

KOSRAE REVISITED

by Glen Cowans

Last year we were fortunate enough to discover Kosrae, the place to go if you want fantastic visibility, good diving and to be able to say you have been somewhere that virtually no one has ever heard of. Well, being back in Micronesia we decided to revisit Kosrae and enjoy it again, second time around.

Kosrae (pronounced Kosh-Rye) lies out in the Western Pacific. It is part of the Federated States of Micronesia, is the second last stop on your way to Honolulu from Guam and sits on its own like a proud emerald gem within a deep indigo sea. Besides stunning scenery,



Moray eel being attended by eager cleaner shrimp.

magnificent mangroves and tropical rainforest, the island features the Kosrae Nautilus Resort which is run by Sally and Doug, who are expats from Australia. Doug and Sally left the rat race behind to follow their dream and in doing so created a peaceful, comfortable resort which is easily considered the best accommodation and food on the island.

Surrounded by fringing reef, Kosrae has some of the most pristine hard coral formations I have ever seen, natural creations so spectacular they resemble underwater wonderlands or castles. One of the reasons the reefs have remained so magnificent is that there is no anchor damage because there is a complete network of mooring buoys surrounding the island, in fact it could be described that the island has just one dive site that goes right around the island.

Whilst the island does have mangroves which can result in run off that can limit visibility,

the outflow locations are limited and hence only effect visibility in their immediate vicinity and this is only under an outgoing tide. So for the most part visibility is exceptional everywhere and at certain times it might be minimally effected in a few isolated locations. This was proven to me when on one rainy cloudy day I rolled in expecting to have a dark gloomy dive only to find that the coral 20 meters below was almost glowing in the subdued light. It felt like it was only inches in front of my face and it was only the image created by my eager dive buddy Louise hovering down above the reef that gave the correct perspective.

A new discovery for us on this trip was Moray Rock, a coral bommie sitting at 20m and covered in small disk anemones that is home to five or more different moray eels. Each eel pokes out from different locations in the bommie and all are constantly being attended to by eager cleaner shrimp of several different species. It is fascinating to watch a moray open its jaws threateningly at you, only for it to have a cleaner shrimp jump inside for a quick dental clean up. On another dive we came across a large nurse shark, over two meters long and sleeping down in a gully within the corals, well actually on the corals. This I found interesting as reputedly they are documented as sleeping on sandy bottoms



Fast asleep in the coral, this nurse shark was around 2.5m long.

only, something not prominent here in Kosrae.

New for the Kosrae Nautilus Resort is that they now run dive courses and so can cater for new divers who want to make the most of their time in the warm clear water and expand their skills or even those wanting to get open water certified during their stay. It is also now possible to coordinate your stay so that you can train right up to NAUI instructor level. Finishing off the new course list is the fact that Doug and Sally now run complete Resort Management Courses, ideal for those who want to follow in their footsteps and embark on that dream blend of vocation and lifestyle.

Upgrades have also happened, their 8m dive boat has had a refit and now runs with a new 200hp four stroke outboard, meaning a much quieter ride out to the dive sites without sacrificing short travelling time. The boat caters

for up to six divers with ease, so your diving and the boat trip is far from crowded with other bodies and equipment and it is rare to even see another dive boat out there let alone have to share a dive site with one.

Accommodation at the resort has also been increased. Two new and fully self contained units have been created, one with two bedrooms and the other with one. Both feature a comfortable lounge, a kitchen and a bathroom / laundry. Ideal for extended stays on the island, one is ideal for a couple and the other for a small family.

It is my hope that we have a world where all our environmental issues don't get worse but if like me you are starting to worry about that more and more, well I recommend you go see the Kosrae corals whilst they are still spectacular, hopefully it is isolated enough that they will stay that way for a long time to come.