

to they could to ruin our vacation and they succeeded. UW Photography Comments: The dive master did have fresh water rinse on the boat and shore for the cameras. There was no flat surface to dry the camera and change rolls of film.

ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia lies in the hurricane belt west of Barbados. Diving on this beautiful, heavily-forested island is fine for beginners and vacationers, with pretty reefs and tiny fish. On the southwestern part of the island is the better diving but it's rigidly controlled. The year-round high is in the 80s days; night lows are in the 70s. Afternoon cloudbursts are common. Great spot for a nondiving vacation, however.

Anse Chastanet, August 2004, Russ & Mary Battisto (Russ_Battisto@comcast.net), **Ros-ville, MN.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm. Travel from airport to resort and back was the only "bumpy" portion of our trip. Accommodations, food and service were above average to great! Diving was controlled and fun but geared for a beginner to average diver. Advanced divers would find this trip somewhat boring although relaxing. No large fish, mainly small tropical and micro life to see/take pictures of. Dive operators wanted us to have fun and, after seeing we were capable divers, allowed us to do our thing and left us alone. Only challenging dive, the second night dive when currents were

strong and switched directions mid-dive. Newer divers in a different group decided to invade our space and made it difficult to navigate back to shore. All made it back without incident but it was challenging.

Anse Chastanet, October 2004, Laurie & Kerry Watts (klwatts@earthlink.net), **Charlotte, NC.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm. Reefs are healthy with large schools of typical fish — angels, parrotfish, butterfly fish, Creole wrasse, fairy basslets, blue chromis, etc. Lack of large species such as grouper, barracuda, sharks, turtles, rays etc. Scuba St. Lucia is at Anse Chastanet. Lockers and spacious rinse facilities are available to divers. Most of the staff is friendly and helpful, especially the divemasters. Some administrative staff can't be bothered. The Anse Chastanet Reef is a shore dive right off of the resort which is one of the best dives. You may see it a lot as there are only 2 single tank boat dives per day and all other dives are shore dives. The shore dives are guided as can't go it alone. Were told they offer an additional boat dive in the morning if we had four or more divers, but when we got four divers to reserve an early morning dive, they told us that the dive boat was being used to escort other guests to Castries for a shopping trip. Having booked a dive package, we were annoyed that we the divers didn't seem to be a priority to the dive shop. The Anse Chastanet is 25 miles from the airport but the trip took a hot and dusty 1.5 hours because of the poor roads and construction. Beautiful resort with amazing architectural design built into the side of a mountain near the

town of Soufriere. You need to climb at least 118 steps once or more a day. The restaurant and hillside rooms offer spectacular views of the ocean and the Pitons. The rooms are amazing with West Indian decor and an open design, using slats instead of windows. No TV's, phones or A/C. We were happy with our beach deluxe room but note that these rooms are not directly on the beach, but tucked away in a garden area near the beach. There is some noise in the evenings from the live entertainment and you hear the staff arrive every morning at 6am. Food at the resort is mediocre, but the roads are too treacherous to venture out at night to another restaurant. A la carte prices off the menu are outrageous so get your meals in a package.. Every night, we had entertainment such as a jazz trio or a steel drum band. The black sand beach is great with beach huts and lounge chairs. You can stake your flag outside your beach hut when you're ready for a pina colada or some lunch. St. Lucia is one of the most beautiful, romantic islands we've visited.

Anse Chastanet, April 2005, Robert (rcwhitejr@comcast.net), Lakewood, CO. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F., calm. No air conditioning and 200-300 stairs to climb. One or two nights it was hot. Guests sleep with mosquito netting and citronella mosquito coils going, reminding me of my youth. Bugs were not a problem. A German chef makes wonderful pasta dishes as you watch. The food is incredible. Staff is friendly and go out of their way to be of service and helpful. You can eat at the beach restaurant on most evenings (more

informal) or European style at the sit-down restaurant 200 stairs up at the reception level. Breakfast is good and includes a nice buffet, repetitive after 7 days. Architecture and artwork are incredible making this resort a romantic place. The diving was excellent — our package included an orientation and 2-3 boat dives per day. Supposedly there is unlimited shore diving, but because of the stairs it's a hassle. You also can't just go out with your buddy — dives require arrangement in advance and must include a divemaster. The night dives were fantastic and I was able to catch a glimpse of St. Lucia's notorious "The Thing" creature behind the rocks for a real thrill. The diving is similar to Dominica — steep wall dives, large barrel sponges — and numerous brain corals, abundance of sergeant majors (who were spawning), squirrel fish and trumpet fish. Huge numbers of small fish, which reminded me a bit of fish balls I've seen in Galapagos and Indonesia. Many divers commented that fish were rebounding in numbers here at the resort in the past ten years or so which is now a protected marine sanctuary. UW Photography Comments: Rinse tank available for UWP equipment at the dive shack. Freshwater tanks available on MV Bertha and Ina for UWP provided they know you want to use them in advance. Both boats could set up a table for cameras.

Anse Chastanet, June 2005, Mark & Lynn Thorne (thorne@mindspring.com), Raleigh, NC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Beautiful surroundings and hotel. Food was gourmet and varied daily. The hotel staff was accommo-

dating and customer-friendly. St. Lucia Scuba appears to be run by zealous control freaks. We found unnecessarily strict rules and guidelines that were reluctantly enforced by dive masters. Dive crew was as customer friendly as their "masters" would allow them to be. If you answer "yes" to any medical question, be prepared to have the dive operator restrict you from diving. The only way they would consider allowing you to dive was with a letter from DAN. (This affected several people in our group.) Call ahead and talk to the dive operator about their dive restrictions.

Anse Chastanet, July 2005, Joe Mihm (j.mihm@att.net), Borger, TX. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 120 Feet. Water: 84 to 88 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Beautiful resort. Great beach with cabanas and bar service, nice bar and a couple of places to eat. The view from our room was breathtaking view of the Pitons. I took a walking tour of the plantation and it was great! Our guide was extremely knowledgeable. No AC. Our room was comfortable due to location...we always had a breeze. Steps....a couple of hundred up to my room from the restaurant level and a couple of hundred down to the beach from the restaurant level. The steps going to the beach were hand made and it seemed that no two were the same. I left a sweat trail everywhere I went. We asked for things in the restaurant and never received them. The answer to every question was yes but getting action on anything was a different matter. I think the service was better if you were not on the meal plan. On the Anse Chastanet web site they claim to be in a marine park. To me that means no net-

ting, trapping or any other type of fishing. The beach at the resort is not in the park. Fishermen show up every evening and use a tree on the beach to anchor their net. We saw several active fish traps at dive sites that were inside the alleged marine park. We paid a fee to dive in the marine park and got a little token for it. I wonder where the rest of the money went. A park boat came and checked our boat a couple of times but he drove right by the fishermen. Marine park my butt! UW Photography Comments: Rinse tank was a small plastic tub with less than five gallons of water in it. There was no camera prep area or dry area for cameras. Tub has 5 small camera and my housed camera in it. We needed another tub. The response was "we'll take care of it". It never happened.

ST. MAARTEN

French St. Martin and Dutch St. Maarten are two nations in one, with wonderful beaches, superb hotels, fine cuisine. A few diver operators are trying to find better diving for experienced divers, but the cruise ships dominate.

Dive Adventures, Pelican Bay Resort, September 2005, Bruce Wallace (laos61@excite.com), Indianapolis, IN. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 84 to 88 F, calm, surge. The colors are as good as anywhere; there are well over 300 species of fish; Saba has lots of large pelagics and the famous pinnacles; St. Barths is alive with excellent corals; wrecks abound around St. Maarten and