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Plunge Deep into the Caribbean's 5 Best Dive Resorts

Whether you're a master or novice looking to get certified -- here are five Caribbean spots where you can get your dive on in style.

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If you've never considered foregoing free oxygen above ground for a tank of the purified artificial variety below the sea, maybe it's time to give marine exploration a try. Once you take the plunge, you'll discover an entirely new niche of travelers who spend their annual vacation days hunting down the most accommodating resorts where guests spend their days submerged under the deep blue ocean.

If you're interested in getting certified, it's as easy as pie. Official agencies like PADI (www.padi.com), NAUI (www.nau.org), and SSI (www.divessi.com) man courses in cities all over the world and require but a weekend (and a couple hundred bucks) to log the necessary training time. After that, you'll need to complete four check-out dives, including passing a necessary skills test, which can be done at any center worldwide that has an approved dive center. Can you think of a better excuse for an exotic vacation? Whether you're a master or novice looking to get certified -- here are five Caribbean spots where you can get your dive on in style.

Green Turtle Club, [Bahamas](#)
(www.greenturtleclub.com)

In the Bahamas, there are two types of islands: tourist monstrosities like Paradise Island (home of the famed lodging theme park Atlantis) and hidden nooks like [Green Turtle Cay](#) where you can have entire beaches to yourself. On Green Turtle Cay, located in the Outer Abacos, is Green Turtle Club, a casual, sprawling resort comprising a mix of bungalows and waterfront villas. However while the pool is enticing, the food stellar, and beaches pristine, it's safe to say many folks come to Green Turtle for one reason: Brendal's Dive Center (www.brendal.com). A collegiate-track-star-turned-fish-out-of-water, Bahamas native Brendal Stevens runs his

eponymous shop with his American wife, Mary, and a handful of top-notch divemasters he's recruited from around the world.

Not only are the sites he takes divers to full of underwater marvels like caves, manta rays, dolphins, turtles, lionfish, barracudas, and even various types of sharks, but the marine life flock to Brendal, and he even has a handful of affable grouper "regulars" who swim up to get a big hug when he arrives. Brendal's most appealing quality is his genteel, yet encouraging nature: He's been known to entice those with disabilities or tragedy-inflicted phobias to enter the water and help them complete their certifications. Just be sure and get in on one of his weekend Picnic Adventures, in which he takes guests out on the boat for a snorkel or dive excursion, and then onto a remote private island, where he free dives for delicacies like lobster and conch and cooks it up on the beach for all to enjoy.

Buddy Dive Resort, [Bonaire](http://www.buddydive.com)
(www.buddydive.com)

Any diver will probably argue that the most frustrating part of the experience is waiting for others to gear up and board the boat. On Bonaire, this is hardly a problem, as shore entry points dot the island; once a diver has his own gear intact, all he has to do is transport himself (and dive buddy, as one must never dive solo) to any of the island's various dive sites and jump in. Bonaire is one of the Caribbean's premiere underwater spots, as it consistently enjoys 100 feet in visibility. It also boasts more than 60 dive spots and an additional 20 or so off its uninhabited sister, Klein Bonaire, as well as the much-revered Buddy Dive Resort. Buddy's steal-of-a-deal dive package includes seven nights in a fully outfitted apartment, breakfast daily, airport transfers, six days of unlimited air for shore dives and six boat trips. However, the resort's most unique feature by far is its Drive-Thru filling station. Guests at Buddy are given a truck or van upon check-in (included in the price of the stay), and once their dive tanks are empty, they simply visit the Drive-Thru, where staff quickly refill air or Nitrox tanks, not wasting any precious time that could be better spent with the fish.

Sunset House, [Grand Cayman](http://www.sunsethouse.com)
(www.sunsethouse.com)

Escape the cruise port-of-calls and tourist shuffle of Seven Mile Beach for serenity and the chance to mingle with birds of a feather (i.e. others who love being far below the sea, too) at Sunset House, situated in a predominantly residential area of Grand Cayman Island. Plenty of shore dives are available -- in fact, the resort is consistently praised in the industry as one of the best for shore entry points -- as are boat trips to popular spots like Stingray City. Swimming out to the sunken wreck *Mermaid*, just 100 feet off the coast from Sunset, is a favorite pastime for divers and snorkelers alike. Other resort features include a swimming pool with waterfall, Jacuzzi, and sea pool cut into the rocky shore, as well as a restaurant and bar should you not feeling like making the 15-minute trek into town. The only downside is there is no beach on the premises; however, with coral reefs resting just feet off of the coast, who needs sand anyway?

Anthony's Key Resort, Honduras
(www.anthonyskey.com/en/index.html)

Part of Honduras' Caribbean-side Bay Islands, Roatan is a water lovers' paradise. In fact, much of the island revolves around the SCUBA operations; those not interested in diving generally travel elsewhere. Divers of all skill level will be delighted to stumble upon Anthony's Key, an all-inclusive spot with the option of up to four dives a day (though specialty trips like Night Dives cost extra). The bulk of the stand-alone bungalows are situated on a plush private isle just a two-minute water taxi from the mainland, where the lobby, restaurant and bar are housed (taxis go back and forth regularly, so there's never much of a wait on transportation). Dive boats depart the main dock in the center of the resort up to four times a day at regularly scheduled times.

Upon arrival, guests will be assigned a boat and given a number which marks their tank and gear throughout the duration of their stay; thus, whenever a diver wants to go out, he simply signs his number on a giant chalkboard located at the dive shop in advance and an Anthony's Key employee will have his gear ready on the boat by departure time. The whole process runs like a well-oiled machine, cutting back on excess waiting and maximizing time spent in the water. Due to its location in the Caribbean, Roatan is often visited by migrating whale sharks and experiences an abundance of active underwater life, including families of sea turtles and various types of rays. Several shipwrecks are also located just off of its coasts, making for intriguing dive sites. Those who want to complete specialty certifications like Navigation or Advanced Open Water can do so at Anthony's, too. For the kiddies or those not keen on full submersion, there are plenty of alternatives: snorkel trips, dolphin swims, horseback riding, whitewater rafting, and even on-site ziplining.

Bohio Dive Resort, [Turks & Caicos](#)
(www.bohioresort.com)

One need only to fly over the transparent aquamarine seas surrounding [Grand Turk](#) to see that the diving conditions are nothing short of stellar. With such pristine waters (even after Hurricane Ike ravaged much of the island in September 2008), 150 feet of visibility is perfectly common; expect to see an array of larger animals like humpback whales, king crabs, turtles, dolphins, stingrays, and spiny lobster, as well as smaller fish like barracuda, batfish, scorpionfish, seahorse, trumpetfish and pipefish. Lucky for those making the hop on down to the Turks, the island's premier dive resort, the three-star Bohio, abides by a simple motto: making the diver's experience as happy and hassle-free as possible (fittingly, Bohio means "home").

Its twelve modest rooms and four suites, all located beachfront, are basic, but clean and comfortable; resort offerings include 4x4 and Jeep safaris, fishing, bike or scooter rental, nature walks, water sports and sunset yoga classes. Surrounded by marine reserve, ample dive opportunities, from wrecks to night excursions are on tap, and while both boat dives and shore entry are possible, the wall diving is really where Grand Turk trumps all the rest. Before and after hitting the surf, guests can grab a bit to eat at the gourmet Guanahani, which serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and an all-day bar menu. Bohio just unveiled a new waterfront bar, The Ike & Donkey, right on Pillory Beach, where divers can cool down with a refreshing beverage and make friends after a long day of seafaring.

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