

Diving IN SABA

MAP / DIVE SITES / MARINE LIFE / & MORE



Saba National
Marine Park

“ In the end we will **conserve** what we love and respect. We will **love and respect** only what we understand. We will **understand** only what we are taught or allowed to **experience**. ”

- BABA DIOUM





Introduction

The island's recreational diving business, which started in the early 1980s, introduced scuba enthusiasts to the wealth of Saba's underwater world. The establishment of the Saba National Marine Park several years later assured the health of the undersea environment and thus the sustainability of dive tourism, today a major contribution to the island economy.

Saba plunges below the sea as steeply as it rises above it. From shallow patch reefs to deep underwater seamounts, Saba offers dive sites suitable for every diver's level of experience.

Past volcanic activity has created spectacular formations and structures as evidenced by underwater lava flows and hot springs.

The reefs are populated with schools of tropical fish and healthy coral. Sheer close-to-shore walls are covered with sponges of all sizes, and the heavily encrusted deep-water seamounts attract pelagic creatures that are not normally seen by divers. Unusual and exciting sightings are always possible in Saba's waters including frequent shark encounters.

Saba offers year-round diving with seasonal differences in water temperature and surface conditions. The approximate water temperature varies between 26°C and 28°C (77°F-84°F). Visibility ranges from a minimum of 20m (60ft) but can be virtually unlimited. Poor weather conditions and heavy rainfall may influence visibility, but it typically improves again very quickly.

Due to the steep coastal zone, shore diving is virtually impossible. Therefore, all diving is done safely from a boat with one of Saba's licensed dive centres.

Their expertise contributes to a safe, convenient, and informative diving experience. Fortunately, Saba's dramatic coastline naturally limits coastal development. Pressure on marine resources has always been modest even as the island population has increased. The quality of the marine environment, coral communities, and rich and varied fish life continue to lure divers to Saba's unspoiled waters.

Saba Marine Life



Grouper

The grouper is an excellent indicator species for fishing impact; the larger they are, the less pressure from fishing exists. In Saba, groupers are often found in the deep waters around The Pinnacles. Nassau grouper and Tiger grouper are the most common species sighted.



Sharks

Sharks have been feared and exploited for centuries, but as a top predator of the food chain it is important that we understand their role in marine ecosystems. Shark encounters occur frequently in Saba, especially around The Pinnacles. Nurse sharks and Black-tip reef sharks are the most common species, but Tiger sharks and Hammerhead sharks can also be seen.



Sea turtles

Sea turtle populations are declining throughout the Caribbean. Laws have been established to protect these endangered species. In Saba, Hawksbill and Green turtles are the most common. The turtles find good feeding grounds around the island. The Marine Park minimizes impact on sea grass beds, the Green turtles' favourite food, by requiring that yachts utilize moorings or anchor in deeper waters only.



Seahorses





Seahorse sightings are considered to be an incredible find among divers. The presence of this unique sea creature is not only a great tourist attraction, but it also signals the healthiness of the ecosystem, coral reef, and supporting seabed. The two species found in Saba are the Long snout seahorse and Lined seahorse.

Underwater Photography and Video

The abundance of marine life makes Saba a perfect place for underwater photography and video although these activities require **advanced diving skills**. Taking a camera in the water will change both buoyancy and balance; therefore, you should practice these skills with your camera before attempting a reef dive. It is also essential that you avoid all contact with the reef and your subject so that no damage is caused. To get the most out of this fascinating activity, it is important to follow certain guidelines that will allow you to shoot your best photos and videos:

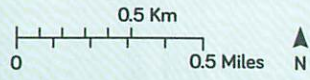
- **Position** yourself and your equipment before attempting your shot!
- Get **buoyancy** correct before trying to get close to your subject!
- Stay at least **1 meter (3 feet)** away from your desired subject; you may be considerably closer than your viewfinder suggests!
- Make all camera and strobe adjustments **before** moving in to take the shot!
- Once you have taken your shot and are ready to move on, inhale to lift you clear of the bottom; **do not** push off from the reef and **do not** fin until you are clear of the reef!
- Your shots should show your underwater friends at home in their **natural habitat**. Remember, repeatedly flashing a strobe will cause stress.



-  Dive Mooring up to 50 tons
-  Dive Mooring 50-100 tons
-  Saba National Marine Park
-  Roads



- 1. Third Encounter
- 2. Twilight Zone
- 3. Outer Limits
- 4. Mount Michel
- 5. Shark Shoal
- 6. Torrens Point
- 7. Otto Limits
- 8. Man O' War Shoal
- 9. Diamond Rock
- 10. Customs House
- 11. Porites Point
- 12. Babylon
- 13. Ladder Labyrinth
- 14. Hot Springs
- 15. Rays n' Anchors
- 16. Tedran
- 17. Tent Reef Wall
- 18. Tent Reef
- 19. Tent Reef Deep
- 20. Greer Gut
- 21. Big Rock Market
- 22. Gile's Quarter
- 23. Hole in the Corner
- 24. Abraham's Hole (David's Dropp Off)
- 25. Core Gut
- 26. Green Island



Dive sites on Saba

The Pinnacles

(SITES 1-5)

The fascinating Pinnacles that rise from the ocean floor up to depths of 30m (100ft) were formed by past volcanic activity and are nourished by deep ocean currents. The Pinnacles are covered with corals, sponges and other invertebrates. Abundant sea life including large groupers, jacks and turtles are attracted to this area and provide a spectacular diving experience.

Shark encounters also occur frequently around these waters. Black-tip reef sharks, Grey reef sharks and Nurse sharks are the most common species sighted.

The most unique structure not to be missed is the Eye-of-the-Needle, a pinnacle that rises up to 17m (90ft) deep, just off in the deep blue waters from Third encounter.

From Torrens Point to Diamond Rock

(SITES 6, 7 & 9)

The large spires at Wells Bay and Torrens Point form a protected cove, an ideal location for snorkelling or shallow diving. Underwater caves and tunnels are interesting structures to explore and the diver can encounter many aquatic life forms. Schools of Blue tangs, Goatfish, and Parrot fish are characteristic of this area.

Man O' War Shoals and Diamond Rock appear to be submerged and semi-submerged extensions of the Torrens Point headland. They do not exceed depths of 25m (80ft), allowing for more bottom time to explore the rich waters and enjoy the magnificent fish life that abounds. Schools of Black-durgons and Barracudas swarm around the mooring lines while Caribbean reef sharks merge into the blue. Stingrays hover over the gray sandy bottom. Walls and rocks are covered with colorful sponges, smaller corals and Sea fans.

Be cautious while diving around Diamond Rock because of occasional strong currents. While this site may present challenging diving conditions, it also attracts abundant fish life.





The Ladder Bay Area

(SITES 11-15)

The original steps that Sabans used to access the island are known as The Ladder. Prior to the building of the Fort Bay harbor, goods were brought by boat to the rocky shore of the leeward coast. Sabans carried the cargo by foot up the nearly vertical stairway to the village. Diving in this area unveils Saba's volcanic origins. A natural labyrinth of groove formations and protrusions developed as a result of lava flow. If you bury your hand in the sand where it is yellow/brown color, the temperature differences of the sea floor become quite evident.

Large boulders and gray sand dominate the area and the most common species of coral are Star coral, Brain coral and Gorgonian. Curious Barracudas may approach divers very closely.

Tent Reef Area

(SITES 16-19)

Just west of the Fort Bay harbor is another unusual geological structure known as Tent Reef. It is an extended rock ledge that starts at only 4 m (13ft) deep but becomes progressively deeper as you head northwest. The ledge is deeply undercut at some points, providing shelter to large snappers. It turns into a sheer wall that gradually becomes fragmented and appears as a series of steep coral outcroppings separated by deep sand channels. Tubular sponges, Elephant ear sponges and Black coral dominate the steep wall.

Tent Reef is also a favourite site for night dives with frequent octopus, sleeping turtles and Spiny lobster sightings.

East side diving

(SITES 20-28)

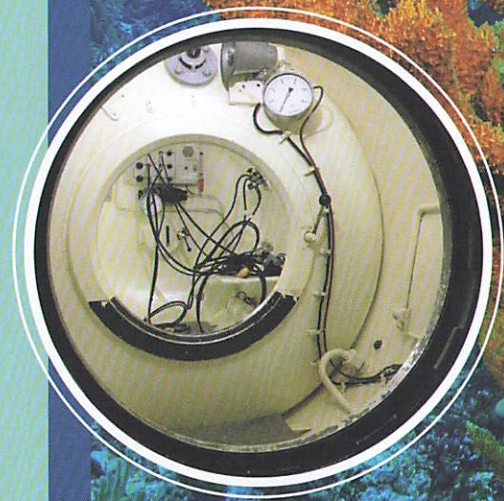
Diving on this side of the island depends on suitable weather. However, visibility tends to be exceptional when the weather is calm. Most of Saba's diving offers views of coral-encrusted boulders of volcanic origin, but only Greer Gut and Giles Quarter are true coral reefs (i.e. made out of limestone). Diverse species of reef fish and other marine life along with the white sand covering the sea floor provide a very different diving experience compared to Saba's other sites. Exposure to the Atlantic side yields the development of hard coral structures more often than soft coral.

Close to shore, well-developed Elkhorn coral formations occur although the risk exists of periodic destruction by wave action and storms. The coral branches are fragile, but they tend to recover quickly due to high growth rates.

Hyperbaric Facility

In 1990, the Saba National Marine Park became the only marine park in the world to manage its own hyperbaric facility. It was donated to the island by the Royal Dutch Navy and it is the official hyperbaric facility in the region to treat diving related injuries. The four-person chamber features a double lock system and full monitoring and is located at Fort Bay.

A hyperbaric team consists of a coordinator, drivers and tenders, under the direction of a hyperbaric physician. Saba hyperbaric teams are on a 24 hour call schedule to handle diving emergencies. Any revenue generated from the treatment is put into a separate fund dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the facility.



Threats to Saba's Coral Reefs

Coral reefs are among the most important marine ecosystems in the world. Aside from their magnificent beauty, coral reefs provide a dwelling place for thousands of animals and plants that have high economic value. In turn, these provide food to millions of people. Reefs act as a natural barrier against wave action and coastal erosion.

On Saba, the reefs are under pressure from erosion resulting from overgrazing by goats on the island, and might be

affected by wastewater seepage. Globally, three-quarters of coral reefs are threatened by climate change and other anthropogenic threats.

Unless an effective conservation plan is implemented, it has been predicted that more than two-thirds of the world's coral reefs may collapse ecologically within this century. Careful management and maintenance of the environment are crucial to safeguard this valuable marine ecosystem.

Nutrient load

An important driver of coral decline appears to be nutrient loading resulting from erosion and wastewater seepage.

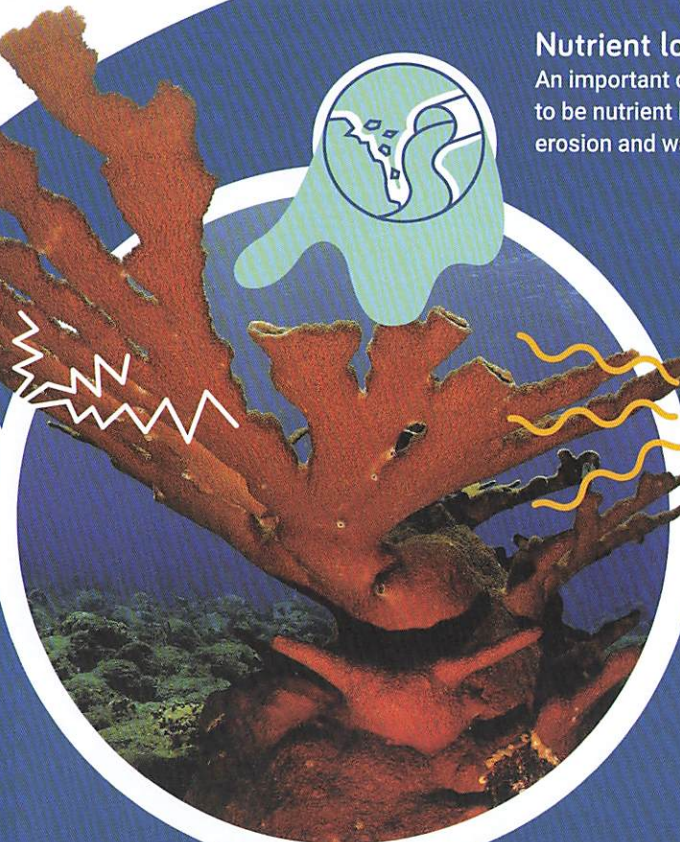


Anchors
Ship anchors can damage the reef.



Climate change

Climate change effects include increased temperature, bleaching, ocean acidification, sea level rise and an increase in severe weather events.



What is SCF doing to protect Coral Reefs?



Water Quality Monitoring

Monitoring water quality for pollution and nutrient loading.



Saba Research Centre

The research centre has been set up to propagate sea urchins and corals, and develop innovative techniques to restore coral reefs. It also serves as an educational facility.



Coral Restoration

Coral reef restoration through our coral nursery.



Artificial Reefs

Innovative structures have been developed to enhance recruitment and coral reef development. They also provide shelter for reef fish.



Control free roaming goats

Supporting the local government in controlling free-roaming goats to help prevent erosion.



Saba National Marine Park

The Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF) is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to preserve the island's nature for the benefit of the people of Saba in perpetuity. SCF is committed to the belief that a stronger island economy will result from the sustainable use of Saba's rich and diverse natural resources.

SCF manages the Saba National Marine Park, the Saba Bank National Park, the Mount Scenery National Park, as well as the island's historic trail network.

The Saba National Marine Park, which was established in 1987, protects the waters around

the island from the high-water mark to the 60m (220') depth contour. Zones protect biodiversity and coordinate use of the Marine Park.

Marine Park staff maintain a system of moorings, provide signage and outreach materials, conduct monitoring, promote scientific research, run educational programs, and assist with the enforcement of the island's nature laws.


SCF's work relies on Nature Fees, donations, in kind donations and the efforts of our dedicated volunteers. Your investment in our island heritage is essential to us all.





Saba
Conservation
Foundation




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