

of a wooden sailing ship that inspired Peter Benchley's book (and later movie) "The Deep." Though only the mast step of the original structure remains, the cargo is much in evidence. Their load of bags of cement have formed a surreal landscape of "pillows," with slate slabs destined for use in pool tables mingled among them. The rest of their cargo was more fragile or salvaged early on; the site is protected from collecting and still littered with the whiskey bottles from the more perishable part of the cargo. The double wreck was a lovely dive. The site is accessible even when the southern end of Bermuda is blown out by swell or high winds. The dive operation is targeting the cruise ships in Hamilton, and so, aims at easy dives and enforced profiles.

Triangle Divers, September 2006, Paul Martin (Paul.Martin@GrammarSmith.com), Arlington, MA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy. Triangle is near the causeway that joins St. George to the rest of Bermuda; they are working to garner the business for the northern end of the islands. They pick up and drop off to the cruise boat dock at St. George. Their boat was old and not a great setup for scuba (one ladder, extra long, for a SNUBA-style hard-hat bottom walk that they and some other Bermuda operations offer to non-divers), but the staff were working hard to make the dive experience a good one. We dived our own gear, but observed minor repairs done instantly to their rental gear. Dives were in afternoon, and first was a shallow reef at the northern corner of the whole Bermuda reef system. Nice healthy coral, but limited species. Basically coral heads forming a maze around a modest blue hole. Second was on the wreck of a dredge, scuttled around 1900. The lo-

icals just didn't need the boat any more and did a good job of sending it down to 80 feet, standing upright and opened up enough for non-hardcore-wreckers to swim through. It had been there long enough to grow some brain coral on it and was especially glorious in the blue-lipped tunicates that formed fist-sized clusters in many places on the upper surfaces and edges. Viz was clouded by rough wind so swimming down the mooring to the wreck and keeping it in sight was the only reasonable nav for this dive. Bermuda's massive reef system has been wrecking boats since humans got the technology to sail there, and it is still at work. It is not the sparkling clear water and creature zoo of the better Carib sites.

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.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar, August 2005, Bruce Williams, Durango, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Spacious condos with good water views, huge open balconies. Dated interiors but clean and well-kept. Full kitchens for eat-in, several good restaurants to walk to, and many in town (vehicle required). Maintenance person helped himself to \$20 when he came to our unit for an electrical problem. Bonaire Dive and Adventure sup-

plies the shore diving business far more so than boat diving, so bulk of business is filling (free) nitrox tanks, as well as air. Our one boat dive with them was average, both in terms of dive site and divemaster. Shore diving was the order of the day (week), using trucks supplied in our package. thorough orientation, helpful and friendly personnel. Bonaire underwater topography is mostly similar ... a little steeper in the north, more gradual to the south. Could take a beginner to any site that we dove with no problems. Biggest issue was negotiating the first 50 feet into the water, over coral and sometimes urchins. In a week of 20 dives, about 3-4 that we would call noteworthy in terms of flora/fauna.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Sand Dollar, November 2006, Ed Regennitter (edreg@alltel.net), York, NE. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 85 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm, choppy, no currents. The reef at Sand Dollar is awesome! We did 10 dives there and were never disappointed with the life on that reef; frogfish, seahorses, cuttlefish and tons of very small sea life I was a little disappointed with the dive operation. We found that the storage area for gear was locked up at 4:30 p.m. and the very small wooden lockers for storing gear outside that area was in great disrepair. There were doors missing and broken hinges and no way to lock your gear on a lot of the doors. We ended carrying our gear back to our rooms. The 3-hour dive operation briefing was way long and got to be very boring after the briefing turned to downtown eateries and shopping areas. The drive through diving was good and most of the time there were tanks for everyone. I wish the Sand Dollar Resort catered more to divers with their meals. If you missed the scheduled feedings in the morning, noon and night, you were looking for

somewhere else to eat ... although later in the trip it seemed the dining area was opened more for sandwiches. The rooms and showers were awesome, as were the furnishings, and the stocked kitchen gear was great. I loved the screened windows and screened patio for sitting and drying gear, plus having a breeze blowing through the rooms constantly.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Den Laman Condos (next door to Sand Dollar), January 2007, Bart Hazes, Edmonton, Alberta, CA. Bonaire Dive and Adventure serves both the Sand Dollar and Den Laman guests. We did the introductory nitrox class (which was a farce, but there is really not enough to teach on this topic to make it a class so it seems to be more of a PADI money grab) because that gave us a free upgrade to nitrox tanks. We also did two workshops with the on site naturalist, which was great. Shore diving from the local dock was also fantastic. Bari reef lived up to its reputation of being the most species-rich reef in the Caribbean, with 108 species identified on a single dive plus two, a yellow brotula and some kind of eel, that I haven't been able to ID yet. The total score for fish sightings for 2 weeks in Bonaire was 168 species, not that many more than the 151 found in Cuba, and in Cuba I didn't have an on-site naturalist to help me find some of the more obscure gobies and blennies.

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, February 2007, Colleen Kabat (colleenkabat@charter.net), Waupaca, WI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 200 Feet. Water: 80 to 90 F, calm, no currents. Last year we had a studio on the parking lot side, but this time we had an ocean front one bedroom unit. It was fully equipped and the only critters we

had for 2 weeks was a 2” gecko and a pigeon on our balcony. We were able to cook breakfast, lunch and a few dinners in the apartment. We used Bonaire Dive and Adventure. Andre’ is a wonderful person who really understands how to cater to the customer. Staff is attentive and professional. We did all shore dives, but they interacted with us often. In 2 weeks we did 30 shore dives each; most of them were 60-80 minutes long. Our favorite reefs were Bari (lots of species of fish, squid, octopi, etc.), Yellow Submarine (seahorses and frogfish), Something Special (frogfish), 1,000 steps, Karpata, Salt Pier (schools of barracuda), Invisibles (double reef), Witcheshut, and Taylor Maid (north end, pristine corals, large green morays, turtles). Our favorite restaurants are Mona Lisa (for bar bites) and Café de Paris. Richard’s is great. Check out the “Last Bite Bakery” and “More for Less” grocery store. Pack half the clothes you think you’ll need and double-up on some of your dive gear (2 masks, if prescription). The dive shops on the island aren’t “overstocked.” Watch for sand fleas and sunburn! Great opportunities for excellent photos. Many seahorses and frogfish. Northern reefs had larger fish and better visibility. Learn to use macro — lots of tiny creatures. We have a Sony Cybershot that’s a few years old. It takes excellent videos and we have many of turtles, squid, octopi, seahorses and frogfish.

Bonaire Dive and Adventures, Den Laman Condominiums, June 2007, Frank Hall and Carole Ott (hoosier-diver79@yahoo.com, Floyds Knobs, IN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 82 F, calm. Arrived on the “red eye” from Houston about 5:30 am. Picked up the rental car and drove to Den Laman only to find the door locked. The office doesn’t

open until 8:30 am. We couldn’t get in the building so we sat at a picnic table and waited. A real bummer after being awake all night. Then we were informed that check-in time was 12 noon and if we wanted a room earlier we would need to pay for an extra night. We told them no way that was going to happen and we were immediately taken to our room. The rooms are immaculate, and after the initial registration problems, everyone was helpful. Bonaire Dive and Adventures is the onsite dive operation. We had a free upgrade to Nitrox and they worked hard to keep up with the demand for tanks. We did only shore diving, but it appeared the boat operation ran smoothly. We have dived Bonaire many times. Although there isn’t a lot of “big” stuff, Bonaire never fails to provide beautiful soft and hard coral, clouds of tropicals, and invertebrates. The license plate says it all — a “Divers Paradise.”

Bonaire Dive and Adventure, Iguana Inn, September 2007, William (wsa_in_mt@msn.com), Townsend, MT. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 F, choppy. We had a close brush with hurricane Felix. The island did not sustain any damage, only one inch of rain. The dive operation did not charge for the lost day of diving, and was helpful to suggest dive spots that were sheltered from the choppy surface conditions the next day. There is a photo shop on premises (Fish Eye).

Bonaire Dive and Adventures, Den Laman Condominiums, September 2007, Carole Ott, Floyds Knobs, IN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 85 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Someone was there to meet us when we arrived at Den Laman Condos. This was a change from June, when we had to wait

until 8:30 for them to open. Although our room wasn't ready, we were given another room until we could get into our accommodations. The office staff went out of their way to provide us with anything we needed. Bari Reef is the "house" dive site. We did all shore diving. If you dive Nitrox with a 63 tank, you have to plan ahead a bit as they run out of those pretty fast. This dive operation locks up the nitrox tanks fairly early and the air tanks later on in the evening. You'll want to put your night diving tanks in a tank locker. The steps up to the dock from the water are rather high; we found it easier to exit onto the shore. The island dive operators are really upset over the government's decision to greatly increase the number of cruise ships coming to the island. As many as 3 cruise ships could be there at one time. The pier extension to the town pier isn't ready yet, so at least some ships are going to have to anchor. It seems that the "powers to be" are less and less interested in divers. We divers need to let the Bonaire officials know that this activity isn't good for the Marine Park, the dive community or Bonaire in general. The divers eat, sleep and dive in Bonaire. Cruise ship passengers are there for a couple of hours and gone!

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

Experience: 400+ dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm and flat, no currents. Shore diving was wonderful. Beautiful coral and numerous fish and small critters. This is our 4th stay at Buddys. Accommodations are going steadily downhill. The furniture is in poor repair and the fan, some lights, etc., didn't work. The room and grounds were infested with mosquitoes. The island appears to be in an uncontrolled building frenzy. Access to some

dive sites is being cut off. There is a lot more trash lying around. We can only hope the local officials come to their senses before Bonaire is turned into a huge T-shirt shop.

Buddy Dive Resort, November 2006, Tom Thompson (tltharper30@yahoo.com), Carpentersville, IL.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm. My wife accompanied me (less experienced as a diver with 30 dives) and my 80 year old father-in-law came along. He did great and we had a great time with good support from the Buddy Dive Shop and crew. One of their instructors helped all of us drop a lot of weight that made our diving a lot more enjoyable and neutral buoyancy achievable. The boat captains and divemasters were great and were safety conscious. The staff at the front desk were not helpful or attentive. They were mostly a young group who seemed more interested in socializing than in helping customers. We found the trucks and dive through dive shop made shore diving enjoyable. I'd recommend Buddy's for newer divers and for people who want to take it easy, enjoy the dives, see lots of marine life (but not many large animals/fish). We did see quite a few eels, sea snakes and large schools of various fish: durgon, parrot fish, snappers, etc. Hired a videographer who did an excellent video of a shore dive with my father-in-law on the dive with us.

Buddy Dive, December 2006, Marilyn Mitchell, Brighton, MI.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, calm. Forty divers took this trip offered by Huron Scuba in Ann Arbor, MI. Buddy Dive is not fancy or luxurious, but clean and neat. Lion's Dive next door but it has been taken over by Buddy Dive. There are three

pools, a beach bar and a restaurant. The food was good, especially in the restaurant, although the service was slow. Our one bedroom condo was roomy and comfortable. Only the bedroom has AC but a great breeze is always blowing, keeping things comfortable. Take DEET — it got rid of the mosquitoes and sand fleas. We did 6 or 8 boat dives. Buddy Dive has three boats and the 36-footer was comfortable, with easy giant stride entries off a large swim platform. The captain and divemasters were helpful and always asked where we wanted to go. We also did a number of shore dives, including Oil Slick Leap (giant stride entry off a ledge and a ladder for exit), Angel City, Bari Reef, the Town Pier (night dive) and Windsock. Also, the house reef is pretty good, especially at night when Charlie the tarpon accompanies divers or when the big grouper hunts using divers' lights to find food. Although we saw no sharks, turtles or rays, there were lots of reef fish of all kinds and three or four kinds of eels. Huge octopus during a day-time dive as well as two or three on the house reef during night dives.

Buddy Dive, Belmar Apartments, December 2006, Steve Johnson (high_cirus@hotmail.com), Cedar Rapids, IA.

Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 79 F, no currents. A family holiday trip with three kids ages 15-21. Three-bedroom, two-bath apartment at the Belmar worked well. Ate all breakfasts, most lunches and half of dinners in the apartment. Local groceries are acceptable, but selection and price are both factors. Buddy Dive is associated with Belmar and maintains the on-site dive operation. This was satisfactory and dove the house reef several times. Also dove the house reef at Buddy Dive twice, an excellent site. Bonaire's shore diving was everything

advertised and we all had a "wee" of a time. None of us have enough experience to make any sweeping claims, but everyone enjoyed themselves. As novice divers and underwater photographers, Bonaire seems to be the best of all possible destinations. Total lack of current at the locations we dove combined with abundant subjects and excellent visibility made it possible to safely dive, take modestly good photos .

Buddy Dive, Caribbean Club, August 2007, Ed Regennitter (edreg55@yahoo.com), York, NE. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 65 to 85 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm, no currents. Unfortunately, 4 people would have to share 1 bathroom in the bedroom of the other couple. You want to know your travel friends at that point. There were problems with the Nitrox testing equipment at Caribbean Club and we tested 5 tanks the first day to find 3 with enough air to dive. After that, we used Buddy's drive and dive card and picked up all our tanks at the regular Buddy's shop. We had problems of not getting to eat at the resort the first couple nights, but after talking to Ruud, things settled in great and the food was fantastic. The drinks were some of the best on the island and the staff was good. The resort was fantastic for not being directly on the water, calm and peaceful.

Captain Don's Habitat, December 2006, Bear Johnston (bearjohnston@cusd.com), Madera, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Healthy reefs and marine life. warm water and great visibility We stayed in in one of the two-bedroom cottages we shared with another couple. With the large patio, we had plenty of room. Just pick up a full tank, 24 hours a day, and either dive the reef in front of the resort or, if you are smart

and rent a truck, head north or south to the many dive sites there. It appeared the south sites seem to have more fish life, while the north sites seem to have healthier corals and sponges. We did do some boat dives. You had the choice of diving with your buddy, or hanging out with the divemaster. As a scuba instructor myself, I appreciate them allowing me to be responsible for my dive profile. All the staff members were professional and showed a lot of concern for everyone's safety. They did a great job of telling other divers not to use the camera barrel for anything but cameras.

Captain Don's Habitat, April 2007, Mark A. Hicks (Zorrr2@aol.com), Schaumburg, IL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy, surge. Captain Don's is a nice place and has a lot to offer. The island is Dutch in nature, as can be seen in the architecture and colors of the downtown area. Its colorful stores are mostly small, but many set their sights on the Cruise Ship clientele that stream into the area periodically. Restaurants are varied and we had no problem with a different selection each night (Richard's — mmmm!). We saw lots of little guys that challenged our cameras' macro shooting skills. Shoot lots of pics and cross your fingers. The reefs were healthy with a good variety of corals. One dive even had us swimming among stands of black coral. We came across a school of dolphins that wanted to play in our wake. Their grace in the water was incredible. The walls were mixed from easy sloping sections to sheer drops down into the deep blue beyond. The Hooker was a treat, and boy is she big! From one end, her hull stretches off into the distance as you see her graceful lines and curves. We dove the house reef many times and each

was just as enjoyable as the last, but maybe not the first dive. On that first dive we were introduced to Tunicates — long lines of them floating in trains in front of you. You had singles here and there, but most were trains of these transparent creatures that were many feet long. At first your mind said "jelly fish" and you tried to avoid them, but the water was teeming with them and after finding out that they do not sting, you would just push them aside. We found lots of little stuff: fire worms, juvenile spotted drums (and a big adult on one dive), morays of many colors. The reefs looked healthy, just not larger fish species. Our rooms were nice and comfortable as long as you did not breathe. The aroma from the bathrooms gave the bedrooms that it leaked into a fragrance that would remind one of an old out-house, but with the window left open, it was tolerable. They have three one-tank boat dives going out each day, at 8, 11 and 2. The spacing left a little bit to be desired. Their changing area is far too small when 20 or more divers are trying to get gear and suit up for either boat or shore dives — there just was no room. The small lockers were ok for your main gear but the pieces of string around the outside walls were the only place to hang any wet suits, and these were full most of the time. The island is designed for loading up your pickup truck and driving to any number of shore dive sites, but after looking at the rocky shore entrances at many sites from the boat, we resisted the concept for fear of taking a fall and ending our week. We did venture next door to Buddy Dives and take a good look around (dive operations and rooms), and if we return some day we all agreed it would be to Buddy Dives. UW Photography Comments: Tubs were available on boats and shore, though they

got crowded a lot. Macro is supposed to be this island's strong point and for the most part it was. The night dive was also interesting, with half a dozen big tarpon following me with my dive light. These guys just had no fear of me at all!

Captain Don's Habitat, June 2007, Ronald Schmetzer (rschmetzer@gmail.com), Tallahassee, FL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, currents, no currents. Crew for our group of 21, Roger and Jinny took us to 12 different sites during the week. Four or five had multiple seahorses and/or frog fish that I probably would never have found on my own. They always gave us excellent briefings and gave us the freedom to dive with our buddy or hang out as a group with whichever of them was in the water with us. They also managed to get us the night dive at the town pier with more seahorses and a frog fish. Since my last visit four years ago they to do a lot more divemaster choice rather than letting divers get a group of six or more together and choose a site for the boat dives. They did take us to the one site that was specifically requested. If anything, the reefs are in better shape now than four years ago. The staghorn coral has started to regrow and there were only a few visible instances of diver-related damage. I brought both my 0.5 mm skin and my 2 mm shorty and decided to start out with the shorty. Since I never got uncomfortably warm and didn't suffer any stings on exposed arms and legs, I opted to stay with the shorty the entire week. The accommodations at Captain Dons are in great shape. Cottage was excellent. They have cable TV complete with CNN, ESPN, and The Food Network. This is not necessarily a good thing. They also have wireless internet in the rooms and a couple of desktop PCs

in the lobby. The only thing to beware of is charging meals to your room at Rum Runners. It is managed separately and you have to give them a separate credit card imprint. They always ask for your room number when charging to your room but what they really mean is "diver number". If yours is a four-person cottage and everyone gives them the "room number," then the person who also has that as their diver number gets all the restaurant charges regardless of what name is used on each slip. Boat rides are short and camera-only bucket was provided.

Caribbean Gas Training, Benji Schaub, November 2006, Patricia Harmon (pharmon@insight.rr.com), Westerville, OH. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, surge. The East "Wild" Side for diving and it is different from the calm and easy diving on the West Side. Benji Schaub is the owner of Caribbean Gas Training. He is professional, highly knowledgeable. Divers meet the boat at the harbor by the Harbor Village Resort. It is a rigid hull inflatable with a canopy and a metal interior with tank racks and two powerful outboards. The boat is so squared away that the captain personally puts a rubber boot on the end of each tank to prevent the tanks from making a banging noise on the racks when the sea gets rough. The trip to the East Side is about 45 minutes and the last 20-25 minutes can be bouncy in rougher seas. Entry is by backward roll off the sides and there is a good ladder for exit. Benji led the dives and on the first dive we saw two turtles and a shark, unusual on Bonaire. The fish are larger on the East Side, and although the viz is not as good as on the West Side. There is one-hour surface interval before the second dive and bring your own water or snack. The second dive

was an exciting drift dive where, again, we saw a shark. For exit in the current we had to grab a line two at a time and be hauled to the boat. While two were on the line the others waited at the surface until the boat came around for them, part of the more challenging experience on that side of Bonaire. The dive profiles work best with nitrox but Benji can accommodate air divers as well. The boat leaves about 8:30 AM and returns about 2 P.M. so it's a full day. This operation can also visit less-dived sites on the Southern tip of Bonaire such as Lighthouse and Red Slave which are on the way to the East Side.

Carib Inn, Happy Holiday Homes, February 2007, Marge and Ernie Karalis (margeka@comcast.net), Algonac, MI. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, calm, no currents. Unlimited shore diving. We staying at Happy Holiday Homes and did all our diving with Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn. We booked our air fills in advance. Bruce keeps a running total of tanks for the weeks you dive and you pay on your last day of diving. He figures the prices based on a la carte or a week's package, whichever is cheaper. His shop has everything you could possibly need. Any gear problems and he has the parts. He didn't charge us for free flow regulator problem because it didn't require parts. Drive-through tank fills, which was great. The diving was just spectacular. We chose to stay at a small bungalow because it was cost-effective. We couldn't afford a trip to Bonaire until we found www.bonaire-talk.com. It's really cheap to sleep/dive there. It's the getting there that costs the most. Louise and Mel at Happy Holidays Homes really have a great operation. Separate bungalows in the Belnam area, clean and efficient. Wonderful restaurants to fit your pocketbook. We

purchased groceries at the two food stores and cooked breakfasts ourselves and ate sandwiches and leftovers for lunch. Dinners were just great. Donna and Giorgio's is not to be missed, along with Pasa Bon Pizza, Richards — book the pier-side table for two in advance; for that special occasion, the Cactus Blue. Book a pickup truck for your stay. Purchase Susan Porters book, "Bonaire Shore Diving Made Easy." It's updated yearly by Susan, who dives these sites every day. It explains what to expect at the entry point and what you will see at the site. How to exit the water and the difficulty. Take the woodwind cruise while you're there and make sure to do a dive at Klein Bonaire (boat dive only). Visit the donkey sanctuary and Washington Slagbaai Park (Whole day for the latter). Week-end only go to BobbieJan's BBQ. It's huge, delicious, and cheap. Get there at 6:00 or you'll have quite a wait.

Carib Inn, April 2007, Marc and Anne Bressman (mbressman116712@comcast.net), Cherry Hill, NJ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Inexpensive resort; clean and comfortable 2-room suite with balcony, but only bedroom is air-conditioned. Kitchen was well-equipped. Owner on site, continually making improvements to facilities, was friendly and helpful, but quirky. Divemasters were competent, but some were not helpful. One was cranky and unhelpful, but good at finding critters. Set up, carry, clean, and rinse your own gear. Dive boats have no shade, no seats except for the sides, and no place except the floor to set up your tanks. Get in by backward roll, and out by use of a difficult-to-use side ladder. We understand and appreciate that owner wants to keep prices low, but boats could still be made

more diver-friendly. Water clear, fish life prolific — Bonaire is still divers paradise on this, our third visit. Saw lots of seahorses, but night dive at Salt Pier was disappointing. Restaurants are excellent and fun, especially Richard's; still our favorite. Bonaire supermarkets offer wonderful variety of foods for our breakfasts and lunches.

Carib Inn, May 2007, Ron Steedman (rlumenator@aol.com), Cape Coral, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, choppy. Having done many dives in Bonaire, and having done some recently in Florida, Hawaii, and other Caribbean areas, it makes you realize how really special the diving is in Bonaire. Bonaire never disappoints. Carib Inn offers the best in friendly, personal service, and their boats get out early and quickly to get the best selection of sites. The boats are uncrowded, and you get geared up and briefed when you arrive at the dive site. All of the divers are experienced, with normal dive time running around 70 minutes, and profiles are unrestricted if you are on computer. There are many prolific nursery sites, and turtles and spotted eagle rays are frequently spotted, as well as schools of dolphin, usually on the way to or from the dive. On this trip there were many long strings of pelagic tunicates floating in the water, offering a feast to reef fishes. It was quite a sight. Schools of squid allow you to float right along with them in the shallows. Frogfish, numerous species of eels, octopus, barracuda, sen-nets, seahorses, batwing crabs, then the normal tangs, damsels, etc. — there is just so much marine life that you cannot list it all. The outer reef on Angel City is one of our favorite sites for fish diversity and its topography. The rooms are great, and Bruce is always doing something to improve them.

Divi Flamingo Beach Resort, April 2007, Rick Tavan (rick@tavan.com), Saratoga, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm. Interesting shore diving right off the pier. Excellent dive pier with lockers, rinse tanks, air, jump-in and stairs to walk out all nicely arranged, available 24/7 once you have been briefed. Nitrox available. Restaurants in town ranged from good to excellent. Best was Capriccio, a true Italian with outstanding food and welcoming proprietors who once had worked at one of our favorite restaurants in Italy. *Si mangia bene e puo parlare Italiano.* little variation among sites we visited on daily boat trips. Many were shore-diveable. All good, none great, all pretty much the same. With the exception of the photo operation, resort staff ranged from indifferent to hostile. Treated visitors as suspects to be avoided and persecuted. Particularly awful were front desk and dive shop desk (except dive shop proprietor, who was courteous). Resort food was mediocre, service slow. Some rooms were seriously mold-infested; room changes resisted strongly by desk staff despite good, empty rooms being available once we insisted. The mandatory pre-diving briefing is not disclosed well prior to arrival. The timing is such that many divers miss a day or even two days of diving. Many arriving flights are red-eyes. Some actually get you in in time for a briefing and then the only reason to miss dives is fatigue. Non-red-eye flights arrive after the once-daily briefing and the briefing is after departure of the morning boats. Consider a shore-diving-only plan; the boats are an unnecessary expense except to go to Klein Bonaire. The transfer via Montego Bay, Jamaica, was a nightmare. We were bumped from our flight and Air Jamaica was hostile

about rescheduling and compensation. What you get depends on how well you negotiate. UW Photography Comments: Good photo shop at resort including the only friendly staff at resort. We weren't photographing ourselves but they supported those who were. They also provided the typical custom/canned trip videos.

Divi Flamingo Beach Resort, June 2007, James A. Heimer (jmsjnk@earthlink.net), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, calm, choppy. The rooms tend to be small, with small tables for setting up cameras. We had upgraded to an ocean view — be sure to ask for a second-floor room. We were a bit of a walk from the dive shop and pier, which made schlepping uw cameras a bit of a chore — there are rooms closer to the dive shop around a pool. We were there for the 2007 Digital Shootout and had breakfast from 7 to 8, morning dives from 8:30 to 1 pm, lunch, then seminars from 2 to 5 or 5:30, dinner (not provided), then an evening slide show of the day's photos with critiques. The breakfast and lunch were at the resort beach restaurant, buffet-style and were good; we ate at the resort, more formal (relative term) for dinner, which was good also — fish, chicken and pasta dishes, limited selection of beef, and some good appetizers. We made one excursion to Richards, about five minutes walk from the Divi, but it wasn't as good as we remembered. Each boat carried 16 to 18 divers, and all had expensive camera setups, which took up all the space. On boarding, each diver set up his equipment (there was storage on the dive dock) and checked one additional tank to confirm two full tanks were on board. At the sites, all geared up except fins, walked to the stern, put on fins, and jumped in. Divers were

competing for the "feature creature," which the dive masters found and pointed out for the ravenous photographers. Fortunately (for them), the non-Shootout participants had their own boats and didn't have to engage in the underwater photographic melee. Dive master duties were limited to a cursory briefing and pointing out photographic subjects and handing cameras up and down. Dive masters Lutte and Rommel were careful with the cameras, found the critters, and helped with gear problems. The Divi resort could accommodate the 70 photographers with respect to classroom space for seminars and presentations; provisions for photographers were limited to rinse tanks on the boats and on shore, a small camera table on shore; camera storage on the boat was limited to an inadequately sized camera table and foam padding placed under the benches to supplement (this was my preferred method of camera storage on the boat). We did two morning dives each day and usually saw frog fish or seahorses on one of them. Macro subjects (blennies, shrimp, gobies, etc.) plentiful; fish limited to schools of small fish, mostly, and the usual mid-sized tropicals.

Divi Flamingo Beach Resort, August 2007, Phil Hampton (gracphil@palmnet.net), Orlando, FL. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, no currents. Both my wife and I need help due to age and infirmities while entering and exiting. The help was always cheerfully given. The unlimited dive package is one 2-tank morning dive and a 1-tank afternoon dive. Thus, in two weeks I got 36 boat dives. The boats are in good condition and we experienced no maintenance problems. Our first week was relatively quiet, with two boats going out most days. The second week was quite busy,

with several large groups and five boats going out most days. Despite this, the boats all left on time and we had great diving, although we learned to avoid one boat with an obnoxious rebreather diver. Serge, the dive manager, and the dive operation staff were outstanding. We stayed in the timeshare suites. They are old, but are being refurbished. Most of the furniture was new. A great place to stay and get lots of diving for your money. Divemasters accommodating, found lots of critters for us, helpful handing cameras in and taking out. Great service on the boat.

Divi Flamingo Beach Resort, September 2007, Terry Gee (TGeeVet@aol.com), El Paso, TX. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 87 F, calm. One of my group had his laptop computer and the power supply stolen from his locked room. Obviously an inside job that the staff was totally unable to understand, repeatedly saying that never happened in Bonaire and they had numerous security guards, one armed, roaming the grounds. The diving was again disappointing. Beautiful reefs devoid of all but small reef fishes. An occasional eel, a couple of frog fish and several seahorses, but nothing of any size. All parrots, small damsels, chromis, and other small fish. Broken fishing line was obvious draped over the reef on every dive we made. The dive sites are supposedly a protected park area, but the population, all fourteen thousand of them, are allowed to fish there.

Fish-Eye Photo, September 2007, Patricia Harmon. In September 2007 my husband took his second class with Tim Peters, owner of FishEye Photo, located at Den Leman, off the traffic circle just south of Sand Dollar, Buddy's and Capt. Don's. A three-hour private

class with Tim was \$75. On an earlier trip he took the full PADI Digital Underwater Photo Course with Tim for \$275. Instruction is in his shop, which is air-conditioned and pleasantly appointed, and diving is right off the dock at Den Leman. For beginners, a rental camera and strobe are included and my guess is that shorter and non-private beginner's classes are cheaper. Tim has a degree in photography and has been working as a professional photographer for almost 10 years. His technical knowledge is truly awesome, but most importantly from the viewpoint of my decidedly non-technical husband, he explains things clearly and answers all questions directly and in terms that are easy to grasp. He helped my husband with simple things like tips for securing his housing and caring for O-rings, clearly explained white balance; use of TTL underwater; as well as the importance of available light readings in certain pictures that also use strobe. He discussed both macro and wide angle at length, among many other things. Tim also dives with his students to help him diagnose problems they may be having with things like backscatter and focus, as well as to provide them with more practical guidance for improving their photos. He has computers set up in his shop to provide critiques of pictures, which he does in a helpful and non-critical manner. He also provides instruction in PhotoShop. In the first 10 minutes with Tim, my husband learned more than he did in hours spent with the camera manual and books on underwater photography.

Golden Reef Inn, August 2006, Jerri, Kerrville, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: choppy. Upon arrival on the redeye we were greeted by GRI employee and taken to the hotel for a few hours' rest provided

by the early check-in. Good choice for the budget-minded diver. Plenty of towels, units were spotless, and management was helpful. Unfortunately, our A/C didn't work for most of the week, but we were accorded a partial refund which made the warm afternoon naps less odious! Bought some groceries at Cultimara, but really didn't do much cooking. Had brought snack foods (jerky, nuts, granola, honey and PB, etc.) from home so we mostly ate out at the recommended restaurants. Were aware of "island time" through Bonaire Talk so didn't mind the long waits for dining service. Viz was not what we had expected, photography suffered for it but it was great not running into boatloads of divers at every site. We dove the far northern sites, Lac Cai, Red Slave and the double reef sites. Recommend Hilma as a night dive (we had it to ourselves). Also took a trip with Larry's Wildside, saw the promised tarpon, turtles and eels, also 2 eagle rays at a distance. But didn't see the quantity of larger fish we expected. The cleanliness of the island and the friendliness of the people were impressive. We enjoyed Bonaire, but too much work involved in all the lugging and changing out of tanks and lots of shore entries. Live-aboards more aptly fit our diving preferences.

Golden Reef Inn, April 2007, Drew Zaun (seaducer@verizon.net), Barne-gat, NJ. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, no currents. The owners are avid divers and made many great recommendations with regard to local sites. In fact, my favorite location was off the map, on a tip. Breakfast was outstanding. The Inn uses Wannadive Resort as its dive shop; friendly service and accommodating. Free nitrox upgrades. The rooms were comfortable, but the rinse

tanks were mostly dirty. Also, the key to the gear locker is left outside, where anyone can find it, so be careful. Truck rental was included with our package, and we were able to make 3 dives our first day on the island. Free rum punch parties both at the Inn and other resorts, for those so inclined. No dedicated rinse tanks, but a sink in every room makes up for it. Wireless internet facilitates instant uploading of your digital images.

Larry's Wildside Diving, January 2007, Jeanne Fielder, Portage, MI. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, choppy, surge, no currents. The preboat/dive briefings were excellent. Had to follow due to the water conditions and the type of boat (Zodiac). Follow behind the divemaster and he would show you the good stuff. Had read about Larry's in previous Chapbooks and were well informed about what to expect from talking to Eddie — Larry's right-hand man. My dive buddy is prone to seasickness and should have done a Dramamine. Expect rough seas — the east side of Bonaire is 180 degrees different from the west side. But, you will see all the big stuff that you don't see on the leeward side. Make sure you stay a little above and behind the divemaster to prolong your dive and so you don't miss out on the lobsters, huge green morays, turtles and rays — eagle and sting. The divemaster is on a mission to point these out to you. On the second dive you can either choose to do another drift or the "White Hole." Though the Hole was filled with a huge school of tarpon, the vis was poor with all the surge and sand. No camera buckets but the boat crew was good and sensitive about our cameras in terms of placing them on the benches when coming up from a dive and getting them back to us.

Port Royal Hotel, February 2006, Tom Harvey, N.J. Experience: Over 3000 dives. Two full bedrooms, 2 baths, huge living room, 3 TVs, overlooking pool and marina inlet and ocean. We were the only guests. I rented an SUV — gas \$6 a gallon. This was my tenth trip to Bonaire and my last. Hurricane Lenny in 1999 ruined Bonaire. All the dive sites at the national park were washed out and are not dived by anyone who wants to see anything. The sites on half of Klein Bonaire, from “SW Corner” to “Just a Nice Dive,” are not used anymore. All the hotel house reefs from La Machaca to 18th Palm are ruined. The town pier was closed to diving. I managed to slip in one night dive there and all the frogfish and seahorses were gone. Lighthouse Point is off-limits. There was no sand on pink beach — it was washed away — they were importing sand while I was there. At the Point Bonaire where we stayed for two weeks, we were right in line with the airline flight path. Most of the dive masters were bored stiff. There are still a few sites on Klein Bonaire and Karpata is still worth a visit. We dived with Larry’s Wild Side Diving one day and the sites were like old times, but it’s regimented and could be rough. Car break-ins are an everyday occurrence at beach dives. Nitrox not needed. The diving had me singing Bruce’s song, “Glory Days.”

Sand Dollar, April 2007, Julie Arismendi (juliearismendi@yahoo.com), Clements, CA. Experience: 350 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm and flat, no currents. The Sand Dollar has nice rooms, but they are old and tired. No A/C in the living area of our 3-bedroom condo and A/C could not keep up in bedrooms. The restaurant was expensive and not good. The dock and facilities were good, the boat diving OK if no more than 7 people

were onboard. Some DMs were not helpful, especially the “nature expert.” He wouldn’t even answer a question about the island unless you booked a land tour with him. We were disappointed in the corals and lack of variety underwater. No color at all in the reefs, lots of parrot fish but not much else. Saw one turtle a day, all were tagged, 2 tarpon, no sharks, 2 barracuda, a few eels, not much small stuff (looked long and hard for them).

Sand Dollar Resort, July 2007, Gary W Brown (gkbrown@vci.net), Benton, KY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 85 to 88 F, calm, no currents. Traveled with a small group from Mermet Springs Dive Shop in southern Illinois. The shore diving is usually easy, with little current. Some locations require a little caution when entering the water due to rocks. All the sites were loaded with corals, fish and critters. We saw several turtles and lots of morays. Did a day trip with Larry’s Wild Side. It was a lot of fun, especially the white hole. The Sand Dollar is a comfortable place to stay and the included breakfast is good. The dive shop is on site with a pier to enter the ocean. We had a rental truck and would recommend that you get one to see the island and access the shore sites. Try Casablanca, The City Cafe, and a host of other fine restaurants on the island. Driving is easy and nobody seems to be overly impatient with the tourists. We took the all-night flight on Continental from Houston and arrived at 6 a.m. and were diving that afternoon.

The Deep Blue View, August 2007, Janet and Robert Ustruck (ustruckr@charter.net), Rockport, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. A copy of “Bonaire Shore Diving Made

Easy” is a must. When descriptions said “you have to swim a bit” to reach a point, we were expecting a 100- to 200-yard swim when it is usually less than a 50-yard swim. The island is friendly and the food was fantastic. We did not have any problems with theft, though we did not leave valuables in the truck and left the truck unlocked. The night dive at the Town Pier is wonderful and the dive at the Salt Pier is great. Both of these dives require a divemaster to guide you and approval from the harbormaster. It takes a day or two to get all of the paperwork and approvals. Esther and Menno, the owners of The Deep Blue View, are friendly, professional, courteous, fantastic cooks and can answer just about every question you could think of. Both have a wonderful sense of humor. The Deep Blue View took care of all of our needs for accommodations (which were great), transportation (no issues at all with the car rental agency), breakfast (wonderful to order dishes) and all our diving needs (we did boat dives and Klein Bonaire dives with Menno). We were able to pick up our air tanks for shore diving right at The Deep Blue View and store all our gear in locked lockers right by the rinse tanks. The Deep Blue View does a Wednesday night Rum Punch Sunset Cruise with a barbeque after that is awesome. Esther packed us a gourmet picnic lunch for our trip through the Bonaire National Park that was more than the two of us could eat. There were no facilities on the boat to rinse your camera equipment, but there is ample room on the boat for camera gear. Back at the resort there are fresh water rinses and lockers for storage of all gear.

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort, January 2007, T Williams (twilliams@green-parrotproductions.com), Frederick,

CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy, surge. Needed to be more specific about dive schedule. We setup for 6 1-tank dives and had a bit of trouble changing to 2-tank dives. Dive shop was busy. Toucan is a well-run operation. Hotel staff and service were good. Restaurant service is slow in the evening. Breakfast room well run. Lunch service slow but acceptable. The only dive not recommended is salt pier. Sea life good but water cloudy and has been at this site for past 2 months. Captain and crew good with handling camera gear in and out of water.

Toucan Divers, March 2007, Greg Snider, Cumberland, RI. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: calm. After reading all the reviews about no fish, broken-into cars, etc., we were pleasantly surprised by the diving and the whole experience. We dove Hilma Hooker alone, saw tiger grouper and 3 6-foot tarpon, then dove Town Pier at twilight, alone with a guide. Saw octopi, seahorse, frogfish, banded shrimp, arrow crabs, and gold spotted eels, several scorpionfish or rockfish. This ended as a night dive; we came out as 12 divers were going in. Our only boat dive, Angel City, saw spotted eagle ray, turtles. Oil Slick, Small Wall and 1000 Steps, saw eels, barracuda, tarpon, lots of great hard and soft corals. Invisibles and Margate Bay, saw octopus in daylight, large spotted eagle ray, turtle. Lots of tropicals on every dive: tangs, peacock flounder, angels, trunkfish, pipefish, butterfly, etc. A lot of rock hinds, different eels, grouper, jacks too. We rented a boat and snorkeled Klein Bonaire; was fun. Also Lac Bay windsurfing excellent. Cactus Blue favorite restaurant.

Toucan Diving, Royal Caribbean Cruise, April 2007, James Knieling (cooltravelnews@aaahawk.com), Las Vegas, NV. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, no currents. For cruise passengers both dives are on the hotel reef. First to the left and then to the right and back to the hotel beach. Very nice corals and even some seahorses. Small fish since the container fleet cleaned out the Caribbean. This is a protected reef area and a nice change of pace with some beautiful girls on the beach. Their equipment is excellent and the staff is good.

Toucan Diving, Bonaire Plaza Resort, July 2007, Nick and Britta Monaco, Gaithersburg, MD. Now I have a full-time dive buddy as my wife finally got certified (I only waited 12 years for this). This was our fourth time at the Plaza Resort and we stayed in a one-room villa that includes a full kitchen with a dining and living room area. Plenty of room to spread out, and the added luxury of being able to prepare meals in the room. Plaza has a nice sandy beach. Have always found the staff friendly, helpful and responsive. The Plaza is going through much-needed renovations and remodeling; we encountered minor challenges such as a shower head that put out no water. But staff responded quickly. Toucan Diving is a well-run operation. Enough boats to keep dive clubs together. All divers are required to go through a brief orientation and perform their first dive on the house reef, 18 Palms. Great site, easy entry and terrific for all level of divers. Toucan staff knowledgeable about dive sites and can recommend them based on diver's proficiency and daily currents. No large fish but plenty of the usual suspects: parrotfish, snapper, grunts, drum, sergeant majors, French angels, and various groupers. If

you're fortunate (we were), you'll spot a seahorse or a frog fish (shut out in that category). Highly recommend taking a guided night dive on the famous Town Pier. Flowering corals, small critters, seahorses and eels. Our dive guide even found not one but two rare red-lipped bat fish. Topside activities include a visit to the butterfly farm, a guided kayaking tour through the mangroves at Lac Bay, and flamingo watching at Goto Meer. Recommended restaurants: Cactus Blue (Caribbean), Capriccio Ristorante (outstanding Italian with an impressive wine list), Pasa Bon Pizza (best pizza on the island), Papaya Moon (Tex-Mex — save room for the apple pie!), Casablanca (great steaks), and Warung Louise (excellent Indonesian rijsttafel or rice table).

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort, July 2007, Jack Gullo (jgullo@carr.org), New Windsor, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm. Easy diving with lots of small life — seahorses and frog fish were common. Several shore dive sites worth doing — Karpata in the North — swells are worse than they look — really worth doing. "Oil Slick" requires a jump from the top of the rocks — water is quite deep — a fun experience. Boat dives to Klein Bonaire are worth doing. Richard's a great restaurant. A rental truck is a must. No problem with theft — but didn't leave anything in the vehicle. Boat had a dedicated rinse tank. Dive masters would hand cameras into the water.

Toucan Diving, Plaza Resort, September 2007, Tom and Lynn Hayes, Pensacola, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, no currents. Resort accommodations were nice, but showing some signs of age, although renovations were

underway. Marine Park orientation was required, regardless of prior visits. Mandatory shore dive is also required, which is slightly less convenient since the dive shop is a fair distance from the beach/dock. Boats tended to feel crowded with 12-16 divers and gear stations fairly close together. Rinse facilities were adequate, but storage was a little cramped, and the resort frowned upon taking any gear to the room for rinse/dry. Personnel in both the resort and the dive operation were helpful and pleasant. Fish life was plentiful — turtles, morays and a number of seahorses. Never saw a lobster, crab or green moray as in previous visits. Other divers made the same comment. Very uncrowded shore dives (except for Hilma Hooker), and plenty of nitrox available. Divemasters tried hard to locate critters if requested, or allowed us to wander on our own. Dive time was limited to one hour, but not enforced rigidly. Bonaire is just a great place to get in a lot of dives, and Plaza Resort is one of the nicer places to stay — a little upscale from Buddy's.

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

Brac Reef Resort, November 2006, Blaine and Marian Browne (bt-browne@bellsouth.net), Lighthouse Point, FL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. There is a trade-off in Caribbean diving in November: while temperatures are more moderate, one runs the risk of less-than-perfect dive conditions. Winds and clouds were the rule. One could dive on the lee side with only minor annoyance from the northerly wind. Brac Reef Super-friendly staff, clean, spacious rooms and well-kept grounds. The food was superb, lots of it and much variety. The dive operation was user-friendly. Spacious, well-maintained boats and the crew does everything but put you in the water. Diving the Tibbetts wreck on the windy north side, we faced one of the most challenging entry-exits we've encountered, with huge swells that wildly tossed the 46 ft boat. Ron and BJ provided careful briefings about reboarding, reassured the anxious, and got all back on board with no problems. Great visibility and some larger fish on the wreck. Currents caused some hatch doors to swing back and forth, emitting eerie, audible creaking noises. Wilderness Wall was arguably the most spectacular dive, with many swim-throughs and beautiful corals and sponges. We saw no turtles or sharks, but others reported sightings. Because of the wind, dive sites were limited during our stay, but those that we saw generally ranked up there with most in the region. One can also explore the island by foot, bike or car, hike various trails, explore the bluffs on the east end, and investigate caves, which are home to bats. The island is more developed than Little Cayman, with a surprisingly large