OK site. A whole school of pyramid butterflyfish was hanging out on the reef. A few large rock cod fish were floating around, looking very much like dinner. Dwarf lionfish, lots of giant clams, and colorful crinoids. One Maori giant wrasse, about 60–80 lb., hung around at the limits of our vision.

I am at a loss to explain Mr. Popugh's poor experience with Dolphin Pacific. Our rental tanks were always over-full, our dives were always with the current, our times were never artificially limited by the staff. I hope other divers who may have shared the wonderful waters of Tonga can offer some comparison. — Joel Snyder, Tucson, AZ

You Did Say I Won, Right? To Have and Have Not

Dear *In Depth*:

I recently attended Our World Underwater in Chicago and registered to win a free dive vacation at the Coral Regency Resort in Bonaire. I was delighted to learn that I had won. When I called the 800 number printed on the certificate of confirmation that I received in the mail, I was told by someone named Jane that the resort was filled, but I would receive free lodging at a condo and she would call back with the details. She didn't. When I called the 800 number again it was no longer in service.

Should I unpack my dive bags? — Ted Gottfried, Williamsville, IL

The 800 number of Resort Connections, 78 North Street, Suite 1-5, Hyannis, Massachusetts, was indeed no longer in service. However, Coral Regency Resort does have another stateside number (800-721-2995). When I called this number and asked about your problem, I was told that too many people had won and the resort was filled. When I mentioned that you had not only been notified but also had received confirmation, yet were still unable to verify any substitutions, I was given the number of the

Coral Regency on Bonaire and told to take it up with them. Mr. Kevin Garvey, manager on Bonaire, has refused to return communications concerning your trip. I would unpack my bags if I were you.

Judging from the literature sent by the Coral Regency, it appears that the free trip is related to time-

share or condo sales. Most of these companies operate by giving away or selling below-cost trips to visit their locations. There's usually no obligation other than to listen to a high-pressure sales pitch. Maybe you're luckier than you think. They could have sold you a condo, taken your deposit, and then refused to talk to you. I would voice a complaint with

Our World Underwater, where the so-called "prizes" were given away, to help prevent such inconveniences to other divers in the future, and I'd advise anyone thinking of having anything to do with the Coral Regency Resort to be extremely leery. Customer service and public relations don't seem to be their strong suit.

Flotsam & Jetsam

One Boat Out of Limbo and Another One In

The *Cehili* is back. The live-aboard's fate has been the subject of recent speculation, but the boat appears to be back on the market. As we reported in the July issue, the *Cehili* did go to Singapore. They reconfigured the cabins to eliminate the quad-share cabins — an excellent idea, as no one wanted to pay that kind of money to share a cabin with three other people. Other improvements being touted by the "new" *Cehili*? The maximum number of passengers has been reduced from 28 to 20 and the rate has been reduced to \$250 a day for the standard double cabins. Larry Smith will remain the divemaster, and the boat will continue its seasonal schedule of rotating from the Manado area to the Banda Sea. They will offer fewer dive cruises, as plans are to alternate cruises with other itineraries that include only some diving or no diving. Undersea Discovery, the former marketer for the *Cehili*, went out of business and operation has been assumed by T. Thorson, the Norwegian owner of the vessel. Mr. Thorson is not honoring deposits made by dive travel whole-

salers to Undersea Discovery. This could affect which wholesalers will be selling the *Cehili*; check with Island Dreams or Tropical Adventures, both of which have said they will be booking the boat, for more details.

Just as the *Cehili* is coming out of limbo, another Indonesian live-aboard, the *Tropical Princess*, is going in. Word is that the *Tropical Princess* is no longer accepting booking. However, just like the *Cehili* saga, rumors are that a white knight in the form of another large live-aboard operator might be stepping in to save the operation.

The apparent demise of the *Tropical Princess* came as a surprise to many people. It has had some problems, such as not enough money put into boat maintenance, but it was a well-entrenched operation with a reputation for good diving. It may be time for us divers to take a good hard look at trip cancellation insurance.

Just One More Dive Mag?

I try to read them all, and that's saying a lot these days, especially if you include publications outside the U.S. How-

ever, if you dive or want to dive the Pacific, *Asian Diver* covers a lot of locations that you might not read about in the stateside mags. Where else would you hear about diving Vietnam aboard the *Song Saigon*, a modern replica of a wooden sailing junk? For more information on the *Song Saigon*, contact Mr. Christian Bouteillier, Voiles Vietnam's Headquarters, 17 Pham Ngoc Thach, Q.3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, telephone +(84-8) 296750 or fax +(84-8) 231591. For information on *Asian Diver*, contact Sports Asia, 19 Tanglin Road, #05-15, Tanglin Shopping Centre, Singapore, 1024.

Old Divers Never Die, They Just Get a Discount

Peter Hughes Diving is offering a 10% discount good at all their operations for any diver who is 59 years or older. When we asked Peter why, he told us that unlike many others in the industry, he sees the market as stagnant and the average age of his clientele increasing. He was working off a hunch, designed to encourage older divers to keep on enjoying diving. He even told a story of one wealthy family that chartered one of the *Dancers*