

were amid the coral. If you're looking for large animals, they are few, but plenty of small, colorful species. Extensive coral bleaching on several sites. Angel City has always been a favorite but was disappointing due to coral damage. Overall, a pleasant experience.

Wannadive, Eden Beach, December 2001, Carole Schmidt, Chandler, AZ. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives accrued: 35. We didn't like Eden Beach Resort much. Wannadive dive operation on their beach was great! Must rent a car, we enjoyed the drive and dive shore diving all over the island. People were friendly. Good idea to purchase local directory to shore dive sites with descriptions. Nice hard and soft corals, small schools of fish, turtles, eels. Good for beginners, dive your own profile. Tough to navigate some entry points, gets easier with practice. (Ph: 00 599 717 790 8880; e-mail info@wannadivebonaire.com; website www.wannadivebonaire.com)

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Grand Cayman is great for divers seeking familiar surroundings: it's Americanized and crowded, with traffic, Burger Kings, Ramadas, and Hyatts. And it's expensive. . . . There are a seemingly endless number of safe and well-organized dive operations; to the dismay of experienced divers, depth and time limits are generally enforced, though some operations are now responding to the needs of more experienced divers. . . . Avoid

prepaying a dive package so that if you're disappointed with cattle boats or site selection you can switch to someone else. . . . Dive quality is declining due to development, and Seven Mile Beach reefs are beaten up. To avoid crowds, endless youths, and Cayman Cowboys, stay on the North side or the East End, where you'll find the best diving and fewer people. . . . Brac diving is not up to the best of Cayman, but it's more laid back, and Brac outfits make frequent trips to Little Cayman from April to November. Rough water often prevents trips at other times. . . . For Caribbean walls, clear water, and beautiful reefs, Little Cayman is nonpareil, but a dozen dive boats a day can visit a two-mile stretch. Winters can be cool in the Caymans, and the islands are in the hurricane belt. . . .

Cayman Brac

Brac Caribbean Beach Village, August 2002, Gene Fochtman, Peachtree City, GA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, no currents. This resort has just switched over to Reef Divers II. Two exceptional Captains! Craig (on Little Sister) and Chris (on Big Sister). Both knew all the dive sites, and consistently put us on great walls and reefs. They knew how to make the trips fun besides being educational (they are top notch Dive Masters). RDII give you mesh bags for your mask, fins, etc. Your reg and BC can stay on board! If you want to avoid renting a car, try Billy's

Market! Billy will pick you up and take you back when you are done shopping! His prices aren't bad either by island standards. (Ph: 866-The-Brac; e-mail info@866thebrac.com; website www.866thebrac.com)

Brac Reef Resort, September 2001, Bob Barada (bbarada@pacbell.net)
Walnut Creek, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 125 Feet. Calm and flat, not unreasonably hot. Water was 90 degrees at surface, 87 degrees at 110 feet! Corals were good, probably as nice as anywhere in the Caribbean. Fish life and lobsters/crabs/eels good, but not as prevalent as Cozumel. Nurse sharks almost every dive, occasionally large stingrays and spotted eagle rays. Small and large wrecks were boring. Dove Little Cayman and lunched at Little Cayman Beach Resort one day. The resort is clean and the rooms are spacious, if simple. Kind of like a Motel 6. Food was medium quality, but plentiful -- buffet for every meal. Italian, Mexican, seafood, etc. Friday night all you could eat lobster, which was excellent. Good sized pool and spa. Splash week included many resort activities and great prices. The dive operation is first class, with large, well set up and uncrowded boats. Your BC and weights stayed on the boat. The rest of your gear went through large rinse tanks and then into a mesh bag and stored in the "drying room" until your next dive. Dive master/boat handlers were terrific and felt like part of the family by the end of the week. Nitrox available for \$10 per fill. Our Saturday to Saturday package in-

cluded two morning dives Sunday through Friday and one night dive. Afternoon dives were extra.

Brac Reef Beach Resort, October 2001, Ollie McClung, Birmingham, AL. Vis: 70-100 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dives logged: 200 +/- . Dive restrictions enforced: 110', time, 500 psi. Great organization/staff. Good equipment/boats. Rooms like moderate motel. Good food though with a "full house" a long serving line at buffet three times a day. Staff competent and helpful. Dive staff really uptight about small things such as coming back up after even shallow descent — forbade diving in after exiting to retrieve dropped snorkel at 10-15' etc. However, did not hassle experienced divers in water about time/depth soloing, etc. (Ph: 800-327-3835, (727) 323-8727; e-mail bestdiving@reefseas.com; website www.bracreef.com)

Brac Reef Beach Resort, February 2002, Larry & Joan Eggert, Ogden, UT. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 100+ Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. Winds and seas were from the NE the entire week, limiting diving on the resort-side of the island. Diving was good on the opposite ("destroyer") side. The food was the best we've had at any dive resort, from the Caribbean to Australia! Excellent variety and deserts that were much too good. Two dive boats were at Montego Bay, Jamaica, leased out to move part of a reef to improve harbor access. The remaining dive boat was supplemented with a smaller, less comfortable boat. It was adequate, but

some days crowded. Overall, friendly resort and dive crew.

Brac Reef Beach Resort, June 2002, John McGinnis, Cambridge, MD.

Vis: 60-110 ft. Water: 82-86 F. Dives accrued: 200. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. Easy diving. No cattle boats. Relaxed divemasters unless you screwed up. Our guy chewed somebody out for bounce diving and leaving his buddy (his new bride). Diving can be dangerous for the stupid!

Brac Reef Beach Resort, July 2002, Joe Culhane (joedive2002@yahoo.com)

Monroe, NY. Experience: 101- 250 dives. Vis: 100 Feet. Water: 85 to 88 F, calm, choppy. The staff was friendly. Nice rooms, most with a patio or balcony but not mine. Food was buffet, nonstop, good (dessert's were too good for a slob like me). Reef Divers very good, nice boats, plenty of room. I was on the Twin Sister with Chris and Morty, divemasters. They were excellent — spoiled the hell out of you. Left you alone if you wanted or dove with newer divers. Gave detailed briefings, drew some funky looking fish. Excellent reefs and dynamite walls there. On Little Cayman's, Bloody Bay Wall, lots of swim throughs and life. Night diving was excellent too, Tuesday and Thursday. Wish they had it every night. Ps: tip your divemasters.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, July 2001, Paul Neis, Mtn. Home, AR.

Vis: 35-90 ft. Water: 84 F. Logged dives: 208. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 ft. The reefs are badly covered with algae

on the Brac. Accommodations ok but not exceptional. Swimming pool water has no filtering system and gets cloudy. The dive leaders are nice and leave you alone if you want it that way. There is no education of divers regarding conservation and they allowed novice photographers to trash reefs by crawling all over them. Watching that occur dive after dive soured me on going there again. (Ph: 800-367-3484 or (345) 948-1553); e-mail stevo@candw.ky; website www.divitiara.com)

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, July 2001, Lydia Adkins, Cordele, GA.

Vis: 100-150 ft. Water: 80-83 F. Dives logged: 300. Dive restrictions enforced: 130, 110 nitrox. Great place to go for families and singles. Island is safe and friendly. Diving is wonderful and easy. Dive crew friendly and helpful. Photo Tiara has great service and helpful.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, September 2001, Scott, Huntington Station, NY.

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. The rooms are clean and comfortable. The staff is friendly and helpful. The food is good, plentiful and varied. Menus ranged from barbecue one night to lobster tails and steak another night. Don't know if I saved all that much money by doing the all-- inclusive thing, but it sure did make life easy. Diving is great and it isn't crowded as far as worrying about a lot of boat traffic. The dive operation is excellent. The divemasters are knowledgeable and professional. They don't baby experienced divers but are aware of

the new divers. There is a dive bag on your bed. Put all the gear that you want on the boat and set up in the bag. The divemasters setup all of your gear and it is waiting on the boat when you are ready to dive. After each dive they change your gear onto a filled tank and all you have to do is relax and get ready for your next dive. When you are ready to leave, the divemasters rinse your gear and put it back in front of your door. Good dive sites on the Brac are East Chute/Cayman Mariner, The Fishery (great for the fish lovers, go figure); End of Island, Tarpon Reef, Greenhouse Wall/Reef, Mixing Bowl, Cumber's Cave and, OF COURSE, Russian Destroyer #356 MV Capt. Keith Tibbets. "The Wreck" is an awesome dive; nice reef area on one side where you can find plenty of fish and critters. The other side is a sand flat where you will find stingrays and similar animals. The ship has broken in half and is accessible at certain points and is easy to navigate in most areas. The front of the bow is in 100 feet of water. The bow has broken off and is lying on her port side. The stern is upright and is easily accessible by beginner divers. The radar tower on the stern is about 40 feet deep. The rear gun turrets are a great background for photos and video. Large groupers hang out there and are rather friendly. I saw two trunk fish mating. Walls start at around 25 feet or so and go off into 6000 feet of total blue abyss. Little Cayman -- little current. Most days visibility was 100 feet or more. One day there was a bit of surge. On the East Chute/Cayman Mariner we did a

drift and it is like you are going up and over underwater mountains. The Cayman Mariner is a small wreck, about 65ft, that has some great coral and marine life on it. On one side I saw southern stingrays in the sand. The other sides are the underwater mountains. The weather was sunny and hot. At night the pool at the hotel made a great place to hang out in and sip cold drinks. Ask the bartenders to make you a "Brac Sunset." After a couple of these, they will definitely have you on an island of your own.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, October 2001, Jim Culp, Iva, SC. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 84-86 F. Dives logged: 100+. Dive restrictions enforced: 110' with computer, 500 psi. Divi Tiara Resort: Rooms plain but adequate, beds excellent. Air conditioned with tile floors. Cable TV. Food was great! Bar was pricey (\$4.00 US/beer). Overall staff was friendly and accommodating. Dive Op well organized and professional. Leave your gear outside your room on day one and you don't touch it until you're ready to leave. Dive briefings were thorough, clear, concise. DM's in water but let you do your own thing. Boats are reasonably fast and roomy. H2O and snacks on board, they have O 2 on board. Diving: Dove Bloody Bay wall (great!), two wrecks (Tibbets & Kissimee). Also did a night dive (\$40 US extra). Corals were in best shape I've seen lately, colorful and healthy. Saw all the usual suspects of tropical fish along with eagle and southern sting ray, tarpon, turtles, octopus, green and spotted moray, Caribbean

and Spanish lobster, and last but not least, flying gurnard. Only problem was delay in departure due to bag searches at Grand Cayman.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, February 2002, Stanley Holz
(saholz@connriver.net)

Whitefield, NH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, calm. Rooms are plain and unimpressive, however, clean, freshly painted, and have good air conditioners and ceiling fans. Our room had a comfortable king size bed, a small table with two chairs, two night tables and a dresser. The bathroom had a tub with shower. Some rooms had two beds, and shower stalls with no tubs. Fleet of five dive boats but we only used one the whole time we were there. Anywhere from two to seven other divers would join our group of five divers. Divers were brought in from Brac Aquatics who had no boats that were operational. Our boat, "Island Fever," was equipped with a camera rinse tank, water hose, mask defogger (baby shampoo), and had fresh water and snack food and fruit. Staff assigns a numbered gear bag for your stay. The bag is stored on a numbered hook in a gear storage area. You suit up, grab your weights, mask and fins, and sit down on the dive platform at the rear of the boat. Your "kit" is brought over to you. Tighten your straps, stand up and giant stride right in. On returning to the boat, the same routine is done in reverse. The staff will rinse your gear and return it to your hook. Dove Nitrox. The crew was careful about testing and sign off.

Their EAN 32 ran 33 to 33.6%. Dive briefings were detailed. A DM is not always in the water and we were allowed total dive freedom within standard parameters. 110' max depth, safety stop, return with 500 psi in your tank. The boat had a hook in the water at 15' just in case. On two dives I observed gloved divers butchering the reef with their hands. The typical Brac dive site is a spur and groove reef. The numerous sand chutes allow photographers to get down and get well set for close up shots. The deeper reefs were generally calm with visibility up to 80', while the shallower reef sites all had some surge. Angel Reef, Wilderness Wall, and Pillar Coral Reef had less fish life than I expected. Last year we dove Bonaire. This just didn't compare. The coral here was generally healthy, I saw more Elkhorn Coral than any other place I've been to, but I was initially underwhelmed by the fauna. We took the 45 minute boat ride over to Little Cayman. The seas were too rough for any of the snorkelers to stay in for any length of time. Prolific fish life at the shallower depths. The wall is lush and absolutely vertical in places. There are many neat swim throughs. At "Cumber Cave" we came across a section of sandy bottom that was covered by hundreds of garden eels. Russian Destroyer on Brac lies in two pieces separated by a debris field. It bottoms at 110' but most of the diving is at 80' or less. Swimming through the central corridor is a blast. It's tilted at an angle and I felt like I was in a Fun House. Very strange effect. The guns are not nearly as big as they look in the pictures, but they

offer some good photo ops. There's not too much growth on the wreck yet, although the anchor chain is starting to look colorful. A large Grouper likes to hang out with the divers on the sandy bottom around the wreck. He was constantly encircled by rings of divers. "East Chute" has beautiful sand chutes, a decent wall, and the wreck of the "Cayman Mariner," a tugboat that sank about 25 years ago. It's fragile and you are asked not to touch it, but it is a classic small wreck. "West Chute" which is west of "East Chute" featured plenty of yellow-headed jawfish and all the conchs you'd ever want to see in your life. Plenty of exceptional sites off Cayman Brac, and some that are pretty pedestrian. The beach in front of Divi Tiara is shallow and has a muddy bottom that is easily stirred up. The snorkelers were always welcome on the dive boat but, more often than not, the reefs were too deep for them to really enjoy. The best time they had was when they got someone from the resort to drive them out to "Buccaneers" for a day of snorkeling. The shore entry was easy and the site was ideal for them. Cliff is the main cook and quite a character. Originally from Boston, he married a Brac woman and has been living on the Brac for 14 years. The breakfast buffets were excellent, and the evening buffets were actually mouth watering. Desserts were sinful. The only things on the island that ate better than we did were the "no-see-ums." Man, they were bad! The resort does have a lit tennis court. An astro turf and sand surface and plays well. Like a cross

between grass and red clay. Should have shore diving excursions for the snorkelers. A day trip and a picnic lunch would open up a new world to the non-divers.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, April 2002, Russ Lido (LIPPY18182@aol.com) Sterling Hts., MI. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy. Second trip to Divi Tiara since 1997 and made partly because of continued good reports that I've read in *Undercurrent*. Glad to say that Divi Tiara is living up to the high marks. The reefs we dived on are in great shape and the fish life is abundant including many turtles, lobster, crab, yellowtail snapper, grunts but not many large pelagics. Max, the new Divi Resort manager and staff are doing a nice job. They showed genuine concern in keeping your stay as comfortable as possible. Food was tasty.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, April/May 2002, Richard Parry, Westfield, NJ. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 84 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 110. The hotel portion of Divi Tiara has been completely refurbished and the guest rooms, dining room and lobby are in excellent condition. I stayed in the timeshare units, which are fair but could use some refurbishing. Evening meals varied but always included same excellent choices -- surf and turf (lobster tail and steak), roast pork with applesauce and mashed potatoes, prime rib with corn and, sweet potatoes. The lunches were of equal quality and desserts were also good. Diving was outstanding. The dive

shop was well run by Nicky, a helpful and competent young lady, who has a great personality and was eager to please. Two trips were run to Little Cayman. I took one that was a three-tank trip with lunch served on the boat. The walls at Little Cayman were spectacular as usual. We dove the wreck on Cayman Brac and saw lots of fish life and turtles on practically every dive. We watched our bags at Newark Airport get tagged through to Cayman Brac and by chance during our layover we decided to check the baggage area and there were our bags. When I complained in Grand Cayman they informed me that the bags are never checked through.

Divi Tiara Beach Resort, September 2002, R. Marie, Park City, UT. Vis: 60-110 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Dives accrued: 150. Dive restrictions enforced: both buddies must have computer. Very laid back, cooks are outstanding, desserts are divine. Food \$11-\$13 for breakfast, .50-\$13 for lunch, \$32 dinner and add automatic 15% for service. Great variety and plenty of it. Few alternatives outside resort. Liquor expensive. Serviceable bicycles to use free. Dive Tiara is great operation, briefings good, head counts always, allowed us to follow divemaster if desired. Good surface intervals on boat but they took us to the dock for our rest on a rough day. Once we arrived, put gear in their bag, we never touched it again until we strapped it on! Be prepared — both buddies have to have computers or pair is limited to the tables. Uwateks for rent at \$60US for six days. Got run

off Brac after two days by tropical storm/hurricane Isidore.

Grand Cayman

Bob Soto's Diving, Treasure Island, October/December 2001, William Hall (denali@whidbey.net) Oak Harbor, WA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 81 to 86 F, calm. There is just something special about cruising through a beautiful canyon, admiring all of the beautiful fish and the things growing along the walls, then breaking out onto the main wall with nothing but "the abyss" below! I was disappointed in the service from Soto's but we were told that due to the large number of divers doing "Cayman Madness." Sandy and Cle were fantastic boat skippers and dive masters. The briefings were thorough and entertaining. But the whole "Cayman Madness" experience was too much of a "dog and pony" show for me. There were cheerleading and drinking contests and lots of other party type things. I'm new to diving and quite conservative so I don't really like to mix much alcohol with my diving. Therefore, going out in the evenings for partying didn't appeal to me. Grand Cayman is a nice island but it is quite expensive. In December my daughter and I took a cruise with stops Grand Cayman. I was extremely disappointed with Bob Soto's under "normal conditions." The service was the same or worse. We still carried our own gear, rigged our own tanks, changed over our own tanks, got our own weights, cleaned our own gear. They offered nothing but a boat, a briefing, and a guided dive with some

fresh water for rinsing cameras, masks, and yourself (shower at back of boat). We had 10 divers on the boat. Soto's had at least two instructors, a dive master, and a videographer. No one offered to help the divers do anything. They try to underweight you. I'd done a dozen dives with Soto's in October so I knew how much weight I needed. I had serious problems with my first dive due to a lost weight pocket, only to be sternly advised by the dive leader that my weight was fine and to follow him (half my weight was in that pocket!). At 50 feet I was positive with a full tank of air. Fortunately the divemaster brought down extra weights and I grabbed one, then two, then a third and was finally negative. I followed the group on the dive carrying three weights in my hands. I was appalled at the divemaster's behavior and no one offered to look for my weight pocket that had to be more or less right under the boat (I ran low on air and had to go up). I realize that I had an equipment failure and the fault was mine but I was very disappointed in the way it was handled by the Bob Soto people. The second dive on the Oro Verde was fantastic. There are lots of restaurants but most of them are quite spendy. Treasure Island is a nice hotel. The rooms are nothing fancy but everything worked fine and the pools are nice. For gear, Soto's prices are very high compared with the diver's supply store a half block away. **(Ph: 800-BOB-SOTO or (345) 949-2022; e-mail: bobsotos@candw.ky; website www.bobsotosdiving.com.ky)**

Cayman Diver LTD, Neptune's Divers, Cayman Inn, July 2002, Ezra Lunde, Staten Island, NY.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. I found a package on Continental "Cool Vacations" for 3 nights in Grand Cayman and round trip air for less than \$600/person. Though the Cayman Inn is definitely economy style, the trip was worth it. I reserved a 3-tank dive day for both my girlfriend and me through Cayman Diver LTD, deciding not to patronize Divers Down -- the onsite operator -- due to an ambiguous dive schedule. I knew it was Don Foster's new deal so I figured it would probably be good. They picked us up from the Cayman Inn and took us across to the Grand Caymanian Resort on the North Sound. It was on this drive that we were informed that the boat advertised online for the 3-tank trip was out of commission, and that we would be taking a smaller boat. Smaller indeed! There was barely enough room for 4 people. Scotty, our guide for the day, provided many laughs with his southern drawl/patois slapstick, and took us to good sites. We went to Leslie's Curl first -- a great north wall dive -- followed by a sandbar interlude with the stingrays and a second dive at Robert's Wall. During the second dive we encountered what seemed like 11 eagle rays, but Scotty thought it was only 5 that kept circling back. Regardless, the North Wall again proved to be a stunning experience. The last tank of the day was spent ambling along Blue Peter Reef, another northern site, and this being my 3rd tank of the day I

understood the origin of the site's name. Cayman Diver LTD was good because of Scotty, but the fellow I dealt within the dive shop failed to communicate with me and his fellow employees on certain issues and it got annoying. My girlfriend informed him that his lack of organization was his problem, not ours, and that we should not have to pay for his error. He agreed. The next day we went with Neptune's Divers -- a small operation that consists of Casey, Keith, a 30-ft island hopper, and a guarantee that you won't be diving with more than 8 people (apparently Neptune's was the first to do this). They picked us up, drove to the sound, and off we went to more North Wall sites. First was Lemon Wall and then Pinnacle Reef -- both excellent dives. www.neptunesdivers.com -- they've been going north as much as the weather permits. **(Cayman Diver Ltd., Ph: 345-946-4386; e-mail dfoster@caymandiver.ky; website www.caymandiver.ky; Neptune's Divers, Ph: (345) 945-3990; e-mail: neptune@candw.ky; website www.neptunesdivers.com)**

Cayman Diving Lodge, February 2002, Robert (rseggall@qwest.net)
Tucson, AZ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy surge. Water pressure in my room was very bad and not fixed when I mentioned it. A new shower head would have done the trick. The dive boats were both great, even in the choppy 4'+ surf we had to traverse to get to the sites. But great sites were within 30 minutes of the

dock. The food was probably the best I've had outside Manhattan. Dinner was family style served by the DM's who also ate with the clients. All gear was set up and taken down and washed by the crew each day. They made our kids feel good and have a great time. Only a day and a half of sun the entire week I would recommend the place for an outgoing, gregarious individual as it's a small place (max 22 guests at one time) and everyone is always pretty much together either diving or eating. They have cameras for lease and can get slide processing done. The lodge has a digital camera that went out on each dive and sells the week for \$40 on a photo CD. **(Ph: (800) TLC-DIVE or 806-794-3466; fax: 806-798-7568; e-mail: divelodge@aol.com; website www.divelodge.com)**

Cayman Diving Lodge, April 2002, Allan Baldwin (abaldwi@attbi.com)
Oak Park, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, surge. Very good diving. Excellent staff. The seas dictated where you could dive and sometimes the boat rides were rough. We had read in *Undercurrent* about sea lice this time of year but did not run into any and no one else there had been bitten.

Cayman Diving Lodge, June 2002, Donald (donaldrowe@earthlink.net)
Glendora, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 82 F, choppy. Deep dives on walls with health growths of coral, sponges, black coral, etc. Shallow dives were thru open ended caves,

tunnels, and chutes where we encountered schools of friendly tarpon and horse eyed jacks. Saw turtles on many dives, sting rays and eagle rays on some, a few morays. Diving at Sting Ray City was wonderful. The boats, crew, and service were excellent to outstanding. Nitrox was available to certified divers, and certification course is offered. The entire staff was friendly, helpful and hardworking. The food was very good, buffet breakfast and lunch, and family style dinner. The lodge is not being kept up well. What beach there is full of rocks, and cluttered. The fence has fallen down. Under every porch you find rusting hunks of something. In my room, the hot and cold faucets were reversed. This place could be outstanding if it had a major clean up both inside and out. We had several nondivers in our group and there was nothing at the lodge for them to do other than sunbathe and read. The lone TV didn't work.

Cayman Marine Lab, June 2002, Mark S. Reckman (mreckman@cinci.rr.com) Cincinnati, OH. Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives accrued: 200+. I like to rent a condo and dive different locations with different shops. I love Cayman Marine Lab (Dive operator): Spartan operation, low prices, good stories. I love Cayman Diving Lodge on the East End. No crowds, great shallow dives, great walls. I love the mini wall next to the turtle farm for a shore night dive. The fish life is good and you are on your own schedule. Dive Tech has a good staging area that's well lit.

Yeah, the island is very American and the surface topography is boring but the diving is great! The restaurants on the island are also expensive but great. **(Ph: 345 916-0849; fax 345 947-5586)**

Dive 'n Stuff, January 2002, Jean & Bob Kirkpatrick (bojean1@bellsouth.net)

Russellville, KY. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 1077. Dive restrictions enforced: depth limits (especially for Nitrox) 500 psi return to boat. A small, personal, safety minded operation where you can dive your computer. Divemasters Paul Deegan and Paul Murphy are knowledgeable, helpful and safety conscious. They give excellent briefings and allow you to go out in buddy teams. They are happy to give extra help to those who need it (me with my arthritic neck) carrying my tank to the front of the boat for a giant stride entry, and lifting it when I return. They will even keep my reg and BC so I don't have to carry them each day from the second floor condo to the beach, where they pick me up. Diving with a small group is fun — most guests are experienced divers and repeat customers and there's great camaraderie. Newcomers soon become "part of the family." Call them at 345-94SCUBA and reserve your place early. Diving in Grand Cayman is better than it was a few years ago, thanks to Marine Parks. Most of the reefs look good and there are lots of fish — some sites, such as Mesa, are packed with fish. It's a good place to do fish surveys for REEF, as there are so

many species. (Ph: 345-94-SCUBA; e-mail divenstuff@cayman.org; website www.cayman.org/divenstuff/)

Divers Down, Grand Hyatt, March 2002, Christopher Turner

(simjez@rcnchicago.com) Chicago, IL.

Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 80-84 F.

Fairly calm conditions, no current.

Sunny weather. Divers Down is a

friendly, relaxed and accommodating.

All dives are two-tank trips, generally

a deep dive (around 100 feet or so,

depending on the dive and group

experience) followed by a shallow

dive (around 40-60 feet). Unless there

were "resort" divers or groups of

beginners (O.K., I probably could

have fit into that group), we went out

with a single divemaster/captain. The

divemasters were great. They are

flexible on going to new or requested

locations and generally permit divers

to dive their own profiles. Never more

than eight divers to a boat, and for

trips off the north side of the island

they have a nice pontoon boat that can

really hold 16. The coral walls —

particularly on the north wall — are

spectacular. While the reefs are

probably taking a beating from the

mass of divers and other water

tourists, the coral and fish life remain

impressive. I saw an eagle ray and

sting ray, some large barracuda, huge

schools of tarpon, three turtles, moray

eels, a couple of large lobsters. Novice

that I am, I found the coral beautiful

and majestic, and sea life amazing.

Surface intervals could get a bit cold

when there was a wind. Hyatt is

family and small-child friendly, with a

great beach and kid-friendly swimming pools. The restaurants are all good. The Hyatt is expensive. Having your own kitchen, or even your own frig, can save you a lot of money by avoiding pricey snacking and boozing even skipping one meal out each day can add up to a lot more money for diving. \$75 U.S./two-tank dive, with the rate declining based upon the number of dives you ultimately purchase (five trips cost me \$65/two-tank dive). I rented a BCD and regulator (\$10 each/day). With some walking and patience you can find some decent fish life even off 7-mile beach. A short swim off the Governor's Mansion on the beach, there is a nice small reef with an impressive array of fish and other sea life. Even off our hotel area, by swimming out a good deal, I came across some (pretty low growth) coral, a large sting ray, some isolated large parrot fish and angel fish, and (OK, pretty small) groups of snapper, squirrel fish and various other fish. Snorkelers should search out locations like Cemetery Reef, Eden's Rock, etc.

(Ph: 345 916 3751; e-mail diversdown@diversdown.net; website www.diversdown.net)

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast Resort, August 2001, Don Buswell-

Charkow, Windermere, FL. Cobalt

has nice rooms. Food is good but a

little slow due to relatively new

operation. Owner/manager helpful.

Dive operation is 15 minute ride away.

Gets out a little slowly in AM All

diving on North side of island which I

like. Relatively deep diving, no

shallow sections. (Ph: (345) 949-1700; e-mail: divetech@candw.ky; website www.divetech.com)

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast Resort, August, September, November 2001, Susan Dasher, Austin, TX. Vis: 150-200 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Logged dives: 380. Dive restrictions enforced: Buddies only. Depth per dive plan. Dive Tech and Cobalt Coast Resort is a combination made in heaven. This is the best dive operation I have ever dived with (over 300 dives) from technical (T-3 and 350) to shore diving. They are tops. Cobalt Coast is the best dive resort in Grand Cayman. Dived here five times in 2001.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, October 2001, Chuck and Nancy Anson (nanson@owl.csusm.edu) Oceanside, CA. Email: www.cobaltcoast.com, cobalt@candw.ky, divetech@candw.ky. Number of dives completed: 300. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water 84 F. Dive restrictions: 110' max depth, 500 psi. Cobalt Coast opened in January 2001. It is 3 miles north of Seven Mile Beach away from the crowds and traffic but close to North Wall diving. Shopping and night life are a short drive. Hotel service was exceptional. Full American breakfast included in the package. The rooms are comfortable and well furnished with TV, telephone, a small refrigerator and wet bar, and a huge bathroom with tub and shower. Restaurant and bar "Duppies" on the ground level. They have a party every Friday night with a local Caribbean band on the pool deck. The attention to detail and the attitude of the staff are a product of owner, Arie

Barendrecht. Twice he personally drove us to a nearby shore diving location at Turtle Cove and was back after the dive. Dive Tech is on the premises (lockers are available for gear storage so bring a lock) and they have another operation at near by Turtle Cove. Tanks and weights are available at all hours for shore diving in front of the hotel and at Turtle Cove. 40 yard swim to spur and groove formations with an occasional small wall. Turtle cove has small walls close in and a deep wall about 80-90 yards out (best reached by scooter, which Dive Tech rents). Healthy coverings of the standard Caribbean corals, sponges and fans, and plenty of schooling fish, tarpon at Turtle Cove. The dive boat was moored at a different location and that we would have to use a shuttle each day to get to the dock. The van would pick up the divers from other hotels before stopping at Cobalt Coast so the schedule varied but we always got two morning dives in before lunch and were the first to be dropped off. The dive boat is wide and well set up for divers and was never crowded. Dive Tech boats had a spacious camera table and the crew was good about passing and handling camera equipment. Dive Tech shops had a few camera rentals and assorted batteries. No E-6 processing. The morning dives were typically deep wall dive first then a mid depth wall 60' for the second. Surface interval was spent on the boat. (Cobalt Coast: Ph: (866) 622-9626 or (345) 946-5656; e-mail info@cobaltcoast.com; website www.cobaltcoast.com)

Dive Tech, Marriott Grand Cayman, October 2001, Chris Bradbury (CtManta@hotmail.com) Weston, CT. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Operation was well run. Captain and DM on each boat. Nitrox available. Large camera table and shaded area. DM in the water on the dives while Captain remains on boat. Shop picked me up at my hotel two out of three mornings on time, and had me take a cab on the third day (their van broke down). Shore dive at the West side is outstanding -- go left out of the cove to find a large school of tarpon hanging out at 50'. Plenty of tropical fish, coral and sponge life. Tarpon, the occasional small nurse sharks, and several turtles. Rain each morning for the first three days, sunshine for the next four. Dove six dives plus Stingray City with Dive Tech. Water was warm -- my 3mm jumpsuit was too warm so I bought a 2mm shortie and was much happier. Could not leave gear with Dive Tech -- had to lug it back and forth from the hotel to the boat each day. Marriott was decent, although their beach is washing away -- they built the hotel much too close to the water. Food was surprisingly good at the beach side restaurant, but the breakfast buffet is not available during the off season. Restaurant service was good. Hotel less than 50% full. Dive Tech's boats had a large photo table and rinse tanks. Boat accommodated perhaps 16-20 divers, but we had 10 on one day and then 8 on the next, so plenty of space. Many of the divers on that first day were photographers, but

there was plenty of space for all. Shore facilities at Dive Tech's West side operation were limited to picnic tables -- had to be careful where you set up, but otherwise there was enough room.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, January 2002, Lisa McLoughlin, Tyngsboro, MA. Dives logged: 125. Dive restrictions enforced: 5 min. safety at 15-20 ft. Great people and great diving. Despite high seas and wind leftover from a nearby hurricane, Dive Tech went out every day to sites on whatever side of the island was calmest. Some shallow coral was damaged in a hurricane but is growing in quickly. Escaped large turtles from the farm and storm debris make for some interesting finds underwater. Cobalt Coast is still amazing with Ari's superlative hosting and prime rib night. Cool weather and big waves were no problem.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast Resort, January 2002, Petra Israel, Annapolis, MD. Dives logged: 120+. Very special week with Arie and staff at the Cobalt Coast Resort. The Resort is new and has European flare and they tend to every possible wish as if royalty had just flown in. Dive Tech staff can be as varied as Tech Divers to free diving champions. Everyone takes the sport of diving to a new level. Any question can be answered and any new interest undertaken. Underwater scooters are part of the package. Great fun and exceptional value. Cobalt Coast Resort is on the north end where the water can sometimes be too rough. No worries,

vans will take you to other parts of the island for boat diving, shore diving, and night diving. On calm water days the shore diving is amazing right off the Cobalt Coast dock.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, March 2002, David Vickery
(twodivers@att.net) Hoboken, NJ.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Dive Tech was everything the *Chap-book* said it would be. Although the restrictions seemed onerous, after diving for one day with them, we told them we'd like to do own thing and there was no problem. The staff is friendly, technically knowledgeable, and easy to be with. The diving was better than Little Cayman because there are more sites, and the walls are exceedingly dramatic. There are tunnels, caverns, swim throughs, overhangs, deep valleys, and lots of healthy and colorful gorgonia, sea fans, sea whips, sponges, and plate corals. Some sites did have algae on them; usually the shallower sites visited for second dives. Not tons of fish, but the usual tropicals. We saw two large nurse sharks, and three eagle rays, and they weren't too shy. Shore diving off Cobalt Coast is OK. Shore diving at Turtle Reef is splendid. There are really two dives, one at the Mini Wall, and one at the deeper wall. The Mini Wall is relaxing, but interesting and would make a good night dive. We counted 30 tarpon in one resident school, an eagle ray, a small school of enormous (Supermale?) parrotfish, and

again the usual tropicals. We rented scooters to do the deep wall, and buddied up with a third diver who had his own scooter. It is kinda neat to fly along the wall, but this was our third dive of the day, and we couldn't go too deep. So we went far. When we were down to 1500 psi, we stopped and waited for the third buddy to join us before we turned around and my scooter failed. So it was a loooong swim back, even being towed by Suzanne, and our tanks were breathed down to Coke bottle shapes. The battery was charged, the switches were clean, but the motor itself failed. We were diving with thimble jellies on the North side of the island. The dive guides say that the larvae do not appear until April, when the huge mats of jellies form. No one on our boat had any evident infestation. One guide said he looks forward to the jelly season because the turtles and eagle rays spend a lot of time on the surface feeding on them. Cobalt Coast is clean, comfy, friendly, with OK food, but it is not near anything else. Rent a car to get to the other watering holes like the Naked Fish at Bob Soto's or the Cracked Conch. Great dining at Calypso Reef (bring money) and good island dining at the Edge.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, April 2002, Alan G. Mack (agm313@aol.com)
Marina Del Rey, CA. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 79-81 F. Dives logged: 400. Dive restrictions enforced: vague. Beautifully kept property. Food and service excellent. One year old. The owner of Dive Tech was away which may be why the service was minimal. Poor briefings

with no chalkboard; no offer to help with gear on and off the van site. All dives on the West End and not the North as advertised because of a mild wind. Would not dive with them again.

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, July 2002, Steve Bowden (bowds@aol.com) Bolton Landing, NY. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 1000+. Cobalt Coast is a great small resort. Dora and Arie are most accommodating. Some initial confusion over whether they could take us. While we were there, they couldn't have been more service oriented. Nancy and her crew at Dive Tech were very good. Occasional confusion getting over to the Turtle Farm shop. Probably could have a regular shuttle, a little haphazard. Both Cobalt Coast and Dive Tech were great with my kids (ages: 18 and 13).

Dive Tech, Cobalt Coast, July 2002, David Kupersmith (thekupe@hotmail.com) Melville, NY. Water: 80-84 F. Dives logged: 400+. Dive restrictions enforced: 110. 5th trip to Grand Cayman. Cobalt Coast is outstanding. Owner/manager Arie couldn't have been more accommodating. Food great although my buddy and I had a car and dined around (Pappagalo, The Wharf and others). Diving Northwest side was ok and somewhat less crowded. Dive Tech runs a good operation. Shore diving from Cobalt Coast required a good swim and they could really use a rope from base of dock to top of a reef, which was magnificent, day or night. Turtle Reef at the other Dive Tech location also great.

Don Foster's Dive Cayman Ltd., Bob Soto's Diving, Comfort Suites, January 2002, Alison T. Stenger, Ph.D. (astenger@pcez.com) Portland, OR. Dives accrued: 350+. Vis: 30-50 ft. Water: 76 F. Dive restrictions enforced: no shore diving. Thanks to the *Chapbook*, stayed in two bedroom at Comfort Suites. Got groceries and often used our kitchen as island food is expensive. Huge waves first 1.5 days. Had dive boats moored and shore diving stopped. Then "pool" reopened. Shore diving easy — walk in from beach or down ladders from dive shop decks. Coral close in and fish friendly. Saw huge tarpon in schools and alone, plus usual tropicals. Dive shops great. Both Don Foster's and Bob Soto's people helpful. Will tell you about best entry points, what to look for, compass headings, etc. Both shops set up to make access to gear and water easy. Nice vacation. As air travel has become difficult, check <http://www.OregonSCUBA.com> for updates on new travel regulations and how to transport dive gear and cameras. **(Don Foster's: Ph: 800-83-DIVER or 345-945-5132; e-mail donfosters@cayman.org; website www.donfosters.com; Bob Soto: 800-BOB-SOTO or (345) 949-2022; e-mail: bobsotos@candw.ky; website www.bobsotosdiving.com.ky)**

Fisheye of Cayman, Ocean Frontiers, June 2001, Phyllis Robinson, Silver Spring, MD. Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 82-83 F. Dives accrued: >500. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. short (35-40 min.) surface intervals.

They prefer that you follow a DM, who were mostly very good. the west side looks more and more like the Florida Keys (topside) every time I go. Enjoyed diving with Fisheye, by and large, though I really resent short surface intervals following 90-100 ft. dives. I found myself 20 feet above the reef on the second dive in an attempt (routinely) to keep my computer out of deco — one of my favorite things to do near a reef is lie flat on the sand and see what comes by! Ocean Frontiers — outstanding operation, outstanding diving. Shore dive off Dive Tech peaceful, lovely — lots of cleaner stations to watch — fish active in late afternoon. **(Fisheye: Ph: 345-945-4209; e-mail askus@fisheye.com; website www.fisheye.com; Ocean Frontiers: Ph: (345) 947-7500; e-mail: oceanf@candw.ky, hq@oceanfrontiers.com; website www.oceanfrontiers.com)**

Fisheye of Cayman, Sunshine Suites, September 2002, Jay Vaughn (jvv@door.net) Lubbock, TX.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 130 to 150 Feet. Water: 87 to 89 F, choppy, no currents. Fisheye and Sunshine Suites are next to each other and are combination of professional divers and like-new accommodations with a nice breakfast buffet. Reasonable rates. Scheduling was on time and professional. Storage of gear, Nitrox, clean rinses were perfect. Night dive was conducted in a professional manner and the site was awesome. The food in Georgetown was pricey but good. Just don't go into town when the cruise ships are in port.

September is slow and a good time to be there with no big blow around. Two of our days, there was only two of us on the dive boat and the other four there were only 5-6 on board. Good Bar: Lone Star. Good Food: Edoardo or Casanova. Fisheye is an extremely knowledgeable photo dive shop. Lots of good suggestions. DM (Giles) was helpful both on boat and diving.

Ocean Frontiers, Morritts Tortuga, May 2002, Elizabeth Morten, Fremont, CA.

Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 77-79 F. Dives accrued: 300+. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft., deep dives — group stay together (guided). Selected Ocean Frontiers based on 2001 *Undercurrent* issue. O.F. had pickup service at Morritts. Max. 12 divers on spacious boats. Guided deep dive and optional guided shallow, but could go on your own. Guided shallow focused always on swim throughs, not always good for photography but could go on own. Shop rinsed/hung up equipment after dives and brought onboard in am. Set-up up to divers. Great pre-dive briefing. Water/Crystal Light on board and oranges between dives. Three dive Stingray City package, a great day. Small fish only, except for tarpon. Soft and hard coral healthy. Turtles on every dive. Watch out for passage through Barrier Reef! Staff did not warn divers to remain seated, even after an accident that injured one diver on our first day and required stitches and us to turn back to shore. On second day (same boat and captain) no one from staff was on dive deck. We had another rough passage due to high

seas and wind that caused the water/Crystal Light and cookies to break loose and fly across the deck. Divers had to replace, no one came down off the upper deck from staff. Although the shop insisted that we had been warned, none of our group of eight ever heard the captain give the divers a warning to brace themselves going through the passage. Definitely a safety concern that should be addressed. If you are even mildly affected by sea sickness and you see white caps offshore, take medication (Tryptone seemed to work the best). Don't be fooled by the water conditions inside the reef. Morritt's was fabulous. They accommodated our request for two ground floor units next to each other on the beach. We brought and cooked most of our own food. Fully stocked kitchen. Buy booze in duty free before you leave the states. It is expensive on island. \$50 limit per cooler on food items brought into G.C. Costs big bucks to eat out. Go to Georgetown's big grocery stores. Will be worth the drive — cost and variety. Used McCurly's for transportation. For about \$250 they will pick you up at the airport, stop at grocery, drop you off at Morritts and leave you a car for the week and then return you via van to the airport. Don't have to worry about renting a big enough car to fit your luggage. A car is a must if you are staying at Morritts. East End is quiet and far away from the traffic and fast food of 7 Mile Beach. Actually feel you are on a remote island instead of on a Miami beach. (Ocean Frontiers: Ph: (345) 947-7500; e-mail: oceanf@candw.ky,

hq@oceanfrontiers.com; website www.oceanfrontiers.com; Morritt's Tortuga: Ph: 345-947-7449; e-mail matteo@morrittsgrand.com; website www.morrittsgrand.com)

Ocean Frontiers, Morritt's Tortuga Club, May 2002, Tami & Gary Seligman, Buda, TX. Vis: 50-100 ft. Dives accrued: 100+. Great resort except after rain strong septic system odor. Ocean Frontiers was fantastic! Choose both resort and operator based on *Undercurrent*. O.F. provides highest level of service imaginable. They even hauled our gear to the boat and back, rinsed it and stored it for us every day! Best operator we've ever dived with! Great diving for corals, tropical fish and small critters. Some of our six dive days were in rainy/windy weather, but the diving was still very good. Saw an 8 ft. plus hammerhead and our first shark (not nurse)!

Ocean Frontiers, July 2002, Mark Bryant/Tom Sadler (bryant0614@aol.com) Pensacola, FL. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. Very friendly, accommodating. Much better than Red Sail and Morritt's Tortuga Divers. Great divemasters, dive sites and dive boats. Book early because the word is out and they book up fast. Very UWP focused. Great table and rinse system. Strict with not allowing masks or other items to be put in rinse tanks for cameras.

Quabo Dives, Villas of Galleon, March 2001, Warren W. Hinze, Minnetonka, MN. Vis: 100-150 ft.

Water: 80-85 F. Logged dives: 319. Dive restrictions enforced: 100' max. depth. Arthlee Evans and his crew know the island well. We dove a number of sites that were not on the list of Cayman dive sites. Fruit and gator aid provided during surface interval. Boat leaves on time or earlier if all the divers are onboard. Divemasters good at finding interesting critters. (Ph: 345-945-4769; e-mail Quabo@candw.ky; website www.caymandiving.com)

Red Baron Divers, Marriott Grand Cayman, October 2001, Chris Bradbury (CtManta@hotmail.com) Weston, CT. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Day one was the West Wall, with four other divers. Rainy season, so Nick Buckley, owner, and Patrick were taking turns running the boats, and I only dove with Nick on one dive of the six and he was only out with us on one of the three days. Dive briefings were decent, only limits were to stay in the vicinity of the boat and to keep it to an hour. Patrick allowed me to dive essentially solo, although I did stay near the mooring. As a photographer, I generally don't travel all that far anyway. Patrick dove with us one of the six dives, although when he did that left no one on the boat. Nick indicated that was pretty standard operating procedure for the smaller six pack ops. I couldn't leave my gear with them and had to haul it from hotel to boat each day. Twice they picked me up right at the Marriott beach, and the other time I had to

drive to their other boat in the Harbor near the Holiday Inn. Red Baron has two small six-packs boats about the right size for 4-5 dives. Limited space on the boats for cameras, but they do have a rinse bucket and are extremely camera-conscious. Dove North Wall one day, did 100' first dive and 60' second. Second and third days were West Wall, and Patrick requested 1 hour max dives. Otherwise no restrictions. (Red Baron Charters: Ph: (345) 945-4744; e-mail: baronred@candw.ky or redbaron@cayman.org)

Red Baron Divers, Hyatt Regency Club, June 2002, John Shumate (dive@ixpres.com) Rockford, IL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, no currents. Nick Buckley and Patrick were accommodating and interested in their clients having a good time. Beyond just leading dives (photographers were allowed to go off on their own) and pointing out the unusual, they made excellent restaurant recommendations. They set up your gear (which always makes me nervous since I like my tank high and generally worry about competence), but they did things just right for me and didn't even have trouble with the long hose and crotch strap on the Halcyon gear that a couple of us had. They also kept us well hydrated and entertained during our surface intervals. We spent every day on excellent sites on the North Wall until the last day when the winds kicked up and Patrick took the dive boat around to the West Wall. My favorite dive site was Ghost Mountain,

a big bommie with a swim thru at ~115' hanging off the edge of the North Wall. Small canyons running perpendicular to the wall added to the pleasures of the site, and a passing hawksbill framed himself in the swim thru when I exited. Also, as an added treat, almost every dive gave us eagle rays either off the wall or over sand. Unpleasant restrictions and bad dive sites had pushed my diving over to Little Cayman, but Red Baron has changed that with their excellent service and careful selection of dive sites.

Red Baron Divers, Discovery Point Club Condos, July 2002, Julie Essman, Key Largo, FL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. Read your report on Nick w/Red Baron Divers in a recent issue so we decided to try them. His operation was professional, yet we felt relaxed. His two boats (27' Dusksys) are comfortable and fast. Dove with both Nick and Patrick on different days, both are good at what they do. Dove the North Wall for 3 days, weather was excellent, seas were a little choppy the 3rd day, but still not bad. Saw eagle rays on every dive, 2 hammerheads (deep), and several Caribbean reef sharks (on the wall). All dives were guided and we were made to feel comfortable in the water. He let us take his weights with us for our shore dives in the afternoon and evening.

Red Sail Sports, January 2002, Dave Hoffman, Indianapolis, IN. Vis: 70-100+. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 60. Dive restrictions enforced:

100 ft. for 30 min., 50 ft. for 40 min., back on boat with 500 psi. The North side of Grand Cayman was choppy a few days, so we dove South where it was calm. Great forests of sea fans, staghorn corals but few exotic sightings. One nurse shark, plenty of parrot, lobster and butterfly fish. Swim throughs at Nedis Tunnels were fabulous. Two days of North Wall diving presented strong surge and 3 ft. swells that made boarding the boat a challenge. Saw turtles, eagle rays and black tip reef sharks at No Name Wall and White Stroke Canyon. Red Sail crew was friendly, mature, professional and displayed great sense of humor. Those with computers were given more leeway with their profiles but all were expected back on board with 500 psi. The Stingray City dive was worth every penny. (Ph: 877-RED-SAIL, 402-593-8800, (345) 945-5965; e-mail: info@redsail.com; website www.redsail.com)

Red Sail Sports, March 2002, Ed Karnes (LAEd@pacbell.net) Winnetka, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. a great dive offered by a cruise line (Royal Caribbean). Most cruise lines leave you on your own to find scuba facilities at a given port. Mostly tourist divers.

Rivers Sports Divers, November 2001, Kay Lasley, Princeton, NJ. Vis: 30 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: lots. River Sports divers and Joann Tilley has always been an accommodating and considerate dive master giving us what we want. She is

particularly helpful to any inexperienced diver. She has a tattoo, a dolphin, and now our group has one, too, and we call ourselves "Joanne's people." Our experience with Cayman diving is laid back, pretty, interesting and fun. (Ph: 800-538-1218 or 345-949-1181; e-mail rivsport@candw.ky)

Sea Sport, May 2002, Richard W. Portmann, Westlake, OH. Vis: 80 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: I have been diving over thirty-five years. My wife snorkels. On a recent trip in the Cayman Islands (our sixteenth), we had the good fortune to have Sea Sport for our diving and snorkeling. Butch and his wife were pleasant and helpful. They would pick you up right at your hotel/motel on Seven Mile Beach and go where and when you wanted to go. Sea Gull Condominiums was strictly second-class with a loud rock band playing next door. (Ph: 345-949-3965)

Spanish Bay Reef Resort, July 2001, David Cohn, Berkeley, CA. Vis: 60-90 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: @1000. Dive restrictions enforced: sport dive - 130. All-inclusive resort, dive operation only, fair. Food — fair. Needs a make-over and remodel. Had to strongly suggest dive sites on North side. Otherwise they would not have gone. (Ph: 345-949-8100 or 345-949-1842)

Sunset House, Cathy Church's Super Underwater Photography, July 2001, Larry Plew (cesium13@aol.com) St. Cloud, FL. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dives accrued: >300. Dive restrictions enforced: depth 130 ft.

max., computers -- no bottom time limits. Too many tourists and huge cruise ships. Accommodations are old and Spartan and maid service is lazy. Cathy Church, Herb Rafael, Jon, Cathy's staff and Sunset Diving staff are fantastic. I learned more in eight days than I would have in eight years on my own. Service on the dive boat and underwater was so great it can't be described. (Ph: 888 854 4767 or 345-949 7111; ; e-mail sunsethouse@sunsethouse.com; website www.sunsethouse.com)

Sunset House, November 2001, Leland Cheng, St. Paul, MN. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 81-83 F. Dives accrued: over 70. Dive restrictions enforced: depth: 90 ft. Poor coral conditions from over dived shore and careless divers. Boat diving only slightly better. No sharks, very disappointing. All divemasters and boat personnel dive simultaneously, leaving no one onboard the boat to assist a diver who may surface with a problem, or monitor boat/mooring status.

Sunset House, February 2002, Ezra Lunde, Staten Island, NY. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm no currents. My father got certified, spending nearly all of his time going through the course, while my daily schedule consisted of two morning boat dives and one afternoon shore dive. The diving on the west side varies from average to good. The shallow second dives tended to be a little drab, but deeper wall sites like Round Rock, Sand Chute, and Orange

Canyon were excellent. Also, the reef in front of Sunset House, Paradise Reef, provides for great afternoon shore diving, but swim out past the mermaid and WWII wreck to the reef slope itself. The coral is in much better shape and the life more prolific, and none of the other hotel guests seem to venture out that far. The highlight was the trip out to the north wall on "Manta Ray" -- an upgraded dive boat that goes out through the North Sound and cruises the north and east side of the island. An additional \$85 on top of the standard dive package, but well worth it. I dove three sites along the northern wall with healthy coral, good fish life, and dramatic drop-offs into the abyss. My buddy had to sit out the last dive because of breaking the 120 ft. limit, so I struck out alone. While everyone else was fighting for macro-photo ops -- kicking up sand and breaking gorgonians -- I hovered over the wall and watched three eagle rays whirl beneath my fins. Meanwhile my poor father was doing buoyancy exercises and peeling skin from his scorched forehead. But on our last day he finally finished the course, which was a real accomplishment at his age. The staff was good despite being over-worked, and I felt that for the most part they really cared about graduating my old man with honors. The accommodations are Spartan but clean. The food is average and expensive, so skip around a little bit. Seaview Hotel, next door, has better fare. The total dive package was a good value, with lockers and unlimited free air for shore dives, and the manta upgrade is top class.

Sunset House, March 2002, Bill and Judy Shepherd, Satellite Beach, FL.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, calm. An established resort away from the hustle of the cruise ship crowd that inundates Georgetown every day but Sunday. Run two tank morning dives to sites selected by those diving. Good variety of sites but most sites had boats waiting. The fish life was not as numerous as one might expect. Visibility was decent. Divemasters accompanied divers but did not "herd them." They helped if asked. Not all tanks were topped off or checked before being placed on boats. Sunset House resort is showing its age though accommodations were well maintained. Resort staff helpful if asked. Excellent restaurant on site that needs to be more actively promoted by resort staff. Limited all divers to 95' on first dive with second dive usually in 50-60 ft range. Other dives (night and other parts of island) cost extra and must be booked in advance. Shore diving available from in front of resort in afternoon and at night. Due to presence of Cathy Church's facility on-site, the needs of UWPs were addressed in all phases of dive operations.

Sunset House, April 2002, Gerald Young, Oklahoma, OK.

Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 77-79 F. Dives logged: been diving 50 years — hundreds. Dive shop was great. Hotel got job done. Food — about par for G.C. This is a nice area for a new diver to get walk in dives etc.

Wall to Wall Diving, Marriott, February 2002, Pete Hammer (Pandgham@aol.com) River Edge, NJ. Experience: 101- 50 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 70 to 80 F, calm no currents. The *Chapbook* has never failed me. Contacted Giles and Deanna of Wall to Wall diving after seeing the latest *Chapbook*. They were perfect. Eight divers max, one dive four divers, two days just two. Pick up at hotel (save taxi fare) and drop off after. Quick rides to dive sites, roomy covered boat, water and fruit on board, on board head, rinse bucket for cameras. Less expensive than the cattle boats and way better service. www.walltowalldiving.com
345-945- 608.

Wall to Wall Diving, Plantation Village, May 2002, John & Anita Motard (jmotard@jlohr.com) Irving, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm. John and I were the only people on the boat our first day, had one other person the next two days, and up to but not more than six people the rest of the week. Giles and Deanna would guide the group or groups on the first dive to a max of 100 feet. On the second dive only one of them would get in the water and we could dive on our own. We saw turtles galore on the Northwest side. I guess they all escaped the Turtle Farm during Michelle last November! Giles and Deanna were great at pointing out little creatures and the big ones also. The North Wall was like a swimming pool a couple of days -- great visibility, lots of fish, beautiful coral

formations. Wall to Wall Diving made our dive trip this year just great. (Ph: 345-945-6608 or 345-916-6408)

Wall to Wall Diving, Carnival Cruise, June 2002, Danny Hunter (huntgas@aol.com) Lubbock, TX. Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 82 F. Dives logged: >100. Dive restrictions enforced: depth. Made arrangements before departure for seven day cruise. Deanna picked us up at cruise terminal (even though we were delayed) and delivered us to Y Club, where their boat (nice) took us to "deep" dive on North "Wall." Restrictions enforced because of Jr. certified diver. Reef only fair (maybe because of depth restrictions or because we needed to hurry). Second dive at Stingray City for kids and we had a great time. Deanna dropped us off after the dives. Very professional and nice people.

Wall to Wall Diving, Caribbean Club, August 2002, Bob Morris (MORRISR1@Wyeth.com) Wayne, PA. Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 84-86 F. Dives logged: 100. Dive restrictions enforced: computer diving — 100 ft. limit. Wall to Wall Diving is a fairly new organization (18 mo). Giles and Deanna run a very efficient and flexible dive shop (although there is no shop per se). In the six days that my girlfriend and I dove with them, we never repeated a dive site. They have no affiliation with any hotel but they pick up divers at their hotels and take them to the boat at whatever dock they used, which depended on where the dives were to take place. We dove the North Wall 3 days and then moved around the coast to the West side for

three days. The boat is spacious being 36 ft. long with a 14 ft. beam. They advertise no more than eight divers per trip and we never had more than seven. They handled all gear on the boat and changed tanks between dives. You sit on the rear of the boat with your fins and mask on and they bring the tank and BCD to you, slip it on, stand on the dive platform and step off. They supply everyone with a dive computer who does not already have one. This enabled longer bottom times and safer dives. Their website said that there would be a \$10r charge for a dive computer daily but in fact, they lent them free of charge. This gives one the opportunity to try a dive computer, experiment with its features and make an informed purchase of your own computer. These folks are knowledgeable about all the creatures. There was always one of them in the water, to show what there was to see, lend assistance but never interfered, except to adhere to the Cayman recreational limit of 100 ft. There was fresh fruit between dives, a chest of ice for drinks, a jug of cold water and a camera rinse tank. We met an interesting assortment of people on board, most with quite a lot of dive experience, which says a lot for the type of operation that Giles and Deanna are running.

Little Cayman

Conch Club Divers, Conch Club Condominiums, July 2002, Steve Dingeldein (sdingeldein@triad.rr.com) Burlington, NC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, calm. Bill (owner), Tim, Wes

and "half-staff" frequent-visitor-work-on-the-boat-while-he's-there crew member Paul) did all they could to make the diving enjoyable. Gave good briefings, and tried to show us stuff underwater. But they do not hover over you underwater. They watch out for the environment and indicated when we were getting too close to the corals I'm a photographer and realize that I am sometimes touching something I don't realize I'm touching). The boat is roomy and they usually don't have more than 14 divers, although there were as many as 20 divers a few days. Conch Club condos are nice and roomy and the food at Little Cayman Beach Resort is good. **(Ph: (345) 948-1026; e-mail: ccdivers@candw.ky)**

Little Cayman Beach Resort, September 2001, Mark & Lynn Thorne (thorne@mindspring.com) Raleigh, NC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 85 to 100 Feet. Water: 85 to F, calm no currents. An upscale well-run operation that feels a bit corporate in its culture. There is no rust or peeling paint to be found anywhere. The dive and hotel operating staff are somewhat anal about keeping things neat and orderly. Yet the place is laid-back and everyone is accommodating and friendly. High cost of drinks -- a beer was \$4.75 US and a mixed drink was \$6.00 -- \$7.00 US. Ouch! There is a store within a 10 minute walk with more reasonable prices. The walls of Bloody Bay Wall and Jackson Wall are awesome with steep vertical drop offs that are dramatic. You feel as if you have dove

back into a prehistoric era with corals and sponges that are twenty times larger than what is usually found in the Caribbean. Our experience was fantastic despite a narrow escape from Hurricane Iris on this island that is only 4 feet above sea level. (Ph: 800-327-3835 or 727-323-8727; fax 727-323-8827)

Little Cayman Beach Resort, January 2002, David Svetz, Alexandria, VA. Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 78 F. Dives accrued: 200. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. The beach resort and dive operation were excellent. The resort was not full and for return guests they will try to upgrade the room location. Due to high winds and waves, we did not dive Bloody Bay Wall. South shore dive sites were excellent. Divemaster went to several sites we requested. He attempted to go to Bloody Bay Wall, but the rest of the boat thought the water was too rough. Wide range of experience of divers. Since they did not fill three boats in the afternoon, they moved us onto one boat.

Little Cayman Beach Resort, February 2002, Larry & Joan Eggert, Ogden, UT. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 100+ Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy surge. We had a new beachfront deluxe room (in the 300's for room number) and it was as nice as any dive resort we've visited. The resort has a nice feel to it, including hammocks by the shore. Very good food and selection. Deserts didn't get put out until after the meal was served, so you had to guess about how much to eat. Dive facilities

and boats were good, but some of the dive staff insisted they knew best and forced us to dive the afternoon dives on the South (surgy, poor visibility) side instead of the North side. We finally pitched a fit and were moved to another boat with staff that would go the extra few minutes to the North side for the afternoon dive. Overall the reefs were not as healthy as Bonaire but the walls were spectacular. Lots of turtles, rays — even eagle rays. An incredible number of huge lobsters, even out during the day. And the Twin Otter plane ride to and from Little was low-enough elevation to be interesting, with great views.

Little Cayman Beach Resort, April 2002, Eric Levine, New York, NY. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 120 Feet. Water: 77 to 81 F, calm. Great dive operation; everything made easy; best food I've ever had in the Caribbean. As having your luggage arrive with you is hit or miss with Island Air, make sure your essentials (e.g., prescription mask, bathing suit, medications, regulator, computer, etc.) are carried on. If your luggage doesn't arrive with you -- it should be on the next flight, or at worst, will arrive the next day.

Little Cayman Beach Resort, June 2002, Richard Foote (footemail@prodigy.net) Cleveland, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, choppy. 34 rooms. Roomy, fast boats have heads. Boats leave from dock at the resort. Leave reg., BC, and weight belt on boat; retrieve other gear from drying shed and you're on the boat

one minute later. 8 A.m. two-tank dive is in marine park (Bloody Bay/Jackson Bay), weather permitting. Sites are rarely repeated in a week, and requests are readily accommodated no hesitation about going to further sites, such as Paul's Anchors. 2 P.M. one tank dive is at a shallower site, outside the marine park. Conditions were choppy on resort side of island, so night dives were not possible. Two divemasters were always on board, with one going in the water to lead divers on request. Good dive briefings. Divemasters were safety conscious, with required "intro to boat" briefing before initial dive, and roll call before leaving site. One divemaster spotted my leaking high-pressure hose, and got it replaced at the dive shop and billed to my room. Reefs have healthy coral, sponges, and macro life; some algae. Sting rays, turtles and large groupers were frequent; spotted eagle ray or sharks occasionally. One group saw a rare hammerhead. It is easy to dive a safe profile because the top of the wall is at 20 feet. Swim along wall at your chosen depth and inspect shallow coral heads on top of reef on return, like a long safety stop. Wall has beautiful topography with shallow cliff-tops or sand channels ending at sheer drop-offs. The resort has nice clean rooms with comfortable beds, TV with HBO, and good AC; no phones. Only rooms at ends of buildings facing the ocean have nice porches for relaxing; for others, there are hammocks under thatched roofs on the beach. Rooms, boats and the dock are nonsmoking. There is a fitness

center with weight machines and a treadmill; also a pool table and leave one-take one library. A small room by the office has a computer with Internet access (AOL or Hotmail) at 25 cents per minute. The room has a phone which I used to call the States using AT&T Direct. The bar scene is friendly but drinks are expensive; definitely BYOB. Diners have a choice of the dining room with A.C. or a screened porch, so no bugs at mealtime. Chef Tucker's food is wonderful, with varied salads, usually three entrees on the buffet, and desserts to die for. Nice gift shop next door, and "spa" across the street. An expensive grocery store and liquor store are a short walk. Nothing else to do except take one of several bicycles for a round-island tour. It is harder to get here due to limited space on Island Air planes. Planes follow my "two pilot, two propeller" rule, but they also have a smaller plane they use sometimes. Luggage and carry-ons are weighed, and overweight charges are 50 cents per pound over 55 pounds. I was charged on way over but not way back. The resort's US reservation service was helpful in rescheduling my trip for two days later after my initial US flight was canceled. I paid Island Air \$25/person to change flights.

Little Cayman Beach Resort, July 2002, Alex and Cindy Rasi, Northwood, OH. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 86-88 F, calm, no currents. First class operation offering three dives a day. Three 42 foot Newton boats carrying 20 divers each. The

boats are well equipped with a DAN oxygen unit, first aid kit, ship to shore radio, camera table, fresh water rinse hose, marine head, water cooler, and snacks. Reboarding is easy via deep twin ladders at the stern. The divemasters are friendly and professional. They give detailed pre-dive chalkboard briefings and perform roll calls after the dives. They set up gear between dives and bring it to divers at the stern platforms. BCs and regulators are safely left on board for the week and hosed off by the divemasters each day. Divers carry the rest of their gear to the rinse tanks and store it in the well-ventilated dive hut. There's a separate rinse tank for cameras. For computer divers, the restrictions are 100 feet for 45 minutes on the first dive with a 45 minute surface interval. The second and third dives have a limit of 60 feet for 50 minutes. Our Nitrox fills cost \$10 extra per tank. We appreciated the freedom to dive in buddy teams. All sites are moored. The quality of the marine environment varied from one dive site to another. Some sites were healthy with good populations of fish and coral. However, we noticed both reef and wall ecosystems showing signs of distress and human impact since our last trip in 1998. We were surprised at the amount of corals and sponges that were dead and silted over. Some coral bleaching. Although there was a good variety of fish, their populations seemed decreased. We observed several sharks, barracudas, stingrays, groupers, jacks, angelfish, butterflyfish, scrawled filefish, queen triggers, cowfish, lobsters, and reef squid. We

encountered more turtles on this trip. The Little Cayman Beach Resort has 40 well-maintained rooms with AC, satellite TVs, and no phones. There's a pay phone by the bar. The restaurant's food is good and served buffet-style. There's also an outdoor bar, pool, Jacuzzi, gift shop, free bikes, and hammocks by the beach. The resort's beach is not suitable for swimming due to dense turtle grass. Mosquitoes and no-see-ums are a problem on the beach at night, even with insect repellent. We drove to Candle Road to see the wild iguanas. We brought bananas to feed them, so they came out of the brush and ran over to us. Island Air has a strict 55 lb. per person baggage limit, including carry ons. They charge 50 cents per lb. for excess weight and will only transport it when space permits. Pack any medication and essentials in a carry on. There is no doctor on the island. Little Cayman has a grass and crushed coral landing strip, so it only accommodates small inter-island planes. The resort's van provides transportation to and from the airport.

Little Cayman Beach Resort, August 2002, Barbara. 400 logged dives, hot and sunny, 100 ft depth and 500 PSI not policed. The best diving I have seen in the Caribbean or Bahamas. The fish life is not as abundant or diverse as in Palau but Bloody Bay Wall is as beautiful and dramatic as anything we saw there. The resort dive shop does two morning dives on the walls and an after lunch dive on shallow reefs near the western end of the island. The afternoon dives tended

to be average Caribbean dives but the walls dives were spectacular. We did not see as many large grouper and tarpon as we had two years ago but there were enough rays, turtles, a spattering of sharks, medium size groupers, and the usual menagerie of tropicals. I spend a fascinating time observing a reef squid hovering in bright, sunlit water for five minutes. It went through its repertoire of patterns and colors and postures, from aggressive to lets-get-to-know-each-other friendly. The boat is comfortable with a wide beam that makes it easy to get around even when there are a lot of divers. The crew was reserved but professional. They took us to every site we requested, they knew the sites well, and the briefings were some of the best. The resort has a nice pool and a great Jacuzzi next to the outdoor bar. There are half dozen under Tiki huts on the water's edge. Thought about sleeping in the hammocks at night but there were a few mosquitoes. The rooms were comfortable and clean, though not elaborately decorated. They served the food buffet style and it was varied and excellent. The resort staff from the maids to the bar tenders were professional and friendly, making sure guest has a good time.

Sam McCoy's Dive Lodge, January 2002, Marvin Gozum (gozum@computer.org), Philadelphia, PA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 200 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy. The lodge is on the north side, facing Bloody Bay Park. LYB is full of ponds that are a source of mosqui-

toes, and there are many biting sand flies at night so DEET and OFF are a must. There are ponds on the south side too, where many resorts are based, but the winds are stronger here during the summer, so bugs are less of an issue. The winds are strong on the north side during winter, and bugs become less of an issue then [also diving Bloody Bay is often blown out because of these "northwesterlies."] McCoy's is an ideal shore based liveaboard-like approach. It is like someone's home with extra rooms. Courtesy shown the host is well rewarded by a sincere approach by Sam's people to make your stay memorable. There is but one dinner table for guests, and one can mingle with Sam and his crew at the bar. Keep your ears open, and you'll learn quite a bit about Little Cayman from over 30 years of Sam's experience and the many locals that frequent his bar. The lodge is near maxed out at 7-8 people, and their boats fit 16 divers [with double occupancy per room you could squeeze 16 people tops]. In the 3 times I was there, I was the only diver half the time and the most I dove was with 8 divers. You called the dive sites, weather and sinews willing. The Lodge has clean running water, continuous electricity and air conditioning. The lodge has 2 parts, a mostly concrete house built in the 1970s, and an annex built by Sam. The family and staff live in the annex while the guests live in the house. Decor is island-ish, and retro-80s. Locks in rooms can be used only from within the rooms. I've stayed at most of the rooms and in the annex. They

are all comfortable, some faucets run slow in the concrete house while the newer annex Sam built has less concrete, is cooler overall and has plumbing that flows better. Their website images are accurate: mccoyslodge.com.ky/photos.htm. The food is Cayman style that means two carbohydrates in each meal, such as a pair of rice, potatoes, pastas; fruits in the meal ala Cuban or Spanish cooking, a side of veggies and meat, pork or fish as the main dish. Fruit, ice cream or cakes are desert. You can have your dietary preferences cooked, but know the cook is not a chef. The food is fresh and tasty but not haute cuisine. I eat it all. The swimming pool is more a Jacuzzi without the jets, but best for getting the salt out after a dive. Washing and bathing water are from rain water storage tanks and, I'm told, halogenated. Faucet water is clean but has a bromide odor. Reverse osmosis drinking water flows from a cooler in the kitchen. While it seems water is plentiful, every gallon is trucked in after Sam's reservoirs are drained. I recall he can collect thousands of gallons through Cayman rain, but it can be run dry by inconsiderate use in 3-4 months.' There are many bicycles to use gratis. At any time 2-4 were usable, but ask Sam to fix more up if needed. They may not look much but work well. Huffy-style tour bikes with big tires are best for the unpaved island roads that cover 2/3 of LYB. I've covered the island's 11 mi perimeter several times; it takes over 2 hours with stops to enjoy the scenery, and the terrain is mostly flat. I've often flattened one tire. McCoy's

schedule has flexibility; the boats scheduled for 9:30 AM, could be made to leave at 9A.m.to 10:30 AM, so long as the divemaster gets enough rest time later that day, and can prepare tanks and the boat for later dives. Sam's operation will let you dive as much as you can tolerate. Their dive shop can do rudimentary gear repair, so best come fully prepared. The whole operation is much like a technical dive operation, the boats and shops provide basic service; the diver must otherwise be self-sufficient. The divemaster does not interfere with divers during a guided dive. He directs the 'herd' in one direction, show keys attractions, then will hover at 30' and watch everyone. If a diver demonstrates bad form, the DM stays close, if skilled he leaves you alone. There is no bottom time limit, just come up with 500 psi, or thereabouts. At over 30 min bottom time, the DM would wait on the boat and watch bubbles. The DM is a fast study of divers' abilities. Bloody Bay Park is a shore dive via McCoy's Beach. McCoy's wall is immediately accessible through his beach, but it's not easy because of sea urchins and a shallow barrier reef. A short drive west of the Lodge to Jackson's Point or Great Wall's Beach [about 2 houses west of the Lodge, a McCoy lot], or to [an unnamable site] in the island at 1/8 mi east of the lodge offer easier entries. Ask the DM to prepare all tanks you use, take them with you and park them on the beach, and explore all the way into night dives. Help lug tanks gets one in good graces -- it reflects some competence and a courtesy to the DM. The Lodge

will pick you up when you say so, but be on time less they call a missing diver alert! At 90 min dives per tank, 2 morning boat dives, and 2-3 shore dives: 1 afternoon and 1 dusk or night dive covered the entire day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, with the day over at about 10 PM. If dives are <60 min, I'd squeeze a 5th dive into the day. I'd pack lunch and water, and eat breakfast and dinner at the lodge. The park is roughly two sets of walls, one starts at 20' that ends on a sand bar at about 60-70,' or tapers to the main wall; the main wall may rise 30' as a coral formation with swim throughs and caverns that exit to 60-130' on the wall, or across the top of coral formations plunges to the abyss. From Jackson's Bight you can attack the wall eastward toward Bloody Bay, or westward, then swim south to the shallow sites and back to shore. As this is quite a swim, for shore dives I did shorter loops from Jackson's Bight, and the eastward swim from the boats. I did not make the west most 2 dives sites on this map as shore dives, as the currents are stronger and the sites begin at 60'. The southern walls, except for the locale of the Soto Trader, begin deeper uniformly, and thus one's average depth is deeper, and thus shorter bottom times.

Generally the vis is uniformly lower, as the current sweeps the island tips and brings a murkiness that, although not bad, pales by the clarity of the Bloody Bay Park area. The southern side did not offer truly distinctive formations, and is best dived should the north side conditions be rough -- but otherwise not worth a dedicated

trip when the park is available. It is still a good dive. My best dive? At the end of a shore dive, at depth, the sun set burning the sky orange casting long shadows on the reef as visibility transcended 200'. We return an hour later in darkness, the Milky Way crowning the island and Polaris peeking above the horizon, we do a deep night dive and navigate via the stars, with flashlights closed on a moonless night the surface is just shimmering dots of light distorted by mercuric bubbles rising from 100'. The reefs edge contrasted against the starry sky, and at dive's end the shallows are covered with spawning coral, and as larvae surround our lights, we are approached by schools of reef squid darting about for a night meal followed by jacks and other fish predators. I do 170 dives annually, to technical depths and gases. Weak current pulls to shore, wall starts at 20' and drops deep, temperature is stable 80+ F through the depths, and visibility is typically 100+', and at worse, 50-60' [when the seas churn, and boats cannot move in and out of the island, you can sneak dives at hidden spots the locals showed me.] The shallower inner reefs allow self rescue should trouble arise, and the proximity of the dive sites to shore minimizes travel time and maximizes bottom time. Although the summers are hot in LYB, repetitive dives chills one down very much, and the hot sun is a welcome relief. (Ph: 800-626-0496 or (345) 948-0026; e-mail: mccoymccoy@candw.ky or mamsmgmt@candw.ky; website mccoyslodge.com.ky)

Sam McCoy's Dive Lodge, June 2002, Dana Mardaga, San Jose, CA.

My third trip to Little Cayman and the first time at McCoy's. The hotel is next to some of the best diving in the Caribbean, Bloody Bay Wall. The wall starts at 30-50' and drops down several thousand feet. There are many crevices and tunnels to swim through. The shallow areas above the wall are good to dive in also. Corals are in great shape. The boat rides were short and shore diving was available nearby, which I did at night. Lowell the guide was very nice and let you do your own diving. Since the area is a sanctuary, the fish are some of the friendliest and abundant I've seen. One large grouper wanted my husband to pet him. My husband kneeled on the sandy bottom and stroked the fish for several minutes. When he tried to move on, the fish kept following him, wanting to be petted some more. We saw a lot of turtles and one tolerant nurse shark. I circled her while she lay on the bottom and got a close look. She didn't seem to mind at all. Little Cayman is a safe and friendly island. We didn't even lock our hotel room door. Several locals waved and said "enjoy your stay!" It's a fairly small island, a handful of small hotels and not many cars. Hermit crabs cruise across the roads and in the afternoon big rock iguanas hang out on the roads waiting for a tourist to bicycle by and toss a snack. The McCoy's run a nice hotel. Meals were good and they gave me vegetarian meals. The guests all eat together, so you meet everyone. There were 15 guests. Owner Sam McCoy is nice and fun to talk to. So

was his daughter, Maxine, who runs the place. The whole staff was friendly.

Sam McCoy's Dive Lodge, July 2002, Mark Bryant/Tom Sadler (bryant0614@aol.com) Pensacola, FL. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm no currents. The diving was excellent. The dive boat and the divemaster were excellent; however, it is probably the most expensive of all the great Caribbean dive destinations. McCoy's has huge potential. It's in a great location shaded by large trees and affords a great sea view. Of the dive resorts on the island, McCoy's is the closest to Bloody Bay Wall, perhaps the best dive in the Caribbean. The people were friendly and helpful. It is the least expensive of all the resorts on the island at about \$190/person/day all-inclusive. After we landed on the grass landing strip via Island Air, we were greeted by a friendly and laid-back Mary McCoy. She led us to her old pick-up truck where she invited us to sit in the back on a 2 by 6 stretched across the well. It was actually fun and a bit nostalgic. The mood was set for a non-touristy old-style Caribbean diving vacation. We were shown our room and within 15 minutes boarded the truck to make our way about 5 miles along the northern shore to the dive boat. My partner and I were the only divers. We waded from shore thru turtle grass and boarded the easily accessible boat. Our divemaster led us along Bloody Bay Wall and then let us do our own thing and we ended up doing 60 min

dives. The diving was perfect! Turtles, eagle rays, tamed groupers, schools of tangs, creole wrasse, and about 200 additional species of fish and a healthy reef system. The visibility was outstanding at 100' plus. I will take swim-thrus overhanging with black coral, pinnacles with schooling jacks and 25' shallow-top sheer 6000' deep encrusted multicolored walls any day. Our room was merely adequate. The A/C worked great, and the beds were comfortable. We were not given clean fresh towels daily. The room was clean but the bathroom needed a good cleaning -- there was used soap cakes and empty shampoo bottles in the shower from the previous guest. There was no TV or phone but that was OK. Under the stairs to our second floor room were piles of junk and old wood. The area around our stairs and front door was not well lit and climbing the stairs at night was perilous. To light the grounds, electrical extensions were run above ground. There is one small rinse bucket for your gear and some clothes lines. There were no lockers for storing your gear. The food quality and quantity was merely adequate. A week here and one could lose 10 lbs. for sure. No snacks were available and no convenient store was within walking distance. We did make a trip one day to the store and spent about \$25 on ice cream, chips, pop and assorted goodies. There is no gift shop on the property. Scruffy locals hang out at the bar every night. The rocky beach that is not suitable for diving is strewn with trash and broken chaise lounges. With a little vision and a lot

of sweat equity this place could really shine. If it's great diving and excellent dive-mastering you want then this is the place, but bring some snack food, bug spray and a lot of moola.

Paradise Villas, February 2002, Dan Purnell (dan-purnell@compuserve.com)

Vancouver, WA. Vis: 70-150 ft.

Water: 78-82 F. Dives logged: 360.

Great resort and diver operation.

Paradise Villas overlooks the beach, surrounded by palm trees. It is an ideal setting swaying in a hammock overlooking the water. You can lounge at night looking at the falling stars.

Truly a paradise. The villas are peaceful and clean. The Paradise Diver operation is exceptional. The Divemasters are top notch, professional and they love their work. They are enthusiastic about showing you unique critters. The corals and walls were pristine and healthy. A blizzard of reef fish, sponges, corals and sea fans. There were also a few turtles, rays and reef sharks. The walls were amazing. One day the divemasters heard that there was a pod of sperm whales between Little Cayman and Cayman Brac so we left Bloody Wall and finally found them. We had a once in a life time experience snorkeling with these gentle giants for several hours. There were a dozen including a baby. Incredible experience. They gave us all CD's with pictures that they took of the whales. **(Paradise Divers: Ph: 877-322-9626 or 218-722-6850; e-mail iggy@candw.ky; website www.paradise-divers.com)**

Paradise Villas, February 2002, Paul & Carole Samuelson, Birmingham, AL. Dives accrued: 100. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. We were several families with three small children — perfect location with good area for kids — sand, pool. Good bone fishing. Great diving on the beautiful wall, Bloody Bay and Jackson's nice sightings of staghorns, manta rays, turtles and sharks. Meals at the Hungry Iguana — accommodating for early meals for the young ones. Excellent dive crew — our divemaster Vince did an outstanding job — also accommodating to our non-divers who wanted to snorkel. (Ph: 877-322-9626; e-mail villas@paradisevillas.com; website www.paradisevillas.com)

Paradise Villas, June 2002, Lenny Zwik (lzwik@austin.rr.com) Austin, TX. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, calm. The accommodations were great, clean and well kept. I stocked my kitchenette from the nearby grocery store enabling me to breakfast on the back porch just feet from the water. The food at the Hungry Iguana was outstanding, if not a bit pricey. Although Paradise Divers will only offer a 3rd tank in the afternoon if there are at least three guests interested, on the two days they didn't go out, they made arrangements for me to dive with the Southern Cross Club. Mark hauled my gear on the truck, took me over and got me set up. He was there when we returned to take me back. The dive staff was accom-

modating and both Vinnie and Rod excel at finding little critters. My first time on land after 15 trips on the *Little Cayman Diver*.

Pirate's Point, January 2002, Ed Lane, Weatherford, TX. Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 75-78 F. Dives accrued: 90. Due to strong north winds we dove mostly on the South side. It was interesting and close (5 min) diving on the South side. The Soto Trader is an interesting small freighter that sank in 60 ft. of water near the harbor a few years ago. Gladys Howard and staff provide excellent food and service. Two boat dives a day. Very laid back. Shore diving if you want, but would require some swimming to get out. Dive masters great. (345-948-1010)

Pirate's Point, March 2002, Jeffrey R. Johnson (jrj72113@aol.com) Maumelle, AR. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. Dove eight days, six on the North side, two on the South side (due to chop on north side) and were never disappointed, although north side with Bloody Bay was better. The wall diving is fantastic -- loved the descending swim-throughs and looking into the abyss watching for sharks, turtles, etc. On the North side, particularly appreciated being able to begin with a deep wall dive and then be able to finish cruising the top of the reef checking out the small stuff, etc. Dive operation is well run. Great 42' boat, lots of room for typical group of 10 to 14 divers. Divemasters (Gay, Martha, Bert, and Thomas) were competent and attentive. Two dives a day, between 9:30 AM and 2:00 PM

so it's a late lunch but plenty of snacks on boat. Rustic but no more so than most of our dive resort experience. Our package was food and booze inclusive. Quality and quantity of food was excellent. Due to the hospitality of Gladys, the owner, and her staff plus the quality of diving and food, this resort attracts many repeat guests, many of them highly experienced divers. Fun atmosphere, great experience. No photo facilities at resort, nothing significant on island. Dive boat had fresh water rinse for cameras, designated storage area.

Pirate's Point, July 2002, Willis & Sandra Flower (ffhwff@aol.com)
Lynwood, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 125 Feet. Water: 75 to 79 F, calm, no currents. Extraordinary vacation. Small resort, excellent food, genuinely nice people (many of whom return every year) and an attentive, helpful, knowledgeable dive staff that goes out of its way to make the experience fun and safe. Fourth visit in three years. Pretty, restful setting. Ten cabins, not new but well maintained and clean. Gladys Howard is an extraordinary host and gourmet cook. Chef Cam seems in a much better frame of mind since chef Diane (her deserts are to die for) arrived. Food was even better this year. 42 foot boat, well maintained. Gay, Coco and Martha know every inch of these waters and find the best spots. Requested sites are accommodated when possible. Can dive own profile subject to Cayman Rules (100/60). One two tank dive/day. No film processing on premises but available

at nearby resort. Dive staff helpful to photographers.

Pirate's Point, August 2002, Stephen Dorsky (sdorsky@aol.com)
Birmingham, AL. Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 82-85 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 100+/- . I thought I would be miserable only doing two dives a day, but as a group we had the longest bottom times, so we spend less time back and forth and more time in the water. Gladys and her staff were wonderful — the best food at a small dive resort, hands down!

Southern Cross Club, October 2001, Don Acheson (don.acheson@verizon.net)
Silver Spring, MD. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, choppy no currents. Diving as good as any other place, and better than most, in the Caribbean. Southern Cross Club is a fine operation with clean and spacious air-conditioned cabins, excellent food, and good service. **(Ph. 800 899-2582 or 619 563-0017; e-mail info@southerncrossclub.com; website www.southerncrossclub.com)**

Southern Cross Club, December 2001, Lee Schrader, Washington CH, OH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 120 Feet. Water: 76 to 80 F, calm choppy. Nice cottages along the beach, with some of the best food I've ever had on vacation (always a vegetarian choice). The staff went out of their way to be helpful. Little Cayman is quiet, no nightlife (not much day life either). Dinner is served at 7-7:30, so if you

are arriving at 2-3 pm, eat at the Grand Cayman airport if possible (it gets to be a long, hungry day). No TVs or phones in the rooms. The dive staff was fantastic. Rather than crowd a boat, the second boat often went out with 4-6 people. Divemasters and captains Henri and Karin were great -- professional and trustworthy. They showed us lots of stuff, and left us alone if we wanted. We dived our computers and they did not hound us. Eagle Ray, several turtles, nurse sharks, lots of small things (nudibranchs, etc.) They handled the gear.

Southern Cross Club, March 2002, Skip and Mary Harutun,

Carbondale, CO. Vis: 100-200

Honest! Water: 80-84 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 100-110 ft., if checked out. Dives logged: >1000. Fabulous intimate lodge with a long history of fishing (esp. bone). Food was terrific. Usually fresh sushi nightly because of the fisherman at the club. The service was impeccable in all aspects. Dive staff (Mike, Hugh, Guy and Anita) were fun and flexible (esp. during happy hour). St. Pat's day was a gas on the island. Southern Cross is small, intimate, total class — in a class by itself!

COLOMBIA

Blue Dive, October 2001, Lloyd Baker (lbakerscuba@hotmail.com)

Cartagena, Columbia. Vis: 30-80 ft.

Water: 82-85 F. Dives logged 800+.

Dive restrictions enforced: Surface with dive guide. Blue Dive is the best of the four dive operations in

Cartagena in terms of reliability, safety and level of service. (I have been diving with all 4). Diving is done around the Islas del Rosarios (a National Park) which is a comfortable 45 minute launch ride from Cartagena. Blue Dive has an equipment storage area (tanks, rental gear, etc.) in the Rosarios next to a resort, whose facilities you are welcome to use. A thorough dive briefing is given before every dive with an emphasis on protecting/respecting the environment, even discouraging clients from purchasing lobster and crab from local fishermen. First dive is normally 25 m max. for 45 minutes followed by lunch and a one hour surface interval and second dive is 20 m max. for 40 minutes. If experienced you may follow your own profile but you surface with the dive guide, who always carries a surface marker buoy. The coral is healthy and the variety/quantity of tropicals is very good on a Caribbean scale. Transport/tanks/weights/lunch is \$45 USD, if you rent equipment it is \$55 USD. If you stay in the Rosarios, Blue Dive will pick up/drop off for diving at your respective resort and they can arrange custom charters for groups to other islands along the Colombian coast. Despite what the North American press says about Colombia, the resort areas of Cartagena, Santa Marta, and San Andres are safe and offer quality, inexpensive diving without the masses of "gringo" divers! (Ph: 655-0154, 656-4128, 664-6519, e-mail info@bluedivecartagena.com or bluedivecartagena@telecartagena.com; website www.bluedivecartagena.com)