

Peñagaricano, San Juan, PR. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 72-73 F, calm, no currents. I have been there before and, if anything, the diving was better. The hotel is run down and is to be refurbished. The dive sites are spectacular. If you explain the type of dive you favor, they will accommodate you. Request that you be assigned to the boat to which Keka is assigned. The best destination in the Caribbean.

Playa Del Sol, Ancon Hotel, Costasur Hotel, Playa Maria Aguilar, August 2001, Richard Shaw (divein24@aol.com) Oshawa, ON. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm. Trinidad is a 400 year old town of 90,000 on the south coast of Cuba, 5 hours overland from Havana. I flew into Cienefuegos, a city of 200,000, 60 miles from the resorts on the Ancon Peninsula. Only one dive operator for the 3 resorts on the Peninsula. The dive shop is run by Cadena de Marinas Puertosol (www.diving-cuba.com) at the Grand Caribe Ancon. It is a large hotel, very nice but too busy. My favorite place was the Hotel Costasur 2 doors over (www.horizontes.cu). The dive masters stay there and I would ride with them to the Ancon. There are excellent bungalows on the beach. It is smaller and more relaxing. Diving is amazing. The fish can be hit and miss on the wall but are plentiful in the shallows, plenty of conch — they don't harvest them. The vis, except after a rain, was over 100'. The reef builds toward the wall for over 200' in 40' of water starting with canyons and

fissures 200' deep, tunnels and chutes leading to the wall. The sheer mass of coral is breathtaking. The wall dive in Cayman pales. There were a few wrecks as well. The guides knew their way on the wall like the back of their hand. Poor country but the warmth of the people and the beauty of the island more than make up.

Puerto Sol Isla de la Juventud, Coconut Hotel, April 2001, Bill Bone (BuenoBill@aol.com) Kila, MT. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 79-80 F, calm and flat. Dives logged: 250+. It ain't Kansas, but it sure beats the "Coz Mobs". 56 anchored dive sites off of a beautiful 2 mile sand beach with 42 ft. steel hulled dive boats and only 12 to 15 divers per boat. Most days 8 to 10 divers split into two groups and no problem diving one's own profile. AM dive followed by a beach lunch and 2 hour siesta — then PM dive and back to the hotel for cervezas, cigars and dinner.

CURACAO

A short hop from Bonaire, Curacao's colorful, historic, cosmopolitan Dutch city of Willemstad offers plenty for the nondiver — good diving, international shopping for high-rollers, night life, hiking (bring boots), an orchid-filled forest, beautiful rural villages and country homes, windsurfing, half-naked Europeans, and horseback riding. Excellent Indonesian restaurants offer all-you-can-eat rijstafels (rice tables). . . . Marine Park, south-east of the public aquarium ("Seaquarium"), offers rough boat

rides in exchange for the best wall dives on the island. There's outstanding beach diving from protected coves on the northwestern side of the island, which is usually calmest and is easily accessible by car. The windward side is almost always too rough to dive, but the diving's good if the wind shifts from its prevailing pattern.

Allwest Dive, Allwest Apartments, February 2001, Rob Schoenthaler (rschoenthaler@juno.com), Highland Hts. KY. Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 77-79 F. Logged dives: 112. Dive restrictions: 500 psi/50 min./boat. Stayed on Western end of island. Found the shore diving to be as good as Bonaire, much nicer beaches. Some sites had long surface swims to reef, but well worth it. Dive shop on premises made getting/returning tanks easy. Sites were easy to reach by vehicle, found very healthy reef. Apartments/studio's were adequate. Kitchens, a/c, no hot water (who cares in tropics). Loved our large deck overlooking bay with sunsets, flocks of parrots, frigates. Peace and quiet, 35 min. to large grocery, 45 Willemstad. Dive shop well equipped with newer tanks and opened in timely manner. Boat was great, very open, lots of room. They made us feel at home and took care of our needs. **(Ph: (+599-9) 864 0102, fax (+599-9) 4612315; e-mail allwest@cura.net)**

Allwest Dive, Allwest Apartments, February 2001, Rob Schoenthaler (rschoenthaler@juno.com) Highland Hts, KY. Experience: 101-250

dives. Vis: 60 to 90 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy. Allwest apartments with onsite dive shop was a nice surprise. Located in Westpunt (45 min. from Williamstad) all rooms have great view from good size deck. Kitchenettes, quiet, family atmosphere with other guests, and owners. Diving was great, saw many wonderful things, no really big stuff. New boat captained by Louis apt. owner, was roomy and dove mainly western sites not normally done by bigger opts to the South. Great value and discounts for stays of week or more. Williamstad's got some pretty bad areas with the oil refineries air pollution.

Caribbean Sea Sports, Marriott Beach Resort, March 2001, James Heckmann, Dubuque, IA. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 20 to 100 Feet. Water: 75-78 F, choppy surge. First class business/leisure oriented hotel subscribing to American standards for size and cleanliness. Food, service, and friendliness was the best. Probably the most luxurious resort on the island, yet it is reasonably priced. It's pool, beach, restaurants, and proximity to downtown Willemstad make it a good choice for non-divers, as there is plenty to occupy their time. The on-premises dive shop is Caribbean Sea Sports, operated by Tom. They made our week of diving effortless. If there are enough divers, the boat heads out around 9 a.m. for a two tank trip. If there are only two or three divers, then they load up the van and drive to one of the myriad beach entry sites, which gives you an opportunity to see more

of the island. On two of the van trips it was just me and the divemaster. After diving at one beach, we would pack up the van and head to another. All of the reefs are a short surface swim from the beach. I actually preferred the van trips to the boat dives. If you didn't want to make the morning trip, you could go to the shop and pick up a tank for a dive on the "house" reef right off the hotel beach. The shop provided rinse tanks, hangers, and storage lockers for your equipment, which was always accessible during the day so you could dive at your convenience. If you wanted, one of Tom's crew would take a van out for you in the afternoon. Very accommodating professional crew is very safety conscious. I tried to get them to allow me to dive the house reef solo, but they wouldn't give me a tank. In places the coral shows evidence of hurricane damage. The coral and sponges are not as plentiful or as colorful as in Cozumel, but there are lots of fish. the negligible currents around Curacao made for easy diving. For the beginner to mildly experienced diver, Curacao offers plenty to see, and plenty to do topside. Rent a car to enjoy the island. (Ph: (599-9) 462 2620; fax: (599-9) 462 6933; e-mail: CSS@cura.net; website www.caribseasports.com)

Caribbean Sea Sports, Marriott, June 2001, Robert T. Hull, So. San Francisco, CA. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 75-78 F. Logged dives: 56. Caribbean Sea Sports is located on the beach at the Marriott. They have regularly scheduled boat trips (2 tank morning

dives, 1 tank afternoon) to sites within 45 minutes by boat of the hotel. Shore diving in front of the hotel or by van to pretty much anywhere on the island. This operation is very flexible with their scheduling and attempt to get you to the best dive sites that the conditions allow. Rinse tanks and gear lockers are available at the shop. The Marriott, although beautiful, is somewhat expensive and rather far from most shopping and dining. Odors from the refinery and water purification plant are noticeable at times. West end shore diving was superb!

Easy Divers, Sunset Waters, July 2001, Bill Morley, Houston, TX. Vis: 70-100 ft. Water: 78-80 F, choppy. Logged dives: 200+. Service at resort was excellent. We arrived with 14 people late for dinner and they were able to adjust. Unlimited shore dives. Reefs were 75 to 100 yards off shore. Most dives were 60-90 ft. Light current. Self-supervised underwater. All dives explained by boat captain above water. Night dives are shore dives.

Habitat Curacao, August 2000, Stephen Griffiths, (griff@blazenet.net) Gettysburg, PA. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 130. Dive restrictions: 500 psi in tank. The dive operation was excellent. We had our 2 daughters on the trip, one newly certified and one certified at Habitat. They could not have been more helpful. The diving was a very good experience for my wife and I who have been diving for 18 years, as well as both of the girls. (Ph: 5999-8648800; fax: 011-5999-8648464; e-mail:

Curacao@HabitatDiveResorts.com;
website www.habitatdiveresorts.com)

Habitat Curacao, September 2000,
Sam & Margaret Wessinger,
Atlanta, GA. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water:
80 F. Outstanding shore diving from
pier — house reef is fabulous.
Divemasters are excellent. Accommo-
dations are very attractive, clean,
comfortable — resort has a good
design and fee. Great views — Room
710 has lots of privacy and terrific
views. Good pool. Service is pretty
good, somewhat on island time. Food
is OK, not great. Quality and selection
could stand some improvement.
Overall, we loved it. Good place for
honeymooning divers! Worthwhile to
drive around the island.

Habitat Curacao, September 2000,
G. Charles Wohlst, Winter Park,
FL. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 78-82 F,
choppy. Dive restrictions: depth.
Thoroughly enjoyable relaxing trip.
Accommodations with wonderful
views of the ocean. Dive staff were
very good with a relaxed attitude
toward diving. Coral was in very good
condition with lots of small fish,
shrimp, etc. Most of the divers seemed
very experienced which made for easy
diving even on full boats.

Habitat Curacao, September 2000,
Paul Travaline, Walpole, MA. Vis:
Good. Water: 80's. Dives logged:
100. Excellent shore diving —
available 24. Most divemasters just
ok/few excellent. Accommodations
great, pool great. Food ok, service ok.

Habitat Curacao, October 2000,
Henry F. Marcuri, Portsmouth, NH.

Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 82 F. Dive
restrictions: None. Third trip to
Curacao. Great dive operation. Staff
friendly and very helpful when
needed. Went out of their way to show
you things including a couple of sea
horses. On boat trip back stopped to
feed iguanas on cliffs. A nice finishing
touch. Could not get film processed on
same day though took 3 days to get
back first rolls even though 1 day
turnaround claimed. Food was
adequate but limited selection on most
days. The diving is great.

Habitat Curacao, November 2000,
Lewis F. Moody, III, Southport, NC.
Dive restrictions: 110. Good diving
— excellent shore diving, especially for
night dives. Our air conditioner did not
work and it took three calls to the office
and 4 days to get it repaired. The Oceans
restaurant on site very good.

Habitat Curacao, November 2000,
Irina Zeylikman, Lexington, MA.
Vis: 40-70 Ft. Water: 82-86 F, choppy.
The diving operations is excellent and
the diving itself is great, the house
reef is one of the best dive sites, but
the resort itself (especially the food in
a restaurant) has a lot of room for
improvement. Our room looked run
down (the resort is only 4 years old),
A/C was leaking all the time and still
was not fixed when we left despite our
complaints. Boats and shore facilities
have camera tables and fresh water
buckets, there is a full service photo
shop.

Habitat Curacao, December 2000,
Elaine Hopkins, (ehopperimp)
Cleveland Hts., OH. Vis: fair. Dives

logged: 50. Dive restrictions: None but most of dives were shallow. The dive operation was efficient and the divemasters pleasant and helpful. The boats were well maintained and were never full so we felt very uncrowded. The dive shop was very poor, however, with little stock and staff who didn't dive. We saw some damage from last year's hurricane on shore. Broken coral and sand cover.

Habitat Curacao, February 2001, Fiona, Toronto, ON. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, calm choppy currents. I like this dedicated dive facility. Grounds are well kept, our rooms were clean and well-maintained, mini kitchenette and fridge were useful, dive shop was helpful, dive staff top notch. Lex runs a good show. While we were there, there was construction going on for new units, and this was not noisy or disruptive to us at all. Signed up for a shore dive package, electing to boat dive a la carte. The house reef is healthy, great night diving. Got a rental pickup and dive site guide, and had a great time diving the northwest end and central part of the island. Tanks available 24 hrs, Nitrox also an option. Whales were seen by our dive buddies off the resort.

Habitat Curacao, April 2001, Stewart M. Kaslow, Maplewood, NJ. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm no currents. Plan a car rental, as there is some very nice shore diving. The management and staff do a great job to ensure a wonderful vacation. Fresh

water buckets available for cameras only, E6 Processing available on site.

Habitat Curacao, May 2001, Gary & Marie Scheidt (diverdown@netusa1.net) Hartford City, IN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Second trip to Habitat in two years. The divemasters made it very enjoyable, both in the water and out. The house reef is in very good shape, we found octopus, lobsters, eels, and the usual tropicals. You can make multiple dives daily, and enjoy each one. Shallow areas still show the effects of hurricane Lenny, however below 30 feet they are in good shape. All staff members both at the dive operation, restaurant, and hotel, were very friendly and attentive. The units could use a little paint, inside, and on the doors, but are still in good shape. The entire atmosphere is very relaxed, and comfortable. A good place to do photography and video. Could use a better camera rinse tank on boat, was not enough room for the number of cameras taken on each trip.

Habitat Curacao, May 2001, Jennifer Obsgarten, Oakland, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Typically dove 3-5 times/day from shore. Can go out anytime day or night with no restrictions. Partner did a solo sunrise dive at 5AM to watch the fish wake up. Unfortunately, the reef and the resort are starting to show signs of wear and tear. The dive operation is first class, all employees are very helpful and pleasant but there's been no money at all put into

the resort facilities and it shows. The rooms are getting dirty and worn, and beds sag. Air cond. works great. The food has always ranged from decent to awful, but the service in the restaurant is significantly better than on our first visit. Since there is nowhere else to eat nearby without renting a car, it would be nice if they would improve the food. Four years ago, when the resort first opened, the house reef was the equal of any in the Caribbean. Now, too many beginners and photographers crashing into the reef have beaten it up. There are still lots of fish, but you need to swim pretty far to find reefs that are still pristine.

Habitat Curacao, May 2001, John Anderson, New York, NY. Vis: 70-80 ft. Water: 82-85 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 3,000. Good place for macro photography, great small stuff on reef (seahorses, shrimp, crabs, etc.) reef killed to death. Reef and sand Curraea Baring, but great place to relax, do a fine dinner, fabulous pool. Food good, room great, island ok, a lot of crime.

Habitat Curacao, Coral Estates, June 2001, Mary Jane Mesojedec, Chesterland, OH. Vis: 70-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F, choppy. Logged dives: 220. We rent a house at the Coral Estates, a housing development where the Habitat is located. Most houses have their own private pool and are ocean-front. Prices vary according to the size of the house. e-mail Caribbean Holiday Bookings chb.cur@ibm.net. There are many large supermarkets to purchase food and these houses have clothes washers. Walk to the Habitat to dive. Also a nice beach 5 minutes away at Porto Marie.

Habitat Curacao, June 2001, David Andel, Athens, IL. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy. For the first time ocean diving it was great. The staff was very helpful, had some problems with the boat on two days. Very friendly and helpful staff.

Habitat Curacao, June 2001, Jim N. Parkhill, Edinburg, TX. Vis: 60-110 ft. Water: 78-82 F. The rooms, facilities, staff and dive operations left little to be desired. The restaurant was grossly overpriced with few palatable dishes and service frustratingly slow. Our room contained a kitchenette with refrigerator and stove so a trip to the local supermarket and meals in the room was the way to go. The dive operation was efficient, the dive boats good, the dive masters top notch. There was a nice mix and variety in the sites dived by boat. Quantity and quality of marine life was as good as any Caribbean destination — abundant spotted drums), trumpet fish, puffers, trunk fish, flounder, eels, seahorses, frogfish. House reef could be dived any time day or night. The dive shop was always open. The wall begins 60 yards from the dive dock. An easy-to-follow rope leads to the drop off. One can dive the house reef over and over at varying depths and always encounter plenty. Transition dives between dusk and dark were especially delightful. The return through the rubble and sand served up eels, flounder and other interesting critters in 10 to 20 feet of water. The trip was put together on the Rodale's Magazine Diver To Diver Message

Board. A group of 35 divers from the four corners of the U.S. and Hawaii who had never met except through the message board converged and the chemistry was immediate.

Habitat Curacao, August 2001, Clay Coleman (clayco@mindspring.com)

Baton Rouge, LA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet.

Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy no currents. Good; House reef is a great dive.

Several large, resident green morays, abundant spotted and goldentail morays. Grunt and goatfish schools, blackbar soldierfish, many brown chromis, good macro. Corals in good shape for a house reef. Accommodations very comfortable and clean.

Bananquits and saffron finches on the balcony each morning. Sugar and water station at the restaurant attracted many colorful birds. Friendly staff.

Boat diving was also very good.

Interesting reefs, boga schools, saw cornetfish on two occasions at different sites. Similar to Bonaire, with an abundance of small stuff.

Green morays were the largest fish we saw, one fully exposed one longer than I (5'10"), placid as a hound dog.

Excellent shore diving facility, available 24 hours a day. The restaurant was slow, overpriced, and the food was nothing special. Remoteness of the resort makes it hard to find other options, but we had a nice, cheap meal at Porto Mari nearby (nice dives there, too). Skipped the boat dive and rented a car for a half day for that trip. The restaurant bill includes a 10% gratuity in small print, followed by a prominent blank for tips. We did

not notice the 10% until our last day and had been tipping a total of 30%, sneaky. As many as 20 divers on 40' boats for the boat dives — crowded. Restaurant closed at 2pm for regular lunches. Couldn't get there in time after a morning boat dive on one day, had to settle for the snack menu. Many families with small children were in residence; nice if you like kids running around. One divemaster was somewhat forward with the ladies in a good natured way. We were entertained, but some may be offended. Separate camera rinse at the dive shop. Rinse buckets on boats, but not enough room for a housed system or double strobe system. Knowledgeable crew.

Lion's Dive, June 2001, David L.

Tester, Chattanooga, TN. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. Great all around vacation destination. The people are friendly, good restaurants, and Williamstad is beautiful. It's a large island so rent a car especially if you plan on doing any shore diving. Rabid dive freaks should stick to Bonaire. Our dives, which ended up being all shore dives except one, were on slow boats in what we were assured were unusually choppy conditions. By the time we got to the dive sites, changed sites due to "unusually strong current" did two dives and got back to dock it was frequently three in the afternoon, leaving only late afternoon to attempt shore dives, which were discouraged for the most part by the divemasters. The coral was healthy, many of the walls were practically vertical, but the

fish, with the exception of an occasional large school of juveniles, were few. Lions Dive is a charming small resort, with clean rooms pleasant landscaping and good food. The beaches were clean and the proximity to local "beach hot spots" was great. Boat did have a designated fresh water "bucket" for cameras but no tables or secure dry areas. (Ph: 1-866-LIONS DIVE; fax: 1-954-217-9980 or 599 (9) 434-8888; e-mail us-canada@lionsdive.com or info@lionsdive.com; website <http://lionsdive.com>)

Ocean Encounters, February 2001, Fiona, Toronto, ON. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, calm choppy currents. Attached to Princess Beach Resort. We signed on to dive the Superior Producer wreck when Habitat's scheduled trip was full. Great dive briefing and video of a dive to this 100 foot deep wreck, and indicated their safety procedures (Oxygen on board, safety hang bar below the boat at 15 feet). However, we never got to see this in action because the marker buoy for the wreck was missing, and we went to another 2 sites. These were good dives, but not what we were expecting. We rebooked for the next morning after being told the buoy would be replaced before then. However, when we drove down to Ocean Encounters next a.m., we were told the buoy wasn't there yet, come back in the afternoon. Although we declined the offer, their boat and facilities were in good shape. (Ph: 599-9-4618581; fax: 599-9-4618581;

e-mail info@oceanencounters.com; website www.oceanencounters.com)

Ocean Encounters, Peter Hughes Diving, Lions Dive, June 2001, Roy Baggett, Murfreesboro, TN. Logged dives: 175. Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 84 F. Water Conditions: A lot of wave action and current on most dive sites. Dive suggested profiles, i.e., Max depth 75', 1500 psi turnaround or 30 minutes, usually 1 hour max dive time. Ocean Encounters Curacao/Peter Hughes Diving is an excellent operator. Staff at shop is very friendly and knowledgeable. The boats are dependable with safe and courteous captains. Divemasters are in the water with each group one in the lead and one at the rear of the group and at least one divemaster stays in the water until the last diver is on the boat. We aborted our primary preplanned dive site one day due to current and cross currents that our boat captain detected and dove an alternate site. The diving conditions are a lot more advanced than the books would lead you to believe except for those shore diving sites such as Playa Divi and Playa Laguna. We started out with 11 divers on the boat! The first day and at the end of the week we had 5 divers still diving in our group. Insect infestation in our bathroom at Lion's Dive. Upon check in I noticed our room had a very strong wintergreen odor, but the odor was gone by Monday morning. On Tuesday night/Wednesday morning I got up during the night to use the bathroom: hundreds of winged insects on the mirror, around the shower, with larva and pupi hatching in front of my

sleepy eyes and becoming these winged insects. The next morning, I went down to the desk and a staff member grabbed a can of spray and went to our room with me. He did not say much and proceeded to spray the bathroom and here it came that distinctive wintergreen smell again. I told the staff member that I wanted once the insects were dead our bathroom completely cleaned and scrubbed, all new wash linens, glasses, soap, and toilet tissue. No telling what was in that spray since we were in a country which has no EPA. After diving all morning we came back to our room and it was pretty clean; yet, I found tell tale signs of our insect friends and had more of them coming out of the drains. I demand a new room, which we got. The hotel sent us a letter of apology for the insect infestation and a couple of T-shirts. No one else had any insect or vermin problems. I would pay more to stay at the Princess just down the beach.

Ocean Encounters, Princess Beach Resort & Casino, June 2001, Tony Maceo, Miami Lakes, FL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 72 to 76 F, choppy surge currents. Our suitcase with clothes delayed a day. We went during Kids Sea Camp. The diving was fabulous with sheer walls sloping at generally 45 degrees starting as shallow as 10 feet and dropping over 300 ft. All this within 30 yards off the beach/shore. Tons of fish and coral in prolific colors and species. Seahorses, several squid. Greg from Scuba Radio and his wife escorted us back to our entry point. Lots of

Pedersen cleaner shrimp ready to jump on your hand and remove any dead skin from your fingers! Some huge lobsters. The water was very blue and clear. Night dive was so-so, the shore diving was as good as any sites taken boat. No big marine life! The dive operation was excellent and the dive masters gave excellent briefings. You never felt like they were babysitting. They were very helpful in pointing out marine life(seahorses) but not intrusive. This was current diving, although not of the mask ripping kind. Adults dove in the morning while the kids went to the Sea Aquarium next door for hands-on lessons. They had fun snorkeling with stingrays, tarpon, Goliath grouper. The kids even appeared in Sport Diver magazine since noted underwater photographer Bill Harrigan was shooting away. Willemstad was beautiful in history and architecture. The moving water bridge was interesting.

Ocean Encounters, Lions Dive Hotel, September 2001, Bruce Dickson (brucedickson@earthlink.net) Apex, NC. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 F, calm. Peter Hughes Ocean Encounters: Comfortable, fast boat (28 foot Delta). Consistent 3000+ air fills. Boat/dive crew were excellent; good briefings, option to dive with divemaster or as a separate group. SDI Solo Diver certification was recognized. Delicious fresh fruit, cake during surface intervals, also shore trips where practical. Profusion of hard corals and small critters. Not many schooling fish, and barely any large pelagics. Definitely a Macro destination.

Beach diving was excellent, with a large concrete entry platform and a solid exit ladder. The House Reef was as good as the reefs reached by boat. The tank rack was often empty by afternoon. We were told we could use the 63's from the seaquarium, or carry our own tank from the dive store (5 minutes walk). Good lockers, but drying facilities were inadequate, one small rack for up to 4 boats. The dive store is about to relocate to a new facility. Lions Dive Hotel was clean, comfortable, and had good food in the restaurant. Service was on island time! Big rinse bucket on boat, but no camera table. E-6 processing unavailable due to relocation of dive store.

Peter Hughes Diving, Princess Beach Resort, November 2000,
James and Wanda Hightower,
(jimhightower1@worldnet.att.net)
Port Orchard, WA. Vis: 20-50 ft.
Water: 79 F. Dives: 2,000. Restrictions: Depth 80', no touching or taking marine life. Diving was great. Everything was close to land. The sightseeing was fantastic. The people were very helpful. Didn't need as much clothing as we took. Would be nice to know when we are on a topless beach, though this is not a tourist trap.

Peter Hughes Diving, Princess Beach,
December 2000, Minh Nguyen
(minh@mninternational.net)
Belmont, CA. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet.
Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy surge.
Princess Beach Resort is a joke. Bad management, poorly trained employees everywhere. We went through Tropical Adventure. I got a feeling that they don't keep up to date with

the services that they partner up with—the bad hotel services in Curacao. The diving operation is well run. The divemasters pretty much let you dive your own profile. But, their boats are too crowded: 18 people per boat. They kept going to the same spots. We dove only 7 dives and they already recycle the dive sites. One couple dove the same spot 3 times. When I asked if we can do Hell's Corner and some other spots, the dive master just gave me a blank stare and said he doesn't know where they are. I think PADI should give this place a run over. All their refill hoses connections are badly rusted. **(Ph: 800-93206237 or 305-669-9391; fax 305-669-9475, e-mail dancer@peterhughes.com; website www.peterhughes.com)**

Silent Immersion Curacao, February 2001, Fiona, Toronto, ON.
Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, calm choppy currents. Fortunately, the local road map had an ad for this shop, and we were not disappointed. Yes, we could get a divemaster to shore dive the Superior Producer. The owner Hans runs a PADI training center and dive shop with lots of great gear. The dive to the Producer was everything advertised, despite surface chop and strong currents at depth. We also went with Silent Immersion for a day trip to Klein Curacao. The viz was 60 foot, but worth the extra boat trip. **((599) 9 767 7014; e-mail info@curacao-silentimmersion.com; website www.curacao-silentimmersion.com)**

Sun Reef Village, Norman B. Ross,
October 2000 and May 2001. 5

minutes from Willemstad and 2 minutes from a super market. Ocean view two bedroom apartment with a fully equipped kitchen for \$100 per day. Only the bedrooms were air conditioned and it was very hot several afternoons in the living area and on the patio. There was a television set, but most programs were in Spanish or Dutch. Mosquitoes were thick. Food prices at the supermarket were very reasonable as were the prices in the restaurants at night. Beer and gasoline were way over priced. The exchange rate is 1.71 to 1 and you have to keep an eye on the checkers at the super market. Check your bill at Sun Reef, I did not and it cost me \$20. Water 90-92 F, 40-60 ft. visibility and mild current. I rented tanks from Wederfoot Diving School, which is located 2 blocks from Sun Reef, for \$6 per tank and this included weights. I was shore diving in front of Sun Reef and Wederfoot. The reef starts about 100 yards from shore and rolls over the edge making for a more or less wall dive. There is a large variety of coral and fish. You will not find any large fish like a grouper, but there is a lot of smaller fish. Spotted drum, trumpet fish, blue tang, blackbar soldierfish, parrotfish. The casinos are small, smell bad, have Mickey Mouse rules and no drink girls. I can recommend Jaanchi at Westpunt, Fort Waakzaamheid and Grill King at Waterfort Arches for good food at reasonable prices — \$50 to 60 for two people. Driving around can be an adventure, because there are very few street signs. (Ph: 599-9-888-3594; fax 599-9-888-3594; e-mail: mesker@setarnet.aw)

Underwater Curacao, Princess Beach, March 2001, Lori Siebert, Manchester, NH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, choppy no Currents. I had booked with the Princess Beach and Underwater Curacao before I read all the derogatory remarks in the chapbook. I have to agree that it was one of the worst Peter Hughes operations. Underwater Curacao now owns Princess diving and the Lions Dive group. I called the dive shop before we left the states, and they assured us that everything was fine and that their boats had been running everyday like clockwork. On the second day, their boat broke down and dives were canceled for that afternoon. From the third day on, all afternoon dives started at 2:30 instead of the original schedule of 1:30, and they were reduced from a 2-tank to a 1-tank dive. However, this decision was made each day at around 12:00 to 1:00, and it ate up a lot of our time traveling back and forth to the shop trying to figure out their schedule. We only ended up doing 2 boat dives with this group the entire week because of all the confusion with the afternoon dives. One minute we are leaving at 2:30 for a 1-tank, the next at 1:30 for a 2-tank, and then back to 2:30 for a 1-tank. At least one day the Princess divers were sent out with another dive shop because of boat problem with Underwater Curacao at the Princess Beach. The two times we actually went on the Princess' boat, the diesel fumes were harsh. The divemaster acknowledged that something was not working right with the exhaust, but

that it had been like that for a while and didn't seem to be a big deal. On the only calm day we had, one diver threw-up only because of the fumes. On another day we showed up to do a shore dive, and all the tanks were missing. When we asked where they were they told us that their compressor was broke and that they had to take them to another dive shop to have them filled. At that point we just had to laugh and shake our heads. It was a comedy scene everyday! However, it was one that the entire shop seemed to be use to. The divemasters were all very nice. They offered guided dives off the boat, or you could dive your own profile. That was nice. They helped everyone into the water, but not so much out of the water, which was needed on the second dive we did with them since the seas were a little rough. The Princess Beach Resort was a nice overall, but does have its good and bad. Our room flooded early into the trip and they had to move us. The rooms were nice and very clean but smelled a little mildewy. In our flooded room we had hot water for showers, in our second room the water was lukewarm at its very best. The grounds are kept exceptionally clean as are the pools, restaurants, and bars. The staff, especially at the bars and restaurants, were exceptionally nice. The food was excellent everywhere in this resort. However you are going to pay for that good taste. I liked Curacao as an island a lot. The diving is comparable to Bonaire, and there is a lot to do topside. (Ph: 5999-461-8131; Fax-5999-461-8581)

DOMINICA

Dominica is arguably the best all-around adventure vacation island in the Caribbean, with gorgeous reefs, plenty of tropicals (though few of eating size), lush rain forests, hiking, waterfalls, warm water springs, splendid fruits and vegetables (prepared by great local cooks), modest hotels — and it's inexpensive to boot. . . . Go forewarned: there are no beaches, even seaside hotels are affected by the nearly continuous cloud cover over the mountains, and there's not much happening beyond polite residents leading their lives. The airport doesn't handle large jets, and there's little tourism infrastructure. . . . Expect daytime temperatures in the 80s and night lows around 68 in winter and 73 in summer, although a few minutes up the mountain and into the cloud forest can change all that dramatically. . . . July to November is the wet season, but showers may occur anytime. Dominica's at the edge of the hurricane belt. . . . The thirteen-mile round-trip hike to Boiling Lake is worth getting in condition for. Dive operations usually offer two dives in the morning to allow time to tour in the afternoons. . . .

Anchorage Hotel, June 2001, Regina Cohen, Chatham, PA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 79-82 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 700. Dive restrictions: depth 100 ft. Magnificent sponge that rivals Pacific. Super cuts through pinnacles.