

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.