

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**; website **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**; website **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

water springs, splendid fruits and vegetables (prepared by great local cooks), modest hotels — and it's inexpensive to boot. . . . Go forewarned: there are no beaches, even seaside hotels are affected by the nearly continuous cloud cover over the mountains, and there's not much happening beyond polite residents leading their lives. The airport doesn't handle large jets, and there's little tourism infrastructure. . . . Expect daytime temperatures in the 80s and night lows around 68 in winter and 73 in summer, although a few minutes up the mountain and into the cloud forest can change all that dramatically. . . . July to November is the wet season, but showers may occur anytime. Dominica's at the edge of the hurricane belt. . . . The thirteen-mile round-trip hike to Boiling Lake is worth getting in condition for. Dive operations usually offer two dives in the morning to allow time to tour in the afternoons. . . .

**Cabrits, Sea Cliff Cottages, July 2002, Al Wentzel (aliz@epix.net)**  
**Carlisle, PA.** Vis: 50 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives logged: 150. Dive restrictions enforced: depth 100' time 50 min. Sea Cliff cottages are four well kept, self catering cottages on the northeast windward shore of Dominica. Awaken to ocean breezes and eye popping sea vistas from your front porch. Good restaurants and groceries are nearby. Cabrits Dive shop is a great facility on the leeward side in Portsmouth — a 12 mile, 45 minute drive over beauti-

ful but winding roads. Don't worry about making the 8:30 morning dive. They operate on a Caribbean schedule — an hour late on our three days. Our six dives were reached in ten minutes in a steel open skiff. Coral pinnacles, volcanic boulders with coral, and mixed sand with coral grooves were typical. Small fish and shrimp action was ok but not as good as the macro's in St. Vincent. We saw best medium fish in active fish traps on most sites — sad. It was said all the tropicals are used except the eels. Don't miss the adventure of exploring the unique countryside, mountains and beaches of this area. It is outstanding! (Ph: 767-445-3010; e-mail: cabritsdive@cwdom.dm; website [www.cabritsdive.com](http://www.cabritsdive.com))

**Dive Dominica, Fort Young Hotel, October 2001, Bruce Fraser, Bakersfield, CA.** Dives accrued: 221. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 ft. Tough island to get to. Had to stay over in Puerto Rico coming and going. Easy diving. 15 minutes to most dive sites. Great coral. Soufriere Pinnacle outstanding for macro photos. Scotts Head Pinnacle great site. Eels, frogfish, turtles, spotted drums. Spent three days in rain forest.

**Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort, November 2001, Wuni Ryschkewitsch, Gainesville, FL.** Vis: 10-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives accrued: 3280. Easy diving, friendly people, only one divemaster out of six was inconsiderate and careless. Whale watch guide was excellent. (Ph: 888-414-7626 or 954-351-

**9740; e-mail [dive@cwdom.dm](mailto:dive@cwdom.dm);  
website [www.divedominica.com](http://www.divedominica.com))**

**Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort Dive  
Lodge, December 2001, Diego  
Lugagne ([dlugagne@la.ko.com](mailto:dlugagne@la.ko.com))**

**Caracas, Miranda.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Water: 19 to 25 Celsius, calm no currents. Hotel is simple but very nice and well managed (rooms, service, food, etc). Dives are set up to end around 1:30 PM, so you can enjoy your afternoon on the island. Dive sites 10 to 15 min from the hotel dock. Scott's Head dive sites are real nice. Healthy reefs, lots of coral. Underwater topography is magnificent. Lots of pinnacles. Nitrox available. Night dive was excellent (zillions of king crabs, lobsters, scorpion fishes, etc). Walking in town will give you a feeling lost in other Caribbean islands. Not a lot of night life, some good restaurants (try the famous "mountain chicken"). Some ATMs. Don't go to town when big boats are in (it gets crowded). Car rental (4WD) is a must, to enjoy the island's breathtaking nature. Drive to Portsmouth Berekua and Scott's Head are great. They drive on the other side and roads are narrow. Horn is a must. A temporary drive permit (12 US\$, takes 30 minutes to get just show your valid drivers license). Front desk will arrange for the car. Shore dive from Castle Comfort dock is nice, lots of macro shots and critters (saw around 12 flying gurnards, some scorpion fishes, etc.). Hotel owners are real hosts, dive staff knowledgeable and very friendly. Boats (5) are roomy and well set up. Whale watch is real nice (saw four

sperm whales, and over 50 pilot whales), though diving with whales is prohibited. Weather is enjoyable (not too hot, not too cold, breeze all day long, no bugs).

**Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort,  
March 2002, Roger & Donna Soape,  
Houston, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 90 Feet. Water: 78 to 79 F, choppy. The prettiest eco-island in the Caribbean, with beautiful waterfalls, plants, birds, hiking. Two dives per day (only) in the morning leave time for island touring, which Castle Comfort arranges but well worthwhile. Fishing by locals means few fish of any size. Try not to look at the fish traps while you are diving. Still, lots of frogfish and seahorses. Dive operation okay but a different divemaster nearly every day meant divers never established rapport with them. It also caused divemasters to be too cautious with experienced divers since the day's new divemaster had never seen any of us in the water. As a consequence, we dove the easier sites except the last day when we finally persuaded the crew to go outside the protected harbor. Great dives outside

**Dive Dominica, Castle Comfort  
Lodge, March 2002, Sunny  
Morrison, Lone Tree, CO.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm no currents. Ranks with the best in the Caribbean, walls and pinnacles on par with Little Cayman. Healthy colorful reefs, large variety of marine life, easy diving and good boats (all have heads). Dive sites are 15/20 minute ride away to the National Marine

Park. Permanent moorings installed at all of the sites. Stingray, electric ray, lots of different moray eels, flying gurnards, acres of garden eels, sea horses, stonefish, lobsters, octopus, squid, juvenile spotted drums, lots of Creole wrasse, barracuda, leaf fish and many more Caribbean fish. Dive site "Champagne" is an experience, hot water bubbles from active volcano. Most of the dive sites the safety stops are on top of the reef at 20 feet. Two morning dives from the boats and unlimited shore diving from the pier at Castle Comfort Lodge (day and night), watch out for the sea urchins (hundreds of them). Nitrox \$8 per tank or \$80 for the week. Lots of activities whale and dolphin watching (we saw at least eight sperm whales and a pod of 200 dolphins); many hikes to waterfalls including dips in the refreshing pools; hikes to the rainforest to watch the parrots, our guide climbed a tree and gathered fresh juicy grapefruit, great after a hot hike (recommend Khatts tours). A trip to the market is a must, 50 cents for a bus ride. Safety was never a problem during our walks around the town, locals were very friendly, and there was plenty of police around on market day. Two days to get to Dominica from USA (overnight in San Juan). Not a destination for shopping. No lively nightlife. Good hiking boots are required for the all day hiking trip to the Boiling Lake (largest in the world). Take granola bars or trail mix if you like to snack in the afternoon, snacks at the lodge not available between meals. Rinse tanks on boats and battery chargers available at dive operation.

**Nature Island Dive, Herche's Place, November 2001, Barry Klickstein, Swampscott, MA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 45 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Healthy reef, lots of coral and small critters, not a lot of large stuff, but great facilities and good dive operation. Herche's place is clean and neat and Greg and Barbara are accommodating but the lack of a beach to sun on, read, etc., is a slight minus. Greg's gourmet cooking and a fantastic bar almost make up for the non-beach. Beautiful island; we would dive in the morning, climb in the jeep and find a different river to relax in every afternoon. The people couldn't be nicer. Several times drivers changed direction to show us where to go. Nature Island Dive is an A+ operation and shore intervals at their shop, in lounge chairs in the sun with a fresh sandwich from Bobby next door is a unique setup. Great diving for experienced and beginners alike. Large comfortable boat and good shore facilities. Only 10 minute run to dive sites and shore intervals at the shop. (Ph: 767-449-8181; e-mail [natureidive@cwdom.dm](mailto:natureidive@cwdom.dm); website [www.natureislanddive.com](http://www.natureislanddive.com))

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Despite the recent flurry of advertisements touting the diving on the reefs of Dominican Republic, we have yet to hear from a well-traveled diver who thinks much of the diving.

**November 2001, Arthur F. Graf Jr., San Antonio, TX.** I do not like to drive at night in a country that I have