

logged: 22. Diving for beginners was excellent! Visibility, temperature, surface conditions made diving easy. Lots of tension at this dive operation as they try and rebuild from the '99 storm. This resort is the last to get their dock rebuilt. The shuttle to another resort for boat access is OK, but very time consuming. Almost nothing (except shopping) for nondivers. We were a family — 2 kids do not dive and they were very bored. (Ph: 800-288-4773 or (599-717) 8738; fax (599-717) 8760; e-mail: [info@sanddollarbonaire.com](mailto:info@sanddollarbonaire.com); website [www.sanddollarbonaire.com](http://www.sanddollarbonaire.com))

### **Sand Dollar Resort, February 2001, Shirley Westcott, Washington, DC.**

Vis: 80 ft. Water: mid 70s, calm and flat. Dives logged: 113. Dive restrictions: 1 hour, 100 feet. Sand Dollar has still not rebuilt its pier, making boat diving far less convenient than at other resorts on the island. Boats are also small and aged. The on-site reef (Bari Reef) is one of the best shore dives on the island. Outstanding staff naturalist.

### **CAYMAN ISLANDS**

Grand Cayman is great for divers seeking familiar surroundings: it's Americanized and crowded, with traffic, Burger Kings, Ramadas, and Hyatts. And it's expensive. . . . There are a seemingly endless number of safe and well-organized dive operations; to the dismay of experienced divers, depth and time limits are generally enforced, though some operations show leniency to computer divers. . . . Avoid prepaying a dive package so

that if you're disappointed with cattle boats or site selection you can switch to someone else. . . . Dive quality is declining due to development, and Seven Mile Beach reefs are beaten up. To avoid crowds, endless youths, and Cayman Cowboys, stay on the North side or the East End, where you'll find the best diving and fewer people. . . . Brac diving is not up to the best of Cayman, but it's more laid back, and Brac outfits make frequent trips to Little Cayman from April to November. Rough water often prevents trips at other times. . . . For Caribbean walls, clear water, and beautiful reefs, Little Cayman is nonpareil, but a dozen dive boats a day can visit a two-mile stretch. Winters can be cool in the Caymans, and the islands are in the hurricane belt. . . .

### **Cayman Brac**

**Brac Aquatics, La Esperanza, July 2000, John Heiman, ([heiman1@juno.com](mailto:heiman1@juno.com)) Loveland, CO.** Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 80-83 F. Dives logged: many hundreds Dive restrictions: 110ft.- 5-700#’s. Not strictly enforced — more requested. Three couples — 2 experienced divers, 1 doing o/w referral, 1 newly certified, 2 snorkelers. We had 40ft. boat to ourselves all but 1 of 9 deep diving. Scott, DM, very thorough in o/w checkout and allowed checkout to be fun dive. Mixed skills in our group restricted the two experienced but still made dives fun for all. Exp did own profile with computers. Very laid back

with little night life but we met a lot of locals and had excellent trip. Jessie, boat captain, was Honduran and excellent good briefs and would dive with group to 70+ ft. A lot of macro. Not quite the fish life we hoped for but weather and small group precluded trip to L.C. and Bloody Bay. Overall excellent trip and rum raisin ice cream was great! Tibbets OK but too bad storm has torn it up so much. (Ph: (800) 544-2722, (345) 948-1429, (727) 323-8727)

**Brac Aquatics, Brac Caribbean Beach Village, February 2001, Lisa Walker, Dana Point, CA.** Vis: 50 to 100+ ft. Water: 80 F, choppy. Dives logged: 160. Dive restrictions: limits only enforced for novice divers, none for experienced. Fuel surcharge for Little Cayman trip for our group. Drinks not included (alcoholic) and were very expensive. Overall trip was excellent and a good value. Food was five star exceptional, condos were clean, nicely furnished, comfortable — exceptions of a couple of nice and noisy air conditioners. Diving was outstanding except windy weather generated chop and diminished visibility. Little Cayman dives were spectacular. Tons of friendly turtles, lots of fish.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, September 2000, Walt and Paula Suita, Sharon, MA.** Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 80-86 F. Upgrade in room this trip certainly worth it. Standard or premium rooms always clean and well supplied with towels and sundries. Resort staff friendly and accommodating. Pool and grounds are well kept. Chef Errol does

a terrific job of providing a satisfying and sumptuous selection of meals. Divemasters Jason and Neal are professional and knowledgeable enjoy their jobs. They allow more experienced divers a fair amount of latitude while remaining within safe profiles. Large fish were limited to a few rays and nurse sharks, large morays along with numerous hawk bills spotted. Overall health of reefs was excellent. Cayman Airways punctual but largely indifferent regarding service. Flight attendants can be brusque with one somewhat hostile involving carry-on luggage size. (Ph: 800-327-3835, (727) 323-8727; fax (727) 323-8827; e-mail [bestdiving@reefseas.com](mailto:bestdiving@reefseas.com); website [www.bracreef.com](http://www.bracreef.com))

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, October 2000, Dave Helms ([scubadav@jorsm.com](mailto:scubadav@jorsm.com)) Highland, IN.** Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. Very pleasant and well run resort. The small size leads to a very personable atmosphere. The staff attitude was excellent, the service was excellent. When American lost all of our luggage, the dive operation was able to supply the rental gear and make emergency repairs. They have a nice swimming pool. The rooms are very nice and clean. The food was very good and plentiful. The diving itself was excellent although there were not many big critters. The coral and sponges were quite healthy. The tropical fish and smaller critters were plentiful. The dive sites were interesting day after day. The divemasters were knowledgeable and gave very thorough briefings. Diving setup is

well suited to beginner and intermediate divers. Nitrox diving was available. Not all that much in the way of non-diver activities. The drinks are very expensive. The beach is not really suitable for swimming. Only three dives per day. Some advanced divers found the time/depth restrictions too strict. No shore diving. Night diving is only offered a couple of days per week. Little provision was made for cameras on dive boats. No rinse tanks were available. There was one carpeted table which tended to be full of dive gear. Dive staff was very good about handling cameras on entry/exit.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, March 2001, Steve Bissell, (fsbissell@aol.com) McLean, VA.**  
Vis: 100-180± ft. Dives logged: 70.  
Dive restrictions: 110 for 40 min on computer, 100 ft for 40 on table, 60-50 on second dive. Reef Divers was wonderful. Relaxed, informative, helpful, friendly, experienced. They used a marker board to sketch out dive beforehand. Dove Tibbetts in day and then at night. South side of Brac the reefs are not as colorful as Bloody Bay. However, lots to see. Wall Dive is a daily event. Plenty of schools of tropicals — all the usual suspects. Only sharks were nurse sharks. Only 2-3 boats diving the whole of Brac — far different from Cozumel. Afternoon dives we had 5-8 people on a boat which could hold 20-24. Once they saw you were a careful and sensible diver we had a lot of freedom. Single divers joined pairs for threesomes as needed. Good food, clean, generally friendly hotel staff. We rented a car

and did our own shore night dive on north side, easily. They lock drying rooms at 5:30 each day. If you need something a key is held at the bar for emergencies.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, March 2001, Mike, Atlanta, GA.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 150 ft. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy no currents. Great resort, laid back, well-above-average food, and attentive staff. Ask for a room with a balcony — all rooms are the same price. Very little turn-over on the staff. The only gear I touched all week was my mask and fins. BUT this is big one: Thimble Jellyfish. The Cayman Islands are plagued by TJ's from the last week of April to the first week of June, a six-week period. The larvae of the TJ's that burrow under your skin just like chiggers. Commonly called sea lice, the larvae are a serious hazard to the enjoyment of your expensive dive trip. Many divers at the resort suffered from these. Anywhere water can get to, including under any wetsuit/skin/hood/booties is susceptible to the larvae. My wife and I used full wetsuits and slathered on a product called SeaSafe to all exposed areas and were not bitten at all. Many divers who did the exact same thing we did WERE bitten. There definitely seems to be a component of whether or not you are immune to them, something like being immune to poison ivy. The larvae cause dime-sized welts, like a giant mosquito bite. One guy had them over his entire body and I cannot imagine the torture he was enduring. Most people had them on their necks,

faces and backs. I'm talking some serious looking welts, and lots of them. The dive operators try to take you to sites where there are no obvious TJ's on the surface (they look like quarter- size brown mushrooms) but people still got bit. We did not dive the Russian destroyer at all because the north side of the island was covered by a mat of billions of TJ's. The Cayman Islands Health Services, Accident and Emergency Department issued a warning while we were there to "not enter the sea unless absolutely necessary." Not a good thing to hear when you have spent big bucks to get to this paradise.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, April 2001, Brian Roy (brifeeta@aol) Fiskdale, MA.** Vis: 75-90 ft. Water: 82 F. Dives logged: 550. Dive restrictions: 110 feet. Exceptional dive staff led by Craig. Food excellent and varied.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, May 2001, Reza Gorji (Gorji@excite.com) Jamesville, NY.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 200 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm. Great staff and great diving despite poor weather conditions.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, May 2001, Hans S. Menco, Pittsford, NY.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm choppy no currents. Rooms and hotel lay-out very pleasant and comfortable. Services outstanding. Dining room had good selection for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Dive operation superb. Dive briefings were thorough and clear. You sit at the rear edge of the

boat and they put your BC, tank etc. on your back and practically shove you into the water which is a great plus for somebody with back problems. They make any effort to accommodate everybody's request for dive sites. mediocre Caribbean diving, no walls and no spectacular sites. Part of the week we had cloudy and stormy weather, but they managed to take us out diving every day.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, June 2001, Sam Kroll, FL.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 F, choppy. Food average to above. We put our dive gear outside the room where they picked it up and took it to the boat. All gear was set up for divers daily, and stored after the day's diving. On the boat, the staff carried the setup tank to a small bench on the stern, and the diver sat in front of it, put on fins and mask, and simply stood up to stride off the dive platform. Very good boarding ladders. If I tried to get in first, I could usually get good bottom time. Overall excellent operation.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, June 2001, Artie Burke, Katy, TX.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 82-85 F. Diving restrictions: 1st dive 110 ft. for 45 minutes, 2nd and 3rd dive 60 ft. for 50 minutes. Logged dives: 150. Had to dive mostly on the north side due to wind and currents on the south side. Had a great drift dive at Craig's Mound. Russian wreck (M/S Tippit) was so-so, nothing spectacular. The Mariner wreck was better — more coral growth. All dives had big barrel sponges. Turtles were friendly — did not see any eagle rays. Reef Divers

operation was great — large boats, good dive briefings, excellent service. Had to do shore entry night dive due to weather. Room at Brac Reef were functional and roomy. Meals were good — although too much starches — plenty to eat. Hotel staff very courteous. Underwater video by Ed was excellent. No problem with bugs except had to spray bathroom for ants. Rented car for afternoon and toured island on own rather than tour. We did none and had air conditioning to keep cool between sites. The bluffs are worth the visit.

**Brac Reef Beach Resort, June 2001, Rich and Margie Morgenstern, Houston, TX.** Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Diving restrictions: depth. Logged dives: 120. Facility and accommodations were fair, but very clean. Service at resort and dive shop were the best we have ever had anywhere. The food was excellent! Morty, Bryan, Liesel, Craig and Cornelia at the dive shop went out of their way to serve us. My only complaints were beyond their control. Rough seas and poor visibility. Dive sites were excellent.

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, October 2000, Ray Petro, Mohegan Lake, NY.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 82 F. Dive restrictions: 80-90'. Made trip to Little Cayman Blood Bay Wall great. Diving good in Cayman Brac. We hit good weather, weeks before was raining — week after was tropical storms. Food was excellent. Plenty of it. (Ph: 800-367-3484 or (345) 948-1553); fax (345) 948-1316; e-mail stevo@candw.ky; website [www.divitiara.com](http://www.divitiara.com))

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, December 2000, Paul Schilter (pschilter@aol.com) Rochester, MI.** Vis: 40 to 100+ Feet. Water: 81 F. The resort need a little maintenance and there were maintenance people working. The staff is attentive. The staff was having an employee's Christmas party. They offered to move us to the time shares or to another room so that we wouldn't be disturbed. At night we had torrential rains which caused some leaking in our bathroom. Dive staff great. Week before Christmas and for three days we had the entire boat to ourselves. We chose to rinse our regulators ourselves in our room because being Atomics they don't like being dunked. Food was good and Cliff the chef was nice to talk to, he's an ex-Bostonian. Night dive is \$40 extra, Nitrox is \$10 a tank extra. 33 gallon garbage type bucket for camera rinse.

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, February 2001, Mary McCowin, Moscow, ID.** Vis: 100 ft. Water: 80 F, calm and choppy. Dives logged: 135. Dive restrictions: had to have computer. One of the better trips we've taken. No problems whatsoever. Every dive we saw tons of great stuff.

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, March 2001, Kevin Feor (FEORDIVER@aol) Webster, NY.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. Diva Tiara runs a good dive operation. Boats can get a little crowded with 18 people. Crew did great job getting everyone in the water. Briefings good. Able to dive your own profile with a computer but

110 max suggested. Crew was always pleasant and fun. Only captain and dive master on board. Little Cayman was great diving. Boats much more comfortable with 15 to 16 people on board. This place is a few years old but the rooms are clean. The food was great. Cocktails pricey. The staff did a fine job. Rinse tank on board but no table or easy spot to store gear.

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, May 2001,  
Jim & Deborah Chambers**

**(jimbo1@mindspring.com) Tucker, GA.** Experience: 101-50 dives. Vis: 75 to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm, no currents. 9th trip to Divi Tiara since 1987. The massive spur and groove reef formations and vertical walls are spectacular and are in pristine condition. Sea life of every type swarms on the reefs. One day on a two-tank dive, we saw seven huge lobsters walking around in the open. On the same set of dives we also saw three sea turtles up close. Large schools of yellowtail snapper and grunts are everywhere, not to mention peacock flounder, soapfish, and very big grouper. If you like macro, this is the place, with nudibranchs, flame scallops, flamingo tongues, banded coral shrimp, arrow crabs, and Pederson cleaner shrimp easy to find. Russian guided missile frigate that was sunk about four years ago is a fun dive, too. Dive package will include a trip to Little Cayman, and you can take extra trips for additional payment. The dive operation is nearly flawless. From the time you arrive until you check out, the dive crews handle your gear. When you get on the boat in the

morning, your gear is already set up. When you're ready to dive, you sit on the back of the boat, a crew member brings your gear to you, you stand up and giant-stride into the water. After you get out of the water, by the time you can dry off your hair, your gear is already set up for the next dive. After returning to the dock, the crew rinses and cleans your gear and hangs it up in the shed. Divi Tiara has five large, fast boats, and they send enough of them out each day to give a variety of choice — no cattle boats here. Most dive sites are no more than 10-15 minutes away. The resort is just as good as the dive operation. Most rooms are nothing fancy, but the air conditioning works very well and most rooms have satellite TV and a telephone with a dataport for those fanatics who just have to stay connected. Meals are buffet style, and the food is very good and plentiful. You'll always have three entrees at dinner, at least one of which is seafood, and if you can't decide which one to have, have them all! Breakfast and lunch are just as good, and desserts are to die for. Some of the dive crew, dining room staff, and others have been here for years, and since many people who stay at Brac are repeat guests, it's almost like a family reunion. Laid-back comfort and casual everything. The tables in the rooms are not big enough to lay out photo equipment. The dive boats do have large freshwater rinse tanks, but there are no special tables or benches for cameras. One complaint: if the photo shop advertises E-6 processing every day, they should do so.

**Divi Tiara Beach Resort, June 2001, Richard Foote (footemail@prodigy.net) Cleveland, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, surge. Dive Tiara is a well-organized, friendly, and safe operation; limited to guests from resort and time-share units. Dive boats go to sites 5-20 min. away along north or south shore, whichever has calmer water. Two-tank trip leaves 9 AM and one tank trip leaves 2:30 PM. Little Cayman trips (45 min. run to Bloody Bay) leave three times weekly depending on weather and if 12 divers sign up. 2nd trip in a week is \$30 more, but worth the trip. Night dives twice weekly, cost \$40. Brac diving is on a beautiful wall starting at 50 feet. Coral in good condition; huge sponges. Turtles and rays seen frequently. Spot the dolphin left several months ago. Boats have no heads and can be crowded, but you sit on the back and they bring your equipment to you, so there aren't people walking around in tanks and fins. One of two divemasters on board is in the water part of the dive, and you can tag along or do your own thing. Good dive briefings. Get the meal plan, as restaurants and stores expensive and not close. Plentiful, tasty food, including lobster tails and T-bone steak one night. Rooms are older but clean, and A/C worked. Deluxe room for a few dollars more was a good value for the beachfront porch and 12-channel cable TV. Easy to call States on room phone using AT&T Direct; saw instructions to plug in laptop, too. \$2.50 connection charge. Resort pool clean but very

warm. Walked to nearby Brac Reef; Tiara rooms are closer to the beach. Most people depart via 6:45 AM Cayman Air flight. We opted for later Island Air 19-seater, which worked fine. Island Air does weigh your luggage and carry-ons, and charges if over 55 lbs. per person. They called us the day before we left and asked us to send our luggage on the afternoon flight due to full morning plane, which was OK, except we flew to Grand Cayman airport next morning and found our luggage had been left on the conveyor belt all night where anyone could have taken it.

### Grand Cayman

**Aqua Adventures, April 2001, Paul Johnson (pajkotwf@aol.com) Santa Rosa, CA.** Experience: 101- 250 dives. Vis: 100 to Feet. Water: 80 to F, calm choppy. I signed on with Aqua Adventures (345-949-1616) because of Clark Bentley's report in last years Chap Book. Thank you Clark, Rob was every bit as good as you indicated. My goal was get my daughter through the last 2 dives of her advanced open water certification. I was able to arrange this and a few more dives through the Aqua Adventures web site. We were the only two divers. Rob said he didn't like to mix training dives with recreational dives. What service! He runs a small high class operation that can give as much or little personal attention as you need. Excellent instructor and guide. (Ph: (345) 949-1616; fax: (345) 949-1616; e-mail: aqua@candw.ky)

**Aquanauts, Aqua Bay Club Condo, August 2000, Bob Doolittle, Stevensville, MD.** Vis: 75 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 150. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. 1<sup>st</sup> dive, 60 ft. 2<sup>nd</sup> dive. Aqua Bay Club excellent! You need a car; it's located in west end by Cemetery Reef. Aquanauts were very professional but gave us some slack on diving own profile. (Ph: (888) 786-6887 or (345) 945-1990; fax: (345) 945-1991; e-mail: aquanaut@candw.ky; website [www.aquanautsdiving.com](http://www.aquanautsdiving.com))

**Bob Soto's Diving, Treasure Island, July 2000, Corinne Covell, Bexley, OH.** Vis: 70 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. on first dive, 60 ft. on second. The divemasters try to make you too light; so add a few pounds to their recommendations. The divemasters were fun, informative and very accommodating! The air conditioning at Treasure Island needs to be improved. (Ph: 800-BOB-SOTO or (345) 949-2022; fax: (345) 949-8731; e-mail: bobsotos@candw.ky; website [www.bobsotosdiving.com.ky](http://www.bobsotosdiving.com.ky))

**Bob Soto's Diving, Treasure Island, November 2000, Jessica Ward and Coby Treadway (ScubaJess99@aol.com) Pomfret, MD.** Experience: 0-25 dives Vis: 50 to 70 Feet. Water: 70 to 78 F, calm no currents. This trip was with the PADI Diving Society during the first members-only dive event "Total Submersion"! The resort, dive operator, and dive sites were amazing!

**Bob Soto's Diving, December 2000, Patrick Murphy, Chelsea, AL.** Vis:

100-125 ft. Water: 79-81 F. Dives logged: 200+. Dive restrictions: 100'.

**Bob Soto's Diving, Treasure Island, May 2001, Terry Ekdahl (tek Dahl@voyager.net) Oscoda, MI.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. I took my IDC with Bob Soto's and was impressed with the quality of the training, and was fully prepared for the IE. Still had time for diving and really enjoyed Orange Canyon and Tarpon Alley. The diving was very good with great wall diving. Treasure Island Resort was reasonably priced and clean with nice pools.

**Bob Soto's Diving, Treasure Island, July 2001, Tom Maloney (tomsansal106@aol.com) Nutley, NJ.** Experience: 101- 250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Island is very expensive. Reefs appear to be losing it and appear to be overdived. You see a few rays here and there, but nothing spectacular. It was a very disappointing dive trip, especially after reading about how great it was supposed to be. Soto's operation is very professional and friendly, a little crowded. I felt bad for the photographers, lugging all that camera equipment into the water. There really wasn't much to photograph.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, November 2000, Jacquie Moore (seanerd@eudoramail.com) Port Charlotte, FL.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 65 to 125 Feet. Water: 80-84 F, choppy. Fourth trip to the Lodge. The lodge is small (12 rooms), and is located on the sparsely populated East



End. There is no shopping here, no cruise ships, and virtually no other tourists, all of which equates to diving far superior to the Seven Mile Beach area. The staff handles all your gear, including rinsing off gear at the end of the dive day, and having it set up on a fresh tank ready to go the next morning. The dive boat and dock are a few steps from the rooms. Three meals/day in the packages, which helps make Grand Cayman more affordable. Meals are plentiful and good, with a buffet style breakfast and lunch, and a more formal dinner served by the divemasters, who live on the premises. The rooms are not fancy, but are adequate and spacious. Don't expect 5-star accommodations. Two dive boats, but primarily uses a Pro 48 which is comfortable, fast, and roomy enough to handle 16 divers (the maximum number the Lodge will take on one boat). This area of Grand Cayman tends to attract more experienced divers, which makes this number of divers acceptable, however 16 inexperienced divers on this boat would be a problem. The boat has a freshwater shower, marine head and covered seating. The dive sites are unlike the rest of the island. The morning dive is to vertical walls covered with a variety of corals and sponges, with the second dive to a shallow reef that is frequently full of tunnels, caverns, overhangs and swim-throughs. We observed reef sharks, eagle rays, southern stingrays, hawksbill turtles, tarpon and many green and spotted moray eels, as well as smaller fare such as arrow crabs, Pedersen's cleaning shrimp, anemone

shrimp, flamingo tongues and many, many small tropical Fish (parrots, butterflyfish, yellowhead jawfish, sand tilefish, fairy basslets, spotted drums, etc.). The coral is healthy and visibility often exceeded 100'. Surface water can be choppy with 2'-3' waves the norm. Great operation. One word of caution though — the Lodge underwent a total staff turnover during 2000 and the divemasters we had come to like so well are no longer at CDL. The new staff seems capable and friendly, though not as willing to listen to requests for specific sites. No on-site film Processing, but numerous places in Georgetown to get film developed. Boat had large rinse tank dedicated to photo gear, and staff was conscientious about making sure nothing else went in (provided a separate rinse for masks) The photo rinse tank was large enough to comfortably accommodate two video units and three cameras. Boat also has a two-shelf table, with the top shelf reserved for photo gear. Unfortunately, this requirement was not stringently enforced. Still, plenty of room for photo gear. (Ph: (800) TLC-DIVE or 806-794-3466; fax: 806-798-7568; e-mail: [divelodge@aol.com](mailto:divelodge@aol.com); website [www.divelodge.com](http://www.divelodge.com))

**Cayman Diving Lodge, Condo, April 2001, Mark S. Reckman, Cincinnati, OH.** Vis: 80 ft. Water: 78-80 F, choppy. Dives logged: 195. Dive restrictions: 100 feet. Your report (May 2000) is still right on the money. The diving on the east end of Grand Cayman is equal to the best of the Caribbean. The walls are as good

as Little Cayman. The shallow dives are better than the rest of the Caribbean. Cayman Dive Lodge is an old, very basic, no frills operation. This Spartan style is offset by excellent service on and off the boat. The staff is mature, soft spoken and quietly competent. We rented a condo nearby because we wanted a little more luxury. But, this is the operation to dive with on Cayman!

**Cayman Diving Lodge, April 2001, Stan Campbell (stancamp33@aol.com)**

**Cincinnati, OH.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 79-80 F. Logged dives: 1000 + (over 45 years diving). Dive restrictions enforced: 110 ft. This is a well managed, smooth running operation. Comfortable, enjoyable diving experience above and below the surface. They take care of everything. Two powerful boats limited to about 21 guests. The boats are spacious and the diver is never in a crowd. Most days, we had one lady captain and two in-the-water lady dive masters. They were competent, friendly and, after a check out, allowed individual profiles to 110 ft. All dive sites are reasonably close with many wall dives and swim throughs. Weekly night dive and optional visit to Sting Ray City. Viz is very good but surface tends to be choppy and occasional mild currents on the east end. The boats are well designed and the crew is well adapted to these conditions. East End is mercifully away from the chaos and glitz of the unbearable and overdived seven mile beach area. The diving is on healthy reefs with abundant marine life. A seven foot reef shark that came

within six feet of me and hung out for about 20 minutes. Several other reef sharks were circling in the background. This is a small, dedicated dive resort with 12 A/C rooms. Very friendly and intimate atmosphere. Rooms are on the small side with no phone, no TV and no refrig but very adequate and comfortable. All meals are in a protected, outdoor veranda but the food and service are absolutely superb. A small gift shop and honor bar is available. They keep a computer in the lobby for free internet messages in and out using the resort's email address. A separate computer is available, for a fee, to connect to the internet. E6 photo service is available at a nearby resort. Check it out at [www.divelodge.com](http://www.divelodge.com). Great bang for the buck.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, April 2001, John E. Gastineau, Oakland, MD.** Experienced: 100 dives.

([www.divelodge.com](http://www.divelodge.com)) all-inclusive resort. The rooms are small, spare, free of telephones, and clean. Three meals a day are well prepared and served, and the chef can take into account some requests. There's an honor bar. The staff takes your dive gear at the front desk, and that's the last time you touch it before gearing up on board. Between boat trips the staff rinses and stores your gear, and sets it up again the next morning. Despite the small size of the hotel, there are two dive boats. The staff separates the divers by experience and goals. The dive profiles assume you have a computer. The diving is not hard, but it is more challenging than on the west end. The waves are

generally higher. We did feel some current at times. The reefs were in excellent condition. We never saw other dive operations. The staff at CDL was genuinely interested in knowing what you wanted to accomplish with your dives, and planned accordingly. They were around the lodge during the day as well, so you could talk shop. bicycles for local transportation, although most guests just enjoyed the dock and the deck after dives. There are also a few resort dogs, never begging but always providing a laugh.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, June 2001, Bill & Martha Chapman, Alexander City, AL.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100+ Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F. choppy. Had done research through "Chapbook" and other sources. CDL room was clean with good bed, lots of hot water and a/c. Especially liked no TV or phones, total relaxation. Entire staff made you feel like family. Dive boats are large and never crowded. Dive sites, especially walls, were great. Saw sharks on several dives. Rays and turtles on others. Outstanding food. Did not have to touch gear from arrival to departure. Divemasters set up, changed tanks and rinsed after each dive day. We were on three dive per day plan and never felt tired or rushed. Crew rotated divers so you dove with different guests on different days. Allowed great interaction between guests, felt we got to meet and spend time with all of other divers.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, June 2001, Frank Hull, Floyds Knobs, IN.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 81 F, surge. Diving

restrictions: No deeper than 100 ft. first dive (wall) was led. reef dives had the option to dive in buddy teams. Our room, # 14, was very nice. Some rooms appeared to be quite small. Ask questions about the room assignment. There was some problem with the kitchen help. We had the same cold cuts 4 days in a row for lunch. We were somewhat disappointed in the lack of color on the reef. There were also fewer fish and critters than we had expected. The staff and boats were excellent.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, June 2001, Chris and Jen Havens, Catonsville, MD.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, choppy surge. Great, dedicated dive resort. Service was top-notch. Divemasters knowledgeable about sites and marine life. Boats in excellent condition, but recommend sea sickness meds for even seasoned sailors. Accommodations met our expectations. Food was good to excellent and chefs very accommodating of special food requests. Would be a perfect dive resort if time restrictions on dives were loosened. Great care taken with cameras. Got a bit crowded when there were more than 3 setups. No on-site E-6.

**Cayman Diving Lodge, July 2001, Deborah Harkleroad (deborah.harkleroad@roche.com) Collierville, TN.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 85 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm surge. 3rd trip in less than a year. To-die-for food and good diving. I was disappointed in the visibility. There are several new DM's and on occasion, a lack of attention to

detail: broken snorkel, dust cap on 1st stage not on, equipment not being switched from 1 boat to the next, masks not stored in protective cases. My husband broke his camera this trip due to a bad hand-off to the DM on the boat. CDL offered to pay for any repairs. I did have a scary incident: I found myself back at the dive boat way before time to be there, with the seas at 5-6 ft. There was no tag line and I could not get back on the boat unassisted. There was no one from CDL on the boat. I had to hang off the back of the boat for 25 minutes. My husband was busy taking pictures. Fortunately, one of our group noticed me hanging and thought I gave the OK sign when actually I was waving wildly for help. He told everyone I was OK, but I had been gone a good 5-8 minutes and no one came to see about me. I didn't panic, I knew someone would definitely be back and I knew enough not to hang onto the ladder, to inflate my BC, keep my regulator in my mouth and not to take off my fins. If I could relive this, I would have gone down again (after seeing my diving friend) and swam around by myself until time to come up. The disturbing thing is there was no one on the boat, no tag line and they waited before coming to see about me. I did have a wonderful time.

**Cayman Marine Labs, March 2001, Chuck Fish, Grand Rapids, MI.** Still doing it right is Tom Byrnes, Ph.D. He's one of the guys that really makes interesting the knowledge and the practice of safe and sound dive trips. I went to Cayman Marine Lab origi-

nally on your suggestion. Ten years later I'm still well pleased. (Ph: 345 916-0849; fax 345 947-5586)

**Divers Down, Treasure Island, March 2000, Carl and Gail Weckel, (weck250@aol.com) Carol Stream, IL.** Vis: 75-125 ft. Water: 72-78 F. Dives logged: 100+. Dive restrictions: 130ft., return with 500 psi. Nice condo at resort. Divers Down is a great dive operation — friendly, laid back, helpful, but not overly intrusive — small boats with max of 8 divers (that is great). The island is expensive. (Ph: (345) 945-1611; fax: (345) 945-1611)

**Divers Down, Sleep Inn, June 2001, Steve Neal (steveaneal@aol.com) Fairfield, TX.** Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Dive restrictions: 100 ft., guided first deep dive, then computers 10 min more; shallow no guide. 6 years ago — many more fish and critters then. This trip only 1 lobster and 1 conch; only 1 stingray other than Stingray City. Did see more turtles though. Divers Down has shop at Sleep Inn. Good guys, all drive boats and dive — no captain to stay with boat. Helpful, informative. \$75-2 tank, cheaper with volume. \$50 Stingray City. Pontoon boats to West Side, 42 feet to North Wall.

**Dive 'n Stuff, February 2001, Jean Kirkpatrick, Russellville, KY.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 78 F. Logged dives: 975. Dive restrictions enforced: return with 500 psi, limited depth by Nitrox. We've been diving in the Cayman Islands since 1980, but this year I was determined to find a small dive

operator who allowed me to dive my computer. Dive'n Stuff was the first operation I tried and the only one! The eight divers usually were experienced divers who had been with this operation for years. Newcomers (like me) became part of the family and were soon being kidded like everyone else. The atmosphere was totally relaxed, but safety and reef protection were stressed and were very important. The only restrictions were a 3 minute safety stop and a return to the boat with 500 psi. Nitrox was also available — a bonus! Cayman marine parks have improved both the coral and the numbers of fish. I did Fish ID surveys and found 141 species in 22 dives and 6 hours snorkeling a very good number.

**Dive 'n Stuff, Westin, April 2001, Jason DeSalvo ([desalvo@concentric.net](mailto:desalvo@concentric.net))**

**Montclair, NJ.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 120 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F. My 87-year-old grandfather decided he wanted to see the Caribbean one last time and take the family with him (a total of 10 of us). Grand Cayman is just one direct flight away from Newark via Continental Airlines and has a very good hospital (by Caribbean standards). I've been diving Grand Cayman since the early 1980's and based on personal experience and recommendations from Undercurrent, I chose Dive N' Stuff rather than with the Westin's onsite operator the overpriced, over-conservative Red Sail Sports. I was not disappointed. We were picked up by boat on the beach in front of our hotel early to ensure that we always had our

choice of the best sites and there were never more than six people on the boat. Two tank trips cost just \$65 — \$20 less than the cattle boats charge. We were given a choice of sites (all on the west side), treated like adults, allowed to dive our own profiles and had a thoroughly enjoyable time. The coral actually looks much healthier than it did the last time I dove Cayman in November 1998. There were few schooling fish, but I did see more Nassau grouper than I have anywhere else recently. Grand Cayman continues to be overdeveloped and traffic jams are now a routine annoyance along the main road lining Seven Mile Beach. While the diving on the North Wall and East End remains top notch (for the Caribbean), why people would subject themselves to the overpriced, overcrowded hustle and bustle of Seven Mile Beach (unless they were traveling with a large family like ours ranging in age from 2 to 87) is beyond me. The Westin is a nice hotel, but it is absurdly overpriced. The first rooms they put us in, which were billed as partial ocean view, had a much better view of the parking lot and tennis courts than of the ocean. When we complained, the manager refused to do anything. Finally we opted to pay an extra \$50/person/night to get true ocean view rooms. A word of advice "if booking partial ocean view rooms at this hotel, demand one of the four rooms on each floor (2 on each side) in this category closest to the beach or don't bother. When it was all said and done, we spent \$16,500 for ten people for 5 nights /6 days including airfare food and lodging. Since only two of us

dove and two were children under the age of six, this is truly a high price to pay for a setting that has all but degenerated into a south Florida wannabe. The Marine Park is a complete work of fiction. We routinely witnessed fishermen tied up to the dive moorings going about their business. Also, there is not a restaurant or grocery store on the island that doesn't offer grouper or snapper all locally caught! The Caymans have opted for mass-market tourism at the expense of the environment as so many islands have also done. Balboa wreck is in Georgetown Harbor and can only be dived when cruise ships are not in port (generally one or two nights per week). It is one of the best night dives you can do in the Caribbean! The rest of our diving was done at the northern most sites on the West Wall (Trinity Caves, Orange Canyon, Dolphin Point, etc.). I've dived these sites at least ten times a piece in the past 15 years and they remain thoroughly enjoyable if not as fish filled and pristine as they were back then. You'll see some of the most wonderful underwater topography in the Caribbean, relatively healthy hard corals and a good variety of fish. Dive N' Stuff is a great operator it's as good as diving the West Wall gets. Call ahead to make sure there is a camera rinse bucket on board. Would be crowded if more than two photographers no board. (Ph: 1.345.94-SCUBA; fax: 1.345.945.9207; e-mail [divenstuff@cayman.org](mailto:divenstuff@cayman.org); website [www.cayman.org/divenstuff/](http://www.cayman.org/divenstuff/))

**Dive Tech, February 2001, E. Gordon Walker, Plymouth, MN.** Vis:

70-100 ft. Water: 79 F. Dives logged: 98. Nancy Romanica and Dan Hoggins run one of the best dive operations in the world! The staff is clearly trained to make the customer's experience a good one. Turtle Reef is probably among the finest shore dives at the Cayman Islands. Nutrient effluents from the turtle farm provide a natural feeding ground above two reefs, one a shallow "mini wall" from 30 to 60+ feet and farther out a sheer wall to the abyss starting at about 70' and sloping to a sharp drop off. The coral is in very good shape particularly on the deep dive. Spotted eagle rays can be seen cruising and feeding. (Ph: (345) 949-1700; Fax: (345) 949-1701; Email: [divetech@candw.ky](mailto:divetech@candw.ky); website [www.divetech.com](http://www.divetech.com))

**Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, February 2001, Lisa McLoughlin, Tyngsborough, MA.** Vis: 75-100+ ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 88. Dive restrictions: 5 min deco stop @ 15'-20'. Dive Tech has a shop at Cobalt Coast and drives you to and from boat. Shore diving available (a little swim to the wall) at Cobalt (weather permitting — too windy some days). Great shore diving at Dive Tech's shop (wall right there). Wonderfully friendly and helpful people at both operations. I didn't carry any tanks the whole 12 days. Excellent instructors (took Nitrox and free diving courses) and very kind and professional divemasters. Cobalt coast is quiet, brand new and uncomplicated — a really nice hideaway.

**Dive Tech, Colbalt Coast, August 2001, Christopher Leahy**

(chris@gothambuilders.com)  
**Colonia, NJ.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 90 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm. The Colbalt Coast resort is opened last Christmas. Arie, the owner, operates the resort with 14 rooms, each with two double beds. There are two 2 bedroom villas with full kitchens and 2 bathrooms. We stayed in a kitchen-equipped villa with 4 teenagers and plenty of room. All rooms are nicely decorated and large. Cable TV with HBO, telephones, and a friendly staff. Served a terrific breakfast included in the room rate, lunch was reasonable and good, dinner was not great for the price. Arie made good recommendations for other restaurants and transportation. He even drove us to a grocery store to stock our refrigerator.

**Don Foster's, Plantation Village, November 2000, Kyle Allen (nosex@spacestar.com) Ely, MN.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dives logged: 50. Dive restrictions: Depth limits — dive your own profile with computer. We stayed in a 2 bedroom condo at Plantation Village. Great place! Used the BBQ grills on the beach to cook our own meals. Don Foster's Dive Cayman gave us excellent service and diving opportunity. Very friendly and knowledgeable divemasters, uncrowded boats, great weather and lots of great sea life including nurse sharks, turtles, eels, lobster, stingrays, and octopus. **(Ph: 800-83-DIVER or 345-945-5132; fax: (345) 945-5133; e-mail: dfd@candw.ky; website www.donfosters.com)**

**Don Foster's, June 2001, Richard and Pat Pautler (rap35@midwest.net) Chester, IL.** Vis 70 to 80 feet, water 82 to 84 F. Calm and flat, dive your own profile. Depth limit 100 feet. Van picks you up at your hotel to take you to dive shop and pier. Nice boats have camera tables, rinse bucket for cameras, at least two divemasters. They do an afternoon trip to Stingray City every day but Tuesday. Sergio Cino is a great manager and divemaster. Sarah goes along on the dives to take videos. She puts them together at the end of the dives. Excellent divemasters. They do everything they can to make you a happy diver. (1-800-83 Diver. 345-945 5132 FAX 345-945-5133) email dfd@candwky)

**Eden Rock Divers, March 2000, Tanna Abel (TMJA@usa.net) Oneida, NY.** Vis: 75-100+ ft. Water: 80 F. Dive restrictions: none. Will Taylor dives to suit your group — very accommodating, small operation. Boat dives and shore dives will take the boat where you want to dive (weather permitting of course). **(Ph: 345-949-7243; fax: 345-949-0842; e-mail: edenrock@candw.ky; website www.edenrockdive.com)**

**Fisheye of Cayman, Treasure Island, May 2000, Peter Plemper, New York, NY.** Vis: 100-150 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Logged dives: 200+. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. Check out the submarine dives to 750 or 1,000 ft. — very expensive (\$350-475 p.p.) but a unique opportunity. **(Ph: 345-945-4209; fax: 345-945-4208; e-mail askus@fisheye.com; website www.fisheye.com)**

**Fisheye of Cayman, Holiday Inn, December 2000, Richard Feldman (rfeld400@aol.com) Merrick, NY.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 75 F. Dives logged: 56. Dive restrictions: 100 feet. Holiday Inn — opened one month ago. Excellent rooms but service needs improving. Excellent beach but dangerous crossing of highway to get to it. Fisheye Dive Center — friendly, liked small boats but I expected more based upon their A+ rating in Scuba Diving magazine. Boat equipment needs improvements.

**Fisheye of Cayman, Sleep Inn, June 2001, Steve Neal (steveaneal@aol.com) Fairfield, TX.** Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Did 1 night dive with Fisheye. Divemaster and captain had weird sense of humor. No one had experience except my wife and I, and we went off on our own. Took us to wreck of Doc Polson, dull in day, worse at night.

**Morritt's Tortuga Club, December 2000, Bill Doyle, Plymouth, MN.** Vis: 60-75 ft. Water: 79 F. Dive restrictions: depth limits. Sun — 2-3 days rest windy — 1 rainy day. G.C. is now only a stop for wealthy — middle class tourists are gone. East end nearly 80% of all homes were up for sale — signs everywhere. Plenty of empty rooms. (Ph: 345-947-7449; fax: (345) 947-7669; e-mail matteo@morrittsgrand.com; website www.morrittsgrand.com)

**Morritt's Tortuga Club, June 2001, Sam Kroll, Tampa, FL.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 F. Operation caters to time-

share guests, many of whom are not hard-core divers, making it not the best choice for the experienced diver wanting the max immersion. On some dives, they accommodated a hemiplegic diver (I dove with him). Depths and times were closely monitored. Most dives were in chop or surge. Accommodations very nice and modern, but restaurant meals expensive, and taxis expensive. Remote location. A better choice next door at Ocean Frontiers Dive Shop at the Royal Reef, but we had booked online with Tortuga for a discounted (but nonrefundable and nonchangeable) rate.

**Morritt's Tortuga Club, June 2001, John Parker (jparker@hharchitects.com) Addison, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Divemasters were competent and "in charge", mostly British expatriates. On one dive, I swam back to the boat between 15 and 20 feet doing my safety stop on the return, ready to get out as I was down to 400 psi. Both DM's required me to do a second supervised safety stop hanging on a DM's octopus under the boat, with the group. I thought that the fish population was pretty skinny for one of the world's premier dive destinations. The walls were pretty and the coral was in good condition. I managed to get one spotted eagle ray on video, but the rest of the dives were pretty common. The night dive was the highlight; but it should have been started later than dusk. We were back at the resort, all rinsed out by 9:30 PM. Only one night dive for the week



seemed kind of lazy for an operation as well staffed as Tortuga Divers. The camera table, about 18" x 48," policed for camera use only; one fresh water dip tank, for cameras only (cameras were stacked in the tank at times). Generally, cameras shown respect and non-photographers were cautioned about damage, but no concessions for underwater time, such as staying out of the pictures, etc.

**Neptune's Divers, Treasure Island, July 2001, Lynne Hinckley, Dallas, TX.** Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 50 to 85 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, no currents. Treasure Island clerk at the front desk informed me they had no oceanfront rooms because they were not really on the ocean. I had specifically requested an oceanfront room with the travel agent and she neglected to tell me that! We checked into the room overlooking the parking lot (not even a pool-view). After letting several people know how disappointed I was, they moved us to a room that had an "ocean view," which at least satisfied my longing for that! It was a "smoking" room, which did not smell clean. The hotel is older and in need of renovations. No one seemed eager to help us with anything, except for the bartended in the lobby bar! We fared much better with our diving. Keith and Casey at "Neptune's Divers" run a small operation — just the two of them, which gives it a personal touch. They will not take more than 8 people out on a dive, and for a new diver, that was comforting. They picked us up and dropped us off at the hotel after every dive, even stopping and letting

us pick up lunch on our way back to the hotel. Casey went out of her way to set up a private trip to Stingray City for just 7 people with a friend. (They do not take their boat there.) They do not go to the East End. They took us on two wall dives and a wreck dive. They do not go to the sites that are "hyped" so the coral was in great shape and we saw some really neat things. I really wanted to see a seahorse, and try as hard as he did, Keith just could never find one for me. (Ph: (345) 945-3990; fax: (345) 949-6444; e-mail: [neptune@candw.ky](mailto:neptune@candw.ky); website [www.neptunesdivers.com](http://www.neptunesdivers.com))

**Ocean Frontiers, Royal Reef, September 2000, Susan Beck (pmol@mindspring.com) Dover, DE.** Vis: 65 to 100 feet. Water: 80-83 to F. After 8 short boat dives to 8 different sites, it all looked similar. Nothing spectacular, unless you count a completely silted up with sand swim through full of narrow twists exciting. No real wall dives. Night dive at Sunset Reef was WAY too shallow, and coral showed the damage of frequent encounters with divers' fins. Otherwise, sites like Jack McKinney, Pats Wall, Rivers of Sand, Black Rock were as close to untouched as could be hoped for. I never went to North side, but when vis or current wasn't the greatest, Ralph, the artist/Aussie who briefed, drove and dove just went somewhere else. Staff superb; dive shop full; Anna fun and helpful. Since we were there during hurricane season, it helped to see a daily weather printout. Fantastic snorkeling right off the nice beach, resident tarpon and snook, reef squid, the occasional

peacock flounder, scorpion fish and sleeping nurse sharks. Dove with Ocean Frontiers last year [got married on a beach barefooted and this was a 1st anniversary] and found them informative, friendly, very safety oriented, full of humor; they showed a drawn, diagrammed description during briefing. Boat was maxed out at about 16 people, but we never had more than 12. They now have a very thorough, fully ecologically minded, and sensibly arranged shark dive preceded by a long and informative classroom presentation. They only do that once a week so as not to turn into a stingray manipulation scene. Royal Reef brand new and really very nice. East End is a long way from the horrid traffic jams outside of Georgetown. (Ph: (345) 947-7500; fax: (345) 947-7600; e-mail: [oceanf@candw.ky](mailto:oceanf@candw.ky), [hq@oceanfrontiers.com](mailto:hq@oceanfrontiers.com); website [www.oceanfrontiers.com](http://www.oceanfrontiers.com))

**Ocean Frontiers, Turtle Nest Inn, September 2000, Evelyn D. Russell, Greensboro, NC.** Vis: 60-80 ft.

Water: 86 F. Dive restrictions: 130 feet, 30 min 1<sup>st</sup> dive; 40 second. The Turtle Nest Inn is in Bodden Town. It has 8 apartments with bedroom, bath, dining area, living room and kitchen. Each one is different, with all well equipped. The views are beautiful and the layouts good. The Inn is exceptional because of its owners, Marleine and Alain. Also, because of their planning, some apartments can be made into a 2 BR apartment. There also is a sofa bed in each apartment. There is a lovely H2O pool and a good reef for snorkeling out front. You do

need booties or reef shoes to get out into the H2O. A car is a must. They usually have an Indian and Caribbean dinner meal, but must have 8 to do so. They are excellent. You can purchase wine and bar drinks, but there is no restaurant. Hurley's grocery store is relatively close to the Inn and with planning, you can save a great deal on meals. There is every convenience, luxury and personal attention. They make you feel like one of the family. Everything that was promised materialized! They make arrangements for cars as well as for special occasions. Off the beaten track. No crowds!

Hooray for Marleine and Alain! Ocean Frontiers is about 20 minutes east of the Inn. The staff is terrific here. Max — 12 divers to a boat; there is a head. The camera table is small. Briefings are excellent; divemasters on the 1<sup>st</sup> dive and 2<sup>nd</sup> dive, they will go with you, if you want. No touching of coral (gloves not encouraged), no fish feeding and safety stop. Capt. Dave was wonderful — brought me my gear and allowed me to take off BC in H2O. Also, Mo, Delwin, Ralph, Colin, Mark and Frazier were great. All staff are up beat, polite and helpful. They do have a locked storage room for you to leave your gear. They rinse it and return it to the boat the next day. There was virtually no current, slight surge on one dive. The corals are in very good condition, because they are not dived as often (East End). The fish population is not prolific. Had a close encounter with 7ft. reef shark — no mantas, few turtles, typical corals. Lost of black coral. They will arrange a Stingray City dive for you (\$55).

Divers came from the north side to dive with them. Ocean Frontiers is also very safety conscious. The one drawback. You do 2 am boat dives — then back to the dock. The first dive about 30 minutes, the second 40. So, you feel a bit rushed. I returned to the boat with anywhere from 1800 to 1200 psi. We all had computers. One couple paid extra for Nitrox, but they got scolded on one dive for staying down for an hour; however, they held up no one — they were just last to reboard.

**Ocean Frontiers, Tortuga Club, October 2000, Pejman Khosropour (pejmankhosropour@excite.com) Los Gatos, CA.** Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy. Because of a storm however coming from south and southwest, 7 mile beach was turned into seven mile surge, but the east end and north side, remained unusually calm and clear. Tortuga Divers were good, nothing special but good. I however, liked the Ocean Frontiers much better. We were 10 minutes away from them. They came exactly at 8 and picked us up. They left the dock exactly at 8:30pm. after I express the need to dive my own profile, with my wife (because we like to hover and shoot pictures). They allowed us to do our own thing, as long as we obeyed the depth and time limit. The boats were big and not many people on board (They said they only allowed 12 divers). We were not more than 8 usually. The Captain and Dive Master seem to know what they were doing and they provided help, as soon as you requested it.

**Ocean Frontiers, Cayman Diving Lodge, December 2000, Angie Dorn & Morten Winckler (morten@hawkaccess.com) Atlanta, GA.** Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 70 to 75 F, choppy surge. Wanted to dive with Ocean Frontiers and Cayman Diving Lodge based on past reviews in Undercurrent. Almost felt that we knew both operations when we arrived. CDL only offer 10am-2pm/2 tank dive for non lodge residents, costing us 85/person incl. sandwich for lunch. Dove both am and PM trips with Ocean Frontiers for 6 days, plus one shark dive and one night dive. Weather rough with strong winds from NE, making diving at north or east side of Eastend impossible. However, good viz and lots of mid-size and small fish. Only big fish are tarpons, which are plentiful at shallow dives, plus less than a handful of groupers on 20 dives. Saw more than one school of tarpons with 20+ fish standing still between reefs. One tank shark dive at usd 129 also worth the money, though lid came off bucket with squid before divers entering site and most of the action had happened. Did count more than 8 shark around the site. They made hour briefing about sharks, which kind to expect to see and general precautions. Staff shot video before/during shark dive, which was good, however us 80/copy is a rip off....Pricing was us 65 for 2 tank am dive respectively usd55 for PM, with discount for more dives. Boats are great with plenty of space and divemasters/boat captains are extremely good with attitude to please guests and authority to do what it

takes to make everyone happy (some divemasters come to dive on their day off). Divers were mix between experienced and students, however most of dives 2 divemaster were in the water, thus never had to care for other than yourself and buddy. Staff always asked before going to a dive site to whether anyone had been there before and did their best to not dive same sites, although most sites can stand repeat trips. Best are The Maze (great swim through walls), River of Sand (wall diving at 100' and diving through tunnel up to wall of sand wall coming down), Maggie's Maze (shallow dive with plenty of swim through and tunnels with many fish, incl. schools of Tarpons). On last day boat got chased by 6-7 dolphins. Did not dive Westend due to reports on cattle boats, less healthy reefs. Stayed with friends in Georgetown and rented tiny car with Coconut rental at low season special for us 150/7 days incl. free mileage (clerk at counter joked that we could keep the car if we could put more than 1,000 miles on during 7 days). Seven mile Beech is commercialized, including most of restaurants on/around the beach. Downtown Georgetown is one 'tax free shop' after another catering for cruise ship guests. Trip from Georgetown to East End and return in the afternoon took about 40 minutes each direction, against rush-hour traffic. Turtle farm only real activity. 'Hell' is nothing special.

**Ocean Frontiers, Marriott's Tortuga Club, January 2001, Didrik and Mary Kay Voss (ypmm@aol.com) Mill Creek, WA.** Vis: 60 ft. Water:

79 F. Dives logged: Didrik, 71, Mary Kay 49. Ocean Frontiers had Nitrox and a cancellation policy (Tortuga allowed no cancellation once you were on the island). We did 8 boat trips of 1 deep and 1 shallow dive each from Sunday through Thursday. They were very accommodating — made an effort to go when divers wanted to, given our weather conditions. They stayed away from spots with current — good briefing and guided deep dives through, around and under reefs and then allowed unguided shallow. No sun and churned up water (because of storm).

**Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, March 2001, Michael Drumstas (Griswald8@aol.com) Worcester, MA.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 175 Feet. Water: 75 to 82 F, choppy. Accommodations at were fantastic. We had an ocean front 2 bedroom with sliders that led to the beach a few feet away. The house-keeping was great with plenty of towels. The dining is pricey on the island (75-125 \$US) for a dinner but bargains can be found. Make sure to stop at Vivines', between Ocean Frontiers and Morritt's. A small local house that also serves dinner. The food is cooked in the kitchen of the house and you have the option of eating in or outside at a picnic table overlooking the wreck of 10 sails. Ocean Frontiers staff can't do enough for you. The first dive each day was a guided wall dive. The boat usually had 6-10 divers and were split into 2 groups. The first dive was a split profile to 100+ then back up to 50-60 for the remainder. A 30-35 min first was the norm. A short,

sometimes too short, sit period 45 min. The second dive was to 50-60 ft and it was our choice as to guided or not. Shark Awareness class and dive was approx. 2 hrs. and was informative clearing up a lot of misconceptions about sharks and their habits. The dive was the best. We were surrounded by 11 black tipped reef shark ranging in size from 4-8 ft. We felt very safe with the staff making sure that no harm came our way. After about 20 min. with the sharks it was determined that we could swim around, based on the shark behavior that day. The crew from the Capt. Colin and mates Delwood and Nigel were most helpful as was Maria, the videographer and resident U/W photo expert. One heck of a dive trip.

**Ocean Frontiers, Turtle Nest Inn,  
April 2001, Craig Neal  
(canfsa@rit.edu) Pittsford, NY.**

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 100 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Turtlenest Inn, 9 rooms, on the beach in Boddentown, far away from 7 MB. Suites, 2 gourmet dinners a week, owners on premise insure quality operation. Ocean Frontiers the best on Grand Cayman. Two 40' boats, short boat rides to 6000' wall, twice weekly shark dive was very interesting, totally changed my perception of sharks, professional staff carries your bag to the boat and makes everything easy. Great operation.

**Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, May 2001, Charles Sanetra  
(xski4chuck@aol.com) Henderson,  
NV.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm

no currents. The staff goes out of their way to be of assistance either in the office or on the boats. The number of divers is limited to 12-14 people though the boats can carry more. The weather conditions were ideal, which allowed us to dive the north, south and east walls around the East end. They have excellent storage facilities for leaving gear, 3 rinse tanks, Nitrox and an excellent pool for training. We had our own car because of the distance the East end is from the rest of the Island, however, they do have pickups. Both my wife, myself and others diving on the same boat with us got stung by the larvae of the Thimble jelly fish. We were unaware of any preventive actions that could be taken but knowing how to manage the problem after it occurred would have been nice. We heard numerous local preventions and cures some which I would never try. We did have to see a doctor for my wife's case as she had a severe reaction. It is our understanding that this is a common occurrence from the end of April to the end of May. The doctor said we could keep on diving. Great trip. Fresh water for rinsing was available and a camera area for camera setup was also available.

**Ocean Frontiers, May 2001, William Kansier, Silver Spring, MD.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: choppy. Logged dives: 83. Dive restrictions: 110 ft. for Nitrox 32. The best land-based dive operator I have ever been with. Great wall diving on the east end and the swim throughs on the shallower dives were great!

**Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, May 2001, Roger Mader and Jenni McMonigle, Corydon, IN.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 80 F, choppy, surge. Logged dives: 120. Dive restrictions: depth and time limits. Morritt's is time share condo on the East End. All units have full kitchens, so we can save some money by having some meals in. Two pools — one with swim-up bar. Two restaurants — David's and Windows Bar — are good but pricey. Beach is great and grounds are always well manicured. Lots of activities See the Amazing Ricardo Fire Eating and Limbo Show — Ricardo limbos under flaming sticks set on 2 Coke bottles! Ocean Frontiers is a first class operation. Dive boats are custom built catamarans equipped with camera rinse tanks/table. Great maps of dive sites drawn by divemasters during thorough briefings on site. New dive shop and dock is a couple miles from Morritt's. Diving East End is rougher than other end of island — waves often 3 ft. and rather surgy on shallower dives. Saw 6 ft. reef shark, large green turtle on one dive. For dinner out, try the Edge. Laid back atmosphere with seaside dining and great seafood with fried biscuits and side dishes served family style. They make a mean mudslide.

**Ocean Frontiers, Royal Reef Resort, June 2001, David R. Lamb (Daveydick@excite.com) Salt Lake City, UT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, choppy. Ocean Frontiers is top flight all the way. From the time I sent them my first E-mail until I settled my bill

at the end of the trip they were most accommodating. Dive briefings are detailed and always presented with a map. Safety is a prime consideration and boats are well equipped in that regard. They will pick you up from almost anywhere on the island. Tips were never mentioned. They rely on their outstanding performance and service to stimulate you to do the right thing. The diving is mostly wall diving on the East end and North side of the island; 90-110 ft followed by a second dive in the 50-60 ft range. The walls are nice with some spectacular crevices, canyons, caverns and swim throughs. Nitrox is available. They do a "shark awareness" dive which is rather unremarkable compared to some of the shark dives in the Bahamas, but is a good introduction and educational if you've not done much diving with sharks. The Royal Reef is a comfortable resort about a 5 minute drive from Ocean Frontiers' main shop and dock. Ocean Frontiers also has a shop on site. The resort staff was very friendly and accommodating, particularly in the restaurant. The "villas" are large condo units with a full kitchen. The "studios" are lock-out units along side the villa units and have only a coffee maker, microwave and a very small refrigerator. There's a nice pool area and a beautiful beach. Grand Cayman is expensive. You could get by without a car if you didn't need to shop for groceries and didn't want to sight-see since airport transportation can be arranged and the dive shop picks you up from the resort. But the resort is isolated and there's much to see on Grand Cayman. We particularly enjoyed a visit to the Pedro St. James estate.

**Ocean Frontiers, Sleep Inn, June 2001,  
Steve Neal (steveaneal@aol.com)**

**Fairfield, TX.** Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 82-84 F. 2 morning dives one day with Ocean Frontier on East End. Coral was better, saw more fish and critters. But hotel pickup on AM dives only. No pickup or return for afternoon dives. Only worth the hassle if you stay on east end. At \$85 for 2 tanks more expensive than Divers Down or Fisheye.

**Ocean Frontiers, Turtle Nest Inn,  
July 2001, Catherine Chiu, Belmont,**

**CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 150 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm surge. Reef healthy, and the water clarity plus the canyon-like terrain were breathtakingly beautiful. There were many swim-throughs, as well as swimming around pinnacles that were near the wall. Due to wind conditions, we dove the north side of the east end the first day, and south side most of the rest of our stay. The south side, particularly the Maze and Grouper Grotto, were spectacular. The north side of Eastend was less interesting, though beautiful nonetheless. We saw large barracudas, schooling as well as single. We also saw large schools of tarpon, not at all shy if approached from below and slowly. The wind and surf condition dictate where one could get the best diving each day. The fish life was varied and abundant, but not as abundant as Hawaii. Ewe truly learned to appreciate the canyons, walls, tunnels and pinnacles. Reef and corals were healthy. The dramatic black corals studding the wall made the scenery spectacular. Only one

eagle ray, a few eels, scorpion fish, friendly groupers, lots of drums.

Turtles on nearly every dive, likely thanks to the Turtle Farm at the north end of Grand Cayman. We also found a decent spot for shore diving at the extreme north end of the island, with Dive Tech at Cobalt Sea Resort. We were able to dive right off a pier which enabled us to by-pass the rocky shoreline. With a swim of 200 yds, we were able to reach the wall. This place resembled the Jackson Wall at Little Cayman. Turtle Nest Inn in Bodden Town is a small condo arrangement, with 8 condos on premises. Everything was provided with attention down to the last detail, including fresh thick beach towels everyday, and a cooler. We were able to pack a lunch, snack and drinks, and with the cooler pack as well as ice (available on premises). We could make a day without having to eat at a restaurant until dinner. We were also able to "borrow" additional sugar, cooking oil and salt/pepper. The condos are nicely furnished, with plenty of overhead fans, A/C, and all the conveniences in the kitchen. There was a small pool and beach. Bodden Town had little of interest. 10 minutes to Morritt's Tortuga Club, if we wanted to lay around on a beach and enjoy resort comfort. Close to George Town and excellent restaurants. We only drove 30 minutes in any direction to reach the extreme north end of the island. Ocean Frontiers' operation was professional, courteous, friendly and knowledgeable. There were a mixed crowd of experience levels everyday. As a result, they tended to be more

conservative than we had liked in allotting time for each dive. Our dives were consistently 10 minutes shorter than we were able to achieve on live-aboards and at Little Cayman. The Ocean Frontiers operation on-shore also provided outdoor and indoor shower, bathroom and gear storage facilities,. The boats had ample room for the maximum 12 divers, with fresh water, towel and fruit on board. One of the boats did not have a functioning head. Summer is supposed to be the better diving time (as opposed to winter, which can be lots more windy). The weather turned out to be hot and humid, but a breeze made everything tolerable. We drove from the south end to the north end of the island on weekend days and the traffic was reasonable. While Ocean Frontiers claimed they dive the north side of GCM, they really stay near the Eastend on the north side. We were not able to dive Eagle Ray Pass and other north side boat dive sites of interest with them. Restaurants are expensive: We had a killer filet at the Portofino (Eastend) and gourmet — level multiple courses at the Smugglers' Cove (George Town.) The Royal Palm (near the Strand shopping strip on Seven Mile Beach) had great romantic Caribbean music one can dance to, right on the beach. Even if we did not have wine or appetizers, our bill typically came to \$100 for two. A condo with cooking facilities and an ice chest can considerably cut down the food bill.

**Ocean Frontiers, Cayman Villas, July 2001, no name, Denver, CO.**

Vis: 60-150 ft. Water: 81-84 F. Logged dives: 133. Dive restrictions: computers ok. Excellent diving north wall, east end, south shore Grand Cayman. Short boat rides Summer provides most opportunities for north wall. Perfect for experienced; somewhat challenging for beginners. Spectacular topography deep and shallow — tunnels, canyons, swim-throughs. Reefs very healthy. Cayman Villas — variety of choice and price, cook your own meals and save on expensive restaurant bills. Highlight was dive on Grouper Grotto with thick clouds of silversides being stalked by tarpon.

**Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, July 2001, D. Dempsey, Long Branch, NJ.**

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy. Ocean Frontiers owners and staff were most accommodating. Anything requested was immediately taken care of. Nitrox readily available. The staff was extremely friendly and knowledgeable. No "Cattle Boat" feeling. Reefs are very healthy and visibility is astounding. Great tunnels and swim throughs.

**Ocean Frontiers, Royal Reef, July 2001, Wayne Joseph, San Mateo, CA.** A real nice condo complex with a restaurant, dive shop, and small store. It's built really well and has some activities for the kids. They required me to stay 7 nights. They try to inform you about time share ownership and get you to purchase one, but it wasn't high pressure. Ocean Frontiers does E6 slide processing which is convenient. Split Rock has lots of black



coral and large barrel sponges. Iron Shore Garden has about 12 tarpon hanging out in the small canyons; make great photo opportunities. The Reef Seeker was supposed to be a temp. boat for 3 mos., but an employee said they have had it for about a year, while a new boat is being built. There was some 3 to 5 ft swells and this boat bounced around like a cork. At least one diver got sick. I even spoke with someone who went out on a relatively calm day and he got so sick that he couldn't do the 2nd dive. This boat even made me queasy! It should just be used in North Sound for Sting Ray City. My 12 y.o. was sick both times she went on this boat.

### **Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, August 2001, Gerry**

**McAtavey, Roanoke, VA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm no currents. Bring all your money and credit cards, Grand Cayman is expensive! East End diving is nothing short of spectacular. Healthy corals, lots of fish, 4 sharks on the 1st dive, turtles and a great dive operation. Ocean Frontiers offers great briefings dive staff that is committed to you having a great experience. Uncrowded boats most days 10 or less, one day only 4 of us. 1st dive is with a divemaster, 2nd you can go on your own or follow one of the staff. Morritt's is isolated so you need a car. Stop at the big grocery store by the airport and the beer store. Smaller grocery store 10 min from Morritt's is OK but limited.

### **Peter Milburn's Dive Cayman, Divers Down/DiveTech/Marriott, January 2001, Gerry Keavany**

**(keavany@mcttelecom.com)**

**Warner, NH.** Vis: 70 to 100 Feet.

Water: 77 to 80 F, calm. I was extremely disappointed with his operation. Even though Tripp was a very good divemaster, Peter seemed more concerned about keeping his boat close to his South Sound mooring than providing divers with a satisfying dive experience. After 2 days with Peter, I switched to Divers Down and was thrilled with their operation. They made every attempt to get divers to the "best" sites as well as taking requests for particular sites. Dove the North and West walls and found wonderful fish life and healthy reefs. Divers Down doesn't take more than 8 divers on either boat and their divemasters are great! I also did a night, shore-dive with Divetech. Our divemaster, Kelly, did a great job on our pre-dive briefing and in leading our group. We saw very healthy coral and an incredible number of night critters including octopus, lobsters, shrimp, crabs, hundreds of sea urchins and a green moray eel. The Marriott is nice but has a tiny beach and the food is mediocre. **(Peter Milburn's Dive Cayman: Ph: (345) 945-5770; fax: (345) 945-5786; e-mail: pmilburn@candw.ky; website www.cayman.com.ky/com/pmilburn/index.htm)**

### **Peter Milburn's Dive Cayman, Silver Sands, July 2001, Beth**

**Moore, Atlanta, GA.** Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 79-81 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 86. Dive restrictions: 110 ft. Third time with Peter Milburn. Valet diving. Peter and Trip are very

knowledgeable about sites, marine life, and diving. Excellent safety record. Love the pontoon boat, lots of room, no tripping over other divers or gear.

**Quabo, Aqua Bay Condos, August 2001, Cynthia Abgarian (cgills@mediaone.net) Ann Arbor, MI.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 F. I have dived Caymans many times. The reefs have taken a beating, but remains consistently good diving. Numerous turtles, the occasional shark, eagle rays and tons of tropicals. Frog fish, raccoon hamlet, bluethroat pikeblenny, and box crab. Quabo offers a large comfortable dive boat and a crew that knows the waters. Owner Arthle Evans is a Caymanian who o introduced me to the sport too many years ago to talk about. He still exhibits passion. Yes, Cayman dining is expensive as are the accommodations, but for those who want a clean, safe, friendly atmosphere that's easy to get to, Cayman remains a likely choice. (Ph: 345-945-4769; fax 345-945-4978; e-mail Quabo@candw.ky; website www.caymandiving.com)

**Red Baron Divers, Caribbean Club, June 2001, Robin & Rob Masson (ram@wigginsandmasson.com) Ithaca, NY.** Experience: 101-250 dives. viz: 50-75 feet. For clarity: at times it was calm, and a few days it was choppy. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm choppy. Our hotel and dive operator were a refreshing breath of fresh air. Red Baron is Nick Buckley and his assistant, Patrick. They have 2 25' boats that are clean, comfy and in good condition. No more than 8

divers, most days 3-6. Excellent 1:1 instruction for our 15 year old nephew, who did his open water dives. They picked us up on the beach of our hotel for dives on the West Wall, and we met at the Yacht Club for dives on the North Wall and Stingray City. Good safety, nice guiding, and let us be independent. Fish were plentiful and coral in good shape. Lots of turtles and some manta rays. Fresh water bucket on the boat, big enough for a housed slr/strobes, but not much else. No "dry area" for camera set up. www.redbarondivers.com. Caribbean Club is a quiet property with 18 freestanding 1 or 2 bedroom cottages on 7-mile beach. The cottages are clean, nicely decorated, set in well-maintained gardens. Kitchens are fully equipped with all the essentials, and each unit has a patio with charcoal grill, rinse area, and drip-dry area. The staff is lovely and personal service is ample. The beach is exquisite, clean and uncrowded — only the 18 families staying on the property use it! Plenty of lounge chairs, thatched shade areas with hammocks, etc. Take the virtual tour at www.caribclub.com. (Red Baron Charters: Ph: (345) 945-4744; fax: (345) 945-4744; e-mail: baronred@candw.ky or redbaron@cayman.org)

**Red Sail Sports, Marriott, August 2000, Gary R. Dorfman (FTDOK) Palm Desert, CA.** Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 85-90 F. Dives logged: 35. Dive restrictions: depth and time. Expensive. Stay away from hotels for meals. Excellent restaurants all over the island. Beaches are great. Spent

one entire day going from snorkel site to snorkel site (wife does not dive). People very friendly and island appears to be very safe. Walked seven mile beach at night. Be prepared to drive on the left side of the road. (Ph: **877-RED-SAIL, 402-593-8800, (345) 945-5965; fax: (345) 945-5808; e-mail: info@redsail.com; website www.redsail.com**)

**SeaView, November 2000, Steve Sheasly (dsheasly@cs.com) Guyton, GA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm choppy no currents. I should have brought as much alcohol as I could carry — a beer is about \$4.75 us. The service is poor everywhere, people who are so slow it hurts. I live in South Georgia and we have a reputation for being slow but these people take the prize! Eat at Deli's; can buy food by the pound and sit right out side. Seven Mile Beach is a tourist trap with cruise ships coming day and night. Most people on Seven Mile Beach are there to party not dive, which is fine but not conducive to a diving atmosphere. SeaView has a skipper that takes people out from the hotel. SeaView is a very good value — rooms small but clean like and older Motel 6. Window shaker type air conditioning. We sat by the salt water pool and mixed our own drinks and met some very nice people from around the world and still communicate with them. The island food is not that good but it is very expensive, nothing is grown on the island and there are no fresh water rivers. Cars are best reserved ahead of time. I saved about

\$300 by taking a taxi to my hotel then coming back and negotiating a better deal mid week. (Ph: **345-945-0558; fax 345-945-0559**)

**Spanish Bay Reef Resort, August 2001, Kendall Botellio, Phoenix, AZ.** Vis: 60 to 150 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F; choppy, no currents. Restrictions: computer. Do Ghost Mountain, Trinity Caves and Pattie's Peak; excellent dives! Nice shore dive off hotel. Cayman is expensive, be prepared to pay top dollar for taxis, sundries, restaurants and souvenirs. (Ph: **345-949-8100 or 345-949-1842**)

**Sunset House, August 2000, Don O. Peck (peck@pfgw.net) Paducah, KY.** Vis: 65-110 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dive restrictions: 120 1<sup>st</sup>, 80 2<sup>nd</sup>. Attended Cathy Church Photo School. Diving and photography were great! Divemasters very accommodating. Grand Cayman offers great diving but island is expensive! Sunset House leaves lot to be desired, although the room was clean — just older and not up to date as other accommodations on the island. Cathy Church School is a great experience! (Ph: **888 854 4767 or 345-949 7111; ; e-mail sunsethouse@sunsethouse.com; website www.sunsethouse.com**)

**Sunset House, October 2000, Richard Foote, Cleveland, OH.** Vis: 75-125 ft. Water: 83-84 degrees. Weather: sunny. Water: calm. Dive Restrictions: 110 feet. Pleasant place to stay, if you don't mind low-flying airplanes on their way to Grand Cayman's airport. Their package routine of 7 AM breakfast at their

restaurant followed by 8:15 AM departure on a 2-tank dive expedition worked well for an early riser like me. Boats were crowded (15-20 divers). Both boats had a head. Divemasters (2 per boat) were eager to please, mildly humorous, and safety conscious, and we enjoyed ourselves. If water was too rough for the boat to dock in front of the hotel, the hotel bus and truck took us and our equipment to a sheltered spot a few miles south. Coral health improves markedly the farther you get from Georgetown. Although sites off Georgetown and 7-mile beach had interesting swim-throughs, lots of fish and the occasional turtle or ray, the coral is basically trashed. The same area is used by ships bringing 1 million annual cruise ship visitors, plus supplies for 38K residents and 400K stay over visitors. I had hoped to visit sites east and north of Grand Cayman on 3-tank trips aboard Sunset's fast MANTA boat, and had reserved space (\$65 upgrade); however, the US-based reservation service wasn't told the boat would be out of the water for maintenance (call the dive shop directly). I drove 30 min. to Ocean Frontiers for a two-tank dive, and saw much healthier soft corals including huge sea fans, plus Nicky the shark at Jack McKenney's Canyon (one of 30 sharks they claim to have named based on their markings). The Ocean Frontiers divemaster said they are voluntarily trying to limit dive sites to 6000 divers annually (2000 visits for each of the 3 East End dive operations) and had already reached their quota for that site, so don't count on visiting every site.

They said they have been unsuccessful in trying to persuade Georgetown dive operations to pull up some mooring buoys to give sites a rest. Lunch at Sunset's waterfront spot, My Bar. For a good dinner on the water, walk 2 min. south to Blue Parrot, where we enjoyed great conch fritters, plus seafood and pasta specials, and all-you-can-eat jerk chicken and ribs on some nights. We liked watching TV sports projected 30 ft. tall on the side of the oil storage tank next door. Entrees are \$20 US and a beer is about \$5; this is not an island with cheap food (unless you hit Burger King, Subway, etc.).

**Sunset House, 2001, Gerald Canning, Reno, NV.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm, no currents. The rooms in the Courtyard section were similar to 1950 era strip motels. They were small and showed considerable sign of wear. The on premise restaurant produced an edible breakfast, included in the room cost. Lunches and dinners were better eaten elsewhere. The dive boats showed their age. The divemasters did not offer to help — but would if asked. The whole operation seemed to be very tired. We were very disappointed in the limited access to North Shore diving. The Manta Ray trips were usually canceled. We were told that it took five divers to take the Manta — but we know of one case where at least 7 had signed up and the dive was still canceled. The diving on the North side was awesome the one time we actually got to go across — but don't count on it.

**Sunset House, January 2001, Ken Marks (ken.marks@home.com), Reston, VA.** Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 74-77 F. Dive restrictions enforced: Depth and time. . Despite being certified in 1980 and diving several other Caribbean islands, we never found time to make it to Cayman. We were pleasantly surprised. Sunset House diving is sentry diving and not guided diving. We went out on three of their dive boats and found each satisfactory. On one dive the boat was at capacity, but there was still plenty of room. The dive briefings were excellent. The boat captain on each dive always drew a map of the dive site. After the first dive, the captain usually passed around a tray of orange or apple slices. The shore diving was convenient and there were plenty of lockers and fresh water rinse stations. Moorings on the dive sites were plentiful and close to the dive sites. The dive masters were helpful but not overbearing. Every day the divers were asked if there were any dive site requests. After a vote was taken, the group was taken to the winning dive site.

**Sunset House, February 2001, Judy Richards Flagg (judyflagg8@aol.com) Wallingford, CT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, calm. The rooms were large, clean and Grand Cayman is a pleasant place We expected to dive some of the Caymans famous walls but the dive operation scheduled us on a boat with several divers doing their first training dives. We ended up diving a shallow but pretty coral reef and 100 feet from the cruise ships that smelled a little septic. We had 18

people plus staff on the dive boat. The diving got better but the crowded conditions on the dive boat did not. One day we had 21 people plus staff on our boat. We came to a dive resort to avoid that cattle boat feeling. Management was not responsive to our complaints. The staff was apologetic and tried their best to make us comfortable with the situation. The highlight was a day on Manta. We headed to the North Wall. The diving was excellent and the boat uncrowded. We saw lots of life. Diving right off shore was nice — lots of life and had great vis. Sunset House was a nice place to vacation. The crowded boat situation was the difference between a good vacation and an unforgettable one.

**Sunset House, April 2001, John E. Gastineau, Oakland, MD.** Experienced: 100 dives. ([www.divelodge.com](http://www.divelodge.com) and [www.sunsethouse.com](http://www.sunsethouse.com)). Sunset House is just south of Georgetown, on the south west end of Grand Cayman. The cruise ships dock within view, although the hotel is just far enough from town that you don't feel the presence of the ship crowds. Sunset has a number of dive boats, including the Manta, a large and fast boat for full-day, three-tank dive trips. Unlimited shore diving however the reef is a bit beaten up, but there is still a lot to see. Sunset offers rebreather diving and the Cathy Church photo school. Water is nearly calm and currents nonexistent. The Sunset dive masters always drew a moderately useful map of the dive site, and explained the plan clearly. The suggested bottom time was usually twice as long for computer

users as for table users. The sites were good to spectacular, the same sites visited by the majority of dive operations on the island. Sunset could have kept both the beginners and experienced divers happier by separating the groups. Every day there were new divers, sometimes not wanting to go that deep. We felt limited. The Manta is an extra-cost upgrade to dive packages. Of the three days the Manta was scheduled to go out, it never did due to lack of divers. One day that was an aborted Manta day, there was an influx of new divers. Management put them and the folks who'd signed up for the Manta on one boat. They had staff for two boats, but they compressed 17 of us on one boat. It was not a good day.

**Sunset House, June 2001, Randy Vanlit, Metuchen, NJ.** Vis: 60-75 ft. Water: 80-84 F, calm and flat, choppy, surge. Logged dives: 50. Dive restrictions: depth and time limits. Overall a very good operation. Boat crews were friendly and helpful and very knowledgeable of all dive sites.

**Sunset House, July 2001, Carol Litchfield, Arlington, VA.** Vis: 100-150 ft. Water: 84-86 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: more than 400. Dive restrictions: kept shallow (around 30-40 ft.) to maximize bottom time. Strongly recommend Cathy Church's photo course for serious underwater photographers. Excellent lectures and critique. In-water assistance superb. Arranges with Sunset Divers to provide beverages and fruit while awaiting tank/film changes. Have 2-1/2-3 hours at a site to practice various

types of lenses. I have taken the course 4 times, so I was allowed to try different things. Would help find critters. Helped me to adjust weights for better control while photographing. Everyone very friendly and helpful. Get to use her extensive line of equipment altogether an excellent course which results in vastly improved photos, plus good diving. Dive shop sets up regulators, etc. So don't have to carry tanks and really assists in making it easy diving. On deep dives, dive master in the water just in case — no effort to "herd" divers. Great trip!

**Sunset House, July 2001, Wayne Joseph, San Mateo, CA.** My 12 y.o. daughter finished her PADI certification with Stewie. She had a great time and Stewie was very helpful as was the rest of the dive staff. Did mostly shore dives and one boat dive to Sting Ray City. My 15 and 12 y.o. daughters had a blast. We saw sharks, sting rays, and octopus on the shore dive. Sunset House is showing its age. You get a basic room with cable TV (helps when you have kids). They keep it clean, but it's mostly like Motel 6. The food at the restaurant and the bar is pretty good, but expensive, as is most of the Caymans. The Crow's Nest (just down the road) is a great place to eat! Sunset House is close to Georgetown, so you can walk to town and mingle with the 5,000 people from the cruise ships.

**Sunset House, August 2001, Lynne Firester, Skillman, NJ.** Vis: 40-100 ft. Water: 84-87 F, calm & flat, choppy at times. Logged dives: about 200. Dive restrictions: depth and time limits. Diving was wonderful — many

dive-throughs, walls, large corals. Food at Sunset was excellent, though not inexpensive. Dive operation was disappointing. There were typically 20+ divers on a boat with just 2 dive masters. The boat was unattended when new divers surfaced early. Dive masters often did not lead dives, so those new to the sites missed tunnels and other features. They stationed themselves to prevent divers from going too deep. The dive staff did not load dive gear, move tanks or otherwise assist in helping with gear unless asked specifically. They spent their time logging in time below, max depth and remaining air psi for each diver, for each dive. Intervals between dives were held to 40 minutes, regardless of depth of first dive. When our group wanted a 60 minute interval, the dive masters were annoyed. While we were doing safety stops at 15 feet or on the hang bar, they pulled up the ladder and turned on the boat engine — I guess to “scare” us because we were 5 minutes late.

**Treasure Island Resort, Coconut Harbor, August 2000, Rich Mooney, St. Louis, MO.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dive restrictions: Cayman Island Divers Association Limits. Between two oil storage depots. I enjoyed the quiet clean resort, nice people. Coconut Harbor needs dome updating but overall a very pleasant experience. Call Joe or Joy at 1800-552-6281 for better than published rates. Blue Parrot Restaurant on property was excellent and reasonably priced for Cayman. Treasure Island Divers — new crew, strict limits. Only 1 dive in 10 days were we pick up by

boat — the rest by car to the main dive shop causing us to be last boat out. Visited only close sites multiple times. Eden Rocks (a shore dive) 4 times! Boats were very nice. Boat crew and shop workers not very friendly until gratuity time. No one in our group thought it necessary to leave a tip or to dive with Treasure Island again.

**Treasure Island Resort, Sleep Inn, September 2000, Dennis and Julene Brierley, Medford, OR.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dive restrictions: Don't go below 110ft. I had computer could stay 10 mins. longer. (Ph: 800-872-7552; fax: 954-351-9740; e-mail: [tdivers@diveres.com](mailto:tdivers@diveres.com); website <http://treasureislandresort.net>)

**Treasure Island Resort, Coconut Harbor, October 2000, Ed and Debbie Craven, Terrell, NC.** Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. 1. Saw a lot of dead and damaged coral. Not satisfied with dive operation. TI didn't pick up at CH as promised, due to previous storm damaging pier. Damage was minimal. No extras offered due to inconvenience! We were bused to TI each day. TI seemed to be lax, offered dives closest to the shop instead of venturing out. Went to one (poor) dive site 4 times in 7 days. Purchased video (\$75) color was awful, camera equipment was old. Because we stayed at CH, we had to haul our equipment back and forth each day, wash and rinse ourselves.

**Treasure Island Resort, Treasure Island Condos, November 2000, CJ & Richard Brose.** Doing web surfing

Treasure Island Condos looked a decent selection, so we booked an ocean front condo about 3 months in advance, paying 50% upon the reservation, and the balance a month in advance. Six days before we are going to be leaving, I get a call from the agent representing the condos who announces that the front entrances are inaccessible — you have to go in through the patio, in some cases on temporary stairs. (They knew about it at the time of the reservation and didn't say anything). The agent says she can give me a 5% discount or I can cancel, but with one day to make alternate plans I'm left hanging. When we arrive jack hammers being used behind the condos. There is major construction, the place behind the condos is a mess and there is constant construction noise during the day. Granted, the condo itself was nice — right on the beach, but that's little consolation when you're picking your way through construction debris to get out and workers are outside your window talking at 7 am. You can't take a nap during the day because you're in a construction zone with constant noise. Treasure Island Divers was ok — lots of young, inexperienced dive masters though. Extremely conservative and with a group mentality. Since my Dad was inexperienced and older, my husband and I put up with it. At least they were helpful and friendly. Dive sites were marginal in quite a few cases. On one day they did a drift dive and they had no idea what they were doing. Bordered on dangerous with too many divers jammed together trying to hang on to

a line waiting for the dive master. One diver on another of their boat's close by got swept away by the current and one of our divemasters had to jump in and tow her to the boat.

**Treasure Island Resort, Comfort Inn, May 2001, Ron Palecki (rpalecki@kscable.com) Wichita, KS.** Vis: 150-200 ft. Water: 80-85 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 11. Dive restrictions: no touch. Everything was excellent. Food is a little pricey but very good!

**Wall to Wall Diving, April 2001, Hugh Holland, Brackney, PA.** Delightful week. They are fairly new, with a new custom boat. [www.walltowalldiving.com](http://www.walltowalldiving.com). Deanna Charlton-Jones and her husband Giles have worked for other dive operators in Grand Cayman. Although the goal is 6 to 8 divers, our maximum number of divers in our group came to 14-15, but Deanna and Giles handled us with humor (they are originally from Britain) and professionalism. Plenty of tanks to 3000 lb., Nitrox it, a camera rinse tub, camera table, a weighted hang line with air in case anyone came up low in air. Also cold water, soda, and fresh fruit between dives. Giles gave excellent briefings, and admonished all to have 500 pounds of air when getting back on the boat following the safety stop. Computer diving is encouraged and experienced divers will have the latitude they desire. Both Deanna and Giles are excellent dive masters. We were able to get to just about any site we wished on the West wall as well as the North wall and Stingray City. Pick up was prompt each morning and transportation to the boat was quick



and comfortable. Lots of lobster, eels, spotted eagle rays, yellow stingray, turtles, scorpion fish, nurse sharks, tarpon, some tunicates, all the other usual fish, and a great frenzy at Sting Ray City. (Ph: 345-945-6608 or 345-916-6408; fax 345-946-2912)

**Wall to Wall Diving, July 2001, Jim Reynolds, Commerce, TX.** Water: 84-86 F, calm and flat, choppy. Logged dives: 340. New start-up. New boat with fresh water shower, camera table, maximum 8 divers. Friendly and accommodating owners/divemasters encourage experienced divers to use computers, Nitrox, etc. sensibly.

**Wall to Wall Diving, Anchorage Condominium, August 2001, Frank R. Rudy, Camp Hill, PA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 84 F, choppy no currents. Been to Cayman many times and Wall to Wall Divers is the best. Small operation with excellent boat. 8 divers max. Giles and Deanna take you to the best dive sites. They dive the North wall unless prevented by the weather. Able to accommodate both experienced and novice divers. Allowed good bottom times and provided a computer to those who did not have one. Good rental gear. Provide free transportation to and from hotel or condo. Anchorage is at the quiet north end of 7 Mile Beach. Is a small oceanfront condo. with 15 units. Oceanfront units have a great view. Condo. is well maintained. Good pool. Great beach. Good snorkeling in front of condo. with turtles seen daily in the shallows. Close to Links golf course and marina. Excellent boat with good

storage and work space. Camera rinse bucket onboard.

### Little Cayman

**Conch Club Divers, June 2001, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano (guigo34@hotmail.com) San Juan, PR.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. The 100-foot maximum depth restriction was arbitrarily set by the Cayman Islands dive operators, ostensibly "because there was nothing to see at deeper depths". This is patently untrue. (Ph: (345) 948-1026; fax: (345) 948-1028; e-mail: ccdivers@candw.ky)

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, October 2000, Kendall Botellio, Phoenix, AZ.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 81-83 F. Dive restrictions enforced: No diving below 100 ft. Had to dive their profiles. Great resort! Good people! Lots of turtles, several eagle rays. Nice diving. (Ph: 800-327-3835 or 727-323-8727; fax 727-323-8827)

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, November 2000, Reza Gorji (Gorji@excite.com) Jamesville, NY.** Vis: 100- 200 Feet. Water: 80-83 F, calm. Went out of there way to make our groups trip a success. 2 dive guides on each dive. DO not have to stick with them. Coral bleaching, Groupers friendly. Superb value for the diver wishing to travel and dive in luxury. Water pressure low when 70 divers were taking showers after the dive! Computer divers were told 100 feet 45 min on first dive; 2nd dive 60 feet 50 min. This was ordered by Cayman Watersport

organization. However, experienced divers were not hassled at all.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, February 2001, Harvey Glick, Worthington, OH.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 77-78 F. Logged dives: 200 +/- . Dive restrictions: 100 max. Great place to get away. Fine diving. Some of the best walls. David and Elisa (dive crew) made the trip. Great boats — 42 ft. Newtons. High level of personal service. Glass strip — no lights — no jets. No white lines on the streets. Bike or walk anywhere. No fear! 3 dives per — never the same site twice. Lots of small Fish, turtles and rays. Fun bar with great staff.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, February 2001, D Demming (DemmingFSC@aol.com) Hudson, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 125 to 200 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm no currents. The food and quarters were very good. The resort was inflexible toward accommodating divers for either night dives or going over to the Brac and diving the Russian destroyer. They canceled one of the night dives and only after we orchestrated a strong united response by more than 20 divers did they schedule a night dive. It was obvious they discouraged night diving and they made it very clear that the staff was being put out in serving us dinner late. We heard that they had not had a night dive previously in 2 months. There were no rinse tanks for cameras on the boats.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, March 2001, Susan and Jerry Myers (jamjazz@usol.com) Flint, MI.** Vis:

60-100 ft. Water: calm and flat. Logged Dives: 199. Dive restrictions: suggested to limit to 100 ft., did not strongly enforce. The dive crew were very good about reminding and reinforcing to not touch coral! Couldn't have asked for a better divemaster crew. Island Air can be a huge problem — try to pack so that on your first day you'll have what you need to dive (can usually borrow a BC, and other equipment from dive shop first day) in one bag that goes with you, as the other may not make it until next day.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, April 2001, Paul Johnson (pajkotwf@aol.com) Santa Rosa, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to Feet. Water: 80 to F, calm. DAN Diving and Hyperbaric medicine course. Great time. Four hours of "school" every morning, two great dives in the afternoon, an occasional night dive, and hanging out at the bar when the diving was done. The Resort is delightful, in an excellent setting (although it didn't have much of a beach) and provided wonderful food. The dive operation was professional and fun, with the uncrowded boats. Nitrox available at a small additional fee. We dove Bloody Bay and Jackson Bay walls.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, June 2001, B. Bronstein, Phoenix, AZ.** Vis: 50-85 ft. Water: 81-82 F, calm and flat. Logged Dives: 150. Dive restrictions: Depth 100 ft. Dive restrictions are serious. Random checks of computers for people going deeper than 100 ft. Non-smoking rooms/boats/docks. If current is a problem at one site, boat moves to

new site. Total service diving!  
Excellent for new divers or older  
divers wanting help with gear.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, July 2001, Laurel Fulton & Frank Goldsmith (fgoldy@yahoo.com) Denver, CO.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 75 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 F, calm. Take Island Air's luggage restrictions of 55 lbs (including all carry-ons) per person seriously. They will get additional luggage there for a small fee, and most passengers got it a day later. On the way home, when we arrived in Grand Cayman, the bag that we had sent ahead was sitting in the claim area. Don't know how safe it was although the resort encouraged us to send our dive gear ahead). Very nice resort. Rooms were large and nicely appointed. A/C didn't seem to be cooling very well. We asked for it to be fixed. 20 minutes later, the maintenance person showed up with a brand new unit. We never would have slept without the A/C working. The pool was cozy and right next to the bar. Bartenders were friendly. The drinks were strong and the most expensive blender drink (frozen mudslide) was \$8.50, but most frozen drinks were \$7 and beers were around \$5. The food was good, but not great. Good soups every day. Crab legs and crab claws one night were tasty. The dive boats were well laid out and we had 8-12 people each day with 2 divemasters. Boat rides were normally 40 minutes in the morning. Boats left the dock around 8:15am. We dove the Bloody Bay area in the morning. Dive briefings were com-

plete and we were advised of the depth restriction of 100 ft. For computer divers, the first dive had a depth/time limit of 100ft/45 mins. Second dive after 45 mins surface interval was 60ft/50 mins. Shorter dives for table divers. Divemasters Gary and Elisa were with us most of the week. Elisa was the last one into the water and stayed down about 20 mins each time and then got out. She pointed out a few items, but normally, we never saw her under water. The divemasters moved our BCs/regs from tank to tank. The BCs stayed onboard overnight. We were responsible for taking all the rest of our gear off the boat, up the dock, rinsing it, and setting it up in the drying room (and bringing it back onboard in the morning). With the 45 and 50 minute dive restrictions, we came up with 1200- 500 psi of air which was frustrating. We tried to be the first ones into the water and the last ones out and still had that much air. The divemasters were adamant that we had to get back for lunch so that we had an hour for lunch before the boat left for the afternoon dive. On one dive, we came up after about 55 minutes. Gary was rude with my wife and asked her what our dive time was. She told him that with our safety stop, we had 55 minutes of dive time. He didn't believe her and roughly grabbed her wrist to look at her computer. Liz was the other divemaster and she courteously asked me to please keep an eye on my bottom time. Gary was grumpy all week. On another dive, we came up and were discussing a shark that we had seen and neither divemaster

made any effort to help us figure it out. They usually didn't consult any of the passengers when picking a dive site. They also stayed at the Bloody Bay end of the marine park because it was closer to the resort and going to the Jackson's end would have meant more transit time. We had 2 dives in Jackson's all week. After lunch, we had to be back on the boat at 1:50pm. The divemasters told us that their permit only allowed them to go into the marine park once a day in the morning, so we had to stay just outside it for the afternoon dive. These sites were often not as good. The underwater scenery was excellent. What a great wall! Lots of friendly turtles. We saw a nurse shark, Nassau groupers at cleaning stations, squid. Not much big stuff. Beautiful coral colors. Swim thrus were excellent. Several huge lobsters walking on the coral. Juvenile drums. Spotted morays. Scorpion Fish. Small rays. Rare pipefish. Garden eels. Several divers wanted to dive the Russian destroyer near Cayman Brac. The divemasters wanted the entire boat to vote to do that dive because it is a "long" transit and it could be rough. Also they said that the dive is just OK. My wife and I had been to the wreck and the divemasters were right. Not much life on it and torn in half by storms. The divemasters also said that they had a lot of complaints about the transit, the dive, and the second dive on the way back to the resort, so they really didn't want to do it. The divers who did want to go had to be quite aggressive with the crew. Both boats did go after much negativity from the

crew. The transit was smooth and took about 45 minutes (not much longer than the daily trip to Bloody Bay wall). The crew was stressed about getting back for lunch. We saw an enormous barracuda at the wreck. The resort also has a video guy on each boat once during the week and divers booked for at least a 6 day dive package got the video for free. The second dive of the morning was back at Little Cayman, but not in the park. The site had a lot of surge and visibility was only about 20-30 feet. Glad I had a compass. Staghorn coral in this area was great. Night dives were also discouraged strongly. Guests pushed hard for night dives but the crews told us that it was too rough and that the transit out the cut was too dangerous and risky. Very lame excuses. Although the wind calmed down very quickly at dusk, it had been a little windy during the day, so they canceled the night dives. We rented a camera from the onsite shop. Jeff, the new photo guy, was quite friendly and helpful. We took a Nitrox course. Ryan was our instructor and he was friendly and helpful. \$225 and included the 2 dives. Due to the depth and time restrictions of the resort, Nitrox is unnecessary. The resort charged \$10 per tank for or had an unlimited package for the week for \$150 (I think). The resort used Nitrox 32 and all divemasters dove with it on every dive. This worried us as the divemasters were therefore restricted to 110 feet due to the Nitrox. In the event of an emergency where they might have to go deeper, this would have been a serious problem if they

weren't able to go past 110 feet without serious risk to themselves. Evenings around the bar were lively and social. The noise level was OK most nights, and the bar closed at 11pm. The resort had a few bikes to borrow, but whenever we wanted one, there was none. The no-see-ums and sand fleas were bad on the beach at dusk and at night. We enjoyed watching the tarpon hunting for fish in the dock lights at night. The water pressure in the rooms was low after diving when others were showering. The equipment drying room worked quite well and our equipment was dry every morning due to the breeze.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, July 2001, Thom and Betty Hall (thall@lec.sccoast.net), Myrtle Beach, SC.** Vis: 40 to 90 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm and flat. Dives logged: 170. 2 am and 1 pm dives daily with night dives twice a week. The food was plentiful and tasty. The dive crew was competent, very helpful when asked, but kept to themselves after an initial introduction. The boats are in good shape and the lodging and grounds were well kept up.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, July 2001, Jeff Wilson (jeff.wilson@pharma.com, Norwalk, CT.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Didn't get my dive gear and some clothes until a day later. (Pack your carry-on with necessities) My weight was exactly 55lbs. Island Air loads the plane with bags until it reaches the allowed weight. If your bag is one of the last (within weight

requirements or not) it gets left behind. Try to be one of the first people in line when connecting flights. The staff are really easy going. Dive shop rented me the gear for free and all I needed was a bathing suit. The diving was excellent. Blacktip reef shark slowly cruised by me off the wall at Marilyn's Cut dive site. Southern and eagle rays, barracuda, turtles. I only saw one moray eel. Great reefs for macro photos! I felt we did not venture to some of the further, better sites, on the Marine park. We repeated a couple dives during the week. speak up if you want to see or do something, otherwise they'll just think your content with the program. The night dive was canceled twice because of windy, choppy conditions. Accommodations were comfortable. I had ocean view room 215, nicely decorated, small fridge, coffee machine, microwave and king size bed. Hot water, A/C worked well. The only thing was two palm trees sit right in the view of the ocean. One night I retired early and was watching TV and this huge cockroach came from under the couch. I leapt on to the bed. Its hilarious now, but I didn't rest until I smooshed that sucker. I didn't see another one after that. Make sure you keep the screen door closed. Food was delicious. There wasn't one meal I didn't like. I've been to many places by myself, but this place has absolutely nothing outside the bar. The fireworks on the beach(w/full moon) fourth of July was a real beautiful evening.

**Little Cayman Beach Resort, August 2001, Tripp Jones MD**

**(Tjones@sc.rr.com) Columbia, SC.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 1125 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, calm no currents. Third trip to LCBR. Great diving, great dive operation, great shore facilities. Dive staff allowed us to dive our own profiles. Our dive group (Wateree Dive Center in Columbia, SC). Boats were in excellent condition. Reefs and walls in excellent shape. Saw a few reef sharks, and tremendous variety of small critters.

**Sam McCoy's Dive Lodge, April 2001, Marvin Gozum, Philadelphia, PA.**

I did 2 boat dives and 16 shore dives, freedom is greatest when you call the time. McCoy's north sided beach is right on Bloody Bay Wall. What most resorts need a boat to get to, you walked to. McCoy's also own property facing the Great Walls, but the whole of Bloody Bay is a short drive down the beach, a swim or snorkel from buoy to buoy, and most buoys are 15 ft deep reefs. The reef is about 300 feet from shore, of which 150 are under 3 feet of water. When the winds were blowing enough to abort the boat ride to Bloody Bay, it wasn't enough to abort shore dives. On the North side a very weak current ran North-South, and a passive diver would inevitably be swept back to shore. Strong currents exist at the island's tips. Reefs extended into shore. Beaches with big reefs absorbed more wave action but life around shallow reefs can be difficult. Sheets of spiny urchins land mined the bottom, coral formations obstructed straight line attacks to a buoy and needed planning. In two feet of water, you already had fish, stingrays, conch,

and barracuda trolling. Unless covered by sand, the bottom is uneven or rocky, and makes for an intrepid walk to water deep enough to snorkel. After mapping a path, it was easily hiked. Jackson Bight's is mostly clear from shore to buoy, so this often was a starting point. The water's color goes from green to blue quickly, green is a tapered descent to 15-20 fsw from the beach, and blue is the abrupt 1000+ fsw depth of the wall, 300 ft from shore. Diving Profile 78-80F all depths and times, 75[night]-85F[daytime] surface temps, over 60 min per dive on A180. Depths are limited to 100 ft but liberties were made. Plunging to 100+ fsw, making slow ascents and 20 minute "safety stops" @ 30 ft, dive times ran 80-100 minutes on A180 down to 300 psi .... thus 2 tank dives with surface interval lasted all day. We added 3 twilight and 2 night dives during 3 tank days, limited by twilight appearances of vicious sand flies and mosquitoes at some beaches [bring DEET]. Visibility 60-100 feet horizontally, 300+ feet vertically, From within Bloody Bay Park, almost imperceptible drift slowly southward to shore. I saw once at a distance were a 7 ft Reef Shark along the Wall; a 4 ft Reef Shark, 6 ft nurse shark within Jackson's Bight; school of 20 squid, several 2-3 foot Southern rays and one 4 ft spotted eagle ray, several 1.5-2ft green turtles. The sandy bottom was carpeted with grasslike oases of garden eels, trails of conch, and the occasional scurry of cockroach-like spiny lobsters. The plethora of sea life began at 15 fsw. Reef iso-heads were a living Paul

Humann's "Reef Fish/Creature of the Caribbean" book. The reefs came alive at twilight, with schools of wrasses in the hundreds swimming in long thin schools, scores of 6" shelled channel clinging crabs crawling onto the reef, spiny lobsters began evening patrols. Schools of jacks and wrasses darting like migratory birds, turtles, reefs crawling with life as colonies of ants on a picnic fruit bowl. A 4 ft Great barracuda who swam menacingly inches away from us, until we left Jackson's Bight buoy, it appears to have claimed that day. As the moon aged, a sky full of Milky Way gradually dimmed. The Little Dipper was completely outlined, constellations were clearly seen at > 50 ft underwater. My first navigation dive using Polaris! McCoy's is a Cayman bed and breakfasts, with lunch and dinners. No known crime, no locks on doors, and keys are left in autos. You rub shoulders with the true islanders and connect with other guests and the host's party. Did you know in the 1960s Little Cayman was so full of mosquitoes you could grab them from your nose like rice grains? Natives once carried smoke pots to keep mosquitoes at bay. Natives wear long trousers to keep gnat, sand fly, and mosquito bites at a minimum, year round. The reefs had a bleaching episode several years back, with minor injury to the coral. Divers who die are always a discussion here not made obvious to the tourist clientele. One of the divers from our conference had DCS and spent the rest of his vacation at Grand Cayman's excellent chamber. Most islanders get supplies and

services from the Brac. Its only 5 mi. away. Great swats of land around Bloody Bay are for sale. Homes of big executives, sheiks, and other celebrities are rarely occupied, but clearly there is an affluence here. Negotiate your own dive profile and sites with divemaster Chris McCoy. McCoy's is not an equitable physical plant, but a better value for diving freedom. Their guest book listings from 1999-2001 suggest about 4-8 guests stay weekly. I was the only guest. It's a family run outfit and they did it all themselves until this year. Mary is cook and hostess but is recovering from illness, so Pam, from the Brac, is now cook. Lowell assists Mary's son Chris as a divemaster. Chris does all SCUBA shop work. Water is by reverse osmosis, had high pressure —its good enough for dialysis and superior to most bottled water if it weren't chlorinated. The lodge is orderly, clean, had stable electricity, cool air-conditioned rooms, hot and cold running water and served good food. My shower was weak and the bathtub drained slowly. 2 bikes are free for getting around. One is rustier and stuck on 3rd gear. With half the roads unpaved, getting around was best on a 3rd gear cruiser bike with soft wide wheels for traction. If you need more bikes, they know where to get them; I biked around half the island's 11 mi. perimeter many times before sunset. Key road signs are Iguana crossings. Point of Sands, a beautiful beach to use a surface interval. McCoy's get great sunsets, and possibly a green flash. In pitch black areas during my night treks, the roadside would have a

variety of variegated land crabs scurrying about. Chris flies his Piper to the Brac for supplies, and to a Grand Cayman office. He's a single seat alternative to Island Air. He appears set to inherit Sam McCoy's and increasingly runs day to day operations. Chris plans a north side resort to rival the south side, on their property facing Bloody Bay. My recently serviced regulator began to free flow after 30 dives and its was unserviceable. After my trip, a return to my dive shop in the US revealed a defective high pressure seat. This accident could have been avoided if I periodically checked my regulator for low pressure creep after an annual service, which I will do from now on and, for extra safety, bring a back-up regulator! Second, my SPG O ring leaked after 200 dives, apparently did not get serviced at my dive shop. I did a field repair, with O rings supplied by Little Cayman Beach Resort. If you want to reach your profile and dive until your drop, the capacity to negotiate at McCoy's delivers what few resorts offer. McCoy's has no facilities for supporting underwater photography. (Ph: 800-626-0496 or (345) 948-0026; fax: (345) 948-0057; e-mail: mccoys@candw.ky; website mccoyslodge.com.ky)

**Sam McCoy's Dive Lodge, June 2001, Sam and Phyllis Major (hbillygirl@aol.com) Knoxville, TN.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100+ Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. Mc Coy's Lodge is only 8 rooms and a charming, basic dive lodge on the north side of Little Cayman. Rooms

are air conditioned, and clean. It is graciously run by Maxine, a McCoy, and a wonderful staff of four. Included are 3 home-cooked Caymanian-style meals a day, with breakfast generally consisting of eggs and meat, lunch — sandwiches or meat-based salad, and dinner — meat, salad, and 2 veggies. No-see-ums and mosquitoes could be pesky in the evening if winds were calm; however DEET-based insect repellent made this a no problem. Morning dives were two tank with a 50-60 minute interval and fresh fruit. The first dive is a wall dive to 100 ft. on either Jackson Bay or Bloody Bay Wall, with the second dive to around 50-60 ft. 10 minute ride in the back of a pickup to where the boat was moored. Cayman authorities will not let them build a pier so close the Marine Park. It is still quicker to the dive sites than the boat ride from the south side of Little Cayman where all other resorts are located. Unlimited air fills for afternoon or night shore diving are included. Nitrox is not available. Lowell, the Honduran boat captain/divemaster stays in the water on boat dives, keeping an eye on all divers, or at least their bubbles, but allows each diver to move about at their own pace as long as he can see them. Dive time limits were by individual computers. We averaged 35-40 minutes for the first dive and 50 minutes or longer on second dives. Lowell is great to help find large (turtles, groupers) and small(juvenile drums, various blennies) sea life. The wall with its colorful tube and vase sponges is the spectacular main attraction. A favorite dive sites was



Coconut Walk on Bloody Bay, with its series of cut-thrus. Island Air, the only public transportation to Little Cayman, has a 55 lb. baggage limit, including carry-ons, and charges 50 cents per pound over 55. If luggage is overweight, it may not arrive until the next day, so we packed a mask, regulator, computer, swimsuit, and a change of underwear in our carry-on bag, to insure we could dive the first day. The folks at Island Air, as well as every other Caymanian with whom we had contact, were most pleasant.

**Paradise Divers, Sam McCoy's Diving Lodge, October 2000, Fred Gentry, (Fred@Beanandgentry.com) Olympia, WA.** Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 82-83 F. Bloody Bay Wall is everything you have heard. Best wall dive in my experience. Jackson reef and wall has several excellent shallow dives. McCoy's is funky but fun if your demand for quick service is low. Food not fancy but adequate. This is a quiet place. **(Paradise Divers Ph: 877-322-9626; e-mail villas@paradisevillas.com; website www.paradisevillas.com)**

**Paradise Divers, Paradise Villas, October 2000, A. Pagnotta (Pagn@earthlink.net) Durham, NC.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 79-81 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 200+. We have been diving with Paradise for some years, and it has always been a positive experience. Bring your own canned/dry food, wine/alcohol — as store and restaurant prices quite high. Bring books, and leave paperbacks behind for staff and guest. Watch the airline weight restrictions. If you are

overweight this can delay the arrival of your gear. Diving is pleasant, relaxing and staff are terrific.

**Paradise Divers, Paradise Villas, April 2001, Richard R. Gala, Royal Oak, MI.** Vis: from 60-90 ft. Water: 80-82 F; First class operation.

Paradise Villas is about 8 years old and accommodations are very comfortable. There are 12 identical villas that contain two units each. There is a king size bed (some units have twin beds) and color cable TV in the bedroom, a bathroom with the shower and head in a separated area from the sink, a living room with a comfortable couch (which is a hide-a-bed) and end tables with a light that you can actually read by at night, a fully equipped kitchen (coffee pot, plates, cups etc.) with a small refrigerator, oven, cooking burners, microwave and a table with 2 chairs. The villas are on the beach and have a large porch on both front and back. The back porch has a table and comfortable chairs and a clothes line. Bring your own cloths pins. Each unit also has two bikes to explore the Island and a hammock overlooking the ocean. There is also a small swimming pool in the complex. Package included two dives a day. Since there were 12 in our group and not everyone did 2 dives a day, they let us bank dives to be used by others in the group. This was consistent with the folksy style in which Paradise Villas is run. No meals were provided with our package but next door is the Hungry Iguana Restaurant/Sports Bar. The food was very good but expensive as is everything on the Island and the

service was extremely slow. Breakfast is not provided by the restaurant except a Sunday brunch. The only food market on the Island was 2 blocks away so we purchased the makings of breakfast and lunch and ate dinners out. Expect to pay \$35-45 per person for dinner with wine. As a special favor and with 24-hour notice the Pirates Point Resort, as well as other resorts, would provide dinner for people not staying with them. My ranking for dinner from best to least: Pirates Point Resort, Hungry Iguana, Southern Cross Resort, and Frankie's. Diving Little Cayman and Bloody Bay is always fantastic! A limit of 60 minutes dive time was enforced and no handling of creatures was allowed, except for 2 big groupers, Ben and Jerry, who would invite you to rub them. Large pontoon boat provided a great dive platform. Large dry boxes provided for everyone's gear. We had a few days of rough weather with the boat heaving up and down. Getting onto the boat from the side made it easy and so much safer. Also, instead of a long bumpy ride around the West point to Bloody Bay, as all the other resorts did, we boarded benched pickup trucks for a smooth 2 mile ride to the other side of the Island where the boat was waiting for us. We then had the pick of the dive sites and as we were getting into the water, the other dive resort boats were rounding the West point! My wife is not comfortable diving because she does it so infrequently and Anne, the dive-master, stayed with her on every dive so that we had a one-on-one situation. All the people associated with the

resort went way out of their way to make you feel comfortable. Marc, the manager, set the tone for the operation. When we were leaving it looked like we would miss our connecting flight in Grand Cayman. He stepped right in and made alternate flight arrangements for us.

**Paradise Villas, May 2001, LeRoy Anderson (leroya@vmh.com) Salt Lake City, UT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy, no currents. Thanks to *Undercurrent* for making it clear that some of the best diving in the Caymans is in Little Cayman. We found it uncrowded but very civilized, and a breathtaking place to dive for both myself, whom I consider to be an advanced diver, as well as my daughter, who is a beginner. Paradise Villas was an exceptionally fine place to stay for us. Uncrowded, very nice and clean accommodations, close proximity to the restaurant and grocery store, microwaves and refrigerators to drop the cost of dining for those not on an unlimited budget, free use of bicycles to tour the island, and oceanfront villas. And the very best value for the money of all places to stay on the island. Be sure to have a meal with Gladys at Pirate's Point; expensive, but worth every penny. The dive operation at Paradise Villas was first class, the staff drives you close to the dive locations, the dive boat picks you up on shore, instead of boating around the whole island — a distinct plus for those like my daughter who get seasick on long boat rides. Diving was fabulous.

Healthy and varied coral life, swarms of bright little blue anthias/chromis fish hovering over coral heads, bigger butterflyfish, parrotfish, multiple species of triggerfish, angelfish, yellowtail snapper, etc. And frequent close interaction with multiple turtles. Filefish, gray reef sharks, barracuda, sting rays, and eagle rays. Spectacular underwater topography covered by healthy coral covered by swarms of blue chromis, along with schools of chubs and grunts, cowfish and pufferfish, along with one or two pelagics, all simultaneously! With great vis and no current. Diving on the south side was in some ways even better than bloody bay wall, in terms of the untouched and virgin nature of the reefs. Coral health and fish life is absolutely just as prolific on the south as well as the north side. The photo opportunities are truly exceptional, especially for wide angle.

**Paradise Divers, Paradise Villa's, May 2001, Robin and Michael (mdenapoli@aol.com).** Paradise Villas is located at the end of the airstrip. Everyone was very friendly and accommodating. Mark and Sabine run Paradise Villas and Paradise Divers. The dive team, Rod, Jay, and Ann, who are all PADI dive instructors, were terrific and made our diving fun and exciting. The Villas are cozy and pretty. We had a king size bed, TV, air-conditioning and ceiling fans. The kitchenettes are fully stocked with all the basics. Up the road is a small fairly well supplied market. Groceries

are expensive however so you might want to bring a few with you. We had breakfast and lunch every day on our porch enjoying our view of the ocean and the friendly iguanas. Bicycles are available. We've been diving in the Caribbean for ten years. Bloody Bay Wall is teeming with life: hawksbill turtles, yellow stingrays, southern rays and eagle rays, reef sharks, nurse sharks, and even a hammerhead. The soft/hard corals and sponges are beautiful and abundant. The visibility was good to excellent with water 82°-84°. The diving was great! The Hungry Iguana restaurant is excellent and they have a great bar. The island is home to the "Red Footed Booby Bird," as well as sea birds, egrets, herons and cranes.

**Paradise Divers, Paradise Villas, August 2001, Bob Kuehling (eclectic@execpc.com) Madison, WI.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 82-84 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 150. Little Cayman has less than 100 permanent residents, all of whom work in the tourist industry to serve the 200 tourists who are present at any time. Paradise Divers which is one of the smaller and less expensive operators. They dive from a large pontoon boat, which due to the close proximity of the dive sites, is not a problem. The initial dives are closely supervised. After that, good divers can dive their own profile. Saw a few reef sharks, some large lobsters, the usual reef fish, and a lot of turtles. Paradise Villas is clean and comfortable, with satellite television. The Hungry Iguana is the on-site restaurant/bar. It is fine,

except a little expensive, as are all of the island eateries.

**Pirate's Point, October 2000, Laurie Gneiding & Michael Brady, Lebanon, NJ.**

Vis: 50-80 Feet. Water: 84 degrees, choppy. Best run operation I've experienced in 20 years of diving; accommodates approximately 20 divers so there's lots of personalized attention. It's also very relaxed. The roundup for the boat starts at a civilized 9:30 am. All dive sites less than 20 minutes from dock. Two of us were very experienced (100+ dives) and a few were new divers (including my husband) All were satisfied. The divemasters (especially Coco and Martha) made sure we saw the large and small critters. The walls were incredible! Huge rainbow parrotfish down to thumbnail size juvenile sergeant majors and squirrelfish. Great corals and basket sponges you could hide in. Many southern, yellow and spotted rays along with hawksbill turtles. The boat accommodated 20 persons easily. Lots of room for cameras and gear. We had plenty of snacks and beverages between dives. Gladys Howard is the epitome of hospitality. You felt like you were staying with a good friend. The food is outstanding — plentiful and very tasty (especially Gladys' apple strudel!). Mosquitoes are bad the hour around sunrise and sunset; however, Gladys supplies bug repellent. Island Air is very strict on weight limits — 55 lbs. per person or else you pay \$.50/lb and your luggage goes on the next flight.

**Pirate's Point, July 2001, Willis Flower (ffhwff@aol.com) Linwood,**

**NJ.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F. Third visit. Food, service and hospitality remain superb. Small resort, congenial atmosphere, helpful, friendly, knowledgeable staff. Relaxed diving, very safe, 42 foot boat in good condition. Ten rooms, not new or fancy but clean and comfortable. Not the place for the hardcore (one two tank AM dive/day and night dives on request, bone fishing, birding and that's it). Great food. You can dive your own profile or accompany the divemaster. Guest preference as to dive sites will be accommodated if possible. Divers can stay until they reach 500 psi. Safety stops encouraged. You are never rushed or hassled. No film processing on site, rinse bucket on boat, camera table on boat. **((345) 948-1010; Fax: (345) 948-1011)**

**Sea-Esta/Conch Club, September 2000, Amber Andrews, Springport, MI.** Vis: 100-120 ft. Water: 85-87 F. Dive restrictions: 100 ft (flexible), time—not flexible. The coral life was spectacular. Not as colorful as Coral Sea, but extremely abundant and healthy. We had 6 people and the Conch Club ended up being \$60 a night. It was the best accommodations ever. The dive operator does 3 dives a day. If you rent a Jeep you can do additional dives at no charge or you could probably talk Little Cayman Beach Resort driver to drop off and pick up for a small tip. The Bloody Bay Wall was great but I preferred the lip of the wall. We also dived the Russian Destroyer on Cayman Brac. Nice dive, little fish but eagle ray. **(Ph:**

**(345) 948-1026; fax: (345) 948-1028;**  
**e-mail: ccdivers@candw.ky)**

**Southern Cross Club, July 2000,**  
**Flavio Ciferri, San Clemente, CA.**  
Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dive restrictions: 130 but we requested guided tours. We happened to get one to the two best cottages with living area and large bedroom, very airy and comfortable, shut A/C off most of the time. Food was good and ample. One could eat inside or outside the DR but sometimes it took a little prodding. Good bar, often honor system. Small family style operation. Good boats, fast, but tend to be cramped when full (up to 16-18 people) but for most days we had the boat to ourselves (6-8 divers). Afternoon dive requires at least 4 divers sign up. Dives were 80% at Bloody Bay, 20% toward the lagoon. Snorkeling in the lagoon was marginal at best. Dolphin was there once in the afternoon, he moves ad lib from Brac to Little. Very friendly and playful. Solid, reliable operation. **(Ph. 800 899-2582 or 619 563-0017; e-mail info@southerncrossclub.com; website www.southerncrossclub.com)**

**Southern Cross Club, December 2000,**  
**Tom Beach (tbeach@ispchannel.com)**  
**Lewes, DE.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 90 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F choppy. My wife (non-Diver) would stay on the beach at the resort while we dove in the am and not see a soul unless it was an employee of the resort. The entire operation was there to do everything possible to make our visit comfortable. The dive boat was well maintained as was any gear that was needed for rental. A real class act. Guy,

the dive master, is quite the uwp and was very helpful in setting up a shot. No film developing or processing on the island.

**Southern Cross Club, January 2001,**  
**Barry Jacobs, Atlanta, GA.** Vis: 90 to 110 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm choppy. Third visit. Still an A+ for overall dive resort to vacation. Strong cold front brought constant wind and cloudy skies, keeping all the island's ops off the north side (where all the great/famous diving is) all week. We were confined to the south side which has "okay" but not great sites. We were 0 for 6 days in getting to Bloody Bay, Jackson, etc. The diving op was great — terrific boat and terrific folks (other than the need for Guy to concentrate more on guests). But, the diving itself was just okay. SCC has undergone some pretty hefty turnover in the past few months, but, it's still terrific. The food's better than ever. The new managers (Mark and Amy) are 10's. The staff continues to be tops. Rinse buckets for cameras on boat, but no table space.

**Southern Cross Club, May 2001,**  
**Irina Zeylikman, Lexington, MA.**  
Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. Very quiet, extremely casual, very good food. They accommodate any dietary restrictions, medical, religious or preference. Rooms are big, with A/C and ceiling fan. Several turtle on every dive, countless stingrays, eagle ray, groupers all sizes, angel fish, porcupine fish, butterfly fish, etc, magnificent walls. Dive operation is very efficient. They will take care of their guest's gear, guests just bring it

to the boat the first morning and do not have to worry about it. We always take care of our gear ourselves and they respected that. Everybody dives computer and if someone does not have one, it has to be rented from the shop. No dedicated UW photo shop.

**Southern Cross Club, May 2001, Gerald Canning, Reno, NV.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm.

Accommodations, food and service were outstanding. When my PC wouldn't work to download my dive computer, Ken let me use his. Friendly, helpful staff. DM Henry and Karen showed us the best sites and meet our requests. Karen was particularly good at finding small critters. Bloody Bay wall diving is outstanding. Operation was photo friendly — but not really geared to photography.

**Southern Cross Club, June 2001, Donn Ellerbrock, Columbus, OH.**

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Food was outstanding. Breakfast was a main course with juices, fruit, toast, rolls, bacon, and cereal. Lunch was a number of salads. And the dinners were very good, although a limited choice. The staff was friendly and courteous. And the owner was right there to make sure things ran smoothly. The resort is small with maximum of 22-24 guests divided among fishermen/women and divers. The main building houses the bar, dining room, and gift shop. All guests are housed in two-unit Buildings spread along 800ft. of beach. Not being on the water there means you

are 20ft. further back on the beach. Because of the limited number of guests distributed over the length of the beach, the resort frequently felt was deserted, except for meal times or when loading the boat. The rooms were clean and nicely furnished, and hardly five star, but better than many places we have been. And they included a number of amenities. We didn't have any problems with bugs. Last May, they were more noticeable. But there are cans of Off at the outside bar. Bikes, sailboards and kayaks are available for those that wish to use them, and there is a fishing guide and boats for deep sea fishing or fishing for bonefish and other fish found in the lagoon. Wall diving is superb. One of the boats was down when we were there requiring a few people to dive in the afternoon, but it all worked out after a few days, and people then had the option of diving mornings or afternoons or both. The dining area is a little warm during the day, but we just moved out by the pool for breakfast and lunch, and they accommodated us there. And breakfast was supposed to start at 7:30am, a little late for an 8:15-:30am departure, but most things were out by 7:00am, and after others started to arrive early also, they started breakfast at 7:00am. This willingness to be flexible was typical of our treatment. Live-aboards park on some of the sites for longer than they should, but with so many good sites, it not really a problem unless you had your heart set on a certain site on a certain day.

**Southern Cross Club, July 2001, Dennis Schneider, Round Rock, TX.**

Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Logged dives: 250+. Dive restrictions: 130. Great ambiance, dive operation was outstanding except continual bitching about being back on the boat with 500 psi. The boat usually had one divemaster who spent his dive shooting video or fooling around underwater leaving divers to come back to the boat and get back on alone.

### CUBA

To visit Cuba legally, American citizens must be licensed by the Treasury Department, and ordinary tourists don't get licensed. Big fines await those who are nabbed when passing through one of the gateway airports in Mexico and Canada. The U.S. government has been cracking down since mid 2001. . . . Street signs in Cancun and Playa del Carmen offer four-day trips to Cuba for as little as \$300 US and Scubacan in Canada also runs trips. . . Dive operations are generally well-run, and the reefs are pristine.

### Isle of Youth

**Hotel Copacabana, February 2001, Phil & Nancy Hamilton**  
(glasstwn@bellatlantic.net) Sandwich, MA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 72 to 76 F, calm. We were scheduled to go to the Isle of Youth, however, problems with water at the hotel there required us to spend the week near Havana. Because of heavy fishing, the diving in this stretch of the Cuban coast is ok but not spectacular by

Caribbean standards. However, the day boat was more than adequate for our group, and the hotel's dive instructor, Octavio Rivero, was excellent. The boat departed from the Marina Hemingway — had to present passports and get permission from the military before each day's diving. One day, when we had planned to dive the wreck of a Spanish galleon, permission was denied to dive that part of the coast. A diving highlight was a day of beach diving at the Bay of Pigs. Just to dive such a well known location was a blast, and to see a whale shark as well was the icing on the cake. The arrangements made by ScubaCan were excellent and the guides were informative and helpful. Havana is a wonderful city — sipping coffee at the bar in one of the restored downtown hotels, you almost expect Papa Doc or a 50's movie star to stroll in! If you have know and love the Cuban cuisine in major US cities, be prepared to be disappointed. The best food is in the few private (and comparatively expensive) restaurants, but most places it is fairly bland with a preponderance of rice and beans (though still a feast for the average Cuban). The people were friendly, and it was safe to walk around many areas at night — the Cuban government seems very protective of its fledgling tourist industry. A supply of pens, toiletries and over-the-counter medical supplies come in useful as gifts. The boats had rinse tanks and the crew were careful with people's equipment.

**International Dive Center, Hotel Colony, January 2001, Gabriel I.**