

# Dominica

Whether you're into trekking high into the mountaintops or exploring the watery world below, Dominica is the place to go for those who prefer hiking boots over high heels and are content with a nightlife where the only music is the murmur of the jungle.

Dominica has surprisingly long drives for such a small island, so it's better to pick a spot or two and explore instead of bouncing around. If you can do it in the mountains (hiking, bird-watching, searching for hidden pools and waterfalls) or the water (diving, snorkeling, kayaking), you can do it in Dominica.

There are a few sandy beaches, but most require a little gumption to find and there are usually only a few lodging choices nearby, at most. There are no direct international flights and the island-hopping it takes to get here has kept the package tours at bay.

The locals are so friendly that it's almost fun to get lost just to have an excuse to approach people on their front porches. Whereas some of the bigger Caribbean cities are decidedly scary, in the capital city of Roseau the locals often stop visitors just to wish them a good visit.

Rasta culture is strong, and those offended by the sight of Rastafarians taking their sacrament might have to cover their eyes a time or two. Dominica is also the home to about 2200 Caribs, the only pre-Columbian population remaining in the eastern Caribbean.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 290 sq miles
- **Capital** Roseau
- **Country code** ☎ 767
- **Departure tax** EC\$55 (US\$20) for over 12 years
- **Famous for** Nature
- **Language** English, French patois
- **Money** Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$); EC\$1 = US\$0.38 = €0.24 = UK£0.19
- **Official name** Commonwealth of Dominica
- **People** Dominicans
- **Phrase** irie (hello/goodbye/cool/good); check (understand)
- **Population** 72,400
- **Visa** Required for residents of former Eastern Bloc countries and citizens of China, India and Nigeria; see p600



## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Canyoning** (p594) Don't just look at waterfalls, feel them wash over you in a canyon where no other visitors go
- **Morne Trois Pitons National Park** (p595) Inhale breathtaking mountain and atmospheric rainforest scenery in this Unesco World Heritage site
- **Portsmouth** (p590) Explore the Indian River or go on a sail-powered sunset wine and cheese cruise
- **Diving** (p598) Take the plunge and play in the bubbles of Champagne Beach, the star underwater attraction
- **Hiking** (p598) Step out on Dominica, from a leisurely walk to Emerald Pool to an unforgettable trek to Boiling Lake
- **Roseau** (p584) Wander around for shopping and eating deals and feel the friendliness of the locals warm up the modest capital city

## ITINERARIES

- **R&R** Consider chilling out for a few days at one of the luxurious properties in the Trafalgar Falls or Grand Bay areas to get on Caribbean time. After all, one of Dominica's hottest commodities is peace and quiet.
- **Turf and Surf Sampler Plate** Spend the first day in Roseau wandering between the markets and checking out the sights and arrange a tour to Boiling Lake for the next day. Hook up an afternoon snorkel or dive trip to Champagne Reef the next day, or just take it easy and enjoy the fresh fish in the fishing village of Scotts Head.

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

A year-round tropical climate tempered by northeastern trade winds makes Dominica a good Caribbean destination for those who prefer a more moderate climate. 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. Most visitors come to Dominica between February and June, the island's driest months, when humidity is at a manageable average of 65%. April is the driest month with about 10 days of rainfall in Roseau, as opposed to the wettest month, August, when rainfall more than doubles. The rainy sea-

son lasts from July to late October, almost coinciding with the Caribbean's hurricane season (peaks in August and September). It can get cool in the mountains and a sweater is handy.

## HISTORY

Dominica was the last of the Caribbean islands to be colonized by Europeans due chiefly to the fierce resistance of the native Caribs. The Caribs, who settled here in the 14th century, called the island Waitikubuli, which means 'Tall is her Body.' Christopher Columbus, with less poetic flair, named the island after the day of the week on which he spotted it – a Sunday ('Doménica' in Italian) – on November 3, 1493.

Daunted by fierce resistance from the Caribs and discouraged by the absence of gold, the Spanish took little interest in Dominica. France laid claim to the island in 1635 and wrestled with the British over it through the 18th century.

In 1805 the French burned much of Roseau to the ground and since then the island remained firmly in the possession of the British, who established sugar plantations on Dominica's more accessible slopes.

In 1967 Dominica gained autonomy in internal affairs as a West Indies Associated State, and on November 3, 1978 (the 485th anniversary of Columbus' 'discovery'), Dominica became an independent republic within the Commonwealth.

The initial year of independence was a turbulent one. In June 1979 the island's first prime minister, Patrick John, was forced to resign after a series of corrupt schemes surfaced, including one clandestine land deal to transfer 15% of the island to US developers. In August 1979 Hurricane David, packing winds of 150mph, struck the island with devastating force. Forty-two people were killed and 75% of the islanders' homes were destroyed or severely damaged. To get a feeling of the hurricane's force, see the school bus at the Botanical Gardens in Roseau (p585).

In July 1980 Dame Eugenia Charles was elected prime minister, the first woman in the Caribbean to hold the office. Within a year of her inauguration she survived two unsuccessful coups and in October 1983, as chairperson of the Organization of East Caribbean States, endorsed the US invasion of Grenada.



Dominica's more recent political history has also been turbulent. After the sudden death of popular prime minister Roosevelt Douglas ('Rosie') in 2000, after only eight months in office, his successor – the radical Pierre Charles – also died on the job, four years later. In 2004 the then 31-year-old Roosevelt Skerrit stepped into the breach. A popular choice with young people, Skerrit comes from a Rastafarian farming family in the north of the island and is still leading the country today.

The Dominican and Chinese governments formalized relations in 2004 and the sparkling new Windsor Park sports (mostly cricket) stadium in Roseau is a gift from the Chinese that cost an estimated US\$17 million. Skerrit broke off long-standing relations with Taiwan that same year, and said on the record that China will give Dominica US\$122 million in aid.

In August 2007 Hurricane Dean beat up Dominica and the nearby islands – damage wasn't too heavy compared to Hurricane David, but there were at least two deaths.

In January 2008 Dominica joined the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, or ALBA – a regional trade group that includes Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua, designed to counterbalance American trade power. Plans for a Venezuelan oil refinery on Dominica are up on the air at the time of writing; after the refinery was announced, the tourism industry protested the plan, saying that it would ruin the island's image.

## THE CULTURE

Dominica draws on a mix of cultures: French place names feature as often as English; African language, foods and customs mingle with European traditions as part of the island's Creole culture; and the Caribs still carve dugouts (canoes), build houses on stilts and weave distinctive basket-work. Rastafarian and Black Pride influences are strong here.

Dominica's population is approximately 72,400; about a third lives in and around Roseau. While the majority of islanders are of African descent, about 2200 native Caribs also reside on Dominica, most of them on a 3700-acre reservation on the eastern side of the island.

With a 61% Roman Catholic population and religious observance commonplace, con-

servative traditional values are strong. Family holds an important place in Dominican society, so much so that a government poster warning Dominicans of the dangers of transporting illegal drugs lists separation from family (followed by imprisonment and loss of life) as the number one deterrent to the crime.

Locals are worried about the proliferation of Chinese-owned businesses, and signs have been popping up around the country urging people to buy local.

Much ado has been made of the number of centenarians who live here – Ma Pampo is the most famous, dying at 128 years of age in 2003. The island does have a high percentage of centenarians but the hard evidence for some of the more extraordinary cases is murky. The average life expectancy at birth is now 75.1 years, making Dominica 78th in terms of life expectancy out of 222 countries.

## ARTS

Dominica's most celebrated author, Jean Rhys, was born in Roseau in 1890. Although she moved to England at age 16 and made only one brief return visit to Dominica, much of her work draws upon her childhood experiences in the West Indies. Rhys touches lightly upon her life in Dominica in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and in her autobiography, *Smile Please* (1979). Her most famous work, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a novel set mostly in Jamaica and an unmentioned Dominica, was made into a film in 1993.

## ENVIRONMENT

Dominica is an island of dramatic mountains that seem to come straight out of the sea, and what few beaches there are are very lightly developed, at most. For the most part the nature here is untouched, save for the rusted cars that dot the roadsides like so many memorials to bad driving.

### HOW MUCH?

- **Bottled water** EC\$3
- **Kubuli beer** EC\$4
- **Creole plate** EC\$25
- **Tank of gas for 4WD** US\$40
- **Accommodation outside Roseau** US\$110

## The Land

Mountainous throughout, Dominica is 29 miles long and 16 miles wide, and has a total land mass of 290 sq miles. It has the highest mountains in the Eastern Caribbean; the loftiest peak, Morne Diablotin, is 4747ft high. The mountains, which act as a magnet for rain, serve as a water source for the alleged 365 rivers that run down the lush green mountain valleys. En route to the coast, many of the rivers cascade over steep cliff faces, giving the island an abundance of waterfalls – 33% of the island's electricity is hydro-generated.

## Wildlife

Whales and dolphins roam the deep waters off Dominica's sheltered west coast. Sperm whales, which grow to a length of 70ft and have a blunt, square snout, are the whales most commonly sighted; the main season is October to March. Other resident toothed whales are the orca, pygmy sperm whale, pygmy killer whale, false killer whale and pilot whale. In winter, migrating humpback whales are occasionally spotted as well.

For near-shore divers, the marine life tends to be of the smaller variety – sea horses included – but there are spotted eagle rays, barracuda and sea turtles as well.

More than 160 bird species have been sighted on Dominica, giving it some of the most diverse birdlife in the Eastern Caribbean. Of these, 59 species nest on the island, including two endemic and endangered parrot species.

The Sisserou parrot (*Amazona imperialis*), also called the imperial parrot, is Dominica's national bird. The Jaco parrot (*Amazona arausiaca*) is somewhat smaller and greener overall, with bright splashes of color.

The island used to have an abundance of large frogs, aka 'mountain chicken', but they've been a local delicacy for so long their numbers are dwindling. The island has small tree frogs, many lizards, 13 bat species, 55 butterfly species, boa constrictors that grow nearly 10ft in length and four other types of snake (none poisonous).

The most abundant tree on the island is the *gommier*, a huge gum tree that's traditionally been used to make dugouts.

## Environmental Issues

Cruise ships with a capacity for holding 3000 people dock here to refill water supplies and dump waste, which worries many environ-

mentalists. People are also concerned about the impact of a planned Venezuelan oil refinery.

Despite objections by international environmental groups, Dominica allows whaling to take place in its waters.

## FOOD & DRINK

The food is simple here – 'chicken or fish?' is a question visitors soon get tired of – but the Creole-meets-Rasta cuisine leans on flavorful and fresh ingredients. The locals put hot sauce on almost everything, but it's in bottles so you can season to taste.

Vegetarians will have no trouble filling up on bean, rice and vegetable creations. Vegetable curries and *callaloo* soup are on most menus. *Callaloo* tastes a bit like spinach and on Dominica it's invariably a flavorful, creamy concoction.

There are lots of cheap takeaway places with 'snack' signs that sell salted and barbecued cod and tuna, and deep-fried bread cakes. Most bars frequented by locals also sell snacks.

The island grows a number of fruit, including bananas, coconuts, papayas, guavas, pineapples and mangoes, the latter so plentiful they litter the roadside in places.

Rivers flowing from the mountains provide Dominica with fresh water. Though tap water is generally safe, many travelers stick with bottled water.

Dominica brews its own beer under the Kubuli label; you'll see red-and-white signs all over the island with Kubuli's concise slogan – 'The Beer We Drink.' There's local rum that connoisseurs crave: Macoucherie. Don't be fooled by the plastic bottles or cheap-looking label, it's an undiscovered gem. 'Bush rums,' where locals soak various herbs, roots, and fruits in a bottle of rum, are on sale everywhere.

## DOMINICA

Once outside the capital city, visitors see that Dominica has its tiny villages and a few mountain enclaves, but for the most part, nature still rules the land.

## ROSEAU

pop 15,000

Roseau (*rose-oh*) is a colorful West Indian capital, its streets lined with old stone-and-wood buildings. For the budget-minded it's a

good base because it offers the widest range of eating and accommodations. Dance hall and reggae music is blaring everywhere during the day while people zip around, but at night the city empties. The Chinese eateries popping up around Roseau might seem a bit odd, but more Chinese are setting up shop here and it's becoming more common to see Chinese signs on an otherwise classically Caribbean street. When crossing the street, look right.

## Orientation

Roseau is laid out in an easy to navigate grid system with many of the tourist facilities clustered around the cruise ship dock; the tourist office and Old Market are close by. Be aware that people use 'Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd' (the proper name of the street) and 'Bayfront' interchangeably in addresses.

## Information

**Chinese Medical Clinic** (☎ 448-4712; 86 King George St; consultation EC\$40; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) The place for acupuncture massages and herbal remedies.

**Cyberland Internet Café** (☎ 440-2605; www.cyberlandinc.com; cnr Cork & Great George Sts; 30-min access code valid for 24 hrs EC\$3.50; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat) Fast connections in air-conditioned comfort.

**Dominica Cable & Wireless** (Hanover St; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri) For phone card, fax and email services.

**First Caribbean Bank** (Old St)

**Lin's Laundry** (10 Castle St; load EC\$12; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-3:30pm Sat)

**New Charles Pharmacy** (☎ 448-3198; cnr Fields St & Cross Lane)

**Post office** (Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Fri) Check out the mural detailing the history of Dominica's postal service – Anthony Trollope came here in 1856 to set up the system, and policemen were the first mail carriers.

**Princess Margaret Hospital** (☎ 448-2231) In the Goodwill area on the north side of Roseau, off Federation Dr.

**Royal Bank of Canada** (Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd) Near the Old Market, this bank has an ATM that accepts credit and bank cards.

**Tourist office** (☎ 448-2045; www.discoverdominica.com; Roseau; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Fri) Free maps and advice, located on the ground floor beneath the Dominica Museum.

## Sights

### BOTANIC GARDENS

The 40-acre **botanic gardens** (www.da-academy.org/dagardens.html; admission free) on the northeastern edge of Roseau's center is a sprawling place

with big banyan trees and flowering tropical shrubs. Locals take leisurely strolls and picnics here. A must-see is the **Parrot Conservation and Research Centre**, an aviary housing Jaco and Sisserou parrots, the two parrot species found in Dominica's rainforests (see opposite).

After the aviary, the most worthwhile site here is the **monument** (of sorts) to Hurricane David. Near the forestry office you'll find a rusting school bus trapped under a huge African baobab tree. The bus was thankfully empty when the hurricane's 150mph winds ravaged the island in 1979.

Brochures describing the island's parks and trails are sold at the forestry office. The garden is the place to start for those who want to hike to the top of Morne Bruce (p587), which overlooks the park.

## OLD MARKET

The cobblestone plaza and small covered arcade of the Old Market has been the center of action in Roseau for the last 300 years. It's been the site of political meetings, farmers markets and, more ominously, executions and a slave market.

Nowadays it's a big souvenir stall where visitors buy bush rum, T-shirts, handicrafts and everything Rasta. To have time to chat with the local vendors, it's best to avoid this market when the cruise ships dock.

## DOMINICA MUSEUM

This small but interesting **museum** (admission US\$2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) gives an overview of the history of Dominica and its people.

Besides pictures of a young Jean Rhys (p583), you'll find Native American artifacts, including stone axes and other tools, *adornos* (Arawak clay figurines) and a *gommier* dug-out. Informative displays delve into Caribbean lifestyles, Creole culture and the slave trade. Old photos and drawings trace the history of Roseau from a swampy marsh to the island's biggest city.

## PUBLIC MARKET

Along the riverfront at the northwest end of Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd, you'll find the bustling **public market** (☎ 6am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 6am-5pm Tue & Thu, 4am-6pm Sat). It's a good place to have a snack at one of the many cheap food stalls and is the place where locals get their produce and spices. A conch



shell sounds every time a new batch of fresh fish arrives.

## CHURCHES

The **Roman Catholic Cathedral**, situated on Virgin Lane above the Methodist Church, is an old stone edifice where Gothic meets Caribbean. The upper windows are stained

glass, but much like a typical Creole home, the lower windows are wooden shutters that open for natural ventilation. Architecture buffs should give it a look, but as attractions go it's only worth a quick pass from the street.

The **Anglican Church**, located opposite Peebles Park, is a gray stone-block church

that was left with only its shell standing in 1979 after Hurricane David ripped off the original roof. The new roof is now made of tin.

### LIBRARY & AROUND

The **public library** (Victoria St) was built in 1905 with funding from US philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The wrap around porch is a nice place to check out the sea views and there's a grassy area with a few stone benches to rest in the shade.

**Government House**, the white mansion with the expansive lawn, and the **Assembly Building** are both within about 100 yards of the public library.

### MORNE BRUCE

A rather exclusive hillside suburb that's northeast of Roseau. It has a couple of places to stay, but most people who venture up this way do so for the panoramic hilltop view of Roseau and its surrounds.

One way to get to the viewpoint, near the big cross that overlooks Roseau, is to drive up and park below the president's office. You can also hike to this point from the botanic gardens; the half-mile trail begins just east of the parrot aviary.

### Activities

The following dive shops are located in Roseau:

**Anchorage Dive Center** (☎ 448-2638; www.anchoragehotel.dm) At Anchorage Hotel in Castle Comfort, just south of Roseau. It also runs whale-watching trips.

**Dive Dominica** (☎ 448-2188; www.divedominica.com) At Castle Comfort Lodge; it's the island's oldest dive shop. Also runs whale-watching trips.

**Fort Young Dive Shop** (☎ 448-5000; www.fortyounghotel.com/diving.cfm) At the Fort Young Hotel in central Roseau.

### Tours

**Wacky Rollers** (☎ 440-4386; www.wackyrollers.com; 8 Fort St; tours from US\$60) offers jeep tours to Titou Gorge, as well as river tubing, kayak tours and zip-line outings.

### Festivals & Events

Roseau is packed solid for **Carnival**, and for the week of **Independence Day**; make hotel reservations in advance or you'll find yourself sleeping well out of town. For more information see p599.

## Sleeping

### TOWN CENTER

**Kent Anthony Guest House** (☎ 448-2730; 3 Great Marlborough St; s/d with shared bathroom US\$30/35, s/d with private bathroom US\$44/50) Humble yet clean, these nine rooms are about as cheap and central as it gets. The helpful proprietor, Austel (his sons are Kent and Anthony), can organize car tours. TVs with cable were on their way at the time of research.

**Syme-Zee's** (Syme-Zee's Eatery; symes\_zee@hotmail.com; 34 King George V St; r US\$40-60; ☎) Above a popular restaurant-bar, this has 11 rooms, three of which have air-conditioning. Most of the rooms are set back from the main street, and it's surprisingly quiet given the midday hustle and bustle down below. There's a shared living room and laundry.

**Ma Bass Central Guest House** (☎ 448-2999; 44 Fields Lane; s/d US\$55/60; ☎) One of the best deals in Roseau. The friendly owner, Theresa Emanuel (better known as Ma Bass), earned her name from the medical students who stayed with her before she converted her home into a proper guesthouse. She keeps the place clean and goes out of her way to make guests feel at home. Groups should get the two back rooms that are next to each other and share a balcony – the perfect place to enjoy the night breeze.

**Sutton Place Hotel** (☎ 449-8700; www.suttonplacehoteldominica.com; 25 Old St; s/d US\$75/95, ste s/d US\$105/135, all incl breakfast; ☎) Roseau's answer to a boutique hotel, this place strikes a good balance between style and comfort. Many of the rooms have four-poster beds and the suites have a self-contained kitchen. The downstairs Cellar Bar was under renovation at the time of writing, but it's a real cellar and has a funky, intimate vibe that's not often experienced in this part of the world.

**Garraway Hotel** (☎ 449-8800; www.garrawayhotel.com; 1 Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd; r/ste from US\$100/110; ☎) Catering mainly to business travelers, the staff is friendly and professional and the rooms are nice enough, albeit a bit bland.

**Fort Young Hotel** (☎ 448-5000; www.fortyounghotel.com; Victoria St; r US\$90-115, ocean-front r US\$110-175; ☎) The old cannons that decorate this 74-room hotel are a testament to its history as an 18th-century fort. Now, it's probably the swankiest option in town – the newer oceanfront rooms are the best, with



stylish furnishings, dark wood floors, big baths and private outdoor patios. There are wheelchair-accessible rooms and a spa for chill-seekers. There's wi-fi access, and also a dive shop on the premises.

### CASTLE COMFORT

Those who are mainly interested in diving should consider the Castle Comfort area, about 1 mile south of Roseau.

**Sea World Guesthouse** (☎ 448-5068; r US\$65; ☼ ☑) This bright and simple guesthouse was undergoing construction of a new outdoor bar and grill at the time of research. There's no dive school, but there is an on-site restaurant and shared kitchen.

**Anchorage Hotel** (☎ 448-2638; www.anchoragehotel.dm; s/d US\$66/85; ☼ ☑ ☑) With an on-site restaurant, bar, dive school and whale-watching trips, this place has it all – including the skeleton of a giant sperm whale beside the pool. Rooms are simple but well appointed with cable TV, a fast internet hookup, and either a balcony or windows that open right over the water.

**Evergreen Hotel** (☎ 448-3288; r from US\$110, lodge US\$145; ☼ ☑ ☑) Set on gardened grounds, the exterior feels more spacious than any other Castle Comfort hotel but the rooms in one of the two buildings (the three-storey one) are a bit small. The detached lodge (aka Honeymoon Hut) has a patio right above the water, and the rest of the rooms are set back on the grounds. There's no water access, but the hotels with dive schools are right next door.

**Castle Comfort Lodge** (☎ 448-2188; www.castlecomfortdivelodge.com; 4-/7-night package US\$700/958; ☼ ☑) Renting its rooms as part of dive packages only, those who come for a scuba adventure will be in heaven. Dive packages include meals, two-tank boat dives every day, airport transfers and, at an additional cost, whale-watching. For those who prefer to go their own way, guests are welcome to grab a tank and jump off the pier whenever they see fit – fish-filled water is just a few fin strokes away.

### Eating

For those used to late dinners, be aware that even if a place normally serves dinner it's best to show up on the early side, unless otherwise noted.

**Natural Livvy Vegan Restaurant** (naturallivvyrestaurant@yahoo.com; 13 King George V St; mains EC\$8-16;

☼ breakfast & lunch Mon-Thu & breakfast, lunch & dinner Fri) Lively up yourself for the Rastafarian proprietor, Dr J, who serves vegan goodness in the form of pizza, stews and tofu dishes while the reggae music booms in this open-air courtyard restaurant.

**Cornerhouse** (☎ 449-9000; 6 King George V St; mains EC\$12-18; ☼ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) This 2nd-level restaurant is a good place to meet other travellers or just watch life go by on the street below. The breakfasts are solid and the Creole plates span the range of vegetarian to local fish. The homemade chili is good, too. Internet access is EC\$3 per 15 minutes.

**St Aimie's** (☎ 440-4463; 35 Great George St; mains EC\$12-24; ☼ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Its motto is 'Just taste it!' and it's good advice. It doesn't look like much more than a shack, but the locals swear by this place and it serves dinner after most places have sold out of food. The fish and Creole dishes on the menu are standard fare, but the cook here works some special magic that takes the food above and beyond.

**Garage Bar & Grill** (☎ 448-5433; 15 Hanover St; mains EC\$14-25; ☼ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Set in an old stone house with open windows, this happening place feels more like an old castle than a garage – except for the bar stools that use old tires as a base. The food, especially the barbecue plates, is doubly good considering it looks more like a bar than a restaurant. Lots of local professionals wet their whistles after dark and it's often the last place to shut down in Roseau.

**Ocean Terrace Restaurant** (mains EC\$15-70; ☼ breakfast, lunch & dinner) At the Anchorage Hotel, it may be out of Roseau, but those willing to make the short drive will be surprised by a second-level seaside casual dining room where the food tastes great. Its lunch menu is worthy for its sheer range of prices and dishes; and breakfast here is a pancake-lover's dream come true. At night it's more of a fine-dining experience.

**Cocorico Café** (☎ 449-8686; www.natureisle.com/cocorico; cnr Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd & Kennedy Ave; mains US\$9-16; ☼ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Big open windows look out on the bay in this art gallery, duty-free shop and restaurant. It's quite popular with cruise-ship visitors, and the food from the French owners is something to crow about. Try the chicken in a coconut curry sauce, or one of the rum punches – some of the spiciest around. It's a wi-fi hot spot.

**La Robe Creole** (☎ 448-2896; [www.larobecreole.com](http://www.larobecreole.com); 3 Victoria St; mains EC\$30-85; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Serves top-notch Creole dishes and seafood all day in a friendly environment that you don't need to dress up for. The bar has an extensive wine and spirits selection and Erica's rum punch is quite the treat. Anything seafood is highly recommended and the daily specials are indeed special.

**Sutton Grille** (mains EC\$50-120; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) At the Sutton Place Hotel, this courtyard restaurant has a slightly Gothic, sumptuous feel with its thick stone walls and wrought-iron gates – be scared if a shadowy figure with pointy teeth sits down. Fancy sandwiches or a buffet lunch are available by day with a more elaborate fish and steak menu later on.

The place to go for snacks, the fixings for dinner or rum at local prices is the **J Astaphan & Co** (☎ 448-3221; 65 King George V St; ☺ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat) supermarket. Upstairs is a department store with all the rain ponchos and extra socks you'll ever need. The public market (p585) is the place for fish, fruit and vegetables.

## Entertainment

Most entertainment is largely limited to a sunset drink at one of the hotel bars.

**Fort Young Hotel** (☎ 448-5000; Victoria St) has a happy hour from 6pm to 8pm and live steel-pan music a bit later.

On Thursdays **Syme-Zee's Eatery** (38 King George V St; ☺ 9pm-3am) has a live jazz jam session with talented local musicians.

The **Ole Jetty Bar** (☎ 449-8800; Garraway Hotel, 1 Dame Eugenia Charles Blvd; ☺ 5pm-11pm) has karaoke nights on Friday. The bar is open until 11pm or so on weekdays, later on weekends.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

See p601 for information on flights to/from Dominica.

### BOAT

For information on the ferry services between Roseau, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Lucia, see p601.

### BUS

The bus service is operated by private minivans, recognizable by number plates that begin with the letter 'H.' You can hail a passing van from the street. There isn't a bus station, but buses heading southward

(including to Castle Comfort, EC\$1.50) tend to congregate at the Old Market, while those going north stop at West Bridge. Bus service stops soon after the working day is over.

### CAR

For information on car-rental agencies in Roseau, see p602.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Avis and Budget car rentals are at Canefield Airport, but other agencies will provide customers with free airport pick-up. Taxis are readily available (five- to 10-minute journey set fare EC\$25) from Canefield Airport. Melville Hall has a wider selection of car-rental companies and the hour-plus taxi ride between Roseau is set at EC\$50.

### TAXI

You can pick up a taxi on the street or call **Dominica Taxi Association** (☎ 449-8553).

## LAYOUT RIVER AREA

The Layout River, Dominica's longest, empties into the sea just south of Layout, at the center of the west coast. It's a popular place for freshwater swimming when it's not running strong. North of the Layout River are the gray pristine sands of Mero Beach.

## Sights

**Macoucherie Distillery** (☎ 449-6409; [www.shillingfordestate.com](http://www.shillingfordestate.com); Macoucherie), makers of some of the best rum in the Caribbean, is located between the Layout River and Salisbury. This is a working distillery – visitors either can try their luck by just stopping in or can call first. Be sure to take the opportunity to stock up on potent potables while you're here.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Tamarind Tree** (☎ 449-7395; [www.tamarindtreedominica.com](http://www.tamarindtreedominica.com); Salisbury; s/d incl breakfast from US\$93/108; ☺ ☑ ☑) This cliffside property sets the standard for ecofriendly Dominican hotels. It posts its Green Globe certification online and links to the report that shows exactly how much water each guest uses on average, how much trash the hoteliers recycle, etc. The hotel faces the pool and has 12 comfortable rooms that vary in amenities (some are fan-only). For guests who want to dive, the owners here work with the nearby Sunset Bay Club.

**Sunset Bay Club** (☎ 446-6522; [www.sunsetbayclub.com](http://www.sunsetbayclub.com); s/d all-inclusive from US\$144/238; 📺 📶) About 1 mile north of Salisbury, this beachside hotel is set on lush grounds where lizards scamper across the walkways. There's an on-site dive center, a small pool, a sauna, a nice open-air restaurant (meals EC\$30 to EC\$50; open lunch and dinner) and an on-site masseuse. It does beach clean-up and future-divemaster programs with the area's youth.

**Connie's Mero Beach Bar** (Mero Beach; snacks EC\$4-10; 📺 lunch & dinner) Those who go to Mero Beach can count on this place for snacks, drinks and friendly advice on local attractions. In the evening, Connie says she either closes early or keeps the barbecue fired up into the night, depending on how many people are around.

### Getting There & Away

There is a bus service from Roseau to Salisbury (EC\$5.20, 45 minutes) or Portsmouth (EC\$8.50, 1¼ hours).

## NORTHERN FOREST RESERVE

The Northern Forest Reserve is a huge area that encompasses 8800 hectares of land in the interior of the island, including 4747ft Morne Diablotin, the island's highest peak. The main habitat of Dominica's two endangered parrot species is in the eastern section of the reserve.

To get to the reserve, turn east on the signposted road that begins just north of the village of Dublanc, on the coast south of Portsmouth, and continue to Syndicate Estate, about 4.5 miles inland. There you'll find an easy mile-long loop trail (Syndicate Trail) to a parrot observatory platform, as well as the start of the trail leading up Morne Diablotin, a long and rugged hike that's best done with a guide – contact the **tourist office** (☎ 448-2045; [www.discoverdominica.com](http://www.discoverdominica.com); Roseau; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Fri) in Roseau.

## PORTSMOUTH

Dominica's second-largest town sits on Prince Rupert Bay. The bay is a favorite with the sail boat set and there's an occasional mega-yacht lurking in the distance. Cabrits National Park, on the north side of town and Indian River, to the south, are the area's noteworthy attractions. Beside the two main sights, Portsmouth is a nice spot for whale-watching and dive excursions. The town center doesn't have much to offer other than some basic shopping, and

the place gets downright ominous at night. Ross University School of Medicine, just south of town, attracts a lot of international students, who add a cosmopolitan flavor.

## Information

**Computer Resource Center** (Bay Rd; per 30min EC\$3; 🕒 9am-10pm) With fast internet connections, it also sells computer accessories on the expensive side.

**National Commercial Bank of Dominica** (☎ 445-5430) Just south of the town square parking lot (where you pick up the bus to Roseau).

**Police** (Bay Rd)

## Sights & Activities

### DIVING & WHALE-WATCHING

**Cabrits Dive Center** (☎ 445-3010; [www.cabritsdive.com](http://www.cabritsdive.com); snorkeling trips US\$15, dives from US\$60) Chris, the friendly divemaster here, won't say if the diving on the north side of the island is better or not, but he does say there's a lot of variation – massive underwater boulders, gently sloping walls, some wrecks and, his favorite, the 'pole to pole' dive under a ship berth that's spawned its own ecosystem. In addition to the standard dive outings, Cabrits can help divers book accommodations and will pick up sailors who want to dive from their boats.

**Whaledive** (☎ 445-5131; [www.whaledive.org](http://www.whaledive.org); snorkeling trips US\$20, whale-watching & dives from US\$50) Founded by Dr Fitzroy Armour, known as 'the Jacques Cousteau of Dominica', these trips combine whale-watching and diving on a sail boat to cut down on noise and exhaust pollution for our underwater friends. Based at Picard Beach Eco-Cottages – which Armour owns along with a few other hotels on the island – Whaledive runs a daily sunset wine and cheese cruise.

### INDIAN RIVER

Boat trips here wind up the shady river through tall swamp bloodwood trees, whose buttressed trunks rise out of the shallows, their roots stretching out laterally along the riverbanks. It can be a fascinating outing, taking you into an otherwise inaccessible habitat and offering a close-up view of the creatures that live at the water's edge.

Though almost everyone you meet in Portsmouth will offer to be your guide, you'll get a lot more from the trip if you go with one of the boaters who work with

the Park Service; they can be found with the other rowers at the mouth of the river (see below). Or, if staying at a waterfront hotel, the front desk can call a guide to pick up groups at the pier for a small negotiable surcharge (per person US\$2 to US\$4).

The rowers, who set up shop along the coastal road at the river mouth, charge EC\$35 per person for a tour that takes about 1½ hours, usually with a stop for drinks at the **Indian River Bush Bar** (☎ 445-3333; [www.cobratours.dm](http://www.cobratours.dm); drinks US\$3), run by the affable 'Cobra' (aka Andrew O'Brian). The dynamite rum punch is its signature drink, a mixture of fruits, herbs and 'local atmosphere' as Cobra puts it. Although it looks like it's only accessible via the river, locals can point you to a walking path that takes 10 minutes or so from town.

### CABRITS NATIONAL PARK

Located on a scenic peninsula 1.25 miles north of Portsmouth, **Cabrils National Park** (admission US\$ 2.50; ☒ 8am-6pm) is the site of Fort Shirley, an impressive 18th-century British garrison. In addition to the peninsula, the park encompasses the surrounding coastal area, as well as the island's largest swamp. The Cabrils Peninsula, formed by two extinct volcanoes, separates Prince Rupert Bay from Douglas Bay. The coral reefs and waters of the latter are also part of the park, and good for snorkeling.

Cabrils is a fun place to explore. Some of the fort's stone ruins have been cleared and partially reconstructed, while others remain half-hidden in the jungle. The powder magazine to the right of the fort entrance has been turned into a small **museum** with restoration exhibits and a display of unearthed artifacts.

The fort is home to scores of hermit crabs, harmless snakes and ground lizards (*Ameiva fuscata*) that scurry about the ruins and along the hiking trails that lead up to the two volcanic peaks. The trail up the 560ft West Cabrit begins at the back side of Fort Shirley and the hike takes about 30 minutes. Most of the walk passes through a wooded area, but there's a panoramic view at the top.

### Sleeping

**Portsmouth Beach Hotel** (☎ 445-5142; [www.avirtuallondon.com/pbh.htm](http://www.avirtuallondon.com/pbh.htm); s/d US\$50/60; ☎) This hotel is situated on a lovely yellow-sand beach about 0.5 miles south of town. You'll find 80 rooms with kitchenettes here, although booking one

can be hard during the school year because most are rented out to medical students.

**Picard Beach Eco-Cottages** (☎ 445-5131; [www.avirtuallondon.com/picard.htm](http://www.avirtuallondon.com/picard.htm); cottages from US\$120; ☎ ☎) This place does a lot of neat things, such as using as little outdoor lighting as possible so as not to upset nesting turtles or stargazers; inviting guests to eat fresh fruit from the trees on property; and running sailboat-only whale-watching (opposite) and dive trips. But at the time of research, guests wouldn't know any of this unless they asked. Set no more than a few steps from the beach, the spacious cottages all have outdoor kitchens and porches that just beg for long days of lounging.

### Eating

**Purple Turtle Beach Club Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 445-5296; Michael Douglas Blvd; mains EC\$10-20; ☒ lunch & dinner) This Portsmouth institution is a favorite end-of-day drinking spot for locals and boaters alike.

**Big Papas Restaurant** (☎ 445-6444; [bigpapas@hotmail.com](mailto:bigpapas@hotmail.com); Michael Douglas Blvd; mains EC\$18-30; ☒ lunch & dinner) In the heart of Portsmouth Lagoon north of the town center, this Jamaican food place is run by the friendly, and yes, big Aldrin Burnette with his wife Gloria. Try the super spicy jerk chicken or Indian curries with fish or chicken.

**Le Flambeau** (mains EC\$25-40; ☒ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Located at Picard Beach Eco-Cottages, this breezy beachside restaurant has a broad selection of Caribbean dishes and food from home. The burgers, although not quite a local specialty, are extremely good. It also has a nice choice of vegetarian plates and moderately priced fish and meat dinners.

**Blue Bay Restaurant** (☎ 445-4985; [bluebayrestaurant@cwdom.dm](mailto:bluebayrestaurant@cwdom.dm); mains EC\$35-60; ☒ dinner) Word on the street is that this is the tastiest place in town. The French chef makes the usual array of fish and chicken dishes but the creamy seafood pasta is a must-try. Don't trust first impressions – follow the signs from the street and in a few steps the alley leads to this hip waterside eatery.

### Getting There & Away

From Roseau, bus service to Portsmouth (EC\$8.50, one hour) leaves from the south-east side of the Roseau River near the public market. In Portsmouth, the town square, on Bay Rd, is the place to catch a minibus to other parts of the island. The road across from the

square eventually leads to the airport – the drive takes about one hour.

## PORTSMOUTH TO PAGUA BAY

The route that cuts across the northern neck of the island from Portsmouth to the east coast is a stunning drive through mountainous jungle. Near the village of Bense, look out for signs for the hiking trail to **Chaudiere Pool**. It's a 45-minute hike each way, and the scenery and the deep swimming hole at the end are well worth it.

## Borne

Although Borne is useful navigation point more than a sight itself, it does have some places worth checking out.

The French-born Marie Frederick can turn something as simple as basil pasta into a feat of gourmet cooking at the **Indigo Art Gallery** (☎ 445-3486; www.indigo.wetpaint.com; Borne; mains US\$20-50; ☺ lunch & dinner), which she runs with her husband Clem. This one-table tree house–like restaurant also sells Marie's art and some of Clem's handicrafts. There's a tree house cottage (room from EC\$300) on site, but it's best to visit before booking. It's gorgeous but very rustic – there's no electricity and the outhouse can be hard to find in the dark. Bring a flashlight.

**Brandy Manor** (☎ 445-3619; Borne; r from US\$65) is an oasis of order in the thick forest along Brandy River. There's one bungalow that stands alone and three simple rooms in the main house. There's no hot water except for solar shower bags. Guest can go swimming in the river and the owner can arrange rainforest horseback riding (US\$45 to US\$75). The restaurant and bar (mains EC\$20 to EC\$55; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) is by reservation only for non-guests.

## Calibishie

The first sizable town you will reach on the east coast, Calibishie is an attractive fishing village with a handful of friendly bars and restaurants, a craft store and a car-rental agency.

There are some good picnic beaches in the area. **Hell's Gate Beach**, half a mile west of town, looks out onto two striking rock columns protruding from the sea – the columns are collectively known as Devil's Rock. However, this beach is unsuitable for swimming. Further west is **Batibou Bay**, a scenic beach that's good for swimming and was

featured in a certain pirate-movie trilogy starring Johnny Depp.

Calibishie makes a good pit stop for lunch or an overnight stay, particularly if you're catching a morning flight from nearby Melville Hall Airport.

The five self-contained apartments at **Dominica's Sea View Apartment** (☎ 445-8537; www.dominicasseaviewapartments.com; apt US\$85-95; ☺) are on top of a hill overlooking Calibishie village – the view is stellar. All of the newly-constructed units have kitchens and dining rooms. A rental car to get food and mount the hill is highly recommended. Check in at Calibishie Lodges.

**Sea Cliff Cottages** (☎ 445-8998; www.dominica-cottages.com; cottages US\$90-120, house per week US\$720; ☺) are made up of three cottages and one fully-equipped house (2-week minimum in high season) are on a cliff that overlooks Hodges Beach. It's not the place to meet people or party, but for big groups on a budget or couples who want to 'connect,' it's a solid choice.

The scenic, extremely well-run **Calibishie Lodges** (☎ 445-8537; www.calibishie-lodges.com; apt US\$105-160; ☺ ☑ ☒) has six apartments that sleep up to four people. The apartments have good-sized living areas, bright and modern furnishings, and come with balconies.

The excellent **Bamboo Restaurant** (mains EC\$30-65; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) here offers an inventive Creole menu, including dishes such as coconut crayfish and lobster with banana cake.

## CARIB TERRITORY

The 3700-acre Carib Territory, which begins around the village of Bataka and continues south for 7.5 miles, is home to most of Dominica's 2200 Caribs – properly known as Kalinago. It's a rural area with cultivated bananas, breadfruit trees and wild heliconia growing along the roadside. Many of the houses are traditional wooden structures on log stilts, but there are also simple cement

### TWIST MY ARM: THE PLACES THE AUTHORS WANTED TO KEEP SECRET

The tree house cottage at Indigo Art Gallery (left) is a really special place. There's only one room, though, and it's definitely not for everyone.

## FORWARD EVER, BACKWARD NEVER

Clem Frederick, a man who works architectural miracles with stone and wood at Indigo Art Gallery (opposite) and other lodgings in the Borne area, isn't convinced that tourism is a good thing for Dominica. The deep-voiced, dreadlocked local shared his thoughts.

**I wanted to talk to you about the cool stuff here in Dominica.**

Well, what I suspect – when people are talking about 'cool stuff,' nobody really wants the cool stuff, you know.

**How do you mean?**

I mean, nobody wants cool stuff. You know why I say that? Because when a big man comes to nature island, his plan will never be to buy a mountain and just leave it like that. So, there's nothing cool concerning what people are speaking about.

**But, I'd like to think that there are some smart people who realize that keeping it like it is going to bring more tourists.**

No, no. Nobody will be smart. They'll say 'forward ever, backward never.' They're just getting more foolish, because nobody really wants to live the local life, they're just talking about it.

**Well, how about places like this, or places in Roseau Valley? They're beautiful and they bring tourists, they bring money to the local economy, but they're set in nature.**

Yes, there are some, there will always be some. But some of the little places they are little because they just hope to be bigger. It's like if you go in the bush, and you see the Rasta man, and ask him if he likes the life, he'll say yes. But soon you'll see him again living in America (laughs). That's the way it is, man.

homes and, in the poorer areas, shanties made of corrugated tin and tar paper.

The main attraction here is **Kalinago Barana Aute** (Carib Cultural Village by the Sea; ☎ 445-7979; [www.kalinagobaranaaute.com](http://www.kalinagobaranaaute.com); Old Coast Rd, Crayfish River; site pass & tour EC\$26; 🕒 9am-5pm) a traditional village showcasing a herbal medicine garden, canoe-building, arts and crafts.

The main east-coast road runs right through the Carib Territory. Along the road are several stands where you can stop and buy intricately woven Carib baskets and handicrafts.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Islet View Restaurant** (New Rd, Castle Bruce; mains EC\$10-23; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The big outdoor porch overlooks Castle Bruce Beach and is a good place to take a break from a day at the beach or the long drive up the east coast. The thatched walls and big selection of hand-labeled bush rums behind the bar make the restaurant, with only one or two meals on the menu, look more like a friendly witch doctor's house than a roadside eatery.

**Gchette Cottages** (☎ 446-0700; [www.gchette.com](http://www.gchette.com); Castle Bruce; s/d US\$60/70) The five free-standing cottages here all have kitchens and there's a river and fresh spring on the property. The friendly owner runs the Stewpot Restaurant (mains US\$15 to US\$40; open 11am

to 10pm) right outside the hotel grounds. The cottages are inland from Castle Bruce Beach on the way to the Emerald Pool.

**Beau Rive Hotel** (☎ 445-8992; [www.beaurive.com](http://www.beaurive.com); s/d US\$137/180; 🚗 🚗) Set in tropical gardens overlooking Wakaman Point, this elegant hotel lies one mile north of Castle Bruce. It is run by Briton Mark Steele, who has made many small touches with the comfort of guests in mind – there are walking sticks and umbrellas on either side of the front entrance and an all-white room decor shows that the place is truly spotless. The airy restaurant serves a set meat-free dinner (EC\$83) as well as fish or chicken.

## Getting There & Away

Buses heading to Canefield (EC\$2) and the Carib Territory (EC\$9.50) leave from the southeast side of the Roseau River near the public market in Roseau.

## EMERALD POOL

The island's most accessible waterfall, Emerald Pool takes its name from its lush green setting and clear water. At the base of a gentle 40ft waterfall, the pool is deep enough for a dip but the water can be on the cool side.

The 0.3-mile path to get here winds through a rainforest of massive ferns and tall trees. On the way back there are two viewpoints – one

is a panorama of the Atlantic Coast and the other is a great view of Morne Trois Pitons, Dominica's second-highest mountain. The path can get a bit slippery in places and sandals aren't advised, especially after rain.

Emerald Pool is generally serene except on cruise-ship days, when one packed minivan after another pulls up to the site – past 3pm is the best time to avoid the crowds.

The pool is on the road that runs between Canefield and Castle Bruce; it's an enjoyable winding drive with thick jungle vegetation, mountain views and lots of beep-as-you-go hairpin turns. It's about a 30-minute drive from Canefield and the trailhead is well-marked.

## TRAFALGAR FALLS

On the western edge of Morne Trois Pitons National Park, Trafalgar Falls are spectacular and accessible via a steep but smooth uphill walk. The 0.4-mile walk to the falls begins at Papillote Wilderness Retreat, about 1 mile east of the village of Trafalgar.

Start the walk at the bottom of the inn's driveway, where you'll find a cement track leading east. Follow the track until you reach a little snack bar; take the footpath that leads downhill from there and in a couple of minutes you'll reach a viewing platform with a clear view of the falls.

There are two separate waterfalls. Water from the upper falls crosses the Titou Gorge before plunging down the sheer 200ft rock face that fronts the viewing platform. At the base of the waterfall are hot sulfur springs. Look for yellow streaks on the rocks to find a good soaking spot.

The lower falls flow from the Trois Pitons River in the Boiling Lake area. This waterfall, gentler and broader than the upper falls, has a deep and wide pool at its base made for swimming.

Guys hang out at the start of the trail, touting as guides. Getting to the viewing platform is straightforward and doesn't require a guide, so if you plan to go only that far, save yourself the fee (roughly EC\$20).

Going beyond the platform is trickier – crossing a river is the only way to get to the base of the falls. Depending on how sure-footed you are, a guide could be helpful in climbing down the boulders to the lower pool or clambering over to the hot springs.

Guide or not, be careful because the moss-covered rocks are as slippery as ice. This is a serious river, and during rainy spells it may be too high to cross. Flash floods from heavy rains in the mountains are a real danger – if you're in the river and the waters start to rise, get out immediately, preferably on the side closest to home.

Cocoa Cottages runs an awesome **canyoning trip** (☎ 448-0412; [www.cococottages.com](http://www.cococottages.com); US\$150), a half-day of rappelling down waterfalls and floating in pools at the bottom of deep canyon walls. As Richard, the tour leader, puts it, 'A lot of people come to Dominica to look at waterfalls, but with canyoning you get to taste them, feel them, be in them.'

## Sleeping & Eating

**our pick** **Papillote Wilderness Retreat** (☎ 448-2287; [www.papillote.dm](http://www.papillote.dm); s/d US\$100/115, with breakfast & dinner per person extra US\$40; ☑) The American owner Anne Baptiste has planted the grounds with nearly 100 types of tropical flowers and trees. Actually, because of hurricanes, she says she's built this place twice in the course of her 30 years here. The rooms are spacious and, like the outside, feel luxurious with just a few simple touches – comfortable beds, stylish bathrooms, handmade quilts. Try to get a room near one of the three hot springs here. Papillote serves exemplary food, with lunch-time salads and hot Creole dishes (US\$10 to US\$15). Dinner (US\$30) is by reservation and it's a delicious full-course meal. Anne usually dines in the evening here – be sure to say hi. The gift shop sells copies of Anne's *The Roseau Valley Guide* (US\$3), a good book for travelers who base themselves in the area.

**Cocoa Cottages** (☎ 448-0412; [www.cococottages.com](http://www.cococottages.com); r from US\$104, with breakfast & dinner per couple extra US\$70) Run the by the affable Iris and Richard, who've created a very casual environment good for meeting interesting people from around the world at the communal dining tables at breakfast and dinner. The dinners are a bit pricey (US\$30) considering that they're a serve-yourself family-style affair, but they are delicious. The living room has a drum kit, acoustic guitar, couches, books and games. Try to get the honeymoon suite – it's private and quiet.

## Getting There & Away

Buses go from Roseau to the village of Trafalgar (EC\$2.75, 30 to 40 minutes); from there it's no more than half a mile to either

## BEST ITUNES DOWNLOAD FOR DOMINICA

Check out the *Dominica Tenement Yard* album. The group's leader, Trevy Felix of Boom Shaka fame, returned to his native Dominica and sought out roots reggae musicians who were living in the countryside. It's kind of like *The Buena Vista Social Club*, Dominica-style.

hotel. Taxis from Canefield Airport to either hotel cost EC\$50.

To get to Trafalgar by car from Roseau, take King George V St north from the town center. After crossing a small bridge make an immediate left on what might feel like a small road and follow its serpentine twists and turns. Veer to the right at the first fork in the road (left will get you to the entrance of Morne Trois Pitons National Park) and look for the hotel signs.

## MORNE TROIS PITONS NATIONAL PARK

This national park and Unesco World Heritage site in the southern half of the island encompasses 17,000 acres of Dominica's mountainous volcanic interior.

Most of the park is primordial rainforest, varying from jungles thick with tall, pillarlike *gommier* trees to the stunted cloud-forest cover on the upper slopes of Morne Trois Pitons (4550ft), Dominica's second-highest mountain. The park has many of the island's top wilderness sites, including Boiling Lake, Boeri Lake, Freshwater Lake and Middleham Falls. Hikes to all four start at Laudat (elevation 1970ft), a small hamlet with fine mountain views.

See p593 for a description of Emerald Pool, located at the northernmost tip of the park.

All of the hikes below can be done as a (long) day trip from Roseau. Pretty much all hotels and guest houses can hook visitors up with a guide (per person US\$40 to US\$60), if one doesn't find you first.

## Sights & Activities

### HIKING

#### Boiling Lake

Dominica's pre-eminent trek, and one of the hardest, is the day-long hike to Boiling Lake, the world's second-largest actively boiling lake (the largest is in New Zealand). Geologists believe the 207ft-wide lake is a flooded fumarole – a crack in the earth that allows hot gases to vent from the molten lava below. The eerie-looking lake sits inside a deep basin, its grayish waters veiled in steam, its center emitting bubbly burps. The lake mysteriously

stops boiling every once in a while, but after some short breaks in 1998 and again in 2005, it's churning away just fine.

En route to the lake, the hike passes through the aptly named Valley of Desolation, a former rainforest destroyed by a volcanic eruption in 1880. The hike follows narrow ridges, snakes up and down mountains and runs along hot streams. Wear sturdy walking shoes and expect to get wet and muddy.

The strenuous 6-mile hike to the lake begins at Titou Gorge and requires a guide. Most of the guides stop on the way back at a 'secret' bathing hole.

#### Middleham Falls

The trail to **Middleham Falls**, one of Dominica's highest waterfalls, takes you on an interesting rainforest walk. More than 60 species of tree, including the tall buttressed chataignier, form a leafy canopy that inhibits undergrowth and keeps the forest floor relatively clear.

There are usually guides available at the trailhead who charge about EC\$60 to take you to the falls and the hike takes about 1¼ hours each way. If you don't use a guide, carry a compass or GPS unit and be careful not to stray off the main trail. It's all too easy to lose your bearings here.

#### Other Trails

The walk to **Freshwater Lake**, Dominica's largest lake, is a straightforward hike that skirts the southern flank of Morne Macaque. As the 2.5-mile trail up to the lake is along a well-established 4WD track, this hike doesn't require a guide. It's a relatively gradual walk and takes about 2½ hours round-trip.

Hikers can continue another 1.25 miles from Freshwater Lake to **Boeri Lake**, a scenic 45-minute walk that passes mountain streams and hot and cold springs. The 130ft-deep Boeri Lake occupies a volcanic crater that's nestled between two of the park's highest mountains.

For a short walk and a dip there's the trail from Laudat to **Titou Gorge**, where a deep pool is warmed by a hot spring.



Hikers should also hire a guide to tackle **Morne Trois Pitons**, the park's tallest peak. It's a rough trail that cuts through patches of sharp saw grass and requires scrambling over steep rocks. The trail begins at Pont Casse, at the north side of the park, and takes about five hours round-trip.

### RAINFOREST TRAM

To get to the entrance of the **Rain Forest Tram Dominica** (☎ 448-8775; [www.rfat.com](http://www.rfat.com); office cnr Old & King George V Sts, Roseau; US\$55) head to Roxy's Mountain Lodge in the village of Laudat and look for the signs. The tram ride takes 45 minutes each direction. On the far side you can take a 20-minute guided tour that includes a walk across a dizzyingly high suspension bridge. For the price it's a bit underwhelming, but a decent introduction to what the rainforest has to offer. You can also buy tickets in Roseau.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Roxy's Mountain Lodge** (☎ 448-4845; s/d US\$55/69) Based in the tiny village of Laudat, Roxy's is the place to stay for serious hikers. The rooms with kitchenettes were under renovation when we were at this friendly, family-run place. There's a TV room, a small bar and a restaurant with good-value lunchtime sandwiches – which staff can pack in a picnic basket for trekkers – and dinner meals.

### Getting There & Away

There's regular but limited bus service. Buses to Laudat (EC\$4.75, 40 minutes) leave from the Roseau police station every other hour from 6:30am; buses return to Roseau from Laudat about 45 minutes later. Taxis from Roseau to Laudat cost EC\$80.

To get to Laudat by car, take King George V St north from Roseau. After crossing the bridge over the Roseau River hang a left and continue up the Roseau Valley for 2.3 miles, at which point the road forks; take the left fork, marked 'Laudat.' The road is narrow and potholed, but it's passable. The trail to Middleham Falls begins on the left 2.5 miles up; the trail to Freshwater and Boeri Lakes begins opposite the shrine, half a mile further.

### GRAND BAY

The road that cuts across the southern tip of Dominica is one of the most pleasant and stress-free drives on the island. The wide (relatively speaking) and gently curving road skirts

the base of Morne Anglais and crosses a few rivers before heading up along the east coast at Grand Bay.

**Zandoli Inn** (☎ 446-3161; [www.zandoli.com](http://www.zandoli.com); Roche Cassée, Stowe; s/d US\$135/145; breakfast & set dinner plan per person US\$45; ☑ ☒) is a charming little place designed to induce a state of Zen, Caribbean-style. There aren't any TVs or radios and guests are asked to use headphones to listen to music. All five of the rooms have private balconies, sea views and solar hot-water showers. Walking paths on the hotel grounds have benches spaced throughout to take a rest on or just watch the little *zandoli* lizards (a sign of good luck) scamper by.

At **Jungle Bay Resort & Spa** (☎ 446-1789; [www.junglebaydominica.com](http://www.junglebaydominica.com); Pointe Mulatre; r from US\$175, full package s/d US\$239/315; ☑ ☒), a sprawling, rustic resort with 35 cottages, the owners made the laudable decision to blend the cottages into the jungle as much as possible. The 'Jungle Adventure Package' includes a daily massage, yoga classes, meals (sans alcoholic beverages) and carte blanche to drop in on any of the activities of the day, which range from rum-shop tours to snorkeling trips to Caribbean cooking classes. Travelers tell us the quality of the massages and food is variable, but the service is great and it's one of the most romantic getaways on the island. Another plus is that the management and staff here go out of their way to give back to the local community.

### SOUTH OF ROSEAU

The coastal road south of Roseau is a 30-minute drive that takes you through a couple of attractive seaside villages and ends at Scotts Head. There is a bus service from the Old Market in Roseau to Soufriere and Scotts Head (EC\$3.50, 30 minutes).

### Soufriere

pop 950

Soufriere has a picturesque old stone **church** on the north side of the village. There are steaming sulfur springs in the hills above town, including one about a mile inland on the road that leads east from the village center.

**Nature Island Dive** (☎ 449-8181; [www.natureislanddive.com](http://www.natureislanddive.com)), based in Soufriere, takes divers to many of the island's best dive spots just minutes away. It also rents out sea kayaks for US\$55 per half-day; paddle around Soufriere Bay, or take an excursion up the coastline

to snorkeling sites that can't be reached by land. If you want to stay on dry land, it rents out mountain bikes and leads half-day guided biking trips (per person US\$65). You can explore old estate trails and the nearby sulfur springs; staff can recommend longer outings for serious bikers.

## Scotts Head

pop 800

On the southernmost tip of Dominica's west coast, Scotts Head is a picturesque fishing village and is the place to go for underwater exploration. It has a gem of a setting along the gently curving shoreline of Soufriere Bay, which is the rim of a sunken volcanic crater. The center of village activity in Scotts Head is the waterfront. It's a lively, welcoming scene, with frequent beach barbecues and dancing in the local bars.

Soufriere Bay is a designated nature reserve, and has some of the island's best dives (see p57 for details). Scotts Head Drop-Off is a shallow coral ledge that drops off abruptly more than 150ft, revealing a wall of huge tube sponges and soft corals. Just west of Scotts Head is the Pinnacle, which starts a few feet below the surface and drops down to a series of walls, arches and caves that are rife with stingrays, snappers, barracudas and parrotfish. Calmer waters more suitable for snorkelers and amateur divers can be found at another undersea mound, the Soufriere Pinnacle, which rises 160ft from the floor of the bay to within 5ft of the surface and offers a wide range of corals and fish.

**Champagne Reef** is where divers and snorkelers go to play in the volcanic bubbles that rise from the sea floor and make the shallow water look like a huge glass of champagne. **Irie Safari** (☎ 440-5085; [iriesafari@cwdom.com](http://iriesafari@cwdom.com); Pointe Michel) rents good snorkeling gear for around US\$12

for the day; the dive center Nature Island Dive (opposite) is based in nearby Soufriere.

# DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Dominica has only about 800 rooms available for visitors, mainly in small, locally run hotels and guesthouses along the west side of the island around Roseau and Morne Trois Pitons National Park, or near Portsmouth. Outside of Roseau, guesthouses and hotels are nearly identical in price and services. At many of the accommodations outside of bigger towns, off-property dining options are nonexistent – make sure you like the food and prices at your lodging's restaurant.

In 2006 Dominica introduced a value-added tax (VAT) of 10% for hotel rooms and 15% for most other items. Nearly all hotels and guest houses add the VAT and a minimum 10% service charge to bills.

See p815 for details on how accommodations price ranges are categorized in this book.

## ACTIVITIES

In response to the growing numbers of cruise-ship passengers, the government of Dominica has instituted user fees for all foreign visitors entering ecotourist sites. These include national parks and other protected areas.

The cost is US\$2 per site, US\$5 for a day pass or US\$10 for a weekly pass, and the proceeds go to conservation efforts and maintenance of the park system. Passes are sold by car-rental agencies, tour operators, cruise-ship personnel and the forestry department, as well as at all of the major sites.

## HIDDEN GEMS

Want more accommodation options? Try these spots.

**Rosalie Forest Eco Lodge** (☎ 616-1887; [www.rosalieforest.com](http://www.rosalieforest.com); Rosalie; dm US\$22, r US\$44/66) Jungle cabins, camping, village home stays and some real environmental cred on the east coast.

**Sister Sea Lodge** (☎ 445-5211; [sangow@cwdom.dm](http://sangow@cwdom.dm); Picard Estate; s/d US\$65/85) A little treasure at the end of leafy Lizard's Trail in Portsmouth.

**Crescent Moon Cabins** (☎ 449-3449; [www.crescentmooncabins.com](http://www.crescentmooncabins.com); Riviere la Croix; r US\$156) People rave about this back-to-nature, remote place run by a Montessori teacher and professional chef.

**Silks** (☎ 445-8846; [www.silks-hotel.com](http://www.silks-hotel.com); Marigot; d US\$200) A boutique hotel in a 17th-century-style mansion where 'worry' is a dirty word.

## Beaches & Swimming

While Dominica doesn't have the sort of gorgeous strands that make it onto brochure covers, it's not without beaches. On the calmer and more popular west coast, they're predominantly gray-sand beaches.

The east coast has largely open seas with high surf and turbulent water conditions. There are a few pockets of golden sands just south of Calibishie that are sometimes calm enough for swimming and snorkeling, and there are a couple of roadside brown-sand beaches a bit further south.

## Cycling

Nature Island Dive in Soufriere (p596) rents mountain bikes and leads guided trips.

## Diving & Snorkeling

Dominica has superb diving. The island's rugged scenery continues under the water, where it forms sheer drop-offs, volcanic arches, pinnacles and caves.

Many of Dominica's top dive sites are in the Soufriere Bay area, a designated marine reserve (p597). Scotts Head Drop-Off, the Pinnacle and the Soufriere Pinnacle are favorite sites in the area. Also popular for snorkelers and beginners is Champagne Reef (p597), a subaquatic hot spring off Pointe Guignard, where crystal bubbles rise from underwater vents.

The north side of the island still has lots of unexplored territory. Popular sites north of Roseau include Castaways Reef, Grande Savane, Rodney's Rock, Toucari Bay and the wrecks of a barge and tugboat off Canefield.

There are dive shops in Rouseau (p587), Soufriere (p596), Scotts Head (p597), the Layou River area (p590) and Portsmouth (p590); see the appropriate section for listings. The going rate is about US\$60 for a one-tank dive or a night dive and US\$95 for a two-tank dive. Many dive centers offer be-

ginners a resort course with an ocean dive for US\$125. A number of the shops offer full PADI open water certification courses for around US\$400.

In addition, most of the hotels with on-site dive outfits have one-week packages that include accommodations and multiple dives.

All the dive shops offer snorkeling tours or will take snorkelers out with divers. If you're tagging along with divers, make sure they're doing a shallow dive – staring down at a wreck 50ft under water isn't terribly interesting from the surface.

## Hiking

Dominica has some excellent hiking. Short walks lead to Emerald Pool (p593) and Trafalgar Falls (p594), two of the island's most visited sights. Cabrits National Park (p591) has a couple of short hikes. In the Northern Forest Reserve (p590), there's an easy hike through a parrot reserve and a rugged trail to the top of the island's highest mountain. The Morne Trois Pitons National Park (p595) offers serious treks into the wilderness, ranging from jaunts through verdant jungles to an all-day trek across a steaming volcanic valley that ends at a boiling lake.

The short hikes to the more popular destinations can generally be done on your own, but most wilderness treks require a guide who's familiar with the route.

Dominica's Forestry Division publishes brochures on many of the trails; each can be purchased for EC\$1 or so at the forestry office in Roseau's botanical gardens (p585). There is a free Acrobat-format hiking guide on [www.discoverdominica.com](http://www.discoverdominica.com), the tourism office website.

## Kayaking

You can rent sea kayaks in Soufriere; see p596 for details.

### PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers** The *Chronicle* is the national newspaper.
- **Radio** Government-owned DBS radio station broadcasts on 88.1FM and 595AM.
- **Video Systems** NTSC is used on the island.
- **Electricity** 220/240V, 50 cycles. Outlets use a square three-prong plug; bring an adapter.
- **Weights & Measures** Dominica uses the imperial system.

## Whale-Watching

Operators in Portsmouth (p590) and Castle Comfort (p587) run whale-watching tours nearly every day (US\$60) from October to August, but sightings are most common between November and March.

## BOOKS

*The Dominica Story – A History of the Island*, by Lennox Honychurch, the island's pre-eminent historian, is a must-read for those who really want to understand what makes Dominica what it is today. *In Search of Eden: Essays on Dominican History*, by Irving Andre and Gabriel Christian, provides a good introduction to Dominica's natural history.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses open from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday with a lunch break from 1pm to 2pm. Banking hours are from 8am to 2pm Mondays to Thursdays, and 8am to 5pm on Fridays. On Saturdays, banks are closed but most shops open from 8am to 1pm.

## CHILDREN

For the most part, Dominica is a good place to travel with children. The medical care is good and the food is safe. Most adults have no problems with the tap water but young stomachs may be safer with bottled water, at least at first. Speaking of stomachs, being in the backseat on long drives on twisty mountain roads can be nauseating for the wee ones, and we'd suggest keeping the drives short.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The locals tend to drive much faster than tourists on the twisty, pot-holed roads and driving can be intense, though accidents are relatively rare.

Travelers have told us they've felt mildly taken advantage of with the confusing room tax and service charge situation. Some hotels include all taxes in their published rates, some include 10% VAT, while others include a 10% service charge and tack the VAT on afterwards. The best thing to do is ask before booking what the bill will look like with all taxes and service charges included.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

**Belgium** (☎ 448-3012; 20 Hanover St, Roseau)  
**China** (☎ 449-1385; dm.chineseembassy.org; Roseau)

**UK** (☎ 448-7655; c/o Courts Dominica Ltd, Castle Comfort)  
**Venezuela** (☎ 448-3348; 20 Bath Rd, Roseau)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Carnival** Dominica's official celebrations are held on the two days prior to Ash Wednesday, but there are pre-Carnival events running from January. These include weekly competitions and parades: in the two weeks prior to Lent there are calypso competitions, a Carnival Queen contest, jump-ups and a costume parade.

**Independence Day/Reunion** The week leading up to Independence Day (November 3), or Creole Day, is packed with events. The vibrant celebration of local heritage includes parades, school kids in traditional outfits and special Creole menus. Live music is performed in restaurants, banks and grocery stores as well as on sidewalks all around Roseau. At major milestones (the 30th anniversary of independence is in 2008), Dominicans from all over the world return home.

**World Creole Music Festival** Music continues through the night at this music festival, usually held on the last weekend of October in Roseau. Big-name acts from the Caribbean rock on with African *soukous* (dance music), Louisiana zydeco and a wide variety of local bands and dance groups.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

It's a socially conservative country so some discretion is advised, but, hoteliers don't seem to care if two people of the same sex share a bed. Evangelical groups staged small protests in 2006 asking the government to ban gay cruise ships from stopping in Roseau, but the issue now seems to have gone away.

## HOLIDAYS

Public holidays on Dominica:

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Carnival Monday & Tuesday** Two days preceding Ash Wednesday

**Good Friday** Late March/early April

**Easter Monday** Late March/early April

**May Day** May 1

**Whit Monday** Eighth Monday after Easter

**August Monday** First Monday in August

**Independence Day/Creole Day** November 3

**Community Service Day** November 4

**Christmas Day** December 25

**Boxing Day** December 26

## INTERNET ACCESS

A few restaurants and hotels offer wi-fi, but hard-wired internet hookups are still much more prevalent. Internet cafés are only found

in Roseau and Portsmouth, and usually charge EC\$3 per half-hour.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Discover Dominica** ([www.discoverdominica.com](http://www.discoverdominica.com)) Run by the government tourism bureau, it's a good site for information on what to see and do in Dominica, and where to stay.

**Dominica Academy of Arts & Sciences** ([www.da-aca.demy.org](http://www.da-aca.demy.org)) Not easy to navigate but there's a load of information on Dominica's history and birdlife once you find it.

**Lennox Honychurch** ([www.lennoxhonychurch.com](http://www.lennoxhonychurch.com)) The place to go for Dominica history.

## MAPS

Free maps are available at most hotels and guesthouses, car-rental agencies and at the tourist office in Roseau.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

The Princess Margaret Hospital (with a hyperbaric chamber for decompression sickness) in Roseau, Marigot Hospital and the Portsmouth Hospital are the three main medical facilities. Intensive care units are available at Princess Margaret and Portsmouth hospitals. Several specialists and general practitioners operate private clinics.

## MONEY

Dominica uses the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$). At the time of writing, the bank exchange rate for US\$1 was EC\$2.68 for traveler's checks, EC\$2.67 for cash. US dollars are widely accepted by shops, restaurants and taxi drivers, usually at an exchange rate of EC\$2.60.

Most hotels, car-rental agencies, dive shops, tour operators and top-end restaurants accept MasterCard, Visa and, less often, American Express credit cards.

## POST

The main post office is in Roseau; there are small post offices in larger villages. The use of the word 'Commonwealth of Dominica' on mail is important to prevent mail being sent to the Dominican Republic by mistake.

## TELEPHONE

Dominica's country code is ☎ 767. To call from North America, dial ☎ 1-767 + the seven-digit local number. Elsewhere, dial

your country's international access code, + ☎ 767 + the local number. Within Dominica you just need to dial the local number. We've included only the seven-digit local number in Dominica listings in this chapter.

For directory information dial ☎ 118; for international calls dial ☎ 0.

Dominica has coin and (more commonly) card phones. You can buy phone cards at telecommunications offices and convenience stores.

To see whether you can use your phone on the island's GSM networks, check with your cell service provider before you leave to see if it has a roaming agreement.

SIM cards for unlocked cell phones are available from Digicel at a number of convenience stores throughout Dominica. Rates are around EC\$0.50 for outgoing calls. Incoming calls are free.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

There's a **tourist information booth** (☎ 6:15-11:30am & 2:15-6pm) at both airports and a **tourist office** (☎ 448-2045; [www.discoverdominica.com](http://www.discoverdominica.com); Roseau; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon, to 4pm Tue-Fri) in Roseau.

## TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Because of the mountainous landscape, most inland accommodations have steep stairs that might be hard to navigate. Some of the bigger hotels in Roseau, Castle Comfort and Portsmouth can make arrangements for disabled travelers.

## VISAS

Only citizens of former Eastern Bloc countries, China, India and Nigeria require visas.

## WOMEN TRAVELERS

Dominicans are for the most part courteous and respectful towards women. Of course, the rules of stranger danger and safety in numbers still apply.

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- **Ambulance** ☎ 999
- **Fire** ☎ 999
- **Police** ☎ 999

## WORK

Foreigners who work here are often professionals who work for the government or own a hotel or restaurant. To legally work in Dominica you need a work permit from the **Ministry of Labour & Immigration** (☎ 448-2401; legalaffairs@cwdom.dm).

# TRANSPORTATION

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Entering Dominica

Most visitors to Dominica must have a valid passport; US citizens see the boxed text, p830. French nationals may visit for up to two weeks with an official Carte d'Indentité. A round-trip or onward ticket is – in principle – required of all visitors to the island.

### Air

There are no direct flights available from Europe or the US into Dominica, so overseas visitors must first get to a gateway island.

Dominica has two airports: **Canefield Airport** (DCF; ☎ 449-1990), just outside Roseau, and **Melville Hall Airport** (DOM; ☎ 445-7101; melvillehallairport@yahoo.com), on the secluded northeast side of the island. Both airports are lacking in facilities. Each has snack bar that may or may not be open. Immigration procedures tend to be slow.

On LIAT's printed schedule, the letters C and M after the departure time indicate which airport is being used. There's a **tourist information booth** (🕒 6:15-11:30am & 2:15-6pm) at both airports, as well as a handful of car-rental firms.

The following airlines fly into and out of Dominica from within the Caribbean:

**American Eagle** (☎ 448-0628; www.aa.com) San Juan  
**LIAT** (☎ 448-2421; www.liat.com; King George V St, Roseau) San Juan, Antigua, Barbados, St Lucia

### Sea

Roseau is a regular stop on the cruise ship circuit. There are ferries between Dominica and the nearby islands of St Lucia, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Portsmouth's Rupert Bay is the main sailboat and yacht mooring.

### CRUISE SHIP

There are three cruise-ship docks in Dominica – one at Roseau, one just north of Roseau and one at Portsmouth – but the Roseau dock is far and away the most commonly used.

### FERRY

There are ferries to Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Lucia, all departing from Roseau.

**L'Express des Iles** (☎ 448-2181; www.express-des-iles.com; c/o Whitchurch Travel, Roseau) connects Dominica with both Pointe-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe (€67/100 one way/return, 2 hours, once daily Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday) and Fort-de-France in Martinique (€67/100 one way/return, 2 hours, once daily Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday) on modern catamarans. Both services do return trips on the same days. There's also a service to Castries in St Lucia (€67/100 one way/return, once daily Wednesday, Friday and Sunday).

These schedules change frequently; it's important to confirm departure times a couple of days in advance to avoid getting stranded on the island.

There are discounts of 50% for children aged under two; 10% for students and passengers under 12 years old; and 5% for passengers younger than 26 or older than 60.

**Brudey Frères** (☎ in Guadeloupe 590-590-90-04-48; www.brudey-freres.fr) in high season has a daily (except Friday) service at 9:30am between Dominica and Guadeloupe for €55/80 one way/round-trip.

The company has daily crossings, except Monday, to Fort de France, Martinique (one-way/round-trip €55/80).

Brudey also offers discounts for youths and elders. Schedules change, so check current timetables.

## GETTING AROUND

### Bus

There are buses between Roseau and Scotts Head, and between Roseau and Portsmouth, although the further north you go past Canefield the less frequent they become. Generally, they run from 6am to 6pm or a little later Monday to Friday, and until 2pm on Saturday. There aren't any services on Sunday. It's a cheap way to go, but is only advised for those with lots of time to spare.

### Car

#### DRIVER'S LICENSE

A local driver's license (US\$12) is required, which can be picked up from immigration at either airport or at car-rental agencies any day of the week. Visiting drivers must be between the ages of 25 and 65, have a valid driver's license and at least two years of driving experience.

## RENTAL

**Avis** (☎ 448-2481) has daily rates beginning at US\$48, while **Budget** (☎ 449-2080) has rates beginning around US\$45. Both Avis and Budget car rentals are at Canefield Airport, but there are also car-rental agencies at Melville Hall Airport and elsewhere on the island. Those in Roseau include **Courtesy Car Rental** (☎ 448-7763; Goodwill Rd) and **Garraway Rent-A-Car** (☎ 448-2891). Also try **Valley Rent-A-Car** (☎ in Roseau 448-3233, in Portsmouth 445-5252).

Note that although most car rentals include unlimited mileage, a few local companies cap the number of free miles before a surcharge is added, so be sure to inquire in advance.

In addition to rental fees, most companies charge US\$10 to US\$15 a day for an optional collision damage waiver (CDW), though even with the CDW you may still be responsible for the first US\$800 or so in damages. Some also charge around US\$3 a day for additional drivers and an airport drop-off fee of US\$20, even if that's where you picked up the car. A 15% VAT charge is also applied to the total bill.

A 4WD is recommended for exploring in the mountains – even some of the main roads at the higher altitudes are in bad condition. Most car-rental places offer 4WD vehicles starting at US\$55 per day.

## ROAD CONDITIONS

Road signs mark most towns and villages, and major intersections are clearly signposted. Very few roads have dividing lines and the first few days of driving it might feel like a head-on collision is always imminent.

Be careful of deep rain gutters that run along the side of many roads – a slip into one could easily bring any car to a grinding halt.

## ROAD RULES

Dominicans drive on the left-hand side of the road. There are gas stations in larger towns around the island, including Canefield, Portsmouth and Marigot. The speed limit in Roseau and other towns is 20mph.

Honk the horn often around the blind curves. If causing a backup, the polite thing to do is pull over to the side of the road whenever it's safe to let traffic pass.

## Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking, alone or in a group, is always a risky proposition and is not advised. However, picking up hitchhikers, especially if there is only one of them and two or more of you, is a great way to meet locals and pick up good insider tips. Locals of either sex and of all ages hitchhike here.

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