

connections through Texas and Charlotte to Belize. A Miami transfer is no longer the price of visiting Belize. The Fort George Radisson Hotel (where the boat docks) is a reasonable place to spend an extra day or two in comfort.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Cayman Aggressor, August 2002, Kitty Huntley, San Diego, CA. Vis: 20 to 100 feet. Water: 82-84 F. Began diving before log books — 1969 (150-200 dives). Dive restrictions enforced: ecological habitat — don't touch. Buoyancy some hadn't mastered and some destruction occurred. People who haven't completely mastered buoyancy control, as well as various motion techniques for diving in close proximity to living creatures, are living eco-terrorists and should be removed from the area and taught how to dive prudently. I saw pieces of reef kicked off. One person even stood on the reef! Also, an overweighted kicks too much and probably is not comfortable in the water yet, left alone.
(www.aggressor.com/ca_home.html)

Cayman Aggressor, December 2002-January 2003, Jeffrey Kearns. Dives logged: 750+. Awful experience. My wife and I had been on the *Fiji Aggressor* and had an incredible time. This was a waste of time and money. Our main complaint was the Captain. He was aloof, unfriendly. His choices of dive sites were disappointing. We did not choose to vacation on a live-aboard to fight for buoy space in the shadow of 5 cruise ships. I am sympa-

thetic to the Captain's decision to shelter the boat from the weather, but by Tuesday the seas were light (as reported by the local news) and he continued to position the boat off 7 mile beach. (The *Aggressor* does not travel to the other islands for almost the entire winter.) Tom did not once discuss these issues with the guests. Does he get a fuel saving bonus? By Wednesday, we wanted to get off the boat because we were so bored with the diving. When on the *Fiji Aggressor*, we had horrible weather with 7+ foot seas and the Captain let the guests have input to the dive sites (even with the weather we had an amazing time). On Thursday afternoon Tom decided to move the boat within a couple hundred meters of the cruise ships and dive in front of a Texaco fuel depot in the flight path of the airport (he must have wanted to get home quickly on Friday). This was the worst site of the trip — bad visibility, etc. One of the more experienced couples had dived this site prior to getting on the boat, but Tom did not care. Tom's response to the planes buzzing overhead was that they stopped at 11 pm. Great, I go to a tropical island for a vacation and I get to sit and look at a Texaco oil station and get jet fuel dumped on me. I should have stayed in Los Angeles and spent time under LAX. To top off a pathetic performance, we docked at a pier that was offloading cargo over the ship's bow. There is nothing like having a cocktail party and watching heavy cargo getting stacked 30 meters from you. On a positive note, the food was the best that I have had on any dive trip outside the U.S. Andrew did an excellent job and

my family appreciated his hard work. The divemasters, especially Fergie, were helpful and friendly. They tried to make the most of our vacation.

Cayman Aggressor, March 2003,
Bob Parks, Baton Rouge, LA.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy, no currents. The daily schedule: Breakfast, site/dive briefing, Dive #1, snack, Dive #2, lunch (boat moves to new site during lunch), Site/Dive briefing, Dive #3, snack, Dive #4, dinner, Night Dive. The boat would then move or move early in the morning. Some guests logged 25 dives. There are no guarantees that this boat will make the crossing from Grand Cayman to Little Cayman. Rough seas will keep the boat around Grand Cayman. Captain Tom mentioned that winter was the worst as northwestern fronts frequently come through. Our charter made the crossing, although we did encounter some 5 to 6 foot seas while visiting Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Was told that summer weather usually brings about calmer seas and excellent visibility. Visibility varied from 50 feet on a couple of dives to over 100 feet. Most dives had some sort of suspended sediment stirred up by wind and rough seas. Captain Tom did his best to put us on the best sites available, given the conditions and wind direction that were present at any given time. Bloody Bay Wall at Little Cayman is certainly some of the best diving in the Caribbean. Spur and groove formations scattered throughout the walls provide many swim-through tunnels,

chimneys, and underwater (some are rather large) canyons that lead to the steep wall drop-offs. Although I do not carry a camera, the healthy coral combined with spectacular wall allow for some breathtaking wide-angle photos. Most dive sites begin and end in the shallows, so that multilevel diving is the norm (get a computer if you do not have one) and even your safety stops are enjoyably scenic. Some of the larger species I saw included lots of hawksbill turtles, spotted eagle rays, gray Caribbean reef sharks, tarpon, barracuda, Nassau groupers, and Southern stingrays. Other typical fish included parrotfish, spade fish, African pompano, trumpet fish, needle fish, sergeant majors, blue chromis, squid, and spotted drum to name a few. Little critters included Pederson cleaning shrimp, red banded shrimp, lettuce leaf slugs, and gobies. The health of the corals was good overall and no coral bleaching was noted. In a few places, storm damage was evident in the shallows which is typical of the hurricane belt. Unlimited Nitrox available (\$100 US). Visa and MC accepted for any onboard purchases and crew gratuities. Hot tub on sun deck. Two showers on dive deck. Limited dive gear available for rent should your gear not make it with you. Camera rental (including a digital camera) and video camera rental were available. Guests sensitive to noise from the generators and engine room in general should avoid Cabin 9. Cabins 8 and 9 share a head. I was in cabin 8 and was never bothered by the noise (although I certainly noticed it), and the sharing of the head was not a

problem. There are decent reading lamps over your pillow in the bunks. Try to get a center dive locker and hang your scuba/swim wear over the center dive lockers as water from the hot tub on the deck above will spill over to the deck below. Spacious camera table. E6 processing. Dedicated camera rinse tank.

Cayman Aggressor, July 2003, Craig & Ruth Campbell, Long Grove, IL.

Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 83-85 F. Dives logged: Craig: 310, Ruth 270. Dive restrictions enforced: Do not exceed 110 ft, complete a safety stop on each dive @ 15 ft and return to the boat with about 500 psi. This was a typical *Aggressor* operation with excellent service and food, an extremely clean and well maintained boat and a knowledgeable and helpful crew who were always available if you needed or wanted them. The quality of the diving was in the good to very good range; however, we have been to the Caymans in 1993 and 1996 and were disappointed in the deterioration in both the health of the reefs & abundance of fish life on this trip.

Compared to our last trip to the Cayman Islands (Little Cayman-Bloody Bay Wall), there is serious degradation in the walls and the fish population is scarce. On previous trips the walls were vibrant with color: Large sponges, sea fans, hard & soft corals, now it appears that brown algae have taken over.

Previously on any dive there were many angel fish, triggerfish, file fish, large groupers, and other reef fish. Now there were a few if any. The tur-

tle population has significantly improved — they were seen on every dive. Dietary restrictions which were identified before the trip were not met/accommodated.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Caribbean Explorer II, July 2003, Jack A. Gullo Jr., New Windsor, MD.

Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 85 F, calm. Great boat, clean accommodations, good shores and heads (private per state-room) friendly crew and great diving. Boat set up and routine great for diving. Food was plentiful and first class. An outstanding trip. Dedicated rinse tank, large table for camera only activities; knowledgeable staff.

(www.explorerventures.com/ne-carib/ne-carib.html)

Caribbean Explorer II, April 2003, Billy E. Haggerty Jr. CRNA (billy.haggerty@cox.net), Midland, TX.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy. This was the first live-aboard for me. Wonderful staff. Crew of eight took care of the divers. Up to 5 dives available per day, including the night dive. Nitrox \$150/ week. The food was incredible, with the chef handling all requests. Beef Wellington, pork tenderloin, smoked turkey, etc. The diving in St. Kitts is great because there are not that many divers. The coral is in great shape, and the marine life is curious of you. Great dive trip after the first day on board. All of us got sea sick at some point. Separate area for battery charging stations. Large table for u/w cam-