

Vis: 70 ft. Water: 80 F, choppy, no currents. Scuba Safari is the operation recommended by the Four Seasons Nevis. Their boat anchors in the bay right outside the resort. Frankly, we expected more. 2 of the divers on the boat told the captain that it was their first dive in open water and we informed them that neither of the 2 of us are extremely experienced divers either (less than 25 dives each). Therefore, they were on notice that they had a fairly inexperienced group that day. The captain gave a brief but adequate pre-dive briefing. Once we hit the water, it was as if the divemaster had not heard the briefing. The captain said that the divemaster would regularly ask us to check on our remaining air and would want to know when we reached 1,500, 1,000, and 500 psi. He never asked and one time, as I hit 900, I had to race to catch up to him and tell him. The dives we took were pure "reef races." It was kick, kick, kick and try to stay up with the divemaster. He rarely looked back to see if anyone had fallen back. Several times I lagged to try to catch a look at something interesting or to take a photo, only to look up and see him several hundred yards ahead, swimming along obliviously. On one occasion, he came across a scorpion fish resting in the rocks. He kicked it several times with his flipper until it finally departed its resting spot so we could all get a better view. Later, he relentlessly (and unsuccessfully) chased a puffer for a good 2 or 3 minutes. When we got back onboard, he told me that he caught it a couple of days ago and "blew it up." On our second dive, we came across a sleeping nurse shark.

Again, he reached down and prodded it until it scurried away. These actions showed not only a disrespect for the fish and environment but also could have endangered the divers. When I asked the divemaster on the return trip about a number of fish that we had seen that I was not familiar with, he really couldn't identify any of them. It seemed that I knew more of the species (on my first Caribbean dive) than he did. The operation provided no snacks of any kind during their 15 or 20 minute surface interval. I gave the crew a \$20 tip (still asking myself why) and nobody even bothered to say thank you. Overall, the diving was OK. UW Photography Comments: No specific facilities for photography on boat. **(Ph: 869-469-9518; e-mail scubanev@caribsurf.com; website http://www.nevis1.com/scuba_safaris.html)**

ST. LUCIA

St. Lucia lies in the hurricane belt west of Barbados. Diving on this beautiful, heavily-forested island, with pretty reefs and tiny fish, is managed and controlled. ... Anse Chastenet hotel is located near the Pitons on the southwestern part of island, where the better diving is, but it's rigidly controlled; there's not much worth seeing elsewhere underwater. ... The year-round high is in the 80s days; night lows are in the 70s. Afternoon cloud-bursts are common.

Anse Chastenet, March 2003, Jim Rhodes, Lafayette, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 70 feet.

Water: 77 to 79 F, calm. The July '99 issue of *Undercurrent* nailed it, and basically there have been no real changes since then. You can get two morning dives now without being in a group. It's a beautiful vacation spot, albeit pricey, but diving is just fair. Some good local entertainment in the evening (best steel band we've heard). Go for the ambiance, not necessarily the diving. (www.ansechastanet.com)

Anse Chastanet, May 2003, Mary Temple, New York, NY.

Dives logged: 100. Vis: 70 to 80 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F. Dive restrictions enforced: depth, time. St. Lucia is one of them. Anse Chastanet is a charming property with a lovely beach located seconds or just a few minutes boat ride from reefs that are in great condition. All dives are lead by a guide, which helps to keep the marine environment healthy for all to enjoy. Hardier souls can get away with a 3 mm or shorty, but I was comfortable in my 5 mm. The resort is situated on a mountain with a few bungalows at beach level. I was upgraded from a standard hillside to a beach bungalow. But got little sleep because of late night noise from the restaurant above me and early morning noise from the kitchen and construction workers. It is also rather isolated and food choices are limited. Despite this and no-see-ums, I spent many lovely hours after gorgeous days, under a shady cabana or rocking in a hammock on the beach under the stars and swaying palms.

Sandals, October 2002, Victoria Ocampo, Yorba Linda, CA. Vis: 50 to 100 feet. Water: 84 to 86 F. Dives

logged: 70. Dive restrictions enforced: No gloves, no knife, no touching, all protected marine life. The service surprised me; they were a great dive team. Our first day we had to do the afternoon shallow dive only because my husband hadn't dove much, and they wanted to check us out. The boat was full of beginners. The spot they took us to was an overall disappointment, and I was worried the whole week would be the same. The next day, however, we went on the certified two-dive boat, and it was like going from kindergarten to college. Our first dive was phenomenal! Schools of fish and eels, huge blue and red lobster. From there the diving just got better. They dove a recommended profile. They had great boats, food, friendly crew. You had to set up your own equipment, which was new to me for a resort. There was a great wreck dive, wall dive, reef dives — overall I loved it. (www.sandals.com/general/resorts-lucia.cfm)

Scuba St. Lucia, February 2003, Kathleen McGowan, Eagle, ID.

Dives logged: 135. Vis: 50 to 80 feet. Water: 79 to 81 F. Dive restrictions enforced: within eyesight DM, time. People were friendly, helpful. Boats excellent. Andre, DM, very nice. On time, professional. (www.scubastlucia.com)

ST. MAARTEN

French St. Martin and Dutch St. Maarten are two islands in one, with wonderful beaches, superb hotels, fine cuisine — and poor diving, a situation that was not