

see the gray reef sharks that hang out there. They leave when the first diver appears. They are about 6 feet long. The Library on Grand Turk is also a great dive! Although I saw many turtles, the biggest was at the Kelly's Folly on Salt Cay. The shell was about 5 feet long. The turtles will let you get fairly close for some good video. We dove the Endymion wreck. It is exposed to the open ocean. Many cannons, cannon balls, large chain, and many anchors are still visible. There is a lot of current. There is also a lot of fire coral. *Wind Dancer* is an older boat. The dive platform was a concrete pad. It had weathered and was rough. Some complained of it hurting their bare feet. There was also a rubber matting on the sun deck that hurt everyone's feet. My room was number 9 next to the engine room. The smell of diesel fuel was very noticeable. The crew was safety conscious. We even had a life jacket drill. The boat and crew did not concentrate on the south Caicos and Turk area, rather they did many different itineraries. They did the humpback whale trips, a Bahamas trip, and the boat evidently will end up in Tobago. Because of this the divemasters were not familiar with the dive sites. They could not answer questions regarding fish life or where to find a particular fish you were looking for. Overall the diving and service was fabulous. Sky King airlines will charge you for exceeding the weight limit. Mine was \$15 and \$20. U.S. dollars are accepted everywhere. On Grand Turk on Good Friday, everything was closed. The people that were staying on the island

that day only had a banana and some peanuts. Even the hotel kitchen was closed. (www.peterhughes.com)

UNITED STATES - FLORIDA

Dry Tortugas

Ultimate Getaway, June 2003, Glenn Gracom, New Smyrna Beach, FL.

Vis: 40 to 80 feet. Water: 78 to 81 F. Experience: 410 dives. Seventh time on boat for me. Great diving and plenty of it. Did 19 dives in three days. Nitrox available. Three delicious hot meals per day. Saw extremely interesting Fort Jefferson. Accommodations are not fancy but adequate. Dive from sunup to sundown. Spear fishing allowed, and it is very good. Must plan your dive so that you get back to anchored boat. Don't like to pick divers up in inflatable. (<http://ultimategetaway.net>)

UNITED STATES - TEXAS

Flower Garden Banks

MV Fling, May 2003, John Hluboky (john@hluboky.com), San Jose, CA.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 80 feet. Water: 69 to 76 F, calm, currents, no currents. The Flower Gardens *M/V Fling* and *M/V Spree* charters leave from Free Port, TX. This is a live-aboard charter which has some extended trips, but mostly weekend runs. For the weekend runs, there are up to five dives the first day (first dive at about 7am, last at about 9pm), and usually two the second. Dive conditions vary. In the spring, hammerheads are common, and late summer has

whale sharks. They have trips for coral spawning, and have quite a varied assortment of hard corals and life. There is also the option to dive under an oil platform, which is interesting. (<http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>, <http://gulf-diving.com>)

M/V Fling, September 2003, Roger Soape (ras@rasoape.com), Houston, TX. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 feet. Water: 85 F, calm. A well run 2-day trip, a bit like camping. Boat left the dock at 9:30 pm Friday night and travels while divers sleep. Dawn Saturday found us at the Flower Gardens for a 7:00 am dive — the first of five that day, including a night dive. We made two more dives on Sunday morning at Stetson Bank (after moving during the night). Thirty plus divers share rooms with bunks and only three heads. Showers on dive deck. Still, all runs like clockwork. No divemasters in the water but they jump in the water first to check out the site, currents, etc., then back on board to give briefing and help divers giant stride in buddy pairs the 5+ feet to the water. Diving at the Flower Gardens was so-so with a loggerhead and a couple of hawksbills, barracuda and a good number and variety of the usual tropical suspects. Stetson Bank was fabulous. Two manta rays — close and relatively unconcerned in 100 ft vis water! A bull shark or two, lots of spotted and goldentail morays, jacks, snapper, reef fish (large and small). Food good and plentiful. The galley crew had something good for us to eat after each and every dive. The captains,

galley crew and divemasters all love to dive — and it shows. We were told that the two galley guys and the two divemasters work so they can go diving. They take turns diving between the guests dives. Nice get away — especially for a Houston area resident or someone who is in or near Houston on other business. Weather is a concern, though, and trips are canceled if the seas are rough. Not for beginner divers!

VIRGIN ISLANDS, BRITISH

Cuan Law, February 2003, Victor A. Bary (vbary@yahoo.com), Cranford, NJ. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 15 to 50 feet. Water: 78 to 83 F, choppy. Second trip on the *Cuan Law* and we were just as pleased as on our first. The boat (105' x 44') is spacious and well-appointed, with one and two person kayaks, two Hobie Cats and two 20-foot Zodiacs, used for dive sites where the Cuan can't anchor and for water skiing. The food was delicious and plentiful and the entire crew (captain and five others) were delightful and accommodating. Each dive was preceded by a thorough briefing including a large site map. Divers could follow divemasters and map their own course and pace, as they chose to. Slow-paced, luxurious vacation, with two to three dives a day, with other aquatic activities available, and wonderful and spacious accommodations. Boat offered separate rinse tank (although its purpose seemed to escape a number of non-photographers), E-6 processing, and camera rental. (www.cuanlaw.com)