

many angelfish, triggerfish and filefish. Inner reef sites and North Direction Island also excellent with great coral and juvenile fish nurseries. Sea life included humbugs, Hector's goby, fox-face, titan triggerfish, bristly puffer, Solander's sharp-nosed puffer, Clark's anemonefish, batfish, goby and blind shrimp, thorny oysters, giant clams, burrowing clams. Only real disappointing site was night dive at Mermaid Cove: coral really bleached and dead. Only highlights were Russell's lionfish and cone shells. If you want to dive the Great Barrier Reef, relax away from the crowds, but not need to be on a live-aboard or have to spend all day traveling to and from the reef and have cash to spare this is an outstanding resort. Lizard Island is an expensive, luxurious, romantic resort with fantastic snorkeling and diving.

**Sea Quest (Dive Down Under),
September 2003, Joseph (joegallagh
@aol.com), Fort Wayne, IN.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 Ft. Water: 70 F, calm. Diving on day boats from Cairns can be very restricting. The operations tend to over control concentrating on getting to the reef (two hours away) quickly, getting the dives done and getting back quickly. As a result the dives are very controlled, often on the less vibrant landward side of the reefs where divers can more easily be watched and closely supervised. Sea Quest was a welcome change from that routine. We went as far out as possible to very healthy reefs, Norman and Hastings Reefs which had very active spots. The crew was accommodating, particularly compared to the poor

TUSA operation that I experienced the day before. The Great Barrier Reef has much to offer, giant clams, an abundance of corals and a tremendous variety of fish living off the corals. Maximum underwater time in a vibrant location is what an experienced diver should expect and the Sea Quest operation does its best to meet those expectations. The reefs, Norman and Hastings Reef, were vibrant and full of life. Sea Quest Captain picked out seaward healthy reefs. Because of my experience level I was paired up with a member of the boat crew who simply followed my lead.

Fiji

For Left Coasters, it's easier to get to Fiji than to the Caribbean: 10 hours nonstop from L.A. Airfare and an all-inclusive week at many excellent resorts can be had for under \$2,500 per person; air packages can be tailored to include New Zealand/Australia extensions at little extra cost. ... 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, Scott and Jann Taylor (scotjann@cdsnet.net), Cave Junction, OR. Dives logged: 200+.

Vis: 50 feet. Water: 85 F. We were scheduled to fly out of LAX for Nadi, Fiji, the day that the U.S. launched the pre-emptive strike/window of opportunity assault on Iraq. The security at LAX was definitely cranked up a notch, and all the major news stations had crew and cameras outside the International Terminal interviewing would-be travelers. Once inside, we joined the rest of the huddled masses around the limited TV monitors and questioned the wisdom of flying overseas at this particular juncture. With lots of coverage of anti-American protests all over Europe, we opted to call Lalati Resort to convince ourselves we wouldn't be getting into an unpleasant situation. The manager at Lalati (Beato) urged us to continue our trip and assured us we would encounter no problems whatsoever. Thus, we climbed aboard Air Pacific and headed for Fiji. Going through customs at Nadi was a breeze, and we quickly located our driver for the 2.5-hour ride to Pacific Harbor. Despite being a bit punchy, the drive through the Fijian countryside was wonderful. When we arrived at Pacific Harbor, the boat to

take us to Beqa Island was waiting, complete with Clint, the gracious owner of Lalati. A 30-minute boat ride across Beqa Lagoon, and we arrived at Lalati. Small, with only five or six bures that face the ocean. The bures are well constructed and huge, with two bedrooms, a generous bathroom, and a terrific veranda. There is an open air dining area and bar, a swimming pool, hot tub, photo/video room, and the dive shop. The landscaping is lovely. Breakfast consists of toast, cereals, fruit, muffins, and two choices of entrees. The banana pancakes were outstanding, and the garden omelette delightful. Lunch was served around 1 p.m., after the morning dives; fish tacos, pizza, lasagne ... superb. The dinners were a real treat with fresh fish and veggies and always ended with an amazing dessert. The week we were at Lalati we were the only guests, so the service couldn't have been more personalized. The first day we dove with Clint and Jane (the owners), Dan (The Canadian divemaster), and Seru and Epeh (the Fijian divemasters-in-training). We had two excellent dives and were delighted with the abundance of soft coral, blue ribbon eels, lionfish, and nudibranchs. The seas were flat and calm, and the divemasters knew how to avoid strong currents. E6 processing available — our pictures were ready each evening, and we could look at them on the big screen in the video room. Seru and Epeli were a bit shy but did a wonderful job finding interesting critters. The diving was quite good. Lots of soft coral, tridacna clams, many varieties of nudibranchs, leaf fish, lionfish, blue ribbon eels galore, and plenty of white tip and

black tip sharks. The only downside to the diving was the warm water (85 degrees) and the rainfall made for less than good visibility. Shore diving was available and supposed to be good for muck diving, but we never gave it a try. One afternoon we took the kayaks out and paddled to the end of the bay and into the mangroves. Lots of fun winding through the narrow passage ways. Also at the end of the bay is an amazing island that we named Fruit Bat Island, with thousands of fruit bats hanging in the trees. Something spooked them, and this massive black cloud of bats took flight, an amazing experience. Another afternoon we climbed to the top of the hill behind Lalati. We do a fair amount of hiking at home, but this was a tough one with a slippery slope and the heat and humidity. However, the view from the top was outstanding and made up for all the sweat. On Sunday we were invited to go to Lalati Village for church. We donned our sulas and walked along the beach to the village. The church service was wonderful, and we did our best to sing at least the choruses of the Fijian hymns. On most evenings, villagers came over and sang, played guitars, and drank kava. One evening the village put on a special dance/ceremony that was incredible. Every person we met went out of their way to make us feel welcome. The morning we left, the villagers presented us with flowers and gathered on the beach to sing a farewell song. With tears in our eyes, we left Lalati, knowing that the experience would warm our hearts forever. (www.lalati-fiji.com)

Lalati, November 2002, Rick and Eleanor Sinnott, Boston, MA. Lalati — perfect romantic paradise for couples who want it all in a secluded setting. Lalati Resort is gorgeous, right down to the little details, like multiple exotic flower arrangements in your bure (bungalow) and homemade cookies put there every day. The owners, Linda Kwasny and Clint and Jane Carlson, made sure we did not lift a finger to do anything but enjoy ourselves. The food is gourmet with a chocolate souffle that is to die for! The chef, Beato, takes great pride in his cooking and his presentation is beautiful. We felt like we eating at the finest restaurants in Boston except the setting was gorgeous Fiji. The bure was spacious and right on the water. The diving was so colorful with beautiful, abundant soft corals and nudibranchs. Seta is the best divemaster with whom we have dived. On one dive, we saw three manta rays, two eagle rays, and five sharks schooling together! He can spot anything from the tiniest yellow shrimp to evasive octopus to leaf fish. There was banana bread in the boat and hot chocolate for those of us who get chilled easily. Finally, for the ultimate romantic experience, we were dropped off on Nanuku Island, which is just a quick boat ride from Lalati. Nanuku is a small, uninhabited island that you can walk around in 10 minutes. Beato packed us a feast and put it in a cooler and we were dropped off to spend a secluded afternoon by ourselves on the island. We had a wonderful picnic, did some shell collecting on the beach, and explored. Lalati was building a spa when we were there for those who really like pampering!

Marlin Bay Resort, October 2002, Aaron Wiltfong, Hayden, CO. Vis: 30 to 80 feet. Water: 74 to 80 F. Dives logged: 400+. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 depth limit. No phone, no tv, no cars, no noise, few bugs, loud frogs, great people, good diving, and a view of the stars that will stop you in your tracks on clear nights! The crew takes your gear from you, and you do not have to touch it the rest of the week! Shore tanks are self-service and avail. 24/7 if you desire! Let the crew know if you're going to shore dive, and they will make sure that you have all your stuff off the boat and supply shore support for nighttime stuff! Not for the timid beginner. However, guppies could handle the diving in most of the dive sites! I spotted at least six or eight kinds of nudibranches, lion fish, ribbon eels, leaf fish, lion fish, Moorish idols, and lots of fish. Soft corals and lots of hard stuff. Take a jacket for the boat rides and extra T-shirts for the cool kids. If you go on the village tour bring the shirts, guitar strings, or school supplies and be ready to sing a song or recite a poem or do a dance for the class. The people are great and friendly. The boat did drop anchor on the reef as a common practice in certain areas. A lot of the dive sites have mooring buoys; however, 50% of our dives had anchors dropped! Gloves are not cool unless you're one of the divemasters that needs gloves to rip octopus from their holes and twirl star fish with their batons. The star took a plunge from 70 to 110 feet, yo! Not cool. The DM is an Aussie with thick skin. However, he is a good DM, and if you need anything special he does try to accommodate.

Great trip for dive \$. MBR, 800-542-FIJI. (www.marlinbay.com)

Marlin Bay Resort, November 2002, Reed Nescher (reed@nescher.com), Beaumont, CA. Dive logged: 3500+. Cloudy and dry some afternoon showers, calm and flat. Some small swell, light winds. Water: 77-81 F. Skin or 3 mil spring suit was best. Currents: little depending on tide. Vis: 40-120+ ft. Dive your own profile 120 ft limit enforced. Shore diving: unlimited but nothing special. Went with Wiley's Scuba Locker Group of thirty-two divers for the second year in a row. Three-hour bus ride to Pacific Harbor and forty-five minute boat ride to Marlin Bay Resort on Beqa Lagoon. The bures are well appointed with glass block showers and nice decorating themes. Each meal is delicious with a couple of choices. Snacks are lacking so we took popcorn and had the kitchen pop it for us. We left what was left and the locals loved it. They need snacks and a soda fountain to help keep you hydrated in the tropical heat. The main bure is where you eat and drink and party during the week. The TV makes it fun to show your day's video or digital slides etc. Not all bures are air conditioned. Not really needed on the beach ones, but would help. All the ones away from the beach have air. The staff are as you have heard friendly and will do anything for you to make your trip great. The Fijian people are the friendliest in the world and we have made good friends with Chief Kenny of Beqa Island. The landscaping is beautiful around the resort and the island is a tropical paradise.

Please learn a little of the customs and visit the villages. It is as rewarding as the diving. Ask any one and they will help you with custom and local etiquette. We take school supplies and donate to the Christmas fund in lieu of tipping. We always leave batteries, candy, or anything else that I do not need to carry back as a gift in my bure at the end of the trip. The bures all have sitting areas and front porches that are great for relaxing. The diving is world class and varied. The dive masters know where everything is, so if there is something on your list to see, let them know and they will most likely find it for you. This includes pipefish, blue ribbon eels, cushion stars, and lionfish. The dive operation is isolated, so bring back up or some parts, they are handy and do have some rental gear. All your gear is loaded for you each day and set up the way you like it. They have three boats with bucket rinse tanks, but not any camera storage out of the buckets. If it will leak it will probably leak in the bucket banging against the other cameras in the bucket. Other than this the boats are well laid out for 12 to 16 or so divers. Easy ins and outs and a helpful crew. Not a lot of deep diving, but a lot to see on the tops of all the bommies that dominate the diving in this area. Not much wall diving except at Frigates Pass. In between the bommies is an ocean desert with an occasional shark cruising in the distance. Lots of nudis, pipefish, leaf fish, colorful corals. You will get two morning dives and one night dive in the dive package. Shore diving is unlimited and extra dives can be arranged with the staff.

The shark dive is good, but deep so time is limited. No nitrox is available. The surface intervals are on beautiful beaches with lots of shells.

Marlin Bay Resort, March 2003, Sherrie Barker (sherrie49@hotmail.com), Jefferson, OR. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 87 F, calm, choppy, currents, no currents. Marlin Bay was all we could have hoped for. We had every kind of weather possible, including thunder and lightening. The sunsets were magnificent. The Marlin Bay staff are incredibly accommodating while unobtrusive. Make an appointment for an afternoon massage! It's a good thing diving burns calories, because the meals were delicious. The only change I would suggest is a breakfast buffet so guests don't find themselves rushed to be on time for the boats. We took the organized tour to the school, which was interesting (the kids were great — practice your singing before you go) and walked on our own to the Rukua village, where we were warmly welcomed. No fire walking, since there was a dispute between two of the chiefs. We weren't with a dive group, so found ourselves on the Luna Sea with others who had come as small groups or couples and had the best time you could imagine. The soft coral was amazing and in great shape (we had just seen Coral Reef Adventure) and the fish abundant. I generally dive in a 3 mm suit, but was comfortable in a full skin instead. The visibility wasn't as clear as we had hoped it would be. Get a day room booked at the Tanoa Hotel in Nadi. It's a long trip back to

L.A. My camera quit working immediately, but others on board were able to put cameras in the rinse tank without masks, etc., in with them. There was space to change film under the upper deck on a solid table.

Marlin Bay Resort, April 2003, Juli Tracy & Dick Gamble, San Diego, CA. Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, choppy. Dive resort was nicely appointed — clean, comfortable, spacious bures. Food was also good, although breakfast could benefit by being a buffet, because often by the time everyone was served (7 a.m. start time), it was a rush to make the boat by 8 a.m. Diving was a letdown after being on the *Aggressor* the week before, but as the week progressed the divemasters took us to better and better sites! The divemasters were excellent — showed us creatures we never would have found. We are usually the last on board, and there was always a divemaster around until we actually started our ascent after the safety stop. Two dives a day isn't enough diving for us, but since it took 30 to 45 minutes to and from the sites it was often close to 2 p.m. by the time we sat down to lunch. We enjoyed the pampering and the beauty of the island and the islanders. No camera table on shore, and limited table space in rooms to work on cameras — ended up doing most changing film, etc., on bathroom sink for the best light. On boat there were sheltered areas to change film and two rinse tanks.

Marlin Bay Resort, May 2003, Dan Purnell (DanPurnell@CS.com),

Vancouver, WA. Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dives logged: 400. A beautiful resort, nestled among swaying palm trees. The accommodations are very nice and the food and service are excellent. You can visit near by villages. Everybody was friendly. The stars in the evenings were incredible. The fruit bats flying among the palms added a nice touch. The reefs are very colorful, covered by beautiful soft corals and gorgonian fans. The dive sites include walls, ledges, canyons, wrecks and bommies. Many bommies are covered with soft corals and clouds of colorful reef fish. Heavy current areas have some of the most magnificent gorgonian fans and soft corals, every color in the rainbow, that I have seen. The sites also have a lot of colorful reef fish, but not too much big stuff. Some of the bigger fish, like grouper, rays, barracuda, sea bass come out of the depths in force when the current is running. The divemasters are excellent at pointing out small critters. We saw many blue ribbon eels and scorpion leaf fish. Between dives we explored and snorkeled around sheltered islands. The resort does not offer more than the standard 2 tank boat dive a day, but they are very flexible going out with only one diver on slow days. On days where we only had 2 divers on the boat, they took us to some of their best dive sites. The dive operation facilities are adequate. In the future they may want to consider providing the option of offering more than 2 boat dives a day.

Marlin Bay Resort, June 2003, Fran Macintyre (jennienik@netzero.net), Albuquerque, NM. Experience: 501-

1,000 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, choppy, no currents. Marlin Bay Resort is absolutely beautiful with a variety of accommodations, most of which face the ocean. The grounds are meticulously maintained. The resort is a 20-minute boat ride from the mainland. We did not have to handle our luggage once we reached the dock on the mainland; the crew took care of it all. There is no dock at the resort, so the transport boat has to anchor out from shore, and the guests are shuttled to shore in small motor boats. The only way to shore at low tide is to climb out of the smaller boat and walk through mud and sand. This routine is repeated daily for diving — walk through the water to the smaller boat which takes you to the larger boat, etc. The food is delicious and well presented. The desserts are absolutely not to be missed. The waitresses, however, could take a few lessons in good customer service and promptness. Breakfast begins at 7 a.m., at which time we ordered breakfast, lunch, and dinner off the menu presented to us. We were to be ready to head out diving at 7:45 a.m. This was not usually much of a problem except on our last day of diving when one less-than-friendly waitress did not have the table set up with the menu and order slip until 7:20 a.m. and was irritable when the problem was pointed out to her. The diving was very good with the exception of the wreck (on John's Tunnel dive) and the wall dive (I believe it was called Surf Zone); these dives could have been skipped in favor of much prettier dives. The dive-masters were all good at pointing out critters to divers and photographers alike and were patient when any of us

lagged behind to zone out on one critter or another. Shore diving left a great deal to be desired. At low tide, it's a long walk out to the water through mud, tide pools, over rocks, etc. At night, it's a real challenge to get to deeper water without falling over something. A couple of us did a shore dive the day we arrived, and, yes, we did see a lot of fish, but that close to shore was pretty well covered with silt. Shore diving really wasn't worth the effort. My two biggest complaints about the dive operation are the total lack of a dive shop, and the way our equipment was mishandled by the crew. The dive operation did not appear to have much in the way of quality rental equipment. One fellow who joined us for a couple of days (a travel agent on a fam tour!) needed to rent a wetsuit; all that was available was a diveskin — for diving in 77 degree water. And, yes, he had contacted them about his needs in advance. One of our group had a high pressure hose showing signs of deterioration, but the only thing the dive operation could provide was an obviously well-used hose from a rental BC. There seemed to be no replacement parts, not much rental equipment, and no way to obtain these things other than to wait for someone to make a trip to the mainland. Because we were told that Marlin Bay had a full dive shop, our escort did not bring tools or replacement parts the way he normally would have. So make sure you pack what you need because the resort most likely won't have it. (The same with toiletries and medications, I might add.) There were no rental computers, so be sure to take your own. We were issued small, black,

mesh gear bags in which we were to store our mask, snorkel, fins, and regulator. Split fins definitely do not fit in these bags! The bags are numbered, so the crew knows which bags to put on the boat in the mornings before we arrive. At least that's the theory. The bags are stuffed into large plastic tubs and transported to the water's edge on a small John Deere tractor. One morning, I watched as one of the tubs tipped over, spilling three mesh bags to the ground (several feet below). That's really good on the regulators! On another occasion, a mask was missing when we arrived on the boat, a mask that had been secured in a regular dive bag complete with a zipper and tied off at the top. The mask was found at low tide in the mud flats and returned to its owner. This was my third trip to Fiji; Muscat Cove on Malolo and Garden Island Resort on Taveuni were my first two trips. My overall reaction to Marlin Bay is that I would rather not go back. There are too many good dive operations and locations to put up with this mediocre outfit. No dedicated area for cameras. Very small plastic rinse tub which was not adequate to hold all the cameras on board.

Kadavu

Dive Kadavu, October 2002, Kate Mitchell (taylorlorkjm@yahoo.com), Lafayette Hill, PA. Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 feet. Water: 74 to 75 F, calm. Luggage allowance on SunAir was not a problem. The resort and staff, divemasters, and villagers were wonderful, kind, generous, and the friendliest people I've met in a

long time. We attended a church service in the village to hear the beautiful singing. My bure was large and hidden in the foliage! I had a great view of the ocean and sunsets. Very breezy, and I needed thin sweatpants and sweatshirt in the evenings! The water was colder than I'd expected, so I had to borrow a 5mm wetsuit. Wear Teva's or nothing on feet, when you arrive (and leave). You are taken from the airport by boat to the resort, and you wade to in the water to/from shore. Very casual here, no shoes in lodge! Unbelievable selection of books to read. The soft coral in Kadavu was disappointing, (much better in the Wananavu Resort area with Crystal Divers on Vitu Levu), but the macro was fantastic. The opportunity to mingle with the local villagers was priceless. The food was great, too. They provided a rinse bucket on the boat, which worked out fine for the two of us. The resort brought rectangular buckets to our bures so we could rinse our gear or cameras. (www.divekadavu.com)

Dive Kadavu, November 2002, Steve Evers (severs@thermokevex.com), Boulder Creek, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, no currents. Dive Kadavu (formerly Matana Beach Resort) is run by an enjoyable Australian couple, Bob and Rena Forster. Our second visit in two years. There are 10 bures, most of which are beachfront. The bures at the end (number 9 and 10) are the best if you want to get away from the main area where there is more foot traffic. The rooms are in good shape and are cleaned daily. Food is served in a main

dining area. Breakfast is buffet, and you specify lunch and dinner choices during breakfast from a limited menu which is posted each morning. Food runs from OK to quite good. The dive operation consists of two pontoon boats which each handle no more than about eight divers including guide and are used for local diving. There is also a fast boat, which was recently upgraded by adding about 2 meters to the equipment/sitting area and an additional engine, to get to the dive sites at the west end of the island more quickly (this boat is also used to go to Astrolabe Reef when there is enough demand and conditions permit). There are two dive guides: Joeli, an indigenous Fijian divemaster, and Isaac, a Kiwi dive instructor. For me it was Joeli, Isaac, Bob, and Rena that made us want to return to this resort. These are some of the friendliest people I have met in my travels. I love to joke and goof with people, and these folks love that! The local diving has degraded in recent years due to El Nino effects, which have had a significant effect on the hard corals. Joeli, with his thorough knowledge of the local dive sites, has made the diving enjoyable in spite of the coral damage. Joeli will give detailed briefings before each dive, telling you where and when to expect many of the fish and critters on the dive. He carries an Etch-A-Sketch type writing tablet with him and will write down the name of any interesting fish or critter that he encounters. Diving on either end of the island will generally reveal healthier coral and a higher probability of big animals.

Dive Kadavu, March 2003, Frank

(hutchpf@surfnetausa.com), Boulder Creek, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm. Wonderful, small, intimate resort on the beach. Your meals are taken with the owners and staff, so you get to know everyone quickly. The staff responded quickly to issues, were attentive when you needed them, and gave you lots of room to explore as you wished to. The dive sites were 10- to 15-minute boat rides for the most part. Surface intervals were on wonderful white sand beaches with shells galore. They dive when you want to dive, so the guests set the tone for schedule. The high point of the day was the late afternoon gathering at the beach bar to visit and watch the sun go down before dinner. No shore diving. The area is wonderful for snorkeling but not anywhere deep enough for diving. My camera needs were minimal, as I shoot with a Canon A20 digital without an external flash. I was the only photographer at the resort for the week; really there were only four of us.

Dive Kadavu, Matana Beach Resort, May 2003, John Shumate (dive@ixpres.com), Rockford, IL.

Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 40 to 90 feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. The DMs are friendly and good at finding whatever divers wanted to see; in our case, nudibranchs and blue ribbon eels. Tanks are filled on the boats, entry is a giant stride from the bench seats, and the ladders have extended hand holds for easy exits. The dive briefings are excellent and can keep you out of trouble. Like the Fijian staff the owners, Bob and Rena (who combines cuteness

and crotchitness in a delightful melange), and the general manager, Dave, are friendly and eager to please. The meals went from mediocre to excellent. I liked the spicy curries, and the *lovo*, a traditional Fijian meal, was entertaining. The beef could be on the tough side, but the chicken was excellent as was the fish, which was brought to the kitchen alive and often served as a sushi appetizer followed by the same fish as an entree. Liquor was extra but reasonably priced particularly considering that everything comes to the resort by ship. The wines were Australian and quite good, and my choice of beer was Fijian Bitter. If one makes a request before arriving they'll try to have whatever liquor the diver wants on hand. Bring an adapter if your recharging equipment isn't set up for Australian outlets and voltage, and make sure that you know the hours the generator is on. Cava (pronounced Thava), the chief's son, is a delightful man who arranges mekes to the village and the evening's entertainment. The resort takes care of the traditional gift and Cava will lead the party into the village. Bring an out-of-water flashlight just in case Joe (the security man) isn't available to light your way back to your bure at night with his. The rinse tanks on the boat always had fresh water in them and the boat driver and DMs were quick to move cameras to and from divers. There is no camera table on the boat which makes it a little difficult to change batteries for digital photographers or film for analog photographers.

Tiliva Resort, April 2003, Rosemary Gutwillig, Greenport, NY. Dives

logged: 225. Vis: 40 to 80 feet. Water: 82 to 86 F. Opened October, 2002, and is near the remote village of Tiliva on Kadavu Island. You land on a gravel strip and embark in an open 27-foot skiff for a one-hour, scenic but bumpy ride to the resort. The accommodations are unexpectedly luxurious. Guests are housed in beautifully appointed wooden cottages modeled after Fijian dwellings called *bures*. The tiled bathrooms have up-to-date fixtures and plenty of hot water. There is no air conditioning, but the ceiling fan worked fine. A larger building in the same handsome style functions as a lounge and indoor/outdoor dining room. The meals were the best I've eaten on any diving trip. The Fijian proprietor directs the cook to make marvelous original combinations of local and Western cuisine: The fish dishes were especially good, and there were frequent appearances of the delicious local spinach-like green called *rourou*. You could become an addict of their coconut sauces. Pork, steak, chicken, and pork chops were served other evenings. Breakfast and lunch were the usual Western fare. There is no menu, but your desires are seriously solicited. The proprietors are unstintingly hospitable and will do everything for your well-being. The dive operation is run by a Fijian divemaster. The boat is the same 27-foot molded fiberglass open skiff with a 85 hp outboard that met you at the airport. Tanks are laid crosswise on the boat floor. Entry is by backroll. There is new Apollo gear (regs, BCs, fins) to be lent — no rental fees are charged. The Astrolabe Reef is a beautiful perpendicular wall but has also large areas broken up into canyons, caverns,

pinnacles, overhangs, and swim-throughs which are fun to explore and dramatically eerie at night. There were no strong currents to contend with. There are gorgeous soft corals, sea fans, whips, and enormous plates of hard coral. Reef fish abound. There are almost countless species of pairing and single butterflies; half a dozen different bannerfish; and many varieties of angels, puffers, snappers, triggers, surgeonfish, groupers, glassfish, wrasses, tangs, and damselfish. Schools of copper sweepers, pyramid butterflyfish, scissortail sardines, and bannerfish; assorted snappers, chromis, anthias, and fusiliers. Groups of steelhead parrots, harlequin sweetlips. Clark, skunk, tomato anemone fish. Mounds covered with every color of Christmas tree worm. Banded sea snakes. Ringed pipefish. Thorny oysters. Brilliant painted crayfish. A turtle and a few whitetips. A huge 10-foot giant moray hidden in a cavern. And a 4-inch Fijian octopus to hold in the palm of your hand. (www.tilivaresortfiji.com)

Namena

Moody's Namena, November 2002, Rick and Eleanor Sinnott, Boston, MA. Namena is a secluded island that contains only one small resort, Moody's Namena in an exotic setting. The burens are a good distance from each other, so you have total privacy. The six-sided buren has sliders that open to breathtaking views. Our buren was right on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Tom and Joan Moody, the owners, make you feel like part of their family. The meals are family style, and the

food is wonderful. Tom and Joan are incredible, warm people, who survived harrowing times in Panama. Just to hear their stories is worth going to Moody's Namena. The resort is perfect for active couples who like to dive, hike, and kayak. It is home to many red-footed booby birds. We were there when the baby birds had recently hatched. Looking at the island from a kayak, it looked like the island was spotted with cotton balls! The diving was beautiful. At Fish Patch we saw huge schools of fish. Several times we found ourselves in the middle of a huge school of barracuda. We saw lots of reef and white tip sharks but were thrilled twice when we saw a hammerhead shark that hung around. There are beautiful hiking trails on the island, one that takes you around the island to different beaches. (www.moodyznamenafiji.com)

Nanau-I-Ra

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, September 2002, Kate Mitchell (taylorlorkjm@yahoo.com), Lafayette Hill, PA. Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 200 feet. Water: 75 to 76 F, choppy. The resort and my buren were absolutely beautiful. Gorgeous view with pool. Maids arranged flowers in room and on bed every day. Cool breezes left no need for A/C, and I only used the ceiling fans one night. Bring sweater to wear in evening, ladies. Staff at hotel all know your name. Great, reasonably priced food. Had fun, cheap meal in Rakiraki one evening at the "Internet" Paradise bookstore. (\$3.00) taxi drivers were helpful and friendly (as all Fijians

were) and stopped to let me take photos. The water was much colder than I expected, but Dan from Crystal Divers lent me a 5mm wetsuit to “save the week!” Jioji, Alfred, and Mary were wonderful divemasters. They had hot chocolate and a treat after the dives. They brought another rinse bucket for my camera, because the two on board weren’t being shared by another guest! My only complaint was that they were catering to this other photographer, and we had to either do three dives or just sit on the boat and wait for him, so that we didn’t get back to the resort until 4 p.m. every day. We were told we were to get charged for the third dive, but after complaining we all worked it out amicably. The boat rides were at least an hour, but Crystal Divers takes you to the best sites with incredible soft coral: This was better than anything I saw in Palau. The dive crew was helpful with cameras and tried to have extra rinse buckets for the photographers. (www.crystaldivers.com)

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Resort, October 2002, Jim (jwiggi@aol.com), Chapel Hill, NC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 feet. Water: 76 to 80 F, choppy, currents. We recommend a villa instead of a bure. The additional cost is worth it, and for those who like it a little more quiet and spacious you’ll certainly appreciate it. The food is good but can get tedious, especially the lunch menu. Fried food is abundant, but the chef will accommodate special requests so don’t be shy. A healthier menu would be nice. Wananavu has a well-stocked bar. The diving is excellent, and Crystal Divers worked hard to ensure we had a

good experience. The seas were rough, but we managed to dive every day thanks to a larger boat compared to their competitors, who also appeared well equipped, albeit in a smaller craft. Entries and exits were easy even in rough water. We used our safety sausages on one occasion when we were separated by strong current and swept some distance away. The surface intervals were typical but way too much sugar and not enough fresh drinking water offered. I would have gladly paid for bottled water on the boat. The resort is pretty much on its own, so going elsewhere for food is limited. Thus the villa makes more sense due to the cooking and food storage capabilities. If you’re a gourmet coffee lover bring your own! The resort has 24/7 electricity and A/C in the bedrooms. Hot water was sporadic, mostly nonexistent. Make a trip into town by taxi and get provisions. When we went to town, there was one shop that provided Internet access. There isn’t much to see in town, and it is a typical Fijian town with pretty much the same provisions as most other towns we visited. We had been in Fiji for almost three months by the time we arrived at the Wananavu Resort, and it was excellent compared to other places we had stayed. For departing visitors, we would not recommend the Toka Toka (in Nadi) for a day room prior to departure. Instead check out the Tonoa (in Nadi). Crystal Divers makes the arrangements so inform them since they default to the Toka Toka for some reason — \$\$\$\$. Chef’s in Nadi makes for a nice departing meal or the Millennium for BBQ. On our trip there were lots of cameras and videos, and Crystal Divers

handled all our requirements with no problems. Do keep in mind that the fresh water rinse is from the Resort, and we noticed some salt water taste (very evident) in the water. Apparently there is some salinity in the well water. I used the drinking water (rainwater) to final rinse our cameras daily, but one must be frugal since this supply is limited.

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Resort, March/April 2003, Sue Sampson, Renton, WA. 100+ dives and dive buddy, 1,000+ dives. Water temperature 82 degrees; air temperature 85 degrees; visibility 60 to 100 feet. Crystal Divers and Wananavu Resort are well-run operations. Although there was a slight screw-up upon our arrival, it was handled promptly. When we got to Nadi airport, our driver for the 2.5 hour drive to the resort was nowhere to be seen. The two of us, and four divers whom we met, were all stranded. The Fijian taxi drivers and airport personnel were concerned and made calls until a van was hired to haul us all, at resort expense. Crystal Divers, operated by Americans, met every safety standard and provided towels and cookies between dives. We began our week joining 12 other divers, and that was a full boat. After they left, we dived with three or four other divers. Although diving individual profiles was permitted, it was useful to follow a divemaster to navigate through crevasses in the bommies (coral pinnacles coming off the sea floor) and to find the colorful nudibranchs. A couple who declined to follow the leader caught the current and had to be plucked out of the water some distance from the boat — twice. Whenever

weather permitted, we took hour-long rides to choice dive sites. Heavy seas turned us back once. Current ranged from nonexistent to moderately heavy. I aborted one dive because the current was too strong for me with my camera gear; I was prepared to live with it. Instead, the crew polled the other divers, stayed out at sea longer, and let me get my second dive in at a calmer site. That's class. Creatures included countless small fish, gorgeous translucent soft corals, elaborate feather starfish, lionfish, anemone clownfish, blue tunicates, and various angels and butterflies. My buddy saw sharks and turtles twice. The resort was comfortable and modern but without phones, Internet, or television except for a little set that was brought out in the bar for local and BBC news for an hour weekday evenings. The restaurant menu as printed was fairly limited, but a special of the day at both lunch and dinner provided variety. We ate everything from Thai spring rolls to British steak pies. The chef was a genius with seasoning and sauces, and the presentation was always attractive. A couple of travel hints to visit here: confirm flight and arrival date by e-mail with whoever may be responsible for airport pickup. Carry the phone numbers to the resort and dive company. Carry Kleenex; the toilet on the long drive to the resort won't have toilet paper. Bring a flashlight; there is little ambient lighting once the sun goes down. Check out the incredible bioluminescence of creatures on the beach at night. Bring antihistamines. Although we aren't normally susceptible to allergies, we were whacked by reactions to strange pollens or molds blooming in

the hot, humid climate. Bring small change; a shop owner can't change a \$20US for a soda or a few small souvenirs. The 10.5 hour flight, from LAX, was uncrowded going over, almost intolerable coming back.

Crystal Divers, Wannanavu, May 2003, Mark & Jill Baker, Monument, CO. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, currents. The diving here was the best we've ever done. The health of the coral and the number of fish were amazing. We saw hard corals and a great assortment of the soft corals that Fiji is known for. The reefs were teaming with fish. On the upper parts of the reef, we saw so many little fish that it felt like we were in an aquarium.

Sharks on nearly every dive, nudibranchs, large clams, shrimp, clown fish, and anemone fish. The dive staff was also great. We dove with Jioji and Bola with Alisi helping out on the boat. Both divemasters excelled at pointing things out. Bola is particularly good at finding nudibranchs and other small critters. We didn't really have any restrictions — once we proved competent in the water, we were left to dive our own profile. With the best parts of the reef in the 20- to 60-foot range, we were able to get some long dives in — several around 12 hours. The staff didn't seem to mind as long as we were back on the boat with 500 psi. There were few other guests so we really had some freedom. One day, we were the only two guests so several staff (Linda and Sharon) came out for the day. We did some great dives in some ripping current — Mary's Maytag was espe-

cially fun. We ended the day with lunch at Crystal Divers and a tour of Dan and Linda's home. We were really treated well. One of the guests (nicknamed Reef Hatchet) was damaging the reef to get his photos. I saw him break off large pieces (4 feet+) of coral on several occasions. We brought this up to the staff and they didn't confront him even though they saw the same behavior. We finally yelled at him but it would have been better coming from the staff. Our stay at Wannanavu was equally nice. Our bure was luxurious by our standards and the food was good too. The kitchen staff really went out of their way to make sure we enjoyed our time. Tito was both patient and helpful in teaching us a little Fijian.

Crystal Divers, Wananavu Beach Resort, August 2003, Don Acheson (Don.Acheson@verizon.net), Silver Spring, MD. Experience: Over 1,000 dives. Vis: 60 to 150 feet. Water: 77 F, choppy, currents. As Crystal Divers has done during my prior 5 trips, they provided varied, delightful, and challenging diving while offering exposure to a wide variety of healthy, thriving marine life.

Ra Divers, Wananavu, April 2003, Peter J Maerz (quatz@earthlink.net), Hollywood, FL. Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. The resort is beautiful, with every inch of ground covered with flowering plants, palms, and shrubs. The ocean view "bure" or cabin I had looked like something out of Architectural Digest, with high ceilings, spot-lit white shelving, beautiful hard wood walls and louvered windows and a bathroom that took up a

third of the floor plan with a 15-foot-long vanity and a shower with plate glass window facing an enclosed garden. An adequate AC unit over the bed and ceiling fan ameliorated the suffocating heat and humidity. The views are great from the ocean view bures and the dining terrace, looking out onto the channel which separates the mainland from the island of Nananu I Ra and its smaller neighbors. The food here was much better than at the Garden Island Resort on Taveuni and the pool unique, with large stones embedded in it and a rock wall and lush vegetation surrounding it. I had wanted to sign up with the Crystal Divers op after reading raves in *Undercurrent*, but, because I was told by Reef and Rainforest that Crystal told them they were fully booked with “German Tourists,” I was “forced” to dive with Ra Divers. This was disputed by Crystal’s owner/operator when I met him at the resort. Sadly, I took to calling Ra Divers the “Loser Op.” Real nice, hardworking guys, but the equipment is not in great shape and the operation is much more loosely run than AqueTrek’s. Every day a problem prevented us from leaving anywhere near on time, though they maintained that divers must be at the dock at 8:30. A dead battery, a shorted wire to the motor that lifts the outboard up, a fouled fuel filter, a late-signing passenger and other calamities within or beyond Ra’s control interfered to lesser or greater degrees with the diving experience. Also, my gear was handled so roughly that it sustained some pretty serious damage (I watched from shore one morning when the tank with my gear attached fell over at the hands of the lead DM. That one

took care of a zipper pull on my BC and, as I discovered after returning home, broke the housing on my second stage—no wonder I was sucking so much water on my last dives!). There were not one but two tropical depressions that made their way over our resort during the week so conditions were funky. Diving was not nearly as good as in Somosomo Strait. Nowhere near the amount of fish life, few sharks (which was a main attraction for me to this site). But almost every surface blanketed with finger corals, octo corals and all manner of stuff, a fair amount of soft corals and some fun swim thru’s and overhangs. The diving is all among large pinnacles or “bommies,” stacked one up against the next, so the views are pretty dramatic (or would be if the vis were greater than the 30 or 40 feet I experienced). Admittedly, we did not dive the farther-out Bligh Water sites that the live-aboards and, apparently Crystal Divers do.
(www.radivers.com)

Navini

Subsurface, Musket Cove, March 2003, Sandra J. Walzer (azlady@access4less.net), Prescott, AZ.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 10 to 20 feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, choppy. Subsurface (www.fijidiving.com) seems to operate throughout the Fiji islands. There were three divers at our resort, and we picked up one or two divers each day at other nearby resorts. The crew was accommodating and helpful, which was refreshing in a place that does not expect tips. It is not a fancy operation but well run

by knowledgeable divemasters who showed us many things we might have otherwise missed. Much of the coral is in poor condition, due to a warming trend (water 86 degrees at 60 feet) and possible lack of protection from divers and fishermen. Still, I saw many species of fish I had never come across in the Caribbean. Quite a few brilliantly colored juveniles. I stayed in a timeshare exchange bure that was well equipped, clean and spacious, but not air conditioned. My bure only had one fan — next visit, I'm requesting a two-fan bure. The grounds were beautiful, and the food good and fairly reasonable. Others who were paying by the night all agreed their accommodations were lovely. No TV, no radio, no telephone makes the heat bearable! The people are friendly. (www.fjigidiving.com, www.musketcovefiji.com)

Taveuni

Garden Island Resort, September 2002, Sara Seaton, Montara, CA. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 75 to 80 F. Dives accrued: around 500. As a dive resort, this place is the best. The resort is on the water, rooms clean and comfortable. Dining was excellent. Aqua Trek is a topnotch company. The staff from Garden Island and Aqua Trek made us feel like family. Taveuni is beautiful and my nondiver friend had more than enough beautiful sites to see. We feel we saw the “real” Fiji. The President of Fiji was staying at Garden Island while we were there. (www.aquatrek.com)

Garden Island Resort, November 2002, Ned Jewett (njewett@proc-engine.com), Grosse Pointe, MI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 85 to 200 feet. Water: 79 to 85 F, currents. The food is exceptional and everything is prepared on site. The accommodations more than sufficient. All personnel helpful and pleasant. Many divers from all over the world. No TV. None required either. The dive operation is good with knowledgeable and helpful crew members. All divemasters know the sites and how to deal with the variable diving conditions namely currents. Pay attention to the pre-dive instruction regarding the strong currents; my safety hook (usually used to hang for the safety stops) was useful attached to dead coral while viewing various cleaning stations. All divemasters should have these. There are three HP compressors, with a forth larger one being installed in the future. Nitrox is available upon request. Our weather was rainy — rainy season started some three to four weeks early. The surface times are typically used to see the sites and the waterfalls, and slides are worth the trips, too, as is the “Village Trip” where one can learn how to process kava and other local favorites. The people are most friendly and always call out “bula” in welcome. The dive crew are familiar with photographer requirements. Photographers had their own divemaster who worked hard finding the small critters. On board camera rinse as well as on shore.

Garden Island, April 2003, Peter J Maerz (quartz@earthlink.net) Hollywood, FL. Experience: 101-250

dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, currents. My 10-hour direct flight to Fiji on a musty, cramped Air Pacific 747 would have been a breeze since it was less than half-booked, but I opted for an exit row seat. Yes, it allowed for 5 feet of leg room but the seat backs were rigid! By the time I was ready to head off to sleep and noticed this, the center section was filled with passengers lying across the seats asleep. Be warned! Sun Air flight to Taveuni is visually stunning on Taveuni, the “airport transfer” is about a half-hour trip down a beautiful coastal road to the Garden Island Resort. As I stepped into the “lobby,” I was greeted by a view out through the open air dining terrace that took my breath away. Beyond the resort pool was an expanse of gleaming blue water and then the lush mountains of southern Vanua Levu beyond. No beach there, mind you. Every clerk, server, maintenance person and dive operation employee greeted me by name at each meeting and usually inquired as to how I was enjoying my stay. I found Fijians in general to be welcoming, genuinely friendly, happy and loving folks. The rooms at the Garden Island are basic motel quality but more than adequate: a separate table and two chairs, a desk perfect for working on camera or laptop, loads of storage space in big open, bin-like shelves, the same fantastic views as from the dining terrace, nice porches, fairly large bathrooms with powerful showers. It’s a short walk from most of the rooms to the AquaTrek dive shop, itself just a couple of feet from the boat ramp/dock. From there you’re dinghyed to the AquaTrek dive boats, all-aluminum with plenty of room to

gear up and a one-person size platform for stride entries. From day one, all gear is handled, set up and cleaned and stored by the crew. There are separate rinse tanks for cameras, masks, and wetsuits (this tank with sanitizing detergent). Wetsuits are hung to dry in the shop which, though locked up overnight, is well ventilated enough to dry the suits. Booties are stored on mesh racks and dry well also. Plenty of water on board and cookies and fruit for surface intervals. Trips to the dive sites run, on average, about 20 minutes, the longest, maybe 40 minutes. The diving in the Somosomo strait: just incredible. My previous diving limited to the Caribbean, though I’ve dived almost all the islands there and down into Central America’s Atlantic side. So, much of the fish life was new to me. Regardless, the density, profusion, color and variety of both fish life and corals was mind-blowing! Soft corals are draped almost everywhere in every color of the rainbow. Clouds of basletts, damsels and other small fish hang in the current. Lionfish — common. Titan triggers — plenty. Nudibranchs — ranging from 2 inches to the size of a doormat! Coral trout, the beautiful regal angel, wrasses, ghost pipefish — just look in a Pacific Reef Fish book and you’ll find them all in the strait. Vis was great, but, as many have mentioned, look out for the currents! It’s in these currents that most of the “action” is: those fish and soft corals just hover motionless in the breeze sucking down nutrients. But we mortals must try to negotiate sometimes mild and sometimes absolutely ripping currents by descending or swimming behind an outcropping or the pinnacle

itself, finning like mad or sometimes just grabbing on to something (dead of course!). All the dives are expertly and conscientiously guided, however, and these guys (just one woman DM who didn't dive with us) know these waters, tides and currents. They try to choose sites where the current is strong enough to bring out the good stuff without sending their divers to Australia. They know where to find that good stuff as well. You're pretty much free to dive your own dive, but they're there if you need them and want them and they offer good pre-dive briefings as well. Favorite dives: Annie's Bommie, Blue Ribbon (yes, the eel awaits you), the fabled Great White Wall. Leisurely, hour-long surface intervals are taken on spectacular, Robinson Crusoe Islands, usually deserted, with vast thatches of soaring palms, dense undergrowth and pristine white sand coves with plenty of shade in which to escape the soldering iron sun. Dock departures are between 8:30 and 9:00 am and you're generally back by 1:30 or so. Food at the Garden Island is plentiful but not so hot. Lots of sloppy sauces, cheese and a fair amount of oil. The Breakfast buffet opens at 7:00 am. Don't order a cooked breakfast unless you want to risk having to rush to make the dive boat. Fiji time, as in many island cultures, is stretched out. Don't miss the hike to the natural "waterslide." If you go on a Sunday, you'll meet dozens of extremely friendly local folks who'll invite you to "ride" with them. While there is no camera rinse tank on board the boat, the crew does everything in its power to protect and gently handle cameras. As a digital photographer, I can't comment on film

processing. I brought my laptop which I felt totally safe leaving in the room and a battery charger which worked fine with a good quality transformer and outlet adapter.

Garden Island Resort, April 2003, Rosemary Gutwillig (rustyatbay@aol.com), Greenport, NY. Dives logged: 225. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 83 to 86 F. Dive restrictions enforced: depth. Attractive, air conditioned rooms in a long, two-story building facing the water. Meals are served in an open dining area adjacent to the pool and patio. The food is good — with many choices — and is prepared imaginatively. Lobster makes a nightly appearance in different guises. The dive operation was efficient. Briefings were complete, and, on your return to the boat, a crew member with a clipboard asked your maximum depth. (No guest was challenged for infractions.) Guides were available (often advised when current was strong) and were knowledgeable about marine life. The resort has two boats — the larger one with a decked-over bow serving as a sundeck and a forward captain's cabin with bunks you could lay cameras or other gear on. This was assigned to my buddy and me and four to six others during our first few dive days, the smaller one inexplicably being used by a 14-member American group. When they left, all remaining divers were taken out on the smaller one. The day our number reached 14, it was so crowded you could not even get into your BC until the diver next to you geared up and left. Cameras were placed on life jackets tossed on the floor. I never got the same answer as to

why the big boat was not routinely used. Taveuni has gorgeous soft corals. The White Wall is breathtakingly luminous with white and lavender ones. There is an abundance of reef fish: butterflyfish (I collected a couple of dozen species), angels, chromis, anthias, fusiliers, bannerfish (every one in my book), surgeons, unicorns, triggers, breems. A bewildering number of wrasses. Some sightings of whitetips, but the largest fish were groupers; three huge batfish shadowed us one entire dive. Banded sea snakes were common. One of the loveliest sights was a sea snake swimming toward the surface through a sunlit school of bannerfish. Lots of banded pipefish. A few needlefish. Some unspectacular nudibranchs, a few morays. Stonefish. One turtle. There were some strong currents below, and especially strong ones on the surface. The divemasters chose sites to minimize currents at depth, but surface currents sometimes could not be avoided. Quite a few times you had to pull yourself hand over hand down the anchor line with your body streaming out like a flag. Naturally ascents were also pretty challenging. Manageable certainly, but be forewarned.

Vanua Levu

Cousteau Fiji, December 2002, Leonie Walker (LeFlies@aol.com), Portola Valley, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. We found the resort staff the friendliest we've ever encountered. The resort wasn't busy. The diving was among the best we've ever experienced in terms of diversity, abun-

dance and health of the reefs, fish, etc. We got to Namena one day, which was spectacular. The food was terrific, accommodations simple and lovely. Afternoon excursions to waterfalls, mangrove project, visit to village chief were well organized and enjoyable. Mediocre weather — cloudy, some rain and only one truly sunny beautiful day. That didn't affect diving, however. (www.fjijresort.com)

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Tahiti and Moorea are everyone's dream of the South Pacific, and despite their pricey resorts and food, these French-speaking islands have just begun attracting American divers since there is plenty of reef shark action. ... There are a range of accommodations, though generally it's expensive. ... The once snotty French attitude toward others has lessened considerably.

Bora Bora

Bora Diving Center, Beachcomber Intercontinental, June 2003, Lauren Henderson, Kona, HI. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water temp. 82 F. Calm seas. Dives Logged: 375. Weather — Sunny, mid 80s. Dive restrictions: 500 psi or 45 min. due to flight problems I missed a day of diving and was only able to do 3 dives with Bora DC. Anne and Michel Condesse who own this intimate dive operation (and speak English), responded to all my inquiry e-mails. They picked me up in a van in the morning for a two tank am dive. I