

dive sites that he founded and that the other operators do not frequent. He was great company and loved to joke around. After each day, Stu would rinse and store our gear for the next day.

## TURKS AND CAICOS

This island group, south of the Bahamas and north of the Virgins, features awesome walls and clear water. Provo, the glitzy island, has spectacular beaches, but it's an hour's boat ride to the better diving of South or West Caicos. Grand Turk is a funky, laid-back island that has a wall right offshore and occasional fishy surprises. Salt Cay has pretty diving and the boats visit Grand Turk's wall. Bring a long-sleeved shirt during the winter; it can get cool in the evenings. The flight to Provo from Miami is a little over an hour.

### Grand Turk

**Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, December 2006, Richard Connell (connellr@onetel.com), Colyton, Devon.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 3 to 5 Meters. Water: 23 to 27 C, choppy. 12th time with Mitch Rolling's Blue Water Divers and same with Jenny Carnahan, now owner-operator of Osprey after years at the Salt Raker. Quiet, small old town and friendly atmosphere, no hustle with high proportion repeat customers. Reef is close-in and in excellent condition since mostly in a national park. Straightforward Caribbean diving. Dive operation synonymous with competence and Mitch's band doubles in evening as entertainment around town. Osprey is a leader in anyone's league of smaller personal-

ized resort hotels. Staff are long-serving. Probably the ideal spot for couples of mixed ability and experience. Old timers need not fear cruise ship arrivals. Nothing has been ruined. You hardly notice them.

**Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach, April 2007, Tim Kolakowski (tkolakowski@choiceonemail.com), Erie, PA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 F, calm. Blue Water Divers always gets great reviews, so I dove my 4 days on Grand Turk with them. The corals were, however, sandy and bleached like I've seen off Provo and Salt Cay in recent years. Unlike many past Undercurrent reports, we didn't see a single shark or anything out of the ordinary until the last half of my last dive ... then suddenly it became the dive of my life — 6 dolphins joined us at 40 feet! They dove, surfaced, and played, over and over again, for a solid 20 minutes, passing with a few feet of us each time they cruised by. Some swam upside-down, some were play-fighting as dogs sometimes do. One even backed itself down to the sandy bottom a few feet away from me on its tail, then leaned back towards me at a 45 degree angle and held that position for about 30 seconds. Imitating me, maybe? The final encounter as two of the dolphins approached and one of them rolled on its back on the bottom and lay still for about 30 seconds...I could have almost scratched its belly! The cruise ships are there, but the glitzy port with restaurants, bars, and shops is on the southern tip of the island, away from everything. It's literally quarantined by a giant gate, preserving the rest of the island's quaintness. Cockburn Town is charming and the old buildings are beautiful. If you go, try to meet Oswald E. Francis, a 91-year-old Belonger who still works — he helps manage a

warehouse in Cockburn Town. He'll tell you all about his life on Grand Turk and his time spent at sea. The Osprey is the only hotel on the beach — what a view! Great BBQ on Wednesdays when Mitch, the owner of Blue Water Divers, and his band play. The lighthouse is worth a visit if you drive around the island. Also check out Gibbs Cay, the uninhabited small-scale Stingray City.

**Blue Water Divers, May 2007, Russ Knapp (knappsci@hotmail.com), St. George Island, FL.** Experience: 200 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm and flat. Cruise ships — I'm a many-time visitor to Grand Turk and the cruise ships are not a problem. The dock is on the south end away from town. Most cruisers never leave the dock area. All the dive companies have separate dive trips for the regular divers and don't mix groups. Blue Water Divers is a friendly, professional company — Mitch and Monica are great. Boat ride 10-15 minutes. Grand Turk is a laid-back place. Things are little on island time, which is a plus.

**Bohio Dive Resort, August 2007, David Hardie, Chappaqua, NY.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 120 Feet. Water: calm. The August-September period is hot, and there is nothing to do at Bohio except dive. Even the pool was closed for long-term repair. It worked for me but not as well for my teenage son. The beach is nice but relatively small and deserted. The resort advertises shore diving, but the wall is a long swim from shore. (We tried to snorkel out, and ultimately gave up.) The wall is fabulous, and the reef is vibrant and healthy. All dives are a short boat trip away, returning to the resort for your surface interval. That is, one tank in the morning, lunch on shore, and then one tank in the afternoon. We never

had more than 3 divers on the boat plus the guide. They readily agreed to a night dive, even with just 3 of us going. And there was no set schedule for dives — we just agreed what time to meet at the beach. One owner arrived during our stay, preparing to take over as general manager. One dive guide was fired while we were there, and a couple of other people were planning to leave. That's probably pretty normal, but the resort should have kept it a little more hidden from view. Accommodations were clean but quite Spartan. Ask for a room on the second floor, since you'll hear every footstep if you are on the bottom floor. Blackberry worked, and they have Wi-Fi. Cellular service (Verizon) did not work.

**Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach, August 2006, Richard Rigg (rkrigg@earthlink.net), Boise, ID.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no Currents. Osprey Beach (the best hotel on Grand) is a diver's hotel. My wife, a non-diver found the pool uninviting as the restaurant surrounds it. The beach is nice, but no umbrellas. Room was comfortable. Provo has more restaurants and better hotels but the diving on Grand Turk makes up for any shortcomings in the hotels. Michael's has a great breakfast and dinner. I would not stay in the garden rooms of the Osprey, as no view. Mario and Sara, the two dive masters we had from Oasis Divers, asked us what we want to see and how we dove, they watched us and once they knew what we were capable of, they adjusted. Mario videotaped 11 of our 13 dives and made us a CD for \$80. Skip the temptation to visit the cruise center!

**Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, November 2006, Dale Thompson, San Diego, CA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives.

Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm. Osprey Beach Hotel was recently renovated and in fairly good condition — for a typical small Carib island operation. Staff very accommodating; on the other hand, air-conditioner rattled and wheezed, disturbed by other occupants next door and above room due poor construction. 4 restaurants in walking distance, all had same basic island food — conch, fish, chicken, curry, steak; all reasonably well done and inexpensive. Service varied from slow to glacial, but usually friendly. New cruise ship terminal just opened at South end of island. Attempt at upscale restaurant there just opened, may prove to be a nice alternative to local places near the hotel. Rental car unnecessary as hotel, restaurants and dive operation all a few blocks apart. Dive operation well below usual standards. Small boats with beach access to board, tank racks not set up behind seating benches but rather on boat's center deck/floor. Only carried tanks for one dive, so AM, two dive trips required a return to the beach and a 20-25 minute wait while the operator's staff changed out tanks across the beach. Access by back roll from bow was usual, return to boat via unusually small, unsteady, and poorly designed ladder adjacent to outboard motor — with minimal hand holds to complicate it. One member of our group lost a day of diving to back strains directly attributed to poor ladder. Also, one dive master/boat captain, so boat left unattended while all were in the water (all divers expressed concern about this — the dive master's response: "Well, a few boats have drifted off before but it hasn't happened to me" [yet!]). Finally, boats used moorings where available (about 50% of the sites), but anchored freely as needed — usually managed to get the anchor into the sand, but chain

frequently dragged across coral. Underwater typically saw rich assortment of small fish, but little large stuff.

**Oasis Divers, Salt Raker Inn, November 2006, George Lock (glock@voicenet.com), West Grove, PA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, currents. The 28' dive boat was loaded from a beach without the benefit of a pier, so dive equipment and cameras had to be carried through the surf to the boat. The boat was stocked with snacks and fresh water. There was little room to stow dry clothes, towels, etc. The prepaid dive plan consisted of two dives each morning. The boat returned to shore between dives to replace tanks while we waited on the beach. We had the option of an afternoon or night dive each day, if a minimum of four were signed up. The boat captain served as the dive master, so the dive boat was unattended during dives. There was no radio on the boat, and no dive flag flown during dives. The small, flimsy ladder made reboarding the boat with dive equipment in choppy water a challenge. The dive shop personnel and dive masters helpful and friendly. The dive masters were eager to point out unusual sights and photo opportunities. Don't buy a prepaid meal plan; instead, sample the restaurants within easy walking distance of the Salt Raker Inn, Osprey Beach Hotel, etc. A new cruise ship pier has been built on the south end of the island and appears to have little impact on the diving. However, when a shipload of tourists appears at the dive shops to snorkel, jet ski, etc., albeit infrequently, the dive shop is somewhat overwhelmed for a brief period. .

**Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Resort, February 2007, Richard Lowe, New York, NY.** Experience: 101-250 dives.

Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 70 to 80 F, calm, choppy, surge. The weather was worse than I had expected, but the staff was attentive. We mostly dove with Mackey, who has eyes like a hawk. During an afternoon dive he was able to find an octopus that was about 3 feet long. We were slightly experienced divers, so we could dive a slightly more aggressive profile. Dale and the staff always do a fantastic job in taking care of their customers, and made sure that we had everything that we needed and wanted. This was the first time that I dove Nitrox, and Dale made sure that I had a proper mix. While we didn't see large fish or whales, others did. One group dove with dolphins, while another group took a whale watch trip, and had the opportunity to swim with a mother and calf.

**SeaEye Diving, Osprey Beach Hotel, June 2007, Barbara Shively (barbshively@comcast.net), La Plata, MD.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Smitty, our long-term divemaster, is leaving SeaEye Diving and starting his own dive operation, Grand Turk Diving. He is the best divemaster we have ever known and has an amazing knowledge and love of everything underwater. He is quiet and low key but is always on top of every potential problem in the water and on the boat. UW Photography Comments: The little Carolina skiffs we dive from do not have room for camera facilities except a bucket usually provided with water to keep camera in before and after dive. There are no shore facilities but our hotel room was steps from the shore where we ended each dive.

**Sea Eye Divers, Blue Water, Oasis, Osprey Hotel, September 2007, Laura Cook, Westfield, MA.** Experience: 300+

dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 80 F, calm and flat, no currents. I loved the diving here. Smitty from Sea Eye took great care to give us the best dive sites. We spent a long weekend here and dove one day, two dives with Sea Eye, one with Blue Water and one with Oasis. Blue Water also took good care of us. Oasis was disappointing. They do the cruise traffic so they are overloaded and we were ignored and left to hoof our gear down the street prior to diving. We asked to be dropped back to our beach after. Otherwise we would have had to walk. Both Sea Eye and Blue Water did beach pickups and drop-offs. Great diving, pristine, so many turtles our dives were over one hour each. No rush, great service. Dolphins everywhere. Osprey was adequate. Great beach location. Food pricey and nothing great. Our room came with a kitchen that was not clean. Some renovations happening, but was pricey just the same. The younger island population was not friendly. Most adults and service-related people were great. Local youth seem almost intolerant of our presence. Stay in the tourist areas. Lots of litter in non-tourist spots.

## Providenciales

**Caicos Adventures, Time Share (private), November 2006, Terry Garland, Naples, FL.** Experience: 251-500 dives.

Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, no currents. The people of the Turks and Caicos are on island time for sure, the restaurants are slow and expensive (at least based on Florida standards). The accommodations were great, but hard to get anything from the staff. Caicos Adventures is a very well organized dive business. Large dive deck, good camera staging area, sandwiches between the dives. Smooth, very

fast big dive boat. I ran this trip as the dive leader and took 21 other divers; this company made my job very easy. Fifi, who owns the place, has a very well run company. His people are willing to please and Fifi himself is involved with the day-to-day diving. If you are looking for good quality, hassle free diving and don't mind really laid-back hotel and food service, then this is one very good place to dive.

**Caicos Adventures, Royal West Indies, April 2007, Tim Kolakowski (tkolakowski@choiceonemail.com), Erie, PA.** Experience: 251-500 dives.

Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 75 F, calm. Multimillion-dollar condos, long boat rides to the dive sites on big, roomy boats, tightly run dive operations. Fifi runs an efficient but fun dive operation and handles 20+ divers on the 54-foot boat by breaking them down into small groups of 5 or 6 divers. We had 5 DMs on the trip! Coral bleaching evident but I got some excellent shark pictures. Royal West Indies feels like the higher priced resorts, yet it's one of the least expensive condo resorts on Provo. A snorkel trip to Iguana Island and the adjoining cays for shelling is a nice way to spend an afternoon, as is a trip to the only conch farm in the Caribbean. If you're there during a full moon, see the glow worms after dusk. Take a drive to Northwest Point.

Caicos Adventures, Turks and Caicos Club, July 2007, Chuck Oman, Winchester, MA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 F, calm, choppy. Relatively small (21 units), 4 years old, well maintained by friendly, courteous staff, beautiful white sand beach away from bustle of Turtle Cove and Grace Bay condo construction. Snorkeling reef. Units were large and well furnished — kitchenette, washer

and dryer, etc. No rain all week, no mosquitoes, either. Rates included breakfast. The T&CC restaurant, Simba, is good but their lunch and dinner menus became repetitious after a day or two. (Some "specials" have been special for months). So you'll eventually need a taxi or rental car. Of the 4 other restaurants on Provo we tried, we particularly enjoyed Magnolia and Anacaona. Three of us spent 3 days with Caicos Adventures, diving the reef and walls at West Caicos and French Key, while taking PADI AOW and nitrox courses. Most of our dives were 55-100 feet. Owner/skipper Fifi Kunz, his instructors Rich and Lil Moniz and the dive staff were friendly, knowledgeable and professional. Hotel pickup and dropoff were included. We all learned a lot, had great fun, and I returned with some good photos of coral and small critters — including a lionfish. Fifi's two cats are superbly equipped dive boats: roomy, dual ladders with deco bar beneath, fresh water showers, large and clean head, stable, and fast enough so the 18-mile trip to West Caicos took only 45 minutes. And great sandwiches - en baguette, naturellement. Caicos Cat well set up for UWP.

**Provo Divers, Sibonet, February 2007, Richard Sziede (dsziede@hotmail.com), Reston, VA.** Experience: 251-500 dives.

Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm, choppy, no currents. In addition to healthy reefs and a goodly selection of the usual reef denizens, the week offered sharks, whales, dolphins, a manta and a lion fish! I sent my footage to NOAA, and received a reply that Provo was the furthest west this invasive species had been sighted. Provo Divers picked me up in a van right on time every AM. On time, not on "island time." Although the boats were full, a hustling crew kept divers from stepping

on one another. Grace Bay under Pressure? Dives were always led, but divers needn't follow the DM once they had made their chops. I earned the wrath once when I wandered away in pursuit of a photo. Thence they buddied me with a fellow shutterbug who followed a similar meandering profile. Although we rode different boats each day, rinsed and dried gear awaited us each morning on the right boat. Each boat had shelter from sun and wind, a head, a vestigial rinse tank, and small camera table. I learned to retrieve my Ikelite from the rinse tank after the last dive, because that's where the rental regs were dumped after being returned! Provo Divers made divers happy, including delivering my gear to Sibonet after my last dive. Close in dive sites were in Grace Bay. That's where we found the lion fish. The best dives were wall dives near West Caicos, about 45 minutes from the dock. West Caicos was once a nature preserve, but was sold out by the enlightened government. Now it is a millionaire preserve. On days the boat took the channel to West Caicos, we saw whales and dolphin. If we hugged the reef we had a much smoother ride, but no big guys. Divers with sharper ears than mine could hear the humpbacks singing if they held breath to stop the sound of bubbles. I'd put the wall at West Caicos second only to Bloody Bay wall for health of the reef and clarity of the water. Grace Bay was clouded by runoff. Reefs around Provo start at 40-45 feet. This shortened dives to 45 minutes or so, because there were no shallows in which to putter after the ol' computer reached the yellow. Provo is in the midst of a land rush of sorts. The half-million dollar condos they pitch to successful dentists are going to price divers out of a place to stay on the island. Not to mention runoff

damage to the reef when the last square inch is under concrete. And yes, the usual shady operators that accompany any such bubble are there in force. The construction site next to Sibonet was pre-sold by an operator that didn't actually have title to the land. The Grace Bay Bistro in Sibonet has the best chef. Other restaurants, including the well-reviewed Hemingway's, had competent island fare. But GBB's chef is the only one who brought us back. Sibonet restaurant staff has garnered negative reviews on travel sites. Earned, I would say. They may be slow, but they're surly. Conch chowder is on the menu of every island beanery. It is completely different at each venue, but always wonderful. Bonnie's on Sibonet Rd. gets special praise. Sibonet desk clerk would not sell us Gecko tickets. Her reason was poor service from Gecko reflected on the hotel. Gecko is the island bus/taxi service. Our experience was Gecko arrived within 10 minutes of being called. Only late once. Good as taxis, and they sure beat trying learn to drive on the left. Our ocean front room was clean and pleasant. Housekeeping was excellent. Grounds and beach were beautiful. Fewer beach huts than guests, however. If you want shade, hit the beach early. Two-story, gardened and pleasant Sibonet will soon be surrounded by 12-story eyesores. UW Photography Comments: Small on-boat rinse tub for cameras. Rental regs dumped into rinse on top of cameras. Eeek!

**Provo Turtle Divers, April 2007, Sam and Lin Teichman, Alamo, CA.** My wife and I are comfortable intermediate-level divers Our kids are 16, 13 and 11 years old. All 5 of us came to Provo for a week. The grand plan was for my wife and me to dive for 4 days while the kids took their certification courses and then to end the week with all of us

diving together as a family. The course instructor, Jim, kept the course fun and interesting. Even though my youngest struggled some with the theory, he patiently spent the extra time making sure she learned it. Equipment and facilities are high quality. The pool work was the prelude to the real stuff on the boat. Their course dives were off the same boat that we were diving from on those days. Jim was thorough but kept it light and they loved him. They all passed the course. The best moment was on their first boat dive. My son was taking his giant stride off the stern platform. My daughter was already in the water looking under the boat. In mid-air, my son heard, "Oh, cool: sharks!" The boat was meticulous and never crowded, even though it was a holiday week. The rental gear was new and well-maintained. The pre-dive briefings included white-board sketches of the dive sites and pointers as to what to be on the lookout for. You could set up all your gear yourself, you could do it with the dive leader or you could watch and then double-check it yourself. Getting in and out of the water was easy off the big rear platform. The two hanging bars at 20 feet for decompression stops with the extra long spare regulator encouraged everyone to be a safe diver. Good-to-great visibility, warm water and turtles, lobsters, sharks, rays, eels, groupers, barracuda and more on almost every dive. The smaller fish were abundant: Flying gurnard, drum fish, blennies, mahogany snapper, trunkfish and more. And the sponges and corals and topography were beautiful, with walls disappearing down into the abyss. My oldest found a well-camouflaged spotted scorpionfish under a ledge. The kids were comfortable underwater, had good breathing and buoyancy control. Tony, knew what we wanted and led us

around in a nice lazy loop, getting us back safely. The highlight of the family dives was the colorful hawksbill turtle who glided slowly past us, close enough to touch, and looked each one of us in the eye before settling down on the reef a few feet away. Pre-trip communications were handled well by phone and e-mail with help setting up our hotel reservation. Everything was professional and efficient. On the island, our hotel bungled the reservation but Melinda worked hard to get it all straightened out.

## Salt Cay

**Salt Cay Divers, February 2007, Mike Scott, Sidney, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 55 to 100 Feet. Water: 74 to 78 F, calm. Quiet and peaceful, small population. The island is beginning to develop due to spillover from Grand Turk. We started diving here 6 years ago; the fish and coral life has diminished significantly. Much fewer mature fishes. Probably not from overfishing, maybe from development and warming. Humpbacks seem more shy than other years. Salt Cay Divers uses 2 24' Carolina skiffs that are beat up, with no comfort, but most dive sites are 10-15 minutes out. They have a new, wider 28' skiff but it is usually reserved for whale watching and sunset cruises, which are more profitable. They also have a V-hull boat they use for going to the Endymion wreck, a 1-1/2 hour ride that is hardly worth the time and expense. The dive operation is somewhat disheveled. They have no O2 available and much of their gear is just plain worn out. Debbie has too many irons in the fire (real estate, politics, etc.) to be a devoted dive operator. She counts on her dive masters (usually itinerant) and Haitian hired help to run the business. Ollie

is a delight and is a truly great diver and gentleman. The price of food is exorbitant. We bring our own and cook it but spending \$100.00/day is about average if you eat out. A beer is \$5, so do without or prepare to pony up.

## South Caicos

**South Caicos Diver, South Caicos Ocean and Beach Resort, March 2007, Randi Dillow (rtieger@aol.com), Cupertino, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, calm, choppy. Practically none of the amenities the owner has been advertising for months on-line, in Scuba Diving magazine and on a poster that greets you at the South Caicos Airport exists; at least it didn't as of the second week of March 2007. We booked what was advertised as a fully furnished 2 bd. 2 ba. condominium with air conditioning, TV, washer/dryer, full kitchen, daily continental breakfast, restaurant, pool, Tiki Hut Bar (4 complimentary drink coupons each) and 6 days of diving at the South Caicos Ocean and Beach Resort at a purportedly reduced price. He advertises the resort is new, the only hotel on South Caicos and open with full amenities. To be sure, the hotel is new and is the only hotel even close to opening in South Caicos, but as of the date of our departure, the hotel was not open (the electrical inspector had not yet signed off on the resort), the pool had no water in it and did not appear to be close to being finished, there was no restaurant, no Tiki Hut Bar, and no television. The condominium we rented had air conditioning only in the bedrooms, no television, a washer (no dryer), no dressers, nightstands or coffee table, no toaster, a leaky refrigerator and dishes and silverware for only 3. We wouldn't have minded these

conditions, of course, if we hadn't made specific inquiries about the condition of the resort and condo prior to booking. We made it clear we did not want to stay in a place without a functioning pool, TV, bar, etc., prior to booking (we had a non-diver with us). We told the proprietor we didn't mind that the grounds were being worked on but wanted to be sure this property was otherwise fully operational. The owner of this one-man operation was less than truthful about the condition of the resort in the numerous e-mails we exchanged. The morning after we arrived the four of us discussed whether we should cut our losses and head for another island, but decided to see how the diving was. We ended up staying for the week, all the while too intimidated to bring up how angry we were about the owners misrepresentations for fear our next door neighbor/host/dive guide would make matters worse (he was our only point of contact for the 3 restaurants on the island and the owner of the grocery store). Dining out on South Caicos is somewhat of an adventure. It involves arranging to have a meal in a room in back of a local residents home (no menus). The food, for the most part, was fine and we enjoyed meeting some of the people. There is one place to get a hamburger and fries for lunch but you wouldn't find it unless someone told you about it. After three nights of dining out, we switched to dining in. The three divers in our group pretty much filled the owners small pleasure boat which was not really set up for diving (his larger boat [assuming it actually exists] was purportedly undergoing repair so humpback whale watching was out). He leaves the boat tied to the mooring line and empty during the dive as he drops down to lead the group (not the safest

practice) and it was difficult to get back on board when the water was choppy (my bruises are still healing). He had no place to store or rinse gear at the condo or near the boat and no dive shop (we rinsed our gear in our upstairs shower and hung it over the balcony). I believe, given enough time, the resort may one day be a pleasant place for a dive vacation, but this property has a long, long way to go. We wrote him when we got back, demanding a small refund for what was sadly lacking in our significantly overpriced package, but never heard from him. The diving, on the other hand, was great. The reefs appear healthy, the sea life is abundant and the dive sites are 5 minutes from shore. Our favorite site was The Grotto, where we saw numerous sharks on every dive (black tip, Caribbean reef and nurse), turtles, schooling jacks, and cuttlefish, along with squadrons of large spotted eagle rays (on one dive a squadron of 20 flew straight toward us at the top of the wall, then turned left about 15 feet in front of us). On other dives we saw anywhere from 2 to 8 eagle rays on nearly every dive at that site. We heard whale song most days but on the last day it was so loud throughout both dives we felt certain we were going to see them, but didn't. We did see several pods pass by throughout the week from the condominium. We were extremely disappointed that the owner failed to disclose he did not have a large enough boat to take us whale watching as he promised (one of the reasons we decided to come in March). We love going to small islands off the beaten path and have had many enjoyable experiences doing so, but this trip will be remembered for the wrong reasons.

## UNITED STATES

### Florida

#### *Bradenton*

**Scuba Quest, Cape Coral, August 2007, Ron and Dawn Steedman (rlumenator@aol.com), Cape Coral, FL.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 30 Feet. Water: 85 to 86 F, choppy. We have lived on Florida's gulf coast for over 30 years, and this was our first gulf dive. The operation was arranged by Paul with SQ, and we were pleased with the attentiveness, and help from the crew. Water and crackers were provided on board. The dives were in the 50 to 60-foot range. One dive was to a barge, and the other to a culvert area. We saw Goliath groupers (inside the barge) and snook. Also, arrow crabs, numerous 3-row cukes, barracudas, flounder, snappers, ocean trigger, puffer — but the sitings were few and far between. New divers leaned proper buoyancy and their safety stops, after a bad initial certification. Most of the dives to this area are done by spear fishers, who were also on our dive.

#### *Crystal River*

**Plantation Inn, February 2007, Dana Mardaga, California.** I made plans to visit the manatees in Florida with the Plantation Inn in Crystal River. The Inn is on the water and they offer a package deal with the dive shop next door. I was only going to be in town one night. When I made my reservation, I was told that when they take you out in the boat, you have three hours to frolic with these wonderful animals. I also spoke with the dive shop and was told again that the boat takes people out to swim with the manatees for three hours. After one hour and twenty