

with departure at 9:30am. These operators also go in the afternoon.

Sunset Waters, April 2005, April, CG, Boston, MA. Booked a trip with Sunset Waters and your piece came out the following day. It was pretty much right on. The resort was low keyed barefoot casual with good food with a local staff that bent over backwards to please you. The dive operation was first class and the diving was easy and sweet. Not a lot of big guys but enlightening visibility and prolific reefs with lots of macro opportunities. The staff is delightful and Mike is the high voltage fast talking owner, removed from the hands-on daily operations. Steve, Mike's partner, is a real sweetheart and has all the schmooze that makes for a perfect trip. The rest of the staff is top shelf and the ease of their operation is the perfect no-brainer dive trip. A dive club that came through Jamaica with lots of their luggage getting lost and not arriving till the day they left. Seems this is a common occurrence with Jamaica airlines through Jamaica. The proximity of the reefs being so close to shore with great visibility and beautiful corals is a treat not to miss. The diving reminds of Bonaire back in the 70s.

Sunset Waters Beach Resort, May 2005, Jim and Terri Turner, Binghamton, NY. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F., calm, no currents. Caring, attentive staff and great service, it's our favorite Caribbean spot. The food is excellent and my vegetarian husband is spoiled with attention. Sunset Divers, is the best, with professional, knowledgeable

instructors and staff. Kevin, Lynn, Carlos, Steve and Kurt are fun, provide lots of support to and instill confidence in new divers and others advancing their skills. They are eager to find new critters, e.g., frog fish, seahorses, pipefish, leopard flatworms, etc., always willing to help identify species we find on shore dives. The boats are clean, well cared-for and comfortable for 20+ divers. The house reef is excellent, and we dive it every afternoon/evening and always find something different from turtles and seahorses to slipper lobsters and octopi, and a flying gurnard.

DOMINICA

Dominica is the best all-around adventure island in the Caribbean, with gorgeous reefs, plenty of tropical fish (nothing sizeable), lush rainforests, hiking, waterfalls, warm water springs, splendid fruits and vegetables, modest hotels and restaurants — and it's inexpensive. Small seaside hotels and diver retreats are affected by the nearly continuous cloud cover over the mountains, and there's not much happening beyond residents leading their lives. Expect daytime temperatures in the 80s and night lows around 68 in winter and 73 in summer, although a few minutes up the mountain into the cloud forest can change that. July to November is the wet season. Dominica's at the edge of the hurricane belt. The 13-mile round-trip hike to Boiling Lake is beautiful and a good work out.

Anchorage Dive Center, June 2004, Jeff Bloomer (jlbdiver@aol.com), Hebron, KY. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. The island is drop dead gorgeous. From the moment your plane makes the approach to the landing strip you think you are on some sort of King Kong movie set, flying through lush mountain passes. The people are friendly, honest, and really understand what a special island they have. Our cab driver stopped many times along the way to show us cashew trees, nutmeg, banana, lemon grass, you name it. The diving was great too. We had the boat to ourselves up to the last couple of days so our small group of 5 divers and 1 snorkeler had our pick of dive sites. Paul the captain and Richard the DM were top notch. We never touched our gear, it was always rinsed and hanging up for us if we wanted to shore dive and on the boat every morning ready to go. Richard and Paul were entertaining and made a lot of good suggestions on what to do and where to eat. As far as dive restrictions...forget about it. When other divers were done with their dive Richard would take me and a few others off and do some exploring to burn up our air. Usually the DMs are banging on their tanks telling me its time to go. Tons of eels, jaw fish, tropicals, lobster, sea horses, schools of squid, etc. Swiss Cheese (a dive site) is in my top 5 of all dives, a real must. We rented the whale watching boat, a large motorized cat, to snorkel with sperm whales. We were out less than 20 minutes and were in the water with 2 females and a calf. Having these huge animals dive right in front of me and roll on their side to take a

look at me was heart stopping. With an indigenous population of sperm whales you can see these big boys year around. The Anchorage hotel is OK. Castle Comfort was nicer but they gave away my reservations so they are not high on my list although I would stay there if the dive operation hires Richard and Paul! Evergreen was also nice. Have a meal at both these places but make reservations at Castle Comfort because the restaurant is small. The only bad experience I had was in setting up a trip to water falls. The driver, Earl, wanted to change the price after we agreed on the amount.

Anchorage Hotel and Dive Center, January 2005, Jim Gibson, Springfield, MO. Experience: 280 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 ft. Water: 80 to 72 F, calm, flat. Dominica's land activities make it a unique dive destination. Hiking in the rain forest and swimming in the pool at the base of Trafalgar Falls are well worth the trip and easily arranged by the staff at the dive shop at the Anchorage Hotel. Boiling Lake was closed because the water level in the lake had dropped unexpectedly so we went whale watching on our day off from diving and saw four whales, one of which swam lazily under our boat. The diving was excellent, the corals healthy and fish life abundant with the usual Caribbean species. Several scorpion fish, seahorses (one on a night dive) and free-swimming snake eels. The Anchorage Hotel is comfortable and clean, and the dive shop personnel friendly and helpful. The restaurant food was good but the service slow and the prices modest.

Anchorage Dive Center, August 2005, Tom Greenway (ag22591@aol.com), Wilmington, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 50 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. We each (my 14 and 15-year-old sons) dove 18 dives over nine days and hiked also. I found the dive operation well organized and professional. Richard and Stone were everywhere they needed to be. Newer divers were given special attention and the experienced given lots of room. The boats were spotless. We dove with as few two others and as many as 16. The smaller 30' was great for up to 8 ... then the nice 65' whale cat was used for larger groups. With the larger groups the big boat was great ... the DMs would split the groups and after a minor traffic jam getting in you wouldn't know there were so many w/you. The cat was only needed two days. You could always get out of the sun on either boat. The boats from Dive Dominica, which is directly next door appeared always have huge groups, as many as 20 on a much smaller boat. All gear was removed from the boat nightly and rinsed in warm soapy water. The diving is best described as a huge aquarium. Spectacular colors, sponges and corals, amazing critters everywhere. I know my boys " finding stuff" skills improved dramatically as did mine. There was no reason to go deep as most of the life was 60' or less. Turtles every dive. Most dives are easy. When the DMs had confidence in the boatload's abilities, we were taken around Scott's Head to the Atlantic side that is great because it different. A little deeper, not as many critters, but great formations. I especially enjoyed "condominium." Currents can and will

kick up on these dives. Another great dive was the unmarked "Craters Edge," where adult fish go when they graduate from the Scott's Head reefs. You can shore dive in front of the hotel, a nice shallow warm-up type dive w/a small lively reef. The surface intervals were treats, one spent cruising w/at least 30 jumping dolphins while riding up front with my feet almost touching them. Another to watch a turtle lay eggs, unmolested by the curious villagers of Soufriere, and another at Soufriere on a Sunday, in time to watch the villagers leave church in their Sunday's finest. The hotel owns the dive operation, definite mixed bag. They forgot to pick us up at the airport requiring we stand around for 1.5 hours while the house driver sped from the hotel to pick us up, while fending off volunteer replacement cabbies. Apparently the best job on Dominica is being a cabby giving tours, because we were asked constantly — annoying. You had to hire a driver to go to any hike . . . and it's expensive. A fellow diver took back his rental car after one afternoon as driving was " terrifying" in his words. Our big rooms were clean, mattress good, the noisy a/c worked well, nice view, one room rarely had hot water and a faucet leaked a lot and no one cared after three tries at pointing it out. Hood was also a mixed bag. Breakfasts classic American truck stop. lots of it...usually enough left for a surface interval snack. Lunch and dinner inconsistent and slow. We liked the Evergreen and the Green Flash restaurants for evenings. Hiking: The boiling lake was great, but tough. Trafalgar Falls for an afternoon is cool as were the hot springs. We found the Caribe area dis-

appointing as it was one big basket sale w/little of historical significance. Scotts Head was fun to wander around. Be sure to ask for your bill well in advance as nothing happens fast at the front desk. The front desk can be indifferent. Locals are friendly and helpful. My wife never felt threatened while out by herself. Dominica is poor so be ready for people living as such. UW Photography: basically a dunk tank on the boat ... usually an igloo cooler.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort, Dominica, December 2004, Tom Hayes (tomhayes@cox.net), Pensacola, FL.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F., surge. Air connections were not good, but we did get our luggage on LIAT Airlines. Several groups staying the same week did not get theirs for two days. Castle Comfort is a basic 3-star lodge, with a good location on the water, a pool, hot tub and nice ocean side bar. Food was mostly local, with plenty to eat and some unique dishes. We were there during carnival week, and the bands next door practiced all night for three days — complete with loud music and vibration. Soundproofing was not good. Our package included breakfast and dinner. On Carnival Tuesday we were advised the staff would be off for the day after lunch. We did get a lunch, but ate dinner next door at the Evergreen Hotel — very good. Lodge was a mile from Roseau (the capital). Dive operations were decent. Very comfortable boats and gear was hauled and rinsed each day by the staff, although setup was left to the divers. They did mix up the weight pockets twice on similar weight integrated BCs, so my

wife had to return to the boat each time to adjust her weights. Divemasters changed several times so we had little chance to learn each other's dive routines. On most dives the divemasters just swam their routes and we were left to stay up or simply lag behind. Very little was pointed out to us — we had to find things on our own. Bottom time was supposed to be an hour, but on several dives we were brought up early. Viz was poor on a number of dives due to the surge which lasted most of the week. Corals were healthy, but most of the big fish had been taken by fisherman. Small critters were abundant and we saw a number that we had not seen in the rest of the Caribbean. Saw a spotted snake eel, numerous electric rays, various species of shrimp, a sea horse, more urchins than we had ever seen, and flying gurnards. Blennies and gobies were everywhere. Our best dives in terms of critters were off the dock- not much coral but a lot of life in the rocks and boulders. Boiling Lake was interesting, but had stopped boiling since the earthquake in Montserrat. They didn't tell us this before we took the hike, but it made little difference. The hike was strenuous, to say the least. The rain forest and the volcano calderas were worth the trip. The hotel staff was helpful except during carnival. The carnival itself was an experience, except for the noise at night. The Dominicans were all friendly. On several occasions we were offered drugs on our walks to town. Panhandlers were rare. The main drag was littered with trash, and not sanitary, but the mountain rivers were extremely clean and drinkable. Tap water was excellent.

Dive Dominica, Fort Young Hotel, December 2004, Steven Levin, Arlington, VA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 75 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm. Dive Dominica. I had read that they were a good outfit, no limits on dive times, etc. Not true. Every dive limited to 60 minutes. They pushed for short surface intervals. All dives 15-20 minutes from their shop. They refused to go to better sites that were a bit further out. No assistance on the boat or in the water. We have 10 dives for each of the three members in our family. They refused to allow us to use some of the dives from our daughter. Fort Young. Arrived and they said — you know we are doing construction! They did not tell us they were doing major construction from 7 AM to 8 PM every day — Christmas and New Years included! No offer of compensation, nothing.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort, June 2005, Edward Leibowitz, Jersey City, NJ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. I did 13 dives and was a bit disappointed in the repetition of the dive sites; three each at Witches Point and Champagne. I would have preferred more variety. Mostly saw smaller reef fish on dives. Saw a couple of good-size turtles and an occasional barracuda. Nitrox is \$90 for 10 dives. It is better to pay cash than using a credit card at diving resorts. You get a better exchange rate. I had a similar experience at Walindi Plantation last year. Breakfast was included in my package. The rest of the meals were not included. Lunch had to be pre-ordered at breakfast. You could obtain a large vegetarian pizza at lunch for \$13 US. However suppers were \$28 plus a

service charge. I enjoyed the food at the Taiwanese restaurant close to Castle Comfort. The food at the Fort Young Hotel was good. You could sit in the bar vicinity and purchase good food at moderate prices. However, eating in their dining room was rather expensive. I tipped the head of diving \$50 and asked him to distribute tips to the boat crew and dive guides. Dominica is a poor island and I was occasionally approached by beggars while walking to town. I visited Titou Gorge (Trafalgar waterfalls and hot springs — great trip) and saw 8 sperm whales and many dolphins on the whale watching cruise.

Nature Island Dive, Galette Cottage, March 2005, Darren Dawson (darren.dawson@ces.clemson.edu), Clemson, SC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F. Diving here was the best in comparison to Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, Belize (Lighthouse Atoll), Hawaii (Kona), Bonaire, Cozumel, Utila and the Bahamas. Breath-taking color on the reefs, which are covered with large sponges and corals of every color imaginable, most with crinoids growing in and around them. A wide angle lens is a must. It was not extremely clear as there seemed to be a good bit of particulate floating in the water, but we were awestruck by the breathtaking colors here. We dove with Nature Island Divers (NID) in the southern village of Soufriere and stayed at a nearby cottage owned by the dive shop. NID tried to go to the sites we requested each day and they took us out on multiple night boat dives, even with just the two of us as customers. NID is on the Soufriere/Scotts Head Bay, which offers the best diving

on the island. All of our dives were conducted in and around the bay, so boat rides were usually between 5-15 minutes and we always returned to the shop between dives for our surface interval. Soufriere is a small fishing village without much in the way of accommodations or restaurants, near the southwestern end of the island, about a mile from Scotts Head. The town is not particularly attractive, with make-shift shacks and abandoned or neglected buildings and chickens and dogs freely roam. There are no sandy beaches as the shoreline is composed of smooth stones. The closest town within walking biking distance is Scotts Head, and it was similar. We did not find the people in this area to be overly friendly to tourists. Many people stay in hotels in the larger city of Rouseau about 20 minutes north of Soufriere. We stayed in the upper apartment at NID's Galette Cottage on the bay. The cottage was nice, similar to a small lake cabin here in the States, with a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and den, and a covered porch overlooking the ocean. There is no A/C, but the windows and the louvered panels in the bedroom and den allowed for plenty of cool air. The road between Soufriere and Scotts Head runs about 5 feet behind the cottage, so you do get traffic noise and the waves at night can also be quite loud, so you may want to bring earplugs. The dive shop provided us with bicycles to travel back and forth from the shop to the cottage, 4-5 minutes. The dive sites consisted of walls and pinnacles for the deeper dives, and scattered coral heads in the shallower areas. There were some macro critters, but not as many here as

other places like Bonaire. We found one juvenile seahorse and one adult, but the frogfish were nowhere. We didn't see any large animals (no turtles or sharks, etc.) but there were schools of small fish, and always large schools of black-bar soldierfish in the swim-throughs at Scotts Head Pinnacle. Among the most common fish during the day were parrotfish, damselfish, drums, chromis, longsnout butterflyfish, trumpetfish, trunkfish, scorpionfish, grunts and squirrelfish. We saw few angelfish, and only occasional butterflyfish other than the longsnout. On the night dives, we saw numerous lobsters and crabs of many varieties and occasionally squid; no octopus. Our favorite dive sites included Scotts Head Pinnacle, Condo, Crater's Edge and the Abyss. NID has 3 covered pontoon boats (1 large and two medium-sized), allowing for smooth rides to the dive sites, most of which are between 5 and 15 minutes from the dock. The divemasters set up our gear each day and took our gear between the boat and the dive shop, which is located just a short walk across the street from the dock. Our main divemasters during the week were Wefee and Oscar. Tony took us on one night dive and Simon dove with us on our last day. Selwyn served as our boat captain most days. All of these guys were great — they let us go at our own pace but also pointed out interesting fish, critters, etc.

GUADELOUPE

Guadeloupe, a French island with not much English spoken, has never been on the map of American divers. Jacques Cousteau wrote glow-