

in honesty this is the closest I have come to being bored diving! There were two dives a day and supposedly the option for a night dive but we didn't bother. Other islands in the Cooks may have a better reputation — but for our money and time, we would not bother returning to Rarotonga to dive. (Ph: 888-994-2665 or 682-22 483; e-mail gwilson@ci-divers.co.ck; website www.cookpages.com/CookIslandDivers)

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 Island/Beqa Lagoon

Lalati Resort, February 2002, Craig Condron (lindacondron@hotmail.com) **Nine Mile Falls, WA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 65 to 90 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm choppy. The bures are large and comfortable and they have made every effort to protect the environment. They reuse all the water in gardens and the toilet waste is aerobically and anaerobically disposed of. The staff was wonderful and they treated us as if we were a part of the family. The owner and manager ate meals with us and were available always. Beato, the manager/chef was a true delight. His food preparation, sauces, desserts were to die for and the menu was always changing with different ethnic dishes every day. The diving was wonderful. The visibility, because of recent storms, was only about 75' but Seta, Lalati's divemaster, made up for this slight imperfection. He knows the location of every little creature in Beqa Lagoon, leaf fish (including a purple variety), blue ribbon eels, anemone shrimp, etc. Their dive boat is large and spacious for a 5-bure resort. During our eight days and two dives per day, two divemasters and four guests were the max. The only downside is the lack of a large beach (small but acceptable) but they will take you five minutes by

boat to uninhabited Storm Island where the beach is beautiful and the snorkeling is great. The price, which includes boat transfer, diving (two per day), meals, beautiful accommodations and wonderful people is a steal. (Ph: 877-2-LALATI or US 303-417-0557 or Fiji (679) 472 033; e-mail Lalati@is.com.fj or reservations@lalati-fiji.com; website www.Lalati-Fiji.com)

Lalati Resort, June 2002, Malcolm Leader-Picone (mlp@leader-picone.com), Berkeley, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 F. Lalati Resort is a fabulous place! Linda Kwansy, the owner, and her staff made us feel like part of the family during our ten nights. The bures are beautiful and huge, handmade by the local islanders. The food is superb. Mellow gatherings before dinner to imbibe (and not just the mandatory kava) and listen to the staff sing, wonderful massages and pedicures, fire walkers and local dancers! Seta, the local divemaster, is utterly amazing in his ability to find rare species: frog fish, leaf fish, every type of nudibranch in the books, shrimp, eels, you name it, Seta found it for us. The corals in Beqa Lagoon are among the healthiest we have seen anywhere, hard and soft. The colors are fantastic. There are millions of juvenile fish of all the Indo-Pacific varieties. Large schools of barracuda and jack cruised the reefs. Sharks: predominantly white tip, but with black tips and nurse sharks. There was only one dive in nine days of diving when we did not come close to a

shark. The diving in Beqa Lagoon is primarily on bommies, or pinnacles. We would drop to the sandy bottom and slowly spiral our way to the top, which would be in 15 to 30 feet of water. On the top of the bommies, the amount of fish life and effusiveness of corals was unbelievable. Seta was expert at leading the dives in such a way as to minimize any encounters with current. Lalati is a wonderful tiny paradise, from the moment you step off the boat into the shallow waters lapping at the small beach, to the tearful farewell, with all the staff gathered to sing to you as you depart.

Marlin Bay Resort, September 2001, Lloyd Schwengel (swendiver@aol.com) Brea, CA.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 75 F, calm choppy. Individual bures next to the beach with two beds. No A/C but ceiling fan and plenty of ventilation. They were kept clean with fresh towels every day. The food was excellent. You filled out your choices each morning, from three breakfasts, two or three lunches, and two dinners with soup and desserts to die for. The staff, both diving and resort were friendly, helpful and accommodating. You gave the dive shop your gear in a provided mesh bag and each day they set up your BC and reg. They transported it back and forth from the boat, rinsed it out and hung to dry. The divemasters were friendly and frequently pointed out interesting critters. Most of the hard corals are just beginning to come back but still plenty of soft corals. Blue ribbon eels

all over. Not much big stuff, a few white tips, one turtle, several octopi, eels, and lots of reef fish. The air temp. was 80-85 without heavy humidity. The briefings were short with a depth and time given but reasonable. The resort staff worked hard to make our stay comfortable. The people were great, even in passing on the pathways, no roads on the island. Fire walking ceremony, hiking, village visits, kayaking, shore diving. Plenty of time to soak up some breeze in the hammock in front of your bure after the two A.M. dives. (Ph: 800 542 3454 or +679 3304042; e-mail info@marlinbay.com or marlinbay-reservation@att.net; website www.marlinbay.com)

Marlin Bay Resort, November 2001, Reed Nescher, Beaumont, CA.

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy, surge, currents. Great food, wonderful accommodations, friendly people, and beautiful surroundings. Gave you a warm feeling about the islanders, made you feel at home if you tried to make contact and visit the villages. Left them all my batteries and the group we traveled with brought school supplies. These are some of the friendliest and genuine people any where. Great diving, world class, but maybe not the best I have done. It is the overall experience that has me going back. First week was dry with a little rain at night and the second just a lot of rain, low vis and strong currents. Russell and his staff did a great job of making our trip one to remember. All you have to do is show up on time

with skin, camera, and incidentals; all the other gear is loaded every morning on the boat. The fills were good with alum. 80s. When you finish your dive, they take your BC on board and change tanks for you. They offer snacks and punch with a towel. Lots of surface time on local beaches. This is paradise for divers and surfers. I long to return to paradise where even Americans are liked, even 52 of us. Need better rinse tank on boats and a camera table would be nice. Lots of soft corals and micro stuff when the vis goes down. Islands of coral coming up from 80+ ft. between desert with little to see. Lots of white tip reef sharks, 17 on two dives. Need afternoon dive other than shore and new moorings.

Marlin Bay Resort, June 2002, Jerre B. Sadler (jerlynsad@aol.com)

Bartow, FL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, choppy, surge. The most professionally run dive resort and dive operation I have encountered in my 18 years of diving. The resort staff are dedicated to your relaxation and enjoyment and there is nothing you could desire that they would not try to make happen. The tropical setting is stunning and the physical plant itself is top notch. There are many things for nondivers including shelling, snorkeling, hiking, photography, fishing, surfing, mongoose watching, birds and butterflies, kayaking, village and school visits, and getting to know the genuine and curious Fijians. The bures are way more than I expected and the cleaning staff is always there but you

never see them. The restaurant and staff are also top notch serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner and snacks if you gotta have them. The desserts are memorable. A full range of beverages is available. The dive personnel are quick to help and the dive boats are modern, clean, fairly quick, and easy to get in and out of. You go to the dive platform, they bring your gear to you, and you go diving. Good ladders, help you out of the water with your gear on, or off being handled by the captain, dive masters, or crew. They change tanks for you. You can get as much or as little help as you need without complaint. Dive masters know the dive sites well and make sure that you do before you hit the water. Corals are in good shape, tropicals/macro are everywhere, carpet anemones with their resident clownfish abound, octopi and small squid, sharks are here and there, grouper and snapper and the gamut of western Pacific marine life are here except mantas. Water was cool and rough and occasional currents could surprise you at tide change. Air from mid-70's to mid-80's with an occasional rain shower. It can be buggy at dusk and into the evening but bug spray is available. The 10-hour flight from Los Angeles arriving at dawn, followed by the 3-hour bus and boat ride to the resort can leave you shell-shocked but you have just arrived in paradise. No phones, no computers, no fax's, no TV's, no radios, no roads, and no need for stress. Shop and conduct yourself carefully on the big island. Don't wear your sparkly jewelry, watch your

wallet/purse, and use standard traveler's commonsense. You are back in the real world on the big island. No real dedicated area for camera folks but did have a camera rinse tank on board. No film processing on the island I was aware of. Boat crew assisted camera folks on and off. Very careful with all gear.

Marlin Bay Resort, August 2002, Sean Bruner (sean@bruner.net) Tucson, AZ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 25 to 50 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy. We booked the trip through a local dive shop, which did a poor job of describing what we needed to bring. I only brought a 3-mm wetsuit and was cold throughout the week (consequently using a lot of air). My wife was smart enough to bring her hood. Luckily, someone lent me her hood. The dive guide from the shop (chubby) said, "Well, I'm not cold and I only wear a 3." Apparently, some people at the shop knew in advance, because someone had e-mailed the shop that the week before the divers were cold, but most of the travelers weren't told (this is the shop's fifth trip to this resort, so they should know by now). It rained the first three days and everyone was freezing. I had foolishly only brought a sweatshirt. All the personnel at the resort were wearing nice knee length windbreakers with hoods, advertising the resort on the back, but the gift shop was out of them when I tried to buy one. The first two days of diving, the dive shop owner picked wrecks to dive where the water was choppy and the currents were strong. It was totally

unsuited for a first dive. After two days, the weather cleared, but the water never did. The rain limited visibility for the rest of the trip. The corals, however, especially the soft corals, were impressive. The boat rides were long (the resort is on Beqa Island), minimum one hour to the reef. The guys on the boat and the local divemasters were top notch. The resort has a policy of no tipping. They ask you to contribute to a Christmas fund for the employees, but are murky on how the money actually gets distributed. The resort is beautiful and the rooms are quite pretty, but you are virtually a prisoner there, since they prohibit walking to any of the nine villages on the island (no cars) unless it is during the contrived school visit or church service. The villagers put on a tourist "fire walking" and singing show. They are good singers and the authenticity of their cultural heritage is impressive. Overall, the experience was positive, but the weather did dampen it. The food was so-so, especially the breakfasts. Lunches were the best meals. Desserts were great and way too big. Fiji has 300 islands and next trip I would like to see more of it instead of just one little portion. There was no E6 processing, no photo tables on boats, separate rinse tank but everyone was cleaning masks and sometimes other things in it, and the gift shop sold some film and batteries but at way inflated prices.

Marlin Bay Resort, August 2002, Terry Specktor
(inspektor@comcast.net) Tucson, AZ. Vis: 50 ft. Water: 78 F. Dives

accrued: 150. Dive restrictions enforced: 120 ft. Paradise views when not raining. The resort is first class even tho' you're on a remote island. This spot is enjoyable even for nondivers or down time. Captain "G" took care of us on the boat, extremely watchful. We booked as a group. Two dives in a.m. I would have liked three dives each day. The night dives were the best dives!

Kadavu

Dive Kadavu, March 2002, James McMeins, Carnation, WA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm, choppy. First time at Dive Kadavu, have dived this island before but mostly the Astrolab Reef. All dives are on the north side of island and within 15-20 minutes. Large swells on this visit caused a lot of lower than usual visibility dives. The warm water has really affected reefs, reef tops all brown or covered with algae. Don't know if it is from over fishing but very little fish life on most of the reefs, not what we're used to for Fiji diving. Had read other reader reports about dive operation not taking day trips to Astrolabe Reef but we had no problem though only four of us went. Diving much better out there. Resort is lovely and well maintained. Meals very good, owners are friendly and helpful. No a/c in rooms but fans keep it cool at night. No camera table and only one bucket for cameras and as usual non-underwater photo continue to rinse masks in it. (Ph: 888-234-5447 or + 679-311780; e-mail divekadavu@is.com.fj; website www.divekadavu.com)

Matangi Island

Matangi Island Resort, November 2001, Steve Evers (stevee@kxr.com) Boulder Creek, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, calm choppy. Food and accommodations are 5-star. Breakfast was served to order. During breakfast we placed orders for lunch and dinner. Two choices for each meal. Very intimate setting. Local diving was good but not great. The stern of the boat has a swim deck on each side and then a higher deck in the middle that you step up onto to then get to the main part of the boat. Unfortunately the swim decks are about two feet above the water line and there are no handholds to grab onto to pull yourself up. The boat was about nine months old and that an error had been made in determining the buoyancy of the boat, so the swim decks were higher than planned. Damage to hard coral was evident. Staff consisted of one DM and two assistants (working on DM cert). They were OK at pointing out small critters (mostly nudibranchs), but not great. Lots of white tip reef sharks and schools of barracuda. We had a prepaid dive package for two tanks a day for five days. Rainbow Reef was an additional US\$60. For that we got three dives and an excellent picnic lunch. Hour boat drive. The dives (Great White Wall, Purple Wall, Jack's Place) on Rainbow Reef were outstanding. The coral was in good shape and unbelievable in its color and variety. (Ph: 888-628-2644 or 679-880 699 or 679-880 260; e-mail

usres@MatangiIsland.com or
fijires@MatangiIsland.com or
matangiisland@is.com.fj; website
www.matangiisland.com)

Matangi Island Resort, March 2002, James McMeins, Carnation, WA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 110 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, choppy, currents. For the price and remoteness this is a 1st class operation. 3rd stay. The food was excellent and the staff is attentive. They offered to upgrade us to a deluxe bure but we declined. Although #1 used to be the oldest, it was recently refinished and we enjoyed the extra room this bure provides. Carol and Nigel Douglas run the dive operation and the jet boat is an excellent dive platform. Fish life is abundant as well as big fish. We got in the water with a large school of pilot whales and dolphins on one dive, it was great! Explored several new sites. Warming waters and algae are having a negative effect here as most of reef tops are brown or covered with algae. Did the day trip to Somosomo Strait, hit the Great White wall at full tide, what a ride! Shore diving is improving each year, more and more of the reef off the resort is coming back to life and lots of fish here. Night dives are excellent. Dive operation had new dive guide who was unfamiliar with a lot of the sites, we had to tell him some dives we wanted to do and get the native crew to show him where they were. 1st three days it was really rough, several divers got seasick, the rest of the time it was mostly calm. The trip to the local village is a real eye opener; take boxes of pencils/

crayons and tablets with you. The children in the school appreciate it, as well as sporting equipment, i.e., soccer balls, basketballs etc. No camera table on boat and had to request camera bucket put on boat.

Matangi Island Resort, May 2002, Dave & Deb Smith-Craigne, Kutztown, PA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 84 F. Dives logged: 100. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 ft. recorded dive profile for every dive. Matangi Island Resort was fabulous. Our bure on the beach was spacious and comfortable. The food and the service were exceptionally good. We were well taken care of. Everyone was friendly. The diving close to the resort was not good. Most reefs were dead or dying. We asked for, and were taken to, reefs farther away and were treated to fine diving. We had to pay extra for these dives, but it was worth it.

Nanau-I-Ra

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, August 2001, Jacob Rosenstein, San Francisco, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 72 to 74 F, choppy. Fantastic dive operation. We hit reefs that no other boats have. Pristine diving at its best. Lots of tropicals, nudibranchs, soft and hard coral. Walls were covered with a rainbow of soft coral. Certain dive sites, such as G6 had strong current. But the schools of fusiliers and trevally jacks made it worthwhile. Few sharks and barracuda. Hardly any pelagics. Overall, an exciting and unique diving experience. Wananavu Resort staff very friendly.

Make you feel right at home. Lovo night especially memorable. It rained for over 24 hours, but there was sightseeing and shopping in nearby towns. Boat went out in the rain anyway. UW Photography comments: Boat had large rinse buckets for u/w photographic equipment. Crew was helpful in handing equipment to divers, pointing out small critters, and generally friendly. **(Ph: 679-694-747; e-mail info@crystaldivers.com; website www.crystaldivers.com)**

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, March 2002, David L. Crawford and Kathleen K. Crawford, Peoria, IL. Kathy and I both review our *Undercurrent* religiously. Crystal Divers had the most praise, and I concur with all those divers who found Dan Grenier's operation top notch. We had communicated with Elisa, Dan's wife, and, I believe, Linda, one of Dan's employees before arriving. On check-in at Wananavu Beach Resort, Dan was there to greet us at the bar, answer what questions we had, and then within a couple of hours his employees, George and Bulla had come by and picked up our BCs, regulators, and other gear and taken them down to the boat for us. They also reviewed our C-cards and got all of our information taken care of up front and they stored and cared for our gear. Crystal Divers still has a great boat, the *Crystal Explorer* and they took it out, for anywhere from three people all the way up to eight. They certainly had courteous staff between George, Bulla, and Mary. There were delicious

homemade snacks between all the dives. All the dives were thoroughly researched and explained to us and there were two dive masters in the water with us, and one, if not two, on the boat the whole time. They generally chose to take us out to distant dive sites where live aboards went. These were a higher quality sites. Often we saw the *Fiji Aggressor* following us, diving in the same spots that Dan had found shortly after we exited. We never had a cross word from the staff, the tanks were always full, our gear was always cleaned and stored for us, and though the groups changed, they kept track of where they had been, so that in our one week of diving, we never went to the same place twice. I have been diving since 1986 and Kathy since 1996 and been in many places in the Caribbean and I have never seen the hard or soft coral in as good a shape. The anemones and corals were outstanding. Most of the dives are with current along walls, and the views were as impressive at 35-40 feet as they were at 80. Wananavu Beach Resort was very nice. There were air conditioners in each room. One group in our party had the beachfront accommodations and we had a villa, both were nice. Friendly courteous staff cleaned the rooms every day, plenty of hot water, and insects were not a problem. The food at the resort was very good. The meal plan, which includes breakfast, lunch, and a three-course dinner for Kathy and me for six nights including our bar tab with the exchange rate, was less than \$600 American-. Crystaldivers@is.com.fj.

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, April 2002, Jim Chambers (jimbo1@mindspring.com) Tucker, GA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 80 Feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, calm. Reading "*Undercurrent*," we kept seeing rave reviews for Wananavu Beach Resort and Crystal Divers, so we booked. Wananavu is a superb resort on the secluded north coast of Fiji, near the town of Rakiraki. It's small but comfortable, and it's located many miles from the more upscale, crowded resort areas. The staff is the most friendly and personable group of folks whom we have ever met, the restaurant is superb, and the buildings and grounds are absolutely gorgeous. Two villas have two bedrooms. All of the bures and the villa bedrooms are air-conditioned! Dan and Alisi and Linda run a great operation, and the boat crew is the best. The Crystal Explorer, is a superb dive boat, fast, smooth (even in choppy seas), and comfortable. It has overhead slings to keep your equipment dry, so there's no clutter of stuff on the seats and deck -- a nice touch. If it's raining or the seas are rough, there are roll-down vinyl windows that zip together to keep things dry -- another nice touch. Joiji, Bola, Paul, and Mere are incredible, dedicated to seeing that we had a great dive experience. Joiji and Bola found exotic nudibranchs and other little critters faster than I could photograph them. Mere's (Joiji's sister) home-made brownies were to die for during the surface intervals. We were diving in the eastern part of the Bligh Water and the Vatu-I-Ra Channel between Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Except for

an occasional live-aboard, Crystal Divers is the only dive operator diving this area, and the reefs are pristine. In the Vatu-I-Ra Channel, we dived bommie after bommie. Bommies are vertical or near-vertical uprisings that came within a few feet of the surface. I have never in my life seen, or even imagined, such proliferation of soft and hard corals, fish, and invertebrates. Scores of lionfish and clown anemone fish. Most dive sites were about an hours boat ride. We had calm water most days, but even on a couple of days when the water was choppy, it was a comfortable ride. Dove with lycra skins only, and were quite comfortable. We didn't see a lot of big animals, but we hardly missed them. We did see sharks on most dives (mostly whitetips and bronze whalers) and some eagle rays. My favorite site was "Black Magic Mountain." We dived it four times (by request), and I would have happily dived it every day! There was some current on most dives, and the dive crew was proficient at handling it. Being most experienced in no-current diving, we quickly learned the ropes and learned to love drift diving. We learned how to get out of the current when we wanted to, and if it were easiest to just use the current to glide past the bommies, the boat came and picked us up. No one had to swim against a current. PS: the microscopic bars of bath soap at Wananavu are absurd. Next time, we'll bring our own soap! We booked the trip, including the Air Pacific flights, with Donna Lattin at South Pacific Island Travel, in Seattle. Donna's a nice lady who is extremely

knowledgeable about the resorts she books. Check her out at www.SPIslandTravel.com.

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, May 2002, Dave & Deb Smith-Craine, Kutztown, PA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 84 F. Dives logged: 100. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 ft. recorded dive profiles for every dive. We stayed in a single beach bure that was large (two bedrooms) and comfortable. We had a full kitchen and a washing machine. The food and service were exceptional. Crystal Divers was fantastic. We dove fabulous reefs and every dive. The boat rides were long (45-60 min) but worth it. The boat crew was friendly and helpful. They even treated us to a traditional Fijian dinner on their island.

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, July 2002, Don Acheson, Silver Spring, MD. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, choppy, currents, no currents. Crystal Divers continues to deliver some of the finest diving I've experienced. Black Magic Mountain still entrances me; it has everything — sharks and tuna and jacks on the prowl, hard and soft corals, tropicals, little critters. Wananavu offers attractive, comfortable bures, excellent service, and good food and drink with a wonderful view of the ocean and setting sun. Our maid left beautiful fresh flower arrangements to greet us every day when we returned from our diving. Fifth dive holiday with Crystal Divers and third at Wananavu!

Ra Divers, Wananavu, September 2001, John & Juanita Bambridge, West Hills, CA. Vis: 30-60 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives accrued: 232. The most beautiful topography (swimthroughs, ledges and reefs) with lush corals. Specially soft, we've seen so far. Abundant selection of tropicals, small, medium and large. Beautiful diving, fine resort and food. **(Ph: 679-694511; e-mail radivers@is.com.fj; <http://www.radivers.com>)**

Savu-Savu

Cousteau Fiji Island Resort, December 2001, Douglas K. Rickerson, Vashon, WA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Dives logged: 100 (my wife is pushing 1000). Dive restrictions enforced: 130, less with Nitrox. One of the best dive operations we have ever encountered. I am 73+ years young! They set my gear up, help me put it on, help me in and out of the dive boat, escorted me on dives and showed me things I never would have seen! Outstanding operation! Our third time at Cousteau's Resort. My wife does a lot of cold water diving at home! I don't do cold water! She has been diving over 20 years — only nine for me! **(Ph: 800-246-3454 or 415-788-5794; e-mail info@fijiresort.com; website www.fijiresort.com)**

Moody's Namena, Namenalala Island, August 2001, Jerry & Julie Morben (jmorben@wdata.com) Bismarck, ND. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 77-79 F. Logged dives: 200 each. Dive restrictions enforced: None, but safety stressed. Booked through Fiji Escapes.

All details and arrangements went without a hitch. Tom and Joann Moody were wonderful hosts. The bures were wonderful, (private and had fantastic views. The food and beach barbeque were wonderful. Meals were served family style. The staff surprised us with an anniversary cake and champagne plus a Fijian song on our special day. The diving was fantastic. Our favorite site was Fish Patch. There were always four staff on the dive boat (two divemasters) boat captain and equipment handler). We have been forever spoiled by the resort owners (Tom and Joann), staff and dive personnel. **(Ph: 679-8813-764; e-mail moodysnamena@connect.com.fj; website www.moodysnamenafiji.com)**

Viti Levu

Aquacadabra, July 2002, Julie Sanderson, San Diego, CA. Vis: 50 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 260+. Dive restrictions enforced: time. Great boat, 9000 Naiad, twin outboard. Center bench with tank seats — overhead net pockets for T-shirt, hat, sunglasses. Spare air on safety top line. 2 ladders for reboarding. Walter was an excellent captain. Julie is an excellent instructor, thorough and still fun. We had six guests, four crew for a two-tank dive trip. Very personalized service. Julie had some vinegar ready for my little hydroid sting. Perfect for beginning divers. **(Ph: 679-3450-911; e-mail info@aquacadabradiving.com; website www.aquacadabradiving.com)**

Sheraton Denaru, December 2001, Bradley Bowen, Farmington, UT.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. We had chartered a boat to take us on a two-tank dive immediately upon arrival of our plane at 5:30 a.m. as the *Fiji Aggressor* does not permit boarding until 1:30 on the day of arrival. We collected our baggage and were in a cab by 6:45. Our first dive was at Malolo Pinnacle, about 12 miles out from the Sheraton Royal and a few hundred yards from the end of Malolo Island. Great dive consisting of two pinnales rising from a sandy bottom in 80 feet of water. Dozens of anemone fish on top of the pinnacle, including tomato clown fish, Clark's anemone fish and at least one other species. Lots of jacks, giant trevally, clouds of anthias and other fish feeding in the water column on the East side of the pinnacle. A great tunnel under the second pinnacle and plenty of soft corals. The second dive was at Mystery Reef, half way between Malolo Island and the Sheraton. Fabulous swimthroughs at the beginning of the dive. Not many fish, but lots of sea cucumbers, one that spews out long sticky threads when slightly stressed. Remains of a Japanese frigate that ran onto the reef four years ago and broke up in subsequent storms. Book through the dive shop directly rather than through the Sheraton and ask for the manager to make special arrangements such as diving right after plane lands. (Ph: 679-6750-777; e-mail sheratondenarau@sheraton.com; website www.bulafiji.com/web/denarau)

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Tahiti and Moorea are everyone's dream of the South Pacific, and despite their pricey resorts and food, these French-speaking islands are developing as a destination for American divers since there is plenty of reef shark action. Some areas have not seen many divers There are a range of accommodations, though generally it's expensive....the once snotty French attitude toward others seems to have lessened considerably.

Bora Bora

Blue Nui Bora Bora, Pearl Beach Resort, May 2002, Bob Woods
(bobwoods@pacbell.net)

Hillsborough, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, calm, currents. Blue Nui Bora Bora is a good, professional organization but not long on service. We had to set up, tear down, and rinse all our gear for each dive; they stored it for us. Not concern and service by the general staff we expect in the Caribbean or, say, Fiji. Morning dive at 8:30, a short surface interval, and another dive before lunch. The surface intervals typically less than an hour were a bit short for my taste, though our computers said they were OK. The drill is back roll in, fairly easy exit on a detachable ladder. They were flexible about how you got out, whether you want to take off your fins, BC, etc., in the water or not. Fish life was ok but not great for the South Pacific; we saw lots of black tip