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found. Take what you need; hope for the best.

I dove numerous sites during the week, all near the southwest corner of the island, and saw two small dive boats from a couple of other operations. I suspect this is where most of the diving occurs. The guides talked about pinnacles located well offshore in the Atlantic beyond Scott's Head, and twice we went looking, but the prevailing seas kept us from mooring up

to them. According to divemaster scuttlebutt, they're excellent but only occasionally diveable.

Dominica is unique among Caribbean dive destinations in that the scenery is more impressive topside than below. Some taxi rides are nearly as thrilling as landing at Canefield. And, for \$25 to \$40 per person, you can choose from an assortment of guide-escorted treks. As recommended by *Undercurrent*, several people at

the hotel toured with Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours and reported excellent trips. I did one trip with Ken to Trafalgar Falls and thought it worth the money.

Knowing what I know now about Dominica/Castle Comfort/Dive Dominica, would I be willing to pay the same dive vacation price tag to visit the same destination again? Absolutely.

I'd even pay more for the plane ride . . .

G. D.

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## Travel Notes

### *Readers' observations on Dominica*

*Castle Comfort still rates high with readers for reasons you can read below. The 32-room Anchorage, just a couple of doors down from Castle Comfort, is another of the pioneer dive operations on the island. They get high marks for their dive operations and whale watching knowledge. The Lauro Club and East Caribe Dive are newcomers to the island.*

#### **Castle Comfort Lodge/Dive Dominica (January 1997) —**

Castle Comfort Lodge is very friendly and clean but very small. If you are stuck in one of the back rooms, noise from street will assure that you get very little sleep. Ask for an ocean-view room and hope one of the neighboring resorts isn't having a party the night you want to sleep. [*Editor's note: Savvy divers will try for rooms 8 and 10.*] For this reason I would probably stay at the Evergreen next door, larger and with a pool, for a better chance of getting a room away from the street.

Dive Dominica is a first-class dive operation: great boats, lots of

room, and working heads. From 3 to 12 divers on a boat, divemasters open to where you want to dive that day. Saw seahorses at Champagne dive site (a must) and saw orange ball anemones on shore dive in front of resort, lots of spotted drums, eels, stonefish, an

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Dive Dominica  
Castle Comfort Guest House  
P.O. Box 2253  
Roseau, Dominica, W.I.  
809-448-2188, fax 809-448-6088  
E-mail: dive@tod.dm

Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours  
P.O. Box 447  
62 Hillsborough Street  
Roseau, Dominica, W.I.  
809-448-4850, fax 809-448-8486

Anchorage Hotel and Dive Centre  
Roseau, Dominica, W.I.  
809-448-2638/1, 1-800-328-5336, fax 809-448-5680  
E-mail: anchorage@tod.dm

The Evergreen Hotel  
P.O. Box 309  
Castle Comfort  
Roseau, Dominica, W.I.  
809-448-3288, fax 809-448-6800

octopus. Whale watch with Dive Dominica is a must; our first day out we saw no whales but were in a school of 300-400 dolphins who really put on a show for us. Went out again after whales were spotted that morning and saw about a dozen sperm whales. Got within 50 feet of one pair; they popped up beside the boat while we were watching others farther out. We were with them for over an hour and a half, saw them breach, fluke, and spout, and listened to them communicate under water with the hydrophone — really awesome. (Best season for sperm whales is October-May. Other species sighted include short-fin, pilot, pygmy humpback, orca, pseudo orca, and dwarf sperm whales.)

The whole staff, from Derrick on down, was great. No biting bugs!

Gloria Davis  
St. James, Missouri

**Anchorage Divers, Anchorage Hotel (January 1997) —** Overall, consistently good diving for Caribbean; divemasters Miguel, Corney, and Mikael were all excellent — patient with our group, helpful, found the good stuff for us, and where else will divemasters rinse all of your gear, insides of BCs, and wash with soap

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your wet suits? Food was good and varied, hotel staff nice and helpful, rooms comfortable. Bring current converter — dive shop has one 110V outlet, so you'll probably use your room's 220V.

Peter Hartlove  
Longmont, Colorado

**Lauro Club/East Caribe Dive (February 1997)** — Gunther Glatz of East Caribe Dive runs a first-rate dive operation — personalized

service. He takes care to find the best sites; profiles are flexible, done by computer and tailored to the desires of individual divers. Diving is also varied and includes walls and dropoffs. Few large fish, but some schools of smaller fish and excellent sponges. Coral is healthy and undisturbed. There are many frogfish and seahorses. The Lauro Club offers comfortable cabins, all with kitchens. Island is beautiful with friendly people,

well worth the trip for both diving and exploring the beauties of nature.

William S. Ritter, M.D.  
Kansas City, Missouri

*Between the Anchorage and Castle Comfort is the Evergreen, a hotel that I've recommended in the past. Stay there and have a choice of diving with operations on either side.*

J. Q.

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# The Great Malaria Debate

## *Readers and authorities take sides*

A letter in a 1993 issue of the respected British medical journal *The Lancet* warned readers about the often severe side effects of mefloquine (better known by its trade name, Lariam). The author of that letter, B. Meredith Burke, Ph.D., read the discussions of malaria and Lariam in recent issues of *In Depth* and *Undercurrent* and contacted us. Since Burke's letter describing his personal experience was published in *The Lancet*, he has been contacted by others who have had similar problems with Lariam. A professional underwater photographer experienced several months of "severe neuropsychiatric symptoms" upon returning from a trip to the South Seas; a physician suffered eight months of limb numbness, vascular problems, and insomnia after taking this drug.

We recently learned that the incidence of serious side effects from this antimalarial seems to be much higher than previously thought. We have also heard from subscribers who have suffered

these ill effects. One reader wrote that after taking his first pills he suffered nightmares, a racing heart, and depression; his wife stopped sleeping completely after her first dose.

Burke has also been contacted by a U.K.-based group called

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### **Estimates of the incidence of serious side effects from Lariam have been revised from 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 140.**

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Lariam Action, which is planning a legal action against Lariam manufacturer Hoffmann La Roche. The group was started by Lance Cole, a 34-year-old British journalist who experienced mysterious symptoms upon returning from assignment in Zimbabwe — symptoms that were

finally diagnosed as being caused by Lariam. Indeed, after an article in the *British Medical Journal* reported sharply higher estimates of the incidence of serious side effects, the drug's information sheet has been revised to reflect this fact. What kind of increase? An incredible leap from 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 140!

### **False Bends**

As we reported in "The Big Chill" (*In Depth*, August 1996), many U.S. doctors now prescribe Lariam as the antimalarial of choice in parts of the world that have chloroquine-resistant strains of *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most dangerous form of malaria. But many divers avoid taking mefloquine because its side effects may mimic decompression sickness or even malaria itself. However, in a phone conversation with Dr. Hans Lobel, senior malariologist at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, he dismisses the notion that Lariam can mimic the bends as "a rumor going around the diving world."