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FALL / WINTER TRAVEL ISSUE

WELCOME TO THE CHÂTEAU

California Euro-luxury
{where you'd least expect it}



PLUS

WHERE
HOLLYWOOD
VACATIONS

MICRO-MINI
BEAUTY
POTIONS
TO CARRY ON

HOTEL
SHOPPING:
BEYOND
THE BATHRO

BEING THERE

A Shore Thing

Luxury and adventure
await in Dominical,
Costa Rica's blossoming
coastal treasure

By Josh Jenisch
Special Advertising Sections Writer

From secluded pools
to gorgeously
appointed accommoda-
tions to a legendary surf
scene, Dominical is bliss.



It's 9 a.m. Mesmerized by the hypnotic vortex of the teak ceiling fan and the staccato drumbeat of a passing morning storm, you're tempted to remain placidly prone, draped in designer linens and contemplating the eternal thunder of the surf. But with paradise literally at your doorstep, the promise of adventure is too great. You don a plush, personalized robe and head out into the living room, where a private chef has prepared a delectable early morning feast teeming with local flavors. Through gently billowing curtains, a thick golden glow pours in. The sun has cast off a veil of thunderheads: It's going to be another perfect day.

You're in Dominical, a tiny village nestled between verdant rainforest and the Pacific on Costa Rica's spectacular central coast. Minimally developed and staggeringly lush, Dominical is an unspoiled paradise, adopted home of surfers from all over the world, who come seeking epic barrels and a stress-free way of life. The town is uniquely Costa Rican, authentic without being quaint and exciting without being exhausting.

You're staying, as any self-respecting recreational hedonist would, at Kiana Resorts: The Villas at Playa Dominical. A beachfront spa and resort, Kiana is composed of 26 impressive individual villas, each handsomely styled in an Asian-Latin fusion motif. And though each is dramatically infused with the rich indigenous color palette, the overall feeling is one of rustic charm and understated refinement.

As you arrive at your private Kiana villa, General Manager Martial Thevenaz and his staff greet you with all the enthusiasm accorded a visiting foreign dignitary. Dip into either the awaiting tropical fruit basket or the perfectly warm waters of the nearby pool before heading

to the spa for a decadent post-flight massage. Afterward, relax in your own covered *palapa* – situated atop your villa, of course – and enjoy an early sunset, watching as the sky floods with fairy tale shades of purple and coral.

The next morning you're awake early for a visit to the resort's impossibly knowledgeable concierge. Among the particularly popular excursions are Don Lulo's Horseback Tours, which take riders on a jungle journey to a secluded waterfall (www.cataratasnauyaca.com), and Southern Expeditions' ocean kayaking tours, which guide paddlers through a series of extraordinary sea caves (www.southernexpeditionscr.com). Or, if off-road adventure is more your scene, U.S. ex-pats Will and Andy Totman take visitors – along with dog Ginger – on an especially invigorating journey into the heart of darkness aboard Yamaha ATVs at Adventure Motorsports (www.jungleatv.com). But you can't visit Dominical without learning how to surf, and the fun-loving but patient crew at Green Iguana Surf Camp will see you up on a longboard in just a few short hours (www.greeniguanaSURFCAMP.com).

At the end of the day, it's back to your quiet jungle sanctuary to relax on the terrace under a brilliant curtain of shimmering stars. Leave the TV off as Costa Rica's nocturnal symphony comes to energetic life – a vast array of forest creatures emerging for a nighttime frolic.

Visit www.Kiana-Dominical.com for more information. Reasonably priced flights are available from Flight Centre at www.FlightCentre.com. ■

Travel in Style is designed and edited by the Special Sections staff of the Los Angeles Times. Write to josh.jenisch@latimes.com with any questions.

