

currents, a good deal of psi can be sucked up fighting the current to the mooring line or back to the stern. Several requests to deploy a granny line went ignored. Since all sites are pinnacles, there is a certain "sameness" as the week progresses in the diversity in dive sites. Not a venue for "big stuff." My routing from U.S. required 23 hours flying, 10 hours connections, 2 overnight layovers.

## PHILIPPINES

***Oceanic Explorer, May 2000, John Crossley, Fresno, CA.*** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 82-83 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 ft. The Philippines can be reached easily on flights from Los Angeles (and can include a free stopover for diving in Hawaii), but probably will require overnighing in Manila before flying on to the live-aboard's port, Puerto Princesa. Manila was dirty, with terrible traffic congestion, and extremely polluted air. The Pan Pacific Hotel in downtown Manila was a great hotel for exploring the city for a couple days; stay near the airport and get in/out of Manila as quick as possible. The *Oceanic Explorer* has 12 cabins of adequate space, a small salon that isn't used much, and a big shaded rear deck where meals were served and most of the non-diving activity took place. Fairly good buffet, with several choices each meal, but desserts and between dive snacks were marginal. Both port and starboard sides have narrow areas for gear storage and suiting up, plus very small camera tables and rinse buckets. Our 18 divers

were divided into three groups, each served by small motorboats to take us to the dive sites. The crew handled all our gear, and dive briefings were comprehensive. We reached the Tubbataha Atolls in the middle of the Sulu Sea after an overnight sailing. The reefs were generally very healthy, with no damage from bleaching or dynamite fishing. Seas were absolutely flat calm, not typical for May. Fish life was pretty good; lots of colorful tropicals, but not many big fish. One dive we had three mantas circle several times, and another dive included a small school of sharks. About every other dive we saw a solitary turtle, shark, or manta. Macro critters were pretty good, especially nudibranchs. Lionfish or two on every dive and Titan triggerfish. Several divers were attacked by the triggers, but only had fins bit. Night dives were good, but we had problems with some type of mini jellyfish that resulted in rashes around exposed areas for half the divers. 17 dives in four dive days on this five night, six day cruise. It was a pretty good value (\$1000)/  
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## SOLOMON ISLANDS

***Aggressor, December 1999, Bob Puschinsky, (puschinsky@aol.com), Seabrook, TX.*** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 82-84 degrees. Crew not adequately knowledgeable of Solomons - dove with local dive operator at some of same spots with much better results