

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

in the lee, but April and May are the best months, followed by October, November, and December. . . . The Solomons are a possible add-on from Fiji (1300 miles to the southeast) or Papua New Guinea (700 miles to the west); Honiara is on the main island of Guadalcanal; use it only for overnighting. . . . Solomon Islanders produce fine wood carvings. . . . This is serious malaria country. . . .

TONGA

This island grouping, with all the beauty of the classic south Pacific, lies 600 miles to the southeast of Fiji and can be reached via Hawaii, Fiji, or New Zealand. There are few dive operations here, but diving is good and may get better if other resorts open.

VANUATU

The world's largest air-accessible wreck, the *President Coolidge*, a 640-foot ocean liner converted into a troop ship, is a beach dive on Espiritu Santo. It's mainly for advanced divers, starting at 70 feet and going down to 250. . . . Check with DAN about your evacuation insurance before going; you may not be covered due to the number of divers getting bent on this site. . . . Some diving is available from the capital city of Port-Vila, but it's not spectacular. . . . Little reef diving is offered so far. . . . Water temperatures in February hit the

mid 80s and in September may drop as low as 70. . . . Don't miss the side trip to Tanna Island to visit the active volcano, dugongs, and Melanesian villagers living according to ancient customs. . . . Other side trips include the island of Pentecost in April to early June to see the land divers leap head-first from 70-foot towers with nothing but vines tied around their ankles. . . .

LIVE-ABOARDS

AUSTRALIA

Southern Australia

Falie, June 2002, John Crossley (jcrossle@csufresno.edu) Fresno, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 61 to 64 F, choppy. This was a Stan Waterman trip that teamed up with the world famous great white shark expert, Rodney Fox, on the three-masted, 80-year-old classic sailing ship, the *Falie*. The cabins were decent size, but fifteen divers shared three large toilet/shower rooms. Meals included several choices and were well prepared. The great whites were there every day. We saw thirteen different ones in a week. At most we saw five in a day, about 9-16 feet long, but most was really thick and strong looking. Four divers could get into a 6ft by 6ft. steel cage lowered from the side of the ship to 60-80 feet, where we would watch the white sharks (and eagle rays, sting