

Barbados - Reef Diving

Barbados offers an outstanding variety of reef dives. The only Caribbean island built on solid limestone and coral, surrounding waters are characterized by shallow slopes into the deep ocean recess.

Divided between layers of reef broken and sandy lengths, surrounding waters are endowed with an abundance of both hard and soft corals nurtured by the abundance of sunlight filtering through the crystal clear waters. The island is surrounded by a colourful array of patch and fringe reefs and two distinct barrier reefs running along the west and south coasts. With a little bit of everything, diving in Barbados is a buffet of underwater delicacies.

Most reef diving on the south coast will undoubtedly be a drift dive. Currents range from gentle flows to heaving pulls making for an exhilarating ride along the Barbados express!

The way it works is like this, you board a boat out to the reef where you enter the water. The dive master will generally carry a reel attached to an inflated buoy or marker which allows the driver of the boat to follow the divers path. Usually, the dive will end at an pre-arranged location and time where the boat will then pick you up. During the dive, you and your guide will swim with the current to avoid over exertion and maximize bottom time. In the case of an early ascent, divers should surface with their dive buddy staying as close to the marker to allow for easy identification and pick up.

While the idea of a drift dive might seem intimidating at first, there are many benefits to drift diving. Sediment kicked up by other divers is quickly pushed away often allowing for increased visibility while allowing your self to be effortlessly carried by the flow enables the diver to cover long distances underwater and the opportunity to see a broader range of sea life for an extended period of time. Furthermore, nutrients are carried into the reef which helps sustain and foster a diversity of coral colonies. Certainly not the best conditions for macro photography which would inevitably lead to coral damage and clumsy shots, nevertheless some excellent shots can be had.

Popular drift dive sites include The Deep, Lobster Reef, Carlenes, Victor's, Pieces of Eight, Caribee, The Boot, Mount Charlie and Asta Reef. At varying depths, these sites fulfill every range of capabilities from the recently certified to the more advanced scuba divers.

East and north coast dives are not for the faint of heart. With cold Atlantic waters, breaking waves, intricate channels and heaving currents these dive sites should only be attempted by experienced divers guided by local dive operators familiar with the areas. Consett Bay is a popular south-east location. Situated off of a small fishing village, this Bay is an ideal spot for viewing rough and rugged coral formations, lobster and big game fish such as sharks and **. Conditions are best during the summer months between June and September.

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