

board. Once the boat left the dock, we needed to gear up as the dive site was two minutes away. We did a giant stride into the water, one after the other, and went straight down. The current was swift, but we had no problem staying together. The boat followed from above. The instructor had given us an appropriate depth and time in the pre-dive briefing (we were all using computers), and he stuck to it. The topography and fish life were very much like Cozumel. We saw 15 huge turtles on this dive! When time was up, we did a slow ascent up and a safety stop at 15 feet. Then to get back on the boat, you hand up your weight belt, then BC, to the driver and hoist yourself up to the dive platform (no ladder). We went back to the park for the surface interval and ate lunch while watching people in the water with the dolphins. We had brought sandwiches, but it would have been equally easy to purchase lunch there. Our gear was already set up for us on new tanks for the second dive to Barracuda Reef (45 feet). This dive did not have much current but lots of fish life. A new diver was on the boat with his own instructor. They did their own dive. At the end of the dive, our gear was rinsed for us. The park also offers many varied activities, so is great for non-divers.

([www.xcaret.net](http://www.xcaret.net),  
[www.grandflamencoxcaret.com](http://www.grandflamencoxcaret.com))

## PUERTO RICO

Puerto Rico is beginning to come into its own as a dive destination, with good reefs and walls and good fish life. Winters can be cool.

### **Parguera Divers, Posada Porlamar, Villa Parguera, April 2003, John Yasaki, Oakland, CA.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 feet. Water: 82 F, choppy, currents. Porlamar Posada is a wannabe luxury hotel, needs to figure out that service is important. Bar on patio was open, but unstaffed; when staffed, anything ordered was picked up from restaurant upstairs. Everything involved a wait. The restaurant, however, has great food, but you (again) have to wait for it. Villa Parguera is a little more pricey, but a much nicer place to stay. Beautiful grounds, a somewhat stodgy front desk, but all around relaxed and friendly once checked in. Restaurant is average, though the service was pretty good. Parguera Divers is a great operation; boat is a little small for the offshore conditions but not a problem if you don't get seasick. Angel Rovira and Jose (the DM) do a great job making sure you are happy. Lots of fun on the boat. We arrived after two weeks of heavy rains, so vis was poor, and fish life was sparse. Corals in pretty good shape, inverts plentiful. Supplied camera rinse bucket on request. Pace was a little fast on dives, but that may have been because we didn't make noise about it. (<http://netdial.caribe.net/~divepr/>)

**Parguera Divers, Parador Posada Porlamar, July 2003, Karren & Tom Darone (KDleChat@aol.com), Fairfax, VA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 83 F, choppy, no currents. I wish we'd known it was the start of a four-day holiday weekend. Seems like most of San Juan joined us on the road to La

Parguera. Parador Posada Porlamar is part of a network of 18 “paradores” in Puerto Rico — sort of a three-story eclectic country inn overlooking the South coast. We unfortunately got a room right next to the outdoor wooden staircase, and listened to stair climbers most. Also had problems with air conditioning, since the influx of holiday visitors to the town quite overloaded the town’s electrical capacity. The onsite restaurant, La Pared, was excellent (but pricey) for dinner. Buffet breakfast was included with dive packages but service was quite slow. And for some reason, the waterfront bar was never open. Parguera Divers (Angel Rovira and wife Roberta Santos are owner operators — [www.pargueradivers.com](http://www.pargueradivers.com)) was just spectacular. One of the best, most thorough dive ops we’ve seen. The ride to the wall can be pretty choppy, everything not stowed away in the fore cabin will get wet. Water temps were consistently 83 degrees top to bottom — balmy! Saw a huge crowd of Atlantic spadefish on one dive, an intrusive remora on another. Lots of black durgon, parrotfish, chromis, tangs, gobies. Corals were great and varied (sea fans and rods, black coral bushes, wire corals, brain and sheet and encrusting corals) and the walls just wonderful — particularly a swim-through at 120 feet marked by an eleven-tube lavender stovepipe sponge. We did a night dive one evening (I didn’t enjoy it — too many people and too little viz) and afterwards Angel took us over to swim in the Phosphorescent Bay, which was unbelievable. Recommend Guacataco for open-air local food, or Golden City

(Chinese/criollo in the local mall) for lunch, followed by naps!

**Sea Ventures, Fajardo Inn, November 2002, Tom Rain ([tom-rain1e@hotmail.com](mailto:tom-rain1e@hotmail.com)), Irving, TX.**

Vis: 30 to 50 feet. Water: 82-85 F.

Dives logged: 350+. Dive restrictions enforced: no deco. We dove off the town of Fajardo, P.R. — on the East End of P.R. Nice hotel. Below average dive operation with marginal divemasters. Dive sites boring with poor visibility or fish life. Lots of sea fans but other coral was poor. Instead of diving, we should have spent our time sight seeing in old San Juan.

([www.divepuertorico.com](http://www.divepuertorico.com), [www.fajardoinn.com](http://www.fajardoinn.com))

## SABA

Saba is one of the more adventurous and exciting Caribbean destinations, both on land and in the sea. ... Pinnacle diving begins at 70 feet, with good fish life and occasionally sharks and bigger fish. ... Accommodations are in quaint villages at 1,000 feet and above. ... Although there are no beaches or night life, Saba has delightful people, a few good restaurants, and a cool, pleasant climate at altitude. It’s also in the hurricane belt. ... Some divers claim that, after several days of diving, they get muscle pains if they climb 3,000-foot Mt. Scenery. ... Be sure to close your eyes when your plane lands ... or take the short ferry trip from St.. Maarten.