

## CUBA

**Ancon, November 2006, Brian Verbonac (verbonac@sympatico.ca), Huntsville, Ontario.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. One week all-inclusive from Toronto was \$370 Canadian plus taxes ... the cost of diving for the week was \$300 Canadian, so all in all, a cheap week. The dive masters here, as in all of Cuba, are knowledgeable and true professionals — as good as anywhere we've been diving. The flight was a late one from Toronto, so after clearing customs, finding the correct bus, stopping at another hotel on the way, e didn't get to the Ancon until 3:00 AM. No one around except the desk clerk, who could not leave to show us where our rooms were. We were in the "new wing," but the rooms were still tired. We have made numerous trips to Cuba, so this is a true value description of the accommodations. The food was not up the standards found in other parts of the Island. Normally, when there are several hotels together on a beach, you can visit back and forth to see what's available elsewhere. But, here you cannot do this without taking a taxi and arriving at the front of the hotel to get clearance. The guard won't let you into the hotel from the beach entrance ... extremely annoying. The dive boat was broken and its replacement was a 40-foot catamaran. This is a fun boat, but not a dive boat; cramped quarters for the dive deck area, difficult to get into the water and a pain to get back on board. Getting from shore to the boat was another adventure — there is no dock, so you get into a small tender at the beach, row with pieces of plank (no paddles or oars) to the catamaran, and hope you don't fall into the water as you climb aboard. The crew paddle for you. The diving ... well,

OK for beginners. Shallow dives with not a lot of variety. Corals were average. No large fish at all and few small fish or critters. The whole area has pretty well been fished out with no regard for marine management.

## CURACAO

A short hop from Bonaire (and a nonstop flight from Miami), Curacao's colorful, historic, cosmopolitan Dutch Willemstad offers plenty for the nondiver — shopping, casinos, night life, hiking, an orchid-filled forest, attractive rural villages, half-naked Europeans, and excellent restaurants. Dive resorts prefer the relatively undeveloped northwestern side of the island, where there's outstanding beach diving from protected coves that are generally calm and easily accessible by car. Many divers who cut their teeth on Bonaire now prefer Curacao, which has less diver traffic and development, and an increasing number of popular shore diving sites.

**Caribbean Sea Sports, Marriott, February 2007, James Cooper (mcnkeg@aol.com), East Greenwich, RI.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm.. I went to Curacao for the purpose of getting some additional pictures of frogfish and sea-horses and left after a week with much more than good pictures. Caribbean Sea Sports are the onsite dive operation for the Marriott, an excellent resort. They have first class restaurants, pool and landscape areas, fitness facilities, a great beach ... and friendly, service-conscious staff. The dive operation is safety-conscious and more geared to divers who don't mind diving within a DM-led group. As a single diver, I took