



OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR  
FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION  
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
UNIBE

# WELCOME TO THE **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**



# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic is a country where people are happy, friendly and always willing to help or to share what they have. Dominicans live for each day, and we are constantly laughing.

The three most important elements of Dominican culture are music, family and food. We cannot live without all three. The three traditional local music genres are bachata, merengue and salsa. The basic meal consists of rice and beans prepared in many different ways, seasoned but not spicy. Other staples of the Dominican diet are meat, plantains, tubers, juice and cheese. Many dishes are fried in vegetable oil.

Spanish is the primary language of the Dominican Republic and the majority of the population is Roman Catholic.

Here you'll find some short but necessary tips on what to know for your stay on this beautiful island. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

## PLANNING TIPS

Visit [www.godominicanrepublic.com](http://www.godominicanrepublic.com), our official tourism website.

## MONEY AND COSTS

Currency: Dominican peso (RD\$)

ATMs can be found throughout the DR. Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in cities and tourism-related businesses. Banks with reliable ATMs include Banco Popular, BanReservas, Banco BHD León and Scotiabank.





## WHAT TO WEAR

Dominicans, especially in Santo Domingo, Santiago and other large cities and towns, dress well; consider long pants and comfortable, semi-formal tops (never shorts or tank tops), even in the warmest weather, when you'd probably rather wear as little as possible. High heels and starched shirts are the norm for nights out.

## TAXES & REFUNDS

Most restaurants add a whopping 28% tax to every bill: this includes the ITBIS, which is the national government tax of 18% and a 10% service charge. Be sure to ask when requesting a service if the listed price includes the tax. There is no refund mechanism for VAT-exempt goods for the average traveler.

## HEALTH & INSURANCE

From a medical standpoint, the DR is generally safe as long as you're reasonably careful about what you eat and drink. As always, you should purchase travel or health insurance offering you coverage abroad. Medical care options vary in Santo Domingo and are limited elsewhere, although good privately run clinics and hospitals can be found everywhere.

Tap Water must not be used for drinking.

## EMERGENCY & IMPORTANT NUMBERS

For all calls within the DR (even local ones), you must dial 1 + 809 or 829 or 849 (national area codes) + the number. There are no regional codes. The national Emergency number is 911.

## MOBILE PHONES

Local SIM cards can be used or phones can be set for roaming. If you have a GSM phone, and you can unlock it, you can buy a SIM card at one of the local phone companies, Altice or Claro (prepaid kit US\$30).

## POST MAIL

Post service in the DR can't be relied upon, since mailing addresses are non-existent in much of the country. It can take as long as a month for a letter to arrive from the US. Your best bet is FedEx or UPS.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

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The Dominican Republic is not a particularly dangerous place to visit, but foreigners should be aware of the following:

- Street crime is rare, but locals advise to avoid talking on or looking at mobile phones in public areas, as thieves are known to snatch them
- Don't walk on beaches at night, and consider taking a cab (taxi) or an Uber when returning home late from bars
- Car theft is not unheard of, so don't leave valuables inside a personal vehicle
- Tensions along the Haitian border flare up occasionally: always check the current situation before visiting or crossing the border

Women traveling without men in the Dominican Republic should expect to receive some attention, usually in the form of hissing, whistling, catcalling, stares and comments like 'Hello, beautiful'. Although it may be unwanted, it's more of a nuisance than anything else. If you don't like it, dressing conservatively and ignoring the comments are probably your best lines of defense.



# GETTING AROUND

## BUS (FOR OUT-OF-TOWN TRAVEL)

To travel around the country, the DR has a great bus system. Fares are low – the tickets are less than US\$10 – and you must buy your ticket before boarding. Reservations aren't usually necessary and are rarely even taken. Unfortunately, there are no central bus terminals in the majority of cities and each company has its own station location. For detailed information on available bus routes and schedules, visit the following websites:

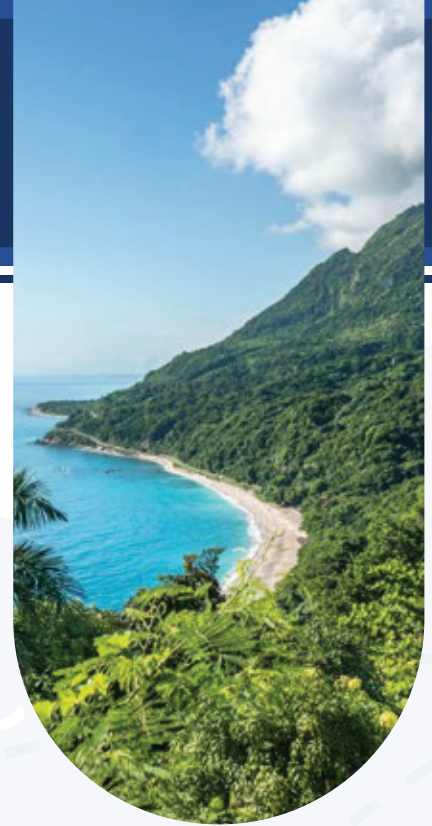
- Caribe Tours [www.caribetours.com.do](http://www.caribetours.com.do)
- Metro [www.metro serviciosturisticos.com](http://www.metro serviciosturisticos.com)

## HITCHHIKING

Hitching is never entirely safe, and we don't recommend it. Travelers who hitchhike should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk.

## LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

- **Taxi:** Dominican taxis rarely cruise for passengers – instead they wait at designated stops which are located at hotels, bus terminals, tourist areas and main public parks. Taxis do not have meters, so we recommend that you discuss and agree on a price with the driver beforehand. A normal taxi ride should run around RD\$250.
- **Uber** is a good and safe choice to travel around; just download the app and request a ride.
- **The Santo Domingo Metro** is the local metro (subway) system. Rechargeable cards can be purchased at every station for RD\$60 and each ride costs RD\$20. Visit: [www.metro santodomingo.com](http://www.metro santodomingo.com)
- **Local Bus or Guaguas** (pronounced 'gwa-gwa') are typically midsize buses that pick up and drop off passengers anywhere along their route – to flag one down simply hold out your hand. They rarely have signs, but the driver's assistant (known as the cobrador, or 'fee collector', since one of their jobs is to collect fares from passengers), will yell out the destination to potential passengers on the side of the road. Don't hesitate to ask a local if you're unsure which one to take. Most guaguas pass every 15 to 30 minutes and cost RD\$35 to RD\$70.
- **Motoconcho** (motorcycle taxis) are the best, and sometimes only, way to get around in many towns. An average ride should set you back no more than RD\$50. By law, drivers are required to wear helmets though it's generally ignored, as are any tickets issued.
- **Públicos** (also known as conchos or carros) are public transportation cars. They don't have signs but the drivers hold their hands out the window to solicit potential passengers. They are also identifiable by the excessive amount of people inside them: up to seven passengers in a midsize car! To flag one down simply hold out your hand, the fare is around RD\$30.



# SANTO DOMINGO

## TOP SIGHTS TO VISIT

- The Colonial City
- Mirador del Sur Park
- Columbus Lighthouse
- National Botanical Garden
- Palacio Nacional (The National Palace, which is the Presidential building)
- Los Tres Ojos Cave
- Malecón Santo Domingo
- Dominican Baseball Stadium "Estadio Quisqueya"

## NIGHT LIFE & ENTERTAINMENT

- Parada 77 (@parada77rd)
- Onno's bar (@onnoszonacolonial)
- Mix (@mixrest)
- Hard Rock Café (@hrscsd)
- Mercado Colón (@mercado.colonrd)
- Casa de Teatro
- Beer Market (@beermarketrd)
- La Alpargatería (@laalpargateria)
- Jet Set Club (@jetsetclubrd)
- Grupo Bonyé - Monasterio de San Francisco Dominican free concert every Sunday night
- El Teatro Nacional Eduardo Brito [www.teatronacional.gob.do](http://www.teatronacional.gob.do)

## WHERE TO SHOP?

- Mercado Modelo
- Agora Mall
- Sambil Mall
- Blue Mall
- Supermercado Nacional
- La Sirena Multicentro

# BÁVARO & PUNTA CANA

## TOP SIGHTS TO VISIT

- Ojos Indígenas Ecological Park & Nature Reserve
- Hoyo Azul Cave
- Macao Beach
- Marina Cap Cana
- Arena Gorda Beach
- Dolphin Discovery Punta Cana
- Juanillo Beach

## NIGHT LIFE & ENTERTAINMENT

- Hard Rock Cafe Punta Cana (@hrcpuntacana)
- Huracan Cafe (@huracancafe)
- Onno's Bar (@onnosbavaro)
- Coco Bongo (@cocobongoshow)
- Imagine Punta Cana (@imaginecave)

## WHERE TO SHOP?

- Puntacana Village
- BlueMall Punta Cana
- Downtown Mall
- Palma Real Shopping Village
- San Juan Plaza Shopping Center
- Supermercado Nacional
- Jumbo Supermarket



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