

and dinner usually \$5 to \$15. Nice place for a change but not a Bonaire. For the most part clean restaurants and hotels like El Candil two blocks off beach very reasonable with good service including pick up at airport. Treasure Divers is an average operation, friendly staff. Boat is slow but reliable. Not to many divers during April. Safe operation overall. Last day had 6 to 8 ft seas and the anchor line broke while underwater, lucky the captain could retrieve the line that broke on the surface. A surprise at the end, they wanted cash, no credit cards. Spent part of the afternoon in a DR bank getting cash. ([www.treasuredivers.de/eng](http://www.treasuredivers.de/eng))

## GRENADA

Hurricane Ivan wreaked havoc on Grenada in September 2004, damaging as much as 90 percent of the homes and shutting down the entire tourist industry. Divers planning to visit will need to do their homework.

**Devotion 2 Ocean, Rex Grenadian, March 2004, Willaim Thomsen ([thomswill@aol.com](mailto:thomswill@aol.com)) Indianapolis, IN.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 81 F, choppy, surge. Tried to contact this dive operation twice through the resort but never received a response. When I asked them (face to face) about the lack of response, they said that email went to the front desk and that they never forward it to them. When it was windy and wavy, they couldn't launch their boat from the beach so they only went out twice in a week. There was no

information given on the safety features of the boat. I didn't see any oxygen aboard for emergencies. Entry was a backward roll and exit was difficult when having an integrated BC because exit was up a ladder set over the side. I changed dive operations and hooked up with Aquanauts Grenada (Note, they were the only dive operation that responded to my email). They seemed to be the only other viable operation on the island. They were very accommodating. They had three boats with good entry and exit platforms. Rinse tanks for cameras, first aid w/oxygen. Different boats were scheduled for different dive sites. They also handled pick up and return to your resort for a small fee. Briefings were very comprehensive. Diving in Grenada was really less than I expected or hoped for. Other than the great amount of wrecks available to dive on, the diving was very uneventful. There was little wildlife, what there was juvenile (probably from overfishing), visibility was less than I expected and the coral was not very colorful (maybe due to light being cut-down because of water clarity). Not much for photography. No rinse tank on the boat, boat small and crowded, no camera rinse tank at boat facility. ([www.devotion2ocean.com](http://www.devotion2ocean.com))

**Dive Grenada, Grand View Hotel, February 2004, Walter Brenner, Wayne, PA.** Experience: 960 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 feet. Water: 78 to 79 F. Purpose of visit was to dive on the Bianca "C", an Italian cruise ship which burned and sank in October 1961. No penetration allowed because of deterioration and nothing much of

interest above deck. Two days of diving were plenty. ([www.divegrenada.com](http://www.divegrenada.com))

## HONDURAS

All dive resorts are on the Bay Islands: Roatan, Guanaja, Utila, Cayos Cochinos, and other small cays. ... Honduras is home to aggressive no-see-ums; they bite, bite, bite, and many people have serious allergic reactions. Those who are unprepared — meaning DEET — often find their vacations ruined. ... The diving features great walls, offshore seamounts, and excellent coral and gorgonians, although there are few large fish or lobsters due to overfishing. ... Whale sharks are seen near Utila, while diving on Guanaja falls short. ... There's limited access to beach diving except at CoCoView and Fantasy Island on Roatan, and Plantation Beach on Cayos Cochinos. ... The rainy season is October through February, and northers can disrupt the diving. ... Spanish is spoken on the mainland, English in the Bay Islands. ... Classic Central American jungles and Mayan ruins inland make great side trips. ... Malaria protection is advised.

## Cayos Cochinos

**Plantation Beach Resort, April 2004, Jeff and Laura Krause ([krause@bright.net](mailto:krause@bright.net)) Wellington, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit,

choppy. The resort is only accessible by boat, generally from La Ceiba. We were the only clients at the resort, missing eight people the week before and a full house the week after. That didn't stop the staff from catering to us. The food was very good and plentiful. Breakfast consisted of eggs, bacon, sausage, french toast, pancakes, cereal. Lunch and dinner varied from typical "American" food to local Honduran dishes. Soft drinks, beer and a limited selection of liquor was available from an Honor Bar Occasionally, we were joined for dinner by people who sailed in and moored in the bay. Our room was up the hill, a short walk from the dining room. The floor was tiled, and a ceiling fan over the bed helped to keep us cool. The shower was screened in on two sides, providing a beautiful view of the bay below. Two dives in the morning, one in the afternoon - unlimited shore diving, plus a night dive in the package. We were ferried to the dive sites by small runabout, rather than taking the large dive boat. Tank fills generally 3100 psi. Roger (manager, instructor, divemaster, mechanic, etc.) provided detailed briefings, explaining the characteristics of the site plus aquatic life. Danny (boat captain) was able to find sea mounts without a problem. He was helpful with equipment and photo gear when getting in and out of the boat. Aquatic life was plentiful, but we didn't see anything out of the ordinary worth writing about. Our mission was macro photography. We toiled around the bay on sea kayaks provided by the resort. We also hiked one evening to the lighthouse on the top of the island, and another to a

neighboring village. Very relaxing week. (011-504-42-0974)

## Guanaja

**End of the World Resort, January 2004, John Walker (jwalker@napanet.net), Sonoma, CA.**

Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 Fahrenheit, calm, choppy. R“remote island. Well maintained, clean, and theft free rooms, great food, and excellent accommodating service above and below the water. Two airlines run flights from San Pedro Sula through La Ceiba. We made several trips past the ill-fated Bayman Bay Club; the owner’s final insult to the island was that he didn’t even bother to return to get his dog that now enjoys a comfortable life at End of the World. End of the World is a small intimate resort with 3 cabanas divided into 6 rooms. The resort is fully booked at 6 singles or 12 couples. There were only 3 of us I was the only diver. The cabanas are located at the top of 93 steps and afford wonderful views, and pleasant breezes. The rooms were screened with shutters, individual bathrooms, showers, and mosquito nets. They are installing hot water but we “enjoyed” spring water temperature showers. Sitting on the deck watching the sunset enjoying a good bottle of wine was wonderful. (Bring your own wine). The last person to leave the bar turns off the generator so reading is by candle light and kerosene lamp. Meals were included. The cook was accommodating to requests and talented. Breakfasts included fresh Honduran coffee, pancakes, toast, eggs, chorizo,

beans, and granola. Lunches and dinner included lobster, fish, pasta, steak, chicken, home made tortilla donuts, cakes. I would kayak in the morning and dive in the afternoon. My friends took a separate boat to snorkel. The owner, Brian, was the divemaster. He offers full rentals except computers. I rented a dive light for a night dive. Brian was flexible on when and where we dove. I enjoyed not having the stress of rushing to the dock for the 8 am cattle boat. Emergency medical treatment is not available. Brian insists on safety stops and dive limits. Radio contact is made with shore before and after every dive. Guanaja is protected by an outer reef, which surrounds the island. The inner reef is in excellent shape with mini walls, swim throughs, and lots of variety. Dive boats come from Roatan for the day but we saw no other divers in the water. There is a conspicuous lack of edible adult fish — the inhabitants of this island depend on them for food. There was a great variety of small fish, rays, nurse and black tip sharks. The sandy beach is infested with sand flies. On the dock or in the cabanas is fine. Recommend lemon-eucalyptus oil when ever entering the bar or sand zone and a daily antihistamine. The locals are happy and friendly. English and Spanish was spoken everywhere. A dirt road crosses the island which is a 3 hour walk. There are local bars (in some case shacks) that serve cold beer. There is a small store at Savanna Bight that sells some food and dry goods. By boat (everything starts off by boat) you can visit “The Key” where the majority of the population resides. This 1 ? square mile island is crammed with

small houses. There are only sidewalks lined with houses and small stores that support the island’s population. There is a picturesque island restaurant known as “Grahams” where you can get good food and cold drinks. Graham has several ocean pens where he keeps turtles and other edibles that he saves from the local dinner plates. No air conditioning, telephones, TV, internet access, a variety of restaurants, bars, night life, or beach. You will meet local expatriates who pass through the bar. All are friendly characters who believe they are living in the best place on earth. ([www.guanaja.com](http://www.guanaja.com))

## Roatan

**Anthony’s Key Resort, November 2003, Carmen Thomas Morse, Boise, ID.** Dives logged: 75. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 78-81 F. Dive restrictions enforced: Depth and time limits. The good was we had very nice neighbors that loaned us clothes and suits until our luggage arrived. The dive operation was satisfactory, but the overall attitude of the resort staff toward divers with lost or delayed luggage was unacceptable. When we arrived, we were one of three parties whose luggage had not made the trip. Most people received their luggage within one to two days. Ours took four days, because our bags were sent to Santiago, Chile, instead of Roatan, Honduras. The night we arrived, resort staff were very accommodating about opening the souvenir and snack shop after hours for those of us that needed clothes and toiletries. However, all guests were required to pay for those

items. In the days that followed, we had difficulty getting information from resort staff about the status of our luggage; staff seemed not to care whether it arrived. When we would inquire about the status of our luggage, they would tell us what they knew (which typically was nothing), but would not take initiative to call the airport or airline to see when luggage was anticipated to arrive. The resort was kind enough to lend us gear to enable us to make some of the dives (when we weren’t on the phone with the airline, airport, or travel agent). They did not seem to understand that diving with replacement or “rental” gear is not the same as diving with your own gear (we were cold every dive in the borrowed gear). Even more surprising was the attitude of the resort TACA. They said TACA frequently lost luggage: “It happens all the time”, but do not seem to have done anything to remedy the situation! The resort and dive staff really need to take TACA to ask or risk a drop in business. We certainly won’t be returning any time soon. Our travel agent has been attempting to obtain some compensation from TACA for the four nights we were without luggage and so far has been completely unsuccessful. TACA told our travel agent that we had to fill out certain forms to be eligible for compensation. Yet when we requested these forms from the TACA staff at the Roatan airport, they refused to give us the forms. Thinking we might have better luck in Houston, we again requested the forms (on our return trip). Again TACA staff refused to provide us with the forms. In Houston,

the reason they gave us for not providing the forms was that we were required to fill them out in Roatan. When we told the staff that we had tried to do this, and that their staff would not give us the forms, the lady shrugged her shoulders and said there was nothing she could do to help us. ([www.anthonyskey.com](http://www.anthonyskey.com))

**Anthony's Key Resort, April 2004, Scott Ehrlich, San Diego, CA.**

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 25 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm, choppy, surge. This is a fabulous resort but the diving is mediocre. I've visited Belize 4 times and the Bay Islands twice before. The food was outstanding and the service was truly wonderful. It's a great place for kids and non-divers. There's horseback riding and a dolphin enclosure, kayaks, water-trampoline and great snorkeling lagoons. The place runs like a clock. On the other hand, the diving was not the greatest. The divemaster was "over-it" and limited all dives to 40 minutes, despite the fact that everyone on our boat was an experienced diver. This seemed to be the rule on other boats as well. The boats return to the dock after every dive, so they tend to stick close to the resort and have to be pressured to go to less-visited sites. The dive operation is regimented and perfunctory. The corals are in good shape but it's really barren when it comes to fish and critter life. We saw one small Southern stingray over a 7 day period. No eagle rays, no nurse sharks, no nudibranches, no schools of jacks, no drums. I'm used to finding tons of small, interesting critters in the cracks but didn't find much

of anything on our dives. We did see two hawksbill turtles but that's about it for larger sea life.

**Anthony's Key Resort, May 2004, Judy Farago ([coloradojudy@msn.com](mailto:coloradojudy@msn.com)) Monte Vista, CO.**

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm, no currents. We had a wonderful vacation at Anthony's Key Resort. They met us at the airport, took our passports, took care of customs and immigration and handled our luggage. We dove 3 dives a day plus one night dive. The weather was hot and humid but since we spent most of our time in the water, we didn't care. We had an air-conditioned cabin and the beds were comfortable. The food was delicious and plentiful and the service was great. Put on bug spray and sunscreen before you leave your room and again after every dive. (On the dock is where we got lots of no-see-em bites.) The water is safe to drink. Milk, juice, coffee, and ice tea (real good) are included, soda pop and drinks are extra. Bring towels and a windbreaker with hood for the boat rides.

**Bay Island Beach Resort, June 2004, Mark Rosseisen ([markross@austin.rr.com](mailto:markross@austin.rr.com)), Cedar Park, TX.**

Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, choppy. Dive shop staff was helpful and was receptive of special requests for dive sites. They changed our tanks between dives and hauled our gear to and from the dock. There were lots of Nitrox divers and after having analyzed our tanks and labeled them with our name the staff just put the tanks on the

boat anywhere they fit. We then had to move the tanks around on the boat so that both our tanks were together. The DMs were good at showing us the dive sites, but they tended to rush through the sites. Since most of us were taking pictures, it was annoying. Nitrox fills were between 31% and 34% with a wide variation from tank to tank. They were open to special requests for mixes (we requested 36% for our afternoon dives). There were no camera tables on any boats, inadequate rinse tanks (they were too small). The dive shop did not have a camera rinse tank available after a shore dive, and a camera table would have been real nice at the shop since my room did not have a table big enough to do camera maintenance. Lots of nice swim throughs, 2 wrecks, and lots of big groupers. The coral seemed in good shape, but saw large areas of dead coral and coral rubble (maybe from Mitch). Most dives were drift dives as there was a mild current. The night dive was incredible. Saw 2 octopi, squid, several lobsters, some really big basket stars, shrimp everywhere. The shore diving quality was grossly misrepresented on all the literature. The wall was quite a ways from shore and the visibility was terrible (in terms of blue water diving). Spooky channel was only spooky because the vis was so bad (about 30 feet). We did see many interesting critters in Spooky including a coral head full of morays (10-15 of them) and bristle worms. Some good macro subjects, but not much coral. They had 1 boat that was new, 1 a bit older, 1 even older. They all need fresh water showers. I got wet paint on my wetsuit from one of the

benches. No one warned me nor did they seem to really care. I was happy with the service and the food, until the last 2 nights – not good. The breakfasts were great and lunches were good. The soups for lunch and dinner were great. There were always alternative choices. The beds were comfortable, the A/C cold and the showers hot. I would suggest adding to the room would be either a table or desk for working on equipment. We drank tap water the whole week with no problems. Took over 3 days to get film developed. ([www.bibr.com](http://www.bibr.com))

**Coconut Tree Divers, August 2004, Stephanie Voris, Ft. Lauderdale, FL.**

Coconut Tree Divers is a great operation. They are the first dive shop you come to in the town of West End and you need to look no further. They are laid back, friendly, safety conscious, very knowledgeable about diving and the island, and a great deal. It costs \$15/dive including equipment. The boat is spacious and holds 16+ divers but they go out with as few as 3. Most of the reefs are located within a 5 minute boat ride and each dive is better than the last. A friendly, top notch operation. ([www.divingonroatan.com](http://www.divingonroatan.com))

**Coco View, November 2003, Stan Margolis ([stanmargolis@webtv.com](mailto:stanmargolis@webtv.com)) Charleston, WV.**

Dives logged: 3000+. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 82-86 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. Dive operation class A — storage close. Excellent boats. Nitrox — great divemasters. Knew where all the little guys live. Sea horse, Peterson shrimp, scorpion fish, eels. Great two walls on

way home (drop-off). Excellent shore dives unlimited. Accommodation modest but comfortable. Food buffet style good. Staff excellent. Bill and Eve great hosts. ([www.cocoviewresort.com](http://www.cocoviewresort.com))

**Coco View, April 2004, Bill Edwards (bill@edwardsaz.com) Phoenix, AZ.**

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 25 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. This is our second trip to Coco View. Last year there was a lot of chat about the turista that had come to effect the divers and guests at CCV. This year, the kitchen was totally redone, and the chef had been replaced. There were absolutely no turista problems. The wife had one day of upset, but that was a result of the rough day at sea. The staff continues to be excellent, the dive conditions were great. The weather was good, rained one afternoon. The dive pier was well equipped, although very basic. The staff was very good about helping at every turn, from carrying your tanks to loading your BC on the boat every morning and afternoon. The rooms were well kept and clean, with new AC units and king sized beds now available. The food was basic and a little plain, but very good and always there was enough for everyone. Bill and Evelyn have sold the resort to a couple from the states, and they have indicated they will work to add a few rooms and amenities. We continue to plan to come to CCV unless they try to turn this into a family resort where diving is secondary. I think enough of the divers expressed this so that new owners would be idiots if they made that transition. Overall CCV was an enjoy-

able trip, and we plan to return next year. The only hassle was returning home through Houston, as the airlines still have not figured out how to easily recheck bags for the second part of the ride home. We would have barley made our flight after spending two hours rechecking bags to Continental, but weather delayed us another 3 1/2 hours, so the trip was easier. Note, bring half as many clothes as you think you need.

**Coco View, August 2004, Ron Hyatt (rhscubadiver@aol.com), Arlington, TX.**

Experience: 501-1000 dives Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm. New owners have made some changes. Rooms are basic, not fancy, but beds are comfortable, clean and good a/c. Maid service good. Good food and plenty of it, lunch/dinner buffet style, breakfast made to order. Kitchen staff very good. Diving very easy, boat rides were 10-30 minutes; dive boats sturdy, easy to enter/exit, covered; table and rinse tank for cameras. Boat captains helpful and good attitudes; my divemaster, Jessie, was outstanding. He is knowledgeable, in and out of the water. Found all the small critters, good briefings. Kept the dive organized and fun. Found lots of photo ops. First boat dive usually 1 hour, the drop off dive at either Newman's or CoCo View wall on your own to plan. Shore diving easy, 24/7. Dive shop well equipped and can handle most all repairs. The photo shop is also well equipped with supplies/advice. Saw seahorses, squid, crabs, lobsters, flamingo tongues, toad fish, rays, a shark, turtles. Coral seems to be coming back; some

of the sites like Forty Foot Point, Missing Link, Calvin's Crack were terrific because of the coral, sponges and critters. On our last day, a call came in that Orcas had been spotted. One of the boat captains got a boat and out we went. We spent 45 minutes watching 6 swimming together; at one point, they changed direction and swam directly under our boat. Very exciting as they are not seen in this area but a couple of times a year. CoCo View handles its paperwork very well, easy to check in/check out; Nora also handle getting your boarding passes for your return flights. The whole staff headed up by Billie and Erin do a great job. Dive boats have camera area and rinse tank; boats are covered and are easy to enter/exit. Crew very considerate of photo equipment. Dock has big rinse tanks. Photo shop does nice job with supplies/services.

**Fantasy Island Resort, April 2004, Guy Johnson (siberia@netexpress.net).**

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 88 F, calm, no currents. The terrible "no-see-ums" were there but Avon skin-so-soft kept them away. The resort was nice and the staff were some of the very best I've seen. Went out of their way to please and be friendly. The diving was average. We did see alot of groupers in the 4+ ft range and tons on schooling fish. We had several free-swimming morays that interacted with us freely. One day when a pod of 9-10 dolphins entered the swimming lagoon and stayed two days!! We could not get any closer than 15 feet to them but still they were exciting to see. The resort wanted to

keep them penned in but the game officials "persuaded" them otherwise. We did a shark dive with nearby Walhukua Dive Center and it was one of the best I've done. 15-20 gray reef sharks in the 4-9 ft range, not a nurse shark to be seen!! They stayed close (within 2 ft or less) and allowed us to swim with them. The shark dive had only 4 divers but might have been a bit crowded with a larger group. All the dive sites are within a 20 minute boat ride at best. So all dives are considered to be single tank dives and the boat returns to the dock each time. We tried to get them to take us to the north side of the island to dive the wreck of the Odyssey. It didn't happen, we were told all sorts of stories of how it was gone, upside-down, broken into bits. Anything to keep from making the long boat ride to it. We even tried to offer a cash incentive but to no avail — since the resort borders next to Coco View they share a common dive site of the wreck prince Albert and a nearby DC-3 cargo plane. Both basic but nice dives. The dive-masters were some of the most friendly and helpful I've ever dove with. Derry and Moses, great guys!! We saw lots of seahorses, crabs, lobsters, eels, groupers, and barracuda. Had a cute little octopus on a night dive. The room was decent, a/c was a little nosey but not bad. The TV had a remote but you had to ask for it at the check-in desk. The rooms were spotlessly cleaned each day. Each room had a fridge stocked with ice and water for drinking. Bathrooms had a large vanity and hair dryers too. Plenty of hot water for the shower but sometimes it came in spurts! The resort was as romantic a

setting as one could ask for. Volley ball, pool, ping-pong & kayaks were on site. The dive center had ample fresh waster showers and gear rinse and storage. Our air fills were always in the 3200-3400psi range — no short fills here!! The compressor area was neat, clean and well run. Other than diving the Odyssey, all requests were filled! The resorts food was served at times so that you could eat no matter what time frame you were on. The food was decent overall if a bit basic. Lots of fresh fruits each day, a choice of beef, pork , pasta, and sea food whether fish, shrimp, lobster or crab. Various choices of breads were always available. Each lunch and dinner they had self served homemade style ice cream. All to die for! All meals are served buffet style with plenty of staff refilling your beverage and removing dirty plates. I've read in previous Undercurrent reports of the food not being served hot thought it was just fine, but since it was a buffet and the dining hours were rather liberal, the food would be less than hot. Two meals each day were served indoors and one outdoors (usually the lunch) sodas, and alcohol were an extra fee (cokes were \$2 per can!). They have a small gift shop for T-shirts, etc. but not much else. Internet service is available for \$5 per half hour. The dive boats were large, open sterned, and could hold up to 24 divers. We usually had 11 and never more than 13. Coolers with iced fruit and fresh bottled water on for each dive. The boats had O2 and ship to shore radios and big roofs to keep the sun off and cleaned between dives. The water in the rooms is not

drinkable. (ok for brushing, etc) We toured the island and its nice, but simple. The west end looked like the place to be for nightlife and dining out. Alot more reasonable rate. Anything beyond the escort/diving package at Fantasy Island will get real expensive, real fast! If not for the sharks, morays and dolphins the diving would have been just average. Beginning divers will love this place! A decompression chamber is on site for those unlucky enough to need one! Fresh water barrels provided for rinse but no camera type table on board. Not a problem really. ([www.fantasyislandresort.com](http://www.fantasyislandresort.com))

**Inn of Last Resort, May 2004, Leslie & Michael Bardelli, (lbardelli@snet.net), New Milford, CT.**

Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm, no currents. 5th time at The Inn of Last Resort, a 30-room resort that caters to divers. The main lodge houses the dining room, bar, gift shop and recreation area. The other buildings are guest quarters. The rooms are large, clean with a rustic feel. Each room has AC as well as 2 ceiling fans. Rooms can accommodate 4 with a queen size bed and 2 twins. The bathroom has a stall shower; overall it is small, but functional. If there is anything you need, just ask any of the resort staff. There are plenty of animals to keep you company. Casual and laid back, T-shirts and shorts are the norm. The walkways are either cement or wooden. If you are an early riser, take a book and find a hammock at the lagoon or lodge and watch the resort come to life. The spectacular sunsets are a daily occurrence.

All meals are included. The food is fresh, tasty and never buffet. Breakfast is ordered off a menu that includes typical American fare. Lunch and dinner are a fixed menu with a variety of entrees Some meals have a typical American flavor, but there is island cuisine as well. Homemade desserts with both lunch and dinner. Ice tea at no charge. Tap water is safe. Soda and bar drinks are extra. Two 42-foot dive boats are docked alongside the resort. The dive shop is just a few feet away and has plenty of storage. 3 single tank boat dives a day at 8:30, 10:30 and 2 PM. Once a week they do a night dive and eliminate the 2 PM dive. Occasionally they do a 2 tank AM dive. Once a week they do a lunch picnic at West Bay Beach and your surface interval is yours to walk the beach, snorkel or relax. The diving is mostly wall diving. For moored dives you can dive with the divemaster or go unguided. For a drift dive or one with no mooring the group stays together. The reefs are teaming with life. Fair amount of large groupers, snappers, turtles, spotted eagle rays, green moray as well as smaller morays, but the macro life is very abundant. Dives were generally 60 minutes. You are responsible for your own profile. Maximum depth is 130 feet and back on the boat with 500 PSI. The boats are spacious with plenty of storage under the bench seats. There also is a large engine cover that is used for dry storage. They also have a box with towels where you can store your shirts, glasses. You load your gear on in the AM and it stays until you're done diving. The boat has 2 sets of rinse tanks for masks and fins and the other for

camera gear. Boats have large platform for giant stride entries and well as 2 ladders. Plenty of shade. The lagoon is a short walk from the main resort and a nice shore dive. The pier has shade cover and hammocks, lounge chairs in the sun and steps down to the water. You can swim, snorkel as well as dive here. The lagoon itself is about 10 feet deep and is full of life — saw an octopus, squid, flying gurnard, and juvenile fish. There is a white buoy marking a shallow cut in the coral. Once through the cut, follow the natural ruts in the sand and you will come to Fish Den, full of life. A well-packed carry-on is your best friend to survive 24 hours: clothes, OTC & prescription meds, dive computer, regulator. Wear bug repellent — no-see-ums can be a problem. Cactus Juice works well for me and it's sold at ILR. ([www.innoflastresort.com](http://www.innoflastresort.com))

**Inn of Last Resort, June 2004, Tom (reynolds@ilan.com), So. Pasadena, CA.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm, choppy, no Currents. Everything, including the boats are hand made of wood. The boats and the accommodations are inelegant but functional. The big wooden boats go slow in comparison to Anthony's Key's boats, but it was seldom more than 15 minutes to a site; the boats were big and uncrowded compared to the newer faster boats. 7 AM Breakfast, 8AM Dive, 10AM quick nap, 10:30AM dive, noon: eat 1:00PM nap 2:30PM dive 3:30 dive 5Pm bar and rap 7PM dinner 8PM crash. The rooms are excellent, large and air-conditioned and the beds were comfort-

able. The food is home cooking. It isn't elegant but it's good. They cater to large, nondiving groups, typically there 2 nights maximum in a week. The resort is uncrowded and the boats are never crowded. Closer to the West End than the better known resorts. The ride is shorter, but you dive the same sites from West End to Spooky Channel. There are a couple of nice wrecks, some nice walls and lots of interesting flats for that third dive. Nitrox is available. The reefs do not have the towering formations found in Palancar on Cozumel but are more varied with deep channels and swim throughs than Bonaire. More small stuff on Bonaire but more big stuff on Roatan. Shore diving in the lagoon or Fish Den is nice. Squeezing a 4th dive in at Fish Den is trivial. Swim out or have the boat drop you off....but you'll miss your nap. A large dedicated rinse tank on the boat. Several rinse tanks on the docks and a room large enough to layout and process batteries, download pictures.

**Luna Beach Resort, August 2004, Richard (rck1960@cs.com) New York, NY.** Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 80 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm, no currents. Magnificent accommodations at reasonable prices. Rented a two-story, three-bedroom, two-bath, two-balcony house on the hillside overlooking the water. Beautiful mahogany floors, air conditioning and a full kitchen. No TV, no telephone, no music system. So bring plenty of books or enjoy the quietude. The dive operation was top notch, with excellent rental equipment,

Nitrox (blended perfectly) attentive and professional staff, great attitudes, a large comfortable boat and helpful crews. Small groups, great water conditions, and a commitment to make every dive memorable. Resort restaurant service was worse than bad, with orders getting mixed up, long waits for even the simplest dishes or beverages, the need to request things three or five times. And, the food is horrible. Skip the meal plan and buy groceries to be cooked at home or eat at any of the many nearby restaurants. Although the restaurant staff were inefficient, they were personable. There is a beautiful beach, but it can't be used because of the insect problem on the shore and because of weeds in the water. Coat yourself with DEET at all times—not just at the beach. Bring antimalarials too. ([www.lunabeachresort.com](http://www.lunabeachresort.com))

**Pirate Divers, Foster's West Bay, September 2004, Scott George, (scottgeo@earthlink.net), El Segundo, CA.** Experience: 0-25 dives Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 Fahrenheit, calm, no currents. Foster's West Bay is a small resort with cabanas and duplexes on the beach. They have a restaurant/bar. The food is basic but not bad. The service varies by what person is serving you, but the staff are polite and helpful. The accommodations are rustic, but clean and well kept. The beach is one of the most beautiful on Roatan. Sand flies and mosquitoes — be prepared. There are a handful of other small resorts with bars and restaurants within walking distance, but make a trip into West End, where there are a number of good restaurants. We partic-

ularly enjoyed Dian's Garden of Eat'n and Belvedere's Shipwreck. Pirate Divers is Fosters' new on-site dive shop and they did not yet have many divers booked — we only dived with one other pair of divers on one dive. Iain and Steve were learning Roatan dive sites, but since we were the only divers with them we got personalized service. The diving was excellent. We are both relatively new divers and the dives were pretty easy and the personal attention was helpful. The reef just off West Bay was in fantastic condition and the fish life is pretty abundant. We saw turtles on most dives, many barracuda, groupers, eagle rays, small tropical fish, and a huge free-swimming green moray eel. El Aguila is not a really impressive wreck but it is about 100 ft depth so it is an easy wreck dive. ([www.piratedivers.com](http://www.piratedivers.com))

**Reef House, January 2004, Samuel B. Johnson (sjohnson@eureka.edu) Eureka, IL.** Dives logged: 245. Water: 78 F. Visibility: moderate and variable. Never excellent and on one or two dives poor. Maybe averaged 50 feet? Restrictions enforced? On me and other experienced divers, none. Divemaster kept closer eye on inexperienced divers, e.g., encouraging them to come up from too great a depth along wall. My sixth trip to Roatan, spread over 10 years, and my second visit to Reef House. Undercurrent subscribers can see my Reef House report in the 2002 Chapbook; little has changed. I do think one sees less and less large fish, perhaps as a result of ever more desperate fishing? I saw one (!) Nassau grouper over two weeks. The coral is slowly

making its comeback from Mitch, but to my eyes it is still heavily overgrown with algae in many places. Some fellow guests were world traveled, experienced divers (who didn't let you forget it), and they were very underwhelmed, but for the less demanding Roatan is interesting and enjoyable diving. Highlights for me were three seahorses, two spotted eagle rays, and several schools of squid. I also became a tunicate spotter, including a very camouflaged giant tunicate. All the Caribbean fish that Humann characterizes as common are there, and there are plenty of opportunities to spot the occasional, less common fish, e.g., arrow blenny, spotted scorpionfish, porcupinefish, balloonfish, slender filefish, greater soapfish, etc. Winter in Roatan is not summer. We had heavy rain with very strong winds on a couple of days, and very few cloudless warm sunny days. The seas were always slightly to very choppy, and visibility was moderate to compromised. At the Reef House one gets individual attention and service. By contrast, one of the neighboring big resorts borrowed a Reef House boat and captain one day because they needed to get some 175 divers into the water(!). Reef House is characterized by the fact that, when our flight was four hours late getting in, Lucian, the owner, was at the airport to meet us — with pizza, fried chicken and beer! Then he was back at the airport and on the phone repeatedly until he tracked down our lost luggage and equipment. Rental equipment was free until our own equipment arrived. In the water there are no restrictions on experienced divers. David, the divemaster, is excellent. He's friendly and very sharp-eyed,

more than willing to help you spot things or to leave you alone. He's equally excellent with new divers, safety conscious and solicitous when needed, as when he caught a new diver who had lost her regulator, didn't succeed in recovering it and was about to bolt for the surface. He saw what was happening, got to her, gave her his back-up, calmed her down and prevented what could have been very dangerous. The shore dive is a mixed bag. This trip the water was choppy enough that a shore entry would have been unpleasant if not dangerous most days. I did make two shore dives, and the reef in front of the resort is in reasonable shape, once one gets out to depth. I was pleased to find a huge basket star, once I got out to the wall. A wooden extension of the pier for just 20 to 30 additional feet would get one beyond the awkward entry area and create an excellent short dive opportunity. Reef House still extensively use anchors rather than fixed moorings. Every time the anchor went over the side I cringed. David regularly moved the anchor, once he was in the water, to try to minimize the damage, but there's no getting around the fact that anchors, day after day, damage reefs. Reef House is small and low-key. The accommodations are very simple. The meals are fine, but it's basically the same menu for everyone at each meal. It's located on a key, so one has to be taken by boat across the channel if one wants to visit anything else on Roatan. The place can feel a little rough around the edges. But the attention to the individual, experienced or not, the flexibility, the friendliness, and the relaxed atmosphere can't be beat. Future travelers should be

aware that Lucian is looking to sell Reef House. ([www.reefhouseresort.com](http://www.reefhouseresort.com))

**Sueno del Mar, Hotel Pura Vida, Sea Breeze Inn, November 2003/March 2004, Mike Frayn ([mfrayn@bigfoot.com](mailto:mfrayn@bigfoot.com)) Lutz, FL.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F in November, 78 in March. Roatan's West End is a big Utila Town with quality diving with topside nightlife. Sueno del Mar Diving Center was well run with an enthusiastic staff. The dive center sits on stilts with a small dive shop, dive gear storage area and dock. There is a bar and restaurant upstairs. They go out at 8:30, 10:45 and 2:00 for single tank dives. It never takes more than 15 minutes to get to a dive site. Sueno dives off pangas despite the picture of the large covered boat on their web site. There is a dockmaster to help with gear problems and a decent shop on site. All the staff speaks English. It's a mixed bag of nationalities working there; Filipino, Brit, Kiwi, Swiss, Welsh, Austrian and Hondurans. In November my divemaster was a cute little Kiwi named Kirsty. She kept her group in sight but never crowded them. She had an amazing eye for finding the small stuff on the reef. The reefs have seen some bleaching and the fish are not as plentiful as they were 5 years ago. The boats return to shore after each dive for the surface interval. I wasn't happy with was the length of the dives. No dives ever exceeded 50 minutes. Rainy season lasts from October to February. Pura Vida Hotel was clean and well maintained. There was nothing special about the rooms. The sheets

and towels were clean and there was adequate hot water. The kitchen didn't open until 7:00 so you need to go in search of coffee if you are an early riser. It is across the street from Sueno del Mar so you couldn't beat the location. Sundowner happy hour begins at 5:00 with 15 Lempira beers. There are a number of good places to eat; Argentina, Belvedere's, Pinocchio, Buccaneer and Cannibal Café. Shoes are not required at any establishment in West End. Don't miss Sunday Quiz night, the most popular weekly event. The Sea Breeze Inn is your basic West End hotel. The rooms are basic and clean. You get a bed, a small TV with a couple channels, fan, small fridge and a hot plate. It's convenient and cheap. ([www.suenodelmar.com](http://www.suenodelmar.com))

## Utila

**Altons, June 2004, Bill Mashek ([rubicon@sonic.net](mailto:rubicon@sonic.net)) Forestville, CA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F. Honduras is a wonderfully diverse country and an excellent travel location for "multi-sport" adventures. English is dominant on the Bay Islands. It is a cheap, easy place to travel. Some of the best (and cheapest) diving in the Caribbean. I combined diving with Spanish school, whitewater boating and some mainland travel. Utila is 9.5 miles long and 3 miles wide. Land transportation is limited to a few pickup trucks, a couple of unreliable taxis and a ton of old mountain bikes. From mid February through March one can almost be guaranteed a whale shark experience. Subsequently, the streets are lined with dive shops.

Because certifications are so cheap, many shops have reputations as "divemaster factories." For as little as \$500. (including lodging) one can spend a month on the island completing a divemaster course. My 12 dives cost me \$160. Which included all gear and wet suit. I dived with Altons, a PADI facility. The divemasters were young, mostly inexperienced but competent and friendly. My friend did her certification course through Altons, they were able to work around her school schedule and she felt her instruction was proficient. The best diving in Utila is in the morning. This is when most dive boats go to the "north" side. Also morning offers the best conditions. There are no bad dive sites on Utila. During my 12 dives, I encountered the largest lobster I have seen in the ocean (20 pounds), a whale shark, several barracuda, jaw fish, octopus, spotted drums, sea turtles, moray, scorpion fish, crabs, hog fish lizard fish, large sting ray, eagle rays, corals, sea fans, turtles, sponges and much more. The dive sites included a spectacular seamount at Black Hills, Rons Wreck,; unimpressive as a wreck dive but lots of sea life — saw the green moray here. Airport reef, (a good night dive) Blue Bayou, where I saw 2 turtles, barracuda and the "giant" lobsters. Black coral wall (2 deep dives here-good), Jack Neil, Big Rock, and Cabanas. did a couple of deep dives (36 meters) the best diving is between 12-20 meters. Lodging and food in Utila are as cheap as Thailand. We stayed at the Colibri Hotel, a new hotel with the first pool in Utila. We had a large room with 2 queen size beds and hot water for \$25/night. Most meals

are under \$3. A fancy diner will cost twice that. activities include, excursions to Water Caye, (a small white sand island with palm trees and no sand flies), hiking to Pumpkin Hill and visiting the Iguana Farm. Most aggressive no seeums anywhere. Bring lots of repellent. Traveler checks can be exchanged at Henderson's Market. No ATM's. The only credit card accepted was Visa. If you travel with Taca Airlines be prepared to have your luggage delayed. It is nice to have Rafael (the School Master) as an advocate to hasten the process of getting our luggage to La Ceiba. The cultural experience of not only, getting to know, but become friends with the Honduran people I met was exceptional. We made many international friends with other students. Central American Spanish School: [www.ca-spanish.com](http://www.ca-spanish.com); Jungle Tours: [www.hondurasjungletours.net](http://www.hondurasjungletours.net), ([www.divealtons.com](http://www.divealtons.com))

**Deep Blue Dive Resort, July 2004, Darren Dawson (darren.dawson@ces.clemson.edu), Clemson, SC.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 Fahrenheit, choppy. We had a great time. Deep Blue Resort is a great place to dive your brains out. ([www.deepblueutila.com](http://www.deepblueutila.com))

**Laguna Beach Resort, April 2004, Janet and Michael Mallin (Egg Harbor Township, NJ.** Dives: 100-300, Visibility: Good but not great; North side is better than the South side. Temperature: 81E. Although it is located on a tiny peninsula separated from the rest of Utila on the east side by a 100-foot wide channel, it offers the

complete seclusion of a tropical island. You are met at the airport and transported to the dock where you are picked up by boat for a five-minute ride to the resort. LBR is a tropical paradise, complete with palm trees and coconuts, a clean, white sandy beach and green blue water lapping at the shore. The rustic cabins are built over the water and are clean and roomy. Our bed was very comfortable. Free bottled water and ice are provided. The jalousie windows allow for a nice breeze when windy and the beautiful views all the time. It's so secluded and safe, we didn't even lock our door. The notorious see-ums are easily managed with bug spray containing 100% DEET. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served buffet style. You are provided with a large variety of dishes to choose from, with special attention to vegetarians. If you desire a snack any time, all you have to do is ask. The food was delicious. The managers, Luciano and Romina, are charming and will accommodate special requests. (They will arrange for transportation if you feel like going into town.) The Newton dive boat was spacious and comfortable, easy in and easy out. Our equipment was set up for us before our dives and washed and put away in the gear room afterward. We liked Airport Caves and Pretty Bush for their astounding coral formations. Big fish were scarce, but seahorses weren't hard to find. Whale sharks were spectacular. We dived for seven days and we had 16 whale shark encounters. We had clear, beautiful weather, calm seas and the considerable expertise of both Captain Wagner and our divemaster, Raul. Not only was

Captain Wagner extraordinarily good at finding whale sharks; he also performed amazing feats of navigation. One day we chose to go to a sea mount known as Black Hill, a couple of miles offshore. It wasn't marked with and there was no GPS gear to rely on. Captain Wagner put our boat directly on top of the sea mount which was only 200 ft. in diameter and about 50 ft. down. This dive was truly memorable. There was blue water all around. The coral receded from the flat top down the slope of the mount on all sides. A fair sized sea turtle greeted us on the way down. There were huge schools of fish. But the real surprise was seeing a manta ray materialize out of the deep blue surrounding us, swim right above us through the sunlit water and then disappear into the blue again. On the way home we found three more whale sharks which made a total of six for that day. Just bring DEET and C batteries if you plan on renting a dive light for the night dives. ([www.utila.com](http://www.utila.com))

**Laguna Beach Resort, April 2004, Susan Sampson and Buddy, Renton, WA.** Vis: 100'. Water: 79 F. We snorkeled with whale sharks every day of our week on the Island; snorkeled with dolphins once. The reef was healthy and the diving was easy; there was no current at all, even for our alleged "drift dive." Our boat, the "Show Time," was comfortable, well suited to diving, and uncrowded, with never more than 9 divers plus divemasters, and usually fewer than that, on board. Captain Wagner handled the boat expertly. We saw all the common tropical fish, a few turtles, morays, and

medium-sized grouper. Our divemaster located a frogfish for us by daylight and an unfurled basket star by night. The lodge and cabins are attractive, the campus was gorgeous, and managers were sincerely interested in excelling. Temperatures hit an unseasonable 95 hot and humid degrees; the no-see-ums chewed up my buddy, leaving him with at least 50 itching lesions, even though we used the same DEET at the same time from the same bottle, and they never bit me; Americans will be offended at having to drop toilet paper in a waste basket instead of flushing it away; water is not potable, but purified water is used in the kitchen and is placed in each room; sewage disposal is into cesspools that stink when the tide is out; and the music from partying on a nearby beach is incessant, literally 24 hours per day, during the holiday week before Easter. The resort food was mundane and over processed, like an old-fashioned Woolworth's lunch counter, highlighted from time to time by a regional dish like excellent ceviche, enchiladas, or beef with Argentine Chimichuri sauce. We were horrified that grouper was served at the weekly barbecue, given the disappearance of all the big ones from the region, and we did tell the managers about that. Best photo op: abundant blue tunicates as shallow as 20-30 feet. Bring a big can of bug spray for your room.

**Laguna Beach Resort, May 2004, Jean and Bob Kirkpatrick (bojean1@bellsouth.net) Russellville, KY.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, no currents. Sixth trip to Laguna Beach

Resort.. The resort is situated on a peninsula accessible only by boat, and it is a beautiful setting. The cottages, with individual docks, face the lagoon, and they are spacious and comfortable. Made of local hardwood, they have AC and ceiling fans, comfortable beds with good lighting, plenty of storage space, and baths with showers. The main building is also attractive and houses the dining room, an honor bar, and a game room upstairs with a TV. Meals were excellent, thanks to a new chef, and managers Luciano and Romina took care of every person and every request. The dive operation is excellent. There is storage next to the dock, and the staff sets up your gear on one of three wonderful dive boats. You carry only your wetsuit, mask, and fins, and step on board. Boats have camera tables and rinse tanks, and towels, fruit, snacks, and water are furnished. Even the ladder is outstanding — it is at an angle, so it's like climbing stairs. There are two morning dives and one afternoon dive. Nitrox is an extra charge. The enthusiastic divemasters, Kim and Sara, helped us find many reef fish, including some very unusual species, such as the Southern stargazer. The whole group had a great time finding and identifying fish. The reefs are not particularly colorful but most have interesting formations. For the morning surface interval, we always cruised around looking for whale sharks — didn't find any this time, but we've seen one here, and they often see them in the spring. The winds and choppy water made it hard for even Captain Wagner to find them, although he has been at the resort since it opened and is

a real expert. Dives are limited to one hour to get in the three dives. Shore diving or snorkeling is always available. Night dives are offered twice a week. Kayaking or hiking can be arranged, as can trips to town. This is a laid back resort where the focus is on diving, and it's almost as easy as diving from a live-aboard. The package prices are very good, and their US office does a fine job of arranging your trip.

**Laguna Beach Resort, September 2004, Ronald Gillespie (gillesprn2@msn.com), Huntington Beach, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 Fahrenheit, calm. Fifth time at Laguna Beach, snorkeled with whale sharks 4 trip out of 5. Captain Wagner will go out of his way to find a whale shark on our way to the first dive and during the surface interval. Diverse marine life. We've seen pairs of spotted eagle rays, turtles, seahorse, frogfish, lettuce leaf slug, lots of large angelfish, large green moray, and many others! Diving is done around the island, towards the north side of the island is better. We dove the pinnacles and the diving is excellent, schooling jacks and creole wrasse. Their house reef is very good. We've seen 14 or more lobsters hanging out, biggest lobster taking a leisurely walk, jawfish, lots of juvenile fish, turtles, and many more. Dive boat is roomy and fast, bungalows are over the water on the lagoon side of the peninsula. Plenty of food and the BBQ lobster night they had twice during our stay was great. There isn't much of a night life at the resort, but great service, great diving and with 3 dives a day

plus unlimited shore diving, great price. No-seeums may be a problem if there isn't much breeze, but as long as you have bug juice (Cactus Juice and Deet work best for us), it should not be a problem. They take very good care of our equipment, fresh water rinse bucket on the boat with roomy camera table.

**Utila Lodge, February 2004, Mike Foust (drfoust1@earthlink.net) Santa Ana, CA.** Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, surge. The facility, people and island were fine. The lodge was well managed and being improved. They run it just like a live-aboard system of diving and eating, etc. With the brief exception of the whale shark sighting, it was very disappointing to find that due to over-fishing there is minimal sea life. They are trying to address it so it may improve. ([www.utilalodge.com](http://www.utilalodge.com))

## MEXICO

Cruise ships daily disgorge packs of shoppers on the island of Cozumel, who descend on the shops, restaurants, and bars galore; sidewalk hustlers hawk condos and little plaster statues of guys wearing big hats leaning on saguaro cactuses ... Spectacular dives exist. While many operators cater to divers of mixed experience, savvy divers select from premier operations that travel to the best sites. Much of Cozumel's diving is deep or fast-current drift dives. Carry surface-signaling devices (strobe, safety sausage, etc.) and stay with your dive guide

or group. The best diving is in spring and summer. While it can be rainy during the fall (hurricane season) and winter, heavy rains closed the island for a week in June 2004. ... Accommodations range from small inexpensive downtown hotels to diver hang-outs to high dollar hotels. Many divers take side trips to the mainland to dive the fresh water cenotes. ... Along the coast, there are dive operations from Cancun south, but the diving is mainly patch reef diving. ... Whale sharks spend several summer weeks northwest of Cancun, near the island of Holbox, where one can just about be guaranteed to snorkel with scores of the behemoths. See *Undercurrent*, October 2004, for a review of this new discovery.

## Cozumel

**Advanced Divers, Villas Las Anclas, March 2004, Jack Gibson, Dallas, TX.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 95 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm, currents. Ricardo and Tony did it for us again. On our first dive, 77 minutes at Palancar caves, we saw one of everything: a nurse shark, hawksbill turtle, spotted eagle ray, southern stingray, green moray, and a spotted moray. Punta Sur is my favorite Cozumel site and, on another day, I enjoyed seeing a spotted eagle ray silhouette against the blue Caribbean sea as he swam by the opening of the second cavern just before we emerged. From there we cruised on down the reef to take the