

Sun Dancer II, September 2005, Julie Conner (snow_julie@hotmail.com), Seabrook, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 86 to 88 F, calm. The boat was well run. We had 8 staff for 15 divers. We didn't go to the blue hole and had a couple of dives cancelled due to weather, but the overall experience was good. Most life was above 80 feet. Most of the boat was diving enriched air and we got our certification while on board. Lots of corals, we saw lots of small stuff. Not as many large groups of big fish as in Honduras or Bonaire. Food was excellent, the staff was good about remembering likes and dislikes. If you are thinking about certification and have health issues, get releases from physician before leaving home. It will save hassles. UW Photography Comments: No on board expert when we went, but lots of other divers willing to share experiences.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Aggressor, May 2005 and August 2005, Lorna Weible (mweible@juno.com), Magnolia, TX. Experience: 275 dives. Vis: 130 feet. Water: 83 to 86 F, Calm and flat. Top-flight crew on both trips. Captain willing to move boat at any time to find perfect conditions. We had water-ski conditions in August and some rain in May. Diving in Grand Cayman has taken a hit from Ivan. Lots of broken coral compared to several years ago. Bloody Bay Wall and Capt. Keith Tibbits are still sensational. Shore excursion to Little Cayman is interesting, and Terry is entertaining. This is for those who would like a mid-week

break from 5 dives/day. Excellent briefings. The crew really enjoys working together and they enjoy their jobs. The only negative would be the blood worms on the night dives Y at times they were so thick they would cloud out the light from your dive light.

Aggressor, June 2005, Chris Goumas (chrisgoumas@yahoo.com), Brunswick, OH. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F., calm. This was my second time on this boat. The boat is nice although I kept finding flaking white paint on my clothes. Rooms are tight but clean w/TV/DVD combo. Diving made easy with Nitrox or air fills without you needing to remove BC from tank. Food was great. Nice variety, quality, and lots of it. Barty was the cook and she did a wonderful job. The dive staff was great but didn't point out anything underwater (except for the night dives). I wish I would have brought ear drops. make sure you have correctly fitting booties so you don't get blisters. I had my Dramamine so I didn't get sick on the crossing between Grand and Little Cayman. I had problems with Steve the photo guy as I rented a camera that didn't work (came up in middle of dive to get a different camera, when I went back down it still didn't work). He set up the camera (once it was working) and all my shots were way too dark, I think the flash was out of sync with the camera because some shots I took without the flash looked like those with the flash. He blamed me saying I was expecting perfection on each picture... give me a break. He did make sure I had a working camera for 4 dives though.

Nice big camera table with places to charge batteries and dry camera. On board computer to view digital pics, and video processing for slides. Dedicated fresh water bin for cameras. Camera pro wasn't helpful for me but may have been for more experience photographers.

SABA/ST. EUSTATIUS/ ST. KITTS

Caribbean Explorer II, September 2004, James Bolton (jstarbry2000@yahoo.com), Atlanta, GA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. Caribbean Explorer II is in good condition. The cabins are comfortable but the boat's diesel is relatively noisy, even in the most forward cabins. Light sleepers may have some difficulty. There were only 11 divers on board. The boat's capacity is 18 but the cabins would feel extremely small for two persons and there is not seating for 18 at meals. Compared to places such as Lighthouse Reef in Belize and West Caicos, the condition of the coral is not that good. Diving on the pinnacles off Saba feels more adventurous but not one in eleven wanted to do more diving there when offered. I think this is because at the depth, the dives are short, currents somewhat stronger and much less in the way of reef life. Great variety of crabs, lobsters, eels, worms, shrimp and sea slugs; things you may not see often at other locations. Perhaps due to the recent storms, much of the shallower areas were covered in a layer of silt, giving much of the reef a brown

tinge. Visibility ranged from good to murky, despite the calm conditions on the surface and little current at depth at most of the other dive sites. The Caribbean Explorer crew does not pamper the way that Peter Hughes boats are known to do. Captain Jim was personable enough as well as John the cook. The crew is turning over almost completely except for the captain. Dominique is now aboard as cook and Jon has gone to the dive deck. Separate rinse tank provided. Charging area provided. Large workspace available for cameras only. Crew was prepared and able to help with camera handling.

Caribbean Explorer, April 2005, Marc & Anne Bressman (mbressman116712@comcast.net), Cherry Hill, NJ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy, currents. Much of the diving—Saba and Statia — was too deep for leisurely dives. Visibility was just okay and there was only one great dive—a night dive that included watching an eel devour a sergeant major. Crossings were rough. Since they were at night they prevented sleep. The cabin was cramped, especially the shower.

Caribbean Explorer II, May 2005, Shelagh McGillicuddy (littlechaos3211@yahoo.com), Orlando, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 45 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 to 83 F., calm. We had to schlep our luggage through a parade to get to the boat in St. Maarten because it was Carnival. We just went with the flow. The boat accommodates 18 divers but there were only 7 so there was no crowding. We spent 3 days diving in the Saba marine