

SCUBA IN MARTINIQUE FOR 2000
Professionals Praise Efficiency of Island's Dive Centers

Scuba has become one of Martinique's really big sports. Many facilities offer more opportunities than ever for both amateurs and professionals to explore the island's underwaters.

Fascinating dive sites, ideal water temperatures, abundant marine life and incredible shipwreck makes scuba an ideal island sport, and veterans divers long acquainted with the Caribbean's better known scuba destinations, have been giving such top marks to Martinique that the 2000 season shapes up as another banner year under the sea.

Professionals praise not only the efficiency of the island's dive centers and hassle-free way in which scuba can be enjoyed, but also the special cachet that makes Martinique different from the rest of the Caribbean: its unique joie de vivre, fine cuisine, and sophisticated French ambiance.

Novice of first-time divers are being won over by the dazzling flora and fauna at even the easiest depths. Living coral reefs, covered with a wealth of sponges and plant life, and surrounded by an incredible variety of fish, can be explored effortlessly. And to ensure their preservation, these waters are government protected.

Dive prices for 2000 given below in French francs are approximate and subject to change. The dollar equivalent is based on 6,30F = \$1. Not all dive centers charge exactly the same rates, but their quotations do not vary much, and the following chart represents average costs.

	With full equipment	With tanks/weights only
First dive (baptism)	250F (\$40)	
1 dive	220F (\$35)	180F (\$29)
6 dives	1,190F (\$189)	990F (\$157)
10 dives	1,740F (\$276)	1,540F (\$244)
1 night dive	250F (\$40)	
Lessons		
Level One (6 dives)	1,570F (\$249)	
Level Two or Three (10 dives)	2,620F (\$416)	

* Equipment rental: 200F (\$32)

(more)

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Fine Facilities at Pointe du Bout

Across the bay from Fort-de-France at the Pointe du Bout resort area, is the well-equipped **Espace Plongée**, which operates from three hotels (Meridien, Sofitel Bakoua and Novotel Carayou) Tel/Fax. (596) 66.01.79. email: e.p.m@wanadoo.fr. The scuba pro Philippe Deniau and his team escort

dive trips daily by boat leaving from the Meridien pier. Free initiation at the hotel pool at 11:45 a.m. Departures are daily from 8:45 a.m. and 2:15 p.m.

Fully stocked and considered by many to be the most outstanding operation of its kind, the 45-ft dive boat, **Planète Bleue**, is berthed at the Marina in Pointe du Bout. Operated by Michel Pivette, Planète Bleue has CMAS divemasters and offers half-day and full-day trips. Tel.(596) 66.08.79, Fax.(596) 66.10.01, Cell. (596) 45.32.77, Internet: planete-bleue.mq - Email: planbleu@ais.mq

Ile Bleue also operates from the marina of the Pointe du Bout, and like working with Americans and cruise passengers willing to scuba dive for a day in Martinique. Run by Laurent Juhel and Jean-Jacques Aleci, Ile Bleue also has PADI instructors. Tel. (596) 66.06.90, Fax. (596) 66.13.36. Email. cbub@ilebleue.com or jlaurent@cgit.com – Internet: ilebleue.com

Lychee Plongee run by Jérôme Magnan, offers half-day trips also from Pointe du Bout. Tel. (596) 66.05.26, Fax. (596) 66.14.98. Email. Lycheeplongee@wanadoo.fr

Challenging Dives around H.M.S. Diamond Rock

Off the southwestern coast of Martinique is a second resort area, Diamant with historic Diamond Rock, and facing it is the Novotel Diamant hotel, with its aptly named dive club, the **Sub Diamond Rock** run by Jean-Luc Cecillon Tel/Fax. (596) 76 10 65. Free initiation on Tuesday morning at 9 a.m. Morning trips leave at 8:30 a.m. and return at noon; afternoon trips start at 2:30 p.m. and return at 5:30 p.m.

At the Marine Hotel next door, **Acqua Sud** operated by PADI instructor Jérôme Fayon Tel. (596) 76.46.00, Fax. (596) 76.25.99. Aquasud offers free initiation in the swimming pool everyday.

The rock itself served as a British sloop-of-war from 1803 to 1805, and today passing British ships salute it as H.M.S. Diamond Rock. The underwater world of this Caribbean Gibraltar is crystal clear and very challenging to the diver but presents such rewards as beautiful coral formations, multicolored fish, sponges and a cannon or two. Featured are excursions around Diamond Rock, including the boat trip, complete diving material and monitor.

A dozen scuba spots down south

The roster of dive sites in the south of Martinique lists over a dozen spots along the scalloped coastline. Notable are Ilet Ramier, a short distance from Pointe du Bout, Cap Salomon and Anses d'Arlet, about a half-hour's boat ride south.

Based in Sainte-Luce, **Okeanos Club** run from the hotel Village Pierre & Vacances in Sainte-Luce, by PADI instructor Michel Hager offers excursions from Marin to Diamant – Tel. (596) 76.21.76 or (596) 62.52.36 – Fax. (596) 62.24.64

A small but enterprising operation at Grande Anse d'Arlet is **Plongée Passion** run by Cécile and François Cavernes. It is open 365 days a year and features speed boats with first class equipment. Tel. 68.71.78, Fax. (596) 68.72.52

In Anses d'Arlet, **Ti Bleu** run by instructor Alban Grandel also operates from Grande Anse d'Arlet. Ti Bleu offers day excursions. Tel.(596) 68.64.78, Fax. (596) 68.68.88, Email. Localize@wanadoo.fr

Further south, in Sainte-Anne, at **Plongée Caritan**, run by Albert Ben-Arous plongee.caritan@wanadoo.fr Free initiation Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:30 a.m.

There are scuba operations at **Buccaneer's Creek / Club Med** in Sainte-Anne, Tel. (596) 76.76.14, Fax. (596) 76.72.02.

Going Deep-Sea Diving, Up North

Diving centers are located at strategic spots all along Martinique's Caribbean or western coast.

In Carbet, just before Saint-Pierre, at Anse Latouche, **Tropicasub**, under the direction of Lionel and Françoise Lafont, runs trips daily. Tel. (596) 78.38.03, Fax. (596) 52.46.82. Internet: multimania.com/tropicasub - Email. Tropicasub@hotmail.com

Operating from the Marouba Hotel in Carbet, **Submaroubase** also offers diving trips up North. Tel. (596) 78.40.04, Fax. (596) 55.58.71.

North of Carbet, in Saint-Pierre, the long established UCPA (Union des Centres de Plein Air) is managed by Laurent Supiot, Tel. (596) 78.21.03, Fax. (596) 78.19.42.

Dives of all types can be made from coves and beaches near Carbet, or from sites as far away as an hour by boat. One sample of the latter is the offshore landmark, **Ilet de la Perle**, whose backdrop is northern Martinique at its lush and mountainous best. Underwater, it is just as rich and enchanting, and intriguing tunnel surrounded by small fish, sponges, and coral is the highlight of this dive.

Exploring the Shipwrecks of 1902

Saint-Pierre, once called the "Paris of the West Indies" was virtually wiped out by the eruption of nearby Mont Pelée volcano a may morning of 1902. In all, there are a dozen ships to explore at St-Pierre. Some are too deep for beginners, but nearly all can be dived. The most prominent, filmed for TV by Jacques Cousteau, is the metal-hulled Roraima, which rests on a slant in 150 to 200 feet of water and takes several dives to cover completely.

For further information, contact the Martinique Promotion Bureau, 444 Madison Ave., NY 10022, Tel: (800) 391-4909, Fax: (212) 838-7855. On the Internet: <http://www.martinique.org>. By e-mail: info@martinique.org

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DIVE OPERATORS:

Espace Plongée, Méridien Trois-Ilets, Tel/Fax (596) 66 01 79
Email : e.p.m@wanadoo.fr - Contact : Alain Le Boulanger

Acqua Sud, Mercure Diamant Coralia, Diamant, Tel (596) 76 46 00
Fax. (596) 75 25 99 - Contact: Jérôme Fayon

Kalinago, Pointe du Marin, Ste-Anne, tel. (596) 76 92 98, Fax. (596) 76 80 11
Contact : Thierry Theroude

Okeanos Club, Village Pierre & Vacances hotel, Ste-Luce
tel. (596) 62 52 36, fax. (596) 62 24 64 – Contact: Michel Hager

Plongée Caritan, Anse Caritan Hotel, Ste-Anne
Tel. (596) 76 81 31 - Email : plongee.caritan@wanadoo.fr Contact : Albert Ben Arous

Submaroubase, Marouba hotel, Carbet
Tel. (596) 78 40 04 – fax. (596) 55 58 71 – Contact: Laurent Teillet

UCPA, St-Pierre
Tel. (596) 78 21 03 – fax. (596) 78 19 42 – Contact: Laurent Supiot

Tropicasub, St-Pierre
Tel. (596) 78 38 03 – fax. (596) 52 46 82 - Email : tropicasub@hotmail.com
Internet : www.multimania.com/tropicasub - Contact : Lionel Lafont

Plongée Passion, Anses d'Arlet
Tel/Fax: (596) 68 72 52 – Contact: François Cabvernes

Club Med Les Boucaniers, Ste-Anne
Tel (596) 76 76 74 – Fax : (596) 76 72 02

Corail Club Caraïbes, Hotel Frantour, Trois-Ilets
Tel: (596) 68 36 36 – Fax : (596) 68 30 13

Lychee Plongée, Trois-Ilets
Tel: (596) 66 05 26 – Fax: (596) 66 14 98
Email : lycheeplongee@wanadoo.fr

Subdiamond Rock, Novotel Diamant hotel, Diamant
Tel/Fax: (596) 76 25 80 or (596) 76 10 65 - Contact : Mr Cécillon

Planete Bleue, Pointe du Bout Marina, Trois-Ilets
Tel. (596) 66 08 79 – Fax. (596) 66 10 01
Email : planbleu@ais.mq - Internet : www.planete-bleu.mq

Ti Bleu, Anses d'Arlet
Tel (596) 68 64 78 – Fax. (596) 68 68 88
Email : localize@wanadoo.fr

Ile Bleue, Marina, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
Tel (596) 66 06 90 – Fax. (596) 66 13 36 Contact : Laurent Juhel
Email: club@ilebleue.com - Internet : www.ilebleue.com

