

had about 50 minute at 50 feet, out for an hour, and 45 minute at 30 feet. It was a nice tour to be able to say you dove the Great Barrier. Otherwise, a bit hurried. Staff very professional. **(Lady Musgrave Cruises: Ph: 07 4159 4519; fax 07 4159 5085; e-mail webmail@lmcruises.com.au; website www.lmcruises.com.au)**

Port Douglas

Poseidon, Reflections Condos, February 2001, Chuck Atwell (catwell44@yahoo.com) Aurora, IL. Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 50 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm no currents. Accommodations at the "Reflections" were great — half block off beach — on main st next to the "Goanna Bar". Picked us up on time. Traveled to outer reef. Boat was large — about 50 divers and snorkelers (mostly snorkelers). Large group but very well organized. Staff was wonderful and gave excellent briefing on both safety and marine life. Many large clams of all colors, small tropical fish. Corals of far greater diversity than Caribbean. This is not the best of the GBR but you need a full week to explore the Coral Sea. Port Douglas is a real kick! Australia is a spectacular country and its people can't be beat. Once you get there the cost is about half the US! Plane ride only 18hr from Chicago; just think of driving to Florida! **(Ph: 07 4099 4772; fax 07 4099 4134; e-mail info@poseidon-cruises.com.au; website www.poseidon-cruises.com.au)**

CHRISTMAS ISLAND (SEE KIRIBATI)

COOK ISLANDS

Tucked between French Polynesia and Tonga, the Cook Islands have from time to time tried to promote themselves as a dive destination. They've never really succeeded — even though the main island of Rarotonga has good food and a wide variety of places to stay. There's a decent dive through a cut into the lagoon that has good sharks and strong current.

Cook Island Divers, June 2001, Bobby D. Perry (bobbyderry@aol.com) Bellaire, TX. Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 70-74 F, choppy. Logged dives: 700-800. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. We traveled by Zodiac about 5 miles from boat landing 3-4 ft. swells — dive-master threw the anchor, which was a cement block overboard and lodged it in a coral head — removal was by yanking from the surface — corals had considerable bleaching — crown of thorn starfish were in great supply. The water was cold by Caribbean standards and visibility changed during the dive. Lots of small critters. Didn't see large fish on dive but caught mahi mahi, wahuu and tuna 2 days later. **(Ph: (888) 994-2665 or (682) 22 483; fax (682) 22 484; e-mail gwilson@ci-divers.co.ck; website www.cookpages.com/CookIslandDivers)**

Cook Island Divers, Pacific Resort, July 2001, Gill Cruz, Pleasanton, CA. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 75-77 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 3,000+. Dive restrictions: time. A lot like Hawaii, all encrusting corals no

colorful corals. One compensation was excellent, professional, well run, personable, experienced and customer-oriented operation. They pick you up and deliver to resort. For an experienced diver, I do not recommend the Cooks, because of lack of diversity and marine life. It is good for beginners. The Pacific Resort is excellent.

Fiji

For Left Coasters, it's easier to get to Fiji than to the Caribbean: ten hours nonstop from L.A. Airfare and an all-inclusive week at many excellent resorts can be had for under \$2500 per person; air packages can be tailored to include New Zealand/Australia extensions at little extra cost. Sunflower Air is more squared-away than Fiji Air for local flights. . . . Fijians are polite, friendly, delightful, modest, and religious, so watch your language, and wear non-revealing clothes to town. Guys, have someone teach you how to tie a sulu so you, too, can go home in a skirt. . . . Wetsuits are a staple year-round; currents add coolness, just like the wind chill factor. . . . Taveuni has great diving but it's terrible for beginners with difficult currents; bring a compass, and carry both day and night emergency surface signaling devices (tubes, strobes). . . . The weather can be stormy June through September; short, heavy showers are possible any afternoon year-round. The

year-round average temperature is 80 or above; nights average 68–69 degrees in winter; bring a sweater. . . .

Beqa Lagoon

Centra Pacific Resort, March 2001, James McMeins, Carnation, WA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 25 to 50 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, choppy currents. Diving in Beqa Lagoon. Cyclone had just left the area and water never cleared up. Probably due to amount of muddy run off from several rivers. Very rough seas every day near end of second dive everyday. 2nd dive on first day, went down and into very strong current that divemaster took us against most of dive. Lot of crawling along the bottom to make headway. At the end of dive the 6 of us agreed we're there to relax not exercise and made it plain we didn't want anymore dives like that. Very agreeable and rest of week was fine. If current in area was too strong, went to another site. (Full moon and big tides at the time). All sites were moored, which is nice and of course the surface intervals always done on secluded remote beaches which are great. Centra Pacific Resort just reopened in Pacific Harbor after being closed for several years. The setting is beautiful but the buildings need major repair/upgrades. Have a large pond system on the grounds with huge resident sea turtles. Staff is great, very attentive and knew our names within the day. Very good food. (Ph: (679) 450 022; fax (679) 450 262; e-mail centrapacharb@is.com.fj; website www.sphc.com.au)