

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)

Divers Dream, Hotel Aquarium, November 2001, Lloyd Baker/ Colegio Jorge, Cartagena, Colombia. Vis: 60-100 ft. Water: 75-80 F. Dives logged: 600+. San Andres Island (Colombia) is a small (11 km by 3 km) island in the Caribbean, 200 km east of Nicaragua. The diving consists of deep vertical walls on the eastern coast and sloping drop-offs on the west coast with a few shallow patch reefs on the northern end. We dove on two beautiful walls --"Palacio de Cerna" which starts at 12 m and is vertical to the abyss. While the second dive -- "Blue Wall/Hole" is a canyon at 20 m and a tunnel at 30 m meets up with a circular area with huge boulders covered in hard and soft corals. The "Pyramid" is two minutes from the dock and is a 9 m sand basin with a triangular coral mount raising to the surface. The huge schools of grunts and blue tangs are not shy about approaching divers for hand outs, as this is also a popular snorkeling spot for tourists. Coral and fish life was healthy and abundant with a few sightings of sting rays. Diving was from an open launch and the maximum number was five divers. After the briefing the dive guide asks you what profile/time and depth limits you want. The dive operation is laid back but well run and personnel are professional and friendly. They change over tanks after dives and rinse/store your equipment overnight, and have it ready the next day. The dive operation is in the Hotel Aquarium (where we stayed), it is an all-inclusive resort in a beautiful property on the water a few blocks from the main town or Centro.

Diving: two-tank dive without equipment \$45 USD, two tank dive with equipment \$65 USD. I did a 3-day package of two tank dives without equipment \$124 USD. Hotel Aquarium: all-inclusive (accommodation, all meals/beverages/snacks etc.) approximately \$70 USD per person per night. We obtained a hotel/flight package from Cartagena for four nights for \$335 USD per person. (Ph: +57-8-512-6923; e-mail informes@diversdream.com; website www.diversdream.com/english)

CUBA

To visit Cuba legally, American citizens must be licensed by the Treasury Department, and ordinary tourists don't get licensed. Big fines await those who are nabbed when passing through one of the gateway airports in Mexico and Canada. The U.S. government has been cracking down since mid-2001. . . . Street signs in Cancun and Playa del Carmen offer four-day trips to Cuba for as little as \$300 US and Scubacan in Canada also runs trips. . . . Dive operations are generally well-run, and the reefs are pristine.

Brisa Sierra Mar, April 2002, Atkinson Family (yakpack@sympatico.ca) Toronto, Ontario. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 30 Meters. Water: 28 F, calm no currents. The hotel staff made this quite a delightful holiday despite the diving. Everyone from the gardener to the wine waiter was