

do have some very good restaurants. We enjoyed Jaanchi's in Westpunt. Seascope Dive and Water Sports (seascope@Interneeds-net) on the property. Eva and her husband run a nice operation and made you feel at home. They've been there 30 years. 10 dive package is \$250. You get 1 night dive and free use of lockers. For the 1st 2 days, they hooked me up with the dive operation at the Marriott. They had both their boats in dry dock. One of Seascope's divemasters, Andy (a great guy), went with us on the 2nd day. The next 3 days was on a Seascope boat. None of the dives were crowded. My last day was just with Andy. The weather was dry and sunny with the usual trade winds; twice the dive boat broke off the dive mooring. Water was 80 degrees with some strong surface currents. Visibility was 60 to 100+. Good dive briefings. I pretty much followed my computer. The corals were nice and healthy with many tropical fish, small critters, and some large morays and one eagle ray. Easy diving for experienced divers and nice diving for beginners. The only thing missing was large fish. (11-599-9625; Fax 11-559-9625)

Underwater Curaçao, Lions Dive Hotel, March 2000, Drew Elliott, Portage, WI. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 80 degrees, choppy, surge. This resort and dive operation exceeded every one of my expectations. Resort is clean and well kept with a good restaurant/bar. Food and drink prices are moderate. Great beach (private) and nice pool. Small store on premises for souvenirs, snacks. Dive

operation under new experienced management 40 ft. boats. We had 12-16 people on board all week; not at all crowded. Divemasters professional and very pleasant. Few rules: 1 hr. max. dive time return to boat with 500 psi. Excellent reef and wall diving plus 3 wreck dives. Lots of reef fish, lots of juveniles. No big fish. All in all a wonderful experience. **(P.O. Box 4095, Bapor Kibra, Curaçao; Telephone 800-468-0023 or 11-599-9616)**

Underwater Curaçao, Lions Dive Hotel, August 2000, Rob (meat2beat@prodigy.net), Wauwatosa, WI. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy. Dive your own profile. Follow your own dive limits. Dive staff was unbelievable. We were able to keep the same divemaster and captain for the whole week. Our divemaster brought us together and went over the sites and allowed the group to choose when and where we wanted to go. Everything was well organized and very relaxing. The only bad thing was the smell of diesel that constantly came from the boat.

DOMINICA

Dominica is arguably the best all-around adventure vacation island in the Caribbean, with gorgeous reefs, plenty of tropicals (though few of eating size), lush rain forests, hiking, waterfalls, warm water springs, splendid fruits and vegetables (prepared by great local cooks), modest hotels—and it's inexpensive to boot. . . . On the other hand, go forewarned that there are no

beaches, that even seaside hotels are affected by cloud cover, and there's not much happening beyond polite residents leading their lives. The airport doesn't handle large jets, and there's little tourism infrastructure. . . . Expect daytime temperatures in the 80s and night lows around 68 in winter and 73 in summer, although a few minutes up the mountain and into the cloud forest can change all that dramatically. . . . July to November is the wet season, but showers may occur anytime. Dominica's at the edge of the hurricane belt. . . . The thirteen-mile round-trip hike to Boiling Lake is worth getting in condition for. Dive operations usually offer two dives in the morning to allow time to tour in the afternoons. . . .

Castaways Beach Resort, May 2000, Rhoda Yarborough (rnr001@mindspring.com), Eastover, SC. Vis: 75 to 90 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, calm choppy. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: For those staying with Dive Master -100ft. No gloves. Wish I had known the condition of the hotel before making arrangements to stay there. Staff gives more attention to groups and influential versus regular tourists on vacation. Do not count on consistent hot water in your room or A/C. The Dive Crew does take care of all your gear during the entire visit, no need to fuss with it. Each briefing of dive sites was short and sweet. Did intervals between dives on boat. Had juice and water avail. Limited rinse

tank. No tables on boat, limited dry storage on boat for gear. Most all reefs are beautiful and are in good shape. A few of them were damaged bad by hurricane Lenny 11/99. Lots of fish life on reefs. The eco-attractions on the island are also quite nice. **(Castaways Beach Hotel, P. O. Box 5, Roseau, Dominica, West Indies; Tel: (767) 449-6244; Fax: (767) 449-6246)**

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort Lodge, December 2000, Vanessa Abbott. Super place to dive and generally have a good holiday — unless you are seeking lots of night clubbing etc. in the evenings. **(Ph: 809-448-2188, Fax: 809-448-6088)**

Dive Dominica, Nature Island Dive, January 2000, Jolene Eichorn, Little Canada, MN. Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 79-80 degrees. Dive restrictions: 85 ft. I dove 3 days with Dive Dominica, they have big, fast, covered boats, with full facilities for UWPs. Gus was the captain and divemaster. He pointed out many interesting things. We were disappointed with the service, however. My dive buddy only dove with them for 2 days because he was so disgusted. We also went with Dive Dominica for the whale watch. It was \$100/person. We saw a lot of dolphins, but no whales and they don't take you out again. They seemed more interested in getting back to the island for the political rallies and parties than finding a whale. Swiss Cheese at Scott's Head Pinnacle was incredible! Walls of fish, beautiful swim throughs, and large octopus. Rodney's Rock had sea horses, a huge ray, lots of

eels, lobsters, and wherever you looked something else to take a picture of. We dove one day with Nature Island Dive. Nice boat, great service, and a very informative divemaster. Went to Dangelben's Pinnacles, beautiful coral, eels and octopus. Stay at least one night at Papillote Wilderness Retreat in the mountains. It is stunning, a very quiet retreat. There are lots of activities on Dominica so even the non-divers have fun.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort, February 2000, Larry Lambert, St. Petersburg, FL. With the exception of a few slow spots on the roadways you could hardly tell storms did any damage. We stayed at the Castle Comfort and dove with Dive Dominica that is at the hotel; the hotel did lose their sea wall, pool and hot tub, but they have replaced all with new and fully operational. The diving was enjoyable and service was first rate with a very professional, knowledgeable and friendly staff. The hotel was comfortable and food and service was outstanding! I wish I had set aside a few more days to explore the Island it by far the most beautiful location in the Caribbean. The food at Castle Comfort was great, a very interesting creation of flavors and local foods using Creole spices. They will tailor selections to individual tastes and create any thing you may want. The room are very clean and convenient for diving and viewing the sea and island.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort, March 2000, Porter Williams IV, (DiverBoy25@aol.com) Wabasso, FL. Vis: 70 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to

85 degrees, strong currents. Dive your own profile. Restrictions: None really except certain depth limits. Great diving, topside attractions. Went during carnival and had a wonderful time. Staff at Castle Comfort amazing. Food and people are great. Not a good place for beginning divers, the school of fish are truly amazing.

Dive Dominica, Evergreen and Castle Comfort, March 2000, Skip and Mary Harutun, Carbondale, CO. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 78 degrees, calm and flat mild to strong currents. Dive your own profile: no. Dive restrictions: 100 feet even with computers most times given to us. Hurricane Lennie (Nov. 1999) damaged the resorts. Castle Comfort has rebuilt better than ever. Evergreen — the rooms are fine but the sea wall/ocean front bar restaurant and deck are a mess. The diving reefs, fish are perfect no damage and much better than Palau. Derek and Jenette own the Castle Comfort/Dive Dominica; fabulous; great attention to detail and any guest needs. They have a great dive staff with many staff members to help with any requests top side. Tons to do on the island.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort Lodge, May 2000, Stewart Kaslow, Maplewood, N.J. Vis: 50 to 70 ft. Water: 80 to 82 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: none. 2 dives each am, 1 dive option in afternoon, suggested hiking tours in pm to waterfalls. Had whale watch trip in afternoon for 2 days; both successful. Service in hotel

restaurant and dive shop very good. Reefs pristine, corals, sponges, and lots of critters especially liked Dangle Bens pinnacles, Soufriere pinnacles, Scott's Head pinnacles and point Gurnard. Was treated very well by owners Ginette and Derrick and entire staff.

Dive Dominica, Fort Young, June 2000, Craig and Ruth Campbell, Long Grove, IL. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 82 degrees. Dive restrictions: Buddy required, Stay above 130 ft., safety stops and avoid touching anything on the reefs. Diving was outstanding. Mostly walls, wall tops and pinnacles with some light current. They guide all dives, but dive guides are not overbearing. Nothing big, there is still lots of fishing going on. Macro photography had many subjects: bristle and fireworms, anemones of all kinds, cleaner shrimp (some extremely large), arrow crabs, lettuce slugs, nudibranchs and some of the largest and prettiest feather dusters I have seen. Large schools of soldier fish and chromis, and lots of trumpet fish, trunkfish, eels, snake eels, peacock flounders, sea urchins, juvenile and adult spotted drums, night sergeants, squid, burrfish, porcupine fish, long snout butterfly fish and sharp nosed puffers. I saw spaghetti worms on every dive. Frog fish? Didn't see any. Lots of vase and tube sponges, mostly small. Golden and black Crinoids were everywhere. Not as many angel fish as you normally see. There are all kinds of things to do after diving. Dominica is beautiful, the people are friendly, beautiful flowers everywhere and it has a lush large Rain forest with

unlimited fresh water that cascades down from a number of large water falls. There are a number of hiking excursions, a river trip, visits to native villages, and old forts. We went whale watching one afternoon and saw two female sperm whales with two calves, reasonably close. Also were encircled by a pod of more than a hundred dolphins that stayed around the boat for 20 minutes. The nature tours started almost immediately after we returned from diving and did not leave time for us to have lunch. We would get back from the morning dive about 12:45 and the tour would leave about 1:30. We ended up hiring a Taxi cab for two afternoon trips and an all day excursion on our last day. He was more expensive than the tours, considering we ended up paying for his dinner one night and lunch on the all day trip, but we got to go where and when we wanted to go. Electrical power on the island is 220 volts @ 50 Hertz. You need a converter/transformer to use electric razors, battery charges etc. Fort Young had a limited number; take one from home.

Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort Lodge, July 2000 G. and J. Carew, Charleston, SC. Both the Castle Comfort Lodge and Dive Dominica are run by the Perrymans. Accommodations are modern, open and airy, with a/c and large baths in all rooms. Great views of the sea and sunsets. Bar and restaurant on site with a set menu each night. The staff was professional and courteous. Diving with Dive Dominica was excellent. The dive staff took good care of their

divers and our dive gear was set up each morning when we arrived at the boat. Boats were quite comfortable. The dive staff was knowledgeable, helpful. They suggested dive sites and allowed divers to pick their dives. Champagne dive site is an experience, with volcanic vents bubbling from the ocean floor. Diving is diverse, with many fish, turtles, eels, frogfish, seahorses etc. Most sites are old, submerged, volcanic peaks loaded with overhangs and crevices for the macro life. Dives were usually limited to 90 ft. Then the slow ascent spiraled up and around the peaks. Vis. Was 80-125 ft. The topography of this island coupled with the diving makes it a great destination. We spent one week diving and one week up in the rainforest at Papillote Wilderness Retreat, luxuriating in the beauty of the "nature island."

Nature Island Dive, November 1999, Lynn Hensel, Barrington, IL. Water: 82-84 degrees. We stayed in the downstairs portion of the cottage (oceanfront) owned by the dive operation. It was lovely. Unfortunately, Hurricane Lenny has wiped it out. The upstairs 1 BR is still available and is perfect for 2 people. The diving was great, close to the dock, great visibility, warm water, lots of fun fish, swim throughs, sea horses! People very friendly. A few restaurants but this is not a touristy island. Great biking and kayaking. Beautiful scenery. (Ph: 809-449-8181, Fax: 809-449-8182)

Nature Island Dive, Oceanview Apts. and Crescent Moon Cabins, May 2000, Gary Lemme, Holiday, FL. Vis: 60 to

80 ft. Water: 80 to 82 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Dive your own profile: no. Dive restrictions: depth. Second trip to Dominica. Stayed at Oceanview Apts. In Scott's Head. Dove Nature Island Dive, 5 min. drive. Oceanview great, run by great people, great views, great gardens, quiet, cooked our own meals; stayed 12 nights. In between dives went to apartment for 1 hour surface interval. Dives in marine reserve good to outstanding. N.I. was well run. Good, fully equipped, fast boats; no cattleboats. Dives guided, 80 ft. max, depth only restriction. Didn't mind but there sure were some interesting reef formations below us. Dramatic wall dives into extinct volcano. Atlantic dives were outstanding w/hoards of jacks. 3,250 psi every tank; spent last night at Crescent Moon cabins in a mountain valley. Cabins and surroundings beautiful; owners were very friendly, knowledgeable and gracious hosts; food prepared fresh from on premises-grown food. Outstanding and inexpensive. Cabins overlook valley and sea below. You can lay in bed and look down valley to ocean; we hiked in the mountains and drove all around. We will wonder why the majority of travelers have yet to discover this heaven on earth.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Despite the recent flurry of advertisements touting the diving on the large Caribbean island of Hispaniola that the Dominican Republic shares with Haiti, I have yet to hear one report of good