

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](mailto:sheratondenarau@sheraton.com); website [www.bulafiji.com/web/denarau](http://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](mailto: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

sharks, some big Java moray eels, Napoleon fish, dot-and-dash butterflies, and eagle rays. There were nice coral canyons and swimthroughs, but there seems to be no soft coral in French Polynesia. We did see a few anemones and tomato anemone fish. (Ph: + 689 50 84 52; e-mail [sales@spmhotels.pf](mailto:sales@spmhotels.pf); websites <http://www.pearlresorts.com/bora/main.asp> and [www.bluenui.com](http://www.bluenui.com))

**Bora Diving Center, October 2001, Don Worpell, Las Vegas, NV.** Vis: 85-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives logged: 326. Beautiful island and colorful waters. People very friendly and helpful. Lodging expensive in general. Dive equipment and wetsuits in good condition but no depth gauges. Dive staff helpful. Saw only two manta rays because most had already migrated. Saw schools of eagle rays, many sharks of all sizes, fair number of tropicals, hard coral only. Semi submersible aquascope inside the lagoon was worthwhile for additional fish viewing with a free diver feeding the fish. (Ph: 689-67-71-84; e-mail [boradiving@mail.pf](mailto:boradiving@mail.pf); website [www.boradive.com](http://www.boradive.com))

### Huahine

**Blue Nui Manihi, Pearl Beach Resort, May 2002, Bob Woods** ([bobwoods@pacbell.net](mailto:bobwoods@pacbell.net))  
**Hillsborough, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 15 to 100 Feet. Water: 85 to 85 F, calm, currents. Blue Nui Manihi, as run by shop manager Staphane Hamon, is top of the line. They tried hard to please, we never had to touch our gear, and they treated

us as friends rather than just customers. When we left the dive shop for the last time it was hugs and kisses all around. Morning dive at 8:30 (or 10:30 if no one wanted to dive early; they were accommodating), back in for lunch, and another dive around 2:00. You do a back roll, 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. Restrictions depended on what the dive staff perceived your experience level to be; we could pretty much do whatever we wanted, while some others were closely shadowed and held under a tight rein. The diving ranged from calm, quiet wall and reef dives to flying drift dives through the lagoon entry (The Break) at tide change. On the wall and reef inside and outside the lagoon, there are coral-covered canyons, channels, and the undersides of ledges to swim through. There is plenty of healthy hard coral — no soft coral. Fish includes lionfish, white tips, black tips, eagle rays, Napoleon fish, clouds of pyramid butterflies, unicorn fish, flame angelfish, ringtail wrasse, and the beautiful bird wrasse. The dives in the channel at full current were wild rides and great fun. You would either drop into the channel, or start in still water at one end. If you didn't drop into the channel itself you would be in fairly calm water for a few minutes with a moderate (1-3 knots) current, then accelerate as you go through the shallow break. When you again hit the deeper water at the other end it's like hitting a wall of still water, with everyone tumbling head

over heels as the currents meet. Then it's nice and calm again until you're ready for the boat to pick up survivors. (Ph: + 689 50 84 52; e-mail [sales@spmhotels.pf](mailto:sales@spmhotels.pf); website <http://www.pearlresorts.com/TeTiare/Main.asp> or [www.bluenui.com](http://www.bluenui.com))

**O'iri Plongee, Te Tiare Beach Resort, June 2001, Sarah Crawford, Holualoa, HI.** Dives accrued: 160+. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 77-80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: as a single diver, always had a guide as a buddy. Serge and Amaelie of Oiri Plongee were friendly and relatively fluent in English. On one day they picked us up by zodiac at our resort and on another we drove to their place on the other side of Huahine. A slight current in Avamoa Pass helped us see lots of reef fish, lion fish, fire coral and other, and two black tip reef sharks. Hundreds of barracuda, two more sharks, colorful sponges and coral, and eagle rays checked us out in the Pass as Amaelie guided the second dive that day. At Parea Pass on another dive, we explored a sand bottom at 60 ft. next to a coral wall and saw angelfish, anemones and anemone fish, and other tropicals. Serge and Am@elie felt like friends. Te Tiare was a beautiful resort but needed better ac. Excellent food and great Polynesian shows. Friendly staff. (Ph: 00.689.68.76.84; e-mail : [oiri.plongee@mail.pf](mailto:oiri.plongee@mail.pf); website [www.oiriplongee.com](http://www.oiriplongee.com))

## **Moorea**

**Bathy's, Hibiscus, Intercontinental Beachcomber, May 2002, Bob Woods, Hillsborough, CA.** Experi-

ence: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. We dove with Bathy's Club at the Intercontinental Beachcomber, which is where we were supposed to stay before a forced schedule change. They picked us up daily by van (by car, after the van broke) from the resort we ended up staying at and brought us and our gear to the shop, but they had no storage for our gear — we had to shlep it back and forth every day. Then we had to lug it from the shop (about 100 M) to the boat and set it up. When we asked for a cart were told there was none; actually there was one, but it was for the exclusive use of the crew and for hauling tanks but not for the customers. We also found the boat crowded, twelve or more divers on a double-outboard that more commonly accommodates no more than six. After the dive the crew pointed out where we were to rinse our gear after we had unrigged it and hauled it to the rinse tank (no help from them), and then we packed it up for the ride back to the hotel. No snacks (or even water!) on the dive boat, although the rides to the dive sites were five to ten minutes. Back roll in, fairly easy exit on a detachable ladder. They were flexible about how you got out, i.e., whether you want to take off your fins, BC, etc., in the water or not. The dive routine seemed to be if customers were available the morning dive was a shark feeding dive, although it seemed more mackerel got fed than sharks. But there were a bunch of 3-5 foot blacktips and a couple of good sized lemons, and what the hell, we got wet.

On the bottom there was nice healthy hard coral; no soft coral in French Polynesia. Butterflyfish, groupers, and so on, but nothing unusual. OK diving, but not worth a trip. **(Intercontinental Beachcomber Ph: +689 86 51 10 | Fax: +689 86 51 30; e-mail tahiti@interconti.com; website <http://tahiti.french-polynesia.intercontinental.com>; Bathys's Ph: 689-56 31 44 or 689-55 19 39; e-mail bathys@mail.pf)**

**Scubapiti, Les Tipaniers, February 2002, Ben Glick (bglick@vgernet.net) Williamstown, MA. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Dives logged: >1400. Dive restrictions enforced: 120. Big 8-10 ft. lemon sharks up close. Very good dive operation right at the hotel. Dive site limited. (Scubapiti: Ph: +56 20 38; e-mail scubapitidaniel@mail.pf; <http://home.covad.net/~ajromcom1/scubapiti/English/Club/Clube.htm>; Les Tinaniers: 689-56-12-67)**

### Rangiroa

**Blue Dolphin Dive Center, Kia Ora Resort, February 2002, Sherwood & Judith Smith (shersmith@msn.com) Olympia, WA. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 84-85 F. Dives accrued: 450+. Dive restrictions enforced: group dives because of strong currents. Wonderful diving in Tiputi and Avatoru passes in a variety of currents from slight, to 3+ knots. Many dives were repeated, but given the variety of currents and fish life, all were worthwhile. Dolphins were heard on most dives, and seen underwater on two. On outside windward wall dives, on healthy coral,**

**we encountered mantas, turtles, dogtooth tuna, the largest titan triggerfish we have ever seen, Napoleon wrasse, schools of jacks and surgeonfish, eagle rays, and large groups of gray reef sharks, and the usual small reef fish. The drifts through Tiputi pass, especially in ripping current, were a thrill, especially the one on which a large cruise ship, exiting the pass, passed overhead with 20 feet of clearance. Kicking out of the current into a cave with sleeping white tip sharks, and then back into the tidal stream was a lot of fun. Most dives done grouped, reasonable in these conditions. Silvertip shark feed at Avatoru pass entrance was worthwhile, though we do not generally favor this activity. The interaction between nesting titan triggerfish, and huge silvertips had to be seen to be believed. Currents and surge, and need for excellent buoyancy control suggest that this diving is not for beginners. Thirty divers overwhelmed the dive shop, both for filling tanks and for supplying weights, causing scheduling problems. The dive shop staff loaded the tanks from shore onto the Zodiacs, and divers then jumped on from the pier. When members of our group geared up on the Zodiacs, we sometimes found that our (integrated) weights had been scavenged for other divers during the surface interval, and not returned. This required a return to shore for more weights twice. Gear was roughly handled during loading, resulting in broken buckles, torn mouthpieces, etc. Also noted were several missing items, unfortunately**

“scavenged” from BC’s during overnight storage at the dive shop. Nonetheless Sebastian, Pascal, Fred, and Philippe were helpful and enthusiastic divemasters. Entries into the Zodiacs, without ladders, were a challenge for those lacking superb upper body strength. Kia Ora Resort clean and beautiful. Restaurant food ordinary; both rooms and food are overpriced. Walk or taxi to Kai Kai or Ikimasho for superb dinners. **(Ph: 689-96 03 01; e-mail [bluedolphins@mail.pf](mailto:bluedolphins@mail.pf))**

**Paradive, Relais Josephine, February 2002, Ben Glick ([bglick@vgernet.net](mailto:bglick@vgernet.net)) Williamstown, MA.** Dives logged: >1400. Dive restrictions enforced: 130. Pass diving in Rangiroa. Exciting for 2-3 days. Lacks interest for more than this. Relais Josephine one block from pier with dive shop. Out standing accommodations and food. Paradive was professional and helpful. **(Ph: 689-960 503; e-mail [paradive@mail.pf](mailto:paradive@mail.pf); website [www.chez.com/paradive](http://www.chez.com/paradive))**

**Top Dive, March 2002, Harvey Monroe ([Che Mono@aol.com](mailto:Che Mono@aol.com)) Santa Fe, N.M.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 160 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, currents. We spent six days on Rangiroa in a family run hostel. The accommodations were good for \$37 a night and provided cooking facilities. There are 4-5 different dive operations. The most popular are the ones with the lowest prices, which was only a few dollars. With Top Dive I was often the only diver with Eric the Dive Master; other operations loaded down their Zodiacs with up to 15 people, though intended to carry 6 -- hazard-

ous considering the seas outside the lagoon sometimes where over seven feet. The diving is mainly through the passes from the lagoon to the ocean. Sharks every dive, numerous large fish, schools of jacks and barracuda. We observed a school of 16 eagle rays in formation for four or five minutes. A hammerhead was spotted. We missed the manta rays that are seasonal, June thru August. We often dived to 130-150 feet that was challenging during the decompression with the surge and currents that can be dangerous to the uninitiated. The diving is usually to the same general area with the fish life different most of the time. The reefs are attractive hard corals with numerous tropicals. Turtles every dive. The lagoon was not in as good a shape with coral bleaching. Rangiroa has some of the best diving in French Polynesia. Avoid would be during July and August peak vacation season for France and Europe. Diving is a 5-10 minute zodiac ride. **(Ph: 689-60-5050; e-mail [info@topdive.com](mailto:info@topdive.com); website [www.topdive.com](http://www.topdive.com))**

## **Tahiti**

**Iti Diving, Fare Nana’o, February 2002, Sherwood & Judith Smith ([shersmith@msn.com](mailto:shersmith@msn.com)) Olympia, WA.** Vis: 75-100+. Water: 84 F. Dives accrued: 450+. Diving off the Iti Peninsula, on the back side of Tahiti, is a vast improvement over that on the Papeete side, and this wonderful “dive boutique,” handling eight divers at most, was a real discovery. Gilles Jugel runs a slick operation, and his divemaster, Eric, is one of the best

we've encountered. Bilingual dive briefings were remarkable! Dive sites at most a 10 min. boat ride, on a fiberglass V-hull with swim steps, making for easy boat entries. All dive sites buoyed. One lagoon dive in limited visibility to see a school of eagle rays; other dives were all on walls, starting in 20-30', and dropping to 500', with visibility mostly in the 100' range. Pristine corals, and holes full of critters. Large free-swimming morays, Napoleon wrasse, titan triggers, enormous jacks on every dive, with caves and holes both on the wall and on top of the reef filled with the entire spectrum of critters and reef fish. Latter aspects of each dive on the corner of the wall, and onto the plateau, accompanied by a school of up to forty blacktip sharks, quite content to swim with us. Fare Nanao is an "ecotourism" pension, with eight thatch-roofed fares, full of unique, hand-built, rustic furniture. Monique Meriaux and her children provide excellent home-cooked meals, wines included, and French hospitality. We stayed in a tree house! Package included daily transportation to dive shop, and to and from airport. (Ph: +689 57 7793; e-mail [itidiving@mail.pf](mailto:itidiving@mail.pf); website [www.itidiving.pf](http://www.itidiving.pf))

**Raie Manta, September 2001, Lisel Doreste (Lisel27@yahoo.com) Maspeth, NY.** Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, currents. Raie Manta Club is a great operation. Professional, courteous staff. They picked us up every morning in the dive bus. Were not

overbearing (like Blue Dolphin operation from the Kia Ora) but there to help whenever needed. Sharks on every one of 17 dives! The drift dives are tough for the inexperienced, but once you're used to them, they are a thrill! They are also where most of the silvertips would hang out, just outside the lagoon. Also witnessed an amazing 'wallpaper' of gray reef sharks sitting off the reef at 100 feet. Hundreds in every direction. Thoroughly incredible. Two independent hammerheads in the distance on two dives. Also saw nurse sharks, black tips, white tips, wrasses, turtles, dolphins jumping in the pass, schools of jacks and barracuda, and lots of little critters. Nice big manta rays on almost every dive. Saw one beautiful big mother with her baby and they hung with us for the whole dive. The Kia Ora is a great and expensive resort, but worth it. Almost the same price as the local b&b's but much more comfortable and luxurious. No night life, good food. The French influence ensures fresh baguette every morning and great wine at dinner. (e-mail [raiemantaclub@mail.pf](mailto:raiemantaclub@mail.pf); website <http://raiemantaclub.free.fr>)

## GUAM

The island of Guam is the main layover point for divers headed for the Micronesian destinations of Palau, Truk, the Marshall Islands, and others. The diving is several notches below those final destinations, but it is the Pacific, and if you end up there with time on your hands, there is diving available.