

at port one morning on my last trip, so a scheduled 9:30 a.m., dive tour went at 11:30, we were encouraged to rush through it, and our afternoon schedule was ruined. While a WJ divemaster always accompanied us on dives — perhaps for liability reasons — scuba is an incidental activity. (Ph: 800-327-2601 or 305-672-6453; e-mail [info@windjammer.com](mailto:info@windjammer.com); website [www.windjammer.com](http://www.windjammer.com))

### TURKS AND CAICOS

**Aggressor, December 2001, Michael Lewis, South Riding, VA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 120 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm surge. Pleasant cruise but it did not live up to the standards we expected from the *Aggressor* Fleet. The cabins were good, with large drawer storage and a closet for hanging items. The steward (Lyndon) kept the rooms clean and towels replaced. He was pleasant and helpful with the guests. The salon was small and crowded for the 14 people on board and was not adaptable for use other than having meals. The food was a big problem. My wife has a deadly allergy to anything peanut (oil, butter, etc.) and we included that in our reservation form. We e-mailed the boat two weeks before our cruise to remind them and received a reply from Annette, who was the cook for our trip, saying that was easily handled. We searched out Annette when we got on the boat to introduce ourselves and remind her of the issue and she said it was no problem. Then two days into the trip, she served peanut butter/macadamia nut cookies

and did not say one word to us about them. Fortunately, we heard someone else comment on the peanut butter before my wife took a bite or we would have ended up heading to shore for a hospital (which would have seriously inconvenienced everyone on board — especially us)! Annette's comment was that she was too busy to keep track and my wife needed to "help" her remember. There was also a person on the boat that was lactose intolerant and another who was diabetic that needed constantly to remind her of their problems. One day when a guest went back to ask for some soup du jour at the end of a meal, he was told there was none left. However, more magically appeared when the crew came in to eat. Another guest asked that more juices, etc. so that we could stay hydrated but they never seemed to appear. The diving was very good, although not spectacular. The coral reefs seemed to be damaged at many sites but it did not appear to be from diver induced stress. There was a large variety of corals and sponges but not a large variety of fish. We did see reef sharks and barracuda at several sites and an occasional eagle ray. The walls were outstanding for formations but did not contain many small critters. The divemasters were friendly and would help on board the boat. They did a good job explaining the sites but they never led a dive. Most of the time, they were more interested in taking pictures or video than in finding critters for the guests. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; e-mail [info@aggressor.com](mailto:info@aggressor.com); website [www.aggressor.com](http://www.aggressor.com))

**Aggressor, May 2002, Tim Merrill**  
(tmerrill@sota-oh.com)

**Newcomerstown, OH.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 125 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm no currents. Went by myself. Everybody was easy to get along with. I got to see barrel sponges spawning. The walls were excellent. I was the only person who did all 27 dives for the week. I used Nitrox and was not tired at all. I got to hear whales under water.

**Sea Dancer, December 2001, Ann & Darrell Stadler, Amarillo, TX.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. Trip was top notch. Diving was great and the crew was fantastic! They did not have a rental video but the crew made theirs available for me to rent and were more than accommodating in teaching and giving pointers. (Ph: 800-932-6237 or 305-669-9391; e-mail dancer@peterhughes.com; website www.peterhughes.com)

**Sea Dancer, December 2001, Bob Woods (bobwood@pacbell.net)**  
**Hillsborough, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, choppy. Dramatic walls, healthy hard and soft corals and usual tropical fish of West Caicos and French Cay. Large number of eagle rays we saw, in one case, six at one sighting. Add in the curious and friendly reef sharks that circled under the boat and the acres of garden eels in the sand flats atop the wall and this has to be one of our best Caribbean diving experiences. Crew is group of people who like and respect each other and are dedicated to the safety and service of their guests.

Captain Ian, first mate/chief engineer Karen and engineer James made us comfortable; and dive instructor/social director/all-around bon vivant Hoi Leung made sure we were having fun. Chef Stanley and attendant Annette made sure we were lacking nothing in creature comforts. Annette's response to almost any request was the mantra of her native Jamaica, "No problem!"

**Sea Dancer, January 2002, Lydia Adkins, Cordele, GA.** Vis: 70-110 ft. Water: 75-78 F. Dives logged: 300. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 Nitrox, 130 air. Cabins are small but well kept and have own bath. Food was wonderful and plentiful, Stanley still the best. The crew was well trained and worked well together. Divemaster in water on every dive and two on back platform. Took care of any problems promptly and fixed customer gear at no charge as needed. Great boat, great crew and great group of divers.

**Sea Dancer, February 2002, Rick Peterson (cfdmedicdive@msn.com)**  
**Chicago, IL.** Dives accrued: 4500+. Vis: 40-90 ft. Water: 76-79 F. Dive restrictions: computer limitations. An excellent boat and crew! Divemasters, Captain Ian, Hoi, James and crew were professional and were also glad to be diving unlike other live-aboards I have been on. Stanley's cooking again top notch. Saw whales breach on surface and heard them on all dives. A great boat, crew and location.

**Sea Dancer, Caicos Adventures, Comfort Suites, April 2002, K.C. Den Dooven (KCDDooven@aol.com)** Las Vegas, NV. Vis: 80-100+. Dives

logged: 225. Dive restrictions enforced: None. Took Nitrox course: 110 — or air. Suggested to 130. Everything Island Dreams arranged was perfect. The various parties knew of my arrival. Great weather, great diving, great people to dive with. When I arrived in Provo, it was already dark, but there was a taxi waiting for me at the airport. \$20, with tip. OK. The Comfort Suites had a ground floor room. Very nice place, well located. They know scuba divers needs and give them ground floor accommodations, with equipment to haul. OK to dry out things on the chairs by the pool. The *Sea Dancer* called to confirm I was there. Only nine divers the week I went out. I and two other single guys all had separate rooms. The *Sea Dancer* was GREAT. It's an old ship but the crew was friendly, helpful, competent. No temp adjustment to the showers! Either its quite hot or coldish! The temp of the cabins is almost too cold! Food was great, fabulous, unbelievable. A chief, not just a cook! The diving was good for the Caribbean. I did 22 dives in 5-1/2 days of diving. Since I was taking a Nitrox course I did not go below 115 ft. I did a few "air" dives, down to 147. They suggest you don't go deeper than 110, and they the maximum depth after each dive. But they don't give you a bad time. Some highly experienced divers that did 205-210 ft. dives. Nobody bragged, nobody commented, nobody complained. The weather was perfect, the seas calm. I dove along side sharks, barracudas, moray eels, lobster. Saw sponge spawning, giving off a stream of

yellow sperm(?). I swam with a hawksbill turtle, so close I had to be careful not to bump it. The crew produced a video for sale of the trip. We got back in port Friday afternoon, stayed aboard that evening and the next morning for breakfast. They arranged a taxi to take me to the Comfort Suites, no charge. At the hotel my downstairs room was ready. [I do make it a point to be friendly with the front office staff wherever I stay] The Comfort Suites is well located. There are restaurants within 100 ft. There is a good French rest. Caicos Adv. (Fifi) is only a 2-minute walk. A pretty good Cuban rest. was nearby. Several places had real Cuban cigars for sale, about \$17 a cigar. Caicos Adventures: Fifi knows his diving, his sites, he has a great boat, a catamaran. I went out with him for three successive days, two dives per day. He picks everybody up at 8Am at their hotel, you leave the dock at 9AM — he takes you to the same general areas as the live-aboard, but different sites. In this area two dive sites 50 ft. apart are — different! You are in the water by 10AM; the second by 1:30 and back to your hotel by 3:30. Diving just about as good as the live-aboard. Fifi's second dive will be shallower, but not dull — to about 35 to 50 ft only. You leave your gear with him. They wash it. One day Fifi had 25 diver nine his max., and a crew of 4 — and nobody felt crowded. His crew handles all the tanks, B C's, regulators, etc. They set up everything for the first and second dive. Therefore, nobody is banging into others. Best shore based operation I have ever

seen. I dove my last dive on Tues., about 2 P.M.. A shallow, long dive, one hour +. My flight was on Wed, about 4 P.M., so I had my 24+hrs. to off-gas! I really do enjoy *Undercurrent*. Island Dreams had never booked with Caicos Adventures, but I insisted on using them after reading all the good comments in your 2002 handbook. I have been a subscriber for about ten years. This trip was a dive trip for me to celebrate my 72nd birthday!

**Sea Dancer, April 2002, Joe Friedman, Dallas, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75+ Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy. Boat was set up great for UWP. Other divers generally respected table and buckets. Very little to no macro. Very much a wide angle dive location; would have been at loss without it.

**Sea Dancer, April 2002, Kay Greeley (kaygreeley@earthlink.net) Simi Valley, CA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 150 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, calm no currents. Only nine divers on the trip and congenial. The crew was outstanding. They had a great sense of humor. Chef Stanley Simmons a wonderful chef. Captain Ian gave us the choice whether to attempt venturing beyond French Cay, as the seas were a bit choppy. The diving was superb in the outer reefs. Darren did a fantastic job as video pro, making sure we got a great memory video and lots of slides, while Nina was a superb hostess. Crazy instructor Hoi's dive briefings were excellent and accurate. Lack of anything to do on the last day while back in port. It

was a long wait to go home, so we had a last visit with the other guests. Airport transfers, to and from, were both flawless. Usual Peter Hughes quality photo table set-up. Crew took extreme care when handling cameras and was helpful at all times.

**Sea Dancer, April 2002, Diane Nash (divernash@attbi.com) Mechanicsville, VA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 85 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy no currents. Having been on this boat four other times, we felt like we were home. We had never been over to French Cay until this trip. We stayed two and half days because the diving was so good. The weather was windy and this made for interesting entries and exits, as the boat was not still. However, the diving was some of the best we have done in TCI. There were sharks and cudas on every dive, schools of fish, turtles, and rays. The walls were breath taking. There was some bleaching but not enough to take away from beauty. Stanley is still the best cook in the *Dancer* Fleet. The crew, as usual, was fantastic.

**Sea Dancer, May 2002, Lawrence Cook, Santa Rosa, CA.** Vis: 75-150 ft. Water: 78 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 110' with Nitrox, 130' with air. Great week! Mostly wall diving starting at 40-50 ft. Saw lots of sharks, spotted eagle rays, dolphins, morays, big grouper, etc. The crew really made the week enjoyable and Stan's cooking lived up to its Caribbean reputation. Special requests were happily accommodated. Darren, the "photo God" went out of his way to

ensure we got great slides to take home. Since we don't use an underwater camera, this was an unexpected treat.

***Sea Dancer*, June 2002, Terry Gee, El Paso, TX.** > 1000 dives. Clear most of the time with some clouds and occasional rain. Calm flat surface conditions and water temp 79-80 F. Vis 40-100 feet depending on day and location, dive own profile without restrictions. Large numbers of sharks, eagle rays, turtles, some dolphins. Reef fish plentiful, some larger. The *Sea Dancer* is the oldest boat in the Peter Hughes fleet. It is well maintained and operated but noisy when the engine is running. Rooms are adequate to good and well cared for. The crew is professional, friendly and interacts with the guests well. The food and service were top notch. The dive profile was up to the individual divers with the suggestion that we abide by recreational limits. No checking computers, etc. No baby sitting. A beer at lunch didn't result in a diver being eliminated from further dive activities. Nitrox at \$10/tank or \$150/week, pricey but readily available.

***Sea Dancer*, July 2002, Robert Losey (rflosey@inficad.com) Chandler, AZ.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Stan the cook was outrageous, some of the best food I have had. Dinner was semiformal, (how formal can you get in a bathing suit) salad, soup, hot bread or biscuits, wine, the main course. Three out of the seven nights we had a

choice on entrees and dessert! Matt, the Photo Pro was great, however he will soon be going over to the new Peter Hughes boat in Belize. Captain Ian, Nina, Ben and Franklin did a fine job also. There was always one of the crew in the water with you, not that this was necessary. Peter Hughes hang bar was almost worthless unless you where in calm seas and the boat was not moving on its mooring. I'll take the *Aggressor* approach anytime, ropes and not stationary bars. One thing that really ticked my wife off was that after exiting the van that picked you up from the airport you had to go upstairs immediately and do the 'C' card thingee. On Peter Hughes boats you have to bring a copy of the waiver you sent to them; ours was in our luggage, hardly on the boat yet. The boat is in bad need of updating! All the eating is on the top deck under a canopy type thing — if it gets hot or the air quits moving, things can get a little sticky up there. The door into the cabin area is a 1 to 1 1/2 ft step up, my wife really bumped her toe on this lip — ouch! The cabins need new carpet on the walls and the shower in #3 is only one temperature — HOT! It only has one lever; on or off. Rust and wear here and there and just old! Diving was great for Caribbean standards four to five dives per day. Crossing to French Caye was worth it. Did not even have to touch my camera before or after dives, crew took care of all.

***Wind Dancer*, November 2001, Patrick Flynn, Washington, D.C.** Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 82 F. Quiet, stable,

roomy vessel with an enthusiastic and accommodating crew. Experience will improve their familiarity with the underwater terrain. The diving is great when the weather is fine, which was most of our trip and rare calm seas enabled a visit to HMS Endymion, foundered warship in 1790. One of my best dives ever (of 250

worldwide) despite a long swim (due to hazard) and current. S. Caicos, Grand Turk, Salt Cay were all healthy with abundant and various fishes and coral and sponges. Tony's cooking was the best! Amazing ability to meet our group's special dietary requirements and impressive culinary skill! Cabins were too warm at night. (Ph: 800-932-6237 or 305-669-9391; e-mail [dancer@peterhughes.com](mailto:dancer@peterhughes.com); website [www.peterhughes.com](http://www.peterhughes.com))

**Wind Dancer, November 2001, Ed Cortes, Slidell, LA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 75 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy surge. We had recurring problems with the head office. They did not return phone calls, nor did they answer some e-mails or provide the service we had previously experienced. While larger than the *Sea Dancer* in Provo, I felt more confined in my cabin on *Wind Dancer*. The *Wind Dancer* can berth a maximum of 21 divers and was fully booked the week we went. The dive deck is the smallest I have seen on a liveaboard. We learned to gear up at least 10-15 minutes early to avoid the crush at dive time. The diving was just plain sad in Grand Turk. The week before our arrival there had been high winds and lots of rain that made for poor visibility. We did three dives

on a site where the top of the reef consists of nothing but ballast stones and little life. South Caicos diving was spectacular. Eagle rays, sharks (two baby reef, adult reef and blacktips), turtles, and incredible macro life. Overall the experience was disappointing. The excellent food and \$500 trip discount helped to ease our pain.

## UNITED STATES

**M/V Fling, August 2001, Richard Kongable (rkon@ev1.net) Austin, TX.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, choppy. We were there for the August coral spawning and Mother Nature delivered! The spawning was prolific, happens about 9:45 p.m.; you could actually smell it once it hit the surface. No current, so spawning was a photographer's dream as the egg sacs and sperm left the coral en masse and slowly drifted upward. Several divers were intimate with sharks and turtles; one turtle bumped a diver's fins and small sharks came close. Accommodations are basic but fine. Food is good and there's plenty, snacks and drinks always out, soft drinks and beer for sale. Rules are there for a reason; Captain Phil explained them thoroughly in the initial briefing and they were reinforced by the divemaster briefing before each dive. 100' depth limit but no limit on dive time. Mandatory 2.5 hour surface interval between dives. Divemasters check conditions before each dive. Accounting procedures consist of a DM checking your bunk number and documenting time in after checking