

take it from me before exiting the water. There isn't any camera table or bucket large enough for the camera to soak in between dives. I used a cooler bucket to store my setup and they do have fresh water hoses to rinse the equipment off.

South Carolina

Cooper River Diving, August 2006, Wm. DiGiovanni, Bishopville, SC. Experience: 1500+ dives. Vis: 1 foot. Water: 80 F, strong currents. John knows Cooper River well. Dove Red Bank; swift current; you must go down anchor line. Found sharks' teeth. Rice Hope Plantation, current still strong; found more teeth, saw shrimp, crabs, small half-dollar size flounder and small fish.

VIRGIN ISLANDS — BRITISH

Patch reef diving on these closely grouped islands is easy, pleasant, and fairly similar despite which island you choose. The islands are small, friendly, and great getaways.

Peter Island

Paradise Watersports, Peter Island Resort, July 2006, Lourdes De Cardenas (delfin_boricua@yahoo.com), San Juan, PR. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm. Peter Island offers world-class service and excellent meals. This is a great resort with beautiful beaches. Diving in the BVIs is very good — waters are part of a protected underwater park. Diving was very relaxed and divemasters took care of tank changes and carried and set-up equipment in the mornings. Coral conditions were actually much better than

expected — coral is quickly recovering from latest Caribbean bleaching event. In the first 2 dives, I was the only diver in the boat. Saw eagle rays, large sting-rays, lobsters, turtles, a large 4' cobia, tunicates aplenty, clinging crabs, jaw-fish, and the usual Caribbean reef fish, including queen triggerfish. For those looking for a pampered diving vacation with excellent service, great meals and superb beaches, look no further! And Randy Keil's (dive shop owner) enthusiasm for diving is truly contagious. UW Photography Comments: Camera bucket available in the boat.

Tortola

UBS Divers, Tamarind Club, December 2005, Chuck Levine, Red Lion, PA. (cblevine@suscom.net), Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy, surge. Decided that I needed a few days away to clear my head under the waters of the Caribbean due to my wife's health concerns and was able to coordinate reasonable airfare (USAirways connecting to Win-Air in SXM), lodging (Tamarind Club), and private diving (UBS Dive Center). Website for Tamarind Club described a beautiful, intimate 9 room hotel with onsite restaurant, pool, and airport transfers included. Rooms were clean, AC, shower and fridge. Meals were fantastic and reasonably priced for the islands. Entertainment at night was loud and late, but the owners put me in the farthest room from the pool area to minimize the disturbance. Airport transfers only means one way: cost me \$20 from the airport (actual one-way fare is \$7-8 so paying \$20 one-way covers the r/t). UBS Divers advertises: "private dive boats for you and your group of family or friends, it will always be just your group onboard the boat. Land based guests can choose from half

or full day trips with two-tank day dives or afternoon and night dives . . . Prices are per person and include your own private dive boat, Captain/Instructor, all equipment and drinks. . . 2 Persons Full Day (9:30 - 4:00) \$150.00; 3 Persons Full Day (9:30 - 4:00) \$100.00." In fact UBS offered to have one of the owners (husband and wife Tony and Kathryn Brunn) take me out one-on-one on their small boat for half their usual fee. I expected three dives/day for days 1&2, 2 dives the morning of my third day in anticipation of flying home next day. Conditions were choppy, viz was 50-75 feet, water was a cool 80F. 3mm wetsuit with hooded vest was comfortable... just. Fish were typical Caribbean fare. A few southern rays but nothing large and little small. Coral had some bleaching but otherwise was in decent shape. Dove the RMS Rhone twice, Wreck Alley once, Thumb Rock too, and had lunch both days at Cooper Island where we highly recommend the calamari. I was put on a boat with two gentlemen from Omaha who had also expected to have their own private dive boat, dive 4-5 times/day, and were equally stunned to find that Tony/UBS only does 2 dives per day...period. As it was, we three enjoyed ourselves but since diving finished at 1400, I was unwilling to dive that late on the day before my flight home, and canceled my third day of diving, choosing to explore Tortola topside instead. This decision was greeted by an incredibly obnoxious email message from the owner upon my return to the States. There are many other dive operators in the BVI. I'd like to return to the BVI but will be looking at other *Undercurrent* recommendations.

Virgin Gorda

Dive BVI, Biras Creek, November 2005, Mickey Rosenberg

(mickeyrosenberg@cox.net), Providence, RI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 85 to 88 F, choppy. I have been here many times over the last twenty years. It's usually just decent, fun diving, with good small fish life, corals and fans; some interesting underwater terrain and one of the more interesting wreck dives: the Rhone. Bleaching has affected 50%-70% of the hard corals, even at depth. This was a sad shocker: an apparent consequence of the warmest waters that had been seen in the region (same warm waters that spawned those nasty hurricanes). It is unknown if those coral will survive or the long term effect on the entire reef ecology. Dive BVI is a great operation, and Biras Creek is pricey, but delivers fabulous food, dwellings, and we love the Boston whalers you can take out to remote snorkeling sites.

Kilbride's Sunchaser Scuba, Bitter End, June 2006, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano (guigo34@hotmail.com), Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 Feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, choppy. This is a dive operation geared to recreational divers. There is little to see other than the Chikuzen wreck, and that only if the sea conditions are optimal. The reefs are unremarkable and there is a lot of finger wagging from the guides if one strays more than 50 feet from the herd. Nothing to write home to mother about.

VIRGIN ISLANDS - U.S.

St. Croix is getting more attention from divers, thanks to its underwater topography and improved dive services. Once unfriendly to visitors, the Virgins are now a good tourist destination with decent Caribbean