

was in awe. Their attitude on safety was very important. Well-informed briefings. They also believe in small groups. Our dives were 8-9 divers. They also switched out tanks on all our dives. (Ph: 868 639-7424; e-mail [proscuba@tsst.net.tt](mailto:proscuba@tsst.net.tt))

### TURKS AND CAICOS

#### Grand Turk

These islands, situated south of the Bahamas and north of the Virgins, feature awesome walls and clear water. . . . South Caicos wall, off Cockburn Harbor, has a stone arch at 50', a lip as sharp as a knife, and a breathtaking vertical face. . . . Provo, the glitzy island, has spectacular beaches, but it's at least an hour's boat ride to the better diving of South or West Caicos. Grand Turk, on the other hand, is a funky, laid-back island that has a wall right offshore. Salt Cay has a guest house and decent diving; West and North Caicos have no dive facilities . . . Bring a long-sleeved shirt during the winter; it can get cool in the evenings. . . . The flight to Provo from Miami is a little over an hour. . . .

**Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, July 2001, Roger Beuster, Rancho Mirage, CA.** Vis: 60-80 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Logged dives: 100+. Dive restrictions enforced: 100' max. Very limited night life. Laid back island, good place for peaceful relaxation. Diving was good; boat rides were very short — great to get in AM dives and relax thru the

day. Osprey Beach Hotel still under remodel. This was ok, but proprietor did not try to make us feel welcome. Mitch Rolling: Entertaining, informative and easy to dive with. (Ph: 649-946-2432; e-mail [info@grandturkscuba.com](mailto:info@grandturkscuba.com); website [www.grandturkscuba.com](http://www.grandturkscuba.com))

**Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach, February 2002, William Edwards, Placerville, CA.** Dives logged: 214. Dive restrictions enforced: return with 500 lbs. The staff at Blue Water Divers were friendly, helpful, knowledgeable and they let us dive our own profile. The only requirement was that we return to the surface with 500 lbs. of air. We saw an abundance of corals and tropical fish, plus two of the largest octopus any of us had ever seen. All dive sites were within fifteen to twenty minutes of the boat dock. We were picked up in front of our hotel every morning and dropped off on our beach in the afternoon. They only had one guy to dive and be boat operator so the dive boat was left unattended while we were diving. The dive operation's owner, Mitch, also entertained us one night at the Osprey Beach Hotel where we stayed. The hotel is old and in need of some serious repairs. Although clean, these were not first class accommodations. However, the staff was friendly and the food was good and they did have the nicest beach.

**Blue Water Divers, Osprey Beach, August 2002, Anthony Dresden, Arlington, VA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F,

calm, choppy. Tenth dive trip to Grand Turk and each time I have used Blue Water Divers. For four days, I was the only diver on the boat and appreciated all the personal attention. I dove with Mitch Rollings “ the owner and operator of Blue Water who is closing in on 7,000 dives off Grand Turk “ and divemasters Carl, Conchy, and Johnny. I cannot say enough about the service, enthusiasm and professionalism displayed by the entire BWD staff. Safe operation. They work hard to make every dive memorable and enjoyable and to find both the large and small stuff. Although there has been a dearth of mantas over the past few summers, there were more turtles than I can remember. The reefs remain extremely healthy with a good variety of tropicals, great coral and invertebrates. I followed Jenny Smith and her wonderful, helpful staff from the Salt Raker over to the refurbished Osprey Beach, which is great. She performed small miracles transforming the dilapidated Kittina, a.k.a. the Sitting Pretty into a lovely inn. Good breakfasts and lunches at the Courtyard Café across the road and dinner is pool side at Osprey Beach. A new food and beverage manager, Allan from British Columbia, produces everything from delicious tapas to amazing full meals from a galley kitchen behind the bar. He is as talented as witty and amusing. There is also a barbecue two nights a week and don't miss Anna Mae's key lime pie. Grand Turk is still the sleepy and friendly island. However, there is serious talk about bringing in cruise ships. Hopefully common sense will

prevail and they will shelve this shortsighted plan.

**Oasis Divers, Island House, July 2002, Richard Powers, Haslett, MI.**

Experience: 25 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, choppy, no currents. Dale at Oasis Divers very helpful in arranging trip and recommending Sky King — within an hour of on-time — and hotel. Diving very good. DM Paul was courteous and helpful but did not point out much. Small boats comfortable for six, but there were up to ten divers some days and it took ten minutes to get them all in the water. Walk to front of boat, put on equipment, back roll into water, wait for group, thirty minute tour of wall, use up rest of air around boat, five minute safety stop, hand up equipment, climb up ladder on back of boat. Patch reefs and wall next to boat anchorage were interesting. Wall only 300 yards offshore and boat rides only 5-10 minutes. Shortest dive was 58 minutes. Longest was 72. Had a short fill on the 58 minute dive, told DM, always 3000 psi thereafter. Fish life good but not as good as Cozumel (less fish and smaller). Many small tame Nassau grouper get in your face. Turtles on every dive, lots of tropicals. Many shrimp, crabs, flamingo tongues, and feather dusters. The Island House is a great place. Suites are spacious and clean. Always a breeze — never used the a/c. Colin, the owner, gives a tour of the island upon arrival. The room comes with a vehicle. We had an older S-10 pickup. Throw gear in the back and five minutes to dive shop. Nice to drive

around the island in the afternoon to see the wild horses, burros, cattle, and the bird life. Adequate groceries except meat, fish, and fresh fruits and vegetables, which are flown in only on Wednesday. Take your own coffee if you want good coffee. Not much to do except dive and relax. The manager of the museum is an overbearing Englishman. The museum is interesting but avoid his tour. Islanders very friendly. The best meals were at the Salt Raker Inn and The Regal Beagal (fried fish and cracked conch good and inexpensive). (Ph: 800-892-3995 or 649-946-1128; e-mail [oasisdiv@tcitway.tc](mailto:oasisdiv@tcitway.tc); website [www.oasisdivers.com](http://www.oasisdivers.com))

**Oasis Divers, Turk's Head Inn, November 2001, Dr. John R. Ware, Gaithersburg, MD.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, choppy surge. Day temps were cool, windy and overcast and water was cloudy and rough. Vis was poor most days, nothing big in the water and shore diving was impossible. Turk's Head Inn still in rehab. No hot water for showers, room by dining room was very noisy -- staff gathered near door to talk between serving meals. Service was indifferent and slow but food was excellent though expensive. Managers very solicitous when around. Rinse bucket on Carolina skiffs not great -- cramped even with four divers. Rough water conditions. Surf entries to boat a little dicey.

**Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, February 2002, Richard J. Troberman (tmanlaw@aol.com) Seattle, WA.** Experience: 101-250

dives. Vis: 50 to 200 Feet. Water: 75 to 76 F, choppy. Better diving than the Caymans. The wall is just a few hundred yards offshore and begins at 30-50 feet, so there is excellent shallow diving along the top. The visibility and number and variety of fish, are awesome. Likewise, the colors of the corals, gorgonians, and sponges are magnificent. The Osprey Beach Hotel (recently renovated) is right on the beach, and provides the best accommodations. The Arawak is also nice, but is isolated on the South end of the island. Don't be fooled by the photographs of the hotels on the dive operators' websites. Those are, for the most part, old photos, taken under ideal conditions, which do not accurately represent the size or current condition of the hotels. Everything seemed like it was in 3/4 scale compared with the photographs on the websites. The food in Grand Turk also leaves much to be desired, although good breakfasts and lunches at the Courtyard (affiliated with the Osprey Beach Hotel). The Saltraker, Turks Head, and the Waters Edge all serve dinner, but the quality and service was mediocre. Oasis Divers is a competent operation. Like most of the dive operators, they use 24 foot Carolina skiffs for the short ride to the dive sites. They leave from the beach directly in front of their shop. Oasis comes back to the beach for the surface intervals. They were relaxed, and let you do your own thing once they knew you were competent. Briefings could have been more thorough, but it was a well-run operation. Some divers expected

warmer temperatures and weren't adequately protected, and complained of being cold. However, a full 3mm suit, with a hood, provided ample warmth.

**Oasis Divers, Osprey Beach Hotel, March 2002, Kevin Hopper** ([hopperlaw@aol.com](mailto:hopperlaw@aol.com)) **Cincinnati, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 Feet. Water: 76 to 77 F, calm choppy. We had the owner as our captain and dive master. On time, kept gear on board and rinsed it after the day of diving. Sat on back of boat and they brought gear to you. Changed gear between dives. Found whales coming back from dive and we went whale watching as well on that trip. Usually that is a separate trip which we did on two afternoons. Hotel had deferred maintenance — was livable. Had refrig and stove and microwave that could be used if one tired of the three restaurants on the island. Don't go with meal plan to be locked into the food at the hotel. Food is pricey on the island \$30-35 USD for one for fish dinner with one drink. We flew on Lynx Air from Ft. Lauderdale to Grand Turk. On time, three hours, with a short stop in the Exumas in the Bahamas for fuel and to drop off passengers. Stretched our legs as well. Plane seats 19 but is fast turboprop. Had to overnight in Lauderdale to make 8AM plane.

**Oasis Divers, Aqua House Condominium, March 2002, Peter Belden, Stanford, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 150 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm no currents. We snorkled twice with humpback whales including a

mother and calf. which were 30 feet from us. We heard whales singing on multiple dives. Many opportunities to see jawfish and flamingo tongues as well. They handle rinse and store your gear. Great coral, lots of black coral, good number of fish, although few large fish. Dale from Oasis is friendly and accommodating. Dive sites five minutes from shore. Two morning boat dives, interval on shore. Afternoon to relax. The Aqua House condos have recently been renovated and are gorgeous, right on the beach and feature hardwood floors, kitchen, leather couches, TV with cable and DVD player with DVDs, two bicycles, washer dryer and AC. 10 min walk from dive shop but they will pick you up by boat or truck for the dives. Island is tiny, quiet, no distractions other than diving and relaxation. Only four restaurants to choose from but there all in a small area in walking distance along with the dive shops.

**Sea Eye Diving, Turks Head Inn, August 2001, Doug Welsch** ([winery@fennvalley.com](mailto:winery@fennvalley.com)) **Fennville, MI.** Vis: 60-200 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Logged dives: 1400+. Dive restrictions enforced: come back alive. Turks Head Inn is classic Caribbean historic mansion or govt. residence that has been refurbished. Not luxury, but very comfortable — like one would imagine the Caribbean to be 30 years ago. Did the full meal plan and they were very accommodating — staying open late for late lunch or dinner after dives, fixing some foods the way I like when item is not on menu. By the end of the week, the staff and my family

were like old friends. This is the friendliest island that I have ever experienced. Diving is all boat dives. Very accommodating. Excellent macro! (Ph/fax: (649) 946-1407; e-mail ci@tcitway.tc; website [www.reefnet.on.ca/grandturk](http://www.reefnet.on.ca/grandturk))

### **Sea Eye Diving, Turks Head Inn, October/November**

**2001, Susan Sampson**

([susanraesampson@hotmail.com](mailto:susanraesampson@hotmail.com))

**Renton, WA.** Vis: varied, but usually around 100'. Temp: 80's. Logged dives: 100. Sea Eye handled all equipment. 24' Sea Ray Carolina Skiff with a shade canopy, no head. A rinse bucket for cameras on request. Nitrox available. Bring your own water. Six divers and one Captain/divemaster per boat. The usual profile was 70', 60 minutes for the first dive, 40-50' for 60 to 70 minutes, second dive, and return to the boat with 500 psi, but rules were not harshly enforced. The reef was generally healthy with bleaching of some small coral heads and some small areas of algae. Critters included turtles, sand sharks, huge friendly groupers, black margate, sting rays, and horse-eyed jacks among the larger fauna, and schooling fish, octopi, batfish, frog fish, lizard fish, scorpion fish, burr fish, and seahorses, among the smaller. Turk's Head Inn, very comfortable, diver friendly, allowing gear to hang on the balconies or clotheslines and providing a clear water tub for dunking gear close to the front door. Took a calculated risk traveling during hurricane season. Because the low season prices were good and the diving was terrific.

Direct flight out of Ft. Lauderdale on Lynx Airlines flying a Metro twin-engine, turboprop with only six passengers. They allowed 65 pounds of luggage per passenger (really 70) and used scales that seemed pretty forgiving. They charge \$2/pound for excess, but the real risk is having the luggage set aside in favor of the mail the plane carries. The island rises barely above sea level, extending only 10 by 7 miles or so, with the middle cut out by large salt ponds, vegetated by coconut palms, mahogany trees, and tall cacti. Cars drove on the left side of the street, British style, honking at intersections and dodging bicyclists, chickens and herds of up to 10 horses wandering freely. Herons, pelicans, and plovers worked the salt ponds, roosters crowed, dogs howled, and lizards chirped from their perches on rock walls and in courtyard trees. Buildings were painted bright colors but were weathered, and many were empty, with yards overgrown by shrubs. Our dive-master was Allgrove "Smitty" Smith, who is the kind of diver legends are made of. Twice I saw him grip four filled tanks and carry them across the beach and load them in the boat. His buoyancy was so very perfect that he didn't use a BC. For convenience, he might tuck a few rocks in his pocket or hold a huge conch shell. And he used air so efficiently that he didn't change tanks between dives. The weather turned stormy shortly after our arrival. Visibility generally was excellent, but was poor, 35', on one dive, due to drifting sand; and once, the wind churned up waves while we were

below so that we shucked our gear and handed it onto the boat so we could climb aboard less awkwardly. The lee side of the island is lined by a shallow fringe reef leading to a wall that plunges into the abyss. The reef is populated by soft corals, gorgonians, sponges, plenty of the flamingo tongues so popular with photographers, all the usual tropical fish like parrots, squirrels, wrasses and jacks, bigger fish like margate and horse-eyed jacks, treats to see like rays and turtles, and novelties to search for like sea horses, frog fish, scorpion fish, lizard fish, burr fish and bat fish. Perhaps several acres were paved with stones that had served as ballast for the salt ships that used to call at Grand Turk. "The Pits" is littered with junk like car parts, sunken wooden pallets, charcoal from barbecues, and concrete masonry units. It's a mess, and sea creatures love it. A huge ray flapped his great wings and settled into the sand. One octopus had grabbed a bottle and dragged it into his concrete block hiding place; another hid between the planks of the sunken pallet. "Watch for the batfish," Smitty had said, "It looks like a plucked Cornish game hen." He found the batfish, grayish, flattish, with splayed fins that looked for all the world like a plucked bird flatten like road-kill, but then it stood on its fins and walked along the ocean floor. We spent surface intervals on the shore sipping punch or hot chocolate and eating cookies, or beach combing for empty shells. When waves pounded the beach across the street from the dive shop, Sea Eye

loaded us into the back of a pickup truck and drove us several miles to the south to a calmer bay to embark. Sea-Eye provided Nitrox, but their tester was giving erratic readings, so we relied upon our own and found that the load was pretty light, around 27%. We left our equipment on board our skiff over night without problems, and Sea-Eye provided a not so clean dunk tank and clothesline for divers who wanted to leave their skins over night. "You get cooties from that," one of the staff laughed. Turk's Head Inn, a British mansion from the 1840s that has been revamped into an 8-room hotel with the feeling of a bed-and-breakfast, with a hallway converted to a small bar, and a nice dining room added on. We were greeted with the offering of a rum punch so strong that it was still strong after the ice melted. Package included our room (with its antique 4-poster canopied bed and mahogany Chippendale furniture, plus air conditioner and TV) and three meals per day. Side dishes, coffee, soda pop, or even water, were extra and pricey. The dining room ran well when Doris or the regular waitress, Lynn, was on duty, but on their day off, the diners forgot about getting their own orders, and after long waits, simply started vying for the next dish coming out of the kitchen. Food was good. Besides the steak and lobster, the menu included fish and chips, curry, chicken, pork and fish dishes, and pizza. Sides included red beans and rice. The airstrip here runs across the narrow width of the island to face the trade winds. The Salinas in the middle

of the island don't leave room for growth. The harbor was deep enough for salt ships, but they no longer call, and even if the cruise ships were to call here, there is no commerce to greet them. The island is small, but it is a little treasure. The tired-looking ex-pat in the bar (from Canada) told me that he was the local prosecutor, and he had put any bad guy who would bother a tourist in jail. The dive industry here treats the reef respectfully; anchoring on buoys and assuring that the weighted ascent lines don't pound on the reef. There is no industry creating runoff that harms the reef.

**Sea Eye Diving, Turks Head Hotel, February 2002, R. A. Speir (bobfmdc@yahoo.com) Falls Church, VA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 76 to 78 F, choppy no currents. One of our best trips. My wife, with only 30-40 dives, was tutored by dive guide (Smitty) and her air consumption and technique improved greatly. He also kept his eye closely on other divers who were new. Smitty and Lindsey act as guides rather than supervisors or detached observers. We could dive our own profile, or stay with the guides, who knew where the good stuff was. Night dive off the "Library" wall was spectacular -- blooming coral, small critters, friendly groupers, and, when the lights were out much bioluminescence. Two days, strong winds came up, thereby precluding us from the northern sites, so Sea Eye trucked us down to the southern part of the island and calmer water. When you were on the wall you could hear the whale

songs. Turks Head Hotel is a grand old 1850s house with eight rentable rooms, a big courtyard with tables, a friendly small bar and probably the best restaurant on the island. They have a guy playing guitar Friday night; otherwise, plan on watching a lot of sunsets and bright stars. We arranged our dive package through them and got a good price. Staff and management were very friendly and helpful. Upper floor rooms were probably a bit quieter, but it really depends on who is above you if you are downstairs. This is a 150-year old house with thin floors. Conch fritters are pounded out and cooked in a light tempura batter. Conch chowder at the "Court Yard Café" is excellent for lunch (\$7.50 for a large bowl). I doubt that there were more than 50 divers on the entire island. Several times we went out with four people and a guide/boat operator. Only three functional restaurants open in the area where the tourists primarily stay and two more (the Regal Beagle and Moogie Pizza down the road in a residential district). Turks Head Hotel provided a continental breakfast with the room, but lunch -- soup and salad or sandwich with a beer or two run \$35-40 for two. Dinner entrees mostly are in the \$15-\$25 range and pretty much ala carte, so plan on another \$50-\$60, depending on how much you drink. Beers are \$4 to \$5 (12 oz.) and mixed drinks are \$5 -- \$8. There are a few places to buy munchies to defray some of this cost, but stock is scarce and costs are high (10oz dry roasted peanuts \$5). Hit the duty-free store if you

drink the hard stuff. Many turtles and a few encounters with bottlenosed dolphins underwater. Grouper 15-30 lb.

**Sea Eye Diving, Osprey Beach Hotel, February 2002, Mark & Lynn Thorne (thorne@mindspring.com), Raleigh, NC.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 F, calm. The entire Sea-Eye crew consisting of Connie, Cecil, Mackie, Grumps, and others bent over backwards to meet our needs. Osprey Beach Hotel gets nicer each year. This year a lot has been done to upgrade the rooms with new paint, furnishings, etc. Most rooms have refrigerators, TV, and private bathrooms. Some rooms have a small kitchenette. The place is quiet and peaceful except for roosters awakening you in the early morning. Dining options within walking distance are Water's Edge, and Turk's Head. There are a few other places such as Reagle Beagle but food consists primarily of fried options. Our large diving group of 15 used Sea-Eye Diver's large 40-50 foot boat. The boat is nice with a head, rinse tanks, camera tanks and sun deck. The typical profile is two dives per day with the afternoon off. Afternoon and night dives are easily arranged. The smaller groups used the 20 foot Carolina skiffs, which have easy entry and exit into the water. All diving is usually on flat seas without current with fantastic visibility. In early February you hear the eerie and magical sounds of the hump back whales coming from the abyss. Whale watching, dolphin and sting ray side trips are available.

**Sea Eye Diving, Turks Head Inn, May 2002, Pat McGuire, Ladue, MO.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 81 F, choppy. The Turks Head Inn was a former governor's mansion. There is a new manager who is service oriented. The food is the best on the island, but is expensive if ordered ala carte. The meal plan \$40 US/day is a great deal. We had lobster for dinner most nights! The hotel service was great. After our night dive we were going to return after the kitchen was closed so Klaus(the manager) kept the kitchen open and they gave us a glass of wine, told us to shower while they prepared our meals. Sea Eye never checked our C cards, there was no oxygen on the boats, and the boats were left unattended while we dove with the divemaster who also served as boat captain. He was good at finding small things. We saw several seahorses. Dives were over an hour. The coral is beautiful and healthy, large schools of fish, no sharks. The island is interesting, many abandoned buildings, no tourist spots, no souvenir shops. I recommend the Turks and Caicos museum; meet the curator who is a very interesting guy.

**Sea Eye Diving, Arawak Inn, July 2002, Ollie McClung, Birmingham, AL.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives logged: 200 +/- . Dive restrictions enforced: come up with some air left. No hassle — dive pretty much on your own. Pretty good pre dive briefings. Short rides to dive sites, divemasters (one per boat in water) helpful. Visibility less than all reports



I have seen — maybe season? We chose Arawak Inn for kitchen facilities (took food) as eating out anywhere is expensive. (Rooms like small condo units — nice. Quiet, no night life.

**Sea Eye Diving, Arawak Inn, August 2002, Ron & Sherry Smith,**

**Levittown, PA.** Vis: 60-90 ft. Water: 80-86 F. Dives accrued: 146. The Inn was at the South end of the island, 2 miles from town. Very relaxed nothing else around. Secluded beaches, nice pool next to beach, bar and restaurant on beach (great for watching sunsets). Dive operation great, they pick you up by boat in morning and return in afternoon. Divemasters show you lots of stuff. \$8/ person cab ride one way to town. Owner has plans for development here, which will ruin the ambiance of this secluded area.

### **Providenciales**

**Beaches Turks and Caicos, October 2001, Dave Helms (Scubadav@jorsm.com) Highland, IN.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 70 to 80 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm choppy. Not a dive resort, though the diving operation was taken very seriously. The manager discussed what our group wanted and did his best to accommodate us. They take their medical waiver form too seriously, though, and if you answer “yes” to any question, you had better have a letter from your physician saying you can dive. The diving schedule only allows two dives per day, so you had to choose either morning or afternoon dives. You could not do both. Night dives could be purchased if enough

people were interested, but there is no provision for shore diving. During rougher weather, they will bus you to the Caribbean side of the island, which tended to be calmer. The dive boats were roomy Newton 36 and 46 footers, which were very well set up for up to 30 divers. The boats had ample gear storage areas, dry areas, and ample space topside. They assigned us to the same boat all week. Buddy teams could dive separately from the divemaster and follow their computers. The boat procedures were excellent with comprehensive briefings and roll calls before and after each dive. Most dive sites had moorings. The dive sites were generally excellent and varied from deep walls to relatively shallow patch reefs. The coral was lush and healthy, and fish life was surprisingly good. Big critters such as sharks, turtles, and rays were plentiful especially on the Caribbean side of the island. The ultra all-inclusive concept will spoil you. All food and booze are free. The grounds are spotless and the rooms were very nice. Five pools, nine restaurants, a gym, and quite a few bars all on-site. And, of course, a beach. There is a dress code for most restaurants. Service and staff attitude were great. No provision for gear storage. Camera rinse tanks on the boat were coolers full of water that were too small for large, multi-strobe setups. (Ph: 888-SANDALS or 305-284-1300; e-mail [info@beaches.com](mailto:info@beaches.com); website [www.beaches.com](http://www.beaches.com))

**Big Blue Unlimited, Parrot Cay, December 2001, Erwin P. Staller**

**(staller@vdot.net) Huntington, NY.**

Parrot Cay is a Caribbean resort with an Asian influence. They have excellent food, a great spa and personnel who could not do enough for their guests. Parrot Cay provided transportation to Provo each day so that I might be able to dive with Big Blue Unlimited ([www.bigblue.tc](http://www.bigblue.tc) - )which has acquired a new catamaran that is very spacious, fast and they only take out a limited number of divers. They run an excellent operation. (Ph: 649-946-5034; e-mail [bigblue@tcway.tc](mailto:bigblue@tcway.tc); website <http://www.bigblue.tc/welcome.htm>)

**Caicos Adventures, The Sands, December 2001, Ron Chau, Bayside, NY.**

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Caicos Adventures was top notch. Only restriction was be back on the boat with 500 psi. New dive boat was fantastic. Trips to West Caicos 30 minutes, French Cay 45 minutes. Healthy reefs, but less fish life than expected. Nice wall dives start around 60 feet. (Ph:/fax 649-941-3346 ; e-mail [divucrzy@tcway.tc](mailto:divucrzy@tcway.tc); website [www.caicosadventures.tc](http://www.caicosadventures.tc))

**Caicos Adventures, Comfort Suites, March 2002, Susan Warhus**

([swarhus@aol.com](mailto:swarhus@aol.com)) **Scottsdale, AZ.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 90 Feet. Water: 75 to 77 F, calm.

"Fifi" is a hands-on, meticulous perfectionist that makes sure the dive operations runs well. The boat is new and the most comfortable and beautiful of any dive boat we have been on. Submarine sandwiches for lunch are great. Dive staff is caring and knowl-

edgeable. Beautiful Caribbean diving with lush coral reefs and marine life. Comfort Suites: (barely) adequate low budget accommodations. Pitiful continental breakfast, marginal A/C, poor plumbing had to have toilet plunged, yellow water coming from shower head! Local taxi drivers hang out at the bar between their fares.

**Caicos Adventures, Sands at Grace Bay, June 2002, James W. Roby**

([eroby@sonet.net](mailto:eroby@sonet.net)) **Haleyville, AL.**

Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dive restrictions enforced: computer profile. Third trip with Caicos Adventures. Fifi and Caicos Adventures are "tops." Serious, but fun and customer oriented. Reef sharks, hammerheads, eagle rays are legitimately expected at West Caicos. Sands at Grace Bay is a lovely, well-managed property. Nice IGA.

**Caicos Adventures, The Sands, July 2002, Michael Kamens,**

**Wintersville, OH.** Experience: 101-

250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, choppy. I had read the previous *Chapbook* reviews on Fifi and Caicos Adventures and was expecting a one of a kind dive trip. Unfortunately a lot has changed. While I expected small groups at pristine sites and superior customer service, I was discouraged to end up on a boat with close to 30 divers making for a typical cattle boat experience. The boat was chaotic, the diving crowded and besides one fantastic divemaster (Canard), the service was poor. The fish life was not quite what was advertised either. We saw a couple reef sharks and two

beautiful eagle rays, but there was little activity on the reefs and the vis was at best 75 feet. The walls seemed healthy but not void of damage and were monotone in their appearance. As advertised we dove exclusively off West Caicos and French Cay. On our last day, the boat was reduced to eight divers (as I expected for the whole trip) and while the sites were not earth shattering, at least we could enjoy the dives without seeing more humans than fish. My guess is that success has changed Caicos Adventures into another run of the mill dive operation and that is a shame. The Sands was fantastic. The facilities were clean and the staff attentive and pleasant. They have a gorgeous pool and landscaped grounds that made for relaxing afternoons. They offer free Hobey cats and non-motorized water sport equipment and the beach was breathtaking.

**Caicos Adventures, July 2002, Roger & Donna Soape, Houston, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 81 to 82 F, choppy. Great dive operation though boat rides to West Caicos and French Cay are 30 to 45 minutes. Large dive boat makes the ride comfortable — marine head, rinse showers, fresh water and lemonade, oxygen. Sometimes more divers than we prefer (15+) but Caicos Adventures handled them well; we did not notice the crowd once we were in the water. Great corals and some walls rival Little Cayman. Sharks and eagle rays on most dives. Lots of fish life, large and small. Good vis although

reduced from by winds some days. Only two dives a day except one day each week when Caicos Adventures dives three dives. Lunches served on board were adequate. We rented a house on Provo's beautiful beach. Good restaurants — casual Shark Bite and BBQ night at the Tiki Hut. Fancy French/Caribbean cuisine at other restaurants. Everything's expensive.

**Caicos Adventures, Ocean Club West, August 2002, Robin Katz, Chesapeake, VA.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 75-78 F. Dives accrued: 150. Caicos Adventures and Fifi is a great dive operation. Fifi gives detailed pre-dive information. His boat is awesome and we went to sites most operators don't visit! The crew is helpful and the diving is great! Ocean Club West is the newer of the two properties. There is a van to transport you to the restaurants at Ocean Club. The property is beautiful, the beach is wonderful and the accommodations were clean. There are excellent restaurants!

**Dive Provo, The Sands at Grace Bay, July 2002, Ernie Feleppa, Rye, NY.** Dives accrued: 1200. Vis: 80-120'. Water: 82 F. Guided if wanted, independent if wanted, 80' recommended but not "enforced," restrictions were commonsense, e.g., safety stop, slow ascent, don't push tables or computers, etc. Alan, the co-owner, was fantastic as were his crews. Runs to dive sites were long by Bonaire standards, but worth the time, and the boats and crew made the trips comfortable and pleasant. Our group was big — 26 divers — and we split

between two boats. We chose not to go to the more distant sites such as French Cay and West Caicos and stuck to Northwest Point, Grace Bay and Pine Cay, and had a blast. Dive sites were healthy — probably because development on land is minimal.

Visibility and water conditions were great, and the weather was absolutely superb. Every dive offered an optional guided tour, and perhaps a half of each boat load chose to be guided; the rest did their own thing. Shore diving is not done in Provo, but the snorkeling at Smith's Reef and Coral Gardens is fantastic. The Sands Resort was terrific with restaurant and bar by the beach. The beach unbelievable. I am amazed by its whiteness and powdery fineness. Provo has some great restaurants, e.g., Magnolia, Caicos Café, Coco Bistro, etc., and Boogaloo's on the beach past Blue Hills is a must for local conch.

Nonstop flight from JFK. (Ph: 800-234-7768 or 649-946-5029; e-mail [diving@diveprovo.com](mailto:diving@diveprovo.com); website [www.diveprovo.com](http://www.diveprovo.com))

**Flamingo Divers, The Sands Resort, December 2001, John Keith**

([jkeith@econ.usu.edu](mailto:jkeith@econ.usu.edu)) Logan, UT. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 100 Feet. Water: 27 to 28 Celsius, calm choppy. Flamingo Divers provided an excellent experience for beginning divers and advanced. 5-8 divers on each trip. The staff was pleasant and knowledgeable about the dives and the area. They avoided sites where other boats were. Departures were early. Dove the Northwest Point and several sites along West Caicos.

We saw some of the best corals I have seen in the Western Hemisphere. It's a long ride (45 minutes) to the sites and when the sea is rough, it's not the most pleasant experience. But the diving was worth it. (Ph: 800-204-9282; phone/fax 649-946-4193; e-mail [Flamingo@Provo.net](mailto:Flamingo@Provo.net); website [www.provo.net/flamingo](http://www.provo.net/flamingo))

**Flamingo Divers, August 2002, Jeffrey Greene** ([dadgreene@hotmail.com](mailto:dadgreene@hotmail.com))

**Merion Station, PA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, no currents. The operation allows only ten divers on the boat but I dove one day with one other diver, another day with three, one day with five. I entered the water first dove directly to the bottom to wait for the others. The dive masters were experienced (no kids!). They pointed out fish and named any animal you pointed to. One of the best experiences I have had.

**O2 Technical Divers, December 2001, Neal B. Milch, Woodmere, NY.** Vis: 75-125 Ft. Water: 79 F. Dives logged: 91. I took a Diver Propulsion Vehicle 1 day cert. course with John Garvin's O2 Tech. John is very personable and professional, and this course, taught on Apollo scooters, quite interesting. We "chased" five Carib reef sharks and covered 4X normal distance. O2 Tech is excellent for advanced diving instruction. (website [www.o2technicaldiving.com](http://www.o2technicaldiving.com))

**Provo Turtle Divers, Ocean Club, August 2001, Kathleen O'Connor** ([koconnor@vb.gov](mailto:koconnor@vb.gov)), Va. Beach, VA. Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 85 F. Dives

logged: 216. Dive restrictions: flexible. Ocean Club is on the gorgeous beach at Grace Bay. It has every amenity and a great restaurant — the Gecko Grille. The restaurant at the Provo Golf Club (across the street) was also great. Provo Turtle Divers had very experienced staff and clientele. We went to the best sites at NW Point and we were given as much/or as little supervision and assistance as we desired. Saw numerous, huge schools of tropicals, three sharks during six days of diving. “Eagle’s Nest” was a spectacular wall dive — great for photography. (Ph: 800-833-1341 or 649-946-4232; e-mail [ProvoTurtleDivers@Provo.net](mailto:ProvoTurtleDivers@Provo.net); website [www.provoturtledivers.com](http://www.provoturtledivers.com))

**Provo Turtle Divers, Caicos Adventures/Beaches, August 2001, Andy Murro ([amurro@optonline.com](mailto:amurro@optonline.com))**  
**Bay Shore, NY.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm no currents. Beaches is a beautiful and large resort with great restaurants and food, nightly entertainment, family fun. Service was unimpressive, at times terrible unless you tipped up front and told them there was more coming. Then they treated you like kings. Check-out in pool a must and a joke. Did a night dive with them, everyone meets under boat, everyone meets at bottom, everyone meets when divemaster wants to check your pressure. Everyone banging into one another. Thank God everyone had to be out in 30 minutes, no matter what your air supply. I dove two-tank dives with Turtle Divers. A professional organi-

zation. Customized 42 ft. boat was comfortable and never crowded. Boat captain, Rock, and divemasters were attentive, friendly, and informative. Rico was a great divemaster, while their female divemaster was less attentive and less friendly. They kept an eye on you until they were comfortable with your skills, without ruining the dives of those who were experienced, or diving computers, who could dive their own profile. Return with 500 psi, and don’t go under 110 feet. All wall dives. The coral was in great shape, with abundant marine life, though less than Grand Cayman. Several reef sharks, medium and large turtles, sting rays, barracuda. Elvis, the 4.5 foot barracuda hung out under our boat for three dives. Went to West Caicos with Caicos Adventures for a two-tank trip. A long 1.5 hour choppy ride out and back on a well equipped 32 foot dive boat. Eight divers, plenty of room on the boat. Boat captain and Dive master were friendly, attentive. First dive was a leisurely drift dive at 80 to 40 feet lasting almost 60 minutes. The dive master stayed in as long as you had 500 psi, the boat following above. Second dive was a wall dive, 80 to 60 feet depth. Beautiful and worth the trip.

**Provo Turtle Divers, Sandals/Beaches, December 2001, Richard Jones, Murrysville, PA.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 82 F. Dives logged: 1000+. The Sandals Resort is top flight rooms, food service, facilities are all top of the line. The diving is all inclusive. While good for beginners,

the Sandals operation will drive an experienced diver nuts. Dives are led and bottom time limited to 30 minutes. So I paid to go out with Art Pickering's Turtle Divers. Service was very good, accommodation to experience levels was very good and boat loads were 6-12. Across the dock on Beaches boat the load was 17-30, you get what you pay for. Provo has some of the healthiest coral I've seen in years and fish life was very good. The walls at French Caye and Southwest Caicos are wonderful. I've seen better walls, better fish, better large animals, but they have very good levels of all here.

## Salt Cay

**Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, November 2001, Scott Burrows (scottyb@texas.net) Spicewood, TX.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm no currents. Salt Cay is definitely a throw back in time, from the culture to the landscape. By the end of a week, you actually blend in with the locals.

Porter, at the Island Thyme Bistro, provides a very casual and informal environment, yet serves up creative and interesting meals with a lot of local flavor. Ms. Pat's Place is like going to your favorite aunts or grandmother's home to eat the meal you had requested. The steamed snapper in chili sauce over grits for breakfast, blew us away. The Tradewinds are very nicely done with everything you may need in a kitchen. Everything is very functional and is 100 yards from the dive shop. The screened porches are great for all your

gear, however we had little to no bugs and spent most of our leisure time on the shoreside deck. We packed some dry groceries and canned food in a trunk and prepared a few lunches and breakfast in the room. Between suspicious customs agents and extra cost for inter-island air, next time I will take them up on their offer of stocking these items for you before you arrive. Strong westerly wind for the first couple days. However, the water and visibility improved throughout the week, getting up to 80+ feet. Endemyon is excellent with coral encrusted cannons, anchors, and massive chains that almost seemed to be holding up the reef. Did our first ever wall night dive, searching for critters vertically instead of horizontally. Some walls are gradual and some are more shear. Normal assortment of Caribbean fish and coral. However, we did see our first ever pod of dolphins while diving. Most of our 15 dives were only the two of us and our friend Merle. Excellent service and guidance provided by Ollie, Debbie, Craig, and Mike. Lot of sand draped over the coral. Diving is done with Carolina Skiffs. No accommodations for photographic equipment, but boat rides are very short and we returned between dives, where I could change rolls and equipment. (Ph: 649-946-6906; e-mail scdivers@tciway.tc; website www.saltcaydivers.tc)

**Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, January 2002, Art Hulse (ntcc@grove.iup.edu) Kittanning,**

**PA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, choppy surge. Excellent dive operation. Debbie, Ollie and Mike are very accommodating and will dive where you want to go. Salt Cay has a great wall that allows you to dive deep or shallow. At most sites you can do your safety stop in the shallows rather than hanging on a line. Wall and reef crest are in good condition with an abundance of fish life, good healthy corals, and lots of invertebrates. Saw nurse sharks and turtles every third dive. On one dive had a couple of spotted eagle rays within arms distance. If conditions are appropriate the wreck of the HMS Endymion is a must. It was a 44 gun double decked frigate that wrecked on a spur and groove reef. Cannon, ballast blocks, chains, anchors, etc., are still there, in addition the coral and fish life is great. Request a trip to Gibbs Cay to see the southern stingrays. Debbie is also great at reserving hotel accommodations, dinner reservations, getting you food and beer, airline reservations for inter-island flights, etc., great island. Permanent population of less than 100 people. Main modes of transportation are golf carts and foot. Roads are unpaved and you share them with horses, cattle, donkeys and the occasional iguana. The restaurants are good but most places have a few items on any day and reservations are a must. Island Thyme is a very nice restaurant, but watch out for Porter and shots of Tequila Sauza. Tradewinds is a nice place to stay and is only about a two minute walk from Salt Cay Divers.

**Salt Cay Divers, February 2002, Ed Hoort, Montrose, MI.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: to 76 F, calm. No phones, television; provisions are difficult to come by but if you e-mail a grocery list before you arrive, they will try to accommodate. Island Thyme Bistro is the best little restaurant and bar on the island. Porter, the owner, provides great meals, and strong drinks. We stay at Tradewinds, a group of four apartments. Two have complete kitchens and one can have them provisioned by Debbie by sending a grocery list. Debbie and Ollie do anything they can to make your diving meet your expectations. Debbie is great with beginners. Ollie is fantastic at finding critters. All dives on Salt Cay are within 10 minutes run from the shop. You set your gear up once, and the shop takes care of everything after that. They run 3-4 dives, two morning, an afternoon and a night dive if folks want it. In February, we go to see humpback whales. We saw 20 of them this time in one a week stay and swam with them. The walls are very healthy, and lots of small and mid range fish. Not lots of large fish. Lots of turtles. Wreck of the Endymion, an 18th century wreck; little is left except cannon and anchors. However, the coral is exceptional. Reef Runners is another operation on Salt Cay; while we were there, they left two divers in the water who had to swim to shore. While it is only about 300 yards from the wall to the shore, they had to leave their gear and walk

the two miles back to town. Bring books. Diving and beaches are all there is.

**Salt Cay Divers, March 2002, Michael N. Hofman, San Francisco, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 73 to 77 F, choppy. Rented a house. One of the best treats in diving was hearing the whales "singing" nearby. We never saw them while diving but they were so close we could feel their calls. Wonderful meals at Pat's Place, where Pat cooks great food and loves to chat. Walking and driving the golf cart around the island is a pleasure. Ollie and Debbie, who run Salt Cay Divers, do just about anything to solve problems and make the visit enjoyable.

**Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, March 2002, Rebecca Maldonado, La Verne, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, calm. My husband and I take 2-3 dive trips per year and this was the best place we have been. The island is small with only about 65 people who live on-island, everyone is friendly and helpful. Crime is nonexistent. We didn't even have or need a key to our room. Our room was comfortable with wonderful sea breezes keeping it cool and mosquito-free all day. The humpback whales were migrating and we snorkeled with a mom and baby. The wreck dive of the Endymion was the best dive I have been on. The coral and the fish were beautiful, and while the wooden wreck has fallen apart, the cannons and anchors are beautiful. The dives around Salt Cay were less interesting, but dive operation was

willing to go to Grand Turk, about 20 minutes away, and the dives there are beautiful with wonderful corals, turtles and fish. Snorkeling with the stingrays at Gibbs Cay was another highlight. Uncomfortable boats -- flat-bottomed Carolina skiffs provide bone-jarring, bottom-bruising rides. There are 4 restaurants, including one person's home. Island Thyme provides wonderfully prepared food and you pre-order what you want. Pat's has wonderful home-cooked meals as well. Keep the camera in a foam case such as a Pelican case, due to rough riding on the boats.

**Salt Cay Divers, Tradewinds, March 2002, Cindi & Bob Robertson (uzisu@aol.com) Traverse City, MI.** Vis: 30-100 ft. Water: 77-78 F. Dives logged: 35 years — 900+ dives. Dive restrictions enforced: turn dive at one-half your air. We began e-mail communication with Salt Cay Divers about six months before our actual trip. They answered our questions with promptness, thoroughness and with patience. Debbie and Ollie not only run the dive shop, but will buy your food ahead of time (if you place an order), assist in making your airplane reservations from Provo, personally greet you at the airport, and oversee your guest arrangements. Debbie made reservations for us on InterIsland airlines which cost \$150. They can guarantee that all luggage would arrive with us. They allow 40 lbs. per person and would charge \$10 for every pound over. We put green ribbon on the ONE bag that had to go with us, but our luggage was loaded



on without a hitch. Tradewinds is a five-unit motel, on a rocky beach, that is within walking distance of the dive shop. For some perishable food items, we placed an order with Debbie before our arrival. It was in the refrigerator when we arrived. There is air conditioning, but we never used it, due to the winds that blew so strongly on some nights. No TV at the Tradewinds, but there are radios. Bring tapes or CD's. As the week progressed, we began going to bed by 8:30 PM due to the roosters and donkeys that began their wake up calls at 4:00 AM! We received fresh linen about every 2-3 days. Fleet of new bicycles to use at your convenience. We rode the bicycles to the North Beach - a beautiful sandy shoreline just like in the dive magazines. The units have their own desalination plant and the water is safe to drink. Salt Cay has no gas stations, grocery stores, gift shops, or restaurants as we know them. Because we packed in all of our food, we never ate out. (We did eat lunch on Grand Turk where we ordered two hamburgers, fries and cokes and paid \$25.00). The two places to buy food: Netties and Pats, have limited supplies and you take pot luck when they are open. We did stop by Pats Place, and purchased a few potatoes to go with the canned ham that we brought. The first day of diving, we traded our afternoon dive for a whale watching trip with Ollie. Whales began surfacing within a few feet of the boat. Several people were able to snorkel with them. They were audible on several dives. Salt Cay

Divers have three 24 foot flat-bottomed Carolina Skiffs. The maximum number of people we had on the boat was about six divers, with most of the dives having only four divers. All dive sites are moored within 15 minutes of the dive shop. Back roll off onto the reef at 30 feet, then drop down along the wall. After three dives a day, most people got chilly. I wore a 7mm shorty over my 3mm and was fine. Dive your own profile based on your level of comfort and your computer. They will take you to Grand Turk to dive a few sites. We spent one afternoon on Gibbs Cay feeding the sting rays. It is one of those 'been there, done that' sort of things, but to have 4-5 sting rays speed past your mask is worth the experience. Besides the whales, and the usual fish, we saw nurse and reef sharks, hawksbill and green turtles, several spotted moray eels, a chestnut moray, and a spotted sea snake. On the surface we saw dolphins and flying fish. There was one dolphin in the distance on one dive and an octopus on the night dive. In addition, beautiful black coral, deep water sea fans, and hogfish and trumpetfish on almost every dive. As we left Salt Cay on InterIsland airways, we looked out the window of our airplane to see a mother humpback whale and her baby. The pilot did a 180 so that we could get a better view.

### South Caicos

**Ocean Haven, November 2001,**  
**David D. Dori, Pasadena, MD. Vis:**

75-100 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives accrued: 450. Dive restrictions enforced: 120 max. Been there before. Bob and Diane make you feel at home. Old facility with some minor draw backs but great food and good diving. Recently purchased new dive boat that has a so-so ladder but it will be up graded. Older open skiffs have super ladders. Super dive trip. (Ph: (649) 946-3444; fax (649) 946-3446; e-mail [divesouth@tcway.tc](mailto:divesouth@tcway.tc); website [www.oceanhaven.tc](http://www.oceanhaven.tc))

**Ocean Haven, February 2002, William Edwards, Placerville, CA.** Vis: 60-120ft. Dive restrictions enforced: three minute safety stop. Bob Musselwhite, owner of Ocean Haven, and Diane, his co-host, are very knowledgeable and accommodating. The diving was excellent. All sites were within ten to fifteen minutes from the boat dock. The boat returned us to our "resort" between dives allowing us to remove our skins and wetsuits and warm up if necessary. We were allowed to dive our own profile with the only restriction being a three-minute safety stop on our way up. We saw lots of reef sharks, nurse sharks, sting rays, some moray and spotted eels, turtles, barracuda and all sorts of tropical fish and corals. On a safety stop I saw eighteen eagle rays circling below me. Bob and Diane are both dive masters and they always have someone to stay with the dive boat while everyone is in the water. Ocean Haven building is old and in need of upgrading and repair. The bathrooms are small and barley adequate and the furnishings are

shabby at best. Nothing to do for the non-diver. The local people are very friendly. Bob and Diane do their best to give each diver personal attention and the food they prepare was always very good.

**Ocean Haven, March 2002, Sandy Fallen ([sfalen@kscable.com](mailto:sfalen@kscable.com))**

**Topeka, KS.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 74 to 77 F, choppy no currents. South Caicos is a gem of an island, across the Columbus Passage from Grand Turk. Only a 15-minute plane ride from Provo (let Diane arrange your Sky King flight for you). Diane and Bob have a well-deserved reputation as warm hosts and responsible stewards of the marine environment. We lost two days of diving due to high winds and a rainstorm. The accommodations are modest, clean and comfortable. The food was simple, but delicious and generously served. The resort was uncrowded -- with only two other divers for the first few days and never more than eight. Other hotel guests spent their days bonefishing, and were only seen at breakfast and dinner. Diane is a master at finding juvenile queen angels, minuscule baby drums, and snapping shrimp. We also saw schools of reef sharks, huge eagle rays, a gigantic loggerhead turtle, and a Goliath grouper than was easily six feet in length and five hundred plus pounds. You could easily survive in only shorts and T-shirts, particularly during the warmer months. The March evenings were quite cool, and a jacket would have been appreciated. The rooms had window a/c, but I slept

with just a latched screen door to let in the breeze. I layered a 3-mil vest under my fleece. A hood is advisable this time of year. We didn't see whales but heard them singing daily. If you have any special desires for food or drink, either take it with you, or inquire before you travel, as shopping is quite limited. The honor bar was handy for soft drinks and alcohol, and there were always ice and filtered water. Ocean Haven has a saltwater pool; we enjoyed the surrounding patio for morning coffee and evening sunset watching. I spent topside time reading, walking, and visiting with the locals and fellow guests. If you're good at dominoes, you may want to check out the infamous Chicken Bar. This is a laid-back, relaxing, and incredibly friendly place for divers and fishing enthusiasts, but is not for nonparticipants or children.

### **Ocean Haven, April 2002, Dennis and Helen Ownby, Evans, GA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 ft. Water: 77 to 79 F, choppy. Bob and Diane did their best to accommodate everyone. Considering out island, did a lot to increase the appeal of canned foods, did have fresh salads every day. Fresh fruits available, no morning orange juice, but coffee starting about 6:30. Boats were Carolina Skiffs, backroll, took gear before boarding. Arranged bonefishing afternoons, since can't walk to flats to fish. Need an afternoon dive in pkg. Won't make afternoon or night dives without four divers. Nice saltwater pool. One source for drinking water, cistern for showers,

and saltwater toilets. Are still working on improving the facility, rooms clean and bed good. Place closes up about 8:30-9, not much up town for night life. The School for Field Studies is across the road and shares dock. No Nitrox.

### **Ocean Haven, July 2002, Stanley Cohen (waterfordacademy@hotmail.com) Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, choppy, no currents. My second time at the Ocean Haven. The Island has not changed what with the free ranging wild running animal complements and the addition of a bull! Ocean Haven is still a basic, clean utility with air conditioning and pool. Snorkeling off the dock is interesting. The end room with the prevailing easterly breeze caressing me as I lay in bed felt so good that nothing would have got me up except the excellent diving. Food was plentiful, healthy, with new recipes Diane likes to try out. Chicken, fish, salad, fruit bowl, all O.K. Four sharks the first dive, look down, sting ray in the sand, look up — a flotilla of six spotted eagle rays, oh, here comes JoJo the dolphin, a little worse for wear but still fun to free dive. Second dive — turtle munching, framed by two queen angels with a gray angel in the background next to two parrots. Real blue gorgonians, anchors, ropes to nowhere over the wall, lobster, all there. Exploring shark bay wall was a treat with a river of sparkling white sand flowing over the wall. No Nitrox. Bob and Diane are wonderful and make your stay most enjoyable. There were only three of us

diving but some fishermen were also staying at the Ocean Haven. I only had the breeze and ocean sounds to lull me to sleep. South Caicos is a haven. Enjoy a cold Heineken at the two stools at Trench Town Bar a block away. Sometimes the students (or profs) from the university outpost may dance on the tables when the going gets too boring. I hiked to the house atop the hill, three hours there and back. I enjoyed the changing flora and fauna. Very hot, like a biblical patriarch walking in the desert under the broiling sun! My spot on the beach in front of the two cement buildings saw no one else but me for the time that I was there. The low tide walk through shark bay was interesting but beware the unevenness of the sand bottom. Adventurous time with superb diving. You lose a day coming and going. Beware of baggage delay on Sky King to and from Provo. No photo processing, no specific camera table. You could arrange your own water bucket but nothing specific on the boat. Cameras were handled with care.

**Ocean Haven, August 2002, Ed Cortes (oceansailor@bellsouth.net) Slidell, LA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 65 to 80 Feet. Water: 83 to 84 F, choppy, no currents. Ocean Haven reminds me of hotels I stayed in during the late 70's before the explosion of deluxe beachfront resorts and dive ops — when you negotiated with the local fisherman to take you out on his boat for the day. The rooms are basic with no fancy artwork or plush towels, yet the a/c works, there's plenty of hot water and the linen is

clean. The food is plentiful and good. Deserts are outstanding. The large upper and lower decks provide for plenty of space to catch a few rays, read a good book or experience a great view of the solar system at night. The dive sites are less than ten minutes away by boat and all world class, with plenty of sharks, turtles, jacks, rays, and tons of macro life to satisfy any diver. Bring any unique items you may need during your stay. Supplies are limited on South Caicos.

## UNITED STATES

### Florida

#### Florida Keys

#### Lower Keys

**Bonsai Divers, March 2002, Clinton Jones (clint@eggsav.com) Virginia Beach, VA.** Vis: 30-50 ft. Water: 74-76 F. Dives accrued: 238. Peter, the captain, was nice and the 6-pack boat was in great condition. The rental BC had a leak in the bladder. The rental tanks that my wife and I used both had bad o-rings. They did not have the proper o-rings to replace the bad ones. The first dive was 60' on a wreck. We saw four free-swimming green morays, the second dive was on a reef in 30'. We saw two nurse sharks. Diving was good for beginners. (Ph: 305-294-2921 or 305-296-6301)

**Paradise Divers, August 2002, William & Frances Ungerman (Elitecorps@aol.com) Santa Ana, CA.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Water: 84 to 88 F, calm, choppy, currents, no currents. Dove the