

## [A Day in Dominica](#)

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5:45 am

This morning, I am up with the roosters in Canefield, the neighborhood near the capital city of Roseau during my summer in Dominica, and the former location of the Cane Field Estate plantation from 1763 until the British abolition of slavery in 1834.<sup>1</sup> The sun is barely peeking out when I cross the street to my unofficial Dominican host family's house to see who is up early enough to sit down and eat fruits with me. On the table lies a bounty of fruits to choose from: paw paws (related to papaya), guavas, bananas, passion fruits, and mangoes. The first three fruits came from our last early morning, Friday venture to the market in town, where peasant farmers and vendors from around the island come to sell the fruits of their labor each weekend – as they have for centuries. The passion fruits and mangoes, on the other hand, were respectively brought by a friend and a neighbor from their home gardens (a feature of almost every standalone house in Dominica). I choose the first four fruits and cut them up for myself and my host auntie to enjoy at the kitchen table and chat with my host mom while she finishes filling her latest black pudding orders. As I eat, I receive a WhatsApp message from my American doula friend, Iris. She tells me that after three days of air travel and delays, she is finally taking flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico to complete the last leg of her trip.



Photo by author

6:30 am

I hop in the right-hand driver's side of my red jeep and start the winding, 45-km journey to Douglas-Charles Airport on the northside of the island. To get from the capital to the middle of the island, I hop on the Imperial Road. This road was one of the first major infrastructure projects the British embarked upon after uprooting Dominica's Black controlled legislature (the first in the British Caribbean) and re-establishing Crown Colony government on the island in 1896. The meandering road climbs mountains, cuts through rainforests, and crosses rivers, which is one reason why the 25-km road took 38 years to construct. Today, it is the smoothest and best-maintained road in Dominica. I turn the music up high and take in the views.



Photo by Carla Garcia

7:30 am

I pull into the parking lot right after my friend, Iris, exits the one-gate airport and I advise her to withdraw money at the ATM, as Dominica's economy is primarily a cash economy. Iris is ready to eat after her tumultuous travels, so we stop at a roadside shop in the nearby town of Marigot and ask for the best bakes (fried bread served with a variety of fillings) in the area. They gladly point us down the road to a small, red building and tell us to ask for Janelle. When we find Janelle's bar, we order cheese bakes and locally-made seamoss and guava cherry juices to enjoy while we chat with a few patrons and watch the Atlantic waves crash (as national historian Lennox Honychurch told me the Indigenous Kalinago people who have lived in the area and navigated the waters for centuries have done). Once we have finished our seaside breakfast, we start the vertiginous, verdant journey back to the capital area to pick up two of my colleague-friends from Dominica State College, Dionne and Ismani, to join us for the day's adventures.



Photos by Iritisen Muhammad

10 am

The morning is not complete without coconut water, so we stop by our favorite coconut man in Stockfarm. We are glad to see him as the consistent, heavy rains had kept him home for the past week or two prior (it is dangerous to climb wet coconut trees), and he is known to have the best coconuts in town; his truck has drawn a line today. He cuts the top of our hand-picked, homegrown coconuts with his cutlass to create a drinking hole, then, once we have chugged all the water and "our bellies are full full", he chops it in half for us to enjoy the jelly. We make one more stop for bags of canep (also known as guinep or quenepa in other parts of the region), a sweet and sour summer fruit that is a local favorite which is also scarcely sold when trees are wet.



Photo by Iritisen Muhammad

11 am

Today's plan was to go hiking at Jacko Flats, guided by University of South Florida's archaeology PhD student Jonathan Rodriguez's whom I met through the [CreateCaribbean Institute](#) at Dominica State College. Jacko was a West African-born man who was enslaved in Dominica before escaping to the internal forests of the island as a Maroon, becoming the most senior Maroon Chief by the 1760s and leading for over 40 years. Dominica-- due in large part to its steep topography, dense vegetation, and formidable Indigenous and maroon resistance -- had the second largest maroon population in the Caribbean (second to Jamaica) and they stayed primarily in the mountainous interior of the island. Jacko Flats was a maroon camp Jacko established on a forested plateau surrounded by cliffs to launch raids on nearby plantations, to provide refuge to other Maroons fleeing slavery, and to support a mission of self-determination, freedom, and colonial resistance.<sup>1</sup> The hike itself consists of wading through a river and climbing hundreds of steep, treacherous stairs carved into the cliffside ("Jacko Steps") by Maroons intent on defending themselves from British colonizers and protecting their camp on the plateau. Local farmer Eunice upkeep the trail and archaeologist Jonathan Rodriguez is working with local Rastafarian communities to uncover more history of the site and its maroon community, while also further developing the trail system. Unfortunately for us, July is peak rainy season, and the storms made the steps slick and impassable today. Upon hearing about the conditions at Jacko Steps, we reverently listen to nature (as Dominicans are accustomed to doing), and we adjust accordingly, making a detour to a separate part of the Flats-- Jacko Falls.

Jacko Falls consists of a beautiful waterfall, pool, and cave tucked in the lush vegetation of the Trois Pitons mountains. We spend hours swimming, laughing, spotting fish and crabs, and wading down the river in the same waters as Jacko and the Maroons he led.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://divisionofculture.gov.dm/resource-information2/national-figures/jacko>





Photo of waterfall by author  
Group photo by Dionne Ralph

1:30 pm

On our way out of the Jacko Flats Area, I call my friend, Nonoi, to tell him I am stopping by with friends. He is the kind owner of The Farmacy, a roadside farmstand. When we arrive, he graciously gives us a tour of his off-grid property, showing us his solar panels, piped spring water, ducks, fruit trees, vegetable garden, wood-fired stove and meat smoker, and guest rooms. It was there that he weathered category 5 Hurricane Maria in 2017 and had access to electricity and water before most of the island (it took the local utility 24 months to restore service to the whole island). He brews us coffee from his homegrown, hand roasted beans, filled our jugs with the purest spring water, and sold us fruits and vegetables (including the biggest, sweetest avocados I have ever tasted). All the while, he shares tips on farming with Ismani, who has his own farm he tends to after his workdays at the College, and tips on going off-grid with Dionne, who already has a small solar system at her house. Nonoi promises to call when he has more passionfruit (my favorite) ready for my picking. With our trunk and hearts full, we head back to down the mountain to town with [bouyon music](#) blasting.



Photos by author

3:30 pm

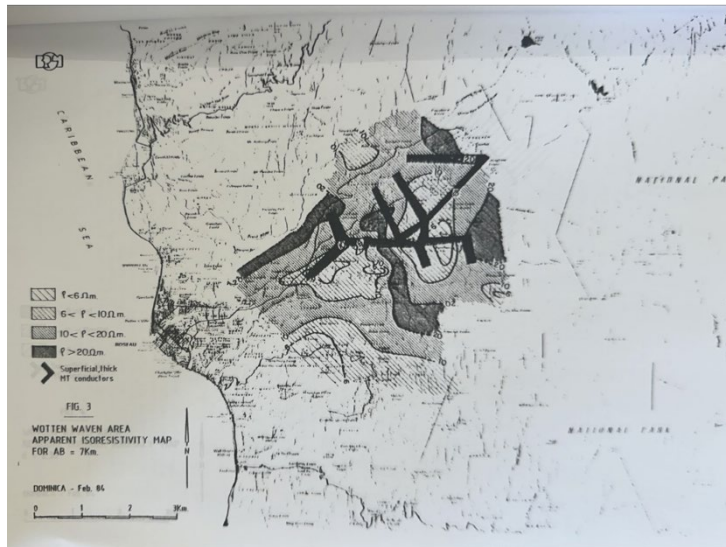
Our bellies are growling for food more substantive than fruits and chips, so we stop at a small restaurant in town to get some local favorites – barbecue chicken, mac n' cheese, fried breadfruit, and green fig (banana) salad. Bananas – both green and ripe-- were Dominica's main export in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their overdependence on this monocrop led to significant economic depression post-Independence due to volatility in climatic/ weather, political, and economic conditions.<sup>2</sup> While bananas are no longer the largest export, they still form a core part of the Dominican diet. The wait at the restaurant looked to be over half an hour, but luckily my friend had a friend and we got the food in 10 minutes for free. (In Dominica, as in many small islands, it is all about who you know.)

5 pm

After running around the island all day, we are ready for relaxation. We leave town again and head into the Roseau Valley to the geothermally active town of Wotten Waven. This is a name I have seen frequently in technocratic reports during my archival research on electricity in Dominica, as international consultants and companies have been flocking to the site since the 1980s to evaluate its potential to produce geothermal energy for Dominica and its neighbors. We pass the somewhat ugly, somewhat nondescript geothermal drilling sites (which were tested and abandoned a few years ago), stop and pick some fresh cacao beans to snack on, and continue up the road to somewhere much more picturesque and relaxing – private sulphur hot spring pools



called "Ti Kwen Glo Cho." Before getting in the water, we pick guava cherries and guavas, grab some passion [fruit] punch, and visit the small zoo where we see the agoutis – rodents similar to guinea pigs that are considered a local delicacy. Then we spend hours bouncing between the warm pool, the hot pool, the mud bath, and the cold spring showers until all the tension in our minds and bodies has dissipated.



Photos by author

Isoresistivity map of Wotten Waven photo taken from "Geothermal Prefeasibility Study in Dominica Island (Wotten Waven and Soufriere areas) - Final Report" by the French Geological Survey on behalf of the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, photo taken in the National Documentation Centre of Dominica

10 pm

We finally decide to leave the hot water just before they close for the night. However, our night is not done until everyone and their loved ones are home safe – no matter how long it takes. In Dominica, the people take care of each other even when governments and international powers refuse to do the same. This mutuality is what kept me safe and taken care of all summer in Dominica, a place I arrived knowing only two former professional acquaintances at the electric utility. Thus, one way I show my gratitude and mutual commitment to those who have welcomed me is to offer rides in my rental car. We drive up and down mountains and crisscross town, dodging dozens of potholes along the way and praying rocks do not fall as the rain comes down.

11:30 pm

Finally, everyone reaches home happy, grateful, exhausted, and looking forward to our next adventure.