



Dominica

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Why Go?

On Dominica, nature has been as creative and prolific as Picasso in his prime. Much of this volcanic island is blanketed by untamed rainforest that embraces you with the loft and grandeur of a Gothic cathedral. Experiences await that will forever etch themselves into your memory: an intense trek to a bubbling lake, soothing your muscles in hot sulfur springs, getting pummeled by a waterfall, snorkeling in a glass of 'champagne', swimming up a narrow gorge – the list of possible ecoadventures goes on.

In many ways, Dominica is the 'anti-Caribbean' island. It has been spared the mass tourism, in large part because there are very few sandy beaches, no flashy resorts and no direct international flights. The locals are so friendly that they often stop visitors just to wish them a good visit. Just as uniquely, Dominica is also home to about 2200 Caribs, the only pre-Columbian population remaining in the eastern Caribbean.

Best Beaches

- » Batibou Bay (p396)
- » Champagne Beach (p392)
- » Point Baptiste Beach (p397)
- » Mero Beach (p393)

Best Places to Stay

- » Jacoway Inn (p397)
- » Pagua Bay House (p398)
- » Silks Hotel (p398)
- » River Rush Eco Retreat (p398)
- » Cocoa Cottages (p390)

When to Go

Temperatures average between 75°F (24°C) and 86°F (30°C) year-round, with cooler temperatures in the mountains. There are short bursts of rainfall all year long. February to June, the island's driest months, are the most popular. The rainy season lasts from July to late October, almost coinciding with the Caribbean's hurricane season (peaks in August and September).

Dominica's Carnival celebrations run for two weeks prior to Ash Wednesday. In October, Roseau hosts the World Creole Music Festival. The week leading up to Independence Day (November 3), or Creole Day, is a vibrant celebration of local heritage.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$); US dollars widely accepted
- » **Language** English
- » **Money** Outside of Roseau and Portsmouth, ATMs are thin on the ground. Currency dispensed is EC dollars.
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the US, EU and Commonwealth for stays of under 21 days

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 290 sq miles
- » **Population** 70,400
- » **Capital** Roseau
- » **Telephone country code** 767
- » **Emergency** 999

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** US\$40
- » **Two-course evening meal** EC\$50
- » **Museum entrance** EC\$5 to EC\$12
- » **Beer** EC\$5
- » **Bus ticket** EC\$1.50 to EC\$12

Resources

- » **Discover Dominica** (www.dominica.dm)
- » **Visit Dominica** (www.visit-dominica.com)
- » **Lennox Honychurch** (www.lennoxhonychurch.com) Cultural resources and history
- » **A Virtual Dominica** (www.avirtualdominica.com)

Itineraries

THREE DAYS

Dominica in a nutshell: on day one drive south from Melville Airport via spectacular Pagua Bay through the Carib Territory to Roseau, briefly stopping for a dip in the grotto of shimmering Emerald Pool. Spend the next day's morning exploring Roseau, then head east to marvel at Trafalgar Falls, swim in Titou Gorge and soak in a hot sulfur spring at a Wotten Waven spa. Spend your final day driving north along the West Coast, stopping for a short rainforest hike to see endangered parrots in the Syndicate Parrot Reserve. In Portsmouth, follow in the footsteps of Caribs and Johnny Depp while rowing through the messy jungle of the Indian River. Head east and spend your final night in Calibishie.

ONE WEEK

Stretch the three-day itinerary into a saner five days. Use the extra time for the spectacular hike to Boiling Lake, soaking up Roseau's vibrant culture in more depth, snorkeling or diving in Champagne Reef and exploring Cabrits National Park near Portsmouth.

GETTING TO NEIGHBORING ISLANDS

There are regular ferries from Dominica to Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Lucia. LIAT flies to Antigua, Barbados and Guadeloupe.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Callaloo** A creamy thick soup or stew blending a variety of vegetables (eg dasheen, spinach, kale, onions, carrots, eggplant, garlic, okra) with coconut milk and sometimes crab or ham.
- » **Fresh fruit** Dominica grows all sorts of fruit, including bananas, coconuts, papayas, guavas and pineapples, and mangoes so plentiful they litter the roadside in places.
- » **Sea moss** Nonalcoholic beverage made from seaweed mixed with sugar and spices and sometimes with evaporated milk. It's sold in supermarkets and at snackettes.
- » **Kubuli** Dominica uses the island's natural spring water for its home-grown beer label; you'll see red-and-white signs all over the island with Kubuli's concise slogan – 'The Beer We Drink.'
- » **Macoucherie** Rum connoisseurs crave this local concoction. Don't be fooled by the plastic bottles or cheap-looking label, it's an undiscovered gem.