

KIRIBATI (CHRISTMAS ISLAND)

Christmas Island is situated about 1300 miles due south of Hawaii. That's only about a 3-hour flight, but Kiribati bends the dateline to keep all its islands on the same side, so you will arrive a full day later. One of the Line Islands, Christmas is the world's largest coral atoll, a full 45 miles long and between 7 and 25 miles wide, although lagoons make up nearly 2/3 of that area. The island was named after the day in 1777 when Captain James Cook first happened upon it, but it remained uninhabited until the 1950s, when the British chose it as the site for their nuclear weapons development project and induced a small Micronesian work force from the Gilbert Islands to relocate there. Once they'd detonated their H-bomb nearby, however, the British pulled out, leaving behind a few Micronesians and a great deal of debris. Today the island's 4400 residents are citizens of the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced cure-a-BOS).

MICRONESIA

Chuuk

This is the world's most diverse wreck diving on hundreds of Japanese ships sunk during a battle in WWII, with lionfish on the bridge, giant clams on the deck, and bottles of ink and erasers for students of the vanished Japa-

nese Empire still visible in the hold. . . . Most wreck dives—other than on superstructure—are deeper, in the 80'+ range, but there's fine diving even without wreck penetration. . . . Expect calm water, occasional poor visibility, little or no current, and temperatures that can hit the high 80s. . . .

Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, November 1999, Mike Hayes, Baton Rouge, LA. Vis: 70 to 100 ft. Water: 76 to 78 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Dive restrictions: none. Great service, dive guides were excellent. Wrecks were in superb condition. Guides were protective of sites but understanding of diver's need to explore. Our group was made up of experienced divers allowed to dive their own profiles. Our one inexperienced member was watched from a distance, but with effective control. (800-843-8956, 800-348-0842, 800-527-5228 (CA), 691-330-2796; Fax 691-330-4307)

Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, February 2000, Charles Menbeck (aqua405@aol.com), Chicago, IL. Vis: 65 to 100 ft. Water: 82 to 83 Fahrenheit, calm no currents. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: Followed the Dive Guide. Sunny 88 degrees. No current. Seemed to shower late every afternoon (4-5 pm). Resort was renovated recently with lots of new equipment, and it showed! Best ocean view I've ever had in a room. Brand new digital AC units. Good sat tv. Provided bottled drinking water in the rooms. Staff attentive and helpful. This resort has