

Freshwater Lake

Morne Trois Pitons National Park
DOMINICA

Just 2 miles north-east of the village of Laudat is the Freshwater Lake, which can be reached via the historic Chimen Létan or "Lake Road". Visitor facilities and a Visitor Centre are provided near the lake. Several hiking trails begin in the area and offer the enthusiast a variety of challenges and the opportunity to explore the interior of the Morne Trois Pitons National Park.

Freshwater Lake is the largest of Dominica's four lakes. It is located at just over 2,500 ft above sea level and is the natural source of the Roseau River. The lake has been dammed to provide water to generate electricity.

A hike along the Freshwater Lake Trail provides an opportunity to study Dominica's higher forests. Montane forest, which can be recognized by its short, thin trees and open canopy, covers the majority of the area surrounding the lake. The shallow soils and strong winds do not permit the luxuriant growth that is so characteristic of the rain forest.

The open canopy of the montane forest permits sunlight to reach the forest floor where many shrubs, herbaceous plants and ferns such as tree ferns grow. A common shrub is Blue Wax Flower whose name is very descriptive. In the more open areas you will find *Balizyé* or Lobster Claw (*Heliconia bihai*) with its brilliant red-and-yellow "flowers".

Another characteristic of the montane forest is the abundance of epiphytes – plants that use other plants for physical support only. Sometimes it is difficult to see the trunk of the supporting tree through the epiphytes. Here you will find wild anthuriums, *Apoplèxi* or Chinese Lantern plant with its pendant red-and-yellow flowers, and delicate filmy ferns.

The most common trees in swampy areas around the lake are *Mang Wouj* and *Mang Blan*. Their prop roots, which extend from well above the ground, give them support on the waterlogged soils. Looping out of the ground are breathing roots that enable the roots to breathe in the oxygen-poor soils. Other common trees include *Maho Kochon*, *Gombo Moutany*, and Palms.

The uppermost forest is usually buffeted by the strong Trade Winds and draped with clouds. Some of the plants have small, leathery leaves to prevent them from being torn by the wind. From a distance, the elfin forest along the Divide Ridge above the lake has the appearance of a well-trimmed hedge, the work of the shearing force of the winds. In sheltered areas the tree stems are draped with dripping mats of mosses and filmy ferns.

The most conspicuous wildlife in the montane forest is the birds. If you are quiet you may hear the varied and beautiful song of the Mountain Whistler (*Siflé moutany* or Rufous-throated Solitaire). You may also see the Purple-throated, Antillean Crested and Blue-headed Hummingbirds feeding from *Balizyé* flowers, and perhaps you will get a glimpse of the Tumbler as it moves from branch to branch. On rare occasions a migratory Blue-winged Teal may be seen swimming on the lake, and a lone Egret or a Green Heron may be seen gliding over the water. Other wildlife in the area includes Agouti (a rabbit-sized rodent), Anolis lizards, bats, opossums and feral cats.



The aquatic life in the lake includes the brown-and-yellow crab locally known as "siwik" and introduced Tilapia.

The Trail on the Divide Ridge to the east of the Lake provides splendid, panoramic views. This is actually part of the rim of an inactive volcano. To the west is Morne Macaque (Micotrin), a young volcanic cone that separates Freshwater Lake from Boeri Lake which were formed on the crater floor.

From the ridge-top you can see numerous ridges and peaks, e.g. Morne Nicholls, Morne Watt and Morne Trois Pitons formed by several volcanic eruptions. Here you can appreciate the violent origins of this island from the depths of the ocean. To the east is the village of Grand Fond, and Rosalie Point on the coastline. On a very clear day you may even catch a glimpse of Marie Galante on the horizon, to the north-east of Dominica.



Freshwater Lake has much to offer the visitor. The Forestry, Wildlife & Parks Division and the Ministry of Tourism hope that you enjoy your visit, and invite you to please come again. User Fee tickets may be purchased in Laudat Village.

Please do not litter. Use the garbage bins provided at the Visitor Centre.

Please do not pick any plants or flowers. Take only pictures and memories and leave behind only footprints.

Freshwater Lake is part of the Morne Trois Pitons National Park World Heritage Site which was set aside by the Government of Dominica for the enjoyment of Dominicans and visitors alike. Everything within the park is protected by law. Let us all play our part in preserving Dominica's natural heritage.



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