

Welcome to Kalinago Barana Auté, 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. ||

# FROM THE VOICES 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 Auté (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 Auté 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 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 masterly constructed long boats 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 recognized 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 Kalinago's simple structures were also surprisingly strong – they could withstand fierce winds, even hurricanes – while any damage could be quickly repaired.

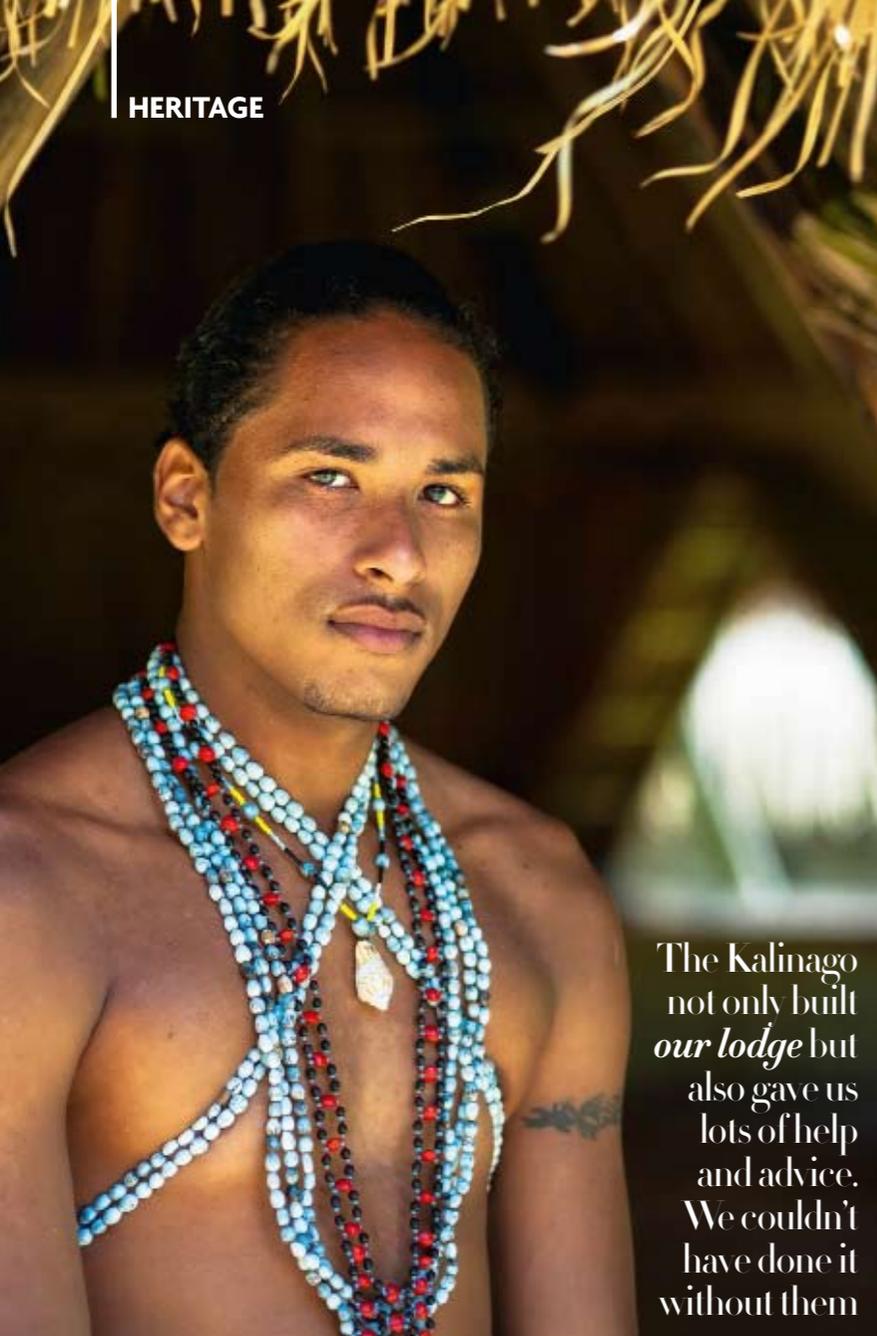
"My people lived off the land," Kalinago Chief Garnette Joseph explains. "The forest provided not only building material for their houses but also food

design, as Pat explains: "I was driving nearby Kalinago Barana Auté 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."

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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 cullote' (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.



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.

LEFT: Merlin Stoute is one of very few remaining master canoe builders. He is passing that ancient skill 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.





For more details about visiting Kalinago Barana Auté, please go to [www.kalinagobaranaaute.com](http://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](mailto:kdangleben@gmail.com) or call 1 767 3170595

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AN ART HISTORIAN, RESEARCHER AND WRITER WITH PASSION FOR THE CARIBBEAN, MARGARET WROTE INTERNATIONALLY AWARDED BOOKS TROPICAL HOMES OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN, AND EXOTIC GARDENS OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN. SHE TEAMED-UP WITH DEREK GALON, ACCLAIMED PHOTOGRAPHER, MANAGING A PUBLISHING HOUSE, AND OFFERING EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY PUBLISHING AND PRINTING SERVICES. MORE AT: [WWW.OZONEZONEBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.OZONEZONEBOOKS.COM)

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**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 and 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 may 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.