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USVI Entrepreneur Sam Raphael's Jungle Bay Named Caribbean's Leading Retreat Resort; New Ventures on Horizon

Recognized as the Caribbean's Leading Retreat Resort, Jungle Bay's success marks a milestone for Dominica's wellness tourism. Sam Raphael praised his team's two decades of work and hinted at new ventures in the region, potentially in or near the USVI.

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The Jungle Bay Luxury Resort in Dominica.

Jungle Bay Resort & Spa, under the leadership of owner USVI-based businessman Sam Raphael, has been named the Caribbean's Leading Retreat Resort at the 2025 World Travel Awards Caribbean & North America Ceremony, held over the weekend in Saint Lucia. In an interview

with the V.I. Consortium on Sunday, Raphael reflected on the achievement, the resort's evolution, and his vision for Dominica's tourism future.

Raphael, who was born in Dominica and migrated to St. Croix with his parents in 1967, described the recognition as a milestone earned through perseverance and teamwork. "When you work hard at something and then you're recognized for it, that's quite significant for us," he said. The award, he added, will help Jungle Bay and Dominica strengthen their reputation as leaders in wellness and retreat tourism.

He credited his dedicated team, many of whom have been with him for over two decades, for contributing to the resort's success. "I have a team that many of them have been with me for over 20 years ... developing their capacity," he said.

Raphael noted that Dominica has shifted away from pursuing a "sun and fun" tourism model toward a more sustainable niche rooted in adventure and wellness travel. "After 25 years, I think all parties have agreed that this is the right niche, and there's a strong future for Dominica in adventure and tourism," he said. "We've found our niche and we have an opportunity to continue to grow in that area."



Jungle Bay Resort in Dominica. (Credit: Jungle Bay)

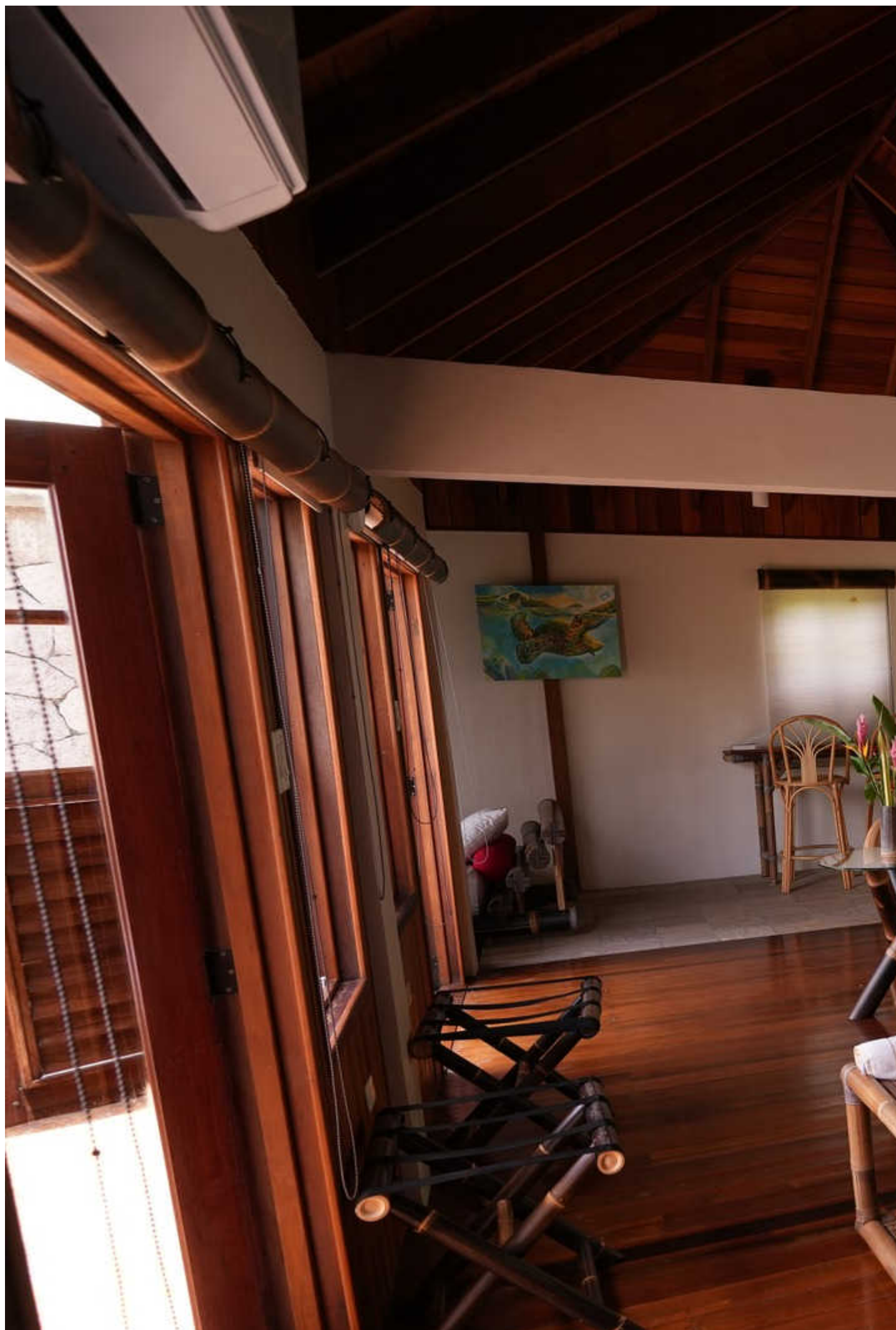
Jungle Bay first opened in 2005 on Dominica's east coast with 35 cottages, but Tropical Storm Erika in 2015 devastated the property. Rather than abandon the concept, Raphael rebuilt on the west coast near Soufrière and Scotts Head, expanding the resort to 89 rooms.

"We often had over subscription — there was more demand than we had accommodations," he said. "The storm was a setback, but it was an opportunity to rebuild bigger and better, and that's what we did in this new location."

The new facility officially opened in 2019, but operations were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2022, however, Jungle Bay has seen steady recovery and strong growth. Raphael said the resort has reached what he calls a “critical mass” — enough capacity to meet demand without losing its personal touch.

“We don't really want to bring more numbers because we want to offer personalized service,” he said, adding that many guests are repeat visitors who return for the individualized experience.

Raphael revealed that while Jungle Bay will remain stable in size, he is now turning his attention to new developments abroad — including a project in Bermuda and two others that have yet to be announced. “I have two other secrets that I’m working on. One is very close to you. I’ll just hint — in the next few months,” he said. Given that the V.I. Consortium is based in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Raphael’s remark suggests that one of his upcoming ventures could be planned for the Virgin Islands or a nearby Caribbean territory.



Located in Soufrière on Dominica's southwestern coast, [Jungle Bay offers guests an immersive nature experience](#). The property is built with local stone and hardwood materials, blending luxury with environmental sustainability. Guests can choose from eco-villas and private cottages overlooking the Caribbean Sea and tropical forest.

The resort emphasizes wellness and rejuvenation, featuring daily yoga and Pilates sessions, spa treatments, and guided adventure excursions such as hikes through Dominica's volcanic terrain and snorkeling in the nearby Soufrière-Scotts Head Marine Reserve. Packages include all meals, prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients, and wellness programs designed to promote balance and renewal.

Established in 1993, the [World Travel Awards](#) celebrate excellence across all sectors of global travel and tourism. Recognized as one of the most prestigious honors in the industry, the awards aim to acknowledge exceptional service, innovation, and leadership.

Raphael said Jungle Bay's recognition in this year's regional ceremony highlights not only the resort's excellence but also Dominica's growing influence in the Caribbean tourism landscape. "It's great that the island was recognized too, for being a top major destination," he said. "It's going to be a powerful tool for us as we go forward."

Raphael said Jungle Bay's future lies in maintaining the resort's boutique scale and commitment to personalized service while expanding Dominica's reputation as a destination for wellness and sustainability.

For him, the recognition validates two decades of persistence, creativity, and community engagement. "It's quite good because a lot of effort has been put in," he said. "It's huge that we get recognized, and it's going to help get the message across that Dominica and the Caribbean are leading wellness destinations."