Dominica

THE NATURE ISLAND

Diving Guide

Nestled in the southern branch of the Caribbean archipelago is Dominica, a diver's dream. Envision pristine reefs, dramatic walls, underwater hot springs, and spectacular marine life. This isle also boasts a diving culture characterized by excellent service, professionalism and environmental awareness.

All dive centres belong to the Dominica Watersports Association and adhere to strict operational and safety procedures. There are three main diving areas on the West Coast, South, Central and Northern side, and all dive shops offer something unique.

One of the first things you might notice on your first dive in Dominica is the healthy and vibrant reefs. This is reflected in an explosion of colour rarely seen on Caribbean reefs and is always one of the lasting memories our divers take home.

Our sponge life is truly spectacular and on every dive, you will see sponges of many colours. Pink azure sponges, red rope sponges, yellow tube sponges, and purple vase sponges are just some of the colours that will catch your eye. Another unusual aspect of diving in Dominica is an incredible number of crinoids all over our reefs. It is common to see multiple crinoids attached to one giant barrel sponge. The variations from yellow to red or gold also contribute to the explosions of colour. One more reason to bring your camera!

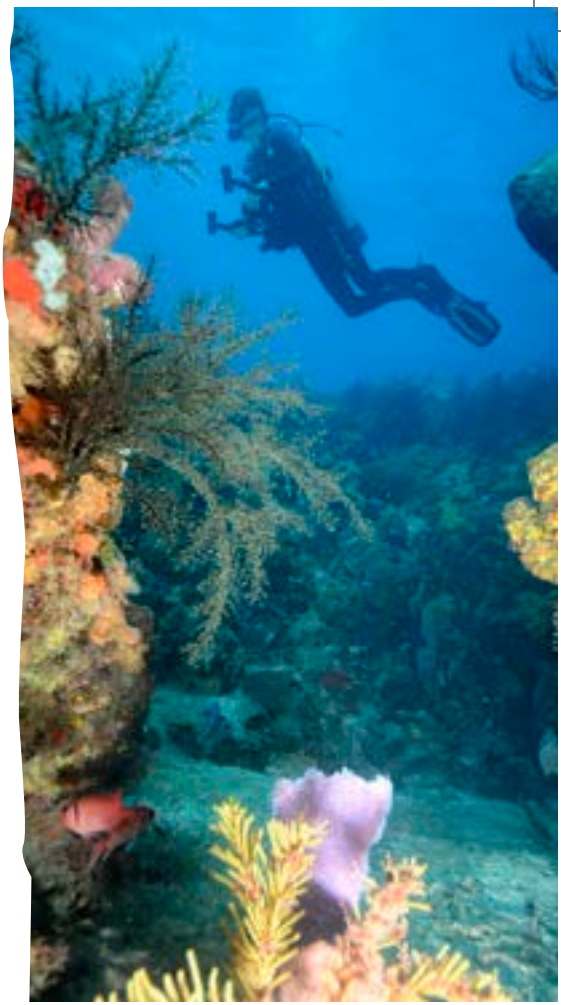
SCOTTS HEAD PINNACLE

Location: South
Difficulty: Moderate

At Dominica's south end, where the Leeward side blends into the Windward, discover Scotts Head Pinnacle, the best-known part of a vast and fantastic underwater topography.

Follow the sloping contours to the Pinnacle itself which is the remnants of a volcanic crater. Swim through the crater wall and as you exit the bottom drops away and forms a spectacular wall. The buddy system will allow one diver to search for seahorses and lobsters while the other scouts for passing barracudas, ceros and huge yellowtails while everyone is entertained by waterfalls of creol wrasse.

From the wall you arrive at Soldierfish cave, enter slowly and the school of soldierfish part like a stage curtain as you pass through to the chimney at the back which takes you to your safety stop. Here you can search the top for critters.



DANGLEBENS PINNACLES

Location: South
Difficulty: Moderate

This amazing site is one of every divemaster's favourite dives in the South. There is frequently a slight current that draws schools of horse eye jacks who flow up and down the south wall. Bar jacks also patrol the drop-off trying to panic shimmering schools of bait fish. On current-free days, look out for the huge barrel and vase sponges with golden crinoids that spill over the top.

Spend your safety stop on top of the pinnacles with schools of creole wrasse and chromis causing shifting waves of blue and red. Its also a good time to watch below for passing turtles.

SHARK'S MOUTH

Location: North
Difficulty: Beginner–Moderate

This site, found at the south end of the Cabrits NationalPark peninsula, is named for the barrel sponges that look like sharks' mouths. While descending, bask in the kaleidoscope of colour from purple and azure vase sponges, yellow tube sponges and schools of blue chromis and tang.

Look out for the spotted scorpionfish, eels hiding in the reef, shy porcupinefish, and passing rays and turtles. Along the top of the reef, in about 30 feet of water, spotted snake eels, peacock flounders and shy yellowhead jawfish can be observed.

On your safety stop, enjoy playing along the large boulders that have dropped down from the cabrits and lie in just 15 feet of water.

WHALESHARK REEF

Location: Central
Difficulty: Moderate

Starting at about 55 feet and cascading down to 130+ feet is this reef, found on the southern drop-off of the Grand Savanne flats.

This reef is a photographer's dream with remarkable sightings of arrow crabs, banded and pederson cleaner shrimp and spotted flamingo tongue snails. Whaleshark Reef's vertical face has giant barrel sponges, brilliant yellow tube sponges, stunning azure vases and colourful hard corals teeming with tropical fish. However, it is the outermost sites in the area that offer the best chance to see large fish like barracudas, Spanish mackerel and jacks.

RINA'S HOLE

Location: Central
Difficulty: Beginner

Found further north of the island, Rina's Hole boasts a great shallow dive with beautiful swim through clustered rock formations encrusted with corals, teeming with anemones, delicate sea fans, and beds of sea plumes. The vibrant colours seen here can be attributed to the contrast with white sand and the shallow sunlight . Rina's is the ultimate critter dive, as the nooks, crannies and overhangs shelter all kinds of marine life.

Expect to see large schools of chub, along with occasional stingrays, spotted eagle rays and nurse sharks.

TOUCARI CAVES

Location: North
Difficulty: Beginner

Toucari Caves' dive starts at just 25 feet and circles around the reef as deep as 100 feet. Nearing the front of the reef, pass through narrow gaps covered with black coral, sponges and soft coral, and scout for turtles, stingrays, barracudas and eagle rays as they slowly glide along the open blue. From crevices, hidden moray eels peek out at you.

Imagine swimming through a beautiful cave and a coral archway to find hidden crabs and lobsters clinging to the cavern ceilings and then up over the same spot where you will dance in your own bubbles escaping from the caves. Turtles love to play and feed here.

While diving is one of Dominica's main attractions, there are a plethora of other activities happening year-round. The other water-related activities include spa visits, turtle and whale watching, kayaking, rafting, river tubing, and canoeing.

When not diving to explore underwater exotica, there are countless pleasures above water to keep you entertained:

- Year-round village feasts with sports, music and dance.
- Dominica Carnival, dubbed "The Real Mas" is a pre-Lenten festival commencing after the Christmas season in December and culminating with a costumed street parade on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.
- Domfesta, the Dominica Festival of Arts takes place in May every year.
- The Emancipation Festival takes place annually between July and August and celebrates local music, dance, arts, culture, drama, and cuisine.
- The World Creole Music Festival held the last weekend in October annually, is a platform for Dominican musicians and musical expressions and promotes creole music as a major musical art form.
- Independence Celebrations on November 3 mark Dominica's independence from the British in 1978.

Puerto Rico
DOMINICA
ROSEAU

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