

water, hot chocolate, cookies and amusing stories. On one interval we came upon a pod of dolphin (40+) and had the opportunity to snorkel with them. My husband and I hung onto the sides of the Zodiac as we slowly motored while the dolphins bow surfed and pooped right in front of us. A once in a lifetime occurrence but common in Nive. Underwater scenery was among the best I've experienced with cut-throughs opening up into caves with sunlight pouring through crevices on top of you, bommies, walls, great hard and soft corals and little or no current. No worries mate! A photographer's dream, I got some great macro and wide angle pics. It was a long way to go but well worth it, the scenery above and below water was spectacular. (+683 4311, Fax +683 4028; e-mail: niuedive@dive.nu, website: www.dive.nu)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Some of the world's finest diving is in this land just north of Australia whose most consistent feature is its unpredictability. . . . It's a dream destination for live-aboards with unique critters on a big scale: big fish, big coral, big distances, and muck diving. It's also a naturalist's paradise with beautiful topography: mountains covered with snow in July shade, steaming jungles, butterflies as big as birds, walking-stick insects a foot long, and splendid Birds of Paradise. Most rain comes in heavy afternoon downpours. Volcanoes routinely disrupt things, destroying

Rabaul in 1994 for the umpteenth time, although now it has a new airport. . . . There's excellent land-based diving at Walindi Plantation. . . . The water in Kimbe Bay may be in the high 80s, with visibility up to 200'. . . . If you're into wrecks, check with the live-aboards in this area as some of them are once again making trips to Rabaul. . . . After traveling this far, you must take a week to stay in some of the fine lodges like Karawari or Tari (even though they want top dollar) to visit indigenous, primitive, wild-and-woolly cultures that are among the most interesting on the planet. The people are divided into hundreds of frequently-sparring tribes speaking hundreds of languages. Witchdoctors on the outer islands maintain the old value systems, yet go to Christian services on Sundays, and men from the stone age, covered with colored mud, mingle in airports with business people in suits and ties. . . . Women should not travel alone in PNG. Port Moresby is an unsafe city, although the big hotels are fine; but use Moresby for changing planes and daytime shopping at the superb giant crafts market. . . . If you have to lay over in Port Moresby, consider Loloata Island Resort (011-675-325-1369 or e-mail loloata@daltron.com.pg), a diver's alternative 25 minutes from the airport. . . . Malaria prophylaxis is still essential. English and Pidgin English (helicopter:

"Mixmaster blong Jesus") spoken. . . .

Lissenung Dive Resort, Malagan Lodge, Walindi Plantation Resort, July 2000, Jonathan Friedlaender and Françoise Thompson, Philadelphia, PA. Some of the best diving in the world. PNG has been spared the devastating effects of global warming. Water mid-80's, because deep water surrounds so many reefs. Cyanide or dynamite fishing is still minimal to none. Biologists say marine life is most diverse in the Celebes and declines in all directions and PNG is right next door, with intact reefs and especially abundant fish life.

Lissenung Dive Resort, Kavieng, New Ireland ... 30 mile expanse between New Ireland and New Hanover is dotted with small coral islands and passages. May-October is where the live-aboards in PNG hang out (the other great dive area in PNG, Milne Bay, suffers during this period from rough seas). The one land-based dive operation there is small and excellent. Lissenung Diving is operated by Dietmar Amon, with his charming wife, Edith, and side-kick, Andy -- a delightful, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable group of Viennese (fluent English). Their rustic resort of 4 rooms on tiny Lissenung Island, a 15 minute boat ride from Kavieng town, is something out of Swiss Family Robinson. Cooking is spectacular, the rental dive equipment is first rate, and they've been diving there for over 4 years - a major plus over the live-aboards and larger dive operations. No air conditioning in the local style guest

houses, the power goes off between 11 pm and 6 am, and the toilets and showers are down a sandy path between the coconuts. You can also stay in Kavieng in a standard air conditioned hotel - the Malagan Lodge - and be picked up for diving every morning. Nusa Island Resort is just as rustic as Lissenung, but closer to Kavieng. Check out I dived various sites in Kavieng two years ago with a now defunct operation and it wasn't a "other-world" experience. Dietmar and Andy know the conditions and when to visit different places, as well as which fish and sharks are currently "at home" and "receiving guests." We dived Albatross Passage three different times, with three entirely different experiences. There are circling swarms of barracuda, feeding sharks, lots of trevally, tuna, and a great wall. Françoise gingerly approached and petted a 2-foot long puffer fish. Another site had 8 or 10 giant triton trigger fish, all nesting and very belligerent. Most memorable moment was the night dive off Lissenung beach, in 5 feet of water (the snorkeling there is also terrific). Besides sleeping parrot fish in their cocoons, the ubiquitous spiny lobsters and shrimp and huge crabs, we watched flatworms swimming free in their majestic rippling manner, and a tun shell, with its crepe-sized mantle fully extended. Abundant soft corals, sea horses, leaf fish, gobies, to beautiful coral gardens, to big fish action. Walindi Plantation in Kimbe Bay suffers by comparison to Lissenung. The reefs in Kimbe Bay are healthy, but the fish life has declined in

abundance over the past 8 years. The best sites are at least a 45 minute ride away from the resort, and the south-east trades can make it very bumpy. The night diving is mediocre. This is a relatively large resort (18 rooms), and you may end up diving with more than 6 divers). Dive masters are mostly young Aussies or local New Britain guys, who can be very uneven. The rental equipment has seen heavy use. Food (while plentiful, it's not great, and no seafood!), and the cost is exorbitant at \$132 per person, without diving, and no air conditioning. The bungalows are charming. We didn't like being in a gated compound with barbed wire separating us from the beach, though it might be necessary near Kimbe town. (Lissenung Diving: +675 675-984-2526; Tel/Fax+675 675-984-2526. Walindi: +675 675-983-5441, +675 2-9267-6118; Fax +675 2-267-5563)

Loloata Island Resort, November 1999, Andrew Molnar, West Haven, CT. Vis: 50 to 100 ft. Water: 84 to 86 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Dive your own profile: yes Accommodations were clean, well-kept and comfortable. Food was very good, considering availability of western-oriented food stuffs. Full breakfast, buffet lunch and dinner. Diving was good. Boat was a bit overcrowded at times. Dive resort offers 2 tank morning dive and afternoon dive is available, sometimes. Dive site choices were OK, nothing spectacular. Reefs in good shape. Divers were allowed to dive own profile. Lots of macro critters. Loloata is a very pleasant and relaxing alternative to

staying in Port Moresby as a prelude or an ending to your PNG visit. Also made a visit to Tari in the Highlands to visit the Huli people. An amazing culture that is sadly in transformation to being westernized. Very friendly people, very willing to sit and talk with you about their culture and yours. A lot is still not contrived and if you just go off the beaten path and wander the villages you will have an experience well worth remembering. Stayed at Ambua Lodge. Very nice, but also very expensive. It is situated overlooking the Tari basin at 7500 ft. Spectacular views. The food was basic and not very well prepared. Do the jungle walks if you can. Ask for Joseph Tana as guide. Very personable and knowledgeable. (+675 325-8590; Fax +675 325-8933)

Loloata Island Resort, March 2000, Bob Puschinsky, (puschinsky@aol.com), Seabrook, TX. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 83-84 degrees. Dive restrictions: With guide no Nitrox. Overpriced lodge. Diving good but limited number of sites. Visibility variable.

Loloata Island Resort, April 2000, Mary and George Jonilonis, Del Mar, CA. Vis: 30-50 ft. Water: 82 degrees. Dive restrictions: 130. This little island 20 min from Port Moresby saved our PNG trip. Came off Mike Ball's boat in Milne Bay with disappointment. Michael Burden -- Manago dive op on Loloata -- was the greatest. He took boat out every day even though sick w/malaria attack. He knew where everything was that I wanted. Pygmy seahorse, ghost pipefish, etc. When I flooded N90

read in scubal housing he worked all afternoon with me to fit my 8008 in housing. Cabins on water w/pleasant deck w/chair. But no A/C, lots of biting or stinging ants, mold in bathrooms. Really need to work on housekeeping. Dik Knight/owner/dines w/guests. Very pleasant, many stories, lived on PNG a long time. Relatively inexpensive and easy to get to. We were surprised and thrilled w/diving. Michael, crew and boat all get high marks.

Loloata Island Resort, June 2000, Mel Cundiff, Boulder, CO. Vis: 20 to 50 ft. Water: 80 to 84 degrees, choppy, strong currents. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: none. The best place to stay if one has a layover in Port Moresby. Only 30 minutes from the airport, it has excellent coral reef diving and is much safer and secure than the city. The resort provides free airport transfers, and tours of the city are available at a nominal cost. I was pleasantly surprised at the excellent quality of the reefs I dived while there. They were in excellent shape with a great diversity of corals, fish and critters.

Loloata Island Resort, August 2000, Karen Higgins, Bellevue, WA. Met at the modern airport at Port Moresby by a Resort staffer and van. It was a 15 minute drive over paved, then dirt roads, past a squatters' settlement and lots of garbage, to a dock where we met a Loloata Resort boat. 15 minute boat ride to Loloata Island, solely occupied by the Resort. The resort is composed of to room bungalows mainly along the beach; the dive shop;

he office, registration desk, lounge area, kitchen and dining area; and employee housing. 16 guest rooms lack air conditioning but are usually kept cool with large ceiling fans. Power is supplied by a diesel generator. Water is piped from the mainland. Drinking water served with meals is from rainwater. I found our room satisfactory and I am persnickety. The rooms are spacious and their hardwood floors are a touch of elegance in an otherwise simple facility. The bathroom was kept clean. I was dismayed at the beach directly in front of our room. The sand was covered with dead leaves and bits of litter and plastic. The room rate was \$220/night and included meals and transportation from/to the airport. Meals are served family style at 7 AM, 1 PM and 7 PM. The food is western with an Asian influence. I liked it well enough and enjoyed the group meals with other guests and the owner. Guests were mainly from Australia and Japan. The owner, Dik Knight, came to PNG with the Australian army 31 years ago. He purchased what was then a guest house 23 years ago. The diving operation was headed by Michael, a New Zealander who planned to leave in a month, saying the four years was enough. Nitrox was not available during our visit, as a former employee had absconded with the oxygen analyzers, but replacement equipment was on order. The routine is two morning dives, separated by an hour surface interval, then back to the resort for lunch. After lunch, the wind picks up so the afternoon dive was close by. There are two dive boats, the

best a 30-foot aluminum boat with room for 9 divers. The second boat is a 23-foot fiberglass boat that bounces more. After several days of being in the smaller boat, my back hurt from the pounding. My friend also got the backache plus and deep abdominal bruise from falling into a tank when the boat came down on the waves particularly hard. The roughness was exacerbated by the speed at which the operator ran it, causing it to become airborne. The dive sites were reefs, bommies and several wrecks. Marine 6 is a fishing trawler wreck; saw two wobbegong sharks about five feet long. I could get close enough to take photos. Saw many lionfish and a curious sea snake followed me. Our guide grabbed the snake near its head and it swam off when Sebastian released it. Sea snakes are venomous though it is difficult for them to inject their poison into a person with their fangs in the back of their mouth. At a small wreck Michael showed us several pygmy seahorses. Also saw a cuttlefish and lionfish, lacy scorpionfish, a giant clam. The water was 75 degrees. We felt some thermoclines on the deeper wreck dives but I was comfortable wearing only a skin. My buddy wore a 3 mil wet suit that kept him warm. The visibility was good, perhaps 30 feet on the wrecks and 50 feet elsewhere. While not a dive destination from America by itself, Loloata is worth a 3 to 7 day stopover as part of a trip to PNG. Loloata Resort, PO Box 5290, Boroko Papua New Guinea, phone (675) 325 8590, fax (675) 325 8933.

Tufi Dive Resort, March 2000, Barry Lipman (b_lipman@hotmail.com) Brookfield, CT. Vis: 35 to 85 Feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, calm currents. Dive your own profile: yes. One was expected to dive safely according to one's own definition of diving safely. The resort is the only resort for many long miles around. The shore diving is in the fjord below the resort. From the resort the fjord looks like a mountain lake — very picturesque! Underwater, there are lots of very delicate Acropora and Porites corals, as there is virtually no current or surge to disrupt anything. There are varieties of blennies and gobies, and lots of crabs and shrimp. More than quite a few mantis shrimp, and right under the jetty is the largest population of Mandarin fish I've ever seen. When the little day boat was up to the task, we made a couple of trips out to the outer reefs. Here the coral is among the healthiest I've ever seen anywhere, and that was seconded by a coral scientist I was diving with. Nudibranchs were everywhere on every dive. Even after more than a week of diving it was possible to find new species of nudibranchs on almost every dive. Ken, the manager, was most knowledgeable on the subject and could usually identify genus and species just from a mere description. His knowledge of their living and feeding habits enabled him to find many species on demand. Although pelagics were alleged to be regular characters, I never saw any. Ee only dived there about four times. There are many rare giant clams, and tons of medium sized reef fish on the outer reefs, but the

hammerheads and reef sharks never showed. Things should really get better according to the new owners. The food at the resort was mostly fresh seafood. The manager actually apologized for serving so much freshly caught lobster almost every other day! All seafood was bought fresh from locals or caught by resort staff, and the vegetables were fresh and locally grown. There were problems with the infrastructure, boats, generator, etc., but the new owners are equipping a new day boat, refurbishing the dock, putting in newer and larger generators, and adding A/C to the rooms, which are otherwise quite comfortable. As long as the generator worked, we had plenty of potable fresh water for HOT showers. There will be, but were no rinse tanks provided on the boat or at the dock for shore dives. The new boat and improved dock should have these amenities, along with the now lacking freshwater showers for the divers. The staff was extremely helpful, carrying my many cameras up and down the hill for the diving. The resort staff are cheerful and helpful, never letting you think you are imposing on them. Sounds of giggling and laughter regularly were heard coming from the kitchen as the meals were prepared. If you are lucky, you may be treated to a sing-sing, where some of the local residents get dressed up traditional and perform traditional song and dance. The fresh herbs used in their attire smells wonderful. I had a great time, and I'd like to go back to enjoy all the improvements I saw in the making. (+675 675-321-4210; Fax +675 675-321-4277)

Walindi Diving Resort, November 1999, Andrew Molnar, West Haven, CT. Vis: 40 to 80 feet. Water: 84 to 86 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: none. Walindi is on Kimbe Bay and is a working plantation. Very isolated yet teeming with life. It's PNG's answer to Rick's 1Café. Very interesting people pass thru. Accommodations are good and food is also very good and plentiful. Kimbe Bay is the most photographed reef in the world. Some of the sites are excellent. All are teeming with life, mainly macro. The biodiversity is amazing on these very healthy reefs. Not too many larger critters, but somehow one doesn't mind. The dive operations equipment could use an upgrade. The boats are a bit worn, yet comfortable. Dive Masters Steve and Peter were amiable and knowledgeable. Main complaint is that the operation offers only 2 tank morning dive. Night dives by adamant request. Boats leave at 9am and return around 4pm, yet only 2 dives. They spend 2 hours for lunch on a little island. This is all nice but I would have preferred to do at least 1 or 2 more dives, after having traveled 26 hrs. by air. Overall, Walindi grows on you and is a good addition to PNG visit. (+675 675-983-5441, +675 2-9267-6118; Fax +675 2-267-5563)

Walindi Diving Resort, May 2000, Mel Cundiff, Boulder, CO. Vis: 40 to 60 ft. Water: 86 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: none. Max and Cecilie Benjamin still run the first-class resort/dive operation that they did in

1995 when I was there. This area contains, on average, some of the best, most complex, intact and diverse hard coral one can find anywhere in the world. A few dive sites in Indonesia might be the very best, but they are among many damaged by dynamiting and cyaniding. An added bonus was to be able to get within touching distance, we didn't touch, of a 15-ft. calf sperm whale nursing on its 30-ft. mother. A 20+ foot sibling was also very close to us. This was part of a pod of ten that was a part of a larger pod of 30 sperm whales that spent over an hour on the surface in Kimbe Bay. While sperm whales don't sing like humpbacks do, they were making high-pitched, rapid clicking sounds around us.

Walindi Diving Resort, July 2000, Jim Parkhill, McAllen, TX. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 86-88 degrees. Dive restrictions: None. Resort: Picturesque and charming setting in lushly landscaped grounds. Friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Wonderful staff. Free laundry service. Great DMs. Staff washes diver's gear daily. Healthy hard and soft corals. Great for small critters and reef fish, sharks on half the dives. Rest of island a virtual beehive of marine activity. Diversity of dive sites. Rather expensive at US \$153 per person double occupancy for room plus US \$120 per person per day for 2 tanks of diving. The boats are not diver friendly and can be uncomfortable on long rides to dive sites in rough seas.

Walindi Diving Resort, September 2000, Jim Ferman (jpferman@cs.com), Wickenburg, AZ. Vis: 80 to 100+

Feet. Water: 84 F, calm. Dive your own profile. Boats were small, slow and getting long in the tooth. No showers on board. Not a lot of room to maneuver around the dive deck. Can't imagine what it would be like with many divers. The huts were really charming, but a couple of nights were hot and humid! Ran out of hot water very quickly. Owners were terrific, staff was wonderful. The room was keep clean, they provided mosquito nets. The food was truly gourmet. Diving was out of this world. They had just located a Japanese Zero and it was in pristine condition. The dive-masters were helpful. The grounds were lovely. The new dive master, an Australian, is very nice. He told you about what diving spots were favorable for what you were looking for and did his best to get you there. Diverse and interesting group of people there. No rinse buckets on one boat, the other had a tiny rinse bucket.

PHILIPPINES

Major dive areas are concentrated around Batangas, Mindoro, Palawan, and the Visayas. . . . Though the reefs here are among the most diverse in the world, supporting more than 2000 species of fish (the Great Barrier Reef, by comparison, supports around 1500), they are also among the most threatened. Up to 70 percent of Philippine reefs are dying or dead. . . . The best diving is in the Sulu Sea, which can only be accessed by live-aboard. . . .