

without a buddy would result in cancellation of dives. This is not an unusual requirement, but the penalty is. We were required to show our computers to the divemaster checking in the returning divers. They did not trust our verbal report. The Spree did not provide divemasters in the water or anyone who would monitor the skill or progress of the divers. Tanks were only filled to 2800 psi at best. When more Nitrox was requested, the crew became argued about what constituted a full tank. A mandatory 2 hour and 30 minute surface interval was imposed for the first part of the week. On one day, 5 dives were achieved. On the second segment, a 3-hour time was imposed even though only 4 dives were done on any single day. The dive times and profiles (70-90-foot square) for the two segments were similar. On several occasions, the SIT became a "count down" to the very minute when the next dive would be allowed.

Attendance at dive briefings was mandatory. Presence or absence for a dive briefing seemed to be measured in how many feet the diver was standing from the divemaster giving the briefing. A diver ready before the correct time was scolded for being too early. The window was usually only 15 minutes in which to accommodate up to 30 divers. There had been four recent incidents of DCS (excluding the two during this week) and one lost diver. These events had motivated the owner, Gary Rinn to impose new tough restrictions and penalties for violations. The crew was under pressure to enforce these policies rigidly.

***MV Spree, August 2001, Robert Don Brinson, Bloomfield, IN.*** I was a trip leaders with Indiana Scuba and can't say enough good things about the crew of the Spree. Capt. Frank gave all of the divers their briefing of the boat and the rules: go below 100 ft. you are done for the trip, come up with no air in your tank you are done for the trip, come up without you buddy and you are done for the trip and no beer after midnight. The trip leaders in charge of the tank fills took as long as they could as to not have hot fills, usually about 2 + hours to refill the tanks. The crew goes out of there way to make sure all safety requirements are followed and the food was great.

## VENEZUELA

### Isla la Tortuga

***Kulkuri, Horisub Dive Resort, March 2001, The Henke Family, Wichita, KS*** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 78-79 degrees. Dive restrictions: 130 ft and 500 psi. Dive your own profile: yes. Isla La Tortuga is the second largest Venezuelan island. The surface area of La Tortuga extends over 155-square kilometers (80% as large as Aruba). The Kulkuri is a beautiful sailing ship. She is 80-ft long, 2-masted schooner. Her hull, masts and sails were made in Finland in 1991. The interior cabins and other extensive woodwork were completed in Venezuela. The Kulkuri is loaded with all the modern electronic navigation aids, but the Captain sails her the old-fashioned way most of the time. The cabins, showers, dining area and

storage areas were clean, spacious and comfortable. Boarded at Marina Americo Vespucio in Puerto La Cruz. There were ten passengers on board. Arturo Barrios (horisub@telcel.net.ve), the owner of Horisub Dive Resort arranged to meet us on the island in another boat. The cabins were always clean and the food was great. The beauty of the coral reefs, the clear crystalline water, the green mangroves and the white sand beaches at Isla La Tortuga really amazed us. The sites are similar and are basically a shallow, narrow sandy reef terrace that slopes to a depth of 35-ft where the main reef wall or slope begins. The slope or wall ends at a sand bottom located in the range between 90 and 130-feet. There are lots of hard and soft coral growing on the walls and slopes. Our favorites sites were La Pared de Kulkuri, Guarida de Morenas Mollejuas, Hundreds of huge queen angelfish, large schools of barracuda, rivers of Creole wrasse, the turtles and gigantic green moray eels. (Ph: (582) 266 9466 (5814) 376281; fax (582) 266 9466)

### Los Roques

**Antares Dancer, Peter Hughes, July 2000, Karen and Jack, (stamjack@aol.com) CT.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dive restrictions: 60 min. Do not agree with Undercurrent's report The boat is in poor condition, not typical of Peter Hughes boats.

**Antares Dancer, Peter Hughes, November 2000, Kris Manlon, Littleton, CO.** Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 80-83 F. Dives logged: 138. Dive

restrictions: 500 lbs air left. Read Undercurrents reports and it was just as reported! Was able to set up luggage storage on Gran Roque because of pre warnings! Had everything we needed and flights were all late as reported. Stayed in a Posada (Aquamarina) and it was a lovely experience with an incredible beach day by boat to an island and lunch provided. Cold showers — dinner included — interesting island and people. The Antares is old — window in our master stateroom was all cracked, but everything else was great — boat could use some repairs — needs air conditioning in kitchen. Food was very good — crew was great and diving was wonderful — lots of schools of fish — nite dives were tremendous — lots of life. Had a great time — saw octopus! Fish friendly! Diving doesn't have great variety — much the same throughout but so healthy! Antares Dancer, May 2001, Jan Culbertson, Seattle, WA. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 82 F. Logged dives: 560. Dive restrictions enforced: time-always 45-60 ft. The flight from Caracas to Los Rogues is a short 30-40 minutes? The airport is basically a hut on the beach. 85' dive boat with 6 cabins. In 5.5 days of diving I logged 23 hours in the water. Diving was only mediocre. Coral is in great condition, not a lot of diversity. After the first 5 or 6 dives, they all started to look the same. The Ledges and Mini Wall, we had some really good currents. A large hogfish was kept time with me and I was snapping off shots. No barrel sponges to speak of but lots of soft coral, sponges, some nudibranchs. I

did spot a pygmy octopus one night, only about 1 inch long, bright red. Large schools of jacks, some grouper, lots of wrasse, some large green morays (one guy about 6 ft long was lying out on the reef during the night, a few lobster, trumpet fish, trunk fish, parrotfish. Dive tender is a 30 foot panga with a dive ladder. You have to lift your tank/bc straight up from a sitting position and get it over the edge of the boat and do a back roll, very Mike Nelson. As there is wind you must descend pretty quickly. Quite often there was surface current but none to speak of once you were submerged. In winds and some good wave action, getting back in the boat also was a challenge. I left a good portion of shin skin on the dive ladder by the end of the week. On Gran Roque for 4 days I stayed in a posada, basically a group of rooms, very basic. Cold water shower, bed, and that's about it for amenities. There was no a/c or ice. This was the best part of the trip. The island of Gran Roque has a single "town" — the streets are sand, there are two trucks on the island, water and garbage. There are about 3 dozen posadas - some a little nicer, but most about the same. I found a place with an internet connection I was typing on a pc made in Germany with German keypad, the outlook functions were in Spanish, and I am trying to type in English. Life for the tourist on Gran Roque is something like this; have a good breakfast then leave the island for another island to fish(I caught 9 bonefish, a needle fish, some jacks, and a mackerel which got turned into ceviche), swim, or

sunbathe. Lunch on Gran Roque is hard to find as most things close down from 10-3. There are a couple places where you can get a cool drink (but not too many). The Aquarena is great, it is on the beach, but it has a nice shady place to relax, play some cards, have a cerveza and hang out until dinner. Everything closed by about 9pm. For a few dollars (that is a fist full of Bolivars — about bs715 = \$1) you can have a water taxi take you to any island. You just arrange a time to be picked up and they will bring you back to Gran Roque. (Ph: 800-932-6237 or 305-669-9391; fax 305-669-9475; e-mail [dancer@peterhughes.com](mailto:dancer@peterhughes.com); website [www.peterhughes.com](http://www.peterhughes.com))

**Antares Dancer, July 2001, Gilda & Warren Sprung (wcgb@wt.net)**  
**Houston, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 35 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm choppy. Didn't bring our 3 mil vests and beanies. Occasionally we got into (nutrient rich) upwellings that left us a little chilly. 4th Peter Hughes boat Crew created a wonderful atmosphere, a warm and memorable experience. Rafael the chef belongs in a fine Houston restaurant! The boat had just come out of maintenance and other than a sick a/c in one of the cabins was wonderful too, as was the tender. Side trips to a couple of islands added to the enjoyment. We have not seen corals and Fish life (did I mention the school of 12 eagle rays that almost ran us over or the soft coral with way over 100 flamingo tongues) anywhere to surpass what we saw here and we've been to Cozumel, Roatán, Turks & Caicos, Saba, Red

Sea, Little Cayman, Yap, Palau, Galapagos Islands.

### **VIRGIN ISLANDS, BRITISH**

**Cuan Law, February 2001, Victor Bary (vbary@yahoo.com) Cranford, NJ.** Vis: 40-70 ft. Water: 78-82 F. logged dives: 100+. Recommended maximum times, no site was deeper than 85'. Sunny, windy. 105 ft. trimaran, designed by owner Duncan Muirhead, offered spacious rooms (each with own bath) a very large lounge and bar area, and a spacious, shaded after-deck. Each dive was preceded by a thorough briefing with map of dive site around Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Salt Island, etc. It had stormed the week before our trip, which accounted for the surge and somewhat diminished visibility. Thoroughly professional and dedicated crew out to assure that you have an unforgettable experience. It offers a nice blend of diving, sailing, and socializing in pleasant and relaxed surroundings. Each day included 2-3 dives, a night mooring, as well as some opportunities to kayak, water ski and sail a hobie cat. It also attracts the kind of guests you'll enjoy spending a week with. (Ph: 284-494-2490; fax 284-494-5774; e-mail [cuanlaw@surfbvi.com](mailto:cuanlaw@surfbvi.com); website [www.cuanlaw.com](http://www.cuanlaw.com))

**Cuan Law, May/June 2001, Terry Gee, El Paso, TX.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, calm. Spent two weeks aboard the Cuan Law. Have done three previous charters. I charter the entire boat and was pleased to find the same exceptional standard of

service and care still exists. First week in the northern leeward, St. Maarten, St. Bart's, Saba and up to Sombrero and back to St. Maarten. The second week was St. Maarten, Saba, Sombrero and then in to the BVI's for the last two days. Saba is very good diving but Sombrero is even better. The dives elsewhere are pretty and excellent for novice to intermediate divers. Excellent opportunities for great macro photography. Skip St. Maarten. The customs there is an ordeal with rude obnoxious individuals who seem bent on spoiling everyone's vacation. Photography: No special tables but the crew most accommodating providing fresh water rinse tubs limited to cameras only, below deck facilities that they would make available if needed.

**Cuan Law, May and July, 2001, Juli Tracy or Dick Gamble (jwtracy@scubadiving.com), San Diego, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 80 Feet. Water: 83 to 95 F, calm. Did trips in May (8-day trip from St. Martin up through Saba to Sombrero Rock, then back to St. Martin) and July (the usual 6-day trip in the British Virgin Islands). Accommodations are spacious and each cabin has a private head. All the cabins are about equal in size, and the lounge is like a private living room — comfortable and homey. The food is very good and served on the deck (unless it's raining!) at large tables, family style for dinner, and buffet style for lunch and breakfast. The crew is friendly