

The House Reef Dive Sites



An iguana near the dive boats at Captain Don's

Getting into the populated areas where many of the northern dive hotels and restaurants are situated, the reefs are often called house reefs. The diving on all of these is quite good with great fish diversity, nice selection of sponges and lots of cleaning stations. These reefs are fed from the deep channel between Bonaire and Klein Bonaire.

The marine park has designated from **La Machaca** down to **Calabas Reef** as shore dives only with the exception of **Something Special**, which has a mooring buoy. Some of these reefs are for hotel guests only, but a few allow visitors for a fee. Some want you to just check in and let them know you're diving and others ask you to sign a legal waiver of liability. Please check with the host hotel's dive center prior to making the dive to see what the current policy is on diving the desired house reef.

| <i>The House Reefs</i> | | GOOD SNORKELING | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------|--|
| | | NOVICE | INTERMEDIATE | ADVANCED | |
| 24 | PETRIES PILLAR | • | • | | |
| 25 | SMALL WALL | • | • | | |
| 26 | CLIFF | • | | • | |
| 27 | LA MACHACA | • | • | | |
| 28 | REEF SCIENTIFICO | • | • | | |
| 29 | BUDDY'S REEF | • | | • | |
| 30 | BARI'S REEF | • | • | | |
| 31 | FRONT PORCH | • | | • | |
| 32 | SOMETHING SPECIAL | • | • | | |
| 33 | TOWN PIER | • | • | | |
| 34 | CALABAS REEF | • | • | | |
| 35 | 18TH PALM | • | • | | |

24 PETRIES PILLAR

Location: Northwest coast

Depth: 15-110ft (4-36m)

Access: Shore & boat

Expertise Rating: Novice

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There are some very attractive pillar corals here, hence the name – given by the famous Capt Don – to a friend as a wedding gift. This is a lovely snorkeling site even though the park doesn't list it as so. This is not an easy entry or even easy to find, but it is easy going once in the water. The easiest way is to go by boat.

The shallows have stands of pillar corals and scatterings of other corals. Look for squid, queen and stoplight parrotfish, as well as nice staghorn coral. The drop-off begins near the area where the buoy anchor eye is drilled in 20ft and slopes down deep to 140ft. The slope is mostly hard corals and there are some tube sponges and rope sponges.

The upper reef is interesting and you may want to spend your time poking around the 20ft to 40ft area. Look for frogfish and glassy sweepers. Turtles seem to like this reef and you will probably see some greater soapfish as well.

25 SMALL WALL

Location: *Black Durgon Inn, northwest coast*

Depth: 30-70ft (10-23m)

Access: *Shore & boat*

Expertise Rating: *Novice*

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The mooring sits in 24ft of water at Small Wall and the dive is best in the 30ft to 60ft range. As you face shore, the small, vertical wall that highlights the site is to the right. The shallows have many small fish complimented by stoplight, red-band and princess parrotfish. Look for bristle worms in the gorgonians. There are also juvenile spotted drums in the protection of the corals here.

An octopus changes color to blend in with its surroundings



The little wall is a beautifully landscaped place with lots of sponge life, many small baitfish and trumpetfish roaming in and out of large growths of rope sponges. Macro critters like lettuce slugs and spotted cleaner shrimp on giant and corkscrew sea anemones make this a good place to narrow your focus. There are also spotted and golden morays in the various reef holes. Octopuses are also common here.

There are some nice invertebrates here like flamingo tongues, Christmas tree worms and brittle stars. Look for shoals of French grunts in the shallows.

26 CLIFF

Location: *Hamlet Villas, northwest coast*

Depth: 30-70ft (10-23m)

Access: *Boat & hotel pier*

Expertise Rating: *Intermediate*

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This is the site of Capt Don's underwater stone memorial that is dedicated to 'divers who have gone before us.' It is accessed from boat or shore with a shallow buoy in just 13ft of water. Snorkelers can enjoy the shallows here with some elkhorn coral and lots of Spanish hogfish picking their way through the white sandy shallows.

There are some healthy purple tube sponges and also some orange elephant ears with fairy basslets hanging around them.

This little wall is great to dive early in the morning. As fish wake up, begin moving along the reef and start cleaning at the cleaning station down the wall, the sun peaks over the wall tops and sends blue rays down through the clear Bonaire water.

Look for curious tarpon in this area. There are also lobsters found on this reef and a variety of moray eels.