

Irresistible Island

Travelers and turtles find paradise at a resort on the Caribbean island of Dominica.

As a young girl growing up in Minnesota, Beverly Deikel never dreamed she would one day move to Dominica in the Caribbean to help protect endangered sea turtles. The island's lush, volcanic landscapes, waterfalls and rivers captivated her.

"Its natural beauty drew me back again and again," she said, "and I knew it was the place I wanted to be."

Nicknamed the Nature Island, Dominica boasts numerous hiking trails, natural hot sulphur spas, unspoiled reefs for snorkeling and scuba diving, and year-round whale watching. It is the largest and most northerly of the Windward Islands, located midway along the Eastern Caribbean archipelago, just a few miles from Martinique to the south and Guadeloupe to the north.

Beverly's love of Dominica led her to search for the perfect location where she and her partner, Oscar,

Tiny Leatherback hatchlings make their way to the ocean.

MARINECREATURES

BY DEBBRA
DUNNING
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ROSALIE BAY RESORT

a Dominican native, could design and build a beachfront resort. They wanted to create a place of tranquility and wellness, and they wanted it to be eco-friendly in every way possible.

During their search, they were shown a 22-acre site on Dominica's eastern coast, facing the Atlantic Ocean and intersecting with the Rosalie River at the point it empties into the sea. Upon discovering that its black sand beach was a sea turtle nesting site, the deal was cinched.

Saving Sea Turtles

The beach was one of several on the island that had been seriously impacted by poaching. Raiding turtle nests for eggs had been a common practice on Dominica for years, as many locals consider them an aphrodisiac. Committed to stopping it, Beverly and Oscar established sea turtle protection efforts on Dominica.

Three species of endangered sea turtles—Leatherback, Green and Hawksbill—make their way to Rosalie Beach each year from March through September to dig nests in the sand and deposit their billiard-ball-sized eggs. About 60 days later, a tiny hatchling emerges from its shell and makes its way to the ocean.

Rosalie Bay Resort, which opened in January 2011 after eight years of planning and construction, has become a protected turtle nesting area, thanks to a growing number

of volunteers who help patrol the beach during nesting season.

Led by Simon George, the community-based Nature Enhancement Team makes sure turtles that come ashore to lay their eggs aren't disturbed. Once eggs are deposited into a nest the turtle digs in the sand, the eggs are transferred to a safe area of the beach on higher ground.

Upon check-in, interested guests may sign up to receive a wake-up call if a turtle comes ashore to lay her eggs or if eggs are ready to hatch. Nightly tours are held at a turtle hut on the beach, where guests can learn about the egg relocation program and visit the hatchery.

The resort's gingerbread-trimmed cottages with private verandas are spread throughout the lush grounds, with views of the sea, gardens or the river. Beverly's mission to develop a wellness resort, where guests can eat, move, relax and commune with nature in a healthy way, has been fulfilled. Morning yoga on the beach and guided nature hikes in the surrounding forest are among



RANDY KERR

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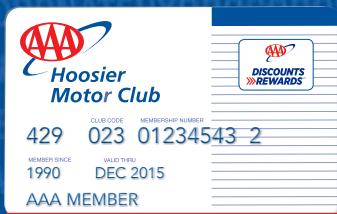
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ROSALIE BAY RESORT

Nine cottages, housing 28 rooms and suites, blend traditional Caribbean design and island style with luxurious modern amenities.

the ways visitors can start their day, before exploring the island's treasures outside the resort.

Dominica Dazzles

Anne and Charles MacLean of Fort Wayne, Ind., enjoyed stunning scenery and fabulous food during a five-night stay at the resort. The couple looked forward to meals in the open-air Zamaan restaurant, which offered fresh fish served with organic vegetables and herbs from an on-site garden.

"After a shore excursion on Dominica from a cruise ship, we vowed to return for a longer stay," said Anne. "We chose Rosalie Bay after reading about

its secluded setting and its focus on health and fitness."

Besides relaxing on a veranda overlooking the sea, the MacLeans took long walks around the resort's grounds, enjoyed massages in the spa and ventured to nearby sites, including Emerald Pool, a waterfall grotto located within Morne Trois Pitons National Park.

"It's a lovely place where you can do as much or as little as you like, but don't come here looking for a party atmosphere," Anne said. "You have to be a nature lover."

The one night she and her husband turned in early—following a full day excursion around the island—they missed the opportunity to see some turtle action. "We were sad we'd missed them, but we were able to walk the beach the next day, see the turtle nests and learn more about the conservation efforts going on here," Anne said. "We're happy to know that even the turtles can be at peace at Rosalie."

Planning Your Trip

To learn more, visit www.rosaliebay.com. For travel-planning assistance, call your local AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel.

H&A



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