



Welcome to Dominican Republic

"Taking part in the project gave me an insight into a completely different side to this amazing place, its so much more than just an incredible holiday destination."

The Dominican Republic is a colourful and fascinating kaleidoscope of Spanish, French, Haitian, and African influences and is home to some of the most rich and diverse landscapes in the world. Described by Christopher Columbus as "a beautiful island paradise with high forested mountains and large river valleys", the Dominican Republic offers a captivating and unique cultural experience, above and beyond the enticing attractions of sun, sea, and sand.

Know your History

Hispaniola

Explored and claimed by Christopher Columbus in the name of Spain on his first voyage to the New World in 1492, the island of Hispaniola ("Little Spain") was indigenously populated by the Taíno (the "good" or "friendly people") at the time of conquest. The 400,000 or so inhabitants of the island were soon wiped out by a combination of European diseases and harsh working conditions, as Spanish settlers exploited the gold deposits found in the country. The Taínos resisted the Spanish, but were soon conquered, and after the smallpox epidemic and intermarriage, the last record of pure Taínos was in 1864.

Settlement in Hispaniola meant a convenient springboard for the Spanish as they continued their conquest of the Americas. In 1496, Columbus' brother Bartholomew built Santo Domingo, Europe's first permanent settlement in the New World. The island went on to become the headquarters of Spanish power in the hemisphere for decades to come, and Columbus himself was buried in Santo Domingo upon his death in 1506.

The island and its primary settlement of Santo Domingo lost prominence when gold was discovered in Mexico and Peru, and Spain eventually ceded the western third of the territory to France in 1697. The French would turn their side of the island, which became known as Saint-Domingue and later Haiti, into the world's richest sugarcane producer. By the end of the 18th Century, Saint-Domingue had a population four times that of its Spanish cousin.

French rule & Toussaint Louverture

As a consequence of the revolutionary wars in France, the Peace of Basel meant Spain ceded the remainder of the island to the French. At the same time, Toussaint Louverture led a slave revolt against France. The slaves took Santo Domingo in 1801, and had control over the entire island until

1802, when an army sent by Napoleon captured Louverture and sent him to France as a prisoner. Louverture's lieutenants and a yellow fever epidemic drove the French from Saint-Domingue, which in 1804 was made the Republic of Haiti, whilst the French still controlled Santo Domingo. In 1808, Santo Domingo was returned to Spanish control when the criollos (people of Spanish origin) revolted against French rule after Napoleon's invasion of Spain.

Santo Domingo sought to gain its own sovereignty in 1821, when former Lieutenant-Governor José Núñez de Cáceres declared independence and requested admission to Simón Bolívar's republic of Gran Colombia, but was conquered and ruled by the Haitians in February 1822, which lasted for 22 years.

Haitian rule

A Dominican nationalist movement developed during the occupation when Jean-Pierre Boyar's (Haitian leader) reforms and new system caused widespread animosity. Boyar abolished slavery, just like Louverture two decades earlier, and nationalised private property (including property abandoned by landowners in the wake of the invasion, church property, and property belonging to the former Spanish rulers). He placed huge emphasis on cash crops, reformed the tax system and allowed foreign trade – the boom in sugar and coffee production did nothing to allay the protests of Dominican farmers. Under Boyar's rule, the education system collapsed, all Dominican men between 16 and 25 were drafted into the army, and the occupation troops had to "forage and sack" from Dominican civilians to get food, as they were unpaid. Boyar's "heavy tribute" on the Dominican people pushed more whites to Puerto Rico, Cuba and Venezuela. The economy failed, and a mix of Haitians, Dominicans and Anti-Haitian movements (pro-British, pro-French, pro-Spanish, pro-US and pro-independence), all joined to oust Boyar in 1843.

Independence

The eastern side of the island finally attained independence as the Dominican Republic in 1844. The revolution was led by Juan Pablo Duarte, now considered as the father of the Dominican Republic and the subject of a national holiday in the country. Tyranny, factionalism and rapid changes of government marred the first few decades of independence, and there were several attempts from Haiti to regain control, in 1844, between 1845 and 1849, from 1849 to 1855, and again between 1855 and 1856.

In 1861, Santana, who imprisoned, silenced, exiled, and executed many of his opponents, used both political and economic reasons to return to the Spanish Empire as part of an annexation agreement. In 1863, the Dominicans eventually launched the War of Restoration, led by Santiago Rodríguez, Benito Monción, and Gregorio Luperón, that restored independence in 1865. The Haitians, fearing Spanish rule, provided refuge and supplies to the revolutionaries, and the United States (caught in their own civil war) staunchly stood against the Spanish.

Trujillo

The US occupied the island, using military force, from 1916 to 1924 and the Dominican Republic was subsequently ruled by a succession of repressive military dictatorships, culminating in the rule of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo from 1930 to 1961. Trujillo's reign began after an election where he stood virtually unopposed, thanks to a violent campaign against his opposition. Trujillo ruled with an iron fist, using murder, torture and terrorism to suppress the opposition. He renamed Santo Domingo to Ciudad Trujillo (Trujillo City) and the Caribbean's highest peak, Pico Duarte, to Pico Trujillo (Trujillo Peak), as well as changing the names of many towns and provinces to honour his family.

Under Trujillo, the Dominican Republic experienced huge economic growth, and progress in healthcare, education, and transportation; he built hospitals and clinics, schools, and roads and harbours, negotiated a permanent border with Haiti and implemented a housing construction programme and pension plan. By 1947, the country was debt-free. However, most of the wealth went straight to Trujillo – by 1934 and the end of his first term, he was the wealthiest man in the country, and by the early 1950s, one of the wealthiest in the world. Shortly before the end of his regime, Trujillo's fortune was estimated to be about \$800 million.

The Parsley Massacre

Despite being one-quarter Haitian himself, Trujillo ordered the Parsley Massacre (known in the Dominican Republic as El Corte, or "the cutting") in 1937, where any Haitians in the Dominican Republic were to be executed. Between 17,000 and 35,000 Haitians were slaughtered by the army in six days, killed by machetes instead of bullets so that the army could not be implicated. To identify them, anyone with darker skin were questioned, using the shibboleth "perejil" (parsley) as the "r" was difficult to pronounce for Haitians.

The Mirabal sisters

On 25th November 1960, Trujillo ordered the killing of the Mirabal sisters – who were nicknamed Las Mariposas ("The Butterflies"). Strong opposers of the Trujillo regime, three of the four sisters – Patria Mercedes, Argentina Minerva, and Antonia María Teresa – were executed along with their driver, Rufino de la Cruz, in a sugarcane field, and their car thrown off the mountain La Cumbre to make it seem like an accident. The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is marked on the anniversary of their deaths.

Following military coups, civil war, and further US intervention, Joaquin Balaguer was elected president in 1966 and maintained an iron grip on power for the next 30 years, until international reaction to corrupted elections forced his removal from office in 1996. Subsequent elections have been won by both left- and right-wing parties, and former head of state Leonel Fernandez Reyna returned to power in May 2004.

1961

Despite the massacre of the Haitians, political assassinations and several plots against other countries, Trujillo's regime was supported by the US, Catholic church and Dominican elite – who believed that the regime was the "lesser of several evils". It wasn't until 1960, after his attempt to assassinate Rómulo Betancourt, the Venezuelan president, that the US broke with the Dominican Republic. Trujillo remained in power until his own assassination on 30th May 1961.

1961 – 1977

Leftist Juan Bosch took office in February 1963, but was overthrown by September. There followed 19 months of military rule, until a pro-Bosch revolt broke out in April 1965. In the US, president Lyndon Johnson feared a "second Cuba" should the revolt by communists succeed. In response, he sent the Marines just days later, with the army's 82nd Airborne Division and elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps in hot pursuit under Operation Powerpack. Joined by small contingents from the Organisation of American States, these forces stayed in the Dominican Republic for over a year – supervising the 1966 elections before they left. Joaquín Balaguer, Trujillo's last puppet-president, took power, remaining as president for 12 years.

Balaguer's reign reflected Trujillo's – repression of human rights and civil liberties (to keep pro-Castro or pro-communist parties out of power) conflicted with an ambitious infrastructure programme which included large housing projects, sports complexes, theatres, museums, aqueducts, roads, highways, and the Columbus Lighthouse (completed in 1992).

1978 – Present

In 1978, Antonio Guzmán Fernández, of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) succeeded Balaguer, and the PRD remained in power in 1982 with Salvador Jorge Blanco. PRD rule saw relative freedom and basic human rights emerging, until Balaguer's return in 1986. There followed two re-elections in 1990 and 1994; the 1994 elections were found flawed, and international pressure saw Balaguer schedule another presidential election in 1996.

In 1996, it was the turn of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) under Leonel Fernández. Both the PLD and PRD had been founded by Bosch, the PLD emerging in 1973 after Bosch left the PRD. Fernández oversaw a fast-growing economy, a drop in unemployment and stabilising exchange and inflation rates. Hipólito Mejía of the PRD took over in 2000, but economic strife during his reign saw the presidency handed back to Fernández in 2004. Despite accusations of corruption, Fernández and the PLD have been credited with moving the country forward technologically, with initiatives such as the construction of the Metro Railway (El Metro).

The citizens of the Dominican Republic have been devastated in recent years by a series of hurricanes that pass across the island seasonally. Over 2,000 people in the country's southwest died or went missing as a result of severe flooding in 2004. The country has recently been involved in the relief effort for the Haiti earthquake, which struck in early 2010. Refugees, hospitals and many charity base camps have been positioned along the border in an attempt to ease the troubles in Haiti. Political instability and civil unrest have increased in recent years following governmental economic policies which have included increasing prices and power cuts. Despite these troubles, the Dominican Republic remains a destination like no other – boasting a remarkable arts and entertainment scene and exotic cuisine.

Money Talks

As an upper middle-income developing country, the Dominican Republic is primarily dependant on agriculture, trade and services – especially tourism. The service industry is now the main source of employment for locals, overtaking agriculture.

Exports

The majority of trade for the Dominican Republic is from the US, and in lesser doses, Canada, Japan, and Western Europe. The main exports are: ferro nickel, sugar, gold, silver, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, and meats. Nearly 73% of all these goods go to the US.

Money

The Dominican Republic's currency is the Dominican peso (DOP / DR\$), is sometimes known as the "peso oro". One peso is divided into 100 centavos. The first Dominican peso currency replaced the Haitian gourde in 1844, and was originally divided into eight reales – the Dominican Republic decimalised, subdividing the peso into 100 centavos. Between 1891 and 1897, the franco was used alongside the peso, and in 1905, the US Dollar replaced the peso. The peso oro as it is now used

was not introduced until 1937, where it spent a decade as a second currency until the US Dollar was abandoned in 1947, after the introduction of the first peso oro banknotes (paper money).

Although you may be able to use US Dollars in some places, it is best to use pesos when visiting more rural areas. Casa de Cambios and ATMs are widely available in larger towns and cities, and cards such as MasterCard and Visa can be used in some places. When visiting smaller villages and more rural areas, always make sure you have enough cash to cover your stay, as ATMs may not be available.

Get Culture Savvy

Music

Over time, African, French, and Spanish influences have combined with indigenous culture to produce local musical and dance styles that are distinctively Dominican. The most popular form of music is the Merengue, but Salsa and the rural Bachata are also popular on the island. Local instruments help Dominican music stand out as a unique cultural form. Baseball is one of the most important cultural activities on the island, with the Dominican Republic famous for producing some of the best players in Major League Baseball, and the golf courses on the island attract the world's best players.

Food

Food in the Dominican Republic boasts many local delicacies and must-tries for visitors include a dish of mangu, a mix of plantains, cheese and bacon. La Bandera Dominicana, the Dominican flag meal, is eaten by nearly everyone at lunchtime. This dish consists of rice, beans, meat, vegetables, and fried plantains to ensure energy for the rest of the day. Another popular local dish is sancocho, a Spanish-style stew of various roots, green plantains, avocado, and typically chicken or beef, usually served with rice. A proper Dominican meal is not complete without dessert. In a land abundant with sugarcane, most desserts are exceptionally sweet. Cakes, puddings, caramel-dipped fruits, and creams are common.

The fascinating convergence of a multitude of cultures, including European, African, and American influences, has created something truly unique.

Holidays

1st January - New Year's Day
6th January - Epiphany
21st January - Our Lady of Altagracia
26th January - Duarte's Birthday
27th February - Independence Day
Varies (Friday before Easter) - Good Friday
1st May - Labour Day
Varies - Corpus Christi
16th August - Restoration Day
24th September - Our Lady of las Mercedes
8th November - Constitution Day
25th December - Christmas Day

Learn the Lingo

The official language of the Dominican Republic is Spanish. English is also widely spoken on the island, as it is a tourist hotspot for millions annually.

We recommend the Lonely Planet's Latin-American Spanish phrasebook to bring along with you to the Dominican Republic. The Spanish spoken in Spain is slightly different from the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic. Here are some phrases and words to get you started.

Remember:

The letters **LL** together are pronounced as **Y**

The letter **J** is always pronounced as **H**

The letter **V** is soft, so pronounce it as **B**

ENGLISH	SPANISH	ENGLISH	SPANISH
Greetings		Numbers	
Hi	Hola	1	Uno
Goodbye	Adios	2	Dos
Pleased to meet you!	Mucho gusto!	3	Très
How are you?	Como estas?	4	Cuatro
Good morning	Buenos días	5	Cinco
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes	6	Seis
Good evening/night	Buenas noches	7	Siete
8	Ocho		
About Yourself		9	Nueve
My name is...	Me llamo...	10	Diez
I am from England	Soy de Inglaterra	11	Once
I don't speak Spanish	No hablo Español	12	Doce
I don't understand	No entiendo	13	Trece
What's your name?	¿Cómo se llama usted?	14	Catorce
15	Quince		
In the Shop		16	Dieciséis
I would like.../I want...	Quiero	17	Diecisiete
How much does it cost?	Cuánto vale?	18	Dieciocho
Please	Por favour	19	Diecinueve
Thank you (very much)	(Muchas) gracias	20	Veinte
Yes	Sí	100	Cien
No	No	500	Quinientos
1000	Mil		
In the Restaurant			
Chicken	Pollo		
Vegetables	Vegetales		

Beef	Res	
Meat	Carne	
Cheese	Queso	
Fish	Pescado	
Tomato sauce	Salsa de tomate	
Beer	Cerveza	
I am a vegetarian	Soy vegetariano	

Lay of the Land

From tropical forests to semi-deserts, the Dominican Republic is composed of various climatic regions, the largest being sub-tropical moist and sub-tropical dry forests. Four mountain ranges elevate the island and are capped by four of the tallest peaks in the Caribbean: Pico Duarte (the highest at 3,098 m above sea level), La Pelona (3,094 m), La Rucilla (3,049 m) and Pico Yaque (2,760 m). The Dominican Republic also has the lowest point in the Caribbean, 40 m below sea level, at saline Lake Enriquillo.

What's the Weather like?

The climate is maritime semitropical with an average yearly temperature of 27°C. With a temperature range of 23°C to 31°C, the Dominican Republic is hot and tropical, with little seasonal variation in temperature. Seasons can, however, be determined by rainfall, with October to April being the rainy season on the north coast, whilst May to November is the wettest month in the south of the country. The driest area is the west. Cooler temperatures and less humidity are generally experienced between November and April, whilst the mountainous interior is always cooler than the rest of the country.

Biodiversity

The Dominican Republic's national bird is the Cotica Parrot, which is green and very talkative, and has been a popular pet until recently, when it has been targeted for protection. The country is a popular bird-watching destination, with the opportunity to see: parrots, hummingbirds, the Guaraguao (a hawk), the Barrancolí, and the Flautero.

Mammals on the island include the hutia, the endangered endemic rodent, and the manatee whose habitat is located in Estero Hondo, and is also in rapid decline. In 1996, President Balaguer took drastic steps to improve conservation. There are large protected areas off-limits for construction, and national parks established in Lago Enriquillo, towards the Haitian border in the south, Laguna Rincón in the east, as well as the reserve of las Cuevas de las Maravillas in Boca de Soco on the San Perdo de Macorís road on the way to La Romana. There are also several monuments across the country, including the Bahía de Calderas, which aims to protect the ecosystem in the dunes of Las Salinas (the largest sand dunes in the Caribbean).

The Isla Cabritos National Park in Lago Enriquillo is a particularly unique environment. Much of the original vegetation was lost to timber collection or to the goats and cattle which once grazed there. But recently, new secondary vegetation has been identified, including 106 species of plants and 10 different types of cactus. Populating the island is a large crocodile population, an endemic species of iguana, and a host of other reptiles. 62 species of birds have also been identified on the island – 5

aquatic, 16 shore, and 41 land birds – 45 of which are native to the island. For the birdwatchers, species that can be sighted or heard on the Isla Cabritos are: the Manuelito and the Great Hummingbird, the Querebebé which is best heard at dusk, and the Cu-Cú that sings at dawn and dusk, and nests in an excavated hole in the desert!

These mountain ranges, valleys, deserts, lakes, and islands serve as home to 5,600 plant species. 36% of the country's floral species are endemic, meaning they are found nowhere else in the world, including an endemic palm tree called the Manacle Palm. Several marine areas have been classified as national parks and many animals have found refuge here where 14% of the world's coral reefs reside. Six of the world's seven marine turtles live in the Dominican Republic, including the Mammoth Leatherback, in addition to the endangered Antillean Manatee, the Humpback Whale and the Bottlenose Dolphin, which are often observed in the Dominican Republic's bays.

Good Books

Guidebooks

- Rough Guide to the Dominican Republic. Sean Harvey. Rough Guides, 2009. ISBN 9781858288116
- Dominican Republic Travel Guide 3rd edition. Lonely Planet, 2005. ISBN 9781740597043
- Caribbean Islands 4th edition. Lonely Planet, 2008. ISBN 9781740595759

Teaching Guides

- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Elementary Students of English 2nd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press, 2002. ISBN 9780521529327
- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Students of English 3rd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 9780521532891
- Lessons from Nothing: Activities for Language Teaching with Limited Time and Resources (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Bruce Marsland. Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 9780521627658
- Games for Children (Resource Books for Teachers). Gordon Lewis & Gunther Benson. Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 9780194372244
- Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching 2nd Edition. Diane Larsen-Freeman. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 9780194355742

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