

The Star are among the most popular. These sites are provided with beautiful coral arrangements and Fish-life such as princess parrotfish, yellowtail damselfish, blue chromis, and black surgeon. Also, is not uncommon to see great barracudas, sharks, green morays, lobsters and turtles. Great diving!

Sea Ventures, Fajardo, January 2001, Richard Foote (footemail@prodigy.net), Lakewood, OH. Vis: 25 to 50 Feet. Water: 82 F, calm. PADI 5-star shop located in large Puerto del Ray Marina. Friendly and helpful in shop and on board; had a spare regulator on board. Only one of two 38-ft. boats working, so 18 divers plus divemasters squeezed on for 10:00-3:30 2-tank trip (nice lunch between dives and help-yourself soft drink cooler). Guided dives in groups of 4 or 5, or do your own thing. Roll call before leaving each site. Unfortunately, sites near Fajardo had low vis.(25-40 ft.), algae, few soft corals, some fish (did see spotted eagle ray). Damage caused by anchor drops. All-day Sunday 2-tank trips to Culebra or Vieques islands are somewhat better. 2.5 hr. boat ride to 1st Culebra dive site. Only 11 divers plus divemasters; supposedly for more experienced divers due to 90 ft. 1st dive, but there were new divers with instructors. Slightly better vis.(50 ft.), but not as expected as there is no surface run-off. Soft corals much better, including huge purple sea fans studded with nudibranchs. Large lobster, barracuda. (note, see Culebra web site for guest houses and dive operations; 20 min. flight from San Juan but small planes with few seats). We stayed 20-min. drive from shop at La Paloma

Guest House (lapaloma@coqui.net), very quiet with beautiful view overlooking Fajardo-Ceiba coastline. Spacious 2-bdr. apt. with sat. TV and pool, good value. Friendly owner Nilda invited us to dinner one night; she will meet you at highway exit if you call when you're close. Hiking at nearby El Yunque rainforest. Fly nonstop to San Juan from several US cities. (Ph: 800-739-3483 or (787) 863-DIVE; fax (787) 863-0199; e-mail seaventures@divepuertorico.com; website www.divepuertorico.com)

Sea Ventures, El Conquistador, June 2001, Michael Igoe (mike_igoe@estreet.com) Aurora, CO. Experience: 501- 000 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy surge. I wouldn't choose it solely as a dive destination. Sea Ventures is well run, safety conscious, and patient with beginners. Pleasant personnel. Prices are on a par with Fajardo, east end Puerto Rico.

SABA

South of St. Maarten, Saba is one of the more adventurous and exciting Caribbean destinations, both on land and in the sea. . . . Pinnacle diving begins at 70 feet, with good fish life and occasionally sharks and bigger fish. . . . All accommodations are in quaint villages at 1000 feet and above. . . . Although there are no beaches or night life, Saba has delightful people, a few good restaurants, and a cool, pleasant climate at altitude. It's also in the hurricane belt. . . . Some divers

claim that, after several days of diving, they get muscle pains if they climb 3000-ft. Mt. Scenery. . . . Be sure to close your eyes when your plane lands. . . .or take the short ferry trip from St.. Maarten.

Saba Deep, November 2000, Bob Pringle, Sparks, NV. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water 81 F with six to 8 ft swells; you had to hold on or you were "dead in the water." The air price for Seniors was about \$4 less than the ferry. The catch with flying is you have to take a 30 minute, \$18 taxi one way but it was well worth it to see the island and their roads that took 20 years to build along with their town and homes. The island looks like it was especially built for a James Bond movie. All dive operators located at the same place. The ferry also comes in there. Dive operation excellent, only two of us on the so-called dive boat. All dive operators on Saba return to shore after each dive due to the fact that all three dive operations should get together and burn all their boats. Coral in fair shape with normal number of small fish. Spotted one turtle, bug and ray. (Ph: (888) DIVE-SABA or + 59941-63347; fax + 59941-63397; e-mail diving@sabadeep.com; website www.sabadeep.com)

Saba Deep, March 2001, Stephen Cushman, San Diego, CA. We loved the Needle when we dove there several years ago, when we dive from a private yacht. This time Mike of Saba Deep sent us out on one of his boats, saying that we could no longer take our own boat to the dive sites. He

sent a man named Mike who, it turned out, had done several dives that day and this being a deep site could only stay down a few minutes. This was not disclosed and we all surfaced with over 1000 # of air. What a rip off! Keep up the good work we really appreciate your honest reviews!

Saba Deep, Queen's Gardens, March 2001, Roger Soape (ras@rasoape.com) Houston, Texas. Experience: 101-50 dives Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy. No beaches and very little night life, sparsely populated Saba is a wonderful escape. Queen's Gardens accommodations very nice and staff helpful and welcoming. Dry season and low cisterns meant a scarcity of water. New French chef and wife (Bruno and Camille) prepared very nice dinners at the hotel. Short taxi rides to other good restaurants (YIHK, Tropics and Swinging Doors). Sleeping with all windows open, high above the town of The Bottom, we were awakened each morning by roosters crowing in town and the sounds of goats on the steep hillsides. Nice hiking on very steep trails but if you do not dive there is very little to do. Tourists jammed St. Martin airport, and Winair service to and from Saba, leave a great deal to be desired. Travelers should allow at least two hours to make connections. Saba Deep wonderful! Three dives per day, with good lunches after second dives at Inn Two Deep over the dive shop. Fifteen dives and only once were there more than four to six guests diving from the small boat. Mike, Mike, Jim and Andrew (owners and divemasters)

are mature, responsible, warm and fun loving. They accommodated differing skill levels. Once they had seen some of us in the water for a few days, they provided extra special dives for experienced divers and wanted us all to have input into the dive sites and to have a great dive trip. Diving is on deep pinnacles and steep shoreline walls. Moorings are all in deep water and many dives begin at more than 70 feet. Volcanic material and absence of beaches means good visibility. We saw sharks (black tips and Caribbean reef) on two pinnacle dives, nurse sharks and turtles on two or three dives, many spotted morays and several golden tail morays, several large seahorses, large jacks and groupers and a large number of healthy tropicals. Corals and sponges are pretty and healthy but not spectacular except, perhaps, on incredible pinnacles. The area surrounding the island is a marine park, and it shows! Wind on several days made for choppy surface conditions but the boat rides are generally less than ten minutes. A great trip for experienced divers who do not mind the depths. Less so (particularly the morning pinnacle dive) for beginners. A little pricey for the typical Caribbean diver. Boats are small and boat rides short so camera rinse tank not provided without specific request. Rinse tank and work space available on request in dockside dive shop.

Saba Deep, June 2001, Donald L. Sherry, Ocala, FL. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 70-82 F, calm and flat. Logged Dives: 3,000+. Dive restrictions:

None, but close watch was kept. Juliana's was really great! Get room #7. Tropica Café was fine (ask Caroline what's special!). Saba Deep was very good, very helpful, did a great job. Ask to dive with Andrew, "Big Mike" can be a bit much! In-Two-Deep fine and reasonable for lunch. An island and dive operation for the more advanced and hard-core divers (like to dive a lot). 3 dives per day. Seamounts were cool. Be sure to dive twilight zone, man-o-war shoals, third encounter. Pass on diamond rock, ladder labyrinth.

Saba Deep, Cottage Club, July 2001, Stanley Richter (diveserv@prodigy.net) Oak Ridge, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy surge. The undersea pinnacle diving is incredible — saw sharks and turtles on every dive. At "Eye of the Needle" we saw numerous black tips and reef sharks and a 12 foot bull shark followed us to the boat from 110 feet. No crowds, wonderful people and the Cottage Club is the nicest place, private and comfortable. Saba Deep is a professional dive operations got us to the best dive sites and gave excellent dive briefings. Mike Myers and Big Mike provide the ultimate diving experience!

Saba Deep, Juliana's, July 2001, Cindy Camacho, Oak Ridge, NJ. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 90 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy surge. Juliana's is wonderful with all the comforts of home. Tropics Cafe has excellent food and Johnson's Car Rental is the place to rent a car for exploring the beautiful island.

Juliana's is on the Windward side and is a landscaped paradise with wonderful views. Juliana, Vanessa and Franklin treat everyone like family. Saba Deep takes care of everything.

Sea Saba, January 2001, Tim and Robin Kirkpatrick, Lithonia, GA.

My wife and I have visited Saba frequently, beginning in 1988. The island has regained its beauty and the reefs are healthy as well, with abundant fish and greater numbers of black tip sharks than ever before. Not only was there a fresh water shower at the stern of the boat for rinsing off ourselves, the dive masters used it to rinse our gear daily. Also, a fresh water barrel was maintained at the Fort Bay dive shop to rinse any gear we wished to take back to our room. We were able to take advantage of Sea Saba's newly installed Nitrox membrane system, and Nitrox is a terrific improvement! Diving the pinnacles on EAN32 is great because of extended bottom times and the added safety. Sea Saba's two new dive boats are comfortable and well-equipped. These boats, Nitrox, and the professional staff, have firmly entrenched Sea Saba as the islands premier dive operation.

Sea Saba, Smith's Gingerbread Cottage, January 2001, Bobby Lamb (lambr@bellsouth.net) Lake Wylie, SC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100+ Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, choppy surge. Sea Saba (www.SeaSaba.com) made arrangements for taxi service to and from our cottage, the airport, and the dive boats every day. They had two large boats and limit the trips to 10 divers. The staff was very helpful and searched for

good dive sites. The crew looked after our personal gear which we left on the boat the entire week. The dive masters were required guides on the deep pinnacle dives each day, but we could dive our own profile on consecutive shallower dives. My wife and I used Nitrox. A third dive was always offered to us each day, if we wanted to go. The diving was fantastic and the marine life was healthy. We saw black tip sharks, turtles, and free swimming morays among the usual tropicals. The January weather changed the sea swells around the island and allowed us to dive a few times off the windward shore. On a couple of dives, we heard whales singing as they migrated. "Eye of the Needle" is an awesome formation and a short swim from "Third Encounter"; we would stick our hands into yellow stains on the black sandy bottom which were volcanically heated at "Hot Springs." One of our 5 days of diving was canceled due to high seas, but we made up for it on the other days. After our daily diving, the taxi would make a quick stop at the dive shop in Windwardside so that the staff could make reservations for us at any of the restaurants for dinner. Thanks to Sea Saba staff members Lynn Costenaro, Dick and Paula Litzel, Steve Giles, Susan Hurrell, Manny Lynch, Garvis Hassell, Matt, and Charlotte for an enjoyable diving experience. Smith's Gingerbread Cottage which was more house than we needed. A charming, fully furnished 2 bed/2 bath cottage with a picket fenced yard, a 10 x 20 fresh water pool, a gazebo, cable TV, stereo-cd player, and a phone. No A/C,

but a constant breeze through open windows kept it cool. Every morning from the front porch, we were greeted with the sea 1500 feet below us and a view of St. Eustatius. On clearer days, we could see St. Kitts and Nevis. The island houses collected rainwater from the roofs into cisterns. We used this water for drinking and bathing. The cottage was on the sea side of Booby Hill about a 1/2 mile from Windwardside. Every evening we walked to the village restaurants and back. It was uphill and steep, but we welcomed the exercise. Our favorite watering hole was the Swinging Doors which offered great barbecue. Other excellent restaurants were Y2K, Brigadoon, and Tropics Café. Most of the time during the week, we ran into the same people that were on the dive boats. No sandy beaches, no night life, no cruise ships, and very peaceful without too many American (bad) influences. The people were friendly and everyone says hello. A very laid back environment. The first day on the island, we had a challenging hike through a rainforest to the top of Mt. Scenery (2855 ft). The vista was breathtaking. The entire island was clean from the top of the mountains to the bottom of the sea. Our flight itinerary showed only 25 minutes from the time we landed in St. Martin to catch the last WinAir flight to Saba that day. As soon as we land in St. Martin to not go to immigrations, but to proceed to Gate 10 for in transit travelers. At our home airport, we checked our bags straight to Saba. We had no problems catching the last flight. Had back up plans provided by

Sea Saba in case we didn't make the last plane. (Ph: (800) 883-SABA or + 59941-62246; fax + 59941-62362; e-mail divemaster@seasaba.com; website www.seasaba.com)

Sea Saba, Juliana's, May 2001, Walt Sommer (divemon@i2k.com)

Gaylord, MI. Vis: 50-90 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged 526. Dive restrictions enforced: 130. After a great week on the Caribbean Explorer, we met up with Sea Saba's boat while it was moored near Man O'War Shores. We moved to in Flossie's cottage at no extra charge. Nitrox special all week for \$49 extra. Excellent diving at sites the Explorer can't moor at due to size. We avoided baggage charges by not flying into Saba. Sea Saba run very smoothly.

Sea Saba, Juliana's, May 2001, Karla Kerekes, Cincinnati, OH. Vis:

60-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F, calm and flat, choppy. Diving restrictions: depth, safety stop. Logged dives: over 100. Flight from St. Martin to Saba is not as bad as described but I am glad the weather was good. Juliana's is very nice, near town and great people. At 1,000 feet there was a breeze so we did not need air conditioning, good thing since there wasn't one. The cottages looked very nice, would recommend checking those out if you want more space. Dives were very good but first dive was always 100 ft. I prefer a little more shallow diving so you can spend more time checking things out. On each deep dive we always saw 1 or 2 sharks, mostly black tip but a nurse shark on occasion. Dive operation offered Nitrox even for 120 ft. dives. Boats were

nice. One did not have a head. Both provided shade. Crew very friendly and helpful. Dive masters pointed out special critters.

Sea Saba, May 2001, Carrie and Buddy Nobles, Brentwood, TN. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 80 F, choppy. Logged dives: 85. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. Second time here. Great diving, friendly people, best dive shop/operation we have ever seen — Lynn and John do a wonderful job of making the dive experience memorable. The diving was even better than 10 years ago. Black tips on every pinnacle dive, corals and tropicals healthy, several turtles — one swam up to my wife, looked into her face mask about a foot away, then lazily swam away. Stayed at cottage with view overlooking windward side and both sides of island — economical, good accommodations, convenient. This is a great island!

Sea Saba, Queens Garden, Cottage Club, July 2001, Lani Selter, Winston-Salem, NC. Dives logged: more than 150. The quality of the diving depends on the assigned dive crew. Stuart and Bruno were the best but unfortunately were not scheduled many days we dove. Instead we had Paul and Steve. After our first day we almost packed up and moved to St. Eustatius. We decided to forego the hassle and stayed. If you like loud, arrogant, controlling divemasters then Paul's your man. Sea Saba will crowd the boats if they need to and in an effort to keep their boats as full as possible will go back to the port to

pick up divers between dives. This occurred 5 out of our 6 days so we had to hear the boat briefing 10 or 11 times. The boat carries no food and Sea Saba doesn't let you know ahead of time to bring your own. This is difficult if you land on Saba late Saturday as stores close at 5 pm and don't re-open until Monday morning. Diving is tightly controlled which, on the deep pinnacles, is understandable but the ultra control on the shallow dives is oppressive and interfered with hunting for small critters. The dive staff mixes seasoned divers with those new or being certified. Steve and Paul repeatedly go to Tent Reef which is underwhelming but easy to get to and can accommodate the various levels of divers thus making their job easier. The pinnacles are magnificent! They are pristine and covered with huge, healthy coral and sea life. We started out at Queen's Garden Resort. We were the only people staying there and all of the staff, including the chef, had quit a few days prior to our arrival. It is remote and difficult to get to windwardside which is where everything is located. After one day we moved to Cottage Club where the rooms are clean and the owners are very friendly and accommodating. All of the rooms have a kitchenette. Brigadoon and Tropics were the best restaurants. The food was excellent at both places.

Sea Saba, Juliana's House, August 2001, Ted & Ginger (Powers739@aol.com) Stuart, FL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm choppy. The people are friendly.

Juliana's is clean, friendly, quiet, great location, and very accommodating. The Topic Café next door –ate breakfast there every morning (part of the package) and ordered a bagged lunch to bring on the boat. Sea Saba had the biggest boats on the island (4-8 divers on a 38' Delta); the crew was very knowledgeable and friendly. We used 32% EAN. They would set up your gear, rinse it gear off at the end of the day, store the gear at their facility. The boats were well equipped, fresh water rinse hose and provided drinking water and a cooler to store your lunch. Dive Saba (www.divesaba.com) Travel agency — Beth — made sure everything was taken care; you can't beat her for booking and getting the best prices. Transportation to and from the airport/boat was part of our package. Taxis are available to get to other parts of the island. The restaurants were small and served excellent meals. Reservations are preferred. Don't be surprised if your waiter was your divemaster, or the owner of the restaurant is diving with you. The dollar was accepted at all places, credit cards were accepted at most places. No film developing facilities.

ST. EUSTATIUS

An historically significant island, St. Eustatius, which lies fifty miles south of St. Maarten, was the first to recognize the United States as a country. As a result, British Men o' War pounded the island to a pulp. Some artifacts from the barrage can still be found in the murky water of the bay, and low-profile reefs offshore provide some

diving. . . . The protected marine park is beginning to pay off, with pretty reefs and increasing numbers of fish. A hike up the Quill, an extinct volcano, is worth the effort.

Golden Rock Divers, Old Gin House, September 2000, Terry & Karen Plaxton, W. Bloomfield, MI.

Vis: 50-80 ft. the hurricanes stayed their distance. St. Eustatius (Statia) is a very small Dutch island between Saba and St. Kitts. It's about a 30-minute flight from St. Martin on a twin engine Otter and a lot of fun if you have to make a stop in Saba. The landing and take off are worth the price of the ticket! We were met at FDR Airport in Statia by Michele, wife of Glenn Faire. They are the owners of Golden Rock Divers (www.goldenrockdiver.com). Michele gave us the short ride to The Old Gin House (www.oldginhouse.com). Old Gin House is very nice. Only fourteen room, very nice private pool, great dining room and bar and directly across the street from the Caribbean waterfront. Hot water that was on sometimes and sometimes not but then it's the Caribbean. Oranjestad is quite nice with many places to eat although a few were closed for hurricane season. There are also a couple of good places for groceries and liqueur, if you're so inclined. The diving was very good, lots of good healthy coral, fairly good tropicals, tons of lobster and rays. No sharks. Some turtles. Almost all diving is within the Marine Park (separate fee of \$35.00/person/week). Large (size) tropical fish. Some big Filefish, Queen and French