

lunch varied with the day, and dinner was posted on the board the night before so we could choose one of two or three selections. All meal portions were more than enough to eat. The boats had fresh water for camera rinse. The resort had some photo supplies available, but no processing. (www.lighthousereefresort.com)

Lighthouse Reef Resort, September 2004, Yoko Hosoya, Toronto, ON.

Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 25 to 30 Meters. Water: 29 to 30 Celsius. The sea was calm. A week before they suffered from strong winds and high waves caused by Ivan and had to cancel the diving for three days. There were only four guests so everybody got full attention of the staff — one of the best serviced, most relaxing and most scenic resorts I have ever stayed at. Diving-wise, I found the Long Caye the best. It's worth going to Half Moon Caye because of the bird sanctuary, but the walls were less interesting. One has to dive the Blue Hole just to say "I was there!" Otherwise it's a waste of time. The most interesting dive was the night dive 10 minutes from the resort. We saw a ray, octopus, crabs and lobsters, peppered moray, etc. No big stuff, no "surprises" — so the diving was in a way disappointing. No shore dives. Apparently the resort will starting next August for a complete rebuilding.

Turneffe Island

Turneffe Island Lodge, November 2003, Stanley N. Kanzaki, (stanzakronin@aol.com), New York. Dives logged 500+. Water 80, Viz: 40'

50. 'Dive own profile, yes. Dive restrictions: Max 130', 500 lb return, 15'/ 5 min. deco. stop, etc. A well organized operation from the moment of pick up boat from Belize to Turneffe. First dove this area in 1984 aboard the Isla Mia and in 1988 aboard the ill fated La Strega. Entire lodge staff friendly and looked after the divers on land and in water. First few dives not too interesting, saved the best dives for the end. Lefty's Ledge named after a resident turtle with a missing flipper seen by some. The Great Blue Hole was an interesting deep dive but too short. Later went to Half Moon Caye. Best dive with wall, many fishes and rays and interesting bird sanctuary on island. From observation deck saw many ospreys and frigate birds nesting on top of trees protecting their chicks. Three Amigos was interesting. Puffers, eels, yellow tails, spotted eagles and a sleeping shark underneath a rock. Did night dive there and saw red scorpion fish and same sleeping shark. All dives were from small boats and was either drift dives or follow the DM except where there were moorings. The initial dive briefing at the lodge was too long and did not ask for any questions. The boat Capt./DMs were Marcel and Rick who were excellent except briefings on the dive site were too short. Danielle the genial efficient administrator took care of all land operations and was the perennial Island limbo champ. The divers were from all over the USA and were an interesting group. The food was good and the entire place was clean and well maintained. The accommodations were excellent. Every morning just outside of your

cabin there was an individual pot of hot coffee or tea on the table just by your door. Free access to canoes, kayaks and small sail boats. Two friendly well trained pet dogs. Near the waters of the lodge was a resident alligator about 4' long which I nearly bumped into while kayaking. I heard that there was another dog but it is believed it became a meal of the gator. Total of 17 dives in 6 days. (www.turneffelodge.com)

Turneffe Island Lodge, February 2004, Ramsay Thom (Ramsaythom@aol.com) New York, NY. Experience:

101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy. It was quite windy and therefore the surface condition was quite choppy. Because dive sites are so close to the resort, small boats are used. You need to remove BC/tank before re-boarding but the crew lifts your BC/tank back on board. This is true "valet" diving. I would go a bit later in the year next time due to windy conditions.

Turneffe Island Lodge, March 2004, Ron & Sherry Smith, Levittown, PA.

Vis: 60-70 feet. Water: 76-78 F. Dives logged: 274. This was our fourth visit to this beautiful island hideaway. Great service, food, and lovely beachfront accommodations. Although the wind got worse as the week went on, we enjoyed ourselves anyway. Visibility got worse as the winds got stronger, but our dives were still enjoyable. Bo and Ricky are great to dive with, and got to see my first Hammerhead on this trip! Great place.

Turneffe Island Lodge, June 2004, Roger, Donna & Kate Soape (ras@rasoape.com) Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. We visit every couple of years. The food here is consistently among the very best we have experienced anywhere in the Caribbean. The accommodations — especially the cabanas — are very nice. The resort occupies its own island, which is reachable only by boat, so — it is very quiet. We did not experience as many spotted eagle rays and black tip sharks as on some prior trips. The currents weren't really running and the moon was full; maybe that was why. Still, lots of turtles and pelagic fish (permit, jacks, snapper). Several spotted toadfish and a good number of the usual reef suspects. We dove with groups of about a half dozen in a small, open boat. Most dives — including the renowned Elbow — are done as drift dives just a few minutes ride from the resort so surface intervals between the three dives are done at the resort. Experienced divemasters and boat drivers continue to pamper guests. Sometimes swift currents in open water, and deep dives.

BONAIRE

In 1999, hurricane-driven waves damaged, even destroyed, many of Bonaire's beautiful shallow coral gardens, ruining snorkeling in many places. Still, Bonaire is a diver's island par excellence, with easy diving that's especially well-suited to beginning divers or those returning to the water after

a long dry spell. Superb year-round weather, with lows around 74 F at night and daytime highs around 89 F. Expect some rain from October through January, but, since Bonaire lies outside the hurricane belt, dives are rarely canceled. ... Savvy divers rent a vehicle to shore-dive the island (reserve ahead of time, or you may be out of luck — and don't leave valuables in your car). ... The southern end of the island is often rough but worth diving when conditions are favorable. ... Avoid meal plans to take advantage of the many restaurants within walking distance of most hotels (and so you don't get stuck if your hotel chef is on leave). There's overnight film processing, good gear rental, and repair facilities. ... Everyone speaks English.

Bon Bini Divers, Ocean View Villas, May 2004, Marc & Maureen Duggan (marcandmaureen@cox.net), San Diego, CA. Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 70 to 125 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 Fahrenheit, calm. Tim, one of the owners of Ocean View Villas was waiting for us at the airport, showed us to the rental car agency, and had us follow him back to the Villas (three apartments in the same building as Tim's residence). Catering to divers, there are two studio apartments and one large two-bedroom apartment. Nice and clean with newer kitchens and bathrooms, and an additional private shower out the back door of each unit (great for rinsing off equipment between days). Bonaire is a shore diver's para-

dise: park your van on the side of the road, and just walk in. Previous articles in Undercurrent indicated possible thefts from vehicles, so we went prepared: don't bring anything in your rental vehicle that you aren't going to take in the water with you, lock the steering wheel with a "Club", and leave the windows/sliding door wide open. We had no problems. Before your first dive, every diver must do a land orientation/checkout dive with a local operator and purchase a \$10 Marine Park Tag, even if you have dived in Bonaire before. No gloves allowed. The dive operator affiliated with Ocean View Villas is Bon Bini Divers located at Lions Dive Resort and provider of all our tank refills. Francey and the others at Bon Bini were very helpful (my Cobra malfunctioned and locked in surface mode and they offered the use of one of their rental computers for free). Tank refills were easy through their "drive-through" filling station. We could have passed on the few boat dives we did (1000 steps, Nearest Point, and Small Wall) and would have preferred to do a few more shore dives instead. It's a long haul for equipment from the Lions Dive parking lot down to the dive shop. Underwater we found serene gardens, lush plants and beautiful coral and sponges, with many tropical fish. Sightings included large tarpon, eels, parrotfish, blue tang, trumpetfish, yellowtail snapper, a honeycomb cowfish and a porcupinefish. Not too much large stuff. Two favorite dive sites: Margate Bay and Hilma Hooker (wreck with an interesting story behind it). Be very careful not to get small

sand/coral particles in your regs when taking equipment on or off with shore diving. Tim's restaurant and club recommendations never failed us, especially "It Rains Fishes", and an intimate Cuban bar called "Little Havana" that spins old vinyl jazz records while you enjoy Cuban rum and cigars. (www.oceanviewvillas.com; www.bonbinidivers.com)

Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn, May 2004, Kevin (kelseyfox2@cs.com), Knoxville, TN. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, choppy. I dove with Bruce Bowker one day. I had been diving with Toucan Diving but, they were overbooked this day. Grounds neat and well kept. Bruce and his staff are very friendly and want to go out of their way to please. The dive shop is extremely well stocked. There is more "stuff" in this smaller than average size shop. Diving was a little on the "roughing it" side of things. No two tank diving. One tank at 8:30 am and one tank at 1:00 pm. The boat I was on was approx 25 ft. No roof for shade. Seating on the gunnels. No storage for gear. They do have a rinse tank. The boat was crowded with 12 divers. Divemaster and captain are one of same. She brings your tank to you and helps you put on your BC. Water entry is back fall of side of boat. The dive shop and staff make up for the dive boat inadequacy. Excellent laid back diving. (www.caribinn.com)

Buddy Dive, October 2003, Mike Hill (mikehill@casstel.net) Peculiar, MO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 F, calm. Really

enjoyed the shore diving. No crowds, take as many tanks as needed. Town Pier night dive was good, to many divers though. Salt Pier was good also, spotted eagle rays. School of squid in shallow water 75' from shore on one dive. Large tarpon at dive resort on night dive. Octopus also. The bad was the crowd on the boat dive to Klien Bonaire. (www.buddydive.com)

Buddy Dive Resort, December 2003, Michael Ewing (mikeandcindyewing@cox.net) Cincinnati, VA. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, choppy. Our first trip to Bonaire. Hard to imagine that any operation can be any more accommodating to serious divers. Boat diving was excellent and divemasters Murph and Zoo were the absolute best! Daytime water temp was 81 F top to bottom at most sites and 79 F at night. Visibility exceeded 100 ft on most dives, down to maybe 80 ft at Salt Pier. The "drive thru" part of Buddy's is a much better service than we anticipated. Shore diving in Bonaire is, of course, primo and after 6 intensive days of diving, we're eager to get back for the gazillion sites we couldn't make this trip. The reef life was spectacular. Don't waste your money on a prepaid calling card purchased in the US. We purchased one from "Is card," an Internet company I wouldn't give another dime to! The card was nonrefundable and an absolute waste because we could not find a phone on the island that would accept this card. Complaints to "Is" when we returned were basically answered with a 'too bad.' Prepaid telephone calling cards

can be easily purchased on the island and at very reasonable rates. Bon Dia!

Buddy Dive Resort, January 2004, Bill Schlegel, Columbia, MO. Joined Captain Nemo's group from Columbia, MO. Weather: perfect, calm seas (on the west side of the island) as usual, rare rain shower, air temperature mid 80's. Water temperature 79-81. Visibility 50 to 100+ feet. Total personal dives: 500+ with additional rebreather dives. Diving: 4 stars, as expected for Bonaire. Lots of small critters. No big critters except for an eagle ray seen on a beach dive. I saw more cleaning station activity than I remember seeing on previous trips to Bonaire, although frequently small parrot fish being cleaned by tiny wrasses. Coral is healthy. There is some dying back and bleaching but there were entire dives where none of that was seen. There are areas where the staghorn coral, of which there used to be huge forests in the shallows that were destroyed by hurricane Lenny in 1999 is regenerating. Seahorses were seen several times. Spotted drum, sharptailed eels, green, goldentailed and spotted morays and other critters that hide in the crevasses. All the other (small) southern Caribbean critters were abundant. Saw several frogfish, found by the divemaster who seems to know exactly which coral head they are on. Saw several hawksbill turtles. Talked with the local "save the turtles" representative and apparently there is a growing Bonairian turtle population. There were lots of tarpon including those in front of Buddy Dives' pier, which is essentially the same reef as

Captain Dons'. The town pier night dive is not as good as it once was, but improved may be due to stricter limits on number of dives allowed in there at one time. The sponges and other critters there are still beautiful. No currents and nice boat entries and easy exits. They enforce a 100 foot depth limit and allow up to one hour, when appropriate. I know they will allow greater than 100-foot depth limits, but it seems you need to go with a technical diving divemaster. Dive operation very accommodating. Their classic "drive through" refill station makes it possible to refill and get on the road again in about five minutes. All air refills are included in the usual hotel package. They also do drive-through Nitrox, with the Nitrox package. The package we had included a 4 seat Toyota truck for each four divers. Best diving is on the small, uninhabited sister island of Klein Bonaire that is only reachable by boat. A great compromise is to get the two-boat dive in the morning and unlimited afternoon (or night) beach diving package. The personnel are about the friendliest I've seen with a pleasant attitude in all situations. I listened to a clearly unstable customer harangue the dive operations manager for several minutes about some "piddly" problem that he should have taken care of himself. While I expected her to "let him have it" any second (I would have) she was constantly polite and helpful. The divemaster I had for the boat dives was Rob. He was very slow, picking his way over the reef and finding incredible amounts of the small stuff that Bonaire is all about. The other divemaster we had was Enrique,

borrowed from Divi Divers for our week there. Enrique who would take off fast enough that most of the divers could not keep up with him, he would never look back and sometimes, when he decided that it was the turn around point, I would be the only diver with him out of 16 or so. The operation will support rebreathers (high concentration Nitrox and scrubber) for those so inclined. Accommodations: Two stars. Not bad for an "economy" operation. Clean and serviceable rooms. We had a kitchenette with stove, refrigerator, microwave, sink, clean dishes. Also had a TV that received about 20 cable channels. Our apartment had a single bedroom but was expandable to using the livingroom as another. There are mosquitos and something best described as sand fleas or "no see ums". Bug repellent when sitting around to bar in the evening or a tolerance for bugs is suggested. I believe the mosquitos were breeding in the goldfish pond outside the rooms and suggested they just get rid of the thing. Food at the restaurant is serviceable with some customers feeling it was great and others complaining fairly strongly. My opinion: acceptable verging on good. There were some evening buffet meals (Mexican, barbecue and seafood) that were very good. They could use more hooks to hang dive gear outside your rooms on the first floor (second story and above have railings) and clearly need more hammocks for those times you want to snooze in the shade.

Buddy Dive Resort, January 2004, James & Linda Dyer (jhdyer@

mindspring.com), Cleveland, TN. Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 Fahrenheit, calm. Our 4th visit to Buddy Dive Resort in 3 years. Resort staff friendly and helpful. Accommodations are adequate, clean and comfortable. Dive facilities and staff are excellent. The diving is superb with healthy reefs with loads of small critters. The people of Bonaire are polite and friendly. Restaurants have good food at reasonable prices. Meal choices run from Whataburger, KFC, and Subway to Capriccios and Richards on the elegant side. The Rib Factory is on the second floor of the Kralendijk shopping area overlooking the harbor, a great location to catch sunsets and enjoy a great meal while reflecting on another day in Divers Paradise. Dive boats include dry tables and dedicated rinse buckets for equipment.

Buddy Dive, May 2004, Marsha Stout, Weatherford, TX. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 F, calm. The resort is very nice. As a group of nineteen, we stayed in several three-bedroom "apartments." All bedrooms are on separate A/C controls. The kitchen and living room were not air-conditioned, but you could open the French doors for a nice breeze. The oven didn't work and refrigerator froze all the liquids. The two upstairs bedrooms both had small refrigerators, but each apartment may not include those. Same with TV's. There was an onsite restaurant that was pretty good. The Lions Den was just next door to a Captain Don's was on the other side of that, so if you wanted to try a different restaurant it wasn't far to walk. We drove into town to visit the

local supermarket and got some drinks and snacks. They accept American dollars but will give you florin in return. They have KFC and Subway, but would not qualify as fast food in American standards. Sodas are about \$1.85. The diving was great. We used our boat trips for Klein Bonaire and boat-accessible only spots like Karpata. They have three boats and the boards that mark planned boat trips are convenient. Just sign your name to the list and it goes if there are enough people. The Town Pier diving is only by arrangement but you can dive Salt Pier on your own. They have the rinse tanks split up into three sections: cameras, regulators and everything else. They have an area to hang all of your gear and they lock it at night. Most of the staff at Buddy Dive were friendly although several people did not like one divemasters. The Dutch bartender offended several people. Dutch Caribbean was an hour late to Bonaire on our trip home. Also, they didn't seem to have any custom forms in English, so we all got to fill out the Spanish version. Continental only allowed two fifty-pound checked bags and one forty-pound carry-on. Some of the travelers in our group paid extra. Take rechargeable batteries to keep the weight down. Electrical current is close to the US standard and I didn't have any problems with either of my recharger units. We didn't experience any of the theft. One person in our group had some DVD's stolen out of his suitcase after leaving the Miami airport en route to Curacao. Lots of wild donkeys, goats, dogs, cats and flamingos. Too many dive sites to hit in a one-week trip.

Buddy Dive Resort, June 2004, George Wilkens (grw@math.hawaii.edu) Boulder, CO. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Dutch Caribbean Airlines (DCA) cost us a day and a half of diving. The Miami to Curacao flight was delayed so much, that we were forced to spend Saturday night in Curacao. The 10 minute flight from Curacao to Bonaire was supposed to leave Sunday morning, but we did not arrive in Bonaire until 8:30 pm Sunday night. Our luggage (with all of our dive gear) was still on Bonaire and was not delivered to us until late Monday morning. On our return flight we had 5 hours to make a connecting flight in Miami, but DCA was so delayed on Bonaire that we missed our connecting flight, we had to spend the night in Miami, and arrived home a day late. Buddy Dive Resort was great and the diving on Bonaire was great.

Capt. Don's Habitat, September 2004, Joe Mellino (Jobryle@hotmail.com), Bridgewater, MA. Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 Fahrenheit, calm, currents. Diving freedom. Staff was great, tanks plentiful. nice set up all around. The diving in Bonaire was just fantastic, the reefs are colorful and full of sea life. We did 21 dives in 6 days. (www.habitatdiveresorts.com/bonaire)

Capt. Don's, September 2004, Nancy Schmidt, Corpus Christi, TX. Vis: 50-70 feet. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 250. Food — plain, and service can be very slow (even for island time). Divemaster touched and passed

around creatures (not allowed in the park). Boat captain said that didn't apply to the divemaster. Nothing really to see — boring dive for experienced divers, would recommend to new diver.

Divi Flamingo, November 2003, David Van Ryn (DaveVanRynti@alumni.indiana.edu) Elkhart, IN. Dives logged: 300+. Vis: 75 ft. Water: 75-80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: variable. Bonaire is still great diving. After several trips, still enjoyable. Coral recovering from hurricane. Saw lots of evidence of fishing pressure by locals. Lots of turtles. Great fish — lots of eels (feeding). Sea horses, frogfish, squid. Night dives at town pier are excellent. Divi is worn but still great. "Improvements" seem to be cosmetic. Still great dive access (pier). Condos are still best. Proximity to town still nice. (www.divibonaire.com)

Divi Flamingo, November 2003, James Reilly and Fran Klass (james.reilly4@worldnet.att.net) Wyndmoor, PA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm, no currents. We flew Air Jamaica and were pleased with the flight, although the days of post 9-11 empty seats appears to history. Divi Flamingo was comfortable but not luxurious. Food served at the resort to be reasonably priced and well prepared. Several restaurants in town, an easy walk on a shorefront boulevard, were superb — especially "It Rains Fishes" and "Mai Mai." Mostly we did shore dives from the Divi Diver's dock. Wonderful being able to dive whenever you want and free to go where you

want. Very easy diving on a decent house reef. We also did a boat dive and enjoyed it a lot. Again, very few rules other than be back on the boat in 45 minutes. We ended our dives with over 1000 lbs, but many folks had less. The dive boat staff was very professional, fun and laid back. They were attentive but not pushy or overly cautious. We think Divi Divers is a professional and well run operation. The resort was fully booked and the dive operation and the resort staff worked very hard to insure that our stay was relaxing. They took very good care of a large group and took very good care of non-group guests also. The boats did not have marine heads.

Divi Flamingo Beach, July 2004, Phil & Grace Hampton, Orlando, FL. Vis: 30-200 feet. Water: 78-81 F. Experience: Phil - 2,200, Grace - 900. We spent three weeks in our timeshare. I dove three dives a day and Grace dove two a day. Not bad for a pair of 73-year-olds. Dive Bonaire gave us outstanding service. We use 67 ft 3 tanks and the divemasters made sure our small tanks were loaded at the rear of the boat to accommodate my back problem. They also found lots of critters. The timeshares, which are basically studio apartments, are a bit old, but have been well maintained. Air conditioner improvement is needed to control humidity. Shore diving the town and salt piers was greatly tightened up on July 1 to meet international shipping and port security (ISPS) standards. We saw turtles on most dives, including the largest Loggerhead I've seen and a tremendous Hawksbill. Also

saw eagle rays, frog fish that were green, red, brown, yellow, all which and white with brown markings, sea horses, octopi, and coronet Fish. Dive operation was excellent including the shop personnel, boat captains and dive-masters. We are looking forward to our 27th annual visit.

Harbour Village, October 2003, Ezra Lunde (ezralunde@hotmail.com) New York, NY. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Flew down via American for two days Nitrox diving. Resort enforces an orientation dive which took up precious time. Rooms are nice; resort is very nice (cool little beach). Service was sluggish or nonexistent except at the dive shop. Diving was clean, clear, beautiful, plentiful and easy as always. At this time of year Harbour Village is inexpensive and uncrowded — just don't count on the staff for much, and all resort services shut down at around 7:00pm. (www.harbourvillage.com)

Harbour Village Resort, February 2004, Victor Bary and Maureen Strazdun (vbary@yahoo.com) Cranford, NJ. Experience: 150+ dives. Vis: 40 to 70 feet. Water: 80–83 F. Harbour Village is once again a hotel, and has renovated and enlarged rooms. Truly a fabulous facility. Dive operation is friendly, knowledgeable, and courteous. Rental equipment is recent and well maintained. Divemaster Etienne — “ET” was excellent at finding interesting aquatic life (frogfish, sea horses, etc.). Probably because of low hotel occu-

pancy, 35' dive boat generally carried 4–5 divers, never more than 8.

Harbour Village, June 2004, Robert Berger and Amy Thorkilsen (rlbergerpdc@optonline.net), Bound Brook, NJ. Experience: 100+ dives. Vis: 60-100 feet. Water: 80 82 F, calm with some currents. Our inbound flight arrived late for our Air Jamaica connection in Montego Bay. Air Jamaica put us up overnight at an all inclusive and paid for everything, including the transfers to the airport. They called ahead to Harbour Village to shift our reservations by a day. Harbour Village is 1-1/2 miles north of Kralendijk and just south of the Sand Dollar, Buddy Dive and Captain Dons. A harbor and yacht club flanks its eastern shore. The resort has an array of two story villa style rooms among a lush and well landscaped garden A Garden View room was far cheaper (and a better value) than the harbor side and ocean view alternatives. We were 100 feet from the beach and had a patio. The dive operation (Great Adventures) has a small pier and a 30+ boat and a 42' Newton. Beach diving is available 24x7 and offers a good variety A sandy basin full of garden eels, bonefish and peacock flounders awaits immediately off shore and a classic Bonaire coral slope from 30'-100' lies to the south. The resort was at 50% of capacity, but it felt empty. Only a few couples would show up for breakfast at their beachfront café (La Balandra). The dive boats left at 9:15 AM, 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM. The boats were well maintained and provide separate water containers for cameras. The electrical current proved problematic with my re-charger, so bring alkaline

batteries. They provided good tank fills (e.g. 3000+ PSI), but employed the normal (not-so-safe) island fill it fast and hot overfill technique. The Captains and divemasters allowed for unescorted dives once they evaluated your competency. The reefs at are rich with hard and soft corals and a variety of sponges, spotted drums, sea horses and frog fish. Because we were the only divers on 60% of the dives, we were able to partake in a number of multi-site drift dives. Montes Divi to Rockpile ending up at Johannes Sunchi offered a pristine forest of elkhorn coral. Another offered a large loggerhead turtle. A drift dive along Klein Bonaire's eastern shore had more sponges than I had ever seen and four green turtles. On the remaining 40% of the dives there were no more than one or two other pairs of divers. The other dive resort's boats all seemed quite full. Every evening we would walk to town along the promenade that runs along the water. For Italian, both Croccantino and Capriccio are excellent. Carpriccio has a fantastic wine cellar. Mona Lisa is nice small Dutch bistro serving a focused but well executed continental menu. Casablanca is an Argentinian style steak house that serves portions so large that each should have its own zip code. It's Raining Fishes offers some reasonably priced good seafood. The Lighthouse, north of town, near Harbour Village was quite good as well. The resort's on-site restaurant was OK for breakfast and lunch, but was uninventive and the staff was a bit sleepy. Try going next door to Buddy Dive for lunch. It's a short walk and quite good. Overall, elegant, quiet accommodations with a

European flair, ; beautiful air conditioned rooms, an unsurpassed beach and a first class dive operation. The price is only incrementally more than the popular dive resorts.

Larry's Wildside Diving, April 2004, Barbara Anderson (shrinkski@aol.com), Winter Park, FL. Vis: 50-60 feet. Water: 82-84 F. Experience: 703. My comments are restricted to the “other” (west) side of Bonaire only. What makes this operation unique is that the diving is done from a 12-person Zodiac, with a 10 min ride to the sites usually not accessible or used by other operators. Larry is an ex-Canadian seal, runs a great operation (safety first!) and one can spot multiple pelagics and turtles as well as corals undisturbed by other divers. We saw about 15-20 large tarpons in the Blue Hole and a spotted Eagle Ray. Other days, many rays, including a Manta, were seen. (www.infobonaire.com/larrys)

Lion's Dive, January 2004, Rick Neumann, Bethesda, MD. Dives logged: 350+. Vis: 60-80 Ft. Water: 79-81 F. Dive restrictions enforced: Under 100. 9th trip to Bonaire. Shore diving easy and superb. In May 03 and Jan 04, visibility was not as good as previous 7 trips, about 60-70 ft. Bonaire's best period to get new divers into the world of diving. Lion's Dive Hotel needs to work on amenities in the units. The pool was unusable for our stay. The Lion's Den restaurant is the best food on the island and the Bon Bini dive operation is fine and very attentive to divers needs. (www.lionsdivebonaire.com)

Lion's Dive, August 2004, Clay Coleman (clayco@mindspring.com), Baton Rouge, LA. Experience: 501-1000 dives Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, choppy. American Airlines (Miami/San Juan/Bonaire. Late flights, cancelled flights, endless delays, and lame excuses. There were 16 divers in our group and not a single checked bag arrived with us. Attempts to contact the AA on the island failed, and even attempts to track the bags from a representative in Miami were fruitless. However, the bags arrived on the next evening's flight. 15 folks from that arriving flight did not have their luggage, so it seems that the American Eagle flight from San Juan operates on a day-late schedule for luggage. We told Bon Bini of our plight, were set up with rudimentary gear and charged full price for the rental. The house reef from Buddy Dive to Capt. Don's is pretty ragged, but it's still interesting. Reefs on Klein and elsewhere looked as pristine as ever despite reports of damage from sewage. Friendly staff. Lion's Den restaurant is excellent. Bon Bini boats carried a small ice chest for fresh water rinse, which was grossly inadequate. Even small rigs like Nikonos or Motormarine/single strobe setups were a tight fit. Housed cameras could not be rinsed. Dive crew sometimes stacked cameras on top of each other to the point that the uppermost cameras were not close to the rinse water.

Photo Tours, Hamlet Oasis, October 2003, Bob and Carolyn Smith, Fall River, MA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 84 to 88 F, calm, no currents. Our fifth trip to

Bonaire, and it was delightful, as usual. The diving was superb. We made 25 dives over 8 days. We did not see any turtles, green moray eels or eagle rays. Hamlet Oasis villa, is actually a one-bedroom apartment with an adjoining studio. It is clean and quiet, with a pool on site. The bedrooms are air-conditioned, and the buildings are situated so the breeze moves straight through the living room. Management was friendly and accommodating. The kitchen lacks an oven, which we did not expect, but we managed to cook meals planned for the oven on top of the stove. We always dive with Photo Tours, and are never disappointed. The rates are reasonable, the service always friendly. They have a shop next to Hamlet Oasis, one downtown, and one close to the airport at Caribbean Court. They also operate the Pink Bus, which is a real asset to those diving the south part of the island (the bus is located at one particular dive site each day, and offers refreshments, items for basic repairs, and a place to store things if needed). As usual, we had to be careful regarding petty theft while diving. While shore diving, we brought nothing with us that we would not want stolen, and left the windows down. Thievery is a real problem on the island, and although the dive operators are up in arms about it, the police are not cooperative. There was a suspicious, obviously local, car and driver parked partially concealed near divers at the Hilma Hooker site. One member of our party marched over to it and took down the license plate number. The car was gone when we surfaced from the dive. We became friendly with a woman

who had gas siphoned from her truck every night, since she was the only one in the neighborhood without a locking gas cap. Although the theft problem is disturbing, we cannot stay away from Bonaire. (www.bonphototours.com)

Photo Tours, Sorobon Beach Resort, November 2003, Pat Aderman (pat_aderman@juno.com) Naperville, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy, no currents. Virtually all the tourists are divers with a few wind surfers. Prices in restaurants, shops, etc. are much lower than other resort areas. Despite the small population there are many good restaurants with varied menus and modest prices. A couple of places have live music 2-3 nights a week but for the most part the sidewalks are rolled up by 11:00 pm. There are a couple of small casinos for those wanting to gamble. No in shop photo processing.

Plaza Resort, October 2003, Pete Lemme (Lemmegodivin@aol.com) Mundelein, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 89 F, calm, no currents. The resort is in beautiful area — although the grounds were unkempt. I wouldn't spend the extra money on a grand suite because it was just a very large room with too much unusable space. I would get a villa. The food was very good but the service was extremely slow — a 3 hour dinner, ask for the check when you received your entree. Toucan Dive was very good, the boats were great and the divemasters would leave early if you wanted a popular dive site in order to beat the competition. Salt Pier was by

far our best dive, we spotted numerous scorpionfishes. Aqua Kids program — my 8-year-old daughter loved it. She pointed out fish while snorkeling that I couldn't even identify thanks to the fish identification class. She went to the donkey sanctuary, and took a boat ride to Klein Bonaire to search for turtle nests and dolphins. My wife and I could dive without worrying about whether my daughter was having a good time. She even came home with a list of Dutch words to teach her classmates. (www.plazaresortbonaire.com)

Plaza Resort, February 2004, Mark Goodman (mgunder@spamex.com) Maplewood, NJ. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, no currents. Toucan Divers and the Plaza Resort offer a first class diving experience. Our package included a dual cab pickup truck and unlimited air. (Unlimited Nitrox at an additional charge.) Bonaire law requires a resort orientation which consisted of a video and shore dive. Some folks in our orientation group were not aware that once your buoyancy is confirmed you are free to complete the rest of your tank as a regular dive with your buddy. It's well worth the time as the coral and fish at the Plaza's dive site is quite nice. Toucan is a 5 Star PADI facility. On this trip my wife and I completed the Enriched Air Nitrox course. Our daughter completed the open water diver class. We were all very satisfied with the instructors and facilities. The best part of Bonaire is the shore diving. Buy the latest edition of "Shore Diving Made Easy" to help select dive sites suitable to your ability and interest.

Load the tanks in your truck and go — day or night. (The Town Pier dive requires a local divemaster, the Salt Pier dive requires the Harbor Master's permission.) On this trip we really enjoyed Karpata, Andrea II, 1000 Steps and Hilma Hooker. The visibility, quality of reef and abundance of life were all good. We also enjoyed the boat diving on Klein Bonaire. We were disappointed in our night dive to Salt Pier and with the visibility at Margate Bay. We did a night dive at the Plaza and were accompanied by a tarpon using our lights to find supper. It would have freaked us out if we hadn't been warned. Aqua Kids for the younger set is highly recommended. The kids learn snorkeling, fish identification, and respect for nature. My son's group had the rare opportunity to see four sea turtles make their first trip to the water! Don't forget the insect repellent and cortisone cream. It's been wet lately and the mosquitos are out and biting.

Plaza Resort, March 2004, Bruce (weiner@citlink.net) Goshen, NY. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. The diving was pleasant and relaxing. Unfortunately our villa was broken into in the middle of the night while we were sleeping and our computers (dive and laptop), regulator setups were stolen, in addition to other items. The really upsetting thing is that it happened the night before in the villa next to us and the resort did nothing to provide extra security or alert people. When I reported it the attitude was "don't you have insurance". No apology, not even a cup of coffee was offered to comfort

the situation. The island is beautiful with extremely friendly people. The night diving is excellent. However I would not recommend the Plaza Resort. First rate dive op, very poor customer service. To date they have not contacted me as to a resolution.

Plaza Resort Bonaire, March 2004, Gil G. Perrone (sanoop@aol.com), Scarsdale, NY. Vis: 30-60 feet. Water: 78-80 F. Experience: 1,200+. The Plaza Resort is a disgrace. Theft is out of control. Our two bedroom unit was robbed while we were asleep — four adults, dive cameras, computers, etc. We then learned the unit next door was robbed the night before. You get "lip service" from the hotel and nothing else.

Plaza Resort, April 2004, Ed Boyer, Webster, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 70 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, surge, no currents. Although the underwater sites were more than satisfactory, the dive crews and operation left much to be desired. The equipment room was small and poorly ventilated and crowding was the norm when a boat returned and especially first thing in the morning when all boats departed at the same time. There was poor facility for hanging wetsuits and the wet gear from the upper lockers drained into the lower lockers. You could leave nothing in the lockers you wanted to be kept dry. Although they had several boats, they crowded almost maximum capacity onto one boat with only one captain and one divemaster no matter how many divers of whatever level were on board. Because divers were placed with different divemasters each

morning and afternoon there was a "start at the beginning" situation each trip. Although some divemasters were excellent, some appeared lazy and uncaring. On one trip the divemaster was told one person was a new diver this year and his wife had gotten certified that week. The response from the divemaster was "be back on board in one hour." Upon returning from the dive trip I related to the head of the dive operation what had transpired and he seemed to feel he could do nothing but keep the divemaster out of the water for one day as punishment. The boats all had a large engine cover in the center of the dive deck that prevented 2/3 of the divers from passing, creating congestion when trying to get into or out of the water. Our night dive, with a dive instructor and his wife, was excellent. Overall, the resort was extremely nice and above average in all respects. If you get a package for your trip you are stuck with the dive operations for the duration. UW Photography Comments: the boats had a small rinse tank. On one trip a tank fell from the holder in the railing onto a camera in the rinse tank at the stern. I wouldn't take a camera.

Plaza Resort, May 2004, Kevin, Knoxville, TN. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 70 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, choppy. Very friendly locals. The people reminded me of how Grand Cayman was 20 years ago. My decision to stay at Plaza Resort is mostly to satisfy my wife's (non diver) likes for a nice beach, A/C and cable TV. The Plaza Resort is probably the largest on the island. It also might be the most overrated. The rooms are huge and very

clean. Decor is basic and limited. We stayed on the 2nd floor (top) and our ceiling leaked in five places during a couple of afternoon rain showers. The landscaping around the resort was lacking. Bird droppings covered walkways under tree over hangs. I expected a lot more from this resort based on the rates I was paying. Toucan Diving is located at the Plaza Resort property. Convenient walk from my room to the dive operation. The operation is very professional and accommodating. They cater to all diving. Rental BC's and other gear looked new (I have my own). They provide lockers and keys for gear storage. They have four very clean and well maintained dive boats. Twelve divers max on these approx 30 ft boats. Never felt crowded. Rinse tanks on all the boats. Divemaster and captains very knowledgeable and go out of their way to please all. Tank fills are generous at approx. 3200psi/80's. Crew accommodated dive site requests. Loose dive restrictions. Recommend reserving before making your trip. Boats can be full even in May. I had to dive with different operation one day due to being booked. The reefs are beautiful and seem to run forever. "Karpata" and "1000 Steps are similar. Soft and hard coral of every description. Colors abound with schools of small fish. Blue chromis and tangs. Frequent sightings of French and queen angels (my favorites). Several visits by loggerhead turtles. Spotted moray's and trunk fish. I watched a gold spotted eel rummaging through rocks looking for his next meal. The list goes on and on. Bonaire has over 85 dive sites. I dove sixteen of them and they were spectacular.

Restaurants 10-20 minute walk of Plaza Resort. "Richard's" for seaside dining. Ate there twice and loved the fresh catch of the day each time. Table clothes and very reasonable prices. "Chibi Chibi" located at Divi Flamingo Resort. Again we ate there twice. Sorry but the fresh catch wins again. The fresh El Dorado mmmmm. I have never eaten better sea food than in Bonaire. This was also seaside dining. Watch the sun setting and night divers lights below the surface in the near distance. Best steaks are at "Casablanca's." Thick cut Argentina beef and more. Consider reservations even in May.

Sand Dollar, November 2003, Lori Rocheleau (Lori.Rocheleau@fallon-clinic.com) Paxton, MA.

Dives logged: 182. Vis: 70-100 ft. Water: 82-86 F. There was a good variety of fish and critters. Saw some frog fish, seahorses, lettuce sea slugs and anemones. We rented a 3 bedroom condo which was very nice. The grounds, restaurant and general atmosphere at Sand Dollar are not the absolute best but are adequate and it is a very short walk to several other dive hotels for their restaurants. All in all, this place was a good value. (www.sanddollarbonaire.com)

Sand Dollar, June 2004, Janet Sitchin (jsuw@aol.com) Doral, FL.

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, no currents. Dive operation did a good job, and had helpful and well qualified staff. E-6 processing next to dive shop with half day processing.

Sand Dollar, July 2004, Jacki Briggs (briggsjr@comcast.net), Yardley, PA.

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Air Jamaica scheduled for 8:20 AM took off at 12:20 PM. Our 3 bedroom unit at the Sand Dollar was perfect — unit D-18. Roomy and clean. Bonaire Dive and Adventure's Michael and office help Joan did the basic orientation. We saved our checkout dive for Friday morning. After our buffet breakfast at 7 am at house restaurant Mango's. Headed to the Pier, grabbed our weights and jumped in for our checkout dive. Giant stride is easy, tanks are right there. We also did 1000 steps by 2 PM by boat which was not diver friendly and most uncomfortable. We were squished tight (13 + DM & Captain), leaving null room for gear assembly & entry/exit. Klein Bonaire: hoped to find the legendary old Loggerhead as big as a VW Bug, but no luck. Tons of macro life. Did Oil Slick by shore — lovely dive. Giant stride off the cliff. Andrea II by shore — a little tricky entry because of rocks on shoreline. Scheduled a night dive on the Pier with the shop for 6 of us. We booked through Joan in the office — had to give her our passports, get a divemaster for every 4 persons + pay \$20 pp. We get to the shop at 6:30 PM and get a "lazy" divemaster. He learns that we have never done a night dive and refuses to take us. This reduces me to tears. Mr. Wizza (pronounced Pizza with a "w") reasons that you should do at least 1 night dive before the pier. There were no other opportunities to night dive the pier before we left. We did the Bari Reef at night as a group

— saw an octopus. Drove to Washington Slagbaai at 8:30 am. You must snorkel at Wayaka II as there are 2 friendly angel fish. They want to be fed. The crusts from our peanut butter & jelly sandwiches did the trick. Lovely beach with shade provided by the cliff overhang. Pink Beach in AM had a stingray. Two of our group did a night dive and saw the tarpon eating. Telerin rental was great (we had 2 trucks reserved with our package). Lots of construction going on next door (new apartment bldg. & new location for dive shop). They have a gear room that remains open from 8:30 am until 10:30 PM. Everyone upon check in gets assigned a diver # & corresponding hook in the gear room if you want to do early morning or late night dives — take your gear to your room or lock it in a locker. 2 separate rinse tanks for cameras, one on the dock, the other by the drive up air fill station. W brought bottled water and used it to rinse our cameras once we got out of shore dive.

Wannadive, Eden Beach, September 2003, Ed Gross (ejg2putt@earthlink.net) Plano, TX.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Good diving. Diving is easy if no currents, can be challenging if any currents, especially entries/exits. Some sites are almost impossible to get in/out without falling/tripping/stumbling. No really exciting large life, mostly small stuff seen in rest of Caribbean. Large tarpons and snooks are the exception. Reefs in great health, but lack the color of reefs in north Caribbean (Cozumel, Saba). Some big schools of

dolphins, especially around Klein Bonaire. A few interesting wrecks very accessible. All diving is done from shore, worthwhile to rent a pickup truck to get to sites all over island. Convenient to dive when/where you want. Somewhat inconvenient that petty theft is a problem on the island, and stuff will be removed from your truck. Rental companies ask that you don't lock the trucks and that you keep the windows rolled down — prevents damage to the truck when stealing stuff. (We had food removed a couple of times). Didn't feel comfortable keeping a change of clothes or other conveniences in the truck — so we lost some time each day returning to the hotel to get the conveniences. Some nice restaurants, enjoyed eating out. The restaurant/bar at Eden Beach had great food. Skip the National Park on the North end of the island unless you want to spend 1/2 day 4 wheeling (some awesome sights at the Park, but it's a grueling drive). If you're up for a deco dive, the Wind Jammer wreck near Bopac is pretty good. Hans at the dive shop towards the north side (can't remember the name of the shop, but its next to the only bar we found with Guinness on tap) has a good dive plan for the wreck. Top of wreck is about 175 ft. Classic 3 mast ship in pretty good shape. Recommend doing the dive on a calm day, it does require some swimming to get to the wreck. Wannadive staff friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful. Wannadive dive shops at Eden Beach and downtown had separate tank for cameras. (www.wannadivebonaire.com)