

## TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

These islands, situated south of the Bahamas and north of the Virgins, feature awesome walls and some of the clearest water in the world. On a good day, visibility is about 200'. . . . South Caicos wall, off Cockburn Harbor, has a stone arch at 50', a lip as sharp as a knife, and a breathtaking vertical face. . . . Provo, the glitzy island, has spectacular beaches, but it's at least an hour's boat ride to the better diving of South or West Caicos. Grand Turk, on the other hand, is a funky, laid-back island that has a wall right offshore. Salt Cay has a guest house and decent diving; West and North Caicos have no dive facilities; a small dive operation on South Caicos has had a series of ups and downs (mostly downs), but it now has a new owner who hopefully will do better. . . . Bring a long-sleeved shirt during the winter months; it can get cool in the evenings, and water temperatures can drop into the mid-70s. . . . Stop by a post office and check out the marine life commemorative stamps — U/W photo contests are held periodically here, and part of the prize is having your photo placed on a stamp. . . . Don't be tempted by contraband; for decades the Turks and Caicos have been a clandestine refueling stop-over for dope-smuggling pilots from South America; a Customs dope-sniffing dog will greet you in Miami. . . .

## Grand Turk

**Blue Water Divers, Salt Raker Inn, September 1999, Peter Swartz, W. Newbury, MA.** Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 83-85 degrees. Wall at Grand Turk is spectacular esp. for corals, gorgonians and juvenile fish. Carl and Mitch from Blue Water Divers are very nice, relaxed and helpful divemasters. Food at the Salt Raker Inn is just ok and pricey as is the food at nearby Turks' Head Inn. People living on Grand Turk were relaxed and friendly.

**Blue Water Divers, Salt Raker, October 1999, Brian Sullivan and Sharon Benoit, Groveton, NH.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 80-85 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced; 90' and 10' stop. Jerry and staff at Salt Raker are excellent. Food is good and plentiful, fresh. Rooms very clean and homey. Feeling a great place to relax after diving. Mitch and crew at Blue Water very helpful, will work hard to get the best dive. Will point out interesting sea life or corals/sponges. Very good at ensuring dive will be enjoyable to all divers, even with differing experience. (Ph: 809-946-2432, Fax: 809-946-2432)

**Oasis Divers, Island House, December 1999, A. Chesson, Shreveport, LA.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 77-78 degrees. Island House was bit out of town but well within golf cart range (as was whole island almost) and the free use of transportation was real benefit. We used kitchen and grills for great meals (but could not buy fish? The small market never had any

available). Hotel is small, quaint but clean, well kept. Area to clean dive equipment. Oasis Divers were great. We had multiple skill levels. One new diver to experienced and all had a great time. Boats not crowded. Dive sites just minutes away. Generally entered 30-40', swam to wall, dive along wall and then back across shallower area to boat. Excellent coral. Fish population good and varied but without large fish, always something to see on the wall. Friendly islanders helped make an enjoyable stay. (Ph: 800-892-3995 or 809-946-1128, Fax: 809-946-1128, e-mail: oasisdiv@caribsurf.com, Website: www.oasisdivers.com)

**Oasis Divers, Guanahani, February 2000, Thomas F. Sharp, Kirtland, OH.** Vis: 25-75 ft. Water: 75-77 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: Once you checked out, you were okay. I wish someone had told me to bring a wetsuit. I was the only one without one, and I was cold every dive. The coldest time was the surface interval between dives, when it was cloudy. Though Oasis provided towels, we all still froze our butts off. The payoff was the great reefs full of critters. Oasis is a terrific operation, relaxed but professional. Once they knew you were okay, and could handle it, they left you alone to dive your own profile. So Nitrox people could dive with air people, and no one felt slighted. I got to do the dives I wanted, (which generally are less than 80') and we really covered those walls. See the seahorse at Macdonalds. Gibbs Cay is a worthwhile side trip,

another Sting Ray City, but climb the hill and see the backside of Gibbs: Great view! We did do the whale watching, came upon a mother and a week old calf: quite fantastic. Avoid the Guanahani: as one manager said to me "We are trying to sell it and we are not going to put any more money in it." No screens (and mosquitoes are a real problem). Ill fitting doors, lots of bugs, trash strewn about, lousy menu selection, far away from anything. So we ended up moving to the Osprey Beach Hotel that was much nicer, close to lots of restaurants, close to the dive operation, yet still quiet and lovely. Cab \$10/person to go anywhere. Dinner would have cost an extra \$40! The Osprey has its problems, but was much preferable to the Guanahani. The Turk's Head Inn is really beautiful, with a great menu and a fabulous courtyard. Take long pants and a long sleeved shirt for the mosquitoes. Beautiful Island, good diving, very friendly people. Good bang for the buck.

**Oasis Divers, February 2000, Richard Kimball, M.D. (dock@socket.net)**  
**Lake Ozark, MO.** Vis: 60 to 90 ft. Water: 77 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. Pleasant but not exciting (except when dolphins came up to us on dive and stayed awhile. Short boat rides; good Nitrox availability.

**Oasis Divers, Salt Raker Inn, February 2000, Dan Oliver, Walla Walla, WA.** Vis: 30-100 ft. Water: 77-78 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 ft. requested but not

enforced. Oasis Divers is a relaxed island operation owned by native Captain Everett and his Atlanta born wife Dale. A good team. Salt Raker Inn a comfortable 1850s Bahamian cottage with excellent cuisine in "The Secret Garden." Just 50 feet from diving, all on Front Street of Cockburn town on Grand Turk, BWI.

**Oasis Divers, Island House, May 2000, Bruce Brander**

**(bruce.brander@home.com),**

**Calgary, AB.** Vis: 80 to 100 Feet.

Water: 75 to 77 F, calm choppy. Oasis Divers overall runs a very good operation. Grand Turk is a perfect place for those who don't like to spend too much time on boats. The dive sites are all only 2 - 10 minutes so it's a quick ride to the site, briefing, in the water, and then out and back to shore for the surface interval. The boats are small (8-10) so even with a couple of inexperienced divers on board it doesn't take long to get everyone in the water. Dive briefings from guides Austin and Paul were extremely thorough. Most people stuck with guides, but it didn't bother the guides if more experienced divers/UWP's tended to be only nominally attached to the group while following photo ops. Boats left on time. The staff great at taking care of gear between dives. Island House is an 8-room Mediterranean style villa a little north of town. Being outside town is not an inconvenience because each room comes with a golf cart (or some other vehicle) so running into town for diving or dinner is just a matter of minutes (this also solved the early morning taxi ride to

the airport "Just grab the red pickup, and leave it in the airport lot with the keys in the ignition.") Rooms are large, bright and designed for maximum natural ventilation. There are in-room telephones, TV (15 channels) and A/C (although I never had mine on in 10 days because hilltop location and design let the breeze blow through.) There are a large outdoor veranda area and a small pool, and guests are free to use the hotel washer and dryer. Rooms all have a small kitchen - not the best for cooking for a family, but fine for breakfasts, lunches and light meals. The hotel has its own reverse osmosis plant, and fresh drinking water is provided daily. Staff is helpful - after I arrived the manager drove me into town, showed me the dive shops, where to get groceries etc. Overall Grand Turk is a great dive experience but there is essentially nothing for the non-diver. UW Photography comments: if there are more than 3 UWP's, it's a tight fit in the tub. For half the dive there was no tub in my boat. Rinse tank outside the shop, although I'm not sure if they changed the water in the 10 days I was there. There was a large table back at the shop for changing film, working on cameras etc. The dive guides made no particular effort to point out unusual flora or fauna for UWP's. Their assumption seemed to be more that the UWP's were experienced divers whom they could trust to do their own thing and get back to the boat.

**Sea Eye Diving, Guanahani Hotel, September 1999, Charles Stigall, Sealy, TX.** Vis: 30-90 ft. Water: 80-

82 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: 500 psi stay reasonably near dive-master. Guanihani Hotel was like a very old Holiday Inn. It wasn't dirty, just needed updating. Service was good, food very good but expensive. Less expensive places in town. Hotel is out of town a short distance, so a bike rental was nice. Cars are available for rent. Location on beach was best one on the island. Sea Eye Divers were ok, nothing special, got you to dive sites, accommodating and easy to deal with. This was off season, so divemaster was very laid back. At most, we had five people on boat. (Ph: 649-946-1407, Fax: 649-946-1407, e-mail: ci@caribsurf.com)

**Sea Eye Diving, Turks' Head Inn, November 1999, Dan Morissette (djmpc@erols.com) Manassas, VA.** Vis: 75 to 100 ft. Water: 70 to 75 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. Had been there before, so no surprises. Went back because first trip (4/98) was so good. Gibbs Cay/stingray outing was fantastic. Besides dozens of large stingrays also saw an eagle ray, which breached at one point. Small coral head in waist-deep water 15-20'. From shore to home to 3 morays of varying size and small grouper. Night dive at the Library w/ Cecil and Smitty was highlight of trip; 6' nurse shark circled for 3-5 mins. Saw variety of small crustaceans, puffer; fed two large grouper by spotlighting fish.

**Sea Eye Diving, Arawak Inn, December 1999-January 2000, Kendall Botellio, Phoenix, AZ.** Vis:

60-100+. Dive restrictions enforced: Dive computer. Wonderful destination. Hotel is terrific - like private one bedroom apartments! Staff is awesome at Arawak Inn and at Sea Eye Diving! Walls are healthy and colorful! Turtles, eagle rays, garden eels, bat fish, shrimp, crabs, lobster, octopus - Photo heaven! Vis was great! Water was cold, average temp 77 degrees. Air temp. was 70 degrees.

**Sea Eye Diving, Turk's Head Inn, May 2000, Lada Simek, Ossining, N.Y.** Vis: 60 to 100+ Feet. Water: 80 F, calm. Shore diving really is not worth it, but this was the only disappointment. Most underrated area I've seen. Every dive has an option of being a wall dive, with every other kind of dive possible except wreck. The corals are healthy, fish are very approachable and plentiful. Even the sand eels would let you get within four feet! There was a good size critter visible on every dive. Would you believe a three to four foot male Spanish hogfish!? Hotel is charming with excellent food. We noted some "island maintenance." The new managers are working at it. Food is excellent and the natives genuinely friendly.

**Sea Eye Diving, Turks Head Inn, June 2000, Ed and Yvonne Diehl, Seattle, WA.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 82 degrees. Grand Turk is a somewhat sleepy laid back island and the people are friendly. Drive on the left side of the road. T-Shirts are only available at the few hotels, dive shops, and the local museum. Hot and humid, mid 80s. We did two morning dives at 9

A.M. The surface interval was on shore at the Osprey Hotel, where we had started our short boat ride. The Osprey Hotel used to be called Sitting Pretty. The ocean side units are in operation and the units across the street were closed for renovations. Divemaster Smitty was easy going, pointing out creatures and picking the best uncharted sites that required anchoring in the sand rather than tying up to a buoy. Smitty suggested profiles with "thereabouts" depths and times. We were able to dive our own profiles. There is a sanctuary along the island wall, so they do not allow fishing and there were schools of fish, everywhere. We saw two lady divers from our group petting a nurse shark, a touching experience. Reefs were healthy and in excellent shape. The color of the water was indigo blue. There was an abundance of marine life and a large variety of fish, including schools of Creole wrasse, trumpet fish, spotted drums, jacks, Nassau grouper, frog fish, barracuda, jawfish, yellow tailed snappers, grunts, burr fish, goatfish, parrot fish, silversides, blennies, damselfish, angel fish, moray eel, spiny lobster, crabs, garden eels, small lemon shark, stingrays, turtles. We needed an extra pair of eyes to see all the fish. Not many large pelagics. The gorgonians were in excellent shape although not quite as large as on Bloody Bay wall in the Cayman islands. Turks Head Hotel is a charming, renovated 18" century mansion. There are new managers, Doris and Werner. They are renovating the whole building. They remodeled the kitchen, including the installation

of a pizza oven, expanded and remodeled the office-gift shop, moved and replaced the stairs to the terrace, and replaced some fixtures in the rooms. Turks Head food is the best on the island. We had a choice of eating in the dining room, or in the charming, shady garden. Each room has a fan and an air conditioner. We stayed in an upstairs room number 1, facing the ocean. Rinse buckets and a drying area were off the garden. We were drying our scuba gear on our private patio. Our room was above the kitchen and we heard the staff arguing one morning around 7:30. Islands roosters woke us up at 6: A. M. We had a breakfast at the Court Yard Cafe, where Phillis makes the best waffles. She also prepares nice light lunches, consisting of salads and sandwiches. They take the last order of lunch at 2:30 P.M. at any restaurant on the island. If you miss it, the dinner is not until 6:30 P. M. Smitty was good at arranging the second dive so that we didn't miss lunch.

**Sea Eye Diving, Arawak Inn, August 2000, Trent Johnson, Scotch Plains, NJ.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 84 degrees. sunny and dry, calm and flat, no currents. Dive own profile: yes, if you demonstrate you are experienced. Restrictions: 80 feet, but if you showed you were competent and comfortable, you could go deep and stay in the water as long as you wanted, as long as you came back with 500 psi. 3 nurse sharks, no mantas, 2 turtles, no dolphins. Sea Eye diving has friendly, experienced divemasters and staff. We had

Mackay. He's fun, easy going and lets experienced divers do their own thing. Most dives for us were over an hour. Carolina skiffs were fast and roomy, from 2-6 divers, often just 4 divers (or 2!) on the boat. Surface interval on the beach for morning dives. Cecil is a great fellow, calm and relaxed. Arawak Inn is spacious! Kitchen with stove, oven and refrigerator. Nice pool, beach and bar. Good deal! Klaus (the new owner) is a great host and was good at making sure we were happy. Ants could be a problem if you leave food out, if you're careful with food you can manage though. Only complaint - the taxi fare to town is \$8 per person, one way, and it's only a 2-mile ride! The Arawak provides free van service to town twice a day! Though the first ride is around 9:00 a.m. when we were diving. The diving is essentially all wall diving. Sea fans plentiful, huge sea plumes, some 7 feet high! It looked like the corals are beginning to bleach. Small reef fish are plentiful, not much large fish life. Shore diving is best from Arawak but you must swim 150 yards to get to the wall, we enjoyed it. Tried night diving the old pier, but were run out of the water by sea wasps!

### **Providenciales**

**Beaches Turquoise, November 1999 David A. Castle** (dacsatle@sprintmail.com), Cincinnati, OH. Vis: 30-100 ft. Water: 79-81 degrees. Weather: sunny, windy. Surge, no currents. Pre-dive pool checkout required. Either 8:30 am or 2:45 pm. In-pool portion took about

10 minutes. Sunday is big turn over day for guests, so Monday morning checkout took most of an hour because of the large group. 2 tank dive leaves at 8 am, 1 tank dive leaves at 10 am. To maximize the number of dives on the trip, try to arrive in time for the afternoon orientation on your arrival day. Two tank dive starts with a 10-15 minute bus ride to a marina on the south side of the island. Our dives were off West Caicos and French Cay. West Caicos was a 45 minute boat ride, French Cay about an hour. The two tank trip gets back to Beaches between 2 and 2:30 pm. The one tank dive leaves from Beaches and goes to the reef near the resort. No dock, so a surf entry to the boat is necessary. Dive staff friendly, but provide a lower level of service than we've experienced elsewhere. Rather than receiving your tank and BC from the staff at the transom and then giving it back to them there, it was necessary to wear all gear from your seat and back to your seat, except fins, which could be handed up from the water. Dive profiles: first dive: 80 feet, 30 minutes; second dive 60 feet, 30 minutes after a 1 hour interval. There was a little flexibility in timing, but if you blew the max depth by much you might spend the next dive on the boat. Generally, all diving was with a divemaster, in groups of up to 10 people. If you have a computer and ask, you can "buddy dive" with your partner apart from the group though you still have to adhere to the time and depth limits. Northeasterly winds dropped vis on the north side (the 1 tank dive side) to 30 feet, and brought

high seas that canceled the 1 tank dive a couple of days. The two tank dive, from the south side, wasn't affected. South side vis was 80-100 feet. Water between 81 and 79. West Caicos and French Cay sites started with a level bottom at roughly 50 feet with a wall dropping from there. Second dive was limited to the very top section of the wall. The north side site we saw started in 40 feet or so and gently sloped down from there. Signing it up for each dive was necessary, with sign-ups limited to one day in advance. Each morning, then, two lines to check in for the morning's dive, then the other for the next day's diving. No secure place to store your gear at the dive center so schlep gear from your room for each dive, and all borrowed or rented equipment is checked out for each dive. Regulators and weights available on the boat. Camera table used to strap down unused weight belts, and as storage space for regulators, an uneasy layout for a photographer. Night dives Tuesday and Thursday. Most of Beaches is all-inclusive, but the night dives are extra and are the one way to get in a three-dive day. Beaches rooms clean and functional, villas very spacious, though when the door lock to our room broke it took 18 hours to fix and they poorly communicated the status of the repairs. Full service meals took forever, and food frequently overdone. Service indifferent. Buffet-style meals were quicker, with broad selections available once everything laid out, not usually the case until 15-30 minutes after opening. Phone service back to the states \$ 4.50/ minute

or a \$7.50 access charge to get to ATT Direct through the hotel operator.

**Beaches, April 2000, Mark S. Reckman, Cincinnati, OH.** Vis: 50 to 70 ft. Water: 76 to 79 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Group diving only, by the tables; no computer profile and no buddy diving, no Nitrox, no pm. Dive. All-inclusive good luxury resort, it is not for serious divers. They gear the dive operation for resort divers (non-certified) and casual divers. Serious divers should go to Dive Provo, Turtle Divers or somewhere else on the island. The diving itself was excellent, great walls, esp. on west Caicos and French Cay; both serviced from Provo dive shops. Saw 4 reef sharks and 2 eagle rays in just 4 days of diving. (Ph: 1-888-BEACHES or 649-946-8000, Fax: 649-946-8001; website: [www.beaches.com](http://www.beaches.com))

**Big Blue, Parrot Cay, April 1999, No name.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 75-80 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: Depth limits 90 ft. Stayed at Parrot Cay - exquisite service, food and accommodations. Privacy but spendy. Pick up by Big Blue outstanding, personalized service, fast boat, safe, courteous and conscientious operation. Very knowledgeable. Know the spots and conditions. Easy diving, great visibility but no large fish. (649-946-5034)

**Caicos Adventures, The Sands, December 1999, Brian M. Quimby (qinter@ncinter.net), Erie, PA.** Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F. Dive Restrictions: Inform divemaster

of profile and stick to it. Fifi who owns Caicos Adventures is a true master in the art of diving, running a very professional and fun dive operation, and overall decent human being! Definitely the best! He will help those that require it but leaves those that have experience alone as long as he knows their dive plan. We saw large pelagics on every trip! Many eagle rays and sharks. The wall is awesome and his operation only carried at most 10 divers. No cattle diving operation here! His crew was very friendly and helpful and did everything for you including changing BC's between dives to washing and storing dive gear after the day was done. Price was very reasonable. Boat trips usually took about 40 minutes to sanctuary where few operations ran. **(Caicos Adventures: phone 800-513-5822, fax/phone 649-941-3346, e-mail [divucrzy@tciway.tc](mailto:divucrzy@tciway.tc), website [www.caicosadventures.tc](http://www.caicosadventures.tc).)**

**Caicos Adventures, Coral Gardens Condominiums, March 2000, David E. Bishop, Bratenahl, OH** ([dbishop@calfee.com](mailto:dbishop@calfee.com)) Water 79-82. Visibility 100 to 200 feet — the proverbial “gin clear!” Caicos Adventures operated by Philippe “FiFi” Kunz. ([www.caicosadventures.tc](http://www.caicosadventures.tc)) we chose based on the '99 Chapbook. We wanted to dive West Caicos and thought a 45-50 minute boat ride would be part of the adventure, not an “effort.” Caicos Adventures dives 2 tank West Caicos dives six days a week. On Thursdays it is a 3-tank trip. FiFi knows all the sites and chooses a given site based on the weather,

visibility and sea conditions. Although there is a GPS on the boat, neither FiFi nor Captain/divemaster Laurent used it. Only on one of my eight dives was there a mooring buoy; we anchored in the sand on the other seven. Half the days we even saw another dive boat once we approached West Caicos. We dove from the Melissa II, a comfortable 40' custom dive boat equipped with a marine head, fresh water shower, first aid kit, oxygen, ice water for drinking and plenty of shade. The boat would hold 20; FiFi takes a maximum of 16. We had 4 to 12 divers. Drop your shoes in the box on the dock before you board. There is no transom to step over as you prepare to enter the water off the stern. A stern line on a buoy trails on all dives and the substantial single ladder makes exits easy. 2 tank dive day begins at a small marina located next to the Marine Biology Center by Turtle Lake, considerably closer to West Caicos than the Turtle Bay marina, about a 10 minute drive from our condo. Divers who have chosen to be picked up/dropped off by FiFi's white bus arrive about 8:20 and the boat departs by around 8:30. The divemasters have already hooked up the rental equipment to the tanks. The staff hooked up, broke down and washed and stored our gear for us all week. On several days I dove, we stopped at a house on Sapodilla Bay to pick up some divers. On another day we stopped to pick up a couple of divers from a sailboat in the Bay. Spotted a young Hammerhead swimming alongside the boat as we were returning to Sapodilla Bay. FiFi



and divemasters Eric and Laurent gave detailed and informative pre-dive site briefings. In the water they were quick to point out things of interest. Divemasters were in the water every dive, but divers were free to follow or not. Some followed; some dove their own profiles. Private dive guides were available. We dove computers as did FiFi and the divemasters and half the divers. They urged, but not forced divers to stay above 130 feet. The only real rule was to be on the bar at 15' with 500 psi at the start of the 3-5 minute safety stop. Each diver's air supply determined dive length. "Air hogs" like I would be pointed toward the bar while the dive masters and other divers continued diving the shallower reefs near the boat. After an 80 minute surface interval with lunch, our second dives were relatively deep — 80 to 90 feet — well within the computer limits. The repetitive deep diving was permissible because of multilevel diving profiles, including relatively short intervals spent below 100', more time spent around 60-80' or so, and some quality time spent on the bottom under the boat at the end of the dive. Some divers were happier staying shallower on the second dive. Our second dive sites had the bottoms around 35'-40', reefs around 50' with the wall starting about 60'. After the first dive, FiFi serves a tasty lunch of sub sandwiches and pasta salad and soft drinks. Meanwhile, the crew is changing tanks for everyone. We were usually back at the marina by around 2:30. West Caicos diving must be experienced to be believed. Healthy, unspoiled hard and soft corals, reefs

and walls, spectacular sponges of many types plentiful fish and creatures galore. Saw three spotted Eagle Rays, good sized Nassau Groupers, three fairly large Nurse Sharks, 10-12 medium sized Barracuda, couple of Reef Sharks. Donna manages the land operations and handled our reservations via e-mail quickly. Beach Villa at the Coral Gardens/White House Villas is on the beach at White House Reef in Princess Alexandra National Park on Grace Beach on Provo's north coast. ([www.coralgardens.com](http://www.coralgardens.com)) The condo was gorgeous with a great view of the beach. Oversized rooms — much more space than we needed. There are no screens. The sliding doors open onto a large balcony. No problems with bugs. The facility is well designed and lovely. Fine dinner-only restaurant at the resort—Coyoba. There were complimentary coffee and breads and fruit buffet available each morning. Just off the beach at Coral Gardens is White House Reef, a terrific and popular snorkeling site. Matthew, the Coral Gardens Manager, led a couple of shore dives from the beach just in front of the condo while we were there—maximum depth is about 25 feet. He arranged the tanks, regs and all the rest of the equipment. We rented a car at the airport — taxi service on Provo is not the most timely or reliable — and found the Island very easy to navigate with a map we picked up at the airport. The Caicos Café and the Sharkbite grill were our favorites for dinner.

**Caicos Adventures, LeDeck Hotel,  
April 2000, Tom Rain, Irving, TX.**

Vis: 50 to 100 ft. Water: 80 to 83 degrees, calm and flat, no currents. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. Very nice trip. Nice, small, comfortable hotel (LeDeck). We dove with Fifi, off West Caicos, very good dive operation and location for diving. Worth the one hour boat ride from Provo. Nice, large dive boat. Provo is more civilized than Mexico, Belize, Roatán, but not as developed as Caymans; a very nice compromise in my opinion.

**Caicos Adventures, Comfort Suites, June 2000, Robert Praisner, Bedminster, NJ.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 80-84 degrees. Dive restrictions: None. I dove with most of the dive operations on Provo, and Caicos Adventures dives the best sites (West Caicos, French Cay) daily. West Caicos rivals Bloody Bay Wall (Little Cayman) and French Cay is virgin diving.

**Club Med Turquoise USA, March 2000, Debbie, New York, NY.** Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F. Dive your own profile. No decompression dives, Depth limits are given, but they are not really conservative. Great place for a well-rounded vacation not necessarily centered around diving, but including it. Boats leave at different times from the resort, so it's great if you don't want to wake up at dawn. The large dive staff's manner ranged from incredibly nice to patronizing. They appeared competent, although there were a few incidents/accidents during the week. The dives themselves were OK. I saw an Eagle Ray and a medium sized

shark, which they told me was a Black Tip. Excursion Dives from West Caicos can be booked though the resort but aren't included in the Dive Package. Don't buy the dive package from Club Med if you want to take a day off or dive off site. It will be the same price or more expensive. (809-946-5491; Fax 809-946-5501)

**Club Med Turquoise, March 2000, Ken Richardson (redeyepix@aol.com), Arlington, VA.** Vis: 50-100 Feet. Water: 78-84 F. Dive your own profile. Restrictions are, with computer, 130 ft for 40 mins, interval, 70 ft for 30 mins (I could be off a bit). Boats do hold a lot of folks, but are spacious, clean and comfortable, and the snacks are the best I've found, with fresh fruit, sandwich meats and cheeses and lots of water and other beverages. At least four instructors onboard, as well as the captain, and you can either dive your own profile (buddy) within the restrictions or tag along with a group. If you haven't been diving in the past six months, there's a required refresher dive and an orientation dive, but they're very low key. In past visits, the boats occasionally seemed in a bit of a hurry, but that was to make sure you made lunch back at the village, and isn't an issue any longer since lunch hours have been extended. Dive staff changes seasonally, but is invariably friendly and professional. Sites are great, though not if you're in the market for lots of sharks. Have seen a few, but the rays, turtles, grouper, cuda and smaller fish, and the remarkable health of the coral, are the reason to be diving

there. What you pay for three 2-tank dives anywhere else gets you six 2-tankers, and a night dive. Being a Club Med, the place is very, well, gregarious, and a definite party at night, but they tend to house divers in a quiet section of the village, so getting a good night's sleep isn't difficult.

**Club Med Turquoise, May 2000,  
John Church, Cliffwood Beach, NJ.**

Vis: 75-100 ft. Dive restrictions: time and depth. Jellyfish infestation early in week. Stung on every dive. Wind kicked up Thursday and blew jellyfish away but reduced visibility by half. Wind driven waves/chop canceled water skiing but helped sailing. (I like Club Med for the variety of nondive activities.) Rental dive computers used by divemasters as a SCUBA police to monitor profiles. Diving restrictive to experienced divers. I didn't mind, let the guides do the navigating while I enjoyed the view. So much sand on top of the coral it looked like some enormous earth mover dumped it there. Much gray/dead areas on the shallower parts of the reef. Even if every diver, every day damaged the reef in some way they couldn't do as much damage as I saw. Was it environmental changes, over development, storms - I don't know. Boats big, wide catamaran style. Two had upper sun deck. All had working head. Longest ride to dive site was about fifty minutes. Snacks and beverages on board. No big critters. Room simple and clean. Everything (shower, phone, TV) worked. In room safe for valuables. Had great time jellyfish and all.

**Dive Provo, Allegro Resort, February 2000, Stanley Holz, Whitefield, NH.** 8 dives. Resort is very well maintained and features some excellent food, beautiful sandy beach, comfortable air conditioned rooms, and a friendly staff. Dive Provo's boats were in excellent repair, they always washed and set our equipment for us, and cold soda, water, and crackers were on every boat. Each boat had a marine head. The divemasters were courteous and helpful, and offered us the option of either a guided tour or going off on our own. Dive profiles were generally 15 minutes out, 15 minutes back to the boat, then "free time" if you wished to continue diving near the mooring. They allowed computer divers to dive their computer profile. Went to sites at West Caicos, Northwest Point, and Pine Cay and Grace Bay. Conditions dictated the choice of sites...our boat was often the only dive boat moored at a site. The best diving was at West Caicos with very impressive walls and drop offs. "Spanish Anchor" was a fun dive with a beautiful swim through and an old anchor encrusted on the coral wall. Northwest Point and Pine Cay were excellent. Two Humpback whales about 50 yards off the boat on one trip to West Caicos. Water 77-78 F at all sites, and visibility 100', to 50 feet at Grace Bay during turbulent water conditions with heavy surge. Fish life was prolific: gray, queen, and French angelfish, queen triggerfish, schoolmasters, slippery dicks, rock beauty, lobster, crabs, and huge barracuda. Never saw single Moray, and only one solitary Nurse

shark. I was comfortable always with a full 3 mm suit, but some divers were using heavier suits. (Ph: 800-234-7768 or 649-946-5029, Fax: 649-946-5936, e-mail: [diveprovo@caribsurf.com](mailto:diveprovo@caribsurf.com), Website: [www.diveprovo.com](http://www.diveprovo.com))

**Dive Provo, Caicos Adventures, Allegro Resort, June 2000, Olga Kuchukov, Middle Village, NY.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 75-80 degrees. Dive Provo restrictive because it's a resort dive op. I wish I didn't waste time diving with Dive Provo. When I finally dove with Caicos Adventures it was on a par by itself. Fifi Kunz is an excellent, endearing, no-nonsense host. This boat is very relaxing, his choices of dives informed. When I went too deep, and my partner along with me, he didn't give us too hard a time, but we understood. Also he shared air with me when I sucked through mine too fast. This was very nice because it allowed me more time diving. Anyone else would've made me go up. Dive Provo piled too many people on the boat. Provo is great for diving. I wouldn't stay at Allegro again. I'd go for Sands or something, not an all inclusive. Thanks for the *Chapbook*!

**Dive Provo, The Sands at Grace Bay, July 2000, Beth Klopman, Atlanta, GA.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 80-82 degrees. Dive Provo generally very good. Favorite divemaster, Bill Sewell. One divemaster pretty bad, missed boat, several divers had very low to no air. Several o-rings blew at 60 ft. They did replace all o-rings when we insisted. We were a group of 30 and they accommodated us very well

with 2 large boats. Nurse sharks, tiger paw, spade fish, cleaning stations, juvenile drums, 18 dolphins joined us on a surface interval. Spectacular! The Sands was exquisite. My daughter got sick and Dr. Menzies was terrific.

**Dive Provo, Allegro, July 2000, Stanley and Gretchen Gettis, Miami, FL.** Vis: 80-110 ft. Water: 80-82 degrees. Restrictions: 100' limit — dive computer profile. The water was colder than I expected. A Darlexx or 3 mm is necessary for comfort. Extremely long boat rides to all sites other than Grace Bay, West Caicos is 1-1/2 hours, French Cay 1-1/2 hours, Northwest Point 1 hour. Dive Provo, which leaves from Allegro Hotel, is a well-run operation, once your gear is at dive shop, you never touch it again. They try hard to please when you have their top staff. Rick, who has been there 10 years, and Bill and Gerry.

**Dive Provo, Sands Resort, July 2000, Ernie Feleppa, Rye, NY.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 84 degrees. I have been taking dive groups to the Caribbean since 1984. Sands Resort on Grace Bay is new and offers a good value with a nice mix of luxury and tolerable price, with an exceptionally considerate and responsive senior staff. The place was clean, offered good food at their beach-side bar and restaurant, had spacious suites, and is in the center of the phenomenal world-class Grace Bay beach. Dive Provo had a large and capable staff. Even the Florida-based reservations office was competent, friendly and efficient. They greeted us with all the requested

rental gear, name-labeled mesh bags for storage of gear (rented or owned), and all the inevitable waivers and forms. They took all the gear we chose to entrust to them, stored it, set it up on each boat before leaving the dock, removed it washed it and securely stored it over night — every day. They used a 42' stable comfortable Bruno and Stillman and a smaller, faster Pro Dive. Their captains, who also served as divemasters, were terrific in both their roles. They had just installed a bunch of brand-new O-rings in their tanks. Apparently, the batch was bad. We blew 6 of them on our first day. All but one blew on the boat within seconds of opening the tank valve; one blew underwater and emptied a tank in a minute or so. Dive Provo replaced the O-rings on all their tanks overnight. Pre-dive briefings generally were brief and relaxed, and one divemaster went in the water on every dive, but following the divemaster was optional. One diver in our group requires a wheel chair and Dive Provo had no trouble accommodating her special needs. With a group our size, Dive Provo might have added a third crew member so two divemasters could have entered the water. Dive Provo had us scheduled for dives off Grace Bay, Northwest Point, West Caicos, French Cay, and Pine Cay. After experiencing unexpectedly good diving in Grace Bay and the long ride to West Caicos and the poor vis on an outgoing tide at Pine Cay (once), we elected to do all our remaining dives off Grace Bay. Everyone (except me and my wife) saw at least one shark. One of our two groups spent a half

hour diving and snorkeling with a pod of spotted dolphin the first time we went to Pine Cay. Reefs were healthy, colorful and presented fish that are not common in Bonaire or Cayman, such as a bat fish and many spade fish. Wall architecture was interesting, and the typical 100' viz allowed it to be appreciated. Provo sites like the Hole in the Wall, the Crack and the Amphitheater don't approach the grandeur and complexity of sites like Trinity Caves and Big Tunnel in Grand Cayman. The food at several very pleasantly surprised us at the "better" restaurants: Coco Bistro, Caicos Café. The restaurant at Coral Gardens and at the Grace Bay Club were said to be superb. Boogaloo's is an experience in local conch. We also were surprised by snorkeling at Smith's Reef where tropicals and healthy corals abounded. Smith's Reef is a "park" with underwater markers. 8' wide coral head very close to the shore entry point y was covered with huge anemones of all colors.

**Flamingo Divers, Allegro, February 2000, June Densmore, Liverpool, N.Y.** Vis: 40 to 60 ft. Water: 72 to 76 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 110 ft. Flamingo Divers were safety conscious, friendly, warm and knowledgeable. They took us to many excellent dive sites and you could do your own profile or go with the divemasters (2 for 6-8 people). We saw many great coral reefs and tropical life and photographed thanks to a great divemaster whose main goal was for everyone to have a safe and fun dive. **(800-204-9282; 649-946-4193)**

**Flamingo Divers, Erebus Inn, May 2000, Barbara Cordaro, Martinez, GA.** Vis: 70-110 ft. Water: 80-82 degrees. Dive restrictions: Computers < 130', no deco. Best dive operation we have experienced yet. Andrew, Matthew, Jamie and Bob made sure that we had relaxing dives with small groups of no more than eight. We dove off French Cay and San Spit, off the beaten path. Andrew assured us that we would enjoy Rock 'n Roll, G-Spot, Sand-Spit and those dive sites did not disappoint. Surface intervals enjoyed on the isolated beach of French Cay. Returning to Provo with a stop to swim with JoJo and a pod of male dolphins, also sighted a sperm whale. Flamingo Divers were in no hurry to return to Provo. They enjoy looking for dolphins, whales, sharks. One day returned at 3:30 after a glorious 2 tank dive, long surface interval and relaxing return to the Erebus Inn. Erebus Inn offers basic rooms, upgraded to ocean view of Grace Bay worth it. Pool view rooms with limited view pool. Restaurant spectacular view, good food. Excellent conch carpaccio at Tiki Hut. Very friendly people on Provo.

**Flamingo Divers, August 2000, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico.** On the strength of your recent article on Flamingo Divers, I revisited Provo. Andrew, Matthew and Jaime were as pleasant as described, so it is certainly strange that Andrew is resigning. It does not forebode well for the operation. The diving itself was not as good as made out in the article. The ride was 1 hour and 10 minutes and the first site visited: Sand Bar, was not

worth the ride. Double D was very good, but certainly not something meriting such a long trip. They provided no food other than snacks. The drinking water was tepid and the boat just big enough for 8 divers.

**Provo Turtle Divers, Comfort Suites Inn, July 1999, John M. Davis, Chattanooga, TN.** I have been diving since 1981 including the Bahama Islands, Grand and Little Cayman, Cozumel, Curaçao, Bonaire. Overall weather conditions were sunny and dry, and the seas were usually flat and calm with a couple of days of chop. The water was approximately 84 degrees, with some people diving wearing merely a T-shirt, and others like me, wearing a one eighth inch neoprene suit. Visibility seventy-five to one hundred feet. Provo Turtle Divers did an outstanding job. We were able to either dive our own profile, or dive with a divemaster -our choice. The divemasters were extremely friendly and really wanted to accommodate us. Their desire was that we would be able to go to good sites and see what we wanted to see. The variety of diving was very good. On the first day out we saw a Hammerhead, although he did not come really close to us. I also got a super video of a beautiful Spotted Eagle Ray and she did not bolt, as I swam 15 feet above her for a good minute. On one of many trips to West Caicos, we encountered a school of Dolphins, which played around the boat. Turtle came within two feet of my video lens. The coral on West Caicos was beautiful, and most was generally in

good shape. Good amount of tropical fish and small critters. Many wall dives. The accommodations at Comfort Suites were excellent and the people, not only at the hotel and dive shop, but all over the island were very friendly. The attitude of everyone we encountered was excellent. We ate at Pub On the Bay, which is on the opposite end of the island from most of the development, where many locals eat. I have never ever had better conch fritters, conch chowder, or cracked conch. Provo is not overly developed, and the masses of tourist like you see on Grand Cayman are not there. The coral is not dead yet, and too many divers have not adversely affected the underwater beauty, because it is still a little bit expensive to get to this place and to stay there. (Ph: 809-946-4232, Fax: 809-946-4326)

**Provo Turtle Divers, House Rental March 2000, Stephen Cohen** ([stephen.cohen5@worldnet.att.net](mailto:stephen.cohen5@worldnet.att.net))  
**Pound Ridge, NY.** Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, calm. Dive your own profile. Dive restrictions: occasionally "try to stay above 135 fsw, come back with 500 lbs." Mostly on your own if desired or follow-the-guide. Fourth time diving with Turtle Divers since '87 but not since '94. First-class. They get you to the best sites, let you dive within your own limits, point out what's interesting, run an efficient, safe boat and respect the reefs (another diver had to remove gloves before being allowed off the boat). Did six dives over three days (my wife is a nondiver so we appreciate great Provo beaches) and they

were all good — Northwest Point, West Caicos, Parrot Cay. Saw reef sharks on half the dives — a tiger shark cruised by the boat in the shallows during one surface interval at Northwest Point. The divemaster was able to get in the water with his camera and snorkeling gear. Numerous spotted eagle rays, lobster, dinner-plate size octopus, morays. Art Pickering has amassed a good collection of guides, they remain enthusiastic divers eager to see new things, and share them with other experienced divers. While Art caters to experienced divers (who can stand one-hour open water trips to a good site near West Caicos that can be bouncy even in his great 42' Newton), a few people also were doing their first open-water dives (though with separate instructors). I have been diving for 25 years (and an *Undercurrent* subscriber almost as long) and Art and Provo remain one of the best. Even a 30-foot second dive in front of club med turned up a big lobster, sting ray and octopus besides the normal tropicals. But the real diving remains the walls.

**Provo Turtle Divers, Turtle Cove Inn, May 2000, Bob Greaves,**  
**Bonita, CA.** Vis: 70 to 80 ft. Water: 78 to 80 degrees, calm and flat, choppy, no currents. My second visit to Provo and with Provo Turtle Divers. Well-organized and relaxed operation; a couple days had 20+ divers on board but staff had all sorted out efficiently and it really wasn't a hassle on board or in the water; two days we had lots of 1"-2" jellyfish,

surface to 30', a feast for a couple turtles. Nice eagle rays on several dives; one really large 8'+ nurse shark; good population of usual fish life. Coral and sea fans in good condition; just a long trip from Calif. Turtle Cove was a 5 min. walk to dive boat. Room was fine. 2 restaurants at the Inn but not affiliated; plus a few others a 10 min. walk; most dives were walls; divemasters led tours; had maybe 4 divers; all others paired up and on their own.

**Provo Turtle Divers, Turtle Cove Inn, Cheryl Mire, Metairie, LA.** 16 divers and 2 nondivers (most over 40, with 5 years diving). Turtle Divers just down the dock from our hotel. Our dive boat Chuck's Honey, a comfortable 42' vessel. Plenty of shade on the bottom and top deck, was equipped with padded seats. Bathroom, spacious camera tables and two large ice chests with fresh water. Dived in two groups, never crowded. Coral more colorful than any other location we had ever visited. Good visibility, no current and massive coral formations. Pillar coral downright awe inspiring. Fish life was plentiful and varied. Large number of triggerfish and trumpetfish, spotted filefish queen angelfish sparse, large numbers of schooling barracuda, horseeye jack and school of 20 squid. Grace Bay not noteworthy; most dives on Northwest Point, which got mixed reviews. Best was West Caicos, an hour boat ride. 2-tank morning trip part of package, but could arrange a 3-tank dive. At DEMA, they agreed to provide the third dive for \$30 including a hot lunch. When we arrived, the

price changed to \$45. Night dives in less desirable location of Grace Bay were \$50; we passed. Pickering's group wouldn't let us bring our own sandwiches to cut the cost of the dive. Since Pickering had already reneged on an agreement that our 19 divers would be the sole occupants of the boat, setting our own departure time in the morning, the reaction of the group rivaled Mutiny on the Bounty. Our local dive masters, who have always put in extra effort to give their groups a satisfying dive experience interceded with Pickering who eventually agreed to \$40 for the third dive. They served lunch after the second dive; unfortunately, the crew neglected to bring forks and plates. After begging supplies from a nearby live-aboard, most of us ate rice with paper cups normally used for water or shared forks with one another. The next day, our group split up with 7 choosing a three-tank trip to West Caicos. I preferred the less spacious boat- even sans commode! We received our gear on the dive platform at the rear of the boat. One foot forward and we were in the aquarium. After each dive, I could hardly get my mask off and blow my nose (diving truly can be nasty) before the crew had set up my gear on a new tank. These three dives ranked as my best of the trip. Tons of Sponges on West Caicos had me truly wide-eyed. The Gully and Highway to Heaven were equally satisfying. Our \$45 bought us lunch - this time cold chicken leftover from the Wednesday night special at the Tiki Hut and salad without dressing (crew forgot it - again). None of us had ever



encountered a staff more unwilling to provide a quality dive experience. The lack of rinse tanks for suits or cameras at dockside was a small deficit by comparison with the inadequacies of the personnel. The dive leaders, who had impressed our local divemasters on a previous trip to T and C, have left the operation to work for Fish Frames. In their place, are divemasters who will be hard pressed to make a living on tips for services rendered. The first words the crew said to us were, 'No shoes on the boat; take your shoes off.' In fact, that was our daily greeting. I had water socks or rubber bottom sandals. Most divemasters had been with the operation a few months and were unfamiliar with the sites, unable to point creatures. They expected the group to enter the water before them and waste their air waiting for their tardy entrance into the water. Bottom time was less than 45 minutes until midweek when we rebelled and sucked our tanks down before agreeing to return to the boat. Pickering's group told us they had a policy of not filling the tanks to 3000 psi; they preferred 2800 psi as the ideal fill because they didn't want to damage anyone's regulator. A young British girl named Selena was very gracious and anxious to please when she served as our dive leader. Turtle Cove Inn, provided us with a comfortable room, complete with refrigerator, pool area with tropical landscape. Turtle Cove Inn is a lovely gem, not luxury, but more picturesque than a typical dive hotel. The American owner made every attempt to please my husband and me, even going so far

as to speak to Art Pickering about my group's dissatisfaction. Several of us took a taxi to the local IGA to stock our refrigerators for the week. A loaf of bread was nearly \$4 and a case of 24 beers just less than \$40. Add the taxi charge of \$10/couple and you get the picture. Taxi fares to restaurants, nearly all of which were beyond walking distance, cost us \$20 round trip. For breakfast, we used the Tiki Hut. For about \$12, both of us could have two eggs, an English muffin and coffee, but with an aloofness that bordered on contempt. The restaurant that opened at 7 a.m. was hard pressed to serve food before 7:45. We brought our own snacks on the boat, fresh pineapple, with the dive operation supplying fresh water and local soft drinks. Best dining at the Terrace restaurant in the hotel or at the Shark Bite next door. The Terrace offers upscale ambiance and fine cuisine in an outdoor setting. At the Shark Bite, I recommend the Conch Chowder, the Cracked Conch and the Grouper (served on a velvety Coconut Curry sauce). The Banana Boat is on the other site of the hotel. Beer (except for \$2 happy hour) costs \$4.00. The liquor store is only a few steps away and charges \$2 for cold beer! Erebus Inn and the Sunset Hilltop Restaurant: Panoramic view of the harbor and sunset, but considering the cost for dinner, hardly worth it. We let the boat captain, take us to a restaurant where the 'locals' ate, a \$20 round trip. Smokey's was a dive. Local were dumping their week's pay into video poker or a bar tab. Many appeared angry that a bunch of Americans had

come 'slumming' on their turf. We ended up eating a slim half grouper fillet served with rice and peas for about the same price as we had paid for a far better meal at the Shark Bite.

### **Salt Cay**

**Salt Cay Divers, Sunset Reef, August 1999, Nancy Lee, Superior, CO.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 84-86 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: 130' max. Debbie and Ollie are fantastic dive operation. Very customer oriented and determined to make sure their guests are happy. Sunset Reef guests house is definitely 5-star accommodation. All the comforts of home - TV, refrigerator (2), CD player, fax machine, icemaker. Wonderful diving, wonderful lodging - would highly recommend. (Ph: 649-946-6906, Fax: 649-946-6922, e-mail: [scdivers@caribsurf.com](mailto:scdivers@caribsurf.com), Website: <http://exposonline.com/scuba>)

**Salt Cay Divers, Sunset Reef, December 1999, Buzz Waterson, Wallingford, PA.** Vis: 75 to 100 ft. Water: 76 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: none. My second trip to Salt Cay. While there was an unusual drought of large fish and pelagics, what sets this island apart is the specialness of the people. Everyone treated me like family. Debbie and Ollie did everything possible to make my trip wonderful. Sunset Reef very comfortable and Brian at Mt. Pleasant served wonderful meals as usual.

**Salt Cay Divers, Mt. Pleasant Guest House, January 2000, Porter Williams, Wabasso, FL.** Vis: 80 to 100 ft. Water: 74 to 76 degrees, dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. maximum. Salt Cay is a great get-away island with limited night life. Beautiful beaches and lots of whales.

**Salt Cay Divers, June 2000, Richard Jorgensen, Bradenton, FL.** I've only dived in Florida, both coasts. Salt Cay was an incredible dive experience. My oldest boy is a junior diver, my wife, a non diver, and my 9-year-old son, a serious "wannabe" diver. Besides the promise of great diving (common to all resorts), we choose Salt Cay for the small town safety for the boys and the fact that, as a desert island, there would be no bugs. It worked! The diving was amazing. Water mid 80s. Viz on one dive about 40' and the rest of the week 80' plus. All dives are on the lee side of the island so winds are usually not a factor. They did keep us from doing the Endymion the week we were there. Morning dive leaves about 9 am. Longest boat ride is 10 minutes. Either follow Ollie or Debbie up wall, 1st diver to 1000# signals and return to the boat on top of the wall. Amazing life everywhere manta rays, hammerhead shark, great coral heads with all the small stuff. If you want to wander off on your own, that's ok too but Ollie and Debbie are so great at spotting that we hung with them. A hang bar under the boat and try to surface with 500# left. It's nice to be treated as a grownup and just allowed to dive. Return to the dock after 1st dive, snack hang out and do the

second dive around 11:15. Short rides to all sites. Boats have shade. 20 dives and had 4 night dives during the 8 days. Tanks are available for shore dives. Snorkeling is excellent as is photography or beach lounging. No night life except at the only operational restaurant in town, The Blue Mermaid. Michelle does an excellent job of everything and keeps everyone entertained. It's quiet. Only about a dozen divers on the island when we were there so everyone got to know everyone. Diving was excellent for beginners. Advanced divers can go down the wall to explore. My nine-year-old did a scuba experience and my wife got in her first dive as well. Currents were either light or nonexistent.

**Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, August 2000, Harold and Jan Bedoukian (araratrug@videotron.ca), Montreal, QC.** Water: 83-85 F, calm no Currents. Dive your own profile. Allowed to dive our own profile, within the limits of our computers. Third trip to Salt Cay in 2 years. The Dive operation is still top notch. Debbie and Ollie accommodate their divers. They do trips to "The Wall" off Grand Turk, The Endymion and they even did a dawn dive, which was the best dive of the week. The vis was not as good as usual. Tradewinds is a few minutes walk to the Salt Cay Divers' new dive shop. We had initially been concerned about the eating establishments since two of our favorites (Mt. Pleasant and Miss Irene's) had closed. Miss Pat (Miss Irene's sister) has opened a restaurant in her home. She serves food with an island flare. The Blue Mermaid has a more "American-

ized" menu. Both are excellent. Flights to and from Salt Cay need to be confirmed and reconfirmed. Divers do manage to get off the island but there can be a few tense moments before the plane arrives.

## UNITED STATES

### Florida

#### Boca Raton

**SCUBA Referrals of South Florida, July 2000, Jason DeSalvo (desalvo@concentric.net), Montclair, NJ.** Vis: 35 to 45 Feet. Water: 78° F, calm currents. They are geared toward recreational divers as opposed to the dive-industry training crowd (800-585- 483). One call to them with the dates of your desired dives and you'll be provided with a meeting place and time, asked about what equipment (if any) you need to rent, and everything else is taken care of for you. A two-tank boat trip cost \$65 for the diving and approximately another \$35 for rental gear that was all top of the line, well-maintained Sherwood equipment. When we arrived at the dock, they had already brought our gear onto the boat, set it up and was ready to review it with us. The boat was well maintained and uncrowded, although there was no rinse tank available for photographers. The run out to the first site (off the coast of Boca Raton) was 30 minutes. When booking, we had requested a site that had interesting topography and excellent marine life. Fink's Grouper Hole more than fit the bill. Under a bright sunny sky, they gave us