

THE GREEN ISSUE

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## The island's economy

Dominica's economy is based on tourism and agriculture. Primary agricultural products include bananas, mangoes, coconuts and cocoa. Industries produce items such as coconut oil, soap and furniture. The island has several restaurants, shops and hotels as well as many local companies that offer services to visitors. The government is trying to develop an offshore financial base and construct an oil refinery to boost the economy.

The official language of the island is English with some islanders speaking French Patois. The island's currency, the East Caribbean (EC) dollar, has an exchange rate of 2.7 for the U.S. dollar. The island is served by American Eagle airlines from Puerto Rico.

## Where to eat

The first time Øesch visited Dominica he was intrigued with bread fruit, one of the local vegetables. "I had never encountered it before," he says. "It's served liked mashed potatoes."

Fresh fruits, vegetables and seafood are plentiful on the island. "You can go to the dock and buy fresh fish right off the boat," Øesch says. "They will fillet it for you there."

The island's capital, Roseau, is scattered with shops and restaurants that serve local cuisine. "The area is similar to a large outdoor food court," Øesch says.

For restaurants, Øesch suggests **The Ocean Terrace Room** at the Anchorage Hotel Whale Watch and Dive Center for its ocean views and the **Pavilion Restaurant** at Jungle Bay Resort where you'll find healthy creations made with local fruits and vegetables.



Victoria Falls is one of 300 waterfalls in Dominica.

Photo courtesy Discover Dominica Authority

# Caribbean paradise

Dominica is home to hot springs, rain forests and waterfalls

by Joan Tupponce

**H**iking the Valley of Desolation on the Caribbean island of Dominica is one of Fred Øesch's favorite pastimes. The picturesque site includes thermal hot springs, hot mineral baths and Boiling Lake, the second largest lake of its kind in the world. "Most of the island is tropical rain forest," says Øesch (pronounced "Esch"). "The island has over 300 waterfalls."

The island's dramatic scenery, in fact, provided a lush backdrop for the second and third movies in Walt Disney Pictures' "Pirates of the Caribbean" series.

Christopher Columbus discovered the island in 1493. Øesch, who owns Øesch Environmental Design in Schuyler, Va., made his discovery about three years ago after hearing about the Dominica from friends.

When he visited the island for the first time, he fell in love with its natural beauty and purchased beachfront property. He is currently upgrading his property, using local bamboo to build furniture and an additional shed.

Beachfront cottages vary in price, with some that sit on the side of the island prone to tropical storms carrying a \$275,000 to \$325,000 price tag. "Comparatively, it's one of the best bargains anywhere in the Caribbean," Øesch says. "An equivalent property on the Virgin Islands would be about four times as much."

The unspoiled environment in Dominica is geared toward ecotourism. "There's a great deal there for a naturalist," Øesch says.

A mountainous retreat between the Windward and Leeward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Dominica is a former British colony that now is an independent nation. It offers

a number of outdoor activities such as sailing and scuba diving in crystal blue waters. Other adventures include whale watching, Jeep safaris and hiking. "One of the things that Dominica is doing is preserving all of its eco sites [waterfalls, hot springs, etc.] but they are not overadvertising," Øesch says.

Some of the trails are rough to maneuver, he adds. "Many are mountainous with rocky terrain. I would encourage you to hire a guide."

Cruise ships regularly dock at the island's port. "The island has character and charm," Øesch says. "It's just an incredibly beautiful island." **VB**

## Where to stay

Dominica is the quintessential island getaway. Resorts offer a variety of services and activities. **Papillote Wilderness Resort** in the rainforest overlooks Papillote Gardens where you'll find rare orchids and lush landscaping. The small, secluded **Zandoli Inn** has scenic views of the ocean, mountains and forest. **Jungle Bay Resort & Spa** has an eye on nature and wellness. Profiled in many magazines, the resort is situated on 55 acres of tropical jungle and includes a spa, hiking trails and rocky beach. **3 Rivers Eco Lodge** uses a micro hydro-electricity system and solar hot water systems. The lodge also offers workshops on renewable energy and ecotourism services.