

# Dominica

## Hot and Cold Running Adventure

Text and Photos by Dale Sanders

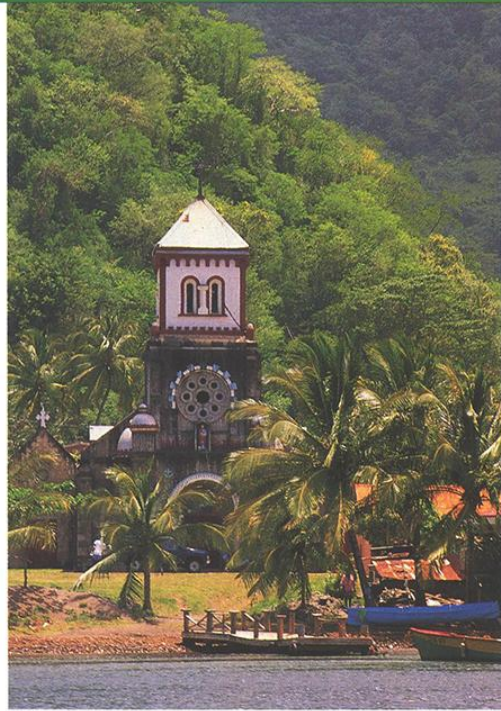
**F**rom the air, it seems impossible that Dominica's lofty volcanic terrain could harbor a landing strip. However as the plane banks steeply, a strip of asphalt materializes through a carpet of tropical foliage. Dominica (pronounced "dom in ee ka"), the southernmost of the Leeward Islands, lies between Guadeloupe to the north and Martinique to the south. Rich volcanic soil coupled with an annual rainfall exceeding 200 inches combine to make Dominica a tropical greenhouse. At Melville Hall Airport, my first impression is of green, green and more shades of green stippled with the reds, yellows and pinks of exotic flowers. It's easy to see how Dominica flaunts nicknames such as "Nature Island of the Caribbean" or "The Water Island."

From the airport we follow winding mountain roads etched along hillsides to reach Castaways Beach Hotel. This centrally-located dive resort perched on an ocean-view hillside is enveloped by a verdant canopy. Castaways dives take on a truly virgin elegance, viewing untouched marine life in the 90- to 110-foot range on morning dives, and 60 to 80 feet on afternoon dives.

Located four miles north of Castaways, Lauro Reef is one of these notable deeper dives. This submerged volcanic plateau riddled with small caves, creates an ideal home for pods of Caribbean spider crabs. As divers traverse the mini-walls, spiraling whip coral float motionlessly in the clear water. Another exceptional morning dive site is Whale  
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If **Dale Sanders** ever slows down long enough, he intends to complete his manuscript, *Shipwrecks of the Florida Gulf Coast*. During the past 20 years while he has logged over 3,000 dives around the world, the list of Florida shipwrecks has only grown longer. A glance at his Dominica story on page 59 hints at what keeps him from the computer.



Far Left: Vast numbers of fluorescent vase sponges harbor crinoids at Maggie's Point.



Above: Soufriere village is perched on the rim of a sunken volcano.

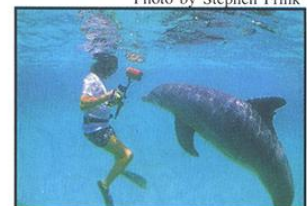
Left: A basket star unfurls its multi-segmented arms at Coral Gardens dive site.

Below: Gushing both hot and cold, Trafalgar Falls are the ultimate in hiker convenience.



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Photo by Stephen Frink



Dale Sanders