

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; website 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

life. We found the food on Saba a little pricey but good and our favorite places were Brigadoons, Y@K and barbeque night at the Swinging Door. The Cottage Club is cozy and clean with good service and reasonably price with a beautiful ocean view. **(Ph: (888) DIVE-SABA or + 59941-63347; e-mail diving@sabadeep.com; website www.sabadeep.com)**

Saba Deep, Cottage Club, January 2002, Suzanne Gerber (zuzanne2@aol.com) Brooklyn, NY. Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 195. Dive restrictions enforced: DM's assess divers and create dives accordingly but experienced divers can do own thing. Last January was my 5th trip in less than two years. While the island today boasts close to a dozen comfortable hotels and restaurants and is well known for serious hiking, the real draw is the diving. The other two dive operations on the island have sterling reputations, but a big part of Saba's appeal for me is Saba Deep. Owner Mike Myers and esprit de operation Mike Austin are rare finds, indeed, ">60 years dive experience between them." Small boats and attention to divers assure you'll never have a "cattle call." But it's underwater that Saba reins supreme, too many have favorably compared it with the Caymans. Deep pinnacles, walls, healthy coral abounds and the marine park status has preserved the hundreds of species and huge bounty of critters. You'll see large pelagics and incredible macro life on nearly every dive! Don't miss

Diamond Rock, Man of War and the deeper and stunning Mont. Michel.

Saba Deep, February 2002, Joshua Paddock, Rutland, MA. Vis: 20-170 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives accrued: 380. Dive restrictions enforced: 130. Saba is a big, steep sided rock rising from the depths. There are no beaches and no desirable shore dives simply because there are only two places on the whole island where you can get into the water. Some of the best diving you are likely to see. Saba has no natural reefs, but does have bizarre shapes made by lava flows and later completely encrusted with coral. Most dives are done on the west side of the island to avoid heavy waves, which are often on the east side. Ask to dive Core Gut the corals growing on top of the lava rocks looks like melted candle wax, with solitary rocks looking like car sized mushrooms. My father and I both got very close to several black tips, turtles, and a couple of large nurse sharks. The island is a marine park and has been for twenty years. They aren't waiting for nature to repair man's damage because very little if any has been done. Many pinnacles are quite large, a bit like diving on the top of a skyscraper, with ragged and sometimes undercut walls dropping out with no bottom in sight. The Needle is maybe fifty feet around but 150' high rising out of the sand at around 230' and coming within 80' of the surface, without getting much wider at the base. Saba Deep was great; Mike and Big Mike took great care of us. Our gear was rinsed and set up on the boat when we arrived each

morning. We came back to port after every dive; it's a very small island. After the morning deep dive you can order lunch at the In Too Deep café located above the dive shop. When you return from the second dive, it's ready. Mike owns the restaurant so you can run a tab during your whole visit. The third dive of the day is typically shallow, no more 75'. Big Mike seemed to find all the critters and even the most experienced diver can learn something from him. Nearly everyone who dove with him for more than two days was using at least two pounds less weight some four or six pounds less. The conditions can and do change rapidly, on one dive the visibility went from 100' to 20' in less than a minute. The dives that make this place the most special (the pinnacles) are deep, starting at 80'-90' with deep blue water all around, good buoyancy control is essential. Novice divers and a few instructors and dive masters we saw would do well to log many dives before visiting. Also, the entire island down to a depth of 200' is a protected marine park. The place is strictly hands off. No gloves except on the line. Mike and Big Mike guard the marine life zealously and have been known to refuse to let divers that ruin the coral with their fins and hands to dive with them again. This was the best diving I've ever seen. Ask for The Needle, Mont Michel, Shark Shoal, Diamond Rock, Man O' War; these will blow your mind. Topside Juliana's had nice accommodations. Check out the Tropics Café and Brigadoon's for a

steak like in the states and fresh seafood. Don't forget to try the Saba Spice.

Sea Saba, Garden Cottage (Hal's Place), June 2002, Tim & Jill

Kolakowski, Erie, PA. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: Tim-93, Jill-34. Dive restrictions enforced: stay with guide. No beaches, no palm trees, no night life. What Saba has (all five square miles) is 1400 friendly residents who really mean it when they smile and say "have a great day." It has spectacular views from every where on the island. There are villages with red roofed, green shingled, little white houses. The "Road," built by hand from 1938 to 1963, snakes its 19 miles up and around Saba like a roller coaster. Crime is unheard of. Homes and apartment rentals inexpensive. For the best deals, call Beth Jansen at Dive Saba Statia (800-883-7222). She couldn't have been more helpful. We ate most of our meals at our house. "The Garden Cottage" above windward side, shopping at the Big Rock Market. This grocery store had a good selection at low prices. We had a fabulous dinner at YIHK and the BBQ was great at the Swinging Door. And the diving!! Seahorses, pipefish, spotted drums, sharks, anenomae, octopus, turtles, etc., etc., etc. Tons of fish. A cold front kicked up 4-5 ft. waves and currents on the pinnacles so we only did two of them. They were my least favorite dives with short bottom times and long ascents hanging around the anchor line looking at each other. Tent Wall, Tent Reef, Tent Deep, Babylon, Labyrinth

were great dives. The divemasters seemed to have as much fun as we did. Many dives were with 4-5 other divers on a 36' boat. Sea Saba's two boats greatly outclassed the other dive operators. If you buy a dive package, do not expect a refund for missed dives for any reason. That aside, Sea Saba was great to dive with and Saba is an unforgettable dive vacation. **(Ph: (800) 883-SABA or + 59941-62246; e-mail divemaster@seasaba.com; website www.seasaba.com)**

Sea Saba, Juliana's, Orchid Cottage, September 2001, Sharon Dickinson (dickinsonsharon@hotmail.com)
Cumming, GA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. I have visited several times, usually at Juliana's Guest House. This time, my boyfriend and I rented Orchid Cottage, next to Tropics Café and it was fabulous! Breathtaking views, an amazing patio, the most incredible indoor/outdoor shower and a great kitchen. Plenty of room. TV and VCRs, plenty of space to spread out. Two bedrooms, it was truly spectacular. Fantastic dive experience with Lynn and John of Sea Saba, and the crew of Zissy, Steve and Stuart. Service was excellent, the staff international and knowledgeable, always keeping safety first, but meeting the guests requests when possible. The diving is so varied and depending on the time of year. We had very rough seas and several divers chose not to dive more challenging pinnacle dives because of strong currents and rough waters. The few

who did go on these dives were treated to schools of sharks, free-swimming octopus, turtles, and lots of beautiful reef fish. Plenty of nudibranchs, flatworms, etc. We did not see seahorses or frogfish. The food was pretty decent, considering consumables must come from other islands. Carolyn at Tropics does a great job and Brigadoon had very good food. Lime Time, a local bar in the Bottom, was a disappointment with only four entrees available from a multi-page menu, and the food was just so-so. Friendly people. Be sure to set up your camera before heading out on the boats. There is not a large camera area and when the seas are rough, it is hard to 'play with' on the boat. No film processing on island.

Sea Saba, Juliana's, January 2002, Don Acheson, Silver Spring, MD.
Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 125 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. Saba is a small, rugged volcanic island with one road running from the airport to the tiny harbor, clinging to mountainsides for most of its length. The island is clean and bright, without roadside litter, its buildings characterized by red roofs and fresh white paint. Windward side, like most of the villages, is situated about 1500 feet above sea level; cool breezes were ever-present, calling for a light sweater in the evening. Sea Saba provided a taxi to get to and from the harbor. Juliana's provides breakfast; other meals, taken at several restaurants in Windward side, ranged from excellent to mediocre. The first dive of the day was usually on one of several

pinnacles with tops at 90 to 95 feet. Consequently, with the restriction to no-decompression diving, that dive was only 15 to 20 minutes long (somewhat longer for Nitrox divers with Nitrox computers). Second dives were over shallower bottoms with enough vertical structure to permit one to slowly work up the reef or rock and do a safety hang with interesting things to see.

Sea Saba, Juliana Resort, May 2002, Bill Schlegel (schleggg@aol.com)

Jefferson City, MO. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet.

Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. The only airline serving the island often finds it difficult to get all your luggage and dive gear on board. Avoid those weekends when the couple hundred medical students are returning, such as from spring break. Luggage really gets backed up on St. Marten. Sea Saba's manager had to fight for days to get my rebreather system off St. Maarten and to Saba, took 2 and 1/2 days.

General, good Caribbean diving. Still some beautiful coral. They lost most of their staghorn in a hurricane but still some of the best I've seen at Green Island. Turtles were seen daily. Fish diversity better than other islands. Maybe, it was because I was taking an underwater naturalist course with Helen Sykes (visiting from her operation in Fiji), but I saw over 100 different species at Core Gutt. Big stuff is rare although we did see a few shy sharks. Stewart and Andrea are professional and energetic divemasters. The owner was helpful and loaned me one of his rental

Drager Dolphin rebreathers while mine was sitting on the tarmac at St. Maarten. Juliana "resort" is notable for fantastic views and good food, nice pool, walking distance to town. They're next door to the ruins of the famous Captains Quarters (closed due to hurricane damage). Little special accommodation for photographers but not bad overall as the operators were understanding and considerate. No developing.

Sea Saba, Juliana's, August 2002, Ray Fealko (raydar@netlink.net)

Cortland, OH. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 125 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. No complications when going straight through at St. Martin gate 10. On the return trip Sea Saba sent us to Mary's Boon in St. Martin for the day. Great way to wait for our home flight on the beach five minutes from the airport. They gave us full facilities and all we needed to do was buy lunch. Juliana's is an accommodating family place. We got the 3rd floor suite overlooking everything with our own balcony. The view! Sea Saba takes excellent care of their divers and all their equipment. Nitrox course was a bonus. We feel much better after using it since we tend to get upset stomachs. David Clark did a nice job both on the boat and teaching the course. Lobsters seemed to have disappeared since our last trip. Make it to the top of the rock on Mt. Scenery, and take the time to hike the other trails. They are wonderful. Fresh water hose on the back of the boat for rinsing everything.

Sea Saba, Juliana's, September 2002, Elizabeth Hiltcher (reefsong@attbi.com) Oak Park, IL.

Vis: 80-110 ft. Vis: 82-84 F. Dives accrued: 226. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 depth, no deco. Pristine, beautiful place with healthy reefs and respectful, service oriented, ecology minded divemasters. Water and weather conditions couldn't have been better. Juliana's Orchid Cottage was wonderful. Sea Saba is a good outfit with a helpful but unobtrusive crew. Gatehouse — the best meals and ambiance on the island.

ST. BARTHELEMY

Dive With Dan, December 2001, Don Henderson, Lockney, TX. Dives Logged: #42. Vis: clear. Water: 82 F. I really enjoy this little French island and always look forward to it when taking Windjammer's S/V Polynesia on its northern route. WJ booked us a single tank trip and unlike the other divers on board, I had all my own gear with me. I thought that this would be great timing: dive, quick shopping, lunch, then the afternoon on the beach! I did a light breakfast, as I avoid eating much before diving, then dragged my bag up three flights, only to learn that the operator dumped us to cater to a bigger group from a larger boat. We had to schedule our dive for the afternoon, and I wished that I'd had more to eat, as now I was looking at a light lunch and a rescheduled day that no longer included beach time. When we finally got to the dive boat, the rest of the divers were disappointed that at \$50 for a one tank dive,

they didn't get depth gauges or auxiliary second stages with their steel tanks? We made do, though, and enjoyed the nice reef dive otherwise. My buddy surfaced, habitually looking for any fires, and — spotted one! A boat was burning near where we'd first boarded ours, and we watched as it was towed away from the dock. WJ's M/V Amazing Grace supply ship, which happened to also be in the harbor for delivery, pulled along side to douse the flames. By the time we got back to the Poly, showered and changed, the Grace had repositioned away from the smelly remains, and we all took launches over for a wine and cheese gathering on "the bingo boat" with the ship's quieter passengers. I have quite a collection of souvenir T-shirts, but I was feeling pretty salty by now and thought that this might be the time to wear my WJ Officer's Shirt -- available by special order only, not from the ship's store, along with matching WJ shorts and my straw western hat! Many of the Grace's passengers and some of my own mates took me for an officer, but I behaved pretty well for an old cowboy drinking wine out in the Caribbean on an empty stomach. We returned to our own craft for dinner, and I didn't moon anyone until our rowdy time ashore at one of Jimmy Buffet's old hangouts. I think we weighed and sailed around midnight. (Ph: 590-276478)

ST. EUSTATIUS

An historically significant island, St. Eustatius, which lies fifty miles