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Snorkeling And Diving In Curacao

By Justin Burch

Home to over 80 miles of pristine coral reef, myriad tropical fish, sponges, sea turtles, seahorses,

eels and dolphins, the waters surrounding Curacao beg to be enjoyed and photographed. Besides boasting the clearest water in the Caribbean, with average visibility between 80–140 feet, year-round water temperatures of 78–83°F allow the ocean to be enjoyed regardless of season. Whether you want to snorkel or scuba dive, there are plenty of experienced dive operators providing daily boat trips and tours to all the best locations. From quiet coves with shallow reefs perfect for snorkelers and beginning divers, to coral walls with strong currents for experienced drift divers, there are sites in Curacao for everyone. In addition to being recognized as the best snorkeling and scuba diving location in the Caribbean, Curacao was also named the "3rd Best Destination in the World" by Scuba Diving Magazine. With over 80 unique dive and snorkel sites to be explored, this article will merely scratch the surface of what Curacao has to offer.

Porto Marie is a wonderful site for all levels of divers and snorkelers with a quiet, scenic beach to relax before and after your dive. Currents and swells here are light and the visibility averages 80 feet. Porto Marie offers a unique double reef dive, with a 100-foot wide, 50-foot deep sandy valley separating the inner and outer reefs.

Klein Curacao is a tiny, idyllic island southeast of Curacao. Day trips are available from a number of dive shops and charter companies. The island offers a serene day away from civilization with a long stretch of powdery sand, shallow snorkeling areas, an old scenic lighthouse and the wreck of the Maria Bianca Guidesman tanker resting against the rocks. Additionally, visibility is usually over 100 feet, allowing divers the opportunity to observe sea turtles and dolphins.

The Superior Producer is a fantastic wreck dive located near the Mega Pier where cruise ship passengers disembark for daytrips into Willemstad, the island's capital. The currents are strong here, so the site is limited to experienced divers. Roughly 200 feet long, you'll find this wreck sitting upright on a sand plateau between two reefs in about 100 feet of water. After 27 years beneath the surface, the ship is completely encrusted with tube sponges, cup coral and patches of black coral, producing a colorful garden complete with snails, rays, eels and darting fish. Also, the bridge has recently been opened up and is safe to swim through.

Snorkeling And Diving In Curacao

The incredibly popular Tugboat is a wreck that can be enjoyed by snorkelers and divers alike. Sitting upright in just 20 feet of water, the 30-foot vessel is accessible from shore or by boat. After three decades beneath the sea, it is fully encrusted with elaborate formations of brain coral, star coral, sponges and Christmas tree worms. The area is also teeming with such photogenic fish as sergeant majors and parrotfish.

Watamula lies off the coast of a national park at the northwestern corner of the island. The reef starts at 30 feet and runs down to a sandy shelf at 100 feet. Sea turtles favor this area, with a huge resident logger head, the barnacle-encrusted "Crush," regularly spotted resting between 30 and 60 feet.

The Mushroom Forest, regularly cited as one the Caribbean's premier dives, is also located on the sparsely populated northwest side of Curacao. The Forest starts close to shoreline cliffs in 40 feet of water and runs several hundred yards out into the sea, reaching a depth of 60 feet. The site earns its

name from the giant mushroom-shaped coral formations sprouting from the seafloor. Formed over many decades as the bottoms of Great Star and Plate Corals were undermined by fish, sponges and clams, some have grown to over ten feet in diameter.

Oswaldo's Drop Off, another of Curacao's celebrated sites, is suitable for all levels of divers with great snorkeling on a shallow terrace. The drop off is only 100 yards from shore with the reef wall starting in 30 feet of water, gradually plunging to a depth of 130 feet. The remains of the Car Pile, an artificial reef created in the 1960s, also rests in this area.

Playa Kalki, also known as Alice in Wonderland, is a fantastic site located on the west side of the island. Sheltered from the wind with minimal surf, this is a great place to rent a diveyak, an inflatable kayak that can hold all your gear.

Playa Jeremi offers a quiet sandy beach with an easy dive entry. The sheltered bay is ideal for beginning divers and snorkelers, with plenty of coral at depths of 3-20 feet. For experienced divers, the outer reef offers a fantastic variety of unspoiled corals and abundant fish populations.

This article was written by Justin Burch. Justin writes select pieces about travel in the Caribbean for the Curaçao Marriott Beach Resort & Emerald Casino. –

<http://marriott.com/property/propertypage/CURMC>

Go Scuba Diving In Maui

By Chris Sutton

Do you want to see a side of Maui like never before? Check out the beautiful island of Maui from a different view— underwater! There are many places in Maui where you can go scuba diving even if you have never been before. You can go on a guided tour, learn from an instructor or rent equipment if you don't have your own. Below is more information about snorkeling and scuba diving in Maui.

Snorkeling And Diving In Curacao

Diving Trips

There are many different diving trips for you to choose from if you are staying in Maui. Many places offer small group SCUBA trips to at least two different destinations on each day of the week. Set out with other divers on a fully-equipped dive boat and enjoy comfortable seating and amenities (such as a bathroom) while you travel to your dive location.

There are knowledgeable crew members and diving instructors that can help you no matter what your level of experience and most dives are very affordable. If you are concerned with price, you might also look into package deals to save you money or go with a group.

There are also many specialty diving opportunities such as diving in caves or caverns. There are special excursions you can take with a professional tour guide to show you sights you probably never dreamed of before.

If you are a novice diver or if you are in a party with snorkelers, then you might want to take a different boat trip or tank dive trip. You will have to contact facilities that offer these to find out all the details. There are also many introductory dives and diving courses for you if you are new to the underwater world.

Snorkeling Trips

In addition to scuba diving, you might want to try snorkeling. There are many places that let you view gorgeous coral reefs and much more as well as the many exotic underwater living creatures of the Hawaiian Islands. Set out on a boat with many other snorkelers whether it's your first time or you've been doing it forever. Head out to a nice snorkeling location such as a coral reef and friendly, knowledgeable crew will help you even if you have never done this before. There are "boogie boards" available to help you while moving through the water.

Even if you have been snorkeling before, you have likely never seen it like it is in Maui so it is well worth the time to go for at least one day and check it out. Snorkeling usually costs around \$50 a day per person but you will have to call actual facilities since prices are subject to change. There are also group deals and discounts that you may be eligible for as well if you call and check into it.

Diving Courses

If you don't know how to dive, you might want to look into getting some instructions first before you set out to go on a dive with people that know what they are doing. There are also many places that offer diving courses for those of you that may not have even been diving before. You can take classes on all

the details of diving as well as go out on a boat with an instructor that will show you exactly how to do everything properly and safely.

If you are looking to find out exact pricing and diving schedules for different resorts and facilities, you will have to call them to find out all of the details. Equipment rentals can vary in pricing according to

Snorkeling And Diving In Curacao

exactly what you need and what company you go through so you have to call to find out for sure. There are some places in Maui that offer trips and equipment that have their information available online and this may make it easier for you to plan ahead for your trip and find which location you want to use.

If you are going to be in Maui for vacation, you really need to take at least one day to go scuba diving or snorkeling and see the amazing underwater world in person for yourself. You might even want to take along an underwater camera to remember your adventure.

You can check into pricing, dive days and times as well as what certifications they have and what comes in their deals to help choose the one that suits your needs the best.

Chris W. Sutton is president of the Maui Travel Club. Maui Travel Club is a new concept in saving money on your next Maui vacation. It is very inexpensive but it will save you hundreds of dollars on Maui accommodations and activities. It is located at

<http://www.mauitravelclub.com>

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