

French diving rules are a bit quirky. Unless you're a divemaster yourself, which allows you great freedom, you must dive with a guide.

GRENADA

Grenada's as lush as Caribbean islands get, with great local food, an extraordinary beach, friendly people, and the most picturesque capitol in the Caribbean. Sadly, diving is only average, with one exception: the biggest wreck in the Caribbean, the *Bianca C.*, a 592-foot liner that burned in 1962 and was towed offshore to die, lies a mile off the beach. Unfortunately, it's not fertile ground for coral or fish, and the surface current is often strong enough to splay you on the downline, but if this vessel ever grew coral and attracted fish, it would be an unparalleled Caribbean dive. . . . Grenada is south of Barbados and out of the hurricane belt, though it's pelted by summer rains, which is why it's so lush. A fine way to visit the old Caribbean, get in a little no-hassle reef diving, sit in the sun, and drink rum in the rum houses along a harrowing perimeter road — which is about as safe as a Boston turnpike on St. Paddy's Day. Hire a cab — preferably the singing cab driver who hangs out at hotels. . . .

Ecodive, Coyaba Beach Hotel,
August 2000, Tom Kelly, Irmo, S.C.
 Logged 700 dives. Water calm and slight current. No sharks, turtles,

dolphins, nothing big. Some schools of fish. The Coyaba Beach Hotel on Grand Anse Beach. The rooms are divided into a new wing and the old. Ask for the new rooms, better AC and bathrooms. The food at Coyaba was poor. Don't get the meal plan! The huge buffet pictures in the hotel's brochure never happened. The "huge breakfast" buffet was only rolls and fruit. There was a Kentucky Fried Chicken across the street and pizza parlor within walking distance. You could also walk up the beach to St. George's Medical Dorms and eat local cuisine seaside. The food here was excellent at a great price. The pool at the Coyaba was closed for repairs. The only place air conditioned at the Coyaba was your room. No refrigerators in the rooms. For nicer rooms I recommend the Grenada Grand (no dive shop). During "Carnival" everything's booked including rental cars and restaurants. Eco Dive is on the beach in front of Coyaba Beach hotel). No private lockers. Placed our equipment in one area of dive shop. The dive boat was a 28 ft. twin engine with the scuba tank down the center and seats to the outside. Entry into the water was rolling off the sides of the boat that our ten-year-old had trouble with. Getting back on the boat was with a short wobbly unstable ladder was tricky. There was no camera table or rinse bucket on the boat. You had to keep careful watch of your \$1800 camera or someone would sit on it or knock it off. The boat could technically hold 16 divers but I thought 10 was crowded. EcoDive very accommodating. On three days my family of six were

the only divers on the boat. They did this by scheduling more dive trips in the morning or afternoon, splitting up the divers, so they weren't crowded on the boat. Great service! The guides were very helpful and knowledgeable. The visibility was 50-60 ft. due to the rainy season (July to Oct.). Most of the dives on Boss reef and Northern Exposure are drift dives. Flamingo Bay and Dragon Bay are protected reefs. Saw the most schools of fish and lots of small marine life here. The ocean temperature was above 80° so algae blooms were covering a lot of the coral. Hurricane Lenny ruined a lot of the soft coral, but it finally started to come back. The couple of dives on the Bianca C, the largest wreck in the Caribbean was awesome. The Bianca C is a true world class dive — 600 ft. long at a depth of 135 ft. Simply amazing! Large cruise lines no longer dock here, resulting in many shops and boutiques going out of business. Of course this eliminates those novice cruise line inexperienced divers tearing up the reef! (**Coyaba Beach Resort, 809-444-4129; Fax 809-444-4808**)

HONDURAS

All dive resorts are on the Bay Islands: Roatán, Guanaja, Utila, Cayos Cochinos, and other small cayes. . . . Honduras is home to the world's most aggressive no-see-ums; they bite, bite, bite. Although Skin-So-Soft works for a few, most people need DEET, and some have serious allergic reactions to the bites. Those who are

unprepared often find their vacations ruined. . . . The diving features great walls, offshore seamounts, and excellent coral and gorgonians, although there are few large fish or lobsters due to overfishing. . . . Whale sharks are seen occasionally near Utila. . . . Cayos Cochinos is excellent for diversity of macro subjects. . . . There's limited access to beach diving except at CocoView and Fantasy Island on Roatán, Bayman Bay on Guanaja, and Plantation Beach on Cayos Cochinos. . . . The rainy season is October through February, and northers can disrupt the diving. . . . TACA often overbooks, so reconfirm flights (which may not help) and carry essentials as TACA loses or delays luggage. . . . Spanish is spoken on the mainland, English in the Bay Islands. . . . While there's little night life or shopping, classic Central American jungles and Mayan ruins inland make great side trips. . . . Malaria protection is advised. . . .

Cayos Cochinos

Plantation Beach Resort, February 2000, Marsha Green, Morris, N.Y.

Dive restrictions: none Food and accommodations were good, although the facility could have been managed more efficiently and effectively. I was not picked up upon arrival at the airport, despite previous arrangements. I spent the first night on the mainland. The water was cold — 72 degrees — and silty-poor visibility.