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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad, the southernmost island in the Caribbean (it's actually south of Caracas) isn't for divers, but its smaller sister to the north is. . . . Diving from resort hotels along the southwest coast of Tobago is inferior to the diving to the north, where you'll find huge coral heads and good fish life, with mantas in the spring. Strong currents and choppy water make this a place for experienced divers. (In 1997 a woman lost contact with her dive boat and spent 27 hours in the water before washing ashore.). . . . Blue Waters Inn is the main dive hotel; it's situated on a nice beach about 15 minutes from all sites. . . . Tobago is covered with rainforest and has good hiking, friendly people, and serene and beautiful beaches. Birding there is excellent, but Trinidad's Asa Wright Nature Center (a small hotel with a view that's almost guaranteed to be filled with scores of tropical species) is unparalleled, as is the lagoon trip to see 2000 scarlet ibis fly in from Venezuela each night. . . .

Tobago

Blue Waters Inn, April 2001, Jeanne Moore, Bellows Falls, VT. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: choppy. Dives logged: 33. Dive restrictions: 60-70 feet

(novice divers). Getting there took forever — 3 planes and an 1-1/2 hour taxi drive. But it was well worth it. Rooms looked out onto the uncrowded beach — totally carefree. We locked our money in the safe and never needed it. No phones, TV or radios in room so we totally relaxed. The staff was wonderful. The people at the dive shop made sure the dive was right for you. When they got 8 divers they added another boat. There was strong current and I'd only had 23 dives but I felt very secure — they gave me easy dives at first and more difficult as I was ready for it. They would even go out with only 1 diver. **(Ph: (800) 742 4276 or (868) 660 4341; fax (868) 660 5195; e-mail bwi@BlueWatersInn.com; website www.bluewatersinn.com)**

Dive Tobago, Manta Lodge, December 2000, Fran Prince (jpfranprince@hotmail.com) New York, NY. Vis: 20 to 50 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy surge currents. Current was hard. There is little life, outside of Angel fish, hog fish and damsels. No nudibranchs or little stuff. If Shaun Robinson is not there, the divemasters will refuse to do a second dive unless you force them. The boat is small and many days we went out overloaded. One day as we rolled back into the water I got hit in the head with a tank. One day we had to wait to go out because of a resort. The rental equipment needs to be replaced; the bcd's leaked. The tanks were all overdue for testing. Every day we had people traveling from the other side of the island (1 1/2 hours) to

dive. And no matter how many, they got on the boat. The Manta Lodge is lovely. Don't take the meal plan; only eat breakfast. You can eat for 1/2 price (and tastier) at Jemma's and Birdwatcher. But the staff of Manta will go out of their way if you request something. **(Dive Tobago: Ph: 868-639-0202; fax 868-639-7275)**

World of Watersport, Hilton, October 2000, Tom Kelly D.D.S., Irmo, SC. Vis: 100 ft. 4.5 hour flight to Trinidad from Miami, 2 hour lay over for flight to Tobago. Took all day to get there from South Carolina (10 am till 8pm). Ten of us lost luggage because we didn't know to pick-up our luggage in Trinidad and go through customs and immigration there. BWIA gate agent told us we were in transit and would go through customs immigration in Tobago. Stayed at the Hilton opened 6 months earlier very beautiful resort. Constant "blast" of wind off the Atlantic Ocean is uncomfortable. I would estimate a 25-30-knot/hour breeze. Waves on Hilton's Beach rough. There wasn't any swimming and snorkeling, also no sunset from this side of the island. World of Watersports runs the dive operation. They have an office at the Hilton but the Dive boat is docked at Pigeon Point 20 minutes away. The Diving on Mount Irvine Wall Buccoo Reef Maverick Wreck was terrible with poor visibility and few fish (Very Disappointed). Then we went to Speyside and dove around Goat Island and Little Tobago. I've dove 24 islands through out the Caribbean, the visibility and fish life near Speyside

ranks close to the best. It's a 1.5 hour car ride on winding roads from Scarborough, but it's interesting. The Blue Waters Inn is the nicest resort up this way. If all you want to do is dive this is the place but your wife may not be happy with the seclusion and dining the same place all the time (There is no shopping in Speyside). Except for Jemma's kitchen Restaurant there are no other nice places to dine. Also the Dive shop at Blue Water Inn had the largest and nicest dive boat in that area. The other shops from Buccoo Bay (The South side of island) would make arrangements with a Local "fisherman." You would "roll off the small open boat to enter the water and later trying to pull yourself into the boat, falling on the floor boards (no ladders, very ungraceful entry). This also put a 3 inch rip in my BCD and I didn't realize this on the next dive till I was 80 feet down! After looking at the Grafton Beach Hotel` Grand Courlon` Mount Irvine Hotel` Kariwok Hotel` Rexturtle Hotel` I thought the Coco Reef Hotel was the best. I would also go to Speyside from Scarborough for 3 dives/daily forget going to Mount Irvine Wall. Speyside is drift diving and novice divers should not have any problems diving as long as they stay with a dive group. A strict buddy system should be enforced for safety. **(Ph/fax: 868-660-7234)**

TURKS AND CAICOS

These islands, situated south of the Bahamas and north of the Virgins, feature awesome walls