

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

angelfish. Lots of Goldentail and Spotted Morays. Easy to find Flying Gurnards, juvenile and adult Spotted Drums. Golden Rock Dive Center (Glenn, Michele, Reynaldo and Duncan) are very "user friendly" and a lot of fun. Diving time and depth are set every dive but once you've shown your skills you can pretty much do your thing. Just do a stop and be back with 500 lb. Water was around 85 degrees and surface calm air 90-95. The Old Gin House rooms have good AC! Blue Bead Hole: it's fun and if you find one (blue bead) it's a real treasure and keepsake. No extreme diving. Long walks and relaxing are the main activities top side. (Ph: (800) 311-6658; fax + 5993-182964; e-mail grdivers@goldenrock.net; website www.goldenrockdive.com)

Golden Rock Dive Center, Mama Jean's Little Round Hill House, June 2001, Kar DeGeiso

(kard@magpage.com) Newark, DE. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to F, calm no currents. Mama Jean's has a few rooms. There are refrigerators, and she opens her kitchen for people to cook meals. Rooms are clean. Bathroom is inside, but the shower is outside. Kind of rustic, but nice. Food stores pretty much sell what we can get here in the US. Nice restaurants in town and on the lower part of town. Mama Jean's is about a 20 minute walk from town and the dive shop. Did rent a car, and lady at airport was nice enough to send Rosie over for the car rental. (Rainbow Rentals). Last year's Chapbook was promising, so I went. Glad I did.

Golden Rock Dive center was very accommodating. Glenn and Michele who own the shop are very friendly and helpful. We e-mailed back and forth before I got there. Michele met me at the airport and helped me to find my lodging. Reynaldo and Ger are the divemasters. Reynaldo provided lunch between the dives. Both are knowledgeable and very good divemasters. Since I was looking for fish and inverts for id, we only did the reefs, which are in great shape. There was a lot of algae, but it did not interfere with the conditions of the coral. Lots and lots of fish and macro too. Saw a fingerprint cyphoma! Lots of history and artifacts. Lots of macro. Orangesided gobies with shrimp, flaming helmet, yellowface pikeblenny, decorator crabs, and lots more. Was very impressed with Golden Rock Dive Center and the diving. Golden Rock was not set up to accommodate cameras. I took my camera, but had to wait until I got back on shore to rinse off. I don't even think that there is a place on the island for film processing, let alone E6. The people are very friendly, the diving is good, there is a lot of history, the restaurants are good (especially the Chinese restaurant in town), not much nightlife, and lots of nature. I hiked the Quill (an extinct volcano) and did some birdwatching.

Golden Rock Dive Shop, Ole Gin House, July 2001, Dana Mardaga (dmardaga@stanford.edu)(no city, state). Vis: 80 ft. Water: 82 F. Cruise ships don't call on this island. It is a quiet and friendly place where history

is everywhere, from the old forts and shipwrecks to ancient buildings built by slaves in the 17th and 18th centuries. Walked through the old town, past the old cemeteries, some which have grave sites of people born in the 1720's. Cannons and old anchors can be found above and below water. Local people are very friendly. Almost everyone waves and says hello. One lady from North Carolina said she had lived there for 16 years without a lock on her door. Diving was safe and fun. The ocean floor slopes gradually down and out to the wall. The wall starts at 80" and is too far out for a shore dive. Coral is in good shape. A lot of big barrel sponges, even in shallow areas. Being a marine park, fish are plentiful and friendly. Turtles and nurse sharks let me get close to take pictures. Saw a couple of flying gurnards that spread their big blue fins forward. A school of squid followed us on one dive. Saw a snake eel sticking out of the sand. We snorkeled and did a few nice shallow shore dives in front of the dive shop and saw a lot of fish and more canons. Golden Rock Dive Shop: owners Glenn and Michelle Faires booked our hotel and the Winair flight from St. Maarten and picked us up at the airport. Golden Rock was flexible about departure times, the sites are close, and they come back to the shop after every dive. The dive staff was very friendly. The Gin House is close to the dive shop. Rooms were newly redecorated and very comfortable. The main part of the hotel was built in the 1700's as a cotton gin and has been beautifully restored. The food was very good, a

little pricey, but there are other restaurants near by. The Gin House chef was willing to make less elaborate lunches, like a sandwich. Book a historical tour with Mr. Daniels. He has lived on Statia his whole life and gives a great tour in his van. The museum is a must. Herds of goats, cows and chickens roam free. The volcano can be hiked in about 45 minutes. We didn't encounter any no-see-ums or mosquitoes. There is a chamber on the island and a medical school. www.goldenrockdive.com 1-800-311-6658.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

These small, intimate islands have a lot of "Old Caribbean" charm. Their strong suits are gracious hotels and old inns, verdant, green scenery, and lovely beaches. The diving is decent, but there are no thrills. . . .

ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia lies in the hurricane belt west of Barbados. Diving on this beautiful, heavily-forested island, with pretty reefs and tiny fish, is managed and controlled. . . . Anse Chastenet hotel is located near the Pitons on the southwestern part of island, where the better diving is, but it's rigidly controlled; there's not much worth seeing elsewhere underwater. . . . The year-round high is in the 80s days; night lows are in the 70s. Afternoon cloudbursts are common. . . .

Anse Chastenet, January 2001,
Dave Dille (ddille@primary.net) St.