

ing willing to let the diver set the pace and depth of the dive. Philippines offers breathtaking diving with all types of little critters, nudibranchs are especially abundant, living on vibrant reefs of soft and hard coral. Anilao is no exception and is the most accessible dive spot from Manila. Shore diving was problematic, the visibility depended very much on the current which could raise havoc with the silt on the ocean floor and the plankton. Off shore diving 15 min. to 30 min. ride on a small craft was fantastic. The currents, sometimes strong, provided outstanding visibility and in the protected parts of the reef great subject matter and outstanding photographic opportunities.

Atlantis Dive Resort, October 2002, Giles Charlton-Jones, Grand Cayman, BWI. Experience: More than 1,000 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, currents. Great service, great accommodations, and great dive-staff. Very enthusiastic guides/instructors, even when doing five dives a day. Some guides were new to the area and not especially knowledgeable about a few of the creatures on our hit-list of things to see, but they are learning! Strong tidal currents at varying times, and although unpredictable the guides mostly had it spot-on. At slack tides in many areas current was absent or negligible. Underwater photographers that want the longest dive times should take a safety balloon and reel. Overall a superb resort with everything on-site. The rooms are clean, comfortable, and well appointed, and the restaurant is first class. Great macro photography, quite a few frogfish, plenty of nudibranchs,

interesting shrimp but not numerous. The pygmy seahorses were not playing while we were there, no sightings but we were assured that they are normally around. Very short boat rides (five to 10 minutes), but no camera buckets or safe area, although the boatmen were good at taking care of and handling cameras. Large camera/regulator rinse tank at the shop but was not policed well. Frequently saw people dunking wetsuits, BCDs, and even a weightbelt once! (www.atlantishotel.com)

La Laguna Beach Resort, January 2003, Douglas Hansen (mhel@pop3.concentric.net), San Jose, CA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 55 to 80 feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, choppy, currents. The diving was very good. The corals seem to be in good shape, although there were very few big fish. The dive operators seem to be protective of the reefs, and it shows. Our dive guide, Leo, tried hard to point out critters that we were interested in. Diving is from Bancas, which takes getting used to. Our night dives were in Sabang Bay, which were muck dives. We saw Spanish dancers, eels, a variety of nudibranchs, and a frogfish. Nitrox was \$6 per tank. The accommodations were inexpensive, but small; we upgraded to the largest room available. Cleaning was not as thorough as we would have liked. The food in the on-site restaurant was good and inexpensive. No accommodations for cameras on the boats.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Solomon Islands' tourist

infrastructure is nil except for a few small, remote dive resorts in beautiful settings like Uepi and the Gizo islands, although several live-aboards dive these waters. ... There are plenty of wrecks from WWII, lots of pristine reefs and walls, an abundance of fish (big ones too), and even more unexplored territory. ... Diving is year-round with plenty of places to dive in the lee, but April and May are the best months, followed by October, November, and December. ... The Solomons are a possible add-on from Fiji (1,300 miles to the southeast) or Papua New Guinea (700 miles to the west); Honiara is on the main island of Guadalcanal; use it only for overnighting. ... Solomon Islanders produce fine wood carvings. ... This is serious malaria country. ... While there is continued trouble between various Solomon Island factions, tourists aren't hassled.

Adventure Sports, Gizo Hotel, August 2003, Jan Breidenbach (aquafauna@aol.com), Granite Bay, CA. Dives logged: 800+. Vis: 60-85 ft. Water: 82-85 F. Things are much improved, prices excellent and people gracious and charming. Danny Kennedy's operation gives 110% to every diver. WWII wrecks, shallow to deep dives, good passes, reefs and short boat rides with delicious beach lunch! Well worth the effort to get there! (www.divegizo.com)

Uepi Island Resort, August 2003,

Jan Breidenbach (aquafauna@aol.com), Granite Bay, CA. Dives logged: 800+. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 82-85 F. Uepi Island Resort is the "best of the best" and that says it all. Pristine beauty above and below the water. Lovely resort with excellent managers and staff. Every sort of diving offered and fantastic snorkeling. Solomon Airlines does great job of getting you to Seghe, boat trip across Marovo Lagoon to the resort a real pleasure. This is a "don't miss" destination! (www.uepi.com)

TONGA

Dolphin Pacific Divers, Tongan Beach Resort, August 2003, Dan Purnell (Danpurnell@CS.com), Vancouver, WA. Vis: 80-150 ft. Water: 76-78 F. Dives logged: 400. Dive restrictions enforced: time. I spent nearly 2 weeks in Vana'u. I went scuba diving with Dolphin Pacific Divers and took a tour snorkeling with humpback whales with Whale Swim Adventures. Vana'u is a collection of beautiful islands, offering shelter to whales giving birth to their young. Although Vana'u was hit by a huge hurricane several years ago, there is still good scuba diving. Many of the diving sites are especially interesting from a geological perspective. Huge boulders, canyons, caves, swim throughs, split rock formations make the diving very interesting. There are some very nice tropical fish, but not nearly as many as you would find in Fiji or Palau. In some sites the hard corals are pristine, and in others they are heavily damaged by the hurricane. Some sites are breathtaking, while