



A deluxe room at Cabrits Resort & Spa Kempinski Dominica, opening in October.



Gay Nagle Myers

When a luxury European hotel group fixes its sights on a Caribbean island more known for nature and hiking trails than for nightlife and beach bars, what can a traveler expect upon check-in?

That's the challenge facing Kempinski Hotels when the **Cabrits Resort & Spa Kempinski Dominica** welcomes its first guests on Oct. 14.

Reservations opened in late July for the 151-room property overlooking Douglas Bay Beach on Dominica's north coast, and 145 rooms were booked very quickly, with 35 of those who booked requesting the holiday season, according to Michael Schoonewagen, the resort's general manager.

"Dominica, the Nature Island, is a destination unknown to many travelers and is often confused with the Dominican Republic, but this island is night and day different from the D.R. We will catch up and Dominica will become the destination of choice in the Caribbean once people discover it," he predicted.

The design of the resort, surrounded by Cabrits National Park, plays into the natural beauty and ecosystems of the volcanic island.

The guestrooms, suites, two-bedroom duplexes, villas and the two-bedroom presidential suite with butler service offer ample natural lighting and feature mountain or ocean views.

"There is so much to see here, from rainforests and 365 rivers to a boiling lake, hot springs, 300 natural pools, waterfalls and dive sites. I walk the resort site every day; I see changes in nature daily. The island has greened up completely since the devastation from Hurricane Maria in 2017," said Schoonewagen, who prior to this assignment served as general manager at Belmond La Samanna in St. Martin and before that at the St. Regis

Bora Bora Resort.

While nature and outdoor activities will be a major focus for guests at the resort, especially for the more than 6,000 adventure travelers who visit the island each year to hike part of the north-to-south trail, in-room amenities will include complimentary WiFi, flat screens TVs, espresso machines and luxury bath products.

Kempinski Dominica will offer an 18,000-square-foot spa with indoor and outdoor spa treatments, the Rumfire Bar and three restaurants with local and international cuisine as well as farm-to-fork and sea-to-table dining.

Decor of the Cabrits Market will mirror the colors and flavors of a Creole market with buffet stations offering fare from Italian and barbecue to Creole menu items.

The Kweyol Beach Cafe offers its spin on the traditional Creole beach bar, while the Bonsai restaurant will offer Pan-Asian cuisine with sushi, sashimi, satays, Thai curries and wok-sauteed dishes.

“Our main target is luxury adventure travelers, but we're focused on the romance aspect, as well. We already have one wedding booked for Nov. 12 with 70 guests attending,” Schoonewagen said. “I envision offering soon-to-be-engaged couples a helicopter tour, which will fly over the beach where 'Will you marry me?' is spelled out in coconuts on the sand below.”

Kids will be welcome at the resort, which will feature a complimentary kids' club for ages 5 and up as well as a kids' menu in the restaurants.

Children up to 6 years old sharing room with parents stay free; those age 7 through 12 get a 50% discount on rates, and all kids get a “passport” upon arrival for unlimited ice cream and milkshakes.

Schoonewagen forecast that up to 70% of guests will hail from the U.S. with the remainder from Germany, Scandinavia and France.

“If travelers choose Dominica, it means they have already looked into it, know something about the destination and have selected it for specific reasons,” he said.

Dominica is not the easiest island to get to. Interisland flights operate from Martinique, Guadeloupe, Antigua, St. Maarten, Barbados and St. Lucia. However, there are charter options available from Miami and Fort Lauderdale, which land at Douglas-Charles Airport.

Portsmouth, the second-largest town in Dominica, is a 10-minute walk from the resort and features produce and fish markets and small shops, offering “another option for our guests who want to experience the local scene,” Schoonewagen said.

Rates, which include daily breakfast for two, start at \$565 per room, per night to Dec. 21. Holiday rates through Jan. 4 range from \$995 in a superior mountain view room to \$1,895 in an executive junior ocean view suite while winter rates through March go from \$845 to \$1,610, respectively.

Rates are higher on all dates in the 10 specialty suites.

The property does not charge a resort fee.

In addition, an agent rate of \$175 for a double room is offered all year except during the Christmas season.

“Tour operators are very important to us, and we will be working with them on packages,” Schoonewagen said.

Kempinski Hotels was founded in Europe in 1897 and includes 77 global properties. The brand debuted in the Caribbean with the opening of the Gran Hotel Manzana Kempinski in Havana in 2017.

The Cayo Guillermo Resort Kempinski resort on the north coast of Cuba is slated to open later this year.

Further expansion plans are under discussion for the Turks and Caicos, Antigua, Miami, Washington and Sao

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