

and I was back on the boat earlier than some. I sought to assist the First Mate with reboarding the last of the divers, as that part often gets backed up, and I noticed that while one was climbing, another was underneath?! I shouted a warning, to which the diver in the water just gave me a funny look, and then -- I recognized the Skipper! The First Mate laughed, saying I should have told him to put his regulator back in his mouth, too. (Ph: 011-599-545 3213; e-mail dives@thescubashop.net; website thescubashop.net)

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent lies in a beautiful chain of islands and is heavily forested, with pretty reefs and a good range of fish species. . . . Daytime temperatures are in the high 80s year-round, the low 70s at night; afternoon cloudbursts are common; St. Vincent is in the hurricane belt. . . . The Grenadines - Bequia, Palm, Union, and Carriacou - are a sailor's dream; they're islands with small hotels, little dive operations, and decent Caribbean diving in an area that has become, perhaps, the "small critter capital" of the Caribbean. . . .

Bequia

Bequia Dive Adventures, July 2001, Winston Reed, Milford, CT. Vis: 40-500 ft. Water: 75 F. Dives logged: 164. I was the only diver — very personalized service. DM's Ron Williams and Larry Stone were helpful and friendly. Would dive with them

again. Nice reef dive. Lots of colorful small stuff and lots of lobsters.

Bequia Dive Adventures, August 2001, Mike Plante (mplante664@aol.com) Milwaukee, WI. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Not a big tourist destination although many yachts visit and some divers join you from the yachts. Often just our family (husband, wife and 14 yr. old son) were diving. Easy boat rides 15-20 min to dive sites that were in excellent conditions. Accommodations and meals range from reasonable to very reasonable. The dive shop will arrange for accommodations and taxi from airport on St. Vincent to ferry to Bequia. Nice beaches for lounging no shopping or night life. (Ph: 784-458-3826; e-mail Adventures@caribsurf.com; website www.BequiaDiveAdventures.com)

Carriacou

Silver Diving, July 2001, Winston Reed, Milford, CT. Vis: 40-50 ft. Water: 70 F. Dives logged: 164. Dive restrictions enforced: stay with group. Dive site was the Sisters (2 Rock). Depth: 25-100 ft. Currents: drift dive, easy, like flying over sea rods/plumes. Some coral-covered rocks. Sea fans went thru channel between Sisters. Moderate number of small fish. Saw one shark "sleeping." Nice dive. Pick up from our chartered mooring in small open skiff in 18 ft. Backrolls, very small wooden ladder. A little difficult to use in the chop. Max Nagel (owner) very pleasant and helpful. Carriacou Silver diving: fax/phone 809-443-7882. (Ph: 809-443-7882;

website <http://www.islandvillas.com/diving/silver1.htm>)

Palm Island

Grenadines Dive, Palm Island Beach Club, November 2001, Scott and Karen Fauth, Jacksonville, FL.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, calm. Glenroy Adams does an excellent job of making you feel comfortable above and below the water. Boats were not traditional dive boats, required backward roll entries. Locations were selected based on conditions and request of divers. Due to our experience, they often gave us our own boat and guide, usually Glenroy. Corals and marine life healthy. We were picked up daily at the dock at Palm Island Beach Resort (we were the only divers there). Sometimes other divers were picked up from their yachts and sailboats. Due to weight restrictions on the inter-island airway, we used rental gear, which was in excellent condition. To get to Palm Island, you fly to Barbados and then a private charter takes you to Union Island, where you transfer via a ten minute boat ride to Palm Island. Accommodations are in bungalows. It is a small, intimate resort that encompasses the entire island, inclusive of all meals, drinks, and many activities. The grounds are lush and planted with many palm trees. The freshwater pool has a waterfall and comfortable seating. Three meals per day along with afternoon tea. The quality and variety of food is very high. The bungalows are air conditioned, but the units were small and the rooms tended

toward the warm side. Ceiling fans also. Staff is friendly, polite and helpful. This is the way the Caribbean used to be. We enjoyed it very much. (Ph: 784-458-8138; e-mail GDive@GrenadinesDive.com; website www.grenadinesdive.com)

Grenadine Divers, Palm Island, December 2001, Tom Harvey, Hillsdale, NJ. Vis: 25-50 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 2000+. Palm Island is not a dive resort. It is a five star relaxation spa. All inclusive, top shelf, gourmet food, top shelf drinks and service. Tons of no-seeums, great rooms and views. Grenadine Divers are not professional at all. No diving if a cruise ship comes in. Booked in advance, expensive, very poor local coral. Tobago Cays just average. After complaining they took me to Marlo Is. — heavy current, very heavy. But what a site. It was truly amazing, I have not seen sponges — gorgonians like that in 30 years. Sharks: Six reefs — rays. 100 ft vis. The sponges were great. The reef totally pristine and full of fish and real color. Fast drift they do not take their regulars there. They get blown away. I had to toss my sausage and horn. I dived this four times. It's strange, an oasis in the middle of dead coral. The strong current is the reason. The resort is very expensive, also the diving. (Ph: 784-458-8138; e-mail GDive@GrenadinesDive.com; website www.grenadinesdive.com)

St. Vincent

Dive St. Vincent, Grand View Hotel, January 2002, Donald Hoft,

Holliston, MA. Logged; over 450. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 78 F. Cloudy/windy, generally calm on leeward side of island; little current. Dive own profile. Reefs/coral in good shape; none of the large fish species due to (food) fishing. What is unique is the proliferation of small fishes and sea life. It is no fiction they call St. V. the critter capital. Bill Tewes is a joy of a D.M. One of the best I've had. I would have missed many/most of the "little beauties" found by Bill. A macro delight, forget the wide angle lens. Lots of frog fish, flying gurnards, loads of different shrimp, morays of various types (some swimming free), scorpions, and schools of small fish, etc. A beautiful island with nice people but limited scope and accessibility. Few good restaurants (Allegro best) near Young Island pier and Dive St. V. shop. Stay at a hotel near the shop. Grand View is nice facility but out of the way requiring a car, offering expensive, modest meals and little charm or personal attention. (Ph: 784-457-4928; e-mail bill2s@DiveStVincent.com; website www.divestvincent.com)

Dive St. Vincent, Young Island Resort, April 2002, Dorothy McDonald, Strongsville, OH.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm no currents. The March issue about diving St. Vincent was right on target! It also prepared us to have the macro lens on the camera and there was plenty of opportunity to take pictures of small critters -- from frog fish to sea horses! Bill Tewes

and his staff were excellent -- finding all sorts of interesting critters and writing their names on a slate. Divers could go on their own or stay with Bill or one of his staff. We were never pushed to come up when Bill or others returned to the boat. All dives were over an hour long. On each dive we saw species new to us and some of the more common reef fish. Of special interest was a squid placing her eggs under a coral ledge, mating lettuce leaf sea slugs, white nosed pipe fish, three flying gurnards "walking" together across the sand, brotulas, mantis shrimp, numerous frog fish of varying colors, eight varieties of eels! Although Bill Tewes said it was unusual for April, the ocean was as flat as a pond; there was no current underwater either. This was some of the easiest and most fun diving ever. Young Island Resort was a treat! We bought a one week package over the Internet at half the going rate (check out luxurylink.com and their Best Shot Auctions. Also Bill Tewes says he could make arrangements at Young Island for about the same price we paid. Bill Tewes picked us up at the dock each day and when we weren't diving we had a comfortable cottage, delicious food, and a romantic environment (each cottage has an outdoor shower). There is a small, sandy beach, a salt water pool, and tennis courts. With only about 30 cottages it was quiet and relaxing. A boat is available at all hours to take you the 200 yards to and from St. Vincent.

Dive St. Vincent, Sunset Shores, June 2002, Jay & Karen Reiner, Cold Spring, NY. Sunset Shores is a comfortable place to stay. The room was kept clean, and they provided fresh beach towels. They need to revamp their menu or get a new chef. We ate dinner there and found the food on the dry side, and not well seasoned. Better meals are next door at Beachcombers or down the beach at Allegro. Lime is overpriced and under quality. We were on the breakfast plan, so we wound up with the same old menu every day. Considering that one of St. Vincent's major crops is bananas, there were no dishes that contained them (such as banana pancakes, banana bread). If you're into rum punch, see our man Eddie at the bar. They were the best in the neighborhood. Bill Tewes, the owner of Dive St. Vincent, is a bit of a living legend. He's always pointing out something you'd otherwise go right past, with his extendible pointer. After pointing it out, he'd write the name on his u/w magna-doodle slate. We saw a lot of stuff, to the point of practically running out of writing space on our slate! The dive operation, in general, was run pretty efficiently. The divemasters help you on with your tank, and switch things over between dives. For getting into and out of the water, you're pretty much on your own, though. The friendliest staff members were Dowie and Larry. DJ was a little cool to begin with, and warmed up as the days went on. We only had one day with Callie, which was fine as he was unfriendly. If you like nice long bottom time dives, and

enjoy getting real close to things (in a macro kind of way), then you'll have a great time. There are loads of little things to see on all the dives. We took an optional excursion (meaning extra charge) to the Falls of Baleine, a waterfall at the north end of the island. Before signing up we asked if the price included the two dives offered, and were told by Bill that it did. When it came time to settle the bill for our ten-day stay, they charged us for four dives (the two dives for both of us). When we questioned Vida, the office worker, she said that we went over our allotment of 24 dives, which was the package we booked. Upon questioning Bill, again, about whether the dives on the falls trip were included in the price, he said that they were. As it turns out, he meant that they were included in our dive package allotment. This is not what we meant. Obviously there was a misunderstanding, and Bill's handling of this was less than honorable. The four extra dives came out to \$180US. We offered that since there was a misunderstanding (him of us, and us of him) why don't we split the difference and we'll give him an extra \$90. He wanted nothing of it, and professed that this was the first time this ever happened in the 15 (or 20) years he's been there, blah blah blah. We wound up paying the \$180. Because of \$90, and his short sightedness, he lost any future business he'd ever get from us and we actually had been discussing when we would return. Bill's a good ole Texas boy, with a lot of tall stories. This was one story without a happy ending.

Dive St. Vincent, Mariners Hotel, July 2002, Jose Kirchner, Carmichael, CA. Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 20 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, calm. Dive operator Bill Tewes has been here 16+ years, knows it inside out. He and his friendly, long-term experienced crew are customer oriented, great critter finders, entirely used to video and photo divers with long u/w times. Competent, basic dive op with frills — smaller dive boats, one partially covered, two open, rinse, store and set up your gear, happy to make no commission air and land arrangements, even drive you to a restaurant, or the market on occasion. They cater to experienced divers with critter fixation. We saw several black brotula, golden hamlets, seahorses, colorful frogfish, pikeblennies, and many fish devotees are happy to document in their fish lists on every dive. Sites ranged from open water walls to bays and “Critter Corner,” a true muck-diving shallow flat with muck, eel and turtle grass, and a huge cast of characters. Land arrangements available range from the posh Young Island, to apartments, to several moderate hotels. Food tends to be expensive. Everything is imported. We stayed at Mariners Hotel — close to the dive op and several hotels with restaurants. Rooms were clean and 240 volts with Euro plugs, Internet TV. Some were noisy. Management was accommodating, can arrange drivers and land tours. Our stay was pleasant enough, with a room with a/c and a ceiling fan — but the restaurant was maddening. (Rates: \$125-175 for two, dependent on grade of room and

season.) Mariners restaurant was not always open and though food was frequently good, sometimes it was limited in offerings or poor. Service ranged from friendly and enjoyable to distant and glacially slow, with mixed-up orders. The cook was occasionally a no-show, and the replacement cook would have had trouble in a short-order house. Restaurants nearby included the excellent Lime’n Pub, moderate to expensive, with seafood, imported beef and friendly service. St. Vincent is serviced by LIAT and Caribbean Star from Barbados. Diving is good almost any time of year. (Though hurricanes are not common, the rare one can happen, usually later in the season.) Dive St. Vincent P.O. Box 864 St. Vincent, West Indies Main Office: 784-457-4928 Dive Shop: 784-457-4714, Fax: 784-457- 948 <http://www.divestvincent.com/> email: bill2s@DiveStVincent.com Mariners Hotel and Royal Harbour Restaurant Villa Bay ~ St. Vincent

Dive St. Vincent, July 2002, Alan and Barbara Fischl, Great Neck, NY. (logged 600+ dives each). We were pleasantly surprised by the quality of the diving off the lee side of St. Vincent, and impressed with Bill Tewes and his knowledge about the undersea life. While big critters, there were a lot of interesting little ones, and Bill and his staff were good at finding them and pointing them out. We stayed at the Young Island Resort where we got a significant discount from the high prices. The resort was luxurious and quite empty (which is why we could get such a deep discount!). Booking through Bill is the way to go to get a discount.

High cost of the diving — \$100 per person for a 2-tank dive.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad, the southernmost island in the Caribbean (it's actually south of Caracas) isn't for divers, but its smaller sister to the north is. . . . Diving from resort hotels along the southwest coast of Tobago is inferior to the diving to the north, where you'll find huge coral heads and good fish life, with mantas in the spring. Strong currents and choppy water make this a place for experienced divers. (In 1997 a woman lost contact with her dive boat and spent 27 hours in the water before washing ashore.) . . . Blue Waters Inn is the main dive hotel; it's situated on a nice beach about 15 minutes from all sites. . . . Tobago is covered with rainforest and has good hiking, friendly people, and serene and beautiful beaches. Birding there is excellent, but Trinidad's Asa Wright Nature Center (a small hotel with a view that's almost guaranteed to be filled with scores of tropical species) is unparalleled, as is the lagoon trip to see 2000 scarlet ibis fly in from Venezuela each night. . . .

Tobago

Proscuba, December 2001, Clif & Peta Lewis, North Carolina. First night in Trinidad was at a hole in the wall motel. Two hours sleep. Next time I won't be so cheap for a short overnight stay. Proscuba located in a little motel in Storbay. Friendly and

helpful. They we're willing to help us out with tanks and weight belts to get refamiliarized with our skills. We are novice divers with two yrs. experience. Marlon [a local divemaster] took us to Divers Dream first where we saw a huge turtle while observing lobster. Vis: easily 100', a mild current. Good dive briefing before entering the water. We did rollovers off a local uncovered boat. Dived with surface marker buoy that made us feel safe. Divemaster and two assistants, Ashton and Rachel kept an eye on everyone like a mother with her children. Ashton was assigned to us because we had the least experience. Reentry to the boat was done with a ladder. Fresh fruit and water provided. 2nd stop was Flying Reef. Much less current, large sponge and fan coral, and the usual tropical fish. Back at the shop, good gear rinse down with large barrels and unlimited water. Proscuba took us to Speyside via auto. For what little extra they charged for travel it was well worth it. Got to see the island for a whole lot less than a hired taxi. Hour scenic ride. Met Marlon and Smitty who was our boat captain and another one of those local boats. I knew we were going to be OK because painted on a hatch cover was "Trust God" Bookends, named I presume because the protruding rocks of the reef appeared like a pair of bookends standing out of the water. Here the water had about a 3' chop, vis was about 80-100'. Topography was a little different, saw some large barracuda and other large game fish. Kelston Drain, home of the famous largest brain coral I read about. When I saw this huge thing finally appear out of the distance I