

presentation time that any diving after 3:00 pm is considered as a night dive. On one day we did 2 dives in the morning and 2 after lunch. The second one finished after 3:00 pm so we got charged extra for this. It leaves a cheap taste in your memories! We booked a 14 day package with room accommodations through Dive St Vincent and stayed at the Sunset Lodge about 150 yards you the beach. Good clean rooms. Our dive gear was rinsed daily at the dive shop and we carried our cameras back to the hotel. Just on the other side of the dive shop was the "Veranda" restaurant. Outstanding food! Make sure you try the "Mi Cri" desert! Some of the healthiest diving in the Carribean, (reminds us of Belize in the very early 80's), dive guides need a 'tune up', dive boats were in good running condition. For Californians, not an easy place to get to: red eye LA to Miami, then two more flights to St Vincent. Shore based dive operation had fresh water rinse facilities. We carried our cameras to hotel about 150 yards down the beach.

Dive St. Vincent, Sunset Shores Resort, June 2004, Juliet Trueblood, Orange, CA. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 80 degrees F. Dives logged 200+.

Beautiful, healthy reefs and walls. Abundant small critters, excellent for Caribbean. Booked thru Bill Tewes, owner, no price break on 18 dives in 6 days. Told ahead night dives \$10 extra, not told dives after 3:00 p.m.. were \$10 extra, but charged. Bill was out of town and divemasters Callie and D. J. very unfriendly with bad attitudes. Had to ask D. J. any question three times to get

any response. No enthusiasm, no dive briefings. Each dive was like getting teenager up early Saturday a. m. for yard work. What ever happened to service with a smile? Hotel spacious, clean, friendly staff, included breakfast. Food very expensive, only restaurant worth it was French Veranda in the Mariner Hotel. Excellent cuisine and friendly staff and chef. Five divers in our group, which made trip and dive experience a pleasure in spite of D. M.'s.

TURKS AND CAICOS

These islands, situated south of the Bahamas and north of the Virgins, feature awesome walls and clear water. ... Provo, the glitzy island, has spectacular beaches, but it's an hour's boat ride to the better diving of South or West Caicos. Grand Turk, on the other hand, is a funky, laid-back island that has a wall right offshore. Salt Cay has pretty diving; West and North Caicos have no dive facilities. ... Bring a long-sleeved shirt during the winter; it can get cool in the evenings. ... The flight to Provo from Miami is a little over an hour.

Grand Turk

Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, June 2004, Anthony v. Dresden, Arlington , VA. Experience: Over 1000 dives Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. My 3th visit to Grand Turk and its wonderful, healthy walls and reefs continue to please and amaze. Although the mantas are not as plentiful, turtles on almost

every dive. Some other divers even saw a tiger shark. I saw a large midnight blue parrotfish. Tons of tropicals and great coral. Effortless diving and sites never more than 10-15 minutes from your lodgings Blue Water Divers – the island's only PADI five-star facility – is owned by Mitch Rolling. Mitch came as a teenager to Grand Turk and is mentioned prominently in Stephen Harrigan's wonderful book, *Water and Light*. Mitch has logged 8,000 dives on Grand Turk. He and his divemaster, Conchy display enormous enthusiasm and do a fabulous job. Boats are never overcrowded. Divers are polled as to what sites that have been on to avoid repeats. Mitch and Conchy will scour the reefs to find whatever weird blenny you need a photo of. They will help the novice diver while letting those with experience do their own thing. I followed Jenny Smith from the Salt Raker to the beachfront Osprey Beach which she now owns. This was once the infamous Kittina, which was subsequently placed under the witness protection program and renamed the Sitting Pretty. Now, it's a wonderful small hotel with lovely rooms and the same great staff she put together at the Salt Raker. Everyone is friendly. Food is very good with a changing menu and plenty of fresh fish and lobster (in season) and there's a great barbecue every Sunday and Wednesday night. Don't miss Annamae's key lime pie. Mitch and his local band, High Tide play on these nights after dinner. It's a rock and scrape band combining rock and the rake 'n scrape Bahamian style (think rip saws, screwdrivers as instruments). They're great. There is a serious effort to bring

cruise ships to Grand Turk – as soon as the Fall 2005. Any thoughts as what can be done to preserve this wonderful spot? (www.grandturkscuba.com)

Oasis Divers, Island House, October 2003, John and Sandra Quick, Grand Rapids, MI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 82 F, choppy. Our third visit in three years to Oasis Divers and Island House. We enjoy the quiet atmosphere and laid back diving. The folks at Oasis Divers have always been friendly and accommodating. Island House is not on the beach. It is situated on a hilltop overlooking North Creek and the Sea. It is a small family run operation with a handful of suites and apartments. With your room rate you get a vehicle which allows you to commute (5 minutes or so, maybe longer if there are donkeys or horses in the road) to the dive shop and to explore the island after your day of diving. No restaurant or bar at Island House. You can drive into town for dinner and nightlife. The rooms at Island House have refrigerators and limited cooking facilities so you can take meals in if you like. Grand Turk is one of our favorites because of the ease of diving. Short boat rides to dive sites. Lots of little stuff out there. Never fail to find juvenile trunkfish here. Lots of turtles this trip. Quite unafraid and approachable. This is the only spot in the Caribbean that we have seen Quill fin blenny. We have seen them every trip. An amazing number of large groupers considering they are on the menu every night every where! Govenors Beach is a short drive from Island House. It's a nice public beach.

The dining options on Grand Turk are limited. Not great and somewhat pricey. (www.oasisdivers.com)

Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, February 2004, Gerry Keavany (keavany@adelphia.net) **New London, NH.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 77 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Wonderful beaches and enough local interest for the non-diver as well. Oasis Divers runs a great operation, despite the owner, Dale. She had an attitude the whole week. So we just stayed away from her and didn't let her spoil the otherwise wonderful hospitality of the employees. Our DM, Paul, was absolutely superb. He was born and raised on Grand Turk and has an incredible knowledge of both the island and all the dive sites. His briefings were interesting and full of useful information and he took time to make sure everyone on the boat was prepared and comfortable with the site before they left the boat. He really made you feel that he was there to make your dive vacation as enjoyable as it could possibly be. Also worth mentioning is Shirley, who runs the retail part of the operation. She is a delightful lady who always has a smile and nice things to say. She also gives great advice on where to dine on the island. The first two days there was a reverse wind that forced us to stay on the south side of the island, which is mediocre diving at best. When the wind turned back to it's normal direction, we were able to dive the west side of the island and that was spectacular! The coral life on the wall is eye-popping and the wall itself is awe-inspiring! My most memorable

dive was Amphitheater, where you head down a sand chute and come off the wall at about 80 feet, hold your breath and just listen to the humpback whales sing! It was a nonstop symphony and something I will never forget. I was fortunate enough to also see a black-tip reef shark while diving on "Coral Garden" on one dive and then at the same site, had a pod of 12 dolphins swim within 30 feet! My eyes popped out of my mask! The Osprey Beach Hotel is on the water and is a very well run establishment that features simple rooms that are kept spotless by a friendly staff. The food at the hotel is tasty but overpriced. The one exception is their conch chowder; it is worth every penny they charge! Absolutely fabulous. For more affordable meals with larger portions, try Waters Edge, which is right across from Oasis Divers. Get there early and the service is acceptable. Once it gets crowded, expect to wait quite awhile before your food arrives. The Courtyard Cafe, which is across from the Osprey is open for breakfast and lunch. Service is fast and friendly, you can charge the meals to your room and their food is delicious, especially their desserts.

Oasis, Island House, March 2004, Ted Berk (tedberk@comcast.net) **Carlisle, PA.** Experience: 200+ dives. Water: 78 F. Oasis Divers is a superbly run operation. Boats were not crowded; the last few days there were only four divers on the boat. Divemaster rinsed our BC for us and had it hooked to a tank on the boat the next day. Short boat rides, all wall diving, healthy reef. Grand Turk is a great place to dive.

Island House was a pleasure. They gave you a car at no extra cost! I'd go back without hesitation.

Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, May 2004, Claude Koprowski, Oxford, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Water: 77 to 79 F, calm. We chose Oasis after a very scathing report in the Chapbook about another dive facility. I felt someone might just have had a bad day writing such a review, but, alas, from my conversation with locals her review was justified. We were extremely happy with Oasis: excellent guides, efficient operation, friendly, helpful cheerful service. We also heard good things about Blue Water Divers. The Osprey Beach Hotel is beautifully sited on the beach and well landscaped, with a central courtyard around the swimming pool. The food is good but limited in variety, something it shares with all the eateries on the island. We ate at most of the island establishments and ranked the consistency of food downwards of mediocre but then again we didn't go to the Turks for a gourmet experience. The Old Turks Head Inn has become a well traveled movie location. Unfortunately when the actors decide to unwind they come to the Osprey Beach at 5 a.m. and carry on. Jen, the Osprey owner, kicked them out on their butts. There is a lot to be said for the Osprey!

Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, June 2004, James D. Heckelman (hectorjd@dacor.net), **Norwalk, OH.** Experience: Over 1000 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 Fahrenheit,

calm, no currents. Our group consisted of 6 divers and 4 non-divers. Oasis owner Dale Barker arranged our stay at the newly renovated Osprey Beach Hotel and arranged a car rental. Dale and Everette were extremely accommodating. Though sometimes there were only two other divers, one boat was used for our group, and a second boat was used for the other divers. Everette was the divemaster for our group. He is excellent! We soon learned to follow him, at least for the first half of the dive, because he knew where all the critters were. Everette is very knowledgeable and safety conscious. From what we observed, all of the divemasters are well qualified and provide the same quality of service that Everette provided. The boat dives were great, and compare favorably to Little Cayman diving. The wall starts in 25 to 40 feet of water. Every dive was a wall dive, with plenty of time to burn off nitrogen after ascending on top of the wall. The coral is healthy. Turtles and fish are abundant. Several large groupers allowed us to pet them. Several green moray eels were seen as well as a number of stingrays. Three to six dolphins joined us briefly on four dives. We did two morning dives and one afternoon dive each day and one night dive that was fantastic. There are only three or four places where the wall comes close enough to shore for beach diving, and these are not close to the hotel. We did use our rented auto to go to two of these, but after one dive of nothing but sand bottom, 50 ft. visibility, occasional small coral and shallow water (and never getting to the wall after 25 minutes), we make afternoon

boat dives. Gibbs Cay is an uninhabited island about 20 minutes from the dive shop. On the way to Gibbs Cay, we free dived for Conch. The crew made a fresh conch salad while the hamburgers and hot dogs were being grilled. The highlight is feeding and petting the large stingrays that come right to the waters edge and take the small fish provided by Oasis Divers out of your hand. They hung around the 4 hours we were on Gibbs Cay. The shallow water and white sandy beach make for a wonderful experience. The Osprey Beach Hotel also was very accommodating, clean, pleasant and Oasis Divers is just a short walk. Every room has either a balcony or a courtyard that faces the white sandy beach just a few yards away. The water was calm. Palm trees provide shade.

Oasis Divers, Salt Raker Inn, July 2004, Gabriel I. PeZagaricano (guigo34@hotmail.com) San Juan, P.R. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm. Dale and Everette, owners and operators of Oasis Divers are the standard by which others should be measured. Over the years I have found them to be absolutely honest, accommodating and most knowledgeable about running a first class operation. There are four Carolina Skiffs (three 24' and one 28') that are boarded directly from the beach in front of the dive shop. Divers are distributed so that no boat is ever crowded. Entry and exit are very simple and there is always a divemaster to give you a hand with your equipment, should you need it. For those who like to be served hand and foot, the staff

will set up your gear and you need not concern yourself with it until the day you leave. The icing on the cake, of course, is the diving itself. Grand Turk has a wall that has nothing to envy any other. Fish life is plentiful, the corals are vibrant and there is something for every taste.

Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, July 2004, Janet Mitchell, Aspen, CO. Experience: 900+. Quiet and lots of diving and good operations. The Osprey Beach Hotel, located on the water with a nice beach, was accommodating and helpful in every way. Jenny and her husband run a wonderful hotel. Food was good; lots of grilled dinners, but needed more vegetables other than potatoes, occasional broccoli or carrots. Oasis Divers was just a short walk down the road. Had locked area for BC's, etc. Diving was typical Caribbean, but with a little algae bloom mid-week. No Moray Eels. In 8 days of three dives/day, only four turtles, groupers, a few French and queen angels, schools of grunts, some flying gurnards, scorpion fish, queen file fish, six drum fish, only one adult. Coral in great shape, walls wonderful. Dive your own profile. And, the most on any of our small boats were 7 people. Nitrox available, which I dove all week.

Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, August 2004, Fred R Kogen, Santa Monica, CA. Vis: 80-100 feet. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 100+. Osprey Beach Hotel was simple and charming. Nothing luxurious about it. Service was poor. Food acceptable and prices a bit high. The term "laid back" certainly

pertains to this island. All three dive operations are within easy walking distance from each other. Oasis Divers had the newest, cleanest and most organized shop. Dive boats were small, 4 – 6 person skiffs. Five minute ride to the walls, then over the side. Mackie was a good divemaster. Boats did not have any safety equipment, i.e., no oxygen, no radio, no cell phone, no nothing. They say the short ride precludes the need for safety gear. No whistles either. Nothing to do or buy on island, except for a good national museum. There are no-see-ums!!!

Providenciales

Beaches Turks & Caicos Resort & Spa, Summer 2004, Mike Emmerman, New York, NY. dive staff professional, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their jobs. If you are a more experienced diver sign on to the dive boat as "buddy divers" and avoid diving with a divemaster led group. The dive shop did not provide storage facilities for personal dive gear; unless you got to the dive shop early enough, it was difficult to get a spot on the boat. After returning home from the trip, I communicated with the general manager of the resort and was told: "we have already planned to expand our dive shop and it will have lockers for our guests to store their dive equipment. Hopefully construction will begin in September this year. We also have presently one additional dive boat on order and we should receive it in August this year." The dive operation only goes to the close in dive sites. Our group included several young children and this resort has facilities

exclusively geared to children. Other dive operations on Provo make frequent trips to the more exotic sites, but the logistics of taking care of young children while the parents dive was the more important determinant for us. Overall, we had a great trip, some good dives and the children did not want to go home. (www.beaches.com)

Caicos Adventures, Royal West Indies Resort, September 2003, Tom Patton (gtpatton@hotmail.com) Portsmouth, RI. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 110 Feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, calm. Owner Fifi Kunz personally drove the dive van and picked us up at the Royal West Indies Resort. Royal West Indies is a new beachfront condominium resort and is every bit a 5 star accommodation. Landscaping and beach are among top 20 resorts in the world. Fifi was personable making everyone on the van feel at home, while taking other pick-ups at other resorts. Caicos Cat is a custom built 43 foot catamaran, impeccably clean and maintained, and very spacious with many spots to lounge during the boat ride (upper bridge, front deck, dive deck, inner cabin). There was even enough room that some divers had brought along their non-diving. We dove with Fifi for 8 days (17 dives) straight. Originally we had planned on taking some days off, but each day on the boat was a "life as it should be" day. We mostly dove unchartered dive sites (no moorings) and only repeated one site twice during the 8 days (by choice). Fifi mixed up the destinations each day between West Caicos, Sanborne Channel, South Wall, and

French Cay. He had his own secret or proprietary dive sites to bring us to. He has been pioneering these walls since 1988 and is proud of his discoveries. Of the 17 dives, there were only two dives that we did not see reef sharks. We saw spotted eagle rays on approximately half of these dives, often in pods of three and four at a time. Also of note during the week was a humongous jew fish and one manta ray that came in out of the blue. Plenty of dolphin on the boat rides from and to. All dives were long tremendously vertical walls, some walls with inverted angles. Fifi respected our experience. He let us dive our own profiles dictated by our computers. Both dives each day averaged over 60 minutes, Fifi is a perfectionist, and it shows throughout his organization — the divemasters work ethic, spotless boats, maintained equipment. Fifi lets the divers have their time during the dives, lots of time and lunch between dives, and will detour during the boat rides to chase dolphin. Basically, we left the hotel at 8:15 a.m. and didn't get back until 3:30 each day. (www.caicosadventures.tc)

Dive Provo, Allegro Resort, November 2003, James Zulliger (jzull@aol.com) Dayton, OH. Dives logged: 300. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dive restriction enforced: 100 ft., 45-50 min or 500 psi. Dive Provo very good. Set up all equipment. Good briefings of dives. Nice boats. Excellent staff. Reefs and walls better than average for most of Caribbean. Allegra Resort very good. Staff and facilities very good. Dive shop at resort.

Dive Provo, April 2004, Catherine Gankofskie, Kennesaw, GA.

Experience: 200+ dives. Vis: 60 to 90 feet. Wish I had taken more books. Very quiet island. Loved the small number of divers and dedication to service. Noticed other operators running "cattle boats." Yuk.

Dive Provo, Sibonne, August 2004, Greg Yarnik (gregyarnik@comcast.net), Palatine, IL.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 Fahrenheit, calm, noCurrents. Dive Provo has entered into agreements with several Grace Bay hotels to provide specially-priced multi-day dive packages. We chose a 6-day dive package at a small, well-appointed, "boutique"(their term) resort called Sibonne, with only 29 rooms and a friendly, attentive staff with on-site restaurant and bar. They have the best and most low-key beach location on Grace Bay, away from the larger Club Med and Beaches. Our oceanfront room (50-step walk to the beach) was part of a recently-built new wing of the resort and was large and bright, with air conditioning, safe, large fridge, and all the necessary amenities. Dive Provo picked us up at the hotel each a.m. for 10-15 minute trip to the harbor, where the boats were loaded(10-12 divers on average) for trips to either West Caicos or Provo's distant Northwest Point. A shallower reef site in Grace Bay is usually the first dive when new divers arrive.. Dive Provo staff were mostly professional, skilled and knowledgeable(esp. Lucy, Sam, Jules, and Chris). They provided my wife with much-appreciated personal assistance entering/exiting the water, as she is heal-

ing from recent knee surgery. Exceptions were a couple of younger guides who were detached from their work and the other divers and didn't seem to know a whole lot about the underwater environment. Dive briefings were minimal, but some divemasters took time below to point out interesting critters. You had the option of diving with a buddy on your own profile. Everyone was urged to return to the boat with no < 500 psi in their tank. Everyone had to have a computer, either their own, or one rented from Dive Provo. Nearly all wall sites with 100'+ profiles just above the 7000'-deep Caicos Trench. The 42' boats were excellent, roomy and stable for the hour-long+ trips to distant sites. Snacks/drinks were provided and everyone's gear is stored, rinsed, and set-up each day. Many divers wouldn't risk having someone else set up their gear, but a quick reg/valve/connection check prior to donning greatly reduces the chance for error. We had no problems and viewed this service as a welcome departure from most dive operators. Viz was lower than expected, but heavy plankton/productivity did attract spotted eagle rays, stingrays, turtles, sharks, and spotted dolphins(a highlight were the 3-4 dozen dolphins that played in our boat wake for 30 minutes on our trip back to harbor on the last dive day. Captain Lucy slowed up and let us enjoy the encounter as long as possible). Provo-area diving was better than expected with large pelagics common and reef habitats in good to very good condition. Boats provided camera-only rinse bath and segregated shelving for camera and equipment.

Dive Provo, Club Med, August 2004, R. Moore, Ph.D. (padidm@earthlink.net), Vista, CA. Vis: 75-100 feet.

Water: 83-85 F. Dives logged: 926. Excellent organization, nice shop and very friendly staff. Picked me up at resort and transported me to their boat daily. Three very nice dive boats with full safety equipment. Camera table small and camera rinse bucket too small. Well-trained staff that would carry your gear to stern, put it on, then remove it at the end of the dive and carry it back to your station. I like to handle my own gear and they allowed this also. Usual Caribbean diving - no big stuff, but better than staying ashore. (www.diveprovo.com)

Flamingo Divers, Villa Camilla, March 2004, Susan Durchslag (sued@mailbag.net) Newbiry, OH.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 85 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm, choppy. Our diving trip to Provo was quite good. The boat rides to the dive sites are long 40-45 minutes, which can be a negative in rough conditions. The dive operation was great. You did not touch your equipment after giving it to them. If a problem came up with equipment they fixed it or could provide a replacement. Jayne and Mickie were excellent at finding all sorts of things and writing them down. We did see sharks on every dive. Several groups did see whales, which are fairly common at this time of year. We never had more than 8 divers on a boat. We rented a three bedroom villa with another couple. The name is Villa Camilla. It was right on the beach near a very good snorkeling area. A group of hawksbill

turtles were there every day. The villa is centrally located. (We did have a rental car.) The villa could use a little refurbishing, but was very comfortable. The food at the various restaurants was very good. Dinners can be a bit pricey, but there were several very good reasonable priced places to eat. (www.provo.net/flamingo)

Flamingo Divers, Beaches, May 2004, Mark Mosely (mark.mosely@citigroup.com) Maplewood, NJ.

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy.

Flamingo Divers runs a professional operation with a 6 diver max on their boats. They took me out by myself for an initial 3 tank day toward my AOW classification. The following 2 tank dive and completion of my AOW was done with 2 other divers onboard but my original instructor stuck with me. Good pre-dive plans, orientation and preparation on each trip. Dove West Caicos on both occasions, a 45 trip from their dock. Instructors were full of TCI history and information so the trip seemed shorter than 45 minutes. Encountered 2 sharks, Caribbean and black-tip reef, several small rays, large groupers, a 4 foot king mackerel and an "under-boat" barracuda. Got several good pictures of the barracuda. The reef is in very good shape and quite beautiful. Drop offs are spectacular since the walls go down thousands of feet. The Beaches resort was a good 3 star place, which is what you would expect from an all inclusive resort. The food was plentiful and rated a 3 to 4 on a scale of 5. The resort was very clean and kept in great shape. The room was large enough to accommo-

date my wife, 2-year-old daughter and myself in comfort. The pools (6) and beach were very accessible and clean. They have a kid pool that is covered and only 18" deep. Nice touch. They offer a Kids Club but my daughter was having no part of it. She is a "day-care" kid so I really couldn't figure that one out.

Beaches has a dive operation and offers dives ranging from the price included "cattle-car" dives to private diving at additional costs. They require a pool session orientation dive. Do it early in your stay since it is required before you can dive with them. All their dives are in the morning. One big Beaches negative was the Sesame Street characters on the grounds during our visit. The disappointment was, as we found out at the characters first gathering, the children were not allowed to go near the creatures since the event was really the filming of a promotional advertisement for the inclusion of the characters in the Beaches resort in the fall. Irritating to me and disappointing to the kids. Very poor management on Beaches part. Overall a great trip, good dives and a clean room.

Provo Turtle Divers, August 2004, Nick Polifroni, Westport, CT.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Most dive sites are a long boat ride from Grace Bay where most dive boats dock. Makes for a long day for 2 tank dives. The water is gorgeous, the coral is pristine, and the water is smooth and silky like the Caymans, but warmer. Island roads are terrible, but you don't need to travel much. Restaurants are pricey, but negotiable. Provo Turtle

Divers is an experienced operation, that can adapt to any circumstance, including novice and referral divers, to advanced computer divers. Good digital support. Local dive shops are very helpful. (www.provoturtledivers.com)

Salt Cay

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, November 2003, Rob and Judy McDonald, Cambridge, MD.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. This is our favorite spot to dive (even bought some land here). Debbie and Ollie run the best dive operation. There is nothing they can't or won't do to make your stay enjoyable. Not much more than the diving to do. Debbie does make a weekly trip to Grand Turk for supplies so you can get anything you want that way; let her know before you arrive and it will be waiting for you. Porter's great restaurant Island Thyme serves you eggs Benedict using lobster meat instead of Canadian bacon! The diving is superb. Small boats but that means only 6-7 people at the most and most of the time we were there we were the only two or two of only four on the boat. Very accommodating to the way you want to dive. Dive on you own or go with the dive-master. Coral is beautiful. Fish abundant. Did see a big spotted eagle ray out off the wall one day but that was the only "big" thing we saw. No limit on the turtles, stingrays, variety of smaller fish. Do the day trip to Grand Turk so you can dive there too. (www.saltcaydivers.tc)

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, February 2004, Bill and Martha Chapman (snail.pace@charter.net) Alexander City, AL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Chose Salt Cay Divers based on Undercurrent information. All very accurate. Debbie has an excellent dive operation for people looking for laid back diving under calm conditions. Stayed on leeward side of island to avoid rougher seas. Mike and Craig do excellent job as divemasters. Easy back roll into water, remove gear on return to boat. Walls and reefs in good shape. Saw rays, morays, turtles, etc. Whales near boat on one surface interval. Awesome to hear whales when on wall! We had Debbie shop for us prior to arrival so we could prepare some meals in suite. Our Tradewinds mini-suite was clean and had plenty of hot water. Screened porches are a plus. Provided bikes are great way to tour island. Meals at Island Thyme can become an event thanks to personality of Porter. Also eat at Pat's Place and Green Flash. Be sure to eat with Maria at Mount Pleasant Guest House.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, March 2004, Cindi and Bob Robertson. (uzisu@aol.com), Traverse City, MI.

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 Fahrenheit, I wrote an extensive article in the 2003 Chapbook about Salt Cay, and there haven't been many changes! We had no problems with any of our luggage on InterIsland Airlines. In addition to the Carolina Skiffs, Debbie and Ollie now have a larger boat,

which can accommodate about a dozen divers. This makes the run to the Endymion wreck much easier. Saw whales breach. I snorkeled out, and was able to see the tale of a Humpback as it began to dive. I heard the whales on almost every dive. We packed in all of our food items for the week. (Debbie will supply fresh items for you if you ask her well in advance.) Stayed at the Tradewinds. We did not have a stove in this unit, but we had a refrigerator, microwave, toaster oven, and a coffee pot. We also brought a hot plate. A small, arid island, with nothing to do but dive and ride your bike. Fresh water is precious on this island. Every little bit is conserved. Not much room on the Carolina Skiffs for camera fresh water, but they try. Also, back at the Dive shop - Camera people need to rinse in the same bucket as the wet suits. I just ran fresh water from the faucet, with a final rinse in my room.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, March 2004, Richard Kneipp (kneipp@rockisland.com), Friday Harbor, WA. Vis: 75-100 feet. Water: 76 F. Experience: 95. Weather was sunny, but wind blew all nine days. Two days it was too rough to dive. Divemaster left you alone, but kept good watch on divers. Most of time only 3-4 divers on trips. Short run to dive sites. Good diving for beginners, but experienced divers would have seen it all before. Ate most meals at Island Thyme, which was good. Owner, Porter, makes you feel at home.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, April 2004, Kathy Anderson, LaPorte, IN.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. This was our second visit to Salt Cay (first: April, 2000, same dive operator and resort). Things have grown a bit (Salt Cay Divers has added a 24 ft dive boat, Island Thyme Bistro, a rental villa with a fresh water pool, etc.), but Salt Cay is still relaxing and uncrowded (the quickest way to the dive sites are the smaller Carolina skiffs, land transportation is usually by bicycle or golf cart, and there are still only about 100 people on the island including divers/vacationers). We enjoy the non-pressured diving with Ollie and Mike (divemasters) — excellent wall dives within 10-15 minutes, coming back to shore between dives and being able to dive your own profile with your buddy. In addition to the nurse sharks, the manta ray, the dolphins and the whales — we also saw a spotted eagle ray, an octopus and a green moray. Our 11 year old daughter completed her open water certification with Mike and really enjoyed herself. We also went to the Endymion, a British Man 'O War which sank about 1780 on a reef in 35 ft of water some 16 miles south of Salt Cay. The keel, large cannons and large anchors/chains make for an excellent historic wreck dive — although the weather has to cooperate or the seas can be rough. After diving, there are great beaches (North beach by bicycle and Great Sand Cay by boat). Debbie assisted us with much of the logistics — from inter-island air travel to stocking the fridge in our unit at the Tradewinds to open water certification (she and Mike are PADI instructors). We ate dinners out at Island Thyme (a large selection

with great food/drinks), Maria's (Mount Pleasant) or Pat's Place (the latter two with good island specialties).

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds Guest Suites, May 2004, Blaine Browne (btbrowne@worldnet.att.net) Lighthouse Point, FL. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy, no currents. We chose this destination based on Undercurrent reviews and they were right on the button. A quiet, hassle-free, laid-back environment and superior diving, a top-notch destination. Interisland Airways got us from Provo to Salt Cay on time — they will charge you for overweight baggage. Debbie met us at the airport and for the next week met every need we had. The island is dominated by extensive salinas and the remains of the long-defunct salt industry, which would intrigue any historian of the region. The islanders were a pleasure, welcoming and eager to answer any questions about local affairs. We stayed at Tradewinds, which is right on the beach; our suite was clean, spacious and cooled by a constant breeze. If you are a light sleeper, bring earplugs; the donkeys and roosters can be quite noisy at night. We opted to have Debbie buy our food supply prior to our arrival and mostly cooked for ourselves. Though there are several places to eat on the island, their hours of operation seemed problematic and meals are relatively expensive. Jagan at the Green Flash supplied us with fresh-caught fish to cook and served up some mighty fine fish at his open-air cafe on the harbor. The locals eat most anything they catch — we had

lemon shark at the Green Flash. The dive operation was overseen by John, an Englishman, who seemed thoroughly familiar with the sites after only a month there. He was courteous, humorous and went out of his way to accommodate us. SC Divers set up and cared for all our equipment. We dove from a Carolina skiff in conditions that were windier than usual, but as the dive sites are all on the lee side of the island, we weren't affected. We did two dives a day for five days and saw most of the nearby sites, all of which are only a 5 minute ride from the harbor. It was a bit windy to go to Grand Turk or the Endymion wreck, but there was still plenty to see. John thoroughly briefed us prior to each dive and always pointed out interesting sights. The walls were beautiful, covered with amazing sponges, and there was little or no current. There was an astounding profusion of healthy coral at sites like Kelly's Annex — we've rarely seen such pristine and stunning formations. In the course of the week, we encountered several large grouper, a dolphin that followed our boat, several nurse sharks, turtles and a manta gliding over a sandy channel. There is excellent snorkeling beneath the cliffs just north of the harbor and an incredible beach on the northeast end of the island. Overall, this was a superior experience, made all the more pleasant by Debbie's attentions and John's abilities as a dive-master. We would not hesitate to describe this as one of our best dive vacations — none of the haste or crowds found at some other more popular dive destinations.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, May 2004, Pam Rudy, San Jose, CA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 74 to 77 F, choppy. Not as many fish as I've seen on other dive trips — that was disappointing. Water was cooler than I expected. Must bring own food or order it in advance from the dive shop to avoid expensive eating out. No groceries on island. Dive operation very accommodating to our group of 10. The divemaster, John, had only been there three weeks, so he was still learning the dive sites; after some prompting, Ollie, an owner, started pointing out some stuff on the reef. The crew switched over our tanks, took our weights and BC's as we exited the water. They also put our BC's with tanks and weights on us, as we sat on the stern of the boat with our masks and fins on — ready to dive. Included in dive package is a day trip to Grand Turk, 9 miles away, with two dives there. Great restaurant at Island Thyme. Always a fairly strong breeze, which was quite comfortable — never too hot or too cold. \$.50 a pound charged by Interisland Airways for over 40 lbs of luggage from Provo to Salt Cay.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, June 2004, Cathy Bolton (cathyfb@aol.com)

Linwood, PA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, choppy. There were 3 of us and we all dove Provo & Grand Turk before and loved it. Since this island is more isolated we thought the diving would be better. We signed up for a meal plan since food is scarce on the island, but the restaurant we had our plan with was closed for a month. We were switched

to another place where a woman cooked but you had to tell her what you wanted ahead of time but everyone had to eat the same thing. No beverage was included nor any dessert. Water was \$2 extra. If you didn't eat all your meal you got less the next time. The woman was a good cook but variety was lacking. After 5 nights of fish and rice and beans, I was longing for McDonald's. Maid service was once in the week. The toilet couldn't be flushed too much during low tide. There were 3 women in the room so this was ugly. Two huge roaches in the room caused a bit of panic too. We were told phones weren't a problem only to find out that you had to have a T&C phone card that was sold on Provo, not on Salt Cay. If you used the dive shop phone, the owner charged you \$3 a min, to dial the 1-800 number on the phone card. We found a phone booth a mile from the hotel where there was no surcharge. One of the woman had a sickly mother and this was a real problem. The diving was fair except for the wreck of the Endymion which was great. We lucked out and had one day when the weather allowed us to hit this wreck. It was advertised as part of the trip but later we were told this 1 tank dive counted as 2 dives. The divemasters were very good and let you go at your own pace, limiting down time to 75 mins. Diving for 4-6 people was done in a small skiff. We only got one night dive in. Without lights it was hairy getting back to the beach. There is a package advertising unlimited night diving but this would be taking a tank and going off the beach by the dive shop. No one is around so you would be on your own. The beach in front of

our hotel was rocky and not a good entry. An e-mail to Debbie was all that was needed for supplies. Buying a ticket for the InterIsland flight was a problem if you don't have access to an international fax from 4-6PM. Water is very scarce so camera equipment was dumped in a small bucket. Two guys had big cameras and strobes so small cameras were out of luck.

UNITED STATES**Alabama****Down Under Dive Shop, Young's By The Sea, August 2004, Clem Clapp (cclapp@bellsouth.net), Maplesville, AL.**

Experience: 251-500 dives Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 Fahrenheit, calm, no Currents. Great boat. 46' Newton. All shop and boat personnel were good in boat and under water. Dive briefing was extensive and diving heavily structured. One dm told me that they dealt with many once a year divers and students. After a short discussion, they allowed my daughter and me a bit more freedom. Lot of silt, etc in water lending to poor viz. Pretty routine for the area. Jellyfish infestation was moderate. Glad I wore my skins. Saw a number of octopus, toadfish, jacks, blue angels and assorted other tropicals and a large 30" loggerhead rubbing himself on the prop shaft of the Naval Tug. Highlight was a 12' manta that hung with us for 10 minutes or so. Dedicated table and rinse bucket for cameras. Staff reminded all divers to refrain from other use. (www.downunderdiveshop.com)

Florida**Big Pine Key****Strike Zone Charters Inc., Casa Grande Bed & Breakfast, January 2004, Gill Cruz, Pleasanton, CA.**

Dives logged: 2500+. Vis: 30-40 ft. Water: 72-74 F. Dive restrictions enforced: one hour/500 psi left. I wish I understood how restricted the dive operation was and that they included snorkelers. Unless you are a group of divers at your level, the advanced divers would be bored. Cattle boat experience. We dived Looe Key Reef Marine Reserve that has abundant marine life (barracuda, grouper, lobster, conch, reef fish). The dive organization is well run. You need to schedule wreck and wall dives to get what you want because they cater to the tourist who is passing through. (www.strikezonecharter.com)

Underseas Inc, April 2004, G.

Fulkerson, Amelia, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 25 to 45 Feet. Water: 70-72 to 72 Fahrenheit, choppy. Where would you take 40 teenagers who live in Ohio to get certified for 700 bucks including transportation? In winter, Looe Key is an ideal shallow accessible spot with ample camping and hotels to support such an operation. Underseas was clearly taxed by this many novices - but they took it with good humor (for the most part, better than some of us chaperones) Classes were held at our KOA camp ground in Sugarloaf Key and boats left from Big Pine. Visibility was pretty poor due to recent heavy winds. We barely hit a window of three days of