

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](http://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](mailto:ddille@primary.net)) St.**

**Louis, MO.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, choppy. Romantic destination. The rooms and beaches were magnificent and service and meals were wonderful. St. Lucia is a beautiful tropical island with a wealth of topside attractions and activities. The dive operation, SCUBA St. Lucia, and the diving in general were strictly average. The divemasters did not even try to be helpful with gear or enthusiastic about the dive sites. The viz was terrible and there was a great deal of coral damage. (Ph: 758-459-7000; fax 758-459-7700; e-mail [ansechastanet@candw.lc](mailto:ansechastanet@candw.lc); website [www.ansechastanet.com](http://www.ansechastanet.com))

**Anse Chastanet, June 2001, Phil and Kathy, Atlanta, GA.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: calm and flat. Logged dives: 100+. Dive restrictions: 65 ft.

**Anse Chastanet, August 2001, Robert M. Jackson, Birmingham, AL.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm no currents. The divemasters kindly provided us the freedom to dive our own profiles. They "looked the other way" while we made several deep dives on air. Poor visibility, few marine animals and typical Caribbean resort diving. Anse Chastanet is a pleasant resort, rather than a dive destination. Not worth bringing large amounts of equipment.

**Frog's Diving, Windjammer Landing Resort, February 2001, Scott Campbell (SDCamp1113@cs.com) Seattle, WA.** Vis: 80 to 100 Feet.

Water: 78 to 79 F, calm. Experience: 251-500 dives. My wife injured herself due to the poor condition of the dive boat — it had no ladder for reentry, and divers are required to drag themselves aboard over the rear transom. In trying to pull herself aboard the boat, my wife slipped, landed on her chest, and dislocated either 2 or 3 ribs. The boat had no radio; the engine would not start near the end of the 2nd dive and the boat operator had to jump-start the engine with a screwdriver; the boat had no radio; the diesel engine was in obvious disrepair; and the tank holders were not well designed and allowed the tanks to lean at precarious angles. The boat had run out of fuel on the previous day and was adrift for about an hour before being assisted by another boat. (Ph/fax: 758-450-8831; e-mail [info@frogsdiving.com](mailto:info@frogsdiving.com); website [www.frogsdiving.com](http://www.frogsdiving.com))

**Sandals Golf and Spa Resort, June 2001, Mike Mantei, Lebanon, OH.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 40 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. We dove three times: Once in pool as required! Session started 1 hour after we arrived on time. We did the required shallow dive trip, to a dead reef with 20 snorkelers on boat, max 20 feet/30 min. The boat was 1.5 hours late. We did a night dive, to same dead reef. Boat left 2.2 hrs late. Poachers had set gill nets using the dive site mooring as an attachment point. Dive master did not notice until entire group was near bottom and nearly entangled, several divers in direct contact with the huge net. Dive

was not aborted. We were signaled to move in a direction away from the nets. During the 30 min dive we encountered the net one more time, also nearly becoming entangled. It was huge and only visible in the dark because of the dead and struggling Fish already caught. We probably spooked most of the Fish into the net as we moved about the reef with our lights. Did the poachers have this in mind? The net seemed to encircle the entire reef complex where we dove. It must have been hundreds of feet long. It was weighted to the sea floor and extended up about 10 feet from the bottom, held up by floats. I feel like a moron for not aborting our dive independently from the divemasters and group. It was the most dangerous mistake I have made in fifteen years of aggressive but safe diving. No extra air on boat, no dock, had to carry all gear, tanks, etc., 100 yards to water and wade neck deep to get on idling 40' boat that backed up to beach for diver pickup. Had to do reverse after dive, jump off idling 40' boat into 5' water. Even asked to carry used tank 100 yards to shack. This is also same for night dive. Sandals is very nice. The dive boats are first rate large and fast. (Recently replaced after explosion killed several divers a few years ago on a gas powered boat). The new boats are diesel. Amy and I were married at the resort two days after our nasty dive experience. The food is outstanding and the nondive operations were first rate. The wedding was also about 45 min behind schedule. I read the chapbook before the trip and my expectations were lowered. We went to get married and hoped for some light diving. The wedding was great, the

diving was the worst I have ever experienced. (Ph: 888-SANDALS or 305-284-1300; fax 305-667-8996; e-mail [Info@Sandals.com](mailto:Info@Sandals.com); website [www.sandals.com](http://www.sandals.com))

### ST. MAARTEN

French St. Martin and Dutch St. Maarten are two islands in one, with wonderful beaches, superb hotels, fine cuisine — and poor diving, a situation that was not improved when the island was trashed by a hurricane in 1995. . . . Watch out for shady characters who are drawn to the nude beaches and prey on tourists. . . .

#### **Dive Safaris, November 2000, Bob Pringle, Sparks, NV. Water: 81 F.**

Well operated, excellent boat, controlled first dive, thereafter do your own thing. More than helpful DM and helper. Lots of small fish plus eels, and stingrays. Due to the 1998 hurricane most of the reef is dead also due to the contour the maximum dive depth is 50 ft. Visibility the first two dives 40 ft. 3ft swells. The wind was steady all week and finally on the last day of diving had managed to pick up suds off the salt ponds blowing them into the ocean causing visibility to drop to 3 ft so aborted the dive. (Ph: 011-599-545 3213; fax 011-599-545 3209; e-mail [dives@thescubashop.net](mailto:dives@thescubashop.net); website [thescubashop.net](http://thescubashop.net))

**Dive Safaris, February 2001, Irwin Danto ([irwindanto@aol.com](mailto:irwindanto@aol.com)) West Bloomfield, MI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. A well run operation.**