

improved when the island was trashed by a hurricane in 1995. ... Watch out for shady characters who are drawn to the nude beaches and prey on tourists.

**Dive Safaris, May 2003, Ezra Lunde, Staten Island, NY.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. I flew from Saba to St. Maarten for the day to do a shark dive with Dive Safaris. We loaded the cattle boat, were given a briefing about the need to build shark awareness (as if the sun-damaged, ex-pat master of ceremonies had memorized a WWF brochure minutes before coming aboard) and made to feel obliged to buy a video of the shark feed that was about to come. The water was clear, and the little fingers of reef running through the shark feeding area were lush with soft corals and fans. Very pretty. Reef sharks showed up immediately, and the feed proceeded. The shark diver put fish on his spear and lured the sharks all 'round in just the way you'd expect. This went on for about 30 minutes, and then we were ushered to a safety stop. I really liked seeing the sharks so close but felt reservations about the purpose of such a dive. My suspicion is St. Maarten diving doesn't have much else to offer but the previously mentioned "pretty" fingers of coral and that the sharks are really just another way to hustle cash rather than a genuine effort to build awareness. (<http://thescubashop.net>)

**Ocean Explorers/Dive Safaris, Pelican Resort, October 2002, Dennis Carmichael (dennis\_carmichael@msn.com), Salem, MA.** Vis: 50 to 75

feet. Water: 86 to 87 F. Dives accrued: 2,000+. Dive restrictions enforced: maximum bottom time 40 min. or 700 psi, not strictly enforced. Fifth trip to St. Maarten. Leroy French of Ocean Explorers runs a great small dive operation. Carry your gear through the water to the boat. Expect a wet ride. Leroy will bring you to site that no other operation is diving. Therefore the reef and fish life are better than other sites that are heavily dived. This trip I went with Dive Safaris on their shark dive. Only a few divers went each time. About 12 to 15 Caribbean reef sharks showed up each time. Feed individual chunks of fish on a stick. On the second trip I joined the owner next to the feeder for up close and personal photos. ([www.stmaartendiving.com](http://www.stmaartendiving.com), [www.thescubashop.net/dive.htm](http://www.thescubashop.net/dive.htm))

## ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent lies in a beautiful chain of islands and is heavily forested, with pretty reefs and a good range of fish species. ... Daytime temperatures are in the high 80s year-round, the low 70s at night; afternoon cloudbursts are common; St. Vincent is in the hurricane belt. ... The Grenadines — Bequia, Palm, Union, and Carriacou — are a sailor's dream; they're islands with small hotels, little dive operations, decent Caribbean diving, and have become, perhaps, the "small critter capital" of the Caribbeans.

### Carriacou

**Carriacou Silver Divers, Ben & Jenny's Guesthouse, Peace Haven, January 2003, Chuck and Nancy Anson (nanson@owl.csusm.edu), Oceanside, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 200 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm, no currents. Carriacou (pronounced kari-uh-coo), Arawak for Island of Reefs is 90 minutes north of Grenada by ferry. This small island (pop. 8,000) dotted with pristine reefs is notable for its great abundance and diversity of underwater life, and Max and Claudia Nagel of Carriacou Silver Diving (CSD) take great pleasure in showing it off. Carriacou's gently sloping reef system (depth 30 to 70 feet) remains healthy due to its proximity to the open Atlantic, minimal human impact, and its distance from the hurricane belt. Abundant hard and soft corals and many varieties of colorful sponges; large lobsters and crabs, a multitude of eels, schooling fish by the hundreds, nurses sharks, eagle rays, and plenty of macro critters. CSD is a PADI 5 Star Gold Palm IDC Center that makes diver safety and satisfaction their top priorities. Max (owner/PADI Master Instructor) and Leander (boat captain/PADI Divemaster) were present on all the dives. Both are highly skilled and accommodating. Whatever you desire, just make it known and they will try to make it happen. They knew how to attend to those who needed help and let the seasoned divers do their own thing. There were rarely more than six divers on a boat, and there was always someone in the boat on the surface to pick you up. Dive

restrictions were 130 feet, 500 psi, or 60 minutes. Tank fills were always 3,000 psi plus. Entries were back roll, and exits were by sturdy ladder. A camera rinse tank was made available upon request. Gear storage was available at the dive shop. It was a short walk across the street to a sandy beach where you waded in waist deep and passed your gear up to the boat driver. Most dive sites were within five to 10 minutes. All dives were preceded by a thorough briefing. Surface intervals were spent on shore. If you were doing an afternoon dive, your gear stayed on the boat, and tanks were changed and ready to go again in the afternoon. Rental equipment was well maintained. I got my regulator serviced by CSD, and it works better than ever. We stayed at Ben & Jenny's Guesthouse, a fully furnished apartment 12 minutes walk from the dive shop. (\$35US/night, [www.grenadines.net/carriacou/bandj.html](http://www.grenadines.net/carriacou/bandj.html)) It had a large kitchen, separate dining area, good-sized sleeping area with a comfortable bed and TV. No phone or hot water, but the "cold" was lukewarm, so it was tolerable. The second week we stayed at Peace Haven, an upstairs apartment directly on the beach. (\$45US/night, phone: 473-443-8365) Same amenities, plus hot water. Sunsets were beautiful from both. We did most of our own cooking and found the stores adequate. Fresh vegetables arrived twice/week by boat, and there was fresh bread daily at the bakery. There were plenty of good restaurants in Hillsborough at reasonable prices. We flew in and out of Grenada on American Eagle from San Juan. The Osprey ferry between Grenada and

Carriacou is a modern, clean, and reliable form of transportation. Claudia arranged a taxi tour of Carriacou, be an excellent way to spend a day. We were having so much fun that we extended our stay another week. CSD website: [www.scubamax.com](http://www.scubamax.com), e-mail: [scubamax@caribsurf.com](mailto:scubamax@caribsurf.com). Separate rinse for cameras if you asked. Crew handled equipment professionally. No separate camera tables on boat. Film and batteries available in stores but no spare parts for cameras.  
([www.scubamax.com](http://www.scubamax.com))

### Palm Island

**Grenadines Divers, February 2003, Jeffrey Greene ([dadgreene@hotmail.com](mailto:dadgreene@hotmail.com)), Merion Station, PA.**

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. The dive operation ran on Caribbean time. We were supposed to be picked up at 9:30. Anytime before 10 seemed OK after a while. I learned to relax. Once they realized you knew what you were doing, you were free in the water, wonderful for an experienced diver. I could wander around somewhat. No one watched my depth gauge or my air. I stayed under water until the air was low or my computer said to surface. When I entered the water, I waited on the bottom for the rest of the group to come down instead of having to wait on the surface. There were currents in most dive spots. They would watch you carefully, but I don't think it's an ideal spot for a beginner. Several different dive locations with a few being magnificent and a couple being fair at best. I learned to speak up, and they stopped

going to the fair spots. Halfway through the trip, I gave them a tip and told them more would follow, and I think that encourages them to go to the better places. The resort at Palm Island is a luxury resort that is wonderful.  
([www.grenadinesdive.com](http://www.grenadinesdive.com))

### St. Vincent

**Dive St. Vincent, Young Island Resort, November 2002, Tom & Karen Victory, North Palm Beach, FL.** Experience: 700 logged dives each. Visibility: 60 to 90 feet. Water: 83 F. Restrictions imposed: none (although tanks were steel 72s filled to an average 2,300 psi, we still averaged 50+ minutes per dive and longer on shallow sites). Young Island is charming and relatively deluxe, if somewhat pricey. There are 30 guest units on the island, each with private outdoor shower and fresh fruit and flowers daily. The property is maintained fastidiously, and the island is home to peacocks, iguanas, and parrots. Tiny tree frogs strike up a chorus nightly. The food, included in the tariff, is good and is ordered a la carte at each meal, although there are two buffet dinners and one buffet lunch each week. The staff and the locals are genuinely friendly, a bit shy until they've gotten to know you. The Grenadines are a boater's paradise, and they cater to the sailboat crowd. The best time to go is when the sailors don't, i.e., hurricane season. All the hotels offer better packages then, but the decent restaurants on St. Vincent are expensive year-round, so you'll come out ahead if you bite the bullet and book a meals-included

plan at Young Island. Bill Tewes is something of a diving legend locally, and for almost 20 years has ruled the roost. He is extremely knowledgeable about sea critters and knows where to find them. Encounters that are rare elsewhere in the Caribbean are almost commonplace here: seahorses, frogfish, pipefish, unusual sea urchins and shrimps, jawfish, and scorpion fish abound. Bill showed us the red-banded lobster (on the cover of Paul Humann's Reef Creature ID book) at 142 feet. There are beautiful fringing reefs and excellent wall structure, alive with healthy hard and soft corals and abundant small fish. Bill's true love, however, is "muck diving" on scrub reef and sea-grass patches that teem with life forms that are seldom seen. Macro photographers will be ecstatic. The daily routine is a two-tank morning dive leaving somewhere between 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m., depending on the wishes of the group. The local dive-masters, Callie, DJ, and Larry, are all excellent. They pick you up at your hotel (or sailboat or cruise ship) and get you back by 1 or 2 p.m. The dive boats are less than ideal. The largest, from which we did all of our diving, can accommodate eight paying divers uncomfortably. There are no tank racks or benches. The tanks are stowed in the bow, and the gear is assembled by the crew and brought to you before your back-roll entry from high above the water. Bill may permit you to make a giant-stride entry from the stern if he is reasonably certain that you will not stride onto his outboard motors. After the first dive, the tanks are changed by the crew, and the gear is piled up on

the deck in the only space available to stand. After the second dive, your BC, regulator, fins, and boots are crammed into a mesh bag, which they take back to the shop and (they say) rinse. The next morning, the mesh bags are already on board, piled up in the available spot, ready to go. Diving with Dive St. Vincent is expensive, and Bill Tewes is quite mercenary. His standard rate is \$55 for a one-tank dive and \$100 for a two-tank dive. If you do 10 dives, it's \$45 per tank (all prices US\$). If you book a hotel package through Bill, he may throw in two bonus dives, i.e., 12 dives for \$450 per person. Extra dives are \$45 per. Here's the clinker: only after you've booked and given your nonrefundable deposit does Bill mention that he doesn't really accept credit cards but will do so, as an accommodation to you, for an additional surcharge of five percent. This isn't just on the dive charges, this is on the entire package. In our case, the package was about \$6,000, over 80 percent of which was attributable to the accommodations and meals at Young Island. Young Island gladly accepts credit cards without surcharge, does not accept checks, and, frankly, views you with suspicion if you try to pay cash. The staff at the resort was sympathetic and rolled their eyes knowingly when I complained but insisted that my deal was with Bill and it was out of their hands. After suggesting to Bill that the surcharge was quite likely a violation of his own contract with the credit card companies, he magnanimously relented and said that he would "eat" the five percent. He then mentioned that he couldn't accept U.S. dol-

lars in payment and was forced (by the government and the banks) to convert the bill into the local currency at an unfortunate markup.  
([www.divestvincent.com](http://www.divestvincent.com))

**Dive St. Vincent, The Mariner Hotel, December 2002, Richard J. Troberman (tmanlaw@aol.com), Seattle, WA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 feet. Water: 80 F, calm. Bill Tewes, the owner of Dive St. Vincent, has been diving these waters for 20 years. He is a master at finding and identifying small critters. He uses an “etch-a-sketch” type pad underwater to identify things for you. He can make a 90 minute dive in a small sand patch a great adventure. But there is much more than that, including healthy reefs and walls. On two of the three days I dove with him I was the only diver. Bill never hesitated to go out with just one diver. During three days, we completed a punch list that included several seahorses (including pregnant male), scorpionfish, pikeblennies (bluethroat, yellowface, quillfin), bratula, white nose pipefish, banded and yellowhead jawfish, longlure frogfish, squadrons of flying gurnards (six together in one sand patch), and several varieties of shrimp (invisible, sun, squatted anemone, Pederson, banded coral, scarlet cleaner, and golden). Bill was also informative about the island’s history and customs. I stayed at the Mariner Hotel, which is about 50 yards down the sea wall from the Young Island pier, where Dive St. Vincent is located. The best restaurant is the Allegra, located between the Mariner Hotel and Young Island pier. Spend some extra

time on St. Vincent and tour the island, including Kingstown. My dives averaged 75 minutes with great visibility. St. Vincent is a photographer’s Mecca, and a true Caribbean experience.

**Dive St. Vincent, Paradise Inn, December 2002, Walter Brenner (waltbrennero@yahoo.com), Wayne, PA.** Vis: 80 to 120 feet. Water: 78 to 82 F. Dives logged: 880. In over 30 years of diving around the world I have found nothing better than St. Vincent, just a short flight from Barbados or Grenada and only 175 miles north of Trinidad. Three ocean currents converge off the west coast of St. Vincent to provide the growing conditions for a plethora of unique species. I saw five kinds of eels, the reef scorpionfish, numerous juveniles of many species, the magnificent sea urchin, squids, three kinds of octopuses, four kinds of decorator crabs in addition to seven other kinds of crabs I had never seen before, three kinds of pipefish, seven kinds of shrimp — one not found in any ID book. Average dive was 75 minutes because most were pretty shallow. Two dives a day (often plus a night dive) were quite ample. Not much in the way of real reefs — a lot of sandy or rocky bottoms but enough coral heads and gorgonian growth to support a huge diversity of species. Bill Tewes, owner and dive-master of Dive St. Vincent, seemed to know every critter by first name and where they live. Just diving with him was a fantastic experience. Of course, the warm waters and pleasant air temperatures (82 and 86, respectively) added to the pleasure. “Muck diving”

in the Indo-Pacific is world-renowned, but this surely equals it. It is a macro photographer's paradise.

Accommodations were not fancy but clean and comfortable. Having a balcony right over the beach and facing south provided a good view of the sunrise and sunset as well as the ritzy Young Island just a few 100 feet off shore. The locals were quite pleasant and everyone seemed genuinely interested in seeing that you were having a good time. Bill also arranged a package, which was a considerable savings. Pretty hard to describe an island paradise when it is now such a rare commodity. None of the frenetic pace of Cayman, Barbados, Ambergris Cay.

**Dive St. Vincent, Rosewood Apts.,  
December 2002-January 2003,  
Gary Schofield, Southboro, MA.**

Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 81 F. Dives logged: 650+. Dive restrictions enforced: Left alone after initial check-out. Bill Tewes is a treasure. He was able to spot and identify with his slate small critters that I swam right by. His enthusiasm for finding rare, uncommon critters and diving in general is infectious. St. Vincent is unpolished, but the people were friendly; Christmas Eve we were in Kingstown and never felt uncomfortable. We enjoyed the natural beauty of the island, especially after climbing La Soufriere, 4,000 feet. Rosewood Apts. were within walking distance and were clean. Our view of Young's Island was tremendous, as it sits on a steep hillside.

**Dive St. Vincent, SkyBlue Inn,  
March 2003, Ray Haberman**

**(Masterdiver50@hotmail.com),  
Naperville, IL.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 81 F, choppy. Dive St. Vincent booked my trip for me. I chose the no-frills, two-week stay at the Skyblue Inn. (I saved between \$700 and \$800 over the bigger hotels.) It has seven one-bedroom rooms with kitchenettes. Room was clean, air conditioned, and had cable TV. It is five to 10 minutes walk from the dive shop. The restaurant was adequate but not as good as the Lime N Pub near the dive shop. Callie and DJ are the divemasters at Dive St. V. Both have a vast knowledge of marine life and an uncanny ability to find the smallest creatures. I found the weather ideal but the water visibility less than expected. The dive boat was never crowded. Most we ever had was seven divers. The average was four to six. Underwater photographers' paradise. Dive St. Vincent didn't provide anything for transporting or rinsing the equipment.

**Dive St. Vincent, Young Island, April  
2003, Kay Greeley (kaygreeley@  
earthlink.net), Simi Valley, CA.**

Experience: More than 1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, choppy, surge, currents, no currents. Bill Tewes has been diving St. Vincent for over 20 years and presents a real mixed bag. His love of the critters and knowledge of St. Vincent reefs is unsurpassed, but his treatment of us was mostly patronizing, downright rude, and unaccommodating. There was one woman (nonphotographer) on the boat that monopolized his time every day; by the time she would finally move aside to allow the rest of us a

chance to see what had been found, Bill would usually also move on, the silt would be stirred up, and/or the critter would just be gone. Bill ignored and even ridiculed polite and repeated requests for equal consideration. We were lucky to get two to four critter pictures per dive, since we were not experienced critter finders. Treatment of our gear was just as disappointing. By the third day my BC reeked, and my regulator ceased to work properly due to lack of adequate rinsing. Extended soaking on my own from then on did little to help. Since Dive St. Vincent handled the gear start to finish, it was difficult to get BCs adjusted properly, etc. There is absolutely no space on any of the three boats for personal gear, and Bill constantly griped that we were in the wrong place and that we were doing everything wrong. On the other hand, he never does tell you what it is that he does want you to do or how he wants you to do it. This would be especially difficult for inexperienced divers not familiar with backward roll entries, etc. I think he's just been in the business for too long and it shows. One night, Bill informed us a trip had been set up to Baleine Falls for the next day and told us we would be gone all day and to bring \$ for lunch. We found out purely by chance at the end of the trip that we were being charged \$50 each, in addition to the \$90 each we had already paid for that day's dive (\$140 total). The boat was also packed with snorkelers paying \$50 each for the trip, so diving was difficult to boot. Upon questioning it, Bill was again patronizing but finally agreed to split it after much discussion. The one bright note

was the rest of the Dive St. Vincent crew. Other reviewers have noted that they were not too friendly. I think it's just that St. Vincentians are a bit shy and take some drawing out. I found each of them to be warm and friendly in their own way. Each made an effort to come and say goodbye to us when we were catching our taxi to the airport. Unfortunately, this does not make up for an overall disappointing dive experience. The resort at Young Island is romantic, beautiful, and meticulously maintained. The staff is friendly and accommodating. The cottages along the beach with their outdoor showers are charming. Food was definitely above average and well presented. Plan to spend a long time at meals, as service is leisurely. Service at the bar is fun and drink prices were reasonable for a resort. If you are looking for a place to recharge and spend quality time with a special person, this resort would be an excellent choice! Take an island tour with Andrew the taxi driver (set up through Young Island office). He knows all the best guides at the other local sites and will take excellent care of you. UW Photography Comments: No accommodations made other than a tub with about six inches of water on board boat.

**Dive St. Vincent, June 2003, George A. Bogard, Rockwall, TX.** Vis: 50 to 70 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F. Dives logged: 1,000+. Dive restrictions enforced: safety. I am an UW photographer, and St. Vincent is a macro paradise!

**Dive St. Vincent, Villa Lodge Apartments, June 2003, Tim & Jill Kolakowski, (tkolakowski@ma.rr**

.com), **Erie, PA.** Experience: Tim: 122 and Jill: 44 dives. We owe a big “thank you” to Ben for reviewing St. Vincent in *Undercurrent* because we hadn’t considered St. Vincent as a dive destination, and what a great trip we would have missed! Bill Tewes, the owner of Dive St. Vincent, calls this place the “critter capital of the world” and he is not exaggerating. We saw the “Humann Reef Guide” come to life. Seahorses, frogfish, pipefish, gold tail and snowflake eels, jawfish, brotula, chain moray, cherub fish, squid, etc, etc. At “Critter Corner” there were so many flying gurnards (including a 4 inch long juvenile) that they were getting in the way of my pictures of other fish. Bill Tewes was everything that the Chapbook reviews said he would be; funny, entertaining, and his eagle eyes found all the undersea highlights, which he showed off with his retractable pointer. His instructional skills paid off for Jill by making her feel exceptionally comfortable in the water and improving her diving skills. The Villa Lodge Apartment was more than adequate for our needs (including son James and babysitter Deann) with a friendly staff and a nice pool. The Grandview Grill on Indian Bay Beach provided a fabulous farewell dinner and a tremendous view our last night. The local supermarket was well stocked, easily accessed by the mini van taxis. Ah, yes, the mini vans — \$1.00 EC (37 cents US) gets you anywhere in Kingstown vicinity. The vans, privately owned and tricked out to the drivers’ taste, cruise the local streets, picking up riders as they go. Packed with locals and blaring hip-hop music,

the vans fly through the narrow streets racing around the sharp turns and almost flying off the hills. As Bill Tewes says, “the mini van drivers flunked out of kamikaze pilot school.” Although the urban areas of Kingstown are somewhat crowded, the local people were genuinely nice. They seemed especially curious about our 6 year old, James, smiling at him and occasionally giving him little presents and gifts. Bill can get great deals at local hotels and apartments, contact his website, [www.divestvincent](http://www.divestvincent), for more info. For upscale resort-type lodging, check into Young Island, the private island a few hundred yards off the coast across from Dive St. Vincent’s shop.

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad, the southernmost island in the Caribbean (it’s actually south of Caracas) isn’t for divers, but its smaller sister to the north is. ... Diving from resort hotels along the southwest coast of Tobago is inferior to the the north, where you’ll find huge coral heads and good fish life, with mantas in the spring. Strong currents and choppy water make this for experienced divers. (In 1997 a woman lost contact with her dive boat and spent 27 hours in the water before washing ashore). ... Blue Waters Inn is the main dive hotel; it’s situated on a nice beach about 15 minutes from all sites. ... Tobago is covered with rainforest and has good hiking, friendly people, and serene and beautiful beaches. Birding there is