

easy exit from the water, after BC and tank was lifted out of the water by the boatman. Divemasters very good at finding small critters for the macro photographers. The tremendous variety of fish and corals made for great wide-angle to macro photography. Several dive sites had reef tops from 10'-30' making safety stops most pleasant. The largest boat was a little uncomfortable for the 30-50 minute rides to most dive sites.

**Walindi Plantation Resort, April 2001, Rosemary Gutwillig (Rustyatbay@aol.com) Greenport, NY.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 87-89 F. Dives logged: 158. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. Attractive bamboo bungalows with one double bed; one single (the usual PNG furnishings); fans (no A/C) provided adequate cooling. Central building has comfortable lounge, small bar. Extended dining deck in construction next to pool. Buffet with good choices: chicken, pork, crayfish, mudcrabs; excellent local greens. Fine selection of Australian wines. Local beer also good. Lunches on board dive boats: rice or pasta salads, cold roast chicken, meatloaf. Fresh pineapple and papaya always available. 3 dive boats: small (slow), medium and large. The Australian divemaster, Dale, very fair in assigning boats so all divers get equal opportunity to visit all, including the most distant, dive sites. Never more than 6 divers aboard any one boat. Plenty of room for gearing up. Water, juice and fruit on board. On 2 occasions we landed on Restorf Island for lunch and then did

great shores dives from there: The diving was outstanding. We always saw whitetips or silvertips and turtles; squadrons of barracudas and jacks; clouds of butterflies, anthias, chromis, fusiliers. Plenty of nudibranch sightings. Puffers, lionfish, huge batfish, giant clams, garden eels, cuttlefish. Gorgeous feather stars and feather worms. Beautiful hard and soft corals — especially red sea whips and fans. Spectacular sponges. Magnificent anemones. On the surface we sighted spinner dolphins and pilot whales. Pelted with peppercorn-sized volcanic ash on our first trip out. But that's really something to tell the folks back home and it washes off.

## 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. . . .

**Dive 7000, Batagas, March 2001, Earl F. Stubbe, Lombard, IL.** Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 360. Dive restrictions: 130. Lots of little critters, good night dives, good shore diving. All you have to do is fall into the water. March, April, May are the best months.

**White Beach Divers, Nigi Nigi, Bora Cay, January 2001, Brant Shenkarow (brantkarow@aol.com)**

**San Anselmo, CA.** Vis: 20-80 ft.

Water: 77-79 F, choppy. Logged dives: 2,000±. Dive restrictions: stay within eyesight of group (2-3 divers plus guide). A crown-of-thorns invasion and El Niño have devastated the coral reef and, therefore, the whole chain. Poor vis, choppy surface, strong currents, unattractive sites, shoddy rental equipment made Bora Cay the worst diving in 15 years (2,000 dives) over much of the world. White Beach Divers is a comfortable place to hang out. Mike and crew are friendly and helpful. Nigi Nigi overpriced, filthy, dank room. There are tons of places to stay within any budget. Lots of drinking day and night on Bora Cay.

**Sea Dive Lodge, Coron, November 2000, Dale Litney, Schaumburg, IL.**

Vis: 20-100 ft. Water: 80-100 F. Dive restrictions; Safety stop. The two story resort is built out in the bay with views of the surrounding islands. The main attraction is the scores of Japanese ships sunk during World War II. This is uncrowded and a fraction of the cost of Truk, \$6 rooms and \$20 a day to dive. There are enough ships to not see the same one twice. You can do as much penetration as you are comfortable with. The dive guides are helpful in explaining proper wreck diving techniques. Besides great wreck dives there are hot lakes! Surrounded by cliffs rising hundreds of feet straight up, the water gets over 100 degrees as you get deeper. A wild dive! Cave dives that are out of this

world! Lots of corals and critters everywhere. The dive boats leave around 9 am and come back in the afternoon. Lots of deck space and the crew does all the work. Load/unload gear, set up gear, switch tanks and cook meals. Lunch and drinks are included in the price. Our lunches were fresh cooked tuna, crab, chicken, rice, vegetables, as much as you can eat. The best dive meal I've had anywhere in the world! The resort has new rooms that have the only hot water in town, and I mean hot. The food is great and the kitchen has all new appliances. Jim, the American owner, wants a dive resort everyone can enjoy. He'll help you find anything you need in town, from a Snickers to airplane tickets. He even found a bottle of champagne and threw a party after I asked my fiancé to marry me. Website

[www.seadive.com.ph](http://www.seadive.com.ph) (Ph: +63 98-0937; fax +63 922-9750)

## **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. . . . 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