

tank a.m., one tank p.m. — we are used to two tank a.m., and two tank p.m. When questioned about this, we were told that Aruba isn't a diving destination, but a golf and cruise stop. Therefore, they make accommodations for the people that want to make one dive, then some sightseeing before shopping and reboarding ship. We didn't get cruisers on our boats, but a lot of operators do, so be watchful. The boat didn't have a camera table; however, there was a cooler at the back of the boat supposedly for cameras, but lots of masks (along with the mask defogger) were in there also, so hold on to your own camera. Developing film on island is expensive, we brought ours home. This operator isn't really about photos, so it was about what we expected after having dove with operations that cater to photographers. (www.visitaruba.com/uniquesports, www.bestvaluetimeshares.com/laquinta.htm)

THE BAHAMAS

The Bahamas are easily accessible from Florida and excellent for long weekends, with pretty reefs (though many are affected by algae), decent tropicals, and plenty of resorts that feed sharks. ... Keep hurricane season, June through October, in mind; winter weather from December to March means mid-70s, chilly water, and sweaters in the evening; average nighttime temperature is in the mid-60s, but can drop into the 50s if winter air blows off the continent. ... Out-

island are resorts small and personal, but the best diving is now reached by live-aboards.

Abaco

Abaco Dive Adventures, Moorings Charter, May 2003, Gerald Canning, Reno, NV. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 75 to 200 feet. Water: 78 to 83 F, calm. A new operation this year. It specializes in small-size, adventure diving. We were the only two passengers on a six-pack boat. We ran the dive as a rendez-vous dive with our charter sailboat. We made arrangements with Abaco Dive Adventures by VHF radio, and they came and picked us up from our anchorage. Tim, the divemaster, was born in the islands and has been diving since he was 8 years old. He led us through some fantastic coral formations, tunnels, and schools of shiners so thick you couldn't see the person in front of you in the tunnels. We saw tarpon and Caribbean reef sharks. We were allowed to dive as long as we had air — and we recorded one 80 minute dive and two others that were longer than one hour. We had a great time. No specific facilities for UWP — however divemaster/boat crew took care of handing and retrieving the camera. (www.abacodiveadventures.com/abaco.asp, www.go-abacos.com/conchinn/moorings)

Brendal's Dive Shop, Green Turtle, August 2003, Alan & Barbara Fischl, Great Neck, NY. Although all of the sites were 50 or 60 feet, maximum, most were full of fish. We saw

several Caribbean reef sharks, turtles and a great variety of reef fish, including a scorpion fish and a big school of Atlantic spade fish. We were surprised at the number of fish, since in our experience so many dive sites in the Bahamas have been pretty well fished. All dives were led by instructors/dive-masters. The tank fills were generous and we had over an hour of bottom time on almost every dive. Water was a delicious 84 degrees! The Green Turtle Club was nice; the accommodations were first rate and the food, although a bit pricey, was excellent. During the summer months they have special cut rate deals that are quite worthwhile. (<http://oii.net/brendal>)

Walker's Cay, June 2003, Leo Dioguardi (dioguardi@att.net), Apollo Beach, FL. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 feet. Water: 82 F, calm, choppy, no currents. Tiny island, about twice the length of the runway. Landside was great. Food and service superior though there is only one restaurant open at any meal. Diving was relaxing, easy, nice formations and fair number of fish. Dive leaders, for the most part, did their thing and sometimes lost track of you, no big deal, we like it that way. Due to the dive shop's insistence on feeding sharks, there is no safe beach activity at all. Although they would tell you it's safe to snorkel with the sharks (chummed in to shore), a shark researcher was hit last year in thigh-deep water and another diver just after our visit. Also interesting was that the noise from the island's only truck approaching the feeding area (without food and not at feeding time) drew

numerous large sharks into very shallow (1-3 ft) water near the feeding platform. Their sensory perception was exceptional. (www.nealwatson.com/WalkersCay.html)

Bimini

Keefe's Bimini Undersea, Bimini Big Game Resort, January 2003, Kenneth & Domin Lathom (NagaTikus@aol.com), Del Valle, TX. Vis: 75-100 ft. Water: 82-83 F. Experience: 50 dives. Two 38 ft boats, swim with the dolphins picture opportunities, didn't have to stay with group — gave us more time to frame pictures. The wreck of the *Gallant Lady*, out of Belize City, was the best picture op on the island (deck is slippery, located at mouth of harbor, she ran aground during Hurricane Mitch back in '97). Bimini is accessed by sea plane (Chalk's), out of Fort Lauderdale. There is a museum of Hemingway's, doubles as dancing spot nights. They only refund half your money if there is a cancellation due to weather/sea conditions! But we negotiated 75% credit in gift shop instead. Perhaps payment just before trips out would save you money, but then wouldn't guarantee a spot on the boat if full — your choice. The dolphin encounters were best with Bill and Nowdla being fine hosts. Bill hooked up our new regulators with swivels on our Mares Avantgarde systems. Must be 18 to play pool. Also, outdoors pool is chilly. Outside is about 80 in the afternoon, 55 at night. New Year's Parade (Junkanoo) is one day late, after dark on the evening of the First! Look

around for better food spots on island, some were expensive (\$45 each for New Year's dinner!) Beware of overcharge in most restaurants! Always check you bill.

(www.biminiundersea.com,
www.biminibiggame.com)

Grand Bahama Island

Sunndivers, Unexso, Caribbean Divers, Weston Sheraton at Lucaya Beach, August 2003, Jeffrey Greene (dadgreene@hotmail.com), Merion Station, PA. Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy. Dive your own profile: no. Dive restrictions: All three operations had time limits but I was able to enter the water first, which added about 5-7 minutes to each dive making them about 45 minutes in total time Freeport diving is nice, but not exciting. Sunn Odyssey Divers were nice to dive with and helpful in the water, but they cancel dives if they even think there may be a storm coming which was a problem because I then had to find another operator to go with. Overall they were a B-minus in the water but a C with their erratic cancellations, giving them a C-plus average. Unexso is modern with a large beautiful boat. It's dive-masters are young Americans who have been diving for a year or two at most. They are confident but not mature, similar to an 18 year old who has been driving for two years — experienced but not the best driver on the road. Their operation is a C, on the boat they are C-plus, a bit better than average. Overall they are a C which is average and not bad. Caribbean Divers

is another story. The operation in the office is very nice. The divemaster is tired and looking forward to finishing the dive quickly. Very little discussion about the dive, and he barely notices you in the water (not great for inexperienced divers). The first dive was supposed to be 60 feet for 40 minutes, but the time started as he was telling us this. By the time we were in the water, it was more like 30 minutes.

Fortunately we all ignored him somewhat and decided to come up to the rest stop at about 35 minutes, or 40 minutes for me. This, however, only reduced our interval time, since he had already decided when we were to reenter the water, leaving me only about 15 minutes between dives. I am glad I had the computer to watch my depth and time. The good news was that he ignored me in the water and I had a good time. Overrating is a D-plus. No operation is great, but the diving was pleasant and a lot of large fish and sharks. I enjoyed the dives.

(**Sunndivers:** www.bahamasvg.com/sunnodyssey.html. **Caribbean Divers:** www.bahamasnet.com/caribbeandivers)

UNEXSO, Our Lucaya, October 2002, Thomas O. Moens (tom@thomasmogens.com), Moline, IL.

Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. Our Lucaya was a nice resort, if somewhat homogenized, but we arrived in the midst of a labor dispute, so some staff were somewhat less than friendly. We later learned that the 15% gratuity added to all bills went to the resort, not to the staff, thereby explaining some of

the attitude. After all the hype, Unexso was a great disappointment. The tourist volume was low, but that certainly did not increase the level of service. After boarding the *SS Hunkajunk*, we were treated to the rudest captain we have encountered. Though there were several boats, they seemed to use the worst equipped and worst running of the bunch. Billows of smoke followed us to the reef. After leaving the island, we had to go out of our way to pick up our divemaster, who was apparently already “recreating” on another boat. Unexso never asked about our experience level nor did they ask to look at our dive logs, but put us with the only other divers — two nervous first timers. We were forced to suit up and sit on the dive platform until everyone was ready, and then we were directed to scootch into the water on cue. Then we had to stay with the divemaster for the entirety of our short, shallow dive. When we returned, Captain Schmuck docked as far as possible from the rinse tank, and no one seemed to be able to locate any carts to haul gear. When we did lug everything back to the tank, we thought maybe we should just wait until we got home and rinse everything in the muddy Mississippi, rather than use that science-experiment excuse for a rinse tank. The island and the reefs seem nice enough, just shop around for a dive facility. **(800-992-DIVE, info@unexso.com)**

New Providence

Dive, Dive, Dive, June 2003, Victor Bary (vbary@yahoo.com), Cranford, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis:

40 to 60 feet. Water: 84 to 85 F, choppy. We have dived with them before and really liked the crew — David, Garreth, and Serphin. Boat is spacious, and like the dive equipment, a bit long in the tooth but well-maintained. Day started out rainy, but crew awaited an improvement and went to considerable lengths to find a location with good conditions. Dive briefings were very thorough. Dived Tunnel Reef which had fabulous soft corals on the wall, and then a shallow dive (10 to 25 feet) at Hollywood Bowl, which had an unusual number of blue parrot fish. A friendly operation that provides free hotel pick-up anywhere on the island (which was a 30 minute trip from Paradise Island to their location near the airport). Rinse bucket provided and honored.
(www.bahamasgo.com/divedivedive.htm)

DiveDiveDive, Wyndham Nassau Resort, June 2003, Judy Brown, El Granada, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. DiveDiveDive is an excellent operation and is the recommended dive operation of the Wyndham Nassau Resort. Everyone at DiveDiveDive went out of his way to be accommodating and helpful. The staff loaded our gear onto the dive boat each morning. Guests readied their own tanks each dive. Entry was giant stride off the dive step with easy exit up the dive ladder. The captain honored requests for specific dive sites when possible, and the boat went out with as few as two divers aboard by special arrangement. The dive briefin-

gs were detailed, and the divemasters were eager to find interesting critters. There was a secure gear storage space, so we didn't have to take our wet gear back to the hotel after washing it in the fresh water rinse tanks. On our last dive day, they allowed us to keep our gear there overnight and then delivered it to us at our hotel the next evening. We would choose to stay at the DiveDiveDive resort over the Wyndham. Dedicated dunk tanks on boat for cameras. Lack of current made it easy to get good shots. Good macro subjects at Schoolhouse, Hollywood Bowl, and the Bond Wrecks. Great shark opportunities at Bahama Mama. (800-328-8029 or 809-362-1143)

Nassau Scuba Centre, Orange Hill Inn/Nassau Beach Hotel, August 2003, Scott A. Nill, Shirley, N.Y.

Experience: 160 dives. Vis: 60-120 ft. Water: 84- 86 F. Calm small chop. Dive restrictions enforced: 30-40 min. 100 ft. computer, 80 ft. no computer. On April 4, 2003, we booked a dive vacation for a group of 10 people, 4 divers through Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures, which we met at the Beneath the Sea Expo. We were given information and pamphlets about a place called Orange Hill Inn, which was supposed to be a "nice, clean place" comparable to a "Holiday Inn." Upon arrival to the Bahamas we rented cars to drive and start our great vacation. We were told that there was spacious parking accommodations directly adjacent to the Inn. If you call parking in a lot filled with garbage I guess that view can be accurate. I guess that was

my mistake I forgot to ask if it was a clean parking environment. As we dragged our luggage from the cars down the ramp and headed into this run down Inn we were given our room keys. We were given 4 rooms and as we opened the doors the smell of bug spray and mold was so overpowering that we were left no other alternative but to leave the doors open in 95 degree weather. Next to my room lived 5 barking dogs in a pen, which probably added to the smell of the environment that we were expected to stay in. I used the bathroom facilities and too my surprise the toilet handle was falling off and the top of the toilet was missing and it was replaced with old moldy wood. My attitude tried to stay positive (for all we were in the Bahamas) so after our delayed flight we went to the bar and restaurant to order food. We were brought 1 piece of ham and 1 piece of cheese and were told the bread is over there go make your sandwich. Needless to, say our appetite was lost and we checked out as fast as we checked in. At the front desk they claimed they did not receive any of their money from Neal Watson's and we would have to be refunded through them "of course." So on our vacation we had to search for another hotel. That same day 2 messages were left with the travel company who sent us to these unacceptable accommodations. It's really funny how the attitude of people changes once they receive your money (they don't want to even know you and they don't understand how you can be upset). Our vacation got brighter when we arrived at the Nassau Beach Hotel. After we paid for

another hotel on the same credit card we were given our rooms with beautiful views of the ocean and a beautiful pool, which was clean and not run down like the Inn. We were ready to begin our vacation. This Nassau Beach Hotel had great restaurants, casinos, shops, and great people to assist you and to think we got all of this for \$20 dollars more than the Inn. The next morning after 2 phone calls to the Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures I called again for the 3rd time and spoke to the travel agent who sold this vacation. I explained the situation and spent 10 minutes on the phone with her (which cost me \$32 dollars). Again with the attitude it was like you already paid for this "Oh well." I was also told that I was not in the corporate world I am now in the Bahamas so I have no right to be upset about this situation. At the end of the conversation it was stated we would receive a refund and she would get back to us later that day she had our phone number at the hotel. As you can well imagine, no we never received a phone call. So, we went on with our vacation and figured we would take care of this in New York. The Diving — I enjoyed diving with Nassau Scuba Centre. They were really nice people on and off the boat. The boats were a little like cattle boats, but they didn't over crowd them and I always felt comfortable. They had plenty of room for us and our gear: I did 10 dives with them and was satisfied with the diving. The deeper walls were in better condition not to much damage between 60-100 ft. There were some really nice sponge's and an assortment of corals. The shallow dives

had plenty of large parrot fish, big blue's, nice angels queen, gray and french, butterfly's, schools of blue tangs, grunts and yellow tail snappers. The coral on the shallow dives was showing some damage. But these dives were nice and relaxing. We also did the shark feeding dive with Nassau Scuba Centre. It was just awesome. Sharks coming from every direction in hope of grabbing some food, about 20 to 25 reef sharks cruising all around you. Also 1 nurse shark came to get in on the action. It was great. I would go back just to see the sharks. They were 4 to 8 ft. The diving is great for beginners but maybe next year — I'm going to the Caymans. When I arrived in New York I called my credit card company to find out no credit was made to my account. I got all the information about disputes just in case. I made my 5th phone call to the travel agency in Florida and spoke to the same travel agent as if she didn't know what was going on. I was told that I would be receiving a refund in about 2 weeks minus the night that we never stayed at Orange Hill Inn. The reason for this deduction was different each time we spoke. To make a long story short I am not making any more phone calls to this company. They are well aware that I want to be fully refunded for my vacation. One thing I can say that is a definite is that this company is one that will never be used again. (800-327-8150 or 809-362-1964)

Stuart Cove's, Hilton, February 2003, Jay Vaughn (jvw@door.net), Lubbock, TX. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 feet. Water: 76 to

79 F, choppy. The cattle operation of Stuart Cove's was an absolute nightmare, and the boat crew could not have cared less. This is the worst dive operation I have ever encountered. No help with equipment. Boats are crowded. Cheap operation charging premium prices for everything. Got ill after some bad fish was served at Conchfritters in town and asked Stuart Cove's for a refund on the next day's diving. They laughed and said sorry! I wouldn't return to Stuart Cove's or the Bahamas. It's too close to Florida and a real money machine with a bad attitude. The British Colony Hilton is a good operation. (www.dive-bahamas.com)

San Salvador

Riding Rock Inn, September 2002, Bill Lockhart, Plantation, FL. Vis: 40 to 70 feet. Water: 84 to 85 F. Dives accrued: 370. Dive restrictions enforced: 130 feet. Awesome walls, particularly at south end. Algae on reef gone. Great dive operation. (**800-272-1492, ridingrock@aol.com**)

Riding Rock Inn, October 2002, Gabriel I. Peñagaricano (guigo34@hotmail.com), San Juan, PR. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. My son-in-law, another friend, and myself were the only divers. Stan the divemaster was a consummate professional. He explained the dive sites and let us choose which one we wanted to visit next. He guided the first part of the dive and then left us to our own devices. It was an absolute pleasure to have someone like him, after encoun-

tering a host of idiots at many locations. The accommodations were adequate with good air conditioning, cable TV, and spotless rooms. The food was plentiful, tasty, and one could choose from several main courses. The walls are awesome with many crevices, swim-throughs, tunnels, and openings at 40 feet that led out to the wall face at 140 to 150 feet. Some sections of the reef evidence considerable encroachment by a green algae which shows a preference for star corals, completely destroying them. Sponges do not seem to be affected at all. The boat was, naturally, spacious, if somewhat slow. Nevertheless, this was not a consideration since the dive sites are close by; the furthest being about 30 minutes away. All in all, I will undoubtedly return.

Riding Rock Inn, November 2002, Tripp Jones (Tjones@sc.rr.com), Columbia, SC. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 125 feet. Water: 79 to 83 F, calm, no currents. The best dive staff I have dived with. Stan and Andrew are A+ professionals. You can dive your own profile, and they are there if you need them. They set up your tanks after the first dive and do an excellent job in taking care of the divers. The dive briefings were concise and knowledgeable. The viz was outstanding and the geographical aspects of the walls are, at times, astounding. There were plenty of critters, and the macro photographers were happy. The boat needs work, and the owner of Riding Rock needs to sink some capital into the boats, dive shop, and upgrading the operation. The food was

plentiful and good and the accommodations were fine. Did two a.m. dives and one afternoon dive. One night dive in the week was fine. Our sixth trip to Riding Rock. Club Med will reopen in December.

Riding Rock Inn, May 2003, Hans S. Menco, M.D., Pittsford, NY. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Total no. of dives: 525. Weather conditions: sunny most of the time, temp. in 80s. Water conditions: calm most of the time, temp. around 80, little or no currents. Used 3 mm shorty wet suit. Riding Rock Inn Resort: rooms are reasonable, comfortable, and clean, but resort is showing its age. Meals in general are good and well prepared. Service in the dining room tends to be slow but they try to be helpful and respond well to individual requests. Atmosphere in resort in general friendly and willing to be helpful. Dive guides efficient and helpful: give adequate pre-dive briefings and time and depth recommendations, but are not enforcing any limitations and leave dive profile to judgment to individual divers. The dive boats are comfortable and in good shape. A rinse tank is on board to be used exclusively for cameras and a table can be used for work on cameras like changing films. As you are ready to enter the water they put the tank and BC on your back and help you out of it when you return. Dive gear stays on board overnight and gets rinsed by dive guides. The reef structures are interesting with magnificent swim-throughs. However, the coral is not as healthy as I remember from years ago, with a lot of dead coral. Sand covered coral and algae

covered coral. Fish life is typical Caribbean: with the exception of a few hammerheads, turtles, barracuda, and friendly groupers, no dolphins or other large animals, but plenty of colorful smaller critters.

Riding Rock Inn, June 2003, Edward Clapp (edward.clapp@alum.mit.edu), Corte Madera, CA. Dives logged: >300. Vis: about 100 feet, but not crystal clear. Water temp 82 F. Overall weather conditions: dry and sunny. Water conditions: calm and flat, little current. Wetsuit: I always do, many others didn't. Critters: scorpionfish, eels, lobsters (but far fewer than I'm used to seeing), turtles, sharks, barracuda (including a 5-foot one), rays, baby and adult trumpet fish, headshield slug, crab looking like debris (no ID), large crabs (bodies ~1 ft), groupers (cleaning behavior). The coral is in bad shape — most covered with algae; sea urchins starting to show up. This is my second visit to RRI. My first was about 13 years ago. The major changes are the water problem (see below) and the amount of algae on the coral. The dive operation is generally satisfactory. To call the dive shop minimal would be an overstatement, but they did have the essentials (I can't speak to their photographic capabilities). The crew were pleasant and competent. The boat was well designed: there were sun/shade choices, it was not too crowded, there were rinse barrels for cameras and fresh towels. Boat rides were about 15-20 minutes. Three dives a day, two in the morning and one after lunch, with the first and third usually being deep. They offer one night dive a week.

There is no shore diving. San Salvador's specialty is wall diving and some of swim-throughs end up at 110+ ft. Briefings were quite adequate, though not up to the standards of Dive Makai (which has the best briefings I've ever come across) in Hawaii or Little Cayman Beach Resort. The dive-masters were not Teutonic about time and depth, but they did check. Also, they did most of the work getting divers into and out of the water. The only caveat is that one of the divemasters decided to swim home after the divers had gotten into the water for one dive, leaving some confusion behind. The food was OK but not great, and service was friendly but slow. This was not a problem, as there was no need to rush to get back to the boat. However, even when told in advance about vegetarian eating habits, the kitchen wasn't prepared. Rooms were good-sized and clean, with AC and TV, but without drinkable water. Water is a problem for RRI. Some years ago the government gave Club Med the OK to draw water from the town's water supply — fresh-water wells. Club Med use is four times greater than that of the rest of the users on the island and as a result the water is now saline (there is research showing CM's responsibility). It's OK to shower (though the salt is causing scaling in the water fixtures) and brush your teeth with, but not something you'd want to drink. It's not RRI's fault, of course, but they haven't realized they need to do the right thing for their customers and provide free drinking water (cisterns could provide sufficient quantities) in the rooms. The island has a research center. Given

RRI's been around for a long time, it's a shame it hasn't found a way to connect with the researchers. One might have thought it a great opportunity to, for example, offer passage on RRI's boats in return for talks about the island's geology and biology, and perhaps a field trip or two for RRI's guests.

Riding Rock Inn, July 2003,
Anonymous, Tampa Bay, CA. Club Med diving was fine, and the boats were full. They've recently enacted a 60 feet/18m max depth on second dives. Bummer. There is a new dive-master/head-of-diving over at Riding Rock Inn, Jean Paul, formerly head-of-diving/chief of scuba at Club Med. He is of French heritage and is married to an American named Susan, with whom they have a daughter who is 2 years old. Jean Paul knows the area well from his former job as chief-of-scuba at Club Med. He's personable, as is Susan, and a great addition to Riding Rock's staff. I spent a day diving with Jean Paul, his crew, and his only in-house guest that was a diver, along with several others from Club Med that basically rented the boat out. We did a private charter to the dive site "Double Caves" and a secondary site. Jean Paul briefed us well, and we did the three caverns at the site and ended the dive with a drift dive whereby the boat's captain, who had followed our bubbles, picked us up one by one as each buddy pair ascended. Some were coming up to the surface in 40 minutes or so, and some were more conservative with their air and stretched their UW time to 65 minutes. The captain of the boat

accommodated all. During the dive, most reported seeing a hammerhead, turtle, and crab or lobster hiding along the wall. Not a bad dive at all. Sea lice were prevalent during the excursion's term of mid-June to early July. Water temps were about 80 F. Vis was good almost daily.

Riding Rock Inn, August 2003, Susan DeCanio, San Jose, CA.

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 175 to 200 Feet. Water: 83 to 85 F, calm. Dive operation staff were outstanding! (Apparently new staff since March) Walls and visibility (200 ft!) are awe inspiring. Had the good fortune to see pilot whales from boat and dolphin while diving? Hammerhead and reef shark as well. Very eco aware (scientist from local field station came to give a lecture, guests made aware of preserving reefs, etc. Divemasters were experienced, helpful and fun! Service was topnotch! Staff were experienced but still full of enthusiasm for job. They were always available and accommodating to needs and requests. Hotel isn't run as well as the diving. Restaurant staff a bit slow but friendly.

BARBADOS

Barbados is busy and crowded, with lots of fast traffic, big splashy resorts, and restaurants galore. ... There's ordinary Caribbean diving with tropical fish, although big ones are rare, but it's fine for beginners or for a dive or two on a golf holiday. ... You still can find century-old bottles in the harbor and the wreck

of the *Stavronikita* is interesting but jammed with tourist divers. ... Keep hurricane season in mind.

Blue Reed Divers, April 2003, J. Kelley (ohchevy@aol.com), Natick, MA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 feet. Water: 82 F, calm. My best friend, a nondiver, and I went to a charity auction and bid on and won two American Airline tickets to the Caribbean, for \$550. Turns out for an April vacation, the only island that was available for our ticket category and travel dates was Barbados. I have never had a better experience with a dive shop, and I have almost 300 dives at many locations in the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. American Airlines overbooked the flight from San Juan to Barbados, and we were bumped involuntarily. The weather was great. The seas were calm on the west side of the island where I dove. The viz was about 50 feet, and the water temp hovered around 82 F. Mary and John Moore own and operate Blue Reef Divers on the west coast in Mt. Standfast, north of Holetown. The shop is right on the beach. Mary provides free transportation to and from your hotel. As I was staying on the south coast of Barbados, the ride was 40 to 60 minutes each way, depending on the rush hour traffic; Mary arrived each morning with a smile and an affable attitude. The rides were a treat as I got to see the island and Mary's island commentary and conversation were great fun. John handles the diving end of the operation. John is the divemaster, while a lifelong Bajan named Bob steers the boat and changes over your equipment between