

Montserrat Volcano Observatory can arrange special volcano tours. The best thing is the liming. The pace of life here is 25% of the US and the people are great with virtually no crime. There are many guest houses or villas at reasonable rates. Our eight days at Erindale with most meals, including Christmas dinner, came to less than \$750. You fly to Antigua and take the helicopter or ferry to Montserrat. The way it used to be. krebs@seawolfdiving school.com to sign up for his newsletter. The last two trips I got to witness the volcano's power, sending pyroclastic flows 1-2.5 miles into the air. An incredible sight! And yes, you are safe, just stay out of the exclusion zone. It is a trip for the adventurer not the luxury seeker. About 5,000 population. (Ph: 664-491-6859; e-mail: krebs@candw.agwebsite; website www.seawolfdivingschool.com)

## PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico is beginning to come into its own as a dive destination, with good reefs and walls and good fish life. Winters can be cool. . . .

**Caribe Aquatic Adventure, Inter-continental San Juan, July 2002, Jon Lamos (jlamos@pol.net) Estero, FL.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 10 to 70 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, choppy, no currents. Karen and Tony Vega of Caribe Aquatic Adventures have shore dives in San Juan and "dive picnics" to the Eastern shore of Puerto Rico around Fajardo. Tony is an island native and the dive operation has been open for 30 years. Karen arranges the trips and Tony serves as guide.

English is spoken fluently. The local shore offer experiences with sea horses and a few swim throughs. The visibility was poor (10-15 feet) and one dive was enough. Tony led the shore dive that ranged in depth from 10-30 feet. A few interesting fish/lava swim through and Tony has fish feeding sites with some good fish life. The dive lasted close to 90 minutes — although if desired he would have returned earlier. Tony picked us up at our hotel for the hour drive to Fajardo. He knows all the locals and has a small dive boat in that area with a local captain. The boat was adequate for divers, but photographers would be disappointed with no facilities for equipment. Tony will carry all equipment/tanks/food/drinks to the boat. Adequate drinks and he provided Cuban sandwiches and stopped at a fruit stand on the drive! Tony picked excellent dive sites with some of the healthiest coral that I have seen. Few/no large fish/pelagics, but abundant tropical fish. Tony limits the dive to 4-6 divers and the entire trip including tanks/weights/food and drinks/drive was \$130 each. Visibility was 50-70 feet and is often much better. There are wall dives to 70 feet and terrific coral topography with swim throughs. The trip offers two tank dives with time on a deserted island where snorkeling is available and food served. Pick up at 9 and drop off at 6. (Ph: 787-281-8858; e-mail: caribaqu@coqui.net; website www.caribeaquaticadventure.com)

**Parguera Divers, January 2002, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano**

**(guigo34@hotmail.com) San Juan, PR.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, surge. The reefs are in excellent conditions. The small fish life is abundant. The walls are alive. You are treated like an adult diver and allowed to dive your own profile, alone, if you wish. **(Ph: (787) 899-4171; fax (787) 899-6023; e-mail divepr@caribe.net; website http://netdial.caribe.net/~divepr/)**

**Parguera Divers, February 2002, Randy Ireson, Salem, OR.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, surge no currents. There are two dive ops in La Parguera, Parguera Divers and Paradise Scuba. Angel Rovira and his wife Roberta now run Parguera, having taken over from Angel's father. They are a friendly, informative and helpful couple. All diving is from boats, start on the "Wall" and a second dive in a shallower location (40-60'). Boat is well equipped, with fresh water hose and bucket available. Divers new to the boat get a safety briefing including location of oxygen, first aid, radios, etc. There were 11 divers and one divemaster the day we were with Parguera -- all experienced. Safety line and descent line strung behind the boat, and an emergency reg on a 40-foot line over the side. First dive was to "hole in the wall," max depth 120,' stayed on the wall about 20 min then swam to 60' depth on the lip. Coral is very healthy coral, but fewer fish than I expected, mostly small. Second dive was to "the forest," 60' sand bottom with reefs to 45.' Vis not

as good as on the wall (maybe 50'). Angel also runs night dives. The boat may fill up, especially if weather elsewhere on the Island scratches diving there. Call for reservations ahead. 787-899-4171;

**Parguera Divers, Parguera Pasada Porlamar, April 2002, Arthur F. Graf (art9323@aol.com), San Antonio, TX.** Vis: 30-75 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 500+. Open water, deep reefs. Plenty of black coral. Reef in fine condition but no fish. All equipment including the boat was new. All dives were deep. Down line 45' with a basket on bottom filled with weights. If you are positive just grab a weight. Food was five star and reasonable.

**Parguera Divers, Posada Porlamar, May 2002, James McMeins, Carnation, WA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, choppy, currents. For advanced divers, all dives were on the continental shelf located 5-6 miles offshore. Wall starts at 50-60' so you are more concerned with bottom time than air consumption. Some days it was a challenge to get back on the boat in the 5-7' swells. Most dives are 40-45 minutes followed by a 5 min safety stop. Visibility was not great due to swells — have never seen so many seasick people before on a dive boat. First time we dove using Doc's Proplugs, they worked great. The corals/sponges/seafans are in great shape here and some were the biggest we've seen. Not many fish but a good variety. Resort is quaint older house that has been added to over the years. Dive boat and shop are at the dock and

can store your equipment in their dive locker. The night we arrived, it was late and office was closed but security guard took care of us, put us in the standard room we had booked, then changed his mind and moved us to a nicer room, following day the owner told us since we were staying so long (10 days) he would upgrade us to one of the beach side suites! On site restaurant is good but expensive, only ate there twice. Lots of restaurants within easy walking distance and more reasonable. Don't miss the trip to Biolum Bay, its only \$5 and is amazing to see the water glow and the fish flashing through the water leaving blue/green vapor trails. Rented a car for the ten days — the same price as taking a commuter flight to and from the area — and we were able to travel the island and enjoy the beaches and parks. Took three days to get them to put a bucket on the boat for cameras and no facility on boat for working on them.

**Taino Divers, December 2001, Clare Petosa, Manasquan, NJ.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, surge. Taino Divers quite knowledgeable, safety conscious and a lot of fun! We chartered the boat for a day and did a fishing/diving trip that was a blast. Brought the fish we caught back to the shop and had a BBQ! (Ph: 787-823-6429; e-mail [tainodivers@yahoo.com](mailto:tainodivers@yahoo.com); website [www.tainodivers.com](http://www.tainodivers.com))

## SABA

South of St. Maarten, Saba is one of the more adventurous and

exciting Caribbean destinations, both on land and in the sea. . . . Pinnacle diving begins at 70 feet, with good fish life and occasionally sharks and bigger fish. . . . All accommodations are in quaint villages at 1000 feet and above. . . . Although there are no beaches or night life, Saba has delightful people, a few good restaurants, and a cool, pleasant climate at altitude. It's also in the hurricane belt. . . . Some divers claim that, after several days of diving, they get muscle pains if they climb 3000-ft. Mt. Scenery. . . . Be sure to close your eyes when your plane lands. . . .or take the short ferry trip from St.. Maarten.

### **Saba Deep, Cottage Club, January 2002, Jim Gibson, Springfield, MO.**

Dives logged: 245. Vis: 70-110 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. Saba is a unique experience — from the airplane landing on the “world's shortest commercial airstrip” to it's lush green mountains, hand made mountain road and friendly people. We climbed Mt. Scenery (2,850 ft. elevation) and the views are gorgeous. Mike Myers and Big Mike at Saba Deep couldn't have done more to make the diving easier and we found the coral on the pinnacles pristine and saw several turtles and sharks. Big Mike is a very experienced dive guide who went on every dive with us and did a good job of pointing out the critters. And topside for no extra charge we got to hear about Big Mike's own philosophy of