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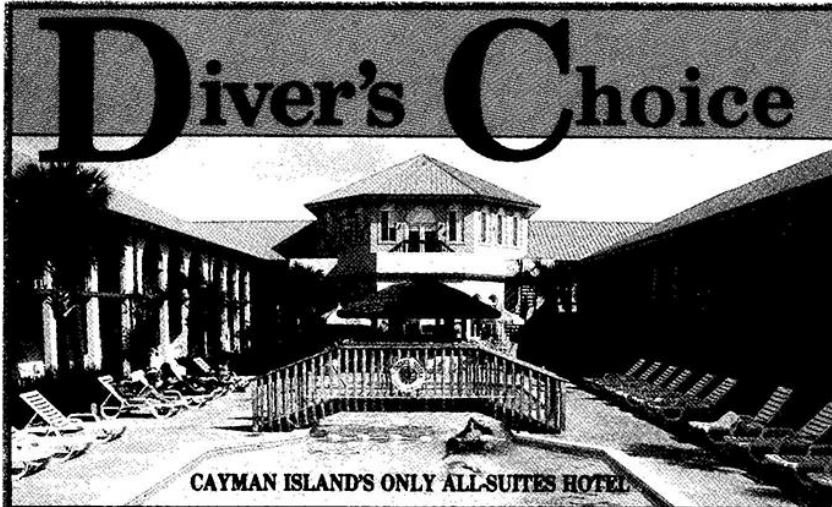
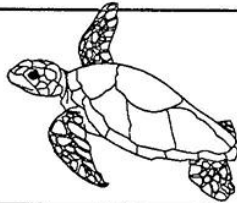
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On the southern end of the island, the guide from Dive Dominica and Castle Comfort Hotel took us to a site divers recount as one of the most spectacular experiences in their repertoire. Mountain Top, a submerged seamount rising to 70 feet from the surface, is known for its dramatic arches, undercut ledges and plunging wall to a volcanically formed abyss. Along the drop-off, huge stands of deep-water gorgonians jut out with fluorescent rope sponges.

Swiss Cheese is another memorable dive along the southern reaches of Dominica. Diverse living veneers of soft corals, brightly hued sponges, and large schools of black bar soldierfish are the scenic splendors found beneath these volcanic archways and ledges. This area, adjacent to Scott's Head (the prominent extinct crater peak which extends out to sea) is a melting pot of marine life. Most notable are the varietal anemones, cleaner wrasses, candycane shrimps and massive schools of blue striped grunts.

In addition to dedicated dive resorts on Dominica, divers can stay at two hotels with a more inland ambiance: Reigate Hall Hotel and Fort Young Hotel. Reigate Hall is a romantic hideaway on a mountainside overlooking the coast just outside of Roseau. The Fort Young Hotel, built within the renovated walls of an original fort, has cannons at its entrance and other reminders of its dramatic history. Both hotels offer diving through Dive Dominica.

Not everyone wants to visit a Caribbean island that has few white sand beaches, no casinos, no duty-free shops or glittering nightlife. Dominica appeals to adventuresome travelers who realize that there are few places like this one remaining on earth. The absence of tourism's trite plastic refinements help keep Dominica the choice for explorers, who only wish to experience the unexplored a little while longer! ▀

Special thanks to the Dominica Dept. of Tourism, Caribbean Tourism Organization; Dive Dominica/Castle Comfort Lodge; Castaways Beach Hotel & Dive Center; Anchorage Hotel & Dive Operations & Tours; Portsmouth Beach Hotel; Picard Beach Cottage Resort & Dive Operation; American Airlines; Liat Airlines, Lauro Club; Layou Valley Inn and Ken's Hinterland Adventure Tours.

Dale Sanders is a photojournalist specializing in eco-tourism and dive travel.