

traveler

# Jungle Living

by Abbie Kozolchyk

Spa treatments preserve the local ecology while gourmet meals support the land. At this Caribbean retreat, indulgence is an earth-saving act



## ONE WITH NATURE

*Footpaths and stone staircases lead the way up to the raised hardwood cottages at Jungle Bay.*

**GETTING THERE** Fly any number of major airlines to San Juan, Puerto Rico, and catch a connecting two-hour flight on Caribbean Star ([flycaribbeanstar.com](http://flycaribbeanstar.com)) to Dominica's Melville Hall Airport. A valid passport is required for entry.

**RATES** from \$153 per person, per night, based on double occupancy; spa treatments from \$45.

**ADDITIONAL INFO** Call 767-446-1789 or visit [junglebaydominica.com](http://junglebaydominica.com).

*There are two things* you'll never die of in Dominica: thirst and hunger. Or so goes the local saying, and one look reveals why. The least touristy of the Caribbean's Windward Islands, Dominica, located between Guadeloupe and Martinique, is blanketed in waterfalls, rivers, lakes, and fruit-bearing trees of Edenic proportions (the short list: banana, coconut, guava, mango, and papaya). But food and water aren't the only sustaining forces there. Misty, jagged peaks, a deserted coastline, and a perfumery's worth of tropical flowers provide a natural feast for the senses. A typical hotelier might deem it the perfect spot for a landscaped, acre-gulping resort. But not Sam Raphael, founder of Jungle Bay Resort & Spa. His concept—a grown-up's tree-house compound perched on stilts—is decidedly atypical, and it's something no eco-conscious traveler should miss.

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Though it only opened in March 2005, the resort's history dates back to 1972, when Raphael took a fifth-grade field trip to the famously righteous Cinnamon Bay Campground on St. John. There, between fallen-wood bonfires (never chopped!) and hordes of protected species, he was quickly sold on conservationism. Jungle Bay opened 33 years later, and its policies read like a primer on ecotourism: minimal land clearing, biodegradable everything, interpretive nature walks, and a local labor force retrained in the wake of the banana industry collapse.

Even the onsite spa embodies the resort's indulgent yet p.c. ethos. The spare, cliffside treatment studios overlook nothing but ocean and come with a built-in soundtrack of pounding waves, jostling stones, and exceptionally vocal birds, nearly rendering the relaxing treatments redundant. That is, until your therapist gets going on the signature coconut-oil massage.

Equally memorable are the staff guides, who take hospitality to new heights. En route to Victoria Falls, for example, if you hesitate to scale the boulders that stand between you and the hike's grand finale, you'll get a lightning-fast hoist by the wispy guide known as Brother. When you thank him, he'll tell you that he routinely carries his 200-something-pound mother to the doctor, and that you, by comparison, are a veritable sylph.

Brother might be singing a different tune after you've had a few meals at the restaurant. Chef Joanne Hilaire gets ingredients from local organic farms for menu items like curry roti wraps, coconut-crust plantains, and carrot-ginger cake. She's happy to oblige guests' frequent requests for recipes and cooking tips. Then again, she's also duty-bound: Heaven forbid a Dominican ever let you go hungry. +

*Contributing editor* **ABBIE KOZOLCHYK** covers spas, travel, and beauty for **Body+Soul**. She lives in New York City with her husband.

## GREEN ALERT

Whether you're in armchair travel mode or desperately seeking ideas for your next trip, a recent release from Lonely Planet may be just the ticket. Somewhere between a guidebook and a literary anthology, *Code Green: Experiences of a Lifetime* features accounts of some of the world's best sustainable travel experiences, stunning photography, pragmatic advice, and sidebar after sidebar on the various aspects of environmentally and socially conscious travel. Within its recycled, soy-inked pages you'll find numerous getaways, from tented retreats on the Bahamas' Exuma islands to Ecuador's Kapawi Ecologde in the Amazon rain forest.



*Volcanic stone surrounds the ocean-view pool.*



*Treetop guest rooms feel open, yet intimate.*



*Dominica's rocky coast is visible from the hotel.*