



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Caribbean, island of Hispaniola, east of Cuba.

Secretaría de Estado de Turismo (Ministry of Tourism)

Street address: Avenida México esq., 30 de Marzo, Edificio D, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Postal address: Apdo 497, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Tel: 221 4660. Fax: 682 3806. E-mail: sectur@codetel.net.do Web site: <http://www.dominicana.com.do>

Embassy of the Dominican Republic

139 Inverness Terrace, London W2 6JF

Tel: (020) 7727 6214 or 727 6232 (consular section) or (09001) 600 260 (recorded tourist cards information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7727 3693. Opening hours: 1000-1300 Monday to Friday.

Honorary Consulate of the Dominican Republic

539 Martin's Building, 4 Water Street, Liverpool L2 3TE

Tel: (0151) 236 0722. Opening hours: 0930-1230 Tuesday to Friday.

Web site: <http://www.dominicanrepublicconsulate.co.uk>

Tourist Board of the Dominican Republic

18-20 Hand Court, High Holborn, London WC1V 6JE

Tel: (020) 7242 7778. Fax: (020) 7405 4202.

E-mail: domrep.touristboard@virgin.net

Web site: <http://www.dominicana.com.do>

British Embassy

Edificio Corominas Pepin, 7th Floor, Avenida 27 de Febrero 233, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Tel: 472 7111 or 472 7905. Fax: 472 7574.

E-mail: brit.emb.sadom@codetel.net.do

Embassy of the Dominican Republic

1715 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Tel: (202) 332 6280. Fax: (202) 265 8057.

E-mail: embdomrepusa@msn.com

Web site: <http://www.domrep.org>

Dominican Republic Tourist Office

136 East 57th Street, Suite 803, New York, NY 10022

Tel: (212) 588 1012. Fax: (212) 588 1015.

E-mail: domrepinfo@ix.netcom.com

Embassy of the United States of America

Calle César Nicolás Pensón & Calle Leopoldo Navarro, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Tel: 221 2171. Fax: 686 7437.

General Consulate of the Dominican Republic

1470 Peel Street, Suite 263, Montréal, Québec H3A 1T1
Tel: (514) 284 5455. Fax: (514) 284 5511.

Dominican Republic Tourist Board
2080 rue Crescent, Montréal, Québec H3G 2B8
Tel: (514) 499 1918. Fax: (514) 499 1393.
E-mail: republicdominicaine@op-plus.net

Canadian Embassy

Street address: Capt. Eugenio de Marchena 39, La Esperilla, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Postal address: PO Box 2054, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Tel: 685 1136. Fax: 682 2691. E-mail: sdmgo@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

Country dialling code: 1 809.

2 GENERAL

Area: 48,422 sq km (18,696 sq miles).

Population: 8,190,000 (1997).

Population Density: 169.1 per sq km.

Capital: Santo Domingo. Population: 2,138,262 (1993).

Geography: The Dominican Republic is in the Caribbean, sharing the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and constituting the eastern two-thirds of land. The landscape is forested and mountainous, with valleys, plains and plateaux. The soil is fertile with excellent beaches on the north, southeast and east coasts, rising up to the mountains.

Government: Republic. Gained independence in 1884. Head of State and Government: President Hipoliti Mejia since 2000.

Language: Spanish is the official language. Some English and French are spoken.

Religion: Roman Catholic; small Protestant and Jewish minorities.

Time: GMT - 4.

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60Hz. American-style 2-pin plugs are in use.

Communications:

Telephone: Full IDD available. Country code: 1 809. Outgoing international code: 011. CODETEL, Dominican Republic's telecommunications company has produced the Caribe Card, which enables tourists visiting the country to phone anywhere abroad from any touchtone phone. For further information contact CODETEL, Av. Tiradentes 1169, Santo Domingo (tel: 220 5168; fax: 549 4721; e-mail caribecard@codetel.com.do).

Mobile telephone: AMPS network and GSM 1900 network exist.

Fax: There are facilities at most locations and many hotels offer this service.

Internet/E-mail: ISPs include Codetel (web site: <http://www.codetel.net.do>).

Telegram: These may be sent from RCA Global Communications Inc., Santo Domingo, or from ITT-America Cables and Radio Inc., Santo Domingo. Large hotels have facilities.

Post: Airmail takes about seven days to reach western Europe. It is advisable to post all mail at the Central Post Office in Santo Domingo to ensure rapid handling.

Press: All daily papers are in Spanish. The English-language Santo Domingo News is published weekly on Wednesday and may be obtained in hotels. Dominicana News, a monthly Tourism Promotion Council publication, has the main Dominicana tourism industry items.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz17.7115.226.1955.975

Voice of America:

MHz13.749.7756.1305.995

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	3	Yes
Australian	Yes	3	Yes
Canadian	1	3	Yes
USA	1	3	Yes
OtherEU	2	3	Yes
Japanese	Yes	3	Yes

PASSPORTS: Passports valid for 6 months after date of departure required by all except:

- (a) 1. nationals of Canada and the USA holding appropriate ID such as a Birth Certificate or a Driver's Licence;
- (b) 2. nationals of Germany holding a National Identity Card.

Note: These nationals will also require Tourist Cards, which may be purchased on arrival.

Tourist Cards: Issued to travellers visiting the Dominican Republic for touristic purposes for stays of up to 90 days. Tourist cards may be issued on arrival at a cost of US\$10, though this can be a lengthy process. Extensions are possible.

Nationals of the following countries are eligible for a Tourist card:

- (c) 3. nationals of the countries mentioned in the chart above;
- (d) nationals of Albania, Andorra, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Curaçao, Czech Republic, Dominica, Ecuador, French Overseas

Territories, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Korea (Rep. of), Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Martin, St Vincent & the Grenadines, San Marino, Slovenia, Surinam, Switzerland, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands, Uruguay, US Virgin Islands, Venezuela and Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro);

(e) foreign nationals who are permanent residents of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK and USA.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section. In the UK, the cost is £8.

Application requirements: (a) Photocopy of the photo page of the passport, containing personal details of the applicant. (b) For permanent legal residents of the countries listed under (e) above, a photocopy of their residency permit as stamped on passport. (c) Fee, payable by postal order or bank draft. Applicant's name and address must be written on the back. (d) Stamped, self-addressed envelope for postal applications.

VISAS: Required by all except holders of a Tourist card:

Note: In addition to a valid visa, nationals China (PR) require an authorisation from the Director of the Migration/Immigration Department.

Types of visa and cost: Tourist and Business (single entry); Business (multiple-entry). All visas cost £10

Validity: Tourist visas and single-entry Business visas are valid for 60 days. Multiple-entry Business visas are valid for up to 1 year.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

Application requirements: (a) Valid passport. (b) Application form and seal stamps (costs £25). (c) 4 passport-size photographs. (d) Fee. (e) Stamped, self-addressed envelope for postal applications.

Working days required: A few days for Tourist Cards; 4 weeks for Tourist and Business visas which have to be referred to the authorities in the Dominican Republic unless requested by cable (the cost of which must be paid by the applicant).

Temporary residence: Consult the Consulate or Consular section at the Embassy.

4 MONEY

Currency: Dominican Republic Peso (peso) = 100 centavos. Notes are in denominations of peso1000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of peso1, and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 centavos.

Currency exchange: The peso is not available outside the Dominican Republic. Currencies of the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK and Venezuela may be converted into local currency. At departure, up to 30% of the exchanged currency can be reconverted into US Dollars at any bank, provided original receipts

are shown. All exchange must be done through official dealers such as banks and hotels approved by the Central Bank.

Credit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are all accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: Travellers cheques are accepted by some banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Dominican Peso against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=23.60 24.37 23.16 23.66 \$1.00=15.90 16.24 16.00 16.20

Currency restrictions: The import and export of local and foreign currency is limited to peso 20,000.

Banking hours: 0800-1600 Monday to Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into the Dominican Republic without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes; 2 litres of alcoholic beverages; a reasonable quantity of perfume (opened).

Prohibited Items: All animal products, agricultural and horticultural products and drugs.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Jan 21 Our Lady of Altagracia. Jan 26 Duarte's Birthday. Feb 27 Independence Day. Apr 13 Good Friday. May 1 International Labour Day. Jun 14 Corpus Christi. Aug 4 Foundation Day of Santo Domingo. Aug 16 Restoration Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Nov 6 Constitution Day. Dec 5 Discovery of Hispaniola. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Jan 21 Our Lady of Altagracia. Jan 26 Duarte's Birthday. Feb 27 Independence Day. Mar 29 Good Friday. May 1 International Labour Day. May 30 Corpus Christi. Aug 4 Foundation Day of Santo Domingo. Aug 16 Restoration Day. Oct 12 Columbus Day. Nov 6 Constitution Day. Dec 5 Discovery of Hispaniola. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	Yes	-

Malaria	1	-
Food and Drink	2	-

1: Low malaria risk, exclusively in the malignant falciparum form, exists throughout the year in rural areas of the western provinces of Castañuelas, Hondo Valle and Repillo Salcedo. Chloroquine is the recommended prophylaxis.

2: All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated and sterilisation should be considered essential. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is pasteurised. Powdered or tinned milk is available. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information consult the Health appendix. Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water. Swimming pools which are well-chlorinated and maintained are safe.

Diffuse cutaneous leishmaniasis has been reported. Hepatitis A may occur.

Health care: Health insurance (to include emergency repatriation) is strongly recommended.

Travel - International

AIR: The Dominican Republic's national airline is Aerolinas Santo Domingo (EX). American Airlines offers daily flights from London via Miami. Direct flights from the USA are operated by Continental Airlines (from New Jersey), and TWA (from New York). Iberia operates every day to Santo Domingo via Madrid. Other airlines operating flights from Europe are Air France, Air Portugal, Iberia, Air Europa, Condor and Martinair.

Approximate flight time: From London to Santo Domingo is 11 hours (including stopover).

International airports: Santo Domingo (SDQ) (Internacional de las Americas), 30km (18 miles) east of the city (travel time - 30 minutes). Taxi services are available to Santo Domingo. Airport facilities include outgoing duty-free shop with perfumes, designer fashions, cigarettes, cameras and spirits; post office; bank/bureau de change (24 hours); restaurants and bars (some are open 24 hours) and car hire.

Puerto Plata International Airport (POP) (Internacional General Gregorio Luperón). Airport facilities include outgoing duty-free shop with perfumes, spirits, cameras and cigarettes; banking and exchange facilities; restaurant; bar and car hire (Avis).

Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ) is 10-30 minutes travel time from the Punta Cana and Bávaro resorts. Airport facilities include gift shops, duty-free shop and taxi.

Departure tax: US\$10. Passengers in direct transit and children under two years of age are exempt. A 'stay tax' is also levied on all passengers staying longer than 3 months: peso60.48 (3-9 months); peso100.80 (9-12 months) or peso160.16 - peso600.32 (1 year or more).

Note: When buying an international air ticket in the Dominican Republic a tax of at least peso3139 (approx £160 on a one-way ticket) and at least peso2671 (approx £135 on a return ticket) is levied on the carrier by the Government. This expense is passed on directly to the customer on the price of the ticket. If the ticket is bought outside the Dominican Republic there is no tax.

SEA: Cruise lines calling at the Dominican Republic include Regent Holidays, Seabourn, Holland America and Windjammer.

Travel - Internal

AIR: There are regular flights between Santo Domingo, Santiago, Samaná, Punta Cana and Puerto Plata by Bávaro Sun Flight or Dorado Air. Planes may also be chartered. For more information, contact the airlines directly.

ROAD: Traffic drives on the right. There is a reasonable network of roads, including the Sanchez Highway running westwards from Santo Domingo to Elias Pina on the Haitian frontier; the Mella Highway extending eastwards from Santo Domingo to Higüey in the southeast, and the Duarte Highway running north and west from Santo Domingo to Santiago and to Monte Cristi on the northwest coast. Not all roads in the Dominican Republic are all-weather and 4-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended for wet weather. Checkpoints near military installations are ubiquitous, though no serious difficulties have been reported (those near the Haitian border are most likely to be sensitive). Bus: Cheap and efficient air-conditioned bus and coach services run from the capital to other major towns. Car hire: There are several car-hire companies in Santo Domingo (including Hertz and Avis). Minimum age for car hire is 25. A credit card is required for car hire transactions. Documentation: A national or International Driving Permit is accepted, but is only valid for 90 days.

URBAN: Santo Domingo has flat-fare bus and minibus services, and an estimated 7000 share-taxis called Carro de Conchos. These operate a 24-hour service, stop on demand and charge higher fares. In old Santo Domingo the streets are narrow with blind corners so care should be taken, particularly as Dominican drivers have a tendency to use their horns rather than their brakes. Horse-drawn carriages are available for rent in most cities for tours around parks and plazas.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Santo Domingo to other major cities and towns in the Dominican Republic.

Air	Road	
Santiago	0.30	2.00
Puerto Plata	0.45	3.15
Samaná	0.35	4.30
La Romana	0.25	1.45
Punta Cana	0.30	4.15
Barahona	4.00	

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: The Dominican Republic boasts nearly 27,000 hotel rooms, making it the largest room supply in the entire Caribbean and extensive development is still under way. The southeast coast is noted for its modern hotels and beautiful beaches. In the capital the choice runs from clean and cheap to plush, with rates remaining the same all year because of steady business traffic. At resort hotels winter prices are higher and in summer prices drop by up to 10%. Hotels outside Santo Domingo and La Romana are considerably less expensive whatever the season. Service charge and a 13% government tax will be added to all bills. Grading: There is a 5-star grading system, but visitors should note that even the highest grade is somewhat lower in standard than is general in the Caribbean. For further information, contact the Asociación Nacional de Hoteles y

Restaurants, Avenida Mexico 66, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (tel: 687 4676; fax: 685 6752 or 687 4727; e-mail: cpt@codetel.net.do or asonahores@codetel.net.do; web site: <http://www.drhotels.com>).

GUEST-HOUSES: Guest-houses are very economical, and best found after arrival in the country.

SELF-CATERING: Self-catering establishments are available in Puerto Plata at very reasonable rates.

CAMPING: There are no official sites. Camping is only possible in rural areas with permission from the landowner. National Parks are also available for camping with the permission of the National Parks Office.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Baseball: Baseball: This is not only the national sport, but also a national obsession, and even the smallest communities have floodlit stadiums. The centre of the country's baseball is the industrial seaport of San Pedor de Macoris. Many Dominican players go on to play in the US major leagues. Juan Marichal, whose pitching exploits for the San Francisco Giants landed him a place in the Baseball Hall of Fame, is now the country's Director of Sports. The professional winter season runs from October to January. Visitors should ask local people or look in the local paper for schedules and the nearest game.

Watersports: Watersports: The opportunities for watersports in the Dominican Republic are excellent. Although some shores are rough and rocky, there are magnificent stretches of beach suitable for swimming. For scuba diving and snorkelling enthusiasts there is reef diving, good visibility, warm waters, wrecks, caverns and a rich marine life. Good dive sites include Sosúa (near Puerto Plata); Cabrera (freshwater cave diving with an underground lake); Las Terrenas; the Sasmaná peninsula; Punta Rucia (good for coral diving); La Caleta National Underwater Park (accessible by boat from Boca Chica); Catalina and Saona islands (accessible by boat from La Romana); and Barahona (an area currently being developed for ecotourism). Experienced divers can also join the North Caribbean Research Group and participate in a government-funded project to recover and remove artefacts from sunken ships (some dating back to the 16th century); details can be obtained by e-mail (info@oldship.com). Snorkelling and diving equipment can be borrowed or hired from dive operators and resort hotels. Small sailing craft are available through hotels in Santo Domingo and most other resorts in the country. Boat trips to the marine caves of the Gri Gri Lagoon near Sosúa are a popular tourist attraction. Hotels also organise charter boats for offshore fishing for marlin, sailfish, dorado, benittos and other game fish. River fishing in flat-bottomed boats with guides can be arranged at La Romana, Boca de Yuma and on the north coast. Windsurfing is particularly good at Sosúa, which also hosts the Professional Windsurfing Association World Cup.

Adventure sports: Adventure sports: The Dominican Republic was quick to jump onto the adventure sports bandwagon and, hence, has well developed facilities for the usual range of adrenalin-generating sports. Whitewater rafting is available on the Río Yaque del Norte in Jarabacoa. The best places for tubing, in which participants individually float down the rapids in oversized rubber tubes, are on the Río Jamao del Norte, the Río Yaque del Norte and the Río Isabela in Santo Domingo. Cascading involves climbing up to the top of a waterfall and rappelling down the cascade tied to a rope; the best places to do this are El Salto de Jimenoa, Cascada del Limón, Cascada Ojo de Agua and El Salto de Baiguate. Canyoning, which is cascading minus the

rope (meaning that practitioners climb up a river gorge and then jump into the river below), is popular at La Madajagua in Imbert and the Jarabacoa area.

Trekking and hiking: Trekking and hiking: The best places for trekking are Jarabacoa, the Constanza Valley, and the Nuevo Valley. Hiking and climbing enthusiasts may join the locals' annual pilgrimage to the Caribbean's highest mountain, the Pico Duarte (3210m/10,7000ft), which they can conquer either on foot or by riding a mule. Similar tours can also be made at Pico Yaque, El Mogote, Mount Isabel de Torres and, in the southwest, the Sierra de Bahoruco.

Horseriding: Horseriding: Dominicans love horseriding and their country offers some of the best riding in the Caribbean. Regular polo games are held at Sierra Prieta in Santo Domingo and at Casa de Campo near La Romana where guests can join in the twice-weekly competitions.

Golf: Golf: There are nine championship golf courses (and several others under construction), many of which are bordered by the ocean on one side and the mountains on the other. Following on from the 42nd Caribbean Golf Championships, which were held in the Dominican Republic in 1998, the country continues to actively promote itself as a major international golf destination. Some of the best courses can be found at La Romana Country Club, Casa de Campo, Dientes del Perro (Teeth of the Dog), Playa Dorrada (designed by Robert Trent Jones), Gran Diabolo Links (the planned location for the country's first Golf Academy) and Santo Domingo Country Club. For more information, contact the Federation of Dominican Golf (ADOGOLF) (tel: 476 4898; fax: 476 4829).

10 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Native Dominican cooking combines Spanish influences with local produce. Beef is expensive (Dominicans raise fine cattle, but most is exported) and local favourites are pork and goat meat. There is plenty of fresh fish and seafood, island-grown tomatoes, lettuce, papaya, mangoes and passion fruit and all citrus fruits are delicious. Local dishes include la bandera (meaning 'the flag', comprising white rice, red beans, stewed meat, salad and fried plaintain), chicharrones (crisp pork rind), chicharrones de pollo (small pieces of fried chicken), casava (fried yucca), moro de habicuelas (rice and beans), sopa criolla dominicana (native soup of meat and vegetables), pastelón (baked vegetable cake) and sancocho (stew with anything up to 18 ingredients). Drink: Presidente (Dominican beer) is very good, as are rum drinks such as the local Brugal or Bermudez. Rum añejo (old, dark rum) with ice makes a good after-dinner drink. Native coffee is excellent and very strong. Locally-produced beer and rums are cheaper than imported alcohol which tends to be expensive.

Nightlife: Choice varies from a Las Vegas-style revue, discotheques and casinos to a quiet café by the sea in Santo Domingo. Hotels offer more traditional shows including folk music and dancing. Popular dances are the merengue, accompanied by a 3-man group called perico ripiao, and the salsa. The Malécon, along a seaside boulevard in Santo Domingo, is known as the world's longest discotheque. Concerts and other cultural events are often held at the Casa de Francia and Plaza de la Cultura in Santo Domingo, among other venues.

Shopping: Best buys are products made on the island including amber jewellery and decorative pieces. These are a national speciality, some pieces encasing insects, leaves or dew drops within ancient petrified pine resin. Larimar or Dominican turquoise is another popular stone. Milky blue and polished pink pieces of conch shell are also made into jewellery. Rocking chairs, wood carvings, macramé, pottery, Taino artefacts, Creole dolls, baskets, limestone carvings and

cassettes of salsa and merengue also make good buys. Bargaining is recommended. Shopping hours: 0800-1200 and 1400-1800 Monday to Saturday.

Special Events: Carnivals, fiestas and festivals are held frequently all year round, both in larger cities as well as among the rural communities. As in many Latin American countries, Carnival is a traditional event. Merengue is the national music and the Merengue Festival draws large numbers of nationals as well as international musicians and spectators. For a complete list of events in 2001, contact the Tourism Promotion Council (see address section). The following is a selection of the major festivals and other special events celebrated in the Dominican Republic:

Feb 2001 Sosua and Cabarete Gastronomic Festival. Feb Carnival, Santo Domingo and other parts of the country. Mar 7-17 Santo Domingo Music Festival. Jun Puerto Plata Cultural Festival. Jul Santo Domingo Merengue Festival. Oct Puerto Plata Jazz Festival. Oct/Nov Puerto Plata Merengue Festival.

In addition to the above, various saints' days are celebrated in different places throughout the year.

Social Conventions: The Dominican lifestyle is more American than Latin, with short siestas and without long, late lunches. The non-Latin ambience is indicated by the fact that, though the culture is rich in Roman Catholic and Spanish influences, 72-hour divorces may be obtained. Daytime dress is generally casual but beachwear and shorts are only acceptable in resorts and at pools. Evenings tend to be smarter, with jackets (although not necessarily ties) recommended for men at better restaurants, hotels and for social functions. Tipping: Hotel and restaurant bills automatically include a 10% service charge but an additional tip may be given as an appreciation of good service. Taxi drivers on the fixed routes do not expect tips.

11 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Sugar, coffee and cocoa are the main agricultural cash crops. The mining industry produces ferro-nickel, gold and silver. These primary products are the basis of the Dominican Republic's economy and its main export commodities. Exploration of other potential deposits has been underway throughout the 1990s, but although some gold and silver has been located, the expected oil deposits have failed to materialise. Industry is mainly concentrated in production of food and drinks, chemicals and refining of imported oil. In the service sector, tourism has had a major impact on the Dominican Republic's economy during the last 20 years and now contributes one-sixth of total output. In 1984, the Dominican Republic was accepted into CARICOM. The economy remains dependent on substantial foreign aid, principally from the USA and the Inter-American Development Bank. The USA is substantially the Dominican Republic's main trading partner, followed by Venezuela, Mexico, the Netherlands and Japan.

Business: It is usual for business people to dress smartly and to deal formally with each other at first, although the general atmosphere is informal. Spanish is the main business language and a knowledge of it will be of assistance. Enquire at hotel for interpreter services. Office hours: 0830-1200 and 1400-1800 Monday to Friday. Government office hours: 0730-1430 Monday to Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Cámara de Comercio y Producción de Santo Domingo, Apartado Postal 815, Arz. Nouel 206, Santo Domingo (tel: 682 7206 or 682 2688; fax: 685 2688; e-mail: camara.sto.dgo@codetel.net.do; web site: <http://www.ccpd.org.do>).

12 CLIMATE

Hot with tropical temperatures all year. Rainy season is from June to October. Hurricanes may sometimes occur during this time.

13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Columbus discovered the island of Hispaniola (which he called La Espaniola) in 1492 and established it as his main base for the further exploration of the region; in 1697 the western part of the island came under the French, the east remaining under Spanish control. In 1795 the city of Santo Domingo (the oldest city in the Americas, founded in 1496 by Columbus' brother) was ceded to the French. The battle of Palohincado, in 1808, in which the Dominican General Ramirez inflicted an important defeat on the French, heralded the collapse of French rule. The colony reverted to Spanish sovereignty in 1809, and in 1821 the colonial treasurer, José Nunez de Caceres, proclaimed Santo Domingo's independence. This independence was short-lived and in 1822 the Haitians invaded the colony and occupied it for 22 years, until on February 27, 1844, the independence of the Dominican Republic was proclaimed. After many years of civil war, dictatorship and US occupation, the Republic was ruled by the dictatorship of General Rafael Trujillo (1930-61), whose assassination led to a period of civil unrest. Under the control of President Joaquin Balaguer, leader of the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano, (PRSC), who served three terms from 1966, the country was reasonably stable. Guzman Fernandez of the main opposition party, the centre-left Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), won the elections in 1978, but after a further defeat in 1982, Dr Balaguer was returned to the Presidency in 1986, and again in 1990. Throughout the Nineties, economic problems and IMF-imposed austerity policies were widely unpopular and prompted bouts of civil unrest. In 1994, Balaguer secured a narrow victory, but accusations of institutionalised corruption led to a major overhaul of the electoral process. Following fresh elections in November 1995, Balaguer was re-installed for a seventh term. A series of increasingly desperate energy crises, steep inflation, and the widespread deterioration of public services provoked a fresh cycle of protests and strikes. Balaguer stood down, and the presidential elections of May 1996 - the first under the new electoral system - were overseen by international observers. An alliance between the PLD and the PRSC (called the Frente Nacional Patriotico) helped Leonel Fernandez Reyna of the PLD to a narrow victory. The alliance also won control of the National Congress at the latest election held in May 1998. However, in May 2000, Balaguer's attempt to secure an eighth presidential term ended in defeat at the hands of the PRD candidate Hipolito Mejia.

Government: The bicameral National Congress comprises the legislature, and members of both houses (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) are elected by universal adult suffrage, as is the President, who has executive power.

14 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: The Dominican Republic is in the Caribbean, sharing the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and constituting the eastern two-thirds of land. The landscape is forested and mountainous, with valleys, plains and plateaux. There are excellent beaches on the north, southeast and east coasts, rising up to the mountains.

The old parts of the capital, Santo Domingo, have been carefully restored to retain their colonial charm. The modern areas contain a thriving port city with discotheques and casinos. A few miles east of the city is a remarkable cave complex, Los Tres Ojos de Agua (The Three Eyes of Water), containing three turquoise lagoons, fed by an underground river and surrounded by stalactites, stalagmites and lush vegetation.

Native Dominican cooking combines Spanish influences with local produce. Local dishes include la bandera (comprising white rice, red beans, stewed meat, salad and fried plantain) and cassava (fried yucca) Locally-produced beer and rum is relatively cheap. For nightlife, the choice varies from a Las Vegas-style revue, discotheques and casinos to a quiet café by the sea in Santo Domingo. The national music, Merengue, is celebrated in several festivals which draw large numbers of national and international musicians.

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