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# SANTO DOMINGO

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**Dominican Republic**  
Has it all

# Welcome to Santo Domingo

Dominican Republic's capital city of Santo Domingo serves as the Caribbean's most culturally rich and historic destination and, arguably, it's most vibrant. The city itself displays contrasts at every turn – contemporary hotels sit on ancient cobblestone streets, luxury cars park beside well-worn scooters, and exotic cuisine is served at chic restaurants while street vendors offer traditional Dominican fare. The city's restaurants specialize in both gourmet Dominican cuisine, as well as gastronomy from around the world, while shopping delights visitors and residents alike with boutiques and major chain retailers from the U.S. and Europe – abundant in the city. Santo Domingo also features a wealth of museums, galleries and theaters, ensuring no shortage of cultural experiences.

Nestled inside Santo Domingo on the Ozama River is America's first and oldest city, the Colonial City, which was established by Christopher Columbus and his brother Bartholomew in 1498. Here, visitors can walk cobblestone streets that conquistadors once strolled centuries ago. The Colonial City is one of the most beautiful and romantic areas in all of the Caribbean, especially at night with restaurants, museums and ancient stone structures dating to the early 1500s. Major business hotels and the panoramic views of the dark blue water along the Malecón are also hotspots for international conferences.

Within an hour east of Santo Domingo, visitors can escape to the resort town of Boca Chica, known as the capital's beach town. Boca Chica's beaches are a family favorite for their coral reef-protected lagoon, shallow waters and soft powdery sand lapped by turquoise waters. The area is surrounded by a variety of seafood restaurants, charming hotels, fun shops, exquisite beaches and boasts perfect weather for sailing.

Further east, Juan Dolio is a slow-paced escape from the energetic city for Dominicans and visitors alike. The beach town rests along the Caribbean shoreline with a quiet main street where most hotels and restaurants are located. With very little traffic on the main beach road, you can walk, jog or cycle to nearby shops and beaches, making Juan Dolio the perfect quiet getaway with the comforts of home.

The following guide to Santo Domingo includes descriptions of the amazing attractions, golf courses, beaches and more that await you.

*Cover photo: Alcázar de Colón*



*Dominican Carnival*



*Folklore Dancers*

*Alcázar de Colón*



# Facts

Santo Domingo, located on the Southcentral Coast of Dominican Republic, is the country's capital city, rich in culture and juxtaposed against modern attractions and nearby exquisite beaches. Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the large island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Republic of Haiti, and is the second largest country in the Caribbean, comprising an area of 19,279 square miles (48,442 square kilometers). The country has a population of 9.5 million and enjoys sunny tropical weather year-round. The average year-round temperatures are 78° to 88° F (25° to 31° C). The cooler season is November through April, while it is warmest from May through October.

**CAPITAL CITY:** Dominican Republic's historic and sophisticated capital city, Santo Domingo, is the oldest city of the New World and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1990.

**LANGUAGE:** Spanish is the official language; however, you'll be surprised by the fact that the majority of employees in hotels and tourist destinations speak relatively good English, French, German and Italian.

**CURRENCY:** The Dominican peso (RD\$) is the official currency.

**GETTING HERE:** Dominican Republic currently has eight international airports throughout the country, including: Las Americas International Airport (SDQ) in Santo Domingo, La Romana International Airport (LRM), Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ), Gregorio Luperón International Airport (POP) in Puerto Plata, El Cibao International Airport (STI) in Santiago, and

El Catey International Airport (AZS) in Samaná. Maritime ports that regularly receive cruise ships include: Santo Domingo Port (Don Diego and Sans Souci terminals), Casa de Campo Port in La Romana and Samaná Bay facilities.

**DOCUMENTATION:** For most visitors, a valid passport along with a US\$10 Tourist Card (available at the airport) is required to enter the country. For a list of countries that can enter Dominican Republic with or without a visa, please visit: [www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/en/entry-requirements](http://www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/en/entry-requirements).

**TIME:** The local time zone is Eastern Caribbean Time (GMT -0400). Dominican Republic does not observe daylight savings time.

**ELECTRICITY:** Operates at 110 Volts/60 Hertz, the same as North America.

**TAXES:** Dominican hotels and restaurants collect 26 percent of their published prices (16 percent sales tax + 10 percent service charges).

**MEDICAL PRECAUTIONS:** Travelers visiting the country are advised to drink only bottled water. Also, because of the strength of the Caribbean sun, it is recommended that vacationers drink water throughout the day to avoid dehydration.

**DRINKING AGE:** The legal drinking age in the country is 18-years old.

**HOTELS:** For information about Dominican Republic hotels and accommodations in the Santo Domingo region, visit [www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/en/hotels](http://www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/en/hotels), the Association of Hotels and Tourism at [www.Asonahores.com](http://www.Asonahores.com), or the Hotel Association of Santo Domingo at [www.CometoSantoDomingo.com](http://www.CometoSantoDomingo.com).

Fortaleza Ozama





Colonial City

# Attractions



Catedral Primada de América



Alcázar de Colón interior

**SANTO DOMINGO'S COLONIAL CITY** – The Colonial City was the first city established in the New World and was erected by Columbus' brother Bartholomew and Bartholomew's son Diego. Thanks to its historical and cultural value, the Colonial City was recognized by UNESCO and declared a world Heritage Site in 1990. Visitors will find hundreds of preserved buildings dating back to the early 1500's, many of which are now museums. Among them are Alcazar de Colon (Diego's home), Ozama fortress and the palace of the Spanish court. A few streets over, in the center of the walled city, visitors will find the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, which was deemed the first cathedral in the New World by Pope Paul III in 1542.

**CATEDRAL PRIMADA DE AMÉRICA** – The Cathedral of Santo Domingo is the first cathedral of the New World. The Gothic style building is highlighted with Renaissance details dating from 1514 to 1546. The architecture emphasizes its cultural and historical content. Its physical interior has great artwork, paintings and gravestones with the remains of archbishops, antique furniture and many other interesting items dating from the era of colonization. The cathedral is open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. (809) 682-3848

**MUSEO DE LAS CASAS REALES** – Once the seat of the Supreme Court of the Governor of the 16th century, the Royal Houses Museum documents the rich history of Santo Domingo with ancient tapestries, maps and other articles. The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (809) 682-4202

**FORTALEZA OZAMA** – The Ozama Fort, named after the Ozama River, is another historical monument that makes up the Colonial Zone. It was built from 1502 to 1508 by Fray Nicolas de Ovando, the governor of the island, in order to protect the city from attacks by pirates and conquerors. It was constructed out of stone and retains its original medieval appearance. Inside you can discover eerie tunnels and dungeons where prisoners, including Christopher Columbus, were once held captive. The fort is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (809) 333-8672

**PLAZA DE LA CULTURA** – Santo Domingo has dozens of museums, many of which are located in the city's Cultural Plaza, where visitors can see the Museum of the Dominican Man, the Museum of Modern Art and the National Museum of Natural History. The National Theater also resides in this Plaza and is the heart of artistic expressions of music, lyrics and performances. Proper attire is required for any visitors who wish to explore its three famous halls, each offering a different form of entertainment.

**CONVENTO DE LOS DOMINICOS** – Located at Padre Billini Street on the corner of Duarte Street in the Colonial City, the Convent is open to visitors with new audio guided tours, which are available in Spanish, English, French, Italian, German and Russian. The restored Convent and church, which was originally built in 1510, once housed the first university in the New World and is most famous for where Father Montesinos made the first human rights call in the New World. The Convent is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and the tour lasts 30 minutes. (809) 682-3780

**PALACIO DE BELLAS ARTES** – The Palace of Fine Arts was opened in 1956 and houses the School of Visual Arts, the National Folkloric Ballet, the National Choir, the National Dance School, the office of the National Symphony Orchestra, the National Ballet, the School of Dramatic Art and the Fine Arts Theater, which presents art and cultural events. (809) 682-1325

**FARO A COLÓN** – Constructed to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the New World, the Columbus Lighthouse is a mammoth structure in the shape of a cross. Visitors come here during the day to see the tomb that houses Columbus' remains and on special nights you can see the Dominican sky with a cross atop the roof.

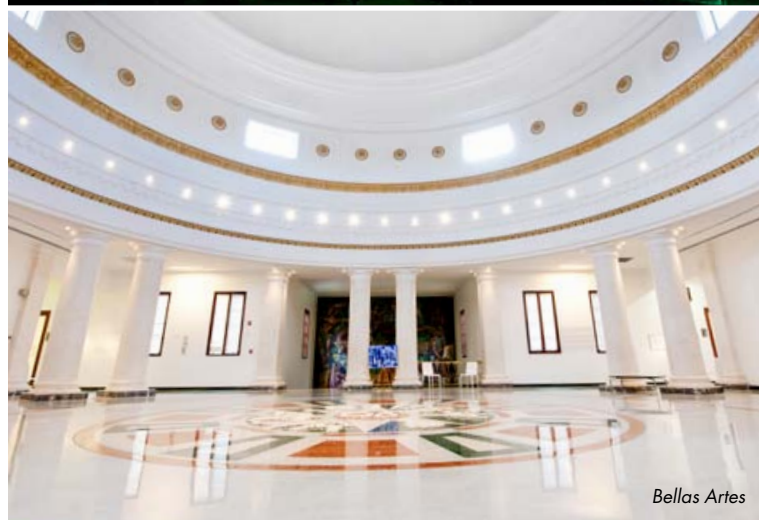
**ACUARIO NACIONAL** – Located just minutes from the Columbus Lighthouse, the National Aquarium is a massive fish complex with a Plexiglas tunnel running through it, causing visitors to feel as if they are swimming underwater with the schools of exotic fish. A hit with kids, the aquarium's most popular resident is a giant manatee by the name of Tamaury.

**LOS TRES OJOS** – East of the city, limestone caves expose gorgeous pools of water at the "Cave of Three Eyes." With accessible pathways and staircases, the cave is decorated with ancient drawings from indigenous Taino Indians and pieces of handmade pottery.

**MALECÓN** – An 8-mile (14 kilometer) maritime boulevard fringed by palm trees, the Malecón is lined with benches for sitting and admiring the Caribbean Sea. Referred to as the Caribbean Seaside Boardwalk of Santo Domingo, the Malecón was recognized by the international organizers of American Capital of Culture 2010 as one of the city's seven material cultural treasures. The Malecón runs along George Washington Avenue and is one of the most attractive avenue in the city, famous for nearby restaurants and entertainment, as well as for maintaining most of the major five-star hotels.



Faro a Colón



Bellas Artes



Los Tres Ojos



Botanical Gardens



Chinatown



Blue Mall

**JARDÍN BOTÁNICO** – The Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens, occupying 2.4 million square yards (2 million square meters), is the largest in the Caribbean. Commonly experienced while riding a small train, the park is a haven for the island’s natural flora and is decorated with areas of palm trees, orchids and exotic plants. Bird watchers can also participate in organized programs by the Hispaniolan Ornithological Society.

**PARQUE MIRADOR** – The extensive green space of Mirador Park is filled with a variety of trees and lined by stunning views of the Caribbean Sea. Mirador Park is popular for picnics, walking, running, biking and skating. The park’s southern avenue is closed to traffic from 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. and again from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., making it extremely pedestrian-friendly.

**BARRIO CHINO** – Santo Domingo’s Chinatown, Barrio Chino, showcases Chinese culture through specialty stores. Visitors can experience it by visiting the various Chinese restaurants and specialty stores, as well as buildings like the Museum of Chinese Culture, the Chinese Language School and the Chinese Clinic dedicated to Eastern Medicines.

**SHOPPING** – Santo Domingo will charm even the most discriminating shopper with a variety of shopping experiences. The Blue Mall offers upscale stores like Louis Vuitton, Armani and Cartier. The Acropolis Mall with its many European stores and a variety of restaurants is also a favorite. The ultra-modern Novo-Centro is transforming the capital city’s skyline and features beautiful modern architecture with many popular shops, bars, cafes, and small movie theaters. Other shopping venues in Santo Domingo include Plaza Central, Bella Vista Mall, Americana Departamentos, Ikea and Cuesta. In addition, there are many gifts shops located in the Colonial City, including the famous pedestrian street El Conde and the Mercado Modelo. Boca Chica’s main shopping strip, one block up from the beach, includes Dominican essentials like rum, cigars, artwork, crafts and more.

**SCUBA DIVING** – Scuba diving nearby Boca Chica is popular due to the La Caleta National Underwater Park. The diving and snorkeling is good in the area, as the all-inclusive hotels offer swimming pool lessons for beginners and open water dives in the crystalline waters.

**NIGHTLIFE** – Boca Chica and Santo Domingo both offer a different nightlife influence. Boca Chica is known for its romantic restaurants that line the sea, as well as the large all-inclusive

hotels that offer entertainment shows targeting both couples and families. Santo Domingo's discos favor dancing merengue, salsa, bachata and even rock, as well as casino gambling until dawn. The Colonial Zone attracts a younger crowd and the nightlife starts late, with people arriving at the discos after 11 p.m.

**CASA DE TEATRO** – Art lovers can visit Casa de Teatro, an arts complex within a renovated colonial building that features galleries of rotating exhibits by Dominican artists. The center also hosts stage productions, musical presentations, spoken word shows over the weekend and an open-air bar.

**SANTO DOMINGO TOURIST TRAIN** – Santo Domingo's tourist train, Chu Chu Colonial, enriches the tourist experience of the heritage offered in the capital city. The tour is composed of panoramic views and information on the most outstanding monuments of the historic city, some dating back more than 500 years. Open seven days a week, the tour lasts 45 minutes and departs hourly between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. The tour provides travelers with audio guides in Spanish, English, French, Italian and Russian. [www.ChuChuColonial.com](http://www.ChuChuColonial.com)



# Beaches

*Playa Boca Chica*



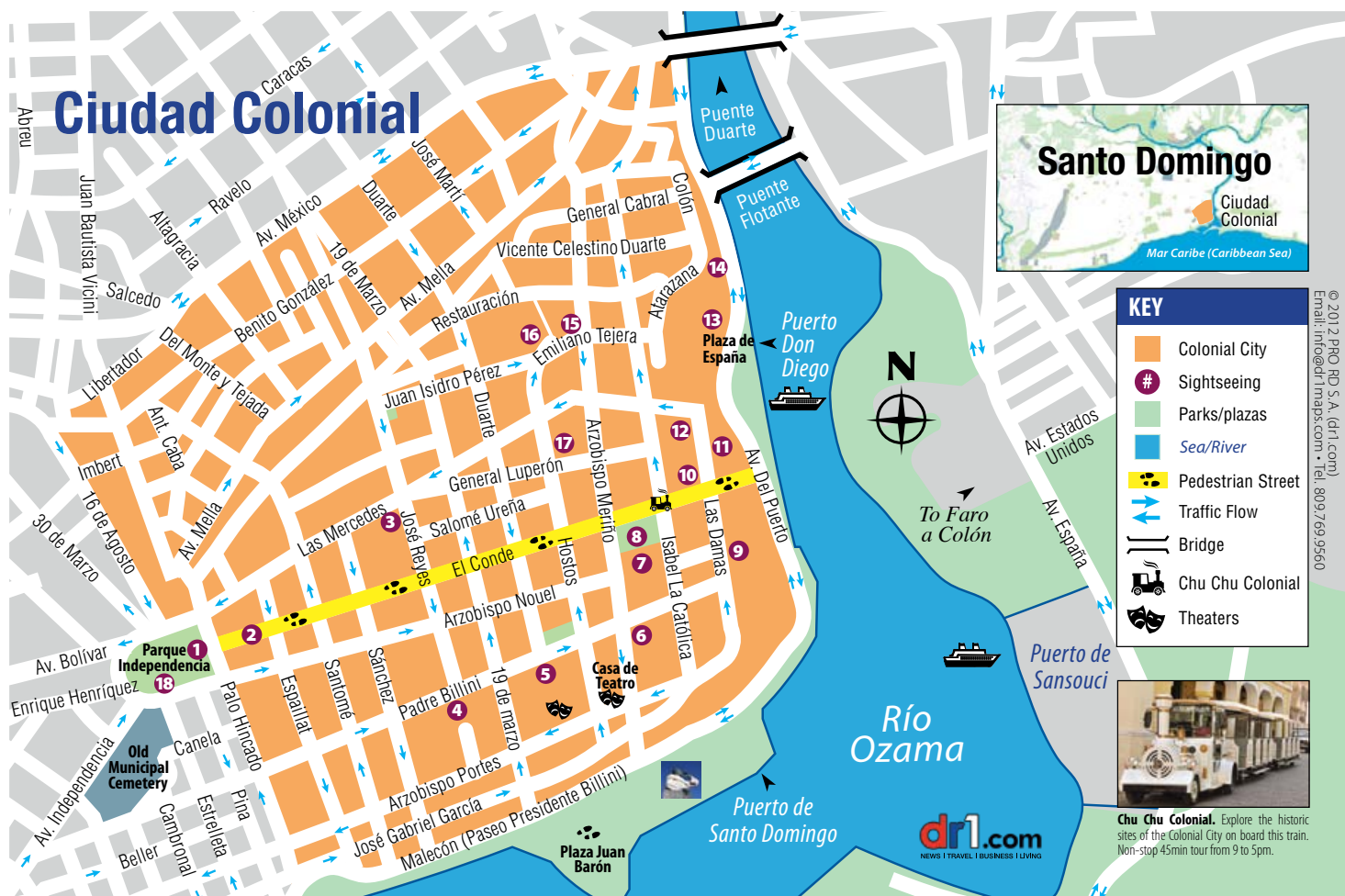
**PLAYA BOCA CHICA** – Boca Chica beach lies 20 miles (30 kilometers) east of Santo Domingo. The city beach, which is famous for its powdery-white sand, attracts large crowds on weekends, and vendors can be found selling everything from massages to seafood to necklaces. Lined with outdoor restaurants and majestic views, Boca Chica Beach is home to attractive marinas that cater specifically to boating and sailing pursuits.

**PLAYA CARIBE** – A small, cove-like beach that is very popular among people from Santo Domingo. The waves are known to be good for body boarding.

**PLAYA GUAYACANES** – About eight miles (13 kilometers) east of Boca Chica is the small town of Guayacanes. The town's beach offers a mix mainly of locals and some tourists, but its calm waters create a small village appeal.

**PLAYA JUAN DOLIO** – Juan Dolio Beach, located two miles (three kilometers) east of Guayacanes, is much more laid back than Boca Chica. High-rise beachfront residences cater to affluent city dwellers who make the commute to enjoy the sea views and food at the very good restaurants. The large expanse of shoreline allows for a relaxing day at the beach, while the resorts even sell one-day passes with all-inclusive minus the room.

# Ciudad Colonial



KEY	
	Colonial City
	Sightseeing
	Parks/plazas
	Sea/River
	Pedestrian Street
	Traffic Flow
	Bridge
	Chu Chu Colonial
	Theaters



**Chu Chu Colonial.** Explore the historic sites of the Colonial City on board this train. Non-stop 45min tour from 9 to 5pm.

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1 Puerta del Conde



2 Calle El Conde



3 Iglesia de las Mercedes



4 Iglesia Regina Angelorum



5 Convento de los Dominicos



6 Casa de Tostado



7 Catedral Primada de América



8 Parque Colón



9 Fortaleza Ozama



10 Panteón Nacional



11 Hostal Nicolás de Ovando



12 Museo de las Casas Reales



13 Plaza de España



14 Alcázar de Colón



15 Museo del Ambar



16 Ruinas de San Francisco



17 Hospital Nicolás de Bari



18 Parque Independencia





# BOCA CHICA - JUAN DOLIO

KEY		
● Resort town	Boat Launch	---- Foot Trail
Expressway	Beach	Casino
Road	Surfing	Golf
International Airport	Sailing	Church
Heliport	Diving/Snorkeling	Hotel Area
Bus Station	Shipwreck	Restaurants
Marina	Park Boundaries	Gas Station



To:  
 • San Pedro de Macoris  
 • Cueva de las Maravillas  
 • La Romana



## Events



**CARNIVAL** – Join in the cultural celebration of Carnival. Locals and visitors dress in traditional devil costumes and decorate themselves with elaborate masks. Festivities take place every Sunday in February and peak the first weekend in March with a large parade that makes way along the Malecón.

**SANTO DOMINGO INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR** – Santo Domingo’s Plaza de la Cultura hosts the Santo Domingo International Book Fair, which is dedicated to a different country every year. The fair presents readings by top national and international authors and poets, as well as a chance to buy and browse a variety of books. [www.Ferilibro.com](http://www.Ferilibro.com)

**MERENGUE FESTIVAL** – Every July or August, top bands at Santo Domingo’s seaside promenade, the Malecón, pump out the infectious music that is much loved by Dominicans at the Merengue Festival. Locals and tourists dance on the beach, in hotels and throughout the capital. There are amateur DJs on every block and rum and beer companies set up their own sound systems, with live bands attracting huge crowds.

**TASTE SANTO DOMINGO** – Taste Santo Domingo is the most complete gastronomic event in the country where the audience can enjoy the mouthwatering cuisine that Dominican Republic offers, along with wines and spirits from all over the world. The culture-infused gastronomic event is held in October. [www.TasteSantoDomingo.com](http://www.TasteSantoDomingo.com)

**DominicanaModa** – DominicanaModa is held every October at Hotel Occidental El Embajador. The glamorous event features numerous Dominican designers, both established and emerging, as they showcase their fashion creations alongside a number of international designers, such as Oscar de la Renta, Tatiana Torres and Sonia Chang. [www.DominicanaModa.com](http://www.DominicanaModa.com)

**BASEBALL** – In December and January, Dominican Major League Baseball greats join their local teams to close the regular season and commence league season finals. Action in Santo Domingo is at the Quisqueya Ball Park. The regular season opens at the end of October and runs through the first week of February when the winner of the Winter Professional Baseball Championship gets to represent the country in the Caribbean Series. Every year the Caribbean series is rotated among Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Venezuela. [www.Lidom.com.do](http://www.Lidom.com.do)

**LONG NIGHT OF MUSEUMS** – Held in mid-December, it is a cultural event where numerous museums and other cultural institutions are open free to the public late at night. The night includes concerts, food tasting, music, folk dances, concerts, lectures, theater and more.

**ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR IN COLONIAL CITY** – The Arts & Crafts Fair in Colonial City is held at Plazoleta Fray Bartolomé de las Casas at the intersection of Calle Padre Billini and Calle Arzobispo Meriño every Friday to Sunday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Shoppers can view and purchase Dominican-made fine arts and crafts.

**SON AT THE COLONIAL CITY** – Free performances by Group Bonyé and other musical groups, including son, jazz and merengue, are held every Sunday from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the San Francisco Monastery in Santo Domingo’s Colonial City.

**FOLKLORE FIESTA AT PLAZA DE ESPAÑA** – The Dominican Republic Ministry of Tourism sponsors a night of folklore dances in the Colonial Zone every Friday and Saturday. The free concert is held at the esplanade of the Plaza de España.

**JAZZ NIGHTS** – Dominican Fiesta Hotel & Casino presents Fiesta Sunset Jazz rooftop concerts featuring innovations of jazz, blues and other genres for locals and visitors year-round. Admission is free and concerts start at 6:30 p.m. every Friday. Music lovers can also visit La Cantina del Agave every Wednesday at 9 p.m., to enjoy the most popular Dominican songs with jazz influences from all eras (809) 562-8222

For a detailed list of events, visit the Calendar of Events at [www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/rd/Events](http://www.GoDominicanRepublic.com/rd/Events).

*Dominican Amber*



*Folklore Fiesta*



*Chu chu Colonial*

Guavaberry Golf and Country Club



# Golf

Dominican Republic's capital city of Santo Domingo offers golfers rounds of world-class courses within a thriving metropolis that overflows with vivacious culture. As a hotbed for golf, this region caters to those who appreciate modern sophistication amid a rich historic background. If you seek an idyllic golfing escape from the energetic city, you need only travel approximately one hour or less to enjoy a peaceful course in the nearby beach town Juan Dolio

LAS LAGUNAS GOLF COURSE  
[www.LasLagunas.com.do](http://www.LasLagunas.com.do)

SANTO DOMINGO COUNTRY CLUB (Private)  
SENIOR / LOS ROBLES  
[www.SantoDomingocc.com](http://www.SantoDomingocc.com)

ISABEL VILLAS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB  
[www.ClubIsabelVillas.com](http://www.ClubIsabelVillas.com)

GUAVABERRY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB  
[www.GuavaberryGolf.com.do](http://www.GuavaberryGolf.com.do)

METRO COUNTRY CLUB  
LOS MARLINS GOLF COURSE  
[www.MetroCountry.com](http://www.MetroCountry.com)



# Local Transportation

As the second largest country in the Caribbean, Dominican Republic offers a wide range of activities, which can be a short or long distance away from one another. Many options exist for traveling on well-maintained highways to nearby attractions and also to more distantly located excursions.

**BUS COMPANIES** – Air-conditioned motor coaches and vans arranged by local tour operators are available from most hotels. Also, companies provide service between Santo Domingo and major cities. Autobuses Metro Tel 809 566-7126, Caribe Tours (809) 221-4422 and Expreso Bávaro (809) 682-9670.

**CAR RENTALS** – Car rental offices and facilities can be found at the local airports. Renters must be 25 with a valid driver's license.

**AIRPORT** – Las Americas International Airport (SDQ) is the second busiest airport in the country following Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ), as well as one of the largest in the Caribbean. SDQ, which received the Best Airport in the Caribbean Award from Routes and Official Airline Guide (OAG) Airport Marketing Awards, lies 12.4 miles (19.8 kilometers) east of the city center and receives in-country and international flights. Also in Santo Domingo, La Isabela International Airport (JBQ) caters to domestic flights and a few international flights to other Caribbean islands.

**CRUISES** – Visitors can arrive via Santo Domingo's world-class seaport, nestled at the mouth of the Ozama River where it meets the Caribbean Sea. The port features two state-of-the-art cruise ship terminals. The Don Diego and Sansouci Terminals are an important part of Santo Domingo and welcome the world's most venerable cruise ships to America's first city.

**GROUND TRANSPORTATION** – Taxis are available at most hotels and tour operators are more than willing to provide additional options for getting around. Visitors should also check with their hotel for any recommendations.



## TABLE OF DISTANCES:

Santo Domingo –	
Boca Chica	40 minutes
Juan Dolio	55 minutes
La Romana	2 hours
Constanza	2 hours
Jarabacoa	2 hours
Santiago	2 hours
Bayahibe	2 hours and 20 minutes
Samaná	2 ½ hours
Barahona	3 hours
Puerto Plata	3 ½ hours
Punta Cana	3 ½ hours

Sans Souci Port





# Dominican Republic



KEY	
<span style="color: red;">●</span>	City and Town
<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	Point of Interest
	Cruise Port
	International Airport
	Domestic Airport
	Beach
	Protected Area/Park
	Golf Course
	Whales
	Highest Peak

# Dominican Republic Ministry of Tourism

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# Dominican Republic Has it all

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