

Frommer's®

Plunge Deep into the Caribbean's 5 Best Dive Resorts

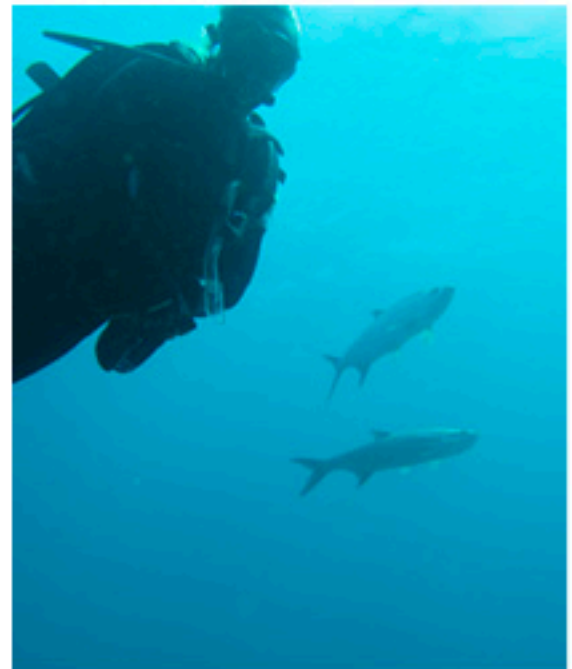
If you've never considered foregoing free oxygen above ground for a tank of the purified artificial variety below the sea, maybe it's time to give marine exploration a try. Once you take the plunge, you'll discover an entirely new niche of travelers who spend their annual vacation days hunting down the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



Photos courtesy of Brendal's Dive Center, Green Turtle Cay, Abaco Bahamas

