

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

that had been shot down by Japanese. This wreck was covered with coral and all sorts of critters. We had heard of legendary currents at Lissenung but rarely experienced them. There was only one dive (at Bermuda Reef) where the current was ripping. A few divers had hooks and hung off the reef to watch passing sharks. Others, like me, clung to dead coral and inched along. Because of the strong currents (which rarely materialized) we also made a nearly daily afternoon dive at Ral Island (about 40 feet) so that our newly certified son, age 12, could dive with us. The dive starts in the sand and ends on a patchy coral area. There was a bright yellow frog fish, a black frog fish, and a red frog fish. I spotted the largest pipe fish I've ever seen — it was grassy green and about 14 inches long! We also saw razor fish, puffer fish, upside down jellyfish, and plenty of nudibranchs. The on-land experience was less pleasing. The quarters were large but sparsely furnished. Mosquito nets were provided for the beds on either side of the room.

Therein lay the problem. The single ceiling fan was in the middle of the room, the mosquito nets, which were required because of malaria, were stifling. The fan provided no relief from the sweltering heat at night. The bathroom facilities were a fair hike from the room. Invariably the bathroom was filled with mosquitoes, and whether the facilities (both toilet and cold water shower) were working seemed to be about 50:50. It's frustrating at 2 a.m. to trek through the dark to the bathroom and then not be able to flush or to soap up after a dive only to have the shower,

such as it is, reduce to a dripping trickle. Meals were served restaurant style, and the floral arrangements on the tables changed daily and were stunning. The food was good (lobster, shrimp Creole, crab, fresh fish, etc.) but plain, and there was nothing to choose for our finicky 12 year old. There were no snacks left out, and the one time we requested something extra (my son had been feeling quite queasy at breakfast time but was hungry at 11:30), I was told we would have to wait — for toast as it were, since they were busy in the kitchen getting lunch ready. Not the response I was expecting. We spent 10 days there — I would do it again so as not to miss the great diving, but I'd stay for a shorter time. UW Photography Comments: Water in rinse tank at dive shop was tinged yellow and was unmarked — other divers were using to rinse other equipment. No flat tables at appropriate height. There was an outlet strip in the room but need to supply your own adapters. (www.lissenung.com)

Loloata Island Resort, May/June 2003, Paul and Sandra McCrossan, Toronto, Canada. 350 and 450 dives experience respectively. Weather: One day of rain out of 9 days. We could see rain on the coast of the PNG mainland only a half-mile away every day; but the prevailing winds kept the island relatively dry in the day — with some showers through the night. Water conditions: water temperature cooler at 79-82 F, viz 60-80 feet on reefs and 10-20 feet on muck dives. Some surge near the surface of reef sites with some current but very manageable. Loloata pro-

vides a rest near Port Moresby in safety with very interesting diving on our way to and from our latest live-aboard trip. In addition to the interesting macro life on the muck dives, there were good macro and close up locations (The pygmy sea horses were “giants” — slightly bigger than a grain of rice with heads clearly visible and we saw 5 lacy scorpion fish — with two side by side — in three different color patterns black and brown, black and green, and orange and brown. We also saw a blue ribbon eel and countless nudis and flatworms.) In addition to the lacy scorpion fish, there were both leaf and common humped scorpion fish as well as a large crocodile fish, both “smasher” and “spearer” mantis shrimp and many “weird” juvenile wrasse for close ups. There were also great wide-angle locations (especially Suzie’s Bommie with its large school of sweet lips, unicorn fish and batfish) and one or two sharks (grays or white tips) on almost every dive. The resident Lion Island wobbegong exceeds the maximum size — 2 meters — cited in the fish book. The Tunnel has a lot of large lobster on the ceiling during the swim through. The two wrecks (*Pacific Gas* and *Pai II*) have good sized resident grouper and snapper. Each day the water started calm with little wind and the wind and waves picked up as the day progressed. Some of the best sites are quite exposed and cannot be dived every day. The four excellent dive masters (British, Japanese, Dutch and PNG) found good interesting sheltered diving for us those days. Two nights the breeze died down early and it was warm in the cabin. There are 10 units

on the beach that overhang the water. Each unit has one large bedroom containing a single bed and a large bed. Each unit has an attached bathroom /shower. The water is desalinated and rain water. While air conditioned units are available, we did not have A/C. Breakfast is a choice of cereal, fresh fruit, or hot. Lunch is a buffet with soup and main meal. Dinner had a choice of fish, fowl and meat courses each evening with dessert. I’d describe the food as “good home cooking.” The desserts are simpler — usually ice cream with some sort of cake or crepe with a sauce. There are resident kangaroos, cus-cus and exotic birds on the island that are generally hard to find in the heat of the day. The island has sea kraits that come ashore to give birth and to shed skin and both events happened while we were there. The snakes are not aggressive in the slightest. One day there was a commotion as a snake “nest” was found along the beach. There were some men pointing at the snakes from the deck and other men down on the beach with sticks “herding” the snakes into the water. The woman next to me asked me if I could tell the difference between a “coastal” and a “mountain” Papua New Guinean. When I said “no,” she told me the coastal people were down on the beach moving the snakes away since island people were used to the docile kraits while the mountain people were up on the decks afraid of the kraits. The fiddler crabs staged “territorial battles” each night right below our deck. They rear up and try to push each other back with their large claws. The winner takes possession of the best hole. A

species of “wild life” that is not so welcome are almost invisible ants. They seem to be found in every PNG resort and live-aboard. The message is don’t take any food into a room or a cabin or the tiny ants will find it. Every Friday evening after dinner, local village children aged 6-18 perform traditional dances and songs. Other than that there is no TV, radio, newspaper or other entertainment other than reading. We read two books each during our stay. Two morning dives, one afternoon dive and a possible evening dive to keep you busy — but not much else other than a nice walk on the island. (www.loloata.com)

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

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy, currents. Lori Brown, Chris Green, and Justin Brown Green. We stopped at Loloata on the first leg of a trip around Papua New Guinea. Loloata Island is near Port Moresby so is a good place to adjust to the 14-hour time difference (between PNG and East Coast U.S.). The rooms are small but comfortable and clean, and we arranged for an air conditioned room. The weather was hot during the day, but it rained nearly every afternoon and cooled down a bit at night. There were a few mosquitos but not enough to drive one mad; we were all on malaria prophylaxis and using insect repellent as well. The close location to Port Moresby draws conferences to the island. We met a PNG historian from Queensland University, a physicist who claimed to be the father of the

PNG equivalent of the National Institutes of Standards and Technology, a large group of German NGO workers, and a group of missionaries all wearing Isuzu baseball caps. Also a horde of tiny wallabies, crested pigeons, large spiders, and captive tree kangaroos. Meals are served buffet style at long tables. Food was good and plentiful and included lobster with light sauce, pasta with shrimp and ginger, ham, and plenty of vegetables (some of them unidentifiable). One night dinner was followed by entertainment by a group of local kids doing traditional dances. It was, well — really cute! The dive shop was run by Adam Powell, assisted by divemasters Nienke and Yosi. Our son, age 12, was recently certified junior open water so could not dive below 40 feet. Nienke stayed with him at an appropriate depth on every dive, so that his being there did not interfere with other divers.

Meanwhile, we were able to enjoy deeper diving while our son had a wonderful (and safe) time. Adam was safety conscious and each time there was a new diver on the boat, he did an orientation of the safety features on board. We didn’t see many large fish (sharks), but small fish were plentiful and the reef stunning. There were huge stands of blue tipped acropora filled with pairs of butterfly fish, long-nose file fish, and the usual assortment of damsels. There were beautiful sea fans and even the occasional pygmy seahorse. I may have to resort to a bifocal mask next time to see them better! There was a huge anemone that covered about 5 feet by 5 feet and was hopping with a half-dozen different species of anemone fish. At a mucky dive at Lion Island we spotted a

tube anemone with a shrimp dancing around it, a tiny crab on the underside of an upside down jelly fish, a pavo razor fish flitting about looking like a little leaf, and a horned sea star with a crab on it. The dive staff kept telling us about the legendary lacy scorpion fish (*Rhinopias aphanes*), a fish that only lives near Loloata Island. Each day, they would tell us that we might see one today. By our last dive, we were rolling our eyes and laughing when they went through the lacy scorpion fish story with the new divers for the day. Low and behold, on the last five minutes of the last dive, Nienka spotted a lacy scorpion fish in the coral rubble at Quayle's Reef. Visibility was usually limited, and there were a few dives on which currents became very strong. We ended one dive with just 300 psi after swimming against a strong current. The current changed within the first 15 minutes of the dive, and the rest of the dive was spent trying to get back to the boat. We were diving with Yosi at the time, looking for pygmy seahorses at about 90 feet. She handled the situation professionally. We managed a safety stop by hanging on to dead coral. The dive staff was friendly and helpful, the diving was good, and a good time was had by all.

Walindi Plantation, Lori Brown (DoctorSLB2001@yahoo.com), Germantown, MD. Dives logged: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30-80 ft. Water: 80-85 F., choppy. Lori Brown, Chris Green, and Justin Brown Green. We arrived at Hoskins Airport on an Air Niugini flight — the flight was delayed by several hours — a common occurrence since our month long trip in PNG, every Air

Niugini flight was delayed or canceled, the driver from Walindi Plantation was waiting for us when we arrived. So was lunch at the Plantation, thoughtful of them since we arrived after 2 pm. A tour of the hot springs about a 45 minute drive, was offered. A dive briefing was held for us at 7 pm, with Joseph. He had a map of the dive sites and individual maps and dive briefings for each site. Joseph also arranged for a dive guide, Gerard, to dive with the latest certified diver in our family, our 12 year old son. Gerard was an excellent and conscientious guide for him. The accommodations were great and included a bed in the living room area for our son, a little dinette area, abundant closet space, and a little kitchen with counters that were perfect for setting up cameras. Not only was the water hot but the water pressure was high. Outside, there was a pungent sulfur odor. At first I thought it was the low-tide but it turned out to be the aroma of a nearby volcano. Our first dive was at South Ema. There is a swim through at about 100 feet with a sea fan with a pygmy sea horse and leafy reef scorpion fish. The second dive was at Charmaine's Reef. There were 3 cuttle fish, two fairly close to each other, beautiful sea fans, and incredible soft coral (*Dendronephthya*) of all colors. After the second dive, we came across a large pod of bottle nose dolphins. The boat has special nets mounted on the sides so that snorkelers can hang onto the nets as the boat moves through the dolphins. At one point, there were 8-10 dolphins directly underneath us in the net. They looked like they were flying. Inglis Shoals features a beautiful seamount. Several of the divers saw a

hammerhead at about 130 feet. There were also several gray reef sharks and white tip reef sharks. They circled around the seamount so we encountered them repeatedly. There was also a massive school of barracuda and on one of the dives at this site, they allowed me to get within 5 feet and swim parallel to the school for a while before they circled up again. There was also a large school of batfish. At Christine's Reef we saw spectacular sea whips, enormous sea fans covered with colorful crinoids, large barrel sponges, a healthy stand of *Acropora* coral, all sorts of nudibranchs, and even an evil crown-of-thorns starfish. Agu Reef which is like a narrow ridge that seems to be terraced in all directions. On either end of the ridge, there was step after step of *Acropora* coral stands. There were terraces down both sides and as you looked down, they seem to go on endlessly. There were nudibranchs galore along the wall. At Kirsty Jaynes Reef we saw multiple pygmy sea horses, a harlequin ghost pipefish, a swarm of razor fish hiding in the sea whips, and a squat lobster hiding in a crinoid. Dinner was served buffet style and there were plenty of entrees, vegetables, and salads. Long tables encouraged guests to mix it up for sociable dinners. Lunch was always an appealing picnic between dives, usually chicken and plenty of salads, at one of the small islands. Breakfast was eggs, bacon, toast — the usual. Snacks and drinks were available for purchase and they kept a tab. Joseph, a senior dive master, volunteered to carry extra cameras down and was very helpful spotting for macro photos. There is also a photo shop at the island for those wishing to

rent camera and instruction available. (www.walindi.com)

PHILIPPINES

Major dive areas are concentrated around Batangas, Mindoro, Palawan, and the Visayas. ... The reefs here are among the most diverse in the world, supporting more than 2,000 species of fish (the Great Barrier Reef, by comparison, supports around 1,500), and divers find inexpensive accommodations and diversings, splendid critters, and, while plenty of divers from other countries, few Americans.

Arthur's Resort, September 2003, Joseph Gallagher (jpgallag@itt.com), Fort Wayne, IN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Ft. Water: 72 F, calm. Anilao in Batangas is a two to three hour taxi ride (depending on Manila traffic) from downtown Manila. Leaving early, 5-6 am, makes a day trip possible arriving back to Manila between 5-8 pm. The roads in Anilao can easily be blocked by heavy rainfall, so check conditions before leaving. The offshore diving makes the trip well worth the ride and if you have the time for an overnight stay will provide great opportunities for great dives. Dive resorts in Anilao are rustic by most Western standards, but most provide direct access to the beach and have facilities for rinsing dive equipment. Arthur's Place provides tanks and weights and dive equipment for rental as well as a small motorized boat to reach the better dive sites. The dive masters are friendly and accommodat-