

## **AFRICA**

Any trip to Africa is best coupled with an inland safari. Timing your trip so that it coincides with animal migrations as well as the best diving season is a complicated affair; check with a specialist. . . . The diving off the coast of Kenya and Tanzania is hit-and-miss. Better diving is found around Pemba Island and off the coast of South Africa.

### **Mauritius**

**Villas Caroline Diving Centre, Pierre Szalay, Hilton Mauritius Resort, February 2002, Anne W. Simon (simonawehotmail.com) APO, AE.** Vis: usually poor, 5m. Water: 27 C. Dives logged: 150+. Dive restrictions enforced: computers. Unfortunately, I was there two weeks after cyclone Dina and the viz was shot because of the islands' rivers washing down volcanic dirt. But the two sites I dove on the West Coast were still worth it. Dozens of lionfish and a giant stonefish were among the usual Indian Ocean parade of Moorish idols, banner fish, goldies and more at Rempart Serpent. The cathedral dive was highlighted by a 10+ plus giant moray eel who swam into the cave with divemaster Pasqual and me to see the lobsters high up in the top. If my new mask hadn't kept flooding and fogging both days, I would have enjoyed the dives twice as much. Note: "Dive Sites of Mauritius" by Alan Mountain is an excellent book. (Ph: 230-453-8450)

## **Tanzania**

**Manta Resort, Manta Beach Hotel, February 2002, Leanne Wells (mwells42@wf.net) Mineral Wells, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 84 F, choppy currents. The Manta Beach Hotel on the north end of Pemba Island is remote and comfortable. Electricity by generator available during hours of expected need; warm showers during generating hours. Facilities Spartan but certainly adequate and comfortable. Food was good and generous. Staff was wonderful, striving at all times to meet not just our needs, but our whims too! When I expressed my frustration with not being able to see a bushbaby although they were certainly vocal enough all night, the night guard trapped one for me and release it unharmed. The diving from the resort is good for small things. On every night dive we saw large Spanish dancers and multiple other night creatures but nothing that I am not familiar with. But the dives were comfortable and interesting. The divemaster, Banda, was the perfect blend of competence and guidance. He allowed all nine of us to dive our own profiles, but he still seemed to know where we were though we tended to break up into smaller groups. At one time two of my buddies and I missed a turn on the dive plan and he came back for us, knowing we might end up in Zanzibar! He was always available for assistance without being overbearing. The boat driver was attentive and rarely missed a surfacing diver. The

safari that followed in the Serengeti, Ungoroungoro Crater, and Tarangiri Park were superlative: like awakening every morning in a Discovery Channel program. It was the most exciting and insightful trip of my 58 years! This is remote diving; did not expect top notch accommodations. The operation does the best job they can with limited resources. Are careful with equipment, but have no specific photographic facilities.

**One Ocean/Blue Bay, Kiponda (Stone Town) & Matemwe Beach Village, February 2001, Rance Wadley, St. Maries, ID.** Hot and dry, just beginning rainy season, so some clouds; morning rain on the last dive day left the seas silky smooth. Flat seas, no current (Stone Town); increasingly choppy after midday, current moderate to slack (Mnemba Atoll) visibility: 30 feet and easy to get lost (Stone Town); up to 60 feet with a current, falling to 30 ft when slack (Mnemba Atoll) Follow the dive instructor and stay as long as your computer and air allows. Sharks: with no other advanced divers, we stayed out of deep, fast water corals: off Stone Town where they are in bad shape, algae and Graeffe cucumbers prominent; 3 off Mnemba Atoll between rocks and sandbanks. One Ocean (oneocean@twiga.com) now has three locations: Stone Town where the back packers go, Matemwe Beach, and the expensive Blue Bay resort. Gary at One Ocean provides a good experience to all levels of divers at poor sites off Stone Town. Much better diving off Mnemba Atoll with

South African Karl, half the husband-wife instructor team at Blue Bay. I arrived a couple weeks after a political rally left a dozen people died in the streets of Stone Town. This shut down tourism for the season with fully booked luxury hotels empty after they evacuated tourists. Very sad for the warm and friendly Zanzibar people. Gary made daily arrangements to transport the two divers at Matemwe to other locations where they had enough divers to run the boats. They include an excellent local lunch for Stone Town guests, but not for Blue Bay guests who are on a meal package. There is a surcharge for use of credit card but I worked out a package deal with Gary. Lonely Planet has yet to find out the cheapest way from Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar is flying the excellent Precision Air (\$US45 round trip), which is about half the cost of the ferry for nonresidents. Stone Town is a blast with nightly grilled seafood on the beachfront. Debelius' Indian Ocean Reef Guide enriched the experience. I enjoyed the fabulous Linda's flatworm, Mozambique fang blennys, various butterflies, blue triggers, Axilspot hogfish, several peacock mantis shrimps, and a marbled torpedo ray. The best diving is farther north along the atoll; presumably because of the lack of guests we did not travel that far. Also, Mnemba Atoll is different from Pemba Island to the north, which is said to have the better diving. Bring your proof of yellow fever inoculation; a hassle-free visa can be obtained for \$US50 upon arrival at the airport.  
**(One Ocean Ph: +255-24-2238374**

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**Sea Breeze Dive Centre, White Sands Hotel, March 2002, Anne W. Simon ([simonawehotmail.com](mailto:simonawehotmail.com))**  
**APO, AE.** Vis: 21-30 ft. (7-10 m). Water: 28 C. Dives logged: 150+. While in Dar for work, made two dives on a Sunday with Hannes Potgieter/Sea Breeze Dive Center. Hotel seemed to be four star beach hotel but I stayed at Sea Cliff on peninsula (an hour by taxi/\$20). Nice staff, good quality equipment, boat left at 9 a.m., 15 min. to sites offshore. Both Pinnacle (70' max. depth) and Bongoyo Patches (40' avg, has training dive for some) had lots to see. Mantis shrimp on sand, cuttlefish, sea anemones and two varieties of clownfish, Indian feather worms, nudibranchs, Christmas tree worms, starfish, giant clam, lots of butterfly fishes, orange tube coral, soft leather coral, barrel coral, find gobies and, of course, Moorish idols and royal angelfish. Healthy reefs and fish, nice dives! (**Ph: 255-812-783241 or 255-811-320741**)

### INDONESIA

Indonesia is a dive hot spot that unfortunately provides few choices. . . . While Bali's culture is fantastic (especially if you get away from the coast), the diving's not as spectacular as in other parts of Indonesia. . . . On Bali's east coast the *Liberty* wreck at Tulamben is a favorite among fish specialists, who claim to find a

new species on every visit. On the north end there's a good chance of diving with mola molas. . . . While they're certainly harder to get to than Bali, I think the Banda Islands have some of the best coral and fish life in the world. . . . Although it offers few big fish, Wakatobi, a operation in remote southern Sulawesi, offers fantastic color, amazing biodiversity, and one of the best beach dives in the world. . . . If bizarre and rare creatures are a lure, Ambon has a dive that surpasses even PNG's famous muck dives, as does Kungkungan Bay in northern Sulawesi. . . . If you're into big turtles (and lots of them), Borneo Diver's operation on Sangalaki, which once got excellent reviews, is again open, and nearby Derawan Resort dives these waters as well . . . . The island of Flores had great diving until it was hit by a typhoon and tidal wave that destroyed its reefs. . . . Although it's seldom been reached by live-aboards, the diving around Komodo, the home of the dragons, is excellent. . . . While domestic flights have suffered cutbacks, there are some real bargains on international fares. . . . The volatile political scene has put a cloud over diving Indonesia, so check with the State Department before travel, and inquire about specific destinations rather than asking about the country as a whole. Before you leave, get a copy of Kal Muller's *Underwater Indonesia*. . . .