

NORTH AMERICA · BEACHES · HISTORY · WILDLIFE · NIGHTLIFE · ADVENTURE

 Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is best known for Punta Cana's all-inclusive beaches, but it has far more depth: Santo Domingo's Ciudad Colonial is the oldest continuously inhabited European city in the Americas, humpback whales gather in Samaná Bay each winter, and Pico Duarte rises above 3,000 metres. Towns like Las Terrenas and Jarabacoa reward independent travellers.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Dominican Republic and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 7 August 2026.

 CAPITAL Santo Domingo	 CURRENCY Dominican peso (DOP) £1 ≈ DOP 82.07	 LANGUAGE Spanish	 BEST TIME Dec–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£220 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B 120V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 9h 30m direct ~£500–£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC-4 standard time

The Dominican Republic fills the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti, and it packs more variety than its resort image suggests: Caribbean and Atlantic coastlines, the highest mountains in the Caribbean, a salt lake below sea level and the oldest colonial city in the Americas. Most UK visitors fly straight into Punta Cana and stay there. A more rounded trip starts in Santo Domingo, heads north-east to the Samaná Peninsula for beaches and whales, follows the north coast to Cabarete and Puerto Plata, then climbs into the cool Cordillera Central around Jarabacoa before finishing in Santiago.

Prices vary hugely by style. All-inclusive packages can be good value, but independent travel is reasonably cheap once you use the long-distance buses, guaguas and local comedores serving plates of rice, beans and stewed meat. Resorts are busiest from Christmas to Easter, when the weather is driest; beaches outside the resort strips stay quiet year-round. The country suits beach-lovers, divers, hikers and anyone happy to dance — merengue and bachata pour out of every colmado, the corner shop that doubles as a bar. Visitors are often surprised by the noise, the friendliness and how good the coffee is.

Top 5 highlights

1

HISTORY

Ciudad Colonial, Santo Domingo

Founded in the 1490s, Santo Domingo's UNESCO-listed old town holds the oldest cathedral in the Americas, the Alcázar de Colón built for Columbus's son Diego, and Calle Las Damas, often called the oldest paved street in the New World.

2

WILDLIFE

Samaná Bay whale watching

Between mid-January and March, thousands of North Atlantic humpback whales gather in Samaná Bay to mate and calve. Boat trips leave from Santa Bárbara de Samaná, and the displays of breaching and tail-slapping can be spectacular.

3

NATURE

Los Haitises National Park

Boats nose through mangrove channels and between forested limestone haystack hills to caves decorated with Taíno pictographs. Trips run from Samaná and Sabana de la Mar, with frigatebirds and pelicans overhead.

4

ADVENTURE

Pico Duarte

The Caribbean's highest peak, at just over 3,000 metres, is usually climbed over two or three days from La Ciénaga near Jarabacoa, with a guide and mules, through pine forest to a chilly summit dawn.

5

BEACH

Bávaro and Punta Cana beaches

The east coast's long run of powder-white sand and palms is the country's resort heartland. Beyond the all-inclusives, wilder Macao beach draws surfers, and catamaran trips head south to Isla Saona's shallow, starfish-dotted waters.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Santo Domingo

≈ 3 million people

The sprawling capital mixes the cobbled Ciudad Colonial, a seafront Malecón, baseball at the Estadio Quisqueya and a nightlife scene that runs on merengue, bachata and cold Presidente beer.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Santiago de los Caballeros

≈ 610,000 people

The Cibao valley's busy second city is the heart of the tobacco trade, with cigar factories, the hilltop Monument to the Heroes of the Restoration and a lively carnival.

3RD LARGEST CITY

La Romana

≈ 265,000 people

A sugar-mill town turned tourism hub, La Romana is the jumping-off point for Casa de Campo, the mock-Mediterranean village of Altos de Chavón, Bayahibe's dive sites and Isla Saona.

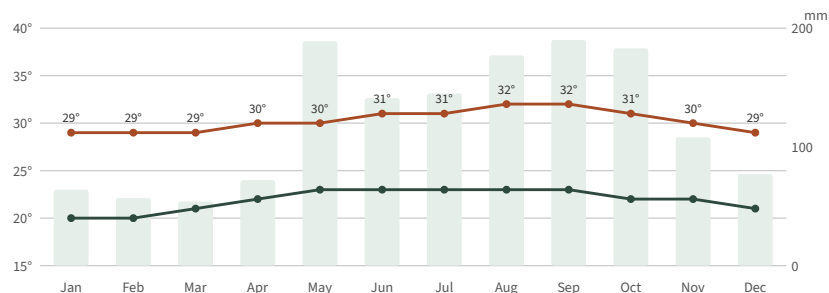
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Dominican Republic

Best time: **Dec–Apr.**

**Average climate in Santo Domingo**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb	Carnaval Every Sunday in February, towns stage parades of masked devils and costumed dancers; La Vega's diablos cojuelos are the most famous, with a national parade in Santo Domingo around Independence Day on 27 February.
Mar–Apr	Semana Santa Holy Week is the country's biggest holiday: Dominicans head en masse for beaches and rivers, buses and hotels fill up, and many businesses close over the long weekend.

How much does Dominican Republic cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ DOP 3,693 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £100 per person / day ≈ DOP 8,207 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £220 per person / day ≈ DOP 18,055 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

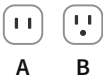
La bandera dominicana The national lunch: white rice, stewed red beans and braised chicken or beef, usually with salad and fried plantain, named after the flag.	Mangú Mashed green plantains topped with vinegary pickled red onions; served with fried salami, cheese and eggs it becomes 'los tres golpes', the classic breakfast.	Sancocho A thick, slow-cooked stew of several meats with yam, plantain, yuca and corn, served with rice and avocado at celebrations and on Sundays.
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Getting around

Caribe Tours and Metro run comfortable air-conditioned coaches from Santo Domingo to Santiago and Puerto Plata, Caribe Tours also serves Samaná, and Expreso Bávaro links the capital with Punta Cana. Guaguas (minibuses) fill the gaps and motoconchos (motorbike taxis) handle short hops. Santo Domingo has a metro, and Uber works in the main cities. Hiring a car opens up the south-west, but driving is fast and chaotic.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



120V — bring a UK-to-A/B adapter

DIALLING CODE

+1-809

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **911** (ambulance, fire, police)

The **911** emergency number does not have full coverage across the country. If you're outside Santo Domingo, you can telephone the tourist police in an emergency: **+1 809 200 3500**.

Source: FCDO "Getting help"

TIME ZONE

UTC-4 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Restaurant bills add 18% tax and a 10% legal service charge; leave another 5–10% for good service, and tip guides, porters and drivers.

ETIQUETTE

Dominicans dress smartly in town, so keep swimwear and bare chests for the beach. Say 'buenos días' when entering shops or guaguas, and expect a relaxed approach to time.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ), Punta Cana; Las Américas International Airport (SDQ), Santo Domingo; Gregorio Luperón International Airport (POP), Puerto Plata

Visas & entry for Dominican Republic

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit the Dominican Republic for tourism without a visa for 30 days.

To stay longer (to work or study, for business travel or for other reasons), you must meet the Dominican Republic government's entry requirements.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- There is a low risk of malaria in the Dominican Republic: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.
- There is no risk of malaria in the cities of Santiago and Santo Domingo: bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Dominican Republic

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Mon 9 Nov 2026	Constitution Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 4 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Thu 21 Jan 2027	Lady of Altagracia
Mon 25 Jan 2027	Juan Pablo Duarte Day
Sat 27 Feb 2027	National Independence Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Christi
Mon 16 Aug 2027	Restoration Day
Fri 24 Sep 2027	Our Lady of Mercedes Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Spanish

ENGLISH	SPANISH	SAY IT
Hello	Hola	<i>OH-lah</i>
Thank you	Gracias	<i>GRAH-see-ahs</i>
Please	Por favor	<i>por fah-VOR</i>
Excuse me	Disculpe	<i>dees-KOOL-peh</i>
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	<i>KWAN-toh KWES-tah</i>

Know before you go

Long-distance coaches are cheap, punctual and heavily air-conditioned — bring a jumper. Buy tickets at the company's own terminal rather than from touts.

Agree motoconcho and taxi fares before setting off, or use Uber in Santo Domingo and Santiago, where it is usually cheaper and avoids haggling.

Pay in pesos outside the resorts: prices quoted in US dollars usually carry a poor exchange rate. Hurricane season runs June to November, peaking August to October.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.