

2006, Gary W Brown (gkbrown@vci.net), Benton, KY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. We loved the tiny island of Salt Cay and the people. Debbie at Salt Cay Divers helped us make travel arrangements and on site reservations. It was pretty windy and the visibility was stirred up a bit. The dive operation is first class. Matt and Trevor set up all of our equipment each day. Most of the diving is done from small boats, backrolling into the water. The walls are nice but there was quite a lot of sand covering some coral. Dive your own profile and come up with 500 psi. Very friendly staff and hard working to make sure you enjoy your vacation. Several people told us that a good time to visit is May and June. We did see a few whales and sometimes heard them calling while diving. Some wonderful places to eat include Island Thyme, Pats, Mt. Pleasant and the Green Flash. Make reservations ahead to be sure food is prepared. Very quiet, uncrowded and remote island. Transportation is by bicycle or golf cart.

Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds Guest Suites, July 2006, Bob and Diane Moore (mooresrv@aol.com), Cleveland, OH. Experience about 100 dives. Nothing has changed since the 2005 reports in the Chapbook. The diving is good and easy. Salt Cay divers were accommodating with never more than 6 divers in a 24' Carolina Skiff, often only the 2 of us. They went where we wanted, when we wanted, guided us at our pace and helped with the gear. Rental gear was old and tattered but quite serviceable. The reef is in good shape with lots of small critters but few larger fish. There were large schools of jacks, goatfish and spadefish and lots of parrotfish. We saw only a few solo angel fish, a few nurse sharks and lobster.

There was one show-off octopus fanned out over something on the wall. Saw a huge group of garden eels. This was my first time back diving anywhere near the Bahamas in 20 years and I was shocked at how little live staghorn and elkhorn coral is left. Soft corals were plentiful and healthy. Debbie could not have been more helpful. She seems to run everything on the island. One day she helped us in the dive shop, the boutique, and at the Tradewinds, then cooked and served our dinner. That night she was up to 1:00 AM to arrange an emergency evacuation and then picked us up at 4:45AM for the trip to the airport, where she took care of the baggage and the tickets. Salt Cay is fascinating, with lots of bicycling, hiking, beach combing and exploring. We stopped to peer in the windows of an old church, only to be invited in and shown around by a friendly islander. Bought breakfast and lunch supplies at Miss Netty's, limited selection but her bread is great. Dinners were at Salt Cay Divers or Miss Pat's and all were good. Don't forget to make reservations. Tradewinds guest suites are clean, comfortable, convenient and yes, the trade winds blow through all day. Air Turks and Caicos was on time but their schedule does not fit with the airline schedules to Provo so you may lose a lot of time sitting in the Provo airport. Contact Debbie at Salt Cay Divers to arrange your trip.

UNITED STATES

Florida

Southern Swim and Scuba, Atlanta Technical Divers, North Florida Cave, July 2006, David N Scarborough (david@wan2dive.com), Douglasville,

GA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 120 Feet. Water: 60 to 64 F, calm. Cave system tour and training — while in Mexico and diving in the Cenotes, I was taken in by the sites and systems, came back to USA to start cave and trimix training. Training to tec dive so I can shoot video of USS Oriskany in Pensacola, Florida. This dive shop is a wonderful place to start training; staff knowledgeable and understanding of teaching an old dog new tricks. We have done training for dry suit and Cavern and intro to Cave, have been bitten by the fresh water bug. Love the non-sea-sick and not having to clean gear of salt. Must come to terms with cold water, heavy equipment — this training will help anyone become a better diver.

Crystal River

American Pro Divers, Seagrass Inn Resort, January 2006, Mary Wicksten, Bryan, TX. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 7 to 40 Feet. Water: 68 to 72 F, calm. Freshwater springs and caverns of northwestern Florida. I also snorkeled with the manatees. Excellent opportunities to tickle these animals and get some top-notch photos, despite your skill with a camera. Went diving from a pontoon boat in Rainbow River. Clear water, clean sand, bubbling springs, lots of fish including strange bowfin. Explored King Springs, which bubbles up in the middle of a bay; catfish at bottom, tarpon at surface! Also visited Manatee Springs, Weeki Watchee Springs (you, too, can be a mermaid!) and springs near Ocala. Clear water but dropped off quickly to spooky depths for cave-certified only; make sure you are NOT overweighted! Staff has well-stocked shop, professional manner. No hassles if you can take care of yourself — they have enough trouble with people

who barely can swim. Not a spectacular place for exploration and photography, but the water is so clean you won't need to rinse your gear. Seagrass Resort has simple cabins on river. Nearby pub has good shrimp dinners but you can cook your own meals in the cabins; large grocery store nearby, all sorts of restaurants and tourist facilities in Homosassa Springs and Crystal River. Could be a good place to take non-diving family.

Florida Panhandle

Scuba Tech, July 2006, David Reubush (davereubush@cox.net), Toano, VA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 40 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, no currents. I called Monday and went out Wednesday. Scuba Tech is on Hwy 98, the main drag in Destin. Their boat is docked at a marina across the street from the shop. The boat is a 45 ft. converted crew boat with an enclosed cabin and covered open area in the back that gives you fresh air but keeps you out of the sun. The boat was in good shape and had the cleanest head of any dive boat I have ever been on. The whole operation was well run. Most of the divers were newbies and they had several dive masters on the boat who split the newbies up into small groups. I buddied up with a relatively experienced diver and we were allowed to do our own thing. During the surface interval the crew swapped our tanks for us and then cut up a fresh pineapple for our snack. The visibility was only about 30 feet and once on the bottom there wasn't much to see anyway. Our first dive was on a "reef." Actually, a step in the bottom that ran for several hundred yards with a little bit of coral. The depth was 80-85 ft. and my buddy sucked air so we had limited bottom time. The second dive

was to the Destin bridge rubble (concrete slabs). This dive went from 60-70 ft. so there was also not a huge amount of bottom time. The only interesting things were a few neat star fish and lots of highhats. Had a rinse bucket on the boat for cameras.

Viking Diving, June 2006, David N Scarborough (david@wan2dive.com), Douglasville, GA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 125 to 150 Feet. Water: 84 to 74 F, calm. Viking Diving of Pensacola is set up to dive the USS Orskiany. Our crew helps get diver in and out of water. Small 6 pac boat. Dive briefing and instruction was given. He does furnish a cooler on boat and water. Take any drinks or food with you. Snack furnished. 2 hr trip from dock to site. Very knowledgeable about wreck and area diving. Works with local dive shop well. Spearfishing was done while on wreck and while returning to dock. Rinse tank for gear on dock upon returning, fresh water rinse for video unit. Local dive shop MBT good people to work with for tec gas, and reg air fills. This is a great dive. The Gulf was calm and flat- little current on top none on wreck. Great wreck but is deep, not for new divers, check out rules on web sites - search under Pensacola diving. Our boat did not have a table or way to tie down video unit. But area was given to set unit. Carry extra strap to handle. No on board rinse tank but can rinse with water from tank.

Ft. Lauderdale

American Dream II, June 2006, Melissa Good (merwolf@bellsouth.net), Pembroke Pines, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, choppy, currents. American Dream II is a 43-foot custom dive boat that ports out of Pier 66 in Fort

Lauderdale. Todd is the boat captain, and he takes reservations from his cell phone. The currents were abysmal, but the AD2 crew both recognized that and worked hard to prepare the divers for it, taking care to make sure they exited from the right spot on the back of the boat and got immediately onto the descent line. The dive was on Tenneco Towers, a set of sunken oil rigs that is considered an advanced dive due to depth (bottoms at 140 feet) and the mentioned current. Divers should take this to heart when considering diving the site. On a good day you can get 80-foot vis, and a billion fish and no current; on a bad day, you're lucky you don't end up being swept up to Cocoa Beach. Second dive was a drift dive at 60 feet on the third level of Fort Lauderdale's reefs that have a lot of cut unders and furrows to explore. There were lots of lobster, some eels, the usual tropical suspects and one or two skittish nurse sharks hiding their heads in the sand so we would not see them. The boat issues drifters their own marker, and when you come up, where you come up, the boat comes to get you. AD2 is a well run operation, the boat has a head, and provides drinks (sodas and water) and crackers (peanut butter or cheese) after the dive. They have air temperature showers on the dive deck and warm water rinse hose. Good dive-masters and crew.

Islamorada

Key Dives, February 2006, Marjorie (stutlerinchrist@tds.net), Millington, MI. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 75 Feet. Water: 65 to 72 F, choppy, currents. Key Dives in Islamorada was awesome! I'm a beginner diver; and they set up our equipment, had it on the boat and all ready to go. Dive master was with us

the whole time, showing us fish, turtles and stuff. We saw a viper eel, sharks, tons of fish, corals, and went down on a wreck. I was really nervous my first dive. He calmed me down and got me to relax and was really patient! We had experienced divers with us — they were left to go on their own. I rented equipment (which was in good shape). They helped us in anyway we needed.

Key Largo

Amoray Dive Resort, August 2005, Joe Sindorf (jsindorf@gmail.com), Rockford, MI. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 40 to 85+ Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, surge. This is not a cheap dive vacation, but it is worth it! This was a family dive vacation. We flew into Miami, rented an SUV and drove down. There were four of us — my wife, two teen daughters and myself. Amoray was the first stop on a two-week dive vacation. The staff is tremendous. The boat captain knows his stuff and takes suggestions about where to dive. Everyone on the boat is an instructor, and they are totally helpful. Back to the staff — this is a total diving resort; everyone dives. They are honest and helpful. We did not get an optimistic dive report, not even once. The vis and conditions were always better than they told us to expect. Seth was always ready to help, Kat was fabulous, but needs to hear “the customer is always right” message again — but, she is so cute you’ll forgive her. There was an error on the room rate — she realized a mistake was made, but said that price was wrong and we needed to pay the higher rate. You try winning a discussion with her! It was not a huge problem. Even the groundskeepers were tremendous. Eddie cut fresh green coconuts for us! You know when Amy (the owner) is there because she parks her Volvo right down by the boat! She’s

nice and runs a great resort. Go for the best room in the place: W2B – The Green Moray. It is not elegant (nothing here is) but it is very comfortable and has a tremendous large screened in deck. It has a kitchen and one smallish bathroom. It is right beside the boat slip, and right on the water. We loved it. There is no food service here, except for a very basic breakfast: bagels, butter, jam and peanut butter; along with juice and coffee. Basic. There are some grills to cook on outside. Take advantage of the good seafood in the area and grill out one night. But put mosquito repellent on if you do. I thought those were flying piranha. Do a night dive, and beg the Captain to take you to Molasses Reef at night and not the normal little wreck. The night dive is uber cool. You can rent lights. The night dive was the highlight of our trip. There are so many good restaurants — if you want suggestions, email me. Bottom line: not inexpensive, but very good. We loved it. Oh, talk the crew into playing the Amoray song for you. It is so corny and fun that you’ll be singing it the rest of your trip — That’s Amoray! UW Photography Comments: Big catamaran boat, lots of space for messing with your gear. Big rinse tub just for cameras. Patient boat crew. Divemaster gave ideas for where cool stuff hung out.

Amoray Dive Resort, April 2006, John Fletcher (john_fletcher@bellsouth.net), Pelham, AL. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to 75 Feet. Water: 77 to 85 F, choppy. If I had known how diver focused this operation was, I would have made every effort to convince my wife to stay there so I wouldn’t have had to deal with commuting my gear around Key Largo! Being able to literally step out of your room and onto the boat with all of your stuff ready was appealing. The attention you receive

from every member of the staff and crew was genuine and sincere. Amoray operates in the John Pennekamp Marine Sanctuary. My first dives were on Elbow Reef at the Sand Chutes and the City of Washington wreck. The corals and sea fans were plentiful and healthy, the tropicals and blennies were plentiful: butterflies, tangs, angels, jacks, grunts, parrotfish, trunkfish, sgt. majors, etc. We went to French Reef to dive the Hour Glass Reef and the Sand Box Caves. Both days, I dived with Patrick McCoy as the DM/Instructor. He could handle a newly certified diver and her older family member without cramping my dive plan at all. The max. number of divers was 6 with 3+ crew members.

Amoray Dive Resort, May 2006, Walt Suita, Sharon, MA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm, currents. Weekend package deal — two two-tank boat trips plus a one-tank night dive. They have two boats; one is a nice six pack set up for premium tours. The other boat is a 30-plus foot, 34-seat catamaran. They filled every seat on the catamaran on all trips but the night dive. Can you say cattle boat? For crew, there was a captain and only one divemaster on board. If you were to need two-person CPR, who's going to captain the boat? On one "deep" (100 ft.), somebody had a "situation" and the lone divemaster spent several minutes getting suited up. Not a lot of safety planning here. The service was indifferent from the front office all the way to the dive ladder. The room was dirty, plain and simple — great CATV though. The continental breakfast was bagged bagels, a toaster, and community peanut butter. Cremona for the coffee just doesn't cut it.

Atlantis Dive Center, July 2006, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano, Guaynabo,

PR. (guigo34@hotmail.com), Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. This was my second dive on the Spiegel Grove with Spencer Slate and Neal Watson. On the first one several years ago the ship was on its side and there were no buoys nor descent lines, compounded by a ripping current. This time the ship was upright and a sight to behold. There are now no less than 10 moorings and, with the weather being dismal, we were the only ones on the wreck, courtesy of Slate, a genial host. There was no current to speak of. This is a wreck that ought to be dived several times due to its sheer size. There is now abundant growth and it is home to many large goliath groupers and barracuda.

Blue Water Divers of Key Largo, November 2005, Chuck Donaldson (scuba@yahoo.com), Portland, OR. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 70 Feet. Water: 74 to 78 F, choppy, no currents. Two man operation next to the Holiday Inn. The office is a kiosk at parking lot level and can be found easily by its sign and proximity to the "African Queen" display. Contact with Brent Hilliard (www.bluewaterdiver.net). We set up our trip and Nitrox instruction via email and everything turned out exactly as promised. BWD set up our accommodations at the Marina Del Mar which were provided at the agreed upon good price and proved to be exactly as advertised. Proximity to BWD's boat was a plus, and could get breakfast and walk to the boat. Because groups are small (no more than 10 and more frequently 4-6 folks) where you go and what you dive can be both flexible and interesting. Brent Hilliard dove with us, not as a divemaster, but as a fellow diver which made for great diving. Brent's site briefs provided plenty of information. We met him on

a couple of the wrecks we dove and he was able to point out interesting features (a pair of 7 foot Bull Sharks) on the fly. We dove Spiegel Grove twice, Duane twice and Bibb. My son and I wanted to qualify and dive Nitrox. We set up instruction in advance and were greeted by an excellent instructor. After passing the exam, we went down to Ocean Divers to pick up our tanks. The instructor walked us through testing and documenting our tanks. We rented our tanks and moved them to the boat. BWD made arrangements for us to pick up tanks at the Ocean Divers dock on the way out rather than having to get them on our own. Blue Water Diver is a Coast Guard inspected thirty foot custom open transom dive vessel. We found it comfortable and fast. The porta-pot is probably best saved for emergencies since some rigging is required. Electronics appear up to date and the boat briefing is well done. Captain Glen Marvel gets you to the dive site quickly and skillfully. Folks from the Pacific Northwest are sometimes surprised to find out that not every location is nonmoving. On Blue Water Diver, the Captain smoked on the boat as did other divers. Good operator, dive where you want to dive.

Blue Water Divers, July 2006, Tricia Coyle (tricia.coyle@gmail.com), Madison, NJ. Experience: 26-50 dives. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, choppy. Clear, mostly calm, warm water plus good vis, abundant marine life and corals, wrecks for divers of all levels. Blue Water Divers was great. They are laid-back and the boat was uncrowded. They let divers have input on what reefs/wrecks to dive and gave practical briefings for how to dive the sites (less rehearsed and flowery, more about best way to make the most out of the dive). Also, rental

gear was in good shape.

HMS Minnow, Key Largo Holiday Inn, October 2005, Dean Knudson (deanknudson@yahoo.com), Golden Valley, MN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 77 to 82 F, calm, choppy. The boat is small, but the sites are close, and the boat is on the ocean side, minutes from the dive sites. The morning trip departs 7:30 a.m. sharp (Jeff will call your hotel room if you are holding up the others!) to have first choice on the mooring balls. Key Largo diving can be hit and miss, visibility wise, and the skipper reserves the right to eyeball a few sites before selecting the spot. The boat is limited to six passengers, service is personable. Jeff doesn't say much initially, but when he warms up he has the unvarnished wisdom and gentle humor of an ex-cop retired in the tropics. Spiegel Grove dives without advanced certification are a possibility, but Jeff has to watch you for a bit before he decides to take you there, and he might want to take a peek at your log. If the Spiegel Grove was not in the area, there would be precious little there to attract intermediate or advanced divers. Since that wreck flipped upright in the hurricane, it has become one of the best wreck dives I have been on, rivaling the C-52 in Cozumel, and better than the Hilma Hooker in Bonaire. Talk to Jeff when booking about the days he might anticipate making a run there. Space is tight on this relatively small boat, watch the aisles and keep your bench tidy. The reefs are somewhat green with algae, but the fish life in the marine preserve is consistently good year to year. Excellent beginner diving, if you have a newly certified diver in your family or group. The Key Largo Holiday Inn is comfortable, reasonably priced, has a nice pool and Tiki bar, and the rooms are 100 feet from

the HMS Minnow. The Island Grill, 10 to 15 miles west on the highway, is an excellent and charming restaurant, with a great view and nice solo guitar music some evenings. UW Photography Comments: Boat is small, but there is a table and a rinse tank. The skipper is careful with photo and video gear.

Horizon Divers, Ramada, January 2006, Ron Jyring, Bismarck, ND.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 25 to 40 Feet. Water: 75 to 77 F, calm, surge, no currents. The purpose of this trip to complete my 12-year-old son's open water certification. Horizon Divers' boat is especially suited for new divers: quite stable, spacious, and with relatively short trips to the dive sites. Horizon Divers came under new ownership last year but many of the staff were still there. The quality may be a little lower than before. We felt less like guests, and more like customers. There was some evidence of hurricane (Wilma) damage: sponges rolling on the bottom, freshly broken pillar coral. Many good dives. We stayed at the Ramada for the first time, having stayed at the Best Western Suites during past trips. My wife liked it a lot better: brighter, newer, better breakfast and pool. I liked the extra room and two baths at the BW. Both are a short walk to Horizon Divers. Book them through Horizon Divers for a good (best?) price. Incidentally, the nearby Tower of Pizza makes a great post-dive meal.

It's A Dive, Marriott, November 2005, John W. Griffis III, Sarasota, FL. (jwgriffisiii@verizon.net) Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 40 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy, surge. It's a Dive is a 5-star PADI resort. They are in the Marriott Hotel complex on the bay side of Key Largo, FL. They are a professional, well-run operation.

Instructors, dive masters, and boat crew are accommodating and knowledgeable. They have two boats: one is a 45 ft. double v-hull flat top, the other a 36 ft. single hull. Both are fully equipped and well maintained, and both are powered by twin large outboards. The 45 ft. boat has modern diving ladders on both sides. Weights are organized in a locker and dunk tanks for masks and cameras are also available. Entry into the water is by giant stride. The dive site was at Elbow Reef, Anchor Chain, at John Pennekamp State Park. Seas were 3-5 ft. A second dive was scrubbed because a diver needed medical attention for an ear problem. It's a Dive has locked storage facilities so that gear may be left overnight. Rinse tanks containing disinfectant for wetsuits and gear are available at dockside. Although we experienced conditions that made diving almost impossible, the staff at It's a Dive are so professional they made the trip worthwhile.

It's A Dive, Marriott Key Largo, June 2006, Ian Kennedy (imkenedy@ucdavis.edu), Davis, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F. It's A Dive is at the Marriott. Generally, there were about 12 to 14 people on board, though when we went to the Spiegel Grove there were only six. On the first day, severe thunderstorms rolled in while we were under the water. I was looking around to see who had the giant strobe on their camera. It was actually lightning. Fortunately, nobody was electrocuted. We went diving on the wreck of the Benbow and then on Elbow reef. Those were to 35 feet. Allotted time of 60 minutes. The City of Washington was probably the nicest site that we visited. There was a large grouper under the boat, weighing a couple of hundred pounds, and a few nurse sharks at the bottom. Went to the

Spiegel Grove. I have been diving on the wreck twice before when the wreck was on its side. It is upright, thanks to the intervention of Hurricane Dennis a year ago. We explored the bow of the ship down to about 100 feet, working our way out over the superstructure to gain a little extra bottom time. There was a bit of current at depth, but this was nice easy Florida diving.

It's A Dive, Marriott Key Largo Bay Resort, August 2006, Allan Baldwin (a.baldwin@comcast.net), Oak Park, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm. We had 3 new divers looking for a long week-end trip from Chicago as well as two small children to entertain. The new divers got a view of diving other than Midwest quarries, the resort facilities and surrounding attractions kept the children happy, and the two experienced divers found enough to make the dives interesting. Best was the service from the crew of It's a Dive. They were professional, friendly and always ready to provide help. The Spiegel Grove was an interesting wreck but a strong current kept it challenging until we were protected by the wreck. Since we held tight onto the line all the way down, a pair of gloves would have made the trip more comfortable. The reef dives were shallow (30ft) with lots of clusters of coral and small fish. It was easy to just sit in one place and watch.

It's A Dive, Marriott Hotel, September 2006, David N Scarborough, Douglasville, GA. (david@wan2dive.com) Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm. The hotel (resort) rates drop greatly if trip is booked with dive shop, great deal! We have been diving with them for several years. The service at the shop and on the boats is great. One diver of

our party broke a piece of gear (the first dive of the first day); they loaned him a replacement one — loaned! It's A Dive changes your tanks in between dives, drinks on board — bottled water, not out of the cooler. Great dive briefing, some history of the site, what may be seen. Four dives on the Spiegel Grove. Slight current on surface. dive safe. UW Photography Comments: Camera bucket of water and carry on boat; crews instruct all not to rinse any other items, great for video lens and camera.

Our Own Boat/Our Own RV, May 2006, Bruce Wallace (laos62@aol.com), Indianapolis, IN. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy, surge. My wife (100+ dives) and I (1000+) dives arrived in Key Largo in May 2006 for a four-month stay to dive the Pennekamp and Florida Marine Sanctuary. We own a 16' inflatable hard hull boat rigged for scuba diving. Our RV camp was right on the Adams Cut with direct access to Largo Sound and the open Atlantic. Our runs to the reefs averaged 20 minutes. We started at Carysfort Reef/Light and spent the next four months diving nearly every mooring buoy down to Molasses Reef at the extreme south end of the Pennekamp Sanctuary. We dove depths from 5 feet to 130 feet with general conditions of no current (or not noticeable), waves between dead calm and 2 feet, visibility averaging 60 to 70 feet (measured by two divers holding up fingers) and mostly on reefs with the usual Grove, Duane, Bibb and Benwood wrecks thrown in for interest and T-shirts. The Benwood was our favorite at 35 feet (average), distributed debris field, tons of hiding places and the greatest "scare" of all when a group of tarpon "fly" through your dive area. Name the reef fish in the books and they were there. Most fish are people

friendly as they see hundreds and hundreds of divers and snorkelers every day. The barracuda are nerve-racking as they have been fed by dive operators and show little wariness to approaching divers. This can be disconcerting when we were easily approached within a couple of feet by 4- to 5-foot great barracudas looking for a “hand out” (try to keep your hands close to your body and use the camera housing for your defense). We dove over 100 dives in the four months. Air refills from World Watersports were \$2 each. We dove 80s, 63s and a 50 to see how our time was impacted. The 63s were the best as they were lighter and we still exceeded 60 minutes (or wife’s thermal limits). There is simply no need to dive 80s when max depth is less than 100 feet. We shot over 1,000 still pics and 30 hours of digital video. All in all, it was an “Endless Summer” to be remembered.

Quiescence, Ocean Point Condo, April 2006, Ched Miller, Kingston, NH. (ched_d_miller@raytheon.com), Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 76 F, calm, choppy. I dove with Quiescence (Q) Dive (mm103.5) for two weeks. Q runs three 6 packs out of Key Largo. They know the best dive spots based on the weather and ocean conditions. Their captains know diving and how to ensure the divers have the least hassles given the diving conditions. Two examples: we were diving the Spiegel Grove and it was blowing pretty good — all the other dive boats on the site were tied up bow first to the mooring buoys and their divers were going off the stern and having to swim/pull their way up to the buoy to descend. John had us suit up while we were still coming up to the site and then tied up stern first so we stepped off the boat right

next to the buoy and were able to grab the line and descend to the wreck with little effort. When we came up, the boat was bow first and we drifted back to the stern and got on board with the boat as protection against the wave action; on another day a couple who were new to diving came up rather far (maybe 15 yards) and down wind from the boat, which would have meant a tough swim back to the boat — John dropped the mooring and moved the boat to them so they could easily board. The captains move your equipment from the spent tank to the new tank before you even get your mask and weight belt off so you were all set for the second dive before you left the first dive site. They want you on the boat with 500 psi or after you have been down an hour; other than that, dive as you want. Sometime there are so many fish you have to almost push them aside. We saw nurse sharks almost on every dive, numerous rays, morays, groupers, angels. I ship my equipment down UPS so I don’t have to hassle with the airlines, my reservations were as requested and we were able to change them around to accommodate some changes. The shop is a scuba ranger shop and SCUBA Steve gave my 10-year-old grandson a great introductory scuba lesson in a nearby pool. They are a topnotch shop. I stayed at an Ocean Point Condo, only ocean side condo with a beach — it has a pool and tennis courts. The continental breakfast was just what you needed before going diving. Ask for a condo in building 4 or 5 since they have ocean views.

Rainbow Reef, April 2006, Glenn Voshell, Bradenton, FL. Experience: 75-100 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 feet. Water: 74 to 78 F, calm and flat. We have been diving with Rainbow Reef of KL for 3 years. They will book your dives and

hotel for you. You can cost out your trip in advance using their exceptional web site. You cannot book via the web site, unfortunately, which subjects you to numerous phone calls and emails as you attempt to confirm your arrangements. Administratively, they are a disorganized mess. You must have your confirmation # prior to arrival or you may not have a room and not at the rate quoted to you. Once you get past all this, they have good boats that leave right from the hotel and great long-term captains. Other dive staff turns over a lot, but their dive guides are usually good as are captain's orientations. There was an instructor there from Miami with a class of 16 completing checkout dives and he freely instructed the captain where he wanted to go for both dives. Other passengers had no say so shallow 30-foot dives were the only option. He even had the captain move the boat on the second dive because the captain had moored to the wrong ball as far as he was concerned. He was a real shitbird and the captain was a wuss. (I know you'll have to leave that last line out if you were to print this.) In spite of everything I'd still dive with the Rainbow Reef folks again.

Rainbow Reef, Ramada Inn, April 2006, Jeremy Ellis, Atlanta, GA.

(jeremyellis@earthlink.net) Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. The dive staff is friendly and helpful. Some divemasters are young and don't always show up promptly for the boat to depart in the morning. The nitrox fills tended to be on the low side (30% to 31%) and we had to bring our own analyzer as there wasn't one on the boat. Once out on the water, the service is solid. The boats are equipped with first aid kit, oxygen, etc. The staff chooses the sites to minimize currents and maximize

visibility so you may tie up to a site or two before jumping into the water. A divemaster is always available to guide a dive, but most divers were happy to dive their own profiles. The captains know the sites well and provide good reviews and suggestions on what to see and where to find it. They got us to the dive sites that we wanted to dive, specifically, the wrecks which tend to get crowded. So, we headed out a little earlier to dive the Spiegel Grove, Eagle and the Duane. They have several dive boats and their large boat was out for repair when we were there so we were a little crowded on their 2 smaller boats (12 divers per boat that should have held 8-10), but since it was all our group, we were OK with the crowding. The wrecks are amazing, with tremendous fish life including schools of jacks and snapper and a Goliath grouper on the Eagle. The Ramada Inn is right next to the dock and within walking distance of a few good restaurants. The food in the area is fairly good and not too overpriced. The hotel has a great pool and hot tub. UW Photography Comments: The boat had a separate rinse tank for cameras and the staff was helpful handing you the camera when you entered the water and collecting it from you at the end of the dive. No dry work area on the boat or at the dock.

Scuba-Do, Marina Del Mar, July 2006, Melissa Good (merwolf@bellsouth.net), Pembroke Pines, FL.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm, choppy. This was my first time diving in Pennekamp Marine Park. We made arrangements with Scuba-Do and Laurie via email. She was friendly and helpful, and remained friendly and helpful throughout the dive. We stayed at the Marina Del Mar, right at the Marina that Scuba-Do ties up in along with many other opera-

tions. The marina also has the boat African Queen moored there (from the movie) which is an interesting five-minute study. They have glass bottom boats, which was a good pick for our non-diving friend to see what she was missing. The hotel had decent service, and the rooms were well laid out and good for families with a kitchen and Murphy beds. It was dog friendly. My Labrador liked the room as well. Diving in Pennekamp was wonderful. The first day we were the only two divers on the boat but they took us anyway. Weather was windy, and the seas were choppy but the viz was fine and we saw a number of turtles as well as the usual tropicals. The coral was mostly benches and undercuts, full of life and the fish let you get close to take pictures. Second day of diving was flat calm. Excellent viz, large swim through coral formations. I was the first one in the water and as the bubbles cleared I was about face to face with a black tip reef shark, who had a buddy, and a couple of nurse friends swimming around below. Nice fish life, nice viz, nice weather. Scuba-Do is a small operation. The dive briefings were excellent, the captain/divemaster Tony was as helpful as you needed him to be, the fills were all over 3000. They had water on the boat and a cooler — you bring everything else. You sit on the back deck and they bring your tank and BC to you, get in, fall over. They help you out, and change your tanks. Nice dual ladders to get out with, take your fins off first. My friend had a brand new mask - Laurie spent our hour surface interval working it over to kill the fogging and it worked. Good team, nice boat, great experience. Dedicated bucket on the boat. No real dry space to open or use cameras.

**Sea Dweller's Dive Center, July 2006,
Christopher Diaz (cdiaz71@hotmail.**

com), Winchester, KY. Experience: 40 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, calm and flat. Fantastic visibility, loads of marine life (large and small), brightly-colored coral. However, they loaded the maximum number of divers (25) on their boat. Although service was slightly impersonal, they did head counts and roll-calls to make sure everyone got back on the boat. DMs left a lot to be desired.

Key West

Subtropic Dive Shop, June 2006, John A. Fletcher (john_fletcher@bellsouth.net), Pelham, AL. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 15 to 30 Feet. Water: choppy. An act of vandalism at the dive shop cost them a day's business. But they handled it like pros. Tropical Storm Alberto would practically ruin my UWP opportunities. Both days were "Captains Calls" and they were wonderful (given the underwater particle "snow storm"). My first day of diving was on Sand Key and Rock Key. They were covered up with usual tropicals and the corals, seafans, and sponges were plentiful and healthy. We dove on the Cayman Salvor and Joe's Tug. Both were impressive wrecks with lots of adolescent fish and the usual critters. On Joe's Tug, I had to jockey around with my camera and dive knife to cut away several multi-hook fishing lines . . . that stuff is still illegal in a SPA, right? I was rewarded by an adolescent loggerhead turtle hanging out on the bow. I went over the port-side to the sand and came across a large adult Goliath Grouper that was about the size of a small refrigerator! By the way, female manatees and calves hang out and regularly visit the dock area.

Marathon Key

Abys Dive Center, Holiday Inn Mara-

thon Key, August 2005, Joe Sindorf (jsindorf@gmail.com), Rockford, MI. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 40 to 85+ Feet. Water: 78 to 82 Fahrenheit, calm, choppy, surge. Tremendous operation. This is a family owned and operated shop and it is very well done. The boat is in great condition and is fast. It is small, so you don't have the crowds you get on a big pontoon dive platform. Cold drinks are provided on board, and there is plenty of comfortable seating, either inside or outside. We booked the package deal with the Holiday Inn which is on the same property as the Abyss shop. You will probably never get a better deal on room and diving. This was very inexpensive and a great value. But do not call the Holiday Inn about this, you have to book with Abyss. Very convenient to walk out of our room right to the dive boat. The Holiday Inn is nothing to write home about. It is just your basic, well, Holiday Inn. We were on a family vacation and got two adjoining rooms. The teen daughters had their own room and my wife and I had our own room. Nice thing — we didn't have to pay extra for this since the package is per person double occupancy. Only disappointment: we booked our week of diving far in advance and when we got there wanted to change one day dive and have a night dive instead — they would not do the switch. I can see their point, but it felt a bit cheap. Also they had a change of policy with the hotel so although we were told we got a breakfast buffet with our package, we arrived at breakfast the first day to find that had been cancelled ... not a huge deal, but a disappointment, and there was no adjustment in cost for the package. But, even with those two minor issues, we loved diving here. The quantity of the fish did not seem as good as Key Largo, but the

dives were spectacular. One nice thing ... actually a very nice thing ... if you are doing multiple day dives, you can hang your gear in the shop and not have to try to store wet stuff in your small hotel room. This was a real benefit. When you go, beg to dive at Pillar Patch — a tremendously healthy group of Pillar Coral teeming with fish. This was the second week of a two-week dive vacation in the Keys. We loved it. There are tons of great restaurants; email me for more info on those. Abyss dive shop has great, friendly people who made us feel welcome, safe and comfortable.

Pompano Beach

Parrot Island Scuba Adventures, November 2005, Joni and Bobby Lamb (scubalovers@comcast.net), Richmond Hill, GA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy. Reasonably priced, safety conscious, and accommodating. With captain Jerry Turmaine, along with a different DM each day we logged eight dives in four days. The boat, Fathoms of Fun, is in great condition, it has plenty of room, and a nice dive platform. Freshwater shower, a head, a camera table, and cold sodas and water. Fathoms of Fun is at the marina next to the Hillsboro Inlet drawbridge in Pompano Beach. Even with chop and cool temperatures, the dive sites were wonderful. We were at a different wreck and different reef each day. Reef dives are drift dives and each buddy team is required to tow a dive flag marker (local law). We saw morays, snooks, stingrays, puffers, trunkfish, parrotfish, spadefish, butterfly fish, damselfish, and more. Hurricane Wilma had torn up the beaches and buildings, but the marine life was unscathed.

Scuba Time Charter, Sand Harbor Resort and Marina, September 2006,

Scott Fried, Levittown, NY. Experience: 150 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 83 to 87 F, calm and flat, choppy. Scuba Tyme Charter is based at the Sand Harbor Marina right over the Atlantic Ave. Bridge at the intercostal waterway in Pompano. The operator is set up for both new and experienced diver. The crew is friendly and will help you load your tanks onto the vessel as you carry the rest of your gear. Between dives they are there to swap out your tanks. The crew is well trained and puts safety first. Head counts before leaving the docks and after each dive. I found the Captain, Bryan (former divemaster) well informed on the dive sites and he has a few that are secret. He will make sure that you have good dives. The divemasters, Chris and Amanda, wait to be asked a question; just look in their direction and they are there. Briefings on the dives are detailed. If diving a wreck, usually the divemaster will go and set a line and will give a report and vis and current and if there were any special creatures. If you are planning to catch your dinner, Bryan will drop them off first and drop wreck divers and photo takers next. You can expect to see large to small game, such as sharks to sea-horses. The coral life is good and well cared for. As for wrecks, there is a host from old to new, from coral-encrusted to just plain old rusted. Proper skin protection is a must, along with gloves. The Sand Harbor Resort and Marina is 50 yards from the boat docks. Scuba Tyme gets divers a reduced rate. The hotel was on the older side. The rooms are basic; nothing special. For hanging wet gear, I had to make do with the cheap plastic chair and table on the porch.

Tavernier

Conch Republic Divers, Decem-

ber 2005, Dave Bridenbaugh
(dtbriden@fuse.net), Cincinnati, OH.

Experience: 375 dives. Vis: 25 to 50 Feet. Water: 70 to 75 F, choppy, surge, currents. Great dive operation and the folks are great to deal with. They have two boats, smaller 30' and a bigger 42 footer. Nitrox is available and a full service Dive Shop. The Motel in Islamorada, Sunset Inn, was a bargain place and nothing fancy but clean rooms and close to nice restaurants. Diving the Keys is always somewhat iffy during Dec. Though the weather can be nice and in the 80s there are usually winds and waves. We had two trips (out the 6 dive days) canceled because of winds and high chop. There seems to be a visibility problem this time of year because of it, but the deep dives were nice. We had a couple dives on the Duane and saw lots of barracuda and grouper as well as a giant hawksbill turtle. Numerous parrotfish and the usual reef creatures. A two-tank dive on the Spiegel Grove was neat. This vessel has some nice fish hanging though it is too new for much coral growth. It is big and will take several dives to see it. A nice dive is the Eagle wreck which has been down for about 20 years. It has lots of big fish including goliath grouper and we saw a couple reef sharks. Lots of cudas as well. There are a number of reefs that have abundant fish life, however, we experienced a lot of surge and poor visibility.

Conch Republic Divers, The Ragged Edge, January 2006, Matthew Nathan
(mattnathan@hotmail.com), San Francisco, CA.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. choppy. The first day, a cold front moved in. With winds 25-40 mph and rough seas all dives were canceled. The next day winds died down. I was a solo diver and, rather than buddy up with a random

diver, decided to hire a Conch Republic dive guide for each of the deeper wreck dives (the Eagle, Duane and Spiegel Grove). Great decision. Unless you are an experienced wreck diver with knowledge of these waters, don't do the wrecks without a guide. Water was cold (72 F) and my full 3mm wetsuit didn't cut it. I rented another three mil shorty which did the trick. Reef dives were long, shallow and uneventful. Lots of tropical fish and critters and decent coral. The reefs are nice, not amazing.

Conch Republic Divers, Ocean Pointe Suites, May 2006, Richard Sziede (dsziede@hotmail.com), Reston, VA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, calm. The sixth time is the charm. The Spiegel Grove has always been my bad-luck dive. Previous attempts all came a cropper. First try, the damn thing hadn't sunk. Second: flooded camera. Third: Wilma. Conch Republic Divers had three Spiegel Grove dives this weekend. I did all three. Finally overcame my jinx. All three dives had wicked current. Up and down on the mooring line, hung out like flags, attended by a school of curious barracuda. First dive I missed the mooring line for the ascent. My computer was deep into the yellow zone, so rather than spend time hunting for the line, we came up free. Current put us way out of swimming distance from the boat. Scenes from "Open Water" began playing in the back of my mind. Another dive boat sent a swimmer with a rope, and we were soon reunited with Conch Republic. The divemasters were kind about my blunder. The second and third dives we kept the mooring line in sight. My jinx held for the second dive. I had rigged the video housing slightly off. It didn't leak, but I couldn't turn the camera on, a fact I didn't learn 'till I was in water. Finally got good foot-

age on the last dive. Conch Republic runs a tight boat. In and out on time, no slip-ups, cheerful and helpful crew. Two-man crew handled a crowded boat with aplomb. An additional hanging rack for dive skins and BCDs would be nice. Last boat in had no place to hang wet gear other than over the stuff already hanging there. Fish life seemed thinner than my last visit. Fewer 'cuda and grouper. Schools of Atlantic spade-fish were absent. But there were plenty of striped grunts, file fish, pipe fish, and other little guys. A goliath grouper is in residence in Spiegel Grove's wheelhouse. (Some wag wondered if Florida would rename Jewfish creek.) Most shallow sites have a complement of nurse sharks. Got good footage of a high hat patrolling a coral cave under the nose of a green moray. Lobsters and crabs. Ocean Pointe Suites had some negative reviews on travel sites. They lived down to them. Fishing boats bring their catch right to their favorite restaurants like Fish House, or Snap-pers. Don's Diner in Key Largo provides a belly-bustin' breakfast. Atlantic's Edge in the upscale Cheecha Lodge is not much more expensive than Fish House, with a big step up in ambiance. A wedding in the lodge presented a South Florida fashion show that was a refreshing change from Washington DC's boring business suits. Many guests wore Florida's high-maintenance woman uniform: dress too tight, makeup too thick, tottering on Manolo Blahnik shoes.

Divers City, Island Bay Resort, September 2005, Clare Petosa, Neptune, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm, currents. If you are going to do wreck diving in Key Largo, look up Divers City. Knowledgeable about wreck and technical diving. Good safety proce-

dures — will let you dive your own plan. Boat takes 8 — plenty of room. Barb and Bob are great captains!

North Carolina

Atlantis IV, May 2006, Clay Coleman (clayco@mindspring.com), Baton Rouge, LA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 65 to 72 F, choppy, no currents. The Atlantis IV is a comfortable boat and the crew is friendly and first-rate. The weather is volatile in May, and water temperature can vary significantly day-to-day. We were able to dive on 4 of 5 planned dive days. My goal on this trip was to photograph sand tiger sharks on the wrecks, and I was not disappointed. We encountered them on every dive, and we often encountered many. We also found a surprising number of lionfish on the wreck of the Papoose. Most of our dives were on the Papoose (we also made 2 on the Spar), and depths were in the 90-120 foot range. We made only 2 dives per day, which required a full day at sea. Despite the deep (short) dives, the area was one of the most fascinating I've seen. Very camera-savvy crew, plenty of fresh water rinse.

Olympus Dive Center, America Suites, September 2006, Steven Rosenfeld (oceanstevenr@adelphia.net), Westlake Village, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 15 to 40 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy. I stayed at Ameri Suites for about \$75 a night. The dive center runs two boats on weekends. The boats leave at 7 am and return around 3 pm. You do 2 dives with a 2-hour surface time between dives. Both boats have a restroom but no food or drinks. They have a cooler if you want to bring your own supplies. The diving is all done in 100 ft. plus water. It is a well run operation and makes it safe and easy.

Upon arriving at a location, a crew member takes the boat anchor directly down to the wreck. An additional line was run on the wreck to help you find your way back to the anchor at the end of the dive. The boat had safety lines at 15 feet and a safety tank was also in the water. The wrecks are wonderful, with a great amount of both small and large marine life. There were sharks, barracudas, jacks and lion fish. Even in the off season the boats were almost full of divers. I wore a 5mm suit; other divers had anywhere from a 3mm shorty to a dry suit. The main problem this time of year was the weather. I got there a week after a storm. There was another storm that stayed about 500 miles away. The diving is 25 miles out to sea and the swells were hurting the visibility. The third day was canceled due to sea conditions.

Outer Banks Diving, Marlin, July 2006, Rick Tuss (rtuss@aol.com), Wilmington, DE. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 72 to 80 F, choppy, currents, no currents. Outer Banks Diving has upgraded their boat. The Flying Fish is bigger, faster, drier, and just overall nicer. Johnny and crew run the best dive boat out of Hatteras. Johnny has always been an extremely competent captain, but he seems to have been upgraded with the boat. I think Johnny has been taking nice pills! We lucked out with the weather and got in 3 out of 3 days although it was a bit lumpy at times. The diving: spectacular. Hatteras, especially the Proteus, has always provided me some of the most eclectic dives anywhere. Imagine doing a giant stride into the water, looking down and seeing a wreck laid out 120 feet below you (yes, +120 ft vis). Go down the anchor line and make your way to the stern passing parts of the fantastic wreck, numbers tropicals,

barracuda, spades, triggers, etc., oh, and a few stray sand tigers. Reach the stern and start counting the sand tigers . . . couldn't. There were maybe 50, anywhere from 3 to 11 feet, and a 300 lbs. goliath grouper in the middle!

Under Pressure, August 2006, Garry Gough (gpgough@optonline.net), W. Paterson, NJ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, choppy, currents, no currents. North Carolina- Hatteras Village at end of Outer Banks. We liked it so much we came back 2 more times in August, despite the required 9-hour drive. The Gulf Stream makes it to Hatteras, so during the high season the water temps are around 80 degrees, the wildlife is prolific with tropicals you typically see in Florida along with a lot of Northern cold water fish including many sharks. The boat service was the best I've had. Typical trip is a max of 6 divers on a 45' boat with 2 mates in addition to the Capt., J.T. Barker. Price is \$125 for a 2-tank dive, \$10 for air, leaving around 7:30am and getting back to the dock between 3-4 p.m. JT would consult us on where we would like to dive while finding out from other boats what kind of conditions we could expect at different wreck sites. Depending on the wreck, it was a 2-hour + trip. The mate would tie us into the wreck, we'd hit the water and during the 2-hour surface interval the mate would cook us hot dogs and chips or you could bring your own food for the grill. They provide a cooler for you to bring other snacks, drinks, etc. We would then select another wreck and head back in. Some people would spear fish. The boat is 45' and completely refurbished this year. You are able to sleep on the boat if you desire. Entry to the water was back roll or giant stride, then 15' down a line to the granny line

going to the anchor line and then to the wreck. There is a 6 rung open end ladder with abrasive coating for easy exit with your fins on or hand gear to the mate and climb up. Suiting up is roomy as there are only 3 people on each bench, back to back, facing the boat rail. During the trip, you could stay in the A/C cabin with the captain and watch DVDs of other dives on a flat screen or just talk. On the return trip they would make popcorn for us. Out of the 18 dives we made during July and August, you could have 30' to 100' viz, water temps stayed around 80 degrees, with current from minimal to screaming. Most dives had minimal to slight current with viz around 60'+ and smooth seas. Wildlife was prolific. Thousands of bait fish, schools of Atlantic spade, sting rays, many oyster toad fish, too many fish to appreciate. Dozens of sharks, mostly sand tiger in the 5' to 8' range. In all our dives we only saw one bull shark and 2 nurse sharks. Dolphins were seen on 1/4 of our dive trips circling the boat. There are tropicals but not in huge amounts. You can see angels, triggers, hogs, and others typical to a Caribbean reef along with lion fish that are not endemic to our ocean. They do not have a DM doing a dive with you. JT will let you dive on your own profile. You should be comfortable in dive planning and open ocean diving, but if this is your first time and you'd like a DM with you, the option is open to discussion. On a good day, you would think you were diving in the Caribbean. We stayed at the Breakwater Inn, 2 miles away, which had a new section facing the bay. The rooms had small kitchen setups. UW Photography Comments: I have a video and light setup. They would hold and hand my setup to me once I was in the water in the manner I requested and

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