

second on the stern section which is strewn all over the bottom. Most dives are the 60 to 80 foot range with good viz and interesting topography. No big critters, but there are a lot of reef fish. Not a lot of coral either, but the rock formations are great. (Ph: 800-848-7078 or 284-495-5513; fax 284-495-5347; e-mail info@divebvi.com; website www.divebvi.com)

VIRGIN ISLANDS, U.S. **St. Croix**

Anchor Dive Center, The Waves, June 2000, George H. Stephens, Pocatello, ID. Vis: 30-60 ft. Water: 80-81 F. Kevin Ryan, the owner of The Waves, was an excellent host and divemaster. He taught us to navigate under water and once we were ready set us free to do our own shore dives. We did 2 night dives at the pier in Fredricksted — unforgettable — beautiful octopus, seahorses. (Ph: 800-532-DIVE or 340-778-1522; website www.anchordivestcroix.com)

Anchor Dive Center, Scubawest, Cane Bay Reef Club, October 2000 Tom & Brenda Richart, Richmond VA. Vis: 50-85'. 85 degrees. St. Croix kind of blue collar. Cane Bay Reef Club is a down to earth, family run place, weathered, with character. Directly on the water (no beach but one within walking distance). Owners made us feel as if we were old friends. Two units, penthouse and presidential, not connected to rest of facility, had exceptional views of island. Bar at motel was somewhat of a local hangout, cool vibe in evenings. Three other bars/restaurants within walking

distance. The north shore is laid back and friendly. Rooms were not upscale but were clean and comfortable.

Anchor Dive: first dive 80 feet 40 mins. second dive 60 feet 40 mins. They threatened to cut dive short if you went deeper than 80 feet. I've already signed my rights away with their pre-dive release form, so I don't believe popping down to 110' is a sin. However, they are a good dive operator and friendly people. Dive guides pointed out critters and unusual stuff — red banded lobster. The diving was good from Salt River Canyon — west. Saw the usual tropicals, a turtle at the West Wall Salt River. Got up close to a small 6-7' nurse shark. Rays, jacks, morays. Pleased with quality of corals and good fish life. Scubawest dives the west side wrecks and reefs. Restrictions — just have 500 psi. Fine operator — boat was small but there were only 4 people + crew. They dive the Fredricksted pier, a very good dive. We enjoyed that better than town pier in Bonaire. They did a great job showing us the stuff.

Anchor Dive Center, the Waves at Cane Bay, July 2001, Joseph Brown (Iko@home.com) Omaha, NE.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: choppy. One of the best dive values in the Caribbean, especially for experienced divers. Room cost (\$75-\$85) includes unlimited shore diving. Most of the best walls are right off the bay, so two divers can dive and room for a week for less than \$600. The diving was very good. Coral in great shape. Wide

species variety. Shore entries are clearly more work than a boat; they provide great maps and briefings. Kevin will guide dives for an additional fee. Fredricksted pier: Spectacular variety. My buddy and I have 300-400 dives between us and we saw several species for the first time. Take the dive by day using Kevin's notes, then pay Kevin to guide a night dive (frog fish, slender filefish, etc.). Take a boat dive or two at Salt River Canyon. Kevin can recommend a boat operation. Rooms were plain but clean. The view from the balcony was as good as it gets. Food on the island is expensive, but with a car (which you must have) you can find some good food. Avoid the hotel food (it was pricey and so-so). Recommend Savant in Christiansted (don't miss the grilled squid). Also, east of Christiansted, where the yachting crowd hangs out, there are a number of interesting places. The K-mart outside Fredricksted was a surprise local food bargain.

Anchor Dive Center, The Waves at Cane Bay, September 2001, Laura Murphy, Ooltewah, TN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. Unexpectedly good shore dives at Cane Bay. Clean condos with kitchen for fixing meals and snacks. Easy entries, moderate swim, diverse coral, nice wall starting at 40 feet, plenty of small schooling fish. Nice sandy beach. The Waves supplied good maps for shore diving, guided diving available. Even the DM's were excited about the dives at Salt River: sea horses, eagle rays,

many turtles, nurse sharks. Everyone warned us about the crime, but we did not have any problems. Wide choice of restaurants at Christiansted.

Dive Experience, Divi Carina Bay, January 2001, Gary M. Brown (gmbrown@1starnet.com) Mt. Pleasant, TX. Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Shore dive — (wall) with Cane Bay was great. Easy 100 meter swim to wall. Visibility 60-70 ft. and minimal current. Boat dive with Dive Experience was also great dive. Two dives were wall and one was fish feed. Captain and divemaster were exceptional. Very knowledgeable and helpful. Allowed divers to dive own profile with computer. Minimal current. Choppy water but overall good diving conditions. Abundance of small to medium fish. No sharks or turtles. A very minor traffic accident led to a large law suit by a local. A warning should be issued to all divers and tourists that locals will take advantage of almost any situation to sue. This has cost my insurance company and the rental car company a large sum of money and could have cost me if not for having a good attorney who negotiated a settlement. (Ph: 800-235-9047 or 340-773-3307; e-mail divexp@viaccess.net; website www.st-croix.com/diveexperience)

Dive Experience, Caravelle Hotel, March 2001, Steve Forrest (forrest@newnorth.net) Lake Tomahawk, WI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 70 to 75 F, calm. Caravelle Hotel first class, and Dive Experience the same. Three two tank morning dives, and

one night dive. Though the corals and large fish seem to be on the decline, still worth the trip. Large eels, turtles, lobster, puffer fish, and more on most dives. Staff very good at pointing out these critters. Cane Bay wall dive still one of the best dives. Night dive was great. At least two dive masters on board, most double as captains. Michelle, Dee, Sam, and the rest of the staff were as good as they come. Divers not allowed below deck, but dive crew was more than willing to change film between dives. Very, good crew. Sixth trip to St. Croix and the Caravelle. The Hotel is small and friendly, the staff treats you like family. New restaurant "Rumrunners" very good. New boardwalk on ocean a real plus. (Pig at Domino Club now drinks NA beer, still a good side trip.)

Score/VI Divers, February 2001, Irwin Danto (irwindanto@aol.com)

West Bloomfield, MI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Score/VI Divers runs a six pack. Excellent service and care. Provided final phase of my wreck diving specialty — lots of special attention. When they had engine troubles they transferred me across the island to Scuba West. VI Divers provided a dive master throughout the day. Wonderful service and attention. (Ph: 877-773-6045 or 340-773-6045; fax 340-778-4338; e-mail score@viaccess.net; website www.scorevi.com)

St. John

Cruz Bay Watersports, Westin Hotel, November 2000. Pat and

Richard Pautler, Chester, IL. Vis 30 to 50 feet. Water was 81 F, calm. Dive your own profile. Westin nice, but food and hotel expensive. Lime Inn good for food and drink in Cruz Bay. Cruz Bay Water Sports personnel were excellent. We did our open water with divemaster Charles Shipman. He was excellent, professional. He put my wife at ease from the start. Did wreck dive at 60 feet and a lot of good reef dives. Boats were clean and well equipped. Drinking water, wash water and gear storage on board The dive shop was on the grounds of the Westin. (Ph: 340-776-6234 or 340-779-4351; fax 340-693-8720; e-mail info@divestjohn.com or cruzbaywatersports@ntt.net; website www.cbw-stjohn.com)

Cruz Bay Watersports, Westin Resort, September 2001, Gail T. Barranda, Whitestone, NY. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: Calm and flat, 82-84 F. Dives logged: 75. Follow-the-leader diving, must be within sight of divemaster, dive usually 45-50 minutes. Ferries to St. Thomas and the BVI made traveling between the two easy. St. John beautiful, quiet and peaceful. If you don't rent a car, you have to take a cab everywhere and that can get pricey. The Westin Resort spoils you: goose down pillows, fluffy comforters, lots of towels, clean rooms and resort grounds, a huge pool and kiddie pool, free beach towels and covers for the beach chairs. Everyone greets you with a smile. The restaurants serve average food and are expensive except for Chloe and Bernard's. Cruz Bay Watersports has

four boats; the largest one takes you comfortably and fast to Jost Van Dyke and visit Foxy's for the famous "painkiller" and listen to Foxy himself as he serenades you. Sandy Cay which has a small tiny island you can swim to and walk around the island in less than 10 minutes. Great coral formations and look for rays and nurse sharks here. After a deli-style lunch they take you to White Cay, home of the famous Soggy Dollar Bar. You can snorkel or just enjoy this perfect beach. On the boats, separate rinse bucket for gear and cameras, cold water and cooler, head, warm water shower. Once you handed them your gear, you never had to touch it again. Divemasters very helpful and great at pointing things out. Charlie, who used to work on Cayman Brac, is especially great, always calling you by names. Jay and Dave were also great. Strict follow-the-leader diving. Must be within sight of divemaster at all times. Dives lasted no more than 45-50 minutes no matter how much air you had left. I came back on the boat with almost 1200 psi on every dive. Easy diving here, perfect for beginners, mostly shallow dives. Hard-core divers might get bored.

St. Thomas

Admiralty Dive Center, Marriott's Frenchman's Reef, March 2001, Ken & Paula Snyder
(scubaflie@aol.com), Estero, FL.

Vis: 75 ft. Water: 70-74 F. Windy and cloudy. Polartec not enough. Can you dive own profile: NO. What restrictions: 50 ft. for 50 minutes. Capt. Vic, the boat driver, was surly and rude.

Barked orders to all around him. Complained about picking us up at Marriott's dock. No dip bucket for masks or camera. On 2nd day no fresh water to drink. Divemasters were good, but intimidated by Capt. Vic. Owners were interested in our comments. Hopefully, they'll make appropriate changes. (Ph: (888) 900-DIVE or (340) 777-9802; e-mail admiralty@viaccess.net; website www.admiraltydive.com)

Admiralty Dive Center, Holiday Inn, April 2001, Wayne Hurst, Bethesda, MD. Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 79-81 F. Dives logged: 240. Dive shop set up all gear at end of dive day, they rinsed, stored, dried gear and set up for next dive day. Picked me up at airport. Divemaster John, owners Marty and Porshe, and all others were terrific! Coral World visit excellent. Cohi Beach and Meagan's Bay breathtakingly beautiful.

Admiralty Dive Center, May 2001, Steve and Patti Fabian
(fabians@mindspring.com) Glendale, AZ. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Logged dives: 400+. Dive restrictions enforced: 130. Marty and Portia Martinez (Owners) of Admiralty Dive Center were extremely friendly, courteous, and most important, professional. They have two boats and each holds six divers and two crew members, the Captain and Dive Master. The three crew members we met were also friendly, courteous, and very professional. Admiralty Dive Center is in the process of getting a new boat that will hold ten divers. We booked 20 dives over five days. It was

the first week of the off-season (May 30) and therefore most of the time it was just the two of us on the boat with the two crew members. The crew let us dive our profile and they just followed. We were never rushed and our dives were between 50 to 70 minutes. Most dives were between 40 and 90 feet. The Dive Master was along to help direct us to great dive areas and knew where the boat was. They have more than enough dive sites so you don't go back to the same place twice, though two of the sites we had done earlier were great sites so we went back.

Chris Sawyer, Anchorage Condos, August 2000, Ray Schmidt, (ray.schmidt@rivhs.com) Yorktown, VA. Vis: 70-90 ft. Water: 76-80 F. Dive restrictions: Dove the Rhone and had to remain with group. Chris Sawyer had a good operation — 2 shops one in Red Hook and the other at the resort. Boat is well equipped but slow which is good for leisure ride back to resort. Chris gave a great pre-dive orientation to the Rhone. Two dive masters took 6 divers each for the tour of the Rhone pointing out various interesting items. Very crowded on the surface with novice sailors (boat rentals). An uncaring person in a Zodiac was zipping around as we were going in and coming out of the water. Lunch was provided on dive — nice touch. Think twice about buying the video offered. Not good quality. **(Ph: (877) 929-3483 or (340) 775-7320; fax (340) 775-9495; e-mail sawyerdive@islands.vi; website www.sawyerdive.vi)**

Diver World, October 2000, Michael Bishop, Dallas, TX. We selected a Caribbean cruise that included opportunities to dive. Our excursion was set for two afternoon dives with pier departure and were the first divers to arrive on the pier — only to find the divemaster angry that we were late. He refused to take us on to the dive boat until everyone arrived so we stood sweating in the full sun for half an hour. We explained that our vouchers said 1 pm departure and that he needed to be understanding about cruise passengers — to no avail. By the time the remaining divers arrived, he was furious and stormed off to the dive boat about 500 meters away. Since he was accustomed to the heat, twenty years younger and wearing walking shoes, we could not maintain his pace and he left us on the pier — too late in the day to even switch to another water activity. Of course the cruise line issued an apology and refunded the cost of the excursion, but this cowboy's behavior will unfortunately be the only scuba memory we take from the US Virgins. **(Ph: (800) 467-0488 or (340) 775-5971; fax (340) 775-6204; e-mail diveworld@islands.vi)**

St. Thomas Dive Club, February 2001, Irwin Danto (irwindanto@aol.com), West Bloomfield, MI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. St. Thomas Dive Club booked me for a wreck diving specialty and upon arrival changed their promised schedule to accommodate divers doing open water check

out dives. Their charges for Nitrox were \$20 per tank. Very nice boat. Their shop is just 10 minutes from the cruise boat pier. (Ph: 877-538-8734 or (340) 776-2381; e-mail bill2381@viaccess.net; website www.st-thomasdivingclub.com)

Underwater Safaris, Marriott Frenchman's Reef, April 2001, Dirk Van Onselder (botomturn@aol.com)
Coral Springs, FL. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: 82-83 F. Dives logged 60. Excellent pre-dive briefing. 40 minutes maximum, I still had 1500 PSI left and they made me come up. Had to follow divemaster. Not very impressed. Second dive was a wreck, I thought it was more like a pile of rubble. Service on the boat was very good. (Ph: (340)774-1350; fax (340)777- 8733; e-mail uws@diveusvi.com; website www.diveusvi.com)

LIVE-ABOARDS

THE BAHAMAS

Aqua Cat, July 2001, Walt Brenner (waltbrenner@yahoo.com) Wayne, PA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 87 F. Logged dives: 800. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. Inaugural cruise a marvelous experience. Food was only mediocre but, but the regular chef was not on board. This Australian designed catamaran has roomy, comfortable ensuite cabins on the same level as the spacious dive deck. Three outside hot showers (and a head), plenty of

hangers, all new dive equipment (steel tanks), two entry ladders in addition to side entry openings, E-6 processing, even an editing suite for videographers. Friendly, cooperative crew. Side trips for exploring and snorkeling were available several times to some of the isolated cays. 4-5 dives a day was the norm and because it was in the Exuma Marine Park, the sea life was unusually profuse and diverse for the Bahamas/Caribbean area. Dived the blue hole within sight of Nassau with a school of juvenile silky sharks in the hole entrance and two very large nurse sharks along the sandy edge. Early on we became quite accustomed to sharks — mostly Caribbean reef sharks with a few nurse sharks and some grays. lots of southern sting rays, yellow spotted rays, several kinds of morays, porcupine and blowfish, many large lobsters (they were out of season), a great octopus experience, and a dozen squids just hanging out. (Ph: 888-327-9600 or 305-888-3002; fax 305.885.3323; e-mail info@aquacatcruises.com; website www.aquacatcruises.com)

Aqua Cat, July 2001, Brad Bowen, Farmington, UT. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 70 Feet. Water: 84 to 88 F, calm choppy. Diving is mediocre at best, while the boat has the best facilities of any live aboard from which we have dove. Just before leaving we called and were informed that the boat was at the Paradise Harbor Club. The people at the Paradise Harbor Club had never heard of the Aqua Cat, and we were unable