

three. The nudibranchs were spectacular and were big. They even had a green and gold (I named it the Green Bay Packer nudibranch). Lion fish, trumpet fish, turtles and long-nosed butterfly fish were around. The operation overall was outstanding and the NZ dollar to US dollar exchange rate made this a bargain that could not be passed up. They also make soup on board, yummy! Website: [www.divenz.co.nz](http://www.divenz.co.nz) (e-mail [rees@divenz.co.nz](mailto:rees@divenz.co.nz); website [www.divenz.co.nz](http://www.divenz.co.nz))

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Some of the world's finest diving is in this land just north of Australia whose most consistent feature is its unpredictability. . . . It's a dream destination for live-aboards with unique critters on a big scale: big fish, big coral, big distances, and muck diving. It's also a naturalist's paradise with beautiful topography: mountains covered with snow in July shade, steaming jungles, butterflies as big as birds, walking-stick insects a foot long, and splendid Birds of Paradise. Most rain comes in heavy afternoon downpours. . . . If you're into wrecks, check with the live-aboards that make trips to Rabaul. . . . After traveling this far, take a week to stay in some of the fine lodges like Karawari or Tari (even though they want top dollar) to visit indigenous, primitive, wild-and-woolly cultures that are among the most interesting on the planet. The people are divided into hundreds of fre-

quently-sparring tribes speaking hundreds of languages. Witchdoctors on the outer islands maintain the old value systems, yet go to Christian services on Sundays, and men from the stone age, covered with colored mud, mingle in airports with business people in suits and ties. . . . Women should not travel alone in PNG. Port Moresby is an unsafe city, although the big hotels are fine; but use Moresby for changing planes and daytime shopping at the superb giant crafts market. . . . If you have to lay over in Port Moresby, consider Loloata Island Resort, a diver's alternative 25 minutes from the airport. . . . Malaria prophylaxis is still essential. English and Pidgin English (helicopter: "Mixmaster blong Jesus") is spoken. . . .

**Loloata Island Resort, December 2001, John Sommerer** ([john.sommerer@jhuapl.edu](mailto:john.sommerer@jhuapl.edu)) **Silver Spring, MD.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy. Nice resort, great service and a nice and knowledgeable owner. Pleasant accommodations near Port Moresby, with no security concerns. Prompt and painless airport, hotel transfer service. Aggressive flies a bother in outdoor areas, including dining; get the A/C rooms, despite the longer walk to meals. Wildlife on island a treat, though I never saw the resident tree kangaroo, and the crested pigeons will beat on you if you approach too closely. Large day groups from Moresby can make you

want to avoid the lounge and bar, but they leave early afternoon. Fascinating critter diving (ornate ghost pipefish, harlequin shrimp, etc.) with knowledgeable and helpful dive crews. Bad weather limited our exposure to the “better” reef sites, but one try out there resulted in a mated pair of huge cuttlefish guarding a staghorn coral full of eggs. Wasn’t even a regular dive site. Probably the best day boats I’ve been on. Never handle the gear except to dive with it. Crew careful with photo gear, but didn’t like signing form that said, “If we destroy your camera, tough.” (Ph: 675-325-8590 or 675-325-1369; e-mail [Loloata@Loloata.com](mailto:Loloata@Loloata.com); website [www.loloata.com](http://www.loloata.com))

**Tufi Dive Resort, November 2001, Wendy Beach ([beach@together.net](mailto:beach@together.net)) Vergennes, VT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 84 F, calm choppy no currents. Fabulous visit. Extremely well run in all respects. The resort beautifully maintained which is quite a feat considering how remote it is. The food was good and the atmosphere conducive to meeting guests from all over the world. The management made sure guests were well-taken care of whether for land tours or diving. Diving is exceptional. Eye opening corals and color, plentiful fish, fascinating macro critters. Not a place to see the really big fish. Nonetheless it was great. They do everything from taking care of your gear to doing your laundry. The service was great. (Ph: 675-641-1438; e-mail [info@tufitelita.com](mailto:info@tufitelita.com); website [www.tufitelita.com](http://www.tufitelita.com))

**Walindi Plantation, 2002, A. Carter Middendorf, Stevenson, MD.** I have a congenital spinal defect which required two operations many years ago and time is slowly catching up. As a result I am somewhat handicapped on land (I need a cane much of the time) and need help with my gear. The owners and staff of the resort have been exceptionally understanding. They don’t fuss, they are simply there when I need help with something. (Ph: +675-9835441; e-mail [info@Walindi.com](mailto:info@Walindi.com) or [Max@Walindi.com](mailto:Max@Walindi.com); website [www.walindi.com](http://www.walindi.com))

**Walindi Plantation, May 2002, Dan Purnell, Vancouver, WA.** Vis: 60-150 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dives logged: 360. Walindi Plantation Resort is a great resort to dive and relax. Everybody is friendly and wonderful. The food is exceptional. It is great to hang out on the deck, with great people and a cold beer, and watch the sunsets and bats fly about. The Walindi Dive operation is excellent. The Divemasters are great at spotting all the unique critters. They are professional, helpful and enthusiastic about their work. The sea fans, sponges and corals in Kimbe Bay are outrageous. They are huge, colorful and awesome. The currents can be strong, but then the big stuff gets more active. This is world class diving.

**Walindi Plantation, July 2002, Elissa ([descentline@attbi.com](mailto:descentline@attbi.com)) Corona, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F. We stayed at the Walindi Plantation before boarding *Star Dancer* and for several days after disembarking. Upon arriving at

Hoskins airport we were picked up by Freddie from Walindi who drove us through jungle, coconut plantations and the bustling town of Kimbe. After a half hour we passed through Walindi's gates, entering an Eden of tropical plants and the shores of Kimbe Bay. Walindi consists of an open air bar, central lounge/TV/reading area with swimming pool, deck, tennis court and gift shop/artifact store. Surrounded by lush tropical landscaping are oceanfront bure style, thatched roof bungalows and lodge. Our bungalow contained queen and twin beds, kitchen, bath and porch overlooking Kimbe Bay. The walls are covered with beautifully woven native woods. There are no glass windows or air conditioning. Instead, the windows are screened, allowing air flow and sounds of nature to permeate. Nothing sounded nor smelled as sweet as the rain and birds while lying in bed. A ceiling fan kept the room comfortable even in the tropical heat. Bring adapters for the Australian 3 prong outlets, repellent and consider an anti malarial. More mosquitoes are on land than sea and I was on the menu! 3 buffet style meals served daily with at least one vegetarian dish. Owners Max and Cecile dined with guests and shared interesting stories. They have an extensive library of reference books, most signed by the authors. Photos on the walls were signed by names familiar to every dive publication. Diving is from small boats that hold 12 people comfortably. Though there are no gear stations, entry into the water was orderly off the back of the boat. They

handed down cameras with care and the divemasters were outstanding, helping find unusual critters. Lunch is on the boat and some of the best critter spotting came during lunchtime snorkeling (how about a pair of double ended pipefish, one male with babies among the sea grass in 2 feet of water?). These reefs near Walindi were as alive and pristine as those we visited on *Star Dancer*. During our stay, dormant volcano Mt. Pago erupted and closed the airport. Terri and Jeff from Peter Hughes took care of rerouting our flights through Rabaul and *Star Dancer* came back and picked us up! We dived off *Star Dancer* for another three days and toured the historic town of Rabaul. The airport in Telesea will replace Hoskins by Sept. 23. Visit the hot river, Kimbe market and Mahonia Na Dari Research Centre (next to Walindi). Try garlip nuts. They're great! See our website [www.descentline.com](http://www.descentline.com) for photos and complete travel report. A separate camera rinse tank is on the boat. There is limited working area and film changes can be challenging. Onsite photo pro and E-6 processing lab at Walindi.

## 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. . . .