

minutes. The wreck diving was great, and the coral health and vibrant. The photo shop in the marina is outstanding. Jim is helpful and has the latest in digital equipment to demo. He'll download your images on his computer and burn a CD for you if your storage device gets full.

**Blue Water Divers, Sugar Mill, June 2002, Michael Monarchi, Houston, TX.** Vis: 40-60 ft. Dives accrued: 390. The soft corals were outstanding — excellent and vivid tube sponges. The reefs were healthy and had good quantities of life, both flora and fauna. Saw a couple of turtles and 3 sharks (2 nurse, 1 reef). Sea varied from flat to light chop or swell. Weather was hot and sunny, with some short rain showers (no thunderstorms). I was comfortable in a 2-3 mm wetsuit; some people dove with no wetsuit, but most had one. The wreck of the Rhone is excellent. (At Nanny Cay: **Ph: 284-494-2847; e-mail: bwdubi@surfbvi.com; At Hodge's Creek Ph: 284-495-1200; e-mail bwdubi@surfbvi.com; website <http://www.ultimatebvi.com/bluewater/>**)

**UBS Dive Service, VIP Yacht Charters, December 2001, Keith & Ellen Irwin ([irwinkw@earthlink.net](mailto:irwinkw@earthlink.net)) San Jose, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. We chartered a 45' powerboat from VIP Yacht Charters in St. Thomas then arranged for UBS Dive Service to rendezvous with us at various anchorages. UBS meets you at your boat and takes your party on the dives. They let you choose the dive sites and decide when to go. Our first dive was from Norman Island. We dove the Indians,

snorkeled "The Caves" during the surface interval, then did an easy dive at Angelfish Reef. We dove the wreck of the Rhone, a wonderful wreck dive. The Chimney and Bronco Billy at the Dogs. These were fun dives with lots of brilliant sponges, soft corals, and abundant small tropicals. They allowed us to dive our computers, often staying down for over an hour. They use a 27' dive boat and a 20' rigid inflatable. Both were comfortable, though the 27' could use a hand rail to make reentry easier. The staff was competent, safety conscious. (**Ph: 284-494-0024; e-mail [page@scubabvi.com](mailto:page@scubabvi.com); website [www.scubabvi.com](http://www.scubabvi.com)**)

## VIRGIN ISLANDS, U.S.

### St. Croix

**Anchor Dive Center, Hotel on the Cay, April 2002, Bonnie Huff ([bhuff@willowbridge.com](mailto:bhuff@willowbridge.com)) Hillsborough, NJ.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 85 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy surge. Professional, top notch dive operation. They only take out six divers and if a seventh diver wants to go they'll take them by themselves on the next dive. Their dive sites are a 10 minute ride and they come in between dives. They are a 10 minute drive from Christensted. They will pick you up, but you have you take a taxi back and the price varies from \$7 to \$10/person. They have a restaurant next door that is good and reasonable for lunch. The reefs and walls are healthy and vary in formation, but lacked large fish. Easy diving for beginners. The Hotel on the Cay is very friendly and convenient to

Christensted. A little worn from weather, but they are slowly making improvements. The price was reasonable and they have their own beach. The food on St. Croix is excellent. The taxi's tend to overcharge. (Ph: 800-532-DIVE or 340-778-1522; website [www.anchordivestcroix.com](http://www.anchordivestcroix.com))

**Cane Bay Dive Shop, Cane Bay Reef Club, June 2002, James McMeins, Carnation, WA.** Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet.

Water: 83 to 85 F, calm. Cane Bay Reef Club is a quaint small facility with a medium sized swimming pool. A/C in most of the rooms which are large with cable TV's, refrigerator and full cooking facilities. The owner took us to a local supermarket and we stocked up on food for the week.

Restaurant on site serves good food and has a lobster night for under \$20 and a Mexican night with all you can eat for \$8. Cane Bay dive shop is a 15 min walk from the hotel. Dive boat is a 10' inflatable, max four divers, dive guide and boat captain. Entry is accomplished by unzipping the deck in the bow, sitting with legs through the hole, they put your BC on and then you do a forward roll under the boat. Looks strange but it works great.

Since most sites are within 10-15 mins. You go back between dives to get fresh tanks. Three boat dives a day plus shore diving (\$5 a tank) — a 300-yard swim to the reef but worth it. On one dive we planned to drift and dive guide was going to drag a float, but dive guide said there was a current going in the direction of the dive so had the boat go to next mooring to

await us instead of following us plus he didn't take the float. Half way through the dive a strong current came in the opposite direction! Two divers got low on air and by the time my wife and I were getting low the dive guide was so far ahead we couldn't get his attention. We gathered one other diver who was down to 300, did our safety stop and then went to surface. The boat was several hundred yards from us. Later I asked the dive guide why he hadn't stopped the dive after running into the current and that he'd actually started swimming faster against the current. His response "I wanted to get to where the boat was anchored because I knew you would be getting low on air, so I figured if we went faster, we'd get there quicker!" Other than that the diving was very good here and corals are healthy with lots of small critters. On our last dive before leaving, my wife and I were diving in 60' of water when a 4.0 earthquake hit on St. Thomas across the water from us. An unusual experience. Due to the size of the dive boat - 10', a cooler is used for storage of camera gear but since boat is limited to four divers, not a problem. (Ph: 800-338-3843 or 340-773-9913; e-mail [canebay@viaccess.net](mailto:canebay@viaccess.net); website [www.canebayscuba.com](http://www.canebayscuba.com))

**Dive Experience, Danish Manor, October 2001, Gabriel I.**

**Peñagaricano (guigo34@hotmail.com)**

**San Juan, PR.** Experience: 251- 500 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 80 to 84 F, choppy. The dive shop is very well set up and the personnel are extremely helpful and accommodating.

The hotel is not associated with the dive operation but is two blocks away, so is convenient. There are several excellent dive sites which one can be taken to by only asking. (Ph: 800-235-9047 or 340-773-3307; e-mail [divexp@viaccess.net](mailto:divexp@viaccess.net); website [www.st-croix.com/diveexperience](http://www.st-croix.com/diveexperience))

**The Waves at Cane Bay, January 2002, Stu Breisch, Salt Lake City, UT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 F, calm. Excellent shore diving included in room rates. NorthStar wall plunges almost vertically from 30' into the deep. Resort on a point with constant surf action = relaxing. Owner Kevin has a relief map of the shore diving sites and gives detailed briefings. He even told us where to find a seahorse at Fredricksburg pier for an excellent night shore dive. Great place for a relaxed pace diving on your own schedule. Fun for new divers with lots to see and mild currents and great for experienced divers on a budget. On site restaurant is pricey but has excellent food and on the water. Nearby restaurants also excellent. The "villa" has kitchen and is separate from resort with a private deck over the waves. Boat dives available nearby. Rent a car. (Ph: 800-545-0603 or 340-778-1805; e-mail [ry1805@viaccess.net](mailto:ry1805@viaccess.net); website [www.canebaystcroix.com](http://www.canebaystcroix.com))

## St. John

**Cruz Bay Water Sports, Westin Hotel, August 2002, Marvin Glassmann (marvg13@aol.com) Huntington, NY.** Vis: 50-60 ft. Water:

75-85 F. Dives logged: 128. Dive restrictions enforced: 60'. The weather was great, the water warm, clear and flat. Some reefs were in good shape. Others "over-used" and damaged. All dives were guided so it was difficult to take photos and keep up with the group. With drift dives this was understandable. 14 on a dive was maximum. Staff was friendly and took good care of guests. Two occasions tank was not put on bcd securely and once floated off my back. Guide didn't see it, but other guest helped secure it. Two guides were inexperienced and did the bare minimum. Others went from competent to great (Charlie) on both St. John and neighboring St. Thomas. No uw photo repair facilities. Eating facilities better in town — fun taxi rides in open air vehicles. (Ph: 340-776-6234 or 340-779-4351; fax 340-693-8720; e-mail [info@divestjohn.com](mailto:info@divestjohn.com); website [www.cbw-stjohn.com](http://www.cbw-stjohn.com))

## St. Thomas

**Admiralty Dive Center, Marriott Frenchman's Reef Resort, February 2002, Lyn & Ben Smith, Mount Airy, NC.** Dives logged: 134. Vis: 30-80+ ft. Water: 76-78 F. Very personalized service. The dive boat picked us up at the dock of our hotel. Our gear was rinsed and stored between dives. The divemaster, John, gave very good pre-dive briefings and pointed out marine life on the dives. Marty and Portia Martinez (owners) were friendly, courteous, and helpful. We dove three days (six dives). Our favorite dive sites were Miss Opportunity (wreck), Cow and Calf, and Sun

Butt (drift dive). (phone: 1-888-900-DIVE). (Ph: **888-900-DIVE or 340-777-9802**; e-mail **admiralty@viaccess.net**; website **www.admiraltydive.com**)

**Aqua Action, June 2001, Winston Reed, Milford, CT.** Vis: 45-50 ft. Water: 75 F. Dives logged: 104. Wall of Buck Island Point 50-50 dive. Owner Carl very helpful and friendly. DM's Susan and Doris very funny and helpful. Well-run dive operation — Aqua Action at Secret Harbor. (Ph: **888-775-6285 or 340-775-6285**; e-mail **AquaAction@islands.vi**; website **http://aadivers.com**)

**Blue Island Divers, Marriott Frenchman's Reef, April 2002, David Haupt (dbhaupt@yahoo.com), Louisville, KY.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. The rooms were satisfactory but nothing great. Each room was equipped with a refrigerator, icemaker and safe. The pool had a volleyball court and a basketball goal. The exercise room had treadmills, elliptical trainers, free weights and good weight machines. The spa offered steam, various wraps (sea-weed, mud) and massages (of which my wife took full advantage). Fiftieth anniversary of Carnival. There were food booths, crafts, flea market type crap and parades. We met people who come for Carnival every year. One parade started at 4:00 a.m. Thursday. It was called Jump Up. Rumors are that there is at least one death every year during this drunken feast. 6,000 sailors from the aircraft carrier George Washington were on shore leave

(Monday thru Wednesday. Traffic thru town was a bitch, but locals said it really wasn't that much worse than usual. — the traffic always sucks. St. Thomas is a great island for diver with a nondiving spouse. There is shopping and great restaurant action. Awesome restaurants. Among our favorites were Herve (Sea Bass with lemon caper sauce, filet mignon with Caribbean lobster tail), Room with a View (filet mignon with black peppercorn sauce, salmon stuffed with spinach, feta and sun-dried tomatoes), Virgilios (fettuccini with shrimp and scallops in a white wine cream sauce) and Old Stone Farm House (excellent sushi, Asian flair to the menu). Among the turds were Tavern on the Beach and Cuzzins, which is local cuisine, and the worst service. I came up with four dive operators that I was interested in and E-mailed each. I chose Blue Island Divers. I worked out a deal when I committed to them for the week that if I wasn't happy with their operation, I would just pay for the dives I did and we would part ways. Never did I even consider leaving! The owners Sean and Aitch, both Englishmen, were tired with the stress from their jobs and elected to pursue their passion — diving. They love what they are doing and it shows! Their boat is a no frills, 20 year old, 28' Delta. It has a platform on the back but no ladder. Sit on the transom, put on your weight belt, fins and mask. Either the boat captain or the DM brings you your tank/BC and helps you slip into it. At the end of the dive, you hand them your weight belt, then turn around. They grab your tank and

you slide out of your harness. An easy kick with your fins and you are seated on the platform. The rinse bucket for my camera was nothing fancy (a large tub), but was adequate. If there was another camera user on the boat, they put out a second tub. On all dive days but one, there were four divers including myself. One day there were nine. The other eight divers were crew from a cruise ship, three working on their AOW. The owners asked if I minded (which I didn't) and made sure that I was in the water first. 75% of the people I dove with were 'Islanders'. Once they saw my diving abilities, they afforded me diving freedom and they never told me when to come up. Aitch, being an underwater photographer, understood my needs and was accommodating. Sean and Aitch research the history of the area and are constantly looking for new wrecks. (Ph: 340-774 2001; e-mail [diveusvi@islands.vi](mailto:diveusvi@islands.vi); website [www.blueislanddivers.com](http://www.blueislanddivers.com))

## LIVE-BOARDS

### THE BAHAMAS

***Aqua Cat*, July 2001, Juli Tracy/  
Dick Gamble, San Diego, CA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 Feet. Water: 85 to 89 F, calm. The crew was friendly, the rooms were big and had lots of storage space, modern heads, everything was clean and new. The food was good, and plentiful — lots of chocolate chip cookies after

every dive! The lounge is beautiful, big and comfortable, though often too cold, especially after a dive. (This also made the food cold, since the lounge was the dining room — maybe an infrared lamp would help.) Diving was off the boat and varied, from beautiful walls to coral gardens, a blue hole, and even a shark dive (though we didn't like that much; there were dives when sharks were just there without being fed, and those were better). The dive deck is spacious, and floored with rubber tubing, so it's soft on the feet and non-slippery. Large photo tables and two rinse tanks for photo gear and two shower heads to rinse off, then on the dive deck itself, two enclosed (big) showers, with soap and shampoo. Showers in the room too. Cabin, #11, is much less nice than the others — it has bunk beds instead of twins or a queen, has little floor space and hardly any storage, and doesn't have a nice picture window, but only a skylight which people on the deck above can see into. This would be fine, if the price for that cabin were reduced, but it's not, and so those people really got a bad deal. (Ph: 888-327-9600 or 305-888-3002; fax 305-885-3323; e-mail [info@aquacatcruises.com](mailto:info@aquacatcruises.com); website [www.aquacatcruises.com](http://www.aquacatcruises.com))

***Aqua Cat*, November 2001, Joe  
Puglia (JPuglia@aol.com) Orlando,  
FL** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 70 to 78 F, calm. The boat was comfortable with nice size rooms with full size ensuite facilities. Showers on the dive deck were great. Our week followed a hurricane; there was much sand on the