

in orange cup corals, one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. We were accompanied the entire dive by a barracuda (a good 4 feet long and really big around the middle), he was always near us, hoping, I guess, that we would scare up a meal for him. I also had a swim with Tina (the smallest of the 3 turtles that hang around these wrecks.) I was impressed with how beautiful and serene a night dive can be. We went sight seeing around the island, which is so pretty. We went up to the old fort and looked out at the vista. We learned about the history of the island and then went and visited the Atlantic side where the water is so different from the Caribbean side. Food was mostly eaten at the Old Gin House and it was fabulous! Try the Lobster! Heading home, the take off and landing at Saba scared the heck out of me. If you don't have a strong stomach, try taking flights from Statia to St Martin that are direct to St Martin and do not stop on Saba. UW Photography Comments: If you asked, Lisa and Mike would try to find just about anything you wanted to take a picture of. I wanted a garden eel shot, they took me to the place and they sat and waited with me for the 15 minutes it took for the critter to come out.

Golden Rock Divers, Old Gin House, February 2006, Bill Edwards, Placerville, CA. Experience: 290 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. The dive operation at Golden Rock Divers was good. They didn't cater to us. We had to set up our own tanks before each dive. They would help you in and out of the boat, if it were necessary. I did three 2-tank dives and saw some sharks, touched a barracuda and saw many turtles and fishes. Mike and Lisa, our dive masters, seemed knowledgeable. And Michele in the dive shop was helpful and super nice. She confirmed

flights for us and arranged for our transfers to and from the airport. After reading in last year's Chapbook about some experiences people had with Winair and their luggage, I was concerned. But we traveled from St. Maarten to Saba, from Saba to St. Eustatia and from there back to St. Maarten and Winair was prompt, courteous and never lost a bag. We stayed at the Old Gin House in one of their upstairs suites that look out over the ocean. Our suite was clean and comfortable, but don't expect the Ritz or the Carleton. There are no large hotels or fast-food joints.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

These small, intimate islands have lots of "Old Caribbean" charm. Their strong suits are gracious hotels and old inns, verdant, green scenery, and lovely beaches. The diving is ok for newbies.

Dive St. Kitts, Bird Rock Beach Hotel, April 2006, John Tomassi (jtomassi@nycap.rr.com), Clifton Park, NY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 45 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Dive St. Kitts does a nice job. Friendly staff. Great pre-dive orientation on shore with map on white board showing both sites that were being dove that day. All sites are less than five minutes from shore. Did seven dives (one night) over three days with Dive St. Kitts. Depths ranged from 30ft to 85ft. Lots of interesting wreck sites (boats, cars, bulldozer, tires) that attracted most of the fish we saw on the trip. Coral is not great with low level of fish life. Saw a fair amount of juvenile fish but not many adults. Decent amount of turtles and rays and lots of large lobsters. Night dive was fun, with plenty of turtles, lattice sea stars, stingrays,

and spiny sea urchins moving about. Hotel is clean but outdated and in need of repair. Toilets leaked, no fan in one room and shower heads that sprayed all over the bathroom. Food was mediocre, but price wasn't. For same price at restaurants you could eat at the five star Marriott Resort.

Pro Divers, Marriott, February 2006, Eric Frick (pande296@sbcglobal.net), Elmhurst, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy, no currents. Pro Divers responded to my request for availability and a price quote right away. I'm still awaiting a response from Kenneth's Dive Shop. Pro Divers' driver picked me up at the Marriott and got me to their dock in town for no extra cost. Their 38' dive catamaran is comfortable and roomy but there is no cover and no head. The 1st 2-tank featured owner Austin, divemaster Charlie (soon to depart for the Odyssey in Truk), deck hand Germaine and just 3 guests. We motored about 20 min. north of the harbor entrance to an unnamed spot opposite the island's school of nursing. Good vis and a profusion of tube sponges awaited. All the usual Caribbean fishes were present. Austin, Charlie and 1 guest were after lobster but got nothing. The 2nd dive was at the last coral ridge north of the previous sight before the reef plunges off into the depths. More good vis and nice sights. Five lobster were taken. I saw plenty of critters I do not always see, including a couple of squid. The 2nd 2-tank a couple of days later included 5 of us from the Marriott, 2 from a cruise ship in port for the day and 4 others. The first dive was at Brimstone Shallows a 15 min. ride from the dock and not too far outside the mouth of the harbor. Features included more

good scenery, including a big grouping of blue chromis and lots of good coral for the Caribbean. The 2nd dive was at the wreck of the River Taw. One or more other dive operations were on site so things got crowded. I spotted a burr fish that Austin immediately grabbed so it would puff up. I kept future sightings of critters to myself. This is an organized operation that provides good services but those looking for all the amenities should look elsewhere. Staffing was more than adequate to meet customer needs. Austin and his crew are friendly and knowledgeable. The Marriott has more than 600 rooms. Still, the grounds are large enough that you do not feel too crowded. Service was a bit indifferent at times and we had snacks there but chose to dine elsewhere. Resort prices were in full force. Prepare to spend some major coin on taxis if you really want to see St. Kitts. There is plenty for nondivers to do and there are some great spots to eat, both casual and more upscale. That Nevis is just a 45 minute ferry ride away makes for even more to do and see. Pro Divers shares its location with Fisherman's Wharf, a seafood diner. We had two good meals there.

Pro Divers, Inc., Marriott, February 2006, Eric Frick (pande296@sbcglobal.net), Elmhurst, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, calm. Corals were in good shape and all the usual critters were present but no large fish. Visibility was good and the rides aboard their motorized catamaran were comfortable and short. No head and no cover on the boat. Austin runs a great operation. My online reservation was confirmed and they picked me up at my hotel for no additional charge. St. Kitts is now a frequent stop on many cruise ship itineraries so be prepared for some perhaps less than highly-ex-

perienced divers. The Marriott is the only large chain hotel on St. Kitts. It's a whopper with >600 rooms. The service was a bit indifferent at times but otherwise it was a good choice. Don't miss the rainforest tour with Greg's Safaris. Fisherman's Wharf is a good choice for a casual seafood dinner.

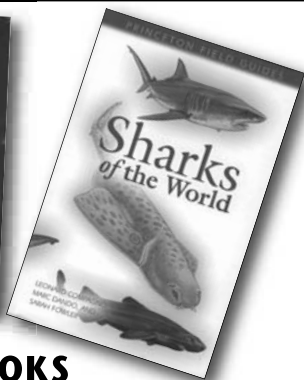
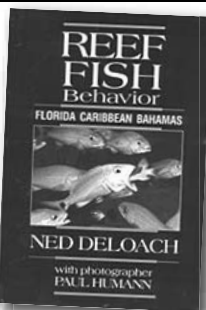
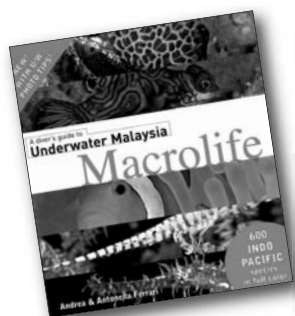
ST. LUCIA

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, November 2005, Gary

Kolb (robertkolb@sbcglobal.net), Carson City, NV. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm, currents. Overall great experience, food and rooms were great. Most of the dive sites were fun dives, liked Pinnacles and Superman's Flight, good drift dives. Some dives after rain storms would only have 20-30 ft. vis. but it was the rainy season.

Anse Chastanet, April 2006, Mike Judd (michaevertjudd@copper.net), Oregon City, OR. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. Hotel was great. Many buildings with 3 - 5 units on different levels, built into the hillside. One wall open to beautiful flowers and birds (and a few mosquitoes). Good views even from the cheaper units (higher prices had even better views up the hill). The signature "Piton" peaks look as good in person as in the photos. Staff uniformly helpful and pleasant. Food was a bit fancy for my taste, but my girlfriend loved it. Much of the island meets the "tropical



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