

day we were off to Utila. We did two dives at Blackish point and the rest in the Marine Reserve. We saw the usual tropicals, sponges, and a hawksbill turtle. Thursday we had the flattest seas of the trip so after we did two dives at Old House we spent an hour or so looking for whale sharks but had no luck. Too late in the summer, I expect. At Old House, besides the usual lot of tropicals, we found a free-swimming spotted moray. The afternoon dives were at Black Hills Sea Mount. Here we found a green moray, hawksbill turtle, lobster, crab, and an assortment of jacks and snappers. The big fish hang out on the 'windward' side of the mount, and there were lots of them! Friday came too soon. Our last two dives were on the East side of Utila at Ted's Point. On the first dive we checked out a little wreck and then Nestor came though and found us a beautiful little seahorse! It wasn't an inch long, so it took us 30 minutes to re-find him on the last dive! The dinner Friday night in Utila was pretty good. I had a steak dinner and reasonable margarita for \$10. When we returned to the boat, there were three small eagle rays swimming in alongside for 30 minutes. We left early the next morning for to La Ceiba. The crew was great. Capt. Jay (from the Belize Aggressor), Shara, Nestor, Shane, and Marna. They all worked their butts off, from finding lots of critters to cooking us great meals. They worked just as hard the last day as they did the first.

SABA/ST. EUSTATIUS/ ST. KITTS

Caribbean Explorer II, August 2005, Mark Holman (Mark19191@cs.com), Prundale, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm, currents. Great value. Boat

and crew were both well prepared and helpful. The youngest member of our family, a 15 year old, was given all of the help needed by the crew to keeping her interested and having a good time both in the water and on board the boat. The Chef, Tony was one of the best with a truly amazing variety of food and high quality. The diving was generally good with the typical things that you would see in the Leeward Islands, with the diving off Saba being the highlight. Lots of turtles, reef fish, nurse sharks, but no other large pelagics in evidence. We dove for a day before on St. Kitts and enjoyed both the Island and local diving. At \$995 for the week it was a pleasant well run dive outing. UW Photography Comments: Adequate for the four photo people aboard but could get crowded if more people were serious photographers.

Caribbean Explorer II, November 2005, Don Ward, St. Louis, MO. (dward3863@sbcglobal.net),

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 82 F. The CE II is a great value and well-run. The diving at Statia and Saba were excellent. Highlights at Statia were dives in the marine reserve. The diving at St Kitts was above average at a couple sites. The cook, Tony, and the purser, Paul — who was overqualified for his job— were excellent. The DM/photo pro, C. Lee, was also first rate. The other two DMs were so-so, but were harmless and left us all alone, which is what I want and expect. The rooms were nice by live-aboard standards, with en-suite showers and heads. We had sea wasps on a night dive at Saba and the crew got out the saltwater hoses to aid divers on exits. No one was stung. Plenty of room for workspace, rinse tanks, etc.

Caribbean Explorer II, August 2006,

Kurt F and Linda I Wilkens, Green Lake, WI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. The crew and food were outstanding. We enjoyed the other passengers as well as the diving. We saw a lot of fish, corals and mantas. We enjoyed the Saba and Statia diving more than St. Kitts. We took all of the island tours and thought this was a bonus of the trip. The Explorer Ventures organization were accommodating and helpful.

TURKS AND CAICOS

T&C Aggressor, January 2006, George (film4rent@aol.com), Cashiers, NC.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 120 Feet. Water: 76 to 79 F, choppy. This was my 4th live-aboard, and by far the best. The food was almost gourmet. The diving was excellent and the crew was more than helpful with almost anything. Really was the best bang for the buck.

T&C Aggressor II, August 2006, Marshall Welch (mpwelch705@msn.com), Seattle, WA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 110 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Great dive sites — dived NW Point sites, then West Caicos and French Caye and then back to the others in reverse order. Numerous reef sharks; nurse sharks on most dives. Some saw a squadron of seven spotted eagle rays, and one or two of these were spotted about every day. Fantastic crew — skilled, talented, pleasant, and eager to help in any way they can. They were kind enough to mix a batch of chemicals and develop my film during the week. However, I think they said that when the chemicals they have run out, they are discontinuing on-board E-6 processing. If you are sensitive to cold (air conditioning), you may want to

bring along a lightweight fleece jacket or pullover — the salon can get cool. They also sell sweatshirts on the boat. Not much good food is available in the airport lounge. Hot dogs was about it. Make sure you are well fed before arriving at the airport. The boat hosted the Jim Church School of Underwater Photography — taught by Mike Haber and Mike Mesgleski. The course is wonderful. I was a returning student, and look forward to joining them again. This boat and crew vigorously supports photographers and video. Dedicated camera rinse tank, spacious camera table with shelves beneath. The captain, second captain, and photo pro are each by themselves capable of supporting serious photographers/videographers. They had two Nikon D-70 cameras in housings available for rentals. Make your reservations early, though — they were already taken by the time I got interested in one. They also have digital point-and-shoots with external strobes available for rent. The video pro made a fantastic DVD, available for sale, from scenes she shot during the week.

T&C Explorer II, October 2005, Clem Clapp (cclapp@bellsouth.net), Maplesville, AL.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, no currents. A bit of a delay getting onboard. Had to find a taxi to take me to the pier, then a 15 minute wait on tender for delivery to boat in harbor. Boat was not at pier due to shallow water. Explorer was a 10-cabin, 120-footer. Clean. Comfortable dive deck. Adequate public area. good and varied food. Only 8 passengers and they gave me a free upgrade from the inexpensive lower level cabin to a nice double. En suite bath. Good ac. Accommodating staff. Friendly captain who invited guests to visit helm. Had tours of engine area with an engineer. Treated