

close, with a return to the resort dock between dives. About half drift dives, half anchored. Guides are competent but not great creature scouts. No premium service here: you set up tanks and rinse your own gear. With mostly European divers, they were doing two dives a day. We requested three per day, and they immediately accommodated. We did one night dive: not a great site but a good dive, and over 60 minutes. We have dived the Isle of Youth in Cuba that attracts more divers, but we prefer Maria la Gorda. The all-inclusive 35 room resort/hotel is right on the beach; nice but plain. The buffet-style meals are plentiful but "basic Cuban." Birding nearby is great with the best guide/naturalist we've had the pleasure to walk with. \$104 per day for a double room facing the ocean including all meals for two. Dives priced separately (e.g., 15 dives \$340). Beer \$1. We showed up after faxing from Havana. Bok in advance (about 15% more expensive) from the USA through Scuba Cuba ([www.cuba.tc/CubaScuba\\_MariaLaGorda.html](http://www.cuba.tc/CubaScuba_MariaLaGorda.html)). Taxi rides from Havana and back are easy, but we rented a car to tour Western Cuba a few days. Spending money in Cuba presently violates US law. But you can join the estimated 70,000 lawbreaking gringos per year who travel there via Mexico, Canada or the Bahamas. You will meet wonderful people and just may help change that unjust law.

**Scubacan International, October 2001, Irene Gillman**  
**(101E52@aol.com) Great Neck, NY.**

I was supposed to go diving in Cuba October 2001, booked through Scubacan International in Canada. Paid them \$2850 in August and they never came through with the visa — no trip at all. They have not refunded my money though I gave them money for supposed trip insurance. Keith Bollander refuses to return my calls. He originally sent me back a \$650 check for the airplane that bounced. I called the Canadian Travel Minister and found out they are not a registered travel agency so there is nothing they can do for me. (**website [www.scubacan.com](http://www.scubacan.com)**)

**Scubacan, Colony Hotel, December 2001, Mimi Greensburg**  
**(ltlmi@aol.com) Los Angeles, CA.**  
Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 5 to 30 Feet. Water: 70 F, calm. Scubacan packaged this trip and charged twice the retail price for the hotels, dive package, meals and transportation. Colony Hotel is rundown and infested with mosquitoes and no-seeums. Almost no housekeeping in guest rooms. Lots of fried, greasy food. Good fresh fruit served at all meals. Local agents for Scubacan cheated Americans by refusing to provide prepaid services, forcing us to pay again or go without. Three spectacular dives; five ordinary dives. Prepaid but never received night dive. All dive sites are 45-60 minute boat ride from marina. Totally turned off by the Scubacan dive experience.

## CURACAO

A short hop from Bonaire, Curacao's colorful, historic,

cosmopolitan Dutch city of Willemstad offers plenty for the nondiver — good diving, international shopping for high-rollers, night life, hiking (bring boots), an orchid-filled forest, beautiful rural villages and country homes, windsurfing, half-naked Europeans, and horseback riding. Excellent Indonesian restaurants offer all-you-can-eat rijstafels (rice tables). . . . Marine Park, south-east of the public aquarium (“Seaquarium”), offers rough boat rides in exchange for the best wall dives on the island. There’s outstanding beach diving from protected coves on the northwest side of the island, which is usually calmest and is easily accessible by car. The windward side is almost always too rough to dive, but the diving’s good if the wind shifts from its prevailing pattern.

**Caribbean Sea Sports, Marriott Curacao, March 2002, Barry Zigas (barryzigas@earthlink.net) Washington, DC.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, choppy. CSS only runs their boat when there are six or more divers, so the first three days we did shore dives by driving to the site. Heli was our divemaster and was good at pointing out sights both above and below the water. Typically dove with only one or two others. The shore entries and exits were easy; little surf or surge, the biggest problem was the rocks, but with booties it was no big deal. Porto Marie was the highlight dive area -- did three dives there, two shore, one

boat. Wall with lots of soft and hard corals, tons of fish, a spotted eagle ray drifting past. GRE and green morays hiding in the walls; few invertebrates during the day. Safety stops sitting on a shallow bottom -- nice change from hanging on a line! On a night dive on the otherwise undistinguished house reef the bottom was loaded with lobsters, and rock shrimp and octopi! The Marriott is a nice resort, mostly full of Dutch visitors. Nice little beach (topless bathing optional and popular with the Dutch guests), cozy casino, food pricey but okay, especially the breakfast buffet and the bar food on the beach. The Italian restaurant, Portofino, wasn’t much to write home about, and not cheap. Our oceanside room was spacious if nondescript; basically an American hotel room, but had a nice balcony overlooking the sea, great mattresses, plenty of hot water. Above-water sights in the national park and Sheta Boca on the coast north of Willemstad. Worth renting a car and touring. Ambiance marred somewhat by the refinery in Willemstad; when the wind shifts to the NE the smell permeates the Marriott property, although AC keeps it out of the rooms. Willemstad is a disappointment. Kula Huranda museum on the Otrabanda side. Terrific museum of the African diaspora and Curacao’s leading role in the slave trade as the center of the infamous triangle trade between W. Africa, Caribbean/North America and Europe. Not their finest hour. Well-documented exhibits trace the history of the trade, its economics, social implications and brutality. It

also covers some African prehistory and a good section on the American civil rights movement. The museum is part of the hotel of the same name. It's a lovely reconstruction of colonial era cottages and small buildings. No beach, but two swimming pools and several restaurants. The eponymous one has American prices but the best-prepared food we had on the island. If you drive to the Christoffel Park, keep going to Westlund for the sunset, and stop at Jaanchie's to have an island cuisine meal (iguana soup, goat stew, and fish and more prosaic meats), and watch the birds daytime and bats nighttime at the feeder on the patio. Very friendly folks, good food and ambiance. (Ph: (599-9) 462 2620; e-mail: CSS@cura.net; website [www.caribseasports.com](http://www.caribseasports.com))

**Caribbean Sea Sports, Marriott, August 2002, Brian Ingoldsby, no city, state listed.** Trusting that the Marriott would have a reputable dive shop on their property, we checked online and booked a 3-day package based on the weekly schedule of dives they emailed me. We never went on any of these dives and they didn't use the larger boat because of ongoing repairs. We signed up for two tank boat dives, and they took our over-booked group to the house reef and we had to dive against the current! The idea was to drift back to the Marriott after the boat left. Several people ran out of air and had to swim ashore. Two people decided not to go on the second dive (probably a wise choice), and ended up walking about a mile down the shore. During the head

count, the divemaster had no idea where they had gone. On the second dive we got dropped off and actually dove with the current, but surfaced to find no boat. After struggling in the water for 15 minutes, our guide used an emergency buoy to signal the boat. We fared better on the second and third days, and had no major incidents, however, we basically dove the same reef for all four dives.

**Easy Divers, Sunset Waters Resort, March 2002, Don Buswell-Charkow, Windermere, FL.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy no currents. Owners have spent a lot of money and own a number of other resorts. Our Room #227 was spacious and had a wonderful porch and view. We didn't have hot water for three days but they fixed that before we left. They were doing everything they could to make our experience enjoyable and memorable. They left a bottle of champagne in our room after the shuttle went into town without us. They did arrange for someone to take us in later. The food was good. We had the-all-you-can-eat-and-drink package. The resort was not busy. Easy Dive is operated by Harry, a Danish expatriate, who is pleasant. He dropped us off with the divemaster and let us swim as far as we want with the current in our allotted hour. They surface and he'll pick you up. You can dive your own profile. The reef is healthy. We had spent a week in Bonaire two months previously and we found the reef in better shape here. The mushroom forest is one of the best

dive sites anywhere in the Caribbean. They were accommodating regarding dive times. One in the morning and one in the afternoon. Or two in the morning or two in the afternoon. No big fish but lots of usual reef fish. The shore diving off the resort is excellent with a healthy reef. The value was excellent. (Ph: +599-9 864-2822; e-mail [info@EasyDiversCuracao.com](mailto:info@EasyDiversCuracao.com); website [www.easydiverscuracao.com](http://www.easydiverscuracao.com))

### **Habitat Curacao, October 2001, James McMeins, Carnation, WA.**

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm choppy. Diving is great. Operation is usually first class but they still fuel the boat between dives. No one was watching the fuel going into the boat (standing around fuel truck smoking)! And fuel overflowed onto boat, soaking dive gear with diesel! When finished fueling, they emptied the fuel in the hose onto dock and into water. For an operation that prides itself on being eco-friendly, this was a sad lapse. Dive manager accommodating -- had a couple of gear problems he handled without charging for the repairs. Had new Ikelite digital camera housing and Photoshop lent video lights for couple of dives. The shore diving off the resort is one of the best, always something new to see. Two tank boat dive each day plus 2-3 shore dives. Crew never hurries you, most dives were from 50 mins to 1+ hours in water. If you were within computer limits, no problems. Nitrox is available. Resort showing signs of deterioration. A lot of wood on the outside and the wind/sun/rain are taking their

toll. Several posts on the deck of our room showed splitting and rotting and the exterior door frames are starting to rot. One night it rained heavily and I awoke to a wet pillow and water dripping from the ceiling; their solution was to move the bed 2 feet from the wall! Service has gone downhill. There were times in the dining room when we and other guest were totally ignored and it was a crap shoot whether you'd get what you ordered and how fast you'd get it. They may have a new chef, but the menu is still that same; if you stay more than a week, it gets boring. The theme nights are buffet and if you don't like what they're having, (and don't want to pay \$22 a person for it) your options are limited unless you want to rent a car to drive somewhere else to eat. Habitat likes to think of itself as an upscale facility, if they want to charge for upscale accommodations, they need to start acting like one. Since the gratuity is included in the prices of everything, there is no incentive for the employees. (Ph: 5999-8648800; e-mail: [Curacao@HabitatDiveResorts.com](mailto:Curacao@HabitatDiveResorts.com); website [www.habitatdiveresorts.com](http://www.habitatdiveresorts.com))

**Habitat Curacao, November 2001, Andrea Ohlson, Des Plaines, IL.** Vis: 40-100+. Water: 75-82 F. Dives accrued: 75. Dive restrictions enforced: 500 psi. Total dive freedom 24 hr. day. House reef terrific with guide rope. Little or no current. Night dives produced many large/small octopus — two very-very large green morays, seahorse — quite abundant. Reef damage after Lenny very apparent but

on rebound. Reef conservation is relatively new concept. Great destination without congestion on Cozumel. Only one boat allowed to moor at the site. Divemasters safety conscious. Not rushed to finish dive — we were always last up. Located my first seahorse on own. Divemaster asked if I could go back in and relocate for future divers. Many small fish. Abundant spotted drums. Slipper lobsters, spotted eagle rays, turtles. Resort was great. New lanai units are clean. Restaurant \$\$\$ but good. Far from town.

**Habitat Curacao, December 2001, Peter Belden, Stanford, CA.** Experience: 101- 250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 75 to 85 F, calm no currents. This is the 5th trip I've planned by researching *Undercurrent* reviews and it was another big success! Diving and dive shop very good. Hotel facilities very good but hotel staff, management and service poor. Habitat gives you true dive freedom. There is a room with about 40 full tanks by the water and any time you want to shore dive you just grab a tank, get your gear from your nearby locker (secured with a pad-lock) and then jump into the water. The wall slopes down starting about 100 feet out from shore. We did two night dives and can say first hand that it is unlimited shore diving with no strings attached. Each morning did two dives from boat, all sites within 20 minutes, handle your own gear, surface interval on comfortable good condition boats. No big pelagics or mammoth fish, but special sightings

included a seahorse, frogfish, spotted drums, barracuda, turtle, many spotted and goldentail eels and the best coral anywhere. Soft coral, black coral, fans, 5 foot tubes, barrels, sponges, mushroom shaped coral 12 feet high! Sea whips, domes of brain coral 8 feet across, and elk horn coral 6 feet high. Dive masters were eager to point out the special critters and very accommodating with new or nervous divers including a few hand led dives. Great place for beginners -- 3 of my friends got certified for only \$350 each. Not much for non-divers. Hotel restaurant expensive but rooms include a kitchen and you can make the 30 minute trip to town to get some groceries. They advertise truck rental but we had to twist the gruff manager's arm to get him to rent us a truck and then we ended up stranded when it broke down. Not a problem if you don't mind the expensive meals and plan to do nothing but dive and lounge. Had to argue for a while to get hotel to reimburse us for the cost of the tow truck. While viewing the sunset from the lovely hotel pool, we saw whales spouting in the distance. A once every 15 years type occurrence apparently. We learned that earlier in the day those on the dive boat watched as two blue whales fed together, driving a huge school of plankton and nearby fish to the surface. Those who saw it said the school of fish was so dense at the surface wedged between the whales that you could have walked on the fish. A dozen lemon sharks 5-10 feet long were feeding on the fish pac-man style, biting down left and right and flopping right out of the

water on top of the huge school of writhing fish. No one got in the water due to the general feeding chaos.

**Habitat Curacao, February 2002, Ceo & Connie Mazur, Newton, NJ.**

Vis: 50-100 ft. Dives logged: 85.

Diving 24/7 on the house reef was great. Beautiful coral, large variety of fish and two huge green moray eels who seemed to pose for the camera. On the boat dives we saw almost every small fish in the new "Reef Fish Identification" book including some of the Brazilian fish. Dive staff was helpful including making an ingenious emergency repair to my flipper. The town closes down Sunday and taxis are expensive (better off renting a car if you're going to do any touring). The restaurants in town are pricey but good. Bistro Le Clochard is heaven on a plate with a view to match. Beware of the market priced lobster at Fisherman's Wharf. Guilders per kilos = lots of dollars.

**Habitat Curacao, February 2002, Daniel Spitzer, Piermont, NY.**

Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 77-78 F. Dives logged: 300. My sixth time to Curacao and my fourth at Habitat. Can dive shallow — never exceed 60 ft, generally dive 60-75 min. per dive, three or four dives per day. Some coral bleaching but seems better than two years ago. Some damage from the hurricane two years ago Food and restaurant service better than in the past. Rooms nice, balconies and pool area have a nice view of the ocean. Best views from the 600 and 700 block of rooms. There should be night boat dives offered — diving on the

house reef every night is repetitive. Though seeing a few giant green morays each night is fun.

**Habitat Curacao, March 2002, Dave Dori, Pasadena, MD.**

My buddy Dave Cooper and I do about three or four trips annually. Resort was beautiful, well cared for, nice pool and tourists other than divers. Only rained once at night. It is very dry and arid, temps were mid-80's and up but always a nice breeze. The resort has standard rooms with cooking facilities and deluxe duplex rooms that include a TV, outside covered porch area with full cooking capabilities/refrigerator, sink, etc. Our package included a good buffet breakfast (eggs to order with meats, fruits, cheeses, cereals. You're on your own for lunch and dinner: \$8.50 for a pasta dish to as much as \$22 for a steak. 30 minute van ride to Willemstad; they run free van shuttles at 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM each day. We had dinner there (\$9 for pork chops and two vegs including a gin martini and tip) and the driver brought us to a super market to grocery shop after he picked us up at 6:30 PM. So we cooked our own stuff most of the week. Our package included unlimited shore diving (24/7) and three two-tank boat dives. Additional days of boat dives @55 each plus 10% tip and 5% tax so \$126.50 for two extra boat dives. If you pick and choose your three boat dives, you can see the really good sites within the package and dive the local reef out front for the rest of the time. They post where the boats are going, weather permitting, several days in advance and you sign up. They

handle a max. of 24 divers a boat but we had 20 only once and mostly six to ten. The dives you must do are #1. Bullen Bay. A saw-toothed wall as shallow as 20 ft under the boat dropping off to approx. 80 to 100 ft max. just loaded with corals and lots of small life. Huge schools of small bait fish, morays and a sea horse. #2. Mushroom Forest -- Their marquee dive, it was good, one of the few that you have to do your safety stop off the mooring line because the bottom is 45-50 ft. #3. Superior Producer -- a wreck dive near town. Max. depth 105-110 but ship is sitting upright and hold, etc., easily penetrated. Very nice dive. #4. Seldom -- Named for the infrequency of being able to dive it. It is in a totally exposed area and it gets very rough, so it is done as a one way dive. You are told that the boat will be running engines when it backs up to the divers and warned to all come up together so the captain sees you all and avoids you. Very safely executed but not for the faint-hearted. A nice wall and coral head well worth the trip. #5. Sponge Forest -- next to mushroom forest but a totally different type of reef, nice dive. Healthy fish life but nothing very big. Maybe two turtles spotted the whole week. No groupers, lots of puffer fish and scorpion fish. Lots of morays and usually being cleaned by the red and blue banded shrimp. Warm waters (they say this is the coldest time of year), very little currents, vis perhaps 30 to 50 feet, not spectacular but acceptable. The reef in front is easily accessible from a pier with a giant stride entry and a wonderful set of

rubber padded steps leading out. We had no problem walking up and out with all equipment on and off to the dive shop. Large rope tied to the steps and leads down to 130 ft off the wall. It's your highway going and coming from the reef. We dove it five times and always saw something different (giant green moray named Chester 1st dive, never saw him again). I came upon an octopus swimming over the reef. The doors to the dive shop and equipment lockers are always open, day and night. Bring your own lock to secure your gear in a locker. The staff was very friendly and helpful and very professional. Package was \$870/person. They run specials.

**Habitat Curacao, July 2002, Clay Coleman (clayco@mindspring.com)**  
**Baton Rouge, LA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy. House reef has deteriorated since last year but remains a very good dive for a house reef. Upwelling affected visibility. Reef lively with courting sealife. Large green morays were the largest fish we saw. Saw cornetfish on two boat dives, many seahorses at Harry's Hole. Most eels were scarred or injured apparently due to fighting. Good macro. Many orange ball corallimorphs on the house reef at 32' after 9pm. Vehicles can no longer be rented at Habitat Curacao. Car renters will pick you up at the resort and take you to the airport for car rental — way too much hassle. Restaurant slow with unremarkable food. Shore diving facility the best. Friendly staff, beautiful resort. Designated camera

rinse regularly filled with clean, fresh water. Boats also had designated camera rinse but the rinse tub was too small for housed or multiple strobe rigs.

**Habitat Curacao, September 2002, Bob Rollin, Saratoga, CA.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Excellent house reef. We dove it several times: during the day, at twilight and at night. The reef starts at 20 feet and drops farther than you would want to go. Lots of healthy coral at all levels. Virtually no current. Great reef for beginners to shore diving. Only one dive boat that they limit to 20 divers. Afternoon sailings were far less crowded. The weather and diving were just as good in the afternoon so we switched to afternoon dives. Some divemasters were more helpful than others. Overall an excellent diving experience. Good accommodations. Breakfast buffet little tired. Table service at lunch and dinner is slow and inattentive. Buffet dinners overpriced and marginal quality. Discovered an excellent dinner restaurant about 5 miles away (Landhaus Daniel).

**Lions Dive, Breezes, July 2002, Karin Doggett (kardog@flash.net)** Ashland, VA. Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, currents. All shore diving from resort, no advanced divers during my week there so all shore dives 60'. Currents strong at times and might change direction during the dive, one new DM guided us past the entrance back to the resort and a group of five of us had to be "rescued" by boat due to currents. Many resort

divers but as we were wall diving it was easy enough to avoid them at depth. Had to be shuttled 1 mile to boat diving, some long distances to boat dives with strong currents, actually did first drift dive. Overall a good experience. (Ph: **866-LIONSDIVE**; e-mail **us-canada@lionsdive.com** or **info@lionsdive.com**; website **http://lionsdive.com**)

**Ocean Encounters/March 2002, Dave Dobbins (yourmotheralso@aol.com)** Henderson, NV. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 78 F, choppy surge. Real nice setup with an aquarium for snorkeling. Semi-protected entry to the top of the wall. Divemaster gave good briefing. No rinsing accommodations for equipment. Lots of eels, and little critters. On entry quite a bit of surge due to 30 knot winds and 6' surf even down to 15.' They were conducting an open water class in the same area that made things congested both in and out of the water with nubies fumbling around. Not so bad. We all started that way. (Ph: **599-9-4618581**; e-mail **info@oceanencounters.com**; website **www.oceanencounters.com**)

**Ocean Encounters, Lions Dive and Beach Resort, June 2002, The Henke Family, Wichita, KS.** Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 80-82 degrees. Dive restrictions: NDL and 500 psig. Dive your own profile: yes. We were pleased with Ocean Encounters. They operated one boat and it never had more than 14 divers. The boats have a capacity for twice that. There other dive boats were mostly undergoing



engine repair. The dive leaders Ronald, Adian, Christian, Remy, Kyle and Sherman were safety conscious and could find seahorses at most dive sites. There were at least 3 staff members on the boat. The boat captain, Ritchie, was a lot of help when getting out of the rough water after each dive. 2-tank dive departing at 9:00 AM and returning before 12:30 PM Refreshments and fresh fruit were provided. The surface interval was usually taken at Caracas Bay Island. The staff appeared to be motivated to get back early to prepare for a 2 PM departure with students. Seaside Restaurant located near the resort and Surabaya, is a good Indonesian restaurant located on the Oceanfront Terrace in Willemstad. Lions Dive and Beach Resort next to the Sea Aquarium caters mainly to scuba divers and is family friendly. At check-in, we received an ID card that gave us free entrance to the Sea Aquarium.

**Ocean Encounters, Lions Dive Hotel, June 2002, Gerry McAtavey Roanoke, VA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 120 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm, currents. Lions Dive clean and comfortable, breakfast included short walk to the dive shop. Dive operation is excellent, good briefings, short rides to most sites. Fresh fruit and ice tea or water on board. Most surface intervals we went ashore and wandered around or got a history lesson from a local divemaster. The day we dove the Superior Producer, current was strong at the surface and stronger at the wreck 100' below. DM should have picked

another site, pretty much a wasted tank of air. Wreck is stripped clean, no fish, not much to see. The rest of the week was very good. Sunday is beach party night, you can start at one end of the beach and work your way back to Lions Dive and hit happy hour at each restaurant/hotel from 6-10 p.m. ten. Great local entertainment. Good local restaurants nearby. Had minor problems with the hotel Internet service, but the hotel up the beach had a machine that worked fine, cheaper than calling the states plus you get to play in the casino while your wife is on line.

**Ocean Encounters, Breezes, September 2002, Barbara Spennetta, Mazomanie, WI.** Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 82-83 F. Dives accrued: 900. Dive restrictions enforced: stay with buddy. The reef was one of the prettiest I've seen. It had a large variety of healthy corals, gorgonians and sponges. Small reef fish were plentiful, with a variety seldom encountered. Many dives found squads of squid, 10 to 100. Seahorses were seen on three dives. Found baby trunk fish, little black marbles with yellow spots. Ocean Encounters, boasts a staff that is knowledgeable and attentive. They were more safety conscious than any group we have been with.

**Seascope, Sheraton, April 2002, Linda K. Billen (lindakbll13@yahoo.com) Edmond, OK.** Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 81-83 F. Dives accrued: 461. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 ft. This was my 4th trip to Curacao. The water can be rough, but most of the time it is pleasant, and the diving is easy. Eva owns the dive

shop and everyone is customer oriented. Any and Clark are great divemasters, and make sure everyone has a good time. We saw four sea-horses and a lot of eels, some large. Lots of little creatures and macro photography is outstanding. The corals are healthy and vary in size and shape from the east to the west end of the island. The prices are reasonable. (Ph: +(599-9) 462-5000; e-mail: [info@seascapecuracao.com](mailto:info@seascapecuracao.com); website [www.seascapecuracao.com](http://www.seascapecuracao.com))

**Seascape, Marriott, May 2002, Bob Lamb, Tinley Park, IL.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 81 F. Dives accrued: 350. Dive restrictions enforced: depth and length.

**Silent Immersion, Aqua Life Apts., March 2002, Tim & Jill Kolakowski, Erie, PA.** Vis: 50-75 Ft. Water: 78 F. Dives logged: Tim-79, Jill-32. Dive restrictions enforced: stay with guides. We travel with our five years old sons. We chose Curacao because of good *Chapbook* reviews and an easy flight from Cleveland that makes just one stop, in Miami. We stayed at the Aqua Life condo complex on Jan Thiel Bay, about 15 minutes east of Willemstad. Curacao Tourist Bureau sent a helpful info. package that included apartments and condos. Aqua Life is a 6 unit complex in a gated community with five high priced homes. The two bedroom, two bath unit with a small beach and pool costs \$900 (high season) including all taxes for the week. We were the only Americans. Silent Immersion really made our trip. On six of my ten dives I was alone with either Martin or Brenda, owners,

because they had a large open water training class and scheduled few guided dives. What a treat — especially since two of our Grand Cayman trips were with cattle boat operators. Brenda even babysat our son one morning! Curacao has awesome and unique dives. We shore dove the Superior Producer twice, it's a better dive than Theo's in the Bahamas. At Director's Beach there's a wall 20 yards from the beach that drops out of sight. Near the tugboat there's a large pier with the pilings built into the slope. The dozens of pilings are packed with hard and soft corals and tons of fish. The whole structure is huge and impressive when you approach it from below the slope. Our night dive near the hotel at Caracas Bay had five eels, octopii, and more fish than I've seen on a night dive. Jan Thiel Beach has a shallow area filled with hard coral, soft coral, fish, squid, etc. A beautiful dive in the sunlight. We even dove the North side of the island once. We thought Curacao had more fish, more divers species than Grand Cayman, and it was fun to feel like foreigners in a friendly country. (599-9 767 7014; e-mail [info@curacao-silentimmersion.com](mailto:info@curacao-silentimmersion.com); website [www.curacao-silentimmersion.com](http://www.curacao-silentimmersion.com))

## DOMINICA

Dominica is arguably the best all-around adventure vacation island in the Caribbean, with gorgeous reefs, plenty of tropicals (though few of eating size), lush rain forests, hiking, waterfalls, warm