

Ocean Concepts, Ko Olina Beach Resort, September 2003, R. Moore, Ph.D.(padidm@earthlink.net), Vista, CA. Dives logged: 883. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 81-82 F. Dive restrictions enforced: time only. Good dive operations. Guide led but let divers with air stay down when air hogs surfaced. Nice wreck with a school of puffers. Eagle rays circled around wreck. Good briefings and food for day boat. Pick up at hotel on time (no island time).

KIRIBATI (CHRISTMAS ISLAND)

Christmas Island is 1,300 miles due south of Hawaii, about a three-hour flight but across the International Date Line. It's the world's largest coral atoll, 45 miles long and between seven and 25 miles wide, although lagoons make up nearly two-thirds of that area. The island was named after the day in 1777 when Captain James Cook first happened upon it, but it remained uninhabited until the 1950s, when the British chose it as the site for their nuclear weapons development and induced a small Micronesian work force from the Gilbert Islands to relocate there. The British pulled out, leaving behind a few Micronesians and a great deal of debris. Today the island's 4,400 residents are citizens of the Republic of Kiribati (pronounced cure-a-BOS).

Dive Kiribati, Captain Cook Hotel, February 2003, Dorothy McDonald, Strongsville, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 84 F. The diving on Kiribati is so good that this was our second trip, and we encourage anyone who enjoys diving and who doesn't mind roughing it a bit to head for this unique island. There is one plane a week to/from Honolulu — so you are there for the week. This is a third world country where most people don't have running water and electricity and most visitors are fishermen. The Captain Cook Hotel, the most modern place on the island, is basic but comfortable. The main part of the hotel was formerly British officers' barracks (some rooms are air-conditioned). Cottages have also been built along the beach — beautiful view — no air-conditioning. Pitchers of drinkable water and ice are put in your room's mini-fridge daily — the tap water is not drinkable. Meals at the Captain Cook are served family-style, and there is always a variety to choose from, and any evening could include tacos, baked chicken, and tuna. Food is good but not gourmet. Since fishermen and divers leave after breakfast and don't return until late afternoon, sandwich fixings and fresh fruit are set out at breakfast and everyone makes their own sack lunch. Kim Andersen, an American, runs the only dive operation. Diving is from one of two motorized outrigger/catamaran type boats. Kim meets you at the airport, and you can expect to go diving the day you arrive. Both times we've been there we were the only divers, so basically could do whatever we liked. Shore dives can also

be done — entry can be pretty rough. There is a large variety of tropical fish, everything from flame angels to dragon eels to lion fish to gold-flake angel fish (Kim told us they are only found in this area) and many more. Trevally are seen on every dive. A huge school of barracuda seemed to hang out at one location. Other places we'd see Napoleon wrasse. Sharks and turtles are seen on most dives. A small school of dolphin swam in front of us on one dive. Lots of mantas. A juvenile manta became curious with us and spent over half an hour with us — coming within a foot to make eye contact and continually circling us. We'd often see mantas feeding on the surface; we'd get into the water with snorkel gear on, Kim would move the boat away, and we'd float with the mantas feeding all around us. There was a school of hundreds of spinner dolphin — we'd don masks and snorkels, hang onto the outrigger's pontoon while Kim drove the boat. The dolphins (some mothers with babies) would be frolicking all around us. Most of the time the water was calm without any strong currents. Kim and his staff did everything possible to make our experience a great one. Trips can be arranged through Frontiers International, 800-245-1950, or contact Kim Andersen at divekiribati@juno.com. (www.fun2do.com/divekiribati)

MICRONESIA

Kosrae

This small, unspoiled island didn't get jet service until 1987, and it still hasn't changed much. ... Its

high volcanic peaks are lush and green, and a close, fringing reef makes the diving easily accessible, but it's not high-voltage diving on a par with Palau.

Kosrae Village, Village At Pohnpei, May 2003, Chris Davies, Redwood City, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Water: calm, choppy. Kosrae Village while more "third world" than the Village at Pohnpei, it was delightful. Owners (Katrina and Bruce) were so accommodating and gave "laid back" new meaning. The staff reflected their style and as a solo traveler was very comfortable. Food good, accommodations while Spartan (however included fridge) were well kept, with a delightful tropical feel. The Island is beautiful, although only did sight-seeing from dive boat. Coral outstanding, fish numbers small. Somewhat inclement weather didn't prevent diving. Loved the very low key environment and fun diving, except on Sunday. Village at Pohnpei — Awesome accommodations (but did miss fridge in the room). Food exceptionally good, staff friendly and again accommodating; camaraderie of the locals, guests and expatriates added dimension to solo travel. Weather somewhat inclement but didn't adversely affect diving. Bring rain slicker. Outstanding dives, big stuff — manta rays, schools of barracuda, sharks etc. Dive boats uncomfortable for long trips to atolls. Sidetrips on land must do. Great shots of schooling barracudas. (www.kosraevillage.com, www.thevillagehotel.com/scubadiving.htm)