

ruins or area on your own. Our room was huge with lots of plugs and space.

BERMUDA

Triangle Divers, Grotto Bay Beach Hotel, July 2006, George T Felt (gfelt@verizon.net), Moultonborough, NH. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, no currents. Grotto Bay Hotel provides convenient access to Triangle Dive operation and comfortable accommodations. Food and drink are expensive (breakfast: \$22) but good, and generally good service. Try the “Swizzle Inn” restaurant next door for variety, and get the meal plan if you’re staying for a while. Hotel is near airport and bus line, but otherwise distant from anything one might wish to do. Scooter rental is convenient and worthwhile or get the extended bus pass. Taxis are always available, but long distances high costs. Triangle Divers is a well run operation with friendly and attentive staff. Graham is the captain and owner/operator of the shop — a likeable and knowledgeable chap. Bring your own gear or rent whatever you need — the important stuff (all ScubaPro) is in good shape, but you should try to bring your own wetsuit and fins if possible (limited selection of rental gear). The boat is solid but slow, and has a marine head. Staff changes tanks for you between dives — it’s pretty much full service and well done. The dive destinations are somewhat limited by the range of the boat. I did two days of two-tank boat dives at good sites, then took a day off (they don’t go out Tues). Then I repeated the sites again on the next two days. I rather enjoyed it, but some would object to the repetition. Talk to Graham — he is

honest and will tell you what the plan is (but as wind, weather, and boat may limit the available options you may have to choose between revisiting a site and skipping the dive action for a day. Look for thousands of purple sea squirts on “The Dredger” — an unusual and lovely thing to see. Excellent and diverse coral, good swim-throughs, and interesting wrecks provided good entertainment on every trip. Boat can be a bit crowded, but not always

Triangle Diving, Grotto Bay Resort, September 2006, William Fisher (wfisher2250@msn.com), Brigham City, UT. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 79 to 83 F, choppy, no currents. My wife and I had an outstanding experience in four days of diving with Graham Maddocks and Triangle Diving. We had some great dives and Graham runs a fine operation. After our first dive, we could pretty much do our thing or go with a divemaster and the rest of the group. Triangle always had 3-4 divemaster/guides in the water. We chose to dive on our own most of the time. We were always first in and last out, dove our profile and most dives lasted 1+ hour. The boat is equipped with all safety gear and the divemasters do a roll call after each dive. Graham and his entire crew made sure they that met all our desires. Dives consisted of wreck dive and then a reef. Grotto Bay Resort is a nice colonial style hotel. Our room overlooked the dive shop. The hotel is a nice 3 star resort and worth the stay. For dinner, I highly recommend the Lobster Pot in Hamilton.

BONAIRE

To many visitors, Bonaire’s attraction is shore diving, not only in

front of their hotels, but via rental car to one of a score of marked sites — but keep nothing in those cars 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 for easy divers and those who want to concentrate on photography.

Andre Nahr, Sand Dollar Condo-Hotel, May 2006, Irwin Spector (irwin_spector@msn.com), Canadensis, PA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 110 Feet. Water: 75 to 84 F, calm. Flying to Bonaire has become accommodating such as Air Jamaica to Montego Bay and change planes to Bonaire (waiting time approx. one to two hours) but arrive in Bonaire by 2.30pm. Continental Airlines will be flying direct nonstop flight from Newark to Bonaire on Sat 11.55pm and arrive Sun 5.30pm. Also, they similar flight from Houston to Bonaire also non-stop. Staying at Sand Dollar Condo and Hotels like living at home (from studio-one bedroom-two bedroom-three bedroom and town house). Hands off policy of diving. While diving with friends, had to leave them due to lack of air and started to swim back to the dock — started my ascent and came up to 10 feet, not realizing I had a medical problem. About 100 feet from the dock my lung collapsed. I managed to swim back to the dock unable to catch my breath and was unable to climb the stairs — Andre was the first person to arrive and, seeing my problem, placed me immediately on oxygen and arranged for the ambulance, the doctor and hospital room. I owe my life to Andre and his staff. Most of all, he visited me at the hospital morning and night every day I was there. He also forced me to call my wife and tell her of my accident as she was unable to come to Bonaire with me.

Bas Tol, November 2005, Wally Szaniawski. Shore diving on the windward side, tempting, is difficult because of rough seas and tricky, if not impossible access. One boat takes divers there, usually to the same two or three sites. Dutch diver, Bas Tol, shore dives the east (windward) side, and can take you there. He clocked thousands of dives and has over 20 established shore sites. On a given day few may be accessible, but, as a resort divemaster told me with envy, "Bas always goes." He would take one or two divers, maybe more if they match the skills and air consumption. We did three dives together. First, an easy one to check my skills, at Lac Cai. After a school of huge snappers, big midnight parrot fish and a thicket of tarpons in shallow murky water we reached a drop-off with 100+ visibility, four encounters with eagle rays, large number of huge snappers, groupers, schools of Bermuda chubs circling, green morays, turtles and the usual smaller stuff. On the way back, in shallow water, dozens of baby lobsters and an octopus. 91min bottom time, max 49 feet. The following morning the east side looked ominous, and the shore was pounded by big waves. No problem, for Bas that is. We arrived at an acceptable site (Bas has them ingeniously marked to take safe bearings) and entered near the lighthouse, to be greeted by a 10 + foot elkhorn, and proceeded to drift over the slope. Stunningly beautiful, with healthy soft and hard coral and 6 + foot sea fans gently moving with the surge. After a few minutes Bas turned toward the blue — waiting there, at 100 - 120 feet there was a circling school of huge snappers (some cubera snappers could be over 5 feet), soon joined by jacks. Visibility was 120 + feet. Turning toward the slope — a big aggregation of large tarpons, all over, certainly more

than 50, curious, approaching close, in crystal-clear water. Back to the slope, continue drifting towards the south, we met again large groupers, snappers, turtles, jacks. A crevalle darted back and forth, so huge I mistook it for a yellowfin tuna. We exited with no drama at Red Slave, after 71 min bottom time, max 100 feet, still with almost 500 psi. Luckily, we caught a friendly pickup truck for about 1 mile ride back to Bas' Toyota and proceeded to Lac Cai for the second dive, with a profile completely different from the previous day. All superb dives. Bas' skills and knowledge are amazing.

Belmar Diving, Belmar Apartments, September 2006, Gary Petty (Gary@Petty.com), La Mesa, CA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm. This 8-day, 7-night trip was all good. Belmar apartments are great for families or groups. Huge ocean-view apartments on the water and a great staff. The nine of us took two 3-bedroom apartments on the second floor, with a full kitchen, two baths and a huge covered patio over the sea. Two 4-door rental pick-up trucks (a part of the package) and 60 and 80 cu. ft. tanks (Nitrox, too) available 24/7 made it an experienced shore diver's paradise. Not recommended for beginners, as the shore entries can be a bit tricky with rocks, sharp coral, a bit of surf, and swims of up to 300 yards to the reef, at least at the south end of the island. On the northern half, you can practically fall onto the reef from shore. Boat dives are available through an affiliation with Buddy Dive Resort. The entire reef around Bonaire is a Marine Preserve — healthy reef system and a huge variety of marine life. We identified dozens of tropical fish, saw spotted eagle rays, stingrays, sea turtles, cuttlefish, jumbo sea cucumbers, bar-

racuda, large tarpon, a variety of eels, a few anemones, many shrimp, and an eye-popping number of amazing fish of all sizes and colors! Huge gorgonian fans, hard and soft corals, and sponges of all colors abound. The people of Bonaire are warm and friendly. The atmosphere is "small-town," laid-back, and carefree, but with enough weekend nightlife for the young at heart. The weather was 85-90F, but a steady breeze made it comfortable all day and night. The Great Escape Restaurant across the street from Belmar no longer serves lunch and dinner. UW Photography Comments: Our photographers rinsed in the apartment bath tubs and worked on the dining room table.

Black Durgon Inn and Scuba Center, February 2006, Marco Accattatis (marco@accattatis.com), Jersey City, NJ. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 75 to 82 F, choppy. Rona, Rick, and Al are the most gracious hosts and they are attentive without being overbearing. The dive shop is right off the pier and Rick is an excellent SSI instructor. My wife and I were a little bit rusty with our skills and Rick was patient and helpful. The room we stayed in, overlooking the ocean, was perfect. Nothing fancy but comfortable and roomy. The rooms in the front of the Inn are not as nice but Rick and Rona are currently working on them. Ask for an ocean side room. All rooms are priced the same and the ocean view makes a big difference. We would hang out on the patio, or dive off the pier at one of the best dive sites in Bonaire, Small Wall. The breakfast was a treat and the open air shared kitchen was a great thing as it saved us a lot of money. Out of an eleven-day stay we ate out only 4 times. The rest of the time we cooked dinner while watching the sunset. The diving was excellent,

both on-site and around the island. The dive operators won't let divers take more than one tank pp to the north of the island due to theft concerns. We had no problems. We followed the advice of not leaving anything in the truck while diving as well as leaving the truck unlocked with the windows rolled down. This, unfortunately, didn't allow us to take that many topside pictures but, in retrospect, it was worth the annoyance as two other divers from our inn had things stolen from their truck while diving.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar Condominium Resort, January 2006 Diane Amos (dianeamos1@yahoo.com), Asheville, NC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Sand Dollar is a wonderful place — quiet, peaceful, with incredible oceanfront views from our balcony and bedroom. The condos were huge, so moving around with all the dive gear was easy. Great balconies for hanging suits to dry, and the dive operation on site has a convenient hanging room for the equipment. Unlike other resorts where you had to stay in A/C because the windows had no screens, this resort had wide-open screens to capture the magical island breeze, but keep out the mosquitoes. No transition period coming from outside to inside frigid air. Full kitchens allowed us to save money and cook in, relax on the balcony eating dinner, overlooking the ocean. The diving was so easy — just walk out of the condo and jump in! But the number of shore dives available around the island led to a great variety of experiences. We still liked Bari Reef the best! Bonaire Dive and Adventure a convenient on-site dive operation.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand

Dollar, March 2006, Gordon Matulonia (sales@biscofl.com), Fort Pierce, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, no currents. We just did the shore diving. Every dive was first rate. Alice in Wonderland, The Hilma Hooker, and The Town Pier at night were my favorites. The house reef was loaded with fish of all kinds. The Sand Dollar was clean, responsive to our needs, and plenty comfortable. Washington Slagbail National Park, and The Donkey Sanctuary are must see attractions. All the restaurants were fine. Do not let the car rental company give you less than the agreed upon vehicle. They tried to stick with one of the ultra mini minivans and finally gave us the pick up truck which you really need.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar Condos, May 2006, John Hoffman (johnnyh1@hotmail.com), Coronado, CA. Experience: 383 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm and flat. The ease and comfort of the shore diving was great, as was the access to all sites outside of the National Park. The fish life was abundant, all the Caribbean favorites. Great night dives off Sand Dollar Pier, complete with 4-foot tarpon that follow the beam of your light to hunt. Seahorses hard to find, but cool. The water was warm and clear. The photography ops were plentiful, especially the macro. Save air for the shallows at the end of your dive, as the juvenile fish of all makes/models are posers. The Sand Dollar is older looking than most of the other resorts, and the landscaping is heavily neglected. The dive shop was set up nicely, tanks at drive-up as well as on the dock.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar Condominiums, July 2006, Glory Moore (cgmpa1@aol.com), S.

Pasadena, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, no currents. Sand Dollar was in the process of painting the buildings. The accommodations are excellent. Their on-call staff is also prompt to fix malfunctioning a/c units. Bonaire Dive and Adventure has the best staff. Their naturalist, Jerry Ligon, is a wealth of knowledge.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar Condos, July 2006, Russ Battisto (Russ_Battisto@Comcast.net), Roseville, MN. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm, no currents. We picked up our rental truck at the airport. Sand Dollar Condos is clean and well run. Plenty of room and the A/C worked when we needed it although there was a nice breeze so we tended to leave the patio doors and windows open. Bonaire Dive and Adventure is well run, friendly and thorough. Their orientation establishes a high level of respect for environmentally friendly diving as well as safety. Bonaire is a shore diver's paradise. I wouldn't recommend Bonaire for new or inexperienced divers or divers not sure of themselves and their navigational skills unless they are with experienced divers. That said, Bonaire shore diving is safe if you are careful and use some common sense. We did our "checkout" dive off the Sand Dollar's pier. Bari Reef is one of the better shore dives you can do in front of a hotel or condo. We saw great coral, tarpon, barracuda, scorpion fish, eels, parrot fish, lots of arrow crabs and many schools of colorful smaller varieties. We did a 75' dive without trying. It would be easy to hit 100' plus but the good coral and fish life are in the 40-70 foot range. We alternated days with boat dives, then shore dives. We enjoyed what the island offered as much as the diving.

Nitrox was available and included in our package but we ran into equipment problems at the dive shop so we had to dive air for two days out of the seven we scheduled. The diving is fun. Lots to see. Coral in OK shape. The visibility was much lower than normal. Many boat dives go to Klein Bonaire, a smaller island off Bonaire. Again, the diving was easy and fun. We did experience a little current at a couple of the sites on Klein Bonaire. Do the dive profile you want and don't worry about when the boat leaves. Make sure you bring your compass and a good dive computer. Just load your tanks into the truck, load up the camera and have fun. Maps are easy to read and dive sites were well marked. Our favorites were Barkadera, Angel City (where we saw a huge manta), 1000 Steps (where I saw a topless mermaid) and Oil Slick Leap. We didn't find any bad food on the island. Just be prepared to slow down to "island" time when you hit the restaurants. Try Casa Blanca if you are hungry. They offer the "Mixed Grill," enough to eat till you are sick and take the rest home for snacks the rest of the week.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar Resort, September 2006, Dr. Mark Wolff (drwolff@champmail.com), Lakewood, CO. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 90 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm. The condos were spacious and clean. It was nice to have the option to prepare meals at "home" rather eating out for every meal. The boats went out several times a day, but the only option was a 1 tank dive. The diving was great. I really enjoyed the shore diving and it was simple. The fee for the condo included the use of a pick-up truck. Having boat dives made it easy to explore Klein Bonaire and dive sites that were more difficult to dive from shore. Diving the town pier requires

some hoop jumping as the harbor master has to approve all dives and you must hire a local "approved" divemaster to lead the dive. The dive was great with an abundance of colorful corals and sponges. Seahorses, eels, tarpon and many small critters (i.e., decorator crab) also make it worthwhile. The salt pier has the same hoops and is also a worthwhile dive. On some dives currents were variable and one dive had to be aborted because the current was too strong to be safely dived. Boats had no camera water baths available. There were tanks dedicated for cameras on the dock to rinse cameras .

Bonaire Dive, Sand Dollar, September 2006, Howard and Kim (howkimh@aol.com), Ashland, KY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. We love the island, the diving, the food, and the people. The diving is so diverse from one site to another. Depending on the time of year, and even the time of dive, we enjoy diving the different sites from Red Slave in the south to Karpata and Oil Slick Leap north of town. Something Special has four frog fish hanging out this year. Oil Slick Leap had three seahorses that we found on two different occasions. We only dove the first reef at The Invisibles, but probably saw more types of juveniles than any other dive, plus a spotted ray. Cactus Blue, a new restaurant, became one of our favorites. We ate there four times! Not only is the food great, the owners and staff always made us feel welcome. We also enjoyed live music on Wednesdays. Pasa Bon Pizza has great American-style pizza and the best chocolate cake. Sand Dollar has large rooms that many other complexes don't have and the screened patio doors that allow the breeze off the water. Each of the rooms offers a great view of the

ocean. Although we eat out for dinner, the kitchens are fully equipped if we wanted to cook. The buildings were being painted and the rooms updated. The resort's management and house-keeping staff checked on us several times during our stay to ensure that they were meeting our needs. Bonaire Dive is our preferred dive shop. Ilsa, Benji, Jerry and the rest of the staff are extremely helpful and friendly.

Buddy Dive, Sun Oceanfront Apts., October 2005, Bill and Donna Goodwin (ptsllc@bellsouth.net), Birmingham, AL. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, no currents. The shore diving is what drives diving on Bonaire. Divers must have thick-soled booties for the sharp, hard shore. Entries are easy unless surf is up (seldom is). Infamous Bonaire petty thievery seems to occur most at sites in town and north of town. We never leave anything of value in the car. To the south we have never seen or heard of thieves working the divers' cars. When we go out for a day on Bonaire, we have 3 tanks apiece, lots of water for rinsing off and drinking, a cooler, cheese, baguette, cookies, etc., and spend the entire day either south or north. The "secret" to Bonaire diving (maybe all rec. diving) is slowness. We had two dives that went longer than 100 minutes - it's those long last thousand pounds in the shallows where so much is going on. We find a place we like (above and below water) and do 2 or 3 dives there every day, being sure to include one late in the afternoon for "rush hour" on the reef. This way we get to really see what's going on in the reef community. We discovered a phenomenon that happened every day between 5 and 5: 15 at a far south site: in about 12 feet of water we would suddenly find ourselves in the midst of what we

began calling a “meteor shower” - an absolute avalanche of fast swimming scads (rather largish bait fish) by the zillions who would come racing past us, audible as they passed, and absolutely dazzle us for maybe 45 seconds. On the best days three such meteor showers would occur in the space of 15 minutes. Sun Oceanfront Apts. have a perfect location downtown, walking distance to many good restaurants, and attentive management (Josie and Muys) and convenient, excellent dive operation.

Buddy Dive, December 2005, Jody and Stan Ortman (ortmansj@juno.com), Kokomo, IN. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. The flight was delayed 1 hour so we were late arriving. Buddy Dive did not have drivers there to greet us but paid for a cab to the resort with no hassle at all. We love the boat and shore diving in Bonaire. Buddy has an excellent setup for shore diving. However, the boat dive list filled quickly and it was difficult to get on the boat dives. Night and dawn shore dives were interesting and fun. It seemed there were eels everywhere (a little creepy). We dove Nitrox all week and felt great. Breakfast was huge and delicious. We booked through Maduro Dive Travel and I would recommend that you go directly through Buddy Dive to book. Maduro promised ocean front with balcony but did not deliver. We were placed in a ground floor room with a view of bushes. The desk personnel at Buddy were efficient, friendly and kind and moved us to an excellent condo with a beautiful view. We were able to stay 5 of the 7 nights in the preferred accommodations. The price was the same for all 1 bedrooms.

Buddy Dive, Belmar Apartments, January 2006, Irv Kaplan (cpt_diver@cox.

net), Henderson, NV. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 35 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. This is my 4th time to Bonaire, but first time at the Belmar apartments. Previously, the only time we’ve been bothered by bugs was eating dinner at Richards (still good food, but expensive). We had two 2-bedroom apartments on the first floor and all eight of us got badly bitten by no-see-ums, and we believe by spiders. Bug spray did little to relieve the problem. Friends of mine, who arrived at the Belmar the day we left, had a second story apartment and had no problems with bug bites. If it wasn’t for the bugs, our accommodations were nice (AC in bedrooms only), though the refrigerator pretty much blocked the hallway. I was disappointed in the diving. Previously we were there during Spring/Summer seasons, when visibility was in the 100’ plus range. In January we experienced the raining season, so seas were up and visibility was down. We saw one turtle off the Belmar, no lobsters or crabs. We finally saw the house octopus out hunting, and we did get see a large green moray free swimming over the top of the reef. No problems with crime, but then there really weren’t many tourists to attract the thieves. Food is still expensive and the diving is easy.

Buddy Dive Resort, February 2006, Donald F. Bradley, York, PA (scupsdad@aol.com). Experience: 1000+ dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 82 F. Third trip to Bonaire. Food service was pretty slow. We ate away from the resort for evening meals. Breakfast included and good. Lunch consisted of store-bought food. Nice shopping and grocery stores. Shore diving at Buddy Dive Center is always good. Took several boat trips to Klein Bonaire. Very good, pristine diving there. Great trucks/vans included in

our package. No problem with stuff left in the truck because we always kept one person topside. Good roads, good shopping and diving. Super value and diving.

Buddy Dive, June 2006, Frank Hall and Carole Ott, Floyds Knobs, IN.

Experience: 400+ dives. Vis: 80 to 90 feet. Water: 82 F, no currents. We flew in on the Continental overnight flight from Houston. Our room was ready when we arrived (6:00 A.M.). Several people on the same flight had to wait for their rooms. This is a huge deal when you've been crammed in an airplane and awake all night. We had to press to get our rental truck so we could purchase groceries. We must have missed the supply ship or something. The shelves in both large markets were empty of anything (except cheese) to make a sandwich. We only shore dived and air fills were always 3000 psi. The coral and critters were plentiful as always.

Buddy Dive, June 2006, Lisa Strickland, Washington, IL.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 79 F, calm. Very good operation, especially for beginners. Slight current. Drive-thru for tanks was convenient. Helpful with arranging dive at Salt Pier with one of their own divemasters leading us. She was great and was attentive to the 15 yr old so he could see everything and finally have a 45 minute dive for the first time. She helped with his air consumption and relaxing. Shore dive to the Hilma Hooker was rough with a surf that beat us up on the return. The one boat dive we did, the DM pointed out 3 frogfish. Otherwise, we could dive our own profile as long as less than 60 minutes and 100 ft. Nice breakfast buffet with omelets to order. Theme night buffets in the bar on three nights. 3 pools with one at the bar so

you can sit on stools in the pool under a cover. Dive shop is small and a tight squeeze when there are more than a few people in there. 3 BR apts. are nice, but housekeeping was a little lax. Some days, the room would not be attended to until late afternoon and two days was never done. Topside, we went on a 1919 sailing fishing vessel from Holland - Waanzinnig VD-17. Beautiful ship. Very courteous crew, beverages, cheese and sausage snacks. Sailed up and down coast for 2 hours. Could assist with the sails if wanted to. Arranged by Buddy Dive. Picked us up from the resort.

Captain Don's Habitat, December 2005, Ken, Toronto, Ont.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: calm. Easy access to easy sites, short boat rides, nice diving, lots of little critters. Typical dive was 70 minutes, 60 feet max and 1500 psi left in tank. Our 5th trip to Bonaire and second time staying at Habitat. We noticed a lack of large fish — only saw 1 grouper all week — saw too many locals fishing in the park. Generally did 2 morning boat dives and 1 afternoon or 1 night dive on the house reef each day. The dive operation was underwhelming this time, especially the boat dives. Staff displayed minimal effort. Tank swap process performed by staff after each boat trip seemed to be a random process. Every dive we were provided an empty tank and often ended up having to locate and swap for a full tank ourselves while the dive staff lounged around. Boat usage was also poor. 3 boats capable of up to 20 divers each were available. The number of boats going out and the fullness seemed unorganized. One day, first morning dive used one boat with 6 divers and one other with 11 (this was great!), second dive of same day saw 20 divers crowded onto a single boat with two boats left at the dock (can you say

cattle boat). Multiple times there were divers “left on the dock” with only a single boat going out, sometimes with a few snorkelers instead of the divers. Boat sign up system is also a little odd. Two morning, one afternoon single tank boat trips available. You signed up every afternoon for the next day of boat dives. Sign up boards made available while the afternoon boat was out. Boat(s) filled up extremely fast. This generally meant that if you went out on an afternoon dive, you could not get back onto the (more popular) morning boats for the next day as they would already be full by the time when you returned. So you needed to make sure you were hanging around the dive shop @ 3:00 if you wanted to choose which boat trips you were doing the next day. Prepaying for boat trips had no effect - most people ended up not being able to make as many boat trips as they paid for. This was not an over booking issue as most times only one of the three boats was sent out. Food can be world class as long as you know where to go: Bistro de Paris is real French food, Capriccio is real Italian, the new Bambu (replacing Mahi Mahi) is real fusion, La Luna for European. Habitat required use of rental truck to eat at these restaurants. Previous trip we stayed at Divi and could walk into town. UW Photography Comments: separate rinse tanks on boat and on shore — boat tanks too small, shore tank left in sun all day and become hot — I used shower to rinse my housing after dives, onsite photo shop seems to be always closed.

Captain Don's Habitat, May 2006, Joel Snyder (jms@opus1.com), Tucson, AZ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. This is our 5th trip to Bonaire in 15 years and we've always stayed at Don's. The resort is about the same, a little more

run-down. The diving operation is the same: top notch. Docks and boats are in perfect condition, while equipment is suffering a bit from wear-and-tear. Check your tank before you leave the dock! There's less a “wild west” feel to it than in the old days, but the operation both at the resort and across the island is still part of the best diving experience you can imagine. Get a villa— Villa 7 is probably the best they have (some of the better ones, like 10 and 12 have gone private); the cottages are not as pleasant. While Rum Runners (the restaurant there) is nourishing and always available, there are so many other good restaurants on the island. For quick pizza, Pasa Bon is excellent friendly (and a bit pricey); the molten chocolate cake is one of the best in the world (from Last Bite Bakery). Bistro de Paris was also good, if not quite true to the Parisian bistro style. We tried both Croccantino and Capriccio, Italian restaurants run by Italians, and both were well done. Rib Factory not so hot for ribs, but try BobbieJan's BBQ (Fri/Sat/Sun only) which is truly laid-back and good. Casablanca (the Argentine place) also outstanding. In Rincon, La Rosa was true to style and pleasant. The famous ice cream place in Rincon is closed permanently, alas. We paid an extra \$35/diver to hire a boat from Don's and go to Playa Funchi and Slaagbai (in the national park), a 2-tank dive. We hoped for pelagics, but didn't get any so it turned out to be a bit of a waste, although the dives were normal Bonaire quality. Divemasters were all friendly and accommodating (as usual); dive management was dour and put-upon (as usual), but fair and helpful when needed. Some of our divers had CCRs that Walt handled without a hitch, prepping up pure O2 and other supplies without blinking. Considerable

deference given to UWP, along with some friendly advice on-boat and off about how to get good photos with the new generation of digital cameras.

Carib Inn, Sunbelt Realty Rental Villa, July 2006, Hugh Aaron (hugh@theaarons.com), Mechanicsville, VA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy. We (two middle age adults and our 13 year old son) rented a private "villa" (i.e., house) through Erika at Sunbelt Realty in Bonaire. The house was called "Villa Zoë" and is in Belnam about 5 minutes from the airport and 10 minutes from the Carib Inn and downtown. Erika at Sunbelt was friendly, helpful and responsive. For about the same price as a hotel room, we had two air conditioned bedrooms, a full kitchen, a driveway with an electronic security gate, plenty of room to store and wash down our gear, a flat screen TV and high speed internet access. We rented a pickup and had planned to do a lot of shore dives. However, the Carib Inn boat trips (\$15 a person) turned out to be a lot more comfortable, so with the exception of our checkout dive on the reef behind the Carib Inn and one night dive on the same reef, we ended up doing all of our dives as boat dives with the Carib Inn. Bruce, the owner, started with Captain Don in the early days. Carib Inn runs like a well-oiled machine. Although they are serious about diver safety, we did not find them to be overly restrictive. We thought the Carib Inn was a bit short on the warm and fuzzies; however, we were pleased with the service. Rooms at the Carib Inn looked a little tired from the outside. However, everyone who was staying there seemed content. We found many unusual restaurants that we liked (the European flair was fun). Most were reasonably priced. We en-

joyed the Wednesday night barbecue at the wind surfing shop/bar at Sorobon. I rented a bike in town and really enjoyed the 20+ mile loop from Belnam around the south end of the island. However, cyclist should be prepared for big wind, intense sun and no place to get fresh water for miles. National Slagbaai National Park is interesting. A truck is required (although 2WD would be fine). Allow a full day. UW Photography Comments: We did mostly boat dives. The Carib Inn boats are small (which is nice). However, there was no secure place to store camera equipment on the way to and from the dive sites. Also, there was no fresh water rinse tank on the boats. However, we were usually back before the salt water dried.

Dive Bonaire, Dive Flamingo, July 2006, Joe Friedman, Dallas, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. 5 seahorses on one dive and turtles are common. No hurricane worries because the island is so far south. The Flamingo/Dive Bonaire operation is OK to good. Buy the breakfast meal package, and if you are a big eater, maybe lunches for the days you are going to do an afternoon dive – otherwise, do the Chibi Chibi a la carte. Go to town for dinner — really high class restaurants with fine dining abound. On the dive boat, try to stay with the same boat and crew for the week. Once the crew gets to know you and realize you aren't a hassle, they become a lot of fun. Be prepared for a range of divers from newbies to grandmothers, all of whom are looking for carefree, extremely easy diving. UW Photography Comments: Setup on boat is OK, but there are lots of non-photographers and if you freak out when a kid rinses his mask in the camera bucket, this is not your dive operation.

Divi Resort, May 2006, Joseph Stehn (jstehn@patmedia.net), Hillsborough, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Resort operation was good, rooms clean and our needs attended to. Breakfast selection was good as well as the food. Selection of food for dinner at their restaurant was poor and overpriced. We ate at other resorts except for the buffet night that was good. At two other resorts (Capt. Don's and Buddy) the mosquitoes ate us alive at dinner. Divi dive shop is fully capable. However, I don't understand the "attitude" of the woman who runs it. It seems that "she is doing you a favor" by answering your questions. That was not the case with the manager or divemasters, who were all excellent. Rented vehicle at Budget car rental — the wait was over an hour to get the car, with 7 people in line in front of us. All were frustrated as to the process. However, overall the resort, dive shop and diving were good, all things considered. If you are looking for an economical trip, consider all shore diving.

Larry's Wild Diving, Plaza Resort, April 2006, Lourdes De Cardenas (delfin_boricua@yahoo.com), San Juan, PR. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, no currents. This is my third trip to Bonaire. Did some diving in the east side with Larry's Wild Side Diving — good for a change — I was the only diver in their pontoon boat. Experienced a bit more of a current, but nothing serious. No large pelagics, though had a good dive with a school of tarpons. Klein Bonaire and the west side of Bonaire were great, as always. Saw pods of dolphins, and several seahorses and frogfish. However, saw no turtles on this trip. Saw a bit of damage in coral in the shallows.

Toucan Divers, Plaza Resort, February 2006, Debbie Husby, Twentynine Palms, CA. (deb29palms@adelphia.net), Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 F, calm, no currents. Toucan Divers great, DMs great, nitrox setup convenient. Boats good, though a little crowded. Good instruction. Hotel terrible, every time bath or shower was used the toilet room flooded (with slippery tile), bathroom smelled like mold. No screen on sliding glass door; eaten alive by mosquitoes. Property seemed well maintained except our room. Food at Tippy Seagull was good, especially the soups. Service in restaurants was excruciatingly slow, almost nonexistent at lunch. Do not plan to eat lunch here and do an afternoon dive.

Toucan Divers, Plaza Resort, April 2006, Mary Johnson (mgjhsn@pacbell.net), Sunnyvale, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. I wish I had known that the whole island "shut down" due to holidays for 3 days! Sat., Sun., Mon., making purchasing any food etc., except at resort restaurants impractical! Restaurants were fair to middling. Had I not brought trail bars and dried fruit from home, I would have been hard pressed to make the early call for diving (8:15) with sufficient nourishment! The Plaza is a beautiful resort, beautiful grounds, extensive property, with dive shop as an "add on." Shop is run well, but my experience was rough as a single older female diver, having to schlep my gear from the lockers to the boat, set it up, change it myself if two tanks, and haul it off the boat to rinse tanks and lockers. Not even a mask de-fogger was offered on the boat. The diving on Bonaire is uniformly beautiful, without stressful water conditions such as

currents, cool water, limited visibility etc. with which to contend. The most disappointing was the apparent disengagement of the dive masters, who were civil, but did not seem eager to share the beauty of this region. A snorkel trip aboard a catamaran highlighted the difference. The guide found something “exciting” every few yards! Just “kitchen bucket” for rinse tank. Dive Masters not interested in pointing out any sea life. It was swim, swim swim and turn around - until I hooked up with 6 other photographers who emphasized to the dive master that we wanted to “poke and round, stop, look, and take pictures.”

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort, May 2006, Bradford L. Atkinson (brad@atkinsonandassociates.com), Conroe, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Water: calm. Get to the airport early when leaving; there is a fee to be paid before going through security gates and it must be paid in cash. Return the rental car the day before departure to return home to avoid the wait at the airport for personnel to arrive and check your car in. If with a non-diver or someone who wants to take off time from diving, do a 2-tank dive in the morning and regroup after you finish your dive in the morning. Allows the other to sleep in and the dive takes you directly from hotel. Consider booking a 1-tank per day dive before arriving so that the boats don't fill up. Bone fishing trip not worth the money.

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort Bonaire, May 2006, Craig and Dora Kippola (ckippola@sbcglobal.net), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, no currents. Took the red-eye from Houston-direct. Got in at 5:30 a.m. We were picked up immediately and brought to the resort, only to find we couldn't

check in until noon — not what we were told. One in our group had no hot water, and was moved. Pool bar was being built. All 3 restaurants had good food, but don't eat in groups because the service will become super slow. In town — Capriccio's Italian — always good (make reservations). Pasa Bon Pizza - good, KFC etc. Large comfortable rooms, housekeeping good. Diving — our 3rd visit so I set up with Simone by e-mail to have a group boat with Ebby and Erwin (divemaster and boat captain). E-mails were promptly handled and everyone was pleased with the whole diving experience. We all dived free nitrox 15-22 dives. The crew watched some of our newer divers well. Later in week we spotted large schools of dolphins — Ebby got the boat ahead of them and we snorkeled and had video taken - what timing. Truck and scooter rental on the property.

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort Bonaire, May 2006, Gregory Kiyoi (gmk@sn1per.com), Pleasanton, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. The boat crews were not the most eager or helpful and some people did require help and had to ask for it repeatedly. The dive store/land portion was accommodating; there were plenty of nitrox tanks whenever we needed them. Two analyzers at the tank area, one each boat. The two crew members on the boat we had, Jackson and Sherman, would “steal” the fruit juice that was given to them for the divers every morning. Jackson was rude about tipping and using him for the pier dives as well. The diving was easy and we were able to get 30 dives in the 6 dive days we were there. The house reef at the resort was nice, as was Buddy's house reef as well. We dove the East side (next to the nude resort) and besides the ½

mile walk in knee high water, penetrating the surf break (of elkhorn and staghorn coral), it was an awesome dive and saw over 100 3-5' Tarpon. Only for advanced divers. Red Slave was disappointing — coral/fish weren't too good there and we didn't see anything big. White Slave is an awesome site and in the coral rubble on the way out there were tons of small life to see. We did several night dives at the Lake. The salt pier was an excellent twilight dive. Karpata was excellent, along with Ol' Blue, Oil Slick Leap, 1000 steps. Two of our group had a battery stolen at Ol' Blue, so when we got there we dove in "shifts" to avoid a similar incident. Town pier was incredible and after 90-minute dive we headed in and saw a 14+ lb spiny lobster eating a fish carcass. Casablanca and Cactus Blue were awesome restaurants worth a visit. Rinse bucket on the boats and at the dive shop. Most shore diving there was nothing unless you brought fresh water with you. This wasn't too much of a problem; you just need to put your camera in the car or out of the sun as you removed your gear or changed tanks.

Toucan Diving, Larry's Wild Side, Plaza Resort Bonaire, June 2006, David Rosen (divindino@hotmail.com), Chesterfield, MO. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 120 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. We dove 6 boat dives with Toucan and 2 with Larry's Wild Side. Toucan took us to interesting dive sites. At each, they gave us an hour's bottom time. A dive master went in with the divers, but you were allowed to do your own dive without the dive master. While there are few large fish, it was like diving in an aquarium. Clear water, healthy coral and tons of smaller reef fish. We saw many different eels, lots of spotted drum, a few turtle and a spotted eagle

ray. We saw a bait ball on a shore dive, squid and octopus. This was wonderful, relaxed diving. Larry's Wild Side is a different experience. More surge and the water is more turbid, but in return, you see larger fish and how the fish act in water in motion. From what we read about Larry, it sounded like the diving would be a military operation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Each of the rules Larry has are related for your safety in what can be rough conditions. Larry's fills were all over 3000 PSI and he requires that you stay with his dive master so that he can make a safe pick-up at the end of the dive. Plaza Resort is a family friendly place in good repair. Rooms were spacious and the food service good, but slow. The staff was uniformly friendly and helpful. The Resort is 5 minutes from town.

Toucan Divers, Plaza Resort, September 2006, Bruce Wallace (laos61@excite.com), Indianapolis, IN. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 80 F, choppy, no currents. We chose Toucan's special offer along with the Plaza Resort package. Rented the typical 4 door Toyota pickup for \$220 for the week. The resort desk staff at 10PM on Saturday check-in was led by Marco, who was personable and had us in our room within 10 minutes. The room was a Junior Suite that was air conditioned, large, 2 queen beds, refrig, safe and a balcony overlooking the Caribbean and pool on the upper floor (J109). The room was clean and comfortable. Maid service changed the linens Wednesday and the rest of the week we had the Privacy Please sign on the door. Diving with Toucan was excellent with 8:30 departures for 2 tank and back by 12:30 (sometimes 1PM if we overdove our sites). Each day included a North or South dive site on west Bonaire and a

second dive off Klein Bonaire. Pieter as DM was outstanding at critter finding for UWP (he is a frogfish and seahorse specialist)! Other DMs were great to dive with too. Gear lockers and rinse tank were right at the dock. Tanks were always at 3K+. Shore dive tanks were located in three different convenient places. 18th Palm off resort beach is great dive for orientation and afternoon/evening dives. every dive of the 12 was an aquarium dive! The slope starts at 20' and goes off to sand at 100' at 45 degrees. On every dive we were surrounded by reef fish beyond count. Juvenile Drums abounded as well as several seahorses and frogfish (sponges). Trumpets of 4 different colors were logged as well as several rays, peacock flounders, golden morays and scorpionfish. The sites were all easy dives with average bottom time exceeding 60 minutes at depths of 60'. Beyond 60', the fish life drops off as does the available light. There is simply no need to dive deeper than 60' anywhere in Bonaire in order to see maximum fish and coral. No reported crime, great restaurant choices, clean rooms, friendly staff and a great dive operator. Each boat had a large tub for cameras with signage for no masks – cameras only! Toucan also had a photo center with computer offerings to copy, edit (CS), burn to disc and print at a low cost. On-staff professional offered free advice.

Wannadive Bonaire, Eden Beach Resort, October 2005, Rebecca Hauser (rlhdvm@powercom.net), Brandon, WI. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, surge. Eden Beach Resort - nice facilities, great beach bar (Bongos), and fantastic dive shop. I used the city center dive shop location rather than the resort location because I was taking Advanced Open Water Certification, and it wasn't

offered at the resort. Instructors were awesome, made me feel completely at home and comfortable. Kind of like part of the "family." They were good at not pushing if you weren't comfortable with a particular dive, but were supportive and encouraging. There was one day with heavy surge that made for difficult entry/exit.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

While diving on the West End of Grand Cayman has succumbed to the travails of the tourist industry, the North Wall and East End still provide good diving. However, it's become extremely expensive so many divers head to the sister islands and even better diving. 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

Reef Resort, January 2006, Susan Mickelson (mickelsonscuba@yahoo.com), Kirbyville, TX. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm. Meals-included plan was great as the food and dining room service was superb. Rooms were spacious and clean. The small bar was a gathering place after dives to share stories. Diving was "valet" style - the staff picked up the rigs at the room on the first day and cared for them all week - even washing them each night! Jay and Ms. Vicki were most professional, yet friendly and helpful. Their drawings of the dive sites should be published, and Jay's story of the wreck 356 is not to be missed. The dive boat had less