

States as country. As a result, British Men o' War pounded the island. Some artifacts from the barrage can still be found in the murky water of the bay, and low-profile reefs offshore provide pristine coral and plenty of fish; thanks to the marine park, the diving here is much better than average Caribbean diving. A hike up the Quill, an extinct volcano, is worth an afternoon. The people are friendly; there are a few small restaurants.

**Golden Rock, Old Gin House, February 2007, Jeffrey Johnson (jrj60174@sbcglobal.net), St Charles, IL.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 200 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, surge. Interesting coral formations, walls with black coral, etc., and wrecks. We saw more lobsters than we have anywhere, lots of turtles and spotted morays, a few stingrays, lots of the usual Caribbean fish including scorpionfish, schools of barracuda, small stuff including fireworm, shrimp. First time we had ever seen flying gurnards with wings spread underwater. Conditions were good at beginning of week but storm came middle of week; didn't affect topside much but stirred things up underwater. Charlie Brown wreck is a must dive; we were going to do penetration but conditions too murky. We probably should have used Nitrox because bottom time opportunity was significant; found we got close to decompression time sooner than we would have liked on second dive. Golden Rock dive operation does a good job, accommodating, laid back, and competent. Boat was not crowded, had safety gear, no head but you return to land between dives. Glenn and Michelle are owners, helpful, also GMs of Old Gin House. Old Gin House had excellent accommodations; no problems with a/c, water, housecleaning, etc. Our room was on water side, had

great sunsets. Not much beach. You can snorkel out to old sea wall. Food at Old Gin House was good, particularly at dinner. Had beach bar barbeque + band on Wednesday; lots of fun. Allow plenty of time for breakfast, service is slow and not particularly good. Did go to Blue Bead a few times for lunch and dinner; also good. I was struck by few fish dishes on menu, particularly at Old Gin House. Other people seemed to like the Chinese place in town, a restaurant by old fort. We did go to town to get some provisions; had everything we needed. Visited old fort. Hiking up and into volcano supposedly worth doing, plus other side of island supposedly had better beaches. Rent a car and taxis are available. Don't count on Winair to be on time, to give you any information, to get your luggage there on your flight, or to care about any of it.

## ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia lies in the hurricane belt west of Barbados. Diving on this beautiful, heavily forested island is fine for beginners and vacationers, with pretty reefs and tiny fish. On the southwestern part of the island is the better diving but it's rigidly controlled. The year-round high is in the 80s days; night lows are in the 70s. Afternoon cloudbursts are common. Great spot for a nondiving vacation, however.

**Anse Chastanet, September 2006, George A. Bogard, Rockwall, TX.**

Experience: 1000+ dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm and flat. Very well organized and equipped dive shop and operation, good diving with great photo ops. Very pretty resort, nice rooms and great food.

**Anse Chastanet, July 2007, Tom & Lynn Hayes (tomhayes@cox.net), Pensacola, FL.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, choppy. The rooms are spacious and the service is first-rate. There is no A/C, but there are fans and cooling is adequate. Mosquito netting over the bed is provided, and we had no trouble, even though it was fairly warm during the week. The views from the hillside rooms are spectacular. There are 305 steps from the beach up to rooms numbered 7, which have the best views. The Jade Mountain section is even higher, but tends to be a little pricey. However, there are beachside rooms which require no climbing. There is regular shuttle service for those who can't do steps. Diving is limited to scheduled boat and shore dive — no unaccompanied diving! A lot of beginners here on honeymoon, but the divemasters let us stay down as long as we got back on the boat with 500 psi. Snorkeling is great, and we saw nearly as much life as on the dives. The dive operation was also first class, although we did handle all of our own gear on and off the boats (shore boarding). The boats are great for diving — good exit and entry. Lots of excursions available through the resort, and they provide free kayak, sunfish, catamarans and sailboards. Food was tasty and varied — we never ate the same entree twice during the week. The week is not inexpensive, but we enjoyed every aspect of the trip. A direct flight from Atlanta made it easy to get to compared to many places. More banded coral shrimp, arrow crabs, eels and small critters than we have seen most anywhere, but not a lot of big fish, sharks or rays. Several people took a whale trip and saw several pods of pilot whales.

**Scuba Steves Diving, August 2006, James Hawkins (jannajh@aol.com), San Antonio, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 F, choppy. Boat was too small for number of people and, because of pick-ups of divers at cruise ships and training them, we would leave the dock at 8:30 am and return at about 3:30-4:30 pm for two-tank shallow dives. Not a good dive operation except for Scuba Steve. Coral and numerous small fish were beautiful.

## ST. MAARTEN

French St. Martin and Dutch St. Maarten are two nations in one, with wonderful beaches, superb hotels, fine cuisine. A few diver operators are trying to find better diving for experienced divers, but the cruise ships dominate.

**Dive Safaris, Wyndham Sapphire, February 2007, Tom Nagle (tomnagle@hotmail.com), Fargo, ND.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy, no currents. Dive Safaris includes any equipment you need in the price. \$70 for the shark dive, \$93 for a 2-tank AM. The shark dive is well done. About a dozen in very close. The procedure is explained ahead of time and the dive very well controlled. We also did the Carib Cargo wreck and one reef. These are only mediocre. Beginners would do well here, but experienced divers are not given much freedom. A trip to St. Maarten is only worth it for the sharks.

**Dive Safaris, Holland House Beach Hotel, May 2007, John Sekan, Las Vegas, NV.** Experience: 200 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, choppy, surge, mild currents. Excellent