

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.**

Our third dive was to a shark encounter managed by Dive Safaris. Great diving day.

**Dive Safaris, Princess Heights, May 2001, Joe Ruf (jruf@tiplus.com)**

**Vineland, NJ.** Vis: 40-50 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 275. Couldn't go less than 60 unless you brought a shovel. Princess Heights in Down Bay Area, small 15 1-2 bedroom condos. Very nice, but plan on driving 30 minutes to restaurants and dive shops. Many restaurants and food was great! Roads and traffic terrible. Carnival Week (bad!). Make sure you know what is going on before going. You will need car. Shop for rates as there are many choices. Only did three dives. Dive Safari was excellent. Personnel and equipment top rate. No dedicated water bucket for cameras! They do shark feed dive four days a week. Very controlled. Mostly female Carib Reef and milky sharks. 25-30 animals up to 9 feet long. Great experience.

**Ocean Explorers, July 2001, Stanley Richter (diveserv@prodigy.net) Oak Ridge, NJ.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 90 to 110 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy. Leroy and Dominique, the owners, run an excellent shop. At "One Step Beyond" where we saw more species of fish than we could count! (Ph/fax 599 544 5252; e-mail divesm@megatropic.com; website www.stmaartendiving.com)

**Tradewinds, July 2001, Philip Hamilton (jeepster@scubadiving.com), Sugar Land, TX.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to F, surge. 38 foot boat. We had a three

foot sea, which contributed to some fish feeding among some of our fellow divers. The Proselyte was a frigate which foundered 200 years ago. I encountered a pair of large crevalles, trunkfish, goatfish, a cowfish, and a rock beauty. I found a pair of cannons lying together, hardly recognizable due to the coral encrustation, as well as a huge anchor. Split rock has a nice reef: spiny lobster, parrotfish, and a school of snapper, a small barracuda followed me for a while, then lost interest, saw a sharptail eel, under the ledge of a rock on the sand and a peacock flounder. Not many operators crowding the sites. (Ph: + 5995-75176; fax + 5995-23910; e-mail twdc@stmartinstmaarten.com; website www.st-maarten-st-martin.com/TradeWinds/)

## ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent lies in a beautiful chain of islands and is heavily forested, with pretty reefs and a good range of fish species. . . . Daytime temperatures are in the high 80s year-round, the low 70s at night; afternoon cloudbursts are common; St. Vincent is in the hurricane belt. . . . The Grenadines — Bequia, Palm, Union, and Carriacou — are a sailor's dream; they're islands with small hotels, little dive operations, decent Caribbean diving, and few surprises. . . .

### Bequia

**Bequia Dive Adventures, Gingerbread Hotel, June 2001, Fred and Maxine Botti (fbotti@dfg.ca.gov)**