

have bug spray w/DEET; the mosquitoes swarm!

BONAIRE

To many visitors, Bonaire's attraction is shore diving in front of the hotels. Many divers rent an auto to reach scores of marked sites — but keep nothing in your car as many get broken into while divers are underwater. Still, Bonaire is a diver's island par excellence, with diving that's especially well-suited to easy divers and those who want to concentrate on photography.

Bas, July 2005, Pam Cote, Olathe, KS.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 F. We have been to Bonaire 5 times. This time we dived with Bas, who was with Photo Tours. He took us shore diving on the east side which is hard to do on your own since the conditions vary. We saw large stuff. e.g. turtles, eagle rays, tarpon and had two great dives. My husband and sons went with him later in the week and had two really neat dives on other sites. There is current on the east side and the shore entries/exits can be complicated. Bas mostly dives the east side and knows his stuff. He likes to do 1.5 hour dives. Phone 717-8830 home and 786-4917 cell. loonybin@bonairelive.com. On a previous trip we dove with Larry's Wildside and had went to the North side to a spot we could have shore dove ourselves and had to cut a dive short because of current and visibility. He promotes the east side but mainly does one or two dive spots there. He does have a new boat and an assistant but

dives are limited to 45 minutes and cost \$100 for two dives.

Bon Bini Divers, January 2005, Mort Rolleston, Arlington, VA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm, no currents. Can basically roll out your condo door into the ocean and swim 30 yards to great diving or drive a truck within 15 minutes and swim 100 yards out or take a dive boat and get to numerous great sites (including Klein Bonaire) within 15 minutes. Very easy to get 4-5 dives a day in. The coral and macro life is really top notch. Swimming over the thick and healthy layers of corals (with endless holes and gaps and compartments), you can watch countless critters living their lives under the cover of the coral (like a whole new dimension you cannot see above the coral). The hard coral on Klein Bonaire looked like something out of Tolkien. Tarpons at night right off the dive resort (a group of three tarpon use your diving lights to hunt — they'll lurk behind you and then will unexpectedly fly past you literally inches from your head and go chasing after something just beyond your light range and then circle back behind you to wait for the next opportunity. Having 3 to 5 foot tarpon flying by your head like that out of the darkness is really cool...) Very little to nothing in the way of pelagics or large schooling fish (or much life of any kind) above the corals in the open water (in nearly 20 dives the entire week, I think all I saw other than the tarpons at night, was a handful of barracuda over the wreck, an eagle ray, and a turtle). That was disappointing. The only partial exception was the Salt Pier and piers right off the

airport runway, which attracted some schooling fish. Virtually every dive site was identical up and down the whole island (except the double reef system around Alice in Wonderland — which was pretty cool — especially the outer reef). While nice, diving what could have been the same site nearly 20 times in a week started getting a little old. Virtually every site was shallow sand going out 30-100 yards that dropped from 30 to 100 or more feet with a coral reef along the slope to a sandy bottom. My favorite dives were: Alice in Wonderland, the reef right outside Bon Binis/Captain Don's, Windsock, and basically all sites on Klein Bonaire — a small island off Bonaire. Bon Bini Divers and their condos were fine and (supposedly) the best restaurant on the island was on the premises (and it was really good!). The island was laid back with no big hotels/nightlife, etc., but had enough civilization so you weren't totally roughing it. Small town feel.

Buddy Dive Resort, February 2005, Marjorie Griffing (mjgriffing@comcast.net), Shoreview, MN. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, calm. Complete freedom to dive when and where you wanted. The reef off the resort was quite nice. Large tarpon followed us at night hoping our dive lights would help them locate dinner. This is the place to look for seahorses, frog fish, etc. The accommodations were somewhat run down. We had a problem with water leaking into our 3 bedroom unit. The bedrooms are air conditioned, the rest of the units are not. If you leave the doors open to get ventilation, the no-see-ems would be vicious. Don't forget

the bug spray! It seemed they had more Nitrox divers than usual. Frequently, Nitrox (which was to be unlimited) was limited. Getting to Bonaire is a long haul from MN. Took us 18 hours to get there including the 4 hour layover in Aruba.

Buddy Dive Resort, March 2005, Colleen Kabat, Waupaca, WI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, no currents. First trip to Bonaire. The office staff seemed "scattered." We never found continuity with personnel. The resort has pretty shabby looking grounds and a moss-covered pool. Their rooms are getting old, but they are huge. We had a beach front room with a kitchen & living room and nice walk out patio. The staff is not very friendly and don't look for many smiles among them! A lot of the resort's guests are return customers and meet up with the same people year after year. This was a hassle when it came time to putting our names on the board for boat dives. Some people were there as soon as they could sign up and filled most of the spaces. Watch for this! Get down to the dive shop early! Find out when they set up the roster and be there! My husband and I had only 6 boat dives each and had a hard time getting on the lists! The resort is located next to Captain Don's and they are virtually on the same reef. The restaurant between, Lion's Den, is excellent! We think it's the best restaurant on the island. We've been all over and have never seen schools of fish like we did there. Klein Bonaire was okay, but they had just had damage from a storm, so the reefs weren't as spectacular as we thought they would be. We liked

the house reef at Buddy better. The night dives there were great. We were accompanied by “Charlie,” a 6-1/2 foot long tarpon that likes to “hunt” with the aid of divers’ lights. My husband was he shocked when this huge, silver, mirror-like fish came swimming between us! He followed us back to the pier and when we went up to Lion’s Den for dinner, divers were all excited that they saw a huge tarpon and we cracked up and told them it was us. We did take our truck to other shore dive locations and we loved those dives! We went down to Invisibles and found the eagle ray. We found a pink frogfish after an hour’s search! Some wise divers told us to “Let the reef come to you.” We did — it worked! We saw more turtles, eels, scorpion fish, sea horses, shrimp, etc., than we could count. UW Photography Comments: Separate dunk tanks at dive shop for cameras.

Buddy Dive, May 2005, Robert Banker, Cumming, GA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F., calm, choppy, surge, currents, no Currents. We did 18 shore dives and 6 boat dives in 7 days. Wind reversal allowed diving at Wilemstoren Lighthouse, unaffected by 2004 hurricane Ivan. Our fifth year at Buddy Dive. No hassles. Fruit, cereal, eggs, omelets, sausage, juice, breakfast (comes with the Drive and Dive package), take two tanks in the truck to dive twice, lunch in our room, take two tanks to dive twice more, dinner — Lions Den, It Rains Fishes, Richards, Buddy’s Friday night BBQ, buy fish from Hispanic folks and bake it in the apartment, cook spaghetti brought from home. Free Nitrox this month! 32% and 36%,

our choice (saved \$99 each). Variations — boat dive to sites not reachable from shore, again no hassles. Night dive on house reef with the resident tarpon. Dusk dive to see fish (yellow head wrasses dive into the sand). Church service Sunday morning at Trans World Radio. Our Olympus C-750 pictures colored some underwater stuff with a reddish cast not seen in above water pictures. It allowed a picture to clearly show a frogfish; whereas underwater the fish was so perfectly camouflaged such that a divemaster had to make it move before either of us saw it. UW Photography Comments: Rinse tanks for cameras and for cameras and regulators on land. Camera bucket on boat used for masks too.

Buddy Dive Resort, June 2005, Diane Kipp, Edgewater, FL. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, no currents. Pack light, quick-dry stuff, only a dive skin or .5mm (no sea lice encountered). Water shoes/booties a must for sharp coral. Casual, laid back. Don’t bring dressy stuff. We reserved 6 nts. in a 3 br. unit w/kitchen. Only upstairs brs. are AC’d. No AC in living room/kitchen which is needed. Ask for a fan. 3br. units don’t face ocean breezes; others do. Rooms are adequate, clean, furnished kitchen. Not a 4 star, but comfortable. Housekeeping service daily. Front desk is excellent as is dive operation and instructors. Rental gear well maintained and gear storage available (we have diving family of 5 from ages 12 to 55, beginners to adv.) Rental trucks have AC; vans do not. Island is easy to drive and tour. Food is expensive. Water is safe; when touring we brought water

and our own snacks to avoid buying. (We pack 1 large duffel bag of food to bring on plane and prepare in a kitchen unit. Kids take note: pizza and hot dogs are harder to find. There's only a small refrig./no dishwasher. The a.m. buffet is nice, relaxing w/view, enough items to satisfy, but the same menu every day. Try the Dutch cheese! Buddy Dive food was ok. Next door, Lions' Den is better but more \$\$.

On-site dive shop well stocked and helpful. Everything you need steps away from rooms. Views/sunsets gorgeous. Nicely landscaped grounds, small but relaxing pool. Area restaurants are close by, good quality, but \$\$.

Tour Slagbaai Natl. Park (by rental truck), allow min. half day, more if you plan to dive. Remote dive spots in Park are awesome & easy to locate, but keep in mind safety, as you are far from the entrance. Unpaved, rough roads but worth the drive Y bring your dive gear! Kids loved the "old west" look, caves/bats, huge iguanas, 20 ft. cactus trees, ancient Indian carvings, wild pink flamingos, and surreal terrain. Last dive in the Natl. Pk. must be done by 2p.m. We made 8 dives in 6 days. No theft problems topside or at the resort. In-room safe. Truck stayed unlocked. We felt safe; locals helpful. No traveling/communication problems. Buddy's drive-thru is unique. Dive 24/7 w/refills, air/Nitrox avail., good rinse tanks, staff helpful. Kids saw nearly every variety of reef fish and coral in their ID books. No large sizes, no sharks, but saw turtles, tarpon, barracuda, eels of every variety, squid, tons of reef fish, and a scorpionfish. Touring topside is interesting: wild donkeys, goats, salt mountains, wild cactus frontiers, colorful island

houses, beautiful beaches and a unique culture/history. Our 12 yr. old, recently certified, made his first wreck dive on the Hilma Hooker. Watch your depth gauge; great vis. makes going to deep depths quick and deceptively clear/easy. Shore diving in Bonaire is the greatest ... easy drive up, gear up, walk in and enjoy! Waters are relaxingly warm, great vis to 100', full of life in every direction. Over 60 shore dive sites, all clearly marked with easy access. I used a Sea & Sea 5000G housed digital camera with a Y-25 strobe; my first U/W digital. I'm not an experienced photographer, but I thought the quality and variety of U/W life on Bonaire would please just about anyone. Adequate rinse tanks, and electric for rechargers.

Capt. Don's Habitat, September 2004, Dave Bridenbaugh (dtbriden@fuse.net), Cincinnati, OH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 79 to 84 F, calm. Were worried about the damage by recent hurricanes. The preliminary reports from there were good (actually not so accurate — don't scare the paying customers away). The visibility was not so hot as low as 30 feet on some sights. The storm mucked up the waters pretty well. Didn't see much damage except down South in the Red Slave area. The soft corals were torn up and a little bit of the reef was wasted. At most dive sights there was lots of silt between the corals and sponges. We still managed to do 39 dives in 10 days and saw several Frogfish (even found one w/o a Divemaster's help) a lot of juvy trunkfish, several turtles, several rays, 2 sea horses, batwing crabs, eels galore, and almost anything you can expect in Bonaire. Great food at Rum Runners,

Mona Lisa, It Rains Fishes, Casablanca, and Lion's Dive. Do rent a truck. There are too many dive sights and not enough time.

Capt. Don's Habitat, November 2004, Bill Hitch (ghitch@ec.rr.com), Jacksonville, NC. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F., calm. The dive crews and boat captains were great, as well as the staff. Packed way to many clothes! All you need is a couple pair of shorts and a few t-shirts. Very laid back.. Easy to get around the island....only driving rule is really....."just don't hit anything". 17 dives in 5 days, with over 15 hours of bottom time! Capt Don's was hooked up with someone with the airlines (Air Jamaica), they came by the hotel on Thursday before we left on Saturday. They take your passport, ticket, departure tax and \$20. fee and they get your boarding pass, which then allows you early check in. We went to the airport at 10 am and checked in our luggage, though our flight was not until 3:10pm! When we got to the airport at 1:30 that afternoon, the line to check in was long! It was L worth the \$20 fee.

Capt. Don's Habitat, May 2005, Craig Young & Sharon Busey, Menomonee Falls, WI. Vis: 30 to 75 feet. Water: 82 F. Air temperature mid-90s. Room nothing fancy but clean and large. Air conditioning; small safe and small refrigerator. Plenty of hot water and shower-tub combo No hair dryer though listed on their web site (rent one at \$5/ day from front desk plus \$50 deposit — no thanks), no iron, no hair shampoo. Housekeeping arrives at variable times (even after 5 PM) for

daily cleaning. Nice patio or deck with plastic coated wire for drying at each unit. Nice swimming pool. Small beach below villas — also site of best snorkeling at the resort. (only fair). Hotel restaurant (Rum Runners) quite good food at reasonable prices (\$10-15 pp). Good breakfast buffet. Plenty of lockers near dock — bring a small lock — only a few will accommodate standard padlocks. Plenty of rinse tanks and shower at dock. Rental equipment in good shape. Beach towels at front desk. Tanks available 24/7. Fills 2700-3100. Boats nonsmoking, large camera rinse buckets, 1 tank dives. Tips appreciated but not expected. Other good restaurants include Argentinian Grill — great grilled meats and fun servers; Richards — excellent waterfront dining (\$30-40 pp); Croccantino — Italian (\$18-25 pp). Airport — get there early on departure, especially if you are returning a rental car (they work on island time). Donot lock your bags, they search every bag by hand. Have all your batteries out of equipment in a separate plastic bag. Diving pretty good, but not spectacular. Best dives — Salt pier, frogfish, hunting morays and sharptail eels and many filefish; Oil Slick Leap — sea-horse; goldentail morays, turtle, lots of drums and trunkfish; Green Submarine — honeycomb cowfish, sharpnose puffer, reef squid; Hilma Hooker — nice wreck with tarpon, barracuda. The house reefs, La Machaca and Reef Scientifico, were both good with mating sargassum swimming crabs, cleaning stations, puffers, reef shrimp, morays (gold chain, reticulated and spotted) and scorpionfish. Bonaire Diving Made Easy is a nice guide to shore diving.

Dives north of 1000 steps are on a section of one way road and is a long drive back to the resort areas. We had no problems with crime, but always left the car unlocked with the windows open.

Capt. Don's Habitat, June 2005, Carole Mouton, Sugar Land, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet.

Water: to 83 F, calm, surge, no currents. The advertised internet service is provided by an outside vender. My computer had an Airport Card for wireless service, so all I needed was the password to access the local network. The provider required me to meet him in person to establish service, but did not show up. His times to be in the office were during scheduled boat dives, so I never could get the service. I bought time on the resort's antiquated computers and could only get off two email messages in 30 minutes. I was shut down without warning and messages being sent were lost. I entered the slide show contest but couldn't be there in person as our night dive at the Salt Pier had been rescheduled for that evening. I won, but never received any prize. When I came to the dive office the next day, I was told that the manager had to give me the prize, but he was not there the three times I came by the dive office. My flight home was the next morning; I left my email and snail mail addresses, but I was never contacted.

Capt. Don's Habitat, June 2005, Rindy and Janet Clayton (rindy@hawksnet.net), Lookout, WV. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 30 to 80+ Feet. Water: 80 to F, calm. Natives not all that friendly but transplants were nice. Owner of Chat

'n Browse (from Connecticut, I think) loaned us his binoculars for our drive around the island. He didn't ask for collateral, ID. Amazing trust! Humidity was terribly high and temps in low 90s but the wind kept it tolerable, barely. I wish we had been prepared to pay for small purchases in Dutch \$. When using American dollars, locals were either ignorant on conversion or con-niving — they would cheat you nearly every time. Wished we had brushed up on Centigrade to Fahrenheit conversion. Oven in our rental cabin was in centigrade! Luckily we weren't trying anything critical and muddled through. A guide taped to the wall would have been helpful! American/American Eagle had no lost/delayed luggage, no missed flights. UW Photography Comments: Photograph shop on premises, but was not staffed a lot of the time because he would be out on the boat. Annoying. Had to go chasing around to find someone to help us.

Capt. Don's Habitat, Happy Holiday Homes Bungalows, July 2005, Dave Bridenbaugh, (dtbriden@fuse.net), Cincinnati, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, no currents. Trip number five to Bonaire. Louise at Happy Holiday (info@happyholidayhomes.com) is great and will take care of booking a truck and a dive package for you — if you'd like even getting some groceries ahead of time. We got our own shore pkg. at Capt. Don's Habitat. After the usual orientation we stowed our gear in their lockers that are 20 ft. from a pier where you can step into 10 feet of water and swim 75 ft. to the reef. Weather hot and mostly sunny with the Trade Winds

making life great. No great scenery. It looks like Arizona outback areas. Since the bungalows have stoves and fridges, we bought groceries. We made two dives that afternoon on Habitat and saw the usual reef suspects. Our routine: Breakfast in the bungalow, pack snacks, water, and lunch. Drive to Habitat and pick up four tanks each. The folks at Habitat are gracious and helpful. Boat diving can be booked along with the unlimited shore diving package or pay by the boat dives. Easily accessible coast, which features more than 80 dive sights. A yellow painted boulder marks each. For the next 13 days we logged up 47 dives. We did two dives in the morning then lunch followed by two dives in the afternoon. Most sights are close to easy parking and sometimes you are no more than 30 ft. from the water. Many sights are 50 yards or closer from shore to the edge of the reef. Many rubble and sand areas have a lot to see. We saw yellowheaded jawfish, garden eels, squid, octopus, and even some rays and turtles in these areas. The reefs are in good shape; however, the visibility was not so hot. The locals blame the storms. I'm not sure. Must dives are Karpata, Oil Slick Leap, and Ole Blue to the North with Red Slave and its beautiful soft corals to the South. Average dives will be 50 to 80 feet along the reef going and 40 or so feet on the return. We usually ate supper at one of the many great restaurants and sometime sneaked over to Lovers Ice Cream Parlor for the nightcap. No sharks, but you might try the Eastside for an occasional shark however, weather conditions have to be right to dive. A couple of dive operations go there. Bruce Bowker at Carib

Inn will be a good choice. We saw spotted eagle rays, turtles, many eels, and my wife found a yellow sea horse. I found a baby 3-inch octopus hiding in a coral head. Barracuda, and the juveniles baby pea trunkfish, little ribbon baby drums, all plentiful to the trained eye. We did not find a frogfish. Bring a 3 or 5-mil suit because you will be diving so much you will drop a degree or two in body temp. Slow down and enjoy the "laid-back attitude" because it is the Caribbean.

Capt. Don's Habitat, July 2005, Mark Kimmey (scubatek1@cs.com), New York, NY. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Planned this trip through the resort's North American reservation agent, Maduro Travel. It took a flurry of email traffic over a period of days; the agent kept screwing up the reservation: we would ask for something, he would price something close. Or he would forget to price something we asked for, or the math was off. By the time we arrived in Bonaire, we were apprehensive that Captain Don's might be as slipshod as their reservation agent. (We later found out that the guy handling our trip left Maduro). Captain Don's met most of our expectations. Rooms were clean and accommodated diving (tile floors, clothes lines, etc.), though a bit under cooled. The cottage we stayed in had coolers in the two bedrooms, only: the common areas (kitchenette, sitting area and bath/shower) had no cooling. The resort's restaurant served good food at good prices, and the dive staff was proficient and friendly. The only area of concern was maintenance of their rental gear. Since I'm a certified

technician and once owned my own equipment servicing business, this has always been something on which I keep an eye: It's indicative of the overall responsibility of a dive operation. My son was issued two BCs, the first of which leaked. More alarming, 9 of 10 tanks bled air, either from the tank valve o-ring, the tank neck o-ring, or in one disturbing case, from the bursting disk retaining plug. When taking tanks for shore dives about the island, it was not uncommon to find that tanks had bled 300-400 psi from the time we picked them up to when we began a dive. We tagged the problem bottles, but attempts to report what seemed to be a systemic problem to the staff were met with polite indifference. In the case of the leaking bursting disk screw, we found the problem in the water during a boat dive and duly reported it to the divemaster upon exit: he looked at me like I was an idiot and simply put the problem bottle with all the others. What I should have done was pull the bad valve o-rings to force the fill operator to replace them. As it was, I checked tank pressure on every bottle we pulled from the "ready" pile before loading them into the truck, and only replaced the valve o-rings when it was obvious there was a problem.

Carib Inn, April 2005, Doug & Nancy Dellisanti (dellisanti@buckeye-express.com), Huron, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. Our fifth year in Bonaire. We found Bruce Bowker's Crib Inn by researching the Chapbook. The Carib Inn is a small quaint place that you instantly feel welcome. You will see a tall lanky individual with a nice sense

of humor fluttering around the place making sure everything is as it should be Y that is Bruce. The staff is warm and friendly. Bruce has one of the best dive shops on the island and the prices are excellent. Bruce and the staff are always ready to lend a hand and will repair or resolve most gear problems and not take anything in return. They offer Nitrox and though they do not blend it, we always had enough for our party of four. Bruce offers wireless Internet service by the pool. Bruce has two small boats that can get you to any dive site quickly. You are never rushed into the water or out of the water. Most days we did one boat dive and a couple of shore dives. We always rent a truck, but you do not need to because you can do mostly boat dives, shore dive right at the inn, walk to several nice restaurants, and walk into town. The taxis are inexpensive and will cover trips to the grocery store.

Divi Flamingo, August 2004, Mark Smith (marktammi33@hotmail.com), Port Saint Lucie, FL. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. We had a great time. The dive staff was wonderful all the way down the line.

Divi Flamingo, August 2004, Gary Brown (texaswhirlpool@yahoo.com), Bloomburg, TX. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F., calm, choppy. Coral along the leeward side of Bonaire is diversified and beautiful, usually in the 30 to 45 ft range. This is dry arid country with little rainfall providing great vis all year long. The fish are the colors if the rainbow. Great diving right off the

resort dock. Town pier night diving is a mile from the resort. Due to security precautions this dive may not be available at all times — check with your dive operator to get on a limited list of dive trips to this area. The theft problem in Bonaire is horrific and needs to be addressed by the Netherlands. We had our radio stolen out of our dive truck at Karpata dive site on the north west coast. We were shore diving at the site and only gone about 1 hour. We had to pay \$210 for the radio before we could leave Bonaire. You may hear advice to not lock your doors and leave windows partially down so that the thieves want to break windows out. Seems like a slap to be told we need to accommodate this den of thieves running rampant. I filed a police report, but it took 2 hours after arriving at the police station. I probably will not return to a place where the local authorities don't seem to give a damn about what's happening to the divers and Bonaire's source of revenue.

Divi Flamingo, November 2004,
Jim Reilly and Fran Klass (james.reilly4@worldnet.att.net), Wyndmoor, PA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 85 to 87 F, calm. Check-in was fast and smooth, although initially we were assigned a room without the extras we ordered (2nd floor, king bed), we were quickly assigned the room we requested. Seemed odd that we were not given the correct room immediately. The Divi continues to improve. Our room was freshly painted, well appointed, clean and kept that way. Housekeeping was outstanding, even remembering to supply us with extra towels once we asked for more. The dive operation used the

newly renovated south pier. Fine for boats but lacking benches for shore divers. The North pier is being rebuilt (several new pilings were poured during our stay). Hotel landscaping also is much improved over last year. The casino is being enlarged. We thought that the food was good, but the American style buffet breakfast was more than we wanted to pay for @ \$27.50 for two folks. Instead we enjoyed a morning stroll along the harbor and ate at City Cafe and The Lost Penguin, where they serve wonderful tropical French toast (with Belgium Chocolate sauce) for about \$13 for both of us. We had great dinners at Casablanca, It Rains Fishes, Zeezicht Seaside, The Old Inn, Ribs Factory. Pizza at the stand in the marketplace downtown is disappointing as were luncheon hamburgers at Casablanca. Dinner at Richards Seafood is over-rated (Frommers 2 star) and over priced — avoid! Ivan has washed away the sandy beaches exposing the underlying hardpan sharp coral, mounded piles of dead coral along the shore and together these conditions make shore diving entrances and exits along the southern half of the lee coastline challenging. Divers need to carefully select their entry/exit points. Shore diving along the downtown is fine and by the marina is nice. And of course diving from the various docks is just simplicity itself. We did not see large creatures, other than tarpon which accompanied us at night darting in and out of our dive light beams looking for prey. Very exciting! But we did see several types of eels, including a golden moray, clouds of small fish and the wonderful seahorses.

Divi Flamingo, The Plaza Resort, January 2005, Jill Caple (rg250cat@msn.com), Pasadena, MD. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, no Currents. Our first trip to Bonaire. We went with Shark Riders Scuba Tours. Ed Hoffman had everything well planned. Everyone at Divi Divers was wonderful. Orlando was amazing at finding frogfish, octopus and other small critters. Pepe was fun to dive and made sure everyone was taken care of. We dove from their dive boat Sea Gypsy, one of the nicer boats. We did 2 tanks in the morning then 1 tank after lunch. Then we did night dives from the dock on the house reef. The house reef is nice for night dives and a slower evening dive. I get cold when diving and dove with rash guard shirt, full suit (3mm), and bought a hood + dive socks to wear after a couple of days of still being cold. My husband wore his shorty. The rooms at Divi Flamingo are fine but nothing fancy. We did have a small kitchen, big refrigerator, great for heating up leftovers or making a quick lunch. We bought drinks and snacks to keep in the room and take on morning dives. The food was great but took forever. We would go to eat before we were hungry because by the time your food came you would be hungry. The front desk would run out of beach towels so you had to reuse yours or hit the front desk at the right time to get fresh towels. Our flight home with Air Jamaica was cancelled. Ed (Sharkriders Tours) got us an overnight stay at The Plaza Resort. The room we stayed in was huge, and nice. The dinner was over priced and made Divi Flamingo's food service look fast. The food was

fine but I was almost sound asleep by the time it came to the table. Diving with Sharkriders Scuba Tours is great because we always get great service and attention.

Divi Flamingo, May 2005, R.E. and Carol A Thompson (baricat@yahoo.com), Boynton Beach, FL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F., calm, choppy. Spectacular shore diving. Corals are healthy and breathtaking! The marine park fee was raised 4/1/05 from \$10 per diver to a whopping \$25. We were almost snagged by a fishing line with bait attached during a dive. It was reeled up while we were almost on top of it. Two locals in a small boat with outboard, close to the Hooker. When we asked about the "protected marine sanctuary" at the dive shop, Orlando, a divemaster, told us "Well, it's OK to fish, but they are supposed to do it at the open water edge of the reef, to stay away from divers." We thought that "protected marine sanctuary within 6 miles from shore" meant just that. Your \$25 bucks at work protecting those fish! We feel this selective enforcement to be unconscionable. Saw 2 seahorses, one brown, one black, during the week, and one frogfish. Town Pier at night is gorgeous. While diving Karpata, everything in our truck was rifled through. Tore a hole in our dry dive bag. They stole a tin of cinnamon Altoids. Left the mint ones, though! Dutch guests were unfriendly. Divi was barely passable — room floor was dirt-laden, fridge froze everything and air co was either in overdrive or non-existent, lots of bratty kids commandeering the pools.

Divi Flamingo Beach Hotel, May 2005, Joe Stehn, Hillsborough, NJ. Experience: 160 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm and flat. Overall dive operation was good. Woman running dive shop was not helpful and had an attitude. Water visibility was not great. Great shore diving but entry at most sites requires great attention due to coral. Saw large 10 foot moray eel on reef. Divi Resort was well maintained.

Divi Flamingo Beach, July 2005, Phil and Grace Hampton (gracphil@palmnet.net). Experience: 2,300 (Grace 1,000). Vis: 40 to 70 feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, calm and flat. My wife and I spent 3 weeks. The unlimited dive package included a two tank morning dive and a one tank afternoon dive. That plan, together with dives off the dock, gave us each 55 dives over the 3 weeks. The dive operation had 4 boats to accommodate nongroup divers and 2 large groups. The boats were not crowded and always left on time. A superb operation managed by Serge and great divemasters. Frog fish, seahorses, eagle and grey rays, turtles plus the usual reef critters. Manta rays were reported on the windward side of Bonaire but we only dove the lee side. Getting to Bonaire can be an adventure; we had an 8-hour wait in Curacao and then left late. I never thought I would miss ALM or DCA, but I do. Time-share units are showing their age. This was our 29th consecutive annual trip to Bonaire and it is our favorite Caribbean dive location.

Divi Flamingo, August 2005 Tripp Jones (Tjones@sc.rr.com), Columbia, SC. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis:

60 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, no Currents. 5th trip to Divi Flamingo. The food at the resort is superb at breakfast and OK at lunch and dinner. Our dive shop (Wateree Dive Center in Columbia, SC) had breakfast included in the package, but we were on our own for lunch and dinner, the best way to do it. We could walk 10 min. to excellent restaurants (Capreccio's, Crocantino's, and It Rains Fishes). The dive operation is excellent. Our two divemasters, Laurel and Rofino, are superb. The boats are fine, nothing fancy. The dive sites were within 15 min. and the reefs were healthy with plenty of critters, some turtles, lots of morays (spotted and golden), frogfish, octopus, seahorses, juvenile drums, and others. We did not see any green morays or sharks. Shore diving from the resort is easy and the reef in front of the resort (Calabas) is excellent with plenty of aquatic life. Flew Air Jamaica twice and no problems.

Larry's Wildside Diving, October 2004, Dawn Steedman (rlumenator@aol.com), Cape Coral, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Water: 84 to 86 F. Larry, a former divemaster on Bonaire, has an exciting dive operation, making boat diving to the east coast of Bonaire a daily adventure. Larry helped to design the 30' rigid hull Zodiac 920, which runs on (2) 225 Yamaha 4 stroke engines. He runs a safety conscious operation. The day we went was choppy, windy, and rainy — but the diving was excellent (an easy drift dive). There were 6 of us on this trip, the Marine Park Director joining us on his day off. Spotted eagle rays, turtles, large rainbow parrots, green

morays, and tarpons too many to count were among the sightings. The coral formations are unusual, and there are numerous sea fans. Entry back into the boat, using an unusually tall ladder was as easy for me at 118 lbs., as it was for a man more than 300 lbs. The operation also does unique dives to wrecks and to Washington Park. Contact: www.larryswildsidediving.com.

Larry's Wildside Diving, Divi Flamingo, November 2004, Judy Flagg, New Windsor, NY. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. We saw lots of vibrant corals and large numbers of tropical fish. The water was in the 80s, the vis was fine and the diving easy. Unlike most Caribbean diving staffs, the Divi staff provided no help with getting everything on board and changing out your tank after the first dive. The first 2 days no in-between dive snack was provided. Despite the small inconvenience, the diving was wonderful. The divemaster in the water was great at finding small critters and seahorses. The sites selected had great coral and lots of fish. We dove with Larry's Wildside one morning. Larry is quite the character. He has a large Zodiac boat and gets the divers in and out of the boat in an almost military fashion. He pointed to you and you were expected to back roll into the water instantly. We did not see any large pelagics but I understand the chances are better on that side of the island. The shore diving was exceptional. We dove Red Slave, the Hooker and went to the National Park for the day. Wear hard soled dive booties or even rock boots because of the coral on the shore and in the water. The Divi is in need of a bit

of renovation. We had a room on the lower level of the ocean front building. The air conditioner leaked water all over our tile floor making it slippery. We called to have it repaired several times but it continued to be a problem. The walls were flaky and a bit moldy. The food was excellent and the bar was great but did close early most nights. The Divi is just a short walk into town. For the price, dealing with the substandard room and having the great diving was worth it.

Larry's Wildside Diving, Holiday Homes, June 2005, Gary Mazzurco (bazzurco@pacbell.net) Aptos, CA. Experience: 0-25 dives. Happy Holiday Homes is simply decorated and for the budget minded. Internet connection in our room (for a fee), and while Internet service was intermittent, it was fast for the island. The BBQ cost us a one time charge and for some reason the briquettes never really got hot. They seemed to disintegrate quickly, like a piece of cotton. No pool or anywhere to sit in the afternoon sun to read a book. Place was well set up for rinsing and drying out dive gear after the days dives and had a small covered patio. Marine life was quite sparse as compared to August 2003, attributed to the large quantities of rain the three weeks prior to our trip and the effects of the hurricanes this season. The freshwater run off sends the fish further out to sea and pollutes the water. Had the "best burger on the island" as it is known at the Lost Penguin. The owners there are great as is the food. We had many breakfasts and post dive lunches there. She told us about Larry's Wildside Adventures and booked a trip for the

next morning. Larry, who has been on the island for about 5 years now, and his dive guide, Martin, were great. We met them at the dock the next morning. They were friendly, professional and helped us out loading and unloading our gear. They gave a full boat and dive briefing prior to leaving the dock and on the way out to the site. They were helpful in setting up gear. Larry runs a safe and tight ship, checking all of our gear was in proper working order before we rolled out to dive. Larry is an experienced military seal and engineer and it shows. His boat is custom made by Zodiac and he helped to engineer it. The boat, less than a year old, is one of the best we have seen and has twin 225 Yamaha motors. Larry's inflatable is by far the most seaworthy on the island. Larry assists the coast guard when needed here in Bonaire. One of the pontoon sausage portions deflates and they put a nice ladder in making entry back into the boat quite easy, especially in rougher seas. Martin has two degrees in marine biology and was helpful in pointing out marine life. Once Larry knows your diving abilities he will do custom trips for you and your dive group. We had dinner at the Mona Lisa restaurant and bar. They are open only Monday-Friday. The chef and staff were great. We had a fabulous lobster dinner and stayed for drinks at the bar. Not a fancy place and was priced right for the quality of the food. Larry and Martin can be found many nights having a quick beer at the end of the day here, along with many other locals. Amstel on tap. We got our air fills through The Plaza Resort. We found the staff to be helpful and friendly both times. Also

the air fills were always at least 3000 psi and usually more. They offer Nitrox fills for an additional fee. The cost is comparable to other locations on the island and we were able to negotiate and great rate since we were here for 10 days of diving and a larger group.

Larry's Wildside Diving, Divi Flamingo, July 2005, Jim Reilly and Fran Klass (james.reilly4@worldnet.att.net), Wyndmoor, PA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, choppy. Diving with Larry is just old-fashioned fun. The boat ride is like an adventure ride at a theme park and the diving was simply wonderful — lots of large turtles, one eagle ray after another, the largest southern sting rays we've ever seen and lots of healthy large green moray eels. Nonstop action. Wonderful dive boat and diving system. At first it seems like lots of rules, sort of military, but once you get going, the logic of the rules is evident and following them is easy and enhances your enjoyment. Larry's Zodiac is a marvel of scuba design. Back roll exit, and easy ladder to climb back into the boat. A great system for diving the Atlantic side reefs; there were 4 to 5 foot swells and some mild chop. Larry's is expensive and worth it! UW Photography Comments: No bucket for camera. But then the total time to the dive site was reasonable brief and the camera was in the shade.

Photo Tours, Windsock, November 2004, Trevor Cramer (cramercraft@shaw.ca), Edmonton, Alberta. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy, surge. My Dive buddy and I had bad intel for the trip, did not do enough

research. Our trip package was done though Ocean Sports of Edmonton, and guided by Karl. Our package said unlimited shore dives with 4/rented truck and condo unit, we found that 4/truck was crowded and hard to get in more than 2-3 dives a day — too many divers with different dive habits. We wanted to dive 3-4 times a-day, others were happy with 1 or 2 dives, we didn't travel all that way to lose out on some dives. Rent your own truck per dive buddy/habit team. The condo had no soap/shampoo, toilet paper, no ceiling fans or any gear hooks and hangers, was right next to the Airport and a 7 minute drive to town, not convenient. That info was not related to us. We would rather stay in town for the convenience. Photo Tours Dive Shop was professional, the boat dive we took was good with exceptional service from the Divemaster Chili and his assistant Divemaster, although we missed a couple of apparently excellent guided shore dives...the dive shop should give each diver a list of potential guided dives available! The food was great, Lost Penguin, Chibi Chibi. The weather kind of sucked, a bit of a tropical storm blew though, the diving was great, a bit more work than boat dives but you learn lots of great skills, not getting tumbled in the surf, navigation, dive profiles, currents and surge, organizational skills, weather and tidal watching. The Island was beautiful and not ruined by over development, the people were friendly and the Dutch ladies sweet.

Photo Tours Divers, Ocean View Villas, August 2005, Robert and Rhonda Fleming (rhondarf@yahoo.com), Tucson, AZ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis:

30 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Photo Tours Divers (www.bonphoto-tours.com): Unlimited shore diving for a flat daily fee, two-tank morning boat dives and one-tank afternoon dives. The boats go to Klein Bonaire except Wednesdays and Fridays, when they go to the northern end of the island. If you want to dive the southern sites, you are better off doing them as shore dives. Divemasters were helpful, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The "drive-through" tank arrangement worked beautifully — pull up in front of a Photo Tours location, throw to two tanks each into the back of your truck (rent a small truck while shore diving in Bonaire), drive off, dive, return the tanks even after hours. The dives: A pod of about 15 dolphins played with the boat en route to Rockpile (a site on Klein Bonaire), then swam past us after we were in the water (about 30 feet away), then played with the boat during our move to the next site. We saw spotted eagle rays, turtles, ocean triggerfish, large (but no huge) grouper, flounder and trumpetfish, eels. Every dive was among the most diverse and interesting I have ever enjoyed. Unseen: squid and seahorses. PTD has two boats, one larger and shabbier than the other. The smaller, newer boat is comfortable (backroll entry), but the older, larger boat is long in the tooth. Ocean View Villas (www.oceanviewvillas.com/). Three-apartment complex south of the airport was designed by a Cuban architect and is managed by Tim and John, who live on the premises. They provide no meals. While not on the beach, it is a short distance from shore and was laid out beautifully for divers, with rinse

and outdoor shower facilities, enclosed high-wall patios (each unit private from the others), and kitchenettes. All utensils, spices and basics were already there, and a shopping trip took care of stocking the refrigerator. Tim and John were excellent hosts, and happy to help with everything — they made restaurant recommendations, reservations for post-dive massages and mangrove kayak tour (check out the day spa run by Nubia Obando (www.infobonaire.com/dayspa) and the Mangrove Info and Kayak Center (www.infobonaire.com/kayakingctively). UW Photography Comments: Boats had a small camera tank, but no divers on any of our boat trips had anything more than simple digital cameras.

Plaza Resort, March 2005, David L. Bader, Burke, VA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 F, calm, no currents. Travel to/from Bonaire is getting increasingly difficult. There's long waits in PR when you transit that airport. North side of Bonaire is plagued with theft from rental cars. The government does not seem to be interested in protecting divers' rights or property. The economy, which once catered to divers, is now focused on the cruise ship industry. It's a shame that such a beautiful dive location is slowly being run into the ground.

Plaza Resort, May 2005, Jim Hanson, New York, NY. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm. The Toucan Diving staff was helpful, friendly, flexible, professional. Lockers and rinse tanks were available. You could pull up with the truck directly to the filling station to pick up

fresh tanks and to (un)load your equipment. Hotel staff was also friendly and helpful. There was a leak in the room from above and it had to be evacuated. The move was completed within 45 minutes and an upgraded ocean view room. Only negative: I was the last one in line to see a seahorse and take a picture of it. I was patiently waiting, finally approaching it as all out of a sudden I was pulled on my fins and pushed out of the way by another group of 3 divers. I did not touch anything. It was a dive master with Captain Dons Habitat. Afterwards, there was a pod of dolphins and divers from a third boat were snorkeling with them and Don's boat came with relatively high speed within 2-3 feet of them. All you could see was panicking snorkelers raising their hands and trying to get away.

Plaza Resort, June 2005, Roger Dennis (rkdennis@pobox.com), San Jose CA. Experience: 400 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water 82 _ F. Toucan Divers did not respond to e-mail asking questions. They advertise things on the web but do not follow through once you are there. The information at the front desk did not conform to what we found, e.g., dive shop was not open at 8:00 am; the orientation started at 9:00 am instead of 8:30. At our check out shore dive, the DM soon left. He told us to call from the bar and they would pick up our gear. Once we were back ashore (eight people) we called and then waited 30 minutes. We finally just carried all our gear back to the dive shop. When we questioned the person in the shop, she told us she was busy with a customer and nobody else was around. She never told anyone. Tanks often under filled.

O-rings on tanks old and not regularly replaced. Boat captains and dive masters often did not have any tools to replace a bad tank O-ring. The dive sites are nice in many ways but there is a lack of larger fish. Although we did see a 7ft tarpon at a wreck dive site. The dive boats provide little shaded area and the aisle ways are too narrow, making it hard to get around people to get to your gear.

Plaza Resort, August 2005, William & Frances Ungerman (WSUngerman@aol.com), Santa Ana, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, calm, choppy, surge, no currents. The Plaza resort is an upscale resort, yet the prices were reasonable and they offered tremendous incentives, e.g., free Nitrox, second diver dives free, kids stay and dive free, breakfast included. They also upgraded us to a Grand Suite, unsolicited. For our four-diver family, we were not disappointed. We booked the six boat-dive (12 dives) package. Boats left promptly at 0830 and returned around 1230. Afternoon boats went out at 1430. Fruit (watermelon, peaches) was offered between dives. The skipper and DM were fairly accommodating on site selection and didn't mind going south or north or to Klein Bonaire (where diving and viz was a bit better). Air was 88-100 degrees F in the day with overnight lows of 75-80. Tradewinds made it bearable. No bugs. There is a \$25 U/W park fee good for the calendar year. A mandatory briefing occurs the first day with an unsupervised "checkout" dive afterwards. Consequently, you miss the first morning boat dives but are allowed to make it up with a night dive

(Monday and Thursday) or an afternoon dive. You can't dive the Salt Pier without both Harbor Master permission and a D/M. They cite the threat of terrorism as the reason. However, when terrorists start blowing up Bonaire's Salt Pier, we're in big trouble. "Action" Jackson (a Toucan D/M) had a major side business charging \$25 a head to take you there (and he doesn't mention the fee until you're loading tanks in the back of your pickup truck). My ten-year-old daughter completed her O/W referral certification here with Instructor "Danny," a Dutch female. Danny was competent and worked effectively with little ones. Thirteen dives later Sierra saw sea horses, morays, and frog fish. The Plaza's beach is "topless" and a lot of European females bare themselves shamelessly. Thank goodness us married guys had dark sunglasses. Whereas nearly 100% of the Americans on Bonaire are divers it doesn't appear that more than a third of the Dutch and other Europeans dive. The Europeans outnumbered the Americans two to one at the Plaza, a Dutch-owned resort. The staff at the Plaza was exceptional: Polite, courteous, helpful and cheerful. Some bartenders at the Coconut Crush Beach Bar who were a mite surly. The Caribbean Point restaurant on-site was excellent with a great staff. The Tippy Seagull, also on site, was a bit pricey and the food only fair. If you night dive, there is no restaurant on-site open except the Seagull and you need reservations and a spare hundred dollars. We ate at The Casablanca (Argentinian flair and expensive), The Rib Factory, near the town pier, (very good), the KFC (What can I say?). The most

memorable was Giorgio's and Donna's, a Pizza and Pasta place. The diving was good to excellent on the Caribbean scale but the reefs and sites all look pretty much the same after a few dives. Shore diving may be as easy as it gets, but it still involves getting sand all over everything and loading and unloading gear. Plus, thefts from vehicles have reached epidemic proportions we were advised. (We never saw a police officer in the week we were there). Visibility on the Hilma Hooker dive was a disappointing 50 feet, the worst of any site. Air Jamaica tries real hard, but time is never of the essence. Curiously, before every landing the flight attendants went over the crash procedures in earnest. There is a \$20/person departure tax (U.S. dollars). US money or N.A. guilders are accepted everywhere. Toucan Diving had no lockers for us until the last days. They were so busy they were even turning down training requests. The aluminum tanks were filled between 2700 and 2900 PSI and were available in 80, 63, and 50 CF configurations. Rentals are extensive and well maintained. Nitrox fills were invariable in the 33% range. Unless you are going to shore dive, skip the vehicle rental. Tanks are always available 24/7. For new divers it doesn't get much better. For experienced divers, there is always something to see.

Plaza Resort, September 2005, Paul Schmieder (pschmieder@sbcglobal.net), Bellville, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm. Our package included room for two, truck for the week, unlimited shore diving and 12 boat dives. I am unsure why including the boat diving in our

package saved us on our overall cost as the al a carte totals, two for one dive package, etc. was totally –confusing yet, when the tally was prepared, the final costs worked out fine and we decided it was better to just allow them to run their calculator however they chose. Dive operations were great and, though there remains damage to the corals from the hurricane that brushed by 5 years ago, regrowth is evident and the fish life is superb. A night dive on Town Pier is a must-do and an afternoon dive at the Salt Pier is also recommended. Both require a guide that is easily provided by the dive operation staff.

Sand Dollar Condominiums, February 2005, Dean Knudson (deanknudson@yahoo.com), Golden Valley, MN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F., calm. The Sand Dollar complex is getting old, but is still comfortable. It is noticeably more run down than Captain Don's immediately to the north. The exterior paint is peeling, and the interior of the condominiums date from the early eighties. The restaurants and the bar at Captain Don's, next door, are nicer and livelier, and the rooms there appear more up to date. The Sand Dollar is quiet, and all of the rooms have a nice ocean view. The main restaurant and bar, Mango's, was being renovated. A small temporary, tin-roofed restaurant and bar had been placed on the ocean, mid-complex, and was pleasant, a beautiful spot to have breakfast, and had a gorgeous happy hour sunset. The restaurant staff were attentive and agreeable, particularly the couple who ran the breakfast buffet. Bedroom air

conditioning was adequate. Opening the windows on allowed a brisk breeze to cool off the living area. The balconies are spacious and have plenty of room to dry out equipment. We had read reports regarding crime and theft on the island, so used a wire mesh Pac-Safe (campmor.com) around a duffel bag, which we padlocked to a large electrical cable in the closet of the condo. We placed all of the computers and other valuables that did not fit into the small room safe into this bag. We also used a portable movement alarm (guarddog.net/halarm) on the bag to discourage anyone from touching it. There is an Internet Café adjacent to the property, with wireless access. Telephone cards can be purchased for about five dollars. Shore diving sounds like a free spirited fun adventure, however it involves hauling 50 to 100 pounds of equipment 50 to 200 yards to and from the water, in 95 degree heat, while walking over sharp stones. It is risky to leave any object inside a rental car, making the process even more inconvenient. Overall, our group was not impressed with this "freedom," and preferred the boat dives. Moreover, the rental trucks receive heavy use and are prone to problems. We had three flat tires. The maintenance staff of the resort agreed to take care of our tire repairs for a modest cash tip. Apparently the cactus needles covering the island eventually work their way into many tires, and it is necessary to use the rental trucks on dirt roads to access many of the dive sites. Ask the rental car company to demonstrate how to lower the spare from the bottom of the truck using the long crank handle before you leave the

rental shop. You may be stranded in a rural area in a hot climate, for hours, waiting for help, and always bring adequate water and something to set up some shade. Bonaire Dive Adventures has two dive boats, both of which are crowded. It is best to arrive early for a trip, and claim a seat near the front of the boat. The seats in the rear have no shade, and receive a good deal of spray. The boats typically are always full, and if you do not reserve a spot by 2 P.M. the previous day, you may not have a spot, which a miscommunication caused our last day. We asked if the staff would telephone another dive shop to assist us, they politely refused, and we politely declined to tip for the week. There is an abundance of small fish life, but most of the reefs look alike. The coral is healthy, but it is difficult to distinguish one site from another, even on Klein Bonaire, or on the far north side of the island. Experienced divers will be disappointed, somewhat, by the quality of the diving. We did the Hilma Hooker dive, which was structured according to a strict dive table 10 minute bottom time limit; many of us wore computers, and could have stayed at depth much longer. The capital city is quite pretty, and is as yet unspoiled by cruise ships. The Dutch have been good stewards of the island. It is fun to drive around and the wind surfing facility on the far side of the island is worth an afternoon. Wind surfers can be rented there, and the beer is cheap. Some nights there were fairly lively parties, and other nights it seemed as though the entire island was quiet. Groceries are astonishingly expensive. It may actually be cheaper to eat at local restaurants than

to attempt to prepare food inside the condo, with the exception of spaghetti or ramen noodles. The Argentinian restaurant downtown serves a gigantic \$15 platter of beef. UW Photography Comments: The dive boats are small and crowded. There was a small bucket for cameras. There was little room to make any adjustments with camera equipment.

Wannadive, Yacht Club Apts., February 2005, Phil Donehoo, Dawsonville, GA. Experience: 200+ dives. Vis: 50 to 100 ft. Water: 75 to 82 F, calm & flat, choppy. Back for the first time since 1984 (stayed Divi then). I stayed at Yacht Club Apts.. after reading about it in Chapbook. Good location, arranged a car and could not have been easier. Went out first with Phototours Yellow Submarine, and I observed total confusion. After two days (one good boat dive, I will admit), I moved to Wannadive, also heard through Chapbook. In 15 minutes more help and information than in two days at Yellow Submarine. Took us to little hurricane damage. I must give them high, high marks. Richards, Rains Fishes, Paris Bistro very good food. Only small fish and critters but in summary, Bonaire may not be a filet mignon but it is still a good prime rib.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Grand Cayman got slammed by hurricane Ivan in September 2004, and thousands of resident's homes Cayman were seriously damaged or destroyed. The readers' comments reflect that most businesses

are back and the reefs, though somewhat affected, are still attractive. Arguably the best diving is on Little Cayman and boats from the Brac make regular trips, though at times winter weather prevents the journey.

Cayman Brac

Brac Reef Resort, November 2004, Randy Cooper, Glen Ellyn, IL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, choppy, surge, currents. Our worries about hurricane damage were unfounded. Damage was light: the resort lost one of its two piers, and a few trees, but everything else was fully operable. Travel was a hassle because of flight cancellations, but hey UW Photography Comments: Separate areas on boats; separate rinse tanks, photo pro on site (Ed Beatty); overnight E6; some photo equipment rental and repair.

Brac Reef Beach Resort, November 2004, Glenn Gracom, New Smyrna Beach, FL. Experience: 500 dives. Vis: 100+ ft. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. Both the resort and dive operation were first class. Excellent location to dive and relax. We did the two morning dives six days during our seven-day visit but chose not to do afternoon dive. No night life. Beautiful grounds with hammocks and swimming pool. Hot tub on premises but not operational during our visit. Three a day buffet menus were excellent. Diving was first rate, as was the Reef Diver crew. Mick and Chris were outstanding boat operators and divemasters. Both gave excellent briefings and provided helpful hints.