

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

improved when the island was trashed by a hurricane in 1995. ... Watch out for shady characters who are drawn to the nude beaches and prey on tourists.

Dive Safaris, May 2003, Ezra Lunde, Staten Island, NY. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 80 to 100 feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. I flew from Saba to St. Maarten for the day to do a shark dive with Dive Safaris. We loaded the cattle boat, were given a briefing about the need to build shark awareness (as if the sun-damaged, ex-pat master of ceremonies had memorized a WWF brochure minutes before coming aboard) and made to feel obliged to buy a video of the shark feed that was about to come. The water was clear, and the little fingers of reef running through the shark feeding area were lush with soft corals and fans. Very pretty. Reef sharks showed up immediately, and the feed proceeded. The shark diver put fish on his spear and lured the sharks all 'round in just the way you'd expect. This went on for about 30 minutes, and then we were ushered to a safety stop. I really liked seeing the sharks so close but felt reservations about the purpose of such a dive. My suspicion is St. Maarten diving doesn't have much else to offer but the previously mentioned "pretty" fingers of coral and that the sharks are really just another way to hustle cash rather than a genuine effort to build awareness. (<http://thescubashop.net>)

Ocean Explorers/Dive Safaris, Pelican Resort, October 2002, Dennis Carmichael (dennis_carmichael@msn.com), Salem, MA. Vis: 50 to 75

feet. Water: 86 to 87 F. Dives accrued: 2,000+. Dive restrictions enforced: maximum bottom time 40 min. or 700 psi, not strictly enforced. Fifth trip to St. Maarten. Leroy French of Ocean Explorers runs a great small dive operation. Carry your gear through the water to the boat. Expect a wet ride. Leroy will bring you to site that no other operation is diving. Therefore the reef and fish life are better than other sites that are heavily dived. This trip I went with Dive Safaris on their shark dive. Only a few divers went each time. About 12 to 15 Caribbean reef sharks showed up each time. Feed individual chunks of fish on a stick. On the second trip I joined the owner next to the feeder for up close and personal photos. (www.stmaartendiving.com, www.thescubashop.net/dive.htm)

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

St. Vincent lies in a beautiful chain of islands and is heavily forested, with pretty reefs and a good range of fish species. ... Daytime temperatures are in the high 80s year-round, the low 70s at night; afternoon cloudbursts are common; St. Vincent is in the hurricane belt. ... The Grenadines — Bequia, Palm, Union, and Carriacou — are a sailor's dream; they're islands with small hotels, little dive operations, decent Caribbean diving, and have become, perhaps, the "small critter capital" of the Caribbeans.