

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. . . .