

We spent the week of December 19-26, 2009 on Little Cayman at the Southern Cross Club. This was our second stay at Southern Cross and, overall, we enjoyed the trip. We celebrated our 25th anniversary on December 23rd, so it was a nice special anniversary celebration.

We flew from Atlanta to Grand Cayman, then took the small Cayman Airways plane over the Little Cayman. The only snag was a delay in the Cayman Airways flight on the return trip (leaving us sitting on the benches at the outdoor “airport” on Little Cayman for about 2 hours) and increased security in Grand Cayman due to the attempted terrorist bombing in the US the day before. All passengers had to have every carry-on bag manually searched and all passengers were frisked before boarding the plane back to Atlanta – a long and tedious process.

At the resort, the staff had changed since our first visit – Chris and Kate, the former managers, were gone, and Jenn served as resort manager now. Mike was still one of our main divemasters, but Mark had moved on and Clive took his place. They both took good care of us during the week. Ron remained as chef and the meals were outstanding – his homemade soups at lunch are simply amazing. On Christmas Day the resort hosted a special mid-day meal and residents from around the island joined us for an elegant feast. The tables were beautifully decorated and the meal included various seafood appetizers, turkey and other meats, lots of side dishes, desserts and cheeses – it was truly spectacular.

We stayed in the same room again – the top floor of the new green unit. We really enjoyed the fabulous view from the upper level. Rooms have A/C and standard US power outlets, private baths with indoor and outdoor showers, but no TV or phone (which is great). There is a computer in the main building that guests can use, as well as free wireless internet access for laptops and mobile phones in the main building.

The dive schedule at Southern Cross includes two morning dives and they will also offer an afternoon dive if there are at least 4 divers – this is something to be aware of if you want to do three dives per day. The diving was good, but due to poor weather conditions we had to remain on the south side of the island for the first three days and could not get to Bloody Bay and Jackson Bay on the north side. It was very windy so we were really cold on the boat, especially during the surface intervals. After the first day, we had hot chocolate on-board between dives. The south side sites were okay and seemed to have more fish than we remembered from our previous visit, but the topography here is coral fingers and coral heads – definitely not wall diving like the north side. We also had poor visibility during these days (by Cayman standards) and ran into moderate current on some sites. The weather was really nasty on Tuesday and the afternoon dive was cancelled. On Wednesday the weather was somewhat better, and by the afternoon conditions had finally improved enough for us to do our first dive on the north side. The weather was very nice on Thursday and Friday- sunny and calm, and we were able to dive all dives on the north side. We really enjoyed the beautiful walls on the north side -- lots of large sponge and coral formations. We saw a number of turtles, an eagle ray, and reef sharks swimming along the walls. The water clarity is one of the most distinguishing features of the diving here – it feels like swimming in an aquarium. I think the walls on some of the sites in Roatan are as good or better than those Little Cayman, but Roatan can't come close to matching the visibility of Little Cayman.

Overall, this was a nice trip, but we were disappointed with the weather for the first half of the week. Because of the uncertainty of weather conditions in the Caymans during December, I don't think we would pay the holiday premium for a Christmas trip to Southern Cross again – it is simply too expensive to risk nasty weather and cancelled dives. We would definitely schedule any future trips during months when the weather is more likely to cooperate.