

ST.SOMETIMES

H o l i d a y s 2 0 0 9

Curacao

I spent December 25th to 29th in Curacao. It was mainly diving and dutch women. Fun!

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Dive and Drive

A new thing for me. The most exciting drive through since the drive thru liquor store in Ohio.

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Shore Diving Bonaire

North to South. Dive to a well marked spot, put on your dive gear, wade in, and dive.

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New Years

Celebrating the incoming new year 2010 with strangers in an open air, tropical restaurant.

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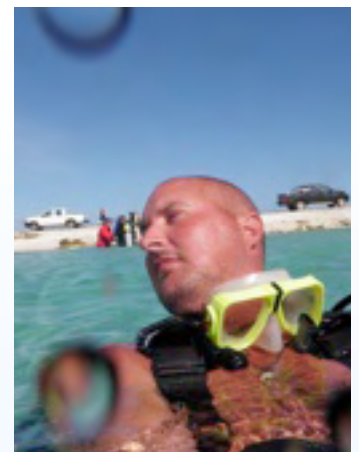
HAPPY HOLIDAYS EDITION

YEARS BACK, MY NEW YEARS RESOLUTION WAS TO WAKE IN A NEW COUNTRY EVERY NEW YEAR. THIS YEAR WAS THE ABC'S.

Have you heard of the ABC's? I bet you know about Aruba for its beaches. Aruba is the A. Bonaire, known for it's diving, is the B. The C stands for Curacao and is known by most cruise ship fanatics. I had the pleasure of spending Christmas on Curacao and diving over the New Year 2010 in Bonaire. Beautiful, expensive, and worth the money.



Who went with me? You would think someone would want to go. Nope. Just me. All by my lonesome, as usual. The islands lie right off the coast of Venezuela (see the pic to the left) so it was a quick - I mean not so quick - trip. Why you say? They are so close. The reason is due to the ever tiring systematic complicity of travel in Venezuela. Read on and join me for my trip.



Shore Diving means booties!

On a diving note, I always dive with warm water fins - the kind you slip on like shoes. If you ever travel to a shore diving destination, take along the cold water fins - the kind you strap on over a pair of wetsuit booties. Why? Walking on coral hurts your feet. I just didn't even think about it.

CURACAO

The 13th Floor Window Incident

I went on the cheap to Curacao. the Howard Johnsons is a 15 floor old hotel downtown Curacao, on the water. It cost a mere \$120 US per night. But my 13th floor room had a big oval window (like on a ship) overlooking the Caribbean - and a big bed.

The morning of the 24th, I was scheduled for a dive with OceanAdventures. I awoke early and took a shower to get rid of the travel lag feeling. Not even thinking about it, I came out stark naked toweling myself off in the sunlight from the Window. What I didn't expect was a deckload of Cruise ship tourists looking right into my window and waving! No kidding. When I got into the shower, all I could see was blue Caribbean water. Who would've thought a cruise ship would be passing my 13th floor window? Not me. Several tourists must have a funny story to tell about their arrival in beautiful Curacao!

Curacao - Not Really for Me

In a nutshell, Curacao is a shopping and restaurant stop for the cruise ships. The all-inclusive-resorts are great spots for a vacation in the sun too. But for me, the only two things that got me going were the beautiful, blonde Dutch women and the boat diving. I spent every morning diving with OceanAdventures and all afternoon drinking expensive beer around beautiful blondes. The Europeans were out in force. This is their happy place. It was a sunny, diving Christmas for me. Long story for later, but I ended up buying a new underwater camera too.



Cruise Ships Taller than any Island Building!

The cruise lines that target the islands of Bonaire and Curacao dwarf any building on the islands. The ships carry more tourists than the actual population of Bonaire! It is amazing. I have never seen these monster Cruise ships up close. The tourists pour out in large sight-seeing groups and descend on the tiny islands daily. Curacao has up to three ships docked at one time. Bonaire only has one or two, just enough to boost their daily local economy. What a fascinating phenomenon! What would these islands do without the cruise ship industry? Go fishing I guess. Hah!



A picture of me? Yes, only one. I am always taking the shots.

Where are the Pics of Greg?

Sorry. I am always taking the pictures so I am rarely in any of the shots. Sometimes I give my camera to someone else and they take a blurry, dark, or simply crappy picture. So I basically gave up.

There might be a thousand pictures from a trip like this. Only a few make it into the newsletter, but rarely are any of me. Perhaps that is for the best. You don't need to see a bunch of pictures of me in scuba gear. The fish and corals are more pleasing to look at. Maybe I can train a few fish to take my pictures.

You should see the fantastic cameras that some of the (mainly American) divers have. I am talking about \$5,000 camera setups. However, the one question I get all the time is: "You take all of your pictures with that little camera...without a big flash setup?" I simply say "It's all I can afford for now. Besides, this little camera takes pretty good shots!" Many of the divers that have all the expensive equipment and expensive camera equipment are the worst divers and useless photographers. No kidding! I still have a lot to learn though.

Dive, Drive, Unlimited Shore Dives

Diving in Bonaire was a wild experience for me. Not only did I dive with people from all over the world, this was truly a DIVING VACATION SPOT - a serious dive vacation.

The drive aire and Nitrox drive-through service is the absolute creme de la creme of my diving experiences! I could pick up a friend, drive my rented truck (complete with tank rack in the back) right up to the drive-through, load up two tanks for each of us, and head to one of the many shore dive sites around the island. We would dive two tanks, drive back to the drive-through, exchange tanks, and do it all over again. How superb!

The dive shops have excellent dive site descriptions, maps of the island, advice of where to dive, and plenty of tanks full of nitrox or regular aire. Does

it get any better than this? I can only think of live-a-boards. But a drive-through service?

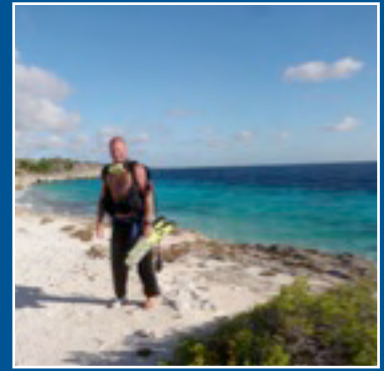
If you don't want to drive to a dive site and brave a shore entry, Dive Buddy Dive resort has one of the best dive sites right off of their pier. Many times, I could just sit on the pier by the tank refill area and wait for someone else to go diving the house reef...and just tag along for a dive.

And yet, the only draw back was finding someone to dive with that had more experience. I always came up with half tank for a 45-55 minute dive. Some day I will return and dive with Kris and Steve for a week or two. I know they can stretch it between 90 and 120 minutes with all of our cameras flashing (and flooding our masks due to laughter). Oh well, another time. Definitely!



**Drive & Dive
Park & Dive!**

BONAIRE



Over 60 Shore Dive Sites

Each of the sites along the shores are marked with yellow painted stones, as well as on a site map of the island. Shore diving can be a bit tiring and dangerous.

Liz backed out of a dive once because she couldn't get past the crashing waves. Dirk and I went without her.

Make sure you dive with booties and adjustable fins. I cut up my right foot pretty bad on the coral because I have warm water fins and no booties. Barefoot! Don't do it. You won't be happy.

FRIENDS ON LAND AND UNDERWATER



From All Over

It never ceases to amaze me how worldly the sport of diving is. Fellow divers hail from all over the globe.

In the Dutch Antilles, I got to dive with more Americans than I have ever dove with. Yet, on the boats, I was with divers from Belgium, France, South Africa, Netherlands, Finland, UK, Australia, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Venezuela, and many more places.



Happy New Years 2010 - Dinner, Fireworks, Dancing, and New Friends

While most family and friends were caught up in the wintery weather of ...Winter, I spent my New Year's Eve in the tropical paradise. Diving during the day was in 80 degree, aqua waters. Buddies Dive Resort has two open air restaurants and a bar, so I just HAD to enjoy dinner outside. It was cool enough that I wasn't overheated in my long sleeve shirt and jeans. I had to dress up a little bit for the holiday dinner.

The dinner was great. Almost everyone had some kind of seafood, except for me - I don't eat seafood

Dive, eat, dive, drink, dive, sleep, dive

anymore. I had a nice breast of chicken and several large Heinekens. The five of us must have spent three hours eating, drinking, and sharing stories.

Almost everyone ended up going to bed early. For those of us still awake at midnight, there was a fireworks display right off the Buddies dock. I should have suited up and watched them from the water. (Maybe next time.)

I must have been in bed by 1am. But no worries, I was diving on New Years by 8am. There are few better things to be doing the first day of a new year. Ciao.

CUTTLE FISH - ONE OF MY MOST FAVORITES TO SWIM WITH



Cuttle fish are called squid in some parts of the world. I prefer to call them cuttlefish. Becky (from Ohio) and I swam with 50, yes 50 of them for about 20 minutes in Curacao. Then Dirk, Liz, and I followed just two of them around the house reef in Bonaire. Wow, these amazing creatures change a myriad of colors, change direction on a whim, and love to get close. They are very curious if you have a smooth, motionless approach. I can watch them for an entire dive (Becky and I practically did). Sometimes a school of them will form a semi-circle around you, as if you are the conductor and they are your underwater orchestra of colors. Fascinating.