

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

These small, intimate islands have a lot of "Old Caribbean" charm. Their strong suits are gracious hotels and old inns, verdant, green scenery, and lovely beaches. The diving is decent, but there are no thrills.

Dive St. Kitts, Marriott Royal St. Kitts, March 2004, John Konnak, Ann Arbor, MI. Experience: 242 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 79–81 F. Marriott is first class, but pricey. Less expensive accommodations are available for divers, i.e., Bird Rock Hotel where Dive St. Kitts operates. St. Kitts has limited dive sites; best is Sandy Point, 20 or 30-minute boat ride from Dive St. Kitts. Dive operation is very good; fast boat, friendly and helpful staff. No camera tank on boat. Tanks always over 3,000 psi. (www.divestkitts.com)

Kenneth's Dive Shop, Cruise, January 2004, Bruce Thompson (thompsv@Sherbtel.net) Cambridge, MN. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 20 to 25 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm, no currents. Two dives. First was a reef from 60-80'. Found a fish trap with about 3 dozen fish inside. Some coral, sponges and reef fish. Visibility was only about 20'. After a 45 minute wait, we went to a wreck site with a small ship broken in a couple pieces. Also a van and a bulldozer at that site. It had 50 old tires scattered on the bottom. Saw an octopus, eel, lots of fish. The ship had lots of life on it. Clams, urchins and

fish. Visibility was limited 20-25 feet. (www.divestkitts.com)

ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia lies in the hurricane belt west of Barbados. Diving on this beautiful, heavily-forested island, with pretty reefs and tiny fish, is managed and controlled. ... on the southwestern part of island is where the better diving is, but it's rigidly controlled; there's not much worth seeing elsewhere underwater. ... The year-round high is in the 80s days; night lows are in the 70s. Afternoon cloud-bursts are common.

Dive Fair Helen, Ti Kaye, January 2004, William Parks, Columbia, MO. Experience: 101-250 dives. Water: calm. Located several miles off the main West Coast Highway on an isolated bay, Anse Conchon, where the protected reef begins and runs down to the Southern tip of island. There are 33 cottages, 19 of which are separate, like the one in which we stayed, and the others are duplexes. Each cottage is nestled into the hillside overlooking a view of the Caribbean Sea. Simple luxury is the theme as the cottages feature wide slatted Venetian blinds, an open air garden shower, a romantic four poster bed draped with billowing white curtains and air conditioning, which we didn't need. The front porch had a table, rocking chairs and hammock, completely private from any other cottage. (Our cottage was named Hadi.) The restaurant and bar at the open pavilion was not disappointing. The

staff was attentive and friendly. The owners made themselves available, especially Jeannie who was particularly friendly and helpful. We dove with Dive Fair Helen which had a branch at Ti Kaye until the dock was destroyed in a storm in 2003. We were reasonably satisfied with their operation except for one divemaster who was so fixed on getting an octopus to show us from under a rock. He struggled for at least ten minutes not paying attention to any of us divers. The creature was dead when we finally pulled it out. We had to board the boat by swimming out from the beach. However, we rented a car for part of the trip and drove 15 minutes to Marigot Bay where we strolled onto the boat as it picked up divers who were staying at various resorts at that beautiful bay. On either side of the beach there is nice snorkeling, as well as at least 5 dive sites a minute or two from Ti Kaye. The diving itself was good, though not as good as our previous experiences in Cozumel, Bonaire, and Tortola. However, the island itself is spectacular. Our land experiences were more enjoyable than even those we've had on Tortola. Ti Kaye Resort is half way between Castries, and the spectacular Soufriere area with the awesome Pitons. We had pleasant, beautiful drives along the coastal highway, after a morning of diving, for site-seeing and some wonderful dining. Although you have to climb 166 steps down (and later, up) to the beach, it is a nice beach early in the morning and later in the afternoon. Nearly every day, one or two party boats carrying scores of snorkeling, swimming tourists from

Castries docked at Anse Conchon for several hours. There is plenty of room, as the bay is large enough, but most annoying were the handful of locals on sea kayaks trying to sell those tourists beads and conch shells constantly blowing their conches to get people's attention. (www.divefairhelen.com)

Island Divers, Ti Kaye, December 2003, PA Jacobs (jacobspat@earthlink.net) Waldorf, MD. While the resort side of TiKaye is wonderful, the diving operation was substandard. The resort had but one boat to share between water taxi duties and divers and snorkelers. Dive trips would start late because the boat was off doing water taxi work, then because the dive trip started late, the diving was hurried to meet the water taxi schedule. Diving was disappointing due to the overly conservative divemaster — Steve. One day I was the only diver. Steve had a divemaster candidate lead the dive which was limited to 50 feet and about 45 minutes- I am an instructor and had been diving with them for 3 or 4 days prior to this dive. I exited the water with more than 1500 pounds of air remaining! Not the type of diving I expected. I complained to the head of the diving operation and he apparently had no knowledge of this divemaster candidate diving with us. The next day, the head of the operation lead the dive which was a bit deeper and longer, but after that, it was back to the same routine of waiting for a boat followed by short/shallow dives. My second visit to TiKaye – the first with Dive Fair Helen was wonderful, but they no longer use that operation. TiKaye needs to get a

dedicated boat, and build a pier.
(www.tikaye.com/scuba)

Island Divers, Ti Kaye Village, June 2004, Sherri O'Neal, Stone Mountain, GA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 65 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, currents. Cab ride from the airport took us on a very scenic hour and half tour in an air-conditioned van. Although the roads were a bit bumpy and very narrow. Most drivers on the island did not have much regard for safety. The staff at Ti Kaye Village greeted us at arrival and we instantly felt as though we had discovered the most perfect piece of paradise in the world. The courteous staff walked us to our room where our luggage had already been delivered. Rooms are actually little cottages with huge hammock porches, fabulous private outdoor showers and a gorgeous bed with flower petals and mosquito nets. The cottages are spacious with a gorgeous view from any angle of the beautiful beach or the rainforest. The rooms also come with air-conditioning and a mini fridge. The staff was wonderful and would go out of their way to deliver anything you'd need to your room. We enjoyed mornings of coffee on the porch watching the gorgeous humming birds in the trees. Meals were served three times a day. Reservations were needed for dinner. All meals were the best I've ever had anywhere. My compliments to the chef, Paul Yellin. There was a terrific bar and again, wonderful staff. There is a pool on site and a gorgeous beach but, be warned, this is not the place to go if you don't like long walks and lots of stairs. A can of bug

spray was in the room but was barely needed as the pests seemed to stay away. Island Diver's, on the premises, doesn't get a very early start. Most dives are two tank and they begin their day around 10 or 11am. The guys were nice and accommodating. We could store all gear in a locked area. They were having some issues with getting a decent boat for the diving though and at times were a little stressed out about boat problems. They could've done a better job at keeping that among themselves and being a little more professional. Once in the water though, they were confident and capable. Not a lot of big stuff but some of the corals appear to be very healthy and lots of smaller life. Fishermen would often fish right above a dive sight. The seas were always calm and flat and there were a few currents. The sites nearest the big Pitons seemed to have much stronger currents and would be better for the more experienced diver. Most dive sites were a very short boat ride away and a little diving and snorkeling could be done right off the beach at the resort. In Castries the native islanders were rude, pushy and the town was not clean. There were times that I did not feel safe either. If you stay at Ti Kaye Village, be prepared to do a meal plan there. The road to the resort is long, desolate and bumpy and not one that you would want to travel often. There is more than enough to keep you satisfied at the resort though without leaving. The atmosphere is very romantic, laid back and stress free.

Ti Kaye, July 2004, George A. Bogard (awesomei@sbcglobal.net),

Rockwall, TX. Vis: 50-70 feet. Water: 80-82 F. Experience: 780+. This is a pretty resort, but definitely not a diving resort. First, it sits high on a cliff with over 150 steps to the beach! It is very understaffed, so everything takes forever to be done. The dive staff is more concerned with telling you what not to do than showing you the reef or critters. They tried to keep everyone herded together like sheep at shallow depths rather than help find animal life.

ST. MAARTEN

French St. Martin and Dutch St. Maarten are two islands in one, with wonderful beaches, superb hotels, fine cuisine — and poor diving.

Dive Safaris, Pelican Resort, December 2003, John Keith (jkeith@econ.usu.edu) **Logan, UT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 27 to 28 Celsius, choppy, surge, currents. Our 2-tank boat dive with Dive Safaris was on a newly sunk tug and the older wreck (barge). We had 5 people on the dive. The dive-masters were attentive and were helpful, as were the people in the office (a real change from the rest of the "friendly island.") While not the most exciting dives, we did have fun cruising through the barge (saw a couple of large lobsters, a scorpion fish, and lots of small fish) and the newly sunken tug (even visiting a head). Not many fish were around, however. We very much liked the dive operation.
(www.thescubashop.net)

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent lies in a beautiful chain of islands and is heavily forested, with pretty reefs and a good range of fish species. ... Daytime temperatures are in the high 80s year-round, the low 70s at night; afternoon cloudbursts are common; St. Vincent is in the hurricane belt. ... The Grenadines — Bequia, Palm, Union, and Carriacou — are a sailor's dream; they're islands with small hotels, little dive operations, decent Caribbean diving, and have become, perhaps, the "small critter capital" of the Caribbeans.

Bequia

Dive Bequia, Gingerbread Hotel, February 2004, William Edwards, Placerville, CA. Dives logged: 220. Vis: 40-50 ft. Water: 80-81 F. Dive restrictions enforced: time limits. This dive operation was not smoothly run. When Bob, the owner, was in the boat it was always a "rushed" operation. Plus he had no qualms about dropping anchor on the reefs. Deedee was a much better divemaster. On one of my four dives I was allowed to stay down for more than an hour — we were usually allowed less than 50 minutes. The quality of the reefs and fish life was fair, but nothing spectacular. We stayed at the Gingerbread Hotel, which is about two doors up from Dive Bequia. Our unit was clean and comfortable, but certainly not the Ritz. Dinners at the restaurant were very good and there are