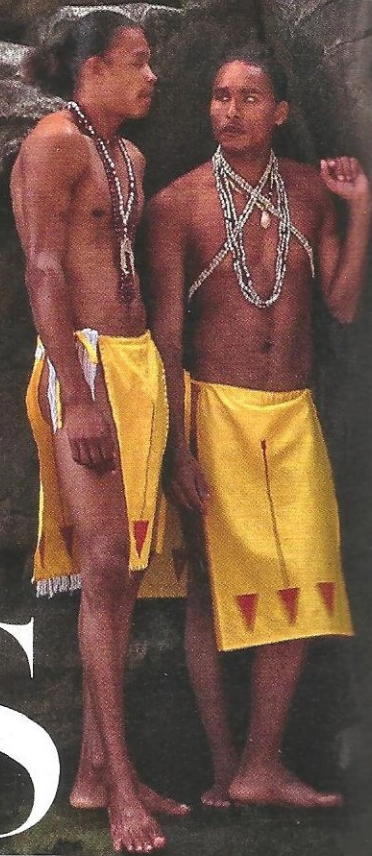


HERITAGE

Welcome to Kalinago Barana
Autê, a unique corner of
Dominica where visitors can
step back in time to glimpse
a way of life preserved by an
indigenous tribe determined
to honour their heritage »»



VOICES FROM THE PAST



Once upon a time, a fearless, proud and inventive Kalinago tribe lived happily on Dominica. Today, a unique place on the rugged north east coast of the island gives you a rare glimpse into their architecture and a way of life before the arrival of Columbus. This place is called Kalinago Barana Autê (Carib Village by the Sea), and stands on Kalinago Territory, a large area of almost four thousand acres established by the British in 1903. It is home to the largest remaining population of Kalinagos in the Caribbean. They called themselves Kalinago, but the Europeans named them 'Caribs', and that word gave the name to the whole region.

Kalinago Barana Autê is a showcase village where traditionally constructed buildings are testament to the enduring strength and ingenuity of indigenous design. When the Spaniards first beheld the Kalinagos' buildings they did not regard them as 'real' homes, because they were so different from the architecture they had left back home. All Kalinago buildings were grouped around a central plaza. The most impressive structure was the main meeting house, called 'Carbet' or 'Taboui', about 60 feet

and medicine, and gommier wood for their dugout canoes." These masterfully constructed longboats were fast, silent and agile, and were one of the causes the Kalinago successfully resisted all European attempts to invade Dominica for almost 200 years.

It is only recently, with the strong interest in 'green' building methods, that these indigenous constructions are being recognised, not just for their aesthetic and historic value, but also for their Earth-conscious design. Maurice Agar, a renowned Caribbean architect based in Dominica, comments: "The challenge for architects designing in today's world with our increasing environmental concerns, is to find a way to incorporate the materials and values of the past into our current 'mod-con' lifestyles and structures. We need to design our buildings not just with sustainability of materials in mind, but also with the end goal of sustainability in our lifestyles. We build not just for ourselves, but with future generations in mind."

Dominica, the 'nature island' of the Caribbean, is host to growing numbers of environmentally conscious architectural endeavours. One of them is Roots Jungle Retreat, created by Pat and Staci Kosick. Kalinago architecture was inspirational for their lodge

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long and surrounded by smaller tent-like Ajoupas and Mouinas. They were built from hard wood and plant material collected from the forest. Their roofs were thatched with palm leaves, with grass or reeds used also as wattle for the walls. Everything was tied together with maho, a rope made of bark. Inside, furnishing was sparse, with hammocks used for sleeping – another ingenious invention of the Amerindians.

Like the dwellings of other Amerindians (for example the Tainos in Greater Antilles), they were perfectly suited to the tropical climate. Thatched roofs and walls permeable to airflow allowed these structures to breathe naturally. This particular aspect of a house was something that all colonial European-brought designs struggled to achieve. The Kalinagos' simple structures were also surprisingly strong – they could withstand fierce winds, even hurricanes – while any damage could be quickly repaired.

"My people lived off the land," Kalinago Chief Garnette Joseph explains. "The forest provided not only building material for their houses but also food

design, as Pat explains: "I was driving near Kalinago Barana Autê one day, and when I saw that big Carbet house with its thatched roof, I immediately knew: that's what our place should look like! The Kalinago not only built our lodge but also gave us lots of help and advice. We couldn't have done it without them."

The rich Kalinago heritage does not only belong to the past but still remains a strong and active force today. "Despite the big changes to the Kalinago traditional way of life, we still retain some its aspects," says Chief Garnette Joseph. "We still live off the land and in tune with nature. We are blessed to be living in natural surroundings, and that feeling permeates our lives. So many indigenous peoples have lost their environment and ways of life. We are in a unique position to offer our island and the visitors coming to us from all over the globe an exceptional experience of our culture, which we continuously strive to keep alive. For the most memorable experience, we welcome our guests to stay with Kalinago families in our village. Our culture and traditions are close to our heart and define who we are." ❧❧



The Kalinagos' simple structures were surprisingly *strong* they could withstand *fierce winds, even hurricanes* while any damage could be quickly repaired

BOTTOM RIGHT: Kalinago Village is located along Crayfish River cascading into the Atlantic, offering spectacular views as it rushes into the turbulent waves of the open ocean

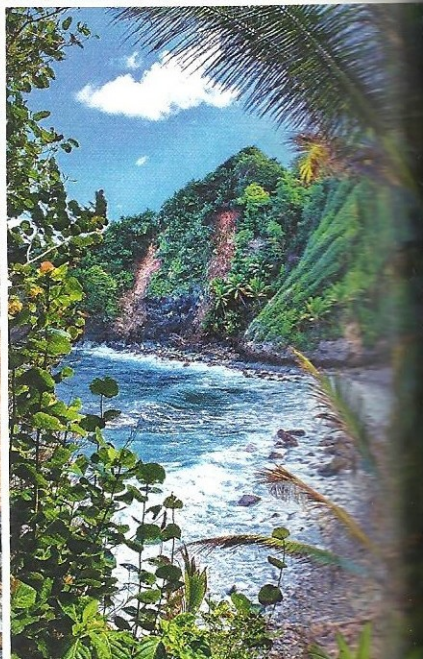
BOTTOM LEFT: Merlin Stoute is one of very few remaining master canoe builders. He is passing that ancient skill on to his three sons, working here on a new seafaring vessel dugout of a huge gommier tree. The hard, back breaking labour of canoe making from a single piece of wood takes them over six months to finish.

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01 KALINAGO MYTH: MARUKA & CIMANARI

There lived in Salybia two brothers called Maruka and Cimanari, famous for the charms they made. They would go to the house of the Tete Chien to find the master Tete Chien, a giant who had a crest of diamond on his head, and who crowed like a cock. When they found him, they would take powdered tobacco and burn it before him on the blade of a paddle. After that, the Tete Chien would vomit, and all that he vomited was 'l'eners caraibe'. Then the snake would disappear gradually, and in his place came a young man 'sans cullottes' (naked). The young man said nothing about being the Tete Chien, but asked Maruka and Cimanari what they wanted. When they told him, he instructed them how to use the envers caraibe to make their charms.

When Maruka and Cimanari felt old age approaching, they went away to the other country. When they reached the shores of the Orinoco River, they plunged into the stream, and came out on the opposite banks as two young lads again. On the water where they had been, floated two turtle shells. They never came back to Dominica, and at last one of them died; but the other is still living there. >>

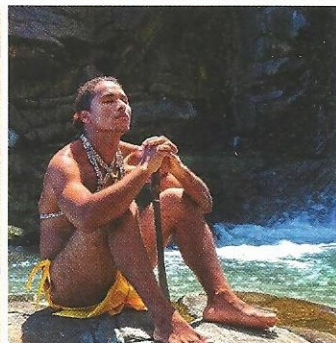


The Kalinago Barana Auté has become the focal point for the preservation of the rich and unique cultural patrimony of the indigenous people of Dominica. This one-of-a-kind heritage facility in the Caribbean takes visitors back in time more than five hundred years with an array of traditional activities including dramatic dance presentations and a thirty minute guided tour with a Kalinago native. The facility has become the single largest enterprise in the Kalinago community and a must-visit attraction for a growing number of tourists who want to experience this rare way of life cherished for more than five centuries. For details about visiting Kalinago Barana Auté, please go to www.kalinagobaranaaute.com, or call 1 767 4457 979. For expert guidance, Kalinago Tours Inc. specialises in tours to the Kalinago Territory as well as to other scenic sites in Dominica. Email: kdangleben@gmail.com or call 1 767 3170595

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PHOTOS: DEREK GALON
DEREK HAS A RARE ABILITY TO CAPTURE THE ARTISTIC FEEL OF THE MOMENT IN HIS WORK. HIS VARIED PORTFOLIO HAS RECEIVED WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION AND HE HAS WON MANY AWARDS. SEE MORE AT HIS WEBSITE: WWW.ARTPHOTOGRAPHYSERVICES.COM

BOTTOM RIGHT: While for everyday work they use casual style clothes, the Kalinago proudly dress up in more traditional manner for dance and celebrations **BOTTOM LEFT:** Kalinago baskets are skilfully woven from Larouma reed, which was brought in by the Amerindians from South America. Methods of weaving and obtaining different colours of strips remain the same through generations.



02 KALINAGO MYTH: SPIRIT OF THE ROCK

On a narrow ridge opposite and beyond Bataka is perched a huge rock that overlooks the valley of Pagua, the ocean and the Reserve. It is composed of a blackish, crumbling rock, while on its summit and from its precipitous sides grow vines and plants, a stunted scrub, and a wild orchid. It is known as La Roche Pagua, and it is the home of a benevolent spirit about whom many tales are told.

The people of Bataka used to go up the Pagua rock in search of charms. There are steps leading to the base of the rock, and, on its top, a crack that goes through the inside. On the top of the rock there grew all manner of charms, but in particular you might find there a white flower with so sweet a smell that people passing on the highway at the foot of the cliff might smell it. When it flowers, a new blossom comes every hour of the day and every hour another fades and falls. If you are lucky enough to find one of these flowers, you may command with it whoever you wish to. You only have to rub it on the palm of your hand, then raise your hand in the direction of a person and call their name. However far they may be, they will have to obey and come to you. If you go in quest of the flower, it is wise to take with you a white cock, or at least some powdered tobacco, as a gift to the spirit of the rock. ●