

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](mailto:divekiribati@juno.com). ([www.fun2do.com/divekiribati](http://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](http://www.kosraevillage.com), [www.thevillagehotel.com/scubadiving.htm](http://www.thevillagehotel.com/scubadiving.htm))

**Sleeping Lady Divers, Kosrae Village Resort, December 2002, Michael N. Hofman (mhofman@jmoyerlandscaping.com), San Francisco, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy. Second trip to Kosrae and Kosrae Village Resort. Bruce and Katrina and the rest of the staff are so friendly. While the diving wasn't super for the most part, the last day's diving made up for it (furthest dive site at the end of the island) — squadrons of eagle rays (at least seven), sharks, turtles, eels and tremendous vitality of the reef. The island and the people are great. KVR's accommodations are thatched roof with all the benefits (coffee maker, fridge, fans, a wonderful outdoor shower); the restaurant is one of the best with fresh food and great variety. The dive operation is top notch — they do a lot of training there and all possible mixes are available! They took great care of equipment and us in and out of the dive boats.  
([www.kosraevillage.com/diving.shtml](http://www.kosraevillage.com/diving.shtml))

### Marshall Islands

**Taluit, August 2002, Wuni Ryschkewitsch, Gainesville, FL.** Dives logged: 3,350. Vis: 30 to 200 feet. Water: 80 to 84 F. This was an experiment. Divemasters from U.S. and boat from Majuro and guide from N.Z. Diving was great, discovered a 100-year-old German wreck not found before. Hotel primitive and funky. 10 divers, six had beds, four on mattresses on floor. Brought food from Majuro and cooked ourselves. Natives provid-

ed some tuna and lobsters. A real adventure; dive operation is trying to establish diving there.

### Palau

Long day-boat rides to the best diving weave through calm water and past magnificent rock islands, but there's the potential for rough seas on the outer edges of islands. ... Most serious divers prefer live-aboards due to the length of the daily commute from Koror. ... Marine biodiversity is among the greatest in the world, but major coral bleaching and commercial fishing is taking its toll. ... Visibility can exceed 200 feet, while currents range from nil to dangerously strong. ... The capital city of Koror, well along the way to being Caymanized by massive tourism, has excellent ethnic restaurants. ... The best handicrafts are prisoners' carved wooden story boards for sale at the jail in town; hand-pressed coconut oil from street vendors is a good gift for your personal massage practitioner.

**Fish'n Fins, December 2002, Michael N. Hofman (mhofman@jmoyerlandscaping.com), San Francisco, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, currents. Third trip with Fish'n Fins. Tova and Navot (who have owned the *Ocean Hunter*) make it a great experience. The local dive masters are knowledgeable, competent, safe, and do a great job. We were scheduled for two dives a day, but after

the first two we came into the harbor, let off the folks who didn't want to do a third dive, and then went out to do closer third dive. All the logistics (i.e., transfers, hotels, etc.) were handled great and Tova's now opened a wonderful restaurant next to the dive shop. They took great care of equipment and us in and out of the dive boats.  
([www.fishnfins.com](http://www.fishnfins.com))

**NECO Marine/Waterfront Villas, January 2003, Douglas Hansen (mhel@pop3.concentric.net), San Jose, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm, currents. NECO Marine was excellent. They took us on night and afternoon dives with only two divers. Unfortunately, the night dives were all local wreck dives. The dive guide, Ernan, asked us what we wanted to see, and then tried to find it for us. He was accommodating, friendly, and helpful. He lent me a weight pouch when one of mine was lost. Nitrox was somewhat expensive, was worth it. Waterfront Villas was clean and modern with a full kitchen and a nice view of the ocean. However, it was not convenient to town, so we had to take a taxi to go anywhere. The onsite restaurant, Captain Finn's, had good food, but was expensive.  
([www.seapalau.com](http://www.seapalau.com))

**NECO Marine, Palau Pacific Resort, April 2003, Jay Levine, Charlottesville, VA.** Palau and the 5 star Palau Pacific Resort; an absolutely beautiful and very well run facility. We all would have been happy to stay there for a month or two. Diving was with Neco Marine, a

first class operation. They picked us up every day at our hotel dock and we completed 9 dives, including Pelelieu Wall, Mandarin Fish Lake (where we did see Mandarin Fish), Ulong Channel, Turtle Wall and Blue Corner. We went kayaking one day with Sams Tours; a worthwhile and fun day.  
(<http://palau.panpacific.com>)

**Sam's Dive Tours, January 2002, Steve Bergerson, Lake Geneva, WI.** Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 81 F. Dives logged: 700+. This was my fourth trip to Palau, first time with Sam's. Other times with Neco. Diving only so-so because of El Nino bleaching. Staff at Sam's very mixed. One great divemaster for one day (Kendall), and mediocre to downright rude the other four days. One divemaster on one of best dives changed profile mid-dive to swim against fairly strong current for no reason causing divers to abort early, then insisted there was no current. Very arrogant staff. Wrote to Sam's and received gibberish reply.  
([www.samstours.com](http://www.samstours.com))

**Sam's Tours, Palau Pacific, October 2002, Jon Lennox, Chaumont, NY.** Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F. Dives accrued: 1,800+. Dive restrictions enforced: 110. Second trip. Weather not as good as first. Not recommended for beginners: Mach I. Current at Blue Corner. Difficult to maintain position especially with photo gear! Tremendous large fish and pelagic action. Anenome, fish, and corals beautiful. Due to rainforest-style weather it can be unpredictable. Thus water clarity following suit. Sam's is

the best I've ever experienced twice! Especially the dive coordinator Russell (a girl). Also super guides.

**Sam's Tours, Sunrise Villas, March 2003, John and Sandra Quick (johnwquick@sprintmail.com), Grand Rapids, MI.** Experience: 251-

500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, calm. Incredible diving. First time we could say visibility restricted by huge quantities of fish. Hundreds of pyramid butterflies, Potters angels, bicolor angels, Moorish idols, etc. Lots of sharks. No need for a shark feeding here. The large Napoleon wrasse would hang with you effortlessly in the current. Almost every dive was a drift dive. Occasionally we would use a reef hook to hang out to watch the sharks and Napoleon wrasse and other large pelagics. We dove with Sam's Tours. They picked our group of 8 up at the Sunset Villas every morning for a 15-20 minute ride to the shop/docks. Our three tank a day dive trip included a box lunch. The lunch/surface interval was done on a beach of one of the "Rock Islands." A highlight in and of itself was speeding through these beautiful formations. It made an otherwise long boat ride (an hour each way) a treat, though we might not have felt that way if the weather were bad and seas rough. Guides were personable and flexible about dive times. No pressure to get back to the dock by 5pm. One day we did an afternoon snorkel at Jellyfish Lake. Definitely worthwhile. Another 'extra' one day was a 15 foot 20 minute dive at "Clam City" to look at the colorful

mantles of the Tridacna clams. Sam's gets a B+ from us. Sunset Villas had large clean rooms. No great place to put our dive gear. We were not on the beach but then they did have a nice pool area. Food and service at Sunset Villa okay.

**Sam's Tours, Palau Pacific Resort, July 2003, J. Traylor, Houston, TX.**

Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 60 to 125 feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. The trip was beyond belief. This was my first dive trip. I was certified for 1 week before I went and my husband was an experienced diver. The diving was superb for both novice and experienced. We hired a private dive guide who stayed with us for the entire 10 days and showed us the most remarkable marine life imaginable. It rained almost every day but the water was calm with the exception of one day. Sam's Tours is the most efficient place I have ever seen. Friendly, helpful, and reliable fleet of boats and guides. They took us to the best sites depending upon the currents and visibility and the lunches they provided were exceptional. We had 18 memorable dives and made many new friends at Sam's. The Palau Pacific Resort is a wonderful resort. They wait on you hand and foot and the food was superb! Great photography shop at Sam's and fresh water igloos on the boats for the camera equipment. They help with any photography needs. Dive your own profile: yes. Any dive restrictions: If you were not an experienced diver you needed to stay within sight of the dive master or guide.

## Pohnpei

**The Village, March 2003, Steve Golleher, Kalispell, MT.** Vis: 25 to 200 feet. Water: 84 F. Experience: 700+ dives. Accommodations and food at the Village, very good. Stay in thatched huts while sleeping on water beds. Diving in passes was outstanding. Lots of pelagic and many mantas. Vis on incoming tides can exceed 200 feet. Ahnd Atoll, a long ride, but worth the trip. Locals were friendly and speak English. Long plane ride from the States. Worth the trip. ([www.thevillagehotel.com/scubadiving.htm](http://www.thevillagehotel.com/scubadiving.htm))

## Truk

**Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, Blue Lagoon Resort, April 2003, Jay Levine, Charlottesville, VA.** I led a group of 13 on an 18 day dive excursion to Micronesia. The trip was awesome. All flights for the 20,000 miles were on time. We flew to Houston, overnighted there and took the early morning flight to Hawaii and then on to Guam, the hub for Continental in Micronesia. In Truk stayed at the Blue Lagoon Resort and went diving with the Blue Lagoon Dive Shop. The accommodations were very nice, the staff friendly and attentive and their restaurant was very good. Eleven divers in the group were split between two small boats. The boats left a lot to be desired; small, open, no radio or oxygen, and some of the rides were a bit rough. Having said that, the crews were wonderful; knowledgeable, attentive, friendly and readily available to

help. We did six dives over three days and enjoyed it immensely. It is all wreck diving and we had a maximum depth during our stay of 89 feet; it does not have to be a deep dive location to see a good cross section of the wrecks. We were well treated and they included lunch one day at a small private island during the surface interval. ([www.castleresorts.com](http://www.castleresorts.com))

## Ulithi

**Ulithi Resort, Dale Litney (edlitney@aol.com), Schaumburg, IL.** Vis: 50 to 200 feet. Water: 80 to 86 F. Dives logged: 300+. Dive restrictions enforced: common sense and training. Ulithi is the best diving I have done! All creatures and corals in one location. The trip to Ulithi is long but well worth it. We had a stopover in Yap, the mantas and dive operation at Manta Ray Bay were top notch, but the hotel leaves a lot to be desired. Employees were friendly and courteous, but the hotel nickle and dimed us. Food expensive, even for islands. Had to pay to watch movies, for as much as the room was. The boat as restaurant is a quaint idea, but all rooms that face the water see a huge wooden ship. And the people on the ship look right in your windows. Not enjoyable to have to keep your curtains closed in an ocean view room. We flew to Ulithi on PMA (Pacific Missionary Airline), professional and safe. The flight is greeted by the whole island as it is the most activity that happens there. Your luggage is weighed and you pay if you are over 30 lbs.; put the heavy stuff in your

carry on to save the cash. Runway is the length of the island, and the resort is a short walk or even shorter car ride. Resort reminded us of a summer cottage on a lake. Two story, clean, comfortable rooms, and nice bathrooms. We were the only guests so the staff asked if it would be OK for them to just show up to cook our meals. No problem. They showed us where the light switches were for outside lights and told us to close the patio doors so the frogs would not come in at night. They offered to have someone sleep on the couch in the lobby but we declined. Our own paradise! The diving operation was in its infancy, but eager to please. All brand new gear to rent, top notch. The dive boat, Boston whaler size, would be on a trailer in front of the resort in the morning. Our gear would be loaded and we would drive to the beach to put in. I helped load and unload the boat each day and loved it. Off Asur island we had our first dive and it was my best ever, over Palau, Pemba, Red Sea, Barrier Reef. The water was so clear, my wife looked like she was floating in air while underwater. Too many corals to recognize, small to extra large. Sharks, eels, tropical fish, cuddlefis, mantas, turtles, cuda, and shells, etc. Unlike anywhere else. Also dove on wrecks where you were still able to read dials and instructions. On a landing craft a warning to make sure all is clear in front of the craft before opening door. The locals had interesting stories of the war years and always eager to talk. ([www.diveulithi.com](http://www.diveulithi.com))

## Yap

Yap is a very traditional island: bare-breasted women, men in loincloths, and huge wheels of stone money. ... Reputedly the best betel nut in the South Pacific. ... Inexpensive restaurants and hotels. ... There are steep coral-covered walls and dropoffs and plenty of fish and nearly guaranteed mantas. ... Yap is a good two- to three-day add-on to a Palau trip.

### **Beyond the Reef, Traders Ridge Resort, July 2002, Michael Fox, Tsukuda, Tokyo, Japan. Vis:**

Outgoing tide channel manta dives (20 to 40 feet), incoming tide channel manta dives (80+ feet). Outer reef (100 feet+). Water temp: 80+ F. Surface: Inside reef: Generally flat. Outside reef — varies. Traders Ridge Resort is a beautiful hotel overlooking Colonial harbor. Rooms and dining exceptional, and everyone went out of their way to help. Beyond the reef (Dave, Jesse, Gordon) were a personalized/friendly operation. Boats were small (about five divers max with no head) but offered a shaded area and drinks/snacks after each dive. Some days, early check in (6:45 a.m.) allowed us to catch the incoming tide at Mill Channel. Along with the multiple mantas, there were about 50 to 60 juvenile sharks, large schools of bass/jacks. I was able to dive Gufnow Channel, which has a sandy channel at about 50 to 65 feet and ridges running up either side to about 20 feet. Saw thousands of convict tangs on one dive, cuttlefish, drag-

on wrasse, banded pipefish, large school (25 to 30) of humphead parrotfish, whitetips, and occasional reef sharks. Outside Gufnuw Channel is a small wall with dramatic typography with lots of tropical fish and some nurse sharks. For almost guaranteed mandarin fish sightings, try the late afternoon dive at a large coral head in about 25 feet near the mouth of the Colonia Harbor. I saw at least three each time I went. Two days I was the only customer on the boat. Yet each time Dave or Jesse found a good site (taking in the tides and sea conditions). ([www.diveyap.com](http://www.diveyap.com), [www.tradersridge.com](http://www.tradersridge.com))

**Beyond the Reef, Traders Ridge Resort, March 2003, John and Sandra Quick, Grand Rapids, MI.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm.

Traders' Ridge Resort is fabulous. The grounds are beautiful, the pool area is landscaped exquisitely, the public spaces and open air bar and restaurant are elegant and tropical genteel as were the rooms. If you had a nondiver in the group that wants to sunbathe and hang out at the pool and enjoy a few 'boat drinks' they could be happy here. If they add spa services it would be perfect. The food at the restaurant was so good we never left the property. The seafood dishes were sublime. Breakfast and lunch services were a bit slow for divers on the go. Beyond the Reef did a real nice job. Diving was tide dependent so we had to leave at a specific time each day. Yap is known for its manta sightings for a reason. In 400 previous dives we had seen one lonely, distant

manta on the Big Island of Hawaii. Here they are a daily occurrence and numerous on Miil Channel dives. The mantas come down the channel to cleaning stations. The guides would position us in the sand near by and unless something, or someone, spooked them they would stay awhile. Lots of sharks and lionfish too! A new species for us was the crocodile fish. A highlight one day was a twilight dive (only 30 feet for 80 minutes) to see the mandarin fish. What a beautiful fish. Coral healthy. We give this resort an A+ and the dive operator a B+.

**Beyond the Reef, Traders Ridge, June 2003, Charles Wilson, Lincoln, NE.**

Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F. Experience: 600+ dives. Dive restrictions enforced: computer only. Traders Ridge is very nice property. Diving on Yap is really only for the mantas.

**Beyond the Reef, Traders' Ridge Resort, September 2003, Julian Lamborn, Houston, TX.**

Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, choppy. The accommodation and food at Traders' Ridge is first class and the staff do everything to ensure the visitor has no problems. The Beyond the Reef dive operation is good and uses small fast boats (with canopies) suitable for up to four divers. The dive-staff are helpful and handle all the gear including setups and washing. The dive operation is run by Dave (an ex-pat) and he has competent dive-masters particularly Gordon (a helpful Yapese). The hard coral on Yap is, for the most part, in excellent condition but there is little or no soft coral. Saw

mantas (not a lot) and many sharks (nurse, white tip, black tip and reef). Lots of reef fish life. September is not the best time to visit Yap, February is considered the best time to see mantas. The weather was rainy one day out of six, but the vis was up to 100 ft on occasion. Couldn't dive Mi'il channel because of tides/vis, but did dive Yap Caverns at the southern tip of the island — awe inspiring. Great trip and worth 15 hours in a plane! Take your own equipment and develop the films when back home. Yap has no good photo processing facilities.

**Yap Divers, Manta Ray Bay Resort, November 2002, Ted Shieh, M.D., Chicago, IL.** Vis: 20 to 100+ feet.

Beside one brief sighting in Valley of the Rays, we saw no other mantas the rest of the seven days. The beginning of trade winds made diving off limits on the east side of the island; hence, rest of the week we dove the windward side and southern tip of Yap proper. In the mornings, we waited fruitlessly in the Mi'il Channel. Nitrox would have been great in theory for extended bottom times at 70-foot+ depth but no mantas. Wish we had known November was the migration month when mantas leave the east side (reappearing on the west side in December). However, Xavier, our local Yapese DM, was intent on making us happy; he chose the best wall dives that conditions allowed and a different one each time based on visibility, and if there were no mantas there were sharks on every dive; mostly white tips, good number of gray reefs. Vertigo is packed full of them —

black tips also. A number of walls had incredibly high percentage of live hard coral coverage and diversity — more than I've seen anywhere. Resort and diving service is excellent; Peter on the topside and Xavier, Jan, Melody, and others on the diving side — all work hard to deliver service. Food is not bad — the new Filipino chef makes menu changes daily to keep limited island ingredients interesting. Food is served on a wooden 19th century Indonesian ship, the *Mnuw*. MRBH makes their own breads, beer, and many other food items. Book the island dinner at the Pathways Hotel (Tues. and Sat.) once — it's the one place to have semi-Yapese feast. Trader's Ridge Resort also provides a nice dining alternative. If the diving wasn't what was expected, at least the culture is fascinating. An island tour to a village in Maap and a local village tour are also must do's. You'll be chewing betel nut in no time. ([www.mantaray.com](http://www.mantaray.com))

**Yap Divers, Manta Ray Bay Resort, February 2003, Mike Garrison ([mgarrison@gbutler.com](mailto:mgarrison@gbutler.com)),**

**Leawood, KS.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 15 to 30 feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm. Yap is a wonderful place and excellent diving. Bill Acker has carved out a diver-friendly business. Resort is excellent for a third world country. Large rooms, each decorated in the theme of sea life. Large showers, patios, no swimming pool. Restaurant and bar are on an old wooden merchant ship, colorful. Diving operation is excellent. Staff rigs all equipment for every dive.



Water warm, wet suit not necessary. Manta rays were mating so they put on a show, rolls, loops, etc. Swam close so made up for poor visibility. Need to dive Nitrox so you can stay long enough to enjoy the show. Reef diving was good but the Caribbean beats them here. However, their fish are more colorful and more variety, not all parrots. Not a lot to do on shore but a few nightspots and places to shop, cultural tour — we hired a private guide, and he was excellent. All arranged through the resort. Yap has a strong cultural foundation and you need to learn about it and the stone money.

**Yap Divers, Traders Ridge Resort, April 2003, Jay Levine, Charlottesville, VA.** Did our diving with Yap Divers. Though Yap Divers is located at the Manta Ray Bay Resort, we were pleased to be at Traders Ridge; a five minute walk to the dive boats. Traders Ridge had a pool, two restaurants and lovely grounds and was a bit more modern than the other choices. The visibility here was only so-so and we only saw a few mantas. The dive operation was excellent and our half day excursion to a native village was a treat. We stopped in Hawaii for two days on the way home and thoroughly enjoyed that. Our flight and diving arrangements were made by Trip n Tour (877-820-5686) and they were excellent to work with. Arrangements for our stay and tours in Hawaii were handled by Frosch Travel (800-866-1623) in Houston and they were a delight to work with.

## Niue

**Dive Niue, Matavai, March 2003, Ann & Dan Goldsberry (d.goldsberry@att.net), Golden, CO.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, surge, no currents. Niue is an island of uplifted coral, so there are no beaches, but all rain flows go down into the island instead of entering the ocean as runoff. This means exceptionally clear water. Poor visibility is still well over 100 feet. No beaches also means the inflatable hard bottom dive boats are lowered into the water by winches, as most of the island's coast consists of dramatic cliffs. The people are friendly and helpful and everyone, from the dive operators to the hotel staff, went out of their way to make sure we were comfortable and taken care of. Niue is a totally unspoiled island with a minimum 'touristy' development. It makes for a holiday in a quiet and natural setting. The diving consists mostly of close-in sites with a wealth of caves, chasms, and swim-throughs filled with crayfish and schooling fish. One cave, the Bubble Cave, opened up to a cathedral of stalactites above the water. Ledges above the water in the caves frequently had sea snakes taking a break from the water. In fact sea snakes are prevalent on every dive. And on one dive, at Snake Gulley, snakes were so plentiful that their behavior of returning to the surface for air left a curtain of snakes in almost every direction. The night dive at this site was quite exciting, as the snakes would constantly move into and out of view. Diving with the snakes at Niue was

different than in Thailand or Myanmar in that the Niue snakes are not timid or easily spooked. They are curious and frequently follow along to see what divers are doing. As in much of the South Pacific we found many beautiful hard corals and a fair number of soft corals. Octopus, three species of lion fish, squadrons of squid, an occasional anemone fish, blue ribbon eels, nudibranchs, bump-headed blue parrots, three species of moray eels, and the occasional white tip shark made every dive a discovery. And of course, being the South Pacific there were the colorful giant clams, including baby giant clams. There were schools of dolphin along side the inflatable several times, and in their winter whales are present right off shore. The water was virtually flat, though we were told this was the rough season, and the water temperature ranged from 82 to 84 degrees. Dive Niue is the only operator, and they are great to dive with. Ian and Annie are ex-Mike Ball dive instructor trainers and trip directors that we had dived with previously at the Great Barrier Reef and in the Coral Sea. Dive Niue usually does a two-tank dive trip in the morning, getting back just after lunchtime. They will do afternoon or night dives on request and will even recommend the best days for it based upon weather and tides. They have a new gear wash and lock up facility so you only lug your gear to and from the shop on the first and last day. They are a pleasure to dive with! There are a handful of places to stay on the island that are quite comfortable. There are no luxury accommodations, but one, the Matavai Resort, has air condition-

ing and nice rooms. It also has one of the better restaurants on the island. Getting there is pretty much by Polynesian Air via Auckland or Samoa. Diving is done from hard-bottom inflatables. One can bring a camera and they'll be glad to hand it to you and retrieve it upon return. There are rinse facilities available after the few minutes' trip back to shore. ([www.dive.nu](http://www.dive.nu), [www.niueisland.com/newpage18.htm](http://www.niueisland.com/newpage18.htm))

**Niue Dive, Matavai Resort, September 2003, Bill and Connie Ehler (Ehler@texas.net), Helotes, TX.** Experience: Over 1,000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 75 to 77 F, surge. Niue Dive (Ian and Annie owners/dive guides) is the most professional and well organized dive operation we have encountered in thirty years of diving. All equipment is first rate including rental gear. Tanks were 3,000+ psi on all dives. Pre-dive instructions were adequate when unaccompanied. Accompanied dives were above average. Hundreds of sea snakes/kraits, swimming with dolphins, gin clear water and very interesting geological sites/caves/swim throughs and virtually undamaged hard corals. Very few invertebrates, i.e., nudibranchs, flatworms, shrimp (lots of banded cleaner shrimp). Water was cool this time of year. Shore diving not available due to topography (no beaches). Our group (10 people) had to rent a van (\$750/week) to travel from hotel to dive operation. The Matavai Resort, Niue's "flagship" property is in good repair. The food lacks imagination. There were very little fresh fruits or vegetables. The meals

were very greasy and repetitious. New manager, Dean, is attempting to correct food problem. Although the hard bottom inflatables were very adequate for diving there was not enough room for large cameras, i.e., housed cameras or RSs. There were no rinse tanks on boats but owner stated it "could be arranged."

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Some of the world's finest diving is in this land just north of Australia. ... 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. ... 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 frequently sparring tribes speaking hundreds of languages. Men from the stone age, covered with colored mud, mingle in airports with business people in suits and ties. ... 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.

### **Lissenuing Island Resort, June 2003, Lori Brown (DoctorSLB2001@ yahoo.com), Germantown, MD.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 20 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy. Lori Brown, Chris Green, and Justin Brown Green. A small resort, a long way from anywhere. The diving is great. Within the first few minutes of our first dive (Peter's Patch) we spotted a solitary hammerhead shark. It was curious and came within 20 feet of us. Peter's Patch is an L-shaped ridge, and when you reach the hinge you are staring into the blue. I watched in awe as my husband swam in an unending stream of jacks as a river of red tooth triggers fluttered around. At Albatross Crossing we spotted several large sharks. We scanned the sea fans for pygmy sea horse. At Baudisson Bay, off the steep wall, we spotted shark, turtles, and a large bump nose parrot jetting down the wall. There was a startling variety of nudibranchs on the wall. At Lemus Island, we saw several large crocodile fish, one laying in the sand near rubble in 15 feet of water. There are several worthwhile wrecks nearby. A Korean fishing boat was bare of coral but covered with a large group of hawkfish. The Stubborn Hellion site is a silty, mucky dive in 45 feet of water with a B-25 Mitchell bomber