



Dominica, St Lucia & St Vincent

Caribbean Islands

It's not by chance that the producers of the Pirates of the Caribbean series of Hollywood movies chose St Vincent and Dominica as locations. They both offer the rustic charm and unspoiled richness of environment that can, with little effort, take you back hundreds of years. Add in a third island, St Lucia, which lies between the two, and you have destinations that provide three very different experiences for the tourist and diver. St Lucia is a maturing package tourist destination, with well established dive schools

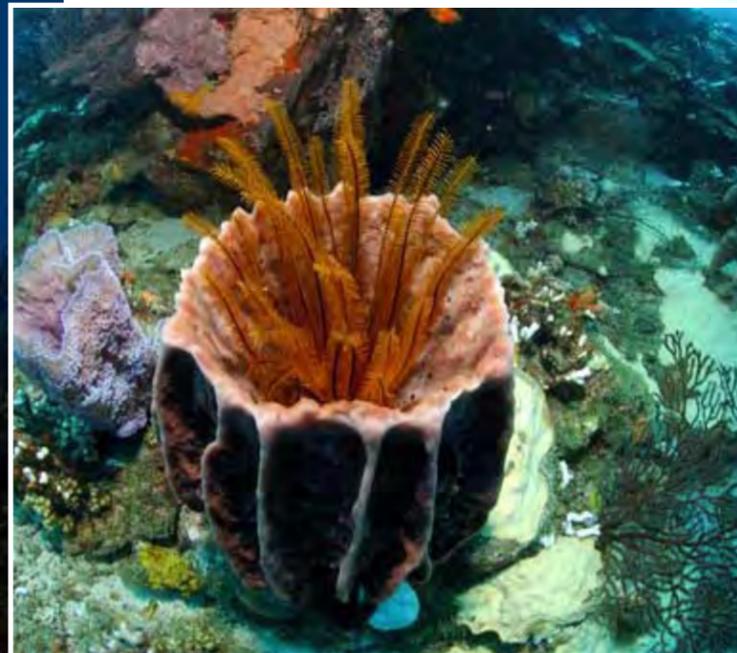
offering multi-lingual instruction and guidance for both beginner and experienced divers; Dominica is a nature tourist's idyllic location offering more adventurous dives and above water scenery that is equally as spectacular as that below water; St Vincent, on the other hand, has become known as the "muck diving critter capital of the Caribbean"—a

photographer's dream offering a diversity of species that rivals Lembeh Straights in Indonesia, but with one difference: these are Caribbean species, and many cannot be found in the Indo Pacific.



Text and photos by Steve Jones

Various species of sponge festoon a St Lucian Reef. TOP RIGHT: Lucia's most famous landmark, the twin peaks or "pitons", can be found in the southwest of the island amongst the best diving areas



LEFT TO RIGHT: A trumpetfish swimming amongst sea fans; A crinoid makes home in a barrel sponge; giant barrel sponges are a common sight in St Lucian waters

every island to be found in this sea. Having chosen to settle on St Lucia over ten years ago says something about what this place may offer.

In recent years, St Lucia has undergone extensive development and is becoming a popular package tour destination, supported by an international airport in the south of the island. Many international hotel chains now have established luxury resorts on the island, mainly based in the north near the capital Castries. Nevertheless, the island is far from over developed, and it only takes a short trip away from the tourist areas to see the rural nature of the island and the many picturesque fishing villages.

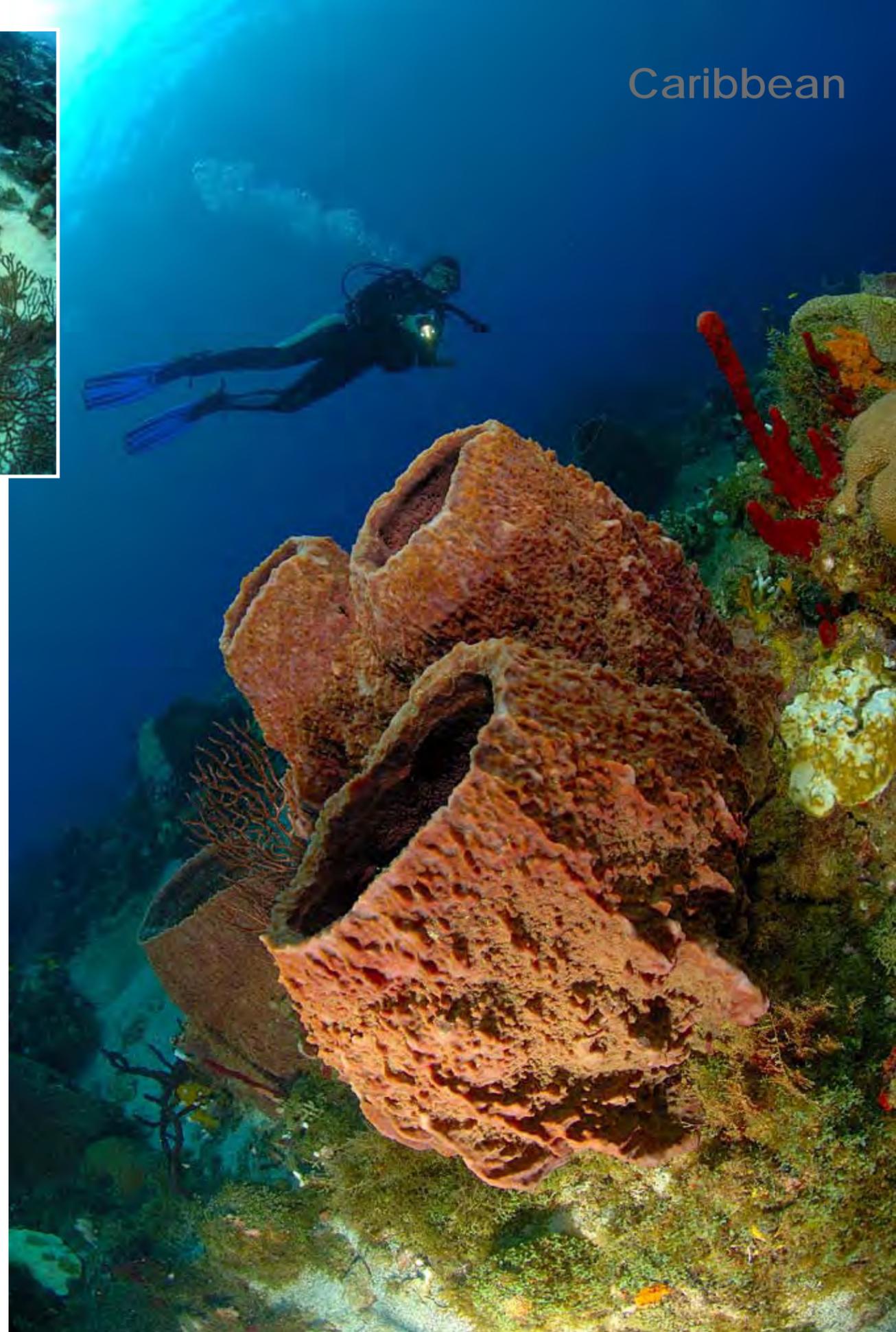
St Lucia is a mountainous green island with a coastline pocketed with quiet bays. The most scenic area is in the south near the town of Soufriere. It is here that the most photographed landmarks on St Lucia exist: the "pitons"—twin peaks that reach into the skies almost vertically from the sea. It is here also that the Anse Chastanet marine park and resort resides, which promises the best diving St Lucia can offer from a location conveniently located in a stunning setting.

St Lucia

"European divers have been spoiled on the Red Sea and the Maldives," explains Bernd, a long serving diving instructor with Scuba St Lucia. "For sure, the Caribbean is a younger tropical sea, but you can see things here you cannot see anywhere else. You can see things on St Lucia that you can't see on many other islands, and if you travel 30 km to St Vincent, you can see things there that you can't see here.

Most people don't appreciate the true variety of marine life that exists in the Caribbean," he maintains.

I'm inclined to agree, for having spent countless hours underwater in the aforementioned Indian Ocean destinations and knowing the marine life intimately, I always find the Caribbean refreshingly "different". Bernd is certainly a good authority on these matters, having left his native Germany in 1990 for the Caribbean, he has dived nearly





ABOVE: Scorpionfish can be found on Anse Chastanets house reef.

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: St Lucian seascapes

Anse Chastanet resort is set in a secluded and private cove, and landscaped sympathetically to the lush jungle that surrounds it. The area is blessed with having a house reef that many

dive operators on the island travel for miles to visit.

Conveniently, Scuba St Lucia is based right on the shore, and after kitting up, you can walk down the gently sloping sandy beach either following the sand out to the drop off or taking a route that follows the shoreline closely, allowing the caves and overhangs to be explored. Once the drop off is reached, you can work your way around the headland. The reef drops away well below safe diving depth—there are no offshore sites on this island since St Lucia’s seascape falls away underwater as rapidly as the landscape rises above the water.

The house reef allows a gentle dive, although you must always be wary of the presence of any currents as you make your way further around the coastline. The rich biodiversity on St Lucia is immediately apparent—scorpionfish, morays, pufferfish and various species of shrimp are in abundance.

Following the reef along to the left, we pass over a series of coral gullies where large barrel sponges are seen

and schools of Jack skirt over the reef, preying on the reef fish. Small shallow caves provide homes to a great variety of life. Resident schools of Wrasse, Needlefish and Chromis seemed used to our presence.

The marine diversity is possibly the result of nutrient rich waters that surround St Lucia, due to the volcanic nature of the island. Indeed, during the journey from the airport to the resort, we passed “The World’s Only Drive-in Volcano”—and the smell of sulphur during the trip serves to emphasise the volcanic heritage of the island, although there hasn’t been an eruption since 1766.

The high quality shore diving is not the only attraction here—taking a short boat journey around the headland from the resort’s bay affords a view that is simply breathtaking—Petit Piton and Gros Piton, the twin volcanic spires eminently soaring out of the sea, dominate the view of the landscape. Designated as world heritage sites by UNESCO, it is easy to see how this area was deemed to be an outstanding

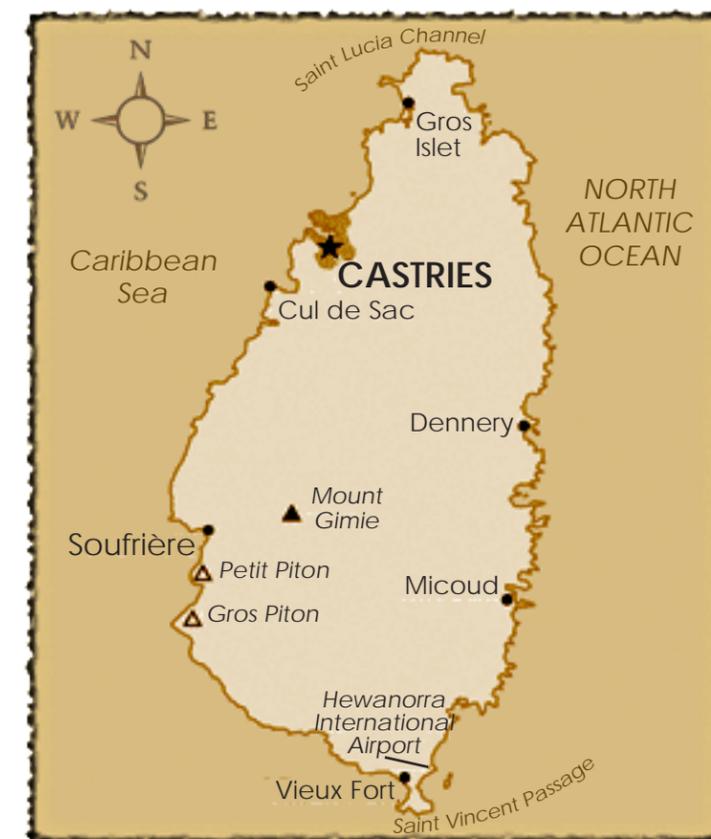
example of cultural and natural heritage when they awarded this coveted title in 2004.

You can dive at various locations around the base of the pitons—most are best done as drift dives. “Superman’s Flight” gained its name after being used as a set during the filming of “Superman II” and offers an excellent dive. Large sea whips drift lazily in the current, and hawksbill turtles can be spotted making their way along the reef.

The huge fish schools that are common in the Indian Ocean will not be found, rather, the beauty of the diving is the variety of smaller life and richness of the reefs, all set in majestic surroundings above water.

St Lucia is teardrop in shape, and during its history, it alternated between British and French colonial occupation. Now independent, English remains the national language, although a local French based dialect (“Patois”) can often be heard being spoken.

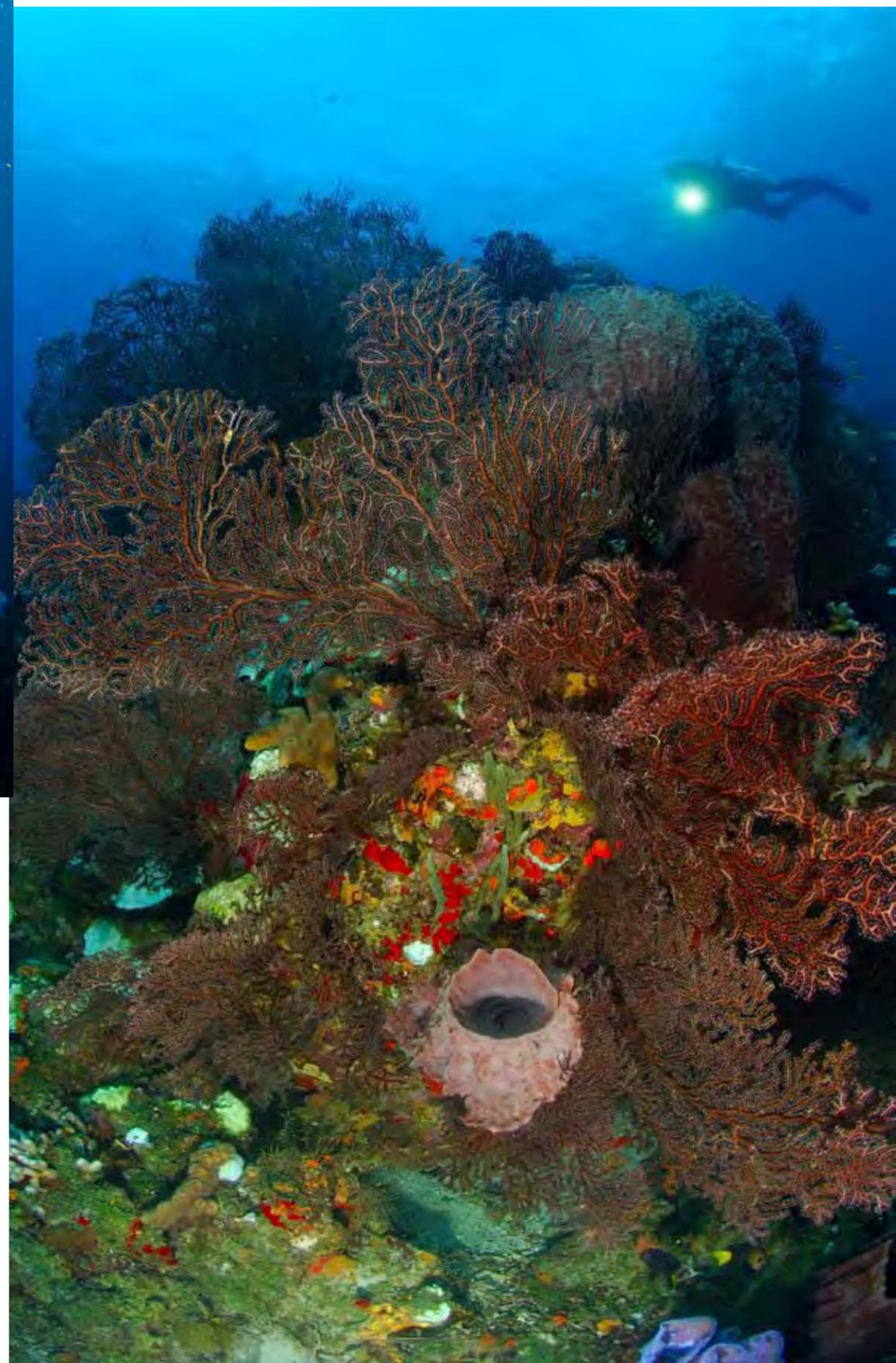
Aside from diving, you will also find that hiking, mountain biking and horse-



Map of the island of Saint Lucia



LEFT: A Giant barrel sponge at "Fairyland"
BELOW: Sea fans at "the Pinnacles" dive site



back riding are popular activities here, owing to the largely mountainous interior.

Across the bay from the pitons, the pinnacles represent a stunning dive. With four seamounts that nearly kiss the surface after rising over 300 metres from the seabed of Soufriere Bay, the reef is richly blanketed in a variety of species of soft coral and sponges. Trumpetfish and filefish can be seen dancing between the colourful gorgonians. Large basket sponges rise from the reef itself, often providing home to shrimp or goby.

Scuba St Lucia offers diving tuition in English as well as other

languages, certifying to various international bodies including PADI and SSI. The quiet, private nature of the bay and the wonderful surroundings, teamed up with attractive nearby reefs make this an ideal location for beginners and more experienced divers looking for something very different to the more popular Red Sea and Indian Ocean destinations.

Top Spots for St Lucia

Anse Chastanet Reef

This reef is just a short walk from the dive centre. It comprises of a plateau running down to eight metres before dropping off into deep water. The reef is covered

in gorgonians, soft corals and sponges. A good site for macro photography, the reef is home to over 150 different species of fish including morays, parrotfish, needlefish and scorpionfish.

Fairyland

Continuing on from the Anse Chastanet reef, this area is covered profusely in corals and sponges. Best done a drift dive, the reef slopes gently from 12 to 18 metres before dropping off into deep water. Turtles can be seen occasionally at this colourful site.

Pinnacles

A stunning dive on four coral

pinnacles that rise abruptly from the depths to within a few metres from the surface. Swimming between these pinnacles, trumpetfish, filefish and seahorses can be seen amongst the whip corals and gorgonians.

Superman's Flight

This site is located at the base of the Petit Piton. The cliff face was used in the filming of the movie "Superman II". It offers a great drift dive along a steep slope that is covered in colourful coral life. Surfacing from the dive you are greeted by truly spectacular scenery.



over the sea before a final run through an emerald comb towards Melville Hall airport.

Over the years, Dominica has become known as the 'Nature Island', an eco-tourist's dream destination. Volcanoes, boiling lakes, rainforest hikes, over 160 species of birds, towering waterfalls, whale watching and spectacular under-

water scenery—Dominica has them all. Despite these reasons to visit, Dominica has remained relatively unknown and most definitely off the beaten track, largely due to the lack of an international airport. One of the windward islands of the Caribbean, the country is only 46 km long and lies between Martinique and Guadeloupe. It's not to be confused with the Dominican Republic, the much larger package tour destination in the Northern Caribbean.

Melville Hall airport lies in the North East of the island. Choosing a self drive in order to explore with freedom, I picked up a hired 4x4, which I had prearranged to be waiting for me. My destination was the capital Roseau, which lies

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Sunset over Scott's head; The emerald pool is one of many of Dominica's natural attractions; The quiet village of Soufriere lies in the heart of a national marine reserve; Map of the island of Dominica

some 35 km away in the South West. Despite the relatively short distance, the journey took over 75 minutes. The trip took me on tight winding roads through rich rainforest, banana planta-

Dominica

Legend has it that when Christopher Columbus returned to Spain from the New World, he was asked to describe the island of Dominica. His response was to crumple up a piece of paper and throw it on the table, replying "that's Dominica!", the paper showing all the sharp edges and folds that are so apparent in this country.

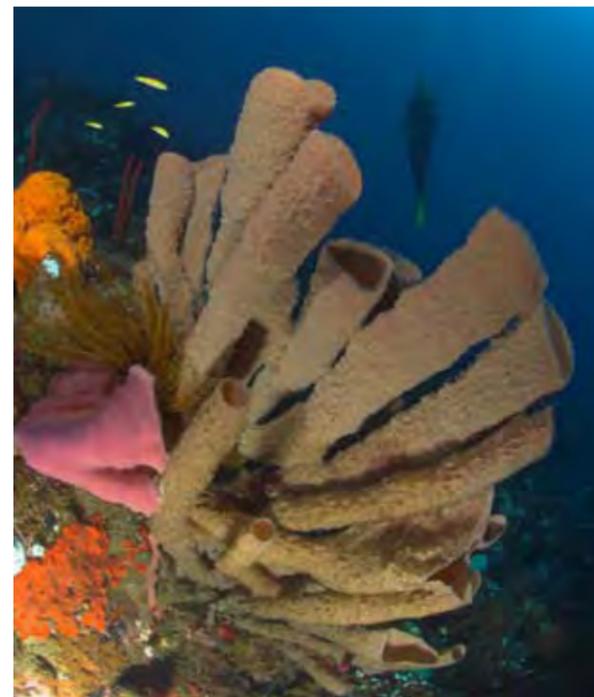
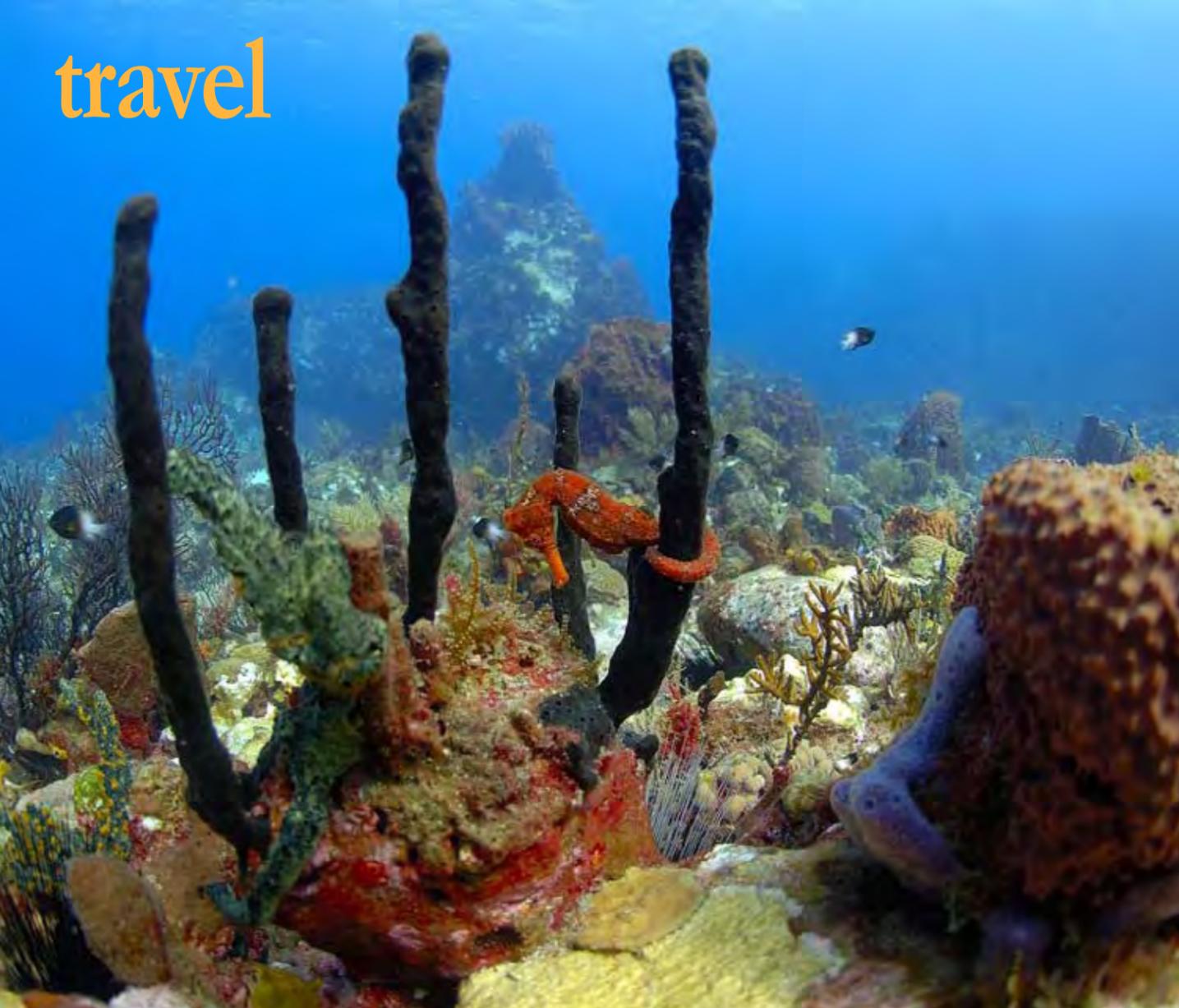
This image stays in my mind as the island appears on the horizon—it is spectacular, looming like no other in the Caribbean. The island is mountainous, covered in rich green forest. Steep ridges rise from the coast, which then give way to lush river valleys. Adventure beckons from this place as our light aircraft banks steeply



travel

Caribbean





PREVIOUS PAGE: Soldierfish gather in a swim-through at “Scott’s head pinnacles”. ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Seahorses are a common sight in Dominica; Northern Dominica’s reefs; Arrow crab; Trafalgar falls are another of Dominica’s famous landmarks

tions and the territory of the one the last settlements of the original inhabitants of the Caribbean, the Carib Indians, who maintain their culture on the island. It was apparent throughout the whole trip just how unspoilt the island is. I arrived in Roseau with a smile on my face.

Roseau is a colourful town bursting with character and traditionally West Indian. I felt I had taken a step back in time as I passed through its streets. They are lined with old stone and wood buildings and despite it being a relatively poor area, it is well kept and the locals are friendly and welcom-

ing. Dive operations on the island are well established, however you will not find resorts on Dominica on the scale that you will on St Lucia—accommodation is in the form of small hotels, guest houses and Inns. I based myself at the Castle Comfort Lodge, which benefits from being 30 seconds walk from one of the island’s longest established dive centres, Dive Dominica. This is a centre that is equipped to cope with large groups of divers, having multiple purpose built dive boats.

My first dive in Dominican waters exceeded all my expectations—

proving to be one of the most spectacular dives I have done in the Caribbean. Scott’s Head pinnacles lies at the South West tip of the island, near a peninsula where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Such nutrient rich waters have developed a stunning reef, which comprises a series of pinnacles, along with swim throughs that are filled with Soldierfish. The water was remarkably clear with visibility exceeding 30 metres, and the variety of reef life was rich—frogfish, mantis shrimp and seahorses can all be seen here. The pinnacles stand on

a plateau, and in the distance, the edge of the drop off can be seen. As with St Lucia, Dominica plunges into the abyss; the sea bed lies hundreds of metres below.

Diving in Dominica is arranged in a way that allows you time to explore the delights that she also possesses above water. Boat trips are arranged so that two 60-minute morning dives are completed by around 13:00. This leaves the afternoon free for other activities, although for those that prefer spending as much time as possible underwater, the jetty at Dive



Giant Barrel sponges are a common site on Danglebens pinnacles



THIS PAGE: Sperm Whales are resident off the coast of Dominica, where they feed on the giant squid that lives in the depths below

Caribbean

Dominica provides an excellent shore dive any time of the day. Stunning scenic attractions such as the Emerald Pool and Trafalgar falls are within half an hour's car drive of Roseau and are easy to reach by foot from the car parks. Dominica also boasts the world's second largest actively boiling lake.

Already providing many attractions for the serious nature lover, Dominica has also earned a reputation as being one of the finest whale watching destinations in the Caribbean. Its extremely deep waters provide a home to the giant squid, which live over a thousand metres down. This, in turn, has attracted a permanent residence of Sperm whales.

Whale watching is an activity not to be missed, and with skilful boat captains and knowledgeable watch leaders, the experience is both exciting and informative. In the space of three hours, we encountered four different Sperm whales at close range and schools of hundreds of dolphins. Orcas, false killer whales and pilot whales can also be seen here, and in winter, Baleen whales such as the Humpback can

sometimes be seen passing through.

A 20-minute car journey down the narrow coastal road south will take you even further back in time. The village of Soufriere (named after the French word for sulphur) lies in a bay that was formed when the walls of a volcano crater collapsed into the sea.

The whole area around the bay is now a marine reserve, managed by a friendly Londoner known to his friends as Izzy, a well travelled gentleman who seems to know just about everyone in the diving industry. When not in the Caribbean, he spends his time diving the Egyptian Red Sea. He is an instructor and qualified marine biologist.

It was comforting to see that Dominica takes the management of its natural heritage very seriously—this is a country that holds its environment in very high regard. Many more developed countries, in addition to some of our favourite diving destinations, could take a valuable lesson from their approach.

Dominican diving

It is in a sleepy village, domi-

nated by a picturesque church, where Nature Island Dive can be found. It is run by Simon Walsh, president of the Dominican Watersports Association (www.dominicawatersports.com). This well organised federation is made up of all the dive centres on the island, and working together, they provide a voice to the government and fisheries to ensure that different users of the sea remain harmonious, safety standards are defined and enforced and marine reserves governed and respected. Again, this is yet more evidence of a well-managed and responsible approach to tourism on this island. Ever helpful, they represent a good first point of contact for anyone wishing to visit the island.

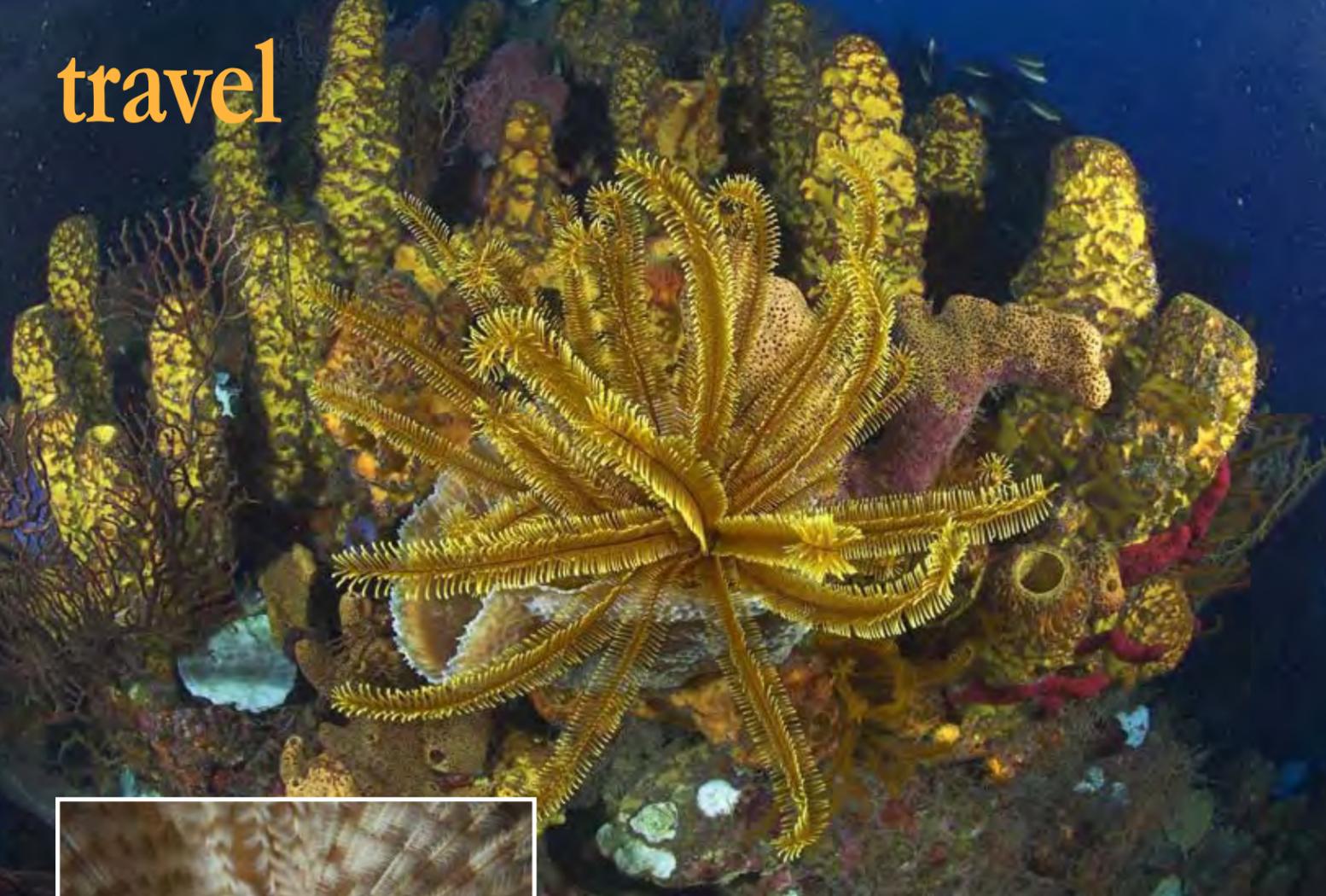
Nature Island Dive is conveniently located right in the centre of the Soufriere bay marine reserve, and the whole experience of diving with them was a very laid back affair, which mirrored the quiet and relaxed

pace of the village itself. Simon is an expert photographer and having hosted some of the world's best image makers, he knows exactly how to find what photographers look for when exploring Dominica and goes to great lengths to ensure they get what they need.

After only a 10-minute boat journey, we descended onto "Danglebens Pinnacles". Upon dropping to the bottom of the buoy line, I came across one of the largest barrel sponges I had ever seen. It's interesting to note that the marine fauna of Dominica also possesses that "spectacular" element that describes so many other attributes of this island.

The journey back from Soufriere allows one to take in some of the set of the film *Pirates of the Caribbean II*. One of its main themes involving a cannibal village was filmed on the headland and Cannibal huts still dot the hill. Many of the diving guides I met had been commissioned





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Featherduster worm; Crinoid featherstar amongst sponges; Dominica's reefs are encrusted with corals and sponges; longsnout seahorse

spring with sand almost too hot to touch, reminded me of the truly volcanic nature of Dominica. Cabrits' owners, Helen and Peter Hepp informed me they even venture round to the rarely explored Atlantic side of the island, offering the chance to dive in unexplored territory.

Dominica's highlights are its diving and hiking, both of which are world class. Mountain biking, canoeing the many rivers, and bird and whale watching also feature high on the list. It offers a raw beauty with wonderful scenery both above and below water. I left with a definite feeling that I had seen a special place, which has been totally unspoiled by industry and tourism. For anybody looking to experience tropical Caribbean nature at its purest, you need look no further than Dominica.

Top Spots on Dominica

Scott's Head Pinnacle

In the south of the island, Scott's Head Pinnacle is arguably one of the island's most famous dive sites. The dive begins on a large rock formation before one enters a large swim through that is filled with Soldierfish. The Soldierfish part like a curtain to allow you to swim through before you emerge on a large plain of coral encrusted outcrops. This leads you to the pinnacle itself. A swim through cuts the pinnacle in two, and on the other side a spectacular drop off to well below diving depth, looms before you. Soldierfish and lobster intermingle amongst the sea fans as the reef drops away.

Crater's Edge

Continuing from Scott's Head Pinnacle in a northwesterly direction is a volcanic ridge that leads out to the site known as Crater's Edge. Looking out into the blue, masses of predatory fish, including tuna

and snapper, can be observed swooping in on their prey. Barracuda also prowl this area. The pinnacle itself is covered in colourful corals and can be easily circumnavigated in one dive.

Dangleben's Pinnacles

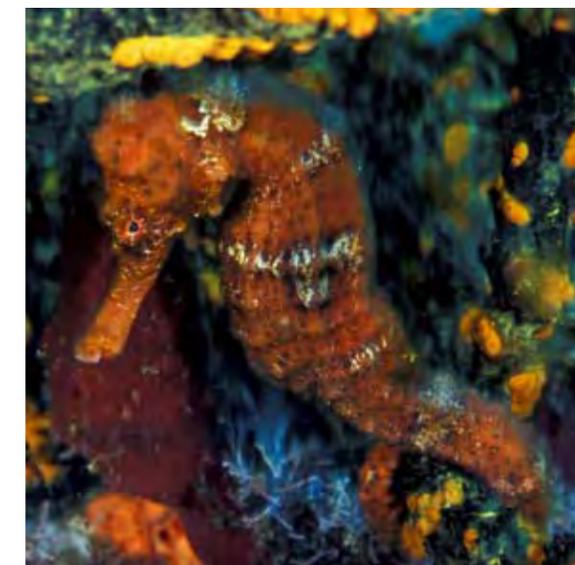
A series of five pinnacles ranging in depths from 12 to 25 metres, this site is notable for its enormous barrel sponges. The pinnacles themselves are encrusted with a variety of colourful coral species and during the winter months, large schools of jacks, can be seen hunting. A spectacular dive and a favourite of many of the local guides.

Champagne Reef

This reef lies in the northern area of the Soufriere Marine Reserve and is a much talked about site by anyone who has visited. In around five metres of water, a sub-aquatic hot spring jets out hot water, and bubbles can be seen rising from the reef in the surrounding area, hence its name.

Toucari Caves

This site lies in the north of the island and can be dived from Cabrits dive centre. A beautiful, healthy reef, the high point of the dive is swimming through a cave and archway abound with lobster. The whole area is rich in fish life and ranging in depth from 10 – 30 metres, it is suitable for both beginner and advanced diver.



as extras for the film, which bought huge benefits for the local economy.

An hours drive north up to Portsmouth shows even more of the underwater diversity that Dominica has to offer. Cabrits dive centre is a very well equipped centre geared towards teaching. The underwater scenery is very different here, lacking the huge abyssal drop offs of the South, but containing gentle coral covered slopes with schooling fish. Finding a bubbling underwater



CLOCKWISE: Young Island resort; sunset over the jetty on Young Island; Peacock Flounder; Map of the island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Longsnout seahorse are commonplace on St Vincents reefs

St Vincent

An intimate knowledge and genuine enthusiasm for marine life are attributes that define some of the best dive guides. With these qualities, they are able to turn an hour underwater into a whole learning experience. Bill Tewes, proprietor of Dive St Vincent, takes that experience to another level altogether. He has placed St Vincent on the map as being amongst the premier locations for critter diving in the Caribbean.

Bill is a weather-worn Texan, full of energy and anecdotes. "I'll dive every day until I die. Hell, there's nothing else to do, is there?" he quipped in his strong Texan twang as the huge twin engines of the dive boat roar into life.

Bill moved to St Vincent 24 years ago. Previously he was

in Papua New Guinea, one of the pioneers of diving in that area. Given the enormous marine biodiversity that exists in PNG, Bill can certainly speak with authority and experience. "I decided to leave New Guinea," he said, "and I saw a guy who was selling a dive centre in St Vincent, so I thought, what the hell, seems like a nice place, but I had no idea just how special it really was."

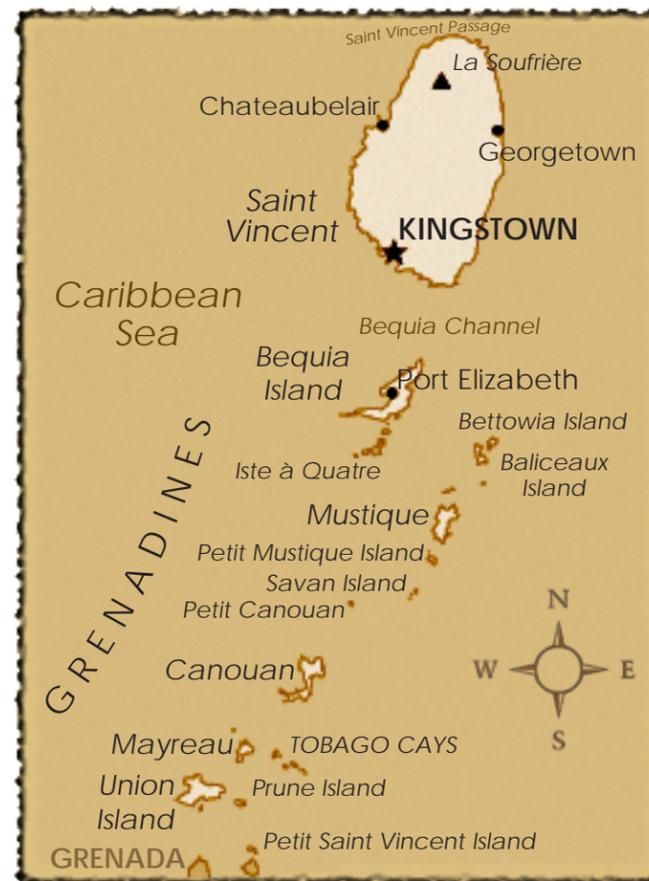
The discovery of St Vincent's true underwater treasures did not come instantly though. For years St Vincent was regarded as typical Caribbean diving. It had nice reefs but was without the special attractions to bring divers in from over the world.

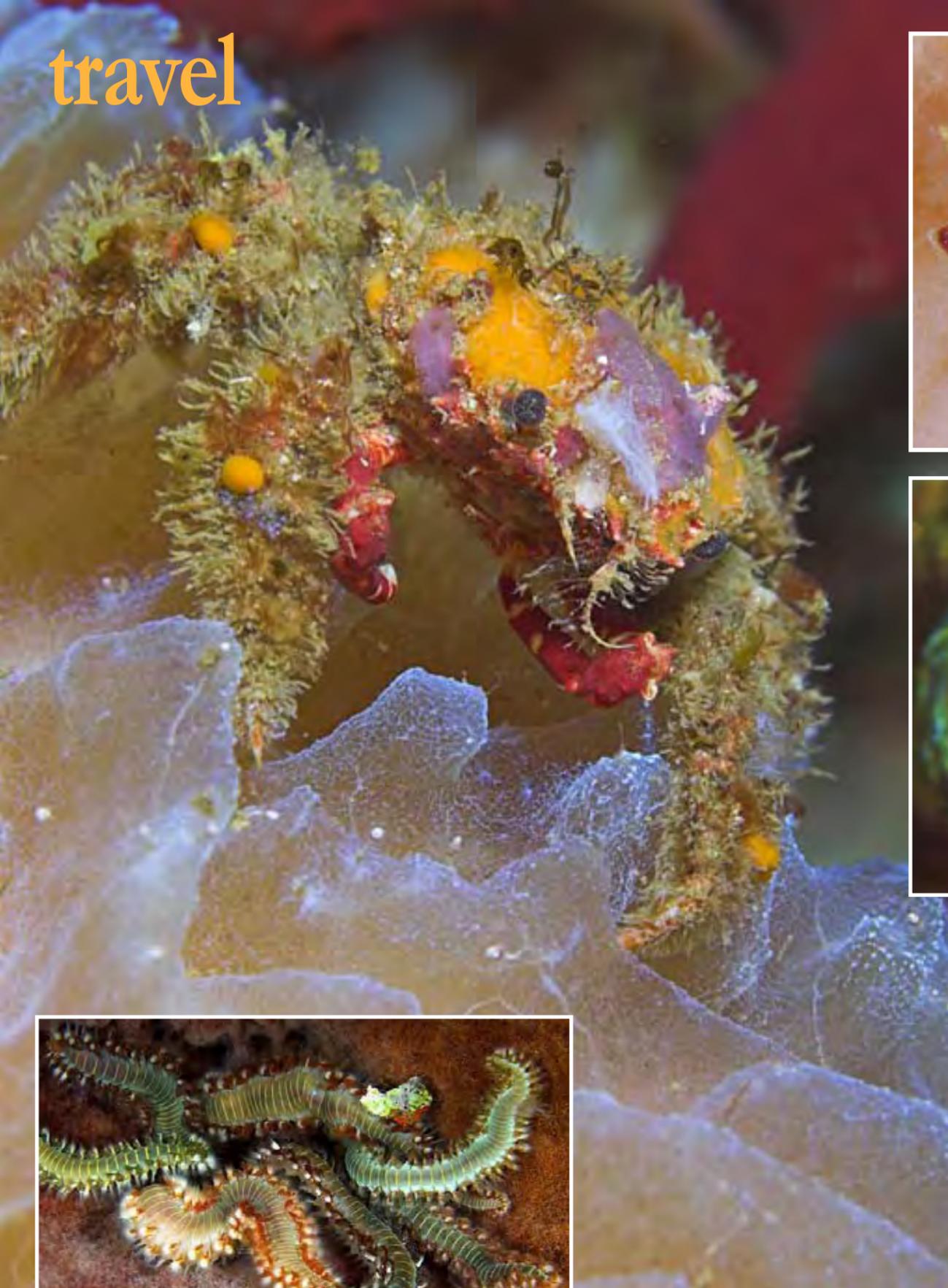
It isn't that St Vincent has changed, but rather that Bill has used his time well focuss-

ing on a more unique aspect of what the island has to offer in the waters that surround.

Entering the old shack that forms the dive centre, one is bombarded with a plethora of colour. Images of the weird and wonderful—some animals of which I'd never seen before—adorn the entry porch to the dive hut. The images were produced by some well-known photographers. My own attention was immediately focussed.

Pointing out any one of the animals portrayed in the images, Bill replies with a description of the animal and where it was taken. "I can show you that," he said and goes on describing every animal to me, like a living encyclopaedia. I can't help but feel eager to get in the water; his enthusiasm is infectious.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Some of St Vincent's weird and wonderful marine inhabitants: Fireworms (inset); Decorator crab; Southern teardrop crab; Snapping shrimp; Secretary Blenny

Diving St Vincent

The dive boat leaves at a respectable 9:30am, allowing time for a relaxed breakfast. His boats are fast, so we're at our first dive destination known simply as "The Steps" in no time at all. Tanks are filled only to 175 bar, but at an average dive depth of ten metres, this is enough for an hour or more.

The diving is slow and relaxed, mimicking the pace of life above water. The aim is not to cover ground, but to find the unusual, weird and wonderful. Good buoyancy control is a must; it's all too

easy to stir up the sediment and ruin visibility.

Much of the time we spend moving along the sand or mud flats, which at first appear as no more than a barren moonscape, but it is here that some of the most unusual critters can be found. It seems every square

metre of this underwater realm contains life, some of it more obscure than I had ever witnessed. Bill and his guides identify each creature and use waterproof writing pads to name what they have found—it was akin to diving with an active guide book.

Indeed, after only one dive here, it is clear that the marine fauna of St Vincent is unusually rich. I wonder if the other dive destinations are equally as rich, and it's really down to the guide's abilities to find the unusual that make this place seem so special. Bill has a theory on this. "I believe

it's the nutrient rich currents that run from the Atlantic through the channel between our neighbour Bequia and us that have made St Vincent what it is. When I first came here, I didn't realise that this place had the treasures it has. But over the years, I've come to realise that it is a truly special place," Bill told me. Special, it most certainly is.

The divers that visit Bill were certainly not what I'd call casual divers. Keen photographers and critter enthusiasts equipped with an array of animal identification books, these were serious divers, and some I spoke to visit several times a year—such is the attraction of this relatively unknown place.

Some world leading marine life experts have also recognised the uniqueness of what Bill has discovered. The chances of discovering the undiscovered is high, and Bill himself found an undocu-

mented species whilst I was diving with him. "My enthusiasm for diving has never been greater," Bill informed me. "I just never know what I'm going to find even on reefs I've visited countless times before."

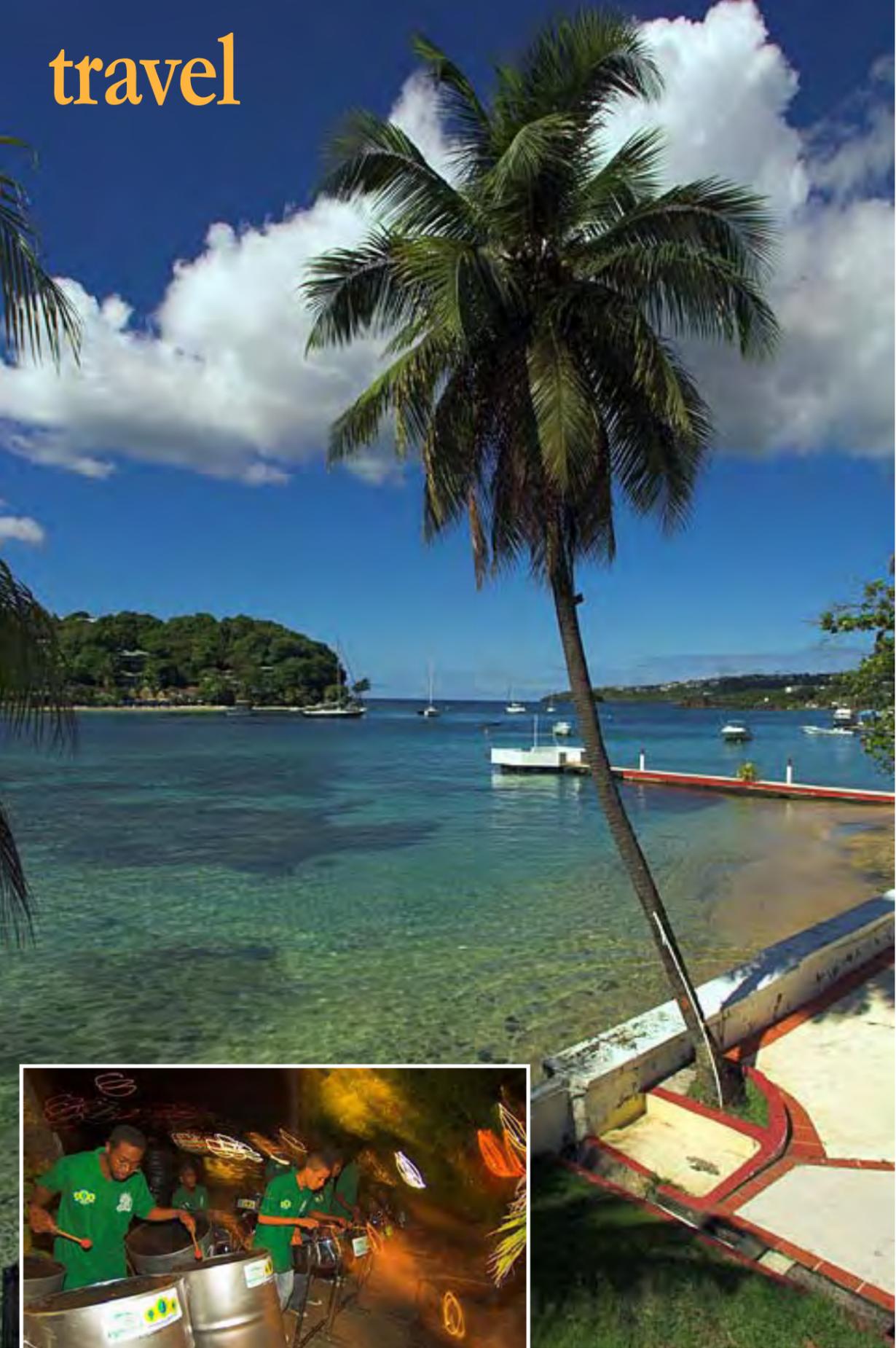
The island

St Vincent itself lies about 35 km from St Lucia, its nearest neighbour to the north. It's a small island, only 29 km long by 18 km wide, and its interior is a tangle of lush vegetation, distinctly mountainous with deep valleys.

The Grenadines group of islands run 75 km south all the way to Grenada, and include such islands as Mustique and Bequia—popular with the rich and famous and known for their white sandy beaches. It's also a popular sailing destination.

St Vincent is much like Dominica in that it has shied away from becoming a package destination, hav-





The location used as the "pirates treasure cave" for the first of the *Pirates of the Caribbean*

movies

used as the "Treasure Cave" set for the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie.

As we descend beneath the

ing no international airport. Its period charm is evident in my choice of accommodation; The Mariners Hotel is styled in typical Caribbean architecture—fresh, clean colours and full of character—it boasts a superb restaurant and lies only a few minutes walk from Dive St Vincent's jetty. Together they lie on the edge of a small stretch of water that runs between the mainland and the more exclusive Young Island Resort. St Vincent therefore offers good accommodation within easy reach of the best diving spots.

It is off the shores of the aforementioned Young Island, only two minutes' boat journey from the dive centre, where

I had one of the most bizarre of dives. For having moored on an anchor buoy, I was to take around 20 minutes to reach the seabed, which lay only eight metres below. The reason lies in testament to Bill's theory on the nutrient rich waters—I found that the entire buoy rope was in itself an oasis of marine life. I never have before seen a rope so encrusted with corals and sponges with a whole variety of creatures making this place their home. I daren't have touched the rope itself, for fear of the absolute destruction I would have caused to this fragile mini ecosystem. The remainder of the dive was no less interesting—burrowing starfish, deco-

rator crabs, jawfish, the rare golden coral shrimp, all found on a flat, seemingly featureless sandy bottom.

St Vincent's coastline itself is no less absorbing than the undersea environment. It is pocketed with coves and hidden bays, whilst various species of sea bird nest on the steep cliffs. It fuels the imagination.

"You may recognise this place," Bill said as our boat snaked around the headland. Indeed, our dive site this day was Orca Point, the bay

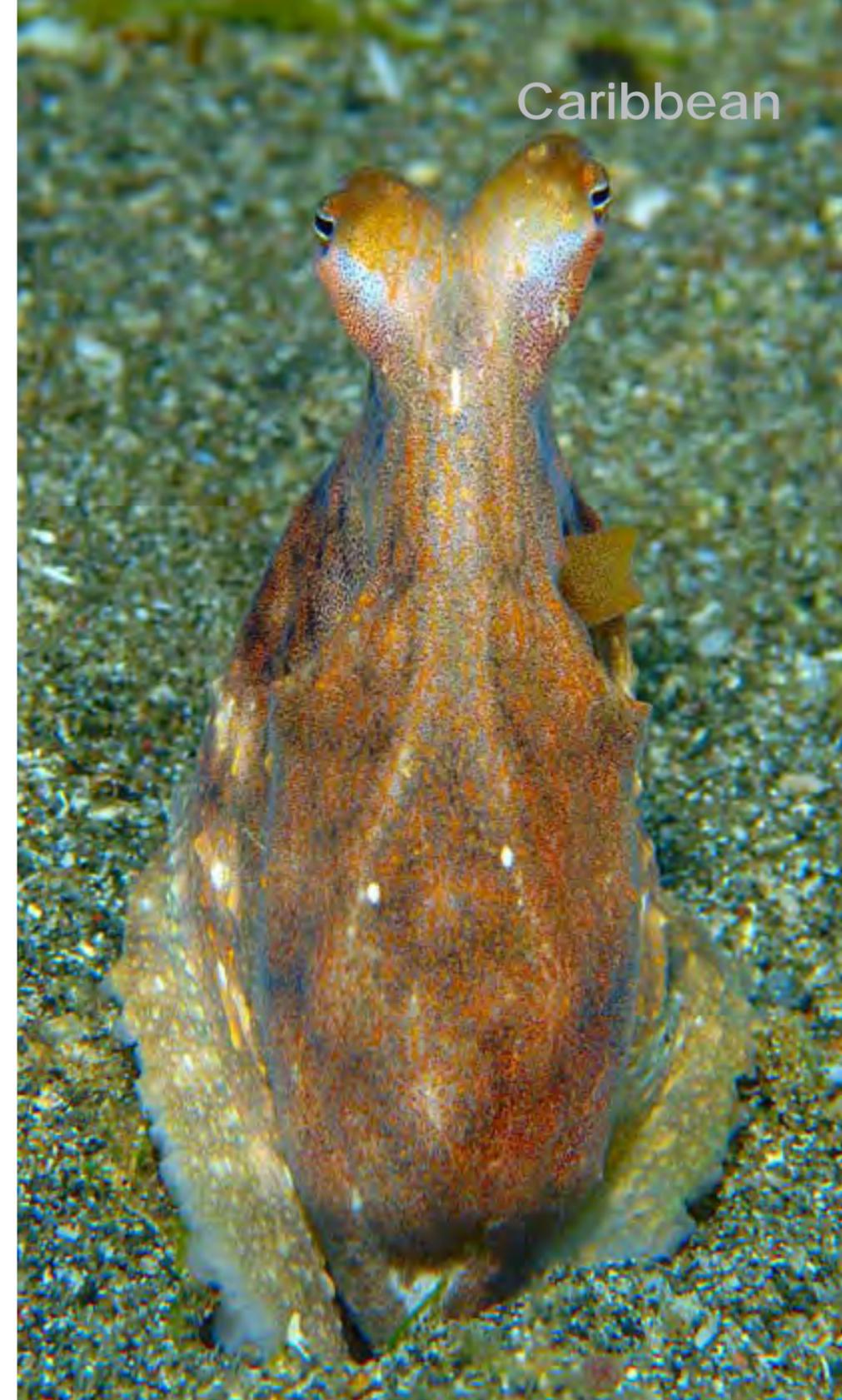
boat, we quickly discovered our own undersea treasures, far more beautiful than any man-made creation. The rare magnificent urchin greets us with a plethora of colour, reds richer than I have ever seen.

I look on in wonder as I observe that these animals are actually capable of walking at some speed. I wonder if they



ABOVE: View from the Mariners hotel
LEFT: local entertainment





FROM LEFT: Secretary blenny; Juvenile Magnificent urchin, rarely seen at sport diving depths; Longarm octopus

know where they are going, as one heads off in the same direction as the other, clearly with intent. Not satisfied with such a wonderful find, Bill was keen to point out the miniscule shrimp that live amongst the spines of this rarely seen animal.

Our attention turned now to the green vegetation that blankets the seabed. Perseverance paid off as we spotted the tiny Bumblebee shrimp—no less special than our earlier find. Smaller than my little finger nail, we

tracked it as it darted amongst the seaweed, ever eager to escape our prying eyes.

Every dive on St Vincent ends with one wanting more, and every dive begins with the excitement of not knowing what one will find, but a feeling that one will certainly find many things, most of which will be new.

Despite the slow pace of life on St Vincent, the time there ends too quickly. I now recall my visit to St Lucia when the dive

guide, Bernd, made a statement about how different the diving can be from one island to the next in the Caribbean—how right he was.

St Vincent's Top Sites

The majority of Dive St. Vincent's sites are on the leeward, or western, side of the island. The journey to the sites by speed boat takes an average of 10 to 15 minutes. There are moorings at the most popular sites, installed to protect the reefs.

The Wall

Beneath the cliffs that protrude into the sea, this reef has a richness of life that rivals the top-side flora and fauna. The wall is full of black corals in an array

of colours. Gorgonians, barrel and vase sponges intersperse the reef. Large populations of Chromis and creole wrasse flow over the seascape.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Tube Sponges; Christmas tree worms; Blennies of a whole range of species are common in St Vincent

Orca Point

This site is full of critters of all shapes and sizes and also makes an excellent night dive. A wonderful area for macro photography, on a typical dive you will see several types of seahorse, flamingo tongues, frog fish and a whole variety of crustaceans. The site descends from six to 30 metres, and the best way to explore it is to start out on the deep side

and work your way to the shallow boulders with swarming fish.

Orca II

Has the best of both worlds: encompasses a beautiful reef and has an area for muck diving. The reef side is very coral rich, containing an abundance of life. The muck diving side displays many of the critters that St Vincent has become famous for

including flying gurnards, seahorses and a diversity of crustaceans, in addition to pike blennies.

Critter Corner

A photographers dream site, in only eight metres of water you'll be limited by film or the space on your flash card rather than bottom time. Pistol shrimp, cardinal fish, torpedo ray, gurnards, seahorse—all can be seen here.

The buoy line itself is encrusted in coral and sponges; so much life is to be found in this small space.

Getting there

LIAT Airlines (www.liatairline.com) offers extensive inter-island flights running several times a day. The flight time from St Lucia to Dominica is 45 minutes, and St Lucia to St Vincent only 20 minutes. International flights land at

Puerto Rico, Barbados, Antigua and St Lucia, all of which are interconnected by LIAT.

Climate & hurricanes

St Lucia, Dominica and St Vincent all lie in the tropical Caribbean. Therefore, the temperature varies only slightly all year round averaging around 30°C, with minimal variations in the number of hours of daylight.

The rainiest time of year is May through November. Even so, rainfall is heavier on the northeast (windward) side of the islands, with much less on the leeward sides, where the diving operations are based.

Hurricane season starts in June and officially ends at the end of November. This is the low season for tourism to this region. All three islands are at the southern edge of the hurricane belt, so the chances of a "direct hit" are low, although tropical depressions passing by

may produce bad weather during the season.

Water temperature averages 27°C year round, so a 3 or 5mm wetsuit is adequate.

Currency

All three islands use the Eastern Caribbean dollar, with US dollars also widely accepted. Cash is readily available from autobank machines and most popular credit cards are accepted by resorts and dive centres. ■



Bangaram Island

Diving Tropical India



ABOVE: Relaxation Bangaram style with lagoon steps away. TOP: Bangaram Island and its atoll

Text and photos by Charles Stirling

Dreaming of diving off an uninhabited tropical island? Doing this by liveboard boat is one approach, but here, on Bangaram Island, one can live the island dream while staying on the island itself, which has enough infra-structure to make it comfortable.

The mainly submerged volcanic mountain range of the Chagos-Laccadive Plateau extends from the Indian Ocean into the Arabian Sea. At the southern end are the Chagos group of islands, which are British owned, but part leased to the United States for a secret military base. They are off limits even for the original inhabitants who have been trying to

return for many years.

The middle archipelago of islands, are the Maldives—an island nation well known to divers. At the northern end are the Lakshadweep islands, formerly known as the Laccadives. All of the islands rising out of the sea from this plateau are low lying coral atolls with associated sand banks and other coralline structures.

The coral growth has kept pace with land sinking and sea level rises, which have been happening for thousands of years giving, for divers, sheer vertical walls, shallow inter atoll bridges along with sandy lagoons to enjoy. Of course, the coral doesn't grow above the level of the sea surface; for island formation, storms or earthquake uplift are needed. Storms wash coral debris onto the top of underwater coral, but storms also mean some islands periodically disappear. The Chagos-Maldives-Lakshadweep Archipelagos are in a

dynamic state of flux.

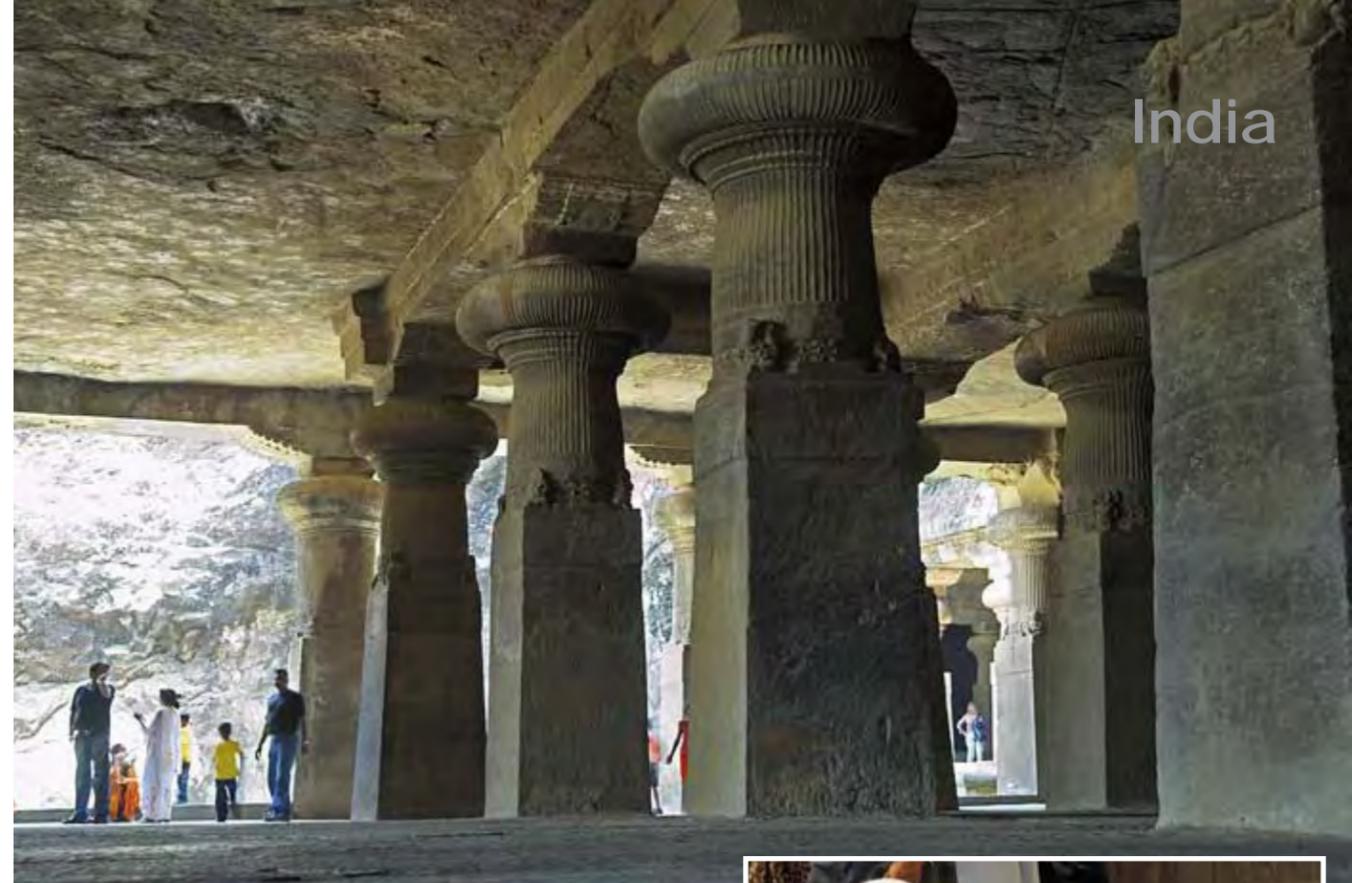
I went diving in the Lakshadweep archipelago on Bangaram Island. India has been very cautious in allowing "outside" influences in this archipelago—firstly, to protect the local native culture, and secondly, to protect the fragile ecosystems.

India—to visit or just dive?

Never having visited India before, I chose to combine the diving trip to Bangaram with a visit to parts of the Indian mainland in one trip. I didn't know exactly what the diving would be like, as it has had little or no coverage. Would I regret not spending all my available time underwater?

I first heard about diving on Bangaram when I talked with two of the owners (Michael and Badu Dominic) of the family-run Indian CGH Earth resort group of environmentally-friendly hotels, and found out they





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Chinese fishing nets at Cochin; Mumbai's Elephanta Island is both a religious shrine but also a simple pleasant location that locals visit to unwind from city congestion; Mumbai does have its street sellers; Crowded busy Mumbai



were both divers. The group owns the resort on this little known island. They highly praised the diving, so my excuse to visit India was sealed.

Getting to Bangaram from England

LAKSHADWEEP

Lakshadweep is the smallest union territory of India consisting of 12 atolls, three reefs and five submerged banks, with a total of 32 islands located between 200 and 400 km off the coast of the south west state of Kerala. Until recently, foreign visitors were not allowed. Now, you can visit by obtaining a permit in advance. Likewise, access was limited, first by infrequent ship, then slow ferry, until an airport was built on the island of Agatti, at first served only by a ten-seater aircraft. In 2007, Kingfisher Airlines started daily flights with a 70-seater turboprop plane. So, Bangaram Island is a rather special destination just beginning to open up. ■

involved first a transfer stop in Mumbai, or Bombay, as everyone local still calls it. I booked this with a morning arrival and a next day internal flight to Cochin (or Kochi in other speak) so had a day to visit the city, and did the same on my return.

Mumbai is a crowded, frantic, hectic, busy city that is fantastic. It's way too big and too congested to see more than a tiny fraction of it in two days, but one still can get a taste of the place. The first thing I noticed was the relaxed friendliness of the people, and that most spoke at least some English. Then, I noticed the slow rush of vehicles to get somewhere, as I tried to walk across a road. As a pedestrian, you quickly learn to weave amongst the cars.

With a car and a guide—which is essential—I crammed in visits to the Gandhi museum, the "Gateway to India", various religious shrines including Elephanta Island, a riverside laundry, various street markets and more. Yes, there was poverty. Yes, people were

begging, but it never seemed oppressive —people were generally happy. Yes, some streets were litter strewn, but seldom worse than England could be with our new rubbish "maybe collect" policies. While, on the whole, I was pleasantly surprised how tidy much of the city was. I would love to go back for a longer stay. At least a few days in a big Indian city should be on one's "to do" list.

Cochin is the gateway to the Lakshadweep islands. I went via Mumbai, but direct flights from some European cities, from other eastern countries and other Indian cities do exist. Cochin is famous for its Chinese fishing nets, to be seen in any travel book of the area, and they do still exist and

work. As in Mumbai, I had two nights, one each going and returning. The town is larger than maps seem to show it, and it's spread over several islands. I stayed on the seafront, near Fort Kochi, just a few minutes walk from those nets, so I did manage to get to see them as well as the fish market stretching along the beach front.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Bangaram Island seen from the sea; The small bar on the beach at Bangaram; Arrival on the little floating dock with dive boat nearby

the 80 or so resort staff—most of whom come from one of the other islands—and up to 60 visitors at any one time. So, does one really get to claim he or she has spent vacation time on an uninhabited island?

Accommodation is provided in one of 30 double bed chalets, each with shower and toilet, mini-bar fridge and enough space that a cat wouldn't hit its head if you had one to swing, and electrical outlets that maintained power throughout the day and night.

Communal facilities included a library and games room, dining hall used for breakfast and lunch, beach bar, plus the water sports centre and, the all-important, diving centre. No roads, just paths, no motor vehicles, no TV, not even mobile phone coverage—so, it is a location for relaxation.

Dinner was served under the stars, buffet style, with a good variety of entrees always including a choice of two or more fish, chicken, or other meat and various vegetable dishes, plus a couple of types of rice. We had barbecued tiger prawns one evening that were REALLY difficult not to overindulge in.

The food here, as in all the group's offerings, was a little bland for me, probably cooked for the more

normal Western visitors—not one used to cooking his own rather spicy concoctions at home. The food suited my partner just fine.

The beach bar was the only source of alcohol in the Muslim Lakshadweep islands, where it was illegal otherwise. So, an after-dive beer or wine with dinner was available.

The resort was very environmentally conscious with rainwater collection and storage for most water needs. The used water was treated and reused for watering plants. Electricity was generated

Getting there

Flying to Agatti was on Kingfisher Airlines—an airline reputed to have more reliable service than the ten-seater plane. Those of us going on to Bangaram were escorted out of the small airport to a thatch-roofed, open waiting area for passport and permit checking before seeing our bags manhandled over the beach to a little movable floating dock, which was pulled over to our boat moored just offshore. Following our bags, our group of newly arriving visitors sat back for the hour-long journey to our very own enchanted, tropical island surrounded by a turquoise blue sea.

Bangaram Island is officially classified as uninhabited, with only



ABOVE: Cooking demonstration, a popular pastime. Hammocks meeting their calling on Bangaram





India



LEFT TO RIGHT: Giant clams of all sizes and colours were common; It wasn't all simple flat terrain; Glass fish; Honeycomb moray eel *Gymnothorax favagineus* with cleaner wrasse and shrimp

with solar cells with battery storage and diesel generation was only used late at night when batteries ran out. Plastics were discouraged, and any that did come to the island were returned to the mainland for recycling.

Equipment matters

Being here for the diving, my partner and I visited the dive centre in the morning after arrival to sort out hire of equipment

as we had only brought wetsuits, masks, camera equipment and dive computers with us. Long flights and weight limits had put constraints on what we could bring with us gear-wise. But bringing our own wetsuits proved sensible as the hired ones were shorties—fine, if you keep swimming, not so good if you take your time, even in the 30°C water.

Bangaram Island is inside a 10 km by 8 km atoll, joined by one other similar sized

uninhabited island, Tinnakara, plus two very small ones, Parali-I and Parali-II.

Looking at local charts, it appeared as if the areas outside the surrounding fringing reef dropped to depths of over 1000 metres on three sides of the reef. In places, these depths reached up to a couple of kilometres offshore. Others were relatively near, but deep depths were generally found only after more gently sloping contours.

On the side facing Agatti, a wide sandy bank bridged the two islands at 11 metres depth. All of this is important for the coral, as you will see later.

I asked Sumer Verma, the dive centre owner, about his diving customers. He said that over half were repeat visitors from many parts of the world. In general, they were vacation divers, often ones wanting to chill out with the island life. Some had bad experiences elsewhere (evidently many from a first experience that went wrong in the Red Sea). Others, such as us, needed to “get wet” while on a wider visit to India.

All the diving took place from a slow hard boat, similar to the one that brought

us to the island. It had bottle storage racks, wooden benches, a proper toilet inside and an insulated sunroof. So, it was comfortable for up to the 12 divers that it could carry, but did not meet the standards, or needs, of Red Sea day boats, which have to cover longer distances. The dive boat did carry an oxygen kit, radio and life vests.

Being a slow boat, it did save on fuel—a positive environmental consideration for this very environmentally aware resort—but it meant that trips to all the dive sites along the outside of the fringing reef took 40 to 80 minutes to reach.

Site selection was made in the morning, dependant on the weather but mostly on the experience levels of those who

turned up. The island life was relaxed; guests might or might not do what they planned the evening before, making for awkward dive planning. This was of little consequence except for photographers

Cleaning station for oriental sweetlips



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Divers did see coral; Sharks were found, just not as many on my dives as other weeks; Feather star; The agricultural area of Kerala grows pineapples so fresh pineapple is a common inexpensive food

shipwreck, the Princess Royal, within the lagoon can be found, but in practice, it is coral reef diving that is the primary draw, as the wreck has only a few exposed timbers.

Most chosen sites were in the low 20-metre

who wanted to set up lenses. The boat had no provisions for photographers; not even a rinse tank was available when I was there, let alone a flat dry area for setting up. However, the fact that the dives took place in a relaxed atmosphere with 30°C water, time limits of an hour and a none too frantic pace led by the dive guide made up for this problem.

Remnants of an old wooden

depth range with a few a little less. One site, "The Grand Canyon", was a narrow fissure extending below sport diving limits. Shallower sites were available, and the first steps in training were done within the sheltered lagoon. Looking at the local charts, there should have been some stunning vertical walls to see. However, since they start at about 30 metres, these are not on offer.

All dives started with a back roll, then

a surface meeting to exchange OK signs, and finally the group descent. The dive sites were often on gentle sloping reef faces, so divers started shallow before finning deeper. Dives then meandered back up, giving excellent multilevel profiles for those hour long dives.

The surface interval of 60 to 90 minutes was spent relaxing on the boat with fresh pineapple slices and cakes, which set us up for the second dive that had us back at the resort by 2:30 for lunch.

Afternoons were spent unwinding on the beach, snorkelling, kayaking, going deep sea fishing, getting an ayurvedic treatment or going for a walk—it's a small island with enough to do if you're not expecting a raving disco or late night clubbing.

A number of sharks and a few large rays were seen on Manta Point, but that was the day before my dive. Isn't it always just before or after your dive?

On my dive, marine life was limited to a few hawksbill turtles, fish of the oriental sweetlips variety at cleaning stations, eels popping out of holes, anemone fish doing their thing, and the rest of the expected coral reef fish and invertebrate life hiding in holes.

Shark sightings arose at Entrance Point with a couple of nurse sharks sleeping under a ledge. We saw a ray and a clutch—if that's what you call 15 or more together—of spiny lobster at Bangaram Reef, cushion stars, giant clams, bannerfish, trevally, wrasse, garden eels, butterflyfish, parrotfish and more at many if not all the sites. Yes, fish life is reasonably good. A guide book to the Maldives will work relatively well here with some minor changes.

The big stuff is less common and tends to visit only in November-December with the cooler waters. Manta ray cleaning stations haven't yet been found, and the sightings are few and only made during those cooler months.





arriving in Agatti.

None of the islands and nearby seas are really fully explored. It is still relatively virgin territory, with the possibility of good new sites yet to be discovered.

Did I err?

Having come to the end of my stay on Bangaram, could it be said that I erred in choosing to make my first trip to India a mix of diving and visiting some of the mainland? No. The other guests and I enjoyed the dive sites of the island, and the resort was great, but the diving wasn't world class. The trip as a whole was in the world class category and was enhanced by time spent underwater.

Cochin and Mumbai were gateways worth seeing. The remainder of the time was spent

visiting a little of the state of Kerala beyond Cochin.

Kerala

Kerala is coastal— well known for its coconut palms growing along its 1000 plus miles of interconnected lakes, rivers and canals that make up the backwaters. Further afield are long stretches of sandy beach, rugged mountains, tea plantations, agricultural areas, and historic and religious centres of many flavours.

This isn't the article for extensive coverage of all the attractions, but a short mention might show why a combined diving and sightseeing trip is worth considering. I only just scratched the surface of what there is to see in this small green state of India.

The backwaters are on the doorstep of Cochin. I went to Coconut Lagoon, accessible by boat, looking first at what

Since most of the clientèle were vacation divers, the organization of the diving for them adhered to a policy that had the divers following the guide who led the group. Strict safety was emphasised. The chance to stay and watch animal behaviour was limited if the group lost interest, but interesting animals were pointed out during the dive giving everyone an opportunity to see marine life. More experienced divers were provided with their own guide on the same site, if numbers worked out.

Warm waters

The warm, 30°C water made for pleasant diving, but the downside was the presence of coral bleaching, with much of the hard coral dead. Small patches

and stands of good coral were present on every dive and recovery was slowly happening.

The warming effect of the 1998 El Niño affected the whole of the Chagos-Maldives-Lakshadweep submarine mountain range. Recovery seems much slower here at Bangaram. It is possible that the Maldives made a quicker recovery due to stronger, cooler deep ocean currents. The top of the mountain range around Bangaram atoll and Agatti is both large and shallow, so the sun warms the water, while the prevailing currents—being from the west—are possibly pushing the newly warmed water over the reefs slowing regeneration.

Agatti is at the southwestern side and suffered less damage during El Niño.

Recovery seems to be better. We did get below a thermocline at one point and found better coral condition. The poor coral is a deterrent to making the trip, but it shouldn't be a show stopper for an occasional diver, or for anyone making this excursion a part of seeing more of India.

In addition to diving on Bangaram Island, diving is also available on Agatti and Kadmat Islands, which I wasn't able to try. Both of these islands supposedly have less coral bleaching yet somewhat similar coral diving. Accommodation on both of these islands is more basic. Kadmat is a few hours' boat journey after

THIS PAGE: Tea farm in the mountains near Thekkadi; Kettuvallam or houseboat on the Kerala backwaters; Wild elephants at Periyar





interesting environmentally, as much of the adjacent land is below sea level with dykes holding the water back. Sea water is let in seasonally to flood the waterways, which helps to control the water hyacinth invasion.

It's an area undergoing economic changes with coconut palms replacing rice fields in some places. More tourists visit now with the houseboats, and land reclamation is taking place. The area grows a lot of coconuts with local home industries producing coir products, spinning the coconut fibre into twine, weaving traditional door mats, and more.

The region is worth seeing maybe sooner rather than later. There's just too much to see—this is the only real problem.

The beaches in Kerala are—well, beaches—long white sandy places with water at one edge—less crowded, less touristy than Goa just to the north and lacking the wild nightlife. If you want to continue the Bangaram style beach life, it's worth considering coming here, as I did for a moment at Marari Beach. Not being much of a beach bum, I took a three-hour tour by tuk-tuk to see other fishing villages.

Driving inland, coconuts give way to rubber tree plantations and pineapple farms in this agricultural region; then, impressive mountains become apparent as foothills become steeper, valleys spread out

below, and the road switchbacks up sheer cliffs. Near the top, one can find tea plantations sprouting, spices growing, forests and nature reserves.

I made it up to the tropical rainforest and Periyar Tiger Reserve near Thekkadi to visit a tea factory as part of the drive. No tigers were seen at the reserve, not that it was really expected, as only about 12 wild ones are left. I took a long hike in the reserve, then a boat ride on the lake, which shows off the wild elephants, water buffalo, monkeys and deer.

The reserve is doing its thing on the environmental side—converting local tribal people from poachers to game wardens and tourist guides. The park boasts a diverse flora of over 2000 species of flowering plants, many of which are endangered, including many species of orchids, grasses and trees along with the diverse animal life.

I found these explorations great fun as well as educational but wondered what families, and in particular, what kids would think about it all. Was it very much an adult trip? So, I asked a few English families with kids what they thought. I was surprised by the responses, summed up by one ten-year-old, who said that their Kerala trip—not dissimilar to mine—was the best holiday she had ever had. She said, "It has the climate, colour, food, friendly people, things to do, beaches, mountains and animals,"



and she didn't want to ever go home.

Environmentalism

Taking this trip happened slightly by accident following a certain conversation about a hotel's environmental endeavours. The CGH Earth group are proud of what they are trying to do, something beyond the normal. So, what did I find when I visited?

First, conservation happens in the background, something a guest

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Coir, or coconut fiber, being spun into twine in a small cottage industry seen in much of coastal Kerala; Rice fields as seen from a backwaters houseboat cruise; Chinese fishing nets at Cochin; Canoes are the local transport on the backwaters

India has a reputation in some quarters as a country to avoid seemingly due in part to the poverty there and less than great food hygiene. Yes, many are poor, but having stayed in the admittedly tourist-oriented hotels, I found food hygiene up to Western standards. Food outside the hotels also seemed at least reasonable and delightfully spicier. Streets were generally clean (in Kerala, often cleaner than streets I see frequently in England). India is changing. ■





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Even the local shop arrives by canoe in the backwaters; Bangaram diving; The earthworms seemed to like the concrete homes at Spice Village; Water treatment at Coconut Lagoon

finds out only by asking, and I was asking. Seeing the practice in action was impressive. There were a variety of initiatives at different locations, each hotel looking at its local situation to minimise impact for that location. They were not using a blanket, unthinking “one-fits-all” approach.

All the hotels did substantial recycling. Plastics and metal cans were sent to commercial centres, organics composted using either anaerobic digesters or earthworms—sometimes for fuel—and grey water was used for gardens.

These days, ‘recycling’ is often just a catchword for governments or establishments to duck behind. Here, at Spice Village, it was impressive seeing over 70 good size wormeries lined up taking compostable waste with the output used on the hotel gardens or in mushroom growing bags.

Coconut Lagoon used both worms and heated anaerobic digesters (heated by burning other waste) to produce methane used for cooking stoves. Tree cuttings might be chipped for mulch or composted.

Varied rainwater catchment and storage systems were in use. The reverse osmosis water purification plant was impressive at one hotel. Others used less water, so had simpler smaller systems.

The solar cells on Bangaram with

battery backup were necessary as no supply grid existed. On the mainland, some electricity might be solar cell generated, but grid supply was often used, as this helped to support supply to the local communities who otherwise wouldn’t use enough to justify making it available.

Local materials were used in buildings—indeed, the older buildings had been rescued, moved and rebuilt. Local people filled most of the staff positions. The Kettuvallam boat was commissioned to be built using the traditional practice of stitching planking together with coir twine—a building practice that is now being lost as nailing is cheaper.

The CGH Earth group is doing an excellent job with eco-tourism. It’s almost worth visiting just to see how tourism can turn “green”, and they accept it as an ongoing, evolving practice. ■

Both the India Tourist Office and CGH Earth Group went out of their way to be helpful in organizing this trip. The author and X-RAY MAG would like to thank both. Links:

*CGH Earth www.cghearth.com
Government of India Tourist Office
www.tourisminindia.com
Ministry of Tourism
www.incredibleindia.org*

fact file



India



SOURCES: US CIA WORLD FACT BOOK, SCUBADOC.COM

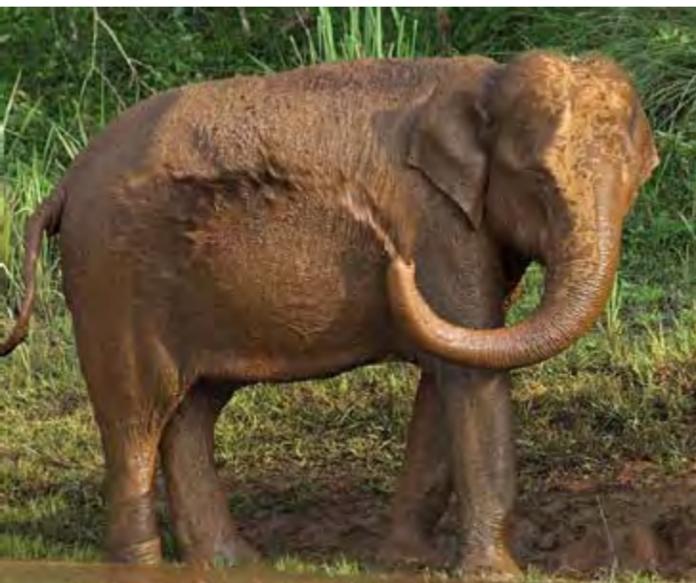
History Around 1500 B.C., Aryan tribes from the northwest moved onto the Indian subcontinent; they integrated with the earlier Dravidian peoples and created the classical Indian culture. In the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., the Maurya Empire united much of South Asia and reached its height of power under the reign of Ashoka. The Gupta dynasty (4th to 6th centuries A.D.) ushered in the Golden Age when Indian science, art, and culture flourished. In the 8th century, Arab incursions began, then came the Turkic in the 12th century followed by European traders in the late 15th century. By the 19th century, political control of virtually all Indian lands was assumed by Britain. A vital role was played by Indian armed forces in the British army in both World Wars. But not all en-

joyed British colonialism. Nonviolent resistance was led by Mohandas GANDHI and Jawaharlal NEHRU who helped to bring about independence in 1947. A division of the subcontinent led to the establishment of the secular state of India and the smaller Muslim state of Pakistan. In 1971, East Pakistan became the separate nation of Bangladesh after a third war between the two countries. In 1998, India's nuclear weapons testing spurred Pakistan to conduct its own tests later that year. Kashmir is an ongoing dispute between the countries, but tensions have been decreased by discussions and confidence-building measures since 2002. India's impressive gains in economic investment and output is challenged by pressing problems including significant overpopulation and extensive

poverty, ethnic and religious conflicts, and environmental degradation. Government: federal republic
Capital: New Delhi

Geography India is located in Southern Asia. It borders the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Pakistan and Burma. Coastline: 7,000 km.

Wild elephant takes a mud bath at Periyar near Thekkadi



RIGHT: Location of southern India on global map
FAR RIGHT: Location of Bangaram Island on map of India



north. Natural hazards include droughts, flash floods, as well as widespread and destructive flooding from monsoonal rains, severe thunderstorms, and earthquakes.

Environmental issues Tap water is not potable throughout India. There is soil erosion, deforestation, overgrazing, desertification, air pollution from industry and traffic emissions. Water pollution results from raw sewage and agricultural runoff of pesticides.

Population 1,147,995,904 (July 2008 est.) Ethnic groups: Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3% (2000). Religions: Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9% (2001 census). Below poverty line: 25% (2007 est.). Internet users: 60 million (2005)

Currency Indian rupee (INR) Exchange rates: 1EUR=63.33INR, 1USD=45.56INR, 1GBP=80.05INR, 1AUD=36.17INR, 1SGD=31.54INR

Language Hindi is the national language. English has an associate status, however, it is used for national, political, and commer-

Terrain: In the south, the upland plain (Deccan Plateau), leads to rolling plain along the Ganges, while deserts lay in the west and the Himalayas in north. Lowest point: Indian Ocean 0m. Highest point: Kanchenjunga 8,598m.

Economy India's economy is made up of traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, a broad range of modern industries, and a variety of services. Growth is primarily due to services, which account for more than half of India's output but less than a third of its work force. Most people work in agriculture, so the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government supports an economic reform program that develops basic infrastructure thereby improving the lives of the rural poor while boosting economic performance. Since 1997, a ten-year average economic growth rate over 7% reduced poverty by about 10%. India has large numbers of well-educated workers skilled in English, so the country has pushed to become a major exporter of software services and software workers. The enormous and growing population is the fundamental social, economic, and environmental problem.

Climate varies from tropical monsoon in south to temperate in

cial communication. In Kerala, Malayalam is spoken, but almost everyone speaks English as a second language. Languages spoken in India: Hindi 41%, Bengali 8.1%, Telugu 7.2%, Marathi 7%, Tamil 5.9%, Urdu 5%, Gujarati 4.5%, Kannada 3.7%, Malayalam 3.2%, Oriya 3.2%, Punjabi 2.8%, Assamese 1.3%, Maithili 1.2%.

Health No compulsory vaccinations are required for Bangaram. It is not in a malaria zone, however, Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended. Please check with your doctor. In other areas of India, there is a high degree of risk for food or waterborne diseases including bacterial diarrhoea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever as well as vectorborne diseases such as chikungunya, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria. In addition, animal contact diseases such as rabies and highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza have been found in India, but pose negligible risk.

Decompression Chambers

Chamber Complex
Indian Naval Hospital Ship Asvini
Colaba, Mumbai 400 005 India
Tel.: 2151666

Diving Season

Bangaram and Kadmat:
October to late April
Agatti: October to early April
The resort on Bangaram is open all year. Monsoons start in May.

Time Zone GMT +5.5
(Look out for that odd half hour)

Travel Air India flies to Mumbai; Indian Air to Cochin; Kingfisher Airlines to Agatti; Air France to Cochin direct from Paris; Oman Air from Gatwick with Muscat as the exchange to Cochin. Some flights go through Dubai to Cochin.

Web sites

Lacadives, Bangaman
www.lacadives.com
Agatti Deline
www.divelineagatti.com ■



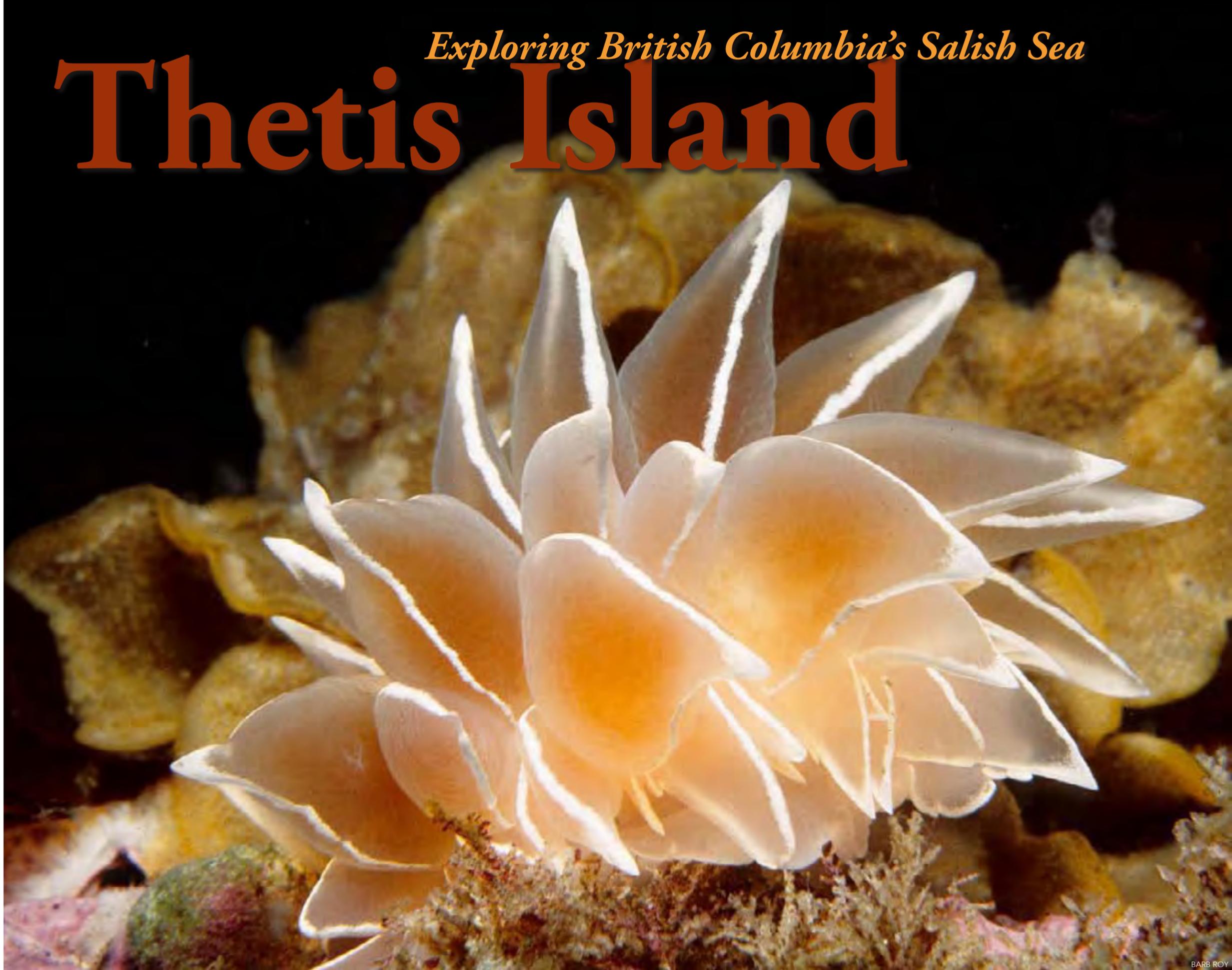
Exploring British Columbia's Salish Sea

Thetis Island

Text by Barb Roy
Photos by Barb Roy,
Andy Lamb and Gunild Symes

Tallen, my youngest daughter and part-time dive buddy entered the cool emerald coloured water with me as the current slowed to a stop to change direction (slack). Full of anticipation, Tallen and I descended down the southwest side of Virago Rock within Porlier Pass, a .65 km (.4 mile) wide channel between the islands of Valdez and Galiano. We swam past rockfish resting on overlapping fronds of kelp and through a dense thicket of bull kelp with tall spindly strands hoisting sacks of air high above with ribbon-like leaves flowing gently in a slight current. The rocky reef below wore a blanket of light pink coralline algae, dotted with tiny white and orange anemones. Before long the area opened up, revealing our prize—the wreckage of the 32-meter (105-foot) steamer tug, *Point Grey*, built in 1911. Looking up at the massive propeller, I marveled at its photogenic, yet mystic appearance.

Frosted
nudibranch



BARB ROY





During February of 1949, while in-route with a load of railway cars in tow, the *Point Grey* tragically struck Virago Rock in thick fog. To make matters worse, the barge in tow rammed the tug from behind, pushing it higher onto the rocks. There the abandoned vessel remained until it rolled over and slipped beneath the surface during a storm in the early 1960s, coming to rest upside down in 10-15 meters (33-49 feet) of water. In late February of 1993, strong currents and stormy weather once again wreaked havoc, breaking the *Point Grey* in half and flipping the bow section right side up.

Tallen snapped me back to reality as she waved, beckoning my presence.

She hovered over the Underwater Archeology Society of British Columbia's (UASBC) plaque, pointing down. It has always amazed me how well some people can utilize facial expressions underwater; Tallen is one these people. She gleamed with a big smile on her face, pointing at four little bright red juvenile Puget Sound king crabs huddled tightly together. I tried to return the smile but was lucky to keep my regulator mouthpiece from falling out. I pointed at my camera housing, then to the huge prop, signifying 'wide angle'. She shrugged, and off she went to check out the rudder.

Marine life covered the two remaining prop blades and the third, which had

broken off, was too well camouflaged to identify. Each giant blade housed an array of invertebrate life, making me wish I would have also brought my macro system. Orange social tunicates, small cup corals and yellow zoanthids shared one of the blades with frosted nudibranchs, painted greenlings and dozens of decorator crabs, all protected by a light covering of red and green kelp, closely resembling leaf lettuce.

We continued down the port side over a caved-in hull with iron ribs stretching across below us. Upon each rib perched a population of tall white plumose anemones, feather stars and clusters of odd-looking swimming scallops. Wary lingcod and immense cabe-

LEFT: Tallen dives at a site off Galiano Island
TOP RIGHT: Propeller on the *Port Gray* wreck

BARB ROY

BARB ROY

Thetis Island



zon, all nestled safely within the tangled wreckage, eyed our every move as we swam over.

Aware of our time restraints and not wanting to experience the 9-knot current this area is known for, we hurried to the bow section.

Yellow, orange and tan sponges helped to create collages of marine art along the way using what were once jagged pieces of hull for canvases. Spotting a rusty circular area, perhaps formerly housing a porthole, Tallen posed for a portrait shot, sticking her face through the opening, with tongue hanging out. What a ham...

Altogether, I counted six different species of nudibranchs, five species of anemones and four different kinds of crab. After another long glance at the mammoth propeller blades, we ascended to the bull kelp for our safety stop. Overall, our depth was a between 10-15 meters (33-49 feet) with moderately good underwater visibility, rendering it adequate for close, wide-angle photography.

This is just one of eight excellent sites divers have to explore when visiting Porlier Pass, part of Trincomali Channel and a dive region commonly referred to as the Chemainus and Thetis Island area, located on the southeastern side of Vancouver Island in British Columbia Canada.

"The local First Nation people refer to this area as the Salish Sea," informs Peter Luckham, owner and operator of the dive charter business 49th Parallel. "The Hul'qumi'num Mustimuhw people often refer to that way because the word tends to capture the notion of the Coast Salish people and their traditional territory—inland

waters stretching from Puget Sound to Johnstone Strait."

Peter has been diving in this area for over nine years and seems to genuinely enjoy introducing divers to underwater paradise year round. "Most are current dives, but with sufficient planning and guidance they are

easily within reach of most divers. The sheer variety of sea life is staggering. All are boat dives excepting Pringle Park and Coons Bay. The bottom at most sites is literally carpeted with white plumose anemones or green and purple sea urchins. When you see how many lingcod hang out here, and not just small ones, you begin to wonder why there is a fishing closure. Once you pull yourself away from the splendor of this spot and start looking closer, you start to see the really interesting stuff, like big crusty Puget Sound king crabs, war bonnets hiding in crevices, sponges, sea pens, and beautiful coloured nudibranchs of all shapes and sizes. The two wrecks here are a glimpse at marine history that you will not find anywhere else. We even found cloud sponge one day in the middle of the pass."

As we headed to our next dive site in Stuart Channel (low current area), closer to the town of Chemainus on Vancouver Island, Peter passionately continued to tell us about his business: "From the Chemainus community dock, we have six good sites

within 20 minutes of the Stuart Channel area and an additional six sites within a 30-40 minute boat ride. I can pick divers up at the community dock in Chemainus or on Thetis Island. Eight more sites are available to us on the Stuart Channel side and in Trincomali Channel, all within a 30-40 minute boat ride. Porlier Pass alone has eight sites, including three great wall dives!"

To accommodate divers, Peter has the *Fat Cat*, a 17-foot catamaran for individuals and couples and the *Xihwu Explorer*, a 37-foot



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Memorial plaque on *Port Gray* wreck; Sunflower sea-star; Lingcod on ledge; Tallen pokes a tongue out of the window of the 737 submerged at Xihwu Reef in 2006 by the Artificial Reef Society of British Columbia

Thetis Island



BARB ROY



BARB ROY

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Swimming anemone; Grunt Sculpin; Spiny pink scallop; Chemainus Harbour; Peter Luckham aboard the *Xihwu Explorer*, a 37-foot Alwest, serves groups of up to ten divers



BARB ROY

Alwest for groups of up to ten. His dive range extends as far north as Gabriola Passage and as far south to Sansum Narrows, including all islands between.

It was approaching dusk as we arrived at our next site, "Xihwu Reef", meaning red sea urchin reef. Most know it better as the location of the 100 foot long Boeing 737-200 jet plane, scuttled as an artificial reef in 2006 by the local dive community and the Artificial Reef Society of British Columbia (ARSBC). The plane sits 15 feet off the bottom on a custom built stand in 90 feet of water. All windows and doors have been removed and the forward and aft cargo bays are open.

Although wreck certification is

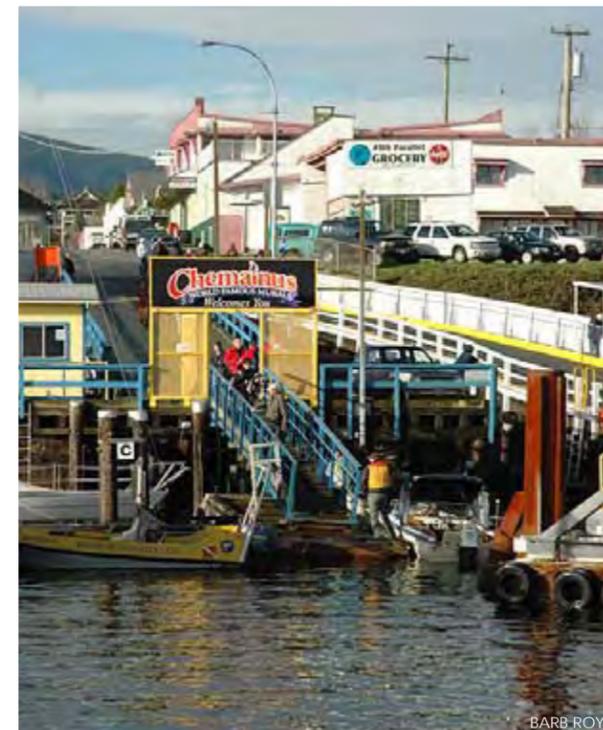
recommended for penetration, Tallen and I entered and swam around with ease. The body of the plane is about 12 feet in diameter and the distance between the front and rear exits are about 65 feet. Wingspan is 100 feet between wing-tips.

First Nation Carvers, Gus Modest of Kuper Island and Doug August of Cowichan created the markers used to honor the reef and as a tribute to the Hul'qumi'num Mustimuhw people. One marker was a large red sea urchin mask, placed on the nose of the plane. The other was a replica, used as a prize in the initial fundraiser when sinking the plane in 2006.

The mask on the front of the plane

dwarfed Tallen underwater as we explored the plane's cockpit, taking turns in the area where countless pilots once flew this mighty silver bird. Here, the maximum depth is 70 feet. A 95-foot depth can be found mid-ship and 150 can be reached off the stern or rear of the jet. Angling upwards, at 27 feet tall, the tail section was only 40 feet deep.

Our good friend Andy Lamb, co-owner of the Cedar Beach B&B on Thetis Island has recorded over 100 different species of critters on the plane as of July, 2008. As a zoologist and co-author of two marine identification books, Andy also offers marine education workshops and loves to dive on the plane



BARB ROY



BARB ROY



BARB ROY

ABOVE: Scene from the 2006 submerging of a 737 in Xihwu Reef by the Artificial Reef Society of British Columbia
LEFT: Tallen looks into the 737

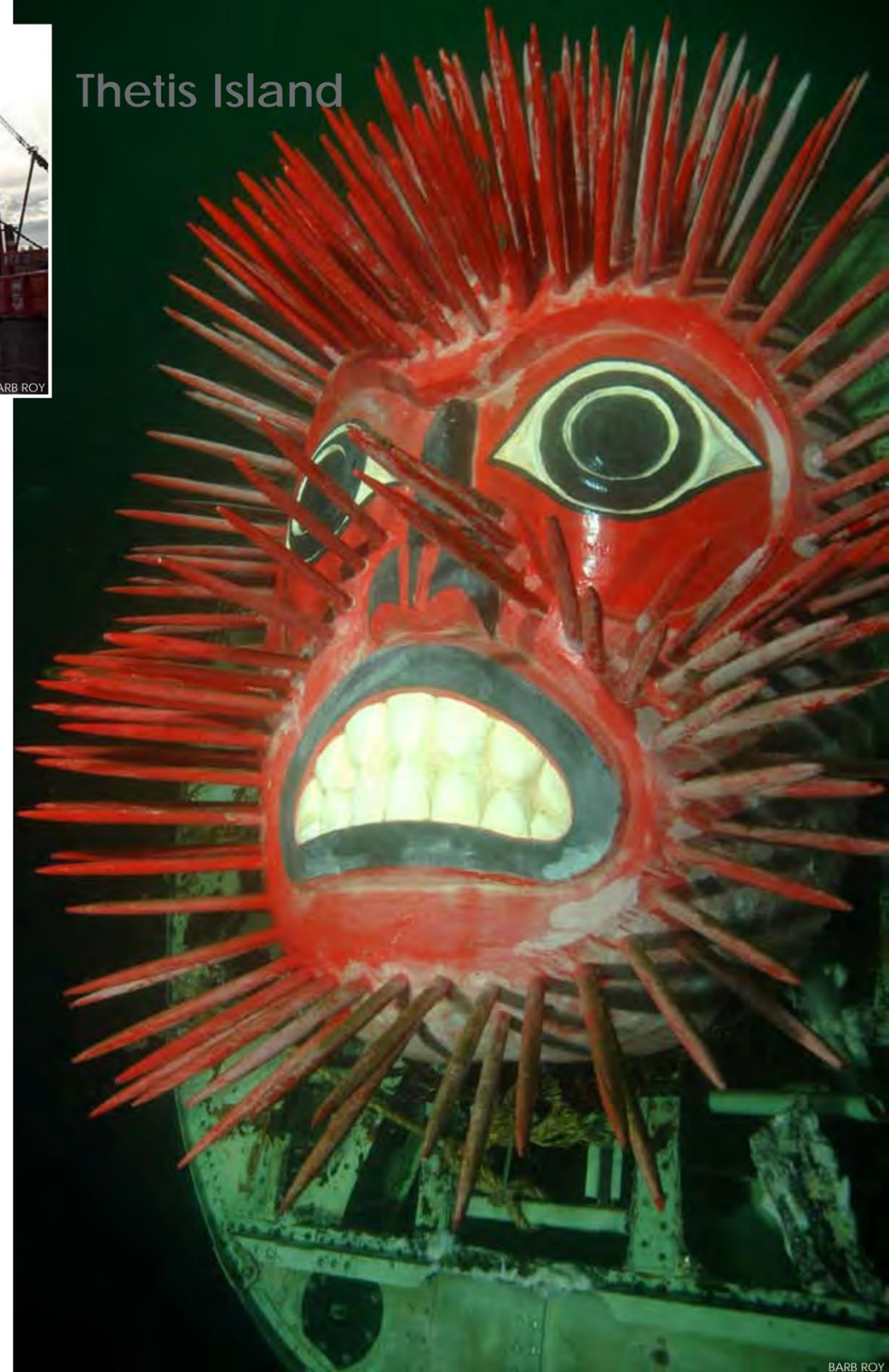
school kids on humorous, fun tours through the aquarium. I once saw her with a group of six and seven year olds walking by like crabs as they headed for the crustacean tanks.

When Virginia mentioned the night before that we would enjoy the view, I had no idea how scenic it would actually be the next morning! In the distance, I could see traces of fog lingering around the Southern Gulf Islands.

After a delicious homemade breakfast, we loaded up our dive gear, along with a hearty lunch Virginia had made for us, complete with soup, sandwiches and cookies. Andy took us down to the marina where we transferred our gear onto Peter's larger boat. The cabin was very spacious and warm, with a head and plenty of changing room. A fresh water hose was available for rinsing gear and cameras on deck.

Andy joined Peter and I for a dive on the historic wreck of the British Bark *Robert Kerr*, located north of Thetis Island between Miami and Ragged Islets, not far from the wreck of the *Miami*, which sank in 1900 after hitting Danger Reef. The once proud 190 foot wooden vessel *Robert Kerr* was built in Quebec in 1866 and originally sailed as a three-mast passenger carrier for Hudson's Bay Company across the ocean from Great Britain to the Pacific Coast. Historic records indicate the *Robert Kerr* was also used to rescue 150-200 people during Vancouver's great

Thetis Island



BARB ROY

ABOVE: First Nation mask mounted on the submerged 737. FAR LEFT: Andy Lamb and Peter Luckham ready for a dive excursion in the 17-foot catamaran, *Fat Cat*; Andy Lamb's book, *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest*

whenever possible.

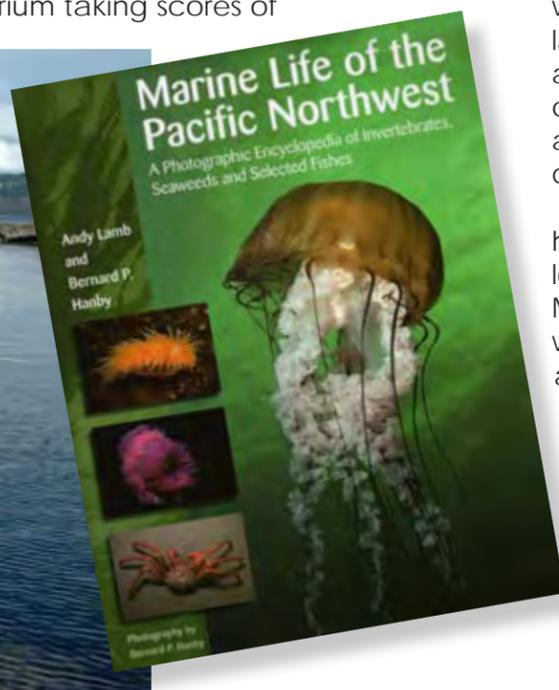
If air supply permits, there is also a nice reef nearby, boasting a healthy supply of critters. Octopus, wolf eels, shrimp, sea cucumbers and rockfish are often seen, along with the occasional sea lion or harbour seal, offering breathtaking encounters!

Andy and his wife Virginia put us up for the night at Cedar Beach in northwestern

style cozy rooms with thick down comforters. Dinner was glazed chicken with an assortment of fresh vegetables, topped off with a scrumptious dessert. Afterwards, we sat around in their large recreation room while a fire warmed us, listened to Andy tell about his experience teaching marine education at the Vancouver Aquarium. Tallen also volunteered for many years at the aquarium taking scores of



BARB ROY





fire of 1886. The vessel was later sold and transformed into a coal carrying barge in 1885. In March of 1911, while in tow from Ladysmith to Vancouver with a full load of coal, the tug towing the *Robert Kerr* wandered off course during the middle of the night, causing the barge to hit Danger Reef, thereafter quickly sinking.

Today what's left of the barge sits upright in 35-70 feet of water with deck knees giving the structure a ghostly skeletal feature. Its cargo of coal lies scattered about the wreckage, blending in with the terrain, but the ship's captain and two iron masts are quite distinguishable even though they wear several layers of marine growth.

While Andy occupied himself with search out hiding critters in the ship's hull, Peter and I swam out away from the stern to examine the nearby debris field. Peter pointed out an old door key plate in the mud, careful not to disturb it. We came

across the ships' double mast ring next, lined with a patrol of copper rockfish. Peter and I gathered up Andy and headed for the bow section. I found Andy to be a lot like Tallen when diving, distracted by anything that moved and curious of what resided in every nook and cranny! I have learned over the years that this is actually a good thing, because both Andy and

Tallen have discovered quite a few new subjects for me to photograph over the years. During our gradual ascent up the reef, we came across several delicate rose stars, white-spotted anemones and giant swimming nudibranchs. Visibility proved to be viable for both wide angle and close-up photography.

Active Pass

My husband Wayne Grant joined me later in the year to explore several more dive sites Peter and Andy, introducing us to Active Point Pinnacle. The reef starting out shallow then dropped off to form a nice wall around 50 feet. Although the wall continued deeper, Wayne and I followed Andy and Peter for a while, then went off on our own, while Andy busied himself with his lingcod survey and Peter checked the anchor.

Visibility was about 30 feet. After seeing the abundance of invertebrate life, I was happy I had decided to use my 50mm macro lens instead of the wide angle. I



often hear about macro photography being so easy, but I find it quite challenging when using a big SLR housed camera, especially when trying to get close to a tiny critter the size of your little finger! The lens does however, allow very close focusing, but to get any form of light on the subject, strobes often need to be twisted awkwardly



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Beach at Cedar Beach B&B; Dining hall and living room of the lodge; View from the lodge; Twin mast ring of the *Robert Kerr* wreck; Delicious dinner by Victoria





ANDY LAMB



ANDY LAMB

we saw on the dive. Wayne was great at lighting my path with his HID light, turning a deeper, darker dive into a sunny day. When not modeling for me, he likes to float just above me pretending he is my shadow.

Several snails of varying shades of lavender were nestled on a cluster of yellow eggs about the size of corn kernels. Feather stars seemed to cover the site in general, as if someone had planted golden brown sea lilies everywhere. Lined chitons, huge plumose anemones, sea

cucumbers, tiger rockfish and perch were also seen. As for nudibranchs, there were a few very small ones, but the white frosted nudibranchs seemed the most plentiful.

Back on the boat, it didn't take us long to devour the yummy lunch Virginia had prepared. Peter filled us in on the areas potential. "We easily have more than a dozen good dive sites to choose from now, most within a short run from Thetis Island. If the weather is bad around Porlier Pass, we always have sites in



BARB ROY

CLOCKWISE TOP LEFT: Tiger Rockfish can be found hiding in the rocky crevices; Red flabellina on tail fin; Basket star; Coonstripe shrimp

Escape Reef
Escape Reef was our second location. Visibility looked a bit better here, but I wanted to leave my 50mm lens on anyway. We followed the rocky terrain down to 70 feet where it unfolded into a sandy sediment bottom. Each section we came across offered something different. Hiding under huge

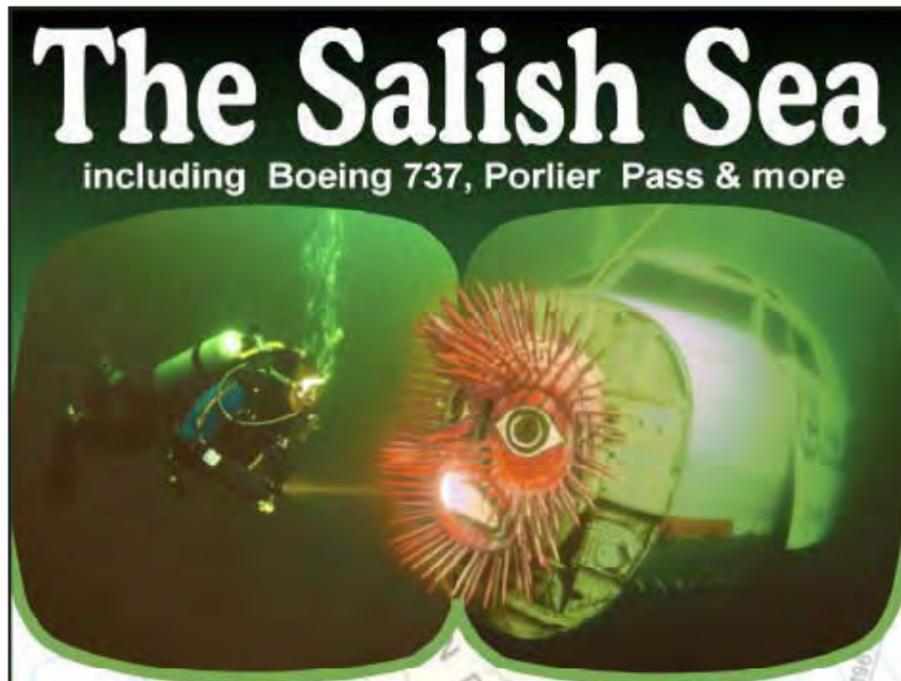
boulders were various rockfish, lingcod and kelp greenlings. Swimming scallops, glassy tunicates, rock scallops decorated in yellow boring sponge, clung to the rocky structures. A strange color variation of swimming anemones caught my attention; I found a whole group together, when I ventured closer.

Stuart Channel. Then, there is Trincomali Channel, but it can be current dependant in places."

"The main part of Active Pass is exceptional," added Andy. "I have done a lot of diving there and know the area well. You would love the colors for your photography!"



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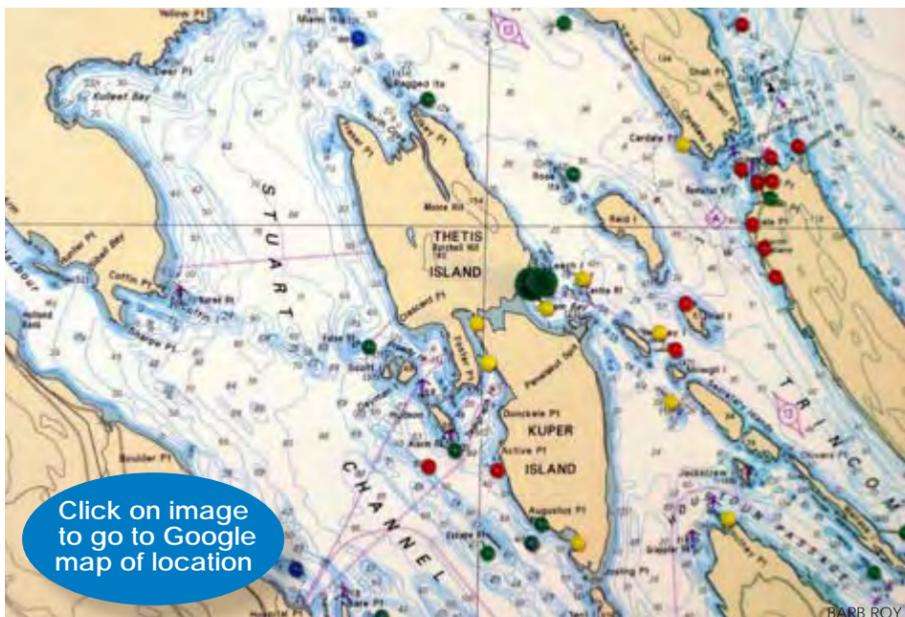


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Wayne found an area where the ocean floor seemed to move! Closer examination revealed hundreds of brittle stars. Sunflower, leather, rose and sunstars added rich colors to the scenery. As we ascended to do our safety stop, we discovered very different critters on and around a wall! This was perhaps even more colorful than the deeper depths, yielding yellow and white sponge, more anemones, small fish, featherduster worms, kelp crabs and a slim worm habitat. I found it hard to get out of the water when I discovered a heart crab at the end of my dive! Maybe it was the 47°F water temperature that helped me to exit.

Peter said later that he had found stubby squids while checking out the soft bottom during his dive. Andy found several structures on his dive, large enough to swim through! Peter instructed us to leave our gear onboard, and he would fill our tanks.

When asked what other wrecks were available to dive, Peter explained, "We have the 60-meter (190-foot) long wreck of the *Del Norte* (1868), a side-wheel schooner at the northeast entrance to Porlier Pass, the *HMS Panther* (1874) at Wallace Island and the *Peggy McNeill* (1923) a steam tug in Porlier Pass to choose from."

Andy had a map of the area on his wall showing all the dive

sites he and Peter have explored, all color coded with push pins denoting ok, good and excellent sites. There must have been a hundred locations marked.

I encourage visiting divers to plan for a two to three day visit in order to truly be able to sample some of the areas unique sites. There are several dive charter operators available and numerous bed & breakfast inns ready to accommodate, most requiring reservations. Visiting divers can carpool in their own vehicle, taking an automobile ferry from mainland Vancouver to Nanaimo or Swartz Bay. When traveling during the summer months, ferry reservations are highly recommended. Chemanius is located 19 miles south of Nanaimo and 50 miles north of Victoria. When not diving, check out the local museum, 37 murals and 12 sculptures along with art galleries and antique shops. Cedar Beach B&B also offers use of their kayaks to their guests. ■

ANDY LAMB



BARB ROY

TOP TO BOTTOM: View overlooking Thetis Island's Capernway Harbour, with Vancouver Island mountain ranges in the distance; Map of Thetis Island dive sites; Kayak shed at Cedar Beach B&B



fact file

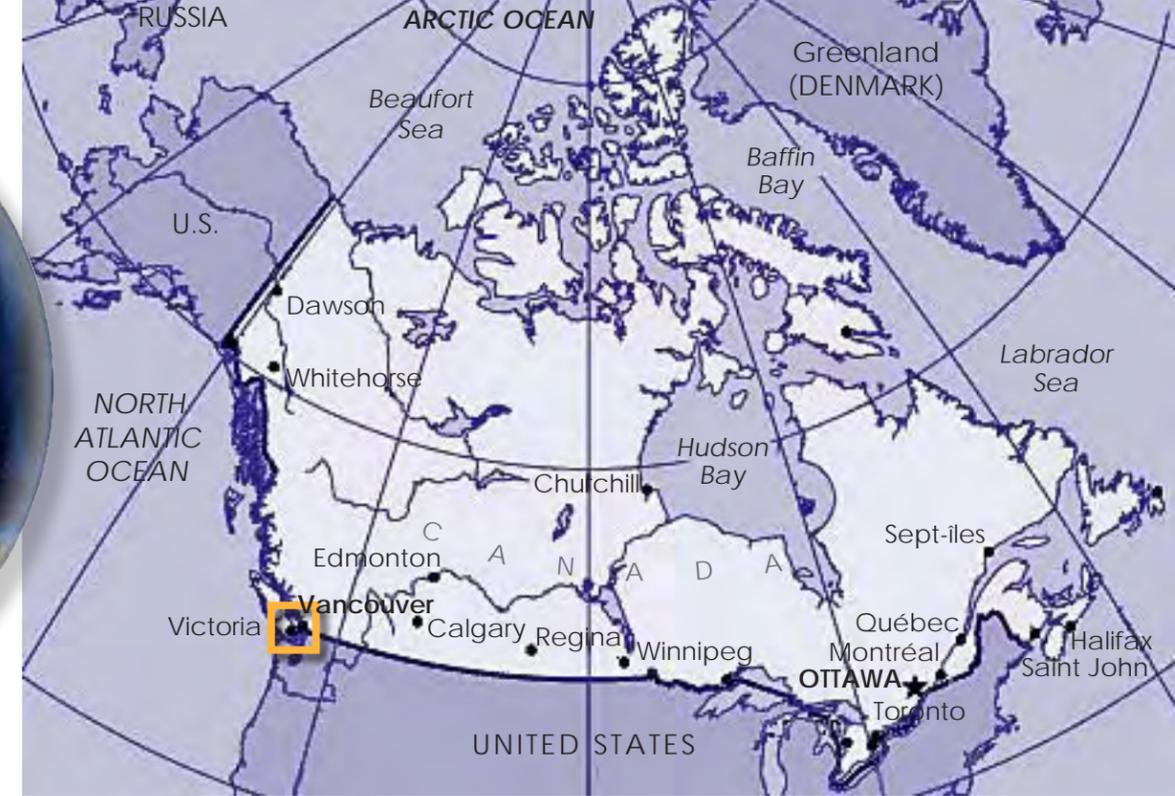


SOURCE: US CIA WORLD FACT BOOK

British Columbia, Canada



CLCOKWSIE FROM ABOVE: Location of British Columbia, Canada, on global map; Location of Thetis Island on map of Canada; Location of Thetis Island off Vancouver Island



History Canada is a country of rich natural resources and vast distances. In 1867, Canada became a self-governing territory while retaining its relationship with the British crown. The country has developed economically and technologically in parallel with its southern neighbor along an unfortified border, the United States. After a decade of budget cuts, the country's greatest political issues are improving education and health care services. Recently, the issue of reconciling Quebec's francophone heritage with the rest of the country's population which is anglophone, has receded after a referendum held by the Quebec government failed to pass in 1995. Government: confederation with parliamentary democracy.

Geography Located on the northern half of the North American continent, Canada is bordered by three oceans: the

North Atlantic Ocean on the east and the North Pacific Ocean on the west, as well as the Arctic Ocean to the north. After Russia, Canada is the second largest country in the world. It has a strategic position between Russia and the US on the north polar route; about 90% of Canadian are concentrated in the area within 160 km of the border with the US. Terrain: wide plains with mountains in the west and lowlands in the southeast; Natural resources: iron ore, nickel, zinc, copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, potash, diamonds, silver, fish, timber, wildlife, coal, petroleum, natural gas, hydropower; Natural hazards: continuous permafrost in north is a serious obstacle to development; as a result of the mixing of air masses from the Arctic, Pacific, and North American interior, cyclonic storms form east of the Rocky Mountains and produce most of the country's rain and snow east of the mountains.

Economy Canada closely resembles the US in its market-oriented economic system, pattern of production, and high living standards. It is an affluent, high-tech industrial society. Agriculture: wheat, barley, oilseed, tobacco, fruits, vegetables; dairy products; forest products; fish; Industries: transportation equipment, chemicals, processed and unprocessed minerals, food products; wood and paper products; fish products, petroleum and natural gas.

Climate varies from temperate in the south to subarctic and arctic in the north

Population 32,507,874 (July 2004 est.) Ethnicity: British Isles origin 28%, French origin 23%, other European 15%, Amerindian

2%, other, mostly Asian, African, Arab 6%, mixed background 26%; Religions: Roman Catholic 46%, Protestant 36%, other languages 18%

Currency Canadian dollar (CAD) Exchange rate: 1 CAD = \$.82 USD / € .63 EURO

Language English 59.3% (official), French 23.2% (official), other languages 17.5%

Web sites
Go BC Travel Guide: Thetis Island www.gobc.ca/thetis-island-travel
Thetis Island community website Thetisland.net

Dive Operators
British Columbia Dive Guide www.bcdiveguide.com
49th Parallel / Cedar Creek B&B www.divemaster.ca

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There are many fine artisans who make their home on or near Thetis Island. These two dive pendants (left) were created by Dee Smith who handcrafts jewelry out of fused glass



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Stéphane Braud



P O R T F O L I O



PREVIOUS PAGE: *Grotte aux naiades, Mauritius*
Oil on canvas, 100 x 73 cm, sold
LEFT: *Epave d'avion japonais (New Guinea)*
Oil on canvas, 130 x 89 cm, 8,000€
BELOW: *Faille de la tour de boucan canot*
(Reunion Island), Oil on canvas, 65 x 50 cm, Sold



Text edited by Gunild Symes
All images courtesy of Stéphane Braud

Underwater artist and diver, Stéphane Braud, was born in the southwest of France, in Libourne, in 1955. Braud began painting when he was 20 years old. Later, he discovered the wonderful world of scuba diving at Reunion Island. Eventually, it seemed a logical step for him to join his two passions, diving and painting. So, he decided to paint under the sea. Braud is now called "the blue fisherman" and considered to be one of the most celebrated sub-aquatic painters in the world.



Ancre à la havanne (Caribbean), Oil on canvas, 146 x 97 cm, 9,500€



La tour de boucan canot (Reunion Island)
Oil on canvas, 146 x 97 cm, 9500€

In his working process, Braud combines the agility of a certified diver with the speed of an experienced artist. To paint under the sea, Braud adapted his materials and developed his own technique, which enabled him to paint onto canvas scenes of the ocean.

In his artwork, Braud captures, for the pleasure of his audience, the bluish luminosity of the underwater world, ghostly images of wrecks, and the plethora of colours inherent in the surrounding nature.

When Braud settled down to paint on Reunion Island, where he was mesmerized by the underwater world around the island, it was, at first, difficult to paint under the sea, he said. He made his first paintings under the sea in 1996 and continued to work underwater in search of his own unique, personal style.

Since then, Braud has painted under the sea regularly at Mauritius, Bahamas Virgin Island, Belize, Martinique, Corsica and Sardinia. He also paints

Stéphane Braud



ABOVE:
Ancre à la havanne
(Caribbean)
Oil on canvas
146 x 97 cm
9500€



LEFT:
Self-portrait
Oil on canvas



Grotte à Bequia, Grenadines (Caribbean) Oil on canvas, 65 x 45 cm, Sold

in his studio, particularly the large paintings. Braud said that it was difficult to paint the larger works under the sea simply due to the inconvenience in transporting the larger formatted paintings on the dive boat.

Braud uses oil paints—the water can't mix with the oil, he said—and also uses a palette knife for painting. He said that he was not an underwater photographer, but often filmed his sites in research for the paintings.

"My favorites places are the coral reefs, especially for their architecture," said Braud. In the future, he would like to paint images of the coral reefs of Australia, the Pacific islands and the islands of Asia, he said.

After living on Reunion Island and Mauritius for 22 years, Braud moved to the south of Spain. He said that he does not dive in Spain, because the dive sites do not correspond to his work. But his work is displayed at several galler-

ies in Europe and several private collections.

A primarily self-taught artist, Braud said, "I want to represent the underwater world with an eye of a diver and painter."

For more information, please contact Galerie Bartoux at galeriebartoux.com or email stephane.braud@wanadoo.fr. You can catch Braud's blog at: stephane-braud.over-blog.com or visit his website at: stephane-braud.com.



Forêt de corail noir (Mauritius)
Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, sold

Stéphane Braud

SOLO & GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1997 Réunion Island
- 1998 Réunion Island, Mauritius
- 1999 France (Couchevel, Mégève, Annecy), Martinique, Guadeloupe, Ivory Coast (Abidjan)
- 2000 Bahamas (Nassau), Miami (Miami Art Expo), Saint Augustin (Florida), France (Couchevel, Saint Paul de Vence), Réunion Island
- 2001 Martinique, Hawaii, New York (New York Art Expo), France (Paris, Ajaccio, Couchevel, Saint Paul de Vence), Réunion Island
- 2002 Hawaii, Orlando, Martinique, France (Couchevel, Saint Paul de Vence)
- 2004 Bruxelles, Strasbourg
- 2005 Belgium (Knokkes le Zout, Coutrai), Monaco, Genève
- 2006 Belgium (Gand Line Art), Ansvr, Luxembourg, Genève, Saint Tropez, Monaco, Honfleur, Biarritz
- 2007 Honfleur, Biarritz, Saint Tropez, Toulouse

UPCOMING SOLO EXIBITIONS

- 30 October - 9 November 2008
Marbella-Puerto Banus, Casa del Mar (Spain)
- 1 -15 September 2009
Saint Tropez, Embassy of Tourism (France)

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Bali
Liberty Wreck
Beluga Whales



ANDY FERRARI



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