

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 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. . . .

Action Divers VIP, March 2001, Larry Campbell (LRC59@yahoo.com) Springfield, VA. Vis: 30-40 ft. Water: 76-77 F. Dives logged: 90. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 ft. 40 min. or air. I have been to Puerto Galera three times. It is my favorite place to dive. Johnno and Rosco do a first-class job running dive operation. All dives are guided and need to be because of currents. Visibility varies from 30 ft. to 100 ft. You can get a room basic \$10 or less. First class \$80. Dives \$20 each with 7th free. All dives are within 10 minutes of shop. Average two to four divers per boat. They do three a day and sometimes a night dive if enough people want to. **(e-mail info@actiondivers.com; website www.actiondivers.com)**

Swagman Hotel, May/June 2001, Tom Sheley ,Two Rivers, WI. Manila is densely populated (13 million); the people are friendly throughout the country. English is spoken by all; signs are in English. Rooms run between \$100 US for high class to \$35 US for something clean but dated. The Swagman Hotel (close to the US Embassy) was \$45 a night and has an Australian atmosphere. They pick you up and deliver you to the airport. Food in Manila is inexpensive (large steak dinner with drinks run \$6; Wendy's large hamburger, large fries, large coke and a frosty \$1.50). Corregidor is 30 miles out of Manila Bay by fast ferry boat (45 minutes). The island is filled with WW II history from when the Americans and Philippine armies held the island through the Japanese

occupation of the Philippines and the reoccupation by the Americans. Busuanga: a 45 min flight from Manila. Round trip air \$100 US. Twelve merchant and one large Japanese military craft were sunk at 60-120 ft. They were part of a replenishment convoy destroyed in the quiet waters of Caron bay between the major island of Busuanga and Culion (about a 45 min air flight South of Manila). The trip from the Busuanga airstrip to Coron bay by bus took 40 minutes. Coron is where most divers stay, but the majority of wrecks are a 40- minute boat trip. We stayed on Sangat Island (www.sangat.com) minutes from most of the better wrecks. Sangat Island reserve (Tangat Island) is an all-inclusive thirty-minute boat ride from Coron (\$60 a night). The reserve is run by Andy Pinwale (a transplanted Englishman) and his wife Edith (a local beauty). Many herons, kingfishers, parrots, woodpeckers, and tabons. Andy's a staff of 15-25 serves eight cottages (sixteen guests). The food was plentiful and good, exotic atmosphere. (www.sangat.com). Electricity is on from 6 P.M. to 1 A.M.. Dry season (October to May). Always a nice breeze to keep us comfortable. There is a lot of stuff in the water thus photography is inhibited by backscatter. Video without its sensitivity to light back scatter works the best. Average visibility was around 30 ft outside the wrecks. Very clear inside the wrecks. Visibility outside the bay is very good. Water 82 degrees. Use bancas, long, port and starboard

outrigger boats. The Island (about 200 acres) is spooky looking (I expected King Kong to look over a cliff.) Monkeys and monitor lizards visited every day. Rental dive gear in good condition (we brought our own gear but may not the next time). Nitrox with the 130-ft max bottom depth an excellent option). All-inclusive does not include drinks served at the bar. Andy has an excellent divemaster who speaks several languages. Two large dive boats. Sangat Island is about 200 miles North of the “events” you may have heard about. Andy has armed security station on the island. Caron Bay: all ships have been partly salvaged, except two close to Sangat Island Resort. The Iroko Japanese refrigeration ship deck is at 90 ft and the better spots inside the wreck are at 128 ft. Twin propeller shafts were powered by turbines, rather than steam reciprocating or diesel engines as on most other WW II merchantman visited by our group. Inside the engine room are large horizontal steam throttle valve hand wheels for control of the turbines, and the exposed starboard turbine blades. Large storage room filled with “wooden” boxes. Engine room has a workshop with lathe. Forward there is kitchen equipment ready to cook a lot of meals. There are large ventilation hand wheels (look like ships steering wheels) forward and aft that make nice props for photos. Akitsushima: Sea plane tender (a real warship). Forward of the mid section she is built like a light cruiser and on the after deck she has a gigantic crane to

service a single four engine Emily seaplane (one of the largest airplanes in WW II). Ship is on its port side. Our first dive was down forward on the starboard side in about 100 ft of water, swimming over the forward gun mounts, bridge and radio tower. We entered the engine room at a break in the airplane servicing deck. On our second dive we entered an opening in the bow, and swam the length inside the wreck through a large major starboard companion way (with many side compartments) and ended in the engine room. The engines are four side-by-side high-speed diesels aligned to reduction gears and two propeller shafts. The control room presented an excellent opportunity for photos of lots of controls and indicators. Forward and aft there are two large three-barrel anti aircraft guns. Six dives are necessary to really appreciate this lady. (**Swagman Travel Ph: 522 3665 (Manila); e-mail bookings@swaggy.com; website www.interbed.com.au/632swagman.htm**)

SOLOMON ISLANDS

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 unexplored territory. . . . Diving is year-round with plenty of places to dive