

atmosphere of the resort. The dive setup was fabulous — everything is taken care of for you. Even though we delayed our trip until the end of March to avoid potential weather, we got it anyway. And it pretty much lasted all week. We weren't able to dive the Elbow for a few days due to visibility. None of the dives had good viz. Nonetheless we saw lots of turtles (huge) and all kinds of rays (except manta). And the tiniest drums. Despite the weather, it was a wonderful place to spend a week and amazingly enough we still really enjoyed the diving. ([www.turneffelodge.com](http://www.turneffelodge.com))

**Turneffe Island Lodge, March 2003, Roger, Donna & Kate Soape ([ras@rasoape.com](mailto:ras@rasoape.com)), Houston, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. The only place we regularly revisit, Turneffe Island Lodge provides some of the best service, best food and nicest accommodations we have found anywhere in the Caribbean — all on a remote island with no air service. Not as many sharks and eagle rays on this trip but still plenty. Lots of large schooling jacks, snapper and permit and turtles at The Elbow — a thrilling drift dive just a 10-minute boat ride from the resort. Three drift dives a day with surface intervals back at the lodge, except for the day trip to dive the Blue Hole and Half Moon Reef. One operator is feeding the sharks at the Blue Hole, apparently to satisfy his guaranteed shark-sighting. We didn't appreciate the 8 ft bull shark that jetted through the shallows where we were off-gassing to collect the morsel tossed

overboard. Half Moon Reef has beautiful corals. If you have time, combine a week at Turneffe Island Lodge with a couple of days eco-adventuring inland. Most dives are done from small boats — a short ride from the resort, so no camera facilities are provided on the skiffs. The boat captain and divemaster took good care of my video camera, placing it in a secure spot on the boat and in fresh water upon each return to the dock.

**Turneffe Island Lodge, March 2003, Ron & Sherry Smith, Levittown, PA.** Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 76-80 F. Experience: 204. This was our third year at this relaxed island resort. Accommodations are nice (on the beach), food is fantastic, and staff is eager to please. Sherman, the bartender, is entertaining and friendly and makes great island potions. Dive operation is great. We had excellent dives with Ricky and Bo. Bo pointed out tons of critters and Ricky took time to check for good visibility at dive sites; if not good, we went elsewhere. Lots of fish life (large and small). Had best dive at the end of the week with a pod of 30+ dolphins that joined us on our safety stop. They hung around and played with us spinning, jumping, and chirping.

## BONAIRE

In 1999, hurricane-driven waves damaged, even destroyed, many of Bonaire's beautiful shallow coral gardens, ruining snorkeling in many places. Still, Bonaire is a diver's island par excellence, with

easy diving that's especially well-suited to beginning divers or those returning to the water after a long dry spell. Superb year-round weather, with lows around 74 F at night and daytime highs around 89 F. Expect some rain from October through January, but, since Bonaire lies outside the hurricane belt, dives are rarely canceled. ... Savvy divers rent a vehicle to shore-dive the island (reserve ahead of time, or you may be out of luck — and don't leave valuables in your car). ... The southern end of the island is often rough but worth diving when conditions are favorable. ... Avoid meal plans to take advantage of the many restaurants within walking distance of most hotels (and so you don't get stuck if your hotel chef is on leave). There's overnight film processing, good gear rental, and repair facilities. ... Everyone speaks English.

**Bon Bini Divers, Lion's Dive, May-June 2003, Rick Neumann (tidalcom@aol.com), Bethesda, MD.** Vis: 50-70 ft. Water: 79-81 F. Experience: 300+ dives. Seventh trip to Bonaire. Lion's Dive operation is excellent. Hotel layout nice, staff okay. Lion's Den onsite restaurant the best. We ate Kirk Gosden's gourmet fare 8 of 9 nights. (Kirk used to be Chef at Sand Dollar.) Visibility was the worst Bonaire vis. ever — 50-70 feet. Still, tons of critters, especially eels, tarpon, huge snapper escorting a 4 foot moray on a dusk-dive. The shore dive off the

dock is perfect for new divers, with enough photo ops for veterans. Gotta rent a car, grab a few tanks, and do shore diving on your own, easy to get to, easy entry! ([www.bonbinidivers.com](http://www.bonbinidivers.com), [www.lionsdivebonaire.com](http://www.lionsdivebonaire.com))

**Buddy Dive, October 2002, Chris Kerios, Merritt Island, FL.** Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 81 to 83 F. Dives accrued: Hundreds. Outstanding! Well run operation, both the resort and dive staff are professional and a lot of fun. ([www.buddydive.com](http://www.buddydive.com))

**Buddy Dive, October 2002, Pat and Charlie Nash (c.nash@verizon.net), Virginia Beach, VA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 120 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. There was an unlimited boat dive package for free in October. Our stay carried us into November also. The dive operation extended the boat dive deal into November. This required an additional \$75/week/person since we hadn't signed up for the deal before leaving the states. The math was confusing, but it worked out to a good deal for an easy dive experience. Buddy Dive needs to simplify their pricing schemes so that guests can anticipate what they are spending as they go along. The boat dives got us to places that we hadn't been to before and couldn't have accessed from shore. It was interesting to see the differences from a dive site like Forest on one side of Klein Bonaire to the site called Munk's Haven. They are only a few hundred yards apart but on opposite sides of the island and two totally different dives. Buddy Dive provides good cooking

facilities and the Cultimara market has a nice supply of meats. Veggies are on a catch as you can basis. If you want lettuce this week, you had better grab it on the day they have some. We had the Buddy Dive breakfast buffet every day, and Rosita makes a great omelet. The rest of our room at Buddy Dive can be described as getting shabby. The outside of the buildings are being painted and our unit had a fresh coat of paint inside. The curtains and cushions were threadbare and needed replacing. New Toyota trucks are in and the one I was issued only had 17km on it. The gang at the dive operation went all out for everyone that they dealt with. I witnessed three different divemasters (Murphy, Alex, and Bart) lifting the tail end of a tank for the entire dive so that a physically impaired diver could still enjoy the sport. It also kept him off the reef, so they helped us all in that regard. All the rest of the divemasters — Sandra, Ken, Rob, Martin, Marc and Haagen — are outstanding as well and really work at making the dive experience easy on their guests. They answer questions and try to share interesting critters with everyone. Sometimes a crowd can build up around special interest items like sea horses or frogfish. They try to keep us sorted out so that everyone gets their shot. Alex can always be counted on for a surprise or two. Beware of the ghostly gorilla that inhabits the Hilma Hooker! The boats were kept clean and whenever the demand went up so did the number of boats in service. As we left, there were three large groups checked in. Each group got its own boat, and this involved Buddy Dive

leasing a boat from Capt. Dons. This is one of the safest boat operations we have ever dealt with. Rinse tanks on all boats and at dive shop. All boat crews careful with cameras and helpful in getting them to/from divers in the water.

### **Buddy Dive, Lion's Dive, October 2002, Scott Boyd, Olympia, WA.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to 145 feet. Water: 76 to 80 F, surge. You can safely eat anywhere in Bonaire as well as drink the tap water (which is good). Just do not leave any valuables in your vehicles; chances are they will not be there when you get back. Be sure to leave your windows rolled down, or they may be broken, and expensive to replace. The resorts and the dining in Bonaire are outstanding. I can think of few places that would be better for a beginner. Unfortunately, the diving is just not as good as many other Caribbean locations, and the crime problem casts a dark shadow on what would otherwise be an ideal location. Ice chest on boats with fresh water rinse was a bit crowded, but worked. Shore facilities include big permanent rinse tanks dedicated for cameras.

### **Buddy Dive Resort, November 2002, T. Michael Garrison (mgarrison@gbutler.com), Leawood, KS.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 feet. Water: 83 to 86 F, calm. The reefs are well developed and don't have the open and sandy area that more northern locations experience. Buddy has good facilities, good divemasters and crews, drive-through facility sup-

portive of shore diving, and a vehicle is provided with each room. Seahorses: we saw several. Also smaller turtles and eels. This is small creature diving: slugs, small shrimp, and beautiful reefs. If the dive is dull the divemasters will liven it up with some fake creatures so you have a memorable experience. The rooms are nice, clean, but maintenance is marginal (A/C went out daily and would only be fixed for one day). Food is just OK so eat at Bonaire's fantastic restaurants; do not buy a food package as you will miss out on some great eating experiences. We only bought breakfast, ate all other meals out and they were really great. Buddy's dive staff are really good, as well as giving us good boat and shore dives, they were able to recommend good diving on our own. Bartender TC was the best source for outstanding restaurants. Book your dive through their U.S. operations in Newton, Mass., and be sure you get what you order; they don't listen well. Stay away from Dutch Caribbean Airline — the old ALM — they will lose your luggage, and they will not give you any service. It is a terrible operation. Fly directly into Bonaire if you can. Buddy drive-through is unique and helpful; they have full Nitrox capability. This was an excellent dive operation that supported underwater photography.

**Buddy Dive, December 2002, Alice Edington, St. Joseph, MI.** Vis: 60-90 feet. Dives logged: 120. Dive restrictions enforced: 90 feet max. Bonaire's accommodations, services, and diving are wonderful. However, the atmosphere of the entire island has dramatically

changed since we started diving there in 1994. We never had a problem with theft before. This trip our truck was ransacked five times. My sunglasses, skittles, soap, and other inexpensive items were taken. Trucks around us had their windows shattered daily. The youth of the island now all have cell phones and drive around blasting music. We saw police, but laws were not being enforced. Bonaire needs to take serious steps to protect its dive site areas.

**Buddy Dive, Lion's Dive, January 2003, Debbie Anderson (daafy@san.rr.com), San Diego, CA.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 80 to 150 feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy. We stayed at Lion's, and the room was good. Full kitchen. Cleaned daily and nice balcony/view. Regency rooms are better than the Royal apts. The food for dinner in resort restaurant was some of the best we had on the island. Kirk does a great job, and the place gets busy. We used the kitchen in the condo for breakfast and lunch. We opted for Buddy Dive due to the better-looking boat with more shade. One of our party has a bad back, and the crew helped her in and out of the water. Pleasant group to dive with. Great night diving off of Buddy's dock. Did the town pier night dive as a private tour. You should do this dive with no more than four other people, and it's worth the extra money. Coral and sponges recovering nicely after Lenny. Saw many seahorses. The trip over all was great except for a jelly fish sting and a minor run in with some fire coral at Alice in Wonderland.

**Buddy Dive, February 2003, David Lefever (DMLefever@aol.com), Pelham Manor, NY.** Dives logged: 40. Vis: 75-100 ft. 19 dives in 6 days, including my first night (3) and shore (13) dives. Buddy Dive delivered on promise of 24/7 “dive through” air for unlimited shore diving. Some of the more challenging shore dive sites were rewarding, particularly Nukove and Angel City. The Salt Pier and Town Pier (night) dives lived up to advanced billing. Overall, a spectacular diving venue. Get a room with a kitchenette, and shop at the one grocery store frequented by locals.

**Buddy Dive, Caribbean Club, February 2003, Karen Groshong (groshong@oregoncoast.com), Tillamook, OR.** Vis: 90 to 110 feet. Water: 82 to 85 F. Experience: 1,500+ dives. The Caribbean Club’s awesome. Booked through Sun Rentals. This place is fantastic. Very clean, quiet, pool, outdoor bar/dining room, dive gear wash tank, drying room, 30 seconds from Oil Slick Leap, five minutes to Karpata, 10 minutes to town center. The managers, Sean and Mar, are the nicest couple you’ll ever meet. \$65US per night, for a one bedroom, fully equipped apartment. Every unit has its own private, tiled terrace with furniture for lounging around. Our apartment came equipped with a king bed, a/c and fan in the bedroom, and large fan in the living/kitchen area. The only noise you’re going to hear is an occasional donkey and a dog barking at the donkey and the parrots. Other than the guests living there, you are completely secluded.

**Buddy Dive, February 2003, Mark S. Reckman (mreckman@cinci.rr.com), Cinti, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 76 to 79 F, calm. Hurricane damage from Nov. 2000 is apparent at 30 feet. The sites in Washington Park were badly damaged. The sites along the “middle” of the east coast are still in good shape. The damage above water has been largely repaired. We think the dive operation at Buddy Dive is great. Their “drive thru” is great for shore diving. We liked the staff. The rest of the resort operation is OK. The units are small but clean and functional and have kitchens. A truck comes with each room — great for shore diving. Buddy Dive was just purchased by the Plaza. We looked at rooms at the Lion’s Den and Captain Don’s (the new rooms). Those resorts look a little better than Buddy Dive. But Buddy Dive’s dive operation is as good or better. We also stayed two nights at the Plaza. Typical 5 star resort — nice big rooms, good service, and fancy. Food is just so-so. Mostly European guests. Big dive operation at the Plaza. We liked it, but it is expensive. There is only one half-decent photo shop on the island — Fish Eye Photo (formerly Sand Dollar Photo) was totally wiped out by Hurricane Lenny and is rebuilding. Look for much improvement in 12 months.

**Buddy Dive Resort, August 2003, Mark Y. Yamanaka (markyy3@sbcglobal.net), Fremont, CA.** Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, calm. After reading nearly every reader report in *Undercurrent*, we decided to make our

first real dive trip to Bonaire with the Buddy Dive Resort. We read many glowing reports about Buddy's, and after diving and staying with them for 9 days, we can enthusiastically say that we are 100% satisfied customers. The all-inclusive Dive/Drive special includes everything — 1 boat dive/day, unlimited tanks for shore dives, accommodations, breakfast, airport transfers, and a rental truck. The breakfasts at the Dock of the Bay restaurant have fresh fruit, French toast, pancakes, meat, and eggs, and they will make your omelet while you wait in line. The 1 room condo had a full kitchen, a/c in the bedroom, a shower, cable TV, and while it wasn't luxurious, everything was clean and modern. Dive masters Alex, Zoo, and Martin all gave good briefings and could spot stuff in the water that we'd never be able to find on our own. Most boat dives went to Klein Bonaire or sites on Bonaire that were hard to access from shore, like Rappel. Along the main road there are yellow/orange stones that mark the dive sites and for most of the sites you pull your truck up to the shore (or close to it), gear up and walk into the water. We went to the Salt Pier, Oil Slick Leap, which now has a ladder that makes entries/exits easy, and Andrea 1 and 2. We also dove on the beach in front of the old Sunset Beach Hotel, which is now abandoned. But there's a little tugboat wreck about 20 yards off the beach at about 75-95 feet that is getting covered with sponges and coral now, and is interesting. We followed the instructions posted on our rental truck — "Leave all windows open and doors unlocked" and we just

kept some old beach towels, my old \$10 sunglasses, our flip flops and a bottle of cold water in the glove compartment. We didn't have a single thing stolen. We talked to locals after a few shore dives who had been hanging out on the beach — they were all friendly. The coral and fish life were abundant — we saw many parrotfish, yellow tail snapper, some tarpon, barracuda, frogfish, sea horses, and even a scorpion fish. We met a lot of good people while we were there, but especially a couple from Ohio, who had been to Bonaire 5 times before and gave all kinds of great advice. The staff from Dorothy at the main desk, to Sandra, Martin, Arturo (or was it Alberto) at the dive shop, to Franklin (Fred) at the drive up tank fill station, are top notch and helpful and friendly. Fred especially helped us pick good shore dive sites. When we left, we gave him a tip for all his hard work and when we went to the airport, we were greeted by Fred's girlfriend and she wanted to tell us how much he appreciated the tip. When was the last time you had someone go to that much trouble to thank you for a tip? Great accommodations, great diving and most of all, great people.

**Captain Don's, September 2002,**  
**Michael Cleaver (mcleaver@gladstone.uoregon.edu), Eugene, OR.**  
Experience: 26-50 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 feet. Water: 70 to 80 F, calm, no currents. The diving was convenient as the scuba lockers and dock were 50 yards from our room. There were three chalkboards with tomorrow's dive and you just wrote in your tank number to reserve a spot. The rental pickups from

the resort have handy little tank racks, and dive sites are marked along the side of the road. We found that it was more fun not to plan the site, but just find one that looks interesting as the whole protected side is diveable. Explore the other side of the island, hunt for flamingos, eat ice cream, and drive through the national park. The island looks like a piece of Arizona dropped in the Caribbean with cactus lizards and all (which kind of adds to the charm). Also the rooms at Captain Don's are not all equal. Each four room complex differs, especially by it's age. We were in the 300 complex which was new with a television and all of the comforts of home, but the first night my room was occupied, and the bathroom gave off an odd odor and seemed a nest for bugs. Get one of the newer built rooms. It's interesting to search around the island for a place to eat, but it's difficult to find good food; seafood is usually the best choice. If you are a large fan of mustard, bring your own, as strangely enough I couldn't find any mustard on the island. Beware of the yellow squeeze bottles because they usually hide creamy and terrible mayonnaise. Captain Don does hilarious slide shows every Tuesday. He has women in the audience pick from a bag "rings of memory" which coincide with a story. However, the stories change nightly as they become ridiculous with pirates and reality television stories. Most people that I met there were on a two or three week stay. There's always a new reef on down the road. ([www.habitatdiveresorts.com/BonaireHome.html](http://www.habitatdiveresorts.com/BonaireHome.html))

### **Captain Don's Habitat, January 2003, Esther Kuznetz (esther@sara-bay.com), Sarasota, FL.**

Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. The resort and it's staff were wonderful and helpful in all areas (e.g., resort, restaurants, diving and dive sites, and other area attractions). We were able to dive our own profile from the boats even if it meant 75-minute dives. When the boat filled up for Klein Bonaire before we could sign up, they added another boat just for us. All boats had separate rinse buckets for cameras, as did the dock for shore diving. Their photo shop had experienced attendants to help with any questions and/or rentals, and they were extremely knowledgeable.

### **Captain Don's Habitat, March 2003, Paul McFall (pemcfall@yahoo.com), Cumming, GA.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 35 to 50 feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, calm. My second trip to Bonaire. The diving is great; lots of small to medium sized fish and great soft corals. The lack of current and ease of access to the dive sites makes this a wonderful location for anyone. The island has just enough stores and service operations to make it comfortable, but if it's solitude you want, take your rental car and go for a drive. You're sure to find your own little world. Captain Don's rooms are comfortable, with great balconies for drying your stuff and yourself. The restaurant is great; don't leave without having a pizza! The dive operation is topnotch, with several longtime employees who always show you a

great time in the water. Beside being a great critter finder and all-around great guide, Sherman is a perfect example of the local people and their friendly, laid-back attitude.

### **Captain Don's Habitat, April 2003, Dr. Bill Schlegel, Riverside, CA.**

Water: 82 F. Essentially no currents.

Last visit was about four years ago, and the only changes are new docks (post Hurricane Mitch) and the loss of the beautiful elkhorn coral stand in the shallow water just north of the docks. Otherwise, the coral and reefs are healthy. Little bleaching and some areas are pristine. Fish life is healthy. But not a place to regularly see large reef critters. Stingrays are seen occasionally; eagle rays and large pelagics are rare. Sharks are uncommon. If you want to see (and photograph) the usual small reef critters — anemones, morays, sharp-tailed eels, all sizes of spotted drums, turtles, and some of more unusual things such as needlefish and reef squid — then this is your place. Found a conger eel on a night dive. Divemasters Roger (Mr. Fix It) and Greg were professional, and — considering the range of experience in our group (and demands) — they demonstrated an incredible range of skills. We had two certifying open water divers who were accommodated perfectly, with their instructor. Then there were several mid-level (500-5,000 dives) divers who were made happy (and left alone) to do their thing. The Habitat has a motto — “the Home of Diving Freedom” — and they are that. Then there was the group of open circuit re-breather divers who were

accommodated perfectly. They provided the correct gas mixes, on time, along with other supplies. Then there were the technical divers who needed trimix and two closed-circuit re-breather divers who did several dives below 200 feet. All were choreographed perfectly by Roger and Greg, sometimes all on the same boat trip! Some may ask what this means for the average diver, with 50 logged dives, on compressed air for 30 minutes. Well, it means experience that may be useful to anyone. You don't find this depth of experience often, at least presented in a friendly manner. Dock diving off the pier is acceptable. They have a unique way of doing the check-out dives. You just have to do a dive off the pier — unsupervised — with your buddy or group before you go out on a boat. This seems to work out well for everyone, and buoyancy and equipment problems are sorted out in 10 feet of water. The dive farther out from the pier is surprisingly nice for such a heavily dived area. You can dive 24 hours a day, and beach diving all over Bonaire (via car or truck) is encouraged. The rooms are serviceable. Cleaned daily. You can leave things in your room without them being stolen (be reasonable, but you can leave your equipment out). Some rooms have a nice ocean view. Some of the cottages have an ocean view; some do not. Food is excellent, in my opinion, with a buffet breakfast every morning, small selection for lunch, and larger selection for dinner. Meals available until 10 p.m. for late night divers. Bug spray is useful but this is not a buggy place — occasional mosquito. Currency is the



Dutch Florin or Guilder. Everyone takes the dollar. Drinking water is safe; they have a modern water system that supplies the whole island from a desalination plant. North American electrical outlets with 120 volts. Fairly modern medical facilities. Kralendijk (main town) is still quaint. The rest of the island is barren but a car or scooter will get you to some of the far southern dive sites; check out the sea salt processing complex on the south end, the wind surfers Mecca at the lake on the southeast side (next to the nudist colony), and the flamingo colonies and Slagbai National Park in the hills to the north. It's recommended that you take a trip around the island on your "gas off day" before you leave.

### **Captain Don's Habitat, April 2003, Jackie Sax, Glen Ellyn, IL.**

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 150 feet. Water: 78 to 85 F, calm, choppy, surge. Found the room clean with a good view. The entire staff makes a huge effort to help get you what you need or want. Everyone is just so nice. I forgot my mask on the dive boat which was switched midweek, so that next day, one of the divemasters swam out to the boat mooring to get my mask. The SCUBA crew were the nicest, most caring, fun and knowledgeable group of happy people; they helped us gear-up, put our rigs together, carry tanks and weights, so you do not have to. They gently help you onto the boat and into the water, to get you on your way to discover the reef. If the mooring was already taken, we voted on a site, and the captain complied. Breakfast was always good and filling,

however the lunches and dinners were expensive (\$30 min.), and not good. The trip was expensive, but I got every penny back, when at 40' I played with an urchin the divemaster found. Or he showed me a rare fish, tongues, snails, parrot fish, and blue tangs nipping at my earrings. There was no hot water. Being an insomniac, I would shower at 2:00 am, because any other time the water was warmer outside under the wetsuit wash. So, I would wash my hair in tepid water (2:00 am), then let it air-dry, as I would walk the property, and sit on the short pier, waiting for the sunrise. They do have roaming security. Fresh water soaking tanks on all boats, and all around the staging area. Can dive 24hrs, and many critters come out at night, right in front of resort. 24 hr. turn around time for spent film. In-house pro for questions, or equipment rental. Huge effort to accommodate. Lots of subjects, large and small.

### **Captain Don's Habitat, April 2003, Karin & Glenn Butler, Lake Villa, IL.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, choppy. The people are friendly, the dive operation is run efficiently, and the boats are clean, well cared for, and leave on time; tanks are always available; and the reef right out the front door (La Machaca) has to be one of the best dive sites on Bonaire, period. Some people with package deals only used up two or four of the boat dives they had already paid for and spent almost all of their time on the home reef! This was our first visit after the storm and some destruction from the hurri-

canes' wind and surge is still evident, both above and below water. The best, i.e., least damaged, dive sites we saw were North of Capt. Don's. Almost everywhere anything above 20 to 30 feet is mostly rubble, although gorgonians have reestablished themselves, and there are plenty of little critters to watch. We also missed the large barrel and vase sponges we saw 10 years ago. But the fish life was still as we remembered: prolific, unafraid, actually downright friendly! If you are flying American through San Juan, P.R., make sure you have essentials for the first day or two in your carry-on as your bag may not make it to Bonaire. The problem has become so common that Capt. Don's has an established procedure for renting dive gear at the expense of AA for people whose luggage arrives late. And don't depend on AA's staff on Bonaire to deliver your bags — go and get them. We couldn't even get AA Bonaire to answer their phone most of the time. Nowhere are the fish friendlier than in Bonaire. Bring a clasp lens, because that's where they will be!

**Captain Don's, June 2003, Dennis Munden, Del Mar, CA.** Experience: Over 1,000 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. We have been going to Captain Don's for years. We always have a great time. The rooms are nicer than the larger units. Dive operation has always been good. The food on site has always been so-so and remains that way. The food service was really bad. The off site places were much better. Coral was still in good shape. One site, that is not dived regu-

larly, was as good as it gets. Little fish are still there in great numbers but that is about it. Saw few angels etc. Still nice easy diving and a great place to learn under water photography. On site pro helpful.

**Captain Dons, August 2003, Artie Burke (scubadiver@houston.rr.com), Katy, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm. Great connections from Houston via Jamaica to Bonaire. The first half day of potential diving was a waste — had to sit through a 1 hr 15 min discussion of marine park and facilities which could have been done in 30 mins — then had to wait for marine tags, weights, etc. Finally got in the water afternoon on first day. All could have been done night before if organized to get you diving that morning. Enjoyed a mix of boat diving with Captain Dons and shore diving on our own. We found 2 seahorses and 2 frog fish — very exciting. The shore diving wasn't as easy as I thought it would be — some sights — such as Angel City and Andrea — had rocky entrances. Karpata was great. Wish we had purchased a Guide to Shore Dives. Angel City was the most difficult as we had a fast current and wasted a lot of air just getting to the wall on the way out but was able to have a decent swim back. Facilities at Capt. Dons was OK — we stayed in the jr. suites — nothing fancy but adequate. These had nice ocean views. The cottages were newer but no view. The food at Rum Runners (restaurant on site) was very good and we had beautiful sunsets. Also went to Richards for a wonderful meal. We

enjoyed having a rental car and some freedom in our dive timings although it was not easy to and from the vehicle to the water on every site. A good break was diving on the boat and that gave us access to some good sites as well as diving on Klein. The dive masters at Capt. Dons are great — especially enjoyed Neatto, Jonathan and Sherman. Air Jamaica canceled the flight from Jamaica to Houston and routed us to Atlanta and then to Houston — so we got home about 8 hrs after our original plan flights. Comments: Great place for small fish — first time I used macro and got some decent results. The photo shop was helpful in pointers and support such as batteries. Several people rented digital cameras.

**Capt'n Dons Habitat, August 2003, Michele Kondras, Pompano Beach, FL.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 feet. Water: 80 to 83 F, calm. The Home of Diving Freedom lived up to its name. We signed up for unlimited nitrox diving and it was easy to dive on the boats or from the shore. The resort did have problems with small sugar ants in the rooms, but they were good about fixing any problems. Everything was convenient, from the location of the dive shop to fresh water baths.

**Capt. Don's Habitat, September 2003, Dave Bridenbaugh (dtbriden@fuse.net), Cincinnati, OH.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, calm, choppy, surge. Touring the island could have been done easily in a day. Not much to see. Enjoyed seeing the Flamingos and saw

a wild boar on a dirt road. 5 people in our resort had their rental vehicles broken into within 4 days. The problem is mainly that the authorities do little about it other than "lip service." Habitat has a nice E-6 camera shop with full service and rental.

**Carib Inn, July 2002, James Snowden (scootgooch@cs.com), Longview, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 125 feet. Water: 78 to 82 F, calm. The diving freedom is fantastic on Bonaire. You almost fear it will disappear someday. Just throw a tank in the rental pickup, and go where you want, when you want. Extremely good night diving right off the Carib Inn dock. Wife had a bad outbreak of sea lice — took us by surprise. Local doctor didn't recognize it (we researched it after we got home). Local diving folks were not aware of the influx of the jellyfish. Will take SafeSea next time. I didn't get it because I took off my swimsuit after every dive, dried off, and changed clothes (wife left swimsuit on). ([www.caribinn.com](http://www.caribinn.com))

**Carib Inn, July 2002, Marilyn Koukol (koukolm@hotmail.com), FPO AE.** Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 70 to 75 F. Dives logged: 1,200. The Carib Inn was quite comfortable, and the guides were helpful. However, we saw as much if not more on our shore dives as compared to boat dives. We did like the seahorses under the town pier during our evening dive. The food at the restaurants in Bonaire is expensive. The kitchenette in the hotel was great for breakfast and lunch. The div-

ing was fine, but I expected more fish. There just wasn't a lot of life, and there was still evidence of coral damage due to the hurricane. It was fun diving, but not exceptional. We also flew to Venezuela to see Salto Angel — the highest waterfall in the world. It was quite an experience to camp out along the river for two nights and sleep in a hammock. Definitely rustic camping! It was also a bit nerve wracking flying in and out of Caracas, Venezuela, but had no problems.

**Carib Inn, May 2003, Art Neslon (realfish@earthlink.net), Oakhurst, NJ.**

Dives logged: 750-1,000. Vis: 50 to 75 feet. Water: 78 to 80 F. Dive restrictions enforced: 110 feet. 500 psi. There is a strong Bonaire/New Jersey connection, what with expats from Jersey establishing inns and dive operation on Bonaire. Finally, after hearing how great the diving is from many of my Jersey dive friends, I decided on the Carib Inn, an operation that gets repeated good grades in *Undercurrent*. Bruce Bowker and crew couldn't have been nicer. Complete inn and dive check in is done in the dive shop, where you are issued a tank number, a marine park badge, and instructions about the general dive drill. The shop has a good supply of quality gear and can do repairs and most kinds of certification. The rooms (only 10) are neat, clean, and have TVs and kitchen gear for those that pick up groceries in town and fix their own meals. We ate dinner at Richard's or Chiby-Chiby each night, each less than a five-minute walk. My wife, a nondiver, loved the convenience and the general laid back

feel of the inn. The dive crew was very helpful, with good briefings and helped with gear. The diving, though, is largely a matter of perspective. When one returns each year to the same dive spot, mostly because of the ease and convenience built in by the dive operations, it is a tribute to those operations, but it disallows comparison to other places. I found the diving very low voltage. The calm west side's fringing reef and the fringing reef of Klein Bonaire are really the only diving areas due to the rough water on the east side. Aside from a few teenage tarpon, there are no large fish on the west side to speak of. Also, there seems to be no areas that adult fish can be recruited from. It is a marine life system in trouble, from an adult fish standpoint. Locals fish with hand lines along the reef for food, as they should, but the fish caught don't seem to get replaced. Much of the coral is beat up. I don't know if that is from constant diving, the Lenny storm of '99, or both. I stopped waiting for something to swim in from the blue about one third through my stay and started looking for the little stuff: frog fish, sea horses, shrimp, and many juvenile fish got on video tape. One very large free swimming green eel stopped and became a star. I found enough to interest me. A fresh water shower on the boat dock would be great. The biggest problems are with the boat(s). The max customers on the *Renegade*, which is the 22/25-foot open skiff, is 12 plus two dive guides. That is too many. It has no camera area, no cover, and the only seats are the gunwales. There should be fewer people or a bigger boat. The ladder is

dangerous. It is a regular style (not a fish-bone type) with flat rungs of aluminum, diamond pattern metal. These rungs are very slippery when wearing dive booties, as compared to round rungs. The most dangerous aspect of the ladder, however, is it has no elevated hand hold at the top for climbing into the ever-rocking boat. Just to the aft of the ladder, on the gunwale or even attached to the top if the right hand post, there should be a 12 inch to 15-inch high hand hold bar. I have never been to a dive place, except for live-aboards, that make your stay and your diving easier or more convenient.

**Dive & Adventure, Sand Dollar Condominiums, December 2002, James and Kandace Heimer (mango9@earthlink.net), Houston, TX.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. Travel to the resort was extremely difficult due to cancellation of our Air Jamaica flight from Houston early Saturday morning. We were rerouted through Miami with much delay, spent the night in Montego Bay, and had to go through Curacao, then to Bonaire. We finally arrived Sunday at 4:30 p.m., and our luggage arrived five hours later. The return trip got us home in one day and was uneventful. The resort was clean and comfortable with a great view of the ocean. Only the bedrooms were air-conditioned, but the weather was pleasant, and we left the doors opened to the patio balcony for a nice breeze. Housekeeping was sufficient; however, we needed to ask for more towels each day. Since we were in the townhouses, we were set apart from the dock and the

dive operation. Wings A and B are closer to the activities. Den Lamén Restaurant was okay, but food was expensive and not good quality. We did not eat at Mangos, the on-premise restaurant, mainly because it was not on the beach. In between dives, there was no place to get snacks or drinks at the dock. We could not use Den Lamén's facilities if we had dive gear and dive suits on. We liked Rum Runners at Capt. Don's and the Lion's Den at the Lion's Dive Club, and we liked the facilities at Buddy's Dive Resort because there was more activity and people there. Bonaire Dive and Adventure was an excellent dive operation. We received a thorough Bonaire dive briefing and orientation of the island, which includes shore diving. The boats are small but well equipped for diving. I rented a BC, which was in excellent condition. Also, it appeared that the rest of their rental equipment was well maintained. They have a large storage room to accommodate dive equipment and a place to hang dive suits to dry out. There are several rinse tanks, camera rinse tank, and two showers right on the dock. For night shore diving, they have outside lockers, with locks, to store your equipment, making it convenient to do a night dive off the dock. Divemasters were safety conscious, knowledgeable of marine life, and helpful on the dives. We especially enjoyed diving with Jerry, on site naturalist, and Dara. Both of them pointed out numerous fish, seahorses, and coral that we would never have found. After the dive, they explained the characteristics and behavior of the things we saw on the dive. Bonaire's shore diving was

excellent. We purchased a book at the dive shop, which described each shore dive in great detail, including enter and exit tips. There are big, yellow rock signs to show you the direction to the shore dives. Next time we will probably stay at Buddy's or Captain Don's.

Photography Comments: The resort had no particular accommodations for photographers. There was a separate rinse tank on shore, but nothing on the boats. The excellent visibility and variety of marine life account for the high overall rating. ([www.discoverbonaire.com/dive](http://www.discoverbonaire.com/dive))

### **Divi Flamingo Beach, November 2002, Peter Golitzen (pgolitzen@attbi.com), El Cerrito, CA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 81 F, calm. Had we known, we would have skipped the meals-included package; service was horribly slow at lunch and dinner. Short walk into town for many choices, but none too cheap. The breakfast buffet was great and is usually included with the dive package. Rooms were okay, and I recommend staying there, but not perfect. Beer retails over \$1 for 25 cl bottles (i.e., about 8 oz.), and Divi charges about \$3 to \$4 for one of those teeny beers. Wish I had brought a bottle of hard stuff along. Dive operation excellent (although they did cram 15 to 17 divers on a boat, but it was an exceptionally busy week). Sometimes we had as few as eight on the boat. Wind usually wipes out the bugs, but once in a while I got eaten alive while waiting for dinner. Needed some DEET one time. Restaurants are open-air and rarely need screening due to wind.

Although Dutch is official language, English spoken by most. A "pidgin" Papiamentu is bantered about (relic of slave days). Bring cash for casino purposes, else credit card does a lot. Flew in American Eagle from San Juan; no problem except late arrival and early departure. Dutch Caribbean — I believe the ghost of ALM — notorious for losing luggage, and they did it again to some friends. ([www.divibonaire.com](http://www.divibonaire.com))

### **Divi Flamingo Beach, November 2002, Tom Lopatin (sharkrodeo@att.net), Lake Hopatcong, NJ.**

Experience: Over 1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. Return visit after 18 years. Sadly, as in so many other parts of the Caribbean, Bonaire is a shell of its former self. Corals were dead in many sites, fish life much more scarce. My wife rated it about 50% of what it was last time. Although we booked way in advance and specified a waterfront room, we were put in one of the run down time-share units because of a Frink digital camera course group. Only after insisting on getting what we paid for were we accommodated our second night. Dive guides went through the motions, you could catch them looking at their watches anticipating the end of their dive day. If you were at Bonaire in the "good old days" and are thinking of going again you might want to reconsider.

### **Divi Flamingo Beach, January 2003, Gill Cruz, Pleasanton, CA.**

Vis: 60-90 feet. Water: 78-80 F. Dives logged: 3,000+. Divi Dive Bonaire staff and service were excellent (courteous, knowledgeable, helpful, profes-

sional). Resort accommodations: good, clean, all the amenities were there. Remodifications to property good. Not too pricey.

### **Divi Flamingo Beach, April 2003, Rich Gettmann, Deer Harbor, WA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 81 feet, choppy, no currents. A comfortable resort with a good dive shop and staff. Only one boat dive we had an overloaded boat, 19 divers. Rest of the time they took two or more boats with six to 10 divers each. A daily blackboard lets you sign up for which boat and location you want. They kept beginners off the boat and keep dive groups together on one boat. Nitrox is an extra charge. You are responsible for your own gear loading, unloading, and washing. They have a good gear shack on the dock, so you don't have to carry it back to your room. Food is good at the resort, and lots of great restaurants in town just a short walk. Great shore diving off the dock and all around the island. Rented a car just one day to do some exploring, as we hadn't been here in 10 years. Lots of new development, but still a small, quaint island with a slow pace. We were disappointed that there weren't more fish. Some evidence of hurricane damage still exists, especially on the outside of Klein Bonaire. Overall, reefs in pretty good shape. Separate rinse tank on the dock for regulators and cameras. People seemed to respect that. No camera table or place to put camera gear on the dock when washing out gear or in the dive shop. One boat had a camera table on it, but most of the week we dove off the other

boat, so had to just sit the camera in a beach towel at the front of the cabin.

**Divi Flamingo Beach, May 2003, Roger Bell, Smyrna, GA.** Vis: 60 to 110 feet. Water: 80 to 84 F. Experience: 200+ dives. First trip to Bonaire, won't be the last. Ties with Cayman Brac, Little Cayman as our favorite dive destination. Just shore dived. Healthiest reef, corals, sponges, and fish in my diving experience. Rent a car and shore dive to your heart's content. Short drive to sites, easy access, and economical. Maybe not the most customer-friendly, but were certainly O.K. Very good in-house restaurant. Close to town. Not the Ritz, but nice enough for most laid-back diver types. Other resorts (e.g., Lions and Habitat) looked similar and more than adequate.

**Divi Flamingo, June 2003, David Smedley (dpsmed@adelphia.net) Rialto, CA.** Experience: Over 1,000 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 83 F, calm, no currents. Lots of good places to eat in walking distance to town. Resort is redoing eating facilities and should be completed by now. A lot of theft from vehicles and newest thing is the punks cut your gas line to steal your gas, because of locking gas cap. Recommend removing the lock gas cap. Cheaper to buy gas then pay for cut gas line (which ins. doesn't cover). Have been going there for more then 10 years. New General Manager, Fritz, is great. Sometimes a little bit of a hassle to take your camera gear when shore diving. Can't leave anything in vehicle because of theft.

**Divi Flamingo Beach, June 2003, Irv Kaplan (cpt\_diver@cox.net), Henderson, NV.** Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, calm. If you are going to do boat diving, do 2 tank boat dives, so you can go further north & south and spend more time on Klein. Divi doesn't do their own Nitrox fills. I expected to pay an extra \$100 for the week, ended paying closer to \$200. They charge per tank. Tester provided was poor and tanks weren't always filled to 3,000 psi. Long haul of tanks to truck for shore diving. Shore diving from Divi is excellent. Easy gear up, entry and exit. Good location for night dive. If I was doing primarily boat diving, I would stay at Divi, but if I was doing primarily shore, then I would use a hotel with drive thru fill station (Buddy Dive — even though I don't care for their dive staff). The Divi Flamingo has renovated their hotel rooms. We had the ocean view rooms (I highly recommend the second floor). Their restaurant has some very good food, at reasonable prices with, for Bonaire, good & fast service. I love their ice coffee and their ice cream. A short walk to downtown, which my non-diving wife appreciated, and a small beach. Watch out for the KLM crews, they have a tendency to take over. If you rent a car (truck) make sure they show how to work the A/C and the different keys. Town Pier — there are still a lot of critters in the garbage, but it's so overdone that the piers don't have much animal life on them. We went in with a small group and got overwhelmed by a hoard of uncontrolled divers. Someone even had a large cave light blinding everyone. Dive

Salt Pier as a twilight and night dive, and watch the tarpons feed off your lights. No camera tables, and recharging station in dive shop was inadequate.

**Divi Flamingo Beach, June 2003, Tripp Jones M.D. (Tjones@sc.rr.com), Columbia, SC.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 70 feet. Water: 77 to 80 F, calm, no currents. Went with our dive shop, Wateree Dive Center in Columbia, S.C., and had great trip. Conditions were fine, viz fair to good, but with the great corals, the viz did not have to be great. Had extremely good divemasters, Rofino and Laurel, who were superb. The boats were good; could dive our own profiles, within reason, and saw a tremendous variety of great coral reef life. Large green morays, free swimming, were seen on several dives, both at Klein Bonaire and on the mainland. Sea horses and multiple other small critters make this a great place to go. Able to walk to town (10 minutes) and downtown food usually good and priced fairly reasonable. This was our fourth trip to Divi Flamingo.

**Divi Flamingo Beach, July 2003, Cheryl Morgavi Mire, Metairie, LA.**

We were lured back to Bonaire by an attractive package through our local dive shop which included a full meal plan, 3 boat dives a day and accommodations at the newly renovated Divi Flamingo Resort. We arrived at Divi late in the evening with another large dive group. Naturally, only one person was at the desk to check in the 50+ travelers. Bonaire, which typically has only 11 inches of rainfall a year, was



having a deluge. Unlike my comrades who endured the three hour wait for dinner in the restaurant, I gave up and went to sleep. Because of the size of our group, we had their largest boat for the week and two competent dive masters (Orlando and Enrique) who alternated underwater duties. We left for two morning dives at 8:30, usually returning by 11:30. Then we scrambled to eat lunch and be back on the dive dock for the 2:00 p.m. departure. More time before the afternoon dive would have been a plus, but the schedule gave the diehards a chance to do a late afternoon and even a night dive if they chose. Shore diving is convenient with tanks available around the clock and Nitrox for a fee. Divi has good boats and competent personnel who run a safe operation. Trips to most dive sites are under 10 minutes. All gearing up, even between dives, was handled by the divers themselves. We found ourselves moving tanks around on the boat on a regular basis. Although I do feel more comfortable hooking up my own gear, I have come to appreciate dive crews who move my gear from the empty tank after the first dive to the new tank. I was less than pleased with the gear room layout. Each diver had a small section of wall for hanging wet gear bags. Since the layout was upper/lower, there wasn't much chance anything would dry out in the locked gear room overnight. Wetsuits hung on a central rack were in close quarters too, and it was disconcerting to find your suit thrown over the top of the rack by someone who decided it was dry and not worthy of a hanger which could be used for wet gear. However, the sepa-

rate rinse tanks for suits, regulators, and cameras were always full and clean. Shallow areas once rich with soft coral and staghorn are now sand flats. Much of the existing coral is covered with sand. However, the fish are as prolific as ever. It was not uncommon to see schools of squid, trumpetfish, and spotted filefish. We saw turtles on almost every dive; these included loggerheads, hawksbills, and green turtles. Various manifestations of parrotfish and trunkfish were constant companions. I can't remember seeing so many queen parrotfish before. A huge aquarium, free of current and full of extraordinarily friendly fish. Our favorite dive was Salt Pier, large structures near the Salt storage areas. The area was a breeding ground for squid and nearly every species of fish found in Bonaire. The dive masters took us to their favorite site, Margate Bay. Near Salt Pier, it was a mixture of pristine coral growth and fish life reminiscent of pre-storm days in Bonaire. The resort is in excellent condition, more luxurious than our usual accommodations. A couple of our fellow travelers had problems with the air-conditioning units in their rooms, but the resort performed repairs in a timely manner. We had ocean front rooms with small balconies. Each unit had hair dryers and an iron/ironing board, cable TV, but it was out of service several hours a day. Movie channels were quite good when we could stay awake long enough. The resort was fully booked, and the cleanup crew was not up to the task of cleaning rooms and providing fresh towels. Most days, we had to call for cleanup and towels, which were then delivered promptly.

We were in the habit of rising early for breakfast, and one day we were surprised by donkeys on the walkway outside our unit. One developed an instant attraction to Ory and wanted to join us in the room. Ironically, we had watched the staff struggling to plant sprigs of grass the day before, and now we were watching the donkeys make their own private breakfast buffet. Donkeys are indigenous to the island, but the resort wasn't interested in providing meal plans to nonpaying guests. Meals at the Chibi Chibi were a highlight, once we got used to a meal takes two hours. We learned to show up just before noon for lunch. In the evening, we found the earlier reservation times got quicker service and it was even possible to do a comfortable night shore dive. Good Caribbean fish soup, Key Lime Pie, and Ponche Cuba desserts. The electricity is 127-50. Many U.S. devices are 110-60. The 110 part doesn't really matter, but if your device does not say 50/60 specifically, it is likely to overheat and malfunction. We purchased an International adapter for our battery rechargers. The dive shop offered an outlet in the shop for rechargers, but I don't think that would satisfy the needs of too many photographers. Without a food package, eating in Bonaire can be pricey. Three meals a day is overkill, but the difference in cost between a two and three meal package makes the full meal plan an obvious choice. Two boat dives a day with shore diving in between probably would have been more relaxing.

**Harbour Village, January 2003, Art Vedejs, Duluth, GA.** Experience:

251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. I have been visiting Bonaire since 1980, and it is still a pleasant place. Harbour Village is pricey but luxurious. Their dive shop just reopened. Jeroen Kleijn knows the dive sites well and provided an enjoyable personalized diving experience. Wide variety of healthy, mature hard coral, sponges, reef fish, and lots of subjects for macro photography. ([www.harbourvillage.com](http://www.harbourvillage.com))

**Larry's Wildside Diving, June 2003, Terry Ekdahl ([terryekdahl@hotmail.com](mailto:terryekdahl@hotmail.com)), Oscoda, MI.**

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 80 F, choppy. Larry takes you where you want to go and when you want to go there. Larry is safety oriented without being a mother hen. Excellent with new young divers, and definitely improves their diving skills during the time with him. Nice fast Grady White gets you to the dive sites before the other operations even leave the dock. A large school of dolphins which played in our wake on the way back from a dive as Larry kept circling the boat so we could photograph them. Did not do the wild side due to winds. ([www.infobonaire.com/larrys](http://www.infobonaire.com/larrys))

**Plaza Resort, February 2003, Jay Vaughn ([jwv@door.net](mailto:jwv@door.net)), Lubbock, TX.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 75 to 100 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, choppy. This is an annual for us. Nothing has changed; it's all good. Carnival every year. Good food, decent wine, great diving. Photo shop at dive shop. ([www.plazaresortbonaire.com](http://www.plazaresortbonaire.com))

**Plaza Resort, May 2003, Randy Van Lit, Metuchen, NJ.** Dives logged: 100+. Dive restrictions enforced: 100 feet. Trip was organized by my dive shop, Ocean Explorers by Donna, who always does an excellent job on all trips. Accommodations were top notch with space galore. It was mandatory to do a checkout dive. Toucan Divers did a great job, well organized. There were 14 of us on this trip, and we had a boat to ourselves. It was a little crowded, but we are all friends. The disappointing factors were the water temp at 75 to 77 and the vis at about 50 feet because of some harsh weather. The diving was great, especially the Hooker wreck and the Salt Pier. The coral was great with lots of critters and great color. The restaurants had excellent food, not one bad meal.

**Sand Dollar, August 2003, Patricia Maeda, Houston, TX.** Exper: 150 dives, 4th visit to Bonaire. Vis. 80+. Sand Dollar has rebuilt: new dock, dive shop, and Mango's restaurant. Dive staff, Jerry, Michael, Valleria, and Roger were friendly and helpful. Jerry made special trip to Witches' Hut to see baby reef sharks (unusual for Bonaire). Abundant fish, 2 turtles, 2 stingrays, squid, huge tarpon, and 4-foot cornet fish. Angel City, Tori's Reef, LaDania, and Bari Reef hard to beat. Shore diving is a must. Recommended restaurants are Croccantino's, Mango's, The Lighthouse, and Amadeus.

**Sun Rental Rental Home, January 2003, John W. Seuell, Littleton, CO.** The house was on the beach and had separate entrances for all of the bed-

rooms. One night two rooms were robbed while the occupants were sleeping. Cameras, computers, cash, and watches were stolen. At no time from booking through arrival at the house were we told of the possibility of theft and the necessity of locking your room during the night. A caretaker and cook were on the property during the day, so theft was not a significant possibility then. I went to Sun Rentals and told the manager's wife I was upset about not being informed of the possibility of nighttime robbery. She said "it happens all over the world" which angered me further. I told her that they should make it clear as to the potential threat for anyone who rents their properties. When we returned two of the three rental trucks to AB car rentals, two of the spare tires had been stolen. We were charged \$420 for replacements. The dive operators need to wake up and demand tighter control from the police. This is an island of several hundred to a thousand residents. It shouldn't be that hard to figure out who is involved. This was our fifth trip to Bonaire and most probably our last. ([www.sunrentals.an](http://www.sunrentals.an))

**WannaDive, Yacht Club Apartments, August 2003, Sandra Tullis, Sunnyvale, CA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 81 to 83 F, calm. We took Air Jamaica and avoided ALM/DCA nightmares we experienced last trip. AJ has packed in more seats in the L.A. to Montego flight so leg room is more cramped. The food was rather poor and my luggage arrived damaged, but all the flights were on time. Jamaica

boarding for connections is a cattle call, and you cannot understand the intercom, so stay alert for your connections. Yacht Club apartments was close to the dive op and the 1 bedroom we rented was roomy and comfortable and had a safe and cable TV. We saved money by preparing our own breakfasts and lunches in the kitchen. The A/C is only in the bedroom so the other rooms can get stuffy. There is a locked place to rinse and store gear near the office, but it is not well ventilated so wetsuits do not dry. They reeked by the end of the week. Linens were changed twice during the week. We were certified with WannaDive two years ago and it was great to go back as a more advanced diver this time. They set us up with Nitrox for the week. WannaDive does not pump it there but the owner, Bart, good about getting the fills for us at 33% and having tanks available for drive through pickup whenever we wanted. The testing for the tanks was done for us by Bonaire Dive Adventures where the Nitrox was pumped, because WannaDive's O2 tester was not working well. We did a dive on the East side with DM Paul, and saw a school of huge tarpon, a 2 foot long parrot fish and an eagle ray. There was some current on that dive, but nothing that made us uneasy and Paul did a great dive briefing. We also did some dive sites to the south that Paul told us about that were not on the map. The fish life was amazing, and we noted hundreds of grunts and chromis. We saw more eels than any other place we have been. There is some old coral damage from Lenny, but the formations were still impressive at most sites.

There was a recent fishing trawler wreck near the Harbor View Marina that we were able to access via a short swim from WannaDive's Eden beach location. It sits in 50 ft of water and looks like it is waiting for passengers to board, except for the huge hole where they dropped a crane through the deck and sank the boat! The currents along that part of the shore are strong in the afternoon so there was some hard swimming. We are vegetarians and had no problem finding plenty of good things to eat at local restaurants, including City Cafe, Garden City, Donna and Georgio, Pasa bon Pizza and Old Inn. Most dinners run between 40 and 60\$ for two including drinks, appetizer, entree and a shared dessert. Service is at a more relaxed pace, so be prepared to have time for more than one pre-dinner cocktail! We rented a double cab pickup from Total Car rental and had no problems, other than a slow onsite rental process. They need to organize/reduce their paperwork for those with advanced reservations. Bonaire is a great place to dive no matter what your certification level! We rented a DX3000 digital camera from Fisheye photo at the Sand Dollar resort, on the recommendation of WannaDive. Their service was excellent. They switched the cards and batteries out daily after 80 pictures and cleaned up the camera. We were doing unguided shore dives so we did not have the luxury of rinsing after every dive. At the end of the trip they burned 300 pics onto a CD for us and saved the pics for 5 more days in case we had a problem with the CD when we got home. ([www.wannadivebonaire.com](http://www.wannadivebonaire.com))