

Beach Resort (formerly the Sonesta) has excellent rooms and convenient to town. It has a private island accessible only by a shuttle boat that comes about every 20 minutes. Red Sail has a concession on the island and shore diving is available, but only if the staff is available and the surface conditions are calm.

Red Sail Sports, Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, July 2002, Gil Zeimer (gil@zeimer.com) San Rafael, CA. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. Many regard the “Antilla” as the best, biggest and oldest wreck dive in the Caribbean. Part of this 400-foot ship is visible above water and from the shore. The remainder slants into the sand at 60 feet. Known as the Ghost Ship, its captain on May 10, 1940 purposely sank this German freighter, rather than surrendering to the Dutch Marines. It was one of the best dives of my life, featuring swim throughs of the roomy compartments, thousands of bait fish that surrounded me in a 20-foot swirling mass for about five minutes, dozens of colorful tropical fish, coral-encrusted surfaces, and an eerie feeling of timeless beauty.

THE BAHAMAS

The Bahamas are easily accessible from Florida and excellent for long weekends, with pretty reefs (though many affected by algae), decent tropicals, and plenty of resorts that feed sharks. . . . Keep hurricane season, June through October, in mind; winter weather

from December to March means mid-70s, chilly water, and sweaters in the evening; average nighttime temperature is in the mid-60s, but can drop into the 50s if winter air blows off the continent. . . . Out-island are resorts small and personal, but the best diving is now being reached by live-aboards.

Andros

Froggies Out island Adventures, August 2002, Hank Martin, Boonton, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy. Mediocre dive op. Primarily interested in filling the boat with snorkelers or divers. Not a dedicated dive boat, tanks and gear are assembled and laid on the floor. Did not bring my equipment since this was a family, not a dive, vacation. Rental equipment substandard — couldn’t take a breath from the reg without getting a mouth full of water. Dive sites were unimpressive — second dive was at a max of 22 feet, and was the better of the dives. Surface interval consisted of the ten minutes it took to get everyone back in the boat and the ten minutes to go to the next site. Dive masters were uninterested in any real interaction with the divers. The one leading our group seemed to think the dive was an aerobic exercise — not much time for stopping to look. My 12-year-old son pointed more stuff out to me than did the divemaster. They charged a buck a piece for sodas and water. As a vacation destination, the cays of the Abacos are tremendous. We rented a private home in Hope

Town, and traveled from island to island on our 20' boat we rented for the week. Found several reefs where the snorkeling was better than the diving! Lots of uninhabited cays to anchor off and swim, and good facilities on the developed cays.

(Ph: 242-366-0431; e-mail dive@froggiesabaco.com; website <http://froggiesabaco.com>)

Small Hope Bay Lodge, August/September 2001, Dr. D.A. Hubbard (thedoc@tclcpalc.net) Brookhaven, MS. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dives accrued: 150. Dive restrictions enforced: yes. Nice place to visit but not really for experienced divers. Crowded dive boats and had to stay with the group. This resort has no air conditioning, a single ceiling fan and floor fan were provided for "cooling." temperature in my room at 10 PM was between 87-90 degrees. Way too hot to sleep. Not a place I would recommend in summer! **(Ph: 242-368-2013, e-mail: shbinfo@smallhope.com, Website: smallhope.com)**

Small Hope Bay Lodge, August 2003, Alan & Barbara Fischl, Great Neck, NY. Logged dives: 650, in the Caribbean mostly. We are big *Undercurrent* fans. Small Hope Bay is the epitome of your basic, Spartan dive resort. If you don't dive (or fish), there is little else to do. The food is surprisingly good, and the rooms are ok with ceiling and floor fans, but no air conditioning. The staff is very nice. The dive operation is first rate, and if you are into tech diving there were dives to 165 feet, 185 feet and a decompression dive to 225. On our

first dive they took a diver, who was unable to clear her mask during the check out dive the day before, to 185 feet! The dive staff could not understand how we were so "hung up" on not venturing deeper than 130 feet. However, here was plenty to see at these "shallower" depths, and the staff insisted on having a divemaster baby sit us though we assured them that it was not necessary. As is the case with most of the Bahamas, there is not a lot of fish life, although we did see sharks on several dives, including a couple in a blue hole. Diving the tongue of the ocean is a blast and there are some wonderful parts of the wall with swim throughs, overhangs and caverns. As diving in the northern Bahamas goes, this is as good as it gets!

Grand Bahama

Caribbean Divers/Bell Channel Dive Shop, Bell Channel Inn, Freeport, December 2001, Jerry Moreland, Auburn, IN. Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 75-80 F. Dives accrued: 85. Dive restrictions enforced: stayed with divemaster, back at 500 psi. This was a small one boat outfit. It was clear that we were to stay with the divemaster. The first dive was to Theo's wreck. I wasn't impressed. This dive the current was strong. My buddy had a difficult time swimming to the line so I refused to try. The divemaster then hooked up a line so both of us could easily get to the line attached to the bottom where the wreck was. I am 66 and in very good condition but I saw no sense wearing myself out to save the divemaster 2-3 minutes extra work. **(Ph: (242) 373-9111 /2; e-mail**

**caribdiv@batelnet.bs; website
http://www.bahamasnet.com/
caribbeandivers)**

Caribbean Divers, Bell Channel Inn, June 2002, Mary K. Wicksten, Bryan, TX. Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20-40 ft. Temperature 77-81 F. 3 mm wetsuit. No -- you could not dive your own profile. Depth and time set before each dive. Surface interval less than 40 minutes between dives. No film or developing at shop but available nearby in Port Lucaya. No rentals or sales except point-and-shoot and disposable cameras. UNEXCO has camera shop, but no repairs or rentals unless you dive with them. Good photo ops on deeper reefs and wrecks, great place to photograph sharks and rays. Better for video than still photography. Some deals to be had on air fare. The Inn is on a marina, not on the beach. Room rates are reasonable; rooms are clean and comfy, face the water and on-premises swimming pool. Dive shop on premises, boat loads by Inn. Taxi and mini-bus close by. Restaurant ok if you want a burger, otherwise go to Port Lucaya for a choice or go to the Stoned Crab or other good restaurants. Many activities for non-divers. Dive boat has no shade cover on stern, so wear sunburn protection. Drinking water, camera bucket available. Entry by back roll, follow weighted line down, meet guide for excursion, return to drift line, exit via rather narrow ladder. Inexperienced divers had trouble timing their exit to climb aboard. Conditions choppy most of the time. Storm and squalls hit during part of

trip, stirred up silt and dead seaweed all along shore. Some filthy water and oil slicks draining out of marinas. Much silt on reefs at 40 feet or less but improving after storm. No shore diving in area. Some nice photo ops. On deep wrecks, such as "Sea Star," healthier corals deeper. Dived twice at "Shark Junction" after UNEXCO feeding trips, saw reef sharks, amberjack, black grouper, crevalle, southern stingray up close. Eagle ray made a close pass. Little chance to observe smaller life -- we were moving too fast, but did see Pedersen's shrimp, cardinalfish, garden eels and jawfish. Guides efficient and capable, tried to find sites with best vis. Dive guides try to discourage beginners from diving deep, but just about anyone with a C-card can get on a boat at Grand Bahama Island. Resorts offer a 3-hour certification course. It's a good idea that diving is regimented. Too many divers with poor physical condition and even worse diving skills!

Grand Bahamas Scuba, Casino at Bahamia, May 2002, Paul Osmond (marriard@myacc.net) Weston, FL. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, choppy. Casino at Bahamia was serviceable and they have just finished a lot of refurbishing so it is becoming nice. They work on the Vegas Casino method of getting you there cheap to fill their rooms and hope you spend all your money at the Casino. We went diving instead. Laker Airlines and the Casino are the cheapest way to get here -- see if they have a deal from

your city. Grand Bahamas Scuba is the best operation on the island. The others are just generally not good operations. The owner is friendly and once he was comfortable with our skills, he will let you dive your own computer profile. I was consistently first in, last out. Boat is serviceable. All tanks and equipment are on the deck. You sit on the back of the boat and the DM brings you your equipment and you step off the back of the boat. Works well even in rougher seas. Entry back into the boat is aided by a Christmas Tree ladder. Air tanks are generally AL80s, although AL100s are available, so are AL63s. Nitrox is \$12/tank, but worth it when you dive Theo's Wreck. Air is fine for most other dives. DM's are in the water on every dive, if you want a guided tour. If you want to wander you can wander. DM's will also change your tanks over on two tank trips if you like. The diving is excellent. Theo's Wreck is an outstanding wreck lying on its side at 100 fsw. I was first in and saw a couple of bull sharks before the rest of the divers came down and scared them off. The wreck is in great shape with lots of life, plenty of nice swim thought, prop intact and a great wide angle photo dive. Worth getting a Nitrox tank to extend the bottom time on this dive. Photos with a 16mm Fisheye were outstanding. A new wreck, the "*Sea Star II*" has just been sunk. It is a little bare right now. It is upright in about 85 fsw. Pygmy Caves and Gail's Grotto are sets of large coral heads at 60fsw that you can swim through in -- and although open it is like a nice set of cave swim

thought. Lots of reef sharks, groupers, jacks and other fish life on these two dives. You can swim through the heads at 60' for the beginning of the dive and then do the tops of the reefs at 45' for a completely different experience. Grand Bahamas Scuba doesn't do the shark feed dives, but instead does Shark Junction after the other operators have left. I enjoyed this much more than shark feeds, and we had 10-15 good sized reef sharks, large jacks, cobia, tarpon, barracuda, grouper and a couple of nice Southern rays. On this dive, the shark feed occurs in a sand area in front of an old recompression chamber where the mooring buoy is tied. Right in front of the chamber there is a large family of yellow headed jawfish that most people don't even see as they watch the sharks. I spent 1/2 the dive playing with these guys -- and the photographers will love them. Next time I bring two cameras on this dive -- one with a 20mm lens for the sharks -- one with a 105mm macro for the jawfish. Pier One restaurant is built on stilts over the ocean -- the food is very good, but most interesting is the daily shark feeding at 7,8 and 9pm. We caught the later feeding, but the big boys turned up -- at least three sharks in the 15' range. Worth the taxi ride. Otherwise food is pretty American, though more expensive. No camera facilities on the boat -- be prepared to rinse your gear when you get back to the dock or hotel. (242-373-6775; 242-373-9791; Fax 242-373-9792)

Sunn Odyssey Divers, Ocean Reef Club, January 2002, Holly Scott

(holscott@aol.com) Richmond, VA.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy. Ocean Reef Resort is a "Vacation Club" (read Time Share without the benefits of equity ownership). The accommodations were clean and comfortable: a huge apartment, with a full kitchen, 2 BR, 2BA and a porch large enough to enjoy the sunrise with anyone else dumb enough to get up at 5:30. My two nieces needed to a refresher and update their Junior OW cards. The resort has an on-site dive shop (Grand Bahamas Divers), but I had arranged to dive with Sunn Odyssey. Grand Bahamas Divers head guy ("Mr. Fred") tried to persuade me to switch to him by making disparaging remarks about Sunn Odyssey and he tried to convince someone who had taken the Discover Diving resort course to follow up with the full certification course despite her persistent and extremely painful ear problem and an inability to hear from it after her 13-foot resort dive. Nick Rolle (Sunn Odyssey) is a "Safety First" person, who also makes sure that the divers have a great time. He was aware of how the divers would interact, and how the conditions would affect divers of different abilities. On the days that we had only experienced divers on board (two out of four) he took us to great sites ranging from 60-120 ft on first dive, and shallow (20 ft) on second. When the girls were doing their refresher dives, we stayed in the under 40-ft range, and he managed to find great stuff for them. The dive boat was spacious, with a raised transom. Divers would sit on

the transom and Nick would then bring over the BC and help you into it, checking that everything was set up correctly. On return, he would board first, then take fins and help you up the ladder to remove the rest of the gear. Water was provided, no snacks. Two tank morning dive each day, after which I would explore the island. They will plan all day three tank dives to far west or east ends (with lunch), and afternoon dives. **(Ph: 242-373-4014; Fax 242-373-4014; e-mail sunnody@grouper.batelnet.bs; website: www.bahamasvg.com/sunnodyyssey.html)**

UNEXSO, November 2001, Richard Heheman, no city, state listed.

Prearranged package. The boats were in fair condition, the divemasters were more involved with each other than the divers, left the dock without checking people v/s tanks on board. The dive sites were like diving on a moonscape. They failed to use any permanent moorings. One young couple who just finished their open water certification had rental equipment with only had a pressure gauge on her console, no timing device between them, his pressure gauge was fogged, no compass, and the high pressure coupling at the console was leaking. The divemaster told him to put pressure on it while diving and it would be fine. I suggested that the divemasters and the couple switch equipment if they thought everything was ok to dive with, reluctantly they did. Counter service was slow and gave no regard for taking people in turn. Management yelled at several

employees in front of patrons. People wandered around looking for assistance on where to go and when. **(Ph: (800) 992-DIVE or (954) 351-9889; Fax: 954-351-9740; e-mail info@unexso.com)**

UNEXSO, Caribbean Divers, Club Viva Fortuna, April 2002, Tina Petersen (tinabobina@email.com) Omaha, NE. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 50 to 90 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy. Dove four days with Caribbean Divers. When I made the reservation I was told to call when we arrived on the island. I wasn't able to call her until 5 p.m. and they close at 4 p.m. so we went to the dive shop at 7am the next day. The hotel by the dive shop (Bell Channel Inn) told us they would be there at 8 so we waited. Around 8:30 she showed up and told us that the morning dives were now going to be afternoon dives. I wanted to pay for eight dives each, but she would only allow me to pay for six, because there might be some weather problems. The only problems she was looking out for is if they didn't have enough divers to go out. I had scheduled four days of two tank morning dives, but we did all afternoon dives except one day. We had to call her every night to find out when/if we would be diving the next day. We were told that they wouldn't take only two of us -- we barely got to dive the last day but some other divers called and booked at the last minute. We had a great time diving with them. Presley Knowles, the owner took us out on every dive. His nephew Jerry helped. On our first dive we descended to six

or seven reef and black tip sharks. We saw sharks on six of the eight dives. Presley took us to the same dive sight that UNEXSO and XANADU do their shark feeds. In the morning there weren't many sharks; but one hour before the 2 p.m. UNEXSO feeding the sharks were there. We also saw huge Nassau groupers, and Southern rays. Presley told my husband that he doesn't take divers on wall dives because he doesn't want the risk. He also said he prefers to do resort courses over certifications because they are quick easy money. We dove with 10 resort course divers during the week. Presley's boat was adequate. He had tank racks with bungies, but only a 5-gallon bucket for cameras. There was an open rung ladder to get out of the water but you had to climb over the back of the boat once you got up the ladder (or wait for Jerry to take your gear off for you). UNEXSO: For the dolphin dive we were loaded onto a 30' boat with about six other divers. Everything went well and the dive staff was friendly and helpful. We rode in our boat to another bay and then followed a little boat with the dolphin trainers to the dive site. The dolphins were let out of their cages, and followed the trainers boat to the site. The dolphins went around the circle of divers, first they came over to us and allowed us to pet them. Next they brought a ring over to us, we took it, they went and got a fish from the trainer, then they took the ring from us and passed it to the next person. Third we stayed vertical, a few feet off the bottom with our right arm extended to the side, shoulder joint locked, the

dolphin came and put his nose in our hand and spun us around twice. Last the dolphins came and gave us a kiss, with our regulators out of our mouths. \$189/ person. In the afternoon we took the catamaran (huge boat), and we had eight divers again. The catamaran has no place to put your tanks except under the bench seats. The shark feed was exciting; \$90/person. All 8 divers were lined up on the bottom on their knees, two safety divers wearing partial chain mail suits stood on both ends of the line, with a piece of PVC pipe to push away any sharks that got too close. When the divers were situated, the videographer and the feeder came down in full chain mail. More than 20 sharks there. The animals came as close as 2 feet from me, I was on the end and the safety diver was constantly pushing them away with his pipe. We bought both videos (dolphin and shark) for about \$55 total. The videos were good, about ten minutes each; no bells and whistles, just some background music. UNEXSO has a lot of apparel for sale, most of it expensive. We got a great package through Yahoo Vacations for seven nights at Club Viva Fortuna's an all-inclusive resort. The staff members were lazy. They tried to get us to sign up for a time share spiel (90 min). The food is served buffet style. For breakfast you can get a made to order omelet; but it took at least 20 min every time. Lunch was always pizza, burgers and hot dogs, along with varying buffet items. There was also a snack served from 4-6 p.m.; pizza, hotdogs, fruit and cookies. Their pizza was good! Dinner was buffet -- lots of

Italian dishes. Plenty of fresh melon, oranges and pineapple, a nice salad bar for lunch and dinner. The food at the Italian sit-down restaurant was excellent; the staff again was lazy however. The wine included with dinners was jug wine, yuck! A bottle of wine was \$20; you could also purchase steak or lobster for an extra charge. The Bahamian staff weren't given the same privileges as the young Italians who worked there. They ate in the dining hall with the rest of the guest; most were rude; they acted like we were interrupting their vacation. The Bahamian staff had to eat in a small building behind the kitchen. Our room was clean and comfortable. The AC worked well. The beach is awesome! White sand, and crystal blue waters. You can walk a mile or two in either direction on the beach. Plenty of beach chairs. The pool was nice. They closed down the pool to regular guests one evening for a party giving for a European tour operator. There were some angry guests! Viva Fortuna is not within walking distance of anything. Without a car we would have gotten bored at the resort; and the taxi fares would have added up quickly. We rented from Brad's for \$280 for seven days.

Xanadu Undersea Adventures,
January 2002, Jeff Brown,
Wellington, FL. Experience:
 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet.
 Water: 72 F, choppy. Maybe the worst
 dive operation I have experienced.
 DM was pushy and rude. This was a
 night dive. They went to the closest
 reef off the inlet and limited the dive

to 30 minutes at a depth of 40'. We all got back onboard with at least 2000 psi. Back at the dock the crew promptly turned off all the lights. We were left to put away our gear in the dark! (800-327-8150; 242-352-3811; 242-352-5856; Fax 242-481-5630)

**Xanadu Undersea Adventures,
Xanadu Beach Resort, March
2002, Dr. Kathleen T. Brown
(k.brown62@comcast.net)**

Martinez, GA. Vis: 20-60 ft. Water: 70-72 F. Dives logged: 26. Dive restrictions enforced: depth and time. All staff associated with the dive shop were professional and accommodating. Reefs in good condition — good variety of fishes. Shark feeding dive was interesting and conducted well. Divemasters are good and had confidence in their judgment and skills when weather made diving conditions more challenging. Resort is off the beaten path for Freeport and taxi fares are exorbitant. Resort caters to obnoxious US students on spring break. These were the only negative aspects of the trip. No complaints about dive operation at all.

**Xanadu Undersea Adventures,
Mayfield Beach and Tennis Club,
August 2002, Jody and Elissa
Thompson (descentline@attbi.com)**
Corona, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, calm, no currents. Our 7th year diving with Xanadu Undersea Adventures. While other shops have stopped providing free hotel pickups, Xanadu still does (even if you are staying in Lucaya). They are customer oriented and run a good shop. Don't

get them confused with the Xanadu Hotel. Though they are next to each other, the Xanadu Hotel is run down and in desperate need of repair. Instead, Xanadu Undersea Adventures offers packages with the newly renovated Royal Oasis Golf Resort. We stayed at the Mayfield Beach and Tennis Club, an older, clean, well-maintained beachfront, two bedroom condo timeshare across the channel from Xanadu. Email Christina at mayfield@coralwave.com for availability. The reefs around are alive with fish and coral, but there are areas covered with algae. Our favorite dive, Theo's wreck (max depth 110 feet, 200+ foot long freighter) could be seen from just below the surface! This dive is usually affected by currents but they were absent. Awesome night dive for advanced, confident divers. Enormous sleeping parrot fish make their evening cocoons inside the wreck. Crabs move about, and bristle worms crawl across the hull. Since this wreck has been down 20+ years, it is encrusted with life. A new wreck, the Sea Star II was sunk four months ago. Sitting upright, it is also a great dive. Though not encrusted, it is surrounded by schools of fish. There are many interesting swim throughs. Xanadu will take divers to the West End to discover new dive sites. Years ago we found a 40 F thermocline produced by underground springs venting to the ocean. Dolphin pods are commonly encountered here. This trip, we encountered eagle rays, eels, gray reef sharks, and a good assortment of reef fishes. Only occasionally did we see turtles. Shark feeding dives

Tuesdays and Saturdays in shark alley. On the days between shark feeds, we dove here, encountering several gray reef sharks, all of which lazily swam around the reef. Freeport is a half hour plane or four hour boat ride from Miami. The diving is consistently good and inexpensive. Many positive improvements have been made to Grand Bahama Island. See our website www.descentline.com for more info and photo gallery. Each boat has a separate camera rinse tank and shaded seat area that easily served as a camera table. The dive shop has a nice classroom with some outlets available for recharging batteries. It is also air conditioned which allows for fog free film changes. The shop has MX-10 cameras for rent as well as videographers on staff who shoot the shark dive as well as do custom videos. Underwater photo and video courses are available by arrangement. The Mayfield resort has plenty of outlets for battery chargers.

New Providence

Dive Dive Dive, Atlantis, June 2002, Victor A. Bary (vbary@yahoo.com)
Cranford, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 83 to 86 F, choppy. While on the other side of the island from Atlantis, Dive Dive Dive daily drove to us to and from our hotel at no charge. Large boat and 6-8 divers made for comfortable conditions. Dive masters gave thorough briefings, picked dives sites based on conditions and diver preferences. Took tank off your BC when you returned from dive while you were still on dive platform. Entries were backwards roll

due to transom. A week of hard rain had reduced visibility to 30'-60'. On Bahama Mama dive site, we were with 6-10 6' reef sharks throughout dive. Well run dive operation with professional and accommodating staff. Separate rinse tank, dive masters pointed out interesting subjects. (Ph: 800-328-8029 or 809-362-1143)

Diver's Haven, Atlantis, June 2002, William Boswell (bos21998@yahoo.com)

Millersville, MD. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 79 F, calm. I've been to the Bahamas before and wasn't impressed with the diving. (Ph: (242) 393-0869; e-mail rguest@jacharic.com)

Nassau Scuba Centre, October 2001, Joshua S. Spector, New York, NY.

Number of dives logged: 101. Water Temperature: 81-83 F. Visibility: 40-70 feet. Restrictions: not longer than 30 minutes bottom time first dive! Not longer than 40 minute second dive. Orange Hill is a nice place, comfortable, honor bar during the day, big room with satellite TV, helpful staff, big pool, beach across the street. Nassau is spread out and expensive to get to restaurants and bars. Cheap busses run from Orange Hill to downtown, but they stop in the evenings. Taxis run \$15-20 to downtown. To Paradise Island \$30 each way. I always felt like I was getting ripped off by taxi drivers. Prices seemed to change arbitrarily. Dinners at the mainstream (not fancy) restaurants set us back \$60-70 for two entrees, one appetizer and two drinks each. Diving was very good. Easy

dives, little or no current, warm water. Every first deep dive was limited to 25-30 minutes and the second, shallower dives were limited to 35-40 minutes. I regularly came up with 1500-1800 psi. This was disappointing. Once we proved to the dive guides that we are competent (the second day), they allowed us to go off on our own on the dives. Time limits were still strictly enforced. For most trips, the boat only had 6-10 divers. However, one morning they packed 20 divers on the boat. Staff is careful, skilled and professional. They were helpful with a regulator repair and made sure that in our 10 dives, we didn't hit the same spot twice. (Ph: 800-327-8150 or 809-362-1964)

Nassau Scuba Centre, December 2001, Larry Campbell (LRC59@yahoo.com) Springfield, VA. Vis: 60-80 ft. Dives logged: 90. Dive restrictions enforced: 30 min. 100 ft. The best thing was a lot of sharks. The 30 minute dives are the pits. They should be called 1/2 tank dives. Always a lot of students and resort divers on boat. Some guides were good though and would take off with some of us early so we could have a little more bottom time. We would have to do a shallow dive on most trips for the students.

Nassau Scuba Centre, Orange Hill, April 2002, Will Mills, Chattanooga, TN. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 75-77 F. Dives logged: 180. Dive restrictions enforced: time in the water. Nassau Scuba herded us like cows on and off the boat. There was no concern if we were having fun. The boat had to leave and be back at a certain time.

Nassau is a fun place but Nassau Scuba Dive is run like a cattle boat. Dive, Dive, Dive is great. (Friendly and fun).

Nassau Scuba Center, Stuart Cove, August 2002, Marv Gozum (gozum@computer.org) Philadelphia, PA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 20 to 130 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm. Poor diving value. While the waters are sapphire to turquoise, crystal clear visibility from 50-130', its climate pleasant in summer, all reefs I visited were 50-90% denuded of live coral. Bottom times are kept at 30 minutes, and rare haggling could get you 60 minutes. Fish life mostly juveniles in small schools amidst a skeletonized landscape of dead coral that betrayed a past glory. The wrecks are small and uninspiring, much like quarry wrecks in the northeast USA. The locals are some of the nicest and friendliest I've met in the Caribbean, while the expats are some of the most disenchanting. Nassau is expensive, developed and optimized to harvest US tourist dollars. Stuart Cove's is a dive vending machine, impersonal but precise. Nassau Scuba Center is more personal.

Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, Clarion South Ocean Beach, May 2001, Karie Jones, Shelby Twp, MI. Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 76 F. Dives logged: 140. Excellent dive operation, professional, good crew, great boats. However, I found the diving rather boring. I was not impressed with the corals or marine life. The shark feeding dive was really great though, made the trip worthwhile. It was a

great hotel and beach. (Ph: 800-879-9832 or 954-524-5755, Fax: 954-524-5925; e-mail info@stuartcove.com; website www.dive-bahamas.com)

Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, October 2001, Barbara Spennetta, Mazomanie, WI. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Logged dives: 800 - PADI instructor. Dive restrictions enforced: Time. We did four dives over two days. First dive had five friendly and curious sharks. Rest of the dives were almost "sterile." First dive we were given a profile of 50 ft. for 30 minutes. I told divemaster I had paid to dive and intended to explore for 45 minutes to one hour. At exactly 45 minutes, boat personnel began to pound on the metal ladder to recall us. The other three divers onboard had all finished their first open water certification dive and were tired of waiting for us. After a 20 minute surface interval, we were again given a maximum profile of 40 ft. for 25 minutes. We would have complained more, but there was nothing to see any way. The dive sites for which this area is known, i.e. Shark Alley and some nicer wrecks, were all carefully avoided. We were informed the divemaster had to be back by 1:00 PM to take out afternoon divers. Because they were late leaving on the morning dives, we were expected to be thrilled to give up our dive and surface interval time so they could get back on schedule.

Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean, Harborside Resort at Atlantis, June 2002, Paul Farago, Lakewood, OH. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 60 to

100 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, calm. The employees were helpful and accommodating. They didn't make you feel rushed during the loading, diving, and unloading. They helped divers out of the water and to their seats, they didn't just stand there and watch you struggle. Separate lines for check-in, depending on what you signed up for. So there wasn't a large gaggle of people trying to check in and pay. The dive boats were O.K. but there were no restrooms, a problem on some longer boat rides. We rented a regulator for my daughter and on three of the four days of diving we had some sort of problem, i.e., free flow, air leaks at console. The dive would take a vote at the beginning of the dive as to what dive sites to visit. The first dive of the day (deep dive) was always led. The second dive was by buddy teams with a return time to the boat. The shark wall dive and shark feed was great, though it took a long time to get back to the docks because of engine problems. The Harborside Resort at Atlantis was great. It is mostly time shares but there are rentals. The one room suite was roomy, 1000 square feet, full kitchen, dining room, balcony that overlooked the Atlantis Harbor and the Royal Towers, king size bed with bath, TV/VCR in the living room and bedroom. You can have groceries delivered and put in the refrigerator while you are out. There is a dishwasher, convection oven/microwave, stove top, and large refrigerator. Outdoor restaurant and bar by the pool, however the menu is limited. A shuttle runs between Harborside and the Atlantis every ten

minutes. You can use all the facilities at the Atlantis, you can even charge to your room. It is about a 45 minute shuttle ride from Harborside that is on Paradise Island to Stuart Cove's. Pick up for the morning dive is 7:45 AM and 11:45 AM for the afternoon dive. No food is served on the boats so bring something to snack on and bottled water also -- the water containers on the boat looked dirty. There was a garbage can filled with fresh water for cameras only. There were no other places to safely set your camera down.

San Salvador

Riding Rock Inn, March 2002, Dr. Barry Galison
(footman@ix.netcom.com) **Delray Beach, FL.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 78-80 ft. Dives logged: 16. Beautiful wall dives and swim thru's that let your out to a vertical wall that looks down to 4000 ft. You would swim out to 135-155 ft. then work your way back up the wall. Saw hammerheads but no other sharks. In the sandy areas you would see sting ray but not mantas or eagles. The reefs were covered with sand. Saw no lobsters and only one spotted eel but played with some large grouper. The rooms were nice and the food was delicious. The dive group was excellent, friendly, and helpful. Use your dive computers and go on your own if you want. (Ph: 800-272-1492 or 954-359-8353, e-mail ridingrock@aol.com)

Riding Rock Inn, March 2002, Peter Hartlove, Longmont, CO. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 77-78 F. Dives

logged: 555. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 first, 70 second, 100 third. Went back after 12 years. The resort is quite nice, well run and friendly, one and all. Good food and plenty of it. The wait persons were great, happy and enthusiastic. Elaine, especially, who had her brother do a woodcarving for my birthday, and cake and candles. The dive shop, though not loaded with rental equipment or supplies, was also run well. We had Bruce as our driver and Alex as our divemaster. Both were good, we had some engine cooling problems but they did their best to keep us diving. We made it to Double Caves Chilly water. Good weather. What San Salvador lacks in fish, it almost makes up for in swim-thought. We did several, starting at 50-60 ft. and exiting on the wall at 120-130 ft. We would do one, float up a little, then go through another. One, at Telephone Pole, is narrow, swim down head first through a Utah-like Slot Canyon, it gets pretty dark, then come out on the wall 50-60 feet deeper. Very nice. I did find an 8" Quillfin Blenny and was the highlight fish of this trip. Couple of sharks, couple of turtles. Had a mother dolphin and her small baby cruise past one day. The groupers at a couple of the sites allowed chin scratching and an interesting "spin the grouper by the nose" trick. Grouper was on the menu quite a bit, so we will see how long they are there. Typical Caribbean tropicals, tho not a lot and the reefs have a ways to go to recover from storms, etc. Overall, a good trip, the resort handled our group of 27 without a problem.

Riding Rock Inn, April 2002, Bill Shepherd (Chorsejbs@aol.com)
Satellite Beach, FL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm no currents. My wife and I have been to San Sal 16 times; great wall diving with variety of corals, tropical fish, and occasional big fish. Divemasters let you dive according to your abilities with emphasis on safety. Most sites within 15 to 30 minute boat rides. Staff takes care of gear that is left on boat. Boats are showing lack of preventive maintenance. 1 of 2 operational, hopefully one will stay operational but it needs fixing. Dive shop has only bare essentials. Staff turnovers in summer 2002 affecting normal quality of dive operations. Accommodations are excellent and meals are typical Bahamian-American with plenty to eat. Staff does an excellent job of caring for divers and their needs. Great value. Lack of experienced photo assistance with departure of Chris McLaughlin. No promotion of photo opportunities by current staff.

Riding Rock Inn, May 2002, Tripp Jones MD (Tjones@sc.rr.com)
Columbia, SC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Water: 76 to 78 F, calm no currents. Excellent dive staff, flexible and patient with new divers. Stan was excellent with all divers and eager to satisfy the customers. The boats need some work, but the diving was fantastic with viz of 80 to 150 feet. Saw one hammerhead, moray and variety of smaller critters. Wet suit was comfortable for early May. The food was plentiful and good and the

Inn was clean and comfortable. We took the charter from Ft. Lauderdale and this was better than traveling Bahamas Air. Owner needs to put money into boat maintenance and upkeep.

BARBADOS

Barbados is busy and crowded, with lots of fast traffic, big splashy resorts, and restaurants galore. . . . There's ordinary Caribbean diving with tropical fish, although big ones are rare, but it's fine for beginners or for a dive or two on a golf holiday. . . . You still can find century-old bottles in the harbor and the wreck of the *Stavronikita* is interesting, but jammed with tourist divers. . . . The average daily temperature is in the mid-80s year-round; there's considerable rain from June to January, and it's important to watch for hurricanes. . . .

The Dive Shop, Cacrabank Apartments, April 2002, Byron Yost, Castle Rock, CO. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. Haroon Degia, Managing director and dive guide recently added "The Wet Shop" to his operation. Included was the 42' Bubbles, a catamaran that can accommodate 10 divers easily. Rinse tank for cameras, a dry storage area and shelves under the seats for personal items, adequate shade on the main deck and a sun deck on top. Haroon and the other dive guides were not overly restrictive and let us dive our computers. The reefs are lush and