



Into the Wild

APPROPRIATELY NICKNAMED THE “NATURE ISLAND,” DOMINICA IS THE PERFECT BALANCE OF RELAXATION AND ADVENTURE **BY AMBER GIBSON**

Between sea caves, sulphur spas, whale watching, and canyoning in the rainforest, Dominica is the Caribbean destination du jour for outdoor enthusiasts. Sure, you can relax on the beach with a private picnic or canoodle in your own infinity pool if you're staying in a villa at Secret Bay, but there's plenty of adventure to be had along the coastline and in the island's verdant mountains if you wish to venture further. Active volcanoes have created hot springs and rich alluvial soil, allowing the island to grow much of its own food. The Ministry of Agriculture even launched a program last year to assist locals with backyard gardening. There are 365 rivers crisscrossing the island and many rushing waterfalls to discover while hiking. Some of the scenery might look familiar - major sequences from the second and third *Pirates of the Caribbean* films were shot in Dominica.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Dominica lies between Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Lesser Antilles, and the under-the-radar island belonged to the British before achieving independence in 1978. Dominica is the only island left in the Caribbean that still has a distinctive population of Carib people, who inhabited the island prior to European colonization. Rainfall is heavier in the mountainous interior and temperatures are pleasantly warm year-round, consistently in the 80s.

English is the official language in Dominica although many locals also speak Creole French. Historically, Dominica has been quite poor and dependent on agriculture, although the tourism and

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NEXT PAGE TOP RIGHT: SECRET BAY



offshore financial industries have grown tremendously in recent years. The official currency is the Eastern Caribbean dollar, but U.S. dollars are widely accepted. There are daily direct flights from San Juan, which is the easiest place to connect for most American travelers.

If you're angling to get a second passport, Dominica has arguably the best citizenship by investment program in the world, requiring a real estate investment with a very affordable threshold of \$200,000. All 42 new villas at Secret Bay qualify, and they've seen a 66% increase in inquiries from Americans over the past several months. Secret Bay is even offering some villas with fractional



ownership opportunities so you can invest exactly \$200,000 for citizenship. There's no residency requirement and Dominicans have visa-free or visa on arrival access to more than 115 countries.

ATTRACTIONS

PORTSMOUTH SATURDAY MARKET

The market in downtown Portsmouth opens every Saturday at 6 a.m., and it's a great opportunity to taste a wide array of authentic Dominican flavors while interacting with locals. Vendors sell a kaleidoscope of fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, bread, fish, and jams, along with handicrafts. Many fruits like guavas and avocados taste different here, grown in native varieties unique to the island. Sip fresh young coconut juice, then find somebody with a machete to chop it open so you can enjoy the jelly-like meat inside.

WAITUKUBULI TRAIL

This 115-mile hiking trail is the longest in the Caribbean and takes nearly two weeks to complete. Don't worry, you don't have to conquer it all. There are 14 different distinct segments stretching from Scott's Head village in the south to Cabrit's National Park in the north, traversing dense rainforests and volca-

nic mountains along the way. These trails were initially used by hunter-gatherers including the indigenous Kalinago people. One of the highlights is World Heritage site Boiling Lake within Morne Trois Pitons National Park, a bubbling flooded fumarole only reached after an arduous three-hour trek.

WHERE TO STAY

SECRET BAY

This Relais & Chateaux hideaway is by far the most exclusive and luxurious in Dominica, with just 10 open-air villas featuring private plunge pools with ocean views, kitchens pre-stocked with local breakfast foods, and expansive terraces. The eco-friendly villas feature low-impact architecture and locally designed furniture. Wake up with sun salutations overlooking Tibay Beach from the wellness pavilion, then snorkel or paddleboard to Secret Beach, accessible only by water. The intimate spa has just one room, featuring housemade botanical scrubs and body oils for a romantic massage accompanied by a soundtrack of crashing waves. By October 2021, a new social hub will debut at the heart of the property, including an art gallery, micro-brewery, lap pool, and all-day dining restaurant. **Ross Boulevard, Portsmouth, secretbay.dm**



FORT YOUNG HOTEL & DIVE RESORT

Fort Young has been a pioneer in Dominica's tourism industry, best known for its world-class diving and whale and dolphin watching. The country's only downtown hotel was once a British fort, built in 1699, then used as headquarters for Dominican police before welcoming its first travelers in 1964. You'll see the ruins, including an old cannon in the courtyard, but the rooms have just been renovated and outfitted with modern amenities, with many adjoining rooms to accommodate larger families. Just a one-minute walk from the marina and with its own dive shop, Fort Young is perfectly poised for underwater adventures. **Victoria Street, Roseau, fortyounghotel.com**

DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

SPEARFISHING FOR LIONFISH

Lionfish are an invasive species in the Caribbean,



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF FORT YOUNG HOTEL & DIVE RESORT



[TRAVEL]



accounting for any dietary restrictions and utilizing the freshest local ingredients, many of which are grown on the property. Fernandes is Portuguese and he's sublime with seafood, pairing local yellowfin tuna tataki with lemongrass broth and juicy lobster with dasheen (taro) purée. Even the duck, marinated and smoked then paired with pickled local vegetables, is local. For dessert, try the refreshing tropical fruit ceviche topped with a silky scoop of mango or soursop ice cream. **Ross Boulevard, Portsmouth, secretbay.dm/dining**

PALISADES RESTAURANT

The signature restaurant at Fort Young Hotel is a popular community gathering place for locals to mingle with guests, showcasing the island's natural bounty in an al fresco seaside setting. Yachts often pull up to the private jetty to have dinner onshore. Palisades' legendary soup blends carrots, ginger, and callaloo coconut for a light and flavorful appetizer. Locally caught lionfish and char-grilled lobster are popular delicacies for pescatarians. Dessert lovers will appreciate the extensive selection of sweets and fanciful presentations, including tamarind cheesecake with guava chantilly and macerated rum raisin. **Fort Young Hotel, Victoria Street, Roseau, fortyounghotel.com/palisades-restaurant** 1

wreaking havoc on the delicate coral ecosystem. They have no natural predators, and Dominica encourages visitors to fish for the pests. Spearfishing is not easy, so it's best to go out with a guide like local captain Don Mitchell at Secret Bay who has personally caught more than 6,000 lionfish in his lifetime. You'll have to free dive 30 feet underwater to find them hiding in the coral crevices, but they are pretty easy to shoot. Just be careful not to touch any of their 18 venomous spikes! Let Mitchell take care of cleaning your catch, then enjoy it raw as sashimi or cooked lightly back at the resort. The flavor when cooked is similar to cod or grouper. secretbay.dm

RAPPELLING TITOU GORGE

One of the most iconic locations in Dominica for canyoning or rappelling, Titou Gorge can only be fully experienced once you descend into the crevices and jump in hidden pools. The rugged terrain has been carved by thousands of years of rainfall and no prior rappelling experience is necessary for the half-day tour. Bring a swimsuit, towel, and closed footwear, and expert guides at Extreme Dominica will brief you on a training wall before heading into the wilderness. Swim through a series of caves at the

base of the waterfall while dappled light streams through, then warm up in the natural hot spring trickling just outside. **Papilotte Road Shawford, Roseau, extremedominica.com**

DINE AND DRINK

ZING ZING

There's no menu at Zing Zing, a fine dining concept exclusive to Secret Bay guests. Chef Fábio Fernandes whips up a new three-course meal each night, deftly



TOP: ZING ZING AT SECRET BAY; BOTTOM RIGHT: THE PALISADES RESTAURANT AT FORT YOUNG HOTEL & DIVE RESORT