

diving attributed to the island, the second largest in the Greater Antilles chain (exceeded in size only by Cuba).

Big Blue Swiss Diving School, Sol De Plata, June 2000, Daniel L. Kopetski, Portland, OR. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 78-82 degrees. Well-run German owned-resort but locales slow and on island time compare to us. They had good attitudes and friendly. The food was mediocre at best and some dishes defied description. Resort was clean with lots of amenities, well suited for families with activities for kids. Big Blue very helpful and gave good service. I took two students to certify for open water and went on to do their advanced. Big Blue is SSI but managed to get us PADI materials! The dive sites were suitable for the students but nothing special for experienced divers. Dive boat open skiff with no ladder. Airfare expensive.

Paradise, Punta Cana, November 1999, Ann Underwood, New Milford, CT. Vis: 25 to 35 feet. Water: 70 to 75 degrees, choppy. Dive your own profile: no. They told us this was an up and coming location. We had high hopes that they would dash. We went for a 7 day all inclusive. The hotel promised premium everything which was not so. You had to make reservations for dinner every day instead of all at one time. The food was eatable, that's all. Cable TV didn't work most of the time. We had repeatedly to beg for extra pillows and an umbrella. Hardly anyone spoke English. My fiancée took the resort course; no classroom instruction and

only 30 min. in the 4 ft. pool. Even though I'm a divemaster and Rescue Dive team member, I had to do a checkout dive. The staff told me my regulator was broken — obviously they haven't seen the new and improved regs. You had to make reservations the day before you wanted to dive. But space was very limited, so either you got up super early to make reservations or you didn't dive as much as you'd like. Bottom line, don't expect to dive 2-3 times a day, instead hope to dive once per day. This was more like going to camp than going on vacations. We wrote a letter to Apple vacations stating our dissatisfaction with our \$2800 vacation — they refunded \$500. **(Paradise Watersport & Dive Center, Hotel Paradise, Punta Cana, Bavaro, Dominican Republic; Telephone (809) 688-8150; Fax 688-8150)**

GUADELOUPE

Guadeloupe lies south of Antigua and north of Dominica. Because it's a French-speaking island, English-speaking tourists often have difficulty getting by. . . . Although there's wonderful shopping, a wealth of music and art, and the cuisine's out of this world, the diving is only average. Among the best dives are the Islets Pledgeon, cone-shaped, coral-covered islands that fall to the bottom at 160', and La Sec Patê, a group of large boulders rising to about 40' below the surface. Les Heures Saines (or "the quiet hours") is among the best operations at Pledgeon, and they speak some English. . . . The

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