

many type mantas, frog fish, stone fish, masses of crinoids, great soft coral, many fish. Resort very good too. (+63 6338-411-5222; Fax +63 6338-411-5226)

**Dive 7000, May 2000, Robert S. Gadbois (bobclarg@mcs.com), Chicago, IL.** Vis: 30-60 ft. Water: 82-85 degrees. Located at Batangas Bay in southern Luzon, 3-1/2 hour drive from Manila. For many years the favorite of Lynn Funkhouser, noted underwater photographer. It has seen better days. But makes up for it with a friendly family atmosphere, good food and prime location. Super-rich in small-to-medium marine life, a photographer-naturalist's paradise. Two boat dives can be supplemented by unlimited shore diving. The richness of marine life is astounding, new species are still being discovered.

**Splash, Coral Cay Resort, Siquijor, March 2000, Max Herndon, Pismo Beach, CA.** Vis: 30-80 ft. Water: 78-80 degrees. Dive restrictions: 130'. Just north of Mindanao and east of Negros, Siquijor is a beautiful unspoiled island. Tourism is only in the infancy stage and accommodations and restaurants are limited. There are only two beach resorts of which Coral Cay Resort is by far the nicest and offers the best food with a staff that made us feel like we were family. Well appointed, spacious beachfront bungalows were \$25 to \$40 per night. Swiss-run Splash Dive Center is a low key but efficient operation. All rental gear and tanks are nearly new. There's about 8 or 9 good dive sites on the

west side of the island, nice wall and beautiful hard and soft coral gardens. Don't expect to see any big fish but the reefs are in great shape and there's plenty of small critters and reef fish. We saw a black frog fish, two ribbon eels and a banded sea snake on one dive. Probably isn't a destination for the dedicated diver but it's definitely worthwhile if you're there.

**Victory Divers, Boracay, January 2000, Michael Igoe (mike\_igoe@estreet.com), Aurora, CO.** Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F. Dive your own profile. Good, professional dive operation. While there were some good dives, I wouldn't return for the diving. Over-rated and overpriced.

**El Nido Resort, Mactan Island, September 2000, Michael Igoe (mike\_igoe@estreet.com), Aurora, CO.** Vis: 30-70 Feet. Water: 84F. Dive your own profile. Not too restrictive. Attentive. Not an exciting dive destination for experienced divers. The dive operation is very well run, with good and personable dive masters. Favorite was Doi Pasquale. Dives priced @ \$20. each. Dives generally lasted 45-60 minutes. Depths never exceeded 80 feet.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

Because of its civil uprising, this has become an unsafe destination for tourists. Before considering it, get your national government's current recommendations. . . . One of the last countries to jump on the tourism bandwagon, the

Solomon Islands' tourist infrastructure is nil except for a few small, remote dive resorts in beautiful settings like Uepi and the Gizo islands, although several live-aboards dive these waters. . . . There are plenty of wrecks from WWII, lots of pristine reefs and walls, an abundance of fish (big ones too), and even more unexplored territory (the *Solomon Sea* has been doing several exploratory trips into new waters). . . . The Russells stand out because of dramatic underwater scenery including rocks, caves, and cracks. . . . In the Florida Group don't miss a dive on Twin Shaft Pinnacles. . . . Diving is year-round with plenty of places to dive in the lee, but April and May are the best months, followed by October, November, and December. . . . The Solomons are a possible add-on from Fiji (1300 miles to the southeast) or Papua New Guinea (700 miles to the west); Honiara is on the main island of Guadalcanal; use it only for overnighing. . . . Solomon Islanders produce fine wood carvings. . . . This is serious malaria country. . . .

**Adventure Sports, Gizo, December 1999, Bob Puschinsky, (puschinsky@aol.com), Seabrook, TX.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 84-85 degrees. Dive restrictions: Guided. Danny Kennedy -- owner of Adventure Sports really knows where and when to dive -- outstanding dive with 100+ pygmy mantas that came right up to us.

Crocodile fish and many others. Poor hotel but best Gizo has to offer.

**Solomon Divers, Paradise Lodge, July 1999, Elizabeth Terk, New York, NY.** Vis: 30 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 82 degrees. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: time. The diving was awesome tunicates everywhere, great wrecks. The accommodations weren't so great but I was on a teen program so they were what I expected. Otherwise it was some of the best diving I've done.

**Munda, December 1999, Bob Puschinsky, (puschinsky@aol.com), Seabrook, TX.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 84-85 degrees. Dive restrictions: With guide. Interesting diving different area of Solomons. Good diving, fair lodging and food.

**Uepi Island, December 1999, Bob Puschinsky, (puschinsky@aol.com), Seabrook, TX.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 84-85 degrees. Dive restrictions: Guide. Terrific resort. Diving good but far from world class. Stranded for 3 1/2 hours when dive boat broke down. (+61 3-9787-7904; Fax +61 3-9787-5904)

## TONGA

This island grouping, with all the beauty of the classic south Pacific, lies 600 miles to the southeast of Fiji and can be reached via Hawaii, Fiji, or New Zealand. There are few dive operations here, but reports suggest that the diving is good. Tonga is seeking more tourism, although it has been slow to develop. . . .