

BONAIRE, NA  
MARCH 3-11, 2012

Route Group 1: Seattle-Houston-Bonaire  
Route Group 2: Portland-Houston-Bonaire

Departure Day:

Our flights today are aboard Continental Airlines but this very morning they have finalized their final merge with United Airlines so at check in, all of a sudden none of our reservations come up on the screen. Oh, this is going to be fun. No wonder there is a ton of staff behind the counter. After about an hour, the majority of the group was checked in but for the most part it was a cluster. No worries, we all made it and are sitting comfortably on the plane heading to Houston for a 5-hour layover before our red-eye out to Bonaire. The flight went great, no issues and as soon as we land we head for dinner at Pappadeaux's. And then we wait...flight is a little late but we land in Bonaire at 6:30AM the next morning.

Day 1

Surprisingly, no paperwork needed when you land in Bonaire, show your passport and you're in. Super easy. Everyone's luggage made it and we go outside and meet Richie from Divi Resorts. They have a large truck capable of holding 23 people and their luggage! This is a first, most of the time the resorts are not



prepared for what divers bring with them. Everyone loads onto the yellow bus and it is a quick 5-minute ride to the resort. The group is a little worse for wear as most did not sleep on the overnight flight, but we actually have quite a bit to do. First and foremost is breakfast, after that I think everyone felt a bit more human. Some rooms are becoming available while most everyone starts to sort out their dive equipment for the check out dive. The 9:30AM dive brief given by Alvin was



very informative and after that, you can take all afternoon to do your dive. Most of the group is in the water soon after and fine-tuning their weight. There is a boat dive at 2:00PM for those that are still awake and kicking. I think only 9 of the 23 made it on the dive boat along with Pam our super snorkeler. This dive makes 50 dives for Mark and he has officially received his Master Diver Certification. After a



high five underwater, I think they pretty much saw everything: two Turtles, Eagle Ray, Moray and Tarpon. This was Crystals first boat dive and both her and Marks first tropical dive vacation. Great way to kick start the trip! After the dive and some downtime, everyone decides to catch the sunset, a drink and a bite to eat. There were talks of a green flash...but not tonight, too many clouds. As people started eating, there where some heavy eyelids starting to appear. The next thing you know...most everyone had called it a night. I cannot wait to see what day two has in store for us. Great first day; good night.

## Day 2

A big breakfast and everyone looks much better after a good night of sleep. Our boat is departing at 8:30AM, so it is quite leisurely. Our Captain for the week is Max and Laurel is our deckhand. Both of them switch off and on as our guides



each day. Since this is the first full day on the boat, Bob gives the safety sausage deployment course and everyone has to deploy their sausages at the end of their dive. Everyone always laughs about this, but believe it or not many divers don't know how to inflate them. On the first dive plenty of the usual suspects including a nice Snake Eel with his head poking out of the sand. Since I am sitting on the



boat, I start to see all the safety sausages hitting the surface, great job group! A small yellow frogfish makes a nice appearance on the second dive with several Queen Angelfish swimming by. A small Turtle glides by and poses for plenty of pictures. The boat takes us back to the dock for a quick lunch before the afternoon dive gets underway. Another nice leisurely swim along the reef filled with free swimming Morays, Queen

Angels, Whip Corals and a Juvenile Spotted Drum. Our boat diving ends for the

day and several of us opt for a late afternoon dive off the dock. Right below the dock is a Juvenile French Angelfish and a big Barracuda at a cleaning station. After



about an hour it's getting late and I think we hear the happy hour bell ringing. A quick shower and into town we go for dinner. Plenty of good restaurants easily within a 5-10 minute walk and we stopped and ate at La Guernica. Both the ribs and fresh fish of the day were wonderful. Can't believe it is already 10:00PM! Where did this day go? I need to finish up to get my 8 hours of sleep before we start all over again tomorrow. It was a great day for our first full day in Bonaire.

### Day 3

The wind is up this morning, better medicate for the boat ride. We head over to Klein Bonaire for our morning dives and Pam is snorkeling in some pretty choppy water. She of course spots an Eagle Ray and a Snake Eel and is squealing with delight! After the first dive the wind has picked up even more and we make our way around to the lee side, which today is still pretty choppy. The second dive produces a Black Seahorse and this also marks Kathy's 100<sup>th</sup> dive. Congratulations

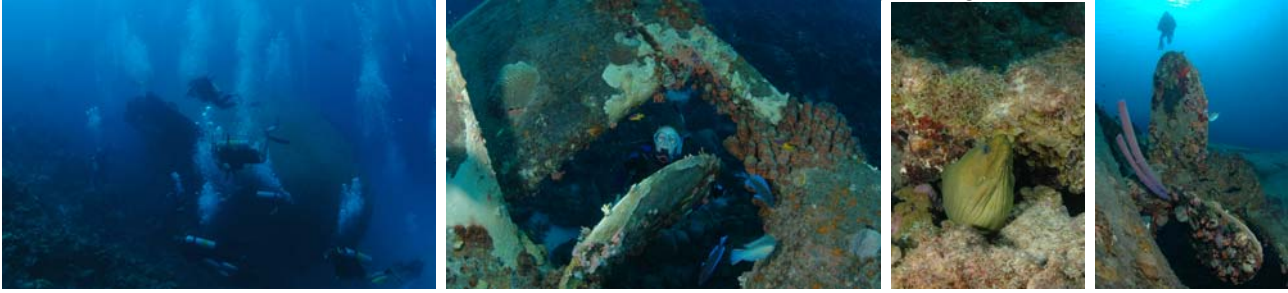


Kathy! The ride back to the resort is cold and wet as we are bucking straight into the wind and we are on an open Pontoon style boat so there is no where to hide from the wind and the waves. We had started a ½ hr earlier today so we have plenty of time for lunch and a little relaxation. South is where we are headed after lunch to Bachelors Reef in search of the Jaw fish hopefully on eggs. No luck there, but lots of Purple Shrimp on Purple Anemones to make great photos. Several of us head out on the house reef for the 4<sup>th</sup> dive of the day and finish it off with the taco bar for dinner with Margarita's. Bob and I head into town and eat at a place called "At Sea". Food was phenomenal but it took at least 2-½ hrs to eat. We still had lots of work to do when we got back to the room, so another late night for us.

### Day 4

Wind is definitely down this morning and it looks like the sun is going to shine. South is the plan as we make our way to the Salt Pier for our first dive. Max, the Captain has connections as the Salt Pier is closed for diving. Unfortunately, there

is a ship coming in so we have to try to dive it tomorrow instead. Rats. Max decides we are going to the Hilma Hooker, which every buoy is taken, so it's quite



crowded once down on the wreck. Second dive we had a huge Tarpon do a fly by thru the group along with several schools of fish. After lunch we have 4 snorkelers on the boat today as Dave, Carol and Katy join Pam for an afternoon of fun. Back at the dock, part of the crew jumps in for a 4<sup>th</sup> dive while the rest of us relax and get ready for another beautiful evening. Unfortunately there is a cloudbank on the horizon and once again no "green flash" as the sun is setting. We still have several nights to go; tonight there is a full moon so we make plans for the night dive tomorrow. Several of us walked into town and had a wonderful dinner at Capriccio's. It is Italian food and they make everything from scratch including the pasta. It was spectacular! One thing we have learned is that you have to plan 2½ hrs for dinner; it just does not come any faster. So far it has been worth it, the food has been incredible at the restaurants we have eaten at so far. Time to wrap it up and get a good nights sleep. Lights out.

#### Day 4

Dark black clouds greet us this morning and the wind is up a bit. Bob is down for the count today with stomach issues so we will check on him later. Marle has requested to go to Karpata dive site this morning, which is far North. Here we have a more dramatic reef that drops off into the deep. Next dive is Witches Hut or Webers Joy. It's amazing the difference in the reefs from the North end to the South end. Our third dive today is the Salt Pier, which is closed to diving, but someone knows somebody and we get to dive it. After talking everyone into doing the afternoon dive as the pier is really worth it, we are in torrential rain and blowing wind. I think I am getting the evil eye from most of them! It's better



underwater anyway, what else would you do in this weather? The pilings are encrusted in life and the schooling fish are amazing, lots to see here. Afterwards there were plenty of smiling faces that at last told me it was worth it. Tonight we are planning a big group night dive at 7:00PM on the house reef. Poor Bob, he is

still not feeling quite good enough to join us. Most of us opt for an early dinner then off for the last dive of the night. The night dive was great, Tarpon out



hunting, lots of little Macro Critters and a little Octopus guarding his den. I'm exhausted so time to take a nice warm shower and hit the sheets.

### Day 5

Well, Bob passed his bug onto me, and an hour after I fell asleep, life was not good. Up all night and in bed all day, this is not how I pictured this trip going. Bob has bounced back and gets back out for diving. At least I have my fingers crossed that it is only a 24 hr bug. The boat took off for Klein Bonaire today and Crystal achieved her 50<sup>th</sup> dive on Sharons Serenity. Congratulations Crystal! A beautiful



Orange Seahorse was spotted to make the dive extra special. Lots of Jaw Fish and a nonstop river of Creole Wrasse, which we think just swim around the island over and over again. After the third boat dive, Peggy, Dale & Mary jump in so

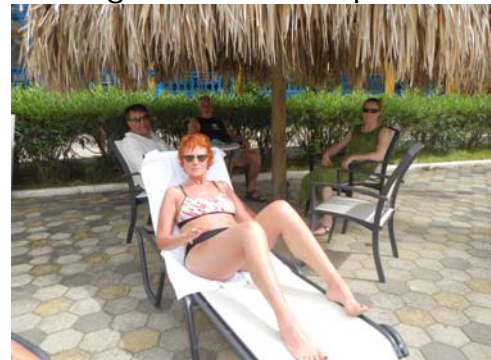
Peggy was able to hit her 400<sup>th</sup> dive! Congratulations Peggy! Bob



and Gene were the only two to do the final night dive of the trip with a Giant Lobster, Moray Eels, Tarpon and all the usual critters. I am still down for the count and I can't wait for tomorrow so I can feel better. Lights out.

### Day 6

This is our day to off gas some nitrogen, but Marle heads out on the charter this morning for a couple of boat dives. Several of the group have rented cars and are doing an island tour. Bela, Katy and Kewn went on a horseback excursion today where you actually get to swim in the water while riding the horses. Upon their



return they had said it was great and swimming in the water with the horses was the highlight. The rest of us are lounging by the pool taking it easy and enjoying some last day sunshine before heading home to the cold Northwest. Big group BBQ dinner tonight to top off the trip and then the horrible 5am departure in the morning. Everyone slowly heads for their rooms after dinner for the final pack and early to bed for a few hours of sleep.



#### Day 7

There it is, 4AM alarm going off. Time for a quick shower and the attempt to get all this luggage to the lobby. Surprisingly, everyone is up and on time! What a great group, everyone was also a good sport when I took the group photo. Smile! How much do we love getting up this early for a flight home? The bus ride is only 5 minutes to the airport and we actually arrive before anyone is here to check us in. Once check-in starts it actually goes quickly and we are all ready to depart for home. Bye, bye Bonaire, it's been fun.



John E, Terri, Carol, Dave, Dale, Katie, Peggy, Pam, Bob, Mary, Mark, Gene, Crystal, Bela, Scott, Kewn, John N, Ken, Lyndsay, Kathy, Marle, Linda, Kelley

Thanks everyone for joining us and we look forward to traveling with you again!



## Summary;

Our flights to Bonaire were quite easy; it's just the long layover in Houston that is the issue. Upon arrival in Bonaire the Divi Crew was there waiting for us with a truck big enough for all the luggage and a nice bus for all the passengers. It is a quick 5-minute ride to the resort, which you would think you would hear a lot of plane traffic, but I actually never noticed it. The check-in was slow as they only did one room at a time so that seemed to take forever. The only rooms that are ready are the ones that paid for a room on arrival. I have to say that they did start to release everyone else's room as soon as they were cleaned. The rooms were clean and everything worked, but they were a bit worn out. We don't spend a lot of time in the rooms so it wasn't that big of a deal, but it is really due for a face-lift. Our group all had deluxe waterfront rooms, which are literally right at the waters edge. Each had nice little balconies with table and chairs to watch the sunset. However, there was one incident on the last day with a room flooding coming in from the room next to them.

Once we made it to the dive shop then Serge took over and had us all going in the right direction. Which is a tough job when everyone is very tired and just want to go to bed. Alvin gave a great briefing about the Marine Park and dive facility and how everything works, he was very thorough. Serge reassures you that he knows everything already, which he pretty much did. If I had a question, he already had the answer, pretty impressive. Our group was all on one boat, which was nice so we could all dive together. Bob and I were very lucky as we really did not have any equipment issues, which was amazing with 23 people in the water. The boat (Alice H) a pontoon style boat was easy getting on and off of. The downside of this boat was it was open and no place to hide from wind and rain, which got a bit cold between dives.

Coordinating food for large groups becomes a challenge, but they did a great job getting us in and out and back on the boats with plenty of time. We had a pre-paid package of breakfast and lunch, which were served buffet style and was timed with the dive boats coming and going. If you showed up late for the buffet you could find several cold and empty chaffing dishes. If I asked, they would bring out more and one time they just took my order and brought it from the restaurant. We had two prepaid dinners, which we used on the last night and everyone could use the other one on whatever night they choose. There are so many great restaurants within 5-10 minutes of the resort it is crazy not to go to town for dinner. The down side is it does take quite a bit of time, but the food was worth it. Several of the group did rent cars and a few did some shore diving around the island and never did have any issues with cars getting broke into or theft. Even though I understand this is still an ongoing problem here. You come to Bonaire for easy diving and it certainly delivers. No worries, just grab another tank and blow some bubbles, this is the home of 24 hour diving. Enjoy!