

ers make their living fishing, and it shows. They've fished out all the sharks. Saw many queen angels and some of the usual Caribbean fish . . . just fewer of them. Plentiful macro stuff. All the dive operations on the island are trying to help the islanders understand that over fishing will hurt their economy, but the fishing continues. For the price of an all-inclusive, including 17 dives, it's a great deal. They have Nitrox and you can dive all 17 dives for \$100.

## JAMAICA

Jamaica has nothing for a serious diver, with much of the coral burned out and any fish that is large enough to eat gets caught. Still, it's a beautiful island, with plenty of upscale accommodations and great food.

**Beaches, Sandals, June 2005, R. Moore, Ph.D. (padidm@earthlink.net), Vista, CA.** Restrictions so severe you don't want to dive. On one dive reef was at 80 ft. but we couldn't go past 60 ft. The limits made sure everyone had a half tank at the end of the dive. No dock so you waded into the chest-deep water carrying your gear. No photo table or camera rinse bucket, only a shower that was like spraying on your camera. Crew provided no service because tipping was not allowed. We did do one 90-ft wreck dive after we all complained.

**Sandals Montego Bay, December 2004, Barb Brauch and Larry Klick, Plymouth, MN.** Experience: 185+ dives. Vis: 30 to 50 ft. Water: choppy. Coral

seemed dead, no fish! Each dive site had own 6' x 6' cage to trap fish and crustaceans. Divemaster said fishermen placed them, but we were always taken to them for show. Bottom time was 60 ft. for 30 minutes. It was an all-inclusive resort, so we felt there was no incentive to go diving. During our week, we were able to dive only twice.

## MEXICO

All the comments here were written before Cozumel, Cancun, Isla Mujeres and the environs were hammered by hurricane Emily. Diving is deeper in Cozumel, so it can be less affected by hurricanes. Many operators cater to experienced divers – but some load boats with all comers. Many Cozumel dives are drifts. Carry surface-signaling devices (strobe, safety sausage, etc.). The best diving is in spring and summer. While it can be rainy in the fall (hurricane season) and winter, heavy rains closed the island for a week in June 2004. Accommodations range from small inexpensive hotels to diver hangouts to high dollar hotels. Many divers take day trips to the mainland to dive the freshwater cenotes. Along the coast, there are dive operations from Cancun south, but the diving is mainly patch reef diving. Isla Mujeres, off Cancun, has some decent reef diving and a drift or two. Whale sharks spend several summer weeks northwest of Cancun, near the island of Holbox, where one can just about be guaranteed to snorkel with scores of