

Middleham Falls Trail

Morne Trois Pitons National Park
DOMINICA

The Middleham Trail was built by the Forestry, Wildlife & Parks Division through a 950-acre tract of tropical rain forest that was donated by John D. Archbold to the Government of Dominica, through The Nature Conservancy.

The trail is located in the north-west portion of Morne Trois Pitons National Park, and its main access points are from Providence Estate near the Laudat Road or from Cockrane village.

Starting from the parking lot at the Information Centre at Providence, the trail first crosses the Providence River. It then passes a few cultivations and a massive *Maho Kochon* tree, before entering the rain forest that is dominated by *Gomyé* (*Dacryodes excelsa*) and *Chatannyé* (*Sloanea spp*) trees. The Trail also takes you past some fine specimens of Yanga Palm (endemic to the Lesser Antilles) and a set of directional signs, before branching off to the left to one of Dominica's tallest waterfalls, the Middleham Falls. A section of Segment 4 of the Waitukubili National Trail traverses the Middleham area.

As you descend the winding track to the 275 ft waterfall, note the large spring gushing between the rocks, and the old abandoned cultivation with bananas, tanya and a breadfruit tree. The water from the spring and falls, as well as that in

the six to eight streams which cut across the trail from Providence to Cockrane, all join to form the Boeri River, popularly known as the Canefield River.

After returning to the main trail at the top, turn left to continue your walk through the rain forest. After passing a rain shelter and a few streams, you will meet the Tou Santi (Stinking Hole), a collapsed laval tube emitting warm gases. Tou Santi is home to several thousand bats, and an occasional boa constrictor lives in one of the crevices.

Throughout the entire area one is walking through rain forest, and of particular interest is the diversity of trees and other plant species. As many as 60 species have been recorded in a 10-acre rain forest plot on Dominica. The buttressed *Chatannyé* and the pillar-like *Gomyé* are most outstanding. Other trees include *Bwa Dyab* and *Palmis*. In waterlogged areas prop-rooted *Mang Blan*, and *Karapit* with buttresses and prop roots, usually occur. Note the broken tree crowns, the result of Hurricane David in 1979.

Another distinguishing feature of the rain forest is the comparatively open forest floor. This is because only as little as 10% of the sunlight striking the canopy is able to penetrate through the tree tops. This leaves little chance of growth for any but the hardiest seedlings, and hence offers an easy walk-through. However this ease is deceptive and one can be tempted to divert from the trail to explore. It is very easy to get lost when one strays from the trail, even for only a few yards/ metres.

Other types of plants that solve the problem of getting adequate sunlight are the epiphytes or air plants. They manufacture their own food but depend on their host plant for support. Many of the epiphytes are mosses, orchids, small ferns, wild anthuriums and bromeliads (members of the pineapple family).



There are no large wild mammals in the area, but this lack of diversity in the wildlife is more than adequately made up for in the richness of the bird life. Especially in the mornings and evenings, one can hear the Rufous-throated Solitaire (*Siflé Moutany*), the Ruddy Quail Dove, and several species of thrush. One may also catch a glimpse of a Scaly-naped Pigeon or a Jaco Parrot through the trees, a Trembler on a branch, or a Purple-throated Hummingbird feeding on nectar in a Heliconia or a Plumbeous Warbler picking insects for its "meal". You will most likely see a Tree Lizard (*Zanndoli*) in an upside down position on a tree stem, and in the evenings the sounds of insects, the movement of bats, and the piping of the little frogs break the stillness of the night.



Please do not litter and stay on the Trail. Site Passes to access the site may be purchased in Roseau or in Laudat.

Please do not damage or remove bark from the trees; and please do not pick plants or flowers. Take away only memories and photographs, leave nothing behind but footprints, and kill nothing but time.

The Middleham Trail is part of Morne Trois Pitons National Park World Heritage Site, a special area 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's all play our part in preserving our natural heritage.

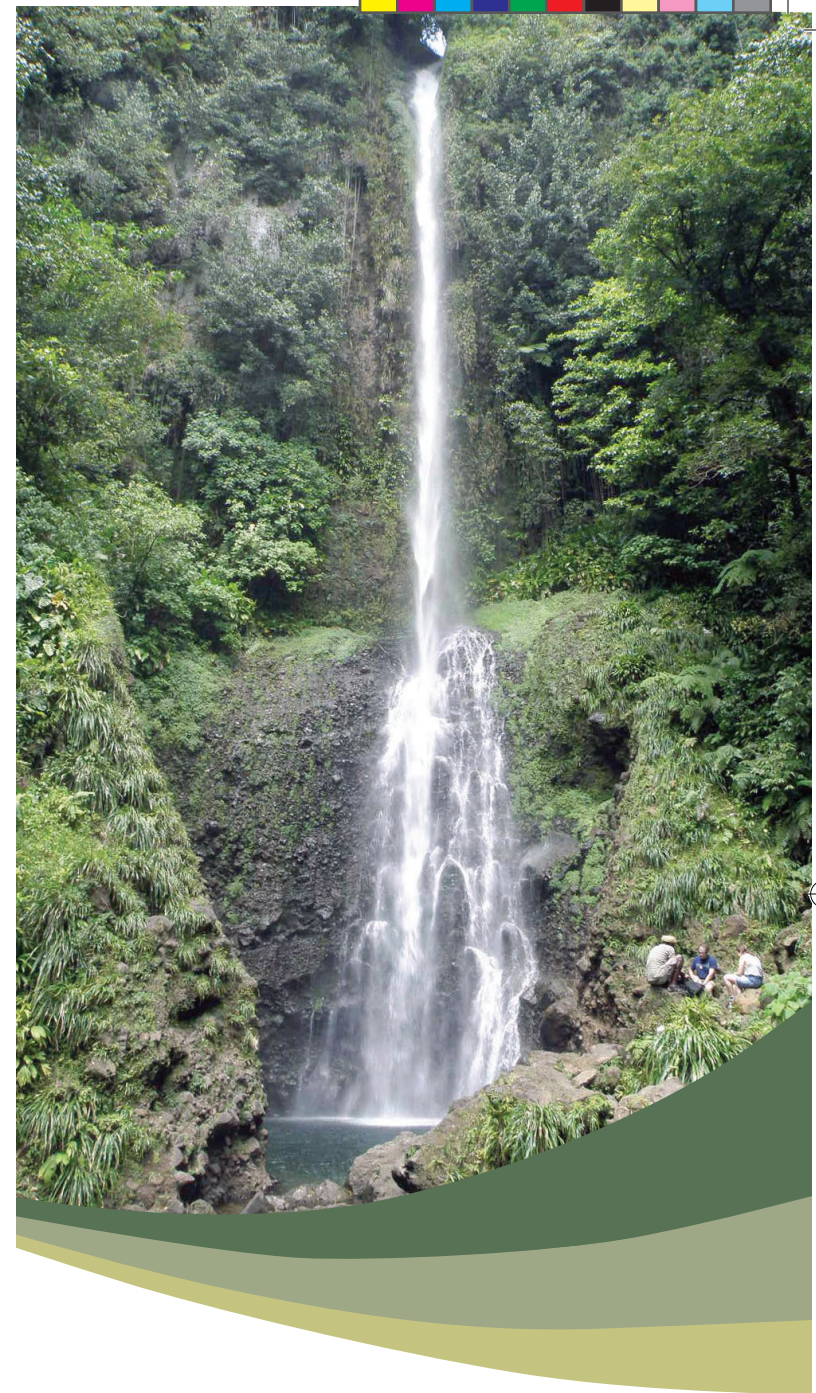


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This Edition produced by
Forestry, Wildlife & Parks Division
DOMINICA, 2014
with financial assistance from
the Tourism Site Enhancement Program
of the Ministry of Tourism
Website: www.tourism.gov.dm



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